

**COLD CITY**

**original screenplay by**  
**David James Kelly**

**March 2007**

DAY ONE

**NINE DEAD WHORES**

DAY TWO

**THE CHOIRBOY**

DAY THREE

**THE DIE SONG**

INT. THE MACHO LIZARD - DAY

Cop bar way down Sunset. An eye-fry spear of So-Cal sunglare strafes two men at a back booth:

ELMER FRINT (52), an LAPD Chief of Detectives badge and a .38 Colt Police Positive ride his hip.

DWIGHT MUELLER (47), pulls a bottle of Romilar CF cough syrup from his jacket, knocks back a long shot, stifles a codeine belch.

DWIGHT  
How many dead?

ELMER  
Officially, just the first one.

DWIGHT  
Unofficially?

ELMER  
Nine.

DWIGHT  
Fuck.

ELMER  
Man who loves his work.

DWIGHT  
Maybe his mother told him: "If you can't do something right, don't do it at all."

ELMER  
May-be.

He slides a Polaroid of a YOUNG WOMAN across the table.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
This woman is the only one to see the killer and live.

DWIGHT  
Who took this?

ELMER  
Reason to believe the killer did.  
Found at the scene. Beside body #9.

DWIGHT  
Got yourself an eyeball wit.

ELMER  
If we could find her.

DWIGHT  
She don't wanna be body #10.

ELMER  
Killer "signs" each of the bodies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
Lemme guess --Helter Skelter.

ELMER  
Legion Gringo.  
(beat)  
That name mean anything to you?

DWIGHT  
Sounds like a spic gang tag. You  
run it through R&I?

ELMER  
And the monicker file. No hits.

DWIGHT  
Talk about the women.

ELMER  
All nine had records. Multiple  
busts, solicitation--

DWIGHT  
--'cause who's gonna miss a few  
diced whores?

ELMER  
They all matter...

DWIGHT  
...or none of them matter.

Elmer nods; Dwight nods; something old-enduring between  
them.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
How old are they?

ELMER  
Were they, you mean.

DWIGHT  
Don't ever tell me what I mean  
again, old shoe.

ELMER  
Twelve to forty-four.

DWIGHT  
twelve.

ELMER  
Five white, three Negro, one Mex.

DWIGHT  
Motherfucker's hittin' for the  
cycle. Nine dead whores is big  
ink. Why no press?

ELMER  
We're bribing the wits who found  
the bodies;

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELMER (CONT'D)  
feeding them cash and narcotics  
for their continued silence.

DWIGHT  
Borrowed fucken' time.

ELMER  
Added to which, the public eye's  
fixed on the Manson trial. His  
antics are a useful smokescreen.

DWIGHT  
Mr. Gringo makes Manson look like  
righteous cat shit.

ELMER  
Our city fathers know another  
madman amuck would not bode well  
for the upcoming elections. Our  
constituents could lose faith.  
Heads could roll.

DWIGHT  
Sounds like nine already have.

ELMER  
The internal consensus is, this  
would best be handled by someone  
outside the Department...someone  
unencumbered by the slow modus of  
jurisprudence.

DWIGHT  
You're saying "me?"

ELMER  
You killed ten men in the Line --  
still the Department record. You  
closed Nash, Glatman, Bashor, all  
my red-letter capital cases.  
Legion Gringo's right up your  
bailiwick.

DWIGHT  
If I wanted you to suck my cock,  
I'd a brought peanut butter.

ELMER  
There's a bounty. We tapped the  
Benevolent Fund. Guys kicked in;  
it got fat.

DWIGHT  
How fat?

ELMER  
Arbuckle.

Elmer slides a cash-tamped envelope across the table.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
Half now. Half on fulfilment the  
contract.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DWIGHT

Humor me why I won't just Geronimo  
the down payment.

ELMER

Because I'll violate your ex-wife  
on a solicitation beef. With her  
priors I can make it stick. She  
goes to the dyke dorm for a crash  
course in carpet cuisine--

Dwight's half over the table, stopped by Elmer's .38 jam-  
cocked under his chin.

ELMER (CONT'D)

Hard-hard charger, just like the  
old days?

DWIGHT

Last of the motherfucken'  
Mohicans.

ELMER

What you are is a functioning  
narcotics addict with scumbag  
credentials. You rut in the  
sewers--

DWIGHT

--where you rut, old shoe?

ELMER

--which gives you homefield  
advantage on this psychopath. I'm  
giving you a chance. A last  
chance. To exist again. And just  
maybe even it up.

DWIGHT

With who?

ELMER

With Jane.

Something breaks wide open inside both their eyes. They  
fall back, trembling and fury-fucked.

ELMER (CONT'D)

We traded in our tickets to normal  
a long time ago, Dwight. For  
morgue vigils and mothers drunk at  
dawn. For to stand in the homes  
of the new-dead and make that  
impossible promise: Yes ma'am,  
yes, sir: We will stand for your  
dead.

(holsters up)

Now, Jack the Ripper's gone  
Hollywood and I need you to be a  
policeman again. To hold your  
promise. To stand for these dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DWIGHT  
...get me the murder book?

ELMER  
Expect it at your hotel this PM.  
You get three days on this. Three  
days before the slaughter breaks  
wide and L.A. turns into panic  
city.

DWIGHT  
If I need more time?

ELMER  
You forfeit your advance and more  
pieces of dead girls.  
(off the Polaroid)  
Start with the one that got away.  
You find her...you'll find Legion  
Gringo.

DWIGHT  
And when he's found?

ELMER  
You know.

DWIGHT  
I wanna hear you say it, old shoe.

ELMER  
You kill him.

DWIGHT  
Yeah, then?

ELMER  
Then: Happy New Year.

Dwight pockets the Polaroid/the cash; he stands to leave.

DWIGHT  
And may old acquaintance be  
fucken' forgot.

OVER BLACK; --superimpose--

**MONDAY DECEMBER 29 1969**

INT./EXT. BUICK (TRAVELING) - NEXT

Dwight, cruising Hollywood in his Riviera. He pops two BENZEDRINE tablets, knocks them back with a Romilar chaser. The juice starts to grab him; he grooves on passing sights:

Homeless Vietnam vets sucking T-bird short dogs, comparing disabilities; Black Panthers waving pickets "Off the Pigs!"; Manson groupie chicks carving swatstikas in each other's foreheads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NINE DEAD WHORES, STRUNG UP OVER HOLLYWOOD BLVD. NAKED, DANGLING, GUTTED, BLOOD DRIPPING ONTO DWIGHT'S WINDSHIELD, THEIR EYES SPRINGING OPEN, STARING DOWN AT HIM, BLOODY TEARS TRAILING DOWN THEIR CHEEKS.

DWIGHT  
Fucken' hell, man...

He's bad-tripping Bennies/Romilar. He sucks air. He fist-rolls his eyes. He wills the terrors away. The dead whores vanish. Then:

In the rearview: an unmarked LAPD FELONY CAR tailing him --that whip antenna a dead give-away.

EXT. GEE GEE'S MARKET & LIQUOR - NEXT

Dwight parks front of this ramshackle liquor mart in Lynwood. As he heads inside: the FELONY CAR drifts by, the TWO PLAINCLOTHES inside giving him the fisheye.

INT. GEE GEE'S MARKET & LIQUOR - NEXT

AGENT ORANGE (26), skinny black dude in camouflage, slight nerve damage, a stutter. He looks up from his copy of "A Taste of Power" as Dwight door-jingles in.

DWIGHT  
What the know, brother?

AGENT ORANGE  
Samey-same, but looky here...

He hefts a pickle jar full of severed HUMAN EARS from under the counter.

AGENT ORANGE (CONT'D)  
Genuine Victor Charlie souven-ear.  
Ninety-nine cent a piece, buck a  
half a pair--

DWIGHT  
Put those fucken' things away and  
shitcan the banter.

AGENT ORANGE  
Careful how you address your  
veterans, now.

DWIGHT  
You smuggled white horse back from  
Laos in your *semper fi*'s rectums.

AGENT ORANGE  
Bein' in country gotta way what  
fuckin' wit a man's better angels.  
Since I been back, I been gettin'  
right wit Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
Fuck Jesus --get right with me. I  
need a piece.

AGENT ORANGE  
What make you think I can do that?

DWIGHT  
You're jungled up with the  
Panthers. Their dicks get hard  
for two things only: white pussy  
and U.S. Army surplus weaponry.

AGENT ORANGE  
What the action gonna come my way?

DWIGHT  
Ten for makin' introductions. I  
get what I need, that's times two.

AGENT ORANGE  
How I know you ain't woofin'?

Dwight yanks his wad; he skims a twenty; rips it in half,  
slaps one half into Orange's waiting palm.

DWIGHT  
'cause I'm your daddy, Twitch.

INT. GEE GEE'S MARKET & LIQUOR (STOREROOM) - NEXT

Orange leads Dwight down a staircase, bangs on a door at  
the bottom.

DE FREEZE (29), big black dude in a Panther beret/bullet  
bandolier combo, opens up, slow-burns Dwight:

DE FREEZE  
*This motherfucker smells like  
fuzz.*

DWIGHT  
You wanna watch you don't trip  
over your tongue and land on a  
Technicolor ass-fucken'.

Dwight/De Freeze, ready to tango.

AGENT ORANGE  
Naw, see, Dwight's ex-fuzz...he  
hate the Pigs same as us or worse  
than. He cool.

DE FREEZE  
That right, homeboy? You cool?

Dwight grins wide.

DWIGHT  
As Charlie Parker's pillow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

De Freeze grins wider.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - NEXT

De Freeze leads Dwight down a man-high tunnel dug out underneath Gee Gee's; lit dim-smeared with strings of Christmas lights. Surface street sounds roar muffled overhead.

DWIGHT  
Ever think a changin' your name to  
The Black Gophers?

INT. UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Tunnel opens into a hive of activity: DOZENS OF BLACK PANTHERS --printing Panther pamphlets on antique presses; trading communiqus with other Panther cells via two-way; screening *Battle of Algiers* and taking notes.

DE FREEZE  
Myself, I'd prefer an above-ground  
re-location --leave this cave-jive  
to Blacula.

INT. UNDERGROUND OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

De Freeze leads Dwight into an office off the main hub; they plop into bamboo throne chairs. De Freeze pop-tops two tallboys of Schaefer's.

DWIGHT  
I'd stay subterranean. Metro's  
Cointelpro squad's got a  
hellacious hard-on for you cats.

DE FREEZE  
So: You are sympathetic to the  
struggle of the Afro-American  
Marxist-Leninist vanguard?

DWIGHT  
No, I just hate those LAPD cunts  
like Gay Edgar Hoover hates you  
commie pinkos.

DE FREEZE  
That is brazen juju for a white  
pebble in the toe of the black  
man's boot.

DWIGHT  
An' I think your "manifesto" is a  
shuck-and-jive to lasso cooze and  
color TVs.  
(beat)  
That mean I can't make a donation?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DE FREEZE  
 Like fuckin' what's-his-name said:  
 Revolutions make for strange-ass  
 bedfellows.

They toast tallboys; they guzzle in mutual understanding.

DWIGHT  
 I need some firepower.  
 Untraceable. Lots of bite.

De Freeze opens a cabinet, comes up with a short-barreled .12 gauge Model 37 Ithaca pump shotgun.

DE FREEZE  
 Special Forces currently employin'  
 this sucker in the Big-V --turns  
 the gooks into Hamburger Helper.  
 Baby's got beaucoup bark and bite.

DWIGHT  
 Lay it on me.

Dwight racks the pump a hard slide; nods approval.

DE FREEZE  
 If you're in the market for a hand-cannon, thisz a real nigger-knocker-downer.

He hands over an Army Colt .45 1911. Dwight slip-slaps the clip, dry-fires; nods approval.

DWIGHT  
 Shells for both, what's the damage?

DE FREEZE  
 Five centuries.

Dwight yanks his wad; he skims c-notes.

DE FREEZE (CONT'D)  
 Call my ass curious, but who's so bad as to require such hardware?

DWIGHT  
 Legion Gringo. That name mean anything to you?

DE FREEZE  
 (shakes head)  
 What'd he do? Fuck your sister's cat?

DWIGHT  
 He's chopping up whores in Hollywood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DE FREEZE  
 If you ain't LAPD no more and none  
 of these ladies is your kin, how  
 come you takin' on this bad dude  
 single-o?

DWIGHT  
 They paid me.

DE FREEZE  
 Naw, Jack --that's the *excuse*.  
 I'm seekin' the *reason*.

Dwight stands to leave; he jams the Colt in his  
 waistband. His gut juts.

DWIGHT  
 I'm the garbage man.

EXT. GEE GEE'S MARKET & LIQUOR - AFTERNOON

Dwight hits the sidewalk, the Ithaca wrapped in black  
 plastic booze bags. He dumps it in the Buick's trunk,  
 sees:

Across the street/an alley: the unmarked F-CAR, the TWO  
 PLAINCLOTHES standing there giving him the fisheye.

Dwight slams the trunk. Dwight beelines them.

EXT. LYNWOOD ALLEY - NEXT

The plainclothes cops perk up as Dwight gets close:

FRED MELBA (27), glasses, sprinter's frame, a boyish grin  
 that makes him look a long ways off from buying his first  
 beer.

WALT KOHNER (48), booze-fucked face, linebacker's frame,  
 eyes sunk way back in his skull like shit pellets in  
 pudding.

WALT  
 Whattya say, junkie?

DWIGHT  
 I say your wife pinch-hits at a  
 whorehouse in Watts, but you knew  
 that, right?

Walt freaks/flushes/lunges.

WALT  
 You filthy fuckin' hype--

Fred buttonholes Walt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED  
 Mr. Mueller, hiya. Fred Melba,  
 outta Central Homicide. I  
 understand you're rankled at the  
 surveillance.

DWIGHT  
 Surveillance? You guys're as  
 subtle as a goat shitting soup  
 cans.

FRED  
 I thought it more politic to make  
 our presence known, Mr.--

WALT  
 --don't dignify this scrote with  
 no fuckin' "mister." He was a  
 disgrace to the race as a cop and  
 he's times ten worse now.

DWIGHT  
 And you done graduated from  
 shakin' down whores for head to  
 The Jesus Christ of Assholes.

WALT  
 Ho-ho-ho, we gotta fuckin'  
 Smothers brother here. Whyn't ya  
 tell us what you're doin' in  
 Darktown? Coppin' junk from your  
 jigaboo pals?

DWIGHT  
 Tradin' box scores on your old  
 lady.

Walt's hand drops to his .38. Dwight's hand drops to his .45.

FRED  
 No.

His voice a slice cord; it stops the two senior men cold.

FRED (CONT'D)  
 I'm ranking here and I'm telling  
 you --both of you-- sub rosa or  
 not, this is a homicide  
 investigation and will be  
 conducted as such with due respect  
 from all parties. We each of us  
 want the same thing: Legion  
 Gringo, cold on the slab,  
 posthaste.

DWIGHT  
 You talk like a faggot or a lawyer  
 and alls I'm in this for is the  
 money.

WALT  
 Not for Jane?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRED  
Who's Jane?

Dwight turns away, spits, snorts, turns back.

DWIGHT  
People I gotta go through to find  
this motherless fuck are gonna  
fly, fucken' *posthaste*, they see  
you two nosebleeds up my ass.

FRED  
Chief Frint was specific to the  
point: account for your  
whereabouts at all times.

DWIGHT  
I don't need no babysitters,  
choirboy.

WALT  
Bullshit. Any fuzz-nut rookie can  
tell ya the only thing ya can  
trust of junkie is ya *can't* trust  
a junkie.

FRED  
He means to say you're simply too  
unpredictable to let off the short  
leash. We're not here to poach  
your turf and I assure you we'll  
be discreet.

DWIGHT  
"Discreet?"  
(off Walt)  
He shits standing up.

Fred sighs grief. Walt looms Dwight.

WALT  
Ya know, Dwight, there was those a  
us who thought you got a raw deal  
with that fucking Jane situation.  
But ya know what?

DWIGHT  
You don't tell me, I might pee my  
pants.

WALT  
I thought you got what every dog-  
dick junkie, badge or no badge,  
deserves: a kick in the scrotés  
and a one-way gutter bounce.  
(beat)  
Thing is, I'm startin' to think  
the kick didn't take too  
good...and you're about due for a  
sequel.

DWIGHT  
So throw some hands, Frankenstein.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Dwight/Walt long-ass seconds stare-down/fists twitching.

FRED

When He does the next one, and  
the one after that, we're going to  
ask ourselves: did we endeavor  
all due diligence to stop Him.  
Yes or No.

(beat)  
You live with your answer?

Dwight flicks his eyes off Walt, onto Fred. Fred meets the big man's gaze evenly.

DWIGHT

Choirboy, you just consider every  
station house smear you've heard  
on me to be a fucken' *mash* note  
and stay outta my way 'till  
Gringo's juked.

Fred pushes his glasses up the sweat-slick of his nose.

FRED

Noted.

Dwight turns, walks back, gets in the Buick/peels out; Fred/Walt dive in the F-Car, fishtail out of the alley and in pursuit.

INT./EXT. BUICK (TRAVELING) - NEXT

Dwight eye-flicks the rearview: F-Car right on his tail. Dwight spins a hard-sudden left. Fred gets the red light behind him. Buys Dwight a lead of seconds. He hurtles past a NORM'S DINER, sees:

TWO L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES walking from their prowl car into the diner, the deputies a pair of big black dudes with some swagger. Dwight jerks the wheel--

EXT. NORM'S (PARKING LOT) - NEXT

--and the Buick ka-thunks into the lot. Dwight brodies into a space, leaves the engine running, sprints for the diner.

INT. NORM'S - NEXT

Dwight makes the DEPUTIES at a back booth. Their name tags read: JACE and WOMACK (both 30s). Dwight rushes to them feigning full-on freak out.

DWIGHT

Officers, officers--

DEPUTY WOMACK  
Everything all right today, sir?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEPUTY JACE  
Y'look a little *bothered*--

DWIGHT  
There's, it's, two men, with guns,  
they're coming, they're crazy-  
men...

DEPUTY WOMACK  
Slow, jist, slow down and tell it.

DWIGHT  
They've got (I'm sorry), they're  
crazy and with guns, saying  
they're gonna kill all the Pigs, I  
think they mean policemen, and  
they said the only thing worse  
than Pigs was...Blood Sausage.

DEPUTY JACE  
(beat)  
Blood Sausage?

DWIGHT  
Their words, officers.

DEPUTY WOMACK  
Blood Sausage...meaning what?

DWIGHT  
I think Blood Sausage means Negro  
policemen.

Out the window: Fred slaloms the F-Car into the lot.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Good Lord --they're here...

Deputies draw their pistols. Diners freak/flip/flee.

DEPUTY JACE  
Step back, sir, please--

DEPUTY WOMACK  
Blood Sausage?

Fred/Walt burst into Norm's, make Dwight, head for him.  
Deputies intercept, throw down on them.

DEPUTY JACE  
Grab some floor, paddy.

WALT  
Fuck you, abba-dabba, we're cops.

DEPUTY WOMACK  
What you are is one second away  
from doin' the Funky Chicken--

FRED  
We're LAPD, we're homicide.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DEPUTY WOMACK  
 You want some Blood Sausage? It's  
 gonna be order *up*, you don't hit  
 the motherfuckin' deck.

Dwight ducks out the fire door, hops in the idling Buick.

WALT  
 We're runnin' a tail on that guy,  
 you dumb County fucks--

DEPUTY JACE  
 Ho! You wanna talk some *County*  
 smack?

Deputies prone out Walt/Fred. Fred watches Dwight gun  
 the Buick out of the Norm's lot. He grins like in spite  
 of himself.

DEPUTY WOMACK  
 Now. Let's talk about Blood  
 Sausage.

WALT  
 (beat)  
 What the *fuck* is Blood Sausage?

EXT. THE GLITTER DOME - NEXT

Dwight ducks inside this busted-ass strip joint in  
 Gardena.

INT. THE GLITTER DOME - NEXT

Funereal veil of cigarette smoke. Patrons with clammy  
 hands and cold-cut breath.

On the bar TV: Manson groupie chicks outside Hall of  
 Justice jail, heads shaved, Squeaky Fromme shrieking:  
 "You better watch your children because Judgement Day is  
 coming!"

Dwight snags a rear table. A B-GIRL (a young 21), in a  
 Catholic school girl uniform abmush-vamps him.

B-GIRL  
 You wanna drink, hey, or some  
 action?

DWIGHT  
 When's Vicky Lind come on?

B-GIRL  
 I give way better suck than her,  
 hey, ask anybody.

She licks her lips. Dwight sees her rainbow-colored  
 braces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
Just, when's she on?

B-GIRL  
Now, hey...

Lights dim. A half-zonked LOUNGE BAND kicks up the instrumental for *Going Out of My Head*. A violet pin-spot flares, star-lights a WOMAN center stage:

VICKY LIND (46), in a rank rhinestone get-up; she starts to sing, her voice all wet-ashes and generic vodka.

VICKY  
*Well I think I'm goin' out of my  
head / yes, I think I'm goin' out  
of my head / over you, over you...*

Dwight pops 2 Bennies with a Romilar chaser.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
*Well I want you to want me / I  
need you so badly / I can't think  
of anything but you...*

Vicky/the club/the music --all transformed into a codeine-jacked funhouse in Dwight's mind. Vicky's a pulsing violet angel in slow-mo.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
*I see you each morning but you  
just walk by / you don't even know  
I exist...*

Dwight trips she's singing just to HIM. A tear works its way down through his beard. He brushes it away --BAM-- his high boomerangs HARD. He sees:

NINE DEAD WHORES, NAKED-EVISERATED, AT THE TABLES AROUND HIM, THEIR FACES SNOW WHITE FROM MORGUE POWDER, UGLY ZIPPER SUTURES ACROSS THEIR TORSOS, STARING AT HIM WITH SOMEHOW SAD SMILES.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
*...out of my head over you / out  
of my head day and night / night  
and day and night/ wrong or  
right...*

Dwight reels; shit clatters. The dead whores VANISH. Dwight looks to the stage, sees Vicky as she REALLY is:

Her bruised thighs. Her nicotine teeth. Her smile sadder than the dead girls'.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
*I must think of a way into your  
heart / there's no reason why my  
being shy should keep us apart...*

She starts to strip. Patrons hump their tables. Dwight looks away.

INT. THE GLITTER DOME (DRESSING ROOM) - NEXT

Dwight stands outside a dressing room marked with an old gold star. His knock is almost shy.

VICKY (O.S.)  
Come on, yeah--

Dwight opens the door. Vicky, sitting there smoking; she looks him up and down.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
Well, goddamn, then.

DWIGHT  
It's important. You know I wouldn't come, it wasn't.

VICKY  
Been some kinda while.

DWIGHT  
Ten years that feel like a thousand.

VICKY  
You stayin'?

He shuts the door and sinks down on a ratty cot.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
Catch the show?

DWIGHT  
Just missed it.

VICKY  
Nice work if you can get it. And I can still get it.

DWIGHT  
You look the same.  
(beat)  
Good, I mean.

VICKY  
Gravity's a bitch...but thanks for saying that.  
(beat)  
You've got this look in your eye.

DWIGHT  
Kinda look?

VICKY  
Look like you used to get. Like you're sitting on something big.

DWIGHT  
I'm working a case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VICKY  
That's cop talk.

DWIGHT  
My former fucken' brethren. They gotta bonaroo psycho on their hands, so they kicked over my rock. They want me to make the bogeyman go away.

VICKY  
So what's to it?

DWIGHT  
I got shit. I got he calls himself Legion Gringo. That name mean anything to you?

VICKY  
I hear things. The street girls whisper. He's got 'em scared bad.

DWIGHT  
But they'll keep workin'.

VICKY  
We all gotta eat.  
(beat)  
Why are you here? There's better tits in this town.

DWIGHT  
Elmer threatened to bust you to get me to play ball on this. I want you to split 'till I disappear Gringo so they can't use you to wedge me on the bounty. Just for a week or two; just for careful.

Dwight yanks his wad; he skims c-notes.

VICKY  
What is this? Some kinda half-ass penance?

DWIGHT  
This is one thousand dollars and me asking nice.

VICKY  
You're not worried about them using me to wedge you.  
(beat)  
You think this psycho might come after me. He's a whore-killer, Dwight. Is that what you think of me? That I am? I'm a singer, you didn't see me up there...  
(beat)  
...I'm a singer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
All it is, I'd feel you were outta  
this guy's orbit.

VICKY  
He scares you. He reminds you of  
Her--

DWIGHT  
Please, don't.

VICKY  
--of *Jane*.

Dwight grabs her wrists; forces eye-to-eye.

DWIGHT  
This bastard's done nine already;  
he's in it for the blood and goin'  
for the world's record and yeah, I  
am scared: scared fucken'  
shitless I can't stop him and more  
a these girls are gonna die bad.  
And nobody cares, not the pogues,  
not the press --ain't like they're  
Quality Victims, right? You know  
what they say: They're only  
whores and they're only whores and  
deep down in their rat's nest  
hearts they think these whores had  
it comin'. That you live by the  
Street you goddamn well die by the  
Street, so nobody gives a  
righteous fuck 'till it's *their*  
wives get chest-popped at the  
autopsy or their daughters get  
dumpstered like human garbage and  
*then* they wanna see blood, *then*  
they wanna know WHY...

He crumples back, just done. Vicky, gentle as she can:

VICKY  
Still know how to talk your way  
into a woman's heart.

He proffers the money; she takes it.

VICKY (CONT'D)  
You sure you can afford this?

DWIGHT  
There's more when he's dead.

VICKY  
Not the money; you do this thing,  
you might not come all the way out  
this time. Or is that the way you  
want it?

DWIGHT  
I don't know. I just know...thisz  
the way it's gotta be.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VICKY

You always loved them more than  
me. I know that.

DWIGHT

Not more. Different.

VICKY

But I was *alive*, Dwight. I was  
alive and right there and I  
waited. Waited for you to love  
me, then to let me in, then to  
come back. I waited and longer  
than I wanna admit, 'cause you'd  
think I was some kinda sucker.

DWIGHT

I could never think that.

VICKY

And here you are and all these  
years and it took more dead girls  
to bring you back through my door.

Silence. Their breathing.

He grabs her, she grabs back; their hands go all over;  
she falls back on the cot, she pulls off her shift, she  
tears it, Dwight kicks off his shoes, he trips out of his  
pants, pocket change goes flying, he falls down on top of  
her still in his socks and she pulls him in.

The clutch, they make small funny sounds; they taste each  
other and kiss tears off each other and keep their eyes  
open so they don't miss any of it; they key a tempo, they  
fuse hard; and when they come, close together, they fall  
down together in the dark.

INT. THE GLITTER DOME (DRESSING ROOM) - NEXT

Dwight, sitting up, dressing. Vicky, smoking, sheets  
pooled around her, watching him.

VICKY

Your eyes still do that thing.

DWIGHT

My eyes.

VICKY

After you come, they turn even  
more green.

(beat)

How will I know it's safe to come  
back?

DWIGHT

Call me the hotel, before.

VICKY

If I can't find you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT

Stay gone.

He stands to leave.

VICKY

Dwight? When you find him...when you find him and kill him and after...if you need something to bring you back, back from that dark place, I want you to think of me. Me loving you. And waiting.

(beat)

Will you do that?

He leans over. He so gently kisses her forehead;

DWIGHT

I always did, Victoria Lind.

EXT. MARLOWE HOTEL - EVENING

Dwight trudges toward his hotel, the Ithaca resting over one shoulder. Fat black clouds hang over Downtown. Pre-storm winds whoop piss-grit around his ankles.

INT. MARLOWE HOTEL (LOBBY) - NEXT

Dwight hits the lobby, sees: WALT KOHNER, leaning against the bank of tenant's mailboxes, the Legion Gringo murder book in one pot roast fist.

DWIGHT

Where's the choirboy?

WALT

Had him go for coffee.

Walt kicks Dwight in the balls. Dwight eats floor.

WALT (CONT'D)

Ya get your rocks off makin' me look stupid in front a those porch monkeys?

Dwight retches bile through a grin.

DWIGHT

They'll be tag-team Tootsie Rollin' your wife tonight--

Walt kicks Dwight's kidneys. Dwight shuts up and curls up. Walt steps on Dwight's face, bears down:

WALT

News flash, Flash: You're gonna find Gringo, then stand down. I cancel his ticket, I reap the attaboy, I collect the bounty.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALT (CONT'D)  
 You try'n shake me again, I will  
 fuck your ass up so bad God  
 himself will look away.

Walt pulls his .38, jams the barrel to Dwight's skull.

WALT (CONT'D)  
 Now: sound off we're clear or  
 I'll paint this fuckin' foyer with  
 your brains and claim justifiable.

DWIGHT  
 --clear.

WALT  
 Address me as "sir," you scrote.

DWIGHT  
 --clear, sir.

Walt drops the murder book on Dwight. Dead whore  
 glossies skitter across linoleum.

WALT  
 Clean up --you look like a fuckin'  
 dog's breakfast.

Walt holsters up. He walks off whistling.

INT. MARLOWE HOTEL (DWIGHT'S BATHROOM) - NIGHT

Dwight, naked in the tub, dinged up from Walt's beat-down. Murder book open before him. Nine dead whores. Just names on a page, now:

Sarah Bryson. Viola Robles. Bertina Dorcas. Mimi Spangler. Chandra Urzen. Alma Beaudorf. Gladys Kupcinet. Ora Kern. And #9: Michelle White.

Dwight guzzles Romilar. Words blip off the coroner's report: "post-mortem sexual assault," "surgical precision," "wrongful death."

Dwight guzzles Romilar. Crime scene pix/morgue glossies; unspeakable subliminal flickers in his mind's eye: Severed limbs. Arterial spray. "Legion Gringo" carved into each victim: the monster's signature, gore-writ. Dwight jumps; he sees:

BLOOD IN THE CRIME SCENE PIX GUSHING RED OUT OF THE PHOTOS, ALL OVER HIM, FLOODING THE TUB, WATER GOING PINK TO SCARLET, THE DEAD WHORES' SILENT SCREAMS SOUNDING OFF IN HIS HEAD ALL AT ONCE A SYMPHONY OF HELL.

--AND: the Polaroid of the one that got away, only living witness to Legion Gringo, staring up at Dwight from beneath the water.

Her eyes say: SAVE ME.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She's the last thing Dwight sees as he plunges his head under the water, screaming, praying for oblivion to take him.

OVER BLACK; --superimpose--

**TUESDAY DECEMBER 30**

INT. MARLOWE HOTEL (DWIGHT'S BATHROOM) - PRE-DAWN

Dwight, passed out in the tub. Vomit dries in his lap. Rain tick-taps the window.

He bolts upright, limbs thrashing, sucking air like a man drowning in blood.

INT. MARLOWE HOTEL (DWIGHT'S KITCHENETTE) - NEXT

Dwight: smoking, showered, combed, a clean shirt; at his kitchen table. He lays the Ithaca in a Vendome Flowers box; the shotgun crinkle-crushes long-dead petals.

He ties the box with some faded ribbon. A low timpani roll of thunder and Downtown's a drab storm-smear.

INT. MARLOWE HOTEL (HALLWAY) - NEXT

Dwight, flower box tucked under arm, knocks on a NEIGHBOR'S DOOR.

BELLAMY (61), in mystery-stained Fruit of the Looms, opens up, yawns.

BELLAMY  
This better be good. I was fuck-  
dreaming Mary Poppins and she  
tasted like Peppermint Schnapps.

INT./EXT. MARLOWE HOTEL (LOBBY) - NEXT

Bellamy exits the lobby, Dwight hangs back. Bellamy goes up to the F-CAR; Fred/Walt, looking like shit after their all-night stake out. They glance at Bellamy; glance away bored.

Bellamy takes out his dick, starts PISSING on the car; Fred/Walt leap out, chase him down the sidewalk; Dwight jolts out of the lobby in the opposite direction.

EXT. MARLOWE HOTEL - NEXT

Dwight skates around the corner/skids to a halt: FRED is leaning against the Buick, in the drizzle, just grinning his grin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED

Mr. Mueller, I gotta say: You're the least disappointing legend I've ever met.

DWIGHT

So what, we just stand here in the rain like two French faggots in a French film?

FRED

All the same to you, I'd rather not. All the same, I'd rather get started.

DWIGHT

Started what?

FRED

Legion Gringo. We go as a team.

DWIGHT

Kohner already thinks he's gettin' the bounty--

FRED

I couldn't care less about the money.

Dwight searches his eyes for bullshit. Finding none:

DWIGHT

What's your angle here, choirboy?

FRED

Funny thing? I was a choirboy. And an altar boy. Went to Seminary school, studied with the Jesuits. I was raised to believe in two things: Good and Evil. But, see, I couldn't spend my life hiding from evil, behind a pulpit or a turned-up collar. I became a policeman and I saw --and I do believe-- that between Good and Evil, just maybe, lies Justice.

(beat)

A case like this...a killer like this: That's my Holy Grail.

DWIGHT

So go get him.

FRED

I don't know how.

DWIGHT

Ask your partner.

FRED

Kohner's washed up and dirty as the inside of a goat. This is beyond him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
What's your spiel on me?

FRED  
That you're erratic, unsound and  
feared on the streets. That  
you're convinced that if you can't  
avenge these girls, you don't  
deserve to live yourself. That no  
one else in this man's Department  
cares as much for absolute  
justice.

(beat)  
I'll bet everything on you.

DWIGHT  
I don't work well with others.

FRED  
Then Kohner and I stay on you like  
a tin-can tail. Gringo slips  
through the cracks and more girls  
take a ride on the pale horse.

Dwight snaps/lunges; Fred kicks out his legs. Dwight  
eats pavement. Fred gets his .38 in Dwight's face.

DWIGHT  
You fucken' virgin, you know shit-  
all about killin'.

FRED  
You're gonna teach me.

DWIGHT  
Fuck you, Nancy Drew--

FRED  
We cherish the same thing above  
all else: Innocence.

DWIGHT  
You cunt, you'll make a groovy  
Chief.

FRED  
We hate the same thing above all  
else: Those who defile it.

DWIGHT  
*I just want the money.*

FRED  
Then who is Jane?

Dwight snarls, rears up; Fred cocks the .38 an inch from  
his eye.

DWIGHT  
How many men you shot weren't made  
a paper?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FRED  
You'd be the first.

DWIGHT  
You ditch Kohner and this kicks  
out, you'll be back in a bluesuit  
rousting piss bums on the Row.

FRED  
All the more incentive we get the  
bad guy.

The two of them locked eye to eye under this cold weeping  
sunrise.

DWIGHT  
You roll with me, it's the  
boonies, the bad bush, the dark  
dream of the heart. I'm gonna  
bury this Gringo cocksucker for  
all time. It won't be pretty and  
it won't be Hoyle. We go as long  
as we draw breath. We go until  
end-of-watch.

Fred slowly eases down the .38's hammer, steps off  
Dwight, offers his hand, helps him up.

FRED  
End-of-watch.

Their hands stay clasped a beat, framing the moment.

DWIGHT  
When'd you grow big enough balls  
to think you could run this down?

FRED  
Last night. In my evening prayer.

DWIGHT  
Jesus fucken' Christ.

FRED  
I'd appreciate it if you didn't  
take that name in vain.

Fred pushes his glasses up his nose and grins:

FRED (CONT'D)  
Okay if I drive?

INT. BUICK (TRAVELING) - NEXT

Dwight jams the Polaroid of The One That Got Away in a  
dash vent; she stares back at them as they spitball.

FRED  
We braced every pimp in L.A.  
existence.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED (CONT'D)  
 None of them claimed the girl and  
 all had solid alibis at the time  
 of the murders.

DWIGHT  
 This doesn't vibe pimp snuff or  
 pussy war. This is one rogue  
 motherfucker.

FRED  
 You're thinkin', what? A trick  
 goes wrong; a haggle, a scuffle,  
 the john sheds blood--

DWIGHT  
 --gets away clean with a taste for  
 it, escalates into a functional  
 frenzy-killer--

FRED  
 --who leaves no physical  
 description, no prints, no trace  
 evidence of any kind--

DWIGHT  
 --gainfully employed with a place  
 of residence--

FRED  
 I think he lives between the  
 screams.

(beat)  
 You considered she might've  
 skipped town?

DWIGHT  
 She's here.

FRED  
 Tell me why.

DWIGHT  
 It's in her eyes.

FRED  
 Windows of the soul?

DWIGHT  
 Fuck that jazz, Shakespeare --she  
 was stoned when this was took.

Dwight taps the Polaroid. Fred peers through the blur  
 and sees the girl's dope-pinned eyes.

FRED  
 You're right.

DWIGHT  
 She'll hole up, stay close to her  
 connection.

FRED  
 Think the connection's our guy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT

A dealer might waste a whore to make a point, but times nine is just bad business. Gringo's a trap-door spider --somebody put her in his path.

FRED

Phone book brigade leaned on every pimp in the vice file and got the big *nada*.

DWIGHT

Le Van Kim.

FRED

Little early for Chinese, innit?

DWIGHT

It's Vietnamese. Le Van Kim is a pimping motherfucker Number One.

FRED

He's not in the vice file.

DWIGHT

Kim's like the smog, man: You can blow it out your nose black but try'n grab it 'n you get a hand full a nothin'.

FRED

What's his MO?

DWIGHT

He's got these "talent scouts" who rope the girls soon as they hit town. Kim provides 'em with room and board, gets 'em dependent on his hospitality. Then he schools 'em in "bed artistry." Kinky sex with high-line clients; stag flicks, dykes 'em out...fore long the girls don't even remember their own fucken' names.

FRED

Jesus wept.

DWIGHT

Hey, hell sucks.

EXT. HANOI HILTON - DAY

Dwight/Fred stand at the front gate of Kim's palatial estate high in the Hollywood Hills. Fred presses the visitor's buzzer. A VIETNAMESE-ACCENTED VOICE crackles back at him:

VOICE (O.S.)

Who that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED  
 We're with the Los Angeles Police  
 Department. We'd like to speak  
 with Mr. Kim.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 You dinky-dau. You buzz off.

Speaker clicks off dead. Dwight punches the buzzer.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Who that?

DWIGHT  
 The voice of America,  
 motherfucker, and open-says-a-me.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 You got warrant?

DWIGHT  
 Tell Kim it's Dwight Mueller,  
 he'll open up most ricky-tick.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 You wait.

Speaker crackles off.

FRED  
 If this guy's so twilight, who put  
 you on him?

DWIGHT  
 While back one a Kim's guys  
 happened to pick up some DA's  
 niece, runaway. She was of age,  
 not bein' held against her will,  
 no legal way to get her back.

FRED  
 So, and?

DWIGHT  
 I got her back.

FRED  
 And?

DWIGHT  
 And, Kim said if I ever came back  
 here, he'd give me a Saigon Sex  
 Change.

FRED  
 (beat)  
 What's a Saigon Sex Change?

Before Dwight can answer: the main gate grinds back,  
 revealing: A HALF-DOZEN VIETNAMESE BODYGUARDS, holding  
 their AK-47s at port arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BODYGUARD  
Mr. Kim say come on in.

EXT. HANOI HILTON - NEXT

Bodyguards march Dwight/Fred through canopy jungle imported from 'Nam. Mr. Kim's palatial villa, The Hanoi Hilton, is glimpsed through rustles of Nipi palm.

FRED  
Who *is* this guy?

DWIGHT  
Made his bones in Cholon, ran a crew with the Binh Xuyenn mob, duking it out with French Intel for control of the poppy fields.

Frangipani blossoms flutter down around them; jungle rats with asses big as a dog's do a foliage tango.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
When shit boiled over Number Ten, he traded 'Nam for Hollyweird and dope for the big boom-boom.  
(beat)  
Stay frosty --this is Indian Country.

INT. HANOI HILTON (SOLARIUM) - NEXT

Bodyguards usher Dwight/Fred inside. Fred wipes steam off his glasses, pushes them up his nose.

Stained glass windows depict Kama Sutra fuck-tableaus. A Victrola cranks out an Edith Piaf lover's lament.

A DOZEN YOUNG GIRLS, late-teens; an All-American white bread harem; clad in silk scanties. Glazed eyes/wan smiles; they hang on every word of THE MAN in the center of the room:

LE VAN KIM (57), sipping Pernod. His accent is musical, cultured French.

LE VAN KIM  
Gentlemen. A tantalizing diversion from what promised to be a most dreary afternoon.

DWIGHT  
I dig what you've done with the place, Kim. Mucho classy. For a fuck pad.

LE VAN KIM  
Monsieur Mueller, I am delighted you have not lost your *joi de vivre*.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LE VAN KIM (CONT'D)  
 You remain in the flesh just as I  
 have you captured in memory.

DWIGHT  
 Nice to be remembered.

LE VAN KIM  
 How could I possibly forget? The  
 young lady you so impetuously  
 relieved from my company was quite  
 popular with my patrons. Losing  
 her was cause for great woe, to  
 both my heart and purse.

Dwight nods at Kim's HAREM.

DWIGHT  
 Looks like you got over her okay.

LE VAN KIM  
 Time heals all wounds.

DWIGHT  
 'cept for the fatal ones.

LE VAN KIM  
 To be sure.

They trade eye-ball fuck-yous. Fred steps up.

FRED  
 We're looking for a girl.

LE VAN KIM  
 Then we are most well-met,  
*monsieur*...?

FRED  
 Sergeant.

LE VAN KIM  
 Pity. I had hoped yours was a  
 social calling.

FRED  
 The girl is an eyeball witness to  
 a string of murders.

Dwight pulls the Polaroid, flashes it.

DWIGHT  
 She one a yours?

LE VAN KIM  
*Mon dieu* --has she come to harm?

DWIGHT  
 Maybe not yet.

FRED  
 The killer knows he can't leave  
 her alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
He gets to her first, she goes  
from star witness to chop suey.

Dwight eye-flicks the HAREM. A beautiful, raven-haired girl flinches on "chop suey."

She is: MOONBEAM (e20s). Dwight doesn't let on he's hip to her reaction.

LE VAN KIM  
The feminine form is God's *chef du  
oeuvre*. One who would desecrate  
such perfection is a most  
unfortunate pismire.

FRED  
Then help us find her.

LE VAN KIM  
(considers, then:)  
She was one of mine, *oui*.

DWIGHT  
Was?

LE VAN KIM  
I dismissed her a fortnight ago.  
Her charms were manifold but she  
possessed a penchant for  
narcotics; an intolerable vice  
amongst my flock.

FRED  
Your *flock*?

LE VAN KIM  
Your tone betrays distaste.

FRED  
Probably because I find you  
distasteful.

LE VAN KIM  
The harem tradition extends time  
out of mind, from Venetian  
ambassadors to the Turkish sultans  
of old.

FRED  
It's an abomination.

LE VAN KIM  
My *palais* shelters my flock from  
such as the man you seek. They  
want for nothing, they require  
only love, and desire nothing but  
to return it. Your happiness is  
their happiness...

Kim snaps his fingers come-hither style. TWO GIRLS break off the HAREM, zombie-drift over to Fred.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LE VAN KIM (CONT'D)  
 ...why not make them happy,  
 sergent?

Fred eases the girls off;

FRED  
 I'm married.

LE VAN KIM  
 She must be a great beauty to  
 inspire such loyalty. How I would  
 love to help her realize her full  
 potential.

FRED  
 What did you say?

Fred bullet-charges Kim. Bodyguards raise their AKs. Everybody freezes. Dwight indicates Fred with a head-tilt. He shrugs, goofs on Fred:

DWIGHT  
 Bring Your Daughter to Work Day.

A couple pretty long seconds. Kim smiles. Dwight smiles. Fred steams. Kim flips the bodyguards a signal; they lower their AKs.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
 For old time's sake, a name and  
 we're gone.

LE VAN KIM  
 In that regard I can proffer no  
 assistance. I christen each  
 member of my flock anew. It helps  
 in breaking old habits and  
 tiresome inhibitions.

FRED  
 Try this one: Legion Gringo.

DWIGHT  
 That name mean anything to you?

LE VAN KIM  
 I know it as the *nom de guerre* of  
 your executioner.

FRED  
 Think he could be one a your  
 "patrons?"

LE VAN KIM  
 Only those who worship at the feet  
 of Aphrodite may partake of my  
 delights.

FRED  
 We're done here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Dwight up-ticks his chin at the HAREM.

DWIGHT  
I wouldn't mind partaking in some  
delights myself.

Dwight forces on a sleazoid grin.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
With the Sultan's permission.

Kim returns Dwight's sleazoid grin genuine.

LE VAN KIM  
Your obstreperous *sergent* is not  
one of the world as you and I. We  
make no apologies for our base  
appetites, no?

DWIGHT  
Life's too short for apologies.

Fred's shocked still. Kim produces a handkerchief. HAREM falls into line; they stare at Dwight like sex-orphans sizing up potential parents.

LE VAN KIM  
When the Sultan pleased to choose  
a damsel, they would abandon all  
modesty, indulge in all breeds of  
wanton carriage to earn his  
affection...

Kim lays the handkerchief over Dwight's palm.

LE VAN KIM (CONT'D)  
...when he had chosen, he dropped  
a handkerchief at the feet of his  
*femme*, and the true revels began.  
So shall you: Choose:

Dwight walks the HAREM. He stops at the last girl: MOONBEAM. He drops the handkerchief; it see-saws down onto one perfect pale freckled foot. Moonbeam smiles.

DWIGHT  
--You.

LE VAN KIM  
*Charmante!* She will make your  
"Lazarus" rise again and again.  
Take her; teach her --fuck her.

Dwight nods like his head's on a stick; Moonbeam takes his hand. Fred blocks their exit, stone furious.

FRED  
God's name are you *doing*?

DWIGHT  
's it *look* like, choirboy? Go sit  
in the car, think about your wife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Dwight bulls past him, Moonbeam on his arm, as--

Edith Piaf sings them out:

*Mon amant m'a quitte' mais je vois  
toujours son visage partout...*

INT. HANOI HILTON (BEDCHAMBER) - NEXT

Frolicking plastic cherubs. Lysol-come stench under Jasmine incense. A gilt-edged mirror above the pink-frilly four-poster bed; on the bed:

MOONBEAM, a low-rent Lolita, rubbing her thighs together.

MOONBEAM  
Name...your...fuck...

She TRIES for sultry seductress. She GETS forlorn play-acting.

DWIGHT  
Don't talk like that.

MOONBEAM  
Why not? You like a little girl  
lost? You wanna be the Big Bad  
Wolf?

Dwight goes to her, covers her with pink satin.

MOONBEAM (CONT'D)  
I'm a fine frame, with no parts  
lame...

DWIGHT  
What's your name?

MOONBEAM  
Are we gonna ball? 'cause you're  
kinda freakin' me out...

DWIGHT  
Answer my question.

MOONBEAM  
Moonbeam.

DWIGHT  
Your *real* name --not what that  
fucken' zipperhead tagged you.

MOONBEAM/EVANGELINE  
Evangeline.

DWIGHT  
Evangeline what?

EVANGELINE  
Evangeline Dull, Mr. Nosey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
(off Polaroid)  
Who is she?

EVANGELINE  
I shouldn't be talking to you. I  
could get in trouble talking to  
you...

DWIGHT  
There's a bad man out there,  
Evangeline Dull. Asking the same  
questions I am. He gets his  
answers before I do? They'll bury  
this girl in a shoebox.

This dents the clouds in Evangeline's eyes.

EVANGELINE  
We were sorta-friends. Small town  
girls, 'n all.

DWIGHT  
Whereabouts from?

EVANGELINE  
Her or me?

Dwight smiles: *put her at ease a bit.*

DWIGHT  
You first.

EVANGELINE  
This lame-o town in lame-o  
Delaware, population lame-o.

DWIGHT  
And her, how 'bout her?

EVANGELINE  
Iowa or Idaho. I always mix 'em  
up. Some burg there, similarly  
lame.

DWIGHT  
Tell me about her.

EVANGELINE  
She won a beauty pageant in Iowa  
or Idaho, thought they'd hand her  
a Boulevard star right off the  
bus. Dumb, right? But we all  
think it...

DWIGHT  
Why'd kim 86 her from the ville?

EVANGELINE  
She didn't really dig the balling,  
just wanted to read movie mags all  
day.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVANGELINE (CONT'D)  
 She started doping to take her  
 mind off shit. Mr. Kim don't let  
 us do dope 'cause it messes up our  
 karma and stuff...

DWIGHT  
 She talk about where she copped?

EVANGELINE  
 This bar, heavy biker scene,  
 named like some kinda snake.

DWIGHT  
 The Fer De Lance?

EVANGELINE  
 (nods)  
 She said the bikers were way  
 creepy but the dope was the stuff  
 that dreams were made of.

DWIGHT  
 What is her name?

EVANGELINE  
 Kathy. Kathy Moffat.

Dwight lets the name drop down; yanks his wad.

DWIGHT  
 Take this and sock it. First  
 chance, you ditch this freak show  
 for a ticket back to Lame City.

EVANGELINE  
 You're real nice...but, I don't  
 wanna go back. Just all the boys  
 fuss at me for dates...the blue  
 plate special and the back seat  
 tango...lame.

He hands her over five c-notes.

EVANGELINE (CONT'D)  
 Holy Cow, mister! Bus ticket's  
 only forty scoots.

DWIGHT  
 Buy yourself four hundred and  
 sixty ice cream sodas on me.  
 (beat)  
 Promise me, now.

EVANGELINE  
 'kay, promise promise promise

He stands to leave; she strikes a "glamour" pose.

EVANGELINE (CONT'D)  
 Y'think I look like Jane Fonda?

DWIGHT  
 Nah, I don't see it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She's crestfallen; she droops.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
I see Liz Taylor.

She lights up; she smiles true.

EVANGELINE  
No foolin'?

DWIGHT  
I would know. I worked red carpet security for *The Big Hangover* premiere.

EVANGELINE  
Holy cow! You met her?

DWIGHT  
Held a door for her.

EVANGELINE  
Did she say anything?

DWIGHT  
No. But she smiled.

He blows her a kiss. Evangeline giggles, catches it, sends one after him out the door.

EXT. HANOI HILTON - DAY

Main gate grinds back. Dwight steps out. Fred by the Buick, cold-eyed.

FRED  
Have a good time?

DWIGHT  
Fuck you talkin'?

FRED  
I'm recommending that Chief Frint relieve you of this "investigation." I'll personally see you face charges: conspiracy, kidnapping--

Dwight balls his fists, gets in Fred's face.

DWIGHT  
--assaulting an officer?

FRED  
(digs in)  
Try me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
 I did, you fucken' mope. You  
 almost got us shot to ham and  
 motherfuckers.

FRED  
 You took advantage of that girl.

DWIGHT  
 She hinked on the snapshot. You  
 missed it, too busy cock-jousting  
 the pimp.

FRED  
 Thick as thieves, you two.

DWIGHT  
 It was smile through the bile. I  
 got chummy so he'd kick loose.  
 You think I liked it?

FRED  
 I think maybe you did.

DWIGHT  
 Real careful what you put in my  
 face, choirboy.

FRED  
 Straight up: Did you have  
 relations with that girl?

DWIGHT  
 She's a material witness. I  
 questioned her. That's my last  
 word on it.

Fred searches Dwight's eyes for bullshit. Finding none:

FRED  
 Then, then: I'm sorry.

DWIGHT  
 Fucken' accepted.

FRED  
 But give me a signal, why-don't-  
 you? Work with me.

DWIGHT  
 Sorry I didn't signal.

FRED  
 F--freakin' accepted.

They pace off the bad blood; quick/tight rooster steps.

DWIGHT  
 Did you really just say "have  
 relations with that girl?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRED  
So if I did?

DWIGHT  
Can't you just say "Fuck" like the rest of the human race?

FRED  
Voltaire said profanity was indicative of a lack of imagination.

DWIGHT  
And Balzac was an ass man --what's your fucken' point?

Fred cracks a half-ass smile. Dwight cracks one back. Fred pushes his glasses up his nose.

FRED  
Did your new friend come through on our girl?

DWIGHT  
"Our girl" is Kathy Moffat. From Iowa or Idaho. Dreamer and a doper.

FRED  
Get a line on her connection?

DWIGHT  
Last known: The Fer De Lance.

FRED  
Place has a bad rep.

DWIGHT  
Bad as you want.

They same-time pop the Buick's doors, get in. Dwight sticks Kathy's Polaroid back in the dash vent, taps it.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Hey, Kathy --do us a solid...?

Fred turns the engine over. Throws it into gear.

FRED  
...stay alive.

EXT. THE FER DE LANCE - DAY

Buick rolls up in front of this San Pedro juke joint. Six souped-up, tricked-out, mother-humping Harleys parked out front in cadence.

Dwight pops two Bennies/a Romilar chaser.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED  
You should take it easy with that stuff.

DWIGHT  
It's my Wheaties.

Dwight slip/slaps the .45's clip. Fred checks his .38's cylinder.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Whoa, where you goin', Padre?

FRED  
We're gonna brace the bikers.

DWIGHT  
*I'm* gonna brace the bikers.  
You're gonna squawk R&I, see if they can fill in the blanks on Kathy.

Dwight punches the glove box. Lid falls. Reveals a police scanner/radio unit.

FRED  
You think I'm a weak sister?

DWIGHT  
These dudes live to fuck with the Badge. We go in there all swinging-dick probable cause, they'll piss all over our leg and turn to stone.

FRED  
If you tumble she's in there--

DWIGHT  
--I fall back, signal you and we bring her out. Together.

FRED  
Five minutes, I'm coming in, regardless.

Dwight smack-pats Fred's cheek like your annoying uncle.

DWIGHT  
Have a little faith, choirboy.

INT. THE FER DE LANCE - NEXT

Dwight pinholes his eyes: Nazi Iron Crosses, *Luftwaffe* insignias, Third Reich snapshots: Hitler's greatest hits.

Our hosts: THE FER DE LANCE MOTORCYCLE CLUB. Five biiig dudes. Bearded/greasy/tatted up. Motorcycle Mamas perched on their laps, ready to get off some leg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dwight shakes rain off his hair, palms it off his eyes.

DWIGHT  
Cats 'n dogs and sure could use a  
beer.

CHAPTER PRESIDENT BILLY BATTIS (49), steps up: Smallest dude in the room --and by far the scariest.

BILLY  
This here's a private social club,  
brother. Reserved for Fer De  
Lance members and their mamas.  
Only those that fly the colors is  
welcome.

Billy pivots; on the back of his denims: A brown serpent under a blood orange sun.

DWIGHT  
Let's say I wanna join. What'd I  
hafta do? Go on welfare and suck  
a tailpipe.

Bikers stand in unison, their mamas hopping off their laps. A pair of bikers by the POOL TABLE thud their leaded cues softly on their palms.

BILLY  
I don't think you know where you  
are, mother-dog.

DWIGHT  
Lay chilly, man. I got no beef  
and I ain't the Badge.  
(flashes Polaroid)  
Her name's Kathy Moffat. I'm  
lookin' for her. Really lookin'.

Grumble-rumbles from the bikers. Billy holds up a hand; gets instant silence.

BILLY  
We might could have somethin' in  
common.

DWIGHT  
You know her.

BILLY  
Not in the biblical sense. What's  
your stake in her?

DWIGHT  
Say I'm a friend of the family.

BILLY  
You do not want to take a tone  
with me, brother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
I ain't your brother, you greasy  
cocksucker. I'm your problem.

Billy eye-signals the pool table bikers. They swing their cues at the back of Dwight's knees. Dwight flails forward; Billy catches his head, jerks his chin up.

BILLY  
Problem solved.

Dwight spits in his face. Billy head-butts Dwight; blood sprays from his nose. Dwight goes for the Colt; Pool Table Biker cues it out of his hand; a MAMA kicks it under a table.

Two Bikers hoist Dwight sag-standing. Billy sidles up.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Now, I dunno if you had a dream  
you were The Man then forgot to  
wake up, or if you're just crazy  
as a shit-house rat. Ain't no  
never-mind to me. I killed crazy-  
men before.

DWIGHT  
*Where is she?*

Pool Table Bikers thwap Dwight's ribs with their cues.

BILLY  
I believe I was speakin'.  
(beat)  
Little Miss Moffat had pussynality  
to spare. I made her for a stone  
junkie quick enough --trouble was,  
she was also a stone cocktease.  
She ran up a free taste tab of my  
dope and still wouldn't get off  
some leg. Before we could teach  
her the way of the snake, she  
lammed with my personal stash.

Billy unbuckles his studded BIKE CHAIN BELT.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
Bein' you're a friend of the  
family, maybe you could enlighten  
me as to that bitch booster's  
whereabouts.

Dwight gags blood out his nose; clears his mouth:

DWIGHT  
You *stink.*

MOTORCYCLE MAMA (O.S.)  
Man, that is one wiggy cat!

Billy sighs like his gerbil just shit the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BILLY  
World of Hurt, brother...

He slides off the chain belt, cocks his arm way back.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
...ticket for one--

Dwight shuts his eyes, gets ready for it. BLAM!  
Everybody jumps/spins/ducks.

FRED, holding the Ithaca, just shot the ceiling. Blasted tile bits drift down around him; he chambers a shell.

FRED  
Let him go. Or all you cats take  
a permanent skid.

Billy nods. Bikers release Dwight; he slumps down the side of the bar, looks up at Fred.

DWIGHT  
...was that really five minutes?

Dwight grins bloody; Fred grins back. His glasses start a sweat-slide down his nose; his hand automatically comes off the pump to push them back up.

BILLY  
Take 'em.

Pool table biker swings his cue. Fred ducks. Cue misses Fred, hits the other pool table biker in the throat; he falls, croaks, gurgles.

Fred slams the Ithaca's butt into the pool cue biker's jaw, drops him. Dwight launches himself up at Billy, batter-rams him against the bar.

A biker throws Yukon Jack in Fred's face, blinds him. He drops the Ithaca. Biker wades in; Fred punches blind.

Billy spins; he/Dwight hit the wall; Nazi helmets tumble off a shelf, rain on their heads. A Motorcycle Mama war-cries, leaps on Fred's back.

He spins, momentum carries the mama airborne, right into the Yukon Jack biker, toppling them in a hairy heap.

Billy squirms free/scampers, grabs up the Colt from the floor. Dwight charges him, slips on blood and beer.

Billy drags himself up the side of the bar with one arm, levels the Colt at Dwight's head with the other.

FRED GRABS BILLY'S ARM ON THE BAR, SLAMS THE PALM FLAT, PULLS A SWITCHBLADE, STABS THROUGH BILLY'S HAND, PINNING HIM TO THE BAR.

Billy's girl-scream takes the fight out of his club. He drops the Colt; Dwight reflex-catches it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Fred covers the room with his .38. Dwight jams the Colt barrel up Billy's nose.

FRED  
Where were we?

DWIGHT  
Kathy Moffat.

FRED  
You heard the man. Give.

BILLY  
She split--

DWIGHT  
Since when?

BILLY  
Check a fuckin' milk carton--

Fred twists the switchblade; bone-metal squeal.

BILLY (CONT'D)  
--gah! Couple, three days--

DWIGHT  
Where?

BILLY  
Shit, man, try the movies, all that came outta that cunt's mouth was movie rebop...she'd glom some shit, take it down to the Vogue, trip solo...

DWIGHT  
Since you're feelin' cooperative--

FRED  
--Legion Gringo.

DWIGHT  
That name mean anything to you?

FRED  
I dunno who that is, just gimme my hand, man, I need my hand to ride.

Dwight nods. Fred jerks the switchblade out. Billy slides to the floor like a bag of Crisco.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Uh, do you sirs mean Legion Gringo like from the comic book?

Dwight/Fred turn, find the owner of the voice: A humongous biker by the commode, missed the whole fight:

HANK MOONJEANS (24), acne scars and tree-trunk arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FRED  
Comic book?

HANK MOONJEANS  
I'm a collector. Legion Gringo  
was the main character in The Die  
Song.

DWIGHT  
And what is that?

HANK MOONJEANS  
Super-rare comic. Technically,  
graphic novel. Outta print.

DWIGHT  
You got one?

HANK MOONJEANS  
No, sir, wish to say. It'd be  
worth a bundle. They say it's  
like a snuff film on paper. Real  
spooky shit.  
(beat)  
I mostly collect Sci-Fi.

DWIGHT  
What the fuck is Sci-Fi?

FRED  
Science Fiction. You know, like  
*Star Trek*.

DWIGHT  
What the fuck is *Star Trek*?

HANK MOONJEANS  
TV show.

FRED  
Classic TV show.

HANK MOONJEANS  
You believe they cancelled it?

FRED  
Colossal blunder.

DWIGHT  
Back to The Die Song.

HANK MOONJEANS  
Man you really wanna talk to is  
Windom. He's gotta place, on  
Cherokee: Six Demon Bag. All  
things passing strange between  
heaven and earth.

Dwight grabs the Ithaca; he/Fred back towards the door.

FRED  
Thanks for the tip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

HANK MOONJEANS  
May you boldly go where no man has  
bone before.

FRED  
See you in the final--

Dwight grabs his necktie and drags him out the door.

INT. SCHWAB'S - AFTERNOON

Ingenues spin dress-hiked lazy on their stools, making  
Lana Turner eyes at no one at all.

Dwight/Fred camped out, a back table, a FREE PRESS open  
before them.

Dwight's head tipped back, napkin tufts plug his bloody  
nose.

FRED  
That's not how you stop a bloody  
nose.

DWIGHT  
No, huh?

FRED  
Nope.

DWIGHT  
Alright, Ben Casey --how do you  
stop a bloody nose?

Fred digs in his pocket and pulls out a QUARTER.

FRED  
Put this between your lower lip  
and lower teeth.

DWIGHT  
Get outta here.

FRED  
My hand to God.

Dwight takes the QUARTER, sticks it between his lower  
lip/lower teeth; it juts like a hood ornament.

DWIGHT  
(garbled)  
Now what?

FRED  
Give it a minute.

Dwight gives it a minute. Then:

DWIGHT  
I feel like a fucken' retard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fred pages past the Free Press MANSON interview, finds the MOVIE LISTINGS.

FRED  
Next show the Vogue starts in an  
hour. With luck, Kathy'll be  
there.

Dwight nods stiffly.

FRED (CONT'D)  
How is it?

Dwight fingers his nostrils.

DWIGHT  
Fucken' voodoo --it stopped.

FRED  
Told ya.

Dwight pulls out the napkin tufts. Then:

DWIGHT  
Can I take the quarter out now?

Fred smothers chuckles, nods. Dwight flips him back the quarter.

Fred pulls out the SWITCHBLADE, wipes off Billy's blood.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Gotta be a tale that goes with the  
toad-sticker.

FRED  
There surely is.

DWIGHT  
Care to share?

FRED  
Soon as you spill on Jane.

Dwight tears open a fresh ROMILAR CF box, slides out the bottle, pockets it.

DWIGHT  
Skip it. You wanna code-seven?

FRED  
I could eat.

DWIGHT  
I know a jammin' barbecue joint.  
Korean, but minimal dog. They  
bounce for cops.

FRED  
I, uh, usually brown bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
Chow goes with the badge, law of  
the lands.

FRED  
It's an unethical custom I choose  
not to perpetuate.  
(beat)  
Besides, my wife makes a "jamming"  
cheese sandwich.

DWIGHT  
Yeah?

FRED  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
*Jammin'*.

They crack up. These two guys, sidearms and  
switchblades, beaten and bloody, laughing their asses  
off. They look a little crazy. They draw stares. They  
don't fucking care.

EXT. SCHWAB'S - DUSK

Dwight/Fred hit the sidewalk, duck in the Buick. Sky  
like lead; rain bullet-pissing the city.

DWIGHT  
We crap out the Vogue, we hit Six  
Demon Bag, get a line on this Die  
Song shit.

FRED  
Least now we know where our killer  
got his handle.

DWIGHT  
Why couldn't the fucker read  
Peanuts?

Static/chatter out of Dwight's radio in the glove-box.

DISPATCH (V.O.)  
...units, Code 3, all units, see  
the man, 182nd and Crenshaw, be  
advised, possible DB...

Dwight's face goes black as the dark side of the moon.

DWIGHT  
182nd and Crenshaw, she said?

FRED  
Yeah, why? You know it?

EXT. THE GLITTER DOME - NEXT

Arc lights, bluesuits, plainclothes, SID, media, rubberneckers; an LAPD ghetto bird flashes the scene with its belly lights.

Dwight white-knuckles the Buick to a stop at a saw-horse barricade, jolts out, Fred trying to keep up. A rookie BLUESUIT tries to hold him back.

ROOKIE BLUESUIT  
Police personnel, on--

Dwight hurls the Bluesuit to the ground. Fred badges the two of them a swath to the Dome.

FRED  
Let us through, please, a little room, folks--

Siren-scream. Dwight/Fred pass the CORONER, dictating to his ASSISTANT:

CORONER  
*...placing the victim's time of death approximately between three and six AM this morning...*

Flash-bulb flares line-drive Dwight's eyes. He gets the front doors. ELMER, setting up a chain of command, WALT KOHNER beside him.

WALT  
(off Dwight)  
--he doin' here, thisz a scene...

FRED  
Ease off, huh?

WALT  
Fuck you, Judas.

DWIGHT  
She's not dead--

He rushes the doors. Elmer catches him f lush in the doorway.

ELMER  
You don't want to see this.

FRED  
Sir, if I may--

ELMER  
You're off Special Assignment. You abandoned your post and your partner. You'll be lucky not to be brought up on departmental charges.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELMER (CONT'D)  
(off Dwight)  
Now, get him out of here.

DWIGHT  
Just tell me she's not dead.

WALT  
Whore's Justice. With the bulls-  
eye courtesy of you.

Dwight breaks free, lunges for Walt. Short, savage scuffle. Bluesuits pry them apart.

ELMER  
Listen to me now, son.

Elmer takes hold of Dwight, eye to eye and gently--

ELMER (CONT'D)  
It's over.

DWIGHT  
Not over, nothing's over, don't  
you say that.

ELMER  
He wanted her found. He's  
laughing at us.

DWIGHT  
He did her 'cause I'm close. Yank  
me now she's dead for nothing.

ELMER  
I can't contain this. The world  
sniffs blood.

DWIGHT  
You put me on this, you fuck, you  
showed me that girl's picture, you  
knew what you were doin'--

ELMER  
We'll take care of her. You go  
home.

DWIGHT  
Don't tell me "go home." I do not  
"go home." I say when it's over,  
I say that.

ELMER  
We can't save them, Dwight. Not  
all of them.

DWIGHT  
Give me my last day.

ELMER  
I'm so sorry.

He lets go, he turns head down, starts to walk off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
"Stand for these dead?"  
(beat)  
You stand for yours.

Elmer stops; he half-turns back. Rain washes away his tears. He manages an old-man's nod.

ELMER  
you got your day.

Dwight charges past him for the Glitter Dome. Elmer snags his arm and pulls him close.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
But, and I am saying this as your friend: You do not need to see what's in there.

Dwight wrenches free and inside, Fred just behind him.

INT. THE GLITTER DOME (BACKSTAGE) - NEXT

A gauntlet of STRIPPERS. Dwight walks their midst, Fred beside him. The strippers lower their eyes as they pass.

The DRESSING ROOM with the old gold star. Fred badges a BLUESUIT. Dwight eases the door open; his fingers raise tiny black clouds of fingerprint dust.

INT. THE GLITTER DOME (DRESSING ROOM) - NEXT

Dwight/Fred step inside. It's dark. There's blood-stink. They see it at the same time:

FRED  
Jesus wept...

VICKY, naked on the cot, splayed out, ripped up the middle, the cot a swamp of blood and HER EYES ARE GONE.

Bloody-hand scrawled on the vanity mirror:

*open season on whores*

Dwight watches a FLY land in one of her empty eye sockets.

He punches the mirror. Bluesuits pile into the room. Try to pull him out. He keeps punching. Strippers scream. Fred calls his name over and over. Dwight punches the world into a billion bloody shards.

INT. ST. VIBIANA'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Dwight comes to sneezing at incense. He's slumped in a pew before a bank of votive candles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The congregation: piss bums, dopers on the nod, blood bank habitues, old Mex ladies worrying rosaries.

Fred, lighting candles one by one.

FRED

The Jesuits used to say: Better to light a candle than curse the darkness. The flame is a prayer, that helps all lost souls get to heaven. For our girls.

DWIGHT

Why'd you bring me here?

FRED

I come here every day. At end-of-watch. It's peaceful; it's a place of love and forgiveness. It's not home and it's not the Job. It's a place I can just Be.

DWIGHT

Do you "pray?"

FRED

Sure.

DWIGHT

What do you pray for?

FRED

Strength.

Fred lights 9 candles. He pauses. Lights a 10th.

FRED (CONT'D)

Tell me about Jane.

DWIGHT

No.

FRED

Alright.

DWIGHT

Summer of '61. Young girls going gone. Killer kept them. Did bad things. When he was, finished, he'd go out, buy them a nice new dress and bury them alive. He wanted them pretty when he put 'em under. Press baptized him "Gravedigger."

(beat)

Elmer caught the case. He was my rabbi in Homicide. He begged the white-shirts for a task force; they kicked loose one man, detached duty. He chose the only other badge fool enough to care and gave me my catechism: "They all matter..."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRED  
 "...or none of them do."

DWIGHT

My clearance rate was sky-high.  
 Sherlock Holmes of the Southland.  
 The Gravedigger case was to  
 exemplify swift justice and  
 consecrate my legend status.  
 Everyone knew I'd get him.

(beat)

Except...I didn't. He was  
 audacious, but very, very careful  
 and luck like the devil himself;  
 we were grasping at straws. And.  
 More bodies. More bodies. More  
 bodies in that Summer of Blood.

(beat)

Jane was #7. Gravedigger sent her  
 bloody sock to the station.  
 Fucking with us; with me. I knew  
 from the other girls she had maybe  
 four days. I never had children.  
 So I made Jane my daughter. I  
 stole the sock from Evidence, took  
 it home, put it under my pillow,  
 thought I could dream where he had  
 her...she struck fire in my heart.

(beat)

Couldn't eat, sleep wouldn't come,  
 booze wouldn't cut it. I hit the  
 needle, hardballin' flake and  
 Mexican brown. First I thought  
 the dope gave me guts, see shit I  
 couldn't see when I was straight,  
 made me some better cop. But it  
 was bullshit --I was runnin', from  
 HER.

(beat)

We caught a break. Ernie Moran.  
 Panty-sniffer, peeping tom, seemed  
 the type might be movin' into the  
 Big Leagues. Found him in  
 MacArthur Park with a bloody sock  
 that matched Jane's...and he was  
 covered in mud, like he'd been  
 digging...

(beat)

Elmer gave me the interrogation.  
 I'd been up three days, was  
 cruising thirty thousand feet on  
 the dope. I worked him non-stop.  
 I grew old in that room. And in  
 the end, goddamn me, I broke him.  
 He confessed. And I fucking wept.

(beat)

Then I asked him the last  
 question, the only question, the  
 Jane question: *Where is she?* And  
 he started to laugh; he laughed at  
 me so I hit him. He kept  
 laughing; I kept hitting. Before  
 they pulled me off, I'd beat him  
 to death, so stoned I didn't feel  
 I'd broke every bone in my hands.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

(beat)  
 It got leaked. Grand jury; civil suit. Elmer called in favors to skate me on a murder charge, but goodbye gun, badge, pension. But I'd avenged his girl. That day, the day I laid down my shield...was the finest day of my...life.

(beat)  
 A week later, The Gravedigger wrote me congratulations on "breaking the case." Moran was just a stupe, found the sock by chance, confession-happy from chugging Sterno. Gravedigger said he told Jane my name when he put her in her tomb: "Dwight Mueller killed you."

(beat)  
 And he was right. She died in the dark. She died waiting. For someone to come bring her up into the light.

(beat)  
 I was too chickenshit to eat a bullet. I went the coward's way, tried to do it with the needle. And my body failed me. By living. I couldn't fucking die. Because of HER. I knew then what would hurt worse than death: I quit the shit cold and started my tour in hell.

FRED

(beat)  
 You said you'd avenged "his girl." What did that mean?

DWIGHT

Jane wasn't a random grab. He took her for a reason.

FRED

What reason?

DWIGHT

Her last name...

FRED

She was--

DWIGHT

...her last name is Frint...

FRED

Oh,

DWIGHT

...Jane Frint...

FRED

Oh, no

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DWIGHT  
...was Elmer's only child.

Dwight's eyes locked in a thousand-yard stare; candle flame-reflect waltzes across his eyes.

FRED  
What is it, Dwight? What do you see?

DWIGHT  
All my dead.

INT. FRED'S HOUSE (DEN) - NEXT

Dwight comes to/de-gums his eyes. TV flicker-glow reveals: Fred, asleep in an easy chair, his 2-year old DAUGHTER held in his arms.

On TV: Sesame Street, Gordon & The Anything Muppets singing: *Consider Yourself At Home*. Fred's DAUGHTER sees Dwight's awake.

She laughs; she gurgles, she waves. Fred stirs. Dwight holds a bloodied hand to his lips and goes "shhhhh..." She gives him this funny smile then drifts off.

Dwight does, too.

INT. FRED'S HOUSE (DEN) - LATER

FRED (O.S.)  
You asked about the knife:

Dwight comes to. Fred's sitting beside him, like on vigil. As he speaks, he cleans/bandages Dwight's busted-up hands.

FRED (CONT'D)  
My father was a drunk. My mother tried to leave him and he put her head through a plate-glass window to "ugly her up," so she could never re-marry. It worked. She drank herself to death before my high school graduation.

(beat)  
I went to study with the Jesuits. Had a teacher there, name of Father Boyle. Not a fella you'd want to cross. Used to make us kneel on bottle-caps whenever we mouthed off. Rage and submission were all my parents ever knew; I wanted to know more: Faith, manifest as strength. Boyle showed me how. He was the finest man I've ever known.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED (CONT'D)

One night, this guy, kid really, my age, broke into the rectory. Junkie-thin and sweating in twenty below. Told Boyle to give him money. Boyle tried to tell this kid where he was, that there was no money, but there was soup, and a bed, and fellowship. That this was God's house and all would be all right.

(beat)

And this kid put a knife through Boyle's throat. He just did that. And he died in my arms. Looking at me but not seeing me. He just ran out red, all over my hands. They took the kid away. I don't know what happened to him.

Fred takes the SWITCHBLADE from his pocket, turns it over slow in his hands, stares down at it.

FRED (CONT'D)

Nobody saw me take it. I kept it in my room. Take it out and look at it and think of holding that man, that good man as he died and what I saw in his eyes was Fear. Knowing then love was not enough. That all men are NOT made in God's image; that there are...mistakes.

(beat)

"And let a two-edged sword lie in mine hand; to execute on them the written sentence. This is the glory of all His faithful."

Dwight jams his eyes shut.

DWIGHT

I killed her. Jane.

FRED

No. But if you close your eyes now, you're surely killing Kathy. We've got one more day and I can't do this without you. *So open your eyes and look at me.*

Dwight forces his eyes open.

FRED (CONT'D)

How many bodies lie in their pauper's graves, unavenged?

(beat)

How many lost souls stalk your nightmares?

(beat)

How many more can you accommodate?

DWIGHT

...no more.

Fred extends the hand holding the SWITCHBLADE out to Dwight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
For Jane.

FRED  
For all of them.

Dwight lays his hand over Fred's.

FRED (CONT'D)  
End-of-watch?

DWIGHT  
End-of-watch, choirboy.

Their fists close around the hilt of the knife.

OVER BLACK; --superimpose--

**WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 31**

INT./EXT. BUICK (TRAVELING) - MORNING

Fred barrels the Buick down a ghost-town quiet Hollywood.  
Hazy sun fighting off the clouds; this weird half-light.

DWIGHT  
What's your daughter's name?

FRED  
Esther.

DWIGHT  
She's beautiful.

FRED  
And smarter than me. Gonna be the  
first female President of the  
United States.

Dwight nods; stares out the window.

FRED (CONT'D)  
I was thinking about Jane. If I  
could?

Dwight throws a glance of some slight consent.

FRED (CONT'D)  
You should pick a place. Forget  
where she *could* be. Her body, I  
mean. Pick a place you think  
she'd like and where she'd rest in  
peace and go there and say  
goodbye. I think she'd like that.

Dwight stares back out the window.

INT. SIX DEMON BAG - NEXT

Dwight/Fred tramp down sidewalk stairs into this basement shop. Mondo bizarro: B-movie memorabilia, occult oddities; Apollo moon rocks, wolfsbane, a taxidermist-stuffed Matthew Buchinger.

WINDOM (40s), the proprietor, smoking a hookah.

WINDOM  
Journeymen, welcome to my outlet  
of the occult, my bazaar of the  
bizarre.

FRED  
Mr. Windom?

WINDOM  
Mr. Windom was my father. I'm  
Windom.

FRED  
(badges him)  
Like to ask you some questions.

WINDOM  
My late wife was clairvoyant.  
Upon her departing our dimension,  
she willed her psychic endowment  
to me. Indulge me?

Fred shrugs. Dwight rolls his eyes. Windom zones out, a hand to his forehead, eyes closed.

WINDOM (CONT'D)  
Now, then: You're hear on dark  
business.

FRED  
You could say that.

WINDOM  
There's been a death. More than  
one.

Fred/Dwight's eyes narrow ever so slight.

FRED  
More than a few.

WINDOM  
You're after a great and terrible  
man.

FRED  
Yes --go on.

WINDOM  
(beat; pained)  
Sadly, the thread breaks there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
Old lady wasn't much of a mind-reader, was she?

WINDOM  
No, but quite a knack in the sack.  
What is it then that brings you to  
my dubious domain?

FRED  
The Die Song.

DWIGHT  
And Legion Gringo --that name mean  
anything to you?

WINDOM  
How much do you know?

FRED  
Say nothing--

DWIGHT  
--and give us the Cliff's Notes.

INT. SIX DEMON BAG (BACK ROOM) - NEXT

Dwight/Fred hunched over a cluttered counter; room flick-buzzes with black light. WINDOM, with a jeweler's care, lays out a very old GRAPHIC NOVEL. Style-wise, it's a crude Gothic forbear of the *Amazing Stories/Thrilling Tales* variety.

The title page reads (in German): THE DIE SONG, VOL. 1, CHRONICLE 7.

WINDOM  
All answers to come from The Die  
Song bein with the question of  
Leopold Braendis...

With tweezers, Windom opens to the first page. As he tells the tale, he turns the pages, the muted, blood-tinted images unfolding concurrent.

WINDOM (CONT'D)  
Legend would have it he was born  
on All Saint's Day, 1911, during a  
Black Mass held in the Harz  
mountains.

DWIGHT  
Black Mass?

FRED  
Witchcraft. Orgies. Satanic  
Verses.

WINDOM  
(nods)  
*Walpurgisnacht.*  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WINDOM (CONT'D)

His father was a Count, his mother a chambermaid of his employ. Young Braendis was one of many bastards, denied his father's patronage, banished to the servant's quarters where he was reviled by the other "low children." He grew fond of trapping rodents; conducting "experiments" on them. His younger sister, Viola, was his assistant --until her disappearance in 1921. Her body was never found, though soon after Braendis seemed to lose interest in rodents...

FRED

Jesus wept.

WINDOM

He may have.

(beat)

Braendis developed an extensive interior fantasy life, complete with an alter ego.

DWIGHT

Legion Gringo.

WINDOM

Whom he imbued with all the qualities he himself lacked: Physical strength, an iron will, derring-do. When he was Braendis, he was a whelp and a bed-wetter. When he was Legion, at night, always at night, he became invincible and would venture the countryside to sate his dark appetites.

FRED

Prostitutes.

WINDOM

They were the only kind who would consort with him, so vile was his bearing. They offered brief physical release, but it was never enough; he grew to hate them, the power they held over him. And his urges began to consume him. Whore's laughter, real and imagined, haunted him. His soul's schism grew; Legion began to consume Leopold.

(beat)

Until one night, he was awoken by a sound: A sweet sound that gladdened his heart and pierced his soul.

FRED

What sound?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WINDOM

Nothing but a drunken strumpet  
stumbling home. But what Legion  
believed he heard was *her soul*.  
That her soul was singing to HIM,  
begging him to free her from her  
pitiful existence. This sound,  
that only he could hear, he called  
The Die Song.

DWIGHT

He killed her.

WINDOM

Butchered her by moonlight. Her  
Die Song ringing in his ears, he  
rushed back to his room to  
chronicle the occasion. And, wet-  
black with her blood, he gave  
birth to the first issue of The  
Die Song. It, and each issue  
thereafter, inked in its victims  
blood.

Windom tweezer-turns pages; tiny dried blood motes twist-  
float up off the pages. We see "Legion Gringo"  
eviscerating dozens of prostitutes in World War II era  
German provincial settings.

WINDOM (CONT'D)

Braendis began to fancy himself  
God's executioner. The Die Song  
his murderous divining rod. The  
graphic novels his bloody gospels.

DWIGHT

You think we could be dealing with  
Braendis *himself*?

WINDOM

Braendis died of the dread  
syphilis in 1949.

DWIGHT

So we gotta groupie.

FRED

A disciple.

DWIGHT

How'd this sick shit get  
circulated, the first place?

WINDOM

The novels were an open secret in  
Europe. They say the Surrealists  
swooned. It was something of a  
coup to own a Braendis original.  
There were those who thought him a  
genius. Hitler was rumored to be  
a fan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

They peer down at a "splash panel": it depicts a YOUNG WOMAN bound to a 4-post bed, her chest split open, her eyes GONE --VICKY'S MURDER represented exactly.

FRED  
Our killer has seen these pages.

Dwight grips down on the counter hard.

DWIGHT  
Probably goin' on fucken'-A

FRED  
Have you had any customers lately unusually interested in The Die Song?

WINDOM  
As interested as you yourselves?  
(shakes head)  
These days, very few are tuned into the Gringo frequency. Only the most enlightened aficionados. This novel isn't a sale item. If someone is reproducing these images...he's working from his own collection.

FRED  
Thank you for your time.

WINDOM  
Might I interest you in my latest acquisition?

Windom proudly produces a CHARLES MANSON LUNCHBOX.

WINDOM (CONT'D)  
These are just in --very popular with the youngsters and sure to be a coming-year collectible.

Dwight/Fred cold-eye Windom:

DWIGHT  
We brown bag.

EXT. THE VOGUE THEATER - NEXT

On the marquee: *Riot on the Sunset Strip*. Dwight/Fred at the ticket booth; the bored USHER skims the latest issue of *F.U.*

FRED  
Two, please.

INT. THE VOGUE THEATER - NEXT

*Riot on the Sunset Strip:* Mimsy Farmer, go-go hot in her go-go mini, gyrates to the grooves of Chocolate Watchband.

Dwight/Fred grab seats in the back, eye-scan the crowd.

FRED  
Nobody who looks like our girl.

DWIGHT  
Little early yet to be kicking the gong.

On the screen: Aldo Ray as LAPD SGT. WALT LORIMER and MICHAEL EVANS as SGT. MATT TWEEDY.

ALDO RAY  
"It's these longhairs, Matt...I just don't like 'em."

MICHAEL EVANS  
"Me either, Walt. But maybe, through communication, we can understand them."

Aldo as "Walt" jukes Fred;

FRED  
What's your static with Kohner?

DWIGHT  
We did a Vice tour back in '52. He'd shake down whores for their cash, then bust 'em anyway, let 'em catch a beatin' from their Daddy-O's. I tried to call him off, he said go fuck myself.

(beat)  
Everybody but Walt knew his old lady was spendin' a lot of time at a jazz joint over on Newton. And a few horizontal mornings with a side man who tromboned at said joint. I tried to warn him off one last time. He went on his merry way. So I snapped some shots of Mrs. Kohner at her trombone lessons and put 'em up in every muster room in the city.

FRED  
Good Lord. Did he retaliate?

DWIGHT  
Who you think leaked the Moran snuff to the Grand Jury?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dwight chugs Romilar. Fred taps his toes to Chocolate Watchband. Dwight shoots him a look. Fred quits his toe-tapping.

INT. THE VOGUE THEATER - AFTERNOON

Five hours/3 screenings of *Riot on the Sunset Strip* later. Dwight/Fred watch longhair shenanigans with eyes dull as cold gravy.

A GIRL walks down the aisle past them; they perk up; she's the right age/right type; she eye-scans the crowd. She spots a FAT GEEK (30s) munching popcorn down front.

THE GIRL plops down next to THE GEEK. They confer. Her head disappears in his lap. As he head drops, Dwight/Fred catch a glimpse: her junkie pallor. her blonde hair. her dope pinned eyes. --AND THEY KNOW HER--

They stand up at the same time.

FRED  
How you want to play it?

DWIGHT  
Soft and not spook her. You run interference, I get her in the car.

They split up, walk to the front of the theater from the two parallel main aisles. They get to her row. They walk towards the center. Dwight signals Fred to hang back. Dwight edges his way to the center of the row.

THE GIRL'S head, bobbing up and down in the GEEK'S LAP.

GEEK  
Yeh, baby, you could suck milk from a crowbar...

Dwight watches this sad fucking spectacle; he thrums like a bull pissing nails. He chokes out:

DWIGHT  
Kathy.

She looks up at him: KATHY MOFFAT (18), wheat-belt beauty on the skids; dope and running for her life taking their toll.

Her eyes hay-wire. She comes up swinging A PAIR OF HANDCUFFS CUFFED TO HER RIGHT WRIST; the cuff slices Dwight's forehead.

Dwight falls, eats armrest; Kathy scrambles over him, tears out of the theater. Fred behind her in a dead run.

EXT. CITY STREET - NEXT

Kathy running, full-out, kicking her shoes off. Fred behind her, gaining. Dwight huffing/puffing in the rear.

She turns down an alley --dead end. She hits the chain link fence at the end, starts to climb; Fred pulls her down.

FRED  
Miss, it's alright--

She kicks him in the balls. Fred dipsy-doodles into a trash pile. Dwight rounds the alley, sees Kathy on the fence, she's almost over, he's got her leg, she falls, he catches her.

KATHY  
Lemme go, cocksucker--

She fights like a rattlesnake in a trash bag. He holds her. She spits/snots/sobs all over him. He holds her.

DWIGHT  
It's alright you're okay you're  
safe now I've got you it's alright  
just there now there...

His big arms bind her. She sobs her fight out spent. Her dangling feet with pink-painted toes gently scrap asphalt.

They spin in this slow-grief waltz.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909) - NEXT

Faded-glory hotel at the ass end of the Sunset Strip. Fred opens the door to the room. Dwight steps past him, Kathy in his arms. He lays her on the bed.

Fred shuts/chains the door. Kathy comes around a bit, sits up, draws her knees under her chin.

FRED  
You don't have to be afraid.

KATHY  
The fuck're you guys?

FRED  
I'm Sergeant Melba, LAPD. This is  
Mr. Mueller.

DWIGHT  
We been looking for you.

KATHY  
Are you Vice? This is a humbug  
roust--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
We know what you saw.

KATHY  
I didn't see shit, man --what I  
saw?

DWIGHT  
Tell us about The Die Song.

She's off the bed like a shot, huddling in the corner,  
snared-rabbit, terrified.

KATHY  
He sent you to find me to kill me  
didn't he didn't he fuck--

DWIGHT  
We need your help.

FRED  
Man that tried to hurt you?

DWIGHT  
We're gonna put him under the  
world.

Her eyes flick back/forth; her eyes take on this freaky  
glow. Her smile comes on WRONG.

KATHY  
--listen--

She wipes her nose on her sleeve;

KATHY (CONT'D)  
I need somethin', maybe you guys  
could get it for me? If you could  
just score for me, just a  
taste...it's been two days and I'm  
hurtin' for certain.

FRED  
You're coming down. You're going  
to stay down.

KATHY  
I don't, I don't got any money,  
but I can make you feel good.  
Real good. Both of you. How you  
like it? You wanna double dip me?

DWIGHT  
How old are you?

KATHY  
I'm, I'm still tight, I promise.

Dwight grabs her wrists, forces eye-to-eye. Her sleeves  
hike up. Fred winces at the TRACK MARKS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATHY (CONT'D)  
--you can do anything you want to  
me, fuck me, just please--

He pulls his Romilar, holds it up to her lips.

DWIGHT  
Drink some a this, it'll level you  
out.

KATHY  
--you know about it?

Dwight's sleeve hikes up; his forearm touches Kathy's. She sees his OLD TRACK MARKS. They understand each other. She sips Romilar.

DWIGHT  
Better, now?

KATHY  
No, like shit.

She sips some more. Her eyes go from dope-jag to codeine-cruise.

DWIGHT  
Give me your hand.

He gently inspects her HANDCUFFED WRIST.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
(to Fred)  
Smith & Wesson. Law enforcement  
issue.

FRED  
Then my key should work.

It does. Fred pops the cuffs off. Dwight briefly inspects them, pockets them.

FRED (CONT'D)  
Is that better, Kathy?

KATHY  
What's your name?

FRED  
Fred Melba.

KATHY  
Sorry about your balls, Fred.

Fred blanches. Dwight smothers a chuckle.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
So you found me, so whoopee, so  
what's now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DWIGHT  
 Man who tried to kill you is till  
 out there. You wanna stay alive,  
 you stay with us.

KATHY  
 You gonna bust him?

DWIGHT  
 He'll never see the inside of a  
 jail cell --you understand?

Kathy nods.

FRED  
 We need your help to find him.

DWIGHT  
 You're a brave, brave girl to be  
 alive; but there's one more thing  
 you need to do.

KATHY  
 I-I don't think, I can't help you--

FRED  
 Just tell how it happened. What  
 you remember.

DWIGHT  
 Be brave just a little bit longer.

She sips Romilar; she closes her eyes.

KATHY  
 I was on the street. No place to  
 go. I met a girl. Named  
 Michelle.

Dwight/Fred share a look: MICHELLE WHITE, VICTIM #9.

FRED  
 She was a prostitute?

KATHY  
 She was my friend. She told me I  
 could make good money if I wanted  
 to bad enough...

(beat)  
 She was all alone, too. She said  
 it was a dangerous thing, being  
 alone, and the two of us could  
 look out for each other; like  
 sisters...

(beat)  
 She started me turning tricks.  
 We'd flag down the johns, they'd  
 drive us to hot-pillow joins --you  
 know, fuck-pads. The john would  
 rent the room, then whoever he  
 wanted would go in an' do him and  
 the other one would wait 'till  
 they were done. We were living.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

KATHY (CONT'D)  
It was working. We were okay.  
(beat)  
But not that night...

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Kathy & MICHELLE WHITE (20s), strung-out redhead, on a corner, shivering/sharing drags of a smoke.

KATHY (V.O.)  
It was Christmas Eve and cold.  
Michelle said lots of square johns  
got lonely on the Eve. It was  
like the dark side of the moon and  
we were gonna call it quits...

DWIGHT (V.O.)  
But something stopped you.

A CAR DRIFTS TO A STOP ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE GIRLS' CORNER. IDLES.

KATHY (V.O.)  
A man. In a car.

FRED (V.O.)  
What kind of car?

KATHY  
I dunno cars. Gray. A real dull  
sled.

A BIG WHIP ANTENNA RIG ON THE BACK OF THE CAR.

DWIGHT (V.O.)  
Did it have a whip antenna on the  
back?

KATHY (V.O.)  
How'd you know that?

DWIGHT (V.O.)  
Never mind. Go on.

THE CAR JUST WAITS, CHUGGING PLUMES OF DRAGON-BREATH EXHAUST.

KATHY (V.O.)  
Man in the car asked us our names;  
we told him; he said they were  
pretty names for pretty girls.

THE DRIVER'S FACE IS CLOAKED IN SHADOWS. The girls start to cross the street; a gloved HAND comes out the window, halts them.

KATHY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
He didn't want us to get in the  
car. He told us to meet him at  
the Come On Inn. Couple blocks'  
walk. He'd be waiting in room 7.  
Like he had it already set up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT (V.O.)  
How'd he know you'd show?

DRIVER'S HAND COMES OUT THE WINDOW WITH TWO ONE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS; HE SLOWLY TEARS THEM IN HALF, LETS THE TWO TORN HALVES FLUTTER TO THE STREET.

KATHY (V.O.)  
He said if we wanted the other half, we'd show.

FRED (V.O.)  
...and?

KATHY (V.O.)  
We showed.

INT. COME ON INN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Cabin-style motel hell-hole. Murphy bed pushed into the wall. A pair of Halogen work lights on tripods throw blinding light at the front door. Like a stage set waiting for performers.

Kathy/Michelle stand there, blinded by the lights, unable to see THE MAN at the far end of the room.

We see DWIGHT/FRED, to the side of the action, PHYSICALLY PRESENT in the flashback.

DWIGHT  
Which one a you did he want?

KATHY  
Both of us, same time. He said he got extra lonely at Christmastime.  
(beat)  
It was no big deal...we'd done each other before.

FRED  
So: You're in this room:

KATHY  
--and the bed's up and there's these lights and it's all wrong.

DWIGHT  
But you needed the money--

KATHY  
--but we needed the money and we were used to plenty worse than this, so we stayed.

A PAIR OF SMITH & WESSON HANDCUFFS slide-clatter across the floor, stop up against Kathy's foot.

MAN (O.S.)  
Get in them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HIS VOICE LIKE BONE DUST ON DEAD LEAVES.

KATHY  
I don't wanna.

MAN (O.S.)  
I don't pay...if you don't play.

KATHY  
(aside/to Dwight)  
And it sounded like he was  
smiling.

MICHELLE  
(to Kathy)  
's okay...Daddy just knows we been  
extra naughty this year.

Kathy snaps one cuff around her wrist; ratchets go click-click-click.

MAN (O.S.)  
That's a girl.

MICHELLE  
How 'bout me, Santa Baby?

MAN (O.S.)  
Remove your clothes.

Michelle shucks a boot.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Do it slow.

She slow-shrugs off her other boot; she unzips her mini-skirt. She pulls off her halter. She's naked now under the hot lights.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Dance for me.

MICHELLE  
I need some tunes to shimmy.

MAN (O.S.)  
There's music all around, if you  
listen close enough.

MICHELLE  
Your dough, your show.

She dances. Room silent but for her dirty bare feet scuffing mangy carpet and THE MAN'S steady breathing and KATHY's cuffs, jingling the radiator.

FLASH. FLASH. FLASH. White/orbs supernova flare: A POLAROID CAMERA, flashbulbs strobing the room.

We HEAR the prints slide out, slip to the floor; Michelle blinks, catches ghost-strobes of THE MAN, his face blocked by the CAMERA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN (O.S.)  
 You've done very well. I'm pleased.

FLASHES STOP. Michelle finishes her dance with a sad little flourish.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Come to me.

Michelle walks to the far end of the room, squints at Halogen glare, stops just short of the darkness.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Michelle.

MICHELLE  
 Yeah?

MAN (O.S.)  
 Do you hear it?

MICHELLE  
 Hear what?

MAN (O.S.)  
 That soft, sweet sound, clinging to the air?

MICHELLE  
 I don't hear nothin' man.

MAN (O.S.)  
 It's so, so soft...you'll have to listen so, so close to hear it.  
 And when you do hear it...that means you're ready.

MICHELLE  
 Look, do you wanna screw or talk about music?

MAN (O.S.)  
 It's your Die Song.

THE MAN'S ARM LASHES OUT OF THE DARK, SEIZES MICHELLE'S HAND, PULLS HER OFF HER FEET, INTO THE BLACKNESS.

Kathy wrenches her chains; from the dark: a wet, ripping sound, a choked-off scream. Kathy shock-stilled. She peers past the lights into the perfect darkness.

A RIVER OF BLOOD flows from the darkness, across the carpet, towards Kathy; she sees her own face reflected back in the creeping red tide.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 I hear yours, too, Kathy. Your Die Song. I've heard so many. So, so many. But your is among the sweetest. A lullaby fit for angels. Do you hear it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She throws her weight; metal squeal; pipe SNAPS. She falls back, surprised at her sudden freedom. She stumbles up, falls at the door, heavy crazy footsteps behind her; she spills out into cold night.

She zigzag flees from the Come On Inn, throws a wobbly glance back, sees: THE MAN, silhouetted in the doorway, light pouring out around him, watching her departure.

He raises a hand in farewell. A promise to meet again.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909) - DUSK

The sun has fallen through the telling of the tale.

FRED  
Jesus wept.

KATHY  
I left her there. I left my friend to die and she did...

DWIGHT  
She was gone. You did right.

FRED  
Why didn't you tell the police?

KATHY  
I didn't want my parents to know what I am now. A junkie and a whore. They can't know--

DWIGHT  
They won't.

She lies back on the bed. She looks very young and very tired.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Try 'n sleep.

She nods; he clicks off the bedside lamp.

KATHY  
Oh, there was something I forgot.

FRED  
Go on.

KATHY  
His name.

FRED  
You heard his name.

KATHY  
Uh-huh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
What was it?

KATHY  
...hmmm

DWIGHT  
What was his name?

KATHY  
He said his name was "Dwight."

She drift-yawns off to sleep, "Dwight" still on her lips.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909/BATHROOM) - NEXT

Fred pulls Dwight into the bathroom; they're nerve-shredded/sweating, hemmed in each other's faces.

DWIGHT  
Say it was me --would I use my righteous name?

FRED  
If you expected both girls to be dead.

Off Dwight's look:

FRED (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, I just--

DWIGHT  
--you were just bein' a cop.

FRED  
Then where's she get "Dwight?"

DWIGHT  
Logic it out: Somebody's tryin' to serve me up. How else would they get to Vicky? An' don't say I did her, too, 'cause you and Kohner watchdogged me all that night.

FRED  
How'd you tumble Gringo's car had a whip antenna?

Dwight fishes KATHY'S HANDCUFFS from his pocket.

DWIGHT  
Smith & Wesson cuffs.

FRED  
A savvy civilian could score those.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dwight holds the cuffs up under the light; there is a tiny SMEAR OF NAIL POLISH by the keyhole.

DWIGHT

*That's a cop who doesn't wanna lose his cuffs in a post-bust clusterfuck.*

FRED

*A cop.*

DWIGHT

*A cop could B&E the motel rooms prior to the murders to avoid ID by the desk clerk, grid wipe the scenes of trace evidence, could stalk whore-town with autonomy.*

FRED

*A cop who used his duty car and cuffs.*

DWIGHT

*Elmer said LAPD was bribing eyeball wits to keep Gringo outta the papers. A cop who handled the field interrogations, had access to the kill-sites, could obfuscate evidence and divert the thrust of the investigation onto somebody else.*

*(beat)  
Onto me.*

FRED

*A cop who knows your name.*

DWIGHT

*And hates me like cancer.*

Fred grabs the wall to keep from falling off the world.

FRED

*Kohner.*

DWIGHT

*He wastes the first one, maybe it's an accident, he does another and another; he's hot for it, he racks up nine --one gets away. Now he needs a fall guy.*

FRED

*Somebody who fits the profile.*

DWIGHT

*Somebody "erratic, unsound, and feared on the streets."*

FRED

*Frint taps you to go after Gringo, Kohner uses you to get to Kathy--*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
Only he didn't count on you  
crossing the street.

FRED  
He eliminates you and Kathy, the  
whore killings end concurrent, he  
scores the bounty and disappears.  
(beat)  
You like it?

DWIGHT  
Much as I wanna, one thing don't  
jive.

FRED  
Which is?

DWIGHT  
Coroner put Vicky's time of death  
early AM Tuesday. But you and  
Kohner sat on me all night, right?  
(beat)  
Right?

FRED  
I did. Kohner was drunk, said he  
wasn't gonna camp out all night on  
your account so he left me for  
home to sleep it off around one  
AM.  
(beat)  
He came back at five.

Dwight grabs the wall to keep from falling off the world.

DWIGHT  
Walt Kohner.

FRED  
*Jesus Fucking Christ.*

DWIGHT  
Amen.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909/BALCONY) - NEXT

Dwight/Fred leaning together on the balcony rail. Below them, traffic jamming up and down the Strip for New Year's revels. They stand there under the slanting sun.

DWIGHT  
If he knows we're close, he'll  
run.

FRED  
We can't take him out less  
anything one hundred percent  
certainty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT  
He on duty tonight?

FRED  
Ringing in the new year at Ports  
O' Call.

DWIGHT  
We have enough to brace him, if we  
bring in Elmer. Get Kohner off  
the street, someplace neutral,  
sweat him.

FRED  
"so, so many"

DWIGHT  
What's that?

FRED  
Kathy said Legion told her he'd  
heard "so, so many" Die Songs.  
You think he was on the level or  
just whistling Dixie?

DWIGHT  
You're gonna find out --hit the  
station, Kohner's arrest reports,  
similarities between Homicide  
cases he's worked and the Gringo  
snuffs.

FRED  
What're you gonna do?

DWIGHT  
B&E Kohner's pad for something  
solid that ties him to the whore  
murders. You and Elmer meet me at  
The Off Hollywood, eleven o' clock  
this PM.

FRED  
(off Kathy)  
And her?

DWIGHT  
Little luck, tomorrow morning  
she'll be on the first thing bus  
back to Iowa or Idaho.

FRED  
I'll call for a black & white.  
You roll your own wheels and stay  
in touch.

Dwight nods. Fred lingers a moment.

DWIGHT  
(off Fred's look)  
Hey --you wanted this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRED  
I still do. Just not the way I  
thought it'd be.

DWIGHT  
Good or bad, choirboy, nothin'  
ever is.

Fred pushes his glasses back up his nose.

FRED  
1970s: What's your feeling?

DWIGHT  
Grave New Fucken' World.

They stand there. Their neckties flap in the breeze.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909) - NEXT

Dwight settles in beside the bed. Kathy whimpers in her sleep; the blanket falls off her foot; she shivers. Dwight pulls the blanket back up.

A radio plays two rooms over. Some one hit wonder mourns The One That Got Away.

INT. STATION HOUSE (CENTRAL DIVISION) - NEXT

Fred, in the RECORDS ROOM. Place is new-year's-eve-empty. He's laying out WALT KOHNER'S arrest reports into two piles, repeating two words like a mantra, depending on which pile he lays the file.

FRED  
Probable, possible, probable,  
probable, possible...

The two piles stack up. "Probable" stacks up faster.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909) - NEXT

Dwight snaps awake; eyes to the bed --SHE'S GONE-- his head spins around --NO-- she's in a club chair, watching HIM sleep.

KATHY  
Bad dream?

DWIGHT  
No worse than when I'm awake.

KATHY  
You know why I came here? This place? For as long as I can remember, people told me I oughta be in pictures; that they thought they'd see my name up in lights;  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATHY (CONT'D)  
 that they all hoped I'd remember  
 them when.  
 (beat)  
 Why do people say those things?

DWIGHT  
 It's just another way they can say  
 they think you're beautiful.

KATHY  
 But it doesn't happen...nobody  
 gets their name up in lights, not  
 really --do they?

DWIGHT  
 Some do. Rest of us get stuck  
 holdin' the popcorn.

KATHY  
 And the fucked thing is, I still  
 don't wanna go back there.  
 People're all like my folks.  
 Bingo on Tuesday and "see you in  
 church."

DWIGHT  
 Boyfriends?

KATHY  
 We're supposed to marry the boy  
 our father thinks has the best  
 handshake.  
 (beat)  
 Dead people; dead place.

DWIGHT  
 So's this.

KATHY  
 He killed someone close to you.

DWIGHT  
 My wife. My ex-wife.

KATHY  
 You don't like saying "ex."  
 (beat)  
 Is that because you still loved  
 her?

DWIGHT  
 Even if I didn't, that one  
 chickenshit little half-world  
 flushes everything two people ever  
 shared down the fucken' toilet.

KATHY  
 What was her name?

DWIGHT  
 Victoria.

KATHY  
 Was she pretty?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
She was a stone heartbreaker.

Dwight looks away, fights off a vertigo of grief.

KATHY  
I'm sorry how I talked to you and  
your friend before. That wasn't  
really me.

DWIGHT  
Ain't nothin'.

KATHY  
By the way, your friend? He's a  
total square.

DWIGHT  
He is, isn't he?

KATHY  
I bet he shits rulers.

Dwight cracks up; Kathy cracks up; she has this big honking laugh, like it's too big for her smile.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
Hey: You wanna see somethin'  
funny?

DWIGHT  
Yeah, I do.

Kathy digs in her purse; pulls out a FADED PINK RIBBON, little gold letters almost rubbed off read: "MISS TEEN KEOKUK, IOWA, 1967."

KATHY  
Didn't know you had Miss Teen  
Keokuk, Iowa 1967 in your custody,  
did ya?

DWIGHT  
I sure didn't.

KATHY  
Laugh it up, smart-ass, but it was  
a big deal. I was in a parade, I  
had my own float and everything.

DWIGHT  
I'll bet you did.

KATHY  
I milked a cow and they took a  
picture.

DWIGHT  
No shit?

KATHY  
None!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

They're laughing so hard they're crying; it tapers off.  
Dwight turns her back the RIBBON, suddenly solemn.

KATHY (CONT'D)  
You have to go, now.

DWIGHT  
That's right.

KATHY  
To end it.

DWIGHT  
Yes.

KATHY  
Take me with you?

DWIGHT  
Better you stay here. Hang on the  
balcony and dig on the party;  
should be a helluva show.

He stands to leave. She stands with him

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
Promise me you'll be here when I  
get back.

KATHY  
You promise me you'll get back.

DWIGHT  
It's a promise.

KATHY  
Cross your heart?

DWIGHT  
Cross my heart.

KATHY  
And hope--

DWIGHT  
--to die.

He brushes a strand of hair off her forehead; turns away.

KATHY  
Hey? Happy New Year?

DWIGHT  
Jury's out.

He walks out fast. He doesn't look back.

EXT. WALT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dwight in the Buick; parked on a residential street in Silverlake. Christmas lights on houses up and down the block --but NOT on the house he's watch-dogging: WALT KOHNER'S shabby rancher.

From some other house: Frankie Avalon croons "*Silent Night.*"

A neighbor's glowing PLASTIC LAWN NATIVITY lights Dwight's face; he pops two Bennies/a Romilar chaser.

Dwight gets out, diddy-bops up to Walt's front door, the Colt pressed to his leg. He leans on the doorbell for twenty seconds. No lights; no movement; nobody home.

He walks around the side of the house through the empty carport, into the backyard--

EXT. WALT'S HOUSE (BACKYARD) - CONTINUOUS

--and sees a screened-in back porch, screen door unlatched. He opens it, dodges yard junk, braces the back house door, gouges the jam with Gringo's HANDCUFFS ratchet; he snaps wood and throws his weight. Door pops open.

INT. WALT'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - NEXT

Dwight prowls by moonlight/touch only: Bowling trophies. Plates and crusts of stuff everywhere. A picture of a YOUNGER WALT arm-wrestling Ernest Borgnine.

Under the soiled mattress: A .12 gauge Remington PUMP SHOTGUN. Dwight ejects the shells, pockets them, SLIDES THE PUMP BACK UNDER THE MATTRESS.

INT. WALT'S HOUSE (BASEMENT) - NEXT

Dwight tugs the bare bulb light pull-chain. Boxes of glommed swag: cartons of Pall Malls, cases of Cutty Sark; a work bench, tools pell-mell strewn over it.

A greasy coat of dust over everything --EXCEPT-- that box in the corner. Dust-free. Dwight kneels, uses the cuffs ratchet to gouge loose a flap of cardboard.

Inside: THE DIE SONG, VOL. 1, CHRONICLE 1, lovingly wrapped in plastic. Dwight digs through the box; it's FULL OF DIE SONG CHRONICLES, all apparent originals. His fingers tear through the plastic sheaths --the blood-ink smears all over his shaking hands.

KA-CHOCK. Pump slide of a shotgun being racked upside Dwight's ear in stereo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALT (O.S.)  
 Ya signed your own death warrant,  
 junkie.

Dwight pivots his peripherals: Walt Kohner covering him with the REMINGTON .12 GAUGE.

WALT (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Get up, slow, that's right. Get those palms on the wall and lean -- lean, motherfucker, like to push it down. Those palms come off the wall, I'll turn your head into a fuckin' canoe.

DWIGHT  
 I can make you for the nine dead whores--

Walt kicks Dwight's legs apart; Dwight eats wall.

WALT  
 I say ya could talk?

He finds the Colt, tosses it away.

WALT (CONT'D)  
 Turn around, face me --do it slow motion.

Dwight turns around slow.

WALT (CONT'D)  
 Now: What shit you talkin'?

DWIGHT  
 Me an' the choirboy got you cold.  
 We got the eyeball wit stashed.  
 You are gonna ride the lightning,  
 fat man.

WALT  
 Are you high? I ain't kill no whores. You're the killer, partner.

DWIGHT  
 I never killed nobody didn't deserve it. Including you.

WALT  
 What about Jane?

Dwight rushes Walt. Walt pulls the Remington's trigger. CLICK. Walt swings the shotgun like a club, glances a blow of Dwight's jaw, takes out the ceiling light, room goes to moonlight.

Walt drives Dwight against the work-bench, bears down on his neck with the Remington, trying to crush his hyoid bone; Dwight's face goes blue to black.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dwight bites down on Walt's hand, shakes his head like a rat-killing dog; he bites down to bone; blood sprays his face; veins flap; Dwight almost tears Walt's thumb out; Walt screams, the shotgun slips from his ripped hand.

Dwight's flailing hand finds a can of PAINT on the work-bench; he round-houses it.

Can smacks --POCK-- into Walt's skull, so hard the lid pops off; blue paint splatters clear across the cellar.

INT. THE OFF HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

All-nite Downtown coffee dive. A SHORT-ORDER COOK (50s) manning the grill. A MARY KAY COSMETICS SALESWOMAN (30s), in her pink dress, at her lonely table, eating a Sundae.

Fred, at a window booth, Walt Kohner's arrest reports stacked before him, his coffee long cold.

ELMER FRINT steps inside, sits across from Fred. Short-order Cook makes a "Want anything?" gesture; Elmer shoos him away.

FRED  
(sotto voce)  
Thank you for meeting me, sir.

ELMER  
Is all this cloak and dagger  
really necessary, Sergeant?

FRED  
What I have to say seemed better  
said outside the station. It  
involves a brother officer.

ELMER  
In what capacity?

FRED  
As a suspect in the nine whore  
murders, sir.

ELMER  
That's a grave allegation.

FRED  
My partner and I feel it's one  
well-founded.

ELMER  
Sergeant Kohner?

FRED  
No, sir. Dwight Mueller.  
Sergeant Kohner is the suspect.

INT. WALT'S HOUSE (BASEMENT) - THAT MOMENT

Walt comes to. Dwight covers him with the Colt. Walt wipes paint/blood off his face.

WALT  
Ya killed my head, ya scrote.

Dwight rolls a bottle of Cutty over to Walt.

DWIGHT  
Have a little oil, Tin man.  
(as Walt guzzles)  
I got the bold strokes, but you're  
gonna gimme the grace notes.  
Start with --you killed the nine  
whores.

WALT  
Jesus Christ, no--

DWIGHT  
Jesus ain't listenin'. How'd you  
do the first one? Pick her up,  
nice piece of potash, you get her  
all alone, you couldn't get it up  
or she laughs at your tiny pecker?

WALT  
You gone psycho, man--

Dwight slaps him. Spit/sweat/paint drops fly.

DWIGHT  
She laughs at you and you just  
snap. BAM. It just HAPPENS.  
Next thing, that laughin' cunt is  
on the floor bleedin' out and it  
feels GOOD, right?

WALT  
No, no no

DWIGHT  
Felt so good you gotta do it  
again. And again. And you can't  
stop doin' it. You want MORE.  
You want two at a time. But you  
shoulda locked up Kathy right and  
tight, 'cause she got away and you  
been burned, baby...

WALT  
I don't know no Kathy.

DWIGHT  
She knows you, stud. She knows  
your car --a gray unmarked with a  
whip rig.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WALT  
My ride's baby blue--

DWIGHT  
--which would look gray at night.

WALT  
Please, just, please--

Dwight slaps the Cutty bottle from Walt's hands; it shatters; Walt cowers.

DWIGHT  
Don't say "please" to me. I bet all those girls said "please." I'll bet they said "please" when you took 'em to pieces. Did they?

INT. THE OFF HOLLYWOOD - THAT MOMENT

Fred and Elmer, continued:

ELMER  
You and Dwight Mueller?

FRED  
He'll be here shortly, possibly with corroborative evidence.

ELMER  
If you're wrong on this, you could be brought up on charges...at the very least face dismissal from the Department.

FRED  
I've considered that, sir.

ELMER  
Dwight Mueller is not a policeman. When he *was* one, had a record of excessive force complaints and narcotics abuse.

FRED  
I'm aware of his history.

ELMER  
And you stand with him on this?

FRED  
I go with my partner.

Elmer searches Fred's eyes for bullshit; finding none:

ELMER  
Tell me what you've got.

INT. WALT'S HOUSE (BASEMENT) - THAT MOMENT

Dwight kicks The Die Song box; cardboard splits; copies of The Die Song spill out all over the cellar floor.

DWIGHT

And the best part? I can match the murder scenes to the drawings in your sick fucking stash down to the spray patterns. It was The Die Song, right? You heard their Die Songs...

WALT

--the, what?

DWIGHT

You heard it once and you got hooked. All those bitches you did were singing to you, 'cause they wanted outta this life and you were only too happy to lend a hand. Right?

Dwight throws Walt across the cellar.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

*Did my wife sing?*

Walt pisses his pants.

WALT

Those--

DWIGHT

Did she?

WALT

Those ain't mine--

DWIGHT

Answer me, you fuck, and I'll kill you quick.

WALT

*Those books aren't mine.*

DWIGHT

Then whose are they?

WALT

*They...they're yours.*

INT. THE OFF HOLLYWOOD - THAT MOMENT

Fred and Elmer, continued:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELMER

Your theories are compelling but entirely circumstantial.

FRED

We're aware of that, sir. We want you to authorize a sub rosa interrogation of Kohner, on neutral turf, maybe County Sheriff's. I want to administer a polygraph. I want to administer sodium pentothal. I want to confront him with our witness and I believe he'll crack wide open.

INT. WALT'S HOUSE (BASEMENT) - THAT MOMENT

Walt, huddled in a corner, Dwight standing over him.

WALT

He said those books were yours. To plant 'em at your pad. That they tied you to the Gringo murders.

DWIGHT

Who is "he?"

WALT

He said you killed the nine whores, that I could get some payback for those pictures you took a my wife...those pictures shot me in the heart...he said I could keep the bounty...

DWIGHT

Who is "he?"

WALT

He said don't ask any questions. He said I could be a hero.

Dwight cocks the Colt, lays it to Walt's temple.

DWIGHT

Next word outta your mouth's a name, or it's the last word outta your mouth evermore.

Walt drools Scotch. He opens his mouth with the name:

INT. THE OFF HOLLYWOOD - THAT MOMENT

Fred and Elmer, continued:

ELMER

Your witness.

(beat)

You found the girl?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRED  
Yes, sir. Alive and well.

ELMER  
Where is she?

FRED  
We've got her stashed.

ELMER  
She can ID the killer?

FRED  
By vehicle. He used his official police vehicle.

ELMER  
There's always one little thing, isn't there, Sergeant?

FRED  
Yes, and thank God for it, sir.

Fred sits back, pushes his glasses up his nose.

ELMER  
And where is young Kathy stashed?

FRED  
The Esperanza, room nine--  
(beat; blinks)  
What--

Elmer shoots him. Bullet blows Fred out of the booth;  
blows his ribs out his back. Pistol concussion shatters the Off Hollywood's windows.

Elmer looks thoughtful as he: slides out of the booth and turns, VERY SLOWLY: The Short Order cook is standing by the grill, a hash-slinger still in one hand. The Cook slowly starts to raise his hands in surrender.

Elmer shoots him. Cook's whites pop/flare over his heart. He bounces off the griddle and hits the floor.

Elmer turns, VERY SLOWLY: the Mary Kay Saleswoman is frozen at her table --a spoon of ice cream hovering at her lips.

MARY KAY SALESWOMAN  
Today's my birthday--

Elmer shoots her. She jackknifes to the floor. Her foot jitters, then it doesn't. Scorched blood and brain matter and gun-smoke all over. Reverb dies to silence.

Fred, from his dying place on the floor, watches Elmer VERY SLOWLY walk over and kneel beside him. Elmer's care-worn face is all kindly concern:

ELMER  
I'll cry at your funeral.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Fred manages to raise his head. His glasses slip down his nose. He coughs up blood and *grins*:

FRED  
end-of -watch--

Elmer shoots him. Close-range pistol roar blanks out Fred's last words.

EXT. WALT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dwight jolts into the Buick, turns the engine over. Walt comes out the front door, drunk-weaving, the Remington in his good hand.

Dwight tenses, but Walt's face is Scotch-slack-whipped. Walt sway-leans on the driver's side door.

WALT  
What're ya gonna do?

DWIGHT  
What you couldn't. Take the mother down.

WALT  
I...I fucked myself on this one.  
Give me back some small thing:  
Take me with you?

DWIGHT  
This is mine; and Fred's.

WALT  
Maybe I could help...

He wipes away booze tears, sucks in his gut, stands to his full height:

WALT (CONT'D)  
...I'm a cop.

DWIGHT  
Not anymore.

WALT  
Then what am I?

DWIGHT  
You're a juicehead. A flunky badge. A stooge to a psycho.

Dwight takes out one of the SHOTGUN SHELLS, flips it to Walt, who reflex-catches it.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
And that's on you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Walt steps back; Dwight stands to the gas. Buick peels out into the night. Walt pads over to his neighbor's lawn, to the GLOWING NATIVITY SET.

He plops down in the manger. He loads the SHELL into the Remington. He takes off his shoes. He rubs his toes in frost-tipped grass.

Walt looks down at the glowing BABY JESUS.

WALT

(grins)  
Ya got off easy.

He crams the shotgun barrel into his mouth. His toe finds the trigger.

Muzzle roar. A jerk and a flop. Blood sprays the wise men.

EXT. THE OFF HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

The Off Hollywood is dark. The "closed" sign dangles in the doorway. The Buick's headlights strafe the windows.

INT. THE OFF HOLLYWOOD - NEXT

Dwight tries the door; locked. He smashes the glass with the Colt, he stumble-trips inside; finger-fumbles the lights on.

His eyes roam the massacre. Fred, dead at Dwight's feet, his eyes open, his chest a bloody ruin, his heart shot out, point-blank.

Dwight holds him. Their foreheads touch. A moment.

Heard in the distance: muffled explosions, tapering off to contrails of whistle-screams.

Dwight looks out the window: a daisy chain of FIREWORKS scatter-gunning across the Hollywood nightscape.

He eases Fred back down; he closes Fred's eyes.

DWIGHT

end-of-watch.

He gently pushes Fred's glasses back up his nose and sets them right.

INT. ELMER'S CAR (TRAVELING) - NEXT

Elmer, in his gray unmarked Matador F-car, cruising parallel to Sunset Boulevard, down Melrose, using his signals, driving the speed limit.

As he drives, he hums some tune only he can hear.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909/BALCONY) - NEXT

Kathy walks onto the balcony, leans over the railing; we see the Sunset Strip from her vantage:

Revellers scream; standstill traffic; a blizzard of streamers/confetti.

Fireworks burst red/blue/green. They light up Kathy's eyes; comets in her eyes.

INT. BUICK (TRAVELING) - NEXT

Dwight, gunning it hard, whips in/out of traffic, blows signals, leans on the horn.

INT./EXT. ELMER'S CAR (TRAVELING) - NEXT

Elmer pulls up to Melrose & Crescent Heights. An. L.A. County Sheriff's barricade blocks forward passage. Detour leads AWAY from Sunset.

Elmer pulls his car to the curb, abandons it, pounds pavement. He melts into the stream of REVELLERS heading up to Sunset via Crescent Heights.

INT. BUICK (TRAVELING) - NEXT

Dwight drives one-handed; he pops Bennies, he chugs Romilar. He sees A DEAD GIRL in the middle of the road.

DWIGHT  
--jesus fuck--

He jerks the wheel/jumps the curb, Buick slams a light pole, sparks rain down, hiss-rattle-silence.

EXT. CRESCENT HEIGHTS - NEXT

Elmer, in the middle of the massive pulsing crowd partying its way toward Sunset.

Between the bobbing hippie heads, he can just make out the spires of the ESPERANZA HOTEL spiking the horizon.

EXT. SWEETZER AVE. - NEXT

Dwight spills out of the Buick, impact-fucked. Revellers with noise-makers and party hats flood by him, oblivious.

Dwight sees the County Sheriff's blockade up ahead at Crescent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He jams the Colt in his waistband; he starts up Sweetzer, limping on a dead run up to Sunset.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL - NEXT

Elmer hits Sunset/the end of the Strip. The Citibank clock reads 11:39 PM.

Across the street/beyond the crowd: The Esperanza. Elmer shoves his way towards it.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. - NEXT

Dwight stumbles off Sweetzer onto Sunset. Crowd-roar decibel off the charts. Strippers writhe naked on top of parked cars; Arthur Blessit lugs his cross; bikers roar their Harleys down the sidewalk, scatter 'nam vet winos in party hats; Pachuco gangsters flip over a Sheriff's prowler car, chanting "Gestapo! Gestapo!"

The Turtles are playing at Pandora's Box: *Grim Reaper of Love* sends Dwight on his way.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (LOBBY) - NEXT

Elmer crosses the tinsel-draped lobby; heads for the elevator, steps inside, pushes the 9th floor button. Ding and the doors slide shut.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. - NEXT

A dog pisses on a pile of burning rubber Nixon masks; bottles of Dom Perignon rain from roof of the Playboy Club --foam and glass torpedo the strip; Dwight gags confetti out his nose, charges forward.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Ding and elevator doors slide open. Elmer steps out into the hall. He draws his gun, knocks on the door of Room 900.

A HIPPIE DUDE opens the door; Elmer peers past him -- hippie central, grass, guitars, jugs of wine.

HIPPIE DUDE  
You lookin' for a party, man?

ELMER  
I'm sorry. I have the wrong room.

Hippie Dude shrugs, shuts the door. Elmer moves on to Room 901. He knocks.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. - NEXT

A platoon of Black Panthers charge an L.A. County Sheriff's riot squad; Sheriff's pop tear gas; smoke phantasms across the Strip...smoke turns the revellers into wraiths; Sunset itself transmuted into this noxious alien dreamscape.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Elmer, outside Room 904. He knocks. No answer. He tries the door --unlocked. He opens it, steps inside:

SOME DEAD GUY in a NEAL ARMSTRONG T-SHIRT that reads: "*One Small Step For Man...*" is hanging from a NOOSE; his body twists around slow on the rope, revealing the words on the back of his t-shirt:

"...*One Giant Leap For Mankind.*"

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. - NEXT

Dwight stumbles through the smoke into a street corner re-enactment of the TATE SLAYINGS: Faux Manson groupie chicks chant "*Charlie, Charlie*" --as they spray ketchup over a pregnant Sharon Tate look-a-like lying before them.

A fake KNIFE with a spring blade is raised and plunged into "Sharon." She mock dies; faux groupies push her knees apart, dig between them.

Groupies pull out a red-spattered plastic BABY DOLL, hold it up to the detonating sky, their lips pulled back, feral, tongues licking at red droplets --they pay homage, they offer sacrifice to some dark god only they can see.

A CHARLES MANSON LOOK-A-LIKE rises up from the sidewalk abattoir, his glittering eyes coming to rest on Dwight:

"CHARLES MANSON"

*Join us...*

Dwight pulls the Colt, fires into the air, scatters the Manson wannabes; he bulldozes through them, throwing elbows; they fall away, stare up at him with eyes pale as milk glass; he bludgeons a path, weeping/screaming, and finds himself at the entrance to The Esperanza Hotel.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909/BALCONY) - NEXT

Kathy, watching the fireworks. Her eyes fall to the fire escape of the TENEMENT building directly across from her balcony.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A swinger's party rages inside; a LITTLE GIRL in a fairy costume, wings/a wand, is out on the fire escape, ignored and all alone.

Kathy waves; the little girl doesn't see her. Kathy stands on tiptoes, waves her pink Miss Iowa ribbon --the little girl sees her then, her face lights up. She waves back.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Elmer steps up to Room 909. He knocks on the door.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909/BALCONY) - NEXT

Kathy wheels around at the KNOCKING --sees a shadow under the door. Sees the KNOB twisting as the shadow tries it, and she knows.

To her left: Room 908's balcony, maybe three feet away. Down: down is a nine story drop.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Elmer draws back, kicks the door; the frame shudders.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909/BALCONY) - NEXT

Kathy looks back, sees the door buckle under Elmer's kick; she swings a leg over the railing, losing a shoe on 909's balcony; she hoists herself up/over, reaches for 908's balcony--

--she MISSES. She grabs air. Her body swings out under her. She catches a glimpse of the LITTLE GIRL in the fairy costume waving goodbye...

Her fingers scrape metal. She GRABS. She HEAVES. She grunts, hauls herself up/over, sweating adrenaline, she sprawls onto 908's BALCONY.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOM 909) - NEXT

Door explodes in/chain snaps. Elmer enters, gun up. Checks bathroom. Bedroom. Under the bed. No one there. Curtains fluttering from the open balcony door. He steps onto the balcony. No one here. He holsters up, starts to turn away.

A GIRL'S SHOE is lying on the balcony. He smiles.

ELMER  
You cunning bitch.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Kathy bolts out of room 908. Elmer bolts out of room 909. They collide in the hall. He drops his gun. Kathy starts to crawl away, panting.

Elmer calmly collects his weapon--

ELMER  
Can you hear it now, Kathy?

She claws carpet; she belly-writhes forward.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
Can you hear your Die Song?

She drags herself a last few feet, to the elevator, tearing her fingernails out on carpet tacks; she looks up. Elmer's standing over her. He raises his gun. He sights down the back of her head.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
I wish I had time for something a  
bit more personal, but this will  
have to do, for us both...

Kathy shuts her eyes. She gets ready for an explosion and then nothingness.

DING. ELEVATOR DOORS SLIDE OPEN --AND DWIGHT'S INSIDE, EYE TO EYE WITH ELMER.

Elmer shoots first --bullet hits Dwight's collar bone, spins him around; throws smoke and bone chips. Dwight falls in a heap in the elevator.

A SERVICE DOOR bangs open at the end of the hallway. Kathy's footsteps disappearing behind it. Door swings shut; Elmer eyes the faded letters: ROOF ACCESS ONLY.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
One more verse.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOFTOP) - NEXT

Kathy crouch-runs across the roof. Fireworks back-scatter a rosy flame across the sky around her. She ducks behind a duct.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Elevator doors ding, start to slide shut. DWIGHT'S BALLED AND BLOODY FIST SLAMS DOWN ON THE TRACK, STOPPING THEM.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOFTOP) - NEXT

Elmer steps out of the roof access doorway, eye-scans the rooftop.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Dwight drags himself into the hallway. His sheared collar bone pokes out through his jacket; he's blacking out; he bangs his head on the floor to stay conscious.

He grips the Colt, braces his legs, forces his body up; his collar bone scrapes the wall as he slowly rises.

DWIGHT  
not yet, goddamn you, not yet--

He starts for the roof access door at the end of the hall, leaving a bloody smear trail along the wallpaper.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOFTOP) - NEXT

Kathy sprints behind another duct. She grabs up a baseball-bat length of REBAR from an abandoned pile; she wraps her hands around it; waits.

She hazards a look: Elmer, coming towards her.

INT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (9TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - NEXT

Dwight reels, the hallway dips; his vision blurs. He retches blood and bile. He falls to one knee.

IN THE ROOMS AROUND HIM, HE SEES HIS DEAD: THE NINE DEAD WHORES, VICKY, FRED...THEY ARE ALL AS THEY WERE IN LIFE: NO MORGUE TERRORS OR BLOODY SMILES --THEY JUST STARE AT HIM, WAITING TO SEE WHAT HE'LL DO NEXT.

Dwight's calvary: he forces himself back standing; he hears his bones gnashing. He takes a step. Hallway's eight miles long --he takes another step.

EXT. ESPERANZA HOTEL (ROOFTOP) - NEXT

Elmer sees the pink Miss Iowa ribbon fluttering from behind a duct.

ELMER  
You can't hide, Kathy. I hear  
you. I've always heard you. Your  
Die Song is a beacon. You'll hear  
it so soon. I promise you, it's  
your time...

He steps around the duct. Nobody there. Just a ribbon hooked on a screw.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATHY SWINGS THE REBAR at Elmer's head; slicing his temple; he drops his gun; blood flows, slicks his face.

Kathy swings again. Elmer side-steps. Her swing-momentum carries her off her feet; she falls; he's on her.

KATHY  
--offa me, bastard--

He's choking her life away; her arms flail; he's too strong; she's fading.

ELMER  
Don't you know it, even now? Your whole life has been prologue to this moment. My life, too. Darkness and then a chorus of angels to sing you home.

Elmer smiles/cries at the same time; half his face is blood-blacked, like war-paint.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
*Hushabye...*

Her eyes flutter shut; her arms slip to her sides.

DWIGHT (O.S.)  
*Legion Gringo.*

This VOICE whipsaws across the roof. Elmer wheels around to face it, Kathy his shield, his eyes blazing over her shoulder at THE MAN framed in the roof access doorway:

DWIGHT MUELLER, trembling under the weight of consciousness; only the bloody wreckage of a man remains--his beat-dog eyes blaze righteous fury, his ringing voice shot through with shattered nobility and purpose.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
That name mean anything to you?

ELMER  
That name *is* me.

DWIGHT  
I know it. And I know you killed those whores. And Fred. And Vicky. And God knows how many else.  
(beat)  
But No More.

ELMER  
(off Kathy)  
You led me right to her. I knew you wouldn't disappoint.

DWIGHT  
Let her go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELMER  
I can't do that.

DWIGHT  
I'm not askin', old shoe.

ELMER  
Don't play at a hero, Dwight. You never wore it very well. Drop your weapon.

DWIGHT  
I do, you'll kill us both.

ELMER  
You don't, I'll shoot her face off.

Dwight can't risk shooting. Blood-loss/shock has Elmer/Kathy tripling in his vision.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
And you're already lousy with ghosts.

Dwight sways; the Colt weighs a thousand pounds; he lets it slip from his grip.

DWIGHT  
Now wh--

Elmer's .38, booming in the night, gunshots mingling with the fireworks. Dwight shot through the pelvis; hardly feels it hit him; he's on the ground, looking up at fireworks setting the stars on fire.

Elmer lays Kathy down, goes to Dwight. Dwight reaches for the Colt, but Elmer toes it away, like a choke-hazard toy from a toddler.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
--how many?

ELMER  
What's that, now?

DWIGHT  
How many you done?

ELMER  
I couldn't say. It seemed a vanity to keep count. To slight them that way.  
(beat)  
Can you understand that?

DWIGHT  
They all matter--

ELMER  
--or none of them do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DWIGHT  
You kill women; you lost a  
daughter.

ELMER  
You lost my daughter.  
(beat)

And that was when I knew: We  
couldn't save them. No matter how  
much we loved them. I was a  
father, a policeman...then one day  
I woke up...and I wasn't there.

(beat)  
I sought another Way.

DWIGHT  
The Die Song.

ELMER  
A volume was found in a Vice bust  
you and Kohner made in '52. He  
booked it as collateral smut and  
forgot about it. It sat in a box  
under the P.A.B. for eight years.  
When you killed Moran, I had to  
show cause to prevent your  
indictment for murder. In  
reviewing your arrest reports, I  
came across, quite by chance, The  
Die Song. In an old box, in a  
forgotten file, I found my  
deliverance.

(beat)  
In her way, in her way Jane made  
us, both.

Dwight snarls, rears up feebly; Elmer toes his jutting  
collar bone. Dwight screams/falls back down.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
Enough of that, now. Just let the  
darkness take you; take you all  
the way down. Down to the dark.  
To all your waiting dead. To  
Jane.

DWIGHT  
Her name sounds like shit in your  
mouth.

ELMER  
I can hear it now, Dwight. Your  
Die Song. For one so coarse, it's  
actually quite sweet.

Dwight's eyes flutter shut; hot tears spring out.

ELMER (CONT'D)  
Can you hear it? I want you, of  
all people, to hear it. To  
understand. To understand what I  
do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Screams of the REVELLERS ricochet off the buildings;  
streaking to the sky as they start the COUNTDOWN:

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Ten...

ELMER  
What I am.

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Nine...

ELMER  
Do you hear your Die song, at the  
last?

REVELLERS (V.O.)  
Eight...

DWIGHT  
...yes

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Seven...

ELMER  
You hear it?

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Six...

DWIGHT  
I hear it.

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Five...

Elmer kneels beside Dwight, lays a soothing hand over his heart.

ELMER  
Then you're ready.

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Four...

Dwight opens his eyes. They lock with Elmer's.

DWIGHT  
No.

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Three...

ELMER  
No what?

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
Two...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DWIGHT  
I don't hear *mine*.

REVELLERS (O.S.)  
One...

ELMER  
Then, whose?

Dwight's hand lashes up, grips Elmer's neck, pulls him last-rites-close:

DWIGHT  
*Yours--*

DWIGHT PLUNGES FRED'S SWITCHBLADE INTO ELMER'S HEART.

DWIGHT/REVELLERS  
...HAPPY NEW YEAR...

Dwight wrenches the knife in, hilt-deep. Blood pumps out black all over Dwight as Elmer's body clenches, then twitches out still, settling down sickly warm, his last breath blown out on Dwight's neck: Elmer dies looking surprised.

Dwight shrugs Elmer's dead weight off his chest, lies there. Kathy finds him, holds his hand, the two of them looking up at the sky.

The last of the fireworks tearing holes in the night like tracer rounds.

KATHY  
Happy New Year?

DWIGHT  
...why not?

They huddle there. Somewhere below, an electric guitar kicks up *Auld Lang Syne*. Sparks shoot across the moon, bathing the survivors in a funeral pyre.

OVER BLACK; --superimpose--

**JANUARY 1970: HELLO DARKNESS, MY OLD FRIEND**

EXT. UNION STATION - AFTERNOON

Dwight and Kathy, on the platform. Dwight limps, his arm's in a sling, he's bandaged up --he's healing. Kathy wears a sundress and a hat; she's de-junked; she glows. She's a prairie sunset.

KATHY  
Thanks for seeing me off.

DWIGHT  
I needed the exercise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She smiles at the waiting train.

KATHY  
You gonna run alongside? Blow me  
kisses and *bon voyage*?

DWIGHT  
That's only in the movies.

Dwight proffers Kathy the rest of his rolled up c-notes; the remains of the bounty.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
I wanna offer this again--

KATHY  
--and I'm going to politely refuse  
it again. You earned it.

DWIGHT  
I'd like to forget how.

KATHY  
I wouldn't.  
(beat)  
You saved me.

DWIGHT  
I'm not sure it's not the other  
way around.

KATHY  
Can't you take a compliment?

DWIGHT  
"You oughta be in pictures."

She punches his arm; he groans for real. She makes his goofy "whoops" face; she laughs her too-big laugh.

KATHY  
(beat)  
I'm sorry about your friend.

DWIGHT  
He died goin' forward. That means  
somethin'.

She nods.

KATHY  
Hey: I never got to ask you your  
New Year's resolution.

DWIGHT  
Stay above ground. How 'bout you?

KATHY  
This year's? This year's is:  
find some new dreams. Corny,  
right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DWIGHT  
Yeah. But also honest and true.

Conductor calls "board" Marines shipping out to Big-V  
hug their folks goodbye; hippies serenade other hippies  
on board with a trail of tossed rose petals.

KATHY  
You think Iowa's ready for the  
triumphant return of Miss Teen  
Keokuk, 1968?

DWIGHT  
I think...I think you'll knock 'em  
dead.

They hold each other. While she's not looking, Dwight  
slips the roll of c-notes in her purse; the train throws  
steam.

Kathy stands on her tiptoes and gives him a kiss. The  
platform empties around them. Kiss holds. She breaks  
it. Dwight blushes furiously.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)  
What was that for?

KATHY  
Just a long goodbye.

She turns, walks through the trail of rose petals, boards  
the train. Train cranks up; starts its roll out of the  
station.

A window slides down: IT'S KATHY. Dwight starts  
hobbling alongside the train, keeping pace. She opens  
her palm --the PINK MISS IOWA RIBBON unfurls, floats  
down; Dwight catches it in his fist.

They don't say anything. It's a last look. Train picks  
up speed. Dwight limps along, huffing for breath. He  
falls behind, wheezing. The train clears the station.

She's gone. Bits of a memory, now: Her goofy laugh,  
holding her on the rooftop, that kiss.

Dwight doesn't know he's crying.

He watches the trail melt into the soggy salmon sunset:  
The One That Got away.

DWIGHT (V.O.)  
Jane, after all these years...I  
find you...

EXT. ECHO PARK - DUSK

Dwight sits on a park bench at Echo Lake. Young lovers  
dodge ducks in row-boats. A kid with a kite. A pair of  
oldsters hold hands in the gazebo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DWIGHT (V.O.)

...I don't know if you're anywhere  
 near here, or if you can hear  
 me...but I picked this spot  
 because a friend thought it wise  
 and it seemed as good a place as  
 any to say goodbye.

(beat)

I'll always think of it now as  
 your place...and I hope, for you,  
 that if one half of a love knows  
 where the other half lies, then  
 that person can never truly be  
 alone.

Dwight kneels. He lays Kathy's PINK RIBBON down in the grass. He presses his fingertips to his lips. And presses his fingers to the ribbon.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

I love you.

INT. ST. VIBIANA'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Dwight shoulders his way through the big wooden doors, limps to the bank of votive candles, kneels stiffly. He starts lighting candles, one by one.

DWIGHT (V.O.)

I heard it told it's better to  
 light a candle than curse the  
 darkness. These days, I light a  
 candle and curse the darkness,  
 and, for now, that sees me through  
 the watches of the night.

He finishes lighting candles; too many to count.

DWIGHT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I light ones for the nine dead  
 whores. For Vicky. And for the  
 choirboy.

He stands to leave, shuffles to the doors.

DWIGHT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And I send up a heathen's prayer.  
 To all those I've saved...all  
 those I've failed...and all those  
 yet to come.

He passes by the last pew, stops, his back to the congregation.

DWIGHT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I pray that we might find each  
 other at end-of-watch. That we  
 may know one another, even in the  
 dark. And I pray that we will  
 share some small warmth...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns back, looks over the congregation: piss bums, dopers, juicers, whores, the old Mex ladies and their rosaries. The forgotten. The forlorn. The fucked and the forsaken.

Dwight slides into a pew, takes his rightful place among them.

DWIGHT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...in the cold city.

And waits for his dead.

Cold City  
By David James Kelly  
March 2007  
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