A Walking Shadow (Original play)

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A Walking Shadow. [Original play]

Newsom, John David, M.F.A.
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1990

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A WALKING SHADOW

by

John D. Newsom

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre

Department of Theatre Arts

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

December, 1990
The thesis of John D. Newsom for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Theatre is approved.

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Examinining Committee Member, Jerry Crawford, Ph.D.

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Graduate Faculty Representative, John H. Irsfeld, Ph.D.

Graduate Dean, Ronald W. Smith, Ph.D.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

December, 1990
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1990

by

John D. Newsom
To Steve McCoy and Destiny Esposito, whose invaluable services as stage managers made the production of this play a richer experience for all concerned -- none more so than the woebegone playwright.
Out, out brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Macbeth
V.v
Dramatis Personae

Louis               Police Detective (black)
Brandee            Prostitute
Vernon             Police Detective
Ernie              Police Detective
Maury              Chief of Detectives
Theo               Assistant Division Commander (black)
Olivia             Tavern Owner
(ELIZABETHAN DUMB-SHOW. Light rises to reveal Maury, Louis, Ernie, Theo, and Olivia in a tavern. They eat, drink, clearly enjoying each other’s company. The feasting is in Maury’s honor. Louis sits on one side of him; Theo on the other. Vernon and Ernie sit across from him. Olivia serves the group, but she is certainly an accepted participant in the celebration. Even though the emphasis is on conviviality, each character demonstrates the dominant trait of his personality. Down-right, a light reveals Brandee, dressed for work and looking directly at Maury. He sees her almost immediately and panic registers on his face. He looks about him, but no one else at the table seems to have noticed her. Maury is relieved, but since Brandee does not break her accusing glare, he does not return to his former heartiness. Down-left, a light reveals an inert human body, apparently wrapped in a shroud. Brandee moves her gaze from Maury to the body, and he turns to look as well. Terror comes to Maury’s face, and this time he is not comforts that his friends still have not noticed what he can plainly see. He leaves the table and moves to exit down-right. His friends do not notice that he has left, but Louis becomes increasingly somber -- while Theo appears increasingly superior. Just
as Maury is about to pass Brandee, she pulls out a packet of cash money and holds it in front of him. Maury stops and shakes his head, but Brandee is insistent. When he places the money in his coat, the movement reveals a gun and badge within. He turns and crosses to down-left. After a moment, he picks up the body and exits down-left. The light goes down on Brandee, then all light fades.)
(Louis and Brandee in an interrogation room. A small table and two wooden chairs, down-center. Brandee is now in jail clothing. Her make-up is smeared, her hair disheveled, and it appears as if her face is bruised and battered. Louis is wearing a functional suit of clothes, but it isn’t very expensive.)

LOUIS
So, what name do you want to be called by...Brandee or Janette?

BRANDEE
Brandee’s been workin’ for me so far.

LOUIS
How long’ve you been using it, then?

BRANDEE
Since I got off the bus in Phoenix.

LOUIS
Come here straight from Cleveland?

BRANDEE
Spent six weeks or so in Salt Lake.

LOUIS
Why’d you leave?

BRANDEE
Salt Lake’s no place for a hooker to make a livin’.

LOUIS
How long’ve you been callin’ Phoenix home, Brandee?

BRANDEE
About eight months....So what’s your first name, cop?

LOUIS
Call me Louis....Do your folks know you’re here?
BRANDEE

No.

LOUIS

Does it matter to you?

BRANDEE

My mother wouldn't recognize me if she was sittin' where you are.

LOUIS

And your father?

BRANDEE

Never knew him... and I don't much give a fuck what my mother's last husband thinks.

LOUIS

You got a husband, Brandee?

BRANDEE

Do you?

LOUIS

Just answer the fucking questions, Brandee.... Then we'll get along.

BRANDEE

My husband's Cornelius Greer.

LOUIS

Silky Greer?... Doesn't he get kinda rough?

BRANDEE

He takes care of me pretty good.

LOUIS

Let me see your arms.... A junkie in the county hospital said somethin' near the same thing, last year.

BRANDEE

I don't give him no trouble.

LOUIS

I bet you don't, Brandee.... I bet you work your ass off for him.

BRANDEE

He makes an effort for me... I make one for him.
LOUIS
Yeah.... I bet he makes damn sure you get enough shit to keep on workin’ for him.

BRANDEE
(pause)
Silky knows I gotta have it.

What do you gotta have it for, Brandee?

To get through.

LOUIS
Funny thing about havin’ to get through hookin’ -- ain’t it?... Tell me, Brandee -- how come Silky ain’t got you outta jail yet?

BRANDEE
There’s a problem... I guess.

LOUIS
Know what I think, Brandee?

BRANDEE
I don’t give a shit what you think...limp-dick.

LOUIS
I think Silky’s -- other wives -- are already trying’ on your clothes.

Eat me, shit-head.

And then there’s that sweet thing who’s been trying’ to catch his eye --

BRANDEE
FUCK YOU.

LOUIS
(Pause)
I never fuck junkies, Brandee.

BRANDEE
If you don’t -- you’re the only cop I ever knew who didn’t.
LOUIS
I can do somethin' that's better, though.

BRANDEE
You can't do nothin' for me...Louis.

LOUIS
'course... you'll have to tell me somethin' about Angel Garza.

BRANDEE
(Pause)
I only know he was chicken.

LOUIS
You told a trustee last night you knew who killed him.

Never said that to nobody.

LOUIS
You got beat up after you said it.

That happens in jail.

LOUIS
Just some dyke who took a fancy to you?

Yeah...maybe.

BRANDEE
Somebody kicked the shit outta you last night, Brandee...and it wasn't no lovers' spat.

BRANDEE
What do you know about it, asshole?

LOUIS
Don't bullshit me, Brandee.... A little girl like you's got about as much chance down there as a toad under a steamroller.

BRANDEE
So maybe it wasn't a goddamn dyke.
LOUIS
Yeah... maybe somebody figured you were gonna snitch about Angel.

BRANDEE
Let me go.... I won’t say nothin’ more.

LOUIS
That’s what I’m worried about, Brandee... like Angel’s never gonna say nothin’ more.

BRANDEE
I don’t fucking know who killed Angel, goddammit.

LOUIS
Somethin’ tells me you do.

BRANDEE
He wasn’t shit to me.

LOUIS
(Pause)

That’s not what he said.

BRANDEE
(Pause)

Did you know him?

LOUIS
I busted him a couple times for soliciting.... Managed to talk me out of it, once or twice.

BRANDEE
And he talked about me?

LOUIS
Had only nice things to say, Brandee.

BRANDEE
Would’ve been nice if he’d kept his mouth shut.

LOUIS
Who’s been arrarin’ his dates for the last month or so?

BRANDEE
Hattie MacDowell.

LOUIS
Angel have any family around here?
BRANDEE
He never said... Hookin' s not somethin' you write home about.

LOUIS
He talked to you about it, though.

BRANDEE
Sometimes business was slow.

LOUIS
You get high much with him?

BRANDEE
Not when we were workin'... Not much, anyway.

LOUIS
Guess you had some bad nights, then.

BRANDEE
Some nights, the freaks come right outta the sewer.

LOUIS
How long did you know Angel?

BRANDEE
Maybe four months... Time flies when you're havin' fun.

LOUIS
Angel popular with the freaks?

BRANDEE
Had a talent for makin' himself look sweet and innocent.

LOUIS
Lots of return customers?

BRANDEE
How the fuck should I know?... Had my own customers.

LOUIS
Never talked about any of his tricks, then?

BRANDEE
They were freaks... Why talk about 'em?

LOUIS
How about one who drove a black BMW?
BRANDEE
(Pause)
Where'd you hear about that?

LOUIS
Word gets around, Brandee.

BRANDEE
Never had nothin' to do with neither Angel nor me.

LOUIS
Any of you?... You and Angel do some work together, Brandee?

BRANDEE
We worked the same streets sometimes -- did some dope to­
gether sometimes.... That's all.

LOUIS
You're scared, aren't you?

BRANDEE
I don't fuckin' know what happened to Angel, goddammit.

LOUIS
You already told me that.

BRANDEE
He got into somebody's car --

LOUIS
A black BMW?

BRANDEE
I wasn't there to see it.... I don't even know for sure he's
dead.

LOUIS
But you told a trustee last night that he was.

BRANDEE
(Pause)
I wanted out.

LOUIS
And somebody didn't want you out -- not alive, anyway.

BRANDEE
Let me go down to the lock-up.... I can take care of myself.
LOUIS
If I do, Brandee.... You’ll never talk to anybody again.

BRANDEE
I’ll take my chances.

LOUIS
Like Angel did?... Don’t be in such a rush, okay?

BRANDEE
Angel just disappeared.... It happens, y’know?

LOUIS
(Pause)
You wanna disappear too?

BRANDEE
I’m not a snitch.... I didn’t ask you to bring me up here.

LOUIS
Maybe last night was a warnin’, Brandee.... You know what can happen to a snitch down in the lock-up?... When it ain’t a warnin’?

BRANDEE
Worse than havin’ to talk to you?

LOUIS
They slit their nipples off -- for starters.

BRANDEE
JUST A GODDAMN MISUNDERSTANDING!

LOUIS
You’re lucky that trustee wasn’t keepin’ regular intervals.... No tellin’ what coulda happened in that shower if she’d come by fifteen minutes later.

BRANDEE
I’m not a goddammed snitch.

LOUIS
I don’t think it makes a bit of difference now.

BRANDEE
(Pause)

Silky’ll take care of me.
LOUIS
Silky’s your best friend, Brandee?... Gee, that’s tough.

BRANDEE
Want me think you’re my best friend... asshole?

LOUIS
The best friend you got -- at the moment.

BRANDEE
Just a blow-job, now and then?... Or maybe you want to take Silky’s place.

LOUIS
Not what I had in mind, Brandee.

BRANDEE
Maybe somethin’ a little kinkier in mind?... Somethin’ the wife won’t do?

LOUIS
Shut the fuck up.

BRANDEE
Maybe you just miss Angel so much, then.

LOUIS
(Pause)
Why don’t you just talk to me about Angel?

BRANDEE
Nothin’ I can say about him’s gonna bring him back.

LOUIS
You’d rather take your chances down in the lock-up.

BRANDEE
Sooner spend my time in the shower than with you.

LOUIS
How sick you gonna be if you don’t get some junk real soon, Brandee... You ever been that sick?

BRANDEE
(Pause)
I’ll do okay.
LOUIS
You'll be climbin' the walls... that is, if you're still alive.

BRANDEE
I done without shit before.

LOUIS
Three days in jail is a long time to go without junk, Brandee.

BRANDEE
You never suffered before, have you?

LOUIS
I'm an alcoholic.... I got an idea.

BRANDEE
Big fuckin' deal.

LOUIS
Had a good look at yourself lately?... You're a mess, Brandee.

BRANDEE
You ain't no goddamned prize, neither.

LOUIS
You look like a rag-mop somebody needs to shake.

BRANDEE
What are you talkin' about?

LOUIS
I figure you saw everything --

BRANDEE
You don't know shit.

LOUIS
(Pause)
So they gotta take care of you, too.

BRANDEE
I ain't gonna be a snitch just to get some shit.

LOUIS
Hattie MacDowell must've slipped in the bathtub.
BRANDEE
Hattie's dead?

LOUIS
You think Silky's heard about that?

BRANDEE
WHY'D THEY KILL HER?

LOUIS
(Pause)
Tell me what happened, Brandee.

BRANDEE
Things just got outta hand... Everybody knows that can happen.

LOUIS
Why don't you give me their names?

BRANDEE
You already know who they are, fucker.

LOUIS
(Pause)
I don't know anybody who drives a black BMW.

BRANDEE
GO TO HELL.... You know what I'm talkin' about.

LOUIS
If they were friends of mine -- the people who offed Angel and Hattie -- would we be talkin' now?

BRANDEE
They're friends of yours.

LOUIS
Why don't you tell me what my "friends" did to Angel Garza.... Let's start there.

BRANDEE
Where does that put me?... You gonna be with me the rest of my life?

LOUIS
I won't let them close to you... I promise.
BRANDEE
WE BOTH KNOW I AIN'T WORTH IT, GODDAMMIT.

LOUIS
(Pause)
I know about feelin' worthless, Brandee.

BRANDEE
For Christ's sake -- I'm meat on a fuckin' hook... When've you ever had 'em take a piece of you?

LOUIS
You don't have to work on your back to be treated like shit.

BRANDEE
Guess we got somethin' in common, then.

LOUIS
Maybe.

BRANDEE
The Hell we got somethin' in common.

LOUIS
(Pause)
We got enough in common to know the only thing that stops your pain is the dope.

BRANDEE
(Pause)
Angel knew that, too.

LOUIS
So does Silky... but he ain't here for you, Brandee.

BRANDEE
I used to be pretty.... Not beautiful -- but not bad, y'know?

LOUIS
I bet you turned some heads.

BRANDEE
Now I'm turnin' tricks... Bastards....

(A long pause.)

Angel said the only way to get back at 'em was to make 'em pay.
LOUIS
Now's your chance to really make 'em pay, Brandee.

BRANDEE
Fuckin' perverts.... Some nights, you'd swear there ain't a goddamned normal man in the world.

LOUIS
Workin' the streets is dangerous... I know.

BRANDEE
(Pause)
What happened to Angel wasn't on the street.

Where, then?

BRANDEE
Do you give a fuck?... What's some chicken meat to you?

LOUIS
(Pause)
Somebody who shouldn't have been chicken meat.

BRANDEE
There wasn't nothin' else for him to do.

LOUIS
You can refuse to participate, goddammit.

BRANDEE
When did we ever have a choice?

LOUIS
Right up until the time you put your dignity up for sale.

BRANDEE
You're just as helpless as any of us, cop.... I'm not the only one in this lock-up.

LOUIS
(Pause)
You and Angel were a package deal -- weren't you?

BRANDEE
Yeah.

LOUIS
A package deal that night -- weren't you?
BRANDEE

Yeah.

LOUIS

Who made the arrangements?

BRANDEE

Silky did -- but Hattie was in on it.

LOUIS

You were a package deal more than once... with these same guys.

BRANDEE

Package deals get package rates.

LOUIS

What usually happened, Brandee?

BRANDEE

What usually happens at fuck parties, idiot?

LOUIS

Did they have coke there?

BRANDEE

Like a fuckin' blizzard.

LOUIS

Did they give you any the night Angel was killed?

Yeah.

BRANDEE

How much?

LOUIS

Enough to get me through the night.

LOUIS

(Pause)

Your testimony won't be worth shit if your mind was wacked that night.

BRANDEE

I know what happened.
LOUIS
These parties always happen at the same place?

Sure.

BRANDEE
Where was it?

LOUIS
An apartment over in Glendale.... Desert Palms.... I don't remember the number.

BRANDEE
Were they prominent men?

LOUIS
Were they what?

BRANDEE
People you see on television... read about in the news.

LOUIS
I don't take a regular paper... sorry.

BRANDEE
But they were well-off?

LOUIS
I never saw none of them wearin' clothes like yours.

BRANDEE
You ever saw any of 'em in a black BMW?

LOUIS
Yeah... sure.

BRANDEE
You rode in it, then?

LOUIS
We rode in it that night... okay?

BRANDEE
(Pause)

Give me some names, Brandee.
BRANDEE
You tell me how givin' you what you want is any different than what I did for them.

LOUIS
They weren't givin' out chances, Brandee.... They were takin' 'em away.

BRANDEE
So what chance are you offerin' me?

LOUIS
Immunity.... We don't talk again until you've got an attorney here.

BRANDEE
Those freaks were full of promises, too.

LOUIS
Silence won't keep you alive now, Brandee.

BRANDEE
I don't wanna end up like Angel.... Bastards... not even human.

LOUIS
(Pause)
You better tell me what you saw.

BRANDEE
(Pause)
There was cum on him -- on Angel -- after they tore him up....After.

(A long pause.)

Snot drippin' outta their noses... breathin' like rhinos... makin' sounds like some goddamn zoo.... They couldn't even talk like humans.

LOUIS
(Pause)
Which one of 'em had blood on him?...

(Pause.)

You know what I mean,

Brandee.... Which one?
BRANDEE
There was blood everywhere.

LOUIS
Give me a name.... One name.

There... isn't --

BRANDEE
Why'd they let you leave?

LOUIS
They didn't.... They just left me there -- with the money.

How'd you get home, Brandee?

BRANDEE
Somebody picked me up.

LOUIS
Who?... The guy in the BMW?

BRANDEE
Yeah.

LOUIS
What'd he do then?

BRANDEE
Cleaned up the mess as good as he could... wrapped Angel up in a bedspread.

LOUIS
Then took you home?... What about Silky?

BRANDEE
Silky wasn't around.... He never answered the phone.

LOUIS
What'd the guy with the BMW do after he got you home?

BRANDEE
Told me I better get outta town right away.

LOUIS
Did he take your money?
BRANDEE
He didn’t want to... but he finally took it.

LOUIS
What was his name, Brandee?

BRANDEE
I don’t know.

LOUIS
You expect me to believe this shit?

BRANDEE
You all look the same to me, pig.

LOUIS
(Pause)
You’re tellin’ me he was a cop?

BRANDEE
You know he was.

LOUIS
How do you know he was a cop?

BRANDEE
You don’t work the street too long before you can tell.

LOUIS
(Pause)
How do you know he was a cop?

BRANDEE
He wasn’t afraid -- not like anybody else would’ve been....
He went right to work... takin’ care of Angel -- and me.

LOUIS
(Pause)
And Silky wasn’t anywhere around.

BRANDEE
No.

LOUIS
No one saw -- this guy -- bring you back.

BRANDEE
I don’t think so.
LOUIS
Did he come inside when he dropped you off?

BRANDEE
Yeah.... Poured me a drink.

LOUIS
What time of night was it?

BRANDEE
Way after midnight.

LOUIS
Did he use the phone?

BRANDEE
No.

LOUIS
Maybe while you were in the bathroom?

BRANDEE
No.

LOUIS
He never told you his name... never asked to use the phone.

BRANDEE
So what, goddammit.... He wasn’t there to play telephone tag.

LOUIS
(Pause)
If he’d been a cop -- the kinda cop who could do what you said he did -- he’d have to have used your phone at least once, Brandee.

BRANDEE
He never did.

LOUIS
He couldn’t have been the average city patrolman, goddammit.... Somebody who has to let people know where he is twenty-four hours a day.

BRANDEE
He never used the phone.
LOUIS
(Pause)
Where's the body, then?

BRANDEE
Guess he went back to Glendale and picked it up.

LOUIS
No body, no witness but a hooker with a head full of coke, not even a name for the man drivin' the BMW.... You tell me what I'm supposed to do with all this, Brandee.

BRANDEE
He said to trust him... said he hated the bastards too.

LOUIS
You might've been better off takin' his advice.

BRANDEE
Should've left town?

LOUIS
Looks like it.

BRANDEE
He's somebody, ain't he?... This cop.

LOUIS
If he is a cop, he's probably somebody.... I'll put you on suicide watch, Brandee.... It's the only way I can keep you safe down there.

BRANDEE
(Pause)
You're goin' to Glendale, ain't you?

LOUIS
It's a place to start.

BRANDEE
When you get there, will you look for somethin' for me?

LOUIS
Like what?

BRANDEE
A bracelet -- made outta black thread.... It's the last thing my mama made for me before she lost her mind altogether.
LOUIS
Did you tell the guy with the BMW?

BRANDEE
Yeah... but I never saw him again.

LOUIS
(Pause)
You got an attorney yet?

BRANDEE
Silky usually takes care of that.

LOUIS
I’ll make a phone call for you, then.

BRANDEE
I’m not gettin’ outta here anytime soon, am I?

LOUIS
None of us gets out, Brandee... not ’til we’ve done our time.

(Lights fade.)
iii

(An office equipped with desks, chairs, office machines, file cabinets, etc. Vernon and Ernie enter from down-left. Each is roughly in early middle age; each is dressed in a suit. Vernon is somewhat flashy; Ernie is somewhat rumpled.)

VERNON
Coffee... coffee.... God, let there be some coffee in this place.

ERNIE
Wouldn't bet on it, Vernon.

VERNON
Shit, I don't even know why I asked.

ERNIE
If we did have any, it probably wouldn't have been any good.

VERNON
That supposed to console me, asshole?

ERNIE
Just puttin' things into perspective.

VERNON
Perspective?... So tell me how come this office is always so goddamned cold in the wintertime?

ERNIE
Thermodynamics.

VERNON
What the Hell is that?

ERNIE
We're the first ones up here ever morning', right?... Fewer bodies movin' around makes for less heat.... Thermodynamics.

VERNON
What outhouse did you learn that in?
ERNIE

Not outhouse... *whorehouse*.... You know -- the ones where you enjoyed immaculate conception.... Hey.

VERNON

Hey -- what?

ERNIE

You want some coffee?

VERNON

You found some?

ERNIE

I hid it so good last night, I forgot where I put it.

VERNON

Get it goin' for Christ's sake.... I can't eat a Danish without my coffee.

ERNIE

Wouldn't have to hide our coffee, if those guys down in Homicide were a little more honest.

VERNON

And if you knew shit from shinola, you wouldn't have to pick your teeth, Sherlock.

ERNIE

You'd think Homicide would have a little more respect for Vice's property.

VERNON

Shit.... Never knew anybody in Homicide I'd give a character reference.

ERNIE

Jeez.... This office is cold.

VERNON

Son, a fuckin' squirrel in a wheel could generate more heat than our goddamn air conditioner.

ERNIE

(Pause)

Coffee's done.

VERNON

Goddamn, that's hot.
ERNIE
Careful... you don’t want to burn yourself.

VERNON
That’s where you’re wrong, Sherlock.... I come in here ever mornin’ — hopin’ I’ll get burned by your coffee.

ERNIE
I was just tellin’ you to --

VERNON
Ernie, if you were any brighter, you’d give off as much light as the inside of a refrigerator -- with the door closed.

ERNIE
(Pause)
Your company’s wonderful this mornin’, Vernon.... I sure hope somebody else comes in -- so they can enjoy it, too.

VERNON
Speakin’ of somebody else... You see Louis’ car out back when we came up?

ERNIE
Wasn’t lookin’.

VERNON
He’s gonna be late in a few minutes.... Hope to Christ he doesn’t have his ass in a wringer again.

ERNIE
Maybe he just overslept... like I did last week, after Maury’s birthday party at Olivia’s.

VERNON
You really think Louis has overslept, Ernie?

ERNIE
It’s possible.

VERNON
He’s worn out that excuse for the next million years.

ERNIE
Still, we don’t know he’s off on a bender... or somethin’.
VERNON
What's Maury supposed to think if Louis don't show up real soon?

ERNIE
(Pause)
That's he's fallen off the wagon.

VERNON
He's been divorced and he's been shot, Ernie.... He's used up all his allowances for bein' a drunk.

ERNIE
Maybe he ain't used up all his allowances with me, Vernon.

VERNON
(Pause)
Let it be a lesson, Ernie.... Your wife's a slut, shoot the bitch.... Divorce ain't worth the stress.

ERNIE
Lucinda wasn't a slut, Vernon.

VERNON
The Hell she wasn't.... If she did it with Theo, she'd do it with half the Marine Corps.

(Maury enters, from down-right.)

Maury
Mornin', gentlemen.... What's the coffee like?

VERNON
Mornin' Captain.

ERNIE
The coffee's hot.... That's about all honesty'll let me say about it.

MAURY
Hot suits me fine, Ernie.... It's cold as a witch's tit in Alaska out there.

VERNON
Captain Abrams, before I moved out here from Brooklyn, they told me it never got cold in Phoenix.
MAURY
What can I say, Vernon?... You may have been recruited under false pretenses.

VERNON
I'm serious, Maury.... These walls got insulation like cardboard.

MAURY
Eat more jalapeno peppers, Vernon.... You'll feel nice and warm inside -- and you'll win friends and influence people in elevators.

ERNIE
Y'know, Captain.... How much would it cost 'em to install some space heaters?

Maury
Your pay raise, Ernie.... Besides they're a fire hazard.

ERNIE
Some offices got better heat than others.

MAURY
Hot air counts for somethin', I suppose.

VERNON
People in command positions can't be hindered by slow circulation -- can they, Ernie?

ERNIE
You see Louis on your way up, sir?

MAURY
(Pause)
Am I hearin' he's late... Is that it?

ERNIE
I was thinkin' maybe he called in sick this mornin' -- or somethin'.

MAURY
Didn't call me.... Not to worry, though.... He's not late yet.

ERNIE
Yeah... I guess not.
MAURY
Have him report to me when he does come in, though.

VERNON
Occurred to me that he might’ve left early on his vacation.

MAURY
No -- this is his last day.

VERNON
Why the Hell anybody would want to go to Oakland for a vacation is beyond me.

MAURY
You complainin’ about the destination or the trip, Vernon?

VERNON
Oakland’s bad enough -- but God didn’t intend for His little creatures to be up in the air like that.

ERNIE
People have accidents on trains too, Vernon.

VERNON
On a train you don’t have twenty thousand fucking feet to think about how much it’s gonna hurt when you stop... do you?

ERNIE
You should see him sayin’ the rosary before we take off.... It’s real popular with other passengers.

MAURY
You guys don’t mind, I’m gonna drink the rest of this swill in my office.... When Louis comes in, send him to me.

(Maury exits, down-right.)

VERNON
You idiot.

ERNIE
Who... me?

VERNON
No -- I’m talkin’ to the mouse in your pocket.... Why the Hell’d you ask the Captain about Louis?
ERNIE
Maybe I wanted to know about Louis.

VERNON
You let the Captain tell us about Louis, goddammit.

ERNIE
I'm concerned about him, goddammit.

VERNON
You give a whole new meaning to "shit-for-brains."

ERNIE
I ain't gonna do nothin' to hurt Louis... you know that, Vernon.

VERNON
You prepared to lie to Internal Affairs, then?

ERNIE
(Pause)
No.

VERNON
You think the Captain is?

ERNIE
Come on, Vernon.... Bein' ten minutes late ain't nothin' like gettin' shot in Scottsdale.

VERNON
Think of all those "innocent answers" Theo gave to Internal Affairs.

ERNIE
Well, Theo's moved upstairs -- and I ain't got nothin' to say that's gonna hurt Louis.

VERNON
Play it safe, Ernie.... When it comes to Louis, he ain't somebody you notice much around here.

ERNIE
All right.... I don't see somebody I've known for the past eight fucking years.

VERNON
I know how you feel, Ernie.... But remember -- we thought Theo was one of us, too.
ERNIE
Goddamn Theo... first Lucinda -- and then Internal Affairs.

VERNON
And then the son of a bitch shows up at Olivia's, last week.

ERNIE
You think he was checkin' up on Louis?

VERNON
Only way for him to find out.... Nobody in this office'll be an ear for Theo.... What's out the window?

ERNIE
Ambulance backin' up to the jail.

VERNON
Anybody we know?

ERNIE
Whoever it is, they got him in a body-bag.... You want more coffee?

VERNON
We goin' to Olivia's tonight?

ERNIE
It's not Friday, is it?

VERNON
I figured we'd get a brew... or three.

ERNIE
(Pause)
I know what you want... and it ain't beer.

VERNON
What do I want?

ERNIE
What you already got at home.

VERNON
That's old shit.

ERNIE
Jacquelire's younger than you are... if I can remember right.
VERNON
Okay.... It's familiar shit.

ERNIE
You're really serious about hittin' on Olivia -- ain't you?

VERNON
Serious as a heart attack, buddy.

ERNIE
After all these years of knowin' her -- why now?

VERNON
Because it's there.

ERNIE
You're bored -- that's all.

VERNON
Boredom's the worst way to die, son.

ERNIE
You think you're gonna get it, too?

VERNON
You can bet on me gettin' it, son.

ERNIE
No bet, son.... Don't like makin' money on other people's misfortune -- especially friend's of mine.

VERNON
(Pause)
What the fuck you lookin' at?

ERNIE
A man married better'n ten years -- with two kids -- about to slit his throat.

VERNON
Don't lose any sleep over it.... Got it all under control.

ERNIE
Famous last words.... "Got it all under control."

VERNON
Look, fucker.... You ain't gonna be a problem about this, are you?
ERNIE
How could I be a problem?

VERNON
By lyin' for me about as good as Theo lied for Louis -- that's how.

ERNIE
You mean, you want me to tell Jackie you're someplace else when she asks me where you are?

VERNON
You’re gettin' the point, you country bastard.

ERNIE
You’re not askin' me to be dishonest -- are you, Vernon?

VERNON
Hell, no.... I’m just askin' you to cover for me while I get a piece of ass.

ERNIE
Assumin' Olivia can be persuaded --

VERNON
Don’t assume, Ernie.

VERNON
(Pause)
You’re sure this is somethin' you wanna do, Vernon?

VERNON
It's a simple biological procedure.

ERNIE
Just your average bull in the herd.. right?

VERNON
Marriage ain't a natural state of affairs, Ernie.

ERNIE
That what you thought when you married Jacqueline?

VERNON
That was so long ago, I can’t remember.

ERNIE
You really think Olivia's dumb enough to be your piece of ass, Vernon?
VERNON
I won't be the first man to put his shoes under her bed, Ernie.... Not by a long shot.

ERNIE
You think Olivia’s attracted to you?

VERNON
She sure as Hell ain’t excited by the smell of cow pasture.

ERNIE
You think she’s attracted to you ‘cause you’re more cosmopolitan than every other swingin’ dick who comes along?

VERNON
I’m gettin’ this lecture ‘cause you’re worried about my marriage, right?

ERNIE
You think Olivia sees rugged good looks instead of a face half-pickled by Budweiser?

VERNON
Maybe she likes me ‘cause I don’t have to scrape cow shit off my boots.

ERNIE
Vernon, you’re about as "cosmopolitan" as Alfalfa.... I’m tellin’ you that ‘cause you’re a friend of mine.

VERNON
Stand back and watch, goat roper.... Alfalfa never had the pussy I’m gonna get.

ERNIE
Y’know.... Louis once thought he had it "all under control."

VERNON
You’re just fuckin’ green with envy -- that’s all.

ERNIE
You can’t see what you’re gettin’ into.

VERNON
I know what I’m goin’ to get into... son.

ERNIE
How many years you got before retirement, Vernon?
VERNON
Look, Ernie — me an' Olivia are goin' to get us some mutual pleasure.... She'll give me what I want -- and I'll let her give it to me.

ERNIE
The same thing probably went through Theo's mind, too.

VERNON
Don't compare me to that motherfucker, Ernie.

ERNIE
What's the difference between what Theo did to Lucinda and what you wanna do to Olivia?

VERNON
Olivia is one piece of ass who doesn't belong to anybody I like.

ERNIE
You ever thought of a woman as somethin' other than a piece of ass, Vernon?... I'm just askin'.

VERNON
You're feelin' sorry for Jacqueline -- right?... Well, don't.... The little lady ain't exactly been Chastity and Holiness ever since our weddin' day.

ERNIE
Yeah... and then there's Olivia.

VERNON
That woman's got more notches on her bedpost than a truckdriver's got hemorrhoids.

ERNIE
She's been pretty generous, I suppose.

VERNON
Olivia ain't somebody's old lady.... She's everybody's old lady.

ERNIE
Now I get it.... Because Lucinda belonged to Louis, that made Theo a slime-ball.... Because Olivia don't belong to anybody -- at least, not this week -- you're just a man of style and sophistication.
VERNON
Listen, fucker -- it ain't no fuckin' achievement to spend forty fuckin' years --

(Ernie's telephone rings and he answers, maintaining a conversation while Vernon continues to speak to him.)

with the same piece of ass.... What's St. Peter gonna say to me?.... "You didn't fuck anybody but your wife for forty fuckin' years.... Come on in".... Shit.... Forty years with one piece of ass -- and then I get to spend eternity in a place where I never get a piece of ass?.... What kinda deal is that?

(Ernie hangs up.)

I'm askin' you, Ernie.... What kinda deal is that?.... Ernie?

ERNIE
Interestin' piece of news.

VERNON
What's that?

ERNIE
Silky Greer's dead.... Somebody blew him to Hell and gone with a shotgun.

VERNON
Golly-be-Jesus.... A tear's gonna come to my eye any minute now.

ERNIE
Homicide thought we oughta come out and have a look around his apartment.... Talk to some of his girls.

VERNON
Can't those fuckers do anything by themselves?

ERNIE
(Pause)

Wonder who wanted to off Silky?

VERNON
You mean, besides you an' me an' half of everybody else in Phoenix?.... Hell, I ain't got a clue.
ERNIE
We'd better tell Maury we're goin' out.

(ERNIE begins to exit, down-right.)

VERNON
Wait a second.... We still goin' out tonight?

To Olivia's?

VERNON
Where the Hell else?

ERNIE
You ever heard of the Department bowling league, Vernon?

(They exit. A beat. Louis enters from down-left. He pulls a file from a cabinet and studies it at his desk. A beat. Maury enters from down-right.)

MAURY
What's up?

LOUIS
Just lookin' at somethin'.

MAURY
Somethin' in particular?

LOUIS
Do we know anybody in the Department who's livin' pretty high these days?

MAURY
You mean, somebody who's livin' better than he oughta be on the city pay?

LOUIS
Yeah.

MAURY
No.... You heard somebody's on the take?
LOUIS
Yeah.

MAURY
From who?

LOUIS
A hooker.

MAURY
Hookers have been known to say that, Louis.

LOUIS
I know.

MAURY
This one give you a name?

LOUIS
No.

MAURY
What you gonna do about it?

LOUIS
Just checkin'... That's all.

MAURY
Why don't you go to Internal Affairs?

LOUIS
I'm not goin' to Internal Affairs.... Not yet.

MAURY
So you're just checkin'.

LOUIS
Yeah.

MAURY
That what you were doin' this mornin'?

LOUIS
No.

MAURY
How long you been here?
About five minutes.

MAURY
Then you didn’t see Ernie... or Vernon.

LOUIS
No.

MAURY
(Pause)
You’re over an hour late, Louis -- and you were a half-hour late last week.... You wanna go on swing-shift or what?

LOUIS
I gotta buy another alarm clock.

MAURY
(Pause)
Get any sleep last night?

LOUIS
Not much.

MAURY
(Pause)
I called your place... last night.

LOUIS
I didn’t get in ’til late.

MAURY
(Pause)
It was late when I called.

LOUIS
I might’ve been in the shower, y’know.

MAURY
(Pause)
Have a drink before you went to bed, Louis?

LOUIS
(Pause)
Yeah.

MAURY
Just one?
LOUIS
Several.

MAURY
The people at AA tell you not to worry about it?

LOUIS
Not lately.

MAURY
Is that 'cause you haven’t seen 'em... lately?

LOUIS
That’s right, Maury.

MAURY
What d’you think?... Droppin’ into your old habits again -- or what?

LOUIS
Call it a possibility.

MAURY
Just a possibility?

LOUIS
I’ll keep a handle on it.

MAURY
Correct me if I’m wrong, but didn’t you stand up and say --

LOUIS
I been standin’ up and sayin’ it at those goddamn meetin’s for the past year, Maury.

MAURY
(Pause)

But now you got a handle on it.

LOUIS
It gets outta hand, I’ll get back with the program -- okay?

MAURY
Somebody has better aim next time, it won’t matter if you were wrong or not.

LOUIS
So I won’t drink in Scottsdale.
MAURY
You got bad judgement when you’re drunk, Louis.

LOUIS
She didn’t have a ring on her finger.... How was I supposed to know she was married?

MAURY
That wasn’t your worst mistake.

LOUIS
So I’ll repeat it five hundred times a day.... "Don’t get drunk -- but if you do get drunk, don’t go to Scottsdale... and if you do go to Scottsdale, don’t talk to any married women... and if you do talk to a married woman -- run like Hell if her husband shows up with a gun."

MAURY
God help me.

LOUIS
(Pause)
If I can’t handle it, I’ll call you... like always.

MAURY
Fair enough.... You got your flight booked?

LOUIS
I’ll need a ride to the airport in the mornin’

MAURY
Sure.... Louis Jr. know you’re comin’?

LOUIS
He’s known for a week.

MAURY
Make the best of the two weeks you got with him.

LOUIS
Two weeks... minus the time Lucinda makes excuses to keep him away from me.

MAURY
Things are still testy between you two?

LOUIS
Testy?... Downright ugly.
MAURY

Remember, Louis -- with the shooting and all, it hasn’t been easy on Louis Jr.

LOUIS

I was in the fuckin’ hospital, Maury... and she wouldn’t even put him on the plane.

MAURY

(Pause)

I know.

LOUIS

Now even after you promised to take care of him.

MAURY

It’s hard... but you’ve got to --

LOUIS

I was gonna fuckin’ die, Maury... and the bitch wouldn’t let me see my son.

MAURY

Give Lucinda the benefit of a doubt, Louis.... He wasn’t even six years old.

LOUIS

(Pause)

She was hopin’ I was gonna die, Maury.

MAURY

I’m sorry as Hell it had to end up this way between you two.

LOUIS

Why be sorry?... A slut’s a slut, ain’t she?

MAURY

Lucinda screwed up one time, Louis --

Screwed is right.

LOUIS

(Pause)

Put it behind you.

MAURY

That’s what everybody tells me, Maury.... And you know what I keep hearin’ behind me?... Theo -- laughing at me.
MAURY
(Pause)
Do yourself a favor and don’t badmouth Lucinda in front of your son.

LOUIS
I’m not gonna lie to him, Maury.

MAURY
Louis Jr. hasn’t seen you since you got shot.... Don’t make it worse for him.

LOUIS
What am I supposed to do?... Take him to the game... Take him fishin’... make up for two years in two weeks?

MAURY
Just be a father to him, Louis.... He’ll understand that.

LOUIS
Just act natural... "and everything else will fall into place."

MAURY
When... Junior talked to you on the phone... did he ask about Eunice or me?

LOUIS
You know he did.

MAURY
Eunice was wonderin’ if... you know -- if we could visit the little guy on our vacation.

LOUIS
Eunice was wonderin’?... You’re family, Maury.... Hell, he was practically livin’ with you through the divorce.

(Maury crosses to Ernie’s desk.)

MAURY
Which reminds me.... The rest of us got together for somethin’.

LOUIS
Somethin’ for what?
For little Louis.

(Maury picks up a wrapped present and returns to Louis.)

What is it?

A city of Phoenix police uniform.... Hope we got his size right.... Used Vernon's son for the fitting.

Maury, you shouldn't have.

Whole thing was Ernie's idea.... You believe that?... You know me -- I'd have gotten Junior a bag of lemondrops.

It must've cost --

Yeah... well, Ernie's got a soft spot in him.

Yeah -- Ernie does.... You've been a rock, Maury.... All of you have.

We wouldn't have done it if you weren't worth it, buddy.

I'm not... which makes me all the more grateful.

Yeah?... Well, Gomez will be grateful if the paperwork you give him is in good shape.

I'll have to walk him through some of it... 'specially the allegations made by that hooker.

The one who claims she knows about a cop on the take?

She also claims she saw a homicide.
MAURY
You believe her?

LOUIS
Somebody in the jail believed her.... Got the shit kicked out of her last night.

MAURY
That might’ve been for anything.

LOUIS
Yeah... but the hooker mentioned Hattie MacDowell -- and now Hattie’s dead.

MAURY
Homicide say that was a murder?

LOUIS
Nope.

MAURY
You got an idea somebody on this detail is on the take, Louis?

LOUIS
(Pause)
I got no proof of that.

MAURY
But you got a suspicion.... Enough to put the hooker in protective custody.

LOUIS
The jail commander called you this mornin’?

MAURY
Yeah.... He wanted to know what the deal was.

LOUIS
(Pause)
I’m glad I’m goin’ on vacation, Maury.... Even Lucinda beats this shit.

MAURY
You figure Gomez can handle it?

LOUIS
He can look for a black BMW as well as I can.
Black BMW?  

I'd been hearin' about a BMW crusin' the district.... The girl claims she got in it with Angel Garza the night he got murdered.

He's the one she saw?

So she says.

She didn't volunteer nothin' about the BMW?

No.

You just put it together?

Like I said... I'd been hearin' about that car in the district.

Good hunch.

Lucky guess.

She give any other names -- besides this Angel Garza.

No.

Doesn't sound like a good witness.

She'd be useless in a courtroom, Maury.

But you believe her.
LOUIS
(Pause)
Yeah... I think so.

Why?

MAURY

LOUIS
She was scared, Maury.

LOUIS
(Pause)
Maybe it's a good thing you're goin' on vacation, Louis.

LOUIS
Do me a favor and get this shit cleared up before I get back.

MAURY
Still feelin' sorry for junkies, huh?

I hate 'em, Maury.

LOUIS

MAURY
Sure.

LOUIS
I hate 'em the way you'd hate a sick dog that ain't never gonna get better.

MAURY
(Pause)
Enjoy your time with junior.... Gomez will clear this case out before you come back.... He's dependable enough.

LOUIS
It's a shit detail, Maury.

MAURY
Everybody gets a shit detail sooner or later.... I try to equal it out.

LOUIS
I ain't complainin' about the distribution.

MAURY
You wanna avoid shit details -- try security work.
I can quit anytime.

LOUIS

You been thinkin’ about that?

MAURY

Only every day.

LOUIS

Since you got shot?... That’s natural.

MAURY

It’s not ‘cause I got shot, Maury.

LOUIS

‘cause of Lucinda, then?... What would you do if you quit bein’ a cop, Louis?

MAURY

Drink full-time... instead of part-time.

LOUIS

What would you do for little Louis?

MAURY

His mama’s got him more than I ever will.

LOUIS

This the only way you got of gettin’ back at Lucinda?

MAURY

You know I wanted to kill her.

LOUIS

You wanted to?...

MAURY

(Long pause.)

You keep to yourself more than you should, Louis.

LOUIS

I’m not such good company anymore.
MAURY
Neither am I... but I’m probably better for you than the average fifth of whiskey...

(Pause.)

Maybe you can be a cop in Oakland.

LOUIS
That’s a thought.

MAURY
You’ll need a recommendation that says you can walk on water.

LOUIS
You think bein’ a cop’s all I can do, Maury?

MAURY
I wouldn’t advise goin’ back to football.

LOUIS
I’m thirty-five years old, and all I know how to do is throw people in jail.

MAURY
What if they don’t want you to throw people in jail in Oakland?

LOUIS
I got six more years until retirement.

MAURY
If you make it.

LOUIS
Maury, how many people in the Department do this job better than I do?

MAURY
Anybody sober’s doin’ it better than you do.

LOUIS
I’ll make the AA meetin’s... from here on out.

MAURY
It won’t matter if you don’t stop drinkin’, Louis.... Wasted effort.
-50-

So I've heard.

MAURY
Do you really want to stop, Louis?

LOUIS
(Pause)
If it wasn't for my son, Maury -- I'd dive into the nearest bottle and never come up.

MAURY
Why?... 'cause of Lucinda and Theo?... You have them to thank to this?

LOUIS
Maybe I can't take the disappointment.

MAURY
Never could, Louis... not even when you played for Arizona State.

LOUIS
I'm tired of beat-up junkies and dead boys in one filthy alley or another.

MAURY
You don't know there is a dead boy.

LOUIS
Somethin' happened in this town last week, Maury... somethin' that don't recommend our fellow humans for any goddamned prizes.

MAURY
Well, this town's gonna have to do without its black fuckin' knight for the next two weeks.

LOUIS
I never thought I was special, Maury.

MAURY
You never thought your were ordinary.

LOUIS
When you're on the fifth string, more's expected of you.

MAURY
You think you're the only one who gives a damn, don't you?
LOUIS
It's a possibility.

MAURY
Who doesn't give a damn, Louis?...Vernon? Ernie? Me?

LOUIS
KEEP GOIN', MAURY.

MAURY
(The pause)
Theo, then.

LOUIS
He didn't get up there all by himself.

MAURY
Sure, Theo had help... He sucked a few asses -- fucked a few more wives... and he got promoted.... You can be sure he ain't wastin' his effort.

LOUIS
Just his idea of how to be a good cop, Maury?... Knowing what wives to fuck -- and what friends to screw?

MAURY
(Pause)
You want confirmation, Louis?... Nobody gives a shit.

LOUIS
I KNOW THEY DON'T GIVE A SHIT, MAURY.... DOIN' YOUR JOB IS JUST SO MUCH PUBLIC MASTURBATION, AIN'T IT?

MAURY
THEO TRIPPED YOU UP THE ONLY WAY HE COULD -- AND IT WORKED....He moved upstairs -- and you went into the toilet.... It was a beautiful thing to watch, Louis... a real fuckin' masterpiece.

LOUIS
(Pause)
Why don't you give him this shit detail, Maury?... Just for old times' sake?

MAURY
Is this all about that pathetic little piece you got on suicide watch?

LOUIS
Among other things.
MAURY
You think you’re the first cop who’s got a reason to be bitter?

LOUIS
Bitter ain’t the right word, Maury.... Try "contempt."

MAURY
Contempt?... For Theo?... Lucinda?

LOUIS
Tell me if contempt’s on the natural order of things, Maury.

MAURY
I ain’t followin’ you.

LOUIS
What do you call it except contempt, Maury?... Your best friend fucks your wife ‘cause he knows it’s the best way to hurt you -- and he never has to pay up.... Some of our sterling citizens party any way they want to -- even kill a kid -- AND THEY NEVER HAVE TO PAY UP .... I’d say contempt’s a good way of describin’ it.

MAURY
(Pause)
We got no proof that anybody’s dead.

LOUIS
(Pause)
Somebody’s dead, Maury.... This goddamn city stinks with it.

MAURY
Leave the job here, Louis.... Take your fucking vacation.

LOUIS
There ain’t nothin’ we can do, is there?... Might as well stay on fucking vacation.

MAURY
ALL RIGHT, GODDAMMIT.... WE WERE MEANT FOR MORE THAN SHIT DETAILS.... WE WERE MEANT FOR SOMETHIN’ MONEY CAN’T BUY.... FIGURE IT OUT WHILE YOU’RE IN OAKLAND AND LET ME KNOW HOW TO GRAB SOME OF IT FOR MYSELF....

(Maury moves to exit down-left.)
MAURY
You're the man in charge until Ernie gets back.... I'm down at the D.A.'s office.

(Maury exits. Lights fade a little to suggest the passage of time. When lights rise again, Theo enters from downright. He is well-dressed, well-groomed, and handsome. Louis does not notice his entrance.)

THEO
Oh.... I thought you were on vacation by now.

LOUIS
Tomorrow.

THEO
Where is everybody?

LOUIS
Servin' and protectin'.

THEO
Maury's not in either?

LOUIS
I'm the man in charge -- until Ernie gets back.

THEO
Couldn't think of a better choice.

LOUIS
I'm the only choice, Theo.

THEO
Where is the Captain, then?

LOUIS
The District Attorney's office.... Don't know when he's comin' back.

THEO
Can you remind Maury that he's got a meeting with the Chief this afternoon?
I suppose I can.

THEO
(Pause)
So it's Oakland for two weeks, then.

THEO
That's where Lucinda keeps my son.

THEO
You planning on taking in a game while you're --

LOUIS
Want me to say hello to anybody while I'm there, Theo?

THEO
(Pause)
I don't guess there's any reason to.

LOUIS
Uncle Theo doesn't have a word for little Louis?

THEO
Well, if he asks about me --

LOUIS
Is that all, sir?

THEO
(Pause)
I could've sent a memo to Captain Abrams, you know.

LOUIS
But the chief asked you to look in on me -- right?... Keep an eye on things?

THEO
(Pause)
You catch that bulletin from Oakland P.D.?

LOUIS
Oakland wants experienced officers to apply.... Who thought of that one, Theo?... The Chief -- or you?

THEO
It might be the best thing for you, Louis.
LOUIS
When you had 'em on the phone, Theo -- did you tell 'em about my... condition?

THEO
I'm not trying to be your friend.

LOUIS
I'm glad we got that cleared up... sir.

THEO
(Pause)
Why don't you let me buy you a drink tonight at Olivia's?

LOUIS
That's considerate of you... but I am still an alcoholic.

THEO
(Pause)
Is that what it is?... We weren't sure.

LOUIS
Not to worry, Theo.... Come on down.... The guys'll be happy to see you again.

THEO
No, they won't.

LOUIS
You got it all wrong.... Vernon's always talkin' about how much he misses you.

THEO
(Pause)
It's time you took your vacation, Louis.... You look about as bad as Maruy.

LOUIS
No shit?... Well, Maury better watch it.... His vacation don't start until August.

THEO
The Chief knows that.

LOUIS
(Pause)
The Chief don't know nothin' you don't know first, Theo.
THEO
Oakland’s not the only place offering career opportunities, Louis.

LOUIS
And Maury has to go on vacation sometime -- right?

THEO
It would be an ideal time for showing some management skills -- don’t you think?

And how about Ernie?

LOUIS
Ernie may be needed... elsewhere.

LOUIS
You don’t need a pair of legs, Theo.... Slidin’ around on your belly would be natural for you.

THEO
There’s no need to take offense, Louis.... It’s just that the time is coming when the Chief will want to know how this office can run -- when Maury isn’t around.

And what about Ernie?

LOUIS
Ernie’s proven himself a hundred times over ... but the Chief isn’t sure --

Maury was right, Theo.

THEO
What?

LOUIS
You’ve got it down to an art.... Every work’s a masterpiece.

THEO
(Pause)

I don’t understand.

LOUIS
I mean, you’re a considerate son of a bitch, Theo.
THEO
The time is coming when somebody sits behind Maury’s desk -- and it isn’t going to be Maury.

LOUIS
GET OUT, THEO... BEFORE YOU GO BY WAY OF THE GODDAMNED WINDOW.

THEO (Pause)
Right.... There’s just one other thing, Sargeant.

LOUIS
I’ll make an appointment if I want any more career counseling... sir.

THEO
This is for Captain Abrams.

LOUIS (Pause)
Go ahead.

THEO
That hooker he asked me to check on.... She hanged herself about an hour ago.

LOUIS (Pause)
HOW IN THE FUCK DID THAT HAPPEN?

THEO
Couldn’t say.... They’re investigating it right now.

LOUIS
She was supposed to be on suicide watch, Theo.

THEO
She was on suicide watch.... She was taken off this morning.

LOUIS
Who the Hell authorized that?

THEO
You’ll have to ask the jail commander....

(Pause.)
LOUIS

She was a witness I needed.

THEO

So why didn't Wallace call you when he put her back in general population?

LOUIS

Good question....

(Thoe moves to exit again.)

Theo.

THEO

Yes?

LOUIS

You said the Captain asked you to check on Brandee?

THEO

Brandee?

LOUIS

The hooker on suicide watch.

THEO

Called me last night... sure.

LOUIS

There wasn't any official paperwork on it?

THEO

Strictly over the phone.

LOUIS

And the jail commander -- Wallace -- no official paperwork to take her off suicide watch?

THEO

As far as I know, that was over the phone, too.

LOUIS

(Pause)

Do we know who called in the authorization this morning?

THEO

Wallace said it was Maury.... Something wrong, Louis?
LOUIS
(Pause)
I don’t think so.... Maybe a few uncomfortable minutes for Maury when Internal Affairs calls him up.

THEO
You sure?

LOUIS
Sure.... Not to worry.

THEO
See you tonight at Olivia’s, then... for a soda on the rocks.

LOUIS
Right.... You’re buyin’.

(Theo exits, down-right.
Louis stands for a long minute in silence. A police siren fades in and out. With deliberate, unhurried movements, he unwraps the package Maury has given him and withdraws the little uniform. He stares at it on his desk, then reaches in his coat for his badge. He folds it within the uniform, then drops everything into his wastebasket. Lights fade as another siren fades in and out. Curtain.)
II

(Olivia's bar. Table, chairs, a television, a juke box. An actual bar extends diagonally from approximately center-right to approximately up-center. Vernon and Ernie enter from down-right.)

VERNON

Well, where the Hell is she?

ERNIE

Where's anybody?... Is this any way to run a business?

VERNON

Hey, bartender?... You got customers out here!

ERNIE

You think she'd mind if we helped ourselves?... I mean, we're officers of --

(Olivia enters from down-left. She is a woman of thirty-five, attractive, but her looks have clearly faded.)

OLIVIA

I don't trust cops any more than I trust liquor salesmen or TV preachers.... Keep your paws off the stock.

VERNON

'Bout time you got out here, Olivia.... No tellin' what unscrupulous sons of bitches mighta done with you gone.

OLIVIA

With you guys here, I don't need to find out about unscrupulous sons of bitches, Vernon.

VERNON

Why the hell don't you give this S.O.B. a beer, then?

OLIVIA

Why don't you cross my palm with some silver, then?

VERNON

I'm distressed, Olivia.... After all the patronage I've given you --
OLIVIA
I ain't in a charitable mood today, Vernon.

VERNON
(Pause)
I can see why you've gone through so many husbands, Olivia.

OLIVIA
My husbands didn't leave me 'cause I charged 'em for their liquor, Vernon.

ERNIE
I'm ready to buy a beer, y'know.

OLIVIA
The usual?

ERNIE
The usual.... I've been thirsty for this beer for the better part of the day.

OLIVIA
Sounds like it's been rough.

ERNIE
You ain't been watchin' the news?

OLIVIA
Why?... Somethin' up?

VERNON
One of our guests at the Gray-Bar Motel decided to check out early.

ERNIE
Strung herself up, Olivia.

VERNON
Extreme reaction to lousy accommodations, if you ask me.

OLIVIA
Some folks can have a bad time in jail, y'know.

VERNON
She was a hooker, for Christ's sake.... Woulda been out by this afternoon.
OLIVIA
(Pause)
Was Louis involved, Ernie?

VERNON
Wasn’t his case... but he sure as Hell took an interest in it.

ERNIE
He interviewed her last night -- but he said he didn’t have any notes to share.

He know her?

OLIVIA
We’re vice officers, Olivia.... We know a lot of hookers.

But he took an interest in this one.

ERNIE
When Louis came back up from the jail, he grabbed his coat and said he was off to Glendale.

What’d Maury say?

OLIVIA
Spent the rest of the day out of the office.... One place or the other.

VERNON
Hell, Ernie was runnin’ the place most of the day.

OLIVIA
You guys don’t seem very inquisitive.

VERNON
I quit bein’ inquisitive along about ten o’clock this mornin’, Olivia.

ERNIE
Somebody offed a pimp today.

VERNON
With a shotgun.... Spread Silky all over his living room.
Silky?

OLIVIA

VERNON

The white shag’s definitely gonna have a markdown now.

ERNIE

Silky Greer.... His mama called him Cornelius, though.

OLIVIA

Guess I never heard of him.

VERNON

Had class, Olivia.... Used to get his girls hooked on junk, then turn 'em out.

ERNIE

Real class, Olivia.... When he was done with 'em, he’d flush 'em down the toilet.

OLIVIA

Sounds like a lovely guy.

VERNON

Ain’t lovely now -- but the plastic bags we put him in look real good on him.

OLIVIA

This city’s gettin’ dangerous.

VERNON

Only for the right people, Olivia.... Hattie MacDowell last night... Silky this mornin’.... Any luck, Phoenix might be a decent place to live by the end of the week.

OLIVIA

Hattie MacDowell?

ERNIE

Somebody else I’m glad you’ll never meet.... Basically the same character and inclination as Silky....

(Pause.)

Vernon, it occurred to you there’s a connection?

VERNON

What... between Silky and Hattie?
ERNIE
Yeah... maybe.

VERNON
Sounds like somethin' we can worry about in the mornin'.

ERNIE
Maybe somebody else's worryin' about it.

VERNON
Somebody's offin' the slimebuckets in our fair city?... Jesus, don't make me weep in my beer.

ERNIE
Maybe we oughta have a word with Maury about it in the mornin'.... It's an idea, Vernon.

VERNON
Yeah... one we oughta think about in the mornin' -- okay?

OLIVIA
(Pause)
You guys plannin' on stayin' awhile -- or what?

VERNON
It occurred to us, Olivia.

OLIVIA
You'll wanna run a tab -- right?

VERNON
(To Olivia)
You been thinkin' what I been thinkin'.

OLIVIA
So why don't you decide now who's gonna get the bill?

VERNON
You're not afraid you're gonna get stiffed tonight -- are you?

OLIVIA
After a couple hours in here, Vernon -- not much of you's gonna stiff anybody.

VERNON
How'll you know until you try, sweetheart?
OLIVIA
Your reputation precedes you, Vernon... which is about all that does.

VERNON
You're about as funny as a Gila Monster in a toilet bowl, Olivia.

OLIVIA
The last time you "officers of the peace" were here, ol' Ernie got stuck with the tab, Vernon.

VERNON
Oh, yeah?... What about it?

ERNIE
So, I didn't know I was gonna get stuck with, Vernon.

VERNON
Why'n Hell didn't you say somethin' before now?

ERNIE
You woulda just passed the buck to Louis or Maury... or Theo.

VERNON
That's an idea.... Let's give Theo tonight's bill.

ERNIE
Everybody was gone when I came back from the can, Vernon.

VERNON
(Pause)
Yeah?... We're talkin' about last week?... When all of us was here?

ERNIE
Yeah.

VERNON
Let's see if I get this straight.... All of us were here --

ERNIE
Even Theo.
Even Butt-Head.... Maury got a call -- and he left.... Louis waited a while -- and then he left.... Theo waited around until I pissed him off -- then he left.

Then Maury came back -- saw Louis was gone -- and left again.

Yeah... now I remember that.

Surprised you too.... You were damn near crawlin’ on the floor.

You went somewhere.

To the can, Vernon.

I went outside...

... and took a cab home.

And I was the only one left when I got back.

Ernie didn’t have the money to pay the bill, Vernon.

Shit, I’m sorry.... What’d you do, ol’ buddy?

Had to call my wife.

Why’n Hell didn’t you let him write you a check, Olivia?

Ernie’s a friend of mine, Vernon... and I want him to stay that way.

Goddamn, Ernie.... You shoulda said somethin’ before now.
ERNIE
Goddamn, Vernon.... I knew it wouldn't do me a bit a' good.

OLIVIA
Goddamn, Vernon.... Everybody knows gettin' your dick outta your pants is easier than gettin' money outta your wallet.

VERNON
I pay my fuckin' bar bills.... Christ, you're tellin' me I got to pay tonight's tab -- right?

OLIVIA
(Pause)
Vernon... why don't you pay tonight's tab?

VERNON
I get the hint.

OLIVIA
'course, it won't be the same... with just two of you on the tab.

VERNON
You wanna invite your friends and neighbors, Olivia?... Jesus, the shit a guy's gotta take for tryin' to hold onto his money.

OLIVIA
Vernon, you got the deepest pockets and shortest arms of any drunk I ever served.

VERNON
Bring a fuckin' contract out here.... I'll sign it in blood.

OLIVIA
Just don't try sneakin' outta here before nine o'clock -- okay?... Believe me, it's the principle of the thing.

VERNON
What the Hell's got into you?... Reg'lar hard-ass, lately.

OLIVIA
A woman with customers like you'd better have a hard ass, Vernon.... Call it a negative incentive.

ERNIE
Y'know, Vernon -- most women don't appreciate a tightwad... especially young women.
VERNON
Since your experience is limited to the little wife and all
the blind calves you could catch on your daddy's farm -- I
don't think your advice is worth all that much -- buddy....
There's a lot of women out there who got emotional needs I
could tend to -- and it won't cost me a week's wages.

OLIVIA
(Pause)
Don't look at me.... The last man I let attend to my emo­
tional needs left me with a six month old child and a Chev­
rolet Vega.

VERNON
You got this bar outta your last husband, Olivia.

OLIVIA
That's 'cause he died in it, Vernon.

VERNON
I wish my wife would leave me a bar.

ERNIE
He'll settle for bein' left in a bar.

OLIVIA
Sure... as long as he doesn't have to pick up the tab.

VERNON
I can handle my bar bills... if I didn't have to worry about
everything else Jacqueline wants me to buy.

OLIVIA
We're talkin' divorce here?... Forget it, Vernon -- divorce
means child support.

VERNON
We can always hope she just abandons me -- right?

ERNIE
You need to treat Jacqueline better, Vernon.... She's given
you the best years of her life.

VERNON
Those were the best years?... Don't depress me, Ernie....
What we need is a few more women who are satisfied with a
man's tender-lovin'-care.
ERNIE
Tender-lovin’-care... That what Theo had on his mind, Vernon?

VERNON
Somebody’s gonna need some dental work before the night’s over.

OLIVIA
Vernon’s still a little testy about Theo, huh?

VERNON
I ain’t nothin’ like Theo, Olivia.

OLIVIA
I’d love to hear you tell me the difference... sometime.

VERNON
You ain’t married to a friend of mine, Olivia.

OLIVIA
I was wonderin’ why you came in here again, so soon.... Was it ’cause you wanted to tend to my emotional needs?

VERNON
(Pause)
I came in here to drink -- and say goodbye to Louis.

OLIVIA
He’s embarrassed, Ernie.... Never fails -- you can always spot a married man who wants to get laid.

(Theo enters from down-right.)

ERNIE
You musta been an eager son of a bitch when you were young, Vernon.... Well, looks who’s here.

VERNON
Shit... If it ain’t enough to ruin a good wet dream.

THEO
I didn’t know you guys would be here.

VERNON
Some of us ain’t changed our habits at all... sir.

OLIVIA
Didn’t expect to see you so soon, Theo.
THEO
The house I bought's on the other side of town, Olivia....
Coming here isn't as convenient as it used to be.

OLIVIA
No hard feelin's.... Like a drink?... We got all kinds.

THEO
Can I get some Chivas Regal?

VERNON
Hey, you weren't drinkin' that last week, Theo.

THEO
You're right, Vernon.... I wasn't drinking it -- last week.

VERNON
Yeah... you wanted to be one of the guys -- last week.

THEO
I enjoy a quality of life I didn't have when I was "one of
the guys," Sergeant.

OLIVIA
I ain't sure we got that brand of poison, Theo.

(THEO)
Don't go to any trouble, Olivia.

OLIVIA
If I do, it ain't under this bar.... Let me check in the
back.

Like I said --

OLIVIA
Do me good to see what I've got back there.... I could write
a fuckin' book on bar management.

(Olivia exits, down-left.)

THEO
(Pause)
You gentlemen ready for another round?

VERNON
Yeah.
I'm sure you'll let me do the honors -- won't you, Vernon?

I'm sure I will -- sir.

It's Vernon's night to pick up the tab.... We already worked that out.

Why would you wanna insult the Lieutenant when he's tryin' to be sociable, Ernie?

I ain't lettin' you off that easy, Vernon.

Who's tryin' to --

Why don't you let me buy this round, Ernie?... I can't stay long, anyway.

You don't want the Lieutenant to leave feelin' like we're ungracious -- do ya, Ernie?

You got an obligation --

So does Theo.... I'll have some Chivas Regal, too -- sir.

He wasn't drinkin' that when you came in, Theo.

I wasn't?... What was that stuff, then?

Beer, Vernon.

I'll be goddamned.

Don't worry, Theo.... I got him under control.
VERNON
Yeah, Theo.... You can be sure I won't get outta hand to­night.

THEO
Something tells me you're not as drunk as you make out to be... Sergeant.

VERNON
I'm always as drunk as I wanna be, sir,... no more, no less.

THEO
Should I assume Vernon's not responsible for his actions tonight, Ernie?

VERNON
(Pause)
Tell you what, sir,... You don't think I'm sincerely drunk, get my name right on your next memo.... Nothin' pisses me off like seein' my name misspelled on official communica­tion.

ERNIE
You have a specific reason for this visit, sir?

THEO
(Pause)
Louis told me to show up tonight -- that's all.

ERNIE
He doesn't come around Olivia's place much anymore.... Change of lifestyle, y'know.

THEO
(Pause)
Glad to hear it.

VERNON
That's Theo for you... runnin' every stray rumor down.

THEO
If Louis has made a change for the better, then the Department's better too.

VERNON
Keep your ear to the ground, sir.... Just be careful some­body doesn't step on your face.
THEO
(Pause)
I wanted a word or two with Louis... away from the office, Vernon.

VERNON
Sure... and you wanna stand just close enough to him to smell his breath --

(Olivia enters, from down-left.)

OLIVIA
You won’t believe what I went through to get this.... How am I supposed to serve it to you?

THEO
(Pause)
I take it straight, Olivia.

OLIVIA
(Pause)
Jesus, your manners have changed.

VERNON
Bet it’s all those leadership classes he’s been takin’.... What d’you think, Ernie?

THEO
I’m buying these gentlemen a round of whatever they like, Olivia.

OLIVIA
(Pause)
Gentlemen?... Are you talkin about Vernon?

VERNON
Goddamn right, Olivia -- and gentlemen drink some high-class shit... So pour us some of what Theo’s havin’.

THEO
What time does Louis come in, Olivia?

OLIVIA
Hell, Theo.... If Louis ain’t here by eight o’clock, he’s usually home watchin’ T.V.

THEO
Guess Maury doesn’t come around much anymore, either.
Aside from last week?... Haven’t seen him in a dog’s age, Theo.

Maybe Maury figured there was somethin’ at home he needed to keep an eye on... like a rat in the woodpile.

If you don’t mind, I think I’ll take my drink over to the T.V. and watch the game.... It’s been a long day.

(Theo crosses to center-left and sits.)

Y’know -- it’s funny.

What is?

Some folks ruin a good time just by showin’ up.

Is that Theo’s Chivas Regal you’re drinkin’?

Fuckin’ right.... Don’t think I’d let the son of a bitch stand next to me and not let it cost him somethin’, do you?

Einstein was a mental midgit compared to you, Vernon.

It’s the principle of the thing, Ernie.

The only principle you’ve had since you were sixteen was how to get drunk and get laid without puttin’ down a dime.

How am I supposed to act around that sorry sack of shit, Ernie?
ERNIE
Louis hanged himself... Theo only gave him the rope.

VERNON
Did Louis ever ask Theo to fuck his wife while he was at work?

ERNIE
And what about you, Vernon?

VERNON
Louis can always depend on me.

ERNIE
Where were you for him, Vernon?... Did you visit him once in the hospital?... Did you stand up for him with Internal Affairs?

VERNON
All he had to do was ask.

ERNIE
He knew better.... The only thing you regret is not knockin' on Lucinda's door before Theo did.

VERNON
I AIN'T SO DRUNK I CAN'T DISLOCATE YOUR JAW, ERNIE.

ERNIE
WHAT'S WORSE, VERNON.... A FRIEND WHO FUCKS YOUR WIFE ONCE -- OR A FRIEND WHO HEARS ABOUT IT AND NEVER STOPS TALKIN' ABOUT IT?

OLIVIA
BOYS.... I'll never make the rent on this place if you two don't spend more time drinkin'.

VERNON
(Pause)
I'll make up for lost time, Olivia.

OLIVIA
Why don't you go for a walk, Vernon?... Get some air?

VERNON
I've had my exercise.
OLIVIA
Go get some air, Vernon.... Maybe I’ll be more agreeable when you come back.

VERNON
You shouldn’t have said those things, Ernie.

OLIVIA
Go get some air... and don’t piss in any windshield washers while you’re out there....

(Vernon exits, down-right.)

Jesus — I’d forgotten how worked up Vernon can get.

ERNIE
Did you really mean that, Olivia?

OLIVIA
About the windshield washers?

ERNIE
About bein’ more agreeable.

OLIVIA
I wouldn’t have sex with Vernon if he was the last man in the world -- and he was a stiff in the morgue.

ERNIE
He’s okay when he’s not drunk.

OLIVIA
Every mean drunk I’ve ever known has said the same thing, Ernie.

ERNIE
(Pause)
Sometimes we forget about you, Olivia.

OLIVIA
That ain’t exactly unique in my history with men.

ERNIE
I used to think it was to your advantage that we treated you different.

OLIVIA
So did I.... But this place is where I ended up, Ernie.... It wasn’t where I was goin’ to.
ERNEIE
It's where we've all ended up... one way or another.

OLIVIA
(Pause)
You don't think it'll get really ugly in here with Theo and Vernon -- do you?

ERNEIE
Make it a matter of simple economics, Olivia.... Keep 'em both here until Vernon's bar bill exceeds the breakage.

OLIVIA
Ernie, I don't wanna keep Vernon here until the middle of next week.

(Vernon and Maury enter, from down-right.)

VERNON
Look who the Hell I found outside... tryin' to remember the way in this place.

MAURY
You won't believe what I found this young man tryin' to do out there.

ERNEIE
The folks tryin' to wash their windshields are gonna be in for a Hell of a surprise.

MAURY
Don't you know that's breakin' the law?

VERNON
What law's that?

MAURY
The pissin' in windshield washers law.... You could be in a lotta trouble if a cop caught you doin' that.... Louis around here?

ERNEIE
We ain't seen him, sir.... But we've been real busy here tonight.

MAURY
Looks like it.... Olivia -- how the Hell are you?
OLIVIA
A week older than the last time you saw me.... How am I holdin' up?

MAURY
Look good to me... a sight for tired eyes.

OLIVIA
What've you been drinkin' so far, Maury?

MAURY
I had a couple of rum and cokes, Olivia.... You guys look like you're ready.

ERNIE
We could be, sir.... Vernon's just dyin' to buy another round, too.

VERNON
(Pause)
Yeah.... Set 'em up, Olivia.

MAURY
It's still rum, then.... How's the business, Olivia?

OLIVIA
Don't have to work for an honest dollar.

MAURY
Hell, that's an achievement in this city.... Goddamn -- you pour a Hell of a drink.

ERNIE
Eunice know you're out and about, sir?

MAURY
Doesn't know a thing.

ERNIE
Think we oughta call her?

MAURY
Hell, no.... I'm out on the sneak, tonight.... She's got so she doesn't ask anymore.

ERNIE
(Pause)
Reminds me... I need to use your phone, Olivia.
(Ernie moves to exit, down-left.)

**MAURY**

Is he gonna **call** Eunice?

**OLIVIA**

I think that's the idea, Maury.

**MAURY**

Goddamn responsible of him.

**OLIVIA**

I don't know how to act around Ernie, sometimes.

**MAURY**

That's 'cause there are so few decent bastards **left** in this city.... Louis **ain't** been around, huh?

**VERNON**

You wanna talk to him, too?

**MAURY**

I gotta stand in line?

**VERNON**

Theo made like bird shit -- and dropped in.

**MAURY**

(Pause)

Poor old Theo.... Nobody respects him -- and he works so hard for it.

**VERNON**

Hard to get any respect when you got your nose in the Chief's ass.

**MAURY**

You oughta be nicer to your superior officer, Vernon.

**VERNON**

My women call me nice.

**MAURY**

That ain't a positive attitude, Vernon.... Theo could influence your career for the better.

**OLIVIA**

Vernon's a little drunk, Maury.
VERNON
I ain't so drunk I can't break Theo's jaw.

OLIVIA
I think it's about time we had a dance, Vernon.

VERNON
(Pause)
A dance?

OLIVIA
Yeah -- a dance.... It's where two people grind together in ways God didn't intend for 'em to do standin' up.

VERNON
I can't dance, Olivia.... I been drinkin' too long, and --

OLIVIA
Come on, Vernon.... I been showin' men how to dance for at least as long as I been showin' 'em how bad my character is.

(Olivia leads Vernon to center-stage, and she begins to lead him in a slow dance to country music. After a moment, Ernie enters from down-left.)

ERNIE
Told Eunice we'd put you in a cab when we got done here.

MAURY
Thanks, Ernie.... Remind me to show my appreciation.

ERNIE
(Pause)
Did Vernon pull her out there?

MAURY
He'll say he did, tomorrow.

ERNIE
Wanna bet that dance's the best time Vernon has all night?

MAURY
Vernon doesn't mean any harm, Ernie.
ERNIE

Sure.... With any luck, he won’t get the chance to do any tonight.

MAURY

Watchin’ ’em makes me dizzy.

ERNIE

Get off your feet, then.... Go over and pay your respects to Theo.... He’s expectin’ you anyway.

MAURY

That’s a Hell of a choice.... Gotta watch what I say -- and I ain’t in no condition to watch what I say.... Man’s got a memory like a Rolodex.

ERNIE

It’s either that or listen to Vernon when they come back.

MAURY

God save me.

(Maury crosses to down-left and sits with Theo. Ernie pours himself another beer and watches Olivia and Vernon until they finish the dance.)

ERNIE

Y’know, buddy... what you an’ Olivia were doin’ out there could qualify as a new Olympic sport.

CHRIST, I NEED A DRINK.

VERNON

MOUTH DRY, VERNON?... NEED TO WET YOUR WHISTLE?

VERNON

Gimme a stiff shot a’ somethin’, Olivia.... My system’s about done for.

OLIVIA

Vernon’s sure got control on that dance floor, Ernie.... I love it when a man’s got me in his arms and showin’ me what he can do.
ERNIE
(Pause)
That's what I was thinkin' when I saw you two.... No woman's ever gotta worry about Vernon not knowin' what to do on a dance floor.

Vernon
Fuck both of you.

Olivia
Is that all you got to say, Vernon?... I was lookin' forward to another round with you.

Vernon
(Pause)
Gimme another drink.

Olivia
Pour it yourself, lover.

Ernie
Take it easy, Olivia.... About the last thing we want is for Vernon and Maury to start tradin' shots.

Olivia
(Pause)
I don't know.... Maury doesn't look in that good a humor.

Ernie
It ain't like last week, is it?

Olivia
Somethin' to do with Louis.

Ernie
Yeah... I'll bet.

Olivia
Think Louis is in trouble again?

Ernie
Maybe it's the same trouble, Olivia.

Olivia
You mean, with Lucinda and Theo?... I thought that was all over.
ERNIE
Louis won’t be done with Lucinda until he takes his last breath... and maybe not even then.

OLIVIA
(Pause)
There’s nothin’ we can do?

ERNIE
It’s like a sliver of glass under the skin.... Nothin’ to do but wait and watch it work itself out.

VERNON
(Pause)
I feel like I’m gonna throw up.

OLIVIA
Goddammit, Vernon.... I can’t take you anywhere.

VERNON
I didn’t say I was gonna throw up.... I just said I felt like it.

OLIVIA
Well, you’d better make it to the bathroom before it happens -- or I’ll stick your head in the toilet myself.

VERNON
The room is spinning.

OLIVIA
Sit there and don’t move, Vernon.

ERNIE
(Pause)
Maybe I should take him home.

OLIVIA
It occur to you he’s doin’ this to get out of the bar tab again?

Yeah... maybe.

OLIVIA
And you don’t mind?

ERNIE
I’ve known him for a long time, Olivia.
OLIVIA
Some folks might think that’s pretty dumb.

ERNIE
That’s all right.

OLIVIA
(Pause)
I don’t suppose you wanna dance?

ERNIE
Olivia, my wife can smell another woman’s perfume on me two blocks from the house.

(Louis enters, from down-right.)

OLIVIA
You’re the only sober guy in here -- and the only one who wants to go home to his wife.

ERNIE
Don’t say a word, Olivia.... I need to get a promotion.

VERNON
Will you look at that?

ERNIE
Look at what?

VERNON
It’s Louis.... Hey, Louis -- how the Hell you doin’ tonight?

ERNIE
Buddy, you look like Hell on a good night.

LOUIS
That Maury an’ Theo over there?

ERNIE
Yeah.... Beginnin’ to wonder if I lost a week somewhere.

LOUIS
How long’ve they been here?

ERNIE
Did we have another re-union scheduled?
LOUIS
How long’ve they been here, Ernie?

ERNIE
(Pause)
About a half-hour, I suppose.... They didn’t come in togeth-
er.

LOUIS
They say why they came at all?

ERNIE
Somethin’ about seein’ you -- I imagine.

VERNON
Seein’ Theo’s enough to make me wanna puke.

OLIVIA
What did I tell you about that shit?

ERNIE
You need some air, Vernon.

VERNON
I don’t think I do, Ernie.

ERNIE
I think we need to go outside -- right now, Vernon -- and
you can show me how to fill windshield washers.

VERNON
What if I wanna punch Theo’s lights out?

ERNIE
(Pause)
You remember that toilet Olivia said she was gonna push your
head in?... Come on, Vernon -- before I get mad.

(Ernie pulls Vernon to down-right and exits.)

OLIVIA
(Pause)
You been drinkin’ tonight, Louis?

LOUIS
Yeah.
OLIVIA
And you’re here for some more?

LOUIS
My money’s still good here -- ain’t it?

OLIVIA
I thought you were finished with that.

LOUIS
I guess I’m not.

OLIVIA
Havin’ a little trouble tonight?

LOUIS
That’s my fuckin’ business -- ain’t it, Olivia?

OLIVIA
You’re right.... Sorry.

LOUIS
Don’t apologize.... Just pour.

OLIVIA
Your usual?

LOUIS
Right again.

OLIVIA
You want it like normal drunks do -- or industrial strength?

LOUIS
No more lectures?

OLIVIA
You’ve made up your mind, haven’t you?... No hope at all.

LOUIS
Maybe it was made up for me.

OLIVIA
You’ve slipped a long way to believe that.

LOUIS
(Pause)
When’s the last time you were in Glendale, Olivia.
A month... maybe six weeks.

OLIVIA

I forget how big this town is.... Still neighborly, though.... Lotsa community spirit.

LOUIS

Why don’t you take your time with this?

OLIVIA

(Pause)

I been takin’ my time, Olivia.... The bell’s rung -- and somethin’ tells me nobody’s gonna win by knockout.

LOUIS

The drinkin’ helped you figure that out, Louis?

OLIVIA

No... the drinkin’s the consolation prize.

LOUIS

You’re goin’ the distance this time -- is that it?

OLIVIA

I went the distance, Olivia.

LOUIS

Drivin’ nails into your own coffin?... Is that a fucking achievement?

OLIVIA

(Pause)

I went the distance.... Theo won without even layin’ a hand on me.... That’s a fuckin achievement, Olivia.

OLIVIA

It’s Lucinda, then.

LOUIS

It ain’t Lucinda.... You’ll hear about it, Olivia -- after Maury tells me.

OLIVIA

(Pause)

Maury’s been ready to talk since he got here.

LOUIS

You don’t mind if I take my drink over there, do you?
OLIVIA
Costs just the same.

(Louis crosses to Maury and Theo.)

LOUIS
Mind if I join you?

MAURY
Looks who’s here, Theo.

THEO
Wondered when you were coming over.

LOUIS
I’m aware of my social obligations, Theo.

THEO
I can see you’ve been workin’ on them... Louis.

MAURY
Hey -- you’re not drinkin’, are you?... What the Hell you doin’ that for?

LOUIS
Recreation.

MAURY
Am I a bad influence, Louis?... I won’t have no more, if you don’t.

LOUIS
You’re not a bad influence tonight, Maury.

MAURY
I’m serious, Louis.... We went through this already today.

LOUIS
Maybe it went through one ear and out the other, Maury.

THEO
Is this gettin out of hand again, Louis?

LOUIS
That’s a possibility, Theo.... Louis is gettin’ outta hand again.
THEO
All those commendations won't help you this time.... The
Chief told you --

MAURY
He knows what the Chief told him, Theo....

(A pause. Ernie and Vernon enter from down-right.)

It's crap-removal.

I don't understand.

THEO

MAURY
Funny thing about crap.... Shovel it up -- and the next
thing you know, there's more to step in.... One thing's
sure, though -- nobody gives a damn about crap removers.

LOUIS
I never gave a damn about the commendations, Maury.... You
know that.

MAURY
The good thing about crap-removal is, regular baths make you
look nice and respectable... like all the other solid citi-
zens.

LOUIS
I never intended to get any on me, Maury.

MAURY
(Pause)
Nobody ever does, Louis.... But soap and water can --

LOUIS
What if you miss a spot, Maury?... What if you scrub real
hard, but you miss one spot?

MAURY
The public expects a clean cop, Louis.... It's what they pay
for.

LOUIS
(Pause)
I was the cop I was, because of you.
THEO
Careful with that stuff, Louis.... You're drinkin' likes there's no tomorrow.

LOUIS
I just came by to tell the boss that tomorrow's been cancelled, Theo.

VERNON
What did he say?

ERNIE
I'll tell you tomorrow.

VERNON
I heard some of it.... What did he say?

OLIVIA
Louis just paid your bar tab, Vernon.... You can leave anytime.

MAURY
You're what?

LOUIS
I'm not gonna be a cop anymore, Maury.

THEO
Let's get this straight.... You're quitting -- on the night before your vacation?

LOUIS
Somebody else can take my place on crap-removal, Theo.

THEO
What else can you do, except be a cop?

LOUIS
Anythin' you can get a shot at doin' -- I'm qualified.

THEO
Nobody just quits after all your years of service.... There's gotta be a reason, Louis.

LOUIS
I got a reason... and it's all mine.
MAURY
What the Hell are you trained for, Louis?... It's a cinch
you can't play football no more.

LOUIS
Ny knees remind me of that every cold mornin'.

THEO
(Pause)
It's Lucinda, then... and me.

VERNON
I told you I shoulda punched him out.

LOUIS
Theo, that's finally behind me.

THEO
What's come over you, then?

LOUIS
Just had it pointed out to me that how I did my job never
made a bit a' difference.... Both of us were fools.

THEO
I'm not a fool.

LOUIS
Both of us are, Theo.... I've even got some sympathy for --

THEO
MAYBE YOU'VE BEEN A GODDAMNED FOOL, BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE.

LOUIS
Sure you have.... You had your idea of how to be a cop --

VERNON
He ain't never been a cop.

LOUIS
-- and I had mine.

MAURY
Louis's problem is that he could never give less than a
hundred per cent.

LOUIS
Like I said -- I was a fool, wasn't I?
MAURY
A hundred percent is a good idea when you’re carryin’ a football, Louis.

LOUIS
(Pause)
But Lucinda didn’t marry a football player -- did she?

MAURY
Lucinda thought the world was just the way you said it was.... Common enough mistake.

LOUIS
I never lied to her, Maury.... Not once.

MAURY
She lied to herself.... No chance she could give a hundred percent to you or anybody else -- but she tried.

LOUIS
I went the goddamned distance for her.

MAURY
You went the goddamned distance for us.... All of us.... Theo didn’t betray you.... He betrayed us.

LOUIS
(Pause)
That’s not true.... I loved her.

MAURY
You still do.... That doesn’t change anything, though.

VERNON
You sleep with your wives, but you live with your partners.

ERNIE
You sleep with anybody you can, Vernon.

VERNON
It’s still fucking true.... Theo fucked us all up.... We were more than just a bunch a’ guys before.

ERNIE
Like what?... Guns and badges make the difference, Vernon?

VERNON
We were somethin’ more.... Now we’re nothin’... just pieces of somethin’.
LOUIS
(Pause)
Was it true, Maury?

MAURY
Memory fails, Louis.... I'm way past the age of a man who can afford the luxury of illusions.

How about delusions, then?

MAURY
Whatever.... Survival in an ugly world is still survival.

LOUIS
Guess I can survive doin' somethin' else, then.

MAURY
You're runnin' outta options, buddy.... 'bout time you saw that.

LOUIS
My options aren't runnin' out, Maury.... They're gone.

THEO
Your son isn't likely to understand this, Louis.

MAURY
Yeah, buddy -- think of little Louis.... How am I gonna explain to him that his old man quit the force 'cause his feelins' were hurt?

(A pause, then Louis removes the bracelet from his pocket and places it on the table before Maury.)

LOUIS
If there's a life after this one, Maury -- let's hope nothin' more than Angel Garza's feelin's are gettin' hurt there.

THEO
(Pause)
Angel Garza.

LOUIS
Somebody who got a little more than his feelins' hurt in this life, Theo.
THEO
He’s the reason you’re quitting?

LOUIS
Just another case of crap-removal... only that little spot didn’t rub off as advertised -- right, Maury?

THEO
I’m not following you.

LOUIS
Gotta settle my bill, Theo.... Don’t wanna leave without payin’ up.

MAURY
He was the one?... The kid -- that was his name?

LOUIS
You never bothered to find out?

MAURY
(Pause)
Didn’t think there was any need -- especially after Brandee offed herself.... If I didn’t know his name, I’d never have to think about him.

LOUIS
Did she off herself, Maury?

THEO
Brandee was the hooker you --

MAURY
Didn’t think she was a threat.... She was nothin’ --

LOUIS
A case of unauthorized crap-removal?

MAURY
If she’d just got on the bus, like I told her.... It would’ve been like he never existed.

THEO
A crime was committed against this Angel Garza?

MAURY
Things got way outta hand, Louis.
THEO
I don't suppose there's a record of this anywhere?

LOUIS
Nobody reported a crime against Angel Garza, Theo....
Nobody's ever gonna find a body -- right, Maury?

THEO
But he was somebody -- just the same?

LOUIS
Was he somebody, Maury?

MAURY
(Pause)
When they called me over, I knew somethin' was wrong.

ERNIE
They called you here -- didn't they, Maury?... You were here -- with us.

MAURY
I left from here.... When I got there, Brandee was alone --
scared shitless.... She had enough money to leave.... She
didn't need to worry.... It would've been like he never
existed.

LOUIS
WHO THE FUCK ARE THEY, MAURY -- THAT THEY CAN JUST MAKE
PEOPLE DISAPPEAR?

MAURY
Real important people, Louis.... Our city is in their debt.

LOUIS
(Pause)
How come you're with 'em, Maury?

MAURY
I made sure it cost 'em.

LOUIS
Was it only money?... What'd it take to buy you, Maury?

MAURY
I wish it were only money, Louis.... This thing might've
been halfway respectable, then.
THEO
Who are these "real important people"?

LOUIS
People who might do some good, Theo.... You’re a man who
doesn’t mind tearin’ off a stray piece, here and there.

MAURY
Might as well, Theo.... You’d know how to appreciate a drink
and a tour of the country club.

THEO
(Pause)
Maybe you ought to tell me a little more about Angel Garza,
first.

MAURY
These are the kinds of people who like to party, Theo -- and
they like other people to join 'em sometimes... professional
people, you know.

Hookers.

MAURY
Goddamn, you’re quick.... Before this young man’s career’s
over, he might even be Chief.

THEO
(Pause)
This girl Brandee -- she was involved with Angel Garza?

Perfect aim, Theo.

THEO
How did Angel Garza get killed?

MAURY
Let’s say he was a little too small -- and they were a
little too enthusiastic.... You know how cocaine makes you
eager, don’t you?

THEO
And this bracelet?

MAURY
Dropped at the scene of the crime.... I went back to look
for it -- but Louis is the one who found it.
THEO
(Pause)
So, you think I'd like a tour of the country club with these guys?

MAURY
These are "good people," Theo.... You wouldn't believe their standing in our community -- the contributions they make.

Bunch of goddamned freaks.

MAURY
That isn't generous, Theo.

THEO
No need to be generous with creeps.

MAURY
Don't tell me you got reservations about gettin' some strange shit, now and then.... You?

THEO
What they did was against the law.

MAURY
I'll be goddamned.... That was their big mistake.... I'll bet they never even thought of it.

THEO
They may be white-bread, country-club citizens -- but there's nothing respectable about them.

MAURY
They can do you a world of good, Theo.... Look what they done for --

THEO
I'll make it where I'm going -- on my own.

VERNON
You sure as Hell needed Lucinda to get past Louis.

ERNIE
Shut the Hell up, Vernon... before I send you home to your wife with your teeth in your pocket.
MAURY
I think we scared him, Louis.... I think some little part of Theo wonders if he'd find 'em as persuasive as I did.

THEO
I know who the fuck I am... I know what I'll do -- and when I'll do it.

MAURY
Sure you do, Theo.... But once they've had you over for drinks and tennis -- up to the lodge for fishin' or huntin' -- maybe even down to the islands for a little vacation, all expenses paid -- you're still sure you won't see things their way?

THEO
(Pause)
I've never had to buy a piece from anybody -- and I never sold a piece of myself, either.

MAURY
Put yourself in their shoes, Theo.... What do you do for a good time when you've already done everything that's supposed to be a good time?

THEO
Don't make excuses for them.

MAURY
You ain't old enough to know what your limits are, Theo.... You ain't rich enough, either -- not yet, anyway.

THEO
I can tell you right now what I'll never do.

MAURY
Can you tell me right now what you won't get to do?... The time's comin', Theo -- when you find out there's somethin' you want and you'll never be able to get it on your own.

THEO
You're just making excuses for yourself.

MAURY
(Pause)
No excuses, Theo.... I participated -- like Angel did, Like Brandee -- only I never had to pull my pants down for 'em.
LOUIS
Did you drive a black BMW for 'em?

MAURY
Yeah... I did, Louis.

ERNIE
A late model BMW?

MAURY
This year's version.

VERNON
Christ, this city's gettin' unhealthy.

OLIVIA
What are you talkin' about?

ERNIE
A late-model, black BMW was seen leavin' the residence of Silky Greer this mornin' -- just after he was killed with a shotgun.

VERNON
Don't suppose you've come across a car answerin' that description -- have you, Captain?

(Maury almost immediately reaches into his pocket and slams a set of keys on the table.)

MAURY
It's in a garage about a half-mile from here.... Enjoy the drive, Vernon.... Handles better than any car I ever bought.

THEO
(Pause)
I never wanted anything that much.

MAURY
What're you gonna do, Theo... when it's clear the only way you're gonna get in the club is crawlin' over the fence after the lights are out and the liquor's all locked up?

THEO
I'll get in there my own way -- and I won't have to sell anything of myself to get there.
MAURY
What if you make a miscalculation, though?... What if you’re lookin’ at retirement — and you’re still tryin’ to get a hundred thousand miles outta the car before you trade it in?

THEO
NOBODY’S GONNA GET ME TO DO WHAT YOU DID, MAURY.

MAURY
(Pause)
Sure, Theo.... You’re a man of rectitude.

OLIVIA
Maury... they had to have somethin’ on you.

MAURY
Not a thing, Olivia.... It wasn’t blackmail.

Then what?

MAURY
Maybe I just got tired of the sweat... the honest sweat.... Didn’t mind it when I was your age -- but I’ve been mindin’ it more and more, these days.... Honest sweat loses its goddamn appeal when you realize it’s all you’re ever gonna get.... I knew what I was gettin’ into -- even before this shit went down.... Even though they were throwin’ money around like it was catfish on a Saturday night fishfry -- somethin’ told me I was gonna be the one to pay up.

LOUIS
You didn’t pay, Maury... not like Angel or Brandee -- not even like Hattie or Silky.

MAURY
I paid, Louis... I paid when I put my dignity up for market-value -- which, it turns out, was zilch.... Maybe Brandee and Angel and me got somethin’ in common, then.

VERNON
They’d have to cut ‘em off me, before I’d let ‘em do that.

OLIVIA
Wasn’t that what you had on your mind when you came in here, Vernon?... Doin’ that to me?

(Louis moves to exit, down-right.)
Where you goin', Louis?

LOUIS

I do my best drinkin' alone.

MAURY

You're still quittin'?

LOUIS

I'm through bein' a cop, Maury.

MAURY

You're a cop, Louis.... Even now, you look more like a cop than anybody I know.

LOUIS

Just a shadow of one... an outline, Maury.... The particulars aren't there anymore.

MAURY

(Pause)

I guess that settles it, then.... Stick around for a minute or two -- and let me buy you a drink.... If for nothin' else, then what used to be.

I need your gun, Maury.

ERNIE

All right, Ernie.

MAURY

And your badge.

ERNIE

Anything else?

MAURY

You want me to call Eunice again?... Or do you wanna do it?

ERNIE

You're takin' me in?

MAURY

Yeah... I am.
Everybody else in this room would let me walk out that door -- as long as I promised to disappear like Angel Garza.

Maybe.

But you won't.

No.

I was wrong, then.... There is one cop left in here.

(Maury removes his gun and his badge and lays them on the bar.)

Go ahead and have your drink, Maury.

He's a friend of ours, Ernie.

He still is, Vernon.

Let him walk outta here, for Christ's sake.... What's gonna change by our arrestin' Maury?.... Are we gonna bring the dead back to life?.... How many of those rich slime-balls can we bring down with him?.... One?.... Two?.... Any? This goddamn city gonna be any cleaner 'cause we put Maury behind bars?

Let him go, Ernie.... Nothin's gonna change.

What d'you think, Theo.... You think the Chief's gonna appreciate this kinda publicity?

Just disappear.

I'm walkin outta here, Ernie.
Don't do that, Maury.

MAURY

Call my wife for me.... I'm not comin' home for dinner.

(Maury begins to exit, down-right.)

ERNIE

(Maury continues to move toward the exit. Louis picks up Maury's gun and points it at his back.)

LOUIS

Maury.... You gotta stop....

(Maury slow down for a second, then continues. Lights go down all at once.)

MAURY

(A shot is fired. Almost immediately a siren is heard. The sound is sustained briefly, then fades. Lights slowly rise. All who were present before are present now - except for Maury.)

VERNON

Which one of us tells Eunice?... It sure as Hell ain't gonna be me.

THEO

The Chief'll do that.

VERNON

Fuckin' Hell.... I never woulda believed it of Maury -- not any of it.

ERNIE

The proof's sittin' in a garage half a mile from here, buddy.
OLIVIA
He sold his dignity for a goddamned car, Ernie?

ERNIE
Looks like it.

OLIVIA
Is there something we can do for Maury now, Ernie?

ERNIE
Somethin’ more than clean up the concrete there?

OLIVIA
Somebody should be with Eunice.

THEO
The Chief’l go over himself.... I’ll call him right --

LOUIS
Eunice isn’t gonna hear about this from the Chief... not first, anyway.

THEO
You’re not askin’ me -- are you?

LOUIS
No, I’m not.

THEO
I didn’t ask for any of this.... Not any of it.

LOUIS
Then go and tell the Chief.... Say whatever’s on your mind, Theo.

THEO
I didn’t ask Maury to sell his dignity, did I?... Why should I put myself at risk?

LOUIS
You’re gonna put yourself at risk ‘cause what was on the floor wasn’t just a collection of parts.... What people are gonna remember is the man we knew.

THEO
I DON’T OWE MAURY A THING.

(A long pause.)
OLIVIA
Turn off the lights and lock up when you leave, Theo.... No
tellin' when I'll get back here tonight.

(Vernon, Ernie, Louis, and Olivia file out in that order,
exiting down-right. A pause
while Theo flips the keys of
the BMW in his fingers. Slow
fade. Blackout.)