

PRODUCER: Stanley Kallis
DIRECTOR: James Frawley

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(F.R.)
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COLUMBO

MURDER, SMOKE AND SHADOWS

Written

by

Richard Alan Simmons

(TVM)

PLEASE NOTE:

Pertaining to the present name Herb Fisher:
All references to Herb will be Len; all
references to Herbie will be Lenny; all
references to Herbert will be Leonard.

ALSO PLEASE NOTE:

All references to Jeanie Fisher will be Jenny
Fisher.

COLUMBO

MURDER, SMOKE AND SHADOWS

FADE IN

1 EXT. STUDIO LOT - TOUR TRAM - DAY 1

The wonders of movie-making are unfolding for the delight of visiting tourists (two tram loads in a single train) as their tour leader, a blazered young lady stationed by the driver, good-naturedly spiels their way through the studio lot.

So it goes, cut by cut, hither and yon, and what takes our eye is not so much the grand sights of the studio as the man seated at the very end of the last tram. A tourist indeed, his clothes too thick for this splendid, sun-blessed California day; his name is HERB FISHER, a bit round-shouldered, a bit work-worn for all his thirty young years. Curiously, he seems to be oblivious to the tour guide's happy pitch, his tensioned eyes following a will of their own as they search nervously from side to side.

2 EXT. SPECIAL EFFECTS BUILDING - TOUR TRAM, GUIDE, HERB 2

Here the Tour Guide points out a plain and massive building as:

TOUR GUIDE

And to the right, folks, the magic kingdom where our directors truly make the impossible become true: the special effects building. We just might drop in there later and continue this tour all the way to Mars.

Some appreciative light laughter from the folks. As for Herb, his eyes are riveted on that building now. It is as if he were holding his breath and that breath becomes a wincing gasp as a young man exits springily from the special effects building. He is a pleasant young man, as nice a young man as you could ever wish to see. His name is ALEX BRADY -- about Herb's age but still touched with vibrant youthfulness. Worn blue jeans and a blue workshirt and a can of film under his arm.

CONTINUED

2 CONTINUED

2

TOUR GUIDE

And coming out over there, right on cue for us, ladies and gentlemen, that fellow there is the famous master of special effects, Alex Brady. That's the young man who's made more superhits than any film-maker in Hollywood history.

(X)

(calling out to
him)

Hi, Alex.

Alex tosses the film can into an electric cart and waves to the folks, some of whom wave back as the tram goes on its way. But not with Herb. Herb has split from the tram, over the back end just as Alex gets into the cart and swings it in an arc to drive off in the opposite direction.

3 ANGLE ON HERB

3

his face impassive now, shading his eyes, watching Alex and the cart.

4 HERB'S POINT OF VIEW - THE CART

4

swings into a turn and disappears around a corner.

5 EXT. BOYS CLUB - DAY - ALEX AND THE CART

5

What we call the Boys Club is a neat bungalow -- a boys club for one boy. The boy is Alex who parks the cart and enters with the film.

6 INT. BOYS CLUB - DAY - ALEX

6

as he enters his personal playland, part film-sorcerer's lab, part fraternity house.

For example: an editor's Kem on one table, an elaborate and immaculately antique electric train on another; large blow-ups of Wyeth illustrations of boy's classics on the

CONTINUED

6 CONTINUED

6

walls along with overpowering photos of athletic heroes; a round water bed and bean-bag chairs; books and books in a vast built-in case and, over there, equally voluminous collections of records, audio tapes, video tapes; to play the audio tapes and records, the grooviest stereo rig you can imagine with speakers like locomotives; to play the video stuff, a television setup ripped from the innards of NASA; history-of-cinema treasures such as an ancient crank camera, megaphone, projector; a soft drink machine, a bright red refrigerator and a replica of a drugstore soda fountain. Above all, awards -- statuettes and honors and plaques and, in a pinnacle position, an Academy Oscar decked in a doll-like toga and derby hat.

Alex drops the film can by the Kem, moves to kick the drink machine. A can of soda drops into his hand. He pops the top, crosses to turn on the stereo, returns to the Kem, drinks, removes a smallish reel of film from its container, threads it up. Classical music breaks like thundering surf from the speakers. Alex starts the Kem, drops onto a stool and drinks again.

7 KEM - SPECIAL EFFECTS FOOTAGE

7

What we have here is fairly technical stuff: various phases of building an elaborate special effect. Still, it seems to march along smartly, if abstractly, with the music from the stereo.

8 ALEX AND HERB

8

Oh, yes -- Herb indeed as he comes to the partially open door and gravely studies Alex who in turn watches the film. It is a few seconds before he says:

HERB

Alex?

Alex's head snaps up. He stares blankly for a moment, then breaks into an ecstatic grin of recognition.

ALEX

Herbie.

He rises, snaps off the drive motor on the Kem, crosses exuberantly to embrace his old friend as Herb comes deeper into the room. As for Herb, he returns the embrace half-heartedly as if embarrassed by Alex's affection.

CONTINUED

ALEX

Herbie, Herbie, you come to L.A.,
you don't call? You don't let me
know?

(breaking from
the embrace)

You did call -- two days ago. My
secretary said you were on the
phone. I picked it up, you weren't
there. You playing tricks?

HERB

I wanted to see if you'd be here.
I guess I was nervous.

ALEX

What're you nervous about?

(moves to turn
off stereo)

Let me look at you. What're you
doing here? You still living in
Albany? (X)

HERB

(diffidently)

Yeah, still Albany. Still working
in the men's store.

(eyes trace the
room)

You know, I figured you'd have an
office like this.

ALEX

(a hint of
amusement)

It's not my office, Herb. Just
a goof-off place.

Herb moves to check out the awards.

HERB

Talented Alex. Smart, smart Alex.
And still just one of the fellas.
The three of us goofing around old
L.A.

(turns to dart
a rueful grin
at Alex)

You and me and Buddy Coates.

ALEX

What're you in town for? How
long?

CONTINUED

8 CONTINUED (2)

8

HERB

(taking a good
look around)

Me? Just the day. I ducked my
job for the day. In this morning,
out tonight. I took the studio
tour. Jumped ship when I saw you.

(eyes find the
Oscar statuette)

Look at that. You won the Award.
I was so proud of you that night.
Me and Buddy.

(X)

(eyes on Alex
again)

The three of us -- kids banging
around this town -- we knew you
were the special one, Alex --
helping you make your little
movies. We still didn't dream how
successful you were going to be.
How rich and famous.

He has drifted to the electric train. There he switches
the transformer, and the tooting train takes half a turn
around the track. He switches it off.

HERB

Our Alex.

Hands in his pockets, Alex lounges into one of the bean bag
chairs.

ALEX

Knock it off, Herb. I was lucky.
I work hard but luck is luck.
Even those days we were going to
school here....

HERB

Sure, college boys.
(that pensive
grin again)

We didn't stay there very long,
did we? Too many important things
to do.

ALEX

What I was really doing, was
jumping the studio fence --
passing myself off as a mail boy
-- flogging my one-reelers like
popcorn. Until the cops caught
me.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

8 CONTINUED (3)

8

ALEX (Cont'd)

They were throwing me out when Mr. Marosco came driving by. Want to talk about luck? He even wanted to see my films.

HERB

(the memory still amazes him)

How old were we then?

ALEX

Twenty. Ten years ago. Mr. Marosco gave me his word -- before I was twenty-one, I'd direct a film for his studio. In the luck department, I was the grand champion.

(X)

Herb is looking at the static image on the Kem.

HERB

Can I see?

Alex rises and turns on the drive.

ALEX

Just some effects we're building.

Herb watches for a few seconds. Then, looking directly at Alex:

HERB

Poor Buddy's dead.

ALEX

(profound shock)
Buddy Coates? How? When?

HERB

Last week. Hepatitis. I'd see him once in a while. I bought insurance from him. At the end I came down to New York.

ALEX

(still the shock)
He married?

HERB

No. Me neither.

ALEX

Me neither.

CONTINUED

HERB

We were a hard-luck bunch. First my sister Jeanie, then Buddy.

Alex really doesn't want to talk about Jeanie.

ALEX

Jeanie was a long time ago.

HERB

Not so long. A year behind us in school. Just after you had your good luck with Mr. Marosco.

Okay, enough. Alex breaks off and crosses to the soda fountain.

ALEX

Come on, we'll drink a soda to Buddy -- what was his favorite?

HERB

Chocolate.

ALEX

Chocolate. I got chocolate.

He starts to build a couple of ice-cream sodas.

HERB

Can we drink to Jeanie, too?

Alex flicks a glance at him.

ALEX

Sure. Ice-cream sodas all around.

Herb stands there watching him.

HERB

Remember how we were helping you finish up that amateur film of yours? I had to work at the market that Sunday -- keep up the payments on my motorcycle. You wanted Jeanie to ride it in the picture -- some kind of stunt you wanted. She was scared of it and I said no way, so we dropped the whole thing.

He crosses now to sit at the soda fountain.

9 AT FOUNTAIN - ALEX AND HERB

9

Alex still building the sodas. Herb's eyes are fixed on him as:

HERB

You and Buddy -- your second cameraman -- remember how you got him hooked on film there for a while?

ALEX

Buddy should've stayed with it.

(X)

HERB

And there's you and Buddy waiting for her to show up at your location. But she never got there. That accident she had with the cycle. Bleeding to death till somebody found her. Too late for the paramedics. She died in their ambulance.

Spoons and straws in the sodas; one for Herb, one for Alex.

ALEX

(quietly)

Come on, Herb. Don't lacerate yourself.

HERB

Lacerate. You always knew just the right word.

ALEX

To Buddy.

HERE

To Jeanie.

They drink through the straws -- Alex more than Herb. Herb puts his soda down, takes a package from his jacket pocket.

(X)

HERB

The last day with Buddy. He gave me a package. He made me promise not to look at it till he wasn't with us anymore.

Alex looks at the package -- at Herb's solid gaze.

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

9

HERB

It was a little reel of sixteen-millimeter film, like you used to use.

(opens the package)

I had it made up bigger -- in thirty-five millimeter -- like you use now.

(reveals the mini-reel)

Can we play it on that thing?

He indicates the Kem. Alex takes caution from Herb's grave eyes. Without a word he takes the film and comes from behind the fountain to cross O.S. to the Kem. Herb watches him. I can tell you as a fact that his look is murderous.

10 AT THE KEM

10

Alex is threading up the film. Herb comes into SHOT. Alex looks at him again, starts the drive.

11 AT THE KEM

11

The film is grainy black-and-white. We see JEANIE -- about nineteen, pretty and long-haired. She is riding the motorcycle -- vivacious and laughing, an instant of pure joy, TV-commercial style -- as she pulls a grandstanding wheelie on what seems to be a tree-lined secondary road. Suddenly, as her rear wheel slams into a pot hole, her little stunt goes out of control.

The motorcycle skids and reels and Jeanie is thrown O.S. The CAMERA, hand-held, clings for a second to the flopped motorcycle, then SWERVES erratically to FIND Jeanie's inert body flung by the side of the road. There is already a wet shine of black-and-white blood.

Now young Alex runs into the scene. He holds a sixteen-millimeter camera, reacts in panic at what he sees, turns and gestures wildly at the CAMERA. Our gyrating IMAGE sweeps up into the air. And the film runs out.

12 AT THE KEM - ALEX AND HERB

12

Alex continues to stare for a moment at the blank screen, then looks at Herb. What he sees is a paroxysm of hatred.

CONTINUED

12 CONTINUED

12

HERB

She got there all right, Alex. My sister got to you and Buddy and your movie. No accident along the way. Your stunt went out of control. Jeanie was bleeding to death and you didn't even try to save her. You just ran away and left her to die. Because of Mr. Marosco? Because you were afraid your wonderful new good luck was going to run out if he ever knew what you did to her?

Alex's mind is racing. He turns back to the Kem, reruns the film.

13 THE KEM AND ALEX'S HANDS

13

as he freezes the film on a selected frame: young Alex standing over Jeanie's body, gesturing to the unseen camera. Alex again looks at Herb and reads the full heat of his rage.

HERB

I choked on it. I couldn't tell anyone -- not until I could face you.

ALEX

Herbie....

HERB

(riding over him)

I'm glad you're such a terrific success. I'm glad you got everything you have. Because, you bastard, Alex, I'm going to turn it all into garbage. I'll ram that picture --

(the Kem image)

-- into every scandal sheet and then every newspaper; I'll see that film on every TV news show until you choke on it, too ---

ALEX

It isn't true, Herbie!

CONTINUED

HERB

-- and the cops and the prosecutors until you climb into your grave, Alex, like it's your new sports car! That's what I came here....

ALEX

(over him)

It isn't real!

Herb breaks off, stares at him.

ALEX

What was Buddy playing at? When'd he start doing tricks with film?

HERB

(stunned)

What?

ALEX

(jams his finger
at the Kem
image)

It's a fake -- phoney! All tricked out! What was he -- jealous? Crazy because I made a life and he didn't? Look at it, Herbie! It's not even one piece of film. Any technician could read it. You can see the mat line, clear as crystal!

(there is no mat
line nor:)

Look at the generational grain.

HERB

(uncertain for
an instant)

I don't see anything....

ALEX

(angrily)

I'll prove it to you -- black and white! Buddy did something evil here. If he wanted to accuse me, why didn't he accuse me?

(reaches for the
film)

Give me the film, I'll show you....

(X)

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED (2)

13

HERB

No!

His own hand descends over the reel. Alex steps back.

14 UP ANGLE - ALEX

14

From this perspective, it is he, not Herb, who is an image of evil. Biblically diabolical.

ALEX

(voice softened
persuasively)

Herbie, for God's sake. We were friends. We were all friends. What's Buddy doing to us?

(X)

15 ALEX AND HERB

15

Our Alex, again -- the nicest of young men.

ALEX

You really think I could've done this to Jeanie?

(again the
flounder of
uncertainty in
Herb's gaze)

Give me a few hours. Wait here for me. I have to get some equipment together -- other experts -- I'll show you its fakery. Then you'll understand, too. Whatever there is to understand -- about poor Buddy. We've been pals since we were twelve. Am I going to stand here and lie to you? Another few hours too much, Herbie?

HERB

(bleakly)

I'll keep the film. My plane's at eleven. I have to be in the store tomorrow.

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED

15

ALEX

I'll put you on the plane myself.
 And you'll give me a hug good-bye.
 For now, try to be comfortable.

(hand sweeps
 around)

Everything's here.

(hand reaches out
 to touch his
 friend)

Try a little trust.

Alex turns and exits. Herb watches him go. He stands awkwardly and finally looks toward:

16 OSCAR STATUETTE

16

The fun-loving Oscar statuette. Toga, bowler hat and all.

17 EXT. STUDIO STREET - LATE AFTERNOON - ALEX AND CART

17

as Alex, driving the electric cart, turns it through the vast open doors of a sound stage.

(X)

18 INT. SOUND STAGE - ALEX AND CART

18

as Alex drives in and the doors trundle shut behind him.

(X)

House lights illuminate the relatively bare sound stage. Substantially, what we have is:

Over there -- something that looks like a high, black-painted picket fence; every other picket is missing. Length about twenty feet.

In the back -- a vast projection screen approaching the dimensions of a cyclorama. Facing it at a distance -- a hulking projector.

(X)

Over on the side, against the stage wall -- a clump of 10K's, baby's and coiled electrical cables.

Over here -- a large holographic photography table with its array of laser, mirrors, lenses, shutters, etc. The laser is live and gives us a pretty effect.

Next to the holographic table -- another table, a light one on wheels, holding a few framed holographic images, correctly lighted and ready to be viewed. Fiddling with their adjustment is Alex's boyish special effects maven, STAN GILLIS.

CONTINUED

18 CONTINUED

18

Alex dismounts (that same springy, go-to-hell gait we saw earlier) and comes over to him.

19 ALEX AND STAN

19

Alex crossing in.

STAN

You okay, Alex?

ALEX

I was any better I'd be unbearable. What've we got?

STAN

Three-dimensional magic.

ALEX

Show me.

As Alex moves to check the holographs, CAMERA ANGLES TO SHOOT FROM BEHIND HIM so that we see what he sees: the vaguely three-dimensional quality of a holographic image of a shapely young woman. Later we will meet her as Ruth Jernigan. Alex reacts with some measure of surprise, looks at Stan. (X)

ALEX

Ruthie? (X)

STAN

She volunteered. (X)

ALEX

Well, she's a volunteering kind of a girl. (X)

(hunching forward
to look)

Swing the table.

Stan slowly and smoothly swings the table from side to side on its wheels. We get about a twenty-degree angle before the image degrades and vanishes.

ALEX

About twenty degrees off axis and there she goes. I don't think we're ready to thrill the audience with Ruth Jernigan in glorious holographic three dimensions. (X)

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED

19

He is already crossing to the projector, switches it on. If it is necessary to dim the house lights for the following effect, he can use a rheostat dangling from a cable near the projector.

(X)

20 WIDE ANGLE

20

There, on the vast screen, is (for instance) the Roman coliseum.

ALEX

Stan, get in there and look nice for me.

Stan goes to the screen. For all the world, he looks to be standing in the middle of the coliseum as:

STAN

I got the laser table ready. We can stay late, work up some of our own holograms.

ALEX

Can't do it tonight.

He breaks toward the stack of electrical equipment against the wall.

ALEX

Got to fiddle with the script.
(re the projected image)
We ever get that system to work, who needs locations?

He looks back to the electrical gear.

STAN

I've got some new plates.

ALEX

Break 'em out.

Stan moves to peruse a rack of film cans.

(X)

21 ALEX AT ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

21

He looks down at a specific length of coiled cable, fingers it for length and heft. Tucked away over there is a pair of electrician's gloves. Alex sees them -- reaches for them.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED

21

STAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Want to see these plates now?

(X)

ALEX
 Can't, Stanley. Maybe tomorrow.

Thoughtfully he slips the gloves into the coils of the cable he has just selected.

22 EXT. STUDIO STREET - LATE AFTERNOON - ALEX AND THE CART

22

driving up to his office bungalow. This one has a different ambiance than the Boys Club; its louvered windows directly face the studio street. Also parked there is Alex's Corniche Rolls Royce, its convertible top in place.

Out of the cart and into the bungalow goes Alex.

23 INT. BUNGALOW - RECEPTION - LATE AFTERNOON - ALEX AND ROSE WALKER

23

Alex's secretary is an old-timer at the studio, maybe twice his age. And that's how good a secretary she is. Her name is ROSE WALKER.

The reception office is as lavish as you please and a bit formal in contrast to the Boys Club. To one side, three high, wing-backed chairs surround a round table. Rose is typing dictation into a computer via a headset attached to a tape machine.

Alex approaches and takes a clipboard telephone list from her desk as:

ALEX
 Hello. You're fired.

ROSE
 (removing
 headset)
 Excuse me, Alex?

ALEX
 I said go home, Rosie. It's time.
 Thanks for the day.

ROSE
 Say it again.

ALEX
 Why?

CONTINUED

ROSE

Because I like to hear it.

She goes to get her topcoat. Alex moves to his office door. Now we see that a man reading a newspaper in one of the high-backed chairs is glancing back at Alex from behind a wing.

ROSE

Mr. Marosco called twice. He's anxious to talk with you.

ALEX

Tell him tomorrow. I haven't got time now.

(the phone list)

What's this call?

(X)

Coat over her arm, she comes back past Alex and takes the phone list.

ROSE

That nice production manager you used to work with -- the one you called the professor. I said you'd call him back.

(X)

ALEX

(a wince of
frustration)

Aw, Rosie, couldn't you have said something else?

ROSE

(right in his
eye)

Should I have told him he's too old, Alex?

ALEX

(twist of
resentment)

Give me a break.

He turns to his office door.

ROSE

(quietly)

Alex -- Ruth Jernigan's waiting for you.

CONTINUED

23 CONTINUED (2)

23

ALEX
(stares for a
beat)
How long?

ROSE
Not long -- ten minutes. And Phil
Crossette is here.

As she goes to secure her computer and Alex again turns to his office, the guy from the winged chair moves in on him, folding his newspaper.

24 ALEX AND PHIL

24

PHIL CROSSETTE is a merry-eyed fellow with a fighter's build and face. He speaks in an intimately lowered voice.

PHIL
Won't keep you a minute, Mr.
Brady. That little job I did for
you the other day --
(flicker of a
wink)
-- everything work out all right?

ALEX
Yeah, Phil, fine -- fine.

PHIL
Performance okay?

ALEX
Yeah, your work was very good.
We get the next picture going,
I'll show my appreciation.

PHIL
No part too small. Any time I can
help you out, maestro.

He exits to the street with a good night to Rose. Alex grins a private grin and goes into his office.

25 INT. PRIVATE OFFICE - LATE - ALEX AND RUTH JERNIGAN

25

as Alex enters. More opulence. In the softly low-keyed lighting -- just a desk lamp -- we see RUTH JERNIGAN in a chair half-facing the disaster-strewn desk. This young

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED

25

woman is prettier than you can possibly imagine and even nicer than that. Her wide skirt is arranged just so around her in the chair; her hands are folded demurely in her lap. She looks like a picture.

She and Alex regard each other until:

RUTH

I've been posing here for you.

Alex comes to lean over her, hands braced on the arms of her chair.

26 CLOSER ANGLE - ALEX AND RUTH

26

ALEX

You want to try for laughs, try a little kick with your upstage foot.

Her hands reach out to cup his face. Gently and lengthily, she kisses him.

RUTH

How's that for laughs?

ALEX

Ruthie, I could use a lot of that.

RUTH

You used to use a lot of that.

(a beat)

Before I went to work as your leading lady.

Alex moves to drop into the chair behind his desk, one foot raised to the chair top. He gazes at her.

ALEX

I seem to have heard something how you went and got yourself a new boy friend. Just a couple of playful actors. Right on my very own picture.

RUTH

Maybe the movie was our trouble, Herr Doktor Direcktor. I seemed to have slipped your mind -- just your actress while you made your very own picture.

They continue to look at each other.

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED

26

RUTH
Can I confess, Alex? Even
murderers are allowed to confess.

A KNOCK at the door.

ALEX
(voice up)
Yeah.

Rose enters, coat on and ready to leave.

ROSE
Excuse me.

She crosses to lay a sheet of paper on Alex's desk as:

ROSE
Weather report. Good night,
Alex. (X)

ALEX
Good night, Rose.

A good night to Ruth (first name) and Rose exits. Alex
looks at Ruth.

ALEX
And good night to you, Fraulein
Doktor Actress.
(a beat)
I've got to do something about you
and me, babe.

RUTH
Now?

ALEX
(helpless shrug)
Now I've got other things to think
about.

She mimics his helpless shrug -- and rises.

RUTH
Try to slip me in.

She gives him a little Oliver Hardy wave of her fingertips
up by her cheek. Then she exits as:

RUTH
Exit pursued by a bear.
(winks at him)
Shakespeare wrote that.

And out the door.

27 ON ALEX

27

We hear the outer door open and close. Alex rises, goes to the window, watches her leave. Then he turns down the louvres of the blinds, fully blanking the window. He moves to stand over the desk lamp, picks up the phone.

28 UP ANGLE - ALEX

28

The devil again. He dials, then:

ALEX

(to phone)

Davey, Alex Brady. I need water on Brownstone...

(looks at his watch)

About half an hour -- I'm not running a debate, Davey. Just find your man and do it!

He hangs up.

29 EXT. BOYS CLUB - NIGHT - ALEX IN CORNICHE

29

as Alex's Corniche pulls up in front of the Boys Club.

30 INT. CORNICHE - NIGHT - ALEX

30

Alex looks at the bungalow -- at the pair of electrician's gloves laying on the seat beside him. He stuffs them in his back pocket as he exits the car and crosses to:

(X)

31 INT. BOYS CLUB - NIGHT - HERB

31

He is replacing a book in the bookcase -- not precisely but laying on its side over the tops of other books. It is entirely possible that we will be seeing this volume again before this tale is told.

Herb turns to face Alex as he enters. They face each other across a distance, both subdued.

ALEX

Thanks for waiting.

HERB

What was I going to do -- go dancing?

Alex sees the 35mm reel laying on the Kem table.

CONTINUED

31 CONTINUED

31

ALEX

Take the film. They're waiting
for us. And we've got a stop to
make.

HERB

(pocketing the
reel)

I don't believe this, Alex.

ALEX

I know.

(a beat)

You will.

32
thru 37
OMITTED

32
thru
37

38 EXT. BROWNSTONE STREET - NIGHT - THE CORNICHE

38

as the car turns onto the street, travels its length and
parks just around a corner.

39 CLOSER SHOT - ALEX AND HERB

39

as Alex gets out of the car.

ALEX

Come on.

Herb gets out also, follows Alex around the corner to:

39A EXT. BROWNSTONE STREET - ALEX AND HERB

39A

The deserted brownstone set, all false front and shadow,
is at once homely and malefic, banal and ominous. Confused
by this setting, Herb looks around. Light from somewhere
tails their figures with long shadows.

ALEX

Brownstone Street.

HERB

(doesn't like
this)

What for? Why'd you bring me
here?

CONTINUED

39A CONTINUED

39A

ALEX

To see the street.

He does a restless little whirling dance, an extravagant touch of Astaire, as:

ALEX

This is where we make movies.
Shadows on the handy-dandy screen.
This is where we kid you with
illusion. This is where we blow
your reality, Herbie.

(ends up facing
his friend, one
hand outflung
for a finish)

This is where I kill you, Herbie.
That's why I brought you here.

Herb stares, shrinks back a step.

ALEX

(a sudden grin)

Come on -- we could never hurt
each other, you and me.

HERB

(dry-throated)

The film -- it's the truth, isn't
it?

Alex advances on him, heavy with menace now, as:

ALEX

What the hell do you know about
truth? What's shadow, what's
substance, Herbie? They teach you
about that in the men's store?

Fully frightened now, Herb stumbles back from Alex's
threat, stumbles down a short flight of brownstone
stairs....

40 EXT. BELOW STREET LEVEL - HERB AND ALEX

40

as Herb catches his balance, looks up to Alex as Alex
descends toward him.

HERB

You're crazy....

CONTINUED

40 CONTINUED

40

ALEX

Better run, Herbie. Escape,
escape....

Herb turns and tears at the door at the base of the stairs. It swings open to reveal no exit -- a solid brick wall. He whirls to reface Alex as we hear the rumble of an approaching water truck. Now Alex is suddenly the pathetic victim of unearned treachery.

ALEX

That film -- you want to hurt me,
old friend. You want to hurt an
old friend. And that hurts me
right here.

Looming over Herb, he indicates his own heart. The sound of the truck is closer now.

41 EXT. STREET LEVEL - BROWNSTONE STREET - THE WATER TRUCK

41

A night beast comes to spray its sluice of water onto the deserted street. Alex and Herb, below street level, cannot be seen.

The truck moves on, leaving only the hard sheen of wet street and pavement, and its vanishing sound.

42 EXT. BELOW STREET LEVEL - HERB AND ALEX

42

ALEX

(reassuringly
now)

Hey, it's all an act. Don't you
know an act? I'm acting for you.

Herb darts past him, flees up the steps. Alex comes after him.

43 HERB

43

Again, in his haste, he stumbles and recovers; but now Alex is on him again from an unexpected direction, thrusting into shot.

(X)

ALEX

Here we go, Herbie.

