

"The Phantom Limb"

An Original Screenplay

by

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Through changing shapes, through devious ways,
By noon or night, through cloud or flame,
My heart has followed all my days
Something I cannot name.

- Don Marquis, *The Name*

OVER BLACK:

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
The first time I considered
amputating my left arm was the
night Vicki asked that I, well...
come through the back door.
(beat)
Sexually.

FADE IN

CLOSE ON A MASKED FACE

His features cloaked by women's NYLONS, the NOCTURNAL
PREDATOR eyes a SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME.

DOCTOR CAIRO (V.O.)
That was the first time you thought
about cutting off the arm?

The SILHOUETTE OF A WOMAN undresses behind a window shade.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
I've *thought* about cutting off the
arm for as long as I can remember.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (32), strikingly handsome, considers his
girlfriend's sexual proposition. She kneels on all fours,
her buttocks high.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
That night was the first time I
considered *doing* it.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME

The Nocturnal Predator tries the front door - it's locked. Helpfully, a FRONT WINDOW beckons, slightly ajar.

PSYCHIATRIST (V.O.)
Did you comply with her sexual
request?

There's a NOISE - it's an approaching car. The Predator takes refuge behind some bushes.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John David Booth and Vicki lie in bed after consummating their back door sex act. He spoons her sleeping form. But he just can't get comfortable.

DOCTOR CAIRO (V.O.)
How'd you feel about it?

The right arm drapes over her naturally, but the other arm - either raised over his head or jammed awkwardly between them - it just doesn't seem to fit anywhere.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A JANITOR mops the floor, his attention drawn to THE SOUNDS OF FUCKING that can be heard from behind a PEBBLE-GLASS DOOR. It's labelled "*JOHN DAVID BOOTH - PRIVATE DETECTIVE*".

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Jake, I guess. But you know how
these things escalate.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN DAVID BOOTH'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Booth engages in some spirited sex with a BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE while Vicki lends a helping hand. The exercise quickly grows tiresome for him - with each thrust comes diminishing returns.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Satisfaction is relative, doc.

LATER

Booth is nothing more than a spectator. His eyes move to:

A PAINTING HANGING ON THE WALL

An unpretentious, Norman Rockwell-esque bit of Americana kitsch. A tire swing overhangs an idyllic pond, everything bathed in a hazy glow of nostalgia.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Dead to the pleasures of yesterday.

The painting RATTLES in rhythm to unseen sex acts.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN BACKYARD - DAY

A child's BIRTHDAY PARTY in full swing. TEN-YEAR-OLD BOYS run past Booth dressed as Cowboys and Indians. Vicki makes flirtacious small-talk with a CIRCUS CLOWN.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
You find yourself committing acts
you didn't know existed, much less
had a name.

CUT TO:

THE NOCTURNAL PREDATOR

He stealthily creeps down the hallway, pushing the bedroom door open. Inside:

A WOMAN

She's dressed in her pajamas, her back to us. The Predator reaches into his waistband, raising a KITCHEN KNIFE.

NOCTURNAL PREDATOR
Scream and you get the big sleep.

She turns - it's Booth's Girlfriend. This is VICKI, and her look of horror is quickly replaced by anger.

VICKI
Jesus, John, is that my good hose?

Booth lifts the nylons off his face - he sweats profusely.

VICKI

Don't you know how much those cost?

Vicki shakes her head before dropping her pajama bottoms. She bends over, leaning her hands against the bed. Looking back over her shoulder...

VICKI

What are you waiting for? Carry on, Scary Man.

Booth pulls the nylons back over his face and advances.

DOCTOR CAIRO (V.O.)

And it was after one of these sex acts that the incident occurred?

BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Booth spoons his girlfriend once more. He still has trouble getting comfortable.

DOCTOR CAIRO (V.O.)

That you tried to take off the arm?

God damn that useless left arm.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Wouldn't necessarily connect the two, Doctor Cairo.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - LATER

A neighbor's DOG barks as Booth watches his garage door rise.

INSIDE THE GARAGE - LATER

Booth steps toward a CIRCULAR SAW. It GLOWS unnaturally in the moonlight. He switches it on.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)

My sex life has become prolific. Anything I do will inevitably take place just prior or afterwards.

CLOSE ON BOOTH'S LEFT ARM

He gradually lowers it down into the path of the blade.

DOCTOR CAIRO (V.O.)
You wouldn't draw any special
significance in the timing?

Blood SPRAYS. Booth SCREAMS right before he PASSES OUT,
dropping to the hard floor. RAIN begins to fall.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

Atop a gurney, Booth fades in and out of consciousness.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Seemed as good an occasion as any.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR CAIRO'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

Booth, left arm bandaged, reads a WOMEN'S FASHION MAGAZINE.
He wears a wrinkled grey suit without tie, as he will most
days - perpetually under and over dressed for any occasion.

CLOSE ON BOOTH'S MAGAZINE

An ARTICLE on how to improve your sex life. A MARLBORO AD on
the facing page features that Blonde - *We Get You Noticed!*

The FEMALE RECEPTIONIST eyes Booth flirtatiously. He smiles
out of politeness, used to attention from the ladies.

The door to the Psychiatrist's office OPENS and a MALE
TRANSVESTITE exits through it.

The Shrink appears - DOCTOR CAIRO - waving us in. We see the
waiting room is packed with transvestites - Booth is the only
patient dressed gender appropriate.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR CAIRO'S OFFICE - LATER

Booth shakes some pills into his mouth, swallowing them dry
before lighting a cigarette.

DOCTOR CAIRO

In the psychiatric community, we call it B.I.I.D. - Body Integrity Identity Disorder. The desire to amputate one's own limb.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

You have a name for it?

DOCTOR CAIRO

We have names for everything.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

So what do we do now?

DOCTOR CAIRO

About?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

About getting this arm taken care of.

DOCTOR CAIRO

We don't take care of arms here, Mister Booth.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

You take care of cocks though, right?

DOCTOR CAIRO

I'm sorry?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Sex changes. Some sissy likes to play dress-up, 'cept this time he wants to play it for keeps.

DOCTOR CAIRO

It's rather more complicated than that.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Just need a doctor's note from you to do it. Do I misunderstand how the process works?

DOCTOR CAIRO

Surgical amputation of healthy limbs isn't something we write doctor's notes for.

(MORE)

DOCTOR CAIRO (cont'd)
You have a *disorder*, Mister Booth,
treated with medication and
therapy, not a bone saw.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Is that how you talk to the daisies
in the waiting room?

DING. Time's up.

DOCTOR CAIRO
I apologize for being short, Mister
Booth. Trust me when I say it is
only for your own good. What you
ask of me simply cannot be done.

Cairo scribbles in his pad and tears off a prescription.

DOCTOR CAIRO
You have two arms. The sooner you
accept this truth, the happier
you'll be.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - THAT EVENING

Booth pulls his car into the driveway, a rusty '58 Porsche
356 Speedster Coupe. Once upon a time, it probably looked
quite nice, stylish even, but that was some time ago.

He grabs some letters from the MAILBOX. For the first time,
he notices the Circus Clown sitting on his front porch.

Booth unlocks the door.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You're early, Clown.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - ESTABLISHING

All manner of 1940s and 1950s CARS shoot by on the road.
Strangely, some have TROLLEY POLES branching from their
hoods, rigged to a network of unshielded overhead wire.

A cable car system...but with automobiles. These wires are ever-present - above every street, inside parking garages, even extending down freeways.

CLOSE ON THE BUMPER OF ONE OF THESE ELECTRIC CARS

A sticker familiar to Hybrid drivers: CAR POOL ACCESS OK, CLEAN AIR VEHICLE.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. STARBUCKS - LATER

A vintage, illustrated sign announces this as the coffee shop we're all familiar with. But not like this.

Like everything else, it's the present filtered through the 1950s. Pristine, silver percolators brew today's two solitary selections: regular and decaf.

BARISTAS in white paper hats ring up customers on a mechanical cash register. At tables, beret-wearing HOPEFUL WRITERS clatter away on their Apple brand TYPEWRITERS.

Booth eyes a GLASS CASE and the food choices held within. Frou-frou salads and panini have been replaced by meatloaf sandwiches, deviled eggs, and tuna-potato chip casserole.

CUT TO:

INT. MODERNIST RANCH HOME - DAY

Porcelain DOLLS with silk hair and lace dresses sit at attention on shelves. FIGURINES of children, their eyes wide, posed to inspire in their precious moments.

MRS. PANGBURN (O.S.)
I don't know how else to account
for it, Mister Booth. Someone is
breaking into my home while I am
gone and moving them around.

Booth turns one over in his hands. A BOY carrying ANOTHER on his back. Engraved it: *He's not heavy, he's my brother.*

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
The figurines?

He returns it beside the others, its place easily delineated by a circle of dust. MRS. PANGBURN (55) reaches out, turning it slightly to replicate its former position.

MRS. PANGBURN
My dolls. My figurines. Items in
the cupboard. All moved.

THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Pangburn yanks out a drawer of SILVERWARE.

MRS. PANGBURN
See?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Were your utensils in a different
drawer?

She points to the forks.

MRS. PANGBURN
See here. This is where the spoons
used to be. And here...that's
where the knives go. It's all
wrong.

MOMENTS LATER

Booth stares into her cupboards, the rows of non-perishable
foods. Nothing looks out of the ordinary.

The older woman clutches his shoulder.

MRS. PANGBURN
All wrong.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
How about you show me this mirror.

THE BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Booth and Mrs. Pangburn stare into a MIRROR.

MRS. PANGBURN
Don't you see? Someone has warped
the mirror. To make me look...
(whispers)
...wider.

Booth looks at the mirror with a new curiosity. In truth,
she could lose a few pounds.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Why would someone do this?

MRS. PANGBURN
Isn't it obvious? To drive me
crazy. And I know who it is.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Oh yeah?

MRS. PANGBURN
My ex-husband.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You peeped him doin' it?

MRS. PANGBURN
Well, no.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Mrs. Pangburn, you really think
your ex-husband is moving around
figurines and warping your mirror.
To make you think you're...

MRS. PANGBURN
The mirror lies!

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Okay.

MRS. PANGBURN
I'm not crazy, Mister Booth.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
No. Of course not.

Booth stares back into the mirror. And smiles.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
It'll be fifty a day plus expenses.

MRS. PANGBURN
I'll get my purse.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN DAVID BOOTH'S OFFICE - DAY

Booth enters, picking some MAIL up off the floor. Bills.

ON HIS PAINTING

The idyllic pond and the tire swing. One side tilts. Booth
fixes it, stepping back to take it all in.

As though transported to this other place, we HEAR cicadas HUM, frogs CHIRP.

Booth's PHONE RINGS but he's lost in reverie. His bulky two-reel ANSWERING MACHINE gets it instead.

DOCTOR CAIRO (O.S.)
This is your psychiatrist, Doctor
Cairo.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Trees, darkness, and rain. A FLASHLIGHT illuminates the ground, searching. It finds what it's looking for:

DOCTOR CAIRO (V.O.)
It is a matter of urgency...

A PATCH OF EARTH

It bulges with packed soil. Looks like something has been buried here.

REVERSE ON DOCTOR CAIRO

He carries the flashlight, a hand-drawn MAP, and a SHOVEL. Cairo begins to dig.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ELBOW ROOM - EVENING

Booth enters a dark, harshly-lit dive bar with sawdust on the floor. Driving rain splashes against painted windows. Female heads turn his way.

Doctor Cairo, out of place with his nebbish appearance, waves him over from a corner booth.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You fit in here like a set of false
whiskers, Cairo. Make a habit of
meeting with patients sipping from
the tiger's tit?

Cairo drinks self-consciously from a SCOTCH. Booth notices the man's fingernails, caked in DIRT.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Strange time to be resodding the
lawn, doc.

DOCTOR CAIRO
After some consideration, I may
have been a touch too dismissive of
your plea, even if your
expectations were, well,
unreasonable. I've decided to
refer your case to a colleague. I
believe he could be of great
service to you...and you to him.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What happened to accepting myself
with two arms?

DOCTOR CAIRO
You see, even if I wanted to, I
couldn't prescribe surgery for you.
It would violate my Hippocratic
Oath. I'd be stripped of my
license and made an example of, a
mockery of the mental health
profession. But my colleague...he
takes a different tact. On
occasion, he has performed
procedures that require...a little
more discretion.

(leans closer)
I've spoken to him about your
situation. It appears he has a
need for services that require a
certain discretion as well.
Services you are known to provide.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Go on.

Cairo throws back the remainder of his drink and rises...

DOCTOR CAIRO
I'll leave the elaborating to him.
Best of luck to you. His name is
Wendell Multhorpe and he will be in
touch.

FADE TO:

EXT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - DAY

Dark skies have given way to another bright and sunny Southern California day.

Booth exits his parked car and turns towards the MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - less a home than a replica English stone castle, in both design and scale, complete with a MOAT.

He narrowly avoids stepping in a HOLE, dug into the otherwise immaculate lawn.

LATER

Booth waits patiently for a DRAWBRIDGE to lower for him, looking down at the LIVE ALLIGATORS below.

A FAT MAN appears, late 40s, his arms raised in welcome. This is the king of the castle, WENDELL MULTHORPE.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Welcome, Mister Booth. I've been
expecting you.

CUT TO:

INT. MULTHORPE CASTLE - MOMENTS LATER

Booth and Multhorpe pass through an atrium, adorned with medieval heirlooms, tapestries, and suits of armor.

In other places, scaffolding and white cloth draped over walls - renovations, presumably.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
They say a man's home is his
castle. I've spared no expense to
ensure this fact.

MULTHORPE'S PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Booth helps himself to some scotch from a tastefully arranged bar. He looks at one of Multhorpe's business cards.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
I do appreciate the haste with
which you've honored my invitation.
It is not often that two men are so
ideally placed to be of intimate
assistance to the other.

(MORE)

WENDELL MULTHORPE (cont'd)
As you can see, I am in the
business of...self-improvement.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Says "cosmetic surgeon" on your
business card. Should get that
fixed.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Never been fond of the expression.
"Cosmetic" implies the superficial.
What I do is no such thing. I
change people, from the outside in.
We are what we pretend to be,
someone once said. And I make it
easier to pretend.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
So be careful what you pretend to
be.

Booth motions toward the bar with his empty glass.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
By all means.

As Booth tongs some ice cubes into his glass...

WENDELL MULTHORPE
I'll get right to it as your time
is quite valuable...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You'd be surprised. I'm about as
cheap as it gets in this business.

Multhorpe digs into a drawer, withdrawing a PHOTOGRAPH of a
BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. He hands it over.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
This is my wife, Sylvia. She's
missing, and has been for some
time. I would like her found and
it is you I would like to find her.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What's the buttons have to say
about it?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
I have not informed the
authorities.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
With all due respect, a looker like
this takes the run-out and
disappears for...

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Three months.

Booth looks to the man incredulously.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
I'm afraid it just isn't possible
to involve the "buttons," as you
put it. You see, she has a
history, vanishing for long
passages of time then reappearing
with empty pockets and a general
disinterest in recounting her
whereabouts. I know it may seem
strange to you, but I love my wife,
Mister Booth.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Gees who love their missing wives
don't usually wait three months to
look for'em.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Sylvia hasn't the best judge of
friends and there's no doubt she's
taken to their vices. If the
police were involved, I can only
imagine what depravity they would
find her in. I'm a private man and
would like to keep it that way.
I'd prefer any transgressions
committed by my wife did not become
a matter of public record.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Certain you want her back?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
No sir, I am not sure I do. But
love is a strange thing and she has
never been missing for this long
before. I fear for her safety.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
How about a name?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
A name?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
A name. These shady characters
got'em, don't they?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Do you know a man by the name of
Shoulders Marquard?

Booth's expression gives away his answer. He paces the room,
taking a look --

OUTSIDE A WINDOW

-- where he sees a team of MEXICAN GARDENERS at work on
Multhorpe's backyard topiary.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
She sure knows how to pick'em,
boss. Shoulders Marquard is about
the wrongest number there is. If
she's taken up with his mob, it
ain't gonna be eggs and coffee.
(beat)
So what's your angle?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
I'd like to make a proposition.
There's something I'd like found
and, if I understand correctly,
there's something you would like
lost. Your arm, Mister Booth.
While I don't pretend to understand
the impulse that drives you, if my
profession teaches me anything, it
is not to pass judgment. You wish
the arm to disappear and that is
good enough for me.

Booth looks at the picture in his hand.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
If you can find my Sylvia and
return her to me, your arm will be
no more. Do we have an agreement?

CUT TO:

EXT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - LATER

Booth exits the castle via the drawbridge. He takes one last
gander at the alligators down below. Upon closer look...

CLOSE ON THE ALLIGATORS

They're fake. Animatronic, like Disney World.

BACK TO:

INT. MULTHORPE PARLOUR - EARLIER

Booth regards his new client.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Don't expect any miracles.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Our fates are now intertwined,
Mister Booth.

Booth turns to leave...

WENDELL MULTHORPE
One more thing. She likes shoes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOSTER CLUB - NIGHT

An ugly cinder block of a building, unmarked except for the flashing sign of a neon ROOSTER. An incongruous, tuxedo-clad DOORMAN holds open the door for Booth.

INSIDE

An underground CASINO, fashioned out of a former-ballroom. Crystal chandeliers, hardwood floors, even a small corner platform with a JAZZ QUARTET.

High society and high rollers in formal attire swamp the various games of chance - roulette, craps, et cetera. Women, per usual, regard Booth's passage with interest. At --

A POKER TABLE

-- a shifty CON MAN subtly pulls an ACE from his sleeve, completing his full house. His name is DONNIE ASTA.

DONNIE
Raise.

ON BOOTH

He sidles up to the bar, gaining the BARMAN'S attention.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Shoulders around tonight?

BARMAN
I'll have to check on that, sir.
Who may I say is asking?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Tell'em Detective Booth wants to
have words.

This has gotten the Barman's attention. He moves off to the phone, out of earshot, speaking into it without dialing.

The Barman returns, pointing to some STAIRS.

BARMAN
Go right up.

Booth ascends the staircase, coming to a MAHOGANY DOOR guarded by a rather large THUG.

THUG
Grab air, Booth.

Booth complies, raising his hands. The Thug checks him for weapons. All clean. Booth now enters:

SHOULDERS MARQUARD'S OFFICE

Elegant and expensive, more befitting a Prohibition-era mobster than anything else. Behind a huge desk is an intimidating, wide-shouldered man in a black overcoat and fedora. He wears a pencil-thin moustache across his lip.

This is SHOULDERS MARQUARD.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Still callin' yourself a detective,
are ya? Thought you had enough of
the law.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Still peepin' it, now it's for a
sad story and pocket change.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Who says this ain't a great
country? Where a bunny like you
can still land on his feet? Truly
the land of opportunity, cheapie.

Against the wall, HAIRY FISTS rattle a cage. It's a MONKEY, clad in a tuxedo. He clutches a STUFFED TOY to his chest, also a monkey.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Congratulations Shoulders. He
 looks just like you.

Booth kneels close to the cage, getting a good look at the sad animal held within. It pets its plush doppelganger, trying to feed the doll from a dish of melted ice cream.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 Word of advice, shamus. Never
 accept a jungle creature as payment
 on a debt.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Why the penguin suit? Thing like
 that ain't natural.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 Came in it. Said he was in the
 circus but damned if I can get him
 to do any tricks. Dingus can't
 even open a beer bottle much less
 make a martini.

Booth extends his hand, poking a finger between the bars. The monkey grabs for it, grateful for human contact.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 It's like a child. All it does is
 shit itself and eat ice cream. You
 come here to look at zoo animals,
 Booth?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Actually looking for a doll by the
 name of Sylvia Multhorpe. Wire is
 she's friendly with your mob. Got
 a weakness for the hop.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 Sylvia Multhorpe? Never heard of
 her.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Sure about that?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 It's a name I'd remember.

An uneasiness enters Shoulders' manner - his jovial demeanor is gone. Booth shows him the PHOTOGRAPH of Sylvia Multhorpe.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Maybe she's using a different
moniker?

That unease elevates with the photo. Shoulders tries to disguise it with a furrowed brow.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Real looker, ain't she?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
What was the name again?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Sylvia Multhorpe.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Sorry, shamus, never laid eyes on
this dame.

Booth doesn't believe it, but chooses not to press.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
If she turns up, you'll give me the
buzz?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Certainly. Who's looking?

Booth smiles.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Good barberin' with ya, Shoulders.

The detective leaves.

MINUTES LATER

The caged monkey watches Shoulders PACE the office. After some thought, he lifts the PHONE and dials, but before Shoulders speaks --

THE OFFICE DOOR BURSTS OPEN

-- allowing entry to TWO THUGS. Tumbling to the floor at their hands is:

DONNIE ASTA

A push sends his leggy girlfriend NORA sprawling after him.

THUG

Caught these two sharpers palming
cards downstairs.

DONNIE

You got it all wrong.

The Thug TEARS the sleeves off Donnie's cheap blazer. ACES
tumble from the ripped seams. Shoulders picks one up.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Donnie, Donnie, Donnie. This ain't
your racket. You're a hophead who
pretends he's deaf and dumb on
street corners for a few clams and
half a meatloaf sandwich. That's
what you do.

DONNIE

I'm sorry, Shoulders. Here...

Donnie empties his pockets, coming up with a handful of CHIPS
and CRUMPLED DOLLARS BILLS.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Pipe that. He's sorry. You know
what they do to gyp artists in
China? Chop their mitts off.

DONNIE

Please. I didn't...

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Take me for a savage? I don't want
your hand. But what else does a
dummerer like you have to give?

Shoulders looks from Donnie to his girlfriend, her thighs
bared in a revealing flapper dress.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

My that's a lovely dress you have
on.

She tries to pull it down further over her legs, but the
fabric only stretches so far.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

No, don't do that. You're with a
dumb-dumb like Donnie. It's all
you got.

(to Thug)

(MORE)

SHOULDERS MARQUARD (cont'd)
You dizzy with a dame, Ray? Real
dish, am I right?

THUG
Wouldn't kick her out of bed for
eating crackers.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Bet this glad rag would look real
nice on your special lady.
(extends the playing card)
Open up, kitten.

She looks to Donnie for help but he refuses to meet her eyes.
She has no choice but to comply. Her jaws part and Shoulders
slides the card between them. She bites down.

Ray the Thug is having some second thoughts.

THUG
Margie's got all the rags she
needs, boss. Don't want to spoil
her.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Spoiling a dame is one of life's
true pleasures. What do you say,
doll? Don't Margie deserve to be
treated right?

His hands go to the hem of her dress, fingertips resting on
her thighs. She's afraid, paralyzed. They stand face to
face. Her lip trembles. Donnie watches, helpless, impotent.

Shoulders begins to lift, ever so slowly pulling the dress up
her bare torso. Up over her head it goes. There she stands,
topless, an arm awkwardly crossed to conceal bare breasts.

Once more, the monkey RATTLES his cage bars. Shoulders wipes
a tear from her eye.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Don't cry, doll. Didn't look that
swell on ya to begin with.

He tosses the dress to the Thug.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Take her out the back.

The Thug does what he's told, taking her away with a firm
grip. Shoulders turns his attention to Donnie.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
What are we going to do about you?

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN DAVID BOOTH'S OFFICE - EVENING

Booth is about to leave when the phone RINGS.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (INTO PHONE)
Booth Investigations.

The unheard reply has gotten his attention.

CUT TO:

EXT. MACARTHUR PARK - NIGHT

The beauty of the place - palm trees, lake, and fountain - is diminished by the HOMELESS PEOPLE and DRUG DEALERS.

Booth finds who he's looking for. It's Donnie Asta, sitting alone on a park bench. He joins him. Silence.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Gonna make me wait all night?

DONNIE
I heard you're looking for Sylvia Multhorpe.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Who's asking?

DONNIE
The egg who knows where she is.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Well?

Donnie smiles. He's missing some teeth. The BLACK EYE completes the picture.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Don't suppose you'd tell me for a cigarette.

DONNIE
If President Grant were puffing it.

Booth takes out his wallet.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
How about a twenty?

Donnie accepts it. Booth waits.

DONNIE
The cigarette?

Booth pulls out his cigarettes, offering one to Donnie. He takes two, lighting one and saving the other for later.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Let's have it.

DONNIE
You mind? I'm trying to enjoy my cigarette.

Like turning a switch, Booth is on top of Donnie, taking him over the bench by the throat. The cigarettes and money go tumbling.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What's the grift, junkie!? Do I look like the weak sister to you!?

DONNIE
Can't...breathe...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I know ya can't breathe! I'm the one doin' it to ya, ain't I!? Now give up the goddamn address!

DONNIE
...okay...

Booth releases his grip but keeps the man pinned.

DONNIE
She's renting a dump on El Centro.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Number?

DONNIE
What?

Smack!

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What's the goddamn number on the building?

DONNIE
Two-sixty-one. Jesus Christ.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You sure?

DONNIE
That's the crop, bo. On the square. Ask anyone.

Booth releases him, collecting the money on the ground.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
If she ain't there I'm coming back for my cigarettes. Dangle, hopper.

CUT TO:

EXT. EL CENTRO AVE - NIGHT

Booth steps out of his car and approaches an apartment building, its address prominently displayed above the door:

261 EL CENTRO

Booth scans the outside mailboxes, each labeled with a name. Thompson, Chandler, Escobar, Smith and so on. No Multhorpe.

But there is a CAIRO. Booth cocks his head - does his shrink live here? After a moment of contemplation, we follow him --

INSIDE THE APARTMENT BUILDING

-- and up a flight of steps to his destination. Booth KNOCKS on apartment number six. No answer.

Into his pocket now, withdrawing a LOCK-PICKING TOOL. Booth goes to work on the door. It unlocks.

INSIDE THE APARTMENT

Minimalist furniture from the 1950s. Envelopes lie on the floor by the mail slot. Booth examines one.

It's addressed to "Dr. Theodore Cairo." A photo of the man on a nearby shelf confirms it - Booth's shrink lives here.

Booth gives the room the once over. A bookshelf full of medical texts. Neatly arranged magazines on a coffee table.

IN THE KITCHEN

An immaculate refrigerator, everything in its right place.

Booth sets a cigarette upon his lip like a cowboy would a length of straw. He searches his pockets for a light but comes up empty.

He opens a drawer, finding a matchbook there. Before he can strike a flame:

A NOISE

It came from another room. Sounded like a squeaking floorboard, but it could just be the building settling.

Booth puts the matches away in his pocket. He waits for the sound to repeat itself. It doesn't.

We follow him down a hallway toward the source of the noise. He draws his pistol, turning the light switch on in:

A BEDROOM

Looks empty. But then there's that CLOSET. Gun at the ready, Booth approaches the closed door. He doesn't hear --

THE FOOTSTEPS BEHIND HIM

-- SOMEONE advancing on him UNSEEN. A DIRTY CANVAS SACK in one hand, a BLACKJACK in the other.

ON BOOTH

Oblivious to the danger that stalks him. He extends his hand to the door knob. The blackjack raises behind him.

Booth JERKS open the closet.

INSIDE THE CLOSET

It's Dr. Cairo, propped against the door frame bound and gagged. He TOPPLES OVER like a fallen tree just as --

THE BLACKJACK STRIKES

-- viciously swinging down upon the detective's neck. The effect is instantaneous. We quickly...

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN

SERIES OF SHOTS - DREAM SEQUENCE - VISTAVISION

A throwback to the kind of Saul Bass-style graphic-infused credit/dream sequences (see: *Vertigo*).

- Booth falls against the backdrop of a turning spiral
- SMOKE rises from a FLAMING PIT, clouding our vision
- Doctor Cairo peers at us from across a table

DOCTOR CAIRO

It appears he has a need for
services that require a certain
discretion as well.

- Booth continues to fall; his arm detaches from his body

DOCTOR CAIRO (V.O.)

Services you are known to provide.

- The smeared, painted lips of the Sex Clown
- The blade of Booth's circular saw gleams in the moonlight
- Even more smoke now, surreal, making it hard to see
- Vicki stares back over her shoulder, her hips thrust out

VICKI

Carry on, Scary Man.

- Animatronic alligators snap their metal jaws
- Wendell Multhorpe shakes our hand

WENDELL MULTHORPE

One more thing...

- Booth's arm drifts off, falling, lost in the flames...

WENDELL MULTHORPE (V.O.)

...she likes shoes.

FADE TO:

CLOSE ON BOOTH

He gradually awakens on Cairo's bedroom floor. His hand goes to the back of his head, coming away red with BLOOD. It's the least of his worries as the SMOKE was no delirium:

THE ROOM IS ON FIRE

FLAMES dance up the walls, eating the curtains, upholstery, everything in sight. Booth leaps to his feet, seeing --

CAIRO'S BODY

-- lying on the floor, his neck crooked awkwardly. He feels for a pulse, confirming the obvious - this man is DEAD.

There isn't much time. Pulling his blazer over his head, Booth charges down the FLAMING HALLWAY to the front door.

It's LOCKED from the outside. Booth throws his body up against it, once, twice, his eyes tearing from all the smoke.

It won't give. He looks for another way out, locking on a BAY WINDOW and the night sky beyond. This is going to hurt.

Grabbing a DUFFEL BAG sitting on the floor, Booth HURLS it through the window, GLASS SHATTERING everywhere. He takes a running start, quickly following that bag with --

A FLYING LEAP OUT THE WINDOW

-- launching into the night sky, tumbling down to the ground like a bird with a broken wing. BUSHES break his fall.

SIRENS wail as fire trucks and police cars SCREECH to a halt at the curb. The duffel bag hangs from a nearby branch.

A SEARCHLIGHT illuminates his supine form in the bush. The BUILDING'S RESIDENTS watch on in night clothes, awed.

TED SPANGLER (V.O.)
You really did it this time,
gumshoe.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Focused light shines down on Booth, smoking a cigarette. DETECTIVES EDDIE O'MALLEY and TED SPANGLER give him the third degree. We're in the middle of an interrogation.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You got me, fellas. Send me over
and throw away the key. I bumped
Cairo and tried to pull the dutch
act by lighting us both on fire.

TED SPANGLER
Think you're a funny guy, huh?

EDDIE O'MALLEY

So this Multhorpe bird hired you to find his wife, did he? Don't suppose you got a receipt for that?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

I look like a chink dry cleaner to you?

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Come off it, Booth. Wise head like you don't think it's queer a man don't know where his own wife is? For three months?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Said she had a taste for the gutter. Can't say it all added up, but math was never my best subject.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

What if I told you we jawed with Multhorpe and he hasn't the faintest clue who John Booth is?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

I'd say you're lying or he is.

Booth waits for a response that doesn't come.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Christ Eddie, think about it. You think I chilled Cairo and tried to toast marshmallows over the stiff?

TED SPANGLER

Maybe you did the shrink and your partner sapped you and set fire to the dump to stick you with the rap.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

What's my motive?

TED SPANGLER

I don't claim to know how a sick mind like yours works.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Shouldn't drink on the job. I can smell the barrel on ya.

Spangler knocks the lit cigarette from Booth's hand. Booth calmly fires up another one. Spangler knocks that one away as well. Booth looks to O'Malley...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Your partner's getting a little punchy.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Give him some space, Ted.

Spangler steps back. Booth lights another cigarette.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Look, if I had a partner who gave me the dry-gulch, why wouldn't I put the finger on him? You think I want that guy walking free so I can swing for the both of us?

Spangler slams his fists on the table.

TED SPANGLER
Stop wasting time! Tell us who your partner is already!

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What did you do to get stuck with this one, Eddie?

TED SPANGLER
Got something to say, cheapie, say it to me.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I talk to the mechanic, not the dirty rag.

WHAM! Spangler slugs Booth, sending him toppling over.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Goddamn it, Ted! Go cool off!

TED SPANGLER
This loogan bunks with your wife and now you're taking his side?

Both Eddie and Booth stare at Ted with disbelief. No one appreciates this airing of dirty laundry.

TED SPANGLER
Well it's true, ain't it?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Just shove off, will ya?

Spangler slams the door on the way out. Booth picks himself off the ground, noticing his cigarette is broken.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I hope we can be adults about this,
Eddie, personal differences aside.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Tell me about the bag.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What about it? It ain't mine.

O'Malley lifts the duffel bag, dropping it onto the table.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I needed something to break the
window. The bag was there.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Open it.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I said it ain't mine.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Just open it, will ya?

Booth complies, slowly working the zipper down. He can smell it before he can see it...

INSIDE THE BAG

AMPUTATED FEET, blackened with dirt and decay. They're quite deformed, barely resembling their natural form. It appears that they've been dug up from somewhere.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Queer thing to be carrying around,
Booth.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Someone wanted to get rid of'em
like they wanted to get rid of
Cairo. Like they wanted to get rid
of me.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
How'd you know Doctor Cairo?

Booth ponders how to phrase this one.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Should really be more careful with
that circular saw.

Booth can't believe he's having this conversation.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

We all got our vices, far be it
from me to judge. Whatever you do
behind pulled shades is your own
business.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Stop playing me, Eddie. I didn't
croak anyone and you know it.

O'Malley slaps Booth on the arm, leaving his hand there.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

That's right, Booth. I know you.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

A guy's got different ideas about
personal appearance and now he's a
hatchetman? And for the record,
ain't exactly jake for you to be
snooping in Cairo's files. Doctor-
patient privilege and all that.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Poolhouse lawyer now, are ye? Your
shrink was killed and you jumped
out his window with a pair of
severed feet. Doctor-patient
privilege? That's a good one.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Just talk to Multhorpe, will you?
He'll put ya wise.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

I told you, Multhorpe don't know
who you are from some corner gink.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

And I'm tellin' you he does. Just
take me to'em.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

I'll do you one better. How about
I bring Multhorpe to you?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Well then, by all means.

O'Malley disappears outside the door. Booth sees he's left a folder behind. Some crime scene photos peek out from inside.

There's also a picture labeled "Wendell and Sylvia Multhorpe," clipped from the society page of the newspaper.

They are not the Multhorpes we know.

O'Malley reappears with another man: crisp suit, tall and slender, late forties, salt and pepper hair, the man in the photo. Physically, he is the very opposite of the person we believed was Wendell Multhorpe, but this is:

THE REAL WENDELL MULTHORPE

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Ever seen this man before?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
I most certainly have not.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Ask me the same question. You might be surprised by the answer.

Booth can't help but smile.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
That ain't the Multhorpe I know.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
What do you mean that ain't Multhorpe? That's Multhorpe.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
He very well might be Multhorpe. But he ain't the Multhorpe that hired me.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO OF THE REAL SYLVIA MULTHORPE

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
And this ain't the dame I was hired to find.

CUT TO:

EXT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - DAY

O'Malley, Spangler and Booth pull up the vacant driveway in a police car. A "For Sale" sign sits at the open gate.

FLASHBACK TO:

BOOTH'S PRIOR VISIT TO THE MULTHORPE RESIDENCE

He narrowly avoids stepping into a hole dug into the lawn.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

The hole is there no more, filled by the "For Sale" sign post. Someone had removed it.

O'Malley exits the vehicle and heads off to the house. Spangler faces the man in the back of the car.

TED SPANGLER

You must take us for some real
mugs, shamus.

There's no answer at the front door. O'Malley walks around the building, disappearing out of sight.

TED SPANGLER

They're gonna love that pretty
mouth of yours up in the joint.

O'Malley comes back with the Latino Gardener. We remember him from Booth's visit. O'Malley jerks a finger at Booth.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Know this guy?

The Gardener speaks no English.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Who owns this place?

Again, some trouble communicating. Booth taps on the glass.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Quien posse esta casa?

As though it were the most logical answer in the world...

GARDENER
 Senor Multhorpe.

AN HOUR LATER

Two UNIFORMED LATINO OFFICERS have joined the others, speaking to the Gardener in Spanish and translating for O'Malley and Spangler.

IN THE WINDOWS OF THE MULTHORPE RESIDENCE

Furniture covered by ghostly white sheets. It doesn't look like anyone is living here anymore.

ON BOOTH

He leans against a police cruiser. It appears he has been let off the hook when:

A CAR PULLS UP THE DRIVE WAY

A silver, 1955 gullwing Mercedes-Benz coup, perfect shape. Multhorpe steps out. The real Multhorpe. He looks puzzled.

Multhorpe joins the Gardener, the Officers, and the Detectives in their little circle.

Keeping one eye on Multhorpe and the others, Booth strolls over to the Benz. There is SOMEONE in the passenger seat: SYLVIA MULTHORPE. The real one.

She nervously fumbles in her purse for a cigarette. Like the men in the commercial, Booth is there with a light.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 You look just like your photograph,
 Mrs. Multhorpe.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 My photograph?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Society page. In the paper.

She nods politely, looking over to see if her husband is looking. He isn't.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Most people, the camera never
 catches'em right. Life is rarely
 like it is in pictures. But you?
 Dead ringer.

She has no response, refusing to even make eye contact.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

That's a compliment, Mrs.
Multhorpe. Pretty dames like you,
they tend to look better in two
dimensions than three.

Her husband calls over.

WENDELL MULTHORPE

Excuse me! You over there! Excuse
me! I'd be obliged if you wouldn't
speak to my wife!

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Just making polite conversation.

WENDELL MULTHORPE

I'd prefer you kept your
conversation to yourself.

Booth steps back from the car, raising his hands innocently.
After a few moments, Mrs. Multhorpe calls out to him, a
raised whisper.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE

My husband can be possessive. It's
often quite endearing.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

I bet.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE

Other times, it's much like this.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Mrs. Multhorpe, why would someone
impersonate your husband, say
you're missing when you ain't, only
to try the knockoff with me and my
shrink?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE

(flustered)

I believe that's a question better
addressed to the police, don't you?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Know anything about amputated feet?

There's recognition in her face.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Do we have a problem, sir?

Wendell Multhorpe is getting impatient. Even O'Malley gives him a scolding glance.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
You better do what the man says.
His chivalrous nature can get the
best of him.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Yeah? What happens then?

She opens her mouth to answer, but her husband's surveillance makes her reconsider.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Good day, Mister Booth.

Her window slowly rises, returning Sylvia Multhorpe to the isolation of her automobile.

MINUTES LATER

Looks like the questioning is done. O'Malley approaches, taking a place next to Booth by the squad car.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Dump is owned by Multhorpe,
alright. The real Multhorpe.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Let me guess, he doesn't live here
any more.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Been on the market for a month.
Multhorpe and the dish live in some
designer mansion on Rockland.
Doors and windows are locked.

ANGLE ON THE MERCEDES-BENZ

Multhorpe gets back in his car and pulls away.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Sure is something queer about those
two.

CUT TO:

EXT. 261 EL CENTRO APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Booth and O'Malley stand on the sidewalk, back at the scene of the crime. The charred remains of 261 El Centro still smolder behind them. However, their attention is directed --

ACROSS THE STREET

-- where Booth had parked his car. It is there no more.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Positive that's where you left it?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You're a witness to this. When it shows up at another homicide, I didn't drive it.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
I'll give you a lift.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. O'MALLEY'S CAR - DAY

They drive in extended silence until...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Look, Eddie, I know we never really cleared the air about Vicki-

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Leave it be.

Booth nods. But he can't leave it be.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'd just hate if it affected your judgement.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Vicki's your problem now.

Booth puts a cigarette in his mouth, again searching his pockets for fire. He finds a matchbook in his jacket pocket, the one from Cairo's apartment. But wait...

CLOSE ON THAT MATCHBOOK

A WORD is hastily scrawled on the inside: *SIMULACRUM*. Could mean nothing. Could mean everything.

Booth strikes a match.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - LATER

Booth enters, rubbing a growing lump on the back of his head. A SOUND stops him in his tracks: the loud REVERBERATIONS OF SOMETHING VIBRATING. Something very large.

It's Vicki exercising. She stands within a fitness fad of the 1950s - the VIBRATING BELT MACHINE.

She switches it off, rushing to Booth's side.

VICKI
Are you okay?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'm breathing.

VICKI
My God, what happened to your head?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Someone mistook it for a piñata.

LATER

They now sit on the sofa. Booth sips from a scotch, wincing as Vicki holds an ice pack to his head.

She runs a hand across his forehead. For the first time, we really see real affection between them.

VICKI
When you didn't come home, I
thought something had happened to
you. I called all the hospitals...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Some punk just sapped me, that's
all. Nothing dipping the bill
won't fix.

VICKI
They tried to kill you.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Not wearin' the wooden kimono,
doll, so you ain't rid of me yet.

She nuzzles in close to his ear.

VICKI
I have a surprise for you.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I think I've had enough surprises
for one day.

VICKI
You're going to like this surprise.
I met her at the market.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Really, Vicki...

VICKI
Go wash up. I just need to make a
phone call.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Booth dries off after a shower. He takes a long, hard look
at his own reflection, checking out the lump on his skull.

And then there's that left arm. He bends it, hiding the
forearm behind his back.

IN THE MIRROR

Booth as he wishes he were - missing half his arm. But it's
only just pretend.

The door bell RINGS. He waits for Vicki answer it. It RINGS
AGAIN. We follow Booth to the FRONT DOOR. He opens it.

ON THE PORCH

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN in a trench-coat.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
Mister Booth?

THE BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Booth spits toothpaste into the sink.

BEHIND HIM IN THE BEDROOM - RACK FOCUS

Vicki fits a BLACK RUBBER SHEET to the bed.

VICKI

John, have you seen the rubber top sheet?

He has no response. She goes in search of it. Nearby, the Beautiful Woman peels off her coat - she wears fifties-era lingerie underneath. Breathtaking.

ON BOOTH

He watches the scene, reflected in the mirror. He's oddly indifferent to her beauty, but something is peculiar about this woman. He turns to take a closer look.

ON THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

She hoists a LEG onto the bed - it TWISTS awkwardly, an unnatural movement. We don't understand exactly what we're seeing until the Beautiful Woman --

REMOVES THE LEG COMPLETELY

-- and tosses it aside. It's a PROSTHETIC LIMB. Booth approaches, his eyes on the stump that is her right thigh. He extends his hand for it, tender, fingertips caressing.

His interest is less sexual than inquisitive, a coin collector examining a rare penny. She watches, fascinated.

Vicki returns. Nude.

LATER

Vicki sleeps on the bed.

The Beautiful Amputee reattaches her prosthetic limb, preparing to leave. Booth observes her with interest.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

How did you do it?

BEAUTIFUL AMPUTEE

Do what?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

The leg. How'd you lose it?

BEAUTIFUL AMPUTEE

Car accident.

She puts on her overcoat. Booth waits for her to elaborate. She doesn't. It's not a subject she likes talking about.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
On purpose?

BEAUTIFUL AMPUTEE
Excuse me?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Did you smash the heap on purpose?

She looks at him like he's crazy.

BEAUTIFUL AMPUTEE
No. No I didn't.

He's ventured into choppy waters and can tell.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'm sorry.

BEAUTIFUL AMPUTEE
Why would you ask that?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
We just got our lines crossed,
that's all.

LATER

Booth spoons behind Vicki. He just can't get comfortable.
God damn that useless arm.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - LATER

Booth stands in the rain, watching his garage door rise.

There it is, the circular saw. It begins to GLOW again, as though a bright light were fixed upon it.

Because there is. Booth turns, looking --

TOWARD THE STREET

-- where we see HEADLIGHTS pointed our way. It's a car, sitting in Booth's driveway. A SILHOUETTED FIGURE steps out.

He opens a rear door, the clear indication being that Booth should join him. Booth stays where he is.

SILHOUETTED FIGURE/THUG
You need an engraved invitation,
cheapie? Get in.

His jacket opens slightly, allowing us the slightest glimpse
of gun metal. Booth walks toward the open door.

Seated in the back of the car is SHOULDERS MARQUARD.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF LOS ANGELES - LATER

Shoulders' vintage Cadillac passes out of Booth's
neighborhood into an area that isn't so nice.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Where are we going, Shoulders?

INSIDE THE CAR

Booth reclines next to Shoulders, TWO THUGS in the front.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Where it ain't raining, shamus.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
This have to do with the dead doc?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Perhaps.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Then I'm already wet.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Your lucky day. I'm here to offer
an umbrella. You think you're in
dutch? You ain't, not with me in
your corner. You can make a clean
sneak without drowning.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'm a pretty good swimmer.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Chained to a cinder block you
ain't. Man can drown in two inches
of water with a foot on his neck.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You threatening me?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

I don't make threats. Sun don't threat to set each day. Ocean's filled with right gees like you who think they can outsmart a bullet.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Where are we going, Shoulders?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Never should've got involved in this sick business and you don't want to be around for the cure. Believe it or not, I like you. I think of myself as a friend to the common man and they don't come much more common than you.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Thanks.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Do yourself a favor and sit this out. I could make you sit it out. Sit it out in a wood box. But I'm not going to. Do you know why?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Because you're a friend to the common man?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Common men get the chill same as the rest. No shamus, I'm doin' ya one 'cause I know you're an innocent man. A mark, same as me. Dame just wants to make a new life of it and some no good chiseler comes around telling tales about the past. It's goddamn un-American. Even roundheel chippies got a right to reinvention, don't they, shamus?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Write it in stone.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Glad we're on the same page. How about we try things the easy way?

Shoulders hands Booth a new \$5,000 BILL. Booth regards James Madison's face on it.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Madison's the carrot. You don't
want the stick, savvy?

The car pulls over to the side of the street. One of
Shoulders' Thugs gets out.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You cutting off feet, Shoulders?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Angling to get rid of yours? Here
I was thinkin' it was just the arm.

Booth shakes his head with exasperation.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Word travels fast, cheapie. Don't
worry, I can keep a secret. All
over town, little birdies,
whisperin' in my ear.

Booth's door is opened from the outside.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Most people, they like to talk.
Sure hope you ain't one of'em.

Shoulders' Cadillac drives off. Booth ponders his new
environs. That's when he sees it:

HIS CAR

Parked on the side of the street, but not exactly in the
condition he left it. The TIRES are gone. Windshield
SHATTERED. GANG GRAFFITI.

Nearby, Sylvia Multhorpe smiles down from a MARLBORO
BILLBOARD. *We Get You Noticed!*

A FEMALE CATCALL from places unseen...

FEMALE CATCALLER (O.S.)
Papacito que bueno te miras!

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER

SPARKS fly from the overhead trolley wire as an ELECTRIC CITY
BUS stops to pick up Booth.

INSIDE THE BUS - LATER

Booth is eyed by some TEENAGE GIRLS. He tries not to notice.

POV - BOOTH

That cursed left arm. He extends it before him, opening and closing the hand.

Open. Close. Open. Close.

A BOY sits nearby, watching Booth with wonder over the top of his coloring book. He speaks up.

BOY
Hey mister, watcha doin'?

Open.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Cursin' God, kid. Cursin' God.

Close.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN

INT. CRUNCH FITNESS - DAY

MUSCLE MEN pump free weights while PRETTY WOMEN jog in place, held there by ELASTIC ROPES fastened to their waists.

IN A DARKENED ROOM

Vicki holds court over a CYCLING CLASS like a basic training drill instructor. Those in attendance struggle to maintain her pace on their own mounted, cherry red SCHWINN PHANTOM BICYCLE. Sweat drips on chrome fenders and handlebars.

VICKI
I want those keisters out of their
saddles! Double time!

She leaps off her bike, walking the rows and rows of raised asses. She extends a helpful hand to those behinds not sufficiently elevated off the seat. A little too helpful.

VICKI

Better keep it up if you want your
man to keep his up! I'm getting
dizzy from all this jiggle!

She leans in close to a PRETTY CYCLIST. Her hand rests on
the woman's posterior.

VICKI

Not you, of course.

IN THE LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Vicki speaks to a FEMALE COWORKER.

VICKI

You should come over, have dinner
with me and John sometime. I think
you'd like him.

FEMALE COWORKER

John?

VICKI

(digging in purse)
I have a photo around here
somewhere...

FEMALE COWORKER

I don't think-

VICKI

And definitely wear that red dress.
You know, the one you wore to the
Christmas party.

She produces the POLAROID, handing it over.

VICKI

What do you think? Oh wait...

It's upside-down. Vicki flips it - it's BOOTH'S PENIS.

VICKI

I'll make Jell-O.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - MORNING

Booth fills his cereal bowl with Corn Flakes, splashing some MILK on top. It's barely a teaspoon. He looks quizzically at the carton until turning towards --

THE CLOWN

-- sitting on the sofa, OVERSIZED SHOES propped on the coffee table. He watches PORNOGRAPHY on Booth's 1950s black & white console television - a Betty Page-style light bondage serial.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Is that pay per view? Getting
pretty comfortable around here,
Clown.

The Clown eats from his own BOWL OF CEREAL, practically drowning in milk. He peers back over his shoulder.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Phone's over there if you want to
make some long distance calls.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. ENTERPRISE CAR RENTAL AGENCY - DAY

Booth signs some paperwork.

LATER

Booth eyes his rental car: a baby blue '57 FIAT with a trolley pole. It's tiny, more a clown car than one befitting a full-sized human being.

LATER

Booth pulls the Fiat out of the lot. It makes quite a racket - not a smooth ride by any stretch.

ON A MYSTERY ELECTRIC BUICK

Parked at the curb, it roars to life and begins stealthy pursuit.

CUT TO:

EXT. MRS. PANGBURN'S MODEST RANCH HOME - DAY

Booth sits in the Fiat, across the street. Mrs. Pangburn pulls out of her garage and drives off, giving a wave as she passes.

As soon as she's out of sight, Booth reclines the seat back and relaxes.

LATER

The SOUND OF AN ENGINE summons Booth awake. He sees a CAR pull into Mrs. Pangburn's driveway.

An OLDER MAN gets out, looking around to make sure he isn't being watched. Booth ducks down in his seat.

The Man unlocks the front door with his own key and enters. Booth can't believe his eyes.

INSIDE THE HOUSE - LATER

Booth tip-toes on the tile floor, peering into --

THE SUNROOM

-- where he sees the Man moving around Mrs. Pangburn's figurines. Just as she said.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Hands off the figurines, pal.

THE MAN
Calm down, fella.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Who are you?

THE MAN
Jack Pangburn.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Well Jack, just what do you think you're doing?

JACK PANGBURN
What are you doing? This is my house.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Your wife got it in the settlement, or don't you remember?
(MORE)

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (cont'd)
 Maybe we should call copper and
 have them sort it out.

The Man stands put.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 You know where the blower is, don't
 you?

JACK PANGBURN
 Should. I installed it myself.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Look pal, whatever queer game
 you're running is your business,
 but I've been hired to do a job.
 Ain't here to bake a cake.

JACK PANGBURN
 She hired someone? I'll be
 goddamned.
 (takes out his wallet)
 So what's it gonna take, fella?
 (no answer)
 Well? How much is she paying you?

There's a lot of money in that wallet.

THE BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Booth looks through a closet. He grabs a HAIR DRYER, holding
 it up to inspection.

JACK PANGBURN
 Yeah, that's it.

THE BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The hair dryer ROARS. Booth stares at his widening
 reflection as Mrs. Pangburn's ex-husband goes to work warping
 the mirror.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHN DAVID BOOTH'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Booth approaches his building's entrance. At the corner, one
 of Shoulder's THUGS stands watching. He tips his fedora.
 The detective raises his Starbucks coffee in reply.

INSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Booth stops before his office door - it's ajar, the door-frame cracked. Someone broke in.

The office is completely, utterly TRASHED.

Seat cushions torn apart, drawers emptied, furniture overturned. His beloved painting lies on the floor, a LONG TEAR knifed through its center.

A FIGURE sits in a chair. Smoke rises from a lit cigarette. It's SYLVIA MULTHORPE.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Is this some joke?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
You don't think I did this, Mister Booth? Do you believe me capable of such a thing?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
How should I know what you're capable of?

Booth puts his painting back on the wall. He notices Sylvia's BLACK EYE for the first time, though she's tried to hide it under a layer of concealer.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Waiting long? Private dicks get to make their own hours. Benefit of being your own high pillow.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Like being rude to your clients?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You're not a client.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I'd like to change that.

Booth sifts through the mess surrounding his desk. He finds what he's looking for: a cigarette.

He lights it with a match. There's that word again, written on the inside of the matchbook: *SIMULACRUM*.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Did you hear what I said?

Rummaging through the mess once more, Booth comes away with a DICTIONARY. He opens it to the letter S.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Things ain't exactly hitting on all
 eight, Mrs. Multhorpe. Business is
 slow, my shrinker's been bopped,
 and my lady's a sex pervert. But I
 gotta tell you, more than anything
 I'm bored with everyone yanking my
 chain, so how about tippin' your
 mitt 'cause I ain't in the mood.

Booth's finger finds his word:

*sim·u·la·crum (noun) 1. An image or representation. 2. A
 copy of something for which an original does not exist.*

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 My husband is being blackmailed.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 By Shoulders Marquard?

He's guessed correctly. Booth tosses the dictionary aside.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 How-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Me and Shoulders go way back. I
 used to wear tin, or didn't you
 know? Peeped it for real before I
 got in this sorry racket. I should
 tell you Shoulders has already
 given me the buzz.

Booth takes out the Madison and lays it on the desk, making a
 show of the presentation. She seems surprised at seeing it.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 What did he ask you to do?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Nothing.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 Mister Booth, please-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Ain't fibbin', sister. He hired me
 to do nothing. Awfully generous of
 him. I usually do it for free.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 I don't understand.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Neither do I.

She stands up to leave.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Sit down. He gave me the Madison.
Didn't say I was keeping it. Not
when a looker like you comes along
trying to turn my head.

She smiles despite herself.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I thought business was slow.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
It's picking up. Trust me, you'd
rather have this conversation here
than at the clubhouse. I can be
bought.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
So can the law.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'm cheaper. What's Shoulders got
on your husband?

After a moment's contemplation, she sits.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Mister Marquard runs a gambling
establishment. My husband was a
customer.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I know it well.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
It was against my wishes. After he
promised to discontinue his visits,
he persisted, in secret.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ROOSTER CLUB - NIGHT

Sylvia sits in the rear of a taxi cab, watching HER HUSBAND
enter Shoulder's casino.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (V.O.)
Or so he thought.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Husband and wife argue. He grabs her by the arm. Despite his slender build, Multhorpe can be intimidating when angry.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (V.O.)
Wendell denied it, of course. "I would never do that," he said. Well he did do it, Mister Booth, and he did other things as well.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

Booth puts his feet up on the desk.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Let me guess. He lost some money.

Her expression confirms it.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Should know better than to go to that clip joint. Ain't nothing there but a rigged game.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Money began to disappear from our bank accounts. Wendell tried to explain it all away, but I knew better. Then one day, that man appeared at our home.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Sylvia Multhorpe answers the front door. Waiting there is...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Shoulders.

LATER

A nervous Wendell Multhorpe disappears into the study with Shoulders. Sylvia watches as the door shuts behind them.

SERIES OF SHOTS - WENDELL MULTHORPE'S NEW JOB

-- a ringing phone wakes Wendell and Sylvia from sleep

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (V.O.)
Wendell began receiving phone calls
at all hours, from Mister Marquard
or someone in his employ.

-- Wendell quickly dresses

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (V.O.)
After these conversations, he'd
leave, disappearing for hours.
Sometimes he would return with
blood on his clothes.

-- Sylvia lifts Wendell's discarded clothes from the floor,
unmistakable red drops of blood on his white shirt

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (V.O.)
This went on for some time. A
year, year and half perhaps.

-- Wendell argues with someone over the phone

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (V.O.)
One night, during one of these
calls, my husband argued with
whomever he was speaking. It
became quite heated.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
What did your husband say?

-- Wendell sees that Sylvia is watching, so he shuts the door

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
He said he wouldn't do it anymore.
He said he had repaid the debt,
many times over. He refused to be
made an indentured servant.
(MORE)

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (cont'd)
 Shortly after, Mister Booth, we
 were contacted by Doctor Cairo.

CUT TO:

INT. MUSSO & FRANK'S GRILL - EVENING

The Multhorpes eat dinner. Wendell excuses himself, likely
 for the bathroom. Sylvia pours herself some wine.

DR. CAIRO appears. He places an envelope on the table - it's
 addressed to her husband.

DOCTOR CAIRO
 I'll be in touch.

As quickly as he materialized, he leaves.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

Sylvia hands Booth a folded letter, a blackmail collage
 created with letters cut from newspaper. He reads it:

I know what you did. \$100,000 or everyone else will.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Was he in touch?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 No. About a week later, the police
 appeared at our door saying that a
 man who claimed to be in the employ
 of my husband had just leapt from a
 burning building.

CUT TO:

INT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - DAY

Sylvia and Wendell stare down at two PHOTOGRAPHS held by Ted
 Spangler. One is Booth. The other is Cairo.

TED SPANGLER
 Recognize either of these mugs?

Wendell quickly shakes his head. Sylvia takes a little
 longer but follows suit. Spangler eyes her curiously.

TED SPANGLER
Sure about that?

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
So you think Cairo and Shoulders
were in it together?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I don't think my husband's
disagreements with Mister Marquard
and the sudden appearance of this
Doctor Cairo is a coincidence.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Think your husband blipped Cairo?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Certainly not.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
He had the motive, didn't he?
Cairo was blackmailing him.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
My husband isn't a killer.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Pollock Joe's wife said the same
thing before they gave him the
electric cure. When you're
visiting Wendell in the big house,
don't let the echo surprise you.
Plenty of birds singing that song.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I'm not lying.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Just 'cause you ain't lying don't
mean it's the truth. So what did
Cairo have on your husband?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I don't know.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You think your husband was cutting
off feet for Shoulders?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Excuse me?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Trouble boys gotta have a
signature, something to show
they're harder than the rest of the
wrong gees.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
You think Wendell amputated feet?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Somebody did.

She puts her fingers to her lips, thinking. Finally...

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Mister Booth, I would like you to
find out what my husband did before
the police do. I don't mind if you
speak to him, but-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Keep our arrangement between us.
If he knew I'd come to you about
this, he'd-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Close the other eye up?

She looks away, embarrassed.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I fell.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Pollock Joe's wife said that, too.
Funny how all the wrong gees got
slippery floors, calloused
knuckles, and dolls that don't know
how to pack a suitcase.
(beat)
This is going to cost ya.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I have money.

Booth holds up the Madison.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
So do I. I'll need something else.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I'm a married woman.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
From your husband.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
He's a married man.

He smiles. So does she. He stops smiling.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Got a queer request. When I caught
this lay from your husband, the
fake one, that is, it was barter.
An exchange. Would sure like to
get paid and your husband, the real
one, is one of the few who can.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I don't understand.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I want your husband to cut off my
left arm.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Your...left arm?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Not the whole arm. Just here down.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Is there something wrong with your
left arm? It looks fine to me.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Do you want my services or not?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
This..isn't what I expected when I
came here.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
(off trashed office)
Me neither.

Sylvia ponders his offer. She stands.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
If you can save my husband, he will
certainly return the favor in a
manner meeting your...satisfaction.

LATER

Booth sits at his desk, regarding Shoulder's money. A LIGHT
FLASHES from beneath the wreckage of his office.

It's his two-reel ANSWERING MACHINE. And it has a message.

MRS. PANGBURN (ON MACHINE)
Mister Booth, it's happened again.
Someone moved my figurines.

CUT TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES CITY MORGUE - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

The Morgue's MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT regards a business card with
skepticism. It's O'Malley's.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
I don't know, Booth. Aren't you a
suspect?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Downgraded to material witness.
O'Malley asked me to come down and
get a slant at the feet.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
He should have told me you were
coming.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
He didn't? Well, why don't you go
ahead and give him a ring?
O'Malley loves hearing about his
mistakes.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
It's after two in the morning.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Is it? I guess forget about the
phone call and let me see the feet.

LATER

The Attendant speaks on the phone.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (INTO PHONE)
Yes sir, he's standing right here.
(extends receiver)
He wants to talk to you.

Booth accepts the phone.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (INTO PHONE)
I asked him not to call.

EDDIE O'MALLEY (ON PHONE)
What in the hell do you think
you're doing, Booth?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (INTO PHONE)
I just want to see the feet.

EDDIE O'MALLEY (ON PHONE)
At two in the morning?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (INTO PHONE)
Is this a bad time?

EDDIE O'MALLEY (ON PHONE)
Put the Med Student back on.

Booth complies.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (INTO PHONE)
Yeah...Uh huh...Okay...

He hangs up.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
You have five minutes. And don't
touch anything.

MOMENTS LATER

The Attendant yanks out a SLAB. On it, the TWO AMPUTATED FEET. However, these are no ordinary feet. Closer inspection reveals a severe DEFORMITY.

The soles of the feet are arched to an amazing extreme, to the point where the heels practically touch the toes. The entire foot is only about six inches long.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What happened here?

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
 Couldn't say. Not any disease I've
 ever seen. A birth defect, maybe.
 If I didn't know any better...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Pretend you don't.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
 Well, if I didn't know any better,
 I'd say it looks a lot like Chinese
 foot-binding.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 How do you know it ain't?

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
 They stopped doing it half a
 century ago.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Maybe the feet are half a century
 old.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
 They aren't.

There's something the Attendant isn't telling him.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 What?

Booth follows the Attendant over to another drawer. He
 yanks out the slab. On it a BODY, covered by a white sheet.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
 They fished this Jane Doe out of
 the bay last week.

The Attendant pulls the sheet back from the face. Despite
 the bloat and bruising, we recognize it.

FLASHBACK TO:

THE FAKE MULTHORPE SHOWS BOOTH A PHOTO OF HIS MISSING WIFE
 She's a blonde, striking beauty.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

She's not so beautiful anymore, but the women are one in the same. This dead woman is the fake Sylvia Multhorpe.

The Attendant now reaches to the end of the slab, lifting the sheet there as well. No feet.

Booth paces, trying to wrap his mind around this wrinkle.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Put me wise on this foot binding.

CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE OFFICE - LATER

Booth and the Attendant stare at an OPEN MEDICAL BOOK.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT
It was a Chinese symbol of wealth
and class for a thousand years.

CUT TO:

EXT. MING DYNASTY CHINESE HOME - DAY (16TH CENTURY)

An ELDERLY CHINESE WOMAN slaughters a chicken, collecting its BLOOD in a pan.

GRANDMOTHER (SUBTITLE)
Xui-Xui!

In a courtyard, her six-year-old GRANDDAUGHTER playfully chases her BROTHERS. The young girl stops, looking over.

GRANDMOTHER (SUBTITLE)
It's time.

CUT TO:

INT. MING DYNASTY CHINESE HOME - LATER

The woman soaks her granddaughter's feet in the fresh blood.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)
They called it the "Lotus Foot."

Xui-Xui looks longingly out the window. The boys, playing. The sun, setting.

LATER

A HAMMER is raised over the prone feet by a SERVANT.
Grandmother holds the girl to her bosom. The hammer falls.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)

From the age of six, women's feet
were broken with a hammer, then
wrapped with bandages so tightly
that the foot was unable to grow
except onto itself.

LATER

The feet are tightly wrapped with a long CLOTH. It spots
with blood.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)

The process was repeated every two
days.

LATER

More dead chickens. More pounding with the hammer. More
wrapping with the cloth. More blood.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)

Men considered the sight of these
deformed feet and the smell of the
infected flesh erotic.

CUT TO:

EXT. MING DYNASTY CHINESE HOME - ANOTHER DAY

The days of chasing after her brothers are over.
Immobilized, Xui-Xui watches them from afar.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)

A four inch lotus foot was
considered ideal.

ON THE BROTHERS - SLO-MO

Laughter and mirth. Around and around the courtyard they go.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)

So what happened?

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S CAR - DAY

Booth drives through West Hollywood. He adjusts the rear view mirror. We catch a glimpse of --

THAT MYSTERY ELECTRIC BUICK

-- a few car-lengths back.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)
The twentieth century happened.
Chinese government banned foot
binding in 1911. Made the practice
punishable by death.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

Booth finds himself in yet another Doctor's waiting room, and again the only "man." This time, instead of transvestites, he finds himself surrounded by ATTRACTIVE WOMEN.

MIDNIGHT ATTENDANT (V.O.)
That was the end of that. In the
course of twenty years, it
disappeared off the face of the
Earth.

POV - BOOTH

He stares at a PAIR OF FEET, shoehorned into some expensive HIGH-HEELED SHOES. Their OWNER feels his eyes on her.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
How do you walk around in those?

HIGH-HEEL WOMAN
Practice.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Reminds me of what the cons say to
each other in the joint. You can
get used to anything.

A NURSE peaks her head in.

NURSE
Mister Booth?

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Waiting in his fashionably-decorated office is Wendell Multhorpe. The real one. The Nurse leads Booth in.

WENDELL MULTHORPE

Robin, would you mind closing the door behind you?

She complies. Booth takes in the office - the golf trophies, the fishing trip photos, the medical licenses.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

You're quite an artist with the scalpel.

Multhorpe watches him curiously.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

A Rodin of the rhinoplasty. He was a sculptor. French, I think.

WENDELL MULTHORPE

I know who Rodin is.

CLOSE ON A REPLICA OF THE VENUS DE MILO STATUE

Booth regards it closely, especially the missing right arm, severed half-way between elbow and shoulder.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

It was a compliment, Doc. You might learn how to accept one.
(off the Venus de Milo)
Why do you think this statue is so famous?

WENDELL MULTHORPE

Did you come here for a history lesson, Mister Booth?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

(ignoring him)
They say it's a perfect rendition of feminine beauty, but that's got to be some kind of a joke, right?

WENDELL MULTHORPE

I don't think it's a joke, no.

CLOSER ON THE STATUE

The Greek nose. The small breasts. The padding on the stomach. The missing arms.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

You get many skirts asking you for a beezer like this? Bet you more come in looking like Venus than leavin' that way.

WENDELL MULTHORPE

If you don't mind...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Do you know any reason why someone would impersonate you for the purpose of hiring me?

Multhorpe smiles like a man trying hard to act calm. He grabs an envelope opener and starts at his mail with it.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Why would someone say your wife's missing when she ain't?

Just digging at envelope after envelope with the opener.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Do you know anything about foot binding, Doctor Multhorpe?

A LAUGH escapes his lips.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Something funny?

WENDELL MULTHORPE

You may dispense with the charade, Mister Booth! That act may work on your friends downtown, but how about we cut to the chase? What is it you are really after?

Not what Booth was expecting. Before he can answer...

WENDELL MULTHORPE

It's money you want, isn't it? Fine. How much?

Playing along...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

How much is it worth to you?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
What's it going to take for me to
never see or hear from you again?

Booth thinks. What number won't make him sound stupid?

WENDELL MULTHORPE
Well?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
One hundred thousand dollars.

Multhorpe stares at Booth with disbelief. Booth keeps a straight face. It looks like he will have to revise that number when Multhorpe begins writing on a PRESCRIPTION PAD.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
You needn't have done Cairo like
that. There really is no honor
among thieves.

He tears the top sheet off with a flourish, pushing the prescription across the desk along with a KEY.

CLOSE ON THE PRESCRIPTION

Written on it: *Union Station, Locker 16B*

WENDELL MULTHORPE
I need time to arrange for that
kind of money. Check the locker in
two days. You'll find your price
has been met.
(dripping with sarcasm)
It's been a pleasure, Mister Booth.

CUT TO:

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Booth addresses an envelope to himself, care of a P.O. Box, and puts the prescription and key inside.

WENDELL MULTHORPE (V.O.)
I'd be obliged if you gave
Shoulders my sincerest regards.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

Heads cloaked under DOME HAIR DRYERS. Everyone reads the newest issue of Cosmopolitan or Ladies Home Journal.

Vicki gets her hair shampooed and cut, face buried in her own copy of MODERN WOMAN. She reads a recipe for JELL-O SALAD.

CUT TO:

INT. MRS. PANGBURN'S MODEST RANCH HOME - DAY

Booth reorganizes boxes of JELL-O in Mrs. Pangburn's kitchen cabinets. Her ex-husband goes to work on the silverware.

THE BATHROOM - LATER

Booth reaches in the closet for the hair dryer, finding it now partially-obscured by package upon package of LAXATIVES. He takes one in hand. Remorse? Second thoughts?

Or not. Like in the kitchen, Booth begins rearranging the laxatives.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A blizzard of billboards and advertisements. Everything is for sale: candy, cigarettes, sex, love, and happiness.

Vicki admires her new haircut in a shop window, eating an ICE CREAM CONE. She moves from one display to the next. Mannequins sport the latest 50s fashion. Shoes. Blenders.

A BLACK CAR pulls up beside her. The rear window lowers and a FAMILIAR FACE APPEARS. His voice calls out...

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Aren't you John Booth's doll?

VICKI
Do we know each other?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
I'm not a gee you'd forget.

His DRIVER gets out of the car and opens the trunk.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Just so happens me and my friend
been driving around with a gift for
Booth. It's sitting there in the
trunk. Think you could take it off
my hands?

VICKI

A gift?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Got a card and everything.

She cautiously nears the open trunk. Something seems off.

VICKI

Maybe you should just give it to
him yourself.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Go ahead, he won't bite. Not
unless you ask him nicely.

The Driver smiles, flashing a gold tooth. Not even Vicki
wants to be bitten by this fellow.

Vicki scans the street. PEDESTRIANS walk by, cars pass.
It's the middle of the day - what could happen?

She looks inside the trunk. Her forehead wrinkles.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Dolly, that's one lovely dress
you're wearing.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - LATER

Shoulder's gift sits on Booth's kitchen table. We've seen it
before. Alive. It is:

A TAXIDERM MY MONKEY IN A TUXEDO

Its paws have been posed over lifeless glass eyes, a
MONOGRAMMED CARD wedged between two stiff fingers.

REVERSE ON BOOTH AND VICKI

VICKI

What's it mean?

A toilet FLUSHES. Booth looks toward the opening bathroom door. The Clown emerges with a frayed copy of TITTER MAGAZINE under arm.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You're still here?

VICKI
Be nice, John.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Light a match at least. That's
what they're there for.

The Clown returns to the bathroom. Booth brings his attention back to the monkey, picking the card from its paw. It's affixed with Shoulders' initials and three simple words:

SEE NO EVIL

VICKI
Who was that man in the car?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
A killer.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

A large room filled with desks. O'Malley finishes a report. Booth casually puts his feet up beside the man's typewriter.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Shoulders? You mean Shoulders
Marquard?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You know another one? Think he's
running skirts or dirty pictures?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
What do you want to know about
Shoulders for?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Healthy curiosity.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
People curious about Shoulders
don't stay healthy for long.
Sometimes they develop a limp.

Spangler spies Booth from across the room.

TED SPANGLER

Hey Booth, looks like you stepped
in shit!

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Try using a toilet next time!

POLICEMEN laugh. Spangler gives Booth the finger.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Somebody should arrest that sap for
impersonating an officer.

(beat)

The clink still hasn't caught up
with Shoulders, huh?

EDDIE O'MALLEY

And it never will. Marquard's got
money and he's got friends. As
long as he don't make headlines, he
gets to keep both.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Last time I checked, floatin' some
broad with no feet wasn't
maintaining a low profile.

O'Malley looks up from his typing.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

I saw the stiff. She got a name?

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Yeah. Jane Doe.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

No record?

EDDIE O'MALLEY

She didn't mention it. Maybe you
should ask her.

O'Malley jerks a thumb over his shoulder.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Mugshot books are in there.

CUT TO:

INT. CHINESE LAUNDRY - NIGHT - SLO MO

A CHINESE LAUNDRY WORKER operates a CLOTHES MANGLER. Under his feet, in the basement below hides:

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Think she was workin' it for
Shoulders?

AN OPIUM DEN

DRUG ADDICTS recline on dirty benches, smoking through long OPIUM PIPES. COCKROACHES cross our path.

EDDIE O'MALLEY (V.O.)
What makes you say that?

FURTHER INSIDE

A little nicer back here where the wealthier opium addicts get private rooms. FEMALE ATTENDANTS in tight silk see to their comfort.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Just a hunch.

EDDIE O'MALLEY (V.O.)
If you're looking for information,
you'll have to do better than that.

EVEN FURTHER NOW

Way in the back, in an OPULENT ROOM hidden behind guarded doors --

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Who said I'm looking for
information? This is just a former
colleague, giving the lay on a bird
you may want to talk to.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

-- lies between two NUDE GIRLS, blowing SMOKE from his own lips into their eager mouths. If they are eighteen, they don't look it.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Shoulders Marquard?

Shoulders removes his robe and extinguishes the lamp light, plunging us into DARKNESS.

BACK TO:

THE POLICE STATION

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You might ask if he ever heard of
Chinese foot-binding.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
That another hunch?

Booth stands with a wink and a slap on the back.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I don't have hunches, Eddie.

Booth heads to the exit. O'Malley yells out...

EDDIE O'MALLEY
What the hell is Chinese foot-
binding!?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You know how to read! Look it up!

THE MUG SHOT ROOM - LATER

Booth flips through pages of pages of female mug shots, a tedious endeavor.

LATER

Still more mug shots. Nothing.

EVEN LATER

He's about ready to give up when SOMETHING catches his attention:

A MUG SHOT

Blonde and pretty, but definitely not the Fake Sylvia Multhorpe.

FLASHBACK TO:

BOOTH AND SHOULDERS IN THE BACK OF THE CADILLAC

The gangster addresses Booth.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Dame just wants to make a new life
of it and some no good chiseler
comes around telling tales about
the past. It's goddamn un-
American.

BACK TO:

THE MUG SHOT

It is, however, the REAL SYLVIA MULTHORPE.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD (V.O.)

Even roundheel chippies got a right
to reinvention, don't they, shamus?

He writes some numbers down off the photo. We follow Booth
out into --

THE POLICE STATION PROPER

-- avoiding the attention of O'Malley and Spangler, taking a
straight path to a FEMALE OFFICER. She smiles. Booth has
this affect on women.

OFFICER DORIS

John, what are you doing here?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Just doing some homework. How's
Sam?

OFFICER DORIS

Oh, you know, any time he's got two
pennies to rub together-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Think you could do me one?

OFFICER DORIS

Why even ask about him if you don't
want to know?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Just being polite, sorry. Need you
to get some info on an arrest for
me. Be a sweetheart, will ya?

OFFICER DORIS
Got a number?

He hands it over.

OFFICER DORIS
You could have called, you know. I
don't...
(leans in close)
...normally do things like that.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I know you don't, doll. And it was
great. But I'm pressed for time.

She acquiesces, disappearing off to places unseen. Booth
remains at her desk, trying to be inconspicuous. A DIFFERENT
FEMALE OFFICER uses the water cooler nearby.

She sees him. More smiles.

DIFFERENT FEMALE OFFICER
John Booth?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Patty? How long's it-

The smile fades.

DIFFERENT FEMALE OFFICER
You're a real ass, you know that?

She THROWS a cup of water in his face. More history here.

DIFFERENT FEMALE OFFICER
Your girlfriend fucks better than
you do.

She walks off. Doris returns with a file, choosing not to
comment on what has just transpired.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I owe ya. What was she pinched
for?

OFFICER DORIS
Soliciting.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Come again?

OFFICER DORIS
Yep. Prostitution.

She shows it to him. Sure enough, Sylvia "Bascom" was arrested for prostitution. A detail at the bottom of the arrest report catches his interest:

Bail posted: S. Marquard

CUT TO:

INT. BIRD CAGE JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

A cramped, smoke-filled room where a mostly BLACK CROWD sways to improvisational jazz. A SAXOPHONIST wails away on his instrument like Charlie Parker incarnate.

IN THE AUDIENCE

A white face soaks in the music. It's Eddie O'Malley, sipping on a bourbon in his darkened booth.

He has company.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Detective O'Malley, isn't it?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Mrs. Multhorpe?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Sylvia. Are you here alone, detective?

A FIGHT breaks out in front of the stage. GLASS breaks, a CHAIR is tossed. O'Malley calmly takes another sip.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Must be a mix up. Governor's ball is across the street. This shinebox ain't exactly featured on the society page.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Is it featured in the Policemen's Quarterly?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Yeah. The crime section.

The fight is over as quickly as it started - BOUNCERS drag out the bloodied loser.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Going to ask me to sit down?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
It's a free country.

She sits.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Is it?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Is it what?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Free. Seems to me everything is for sale.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Not everything.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
You're wrong. Everything has a price, detective. You just need to know where to find the tag.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Hope you're not trying to bribe me.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Don't be silly. A man of your integrity? No, Detective O'Malley, I'm not trying to buy you.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Good.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I'm trying to sell you something.

O'Malley studies her face. The saxophone roars.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Do you know a man by the name of Shoulders Marquard?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
May have heard the name once or twice.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
How would you like to arrest him
for murder?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Who'd he murder?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
A private investigator. John David
Booth.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Funny. Booth didn't mention it.
Must have slipped his mind.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
That's because it hasn't happened
yet.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
But it will?

Sylvia takes O'Malley's glass, tossing back what remains of
the scotch.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
I'm listening.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHN DAVID BOOTH'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Booth returns to his car. Parked down the block is that
MYSTERY ELECTRIC BUICK again. Booth drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY STREETS - LATER

We watch from inside --

THE MYSTERY ELECTRIC BUICK

-- as Booth's car navigates the city streets. A right here,
another right, a left, and then:

A LEFT INTO A DEAD END STREET

It's a TRICK - Booth knew he was being followed. He gets out
of his car, running over to the Buick as it attempts a
desperate three-point turn. We see a WOMAN behind the wheel.

ON THE OVERHEAD TROLLEY WIRE

The Buick's trolley pole TWISTS in the electrical wires.
Maneuverability is not their strong suit. SPARKS fly.

Booth's at the driver's side window before the Woman can get away. She looks to us in panic. The car stalls.

A closer look reveals it's not a woman after all, but a FAT MAN IN DRAG.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You've got to be kidding me.

As it happens, it's no ordinary man, either. It's the FAKE WENDELL MULTHORPE

CUT TO:

INT. RAINBOW LOUNGE - NIGHT

A DRAG QUEEN performs on stage to a scattered crowd. We find Booth and the Fake Multhorpe at the bar.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Do you have any idea what kind of
jam you're in?

The Fake Multhorpe cannot hide his anxiety. He changes the subject.

FAKE MULTHORPE
I do a cabaret act here on
Thursdays. Perhaps you've seen it.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Do I look like I go to gunsels shows
on Thursdays?

FAKE MULTHORPE
We get all types in here, you know.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
No, I don't know.

Fake Multhorpe sips from his frozen daiquiri.

FAKE MULTHORPE
Doctor Cairo told me you were a
patient.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Christ, doesn't doctor-patient
 privilege mean anything anymore?
 What else did he tell you?
 Somethin' about what accessories to
 murder get in this town?

FAKE MULTHORPE
 Mister Booth-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Let me fill you in. You get to try
 on the newest style in neckwear.
 Sound good, daisy, since you like
 to play dress-up so much?

FAKE MULTHORPE
 Please-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Rope don't go with a flower print,
 I'm afraid, so wear something else
 when you take the leap.

Fake Multhorpe begins to cry.

FAKE MULTHORPE
 Doctor Cairo, he promised me...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 He promised you what?

FAKE MULTHORPE
 He promised me my surgery. He said
 if I did...if I did what I did...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Pretend to be the Multhorpe bird?

FAKE MULTHORPE
 If I did that, he'd make sure I got
 on the list. Then I read in the
 news, about Doctor Cairo's murder.
 I knew something had gone terribly
 wrong. Now I'm afraid to go home.
 (beat)
 I've been living out of my car.

Booth regards the Fake Multhorpe. Wrinkled clothes, wig
 slightly askew, makeup smeared.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Give me your wallet.

FAKE MULTHORPE

What for?

Booth grabs the man's PURSE. He finds Fake Multhorpe's wallet, and in it, his DRIVER'S LICENSE. Finally, a name: FRANK GOODIS.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Go home, Fat Frank.

FAT FRANK

What if someone is waiting there
for me?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Who'd be waiting for you? The only
jasper you can finger is Cairo
which is about how someone wanted
it.

Fat Frank is not convinced. There's something unsaid.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

What?

Fat Frank rummages in his purse. Lipstick, a compact, and empty candy bar wrappers pile up on the bar along with:

A COLLAGE OF BODY PARTS

Cut from magazines, Frank's idea of the perfect woman. Less flawless beauty and more a caricature of femininity. A de Kooning-esque chimera monster. Booth shakes his head.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

You're one queer bird, you know
that?

Finally, Frank finds what he's looking for: a HOUSE KEY.

FAT FRANK

I was told to get rid of it. Drop
it down a sewer drain. But I
didn't.

He extends it to the Detective.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

What do I want with your house key?

FAT FRANK

It's not my house key, detective.

The significance dawns on Booth. He takes the key from him and stands. Booth leaves some money on the bar and even more for Frank.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Get outta town and stay there,
savvy?

Frank nods, sipping anxiously on his daiquiri. Booth gives him a final once over.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Do you think you actually look like
a woman?

FAT FRANK
What does a woman look like,
detective?

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN DAVID BOOTH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Booth fixes the tear in his painting with SCOTCH TAPE. He steps back to admire his handiwork.

Ever so faintly, we HEAR his daydream: the sounds of CICADAS, FROGS, and then, the LAUGHTER OF PLAYING CHILDREN.

The office door CREEPS OPEN. Booth looks over to see MRS. PANGBURN. She's distressed, holding one of her figurines.

MRS. PANGBURN
Mister Booth, you haven't been
returning my calls.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Ain't nothing to tell you.

She takes in Booth's mess of an office - he still hasn't straightened up since the break-in.

MRS. PANGBURN
But...but someone...my ex-husband-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Lady, I'm about to do you a favor.
Ready? You're fat and you stare at
those dolls far too much.

MRS. PANGBURN
Mister Booth!

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Just tellin' it to you straight.
Consider the case closed. Bill's
in the mail.

He pushes past her to the door.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
If you'll excuse me, I got some
real gumshoeing to do. Be a good
girl and close the door on your way
out, will you?

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOSTER CLUB - NIGHT

That flashing sign of a neon ROOSTER.

REVERSE ON BOOTH

He sits inside his car, reading a NEWSPAPER. Unremarkable
articles in a sea of clothing and cosmetics advertisements.

A CAR pulls to a stop outside the Rooster Club. Shoulders'
car. The driver holds the door open as the man himself exits
the club and disappears into the back seat.

It pulls away. Booth begins pursuit.

LATER

Shoulders' car shoots along DOWNTOWN CITY STREETS. Booth
follows. He's better at this than Fat Frank.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARMENT DISTRICT - NIGHT

Fabric shops, flower venders, and flea markets, all
retrofitted into dilapidated Downtown architecture.
Everything is in a state of disrepair.

Aging BILLBOARDS peel, their promises of eternal youth
through night cream losing to time and the elements.

IN AN ALLEYWAY

Booth waits in the shadows, eyes focused on:

AN ART-DECO BUILDING

Four stories of blue-green terra-cotta facade. The windows are blacked out, seemingly abandoned to time. Yet a number of expensive cars are parked outside, Shoulders' among them.

What was once a marquee now holds a cheap, vinyl banner: SUGAR AND SPICE AND EVERYTHING NICE. Accompanying illustrations suggest a clothing manufacturer.

ANGLE ON SOME DRUNK MEN

They exit from a side door, clasping to each other with the camaraderie of the intoxicated. Booth watches the men climb into a Mercedes and peel off.

LATER

Shoulders and his Driver appear soon after from the same exit, hopping in their own car. Booth flattens against a wall, avoiding their HEADLIGHTS as they drive away.

Booth hurries across the street to that side entrance.

INSIDE THE BUILDING

The SOUNDS OF MACHINERY emanate from places unseen. Booth progresses forward, discovering the source in:

AN OPEN SPACE

It takes up most of the entire first floor. Rows and rows of MID-CENTURY INDUSTRIAL SEWING MACHINES manned by LATINO MEN and WOMEN. A WORKER passes without acknowledgement.

This is a SWEAT SHOP.

Booth walks the aisles, taking in their work. Looks like CHILDREN'S CLOTHING. Miniature party dresses, shirts, and short pants. It all seems so innocuous, non-threatening.

No one gives him even the slightest notice. No one except an OVERWEIGHT SEAMSTRESS. Her eyes move from Booth to a far wall - what you're looking for is over there. He sees it:

A STEEL DOOR

It's obscured by some CLOTHING RACKS. Booth tries the handle - it's locked. Before he can contemplate his next move --

A SLOT OPENS UP IN IT

-- TWO BEADY EYES staring out at us from behind.

DOORMAN
Password?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What?

DOORMAN
Password.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'm a pal of Shoulders. He told me
to check out the joint.

DOORMAN
Still need the password, sir.

Booth searches his brain. Password?

DOORMAN
Would you like me to phone Mister
Marquard for you?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
No, it will come to me, just one-

It does come to him, as though it were the most obvious thing
in the world...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Simulacrum.

Those eyes study him for an extended moment until the slot
CLOSES SHUT. Seconds pass without activity. Maybe that
wasn't the password.

It's Booth's lucky day. The Door SWINGS OPEN. We see the
tuxedo-clad DOORMAN for the first time. Behind him looms a
STAIRCASE to places unseen.

Booth starts past the Doorman when an ARM blocks his path.

DOORMAN
Sir?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Yes?

DOORMAN
How will you be paying?

The Detective reaches into his wallet, withdrawing SHOULDERS'
FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR BILL. He hands it over.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Cash.

MOMENTS LATER

Booth ascends that staircase towards the sounds of THUMPING BASS MUSIC, the journey lit by dull RED BACKUP LIGHTS. A GAGGLE OF SCANDINAVIAN BUSINESSMEN pass him on the way out, conversing in their own tongue.

THE SECOND FLOOR

A HALLWAY with DOORS. Some closed, some open. In the open doors stand:

WOMEN

Dead-eyed PROSTITUTES catering to eccentric tastes. They get stranger the farther Booth walks.

A heavily-tattooed ASIAN WOMAN. Another who's MORBIDLY OBESE. Her opposite, a WOMAN WITH A LIGHT-LACED 19-INCH WAIST. Someone's 70-year-old GRANDMOTHER. SIAMESE TWINS.

We can only imagine what's behind the closed doors, the hallway filled with the SOUNDS OF SEXUAL DEBAUCHERY. Grunting. Yelling. Screaming. A door opens and --

A POLICE OFFICER

-- exits through it, straightening his uniform. He pushes past Booth to the stairs without acknowledgement. We catch a glimpse of the ACTION behind the door: five or six NUDE MEN sharing a SINGLE WOMAN. Instinctively, Booth's eyes go to:

HIS OWN LEFT HAND

It tightens into a fist as though controlled by a power not his own.

FLASHBACK TO:

BOOTH RIDING THE BUS

That Young Boy watches him with rapt fascination.

BOY

Hey mister, watcha doin'?

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT - ON BOOTH'S FIST

Open. Close. Open. Close. Booth's breath quickens, overwhelmed by the GRUNTS, MOANS, and SLAPPING BODIES heard behind the hallway's peeling wallpaper.

Booth moves on, stained carpet under foot. Down the end, he stops at a doorway, its door ajar. The MUSIC POUNDS.

FLASHBACK TO:

THE BOY ON THE BUS

He returns to his coloring book, scribbling with crayon, pleased by his artistry. So innocent.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

We HEAR the fucking before we see it. Booth's left palm extends with peculiar helplessness, pushing that door OPEN.

INSIDE THE ROOM

A PREGNANT WOMAN has ROUGH SEX with a CUSTOMER. They're not alone. The man grasps her extended stomach with one hand, the other caressing:

THE STUMP OF THE BEAUTIFUL AMPUTEE

He thrusts into the Pregnant Woman with disturbing rapidity and force. A man frustrated by his inability to feel.

The Customer looks in our direction. He likes being watched, inviting it. Until he sees that it's Booth. And Booth sees that it is:

DONNIE ASTA

Booth's eyes narrow, passive repulsion evolving into active violence. The switch has been flipped.

His hand goes to his waistband, coming away with a GUN. Booth RUSHES inside --

PISTOL-WHIPPING DONNIE

-- with a shocking brutality. The naked man falls to the floor, spitting up TEETH.

He tries to crawl away, but Booth is on him, savage, BATTERING him across the back of the neck with a bloodied fist, knocking him out cold.

The Pregnant Woman raises a sheet over her round form, backed into a corner, but Booth's interest lies elsewhere:

THE BEAUTIFUL AMPUTEE

She tries to make an escape on her half-fastened artificial limb, but Booth is too quick for her. He sends the leg FLYING from her body with a swift KICK.

She falls with a THUD. Booth kneels on her spine, cocking his gun with a steely grip. He sets the muzzle on the back of her head.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Tell me about the woman with the
lotus feet.

LATER

The Beautiful Amputee lies on the bed, her wrists secured with a torn STRIP of bed sheet. Booth tears another strip of fabric - the Pregnant Woman is next.

This is a man who's lost it.

ON DONNIE ASTA

He slowly comes to on the floor, finding his own limbs have been tied.

DONNIE
Booth? What are you doing?

Booth, finished with his makeshift bindings, commences removing his SHIRT.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Redecorating, snowbird. Hope
Shoulders likes red.

DONNIE
Look, shamus...I was just doing-

Off come the pants. The detective folds the belt over in his hands.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
A job? I know. Don't you worry.
I ain't gonna put you under ground.
(MORE)

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (cont'd)
I'm just gonna hurt you. It'll be
messy. You'll wish I was shoveling
dirt on your face after we repaint
the room with your blood.

(to the women)
Feel free to scream. Loogans will
just think we're having an extra
swell time.

DONNIE
I'll...I'll spill everything...
Whatever you want to know...
Shoulders, he made me-

Booth thrusts the belt gag into the prone man's mouth. He
BREAKS off a WOODEN LEG from a nearby chair as a weapon.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Nothing for you to spill I don't
already know. Some egg crosses
Shoulders and there's a price for
that. I get it. But see, there's
also a price to crossin' me.

IN THE HALLWAY - LATER

Booth leaves the room, shaken by what he's done and seen.
BLOOD dots his face. He rubs at it with his sleeve.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Get comfortable, Donnie. This is
gonna be awhile.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT./EXT. BOOTH'S PARKED CAR - LATER

Booth sits inside his parked Fiat, needing this moment to
collect himself.

His BLOODY LEFT FIST tightens on the steering wheel,
squeezing with such FORCE we fear his own fingers might
break.

WIDE ON THE SCENE

He is parked in his own driveway.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - LATER

Booth lifts a hand-written NOTE from the kitchen table:

Be back later - Vicki

THE BEDROOM - LATER

Booth goes through Vicki's drawers. Lotions. Sex toys. Pornography. He finds what he's been searching for - a SCRAP OF PAPER with a single word written on it. *Simulacrum*.

MOMENTS LATER

He stares down at the unmade bed sheets. Dirty. Booth YANKS them from the mattress with a strange ferocity.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN

EXT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - POOL

Sylvia Multhorpe swims in her lap pool. She begins to climb out when a HAND extends a towel to her. It's Booth.

She accepts it, but stays where she is, NUDE below the water.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
How are things progressing, Mister
Booth?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Swimmingly.

She doesn't get out of the pool.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
Would you mind turning your back?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Modest all of a sudden? You can
cut the virgin act.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
I beg your pardon?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 I seen the mugshot, chippy. I know
 you worked for Shoulders. Your
 whore'in is a matter of public
 record.

She still won't get out of the pool. Finally, he turns
 around. She steps out, wrapping the towel around her.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 You have the wrong idea.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Do I?

Booth swings back to her. He's had enough, RIPPING the towel
 off her body. She stands there in her birthday suit,
 unflinching, refusing to be intimidated.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Gambling debts? You must be having
 a laugh. Sounds like I ain't the
 only one who still works by barter.
 Shoulders gets a crooked doc for
 his creep joint and your husband
 gets one of the prize whores. Tell
 me another one, sister.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 Can I have my towel back?

Booth considers the towel in his hand. He hands it to her.

Rather than cloak herself with it, she uses the towel to dry
 her hair. Booth doesn't know what to say.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 You think you know what's in a
 person's heart, Mister Booth. But
 you don't.

Wrapping it now around her head, her nude form on display...

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 No one owns me.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 What would you call it when one man
 buys you from another?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 That's between them. What I do, I
 do because I want to.

(MORE)

SYLVIA MULTHORPE (cont'd)
 If they believe their agreement is
 binding over me, then they are as
 mistaken as you are.

She walks over to a lounge chair, casually grasping another
 towel - this one she drapes around her body. Show's over.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Why string me along?

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 My husband has been in Shoulders'
 employ, fulfilling duties to which
 I have not been privilege to. The
 reasons for that service do not
 matter, regardless of whether they
 engage your prurient nature.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 My prurient nature? You have a
 smart mouth for a roundheel chippy
 two years removed from the screw.
 You clean up nice, but I can still
 smell the gutter on you. That
 eye's healing real swell. I'm
 startin' to believe you did fall
 down.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 Tell me, Mister Booth. What do you
 think you know?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Cairo was blackmailing your husband
 alright.

FLASHBACK TO:

CAIRO'S BLACKMAIL LETTER

I know what you did. \$100,000 or everyone else will.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
 The way I figure, Cairo found out
 you were one of Shoulders' pro
 skirts. Thought he could get a few
 leafs from your husband to clam up.
 Except Wendell Multhorpe ain't no
 dummy. He knows blackmail's got a
 way of not stayin' bought. So he
 calls Cairo's bluff.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. WOODED AREA - NIGHT

A dark, stormy night. Cairo begins to dig.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
But see, this is where it all gets
queer. Cairo doesn't disappear.
He doesn't because he finds a pair
of deformed feet.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MAKESHIFT OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

Wendell Multhorpe studies grotesque PHOTOGRAPHS OF LOTUS
FEET. Seated nearby, nude except for her surgical gown:

THE WOMAN WITH THE LOTUS FEET

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Suddenly, it's not just some dirty
doc at the end of the hook but the
hardest gee in town.

LATER

HER NORMAL FEET protrude from underneath a white sheet, each
held by a WOODWORKING VICE. Life for her is about to change.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Ain't too many things that can bend
Shoulders Marquard over a barrel,
but smashin' some chippy's feet for
sex perverts with a chinky exotic
taste just might be one of'em.

Wendell Multhorpe regards the task at hand with apprehension.

WENDELL MULTHORPE
You've met my price?

His employer steps from the shadows...

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Your price, Multhorpe, waits
downstairs. Now get to work.

Multhorpe reaches to a tray of surgical tools, grasping a
RUBBER Mallet. He swings it towards the feet.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Takes a special kind of depravity,
sister. To find beauty in broken
bones and rotting flesh.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN BUILDING - NIGHT

Multhorpe takes drags from a cigarette clasped in trembling
hand, shaken. But things are looking up.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
That kind gets the newshawks all
excited, John Q Public askin' what
the law's doin' about it, and the
politicians scratchin' their heads
wondering how some beat cop drives
a nicer crate than they do.

Waiting for him on a bench is his future wife, Sylvia.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
That's some story.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
You act surprised, like this is all
news to you. Cairo just happens to
find the feet when he's already
trying to chisel your husband?
That's a big coincidence, Mrs.
Multhorpe, and I don't believe in
coincidences.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
What are you trying to say?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'm sayin' Cairo had a partner.
And when he got bumped, they needed
some sucker to be a front man on
the graft, even if he didn't know
he was. I'm that sucker. And I
can't shake the feeling you're
pulling all the strings.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
You've got quite an imagination.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I ain't even done yet.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ROOSTER CLUB - SHOULDER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Booth shows Shoulders the photo of the Woman with Lotus Feet.
A moment of recognition in the mobster's face.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Cairo sees in me a desperate man.
Maybe I am. Has me on a fakeloo
search for Sylvia Multhorpe,
flashing the dead woman's picture
around town.

MINUTES LATER

Shoulders regards Donnie, lying on the floor of his office.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
What are we going to do about you?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
There's only one way Shoulders
shuts up a blackmailer and that's
making so they don't talk to no one
without a Ouija board. Wouldn't
want to put your own pretty neck on
the chopping block, so that's where
I come in.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
You should leave now, Mister Booth.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
What if I don't? How about you get
the law on the horn? While you're
at it, put'em wise to how your
husband resurrected barbaric
practices from a half century ago
for a goon like Shoulders.

(MORE)

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (cont'd)
 Didn't she deserve better than to
 have her feet smashed with a
 hammer, corpse fed to the fish?
 Got any feeling in that ice cold
 pump of yours? She was a whore,
 just like you.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 My husband-

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Your husband is rotten as
 Prohibition and you know it!

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
 I suppose you'll be keeping that
 arm of yours.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 You know, I think I'm getting used
 to it. But don't worry about me.
 I'll be getting paid.

Booth reaches into his pocket, taking out the HOUSE KEY Fat
 Frank gave him. He tosses it over.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 That's your key, ain't it? Funny
 how these things find their way
 into the hands of blackmailers and
 fat gunsels angling to get a little
 lighter between the legs.

She doesn't need to say it's her key - her face says it all.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 You want your husband to swing,
 that's jake with me. Just stop
 pretending you love him.

CUT TO:

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Booth opens a post office box. A single ENVELOPE waits
 inside, addressed by his own hand. He holds it up to the
 light, silhouetting the KEY held within.

CUT TO:

INT. UNION STATION - DAY

We pick Booth out of the packed train station crowd.

LATER

Booth sits at the counter of a Union Station DINER, his eyes focused about fifty feet away on a ROW OF LOCKERS.

CLOSE ON LOCKER 16B

It's the one he has a key for. No one loiters near it and no one appears to be watching him. Just commuters buying newspapers and boarding trains.

Booth makes his move. He traverses the distance between diner and locker as inconspicuous as possible. Puts the key in - it fits, it turns.

The locker opens. There, inside: a BRIEFCASE. He grabs it.

INSIDE A PUBLIC BATHROOM - LATER

Booth waits for the last person to wash their hands and exit before he disappears into:

THE LAST STALL

He places the briefcase on the toilet, flips the latches and opens it - stacks and stacks of MONEY.

ON THE MAIN BATHROOM DOOR

UNKNOWN HANDS close it and lock it.

BACK ON BOOTH

He thumbs through the bills. Sure looks like a hundred thousand dollars.

OUTSIDE THE STALL

We see Booth's feet underneath the door. Two MEN enter the frame, standing just outside. Between them, they carry a large LUGGAGE TRUNK. You could fit a body inside.

ON THESE MEN

It's SHOULDERS' THUGS. They nod to each other before REACHING UNDER THE DOOR and dragging Booth out by his ankles.

He twists onto his back, getting a good look at the FIST that comes swinging down, bringing us to...

BLACK

SMASH CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - DREAM SEQUENCE - VISTAVISION

Another graphic-infused dream sequences.

-- the door to locker 16B OPENS and Booth falls into it, through the rabbit hole

-- the lid of the trunk OPEN and the THUGS pull us out

-- Sylvia Multhorpe accepts a towel from Booth

SYLVIA MULTHORPE

How are things progressing, Mister Booth?

-- we are tossed into the trunk of SHOULDER'S AWAITING CAR

-- the tight-laced Prostitute stares at us from an open door

-- Booth falls through smoke and into blackness

-- the Junkie, bruised and battered from his beating, leans into view; a HALO BRACE circles his head

DONNIE

Got any more smokes, Mister Detective?

-- the Junkie slams the trunk SHUT

-- the Beautiful Amputee removes her prosthetic leg

-- a lotus flower BLOOMS

-- Fat Frank looks at us over his strawberry daiquiri

FAT FRANK

What does a woman look like, Mister Booth?

FADE OUT.

FADE IN

EXT. WILDERNESS - NIGHT

Things are hazy at first, slowly gaining clarity when --

SPLASH

-- we're drenched by a bucket of water wielded by unseen hands.

REVERSE ON BOOTH

Shivering from the cold, deep gulps of air, his face bloody and swollen.

Booth hugs an OAK TREE, prostrate on a mound of grass. He tries to get up, but he can't - his hands are handcuffed around the tree.

He takes in his surroundings. Forestation as far as the eye can see. A dirt road.

On that road, there's a PARKED CAR. Shoulder's car. Two Thugs stand beside it, playing POKER on the trunk with a wheelchair-bound Donnie Asta.

Then there's the broad-shouldered MAN who stands before us holding an AXE. This can only be one person.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Remember me?

It takes a moment for Booth to gather a response.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

My fairy godmother?

Shoulders approaches. He regards the axe in his hand, admiring his own reflection in its enormous blade.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

That's remarkable, Booth. You've guessed correctly. Shoulders Marquard is your fairy godmother because he is about to give you a very special present.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

A briefcase full of money? It's a popular gift this season.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Just gave away my last one. I have
something even better for you.
Something I know you want.

(beat)

A new shape. How does that sound?

Shoulders stands over his captive. The axe shines brightly
in the afternoon light. He holds it over Booth's left elbow.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

It's here you want it, am I wrong?
My memory is always letting me
down. Easy to forget things you're
not looking at. Man can forget his
own face if he didn't have a
mirror.

It's Booth turn to see his own reflection in that massive
blade. Fear shows on his face.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Father was a lumberjack, you know.
I was practically raised with one
of these in my tiny hand. Alas,
the family business wasn't for me,
but maybe I can still make papa
proud. We chop other things in
these woods now.

Nearby, an empty HOLE, dug into the dirt. The significance
dawns on Booth.

FLASHBACK TO:

A STORMY NIGHT

Cairo plunges a shovel into these same woods. He comes upon
the LOTUS FEET.

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

Shoulders lights a CIGARETTE in his own mouth, extending it
teasingly towards his captive.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Sorry they ain't your brand, but I
ain't below giving a condemned man
his last puff.

He puts the cigarette in Booth's left hand. The detective holds it there impotently, far out of reach of his own mouth.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

The skills aren't what they used to be, I'm afraid. We'll have to start small and work up to it. Like getting your hair cut, Booth. A little at a time. You're going to look wonderful, just the way you always imagined.

THE AXE SWINGS DOWN!

TWO DIGITS on that left hand drop to the ground like twitching caterpillars. The cigarette stays firmly ensconced between index and middle fingers.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Ahhhhh!!!!

The barbarity has caught the attention of Shoulders' Thugs, interrupting their poker hand to take a long look over. Donnie uses the opportunity to slip an ACE from his sleeve.

Booth tries to hold it together.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

You get your rocks off breaking feet, hardman?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

I'm a business man, not a sex pervert.

Shoulders leans in close.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

I'll let you in on a little secret. That skirt wanted them feet.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Why would she want that?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD

Better to cut one off, shamus? Without'em, she's just some corner chippy waving down passing cars for pocket change. I made her a twist men cross oceans for.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Then why'd you kill her?

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 I didn't kill her. Did that
 herself. Beauty can be painful.
 Said she wanted the feet.
 Keepin'em was a different tale.

Shoulders sizes up Booth's arm once more with the axe,
 raising it into position.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 Beauty can be painful in ways
 unforeseen.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 You're being set up.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 You born without brains, shamus?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 By the Multhorpes. I thought it
 was just the dame, but it's both
 of'em. It's a bad frame, but
 they're trying to make it fit.
 Don't get goofy, Shoulders. Do
 this and you're icing the only bird
 that can tell people otherwise.
 They want you to bump me.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 Couldn't just sit and stare at the
 five grand I gave you. Should've
 stuck to bindle stiffs. Blackmail
 ain't your racket.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Blackmail? You're making a
 mistake.

Shoulders pulls a folded PIECE OF PAPER from his pocket.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 Someone else wrote this, did they?

He shoves it in Booth's face. It's too close to read the
 whole thing, but we see a few details. *\$100,000...if you
 know what's good for you...Union Station...16B.*

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
 On your stationery!? And you just
 happen to make the pick-up!?

FLASHBACK TO:

BOOTH'S DESTROYED OFFICE

Sylvia Multhorpe sits in a chair, as innocent as could be.

SYLVIA MULTHORPE
You don't think I did this, do you?

BACK TO:

THE PRESENT

He's right. The letter is written on Booth's letterhead.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
My office got broken into-

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
You're a goddamn liar!

Booth struggles against his restraints but it's a lost cause.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I'm telling you you're being set
up! They're playing you for the
sap!

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
I'm late for an engagement,
cheapie. What do you say we go for
it all?

CLOSE ON BOOTH

He could beg, but what would that do? All he has left is
pride. He chooses to keep it.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Hell, if it gets you to shut your
trap, then take it. Didn't want
the damn thing anyhow.

SHOULDERS MARQUARD
Be careful what you wish for. It
just might come true.

The axe is poised at the ready. An eternity passes in a
moment until finally:

SHOULDERS SWINGS THE AXE DOWN!

It cuts straight through Booth's LEFT ARM, severing it completely from his body. BLOOD SPRAYS.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Ahhhhhh!!!!!!!

The axe remains lodged into the tree trunk. Shoulders tugs on it, but it remains stuck.

One of his Thugs VOMITS. The other follows suit. They are used to barbarity, but not like this. Even Donnie is thrown.

Booth is going into shock. He must act fast.

He rolls away from the tree, discovering that the axe has de facto freed him from his restraints - the severed left forearm now hangs from his right wrist.

ON SHOULDERS

Still tugging on that axe, unable to free it from the tree.

BACK ON BOOTH

Stretching with his right arm, grabbing for that WATER BUCKET lying nearby. He swings it up at Shoulders with a vengeance.

CONTACT!

Shoulders hits the ground with a THUD. Booth rises above him, the left limb still dangling from the right. It's a nightmare vision.

Booth yanks at the axe handle, trying desperately to pull it free. The stunned gangster stirs at his feet until finally --

THE AXE COMES AWAY IN HIS HAND

-- like Excalibur from the stone. It GLOWS. The Thugs notice Booth but it's too late:

BOOTH BRINGS THE AXE DOWN!

Again and again and again, blood flying everywhere, covering Booth's face with tribal war paint. What was once Shoulders Marquard is now a slab of meat.

Booth looks down to his severed left arm, swinging from the right wrist. The cigarette still between index and middle fingers. He lifts the arm, bringing the smoke to his lips.

ON THE THUGS AND DONNIE

What should they do? The decision comes quick:

THE THUGS DISAPPEAR INSIDE THE CAR AND DRIVE OFF

Donnie is left behind in the wheelchair. He tries to wheel himself away over the bumpy terrain.

Booth is quickly becoming delirious. He has to do something about the arm. Using his jacket sleeve, he tourniquets the wound. But it must also be cauterized.

From the jacket pocket: the MATCHBOOK. He manages to get it fired up with the help of his own lit cigarette.

That scribbled word - SIMULACRUM - disappears inside the flame.

He holds the matches to what's left of his jacket - it erupts in FIRE. Booth steels himself for necessity.

WIDE ON THE SCENE

Donnie makes it to dirt road. He has no time to react when --

SHOULDERS' CAR REAPPEARS FROM WHENCE IT CAME

-- racing now in the other direction and PLOWING THROUGH THE HELPLESS DONNIE. The wheelchair and its occupant fly overhead in all directions at once.

SIRENS follow: POLICE CARS in hot pursuit. One comes to a screeching, dirt-cloud-billowing halt in Booth's vicinity. TED SPANGLER peers out from the passenger seat, mouth agape.

WHAT HE SEES

Booth covered in blood and cigarette dangling from lip, left arm hanging from the right, standing over Shoulder's dead body with an axe handle poking out of the corpse.

The oak tree burns behind him like a Roman candle. He holds the flaming jacket.

And puts it to his bleeding, severed limb. STEAM rises from the wound.

Booth promptly passes out.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN

EXT. AN ARCADIAN WILDERNESS - DAY

The image of rustic perfection. The sun reflects off an idyllic pond, its banks protected by high grass and reeds. Unseen frogs CHIRP, birds SING, cicadas DRUM.

REVERSE ON A YOUNG BOY (5)

He's dressed in an over-sized grey suit made for a man. A suit, in fact, made for John David Booth.

The Boy raises his left arm, surprised to find it's still there. Pleasantly surprised.

He clogs toward the pond, a foot slipping out of the size 12 SHOE which had held it. He cinches his trousers to keep them from falling, pant legs muddied with each awkward step.

LATER

The Boy kneels at the water's edge, entranced by the fish that skim just beneath the surface.

LATER

Reaching into the reeds, the Boy comes away with a TOAD, grasping the creature between his fingers. He gently places it in the grass, watching it hop away.

LATER

The Boy searches the ground for smooth rocks, skimming them across the water's surface.

LATER

Leaving his shoes behind, the Boy wades into the pond, soaking his pants and jacket.

The pond water RIPPLES. We hear the SOUNDS of LAUGHTER.

IN THE DISTANCE

A previously unseen TIRE SWING drifts lazily over the pond, dangling from the extended branch of an old OAK TREE. In the water below swims a YOUNG GIRL (5)

LATER

The Boy trudges toward the tire swing. The Girl waits for him there, clothing likewise over-sized and caked with dirt.

Her features and dress remind us of a young Vicki.

LATER

Both children go HURTLING through the air on the tire swing, SPLASHING down into the water with LAUGHTER and the excitement of youth.

They race each other back to shore.

LATER

Their clothes dry on a rock. The Boy and the Girl recline nude in the sun, soaking in the bright afternoon sun. Blissful, prelapsarian innocence.

The Girl smiles at her new friend and he returns it. When she closes her eyes to sleep, the Boy continues to stare.

Finally, he closes his eyes as well. Together, among the frogs, the insects, and the birds, these two young children fall asleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Booth wakes up from a long slumber. He looks to his left arm, not knowing what to expect. Everything below the elbow:

GONE

It barely has time to register before the PRIVACY CURTAIN is jerked aside. Vicki stands there in a NURSE'S UNIFORM, the top few buttons left unclasped.

VICKI

I believe it's time for your sponge bath, Mister Booth.

Booth says nothing.

VICKI

You don't like the uniform?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Just come here. Lie next to me.

She can tell he means it.

VICKI
Okay, John.

He cradles her in the arm he has left. They lie there in this position we've seen them in before, but now without his troublesome appendage.

Yet he still can't get comfortable. Neither can she, though she puts on a good show.

She sits up. A few moments pass before...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Where'd you find her?

VICKI
Who?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
The woman with the peg leg.
Where'd you get her from?

VICKI
I told you. We met at the market.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Don't lie to me.

VICKI
John, I'm not lying to you.

He doesn't believe her.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I know you been there, Vicki. I know you been there 'cause I been there, too. Just say it, damn it.

She has no answer. It says everything.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
I don't know where we got lost, where we took a wrong turn, but now it's dark. I'm afraid we won't find our way back.

VICKI
Back where?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Back to where we weren't so damn numb to the simplest pleasures.
(MORE)

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (cont'd)
Where this - lying here - it meant something. I want to go back there, Vicki. We can do it. Just by saying it, speaking the words, we make it real.

VICKI
John, you're not talking sense. You've been through a lot.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Don't you want to stop running? There ain't no finish line, doll.

VICKI
Maybe I like the race.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Please. Let's go back.

VICKI
I don't want to *go back*, John. This is me.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
How do ya know that? How do ya know who you are?

VICKI
I just do, John.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Nobody knows who they are until someone tells'em.

She gets out of bed.

VICKI
No one tells me anything. I like who I am. I won't change. Not for anybody. Not even you.

Vicki disappears out the door. Booth looks to a large bunch of BALLOONS, some shaped into ANIMALS, other into SEXUALLY-SUGGESTIVE FORMS. There's a card:

Get well soon - Ned the Clown

The NURSE appears. She takes a THERMOMETER from her own mouth, putting it in Booth's.

NURSE
How are you feeling, Mister Booth?

She takes the thermometer from his mouth, taking a look.

NURSE

I'm not getting a reading. Looks like we'll have to get that temperature the old fashioned way.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

I'd rather you didn't.

Someone COUGHS O.S. - it's O'Malley and Spangler.

TED SPANGLER

Aw Booth, let the lady do her job, will ya?

The Nurse leaves. Spangler gets a good look at her backside.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

How about you take a powder and give me and your partner a minute?

TED SPANGLER

Do I take orders from you?

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Do what the man says.

Spangler looks to his partner with incredulity.

TED SPANGLER

Would it hurt you to take my side for once?

Spangler leaves the room in a huff. O'Malley pulls up a chair.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

That was some timing. Just the right moment to turn up in some dark woods in the middle of nowhere.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Yeah, lucky for you, huh?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH

Lucky for whoever gets that hundred thousand, Eddie. Watch out, she's a dangerous woman.

EDDIE O'MALLEY

Who is?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
How about you stop playing me for
the sap?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Be careful, Booth.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
That's what my mother used to tell
me. Didn't listen to her, either.
So who keeps the hundred grand?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
What hundred grand?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
The keister full of a hundred
grand.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
Did you have a keister full of a
hundred grand? That's a lot of
dough. How'd you come by that?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Blackmail.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
That legal, Booth?

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
It's okay, I was just pretending.

CUT TO:

INT. MULTHORPE RESIDENCE - DAY

A POLICE DETECTIVE shoves a SEARCH WARRANT in the face of the
Multhorpe's Latino MAID.

EDDIE O'MALLEY (V.O.)
Look Booth, Shoulders was a wrong
gee, worst this town has seen in a
long time. And now...now he ain't.

IN THE BACKYARD

Wendell Multhorpe stares into the clear water of his pool.
He holds in his hands a BAG OF HEAVY ROCKS, fastened by rope.

EDDIE O'MALLEY (V.O.)
 You know how the business works.
 He wouldn't have gone over.
 Witnesses disappear. Evidence gets
 lost. Juries are bought.

BACK TO:

THE HOSPITAL ROOM

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 And the Doc? What are you going to
 do about him?

EDDIE O'MALLEY
 The Doc was kind enough to take
 care of that for us. Wise move.

CUT TO:

THE BACKYARD

The cops finally arrive at Multhorpe's pool. There the
 owner's LIFELESS BODY floats, the rope around his neck,
 tethered to the bottom like a Thanksgiving Day Parade float.

EDDIE O'MALLEY (V.O.)
 Better a funeral than the big
 house. Some eggs ain't built for
 that.

An OFFICER turns to the maid.

OFFICER
 Donde esta la esposa?

BACK TO:

BOOTH'S HOSPITAL ROOM

O'Malley pats Booth on his bandaged flipper.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
 Word of advice. Stay away from the
 cutting tools.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 Eddie, I'm tellin' you she's
 dangerous.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
 They're all dangerous, Booth.
 That's why we keep'em in cages.
 Pretty cages, made of lace and
 feathers. Cages that don't look
 like cages at all.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
 She *should* be in a cage. The kind
 with bars and a sink that doubles
 for a toilet.

EDDIE O'MALLEY
 Best prison is the one you don't
 know you're in. Enjoy yours,
 Booth.

FADE TO:

EXT. NEWSPAPER STAND - NIGHT

Hands grab for the midnight edition. The HEADLINE reads:

BLACK WIDOW ESCAPES WITH TOP COP

PHOTOGRAPHS of O'Malley and Sylvia blanket the cover.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO - ESTABLISHING

Christ the Redeemer stares from atop his perch.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
 I don't know when O'Malley got
 mixed up in it.

CUT TO:

INT. RIO DE JANEIRO - GALEAO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT- DAY

O'Malley and Sylvia, panama hats and tropical wear, depart an
 airplane. He carries a familiar briefcase.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
 Maybe he was in dutch from the
 beginning.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO - THE BEACH - DAY

O'Malley dives under the surf, enjoying the crystal clear water. He look to --

THE CROWDED BEACH

-- where Sylvia sits under an UMBRELLA applying sunscreen.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
He and the dame, scheming to put
two wrong numbers in cold storage.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTH'S SUBURBAN MIDDLE-CLASS HOME - MORNING

Booth looks to the floor. There, just inside the front door, are a row of SHOES. Out of place among them is an enormous pair of CLOWN SHOES.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Me as the sap to stick his mug in
the firing line.

As he hangs his KEY on a hook, we see for the first time he carries a SUITCASE in hand, that POND PAINTING under his arm.

Booth exits, having to put the painting on the floor before he opens the door. He lifts the painting only to put it down once more to close the door. A time-consuming endeavor.

BACK TO:

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO - THE BEACH - DAY

O'Malley returns from the water, scanning the packed beach for Sylvia. He can't find her.

MOMENTS LATER

A BOY builds a sand castle where Sylvia once sat. O'Malley knows something is up.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BODY SHOP - AFTERNOON

Booth collects the keys to his newly-repaired '58 Porsche from a MECHANIC. Still rusty and dented, much like the first time we saw it.

He tosses his suitcase and painting in the trunk after having once again set them down to get the trunk open. All in all, this one arm business has made things complicated.

Nearby, a CREW papers over a COSMETICS BILLBOARD. A new ADVERTISEMENT with a new SMILING WOMAN selling a new dream.

BACK TO:

INT. RIO DE JANEIRO - HOTEL ROOM - DAY

O'Malley enters his room, finding the CLEANING WOMAN at work. His panic subsides when he sees the BRIEFCASE is still there.

He opens it, finding BRAZILIAN TELEPHONE BOOKS instead of money. He's been had.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. BOOTH'S CAR - SUNSET

Booth idles his car at a RED LIGHT. Off to his left:

VICTORIA'S SECRET

Window Mannequins display 1950s GIRDLES, CONICAL BRASSIERES and CORSELETTES. Through the doorway, Booth sees:

MRS. PANGBURN

The woman with the widening mirror. She examines a girdle with interest. A car horn BLARES behind us - the traffic light has turned GREEN.

LATER

Booth drives along the PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY, the SUN setting on the distant horizon. In the passenger seat, the midnight edition blows open. Staring back at us:

A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MYSTERY LOTUS WOMAN

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Her name was Margaret Minehan.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL TOWN U.S.A. - DAY - FLASHBACK

MARGARET MINEHAN, pride of American Falls, Idaho, looks back from the steps of a GREYHOUND BUS. She waves, filled with the enthusiasm of the young and beautiful.

Assorted TOWN FOLK and FAMILY have gathered to send her off. Destination: LOS ANGELES.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Same initials as Marilyn Monroe and
the identical dream.

Her PARENTS give her a kiss on each cheek.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREETS - NIGHT

The years have not served Margaret well. She competes with other STREET WALKERS for the attention of passing cars.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
Took different paths, but ended up
in the same place.

SHOULDER'S FAMILIAR CADILLAC pulls over beside her.

CUT TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES CITY MORGUE - DAY

Harsh fluorescent lights illuminate Margaret Minehan's pale, dead, face.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
One of Cinderella's poor, desperate
sisters.

REVERSE ON HER PARENTS

Identifying their daughter's corpse. Margaret's Mother is beyond solace.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Cuttin' off their heels and toes...

Where Margaret's feet once were are now just the shallow
pools of a white sheet.

CUT TO:

INT. UNKNOWN APARTMENT - DAY

An OVERWEIGHT BUILDING SUPER eats cereal. Something DRIPS
into his bowl from above, turning the white milk RED.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
...just to net some pervert prince
with a foot kink.

He peers UPWARDS - a STAIN OF CRIMSON spreads on the ceiling.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

The Super unlocks the apartment above for a PATROLMEN.
Inside, this small residence has been turned into --

AN UNDERGROUND CHOP SHOP

-- where illegal surgeries are performed.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
Just another pretty farm girl with
a bus ticket and stars in her eyes
who took a wrong turn and couldn't
find her way back.

There, amidst the stacks of week-old newspapers, overflowing
ashtrays, and vials of medicine:

FAT FRANK'S CORPSE

He lies on a rusty cot, BLOOD pooling on the floor below from
his mutilated groin. A botched sex change. Nearby:

FAT FRANK CHIMERA WOMAN COLLAGE

One woman's eyes, another's nose, still another's smile...

JOHN DAVID BOOTH (V.O.)
In the dark, all roads look alike.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRAZILIAN COUNTRYSIDE - TRAIN - DAY

Behind dark sunglasses, Sylvia Multhorpe watches sugar plantations pass from a PASSENGER TRAIN.

POOR BRAZILIANS in Nike t-shirts wave from their donkeys.

BACK TO:

BOOTH'S CAR SHOOTING DOWN THE HIGHWAY

The Detective puts his truncated left arm out the window, like a dog lifting its snout to the passing wind.

JOHN DAVID BOOTH
The same shape, just different
names.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END