

"BERT & ERNIE"

by

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EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD--BERT'S FLASHBACK--BLACK & WHITE--DAY

We're slowly tracking past a line of trees.

In the distance, sunshine dances on calm water as two figures, YOUNG BERT, 9, and his GRANDFATHER, 60's, sit facing each other in a row boat. The Grandfather tosses something overboard. It splashes in the lake.

BERT (V.O.)

If I had to pick a self-defining moment, it'd be the day my Grandfather made me go fishing at Lake Hollywood.

Closer, we notice the conspicuous absence of fishing poles. Birds are chirping. It's peaceful, tranquil, soothing. Until an EXPLOSION blasts a fountain of water and fish skyward. They fall like rain.

BERT (V.O.)

I learned two things that day: you can't help everyone and God help ya' if you try.

His Grandfather extends another grenade. Young Bert glances at the struggling fish, the dead fish, shakes his head. His Grandfather boxes him on the ear. Reluctantly, Bert pulls the pin and the grenade's tossed overboard.

Another explosion sends up a rush of water and fish.

INT. COPYCAT -- PRESENT -- DAY

Everything happens in slow motion. The sound's nearly muted.

We PULL BACK from an employee nametag, revealing BERT, early 20's, goatee, mop hair, wearing khakis and blue CopyCat shirt.

BERT

Ernie, noooo!!!

ERNIE, early 20's, spiked hair, CopyCat uniform, throws a punch right at us.

BERT (V.O.)

Hindsight's 20/20, but know this; Ernie was the best friend I ever had. Even with his little problem with numbers.

Ernie's fist reaches the cheek of customer JAGUAR MAN, 30's, shit eating grin. He topples accordingly, landing hard on the ground. Copies fly through the air.

Ernie glances to the side, a small smile appears on his face.

At the register, SANDY, cashier, early 20's, holds hands with the manager, TONY, late 20's, moustache. Her eyes go wide. Tony turns around, rushes toward the scene.

BERT (V.O.)

Had I to do again, I'da punched that customer myself. 'Cause it changed Ernie forever.

Tony kneels down to help Jaguar Man, points at Bert and Ernie to leave. Bert removes his nametag.

BERT (V.O.)

And things between us would never be the same. I shit you not neighbor. I shit you not.

EXT. COPYCAT -- DAY

The doors bust open as Bert and Ernie exit into the parking lot. Ernie struggles to keep up as they pass an illegally parked white Jaguar.

BERT

You wanna tell me why you hit him? Was it Sandy? I know you're still pissed she dumped you for Tony.

Ernie shrugs.

BERT

C'mon, Ernie, its not like you.

ERNIE

The guy was being a jerk. And when he called me an idiot, I dunno, Bert, I blacked out.

They reach Bert's car, an old Ford Falcon. Bert fans off to the driver's side, Ernie the passenger's.

ERNIE

Don't be sore at me, Bert.

BERT

(leaning on car roof)
I'm not sore, Ernie. I hate jerks as much as you. But why not let the air out of his tires or send kiddy porn to his house? 'Cause unless someone dies and leaves us money, it's back to the Men's Shelter.

ERNIE
 (rubbing knuckles)
 I hate the fuckin' shelter.

BERT
 How's your hand?

ERNIE
 Hurts.

BERT
 (opening car door)
 C'mon.

ERNIE
 Where we going?

BERT
 Find Mitch.

They drive off. The Falcon leaves an immense cloud of white exhaust smoke in its wake.

ERNIE (O.S.)
 Hey, Bert? Think we can pick up
 some whippets on the way home?

BERT (O.S.)
 Sure, Ernie. Sure.

EXT. BOARDNER'S -- DAY

The smoking Falcon parks out front.

INT. BOARDNER'S -- FRONT BAR -- DAY

The BARTENDER sets down two Schlitz. As Bert and Ernie take them, MITCH, 20's, jet black hair, leather jacket, biker boots, notices Ernie's knuckles.

MITCH
 Jesus, what'd you do to your paw?

ERNIE
 (shyly proud)
 I, uh, punched a jerk.

MITCH
 Hey, good for you!

Mitch clinks his beer with Ernie's. Ernie turns to Bert and smiles. Frowning, Bert hands him some change.

BERT
Cigarettes.

Ernie looks at his palm, runs a finger through the coins.

ERNIE
Did you give me enough?

Bert waves him off, takes a stool. Mitch looks at his watch, checks the door.

BERT
What's up?

MITCH
Ah, I did a favor for this dude and he said he'd take care of me today.
(glances at door again)
Expectin' him any minute.
(changing subject)
So, Ernie, he's gonna be okay?

BERT
Yeah, you know Ernie. A couple of whippets and he's back to normal. Mitch, there any openings at the hospital? I really need a job.

MITCH
You don't wanna work there. My floor? The old folks? Elephant graveyard. Their suffering'll make you wanna punch a nun.

INT. BOARDNER'S -- FRONT BAR -- BY ENTRANCE -- DAY

Ernie pushes a cigarette icon, bends over to grab the felled pack. He rises as LANDON, 20's, blonde, cool, attractive, enters. Looks like she's wearing little more than cowboy boots and a raincoat. She glances around the bar.

ERNIE
Hey...

She spots Mitch, makes a beeline. Heads turn as she moves through the bar. Mitch sees her, watches her with curiosity.

BERT
The old folks won't bother me, Mitch. Really. We just gotta make us some money. I gotta make us some money. I mean, who's gonna hire Ernie for chrissake? He can't count.

Mitch isn't listening. His attention's on Landon.

BERT
Mitch? I really need some help,
Mitch.

Landon steps up, leans against Mitch, whispers in his ear.

LANDON
Tex says thanks.

Mitch sets down his beer and stands.

MITCH
(to Bert)
See ya'.

Again, all heads watch Landon. Mitch winks at Ernie and he's out the door.

ERNIE
He's a bad motherfucker.

BERT
(stepping up next to
him)
Let's go home.

EXT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- DAY

More like a woodshed, Bert and Ernie's apartment lays at the end of a driveway. We TRACK to the left, framing up the adjacent main house.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE -- DAY

Shades are pulled aside, revealing a view of Bert & Ernie's. The OLD MAN, 70's, portly, gray hair and beard, tries to make out if lights are on or not. There seems to be a flickering. He drops the shades.

OLD MAN
Bastards!

INT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- DAY

The room is cluttered, cold, dark. Bunk beds, ratty couch, table, 8-tracks, Kerplunk, Legos, Battleship.

On the 70's Zenith television, a MUSCULAR SUPERHERO blows away VILLAINS by pulling weapons from his long, leather jacket. Throughout, he utters the lines "He's toast", "I'm the man", and, as he drops grenades, "Cocktail?".

Bert and Ernie sit on the couch, leaning forward, the volume barely audible. Between them rests a paper bag. On the floor lay empty whippet and Schlitz cans. Another falls.

Bert opens a fresh beer. Ernie does a whippet, points anxiously at the screen as the Hero blows away the LAST VILLAIN with enough firepower to light Manhattan. Tossing the gun he unties the BLONDE BABE, lifts her in his arms and with flames licking the walls, turns toward the camera for one last line.

MUSCULAR SUPERHERO

I'm a bad motherfucker.

He disappears into the fire as credits roll. Ernie's 100% into it. Suddenly, Bert snaps to attention, clicks a button on the archaic remote and poof! The television's off. A slight bloom appears on the screen as a door from the main house slams shut. Bert turns to Ernie. They're panicked.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Bert and Ernie? Are you there? You boys owe me rent. Are you there?

Bert jumps over the couch, rushes to the window as Ernie hurriedly sucks in a final whippet.

BERT

Ernie!

EXT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- DAY

We're outside the window looking in. The Old Man enters. He sees the open window, heads for it as Bert and Ernie slink down the side of the house. They duck around the corner seconds before he pokes his head out.

OLD MAN

Bastards!

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

They drive aimlessly. The 8-track blasts. Ernie finishes a beer, belches out "SCHLITZ" as he burps. Bert smiles.

BERT

(offering cigarette)
"Cocktail."

Ernie takes it. Bert hands him his zippo.

ERNIE

"I'm the man."

EXT. CANYON ROAD -- NIGHT

With a fresh facial bruise, Jaguar Man leans over his Jag's steaming engine. He hears the Falcon's radio, looks up as it 'rounds the curve, the smoking exhaust close behind.

JAGUAR MAN

What a piece of shit.

He steps into the middle of the road, waves his arms.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Ernie perks up, points.

ERNIE

Hey-hey-hey-hey, Berrrrrt...

BERT

No fucking way...No fucking way.

Jaguar Man stands in the middle of the road.

JAGUAR MAN

Stop! Stop that piece of shit.

ERNIE

What a jerk.

BERT

Check it out.

Bert clicks on the brights, catches Jaguar Man in the eyes. He flinches. Bert and Ernie laugh. Suddenly, Ernie's face goes blank.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD -- ERNIE'S FLASHBACK -- BLACK & WHITE -- NIGHT

A deer glances up as headlights cross its face.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

ERNIE

Hey, Bert? Did your grandfather ever take you hunting?

BERT

He made me go fishing once.

EXT. ROADSIDE -- NIGHT

The Falcon comes to a stop, but the exhaust cloud continues forward, engulfing the car. Jaguar Man approaches. The cloud of exhaust drifts off, revealing Bert and Ernie.

JAGUAR MAN

Well, if it isn't the village idiot.

BERT

Ernie, pop the trunk.

ERNIE

Popping the trunk.

BERT

(getting out of car)

I'm sick of jerks like you pushing him around.

Bert's shirt fills the frame.

EXT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

We swoop down as Bert & Ernie close the trunk on Jaguar Man.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Bert and Ernie's doors slam shut, the key turns, the 8-track plays. They laugh.

BERT & ERNIE

We're bad motherfuckers!

The Falcon peels out, leaving the smoking Jaguar behind.

EXT. VARIOUS ROADS -- NIGHT

The Falcon heads over a variety of speed bumps, pot holes and ditches. It swerves on gravel, sand, dirt. They pass a sign reading "LAKE HOLLYWOOD", disappear into the night.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Bert and Ernie laugh, swig Schlitz.

ERNIE

What do we do? Drop him by his car?

BERT

Nah, this Joey's walking home.

Ernie faces around.

ERNIE

Hey, jerk?!? You like Ozzy, jerk?!?

Ernie cranks the volume.

EXT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

We TRACK the length of the car to the back. Unbeknownst to Bert and Ernie, the damaged exhaust pumps lethal fumes into the trunk. We hear a desperate coughing and banging.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- TRUNK -- NIGHT

Bert and Ernie pop the trunk. Their smiles drop.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert...

BERT

I know, Ernie.

ERNIE

Hey, BERRRRRT!!

BERT

I KNOW, Ernie!

Jaguar Man's asphyxiated.

ERNIE

No wonder they do smog checks.

EXT. WOODS ABOVE LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Directly over them, we watch Bert and Ernie carry Jaguar Man's body from the trunk into the woods. We slowly CRANE away from them, across the road, into the opposite side of the woods. A LIGHT FADES UP on a small green tent deep in the foliage. A COUPLE KIDS share a pair of binoculars.

KID #1

Let me see.

Kid #2 hands him the glasses. Looking through them he sees Bert and Ernie struggle, hauling the body through the woods.

ERNIE

This guy's heavy.

BERT

All jerks are heavy.

Kid #1 lowers the binoculars, turns to the second. Their faces mirror concern, but then they smile, watch our guys dump the body and rush to the Falcon.

KID #2
(taking back glasses)
This is so cool!

EXT. SIDE STREET -- NIGHT

Bert's inside wiping down the dash. Outside, Ernie pops the trunk, sees Jaguar Man's shades.

ERNIE
Oh, yeah....

As he pockets the sunglasses, he notices a wallet.

ERNIE
Hey-hey-hey-hey-hey...

Bert rushes to the back as Ernie points to the trunk. He sees the wallet and opens it. Cash. Lots of cash.

EXT. BERT AND ERNIE'S DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

The Falcon's in the carport.

INT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

From their room, we see two silhouettes in the Old Man's window. Bert's shadow hands the Old Man's shadow money. Bert exits and the Old Man's light turns off.

Ernie's in front of the television, watching the end of the action film again. "I'm a bad motherfucker". He rewinds it. "I'm a bad motherfucker". A moment later, a door from the main house closes and Bert passes their window.

Ernie turns off the television, rises and fiddles with things on the far side of the room. Bert enters, walks to the otherside of the room, pops in an 8-track, clicks through the tracks to "SPIRIT IN THE SKY", starts dicking around.

BERT
Can't believe tonight.

ERNIE
Yeah, he just died.

Through the conversation, they work their way to the center of the frame. We creep forward, end with them in profile.

BERT
Like he had it coming.

ERNIE
Like he deserved it.

BERT
We gotta find a way to make money.

ERNIE
He had a lot on him.

BERT
But he was a jerk.

ERNIE
There's a lot of jerks out there.

BERT
Overbreeding.

ERNIE
No one to thin out the herd.

BERT
We could do it.

ERNIE
And make some cash on the side.

BERT
'Cause there's a lot of jerks out there.

ERNIE
And we drive a Ford.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. CREST OF HILLS -- DUSK

The music kicks in as the Falcon rises over a crest and heads toward us, disappearing and reappearing amidst the hills.

INT. BOARDNER'S -- NIGHT

A PREPPY GUY in a collegiate baseball hat pulls out a cigarette and lights it with a silver zippo bearing a cowboy riding a bucking bronco. He bumps into Bert, scoffs at him. Ernie steps up. The PREPPY'S GIRLFRIEND laughs, moves away.

Bert and Ernie walk towards us blocking the frame.

EXT. BERT'S FALCON -- TRUNK -- NIGHT

Ernie rushes away from camera and jumps in the air. Bert's struggling to close the trunk. Ernie lands on top and it shuts on the couple.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

The Two Kids sit in a canoe. The First gazes through binoculars, peeping at a couple going at it in a bedroom as the Second folds a Land-o-Lakes Butter cover so the Indian Woman's knees appear to be breasts. The binoculars swing around, pick up the Falcon smoking its way along the road.

KID #1
Hey-hey-hey-hey...

Kid #2 looks up, squints, smiles.

KID #2
Ah, they're so fucking cool.

EXT. DWP -- DAY

Bert enters through the front.

INT. DWP -- DAY

The CASHIER slides Bert a receipt.

BERT
Thank you.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

With approaching traffic, a wayward MOTORCYCLIST whizzes around The Falcon, cutting back into their lane. Bert honks and the Motorcyclist flips him off.

ERNIE
Cocktail?

BERT
Cocktail.

Ernie reaches to the backseat, pulls out a baseball bat.

EXT. FURTHER UP THE ROAD -- NIGHT

A Police Cruiser approaches a gnarled, smoking mass of bike.

INT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- DAY

They carry in a larger, used Zenith television.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Smoke billows from the idling Falcon. A banging echoes.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

The banging continues. Ernie takes a hit off a joint, passes it to Bert. Both hold their breath through the conversation.

ERNIE

Think we can get a phone soon?

BERT

They want a deposit.

ERNIE

Maybe we could find some more jerks.

BERT

Maybe you could write a letter.

ERNIE

Maybe you could blow me.

BERT

Maybe you could buy a vacuum cleaner.

The banging stops.

ERNIE

(searching for a
comeback)

Maybe...maybe ...maybe...

BERT

(exhales, gets out of
car)

C'mon.

ERNIE

Jerk.

He exhales, gets out of car.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Ernie violently kicks the Biker's body. Bert pulls him away.

BERT

What the fuck, Ernie?!?

ERNIE

He's a jerk. And I'm the man.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE -- NIGHT

Ernie purchases cigarettes and a Playboy. He sees a display selling packages of Serial Killer Cards. Ernie leans back, makes sure Bert isn't watching from the car, and buys them.

EXT. GAS STATION -- NIGHT

A gas funnel slides into a tank.

Ernie stands next to the car. Bert heads from the pay window toward the Falcon. Across the way, A MAN AND A WOMAN are in a heated argument. The Man slaps her, she runs off. Bert and Ernie exchange glances. Ernie shakes his head, taps the nozzle on the tank, replaces it in the holder.

The exhaust spews clouds of smoke.

EXT. COPYCAT -- DAY

Ernie wears the Jaguar Man's sunglasses. Tony and Sandy are reflected in the lenses as they leave the store.

EXT. YARD SALE -- DAY

A neon Schlitz sign and a Lawn Boy mower lean against a tree. Bert and Ernie rummage through a cardboard box of 8-tracks. An ELDERLY WOMAN approaches. Ernie hands her a fifty.

ERNIE

I'll take them all.

In awe, Bert watches a smiling Ernie pick up the box and proudly walk away. He turns to the woman.

BERT

And I'll take that sign.

He digs into his pocket.

EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

We're tracking with a couple pairs of tiny legs running above the length of the road as the Falcon turns off its lights and stops.

INT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

Its dark.

BERT (O.S.)

Let there be light!!

The Schlitz sign flickers to life. Bert and Ernie high-five.

BERT & ERNIE

We're the men!

EXT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Bert removes money from a wallet, notices the victim's family pictures. He's taken aback. Ernie steps up, snickers, flicks a cigarette ash on it, walks away. Bert wipes it off, then drops the wallet in a trash bag.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Jaguar Man's body rolls down the hill. It begins to slow halfway through a revolution...

INT. MORGUE -- DAY

.....but finishes its roll naked, on a metal table. The CORONER snaps on his gloves, adjusts the hanging overhead light, as two ATTENDANTS roll an empty gurney out.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

We're following the Coroner's shoes as he moves down the hallway. His white robe barely drops into frame.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE -- DAY

A DETECTIVE holds the Coroner's report and picture of Jaguar Man. We never glimpse the Detective's face.

DETECTIVE

So he sucked on an exhaust pipe.
Big deal.

CORONER

To get this much Carbon Monoxide in his blood stream, he'd have to chain smoke a couple'a dozen Chevy's.

DETECTIVE

I'll look into it.

As the Coroner leaves, the file hits the trash.

INT. GREASY SPOON -- NIGHT

With napkins in their collars, Bert and Ernie toast the end of magnificent dining on burgers, fries and cold Schlitz.

ERNIE

We're bad motherfuckers.

BERT

That we are.

Ernie lights a cigarette with the cowboy zippo taken earlier from the Preppy Guy. In disbelief, Bert watches Ernie set it down on the table, exhale smoke.

BERT

Have you been keeping things?

ERNIE

Uh.....

Bert slowly burns, then grabs the lighter off the table and rushes outside.

EXT. GREASY SPOON -- NIGHT

Bert exits with Ernie in hot pursuit.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert? Hey, Bert?!?

Ernie catches up, falls into step with Bert.

BERT

You wanna get caught?

ERNIE

We're not gonna get caught. We're bad motherfuckers.

BERT

Shit like this'll get us caught.

ERNIE

But I feel like I should take something.

BERT

Don't.

He gets ready to throw it in the street, but paranoia sets in. People are watching. Bert slides the lighter in a jacket pocket.

BERT

Let's go home.

INT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

With small flashlight in hand, Ernie lays on the bottom bunk, reading the backs of the Serial Killer Cards. He smiles, turns out the light, goes to sleep.

EXT. ROAD -- SUNRISE

The Falcon disappears over a hill. The music fades off.

END MONTAGE:

INT. CHECK CASHING OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bert and Ernie wait at the end of a long line as a MAN harasses THE CASHIER. Her voice is muffled behind the glass partition.

CASHIER

I can't cash a personal check without confirming the amount with the bank.

MAN

I've been comin' here for years!!

CASHIER

Sir, it's not up to me.

MAN

Bullshit! Now gimme my fuckin' money!!

Ernie turns to Bert.

ERNIE

This guy needs a little ride to Lake Hollywood.

Reluctantly, she slides out some bills. The Man sticks them in his pocket.

MAN

Fuck you very much.

He walks down the line and out the door. Bert and Ernie pause before following. Through the window, they can be seen wrestling with the Man, forcing him into the trunk. No one in line pays them any mind.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Bert and Ernie carry the Man's body through the woods.

BERT

(whisper)

Ernie, stop, stop. Hang on a second.

They pause. Ernie's having difficulty holding the guy's torso.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert.

BERT

Shhh. I hear something.

Ernie starts sweating.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert, this guy ain't light.

Bert tries to see through the trees. Headlights signal a car's approach. It does a U-turn and shuts off its beams. GOWER, 40's, cheap suit, gets out of the car. He adjusts his tie, proceeds to pop the trunk and pull out a body.

BERT

Holy shit. He murdered someone.

Ernie's still struggling with the body.

ERNIE

Hey, Berrrrrrrrrrrrrt...

BERT

(oblivious to Ernie)

We should get his plate and call the cops.

Bert turns to Ernie.

BERT

You okay?

Trembling in muscle failure, Ernie drops the corpse. It lands with a THUD and rolls down the incline, snapping twigs, rustling leaves, splashing in the lake.

Startled, Gower stares into the woods. He scans the area, sees nothing. Calmly, he replaces the body in the trunk, shuts it, strolls to his vehicle and pulls out.

Bert holds Ernie in a headlock, hand over his mouth. As Gower drives away, Bert releases Ernie.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Bert leadfoots it through the curves. His eyes Ping-Pong from the road to the rear view mirror.

ERNIE

Fu-Uh-uuuh-uuuck!

BERT
Ernie!

ERNIE
Fuuh-uuuh-uuuuck!

BERT
ERNIE!

Ernie turns to Bert.

BERT
Fuuh-uuuh-uuuucking RELAX!!

ERNIE
The guy was a killer! He could've
taken us out!

BERT
But he didn't.

ERNIE
Yeah, he didn't!

BERT & ERNIE
'Cause we're bad motherfuckers!!!

They high five.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

The Falcon drives off into the night. Dark and silent in a hidden turn off is Gower's car. The headlights turn on.

INT. GOWER'S CAR -- NIGHT

Gower sits up as the Falcon disappears into the night. Slowly, he pulls out, following in the same direction.

INT. BOARDNER'S -- NIGHT

Bert and Ernie sit at the far end of the bar. The Bartender sets down a couple Schlitz. They toast.

BERT
To one less jerk.

ERNIE
And a job well done.

Bert pulls out a cigarette, taps it on the railing. Gower enters, steps to the bar, orders a shot. Ernie sees him.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert.....

BERT

Oh, and I know you pinched my zippo.
You gotta put the big hurt on that
shit, buddy.

ERNIE

Hey, BERRRRRT!!

Bert looks up and sees Gower.

BERT

The killer.

Gower downs his shot and makes eye contact with our Boys,
strolls over behind them.

GOWER

Were you guys dumping a body?

BERT

Someone dumped a body?

ERNIE

None of your bees wax.

GOWER

A lot of bodies have found their way
to Lake Hollywood.

Scared, Bert and Ernie sweat, fidget.

GOWER

You're good. Real good.

ERNIE

We're saving up for a phone.

Bert elbows him.

ERNIE

And a vacuum.

BERT

What were you doing up there?

GOWER

Canceling a membership. I know some
folks who'd really like to meet you.

INT. SERIAL KILLERS CLUB -- STAIRS -- NIGHT

Gower leads Bert and Ernie down a dark stairwell. Dirty, musty, cobwebs. Bert and Ernie glance at each other. Nervous, scared. Bright light seeps through thick curtains at the bottom of the stairs. Gower parts them.

INT. SERIAL KILLERS CLUB -- NIGHT

Majestic, ornate, awe inspiring. Bright chandeliers, shining brass fixtures, long wooden bar, classical orchestra on a riser, roulette, craps table, cigar lounge sequestered by a velvet rope, humidor room behind it where a MEMBER and CIGAR VALET peruse the goods.

WAITERS and WAITRESSES criss cross with drink trays.

ERNIE

Are all these people-

GOWER

Artists. We don't use the 'K' or 'M' word.

Gower leads Bert and Ernie inside. They walk toward the middle of the room, swirl with delight, as VARIOUS MEMBERS turn, greet them with acknowledged nods of the head. Men in business suits, women in floor length dresses, bikers, cowboys, blue collar, white collar, beer swillers, Port sippers. All together, all as one.

There's a skylight - a full moon. Art on the walls. Is that a Van Gogh? Are those Hockneys? Holy shit - Dogs Playing Poker and a Velvet Elvis!

We PUSH through the crowd, settle on the bar where our Core Group of Serial Killers stands: PAPA 40's, thin, THE DECAPITATOR 30's, tall, bald, leather jacket, chaps, ZIPPO late teens, Doc Marten steel toe boots, ICEMAN, 20's jean jacket, ARNOLD, 40's, chubby, dark suit and TEX, late 40's, a portly good ole boy, cigar in hand.

The orchestra stops, discussions fade. Gower, Bert and Ernie stop in the center of the room. A spotlight clicks on.

We TRACK FAST through the V.I.P. cigar lounge to a table in the back where a man sits behind his *New England Law Journal* newspaper. The paper's lowered, revealing ATTICUS, 40's, well pressed suit, inquisitive expression, clearly the head of the group. He observes the fracas below.

At the bar, Arnold watches Iceman sloppily grab peanuts from a counter bowl. He drops one, bends over to pick it up and pops it in his mouth.

ARNOLD

You're foul.

ICEMAN

Blow me.

On the floor, Gower glances about as a boxing-type microphone lowers from the ceiling. He takes hold of it, begins speaking.

GOWER

As you all know, recently, Lake Hollywood has been the sight of numerous disposals.

At the bar, Arnold continues to glare at Iceman.

ARNOLD

You're a waste.

ICEMAN

Ever think about what that peanut went through to make it to the bar? How many hands it touched? How many migrant workers probably whipped out their-

Tex glances back, quiets them with a snap of his fingers, turns back around.

ARNOLD

I oughtta take you out.

ICEMAN

(mocking Arnold)

I oughtta take you out.

Arnold burns as Gower continues.

GOWER

...though we've all been curious who's punching tickets, there's been some silent finger pointing and accusations of impatient turn skipping, I'm pleased to set suspicions to rest. Ladies and Gentlemen, our newest pledges, Bert and Ernie.

GROUP

Hi, Bert and Ernie.

ERNIE

Hey.

Bert waves politely. Immediately, the music clicks back on, the microphone zooms up, the spot light clicks off and the people return to their previous conversations.

GOWER

Bert and Ernie? That's rich. No one uses their real names so don't feel funny.

Gower steals a look toward Atticus. Atticus watches closely. Gower turns back to the boys, steers them to the bar. He motions to various games, Roulette, Snooker, etc.

GOWER

We're a full service club. Games, amusements...

ERNIE

You guys play Buck-Buck?

BERT

Buck-Buck's cool.

GOWER

Not that I know of.

BERT

What about Battleship?

ERNIE

Bert's great at Battleship.

BERT

Thank you, Ernest.

ERNIE

You're welcome, Bertest.

GOWER

No, I can't say we play Battleship either. Kerplunk, though...

(laughs to himself)

Now, our organization's not unlike a family. And, as such, we're sworn to secrecy and mutual preservation. It only takes one Linda Tripp, you know. In return, we offer tutelage, a benefits package, medical care and legal representation.

(leans in, lowers voice)

Although between you, me and the lamppost, I'd invoke the fifth before drawing that straw.

He winks. They reach the bar.

GOWER
Tex, may I interrupt you, sir?

Tex smiles and waves his cigar in acquiescence.

GOWER
I'd like to introduce Bert and Ernie.

Tex shakes hands with the pair.

TEX
A pleasure.

GOWER
And over here we have Papa.

Papa is paternal in his silent nod.

GOWER
And Arnold.

Arnold studies the two. It makes Bert and Ernie uneasy.

ARNOLD
Lake Hollywood, huh?

They shrug. Tex sets down his cigar and bores into the group.

TEX
You raised in a barn? Give 'em room.
Belly up to the bar, boys.

The Decapitator shakes their hands

DECAPITATOR
Decapitator.

BERT
Bert and Ernie.

Gower makes an exit around the group.

ZIPPO
What're you guys drinking?

BERT & ERNIE
Schlitz!

It takes a beat for a group laugh to kick in. Tex rescues them.

TEX
 (to Bartender)
 Glenfiddich with a Red Dog back.
 All around.

INT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- CIGAR LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Gower approaches Atticus' table. An ATTENDANT lets him through the velvet rope. Gower starts talking before he's reached the table.

GOWER
 I gotta tell you, they're pretty dim.

He sits at Atticus' table.

ATTICUS
 They may be dim but they're smart enough to kill.

GOWER
 True.

ATTICUS
 There's still another renegade out there. Do you think it could be one of them? Alone maybe?

They observe Bert and Ernie at the bar. Two misfits out of place in a room full of misfits. Gower turns back, grins.

ATTICUS
 Well, see if they have any ties to the hospital just the same. I don't like the idea of a serial artist operating freelance. Jeopardizes everything this organization's about. Look at what Ramirez and Dahmer did to us, the non-conformist bastards.

GOWER
 I remember.

ATTICUS
 Who's going out tonight?

GOWER
 Rourke. It's full moon. He refuses to go any other time.

ATTICUS
 It'll be a perfect opportunity for their initiation.

GOWER

Perfect?

Gower laughs.

GOWER

He'll like that.

ATTICUS

Give them the standard rules package
and make sure they understand this a
lifetime commitment.

GOWER

Will do.

INT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- BAR -- NIGHT

Gower approaches the group, puts an arm around Bert and Ernie.

GOWER

Gentlemen, our guests must be leaving.

ERNIE

Hey, Gower? I'm gonna kick it for a
bit if its all the same to you.

GOWER

No can do, firecracker. You're not
members.

ERNIE

Well, what do we have to do?

Gower smiles. The Core Group laughs.

EXT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- STAIRS -- NIGHT

Gower exits with Bert and Ernie.

GOWER

Rourke's a nice Dingo. Anal
retentive, but nice.

BERT

I'm kinda tired. Could we do this
another time?

GOWER

No.

ERNIE

Hey, Gower? We're in.

Gower pats them on the back, walks away.

ERNIE
Where're you going?

Gower turns, back pedals.

GOWER
(slight laugh)
I still got a body to get rid of.

He waves, disappears into darkness. Bert waits a moment before turning to Ernie.

BERT
Okay, tough guy, we'll go. But we're only punching his ticket if he's a jerk.

ERNIE
I don't know, Bert. They seem like pretty cool Joes.

BERT
Ernie....

ERNIE
Okay, okay.

INT. ROURKE'S CAR -- NIGHT

ROURKE, 30's, Australian, clean shaven, trim haircut, flawless skin, drives his unsullied automobile through the hills. Bert's in the passenger seat, Ernie in back.

ROURKE
Ride alongs are great. You'll learn a lot from the others as well.

BERT
Others?

ROURKE
Yeah, they'll have you on the go with a variety of artists. You know, suss out their techniques, things like that. Its a way ensuring artistic integrity.

Ernie lights a cigarette.

ROURKE
Hey, Ernie? Do you mind not smoking?

Ernie flips open the ashtray. Rourke pushes a button and the back window goes down.

ROURKE
Just chuck it.
(to Bert)
Bugger L.A. It's a tip.

Big smile.

EXT. PRIVATE ROAD -- NIGHT

Rourke opens the trunk. Empty. Until he lifts the carpet to reveal a custom made cabinet holding pristine tools, a black jack, a jumpsuit and a medical bag. He puts on the jumpsuit.

ROURKE
Me, I'm a Zen warrior. Some say anal retentive. I say Zen. I'm at a point in my life where the perfect situation is my goal. And if circumstances don't promote that, I walk away. You guys should read THE FOUNTAINHEAD.

Double blank. Rourke takes out a thermometer. 75 degrees.

ROURKE
Perfect.

He glances upward. Bright moon, but cloud cover threatens.

ROURKE
Hmmm. Better get a move on.

He removes a pistol, hands it to Ernie.

ROURKE
Tranquilizer gun. Anything not in the master bedroom gets a dart.
(to Bert)
Can you pick a lock?

BERT
Uh...

ROURKE
(Hands Bert a flashlight)
Okay, carry this.

Rourke slips a pair of night vision glasses around his neck and opens the medical bag. All we see is sparkle.

He reaches in and removes a box of gum.

ROURKE
(to Bert)
Chicklet?

Bert shakes his head no.

ROURKE
(to Ernie)
Chicklet?

Ernie declines. Rourke shakes out a couple. One's Orange.

ROURKE
Ooooh, Orange. Bad medicine.

Another smile as he shuts the trunk.

EXT. PRIVATE ROAD/DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

They walk up the road and driveway, speak softly. Rourke's all business as Bert attempts to find justification. Trailing behind them, Ernie plays quickdraw with the dartgun.

BERT
So, who is this guy?

ROURKE
Reckon he's a right Git.

BERT
What'd he do? Is he a jerk?

ROURKE
You know about phosphates? Probably not. Its news but not interesting enough to be covered in the States. Phosphates are found in detergents, old sodas. They go down your gutter, get into the water table, end up in a lake or ocean. Encourage biological activity, which plants feed on. So what you end up with, is an oceanic overpopulation. This depletes the oxygen and kills the fish. So you end up with heaps of dead fish and heaps of underwater vegetation. Phosphates are like this bloke. Which is where I come in.

They reach the door.

BERT

But-

Rourke glances at the sky. Cloud cover threatens.

ROURKE

Shhh. Gotta concentrate.

(to himself as he
picks lock)

There was movement at the station,
For word had passed around....

INT. MANSION -- NIGHT

Rourke picks the lock and enters. Wearing night vision glasses, he finds an alarm panel and enters digits to neutralize it.

A DOG pads around the corner. Bert points the flashlight, Ernie shoots a dart. It's asleep before it hits the floor. Ernie winks at Bert.

They enter the living room. A MAID exits a door and comes down the hall. A beam of light, a dart in the chest.

ROURKE

Guys!

Rourke rushes over. He catches her fall, lays her on the ground. He moves forward, waves them to follow.

Ernie veers off. Moments later, we hear a splashing sound. Bert tiptoes over. Ernie's got the muzzle on the surface of a fish tank and shoots into the water.

BERT

ERNIE!!!

ERNIE

He said anything not in the master
bedroom gets a dart.

BERT

Well, hurry up.

Splash-splash-splash. Goldfish kabob.

EXT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

They rejoin Rourke. He's outside the Master Bedroom, slowly pushes the door open. A BALD MAN snores under the covers. A skylight allows the moon to illuminate the room.

Rourke opens his bag and pulls out what appears to be a gun. Until he removes a sparkling, shiny, mother-of-all drill bits attachment.

As he screws it in, he smiles at Bert. Appalled, Bert turns to Ernie who looks like a little boy checkin' out the most bitchin' toy in the world.

Rourke glances up at the skylight. Clouds approach the moon. He quickens his pace, tightens the bit, pulls the trigger. Nothing. A click and the battery pack's out, a snap on his utility belt and another's in his hand, slipped into the tool. VRRRINNG.

Rourke rises, approaches the mound beneath the covers. But clouds covering the moon drag a shadow across him and he backs out. Bert's relieved. Ernie in disbelief.

ERNIE
 (rising, setting down
 tranquilizer gun)
 I'll drill him.

Ernie attempts to take the drill from Rourke.

ROURKE
 No. It's not perfect.

BERT
 Ernie, what the fuck?

ERNIE
 It's good enough for me, Bert.

Bert tries to restrain him. The three silently wrestle for control of the drill. The Bald Man shifts beneath the covers.

ERNIE
 Let go, Bert.

BERT
 Ernie, he's waking up.

ERNIE
 Scissors, paper, rock?

BERT
 No!

Bert gets pushed into the nightstand, knocks over a lamp. The Bald Man sits up, sees Rourke in his jumpsuit and night vision glasses struggling with Ernie. In a panic, he jumps out of bed and rushes to the sliding glass door.

Bert dives over the table, picks up the tranquilizer gun and shoots between Rourke and Ernie. He nails the Bald Man's back.

EXT. GLASS DOOR -- NIGHT

As the Bald Man slides down the length of the pane to the floor, Ernie takes a step forward. Both Rourke and Bert pull Ernie out of the room and down the hallway.

FADE OUT:

EXT. BERT AND ERNIE'S DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

Bert stands by Rourke's car, idling at the bottom of the driveway. Ernie trudges toward the apartment.

ROURKE

I owe you, mate. I've killed sloppy.
And sloppy ain't Zen.

BERT

Yeah...

ROURKE

No, I mean it. Not a lot of stand
up guys in our profession. I'm gonna
make good, do something for you
sometime.

BERT

No, that's okay, really.

Rourke puts the car in gear, winks at Bert.

ROURKE

I owe ya', mate.

He drives off. Bert pulls out a cigarette, lights it. Behind him, Ernie peaks through the blinds, stares for awhile, lets them fall. Moments later, the room dims.

Bert watches Rourke turn the corner.

BERT

Man...what's next?

He heads up the drive way.

FADE OUT:

EXT. BOULEVARD -- NIGHT

A huge, Texas style Cadillac rolls along.

INT. TEX'S CADDY -- PASSING PARK -- NIGHT

Tex drives. Ernie's in front, Bert in back.

TEX

I love L.A. Came out in '76. Been here ever since.

They drive past a park.

TEX

That park there, me and the Mrs. used to picnic every Sunday. Tough soil. You haveta really dig.

BERT

What sort of work you in?

TEX

Son, if a man wants his livelihood known, it'll come out in his conversation. Have some decorum.

Tex turns on a blinker, sails 'round a corner.

INT. TEX'S CADDY -- PASSING MUSEUM -- NIGHT

TEX

Museums. The Mrs. loved museums. We set up a philanthropic grant for some wet behind the ears, can't pay my bills, cry like a baby, painters. Those cement patios are new. Paved over the supple, easy tillin' sod. Shovel went in like butter.

INT. TEX'S CADDY -- PASSING DODGER STADIUM -- NIGHT

TEX

Never was one for baseball, myself. But after a few rounds of golf with those ear bending investment bottom feeders, there's nothing better than a Cuban cigar and a night game. 'Til those health nut, treadmill gerbils forbid it. Second hand smoke my eye. Up above, in the Chavez Ravine hills, you gotta dig real deep, else the Coyotes'll make a mess of your hard work and artistry.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

Tex stands between Bert and Ernie, staring off at the Los Angeles skyline. With a small knife, Tex burrows into his cigar. Bert and Ernie follow his example, but end up with chew toys.

TEX

This was another favorite spot.
Used to come here for a little cuddle.

Tex lights up.

TEX

You boys know how much I'm worth?

ERNIE

What do you think, Bert? The car's pretty cherry.

BERT

Cars are easy to fix up.

ERNIE

True. What about the tickets?

BERT

Yeah, we never have the dough to see ball games.

TEX

I'm worth more than you could ever dream.

Bert and Ernie cough on their cigars.

BERT

That's alot. We dream big.

ERNIE

Especially Bert. One time, hee-hee, we saw this porno film, and in the middle of the night-

Bert slaps Ernie's arm. Tex continues nonplussed.

TEX

What I'm worth is nothing,
nothing...to what I would've had if
she hadn't left. I would've had
more. Much more.

The Boys are silent. Tex drops his cigar to the ground, twists it hard with his cowboy boot.

A bit too hard, a bit vindictive.

TEX
Let's settle up.

From above we see it all. Mound of dirt, tools, open grave and a writhing duffel bag. They shovel dirt on top of it.

INT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- DAY

In pants and a bathrobe, Bert sits on a milk crate, brushing his teeth with one hand, holding the changer with the other. He stares distantly at the end credits of the old PBS show, "ZOOM".

TELEVISION
Come on and Zoom-Zoom-Zoom-uh-Zoom
We're gonna Zoom-a-Zoom-a-Zoom-a-
Zoom/Come on give it a try/We're
gonna give it a try/We're gonna teach
you to fly, HIGH/Come on and
Zoocom/Come on and Zoom-Zoom....

The television begins to echo, becomes more distant.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH -- BERT'S FLASHBACK -- DAY

Young Bert and his Grandfather stroll, picking up stunned fish as they wash ashore, flipping, disorientated, dead.

Young Bert feels for them. While his Grandfather's turned away, he sends as many back into the water as he can. His Grandfather turns, sees what he's done.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- DAY

There's a knock on the window. Bert shudders. His finger's on the remote, channels flash past. He releases the button and cartoons begin.

Ernie exits the bathroom in towel and shower cap. Another knock on the window. Ernie pulls back the shade. Its Arnold. In the background, his car idles by the curb.

ARNOLD
C'mon! I'm illegally parked!!

Ernie waves okay as Arnold retreats to his car.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert! Arnold's here!!

BERT

I'm not going.

ERNIE

What?

Bert enters the bathroom.

BERT

I'm not going.

He slams the door.

ERNIE

Fine!

Ernie pulls his pants on, grabs his shoes and exits the house.

INT. BATHROOM -- DUSK

Bert stares into the mirror. He picks up an electric razor and takes it to his goatee.

INT. ARNOLD'S CAR -- DUSK

Ernie and Arnold sit in a blue Lincoln. They share a box of donuts, sip coffee in styrofoam cups.

Arnold holds a switchblade, stares in the rear view mirror, periodically glances at Ernie.

ARNOLD

Cutting's an art. Talk to a butcher,
a seamstress. It's an art I tell
you. Taoists talk about having this
power, where they pass over a piece
of meat, and without looking, separate
bone from everything else.

He opens and closes the switchblade. SWISH-SWISH.

ARNOLD

I used to have a Swiss Army knife.
But its not exactly a mean looking
blade, 'cause, you know, the Swiss.

Now, I'm a stiletto man. Not just knives, I dig women in
them red numbers. Like 'em to walk around wearing the sticks.

ERNIE

You know, its funny you should bring it up. Those shoes, they look like they'd be cruel shoes, but they're not. In fact, some are kinda comfortable. The heel's high, gives you support. You can't play sports in 'em, that commercial's bullshit, but while your sister's at work, they're time killers.

Arnold turns to him in disbelief.

ARNOLD

You're an odd bird.

Something catches Arnold's eye.

ARNOLD

Let's get out of the box.

EXT. STREET -- DUSK

Ernie and Arnold exit the car, deposit some money in the meter.

ARNOLD

Those Ritas are bastards around here. Slap you with a ticket like a back talkin' wife.

He turns the dial. The timer snaps up.

EXT. STREET CORNER -- DUSK

A PRIEST comes around the corner. We hear the sound of Arnold's knife snapping in and out.

ARNOLD (O.S.)

Listen to that.

Swish-swish. Swish-swish.

ARNOLD (O.S.)

I love that sound.

Ernie and Arnold walk around the corner.

ARNOLD

You got two ways of cutting. Like so...

He positions the knife in his hand.

ARNOLD

And like so...

He reverses the direction of the knife.

ARNOLD

Pretty standard grips. One or the other. I recommend holding it in the first position if you get in a scuffle. It allows you to cut with each punch. Also, the option of coming downward, say, on an ear, or the cranium. Heads are tough, its not often you get sticker. The blade scrapes, slides off.

Ernie's hanging on every word.

ARNOLD

To throw, hold the blade and snap your wrist like you're closing a shade. If you're slicing, hold it like so...

Arnold stops on the sidewalk, blade sparkling, and uses Ernie's head for demonstration.

ARNOLD

...grab the opposite jawbone, pull the blade across. They go down like Seka.

ERNIE

Seka's hot. You ever see the one where she's a farm girl and Ron Jeremy's a cow wrangler? Its kinda tough to follow, I get lost in the plot sometimes, Bert says its a free flowing art, but the end's a smiler. Hey, Arnold? How come they don't sell the soundtracks like on other films?

ARNOLD

I don't know. But you could record them off the television.

The Priest enters a building. Casually, as if by coincidence, Arnold and Ernie follow him in.

ERNIE

You know where I can get blank 8-tracks?

INT. LOBBY -- DUSK

The elevator rings open. The Priest enters. Arnold and Ernie walk into the building, go straight to the lift.

INT. ELEVATOR -- DUSK

The Priest stands in front, Ernie and Arnold in back. Ernie bops to the Muzak version of "SPIRIT IN THE SKY". We hear the "switch" sound. Ernie casually glances over, notices the blade protruding from Arnold's hand.

It takes a second. Arnold grabs the Priest's jawbone, pulls across. The Priest goes down, blood spreads, the elevator rings open and they're gone.

EXT. STREET -- DUSK

Ernie and Arnold head for the car.

ARNOLD

When I was an altar boy, this priest did things to me he shouldn't have.

ERNIE

THIS priest?

ARNOLD

(softly)
They're all the same.

INT. COPYCAT -- NIGHT

Sandy's at the register, finishes with a CUSTOMER.

SANDY

(bright, innocent
smile)

Thank you.

Bert steps up.

SANDY

Hey, Bert.

BERT

Hi. Is Tony around?

SANDY

Uh, yeah.

BERT

Can I talk to him?

SANDY

Sure, I guess.

Sandy walks the length of the counter. Bert follows her.

BERT

Do you think he'd give me my old job back?

Sandy heads up the stairs with Bert behind.

SANDY

Probably. He's not as strong as I thought. He's actually turned into a fuckin' pussy, excuse my French.

They reach the top of the stairs.

SANDY

Bert, how's Ernie? Is he taking care of himself?

BERT

Ernie's doing a little too swell in that department.

Sandy knocks on a door marked "Manager". Through the window, we see Tony look up. He's taken aback, waves Bert in.

SANDY

Tell Ernie I said 'hi'?

She opens the door for him.

BERT

Sure.

Bert enters.

EXT. TEX'S ESTATE -- NIGHT

Tex has no difficulty flaunting his wealth. A spotlight circles. The gates are open. Cars line the drive awaiting valets. BMWs, Range Rovers, Porsches, the Falcon. Thick exhaust smoke.

INT. FALCON -- NIGHT

Five cans from a six pack rest between Bert and Ernie. Empties on the floor. The Boys sip their Schlitz, listening to an 8-track. It fades out in mid song, the machine clicks over and the song fades back in to finish. They're oblivious to the break.

The cars in front move forward, and a VALET waves the Falcon ahead. Ernie's sporting some facial growth.

BERT

I bet he's not gonna have any good beer. Probably imported crap.

ERNIE

Are you gonna be a jerk tonight?

BERT

C'mon, you seen this guy.

ERNIE

Have some decorum.

BERT

He's not-

ERNIE

Have some decorum.

BERT

Fuck you, Ernie.

ERNIE

Hey, fuck you, Bert.

BERT

No, fuck you.

There's one can left. Both reach for it.

ERNIE

That's my beer.

BERT

Bullshit, you drank three.

ERNIE

You have some stashed in your jacket.

BERT

So do you!!

Tired of waving them forward, the Valet trots to the car.

ERNIE

Well, who bought it?

BERT

Well, who drove?

ERNIE
Well, who paid for gas?

BERT
Well, whose car is it?

VALET
Sir, I need you to pull forward.

Bert slaps it in gear.

BERT
Take it.

ERNIE
You take it.

BERT
I will!

ERNIE
Fuck you, I want it.

INT. TEX'S -- NIGHT

Jackets bulging, Bert and Ernie enter.

It's quite a spread. Barbecue pit, pig with apple, COCKTAIL WAITRESSES dressed in short, short skirts and identical, beehive Texas style blonde hair, BARTENDERS, stocked bar with Heineken and Call Brand liquor, BLACK TIE GUESTS, REDNECKS, BIKERS, you name it. A CLOWN hands out balloons.

A DOORMAN collects the invites. Ernie pulls a crumpled piece of cardboard from a pocket, hands it over. Tex stands with a couple SOCIALITES. He sees the boys, excuses himself and walks over.

TEX
You boys find it all right?

BERT
Yeah, thanks to the Bat light.

Bert strolls off.

TEX
Your pal's heading for a Georgia Red Clay ass whoopin'.

ERNIE
Yeah, he's being a jerk.

Landon catches Ernie's eye. Tex notices.

TEX
Tickle your fancy? Go on up and
introduce yourself, son. Ain't no
lady too good for my friends.

ERNIE
Really?

TEX
Heck, yeah. Say howdy.

EXT. CORNER OF ROOM -- NIGHT

Bert's found a safe haven. A Cocktail Waitress approaches.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS
Sir, would you like something from
the bar?

Smugly, Bert removes a can of Schlitz and opens it.

BERT
That's right. Schlitz. And just
enough for me.

Bert takes a slug as she moves off. He checks out the people
holding bottles of imported beer.

BERT
Jerks.

Bert rises, turns and exits out a sliding glass door.

INT. PARTY -- NIGHT

Ernie stands with Landon. Each holds a Schlitz. She seems
legitimately interested in him.

ERNIE
I've been an artist ever since.

LANDON
That's incredible.

ERNIE
I shit you not, neighbor.

Tex catches Landon's attention, motions to ANOTHER GUEST.

LANDON
Ernie, you'll have to excuse me. I
need to say hello to someone.

ERNIE

Hey, maybe later we could do some whippets.

LANDON

(selling it)

I'd like that.

She passes Tex on her way to the Guest. He takes the Schlitz. Ernie does a slow turn, checks out the room.

ERNIE

I'm the man.

A Cocktail Waitress passes.

ERNIE

Hey, Miss? Where's the think tank?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

Excuse me?

ERNIE

I gotta pee like a grown up.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS #1

Down the hall, third door on your right. Or you can go upstairs, fourth door on the left.

ERNIE

Uh....fourth?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

That's right.

EXT. TERRACE -- NIGHT

Bert leans against a pillar. The Clown exits the glass doors, holds out a balloon. It takes a moment for Bert to turn.

BERT

No, thanks.

The Clown extends the balloon a little closer to Bert.

BERT

I said, 'no, thanks'.

The Clown stares at him. Bert returns the glare, recognizes him.

BERT

Rourke?

Rourke smiles.

BERT
(re: clown suit)
You join a gang?

Rourke lets the balloon go.

ROURKE
The other night? It was a contract.
That bald guy was stonewalling Tex
so he paid me to punch his ticket.
I screwed it up. Tex says I'm a
clown, hence the attire. I gotta
stop being so anal about me art.

BERT
Rourke, you're doing great. You
should bail every time it doesn't
feel perfect.

ROURKE
You reckon? I feel I've got Buckley's
chance.

BERT
Definitely. If it ain't Zen, don't
kill.

ROURKE
Yeah, you're right. Here, have a
balloon. Ah, shit, have two.

He nudges Bert.

ROURKE
I still owe ya', mate. And I always
pay my debts.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Ernie's completely lost. Walks up and down, trying to figure out which room is number four. He hears footsteps ascending the stairs, chooses a door and enters.

INT. TEX'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Ostentatious, but classy. Ernie roams around, looking at things, notices a frame by the bed. TEX'S EX, a Southern Belle, and creepily similar to all those Cocktail Waitresses downstairs. Ernie feels a presence, turns around. Tex stands at a small bar.

ERNIE

Is she from the park?

Tex opens a couple Heinekens, serves part of them in glasses
Ernie approaches.

TEX

No, son.

Tex hands Ernie a beer. Ernie winces. Tex strolls to the
deck. Ernie eyes a bathroom, points to it, begins to say
something.

TEX

She's who the others remind me of.

Ernie follows Tex out to the deck.

EXT. DECK -- NIGHT

The sprawling lights of L.A. twinkle in the distance.

TEX

Having difficulty with your pal?

Ernie shrugs.

TEX

You have to pick a line and walk it.
Ernie, I didn't like the way social
relationships were headed, so I took
measures to make myself comfortable.
The Club allows me to purge my demons.
People, they talk a lot of crap. I
hate that. See what you want, set
your course, and don't let go of the
reins 'til your bedroll's on the
horizon. You want something from
someone, take it. Sure as shinola
they'll take it from you. Excuse
the sissy talk, but follow your bliss.

Tex winks, takes a sip of his Heineken.

ERNIE

Hey, Tex. Thanks. I wasn't sure
what I'd do, but now I know. I'm
gonna be the best.

TEX

That's my boy.

He pats Ernie on the back, walks away. Ernie stares off,
nodding in self-affirmation. Tex pauses at the doorway.

TEX

And Ernie?

Ernie turns around.

TEX

Lay off the whippets.

ERNIE

Yes, sir.

Tex holds up his glass in a toast. Ernie follows suit, reluctantly takes a sip. Tex winks and is gone. Ernie spits out the beer, pulls out a Schlitz and chugs it to clean his palate.

INT. TEX'S PARTY -- NIGHT

Ernie descends the stairs, runs into Bert on his way up.

ERNIE

Cool house, huh?

BERT

I guess.

ERNIE

Alotta land.

BERT

Yeah, I wonder how many bodies he stashed in the backyard.

ERNIE

None. He disposes at places of remembrance.

BERT

Well, maybe his wife blew him on the swingset.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert? You're not funny. If you don't like him, leave.

BERT

I will.

ERNIE

So go.

BERT

I'm gonna.

ERNIE
Still here?

BERT
Waitin' for you.

ERNIE
Staying.

BERT
Taking the car.

ERNIE
Take it.

BERT
I will.

ERNIE
I'll find my own ride.

BERT
Yeah? How?

INT. STRANGER'S CAR -- NIGHT

Ernie's hitched a ride with an EMACIATED MAN, 60's, gaunt, gray stubble and hair, soiled white T-shirt.

EMACIATED MAN
I don't normally pick up hitchhikers.
Especially this time of night.

TEXY (V.O.)
You want something from someone,
take it.

Ernie reaches into his pocket, removes Rourke's black jack.

EMACIATED MAN
But you remind me of my grandson,
and I love that boy like the dickens.

Touched, Ernie pockets the black jack.

EXT. PICK-A-PART -- ESTABLISHING -- MORNING

Two football fields with row upon row of scavenged cars, trucks, vans jeeps and motorcycles.

EXT. PICK-A-PART -- FRONT -- MORNING

Bert pays the CASHIER, gets stuck in the rolling entrance bars. The Cashier and some WORKERS snicker.

BERT
 (mumbling to himself)
 Jerks....ride....Lake Hollywood....

He makes it through.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- DAY

Ernie wakes up, sees Bert pulling on a CopyCat shirt. He smiles.

ERNIE
 That's a great costume.

BERT
 I got my old job back.

ERNIE
 What?!? I thought we were going out tonight?

Nothing. Ernie jumps out of bed.

ERNIE
 Hey, Berrrrrt. I thought we were gonna "go out" tonight? C'mon, its Halloween.

BERT
 I'm not going out anymore.

Bert throws on his jacket.

ERNIE
 Gimme the car, Bert.

BERT
 Fuck you.

Ernie stands between Bert and the door.

ERNIE
 Bert. Give me the car.

Bert laughs, tosses him the keys.

EXT. TRUNK -- NIGHT

Ernie frantically attempts to shut the trunk on an extremely resistant VICTIM. Finally, the lock clicks. He leans on the trunk, wipes his brow, ignores the pounding and yelling.

INT. FORD FALCON -- NIGHT

Small notes are taped on the speedometer. At 15 mph, "city streets", at 35 mph, "open roads", at 65 mph, "freeway".

Ernie drives aimlessly, a pile of 8-tracks on the passenger seat, a Schlitz in a swivel cup fastened to the dash. Again, the 8-Track fades out in mid song, fades in to resume.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Ernie slows to a stop, leaves the engine running. He finishes his beer, tosses it in the back, steps out of the car.

Ernie takes a cursory look around, heads to the trunk. There's pounding, yelling. He reverses direction.

ERNIE

Man...

He gets back in, peels out.

INT. COPYCAT -- NIGHT

Paper's pulled from a tray and sucked inside a copy machine. At the other end, the newly inked sheets flow out and land atop others. More paper is pulled from the tray and sucked inside where the inner workings roll and drag it along.

EXT. SIDE ROAD -- NIGHT

The Falcon drives through some wooded areas.

INT. COPYCAT -- NIGHT

A photo bulb flashes on and off, capturing the image of the master as black ink shoots onto the white page. A second later, the paper's swiftly jerked away.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

Ernie stops the car, turns down the 8-Track. More banging.

ERNIE

Fuck!

He checks the gas gauge. Half a tank.

INT. COPYCAT -- NIGHT

The paper sticks and the entire clockwork stops. Atop the control panel, a red "jam" light illuminates.

EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

Ernie exits the rural street, pauses to turn on a major road, stops. Even more banging.

ERNIE

Iron Lung.

INT. COPYCAT -- NIGHT

The door of the copier opens, revealing Bert. He tries to remove the foul sheet but it rips.

BERT

Fuck...

EXT. GAS STATION -- NIGHT

Ernie fills up, amidst the pleading and pounding. A BIKER pulls in wearing a helmet with an ax attached to the top. Red paint drips down the side. He hears the banging, laughs.

BIKER

Happy Halloween.

ERNIE

(Oblivious)

Hey, Happy Halloween to you, too.

INT. FALCON -- NIGHT

Ernie gets back in, turns the key. The gas gauge arrow goes to full.

INT. COPYCAT -- NIGHT

Bert rises, toner's all over him. He wipes his brow.

BERT

Okay. Here we go.

He pushes a button. It works. Bert bends over, picks up a box and walks away. Tony watches him.

EXT. FREEWAY -- NIGHT

Ernie drives, drives, drives. Passes numerous cars, others pass him. Road signs fade in and out, until he eventually reaches "LAKE HOLLYWOOD: SCENIC DRIVE". He hits his blinker, veers off.

INT. FALCON -- NIGHT

The car comes to rest. The gas gauges 1/4 tank.

Ernie shuts off the engine. Listens. Nothing. Relieved, he pops a Schlitz, sips it, gets out.

EXT. FALCON -- NIGHT

Ernie sets the beer on the hood, walks to the back. He sticks the key in the lock, opens the trunk. The Victim lunges at Ernie with a tire iron, knocks him down. Still holding the weapon, the Victim runs down the road. Ernie gathers his capacities, offers pursuit. The Victim drops the tire iron, runs for his life.

Ernie picks it up, reaches the Victim and pushes him down. He hits him over the head. The Victim tries to rise but Ernie belts him again. Hard, with venom, with purpose. He drags him into the woods, to the shore.

VICTIM

Please...please...please...

In silhouette, Ernie pummels the guy.

INT. FALCON -- NIGHT

The 8-track plays. Red blotched hands tap the steering wheel.

Dabs of blood on his face, Ernie drives the road. He reaches a major boulevard, sees COPS. But it's Halloween, and he's behind a truck with a coffin placed in back. Periodically, a WOMAN jumps out holding a severed head, laughing as her BOYFRIEND rises, nothing above his shoulders. Everyone's having a ball.

A COP directs traffic away from the through street.

COP

Keep it moving.

Scared, he turns the wheel, keeps an eye on the rear view mirror.

INT. BOARDNER'S -- NIGHT

The place is packed. Witches, animals, chicks in towels, Statue Of Liberty. A guy dressed as BATMAN speaks with two others dressed as POPEYE and ELVIS, Vegas Era.

BATMAN

They found the torso in a dumpster.

ELVIS

What about the head?

Batman shakes his head 'no'.

ELVIS

That's crazy, man. I heard there's some sick shit going on at the hospital. Old folks are dropping like flies, but they wanna keep it hush-hush 'til they find out who's pulling the plugs.

POPEYE

Lotta twisted folks out there.

Ernie turns around, standing at the bar with a Schlitz, still with blood on his face, shirt. But Halloween hides him.

ERNIE

Hey, Popeye? Why're they twisted?

ELVIS

One man killed another.

ERNIE

Gotcha.

POPEYE

Took his life.

ERNIE

Okay.

BATMAN

That's what's sick.

ERNIE

You lost me.

BATMAN

Life is delicate.

ELVIS

Think of it as an injured child.

ERNIE

I wanna pick on it.

POPEYE

No, you hold it, protect it, heal it.

ERNIE

Well, I think there's alotta jerks out there. And no one to thin out the herd.

Popeye, Batman and Elvis stare in awe before filing away.

INT. BOARDNER'S -- LATER -- NIGHT

Everyone's dancing and drinking heavily, especially Ernie. He's doing his "Ernie Dance", pumping his arms back and forth, clapping on the beat. Various bar patrons watch, start doing his dance with him. A MAN AND WOMAN, dressed as Vikings, dance by, clinking cans with Ernie.

Upon Ernie's head the Man places his helmet with musks protruding from each side. Ernie digs it, jumps around with the crowd. People like him, he likes himself.

He's the man.

EXT. SCENIC OVERLOOK -- NIGHT

We're staring at Ernie from the front. With the Viking hat still on, he screams in victory, fists in the air like the little boy who went hunting with Gramps. A vine twists upward to the left of his waist, a flower at its top.

From behind, the cry wails over the city he's to conquer. His silhouette resembles the devil. The scream echoes into....

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- DAY

A newspaper in the face interrupts Ernie's slumber.

BERT

You did it!! That was you!!

Ernie comes to, sees Bert wearing a Copycat uniform.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert, my head's out of toner.
Could you keep it down?

BERT

Its gonna stop. Now.

Ernie sits up, looks at the newspaper article detailing the previous evening's brutal slaying.

ERNIE

I don't think so, Bert.

BERT

It is. Things'll go back to the way they were.

ERNIE

No, Bert.

Ernie stands up.

ERNIE

No. I'm picking my bliss. My whole life I've been looking for something I'm good at and I finally found it.

BERT

What are you talking about?

ERNIE

The Art. Yeah, I punched that guy's ticket. He was a jerk. It was a little harder since someone replaced the exhaust pipe and the trunk, but that just goes to show what a bad motherfucker I am. Nothing can stop me. Not a trunk, exhaust or you.

BERT

Ernie...

ERNIE

WHAT!!! You want me to go back to CopyCat?!?! To working for jerks who make fun of me, to chicks who want jerks like Tony?!? Even you treated me bad. 'Ernie, get more paper', 'Ernie get more toner', 'Ernie don't touch the register'.

BERT

You can't count, Ernie.

ERNIE

Fuck you, Bert. I found out what I do well. And if you get in my way, I'll do it to you.

He pushes by a stunned Bert, heads for the bathroom.

INT. COPYCAT -- DAY

Bert works his ass off. Runs the register, bags merchandise, unloads trucks, stocks shelves, replaces toner...

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- DAY

...while Ernie watches documentaries on Dahmer, Lucas, Gacy. Checks out shows on The Hillside Strangler and Ted Bundy, interviews with killers on Hard Copy, Inside Edition, A Current Affair. Learns of women pining away for "bad boys" on death row. Conjugal visits, money, affection, love. Ernie opens a box with his and other's newsclippings, totems, etc.

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

Bert sleeps soundly as Ernie dresses in new clothes. Steel toed boots like Zippo, chaps like Decapitator, long black jacket like his Superhero, stiletto like Arnold's, tranquilizer gun like Rourke. He's also shaved his beard into a goatee like Bert's.

INT. OLD MAN'S ROOM -- DAY

Bert pays the Old Man his rent. He counts out the money, ends up handing him singles and change.

BERT

Ernie'll take care of his half.

OLD MAN

He already did. For the year.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Ernie reads books on serial killing, psychological profiles, patterns, task force techniques, murder, knives, guns, ropes, machetes, explosives, martial arts.

EXT. BERT & ERNIE'S -- DAY

Bert approaches the apartment and finds a small package addressed to him. He opens it up, removes a note:

BERT

I think this'd be perfect for you.

I still owe ya', mate!

ROURKE

EXT. CAFETERIA -- DAY

Bert sits alone, reading "THE WAY OF THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR".

INT. FALCON -- DAY

Bert pulls up to the driveway. Their couch is on the side of the road next to some garbage cans. A Van with a CARPENTRY sign pulls out. Bert drives in and parks behind an identical Ford Falcon. He gets out and walks toward the house. There's Schlitz and 8-tracks on the front seat of the other Falcon.

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- DAY

Bert opens the apartment door. Ernie's bottom bunk has been encased with a custom wooden cabinet, complete with 8-track,

speakers, shelves, light, etc. A larger table's in the middle of the room taking place of the couch.

Ernie's reading on his bed. He slides the door closed.

BERT

Jerk.

Ernie slides the door open, eyes Bert.

BERT

That your Falcon?

Ernie eyes him with defiance, appropriation, as he slowly closes the cabinet door again.

INT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- CIGAR LOUNGE -- NIGHT

Ernie laughs it up with the guys. Papa turns to him.

PAPA

Ernie, I want you to come over to my place tomorrow.

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE -- DAY

We're TRACKING along a series of full body paper targets. Bullets rip through them, hitting mostly in the black. Until we reach the final target. Clothes pins holding the paper blow off. Few shots impact the paper, those which do hit the white.

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE -- FIRING LINE -- DAY

Ernie lowers the gun, turns to Papa. Papa's looking through a scope, checking out the target.

PAPA

You should try a .38.

He sets the scope down, exchanges a .38 with the Sig Sauer Ernie's holding.

PAPA

I like the Sig Sauer. You can load it from either side and I'm left handed. Go on, it's hot.

Ernie turns, aims at the target. Papa picks up the scope. Ernie's shooting improves dramatically.

PAPA

Oh, my God.

INT. PAPA'S -- NIGHT

Dinner's cooking on the stove. Spread across the table are pistols, explosives, gunpowder, bottles, cans, pipes, etc. Papa's making bombs and bullets.

ERNIE

You ever worry about disposal?

PAPA

Occasionally. They can be placed anywhere. Except certain cemeteries. Most are sacred. Others are heathens. You ever been baptized?

ERNIE

Yeah, at Halloween.

PAPA

Glad to hear it.

EXT. PAPA'S -- NIGHT

Papa walks Ernie out, hands him a .38.

PAPA

Go in peace to love and serve the lord.

Ernie spins the chamber, aims it off to the side, looks at Papa.

ERNIE

Fuckin' A.

EXT. POLICE STATION -- NIGHT

Bert walks by the front. He contemplates entering, tries to gather the courage, but sees TWO COPS escorting a CUFFED MAN inside and changes his mind.

EXT. NEWSSTAND -- DAY

Ernie's reading a comic book. The Two Kids from Lake Hollywood are near him, checking out a newspaper rag called TRUE FICTION.

KID #1

He struck again!!

KID #2

Who?!?

KID #1
The Decapitator.

Ernie turns, sees the article.

INT. BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Ernie watches The Decapitator tighten a vice. A small white mouse climbs around it.

DECAPITATOR
It takes a big man to admit he's not
the best. I respect that, Ernie.
And I'll show you my techniques.

ERNIE
How'd you get into the club?

DECAPITATOR
When I was growing up, crossing guards
used to make me stop when I could'a
made it across the street. I was on
a Big Wheel for chrissakes. Then,
in high school, some hall monitors
rubbed me the wrong way, so at night
I'd sneak into their houses and draw
a line across their necks. The next
day, I'd slip an anonymous letter
into their locker pretty much saying,
"it's that easy". By the time I
reached college and butted heads
with Campus Security the line thing
was passe. Now I work out of my
house.
(places mouse on his
shoulder)
C'mere, Henry.

The Decapitator picks up a chain saw, pulls on some goggles
and motions for Ernie to step back. As Ernie does, we see a
BODY in police uniform laying prone on the workbench, the
head in a vice. The Decapitator starts the chain saw.

INT. DECAPITATOR'S TROPHY ROOM -- NIGHT

We PULL BACK from the freshly mounted head. Scores of law
enforcement heads with corresponding hats (LAPD, BOBBIES,
ETC.) line the walls like game.

Ernie and The Decapitator shoot bumper pool. Henry runs on
the felt, barely avoiding the balls. The Decapitator wears a
high neck sweater and holds a glass of scotch.

ERNIE

Do you worry about getting caught?

DECAPITATOR

Nah, the only thing you gotta worry about's Cops. I hate 'em, the fat fucks. But people, shit Ernie, people don't care. And when they do they're too shook up to describe anything with a degree of accuracy. Some say 10 shots, 5 shots, gray car, blue car, 5'10", 6'1". See what I'm saying?

Distant bells echo. The Decapitator closes then opens his eyes.

DECAPITATOR

Pretty soothing, huh? There's a church across the street. Check it out.

Ernie steps over, pulls back the shade. Sure enough, there's a church across the street. People mill about in front.

DECAPITATOR

See what I'm saying? Most people just walk on by. I've picked up people on the road, seen people. They don't say shit. They don't get involved. Just walk on by. You know, come to think of it....I like people. You could say I'm a people person.

From above we watch The Decapitator win.

EXT. BEACH -- BERT'S FLASHBACK -- DAY

Young Bert looks up from the shore, having saved a couple more fish and realizing his Grandfather's caught him. The Man's demeanor becomes very mean and slowly he fills Young Bert's entire point of view. He raises his arm.

SMASH CUT:

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Bert's shaken by a PARISHIONER. He looks up.

PARISHIONER

You're next?

BERT

What?

The Parishioner steps aside. The confessional door's open.

INT. CONFESSIONAL -- NIGHT

Bert sits next to a metal screen. We can barely make out the shadow of the Priest.

BERT

I don't know why I thought it was okay, but now I'm feeling really guilty. What do you think?

PRIEST

Well, I wouldn't sweat it son, just keep your nose clean, say a couple Hail Mary's on the way home and start worshipping with the Protestants over on 3rd.

BERT

Are you sure it'll be okay?

PRIEST

Provided you never come back, we'll call it square.

EXT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Bert exits the front, walks away.

INT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- NIGHT

A party's in full force. And Ernie's influence is at play.

Gone is the classical orchestra, instead a metal band plays. Gone is the Roulette and Snooker, in its place we find Buck-Buck in the deep background, chicks dancing in cages, raunchy decorations, kegs, whippets. Everyone, every single person, is doing the "Ernie Dance", pumping their arms back and forth clapping on the beat.

We FOLLOW a COCKTAIL WAITRESS weave her way through the crowded dance floor, she veers off as we reach the middle and a scuffle between Iceman and Arnold. Tex attempts to mediate but the two go at it. Papa and Zippo hold the brawlers at bay.

The music and dancing stops as the spotlight finds them.

ARNOLD

You're dead, history, incarcerated.

ICEMAN
Blow me.

TEX
Settle down, boys.

ZIPPO
Ask Ernie.

ICEMAN
Yeah, ask Ernie.

TEX
Ernie?!? Front and center, son.

Ernie's standing on a table, chatting up one of the dancing cage chicks. He hops down.

TEX
You take showers, Ernie?

ERNIE
Everyday.

TEX
You dry off afterwards?

ERNIE
Yeah.

TEX
With a towel?

ERNIE
Yeah.

TEX
What do you dry off first?

ERNIE
My face.

TEX
And then?

ERNIE
My arms, chest, legs.

TEX
What do you dry off last?

ERNIE
My...butt.

TEX
You do that last?

ERNIE
Yeah.

TEX
Why do you do that last?

ERNIE
'Cause I don't wanna dry my face
with the part I just used on my ass.

TEX
Okay. Now, before you get dressed,
what happens to the towel?

ERNIE
I hang it up to dry.

TEX
You don't throw it in the hamper?

ERNIE
No, I let it dry, use it the next
day.

TEX
Do you know what part of the towel
you wiped off your ass with?

ERNIE
Uh....

TEX
So what's to keep you from drying
your face with the part of the towel
you wiped on your ass the day before?

ERNIE
Wow....

ARNOLD
SO DON'T YOU THINK-

TEX
Son, I have the floor.
(to Ernie)
Would you suggest washing your towel
everyday?

ERNIE
Or buy a robe, sure.

Arnold gloats. Iceman attacks. In a flash, Ernie brandishes a stiletto in Iceman's face and a .38 in Arnold's.

ARNOLD

I hope you got a permit for that.

ERNIE

Shake hands.

ICEMAN

What?

ERNIE

Shake hands. Like pals.

ARNOLD

(to Iceman)

I'm still gonna get you.

Ernie cocks the trigger. Arnold extends his hand. He and Iceman reluctantly shake hands.

ICEMAN

Careful, man, he's got a blade in my throat.

ARNOLD

I'm a little preoccupied with the gun on my chin.

Ernie backs off. The music resumes and the party re-energizes. Ernie and Zippo peel off.

ZIPPO

Quick thinking, bucky.

Zippo pulls out a cigarette, holds it between his teeth.

ERNIE

My Grandfather made me and my sister shake hands after the trial.

ZIPPO

Trial?

ERNIE

Yeah, she said I ruined her shoes.

Zippo pulls out a lighter, flips it open. Ernie's impressed.

ZIPPO

I call it, '30 Days In County Without A Cigarette'.

ERNIE

Whadda ya' say tomorrow you learn me
some tricks?

ZIPPO

Yeah, sure what the fuck.

INT. BASEMENT -- DAY

Fuel splashes out of a can, spreads along the cement basement. Ernie and Zippo douse everything. Heaters, equipment, logs, dolls, boxes, rat traps, backing their way to the stairs. They leave a variety of large cans on the ground. Shredded towels stick out of the openings.

ZIPPO

You wanna try and keep as much of
this shit off you as possible.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

They saturate the stairs, head down a hallway.

ZIPPO

This is a little blaze so it won't
be a problem. But sometimes, when I
do infernos, I get this incredible
rush where my vision narrows and all
I see is static.

ERNIE

Like on TV?

ZIPPO

Yeah, like on TV. But without the
blue. My doctor says to be careful,
it could lead to cardiac arrest, but
I'm like, fuck it.

Zippo tosses the can.

ZIPPO

You got a lighter?

Ernie nods. Pulls out Bert's.

ERNIE

I pinched it from a jerk.

ZIPPO

Give it a shot.

Ernie does the trick but can't get it to light. Zippo laughs.

ZIPPO
Its out of fluid you idiot.

ERNIE
What did you say?

ZIPPO
Uh...

Ernie whips out his .38.

ERNIE
Tell me what you said.

He pushes Zippo.

ERNIE
Tell me!!!

ZIPPO
Just-

Ernie knocks him over a footstool.

ERNIE
WHAT!?!

Ernie lunges on top of him, the .38 cocked.

ERNIE
You know the only thing keeping me
from killing you?

ZIPPO
I'm cool?

ERNIE
No!

Ernie fires a round into the wall.

ERNIE
GUESS!!!

ZIPPO
I'm drawin' a blank, man!

Another shot.

ZIPPO
'Cause-cause-you can't kill another
artist without the club's permission?

A third shot.

ERNIE

Wrong!!

Zippo starts crying.

ZIPPO

Uh-uh..

A fourth shot.

ZIPPO

JUST KILL ME!!

ERNIE

'Cause I can't drive a stick!

ZIPPO

I....I....could teach you.

Touched, Ernie uncocks the gun, moves it from Zippo's face.

ERNIE

You'd do that for me?

ZIPPO

Sh-sh-sure.

ERNIE

Really?

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

Smoke billows on the horizon, sirens wail and Zippo's Mustang starts and stalls in the distance.

ZIPPO (O.S.)

Start it again.

RINGGGG-RINGGG-RINGG.

ZIPPO (O.S.)

Let go of the key!

ERNIE (O.S.)

Am I doing alright?

ZIPPO (O.S.)

Not really. Put it in gear.

GRINNNNDDDDDD..

ZIPPO (O.S.)

CLUTCH!! CLUTCH!!

The grinding halts.

ZIPPO (O.S.)
Ernie, you need to be in first.

Stall.

ERNIE (O.S.)
I have a little problem with numbers.

The brake lights come on.

INT. THE POLO LOUNGE -- DUSK

Upscale. Elite. Gower's shown to Atticus' table. He carries a briefcase.

ATTICUS
So how are the pledges doing?

Gower sits down, removes a couple file folders. One on both Bert and Ernie. He hands him the first. Its overflowing with manuscripts. Atticus opens it, sifts through glowing reports from everyone.

GOWER
Ernie's doing wonderful. High marks all around. Plays well with others, willing to share, a good egg.

ATTICUS
And Bert?

Gower hands him the second folder. A lot thinner.

ATTICUS
Hmmm..."poor attitude", "could try harder", "needs decorum". Ah, man, this guy's another Bundy.
(displays folder)
Tell me something good, will you please?

GOWER
On the plus side, Rourke says he's a stand up guy.

ATTICUS
What is it with the youth of America?

GOWER
(shaking head)
Slackers.

ATTICUS

In my day, you joined a club, you applied yourself.

GOWER

There was none of this willy-nilly knockabout seesawing.

ATTICUS

Christ on a crutch! My Grandfather broke the very ground where the organization now stands. Back then, pursuing your art meant more than drive bys, sawed offs or vengeance. You had to be creative, resourceful. Those words mean nothing to the youth of today! Its all about hip hop, techno and gettin' the panties!

GOWER

Non-conformist bastards, everyone of them.

ATTICUS

(tossing back file)

Keep an eye on him.

EXT. MARTIAL ARTS DOJO -- NIGHT

Bert walks aimlessly down the sidewalk. He passes a Martial Arts Dojo, peers through the front glass. A line of STUDENTS in white uniforms practice kicks under the watchful eye of their SENSEI.

INT. MARTIAL ARTS DOJO -- NIGHT

We track along the line of Students as their Sensei offers instruction. At the end of the line is Bert, out of sync, but giving it his all.

INT. BOARDNER'S -- NIGHT

Sandy sits with Ernie. A small black mouse crawls on the bar. She strokes its little head.

SANDY

What's his name?

ERNIE

Hank.

Bashfully, Sandy glances from Hank to Ernie.

SANDY

You've changed, Ernie. You used to be nice but now you don't care about anything or anyone but yourself. I like that in a man.

ERNIE

Yeah, well, you gotta pick your line and walk it.

SANDY

You and I, it just wouldn't work out?

She waits for his answer.

SANDY

How's your grandfather?

ERNIE

He's back in the hospital.

SANDY

Have you gone to see him?

Ernie drops his gaze.

ERNIE

No, um, my sister and I-

A catcall whistles out. Ernie turns, sees Landon enter from the back bar.

SANDY

You should go see him. Ernie?

Landon waves to Ernie as she passes.

ERNIE

Hey.

SANDY

You know her?

ERNIE

We go to the same club.

SANDY

Yeah, I meet a lot of guys where I work out.

He doesn't hear, he's watching Landon exits into the other bar. Ernie grabs Hank.

SANDY
Ernie? Where are you going?

Ernie stands, follows Landon.

ERNIE
Hey, Sandy? I'll call you later.

SANDY
But...

INT. BOARDNER'S -- BOOTH -- NIGHT

Ernie and Landon sit in a dark booth. She pulls out a cigarette. Ernie holds up the zippo, does the trick, lights her smoke.

LANDON
I'm impressed.

ERNIE
Yeah, I call it-

LANDON
Thirty Days In County.

She winks. A Waitress arrives, sets down two Schlitz.

LANDON
(sets an envelope on
the table)
Tex has a favor he needs from you.

She moves a little closer.

LANDON
Do you like me?

ERNIE
Sure.

She reaches beneath the table, rubs him.

LANDON
Show me how much you like me.

Ernie becomes aroused.

LANDON
There's this man who's been
stonewalling Tex. He needs you to
punch his ticket.

ERNIE

Uh...

LANDON

You like this? You do, I can tell.

ERNIE

Hey, uh, I'm gonna pop.

LANDON

You do this for Tex, you'll pop all night long.

She sticks her tongue in his ear.

ERNIE

Okay.

Landon pulls back.

ERNIE

Hey, Landon? Could you give me a little deposit beforehand?

Landon smiles and exits.

ERNIE

Yeah, I figured it was a no-go.

Ernie opens the envelope, pulls out a photo. Its the Bald Man from the Rourke ride along.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- NIGHT

The Bald Man exits a building, strolls up the sidewalk in a sea of pedestrians. Trailing a safe distance behind, we make out Ernie. The Bald Man weaves in and out of the crowd, unaware of the killer behind him. Ernie slows down, reaches into his pocket. A hand lands on his shoulder, turns him to the side.

OLD MAN

Ernie? Is that you, Ernie? I thought that was you. Ernie, this is a friend of mine.

The Old Man stands with an OLD WOMAN. She wears bottle glasses, wheezes, and uses a bronchial spray.

ERNIE

Hey.

OLD MAN

So what brings you out tonight?

ERNIE

Work.

OLD MAN

What are you doing for the green
backs these days?

(to Woman)

Ernie's paid up for the year.

She nods, takes a blast, breathes easier.

ERNIE

I'm an artist.

OLD WOMAN

You must be good.

Wheeze.

ERNIE

I'm getting' there.

Through the crowd, Ernie sees The Bald Man turn the corner.

ERNIE

Fuck!

He takes off.

OLD MAN

That's the oddest thing. I would've
considered him too dim for art.

EXT. SIDE STREET -- NIGHT

Ernie rushes around the corner, sees The Bald Man flag down
a cab. He glances around, sees people walking, COPS on bikes.
He can't use his gun.

The Bald Man reaches for the cab's door handle.

BALD MAN

Figueroa & Third.

Ernie pulls out his butterfly knife, flips it open, hurls it
through the air. WHIP-WHIP-WHIP-WHIP. It flies toward its
target, nails The Bald Man in the back of the head.

INT. CAB -- NIGHT

The Bald Man falls into the backseat. The Cabby pulls out.

EXT. SIDE STREET -- NIGHT

Ernie steadfastly approaches the main street.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- NIGHT

Sweating, Ernie enters the crowd. The Old Man sees him.

OLD MAN

Ernie!!

Ernie starts running.

OLD WOMAN

Hell's Bells what's with that boy?

Wheeze.

INT. ERNIE'S CABINET BUNK -- NIGHT

Ernie lays inside the cabinet, his 8-track plays softly. There's a knock on the side.

LANDON (O.S.)

Ernie?

He slides the doors open. Landon stands in fur coat and cowboy boots, holds a few cans for Whippets.

ERNIE

Hey...

She lets the coat slide off her shoulders. She's naked.

LANDON

Tex says 'thanks'.

ERNIE

Hey, alright, Tex!!

He takes the cans and the coat hits the floor. She glances at Bert, offers a smile, climbs in with Ernie. The cabinet shuts. In seconds, the bed's shaking.

LANDON (O.S.)

Oh, Ernie...oh, Ernie...you're the man. Ernie, you're the MAAAANNN!!!!

Frustrated, Bert rolls over.

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

A HAND spins the plastic wheel on the board game LIFE. The same hand moves a small plastic car, with a blue stick figure driving.

Tex, Zippo, Ernie, Iceman, The Decapitator, Papa and Arnold sit at a table in the middle of the room, playing the game. Each has their vice, be it Tex's cigar, Decapitator's snifter, etc.

ICEMAN

Wife me.

Papa places a Pink Stick Figure in the passenger seat of the car.

TEX

Keep an eye on her, son.

Zippo smiles.

TEX

Trust me on this. No matter how pretty she is, there's some guy out there who's tired of her crap.

The game continues. They pay bills, balance check books, breed.

ERNIE

You guys hear about the hospital?

PAPA

What about the hospital?

ERNIE

Someone's pulling the plug on elderly patients.

ZIPPO

I heard Atticus' has a guy in there trying to find out who it is.

TEX

No, son, I have a man in there. Me and the Mrs. donated a whole wing after my prostrate difficulty.

PAPA

You'll get to them before the cops do.

DECAPITATOR

I hate cops. Lazy fucks.

ARNOLD

I don't know, cops got it hard.

DECAPITATOR

Yeah, it ain't easy downin' a couple'a dozen crullers. But then it must be tough beatin' folks on an empty stomach.

ARNOLD

At least cops're out there. I mean, fucking priests...

PAPA

Priests are gentle creatures.

ERNIE

Until they start touchin' ya'.

This stops the table. Ernie winks at Arnold. He shrinks. Tex removes his cigar, leans in to Ernie.

TEX

You did like my thank you note?

ERNIE

Heck, yeah!!

Tex smiles, replaces his cigar.

ZIPPO

Jack called me last week.

Universal groans, disgust. Zippo laughs.

ERNIE

Hey, guys, who's Jack?

TEX

Deflowers women of their honor.

ERNIE

Hey, Tex, you lost me.

ICEMAN

He's a serial rapist.

PAPA

That's sick.

ARNOLD

They should lock that guy up and
throw away the key.

TEX

They did.

ICEMAN

I hate those guys.

DECAPITATOR

Yeah, I hate 'em worse than cops.

ARNOLD

I hate 'em worse than priests.

ERNIE

I hate 'em worse than Bert.

The guys burst out in laughter. The door swings open and in
walks Bert, tired, wearing his Copycat uniform.

BERT

One of you guys own a fire engine
red '67 Mustang with tricked out
rims?

ZIPPO

That's mine.

BERT

You're in my spot.

Zippo doesn't move.

TEX

(to Zippo)

Son...

ZIPPO

Sorry...I'll move it right away.

Zippo exits.

BERT

Ernie, how long you gonna be up? I
gotta work a double tomorrow and I
start at 8.

ERNIE

Welllllllllll-

Tex places his hand on Ernie's arm.

TEX

I don't believe it proper to insult
a man under his own roof.

(stares Bert in the
eyes)

I certainly don't appreciate insults
under mine. Thank you for your
hospitality, Ernie. Gentlemen...

Bert's eyes remain downcast as all rise and exit.

EXT. BERT AND ERNIE'S DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

The various cars drive off, allowing Zippo to peel out in
his Mustang. Bert pulls up behind Ernie's Falcon.

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

Bert reenters the apartment. Ernie's standing, waiting. He
watches Bert cross the room toward the beds. Ernie
lethargically closes the door, locks it.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert? Move out.

BERT

Why don't you move out.

ERNIE

'Cause I'm a bad motherfucker.

BERT

You're a psycho.

Ernie holds the stiletto down by his waist.

ERNIE

Get out.

BERT

What happened to you, Ernie?

ERNIE

I have clarity.

BERT

You're gone. You've stared into the
abyss and you like it.

SWISH. The stiletto blade slides out.

ERNIE

Get out.

BERT
No.

ERNIE
Yes.

BERT
No.

ERNIE
Yes.

BERT
We'll ask the Old Man. Leave it up
to him.

ERNIE
Okey-dokey.

EXT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

They exit the apartment, walk toward the house.

BERT
He likes me better.

ERNIE
I don't think its going to be an
issue.

INT. OLD MAN'S -- NIGHT

The bed's in the middle of the room. On one side, Bert stands
in front of the dresser. On the other, Ernie's by the window.
The Old Man lays on his side, under the covers, facing Bert.

Ernie stares at Bert. Bert avoids looking back.

BERT
....but things have gotten tense
between us. Our roads have reached
a fork and the time has come to go
our separate ways. We'd both like
to stay, but-

SWISH! The knife. Bert's caught off guard, glances up at
Ernie. Ernie stares intensely, turns his gaze to the Old
Man. The shadow of the stiletto looms ominously behind the
Old Man.

BERT
I'll go.

OLD MAN
Well, I'm gonna miss you, Bert.

ERNIE
And you'll have your things out in,
say, three minutes?

BERT
If you count it, sure.

ERNIE
We'll let the Old Man count it.

EXT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

Bert dumps some things into a pile by the Old Man.

INT. BERT AND ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

Bert rushes through the apartment, tosses things out the window, into a box, hurrying, hurrying, hurrying.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
...25 Mississippi, 24 Mississippi,
23 Mississippi, 22 Mississippi...

Bert heads for the 8-tracks, grabs "SPIRIT IN THE SKY".

ERNIE
WRONG!!!

OLD MAN (O.S.)
...18 Mississippi, 17 Mississippi...

Ernie points his .38 at Bert.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
...12 Mississippi, 11 Mississippi...

Bert rises.

BERT
Five times five?!?

Ernie cocks the pistol and Bert exits. Ernie kicks the door shut.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
...6 Mississippi, 5 Mississippi...

EXT. SCENIC OVERLOOK -- NIGHT

Parked at the same spot where Ernie wailed, Bert smokes a cigarette, staring off at the city he's powerless to protect.

EXT. COPYCAT ALLEY -- NIGHT

Bert climbs in a side window.

INT. COPYCAT WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

Its Dark.

Bert's arranged a bedding area inside a six foot wall of copy paper boxes. He sleeps on the floor, next to his clothes and an old suitcase record player. The scratching album plays Ozzy.

A far door opens. An INTRUDER's flashlight sweeps the warehouse, turning corners, weaving around stacks of boxes, through damaged equipment and finally up Bert's staircase of copy paper.

Bert hears the footsteps, pulls up the covers as the beam navigates the stack and floods his area.

BERT
(scared)
Ernie?

The flashlight lowers. Its Tony and TWO SECURITY GUARDS.

TONY
Bert, what are you doing here?

Bert shrugs.

INT. TONY'S LIVINGROOM -- NIGHT

Tony hovers in the kitchen, pouring a Yoo-Hoo.

TONY
You really turned your life around,
Bert. Controlled your temper, been
a good egg. Sandy and I'll sponsor
you for a few weeks, 'til you're
back on your feet.

Bert lays on the couch, tucked in a set of Mickey Mouse sheets. In the background, Sandy stands draped in a robe.

BERT
I don't want to be an inconvenience.

Tony sits down, hands Bert a Yoo-hoo.

TONY

Bert, sometimes doing the right thing's a real fist in the nuts. It don't make a difference though. You gotta do what's right. Take it like a man.

INT. LOW GRADE RESTAURANT -- DAY

Bert's attempting to pay a WAITRESS. He's got a few bills on the table, searches his pocket for some more.

BERT

I know I have it, trust me.

The Waitress looks off, gives a nod of her head. A LARGE BUSBOY steps up, asks something in Spanish, receives a reply, stands at the table.

Bert digs out some change, buttons, lint, garbage and then the Cowboy Zippo from the Preppy Murder. He doesn't even notice. The Busboy picks it up, checks it out.

Bert continues the search, finds a ten, hands it to the satisfied Waitress. Bert proceeds to put his things back, notices the lighter.

BERT

Where'd you get that?

The Busboy motions to the table. Bert grabs it from him, glances around at the other patrons, lands on a COP, who's merely eating. Bert exits as casually as possible.

WAITRESS

Your change?

EXT. LOW GRADE RESTAURANT -- DAY

Bert leans against the building, searches for a cigarette, puts it in his mouth and, again, pulls out the lighter. He fires up, exhales the smoke, realizes he's used the zippo.

BERT

Fuck!

He tosses the zippo into a gutter drain, walks off.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

DOCTORS, NURSES, PATIENTS and VISITORS enter and exit. Ernie drives up in his Falcon, stops to take a look, pulls away.

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

The front doors roll open and Ernie walks through in his new garb. He's quite a spectacle.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY -- DAY

RELATIVES hold a vigil outside a room. ERNIE'S SISTER turns, sees Ernie strutting down the hall.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Ernie?

The rest of the crowd slowly looks up as Ernie approaches. His Sister stands, moves toward him.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Ernie, what are you doing here?

ERNIE

I came to see Gramps.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Ernie, you're not allowed to be near us.

ERNIE

Hey, Sis, don't push me. As far as I'm concerned, that court thing's bullshit.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Ernie.

ERNIE

I replaced your stilettos!

ERNIE'S SISTER

That's not the point.

ERNIE

Ask him if he wants to see me.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY -- LATER -- DAY

Ernie sits a few chairs down from everyone else. His Sister exits their Grandfather's room, waves Ernie over. Ernie rises, walks to the door, looks inside. His Cousin TAD, 20's, brown penny loafers, Andy Williams sweater tied over his shoulders, sits at the Grandfather's side.

Ernie makes eye contact with his Grandfather. He waves Ernie in.

INT. GRANDFATHER'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

The guy's in bad shape. IV's, hoses attached to machines, beeping noises, liquid containers. If there's a piece of equipment to keep you alive, it's attached to this man.

TAD

I will, Gramps.

GRANDFATHER

You promise?

TAD

I promise. I swear I'll go.

GRANDFATHER

'Cause I haven't gone hunting in years.

Tad kisses his Grandfather's hand, brushes by Ernie without acknowledgment. Tad exits and Ernie's Sister closes the door, leaving Ernie alone with his ailing Gramps. Ernie observes the man, the equipment, the atmosphere, pulls back the plastic wrap. His Grandfather smiles, then coughs.

GRANDFATHER

Ernie, you got a cancer stick?

Ernie lights a cigarette, places it in the man's lips.

GRANDFATHER

You know what a favorite Grandchild is? A favorite Grandchild comes to see you when you're ailing, remembers your birthday, provides you with contraband.

Ernie's beaming.

GRANDFATHER

A favorite Grandchild is confident, determined to make something of himself.

Ernie stands tall. Grandfather reaches to the nightstand, pulls a pack of Camel Non-Filters from a drawer.

GRANDFATHER

Your cousin Tad. He's my favorite Grandchild.

He waves at Tad through the door's window. Ernie's crestfallen.

GRANDFATHER

Don't fret none, Ernest. You're my second.

EXT. GRANDFATHER'S ROOM -- DAY

Ernie rushes out. He's halfway down the hall before the door closes. No one bothers to dissuade him. Tad smirks as Ernie turns the corner.

INT. TAD'S LIVINGROOM -- NIGHT

The apartment's clean and chic. Tad works at his laptop. His fingers dance on the keys. He pauses suddenly. Turns around. Nothing. He returns to his computer. Stops again. Turns. Nothing. Back to work.

Behind him is a closet. And the knob is turning back and forth. The door cracks open. A muzzle from a dart gun appears. Tad types away oblivious. A flash appears, a dart sails into his neck and his face slams on the computer. Keys pop off on impact.

Ernie steps from the closet, holsters the gun. He holds an extremely large mason jar. Ernie reaches into a pocket and removes a drill bit with a small circular saw on it.

He pulls out the drill from another pocket and steps forward while assembling it. Ernie hovers over Tad, blocking our view. VRRRINNG!!!

INT. GRANDFATHER'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Ernie sits next to the bed, holding his Grandfather's hand.

ERNIE

Hey, no problem.

GRANDFATHER

You promise?

ERNIE

I'll even drive. I learned to work a clutch!

GRANDFATHER

Gangbusters!!

Ernie slips him a carton of Camel Non-Filters, exchanges a wink and exits the room

EXT. GRANDFATHER'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Dressed in mourning black, the entire family sits outside. They ignore Ernie. He stands for a moment, slips on the shades, struts off. His Sister can't believe it, bolts into the room.

INT. GRANDFATHER'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

She's pissed.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Gramps, don't you find it a little odd that Ernie shows up out of the blue the same day Tad's brain is stolen?

GRANDFATHER

Nope.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Just because you didn't like Tad is no -

GRANDFATHER

(interrupting)

Tad was a skittle. Ernie's a go-getter.

ERNIE'S SISTER

I'm callin' the cops.

GRANDFATHER

Careful, girl, that's my favorite Grandchild you're talkin' 'bout.

ERNIE'S SISTER

But-

GRANDFATHER

Get back in the fuckin' kitchen.

She doesn't blow. Instead, a small smile appears on her face and she calmly exits the door.

EXT. GRANDFATHER'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Ernie's Sister lets the door close against her back. She smiles at the family and softly addresses them.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Everyone, Gramps is upset about Tad and wants to be alone for awhile.

Met with unsure looks, she claps her hands, shoos them off.

ERNIE'S SISTER

Let's go! Everybody outta the pool!
Train's leaving! Put a fire under
it!!

They rise and file down the hall. A few moments pass and Mitch, in male nurse garb, passes the room. He stops and checks around. The coast clear, he enters the Grandfather's room.

We HEAR the beepings. A second later, he exits and we HEAR flatlines. Mitch takes off the opposite direction of the family. Inside, Ernie's Grandfather convulses in spasms.

INT. VIDEO ARCADE -- DAY

Videogames, Skee-ball, pinball. Kids, screaming, quarters, etc.

An Assassin theme game fills the screen. Two characters take out villains as they drop from buildings, rise from manhole covers and run around corners.

Ernie and Sandy are the players.

ERNIE

C'mon, you're not watching my back.

SANDY

This is my first time, Ernie.

ERNIE

Snap out of it. Kill, kill, kill.

SANDY

I'm real sorry about your sister.

ERNIE

She's a jerk.

SANDY

Pulling the plugs on all those people.
Not to mention her own Grandfather!

Ernie stops playing turns to her.

ERNIE

Hey, Sandy. Have some decorum.

He walks away.

SANDY
Ernie? I'm sorry. Please don't
go...

Ernie exits the Video Arcade.

EXT. VIDEO ARCADE -- DAY

Ernie slips on his Jaguar Man Shades. Sandy rushes out.

SANDY
Ernie, I'm sorry.

ERNIE
Wanna do some whippets?

SANDY
Uh...

Ernie walks away.

SANDY
Sure, Ernie, sure.

She rushes after him. Moments later, the Two Kids step into frame, watch Sandy hustle it to Ernie.

KID #1
Man...chicks dig the bad boy.

KID #2
No doubt.

They re-enter the Arcade.

EXT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Bert chainsmokes, paces. He works up the nerve, turns and heads for the front. But as TWO COPS exit, he changes his mind, reverses direction.

BERT
Fuck, I've become such a pussy!!

He takes a deep breath, rushes in.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY -- DAY

Sweating and scared, Bert approaches the front desk. The CLERK looks up from his paperwork.

CLERK
Can I help you?

BERT

Yeah, I need to talk to someone.

CLERK

What about?

BERT

Well, it all started when Ernie rang up some items on the register. See, he has a problem with numbers, and-

CLERK

I don't need the play by play.

BERT

Look, if you're gonna be a jerk we can take a little ride up to-

CLERK

Sit down!

Bert steps back to the bench, seats himself. A FEW COPS laugh as they exit an office. They're followed by Arnold, in Detective suit, badge hanging from the jacket pocket. Bert's breath is taken away. He stands.

CLERK

Sit down!!

BERT

I really need to go home.

The Clerk rises.

CLERK

I really think you should stay.

This catches Arnold's attention. He casually glances over, sees Bert. Their eyes meet and his smile evaporates. Terrified, Bert backs out of the door, disappears.

INT. ERNIE'S PLACE -- NIGHT

He's redecorated. Lava lamps, John Wayne Gacy art, weapons, Samurai swords, chain saw & vice, machete, a jar with Tad's brain, pretty much everything he's gathered from those offering tutelage or their lives. Plus stacks and stacks of 8-tracks.

There's a knock on the door.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Ernie? Are you there, Ernie? I'd like to see some of your art. Ernie?

A turn of the key and he's in. He checks the place out, starts snooping around. Sees articles of killings, Tad's brain in a bottle, the Preppy's baseball hat with a tire mark on it, etc.

OLD MAN

Oh, God, Ernie.

Suddenly, the VCR and television turn on. An interview with a SERIAL KILLER plays.

SERIAL KILLER

You wanna know how I made people disappear? I'll tell you how I make people disappear. You cut off all the fingers, the hand. The leg comes off in three pieces, the arm in two. The torso splits. Then, you drive through a secluded place, toss a piece here, a piece there. A couple hundred yards apart. Nature takes care of the rest.

Suddenly, the cabinet doors fling open. Pointing a .38 is Ernie, facing the Old Man while sitting on the bed, back against the wall, with Sandy straddling him nude and thrusting. We TRACK INTO the gun as it fires.

SANDY

Oh, God, Ernie!! Oh, GAAAAAWD!!!!

The phone rings. Like a beast with two backs, Sandy continues working Ernie as he slides off the bed and answers the phone.

INT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- NIGHT

The tone is somber, dim. We FADE UP on Atticus. He speaks carefully, deliberately.

ATTICUS

Gentlemen, we have a situation on our hands. The fate of this organization has been shaken.

We PAN the table and slowly FADE UP on Gower, Arnold, Papa, Tex, Iceman, Zippo, The Decapitator, Rourke and finally Ernie. They listen attentively.

ATTICUS

Over time, members come and members go. Some have run into difficulties while pursuing their art, others disappeared through the floorboards of America. However, NOT ONCE-

Atticus slams his fist on the table.

ATTICUS

Not once have we had a member turn on the club as a whole. Until now. Gentlemen, we have a situation on our hands.

Atticus places six gold encased .38 shells on the table.

ATTICUS

It needs immediate attention by someone who can get close enough to punch the ticket of this dim, tattletelling, shit kicking, glasshouses, Bundy-esque, non-comforist, technoloving, hip-hop, get the panties runt before he blows this whole organization to hell.

The group acquiesces, nods their heads. Ernie looks around the table, smiles and pipes up.

ERNIE

I'll take him out.

Atticus is relieved.

ATTICUS

Do you know where he's at?

ERNIE

Who?

ATTICUS

What do you mean, "Who"?

ERNIE

You lost me, man.

Atticus steams, turns to Gower.

ATTICUS

He's gonna make me get my hands dirty.

Gower interjects.

GOWER

Bert's gone to the police. At least he attempted to. We need you to relieve us of his dilemma.

ERNIE

You want me to punch Bert's ticket.

Gower doesn't blink. Ernie's taken aback, glances at Tex.

TEX

You made your bed, son. Sleep in it.

Ernie takes it all in. Perks up.

ERNIE

Hey, Atticus, I thought we weren't allowed to take each other out.

ATTICUS

Someone explain to this idiot the serious nature of our predicament.

ERNIE

Don't call me an-

TEX

ERNIE!

Gower rises, calms his voice.

GOWER

Remember when you saw me in the woods?

ERNIE

Yeah.

As he speaks, Gower walks around the table to Ernie.

GOWER

You're not allowed to leave the club once you join. That's what I was doing the night you saw me. Canceling the membership of someone who felt our organization had nothing more to offer them.

Gower approaches from behind Ernie.

GOWER

Ernie, you've come so far. You walked through our doors with little more than rough edges and a desire to change your life. Now, you're a full metal jacket of instinct and artistic potential. But there's still a decision to make. Your membership or his. Its that simple.

Gower backs off.

ATTICUS
(Motioning to bullets)
Will these be sufficient?

Ernie sees the bullets, but doesn't know how many.

ERNIE
Uh, yeah.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Bert sits on the couch watching television. Tony enters with a couple of Yoo-Hoos.

TONY
How 'bout a rematch?

BERT
Sure.

Sandy comes out of a room in her workout clothes.

TONY
Jenny Craig?

SANDY
Yep. See you guys later.

She opens the door, steps outside.

EXT. TONY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Sandy makes sure the door doesn't close, rushes to the elevator.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Tony and Bert set up the Battleship game.

TONY
Okay.

INT. PARKING GARAGE -- NIGHT

Sandy opens the door. Ernie's standing there in full gear. He steps in. Doe eyes watch him walk past. He doesn't look at her. She slips out the door.

INT. ELEVATOR -- NIGHT

The elevator doors close. Ernie pushes a button with a happy face sticker on it, stands with hands clasped together, staring straight ahead.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The two play Battleship.

F6
TONY

BERT
Miss. C8.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- HALLWAY -- NIGHT

DING!! The elevator doors part, Ernie steps out. He walks down the hallway, reaches a cracked open door with a large happy face sticker on it. He stands, listens.

Hit.
TONY (O.S.)

C7.
BERT (O.S.)

Hit.
TONY (O.S.)

C6.
BERT (O.S.)

Ernie unbuttons his jacket.

Hit.
TONY (O.S.)

Ernie pulls out a sawed off shotgun.

ERNIE
You were always great at Battleship,
Bert.

He pumps the 12 gauge.

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

BERT
C5.

Hit.
TONY

INT. TONY'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Holding the gun in one hand, Ernie does a Whippet with the other.

BERT (O.S.)

C4.

Ernie exhales, lets the can fall through the air.

TONY (O.S.)

Shit. You sank my-

The can hits the ground.

INT. TONY'S LIVINGROOM -- NIGHT

In slow motion; Ernie kicks in the door, gun in hand. Tony turns around, takes a shot in the chest, lands on the battleship game. Bert ducks off the couch. A shot blows it open and SNAPS US BACK TO REAL TIME.

Bert rushes away as Ernie blasts until he's out of shells. Bert hides behind a far chair.

Ernie squats down, pulls out a butterfly knife.

ERNIE

I have to kill you, Bert.

Bert steps up and runs for the kitchen. Ernie heaves the knife, it rolls end over end, barely misses a ducking Bert. Bert glances up, sees the blade vibrate in the wall.

ERNIE (O.S.)

Cocktail?

BERT

Ernie!!

A grenade lands next to Bert. He dashes to the hall.

ERNIE

Fuck!

KABOOM!! The grenade goes off, knocks Ernie to the ground. When the smoke clears, his jacket and chaps are fucked, but he's alive. The emergency lights are on.

Ernie shakes it off like a superhero, jumping up from his back. He reaches into his jacket, pulls out the night vision glasses, drops the coat. A second later and SWISH!, the stiletto's out. He passes the kitchen, pulls the butterfly knife from the wall.

INT. TONY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Bert hides under the bed, sees Ernie's feet as they tip toe in.

ERNIE

(softly)

Hey, Bert. Hey, Berrrrrt...

Ernie jumps onto the bed, walks around. Beneath it, Bert breathes deep. Sweat falls from his nose. Suddenly, Ernie hangs his head over the edge, stares right at him.

ERNIE

Tattle-tale.

Ernie swipes the knife, Bert holds his hand to cover his face. His palm's cut.

Ernie hops off the bed, flips it over. He charges Bert. Bert punches him in the face. Ernie turns with the momentum, comes around with the other knife. It nearly cuts Bert.

The two engage in a punching, wrestling match.

BERT

This has to stop.

ERNIE

Beg to differ.

Bert frees himself, knocks a knife into the darkness, rushes out the door. Ernie brandishes the .38, fires away.

INT. TONY'S LIVINGROOM -- NIGHT

Bert trips through the terrorized apartment. Ernie shoots in taunt, as Bert crawls backward away from him.

ERNIE

Nothing escapes the turn of the Ern.

Ernie places the muzzle on Bert's forehead. Bert chuckles.

BERT

Ernie, Ernie, Ernie. You're out of bullets, you fucking idiot.

Ernie pulls the trigger. Nothing.

ERNIE

Uh....

Bert throws a fist into Ernie's crotch. Ernie hits the ground hard, watches Bert run away.

ERNIE

Bert, come back!! I'll lose my membership!! Come back!!!

Sirens wail in the distance. Ernie's slow to rise. His hands gently cradle his crotch.

ERNIE

Oh my nuts, my nuts. You killed my
fucking nuts.

EXT. BOARDNER'S -- NIGHT

Bert walks down the street, stops at the window. He searches the crowd, spies Mitch, then moves inside. We watch him approach Mitch, pull him aside, speak demonstrably into his ear. Mitch nods, leads Bert back outside.

MITCH

Gimme your keys.

Bert tosses him the key chain.

BERT

I'm up this way.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

The two drive through the city streets. Bert holds a cloth to his wound.

BERT

Fuckin' Ernie!

MITCH

You can't go to the police.

BERT

No shit.

MITCH

They'd never believe you.

BERT

That's not exactly the problem.

MITCH

Life's tough, Bert. The bottom line, though, is responsibility to the whole. Kind of like Rousseau's Social Contract.

Bert sets his head back, closes his eyes.

MITCH

Take you for example.

Bert smiles.

MITCH

No, really. Ernie's your friend. You love him. But you realize the responsibility to the whole supersedes that to Ernie. So you make a move. I'm right with ya', Bert. Most folks kill for good reason. You guys killed jerks. I felt sorry for those poor geezers in the hospital. They won't suffer in heaven.

Bert's smile fades.

MITCH

Yeah, that was me.
(he raises his hand)
Guilty. By the way, sorry about Ernie's Grandfather. Talk about irony. Anyway... Bert, I like you a lot. But I can't let you expose the Club.

Mitch brandishes a hypodermic needle, slams it into Bert's thigh. Bert tries to pull it out, but fades. He sees Mitch pulling into the Serial Killer's Club. The round table crew are heading to their cars. Mitch honks.

MITCH

I stayed away. But after a little chat with Tex I figured, 'hey, maybe I could use a little umbrella'. Not to mention the pool and darts. And Buck-Buck. I love Buck-Buck.

BERT

Buck-Buck's cool.

Bert blacks out.

INT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- BASEMENT -- NIGHT

A coffin closes over Bert. Mitch proceeds to nail it shut.

ATTICUS

Lazarus won't be rising for a long time. Iceman, put him in your deep freeze.

ICEMAN

I don't have much room in there.

TEX

Take one out.

ICEMAN
It's not the season.

GOWER
Buy a new calendar.

The group files up the stairs.

ZIPPO
Get Nikki Taylor's. Trust me. Its
an investment.

Iceman glances inadvertently to Arnold. Arnold smiles deviously. Rourke remains behind, staring at Bert's coffin. Gower stands at the top of the stairs.

GOWER
Rourke? You coming?

Rourke acquiesces, ascends the stairs. Gower studies him before shutting the door, leaving the room in darkness.

INT. BERT'S COFFIN -- NIGHT

Complete darkness. Squeaking sounds. Nails being removed. The creaking door precedes a rush of light. Bert's eyes open, adjust to it. Rourke stands in front of him.

ROURKE
Hey, sleepy head.

Bert realizes where he is, pushes out of the coffin.

ROURKE
Shhhhhh. Figured this was the perfect
time to pay you back.

They climb the stairs, open the door. Everyone's there.

GOWER
Where you going, Fountain boy?

Rourke slams the door closed.

ROURKE
Get out, Bert!

Bert jumps down the stairs, smashes a storm window and climbs up when a shot fires. Rourke falls down the stairs, followed by the Serial Killers. Bert wedges into the window, murmurs with fear.

EXT. WINDOWELL -- NIGHT

Bert's practically home free when he's pulled from behind. He claws and scrapes, trying his best to get away.

INT. BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Mitch and Iceman have his legs.

Meanwhile, Rourke is getting the shit kicked out of him by everyone else. He crawls about the floor, trying to protect himself. He suddenly rises, brandishes a gun and shoots Mitch.

Mitch teeters, falls backwards. It's enough for Bert to get away.

EXT. WINDOWELL -- NIGHT

Bert scurries to his feet, rushes off.

INT. BASEMENT -- NIGHT

The group watches as Bert runs free.

ATTICUS

Well, men, say goodbye to your happy home. As of tonight, the Club is officially dissolved. Back to the days of cloak and dagger, black masks, lurking in alleys, high sodium food, domestic beer and network television. Its everyman for himself, but, to quote from EQUUS, "what the eye doesn't see, the heart won't grieve over". So, Zippo, tomorrow, I want you to light this candle. Gower, sick the dogs on Bert.

(points at bleeding
Rourke)

And you...

He approaches Rourke, held up by others.

ATTICUS

You've been a rabid little Dingo.

Atticus raises a pistol.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Bert's Falcon sits at a light. A cop car pulls up to his right. A moment later, another pulls up on his left.

Bert glances in the rear view mirror, there's a cop car behind him. A fourth blocks him in front.

We PUSH IN on Bert's face.

INT. BOOKING AREA -- NIGHT

We PULL BACK from Bert's face. He's handcuffed to a bench. The Emaciated Man who picked up Ernie after Tex's party stares at him from one place over.

EMACIATED MAN

Save the watch.

BERT

What?

EMACIATED MAN

You're in deep shit, boy. Save the watch.

INT. ERNIE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Ernie lays in bed with Sandy, lounging, channel surfing through cable. He flips past PINKY & THE BRAIN, moves to UNDERDOG, passes CNN, hits SPEED RACER, then quickly returns to CNN. Bert's picture appears in the corner of the screen. Beneath it in dripping, red letters is his name.

ANCHOR

He's been charged with numerous murders in the Lake Hollywood area.

ERNIE

Those are my crimes!!

Ernie jumps up, frantically pulls on clothes.

ERNIE

I'll be right back.

SANDY

Well, don't expect me to be here when you get back.

Ernie shuts the cabinet doors, locks her in.

SANDY (O.S.)

Ernie!!! Let me out!!! Ernie!!!

Ernie rushes out the door.

SANDY (O.S.)
A least gimme the changer. I'm gonna
miss HOUSE OF STYLE!!

The news continues as Ernie jumps in his car, peels out.

EXT. WITCHES' TIT COLD STORAGE -- DAY

Iceman pulls up in a Witches' Tit truck, gets out.

INT. STAKEOUT VEHICLE -- DAY

Arnold sits in his Detective suit, holds up a radio.

ARNOLD
Suspect's in sight. Shoot to kill.

From the back of the truck, Iceman rolls a pallet jack carrying a large brown package.

ARNOLD
All units prepare to move in. And
remember: Shoot. To. Kill.

INT. WITCHES' TIT COLD STORAGE -- DAY

The freight elevator opens. Iceman rolls out the pallet jack and heads down the hall. He reaches a storage freezer, dials the combination and unlocks the door. He checks the hallway before switching on the light.

INT. ICEMAN'S STORAGE ROOM -- DAY

Bodies line the freezer with corresponding season tags on them. He pushes Rourke's in and switches it with another.

INT. WITCHES' TIT COLD STORAGE -- DAY

Iceman rolls out the body as Arnold leads TWO COPS down the hall.

ARNOLD
Police Officer!!

Iceman turns, realizes it's Arnold.

ICEMAN
You're a pig?

ARNOLD
Shoot to kill!

Iceman takes off. The Two Cops fire.

ARNOLD
SHOOT TO KILL!! SHOOT TO KILL!!

INT. ERNIE'S FALCON -- DAY

Ernie speeds down the road. Hank crawls along the dash.

EXT. WITCHES' TIT COLD STORAGE -- DAY

Iceman rushes down the firescape, pursued by Arnold and the Two Cops. He jumps on a truck then into street traffic.

INT. ERNIE'S FALCON -- DAY

After a few failed attempts at repositioning Hank, frustration gets the better of Ernie and he tosses Hank out the window.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Iceman's running for his life down the middle of the street. Two cop cars are in pursuit with lights and sirens. Iceman stops, sees a Church, and tears ass for it.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

Iceman rushes for the door, opens it. As shots sprinkle the artwork, he dives inside.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Out of breath, Iceman picks himself up, stumbles toward the front. A PRIEST stands at the altar adjusting some cloths, his back to the empty congregation.

ICEMAN
Sanctuary...I...Claim...Sanctuary.

The Priest turns around. Its Papa.

ICEMAN
Fuck me!!

PAPA
You gotta get out of here.

ICEMAN
I'm claiming sanctuary.

PAPA
We don't do that here. Try the
Heathens over on Third.

Iceman's reached him.

ICEMAN
You gotta hide me, Papa.

PAPA
No can do.

ICEMAN
Don't be a dick.

PAPA
Sticks and stones.

Iceman swings and misses. The two begin fighting. Papa puts him in a headlock.

PAPA
(gritting teeth,
struggling)
Father..forgive me...for what...

SNAP!! He breaks Iceman's neck.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

Two more cop cars roll up on the church. They rush to the doors. Arnold barks out orders.

ARNOLD
You men. Inside. And remember-

COP #1
Yeah, shoot to kill, we got it.
Geez...

ARNOLD
(with venom)
Iceman. And Priests.

INT. DECAPITATOR'S TROPHY ROOM -- DAY

Holding a brandy snifter and wearing a smoking jacket, The Decapitator sits reading a book of poetry. He hears the sirens, stands up.

EXT. DECAPITATOR'S TROPHY ROOM -- WINDOW -- DAY

The Decapitator approaches the window, gazes out.

DECAPITATOR
(with venom)
COPS!!!

He drops the poetry book, rushes for the door. We CRANE DOWN to the street.

Protruding from the building is a business sign with a smiling caricature of The Decapitator:

TAXIDERM BY HIRAM - AFFORDABLE PRICES

He exits carrying a violin case and a bowling ball bag.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

The Cops enter the Church. Papa's sweating, nervous, but maintaining a decent composure.

COP #1
Father, a fugitive just ran in here.

PAPA
There's only God and myself.

COP #2
We saw a man rush through the doors.
Didn't you hear the shots?

PAPA
Shots?

COP #1
We're gonna need to sweep the
building.

PAPA
Be my guest.

They move past. Casually, Papa walks off to the side. Cop #3 points beneath a bench, gets into position, aims at the floor.

COP #3
Freeze!

Cop #4 approaches, crouches.

COP #4
His neck's broken.

COP #3
Yeah, like those others we found on
Third Street!

EXT. ALLEY ALONG CHURCH -- DAY

Papa rushes around the corner. Runs into Arnold. Stops in his tracks. SWISH!! The blade comes out. The body drops. Arnold wipes off the knife, turns around. VRRRINNG!! The Decapitator swings a miniature chainsaw across frame.

EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

We're tracking along a bowling ball bag. The Decapitator strides with the crowd, stops at a crosswalk.

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

Ernie's parked by a Motorcycle Cop.

MOTORCYCLE COP

Take another left and you're there.

He peels out.

EXT. STREET CORNER -- DAY

The Decapitator crosses at the light. But Ernie barrels around the turn. The Decapitator bounces off the fender, the bag falls to the ground and the head goes flying. Ernie continues onward. The Decapitator sees the head jumping across the road, rises and trudges after it.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS -- DAY

The head rolls down a hill, barely misses cars in each direction, jumps a ditch. The Decapitator huffs his way through oncoming traffic, nearly gets taken out by a bus.

EXT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- STAIRS -- DAY

We're looking up from the bottom of the staircase. Like a slinky, the head bounces down the steps, hops over us. Breathless, The Decapitator appears, exhales a sigh of relief.

He descends the stairs. The head is standing straight up, looking back at him. It teeters on a cement railing. Slowly, The Decapitator approaches, reaches for it.

DECAPITATOR

Gingerly...Gingerly...

He makes a grab but it falls backward into a window well.

DECAPITATOR

Fuck!!!

He peers over. It's too far to jump.

EXT. SIDE OF SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- DAY

The Decapitator cautiously looks around, enters the building. A second later, Zippo rushes from another part of the building to his red Mustang.

INT. BASEMENT OF SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB -- DAY

The Decapitator reaches through the broken windowell, claims the head. He stands for a moment, relieved. But something catches his attention. He sniffs once, twice, then looks at his feet. He's standing in gasoline. The realization hits.

DECAPITATOR
(in denial)
Naw....

EXT. SERIAL KILLER'S CLUB BUILDING -- DAY

WHOOOSSHHH!!! Flames.

INT. ZIPPO'S MUSTANG -- DAY

Zippo watches the fire. His vision turns to static. Like on television. But without the blue.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Ernie bursts through the doors, approaches the Clerk.

ERNIE
What sort of Mickey Mouse operation
are you guys running here?

CLERK
Excuse me?

ERNIE
I did it. I'm your man. Not Bert.

CLERK
Are you by any chance confessing to
the Lake Hollywood murders?

ERNIE
(Proud)
Yes, I am.

The Clerk points behind Ernie.

CLERK
Take a number.

Every transient and dysfunctional person in the city's there.

ERNIE

What can I do to convince you?

CLERK

Surprise me.

Ernie thinks for a minute. We HEAR the rev of an engine.

SMASH CUT:

INT. ERNIE'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Carrying grocery bags, the Clerk crosses a residential street. Like a doe, he turns and freezes as Ernie plows him over.

EXT. ERNIE'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Ernie rushes around to the prone Clerk. He's missing a shoe and his groceries are strewn over the road.

ERNIE

Surprised ya', huh?

No movement.

ERNIE

Hey, sir? Hey, sir...

He's dead. Ernie sees a PASSERBY standing with a dog.

ERNIE

Hey, buddy? Would you vouch for me?

The Passerby nods.

EXT. CARNIVAL -- NIGHT

A Ferris wheel revolves as a CLOWN, made up exactly like Rourke at Tex's party, walks past, handing YOUNGSTERS balloons. Then pass CANDY GIRLS, carrying trays and dressed exactly like the Cocktail Waitresses from Tex's Party, short skirts, large blonde hair.

Up ahead, a TICKET TAKER stands next to a Ticket Booth. A metal arch frames both.

Clearly the role model of the Candy Girls and Cocktail Waitresses, TEX'S EX-WIFE, 40's, with large, Texas-style beehive hair, approaches the Ticket Taker and asks him a question. He turns and points in our direction. As she approaches, we see she's crying.

TEX'S EX-WIFE

I'm not coming back to you.

Tex steps up to her.

TEX'S EX-WIFE

I know, Tex. Alright? I know. I can't prove it, but friend or otherwise, every man I see ends up dead. Whether their respirator conveniently gets unplugged or they show up in a taxi with a knife in 'em, I know its you.

TEX

Don't talk that way, Darlin'. You're the mother of my children.

TEX'S EX-WIFE

And I'd appreciate you laying off the pleasantries. I told you years ago, Tex, have some decorum.

TEX

I only want you to be happy.

TEX'S EX-WIFE

Leave me be, Tex. Unless you plan on killing us too, leave me be.

She wipes her eyes, turns and exits. As she passes the arch, we REVERSE and rise up. The Arch reads; TEX'S HOUSE OF FREAKS. Numerous Circus Stalls showcase the usual unusuals: BEARDED WOMAN, MIDGET WEIGHTLIFTERS, etc. We continue to rise, until Tex stands in the middle of his world, and his Ex-Wife leaves it forever.

ERNIE

(V.O.)

My fondest childhood memory is when my Grandfather...

INT. PONTIAC -- NIGHT

Pitch black.

We don't know it, but we're looking forward from the backseat.

ERNIE

(V.O.)

...would wake me in the middle of the night to go hunting.

With the ROAR of an accelerating engine, the headlights flash on, illuminating a deer lifting its head as the car plows into it. Above the passenger seat, two little fists shoot up in victory.

INT. YOUNG ERNIE'S DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

The cooked and garnished deer rests on a platter in the middle of the table. The entire family enjoys the wafting aroma. YOUNG ERNIE, 6, head barely above the table, watches his GRANDFATHER, 50's, cut off slices.

ERNIE

(V.O.)

Some say you're an extension of those who came before you. If that's the shit then I owe it all to Gramps. 'Cause he's how I knew....

Young Ernie beams as Gramps winks at him.

INT. VISITOR'S AREA -- DAY

A thick glass partition separates inmates from friends and family. A JOURNALIST sits across from Ernie, jotting in a stenographer's pad. Both speak into telephones. Ernie dictates.

ERNIE

....I had what it took....to be a killer.

The Journalist closes his pad. It reads TRUE FICTION. Ernie leans back.

JOURNALIST

That's quite a story.

ERNIE

I shit you not, neighbor.

The Journalist stands.

ERNIE

Hey, you think you can send me a copy?

JOURNALIST

Uh...we'll see.

EXT. NEWSSTAND -- DAY

We're staring at TRUE FICTION's headline:

ACCUSED KILLER TELLS ALL

Claims To Be "The Man"

Next to the title are diet tips, two headed monkeys and lesbians. The Two Kids are crying. One holds the newspaper, the other reads over his shoulder.

KID #1
We gotta get 'em off.

The paper's yanked away. Startled, they look up.

NEWSSTAND GUY
This ain't a fuckin' library.

As he walks off, the Kids face each other and smile.

EXT. LAKE HOLLYWOOD -- NIGHT

A Cutlass idles by the side of the road, a garden hose dangling from the exhaust pipe. The Two Kids rush from the woods.

KID #1
Move it, lard ass! My parents are
comin' home at ten!!

KID #2
Don't call me lard ass!

INT. TEX'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

The framed photo of Tex's Ex smiles at us. We PAN TO THE SIDE, see Landon lying dead on her back, head hanging over the side, lifeless eyes staring back at us.

We PULL BACK, through the bedroom, onto the deck, as Tex gazes off into the night, a cigar in one hand, a drink in the other, Landon behind him.

INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE -- DAY

The same office the Coroner entered way back when.

A NEW DETECTIVE stands at the desk, removing photos of Arnold in uniform and placing them in a box. The FORENSICS EXPERT enters, drops a file before him, stands next to a couple OFFICERS.

FORENSICS
I'm telling you, there's no possible way those two bozos could've murdered all these people. My forensic team tested both the trunks, the emissions, the tail pipes. Everything's clean.

NEW DETECTIVE

What about the traffic death?

OFFICER #1

A Passerby saw the whole thing. This Ernie guy didn't see the Clerk, stopped when he hit him and asked the Passerby to stick around until Metro arrived. If he were guilty he'd have fled.

OFFICER #2 drops a copy of TRUE FICTION on the desk.

OFFICER #2

The journalist says it's bullshit. Then asked if I wanted a half-priced subscription!

A THIRD OFFICER rushes into the office.

OFFICER #3

Sir, I got a couple kids out here say they were playing Buck-Buck in the woods last night and saw two women in a Plymouth Valiant dump a body. Guess where?

ALL IN UNISON

Lake Hollywood.

NEW DETECTIVE

Set 'em free.

INT. JAIL -- DAY

Bert and Ernie are in separate cells. Ernie's standing, smoking a cigarette. Bert remains seated, almost catatonic. He hasn't shaved for a while, sports some growth.

ERNIE

You got balls even thinking about claiming my crimes.

BERT

They framed me. I only wish I had the courage to tell them.

ERNIE

Nothing can stop me. Not even the law. I was meant to do this. God wants me to, otherwise he wouldn't have blessed me with these gifts. I learn to count, I'm the best.

EXT. BERT'S FLASHBACK -- SHORE -- DAY

Bert's Grandfather slaps him.

INT. JAIL -- DAY

ERNIE

I got a confession, Bert. Remember at the CopyCat when I blacked out and popped that guy? I never blacked out. I knew exactly what I was doing. I'd just been served one shit sandwich too many by the Jerk D'Jour.

BERT

You're not killing anymore.

EXT. BERT'S FLASHBACK -- SHORE -- DAY

The Grandfather spits on him, turns away. Bert stands up, grabs an oar from the boat.

INT. JAIL -- DAY

ERNIE

I'm covering my tracks. And its gonna take a bad motherfucker to stop me.

EXT. JAIL -- DAY

The two Ford Falcons pull out in opposite directions.

INT. ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

The cabinet doors have been broken down.

Ernie stands in a jock, dries his hair while watching the Serial Killer interview. Ernie tosses the towel into a hamper, starts to get dressed. He slides a protective cup into his jock.

EXT. ERNIE'S -- NIGHT

It's a full moon.

The interview continues playing, seeps through the walls. Wearing his killer uniform, Ernie locks the door, turns around. He removes a thermometer. We TRACK INTO him.

ERNIE

Perfect.

EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

The Two Kids' tent glows in the woods.

KID #2 (O.S.)
Who should we kill next?

KID #1 (O.S.)
I'm thinking Principal Cooper.

KID #2 (O.S.)
Yeah, he's a real jerk!!

Swish-swish.

KID #2 (O.S.)
Lemme try...

KID #1 (O.S.)
Me first, lard ass.

INT. TENT -- NIGHT

Ernie lays between the two kids.

KID #2
Don't call me lard ass.

ERNIE
Hey, guys? You wanna see where I
left all the bodies?

KID #1
We already know.

KID #2
Yeah, we used to watch you dumpin'
'em every weekend.

ERNIE
Well...you're coming with me anyway.
Let's go.

EXT. WOODS -- NIGHT

Their hands tied together, Ernie pulls the kids through the woods. They don't look happy.

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

We WIPE FROM a tree and see Ernie pull out his stiletto. Swish-swish. We RUSH FORWARD. Ernie turns around.

ERNIE

Hey, Bert.

Ernie tries to pull out his gun but a baseball bat cracks him in the shoulder.

EXT. BERT'S FLASHBACK -- SHORE -- DAY

Young Bert slams the oar into his Grandfather's head.

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

Ernie goes down, tries to get up, but the bat nails his back.

EXT. BERT'S FLASHBACK -- SHORE -- DAY

Young Bert keeps whacking his Grandfather.

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

Ernie crawls, loses his weapons with each hit of the bat, finally falls flat on the ground.

EXT. BERT'S FLASHBACK -- SHORE -- DAY

Young Bert's Grandfather lies on the shore. Waves crawl onto the sand, leaving fish near his body. Young Bert drops the paddle, spits on him and walks away.

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

Ernie turns over, bleeds from his mouth, ears, nose. He's a goner. Bert, his goatee back, picks up the .38 as Ernie mumbles something.

BERT

What?

Ernie again attempts to speak. Bert sticks the .38 in his face.

BERT

What!

One last try and he gets it out.

ERNIE

You're a bad motherfucker.

He smiles through bloody teeth. It fades.

ERNIE

Do it.

Bert's reticent.

BERT
 Things can go back to how they were
 before.

Ernie shakes his head. Bert doesn't want to kill him.

ERNIE
 It'll be okay. Just watch the tape.

BERT
 I'm sorry, Ernie.

Ernie nods, looks away. BANG! Ernie's body reverberates.

Bert turns to the kids.

BERT
 You guys still wanna live like us?

They stare at him. He pockets the gun, starts untying them.

BERT
 Tonight a school night?

They shake their heads no.

BERT
 Go home anyway. And if I hear either
 of you ain't pulling B averages, I'm
 gonna come lookin' for you.

They rush off. Bert glances at Ernie's body, takes a step
 over to him.

INT. ERNIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The video plays on the television. Bert watches from the
 couch.

SERIAL KILLER
 You wanna know how I made people
 disappear? I'll tell you how I make
 people disappear. You cut off all
 the fingers, the hand. The leg comes
 off in three pieces, the arm in two.
 The torso splits. Then, you drive
 through a secluded place, toss a
 piece here, a piece there. A couple
 hundred yards apart. Nature takes
 care of the rest.

Bert ejects the SPIRIT IN THE SKY 8-track.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Bert shuts the door, slaps the 8-track on, turns the key.

EXT. FREEWAY -- NIGHT

The Falcon drives along the freeway. Bert smokes a cigarette, stares straight ahead. Behind him, a MOTORCYCLE COP appears, throws on its lights, hits the siren.

INT. BERT'S FALCON -- NIGHT

Bert nearly wets his pants, pops out the 8-track.

The Motorcycle Cop speeds up to the car, swerves around and trails off into the distance. Bert wipes his face, lights another cigarette, pops the 8-track back in. The music resumes

EXT. FREEWAY -- NIGHT

Bert's Falcon drives on. The right turn signal blinks and he veers beneath the sign reading LAKE HOLLYWOOD: SCENIC DRIVE.

BERT (V.O.)
Hindsight's 20/20, but know this;
Ernie was the best friend I ever
had. Even with his little problem
with numbers.

FADE OUT.