

The Naked Man

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IN BLACK:

We hear a man's bellow, followed by a great resonating thud.

FADE UP FROM BLACK:

INT EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

A PAIR OF HANDS

Large and very powerful; they move into frame, palms up, and we follow them until they stop directly over a small lavatory sink.

The spigot is activated by a foot pedal.

One hand squeezes a green bottle of PhisoHex soap.

A stream of soap hits the other hand in slow motion.

The huge hands come together and lather the soap. We hear tuneless humming.

We follow the hands into the stream of running water for a rinse.

AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN

She sits in another corner waiting patiently, clad in a backless hospital gown. Around her neck is a chrome steel brace.

An adjustable couch is immediately in front of her.

We hear the water being shut off. The humming continues. Footsteps approach. The humming stops.

VOICE

Morning.

The woman looks up with a nervous smile.

THE HANDS

They bring in a paper towel and towel themselves dry.

A TRASH CAN

A foot hits its pedal to open it and the wadded towel is tossed in.

THE WOMAN

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

The footsteps resume and her look climbs as the man approaches. His back enters frame, eclipsing our view.

CLOSE ON THE WOMAN

Her look continues to climb as the big man's shadow slides up her face. In her glistening eyes we see the man approaching, hands out, fingers spread.

The woman starts to tremble. Her movement is restricted by her neck brace so that her eyes roll to the top of their sockets as she tracks the oncoming figure.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF A SCREWDRIVER BLADE

The glimmering blade enters to fill the screen.

We follow it over to the head of a knurled screw. It clicks into the slot and--CREAK. CREAK. CREAK.--starts to loosen.

OPPOSING SCREW

The blade enters and--CREAK. CREAK. CREAK.--loosens it.

THE WOMAN'S NECK

Her brace is carefully removed to reveal a long vulnerable neck. Her hair is loosely pinned, a few strands wafting in the breeze.

The huge hands enter and strategically close over the neck at the base of the skull and around the throat. They ease the head into a circular movement. The woman becomes limp, leaving the hands total control of her movement.

VOICE

Mmmm. Hmmm. Just relax now. Yes. On the couch, face down please.

THE COUCH

The woman enters and gently falls to rest face down, her nose nestling in the breathing crack.

HAND PEGS

A shot of each of the hand pegs on either side of the couch as each of her hands drops in to clutch it.

THE WOMAN'S BACK

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

1

The man's muscular back enters and he reaches down to gently place his hands on the woman's legs. He aligns them and, humming again, runs his hands along them, feeling each joint.

WOMAN'S FACE

Apprehensive, her eyes roll sideways in a vain attempt to see what's going on.

HER BACK

The hands enter in a butterfly pattern, thumbs touching. We follow the hands as they dive to the top of her buttocks. On contact the thumbs probe deep into the vertebrae.

HER FACE

Her eyes widen.

WOMAN

Ooohh!

THE HANDS

They probe her spine, expertly groping with both thumbs and all fingers.

WOMAN'S FACE

Her eyes drop. She relaxes.

HER HANDS

They relax on the pegs.

MAN'S TORSO

The man is drawing a deep breath; his chest swells and his elbows lock as the muscles leap out in his arms. The man suddenly draws back.

WOMAN

Totally relaxed now, a smile creeps into place.

HER BACK

As the hands come crashing down onto her lower lumbar. We hear the slap of flesh and the stress sounds of stretching tissue.

WOMAN'S FACE

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (3)

1

She is driven down into the cushion and her eyes fly open as the wind is knocked out of her.

WOMAN

OOOoooh!

THE MAN

He locks his elbows once again. He drives down, again and again, applying his weight and his strength to the woman's body. CRUNCH. SLAP. CRUNCH. SLAP.

WOMAN

OOOOwoooOOOOOFFFF!

The woman, forced again and again into the cushion, gasps as if drowning.

The adjustment stops. The woman finally opens her eyes and swallows air. Sweat now stands out on her brow, but she is regaining her composure.

A beat of relief.

The hands reenter to CRUNCH the base of her neck.

. . . NNNGGAPFFF!

The man's voice is still soothing, gentle:

VOICE

. . . On your side, facing me.

The woman starts to roll.

THE HANDS

They hover palms down, fingers spread, as if warming over a fire. With the whine of a compressor, the S of the woman's side hums up into frame to meet the waiting hands.

The hands gently feel, squeeze, and adjust until the correct position is found. A motionless moment.

THE WOMAN'S FACE

She waits in suspense, looking straight ahead.

OVERHEAD

The broad-shouldered man abruptly pushes with his right arm and pulls with his left, the one clean movement sharply twisting the woman. We hear a succession of snaps and pops.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (4)

1

THE WOMAN

Reacting, stunned but not hurt.

WOMAN

AAAaahh. . .

VOICE

. . . On your back, facing me please.

She complies.

Her breathing again slows to normal and her eyeballs roll up as a powerfully muscled arm enters to slide down her face. Her eyes move to follow it. The hand snakes around her chin and stops with the hand firmly clasping her cheek bone.

The hand pauses for just a beat, makes a slight adjustment in the attitude of the head, pauses again.

The other hand enters to slide across her face, her eyes again following. This hand comes to rest on the top vertebra under her ear.

BEHIND HER EAR

Extremely close on the thumb probing her skull and massaging the vertebra until it appears that top vertebra and skull have been disconnected.

WOMAN'S FACE

The powerful arms cradle and swivel the head. The thumb massages behind the ear. The head rolls as if detached from her body and supported only by the man's hands. She is totally relaxed. Her eyes roll up.

HER POV

An eye chart on the opposite wall. It is blurry, and gently rocks back and forth as her head is manipulated.

The rocking stops. A pause.

A short sharp twist--and we hear a bone snap. With the snap the eye chart racks halfway to focus.

A little more rocking. A pause.

Twist back--a second snap--and the eye chart racks to pin sharp.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (5)

1

A head now enters from the top of the frame, smiling down at her. He is a young man with square-jawed good looks.

He is Edward Bliss.

ED

(still upside-down)

About five more visits and that oughta do it.

THE WOMAN

She swings her feet out to sit up. She is radiant now, a new person. A lock of hair droops over her forehead and wafts in the breeze.

The man whom we now see whole for the first time is very powerfully built.

ED

You can put the brace away but don't get rid of it, just in case. Oh, by the way-- I'll be at this address from now on. . .

He is handing her a business card.

. . . I'm starting my own practice in Harper City.

The card, identifying "Edward Bliss, Jr., D.C.," bears the image from the Sistine Chapel of God's hand reaching to Adam's.

. . . It's only an hour away.

The woman glances at the card, smiles at Ed.

WOMAN

I`don't care how far it is.

2 INT EXAMINATION ROOM - LATER

2

SOMEONE ELSE'S POV

We hold for a beat on the wall of an examining room.

With a loud pop we abruptly tilt down to look at the floor. Stretching away from us are the hospital-gowned legs of a seated middle-aged woman.

A man's hand reaches in from the side, showing the familiar business card to the lens.

ED

Moving to a new office, Dotty.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

OBJECTIVE SHOT

Dotty, the middle-aged woman, is seated in a chiropractor's chair, head being angled down toward the floor by a half-nelson applied by Edward Bliss who squats behind her. His free hand is showing her the card.

DOTTY

Oh yeah?

3 INT EXAMINATION ROOM - LATER

3

SOMEONE ELSE'S POV

Ed looms up toward the right, rather blurry. His hands are extended down toward either side of the lens.

With a loud pop the hands twist, and the image spins a full 120 degrees so that Ed now lists off in another orientation. Now he is perfectly sharp. He fishes in his pocket.

ED

New office address, Mr. Renfrew.

REVERSE

On Mr. Renfrew reaching up to give the back of his neck an appreciative rub.

MR. RENFREW

Wherever.

4 INT CLINIC HALLWAY - DAY

4

We pull Ed as he walks down the hall, humming. Another doctor in a white smock pursues, bellowing:

DOCTOR POLAND

Bliss! Bliss!

He is Doctor Peter Poland. Ed turns to face him and Poland thrusts one of the business cards in his face. The card, cupped in his hand, is upside-down, showing God's and Adam's hands palms-up.

Poland splutters:

. . . Wuddya call this?

ED

Upside-down.

Poland swivels his hand down to look at the card himself and sees that it is--right-side-up. He frowns.

(CONTINUED)

POLAND

Wuddya talkin' about?

ED

I'll tell you what I'm talking about. When I started for you as an intern you promised me raises if I was kept on-

POLAND

Bullshit! You're talkin' through your ass, Bliss!

ED

All right then, buster, my ass says this: I've got a family to think about now, I can't keep doing all the work here for none of the money. And since I just got my own D.C., as of Monday I'll be in business for myself. Naturally I'd be grateful for any referrals you could give me, but I suspect you're about to run out of patients. I know I have.

He turns and walks on down the corridor. Poland calls after him:

POLAND

Very funny, Bliss. Har-har-har! Well it won't be so funny when you fall flat on yer keister! You'll be needin' help with subluxation then! Ya musclebound goody-goody! Go ahead--see how ya like it with no Peter Poland lookin' out for ya! On your ass, Bliss! Flat on your goddamn goody-goody ass!

We are pulling away from the doctor, a white-smocked figure in a white corridor. The white-on-white pullback is snapped off by a shock cut to black; the imprecations continue to echo off the tiles as we are in:

5 INT BLACK LIMBO

5

After a beat a body--a large body--rises in slow motion into the blackness. We hear Peter Poland's echoing voice: "On your ass, Bliss!" Arms flailing, the man spins slowly up and away. He seems naked--or, strangely, more than naked: we see exposed muscle tissue, bones, spinal column.

In fact he looks like an anatomy class's Visible Man. He is wearing a leotard which depicts the human skeleton and muscular system, peeled away on one side of the chest to show internal organs. A green fig leaf is sewn over the leotard's

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

genital area. The outfit's mask shows a skull through the nose-hole of which the wearer's nose protrudes, and large eye-sockets through which his eyes peer. Out of the rictus mouth comes a slowed-down semi-human ROAR. Echoing under it: "On your ass, Bliss!"

We tilt up to follow his airborne slow-motion trajectory. The tilt brings us out of blackness to put the spinning body against a high bay light.

The body starts to descend, still roaring, arms still flailing. "On your ass, Bliss!"

6 INT WRESTLING RING - NIGHT

6

Our pan down with it brings it past three horizontal ropes. The body finally slams into a harshly toplit canvas.

NAKED MAN

HUHNGH!

He groggily shakes his head. Peter Poland's voice is gone. A swishing rustle draws his attention.

HIS POV

The dutch-angle, also slow motion, shows another wrestler charging across the ring toward us, arms pumping. This man is naked except for the grass skirt of the Pacific islander which slowly swishes as he runs. His body is huge, his features broad and flat.

SAMOAN

AAAHHHHHH!

NAKED MAN

.. (His eyes widen.)
.. Hunh?

HIS POV

The Samoan leaves his feet--leaping--arms and legs spreadeagled--flying at us.

THE NAKED MAN

His eyes track the approaching Samoan performing his "flying angel." His shadow slips up the Naked Man's face.

NAKED MAN'S POV

The flying Samoan is descending spreadeagled toward us, backlit by the high bay light.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

SAMOAN
AAAAHHHHHH!

His chest fills the frame.

THOOOMP!

BLACKNESS

THE CROWD

The audience roars in slow motion--a sea of faces twisted by the ancient lust for action.

THE RING

Begin normal motion. Beneath his foe the Naked Man wriggles like a pinned insect.

NAKED MAN'S FEET

He lifts and then stamps down his feet to start a "crack-the-whip" wave that travels up his body.

When the wave reaches his shoulders the Samoan is thrown clear with the loud rustle of esparto grass.

SAMOAN
Huh!

The Naked Man scrambles to his feet and grabs one of the Samoan's arms. He starts spinning him, taking small mincing steps as he rotates in place, forcing the Samoan into a flatfooted but accelerating orbit around him.

Once he has generated sufficient velocity he releases the Samoan, who hurtles helplessly toward the ropes.

The Samoan bounces off the ropes and hurtles back toward the Naked Man in the center of the ring, grass rustling.

NAKED MAN
Hah!

He gracefully sidesteps so that the Samoan stumbles on by toward the opposite ropes.

Oddly, the Naked Man now kneels in the center of the ring and draws himself into a ball.

The Samoan bounces off the opposing ropes and approaches center ring again, arms now outstretched and ready for action.

(CONTINUED)

SAMOAN
AAAAHHHHH!

When the evil wrestler reaches him our wrestler performs a "Bouncing Betty," exploding up and launching a fist through the other man's grass skirt into his crotch.

NAKED MAN
HAH!

SAMOAN
NNGGGAIIEE!

The Samoan hunches over and duckwalks around the ring in agony.

The Naked Man slips behind him, presses a palm against each of his ears and performs a "Charles Atlas," squeezing in.

SAMOAN
AAAaagggh--HUH!

The Charles Atlas has been punctuated by a rabbit punch. Now the Naked Man steps around in front of his opponent and grabs his nose. He waves his arm sinuously back and forth, and the Samoan's nose follows.

SAMOAN
Hnnnggggeennnggg. . .

The Naked Man ends this "Water Buffalo" with a sharp releasing snap of his wrist:

NAKED MAN
Hah!

The Samoan's head bobs with aftershocks; he is dazed.

SAMOAN
Whuhuh. . .

A backhand from the Naked Man sends him down onto the canvas.

The Naked Man flops on top of him, pinning him.

The Samoan murmurs:

SAMOAN
Happy birthday.

The ref slaps the canvas three times and the fall is over.

The crowd roars.

7 INT BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

7

The Naked Man is peeling his mask off as passers-by slap him on the back:

OTHER WRESTLERS

Happy birthday. . . happy thirtieth, pal.
. . . Good bout. . . Happy birthday, Eddie.

As he finishes taking off his mask we see that it is indeed Edward Bliss.

He is approaching a pretty young woman who is very pregnant--his wife, Kim. She kisses him on the cheek.

Ed Bliss lays a hand on her stomach.

ED

How's the "Li'l Wrassler?"

KIM

He's not going to be a wrassler! He's going to be a doctor, like his dad!

ED

But his dad's a wrassler too.

KIM

Not any more--your last bout, Eddie--I'm so happy--the beginning of our new life!

Ed looks uncomfortable.

ED

Well. . . maybe I could just wrassle once in a while to keep my hand in. Sammy really needs me here and there's no reason to quit the canvas cold turkey.

KIM

Oh Eddie, you promised! What if your patients found out?! It's so frivolous!

ED

Frivolous!

Sammy the fight promoter enters. He wears a loud checked suit and smokes a fat cigar.

SAMMY

Way to go, Eddie, way to make show! They ate it up! With spoons, Eddie! That

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

SAMMY (cont'd)
crotch-punch is a crowd pleaser! You
gotta use it next week!

KIM
There isn't gonna be any next week!

SAMMY
Whunh?

KIM
That was Eddie's farewell fall!

SAMMY
Farewell fall?!

Ed looks sheepish.

ED
Sammy, I been meaning to tell ya--

KIM
As of today he's a D.C.!

SAMMY
. . . Dog catcher?

KIM
Doctor of Chiropractic! He's thirty
years old! And we've got a baby on the
way. It's time for Eddie to put aside
childish things!

SAMMY
Okay, but why's he gotta quit wrasslin'?

He looks stupefied at Eddie.

. . . Say Eddie, who wears the leotard
here?

ED
I'm sorry Sammy, but you see how it is.
We're movin' to a new home, and I got a
new practice and, well, I--I've thrown my
last crotch punch.

Sammy shouts at Ed's back as Kim takes his arm and the two of
them walk away, into the long dark exit tunnel.

SAMMY

You'll come crawlin' back, Eddie Bliss! I know you--the
wrasslin' game is in your blood! You need that contact--skin
on skin! Your pretty little wife can't give you that!

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (2)

7

As the voice echoes out Ed and Kim are receding out of the last of the tunnel's light, leaving us in:

8 INT BLACK LIMBO

8

Ed, naked, falls in slow motion through the blackness. Sammy's voice still echoes: "In your blood, Bliss!"

Once Ed has disappeared below frame a toplit youth materializes far away, running directly toward us. He wears a leather jacket, has long sideburns and a duck's ass haircut, and all the earmarks of a classic fifties bully.

He rushes at us through the black limbo.

CUT TO REVERSE OF:

9 EXT PLAYGROUND - DAY

9

As--THOOMP!--the bully runs into and bowls over a nine-year-old Eddie Bliss. We are no longer in limbo but on a school playground, and Sammy's voice is gone.

BULLY

--Oh, sorry dickwad. Let me give you a hand.

He reaches to give Eddie a hand up.

A little girl watching, wide-eyed, turns and runs off.

The bully yanks Eddie to his feet and whips him into the chest of another bully.

SECOND BULLY

Hey--watch where you're going, dickwad.

He shoves Eddie to the ground.

At the opposite end of the yard the little girl has run up to a man in a blue windbreaker wearing a whistle around his neck--the playground supervisor. He has the chiseled jaw of a phys ed teacher.

Weeping, the little girl tugs desperately at his sleeve.

GIRL

Mr. Connigliaro, they're beating up Eddie Bliss again!

The bullies are shoving Eddie back and forth.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

BULLY ONE
Watch it, dickwad!

BULLY TWO
Look out, buttface!

Eddie, limp as a rag doll and weeping tears of rage, looks bleakly off.

HIS POV

In long-lens slow motion Mr. Connigliaro, arms pumping, is running toward us, his cheeks slowly puffing out as he blows his whistle.
The little weeping girl runs behind.

BACK TO EDDIE

From behind Bully Two hoists Eddie with a wedgie.

Bully One, facing him, takes him like a hand-off and raises him over his head.

BULLY TWO
Happy landings, dickwad!

BULLY ONE
On your ass, Bliss!

He tosses him.

MATCH CUT TO:

10 INT BLACK LIMBO

10

Adult Eddie is once again falling naked through black.

A picture of a well-muscled man in leotards tensed in a classic wrestling pose fades up behind falling Ed. By the time falling Ed reaches the bottom of the frame, the image is fully up.

11 INT SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

11

The image flips toward us--it is a page in a book. The next page also pictures a classically posed wrestler.

A jump back shows that young Eddie Bliss is intently looking through a wrestling book in the school library.

The sound of a roaring crowd fades up.

12 INT GYMNASIUM - DAY

12

Wrestling mats are out on the floor. A crowd of boys in gym attire surround one mat. They are roaring, their faces twisted in the ancient lust for action.

On the mat young Eddie has pinned one of the bullies face-down and is twisting his arm behind him. The bully's face is contorted with agony.

We hear the bone snap.

The crowd roars. Bully Two rushes out at Eddie, who takes him down with an accomplished leg-hook and starts twisting his arm.

At the sound of a whistle he looks up.

HIS POV

In long-lens slow motion Mr. Connigliaro is running toward us across the gym floor, sneakers squeaking, arms pumping, cheeks puffing out as he blows his whistle.

13 INT VICE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

13

Eddie sits before the vice principal, head hanging.

VICE PRINCIPAL

Both the boys had their arms broken!
Why, this is a serious infraction! This young man has emotional problems, Mr. Bliss! I'm only a school disciplinarian-- these problems should be addressed in the home!

Edward Bliss Senior sits behind Little Eddie, his face mottling with rage. He wears a white smock with a stiff collar--obviously he has been called away from work.

MR. BLISS

Oh they'll be addressed all right, Mr. Boutsikaros! Do you have anything to say for yourself, Eddie?

Little Eddie's head remains hanging in mute shame.

His father yanks him up from behind.

MR. BLISS

. . . Come with me!

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

Little Eddie's head lolls back with the whiplash force of the yank.

14 INT HALLWAY - DAY

14

Mr. Bliss shakes Eddie vigorously in a deserted hallway lined by lockers.

MR. BLISS

What you do reflects on me, Eddie! I'm a respected member of this community--I'm a pharmacist, not a hooligan--and someday you're going to be a pharmacist too!

LITTLE EDDIE

I'm gonna be a wrestler!

MR. BLISS

Pharmacist! Pharmacist! Pharmacist!

Little Eddie's head flops about beneath the violent shakes of the enraged apothecary.

As he screams "Pharmacist!" we track into Ed Senior's mouth until we are interior to it--in black.

15 INT BLACK LIMBO

15

Caplets, tablets and capsules drift down through the black. Also floating down is the adult Ed, gazing about in wonderment at the slow-motion rain of pharmaceuticals.

16 A KALAIIDOSCOPE

16

Spinning images of growing Eddie engaged in pursuits both pugilistic and pharmacological.

Playing under it is a sound collage of three echoing voices, becoming more and more insistent: "On your ass, Bliss!" "In your blood, Bliss!" "Pharmacist! Pharmacist! Pharmacist!"

Ed carefully grinds something in a pestle.

A. He pins various opponents to the mat in his high school wrestling club.

B. He wears a little smock and pours powder onto an apothecary's scale as his smiling father stands behind him and pats him on the back.

C. He mashes opponents' faces into the lens.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

D. He peers down at us through a funnel. Above him, Ed Senior peers down over his shoulder. Little Eddie drops capsules into the funnel and they tumble down toward us.

E. Citations and awards float by from the wrestling club and the chemistry club.

F. Eddie presses dumbbells up toward the lens, screaming with exertion.

G. Muscles a-bulge now, Eddie grinds something in a pestle.

H. Eddie skips rope in a gym--fast-skips, hops, side-to-side pogo hops, sprints.

J. Muscles rippling and leaping with the exertion, Eddie grinds something in a pestle. The pestle shatters in his hands.

K. Intercut with all of the foregoing are shots of Eddie as seen by his about-to-be-vanquished wrestling opponents: He is falling toward the lens, chest forward and arms thrown back in a swan-dive posture.

"On your ass, Bliss!" "In your blood, Bliss!" "Pharmacist! Pharmacist! Pharmacist!"

17 INT BLISS PHARMACY - DAY

17

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT: WHIPPED CREAM NOZZLE

It is being thumbed forward to jet out whipped cream. The voices are gone.

WIDER

On Eddie as he finishes making a banana split at the pharmacy fountain.

His kindly gray-haired mother, also behind the counter, is beaming as she looks at a letter.

MRS. BLISS

Oh Edward, I'm so proud of you! A full scholarship! Your father will be thrilled!

EDDIE

It's a wrestling scholarship. And it's a good school--great preparation for chiropractic training!

Mrs. Bliss's face clouds.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

MRS. BLISS

Well--I'm not sure we have to tell your father that. . .

18 BEHIND THE PHARMACY COUNTER

18

Ed Senior, in his white smock, is glaring at the letter.

MR. BLISS

You dumb cluck! A free ride, and you want to use it to study chiropractics?!

EDDIE

But Dad--

MR. BLISS

You wanna spend your life jimmyin' people's spines?!

EDDIE

Dad, spinal integrity is--

MR. BLISS

Quack stuff! Drugs, Eddie--don't you get it?--drugs help people!

EDDIE

No, Dad! I can't do this any more! This stuff is unnatural and it doesn't work! Half the stuff I been grinding up is sugar pills and the other half is borderline narcotic!

MR. BLISS

You impertinent little--

EDDIE

Dad, the ancient Greeks didn't use all these powders and preparations! They wrestled! That's how they cultivated healthy bodies!

MR. BLISS

Ancient Greeks?! Everybody knows they were pansies!

EDDIE

No Dad, it's not about that!

MR. BLISS

Providing remedies and decoctions, son! That's an honorable trade!

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

EDDIE

No, Dad, that's the quack stuff! God made us whole! The ancient Greeks--

Ed Senior explodes:

MR. BLISS

Shutup with the ancient Greeks! Get outa here! And don't come back until you've learned some respect for the mortar and pestle!

19 INT BLACK LIMBO

19

A MORTAR AND PESTLE

Gleaming white porcelain in a black limbo. With the deep, concussive BOOOOMMM of an earth-shaking explosion they suddenly fly apart, leaving us in black, through which

20 INT BLACK LIMBO

20

ED FALLS NAKED

We are looking down, following Ed as he falls backfirst, facing us. Voices: "Ancient Greeks!" "Dumb cluck!" "In your blood, Bliss!"

He is falling towards a brightly lit square, far, far away.

21 INT CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

21

TRACKING IN TOWARD PETER POLAND

He looks up from a clipboard to address the lens.

POLAND

You're here about the chiropractic internship?

22 INT BLACK LIMBO

22

ED FALLING

As before, except that the brightly lit square, slowly spinning as Ed falls, is closer now. A very distant crowd roar echoes.

23 INT CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

23

TRACKING IN TOWARD KIM

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

She is in a white uniform, seated behind a receptionist's desk. She smiles a greeting at the lens.

KIM

You're the new intern? Your first patient is in there.

24 INT BLACK LIMBO

24

ED FALLING

The white square is closer still; now we can make out the ropes that mark its perimeter and the turnbuckles at its corners. "Ancient Greeks!" "Dumb cluck!" "On your ass, Bliss!"

The roar of the crowd is growing.

25 INT CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

25

HANDS KNEADING FLESH

Ed's strong, capable hands work on various bodies, pushing, plunging, stretching, massaging. The crowd sounds continue and grow over all of these cuts.

26 INT BLACK LIMBO

26

ED FALLING

The ring is very close now. The crowd is louder. The cuts are accelerating.

27 INT BACKSTAGE/OFFICE - NIGHT

27

TRACK IN ON SAMMY

Mouth clamped on a cigar, he arches an eyebrow at the lens.

SAMMY

Moonlighter, huh? So you wanna try the pro wrestlin' game?

REVERSE

Ed stands before him in the classic wrestling pose wearing only briefs and boots

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

27

SAMMY

First ya gotta have a thing ya'know,
with a costume and
stuff.

28 INT CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE - DAY 28

MORE HANDS ON FLESH

Working faster, surer, stronger. "Blood, Bliss! "Ass,
Bliss!"

29 INT BLACK LIMBO 29

ED FALLING

The ring almost fills the frame around him.

30 INT CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE - DAY 30

CLOSE ON PETER POLAND

Astonished.

POLAND

You did all those patients in two hours?!
I like you kid!

31 INT BLACK LIMBO 31

ED FALLING

The crowd roars--less and less reverb--more and more present.
Voices: "Like ya!" "Ancient Greeks!" "Like ya!"

32 INT CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE - DAY 32

CLOSE ON KIM

Smiling at the lens.

KIM

You mean, like a date? Okay! I like
you, Eddie!

33 INT BLACK LIMBO 33

ED FALLING

The crowd is deafening.

4 INT BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

34

CLOSE ON SAMMY

With a beaming two thumbs up:

SAMMY

They like ya, kid! Make show! Make show!

35 INT WRESTING RING - NIGHT

35

ED FALLING

And now finally, through the voices--"Like ya! Like ya! Like ya!" "Ass, Bliss!" "Blood, Bliss!"--

ED

WHOOOoomphhh!

--his back smacks the canvas. But Ed is now wearing his Visible Man leotard.

The voices are gone; the crowd roar continues.

ANOTHER WRESTLER

AAAAHHHH!

He flops onto Ed.

Ed reaches up and grabs his opponents head, one hand on either side. A couple of small exploratory turns and then:

SNAP!--he gives a sudden adjustment.

His opponent roars and rolls off.

Both men scramble to their feet and perform the immemorial pro wrestler's dance: as they face each other with chests thrust out they hop-skip around the ring, running their thumbs under the waistbands of their trunks and then snapping them free.

KIM

In the crowd she cups her hands to her mouth to make herself heard:

KIM

I love you, Eddie!

EDDIE

(CONTINUED)

He reacts, looks over at her, beaming, and gives her two thumbs up.

KIM

Beaming, she returns the two thumbs up.

ED

Still beaming and thumbing-up as his opponent roars in with a blindside tackle that snaps him out of frame.

THE CANVAS

The two wrestlers slam down, the opponent once again on top.

ED

Easy! My girl's in the audience.

OPPONENT

Oh, sorry. Roll?

For the benefit of the crowd the two men roar with feigned exertion, and start the roll.

36 INT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

36

MATCH CUT TO ED AND KIM ROLLING

They are on a sofa, fully clothed. Ed is on top now as the two finish the roll, kissing.

ED

You're my girl, Kim.

KIM

That's right, Eddie--I'm your girl.

CLOSE ON HER KNEE

Eddie puts a hand on it, tenderly massages it. His fingers stretch up her thigh and then his hand starts to slide up under her dress.

The camera is looking up her dress and follows the hand as it slides up. It is dark under her dress.

We are lost in blackness.

37 INT BLACK LIMBO

37

We hear a whistle, very distant, dripping with reverb. Far away in the blackness, a figure emerges into toplight. Very small, very distant, he is running toward us in slow motion.

It is Mr. Connigliaro, the phys ed teacher.

He runs toward us, arms pumping, cheeks distended around his whistle. As usual, in spite of his furious effort he makes little forward progress, his motion slowed by the frame rate and the long lens.

The whistle starts to fade, as does his image, til we are once again in quiet and in

BLACK.

LONG HOLD IN BLACK

38 EXT ROAD/CAR - NIGHT

38

HEADLIGHTS

rip through the black.

39 INT CAR - NIGHT

39

INSIDE THE CAR

Ed is driving; pregnant Kim sits beside him. Ed smiles dreamily as he drives.

KIM
 . . . Penny?

ED
 (still smiling dreamily)
 Remembering. . .

He reaches out with one hand.
 . . . Still my girl, Kim?

She takes the hand.

KIM
 Always, Eddie.

ED
 I think you'll like Harper City.

(CONTINUED)

KIM

I'll like any city that doesn't have Sammy's Big-Time Wrestling. I'm just not sure about being right across the street from your dad's pharmacy.

ED

It's time for Edward Bliss, Jr. to come home. And it's time for Edward Bliss, Sr. to accept his son for what he is--a chiropractor. I figure if I'm near him he's got to accept me sooner or later. Lookin' at my sign every day--"Edward Bliss, Doctor of Chiropractic." And seeing me every morning on my way to work--and I'll be wavin' at him! I love my dad! He's got to accept me! I'm the only son he's got! I'll be wavin' at him! I'm--Whoa Nellie!

At the blaring horn of an oncoming car Ed gives the wheel a sharp twist left.

. . . Those maniacs!

40 INT STICK'S CAR - NIGHT

40

This driver too is pulling out of an evasive swerve, but much less energetically--he drives with one pinky on the power steering of his big boatlike car. His puffy hands stretch at tight white gloves. He is paunchy, in his forties, with black hair and full black sideburns. His figure pushes at the seams of a powder-blue leisure suit and, under it, a shirt in pastel paisly with a big collar. He wears tinted aviator glasses. His speech is drawled, breathy, unemotive:

DRIVER

Whoa. . . Can't believe it. . .

The man in the back seat being chauffeured is small, ratlike, with a Caesar Romero mustache and a humped spine. He is Sticks Verona. His speech is tight and weasely, over-articulated, with popping sibilants:

STICKS

The people in this state drive like rhesus monkeys. They drive like cock-a-roaches. They drive like prancin' reboks. What a you think they drive like?

DRIVER

Whuhhhhh. . .

(CONTINUED)

STICKS

I think they drive crappy. What was the name a that town we just drove through?

DRIVER

Whuhhhhh.

STICKS

Harper City I think. Looked like they had a drug store there. You see if it had a ramp?

DRIVER

Whuhhhhh. . .

STICKS

Cheece. I wonder if it had a ramp. Like to stop there onna way backen gemmiamanana splitttt. . .

DRIVER

Mmmnnn. . .

Beneath the Driver's tinted glasses his eyes are heavy-lidded, unalert, inexpressive.

Sticks is musing:

STICKS

Yeah. . . some kind a fountain treat. . . with sprinkles. . .

The two men drive on.

41 INT BLISS PHARMACY - MORNING

41

Behind the pharmacy counter in his drug store Ed Bliss Senior is pouring capsules into a funnel to fill a row of small bottles lined up on the counter. White hair and Giapetto-like half-glasses have softened his formerly stern look.

We hear the tinkle of the bell over the door.

We hear a woman gasp, and then a male voice:

MAN

AAAAAAHHHHH!

Mr. Bliss looks up. From behind his pharmaceutical counter he has no view of the store.

We hear the female voice:

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

AAAAAAHHHHH!

Mr. Bliss rises, jaw hanging slack, and warily approaches the end of the pharmaceutical counter..

ON MR. BLISS

He rounds the pharmaceutical counter, still holding the jug of capsules.

VOICES

AAAAAAHHHHHH!

He stares and drops the jug.

The capsules bounce and scatter across the floor.

HIS POV

Someone is bear-hugging Mrs. Bliss, her feet up off the floor, kicking, as both she and the hugger continue to bellow with joy. A pregnant woman stands to one side, beaming.

With the clatter of the dropped jug, Mrs. Bliss interrupts her kicking and shouting to look around.

So too does the hugger, Ed Junior.

All stand frozen, Ed Junior leaned back with his mother still clasped to his chest, both of their faces turned to look.

Slowly Mrs. Bliss sinks back to the floor, her broad smile fading. So does Ed Junior's. His arms unwrap from around her.

Ed and his father stare at each other.

Mrs. Bliss looks worriedly from father to son.

Mr. Bliss lurches forward. He walks zombielike toward his son, capsules crunching to powder underfoot.

MRS. BLISS

(apprehensively)

Our little boy has come back to us,
Edward.

Mr. Bliss stands swaying, staring up at his strapping son.

ED

I'm back to stay, Dad. I hope that's all
right.

(CONTINUED)

Mr. Bliss stares. Finally:

MR. BLISS
 . . . Son. . . you stay as long as you
 like.

Ed beams.

Mrs. Bliss beams.

Kim beams.

Ed puts his arms around his father and hugs him tight.

MR. BLISS'S FEET

They dangle off the floor. The odd capsule or two lodged in a shoe tread now falls out and bounces on the floor.

MR. BLISS OVER ED'S SHOULDER

Struggling to smile under the compressive force of his son's bear hug.

Finally Ed sets him down and Mr. Bliss draws a great long-deferred breath.

Ed is too excited to notice.

ED
 Look, Dad! This is my best gal Kim!
 Sorry, Ma--second-best gal!

Kim is blushing.

KIM
 Hi, Dad.

ED
 And this. . .

He grabs his father's hand and places it on Kim's stomach.

ED
 . . . This is your grandson!

All look at Mr. Bliss, who looks in stupefaction at his own hand resting on Kim's swollen belly.

ED
 . . . What do you think, Dad?

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: (3)

41

Mr. Bliss continues to stare at his own hand on the belly. Then he looks up, jaw hanging open, at the three waiting faces beaming down at him. He looks dumbly from one to the other.

He bursts into tears.

He cups his hands over his glasses and sobs loudly.

Ed hugs him, this time more tenderly.

ED

. . . Oh Dad. . . Oh Dad. . .

Mrs. Bliss and Kim smile and sniffle as Mr. Bliss continues to give great hooting sobs.

42 INT BLISS PHARMACY - LATER

42

The family is having coffee at the soda fountain; Ed is waxing enthusiastic.

ED

I bought the place across the street, Dad. The last lawsuit broke Doc Palmer so he sold it to me real cheap. We'll live upstairs from the office--and we'll wave at you every day, Dad!

MR. BLISS

(hoarsely)

And I'll wave at you, son!

Ed chuckles.

ED

Bliss Chiropractic and Bliss Pharmacy-- quite a combo, huh Dad? It's a regular Bliss Corner! And every morning we'll be wavin' at each other!

MR. BLISS

We'll wave every day, son!

ED

That's right! Well--I gotta go see a man about an X-ray machine. . .

He jumps boyishly to his feet, kisses his mom on the cheek and his wife on the lips, and pats her on the tummy.

(CONTINUED)

ED
 . . . You can get acquainted with Kim and
 Junior. Goodbye, Dad!

He waves as he goes out the door. We see him mouthing the
 words "Goodbye, Dad" from outside as, inside, Mr. Bliss
 returns his wave and murmurs:

MR. BLISS
 Goodbye, Son!

43 EXT BLISS PHARMACY - SAME TIME

43

We are pulling Ed Junior as he looks back over his shoulder
 waving.

ED
 Goodbye, Dad!

As he turns face-forward--thump!--he walks into the Driver,
 who is walking toward the pharmacy.

DRIVER
 Whhuhhhh. . .

ED
 Oh--I'm sorry. . .

He looks into the dead eyes behind the tinted aviator glasses
 as his strong hands probe appraisingly at the man's
 shoulders.

ED
 . . . If I, uh, misaligned any vertebrae
 or the sudden tensing on impact knotted
 any of your muscles, feel free to call me
 for a complimentary office visit. . .

As he hands one of his business cards to the oddly passive
 man his attention is drawn by the sound of approaching
 clanks.

Sticks Verona is walking toward us. He walks with the help
 of two orthopoedic walker-canes and wears heavy leg braces
 that keep his knees locked. His body herky-jerks along and
 his stiff twisted back swings wildly with each step like the
 mast of a ship in a heaving sea.

ED
 . . . And if your, uh, friend, uh, needs.
 . . uh, needs. . .

Clank! Clank! Clank!

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

ED

. . . my services. . .

Verona, as he passes, does not dignify Ed with a glance but does give him a directive out of the side of his mouth:

STICKS

Drop dead.

Clank. Clank. Clank.

His driver falls in behind.

44 INT CAR - DAY

44

ED DRIVING

He is humming to himself as he listens to a lecture on tape. He murmurs:

ED

Oh baby, don't sell that bonespotter 'til I get there. . .

TAPE

Subluxations, or misalignments of vertebrae, can produce a virtually unlimited array of symptoms which may be cured by spinal adjustment. . .

Ed slips into a dreamy smile.

ED

. . . I'll be wavin' at ya, Dad. . .

45 INT BLISS PHARMACY - SAME TIME

45

Mr. Bliss is back working the pharmaceutical counter, and Mrs. Bliss and Kim chat at the fountain as the driver settles in at the counter and Sticks lurches clanking towards it.

KIM

And his name will be Eddie, of course. Edward Bliss the Third--

The driver, staring vacantly forward, murmurs:

DRIVER

I'll have a peanut buttern bacon sandwich. Hanka verra much.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. BLISS
I'm sorry sir, we only serve fountain items. There's a lunch counter on Elm Street.

The driver remains seated, staring.

DRIVER
Hank yew. . . Hank yew. . .

STICKS
WHY DON'T YOU GET A RAMP?

Mr. Bliss, startled, comes out from behind his counter.

MR. BLISS
Excuse me, sir?

STICKS
This here's a public place, ain't it Chuckie? I couldn't ride my wheelchair.

MR. BLISS
I'm sorry, sir. Of course, it's only one step--

STICKS
One step a hunnert steps! Wheelchair don't climb steps! Put in a ramp!

DRIVER
Hank yew. . .

MRS. BLISS
I'm sorry, sir--

STICKS
Sorry nothin'! Don't you give a crap about the disabled?

KIM
Please sir, that kind of language does not help anything!

STICKS
Oh no? Huh! Waitaminute--say I never thought a that! Whether that kind a language helps anything. Say. . .

The Driver, still sitting at the counter, has taken out a vial of pills of many different colors. He tilts his head back and pours the contents of the vial into his mouth. He

(CONTINUED)

reaches for the glass of water that Mrs. Bliss, wide-eyed, sets in front of him, and washes the pills down.

DRIVER

Hank yew. . .

STICKS

Maybe ya got somethin' there. Gotta watch my language. Gimmiamanana split. Pretty pleece.

He paces back and forth in front of the counter, with each step waving a cane and planting it with a great walloping motion.

Mrs. Bliss starts working on his fountain treat.

MRS. BLISS

Sprinkles?

STICKS

Yes ma'am.

DRIVER

Peanut buttern bacon sandwich. . . Hanka verra muchshhhhh. . .

MRS. BLISS

Crushed nuts?

STICKS

No, spina bifida.

A pause as the three Blisses exchange worried glances.

MR. BLISS

. . . Are you gentlemen going to require anything from the pharmacy?

STICKS

Yeeaaaahhh. A RAMPFF!

DRIVER

Hank yew. . .

No one knows quite how to react to the nightmarish duo. As Mrs. Bliss works on the banana split there is a fearful silence, punctuated only by Sticks' clanking.

Finally there is the aerosol hiss of the whipped cream being applied.

MRS. BLISS

Enjoy.

46 INT ED'S CAR - SAME TIME

46

ED DRIVING

He throws out one wrist to look at his watch.

TAPE

What are the principal functions of the spine? To support the head; to support the ribs; to support the chiropractor. .

47 INT BLISS PHARMACY - SAME TIME

47

Sticks still paces back and forth, the Driver still sits and stares.

DRIVER

. . . uhhhhmmblackstrap. . .

Sticks projects as if addressing a roomful of students:

STICKS

Only two things make my life bearable.

His pacing halts so that he may hold up one finger.

STICKS

. . . Drugs. . .

He holds up a second finger.

STICKS

. . . Fountain treats.

He looks around.

STICKS

. . . You look like nice people. How much you want for this place?

DUTCH ON MR. BLISS

It is a choking close-up. His face is beaded with sweat.

MR. BLISS

Not for sale.

Sticks affects wounded surprise.

STICKS

Not for sale? Not. . . at any price?

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

OPPOSITE DUTCH TILT

Face beading sweat. Breath whistles in and out through his nostrils.

MR. BLISS

Not for sale.

48 EXT MEDICAL SUPPLY STORE - SAME TIME

48

Ed stands with his hands cupped to peer through the dark glass of the storefront.

ED

What the. . .

He looks down at his watch, shrugs, shakes his head, looks up to check the name of the store.

He goes to the curb where his car stands idling and reaches for its door.

He pulls--the door does not open.

He flips the handle back and forth--definitely locked.

49 INT BLISS PHARMACY - SAME TIME

49

We hear the ticking of the clock, the clank of Sticks' canes.

STICKS

I want all you nice people to think about what my life is like. Got a couple legs feel like the Queen Mary in drydock! Gotta spine like a pig's tail! Attractive personality, sure!

He stops at the sound of an aerosol hiss. He looks over at the counter.

The driver, seen from behind, his ample buttocks fairly drooping over the counter stool, has his head tilted back and is thumbing an aerosol of whipped cream directly into his mouth.

Sticks looks back at the cowed Blisses.

STICKS

. . . But most people don't see that when you're disabled!

In the tightest close-up yet Mr. Bliss doggedly chokes out:

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

MR. BLISS

My son just moved in across the street.
Not for sale!

50 EXT STREET/ED'S CAR - SAME TIME

50

CLOSE ON ROUND-HEADED LOCK BUTTON

A bent coat hanger drops into frame and tries to snag the lock. A couple of tries. No go--it won't stay hooked on the button.

WIDER

Ed stands watching with a group of uniformed cub scouts as one of their number eases the hanger out.

The uniformed pack leader, in neatly pressed shorts and Smokey-the-Bear hat, stands with hands pressed to his hips. He shakes his head.

PACK LEADER

Sorry sir.

ED

Well thanks anyway. My wife's got a spare set of keys, I'll just hoof it on back to the store.

51 INT BLISS PHARMACY - SAME TIME

51

We are close on the driver who once again stares dully forward, though now there is a trace of whipped cream at one corner of his mouth.

DRIVER

' . . Whuhhhh. . . Can't believe it. . .

STICKS

Okay jerkies! You didn't like it when I asked nice! You didn't accept my tender offer! Ya got bias against the disabled! So I'm--

KIM

These people are elderly! Why don't you leave us alone?!

Sticks is taken aback by her spunk. He stares, then smiles.

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

STICKS

Oh, elderly, huh? Golden Agers? Well lemme tell ya something, toots. I've known lots older.

DRIVER

Uh hanka verra muchshsh. . .

Sticks balances on his locked legs as he raises both canes.

STICKS

'Cause ya don't get any older than dead!

BOOM!--A muzzle flash erupts from the toe of his right cane.

STICKS

. . . YA DON'T GET ANY OLDER THAN DEAD!

BOOM!--He shoots with the other cane.

STICKS

. . . HA-HA-HA-HA! YA DON'T GET ANY OLDER THAN DEAD, JERKIES!

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM--The canes are repeaters--bottles explode, displays crash down, the Blisses scream, Sticks laughs, the canes roar, chaos.

52 EXT A STREET - SAME TIME

52

Ed is trotting down the street. We hear distant sirens.

DIFFERENT ANGLES

On Ed's feet as he trots along. We are approaching the siren source.

With each new cut Ed's feet are moving a little faster--from one side, from the other side, from behind, from in front, dutch.

ED'S FACE

Growing worried as he accelerates.

HIS FEET

Now flat-out running.

53 EXT BLISS PHARMACY - DAY

53

(CONTINUED)

Almost home now--Ed starts to slow, gazing off. We hold on him, not showing his point of view. He is overtaken by a police cruiser. It leaves frame as it passes him, lightbar flashing.

A moment later an ambulance likewise overtakes and passes.

And a moment after that an unmarked black sedan approaches--but as this vehicle passes we hinge with it, panning off of Ed. Doing so reveals that the car has a sign in its passenger window: CORONER.

The continuing pan with the car brings us onto the Bliss Pharmacy. The street in front of it is clogged with emergency vehicles.

ED

Staring.

MR. BLISS

We are close on him as he stares hollow-eyed. ZZZZZZIP--a body bag is closed over him.

MRS. BLISS

Her eyes, mercifully, are already closed. ZZZZZZIP.

KIM

Eyes closed as well. ZZZZZZIP.

But wait a minute--we track in on the closed bag--it crinkles in to hug the shape of the face, as if drawn by a breath.

VOICE
Hold on--this one's still alive!

LONG SHOT OF ED

He has turned and is already walking away, out of earshot. His gate is stiff, mechanical, his direction arbitrary.

VOICE
Paramedic! Over here! We got a pulse here!

We FADE OUT on Ed's receding back.

54 EXT STREET - NIGHT

54

ED WALKING

(CONTINUED)

It is night now. We are pulling Ed down the middle of a street. He is staring, expressionless, planting one foot in front of the other, oblivious to the blaring horns and sizzling headlights of the cars passing him on either side.irate motorists shout:

VOICES

Out of the road, creepie!. . . What the heck ya doin'?. . . Watch where you're walkin', musclenuts!

Ed murmurs dully, perhaps to the passing motorists, perhaps to himself:

ED

Got a show at eight. . . Gotta get there. . . Things to do. . . Folks're countin' on me. . . Got a family to think about. .

There is the WHOOOP of a police cruiser; it pulls over and a moment later a fresh-faced young officer trots into frame to take Ed by the elbow.

COP

Could you step over to the shoulder, sir?

ON THE SHOULDER

The officer leads the quiescent Ed to his parked squad car where his partner waits, leaning against the hood. The young cop looks at Ed's dulled eyes.

COP

Sir, have you been taking any drugs?

Ed answers in a flat unemotive voice, staring off:

ED

No. I believe in holism, physical culture, fruits and vegetables and spinal integrity.

The two cops exchange significant glances.

OLDER COP

Sir, would you mind blowing into this bag?

He is handing Ed a breathalyzer bag. Ed takes it, gives it a stupefied look, fills his mighty lungs and then blows into it--BANG--and the bag explodes.

(CONTINUED)

He hands the blown bag back to the officer.

ED

Sorry. I damaged your plastic bag. Now if you gentlemen will excuse me I have a family to think about, and a show to get to.

He walks woodenly off.

The younger cop trots after him and lays a hand on his shoulder.

COP

One second, buddy.

Ed looks down at the hand on his shoulder, stares at it for a beat.

55 INT LOCKER ROOM OF SAMMY'S BIG-TIME - NIGHT

55

Sammy, wearing another loud checked jacket, elbows his way through a crowd of leotarded men gathered around one locker.

VOICES

Eddie's back! . . . Ed Bliss is back!

Sammy penetrates the circle to find Ed in front of his open locker calmly getting into his Naked Man leotard.

SAMMY

Bliss! Holy--! I knew you'd be back! Didn't I call it? Didn't I tell ya you couldn't stay away! Jeez, Eddie, this is great--I'll make an announcement about a surprise fall--let's see--I'll match you with Charlie--ya haven't fought the Mountain Man in a while. . .

Dressed now, Ed reaches into his locker, takes out a policeman's cap and puts it on his head.

SAMMY

. . . Yeah, a grudge match! I'll--forget the hat, kid, it don't go with --I'll say the Mountain Man just called you a steamin' sack a guts, and--

Ed, ignoring Sammy, strides away from his locker.

SAMMY

--Hey waitaminute kid--I gotta make the announcement! And forget that hat!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

SAMMY (cont'd)
 Where you goin'? You can't go out there
 now! Bert 'n Cappy are in the middle of
 a--say!

56 INT WRESTLING RING - NIGHT

56

A man in a leotard and bi-horned Viking headwear is circling
 a man in a leotard and a burglar's mask.

VIKING

AAAAHHH!

BURGLAR

AAAAHHH!

They charge each other and the Viking is slung to the canvas.

VIKING

AAAAA-hungh!

He shakes his head, looks up.

The Burglar is advancing towards him, face twisted in fury--

BURGLAR

AAAAHHH!

--but behind him Ed Bliss is climbing through the ropes, the
 police cap cocked insouciantly over one eye.

VIKING

. . . What the. . .

He hisses at the raging Burglar:

VIKING

. . . What's Ed doin' here?

BURGLAR

AAAAHHHH--huh?

The Burglar looks back, puzzled, as Ed finishes clambering
 through the ropes and rushes in toward him.

ED'S POV RUSHING IN AT BURGLAR

The Burglar's arms are relaxed at his sides and his masked
 eyes look innocently into the advancing lens as he mildly
 puts in:

BURGLAR

Hey Ed, you ain't in this routine--

(CONTINUED)

BLAMMO! He is clothes-lined with so much force that he backflips on the way down and lands on his face.

The crowd roars.

RINGSIDE TABLE

Two play-by-play men share a microphone.

ANNOUNCER ONE

And now the Naked Man comes into the ring to give Knut Hammlensen a hand--the Naked Man and the Viking are great friends, of course--

He gives his partner a what-the-hell-is-going-on look but the other announcer can only shrug and turn two palms up. However his on-air manner remains smooth:

ANNOUNCER TWO

Well that's absolutely right, Dale, last Easter the Naked Man sent Knut a crate of raw herring which, as you know, is all the Viking eats--

ANNOUNCER ONE

I believe he also eats wild berries, Marty. . .

THE RING

The Viking scrambles to his feet and, roaring, performs an atomic knee-drop on the Burglar's back. The Burglar gives a huge reaction. As Ed squats by the Burglar and begins bending one arm behind his back, the Viking interrupts his own roar to hiss:

VIKING

Ed, what the hell're you doin'?

Ed keeps applying pressure to the Burglar's bent-back arm until he wear a pop and the snapping of tendons. The Burglar's scream is real.

The crowd roars.

TABLE

The Announcers, momentarily stunned, look at each other. Announcer Two is the first to pick up the thread:

(CONTINUED)

ANNOUNCER TWO

Well Marty that was an Alabama Jointjack and by the sound of it I wouldn't be surprised if there was cartilage damage.

ANNOUNCER ONE

More than that, Dale, I think I might've heard the shoulder ball popping out of the socket. And folks, I ain't kiddin'!

ANNOUNCER TWO

He's not kiddin', folks!

THE RING

The referee starts slapping the canvas.

REF

I think he's hurt, Eddie; I'm countin' him out!

VIKING

Cripes sakes, Eddie, I think you hurt him!

Ed grabs the Burglar's other arm and twists it back.

We hear more snaps and pops.

The crowd roars.

THE TABLE

The announcers stare.

ANNOUNCER ONE

Well folks it looks like the Second Story Man is in real pain. . .

Beyond him a man leans over the table to ring the bell ending the bout.

THE RING

The ref reaches down to grab Ed's hand and hold it aloft. The Viking holds his other hand aloft. The crowd cheers.

Ed yanks one hand free of the ref and uses both hands to flip the Viking.

The crowd, stunned, is suddenly quiet.

(CONTINUED)

Ed grabs the prone Viking's foot with both hands and gives it a violent twist. Snap! He holds it bent wrong-way-round for a moment, and then twists it quickly back. Snap--crunch--pop!

The ref gapes at him, looks down at the Viking, looks back up at Ed. He suddenly drops down to his hands and knees and starts slapping the canvas.

REF

Okay Eddie, I'm countin' him out too!

THE TABLE

The announcers stare.

ANNOUNCER TWO

. . . Well folks. . . it seems that the Naked Man and the Viking, formerly such great friends, have had some kind of falling out. . .

THE RING

Ed slings the screaming Viking over his shoulder and heads for the corner of the ring.

As he climbs the turnbuckle the crowd remains silent.

SAMMY

He watches, jaw clamped on a cigar, registering the quiet descended on the arena, broken only by the wounded Viking's blubbering. He murmurs:

SAMMY

I don't think they like it. . .

THE RING

Atop the turnbuckle Ed lifts the screaming Viking high over his head.

He pile-drives him down into the canvas.

As the Viking's head rips through the canvas his screaming abruptly stops.

He is a headless body surreally planted upside-down in the ring. His legs futilely scissor and kick.

The crowd roars.

(CONTINUED)

SAMMY

He nods relief.

SAMMY

Nah, they like it.

THE RING

Ed finishes climbing down from the turnbuckle. He looks around the ring.

HIS POV

The referee. Jaw hanging, he stares at the planted Viking; he looks up at the lens--tenses--Who, me?

We intercut shot and reverse of Ed and the ref as they circle each other, each looking into the lens, each crouched with arms extended forward.

REF

Eddie. . . Wuddya. . . It's me, Arthur Flegenheim. . .

Through each plea for a reaction Ed remains mute, circling.

REF

. . . The ref. . . See. . .

The ref points at each item:

REF

. . . Bow tie?. . . White shirt?. . .
Ref. . . Eddie?. . . Are you in there? . .

The ref feints suddenly forward and then spins and tries to flee.

Ed leaps and snares his ankles; the ref topples.

Ed climbs to his feet and, an ankle in each hand, starts to spin the ref. The ref's body and outflung arms start to rise like a whirlygig.

SAMMY

He considers.

SAMMY

The ref. Huh. That's a new one.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: (5)

56

THE RING

The ref is in wind-whistling centrifugal spin. His teeth are bared and his face is stretched and twisted by the g-force.

Ed finally releases.

The ref flies off, off and up, out of the cone of downlight and into the black of the stands.
The crowd screams approval.

SAMMY

A head cock of appreciation.

SAMMY

Well, why not.

57 INT BACKSTAGE ENTRANCE TUNNEL - NIGHT

57

We are looking dead-on at the tunnel entrance ramp from which fighters emerge into the arena. And fighters are indeed emerging.

In slow motion they run directly at us, all of Sammy's Big-Time wrestlers in all their various costumes: a Mountain Man, an Eskimo, a Fireman, an Arab, a Roman centurion, a Rastafarian, an Indian Chief, an Astronaut, Mr. Mystery in a leotard bearing a big question mark, Large Marge the apron-wearing housewife waving a rolling pin, etc.

58 INT WRESTLING RING MONTAGE

58

In slow motion Ed Bliss subdues the swarming comers with adjustments, two-handed head twists, flips, bear hugs, face grab-and-twists, etc.

The crowd, gripped by the ancient lust for action, roars approval.

The montage ends with a slow-motion pan--the kind that traditionally ends a depiction of the Battle of the Boyne or Culloden or, say, Bull Run. This one shows a canvas littered with twisted bodies--some inert, some still writhing in slow-motion agony, all in different attitudes of defeat. The pan finds the feet of the one man left standing--Ed Bliss--and we tilt up to see that he is waving reel-it-down circles with one finger.

59 INT WRESTLING RING - NIGHT

59

LOOKING STRAIGHT UP

(CONTINUED)

We are looking up into blackness cut by one diagonal dusty shaft of light.

After a moment a microphone obediently descends into the shaft of light and approaches in slow motion.

WIDE

Normal motion as the cord-suspended mike finally reaches Ed and he grabs it and waits for sufficient slack to talk into it comfortably.

The roaring crowd finally quiets and, after a brief high-pitched surge of feedback there is complete silence, brought home by one echoing cough from the stands.

ED

. . . Hello. I would like to thank you all for coming today to hear my thoughts.

A few encouraging cheers.

. . . Many evils plague modern society. As you have just seen, no race, no creed, no profession, is immune. I once thought I could fight this evil within the confines of the examining room--and the ring.

Some cheers.

. . . This was a grave error. There can be no out-of-bounds in the fight against malefaction. In a world where vice is manifold and human misery multiform, right must go forth. Therefore. . . I have decided to walk among you.

Some cheers:

. . . Yes, you have seen the many faces of the evil that men do. But what is its one root cause? What is the single great wrong that poisons human intercourse? I think you all know. . . that it is spinosacral misalignment. We draw our being, for good or ill, from our neuro-skeletal center. Man is born whole, and is everywhere treated in pieces. The medical doctor, the druggist, all those who puncture the skin, they would treat the parts of man. Man is not in the parts. Man is true. Man is straight. Man is whole. And that is why, I shall walk among you. . .

(CONTINUED)

SAMMY

He is growing testy at the drift of this speech.

SAMMY

Walk among you?! What walk among you?!
Hit somebody!

BACK TO ED

Winding up:

ED

. . . to establish goodwill on earth,
freedom from drugs, and spinal integrity.
Thank you. God bless you all. And good
night.

To lukewarm applause and one distant cry of "What the hell is he talking about?" Ed climbs out of the ring.

60 INT KOSKI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

60

RINGING TELEPHONE

A hand gropes into frame, uncradles it.

WIDER

The man answering the phone has been sleeping on a fold-out bed, fully clothed in a cheap suit and a hat which he leaves over his eyes as he talks. He has a day's worth of stubble and the classically filthy apartment of the self-loathing man who lives alone.

KOSKI

Koski. . . Yeah. . . Yeah. . . Right. . .
Greco-Roman or Pro?. . . Right. . . Yup.

He hangs up.

He pushes back his hat revealing deeply bagged eyes, swings out his wingtip-shod feet, and sits up. It appears that before bedding down the only concession he made to comfort was to take off his tie and unbutton his top shirt button. He now takes the tie from the bedpost where it hangs and slipknots it back onto his neck. He gives one armpit a cursory sniff.

61 INT KOSKI'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

61

KITCHEN COUNTER

(CONTINUED)

On it are the remains of last night's pizza, a nearly-empty bottle of whiskey, and an amber-puddled tumbler among many dirty dishes. We are shooting across the counter and see Koski chest and down as he stumbles in.

He runs some water into a kettle and puts the kettle on the electric range. He shakes out the whiskey tumbler over the floor and runs some water into it. He takes a bottle of aspirin and shakes a good half-dozen into one hand, tosses them back, tosses the water back.

He unscrews a jar of freeze-dried coffee. He takes a spoon from a bowl among the dirty dishes and shakes it dry over the floor. He scoops out a heaping teaspoon of coffee and dumps it into a mug. He flips the damp spoon, now coated with coffee crystals, into the sink.

He taps the kettle cautiously with one finger and then rests the finger on the metal: still cold.

He drums his fingers on the countertop.

He picks up a can of air-freshener and gives the kitchen a once-over. He puts the air-freshener down. He picks it up again and sprays his armpits.

He cautiously taps the kettle again and again lets his finger rest against it: the water is still not warm.

He drums his fingers.

He picks up the coffee mug and tips it and shakes out the coffee crystals back and forth over a slice of cold pizza. He picks up the slice of pizza.

UP TO KOSKI'S FACE

As he wolfs down the pizza and reaches for his hat.

62 EXT SAMMY'S BIG-TIME - NIGHT

62

As Koski walks into the arena he glances at the procession of stretchers being borne out. Another man in a cheap suit hustles up to him--Sgt. Burns.

BURNS

How are ya, Lieutenant. Well, it ain't pretty. We got a lot of disabled people-- some broken bones, some paraplegics, some quads, some dead, and the ring up there is slick with spinal fluid. It's a tough nut all right--not tough to crack, tough to stomach. Coffee?

(CONTINUED)

KOSKI

Had some.

As he talks, Burns consults a small spiral notebook.

BURNS

The perp is named Edward Bliss, Jr. Apparently earlier this evening he also jaywalked and inflicted universal sprains on the two officers attempting arrest. He handcuffed them together in an anatomically improbable configuration, pilfered one of their hats and fled. He's a white caucasian six-foot-two and last seen wearing a body-stocking depicting the human skeleto-muscular system.

KOSKI

Right.

BURNS

There were about seven thousand witnesses here so we'll be taking statements for a while but in the meantime I've put his description out on the wire. Funny thing, everybody says that after he manhandled these joes he made some kind of speech, but nobody agrees on what it was about. Some say it dealt with good posture and sitting up straight, some say it was about good and evil, some say he was advocating nudism.

KOSKI

Uh-huh.

BURNS

A lot of people thought it was a gag, some were moved, and quite a few were bored silly.

KOSKI

Huh.

BURNS

Well that's about it for now. . .

He flips the notebook shut.

. . . I'll tell you one thing: until we find this backsnapper the only person who's safe on the streets of this burg is Gumby.

63 EXT BIKER BAR - NIGHT

63

A huge-leather clad biker pulls his hog up into the foreground and dismounts. In the background a neon sign over the bar door glows: HAWG HEAVEN.

64 INT BIKER BAR - NIGHT

64

The bar is crowded with enormous bikers in black with the occasional heavy glinting chain or stud. There are also a few cycle sluts--fat slatternly women with raucous smoke-cured laughs.

Ed enters in his Naked Man leotard. His mask is rolled up to ride on his head like a stocking cap. He walks up to the bar, humming nonchalantly. The bartender gives him the dead eye.

ED

Hello. I need some way of getting around town. Do you suppose one of your customers would mind if I borrowed his motorcycle for a few days?

The bartender stares.

. . . What am I asking you for? I should ask one of them, you're the bartender. Bartender, could I have some beer nuts, not too salty, and a glass of water at room temperature?

A sneering smile curls the bartender's lips:

BARTENDER

No skin, no service.

ED

Oh no, I have skin, this is just a painted leotard.

BARTENDER

I know what it is, Gutboy.

ED

Please don't call me Gutboy.

BARTENDER

Why not--Gutboy?

Ed opens his mouth to reply but is interrupted:

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hey, aren't you the guy from the wrestling match?

He turns to look.

The woman is attractive, as cycle sluts go. In spite of her wildly frizzy black hair, nose ring, navel ring, and the tattoo on one shoulder that says BEST BITCH, she is young and rather innocent-looking. She is Dolores.

She is nodding at Ed with a faint smile. He is polite but does not return her smile.

ED

Why is he calling me Gutboy?

DOLORES

Ah, he's just a jerk. I was at your bout tonight. That speech you gave, man--that was really deep. What you said about the spine, man, that's so true. I had a boyfriend once with a slipped disc and god was he an asshole.

She is joined by the bar's biggest biker, a man with a Grizzly-Adams beard and a mammoth gut pushing at an enormous silver belt buckle. He holds a stein of beer and has a hand-rolled cigarette in the corner of his mouth.

BIKER

What's the story with Gutboy?

DOLORES

No, he's cool, Mountain. He has this thing figured out where if everybody's back was okay then there wouldn't be so much like negativity.

BIKER

I don't get it.

DOLORES

Mountain isn't into theories.

ED

Let me tell you something else about Mountain, young lady: I don't care whether it's tobacco or marijuana, this.

He plucks the cigarette from Mountain's mouth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ED (cont'd)

. . . is not good for him. And alcohol.

He drops the cigarette into Mountain's beer. Mountain watches with what looks like sad disinterest.

. . . is a progressive depressant which will eventually destroy his liver unless it engenders a fatal accident first.

Dolores tugs at Ed's sleeve and whispers:

DOLORES

I wouldn't do that to Mountain.

ED

Furthermore, all this ventral weight. . .

He lays a hand on the belly exposed by Mountain's open vest, and vibrates it. Mountain sadly watches.

. . . and the rest of this chickenfat. . .

He likewise jiggles Mountain's breasts and the fat of his upper arms.

. . . create load stresses that his skeleton was not designed to accomodate. Nor was his heart.

At the pool table one biker nudges another.

BIKER

Hey, lookathis. Mountain's about to rip a guy's head off.

Back at the bar Ed plucks a bag of tobacco out of Mountain's vest pocket, loosens its string, and taps its contents into Mountain's beer as he continues:

ED

. . . Now I would recommend that Mountain here adopt a regimen of aerobic excercise, a diet of fresh fruit and raw or steamed vegetables. . .

He slips the empty bag back into Mountain's pocket and takes a packet of rolling papers from the same pocket. He rips it open so that the papers flutter festively to the floor.

. . . and a schedule of chiropractic visits until he trims himself up and gets all of his alignments squared away. Then maybe Mountain will be ready to take his place in civilized society.

Mountain watches the last piece of rolling paper flit back and forth and settle to the floor. The paper takes its time.

(CONTINUED)

The entire bar has fallen silent. A ring of observers has formed.

There is a long silence.

At length, Mountain clears his throat:

MOUNTAIN

. . . Ahem.

He looks at the tobacco-beer cocktail he holds, sadly sets it on the bar.

He climbs sadly off his stool and observers step back to make room.

He looks at Ed for a long beat, then turns and walks away.

Puzzled, the crowd parts to let him pass. He recedes toward the back of the bar. The clack of his bootheels is the only sound in the bar.

He reaches the abandoned pool table. Large man though he is, Mountain is a small figure now in long shot, framed by the foreground bodies of the watching crowd.

Mountain picks up one of the two cue sticks lying on the table. He gives it an appraising heft. Not satisfied, he tries the other one. This one, apparently, feels better.

Heels clacking, Mountain walks back toward the foreground with the cue. The circle reforms around him as he reaches Ed. Like the rest of the crowd, Ed watches patiently.

Mountain takes one measured step away from Ed and, gripping the cue by its slender end, gently swings it until the fat end just touches the side of Ed's face. Dissatisfied with how the shot lines up, Mountain steps forward, gently places one hand under Ed's chin, angles his head just so, then steps back again and takes another slow measuring swing.

Perfect.

Now every muscle in Mountain's body tenses as he brings the stick back for the big blow. As he uncoils and brings the cue stick around in a vicious air-splitting sweep, Mountain roars:

MOUNTAIN

AAAAAAHHHHHHH!

At the instant before impact--WHOOSH--a hand appears in front of the target. It is Ed's hand. WHAP--the cue stick slaps into it.

(CONTINUED)

Ed gives his end of the cue a sharp twist. It snaps, leaving a sawed-off slender piece in Mountain's hand.

Mountain gives his piece a stupid look.

MOUNTAIN

. . . Huh?

ED

You know, Mountain, this could cause severe cranio-spinal subluxation.

WHOOSH-WHISH-WHOOSH--in sped-up motion Ed gives the cue stick one-handed majorette twirls.

Mountain watches, mesmerized, with jerky sped-up head movements.

WHACK--Ed slams Mountain's left ear with the cue stick. Mountain raises his hand to his ear and screams:

MOUNTAIN

AAAAAAHHHHHH. . .

WHOOSH-WHISH-WHOOSH--more nun-chuk twirls; WHACK--Ed slams Mountain's right ear. Mountain clutches his newly-whacked ear and continues to scream:

MOUNTAIN

. . . AAAAAAAHHHHHHHH. . .

Motion still sped up, Ed takes the cue stick and, holding it horizontally, vibrates it up and down across Mountain's lips, so that his scream burbles:

. . . BADABADABADABADABADA. . .

Ed pushes the horizontal cue stick into Mountain's mouth--

. . . HUNNGGK!

--so that his jaw clamps over it. The force of the shove pushes Mountain onto a bar stool where he now sits with his back pressed to the bar and Ed himself pressing against his front.

Ed forms an X with his forearms so that his hands are now crossed in front of him, his right hand grabbing the left end of the jaw-clamped cue stick and vice-versa. He pulls his hands sharply right-way-round, giving Mountain's head a 180-degree corkscrew turn. Mountain's neck snaps with a loud ratcheting sound, his eyes roll up, and he spits the cue stick out--

(CONTINUED)

MOUNTAIN
 . . . PTOOEY.

--and it clatters onto the bar.

Now there is quiet.

The reverse shows the front of Mountain's body as he rests back against the bar, his head now facing wrong-way-round, his pony-tail hanging over his mountainous chest. The backbar mirror shows his face, eyes rolled up like a painting of John the Baptist's head on a platter.

Ed steps away to clear the body. After a motionless beat it pitches onto the floor.

Silence as the bikers absorb these events.

A callow biker is staring down at the motionless body.

CALLOW BIKER
 . . . Mountain? You okay?

A vengeful biker charges Ed:

VENGEFUL BIKER
 AAAAAHHHH!

With this the spell is broken and all hell breaks loose:

MANY BIKERS
 AAAAAAAHHHHHH!

65 INT PRECINCT HOUSE - NIGHT

65

A RINGING PHONE

A hand reaches in to uncradle it.

WIDER

We are in a precinct house. Alvin Koski is at his desk.

KOSKI
 Koski. . . Right. . . Yeah. . . Huh. . .
 Okay.

He cradles the phone.

On his desk is half a tuna-salad sandwich on soggy wax paper; Koski hastily wraps it up and stuffs it into the hip pocket of his suit jacket as he reaches for his hat.

66 EXT BIKER BAR - NIGHT 66

The parking lot of the biker bar is now clogged with police vehicles.

67 INT BIKER BAR - NIGHT 67

Koski is just walking in. As he stops and takes in the scene he puts one hand on his hip and with the other rubs the back of his neck, administering the classic surveying-the-scene-of-the-crime neck massage. This pushes up the back of his fedora to make the front ride low on his forehead.

At his feet is a chalk outline showing where a body fell-- Mountain's, judging by its size and proximity to the bar. Sgt. Burns is approaching with his spiral notebook.

BURNS

Well Lieutenant, it looks like our boy again. No witnesses this time but the victims all had their necks snapped. Hard to figure what connects these schmoes to our bonewright, but we're not far from Sammy's Big-Time and ya can't argue with the M.O.

Koski, by way of answer, gives a low whistle of appreciation.

REVERSE

Stretching all the way to the back of the bar are chalk body outlines, mostly on the floor but some on tables, on the pool table, sitting up against the cigarette machine, etc.

68 INT STICK'S OFFICE - DAY 68

SLIDE PROJECTION

It is a map being projected onto a portable screen. The map has little red banners marking certain towns.

We hear the ventilating hum of the projector. An offscreen voice:

VOICE

Present Puffy's Drugs locations are marked with the red flags. You now have more or less complete penetration of the Tecumseh Valley area, Harper City being the only town of any size that doesn't have a Puffy's outlet.

(CONTINUED)

THE ROOM

A lawyer in a conservative suit has been doing the talking. The Driver, in his powder-blue leisure suit, sits at the back of the room on a folding chair placed next to the slide projector. Without any visible cue from the lawyer, but always at the appropriate moment, he operates the clicker that advances the slides. He still wears his white gloves.

LAWYER

Bliss Drugs is the premier pharmacy in Harper City. . .

The new slide shows the corner drug store.

. . . Its owner, Edward Bliss Senior, and his wife Marlinda died recently. . .

The projector shows a beaming Ed Senior with his arm around his wife.

ANOTHER VOICE

Cheece. That's too bad.

STICKS

He wheels out from behind an executive oak desk. He is riding a top-of-the-line Everest & Jennings wheelchair. He hums around into the beam of the projector and spins to look into it, towards the lawyer.

STICKS

. . . Who will the place go to?

LAWYER

The Blisses have a son. . .

The projector advances to show Ed Junior standing full-figure against a neutral white background. His arms are at his sides but held slightly away from his body with the palms forward. But for a fig leaf over his genitals, he is naked.

. . . named Edward Junior. He recently bought a property across the street apparently with the plan of moving back to the town, having been away for several years. . .

The projector advances to show a side shot of Ed in the same pose.

. . . He's a chiropractor, although he used to wrestle. . .

(CONTINUED)

The projector advances: Ed is now crouched in front of blue seamless in his wrestling leotard, arms forward in a classic comin'-atcha pose.

LAWYER

. . . as a character called the Naked Man.

STICKS

Where could a fella find this fella if a fella wanted to, you know, talk to a fella?

LAWYER

Good question. The police are looking for him in connection with a number of murders at his former place of employment, Sammy's Big-Time Wrestling.

STICKS

Huh. He looks like a reasonable guy. . .

He looks significantly at the driver.

. . . I'd sure like to talk to him.

CLOSE ON THE DRIVER

No reaction. The only movement in frame is the bounce of a stray lock of hair on his forehead in the breeze from the projector fan. The image of Ed Bliss is reflected in his tinted aviator glasses.

69 EXT CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

69

FIRE

The roar of the fire hits at the cut, snapping off the steady of the fan.

WIDER

Ed sits on the ground, legs stretched in front of him, arms folded across his chest, staring at the campfire. Parked to one side is a motorcycle.

Dolores sits by him cross-legged, pushing marshmallows onto a stick.

DOLORES

. . . So I told my parents to go to hell and I joined the Rough Riders. Boy, you were awful hard on 'em; they're not bad people really. Most of them just have

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DOLORES (cont'd)

learning disabilities. But I guess I always knew they weren't really what I was looking for. Rough sex isn't the answer, is it? . . .

Ed continues to stare into the fire. Dolores accepts his silence as a negative. She shakes her head and stares at the fire as well.

. . . I didn't think so. I'm glad we're riding together now. My name is Dolores, what's your name? . . .

Ed continues to stare into the fire.

. . . You don't really care about the names of things, do you? You don't chat. The surface, that's not where it's at, is it? When you talk it's about the deep inside. And that's where you reach me, you know--deep inside. I love you, Quiet Man. . .

Ed continues to stare into the fire.

. . . What does it matter, the names of things? Why is this a "marshmallow"? There's no reason. Things are either bad or good, hard or squishy, regardless of the name. I can tell you've had a great sorrow. I've never had that. I've never had anything deep--just uptight parents and a bunch of lowlife friends. Now I don't even have the lowlife friends. I'm not blaming you. You followed your call. That's cool. What's your journey, man? Where are you going? . . .

She takes his right hand, looks at his wedding ring.

. . . Is there someone else, Quiet Man?
Is it all about her?

Ed frowns at the ring, as if noticing it for the first time. He squints, thinking, trying to remember.

HIS POV

We are tight on his hand, the silver band glinting in the firelight as his large, powerful hand turns, fingers loosely upward, like the hand of Adam, like a sculptor's perfect model.

As we begin to dissolve, Dolores's voice continues off:

DOLORES

. . . Do you wear the suit for her, man?
Who is she? Was she very beautiful?

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (2)

62.

69

Calliope music, echoing heavily, fades up.

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

70 EXT MERRY-GO-ROUND - DAY

70

KIM

She is moving up and down, up and down. She is on a wooden horse on a merry-go-round. She is laughing.

She looks to one side.

ED

Up and down, up and down, on another horse, also laughing.

71 EXT FIELD - 3 LEGGED RACE - DAY

71

A GUN

A starter pistol, pointed upward. With a dulled and distant crack it fires. The calliope music continues.

WIDER

Ed and Kim are among the entrants in a three-legged race. Bound together, they canter awkwardly across the field, moving like someone in the advanced stages of scoliosis. They lose their balance, tumble.

CLOSE

As they hit the grass and roll, laughing.

72 EXT FIELD - EGG TOSS - LATER

72

The egg toss. We cut from Ed to Kim as each catches the egg and then backs up a pace.

CLOSE ON ED

In slow motion, about to receive the egg--suddenly worried.

The calliope music is modulating, growing too loud, turning sour.

THE EGG

Wobbling through space in slow motion.

HIS HANDS

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

72

The egg sails into his large, capable, hands, but--too hard--it breaks--an explosion--goo--mess--failure.

ED

Still in slow motion his head turns, looking up from his hands, eyes widening in horror, he thumps into--

THE DRIVER

His impassive face looms, tinted aviator glasses shading dead eyes.

KIM

In slow motion she is weeping, yelling, her own hands now dripping with broken egg, her voice echoing:

KIM

Ed!

STARTER PISTOL

Same shot as before as--Crack.--it is fired.

KIM

Echoing as before, hands dripping egg:

KIM

Ed!

ED'S EYES

Widening.

ED'S HANDS

Crack--again an egg explodes in them.

KIM

Still wailing:

KIM

Ed!

STARTER PISTOL

Again--Crack.

EGG INTO HANDS

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: (2)

72

Crack.

Kim's fading voice:

KIM

Ed. . .

73 EXT CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

73

ED'S EYES

A tear rolls from one eye.

The calliope music is gone.

The crackle of the fire.

Dolores takes his hand.

DOLORES

It's okay, man. . . It's okay. . .

She puts a raw marshmallow in his hand.

Tears rolling freely now, he looks down at his hand.

THE HAND

Cupping the big puffy marshmallow.

DOLORES

(off)

. . . It's okay. . . Feel the
marshmallow. . .

The hand slowly closes on the marshmallow, smushing it.

. . . It's okay.

FADE OUT

IN BLACK

We hear a weak but steady aspirant sound, like a whistle, but
breathier, without pitch.

74 INT KOSKI'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

74

The breathy sound continues. Koski enters frame having just
entered the apartment, pushing a limp half a tuna sandwich
into his mouth. He freezes, mid-tuna-stuff, looking down.

THE COUNTERTOP

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

The airy sound is coming from the countertop range. A burner light is on and this morning's kettle, its water long since boiled away, has melted onto the electric ring. The kettle is now rippled and twisted and would be unrecognizable but for its intact handle and the whistle through which metal vapors feebly push.

Koski turns off the burner.

He wraps a dish towel around the handle and tries to pick up the kettle. The metal skin of the rangetop puckers out; the kettle has fused with it.

75 INT KOSKI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

75

Koski enters, sits on the edge of the bed, slipknots off his necktie, hangs it on the bedpost and lies down. He pushes his hat forward over his eyes.

After a motionless beat:

FADE OUT

IN BLACK

We hear clanking approaching, growing louder.

76 INT STICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

76

It is immaculate and rather frilly, done in white and pastels. The centerpiece is a large fourposter bed with gathered white canopy drapes and many throw-pillows. Sticks clanks in from just off-camera and, with benefit of canes, wobbles off toward the bed, huffing audibly as he clanks. He wears white satin pyjamas.

When he reaches the bed he grabs one post for support, leans one cane against the wall, leans the other cane against the wall, pauses for a moment, and then swings himself around face-down onto the bed.

He has landed with his back oddly angled, his ass sticking up in the air. We hold, perhaps expecting him to shift into a more comfortable position, but he doesn't move. This, apparently, is how he sleeps.

At length he exhales, sighing deeply.

FADE OUT

IN BLACK

We hear a rhythmic BEEP.

77 INT HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT 77

HEART MONITOR

It beeps with each spike, showing a steady heartbeat.

We pan over to find Kim in a hospital bed, eyes closed, respirator tube feeding into her nose, esophageal tube leading in to her mouth.

As we drift in very close to her eyes we begin to hear the happy calliope music and we:

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

78 EXT MERRY-GO-ROUND - DAY 78

Ed rides up and down, laughing.

Kim rides up and down, laughing.

79 EXT FIELD - 3-LEGGED RACE - DAY 79

Ed and Kim, laughing. The calliope music begins to recede.

80 EXT FIELD - THE EGG TOSS - DAY 80

Laughter and joy culminating with the horror of the exploding egg.

DISSOLVE BACK TO:

81 INT HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT 81

KIM IN HOSPITAL BED

The beeping returns.

One teardrop trembles in the corner of Kim's eye, breaks, and rolls down her cheek.

FADE OUT

82 EXT CAMPFIRE - NIGHT 82

CAMPFIRE ASHES

Smoke wisps up from the caved-in remains of the campfire in the flat pre-dawn light.

DOLORES

She stirs, wakes, looks around.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

Ed is astride the motorcycle, waiting.

Dolores gets up and hops on the bike behind Ed. He kicks the starter

83 EXT ROAD - DAY

83

ED AND DOLORES

On the motorcycle, cruising. It is morning. Ed wears an open leather vest souvenired off of one of the bikers. Dolores, behind, has her arms tucked under his vest, her hands wrapped round his entrails.

Ed looks from side to side as they travel. Dolores shouts over the roar of the engine:

DOLORES

What're we looking for?

ED

I'll know when I see it.

84 EXT STREET AT PUFFY DRUG - DAY

84

The motorcycle roars into frame from just off camera and abruptly stops. We are looking over Dolores's shoulder at Ed's back.

He sits motionless for a beat.

DOLORES

. . . What is it?

His head turns, looking up behind him at a sign they have just passed.

Dolores's head turns to follow his look.

THEIR POV

The pharmacy sign says "Puffy's Drugs." Beneath the store name is the motto, "Take Something For It!" The accompanying logo is a caricature of the Driver with his lip curled, half sneer, half smile, and his finger cocked down at the viewer.

ED

Gazing up at the sign, struck, haunted. Without looking at Dolores he directs her:

ED

Wait here.

85 INT PUFFY DRUG - DAY

85

Ed enters and stops. Late afternoon sun slants in through the large front windows. The door air-hisses shut behind him and then there is quiet. He is the only customer, confronted by a silent, watchful staff.

Ed takes the long appraising beat that precedes the showdown walk.

And then he begins the walk, down the length of the store, past the waiting staff.

Three men stand evenly spaced behind the fountain counter, all wearing white smocks and white paper counter hats. All have their hands clasped behind their backs and their feet spread in the posture of military at-ease.

Ed walks slowly down the counter, looking at them.

Their heads swivel as they watch him, all smiling politely.

Finally the last counterman says:

COUNTERMAN

. . . Something from the fountain, sir?

Ed says nothing, keeps walking.

He approaches a glass-topped counter with a register on it. Another man, white-smocked but hatless, is stationed here. His head too pivots to track Ed; he also smiles politely.

REGISTER MAN

Cigarettes, sir? Film?

He cups one hand to the side of his mouth and stage-whispers:
. . . Condoms?

His smile stays in place though Ed does not answer. Ed keeps walking.

His long walk stops at the back counter: pharmaceuticals. The white-smocked man behind it smiles.

PHARMACIST

Drugs, sir?

Ed looks at him, looks back at the empty store and smiling staff, looks back at the pharmacist.

ED

. . . May I see the manager please?

(CONTINUED)

PHARMACIST

Do you have a complaint about the service, sir?

Behind Ed the three fountain men vault the counter in formation and land softly on rubber-soled shoes. They spread across the width of the store and advance cautiously, ninja-style, on Ed's back.

ED

I'd just--like--to see--the manager.

The pharmacist still smiles pleasantly at Ed.

PHARMACIST

And what shall I say is the nature of your business?

ED

The nature of my business. . . is my business.

The three fountain men are closing in, still unbeknownst to Ed.

PHARMACIST

Of course sir. And your name?

The question sets Ed adrift:

ED

I think. . . it's "Ed". Somebody called me "Ed" once. She had egg running down her hands. . . But do the names of things really matter?

The pharmacist is blandly agreeable:

PHARMACIST

Probably not, sir. I'll tell the manager "Ed" is here.

But he makes no move to tell anyone anything; he remains planted, staring at Ed. Ed is still drifting, lost in thought. Suddenly he cocks his head:

ED

. . . Do you smell rye bread and Limbergher cheese?

The center fountain man leaps at him from behind--but Ed is already swiping something off the pharmaceutical counter, tucking, and rolling backwards.

(CONTINUED)

The center man lands, having come up empty, facing the pharmacist. Ed shoots up into frame just behind him, reaches around from behind and pinches the man's nose. The man's mouth pops open and Ed's other hand reaches around to--PSST--give him a shot of breath spray.

PSST-PSST--He also sprays each of the man's eyes. The man screams, temporarily blinded.

The two fountain men on either side are nearly within striking distance but, having lost the element of surprise, they edge in slowly, looking for an opening.

Ed's head swivels left and right, looking from one to the other. He suddenly crouches below frame.

When he straightens again he is holding an ankle of each man in each of his hands, having scooped them out from under. He holds the ankles to either side at waist height.

Instead of having their arms tensed for attack the two men now wave them wildly, each hopping up and down on one foot, trying to remain standing.

The center man is turning to face Ed and vigorously shaking his head to clear his eyes. He vocalizes his cheek flaps:

CENTER MAN
Wubudu-wubudu. . .

Weighing his options, Ed stands motionless while men hop wildly to either side, like some especially pointless vaudeville act.

Ed decides: he kicks the center man in the crotch. He then spins to face the man on his right, letting go of the left man's ankle but keeping it raised by snagging it with his own foot, thrust out behind. He is thus himself balanced on one foot while he gives the right-hand man's ankle a two-handed joint-smashing twist.

He releases that man, who screams and collapses, and spins to perform the same operation on the other.

He then picks up the crotch-clutching center man and spins him over his head and launches him at the pharmacist, who is reaching a shotgun from under his counter.

Its door crashes open before the stumbling-forward weight of the disarmed pharmacist. Arms windmilling wildly, he air-swims into the room until--CLONK--the top of his head slams

(CONTINUED)

into the office desk. He recoils, straightening, takes one step back, and stands swaying, staring at a bald man seated behind the desk.

The bald man returns his stare, his feet up on the desk, the funny papers held forgotten in one hand.

The pharmacist, eyes still wide, slowly reaches up to massage the back of his neck. He cricks his head, seems to consider something for a moment, and then falls backward, rigid as a felled tree.

Quiet.

What would be the pharmacist's point of view if he had one: from low, looking up at the lip of the desk upon which a foreground desktop plaque reads MANAGER. We hear a chair creak. The top of the manager's bald head--then his forehead--then his downpeering eyes--come into view as he leans slowly forward to get a look over the top of his desk.

Reverse shows the fallen pharmacist stretching away, eyes staring sightlessly up.

Quiet.

The manager's chair creaks as he now reaches slowly over to his phone, uncradles it, and raises an index finger to punch in the first digit.

A sound freezes his finger and indeed every other part of his body except his eyes, which roll up.

Ed walks slowly in the door.

ED

. . . Are you. . . the manager?

The manager still has the handset to his ear and his index finger poised over the telephone.

MANAGER

. . . Is there a problem, sir?

Ed walks slowly over to the desk. He reaches forward with one hand, palm down, and slides it under the manager's poised finger to rest it on the telephone.

ED

The man on the sign outside--Puffy--does he own these drug stores?

(CONTINUED)

He is pressing down on the phone. Although he is apparently not much exerting himself, plastic parts of the phone are crunching, popping off, bending flat.

The manager still has not moved except for his eyes. As he talks he watches the phone disintegrate.

MANAGER

No. He just fronts for the guy who owns them. Sticks Verona. . .

The manager watches as the circuitry guts of the phone start to pop apart under Ed's steady pressure.

. . . Sticks won't use his own picture. .

. He's a little self-conscious. . .

The electronic innards are ground to dust.

. . . about his spine.

ED

Where can I find him?

MANAGER

Sticks? I don't know. . .

Having finished with the phone Ed now reaches for the handset, which the manager slowly hands to him.

. . . I know that, uh, Wednesday, he's meeting a shipment at Emerson Airstrip.

Ed takes the handset in two hands and snaps it. The manager's eyes are on the handset.

. . . Shipment of drugs.

Ed pauses, stares.

ED

. . . You mean--illegal drugs?

The manager is surprised at Ed's surprise. He shrugs.

MANAGER

Yeah. The drugstores are just a front. For drugs.

ED

. . . You sell drugs.

MANAGER

Yeah. That's the racket.

Ed stares vacantly.

(CONTINUED)

ED

. . . You sell drugs.

MANAGER

Best place to hide 'em, drugstores. Cops never look--they wouldn't know what's which.

ED

. . . You sell drugs.

Ed sways. His stare, more and more stupefied, now shifts: he raises one arm and looks down around behind him.

The Driver, kneeling behind him, looks dully up. His white-gloved hand holds a hypodermic needle that has been plunged into Ed's ass.

Ed stares down.

ED

. . . You sell drugs.

He flexes his buttock. The hypo waggles in his ass.

Ed sways.

DRUG INDUCED LIMBO

STICKS

See--you're the party a the first part.

We are somewhere else now--somewhere with lots of echoes and swimming images.

Ed repeats, slowly, dully:

ED

I'm the party of the first part.

A86 DEED

A86

A deed is floating up the screen. It has ornate Gothic lettering.

STICKS

Bliss Pharmacy. Party a the first part.

DRIVER

Peanut buttern fried egg sandwich. Hanka verra much. . .

B86 EGG

B86

An egg wobbles through the air in slow motion.

ED

Peanut butter.

STICKS

Which came first. The party a the first part.

ED

You sell drugs.

STICKS

Ats right. From your store. I'm the party of the second part.

DRIVER

Can't believe it.

ED

I'll be wavin' at ya, Dad. . .

C86 FAT MAN

C86

A fat man wearing nothing but a diaper and a baby bonnet hops through frame on a pogo stick, chanting:

FAT BABY

Piggyback, Dada, piggyback, dada. . .

DRIVER

Mmmmparty a the first part. . .

STICKS

You don't want the drug store. . .

ED

Bliss Pharmacy. . .

D86 KIM

D86

Kim's hands are dripping egg:

KIM

Ed! . . . Ed! . . .

STICKS

Just think about how you're gonna spend all a that money. . .

(CONTINUED)

D86 CONTINUED:

D86

DRIVER

Hank yew. . .

ED

Fifty bucks. . .

STICKS

Fifty dollas for your drugstore.

E86 MIDGET

E86

A midget with heavy beard stubble is wearing a baby bonnet and has his jaw clamped over a cigar. In a deep gravelly voice:

MIDGET

I'll be wavin' at ya, Dad. . .

ED

My baby. My baby.

STICKS

Sign here if that sounds like a good deal.

DRIVER

Mmmmmthat's some deal. . .

ED

I guess I'll sign here then. . .

STICKS

Party a the first part. . .

DRIVER

Can't believe it.

KIM

Ed. . .

ED

I'll be wavin' at ya. . .

F86 SAMOAN

F86

The Samoan wrestler is running directly away from us in slow motion, receding into darkness, grass skirt swishing.

STICKS

You're nutty, Bliss. . .

ED

I'll be wavin' at ya. . .

(CONTINUED)

F86 CONTINUED:

F86

STICKS

All nutty. . .

G86 VIKING

G86

Reverse shows the Viking emerging from darkness, walking herky-jerk toward us with the aid of canes. Clanking, nearing, the Viking addresses us with Sticks' voice:

VIKING

. . . Luckily I know a good clinic.
Private clinic. They'll give ya drugs. .

ED

You sell drugs. . .

VIKING/STICKS

. . . Lots of anti-nutty drugs.

FADE OUT

LIGHTNING CRACKLES ACROSS BLACK

87 INT MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

87

We are high angle, drifting down through a white corridor lit by flickering lightning. People stand here and there against the walls of the hallway, many wearing straitjackets, most staring off into space. We hear distant echoing screams.

One man shuffles away down the hall tunelessly singing:

MAN

Your blue dress matches your eyes. . .
Your red dress matches your eyes. . .
Your green dress matches your eyes. . .

We are isolating on a staring figure: Ed. His straitjacket forces him into a spinally misaligned humpbacked posture. A line of drool sways unheeded from his lower lip.

A voice to which Ed does not react:

VOICE

Hey nut job!

REVERSE

A burley crewcut male nurse in a white tunic and white cotton pants grins down at Ed. Over his shoulder another burley male nurse guffaws stupidly.

(CONTINUED)

MALE NURSE

Thinkin' about a porterhouse steak,
nutter?

His friend chortles.

. . . Hey looney-tunes, somebody said you
used to be some kind of fighter.

Eddie

Still staring vacantly, the drool swaying with the gentle bob
of his head.

The male nurse's hand enters frame at chest level. He
flutters his fingers and lets his hand drift slowly up. This
catches Ed's attention. He gapes wonderingly at the rising
hand.

When the hand reaches Ed's eye level it abruptly clenches
into a fist and punches him in the nose.

Ed blinks, surprised by the blow, his head swaying, mouth
still hanging open.

THE NURSES

The guffawing nurse laughs even louder, encouraging the first
nurse:

MALE NURSE

Don't seem like much of a fighter to me!

He steps behind Ed and shoves him.

. . . Don't seem like much of a fighter
to me!

Ed has lurched into the guffawing nurse.

GUFFAWING NURSE

Hey, watch where you're going, dickwad!

He shoves him back into his friend, who gives him a forearm
to the face.

MALE NURSE

Yeah, watch it, dickwad!

WIDE

We are again high and wide on the corridor as the two nurses
shove and cuff Ed back and forth.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED: (2)

87

Lightning flickers, thunder crashes and the shuffling man is coming back down the hall:

MAN

Your blue dress matches your eyes. . .
Your red dress matches your eyes. . .

88 INT ED'S CELL - LATER

88

Ed, still straitjacketed, is balled into a corner of the tiny room.

We hear a clinking, though Ed does not react.

THE WINDOW

The cell's small high window is barred. From outside someone feeds in a short length of chain, passes it over a couple of bars, and draws it back outside.

ED

Still not reacting. From outside we hear the rev of an engine.

THE WINDOW

We hear the engine rev once more and then start to peel out, and the chain clanks tight around the bars--and then relaxes as the engine noise suddenly drops.

89 EXT MENTAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

89

A motorcycle lies on its side on the parking lot pavement, its rear wheel spinning, the chain looped around its rear shock. There is no rider.

We pan forward to reveal Dolores, several feet in front of the bike, climbing to her feet, dusting herself off.

She looks at the motorcycle, looks around the lot for other options, and--freezes.

HER POV

A big white truck. On its side it says THE DEL RIO HOSPICE/A Private Environment for the Disturbed. The logo is two crossed butterfly nets. It is the facility's padded nutwagon.

90 INT ED'S CELL - NIGHT

90

Ed is as before.

We hear a diesel engine and the grinding of gears. Ed does not react.

THE WINDOW

With a much bigger engine noise and grinding of gears the chain clanks tight and this time the grid of bars tears away from the cement.

91 EXT CAMPSITE - NIGHT

91

MUD

Bloop. . . bloo-wump. . . bla-bloop. . . the mud is slowly bubbling.

A pair of hands enters to scoop some up.

WIDER

Flumff!--Dolores splats the mud down onto Ed's back. Ed is stretched out on the ground, illuminated by the campsite's flickering fire. He has been stripped but his loins are swaddled in white cotton fabric--probably a remnant of his hospital-wear. He gazes dully into the fire.

Dolores gets another handful of mud from the large mud pot and flumps it onto Ed's back.

DOLORES

It's a blend of natural muds. They'll speed the drugs out of your system, Quiet Man. . .

She kneels and talks, perhaps to Ed, perhaps to herself, as she kneads the mud into Ed's back.

. . . I got rid of my navel ring. I might get rid of the nose ring too. I'm not gonna puncture my skin any more. It never really made me happy. I'm just gonna follow you, Quiet Man. You know. You know that there's something higher. It's inside of you, that higher thing. That's what I follow. You're my teacher. My rinpoche. I just wanna serve you, Quiet Man. Don't worry--when you get sick of me you can just tell me to leave. You won't have to give a reason. Just say, Dolores, Go From Me. And I'll go,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

DOLORES (cont'd)
 man. With tears, but with love. Because
 I'll have served my purpose. Here. . .

She wipes a hand on her shirt and reaches a marshmallow from
 a bag. She puts the marshmallow in Ed's hand.
 . . . Feel the marshmallow. . .

CLOSE ON ED'S HAND

It closes over the marshmallow.

CLOSE ON ED

Blank eyes staring at the fire. Dolores continues, off:

DOLORES
 . . . Like those footstools, you know, in
 olden days? The guy who followed the
 king around and got down on all fours
 when the king sat, to be his footstool?
 With head bowed, man. . . Feel the
 marshmallow. . . With tears and with
 love. . .

92 INT PRECINCT HOUSE- NIGHT

92

It is late at night. All the desks are empty except one, the
 lamp of which forms a lonely pool.

CLOSER

Koski sits at the desk, feet up, hat shoved back, slowly
 leafing through a file.

THE FILE

Koski is reading a report under the letterhead of The Clapham
 School of Chiropractic.

The report is titled "Evaluation of Degree Candidate Edward
 Bliss, Jr." Clipped to one corner is a student I.D. photo of
 Ed in a white smock, grinning at the camera.

A slash of light vignettes one passage:

Bliss is a natural healer. His inter-personal skills and
 physical "touch" are excellent. However Bliss also displays
 a propensity for abstract chiropractic speculation which,
 left unchecked, could lead to grave and even dangerous
 errors. . .

KOSKI

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

He looks up from the file and, eyes narrowing, looks off into space, considering.

93 EXT CAMPSITE - DAWN

93

CAMPFIRE ASHES

Smoke wisps up from the caved-in remains of the campfire in the flat pre-dawn light.

DOLORES

She is asleep on the ground.

We hear grunting, gasps, stress sounds from offscreen. Accompanying them are intermittent tendon snaps and joint pops.

Dolores stirs, wipes the sleep from her eyes and, reacting to the sounds, looks around.

HER POV

Dolores is looking upon a feat unheard of in chiropractic literature, a feat which most doctors of chiropractic would dismiss as flatly impossible. It is nevertheless being performed before her eyes:

Still wearing his loincloth but now alert, totally intent on what he is doing, and with great gasps and grunts of effort, Ed is adjusting himself.

He presses his back against a tree trunk and reaches back with both arms to clasp hands behind the trunk. He grits his teeth and tenses, and after a beat of straining suspense, we hear his back pop. He relaxes with a great exhale.

He grabs one forearm with the other hand and strains, pulling, like an overtaxed weightlifter. We hear a tendon give as the arm finally aligns.

He breathes deeply for a few moments, and then repeats the operation on the other arm.

He reaches up to put his hands on either side of his jaw. He pauses for a long moment and then, suddenly, as if to surprise his own head, gives it a hard twist.

He exhales deeply, and rolls his head in easy circles.

Dolores watches with rapt attention. She probably senses, as do we, that she is witnessing a heroic exercise of will

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

which may some day become chiropractic legend, whispered from chiropractor to chiropractor, down through generations.

Ed finishes rolling his head and limbering his shoulders. A beat to collect himself, and then he walks away, striding out of the campsite into the early-morning mist without a backward look.

Dolores's eyes are locked on his receding back. She murmurs:

DOLORES

. . . Goodbye, Quiet Man.

She burst into tears and buries her face in her hands as we hear the sound of his motorcycle grow distant and faint.

93A EXT EMERSON AIRSTRIP - DAY

93A

A remote private airstrip whose control tower is a hut on stilts and whose runway is little more than a cleared field. It is day, but dark. A storm is moving in and a restless wind stirs the trees that line the runway.

A small cube truck with the Puffy's Drugs logo is parked with its open back facing the runway and its tailgate down. On the tailgate sits what looks like a large lazy susan from which two upright levers protrude like large gearshifts. On the lazy susan is Sticks Verona's Everest & Jennings wheelchair. In the wheelchair is Sticks.

Sitting on the edge of the tailgate with his legs gaily dangling is the Driver. He wears his powder-blue leisure suit. He is eating a peanut-butter-and-bacon sandwich.

Parked at the edge of the field is a forklift. Its driver, a man in an industrial jump suit with the Puffy's logo on the back, sits waiting.

The strip is buzzed by a rattling 1952 twin-engine Regency turboprop bearing the Puffy's Drugs logo. It roars past the cube truck right-to-left, and as it does so Sticks pulls one lever and pushes the other so that the lazy susan spins to let him watch.

94 INT CONTROL TOWER - DAY

94

Lavrenti, a burly man with greasy skin and coarse black body hair sprouting over the neck of his long-sleeved sweatshirt, pivots in his swivel chair to watch the plane rumble past. He talks into a tabletop microphone:

LAVRENTI

Okay Snow White, you're cleared for approach and landing from the south.

(CONTINUED)

With a burst of static:

RADIO VOICE

Roger that.

We hear the hum of the receding airplane and the nearby chirring of crickets unsettled by the approaching storm. Lavrenti leans back, rubs his neck, pulls a cigarette from the pack on the table in front of him, pulls a girly lighter from his pocket and lights up. He slips the lighter back in his pocket.

We hear the tone shift of the distant plane as it banks into a U-turn.

Suddenly--the crickets stop.

Silence but for the plane steady and the ominously rustling trees.

LAVRENTI

. . . Hn?

He squints out the big window. The late-afternoon dark gives him little to see but his own reflection. He turns off the table lamp to better see out.

Nothing on the veranda that rings the hut. Nothing outside. Still. . . something. . .

The mournful tinkle of windchimes. . .

The crickets resume.

Lavrenti cocks his head, not fully reassured.

He hunches forward over the table--an odd posture. We hear the sibilant sound of tape giving way and he pulls his hand out from under the table. He now holds a revolver.

Eyes fixed on the window, he slowly stands.

The drone of the approaching aircraft is growing louder.

CREEEAK--with the back of his knees Lavrenti pushes the swivel chair away. We hear it creakily roll to a stop.

Eyes on the window, Lavrenti takes a cautious step toward the veranda door.

CREEEAK--from behind, the swivel chair rolls slowly back toward him. It bumps the back of his knees.

(CONTINUED)

Lavrenti freezes. We are behind him. He slowly, slowly, turns his head to profile. His eyes, wide with fear, roll back to look behind--toward us--

LAVRENTI

--AAHH!

Ed, in his leotard, is almost incorporeal in the last of the daylight.

ED

Siddown.

The terrified Lavrenti finds his resolve: he raises the revolver and--

LAVRENTI

AAAAHHH!

Click. Clickety-click-click.

He looks stupidly at the gun. All chambers empty.
. . . Huh?

Ed takes the few steps that separate them. The plane is growing louder.

ED

Why do you defy me?

LAVRENTI

AAAAHHHAAHAAA--

Screams of terror, drowned out by the approaching airplane and cut off by Ed's hand on his throat.

UNDERNEATH THE TABLE

Two pieces of tape hang down on either side of a time-faded silhouette of the gun.

We pan over to a piece of yellowing scotch tape that holds six bullets against the underside of the table.

We can hear Lavrenti's gurgles as Ed continues to choke him.

BACK TO ED

He is lifting and shaking Lavrenti as he throttles him.

THE FLOOR

(CONTINUED)

Lavrenti is being lifted out of his loafers. His rising toes curl desperately after his receding shoes.

ED

He effortlessly flips Lavrenti to hold him upside down so that he can probe with his thumbs under his kneecaps. The screams resume, louder and louder, but they will bring no help: the room is rattled by the roar of the arriving airplane.

THE FLOOR

The contents of Lavrenti's pockets thunk down: coins, bill clip, keys, girly lighter, and finally, after a beat, his lucky rabbit's foot.

Sticks watches the arriving plane with a dreamy smile and a song burbling on his lips:

STICKS

I like a Gershwin tune, how 'bout you?

I like a cocaine spoon, how 'bout you?

THE DRIVER

In a very close shot the Driver's tinted aviator glasses half-reflect the approaching plane, half-reveal his dead, heavy-lidded eyes.

He daintily licks a stray curl of peanut butter off a gloved finger, then cocks his head and gives an unself-conscious belch.

THE RUNWAY

Like a big fat bumblebee the plane completes its wobbling approach. It hits the field, makes an ungainly bounce or two, slows and comes to rest.

The man on the forklift drives out toward the plane as someone inside the plane opens its cargo door.

Sticks bellows at the Driver over the roar of the engines:

STICKS

Tell Lavrenti to help unload.

The Driver climbs awkwardly off the tailgate and heads for the control tower.

96 INT KOSKI'S CAR - DAY

96

KOSKI'S POV

A siren blasts in at the cut. We are looking over Koski's shoulder as he careens up the street in his unmarked car and halts at Puffy's Drugs.

Burns is trotting out of the building, open suitcoat flapping. He leans in Koski's window to breathlessly relay:

BURNS

Four corpses but we found the manager tossing pills into a suitcase in preparation for flight. He said our boy is going to the Emerson Airstrip to knock off Sticks Verona who's there meeting a drug shipment. . .

Glances at his watch.

. . . Should be there right now!

97 INT CONTROL TOWER

97

From inside we are looking at the door, slightly ajar. The Driver gives it a push: CREEEEEEAK --it swings slowly in.

The Driver stands motionless in the doorway.

A silent beat.

A weak voice:

VOICE

Help me. . .

The Driver Walks slowly in.

98 EXT AIRSTRIP

98

A man standing in the hold of the plane tosses boxes out to the forklift driver, who stacks them on the forklift. Neither man talks; the roar of the idling engine is too loud.

In the cockpit the pilot sits reading the newspaper.

99 INT CONTROL TOWER

99

The Driver edges cautiously in.

Somewhere, the tinkling windchimes.

The voice weakly repeats:

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

VOICE

Help me. . .

The Driver rounds a corner to see Lavrenti. He is seated facing us, his arms pulled back behind his swivel chair.

He looks pleadingly at the Driver.
. . . Untie my arms.

100 EXT AIRSTRIP

100

Sticks is still singing on the tailgate.

STICKS

I like the month of June. . .

101 INT COCKPIT

101

The pilot clears his throat, and turns a page.

102 INT CONTROL TOWER

102

The Driver edges toward the chair.

LAVRENTI

Help me. . .

The Driver sticks one foot cautiously out. He pushes the seat of the swivel chair: creeeeeeek--it slowly turns to show Lavrenti's back.

Lavrenti's arms are indeed tied behind him. Not with rope--the arms themselves have been twisted around each other and knotted. His two hands protrude from the knot, helplessly wagging.

By way of reaction, the Driver arches one eyebrow.

DRIVER

. . . whuhhhhh. . .

Behind the Driver, Ed drops out of the rafters to the floor:

ED

HA!

The Driver spins and adapts the karate first position familiar, perhaps, from many Vegas shows.

DRIVER

Huhhh. . .

They stand facing each other, studying, both at the ready.

(CONTINUED)

The Driver abruptly launches into a series of air-chops and kicks, none of them intended to land. It is display.

DRIVER

Huh! Whuh! Unk! Huh!

He swings again only this time he tears the heart graphic off of Ed's costume.

Hi-ee Huh! (ripppp!)

The routine ends with the Driver resuming first position holding Ed's cloth heart in his hand.

Ed counters with a dying swan, melting towards the floor, his arms gracefully sweeping out to the side.

The Driver looks down at Ed puddled on the floor, confused. What sort of intimidation is this?

Suddenly:

ED

HA!

He performs a Bouncing Betty, leaping up and driving a fist into the Driver's crotch.

The Driver's eyes, beneath his aviators, show no reaction.

At length:

DRIVER

Hanka verra muchshsh. . .

Ed tilts his head, dismayed.

A second effort:

ED

YAAAAAAAAAAHHH!

He gives the Driver's crotch a hyperfast double-fisted drubbing, like a boxer at a speed bag.

The Driver dispassionately watches.

DRIVER

. . . Hank yew. . .

With remarkable speed and power the Driver reaches down and clamps his left hand around Ed's throat and draws him up.

Ed clamps his left hand around the Driver's throat.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED: (2)

102

The Driver raises his right hand high. It clutches a hypodermic needle.

It swings down.

It is arrested by Ed's right hand, clasping the Driver's wrist.

A standoff, hand-to-throat, hand-to-hand.

Ed gasps and purples as the Driver chokes him off.

The Driver shows no reaction to Ed's squeezing hand.

The two right hands tremble with tension, the hypodermic still aiming at Ed.

103 EXT AIRSTRIP

103

At the cargo hold the two men are still unloading boxes.

104 INT COCKPIT

104

The pilot pulls a pencil from behind his ear and starts working the Jumble.

105 INT CONTROL TOWER

105

Under steady pressure the hypodermic begins to turn, inward.

Ed gasps with effort.

The Driver still shows no reaction, but the needle is now pointing at his own head.

It starts moving slowly in, toward his temple.

The Driver's eyes remain expressionless but, finally, his concern begins to show: sweat stands out on his forehead.

The needle closes--closes--closes; its glinting tip, a drop of obedience-serum beading on it, disappears into the poof of jet black hair at the Driver's temple.

Ed trembles, strains..

The hypodermic advances by microinches. . . stops. . . vibrates. . .

Ed's powerful hand wraps around the Driver's. His thumb, shaking, closes over the Driver's thumb, which rests on the plunger.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

A bead of sweat rolls down the Driver's forehead. His eyes roll slowly to the side, toward the needle.

Ed's thumb trembles and whitens under the pressure. . .

Thumb squeezes thumb. . .

The serum flows into the needle.

The Driver's eyes roll slowly forward. One side of his lip arches slowly into a half-sneer.

DRIVER

Whuhhhh. . .

106 INT COCKPIT

106

The pilot frowns down at the Jumble. With the eraser end of his pencil he scratches thoughtfully at his jaw. We hear it scratch against his beard stubble.

107 EXT AIRSTRIP

107

STICKS ON THE TAILGATE

He drums his fingers impatiently on the wheelchair armrest and murmurs:

STICKS

. . . Where the heck. . . ?

108 INT CONTROL TOWER

108

Ed finishes pushing bullets into the revolver and hands it to the Driver. He speaks slowly and deliberately.

ED

The drugs must be stopped. I am naming you a special narcotics agent.

The Driver dully accepts the gun.

DRIVER

Whumnnnn. . . Assimportin work. . . Hank yew.

109 INT KOSKI'S CAR

109

With flashing gumball magnet-slabbed to the dash and siren screaming, the car rockets through the city streets. Burns sits on the passenger side bracing himself for hard turns.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

Koski steers with one hand as he bellows into his radio handset:

KOSKI

We got a probable 405 in progress at the Emerson Airstrip! Requesting back-up-- car, bird, and ambulance plus stun gun, mace and butterfly net! This is a Code Blue and Hotel Sierra!

A burst of static and a concerned answering voice:

VOICE

Did you say Hotel Sierra?

KOSKI

Repeat: this is a confirmed Hotel Sierra!

He takes another hard turn and Burns steadies himself with one hand against the roof.

BURNS

What's a Hotel Sierra?!

Koski, coming into straightaway, stomps on the gas:

KOSKI

HOLY SHIIIIIIII--

110 EXT AIRSTRIP

110

The Driver is leaving the control tower, gun held loosely at his side.

We intercut him and his point of view of Sticks waiting, further up the runway and on the opposite side.

As he approaches the airplane from behind, one of its whirling propellers is between him and Sticks, but it hardly impede his view. He advances without expression.

As he draws even with the cargo hold the man who is unloading from inside notices him.

The man below loading the forklift follows the other man's look. He yells to be heard over the engines:

FORKLIFT MAN

Hey! Give us a hand!

The Driver turns and casually shoots him in the chest.

HOLD MAN

What the--

(CONTINUED)

The Driver shoots him as well. The man staggers and is about to fall.

CLOSE ON STICKS

Looking at the plane.

HIS POV

The view is partially blocked by the whirling propellor and the wing itself. We can see most of the Driver, though his head is cropped by the wing. We can just see what might be part of the prone forklift man, mostly blocked by the forklift. We can see only the smallest corner of the cargo bay door, most of which is blocked by the fuselage. Something--a hand, perhaps--drops and swings from the bay.

The closest person is the pilot, who sits calmly up in the cockpit working the Jumble.

STICKS

He squints. It's hard to figure what's going on.

BACK TO THE PLANE

Both of the loaders are dead; the Driver turns to resume his walk toward Sticks.

He clears the angled body of the plane so that Sticks is clearly in view, directly behind a whirling prop. He advances. He starts to raise his gun.

STICKS

Squinting. What seems to be happening makes no sense.

THE DRIVER

Advancing zombielike on Sticks, closer and closer to the whirring propellor.

STICKS

Who, me?

THE DRIVER

Closer--closer--the gun now fully extended in front of him--advancing toward the prop.

111 INT COCKPIT

111

The jumble has the pilot stumped.

THE PUZZLE

It reads "Hotel Sierra" over two words with eight empty squares.

THE PILOT

Still baffled, he bites lower lip.

A brief razz--like a lawnmower snagging--interrupts the steady whir of the props, and the plane shakes slightly.

THE TACHOMETER

The needle jumps back several hundred RPM.

THE PILOT

Looks up, cranes to look back along the right wing through red smeared plexiglass.

112 EXT AIRSTRIP

112

The Driver backward-staggers into frame. His formerly extended right arm is now a sawed-off stumpy forearm, but that is the least of it:

Not only the front of his leisure suit, but the skin over the entire front of his body, has been chewed away. His nose is gone and his face is flayed red tissue in which two lidless eyeballs register white surprise.

He looks down at his exposed innards.

DRIVER

Whoa. . . Can't believe it. . .

The leading end of his small intestine starts to slip out of his abdomen. He watches as the intestine unravels with more and more speed. The last of its twenty-five-foot length slithers out and he swipes after the tail end with his remaining hand.

No go: it plops onto the ground in front of him.

. . . Whoa. . .

After a short beat his stomach sloshes out onto the ground.

. . . Ngghhnn. . .

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

112

One by one his lungs drop into his abdominal cavity and then flop out onto the ground. His lower spinal column is exposed.

. . . Mmmmm. . .

His hand reaches for something in his inside coat pocket, at the tattered edge of what remains of his coat.

STICKS

Watching: What the--?

THE DRIVER

He one-handedly pops the top of his pill vial, tilts his head back and gulps the multi-colored pills.

The pills bounce down and out of the exposed end of his esophagus.

The Driver gazes mournfully down at the wasted pills. One last sad beat, and. . . he tips backward, dead.

113 INT COCKPIT

113

The pilot has seen enough. We see him mouth HOLY SHIII
He turns to grab the throttle but first falls in the jumble.

CU HAND WRITING

H-o-l-y S-h-i-t.

114 EXT AIRSTRIP - STICKS

114

He stares toward the plane as powder-blue fabric starts to flutter down around him: tatters of the Driver's suit.

After a beat of cheerful blue streamers, something heavier and white plops into Sticks' lap. He looks down.

The Driver's gloved hand.

115 EXT CONTROL TOWER

115

Ed Bliss emerges and heads for the runway.

116 EXT AIRSTRIP - STICKS

116

He angrily hits a button to activate the hydraulics that start the tailgate humming down.

He pulls an automatic pistol from an inside pocket and slams in a clip.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

STICKS

You lousy. . . goddamn. . . cock-a-roach!

RUNWAY

The airplane is bumping off down the runway.

Ed Bliss is running for the abandoned forklift.

Sticks has reached ground level and is motoring his wheelchair forward, one hand on the controls, the other clutching his gun.

Ed climbs into the forklift and fires it up.

Sticks puts his chair in overdrive and outrigger wheels drop down.

Ed revs and grinds gears, shifting up.

He and Sticks head directly at each other, like jousters.

Sticks sights down the pistol, bellowing:

STICKS

What have you done?!

He fires--BANG.

PING--it sparks off a metal upright on the forklift.

. . . That was a beautiful man!

BANG! PING! Ed wrestles with the gears.

. . . Drug problem, sure!

BANG-BANG!

PING-PING!

. . . But he needed help! Understanding!
Not that!

WHOOO-WHOO-WHOO--Koski's unmarked car bounces onto the field, heading directly at the oncoming plane.

BANG! PING!

The plane clumsily lifts off and clears the car which races on toward the jousters.

The wheelchair and forklift are short yards apart.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED: (2)

Sticks takes careful aim.

STICKS

. . . This one's got your name on it,
Gutboy!

BANG!

But Ed is leaping from the forklift as--pffft!--the bullet tears through his seat back and--CRUNCH--the wheelchair and forklift collide.

STICKS

(he is whiplashed)

. . . AAAAHHH!

The scooped wheelchair is forced backwards. Sticks grabs in agony at the back of his neck.

His upraised elbow is snagged by Ed, now on foot, reaching in. He yanks Sticks free.

Ed has him from behind. Behind both men the unmanned forklift recedes down the runway.

KOSKI

(through bullhorn)

Hold it, Eddie!

Koski's car is slewed around several yards in front of him. Koski stands protected by his opened door, bullhorn to his lips.

. . . This is Koski! Police!

Ed ignores him. He slips one hand behind Sticks' neck: a half-nelson.

STICKS

AAAAAHHH!

KOSKI

Quit runnin' around acting like a goddamn
fruitcake!

This cuts no ice either. Ed slips his other hand behind Sticks' neck: a full-nelson.

Sticks' chin digs into his chest and his arms are forced uselessly out to either side, like a scarecrow's.

STICKS

AAAAAHHH!

(CONTINUED)

Ed tenses, preparing to inflict the ultimate, but--

KOSKI

Your wife needs you, Eddie!

--he stops, stricken. He looks slowly up at Koski, haunted.
 . . . That's right! She's still alive!
 And she needs you!

Sticks, with his head forced down, speaks in a squashed-larynx voice:

STICKS

She does need you, Eddie.

Ed continues to stare at Koski.

KOSKI

Don't make her raise your child alone!

Ed stares, digesting this.

STICKS

. . . Poor helpless woman!

Ed stares, still taking it in.

KOSKI

There's been enough killin'!

Sticks' eyes roll back in a vain attempt to read his motionless captor.

STICKS

You know, Eddie, he's got a point.

KOSKI

. . . Drop the pretzel! Let's talk this thing out!

STICKS

A little palaver, what can it--

CRACK!

Ed has abruptly wrenched Sticks' neck, cutting off his speech. Sticks' eyes stare.

A beat of motionless quiet.

Finally Ed releases Sticks and steps away and Sticks sways but. . .

(CONTINUED)

Does not drop.

As he sways it slowly dawns on Sticks that not only is he not dead, he is no longer crippled.

He looks up.

STICKS

What the. . .

Oblivious, Eddie is walking away toward the waiting police.

Sticks experimentally rolls his head. Feels good!

He takes one stiff halting step.

And another!

He grins.

. . . Say. . .

He performs some jumping jacks.

. . . Say!

He runs in place, arms pumping.

. . . Wuddya know about that! Wonder if
I can. . .

He is bending forward at the waist.

. . . touch my. . .

He reaches toward his toes and. . . pulls up a pants leg to reveal a derringer in an ankle holster.

He quickly straightens, raising the gun and--

. . . Say goodbye, Eddie!

--BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Five holes bloom red in Sticks' own chest.

Burns lowers his smoking police special.

BURNS

Sayonara, Sticks.

Sticks, saddened, slowly lowers his gun.

(CONTINUED)

STICKS

. . . Ain't that just the way, though. .

He pitches forward.

HIGH AND WIDE ON THE AIRSTRIP

Ed continues to walk woodenly toward Koski's car.

The field is littered with bodies.

Somewhere, windchimes tinkle.

117 INT HOSPITAL ROOM

117

WHITE FABRIC

A hand enters frame--a strong, capable hand--Ed's hand.

It rests gently on the fabric--a hospital gown--over a woman's pregnant belly.

We hear the rhythmic sounds of intensive care--hissing respirators, monitor beeps.

We pan down the man's hand to. . . its wrist, manacled. We pan along the chain to. . . the man's other hand, which reaches for. . . a woman's hand, resting palm-down on the bed.

The woman's hand is still.

Now--one of the woman's fingers trembles--rises.

Another finger.

The entire hand seems to wake. It turns--palm-up.

Male and female hands clasp.

CLOSE KIM

Eyes closed, she murmurs:

KIM

. . . Ed?

Her eyes flutter open.

HER POV

Ed smiles down.

(CONTINUED)

ED
Still my girl?

She smiles. With difficulty she pushes words through cracked lips:

KIM
Where. . . were. . . you?

ED
I was gone. I'm back now.

She smiles.

KIM
Then. . . me too.

A clink of the chain and the camera pans to reveal a guard by Ed's side. Kim notices, frowns, gives Ed a look of interrogative concern.

But he is the old Ed, bright-eyed and boyish:

ED
Don't worry. My lawyer says he's never seen a better candidate for the insanity defense.

He beams at her. She smiles wanly back.

. . . Penny?

KIM
. . . Remembering.

He squeezes her hand. Distant calliope music.

ED
Happy times?

KIM
Always. . .

Her hand squeezes back.

. . . Happy, happy times.

Her head rolls to the other side of the pillow and her warm expression changes immediately.

KIM'S POV

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED: (2)

117

Ed's maimed wrestling buddies in assorted cast and neck braces surround Kim's bedside with tears in their eyes. We hear a commotion in the room and Sammy burst through the wrestlers holding a huge bouquet of flowers.

SAMMY

Eddie, sweetie, baby, -ehh how's the little woman do'in here?

KIM

(Glaring at Sammy, she is now pale and losing her strength fast.)

Ed, . . . about those happy, happy times.

118 INT HOSPITAL HALLWAY

118

A large nurse yanks Sammy out of the room by his ear, (like an angry teacher) while at the same time shooing the maimed wrestlers toward the elevator doors.

Ed steps from Kim's room, his wrist-chain tautly threaded through the doorway.

SAMMY

(yelling back)

Ooooch! Ouch! Eddie, don't worry buddy. .
 . I've taken inta' consideration your
 current predicament, and I have two words
 fer ya . . . CAGE MATCH! Ouch! Oooch!

The elevator doors slide open and the wrestlers file in. Through the large bodies we see someone trying to exit the car.

First a glimpse, then we see. . . it is Delores. She squeezes through and slowly heads for Eddie.

SAMMY

You'll be gainfully employed! I'll vouch
 for ya!

REVERSE

Ed stares at her emotionless, frozen in his tracks, possibly the call of the wild. On that beat the guard walks through the doorway.

GUARD

Hey! Your kill'n my hand, man.

DELORES

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

Upon seeing the guard she retreats back into the packed elevator car as Sammy continues talking through the narrowing door gap.

SAMMY

Skin on skin with steel mesh patterns
babe!

Clonk! The elevator doors slam shut.

GUARD

You okay ?

Ed is still nonplussed. The guard pats him on the shoulder and he gently comes around.

ED

Yeah. . . . Yeah. I think so. Yeah
thanks. I gotta' get back to my wife.
I love her ya'know.

119 INT HOSPITAL ROOM

119

ED'S POV

We approach a peaceful glowing Kim.

FADE TO BLACK

Hold for a beat. The snap of a light switch, fade up fast to:

120 INT KOSKI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

120

Late at night.

Empty and a mess.

After a beat we hear tinkling ice and Koski walks into frame holding a whiskey. His suit is disheveled and his hat is pushed carelessly back.

He sits on the edge of the bed, takes a sip of the drink and looks dully off. After a beat he thumps at his breast pocket.

He takes out a cigarette pack, looks at it, and crumples it and throws it aside, empty.

He glances fleetingly at the ashtray on the nightstand and then looks again, frowning. After a beat he reaches in with one finger and flips a couple of butts aside, evaluating.

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

He picks out one butt not terribly short and sticks it in his mouth. He reaches into a side coat pocket for a kitchen match and strikes it on the bedframe.

He lights the butt, takes a deep hungry drag.

He lays down on the bed.

He holds the smoke in.

He blows it slowly out.

He gazes at the smoke wreathing away.

HIS POV

A smoke ring floats to the ceiling.

THE END