"Double Time"

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

1. EXT. CAPITOL BELTWAY DAY

We fade in high above the traffic around 7 a.m. Cars are moving along the Beltway. Slowly we begin to move in on one particular car, a station wagon. As we do, the voice of a RADIO ANNOUNCER is heard. An actual radio personality from the D.C. area would be nice.

ANNOUNCER
(v.o.)
You been outside yet today? My, my it's wonderful. Sun is shining. The birds are singing. Capitol Building's on fire. (PAUSE) Everything's as it should be.

We come close enough to the wagon to see the driver, SCOTT CRISTANTELO. Scott is an Italian-looking man of 36, of average build, slightly thin. (Many newsmen are either skinny or obese, with the rest in the middle.) He is a serious man with a sneaky sense of humor. Good natured and strong, he is an archetype of the modern crusading reporter. He has been listening to the radio, and he feigns some weak laughter at the announcer's last remark.

ANNOUNCER
(v.o.)
This is Billy Joel on the morning show, with the title cut from his album, "The Stranger."

The song begins to filter in and the credits roll. The credits end as the song does.
CUT TO:

2. INT. CLOSET OF UNIDENTIFIED BUILDING NIGHT

A pair of hands are working on a telephone switch box, with a chart taped to the wall beside it. Two clips are put into place and, as they are, a voice is immediately heard over the wiretap. Later, we will discover that it belongs to MANFRED MAYNARD TYLER a.k.a. MONARCH. This knowledge is not revealed now, though.

MONARCH
(v.o.)

...I have to testify tomorrow. We'll meet later. (PAUSE) I know I'm rushing, but it has to start soon. If it doesn't, we're all in big trouble.

CUT TO:

3. INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE DAY

We cut to a close-up of Scott. He is lying on a couch, looking up into the camera. He is in session with his psychiatrist, DOCTOR THOMAS GLEASON. They question and answer haltingly, in a doctor-patient manner.

SCOTT

It's getting harder...all the time.
I try to do what you told me. Lots of rest. Keeping a check on my temper.
(PAUSE) Sometimes it becomes unbearable.

GLEASON
(v.o.)

What, exactly?

SCOTT

Deb and I have been having arguments again.
GLEASON
(v.o.)

Bad ones?

SCOTT

No argument is good. I guess they haven't really been bad. But a lot of things have been bothering me lately. She wants kids. And I've told her we can't have kids until I recover. My boss tells me to do better... "like you were before, Scott," he says. If he only knew how much I'd like that.

Scott's face turns somber, then angry. Frustration builds. These sessions aren't helping him, but he doesn't see that. All he sees are the emotions they dredge up without a proper release.

SCOTT

Great things happened to me! (PAUSE) A Pulitzer Prize. Working Bobby Kennedy's campaign. Ten years of hard work shot right down the hole. All of it.

GLEASON
(v.o.)

You shouldn't dwell on it. You have many moments ahead. All of this is in your past.

SCOTT

I have no past.

Scott's face is now sad. There is nothing he can do. His emotions have no release, and he just tries to put a lid back on the anguish...until the next session.
We enter during a hearing of the Senate Committee on Covert Intelligence Activities. SENATOR BERNARD HALL presides; he is questioning Manfred Tyler, alias Monarch (the name we'll use for him hereafter). The witness is a short, energetic black man, his age around 50. He is fending off the questions with a rapidly dwindling reserve. Senator Hall, with his questions, is a man in the express lane going nowhere. A mature-looking senator, he appears frenetic and officious.

HALL

Mr. Tyler, is it true that you have been brought before the director of the CIA on many occasions for unauthorized activities of a serious nature? Activities (which)...

MONARCH

(overlapping "which")

(Senator), I do not understand how any such information could have been obtained. Any reprimand I may have received under any of the directors I've worked under would have been confidential and off-the-record. As it is, I have received no such reprimands. Your sources have (obviously)...

HALL

(overlapping "obviously")

(My) sources also report that you have kept certain evidence and information away from superiors in order to jeopardize U.S. intelligence operations affecting national policy.

A long pause. Monarch gives Hall a confused and amused look. Hall has begun using scare tactics; Monarch is going to try to make the things Hall is saying, which are very true, sound like overblown lies. He has to blast Hall's credibility.
MONARCH

Senator Hall, not to cast aspersions on your staff, but that's a crock. It is unsubstantiated, and it is patently false.

HALL

Is it also true, Mr. Tyler, that for a period of many years, ending in 1974, you were part of a loosely-formed group, unknown even to the President, called the TRIAD? And that this group consisted of three CIA agents, in place, who were used to commit periodic assassinations?

MONARCH

If you had conferred with my colleagues, Senator, you would have learned that I am opposed to the CIA using that sort of pressure to gain results. I have been pushing for reforms within the Agency, and throughout the entire intelligence community, to streamline operations. Ideas like the CONDUIT Building, which will consolidate, yet keep separate, governmental intelligence so that the CIA, the FBI, and all the others won't keep stepping on each other's toes. So that a few isolated agents can't have such a grip on important matters that the main office is helpless to stop them.

Still, Senator Hall wants his question answered, and by God, he's going to get a reply.

SENATOR

You mean you've never heard of an organization called TRIAD? "Trained Intelligence and Assassination Detail?"
MONARCH

You haven't been watching too many movies, have you, Senator?

The gallery breaks up into gales of laughter. Hall has been humiliated. He's trying to laugh it off, but he's not succeeding. Finally the laughter subsides... and Hall continues undaunted.

HALL

Mr. Tyler, have you ever heard of a man named Carl Van Hook?

MONARCH

No, Senator, I have not.

HALL

How about a man named Robert "Burt" DiCenzo?

MONARCH

I don't recall that name either.

HALL

Do you recognize the name James Ramm?

MONARCH

No, Senator, I don't.
The Washington Times closely resembles the Post, but only in routine and appearance. The Times is not as big or fancy. We see the entire newsroom as Scott enters and approaches his desk. As he sits, we move into a two-shot of Scott and his associate, seated at the next desk, CLARKE HOCKNEY. Clarke is a man of Scott's age, perhaps a little more WASP-looking. He gives the facial appearance of a mischievous little boy. A smart aleck grin often spreads across his face. He is a likeable sort, given to periodic verbal jousting with Scott, who is now producing a jar of peanut butter and some crackers from his desk. He spreads some and offers it to Clarke.

SCOTT
Peanut butter?

CLARKE
Yecch!

SCOTT
What do you mean? It's good for you.

CLARKE
So are enemas.

SCOTT
What's your story?

CLARKE
A group of American mercenaries trying to rent themselves out to some bloody African police action.

SCOTT
I think they're called wars.
CLARKE

I talked to one of these guys. Gave me a lot of material about weapons, strategies, philosophies, morals.

SCOTT

What morality could possibly be involved in retail murder?

CLARKE

Apparently, before they go anywhere, they make out their wills.

SCOTT

Never leave home without it.

Scott reaches into his desk and takes out a cassette recorder/player. He pops the last bit of cracker into his mouth, then pulls a tape from his breast pocket. Putting it into the player, he positions an earphone then turns on the machine. We soon hear the voice from the wiretap, Monarch.

MONARCH

(v.o.)

I'll see what I can do. I've really got to get prepared. Michael's going to be here soon. (PAUSE) Yes, we're going to plan. You don't do something like this without planning. Once it starts, it can't be stopped.

Clarke glances at Scott, apparently curious. He leans over to ask Scott a question.
CLARKE
Can I ask a stupid question?

SCOTT
You have before.

CLARKE
What the hell is that?

SCOTT
A secret informer. Even he doesn't know he's giving me information.

CLARKE
That's illegal.

SCOTT
Let's just say unethical.

CLARKE
No, let's just say illegal. Who is he anyway?

SCOTT
Manfred Tyler, CIA currently testifying before a Senate Committee.

CLARKE
You mean the guy who's been in all the papers? Why him?
SCOTT

I don't know. I thought there might be a story involved. He's got a very shady past the CIA is trying to keep secret.

CLARKE

You don't have any reason at all? You're just picking someone at random and invading their privacy? Freedom of the press doesn't include that.

SCOTT

Why are you so angry?

CLARKE

It's just that he's not the only one. (PAUSE) You've been bugging everybody.

Clarke smiles his smart aleck grin. Scott gets up and walks past him, turning off the player.

SCOTT

Verbose ass!

CLARKE

Republican!

Scott goes over to the editor's office and knocks on the door. From within, we hear BOB JONASON, the editor, mumble "come in." Scott does so. Jonason, a fat but not jolly man, is seated at his desk, glasses on, reading. He glances up, then lays the story down, his glasses on top of it.

JONASON

Yeah?
SCOTT

I just wanted to get my assignment. I'm finished with coverage on the CONDUIT Building.

JONASON

Wait a minute.

Jonason looks pained. He rubs his forehead as he rises from his chair. He looks at Scott then paces. Then stops.

JONASON

You said you were finished with the story? (PAUSE) Since when do you decide when you're finished with a story?

Scott can't understand what Bob is driving at. He pauses, thinking.

JONASON

Did someone make you editor last night and neglect to tell me?

SCOTT

Bob, all I wanted to find out was...

JONASON

I tell you what to do! Cristantello, it may not appear on the surface to be a big story! I mean, appropriations were over a year ago. Debate has raged ever since and people are tired of it. But there is, underneath the surface, a more important angle you failed to cover.

SCOTT

And what is that?
JONASON

Dammit, how should I know? You're the reporter! I'm just the editor! But I know by the drivel you passed off yesterday as a story that you weren't trying at all! It was weak! Every story should be your best! There's always another angle. They don't just erect a computerized intelligence system, with a multi-million dollar price tag, in the middle of Washington every few months!

SCOTT

I know that, Bob!

JONASON

But your readers don't. Background. Depth. Lately you haven't gone into the ramifications this project could have. "Big Brother!" "1984!"

SCOTT

That's all speculation! A bunch of armchair theorists getting greedy over space in our paper!

JONASON

But it's news! It's important! People should know! You have no right to leave it out. (PAUSE) If you think you've learned your lesson, I'll let you go back out to the CONDUIT site again today. Senator Joseph McClellan is giving a press conference about his little pet project. Do you think you could handle it for me, Scottie?

SCOTT

This isn't necessary, Bob.
Jonason looks at Scott for a moment, then disgustedly sits back down at his desk, putting his glasses on and returning to his reading. Angry, Scott exhales to dissipate some of that anger. Then he walks out.

Clarke looks up to see Scott coming. Scott goes about his business of scooping up his reporter's notebook and his coat as Clarke asks him a question. Scott answers as he leaves, still angry.

CLARKE

The great and powerful Oz has spoken?

SCOTT

There's no place like home.

CUT TO:

6. EXT. CONDUIT BUILDING SITE DAY

Scott is present with a small group of REPORTERS, all wearing hard hats, as SENATOR JOSEPH MC CLELLAN gives a press conference in front of the partially-completed structure. Work is going on as the Senator speaks. A sign posted nearby proclaims that this is the site of the CONDUIT; Consolidated Data for Uniform Intelligence.

MC CLELLAN

Again, charges have been made in the national press that this system is turning into an unwieldy bureaucratic monster. As I have said before, this is totally wrong. Project CONDUIT will not become a national police force, nor will it invite unhealthy collusion between the agencies involved. The only job of the CONDUIT staff will be that of a clerical nature; data will be stored in a network of computers which will cross-feed information to avoid duplication and imprecision.
SCOTT

Then, Senator, if these charges are unwarranted, how do you answer the mounting evidence that the CONDUIT is becoming a selective project for use only by certain agencies?

MC CLELLAN

The answer to that is simple. The CONDUIT is becoming more selective in the agencies which can obtain a direct computer link to the system. Any state or local law enforcement or intelligence agency will be able to use the CONDUIT, but only by way of a sanctioned federal intelligence agency. In this way, we're hoping to reduce the escalating costs which are slowing progress on the building.

REPORTER 1

Which agencies will be sanctioned to operate the CONDUIT?

MC CLELLAN

All federal intelligence agencies, such as the CIA, the FBI, the Bureau of Intelligence, National Security Agency, National Crime Information Center, will all have computer links. Local agencies will be able to retrieve information from the system by telephone access.

REPORTER 2

Then you don't believe, Senator, that predictions of the CONDUIT becoming a kind of "Big Brother" organization, are warranted?

MC CLELLAN

That is correct.
As the conference continues, Scott, bored stiff, casually walks over to the fence and enters the construction area. He walks along, unnoticed by the workers. Then the foreman, RAYMOND LEWELLYN, catches a rather surprised glimpse of him and approaches. Lewellyn, a gruff, mean-looking man, is somewhat disturbed that Scott entered the area so easily, since it is restricted. At least he seems that way.

LEWELLYN

What are you doing here?

SCOTT

Scott Cristantello. Washington Times. The pep talk outside was getting boring. Thought I'd talk to some of you in here, get your views on this project.

Lewellyn looks puzzled. He's acting oddly. He can't figure Scott out.

LEWELLYN

What kind of game are you playing?

SCOTT

No games, Mr...?

LEWELLYN

Ray Lewellyn. I'm the foreman.

SCOTT

Mr. Lewellyn, what are your views on the CONDUIT? Do you think it will have a detrimental effect...?
LEWELLYN
I don't have any opinions at all.

The words are almost barked out. They are also final. Their tone is vaguely threatening. Scott, uncomfortable, resumes.

SCOTT
I've heard reports that the building schedule is being stepped up. Could you tell me...?

LEWELLYN
I can't tell you anything. You're not even supposed to be here. I'd suggest you leave.

There is a long pause. Scott glances at Lewellyn then at the building. He saunters off, climbing back out through the hole in the fence. He stands watching the Senator momentarily. His eyes catch the Senator's aide, DANIEL HELLER, looking at him. Heller, a thin business-like man, quickly looks away. It puzzles Scott but does not detain him, for he walks away, with a determined expression on his face.

CUT TO:

7. EXT. RESIDENCE IN WASHINGTON D.C. NIGHT

We are in a long shot. The house is dark, save for a lone bedroom light. A figure creeps silently across the lawn to some bushes beneath that bedroom window. In the light, we see that it is Scott. Inside, a WOMAN, a brunette looking younger than her 33 years but still retaining a wise, mature countenance, is readying herself for bed. Scott watches closely as she goes into the bathroom and shuts the door. He quietly opens the window and enters soundlessly. The woman is emerging from the bathroom, so he ducks into a partially-open closet. The woman pads to the bed, lays down, and opens a book to read. Scott opens the closet and approaches the bed. The woman notices and starts, but he raises a hand of caution. He begins to undress, removing his shirt first. He is smiling grimly at her; she is scared. Soon, despite her terror, she speaks.
WOMAN

Before you touch me, I want to know one thing. (PAUSE) Are you going to use any leather?

Scott's sadistic expression gives way to hysteria. He collapses to the bed in laughter. The woman, his wife DEBORAH CRISTANTELLO, has managed to remain serious, although she, too, is amused.

DEB

I'm serious! I have allergies!

JUMP CUT TO:

Later. Scott and Deb are lying in each other's arms. It is evident that they have been making love. Scott is smiling and playing with Deb's wedding ring on her finger. She is in thought; hesitantly, she addresses him.

DEB

I saw the doctor today.

Scott hums an exhausted reply.

DEB

He said I had a condition.

Scott's face turns quizzical. He looks at Deb directly.

SCOTT

What kind of condition?

Deb looks away, as if she doesn't want to see his face.
DEB

A pregnant kind of condition.

Pause. Then Scott turns to her.

SCOTT

Pregnant? I thought you were on the pill? What happened? Did they fail? Did they give you a bad prescription?

DEB

Scott, calm down. (PAUSE) I quit taking them.

SCOTT

Why? We agreed we wouldn’t have any children until I got better. I can’t give my full attention to kids right now. (PAUSE) Oh, Deb.

Deb turns to him. There are tears in her eyes.

DEB

Well, dammit, I’m thirty-three years old! A few more years, and I won’t be able to have children! I can’t wait forever! I can’t wait until you recover!

SCOTT

But we agreed!

DEB

No! You agreed!
Scott is hurt by her observation. Deb continues, still crying.

DEB

I want children! I want them very badly. Your children. In a few years I won't be able to have them. (PAUSE) You haven't made any progress for a long time. Dr. Gleason isn't helping you. He's making you question everything. Why can't you just accept what's happened? The doctors told you after the accident that they didn't think you'd ever regain your memory. It was traumatic, Scott. Brought on by sudden and intense shock. (PAUSE) You get more and more depressed every day because there aren't any answers. And you take it out on me. Not letting me have children because you can't handle them. (PAUSE) Sometimes I think it'd be better if you never found out!

Scott has been listening, and he knows it's true. Yet he has his side as well. He's trying to make her understand.

SCOTT

I think I know how you feel. After five years, the diagnosis is the same as it's always been: "totally retrograde episodic amnesia." (PAUSE) I've become a little obsessed with it, I guess. But it's my life that's been taken away. I don't know who I am. My parents, whoever they were, are long gone. No one remembers. (PAUSE) Dammit, Deb, I want children, too. I want a family. I want a happy life. But I want it to be my life. Something I can possess. And that can't happen if I don't know who I am. (PAUSE) I haven't been feeling myself the last few weeks. But I just wish you would've talked with me first.

Deb's tears have subsided. But she's still sad. She looks up at Scott.
DEB

I guess I thought you'd be closed-minded. I'm sorry, but it's important to me.

SCOTT

All you have to do is ask. (LONG PAUSE) Hey, I'm not mad anymore. Are you?

Deb shakes her head slowly. He smiles at her, then she begins to smile broadly. He slips his arms around her and pulls her down. He is maneuvering her into position for more sex.

DEB

I know what you're trying to do, but it won't make any difference now.

SCOTT

Couldn't hurt.

She puts her arms around him and pulls him down toward her.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE.
8. INT. WASHINGTON TIMES OFFICES DAY 8.

Scott is at his desk, listening to another tape. We hear Monarch again, this time in conference with his aide MICHAEL. We start in a close-up of Scott's face, which is resting on his hands on his desk. A small wind-up Woodstock the Bird toy hops past his nose. Scott appears to be childlike in watching the toy while listening to the earphone.

MONARCH (v.o.)

It has to be done.

MICHAEL (v.o.)

There'll be problems.

MONARCH (v.o.)

There'll always be problems. (PAUSE) When something is of no use, but it is posing a threat, you get rid of it. (PAUSE) No one will ever know.

MICHAEL (v.o.)

Probably not. (PAUSE) I guess it's started.

Monarch and Michael are discussing in light, business tones. Scott shrugs non-committally and turns off the machine. He removes his earphone. Clarke then speaks to him.
CLARKE

Another tape?

SCOTT

Last night. He keeps telling this other guy to "throw them away." That they're "dangerous to have around." Might be able to get something out of it.

CLARKE

Yeah. Five to ten years.

SCOTT

Is Jonason around?

Bob bursts out of his office hurriedly. He is excited. He points to Scott.

JONASON

Get over to the CONDUIT! They've had an accident! One of the workmen was injured. I just heard it on the scanner.

Scott is running toward the newsroom door. He has picked up his pad and is yelling back toward Clarke.

SCOTT

Get me a photographer, Hockney!

CLARKE

Get this! Do that! You'd think I worked around here.

Meanwhile, Scott has burst out the newsroom door on his way.
CUT TO:

9. EXT. CONDUIT BUILDING SITE DAY

A crowd has gathered around the fence. There is general pandemonium. Scott's car skids to a halt nearby, and he runs over. It is tough to get through the people, but he finally manages to reach the center of the crowd, where Ray Lewellyn is lying on the ground. He has fallen off the building. Nearly dead, Lewellyn has little hope of survival. No ambulance has arrived yet. Lewellyn sees Scott and instantly screams for him, taking a lot of energy out of his weak and dying body. The ambulance pulls up to the curb. Scott runs over to Lewellyn. They begin to puts splints and dressings on his body, but it's no use. Scott bends down and Lewellyn says his final words.

LEWELLYN
He's gonna kill all of us!

SCOTT
Who is?

LEWELLYN
Monarch! (PAUSE) It's started.

Lewellyn dies. Scott, puzzled, whips out his pad and writes down the final words, saying them over and over until he finishes. The attendants have to brush him out of the way in order to take Lewellyn to the ambulance.

SCOTT
"He's gonna kill all of us?"

Scott glances up and sees Dan Heller in the crowd, looking at him. Scott starts after him, but is slowed by the crowd. Heller dashes across the street and into his car. As Scott reaches the street, Heller is driving off. Scott pursues the car on foot then stops.
SCOTT

Mr. Heller! Mr. Heller!

CUT TO:

10. INT. WASHINGTON TIMES OFFICES DAY

We cut to a television in the newsroom. A POLICE OFFICIAL is giving an official statement on the death of foreman Ray Lewellyn. A group of reporters, with Scott standing at the head of them, is listening. As he speaks, we pull back to see Scott sitting at his desk, typing his story feverishly. Bob and Clarke are watching him and the T.V. at the same time.

POLICEMAN

The cable had been damaged by a welder's torch. It had been reported, but no one had repaired it yet. Lewellyn stood on the girder and caused enough additional weight for the cable to snap. That's all we have time for now, gentlemen.

As the reporters scramble to ask their questions, Jonason switches off the T.V. Scott is still typing, unaware of the television. Bob is over him like a hawk; Scott is becoming distracted by him.

JONASON

Did you get a lot?

Scott reaches over and points to about ten pages of already-typed material. He doesn't seem to lose one stroke on the keyboard as he does so. Jonason picks up the pages and begins to read them.

JONASON

We might be able to make the afternoon edition with this.
If I can get it done.

Jonason takes the blatant hint and walks away with the copy, taking out his red pencil.

Remember, that man signs your check. He may let it slip this time. If you're lucky.

Scott is still typing diligently. He soon finishes the last page and rips it out of the machine, taking it over to Jonason.

Is it any good?

Jonason nods distantly, still reading the copy. A WOMAN REPORTER from across the room calls Scott.

Cristantello! Line 4!

Scott goes back to his desk and picks up the phone. He does so with a devil-may-care attitude, since he is finally done with the story.

Scott Cristantello speaking.

Mr. Cristantello, this is Dan Heller. Senator McClellan's aide.
As the word "Heller" is spoken, Scott's eyes widen. He sits down and takes down a pad and pen. He motions as he talks for Clarke to pick up the same line. Clarke does so.

SCOTT
Yes, Mr. Heller, I was hoping you'd call. What can I do for you?

HELLER
We must talk. It's urgent.

SCOTT
What about, Mr. Heller?

HELLER
Not over the phone. It may not be very private. (PAUSE) Come to my house at seven o'clock tonight. We'll talk then. (PAUSE) Come alone.

The phone goes dead. Scott and Clarke slowly put their receivers down. Scott shrugs. He is most confused.

CUT TO:
11. INT. THE CRISTANTEOLO HOME DAY

Deb is in the kitchen, cleaning up the sink. The phone rings, and she, wiping off her hands, looks at it threateningly as she goes to answer it. Scott is in voice-over all through the scene.

DEB
Hello?

SCOTT
Hi, Deb.
DEB

Hi. What're you doing?

SCOTT

Getting ready to kill your evening plans. I have to go see someone tonight and won't be able to make it for dinner. Okay?

DEB

It's all right. I can always start calling numbers from the phone book to find a replacement.

SCOTT

Resourceful as ever.

DEB

Who're you meeting?

SCOTT

Dan Heller. He's a Senator's aide.

At the mention of this name, Deb's face takes on a look of casual worry. She keeps her voice as pleasant as it was, though.

DEB

You want me to keep something for you after you get back?
SCOTT

What did you have in mind?

He has spoken suggestively. She thinks nothing of the remark, then she catches on.

DEB

Food. I meant food.

SCOTT

Oh, I don't know. Maybe a little something to snack on.

DEB

I still meant food.

SCOTT

I'll probably be home late. See you later, mommy.

She smiles at his final salutation.

DEB

"Bye.

Deb hangs up, yet her face still retains concern. We should be curious about this, since the conversation hinted at nothing bad.

CUT TO:

12. EXT. THE HELLER HOUSE NIGHT
Scott pulls his station wagon up the driveway. He gets out and approaches the small but comfortable one-story house. He rings the doorbell and waits. No one answers. He rings again. It is a long time before Heller comes, looks through the door window, then opens it to greet Scott.

HELLER
Are you alone?

SCOTT
It appears that way, doesn't it?

HELLER
I don't want anyone to see us together.

SCOTT
Why not?

Heller looks at him curiously, then continues.

HELLER
I don't know if it would look right.

SCOTT
What do you mean?

Heller's voice suddenly raises volume, as if someone other than Scott was listening. Heller thinks the house is bugged. And he's right. Scott doesn't suspect.

HELLER
It might look as if I knew more about that accident at the CONDUIT than I revealed.
Heller motions for Scott to sit down on the couch. They both sit and face each other.

SCOTT

Do you?

As Heller speaks, he picks up Scott's notebook and begins to write something down.

HELLER

No, of course not. I wanted to find out if you had turned up anything. We think it might have been deliberately done, but we're not sure why. Mind you, we think that; we have nothing substantial yet.

Heller hands Scott's notebook back to him. Scott reads it: "The house is bugged. Keep talking." Scott glances at Heller, then he casually resumes the conversation. Heller resumes writing.

SCOTT

Isn't that a job for the police? Aren't they doing a good enough investigation?

Heller has completed his next note. He speaks as Scott reads: "It's started."

HELLER

Yes, surely, but there are things we must look for. Was it one of the workmen? Was it anyone with a criminal record? This is an intelligence center we're building; it must be protected. You being one of the best investigative reporters in town, I thought you might be able to keep me informed.
Scott has been looking puzzledly at Heller. Soon he begins to write, speaking as he does so.

SCOTT

Will it do any good? I'm not sure we're looking for the same thing. I just want a story.

Scott hands the note to Heller. It says, "What in the hell are you talking about?" Heller reads it, then flips back to the page that said, "It's started." He shows that page to Scott again. He speaks emphatically.

HELLER

I'm sure we're looking for the same thing! (PAUSE) This Senate Committee has been turning up some very embarrassing things. They're not all true, but they could be incentive enough for some foreign intelligence group to stage a few accidents, just to jeopardize the project.

SCOTT

You sound like a CIA agent, Mr. Heller. Any ties?

HELLER

I've got some contacts within the Agency. (PAUSE) Hell, these days, everybody's got contacts within the Agency.

SCOTT

How would the Senate Committee's reports help a foreign power?

Heller is looking at Scott as if he's trying to figure him out. It's the same expression we saw on Ray Lewellyn's face.
HELLER

With libelous accusations in the press, no offense, the reputation of the American intelligence community would be considerably weakened if suspicious accidents were to take place on the site of the CONDUIT.

SCOTT

American intelligence community? You really mean the CIA.

HELLER

If you wish. The public would demand a costly and useless investigation of past activities. Things which happened long ago and are of no significance.

SCOTT

The TRIAD?

HELLER

Yes. A few agents got overly zealous and took some unneccasry steps. It wasn't as organized as Senator Hall made it sound.

SCOTT

How did you learn all of this? Your contacts in the Agency?

Heller nods. Scott considers the grim expression on the man's face, then continues. Heller is putting a weight to his speech that has no justification in his words.
SCOTT

Do you know who any of these men are? These overly zealous agents?

Heller looks surprised at Scott's question, but answers.

HELLER

No. The men were reassigned into lower grade work. (PAUSE) They were considerably minor killings. A few foreign officers. They changed nothing. (PAUSE) Of course, this is all off the record.

As he says it, Heller looks menacingly at Scott, as if to tell him that keeping it "off-the-record" is not merely a favor.

HELLER

What I'm telling you is strictly classified. I just want you to understand the situation so that you can help me.

Scott has become angry, though. He glares back at Heller. His gaze isn't friendly, either.

SCOTT

I don't like being used as a reference source, Mr. Heller. I don't like being used, period!

HELLER

We all get used, one way or another.

Scott is confused as well as angry. Heller's manner has him that way. He cannot figure out Heller's motivations.
SCOTT

And what do you mean, minor killings? I don't consider any killings to be minor! It takes someone awfully disturbed to kill another human being. (PAUSE) I know I could never kill anyone.

HELLER

Yes you could.

The remark puzzles Scott. Heller is staring straight at him, as if the remark is intended to mean something else.

SCOTT

Heller, I'm a reporter. I don't work on the honor system. Unless someone tells me beforehand that it's all off-the-record. (PAUSE) And I don't like being threatened.

HELLER

No one threatened you.

SCOTT

A threat was implied. (PAUSE) Don't ever call me again, Mr. Heller. I don't want to help you. Your methods don't settle well with my conscience. The next time you want to deal, call Ben Bradlee at the Post. I'm sure he'll be just as annoyed as I am.

Scott starts toward the door. Heller gets up to go after him.

HELLER

Wait...!
Scott is outside and going toward his car. Heller stops him just before he opens his car door.

HELLER
Wait. Please.

SCOTT
Get your hand off my car.

Heller does so. He looks at Scott, almost pleadingly. He shakes his head in disbelief.

HELLER
Don't you understand?

SCOTT
Understand what?

HELLER
It's started!

SCOTT
Lewellyn told me that same thing. I've been hearing it a lot recently. What do you mean? What's started?

Heller's voice has changed now that he's outside. He's speaking frankly, but his words still ring mysterious.

HELLER
It doesn't mean a damn thing to you, does it?
SCOTT

You're beginning to catch on.

HELLER

It's why Lewellyn was killed!
It's why I'm going to be killed!
It's why I'm telling you! You've
got to be careful! It's
started.

Scott looks at the desperate Heller. His expression
is almost one of pity. He opens his car door.

SCOTT

I thought it was a myth that you guys
got paranoid. I guess it's not.
(PAUSE) Goodbye, Mr. Heller.

Scott gets into his car, starts it, and drives out
of the driveway. As he does, he watches the dejected
Heller walking slowly back into his house. Scott
puts the car into forward and drives away. About
25 yards down the road, a cataclysmic gas concussion
explodes within Heller's house. Scott hits his brakes hard,
then he shifts into reverse and quickly backs up to the
demolished house, which is now on fire. The look on his
face is of pure shock. One of the walls has been knocked
away from the house. There are no windows at all.
Scott turns on his mobile telephone and calls for the
police, panic in his eyes.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO.
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

13. INT. WASHINGTON TIMES OFFICES DAY

Scott is seated next to Clarke, and they speaking in low tones. Their conversation is not that important, only to the extent that we realize they are talking about Heller's death. Soon, Jonason comes walking out of his office. He approaches Scott, then stops.

JONASON

Cristantello, come into my office.

Jonason turns back toward the office. Scott rises and follows him. When we reach the room, we see that Jonason is troubled. There is something on his mind that, even at the end of the scene, he does not reveal.

JONASON

Sit down.

Scott sits. Jonason picks up Scott's story on Heller's death. He tosses it across the desk, and it lands in front of Scott.

JONASON

Your follow-up story on Heller's death? Your conversation with him?

Scott nods. He then looks into Jonason's face. Jonason can't bear to say what he's going to say. He knows he has a hot story on his hands, probably the hottest story ever. But circumstances do not allow........
JONASON

We can't use it.

The words strike Scott like a sledgehammer. His eyes widen yet he remains silent, waiting for Jonason's eventual explanation.

JONASON

It's not supported enough. It's heresay.

SCOTT

It's also a sworn statement with the Washington Police.

JONASON

No matter.

SCOTT

This is the biggest story in years! And you're not going to use it?

JONASON

That's what I said.

SCOTT

Why not?

JONASON

Don't worry about that.
There is a long silence. Scott is staring at Jonason, trying to understand. His face turns cynical. Jonason is broken; he cannot even face his own employee.

SCOTT
When did they call you?

JONASON
Nobody called me.

SCOTT
The CIA. When did they call?

JONASON
Your story is trying to connect a mythical assassination squad to a couple of accidental and unrelated deaths. Heller's house was old; his landlord had warned him about the gasline. Lewellyn got careless and died a workman's death. There is no connection!

SCOTT
I hope it was worth it, Bob. You're going to get awfully lonely, now that you've sold all your friends down the river.

Scott walks out. Jonason is sick. He sits down and drops his head into his hands. We cut back to the newsroom, where Scott is beginning to pack some things away from his desk. Clarke is sitting nearby.

CLARKE
What's wrong?

SCOTT
My story. He killed it.
CLARKE

He did what?

SCOTT

The CIA called him. Asked him to drop it.

CLARKE

Did he admit to that?

SCOTT

He didn't have to.

Clarke notices that Scott is packing a lot of things, and very quickly. He seems angry. Clarke's expression changes: he realizes what Scott is doing.

CLARKE

You can't do it, Scott.

SCOTT

Watch.

CLARKE

What will you do?

SCOTT

I don't know. I'll find something.

CLARKE

Sure. You've retained a lot of skills.
Clarke has meant the remark to stick deep. And it does. Scott stares blind hatred at Clarke, then continues moodily.

CLARKE

Dammit, you're being emotional.

SCOTT

You're damn right I'm being emotional. Do you think because I don't have a memory that I can't be emotional?

CLARKE

And don't hide behind that amnesia crap! That doesn't make you immune to being wrong. (PAUSE) Any problem gets too big for you, and you hide behind your handicap! That way you've got a more-than-valid excuse to act like the jerk you are! (PAUSE) What about Deb? How're you getting along with her these days? More fights because she won't put up with all your garbage? She's been good to you, Scott. And so has the Times. It's just that every once in a while you fail to realize that.

SCOTT

Do you like doing this to me?

CLARKE

I'm not! You're doing it to yourself. Pitying yourself because no one else will!

SCOTT

Are you finished?