

LOU GRANT

"Friends"

by

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CAST

LOU GRANT.....EDWARD ASNER
CHARLIE HUME.....MASON ADAMS
JOE ROSSI.....ROBERT WALDEN
BILLIE NEWMAN.....LINDA KELSEY
ART DONOVAN.....JACK BANNON
ANIMAL.....DARYL ANDERSON
MRS. PYNCHON.....NANCY MARCHAND
ADAM WILSON.....ALLEN WILLIAMS
JERRY HOLLISTER.....
DOUG CARY.....
RALPH SHILLITOE *
PRICE TOWNSEND *
NOELLE KILMER.....
CLAIRE SZABO
BELLA.....
TYLER HUMPHRIES *
CASTILLO.....
JAYSON.....
KENNY GEISEL *
PHILLIP TRACY.....
CARL.....
KEACH.....

SETS

EXTERIOR:

L.A. SKYLINE
BACKYARD OF CARY'S HOUSE
PERSHING SQUARE
PHONE BOOTH
DOWNTOWN STREET
MACARTHUR PARK

INTERIOR:

CITY ROOM
HUME'S OFFICE
LOU'S OFFICE
CONFERENCE ROOM
TRIB CORRIDOR
LA CANTINA --
PYNCHON'S OFFICE
L.A. ATHLETIC CLUB -- INDOOR TRACK
CARY'S HOUSE
GREATER LOS ANGELES PRESS CLUB
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
HARRIS' OFFICE
VALLEY APARTMENT

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

1. EXT. LOS ANGELES SKYLINE - DAY 1.

Barely first light on a morning in winter, pale pink and chilled, too early yet and too cold for sensible people to be up and about. SOUNDS of unsensible people: hard breathing and running feet.

CUT TO:

2. INT. LOS ANGELES ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY 2.

A venerable old structure in the center of downtown. A banked track rims the gym, and here the early birds run including JOE ROSSI and a man his age, DOUG CARY. Their stride is in sync.

ROSSI

You feel like racing the last lap?

CARY

I feel like crawling back into bed.

ROSSI

Me too.

They run for a beat.

CARY

Are we going to race the last lap?

ROSSI

(already sprinting)

Yes.

He's half a stride ahead of Cary, who picks up the pace.

CARY

Hey, I got some news. Guess who just got appointed to the vacant supervisors seat?

ROSSI

(holding his lead)

Who?

CARY

Me.

ROSSI

What?

CONTINUED

2. CONTINUED

2.

Rossi slows his pace. Cary, grinning, spurts past. Rossi dashes after, trying to regain his lead. They both tear full blast around the track, very close but with Rossi slightly behind, pouring it on. They finish with Cary still ahead and crumple against the wall breathing hard.

ROSSI (CONT'D)

Not fair, Doug-O. You wait 'til the last lap to tell me.

CARY

I couldn't tell you before. The news was embargoed until seven this morning.

Rossi glances at the clock. The minute hand has just moved past seven.

ROSSI

You fink.

*
*

CARY

I don't think that's the proper form of address for a supervisor.

*
*
*

ROSSI

Excuse me, your finkness.

*
*

CARY

You know each supervisor in this county is more powerful than the mayor.

*
*
*

ROSSI

So now you're powerful. To me you're still a fink. *

*

He pulls a towel off the pile and tosses it roughly at Cary, then grabs one himself. They start to walk around the track to warm down.

CUT TO:

3. INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

3.

Early morning activity around the city desk. LOU and DONOVAN are going through the wire reports and memos that came in overnight.

LOU

You know that big cocaine bust in Chatsworth?

DONOVAN

Yeah.

LOU

Police lab report says the dope was cut with setamil, an Italian baby laxative.

CONTINUED

3. CONTINUED

3.

Donovan hardly responds.

LOU (CONT'D)
I wonder which is the bigger high.

DONOVAN
I don't know.

LOU
That was a joke.

DONOVAN
Oh.

LOU
You're chipper this morning.

DONOVAN
How chipper would you be if you'd
just found out that your house is
slipping down a hill? *

LOU
Depends on how I liked the view
from the bottom. *

DONOVAN
I had an engineer out there. It's
going to cost twenty thousand dollars
to shore it up. *

LOU
(sympathetic)
Oh boy.

Rossi enters.

ROSSI
Well, this is a big day for Los
Angeles. *

LOU
Why?

ROSSI
Doug Cary getting appointed supervisor.
Didn't you see it on the wires?

DONOVAN
He was appointed to fill the seat
left vacant when Supervisor Hartunian
died. Wasn't Assemblyman Harris
expected to get the position? *

CONTINUED

3. CONTINUED

3.

ROSSI

Yeah, that's why this is such a stroke of luck.

LOU

I don't know much about Cary.

ROSSI

Successful lawyer down here. Does a lot of public interest law. He helped draft some of the major non-discrimination in housing legislation. He is on the enlightened side of almost every issue. Besides being just a good guy.

LOU

How do you know he's a good guy?

ROSSI

We're old friends. I know him really well.

LOU

(two fingers together)

You and Cary.

ROSSI

As a matter of fact, yeah. We go way back. We waited on tables together at a sorority house in college. He's such a good-thinking guy, you wonder how he sneaked through. *

DONOVAN

Well, he was appointed, not elected.

LOU

Maybe if you've got good access we should swing you over to the Board of Supervisors.

ROSSI

No way. I mean it, Lou, we really are buddies. If someone digs that up, everything I wrote would be suspect. I don't mind briefing our guy. *

LOU

It's Tyler. Get with him when you can. *

Rossi crosses to his desk, passing Billie's desk.

4. ANGLE - BILLIE'S DESK

4.

Where JERRY HOLLISTER, the health editor, is hovering. *
To Billie's displeasure he is smoking a cigarette, although
he tucks it behind him as a kind of gesture of consideration.

HOLLISTER

Let me bounce something off you.

BILLIE

What?

HOLLISTER

Executive exercises. Exercises
you can do at your desk while
working, like raising up and down
in your chair while talking on the
phone. Ways for the busy man --
or woman -- to stay in shape.

BILLIE

Does it work?

HOLLISTER

I don't know. I made it up.

BILLIE

Maybe you could squeeze half a column *
out of it.

HOLLISTER

I was hoping to make it a series.
Any other ideas?

BILLIE

For my stories, yes. For the health
beat, no. Unless you want to write
about how smoking affects the health
of non-smokers around them.

HOLLISTER

(as though he just noticed)

Oh, sorry.

(moving off)

I've already done that column.

5. ANGLE - CITY DESK

5.

As Hollister comes up.

HOLLISTER (CONT'D)

Anything health oriented on the
morning wires?

LOU

Sorry, Jerry.

CONTINUED

5. CONTINUED

5.

HOLLISTER
It's one of those dry days.

LOU
Like every day.

HOLLISTER
Art, no ideas for me?

DONOVAN
Okay, look, they sprayed the plums
in Hemet with that new stuff --
what's it called?

HOLLISTER
Insecticide.

DONOVAN
It's a new kind. As a consumer, I'd
like to know if it's safe to eat the
plums if I just wash them with water
or if I need to do more.

HOLLISTER
Like what?

DONOVAN
Like sandpapering them.

HOLLISTER
I don't know.

DONOVAN
Maybe you could find out. Maybe
that would be a column. A pretty
good column.

HOLLISTER
Not really. But I can make it work.

*

He goes off. HUME passes by.

HUME
Art. When you have a minute.

He continues on to his office.

DONOVAN
(to Lou)
I've got a minute now.

*
*
*

Lou nods okay. Donovan follows Hume into his office.

*

6. INT. HUME'S OFFICE - DAY

6.

As Donovan follows Hume in.

*

CONTINUED

6. CONTINUED

6.

DONOVAN
 (enthusiastically)
 I've got a break on the acid
 rain story. A farmer up north who's
 mad gave us a hot interview.

*
*
*
*
*

HUME
 Can the series start this
 Sunday?

*
*
*

DONOVAN
 This Sunday?

*
*

HUME
 Yeah.

*
*

DONOVAN
 I still don't have the local
 angle.

*
*
*

HUME
 I just have a big hole Sunday,
 and we can use acid rain.

*

DONOVAN
 I need to sit down
 with Sweeney and Phelps and inte-
 grate what they've got. It's a
 question of finding the time this
 week.

*

HUME
 Which is hard for you when you're
 working the city desk
 as well as trying to be Environment
 editor.

*

DONOVAN
 Not ordinarily. A lot of things
 have been coming at us lately.

HUME
 And maybe we've picked the wrong
 time for you to be trying to do
 Environment.

DONOVAN
 You want to pull me off?

HUME
 I wanted to see how you felt about
 it. If it would make your life
 easier, don't feel you can't drop
 Environment. If you want to try
 it a little longer, that's okay too.

CONTINUED

6. CONTINUED

6.

DONOVAN
How long do I have?

HUME
Art, don't look at this as some
kind of test.

DONOVAN
Why not? That's what it is. But
don't worry. I'll pass.

He exits.

CUT TO:

7. EXT. BACKYARD OF CARY'S HOUSE - DAY

7.

A large older house in Hancock Park (or an equivalent neighborhood). The lawn is very green and very large, the flowers well-tended and in colorful bloom. It is morning and Cary and several aides are getting work done at a breakfast meeting on the back porch. Rossi is here also, sharing the breakfast and the political talk.

This is the transition period, as Cary takes over his new job, and the atmosphere should communicate that feeling of busy, active, positive excitement. A telephone at a small table to the side rings constantly and one aide does nothing but answer it and talk into it unobstructively and make notes. A sheriff's deputy in uniform, available for errands and maybe security, moves quietly in the background. PRICE TOWNSEND, a key assistant * sits next to Cary, going through a list of items to be addressed.

TOWNSEND *
All the references on Noelle Kilmer
confirm that she is bright, competent,
hard-working. She is quite young
though.

CARY
So?

TOWNSEND *
So if she doesn't work out, you're
going to be vulnerable for appointing
someone who is too inexperienced.

Townsend hands Cary a resume with a snapshot-size photo of *
Miss Kilmer.

CARY
But she's good?

TOWNSEND *
Yes.

CONTINUED

7. CONTINUED

7.

CARY

Then let's hire her.

Townsend checks that item off on his list, reaches into an attache * case open at his feet, takes out a manila envelope.

TOWNSEND

Okay, this is a real problem. *

CARY

Poll results, I'll bet.

TOWNSEND

(nodding) *

Shillitoe has a higher name recognition, * and he is definitely going to run.

(to Rossi) *

Too bad this isn't your beat. You * could plant something helpful for * us. *

ROSSI

I'm just here for breakfast. *

CARY

How long do we have? *

TOWNSEND

Seven weeks to the election which * means you should be passing him in a month or forget it, so your being the incumbent for this short a time * isn't going to help much.

CARY

It works against us. If I start * politicking now, I'll look like an opportunist who only cares about his re-election.

(to Rossi)

It's true, but I don't want to look * that way.

TOWNSEND

I don't think we have a choice. * Shillitoe, as a State Assemblyman, already has a political base. He * wanted this appointment very much.

CARY

Instead it went to me. He'll hit * us hard.

CONTINUED

ROSSI

And dirty.

CARY

Wonderful guy, Shillitoe. Do you remember *
hearing him on the radio when we were
in school? *

CONTINUED (TO 10)

7. CONTINUED

7.

ROSSI

Yeah, I liked him then when he had Shillitoe's 'Night Flight' -- mid-night to 6 a.m. show. Then he bought the station or something.

*
*

TOWNSEND

He was part of a syndicate that did. Through that he got into a couple of TV stations in the central valley. He was one of the first guys in cable, which is where he really made the big money. Then he got into politics.

*

CARY

Other than the fact that he's a caveman on all the important social issues of our time, it's an inspiring story.

TOWNSEND

You're going to have to campaign, Doug, or write the re-election off.

*

CARY

I'm just not comfortable with that. Why don't we let people know what we're doing first. Let them see me as a good supervisor for ten minutes.

*
*
*

TOWNSEND

Ten minutes I can live with.

*

CARY

Two weeks.

TOWNSEND

Okay, two weeks.
(going down his list)
Well, this might help -- request for an interview from Les Pearsall --

*

The aide by the phone signals Townsend.

*

TOWNSEND (CONT'D)

Munroe is here.

*

CARY

Okay, I can face the consequences of my decisions.
(to Rossi)
I took the Bears and seven Sunday.

CONTINUED

7. CONTINUED

7.

ROSSI
(sympathetic)

Oof.

CARY
You like the Rams in Pittsburgh?

ROSSI
I don't bet on anything where *
the ball bounces funny. *

Cary has been writing out a check. He hands it to Townsend. *

CARY
I made the check out to you. You
have the cash?

TOWNSEND *

Yeah.

CARY
We don't want a check with my name
on it going to those guys. I'll
put four bills on the Rams if the
spread hasn't changed.

TOWNSEND *

Okay.

Townsend takes check and heads into the house. Rossi observes *
the betting activity. He is enjoying being part of the political
scene -- sharing in it.

CARY (CONT'D)
Do you know this journalist, Les
Pearsall?

ROSSI
He's good, knows his stuff. You
won't get a fairer deal from anyone.

CARY
Thanks. That helps, Joe.

Rossi is pleased to be of help.

CUT TO:

8. INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

8.

Near deadline. Donovan, at work at his VDT, has called a copyboy, KENNY GEISEL,*
over.

DONOVAN
Get the clip file from the library
on the spraying of the plums in
Hemet.

CONTINUED

8. CONTINUED

8.

KENNY

Right.

Kenny goes.

DONOVAN

(after him)

And move, we're on deadline.

LOU

(holding phone receiver)

For you on three. A David Sloan.

Donovan sighs, doesn't look happy.

LOU (CONT'D)

What?

DONOVAN

He's an old friend who would like a job here, so I said we'd read his stuff. Charlie looked at it too.

LOU

Bad?

DONOVAN

Just not good. Just someone who shouldn't want to write. And a nice guy. Oh jeez.

*

He punches up the call.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hello?...Dave, how are you?... I'm fine...Look, I'm glad you called...I showed your file to some people here.

*

*

Donovan is searching for a way to preserve honesty, yet not hurt the man's feelings.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

What the deal is now is that we're not really looking for someone. ...Well, when that time comes, other people might have candidates.

*

*

What I think? Well, the writing was --

(MORE)

CONTINUED

8. CONTINUED

8.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

it was good for what those pieces were. Of course the style was not exactly what we usually go for here ...No, I did like it... Oh yeah,

I realize you can use the work. We're just not hiring... Sure will. Thanks, Dave. *

He hangs up, feeling rotten.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Where the hell is Kenny with that clip file?

LOU

You just sent him.

DONOVAN

I'm held up on this environmental impact piece until I get it and deadline's in twenty minutes.

Kenny returns, Donovan sees he doesn't have the file.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Where's the file?

KENNY

Jerry Hollister checked it out of the library.

DONOVAN

So get it from him.

KENNY

I tried. He wouldn't give it to me.

DONOVAN

You told him I needed it for deadline?

KENNY

He said you told him to use it and he's writing the column you wanted -- for deadline. He refused to give it to me.

Donovan is seething. Tight-lipped he stands, slams a desk drawer shut, marches out of the room, the fury building in him.

CUT TO:

9. INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

9.

Rossi, Billie and Animal are in the conference room. They notice Donovan striding past, angry. Then return to their work. Rossi has turned in today's story for deadline and is making notes. Billie is helping Animal identify the people in photographs of a labor convention.

BILLIE

This is Duncan, the head of the union. Animal didn't you get any names while you were there? *

ANIMAL

I was called after the meeting had started. I had a choice between getting pictures or getting names.

BILLIE

You caught this guy napping. Cute.

They flip to the next picture.

ROSSI

(overhearing)

The Teachers Union?

BILLIE

Yeah.

ROSSI

They're going to support Cary for supervisor.

ANIMAL

I hadn't heard that.

ROSSI

It isn't official yet.

Animal and Billie exchange a glance, amused at Mr. In-the-know.

ANIMAL

Ah, inside information.

ROSSI

I just heard it at breakfast. Smart move on the Teachers' part. Cary is really interested in improving education.

ANIMAL

(to Billie)

I think I'm okay on the rest of these. Oh, who's this?

CONTINUED

9. CONTINUED

9.

BILLIE

Margaret Harris, the publicist.

ANIMAL

Thanks.

He goes .

*

BILLIE

How do you know Doug Cary?

ROSSI

From college originally. Then I dropped out and he went on to law school. We hooked up again about seven years later and just picked up our last conversation where we'd left it off.

BILLIE

I know what you mean. I have a few friends like that.

*
*

ROSSI

Yeah, Doug is my only friend like that. Although we're real different. He likes to live more on the edge.

*
*

BILLIE

Being in politics.

ROSSI

Yeah, being up for election, driving fast, betting -- stuff like that.

BILLIE

What kind of betting?

ROSSI

Oh, just on football.

BILLIE

Big money?

ROSSI

Not huge. More than a few dollars. A few hundred dollars a game.

*

BILLIE

That can get a county supervisor in debt with the wrong people, can't it?

*

CONTINUED

9. CONTINUED

9.

ROSSI
Why -- if he's careful?

BILLIE
Are you going to give it to Tyler for background? *

ROSSI
Give it to Tyler? No, come on. *

CUT TO:

10. INT. TRIB CORRIDOR - DAY

10.

Mrs. Pynchon walks by a small office off the hallway, she reacts to the sound of a ruckus within, voices raised. The name on the door of the office is J. HOLLISTER. She continues on.

CUT TO:

11. INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

11.

Donovan returns to his desk. He looks upset, but he sets to work methodically. His hands are shaking.

LOU
What happened?

Donovan plunks a torn-off piece of a newspaper story on his desk next to his VDT.

DONOVAN
I got what I needed.

He doesn't want to talk about it. He sets to work.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

12. INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

12.

The next morning. TYLER HUMPHRIES joins Rossi at his desk. *

HUMPHRIES

Who is the last person you'd expect to be busted for possession of cocaine at a party last night? *

ROSSI

Mrs. Pynchon.

HUMPHRIES

Someone in politics. Someone with nothing to gain and everything to lose.

Rossi smiles knowingly.

HUMPHRIES (CONT'D)

You got it.

ROSSI

Alexander Haig.

HUMPHRIES

No.

ROSSI

Who?

HUMPHRIES

Ralph Shillitoe. Your buddy's competition in the supervisor's race. *

ROSSI

The only thing weird about that is his getting caught. Shillitoe involved with drugs doesn't surprise me. *

HUMPHRIES

With an election coming up?

ROSSI

I'm glad we're finding out before the election. What's that going to do to his lead?

HUMPHRIES

What lead?

CONTINUED

12. CONTINUED 12.

Something distracts Humphries, Rossi turns to follow his gaze.

13. ANGLE 13.

Crossing the city room is Jerry Hollister. One arm is bandaged and in a sling. He proceeds across the room with long-suffering restraint, drawing curious glances. He continues into Hume's office. No sooner is the door closed than:

14. ANGLE - CITY DESK 14.

Lou's phone buzzes. He picks up the receiver.

LOU

Yeah?...Okay, Charlie, I'll be right in.

He goes into Hume's office, also attracting curious looks.

15. INT. HUME'S OFFICE - DAY 15.

Lou enters, Hollister sits across from Hume.

HUME

Close the door. I think you ought to hear this.

HOLLISTER

I don't want to have to keep repeating it.

HUME

Just tell Lou what you told me.

HOLLISTER

Okay, I wasn't going to say anything, just stay home and recuperate, then I realized that wouldn't be right. And it actually took me a while to get angry. You know, I think I must have been in shock for a while.

LOU

What happened?

HOLLISTER

Well, yesterday I was working against deadline on my column -- on an idea that Donovan had suggested, a good idea to give him credit -- and then the man came into my office, in a very hostile state, started grabbing things off my desk, and when I asked him what the hell he thought he was doing, he hit me.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

15. CONTINUED

15.

HOLLISTER (CONT'D)

(indicates arm)

I sprained a wrist.

LOU

He hit you on the wrist?

HOLLISTER

He grabbed me by the throat, shook me -- I was so surprised I didn't have time to defend myself -- and he shoved me against the cabinets.

(of wrist)

That's when this happened. But the bad thing is I have high blood pressure and a heart condition. I saw a doctor -- my blood pressure was through the roof.

LOU

I'm sorry.

HOLLISTER

I appreciate that, Lou. I really do.

LOU

So what you're saying is that you and Donovan argued and you mixed it up.

HOLLISTER

I didn't mix anything up. I was too startled. And he was too rabid.

HUME

Donovan rabid?

HOLLISTER

Yeah, wigged out. He was threatening me with a pencil. I just wanted him to get out of there.

LOU

A pencil? An HB or a number two? *

HOLLISTER

He was waving it around. They can get in your eye, Lou.

LOU

Why didn't you come to me right away?

CONTINUED

15. CONTINUED

15.

HOLLISTER

This is right away. First I was shook up. Then I saw a doctor and he gave me something to help me sleep, which I did, and when I woke up, I came in.

LOU

Well, this is really unfortunate.

HOLLISTER

It's more than unfortunate. I'm afraid it would be wrong for me to just let this pass.

HUME

What do you mean, Jerry?

HOLLISTER

I mean I'm going to sue Art Donovan and the Tribune. I don't want to sue the Trib but my attorney says I have to.

Hollister appears to be a man with his mind made up. He means business.

CUT TO:

16. INT. LOU'S OFFICE - DAY

16.

Lou enters ahead of Donovan and goes to his desk.

LOU

Art, you want to get the door?

Donovan closes the door. He waits for Lou to start the discussion although he has a pretty good idea what it is going to be about.

LOU (CONT'D)

Okay, why don't you tell me what happened between you and Hollister?

DONOVAN

What did he say happened?

LOU

I'd rather just hear your side.

CONTINUED

16. CONTINUED

16.

DONOVAN

My side? You were there yesterday. I assume we're talking about yesterday. He wouldn't give the copy boy a clip file I needed, so I went and got it.

LOU

You went and physically got it?

DONOVAN

You saw me. I had to go to his office. I told him to cut out the nonsense. The clip I needed was on his desk. I grabbed it. The damn thing tore. I called him a jerk and came back to write the story.

LOU

You didn't hit him?

DONOVAN

Hit him? Are you serious?

LOU

Just tell me you didn't hit him.

DONOVAN

I didn't hit him.

LOU

What did you do to him?

DONOVAN

Nothing.

LOU

You didn't touch him?

DONOVAN

No.

(then)

Not really. I mean, I may have grabbed him by the collar. I walked in there and I said, "Okay, Hollister, where's the plum file?" And instead of just giving it to me or saying, "Here it is." He says, "I have it and I need it." So I'm thinking I don't have time to mess with this guy. I did take hold of his collar and told him to tell me where the file was. Then I saw it on his desk and let go.

CONTINUED

16. CONTINUED

16.

LOU

You didn't shove him?

DONOVAN

No. I released him. He stumbled backward.

LOU

You couldn't have shoved him?

DONOVAN

I didn't.

LOU

Okay, that's not not touching him.

DONOVAN

I touched his shirt, for half a second.

LOU

I have the true story now?

DONOVAN

Yes. What did Hollister say?

LOU

He says you hit him, grabbed him by the throat, shoved him. He hurt his wrist. He has a bad heart and he's going to sue.

*
*

DONOVAN

What a turkey.

CUT TO:

17. INT. CARY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

17.

A small dinner party is in progress. Cary is at the head of the table, Townsend sits nearby. The guests are presumably people of substance and influence. The talk is political.

*

CARY

I appreciated the Senator's people calling, first of all, because it was smart politically. They understand that the budget of the county supervisors in Los Angeles is like that of a small state, five billion dollars. Second, because I really am concerned on this health care issue and they knew it.

CONTINUED

17. CONTINUED

17.

At the opposite end of the table are Rossi and his dinner partner an attractive young woman, NOELLE KILMER.

NOELLE

I was surprised when I came back from Washington that the Tribune had really become a better newspaper than it was, say, ten years ago. I always read stories with your by-line too.

ROSSI

Thank you, Noelle. What were you doing in Washington?

NOELLE

I went there after Stanford to work.

ROSSI

As what?

NOELLE

A waitress -- what else did an M.A. in Poli Sci prepare me for? Then I got a volunteer job on a congressman's staff but I wanted to come home. Doug took a chance hiring such a neophyte and it's been great for me. He really is terrific. I'd do anything to see his career get going.

ROSSI

It's going pretty good.

Cary calls from the other end of the table.

CARY

Joe, did you hear that?

ROSSI

What?

TOWNSEND

It was on the news coming over here -- the charges against Shillitoe were dropped.

ROSSI

You're kidding. Why?

CONTINUED

17. CONTINUED

17.

TOWNSEND

*

Apparently it was a bad bust.
The cops had no right searching
the place.

NOELLE

He's holding a press conference
in the morning.

CARY

If he can talk his way out of
this one, he deserves to beat us.

TOWNSEND

*

(wincing)

Please, Doug -- not even in a joke.

The conversation breaks up into small groups again. Rossi turns
to Noelle.

ROSSI

Would you like to go out sometime?

NOELLE

Oh, that's nice, Joe. But I've
been seeing a fella in the Sheriff's
department. He's assigned here sometimes. *

But thank you. I hope this
doesn't mean we can't be friends. *

ROSSI

No, let's be friends.

As the party continues --

CUT TO:

18. INT. HUME'S OFFICE - DAY

18.

Lou, Hume, Rossi and Humphries are prepping for the upcoming
Harris press conference, spitballing questions, honing them
for maximum effectiveness.

ROSSI

The first question is did Shillitoe
have the cocaine? *

HUME

Right, and he says no.

LOU

Why don't we ask if he uses cocaine?

CONTINUED

18. CONTINUED

18.

HUME

He's not using it now, so he says no.

LOU

Ask if he's ever used it.

HUMPHRIES

That's good, because other people will have seen him in the past.

HUME

Ask him his future plans.

ROSSI

He'll be waiting for that one.

HUMPHRIES

What about giving him a chance to knock Cary?

ROSSI

That's just letting him off the hook, isn't it?

HUMPHRIES

He could give us a good quote. Maybe about Cary's gambling. I heard talk that he's a heavy bettor. *

LOU

I don't want to give Shillitoe an opening to go after Cary at this press conference. *

HUME

I'd like to hear Shillitoe's views on drug use -- is he for lighter penalties? *

LOU

Good, get into his views on crime in general here.

ROSSI

Nice. Has he used dope is still first...

CUT TO:

19. INT. SHILLITOE'S OFFICE - DAY.

19. *

This is his assembly district office where Shillitoe is holding a press conference well attended by electronic and print journalists. RALPH SHILLITOE is poised and articulate, dressed in a neat suit, a man in his early forties. He has a regular guy quality about him that must appeal to his constituents and a way of talking that takes you into his confidence, as though he's talking to one person alone in a small room. His demeanor suggests that although he is not going to cry about it, he has been wronged. *

CONTINUED -

19. CONTINUED

19.

The press conference is going full blast. Shillitoe is answering a question. *

SHILLITOE *

...If there were illegal drugs in my home, they did not belong to me.

Sixteen reporters talk at once.

PRESS *

Mr. Shillitoe. Assemblyman. Mr. Shillitoe. *

SHILLITOE *

(indicating a reporter)

Carl.

CARL

Where did the drugs come from?

SHILLITOE *

Perhaps a guest, who hid the stuff when the sheriff's officers arrived to investigate the noise complaint. Your guess is as good as mine.

Rossi has his hand up and gets the nod.

ROSSI

Have you ever used cocaine?

SHILLITOE *

No.

He quickly points to another reporter (KEACH), and there is no chance to follow up.

KEACH

Will you still run for Doug Cary's supervisor's seat?

SHILLITOE *

You bet.

Harris points to Humphries.

HUMPHRIES

Have contributions to your campaign slowed?

CONTINUED

19. CONTINUED

19.

SHILLITOE

*

Yes, they have. We've been hurt by this, there is no question. We now have to move forward and hope that I am judged on my record. You know, I am frustrated that the charges against me were dropped because the arrest was illegal. I will now not have a chance to prove my innocence in court. In our system a person is innocent until proven guilty. In politics it is the other way around. Thank you.

He departs the podium before further questions can be asked. Several reporters still have hands up and are trying to get his attention, but Shillitoe is quickly gone. *

The group starts to break up. Humphries and Rossi move toward each other and start to head out together.

HUMPHRIES

(quietly to Rossi)

Rings true, doesn't it?

Rossi sort of nods. He can't deny it.

CUT TO:

20. INT. LA CANTINA - DAY

20.

The little snack area on the fourth floor of the Trib, also known as the Picasso Room because of the faded poster by the artist which is the one attempt at decor. Most of the wall space is taken up with food dispensing machines. Billie and Animal are alone here, discussing the hot topic of the week at the Trib.

BILLIE

Art Donovan is a gentle, rational person. *

ANIMAL

People like that are the first to blow.

BILLIE

That's junk, Animal. That argument really bugs me because its using the man's good qualities against him. I'm not saying Art is some uptight type who can't express anger. He expresses anger just fine and he wouldn't hit someone who worked for him.

CONTINUED

20. CONTINUED

20.

ANIMAL

What did you think when you first heard about the fight?

BILLIE

It really upset me as a matter of fact. I felt sick to my stomach.

ANIMAL

Because inside you believed it was possible.

BILLIE

No, because the whole thing was so distasteful. *

ANIMAL

Look, Art was hassled trying to work the desk and be Environment editor and I heard he was getting static from Charlie about it and his house was slipping into the Pacific Ocean -- *

BILLIE

Okay...sure, but... *

ANIMAL

So he was under huge pressure and he needed something from Hollister, who frankly tees me off when I say hello to him in the elevator.

BILLIE

Hollister is a pain in the neck. That isn't a reason to hit him.

ANIMAL

I just know how exasperating he can be. Just because we like Art better than Hollister doesn't mean that Hollister isn't telling the truth here. Nobody is saying Art walked in there swinging, but if Hollister got testy with him -- I'd want to strangle the guy. You would.

BILLIE

Hollister works for Art. There's no reason for him to get physical.

CONTINUED

20. CONTINUED

20.

ANIMAL

Art doesn't deny he grabbed Hollister by the shirt. How far is it from grabbing someone and letting him go and actually shoving him? I'm not sure that at the height of anger you even know what you're doing --

Animal stops midsentence as Donovan enters, crosses to a machine.

ANIMAL (CONT'D)

Hi, Art.

BILLIE

Hi, Art.

DONOVAN

Hi, guys.

BILLIE

(to Animal)

Anyway, we're assigned together on the sewage plant story.

She seems to run out of conversation. Nobody is fooling anybody here about what they were talking about a moment ago. The awkwardness of the moment stretches out unbearably.

Donovan is standing with coin poised before a machine.

ANIMAL

The apples are good.

DONOVAN

I'll try an apple.

He puts in a coin, pushes a button, the apple drops out. He takes it and goes. Animal and Billie look at each other, embarrassed, uncomfortable.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

21. INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NEWS BUDGET MEETING - DAY

21.

The daily three o'clock meeting is about to get under way. The early arrivals, JAYSON, executive news editor, ADAM WILSON, financial, CASTILLO, national are comparing notes on the biggest news item of the day.

CASTILLO

We were at a movie in Westwood, my wife and I, and Art and his date, and some guy behind us kept talking.

*
*

ADAM

The most annoying thing in the world.

CASTILLO

Art became a different person, asked the guy if he wanted to step outside.

*

ADAM

Good for him.

CASTILLO

I'm telling you, he was out of control. Art was ready to slaughter him.

*

JAYSON

What happened?

CASTILLO

I said, let's just move.

JAYSON

And?

CASTILLO

And we did.

JAYSON

Okay, faced with the most annoying thing in the world, Art did control himself.

Lou enters.

CASTILLO

I'm telling you -- the guy has a short fuse. I also know that he's not married.

CONTINUED

21. CONTINUED

21.

LOU

That's grounds for a suit right there.

ADAM

What are you saying, Art can't get along with people?

*

CASTILLO

I'm saying a steady relationship can be a stabilizing influence.

*

LOU

That's why most murders are the result of domestic quarrels.

ADAM

Anyway, Art has had steady relationships. Hundreds of them.

Hume enters, takes a seat, all business.

HUME

Can we get started? Lou?

LOU

I've got a poll showing Shillitoe is almost out of the supervisors race.

*

HUME

Taken after his press conference?

LOU

After the press conference.

ADAM

People don't like their leaders to do drugs.

CASTILLO

If he did.

ADAM

You don't think so?

CASTILLO

It's a locked door mystery. I think we'll never know the truth, just like we'll never know what happened in that room between Art and Jerry Hollister.

CONTINUED

21. CONTINUED

21.

HUME

Hold it, Ruben. Let me just say this to everyone right now. We've had an unfortunate occurrence. Gossip and innuendo only aggravate a lousy situation, so let's stick with putting out the news and ease up on the gossip. What do you have for national?

CASTILLO

Senator Fleming vacationing in St. Moritz with a well-known actress, not his wife.

ADAM

Who?

*

*

LOU

*

*

Who?

HUME

Who?

*

22. INT. PERSHING SQUARE - DAY

CUT TO:

22.*

Rossi talks to a woman we haven't seen before, CLAIRE SZABO, a very put-together person in her late thirties. She is at the moment upset by recent events and rattled to be talking to a reporter -- it's something, however, she feels she must do.

CLAIRE

I didn't want to meet at the office. Some of the others might not approve, but I think this is the right thing to do.

ROSSI

I think so too. How long have you worked for Ralph Shillitoe?

*

CLAIRE

Since he gave up his business interests to be full time in politics -- that would be the first assembly campaign. Maybe this wasn't a good place to meet -- it's very exposed.

ROSSI

(observing the local bums)

I don't think the group here is too interested. Were you at the party the night Shillitoe was arrested?

*

CONTINUED

22. CONTINUED

22.

CLAIRE

I organized the party. That's one of the reasons I feel so terrible. Then somebody brings somebody who has this cocaine on them.

ROSSI

Who?

CLAIRE

I have no idea. They'll never admit it.

ROSSI

It wasn't someone on the staff?

CLAIRE

No. Even if we took drugs we'd never be dumb enough to use them at a public gathering like that. We've worked too hard for Ralph.

ROSSI

Ralph of course was once a disc jockey, involved in the music business. It's hard to believe cocaine is unfamiliar to him.

CLAIRE

In the years I've been with Ralph I've never seen a hint of that. It's impossible for me to believe that he had illegal drugs in his house that night.

Sometimes reporters just work on instinct. Rossi's instinct tells him this woman is telling the truth.

CUT TO:

23. INT. PYNCHON'S OFFICE - DAY

23.

Mrs. Pynchon is ensconced behind masses of paperwork on her desk as Lou enters.

MRS. PYNCHON

Close the door, please, Mr. Grant.
And come in.

Lou closes the door, as Mrs. Pynchon finishes a run on her desk calculator. The sum that comes up displeases her.

CONTINUED

23. CONTINUED

23.

MRS. PYNCHON (CONT'D)
Have a seat.

Lou sits.

MRS. PYNCHON (CONT'D)
So.

LOU
So.

MRS. PYNCHON
I hear your employees are settling
their differences these days by
armed violence.

LOU
Armed violence?

MRS. PYNCHON
The latest version has Mr. Donovan
chucking a typewriter at Mr. Hollister.

LOU
Not true.

MRS. PYNCHON
I didn't think so. Unfortunately
the top of an organization is the
worst position for getting the good
gossip.

LOU
You know how these things get blown
out of proportion.

MRS. PYNCHON
Of course.
(then)
Were they really arguing over that
new girl in advertising?

LOU
No, it was about work.

MRS. PYNCHON
(disappointed)
Oh. There was also some crazy talk
about a lawsuit. *

LOU
That's...true. *

CONTINUED

23. CONTINUED

23.

MRS. PYNCHON

Oh.

LOU

Hollister said he was going to sue, but we haven't received any papers yet.

MRS. PYNCHON

I hope you're seeking to find the truth of the matter.

LOU

Yeah, I'm the chief investigator on the case. That's why I'm here.

MRS. PYNCHON

I'm clean, Mr. Grant. I don't get physical to get my way with people. Having enormous wealth and power is a better way to go. *

LOU

My sources place you at the scene of the incident at the time it took place.

MRS. PYNCHON

They do? That's really aggravating. *

LOU

You weren't there?

MRS. PYNCHON

Well, yes, I was. *

(adding quickly)

But I'm a terrible witness. I didn't see anything. I heard voices raised, but what I heard was certainly out of context.

LOU

What did you hear?

MRS. PYNCHON

(not liking to say it)

I thought I heard Mr. Donovan calling Mr. Hollister a decrepit old has-been and threatening to break him in half.

As Lou considers this,

CUT TO:

24. INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

24.

Rossi hurries through the desks, drops his jacket off at his chair, continues to the city desk. He sees that Lou is not at his desk, but Donovan is there.

ROSSI

Where's Lou?

DONOVAN

Out.

ROSSI

Oh.

DONOVAN

Can you tell me?

ROSSI

Yeah, sure.

(then)

I've talked to a lot of people. I'm pretty convinced that it was not Shillitoe's cocaine that was found at his party. It's even hard to believe that one of his guests brought it.

*

DONOVAN

Then where do you think the dope came from?

Rossi shrugs.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

You know, there's not a lot of love for Shillitoe in the sherriff's department.

*

ROSSI

What do you mean?

DONOVAN

Well, Shillitoe has always wanted to cut their budget as part of his overall efficiency in government position.

*

ROSSI

Maybe I should look around there a bit. I'll need a contact.

DONOVAN

I know a sheriff's deputy in that office.

CONTINUED

24. CONTINUED

24.

He flips through his rolodex for the number.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Here.

CUT TO:

25. INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SUBSTATION - DAY

25.

A female deputy brings over a file to where Rossi sits at a little desk. Her name is BELLA.

BELLA

This should be most of it.

ROSSI

Thanks.

BELLA

(continuing a previous thought)

Art Donovan was a nice change for me from all these macho types around here whose idea of a good time is throwing their buddy through a window.

ROSSI

(more interested in the file)

Yeah.

BELLA

Such a gentle, sensitive guy. How's he doing?

ROSSI

Fine. Look, Bella, can you check something for me?

BELLA

What?

ROSSI

I'm looking at the lab report here on the coke that was found at Shillitoe's house and it was cut with setamil. Is that common? *

BELLA

I don't know.

ROSSI

In that big bust in Chatsworth -- wasn't the dope also cut with setamil? It's an Italian laxative.

CONTINUED

25. CONTINUED

25.

BELLA
(getting uncomfortable)
You could be right.

ROSSI
It would be interesting to know.

Bella is unhappy about this turn.

ROSSI (CONT'D)
If it was the same formula,
for example, Art and I would
like to know.

BELLA
(a decision)
I'll call you.

CUT TO:

26. INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

26.

Near deadline. Things are tense and awkward between Lou and Donovan.

LOU
(calling)
Sweeney, you have to re-do the
lead on the freeway sniper.

(to Donovan) *
Where's Rosenthal? I thought
you said he'd be back by dead-
line?

DONOVAN
(tightly)
I told him to be here. He said
he would be.

LOU
He's been getting awfully sloppy
lately. We'd better do something.

DONOVAN
Okay, when he gets back, I'll
beat him up.

It's said without a lot of fun.

27. ANGLE - ROSSI'S DESK

27.

Billie is at her desk, typing away on a story. Everyone nearby
is busy, working against deadline. Rossi sits, nothing to do,

CONTINUED

27. CONTINUED

27.

staring at the phone. It rings. He picks it up.

ROSSI
(into phone)
Rossi...Yeah, Bella?

CUT TO:

28. EXT. STREET - PHONE BOOTH - DAY

28.

Bella is talking into the phone.

BELLA
(into phone)
You were right.

INTERCUT:

ROSSI
The same stuff?

BELLA
The same formula. Look, Joe,
you don't know me, okay?

ROSSI
Okay, but I don't think you have
to feel concerned personally.
This is a matter of public record.

BELLA
That was. What I'm about to tell
you isn't.

ROSSI
Yeah?

BELLA
Seven grams was what was found at
Shillitoe's house. Seven grams is
missing from the stuff seized in
the Chatsworth bust. *

ROSSI
Interesting. Bella, I may need to
call you again.

BELLA
You understand what this means,
don't you?

ROSSI
I think so.

CONTINUED

28. CONTINUED

28.

BELLA

Then I feel I've done enough.
Don't call me. Goodbye.

She hangs up.

CUT TO:

29. INT. SHILLITOE'S OFFICE - DAY

29. *

It is plain and practical. Staffers are visible through glass dividers, but Rossi and Shillitoe can talk privately. *

ROSSI

Let's talk about the night of the arrest.

SHILLITOE *

If we have to.

ROSSI

How many sheriffs came to the house?

SHILLITOE *

Two. They obviously weren't starting out to make a dope bust. They were investigating a noise complaint -- we weren't even being that noisy. They didn't have a right to search. That's why the case was thrown out.

ROSSI

Who made the noise complaint?

SHILLITOE *

A neighbor, I guess. I never heard who it was.

ROSSI

Do you remember the two deputies' names?

SHILLITOE *

No. One was a big guy, blond. The other was sort of average-looking, brown hair I think. Not memorable.

ROSSI

Which one came out of the kitchen with the cocaine?

CONTINUED

29. CONTINUED

29.

SHILLITOE

The big guy.

ROSSI

Okay, thank you.

CUT TO:

30. INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE SUBSTATION - DAY

30.

Bella is on duty in the office. The phone rings. She picks it up.

BELLA

(into phone)

Sheriff's office.

(suddenly angry,
undertone)

What?

CUT TO:

31. INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

31.

Rossi at his desk, making call.

ROSSI

(into phone, quickly)

Don't hang up. One easy question.

The arrest report mentions two

deputies -- Clyde Deal and

Franklin Staggett. Which one is the
big blond guy?

INTERCUT:

BELLA

(hating this)

I'm sorry I can't say when you
ask it like that.

Rossi thinks -- what does she mean? -- then gets it, rephrases.

ROSSI

Is Deal the blond?

BELLA

No.

ROSSI

Okay, now I just need to know
was Staggett anywhere near the Chats-
worth contraband --

Bella hangs up.

CUT TO:

32. INT. CITY ROOM - NIGHT

32.

A quiet city room. Rossi is working at his desk late. The phone rings. He picks it up.

CUT TO:

33. EXT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

33.

Bella making a call.

BELLA
(into phone)
This is the last time.

INTERCUT:

ROSSI
(into phone)
Yeah?

BELLA
Staggett signed in to the property
room two days before the Shillitoe
arrest. He is, in fact, under
investigation by Internal Affairs. You
want to talk more, you talk to
him. Five-five-five --

*
*
*

ROSSI
(grabbing pencil)
Wait a sec.

Without waiting she just starts repeating, but he gets it.

BELLA
Five-five-five-two-one-six-
oh.

ROSSI
Listen, thank you so much --

She has already hung up. Rossi hangs up, considers the phone, then picks it up and dials the number in front of him. A woman answers.

WOMAN'S VOICE (FILTER)
Hello.

ROSSI
(into phone)
Hello, this is Joe Rossi from --

CUT TO:

NO CHANGE

34. INT. VALLEY APARTMENT - NIGHT

34.

The person holding the phone is the woman Rossi met at Cary's house, Noelle Kilmer.

NOELLE

(into phone)

Hi, Joe. How did you find me?
I'm glad you decided we could
still be friends.

INTERCUT:

ROSSI

Noelle?

NOELLE

Yeah, this is me. It's nice
to hear from you.

Rossi is stunned.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

35. INT. LOU'S OFFICE - DAY

35.

Lou is going over Rossi's story on his VDT. Rossi watches, discusses the piece, but without the reportorial aggressiveness we expect from him.

LOU

Now here you say Deputy Staggett is under investigation by Sheriff's Internal Affairs. That has to be confirmed by two sources. *

ROSSI

It is.

LOU

They suspect he planted the cocaine in Shillitoe's house? *

ROSSI

That's the implication.

LOU

But why?

ROSSI

Because a lot of people in the Sheriff's Office do not want to see Ralph Shillitoe become supervisor and start slashing their budget. *

LOU

But the Sheriff's Office is investigating this by itself. That hardly suggests some kind of sheriff's conspiracy.

ROSSI

No, my impression is that the Sheriff's Office is pretty straight. This guy is just a bad apple.

LOU

That's not too satisfying, Rossi. What does one guy have to gain from this kind of frame-up?

ROSSI

Maybe he's a true believer.

CONTINUED

35. CONTINUED

35.

LOU

Maybe. Okay, what do you want to do next?

ROSSI

I don't know. What do you want to do?

LOU

I don't know, Marty, what do you want to do?

ROSSI

I've taken my source about as far as she'll go. When we run this story, the competition will be climbing all over the Sheriff. Maybe that will jog something loose.

LOU

When did you start waiting for the competition to jog things loose?

ROSSI

I'll give it some more thought.

LOU

(solicitous)

Not if you have more important things to think about.

Rossi nods.

CUT TO:

36. INT. MRS. PYNCHON'S OFFICE - DAY

36.

A formal meeting. Mrs. Pynchon, Lou, and Hume meet with Jerry Hollister and his lawyer, PHILLIP TRACY.

HOLLISTER

I feel no animosity toward the Tribune or any of the people in this room, so I wanted to come here, with my attorney, and explain our suit.

LOU

Suing people suggests you have some beef with them.

CONTINUED

36. CONTINUED

36.

TRACY

I think what Jerry means is that he's not out to "get" the Trib. He just wants justice.

HUME

What's your definition of justice, Mr. Tracy?

TRACY

Compensation for my client's injuries and the feeling that his employers understand what happened and are taking measures to correct it.

HUME

How can we correct what happened?

HOLLISTER

I notice Art Donovan still works at the Trib.

Hume and Lou talk amost at once.

LOU

You want us to fire Donovan?

HUME

Get rid of Donovan as part of a settlement -- is that what you're suggesting?

TRACY

My client is looking for a measure of good faith from the Tribune, something that could be an ameliorating circumstance. *

MRS. PYNCHON

Gentlemen, how would you like me to tell you how I feel?

All four men are immediately attentive.

MRS. PYNCHON (CONT'D)

I understand the desire for justice, the need to repair a wrong. What I don't understand is why, today, when things don't go the way someone wants, the first words out of his mouth are "law suit."

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

LOU

We know about as much as you did
after you walked by Hollister's
office.

*
*
*
*

MRS. PYNCHON

I talked tough to that lawyer
but I agree with Mr. Hume.
We'd better do something to
cover ourselves. At the very
least we should keep Mr. Hollister
and Mr. Donovan apart.

*
*
*
*
*
*

CONTINUED (TO 48)

TRACY

Some time has gone by since the incident --

MRS. PYNCHON

But Mr. Hollister was talking about suing the Tribune as well as Mr. Donovan the very next day. And why sue the Tribune? Because the Tribune is thought to have large assets, and therefore, maybe we will settle -- and pay some money, in order to avoid the costs of a court case and in order to go about our business of publishing a newspaper.

TRACY

My client has a valid claim.

MRS. PYNCHON

Then make your case in court. You may not be feeling animosity, Mr. Hollister, but when someone threatens me with a law suit, I get teed off. If you persist in this, we will fight. Do we have anything else to talk about?

Hollister and Tracy stand.

HOLLISTER

I understand your position, Mrs. Pynchon. Thanks for hearing us out.

TRACY

Goodbye.

The two men leave, Hollister limping just a tad for good measure. When the door closes behind them, Hume, Lou and Mrs. Pynchon are depressed.

HUME

Well, we'd better do something.

LOU

What? You wouldn't consider firing Donovan, would you?

MRS. PYNCHON

Mr. Grant, how is your investigation coming? What do you know now? *

*

CONTINUED (TO 47A)

#1510 . NO CHANGE

36. CONTINUED

36.

LOU

Oh, great. I'll put a fence up in the city room.

HUME

Well, we can take Donovan off the Environment desk so they don't have to work together.

MRS. PYNCHON

Good compromise.

Lou doesn't necessarily agree.

CUT TO:

37. INT. HUME'S OFFICE - DAY

37.

Hume is at his desk as Donovan leans in.

DONOVAN

I'm going to get with Sweeney and Phelps on the acid rain story this afternoon.

HUME

Oh. You don't have to.

DONOVAN

You're not going to use it Sunday?

Hume

Yes, but I told Burroughs to work the environment desk for a while.

DONOVAN

Oh.

HUME

I think he's already talked to Sweeney and Phelps.

DONOVAN

Oh.

He turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

38. INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

38.

Billie is reading the newspaper and eating her lunch as Rossi enters with a brown bag, sits, starts to open his bag then stops.

CONTINUED

38. CONTINUED

38.

ROSSI

Check me out on something, will you?

BILLIE

Sure.

ROSSI

The Shillitoe cocaine bust.

BILLIE

I was just reading your piece. It's turning into a good story.

ROSSI

Turning into? You think there's more?

BILLIE

Isn't there?

ROSSI

I don't know.

BILLIE

What do you know?

ROSSI

Shillitoe was arrested for cocaine possession, causing great damage to his political career, in an apparent frame-up. The trail leads to the sheriff's department, where there is hostility to Shillitoe and it leads apparently to one man, Deputy Staggett, who is under investigation by the department itself.

*
*
*
*

BILLIE

And there the trail ends.

ROSSI

Not quite. Staggett has a girl friend, Noelle. She works for Doug Cary.

*

BILLIE

And Cary stands to gain the most from Shillitoe's downfall.

*

ROSSI

I know the girl. Very bright, attractive, young. She actually told me she would do anything to see Cary succeed.

CONTINUED

38. CONTINUED

38.

BILLIE

What does she do for Cary?

ROSSI

She's an aide.

BILLIE

The closer the frame-up gets to
Cary the better the story.

ROSSI

So here's a young person, who in
her zeal to help a good man, might
be responsible for ruining him.

BILLIE

That's a wonderful story.

ROSSI

And if I pass it on to Tyler,
I'm contributing to Cary's fall. *

BILLIE

Do you want me to tell you we shouldn't
do the story? You know that's not the
answer. Cary hired this person. Part
of being a leader is hiring the right
people.

ROSSI

He even went out on a limb, giving
someone so young a chance.

BILLIE

If she was that young, she must have
been a very junior aide. Do junior
aides usually do these things on their
own?

Rossi glances at Billie sharply, looks away, thinking.

CUT TO:

39. EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

39.

Rossi, needing some air, takes a long, long walk. He passes
a range of downtown denizens, and central city sights, oblivious
to all of it, turning things over in his mind.

CUT TO:

40. EXT. MACARTHUR PARK - DAY

40.

Rossi, unaware where his feet have taken him, walks along the
side of the lake. It's a cold day. Leaves spin in little

CONTINUED

40. CONTINUED

40.

eddies on the path and the surface of the water is ruffled by the breeze.

A41. EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A41. *
*

Rossi is still walking. The journey through the city is aimless. The journey through logic has only one end, which Rossi can no longer avoid --

CUT TO:

41. INT. ATHLETIC CLUB - INDOOR TRACK - DAY

41.

Running feet pounding the floorboards. Rossi and Cary jog side by side.

CARY

Last lap.

ROSSI

I'm with you.

They both take off for the final sprint, tear around the track neck and neck. Cary is ahead as they finish and both collapse near the pile of towels, winded, panting. They force themselves to get up, keep moving.

CARY

Feeling your age today, sport?

ROSSI

Why are you feeling so full of spunk?

CARY

I'm not. I just had to get back at you after the Trib did that story saying that Shillitoe was framed -- you could revive that guy's political fortunes.

*

ROSSI

Let me ask you something about that.

CARY

Uh oh. This sounds like it could be official business.

ROSSI

Let's call it official business.

Cary chucks a towel at Rossi, grabs one for himself.

CARY

Yeah?

CONTINUED

41. CONTINUED

41.

ROSSI

What do you know about the frame-up?

CARY

What I read in the papers.

ROSSI

Deputy Staggett was one of the sheriff's people assigned to you. *

CARY

Once or twice. There is no regular deputy.

ROSSI

He is also Noelle Kilmer's boyfriend.

CARY

And not worthy of her, I might add.

ROSSI

Right, not the kind of guy who could put a frame-up like this into action by himself.

CARY

Are you suggesting Noelle was involved?

ROSSI

I don't think she would be involved by herself either.

A beat, while Cary thinks hard.

CARY

Look, Joe, why don't you stop playing cute little reporter games with me. You don't have anything. *

ROSSI

I just about have it all. *

CARY

Then you've got a problem, don't you?

ROSSI

I've got a problem?

CONTINUED

CARY

Yeah, whether to be a reporter or a friend -- forget friend -- whether to be a muckraking reporter or a good citizen, because what you write can be the difference between Shillitoe or me being in power in this county, and that's, simply, the difference between bad and good.

*

ROSSI

Was the frame-up your idea?

CARY

No.

ROSSI

Your chief aide's then. And you knew about it?

*

Cary looks at Rossi -- for the first time at a loss for words. Rossi continues, running on reportorial reflex.

ROSSI (CONT'D)

Tell me your side.

CARY

Joe, you know how it is.

ROSSI

How is it?

CARY

If you want something, you have to make it happen.

ROSSI

I don't make things happen.

CARY

No, because a long time ago you made a decision to be an observer, a recorder, not a participant. To be a leader you have to take charge of events. Shillitoe is a bad guy. We both know he's done coke -- a story the press was doing a lousy job of getting out. Truth needed a little helping along to emerge.

*

Rossi turns away from Cary, slams his fist into the pile of towels.

CONTINUED

41. CONTINUED

41.

ROSSI

You...

(wants the worst word
he can think of)

fink.

*

CARY

Come on, Joe, stop acting like
you're a babe in the woods.
You're a grown up reporter for
a big city newspaper. People
play hardball in the real world.

ROSSI

How could you do this?

CARY

Shillitoe will probably survive this anyway.
(genuinely)

*

*

*

Look, buddy --

ROSSI

Aren't you missing a little irony
we have going here, buddy? What
you did is going to come out. It's
going to backfire.

CARY

Not if you're a friend.

As Cary and Rossi look at each other --

CUT TO:

42. INT. LOU'S OFFICE - DAY

42.

Lou is at his desk, looks up as Donovan enters.

LOU

Come in, Art.

DONOVAN

(all business)

Rosenthal is in Long Beach. I
found a photog in San Pedro who
will get to the site.

LOU

Good. Close the door.

Donovan closes the door.

DONOVAN

(neutral)

What?

CONTINUED

42. CONTINUED

42.

LOU
Hollister dropped his suit.

DONOVAN
Against the Trib or against me?

LOU
Both.

DONOVAN
Okay.
(opens door to go)
Anything else?

LOU
Well, aren't you pleased?

DONOVAN
I'm glad to hear it.

LOU
Well, I sure was glad to hear it.
Apparently he interpreted our moving
you off Environment as a
kind of concession and that softened
the hurt feelings. It's funny how
a little thing like that can make
such a difference. *

Donovan shuts the door.

DONOVAN
Little thing? Lou, you know how
much I want to do Environment. I
busted my tail to
make the Trib competitive in that
area. And I don't appreciate being
taken off it because of things that
creep Hollister said about me. *

LOU
Well, that's past now that he's
dropped the suit.

DONOVAN
Why should he have to go to court
when you and everyone else as much
as admitted he was right by taking
Environment away from me? *

LOU
I promise you this is temporary. *
The guy was waving a lawsuit in our faces *
and we had to throw him a bone. I don't think *

(MORE)

CONTINUED

42. CONTINUED

42.

LOU (CONT'D)

most people -- especially those who know you -- believed you hit Hollister.

DONOVAN

They didn't believe I didn't.

LOU

I think they just didn't know.

DONOVAN

Exactly. And my word didn't count for anything. Not even with you, Lou. You can't simply just believe me.

LOU

I didn't say I didn't believe you.

DONOVAN

Do you believe me?

LOU

Don't put me in that position.

DONOVAN

Fine.

LOU

Look, you probably don't know exactly what went down yourself and now I don't need to know. What if it had been me who was involved in a hassle with Hollister

or somebody, and you heard about it? Could you say categorically that you know in your heart I wouldn't have hit the guy?

*
*
*

DONOVAN

No.

LOU

(offended)

You didn't have to answer so quickly.

(then)

Aw, Art. Come on. Let me off the hook here. No matter what happened in that room, can't we go back to our normal way of working together?

*
*
*
*

DONOVAN

Lou, our normal way of working together is to argue all the time.

*
*

CONTINUED

42. CONTINUED

42.

LOU

Yeah. Let's go back to that.

Donovan smiles.

*
*
*
*
*

CUT TO:

43. INT. CITY ROOM - HUMPHRIES DESK - DAY

43.

Tyler types at his VDT. Billie and Rossi read over his shoulder.

*

BILLIE

The frame-up went as high as Cary. Wow. Was that hard to get?

ROSSI

I got it from Cary, himself. I let him think I knew more than I did. Standard technique.

*
*

BILLIE

Yeah.

(then)

I'm sorry, Joe. It's tough -- you being so close to him.

ROSSI

It's a tough world.

(controlled)

You've got to play hardball, right?

He turns away, goes by his desk. He grabs his coat and walks over to Donovan.

ROSSI (CONT'D)

I'm done. I'm going to beat it, okay?

DONOVAN

Okay.

ROSSI

You still jogging?

DONOVAN

A few times a week.

ROSSI

You want to run tomorrow? I'm free.

CONTINUED

43. CONTINUED

43.

DONOVAN
Yeah, okay.

ROSSI
Six?

DONOVAN
Try seven-thirty.

ROSSI
Seven-thirty? The day will be
over.

DONOVAN
Seven?

ROSSI
Six-thirty.

DONOVAN
Six forty-five.

ROSSI
Fink. *

Rossi throws his coat over his shoulder, heads out. Donovan
goes back to work.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

THE END