

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
bailliwick.

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 swastikas
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 communiques 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 shifts 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 scrotes
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 juke.

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 brodie's
 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-EVISCERATED, 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 pagues, 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
attaboys, 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 stones 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
tojours 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 biiiig 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 chill, 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 flush 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 tromp 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
Journeyman, 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 begin 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 awakened 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 hands 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 workbench; 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 jackknives 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 Blessitt lugs his cross; bikers roar their Harleys down the sidewalk, scatter 'nam vet winos in party hats; Pachuco gangsters flip over a Sheriff's prowl 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 backscatter 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-blackened, 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:

Ten...	REVELLERS (O.S.)
What I <i>am</i> .	ELMER
Nine...	REVELLERS (O.S.)
Do you hear your Die song, at the last?	ELMER
Eight...	REVELLERS (V.O.)
...yes	DWIGHT
Seven...	REVELLERS (O.S.)
You hear it?	ELMER
Six...	REVELLERS (O.S.)
I hear it.	DWIGHT
Five...	REVELLERS (O.S.)

Elmer kneels beside Dwight, lays a soothing hand over his heart.

Then you're ready.	ELMER
Four...	REVELLERS (O.S.)
Dwight opens his eyes. They lock with Elmer's.	
No.	DWIGHT
Three...	REVELLERS (O.S.)
No <i>what</i> ?	ELMER
Two...	REVELLERS (O.S.)

(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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