

1 Across and 2 Down

a screenplay

by

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"1 ACROSS AND 2 DOWN"

or

"A favour one depends on in Tennessee, a temporary
title perhaps? (8,2 & 9)"

A BLACK SCREEN

then the sound of a mobile phone RINGING, then ...

UP ON:

a mobile phone, RINGING. It sits on top of a portable
antique writing-box which is sitting on a table.

The CAMERA pulls back to reveal,

INT. SUMMER HOUSE - MORNING.

Resin sculptures in various stages of completion standing
in mock witness to the figure of a beautiful woman,
EUNICE, lying dead on a chaise-longue.
A needle hangs out of a vein in her arm.

Through the full length windows behind her body a
Man carrying a jerry-can approaches across a large lawn
from a manor house.

RING-RING!

HARRY, a big, craggy looking man enters the summer house,
puts down the jerry can and then looks down at Eunice`s
(his dead wife's)body; the meanness of his face shows not
the slightest sign of emotion.

RING-RING!

Harry removes the syringe from her arm then stands
wondering what to do with it.

RING-RING!

He goes across to the antique writing-box, ignoring the RINGING phone. Fiddling with the side of the box: a secret drawer comes out of the back: full of needles and bags of white powder. He places the syringe into the drawer and slides it back in.

RING-RING!

He turns once more to Eunice's body and douses it with petrol from the jerry-can.

RING-RING!

Harry picks-up the RINGING phone and puts it in his pocket. He places the jerry-can on top of the writing box and picks everything up.

The RINGING tone changes to BRRP-BRRP!

He has one last look at his wife's body then he kicks over a small gas fire and leaves.

BRRP-BRRP!

The summer house is soon engulfed in flames.

INT. LIVING ROOM (NEW ORLEANS) - NIGHT.

BRRP-BRRP! Carries over.

STAN, a poker-faced man in his early forties, is just finishing packing a suitcase with a phone tucked between his shoulder and his ear.

BRRP-BRRP!

He walks across the room, which looks like it came straight out of the 1950s, and replaces the handset then re-sets the answer-phone. He pushes his weight down on the case to close it when the phone RINGS. He continues to close the case as the answer-phone clicks on

MACHINE

Hang loose cool cats, Daddy`s

not at home, so lay me a line
and I'll get back to you in time.

Stan listens

CLOSE-UP HARRY

speaking into a phone

HARRY

Stan, this is Harry, I need to
talk to you.

BACK TO STAN

giving a little laugh

STAN

But I sure as hell don't need to
talk to you.

He quickly resets the machine, picks up his jacket and
suit case, and leaves.

The phone RINGS again: RING-RING, RING-RING!

INT. JAZZ CLUB.

The RINGING tone is carried over although it is barely
audible through the noise of a BUSY CROWD enjoying a
BLUES CLASSIC from the R&B Band, ROOMFUL.

THE CAMERA pans across the Band alighting on the lead
guitarist playing a flawless solo.

PAUL "RING-A-DING" BELL is a man in his early forties,
small, wiry, with a well worn face, dressed in a midnight
blue "zoot" suit, with a black leather porkpie hat.

As the Band bring their set to a close the audience show
much appreciation.

The girls up front reach out to Paul and he flirts with
them but just for a moment.

Paul puts his guitar down and takes out his mobile phone
and answers the call. Swinging around he looks across to
the bar, then points at someone with recognition.

Paul gets off stage and wades his way through `blues groupies`. He declines their obvious sexual attention and heads for the bar.

BAR

Stan is standing at the bar, his silk suit shimmering in the neon. As Paul joins him, the BARMAN removes the phone that Stan used to phone Paul.

PAUL

So, how was merry old England?

STAN

Don`t ask .. what you having?

Paul is in good humour as he leans against the bar gazing up to the ceiling and relaxing in an exaggerated manner.

PAUL

A week of staring at white walls
and nothing to do .. and make
that a double.

Stan gesticulates to the Barman who has been listening. Stan and Paul exchange a knowing look, then laugh.

The Barman delivers the drink.

STAN

Hell you got it easy .. I got
weeks on the road arranging the
northern circuit, we got holes in
the schedule you could fly a jumbo
through .. the trip to England
set me waaaay back.

PAUL

(ironically)

Shoot bro .. all I ever do is
enjoy myself .. Say, you and me
could change places. I could do with
a trip up north without all the
expectations.

STAN

You live with the expectations,

that`s what you`re good at ..
leave the sophisticated shit to me.

An Attractive Woman walks past and smiles sweetly in Paul`s direction. He turns away, not interested.

STAN (CONT'D)
Besides, all the thinking you`d have
to do, just might derail your sex
drive.

Paul picks up his drink, ignoring the jibe.

PAUL
So, how did things go .. with your
ex?

STAN
You really want to hear this shit?
.. Hell, what do I know .. Eunice
thinks Harry`s cracking up .. she
says he`s getting violent .. but she
knew he was an asshole when they made
out .. it was his violent persona
that attracted her in the first
place.
(turning to Paul)
And you know that`s true..

PAUL
(agrees, then)
But he was always straight up.

STAN
Yeah, straight up your ass
(they laugh)
Come to think of it, they make a fine
couple. She`s self destructive and
he`s just plain, destructive.
(they laugh again)
Hell, she`s always been like that..
and just look at the habit she`s got,
she`s on a gram a day .. did you know
that?

Paul is slightly surprised but then he turns sarcastic

PAUL

But then of course she did live with
you .. for ten years.

STAN

(annoyed)

Thanks buddy .. nice of you to
remind
me.

PAUL

And how`s Jess? Still doing her
little
Miss Moody bit?

STAN

She practically ignores me when I`m
there, then when I leave ... she gets
all upset.

PAUL

She`s gonna be some woman, if she can
already break a hard man`s heart.

Paul is amused at Stan`s discomfort

PAUL (CONT'D)

Anyway good buddy, you gonna give
me a lift back to the Hotel?

STAN

What? You ain`t gonna get some
little girl to do the honors?

Paul adjusts his trousers, does up his jacket, and then
pays special attention to the angle that his hat has to
the position on his head.

PAUL

I`ve had nothing but, for the last
six weeks. I-need-a-rest.

STAN

Age creeping up on ya? ..
I remember a time ...

Paul waves him away and they laugh as they turn to go.

EXT. STREETS. EARLY MORNING.

The first light is just beginning to show through a threatening sky onto deserted streets in an old part of New Orleans.

A 1950s Chevy drifts through this lonely, moody landscape and cityscape accompanied by the sound of a MOODY JAZZ CLASSIC.

It eventually pulls up outside of an old colonial hotel: "The Belle Reve".

Stan and Paul get out. They go around to the trunk and get out Paul's luggage. Closing the trunk Stan hands Paul a sheet of paper.

STAN

Here's an itinerary of where I'll be if we need to hook up.

Paul looks at it for a moment, then puts it in his pocket.

PAUL

How much longer are we gonna do this shit for .. do you ever think about it? .. Endless gigs, barely making enough to live.

Stan turns and stares down the deserted road in the direction from which they came.

PAUL (CONT) (CONT'D)

Twenty years on the road, and the nearest thing I got to a home, is a room full of changing walls.

Paul mirrors Stan, staring down the road.

STAN

What else we gonna do, we're not fit for real life .. and after seeing Harry and Eunice, Hell, who'd want that shit anyway.

(turning to Paul)

Don't worry, something will turn up, it always does.

He walks past Paul allowing his hand to slide across his shoulders then gets into the car.

Paul walks towards the hotel then turns as the car pulls away.

PAUL

Take care out there good buddy.

The car recedes into the distance.

Paul looks up at The Belle Reve Hotel, then with humorous resignation, enters.

INT. HOTEL.

A FEMALE RECEPTIONIST sees Paul coming and immediately gets his keys

PAUL

Where you got me this time?

RECEPTIONIST

The room maid will show you where.

Paul glances across to see a big Black Woman pushing a trolley of cleaning equipment into a gated lift

Paul turns back to the Female Receptionist and finds her looking at him as though he were something to eat. she is
PAUL

PAUL

Now, I don't want disturbing ..
not least for forty-eight hours
.. no phone calls, no room
service, no excuses. Nothing.

RECEPTIONIST

(huffish.)

I understand the routine.

Paul heads over to the lift and gets in beside the big Black Woman. MISS SCARLET, well-proportioned and in her late thirties, becomes aware of him for the first time - and is none too pleased.
She SLAMS the lift gate closed.

MISS SCARLET

(aggressively)
How come you always find your way
back here, Leatherhead, when you`re
a lost soul if I ever saw one?

PAUL
You just leave me alone and we`ll
get on real fine.

MISS SCARLET
Huh!

She gives him a long glance of disdain.

Paul is a good four inches shorter than her and combined
with her forty-inch double-D bust, her stature makes him
look puny.

HOTEL CORRIDOR

Paul follows Miss Scarlet out of the lift

MISS SCARLET
They got you in the, Kingdom of
Earth Suite ..

She stops next to a door and uses her well-rounded butt
to send it flying open

MISS SCARLET (CONT'D)
.. a fittin` name for Hell.

Paul pulls out a ten-dollar bill and holds it up just out
of her reach.

She looks at it with disdain and is about to walk off
without taking it, when Paul SNATCHES a newspaper from
the trolley and holds the ten-dollar bill up again.

MISS SCARLET (CONT'D)
Huh! An what you gonna do with
that, make yourself a new hat?

Miss Scarlett swipes the ten-dollar bill out of his hand
and giving Paul a dirty look, strides off down the hall.

Paul watches as those big cheeks oscillate out of sight
and as usual something primeval stirs in his loins.

HOTEL ROOM.

Paul closes the door behind him and flattens himself against it.

PAUL
(whispered)
At-lasssst.

And through half-closed eyes looks over the room. It is large and completely white except for a large brass bed, even that has a white cover. French windows open onto a balcony, and there`s an en-suite bathroom. A small table lamp next to the bed provides the only light.

He slowly pushes himself off the door and across to the bed where he drops his gear, throws the newspaper onto the bed, kicks off his shoes and removes his jacket.

Puffing up the pillows he eases himself onto the bed. He switches on the radio; an OLD BLUES NUMBER lays down a mellow mood.

Picking up the newspaper he goes through it until he finds the crossword puzzle. He takes a pen from under his hat and sets to work.

CLOSE ON CROSSWORD PUZZLE

it reads: "\$2000 PRIZE CRYPTIC CROSSWORD WITH A FILM THEME".

TITLE SEQUENCE

[NB. This is only an indication of how the Crossword title sequence might work;

Paul underlines the first clue.

1 ACROSS AND 2 DOWN. `A favour one depends upon in Tennessee; a temporary title perhaps.` 8,2 and 9.

He underlines it again, can`t get it, then moves onto the next clue, underlining that.

2 ACROSS. ` A stationary man who not only shines at night.` 3 and 5.

Paul writes in the space: TOM WAITES.

He underlines the third clue.

3 ACROSS AND 4 DOWN. `A female herbivore from a not so distant planet.` 5 and 6.

Paul writes in the space: HOLLY HUNTER.

and so on.... until the front credits are filled in.

Then Paul`s hand returns to the first clue 1 ACROSS AND 2 DOWN (The clue to what the TITLE should be). He underlines this for the third time then runs the pen along the clue until he reaches `a temporary title perhaps?` which he underlines three times.

TITLE SEQUENCE ENDS.

The puzzle slowly falls from Paul`s hand as we hear SNORES!

SAME PLACE SOMETIME LATER

The door FLIES OPEN and Miss Scarlet strides in. She stops momentarily to survey the chaotic state the room is in; food cartons litter the furniture, clothes are strewn everywhere, empty beer cans and long-discarded spliffs despoil the white carpet.

She marches over to the bed and looks down with disdain at Paul sleeping naked except for his hat.

MISS SCARLET

Leatherhead! .. Your time is up!

(Paul stirs)

It`s two days since you`ve been here and that`s two days too long! I want you out, so I can fumigate! .. You got till twelve, you be hearing me now!

Paul eases himself up and looks at Miss Scarlett... then falls back covering his heavy eyes with his hat.

MISS SCARLET(CONT'D)

Huh!

Miss Scarlett strides out KICKING at garbage as she goes, leaving the door wide open.

Paul sits up, sees the open door and groans. He staggers towards the door and yells after her.

PAUL

The windows, God dammit! ..
Open the windows!

He SLAMS the door shut, wanders across to the French windows and releases the catch.

A STRONG WINDY BLAST from an approaching storm throws the windows open, sending the garbage in the room into swirling flight.

He fights with the windows and finally closes them as the phone RINGS.

He eyes it with suspicion then reluctantly heads towards it, picking up an unfinished spliff from the floor on the way.

He lights up the spliff then snatches up the phone.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(with malice)

If that`s you meatball, I`m
awake and ...

INT. MANOR STUDY

The half-lit face of sixteen year-old Jess wearing a baggy sweat shirt and jeans. She is blond and her big expressive eyes make her look more child than woman. She`s fiddling nervously with the antique writing box (from the opening scene) which is standing on a big desk as she listens

HARRY (O.O.V.)

Cut the crap Paul, I don`t need your
bull right now. It`s Harry, and I
need to talk to Stan and real fast,
like yesterday.

(silence)

Will you shut up and listen! I`ve
been
trying to get hold of him for the
last
forty eight hours!

Jess suddenly drops down behind the desk as Harry enters
the room.

Harry`s face contorts with violent emotion

HARRY (CONT'D)
For fuck sake Eunice is dead!!!

Harry (at the desk) SMACKS the writing-box with the heel
of his hand, sending it with a half turn to the edge of
the desk. It part hangs over Jess`s head

HARRY (CONT'D)
Look you moron! It`s taken
this amount of time to track
you down to the Belle Reve.

Paul`s reply sends him into a rage and Harry storms off
across the room

HARRY (CONT'D)
Shit and Hell! The inquest`s next
week
and he and I got lots to talk about!

Jess nervously looks up at the writing-box above her
head, and notices a small drawer in the front has sprung
open. She removes the contents in the drawer then quickly
drops down to her original position as Harry comes back
to the desk

HARRY (CONT'D)
Listen you asshole! Just give
me the places he`s going to!

Jess cringes as Harry takes a pen from the desk and
seeing the drawer open closes it.

Jess looks through the contents from the drawer and
pockets credit cards and cash. She takes a letter ready
for posting. She looks at the address

CLOSE ON LETTER

the address reads:- "STAN MITCHELL, 8th & 2nd, 9#,
BELMONT, NEW ORLEANS, USA.

Frowning Jess pockets the letter.

A sits watching her from the corner of the desk. She reaches up and takes a small teddy bear off the desk and then quickly crawls across to floor-length velvet curtains and disappears through them.

Harry turns and looks at the curtains suspiciously but is interrupted

HARRY

What do mean, you `think that
it`s the right list`, how many
lists does a moron have!!?

EXT. MANOR HOUSE - NIGHT

Jess comes out through a French window and runs across the lawn to the burnt out remains of the summer house. There she stops, takes a long look at the teddy bear, kisses it on the forehead then places it amongst the ashes.

Suddenly Harry comes out the French window and stands illuminated by the lights from the manor. He scans the grounds but can`t see Jess as she`s in shadow.

HARRY

Jess! .. Jessie! .. Where
the fuck are you?

Jess stands frozen until he goes back into the house. Then she runs into a small wood to the side of the burnt-out summer house.

Harry reappears with a flashlight and Jess hits the ground.

Harry comes across the lawn beaming the light around. He stops at the remains of the summer house and again beams the light around. It travels over Jess`s back, but it doesn`t stop until it comes to rest on the teddy bear in the ashes.

HARRY (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
You silly little ...

He beams the light around again and then moves off at speed towards a large wood.
Jess waits till Harry's deep inside the wood then slips off into the dark.

FADE OUT:

INT. AIRPORT (MEMPHIS)- DAY

A BIG CROWD of people are giving a Reception Clerk a hard time. TWO MEN push their way out through the crowd near where Jess stands. She listens to their conversation.

MAN 1
Look John, you heard...this storm could last for days. We can't afford to pussy foot around in Memphis. We can catch the train and be in New Orleans in the morning.

MAN 2
Yeah? And what about the expense?

MAN 1
Precisely! It's gonna cost us more if we stay here, right?
.. right?

MAN 2
(Reluctantly.)
I guess so.

MAN 1
Some other time .. come on
let's get out of here.

The two Men leave.
Jess checks her wallet: a twenty dollar bill and a five pound note.

EXT. AIRPORT

Jess emerges from the terminal just in time to see the Two Men getting on board the airport bus. She runs across and gets on board as it is about to leave.

STREET (MEMPHIS)- DAY

The bus pulls up and Jess gets off in a seedy part of town.

She looks around apprehensively at a couple of DRUNKS arguing and moves away from them but the other direction is blocked by a group of STREET KIDS, who have already spotted her.

A door opens in front of her and as a Man leaves, Jess realizes that it is the entrance to a run down diner. She enters quickly.

INT. DINER

On entering, Jess immediately becomes self conscious. She scans through the gloom at the booths with their torn plastic seating and customers that appear to live there.

Country and Western is playing on the Juke box.

She heads for the wash-room and as she nears the door, an Old Pervert leans towards her and runs his tongue suggestively across his rotten teeth. Jess quickly hurries through.

WOMAN`S ROOM

a couple of cubicles and a small hand basin with a cracked mirror above. The only light is red.

Jess drops her bag down next to the wash basin and stands looking at herself in the mirror. She pulls a face at herself, then fetches out a hair brush, which ejects the letter she took from the antique writing box onto the floor. She picks it up and plays with it, looks in the mirror then opens it.

As she reads it her face displays intense disbelief and shock. Finishing, Jess slowly replaces it, then leaves.

CORRIDOR

Jess is on the pay-phone.

JESS

Could you give me the Belle
Reve Hotel, New Orleans,
please.

She looks nervously at the entrance to the diner. Then she feeds some money into the phone.

JESS (CONT'D)

Hi, is there anybody from the
band, Roomful, staying with you?

INT. PAUL`S ROOM, (NEW ORLEANS)

Inside, the room is back to its original pristine condition. Outside, a STORM is in full force.

Paul is sitting on the bed using the crossword puzzle to roll a spliff on. He picks up the RINGING phone and tucks it between his head and shoulder.

PAUL

Hi ...
Jess? Jess Mitchell? Hey, how
you doing kid, where you at? ...
No shit. You made it to Memphis
and all by your self, you wild
thing ...
Anyway, your dad`s up north, on
the road ...
I`ve been trying to contact
him for days, ever since I
heard of your mother`s .. er
.. death. Shit. What I mean is
.. I`m sorry to hear about her
being dead .. ah, Jesus .. I er
.. I mean I`m sorry to hear
she died, look, you must phone
Harry, he`s ...

Paul quickly takes the phone away from his ear and we hear GARBLED AGGRESSION. He looks at the phone with surprise

PAUL (CONT'D)

(continuing)
But you`re still going to have
to go back to him,
he`s still your legal guardian ...
(shocked at her anger)
Hold it Jess, hold it ...
What do you mean we all hate
you? Hell, I don`t hate you ..
Jess .. Jess ...
(she hangs up on him)
Shit!! God damn and blast! Me
and my-big-fucking-mouth!

He slams down the phone which ends up on the floor. He
flings the crossword in the air swings his legs off the
bed and getting up kicks a small table and sends a potted
plant flying and covering the carpet with compost and the
broken remains of the plant.
Having hurt his toe Paul hobbles around in agony,
treading the compost into the carpet.

There is a HEAVY KNOCK at the door:

PAUL (CONT'D)
(aggressive)
Who the Hell is it!?

MISS SCARLET (O.S.)
Room service! Who the hell do
you think it is, Vivian Leigh?

Paul turns slowly towards the door and in the quiet self-
questioning tone of some one confronted by madness

PAUL
Vivian Leigh? .. Hell! Not now!

But the door swings open and Miss Scarlet enters with
clean towels, speaking before she even gets into the room

MISS SCARLET
You can`t keep me out,
Leatherhead, house rules ...

She stops, shocked at the mess. Her gaze finally stops on
Paul.

PAUL
(angrily)
So, whadda ya want!?

MISS SCARLET
What do I want? .. I want to phone
the police, and have them take you to
the house of loco control .. cos boy,
you`ve flipped.

On the word "police" Paul has an insight and hobbles
across to the phone on the floor. He picks it up

PAUL
Get me the Memphis police.

He picks up the crossword puzzle.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hey, Miss Scarlet.
(reading out clue)
`A passing breeze to freeze
a name`. Three letters.

Miss Scarlett's anger changes to sly self-interest

MISS SCARLET
I tell you what, boy. I give you the
answer to that clue and you clean the
mess up in here .. deal?

PAUL
I just knew there was more to you
than
a loud mouth and magnificent melons.

MISS SCARLET
Cut the sexist crap .. we got a deal
or
not?

PAUL
(licentiously)
Does Tom like his pussy?

Miss Scarlet leans on the brass bedstead

MISS SCARLET

You know what kinda cryptic
clue that is?

PAUL

Nope. But-I-just-know you`re
gonna tell me.

MISS SCARLET

That`s what they call a simple,
hidden, solution .. which should
have made it easy for you, oh
simple one.

PAUL

Hell, I worked out the movie,
that was easy .. `A passing
breeze` has to be `Gone With
The Wind` .. right?

(Miss Scarlet is poker-
faced)

`To freeze a name`. That
obviously means, freeze frame
a name in the movie .. so it has
to be the name of a character in
`Gone with the wind` .. right?

MISS SCARLET

It`s your call.

PAUL

Trouble is, I can`t remember
the names of the characters,
besides Vivian Leigh`s, that is.

MISS SCARLET

I`ll just go and get you my
trolley .. Mr. Butler.

PAUL

Ret Butler! .. Of course ..
freeze, breeze there`s the r,
and the e, and breeze to,
there`s the t. Ret!

She walks out pleased with herself as Paul fills in the
clue still waiting for some-one to answer his phone call.

INT. POLICE OFFICE

A phone is RINGING in the busy office and a man wearing a beautifully cut suit with half moon piped pockets with matching Stetson and cowboy boots, WILL MAIS walks through. He carries a big persona to fill his forty odd years.

With him is MR. FIELDS, a college type in his early thirties, wearing SWAT attire.

They speak with a heavy southern drawl

WILL

Can't take the chance with a wire, they're just liable to search me, Mr. Fields.

MR. FIELDS

Will, if things go wrong, how we gonna know?

WILL

That's the chance we .. let me rephrase that .. that's the chance I, get paid to make.

VOICE (O.O.V.)

(shouting)

Someone answer that friggin phone!

WILL

(ignoring)

So, if everything is set-up, and you and your men are ready .. I should give Homer a call and let him know it's on for to night.

Mr. Fields stops next to the RINGING phone.

Will eyes the phone.

AN ALMOST SUBLIMINAL FLASH

in SLO-MO a knife slashing through flesh

CLOSE ON WILL

as he has a rush of foreboding

MR. FIELDS

I sure as hell couldn't do what
you do Will. It a make me as
nervous as a Mohican in a barber
shop.

Will, unable to concentrate on what Mr. Fields is saying,
nods down to the phone.

Mr. Fields looks at the phone then he picks it up.

MR. FIELDS (CONT'D)

Hi .. hold it a moment.

Mr. Fields turns around to the office.

MR. FIELDS (CONT'D)

Missing persons!
(to himself)
Where the hell she at?

VOICE (O.O.V.)

Take the details, she`s in
the john.

Will has an insight and his sense of foreboding passes.

WILL

(smiling)
More likely she`s gossiping
with traffic.

Mr. Fields, embarrassed, starts writing down the details.

MR. FIELDS

Sixteen year old English girl ...
Yeah, I got that ...
Yeah .. What she doing in Memphis
without her parents? ...
Oh I see.

WILL

Come on Mr. Fields, this ain`t no
nursery we`re running, nor a labor
of love. We got business to take care
of.

MR. FIELDS

Yeah, we'll put out a missing
persons, sure, bye.

Mr. Fields ends the call then holds out the hand-set to
Will.

MR. FIELDS (CONT'D)

So Will, if you're sure you're
ready, then there's no time but
the present.

CLOSE ON Will as another moment of foreboding hits him as
he takes the phone.

INT. CLUB OFFICE.

Close on a poster for the Silver Dollar Club, advertising
`Stella Knight and The Cloudless Sky`

VOICE (O.O.V.)

.. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,
90, .. 1, 2,

THE CAMERA pulls back to reveal a disorganized office
with a giant safe in the corner, its door wide-open.
There are piles of money and bags of white powder on a
desk, behind which stands HOMER, in his mid-thirties,
tall, dark and handsome, and impeccably dressed in a
white suit, counting money from the safe onto the desk

HOMER

(continuing)

4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 100,000.
You agree?

Homer starts stacking the white powder in the safe.

2ND VOICE(O.O.V.)

If you say so, Homer. You'd be
the last person to make a
mistake of that kind ..

A small, compact man, in his late thirties, LAURIE, is
standing looking out of the window. His lack of movement
enhances his disturbing image; that of a mannequin. His

dress is pristine, right down to the starched handkerchief in his breast pocket.

LAURIE

Now what`s this foolishness I hear about you wanting a side-arm? Not quite your style, in my humble opinion.

HOMER

Hell, it ain`t for me. What I can`t fix, I avoid. You wouldn`t do business with me, Laurie, if a had to resort to that kind a thing .. Now would you?

Laurie`s smile oozes with sickly charm. The phone RINGS.

LAURIE

Well, if it`s not for you, put my mind at ease and console me with an explanation .. A lonesome gun, is a dangerous thing.

HOMER

You have no necessity for such knowledge, as well you know. So stop prying.

(answering the phone)

Silver Dollar ...

Oh hi Will.

(gives Laurie a knowing look)

Yeah of course Will, see you tonight.

Homer replaces the handset, then stacks the money into a brief-case.

Laurie suppresses a cunning smile; something he`s seen out of the window.

LAURIE`S P.O.V.

a Woman with raven-black hair dressed flamboyantly, country and western style, can be seen coming out of a Motel room.

LAURIE (O.O.V)

And Stella, she still taking
too much sugar in her tea?

Homer joins Laurie at the window.

HOMER

Keeps her on a short leash.

Laurie turns to the desk and closes the briefcase, as Homer starts undoing the lock on the window.

Laurie then walks across to a hand basin and takes out a small bottle of disinfectant from his inside pocket and washes his hands with the thoroughness of a surgeon.

Homer glances at this idiosyncrasy with the ease of the initiate, then opens the window.

LAURIE

(already knowing the answer)
So tell me, how you going to
collect the merchandise? For
you can be sure that I won't be
bringing it here.

Homer turns and rests against the window ledge watching Laurie, as the Woman in bg. Walks across the car park.

HOMER

You've seen the little girl
outside, well she'll pick up her
car from outside Benny's, you
know, that new place near Mud
Island. All you got to do is
stash it in the usual place, and
leave the keys in the tail pipe.

Laurie starts drying his hands on his handkerchief as Homer leans out of the window.

HOMER (CONT'D)

Stella! Wait there, I wanna

see you!

The woman in the bg. STELLA stops and looks up

Homer closes the window and watches as Laurie meticulously dries around the nails of his fingers.

LAURIE

I can never understand why you use that bitch, she`s trouble. You know, if it weren`t for her sweet tooth, she`d be sitting in with the sewing circle.

HOMER

Now you`re talking. Ignorance is bliss and there ain`t nothing more ignorant than a habit. She don`t want to know Laurie, and that makes her invaluable.

(suddenly sarcastic)

Now, if you`re finished with your ablutions .. let`s go get her car.

Laurie shoots Homer a vicious look as he passes.

EXT. CLUB

The car park serves both the Silver Dollar Club and the Silver Buckle Motel. They are situated on the corner of a big inter-change.

Stella is leaning against the bonnet of a car. Closer now we see she is an attractive woman in her mid thirties, her exuberant make-up in keeping with her attire. But she`s not happy and her demeanor takes a turn for the worse when she sees Laurie come out of the door with Homer

HOMER

Stella, over here.

She walks slowly over, not hiding her displeasure.

STELLA

Well well well, if it ain`t

Mr. Clean himself. Honey, you shouldn't be walking around here ..

She spits on the ground right in front of Laurie

STELLA (CONT'D)
.. you never know what kind of disease you might pick up.

LAURIE
How delightful to see you again my dear. But not too close, for I fear your fair attributes, and from what I hear are extravagantly licentious, do not include a sense of personal hygiene, which is verifiable by the atmosphere that you pervade.

STELLA
(mimicking)
Ain't nothing wrong with my attributes. It's the appendage attached to your nose ..Mr. Clean .. that so distastefully pervades the air.

Homer, having enjoyed the verbal duel, cuts in

HOMER
Enough Stella. Give your car keys to Laurie.

STELLA
What! .. I'm on my way down town.

HOMER
(false sincerity)
Laurie will be pleased to give you a lift .. now ain't that right?

LAURIE
It would certainly allow us to get better acquainted, my dear ..

but unfortunately, I fear, that your
direction - vertical down I believe -
will never be the right one for me.

Homer cuts Stella off

HOMER

Take a taxi Stella and no
questions. It`s business ..

(clicking finger)

Come on, the keys.

Stella, angry, takes the keys out of her bag and offers
them to Laurie. Just as he is about to take them, she
drops them right into the spit she previously expelled.
Homer grimaces but is amused.
Laurie is frozen with rage.

Stella turns and saunters across the car park to where a
taxi is pulling through. She walks in front of it forcing
it SCREECH to stop then just as she`s about to get in.

STELLA

Now what you gonna do Laurie,
send for the fire brigade and
have them hosed down? Have
them hose you down at the same
time.

She sticks a finger up at him, then gets in the taxi and
drives off.

Laurie, furious, just stares at the keys.

Homer takes Laurie`s handkerchief out of his pocket and
picks the keys up with it, then holds them out for
Laurie.

Laurie stares at them but he won`t take them.
Homer tucks them into Laurie`s breast-pocket and walks
back to the club, leaving Laurie frozen in situ.

Laurie eyes glare at the back of Homer

LAURIE

(half to himself)

You`ll have to give her to me
one of these days Homer, cause

I`m getting nauseous at the way
you use her .. to humiliate me.

INT. TAXI

All of the windows are wide open and the in-rushing air plays games with Stella`s hair as she sits besides the TAXI DRIVER.

The Taxi Driver is a double for the young Marlon Brando; his attire, the same as Brando`s in the `Wild Ones`. He changes lanes at speed, a man in a hurry.

STELLA

Phil my man, what providence, I was just thinking of you. I don`t suppose you got any .. consumables.

TAXI DRIVER

(like Brando)

Stella, this is your lucky day.

He pulls out the ashtray from the dashboard and digs out a medium sized bag of cocaine. He waves it around in front of her.

Stella's eyes lock onto the bag and with a quick smile of relief she goes to take it.

The Taxi Driver SNAPS his fist shut.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)

Not so quick, I`d kinda like to see some collateral.

He SWERVES the taxi through a tight gap

STELLA

Shoot Phil .. I don`t carry a roll around with me, you think I`m losing touch with reality or what?

She then looks at the back-seat of the car then back to him, she licks her top lip suggestively

The Taxi Driver appreciates her audacious suggestion.

TAXI DRIVER

I ain't got time for that shit
right now, but .. perhaps later.

He SWERVES, BRAKES and SWERVES again.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)

Say, if you throw me in a jump as
interest for a roll, you can have it
right now and pay me in kind after
your performance tonight.

STELLA

(full of sweetness)

Sure Phil, what ever you say.

The Taxi Driver looks at her with suspicion but all he
sees is a very sexy lady turning it on.

He SWERVES again then pulls up fast at traffic lights.

He flicks the bag of cocaine to her and as soon as she's
caught it, she's gone.

TAXI DRIVER

Hey, what about the fare?

Stella walks onto the side-walk, opens the door to a
seedy diner then turns back to him.

STELLA

Add it on to the interest, and
make sure you give yourself a
real good .. tip.

She blows him a kiss as he ROARS off laughing, she enters
the diner.

INT. DINER - CORRIDOR.

Jess sits dejected on the floor next to the pay-phone as
Stella walks through from the diner.

Jess is brought around from her reverie by the sound of
the Woman's Room door BANGING shut.

She struggles to her feet, her face a mess for she has
been crying.

She follows Stella into the Woman's Room.

WOMAN`S ROOM

Jess looks at her self in the mirror then starts to wash her face.

Stella comes out from one of the cubicles, her make-up slightly smudged and white powder visible around her nostrils.

She stands behind Jess as she is drying her face on her sweat shirt.

Stella only waits a couple of moments.

STELLA

Move your butt.

Jess taken by surprise retreats to the wall behind her. Stella puts her bag in the sink and from it produces make-up. She starts fixing her face while singing along to the COUNTRY MUSIC drifting in from the diner. Eventually her attention is drawn to Jess through the mirror.

STELLA (CONT'D)

(at the mirror image)

Honey, you got the saddest eyes I ever did see .. What the Hell you hanging around here for anyway?

Jess just stares at the floor.

Stella fixes her hair, still singing and observing Jess through the mirror. She finishes and steps back to appreciate the minor transformation.

STELLA (CONT'D)

What do you think honey? Do I look good, or do-I-look-gooood?

(looks directly at Jess)

You got an opinion?

Jess glances up shyly. Then in typical English fashion.

JESS

Very nice.

Stella laughs but not unkindly.

STELLA
(mincing)
Very nice, shoot, I like that.
Very nice.

She picks up her things and leaves in good humour.

DINER

Stella walks across to the counter and speaks to the WAITRESS.

STELLA
Coffee.

The Waitress goes off to get the coffee and Stella sits down on a stool. A COMMOTION behind her makes her turn around.

Jess has been grabbed by the Pervert, who is trying to get her into his booth, she is struggling to be free.

Stella quickly goes around and pulls Jess free. She confronts the Pervert with a SNARL he reciprocates by GROWLING. Pulling Jess with her back towards the counter she keeps turning and SNARLING... and the pervert GROWLS in reply.

Stella, seeing Jess`s fear, picks up her coffee takes Jess across to a booth by the window.

In the bg. We see the Waitress arguing with the Pervert and pointing to the door; he`s refusing to go.

Stella and Jess sit opposite each other. Jess keeps looking nervously in the direction of the Pervert and Stella observes her with a seasoned eye as she lights a cigarette.

The Waitress gives up arguing and marching back behind the counter picks up a phone

STELLA (CONT'D)
This is no place for a nice kid
like you, why ain`t you home with
your mama?

Jess turns her head away avoiding the question.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Cat got your tongue?

JESS
(flat)
My mother`s dead.

STELLA
(enthusiastic)
Well then, you ain`t got no
problems.

Jess looks at her with big staring eyes; shocked.
Stella is touched and amused by her reaction.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Jesus, them eyes...a window on the
soul of sadness... Honey, you`ll
have to get used to the wicked ways
of men... and you`ll have to learn
not
to display your emotions
so...visibly.
Otherwise, you`ll become a target for
every mother-fucker, this side of
Heaven.

(indicating the Pervert)
He ain`t no problem...he probably
couldn`t get it up anyway .. it`s
the nice ones, the ones that hide it,
the ones that can get it up, and
then get it up again, they`re the
ones that`ll really screw ya.

Stella follows Jess' gaze which alights on two Policemen
who have just walked in

STELLA (CONT'D)
(under her breath)
Shit.

She quickly gets her things together, throws some cash on
the table and starts to leave.
Jess realizing her protection is heading out, quickly
follows.

The two Policemen go across to the Waitress, who points to the Pervert and then points to the now empty booth where Stella and Jess were sitting.

EXT. STREET

Stella is walking at speed, unaware that Jess is following her.

Stella rounds a corner and slows.

Jess looks back to see if they're being followed, then follows Stella.

A crew-bus, with `STELLA KNIGHT AND THE CLOUDLESS SKY` emblazoned on the side SCREECHES to a halt beside Stella.

BLANCHE, a thin nervous woman in her mid thirties and wearing too much make-up is hanging out of the window

BLANCHE

Hey! Stella!

Stella stops in surprise

BLANCHE (CONT'D)

We've been looking all over for you.

STELLA

What the .. ?

BLANCHE

Rehearsal? Remember?

Stella, confused, walks over to the crew-bus.

STELLA

(Annoyed)

Shoot!

BABA (a young Willy Nelson look-a-like pushes his head out beside Blanche

BABA

You outta your brains again?

STELLA

Jesus, where did you all just come from, a temperance meeting.

Screw the rehearsal.

SLIM, the aptly-named driver, comes and opens the door to the bus

SLIM

Come on Stella, get in. We`re gonna practice that new number I`ve written, so we can use it in tonight's performance.

BLANCHE

Please Stella, don`t mess it up for us again.

STELLA

All right already, what you trying to do, suffocate me in guilt.

BLANCHE

Who`s ya friend?

Blanche nods in Jess`s direction; Stella turns around.

STELLA

Hell kid, you got no where to go?

JESS

No.

SLIM

(frustrated)
Stella, let`s go.

Stella takes a long look at Jess.

STELLA

Well, come on then, if you`re coming.

Jess doesn`t need to be asked twice and jumps on board and the bus moves off to the banjo hitting a MELODY.

More groans from the bus as the banjo FRIBULATES.

INT. CREW BUS - TRAVELLING

Jess sit watching Baba playing a CAJUN TUNE on a squeeze box accompanied by JOE, a big hairy man playing a banjo.

STELLA

So what`s the big deal about
Slim`s new song anyway?

BLANCHE

Ooooh that Homer's real pissed that
we ain`t been doing any new numbers,
he
even threatened that he`d take us
off the bill.

SLIM

The guy`s as mean as a mule
with mange and as slippery
as a snake at a salad oil party.

BLANCHE

(being catty)

Now Stella here, I bet she could
tell us a thing or two about the
Greek that bears no gifts.

STELLA

I ain`t saying nothing.
(a hard glance at Blanche)
I know when to keep my mouth shut.

SLIM

Don`t you ever get sick of been
at his beck and call?

STELLA

Aw give me a break, the guy ain`t
all bad. He lets us stand up on stage,
don`t he?

BLANCHE

And feeds your habit,

BABA/JOE/SLIM

(together)

Don`t heee?

STELLA

(annoyed)
You all shut your mouth and keep
your nose out of my business.

BLANCHE
We`re only concerned.

STELLA
Shove your concern!

As Stella turns away and looks out of the window, Blanche impersonates a line from the movie `The Wild One`.

BLANCHE
`Hey Johnny .. what you rebelling
against?`

Stella is about to lose it but then relaxes and turns
around

STELLA
(imitating Brando`s reply)
Well, `Whada ya got?`

Jess watches the two women LAUGH.

Blanche takes out some nail polish from her bag

BLANCHE
(to Jess)
Here, hold this Honey. Take no
notice of our bitchin, it`s the
only way we know how
to express our feelings, cept in
music, that is. My name`s
Blanche, driving is Slim, on
banjo is Joe and playing the
keys is Baba. And I guess you
know Stella? .. What`s yours?

JESS
Jessie .. Jess.

Stella lights and then passes a cigarette to Slim. He
glances behind him and then to Stella.

SLIM
Who`s the kid anyway?

STELLA
(with humour)
Damned if I know.

They both LAUGH as they pull into the Silver Dollar car park.

INT. CLUB.

Jess is helping the band set-up in the empty club, she knows all the wiring systems, the different types of leads, etc. Stella and Slim are watching her expertise.

STELLA
She`s a pro .. shoot. I`m
going to have to have a long
talk with that girl.

SLIM
While we got extra help, you
and I could do a run-through.
Just you and me doing the opening;
keepin' it simple.

STELLA
Sure, you run a short line and
I`ll sing the first verse with
just you doing something light.

Homer appears and starts making his way through the club towards the stage and he calls out

HOMER
(sarcastic)
Great God Almighty. Are we
actually going to hear a new song?

STELLA
Not if you don`t leave us alone,
Homer. We need to establish a
culture of respect here. You
have got to learn not to
interfere with our creative space.

HOMER
Excuse me mam, I was unaware of
the cultural significance of this

here gathering. I was under the
misapprehension that the audience
only came to see your butt ..
(turning mean)
which you can MOVE OVER this way,
cos I wanna to talk with you, NOW!

STELLA
(to Slim)
Oh shit, give me a minute.

Stella gets down from the stage and joins Homer at a
table

HOMER
I got a big customer coming in
here tonight, and a want you
to be real nice to him.

STELLA
Sure thing Homer but I`m going
to need some .. encouragement.

HOMER
Jesus girl, I don`t want you
blasted out of your head on that
stage tonight.

STELLA
Since when? You know damn well
what I can handle. When did I
ever ..

HOMER
Okay okay. Come to the office
after rehearsal ..
(looking at Jess)
Who`s the kid?

STELLA
(more to herself)
Good question, Homer, good question.

Homer looks at Stella and she realizes that it wasn`t the
right answer.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Hell .. she`s just a kid of
a friend of mine, she`ll only
be here for tonight. I`ll book
her a room.

HOMER

Well make sure you pay for it,
and remember, I want you
available tonight.

MAN (O.O.V.)

Homer, your wife is here.

Homer and Stella turn around to see a man supporting a
very Drunk Woman.

HOMER

(getting up)

Jesus H Christ.

He quickly goes and takes his drunk Wife off the man then
helps her out of the club.

Stella having watched the performance, smiles in a
drunken manner and pretends to stagger back to the stage.

STELLA

(slurring)

Homer, I just love the way you
support me, when I`m fallin` over.

LAUGHTER from the band.

Jess runs a lead past her and pushes Stella to one side

STELLA (CONT'D)

Jess, Honey, tell me, where did
you learn to set up like that?

JESS

My dad`s the manager of `Roomful`.
I go touring with the band
sometimes .. in the school
holidays .. I help them set up,
sell T-shirts and stuff.

STELLA

You mean .. The `Roomful`?

With legendary blues man,
Ring-A-Ding Bell?

JESS
You mean Paul?

STELLA
Paul! Is that his real name?

Jess nods, pleased that she has impressed Stella.

STELLA (CONT'D)
(joking)
You don't happen to have his
address, now do you honey.

JESS
(taking her serious)
He's staying at the Belle
Reve Hotel, in New Orleans.

More laughs from the band.

STELLA
(oozing charm)
Jess, we got to have a serious
talk.
(LAUGHS from Band)
I got to rehearse right now
but straight after we gonna have
a heart to heart, and you can tell
me all about your good friend ..
Paul.

Jess begins to understand and smiles.

EXT. SILVER BUCKLE MOTEL - EVENING.

The sun is setting early behind DARK CLOUDS rising on the
horizon.

Jess is walking down the line of rooms over looking the
car park. She finds Stella's room and enters.

INT. ROOM

Jess looks around the cluttered but homey room with
theatrical dressing-table.

She flips her hand through a dress-rack with amazing costumes.

She sees a picture of Stella, aged about sixteen, stuck in the frame of the mirror.

Then sitting on the bed she picks up the phone

JESS

Can I get the Belle Reve Hotel
in New Orleans, please.

PAUL`S ROOM

The phone is RINGING but it is in competition with the sound of HEAVY RAIN, the shower, and Paul SINGING the jazz classic `Stella by Moonlight`.

The shower stops and Paul, still SINGING, comes out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist and his hat on his head.

The phone stops RINGING.

Paul stands and SINGS to it, picking up a spliff from the ash-tray and lighting it between lines.

He he stops singing and there is an eerie total SILENCE.

Paul walks through the French windows and out onto the balcony.

The rain has stopped altogether, a strange SILENCE; the eye of the storm.

Paul leans on the rail and takes a toke on his spliff gazing onto the wet darkening beauty of old New Orleans.

A Streetcar trundles past below.

PAUL

`So late? .. Don`t you just
love these long rainy afternoons
in New Orleans when an hour isn`t
just an hour - but a little bit
of Eternity dropped in your hands
- and who knows what to do with-it`

He LAUGHS with a divine insight... then with divine madness!

The WIND suddenly picks up and the cold goes straight through Paul's body. He shivers involuntarily, and humbled, he goes back inside as the storm returns.

Miss Scarlet comes out of the bathroom carrying used towels. They glare at one another then Miss Scarlett goes about her clearing up

Paul picks up the phone and dials.

He clicks the TV remote-control

ON TV SCREEN

a Man in a hotel room with a phone RINGING. The Man gets up, crosses the room and picks up a telephone

It is Harry!

BACK TO PAUL

PAUL

Hi, Harry? It`s Paul.

HARRY (V.O.)

Why the Hell haven`t you got back to me before now?

PAUL

(groans, then ..)

Listen, I`ve heard from Jess, I ..

HARRY (V.O.)

Where she at?

PAUL

(as if to a moron)

Well you know how your flight was re-routed to Atlanta because of the storm, well, looks like her`s was re-routed as well, except she landed up in Memphis, and ..

HARRY (V.O.)
So when does the silly little
bitch get in?

Paul goes to lie down but Miss Scarlet stops him and
strips the bed.

PAUL
(to Harry)
Harry, she`s not coming.

HARRY (V.O.)
What the fuck do you mean by that!

MISS SCARLET
(making the bed)
I should have been outa here, hours
ago, instead of lickin round after
you.

PAUL
I`m sorry for the terrible inconven-
ience, Miss Scarlet, but hey, don`t
go
away I want to engage you in small
talk.

HARRY (V.O.)
Cut the crap Paul! I`m in no
mood for your bullshit! Just
tell me what the fuck is going
on!

PAUL
(to Harry)
Hey cool it .. none of this
is my problem.

ON THE TV

Harry jumps up and paces around.

HARRY
For-fucks-sake!! Just tell me!

PAUL (VO)
(sounding guilty)

Jess and I .. had a small disagreement and she hung up on me, but I got the Memphis Police out looking for her right now.

HARRY (V.O.)
You useless load of shit! ..
you imbecile, imbecile!

BACK TO PAUL

PAUL
(hard)
Listen you shit head, she wouldn't be lost in Memphis if she hadn't been trying to get away from you!

On the TV Harry collapses into a chair and keeps running his hand through his hair.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Listen Harry and listen good! I've arranged for Stan to stay at Jim's apartment in the Metalwork Museum. You remember, out along the river in Memphis. You're going to have to talk to Stan anyway, and if Jess calls again, I'll send her there too. So, why don't you go on down to Memphis, pick up the keys for Jim's apartment from the studio, and stop giving me a hard time! Okay? .. I said Okay!?

Harry drops both his hands down and just stares for a few moments.

Paul looks up and sees Miss Scarlet in confrontational stance.

MISS SCARLET
I'm waiting, Leatherhead.

Paul waves his hand at her to wait.

PAUL
Harry, you still there?

Harry raises the phone back to his ear.

HARRY (V.O.)
(with menace)
Okay Paul, but if Jessie phones
up, make sure you don't fuck up
again, or I'll kick your ass.

PAUL
(to Harry)
Oh by the way, `A favour one
depends upon in Tennessee.`
8,2, and 9.

Harry gets up, thinking.

HARRY (V.O.)
What the Hell? .. You asking
me a crossword clue!? .. You
snivelling bastard!

PAUL
Sorry, right number of words,
wrong number of letters.

Paul hangs up pleased with himself.

ON TV

Harry throws the phone across the room and paces up and
down

BACK TO PAUL

turning to Miss Scarlett

PAUL
Now where were we?

MISS SCARLET
(pointing at Paul)
I want that towel.

PAUL

Nope, that weren't it .. I remember.

He traces his fingers down the crossword clues

PAUL (CONT'D)

Here it is .. `The filly`s return to the mile, makes for Barbie`s choice of Jockey.`
Three letters.

Realizing that there is no point in hurrying, Miss Scarlet sits down on the bed; resigned.

MISS SCARLET

Does everybody have these problems with you? No, no, don`t answer that. Just give me the clue again and let me get outa here.

Paul sits down on the bed next to her and puts his arm around her shoulder, real friendly. Miss Scarlet looks at the hand and turns to him slowly with a mean look. He removes it in time to her head`s rotation.

On the TV Harry has begun to demolish the room in anger.

PAUL

`The filly`s return to the mile, makes for Barbie`s choice of jockey` .. three letters.

MISS SCARLET

(thinking mode)

`Return to` suggests that this is a reversed, hidden, solution Right?

PAUL

Right. What ever that is. I thought it just meant that the hidden letters were spelt in the reverse order.

MISS SCARLET

(ignoring him)
Now Barbie is a doll, and if my
mind serves me right, there was
a movie called, Baby Doll ..
hummm .. Filly, obviously refers
to her virginity and the fact
that she chooses the jockey to
loose it to .. right?

Miss Scarlet looks up thinking.

BACK TO TV

Harry is interrupted in his demolition work by the
arrival of hotel staff, who start arguing with him.

BACK TO MISS SCARLETT

MISS SCARLET
(continuing)
Now in the movie that jockey was
played by .. who the hell was it?

PAUL
Eli Wallach! Of course! `return
to the mile`, the last three
letters in mile, reversed!
E, L, I, Eli!

Miss Scarlet watches Paul`s juvenile reaction with scorn,
as he writes in the answer.

On the TV Harry is confronted by police.

Miss Scarlet tucks the dirty linen under one arm, then
beckons

MISS SCARLET
A want that towel, Leatherhead.

PAUL
(distracted)
You don`t need this towel.

She leans forward with surprising speed and whips it off
him. Paul covers his genitalia with his hat (which for
the first time reveals his balding head).

Miss Scarlet heads for the door, LAUGHING.

MISS SCARLET

I gotta crack behind my knee for
little boys like you...
...and you know what, its got more
hair than what`s on your head.

Her HOOTS OF LAUGHTER can be heard through the door she
has left open.

PAUL

(shouting after her)

I`m on to you, Miss Scarlet,
yes sir .. I got your ticket,
you`re an intellectual pervert
and that`s for sure! And close
the friggin door!!

The CAMERA pans onto the TV as Harry is being arrested.

MIX TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Harry, in the process of being cuffed by the POLICE,
comes to his senses.

HARRY

Look guys, I just lost it for a
moment. I`ve been under terrible
stress recently, my wife died in
a fire and my daughter .. my
step daughter .. has disappeared
in Memphis. Look you can check
with the Memphis police and hey
I`ll pay for the damages, I`ll pay
right now.

The Police look at the MANAGER.

MANAGER

It`ll cost you a few hundred.

HARRY

What ever, that`s fine, I don`t
mind, I got travelers checks in

my jacket. Go take a look.

POLICEMAN

Let me check with the Memphis
police. If the girl is reported
missing you two can make a deal.

The Policeman picks up the telephone and makes the call.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - EVENING

The office is now empty and in complete silence except
for FOOTSTEPS as Will walks through. He sees the phone
that was ringing in the earlier scene and stops next to
it almost in anticipation.

It RINGS.

AN ALMOST SUBLIMINAL FLASH

in SLO-MO of a knife slashing through the air.

BACK TO WILL

overcome by a terrible sense of foreboding.

He just stares at the RINGING phone until VOICES can be
heard approaching.

He moves off into shadow leaning against the wall as Mr.
Fields and his SWAT team arrive in the office. They sit
around on the desks in a group.

MR. FIELDS

Okay, settle down.

(hands out some sheets)

Hand these around.

As an Officer hands them around, Mr. Fields answers the
phone and sees Will lurking in the shadows with a strange
look in his eyes

MR. FIELDS (CONT'D)

Hi ...

Yes this is missing persons
but there`s nobody here
right now ...

Yes I know I am but I don`t

belong to this department.
Oh, I see, actually I know
about this girl, and yes, she`s
been reported missing ...
No trouble, bye.

Mr. Fields looks at Will and they share a moment over the
coincidence.

Mr. Fields leaves the phone off the hook

WILL
(filled with foreboding)
I`m spooked Mr. Fields, and
that`s just the truth.

MR. FIELDS
(concerned)
Take a wire, at least that way
we`ll know if you`ve been
rumbled.

WILL
That`s not it .. Homer don`t
bother me none, it`s not even
.. Laurie .. I can`t put my
finger on it .. ah, Hell, I
guess I`m just getting too old
for this shit .. Anyway, if
you gentlemen are ready, I`ll
head out.

Mr. Fields holds out his hand, Will looks at it, then
shakes it.

Will walks to the phone and stops, he looks at it, then
back at Mr. Fields.

WILL (CONT'D)
Now don`t you be answering the
phone to anyone but me .. will
ya.

Will walks out watched by a concerned Mr. Fields.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

The club is beginning to fill.

Homer is talking to the Barman as one of the Doormen comes in followed by Will

DOORMAN

Your guest has arrived.

Will and Homer shake hands.

HOMER

(curious)

No problem getting here then Will? It`s a long drive from Plainview and I wasn`t expecting you till later.

WILL

(abruptly)

It is all right for tonight?

HOMER

(taken back)

Sure Will, everything is just fine.

WILL

So when can I collect?

HOMER

Hey, Will, relax. Have a drink, and something to eat. I got a red hot Creole cook, and later, I got a little girl who`ll show you some real Memphis hospitality.

WILL

Let`s not forget why am here. You sure things are set for tonight?

HOMER

(exaggerated sincerity)

Will, everything's just fine.

TANNOY

Hello out there, we got a problem with the PA system, could someone

come up here a minute.

HOMER
Excuse me, Will.

He walks off towards the stage, calling out to the Barman.

HOMER (CONT'D)
Hospitality of the house for my guest.

The Barman comes down to where Will is standing watching Homer with suspicion.

WILL
Jack Daniels. Have you got a phone?

BARMAN
Down the other end of the bar, under the counter.

Will goes to the phone and dials.

INT. S.W.A.T. COMMAND VEHICLE.

The space is full of SWAT personnel. The mobile phone in Mr. Fields pocket RINGS just once before he answers it.

WILL (V.O.)
Hi, looks like I`m going to be delayed. The weather`s real bad, the front has stalled over the mid west, so I`ll have to let you know later what time to expect me.

Mr. Fields pushes his way through expectant officers, to a window covered in condensation and rubs a small spot dry so he can look out.

MR. FIELDS
I knew we should have kept our observation balloon active. Will, you think it`s stalling cause it`s cumulus or cirrus cloud? You don`t think the cloud cover

has been compromised?

He rubs another spot dry an eyes width apart, he peers through

WILL (V.O.)

No, it`s definitely not cirrus.
And yes, it`s been raining for
hours and without even a
suspicion of a break.

Mr. Fields uses his dry spots as the nipples for the figure of a curvaceous woman`s body which he draws in the condensation.

MR. FIELDS

What should we do about our ..
clean clothes, they`re just
hanging out on the line and in
this weather are just liable
to blow .. clean away.

WILL (V.O.)

Hell no, let the washing out
to dry. You know the old saying,
`cleanliness is next to ...`
Well, when you find one, you`re
just liable to find the other.
Just make sure you`re ready with
the weather-proofing, cause a
don`t want to be here by myself
when the storm breaks.

MR. FIELDS

Don`t worry, it`ll be me, riding
on the wings of the storm.

Mr. Fields puts the phone back in his pocket then scrubs out the female form on the window.

In the bg. Can be seen the Silver Dollar Club sign.

MIX TO:

INT. CLUB - BAR

The Silver Dollar Club sign behind the bar.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Will holding the phone lost
in dark thoughts

BARMAN

Excuse me sir, but if you've
finished...

WILL

(handing him the phone)
I'll have another when you're
ready.

Will downs his drink while the Barman **phones**.

STELLA'S ROOM.

Stella and Jess both in their underwear, are lying on the
bed facing each other - Jess looks more woman than child.

The **phone** is RINGING

as Stella gets up and goes to answer it

STELLA

You used your mother's plastic
to buy a plane ticket?
Shoot, that's neat.

Picks up phone

BACK TO CLUB - BAR

the Barman is looking at Will downing another drink

BARMAN

This is your first call, and
hey, it's getting real busy
out here.

BACK TO STELLA

STELLA

That's what I like to hear.

She replaces the handset and slowly walks back to the
bed.

STELLA (CONT'D)

So how come you ended up in
Memphis?

JESS

There was a tropical storm over
New Orleans so they made us get off
here in Memphis.

STELLA

You must love him to travel thousands
of miles just to see him.

JESS

(embarrassed)

He still thinks I`m a little girl
.. he still calls me .. Petal.

STELLA

Ahh, a baby name .. now that`s
just too cute.

Stella watches Jess for a moment than snaps out of it

STELLA (CONT'D)

I got to get ready.

Stella sits at the dressing table and starts doing her
face. She holds out the foundation cream for Jess, who,
clearly pleased, comes and takes it, sitting next to her.
They embark on the ritual of make-up.

JESS

(looking at the photos)

Did you really meet Michael
Jackson?

STELLA

Of course I met him!

(looking at Jess)

Don`t forget to put it under
here, or you`ll get a line.

Jess copies Stella`s action through the mirror.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I met him doing Vegas. I was
getting to be real famous at

one time. Had a record deal,
even a few T.V. slots. Trouble
was, I already had an expensive
habit and when the record
company found out, they dropped
me like I was a skunk in heat.

JESS

Can`t you stop.

STELLA

I did Honey. Trouble is, coming
off left me with no confidence
.. so I bought into something
false. I got into snow.

(seeing Jess` confusion)

Cocaine .. I came off heroin and
got into cocaine .. Jesus, just
listen to me. Am I some kind of
degenerate or what. Huh. My mama
always said that I`d come to no
good.

(forcefully)

But her saying that didn`t help
my self esteem none, neither.

Jess nods towards another photos.

JESS

Is that her?

STELLA

(fixing her face)

Yeah, that`s her .. meanest
woman I ever met .. only
needed the slightest excuse to
beat the shit out of ya. But
I`ll give her that .. she
needed a reason. One time ..
You want to hear about my mama?

(Jess nods)

Well, one time

I was still at school, we were
into swapping things, and ma
hated that .. looking back, I
think it was because all we had
was shit .. but anyway .. I

swapped this real old base ball hat for a real leather wallet, and when we were driving along in our old pick-up - me hiding it from her - it dropped out. Well she put me through the third degree .. an because I didn` t want her to realize that I` d swapped it, when she asked me if I` d stolen it, I told her I had .. biiig mistake .. She stopped the truck, dragged me out and kicked me behind both knees so my legs went numb. Then she dragged me around the truck by my hair and made me ride in the back till we got home.

Stella picks up a bottle of hair-dye and removes the brush from inside, she starts touching up a few grey hairs around the sides.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I guess you must be hurtin real bad about your mama, huh?

JESS

Most of the time I don` t feel anything .. sometimes I feel angry, and I want to .. Stella, I` ve got this letter ..

A loud KNOCK comes to the door.

SLIM (V.O.)

C` mon Stella, let`s go.

STELLA

(finishing Jess`s make-up)
Shit .. hold still .. there,
that looks real pretty.

Stella quickly pulls on a skimpy mini-dress and cowboy boots.

STELLA (CONT'D)

I got to run Honey, pick

something out of the rack that
fits and there`s a pile of boots
in the corner. Come back stage
when you`re ready. Wish me luck.

Left alone Jess picks up the bottle of hair-dye and looks
at the label then looking quickly around she takes off
the top looks at the brush and then at herself in the
mirror

STAGE

Stella`s raven hair... as she SINGS a country ballad...
the distinctive voice... a captivated audience.

BAR

Homer is standing at the bar watching Stella when the
Barman comes over carrying the phone.

BARMAN

Phone call Homer.

HOMER

I`ll take it in the office.

He walks off

BACK TO STAGE

As Stella nears the end of her song, she turns to the
wings and sees a copy of herself; a raven haired,
rhinestone, cow-girl. Jess, transformed and now looking
all woman, if a bit self-conscious..

Stella finishes and the Audience GO WILD.

Stella smiles and gives a special smile to Jess.

CLUB - OFFICE

Homer is sweating and it`s not just because of the heat;
he's on the phone and annoyed.

HOMER

Where the Hell have you been?

Never mind that now...

is it at Benny`s?

Okay.

She`ll be there in fifteen minutes...

She don` t know nothing, so you follow
her just to make sure she gets where
she`s going. Be in touch.

He drops the phone and dabs his skin with a handkerchief
then takes a swig from a bottle of whisky.

He walks across to the window out of which he sees a taxi
dropping people off. He opens the window and shouts.

HOMER (CONT'D)
Wait there, I gat a customer!

CORRIDOR

Homer leaves the office and is almost to the door of the
performance area, when

WILL (O.O.V.)
Homer, why you avoiding me?

Homer spins around towards Will, but keeps walking

HOMER
Hang on Will, hang on, be back
in a minute.

He disappears through the door and into the crowd.

BACK STAGE

Homer beckons Stella.
Flushed with and high on success she walks over

HOMER
There`s a cab waiting outside
for you. I want ...

STELLA
Hey wait a minute Homer, what`s
this shit you`re trying to give me?

HOMER
Look here girl, I got business ...

STELLA
I just gave you a flawless
performance and you can`t even

say, thanks! Well screw you.

She turns to go but Homer grabs her.

HOMER

Don`t fuck with me Stella, you are doing very well here, but I can change all that for good. So, when I say go fetch .. you go fetch. Now go fetch your car back here. It`s parked outside Benny`s down Mud Island. The keys are in the tail pipe. And come straight back. Do you understand?

Stella is nervous and surprised at Homer`s violence.

STELLA

Okay, okay.

She jerks her hand free and goes across to Jess to get her things; Homer sees Jess

HOMER

And I don`t want your protégé hanging around here. Take it with you and keep it out of the club. What kind of establishment do you think this is? Jesus!

Stella and Jess leave in a hurry.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Homer watches the taxi with Stella and Jess drive off. When he turns around he finds Will standing there behind him watching

WILL

What games you playing, Homer?

HOMER

Just a bit of business to see to ..

WILL

No, Homer. No more procrastinating.

It`s finished. It`s now .. or I`m gone.

HOMER
Just five minutes, Will.

Will walks past him into the car park.
A bluff? Homer is in a quandary.

HOMER (CONT'D)
Okay Will, okay, come into my office.

Will stops, he allows the look of apprehension to pass from his face before he turns.

CLUB OFFICE

Will enters as Homer checks the corridor then he enters and locks the door.

HOMER
There`s a slight problem, Will,
but it`s being sorted out right now.

WILL
Cut the bullshit Homer, you`ve either got it or you ain`t.

HOMER
Well, there is a third option ..
I gat most of it.

WILL
(suspicious)
Most of it? And what does that mean?

HOMER
I`ve gat five K`s here and three on the way.

WILL
Homer, you`re full of shit. I want to see what you`ve got, right now.

HOMER
Let me just open the safe. You`ll

see.

Homer opens the safe as Will positions himself next to the phone. Then as soon as Homer puts a K of cocaine on the desk

WILL

Open it!

HOMER

(becoming suspicious)

Hey Will, what is this, we done business before.

WILL

I said open it.

Homer freezes, he looks at Will's cold gaze

Homer slides the K up the desk with just too much aggression and suddenly he's looking at a .22 which has sprung out of Will's coat sleeve.

Will slides the K back with his free hand.

WILL (CONT'D)

Open it.

Homer, mesmerized by the speed by which the gun appeared, can't take his eyes off it and opens the K by touch.

WILL (CONT'D)

(pointing)

Now place it right there.

Homer does what he's told like an automaton. Without taking his eyes off Homer, Will, tests the powder with his little finger and then picks up the phone and dials

After a moment

WILL (CONT'D)

It's time to come in outta the rain.

Homer suddenly laughs but Will keeps his attention focused.

CLUB

The SWAT team invade the club; MAYHEM.

Through the chaos comes Homer, his hands cuffed behind his back and with Will right behind.

CAR PARK

Many police cars, their lights flashing, are parked up. People are being questioned and searched by the police.

Mr. Fields is grilling Blanche (from the band)

MR. FIELDS

Don't give me that Blanche, you will upset me greatly, and my little Lullabell, says my performance goes, way off, when I'm upset. Now you wouldn't want that on your conscience, so just tell me .. where she at?

BLANCHE

(sympathetic)

You're too nice for this job, Mr. Fields. Have you ever thought about a career change, acting perhaps, or the ministry?

MR. FIELDS

(acting mean)

You're not helping Blanche .. my shrink said something on the same lines .. But what neither of you seem to understand, is that I love the excitement, the cut and thrust of dangerous play,

(getting carried away)

the thrill of bringing down the bad guys and making them eat dirt.

Inside me is a man filled with the wrath of the righteous and a desire

(forgetting his drift)

to .. to er ..

BLANCHE

Help old ladies across the street?

MR. FIELDS
(shouting in her face)
WHERE DID STELLA GO!

BLANCHE
(smiling sweetly)
Honey, even if I could take you
serious, I still couldn't tell you.
First, because a don't know, and
second, because she's my friend.

Mr. Fields gives up his act.

MR. FIELDS
Okay, then how about the girl that
was seen leaving with her, who is
she?

Blanche debates whether to tell a frustrated Mr. Fields.

BLANCHE
I don't know who she is ..
(then takes pity)
but she was English, that's for
sure.

They exchange an insightful moment.

Mr. Fields walks over to a police car with Homer and Will
in the back and jumps in the front seat.
Mr. Fields adjusts the mirror so he can see Homer's face.

MR. FIELDS
Where she at Homer?

HOMER
(laughing)
It's a place she visits often,
and a place she liked to live
.. it's called .. paradise.

Will punches him in the stomach to stop his laughter.

Mr. Fields starts the engine and SCREECHES out of the car
park and onto the highway.

After a moment Stella`s car drives past in the opposite direction.

WIPE TO:

INT. STELLA`S CAR

The police car with Will, Mr. Fields, and Homer in, drives past in the opposite direction.

Stella is driving and SINGING, trying to get Jess to join in.

As they approach the Silver Dollar Club Stella slows down as she spots the police lights.

Then clocking the situation she puts her foot down and drives straight past, just making it through the traffic-lights on the interchange.

INTERCHANGE

Two Motor Cycle Cops, sitting right on the interchange, watch as Stella drives through.

Then they turn their attention to the vehicle behind as it has to BREAK HARD to stop for the traffic-lights.

The man driving is busily blowing his nose with a handkerchief, taking forever about it.

CLOSE ON THE MAN

it is Laurie hiding his face from the cops. His eyes stare angrily after the tail-lights of Stella`s car as they recede into the distance.

BACK TO STELLA`S CAR

Stella is driving at a furious pace and keeps looking in themirror nervously.

JESS

What are the police doing at
the club?

Stella suddenly SLAMS on the breaks and SWERVES down a track.

After a few hundred yards she pulls the car over fast into some trees.
She kills the lights.

STELLA

You got it kid. What are they doing? And why do I have a wild cat gnawing at my stomach, when I think about this little trip that Homer so forcefully impressed upon us?

JESS

You mean it has something to do with the car?

STELLA

(angry with herself)

I-am-such-a-fool. Things have been going too well for too long, an I got careless .. I got lax.

(smacking the steering wheel)

Lazy! .. Shoot! Just call me Slack Alice.

Stella gets out of the car and opens the boot.
Watched by Jess Stella rummages through it. Nothing.

She goes around to the back door and opens that, feeling under the seat. Nothing.

JESS

You`re looking for drugs aren`t you?

STELLA

You`re wising up kid, so don`t stand there gawking, give me a hand.

Stella lifts the bonnet.
Jess looks in the back of the car, feeling down behind the seats.

Then putting her hand on the back of the passenger seat, Jess feels something through the fabric

JESS

Stella! Stella! I think I`ve found it.

Stella is there in an instant and runs her hand down the back, feels a lump and brings out a draw-string bag.

She opens it onto the seat and produces three K`s of white powder.

Jess looks at Stella and sees that Stella is both mortified and pleased

JESS (CONT'D)

What are you going to do?

Stella gets out of the car, carrying one of the K`s and paces about feeling it`s weight and thinking.

Jess looks at the rest of the cocaine then out of curiosity puts her hand up into the back of the seat. To her surprise she finds something wrapped in a cloth.

She opens it and finds a gun.

Fascinated Jess feels the gun's weight and then puts her hand around the grip.

She looks up expecting to see Stella watching her, but she`s too busy weighing up other possibilities.

Jess surreptitiously slips the gun into her jacket pocket and gets out of the car.

Stella is suddenly lit up by lights as another vehicle turns down the track

STELLA

Come on Kid, we got to get outa here.

They quickly jump into the car and reversing at speed, Stella drives towards the on-coming vehicle forcing it to swerve around her.

Lots of HORN BLOWING and YELLING from a truck full of men; but they don't stop, neither does Stella.

INT. CAR - MORNING.

Stella has been driving all night and looks like it. Jess is having a fitful sleep on the seat next to her.

JESS
(sleep talking)
Leave me alone .. Harry, leave
me alone, you can't have the
letter, you can't have it.

Stella leans over and gently wakes her.

STELLA
I thought I'd better make a
rescue. You okay?

JESS
(half asleep)
Where are we?

STELLA
Yazoo City.

CAR LOT

Stella and Jess drive on the lot then get out. A SALESMAN comes over.

SALESMAN
(cheerfully)
Good morning, can I be of
service to you .. cowgirls?

STELLA
(winking at him)
I sure hope so.

She turns to Jess while taking money out from her bag.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Honey, you run over to the phone
across the street and try phone
your daddy and tell him
we're on our way.

Jess goes to phone while Stella takes the salesman by the arm for a walk along a line of used cars.

PAUL`S HOTEL ROOM

Paul is asleep in a room in semi-chaos. The bed-side table is over-flowing with beer cans and the phone is RINGING.

Paul comes around and searches for the phone with his hand. Dislodging several cans he finally locates it.

PAUL

Hi.

JESS (V.O.)

Hi Paul, it`s me, Jess.

PAUL

Jess who?

JESS (V.O.)

(angry)

Jessie Mitchell!

PAUL

(yawning)

Oh that Jess. That must be the same Jess, the whole God damn Memphis police force is looking for .. and if I remember correctly, it`s the same Jess who has got a serious problem with running away and scaring people half to death. Yeah, I remember you, so what can I do you for?

JESS (V.O.)

If you`re going to be horrible Paul, I`ll hang up.

PAUL

Cool it, cool it, I`m only joking.

(lights cigarette)

You still in Memphis?

JESS (V.O.)
No, we`re on our way to New
Orleans. We`re in Yazoo City.

PAUL
Mind if I ask, who the other
half of we is?

JESS (V.O.)
Pardon?

PAUL
Who you with Jess?

JESS (V.O.)
Oh I see, Stella Knight, the
country singer.

The shock is so great Paul CHOKES..

PAUL
Stella Knight!!
(coughs)
the country singer!
(to himself)
Shit! Just my luck.
(to Jess)
You godda turn back, kid.

JESS
I don`t understand.

PAUL
It`s real easy, you`re gonna
have to go back to Memphis.

There`s a KNOCK on the door.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(continuing)
Hold it Jess there`s someone at
the door.

He gets up and wraps a bed sheet around him toga style,
then goes across to the door. He is just about to open
it, when it opens with him behind it. Miss Scarlet walks

in and looks around with suspicion, eventually seeing him peeping out from behind the door.

MISS SCARLET

What you hidin behind there for
boy? Not hopin` to sneak up on me,
now was you?

She walks in and surveys the scene while he regally walks back to the phone.

JESS (V.O.)

Hello. Paul. Are you still there?

PAUL

(to Jess)
I think she`s in love with me.

MISS SCARLET

(picking up garbage)
Huh. Psychotic dreams with
sentimental overtones.

JESS (V.O.)

Who`s in love with you?

PAUL

(to Jess)
Never mind, have you got a pen?

JESS (V.O.)

Somewhere, wait a sec.

Miss Scarlet cleans up the mess from the bedside table.

Paul rescues the crossword puzzle, much to Miss Scarlet`s annoyance. Then giving him a dirty look she goes across to the bathroom.

JESS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All right.

PAUL

1/2, Riverside Drive, Memphis.
Phone Number, 2506532. You got
that?

JESS (V.O.)

Yes.

PAUL

Its that crazy old Metalworks Museum,
down by the river - remember? I`ve
arranged for your father to stay
there.

Now look Harry...

JESS

Harry, that fucking wanker,
he`d better stay well away
from me ...

PAUL

Hey, hey, wait a minute Jess,
I don`t like the asshole
anymore than you do, but he`s
real concerned.

JESS (V.O.)

Concerned! Concerned my ass!
He killed my mother!

Suddenly the line goes dead

PAUL

Jess! Jess! Ring back, your dad
doesn`t know yet ..

We hear the dialing TONE, as Paul speaks to himself.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hell, he doesn`t know anything.
He doesn`t even know Eunice is
dead.

He walks across to the French windows as Miss Scarlet
comes out of the bathroom waving a ten dollar bill

MISS SCARLET

I`ve come to a decision,
Leatherhead. I want my crossword
back.

PAUL

(distracted)

No way, it`s almost finished.

MISS SCARLET

It was almost finished when you got it, and I helped you with the rest.

PAUL

A deal`s a deal, from the cotton fields to the glittering glass.

(slyly)

But I might cut you in .. say .. if you were to help me with the finale.

Paul, playing like Caesar, rearranges his toga and then, head held high, he sweeps past her into the bathroom.

Miss Scarlett watches him with a cold eye.

PAUL (O.O.V.) (CONT'D)

`A favour one depends upon in Tennessee` 8,2, & 9. It`s the very last one, and, strangely enough, it`s one across two down...the very first one.

Miss Scarlett looks at Paul sitting on the john concentrating on the crossword.

MISS SCARLET

You`ll never get it, and besides, ah can pick up another copy of that crossword ..

PAUL

You wouldn`t be begging me for this one if you could!
Now come on. `A favour one depends upon in Tennessee.`

She wanders across to the bath thinking and sits on its edge

MISS SCARLET

`A favour one depends upon in
Tennessee.` Hmmm. Now a think on
it .. it`s just too easy.
(chuckling)
8,2, & 9, catfish .. au ..
cranberry.

Miss Scarlett watches Paul look at the crossword
expectantly and then throws back her head a SCREECHES
with laughter

Paul sits up and looks at her then has an insight.

PAUL

A .. Flavour .. one depends on
in Tennessee... shit
Hell, I think I like you better
mean and nasty. Anyways, how
come you so clever at this shit?
Come to think of it, how come
you so clever, anyway?

Her face changes back to being mean and nasty as she
starts running the bath

MISS SCARLET

What you mean is, how come a
house nigger got more intelligence
than a piece of po white trash,
like you!

PAUL

Well, I wouldn`t of put it
quite like that, but let`s
stick to your terms of reference.
How come a clever house nigger
like you is cleaning up the
shit of po white trash like
me? .. how come you so clever
anyway? .. that`s not just ..
native...

(her eyes grow big)
intelligence, that`s educated
hi-ball!

MISS SCARLET

(controlling her anger)

You really want to know?

PAUL

Yeah. I really want to know.

MISS SCARLET

(adds bubble bath)

Leatherhead, I put both my kids into college, and all by myself, I may add. An one day it dawned on me, hell, if they could go to college by me being a house nigger, then a could go too, doin the same God damn thing.

(with pride)

Am in my second year, doin a degree in linguistics and cultural studies.

(shouting angrily)

An' that's why I hate workin here late, cause am missin' class on account of... you!

Paul hides inside of his toga as she turns and adjusts the water in the tub.

MISS SCARLET (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Now, I'll answer your first question. How come am so good at crossword puzzles? It's because they're mind games, designed to work on the subconscious, lexical level of brain function and that`s why semi-conscious assholes, like you, can do them without knowing why.

See, Leatherhead, there is what is called `deep structure`, which in your case is almost certainly missin .. well, that`s how the brain organizes language through the control of the mouth, tongue, and throat. An' sitting on top of that, still subconscious, are the various forms of the lexical

modes. Well, one of these modes is called the crossword mode, no shit, and it has sixteen categories, which just so happens to be the number of categories there are of crossword clues. Any dumb nigger, an' hey, any piece of po white trash can learn them. It ain't so clever, in fact once you know how .. it's easy.

Paul`s mouth has fallen open; he quickly shuts it.

The phone RINGS and switching off the taps Miss Scarlett goes into the other room to answer it

MISS SCARLET (CONT'D)

Now you just sit there and relieve yourself of all that bullshit you`re so full of...

(picks up phone)

The residence of his imperial weirdness, Micro Cock the Infirm ... Sure but you realize that conversing with the divine donut can seriously damage your mental health? ... Uh huh, let me guess, you`re a member of the band ...

She looks around the door and sees Paul now sitting amongst the bubbles in the bath

MISS SCARLETT

(unfazed)

Yo' manager!

PAUL (O.O.V.)

Give it me!

MISS SCARLET

(eyes rolling)

Yesum Massa.

(into phone)

The boss is soakin' his po excuse for a body, so you just hold on while I transfer

you by perambulated locomotion.

She strolls over to the bath carrying the phone.

As she approaches, Paul blows a stream of bubbles at her then takes the phone

Miss Scarlet shakes her hair free of the bubbles and leaves

MISS SCARLET (CONT'D)

I know what you need... a good hard nosed woman, Leatherhead, someone to lock horns with.

(she chuckles)

Pity you`re such a runt.

She exits laughing.

PAUL

(to Stan, his manager)

I`ve been trying to get hold of you for days.

Paul blows out another big bubble as he listens to Stan; it floats up in the air and sticks to the light shade.

Close on BUBBLE: Stan`s face appears in it.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Anyway, buddy, I got some bad news, your ex, Eunice, has been killed...

Stan in shock repeats the word "killed" under his breath, then

STAN

What do you mean killed?

PAUL

You know, dead. I dunno the details, some kind of accident, Harry rang, trying to get in touch with you.

STAN

He said it was some kind of accident?

PAUL

That`s what he said .. but listen, there`s more. Jess ran away and well you`d never guess, she`s here... in the States.

The bubble bursts as Stan explodes.

CUT TO:

PHONE BOOTH

STAN

What! She did what!

PAUL (V.O.)

Hey lighten up buddy, she wants to be with you .. you can`t blame her.

Stan, although in a state of angry shock, cools down.

STAN

Yeah yeah .. of course .. so where is she now?

PAUL (V.O.)

Yazoo City, and listen to this, she`s travelling with the country singer, Stella Knight, but don`t ask me how or why, cos I don`t know.

STAN

(half to himself)

What the fuck am I going to do?

PAUL (V.O.)

Listen, where you at now?

STAN

Minneapolis.

PAUL (V.O.)

Okay, then you head on down

to Memphis. I`ve arranged for you all to stay at the Metalwork Museum, Jimmy`s apartment. Just pick up the keys from the studio... and, oh yes, get in touch with the Memphis police, they said they wanted to talk to you.

Stan is looking around in confusion, his poker face strained.

STAN

Okay, I`ll do that .. there`s nothing else?

PAUL (V.O.)

What kinda favour do you depend on in Tennessee?

STAN

I don`t understand.

PAUL (V.O.)

Forget it good buddy, phone me from Memphis.

STAN

Yeah sure.

Stan slowly replaces the hand set wondering what to do, then with purpose, he picks up the hand set once more and dials.

INT. POLICE OFFICE.

The office is busy. The phone from previous office scenes starts RINGING but there is no one at the desk. Then a woman, LULLABELL, attractive in a Dolly Parton sort of way, comes sauntering in, slowly sits down at the desk and eventually picks up the phone.

LULLABELL

Hi, missing persons ...
Oh yeah, so who are you?

Mr. Fields comes up quietly behind her and listens.

LULLABELL (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Her father? Well that makes two ...

Yeah, that`s right, and he was plenty concerned, nearly blew my ear off, so where have you been these last few days? ...

On the road, my, we must have a tight schedule ...

(she pulls a face)

You know who you remind me of, her other father ...

Hey, I`m not being sarcastic, that`s a direct observation ...

Look buddy, we godda ask questions, after all, that is our business ...

Well FUCK you too!

As she SLAMS down the phone Mr. Fields takes her by surprise and kisses her full on the lips. She feigns distaste.

MR. FIELDS

What`s wrong? You screwed up again, my little Lullabell

LULLABELL

Don`t you start, Mr. Fields .. And you know you shouldn`t kiss me while I`m on duty.

MR. FIELDS

I got senior rank here, so you just do what you`re told.

LULLABELL

Well you just might have senior rank here, but you sure don`t have it in the sack, so if you want to keep your privileges, get off my case.

MR. FIELDS

So what`s with this missing girl that can make you mealy mouthed and moody?

LULLABELL

I don't know .. she has three men desperate to get her back and not a single woman, and what's more, she's English and they're all American.

MR. FIELDS

Tell me, is she five three with blond hair, sixteen years old and her name is Jess Mitchell.

Lullabell looks at him with incredulity.
Mr. Fields acts superior as he walks away from her.

MR. FIELDS (CONT'D)

(continuing)

That's what makes me special.

He walks down the corridor pleased with himself and into

WILL'S OFFICE

Will is sitting with his feet up on the desk.

WILL

So what you so happy about?

MR. FIELDS

Women .. I love em.

WILL

Why you in love with that flake?

MR. FIELDS

Cos she don't remind me of me.

WILL

Hell, you could love me, I sure as shit don't remind me of you.

MR. FIELDS

You don't have quite the same, attributes, Will. She's lazy, simple, and the way she thinks, well, is abstract in the extreme .. but she connects things I wouldn't even dream of. Take for

instance just now, three men
have been in contact about a
runaway English girl, she
thinks that`s spooky. But you or
I wouldn`t, what we`d be
interested in, is if this English
girl was the one that was with
Stella Knight .. Now wouldn`t we?

Will swings his feet off the desk.

WILL

You think it could be the same?

MR. FIELDS

One way to find out.

He picks up the phone and hands it to Will.

MR. FIELDS (CONT'D)

Phone Blanche from the band ..
it ain`t no use me talking to
her, she don`t take me serious.

Will takes the phone smiling at Mr. Fields as he does.

INT. BLANCHE'S APARTMENT

CLOSE UP on RINGING wall mounted phone. A hand comes
across and picks up the handset and we follow it back to
the face of Blanche. She`s nervous and keeps glancing to
one side she speaks

BLANCHE

Yes ...
Oh hi ...
I can`t remember that ...
I didn`t say she was definitely
English, just that she had an
English kinda accent ...
No, she had black hair ...
No, I haven`t heard from
Stella ...
Sure thing, bye.

She puts the phone back on its wall-mount then is
VIOLENTLY SWUNG AROUND.

Laurie`s face is just a few inches from hers and a knife makes it`s way slowly across her cheek.

LAURIE

You know bitch, that I can`t stand being this close to the smell of putrefaction .. it reminds me of my .. dear .. dead .. daddy.

(his eyes glaze)

I loved my daddy .. oh I did .. and she took him away from me .. the unfaithful whore .. when he found out, he went and hung himself, out there in the woods .. me and the bitch searched for days until we found him there, still hanging from the tree .. it been high summer, he stunk .. an then she had to go and pull me to her, with that woman`s smell, and cheap eau de cologne to cover her filth .. I hated her then, even before I found out about her treacherous ways.

He snaps back into reality but the intensity of his loathing is now directed towards Blanche. She WHIMPERS

LAURIE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Tell me .. where is she?

BLANCHE

I swear I don`t know.

He LAUGHS WILDLY in her face.

LAURIE

I`m just picturing you lying here on the floor, with a big grin .. cut right into your throat.

He moves the knife to her dangling ear-ring and flicks it, then passes the knife through it and stretches her ear-lobe.

Laurie puts on the look of a simpleton who has chanced upon a flower in amongst the garbage.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I can't help you, you know,
only Stella can help you, now.

BLANCHE

She left with the kid, I swear,
I swear I don't know.

LAURIE

Oh yes, the kid. Tell me about
our young friend the police
were so interested in.

BLANCHE

She's the daughter .. of the
manager .. of `Roomful`.

LAURIE

`Roomful`?

BLANCHE

They're a blues band. She must
have taken the kid to see her
father, that's it, that's what
she will have done. They're in
New Orleans, staying at the
Belle Reve Hotel.

Blanche SCREAMS as Laurie pulls the ear-ring out through her ear-lobe. She drops to the floor grasping her bleeding ear.

Laurie brings out a bottle of disinfectant and pours some on to his handkerchief. He quickly cleans his hands and knife.

He stretches out his arm to the phone, using the handkerchief to lift the handset and as he brings it to his ear...

he SPLITS THE SCREEN as he pulls in the image of:

THE BELLE REVE HOTEL - FOYER

The Receptionist picking up the phone and as she does she in turn lifts up the image of:

PAUL'S ROOM

which replaces her image in the SPLIT SCREEN

Paul is getting ready to go out, he`s looking very smart in a beautiful white suit and silk vest. He is combing his fast receding hair in front of the mirror. He picks up the phone as it RINGS.

PAUL

Hi.

LAURIE

Good morning, I wonder if you can help me, I`m trying to locate the manager of `Roomful`.

PAUL

I`m sorry, he`s not here at the moment. Can I help?

LAURIE

Could you tell me where I might locate him, as the business at hand is of an urgent nature.

Paul places a white Panama on his head

PAUL

This hasn`t got anything to do with his daughter Jessie.

LAURIE

(surprised)

Er no .. I mean .. I work for .. Red Hot Records and it was concerning a record deal.

PAUL

I didn`t know he was thinking of changing record companies, not

that the one we`ve got`s done
much for us. So what`s the deal?

LAURIE

Well .. er .. I think I should
discuss that with your manager.
Perhaps you could enlighten me
with whom I am conversing?

Paul takes the phone from his ear, looks at it and
mimes "enlighten me with whom I am conversing", then...

PAUL

Well buddy, you`re conversing
with the greatest blues
guitarist of modern times. None
other than the legendary
`Ring-a-Ding` Bell.

Laurie sees Blanche move and he KICKS her in the head.

LAURIE

Well Ring, it is very important
that I contact your manager

PAUL

Say good buddy, do you know the
band, I mean, personally?

LAURIE

Er .. Ring. I am a director of
the company, not a talent agent,
I deal with the business aspects
of our industry and as such I
have pressing business with your
manager. Perhaps you could
facilitate the required
information, as time is also
pressing and I would sorely like
to discuss a lucrative venture
with your superior.

This last comment sticks in Paul`s throat.

PAUL

Well, I sure as damn aim to
please, you can contact him at

the Metal Museum in Memphis.

LAURIE

I am most obliged.

PAUL

Think nothing of it, say good
buddy, you`re good with words,
what kind of favour would you
depend upon in Tennessee?

Laurie is suddenly unsure and he slowly replaces the
handset. The SPLIT SCREEN is slowly pushed back by his
action.

He looks down at Blanche.

LAURIE

Favors? .. In Tennessee? ..
Now you don`t be doing no favors for
the police, Blanche, nor for your
singing sister, or I will be
compelled to facilitate with the
Tennessee smile, and cut your
delicate lips ..right off.

As her head comes up, so he KICKS it, and she COLLAPSES
once more.

He cleans his shoe with the handkerchief and then sticks
it in Blanche's mouth and leaves.

Blanche starts coming around then panics as she becomes
conscious of the handkerchief in her mouth.

She SPITS it out and backs away from it in panic gagging.
She grabs the phone.

INT. MOBILE HOME

Slim is playing guitar when his mobile phone RINGS.

SLIM

Hi, sweet thing...You what!
(he slowly gets up)
You come over here right away!
You`re right, the police
ain`t gonna protect you from

that maniac.. Stella neither,
but we sure got to warn her.
(not believing his ears)
Blanche! Sweet daughter of
mine, you ain't thinking right,
Stella`s our friend and we have
to warn her ...

He opens a cupboard to reveal a small arsenal of guns

SLIM (CONT'D)
Okay, okay, leave it to me ..
I promise, I promise! I`ll
figure away to warn her so
Laurie won`t ever know, just
get yourself across here,
right now!

He starts loading a .44 thinking in-between bullets.

Then he starts writing on a sheet of paper.

In between writing and thinking he keeps loading the gun.

Then he picks up the phone and punches in numbers.

SLIM (CONT'D)
Give me the number for the
Belle Reve Hotel, New Orleans.

INT. FOYER, BELLE REVE HOTEL

The foyer is busy as Paul exits the lift and walks
towards the entrance, when the receptionist sees him.

RECEPTIONIST
Mr. Bell.
(flirtatious)
I just got this message for the
manager of `Roomful`. I know
he`s not staying here but I
thought you would like to
have it anyway.

Paul takes the paper she hands to him and looks at it
curiously.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

He wouldn't leave his name.
I did do the right thing?

Ignoring her, much to her annoyance, he slowly walks to the entrance reading the message then stops in the doorway.

He thinks for a moment and then heads back to the lift.

LIFT

Paul rides alone, reading out the contents of the message

PAUL

"To stars that sing at night,
their future won't look so bright.
For dangerous desires are informed
and mean, with the coming of
Mr. .. blank.

(pause)

And now that family matters are
at hand, don't hang round or
make a stand".

CORRIDOR

Paul gets out of the lift looking at the mysterious encrypted message as he walks towards his room.

Miss Scarlet comes down the corridor pushing a trolley with flowers on it.

Paul passes her totally absorbed then he calls out after her,

PAUL

Hey, Miss Scarlet .. dangerous
desires are informed and mean,
with the coming of Mr. .. blank.

MISS SCARLET (O.O.V.)

How many letters?

PAUL

(shrugging)

As many as you want?

MISS SCARLET

(after a pause)
You turning psycho on me?

PAUL
Yep .. that`s just about the
truth of it.

Miss Scarlet watches him enter his room and shakes her
head

PAUL'S ROOM

Paul goes straight across to the phone

PAUL
Try and get me that Metalwork
Museum in Memphis again. Thanks.

While he waits he takes out a carnation from amongst one
of the displays of flowers and fits it into his button
hole

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
I`m sorry but there`s still no
answer.

PAUL
Okay, thanks.

He goes to hang up then changes his mind, picking up the
crossword puzzle

PAUL (CONT'D)
Hey hang on. Get me the
Memphis police.

WILL'S OFFICE

Lullabell sticks her head around the door and sees Will
and Mr.Fields sitting opposite each other doing paperwork

LULLABELL
How much you wanna bet that
I can make your day.

MR. FIELDS
Hey, that`s no bet, you always
make my day.

They gaze longingly into each others eyes

WILL

Would you two like me to leave?

LULLABELL

(smiling at Will)

Lead on Stella Knight, line two.

Pleased with herself she leaves as Will snatches up the phone and puts it on "conference"

WILL

Detective Will Mais here,
whom I talking to?

PAUL

(voice filtered)

Well my name`s Paul Bell, I
reported a missing English
girl yesterday ..
Well the girl got in touch and
it just so happens that she`s
travelling with a country singer
by the name of Stella Knight. I
don`t know if you've heard of
her but she used to be pretty
big on the country circuit.

WILL

Excuse me Mr. Bell, where are
they?

PAUL

They`re somewhere in Yazoo City
except that I told her to meet
up with her father in Memphis,
at the Metalwork Museum, that`s
down by the river ...

Mr. Fields jumps up leaves the office in a hurry

WILL

It`s okay Mr. Bell I know where
that is. But why are you telling
me all this?

PAUL

Well, I know this is gonna sound weird, but someone left this really cryptic message for the girl`s father.

WILL

Perhaps you`d be so kind as to read out that message.

PAUL

"To stars that sing at night, their future don`t look so bright. For dangerous desires are informed and mean, with the coming of Mr. .. blank. And now that family matters are at hand, don`t hang round or make a stand".

WILL

And what do you think it means, Mr. Bell?

PAUL

Well .. "Stars that sing at night", could be Stella Knight, and if that's so, I don`t like the next bit about her future not looking so bright
- she's one foxy lady - then there's this "dangerous desires are informed and mean, with the coming of Mr. .. blank"

SCREEN GOES BLANK FOR A SPLIT SECOND

CLOSE ON WILL AS HE IS OVER-COME BY A SENSE OF FOREBODING.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I sure as hell don`t like the sound of that .. and then there`s this reference to family matters which just has to be Jess .. of course it could all be quite innocent .. it just gives me a

bad feeling, what do you think?

WILL

(after a long pause)

Sometimes, thinking can just get
in the way .. I got a bad
feeling too Mr. Bell, let`s hope
it`s not the same one .. Thank
you for your assistance, and now,
if I can impress upon you the
necessity for complete discretion in
this matter
.. I will bid you good day.

Will puts down the phone;

a darkness hangs over his whole being.

INT. POLICE CAR - TRAVELLING (YAZOO CITY)

Two Police Officers are driving along a road trying to
kill with exaggerated intensity a wasp that has flown in
through the open window as an APB comes over the radio.

VOICE (V.O.)

A 1019 from the Memphis police
dept. Woman mid 30s. Dark hair
travelling with a 15 year old
blond English girl, believed
to be driving an Oldsmobile
Sunbird. Apprehend. Not
thought to be dangerous.

The Police Officers, still trying to kill the wasp, drive
past the car-lot where Jess is sitting in an old beat-up
car

CAR LOT

Jess, bored waiting and looking around to make sure no
one is watching, pulls out the gun.

She pretends to shoot someone, trying out different
expressions.

Stella appears from an office at the back of the lot; she is wound up, pissed off, and 'hanging out' for a line of cocaine

STELLA

Well that guy really screwed me.
Look at this piece of shit ..
Still, it had to be done.
Did you phone your daddy?

JESS

He`s not there .. he`s in Memphis
looking for me.

STELLA

That`s just great! Well girl this
is where you and me part company.
(Jess looks down-cast)
Ain`t no use you looking like that,
those eyes won`t work on me this
time .. I`ll run you down to the
Greyhound and put you on the bus.

JESS

Don`t bother, I can look after
myself.

She gets out of the car and heads for the road.
Stella EXPLODES

STELLA

WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK
YOU`RE GOING!?

JESS

Why don`t you have a snort from
all that junk you`ve got. It just
might improve your manner.

Jess walks away. Stella KICKS the car then STORMS after
her.

STELLA

Wait up a minute there! You have
been nothing but a liability
since we first met!

Stella swings Jess around.

JESS

Well that`s nothing new, because
I`ve been a liability, all of my
life!

Jess pulls herself free, storming off down the road.
Stella watches her go and then goes after her.

STELLA

Jess listen, Jess!
WILL YOU LISTEN TO ME!
(holding her arm)
For Christ sake give me a break,
I ain`t perfect, but then I
never claimed to be.
I`m sorry! I`m sorry!!
(Jess stops struggling)
Look .. What you and me got to
do is take a time out, go
somewhere and figure out what
we`re gonna do, cos girl I`m as
confused about all this shit as
you are .. I don`t know what
the hell I`m doing anymore.

Stella puts an arm around Jess`s shoulder and they walk
slowly back to the car

RIVER BANK.

Jess and Stella tired but more relaxed are having a
picnic on the banks of the river.

Stella is reading Jess' letter.

STELLA

Dear Stan, and Stan is your real
daddy?
(Jess nods)
just a few lines to fill you
in on what I didn`t get a
chance to say to you before
you left.

FLASHBACK. SUMMER HOUSE.

Eunice is sitting on a stool, leaning on the antique writing- box while reading the letter she`s just written

EUNICE (V.O.)

"Harry, as you probably realized, is still jealous of our history. But it`s more than that, things haven`t worked out the way he expected. He thought he could cure me - he thought we could have some kind of romantic love where we walked into the sunset together. The truth is, he`s getting angry and frustrated, because he`s beginning to realize that I`m never going to change. He`s threatened my life and beaten me on a couple of occasions. I`m getting scared because it all seems to be going one way .. I just want to .. reaffirm .. if anything happens to me .. then Jess can decide who she wants to live with, and I have no doubt who that will be .. You must wonder why I stay with him, but the truth is, I think he`s all I deserve. Take care. Yours Eunice".

Eunice looks out of the window to see Stan watching her from the garden.

They stare at each other for a moment then he turns and walks away.

BACK TO RIVERBANK

STELLA

Hell's fire Jess .. I ..

JESS

I keep saying to myself, Harry killed mum .. Harry killed mum .. but it doesn`t compute .. It`s like I understand the words but because there isn`t any

feeling that goes with them, it`s
not real.

(looking at Stella)
It isn`t real to me Stella,
because mum being dead isn`t real.

Jess gets up and walks along the river bank, Stella
watching her with concern.

RIVERBANK - NIGHT.

A very beautiful night, exaggerated starlight and no
moon.

Stella, asleep in the car, suddenly wakes and sees Jess
sitting on the water's edge.

She gets out of the car, stretches, and goes across and
joins her.

Jess takes a swig from a Martini bottle

STELLA
What the Hell you doing?

JESS
Nothing I haven`t done before.

She passes the bottle to Stella, who takes a swig,
grimaces, then looks at the bottle

STELLA
Girl, you`re just full
of surprises.

JESS
Anyway you can talk, always
shoving powder up your nose.

STELLA
That`s none of your business.

JESS
Yeah, I know, I`ve heard it
all before. It`s just what
Eunice used to say .. except
she`d progressed from snorting
.. she`d just fix it straight

into her arm .. or her feet,
if she couldn't get a good
plump vein.

Jess giggles and takes the bottle from Stella

STELLA

Eunice, you're talking about
your mother?

JESS

(exaggerated posh accent)
My darling mother .. the
ravishing Eunice.

STELLA

So, what, your mother was a
junky?

JESS

How dare you call my mother a
junky .. what do you call
yourself.

STELLA

Wait up there a minute.

JESS

(laughing cynically)
Oh here it comes .. now you're
going to give me the lecture on,
how I'm just a child and
wouldn't understand .. huh!

STELLA

(getting annoyed)
I said wait up there a minute.

Jess gets to her feet, slightly staggering.

At that moment a DEEP RHYTHMIC WHOOSHING sound can just
be heard in the distance; increasing in strength.

JESS

No you just wait up there a
minute, I've put up with this
shit for as long as I can

remember .. always being told
how lucky I was cos I lived in
such a nice house and went to
such a nice school, and had
such a lovely mummy, and a
wonderful father .. no no ..
two wonderful fathers .. and
both of them think I`m brain
dead .. I`m so fortunate ..
just look at me .. look at me!
Sixteen years old and lost in
America with a has-been junky.

Stella jumps to her feet, angry

JESS (CONT'D)

Go on then, hit me .. hit me
.. what you waiting for ..
there`s no one here to see ..
go on then, hit me.

Stella starts digging Jess with her finger.

The WHOOSHING SOUND is INCREASING in strength.

STELLA

Come on, you hit me .. you`re
into violence .. just that
you`re at the wrong end of it
.. come on, let`s see what
you`re made of .. hit me ..
you`re pretty good at talking
when you can hide behind alcohol
.. you ain`t so different from
me, or from your mother, for
that matter. What`s the matter,
mummies little ...

Jess flies into a RAGE and starts LASHING OUT with real
violence, but Stella is a veteran and blocks most of the
blows.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Why you stopped? .. Is that it?

Stella SLAPS Jess`s face.

Jess flies at Stella, landing a couple and making Stella back off.

Jess stops, swaying uneasily then collapses onto her knees and throws up.

Stella sits down smiling, she takes a swig from the bottle.

The WHOOSHING sound is fast approaching crescendo.

STELLA (CONT'D)

Here, wash your mouth out with
this.

The thought makes Jess throw up some more.

Stella laughs.

Slowly Jess recovers and joins Stella who hands her the bottle and Jess forces herself to rinse her mouth out.

They look at each other and laugh, finally hugging with some force.

The source of the WHOOSHING sound comes into view; a Paddle Steamer rounds the bend in the river. Seemingly deserted and completely lit up, it has an ethereal, ghost like quality.

Jess and Stella sit transfixed by the beauty of this cathartic apparition.

EXT. FILLING STATION - DAY

The road is long and straight, the landscape flat.

Stella`s car is bombing along towards the filling station and has to BREAK HARD to make the turn into the filling station.

Stella and Jess get out.

STELLA

You go phone and I'll fill her up.

JESS

Okay.

(walks off then stops)
.. and thanks for this
Stella, I know you`re taking
a risk.

STELLA
Nope, you`re wrong, I`ve decided
to hand the shit in .. well ..
(laughing)
most of it.

JESS
(pleased)
Really!

STELLA
If it wasn`t for you, I`d a kept
right on running .. and that
would have been no risk at all
.. just deep shit for sure.

The warm moment entices Jess to take Stella`s hand

JESS
Oh Stella.

Jess`s sentimental reaction has an emotional impact on
Stella and she turns walk away but Jess holds onto her
hand forcing her to stop

JESS (CONT'D)
Why haven`t you got a boy-friend
Stella?

STELLA
What kinda man would give space
to a .. has been junkie .. who
can only cope with doing the one
thing she can do .. by getting
out of her head .. get real kid
.. descent men, get indecent,
when they think of me.

JESS
Not all men are like that Stella.

STELLA

Wanna bet.

Jess thinks about it for a moment then nods her head affirmatively while smiling

STELLA (CONT'D)

Get outta here.

Jess laughs and then goes to phone, leaving Stella with moistened eyes but not unhappy.

FADE OUT

INT. APARTMENT (METALWORK MUSEUM)

Stan is fixing something to eat when the phone RINGS. He goes to answer it.

CLOSE ON the window, through which we can see a car parked up amongst trees

STAN (O.O.V.)

Jess, I've been so worried,
where are you?

MIX TO:

PARKED CAR

Laurie is watching with interest.

CUT TO:

BINOCULAR VIEW

of Laurie's car sitting amongst the trees in the bg. The Metalwork Museum is clearly visible.

Then the binoculars pan over to the ground floor of the Metal Museum to an apartment and comes to rest on one of the windows where Stan can be seen talking on the phone.

CUT TO:

SCRUBLAND

Mr. Fields stands absolutely still, hiding behind a bush, watching through binoculars.

TIME SPEEDS UP AND DAY TURNS INTO NIGHT.

Then Mr. Fields ducks down and runs across the scrub-land to another car parked up on a track

Mr. Fields gets in beside Will.

MR. FIELDS

He`s still sitting there.

WILL

And Mitchell?

MR. FIELDS

No change, I can see him passing the window from time to time.

WILL

God damn, I could do with some action.

MR. FIELDS

Why don`t we just take him out, once we`ve got him we can just wait for Stella to turn up with the merchandise.

WILL

I know how you feel Mr. Fields but without the merchandise .. Hell, you know how it is.

MR. FIELD

(concerned)

Still got a bad feeling about this?

WILL

It ain`t left me since the phone first rang .. There`s something not right here Mr. Fields .. too many pieces .. This English girl, she don`t belong .. yet she`s been part since the action started.

(getting angry)

What`s this kid running around
with Stella for, anyway.

MR. FIELDS

Will, you`re beginning to
sound like Lullabell.

WILL

(lightening)

Then I must be spending too
much time with you .. Mr. Fields
.. and how come they call you
Mr. Fields anyway, everybody
calls you .. Mr. Fields .. even
your Lullabell calls you
Mr. Fields.

MR. FIELDS

Why you godda ask me that now
.. You coulda asked me that any
time, Will.

WILL

So?

MR. FIELDS

(embarrassed)

What would you call yourself,
if you were called .. Elysian.

WILL

What the Hell is that?

Mr. Fields looks at Will but realizes he`s referring to
something he's out on the road.

Mr. Fields turns to see a car parking next to the
entrance to the Museum and the figure of a man get out
and go up to the wrought iron gates.

MR. FIELDS

Well it ain`t Stella that`s
for sure.

WILL

Let`s go take a look.
They get out.

MUSEUM GATE.

The light in the court-yard comes on lighting up Harry.

Stan comes around from the court-yard and unlocks the gate. The two men stand in face-off, like boxers psyching each other out.

Then Stan lets him through.

BACK TO MR. FIELDS AND WILL

watching near-by

BACK TO LAURIE

sneaking up to the window of the apartment and peeping in

INT. KITCHEN WINDOW

CLOSE ON Laurie`s face peeping in.

The CAMERA pulls back to reveal Stan pouring coffee...
Then we see Harry... watching him
the atmosphere is tense

STAN

Coffee?

HARRY

Where she at?

STAN

She's on her way here right now ...
she`s with some country singer.

He turns around, to see Harry filled with suppressed anger; uncomfortable he continues.

STAN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Paul phoned, said some crazy dude
has been leaving weird messages
concerning Jess.

HARRY

Yeah! Like what?

STAN

Hell, I don't know .. some stuff
.. favors in Tennessee, some
crazy shit.

HARRY

(laughs)

Favors in Tennessee?! You
always did get the wrong end
of everything, dip stick.

STAN

(angry)

And fuck you! She only crossed the
God damn Atlantic to get away
from you.

HARRY

Eunice has just died, she was
real upset .. traumatized ..
and where the fuck you been all
her life?
And where the fuck you been this
last
week?

STAN

I've been on the God damn road,
trying
to keep the band viable. I only heard
about Eunice yesterday .. not that
it came as a great surprise.

HARRY

And what's that supposed to
mean?

STAN

Oh come on Harry, do me a favour,
let's not kid ourselves. Eunice
had an expensive hole in her arm
for as long as I can remember.
An O.D. was always on the cards ..
it's amazing it didn't happen
before.

Harry looks up at Stan

HARRY

How do you know that`s how she died?

STAN

What do you mean?

Harry studies Stan with great interest, then says quietly.

HARRY

You know she O.D`d, don`t you Stan.

STAN

(becoming flustered)

Well .. so what?

Harry is thoughtful then after a pause he shrugs

HARRY

I`ll tell you what .. I`ll do you a favour Stan, and I`ll admit you`re right, she did kill herself with a needle in her arm .. but you know I thought it strange at the time... Eunice had been a junky for too long to do something so careless.

(sudden realization)

But you knew where she kept her gear.. in that secret compartment of the old writing box .. in fact you, were the only other person who did.

STAN

What you talking about .. you can`t blame Eunice`s O.D. on me.

HARRY

Ah, but that`s where you`re wrong, because nobody, but nobody, knows that Eunice died of an O.D. .. Just you and me.. you see Stan, I started a fire .. I burnt her body with all that resin she used on her sculptures...

all that was left was a few fragments
of bone...it`s only you and me, you
and me Stan, that know how she died.

STAN

(confused)

What you talking about, you burnt her
body?

HARRY

The only way you could know
she O.D. was because you made
sure she did .. you poisoned her
junk.

Stan becomes increasingly nervous as Harry has a further
realization

HARRY (CONT'D)

Did she tell you that if anything
happened to her, she wanted Jess to
decide who she`d live with .. cos
that`s what`s in the will .. and with
Jess, goes the money.

Stan is clearly disturbed, as Harry barks a laugh.

HARRY (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Except there was no money, even
the manor was mortgaged up to
the hilt .. she put it all into
that hole in her arm .. and she
was so out of her fucking mind
that she didn`t even realize ..
And if I hadn`t burned the body
there wouldn`t have been any
insurance either, Jess would
have had nothing.

STAN

(unconvincing)

I know nothing about that shit.

Harry stares long and hard then turns to leave

STAN (CONT'D)

Where you going?

HARRY

Now where the hell you think, dip
stick?
I have no motive for killing Eunice,
but
you sure as hell did... and here'
some-
thing else for you to chew on: I kept
the
writing-box with all her junk gear
inside
...I don't know why... but I sure as
hell do now.

Stan has turned white

Harry turns to leave again...

a split second and Stan SNATCHES a butcher's knife from
its holder and PLUNGES it up to the hilt into Harry's
neck!

Harry stands as if nothing has happened and

Stan, having let go of the handle, stands frozen behind
him.

CLOSE ON THE WINDOW

Laurie is looking at the strange spectacle

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

Laurie's face becomes maniacally ecstatic.

He tip-toes away pulling his hands up to just under his
chin, like a child pretending to be a cat. He stops and
uses his arms to clean invisible ears and whiskers, his
eyes darting from side-to-side.

Then on he prowls towards his car

BACK TO WILL AND MR. FIELDS

watching Laurie's strange behavior through night-glasses.

They slowly turn to each other, their skins creeping

BACK TO THE KITCHEN - STAN

standing frozen against the kitchen units, terror on his face as he gazes at Harry still standing upright with the knife in his neck.

Harry slowly falls face-down dead.

BACK TO WILL AND MR. FIELDS

still looking at one another

MR FIELDS

What-the-fuck-is-going-on?

But a NOISE attracts their attention and they watch as Stan hurries over to Harry's car, jumps in and reverses the car out of view.

COURT-YARD

Stan staggers out carrying Harry's body wrapped in a rug. He dumps the body into the open trunk of Harry's car and just as he SLAMS IT SHUT!...

HEADLIGHTS beam into court-yard.

Stan freezes leaning on the trunk of the car as car doors open and close and then Two Policemen come through the beams of light

POLICEMAN 1

You Stan Mitchell?

STAN

Yeah... sure.

POLICEMAN 2

We had a report on your daughter,
she's
been travelling with someone we'd
like
to interview: Stella Knight.
They are not here are they?

STAN

No... no, she hasn't turned up yet.

Policeman 1 picks up on Stan's nervousness

POLICEMAN 1

You planning on going somewhere?

STAN

Er... no... I was just putting the car away.... You will have to excuse me, I've had a worrying time, with my daughter and all... been expecting the worst.

POLICEMAN 2

I can well understand that. But if she turns up with Stella, you be sure to give us a call... and best if you don't say anything to Stella, if you get my drift.

Stan smiles as the two Policemen walk back to their car.

BACK TO WILL AND MR.FIELDS

watching the police-car drive away

WILL

If they've screwed this up, they'll be stuck in traffic for life.

MR FIELDS

I'd better call in and find out the situation.

But just then another car pulls up out-side the courtyard and Jess and Stella climb out

WILL

Reckon its time to get back-up.

Mr. Fields is about to call for back-up when the lights of Laurie's car come on and the car drives out of the trees, past the Museum and heads back down the road.

MR. FIELDS

You sure are right Will, there's some-thing else going down here. What do we do now? We can't let Laurie get away.

WILL

We've no choice but stay with the merchandise, and that's with our little lady down there. If we want Laurie, we're gonna have to wait 'til she makes a move.

BACK TO STAN (KITCHEN)

reading Eunice's letter with nervous excitement.

Stella, sipping coffee, is watching him with shrewd eye as Jess listens on the verge of tears

STAN

"He's threatened my life.. and beaten up on me a couple of occasions"...
Wow!

Stan glances at Jess, then a terrible smile breaks through his poker face as he reads on

JESS

Are you going to phone the police, Dad?
Because he's on his way here.

STAN

(ignoring her)
Listen... "I'm getting scared because it all seems to be going one way, if anything happens to me..."
(looks up)
She was scared for her life.

That ass-hole's got what's coming to him.

JESS

(angry)

But Dad, he's coming here!

STAN

Don't worry about him, petal. He ain't no problem anymore, believe me.

Stella watches has locked into something unconvincing about his performance, then...

STAN (CONT'D)

I tell ya, let's have some more coffee and then I'll take my little girl out for a candle-lit dinner.

(to Jess)

Whyn't you pop upstairs to the office Petal, you know where... in the small refrigerator... bring down some milk.

Jess resents his dismissive attitude but goes When she's gone Stan quickly turns to Stella

STAN (CONT'D)

What the hell's been happening? She looks like a God damn whore!

STELLA

Well screw you. I've been looking after that poor kid...seems like I'm the only one that has ever bothered.

STAN

And what the fuck does that mean?!

CLOSE ON THE PHONE

it suddenly RINGS.

Going to it Stan fires a parting shot

STAN (CONT'D)

I think it's time you got the hell
out
of here lady...

Stella simmers but doesn't move as Stan picks up the
phone

STAN (CONT'D)
...and I mean now!

UPSTAIRS OFFICE

carrying a carton of milk Jess walks by a 1950's
switchboard Jess hears VOICES coming from head-set on
the switchboard.

She picks up the head-set and hears:-

STAN
Who is this?!

LAURIE
You don't need to know my name, sir,
it
is sufficient for you to know that I
have been a witness to murder...
(pause)
And what you're going to do with
the body - of..? Harry, I believe.
Oh, and I also heard how you murdered
your wife.
You seem to enjoy killing people
Mister
Mitchell, I must make a note of that.

SLO-MO: the carton of milk slips SILENTLY through Jess'
hands and EXPLODES at her feet.

Jess stares without moving

STAN
What do you want?

LAURIE
Good, you're doing well. Your
daughter
has just arrived with that singing

whore Stella Knight?

STAN

That's right.

LAURIE

The bitch has something in her possession.. a package, which belongs to me.

I-want-it-back!

STAN

And what's in it?

LAURIE

Tut-tut! I thought you'd have more sense that.

(firmly)

Just get the package and take it on down to the fair-ground on Mud Island. There's a Ferris wheel there, a real big one... leave the package with the big gentlemen who sells the tickets... he's expecting you. Now... you have exactly 10 minutes.. or you'll be spending your old age in prison.

Double murder, Mr. Mitchell, tut-tut naughty boy.

The line goes DEAD.

Jess smiles sadly and tosses the head-set into the milk on the floor.

BACK TO THE KITCHEN

as Stan storms through and grabs Stella

STAN

You've got a package that doesn't belong to you, bitch?

STELLA

(stunned)

I don't know what...

Stan SLAPS her face and grabs her by the hair

STAN
Don't fuck with me!

STELLA
You Bastard!

STAN
You want me to ask Jess? Now where is
it?

STELLA
It's in the car

Stan drags her out of the rooms by her hair

BACK TO WILL AND MR. FIELDS

seeing Stan dragging Stella to her car.

They see Stella hand Stan a package.
Stan takes it then punches Stella to the ground and
disappears back into the court-yard

WILL
That's the damnedest switch I ever
did
see.

MR. FIELDS
Let's go get him...

But Stan's car RACES OUT of the courtyard

WILL
It's too late... call back-up!

They run back to their car

COURTYARD

Jess walks with purpose, her face set, towards Stella as
Stella picks herself up off the ground

JESS
(cold)
Get in the car Stella.

STELLA
What's going on?

Jess opens the door to the car and pulls Stella's around

JESS
(angry)
Get in and drive. You don't want the
bastard to get away with this do you?

Stella looks at Jess in surprise then gets in the car and they drive off.

FAIRGROUND (MUD ISLAND) - NIGHT

Stella's car pulls up amongst several police-cars all parked and empty, their lights still flashing.

Jess gets purposefully out of the car and sets off. Stella has to run hard to keep up with Jess as she walks determinedly through the CROWDS.

Then Jess arrives at a wall of PEOPLE all watching something going on. But Jess doesn't stop but fights her way through to a clearing where:

Three Policemen are struggling with an Enormous Man, and Mr. Fields is cuffing Stan, and Will struggles with Laurie.

As Jess walks calmly onto the stage everything goes SILENT and expectant.

All eyes are on Jess as she slowly walks towards Stan her hand inside her jacket

Stan suddenly sees her

Jess stops and slowly she pulls out THE GUN.

Everyone stands mesmerized as she lifts it up and aims it straight at Stan

STAN
Jess... wait...

Mr. Fields turns

At almost point-blank Jess pulls back the hammer

The blood drains from Stan's face...

As Mr. Fields leaps forward...

Jess SQUEEZES the trigger!

NOTHING!

Mr. Fields stops...

Jess PULLS THE TRIGGER again!

and AGAIN!

and AGAIN!

and AGAIN!

NOTHING!

The gun was empty.

Stan sinks to his knees.

Will watches as Jess slowly lowers the gun, all energy drained.

The gun drops to the ground.

At that moment Laurie sees his chance and knife in hand he SLASHES Will in the face.

In shock Will reels around and lets go of Laurie.

Laurie DIVES into the Crowd but is suddenly sent hurtling back by a blow and

with BLOOD GUSHING from his nose Laurie finds himself grabbed by two Cops... he glares with hatred at Stella

Stella nurses a sore hand walks over to Jess.

Jess stands staring emptily down at her Father (Stan) WHIMPERING at her feet - a broken man.

Mr. Fields is kneeling, holding the gun and looking up in awe and shock at:

Jess - this woman who is more a girl than woman.

Stella puts her arm gently around Jess: FREEZE FRAME

FADE TO BLACK

A telephone starts to **RING louder and LOUDER**

then..

UP ON:

A MOBILE PHONE

ringing - it sits on top of a portable antique writing box which is sitting on a table

CUT TO

CAR PARK (SILVER BUCKLE) - DAY

as the Telephone carries over, a police car comes into view and parks up.

Stella and Jess get out of the back. Mr. Fields and Will, his face bandaged, get out of the front.

As they speak the CAMERA slowly TRACKS BACK and back

WILL

Now Jess, you sure you're going to be alright with these freaks?

STELLA

Well I like that...and after I single-handedly brought a major felon to justice.

MR. FIELDS

Of course... there is the problem of the missing kilo. There was supposed to be three hidden in your car...and you only delivered two!

STELLA

(incredulous)
And you believe those devious
villains?
You'd take their word against that of
an up-standing member of our fair and
honest society?

The CAMERA continues to PULL BACK

and back

and back

until it travels through a window and blinds of

STELLA'S ROOM

the camera continues to track back revealing the
telephone that is RINGING still

A hand comes and picks it up: it is Paul and he is
looking at Jess, Mr. Fields, Will and Stella outside.

PAUL

Hi.

MISS SCARLETT (V.O.)

Is that you Leatherhead?

PAUL

Who is this?

MISS SCARLETT (V.O.)

Who the hell you think it is, Vivian
Leigh?

PAUL

(smiling)

What's the matter? Weren't the
gratuity
to your liking.

MISS SCARLETT (V.O.)

I seen better... but you're gonna
kick yourself Leatherhead.

PAUL

What you on about?

MISS SCARLETT (V.O.)
1 across and 2 down.

In the bg. Paul sees Jess pointing towards the room
and the beautiful form of Stella Knight breaking away
from the group and
walking straight towards CAMERA

PAUL
Look Miss Scarlett you can have the
prize money, just tell me the answer
and you win fair and square.

MISS SCARLETT
Huh! And that was the easy one.
From Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar
Named Desire"..y'know... Blanche's
farewell speech "Kindness of
strangers"?....

But Paul is no longer listening... for the beautiful form
of Stella has walked into the room...

Stella puts her hands on her hips confrontational and
scrutinizes this stranger standing in her room on her
phone

Stella looks back out to where Jess is standing watching
expectantly.

STELLA
So that`s it! Jess is fixing me up.
Shoot!

She looks back at Paul "Ring-a-ding" Bell...

A big smile breaks across Stella's face

And Paul drops the phone and smiles back at her

STELLA (CONT'D)
Well... hello stranger!

They LAUGH.

THE END