"DEADLINES"

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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EXT: COLLEGE CAMPUS. COLD, SNOWY NIGHT.
MUSIC: MUZAK VERSION OF "JINGLE BELLS." UP AND UNDER.
Red lights are flashing on the sides of two dormitories. The camera tracks down into the alley between the dorms, where a pair of police cars and an ambulance are creating the lights.

A bevy of policemen, medics, reporters, and photographers are swarming around as the medics load a sheet-covered body into the ambulance. Flashbulbs pop as the ambulance doors close and the vehicle pulls away.

POLITTI, a jowly, heavy-set detective with a candy cane jutting from his mouth, is suddenly swamped by reporters as their attentions shift from the departing ambulance.

REPORTER 1: Lieutenant, how did the girl--
REPORTER 2: Lieutenant, where was the victim--
REPORTER 3: Lieutenant, what was she--

POLITTI: One at a time, boys and girls, one at a time. This has already been a long night. Betty?

REPORTER 2: What can you tell us, lieutenant?

POLITTI: We've made a positive identification pending notification of the girl's parents. I can say she was a student of this university. Past that, I--

REPORTER 4: What did the girl die from, sir?

POLITTI: Of course that aspect is still under investigation, but my initial impression is blunt force trauma to the skull. I--

REPORTER 1: Come again?

POLITTI: (removes candy from mouth) Somebody conked her on the head. Or her head hit the sidewalk. I think--

SAMPSON: Lieutenant, where--

POLITTI: Who are you, kid?

SAMPSON: Buster Sampson, with the Campus Bulletin. I was wondering if you know what the girl was doin' wanderin' around out in the cold.

POLITTI: Again, nothing for sure...but an item on her person indicates at some time tonight she was at that punk rock place up the
POLITTI: (cont.) street, the...uh...

MacREADY: The Roadkill?

POLITTI: What? Yeah, the Roadkill. She may have been heading home and--

REPORTER 2: Lieutenant, where--

POLITTI: Boys and girls, we've got a murder on our hands...and we're not getting it solved freezing our butts off out here. Now give us a call tomorrow morning and maybe we'll have something for you then. Merry Christmas.

POLITTI squeezes into a squad car as the reporters keep firing out questions. The car pulls away.

The REPORTERS begin to disperse. SAMPSON sidles up to MacREADY.

SAMPSON: Whaddaya doin' here, Suicide, this ain't no place for a cub reporter. Whyn't ya go cover a flower show or somethin'.

MacREADY: I've been looking for you, Buster. The chief wants me to work with you on this story.

SAMPSON: Aw, great. (Enter YAMAGUCHI, fiddling with a camera) Samurai, do I look like a babysitter?

YAMAGUCHI: No, but you look like a child molester.

SAMPSON: I don't got the time to show a new kid the ropes. Sink or swim, that's what I did and look how great I turned out. (He turns his back on MacREADY) Get anything good, Sam?

YAMAGUCHI: I got some OK stuff before they put the sheet on her. No brains pokin' out or anything like that, though.

SAMPSON: Ah, hell. Work with what ya get, I guess. Wanna grab a brew on th' way back to the' newsroom?

YAMAGUCHI: I never develop pictures without a load on!

The pair exit, leaving MacREADY standing there frustrated. Two REPORTERS enter foreground.

REPORTER 4: The cop's right, Betty...this is going to be a long night.

REPORTER 2: Yeah...damn these crazy college kids.

They turn to glare at MacREADY. Flustered, he turns to follow in SAMPSON'S wake.

MORE
INT: NOISY DORM CAFETERIA: MORNING

HERSCHELL POGER, a skinny, nerdy student, sits down at a table alone. He takes the school paper from his tray and unfolds it. He looks at it, and his eyes open wide. He looks quickly, nervously, from face to face in the room—everyone is nonchalantly eating, chatting.

Another STUDENT walks by POGER'S table.

STUDENT: Hey, Herschell—

POGER leaps up, knocking his tray over.

POGER: STAY AWAY FROM ME!

As everyone in the room falls silent and stares, POGER rushes out.

INT: BUSY NEWSROOM: MORNING

SAMPSON is talking on the phone, his feet propped up on a desk.

SAMPSON: Yeah, Mick, gimme the Patriots by ten...yeah. Oh, you saw the story? (SAMPSON lifts the campus paper. The banner headline reads: "CO-ED MURDERED IN DORM ALLEY DEATH"). Yeah, everybody loves a cheezy headline. (He glances up quickly) Gotta fly, Mick, remember, Pats by ten—

SAMPSON hangs up quickly as GOLDSTEIN enters.

GOLDSTEIN: Tracking a hot lead?

SAMPSON: Jus' gettin' ready ta hit th' streets, chief. The cops said this morning the dead girl's boyfriend is bein' "sought for questioning"...which means he's on the lam. I'm gonna nose around an' see what I can find out about him.

GOLDSTEIN: Great...you and Hank ought to be able to cover a lot of ground.

SAMPSON: Chief, please don't stick me wit Suicide Hank, not when I got my big chance here! This story's gonna be my golden by-line, I can feel it, and I don't need no dead weight!

GOLDSTEIN: There's nothing wrong with MacReady that a little experience won't fix...and stop calling him Suicide!

SAMPSON: It ain't just me what calls him Suicide! Everybody does, and for good reason! First, ya put him wit Fuentes ta cover that humdrum flower show, and what happens? A boiler explodes, the joint burns down, MacReady catches schrapnel in the leg, and Fuentes gets second-degree burns!

GOLDSTEIN: Buster--

MORE
SAMPSON: So you pair him with Jackson ta cover the Science Building renovation, supposed to be a snooze, right? Only the Union strikes against the site, a riot breaks out, and Jackson and MacReady get conked on th' head by a coupla scabs wit bricks! And then--

GOLDSTEIN: Buster, it goes like this. Either you work with MacReady, or I got a nice Math Club ski trip you can write about.

SAMPSON: This is my story, goddammit, you can't do this to me, Ben! (beat) Ben?

GOLDSTEIN: MacReady's in my office. You can use it for you conference.

SAMPSON: (grumbles) Well, I hope ta hell my insurance's paid up.

SAMPSON trudges resignedly towards GOLDSTEIN'S office. As he exits, the phone on the news desk RINGS. GOLDSTEIN picks it up.

GOLDSTEIN: Campus Bulletin. (beat) I'm sorry, Buster is in a conference right now. (beat; his eyes go wide) Who did you say you were?

INT: GOLDSTEIN'S IMMACULATE OFFICE. SAMPSON is slouched in a chair insolently, talking to MacREADY.

SAMPSON: Now what?

MacREADY: The lieutenant said Irene Wong was at The Roadkill last night. Maybe somebody there could tell us something.

SAMPSON: That dump? The freaks that go there don't even know their own names. Our best bet is ta find th' boyfriend. (beat, then slowly) You know, come ta think of it, ya might just have somethin' there, Suicide...yeah, why don't you go check out The Roadkill. I'll leave it entirely in your hands. (beat) Yeah, that's what I'll do. You do that, and I'll go after th' boyfriend.

The door flies open, and GOLDSTEIN sticks his head in.

GOLDSTEIN: Buster, we've got Irene Wong's boyfriend on the phone.

SAMPSON: (snorts) Okay, I'll be there in a sec, chief.

GOLDSTEIN: Buster, for Christ's sake!

SAMPSON: Okay, okay! See ya around, Suicide. Lemme know what ya find out.

INT: BUSY NEWSROOM: MORNING SAMPSON picks up the phone as GOLDSTEIN hovers nearby.

MORE
SAMPSON: Yeah? (beat) That so? Well, Irene musta had herself a lot a boyfriends, 'cause yer the fifth that's called me this morning. (beat) Yeah, there's a lot a sick people on this campus, isn't there? (beat) Yeah, okay, okay, wait a sec. (SAMPSON covers the receiver with his hand) Hand me that police report, will ya, chief? (GOLDSTEIN hands him a sheet of paper from the desk) Okay, pal...what was yer girlfriend's middle name? (long beat--SAMPSON looks grim) You know what room she was in? (beat--SAMPSON covers the receiver again) Ben, we got us a live one here.

GOLDSTEIN: Then why are you talking to me? Find out why he called!

SAMPSON: So why the call? (beat) Yeah, I'm the one that wrote that story...you want to what? (beat) Where? (He cups the phone again) Polish me up a Pulitzer, chief--he wants a meeting!

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT: THE ROADKILL: AFTERNOON.
MacREADY cautiously approaches the run-down building. After a moment, he knocks.

CHOO-CHOO, a short, fat punker, pokes her head out the door.

CHOO-CHOO: We ain't open 'till six.

MacREADY: I'm Hank MacReady, from the Campus Bulletin. I--

CHOO-CHOO: So what?

MacREADY: So I was wanting to know if there was anyone here who might've been around here about nine o'clock last night and--

A hand shoots out over CHOO-CHOO's head, latches two fingers into MacREADY'S nostrils, and yanks him inside.

INT: THE ROADKILL
MacREADY is suspended in the air by a giant, hairless punker.

MacREADY: Of course, I could come back after six--

DOGGY: My name's Billy Doggy. I was here last night, I'm here every night. Who you askin' about.

MacREADY, still hanging by the nose, carefully pulls a picture of Wong out of his pocket and holds it out.

DOGGY: (nods) Irene Wong, huh.

MacREADY: Irene Wong. She was here last night.

CHOO-CHOO: (snarls) Yeah, that psuedo was here.

MORE
MacREADY: Wh-what's a psuedo?

SNITCH, a huge, lumbering punk with a mohawk, and SLAB, a fat, ugly punker, enter.

SNITCH: Hey, Billy, ya got yer fingers up this dude's nose, man.

DOGGY: That's cause he just asked a stupid question, Snitch. He don't know there's psuedos, an' skaters, an' brats, an' slammers, an' everybody. He jus' thinks we're all punkers. He didn't do no research on his story before he came here and bothered us today.

MacREADY: Gosh, I'm awful sorry about that, but what I need to know is did any of you guys see Irene Wong here last night?

SLAB: She come in now an' then ta watch, but she don't do no slammin' or nuttin'. But last night--

SNITCH slaps his face.

SNITCH: Don't say nuttin'.

MacREADY: Do you people go to college here?

DOGGY slams him against the wall, releasing the hold on his nostrils.

DOGGY: You don't unnerstand! You're the kind a dude what stands on th' corner an' laughs at us, man! You don't get the meanâ€™ of it all, what we stand for!

MacREADY: (nervously) Uh--not me, man.

DOGGY: Man, yer so stuck in yer little plastic world, corporate executive, wife in an apron bakin' cookies, 2.5 kids--

MacREADY: (nervously) That's not me, man.

DOGGY: Brats get Big Wheels an' GI Joes fer their birthdays, white picket fence an' little house in th' suburbs, mistress wit a station wagon--

SNITCH snaps open a straight razor.

SNITCH: (nonchalantly) Let's cut 'im.

MacREADY: (whispers) Oh no, not again--

MacREADY shoves SLAB into SNITCH and runs for it. A cry goes up.

EXT: THE ROADKILL
MacREADY slams the door behind him, trips on some garbage, gets up, and runs.

MORE
EXT: STREET: A BLOCK OR SO AWAY
MacREADY stops, panting, and leans against a wall.

CHOO-CHOO: (off-camera) HANK! HEY, HANK!

MacREADY whirls around, terrified, as CHOO-CHOO enters.

CHOO-CHOO: Chill out, I ain't armed. (beat) I'm sorry 'bout them guys, Hank, they got ahold a some bad acid last week an' just ain't been themselves. (beat) They call me Choo-Choo, but my folks stuck me wit Martha.

MacREADY: You like Choo-Choo better than Martha?

CHOO-CHOO: (defiantly) Yeah, I do, what's it to ya?

MacREADY: Uh...nothing. Choo-Choo's a fine name. Why do they call you that, anyway?

CHOO-CHOO: You mean you don't know?

MacREADY: Well...wuh...no, I guess not.

CHOO-CHOO: Skip it, then. (beat, shyly) I read your stuff inna paper sometimes, Hank.

MacREADY: Uh...thanks...Choo-Choo. Well, it's been nice talking to you.

CHOO-CHOO: Lissen, Hank, lemme tell you what happened last night, okay, only ya gotta swear to me ya won't say nothin' ta nobody 'bout where ya heard it.

MacREADY: I swear.

CHOO-CHOO: Okay, so Irene was a psuedo, right, which means she jus' kinda hung around the fringes and didn't say nothin' ta th' regulars. Well last night 'round eight she comes in an' was totally trashed out, which kinda surprised everyone 'cause she was sorta a snob. Anyway, the most gentlemanly types don't 'zactly hang out there, so this one regular that goes by Reggie Spike starts puttin' moves on her as soon as he sees she's too blasted ta blow him off. So she an' Reggie leave, which is another big surprise 'cause ya could always hear her yammerin' 'bout her boyfriend.

MacREADY: Do you remember his name?

CHOO-CHOO: Sure, everybody knows Tommy Snow. Tommy Snowden, I mean.

MacREADY: Are you sure about the name?

CHOO-CHOO: Sure I'm sure, I heard it enough.

MORE
MacREADY: Know where he lives?

CHOO-CHOO: Nah, I dunno if anybody does. I know his car, though. A red Thunderbird. He does his business from there.

MacREADY: What kind of business does he do from a car?

CHOO-CHOO: You really haven't been out inna world much, have ya, Hank? Mebbe you should jus' skip that part too. Anyway, so Reg and her leave, an' he comes runnin' back in 'bout fifteen minutes later, an' he is totally freaked out.

MacREADY: What happened?

CHOO-CHOO: Reggie said some dude grabbed her when they was walkin' along. I guess he hit Reg too, an' he got scared an' started runnin'. I mean, she's cute, but...plenty a fish in th' sea. He figured she was gettin' mugged, but he dint call no pigs 'cause he was wasted an' dint wanna get busted for minor.

MacREADY: Nice guy, Reggie.

CHOO-CHOO: Hell, he dint know she was gettin'...you know, killed. None of us did. Billy finally called th' pigs, though, but I guess by that time they already know 'bout it. Reg took a lude an' went home ta chill.

MacREADY: Did he say what the guy looked like? Did he know the guy?

CHOO-CHOO: He dint say nothin' ta us 'bout what the dude looked like. He kept goin' on 'bout what a chick he lost that night though.

MacREADY: Where does Reggie live?

CHOO-CHOO: Big white house, corner a Chelsea Street an' somethin', I don't remember what 'zactly. I was at a party there once.

MacREADY: I'll find it. (beat) Hey, um--thanks for going out on a limb for me, huh?

CHOO-CHOO actually blushes a little, looks at her shoes.

CHOO-CHOO: Yeah, well 'member what I said 'bout not tellin' nobody, specially not Billy. He'd as soon kill ya as look at ya.

MacREADY: Thanks again--

MacREADY spins and rushes away.

CHOO-CHOO watches MacREADY'S retreating back. She bites her lip.

MORE
CHOO-CHOO: (calls out) Hey, Hank, yer kinda cute, why dontcha look me up at th' Roadkill sometime! (beat; adds wistfully) I'm always around.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT: DINGY BAR: AFTERNOON
SAMPSON stretched out in a booth by the window, bored, with an almost-empty pitcher of beer sitting square in front of him. A figure quietly shoulders into the shot.

POGER: Buster Sampson?

SAMPSON: Dr. Livingstone, I presume.

POGER slides uneasily into the booth. He is wearing sunglasses and a wool cap.

POGER: I took a big chance coming in here.

SAMPSON: Me, too. There's a coupla ugly broads at the bar checkin' me out.

POGER: This is my life we're talking about here! This isn't a time for jokes!

SAMPSON: Okay, sorry, it's just I been sittin' here a hour--

POGER: I had to case the place.

SAMPSON: Okay, I guess I forgot about that. Why did you call me? Why not go to the police?

POGER: (loudly) NO! (looks around quickly, then whispers) I can't go to the police. I...I have to clear myself first. I guess the reason I called you is I saw your name on the story, and...and since you're a reporter, maybe you could help me track down some people who--who could clear my name...since you're, um, kind of familiar with the case...

POGER trails off and looks around nervously. SAMPSON strums his fingers on the table.

SAMPSON: You've gotta be kiddin' me.

POGER: I know it's a lot to ask...maybe it's not right, not ethical...but I can't defend myself if the police have me locked up, and I've--I've got to find people...

A WAITRESS crops up. She is wearing a Santa cap. POGER starts.

MORE
WAITRESS: Want somethin'?  
POGER: NO! (shields his face)  
SAMPSON: Just a mild sedative for me, please.  
WAITRESS: Huh?  
SAMPSON: Another pitcher a beer, please. (He pulls out a few limp dollars) Here. Keep the change for that operation you been wantin'.

WAITRESS: Huh?  
SAMPSON: I'll explain it all when ya get back wit the beer.  
WAITRESS: Whatever.  
She exits.  
POGER: All I know is...well, I really need some help. I can't find these people alone, I'm so freaked out...all I know is I didn't do it.  
SAMPSON: Uh-huh.  
POGER: I guess what you want to know is what's in it for you. All I can say is it's one hell of a story.  
SAMPSON picks up his pitcher and drains off the rest. He puts it down slowly.  
SAMPSON: So what's your story.  
POGER: Well, last night Irene and I had this fight--  
SAMPSON: Yeah, well, I figured that.  
POGER: Are you going to take this seriously or not? We had this fight, see, and I got mad and stormed out.  
SAMPSON: Yeah?  
POGER: And then I went home.  
SAMPSON: Oh.  
POGER: So can you help me?  
SAMPSON: Well me, me this is a lot ta ask, bud, but didja see anybody while you were out last night?  
MORE

SAMPSON: Swell. So how 'bout you recreate your night fer me, exactly, just like th' cop shows.

POGER: The guy who took my ticket at the Air Jam lives in my dorm. He said hello to me. One of the guys that won first place was in a class with me last semester, so I went up and shook his hand.

SAMPSON scribbles in a notepad.

SAMPSON: That's a start. Let's get names.

POGER: Bob Richek was the first guy...somebody Sanchez the other. I think he lives on frat row.

SAMPSON: Now one more.

POGER: Whose?

SAMPSON: Yours.

POGER: I can't do that.

SAMPSON: throws his pencil.

SAMPSON: Goddammit, how do you expect me to interview these people if I don't know your name?

POGER: (beat) It's Poger. (beat) It's Herschell Poger.

EXT: DINGY BAR: AFTERNOON
SAMPSON emerges, squints at the light. YAMAGUCHI sidles up.

SAMPSON: Didja make 'im, Sam?

YAMAGUCHI: Me and my trusty telephoto.

SAMPSON: I'm on th' streets. Go with?

YAMAGUCHI: Hittin' the bars after?

SAMPSON: There's a bottle out there with my name on it.

YAMAGUCHI: You got a partner.

The pair exit.

INT: DORMITORY: AFTERNOON
SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI are facing RICHEK'S ROOMIE, who is lounging in the doorway of his room.

MORE
SAMPSON: Went home? But he was taking tickets at the Christmas Benefit last night!

RICHEK'S ROOMIE: I know, but it's Christmas, man. He really was into the spirit of the season, you know? Family around the tree and all that.

YAMAGUCHI: Know how we could get in touch with him?

RICHEK'S ROOMIE: Sorry...I just lived with him, dude.

INT: ENROLLMENT OFFICE: AFTERNOON
SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI are facing a SECRETARY.
SAMPSON flashes his press pass.

SAMPSON: Richek. R-I-C-H-E-K. He won the Campus Bulletin Trivia Contest, and we need his mailing address.

The SECRETARY squints at SAMPSON'S press pass, then disappears.

FEATURE clock on wall, then down to SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI standing and waiting impatiently. The SECRETARY re-enters.

SECRETARY: I'm sorry.

SAMPSON AND YAMAGUCHI CHORUS: Sorry?

SECRETARY: I can't seem to find his records. Richek is a rather difficult name to spell...perhaps it's misfiled.

SAMPSON: Ya mean ya lost 'em?

SECRETARY: Not lost, misfiled. If you fill out a request, we can process it for you within two weeks...

INT: TRASHY FRAT HOUSE: AFTERNOON
A loud party is commencing in the next room as SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI talk to SANCHEZ, who is strumming on a tennis racquet.

SANCHEZ: Poger? Yeah, I know him. Hey, what's this, man?

YAMAGUCHI: (squinting at racquet) "Smoke On The Water."

SANCHEZ: (crestfallen) Naw, man, it's "Satisfaction." You know, by the Stones.

SAMPSON: Yeah, I know. Lissen, didja happen to see Poger after the Air Jam at the Christmas Benefit last night?

SANCHEZ: Man, I was so wasted last night I wouldn't remember if Bob Dylan had walked up and gave me a high five.

MORE
SAMPSON shakes his head disgustedly.

SANCHEZ: Hey, guess what this is, man.

YAMAGUCHI: (squints) "Light My Fire."

SANCHEZ: (sadly) Naw, man, it's "Satisfaction" again. You know--

SAMPSON: (grumbles) Yeah, yeah--by the Stones.

EXT: RUN-DOWN FRAT HOUSE: AFTERNOON
SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI dodge trash and bottles on their way to the street.

SAMPSON: Well, we came up with a big, fat, hairy nothin' today. Mebbe Poger iced that broad after all. Oh well, I gave him the benefit a the doubt, at least. But still--

YAMAGUCHI: So who cares, man, leave it to the cops. Let's go cry in a beer.

SAMPSON: But man, this story is so big I can taste it!

YAMAGUCHI: Speaking of bad tastes, what happened to that kid Goldstein was trying to stick you with?

SAMPSON: Ah, I blew him off. I sent 'im on a wild goose chase. We won't be hearin' from that dude again 'til about Spring Break.

DISSOLVE TO:
DILAPIDATED CHELSEA STREET HOUSE: AFTERNOON
MacREADY comes up the street, picks it out, approaches.

MacREADY knocks. Knocks again. He tries to look in the window next to the door, but it is taped over with cardboard. He looks up and down the street carefully, then walks alongside the house to another window.

MacREADY looks through the window. Stretched out in a chair in the middle of an almost empty room is REGGIE SPIKE, blue-skinned and black-tongued and stiff as a board.

MacREADY, horrified, races back to the front door, tries it, then puts his shoulder to it.

INT: CHELSEA ST. HOUSE
MacREADY breaks in, trips over an amplifier on a stack of books, and falls flat on his face.

POV MacREADY as he sees the pills around the legs of the chair alongside the empty whiskey bottle.

MORE
MacREADY stands up slowly, eyes wide.

MacREADY: Oh no--

POV MacREADY as he sees a flash of bald head, a brick coming down. A THUD, then BLACKOUT.

FADE IN:
BUSY NEWSROOM: NIGHT
SAMPSON grabs GOLDSTEIN's arm.

SAMPSON: (frantic) Is he dead?

GOLDSTEIN: He's okay. He just got hit on the head with a brick by one of Spike's friends, that Slab kid--

FEATURE JACKSON, with notepad, and SLAB talking in another part of the newsroom.

GOLDSTEIN: (VO)--thought Hank was a burglar or something.

FEATURE SAMPSON and GOLDSTEIN.

SAMPSON: I'm not talkin' about Suicide, he's a cockroach--is Reggie Spike still kickin'?

GOLDSTEIN: (beat) He's in a coma, Buster. He's not doing much talking.

SAMPSON: Look, I don't care if he recites the Gettysburg Address, I just wanna know is he gonna finger Wong's killer?

GOLDSTEIN: It doesn't look likely.


MacREADY, his head swathed in a large bandage, enters the newsroom. He passes SLAB and JACKSON talking, does a double-take, then approaches SAMPSON and GOLDSTEIN.

MacREADY: What's he doing here?

SAMPSON: That's the dude what cracked ya one, Suicide. He's talkin' ta Ritz about what happened.

MacREADY: (looks back at SLAB) But...I saw skin. I saw skin.

SAMPSON and GOLDSTEIN exchange glances.

SAMPSON: Come again?

MORE
GOLDSTEIN puts his hand on MacREADY's shoulder and begins hustling him towards the door.

GOLDSTEIN: Look, Hank, I know things are a little...confused right now. Buster and Mimi can cover for you tonight...you just head for home and get a good night's rest. That's the way, get a fresh start tomorrow.

SAMPSON: Yeah, kid...why dontcha.

MacREADY: But chief...I don't think...I mean, I think...

GOLDSTEIN: Don't worry, we'll cover for you tonight...A good night's sleep, that's the way...

MacREADY: (shrugs out of GOLDSTEIN's grasp) But I can't! I've got to get ahold of Irene Wong's boyfriend!

SAMPSON: I've already gotcha covered, Suicide. I talked to him this afternoon.

MacREADY: You talked to Tommy Snowden?

SAMPSON: Who? Wong's boyfriend's name is Poger!

MacREADY: I was told at The Roadkill it was Snowden!

GOLDSTEIN: Don't get all excited, Hank, we'll look into it tomorrow...yep, tomorrow is going to be a new day...

MacREADY and GOLDSTEIN exit. SAMPSON looks confused.

SAMPSON: Snowden? Who th' hell's Snowden?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: MacREADY'S DORM ROOM: MORNING

MacREADY is sitting up in bed in his tidy room, reading the Campus Bulletin idly. The phone rings. It rings several times before he picks it up.

MacREADY: Hello?

SAMPSON: (on phone) Hey, kid, it's Buster. Goldstein wanted--I mean, I wanted ta call an' see how you was this mornin'. (beat) So how are ya?

MacREADY: Oh...fine.

SAMPSON: (on phone) See yer big story on th' front page this mornin'?

MacREADY: My roommate brought me up a copy after breakfast.

MORE
SAMPSON: (on phone) Not bad fer a cub reporter...I only had to rewrite it three, mebbe four times.

MacREADY: Thanks.

SAMPSON: Don't mention it. Hey, kid, I gotta tell ya...

MacREADY turns indifferently to the back page, glances down. He looks again, harder.

SAMPSON: (on phone) ...last night you was actin' like, I dunno, some sorta space cadet. All I'm sayin' is, so a coupla people get iced. You write about it an' don't sweat th' small stuff. What I mean is--

MacREADY: (interrupts) Buster--did you see the personal ads today?

INT: BUSY NEWSROOM: MORNING
SAMPSON is lounging at the newsdesk.

SAMPSON: Personals? Nah, I don't read all that "Dick loves Jane" crap. (beat) What?

SAMPSON grabs a paper and flips it over, scanning the page. He sits bolt upright, eyes wide.

SAMPSON: GOD-DAMN!

FEATURE OFFICE DOOR WHICH READS: "MARY ALICE RYAN, EDITOR IN CHIEF."

RYAN: (through door) If I may be painfully trite...I suppose you are all wondering why I called you here this morning.

INT: CROWDED OFFICE
RYAN wheels out from behind her desk and faces GOLDSTEIN, SOMERS, DEL RIO, BATTAGLIA, BROMMEL, and HILL. She holds up the morning's paper and reads from it.

RYAN: This ran in the Personals column of our illustrious Campus Bulletin this morning..."Engaged Girl in Third Row at Christmas Benefit Saturday night, please come forward. Life or Death. Call Buster at paper." (beat) Well?

GOLDSTEIN: (uncomfortably) I think that refers to our Buster.

RYAN: Don't spread the blame for that one, Ben. He's the news' Buster.

GOLDSTEIN: (angrily) Yeah, well, Buster didn't place that ad, it was Irene Wong's boyfriend, whoever that may be. We had no knowledge of the placing of that ad, or its content...especially the part mentioning Buster's name.

MORE
RYAN: So I suppose the question is...did you boys in advertising know what was meant by the ad?

BROMMEL and HILL exchange glances.

BROMMEL: Well...maybe we caught the gist of it.

The rest of the editors GROAN.

RYAN: Listen, Brommel, maybe I'm asking a little much here...but did any thoughts on, you know, ethics cross your mind?

BROMMEL: Ethics? You want to talk ethics? Do you think it's ethical to deny somebody their Second Amendment rights?

GOLDSTEIN: You're only one off.

RYAN: (tiredly) Well, I'm taking suggestions about what to do now.

GOLDSTEIN: Buster's got a meeting with Poger in just a few minutes.

RYAN: Wonderful...one of our reporters is aiding and abetting a wanted criminal. What are you planning to do, Brommel?

BROMMEL: About what?


BROMMEL: Why, there's nothing for us to do about that. He paid up through the end of the week, and we have no way of contacting him to refund the money--

SOMERS: That's a load of crap and you know it! You'd rather donate a kidney than give back that money!

HILL: This is a free country, isn't it?

SOMERS: That isn't the question, which of course you would know if you hadn't slept through Journalism 101--

BROMMEL: My job is to keep this paper afloat--

DEL RIO: But at what cost do you put--

GOLDSTEIN stands up, glaring.

GOLDSTEIN: Why doesn't everybody just cut out this lip service? I say screw it. It's news, isn't it?

GOLDSTEIN storms out.

MORE
DISSOLVE TO:
INT: EMPTY CLASSROOM: MORNING
SAMPSON looks in the door. He sees POGER sitting in the very back, sunglasses and a slouch hat on.

POGER: How'd it go?

SAMPSON: (shortly) Zilch.

POGER: Wh...what's wrong, Buster?

SAMPSON: Look, Puger, I figgered me an' you sorta entered inta a little partnership when we started this whole thing, which meant I would be straight wit you and you would be straight wit me. But I guess I was wrong.

POGER: (small voice) I don't understand.

SAMPSON flings the newspaper at POGER.

SAMPSON: How 'bout you tell me about that ad in the paper today?

POGER: Oh, that?

SAMPSON: Yeah, that.

POGER: (hangs his head) A girl I met at the show. There...there was only one seat left by the time I got there...I mean, the only seat I could find was next to her, so I sat down. Next to her. And right away, I noticed her ring. An engagement ring. Well, I told her we--me and Irene--were thinking about getting engaged too, only we had this awful fight, and we might break up. I don't know why I started talking to her, but I did, and I told her all about the fight, about the tree--

SAMPSON: The tree?

POGER: Yeah, you know, the Christmas tree. We were putting up our own tree, you know, and Irene kept trying to mess it up with that stringy, silvery crap--

SAMPSON: Icicles? You're talkin' 'bout icicles?

POGER: That stuff. She was covering the tree with that junk, and--

SAMPSON: You mean you wouldn't let her put icicles on the tree? Holy Christ, Poger, everybody puts icicles on their Christmas trees!

POGER: Not everybody! My family never put those things on our tree!

SAMPSON: Okay, okay, just skip it. So what happened next?

MORE
POGER: Well, the girl told me she was unhappy with her boyfriend, too. She told me a little about her relationship, generally.

SAMPSON: (urgently) Christ, Poger, why dint you say so in the first place? What was her name?

POGER: (two beats; whisper) I didn't ask.

SAMPSON leans against the wall tiredly.

SAMPSON: (wearily) Well how in the hell do you expect--

POGER: I was so embarrassed I couldn't say anything, so I took out the ad--

SAMPSON: (more energetic) How the hell d'you expect ta find her, half th' people on this campus are engaged, even I'm goddamn engaged--

POGER: (chokes back a sob) I don't know.

SAMPSON: You dint even ask her name!

POGER: (brief silence, then whispers) I didn't want to have to say this.

SAMPSON: (almost yelling) What?

POGER: (flatly) I was drunk. I don't remember that much about that night at all.

SAMPSON: (softly) Geez.

POGER: But I know I didn't kill her, I just know I didn't.

SAMPSON: (sourly) So where'd you go drinkin' after ya left Irene's dorm room?

POGER: The Brickhouse.

SAMPSON: One more. Know a Tommy Snowden?

POGER: What does that creep have to do with anything?

SAMPSON: You tell me. Who is he?

POGER: One of Irene's old boyfriends. He was a mess, always getting in trouble--

SAMPSON: She see him around much anymore? She talk about him much?

POGER: Never. They broke up about six months ago, when we started getting serious.

MORE
SAMPSON: Thanks.

He turns to go. POGER leaps up.

POGER: Buster? Listen, Buster, I'm sorry, I've just been so confused, I was going across campus today and somebody I didn't even know pointed at me, Buster, if I don't find that girl, oh Jesus, I just don't know--

SAMPSON slams the door.

INT: YUPPIE BAR; MORNING
SAMPSON comes in, disoriented among the hanging plants and wicker partitions. He goes up to the BARTENDER.

BARTENDER: Can I get you something?

SAMPSON: You guys have like beer and stuff here?

BARTENDER: Imported or domestic?

SAMPSON: Just beer. (beat) No, wait a second, I had this really good stuff when I was here Saturday night, only I don't remember what it was...mebbe the dude workin' here that night would remember me and know...who was servin' around nine or ten?

BARTENDER: I think it was Mike. (nods) He's down at the end cleaning glasses.

SAMPSON strolls down to the end of the bar.

SAMPSON: Mike?

MIKE: Can I help you, buddy?

SAMPSON: Were you workin' here around nine or ten Saturday night?

MIKE: (nervously) Who's askin'?

SAMPSON: (ignores him) See, I was supposed ta meet a dude here, only he dint show, although he says he did...anyway, I'm tryin' ta check it out, ya know? he's about five-ten--

MIKE: Hey, man--(looks around) if I tell you this, you have to keep it under your hat.

SAMPSON: That's cool.

MIKE: I had a final yesterday, man, and since the boss wasn't here I had a friend fill in for me--

MORE
SAMPS: Who?

MIKE: My brother, Chad. He knows what he's doing. He--

SAMPS: Where's your brother now?

MIKE: Well, he's in the army, he was just here for a few days...he's on the way back to the base now.

SAMPS: Which?

MIKE: Fort Hood.

SAMPS: Fort Hood Texas?

MIKE: Uh-huh...long drive, isn't it?

SAMPS: (quietly) Yeah...it's a long way home.

DISSOLVE TO:
BUSY NEWSROOM: AFTERNOON
SAMPS is slumped at the news desk, his head in his hands. GOLSTEIN enters.

GOLSTEIN: Patriots beat the spread?

SAMPS: Nah...it's just this whole Irene Wong thing. I mean, we got a paranoid boyfriend who's got no alibi, we got a ex-boyfriend nobody can find, we got Reggie the veggie, and now we got some engaged chick the boyfriend was tryin' ta score. So who iced her?

GOLSTEIN: That's not your beef. you just write the stories that make everybody else ask that. Isn't that about what you told Hank?

SAMPS: Yeah, yeah, I guess...I dunno...

GOLSTEIN: Have you got a line on the boyfriend?

SAMPS: Yeah, maybe...who knows.

GOLSTEIN: You want help? You can have Mimi or Chico.

SAMPS: Nah...I got somebody in mind already.

INT: MacREADY'S DORM ROOM
MacREADY is studying at his desk. A knock comes at the door. He goes to answer it, and finds SAMPS standing there awkwardly.

SAMPS: You ready ta hit th' road?

MORE
MacREADY: What?

SAMPSON: I think I got a line on Tommy Snowden, maybe...you want in on it, dontcha? I mean, it's...it's yer story, isn't it?

MacREADY: Yes...yes, I suppose it is.

SAMPSON: Okay, then, Suicide...let's roll!

INT: SEEDY, GAUDY RESTAURANT
SAMPSON and MacREADY are seated in a Deanie Weenie fast food joint. They are both looking around.

SAMPSON: The Deanie Weenie...another cultural highlight on campus.

MacREADY: So why are we here?

SAMPSON: Snowden flips greaseburgers in this joint...and today's payday. He may wanna skip town, or whatever, but he ain't goin' nowhere without his paycheck.

MacREADY: How--

Enter WAITRESS.

WAITRESS: What'll you guys have?

SAMPSON: Beer.

MacREADY: (glances as menu) I'd like a Weenieburger, everything no pickle, large fries, onion rings, and--(He sees SAMPSON glaring at him, and he drops the menu) uh--just a Coke, please.

WAITRESS departs.

MacREADY: So how did you find this out?

SAMPSON: Easy... I used the old "Trivia Contest winner" line at the records office...read his whole file.

MacREADY: Aren't those people ever going to learn...we don't even have a Trivia Contest!

SAMPSON: Ah, who cares...nobody reads the Bulletin anyway.

MacREADY: So did you tell the police?

SAMPSON: Hell, no, let them read the file...do you think I wanna blow this scoop?

A red Thunderbird pulls up to the curb outside the their booth's window. SNOWDEN hurries out.

MORE
MacREADY: Any good news on Reggie Spike?

SAMPSON: Nah, he's still eatin' through a tube... who knows.

SNOWDEN passes the table.

MacREADY: You know, there's something about that whole thing that keeps gnawing at me--

SAMPSON: They're called stitches, Suicide.

MacREADY: No, I mean-- (He does a double-take through the window) say, isn't that a red--

SAMPSON looks over, jumps up, looks around.

SAMPSON: Let's do it.

MacREADY stands up and bowls over the WAITRESS, carrying the drinks. Everyone swears, general commotion, and then SAMPSON looks out the window and sees SNOWDEN approaching his car.

SAMPSON: Rats!

SAMPSON rushes out as MacREADY begins apologizing profusely.

EXT: THE DEANIE WEENIE

SAMPSON flies down the steps as SNOWDEN opens his door.

SAMPSON: Hey, Tommy, wait a sec, can we talk a minute?

SNOWDEN reaches into the car and whips out a bow. He notches an arrow.

SNOWDEN: Just stay away from me, man!

SAMPSON backs up slowly, eyes wide.

SAMPSON: Whoa there, man, be cool... I don't mean nothin', I'm just a reporter--

SNOWDEN: Reporter!

SNOWDEN notches the arrow back one more. SAMPSON backs into the doorway as MacREADY is running out, and they knock heads.

SAMPSON: Look out, man, he's packin'!

MacREADY: A bow and arrow?

FEATURE A POLICE CAR erupting from a nearby alleyway, sirens wailing.

MORE
FEATURE SNOWDEN'S terrified face.

SNOWDEN: You pig!

SNOWDEN lets the arrow fly. SAMPSON cries out and tries to shield his face. The arrow becomes embedded in his forearm. SAMPSON tumbles down the steps.

As the police car screeches to a halt at a right angle to the Thunderbird, SNOWDEN slings the bow aside and sprints around the car and into traffic. The POLICEMEN leap out.

Policeman: Hold it, kid!

SNOWDEN dashes into the oncoming lane, looking back at the policemen. A car lays on its horn.

FEATURE SNOWDEN turning around in terror--but too late.

FEATURE MacREADY ministering to his fallen friend. There is a SCREECH OF TIRES, then a THUD. SAMPSON manages to raise his head, squint through the pain.

SAMPSON: Damn...there goes my scoop.

His head flops on the pavement.

DISSOLVE TO:

NEWSROOM: NIGHT

SAMPSON slinks in, his arm in a sling, MacREADY in tow. Everyone starts clapping and cheering, embarrassing them. FUENTES sidles up and starts doing an Indian war whoop.

SAMPSON: Ah, put it ta rest, why dontcha?

SAMPSON flops into a chair at the news desk. YAMAGUCHI is perched on the edge of the desk, casually polishing a lens.

YAMAGUCHI: Hey, Custer...there's a cop in there talkin' to Ryan and Goldstein.

SAMPSON leaps up.

SAMPSON: Later days, dude--

YAMAGUCHI: Hey, man...take it now or take it later...you think your arm is in a sling now, it's going to be your butt before long...Buster's Last Stand, I like the sound of that.

SAMPSON: (slumps back) Yeah, a friend in need--

MORE
FEATURE RYAN'S DOOR. It flies open, and RYAN wheels out.

RYAN: SAMPSON...MacREADY! NOW!

SAMPSON and MacREADY slouch into her office. The door slams, and FUENTES leans against it dramatically, whistling "Taps."

INT: RYAN'S OFFICE
SAMPSON and MacREADY stand before RYAN, GOLDSTEIN, and LT. POLITTI.

RYAN: Lieutenant...these are two of our news reporters, Buster Sampson and Hank MacReady.

SAMPSON: We've met.

POLITTI: So we have.

POLITTI stands up, paces in front of the two reporters.

POLITTI: You know, I was just telling your editors...I really hate TV. You know why? Because every cop show or mystery show has got some fat Italian lieutenant on it who just so happens to look like me. Only the difference is, those fat Italian cops are made out to be stupid, and I'm really pretty bright. I have a degree in criminal justice from Boston College and everything.

SAMPSON: So are you gonna write an autobiography or what?

POLITTI whirls around, standing inches from SAMPSON'S nose.

POLITTI: You don't know how deep you're in it, boy...and you sure don't know enough to keep your mouth shut. So far you've been aiding and abetting a person being sought for questioning, and you have not disclosed the details of those discussions to the proper authorities...your little buddy got mixed up in a suicide which is beginning to look like a murder...and now you've got another dead kid on your hands, thanks to your botching our stake-out.

SAMPSON: (confused) What?

POLITTI: Haven't you heard? Snowden was DOA...and Holzappler never did regain consciousness.

SAMPSON: I don't know no Holzappler.

MacREADY: (quietly) Spike. That was...Reggie Spike.

POLITTI: You've been treating me like I'm stupid. I don't like that. So here's what we're gonna do. (beat) You keep getting messed up in this, you're canned. I see your face, you're canned. If I even hear someone mention your name in passing, you're canned.

MORE
POLITTI: (cont.) I'm not talking just getting thrown off this little rat-ass play newspaper you've got here...I'm talking about burying you in a hole you'll never climb out of, boy. Obstruction of justice, criminal conversion...I've got a million of 'em. (He turns to RYAN and GOLDSTEIN) Thanks for your time. Have a Merry Christmas.

RYAN AND GOLDSTEIN: (murmur) Merry Christmas.

POLITTI goes out, shuts the door; a moment later he opens it again.

POLITTI: Oh, and Buster? If that Poger kid calls you again...call me right away, huh?

POLITTI shuts the door gently.

SAMPSON glares and RYAN and GOLDSTEIN.

SAMPSON: What?

They look stonily back. SAMPSON turns on his heel and exits, MacREADY close behind.

INT: NEWSROOM: NIGHT
SAMPSON and MacREADY are stalking away.

MacREADY: So what're we going to do?

SAMPSON: We? Nuttin. I got a feelin' startin' tomorrow we'll be lucky ta get a Chess Club story. So me, I'm gonna go get drunk.

MacREADY: That's it, huh?

SAMPSON: What else is there?

MacREADY: You know, they called Snowden "Tommy Snow" on the streets...and in the police report, did you notice the list of drugs he had stashed in his trunk?

SAMPSON: So mebbe he killed a broad, and sold dope.

MacREADY: What I'm saying is maybe he thought we were wanting to talk to him about the drugs, and he didn't know about the girl.

SAMPSON: Ehhh. (beat) Okay, so none of it makes any sense...Snowden's still seeing Poger's woman on the side, Spike kills himself after pickin' her up...tell me somethin' around here that does make sense.

SAMPSON walks out the door, leaving MacREADY standing where he was. In a moment, SAMPSON returns.

MORE
SAMPSON: You comin', Tonto?

MacREADY: No...I've got someplace to go.

INT: POGER'S DORMITORY: NIGHT
POGER sneaks down the hall to his room. He fumbles with his keys at the door, then lets himself in.

INT: POGER'S ROOM
The room is dark. Poger's roommate MICKEY is breathing heavily, asleep. POGER tries to move cautiously, but stumbles over something, causing a LOUD CRASH. The light snaps on.

POGER: Hey, Mickey--

MICKEY: Oh my God, it's you. What in hell are you doing here?

POGER: Mickey, I--

MICKEY leaps out of bed in his underwear and grabs for the phone.

MICKEY: I'm callin' the heat, man, unless you blow this place. You got me in enough trouble with the cops already.

POGER: Mickey, no, please--

MICKEY: You're freaked out, man, you fragged Irene.

POGER: I didn't kill her! I DIDN'T KILL HER!

POGER runs out the door. MICKEY picks up a tennis racquet from the floor and runs after him.

INT: DORM HALLWAY
POGER is running for the stairwell.

MICKEY: IT'S POGER! IT'S THE KILLER, EVERYBODY! GET HIM!

Doors begin opening in the hall. MICKEY launches the tennis racquet, and it glances off of POGER'S ankle as the last part of him disappears down the stairs.

EXT: THE ROADKILL: NIGHT
Loud, raucous music is emanating from inside. People are milling about outside.

MacREADY comes through the crowd. He stops near the door--hesitates--enters.

INT: THE ROADKILL
MacREADY carefully threads his way through the violently thrashing crowd, searching.

MORE
MacREADY finally spots DOGGY dancing with CHOO-CHOO, both only half-interested. He touches DOGGY on the shoulder. CHOO-CHOO'S eyes open wide.

CHOO-CHOO: Hank!

DOGGY spins, sees MacREADY. He pauses a moment, surprised, then shoves MacREADY away. Others are shoving and pushing, so this seems innocuous.

MacREADY bounces off the wall and pushes back. DOGGY shoves CHOO-CHOO aside and comes at MacREADY, latching his hands around his throat. MacREADY grabs DOGGY'S arms, and the two go spinning around grimly.

They get near the door. DOGGY slams his fist against the side of MacREADY'S bandaged skull. Pained, MacREADY loses his grip and tumbles back into the crowd.

DOGGY runs out the door.

MacREADY rolls across the floor and to his feet, quickly pursuing. Some PUNKERS who have watched the whole spectacle start clapping.

PUNKER: Great moves, dude!

EXT: THE ROADKILL: NIGHT
DOGGY is running, MacREADY gaining. He finally lunges for it and tackles DOGGY. The two are sprawled on the ground, panting.

DOGGY: Why you hasslin' me, man, you ain't got nothin' on me.

MacREADY: Then why did you run?

DOGGY: What's it to ya, mebbe yer face scared me off.

MacREADY: Okay, then...why were you at Reggie Spike's yesterday?

DOGGY: Yer crazy, man, that was Slab what hit you.

MacREADY. Something was bothering me about that, Billy, and tonight I finally figured out what it was. (beat) Slab has hair, lots of hair. And I saw skin. (beat) I saw you.

DOGGY: Man, yer brains is scrambled. (beat--MacREADY says nothing) So what if it was me, man, what're you gonna do, pin Reggie's suicide on me, he was a slab a ice when I got there.

MacREADY: But why did you go there after you figured out what Choo-Choo told me? Did you think Reggie would narc on you? I don't think so, Billy, he was probably afraid of you...they are all afraid of you here, aren't they, Billy?

DOGGY: Yer jus' askin' fer trouble, man, he was ice when I got there.

MORE
MacREADY: Reggie was scared...he stole a golden opportunity from you, didn't he? And you went after him...and her. You hit her too hard, didn't you, and Reggie ran, did himself in later because he figured he was a goner either way, either by the police or by you--

DOGGY: (laughs hoarsely) And what if that's what happened, man? The only dude what knows nothin' from nothin' is six feet under an' he sure ain't writing no autobiography. What you got, some tape recorder or somethin', I'll just deny it all later so what's the diff? What if I popped her fer runnin' out wit that cheap punk Reggie? What if her head bounced a little hard on th' sidewalk, man? Nothin'! Nothin', man, nothin'!

MacREADY: Maybe nobody can pin Wong's murder on you, Billy...but the police are starting to look awful hard at Reggie Spike's suicide.

DOGGY: So what.

MacREADY: So you're going to have a tough time explaining just what you were doing at Reggie's place when he just so happened to be committing suicide...or why you had Slab take the rap for hitting me. (beat) I may not be able to get you for Irene Wong's murder...but I have you pinned for Reggie Spike's suicide.

DOGGY looks flabbergasted. MacREADY gets to his feet. DOGGY begins to stagger to his feet, reaching for MacREADY.

MacREADY: (defiantly) You can't touch me.

MacREADY turns his back and begins walking away. Suddenly DOGGY whips out a knife and lunges for MacREADY. A SHOT rings out, and DOGGY flops on the pavement, with MacREADY close behind.

SNITCH, SLAB, CHOO-CHOO, and a few others are framed in the alley mouth.

MacREADY looks over his body, then looks up, glad to be alive.

SNITCH slips the gun back into his waistband nonchalantly.

SNITCH: That was real cool, man, 'cept at th' end. Never turn yer back on nobody.

CHOO-CHOO: Oh, Billy...why, why?

DOGGY: Shaddup, lardo, Snitch shot me inna leg...Slab, help me outta here!

SLAB steps forward.

MORE
SLAB: Ferget it, Billy, I'm sick a takin' orders from you! An' I don't want you should call me "Slab" no more...I wanna be called "Puke" instead!

MacREADY gets to his feet.

MacREADY: Puke?

SLAB: Mebbe Puke ain't so good...okay, I wanna be called "Fang" instead. Yeah, that's it, Fang!

DOGgy tries to get to his feet, falls down, tries again desperately.

DOGgy: Shaddup about yer cruddy nickname already an' help me! HELP ME, YA STUPID STIFFS, WHAT ABOUT ALL I DONE FER YOU?

SNITCH: (ignores DOGGY) I think mebbe you should get outta here. This ain't the healthiest place in town no more. (beat) We'll take care a things from here, man.

Dazed, MacREADY tries to find his way out of the alley, and the crowd parts for him and closes back up.

DOGgy: HELP MEEEEEE....

MacREADY walks away.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT: NEWSROOM: MORNING

YAMAGUCHI and FUENTES are looking over the morning paper.

FUENTES: So they're still running Poger's ad.

YAMAGUCHI: Score another one for the almighty dollar.

FUENTES: So do you think this chick's seen the ad? How come she hasn't come forward yet?

YAMAGUCHI: Who knows? So who can figure women anyway?

Enter MacREADY, long-faced.

FUENTES: Hey, great story, Suicide!

YAMAGUCHI: Yeah, way to stick it to the lowlifes.

MacREADY: (listlessly) Thanks.

FUENTES: So how did you clue to all this stuff, man? I mean, the faked suicide and all that--

MORE
MacREADY: Eh. I dunno.

He exits. The other two reporters exchange glances.

INT: RYAN'S OFFICE
RYAN, GOLDSTEIN, and SOMERS are in a meeting. A faint knock comes at the door, and then MacREADY sticks his head in.

MacREADY: Oh, I'm sorry--

RYAN: S'okay, Hank, what do you need?

MacREADY sidles in.

MacREADY: Can we talk?

SOMERS gets up.

SOMERS: That's all I need right now, Mary Alice...I'll get with you again later.

As she leaves, GOLDSTEIN stands.

MacREADY: No, you can stay, Ben.

He sits back as MacREADY also finds a seat.

RYAN: Hell of a story you broke last night, hank, and the cops be damned. You should look a lot happier than this.

MacREADY: I'm quitting.

GOLDSTEIN: What?

RYAN: Hank, I--

MacREADY: This just isn't for me, this kind of stuff. I mean, all the weird accidents, I could live with that...even the nickname. But this...this murder, that's a whole different thing, that's people's lives. (beat) I really didn't get involved in the paper to be a journalist, actually...my major's really English. I thought if I was a reporter for a while, then I'd be a better writer. You see, I want to write short stories, that kind of thing. I want to do what Hemmingway and all those guys did, you know, they all started out as newspaper reporters for while. I've got this one story I'm working on now, it's about a family doctor who's real obsessed with how his office looks. He's got to have the most up-to-date and very newest magazines on the coffeetable in his waiting room, I mean today's paper, this week's Time, all that. Anyway, while he's dealing with all that, his patients are dying off all around him, without him paying any attention.

MORE
GOLDSTEIN: Well, gee Hank, I mean, if they're *that* sick, they'd probably be at a hospital instead of a family doctor, wouldn't they?

RYAN elbows him sharply, but MacREADY doesn't notice.

MacREADY: Well, I guess what I'm trying to do with it is make this statement about hypocrisy and pretention and that stuff. I guess maybe it needs some work. That's one good thing, I'll have more time to devote to my writing.

RYAN: (fumbles a little) What do you mean, Hank, that story idea sounded... great! Yeah, great!

MacREADY: (quietly) I just didn't know it was going to be like this, is all.

GOLDSTEIN: Hank...what you did last night, that was something good, that was something important. You took a creep off the streets.

MacREADY: The only thing is, Ben...the more I think about it, the more I put the pieces together now that it's all over...the more I think Billy Doggy didn't kill Wong.

RYAN: Then how do you explain last night?

MacREADY: Maybe Doggy believes he did, but some things don't add up. Like, for instance, Doggy said to me her head bounced on the sidewalk, but the police report said she was hit with something. Those kinds of things...

RYAN: So you're just going to quit?

MacREADY: Well...

RYAN: I've got an idea. Why don't you just take the day off, skip your classes, and think things out--

MacREADY: I'm tired of thinking things out!

GOLDSTEIN: It's really the best thing.

MacREADY: I've already cleaned out my desk. (beat) Sorry it's such short notice.

MacREADY stands, pauses--then turns and leaves quickly. RYAN and GOLDSTEIN sit a moment.

GOLDSTEIN: Well, well.

RYAN: He'll come back. The best always quit at least a few times.

MORE
INT: NEWSROOM
MacREADY passes FUENTES and YAMAGUCHI, talking, then pauses at the door
to the newsroom. He takes a deep breath, exhales. He turns--and runs
smack into SAMPSON.

MacREADY: Sorry, Buster.

SAMPSON: Don't sweat it, kid.

MacREADY exits. SAMPSON comes in.

FUENTES: Hey, man, did you catch MacReady's story this morning? Great
stuff.

SAMPSON: Eh, okay for a second-stringer.

The PHONE RINGS on the news desk.

YAMAGUCHI: I love a good sport.

SAMPSON snatches up the phone.

SAMPSON: Bulletin news desk.

INT: PHONE BOOTH
POGER clutches the receiver frantically.

POGER: Buster? Buster, is that you?

INT: NEWSROOM
SAMPSON on phone.

SAMPSON: Look, Poger, I'm sorry, I gotta turn ya over ta somebody else,
this ain't my story no more--

INT: PHONE BOOTH
POGER on phone.

POGER: NO! (beat) You've been the only one who's tried to help me,
you've been my only friend, Buster, oh my God, they're trying
to kill me, I was afraid to go to Irene's funeral, I'm running
out of places to hide--

INT: NEWSROOM
SAMPSON on phone.

SAMPSON: (shouts) Cut the crapola, Poger! (beat) Look, man, this line
you been feedin' me has got my butt on the line! I ain't Dear
Abby, Poger, so if ya ain't got nuttin' for me then LEAVE ME
THE HELL ALONE!

MORE
SILENCE.

POGER: (on phone) Buster?

SAMPSON: (tiredly) What.

POGER: (on phone) Can I ask you just one thing?

SAMPSON: What.

POGER: (on phone) Do you write your own headlines for your stories, or what?

SAMPSON: No, we've got copy editors do that. I just write the story.

POGER: (on phone) Well, don't you think maybe the headlines about this whole thing have been...well...maybe a little lurid?

SAMPSON: Huh?

POGER: (on phone) I mean, I just wonder what Mr. and Mrs. Wong would think if they saw that three-inch "Co-Ed Murdered In Dorm Alley Death" headline.

SAMPSON: Screw it, it's news.

POGER: (on phone) Well I just don't think--

SAMPSON: (groans) Aw geez--

He slams the phone down and cradles his head in his hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MacREADY'S DORM ROOM: EVENING
MacREADY and his roommate TODD are studying at their respective desks. TODD'S half of the room is decorated with space paraphernalia and posters, while MacREADY'S side is tidy.

TODD: Isosceles Triangle? Isosceles Triangle? Who the hell knows about that, I'm a business major! Sounds like some New Wave band to me.

TODD glances over at MacREADY, who is wearing headphones. TODD tosses a paperwad at him, and he takes off the headphones.

TODD: Do you know what an Isosceles Triangle is?

MacREADY: I don't know...I'm an English major.

TODD: Ah, hell! And everybody said General Math was a blow-off! Ah hell!

KNOCK AT DOOR. TODD goes to answer it. He swings the door open.

MORE
TODD: Do you know what an--

Standing in the doorway is BILLY DOGGY. TODD quickly turns to MacREADY.

TODD: Hank, I've got to go to the bathroom. See ya.

He ducks out at DOGGY slowly limps in and shuts the door softly behind him. MacREADY jumps up, grabs an umbrella from a peg on the wall, and holds it outstretched menacingly. DOGGY looks around the room with interest.

DOGGY: Who you roomin' wit', Neil Armstrong?

MacREADY: He likes the space program, that's all. See that silver blanket there on the bed? The astronauts sleep under the same thing.

DOGGY: Drinks Tang an' the whole bit, huh. (beat) Well, enough a small talk. You prob'ly wonderin', did he bust outta jail an' come ta kill me or what?

MacREADY: (whispers) It crossed my mind.

DOGGY: Well here's th' good news. Fer one, thing, I ain't on th' lam. I made bail a hour ago.

MacREADY: They let you out?

DOGGY: Ain't democracy grand? They got nuttin ta hold me on anyway. I done took their lie detector tests, their stress tests, the SATs, all that stuff, an' it turned up nuttin'. Sure, I smacked her a little, but I dint club her wit no two-by, that's fer sure. An' I got ten people will say I was at The Roadkill at the 'zact moment Wong got boxed. An' you know I don't got a fan club there no more.

MacREADY: About that--

DOGGY: I ain't got a beef 'bout what went down last night. Snitch an' them guys, if they hadn't ratted on me then, they woulda got me on dopin' or somethin' else. A murder bust is a tougher rap than drugs, but hey, my folks got me a kick-ass lawyer. I'm already enough of a embarrassment already, they don't wanna have ta hear about their kid th' jailbird on top a everythin' else from their friends at the country club.

MacREADY: If it means anything...I think it was somebody else.

DOGGY: Nah, that don't mean jack ta me...'specially since I saw th' guy what did it.

MacREADY drops the umbrella.

MORE
MacREADY: What?

DOGGY: Lemme get one thing straight right here. My lawyer, he tole me I make one mistake an' I might as well start practicin' breakin' big rocks inta little ones. So's if it was up ta me, I'd prob'ly break both yer legs.

MacREADY snatches up the umbrella again.

MacREADY: But I thought you said--

DOGGY: That's right, I ain't mad atcha. If Ida been mad, Ida shot ya. But that don't matter now. All's I'm sayin' is just' cause I'm tellin' ya this don't mean I found God or nuttin'. (beat) When I was leavin' that chick onna sidewalk, I seen a guy walkin' up. I figgered, what the hell, let him help her or knock her up, I had had enough a her an' Reggie both that night.

MacREADY: Did yo get a good look at him? What did he look like?

DOGGY: I never fergit a face. He had a long white beard, was kinda chubby, had on dis red suit--

MacREADY: Aw c'mon, man! You're talking about Santa Claus!

DOGGY: Hey, you should be a cop. They caught on 'bout as fast.

MacREADY: A guy dressed up like Santa Claus? Why would a guy be walking around dressed as Santa Claus? If he wanted to be inconspicuous--

DOGGY: Hey, you think I'm makin' this up? If I was makin' this up, I'd say he looked like you. Think of it like dis, man--it's so stupid it's gotta be true.

MacREADY: But why Santa Claus, of all people?

DOGGY: Hey, 'tis the season. Ya got me on dat one. But I figger you was smart enough ta clue ta my scene, yer smart enough to get th' goods on Santa an' get me off th' hook.

DOGGY looks at MacREADY a moment, but he is lost in thought. DOGGY shakes his head and lets himself out.

MacREADY: Santa Claus?

INT: BUSY NEWSROOM: MORNING

SAMPLE, YAMAGUCHI, BATTAGLIA, and FUENTES are playing cards at a desk. YAMAGUCHI is dealing.

YAMAGUCHI: Okay, boys, red aces, one-eyed jacks, and follow the dirty queen...
BATTAGLIA: Hey, Buster, you seen they're still runnin' Pogers personals ad about the engaged girl?

SAMPSON: Not my business any more.

BATTAGLIA: All I'm sayin' is, how come she hasn't come forward, give this dude a alibi, save his butt?

SAMPSON: Who knows? (beat) I'm standin'.

BATTAGLIA: Gimme two. (beat) So what I mean is, mebbe there ain't no girl.

FUENTES: What?

YAMAGUCHI: Oh, there's a girl, alright. Dealer takes two. Just because the rest of Poger's story went down the tubes doesn't mean he didn't get part of it right. I think there's a girl. I just think she's embarrassed.

FUENTES: Embarrassed?

YAMAGUCHI: I mean, this girl told Poger she was unhappy about being engaged, right, so now she's embarrassed because that little tidbit came out in Buster's story, and figures if she comes forward the jig's up with her and her fiance.

SAMPSON: Aw, c'mon, Sam. Raise ya a nickel.

YAMAGUCHI: Women will be women, man, that's all I'm saying, and there's no changing that, no matter if a dude's life is at stake or what. They've got their pride first.

FUENTES: She just hasn't seen the ad yet!

YAMAGUCHI: Yeah, right. (beat) I'm out.

FUENTES: She just wouldn't do that to some guy! Nobody would!

YAMAGUCHI: You haven't dated much, have you, Chico? A buck says she does.

FUENTES: A buck! We're talking about human nature here! The human condition! I just can't go betting a buck on whether or not some woman will allow this man to die! This is more than just an impartial discussion between observers in the game of life and death, this is more than--

YAMAGUCHI: Okay, five bucks.

FUENTES: Okay.

Enter MacREADY.

MORE
MacREADY: Buster? Got a minute?

SAMPSON: Suicide? Dint you quit last night?

MacREADY: I changed my mind.

SAMPSON: This oughta be good. Deal me out, gents.

FEATURE SAMPSON and MacREADY.

SAMPSON: So what brought you out a semi-retirement?

MacREADY: Billy Doggy came to see me last night.

SAMPSON: And yer still breathin'?

MacREADY: He gave me a tip. He said the guy who killed Irene Wong was dressed up like Santa Claus.

SAMPSON: (laughs) Don't be a idiot, Suicide, that dude was razzin' you.

MacREADY: But why?

SAMPSON: Mebbe he wants ta torment ya before he kills ya, I dunno.

MacREADY: But why would he say Santa? Why not say me, or you? (beat) I called all the shopping centers in town, I've got a list of everyone who's playing Santa for them this season...there's twenty-seven of them. Nine are students right here on this campus.

SAMPSON: Mebbe ya missed somethin', Suicide, but you an' me are off this story, man. This kinda crap can get us in trouble wit th' heat, too.

MacREADY: So what if we go interview nine people. Nine people for a feature story on playing Santa.

SAMPSON: (thoughtfully) You really got a feeling about this, don't you?

MacREADY: You're putting on a big show, Buster, but I know you don't want to let this story go, either. Maybe not for the same reasons, but--

SAMPSON: I guess I got the time. Ryan and Goldstein know yer back yet?

MacREADY: Just checked in.

SAMPSON: Then let's hit th' streets.

They move, then MacREADY halts.

MORE
MacREADY: What about getting in touch with Poger? Let him know we may finally have some hope.

SAMPSON: (beat) Nah, screw 'im.

EXT: ROOF OF TALL BUILDING: AFTERNOON
POGER is standing on the edge looking out over the campus. The wind whips around him. He turns his back to the edge; tears are rolling down his face.
POGER spreads his arms and falls backwards. Far below, SCREAMS are faintly heard.

EXT: DORM ALLEY: NIGHT
Ambulances, policemen, reporters, and spectators are all around.

POLITTI is talking to a small group of men. He glances up, does a double-take, and moves away from them.

POLITTI approaches SAMPSON, who is at the fringes of the crowd.

POLITTI: Go.

SAMPSON: Go? I'm just rubbernecking like everybody else.

POLITTI: Go or I'll have your ass canned.

SAMPSON: I'm sorry, lieutenant, I thought yer first warning only applied ta th' Poger case, an' I figgered that ended when he did that bellyflop this afternoon. I dint think that had anything ta do wit this chick gettin' strangled. This isn't still part a th' same case, is it?

POLITTI: You know better. Now clear out.

SAMPSON: Poger takes a swan dive, an' a coupla hours later another broad gets slabbed. Funny.

POLITTI: Funny.

SAMPSON: Been a helluva day for news.

SAMPSON saunters off.

EXT: SAMPSON'S HOUSE: NIGHT
NATALIE is sitting on the porch steps waiting as SAMPSON pulls up.

NATALIE: Where have you been, Buster? I drove all the way down here from Western to see you, and you're not even here!

SAMPSON: I been on another hot story, babe. Remember that broad got herself slabbed Saturday night?

MORE
NATALIE: No. But remind me of it inside, okay? I'm freezing.

INT: SAMPSON'S HOUSE: NIGHT
SAMPSON is sprawled on the couch. NATALIE is seen through a doorway into the kitchen, doing dishes.

NATALIE: This is totally disgusting. And this has only piled up since last weekend. Don't you or that roomie of yours ever do dishes?

SAMPSON: Hey, my arm's in this sling, babe. Besides, you come down here every coupla days an' do 'em for us. (beat) So like I was sayin', this Poger kid looked like a House a Pancakes reject, you know what I mean? Jeez, what a mess. And if that one broad woulda come forward, he woulda been clean as a whistle.

NATALIE: What girl was that, Buster?

SAMPSON: (impatiently) C'mon, Nat, you're not listening again. This engaged woman he met at the Christmas benefit here while his girlfriend was gettin' iced. Funny thing is, if he woulda waited a coupla hours--

NATALIE: This was last weekend?

SAMPSON: Yeah, same night I was bustin' my butt on that budget series for Goldstein, then had ta got cover th' murder an' was out half th' night.

NATALIE: Buster.

SAMPSON: Hey, babe, I'm sorry I left you high and dry like that, it was just one a those nights, you know. But it's like I keep sayin', if you'd transfer down here from Western, we wouldn't have ta be wearin' down a path back an' forth.

NATALIE: Buster.

SAMPSON: I know, they don't got the nursing program here you want, or whatever. But I'm just sayin', you know. (beat) Man, I'll just never get over it. The Samurai had it pegged. He said the chick would be too embarrassed to come forward. Bet Chico Fuentes five bucks on it. And I guess he won it. Some broads, they won't even swallow their pride ta save a guy's butt.

FEATURE NATALIE, wide-eyed.

NATALIE: (beat; whispers) Yeah...some broads.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT: SLEAZY BAR: NIGHT

MORE
SAMPSON is hunched over a barstool, alone and very drunk.

SAMPSON: (mumbling) I dunno 'bout nothin'...nothin' no more...

YAMAGUCHI strolls by with a girl on his arm. He does a double-take when he sees SAMPSON.

YAMAGUCHI: Buster? What are you doing here, man, I thought Nat was coming down tonight.

SAMPSON: She came, she saw, she went.

YAMAGUCHI: Aw, man. (to girl) Go on, hon, I'll catch up to you in a minute.

She exits; YAMAGUCHI plops down.

YAMAGUCHI: Did she get on you about having "Whole Lotta Love" played at the wedding again?

SAMPSON: Nah, worse, man, a million hundred billion times worse...I'm talkin' 'bout the apocalypse, man, I'm talkin' the end a th' line it's over.

YAMAGUCHI: Over? Man, what did you do?

SAMPSON: Nothin', man, that's th' whole thing. One minute we was talkin', the next she was slappin' the ring back in my hand. And we wasn't even talkin' 'bout us, we were talkin' shop, that's the whole thing, man.

YAMAGUCHI: You see, man, that's exactly why I have this continuing series of one-night stands. You just can't trust women.

SAMPSON: Ahh, it's not just Natalie, man, it's th' world. You know that story inna Bible, 'bout that one dude God got pissed off at, an' all that stuff kept happenin' to him 'cause a some bet wit th' devil--

YAMAGUCHI: What's that noise, man, you talking about Job?

SAMPSON: Yeah, that's m'man, Job. So this dude--

YAMAGUCHI: Man, you've got the story all screwed up. God wasn't pissed off at Job, he loved the man. What it was, see--

SAMPSON: Man, this ain't Bible Lit 101. I'm jus' tryin' ta tell a story, see, 'bout how one day, alla sudden, the whole world turns on this one dude. Alla sudden, this dude's life goes down th' tubes. Alla sudden--
YAMAGUCHI: Sampson, do you think the whole world revolves around you, man? You think Wong and Snowden and Holzapple and Poger been having such a good time lately? And what about the one that just bought it tonight? It's not just you, man, it's this whole campus. No, it's the whole world. Everything's going down the tubes.

SAMPSON: Why, Samurai, why? You was right about Poger, tell me why this whole thing is happenin'?

YAMAGUCHI: (softly) I dunno, man. I just don't know. (beat) C'mon, man, let's get you home.

SAMPSON: Naw, man, what about yer chick?

YAMAGUCHI: Forget it, man, come on. We better stick together...everybody better stick together.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT: SAMPSON'S HOUSE: MORNING
A car has been driven through the front of the house. The living room couch is broken. Debris and rubble blanket the scene. SAMPSON is throwing golf clubs, a VCR, and the like in a growing pile in front of the bumper. He has a painful hangover.

MacREADY pokes his head through the hole where the front door used to be. He looks around, stunned.

MacREADY: Oh my God, Buster, what happened?

SAMPSON: Nothin', man, I just drove through the front of th' house is all. Don't sweat it, I think insurance got it covered. In fact, I might come outta this deal good. You wouldn't believe what I ran over...my old golf clubs...my stereo speakers...my old VCR...

MacREADY: Where's Natalie?

SAMPSON: Who knows? Probably in th' sack wit some football stud from Western by now. Too bad she wasn't sleepin' on th' couch.

MacREADY: You two have a falling out?

SAMPSON: Do nuclear bombs fall out?

MacREADY: In what sense?

SAMPSON: Skip it, man. What are you doing here, anyway?

MacREADY: I thought we were going to finish those Santa interviews today.

MORE
SAMPSON: Ah, Suicide, I been thinkin' 'bout those...what I mean is, who did we talk to yesterday? We talked to that Black kid, and it couldn't a been him 'cause Doggy woulda said, hey, Santa was Black. And then there was that dude in th' wheel­chair, but it couldn't be him, or else Doggy woulda said, Santa was in a wheelchair. And the last person we talked to was a broad, an' it wasn't her, 'cause--

MacREADY: It might have been a woman! Under the beard and hat, who knows? We can't discount her.

SAMPSON: See, that's what I'm sayin', man. This dude isn't gonna come to the door wit a bloody axe in his hand. How are we supposed ta know who is who? (beat) It wasn't a bad idea, kid, it just... wasn't a good one, is all.

MacREADY: You're just saying that now because you're hung over!

SAMPSON: Aw quit poutin', man, that's not it at all. They got this other chick got killed ta worry about--

MacREADY: Caitlin Whitehall.

SAMPSON: Whoever. Hell, I ain't even seen th' paper yet this mornin'. (beat) Wong is yesterday's news. They'll prob'ly pin th' rap on Poger and get on wit this new one.

MacREADY: You can't say you don't think the two are connected!

SAMPSON: Ah hell, I dunno. Maybe. But this Santa gig is totally bogus, man.

MacREADY: I'll bet you the Santa connection links up with the Whitehall murder too. Why would Doggy lie like that?

SAMPSON: Hell, he'd kill ya, why not lie to ya? These two murders look like two totally different pieces a work. But there's no way either of us will know either way, 'cause we're still on th' shit list at th' newsroom. Neither of us will be able ta touch that story.

MacREADY: If I can prove it to you, will you stay on this Santa thing with me?

SAMPSON: Prove it how?

MacREADY: Let's get a look at the police report.

INT: BUSY NEWSROOM
FEATURE JACKSON swiveling around in her chair.

MORE
JACKSON: The hell you will!

FEATURE SAMPSON and MacREADY looming over JACKSON.

SAMPSON: Aw c'mon, Ritz, we don't mean nothin' by it. We just got a bet on somethin', that's all.

JACKSON: A bet? You made a bet on this? (beat) Buster...you represent absolutely everything I despise in journalism. You're sexist, bigoted, a functioning illiterate, and a dysfunctional alcoholic, and I have no idea how you got on this paper, much less how you stay in school.

SAMPSON: I sleep wit th' editor.

JACKSON: I don't doubt it. I don't doubt it one bit.

JACKSON slides a sheet of paper over to MacREADY. He picks it up carefully.

SAMPSON: What's this?

JACKSON: That's for Hank, not you. He's got something on the ball, although not too awful much if he's hanging out with you.

MacREADY: (scanning page) He's right, Mimi...it's just for a bet.

JACKSON: Bet, my ass. But I want to be in on whatever you find, Hank. If Ben finds out I gave you that report, I'll be knee deep in--

MacREADY: Her boyfriend was a witness!

JACKSON: What? Oh, right. But that's a dead end. He's left school. Went back to the farm, or whatever.

MacREADY: It doesn't say what happened with this guy. What he saw or thought he saw--

JACKSON: The police didn't release that information.

SAMPSON: Hey, Ritz, did it ever occur to ya ta mebbe call his folks' house?

JACKSON: Yes, Buster, that dim light did go on somewhere in the dark recesses of my brain. But their phone's been disconnected.

SAMPSON: So that's it, huh?

JACKSON: What else can I do? Drive out there?

EXT: WELL-KEPT HOUSE IN SUBURBS: AFTERNOON
SAMPSON and MacREADY coast to a stop in a car.

MORE
MacREADY nudes SAMPSON awake.

MacREADY: This is the place.

SAMPSON: Eh. Quaint, ain't it?

EXT: FRONT PORCH OF HOUSE
SAMPSON knocks. The door is eventually answered by a smiling older woman.

SAMPSON: Good afternoon, ma'am. We're a couple of Phil's friends from college, and he left in such a hurry, why, he left his favorite pair of gym socks. (He gestures with them) So we decided to take some time out and bring them to him.

MOM: I'm sorry, Phil's not seeing anyone right now.

SAMPSON: Okay, well if we could just lay them on his dresser or something--

MOM: (beat) Well, as long as you came all this way...just a minute.

As she exits, SAMPSON and MacREADY exchange glances. SAMPSON shakes his head. A moment later PHIL enters, stops cold. He appears nervous.

PHIL: Who are you guys?

SAMPSON: A coupla curious people is all. Just wanna ask you a few questions.

PHIL: Screw you, pal--

PHIL turns to shut the door. SAMPSON yanks him through the door, shuts it behind him, slams PHIL against it.

MacREADY: Buster, jeez--

SAMPSON: How come you dint finish out th' semester, MacSwain?

PHIL: I was failing anyway--

SAMPSON: Cut th' crap! What did you see the night your woman died?

PHIL: Nothin'! I swear, I saw nothin'!

SAMPSON slaps his face.

SAMPSON: Cut it out!

PHIL: Mommomm....

SAMPSON: I'll break yer nose before she gets here.
PHIL: (beat) It wasn't you, was it? I can see that now. I thought you came to kill me.

SAMPSON: That's still a option.

PHIL: Who are--

SAMPSON: I'm askin' th' questions. You answer me.

PHIL: (beat) This guy...this guy, he was dressed up like...like Santa Claus, you know? He came up, I thought he was collecting or something, only...only, he had this knife...

SAMPSON: Where'd he come from?

PHIL: I don't know...from nowhere...

SAMPSON: From behind a building?

PHIL: Nowhere! I don't know!

SAMPSON: (beat) Why'd you run, man?

PHIL: (almost sobbing) His...his eyes, I...I saw his eyes...

SAMPSON pushes PHIL to the ground.

SAMPSON: (disgusted) You stinkin' coward.

SAMPSON turns his back on PHIL and walks off the porch, leaving PHIL crying brokenly. MacREADY follows after a moment.

INT: CAR ON HIGHWAY
SAMPSON is now driving, MacREADY the passenger.

MacREADY: Buster...about what happened back there...

SAMPSON: Ferget it, man, he don't know us from Adam.

MacREADY: Not that, I mean--

SAMPSON: Don't you think I know what happened back there? It's just this whole thing, it's eatin' my guts, it's--

MacREADY: But that doesn't justify--

SAMPSON: You wanted ta go out there, man. It was your idea.

MacREADY: Buster...maybe it's just not worth it.

SAMPSON slams on the brakes. The car screeches to a halt in the middle of the highway.

MORE
The car behind lays on its horn, swerves around, keeps going.

SAMPSON jumps out of the car.

SAMPSON: Don'tcha see, man! Nothin's worth shit, Hank! (He pounds on the hood of the car) NOTHIN'S WORTH SHIT!

Another car swerves to miss them. MacREADY jumps out and comes to the other side.

MacREADY: Hey, Buster, let me drive home, okay? Okay, Buster?

SAMPSON trudges around and slumps in the passenger seat; MacREADY hurriedly takes the wheel. They start off again.

INT: MacREADY'S DORM ROOM: NIGHT
MacREADY is walking down the hall to his room. TODD quickly passes him, going in the other direction.

MacREADY: Hey, Todd, where are you going? Todd?

TODD disappears down the hall without a look back. MacREADY cautiously approaches his room, pushes the door open.

POLITTI is stretched out in a chair.

POLITTI: Know anybody named Phil MacSwain?

MacREADY: Who?

POLITTI: Kid just dropped out of school, moved back home, about sixty miles from here.

MacREADY: Sorry.

POLITTI: Sorry. (beat) Some friends of his paid him a visit today, brought him some sweat socks he left behind. Only thing was, they weren't his socks. I'm just trying to get them back to their rightful owner.

MacREADY: Well, I'm not missing any gym socks. Thanks anyway.

POLITTI: Okay, then. (He struggles to his feet) Say, MacReady, I hear you're pretty bright, let me ask you a question. Do you know what the connection is between Irene Wong and Caitlin Whitehall?

MacREADY: Gee, I don't know. I only know what I read in the papers.

POLITTI: Just take a guess.

MORE
MacREADY: I'm not sure. They were both women...they lived in dorms across the Quad from each other...uh...

POLITTI: Whitehall was in a sorority...Wong was not. Whitehall was a rich kid from Philly...Wong was from here in town. Whitehall was a poly sci major...Wong an art major. They never met, that we know of. In other words, MacReady...they had no connection, except biology...and being out on cold, dark nights.

MacREADY: Two separate murders, then.

POLITTI: If you saw MacSwain today, you know better. But you don't see the rest of the picture, do you? Unless we can figure out a connection, we just don't have an ordinary murderer here...we've got a psychotic killer. In the fifteen years I've been in this town, we've averaged maybe two murders a month, tops. Now, in one week, I've got two kids dead, and three more in the morgue related to it all somehow. You know what that is, MacReady, that's goddamn scary. We could have another dead girl tomorrow, or maybe a dead guy tomorrow...or we might not have another one for a month...or maybe never again. And he's used a different m.o. each time now. See, that's the way it is with the psychos, you just never know. (He licks his lips) When I came here from New York, I figured to put it all behind me...write up some DUIs, bust some college kids with pot, stop the occasional husband from beating up his wife...stuff you can file away in a nice, clean manilla folder.

MacREADY: Put all what behind you?

POLITTI: Huh? (beat) You're pretty fast, MacReady, for a college boy. (beat) The Bronx, kid. Fill in the rest.

POLITTI heads to the door.

POLITTI: I don't know exactly what went down today...except that you and your buddy are in over your heads. You pass this along, because if I go round and round with your chum again I'm liable to use some police brutality. This isn't the Hardy Boys anymore. Whoever this is, he--or she--could kill anyone next...your girlfriend...maybe even you. (He opens the door; looks back) One more thing about me...I don't talk tough just to stay in practice.

POLITTI closes the door softly.

INT: SAMPSON'S WRECKED HOUSE: MORNING
MacREADY picks his way through the rubble, CHOO-CHOO and RATSO in tow. SAMPSON is slumped in a chair with a bottle.

MORE
MacREADY: Buster? Are you okay?

SAMPSON: Yeah, why?

MacREADY: Isn't it a little early to start drinking?

SAMPSON: Start? I ain't stopped from last night yet. Hey, Suicide, do I got th' d.t.'s or are those real people standin' behind you?

MacREADY: This is Choo-Choo, the girl I was telling you about--and her friend Ratso.

SAMPSON: So you normally look like that, huh?

CHOO-CHOO: Watch yer stinkin' mouth, wiseass, I dint come here ta tell you nuttin. It was all Hank's idea.

MacREADY: (low) Cool it, Buster.

SAMPSON: Okay, okay, what's th' big news, the Sex Pistols gettin' back together?

CHOO-CHOO: Say it again, Ratso. Only say it slow fer Hank's friend here.

RATSO: Okay, so we all been hearin' 'bout this rumor that the dude what slabbed the Wong kid looked like Santa. What it is, though, is where could a dude like that run off to after he done the deed?

SAMPSON: (more alert) Uh-huh.

RATSO: A lotta people don't know this, but underneath the Quad, there's these maintenance tunnels, storage areas, what connects all four a those dorms. They was built forty, fifty years ago, so they're kinda outdated, they don't got much use for 'em anymore--except to th' occaisional lovers--

SAMPSON: And a bright-eyed kid called Ratso.

MacREADY: And maybe a killer. (beat) Three of our Santas live in the men's side of the Quad.

SAMPSON: And our two victims lived in th' women's side.

CHOO-CHOO: Sex Pistols, my fat ass.

INT: DINGY BAR: AFTERNOON
MacREADY is eating a sandwich. SAMPSON is drinking from a pitcher of beer.

SAMPSON: So where'd ya dig up that sweetheart?

MORE
MacREADY: She's nice, really.

SAMPSON: Yeah, Medusa had a good personality too. But ya couldn't stand ta look at her, either.

MacREADY: So we ditched them and came here so you could put them down?

SAMPSON: Look, ferget I said that, okay. I really brought you here to talk about something serious.

MacREADY: Uh-huh.

SAMPSON: I was up all night last night again, you know, and I started ta watch this clunky old movie--

MacREADY: Come on!

SAMPSON: No, hear me out, man. I don't remember 'zactly what the plot was, 'cept it was in black and white, an' that one dude was in it...anyway, what it was is this cop called this dude on th' phone and says, I saw you kill yer old lady, or whatever, and so the dude breaks down and confesses.

MacREADY: Now run that by me again.

SAMPSON: These three guys...we stick a note on their doors, it says, "I saw you." That's it. And we're hangin' around, an' if th' dude freaks out--

MacREADY: That crosses the line, Buster.

SAMPSON: (takes a deep swig) What line.

MacREADY: I taked to Lieutenant Politti today.

SAMPSON: So you're out, then.

MacREADY: No...just in deeper. I just wanted...I just wanted us to get a perspective on it, is all.

SAMPSON: Don't worry about that, Suicide, we got a perspective on it...oh yes.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT: MEN'S DORM: MORNING

YAMAGUCHI and SAMPSON are lounging around in a laundry room across from DEREK'S room. They can see his door, and the note taped on it.

YAMAGUCHI: Man, how many times do I have to rinse out your jockey shorts?

MORE
SAMPSON: Calm down, Samurai, the man can't sleep all day.

YAMAGUCHI: Hey, Buster--

SAMPSON: Uh-huh.

YAMAGUCHI: Ever thought about what we'll do if we catch the guy?

DEREK'S door swings open.

SAMPSON: Cool it, man.

The two reporters watch out of the corners of their eyes as a sleepy, tousled DEREK emerges, wearing a t-shirt and shorts and scratching himself. He notices the note; pulls it loose.

Suddenly DEREK spins around, races inside the room, slams the door.

SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI exchange glances.

DEREK emerges a moment later, wearing jeans and pulling on a heavy coat. He looks both ways quickly, nervously; then charges down the hall.

SAMPSON: Let's hoof it!

EXT: QUAD: MORNING
DEREK races out the front of his dorm, sprints across the yard. A moment later, SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI appear and follow.

EXT: CAMPUS: MORNING
DEREK is running towards a group of buildings. YAMAGUCHI and SAMPSON stumble after him a moment later.

SAMPSON flops down on the steps of the nearest building.

SAMPSON: (wheezing) Go on ahead, Sam, I'm just gonna sit here a second, watch th' sun rise, an' puke my guts out.

YAMAGUCHI: Man, I'm not going to make no citizen's arrest on my own!

SAMPSON: What's this noise you're talkin', man, just watch him!

YAMAGUCHI: Just kidding.

SAMPSON: Split, man, he just went inta th' History Building. I'll catch up.

YAMAGUCHI races off.

INT: HISTORY BUILDING: MORNING
DEREK runs down a dark hallway, his footsteps echoing loudly. He turns a corner and disappears.

MORE
YAMAGUCHI appears at the top of the stairs and looks around. He sees a light on in an office at the end of the hall. He advances slowly.

The letters on the office door's frosted glass read: DR. HELEN DE GRAZIA, MEDEVIAL STUDIES.

YAMAGUCHI sidles up to the door.

DEREK: --thank God you were working today, Helen. I didn't want to have to call you at your house, especially not now.

HELEN: What on earth is wrong, Derek? It looks like you ran all the way over here from the Quad!

DEREK: I did, Helen, I had to tell you--he knows.

SAMPSON clomps up, panting. YAMAGUCHI shushes him.

HELEN: Edward knows? What did he say to you?

DEREK: He didn't have the guts to say anything. He just left a note on my door this morning.

HELEN: How could my husband know? We've been so careful--

DEREK: Well, he knows somehow, goddammit.

HELEN: It's over, then. I'll have to quit my job here, lose my tenure... I'll be disgraced--

DEREK: You'll be disgraced? What'll happen when my frat brothers find out I was sleeping with some forty-year-old prof! All for an A in your stupid boring class!

HELEN: You've only been doing B work, darling.

DEREK: You old bag! You ruined my life!

SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI glance at each other, shake their heads. They begin tiptoeing away. YAMAGUCHI touches SAMPSON'S shoulder.

YAMAGUCHI: Hey, man, do you think we should--

They exchange glances again.

SAMPSON AND YAMAGUCHI: Nahhh.

They exit.

INT: DORM: MORNING

MacREADY is casually standing at the end of the hall, drinking a diet soda.

MORE
He finishes it, and tosses it into a wire trashbasket nearby. It is brimming with diet soda cans.

MacREADY signs and puts more change in the machine.

A door down the hallway opens. MacREADY starts to spin around quickly, checks himself; turns around more nonchalantly.

PICKETT curiously pulls the note off his door. He unfolds it, reads it. He laughs a little, shakes his head, and tosses the paper to the floor. He goes back in and shuts the door.

MacREADY visibly relaxes. He burps, then looks at the soda with distaste. He throws the almost-full can away.

INT: DORM: MORNING
SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI are taking turns drinking from a water fountain.

SAMPSON: You know, that cop told Suicide Hank he figgered this dude was a mass murderer, some sorta psycho. Can you dig it?

YAMAGUCHI: Man, that would be something else. There'd be Pulitzer's for everybody. It's really too bad, though.

SAMPSON: Yeah. He really hasn't wasted enough people to be called a mass murderer.

YAMAGUCHI: Give him a break, man, he's averaging two a week.

SAMPSON: That's not bad. But then there's burnout.

YAMAGUCHI: Straight on, man. (beat) Hey, heads up.

STEVE is standing outside his door, looking curiously at the note. After a moment he storms down the hall past YAMAGUCHI and SAMPSON and pounds on another door.

STEVE: Alright, Gary, I borrowed your speakers! If you wanted 'em back so bad why didn't you just ask?

GARY flings the door open.

GARY: I don't know what brought this on, but while we're on the subject, how 'bout 'em?

STEVE: What about my tennis racquet then?

GARY: Okay, wait right here.

GARY disappears inside, and comes back out in a moment with STEVE'S tennis racquet. He breaks it over his knee.
STEVE: Bastard!

STEVE rushes to his room, and quickly comes out with a speaker under each arm. He flings them against the wall, and they both break.

YAMAGUCHI: (low voice, to SAMPSON) Five bucks says the big guy wastes the little guy.

SAMPSON: (low voice) Are you kiddin'? The little guy's too fast for 'im.

YAMAGUCHI: You're on.

GARY: You little runty--

GARY floors STEVE with one punch. STEVE flops on the ground. GARY then turns to glare at SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI. They quickly step to the side of the drinking fountain.

YAMAGUCHI: Have a drink? Water? Drink? No? Okay, then, well, we'll be going--

The pair hurry down the hall.

INT: DORM: MORNING

YAMAGUCHI and SAMPSON round a corner, then slow down and walk more casually.

YAMAGUCHI: So how do you figure Suicide's doing?

SAMPSON: Him? Crappy, just like us. Ah, it was a bum idea anyway.

INT: DORM: MORNING

MacREADY walks past PICKETT'S door dejectedly. He doubles back on a second thought and scoops up the paper PICKETT had thrown aside.

As he stands up, PICKETT quietly opens the door and leans out with a pistol in his hand. MacREADY straightens up, and is looking down the barrel.

PICKETT: Come on.

MacREADY: Where?

PICKETT: What does it matter now?

MacREADY: Well...I have another appointment, so if I could just make a call--

PICKETT: Don't worry about that. Let's go to breakfast. (He slips the gun in a tote bag) Remember I have this.

MORE
MacREADY: I won't forget.

PICKETT: Do you like Danish?

MacREADY: Huh?

PICKETT: Danish. Do you like Danish.

MacREADY: Sure.

PICKETT: Good. Sunday they serve Danish in the cafeteria. We'll go there.

They exit. A moment later, SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI enter.

YAMAGUCHI: Where's Suicide?

SAMPSON: Musta split. C'mon, let's go get some breakfast.

They also exit.

INT: DORM CAFETERIA: MORNING
PICKETT and MacREADY enter. Light morning traffic.

PICKETT: Go have a seat. I'll be right with you.

PICKETT stands in line. Ahead of him, two guys elbow each other and snicker.

PANZER: Hey, man, what's that smell?

LEWIS: I dunno, man. Mebbe somebody forgot ta take a shower again.

PICKETT reaches into his bag.

POV PICKETT of the interior of the bag: Two pistols, a sawed-off shotgun, loose shells, a big red apple on top.

PICKETT takes out the apple and takes a bite.

PANZER: That keeps th' doctor away, don't it?

LEWIS: What about th' coroner?

LORI: Give it a rest, you guys.

GARY comes in and stands behind LORI. He sees what is going on and joins in, poking PICKETT'S shoulder.

GARY: Whatcha got?

MORE
PICKETT: What?

GARY: Whatcha got in the bag?

LEWIS: You probably don't wanna know, Gary.

PICKETT: Here. I'll show you.

MacREADY leaps up from the table.

MacREADY: WAIT!

PICKETT pulls out a pistol and shoots GARY.

LEWIS: Whoa, hey--

PICKETT spins and shoots LEWIS, then PANZER. LORI screams. He shoots her. He spins around again. The room is silent.

MacREADY falls back in his chair, stunned.

PICKETT turns to the food server.

PICKETT: Danish, please. (turns) Danish for everyone!

INT: RESTAURANT: MORNING
SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI wander in. Nobody is there but a fat fry cook and a gangly cashier. The cashier turns the radio from a country to a rock station as the pair settle in at the counter.

COOK: What can I get you kids?

SAMPSON: Pitcher a beer.

COOK: We don't serve beer for breakfast.

SAMPSON: So sprinkle some cornflakes on top of it.

The cook shakes his head, then turns the radio back to the country station.

ANNOUNCER: --for a special news bulletin. We have just gotten verification that there have been shots fired in one of the dormitories on the campus of the state university. We--

The cashier idly begins to turn the radio back. SAMPSON vaults the counter and clamps down on his wrist.

CASHIER: Hey, what's the prob?

SAMPSON: SHUT UP!

MORE
SAMPSON whips the dial back.

ANNOUNCER: --hostage situation. We'll be back with more as the situation develops.

SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI exchange glances.

COOK: I want you kids outta my restaurant!

YAMAGUCHI: We're gone, pops. (beat, to SAMPSON) Do you think--

SAMPSON: I dunno, man, c'mon!

They rush out.

EXT: GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE: MORNING
SAMPSON and YAMAGUCHI approach, hesitate; finally knock. The door flies open suddenly.

GOLDSTEIN: Why am I not surprised to see your faces?

SAMPSON: Ben, I--

GOLDSTEIN: Save it. I'm on the way to the newsroom. Tell it there and you'll only have to tell it once.

The trio exit.

INT: NEWSROOM: MORNING
Sleepy and disgruntled reporters are filing in: others are already talking into phones and writing furiously.

RYAN is wheeling around barking out orders.

RYAN: Chico, keep trying the cops. Find out if they're going to mobilize their special tactics unit. Mimi, do we have any sort of line on who this character is?

SAMPSON: I--I think I do.

RYAN: Where in hell have you been? Yamaguchi, I need some pictures. Ben--

SAMPSON: Mary Alice, wait. I dunno for sure, but I think this dude...I think this dude is named Delano Pickett.

RYAN: What the--

SAMPSON: And...I think Suicide's maybe in there.

MORE
JACKSON: Hank's in there?

FUENTES: What's he doing in that mess?

RYAN: You've got a hell of a long story to tell.

SAMPSON: I know it.

RYAN: My office, Buster. Everybody else--you heard he name. A.J., crack open some files. We need records. Mimi, start tracking down roommates, neighbors, girlfriends--

FUENTES: Hey, man, do you really think Hank's over there? I heard the dude had a machine gun.

SAMPSON: Man, I dunno. But I'm pretty sure.

FUENTES starts walking towards the door. After a moment, SOMERS follows. JACKSON hangs up the phone and joins the growing group.

RYAN and GOLDSTEIN exchange glances.

RYAN: Oh hell, we can't stay here now. Let's get out there. (She turns to SAMPSON) I don't know what went down, you stupid bastard, but you'll never work here again.

SAMPSON: I'm goin' out there, too.

RYAN: I don't care what you do. Just pretend you don't know us.

She starts wheeling out, stops; turns.

RYAN: You coming, Sam?

YAMAGUCHI: (swallows) Sure.

He glances at SAMPSON, then goes to get his gear. They exit, leaving SAMPSON standing there alone.

INT: DORM CAFETERIA: MORNING
PICKETT peers through a window in the kitchen, gun in hand.

PICKETT: They're already gathering...wondering if dead people look like they do on television...come and look.

MacREADY cautiously sidles up alongside.

MacREADY: The police are out there, too.

A phone on the wall begins RINGING. PICKETT turns his head. MacREADY moves towards it.

MORE
PICKETT: Don't answer it.

MacREADY: But it's been ringing for--

PICKETT: I know what they're going to say.

EXT: DORM: MORNING
POLITTI and several other policemen are standing around a police van. POLITTI puts down an electronic telephone in disgust.

POLITTI: No dice. Wayne, give me that megaphone.

A cop hands POLITTI the megaphone. He puts it to his lips.

POLITTI: Mr. Pickett, this is James Politti. But you can call me Jim. You're not answering the phone, Mr. Pickett, and what we need to know is what you want.

SILENCE.

POLITTI: If we know what you want, why, we can get the ball rolling. Maybe you could let a few of those people out, maybe we could trade them for something you want. Mr. Pickett, can you hear me?

INT: DORM: MORNING
PICKETT moves away from the window.

HANNAH is tending to her fallen friend LORI. She appears almost hysterical.

HANNAH: What are you going to do? What are you going to do!

PICKETT: (looks surprised) Why, have breakfast!

EXT: DORM: MORNING
A TV crew is setting up. JACKSON and YAMAGUCHI are watching to the side. A glossy anchor, CHET BAIN, is talking to his producer, ANDRE.

BAIN: What have we got, Andre?

ANDRE: We're driving in his homeroom teacher from high school right now, Chet.

BAIN: Exclusive?

ANDRE: Nothing but for you, Chet.

BAIN: Excellent.

ANDRE: And we've got a line on an old girlfriend, too.

MORE
BAIN: That's the spirit!

ANDRE: Only problem is, she's just got herself an agent. He's already getting her a book deal and dibs on a miniseries.

BAIN: (disgusted) Great. Look, have our people call her people and make a flat offer.

ANDRE: Gotcha, Chet.

ANDRE exits. JACKSON steps forward a little.

JACKSON: Mr. Bain?

BAIN: (turns) What?

JACKSON: I...I, um, just wanted to say it's great finally seeing you in person after all these years. I've sort of admired you from afar, and since we're in the same field--

BAIN: You're in television?

JACKSON: (surprised) No, journalism.

BAIN: Oh, I see. Well, study hard, get good grades, strive for the top, and one day you'll make it, too.

JACKSON: What I wanted to ask is--

BAIN: Sorry, I don't have time for autographs now. We're doing a live stand-up after this next commercial.

JACKSON: That's not--

BAIN: Nice meeting you. And remember, get good grades.

BAIN is hustled off by some TECHIES. Suddenly, shots are fired.

JACKSON: Oh my God!

FEATURE RYAN and GOLDSTEIN.

RYAN: What's going on?

FEATURE POLITTI whipping up the megaphone.

POLITTI: Pickett! We need to know what's going on in there! We need to know!

INT: DORM: MORNING

PIECEKITT has shot another girl. He is standing there looking down at her.
MacREADY is standing nearby. Around him, people are crying, in shock, wounded, dead.

MacREADY: Why did you do that?

PICKETT: What?

HANNAH: Don't confront him! He'll shoot you! He'll kill you!

MacREADY: Why did you shoot her?

PICKETT: Oh...I don't know.

MacREADY: There must be some reason...like the others.

PICKETT: Dear Diary...

The phone starts RINGING.

MacREADY: What?

PICKETT: What?

MacREADY: You said "Dear Diary"...

PICKETT: Oh, yes.

MacREADY: Why?

PICKETT: Why what?

JOE stands up.

JOE: Answer the phone! WHY WON'T YOU ANSWER THE GODDAMN PHONE!

PICKETT shoots him in the leg. He falls down, screaming. PICKETT calmly cracks open the pistol and starts to reload.

EXT: DORM
POLITTI throws down the megaphone.

POLITTI: Damn!

He storms past the police lines and through a swarm of reporters.

REPORTER 1: Are there more shots being fired, lieutenant?

POLITTI: You got ears.

REPORTER 2: What can you tell us right now, lieutenant?

MORE
POLITTI: Nothing.

BAIN: Lieutenant, this is Chet Bain--

POLITTI: Who cares?

REPORTER 3: Lieutenant, how many--

REPORTER 4: One question, sir--

REPORTER 5: Lieutenant, is it true they are listening to hard rock music?

POLITTI: No time!

POLITTI jogs over to a black van, where ROOSEVELT, in fatigues and holding a rifle and walkie-talkie, is standing.

POLITTI: How are you doing, Buck?

ROOSEVELT: I've got my boys deployed all around the Quad. We can be moving in ten seconds. What's the word?

POLITTI: We're in a holding pattern right now. There's too many kids in there, who knows how many--

ROOSEVELT: But we've heard shots--

POLITTI: We don't know that means we have people down. How many more do we lose if we go charging in there?

ROOSEVELT: With my boys--none.

POLITTI: Sorry, Buck, but I don't have the same faith in them that you do. I have to be positive. And I still think I can talk him out.

ROOSEVELT: Been a long time since you talked somebody out.

POLITTI: But you never forget...never forget.

FEATURE YAMAGUCHI and FUENTES. FUENTES is warming himself over a grate in the sidewalk.

YAMAGUCHI: This sucks, man, I can't get nothin' from out here.

FUENTES. I dont' care about the pictures, man, I just wish I knew what was happening in there. At least it's warm standing here.

YAMAGUCHI: Damn, I almost forgot! (He looks down) The maintenance tunnels! Buster told me all about the, but I spaced it off!
FUENTES: What?

YAMAGUCHI: That's where that basket case was sneaking around. This tunnel should go right in...there.

FUENTES: Aw, man, you're crazy.

YAMAGUCHI: What crazy? There's no action out here. Here, help me lift this grate off, man.

FUENTES: No way, Samurai! What if that nut is wandering around down there?

YAMAGUCHI: Chico, don't be a nerd! He's in that cafeteria! Now give me a break, okay?

FUENTES: Well...okay.

FUENTES and YAMAGUCHI look around carefully, then yank off the grate. YAMAGUCHI slides in to his waist.

YAMAGUCHI: Don't forget about the five bucks you owe me, okay?

YAMAGUCHI disappears.

FEATURE POLITTI on the megaphone.

POLITTI: Mr. Pickett, we need to talk. We need to know what you want.

ROGERS: Still no answer on the phone.

POLITTI: Goddammit, don't hang it up!

INT: DORM: MORNING

PICKETT peers through the window.

PICKETT: They're growing...all the people trying to make a name and get a promotion at the expense of these people's blood.

MacREADY: Then don't let them. Let's just call this whole thing off right now.

PICKETT: But don't you see, it's too late. We're standing at the chasm looking in.

MacREADY: You were saying about your diary...

PICKETT: My secret diary. I gaze into the stars every night and see its secret hiding place. (beat; turns to FOOD SERVERS standing around) Why are you just standing there?

MORE
SERVER: Why, we...I don't know.

PICKETT: Start cleaning up, preparing for lunch...we must keep up the facade.

INT: DORM: MORNING
YAMAGUCHI is moving through the maintenance tunnels. He is half-crouched and looking around intently. He comes to a "Y", tries to get his bearings; veers off to the right.

EXT: DORM: MORNING
POLITTI on megaphone, ROOSEVELT alongside.

POLITTI: Okay, Mr. Pickett, let me give you a show of faith on our part. Standing beside me is Lieutenant Roosevelt, who is in charge of the city's special tactics unit. He has requested that he be able to shut off your electricity...your water...your heat. But I said no. We don't want to use those kinds of methods here. (beat) So let me have something from you...perhaps some of the wounded, if any are ambulatory...or let me send in a paramedic. What we would like--

STUDENTS IN CROWD: WE WANT A BOD-Y! WE WANT A BOD-Y!

POLITTI: Somebody shut those kids up!

INT: DORM: MORNING
MacREADY, HANNAH, a few other pick up on the shouting and catcalls outside.

HANNAH: What's going on out there?

CHIP: Bunch a weirdos out there. (beat) Hell, what am I saying?

MacREADY: The excitement's gone for them...it's been dragged on too long. They've forgotten there are real people in here. It doesn't mean anything anymore.

CHIP: Hey, buddy, I been thinkin'...there's only one a him, an' a bunch a us--what say we rush him?

MacREADY: What do you think is going on here? This isn't a movie!

CHIP: Hey, cool it, man.

PICKETT turns to CHIP.

PICKETT: This is no movie, friend. This is real life. This is piss and blood and a baby's hot tears.

CHIP: (nervously) Yeah, all the way, man.

MORE
EXT: DORM: MORNING
SAMPSON wanders around the fringes of the crowd, who are laughing, talking excitedly. SAMPSON is straining to see what is happening.

CHOO-CHOO and SLAB approach him.

CHOO-CHOO: Hey, you!

SAMPSON: (snaps around) Huh?

CHOO-CHOO: You seen Hank here?

SAMPSON: (beat) No, why?

CHOO-CHOO: Jus' wanted ta see him, is all. (beat; squints at SAMPSON) Hey, what's yer problem?

SAMPSON: Nuttin.

CHOO-CHOO: (beat) Hey... Hank's not in there, is he?

SLAB: Hey, so much fer yer boyfriend, Choo-Choo!

SLAB'S high-pitched laugh is cut off by an elbow in the gut from CHOO-CHOO. She wheels on SAMPSON, throws herself at him, fists flying.

CHOO-CHOO: Why dint you help him? WHY DINT YOU HELP HIM!

INT: DORM: MORNING
YAMAGUCHI is still making his way through the maintenance tunnels. He crosees under a horizontal tunnel and hears dishes clattering, low voices. He stops and looks up into the light. After a moment, he carefully ascends the rungs above.

YAMAGUCHI finds himself against a grate set low in the wall of the cafeteria. He peers into the room.

POV YAMAGUCHI: bloody bodies, corpses, everyone moaning and crying.

YAMAGUCHI turns away from the grate, winces, shakes his head.

YAMAGUCHI: Aw, geez. (beat) I knew I shoulda brought my telephoto.

In the room, PICKETT is stroking his pistol lovingly.

MacREADY: You...you didn't use that before.

PICKETT: I hadn't found these before. Before I had to...improvise.
MacREADY: (whispers) Why?

PICKETT: Why what?

MacREADY: Why did you...improvise?

Suddenly, the grate YAMAGUCHI is leaning against falls out into the room and clatters on the floor. YAMAGUCHI half-falls out into the room. He looks up, wide-eyed.

YAMAGUCHI: Ah, shit.

PICKETT'S gun comes up.

MacREADY: SAMURAI!

PICKETT fires into the grate.

YAMAGUCHI yells, disappears down into the tunnel with a clatter.

MacREADY: (sadly) Sam.

PICKETT strolls up to the grate and looks down. Blood is pooling at his feet.

PICKETT: You knew him.

MacREADY: Yes.

PICKETT: You're one of them.

The phone RINGING seems louder.

MacREADY: One...one of who?

PICKETT: That's why you keep asking the questions. You're a reporter. You're one of the lie-makers. You're one of the ones that made this lie.

MacREADY: Not me.

PICKETT: You're not the heart, are you? Not the heart, not the mind. Maybe the conscience. But you're not the one I want. (beat) You.

PICKETT points to HANNAH, who is now sobbing uncontrollably.

PICKETT: You may go. You have been touched.

HANNAH gets up slowly, uncomprehendingly.

MORE
CHIP: Get out of here!

HANNAH breaks into a run and flies through the door.

PICKETT: Now hand me the phone.

EXT: DORM: MORNING
The crowd registers surprise, scattered applause, as HANNAH races towards the police lines, sobbing and screaming.

As she crosses the line, she is beseiged by reporters, cameras, others.

REPORTER 1: How many people--

REPORTER 2: How do you feel--

REPORTER 3: What were you thinking as--

Bystander: Sign this please--

Bystander: Do you have an agent--

REPORTER 4: What's going on in there--

HANNAH looks from face to face, dazed.

FEATURE POLITTI and the other police.

ROOSEVELT: More shots, Jim, for God's sake. How many kids do you think are dead in there?

POLITTI: Enough, goddammit, I know what's at stake here!

ROGERS: Lieutenant! We got him on the phone!

POLITTI glares at ROOSEVELT, then snatches up the phone.

POLITTI: Yes...yes, I appreciate that. How about a few more? (beat) I see. You've got terms, then, well, I'm here to listen to them, Mr. Pickett. (beat) Who? (beat) You know that's out of line, I can't--Hello? Hello!

POLITTI slaps the phone back into ROGERS' hand.

POLITTI: Just give me one more chance.

POLITTI picks up the megaphone.

POLITTI: Buster Sampson! IS BUSTER SAMPSON HERE?

MORE
The camera tracks in from a LONG SHOT of the crowd to a TIGHT SHOT of SAMPSON'S shocked face.

INT: DORM: MORNING
YAMAGUCHI is groaning, dragging himself along the maintenance tunnel. Finally, he can go no further. He collapses and rolls over, breathing hard.

YAMAGUCHI slowly lifts his camera above his head, points it at himself. He takes a picture. The camera falls from his fingers.

EXT: DORM: MORNING
SAMPSON is talking to POLITTI and ROOSEVELT.

BYSTANDER: Buster Sampson, come on down!

The CROWD cheers and claps.

POLITTI: For Christ's sake, I asked you to **do** something about those kids!

ROOSEVELT: What do you want us to do, turn the fire hoses on them?

SAMPSON: Blow it off, man, jus' finish yer spiel.

POLITTI: Okay, okay. As you are a civilian, we cannot ask you to intercede on our behalf. You must decide to become involved of your own free will. However, you can be held liable for any gross criminal negligence on your own behalf during the course of this hostage situation.


ROOSEVELT: This is a highly unusual situation, Mr. Sampson. Save the one-liners and consider your decision a little more carefully.

SAMPSON: What decision? Pickett says he'll only give his list of demands to me. (beat) So let's do it.

ROOSEVELT: Well, then. (beat) I'll escort you to the edge of the police line.

SAMPSON: Wonderful.

POLITTI: Hey, Sampson--

SAMPSON: Hey, Politti? Don't embarrass yourself this late in the game, huh?

ROOSEVELT and SAMPSON begin moving through the crowd.

INT: DORM
PICKETT peers through the window, then turns to smile at MacREADY.

MORE
PICKETT: He's coming.

EXT: DORM
SAMPSON and ROOSEVELT still moving through the crowd.

GOLDSTEIN: Buster! Hey, Buster, wait a second!

SAMPSON: Ben, I'm in no mood to soothe yer conscience right now. Yer gonna hafta deal wit it.

GOLDSTEIN: I just wanted to say good luck, we've been friends for--

BAIN: Mr. Sampson, why have the police called you in to help with the crisis?

SAMPSON: Yo, Chet Bain! I been catchin' yer act onna tube fer years! Is it true you been puttin' it ta th' weather girl?

The CROWD laughs.

BAIN: (disgustedly) Stop tape.

ROOSEVELT and SAMPSON reach the police line.

FUENTES: Be careful, man!

SAMPSON licks his lips.

SAMPSON: End a th' line.

ROOSEVELT: Uh-huh.

SAMPSON: Man, what do you do when you get nervous?

ROOSEVELT: Me? I whistle "Proud Mary."

SAMPSON: I'm not sure how that goes all the way through.

ROOSEVELT shrugs.

SAMPSON: Yeah, well, thanks anyway.

SAMPSON ducks under the police line and starts walking.

PICKETT: (from window) Stop right there!

SAMPSON stops cold.

PICKETT: Open your coat and turn around in a little circle.

MORE
SAMPSON does, slowly.
PICKETT: Put your hands up higher!
SAMPSON does. The CROWD whistles and calls.
PICKETT: (beat) Okay. Come on in.

CHIP holds the door open for him. As SAMPSON crosses the threshold, CHIP breaks for it.

CHIP races for the police line and tears through it, his fists raised triumphantly.

CHIP: Oh yeah!
The CROWD cheers as CHIP prances around.

SAMPSON looks back, a pained expression on his face. Then he softly closes the door. The camera lingers on the closed door a moment longer.

INT: DORM
SAMPSON faces PICKETT and MacREADY.

SAMPSON: Good ta see ya, Suicide.

MacREADY: Likewise, Buster.

SAMPSON: And you must be the man I need ta rap wit about some demands.
PICKETT: Oh, that can wait. (beat) I want to talk about you.

SAMPSON: Huh? Me?
PICKETT: About your lies. Why you lie. Why you weave your web of pain without any concern for the people you humiliate and shame. About the games you play to get ahead. You are the man with the loaded gun, the man cracking the whip, the man who laughs behind their backs, shames them. You are that man.

SAMPSON: Huh?
PICKETT: You are the source of all this pain, you are the callous one, the one who shames and degrades, who makes them bleed and cry.

SAMPSON: You got me all wrong, man. I'm just a guy who really needs to take a piss right now.

MacREADY: (cautiously) We've talked about ourselves. Why don't you tell us about yourself. Fair is fair.

MORE
PICKETT: When did life turn fair.

MacREADY: All I'm saying is--

PICKETT: You've done nothing but talk and talk, and now I'm tired of the game.

SAMPSON shoots a wide-eyed look at PICKETT.

SAMPSON: Hey, man--

PICKETT: You may go now.

MacREADY: (startled) Go?

PICKETT: You can go free now.

MacREADY looks around hesitantly, fumbles a little. He finally starts to walk, slowly. Stops.

MacREADY: Buster, I thought you should know before I go...Yamaguchi...he tried to sneak in here to take pictures, I guess, and he...he's dead.

SAMPSON goes pale as MacREADY fumbles a moment longer, then turns and goes out the door. A cheer goes up.

PICKETT turns to his tote bag, and pulls out his shotgun. He walks to the window.

SAMPSON: (panicky) Whoa, hey, man, you said he was goin' free!

PICKETT: He will be...free.

EXT: DORM
MacREADY is dazedly walking towards the crowd.

CHOO-CHOO breaks through the crowd.

CHOO-CHOO: HANK!

INT: DORM
FEATURE PICKETT and SAMPSON.

SAMPSON: Naw, man...you can't.

PICKETT: (smiles) But don't you see, this moment has always been. This is the gears in the machine turning. I can do this because I have done it forever. (looks at SAMPSON) It's not in your hands.

MORE
SLOW MOTION: PICKETT levels the shotgun.

SLO-MO: CHOO-CHOO crosses the police line, running.

SLO-MO: MacREADY'S retreatting back.

SLO-MO: PICKETT smiles, tenses.

SLO-MO: SAMPSON'S stricken face.

SAMPSON: NOOOOOO--

SLO-MO: SAMPSON smashes into PICKETT. The gun goes off, but goes high.

The CROWD screams and scatters. CHOO-CHOO and MacREADY collide, and MacREADY pulls her to the ground.

INT: DORM
SAMPSON and PICKETT wrestle, punch each other.

PICKETT finally cracks SAMPSON across the chin with the butt of the shotgun and knocks him cold.

PANZER, wounded and curled up in a corner, starts laughing.

PANZER: They're gonna come getcha now, man, they're gonna fill ya full a holes now--

PICKETT swings the shotgun around and gives PANZER the other barrel. Then he calmly cracks it open and feeds in two more shells.

PICKETT: Yes...they're coming for me now.

EXT: DORM
POLITTI races past the police line, gun drawn, and crouches over MacREADY and CHOO-CHOO.

POLITTI: Are you hit?

MacREADY: (breathing hard) No...lieutenant, listen, Pickett's got a diary in his room--

POLITTI: My men went over his room earlier and found jack.

MacREADY: From what he said, I think it's in the ceiling. Above his bed.

POLITTI: Dammit! Let's go.

MORE
The three begin to move, are intercepted by ROOSEVELT.

ROOSEVELT: We gotta talk!

POLITTI: I'll be right back!

ROOSEVELT: The captain--ah, hell.

POLITTI and MacREADY sprint across the Quad to another door and up the stairs, leaving CHOO-CHOO far behind. They pass a dozen or so policemen armed and waiting in the stairs and in the hall.

POLITTI: Garcia! Did you go over Pickett's room?

GARCIA: Yeah, that was me and my squad, louie.

POLITTI: Did you look in the ceiling?

GARCIA: Huh?

POLITTI: Come on then, and bring the passkey.

INT: PICKETT'S ROOM
GARCIA pops open the door. Half of everything in the room is stuffed in plastic bags.

POLITTI: What did you find?

GARCIA: Hasn't changed since last I told you. Zip. Your average college kid's room.

POLITTI: Stand up there on that bed and poke on that drop ceiling, Garcia.

GARCIA does, and in a moment a thick book drops out and bounces on the bed.

GARCIA: Huh. Drop ceiling, huh?

MacREADY: (breathes) This is it.

GARCIA scoops up the book and cracks it open.

GARCIA: I killed the pig that was my father...I killed the pig that was my mother...I killed the pig that was my sister...(he thumbs ahead) Hell, louie, this crap goes on for a hundred pages!

POLITTI: Huh. Big family.

MacREADY: That's all it says? That's it?

POLITTI: Bag it and tag it, Garcia. Let's head back.

MORE
Suddenly MacREADY runs from the room.

He passes CHOO-CHOO in the hall.

CHOO-CHOO: Hank--

MacREADY: I can't breathe!

EXT: DORM
MacREADY bursts out the door and plops down on the steps, breathing hard. After a moment, he puts his head in his arms and begins sobbing uncontrollably.

FEATURE ROOSEVELT, talking on the phone.

ROOSEVELT: Captain, he's fired on the crowd...I don't know where Politti is, sir, he went to chase down some lead...yes, sir. I'm taking command here. I'll be in touch.

ROOSEVELT hands off the phone and picks up a walkie-talkie.

ROOSEVELT: We're moving out!

INT: DORM
SAMPSON comes around, and finds himself looking down the barrel of PICKETT'S shotgun.

PICKETT: This is the end.

SAMPSON: Screw it, then. Do it.

PICKETT: (startled) What?

SAMPSON: (tears in his eyes) Quit jacking around! If you're gonna do it, do it! I don't give a shit anymore!

PICKETT hesitates.

SAMPSON: (screams) DO IT!!

PICKETT tenses.

The door breaks in, and a half-dozen policemen fill the room, shooting rifles.

PICKETT goes down in a hail of bullets.

SAMPSON takes one in the shoulder and also goes down.

A moment later, it is over. PICKETT and SAMPSON are lying side by side in a pool of PICKETT'S blood, looking up.

MORE
POV SAMPSON as two cops peer down.

COP 1: Which one is he?

COP 2: Well I hope t'hell it's that kid, 'cause we done put fifty holes in him.

COP 3: That's him, you knuckleheads! Get the paramedics in here. (beat) You okay, kid?

SAMPSON: (weakly) Sure.

COP 3: Hang tight, kid. Help is on the way.

There is a flurry of activity, and suddenly the two are alone. Slowly, SAMPSON turns his head to the side.

SAMPSON: (weakly) All th' bullshit aside...why'd you do it? Why'd you kill all those people?

PICKETT turns his head slowly.

PICKETT: Oh...just something to do, I guess.

PICKETT stiffens, and his eyes glaze over.

SAMPSON looks for a moment, and then begins laughing: a little at first, and then more and more.

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT: DORM: A FEW MINUTES LATER
The CROWD is basically dispersed; mostly cops and reporters somberly milling about.

SAMPSON is still laughing hysterically as they load him into the ambulance and drive away.

FADE OUT.