

The Parallax View

By

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Based on the novel by

Loren Singer

"THE PARALLAX VIEW"

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

It's RAINING hard. We look out through the wet side window of a car parked on an overpass, above a long flat straight. HEADLIGHTS of another car come toward us down the highway, from total darkness, refracted by the trickling rain on the window into a parallactic double image. There's a BANG! like a tire blowing. The lights swerve and skid, with a brief staggering CRASH of steel and glass pile head-on at 75mph into cement abutment of the overpass. Then SILENCE settles again, and OVER THE PICTURE these words appear:

"MAN'S IMAGE IS NOT ONLY THAT OF
GOD, IT IS ALSO THAT OF SATAN.
THE IMAGE IN THE ASCENDANT NOW
CANNOT BE KNOWN TO US. PERHAPS
GOD'S IS NOT THE TRIUMPH IN OUR
TIME.

--From The Handbook For
Employees, the Bureau
of Social Structure."

EXT. BLACKTOP ROAD - DAY

A STATE POLICE CAR pursues a sedan at speed, siren and flashers going. Around a curve with tires screaming, then the sedan brakes abruptly and pulls to a stop on the shoulder.

INT./EXT. STOPPED SEDAN

In the mirror the DRIVER watches TWO YOUNG TROOPERS getting out of their car behind. He reaches out to his right, unobtrusively unlatches the passenger-side door. Then he gets a PISTOL from the glove compartment and slips it out of sight under road map open on the seat beside him. Sitting cool and easy, he watches the 1st Trooper stop back of his right rear fender. He pats his pockets, makes a sheepish show of searching for a wallet as the 2nd Trooper comes on up to open window.

DRIVER

Wouldn't you know? I don't have
it on me.

2nd TROOPER

Step out, please.

CONT.

CONTINUED

DRIVER

Out of the car? What for?

2nd TROOPER

Just get out. Not too fast.

Driver about to protest, but then he sees Trooper's hand go down to holster. Driver pops his eyes in kind of scared surprise, obediently fumbles at the door handle. That's his last fumble.

Like a steel spring he throws himself back flat on the seat and with both feet kicks driver's-side door savagely open into gut of Trooper standing at it, and keeps on rolling right out through unlatched door on other side, and lands in a crouch with that gun in his hand and FIRES point-blank at Trooper back of fender, and spins around in front and FIRES AGAIN at 2nd Trooper writhing windless on blacktop where door slammed him.

CU - THE DRIVER

DRIVER

Oh sweet hell.

FAST PULL BACK as he turns. Now we see a STATE POLICE BUS parked just beyond where sedan stopped. There are a DOZEN ROOKIE TROOPERS standing in the road, watching in some awe. The driver, who is LIEUTENANT FRADY, lowers his blank-cartridge pistol fairly disgustedly.

FRADY

Each of you. Write me five reasons that would never happen to you. That's all.

Frady shakes his head again at the Trooper still down on the blacktop, steps over him and gets back into car.

INT. STOPPED SEDAN

Frady slams the doors and starts the engine and turns on his radio. He picks up its microphone, blows in it.

FRADY

One-niner to Central. Leaving training area. Anything up?

RADIO VOICE

Hello, One-niner. Victim in that wreck last night on I-Seven been identified. Tucker, Michael.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Rings no bell. Should it?

RADIO VOICE

Morgue just called. They found a slip in the guy's pocket -- with your name and address on it.

Frady's surprised for an instant, but it's hard to tell. He never shows much expression.

FRADY

I'll look at him. One-niner out.

INT. COUNTY HOSPITAL - LOBBY - DAY

ANDREW WINSTON gets out of an elevator. Well-dressed man in youngish 50s. It won't surprise us when we learn he's a college professor. Winston is crossing to go out front doors when he meets Frady coming in. They both stop.

WINSTON

Lieutenant.

FRADY

Answer's still No.

WINSTON

Please. Listen to me. I don't excuse what he did, but he's one of the best students I've ever had. Really exceptional.

FRADY

That I'll buy. Point one-five drunk and stoned -- and tries to slug a trooper with a bottle.

WINSTON

I'd call the last score settled, Lieutenant.

FRADY

Why?

WINSTON

I just saw him, and I wonder -- would your men have beaten him quite so badly if he wasn't black?

FRADY

Charges of brutality must be put in writing.

CONT.

CONTINUED

WINSTON

Just wondering.

FRADY

Walk along with me a minute.

Frady heads for a door beside elevators. Winston falls in with him.

INT. HOSPITAL BASEMENT LEVEL - DAY

They emerge from a stairwell. As Frady starts to lead around a corner, Winston stops. CAMERA PANS to a sign on the wall. It says "MORGUE" with a pointing arrow.

WINSTON AND FRADY

WINSTON

What's the idea?

FRADY

Wilcox is upstairs in the prison ward with a busted head. I'm showing you where he ought to be.
(as Winston just stands there)

He was in a stolen car. He made a move at an officer. He's very lucky and the charges don't get dropped.

WINSTON

But he has -- he had -- such a really great future.

FRADY

Lots of us had.

WINSTON

Not that I like this tack -- do you know who I am?

A beat. Frady's tone goes even flatter.

FRADY

Andrew Winston. Professor of American History up at State U.

WINSTON

Before that.

FRADY

Yes, I know the position you had. Go on.

CONTINUED

WINSTON

I had some influence, Lieutenant.
In fairly high places. I might
be able to turn it on again.

FRADY

Do me the favor of my life. Try
that.

Frady's eyes bore into him. Winston turns and exits up the
stairway. Frady continues on his way.

INT. MORGUE AREA - DAY

An ATTENDANT sits at a desk outside double swinging doors.
He has a cold cigar butt in his mouth and is mentally jacking
off over an open Playboy mag. Frady comes up behind him.

FRADY

You'll grow hair inside your
skull.

(as fellow looks up)

Visitor for Tucker, Michael.

ATTENDANT

Let's hope he's in.

Attendant gets up. MOVE with him and Frady through the
swinging doors. Chilly air in the morgue-proper hits
Frady and makes him immediately sneeze.

FRADY

Pardon.

ATTENDANT

No sweat. Nothin' bothers the
guests in this hotel. Let's see
now -- Mr. Tucker's suite --

They've reached wall of big pull-out drawers. CAMERA DROPS
with Attendant as he locates one in bottom tier. Typed card
in slot says: "TUCKER, M."

ATTENDANT

We're in luck. Ain't got his
Do Not Disturb sign out.

CAMERA TILTS UP as guy rolls out the drawer. Frady squints
down, not enjoying the o.s. view one bit.

ATTENDANT

Face familiar?

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Not a bit.

ATTENDANT

It's a shame.

FRADY

Why?

ATTENDANT

I mean all I get is guys who've done head-on's at a hundred into bridges. Never nothin' like out of Playboy.

FRADY

Boy. I'd sure hate my sister to wind up around here.

Frady pivots quickly and EXITS SHOT.

EXT. STATE POLICE HQ - DAY

ESTABLISH a good modern building in open countryside. Terrain is fairly flat, with a haze of high mountains in extreme distance. It could be eastern Colorado. Frady parks his sedan in an official slot in front and goes into the building.

INT. STATE POLICE HQ - DAY

As Frady walks along, a young UNIFORMED TROOPER passes him in opposite direction, carrying some papers. He makes funny knowing eyes at Frady and lets out a low WHISTLE. Frady stops.

FRADY

Corporal Harmon.

CPL. HARMON

Sir?

FRADY

Why you whistle at me, Harmon?

CPL. HARMON

I was just whistling, sir.

That's not persuasive, but Frady loses interest.

FRADY

Okay, Harmon. Get going. 'Fore I run you in for moperly with intent to gawk.

CONTINUED

Harmon unstiffens and gets going quick. Frady turns a corner. We can read lettering on the closed door at end ahead of him: "CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION. LT. FRADY."

INT. FRADY'S OFFICE - DAY

Frady enters and stops short, like seeing a ghost.

ANOTHER ANGLE

A GIRL is standing by the window. Her name is HILDY. She's in her early 30s and quite attractive enough to explain Cpl. Harmon's whistle, and her attempt to hide her obvious uncertainty isn't very good.

HILDY

Hello, Frady. Surprise.

CU - FRADY

He just looks at her.- His eyes are strangely cold. Then his eyes go off her as ANGLE LOOSENS. Making a point of not looking at her, he hangs his jacket on a hook but leaves on his shoulder holster as he goes to desk and yanks open a bottom drawer.

FRADY

How you get in here?

HILDY

Said I was engaged to you.

No look, no comment. Frady takes a bottle from the drawer. Antique label says "Sloane's Horse Liniment," but it's probably not that because he uncaps it and drinks a slug.

HILDY

I had a heck of a time finding you. I never dreamed you'd be a policeman.

FRADY

Me neither.

HILDY

I'm terribly glad you are..

FRADY

I'm glad you're glad. Why?

HILDY

It's the damndest thing. It's --
Look at me, won't you?

CONT.

CONTINUED

He won't. He sticks bottle away, wipes mouth with back of hand, starts shuffling papers on his desk.

FRADY

Talk of damndest things. Your first name's Hildy, but in -- let's see -- ummmn -- in nine years, I've forgot your last.

HILDY

Miller. Look at me.

FRADY

Hildy Miller -- don't you know why seeing you makes me so sad?

HILDY

Of course. I don't like to be reminded either.

FRADY

Then what's the score?

HILDY

Someone wants to kill us, Frady.

CU - FRADY

He turns his head at last. He looks at her.

FRADY

Us.

WIDEN to include Hildy. She looks at him fixedly, nods in the most serious way you ever saw.

FRADY

Wants to kill you and me.
(gets another
nod)

The both of us. Murder us.
(and another)

Who?

HILDY

I don't know.

Silence. Frady's lips are suddenly dry. He wets them and looks down again, continues shuffling papers. Hildy comes over and leans toward him with her palms flat on the desk.

CONT.

CONTINUED

HILDY

You should ask why.

FRADY

That'd be dumb.

HILDY

What do you mean?

FRADY

We were together just one night
and one morning. It couldn't be
the night, so it's gotta be --

(after a beat,
low and halting)

11:12 ayem. Where we were.
What we saw. The -- uh -- Jesus,
and I swore I'd never think of
it again -- the -- uh -- damn,
I don't like to say it even --
the assassination.

HILDY

Yes.

It has been said and answered. The word hangs there like a
little hissing snake. More silence. Frady still looks down,
shuffles papers.

HILDY

Go on. Ask questions.

FRADY

Ummmm. You still flying with
the airline?

HILDY-

Yes. Why?

FRADY

Been in any crashes? Had any
mental treatments?

Hildy's mouth opens. Frady jabs button in his INTERCOM BOX,
speaks quickly into it:

FRADY

Frady here. Lady in my office
can't find her way out. Send
Harmon in to help her.

CONT.

CONTINUED

HILDY

Look -- I'm not kidding -- I
can show you evidence, I can --

FRADY

No. You look. Guys who pick
up airline girls for romantic
weekends deserve any trouble
they get, but this one's too
sick for me. Go find a good
shrink.

HILDY

You damn male chauvinist! Wait
till you hear from Mike Tucker!

CU - FRADY

He blinks just once. The prices have changed a little.

FEATURE HILDY

Beside herself with indignation, she grabs her purse and
heads for door. She's in the hall before Frady catches up
behind. If you didn't know better, you might think from
his tone that he was only mildly interested.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Who's Mike Tucker?

HILDY

He's a man! You might believe him!

FRADY

You figure he'll contact me.

HILDY

Probably not, Lieutenant. He's on their list too. I bet they'll murder him while you're still standing with your thumb up it!

FRADY

Where you staying?

HILDY

Motel. The "OK Corral." What's it to you?

FRADY

Had a bum day. Sorry how I been. Stay in and I'll stop by after supper and look at your evidence.

HILDY

You're humoring me, Frady. You won't stop by.

FRADY

Policeman's honor.

HILDY

(still burning)

Dumb crack about guys who pick up airline hostesses -- man, you can put that triple in reverse!

Cpl. Harmon is coming down the hall. Hildy doesn't wait for him. She zooms past him and Harmon looks at Frady questioningly. Frady shuts the door in his face.

EXT. AUTO WRECKING YARD - DAY

Remains of dead cars are piled all over. We find one wreck on a hoist a couple of feet above the ground, its four wheels removed. It looks the way a car should look after it has gone head-on at speed into a concrete abutment.

CONT.

CONTINUED

Frady prowls around it, examining it closely. He's studying the bulged-out smashed windshield when a YARD MAN comes up.

YARD MAN

We got the rubber off the rims.
What's left of 'em.

Frady walks across a little way with the Yard Man. The four wheel rims lie on the ground, stripped of tires. Frady squats down by the pair of them which are knocked egg-shaped.

FRADY

These are the fronts, huh?

YARD MAN

Yuh. What you lookin' to find
exactly?

FRADY

Dunno exactly.
(as guy watches)
Thanks. You can get back to work.

Yard Man gets the idea. He walks away. Frady turns the wheels on the ground, studying the hollow inside of rims where the tires used to be set. He pauses suddenly, with narrowed eyes.

CLOSER - WHEEL RIM

There's a regular little indentation in one of them. A small punched-in hollow in the steel, like could have been made by a rifle bullet. Frady sticks a forefinger in it. PAN to the other wheel rim. It lies with its bent oval shape matching the first, but there is no little hollowed indentation in this one.

ANGLE - FRADY

He gets up. What he's discovered is thought-provoking. CAMERA PULLS BACK to a WIDE ANGLE. We see Frady deep in those thoughts, walking up and down in front of terrible heaped wasteland of junk.

SLOW MIX TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - THE CAPITOL BUILDING - DAY

The junkyard has slowly become this gleaming edifice. It stands in the sunlight as a TROOP OF SCHOOLCHILDREN mount the steps, debouching with their guides from buses parked below. The kids are suitably solemn and awed by it all.

INT. CAPITOL - A HEARING ROOM - DAY

It's not a big one. A session is in progress: some sort of House Appropriations Sub-Committee affair. There's a scattering of PEOPLE in the seats, watching and listening. EDWARD TRUMBULL sits in the witness seat. He's a very well-tailored type in his 40s: they didn't break the mold after they made Dean Acheson, evidently. Facing him over the big paper-strewn table are SEVERAL CONGRESSMEN. The CHAIRMAN is a small Southerner, string-tied and rimless-glassed. The pencils in front of him are very sharp, and we know from his eyes that he is a fierce guardian of the public purse.

CHAIRMAN

Correct me if I am in error, suh.
Your name is Edward Trumbull.
You are the Director of the Bureau
of Social Structure.

TRUMBULL

Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN

I presume you know the purpose of
this hearing, Mr. Trumbull?

TRUMBULL

Yes, sir. To examine my bureau's
request for funding in the coming
fiscal year.

Congressmen look at papers in front of them. Fellow next to Chairman makes a face and whispers something. Chairman nods, addresses himself again to the witness.

CHAIRMAN

Some of us aren't quite clear as
to the function of your department,
Mr. Trumbull. Could you help us?

TRUMBULL

With pleasure, sir. The Bureau
of Social Structure was organized
in 1958, during the Eisenhower
administration, under PL 10451
dash 2. It is charged with -- I
quote -- the continuing study of
social structures as developed
within the United States as made
by its citizens in response to
conduct of the Federal Government.

A beat of awkward silence. One Committee Member bites
peevishly on his cigar.

CONT.

CONTINUED

THAT MEMBER

Worst gobbledygook I ever heard.
What's that mean in English?

TRUMBULL

(charmingly)

I sympathize, sir. The language
of that era often was obscure.
Let me explain it another way --

CHAIRMAN

(banging gavel)

No, suh. You will not.

TRUMBULL

I beg your pardon?

CHAIRMAN

Gentlemen, allow me to draw some
amazin' facts to your attention.
It's on that sheet you all have.
(as they look)

In each and every year since it
was started, this Bureau has
requested somewhat less money
than it received the year before.
Not only that, it has moved on
four occasions into smaller
quarters and operated with fewer
personnel. I find this record
u-nique and without precedent
in my experience. Speaking for
myself, therefore, I don't give
a dang what this whatchamacallit
Bureau does -- just wish there
was more like it. All in favor?

THE COMMITTEE

Aye! ..

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Trumbull suh, your Bureau's
request for funding is approved
as made.

(bangs gavel again)

Step over here, please, and we'll
all shake your hand --

Trumbull rises with a debonair smile, leans across and
starts shaking hands. The people in the seats applaud.

SLOW MIX TO:

EXT. A GUNFIGHT - NIGHT

Congressmen magically become figures on a cute ANIMATED NEON SIGN. They walk each other down along multicolor tubing and draw guns and little neon bullets zap out and everyone falls dead. They start it again as CAMERA PULLS BACK. Old-fashioned light bulbs spell out name over the endless neon slaughter: "OK CORRAL MOTEL." We see Frady entering the lobby.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - RECEPTION DESK - NIGHT

Frady leans on counter as CLERK checks registration file. Frady is in usual civvies, of course, but he is well known in these parts.

CLERK

114. Nothing wrong, is there?

FRADY

Not I know of. Do you?

WITH FRADY

Getting quick headshake, he heads away toward exit to room area. The super-cornball lobby depresses him. Clerk and rest of staff affect phony cowboy gear. Frady pauses a moment by souvenir stand, watching a YOUNG MAN buying a dreadful little lamp made of cactus with a plastic cowboy-hat shade. His eyes ask how could anyone want such a thing. The Young Man sees Frady and winks at him.

YOUNG MAN

Light to make love by. Bang bang.

Frady hurries on. He hears PIANO MUSIC. It comes from entrance to bar. Sign over archway naturally says: "Black Bart's Saloon." Frady angles over and looks in. There's a surprisingly nice GIRL playing piano, just finishing a song. Frady eyes his watch.

IN THE BAR

Frady enters the dim-lit place, goes up to the fairly crowded mahogany counter.

BARTENDER

What's yer poison, pard? Spot o' redeye?

FRADY

(not amused)

Jack D.. Water on the side.

CONT.

CONTINUED

He peels off a buck and goes to the piano. Despite her cool greeting, the Girl's eyes are glad to see him.

GIRL

Some nerve, ol' pig.

FRADY

Yuh, I know, I should've called,
 Claire -- I been busy -- out of
 town on something --
 (enough lies)
 What you doin' later?

CLAIRE

Supporting my local police?

Frady nods, pleased. He goes back toward bar.

FULL SCREEN - PROJECTED SLIDE PHOTO

It packs a big wallop. It's a grainy enlargement of a POLITICAL ASSASSINATION. It's no particular event that we can identify in time or place but it has elements of all of them. The VICTIM is turned away so we cannot see his face, but a piece of his skull is obscurely detached and seems to be taking wing.

A FLASH of that, and a small o.s. CLICK SOUND, and we get ANOTHER SLIDE. Same event from a different angle, seen perhaps three seconds later. The victim is falling now, though we still NEVER SEE HIS FACE, and there is a fine spray that must be blood, and the PEOPLE AROUND are now perceiving. Mouths opened in existential terror as in Munch's painting of a scream.

Just a FLASH of that one too, and the o.s. CLICK and we get a third slide. This one will remain a while. It shows same unspeakable event from yet another angle. A group of SPECTATORS watching from some distance. Setting might be a PUBLIC PARK.

The feature of it is this: perhaps TWENTY SPECTATORS in the frozen shot, all but three of whom have had their faces CIRCLED IN BLACK INK on the negative with VARIOUS DATES INKED ALONGSIDE. Dates like 12/9/64 and 4/19/65 and so on. The THREE PEOPLE at extreme right hand edge of slide are NOT CIRCLED AND DATED. These are ONE MAN by himself, and a BLURRY COUPLE who seem to have been holding hands as the photographer caught them.

NO SOUND for a bit, just o.s. BREATHING, and then:

CONT.

CONTINUED

HILDY'S VOICE

I guess you saw this when it
came out in the magazine.

FRADY'S VOICE

Who didn't?

Hildy walks up INTO SHOT in front of PROJECTION and indicates
the BLURRY UNCIRCLED COUPLE at right edge.

HILDY

You realize this is us.

INT. HILDY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Showing this curious photo being projected on a wall from a
little home-slide gizmo. The room is pretty well dark,

CONT.

CONTINUED

drapes over patio doors pulled shut. Frady walks up and inspects the photo closer. His voice is totally neutral.

FRADY

Could tell it was you, maybe. But the guy's too blurred. I wouldn't know him. Don't think anyone would.

HILDY

Frady.

FRADY

Okay. It's us.

HILDY

Tucker sent me this a couple of weeks ago. He's a magazine writer. He was planning one of those Where Are They Now things. So he did some research and he found -- What do you think the dates are?

FRADY

I don't want to think.
(as she just waits
and looks at him)
Obituaries?

HILDY

On the nose.

FRADY

All of them?

HILDY

Right again, Frady.

FRADY

Impossible. How?

HILDY

Accidents.

FRADY

(broken record)
All of them?

HILDY

Every one. Maine to California. Tucker dug in and found every one was listed a closed-case accident. Here's a copy of his notes.

CONT.

CONTINUED

Hildy picks up a sheaf of typewritten xerox copies from bureau top. She hands them to him. He takes them like they were red hot. He frowns, reads the heading of top sheet aloud:

FRADY

"Arthur Faversham. Drowned while fishing. Salmontail River, Idaho."

HILDY

That was the last one. Now there's just Tucker and us. How's it feel?

FRADY

What feel?

HILDY

Being on the wrong side of the fence. Having someone after you.

ANGLE ON FRADY

He doesn't reply, stares at the sheet. Hildy comes over to him.

HILDY

Go to Idaho. It wasn't so long ago. See what you can find.

FRADY

Another state. Not my turf.

HILDY

Go anyway. What's to lose? It beats being a sitting duck.

Frady rubs back of his neck. He tosses notes down on bed and flicks off the slide projector and crosses to turn up air conditioner.

FRADY

Making me hot. Dumb coincidences always make me hot.

HILDY

Coincidence, huh?

FRADY

Oh come on. You know it.

HILDY

She marches over and turns the projector on again as Frady turns in b.g.

HILDY

Look again. The dates. Left to right.

ON THE PROJECTION

CAMERA JUMPS from circle-date to circle-date, stitching them left to right. HOLDS suddenly.

FRADY'S VOICE

Sonofabitch. They're in order!

CAMERA JUMPS BACK and retraces pattern. We see now if we didn't before: the dates are indeed in exact calendar order.

INCLUDE FRADY AND HILDY

HILDY

Right again, Frady. Seventeen people die in perfect order from left to right -- one after the other, not one out of order. You call that coincidence?

Frady can find nothing to say. Stares from projection to Hildy and back again, sits on edge of bed. As Hildy turns on room lights and kills projector herself, PHONE RINGS. She picks it up quickly.

HILDY

Yes? -- I see. Thank you.

(hanging up)

Tucker was going to meet me here today. Hasn't showed up, and he's not where he lives either.

FRADY

Sonofabitch.

HILDY

You said that before. Now say it doesn't make sense.

FRADY

Shit. We were just out for air. We didn't even know the guy was coming through. Those conspiracy theories are crocks of shit. But even if there was one, how could you and me be involved?

CONTINUED

HILDY

We were on that damn grassy knoll.
Someone thinks we saw something.

FRADY

But we didn't.

HILDY

Of course -- but they don't know.
So they're killing everyone, just
to be sure. That's what Tucker
and I decided. Beat that idea
with a better one.

FRADY

Try Tucker as a psycho.

HILDY

He isn't.

FRADY

Try him. He's got this old slide
and some ink and a case of galloping
paranoia. The rest is in his head.

HILDY

You've got his notes. You're the
detective -- check them out.

FRADY

Sounds more like a job for the FBI.

HILDY

You darn fool -- Tucker went to
them already.

(bitterly)

And guess what.

FRADY

They wanted to fit him a strait-
jacket.

HILDY

Exactly!

FRADY

Okay. I'm taking the slide and
these notes. I'll get back to
you after I look 'em over.'

He picks the stuff up and heads for the door, fairly abruptly.

CONT.

CONTINUED

HILDY

Frady --

(when he turns)

I'm scared. They could be on my trail.

FRADY

Assuming there is a "they."

HILDY

Of course there is. And you should be scared too. Because if they're after me, now I've led them to you.

FRADY

I doubt it.

HILDY

How can you say that?

FRADY

You went to the police. No one could guess you went to a policeman. I'm a tree hid in the forest.

She comes closer to him, her eyes begging.

HILDY

I'm still scared, Frady. Please. I -- I don't feel much like being alone.

FRADY

Take a nice hot bath and chain the door. Not to worry. I'll call you.

He's gone before she can say a thing more. Alone, she does look scared. She slips the door chain in its slot.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frady sits alone under a lamp. He wears shorts only, sips a drink as he broods over xeroxed notes he took from Hildy. Low from RADIO comes a farm and commodity report. It gives the time as something after 3 a.m. Frady puts the notes down suddenly, eyes a telephone.

He changes his mind. CAMERA WITH HIM as he crosses and looks into bedroom. We glimpse Claire sprawled under sheet, sleeping contentedly. Her dress and things are scattered on the floor. Stealthy, Frady goes in to get his own clothes, which are laid out neat on a chair.

CU - A SILENT PORTABLE RADIO

It shimmers, and we realize it is UNDERWATER. The CAMERA PULLS UP a bit. Now we see that radio lies on bottom of a bathtub, with its cord plugged into an outlet beside washstand. Hildy Miller lies in the tub too, face down, her hair floating on the surface like a funeral wreath.

Some small SOUND o.s. and ANGLE SHIFTS again. Frady appears in bathroom doorway. NIGHT CLERK is behind him, with a pass-key. The guy's pasty face comes unglued.

NIGHT CLERK

Holy mother.

INT. STATE POLICE HQ - ANOTHER OFFICE - DAY

This one belongs to CAPT. RINTELS. He reads a report as Frady sits studying the rug.

RINTELS

You knew her. She's passing through and calls you. Why you look so guilty?

FRADY

Well, I -- I walked out on her about 9 p.m. If I'd stayed, it wouldn't of happened.

RINTELS

Sure. And if the moon was made of green cheese.

(scans report again)

It was an accident. Everybody's been questioned. You not hiding any facts, are you?

A beat. Frady shakes his head and stands up.

FRADY

Nothing definite.
(starting out)
Forget it, Captain.

RINTELS

Not so fast. Sgt. Dreben tells me you said to hang a wiretap on Carlton after the court denied an order.

FRADY

The bastard deals H. You know it and I know it. Ask me, the judge is getting his cut.

CONT.

CONTINUED

RINTELS

My God, Lieutenant. I think you must be cracking up.

Another beat. Frady's expression changes.

FRADY

Yuh. I do feel kind of bushed. How 'bout a few days leave to go fishing?

RINTELS

(instantly)

Request granted. Get lost.

EXT. MOUNTAIN COUNTRYSIDE - BY A RIVER - DAY

The river runs through dark sweet pines, joined here by a smaller stream. The waters have carved a shelf into rocky outcrop, and under it is a wide black pool.

CAMERA finds Frady, in old clothes, lying at the end of that shelf and gazing down. Swirl of water, a fish rising, and as it jumps from the surface suddenly the SCREEN FLARES ALMOST WHITE and over the residual image these words appear:

"NATURE IS THE PROPER TEACHER OF
MAN. IN THE LIFE CYCLE OF EACH
SEED AND ANIMAL ARE PRIZED LESSONS
IN AUTHORITY, COURAGE & DISCIPLINE.

--The Handbook, Bureau
of Social Structure."

Words FADE OUT as key returns to normal. The fish is vanished. Frady works himself back from the ledge.

EXT. ROAD NEARBY - DAY

Frady, in jacket and waders, stands at open trunk of car parked on shoulder, setting up his fly rod. It is not the police sedan he drove before. Frady looks down at a map lying open in the trunk. We see it over his shoulder. Highly detailed local job, with legend printed at top: "IDAHO. NORTH FORK SALMONTAIL. SHEET 4." We may recognize the confluence of river and side stream just seen. Below it, an arrow has been marked in ink. Frady shuts the trunk lid, walks toward the river with rod and creel.

EXT. RIVER - FRADY FISHING - SERIES OF SHOTS

He works his way expertly downstream along a gravelly bar. Shadows grow longer: it becomes SUNSET. Frady is touching

CONT.

CONTINUED

up his dry fly, smoothing wings, when he seems to sense something. He turns his head slowly.

PAN to stand of pine behind him. MOVE IN CLOSER on it. Motionless figure of a MAN there, watching from just inside the trees. The setting sun at his back renders the figure an anonymous silhouette.

ON FRADY

FRADY

Howdy! You lookin' to see my license?

INTO PINES

No answer. Figure is so still we begin to doubt it, but then it moves and melts away into the trees.

FRADY

Continues peering a bit, then turns back to river.

EXT. ROADSIDE MOTEL - EVENING

Rundown old place. Weatherbeaten cabins beside a frame house that serves as office too. Sign welcomes hunters and fishermen, but no sign of anyone staying here, just the owner's pickup parked by the house. Frady drives in and gets out of car, still wearing his fishing jacket.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - EVENING

It's just a desk area in front hall. Frady finishes filling out registration card as motel owner watches him. He is HENRY PELIKAS. Seems a friendly soul, glad to have someone to chat with in this obviously failing place. Frady hands him registration card.

PELIKAS

(eyeing it)

John Harmon. Once knew a fella named Harmon.

FRADY

That's interesting. Anywhere nearby to eat?

CONT.

CONTINUED

PELIKAS

Greasy spoon about half a mile.
Or I could give you a bowl of
lamb stew here if you wanta take
a chance. Wouldn't mind havin'
company, to be frank.

FRADY

Thanks. Me neither. It's seven
bucks, right?

PELIKAS

Right. Pick a key.

Frady peels off money, turns to board where keys hang.

FRADY

(picking it)

Lucky seven.

PELIKAS

Well, maybe. Or maybe not so.

(as Frady looks a
question)

Nothin'. Skip it. I guess you
want to wash up; I'll get going
in the kitchen...

INT. FRADY'S CABIN - BATHROOM - EVENING

Frady stands at the mirror beside tin shower stall, a towel
around his middle, giving himself a go-over with an electric
razor. Propped on little shelf in front of him is one of
those xerox sheets from Hildy's legacy. It's the same one
he looked at in her room. As Frady studies it again, we can
read the heading typed in caps. "ARTHUR FAVERSHAM. DROWNED
WHILE FISHING. SALMONTAIL RIVER, IDAHO."

INT. PELIKAS KITCHEN - NIGHT

Nice and cozy. Frady and Pelikas sit at the table, with
bowls of stew and mugs of coffee. Pelikas can talk with
his mouth full or empty.

PELIKAS

Fishing's held up better, than the
hunting. Nowadays, you let go a
round in November, you're like to
put a hole in a eight-thousand-
dollar camper with four beds and
a color TV. And if you did find
a bear, he'd sit up and beg for
peanut butter and jelly. But the
fishing's okay.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

I'm glad. I always heard so much about this river from my friend Art Faversham.

Pelikas reacts, stares at Frady.

PELIKAS

Oh Jesus. That's what I meant about lucky seven, maybe. He was staying here. In the very same cabin you're in, didja know that?

CU - FRADY

He looks suitably startled, lowers his fork. ANGLE LOOSENS. Pelikas has reached for a canister labeled "Flour" and removed top, taken out a bottle of brandy. Pours a dollop into Frady's coffee mug.

PELIKAS

Of course I'll move you now.

FRADY

Thanks. It's okay. I mean it was a damn shame, but -- way I look at it, least he went doing something he liked. Beats old age and cancer.

PELIKAS

Well, yeah. That is a way to look at it.

FRADY

I always been curious, though. Art was no greenhorn on rivers.

PELIKAS

Hell. Old days, there'd be maybe one gone a season, this stretch. You mean you don't know the setup?
(as Frady shakes head)

What happens is, there's this big reservoir up in the notch, say here, for the power company --

CLOSER ON PELIKAS

Moving sugar bowl to demonstrate, arranging utensils as he goes on:

CONT.

CONTINUED

PELIKAS

Don't draw enough water out, it backs up, so they open the sluice there and that overflow comes down like a wall. You're standing let's say here, where the side stream runs through this here little gorge, there's about a four-foot drop anyway, and you're caught there -- you're gonna drown, green horns or blue.

FRADY

Isn't there any warning system?

PELIKAS

Oh sure. Big signs, and a siren and bells. And there's this watchman, kind of, who hangs along the river. That's Buster Meyer. Not that he's worth much on the job anymore. Bought a new car, bought a four-hundred-dollar Browning shotgun. Son of a bitch come into money some way.

PUSH IN on Frady. He freezes with coffee mug halfway to lips, narrows eyes fairly theatrically.

FRADY

Don't tell me -- it happened just after my friend Art had his accident.

INCLUDE PELIKAS

PELIKAS

Yep, it did. What you mean?

FRADY

Art didn't hear the warnings -- because someone screwed 'em up.

PELIKAS

Why?

FRADY

Art was rich. His wife's a sexpot twenty years younger. Then this so-called watchman comes into heavy bread.

CONT.

CONTINUED

Pelikas stares at Frady, fascinated by this touch of melodrama.

PELIKAS

You from the insurance company?

FRADY

Nope. Just a friend. But I wouldn't mind a talk with Buster Meyer.

PELIKAS

He's rat-ass mean, Mr. Harmon.

FRADY

Jack, to you.

PELIKAS

Henry.

FRADY

Could you fix it for us to talk?

PELIKAS

Sure. Easy. I could take you to the bowling tomorrow night.

(very worried)

But I mean he is mean, Jack. He figures you for any ideas, you're taking some chance.

Frady has finished eating. He stands up with a grin.

FRADY

I took one on your stew and it paid off, Henry. Maybe I'm on a streak.

PELIKAS

Okay. I'll fix it.

FRADY

Thanks, Henry. But listen -- you breathe a word I'm asking questions, you'll have an accident yourself.

PELIKAS

Hell.. I'm like a gravestone.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

OPEN CU on one of those WARNING SIGNS Pelikas mentioned. CAMERA PULLS to reveal the narrow gorge and four-foot Niagara described last night. Frady is on a big jutting slab at the side, above the little falls, casting down into turquoise pool below. He has just reeled in when Pelikas emerges from trees behind. He has a shotgun slung on his back and carries a paper-sack.

PELIKAS

How's the luck?

FRADY

All with the fish.

PELIKAS

Feel like eating, Jack, I brung you up some lunch.

FRADY

Hey -- that's very nice.

CLOSER ON FRADY

Coming in on the rock, catching the sack which Pelikas tosses to him. He pulls out a sandwich.

FRADY

You give everyone this service, Henry, you'll lose a --

Sudden BLAST OF SIREN from upstream. Frady spins. Its loudness is really startling in this narrow gorge. Then a GONG starts sounding, and they go together for a bit, and then both DIE AWAY as startlingly as they began. Frady takes a bite of his sandwich, staring upstream toward source of sound, in some awe. CAMERA IN on him.

FRADY

My God. No one could miss that.

PELIKAS

You'd think not.

FRADY

Now I really want to talk with Meyer.

PELIKAS

There isn't any Meyer, you know.

Very quiet, that last. Offhand. But Frady gets it instantly. He's aware of his own mouth opening in mid-chew, the bite of liverwurst and bread lying against his lower teeth as his head turns.

INCLUDING PELIKAS

He has that shotgun unslung now. It's a new Browning. Frady chokes, spits out his mouthful onto the rock.

PELIKAS

Don't do anything, now. I don't want to shoot you now.

FRADY

I'm a police officer. Drop your weapon!

PELIKAS

Shit. You got about two minutes. Warning goes once more, then the third time you're in the drink like your pal Art. Big casino.

FRADY

You penny-ante crazy.

PELIKAS

Been called a lot worse for a lot less.

FRADY

What'd you do it for, two hundred cash?

PELIKAS

Fifty-two-thousand five. Plus I oughta get a bonus for you.

Very simplicity of his tone says that Pelikas is telling the truth. This is rather worse than Frady thought. He feels the blood draining from his face.

FRADY

Who from?

PELIKAS

Don't be a sap.

FRADY

Who's paying you?

PELIKAS

Aw come on. I told you. I'm a gravestone.

Fury of SIREN AND GONG echoes briefly through gorge again, dies away.

CONT.

CONTINUED

PELIKAS

Next one's wet, Jack.

Frady shakes his head, changing his tack.

FRADY

It's a bad joke. You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

PELIKAS

What?

FRADY

I liked you so much last night. Way you shared with me. I was trying to think of something I could do for you, Henry.

PELIKAS

Just shut up, that'll do for me. Till I get my bonus.

FRADY

Bonus. Shit! Till they put a slug in the back of your head!

PELIKAS

No sir, Jack. Parallax folk 'd never --

CU - FRADY

As Pelikas bites that off.

FRADY

Who? Parallax? Who would never what??

ON PELIKAS

He's a gravestone. He glances at his watch quickly, then up the river. Takes a step forward, the shotgun leveled.

ON FRADY

The passing seconds are drowning him. With an easy little movement, he reaches to touch the fly reeled up against tip ferrule of his rod.

PELIKAS

Don't do that! I want that fly tied on there!

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

I'm meant to be fishing, Henry,
there should be more line out.
Goofs like that take a fella to
the gas chamber.

SHOTS - FRADY AND PELIKAS

Pelikas hesitates an instant, then nods.

PELIKAS

Okay. Little more line out.

Frady drawing out line, lazily, and then suddenly it's like with the rookie Troopers as he backhand-slashes rod over Pelikas's eyes and dives at his ankles. Big BOOM! of shotgun as Pelikas goes down, and now SIREN AND GONG start again, and second barrel goes BOOM! and from upstream a SOUND LIKE SURF. They grapple grunting, Frady's fingers still dug into ankle, and then Frady is up on knees, yanking up as if at a lever.

PELIKAS AND THE RIVER

The man is poised a beat, limed against frothy wall of water rushing down, crest boiling with small rocks and brush. Then with a SCREAM, still clutching gun, he flips into the wave. - Head bobs up, gets smashed hideously into rocks. One foot in air, tumbling, and Pelikas has vanished.

ON FRADY

Watching the wild riverrun, its crest gone down the gorge. Frady rises from hands and knees. He kicks the bag and remains of sandwich into the drink, picks up rod and creel, and walks away from the scene.

INT. PELIKAS HOUSE - DAY

Frady's over the desk in front hall. He pulls out all the drawers and gives them a quick search. He finds nothing of special interest. He turns and goes upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

Frady stands a moment, getting the room's vibes. He's a pro at this. He goes to bureau, pulls out the right top drawer, pushes aside socks and stuff. There's a cheap revolver under them. This Saturday Night Special neither surprises nor interests Frady. He leaves it as it was, crosses and throws mattress off the bed. Nothing under it. The vibes draw him to a closet. He reaches up onto top shelf. Behind a fur hat there's a FISHING BOX, like you keep flies

CONT.

CONTINUED

and things in. He takes it down. The box is locked. Frady seems pleased that it is locked. He leaves the bedroom with it.

INT. GARAGE SHED - DAY

Frady gets the box open with a wrecking bar from rack on wall. Top layer has little compartments filled with flies and sinkers, etc. He swings that up on its metal arms. Underneath is a helluva lot of U.S. currency. Frady shuts box again, takes it into house through the connecting door.

INT. PELIKAS KITCHEN - DAY

Three stacks of bills on table: \$20s, \$50s and \$100s. Frady has jotted amounts in each denomination on a pad. MOVE IN OVER SHOULDER as he does bit more arithmetic:

$$\begin{array}{r} \$52,500 \\ 29,820 \\ \hline \$22,680 \end{array}$$

A beat, and then the pencil adds "????."

BACK TO FRADY

He frowns. Assuming Pelikas told truth about what he was paid, and there's no reason to doubt it, almost half the sum is not accounted for. Frady returns to beat-up fishing box. Bottom part is empty all right: no savings account passbook or bonds or anything. He's leaving the box again when something catches at his eye. He reaches under a mess of lead sinkers in top part, comes up with a folded bit of NEWSPRINT. He unfolds it and stares at it and his eyes narrow.

CU - THE NEWSPRINT

It's a medium-size box advertisement clipped from some newspaper. We've all seen ones just like it. Big bold head says: "HIGH-PAID JOBS OVERSEAS!" Then there's bit of print, and another bold line: "YOU MIGHT QUALIFY!" A bit more print, and then the bottom line that jumps out at you too: "APPLY IN PERSON DEC. 18 -- SUITE 327, HOTEL EDISON -- SALT LAKE CITY."

ANGLE UP AT FRADY

Reading it and rereading it, fascinated, as there is a SOUND o.s. A CAR coming in and stopping. So great is Frady's interest in this ad that he doesn't react until there's another SOUND: the definite SLAM OF A CAR DOOR. He whirls around and goes to front kitchen window.

EXT. PELIKAS MOTEL - DAY

A WOMAN and a BOY have gotten out of their car. The Boy is around 12. She's maybe 34, as attractive as anyone would want, in a great tough-slender way that suggests she used to be a model. The kid totes small suitcase and a canvas fishing-rod holder, and both of them appear just a bit travel-worn.

CAMERA TRACKS in front of them as they walk up into the house and stop short just over the threshold.

THE WOMAN

Hello.

INT. PELIKAS FRONT HALL - INCLUDING FRADY

FRADY

Sorry, folk. Closed down for remodeling.

They stare at him. Frady picks up an Auto Club Motel Guide from desk.

FRADY

Whyn't I call and get you in someplace?

THE WOMAN

(calling loud)

Henry -- ??

THE BOY

(to Frady)

What you done with him?

CU - FRADY

He's as silent as the house. He looks like an idiot. ANGLE LOOSENS as the Woman turns back to him. Her eyes are very wary and deep.

THE WOMAN

I'm Marian Gay. This is my son Todd. We're staying here. Who in hell are you?

FRADY

I just got here, ma'am. Door was open and I didn't see anyone so --

Frady trails off. Marian has coolly plucked his card from slot, is looking at it.

CONT.

CONTINUED

MARIAN

John Harmon. Cabin 7. Odd you checked in last night, then.

TODD

Shouldn't we call Sheriff Mapes?

MARIAN

Probably yes.
(gaze back on Frady)
Where's Henry Pelikas?

FRADY

Who? -- Oh. I dunno. He said he was going fishing.

MARIAN

Go look for him, Todd. Along the river?

TODD

We oughta call the sheriff.

MARIAN

Just look for Mr. Pelikas. And be careful.

Todd gives Frady a hugely hostile look, but he goes down the hall toward back of house.

FRADY

Truth is, I'm a -- little crazy.

MARIAN

(solemn deadpan)
But not dangerously.

FRADY

No, ma'am. Just from working too hard. Doc said I'd be fine if I took a rest. I don't know what got into me.

Todd suddenly turns in the b.g.

TODD

Hank went fishing, huh?

FRADY

That's what he said.

CONT.

CONTINUED

TODD

Funny. Because his rod's here
but his shotgun isn't.

CU - MARIAN

Stops breathing for an instant. Just an instant.

MARIAN

Look for him, dear. Along the
river and be very careful.

CU - TODD

He's going to say something more, but changes mind. Glares
at Frady again and exits by door at end of hall.

MARIAN AND FRADY

FRADY

I hope nothing's wrong. Seemed
such a nice fella. Cooked me up
a great breakfast.

She doesn't make any comment. She studies him with a sort
of calculation, then turns. CAMERA TRACKS WITH HER as she
walks through the dining room and into the kitchen. Her
eyes start sweeping, then they freeze.

HER P.O.V.

ZOOM IN on that fishing box. It lies on its side on the
table, open and bashed and empty. Flies and lead sinkers
are scattered around, but Frady must have had time to stuff
the money out of sight somewhere.

BACK TO MARIAN

She goes and looks into the garbage pail. She returns to
the table. The note-pad lies there, with Frady's arithmetic
still on the top sheet. She picks it up and looks at it,
drops it again and turns.

ANOTHER ANGLE - INCLUDE FRADY

He has strolled into kitchen after her sometime, stands with
his head dumbly cocked.

MARIAN

You've been working too hard.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Well. That's what the doc said.

MARIAN

Don't tell me --
 (no tone)
 -- at an Overseas Job?

CU - FRADY

He's good. He won't help you with big reactions. He only looks more puzzled.

FRADY

Why'd you think that?

A SOUND is heard o.s. It's a car crunching in. The CAMERA PULLS FAST. We get a glimpse out the window as Marian hurries across to look. An official COUNTY SHERIFF'S CAR is stopping outside in parking lot.

EXT. FRONT OF MOTEL - DAY

SHERIFF MAPES and YOUNG DEPUTY get out. Deputy waits as Mapes starts for the house. Marian emerges abruptly and meets him before he can get halfway to front door.

FROM KITCHEN WINDOW - FRADY'S P.O.V.

NO SOUND through closed window, but it's pretty plain what's going on. Sheriff puts a steadying hand on Marian's arm, tells her something. It seems to give her a fair wallop. She steps back with big shocked eyes and asks a couple of one-word questions.

WITH FRADY

He walks back into the front hall. Outer door is open. Through the screen, Frady watches and hears this:

MARIAN

Wait for me while I find Todd.
 We'll follow you.

MAPES

You sure? Pete here could stay with the kid while we -- River beat him up bad, Mrs. Gay. Won't be fun.

MARIAN

Wait for us.

CONT.

CONTINUED

MAPES

(indicating Frady's
car)

Who belongs to that one?

MARIAN

Name's Harmon. Just arrived.

MAPES

How "just"?

MARIAN

Ten minutes maybe? Henry wasn't
around so I checked him in. Why?
What are you thinking?

MAPES

(relieved)

You answered it.

Mapes strolls back toward car as Marian re-enters the house.

CLOSER ANGLE - IN FRONT HALL

Marian shuts the door. Tone is low and hard:

MARIAN

I have to identify a body. If
you're not here when I get back,
you'll have made a big mistake.

Frady nods. Marian hurries down center hall and out the
back. Frady turns to the registration-card rack. He
takes out his own, which bears the name Harmon. He thinks
a moment, drops it back where it was. Then he goes out the
front door.

EXT. FRONT OF MOTEL

Sheriff Mapes and Deputy lounge against their car, rolling
cigarettes. Frady comes up in a worried way.

FRADY

Howdy. Been an accident, huh?

MAPES

Sure has. Reckon you'll have to
find someplace else to bunk.

FRADY

Whoo. That's awful. But the nice
lady who checked me in -- won't
she be running the joint?

CONT.

CONTINUED

MAPES

Uh-uh. Just a friend. And sure
has bum luck, come to think of it.
What was the fella's name, Pete?

DEPUTY

Faversham.

MAPES

Right. Arthur Faversham.
(to Frady again)

She's a grass widow. Come up here
originally to visit that poor fish
when he was staying here. Would
you believe he got himself drowned
too?

FRADY

Whooo. That is bum luck.
(then solemnly)

Thanks for the tip. I'll watch
myself.

MAPES

Watch yourself how?

FRADY

Won't get eyes for the nice lady.
Those things come in threes.

Frady walks away toward cabin as the Deputy mutters.

DEPUTY

Power company and their lousy
dam. Oughta write to Washington
-- Ralph Nader or someone.

INT. FRADY'S CABIN - LATE DAY

Frady rocks in an old chair, eyeing that "Overseas Jobs" ad.
He must have memorized it fifty times by now. He reacts to
SOUND OF A CAR o.s. He gets up and looks out through screen
door.

EXT. FRONT OF MOTEL - LATE DAY

Marian's car stops NEAR CAMERA. She and Todd get out. Her
eyes flick briefly and note Frady's car parked as it was
before, against the low red sun. She starts for the house,
but Todd sullenly holds back.

CONT.

CONTINUED

TODD

I don't see why we have to stay here any more.

MARIAN

We won't for long, Todd. Come on, I'll give you a pill. You can sleep.

TODD

You lied to Sheriff Mapes.

MARIAN

Darling -- please -- believe me, I'm doing what I have to -- for both of us -- come on!

Her nerves are all shot. They go into the house and the door closes hard.

BACK TO FRADY

He watches them disappear. From this distance, it's not likely he heard their dialog. He goes into the bathroom and we HEAR shower being turned on. He comes out again. In a crummy old place like this, it must take ten minutes to get the hot water up. He goes to his suitcase and selects a fresh shirt.

INT. PELIKAS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - TWILIGHT

Frady is by himself, showered and changed. He finds a dictionary in a bookcase. He puts it on a table and turns on a light, and stands leafing through it. He HEARS FEET on the stairs. He continues looking through the dictionary.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Marian comes in from the hall. She has a darkish drink in her hand. She's showered and changed too, into some soft pretty outfit.

FRADY

Well. I stayed like you said.

MARIAN

Yes.

FRADY

Just looking up a word. For a crossword I was doing to pass the time...

CONT.

CONTINUED

MARIAN
I might know it. Try me.

FRADY
"Parallax."

MARIAN
Noun. The apparent displacement
of an object or angle as seen from
two different points -- or by two
different observers.

Frady looks from the book to her and back again and pops his
cheeks.

FRADY
I'll be damn. That's word for
word. You've got it perfect --
only what's it mean?

MARIAN
(very level)
Think of an event. Any event.

FRADY
Yuh.

MARIAN
From one angle it looks one way.
Change your point of view and you
see something entirely different.
Clear enough for you?

FRADY
I need an example.

MARIAN
Oh hell -- I'm so damn tired of
talking. Are you a drinking man?

FRADY
Been known to.

MARIAN
Let's shut up and get drunk.

It takes Frady a moment to catch up with change of mood.
Then he nods. Smiles sort of boyishly.

FRADY
Suits me.

INT. FRADY'S CABIN - DAWN

TIGHT ON FRADY'S FACE as he sleeps in pale grey light. He looks bleary and SNORES a little. From outside we hear a COCK CROW. Frady reflexly licks dry lips with dry tongue, stirs as if to turn head on pillow. But something seems to restrain the motion. His eyes open vaguely. Suddenly they're wide and not vague at all.

CAMERA DROPS DOWN a bit. There's a BIG PAIR OF SCISSORS held partly open at his throat, the points precisely at both sides of his Adam's apple.

MARIAN (VO)

Now don't you move. Don't you move at all!

WIDER SHOT

Marian is crouched over him on bed, wearing a wisp of nightie, holding the scissors. Her eyes are vulpine, her lips drawn back over teeth.

MARIAN

God but you men are easy to get --
so easy it's pathetic -- do you
know why you're going to die?

FRADY

Hey for chrissake --

HUGE CU - SCISSORS AT THROAT

They press. Droplets of epidermal blood appear.

MARIAN AND FRADY

She bends closer. The shine in her eye says that she is seriously off her rocker.

MARIAN

You dumb clumsy bastard. We're
next, aren't we? My son and I!
Henry got Arthur and they sent
you to get him and now someone
gets us -- right??

FRADY

No! You've got it all -- !

Pressing points cut off Frady's gasp again. He can only stare up in horror and feel eternity against his windpipe.

CONT.

CONTINUED

MARIAN

You're going to die now. Badly.
Messily. It might save my son.
There's just a chance you bastards
will decide murdering him is more
dangerous than it's worth.

(soft and crazy
and clear)

You are dying as a message to the
rest of them.

FRADY

Jesus --

MARIAN

Die now -- and take some time
doing it!

CUTS - MARIAN AND THE SCISSORS

She leans against his throat. Her hand trembles. We feel she is pushing the steel with all her force, but some obscure counterforce is obstructing her. Trembling gets worse. She despises her own weakness so much that tears suddenly fill her eyes.

MARIAN

Bastard!!

LOW ANGLE - UP AT MARIAN

She lifts scissors, stabs them down flashing PAST THE CAMERA. Again and again, fiercely, and then we see some little bits of goose-down fluff flying up.

ANOTHER ANGLE

It's only the pillow she has murdered. Choking, Marian throws herself down on the foot of the bed.

Frady gets up. He detaches the scissors from her hand. There's a nearly empty bottle of Scotch on the dresser. He takes a snort, then pours a slug into a tumbler. He puts it in Marian's hand. She doesn't seem aware much of anything. Frady reacts to an abrupt SOUND outside: it might be a couple of piled crates falling over. He crosses quickly, peers out the small curtained window.

WHAT HE SEES

There's a heavy GROUND FOG. Young Todd, in pajamas, vanishes into it, running like hell in direction of house in b.g. Somewhere the COCK CROWS again.

BACK TO FRADY

This isn't his problem just now. He leaves the window. Marian's robe is on the floor. He picks it up, tosses it over her. He takes another snort of Scotch and then turns with a seriously pensive expression.

FRADY

I don't blame you really.

(no response)

The blackmail, I mean. He killed your guy. I guess you hit him for about twenty grand.

(that sits her up,
gaping and white)

Not to worry. I'm off my turf.

MARIAN

You're -- w-who are you?

FRADY

You'd be surprised. Have a drink and tell me if I go off-base. It happened after Pelikas took a trip to Salt Lake City.

CU - MARIAN

She doesn't say anything. Doesn't have to. Her wide amazed eyes say it for her.

HER AND FRADY

FRADY

You guessed somehow. Maybe you sat up - uh - drinking with him. Point is - why do you think he killed your boyfriend?

MARIAN

Christ, I don't know -- I don't know.

FRADY

What's Parallax?

MARIAN

I don't know. It was just a word he said -- they'd get me or something -- I don't know.

Frady glances away a moment, then wings it at her:

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY
Lying bitch. The assassination!

MARIAN
?????

Bewilderment seems total. Frady buys it.

FRADY
Okay. But you're still in hot water.

MARIAN
What do you mean?

FRADY
Less you know, better you are. They'll hear about this. They'll come around. They'll add two and two and it could come out you.

MARIAN
What are you talking about?

FRADY
Don't ask. Just get out of this place. You and your kid. How soon can you get out?

MARIAN
There's an i-i-inquest on Henry, s-s-sheriff said I'd have to -

FRADY
Yuh, better wait for that. It was fun drinking with you. Goodbye.
(as she doesn't move)
I paid for this cabin. Get out.

She's going to say something, but his eyes freeze it off. She leaves the cabin.

WITH FRADY

He throws her slippers and the big scissors out after her. Marian stops suddenly, turns back in the fog.

MARIAN
The rest of the money.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Blood money. Don't touch it.

MARIAN

He killed Arthur. I was going to marry Arthur. I need it -- I have a right!

FRADY

You're cuckoo.

(but what the hell)

It's hid in the house -- happy hunting.

COCK CROWS a third time. Marian vanishes wraithlike.

EXT. GREAT SALT LAKE - DAY

Frady drives past the barren expanse. Sign indicates the mileage ahead to Salt Lake City.

EXT./INT. FEDERAL BUILDING - SALT LAKE CITY - DAY

Frady enters the lobby. He goes to Directory Board and finds number of FBI Field Office upstairs.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Frady's in a cubicle with a youngish FBI AGENT. The latter is in no danger of winning a transfer to Paducah because of unkempt hair or slovenly dress. Frady has shown his badge: we see the leather folder open on desk.

FRADY

Parallax Corporation. They took a suite for that day only at the Edison downtown. I've been to it. Paid cash in advance. Gave no reference, left no address.

FBI AGENT

Parallax Corporation. Hmmmnn.

FRADY

Been to the library too. No line in Moody's or any other directory.

FBI AGENT

What's your interest in them?

FRADY

Considerable.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FBI AGENT
They charged with anything?

FRADY
Can't find someone, it's hard to
lay a charge.

FBI AGENT
What's federal about it?

FRADY
That's a long crazy story. Take
me to your leader and I might
tell him.

FBI AGENT
He's not available.

FRADY
I'll wait.

FBI AGENT
Not much point, really.
(fiddles with
Frady's badge)
You say this inquiry isn't 100%
official, right?

FRADY
Not a hundred. As you see, I'm
off my turf.

FBI AGENT
Yuh. You are, kind of.
(puts down badge)
But be of good cheer -- I'll do
you a favor. I'll open a Case
File right now, noting you and
your inquiry. That'll go on to
Washington as raw material for
processing and evaluation.
(going to cabinet)
Meantime, here are some forms.
Get the green filled in by your
immediate superior, blue by the
state director. Six copies of
each, have the top pair endorsed
and approved by an Interdepart-
mental Liaison Officer, next pair
by our own Chief Field Agent in
your sector. Of course you'll
(MORE)

CONT.

CONTINUED

FBI AGENT (Cont)
 append supporting evidence and
 statements by informants and --
 (seeing Frady on
 his feet)
 What's your problem?

FRADY
 None. Do me no favors and we'll
 call it even.

Frady stuffs his buzzer back in his hip pocket and starts out. He has to step back. Being herded down the hall just outside are HALF A DOZEN YOUNG YIPPIE TYPES, their abominable hair and dress in a piquant contrast to the AGENTS escorting them. Frady's FBI Agent makes a face.

FBI AGENT
 Oh boy. What this country needs
 is a good five-cent soap bar, eh?

Frady makes a face of his own, and leaves.

EXT. STATE POLICE HQ - DAY

The place we know: Frady's home base. Frady comes up the walk to the entrance. He meets Capt. Rintels just coming out. Rintels stops, rather surprised.

RINTELS
 Fishing no good, huh?

FRADY
 Too good. Wore me out.

RINTELS
 You reporting back already?

FRADY
 No, sir. Just touching base for
 something I forgot.

RINTELS
 If it's another illegal wiretap --

FRADY
 No, sir. I just remembered, I'd
 promised Corporal Harmon leave
 and I forgot to make out papers.

RINTELS
 You're a good man, Frady.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

I dunno. We'll see.

Rintels goes on his way and Frady enters the building.

INT. FRADY'S OFFICE - DAY

He's there with young Corporal Harmon. Frady has made some surprise on this front too.

CPL. HARMON

Well, sure -- I'd love some leave.
But I didn't know I had any coming,
sir.

FRADY

There's a catch. A hook in it.

CPL. HARMON

I'll bite.

FRADY

You have an apartment on Eighth.
While you're gone, Harmon, I'll be
staying in it.

(a beat)

Don't ask me why. But I promise,
there won't be any bobby pins left
around.

Harmon gets it. A girl. He permits himself just a bit of a grin.

CPL. HARMON

When do I take off?

FRADY

Now. Turn over the keys.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

It could be Denver. Frady comes down the sidewalk and goes into a seedy office building. CAMERA MOVES UP AND IN on a second-floor window. There are gilt letters on it, saying: "D. KARP -- PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS."

INT. KARP'S OFFICE - DAY

Frady lounges in a chair with a kind of dumbish hangdog look, watching KARP examine a sheet of paper which he has given

CONT.

CONTINUED

him. Karp fits his ratty surroundings. We get a glimpse of the paper: clipped to it is that old advertisement for "Overseas Jobs," beside a list of some dozen-and-a-half U.S. cities and dates.

KARP

Now lemme dig this. You want newspapers checked around these dates about twenny places all over the country. To see if they run ads similar to this, right?

(as Frady nods)

That's a big deal, mac.

FRADY

I figured there'd be ops you'd get in touch with.

KARP

Sure. Could do. But hell, some of these dates run back like ten years. It'd cost you plenty.

FRADY

Less'n you think, maybe.

KARP

Oh yeah? How much you planning to spring for?

FRADY

I dunno. Maybe a buck?

KARP

(real indignation)

There's a penny arcade in the bus depot. Take your buck, mac, and have a party.

Frady rises and hauls out his badge case. Flips it.

FRADY

I've been studying your record, Karp. I could reel up your license eleventy-seven ways.

KARP

Hmmmnn. You say a buck?

FRADY

I forgot the freeze. Four bits.

CONT.

CONTINUED

KARP

Sounds fair.

FRADY

Don't blow it all in one penny
arcade.

Frady drops two quarters on the desk and goes.

CU - A DESK PAD

A HAND doodles on it. On a drawn tombstone is written the name "DAVID HARMON." Around it, the hand draws a fanciful profusion of funeral wreaths and angels with harps.

CAMERA MOVES UP a bit to show us a lamp on the desk. We've seen one just like it before. It's made of cactus with a plastic cowboy-hat shade. Band around the hat says: "OK CORRAL MOTEL."

CAMERA MOVES UP further. There's a YOUNG MAN doing this doodling as he sits listening attentively to his phone receiver. He's the same Young Man whom we saw buying that lamp at the OK Corral souvenir stand. During all this, we have heard a GIRL'S VOICE talking o.s.:

GIRL'S VOICE

Right. Bureau of Social Structure.
-- Uh-huh. -- Two jars of paste, six
legal pads, one box of pencils, four
100-watt bulbs. -- Get it over soon
as you can, huh? -- Thanks.

INT. ROOM - WIDER ANGLE - DAY

It's in a quaint old Washington D.C. town house which has been converted into modest offices. This used to be the dining room. We see the Young Man and the Girl who was putting in that order over her phone, a few OTHER WORKERS pattering at desks. It's all extremely low pressure stuff. Young Man smiles into phone as person on other end apparently gets to finish.

YOUNG MAN

Beautiful! Willy will do.

Willy hangs up, tears off sheet with the tombstoned name. He heads out with it, into the center hall.

INT. UPSTAIRS ROOM - DAY

Edward Trumbull's office. He's bent over big antique table, dapper as ever, examining some documents and photos arranged on surface. Beside him is a cheerless Psychology Ph.D. named DR. MALINOWSKI.

TRUMBULL

Good. We'll send this balloon up.

DR. MALINOWSKI

In what manner?

TRUMBULL

We'll drop the file in the men's toilet of some perverse but expensive bar. One of J. Edgar's minions will get it to him quick.

Trumbull ignores Malinowski's frowning grunt, smiles at the clever notion as he starts gathering the stuff into a file folder. KNOCK on the door. Willy comes in and kicks the door shut behind. He knows that he's carrying a bombshell, so he plays it very cool.

WILLY

Parallax time.

PUSH IN on Trumbull. He catches his breath.

TRUMBULL

You don't mean it.

WIDER ANGLE

WILLY

Yes, sir. We've found the last witness from the picture. Got a positive make on him from the Pelikas joint.

He drops the sheet on table. Trumbull picks it up.

TRUMBULL

Harmon.

WILLY

Big joke. He's a corporal in some State Police.

(raffish grin)

Dove-wise, it all tails.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MOVING WITH FRADY - DAY

Frady tramps along among YOUNG PEOPLE. In his usual sports shirt and slacks, he doesn't look out of place. He reaches an arched entrance in the ivied wall beside him. We see a handsome UNIVERSITY CAMPUS within. Big signs threaten Unauthorized Persons. Frady nods nicely at the CAMPUS COP under the arch.

FRADY

Howdy. Where'll I find Professor Winston?

CAMPUS COP

Don't got I.D., you don't. Not a student, are you?

FRADY

Outside agitator.
(wearily pulling
his badge)
Off duty.

EXT. CAMPUS AREA - DAY

Professor Winston is playing softball with the kids. He's at the plate, in old Levis and a witty sweatshirt. He swings mightily, sends up a towering infield pop. He's trotting it out to first when he sees Frady. He stops, looks up. The ball is still in the air.

WINSTON

I knew that one would make rain.

FRADY

Put away your umbrella. Let's do some horse-trading.

INT. WINSTON'S STUDY - DAY

It's a great leathery booky place. Winston is pouring a couple of cokes.

WINSTON

Pop flies. Kid who caught that one dropped six of 'em yesterday. The story of my life. Where's your horse?

FRADY

Jail. Black colt name of Wilcox.

CONT.

CONTINUED

WINSTON

He was arraigned this morning,
wasn't he?

FRADY

Should of been but wasn't. It
could bounce either way.

WINSTON

Thank you. What's my horse?

FRADY

I need some help in Washington.

CU - WINSTON

He stops still. His face changes. The lightness is all gone from
his manner.

WINSTON

Whatever it is, forget about it.
That's all ended.

FEATURE FRADY

He turns and looks at block of FRAMED PHOTOS on the wall. They
all seem academic: taken around schools and colleges and such,
no identifiable public face.

WINSTON

Ancient history. Closed book.
I never wrote a memoir of that
time. I don't even keep one
inscribed picture.

FRADY

Well then. Let me provide a
picture.

Frady hauls a folded print from his hip pocket and hands it to
Winston.

TIGHT LOW ANGLE - WINSTON

Staring down at it with a suddenly frozen face.

FRADY

I'm that last blur at the right.
I say last, because everyone else
is dead.

Little twitch at corner of Winston's mouth. ANGLE LOOSENS as he
lifts his eyes. His tone is terrifically controlled.

WINSTON

You were there.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

By pure bad luck. Walking with
a girl I'd met.

WINSTON

Fascinating. But isn't it a bit
late for this? A new conspiracy
theory?

Frady looks awkward. It's not an act. This bookish study
is a foreign country to him.

FRADY

Late or not. This one's past the
theory stage.

WINSTON

You want help in Washington.

FRADY

Don't want -- need. Maybe one or
two introductions.

WINSTON

Have you taken any steps?

FRADY

Couple of stumbles.

WINSTON

Such as.

FRADY

Well. Not sure. But I may be
in line for getting hired to
kill myself.

Zwipp. Suddenly Winston has ripped the picture and thrown
it in the fireplace and wheeled around. He's in a really
weird state of fury and contempt.

WINSTON

You obscene garbage collector.

CU - FRADY

He blinks just once. He's never offended by words, but
it annoys him that he didn't see this coming.

FRADY

You don't believe me.

WINSTON AND FRADY

WINSTON

Of course not!

FRADY

You don't figure it's possible.

WINSTON

Who said that? Certainly it's possible! Anything's possible in this madhouse country! So what? What in hell do you think I'd do if I did believe you?

FRADY

I dunno.

WINSTON

Not one damn thing, Lieutenant.

FRADY

We're talking about a whole bunch of murders.

WINSTON

The dead are dead. Let the grass grow on the graves. You can't raise the dead. That's no job for garbage collectors.

Frady's at a real loss. His eyes go to the framed photos again, around the room, trying to find something to hang this onto. But there isn't anything. Frady looks back at Winston.

FRADY

But -- Jesus -- you worked with the guy. Probably played with him, drunk with him. I thought he was your friend.

WINSTON

Yes! He was!

FRADY

Well, in that case --

WINSTON

For God's sake -- don't you see anything? The day it happened, I thought it was the end of the

(MORE)

CONT.

CONTINUED

WINSTON (Cont.)

world. Cataclysm, apocalypse,
I thought the heavens would open
and I see the flights of angels.
I didn't eat, I didn't sleep, the
thirst for revenge was an animal
inside my guts.

(looks away)

The heavens stayed shut. My thirst
passed. Nothing changed. I'm a
burnt-out case. I won't be caught
in any ruins again -- do you see
now?

ON FRADY

He nods. He looks out the window. He looks somberly at KIDS
passing by. Voice is low but really shook-up:

FRADY

Good to know we have people like
you around here. Tending graves
and grass, mourning dead kings up
in tree houses. Real inspiration
for young minds.

WINSTON

Go to hell.

FRADY

Yuh.

Frady nods and leaves.

INT. KARP'S OFFICE - DAY

KARP

(into phone)

I should get such mileage outa
four bits. Heard back awready
from Norfolk, Tucson and N.Y.C.
It's bingo bingo bingo.

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

Oldish area, with apartments above small stores. A car parks in
front of a candy store. A MAN gets out, carrying a clipboard.
He goes into vestibule entry and checks mailboxes. Finds the
one he wants. Card says: "HARMON 2-b." He pushes button and
waits for the door opener to BUZZ BACK.

INT. HARMON'S APARTMENT - EVENING

One-room bachelor with cut-rate Playboy decor. We find

CONTINUED

Claire by herself, getting ice out of the little fridge. She goes right to door when the BELL RINGS. Man with clipboard flashes a plastic I.D.

THE MAN

My name's Gould, ma'am. U.S. Census, random spot follow-up. Is Mr. Harmon in?

CLAIRE

Roamin' in a camper. Off on ten-day vacation.

GOULD

(noting it on board)
Vacation. You wouldn't be Mrs. Harmon by any chance?

CLAIRE

Just a friend, hon. Bunking here while he's gone.

GOULD

I see. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Claire smiles and closes door. ANGLE SHIFTS. Frady comes from the bathroom where he was listening, fast and quiet. He goes straight to the back window and lifts it.

EXT. BACK OF BUILDING

Frady slips out onto fire escape and descends to the ground. He sprints through alley to street in front.

ON THE SIDEWALK - FRADY

He stands lighting a cigarette, so lazy you'd never think he'd run anywhere in his life. Gould comes from the building and heads for his car. Frady flicks away his match, saunters across street toward his own wheels parked in front of a hydrant.

EXT./INT. FRADY'S CAR

Frady gets in and turns the key. There's a WHIRRING and then a CLUNK and nothing more. Frady is really stunned. He tries again. Not even a WHIRR this time. Gould has gotten his own car going and is driving away. Frady jumps out and runs across into the candy store.

INT. STATE POLICE HQ - COMMUNICATIONS ROOM

Low jargon of RADIO TALK and clacking teletypes. We find a TROOPER at keyboard, with mike/earphone headset.

TROOPER

Blue Chevy. FCX 814. Hold two seconds.

He punches license number on keyboard. This is one of those great central computer rigs and it really does only take two seconds before machine starts printing back an answer. Into mike dangling at his lips:

TROOPER

Hot, all right. Spotted where?

INT. CANDY STORE - EVENING

Frady's in the phone booth, holding receiver.

FRADY

Eighth and Coronado going west. But don't worry -- it'll be dumped inside two minutes.

He hangs up bitterly and waits to see if phone will return his dime, but it doesn't. He leaves the booth and starts out of the store. Thwunk! A wired bale of newspapers is thrown from a truck onto sidewalk in front of him. He hefts it up, carries it back and throws it down on counter in front of OLD GUY behind.

FRADY

Gimme your snippers, pop.

INT. HARMON'S APARTMENT

Claire's by front window, mixing a stiff drink. She hears key in lock. She's a good girl. She's over holding a drink for Frady by the time he comes in with a newspaper. You can imagine his mood. He takes the drink without the slightest thankyou.

CLAIRE

You're welcome.

FRADY

A dead battery. Sonofabitch -- who'd believe it?

CONT.

CONTINUED

CLAIRE

I'd believe anything. I mean
seeing as how you've explained me
zilch about all of this --

FRADY

You're lucky. Don't ask.

ON FRADY

He has the paper spread out on a table already and takes a drink as he turns the pages. Suddenly Frady goes absolutely stock still. PUSH UP TIGHT on him as he gazes down at the sheet below. Since we know what he's looking for, it's not necessary for us to see it. A soft WHISTLE from Claire o.s. He doesn't hear. She repeats it. He turns his head.

TOWARD CLAIRE

She's draped herself around a pole lamp in a super-sexy slouch, her bra-less blouse slightly open and a cigarette dangling from lower lip. Looks terrific.

CLAIRE

Take me to the Casbah.
(as he just looks)
I'm your Undercover Girl, ain't I?

FRADY

Yuh.

CLAIRE

Let's get under some covers.

EXT. DENVER - HOTEL WELLINGTON - DAY

Big old commercial pile. Frady gets out of a taxi in front. He's wearing a jacket and tie. As he pays the driver and waits for change, the SCREEN FLARES LIGHT as it has before and over image THESE WORDS appear:

"THE PRIME OBJECTIVE OF ANY STATE
IS TO INSURE ITS OWN CONTINUANCE
AND THE SURVIVAL OF ITS CITIZENS
IN A JUST AND ORDERLY MANNER. BUT
IT IS THE STATE'S RIGHT TO MANAGE
THIS BY WHATEVER MEANS MAY OFFER
THE CERTAINTY.

--The Handbook."

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

It's fairly seedy, haunted by the ghosts of many dead drummers. Frady enters via revolving doors. His eyes take in everything: potted plants and PEOPLE loafing and all that. There seems nothing very remarkable. He crosses to the desk.

AT THE DESK - CLOSER

Frady produces a box advertisement torn from a paper. We glimpse it as he puts it on the counter. The ad is identical in format to one found at Pelikas's place. Big top line saying "HIGH-PAID JOBS OVERSEAS!" and a middle line saying "YOU MIGHT QUALIFY!" No need to read new bottom line, telling where and when to apply.

FRADY

Howdy. Looking for Suite 524.

DESK MAN

(giving him a card)

Write your last name in the box.

OVER FRADY'S SHOULDER

It's an ordinary computer card, blank except for a big pre-printed MAGNETIC NUMBER and little boxes in which to fill in the letters of your name. Number on this card happens to be 19 141 6. Frady takes a pen from holder on counter and starts printing his last name.

FRADY

Any idea what kind of jobs being offered?

DESK MAN

Nope. I just work here, friend.

FRADY

Pretty funny. You'd think they'd give a hint anyway.

DESK MAN

Work in this trap long's I done, you'd never think anything.

(when Frady offers him finished card)

Take it with you. Fifth floor. Read this on the way.

Pulls printed sheet from under desk, slaps it down on top. Monster red-printed words jump from the top: "WELCOME, APPLICANTS! READ YOUR INSTRUCTIONS!"

MOVING WITH FRADY

He takes the sheet and leaves the desk. He reads it as he walks toward the elevators. He gets into one and goes up to the fifth floor, during which we hear a VOICE OVER giving the instructions from the sheet, while Frady's reading it himself. Though we don't have to recognize it now, this voice is Dr. Malinowski's. Certain words are stressed unnaturally heavily, as the caps indicate:

VOICE OVER

You are about to be TESTED for JOB SUITABILITY. The test begins the moment you enter the PARALLAX SUITE. If YOUR test is to have value, VALUE, if it is to measure YOUR capabilities, you must follow INSTRUCTIONS as exactly, EXACTLY, as possible. SAY NOTHING or DO NOTHING that you are not DIRECTED to SAY or DO. Here is an EXAMPLE. You now hold a CARD. It bears YOUR NAME and a SIX DIGIT NUMERAL. When and IF you are selected to proceed from the INTRODUCTORY Parallax Suite to an INDIVIDUAL TEST AREA, you must respond to that DIRECTION with the first INITIAL of your LAST name plus the FIRST FIVE digits of the numeral which follows. If the numeral after YOUR name were printed as, for EXAMPLE, 1-3 space 8-7-6 space 4, you would respond with your INITIAL plus 1-3-8-7-6. Note that in this context the printed SPACES would NOT be AUDIBLY VOCALIZED. Vocalization of the SPACES would be an ERROR. Errors cost POINTS. Errors will cause MANY of you to FAIL. Those who FAIL cannot be considered for a HIGH-PAID JOB OVERSEAS. To repeat, REPEAT, you must SAY NOTHING or DO NOTHING that you are not DIRECTED to SAY OR DO. The Parallax Corporation is a nationally recognized testing institute which conducts tests for MANY of America's LEADING MANUFACTURERS and ORGANIZATIONS. To each of you -- GOOD LUCK.

CONT.

CONTINUED

Frady has finished reading this. He is out of the elevator now on the fifth floor, going down a shabby hall, eyeing room numbers. He reaches 524. There's a sign hung on it. "THE PARALLAX CORPORATION. KNOCK TWICE & ENTER." Frady looks again at the instruction sheet. He folds it and puts it away in a pocket and knocks twice and goes in.

INT. SUITE ANTEROOM - ON FRADY

He stops short, just inside. ANGLE to HIS P.O.V. On a bench in this small bare space sits a WOMAN quietly sobbing. Around one sleeved forearm she tightly grips a handkerchief. It's sopping red and blood is dripping from underneath it. Her eyes are terrified and huge with appeal.

FRADY

He looks up and around. Gaze holds on something.

CU - WHAT HE SEES

Somewhat hidden in fake flowers of a high-hung fixture is the eye of a little TV camera, aimed down.

BACK TO SCENE

Frady understands. Another DOUBLE KNOCK and the outer door opens. Another APPLICANT enters, holding his card.

APPLICANT

Christ almighty!

Frady says nothing and does nothing. He continues on through inner door.

INT. PARALLAX SUITE - DAY

Maybe FIFTEEN APPLICANTS hang around in odd silence. They vary from oilfield types to accountants to dowdy secretaries. At the end is a bar and a loaded buffet, and an ACCORDIONIST sits on a gilt chair playing loud polkas. A HOSTESS comes up to Frady. She has a plastic badge saying "Parallax Corp." with photo underneath, pinned to her blouse. She smiles nicely.

HOSTESS

Welcome.

That isn't a direction, so Frady doesn't respond. He looks around for more TV eyes. Hostess isn't offended.

CONT.

CONTINUED

HOSTESS

Order a drink. Make yourself
an interesting sandwich.

Frady heads obediently for bar and buffet.

AT THE BAR

Behind it in a white jacket is young Willy of the BSS.

WILLY

Spot o' redeye, pard?

FRADY

Jack D. and water.

WILLY

Sí, señor.

Frady does a little take and glances at Willy again. Willy just used a line he must've picked up from the bartender in "Black Bart's Saloon" at the OK Corral. Frady brushed Willy for a moment in the lobby there. His memory is trying to tell him something, but Frady doesn't know what.

INT. HOTEL - ANOTHER ROOM

It has the same awful wallpaper. There are a lot of wires lying around, running up and out through a side transom. They lead to a few closed-circuit TV SCREENS set up on the dresser. Watching these are Trumbull and Dr. Malinowski.

TRUMBULL

What's your impression?

DR. MALINOWSKI

An average group.

TRUMBULL

Let's pray somewhat above.

(getting just a grunt)

I mean we're looking for someone
to dispatch a policeman. It could
be sticky.

DR. MALINOWSKI

I have plotted many policemen on
my curves. I have never found
them to be exceptional.

CONT.

CONTINUED

Now MOVE CLOSER on one TV monitor. We're looking down at Frady, contemplating the buffet.

TRUMBULL

I rather like the way this fella walks. Let's follow him and see what he eats.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

Roughneck Applicant who entered anteroom just after Frady is down at the front desk now, much agitated.

APPLICANT

I tellya, there's a dame bleedin' up there! Where's the house dick?

Desk Man picks up phone in a long suffering manner.

DESK MAN

Mr. Ellison? Front, please.

Suddenly the agitated fellow sees something o.s. It staggers him. ANGLE SHIFTS. The Woman from anteroom is emerging from elevator, unwrapping a candy bar. All sign of the clearly fake wound has disappeared.

APPLICANT

Forget the house dick! Where's the bar??

FRADY - AT BUFFET

He's making a sandwich. He puts smoked salmon on a slab of rye, spreads it with strawberry jam. Then he adds mustard and peanut butter and dots the top with olives and whipped cream.

TRUMBULL AND MALINOWSKI

They're watching same on monitor. Trumbull is awed.

TRUMBULL

What was the direction? Make an "interesting sandwich"?

DR. MALINOWSKI

Yes. He does appear to have a certain ingenuity.

TRUMBULL

Damme if I don't like this one a whole lot. Cross your fingers!

CONT.

CONTINUED

Trumbull quickly leaves the monitor. Finds a wire and pushes a call-button at the end of it.

ON FRADY - AT BUFFET

He bites his sandwich. Behind him, from apparent nowhere, a cute little KITTEN suddenly hops onto the table. It says miaou. Frady turns. He gives it a scrap of smoked salmon. Then Willy moves in, holding a vodka bottle by the neck. He whams it down, breaking the kitten's back. He picks it up by the tail and clubs it savagely again and throws it into his barside slop pail.

FLASH CUTS - THE ROOM

Plenty of people have seen this. Their faces are just like yours would be. The Accordionist keeps on playing.

FEATURING WILLY

He wipes his hands daintily with a rag. A LITTLE MAN who looks like a ribbon clerk rushes up, quivering.

LITTLE MAN

You stinking bastard.

WILLY

Cats carry germs.

The Little Man punches Willy in the mouth. Willy slugs him back.

CU - FRADY

He takes another bite of his sandwich. He doesn't say anything or do anything.

TRUMBULL AND MALINOWSKI

They're glued to the monitor. Even the skeptical doc appears impressed.

DR. MALINOWSKI

Certainly no Bambi Syndrome.

TRUMBULL

Let's get inside his head.

Malinowski nods. Trumbull hurries to a telephone.

ANGLE ON FRADY

He stands by the window, carefully looking out. He takes a small controlled sip of his drink. The Hostess comes up to him.

HOSTESS

Could I see your card, please?

That was a question, not a direction. Frady doesn't move.

HOSTESS

Give me your card.
 (he does, at once,
 and she looks at
 printed number)
 Follow me to a Test Room.

FRADY

F19141.

That's the right answer. She starts to move and Frady follows.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR

Hostess leads Frady to a room door a little way down from reception suite. She sticks a key in the lock.

HOSTESS

Seat yourself at once.

She opens door. He goes in. She closes door again.

INT. TEST ROOM

It's lit by a single dim bulb. Black cloth has been tacked over the window. Only furniture is a metal desk and chair in exact center. On it is a box with a row of buttons numbered 1 through 5. Also another metal box with a binocular eyepiece in the front and a chin-rest below. Set up behind the desk, facing the chair, is a big translucent rear-projection viewing screen, set in what looks like a monstrously enlarged TV console.

Frady seats himself at once. He is obviously being observed by a closed-circuit eye somewhere, for he is no sooner sat down than the overhead bulb goes out. The numbered buttons glow. An image appears on the screen. Two HUGE CLOCK FACES. One shows the time of day. The other is a stopwatch affair with a sweep hand which makes a full jerky revolution every five seconds. Dr. Malinowski's VOICE comes from speakers:

CONT.

CONTINUED

VOICE

Time is of the ESSENCE! You are being TIMED! The subject must be AWARE of time's passage, but he MAY NOT see the CLOCKS!

Clock images vanish but their LOUD TICKING goes on.

VOICE

You must ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS, you MUST, by pressing the button corresponding to your CHOICE. You must allow NOTHING to DISTRACT you...

(level falling)

...nothing MUST distract YOU...

Now a multiple-choice question flashes on the screen in huge letters:

THE SOLDIERS RETREATED LIKE...

- (1) Dogs (2) Rabbits (3) Rats
(4) Moths (5) Faggots

It flashes off as Frady hits Button Two, is instantly replaced by another.

YESTERDAY WAS...

- (1) Beautiful (2) Over (3) Cold
(4) Dead (5) Tomorrow

Sudden STARTLING SOUNDS come from hidden speakers all around the room. The whine of a falling bomb, then an explosion that almost knocks Frady out of his skull, people shrieking. They continue, worse than merely distracting, on different tracks: people arguing, and Spiro Agnew delivering a speech, and fire engine sirens and children crying and someone reading a sex manual, all mixed up together as questions follow each other on the screen:

THE QUEEN RULED...

- (1) Benevolently (2) Tyrannically
(3) Maybe (4) Weakly (5) Evilly

HONEYBEEES NEVER...

- (1) Fly (2) Flew (3) Answer
(4) Fragmentate (5) Elucidate

INDECISION LEADS TO...

- (1) Happiness (2) Mary (3) God
(4) Walter F. Jones (5) Sainthood

INT. TRUMBULL'S HOTEL ROOM

Dr. Malinowski is seated at a table, intently watching continuing test results being printed out by some kind of interesting gadget. He makes quick calculations on a slide rule, jots figures down on charts spread out in front of him. Trumbull hovers around, nibbling on a chocolate éclair. He watches over the savant's shoulder, casts an occasional eye on audio and videotape players whose reels are silently turning in the b.g. The door opens. Willy comes in, in his bartender's jacket.

WILLY

Got a live one, huh?

TRUMBULL

Affirmative.

WILLY

Party's growing a bit wet.

TRUMBULL

Fold it up. Give 'em the usual trash to fill in and mail.

Willy crosses to TV monitors. On one we see Frady's dim-lit face, screwed up in concentration as he eyes screen and jabs answer buttons.

WILLY

I wasn't thrilled with how this chap looked at me.

TRUMBULL

How did he look at you?

WILLY

Like he knew me from somewhere.
(getting no reply)
Okay. I'll go 86 the festivity.

TRUMBULL

Double-check the caterers, Willy. Be damn sure they credit us for what's left. Oh, and you might save me a few éclairs... They're not bad, for the provinces.

BACK TO TEST ROOM

Frady's battered by continuing cacophony of SOUNDS, barely holding onto his wits as questions flash on the screen:

CONT.

THROUGH EYEPIECE - INTO BOX ON TABLE

Velvet blackness, with a glow in the center.

VOICE

Now adjust the FOCUS. You must be able to see the TINY LIGHT far down in the DISTANCE.

(glow moving into
pinpoint focus)

Do you SEE this tiny LIGHT?

ANGLE ON FRADY

Hunched at box, chin on the rest, eyes at eyepieces, adjusting focus. The Voice suddenly booms real big:

VOICE

ANSWER!!

FRADY

Yes.

VOICE

You must speak CLEARLY. All your answers will be HEARD and WILL be RECORDED. You should BEGIN NOW to feel DISORIENTATION. Does your back hurt? Does it HURT?

Frady hunches down somewhat, pushes his face forward harder against eyepieces.

FRADY

No but I want to PISS.

Sound of rushing water at once grows very loud.

VOICE

That is a CHARACTERISTIC, that FORWARD motion of your FACE, of this part of your TEST. Now...

INTO THE BOX

VOICE

...you will WATCH that point of LIGHT until you see forming, far away from you, a WORD. The word will be seen as PARTS of TWO WORDS until it becomes ONE WORD. That is a PARALLAX EFFECT...

CONT.

CONTINUED

And we have seen it. Vibrantly colored letters have appeared at both lower corners: "P-I-S" at one side, "O-O-N" at other. They rise as if over an elevation at an immense distance, then rush toward us to combine into a single huge word "POISON" which then blows up almost instantly into sparky points of fire.

VOICE

When you can READ the word, you will give, ANNOUNCE, the word that you ASSOCIATE with it. You will announce ONE WORD only. The word "POISON" was a PRACTICE WORD. There will be NO more PRACTICE words, only TEST words. There will be SEVEN HUNDRED of them. Now BEGIN!

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

CUs of Frady's face, and the letters forming and racing up, and his eyes as seen from inside the box through the lenses, all this coming faster and faster as he gives his answers:

FRADY

(to test word "red")
 Blood --
 (to "black")
 Mail --
 (to "white")
 Pus --
 (to "knife")
 Stab --
 (to "gun")
 Shoot --
 (to "murder")
 Everyone --
 (to "sin")
 None --
 (to "drown")
 Kittens --

INT. TRUMBULL'S ROOM

Malinowski marks points on a big sheet of graph paper. He appears troubled. Quite otherwise is Trumbull, who wears earphones plugged into a running tape recorder.

TRUMBULL

Fantastic. Where has this man been all my life? He's a human snakepit...

FRADY AND THE BOX

MONTAGE as before, Frady barking answers as words race up and explode on his retinas.

FRADY

Jerk -- (to "Jesus")
 Double -- (to "cross")
 Me -- (to "living")
 You -- (to "dead")
 Abortion -- (to "baby")
 Sweet -- (to "rat")

INT. TRUMBULL'S ROOM

Trumbull still wears earphones, listens with an even more beatific expression. Malinowski has now joined the points on his graph paper into an odd-looking curve. He peers at it and seems more than troubled.

TRUMBULL

I swear, he has no conscience at all. He'd rape a roomful of Gold Star Mothers...

DR. MALINOWSKI

Edward! Come here!

FRADY'S TEST MONTAGE

Words now coming so fast and exploding so brightly that it's almost unbearable. Frady's half crazy and shouting his answers:

FRADY

Fake! (to "Santa Claus")
 Heil! (to "Hitler")
 Love! (to "Stalin")
 Crap! (to "justice")
 Want -- want -- WANT!!!

The words stop. Swirling blinding sparks recombine into pinpoint spot of light.

ANGLE ON FRADY

He pants and trembles, his face still pressed against binocular eyepiece.

VOICE

Your EYES remain at the VIEWER. You are in a FIX SYNDROME. This is NORMAL. Now you will see PICTURES. You must EXAMINE these pictures and EXPLAIN them in WORDS. This is the FINAL PART of your TEST, explaining in WORDS the PICTURES which you will SEE.....

IN THE VIEWER

The point of light suffuses into a glow which becomes in turn an image full of violent color. Shadings and convoluted shapes, solarized, changing constantly. They begin rather like the nastiest blots of Rorschach set, and proceed from there into hints of happenings of mind-blowing disgustingness and horror.

FRADY'S VOICE

I see -- it's a garden -- yes -- a garden of flowers -- beautiful flowers -- I think -- some little children playing -- no -- now I see they're angels -- clouds -- it could be heaven -- angels and things -- loving --

INT. TRUMBULL'S ROOM

Tape machine runs on in b.g. as Malinowski indicates his graph.

DR. MALINOWSKI

Part One only, but notice the beta-K factor. Already it shows gross deviation.

TRUMBULL

So he's a glorious freak.

DR. MALINOWSKI

I reject this concept "freak."

TRUMBULL

Oh come on, would Jesus Christ have fitted your damn curves? Would Landru?

CONT.

CONTINUED

DR. MALINOWSKI

(dead serious)

Certainly. I plotted them both,
many years ago.

CU - FRADY - AT TEST BOX

FRADY

Indians -- buffalos -- squaws
and kids and -- feasting and --
eating each oth-- no, it can't
be -- eating each oth--
(fighting nausea)

It's the happy hunting ground
that's what it is the big happy
hunting ground!!

Suddenly Frady gasps and goes limp. The overhead bulb goes
on again as ANGLE WIDENS.

VOICE

The TEST is COMPLETED. Await
your NEW INSTRUCTIONS.

Frady lurches up, knocking the chair over. There's a door
at the side. It's locked. He crashes it open with his
shoulder. It's a bathroom. Frady plunges in as CAMERA
PANS. Willy enters from outside. He's only surprised a
moment at not seeing Frady, because then from bathroom
there's SOUND like a brewery-horse peeing.

WILLY

We got a room for you. Here's
the key.

Willy clanks a key on the desk. He goes to window and starts
ripping down tacked black cloth. He whistles over his
shoulder. A couple of MOVING MEN enter.

WILLY

Everything goes, boys. Truck's
down in back. Chop-chop.

CLOSE ANGLE - TV MONITOR

On it an OVERHEAD SHOT of Frady, sprawled on a bed. PULL
BACK from the monitor. We're in Trumbull's room again.
It is NIGHT. Tape machines have stopped and the other
TV monitors are blank. Willy is watching Frady as Trumbull
sits finishing a big meal. There are now a half dozen
sheets of graph paper with curves laid out on the beds.
Dr. Malinowski is bent over them and smoking fiercely.

CONT.

CONTINUED

DR. MALINOWSKI

I tell you -- these curves are not possible.

TRUMBULL

So what do you suggest?

DR. MALINOWSKI

I suggest nothing! I only tell you facts!

TRUMBULL

There's a phrase they use in the CIA -- "Termination With Extreme Prejudice." D'you know it?

DR. MALINOWSKI

Certainly.

TRUMBULL

You're in some danger of that -- why don't you take a nice walk?

DR. MALINOWSKI

My tests have never failed you, Edward. If you employ this man, you are insane.

Malinowski walks out and slams the door as PHONE RINGS. Willy answers it instantly.

WILLY

Willy here. -- Okay.

(hanging up)

That was Gould. Still no findee Harmon.

TRUMBULL

Annoying. Here we have an ideal hunter, but the pigeon's flown.

WILLY

He'll show up.

TRUMBULL

I have a notion, Willy. There was that divorcee staying at the Pelikas place, remember?

WILLY

Mrs. Gay. Marian Gay.

CONT.

CONTINUED

TRUMBULL

I was rereading the case file. For some odd reason, our Mrs. Gay didn't mention Harmon at the sheriff's inquest. Maybe she's in with him. Could you find her?

WILLY

Sure. We got everyone from the inquest tagged.

TRUMBULL

Do so, Willy. In haste. Find her and chat with her. Run out to the air base and hitch a ride.

WILLY

I'm on my way.

TRUMBULL

Willy?

(as he turns back)

I said chat with her. She's not to suffer an accident. Dig me?

Willy nods and exits. Trumbull stuffs down his last morsel of apple pie. He rises and looks at Frady on the TV monitor. Frady hasn't moved. Trumbull opens a bureau drawer and gets out an attaché case.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Trumbull comes down it, with the case. He stops at a room door. Listens a moment. Then he gets out a key and slips it in the lock and opens the door.

INTO THE ROOM - TRUMBULL'S P.O.V.

Frady's already on one elbow on the bed, looking this way, his free hand slipped under his pillow.

TRUMBULL - IN THE DOORWAY

He half lifts his own hands ironically.

TRUMBULL.

Don't shoot, Mr. Frady. I come in peace. I bear greetings from the Parallax Corp.

ON FRADY

He acts like he's been caught off base. He withdraws hand from under pillow, rises from the squeaky bed.

FRADY

What's the score?

INCLUDE TRUMBULL

Entering and closing door behind him.

TRUMBULL

Yours was excellent.

FRADY

I take your word. That was sure a crazy deal, man.

Trumbull walks over and lifts the pillow. Under it, not at all to his surprise, is a pistol where Frady's hand just was.

TRUMBULL

You fascinate me. I presume you've had extensive dealings with the law.

FRADY

Okay, pal -- forget about it. You wanted to hire Boy Scouts, should of said so in your ad. Go stuff yourself.

TRUMBULL

Don't be so touchy, Mr. Frady. Sit down -- I offer you a job.

Frady looks surprised. He lowers himself into a ratty armchair. Trumbull solemnly places the attaché case on Frady's knees and opens lid. Frady's eyes bug out.

INTO THE CASE

It's stuffed with neatly bundled money.

FRADY

Who printed that?

TRUMBULL

U.S. Mint. Fifty thousand of their finest. It can be yours.

BACK TO SCENE

FRADY

Who do I kill?

TRUMBULL

Whom would you kill?

FRADY

I don't have a mother so who do I kill?

TRUMBULL

His name is Harmon.

FRADY

What's he done to you?

TRUMBULL

He has done it to us all, Mr. Frady. Consider him an enemy of the people.

Frady looks blank a moment, then he nods.

FRADY

Okay. I don't get it but I'll buy it. Harmon's dead. Where and when and how?

TRUMBULL

We'll work that out.

Frady's eyes go down to the case again. He reaches to touch the long lovely green, but Trumbull snaps the lid down and lifts the thing away.

TRUMBULL

Impetuous boy. Not so fast.

FRADY

You neither.

TRUMBULL

I beg your pardon?

Frady stands up. His eyes have become icicles.

FRADY

Harmon's dead. No problem. But price has gone up to a hundred.

TRUMBULL

Oh my. We are greedy.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Hundred. Else I go to the fuzz and report this.

TRUMBULL

Report what? I drop in to offer you employment as a bulldozer operator, and -- What on earth are you talking about? You have no evidence.

(shaking head)

This is dreadfully unfair. You see, I know whom I address, but you of course don't.

FRADY

Eat cowchips. Do I blow whistle or don't I?

TRUMBULL

Others have suffered from this delusion, Mr. Frady. Ever heard of Saint Elizabeth's Hospital?

FRADY

No.

TRUMBULL

It's near Washington. The sad cases I speak of now reside there at public expense. Their suites are padded. They defecate into rubber chamber pots, for their own protection. Do you really think your word would be accepted against mine?

CU - FRADY

Suddenly he seems considerably thoughtful.

FEATURE TRUMBULL

TRUMBULL

And well you might frown, sir. I am Edward Trumbull. I direct the United States Bureau of Social Structure. Look us up in the public library. A small bureau, perhaps, but respected.

(curtly)

Remain here. Think. After a good night's sleep, I might be induced to forget your nonsense.

INT. CORRIDOR

Trumbull comes charging out and shuts the door hard. He looks extremely pleased.

FRADY - IN HIS ROOM

Maybe his act wasn't such a smash. He sinks again into the ratty plush armchair.

EXT. CITY PARK - EARLY MORNING

MIX from the last. It's soon after dawn. Frady sits again, this time by the base of a statue: Lewis and Clark, or the like. There are pigeons around, but no one else. Frady takes his badge out and looks at it. It doesn't give much comfort. He puts it away again. He looks at his watch. Dredging a fistful of change from his pocket, Frady rises and walks to an outdoor phone booth nearby.

INT. PROFESSOR WINSTON'S BEDROOM

He's sleeping when PHONE RINGS. Now SCREEN SPLITS to include Frady in phone booth, in narrow panel at one side. Winston gropes for bedside phone, answers it.

WINSTON

Hello?

FRADY

Professor Winston?

WINSTON

Yes -- who is this?

FRADY

Lieutenant Frady. Listen, I've found out who dunnit.

WINSTON

Huh? What?

FRADY

Those murders we discussed --

WINSTON

Oh for God's sake --

FRADY

Seems there's a bureau of the U.S. Government. It's called "Social Structure" -- that ring any bell?

CONT.

CONTINUED

Winston hangs up. WIPE HIS PANEL. Frady's not too surprised. He picks another dime from change stacked on ledge and dials "0".

INT. HARMON'S BEDROOM

PHONE RINGING here too now. Claire's asleep, naked under a rumpled sheet. She wakes just enough to pick up receiver blearily. Again SCREEN SPLITS to include Frady in the NARROWER PANEL at side.

CLAIRE

Yuh?

FRADY

Hi. It's ol' pig. Me.

CLAIRE

Wha? Where are you?

FRADY

Ass deep in it.
(very seriously)
You better get out of there.

CLAIRE

Bed?

FRADY

No -- wake up, Claire -- out of Harmon's place. Forget what I told you, it's too risky, clear out right away -- you hear me??

A MAN with just a towel wrapped around his middle comes from the bathroom, drinking alky-seltzer. It isn't Harmon, just some good-looking type Claire picked up in the bar.

THE MAN

Who in hell you gabbing with this hour, sweetie?

Frady has heard a man's voice.

FRADY

Clear out! I'm not kiddin'!

Frady's turn to hang up hard. WIPE CLAIRE'S PANEL. He leaves the booth, terribly depressed. SOUNDS of some helicopter clattering over the park, fast and low. Frady gives it a brief automatic glance, then walks on with his head low and his hands in his pockets.

EXT. AIRFIELD - EARLY MORNING

Chopper with U.S. ARMY markings has just touched down. Rotors still turn as Willy hops out and calls inside to the pilot:

WILLY

Thanks for the lift, amigo!

Willy sprints for parking area in b.g.

INT. HOTEL WELLINGTON - DINING ROOM - MORNING

A cavernous dreary place. Trumbull is breakfasting alone, with a newspaper folded open to stock market listings. He pokes a fork sourly into a very overdone poached egg. He's looking around for a Waitress when he sees Willy coming in fast. Willy makes a beeline for Trumbull's table and sits right down.

TRUMBULL

Your manner is full of portent.

WILLY

We've been fooled somewhat.

TRUMBULL

After these petrified eggs, I'm prepared for anything. Shoot me the bottom line.

WILLY

I chatted with the lady. One thing led to another, and we got looking at some of the pictures Gould rounded up. For the Harmon file?

TRUMBULL

Willy. The bottom line?

WILLY

We've found Harmon. Only he's not Harmon -- he's a detective lieutenant named Frady. Howzat do you?

Trumbull really is unflappable. He stares at Willy a beat. Then he cuts his poached egg with a knife and puts it in his mouth and chews it carefully, silently.

ANOTHER TABLE - SAME DINING ROOM

Someone else breakfasts here alone, hidden behind a newspaper. Trumbull walks up.

CONT.

CONTINUED

TRUMBULL

I'll apologize to you later.

Newspaper is lowered. It's Dr. Malinowski. He's still stiff-necked from last night's incident.

DR. MALINOWSKI

Why?

TRUMBULL

Later. Just tell me, please -- say someone knew the object of our tests and tried to cheat -- score high -- how effectively could he do so?

DR. MALINOWSKI

It would greatly improve his score, of course. But it would not change the basic personality profile. Why?

TRUMBULL

Thank you. Later.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

Trumbull emerges from the dining room just as Frady enters from the street. They see each other. They halt. Trumbull walks across, as cheery as a birdie.

TRUMBULL

A good morning to you. Did you sleep well?

FRADY

Lousy. Too much thinking.

TRUMBULL

And?

FRADY

Those tests musta scrambled my brains. I was out of line. I want the job -- your terms.

TRUMBULL.

I'm delighted.

FRADY

I got to know more, though. All kinds of things.

CONT.

CONTINUED

TRUMBULL

Of course. Lunch with me?

FRADY

Sure.

TRUMBULL

I'm in a hurry now. I'll call
and let you know where and when,
all right?

Frady nods. He watches Trumbull exit quickly through revolving doors. Then he drifts over to the lobby stand and picks up a couple of candy bars for breakfast.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Taxi pulls up in front of a restaurant. The marquee says "La Jardiniere." Frady hops out. He looks up and down street both ways, then goes toward the door.

INT. RESTAURANT - ENTERING WITH FRADY

We see it through his eyes: almost total darkness at first, after bright sunlight. He gropes in, bumps against the shadowy figure of a WOMAN just inside.

FRADY

Scuse me.

WOMAN

Mais certainement, m'sieu.

She steadies him with a hand, steps back. The scene grows clearer as his eyes accommodate. The place is dim and narrow, a typical French bistro joint. Frady peers into the room ahead.

FRADY

I think I'm expected. My name's
Frady.

WOMAN

Ah yes. Your friend waits in the
garden, Lieutenant.

Frady takes a step before it socks him. He stops dead still. PUSH IN TIGHT ON HIM. He can't have heard that right, but he knows he did. The Woman evidently thinks the darkness here still bothers him.

CONT.

CONTINUED

WOMAN

Can you see all right?

FRADY

Yuh. Fine.

MOVING WITH FRADY - HIS P.O.V.

As he comes out of brief shock and walks down through the narrow room. His gaze jumps along over the FEW COUPLES who linger behind banquettes. He registers each face but recognizes none. He continues on through door to garden at the end. There's a HIGH-KEY DAZZLE before his eyes re-accommodate to sunlight.

EXT. GARDEN PATIO - DAY

It's a pleasant place enclosed by a brick wall. There are potted trees and shrubbery. Trumbull is by himself at a table toward the far wall. He stands up with a drink in his hand, the picture of a charming host.

TRUMBULL

Hello again. I don't imagine you're very hungry.

(as Frady's eyes say nothing)

How about a drink, then?

(nothing)

You're annoyed with me. Is it because I used your rank? I'm sorry about that. Often it gets one a better table.

FRADY

I'm tired. I slept awful. Can we cut the crap?

TRUMBULL

Imagine -- getting an assignment to eliminate yourself! Reckless devil, aren't you?

Frady doesn't bother to answer. He cases the patio: its high brick wall, no exit. Cocks his head with a sudden thought, glances back toward the restaurant.

FRADY

She's one of yours.

TRUMBULL

Eh?

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Dame bumped into me. Probably searched me.

TRUMBULL

Quite so. And I should add -- there are others here with official function. Sit down, won't you?

Trumbull smiles. Frady walks over and sits.

FRADY

How long you known who I was?

TRUMBULL

I'm ashamed to say, since this morning only. Our procedures have been shockingly careless in some ways. I count on you to improve them, Lieutenant.

FRADY

Me to improve them.

TRUMBULL

I admire you hugely. I invite you to join the Bureau of Social Structure on a permanent basis.

FRADY

He shows no particular reaction. His eyes track a mosquito that's buzzing around annoyingly.

FRADY

Guess you really meant what you said last night. Anybody tries to tell this, gets a ticket to the nuthouse.

TRUMBULL

Guaranteed. We may be careless in some ways, but we never leave evidence. You haven't a scrap. You must realize that by now. Not one scrap of concrete evidence.

Frady doesn't comment. The mosquito lands on his forehead. Whap! He gets it. He flicks the remains away and wipes the spot meticulously with a corner of tablecloth.

FRADY

Tell me about the conspiracy.

TRUMBULL AND FRADY

TRUMBULL

I'd rather discuss America.

FRADY

I wanted to be a ballplayer. My knee went out and I'm a cop. I know a few things about America.

TRUMBULL

Do you love your country?

FRADY

You're embarrassing me.

TRUMBULL

Why? I love it too, Lieutenant. This America, this great nation. Godawful in many ways. Reeks of violence, keeps slave populations crammed in vile ghettos from coast to coast. Hypocritical and unjust, tasteless, overbuilt and underdeveloped, can elect a Richard Nixon. But. It's the last best hope of the world. What's wrong with America can possibly be changed. Provided its existence is preserved. We must manage its survival -- manage it.

(and no doubt he means all this)

The great threat to survival is our pattern of native violence. True, we got along with it for two centuries. We had buffalo to slaughter, and Indians and blacks and gooks. But those outlets are no longer permissible. They are acceptable only to contemptible maniacs. So how will we live with our inbred violence for the next century? Or fifty years or even ten -- what do you think?

FRADY

I don't know.

TRUMBULL

You don't know. But you are a policeman. You are aware of the ever-increasing incidents.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Yes. Maybe.

Trumbull stands up and paces around the pretty little patio enclave, gesturing and spouting quite impressively. He is certainly a dedicated and sincere man.

FEATURING TRUMBULL

TRUMBULL

I don't care what their source is. A lone madman with a Spanish rifle, a handful of activists, outraged black men, frightened rich people on the hill -- each presses on the other's living space, on his beliefs, on his sacred miniscule possessions. And his sense that no one cares.

(pause)

Get a rifle, get a pistol, get a club, something with knots in the end that will break a skull. Save bottles. Fill them with low-lead gas and stuff a rag in and throw it. Make a bomb. Keep it handy. You never know what's coming. You'll see the nameless THEY coming down your street one day, one evening in the spring. Then what will you do? Maybe they'll be all black with beards and a crazy red light in their eyes. Maybe they're white, brutish, and big and tough and bald with shotguns and automatic weapons -- and uniforms. How do you dissipate that pattern?

(turning around)

That's what my Bureau is for. We were funded as a group to look for ways to channel sociological upheavals into coherent patterns, and find ways to ease them.

(coming back to Frady)

And do you know, sir? So far we have not been at all successful. Our researches indicate a society that is NOT coherent, that is basically NOT manageable. That is responsive only to greater and greater dramas acted out in scenes of ever greater violence --

CLOSE ON FRADY

As he stands up suddenly, knocking his chair over, really zonked by something that's just penetrated to him late.

FRADY

Jesus Christ! Back a ways, you said -- "a lone madman with a Spanish rifle" -- !

WIDER - INCLUDE TRUMBULL

TRUMBULL

Did I? I suppose so.

FRADY

But then -- that would got to mean -- the assassination -- even YOU don't figure where was any REAL CONSPIRACY!

Trumbull smiles slightly. He doesn't deny it.

FRADY

But then -- Jesus -- all those people -- Hildy and Faversham and Tucker and -- Jesus! -- you gone and killed 'em all for NOTHING!

TRUMBULL

Nonsense. They died for their nation as truly as the Unknown Soldier. Don't you see?

FRADY

NO.

TRUMBULL

Look at history, Lieutenant. Nothing like the discovery of a plot to pull a troubled country together. Never fails.

FRADY

NO.

TRUMBULL

Charm of it is, we needn't even decide yet who'll be revealed as having been behind this plot. We can contrive that too. Leftist, rightest, whatever -- we'll pick the villain to match the present danger.

CONTINUED

Frady shivers under the hot sun. He bends his head and steals jerky sidewise glances at Trumbull.

FRADY

Scuse me. I'm trying to believe you're real.

TRUMBULL

I am real. Sit down and let's get on with business.

FRADY

(dumb echo)

Business.

TRUMBULL

Your joining the Bureau. This waste of your talent must cease.

FRADY

What you need me for? Isn't the deal sewed up?

TRUMBULL

This one, almost. There will be others.

FRADY

Others? You mean you're gonna cook up other phony plots?

TRUMBULL

But certainly. Sometimes we even allow the incomparable Mr. Hoover to "discover" one. It keeps him youthful.

Trumbull's sardonic smile is terrific. Frady's about to sit down again when another thought strikes him. He stops still and shivers once more, his eyes trying to bore right through Trumbull's skull.

FRADY

When'd you start all this?

TRUMBULL

I really don't see how that's --

FRADY

When did you start killing?

(MORE)

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY (Cont.)

(his voice rising)

Was it after the assassination or
before? Did you MAYBE PULL THAT
OFF TOO???

TRUMBULL

You're beginning to tire me. Sit
down.

That wasn't exactly an answer, but Frady doesn't push it. He sits down. His manner seems suddenly cagey.

FRADY

Say I do join up. How could you trust me?

TRUMBULL

A reasonable question, finally.

FRADY

Hell. You couldn't ever trust me.

TRUMBULL

There's a woman named Mrs. Gay. You unhappily involved her.

FRADY

Involved her.

TRUMBULL

As a result, she knows rather more than I like. Now she and her boy must be terminated. You will perform this action. By so doing, you will earn our trust.

Frady considers that for a moment.

FRADY

I set up an accident, huh?

TRUMBULL

Leaky gas-main. Boom!

FRADY

That's a rough assignment.

TRUMBULL

Nonsense. Candy from baby.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

I'm a cop, Mr. Trumbull. You're asking me to change my spots awful quick.

TRUMBULL

Not true.

FRADY

What you mean?

(real interest in
this)

Because I'm a cop I gotta be a natural killer?

TRUMBULL

Aren't you?

FRADY

Well. I maybe shot a few. But I always felt real lousy after.

TRUMBULL

Bourgeois guilt, Lieutenant. Let me lift that load. Your test-profile reveals a heart without mercy. Accept thyself.

CONT.

CU - FRADY

He ponders it silently. ANGLE LOOSENS. Trumbull hands him a slip of paper.

TRUMBULL

The lady's address. Go forth and do your thing. At once. The Bureau blesses you,

FRADY

What happens if I ram this twelve feet up your ass?

TRUMBULL

Sounds fatal.

FRADY

I meant what happens to me.

TRUMBULL

So did I.

Frady ponders again. He nods to himself. He sticks slip in his pocket and stands up.

FRADY

I got lots to do. Put in my retirement papers, lots of things.

TRUMBULL

First things first.

FRADY

Okay. I'll go back to the hotel and pack up, take right off. How do I check in with you?

TRUMBULL

We won't be far. Don't worry.

FRADY

Shit, man. Who's worrying?

Frady leaves.

INT. HOTEL WELLINGTON - CORRIDOR - DAY

Frady comes from his room, carrying an overnight bag. He walks down to closed door of another room. Puts an ear to it a moment, then knocks.

INT. TRUMBULL'S ROOM

Dr. Malinowski is there by himself, packing up graphs and stuff. He hears the knock, goes over and opens the door against the safety chain.

FRADY

Chief around?

DR. MALINOWSKI

No he is not.

FRADY

Lemme in a minute.

(and then)

Come on, I'm with you. Lemme in.

Dr. Malinowski hesitates, but then he undoes the chain. Frady comes in and closes the door behind him. Stands looking around the room.

DR. MALINOWSKI

What is it you wish?

FRADY

Hey, I know your VOICE. You're the VOICE of those TESTS.

(getting no denial)

And I guess what you find out in your tests is never WRONG -- is that RIGHT?

DR. MALINOWSKI

Certainly.

FRADY

I'll buy it.

Frady kicks him in the balls, uppercuts him as he sags forward, catches him and yells at him:

FRADY

Sonsabitches! YOU PULLED OFF ALL THE ASSASSINATIONS TOO!

(slapping and shaking him)

DIDN'T YOU?

Only reply is retching sounds. Frady throws a forearm under Malinowski's chin, drags him backward into bathroom. Frosted window is partly open. Frady looks out and down.

FROM BATHROOM WINDOW

Straight down a grimy airshaft to alley of garbage cans five stories below.

BACK TO BATHROOM

Frady stuffs Dr. Malinowski through the window. It's a tight fit, but he goes. There's a slight delay and then a terrific good CRASH as he lands. Frady exits.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Frady comes from stairs and goes to desk, with his bag.

FRADY

Checking out. 527. I think it's paid.

DESK MAN

It's paid.

Frady heads for revolving doors to street.

INT. MOVING CAR - INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

Frady drives fast. He takes a little battery tape recorder from seat beside him, props it up on ledge under windshield and punches it on to "Record" and starts reciting factually into its built-in mike:

FRADY

My name is Frady. Lieutenant of detectives, State Police. June 20th, about 3 p.m., I returned from the County Morgue to find a woman named Miller in my office...

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - EVENING

Frady drives up and parks in front of a house. He gets out and stands a moment, his eyes casually roving as he appears to be checking house number against a slip of paper. Eyes notice something o.s.

WHAT HE SEES

Another car parked diagonally across street, its hood up, a MAN tinkering with engine. MOVE IN as the fellow glances up. It's Gould, fake census taker whom Frady chased vainly outside Harmon's place.

BACK TO FRADY

No deal of it, but he makes Gould instantly. He checks slip of paper again, heads up path to the house.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Marian Gay pours milk for her kid Todd, who's eating in front of TV set. SOUND of front door chime.

MARIAN

Drink your milk.

FOLLOW HER through to front. She peeks out a panel beside door. She sees Frady and looks like she wants to run, but his finger is hard on button. BONG BONG BONG BONG. She opens the door. Frady steps in and pushes it right closed behind him.

FRADY

Evening.

MARIAN

Who are you? What do you want??

FRADY

I got a contract to kill you.

CU - MARIAN

Her face is a silent scream. She lurches back and sits down.

INCLUDE FRADY

He slips revolver from shoulder holster.

FRADY

If I don't do it there's a guy outside who will. Where's the kid?

MARIAN

No -- please -- he's not here --

FRADY

Best thing would be to let the guy try. Bit of luck, I could hang 'em for killing you.

MARIAN

Please -- he isn't here --!

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

It'd be a helluva good bargain
too. You and the kid against --

He breaks off, hearing some SMALL SOUND from back of house. He reacts fast. He yanks Marian up and swings her around and pushes her with the gun in her back through dining area toward where that sound came from.

IN THE KITCHEN

Todd must have been listening. He's grabbed up a big carving knife, is waiting with it as his mother and Frady come through the swinging door. He lunges and nicks Frady's arm, but Frady is twisting already and backhands the kid, knocking him flat on his ass. Marian makes whimpering noises. The TV set sings that life is great with a Coke. Frady flips out his badge.

FRADY

Don't move. Don't do anything.
I'm a police officer.

He might as well say he's from Mars. Frady understands.

ANGLING ON TODD

Kid comes to life, scrambles up and tries to grab another knife from set on magnetic holder. Frady gets around in front and wallops him again and knocks him cold for sure this time.

MARIAN

MARIAN

Please -- don't hurt him -- his
father's dead -- please -- dead
-- he was a Navy pilot --

FRADY

What's that to do with this?

MARIAN

Whoever you are -- oh please --

ON FRADY

Dead Navy pilots leave him genuinely blank. He turns the TV set up VERY LOUD and clicks safety catch off on his revolver.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF HOUSE

Gould has the door of Frady's car open. He's holding a metal box about the size of a cigarette carton. He twists a little timer-knob on the end, slips the box under the driver's seat. As he's closing the car door there's a big muffled BOOM! BOOM! from inside house. It seems to surprise him a little. He steps back into the street. Frady appears at living room window. He looks directly out at Gould and jerks his head. Gould hesitates. Then he slips a hand in a side pocket and heads for the front door.

INT. MARIAN'S HOUSE

Frady opens the door. Gould slides in. Frady closes the door and slams Gould with his gun. Gould tumbles and Frady's right on top of him on his knees, smashing his head again and again with pistol butt.

TIGHT LOW ANGLE - UP AT FRADY

He's seriously berserk, flailing with his revolver and yelling like he did at the late Dr. Malinowski.

FRADY

Sonofabitch! It was YOUR ZOMBIES
ALL THE WAY! Wasn't it, WASN'T IT??

He's not going to get any answer. The man's skull has been cracked in any number of places. Frady stops in midswing. He shivers. Perhaps it's occurring to him that he does belong with Trumbull's murderous Bureau. He shivers again at the o.s. sight of what he has just done and stands up.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Marian has appeared in b.g. and is just staring.

FRADY

That was the last easy one. You
got anything I could drink?

She disappears back into kitchen like she didn't hear. Frady bends and slips an automatic from Gould's side pocket, drops it into his own. He's still holding his revolver by the barrel. He notices foreign matter on the butt. He goes and wipes it on a drape.

INT. KITCHEN

Todd is still out cold. Marian is cradling his head, sponging it where it got bashed against edge of table. Frady walks in. There's another lyrical commercial on the TV. Frady kills it and looks down at them.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Where'd he get dead? Vietnam?

MARIAN

What's that to do with anything?

Frady nods. Marian rises in a jerky mechanical way and opens cabinet under sink. She gets out a bottle of "Liquid Drano" with usual skull-and-crossbones warning and sets it down on counter in front of Frady.

MARIAN

You wanted something to drink.

She goes down again beside her boy, continues to sponge his head.

FRADY

You know I really am a cop.

MARIAN

Yes, Officer.

FRADY

Anyway. Word must be out on me by now. We gotta run.

MARIAN

Yes, Officer.

FRADY

They know my car. You got one?

MARIAN

Yes, Officer.

FRADY

Where's the keys?

MARIAN

Yes, Officer.

Frady realizes that the bloody horror she saw on her living room rug has left her in a real state of shock. He yanks her up and slaps her face.

FRADY

Where's the keys??

EXT./INT. GARAGE IN BACK - TWILIGHT

Marian's wagon is in it. She stumbles out through the connecting door from house, ahead of Frady, who carries Todd. He pitches kid into back seat. Marian still seems in a daze, so he pushes her in after and slams the door and jumps in himself behind the wheel. Frady starts the engine and backs out fast.

CLOSER ANGLE - IN THE STREET

Frady jams on the brakes and pushes backwards, trying to slide driver's seat backward on its tracks. It will only go a bit, then jams. He pushes open his door and fumbles at the seat catch. CAMERA DROPS. We see his fingers brush around the end of another metallic box under the seat, exactly like the one we saw Gould slip into his own car in front.

FRADY'S VOICE

What the hell's wrong with this
seat, I can't seem to --
(stops-abruptly)

IN SIDE-VIEW MIRROR

What could be the shadowy figure of a MAN is seen to step back behind a tree. PAN to Frady. He's looking in the mirror, seeing this, and he's not going to worry about his seat position any more just now. He pulls the door shut and spins the wheel and guns off down the street.

ANOTHER SHOT - SAME STREET

It was a man behind that tree. He steps out. We may recognize him: he's the fellow who picked up Claire and was with her when Frady phoned that early morning. If we fail to recognize him, no matter. He walks quickly to a car parked in driveway, engine idling. Behind its wheel is Willy. Fellow jumps in and they take off.

INT. MARIAN'S WAGON - MOVING - NIGHT

Frady makes time down a four-lane highway. There are headlights in his rear-view. Marian is in the seat behind, still holding Todd. Her face is glassy, with a kind of loony apathy.

FRADY

You awake?

MARIAN

Course not. It's a dream.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Pinch yourself. Take this --

He produces the gun he lifted off Gould, hands it back to her. Marian sticks it right into the nape of Frady's neck and pulls the trigger. There's a click. She makes a face of childlike disappointment.

MARIAN

You unloaded it.

FRADY

Won't matter. Put it in your purse, I'm taking you two to an airport. Hop the first plane to anywhere. Soon as it's up, pull that gun and say "Havana."

MARIAN

You're crazy, Officer. I intend to report you.

FRADY

You do that. From Havana. It's the one place they might not have a reach.

(eyes focused on
lights in mirror)

Hold tight.

Frady steps on the gas.

INT. WILLY'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Willy steps on his gas too. Other Killer peers at his watch.

OTHER KILLER

Three minutes to boom. What's the big hurry?

WILLY

I'm possibly perverted. I like to watch.

SHOTS - THE TWO CARS

Frady swings off the four-laner onto a dark farm road. The wagon has rotten suspension, but Frady's a pro at this. Willy has a good foot too. He keeps up through skids and things, but finally he spins out somewhere. It doesn't smash Willy's car, just stalls it and makes Willy say "Oh fudge!"

EXT./INT. MARIAN'S WAGON

Frady rounds a curve at speed, one eye locked on the now-dark rear-view mirror. It's late when he sees what is dead ahead: lowered gate of a RAILWAY GRADE CROSSING, with a DIM RED LIGHT flashing and swinging as a LONG SLOW FREIGHT lumbers through.

FLASH CUTS

Frady tries to floor the brake, but with the seat way forward that way his knee snags the dash and he misses the pedal, and Marian jumps up in back and screams, and Frady kicks again and yanks at hand brake and spins the wheel all at once, and the wagon slews around to a crazy crash stop.

ANGLE - STOPPED WAGON

Its behind is right through the guard gate, about a yard from the clattering train. Marian has been pitched forward into the front seat. Frady jumps out, his knees watery with relief and anger. Damn stuck seat almost killed him. He ducks down, slamming at the seat catch, trying to see and feel what's jamming the track underneath. He sees. PUSH IN TIGHT as he freezes for a split second and then shouts:

FRADY

GET OUT!!

OVERHEAD SHOT

Frady leaps up and yanks open back door, hauls at Todd. Just as he gets him out there's an EXPLOSION from under the driver's seat, a blasting flash that sends Frady and Todd backward through the air.

DOWN THE ROAD A PIECE

Willy's car coasts to a stop on the shoulder with no lights. He and the Other Killer get out. Moonlight glints on their .357 magnum revolvers.

ON FRADY

He's stunned in a ditch. He stumbles up and runs to the wagon. It's not burning but one look is enough. The whole front-seat section has been blown totally to hell. It went off right under Marian. He goes back to where he picked himself up from.

ANGLING ON TODD

Kid lies sprawled beside same ditch. Blown-off car door is partly over him. It looks to have gashed and broken one leg

CONT.

CONTINUED

quite badly. But he is breathing and his eyes are wide open if not exactly seeing. Frady kneels beside him.

FRADY

Hey, kid -- can you hear me?

TODD

(feeble)

Where's Mom?

Sudden BLAZE OF LIGHT on Frady and the BWAAAANG! of a ricochet. A shiny new gash has appeared in the blown-off door panel. Frady rolls Todd into the ditch and dives in after him, whipping revolver from its holster.

OVER FRADY'S SHOULDER - DOWN THE ROAD

The HEADLIGHTS of Willy's car are on him blindingly. BANG! and BANG! and Frady has shot them both out. A beat of nothing and then a figure pops up from ditch and FIRES at him, and as Frady FIRES ONCE back, it is gone and another figure pops up from ditch on the other side and FIRES too and also instantly is gone. They're like tin figures in a mechanical shooting gallery.

BACK TO FRADY

He's poised with finger on trigger, then thinks of something. Flips out cylinder of his revolver. His thought was correct: two bullets blown inside Marian's house, another three just now. That leaves him here in a ditch with a badly hurt kid and exactly ONE BULLET left, and he isn't packing ammo. The situation is not wholly promising. He turns his head to look behind him.

TOWARD THE TRACKS

The train is still crashing noisily through the grade crossing. The locomotives have been gone ahead during all of this, but now light of caboose can be seen coming down the track.

DOWN THE ROAD - LEFT SIDE DITCH

Willy is crawling forward.

DOWN THE ROAD - RIGHT SIDE DITCH

The Other Killer is advancing too.

WITH FRADY

He flips his last bullet back into firing position and draws a careful bead on lower rear end of the wagon. He FIRES. Wagon's gas tank goes up in a WHOOSH OF FLAME.

INT. MOVING CABOOSE

Couple of TRAINMEN in it. One was lounging idly at front, looking out through forward-facing window. He isn't idle any more. He grabs up train's intercom phone and pushes the buzzer.

1st TRAINMAN

Hit the brakes!

ON WILLY - IN THE DITCH

He stops, reacting to change of TRAIN SOUNDS. Now the clashing of brake shoes, air hissing, and the start of a wave of coupling-bangs. Willy sets himself, then bounds up and dashes low across the road and dives into ditch on other side beside his mate.

OTHER KILLER

What now?

WILLY

I'll go up. You cover. One wrong move, you stand up and blast everyone in sight.

FRADY AND TODD - IN THEIR DITCH

Stopping-noises of train very loud as Frady puts his face close to the kid's ear.

FRADY

How bad's the leg?

TODD

I dunnó. Where's Mom?

FRADY

Grab hold of my belt. Hold on and crawl after me best you can. There's a lot riding on you.

Frady takes a reel of recording tape out of his own pocket and sticks it in Todd's shirt pocket and then buttons the flap down.

FRADY

Hold onto my belt!

CONT.

CONTINUED

The ANGLE SHIFTS. Now we see what Frady saw before. The drainage ditch runs under the tracks ahead through a big corrugated pipe. Frady positions himself in front of Todd, hooks the kid's hands in his belt and starts crawling dragging him toward the pipe. Todd's busted leg is no help at all.

ANGLING ON TRAIN

It shudders to final hissing halt with caboose only yards from Marian's blazing pyre. The Trainmen jump off and run up with big flashlights.

1st TRAINMAN

Bejesus.

Willy walks up INTO SHOT. He has one hand in a side pocket and his coolness is terrific.

WILLY

It's a damn crime.

1st TRAINMAN

What is?

WILLY

Way they make cars these days.
Her gas tank blew up.

2nd TRAINMAN

You see it?

WILLY

Passed me a mile back, going like a bat. Gas was leaking right out on the road. Pouring. I tried to catch up, but I guess it got to her tailpipe first.

Willy is standing there easily, but his eyes rove.

WILLY'S P.O.V.

It scans the ditch and around. No sign of Frady any more where the blown-off car door lies. Low dialog o.s. during this:

1st TRAINMAN

Whatta' we do, Joe?

CONT.

CONTINUED

2nd TRAINMAN

There's no helping the poor lady,
that's for sure. What a horrible
stink.

Willy's gaze JUMPS IN HARD on something. It's one of Todd's shoes. It lies there just at the opening of the corrugated pipe where it fell off.

WILLY

I saw a farmhouse. I'll drive
back and call.

BACK TO SCENE

1st TRAINMAN

Yeah, I guess that'd be okay. I
mean it's not like the car run into
us. We weren't in any wreck.

2nd TRAINMAN

You call. Case the police ask,
we'll be at Huntville Yard. We're
deadheadin' this junk back to the
bonepile there.

WILLY

Huntville Yard. Gotcha.

1st TRAINMAN

(at wreck, holding
his nose)

Bejesus.

They retreat fast and sick-looking toward caboose. One stops and waves his flashlight with a rotating motion toward the locomotive far ahead in the night.

INT. STOPPED TRAIN - AN OLD MAIL CAR

Door is partly open on the side away from the action. By moonlight we see Frady bent over Todd, who lies on a pile of dusty old mail sacks. Compressed air hisses o.s. as brake shoes relax from rims. Frady feels the boy's leg where trouser is blood-soaked. He starts a sharp cry, but Frady's hand goes quickly down over his mouth.

FRADY

Okay. Easy. No noise.

He withdraws hand tentatively. No cry, just the huge-eyed gasping question again.

CONT.

CONTINUED

TODD

My Mom -- ??

FRADY

You were out a while. Someone come and picked her up. Didn't have room for us, though, so we're taking a different way. Just lie quiet now, I'm going to put you a tourniquet...

Big jerk as the coupling slack is taken up and the train starts to move.

EXT. TRAIN

Much crashing noise as it gets going. At last moment Willy and his mate come running up low and clamber onto coupling platform at rear of old railway mail car.

INT. MAIL CAR - MOVING TRAIN

Frady has made a tourniquet from strip of shirt, has it twisted around Todd's thigh above the wound. The boy looks poorly: face is filmed with sweat and breath is shallow. He moans at the car's constant jolts.

EXT. COUPLING PLATFORM - MOVING TRAIN

The heavy steel door into mail car is locked. Willy puts his magnum muzzle close to it and FIRES. Door is still locked. They made them tough in those days. He aims to shoot again.

INT. MAIL CAR - FRADY

He kneels holding the tourniquet, looking at his wristwatch. Another BANG! from outside. We can distinguish it from train noise, but Frady doesn't. BANG! again. A couple of beats, then Frady suddenly swivels his head in delayed reaction.

HIS P.O.V. - ZOOMING TO CU

Door at the end. Same kind of BANG! again and chips of ancient paint fly off the inner surface.

EXT. COUPLING PLATFORM

Willy and his mate FIRE TOGETHER. Lock area looks like it's been hit with a bazooka. Willy tries the door delicately. The lock has been smashed. It is going to open now. But he's careful. He takes clip from his gun and rams in a new one.

CONT.

CONTINUED

Ditto his friend. Willy says something into his ear which we can't hear over noise, but from their new positions the idea is clear: Willy will go in now while the Other Killer covers him from the coupling platform.

INT. MAIL CAR - ANGLE ON DOOR

It opens abruptly and Willy steps in with gun leveled. TILT UP QUICK. Frady is up above on iron ladder attached to end bulkhead, holding a mail sack. Frady leaps down, holding the sack open and inverted.

QUICK ANGLES - THE ACTION

It's unbelievably fast. The sack whumps down over Willy's head and shoulders and Frady knees him in the crotch and slams him back into the steel wall and knees him again on the bounce and has snatched the pistol from his hand and dropped to one knee and spun around.

The Other Killer is just rushing in. BOOM! and his shot goes over Frady's head and BOOM! Frady's return shot goes into the guy's nose and he goes cartwheeling backwards into the clattering night, dead before he'll hit the crossties. Frady turns again.

INCLUDE WILLY

He's on his haunches at base of side wall, stunned and retching under his canvas straitjacket. Stenciling on it says "U.S. Government Property." As Willy scrabbles at bottom edge, Frady keeps the gun right on him and moves backward, back to where Todd lies. With his left hand, Frady gropes and finds the tourniquet and twists it tight again. Willy finally gets the sack up off his head. His own gun looks at him and Frady suddenly and at last remembers.

FRADY

I'll be damn. Lobby of the OK Corral. You were buying some souvenir.

Willy moves like he's going to stand up. BOOM! Frady shoots him through a kneecap. Willy says "Ooooooh" and sits down again pretty quick.

WILLY

You silly pig. Trumbull will get you.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Likely true. But meantime I've got you, and you're gonna tell me some things.

WILLY

What makes you think so?

BOOM! Frady shoots him through the other kneecap.

WILLY

Oooooooh.

FRADY

Let's start at the top. Way back, before the assassinations began --

WILLY

You must be hallucinating. What assassinations?

FRADY

Flop on your face. Crawl over here on your elbows and put out your hands flat.

WILLY

What for?

FRADY

I'm gonna hurt you a couple of ways.

WILLY

You sad silly pig. Your little pig brain just cannot dig it.

FRADY

What?

WILLY

I'm an old-fashioned patriot, Frady. I have faith. I ain't scared of dying for my country. Shit! You might as well threaten a statue of Nathan Hale.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Crawl over here and let's mash a few fingers.

WILLY

Can I have a cigarette first?

FRADY

No way. Flop over and crawl.

ON WILLY

He makes a sad face and sighs and obediently he flops forward. He lands on his elbows with his hands folded under him, and before Frady can do a damn thing Willy has darted a hand into breast pocket and come up with a tiny something and holds it right in front of his eyes. PUSH IN TIGHT. It's a small shiny BLACK CAPSULE.

CU - FRADY

He's a dummy. A shot would blow Willy's brains out.

WILLY

WILLY

This is ridiculous. I've always been fond of train rides...

The sonofabitch has style. He pops capsule in his mouth and grinds it, and Willy is grinning at Frady for the whole two seconds it takes before the cyanide hits him and he convulses in a rictus and screams.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Past Frady in silhouette against the partly open door of the mail car. A fragment of America rattles past. In a suburban backyard we glimpse someone drinking beer and building a boat, and Willy's scream has stopped, and some kids are playing, and Frady dumbly lowers his stupid gun.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY RECEPTION AREA - NIGHT

It's quiet. Wall clock says like 3:30. Frady sits on a straight chair in an office cubicle as a bored ADMISSION CLERK types stuff on a card.

CLERK

Hospitalization?

FRADY

How'd I know that?

CONT.

CONTINUED

CLERK

Don't know much, do you?

FRADY

I told you, I was driving. Saw the kid in the road all alone. Just picked him up and brought him in. Might be a runaway orphan, all I know.

CLERK

No identification.

FRADY

None I know. Only that stuff you got there from his pockets.

ANGLE - CLERK'S DESK

Stuff from any boy's pockets. Like scout knife, a bit of change, frayed rabbit's foot. And a REEL OF RECORDING TAPE. As we MOVE IN on this-last until it looks enormous:

FRADY'S VOICE

Be safe, won't it?

CLERK'S VOICE

Safe?

FRADY'S VOICE

Stuff. Might be important just to him.

CLERK'S VOICE

Oh sure. Long as nothing worth stealing, it's safe. Have your name, please?

BACK TO SCENE

FRADY

Andrew Winston. Spelled --

CLERK

I got it. Winston. Like the cigarette should. Address?

FRADY

State University. Here, I have it writ down for you.

(giving her a bit
of paper)

I'm a prof there.

CONT.

CONTINUED

CLERK

I wouldn't of guessed.

Frady ignores that, stands up with a frown.

FRADY

You sure nobody called in about a missing kid, huh?

CLERK

No report yet.

FRADY

Funny. Must've been hours now. Look -- if the kid's folks don't show by morning, I want you to call me. Be sure you call me.

CLERK

You want to take responsibility?

FRADY

Yuh.

CLERK

Okay, I'll put that down. But they'll show up.

FRADY

I'm sure. But in case. Is that all?

CLERK

(eyeing card)

Not much but all we got -- right, Prof?

FRADY

Right on.

WITH FRADY

He leaves the Clerk's cubicle and walks down the hall a way. There's a door that says: "EMERGENCY ROOM -- POSITIVELY NO ADMITTANCE." He opens it.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM

Todd is unconscious on the table, getting a transfusion and being prepared for surgery. We can read lettering on hospital

CONT.

CONTINUED

wristband NEAR CAMERA. It says: "BOY/NAME UNKNOWN" and then some code numbers. An INTERN looks up and sees Frady in the doorway.

INTERN

Scram, mac. Cantcha read?

Frady nods and disappears.

ON FRADY - IN THE HALL

He looks disoriented and a little crazy suddenly, like maybe he doesn't know where or who he is. He scratches his scalp and looks at his hands. There's dried blood on them. Frady charges into a stairwell across the way and starts up the stairs three at a time.

INT. HOSPITAL - UPPER FLOOR

Frady shows his badge to NURSE at floor desk.

FRADY

I just brought someone in -- is somewhere I could wash?

NURSE

(pointing)

Second on the right.

Frady's almost running in that direction already.

INT. HOSPITAL SCRUB ROOM

Frady washes himself like a maniac. Frady scrubs and scrapes and splashes carbolic solution and flushes it and starts again.

EXT. STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - EARLY MORNING

Frady walks fast along a flagstone path.

INT. BEDROOM - CLOSE ON WINSTON

He's in pajamas on edge of bed, clenching phone and making not entirely coherent sounds into its speaker.

WINSTON

Yes -- yes, that's right, I'm -- what? -- am I a relative -- ?

CONT.

CONTINUED

PULL BACK FAST. Frady's about three feet away. His revolver isn't pointed at Winston, but it's in his hand. Frady nods and prompts him low:

FRADY

Father's side.

WINSTON

(to phone)

Yes, I'm related -- to his father.

(after a moment)

All right. I'll drive over. Yes!
Goodbye!

He bangs down receiver and stares at Frady.

FRADY

That's good. You can take care of him. It's right you do.

WINSTON

Why?

FRADY

I dunno. Poppa was a pilot, got killed out there.

WINSTON

What?

(standing up in
indignation)

What's that to do with me??

FRADY

I dunno.

WINSTON

You're simply out of your mind!

FRADY

Yuh. But I got reason. I seen things and learned things and done things that -- a dog shouldn't -- no dog should do --

(shaking that off)

You were saying when the phone rung -- you know this Trumbull, huh?

WINSTON

I said I'd met him.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

That'd be in Washington. Back in the glory days. Where'd he get there from?

WINSTON

I don't recall. Harvard maybe?

FRADY

Harvard. Damn. An intellectual just like you. He appear loony?

WINSTON

Of course not! What in hell do you want from me??

FRADY

Don't yell. I'm a dumb garbage collector. You said that. I'm just trying to understand the how of people like you and him.

WINSTON

Never. Impossible.

FRADY

That was said to me recently on a train. The fella died shortly after.

WINSTON

You can't understand unless you' have been there. At the center of power. There are many men like Edward Trumbull.

FRADY

Jesus." Don't say so.

WINSTON

Men obsessed. Men who...
(stops, looks up
at Frady)

This scheme of his. Imaginary plots to be unearthed. I find it monstrous and mad -- but it might work.

FRADY

Work.

WINSTON

Speaking pragmatically. Ignoring any moral consideration. I swear it might WORK!

CLOSE ON FRADY

He studies the muzzle of his revolver. Then he shakes his head and sticks gun back in holster and stands up.

FRADY

I quit. I'm switching my brain off. Goodbye and lots of luck.

Frady heads for the door with his head down, but Winston steps after him urgently.

WINSTON

Wait!
(as Frady turns)
This boy --

FRADY

On your doorstep, baby, and the snow is blowing -- but I don't think they got a line on him. I do believe he's clear.

WINSTON .

What will I do with him??

FRADY

Pragmatically speaking you might play the tape every Christmas Eve and tell him about Santa Claus and George Washington. He might grow up to do something about the world of you and me. Who knows?

Frady is gone.

EXT. STATE POLICE HQ - MORNING

The air is clear and sparkling. Frady walks up from the parking lot. He stops and looks around. There are no apparent assassins in sight. He goes inside.

MOVING WITH FRADY - INTO HQ

Nobody sinister in the lobby either. Frady nods at the uniformed TROOPER on duty at front desk.

FRADY

Howdy, Johnson.

JOHNSON

Welcome back, sir. How was the vacation?

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Old story. Vacations are fun
but it's nicer to get home.

Johnson buzzes open the gate and Frady goes through that and the inner door behind. He's rounding angle toward his office when he changes mind. Goes back to open entrance into Communications Room.

FRADY

I'm back and I'm a bear. Gimme
some work.

(as heads turn, all
but yells)

You damn fools, gimme reports or
somethin'!

(eyes just looking
at him)

Forget it.

Frady leaves as abruptly as he arrived. We realize now that his ease out front was wholly deceptive. Lt. Frady is almost out of his skull. He charges on to his own office and goes in.

INT. FRADY'S OFFICE - MORNING

There's a big stack of reports on his desk that have piled up in his absence. Frady picks them up and looks at the top one seriously for a moment, and then he hurls the whole stack in the wastebasket. Suddenly he's the loneliest craziest-looking bastard you ever saw. He goes to the door, breathing hard, and bolts it and runs and gets a chair and sticks it canted under the doorknob.

He runs back to the open window. He slams it down and latches it, and clatters down the blind and closes the slats.

CLOSER ON FRADY

He walks to his desk in the gloom. He takes his empty revolver from its holster and flips out the cylinder. He loads it with a SINGLE BULLET from box in a drawer. He places the revolver in center of his desk and sits down. The INTERCOM BOX BUZZES. Frady pays no heed. He gets that "Sloane's Liniment" bottle of booze from its drawer, and a paper cup too, and pours it full to the brim. The intercom keeps going BUZZ BUZZ. Frady pushes down the key.

FRADY

I'm not here.

CONT.

CONTINUED

INTERCOM

Okay. I'll tell that to the guy asking for you.

Frady knows, but he asks anyway.

FRADY

Who?

INTERCOM

Name of Trumbull.

FRADY

What's his business?

INTERCOM

Didn't state. Want I should ask?
(long long pause)

Sir?

FRADY

I'll be out in a minute.

He turns off the box. He takes a big swallow from cup and places his hand on the grip of his revolver.

INT. HQ LOBBY

Edward Trumbull waits there beside Trooper Johnson at the desk, packing his pipe. He seems calm, but there's a little jerkiness to his movements that says this calm is about one millimeter thick. Frady comes out through the inner door. He stops just inside the buzzer-gate beside Johnson and looks at Trumbull with dead neutral eyes.

TRUMBULL

Hello. Lieutenant Frady, is it not?

FRADY

Yuh. Who are you?

TRUMBULL

We've met before.

FRADY

I'll take your word.

TRUMBULL

I tried to sell you something.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

No kidding.

Beat of silence. Trooper Johnson has been following this odd conversation like a tennis match.

TRUMBULL

I see I'll have to adopt a new approach.

FRADY

Yuh.

TRUMBULL

My name is Trumbull, sir. Let me remind you of the words from the Book: In life, we are in the midst of death. Perhaps I could interest you in a lot in a fine new cemetery.

FRADY

You're peddling new graveyards.

TRUMBULL

Yes, sir. I am.

FRADY

What's wrong with the old ones?

TRUMBULL

They have become overcrowded. Though to be frank, the one I have in mind for you is still only in the planning stage.

FRADY

Ain't interested, doc.

TRUMBULL

That's very foolish. The time to buy is now.

FRADY

Do I look unhealthy?

TRUMBULL

(real preacher tone)

He takes us at any moment. From any direction. He takes us when we are least prepared. His ways are myriad.

(pause)

Unless, of course.

CONT.

CONTINUED

FRADY

Unless what?

TRUMBULL

There might be some alternative proposition. Possibly we could discuss it in your office.

FRADY

I'm kind of busy. Old traffic tickets and stuff, you know?

TRUMBULL

Really, sir, I beg you urgently. Let us go into your office. It's essential!

There's a crazy glint in Trumbull's eyes. Frady is getting to him. Frady yawns and scratches an armpit.

FRADY

How'd this fella get in here?

JOHNSON

It's a public building, sir.

FRADY

Screw it. I think he's a phony two-bit creep. Throw him out and lift your leg on him -- that's an order, Johnson.

ON TRUMBULL

He can't believe it. This nobody jerkwater cop has raped his very essence, is actually turning his back on Edward Trumbull. It unglues him completely. With inutterable fury, Trumbull takes a step backward and whips out a little nickel-plated revolver.

REVERSE ANGLE

It happens quicker than it can be described. Trooper Johnson screams "Watch out!!" and leaps up pulling his own revolver, but something like this was just what Frady hoped would happen, and he yells "No!!!" at the Trooper and backhands him, and goes in a twisting dive at Trumbull, and Trumbull's little gun says BANG! and at same instant there's a really cannonlike BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

TOWARD TRUMBULL

He doubles forward with a look of sheer astonishment. It's so staged that for an instant he looks absolutely identical to famed frozen picture of Lee Harvey Oswald getting gut-shot by Jack Ruby. With dying amazement, Trumbull folds and crashes to the floor beneath Frady.

CAMERA CRANES UP FAST. There's a GUY in civvies at the side, who must've just walked in. He holds a smoking revolver. It was he who put the blast on Trumbull. An astonished moment. Frady's head and ours still ring with the stunning reverberation of those four fast shots in this enclosed space.

The Guy lowers his revolver. Almost lazily, he hauls a leather folder from his hip pocket and flips it open. A small gold badge gleams inside.

THE GUY

(southern drawl)

Officuh Ellinsworth, ah'm from New O'leans. Come up to see you all 'bout a fugitive. Ain't it mighty lucky?

Frady still looks uncomprehending. There's blood coming from his shoulder where Trumbull's snap-shot winged him in midair. He rolls Trumbull over. The eyes are glazed and open and dead. The tongue will never wag again. In b.g. other TROOPERS are rushing in with drawn revolvers.

TIGHT CU - FRADY

Something goes off violently inside his brain. He looks up again o.s.

FRADY AND THE COP FROM NEW ORLEANS

Frady recognizes him. He was behind one of those banquettes in "La Jardiniere." Lt. Frady stares into the man's face and sees a labyrinth of dark tunnels stretching into infinity ahead of him.

FRADY

Oh sweet hell.

FREEZE on that.

The End