

AMERICAN SCARLET

original screenplay by

KENNY KEMP

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OVER BLACK

VOICE (V.O.)

I don't know what scared me more--
the horrible things he did, or the
way they fascinated me.

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKE - NIGHT

P.O.V. - WE MOVE SLOWLY

through the pine forest, PANNING from side to side, looking for someone. The sound of HOARSE BREATHING counterpoints LABORED FOOTSTEPS. (All this is done with typical "B" movie overkill.)

Suddenly, WE STOP, our attention drawn to a moonlit clearing, where a faint light glows. Our hand reaches out to part the pine boughs and we SEE TWO TEENAGERS reclining on a blanket, making out.

A small Coleman lantern bathes them in yellow light. They passionately kiss, rolling around on the blanket.

TILT DOWN to a large kitchen cleaver held in our hands. It glimmers in the moonlight. TILT UP to the scene at hand.

A twig BREAKS. The two kids stop kissing and look around. We PULL BACK a little, hiding.

The Boy and Girl look directly at us but we are hidden by the tree trunk. After a moment, they both shrug and continue kissing.

Suddenly WE BURST from the trees into the clearing, waving the cleaver wildly about.

The two teenagers, bug-eyed with surprise, freeze.

We reach down and grab the Boy by the collar, jerking him to his feet. The knife appears IN FRAME before the Boy's face. His mouth drops open in horror.

The knife LEAVES FRAME and suddenly, the Boy jerks upward. Blood gurgles from his mouth. He seems genuinely surprised as he falls OUT OF FRAME.

RACK FOCUS to the b.g. where the Girl crouches, trying to button her disheveled blouse. As she looks DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA, she screams.

We start toward her. She stumbles, barely escaping our clutches and runs into the woods. FOLLOW her, the blood-stained knife occasionally ENTERING FRAME.

We chase the Girl through the woods, her shrieks for help unanswered, our BREATHING labored, the heavy FOOTSTEPS punctuating the still night.

She is blind with fear, stumbling, falling, getting back up, looking over her shoulder at us, just a step behind her. She sobs as she runs, terrified.

Finally, she falls over a large log and cannot make it to her feet. She crawls miserably away.

We STOP, surveying her pathetic movements. She is afraid to look over her shoulder. Finally, as she does, we START FORWARD, TILTING DOWN as we wipe the knife blade on our Levis. TILT UP as we approach her.

She is mute with fear, now back pedaling on her hands and feet, shaking her head wildly side to side.

We reach out and grab her ankle and she lets out a blood-curdling scream. We MOVE to sit on her legs and she thrashes wildly, beating at us with her fists.

The knife ENTERS FRAME again, then exits the TOP OF FRAME, preparing for a vicious downward thrust.

The Girl is frozen with fear, her hands held half-heartedly before her, pleading, tears streaming down her face.

The knife falls quickly, burying itself in her chest. It is pulled out, raised, and buried again--but there is no blood.

The Girl comes out of character for a moment, her eyes searching OFF CAMERA for just a micro-second. Then just as quickly she renews her screams and cries.

The knife falls again. No blood this time either.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE STALKER,

sitting on the girl's knees, removes the knife from her chest and examines it quizzically, touching the blade. He raises it again and makes one final stab. Nothing.

The Girl lets out a ticklish laugh. The Stalker chuckles in spite of himself. After a moment, the two are laughing with great bursts of glee.

The Stalker jovially stabs himself in the chest without effect. The Girl howls with laughter.

Suddenly a stream of blood spews from the knife haft, completely dousing the girl.

For a moment, she is frozen in disbelief, but is soon rendered helpless by waves of laughter.

The Stalker turns the knife toward himself and a final SPLAT! of blood splashes in his face.

He rolls off the Girl, holding his stomach and struggling for breath.

The Girl lies, racked with gales of laughter.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Cut!

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL

an entire FILM CREW: camera operator and assistant, boom operator, sound man, make-up people, gaffers and grips--about twenty people standing about, watching and laughing.

The actors get up, sticky with blood and covered with grass and leaves. The Director, JOEY HODGES, grabs the knife.

He's in his mid-30's, and wears the director's uniform: rugby shirt, jeans, baseball cap, and Reeboks. He is angry as he grabs the knife.

JOEY

Effects? Dammit, Effects!

He scans for the FX ASSISTANT, who finally appears, sheepishly holding a large syringe, its plunger depressed. A small clear tube extends from the syringe to the Stalker. The Stalker removes the tube from his shirt, smiling.

FX ASSISTANT

It wouldn't give... and then it did.
It'll work next time.

JOEY

It better.

The FX Assistant nods and turns tail. Joey looks around, scowling. He keys in on someone.

JOEY (CONT'D)

What're you laughing about?

COLE FURAY (early 30s)

snaps to attention. He is of medium build, boyishly handsome, with a thick shock of dark hair falling across his eyes.

He wipes the smile off his face as Joey approaches him. He holds a paperback behind his back.

COLE

There a problem, Joey?

Joey shakes his script in front of Cole's face, furious.

JOEY

Yeah, Furay, there is. This. This lame, sophomoric shit--I hate it!

COLE

The backers love it.

JOEY

Screw the backers! I'm talking about what I want!

Joey throws the script on the ground. Cole bends, picks up the script and examines it, keeping his eyes submissively lowered.

After a long moment, Joey grabs the script back. He looks daggers at the crew and they get back to work.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Come here.

He puts his arm around Cole's shoulders and hauls him away.

JOEY (CONT'D)

Are you unhappy, Cole?

COLE

No.

JOEY

Are you underpaid?

COLE

No.

JOEY

Are you creatively stifled?

COLE

(smiling; a joke?)

No.

JOEY

Then what is your problem? I have to give you a personal invitation to get you to show up on the set. The rewrites are useless!

He grabs the paperback out of Cole's hand.

JOEY (CONT'D)

What're you reading?

COLE

It's just research.

JOEY
Research. For this film?

COLE
No.

Joey glares at Cole. He leans in, fuming.

JOEY
Furay, I'm only gonna say this once:
if you don't shape up... I'm gonna
kill you.

His eyes bore into Cole's. He gives the paperback back.

JOEY (CONT'D)
I swear to God.

He turns and stalks away, waving P.A.s away.

A HAND

reaches and touches Cole's shoulder.

VOICE
Cole?

Cole jumps straight up, dropping his book, turning and staggering backwards. He sees DESMOND SCHEID, late 40s, rotund and balding, smiling.

Cole hyperventilates from the scare as Scheid claps him on the shoulder, steering him away.

SCHEID
Sorry to interrupt your "creative
conference."

Cole looks over at Joey, who barks orders in the b.g.

COLE
It's not done, Desmond.

Scheid straightens his vest. He's suddenly all business.

SCHEID
You promised it last week.

COLE
Any day now.

SCHEID
You told me that two weeks ago. I
have deadlines, too.

COLE
I've been busy on this film.

SCHEID
 (imperiously)
 What's this one called?

COLE
 (muttering)
 "Slice 'N Dice. Two."

SCHEID
 Two. No kidding.

That says it all. He clap Cole on the back, smiling.

SCHEID (CONT'D)
 Don't jerk me, Furay. I'm a busy
 man. I've got clients who actually
 write.

He gestures about him, smiling in a fatherly manner.

SCHEID (CONT'D)
 You wanna spend the rest of your
 fleeting youth writing this shit,
 Cole?

Cole looks straight ahead.

SCHEID (CONT'D)
 One more week. After that, I'm cutting
 you loose.

He turns and walks away. Cole watches him leave.

EXT. COLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

Cole's red Mercedes pulls into the driveway. The house is in a posh S.F. neighborhood of well-manicured lawns. Cole gets out walks toward the porch, a paper sack under his arm.

COLE (V.O.)
 Sure, I took a lot of shit for my
 troubles, but it was worth it: I
 made a ton of money shoveling it
 right back at 'em.

Cole lifts the lid on the mailbox, removing the letters. In the catch below, magazines are rolled up. He removes them, along with a script, bound with brads, with blue covers.

INSERT - COLE'S "ENDGAME" SPEC SCRIPT

A Post-It note reads: "Cole, talk to me. Jason."

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

gathers his mail together and enters the house.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room has the disheveled look of any well-to-do bachelor pad. Cole drops the mail on the coffee table. From the sack he pulls a six pack of Pepsi, and one of Coke.

He grabs a large tumbler and empties a can of Pepsi and a can of Coke into it, then takes a long, enjoyable drink.

He picks up the remote and turns on the late news. He flips from channel to channel.

INSERT - TELEVISION - SCAN NEWS BROADCASTS

On each channel it is the same: murder, mayhem, misery. HOLD on a crowd of gawking onlookers to a terrible train crash. There is a ghoulisn voyeurism at play.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

shakes his head. He goes through his mail, but it's all bills and catalogs. He uncovers the script, picks it up, and starts turning pages. Despite himself, a smile creeps across his face--he knows this is good stuff.

DOLLY BEHIND COLE to REVEAL the silent TV set. A REPORTER stands in front of a New York brownstone as a sheet-draped gurney is wheeled out the door. Pictures of several women appear on the screen, obvious victims. The reporter eagerly interviews a Policeman. We cut away to gaggles of curious onlookers. It's a silent circus.

Over these visuals, we HEAR the dialogue as the scene plays in Cole's head. The players yell over a THUNDERSTORM:

HEROINE (V.O.)

It's too dangerous!

HERO (V.O.)

I'm afraid! I don't think I can do it!

HEROINE (V.O.)

Then don't! No one will know! They're probably dead anyway!

HERO (V.O.)

You'll know... and so will I. I couldn't face you--or myself--if I didn't try.

HEROINE (V.O.)

Oh, Jesse, I love you!

HERO (V.O.)

That's why I have to go in there!

COLE

is moved. He takes a thoughtful drink from the tumbler, slowly shuts the script, leans back and ponders.

COLE
Who am I kidding?

He rises, crosses to the bookcase and shelves the script. He reaches for a legal pad and sits back down on the sofa.

INSERT - LEGAL PAD

A list of film genres: horror, mystery, serial killer, romance, mistaken identity, sci-fi, coming of age, etc.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

looks up at the TV.

INSERT - THE TELEVISION

continues with the murder report. The sound remains off.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

looks at the legal pad. He picks up a pencil and circles an entry. He turns off the TV and rises, muttering.

COLE (CONT'D)
Stranger than fiction.

He leaves the room. PUSH IN on the legal pad where the words "serial killer" are circled.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Cole enters, sits down at the computer, boots up and accesses an Internet service provider called "NetWorks."

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

Cole taps keys, moving through the menu overlays, finally arriving at a chat group called "WRITER'S FORUM."

He enters the MEMO MENU and types:

To: All Writers

From: FILMBUFF

Re: Info wanted: mass murderers--methodology, psychology, etc.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

leans back in his chair, thinking. He smiles.

COLE

Okay, all you insomniacs, do my homework for me.

He rises, switches off the power, and leaves the room.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. COLE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Cole sits at the patio table, reading the paper. It's a beautiful San Francisco morning: crisp and clear, with blue skies. His yard is immaculate; a gardener comes twice a week.

JASON (O.S.)

Cole!

Cole looks up from his reading, looking around. He focuses on the side fence. A big smile breaks across his face.

JASON LAMBERT

leans over the cedar picket fence, waving Cole over. Jason is nearing 80. An early film pioneer, he produced a dozen Hollywood classics in the 40s and 50s.

But in recent years, with retirement and the death of his wife, he has become a little, well, eccentric. He is beside himself with eagerness this morning.

Cole walks over and offers his hand to Jason, who vigorously pumps Cole's hand, beaming.

JASON (CONT'D)

Well, done, son! Well done!

COLE

Pardon?

JASON

Your script! I was moved, Cole! Moved!

COLE

I'm glad you liked it, Jason.

JASON

Liked it? Why it's a return to classic storytelling! It does the three things!

COLE
 (mildly amused)
 What three things?

JASON
 You give the audience an emotion,
 see? You make them laugh, you make
 them cry, or you scare them! And my
 boy, you've done all three!

He positively dances with glee. With his green gardening
 gloves and cap, Cole is reminded of a leprechaun.

He smiles, trying not to condescend to the old man.

JASON (CONT'D)
 Who else has seen it?

COLE
 Nobody, except you and my mom. I
 don't think it'll play--it's too
 soft. No lesbian ax-murderers,
 suicidal protagonists or exploding
 heads. Pretty boring stuff...

JASON
 I cared about the characters. That's
 the important thing.

COLE
 But my agent says...

Jason looks at Cole evenly. Suddenly, he is not an eccentric
 old gardener--he is a savvy filmmaker with forty years
 experience.

JASON
 Nobody knows anything.

Cole gives this serious thought, weighing it. Finally:

COLE
 Maybe they do.

Jason goes back to puttering in the flower garden.

JASON
 So, what're you writing now?

COLE
 A thriller. A murder mystery, actually--

JASON
 Like Agatha Christie?

COLE
 More like Stephen King.

JASON

Perhaps instead of exploiting our nightmares, you could cultivate our best dreams.

He turns away, carrying his tools with him, wandering through a rich bounty of blooming flowers that is his passion.

Cole stands at the fence, deflated. Finally, he turns from the fence and walks back toward the patio. From the other side, he hears Jason softly singing an old English folk song in his fading tenor.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - DAY

Cole plops down in the chair and BOOTS the computer up, accessing NetWorks. He punches buttons with practiced speed, highlighting his E-MAIL icon. Immediately a cascade of information scrolls down the screen. Line after line of comments, ideas, book titles, obscure newspaper clippings, etc.

Cole flips on the printer and it churns out page after page of data. Cole smiles to himself as he opens a Coke and a Pepsi, pouring them into a big tumbler. He takes a long, satisfied sip of his concoction.

COLE

Thanks, whoever you are...

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The San Francisco Public Library is a large stone monolith.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Cole wanders among the stacks, loaded down with books. He holds a list, eyes roving the stacks, searching.

He stops and removes a book from the shelf. He moves down the aisle to a table, where he unloads the heavy burden with a BANG.

He returns to the stacks in the b.g. The stack of books in the f.g. stands nearly a foot high.

As Cole considers a book at the shelves, SOMEONE in a dark coat passes between the books and the CAMERA, obscuring the view, pausing just an instant, then moving on.

As they LEAVE FRAME, we notice that another book has been placed in the middle of the stack: one with a red cover.

Cole returns from the stack, none the wiser. He picks up the stack and moves OUT OF FRAME.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cole enters, burdened with books. With great relief, he drops them on the coffee table, sits, and begins going through them.

He picks up the red book, trying to remember if he intended to check this one out or not.

INSERT - THE BOOK

is entitled "Necktie Nick: The Unsolved Marin County Murders". The book is turned over, revealing the author's jacket photo. Victoria Owens is 29, fair-skinned, dark-haired, with piercing sad eyes.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

is mesmerized by her beauty and tentative smile--he can't take his eyes off her. He opens the book and reads.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cole shuts the book and rubs his eyes. On his lap, a legal pad is full of notes. He turns the pages, nodding to himself.

COLE
Dynamite. This I can use.

He picks up the phone, dials.

EXT. TRANSAMERICA BUILDING - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

INT. AGENT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Desmond Scheid picks up the RINGING phone.

SCHEID
Scheid.

INTERCUT Cole and Scheid.

COLE
Answering phones now?

DESMOND
Late night. I was thinking about you--
you on schedule?

COLE

I'm close. But I need a favor. Check your fax.

DESMOND

Hold.

Scheid walks over to his fax machine, which BEEPS as a page slides out. He picks it up.

INSERT - THE FAX

It's the book jacket. Even on a fax, Vicki is beautiful.

BACK TO SCENE - DESMOND

nods approvingly and returns to the phone.

SCHEID

Your future ex-wife?

COLE

Ha. She wrote a book about a series of murders up in Marin County a few years back. I wanna talk to her about it.

Scheid leans back, grinning, examining the fax.

SCHEID

You wanna get laid.

COLE

Just get me her address. Call your buddy at HarperCollins.

SCHEID

We'll trade: you get the address, I get a script.

COLE

Done deal.

EXT. FREEWAY - LATER

Cole's 500SL tools along with the late evening traffic.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Cole's car is parked on the street. Cole stands on a nearby porch.

COLE (V.O.)

I wasn't above doing my own research
now and then, especially if the
subject was... compelling...

EXT/INT. VICKI'S APARTMENT - SAME - THE DOOR

opens a crack, held by a chain. Vicki wears paint-spattered
jeans and a sweatshirt, her hair tied back. She's gorgeous.

COLE

Victoria Owens?

She remains impassive. Cole holds up her book.

COLE (CONT'D)

My name is Cole Furay. I'm a grad
student at Stanford. I read your
book and--

VICKI

How'd you get my address?

COLE

What?

VICKI

My address! How'd you get it?

COLE

Your publisher. They said--

VICKI

They're not supposed to give it out.

COLE

I'm working on a profile of serial
killers. Your book is fascinating--
I'd like to discuss it with you.

VICKI

It's all in the book.

COLE

I know, but I think it would be
helpful if I could talk--

VICKI

I don't know anything about serial
killers beyond what I said in the
book. You probably know as much as I
do.

There is a pause as the two people size each other up.

COLE

I'm not a whacko. Promise. I'm just a student. Maybe a student whacko, but not, you know, a professional one.

He trails off, smiling. Vicki smiles, in spite of herself.

VICKI

Aren't you a little old for college?

COLE

I got into it late.

VICKI

Stanford, huh? Then I suppose you know Dr. Emil Kraus.

COLE

Dr. Kraus?

VICKI

I interviewed him for my book. He's at Stanford.

COLE

I haven't had any classes from him, but I know who he is.

A long moment, while Vicki surveys Cole coolly.

VICKI

There is no Dr. Kraus. And you're no student. Now go away before I call the cops.

She slams the door in Cole's face. He is stunned.

COLE

Please, Ms. Owens. I just want to ask you--

VICKI (O.S.)

I have a gun, whoever you are. Now get lost.

Cole takes an involuntary step backwards. He hesitates, then shakes his head, turns, and leaves.

INT/EXT. VICKI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Vicki pulls the drapes aside slightly and looks out the window. Beyond her, Cole walks away, looking once over his shoulder.

She collapses onto the couch, a paint brush held limply in her hands. She looks over at a framed photo on the end table.

INSERT - THE FRAMED PHOTO

is of Vicki and her sister Janice from high school. Vicki looks plain beside her statuesque, gorgeous sister.

BACK TO SCENE - VICKI

looks sadly at the picture, then gently replaces it, wipes away a tear, and leaves. PUSH IN on the photo of the two smiling girls, a world away now.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - NIGHT

Cole sits before the computer, loaded for bear: books, 3x5 cards taped to the wall, and reams of paper. Prominently displayed is Vicki's book, full of bookmarks.

The STEREO plays nondescript white noise music. Empty Coke and Pepsi cans sit near a large tumbler full of soda. Cole pours a generous amount of vodka into the tumbler, stirring it with his finger. He takes a long draw, then stares at the screen.

INSERT - THE COMPUTER SCREEN

The first words are typed in: "FADE IN:"

BACK TO SCENE - CLOSE UP ON COLE

as he smiles, takes another pull from the tumbler, grits back the taste, and exhales loudly. He opens Vicki's book.

COLE

Money, money, money.

ANGLE FROM THE DOORWAY - COLE IS BENT OVER THE SCREEN,

tapping rapidly on the keyboard. The only light in the room is the blue cast from the monitor.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cole wanders in, carrying a cup of coffee. He holds a sheaf of papers in his hand: the first thirty pages of his script. He picks up the phone. Nothing. He hits the disconnect button. Still no dialtone. Then he hears something: VOICES coming from outside.

He crosses to the window, pulls the drapes aside and looks outside.

HIS P.O.V. - A PHONE COMPANY VAN

is parked in front of the large green junction box situated between his yard and Jason's. A PHONE LINEMAN is seated facing the box, working. Jason looks over the Lineman's shoulder, apparently pestering him.

COLE

laughs to himself at the Lineman's predicament.

EXT. COLE'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Cole heads across his front yard. Jason is asking one question after another of the beleaguered Lineman, who is trying to ignore him. As Cole arrives, Jason looks up.

JASON

Good morning, Cole!

COLE

Morning, Jason. Your phone down too?

JASON

He's repairing our... what did you say it was, son?

The Lineman's eyes plead with Cole to save him.

LINEMAN

It's the relay processor. It won't be long.

JASON

I was just telling this fine young man what a pleasure it must be to have a job that takes you outdoors and puts you in contact with so many people! Wasn't I?

He smiles at the Lineman, who forces a weak smile in return.

Cole jumps into the breach.

COLE

Hey, Jason, you got any coffee? I'm out.

JASON

Why, yes. Come on over!

(to the Lineman)

Well, I'm sorry, but I must be going. It was very nice to have met you!

He extends his hand. The Lineman takes it. Jason turns and strides away, Cole following.

Cole looks back over his shoulder and the Lineman tips his hard hat, smiling gratefully.

EXT. JASON'S BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Cole wanders the backyard, among the blooming flowers, sipping a cup of coffee.

In the middle of the garden, a solitary bush stands, strangely barren of any blooms, although the leaves themselves are hardy, deep green and full of life.

Jason emerges from the kitchen.

COLE

You know, Jason, every time I see you, you're slaving away in this garden. You're quite a fanatic.

JASON

Anna's flowers won many a flower show. Me, I'm just trying to keep it up for her memory's sake.

COLE

You know, in the eight months I've lived here, I've never seen any blossoms on this one.

He gestures at the barren bush before him. Jason brightens.

JASON

Ah! This was her pride and joy! The "American Scarlet"--rarer than a seat at Spago! It blooms once a year, and for just a 24 hours. Perfection.

Cole inspects the plant.

COLE

Once a year? That's all? Hardly seems worth it.

JASON

Oh, Cole! That's what made it so valuable. All the work: pruning, watering... but what a reward! Constant, daily efforts that blossom into something precious... like...

Jason's eyes tear up, unable to continue. He continues looking at the barren bush.

A long moment passes as Cole studies something far off in the sky. Then he downs his coffee and gives the cup to Jason.

COLE

Well, thanks for the coffee, Jason.

As Cole turns to go, he touches him on the sleeve.

JASON

I hope you find someone like her, son.

Cole laughs it off and leaves, embarrassed. HOLD on Jason.

EXT. RESERVOIR - NIGHT

Moonlight bathes an empty gravel parking lot, and shimmers on the placid reservoir in the b.g. A light breeze sighs among the pines.

TIRES ON GRAVEL, and a windowless van circles the lot, stopping, the headlights SHINING into CAMERA.

MOVE toward the van as VOICES are heard. A shout, then the sharp report of a slap. Silence. Then, sobbing and pleading, followed by another blow. Finally, a sustained scream, which is choked off.

The van is still. WE ARE UPON IT NOW, and the headlights BLIND US. The side door opens and a DARK SILHOUETTE shoves a body roughly out of the van. CONTINUE DOLLY toward body.

The door SLAMS shut and the ENGINE starts. Kicking gravel, the van speeds away. In the darkness, STOP AND TILT DOWN on the bloody, immobile body.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - NIGHT

Cole leans back, his face lit by blue monitor light. TRACK BEHIND HIM to REVEAL the computer monitor.

INSERT - THE COMPUTER MONITOR

Cole's script is on the screen. It ends with the words from the previous scene: "In the darkness, STOP AND TILT DOWN on the bloody, immobile body."

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

arms away sweat and takes a pull from a vodka bottle. He picks up Vicki's book and thumbs through the pages.

COLE

What do you think? Is that how you'd do it, Nick?

INT. COLE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Cole sleeps soundly. On the nightstand, the clock reads 2:37 AM.

A small SOUND awakens Cole, who sits up, grimacing and holding his head. A hangover. He listens intently, then gets out of bed, looking around the room. It is lit only by moonlight through the vertical blinds.

Cole looks around for a weapon. He gingerly opens the closet door, rummaging silently. Bent over, his back to CAMERA, he freezes as he hears another SOUND from downstairs.

He emerges from the closet with a 9mm Beretta. He creeps to the door, cursing the SQUEAKY floor. He opens the door, which is mercifully quiet.

The hallway is full of ominous shadows. At the far end, the study door is open, a mysterious silver light falling into the hallway.

Cole grasps the gun tighter and slowly makes his way down the hall. He tries to avoid the numerous SQUEAKY boards. He is sweating, adrenaline pumping, muscles tensed.

He stops at the doorway, stoops to avoid a gut shot, and peers around the corner.

HIS P.O.V. - THE STUDY

is dark except for moonlight from the window and blue light spilling from the blank computer screen. Cole stands up, feeling foolish, and walks to the computer.

An ENGINE starts outside. Cole moves to the window, pulling aside the blinds.

PUSH PAST COLE to the street below. A van slowly pulls away from the curb. It is the same size and shape as the phone company van (as well as a million others).

ANOTHER ANGLE - COLE

watches it go. He turns and switches the computer off.

COLE

Alcohol plus darkness equals paranoia.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - DAY

Vicki's book lies on the table. WIDEN TO INCLUDE Cole as he picks it up.

INSERT - THE JACKET PHOTO: VICKI

is stunning, but distant.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

ponders the book a moment, opens it, and removes the scrap of paper with her phone number on it. He dials it.

INT. VICKI'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vicki is reading. The PHONE rings and she picks it up.

VICKI

Hello?

INTERCUT Cole and Vicki.

COLE

Ms. Owens?

VICKI

Who is this?

COLE

This is Cole, the guy who wanted to talk to you about your book? I wanted to apologize and tell you the truth--

VICKI

Leave me alone.

Vicki presses the disconnect button angrily.

Cole looks at the phone. He takes a breath, dials again.

Vicki tenses as the PHONE rings. She shuts her eyes as if she has a headache, then reaches and disconnects the phone.

On Cole's end, the phone RINGS and RINGS. After a long time, he hangs up.

EXT. COLE'S BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Cole emerges from the house with his typical tumbler of Coke, Pepsi, and vodka and his END GAME script, thumbing through it idly. In the twilight stillness, he pauses as he hears HUMMING from next door.

Cole walks toward the fence. PUSH PAST HIM TO FIND Jason kneeling in his flower garden, singing to himself, lost in his work. Around him, hundreds of Anna's prize-winning flowers bloom, golden in the evening light.

COLE WATCHES,

an emptiness on his face. He looks at his script, tucks it under his arm, downs the rest of his drink, and turns away.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. PINEVIEW RESERVOIR - NIGHT

A van pulls into the gravel parking lot, under a full moon. A gentle wind stirs the pines. The van circles the parking lot, stopping in the middle. The headlights remain on.

The driver's side door opens and a FIGURE emerges, opening the sliding side door. The Figure reaches inside and pulls out what is obviously a body.

BEGIN DOLLY MOVE toward van as the silhouetted Figure hoists the body and carries it a few steps, gently laying it down in the headlight beams. The Figure gently unwinds something from the head of the body, making motions and signs that appear almost religious.

A knife is held up, glinting in the moonlight, the curve of the blade almost scimitar-like. The knife descends slowly toward the body.

We cannot see past the HEADLIGHT GLARE, but now the Figure lifts the victim's head and places something under it. The winding motions around the head are repeated.

The Figure touches the victim tenderly, then rises and returns to the van.

CONTINUE DOLLY TOWARD THE BODY to reveal what appear to be mummy wrappings. PUSH INTO the wrapped face, where two dark red spots begin to seep through where the eyes are.

The ENGINE starts and the van pulls away. HOLD on the body.

INT. MORGUE HALLWAY - DAY

FOLLOW A FIGURE as he walks, dodging policemen, paramedics with gurneys, and prisoners chained together in orange jump suits. The Figure stops before a door marked "MEDICAL EXAMINER."

HIS P.O.V. - THE DOOR OPENS

into the morgue, and we are met by a burly DETECTIVE, who recognizes us and puts out a meaty arm, stopping us. He stares directly into CAMERA, his face a thundercloud.

DETECTIVE
What're you doing here?

DETECTIVE'S P.O.V. - ALONSO MORALES, 40,

stares impassively into CAMERA. He wears a plaid shirt and a bomber jacket. A cigarette hangs from his mouth.

DETECTIVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't tell me they brought you in on
this.

POLICE CHIEF LANDON MARX

looks up from conferring with the CORONER. RACK FOCUS to the b.g., where Morales stands beyond the Detective. Marx waves Morales over.

MARX
Alonso!

The Detective steps aside grudgingly. His cold eyes meet Morales's and he whispers as Morales brushes past.

DETECTIVE
Gonna screw this one up, too, Morales?

Morales crosses to Marx and the Coroner. They shake hands.

MARX
Thanks for coming.

Morales looks beyond Marx.

HIS P.O.V. - A BODY

lies on the autopsy table, covered with a sheet.

MORALES

turns to Marx.

MORALES
What am I doing here?

REVERSE ANGLE - THE MEN

step up to the autopsy table, which is in the f.g. The Coroner considers the body under the sheet.

CORONER
Meet Josie Benbough, age 23,
Detective. Maintenance guys found
her at Pineview this morning.

He begins to pull back the sheet. Marx restrains him.

MARX
We think Nick did this.

Long pause as this sinks in. Morales is visibly shaken.

MORALES
"Necktie Nick"?

MARX
Same M.O.

He nods and the Coroner lifts the sheet. Because of the ANGLE, we cannot see the body itself.

CORONER
See the rope marks on her neck here...

CLOSE ANGLE - MORALES

is repulsed. His eyes open wide and his gorge rises. He pulls out a hankie, putting it over his mouth.

MORALES
Díos mio. What happened to her eyelids?

THE CORONER

looks at the body, shaking his head sadly.

CORONER
Can't find 'em--souvenirs, I guess.
But we did find this.

WIDE ANGLE - THE CORONER

lets the drape fall back over the body and turns to a nearby desk, picking up an object which he hands to Morales.

MORALES
What is it?

INSERT - THE OBJECT

is a circular piece of papyrus about seven inches across, inscribed with hieroglyphics.

BACK TO SCENE - MORALES

turns the papyrus over in his hands. He shrugs and hands it back to the Coroner, who continues to examine it.

CORONER
Hell if I know. Some kind of Egyptian voodoo shit. We're checking on it.

The Coroner holds up a mass of bloody linen strips.

CORONER (CONT'D)
She was wrapped like a mummy.

Morales turns to the Chief, convinced.

MORALES

This is too weird for Nick--he's strictly a blue collar killer.

MARX

His last murder that we know of was seven years ago. He kills seven women, then just quits. Cold turkey. Gets it out of his system, right?

MORALES

Or dies--murdered or suicide. Maybe prison...?

Marx shakes his head at Morales's attempt to erase Nick's memory.

MARX

You wish. But since then, not one body has been found that matched his methods. Not one. Until today.

MORALES

Maybe it's a copy cat.

MARX

Seven years later? Check the similarities: he strangles and disfigures 'em, but there's no evidence of sexual molestation--Nick's not a pervert. Yet we both know ninety percent of serial snuffs involve some sexual angle.

MORALES

But this Egyptian shit... it's just not...

MARX

So he's into some new kink now. It's still him--I can feel it in my gut.

MORALES

Your proverbial gut.

MARX

Yeah. And my gut says this time we're gonna catch him... He made you out a schmuck last time, Morales. I'd think you'd wanna even the score. Besides, nobody knows this bastard like you do.

Morales looks at the Chief, doubtful.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cole enters with fifty pages of script under his arm. He plops down on the couch and opens the script. The TV is already on.

INSERT - THE SCRIPT

pages turn as Cole flips through them.

COLE

reads contentedly, until something on the TV catches his attention. He looks up as he hears:

VOICE

... early this morning, maintenance workers found a woman's body at the reservoir.

HIS P.O.V. - THE TV

shows a FEMALE REPORTER standing in front of a chain link fence. A sign on the fence says "Pineview Reservoir"

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

watches intently. He looks at his script, then at the TV. He turns up the VOLUME.

INSERT - TV

It's Shannon Adams, the reporter:

SHANNON

... though unconfirmed, many believe this is the work of the killer who terrorized Marin County seven years ago. A man whom the police, with gallows humor, dubbed "Necktie Nick," because of his penchant for hanging his victims after disemboweling them.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

looks at the coffee table.

HIS P.O.V. - VICKI'S BOOK

lies, the cover facing up: "Necktie Nick: The Unsolved Marin County Murders".

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

can't believe the coincidence. He looks back at the TV.

INSERT - TV

The Reporter is wrapping up her location report.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

... something no one wants to think about: has "Necktie Nick" come back to haunt us? Shannon Adams, channel five news.

CONTINUE INSERT - TV - NEWS STUDIO

The evening news broadcast continues.

ANCHOR

The police have refused to reveal any information about the mutilation of the body, but a source has told us that it was wrapped mummy-style, and that a disk-like object was found with the body.

A BOX appears over the Anchor's shoulder. In it is a circular diagram covered with hieroglyphics.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

The disk is probably a "hypocephalus," a piece of papyrus placed under a mummy's head in Egyptian funeral rituals, intended as a map to guide the deceased on his journey through the perils of the Underworld.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

mutes the TV and leans back, shaking his head, unbelieving.

COLE

Damn, why can't I write shit like that?

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Anchor continues. PULL BACK to reveal a TV hung high in the corner in a waiting room, half full of people.

ANCHOR

... the last body was found seven years ago, and no one has been charged with the murders. "Necktie Nick" remains at large.

VICKI

stares at the TV from her position behind the counter. Her face is ashen.

Another NURSE puts her arm around Vicki's shoulder. Vicki turns to the Nurse, horror in her eyes.

VICKI
Oh, God, not again.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Cole enters and boots up the computer. He thumbs through the first 50 pages of his script. Decided, he tosses them into the wastebasket.

COLE
But you know what they say: mediocre composers borrow, great composers steal.

INSERT - THE MONITOR

At the E-MAIL MENU, he keys in the following words:

To: All Writers

From: FILMBUFF

Re: Need info re: ancient Egyptian religion, practices, beliefs, etc.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

hits the ENTER key with a flourish. He stands, stretches, and walks from the room. A beat, and then the computer beeps softly.

INSERT - MONITOR

The screen begins filling with info, scrolling rapidly. It's full of hieroglyphics and illustrations, bibliographies, etc--all concerning ancient Egypt.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Cole appears, a two inch sheaf of papers under his arm. He plunks down on the sofa, and begins sorting through the pages, which contain obscure references, glyphs, and illustrations. Suddenly, he stops and pulls a page out slowly.

INSERT - THE PAGE

contains a large picture of the papyrus disk mentioned on the news. Below it, a paragraph gives the full explanation.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

shakes his head, amazed at his luck.

COLE
The hypocephalus. Talk about luck.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY - ESTABLISHING

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Morales stands at a door marked "RECORDS." A CLERK comes into view and hands him a large cardboard carton.

CLERK
Man, this was really buried.

Morales opens the box and pulls out files, papers, etc.

MORALES
Not deep enough for me.

He loads the carton on top of another and leaves.

INT. HOMICIDE/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Morales enters the room, looking around, uneasy. Other Detectives mill about, talking, drinking coffee. When he is noticed, all conversation ceases. Morales looks around for a spare desk. The others ignore his presence or return his looks with icy stares.

He finally finds a desk over in the corner, cluttered with junk. He crosses to it, but is met by another detective, BILL THOMAS, black, late 50s.

THOMAS
Public opinion says you had your chance and botched it. We thought one of us would get a crack at Nick this time.

MORALES
Be my guest.

THOMAS
You're gonna get pretty lonely with that kind of attitude.

MORALES
I'm not asking for help.

Thomas is looking through grizzly crime scene photos from the box. He drops them on the desk and turns to go.

THOMAS
Maybe you should.

At that moment, the Coroner enters, carrying an envelope. He looks around, finds Morales and approaches.

CORONER
Did you read my prelim?

Morales nods. The Coroner looks around, then begins opening the envelope.

Thinking better of it, he stops and motions for Morales to follow him outside, away from other ears.

FOLLOW THEM as they walk out of the door and down the hallway, finding a quiet corner.

CORONER (CONT'D)
The cause of death was asphyxiation,
right?

MORALES
So you said.

CORONER
That's what I thought at first, too.
So what's this?

He opens the envelope and removes a photo.

INSERT - THE PHOTO

A small puncture wound is seen just below the ear.

BACK TO SCENE - CORONER

CORONER (CONT'D)
I didn't catch the needle track during
the autopsy--all my attention was on
the eyelid-ectomy. But the blood
test showed minute traces of a
paralytic venom.

MORALES
Venom?

CORONER
Yeah. It's from a beetle called the
"Khepera Scarab," found only in the
Sudan.

MORALES
How'd you find all that out?

CORONER
The Cal-Berkeley Egyptian expert we
called read it right off this "hypo"
thing...

He removes the hypocephalus from the envelope. He points at a glyph of a beetle on it.

INSERT - THE HYPOCEPHALUS

The Coroner is pointing at a representation of a scarab beetle on the papyrus, next to a large eye.

CORONER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

This is it here. This thing's more than a road map for the dead person. It contains the ritual the killer uses when he offs them. Look: this is the Eye of Re, and represents eternal life. See all these little crosses with the heads on them?

He points to the ankh symbols.

MORALES (O.S.)

I've seen those before. Aren't they good luck or something?

CORONER (O.S.)

They represent power over death. But this power isn't easy to come by. It costs.

BACK TO SCENE - MORALES

MORALES

What do you mean?

The Coroner pulls Morales aside, speaking conspiratorially.

CORONER

This time, your buddy Nick's into some serious shit. He's sacrificing his victims so he can become immortal.

MORALES

Victims? We've only found one.

CORONER

So far. See that?

INSERT - THE HYPOCEPHALUS

Among the other depictions is a sacrificial "lion couch," where a victim lies. Another figure stands along side, with a raised knife. There is an upside down "U" glyph near the figure. In the upper left hand corner are ten ram icons, representing sacrificial offerings.

BACK TO SCENE - MORALES AND THE CORONER

MORALES

What's it mean?

CORONER

It's the number of people he's gonna kill this time.

MORALES

How many?

CORONER

He's got nine more to go.

HOLD ON Morales as this sinks in.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY - ESTABLISHING

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cole enters, somewhat tentatively, looking around. He passes through the waiting room and approaches the nurse station.

COLE

I'm looking for Victoria Owens. She's a nurse here.

The RECEPTIONIST smiles up at Cole.

RECEPTIONIST

Just a sec.

She picks up the phone and PAGES Vicki.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Nurse Owens to E.R. desk. Nurse Owens.

Cole nods his thanks and looks around, finding a seat. He picks up a year old People magazine and thumbs through it.

In a moment, Vicki rounds the corner. Cole sees her as she approaches the Receptionist, who points at Cole.

Vicki turns. Her face registers surprise, then hurt, then anger. She takes a step backwards.

Cole stops in his tracks.

VICKI

What are you doing here?

COLE

I wanted to apologize--

RECEPTIONIST
Should I call security?

COLE AND VICKI
(together)
Yes! No!

The Receptionist dials.

Vicki takes another step back, about to cry.

Cole doesn't know what to do.

COLE
Please, talk to me.

VICKI
(more hurt than angry)
You'd better go. Security's coming.

COLE
What did I do? I just want to talk
to you about your book!

VICKI
He killed my sister!

Cole is shocked; this is new information. Instinctively, he moves to comfort her. She is crying now. He reaches and touches her arm gently. She's oblivious to his presence.

COLE
I didn't know. You didn't say she
was your sister in the book... I'll
leave.

GUARD (O.S.)
You got that right.

Cole turns and sees a huge, barrel-chested SECURITY GUARD striding his way. Cole steps back.

The Guard reaches for Cole, who turns, stumbling over an end table, barking his shin sharply and falling to the ground.

The Guard removes his club. Cole scrambles along the floor, crab-like. Vicki steps forward, speaking to the Guard.

VICKI
It's okay.

The Guard doesn't hear.

Cole gets to his feet and scrambles out of the door.

The Guard stops at the entrance, replacing his club in his belt. He turns to Vicki.

GUARD

You okay?

Vicki nods and crosses to the door, looking out.

GUARD (CONT'D)

You want me to call the cops?

HER P.O.V. - COLE

limps across the parking lot, rubbing his shin.

CLOSE ANGLE - VICKI

VICKI

It's okay. I think maybe I...
overreacted, anyway.

GUARD

Suit yourself.

He turns and leaves Vicki looking out the door.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - DAY

Cole enters, loaded with books. He places them on the desk near the computer and sits down. He looks into the wastebasket.

INSERT - THE WASTEBASKET

Inside, Cole's first fifty pages sit, discarded.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

cracks his knuckles and boots up the computer. An E-MAIL notice flashes. Cole accesses NetWorks.

INSERT - MONITOR

Cole access the E-mail and the following quatrain appears:

Anubis sets the Ba of Osiris free;

The eye is opened forever.

All enemies are overcome;

He holds the keys to eternal life.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

studies the monitor closely, then begins rapidly thumbing through the books at hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COLE'S STUDY - LATER

Cole sits amid dozens of open books, legal pads, and crude scrawled attempts at hieroglyphics. He studies the hypocephalus printout.

INSERT - THE HYPOCEPHALUS

Cole's finger points at the figures in the lion couch scene near the center of the hypocephalus.

COLE (O.S.)

Okay. This guy is Anubis, and this person represents Osiris. The hawk is his "ba,"--his immortal soul.

(beat)

I get it: it's a sacrifice.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

leans back in his chair, pondering.

COLE (CONT'D)

Cool.

INT. EDITING BAY - NIGHT

Joey and the EDITOR work at the flatbed. They are smoking pot--the room is full of smoke. The door opens and Cole enters. It takes a moment for his eyes to adjust.

COLE

Burnin' down the house.

Joey waves him over, holding out the joint. Cole demurs.

Joey shrugs and turns back to the monitor. It's the stalking scene from the beginning of the film.

COLE (CONT'D)

How's it coming?

JOEY

You oughta know, you wrote it.

COLE

Then it sucks for sure.

Joey nods, smiling.

Cole hands a sheaf of paper to him.

COLE (CONT'D)

So take a break--read the first act of my new script.

JOEY
What's the angle?

COLE
This serial killer believes he's
gaining immortality by sacrificing
his victims--ancient Egyptian style.

JOEY
Stealing from the news now? Shameless
rip-off, Furay.

COLE
That's the beauty of it! This is
current events! I mean, if we move
on this, we might have the movie
made before they catch the guy!

EDITOR
You are scum, Furay.

COLE
Hey, weren't you the editor of "Silent
Night, Bloody Night"?

The Editor looks daggers at Cole, who smiles.

Joey ponders the script, thumbing through the pages.

JOEY
Who's seen this?

COLE
No one. I promised it to my agent,
but I wanted to make it up to you
for being flaky. You were right, I
do owe you.

He gets up to leave, smiling. Joey smiles back.

JOEY
So, I'm the first to see this?

Cole nods. Joey smiles--a bit too broadly.

JOEY (CONT'D)
Thanks, Cole.

Cole leaves.

HOLD ON Joey as he looks over the script.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Candles illuminate the scene. Several large 4x8 panels stand upright, like a sort of Stonehenge, surrounding a stone lion couch, upon which lies the body of a YOUNG WOMAN.

At the foot of the couch is an altar, above which four seated images stare blankly down: Re (the Sun god), Osiris (god of the Underworld), Horus (son of Osiris, and avenger of his death), and Isis (sister/wife of Osiris who raised him from the dead).

On the panels around the sacrificial altar are various Egyptian images: hieroglyphics, kings, battles, etc. Permeating the scene is a feeling of incompleteness; a sort of hackneyed attempt at realism.

A FIGURE, dressed in a robe, wearing the jackal mask of Anubis, stands at the altar, praying. We can't understand what is being said, but it's ancient and portentous. The Figure reaches and opens a vial adorned with a scarab and produces a syringe filled with amber liquid.

The Figure turns and approaches the Victim, who is tied up with duct tape. Her screams are muffled by a gag.

The Figure holds up the syringe and leans over the squirming woman, injecting the carotid artery on the neck.

LONG SHOT - THE VICTIM

goes into a seizure as the drug takes effect. The masked figure stands immobile at her side, watching carefully as the struggles wind down and finally cease.

CLOSE ANGLE - A SCALPEL

glints in the hand of the Killer.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE KILLER

leans over the body, working. We know what he's doing.

ANGLE ON ROOF TRUSS

A rope is thrown over the beam.

ANGLE ON A BUMPER WINCH

The rope is attached to the end of the cable. A switch is thrown and the winch begins winding.

LONG SHOT - THE SHADOW

of the victim, hung by the neck, ascends against the insulation-lined warehouse wall.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - NIGHT

ANGLE ON MONITOR - The final words of the previous scene are on the screen. PULL BACK to REVEAL Cole, leaning back in his chair, thinking. Around him are books, papers, hieroglyphics pinned to the wall, etc. He hits SAVE and smiles.

COLE

Now that's more like it.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. COLE'S/JASON'S BACKYARD - DAY

A package sits on the patio table, wrapped in brown paper. Cole enters, carrying a pair of scissors. He begins cutting open the package, gradually revealing a large sculpture of the jackal of Anubis, made of a dark, polished stone.

Cole stands back, admiring the statue. He turns, HEARING something. FOLLOW HIM as he walks to the fence separating his backyard from Jason's. PUSH PAST Cole to find Jason, sitting in his patio, his head held in his hands, sobbing.

Cole looks around, unsure what to do. After a moment, he speaks tentatively.

COLE

Jason?

It doesn't appear that Jason heard.

Cole grabs a hold of the top rail and easily vaults the fence. He walks to Jason.

COLE (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

Cole touches him on the shoulder and Jason looks up, seemingly unfazed at Cole's presence. He smiles and stands, digging out a hankie from his pocket. He dabs at his eyes.

JASON

I'm fine. I was just... remembering.

He leads Cole over to the flower garden.

In the middle of the garden, the American Scarlet has blossomed, yielding not one, but two beautiful, blood-red flowers.

JASON (CONT'D)

Have you ever seen anything like it?
Two blossoms!

Cole shakes his head.

JASON (CONT'D)

Anna tended that flower for fifteen years. But it never gave her two blossoms! Never!

COLE

What makes it so important? Is it worth a lot?

JASON

There's no money in it, if that's what you mean. No, the American Scarlet was more than a flower to Anna; it was a metaphor...

(beat)

But this year she isn't here to see it...

He holds back his tears. Cole puts his arm around him.

COLE

I'm sorry.

Jason looks at the blood-red flowers, dabbing at his eyes.

JASON

After all the waiting, when it finally bloomed, she'd admire it for a few moments, then snap it off and place it in my lapel!

COLE

Why would she kill a flower she waited an entire year for?

JASON

Oh, Cole, have you ever loved someone?

Cole looks away, avoiding Jason's piercing eyes.

JASON (CONT'D)

In the months since her death, I've prayed for a sign that she's all right. Today I got it. Two blossoms!

Jason snaps off one of the blossoms, giving it to Cole.

JASON (CONT'D)

Give it to someone you love.

COLE

There's nobody.

JASON

Then you must use better eyes.

Cole examines the flower, abashed. He doesn't know what to say. Jason shoos him away, smiling.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'd like to be alone with Anna.

Cole finds himself walking to the fence. He sets the flower on the rail, hops over, and tenderly picks it up again. He walks past the patio and the statue, heading indoors.

INT. COLE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cole eats supper while he pours over Budge's *The Mummy*, taking copious notes.

The PHONE rings. Cole picks it up.

COLE

Hello... Hi, Joey... What? Sure,
I'll watch. Okay, right now. Bye.

He hangs and takes his dinner into the study room.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The television is on and WE SEE another location report. Shannon Adams stands outside the POLICE STATION with Detective Morales, who looks haggard.

SHANNON

... was discovered on the waterfront,
just two hours ago, the second victim
found in a week...

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

sits down on the sofa, shaking his head.

COLE

Oh, God, no.

INSERT - TV

The reporter is on.

SHANNON

... then what can you tell us about
the emerging pattern, Detective
Morales?

She shoves the microphone in Morales's face.

MORALES

I'm not prepared to discuss patterns
yet, Miss Adams.

SHANNON
Isn't this the work of "Necktie Nick"?

MORALES
I don't believe so.

SHANNON
You don't? The victims were both
strangled and mutilated. Isn't that
Nick's modus operandi?

Morales fairly squirms under the hot TV lights.

MORALES
There are other factors in these
killings that differ from those
attributed to "Necktie Nick."

SHANNON
You mean the mummy-wrapping, the
mysterious papyrus disk, and the
mutilation. Can you describe the
mutilation?

MORALES
I'll bet you'd like that.

Morales scowls at her and goes back inside the building.

SHANNON
Well... I...

She turns toward camera, shrugging.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

turns off the TV, but continues staring into the blank screen,
thinking.

COLE (V.O.)
I got this weird feeling that I knew
more about this stuff than anybody
else except... him...

He stands and plucks a xerox of the hypocephalus off the
wall, examining it.

After a moment, he reaches for the phone and dials 911.

COLE (CONT'D)
Gimme the police... Detective
Morales... Yeah, homicide.

INT. HOMICIDE - CONTINUOUS

Morales picks up the RINGING phone.

MORALES

Morales.

INTERCUT Cole and Morales.

COLE

Are you heading the murder investigation?

MORALES

There's a lot of murders in San Francisco, buddy.

COLE

The "Necktie Nick" murders.

MORALES

We haven't made that connection--

COLE

I know something.

Morales puts his feet on the desk and gazes at the ceiling.

MORALES

I'm all ears.

COLE

Are the bodies cut up?

MORALES

Look, pal, the entire world knows that. Unless you got something substan--

COLE

The eyelids.

Morales jumps up, knocking over his chair. He puts his hand over the mouthpiece, gesturing wildly for attention. He finally succeeds in getting Thomas to look his way.

MORALES

Say again?

He mouths "PHONE TAP! PHONE TAP!" repeatedly to Thomas, who finally gets it. Thomas gets on another phone, speaking low.

Morales turns his attention to the phone again.

COLE

The eyelids. Were they, ah, removed, I mean, cut off?

Silence on the phone. Morales is thinking.

MORALES

How did you know?

Cole takes a deep breath, starting to speak.

COLE
I think I should tell you--

An audible CLICK! is heard as the phone tap begins. Cole reacts, then slams down the phone, terrified.

Morales, disheartened, makes a slashing motion across his neck to Thomas, who speaks into his phone.

Cole jumps up, pacing the room, his mind a whirl, wringing his hands, looking at the phone as if it might bite him.

COLE (CONT'D)
Somehow he's acting out my script!

Suddenly, the phone RINGS, scaring him nearly out of his wits. It rings and rings. He watches it, afraid to answer.

He lets the phone ring until the machine picks it up.

COLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This is Cole. You know the drill:
leave a message.

The machine BEEPS. Cole can't take his eyes off it. Part of him wants to fly out of there. But on the phone:

VICKI (V.O.)
Is this Cole Furay? This is Vicki
Owens. Did you just see the news? I
can't believe--

Cole snatches the phone up gratefully.

COLE
Vicki? I'm here.

INT. VICKI'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vicki sits on the couch, clutching the phone, her face red, her eyes wild. She's been crying.

VICKI
Are you watching the news?

INTERCUT Cole and Vicki.

COLE
Yes. Are you okay?

VICKI
He's doing it again and I'm in danger!
Please, help me!

COLE

Why are you in danger?

VICKI

After the book came out, someone sent me a package in the mail. Inside was a dead rat wearing a bow tie. He knows who I am and where I am! He's killing people again--I know he wants me!

COLE

Calm down. Stay put. Lock the door.

VICKI

It's locked! I checked it twice already!

COLE

Then check it again. I'll be there in twenty minutes!

EXT. FREEWAY - LATER

Cole's car speeds along, weaving in and out of traffic like a maniac.

EXT/INT. VICKI'S HOUSE - LATER

Vicki sits on the couch, knees drawn up around her, drapes drawn, the lights out. She holds a baseball bat on her lap.

A loud KNOCK at the door startles her. From outside:

COLE (O.S.)

Vicki! You in there?

She approaches the door and opens it a little, keeping the chain on.

Cole is on the porch, looking as frightened as she does.

COLE (CONT'D)

Vicki? Are you okay?

She nods.

COLE (CONT'D)

Can I come in?

Vicki looks around doubtfully. She isn't sure now. She's nearly hysterical with fear.

Cole reaches his hand through the door slowly.

COLE (CONT'D)

I'm here to help.

His hand is extended, palm up. Vicki looks at it warily. Finally, she takes it tentatively, her own small hand shaking in his warm, firm grasp. It calms her.

COLE (CONT'D)

It's okay. Shhh...

She slowly pushes his hand out, shuts the door, and removes the chain, opening it again. Cole steps in.

Vicki crosses and sits on the couch.

Cole stands near the door, unsure what to do next.

VICKI

I shouldn't have called. I'm probably blowing this whole thing out of proportion. I mean, if he hasn't come after me in the last seven years, why would he come now?

Cole sits on a chair opposite Vicki.

COLE

Right. He probably wants you around to write the sequel.

Vicki looks up at Cole, hurt turning to anger.

VICKI

That's not funny.

COLE

Sorry. I just don't know how to... to act around you. We got off to kind of a rocky start.

Vicki relaxes and looks directly at Cole for the first time. Something softens in her.

VICKI

You're right. Let's start over.

COLE

First I have a confession. I'm really writing a novel, which, given what's been happening, feels pretty trivial right now.

He fiddles with the zipper on his jacket.

COLE (CONT'D)

Actually, I saw your picture on the
dust jacket and had to meet you.
Plain and simple.

Vicki relaxes. Typical male motivations she can deal with.
There is an edge in her voice, but she's not really angry.

VICKI

So you were hitting on me in the
name of "research"?

COLE

No! Of course not! I wanted to know
how you came to write a creepy book
like that--it gave me the chills.

(beat; quietly)

... But what you said about your
sister explains all that.

VICKI

I changed the names in the book.
Janice was a year older than I; I
was extremely jealous of her in high
school: she was a cheerleader, really
popular, etcetera. I had braces, bad
skin, and was overweight.

(beat; struggling)

One night, she left to go to a
friend's house but she never arrived.
They found her body a week later in
the bay. She'd been strangled and
mutilated. She was the last of Nick's
victims--until now.

COLE

So you're sure it's him?

VICKI

I don't have any proof, but I know
it's him.

COLE

Why can't the cops catch him?

VICKI

Because they're morons. He ran them
in circles, chasing their tails.
He'd send them these little cryptic
verses, full of clues, daring them
to catch him. They never even came
close. After Janice's death, when no
other bodies turned up, they just
closed the case. I went to the mayor,
the governor, the FBI. Nothing.

(MORE)

VICKI (CONT'D)

"Too many other cases that can be solved," they said. I was so full of anger and frustration, I had to do something.

COLE

So you wrote the book.

VICKI

Yeah... and made myself a target as well. Pretty smart, huh?

COLE

Vicki, do you believe in ESP?

VICKI

I dunno. Why?

COLE

How else could he evade the cops for so long?

VICKI

I don't think he's psychic. But who knows? Maybe if you're as batshit crazy as he is, you develop other powers.

COLE

What do you make of the Egyptian stuff?

VICKI

It's probably just something to throw the police off. But it doesn't matter because they won't catch him anyway. He doesn't make mistakes like regular people do, Cole. He's like a machine: cold and methodical. He takes great pride in his "work."

She shivers at the thought. Cole ponders, setting his jaw.

COLE

Vicki, do you know anything about computers?

VICKI

Computers? No.

Again, silence as Cole thinks.

Vicki's face shows doubt.

VICKI (CONT'D)

What do ESP and computers have to do with Nick?

COLE

They're just plot devices for my novel.

VICKI

What else have you published?

COLE

Oh, nothing. It's my first.

Vicki looks evenly at Cole, wondering.

He stands, feeling her zero in on him.

COLE (CONT'D)

Well, I better go. Will you be all right?

VICKI

Yeah. I just didn't know who else to...

COLE

It's okay. You helped me clear a few things up.

VICKI

Like what?

Cole crosses to the door, looking for escape.

COLE

Things. Thanks. Maybe we'll see each other again.

Vicki is openly suspicious now.

VICKI

Maybe. Who knows?

Cole opens the door. He turns and extends his hand.

COLE

Right. Who knows?

They shake hands and Cole leaves. Vicki stands in the doorway watching him go, looking confused.

INT. COLE'S CAR - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Cole cruises the late night traffic, thinking.

COLE (V.O.)

I wondered why I continued to lie to her about my script. But the harder I tried to convince myself that the connection between my script and the killings was a coincidence, the less I believed it.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. COLE'S STUDY - DAY

Cole sits on the couch, pouring over Egyptian books and notes on the coffee table. From downstairs, a sound as the DOOR OPENS.

JASON (O.S.)

Cole? You home?

Cole rises and goes to out the door. He stops at the top of the stairs, looking down at Jason.

HIS P.O.V. - JASON

looks up at Cole, smiling. He's wearing his gardening hat.

JASON (CONT'D)

Am I interrupting?

COLE

waves him up and then turns and goes back into the study.

In a moment, Jason walks through the door in mid-sentence:

JASON (CONT'D)

... an extra flat of begonias and I thought...

HIS P.O.V. - THE STUDY

has been turned into a veritable museum of Egyptology. National Geographics are stacked, articles and pictures clutter the walls, and dozens of books lie about.

On the wall by the computer is a blow-up of the hypocephalus, with notes and explanations.

JASON

looks around in wonder. Cole sits on the couch, looking through another book on hieroglyphics.

JASON (CONT'D)

My goodness. What is this?

Cole closes the book and leans back, rubbing his eyes.

COLE

My new script has an Egyptian angle
in it.

Jason examines the hypocephalus. He turns to Cole.

JASON

Wasn't this on the news?

Cole nods. Jason gives Cole a hard look.

COLE

Jason, you believe in life after
death, don't you?

JASON

I hope for it.

COLE

The Egyptians believed. They spent
their entire lives preparing for
death. And they believed in a literal
resurrection four thousand years
ago.

JASON

Is that so?

COLE

The funerals for their kings lasted
months! They were buried with food
stores, weapons, and maps...

He points to the hypocephalus.

COLE (CONT'D)

... to guide them on their trip to
immortality. Every year, on the dead
king's birthday, they sacrificed a
slave to empower the king on his
continuing journey.

Jason looks evenly at Cole and sits, placing his palms on
his knees, leaning forward, intent.

JASON

Aren't you cutting rather close to
the bone, Cole? Real people are in
pain with these killings. Don't you
think it's rather unworthy to exploit
that?

Cole sits back. The two men stare evenly at each other.

COLE
What do you think a Movie of the
Week is?

Jason says nothing, but his face says: Is that an excuse?

Cole looks away.

Jason crosses to Cole, placing a hand on his shoulder.

When Cole looks up, Jason smiles ruefully.

JASON
"Only the morally courageous are
worthy of speaking to their fellow
men for two hours in the dark. And
only the artistically incorrupt will
earn and keep the people's trust."
Frank Capra said that.

He turns and leaves quietly. As his footsteps recede down
the stairs, Cole looks at the doorway.

COLE
Capra? Shit. What did he know?

He makes a decision and picks up the phone, dialing.

INT. EDITING BAY - MOMENTS LATER

The PHONE rings and Joey answers.

JOEY
Editing.

INTERCUT Cole and Joey.

COLE
Joey, Cole. You're into computers,
aren't you?

JOEY
I can usually figure 'em out.

COLE
Is it possible to gain access to
someone's computer through the phone
lines?

JOEY
Using a modem?

COLE
Yeah. You know, do it remote?

JOEY

Not unless the computer has access software, is turned on, and the person knows the security password.

COLE

Oh. So it's not possible.

JOEY

No. Why?

(fearfully)

Did somebody else get those script pages? You said I was the only one to see them.

COLE

No, nothing like that. I was just wondering.

JOEY

Man, don't scare me like that! Those pages are gold, pal. I've been reading the papers and this story is really heating up. There's a ton of money to be made, if we keep this thing low key for now and move fast.

COLE

Yeah. Well, thanks, Joey.

JOEY

You okay, Cole?

COLE

Just got a lot on my mind.

JOEY

Well, good luck. Can't wait to read the next installment!

He hangs up.

Cole hangs his phone up, thinking. Then he dials again.

RECORDING

NetWorks Customer Service. If you wish to speak to a service representative, push one now.

Cole stares at the phone in disgust. He presses "one."

SERVICE REP

This is Katy. May I help you?

COLE

Is it possible to get a list of subscribers' phone numbers?

SERVICE REP

That information is confidential,
sir.

COLE

Is there a way I can find out a
subscriber's real name?

SERVICE REP

Have you asked, sir? Perhaps they
will give you the information
themselves.

COLE

I don't know their handle.

SERVICE REP

Perhaps a general inquiry.

COLE

Thanks.

He hangs up, frustrated. He turns to the computer.

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

I wasn't ready to believe in ESP--
yet. Somebody gave me the Egyptian
stuff, and I was pretty sure that
somebody was "Necktie Nick."

He turns the computer on, accessing the word processing
program. A small smile steals across his face.

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

If he was as smart as Vicki said, he
must've figured out a way to read my
script.

(long beat)

Well, I'm no moron, either. I decided
to write the end to Nick's story.

INT. HOMICIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Morales picks up a phone, nodding to a COP, who speaks quietly
into another phone.

MORALES

Morales. Yeah, I'm in charge... Okay,
I'm listening... Go ahead...

INSERT - NOTE PAD

The words "Suicide Bridge--midnight--Friday" are hastily
scrawled.

BACK TO SCENE - MORALES

MORALES (CONT'D)

I'm not sure I know that bridge...
no, wait, I didn't get--

The phone goes dead. He replaces the receiver, looking over at the Cop, who listens into his own phone. After a moment, the Cop shakes his head and Morales hits his desk angrily.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Cabrón!

EXT. SUICIDE BRIDGE - NIGHT

A single car moves slowly across the bridge, which spans a deep gorge, somewhere in the Coastal Range north of San Francisco. Dark pines press close to the road.

PAN WITH the car as it moves OUT OF FRAME. FIND and HOLD ON an unmarked car sitting quietly in the shadows facing the bridge.

CRANE UP TO FIND Cole, dressed in black, sitting in the crook of a tree, about twenty yards behind the police, binoculars pressed to his eyes.

HIS BINOCULAR P.O.V. - TWO DETECTIVES

sit in their car, smoking. They are relaxed, chatting quietly as they suffer through the stakeout.

COLE

takes the binoculars away from his eyes. He's very excited and can barely sit still. He looks at his watch.

INSERT - COLE'S WATCH

reads 11:56 P.M.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

rubs his hands to keep warm. He smiles slightly to himself.

THE BRIDGE

and the surrounding area are quiet. The silver moonlight has a ponderous heaviness. The only sounds are the chirp of CRICKETS and the trickle of WATER, far below.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME - LATER

Cole is clearly upset. Time has passed and he's getting restless. He looks at his watch again.

INSERT - COLE'S WATCH

now reads 12:35 A.M.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

scowls at the watch. The sound of an ENGINE starting pulls his attention to the scene below.

HIS P.O.V. - THE UNMARKED CAR

has started up. One of the Detectives has placed a portable hazard light on the roof. The car pulls quickly out of the shadows and roars across the bridge, disappearing into the darkness on the far side.

COLE

sits slack-jawed. He looks around as if to ask, "What's going on?" As the sound of the ENGINE recedes, Cole finds himself all alone. He still can't believe it.

THE BRIDGE

is a tenuous connection to reality. Time has stopped. Not a sound can be heard--even the whisper of the wind has ceased.

COLE

holds his breath, knowing that something is coming. He focuses all his attention on the far side of the bridge. He hears, distantly, the sound of TIRES on pavement.

HIS P.O.V. - FROM THE DARKNESS,

the distant glimmer of light is seen: red and orange.

COLE

squints his eyes and brings the binoculars up to his eyes.

HIS P.O.V. (BINOCULARS) - FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS

a minivan creeps toward the bridge, only the running lights lit. It stops on the far side of the bridge.

COLE

drops the binoculars. After a long moment of internal debate, he begins his descent from the crook of the tree. Once on the ground, he drops his binoculars near the base of the tree.

Staying in the shadows, he slowly moves closer to the bridge, hoping to get a clearer view of the action.

As he stoops behind a tree near the edge of the ravine, the headlights of the van snap on. Cole freezes--the lights are shining directly on him. He is protected only by the thin foliage of the scrub oak he hides behind.

COLE'S P.O.V. - THE VAN

moves slowly forward, crossing the bridge. It's impossible to see past the headlight glare.

COLE

scrunches down. He peeks out to see what's happening.

THE VAN

stops in the middle of the bridge and the side door opens. The amber dome light spills out, and a FIGURE steps tentatively onto the blacktop, looking around, then stoops to do something.

COLE

moves to the other side of the road, hoping to get a better view of what's happening. On the other side of the roadway, he looks for cover.

HIS P.O.V. - THERE IS NOTHING

between him and the van except open road.

COLE

can't move without exposing himself. Just then, the van SIDE DOOR slams, bringing Cole involuntarily to his full height.

He steps into the roadway as the van pulls out, TIRES squealing, heading directly for him.

Cole tries to flag down the van, which accelerates quickly.

At the last second he jumps off the road to avoid being hit.

The van speeds away, its tail lights burn in the blackness.

Cole picks himself up and turns back to the bridge.

HIS P.O.V. - CLOSE ANGLE - A ROPE IS TIED

to the railing and stretches tautly toward the river below.

COLE

runs to the railing, grabbing the rope.

HIS P.O.V. - SOMETHING IS SUSPENDED

at the end of the rope.

COLE

begins to haul the heavy object upward. It is terribly heavy and he strains with all his might. Sweat stands out on his forehead.

Finally, he succeeds in pulling a body over the railing. Just then:

A VOICE (O.S.)

Freeze!

An arc snaps on, impaling Cole with white hot light. He slowly turns his head toward the light.

HIS P.O.V. - THE LIGHT

In the midst of the light, a FIGURE straightens from a crouching position and begins moving slowly TOWARD US.

COLE,

nearly blinded, looks back at the body in his arms.

HIS P.O.V. - THE BLOOD

is seeping through the linen wrapping over the face.

PAN SLOWLY to the advancing Figure, whose gun and uniform are becoming ever more distinguishable.

COLE'S FACE

tells it all: stupid, stupid, stupid.

LONG SHOT - FROM COLE'S ORIGINAL VANTAGE POINT

In the b.g., COPS check Cole for weapons and handcuff him. Police cars sit blocking the bridge, lights flashing. One Cop radios for an ambulance, another examines the body.

A FIGURE steps into the extreme f.g., back to CAMERA. TILT DOWN as the Figure bends and picks up Cole's binoculars.

REVERSE CLOSE ANGLE - VICKI

watches the action on the bridge through the binoculars. She wears a heavy coat. Her hair is tied back severely.

HER BINOCULAR P.O.V. - COLE

is dragged roughly to his feet and thrown into a cruiser.

VICKI

watches from the shadows, her mouth set in a straight line.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Cole sits on a stool in an interrogation room off the main room. His hair is mussed--he's been roughed up a little. He looks forlorn and borderline frantic.

MARX (O.S.)

What does he say he was doing?

MORALES (O.S.)

Says he was just out walking.

Cole looks directly into CAMERA. Begin to PULL BACK. Our view of Cole is through a small window in a cell door.

Continue to PULL BACK under the following dialogue to REVEAL Chief Marx and Detective Morales standing outside the door.

MARX

In the woods, at midnight?

Morales shrugs.

MARX (CONT'D)

Who's he?

MORALES

Name's Cole Furay. Hasn't said much, but he's skittish as hell.

MARX

What about his vehicle?

MORALES

We did an impound search. Nothing.

MARX

And the body?

MORALES

Coroner's got her. It's the same M.O.

MARX

Told you.

Marx looks evenly at Morales, who shrugs again.

Both men watch Cole, who looks up, feeling their stares.

MARX (CONT'D)

It's not him.

Morales looks back at Marx.

MORALES

How do you know?

MARX

My gut says this ain't him and besides, look at this bozo: does he look smart enough to be Necktie Nick?

The two men just happen to catch Cole looking especially pathetic right now.

After a moment:

MORALES

No.

MARX

Has he got any priors?

MORALES

No.

MARX

Then cut him loose. Quietly. The last thing we need is for the press to get wind of this. Nick will be calling to see if we took the bait. And this time we'll trace him so fast we'll be standing next to him when he hangs up.

Marx takes one last look at Cole and turns back to Morales.

MARX (CONT'D)

We're close. I can feel it.
(points to his stomach)
Here.

MORALES

That's just gas.

MARX

One hundred percent high-octane primo-accurate rocket fuel.

Marx goes. HOLD on Morales as he looks into the cell.

COLE

sits in the cell. Morales's expressionless face is framed in the window. Cole looks up, sees Morales, then looks away.

EXT. POLICE STATION - LATER

Cole exits the police station and looks around. He sees his car, pulls his keys from his pocket and heads for it.

HIGH ANGLE LOOKING DOWN - LONG SHOT - COLE

gets into his car and starts the ENGINE. The lights go on, and he slowly pulls away from the curb.

CLOSE ANGLE - MORALES

stands at an upper story window, watching as Cole pulls out. His face is deep in thought.

EXT. COLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole pulls into the driveway. The street is deserted and dark. Cole wearily gets out of the car and heads for the porch.

FOLLOW as he moves up the walk, yawning. He arrives at the front door and fiddles with his keys.

Just then, a HAND reaches and touches him on the shoulder.

VOICE

Cole?

Cole jumps out of his skin, whirling around.

Vicki steps forward out of the shadows. She has changed and is wearing a sweater. No trace of a hat is seen.

Cole staggers backwards, catching his breath.

COLE

Jesus! You scared me!

VICKI

Sorry.

COLE

What are you doing here? It's three A.M.!

He faces her tensely. She holds her ground.

VICKI

I was concerned. You acted kinda strange the other night.

COLE

So you decided to ask me about it in
the middle of the night?

Cole fumbles with his keys, inexplicably nervous. He manages to get the door open and steps inside, snapping on the light.

He turns to face Vicki, blocking the entry.

VICKI

You seemed like you had something on
your mind...

(beat)

Aren't you gonna invite me in?

She shivers on the stoop. Cole, unable to give his fears currency, steps aside and she walks in.

INT. LIVING ROOM/STUDY (COLE'S HOUSE) - CONTINUOUS

Vicki enters the house, Cole behind her. He turns on the lights. There, in the f.g. is the jackal statue. Vicki heads directly for it, touching the shiny ebon.

VICKI

Wow! This is beautiful.

Cole has entered. He seems preoccupied as he looks around, searching the corners. Vicki turns as he pulls aside a curtain, glancing outside.

VICKI (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

COLE

Nothing. Just looking.

He sits on the arm of the sofa, looking down, thinking.

Vicki crosses and sits on the sofa.

VICKI

Are you sure you're all right?

COLE

Sure! Why wouldn't I be? I just got
out of jail!

He looks at Vicki sharply, expecting this to shock her.

She looks back, great compassion in her eyes. Quietly:

VICKI

I know. I was there.

The rebound hits Cole squarely. He doubletakes.

COLE
At the jail?

VICKI
No. The bridge.

Cole jumps up and backs away, eyes wide with fear. Vicki stands, misunderstood.

COLE
You were there?

VICKI
The other night, I knew you weren't leveling with me. So for the last couple of days I've been... following you.

Cole's ears roar. Yet he wants to believe her.

COLE
What? Did you see the van?

She nods. Cole heaves a sigh of relief. Then, just as suddenly, his face darkens.

COLE (CONT'D)
Then why'd you let 'em arrest me?

VICKI
When the van took off, I followed it, but he lost me. By the time I got back, you were surrounded by cops.

COLE
But you still could have--

VICKI
And get myself arrested? You don't know how they are, Cole.

COLE
I know now.

He sits sullenly on the sofa. She sits down by him, putting her hand on his arm.

He looks at her, mildly surprised. Her dark eyes communicate compassion and concern.

VICKI
I'm sorry.

Cole looks at her, wondering. Trying to get his bearings, he looks away, running his hands through his hair.

COLE

I guess I should level with you.

He looks at her. She looks at him thoughtfully and nods.

COLE (CONT'D)

Okay, here goes: It's not a novel I'm writing, it's a screenplay and it's about a serial killer. I've used a lot of your book in it...

Vicki blanches. Cole feels ashamed. He continues:

COLE (CONT'D)

Have you heard of NetWorks?

Vicki shakes her head. Cole bores in, explaining. As he does, his VOICE OVER continues:

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

The flood gates opened and I told her everything: about the worthless slasher films I write, about my struggles to find an angle for my new script, how I got the Egyptian idea from an anonymous user on the Net, and the bizarre connections to the recent killings.

FOLLOW THEM as Cole leads Vicki upstairs and into his study, which is now a veritable Egyptian museum. He shows her several books, but her attention is riveted to the large blow-up of the hypocephalus on the wall over the desk.

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

I told her how somebody--probably Nick--sent me a copy of the papyrus disk that nobody's seen except the cops. And I told her how Nick is probably sacrificing these people because he believes it'll make him immortal.

Cole points to the lion couch scene, especially the glyph near the knife of Anubis: the number ten.

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

Finally, I told her that before he stops, Nick intends to kill seven more women.

At this point, Vicki, who has been listening intently, turns and flees downstairs. Cole is left standing, surprised. He follows her downstairs.

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vicki rushes down the stairs, heading for the door. Cole bounds down after her, grabbing her by the arm.

COLE
Vicki! What?!

She struggles to get free, her face red with emotion. She pushes him away.

VICKI
Let me go!

He grabs both her arms, pinning them to her side.

COLE
What's the matter?

She looks icily at him. He holds her fast.

COLE (CONT'D)
Look, I know you think I'm scum, but I didn't know for sure until the other night what was going on!

VICKI
How could you not know?

Cole lets her go and hangs his head, ashamed. She looks at him, disappointed. He looks up, resolved.

COLE
I'm going to the cops--tell 'em everything I know!

Vicki slaps him--hard.

Cole steps back, sobered.

VICKI
You idiot! That's exactly what he wants you to do!

COLE
Who? Nick?

VICKI
You still have no idea who you're dealing with! He's jerked the cops around for eight years! And it's obvious he's much smarter than you are.

She says this with real invective. Cole walks into the livingroom, collapsing on the sofa. Vicki stands in the entry, watching. Cole rubs his temples.

COLE
But the police--

Vicki crosses to him angrily.

VICKI
Cole! Grow up! People are dying!

Cole looks devastated.

Vicki looks at him, sighs, and sits next to him, softening.

A long moment of silence ensues. Then:

VICKI (CONT'D)
I shouldn't have hit you.

Cole doesn't look up, just stares at his Nikes. He mumbles:

COLE
It's okay. I'm in way over my head.
What do I do?

Vicki puts her hand on his arm, brightening.

VICKI
You don't do anything. We put our
heads together and nail the bastard.

COLE
You and me?

VICKI
Who else? I wrote the book, remember?
And you're his pen pal, for God's
sake!

(beat)
We have to exploit his own
intelligence, that's all.

COLE
(dubious)
Sounds easy.

Vicki smiles, more bravely now.

For a long moment, they look into each other's eyes, their
faces inches apart.

VICKI
Yes.

COLE
Yes, what?

VICKI
Yes, you may.

COLE

May what?

Vicki closes her eyes.

VICKI

Kiss me.

COLE

Kiss me?

VICKI

Okay.

She leans forward and kisses him deeply. Surprised at first, he soon recovers and returns the compliment. In a moment, they are entirely wrapped up in each other, two confused people seeking solace in each other's arms.

EXT/INT. COLE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ANGLE - BLACK TENNIS SHOES - They creep slowly around the corner of the house and pause. TILT UP the back of the black-clad FIGURE, who carries an Uzzi. He quietly ascends the front porch steps.

INTERCUT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

COLE AND VICKI

are wrapped up in each other, pulling and tearing at each other's clothes, surrendering to the passion of the moment.

A HAND

tests the doorknob. A minuscule CREAK escapes.

COLE

pulls away from a deep kiss. His eyes move across the room.

HIS P.O.V. - PAN THE ROOM

Nothing is amiss.

COLE'S

senses are on edge. Vicki looks at him.

VICKI

What's the matter?

He puts a finger to her lips, looking around.

COLE

Shh.

He reaches for the torchiere lamp next to the couch.

OUTSIDE - ANGLE ON THE WINDOW

as the light goes off. The Figure at the door freezes, crouching low.

COLE AND VICKI

sit on the edge of the sofa, tense and alert.

Suddenly, the DOOR crashes open and the FIGURE bursts in.

Cole and Vicki freeze as the Figure levels his gun at them.

At that instant, FIGURE #2 bursts through a side window.

From the kitchen comes the sound of a BATTERING RAM crashing through the door and FOOTSTEPS racing toward the livingroom.

In seconds, Cole and Vicki are pinned to the couch, gun muzzles at their temples. The lights are turned on.

Cole and Vicki are surrounded by members of a SWAT TEAM.

FIGURE #1

All clear!

Morales walks through the splintered front door. He crosses to the couch and eyes Cole coolly, looking around.

MORALES

Hello, Furay.

Cole is speechless.

Vicki is turned away from Morales, her hair falling over her face.

Morales nods at one of the cops, who nudges her to face him. As she looks up, she tosses her hair aside. Morales's jaw drops. Vicki smiles bitterly.

VICKI

Hello, Morales.

Cole looks from Morales to Vicki, then back to Morales, who stands, mute. Silence for a moment.

Cole is the first to regain the use of his voice. He turns to Vicki.

COLE

You two know each other?

Vicki looks daggers at Morales, who is utterly speechless.

VICKI

We've met.

EXT. COLE'S HOUSE - LATER

The street is full of police cars parked haphazardly, a SWAT van, all with lights rotating.

Neighbors emerge from their homes and wander toward Cole's house, where the police cordon off the area.

Jason emerges from his front door, in bathrobe and slippers. He walks toward the commotion just as Cole and Vicki are escorted from the house and led toward a police car. Both are handcuffed and are followed by Morales.

JASON

Cole! Are you in trouble?

Cole turns toward Jason. Their eyes meet as the cops bustle him and Vicki into the police car.

A police officer leads Jason back toward the other neighbors.

Morales steps up and slams the car door angrily.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Cole and Vicki sit scrunched uncomfortably in the back seat. Outside, Morales directs traffic.

COLE

Is this what they mean by free
publicity?

(beat)

So what's the deal between you and
Morales?

VICKI

Nothing.

COLE

Come on! The truth!

Vicki's angry glare says it all. Cole wilts.

COLE (CONT'D)

I figured you might know him, but
why do you hate each other?

VICKI

We were lovers.

COLE

You're kidding.

VICKI

After Janice's death we kept bumping into each other and things got... involved. It was a big break for him to get the case, but he was too young and inexperienced. Because of our relationship, I saw first hand how he blew the investigation--and I can never forgive him for that.

Cole is shaking his head in disbelief.

COLE

You two probably talked a lot about the case, right?

VICKI

Sure. Janice was my sister.

COLE

He was the head investigator--and your lover. That's convenient.

VICKI

You should talk. If you can't tell the difference between what's real and what isn't, then maybe you've seen too many movies.

EXT. COLE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A late model sedan screeches to a stop and Chief Marx gets out. He slams the door and strides toward Morales, stopping momentarily to peer into the back seat of the cruiser at Cole and Vicki.

He turns and points at Morales, who stands on the front lawn, talking with Detective Thomas.

MARX

You get me up twice in one night for the same asshole? What's he done now-- jaywalk on the way home?

(beat)

And who's the woman?

MORALES

You don't recognize her?

MARX

No. Why?

MORALES

It's Vicki Owens. She wrote that book on Necktie Nick.

Marx looks back at the car, surprised.

MARX
(sotto voce)
You mean the one you were...?

Morales nods and Marx lets out a whistle, shaking his head.

MARX (CONT'D)
You bit down hard on this one, Alonso.
She's the last person you wanna get
involved in this. What in the hell
were you thinking?

THOMAS
I tailed him. When he got home, she
was already there--I couldn't see
who she was, but they had this
discussion on the porch before going
inside.

MARX
So?

THOMAS
So, how did she know to be at his
house at three A.M.? He never made a
phone call. It looked fishy, so we
called a few guys, just in case.

Marx looks around: twenty SWAT team members stow their gear,
uniformed police keep the neighbors at bay, and detectives
move in and out of the house with their equipment.

MARX
Yeah. "A few guys." I don't suppose
you bothered to get a warrant before
you busted this guy's door down?

MORALES
Didn't need one. Exigent
circumstances: imminent destruction
of evidence.

MARX
Oh, bullshit, Morales. I hope you
found something.

MORALES
All we could do was a "lunge" search--
but we found this.

He motions for another Detective to bring something over.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Cole sees what Morales is producing: the jackal statue and a number of books.

COLE

Oh no.

He and Vicki watch as Marx and Morales discuss Cole's interest in Egyptology.

EXT. COLE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marx glances at the statute, then examines the books. He throws them back in Thomas's arms angrily.

MARX

You can't arrest a guy for reading
TIME-LIFE books! I got this one at
home myself!

He shoves a title under Morales's nose angrily.

MORALES

I got a feeling about this guy, Chief.

MARX

I get the feelings around here, and
right now I feel like canning you!
This is not the guy!

At that instant, Jason's constant attempts to come closer succeed, and he manages to get past the policeman.

JASON

Excuse me! Excuse me!

Marx and Morales look up. Both smile as Jason approaches, waving. He's wearing a ratty bathrobe and slippers.

MARX

What can we do for you, sir?

JASON

Are you in charge?

MARX

I'm the police chief, Landon Marx.

Jason, pleased at some sense of decorum, heartily extends his hand, grabbing Marx's and pumping it.

JASON

Pleased to meet you. Jason Lambert.
I live next door.

MARX

Well, what can we do for you, Mr. Lambert?

JASON

You've made a terrible mistake! Cole hasn't done anything! His script just uses some of the same, let's say, elements of the--

MORALES

A script? What's he doing, Mr.... ah...?

MARX

Lambert.

MORALES

Mr. Lambert. What's he up to?

Jason is confused--Morales's aggressive questioning has set off alarm bells.

He stops, furrowing his brow, examining the Detective.

JASON

May I speak with him?

MARX

Not until we question him. You see, that's how it works.

Jason eyes the two policemen for a moment.

JASON

Well, then.

He turns away and walks toward the police car.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

Cole watches as Jason heads toward them, but is caught at the last minute by Thomas, who steers him away, but not before Jason can give Cole an "okay" sign, smiling.

VICKI

Who's he?

COLE

My neighbor. He's kinda... nutty.

EXT. COLE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Marx watches as Thomas escorts Jason back to his own yard, then turns back to Morales, who smiles as if to say, "See?"

MARX

Okay, I'll give you enough rope to hang yourself with. You can keep him long enough to get a warrant for the house, but let her go now. And before she leaves, you get on your knees and beg forgiveness, unless you wanna see your picture under a headline reading, "Morales Dismissed For Incompetence."

He wheels around and storms away, getting in his car.

Thomas has returned during the Chief's speech. Morales and Thomas exchange a look.

THOMAS

Ready?

Morales nods. They walk over and Thomas opens the car door.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Ms. Owens? Please.

He helps her out. Cole scoots across the seat, but Thomas pushes him back inside. Vicki turns to Cole as Thomas removes her handcuffs. She is totally calm.

VICKI

See? Told you. Now, remember what I said.

Morales reaches over and slams the door in Cole's face.

Vicki wheels around to face Morales, rubbing her wrists.

Morales has set his jaw, preparing to do something very distasteful.

She matches his expression.

MORALES

I'm supposed to say something to you.

VICKI

There's nothing you could say that I'd want to hear.

She pushes her way past him. Morales exhales, relieved.

MORALES

Thank God.

Vicki strides across the lawn, sneering at the surprised police, who watch her leave.

She walks down the sidewalk but stops as she sees Jason standing in his own front yard, arms folded, looking at the ground, lost in thought. She walks over to him.

VICKI

Hello.

Jason's head snaps up. His frown turns to a smile at the appearance of such a beautiful woman. Then he recognizes her and the smile loses some of its fullness.

VICKI (CONT'D)

I'm Victoria Owens.

She extends her hand. Jason takes it.

JASON

Jason Lambert. Are you all right, dear?

VICKI

Yes. It's just a false alarm, Mr. Lambert. Cole will be back soon. They've made a terrible mistake.

JASON

That's what I told them! Cole's script has got nothing whatsoever to do with the murders! He could never be a part of something so monstrous!

VICKI

You know about the script?

JASON

We're friends!

At that moment, the car with Cole in it pulls away from the curb, lights flashing. Jason and Vicki watch as it moves down the dark street. Vicki turns to Jason and says:

VICKI

Well, Jason, don't worry, it'll be over soon.

She touches him on the arm affectionately. He smiles back.

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Cole lies on his back in his bunk in an orange jumpsuit, fingers laced behind his head. HOLD on him for a long moment, then

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY (FOG)

Morales pulls past two police cruisers with their lights rotating, sending red and blue cones into the early morning fog. He parks, gets out, pulls his coat tighter around him, and heads toward a dark shape as signaled by a Patrolman.

ANOTHER ANGLE - MORALES

walks TOWARD CAMERA. He is passed by numerous other detectives and uniformed police going about their business.

Crime scene tape has been stretched between trees.

Morales slows, looking up. CRANE UP to reveal the back of a body hung by the neck from a life guard tower. The body is wrapped mummy-style, the linen strips loosely trailing from the feet and torso.

Morales draws closer. He scowls and nods at Thomas, who signals another Policeman to lower the body.

The body is lowered to the ground.

PUSH IN to Morales's face as they unwrap the victim. The disgust on his face tells the tale: same M.O. Morales turns away, sickened, and walks back toward his car.

In a moment, he is lost in the fog.

EXT. POLICE STATION - PRE-DAWN

Cole walks down the steps, looking haggard and tired. He pauses a moment on the steps, getting his bearings. Like clockwork, a dark Mustang pulls up at the curb.

The driver's door opens and Vicki gets out, smiling. Cole smiles weakly. She motions him to get in and he does. She gets back in.

HIGH ANGLE LONG SHOT - THE MUSTANG

pulls out into the evening traffic.

MORALES

stands at the upper window, watching as the car pulls away. He lights a cigarette thoughtfully.

Thomas stands at his side, shaking his head.

THOMAS

Damn judges and their Fourth Amendment
bullshit.

MORALES

Our forty eight hours are up.

THOMAS

Maybe he's got an accomplice.

Morales gives Thomas a long, quizzical look, then stubs his
cigarette out and turns to go.

MORALES

Thanks, Thomas.

He leaves Thomas at the window.

EXT. COLE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Vicki's mustang pulls up to the curb. Cole gets wearily out,
as does Vicki.

Cole stands, looking around, tired, depressed and empty.
Vicki comes around the car to him.

VICKI

Get some sleep.

He nods, listless. She tenderly puts her arms around him. He
barely responds. Tears well in her eyes.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Oh, Cole, I'm sorry...

Then she pulls away, looking steadily at him. An idea:

VICKI (CONT'D)

I've got a friend who's an ace hacker.
If anybody can get us into NetWorks'
user lists, he can.

COLE

Sure.

He turns from her and slowly walks around the car toward the
front door. She watches him go, then crosses to her side and
gets in.

As the DOOR slams, Cole turns back. Vicki smiles sadly at
Cole and waves, then pulls away.

Cole waves halfheartedly. He sighs, turns toward the house
and trudges up the drive. As he passes his Mercedes, he stops,
troubled by something. He stoops and examines the tires.

CLOSE ANGLE - THE TIRES

are caked with distinctive red mud and sand.

COLE

rubs a bit of the mud between his fingers, then tests the door. It's open. This is a surprise--he always keeps it locked.

He gets in the driver's seat and looks around.

HIS P.O.V. - PAN THE INSTRUMENT DISPLAY

Nothing seems amiss.

COLE

shuffles his feet on the floorboards. A SCRATCHING noise is heard. He looks down. The floor is covered with sand.

COLE (CONT'D)

Sand?

He looks quickly around, then over the back seat.

ON THE BACK SEAT

is a strand of linen, the sort Nick wraps the bodies with.

COLE

yelps in terror and jumps out of the car, backing away. He stands near the open door, his mind racing.

He looks around frantically, then stops, staring at Jason's house.

HIS P.O.V. - THE LIGHTS AT JASON'S HOUSE

burn brightly, even though it's not dark yet.

COLE

runs to Jason's front door, pounding loudly, calling.

COLE (CONT'D)

Jason! Jason! You home?

Not waiting for an answer, Cole runs around the side yard.

EXT. JASON'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Cole rounds the corner of the house, heading for the kitchen sliding door. He tests it. It's open. He runs inside.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cole moves quickly through the kitchen, calling for Jason. No answer. It seems like every light in the house is on.

Cole stops in the living room, where Jason's favorite chair sits, lit by a reading lamp, a book on the ottoman, Jason's glasses resting on the book.

Cole looks around frantically. He bounds up the stairs.

At the top of the stairs, he stops, his face going ashen.

HIS P.O.V. - THROUGH THE BEDROOM DOORWAY,

a shadow is cast on the far bedroom wall: that of a body hanging from a chandelier.

COLE

lets out a scream of agony and rushes through the doorway.

We remain outside, watching the shadow as Cole struggles to lower the body. Finally he succeeds, and the two shadows crumple on the floor.

REAR ANGLE - COLE

cradles Jason's body in his arms. The old man is wrapped loosely in linen. Although we cannot see the mutilation, we know exactly what has happened.

CLOSE ANGLE - COLE

holds Jason to his chest, sobbing, tears streaming down his cheeks, rocking back and forth rhythmically.

COLE

Not you, Jason, not you, oh, God...

THE CAMERA

PULLS BACK and leaves the room, TRACKING down the stairs, leaving Cole and Jason in private.

As we reach the bottom of the stairs, Cole's voice rings out, hoarse with tears:

COLE (CONT'D)

Bastard!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. COLE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cole stumbles through the door, covered with blood, his eyes red, his clothes disheveled. His dark eyes are narrowed to slits, his hair is matted and he's covered with sweat.

Without turning on any lights, he trudges upstairs.

INT. COLE'S STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Cole walks in and crosses to the window, where his ever-present tumbler of Pepsi/Coke sits on the sill. Instead he grabs the nearby bottle of vodka and takes a long drink.

He pulls aside the drapes and looks out.

OVER THE SHOULDER (COLE) - ON JASON'S HOUSE

The house is dark. Cole takes another drink. Then, a BEEP. Cole whirls around.

THE COMPUTER

has come out of sleep mode.

COLE

walks warily toward the machine, his eyes slitted, his breath ragged. He stands behind the chair, watching.

INSERT - THE MONITOR

goes blank, except for a solitary, blinking E-MAIL notice.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE,

unable to resist, punches ENTER.

INSERT - ECU - THE MONITOR

On the blank screen, words are spelled out, a letter at a time, with painful slowness:

Now that's a plot twist.

BACK TO SCENE

The bottle of vodka falls to the floor, shattering into a million icy shards.

COLE

bounds to the computer, his eyes bright with anger. He tosses the monitor aside and picks up the heavy CPU, jerking it off the desk, the cords trailing after it.

He brings it up, intending to smash it, when suddenly the cover slides off.

Cole stops, setting the CPU on the desk.

ANGLE ON COMPUTER - THE INSIDES

reveal the hard drive, floppy drives, modem cards, etc., all covered with a thin layer of dust. PUSH IN to find a perfectly clean BLACK CUBE, about one inch on a side, with two red lights that pulse on/off.

Cole's finger touches the black cube tentatively.

COLE

tightens his grip on the cube, intending to rip it out of the computer. Then something occurs to him, and he stops.

FLASHBACK: SERIES OF SHOTS

A) In front of Cole's house, the Lineman works at the junction box. Cole arrives and speaks to the Lineman.

B) The Lineman smiles as Cole ushers Jason away.

C) The phone company van sits malevolently at the curb.

D) In his study, late at night, Cole pulls the drapes slowly aside, looking outside.

E) A van pulls from the curb, disappearing into the night.

F) Cole turns back to the computer, which is switched on.

COLE (V.O.)

Son of a bitch. He was here.

END FLASHBACK.

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

almost reverently begins straightening things. He replaces the cover on the CPU, replaces the monitor, checks the connections, and straightens his desk.

He stands back, looking at the wall.

HIS P.O.V. - THE HYPOCEPHALUS

hangs, a testimony to Cole's foolishness and complicity.

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

So there it was, like the opening credits of a horror film, in large, block letters: Written by Cole Furay, Directed by Necktie Nick. Shit.

COLE

looks at the circular hieroglyphic, his mind racing.

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

And what a partnership! Even though I was outraged by the murders, nevertheless, a small, perverse part of me was fascinated by his bizarre, sick artistry... I had a gross points deal in the proceeds: from now on I too would share in the blame for these murders.

Cole pulls the chair out and sits at the desk, running his hands through his hair. He accesses his script and begins typing furiously.

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

But as the creator of this small, twisted universe, I also had power to destroy it. And screw the sequel rights.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MOTOR LODGE - NIGHT

SAM ELGIN, hero of Cole's script, walks down a row of lonely cottages, set on the wind-swept cliffs of Cambria, California. Everything about this scene is 1940s noir. LIGHTNING thunders distantly. Elgin stops, checks his .45, and looks around.

HIS P.O.V. - THE KILLER

stands on the cliff, his back to us, gazing at the sea.

ELGIN

moves quietly forward, gun drawn, steady and sure. Slowly,

THE KILLER

turns around. It's the phone Lineman. He sneers at Elgin, raising his arm. A .357 gleams in the moonlight.

THE TWO MEN

face each other, wind whipping their coats, guns raised.

KILLER

This is out of character for you,
ain't it, Elgin? Doin' your own
fightin'?

Elgin stares him down with slitted eyes.

ELGIN

It's over.

The Killer tosses his head back and laughs, a long, high, hysterical laugh that the wind carries away. He eyes Elgin, sizing up his foe.

KILLER

Yeah. But for who?

He rolls to his left, firing his gun.

Elgin drops to the ground, grabbing his arm, where blood flows. He fires three times in succession as he scoots toward the cover of a stunted oak. He peers out at the cliff, lit now and then by lightning.

It begins to rain in great drops.

HIS P.O.V. - A DARK SHAPE

limps among the trees, seeking a hiding place.

ELGIN

jumps to his feet, pursuing the Killer. FOLLOW as he runs among the trees, gun held high and ready.

Suddenly, he is blind-sided. His gun flies away, and Elgin and the Killer struggle, punching and rolling.

They wrestle to the edge of the cliff, covered with mud and soaked to the skin.

Finally, the Killer holds Elgin's head over the abyss below, pushing him ever closer. Their faces close, the Killer spits his invective:

KILLER (CONT'D)

You're a hack, Elgin. A rank amateur!

Suddenly, two shots ring out, and the Killer's face shows surprise.

He pulls back, feeling at his stomach, where blood flows freely.

IN ELGIN'S HAND,

a small nickel-plated .38 smokes.

PULL BACK as Elgin pushes the Killer off him. With similar invective, Elgin says:

ELGIN
I just turned pro. You're cut.

Elgin stands and pushes the Killer, whose eyes are still wide with surprise, off the cliff.

LOW ANGLE LOOKING UP - ELGIN

stands on the edge of the cliff in the pouring rain, silhouetted against the black sky, looking into the abyss.

CUT TO:

BACK TO SCENE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON MONITOR - It contains the words from the last scene.

The RETURN key is hit several times and the cursor is centered, where the following words are typed in:

THE END

COLE

sits hunched at the computer. He hits the RETURN key a few more times, centers, and types.

INSERT - THE MONITOR

The words appear: GO TO HELL, NICK

BACK TO SCENE - COLE

rises from his seat, skirting the broken vodka bottle, and walks over to look out the window at Jason's house.

He dials on the cordless phone in his hand. It picks up.

VICKI (V.O.)
You've reached 555-1781. We are unable to come to the phone right now. Please leave a message.

The machine BEEPS and Cole speaks into the phone:

COLE
Vicki, it's Cole. As soon as you hear this, get out of your house-- now! It's not safe to stay there. Go to a friend's or something, but do it now! I'll be in touch.

He disconnects and exits.

INT. COLE'S MERCEDES - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Cole drives, his face lit by the dash lights, his face set sternly, much like his Elgin character.

COLE (V.O.)

It was time for Nick and I to meet
face to face--to end it once and for
all.

Cole glances at his Beretta on the seat beside him and smiles.

COLE (CONT'D)

Call it "creative differences."

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT - AERIAL

Cole's car moves along the winding road, heading for the wind-swept cliffs of Cambria, at the foot of Hearst Castle.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOTOR LODGE - LATER

Cole's car pulls into the gravel parking lot. The lodge is reminiscent of the Bates Motel: a small office with several rustic cabins scattered around. We recognize it as the motel from the last scene.

Cole gets out and looks around.

In the distance, past the last cabin, a few wind-lashed trees stand. The sound of WAVES crashing on the rocks below is a steady HUM under everything. The wind whips the clouds past the moon, now entering its last quarter.

Cole heads for the office.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

PAN across the room, which is furnished rustically. A double bed dominates, with two end tables and lamps. It is dark and still, the only light is the waning moon through the horizontal blinds over the window.

MOVE to FIND Cole, squatting in the corner in the dark, his knees pulled up. He holds his gun stiffly in both hands. His eyes are alert, his ears acutely aware of every minute sound: the SQUEAK of the floorboards, the WIND as it stirs the trees outside, the DRIP, DRIP, DRIP of the tap in the bathroom, a cricket's CHIRRING outside.

While his ears search out unfamiliar sounds, Cole's eyes never leave the door.

HIS P.O.V. - THE DOOR

is a dark, foreboding rectangle.

COLE

rolls his shoulders against the cramp, curling his fingers around the Beretta.

COLE (V.O.)

Once he read those last few pages,
he'd know to come here. And I'd be
ready.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cole awakens with a start, looking around. The sound comes again: someone is KNOCKING at the door.

Cole gets up stiffly. The KNOCKING continues. Cole crosses quietly to the door, his gun raised, his back to the door jam, ready for the assault.

VICKI (O.S.)

Cole! It's me, Vicki!

Cole's jaw drops, his mind a whirl. He hesitates a moment.

VICKI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Cole, are you okay?

Finally, Cole opens the door a crack. It's held by the chain.

Vicki is outside, dressed in a heavy coat, shivering in the cold, her hands stuffed in her pockets.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Oh, thank God! Are you all right?

COLE

What are you doing here?

VICKI

I'll tell you everything. Can I come
in?

Another moment of hesitation by Cole. Then he slowly closes the door, releases the chain, and opens it. He turns on the lights.

Vicki enters, shedding her gloves and hat.

Cole backs away, still holding his gun on her. He goes to the other side of the room, keeping the bed between them.

COLE

How'd you know I was here?

Vicki speaks slowly, trying to calm him.

VICKI

What's the matter? Why are you pointing that at me?

Cole's eyes are cold and hard, but his hands shake. Anger and doubt creep into his voice:

COLE

How'd you know I was here?

VICKI

When I got your message, I was so frightened I didn't know what to do, so I went over to your house.

COLE

Was anyone there?

VICKI

Who would be there?

COLE

Nobody. Go on.

The Beretta feels pretty heavy now. He lowers it some.

VICKI

Your front door was unlocked. I went in and saw this on the computer.

She pulls the climactic script pages from her coat.

VICKI (CONT'D)

I put two and two together. As I was about to leave to come find you, it occurred to me that your friend Jason might know something...

She stops. Cole looks at her, tears welling.

COLE

You saw him?

Vicki nods. She slowly takes off her coat and walks around the bed toward Cole. His gun wavers a bit.

She draws closer and puts her arms around him. Cole stands rigid, his arms at his side.

After a moment, he nods his head on her shoulder and quietly cries.

VICKI

It's okay. It's okay. Shh.

ANGLE ON THE BED - THE BERETTA

drops INTO FRAME. As Vicki comforts Cole, PAN SLOWLY UP to FIND, in the waistband of her jeans, a small, silver pistol.

Cole raises his arms, hugging her, narrowly missing her gun.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Oh, Cole, I love you. It'll be over soon. You'll see.

Suddenly, the door bursts open.

Cole grabs his gun. Cole and Vicki whirl around, staring in disbelief as

MORALES

stands in the doorway, holding his black 9mm S&W on them.

MORALES

Don't move.

Cole and Vicki freeze, but Cole's gun remains pointed at Morales, who slowly closes the door behind him.

COLE

What are you doing here?

MORALES

Drop it, Furay.

Cole tightens his grip on his Beretta.

COLE

When I get some answers. How'd you find us?

MORALES

I followed her, you moron! Now drop the gun!

COLE

Why'd you follow her?

Morales's shoulders sag at the weight of Cole's stupidity. His voice is full of condescension as he drops his bombshell:

MORALES

Because she's the killer!

COLE

What? You're nuts.

He turns to look at Vicki, who is aghast, unable to speak.

MORALES

Are you really that stupid?

Cole blinks at Vicki. He turns back to Morales, who shrugs.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Take it from another sucker, pal, this is one slick broad. Years back, when Nick was torturing and killing those hookers, Vicki had a sister she was insanely jealous of. She decided to kill Janice and hang it on Necktie Nick.

VICKI

That's a lie!

Morales turns his gun on her, his suffering apparent.

MORALES

I wish it was... I really do.

COLE

What about Nick?

MORALES

Who knows? Probably dead or in prison. But Vicki's been carrying on where he left off. You see, she's acquired a taste for it.

Cole takes a step back from Vicki and Morales both, his eyes moving rapidly from one to another.

Vicki is truly shocked.

VICKI

You can't possibly believe this!
Cole! Look at me!

Cole looks at Morales, who stands, comfortable in the truth.

COLE

What about the Egyptian stuff? The mutilations?

Morales dismisses this with a wave of the hand.

MORALES

You're a writer; you ought to know.
(MORE)

MORALES (CONT'D)

It's a red herring--something to throw the audience off, to keep them from seeing the real clues the killer is leaving.

COLE

I don't believe you.

MORALES

That's because you and I are the same kind of fool: There I was, a young ambitious cop, in charge of the biggest case in a decade. And when this gorgeous, grieving gringa shows up and falls in love with me overnight, I've got just enough ego and naivete to believe her. She pumps me for information about the case, which, like an idiot, I freely give. When the investigation stalls, she drops me like that.

He snaps his fingers derisively.

Cole looks at Vicki, who shakes her head, pleading silently.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Has she told you she loves you yet?

This sounds a chord with Cole, who looks warily at Vicki.

MORALES (CONT'D)

She's had your number from the get-go! Can't you see it? You're the fall guy!

VICKI

Cole, he's lying! You've got to believe me! Listen to your heart--you know I didn't do it! He's... he's...

Suddenly, Vicki's eyes grow wide with comprehension. She backs away, pointing at Morales.

VICKI (CONT'D)

... He's Nick!

Morales laughs, shaking his head. He smiles at Cole as he gestures at Vicki with his gun.

MORALES

Hoo boy. She never quits!

Vicki's eyes are riveted on Morales, as the pieces begin falling into place.

VICKI

Oh, God, you did it! From the beginning! It was you!

Cole looks at Vicki in bewilderment, then turns to Morales, who shakes his head at Vicki's delusory lies.

VICKI (CONT'D)

Who would have a better motive, or opportunity, to screw up the investigation--than the killer himself!?

Her eyes are wide with fear and loathing. Cole looks from her to Morales, then back to her.

MORALES

Pathetic.

Cole's gun hangs limply at his side. He's brain-locked. Morales raises his gun toward Cole.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Okay, show's over. Drop it, Furay.

Vicki is crying now, nearly hysterical.

VICKI

Don't do it, Cole! He'll kill us both!

After a long deciding moment, Cole drops his gun on the bed.

Vicki falls against the bathroom doorway, defeated.

Morales motions for Cole to step back as he reaches for the gun.

CLOSE ANGLE - THE BERETTA

Morales picks up the Beretta. MOVE UP his arm to FIND a thin gold chain around his neck, upon which hangs a tiny ankh amulet.

Continue MOVING to Morales's malevolent smile.

COLE

reacts instantly, lunging for the gun. Both Morales and Cole have a hold of it.

With his free hand Cole grabs Morales's other hand, which holds the S&W. The two struggle.

Vicki recovers and bolts out the door, into the darkness.

Morales and Cole stare intently into each other's eyes as they struggle for the gun, tense and nearly motionless.

MORALES

Too stupid to live.

He head-butts Cole, knocking him backwards onto the floor.

When Cole tries to get up, Morales backhands him with his S&W, cold-cocking him.

Morales looks around, sees the open door, and races out, leaving Cole unconscious on the floor.

EXT. CABIN/CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

Morales runs down the row of cabins, shoving Cole's gun in the waistband of his jeans, holding his S&W in the other hand. The wind HOWLS--a storm is moving in.

In the distance, on the edge of the cliffs, a stand of trees are whipped furiously about by the wind.

Morales stops, looking about.

PAN THE HORIZON

A dark shape darts across an open space, then disappears.

MORALES

takes off after Vicki.

INT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Cole is coming around, a large bruise and laceration over his eye. He groggily looks about, then is startled back to reality as he HEARS a gunshot from outside.

Cole scrambles to his feet and stumbles out the door.

EXT. CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

Morales stands silhouetted against the angry, dawning gray sky, looking down at an inert figure.

COLE

approaches the scene, trying to be quiet, looking about for a weapon. He hides behind a tree.

MORALES

nudges Vicki's inert body. He turns, looks up, and smiles.

Cole remains hidden in the bushes, but Morales, with a kind of sixth sense, begins walking directly toward him, shaking his head as if perturbed by a small child.

MORALES

Time for the climax, Cole.

At the last minute, Cole bolts out from behind the trees.

Morales calmly assumes a firing stance, sights, and fires.

Cole drops, clutching his leg.

It begins to rain. Morales looks up, savoring the drops, enjoying the distant THUNDER.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFFS - MOMENTS LATER (RAIN)

Morales helps Cole limp to within a few feet of the cliff's edge. He lets him down and steps back a pace. The rain comes down harder, turning the dirt under their feet to mud.

Cole struggles to his feet. His pant leg is blood-stained. He is pale, going into shock.

Morales holds him at bay with his gun.

Cole's back is to the ROARING sea below.

MORALES

Isn't this the moment I'm supposed to tell you my diabolical plan--just before you overcome me?

He laughs. Cole looks back over his shoulder.

HIS P.O.V. - THE OCEAN

below is tormented and turbulent, stirred up by the storm.

COLE

clutches his leg, trying to remain upright.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Okay. Time for some exposition. So: early on, I had no "method" to my... approach. I just felt compelled to do it. But then I discovered the funeral rituals. After years of searching, I unlocked the secrets of the Pharaohs, as did you, Cole--with some help from me.

Cole shakes his head, denying what he knows is true. Morales continues, point made:

MORALES (CONT'D)

So I don't have to remind you that they possessed the keys to immortality...

(beat)

As I do now. Ten is the magic number. I've sacrificed four so far. And I'll do two more tonight. I am getting very close.

He looks over his shoulder at Vicki's motionless body as he pulls out a syringe, flicking off the protective sheath with his forefinger.

He turns back to Cole, smiling, as he holds the syringe up, squirting a bit of yellow liquid into the air.

Cole is bent over, rain running in rivulets down his face.

MORALES (CONT'D)

You have helped me to release these pathetic souls from the cares of this world. They have gone to the afterlife, where they will suffer no more. And for your help, I owe you a debt of gratitude. I will take extra care with your preparations...

COLE

I'm not a part of this--

MORALES

So very like a writer! When good things come from your writing, you eagerly seek the credit. But when the result is bloodshed and death, you shrink away, denying the impact of your work. You can't have it both ways, my friend.

COLE

You can't get away with this.

He pulls Cole's gun from his waistband, examining it.

MORALES

Here's how it ends: together, you and Vicki murdered these poor unfortunates, but you had... a lover's quarrel...

(beat)

In a fit of rage, you shot her. But she also had a gun.

He shows his own S&W 9mm.

MORALES (CONT'D)

... and in righteous anger, she killed you, then "opened your eyes" to the truth...

He stuffs the S&W in his pocket and pulls out a surgically sharp scalpel, which glints in the light.

MORALES (CONT'D)

But, alas, full of remorse at what she'd done, she hurled herself off the cliff, to her death. Case closed.

COLE

You're insane. No one would buy a corny ending like that.

Morales laughs heartily, nodding. Then he stops.

MORALES

You'd know all about "corny" endings. But you forget who your audience is: the police will believe whatever scenario closes the case. On that, I'm the expert.

Morales moves toward Cole, his gun in one hand, the syringe in the other.

Cole stumbles back and falls, disappearing over the edge.

Morales straightens, almost laughing.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Or... we could do it that way.

He peers over the edge of the cliff.

HIS P.O.V. - IN THE DARKNESS,

little, if anything can be seen. Then, LIGHTNING illuminates the cliff and we SEE Cole, hanging precariously from an exposed tree root. He looks up miserably at CAMERA.

MORALES

sits down comfortably on the cliff edge, his feet dangling mere inches from Cole's grasp, the syringe in one hand.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Re-write! Stretch the ending out a little more--just like "Fatal Attraction"--where the Glenn Close jumps out of the bath to scare the shit out of the audience!

COLE

Help me!

Morales considers this request a moment, then sets the syringe down, producing the scalpel.

He lies on his stomach on the cliff edge, reaching toward Cole with the scalpel.

MORALES

With pleasure. I liked my ending better anyway.

Cole holds on to the branch with one hand, flailing ineffectively with the other. He arches his back as Morales arcs the scalpel mere inches from his face.

Morales is getting frustrated.

MORALES (CONT'D)

It's so much easier to do this afterwards. Now hold still.

Cole's grip begins to slip, and Morales reaches closer, the scalpel grazing Cole's forehead, leaving a bright red line. The rain and blood mix, dripping into Cole's eyes.

Morales stops, enjoying the look of terror on Cole's face.

MORALES (CONT'D)

Ah... the look of eternity...

He gets up on his hands and knees, stretching himself even further out over the edge toward Cole.

Suddenly, a shot RINGS out.

COLE'S P.O.V. - MORALES,

a look of utter surprise on his face, freezes, then flips over into the abyss below.

COLE

cranes his neck to see Morales's body lying on the rocks below, lit momentarily by lightning. He looks back up.

HIS UP-ANGLE P.O.V. - THE CLIFF EDGE

Vicki appears, holding her small .38, which still smokes.

She moves painfully to the edge of the cliff, toward CAMERA. We see blood on her jacket from her stomach wound.

COLE

stretches his free hand toward Vicki. His other hand is losing purchase on the slippery branch.

Just as he is about to fall, Vicki's hand grabs his.

Struggling, she pulls him up over the edge, where they collapse on the muddy ground, the rain pelting down on them.

VICKI

Just like "North by Northwest."

COLE

(panting with exertion)

Thanks, Mrs. Thornhill.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. COLE'S BACKYARD - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Flowers reach upward on this beautiful spring morning.

B) A shovel digs into rich brown earth, tossing it aside.

C) The earth falls onto a large mound.

D) A rectangular pit is taking form.

E) Cole wipes a trickle of sweat from his brow.

F) Vicki turns and reaches out of FRAME, then returns with a plant of some sort. She delicately hands it to Cole, wiping a tear away.

G) Cole takes the plant and bends forward OUT OF FRAME. He struggles to maintain his composure at this most emotional moment.

WIDER SHOT - COLE AND VICKI

kneel as they transplant Jason's pride and joy, the "American Scarlet."

CLOSE ANGLE - THE REMAINING BUD

is fully open now, revealing its blood-red flower.

COLE

taps the earth around the base of the plant and Vicki lifts a watering can, watering the tender plant carefully.

After a moment of silence, Cole looks at Vicki, who wipes at another tear and places her hand on his.

Together, they stand and dust the dirt from their knees. FOLLOW as they walk toward the patio.

As they pass the patio table, Cole picks up his dream script, END GAME, hefting it, thinking. He turns toward the fence separating his house from Jason's.

COLE

approaches and leans on the fence, his script in one hand, looking at the splendor of Jason's garden.

HIS P.O.V. - JASON'S GARDEN

is an explosion of colors, a veritable rainbow carpet of hues, bright in the morning light.

COLE'S EYES

are moist with emotion.

Vicki appears and touches him on the shoulder.

He turns and walks with her toward the house.

COLE

The bank opens in twenty minutes.

Vicki faces him and takes the script, considering it.

VICKI

Are you sure this is worth mortgaging
your house for?

Cole takes the script back. He puts his arm around her shoulder and steers her away, toward the back door.

COLE

Only the morally courageous are worthy
of speaking to their fellow men for
two hours in the dark.

She smiles at him as he leads her inside.

FADE OUT.

THE END