

"DARK CITY"

by

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FADE IN ON:

INT. BEDROOM - PANNING SLOWLY ACROSS A DRESSER

strewn with personal items. We see a wallet, a fedora, a sleek-looking gun in a shoulder holster, and a photo under glass of a beaming bride and groom on their wedding day. A luminous digital clock reads 4:25.

KEEP PANNING to see we're in a cluttered bedroom. It's dark, the heavy curtains are drawn tight. We pass a large fan -- it CREAKS, seems old, as it painfully strains to circulate sweltering air. It is warm in here; we can sense the heat in the room as we MOVE IN on the king-sized bed. A man is lying on his back, sleeping fitfully. There are no blankets, the sheets are twisted around his slumbering torso.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I was in the middle of a dream.
The kind that makes you sad when
you wake to find that's all it
ever was... I was dreaming of a
cool breeze against my skin... a
wind kissed by the North Pole...
back when there was a North Pole.

The sleeping man is KEITH BRYCE, the young groom in the photo, aged a little now. A DOUBLE BEEPING SOUND jars him awake. A pause, then DOUBLE BEEPS AGAIN as Bryce forces his mind to come to life. Still groggy, he touches the wall above his bed: A MAN'S VOICE, hyper and enthused, fills the room...

ZANE (O.S.)

Keith? Hiya kid, it's Zane.

(no response)

Zane Stellini? Your agent, babe,
remember? Whatsa matter, I wake
you or somethin'?

BRYCE

Christ... it's four in the
afternoon, of course you woke me.

ZANE (O.S.)

Sorry ace but this couldn't wait.
I got a gig for ya. A major gig.

BRYCE
(yawning,
irritated)

Zane --

ZANE (O.S.)
-- Iceland Park. That mean
anything to you?

BRYCE (V.O.)
(slowly sitting
up)

He had me there. Iceland Park
meant money, you simply didn't
live there without it -- a lot of
it. I wanted to say "call back
when it's dark" but my thin
wallet outweighed my stout set of
principles.

Bryce gets out of bed and slowly walks across the darkened
room, rubbing his eyes.

BRYCE
Go.

ZANE (O.S.)
Here's the skinny: rich guy named
Walcott needs you to find a
missing friend. He doesn't want
the cops involved, time is of the
essence and get this -- the fee's
negotiable.

INT. BATHROOM - BRYCE ENTERS

and stares at his tired image in the medicine cabinet
mirror, HIS AGENT'S VOICE is in this room too, coming out
of nowhere.

ZANE (O.S.)
So I say get your ass up there
and go for the jugular; believe
me, whatever you can get, Wayne
Walcott can afford. He's
expecting you at ten p.m..

BRYCE
Ten o'clock? Then why'd you get
me up so early?

ZANE (O.S.)
I just couldn't wait to give you
the good news. Hey, and turn the
screen on, will ya?

BRYCE

Forget it.

Bryce studies the heavy five-o'clock shadow on his face as he pulls a light green cloth out of a drawer.

ZANE (O.S.)

Come on Keith, it's not normal.
People don't hide over the
telephone.

(anxious)

It makes me nervous talking to
empty space like this!

Bryce frowns and gives in, pressing a spot on the bathroom wall. Instantly, an image of ZANE STELLINI appears on that same wall, about the size of a nineteen inch TV screen.

ZANE (CONT'D)

(grimaces)

God, you look awful.

Bryce reaches over and turns the screen off again.

ZANE (O.S., CONT'D)

Come on, come on, I take it back!

Bryce smiles and reactivates the screen.

ZANE (CONT'D)

You know I was only kidding.
You're lookin' tough, kid, real
tough -- lookin' like you're
ready to make us some money!

Bryce places the green cloth over his face and when he pulls it away the whiskers have all been cleanly removed.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Zane must've really needed this
case; let's face it, handling me
lately meant ten percent of
nothing.

Bryce's body is coated by a thin layer of sweat -- it's hot in this windowless bathroom. He reaches for the tap and we see a meter attached to it, detailing exactly what remains of his daily water ration. He turns the knob with care and allows the bare trickle that comes out to form a tiny puddle in his cupped hands. Relishing the moment, he splashes warm water on his face and lets it run down his neck...

INT. BEDROOM - BRYCE YAWNS

as he walks back in. Zane's huge image, the size of a big screen TV, is now on the wall by the bed.

ZANE

Hey it's really coolin' off out here; you oughta get a visa and come visit. High today was only 114, winter has arrived.

BRYCE

Great, I'll bring my skis.

Bryce crosses to a walk-in closet and puts on a long-sleeve shirt made of very thin, wrinkle-free material.

ZANE

Did you buy a Head yet?
(no reply)

Keith --

BRYCE

-- Okay, quit nagging; I'll pick one up first thing tonight.

ZANE

Hallelujah: welcome to the twenty-first century. Gotta run babe; call me when you close the Walcott deal. Ciao for now.

Zane hangs up, his image instantly replaced by an AT&T digital readout, indicating the long-distance call has been completed.

Bryce moves to the window and pulls the drapes back about a foot or so: searing yellow-orange sunlight burns its way into the room. He must shield his eyes to look outside...

SWITCH TO HIS POV gazing out the window: a sprawling cityscape lays before us, sweltering in the midst of what looks to be a brutal summer's day. Amazingly, there's not a trace of movement, not a breath of wind or sign of life. The entire city seems deserted.

EXT. BRYCE'S FRONT PORCH - DUSK - BRYCE EXITS HIS DUPLEX

wearing a trenchcoat and faded blue, two-tone fedora. A FEMALE VOICE rings out through the city streets on a P.A...

VOICE OF AUTHORITY (V.O.)

Five minutes to sundown. Five minutes to sundown. Do not enter the streets. There are still five minutes to sundown.

Bryce pulls his trenchcoat up to cover his neck and moves down the path, away from his front door.

BRYCE (V.O.)

They say U-VEE rays can harm you even when the sun's below the skyline. But anyone planning to beat the evening traffic is moving by The Five Minute Warning.

He walks briskly down the sun bleached sidewalk. All around, we hear the sounds of a dead city slowly coming back to life.

LAP DISSOLVE to Bryce, several blocks away, still walking. A WIDE ANGLE reveals other pedestrians: most are dressed like Bryce, FORTIES-STYLE, others wear HIGH-TECH, form-fitting jumpsuits, a few are decked out as ANARCHISTS, their garments spangled with bright swirling shades of red, orange and yellow.

At first glance, the city looks like an American urban center, circa 1990. Then we begin to notice the differences: more advertisements, less greenery, and many black, tinted windows.

The city is a paradox to our eyes. It's been beaten and blistered by the elements yet there's still great life and vibrancy here. People are living close to the edge, fighting hard to make ends meet.

Streets are riddled with potholes -- we see no cars at the moment, just bicycles and rickshaws. Political graffiti adorns walls and sidewalks: "WATER FOR THE PEOPLE!" "FIGHT THE POWER" and "WE THIRST -- AMERAPAN PROFITS!"

Billboard ads seem to be everywhere. Many are governmental, with single words prominently displayed in giant block letters, in a variety of cool colors:

"CONSERVE"
"RECYCLE"
"THINK COOL"
"COME TOGETHER"
"FUTUREGREATNESS"

The most prominent commercial display is a gigantic mural on the side of a brick building, depicting a huge dragon. The beast is a hybrid, with a dragon's body and the proud face, wings and talons of an American bald eagle. Beneath the eagle/dragon is a famous slogan:

"AMERAPAN... Where People Come First"

Bryce walks past the Amerapan ad and comes upon a small crowd of ten or fifteen, gathered near a street corner. TWO TRANSIENTS lie dead on the sidewalk. Their skin is charred and mottled, the result of a futile attempt to shield themselves from the sun with old woolen blankets.

The onlookers mill around like motorists stopping to check out an accident, giving off a sense of collective sadness mixed in with morbid curiosity. Bryce shakes his head mournfully and continues on, leaving the onlookers behind.

DISSOLVE TO UP THE BLOCK, where TIM OKUDA is preparing to open his computer store for the night. Okuda is Japanese-American, twenty-three, a computer genius, quick-minded and upbeat. He has long, straight black hair and calm, confident eyes.

Okuda stares down to where the crowd is gathered on the corner, and comments to Bryce as he approaches.

OKUDA

More Expendables, huh?

BRYCE

Yeah, afraid so.

OKUDA

God I hate that term -- it's so dehumanizing -- yet here I am, using it myself. Gotta watch that.

He uses hand-print identification to unlock his store's front door, then sticks his head inside...

OKUDA (CONT'D)

Okay fellas, I'm opening up, time to move on.

In a few moments, three transients ("Expendables") exit the store and head down the block, nodding their thanks to the young store-owner. Keith is impressed.

BRYCE

You let them crash in your store?

OKUDA

Can't let 'em sleep outside;
they'd fry, just like those other
poor souls. It's no big deal,
they don't cause any trouble and
they've never stolen from me.

Okuda notes that Bryce is glancing at the signs in his tinted store window. The signs read: "OKUDA'S WORLD OF HOME COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONICS", Home Of The Latest In TALKING HEAD Home Computers... BLOWOUT SALE!! All Makes, Models, Ages, Sexes, And Races! Want To Get Ahead? THIS IS THE PLACE!!!

OKUDA (CONT'D)

I'm Tim Okuda. Are you a fan of Talking Head technology, Mister...?

BRYCE

Bryce. And to be honest I can't stand the damn things... but my agent insists I'm behind the times.

OKUDA

Your agent is exactly right.
Come, meet The Heads.

INT. COMPUTER STORE - CLOSE ON

a sleeping, bearded, Hispanic man.

OKUDA (V.O.)

Juan.

Juan's eyes pop open: his computer mind is activated. PULL BACK PAST FIVE OTHER TALKING HEADS alongside Juan: they look just like sleeping people except for the fact that they have no body, just a head and neck. Each one's eyes snap open as his or her name is spoken...

OKUDA (V.O.)

Andrea... Walter... Dierdre...
Julie... William.

All six Heads are now active and aware. They stare back at Bryce and Okuda, looking for all the world like real people.

OKUDA (V.O., CONT'D)

Say hello to Mr. Bryce.

All the Heads respond, but as individuals. One says "HELLO", two say "HELLO SIR" and the other three "HELLO MISTER BRYCE". All speak at slightly different times in completely different voices. Bryce finds this unnerving somehow.

ANGLE TO REVEAL that the shelves of the store are packed with Talking Heads. They sit side by side, young and old, male and female, black, white, red and brown -- most are handsome but some are pretty plain. All are inanimate, eyes closed.

OKUDA (CONT'D)

The Talking Head is capable of performing most household tasks. Each is a telephone answering machine and comprehensive security system. A Head can store information, operate your home entertainment center and he or she is a terrific companion.

BRYCE

Look, if I wanted a machine for a companion I'd talk to my toaster. How much are they, anyway?

OKUDA

The average unit is on sale for around six thousand dollaryen.

BRYCE

(stunned,
laughing)

Six thousand D-Y's? That's way out of my league. But thanks for the demonstration.

Relieved somehow, Bryce gives Okuda a friendly pat on the shoulder and heads for the door just as A BEEPER GOES OFF inside Bryce's trenchcoat. He halts it by pressing something around his right front pocket. Okuda is intrigued...

OKUDA

That a police pager?

BRYCE

Low priority -- gives me four hours to report to the precinct.

OKUDA

You an undercover cop?

BRYCE

Private eye.

Okuda's eyes shine at the sound of those words. It fills him with a new determination.

OKUDA

So that's why you have an agent:
I thought you were an actor or a
chiropractor or something. Look,
there must be something we can do
for you. A man in your line
really needs a Head.

Bryce hesitates... and SIGHS.

BRYCE

Well what's the cheapest one
you've got? The absolute dirt
cheapest.

Somewhat reluctantly, Okuda looks over toward another section of the store which houses a vast amount of electronic equipment and gadgetry. Bryce spots a work-table where a couple of reject Heads are being stored.

Curious, Bryce approaches the table and zeroes in on a male Head, currently in a state of repair. It's face is half-removed, revealing complex micro-circuitry.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Old half-face, eh?

OKUDA

My cheapest one? No... I'm
afraid it's that one.

ANGLE TO REVEAL OGDEN, situated next to the faceless Head. Even in sleep, Ogden's face is odd and somehow lopsided: hair thinning on top and bushy on the sides, eyes and ears too large, lips too thin. Bryce crouches, examining it and grimacing.

BRYCE

Uggh, its creator must've watched
too many cartoons. What's its
name?

Okuda hesitates, knowing what saying its name will do.

OKUDA

Ogden.

Ogden awakens and his round, bulging eyes stare right into Keith's. The detective instinctively pulls back...

BRYCE

(flat)

Ogden. That figures.

OKUDA

You should know he's been returned.

(pause)

Uh, three times.

BRYCE

You mean you actually conned three people into buying him?

Ogden LAUGHS, his eyes sparkling with unabashed glee at Bryce's wisecrack. When he sees the detective glaring back at him he quickly suppresses his laughter and awkwardly looks straight ahead, with forced innocence, as though nothing happened.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Does it function okay?

OKUDA

Well, technically I suppose he's as proficient as the next one.

BRYCE

Probably gets returned cause it's just too weird looking for most people.

OKUDA

That may be part of it.

Ogden frowns, not overly thrilled with this conversation.

BRYCE

Well that doesn't bother me. I deal in ugly every day; it's part of my job.

(thinking it over)

Okay, I'll give you four hundred down, refundable. Another four in a week if I decide to keep it.

OKUDA

That's absurd.

Bryce reaches into his pocket and pulls out his money card.

BRYCE

I'm taking a three time loser off your hands, maybe you should be paying me.

CUT TO:

INT. BRYCE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE ON OGDEN

eyes closed, dormant. PULL BACK to see that the Talking Head is perched on a table top in the detective's duplex. Okuda is just finishing his installation as Bryce enters the room...

BRYCE

How's it coming?

Okuda makes one final adjustment along the side of Ogden's neck, then steps back, satisfied.

OKUDA (V.O.)

Ogden.

(Ogden awakens)

This is your new home.

OGDEN

(looking around)

Yes. My new home...

(soft spoken)

Good evening sir. Let me just say what a pleasure it is to be here.

Bryce looks at Okuda, surprised and cautiously impressed.

BRYCE

Tell me something... why did all the other owners return you?

OGDEN

I believe some folks just need a change from time to time, don't you? It certainly had nothing to do with me; I had meaningful relationships with each and every one of them.

Ogden's look is one of pure innocence. Bryce is skeptical but decides not to press the issue.

BRYCE

How do I turn it off?

OKUDA

Just say "sleep".

(Ogden does so)

After tonight, only you will be able to do that.

(taps Ogden's head)

I've installed your personalized microchip, making Ogden aware of thousands of facts about you: favorite colors, foods, music, past history, friends and associates -- it's all in there.

Okuda takes out a device that looks like a remote control for a TV.

OKUDA

You can reach each other instantly, through your watchphone. You need to choose a code number for him.

BRYCE

For him? Double zero.

Okuda points the device at Ogden's sleeping head and presses two buttons.

OKUDA

Done.

As Okuda begins to gather up his tools, Bryce leans down and examines Ogden with wary eyes...

BRYCE

I don't like machines, Okuda. Seems to me, the better we made 'em the quicker the world went down the drain.

(pause)

Just how human does it pretend to be, anyway?

OKUDA

Head technology's advancing so rapidly, the latest buzz claims one of the new models actually dreams. But that's bull of course; true consciousness is reserved for sentient beings.

Okuda touches Ogden's face, his voice betraying a sense of respect and appreciation...

OKUDA (CONT'D)

As to how human, see for yourself. The skin... hair... eyes... incredibly life-like. I don't know how they do it.

(a little sad)

Do you mind if I wake him up to say good-bye?

EXT. BRYCE'S DUPLEX - NIGHT - BRYCE AND OKUDA

walk out together and head up the block.

BRYCE

Hey Okuda... what's with the v.i.p. treatment? I mean, installing him personally and everything.

OKUDA

I like what you do. I grew up reading detective stories and I... well, I think you've got the coolest job in the world.

Bryce LAUGHS at the very thought. The detective stops before a long staircase leading underground marked by a sign reading: BULLET TRAINS. Okuda continues on...

OKUDA

The owner's manual is on the counter top; call me if you have any problems.

Bryce watches, amused, as Okuda walks off down the block.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Okuda was in love with Sam Spade. He just didn't understand: detective work's what you do when you can't do anything else.

Bryce heads down the stairs.

INT. UNDERGROUND STATION - BRYCE

moves forward down a long subway shaft. He gets in line behind three others waiting to board the underground train. The line moves up quickly with each person answering a question and placing their money card in a wall slot. As Bryce reaches the front of the line, A COMPUTER VOICE addresses him...

COMPUTER VOICE

Destination?

BRYCE

Iceland Park.

COMPUTER VOICE

Pay and enter.

Bryce slides his card into the slot and steps onto the train.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - ON OGDEN

awake and alone. He looks around, bopping his head, chewing time, happy to be here.

OGDEN

TV on.

To Ogden's utter delight, the TV instantly reacts to his request: the living room wall fills with the image of the seal of The President as we hear THE VOICE OF AN ANCHORWOMAN...

ANCHORWOMAN (V.O.)

The President addressed a joint session of Congress today, to discuss the state of the union.

CUT TO A CLIP OF THE PRESIDENT: a forty-six year old black woman, giving a prepared political speech from a podium... As The President speaks, her personal statistics ROLL DOWN THE SCREEN:

Marilyn Alicia Braggs (Progressive)
46, Pisces, 5-5, 125, Michigan
Former Congresswoman and Governor
Won presidency with 52% of vote
24% of eligible population cast ballots

PRESIDENT BRAGGS

My fellow Americans: tonight, our great cities are like islands, isolated from one another by hostile elements and energy shortages. These cities and their inhabitants, linked by telephone and television, credit lines and computer lines, now more than ever, must come together to confront those misguided individuals who would disrupt and dismantle our society. Together we can overcome this threat to our way of life. Together we can achieve FutureGreatness.

OGDEN

Politics are so depressing.
Switch.

ON SCREEN the channel changes. A mindless American Gladiators-type show is on: two armor-clad contestants are smashing each other over the head with steel mallets before a CHEERING studio audience. Ogden is wide-eyed, LAUGHING and cringing with each clanking blow...

OGDEN

Competition at it's finest!
Switch.

ON SCREEN: a soft spoken, nerdish man in a blue jumpsuit is standing before a seated little girl and boy; A CHILDISH PIANO TUNE is playing in the background. The name "Uncle Zack" is embroidered on his chest...

UNCLE ZACK

(slow, neighborly)

The sun used to be our friend but
not anymore. Can you say...
Greenhouse?

OGDEN

(happily)

Greenhouse. Switch.

ON SCREEN: a SPORTSCASTER is reading results off a teleprompter, flanked by two bimbos in string bikinis. The logo ASSN can be seen on the wall behind them.

SPORTS CASTER

... The Giants topped the Lions
and the Icemen froze the Broncos.
I'm Paul Bell and you're watching
A-S-S-N: the All Sports and Sex
Network.

OGDEN

Wow... sports and sex? What a
concept! Switch.

The wall fills with the image of a beautiful meadow by a flowing stream. A pretty little girl in a white dress is enjoying nature. She sits by the bank, picks a flower, and playfully dips her hand in the water.

Ogden leans back, soothed and pacified by the familiarity of what he's seeing. We hear CALM, SOOTHING MUSIC and a syrupy CASEY CASEM-STYLE NARRATOR: this is a television commercial.

NARRATOR (O.S.)

Here at Amerapan, we're working hard on today's environmental challenges -- so that one day, little Katie can run outside and play in the sunshine, just like her Mom used to do.

ANGLE ON OGDEN, the TV meadow reflecting off his odd face. He smiles and speaks the last line of the commercial -- one that most everyone knows by heart...

NARRATOR/OGDEN

Amerapan... Where People Come First.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOME - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

of a huge black dome, tinted glass-like walls concealing its insides. ANGLE ON BRYCE, walking up to its gigantic double doors. AN ELECTRONIC SECURITY VOICE addresses him: the voice sounds like a man and woman speaking simultaneously.

SECURITY VOICE

Identify.

BRYCE

Keith Bryce.

SECURITY VOICE

State your business.

BRYCE

(offhand)

Oh, just thought I'd hang out with some billionaires.

SECURITY VOICE

This is a private residential community. You will vacate the premises immediately.

BRYCE

Relax Jack, relax. I'm a private investigator; Mr. Walcott is expecting me.

SECURITY VOICE

(after a pause)

Confirmed. You may enter.

Seamless doors slide open and Bryce enters the dome.

INT. INSIDE THE DOME - "DAY" - BRYCE

looks around in wonder. He finds himself in the midst of a beautiful spring day: 72 degrees, blue skies, and a light, cool breeze. Bryce basks in this incredible simulation -- you'd never know you were inside a dome in the middle of the night.

A street of tree-lined houses with big green lawns is laid out before him. The mansions are elegant and pristine, two adjectives not often found in Keith Bryce's surroundings. THE MALE/FEMALE SECURITY VOICE booms out of the sky...

SECURITY VOICE

Disarm immediately.

Bryce looks up at the sky as if to say "get real" and keeps walking. The air around him suddenly CRACKLES with electricity -- he receives a quick but sharp electrical shock. The detective gets the message, angrily unbuckling his shoulder holster and discarding his gun in a designated security receptacle. Bryce talks to the sky as he continues on...

BRYCE

Don't you ever say please?

INT. WALCOTT MANSION/STUDY - "DAY" - WAYNE WALCOTT

is slowly pacing before a picture window which looks out on his spacious front lawn. Walcott is a vigorous, well-preserved 60: white hair, full beard, strong features that could be intimidating or grandfatherly depending on the moment. He is decked out in an expensive red robe made of crushed velour. On the wall behind him, we can see an elaborate painted depiction of the Amerapan eagle/dragon, wings spread, swooping down over a city skyline.

The BRITISH VOICE of Walcott's Talking Head BUTLER comes over the intercom...

BUTLER (V.O.)

Master Walcott, a Mr. Bryce is here to see you.

WALCOTT

Direct him in.

After a moment, Bryce enters the room and is warmly greeted.

WALCOTT

How do you do, Mr Bryce. Your rather excitable agent speaks highly of you.

(shakes hands)

I suppose we should get down to business... but it's difficult to discuss Marlene's plight without becoming emotional. You see... she means so much to me --

THE VOICE OF THE BUTLER, comes through again on the com...

BUTLER (V.O.)

-- Excuse me sir, but breakfast is served.

WALCOTT

Join me for breakfast, detective. But please, not a word about who you are or why you're here, in front of my servants. Agreed?

INT. DINING ROOM - CLOSE ON A FORK

stuck in a link-sausage, rising into Bryce's mouth. PULL BACK to see Bryce relishing the taste. Wayne sits across from him, while two Latino girls in uniform scurry around serving and refilling glasses with orange juice. The exotic dining room looks out on an enclosed pond teeming with Japanese goldfish.

As the servants exit the room, Bryce wolfs down some scrambled eggs and takes a big swig of juice...

WALCOTT

Enjoying yourself?

BRYCE

You kidding? Fresh eggs, real meat, tobacco, coffee from coffee beans...

(mock cheerful)

Goes to show, Greenhouse or no, the idle rich still know how to live. God bless 'em!

Walcott stops himself in mid-bite, frowning as he catches onto the caustic remark.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

(indicating pond)

How do you clean that water before you drink it?

WALCOTT

Drink it? Why on Earth would I
drink it?

BRYCE

You mean... you have enough to
waste it on those fish?

WALCOTT

I'd hardly term it a waste.
They're called pets.

BRYCE

They're called dinner in my
neighborhood. Dead or alive.

Walcott's eyes flash at the comment.

WALCOTT

I'm not sure I like your
attitude.

BRYCE

Yeah, a lot of people have that
problem -- I wouldn't worry about
it.

The older man leans back... dabs his mouth with a cloth
napkin... and smiles.

WALCOTT

But I do like a man with a sense
of humor.

BRYCE

Gotta have one these days, I
guess.

Bryce frowns as his wristwatch BEEPS.

BRYCE

Excuse me.
(into watch, wary)
Yes?

OGDEN (V.O.)

(business-like)
Ogden here; just checking in
Keith. Can you hear me A-OK?
Testing, one, two --

BRYCE

(hushed,
irritated)

-- I hear you fine Ogden but I'm
in the middle of a meal here.

OGDEN (V.O.)

Oh well for heavens sake, don't
let me interrupt. You just go
right ahead and ignore this call --

BRYCE

(terminating call)

-- Good idea.

(to himself,
shaking head)

This is never gonna work out.

WALCOTT

Trouble?

BRYCE

Nothing I didn't get myself into.

Turning his mind back to the situation at hand, Bryce kicks
back in his chair and lights one of Walcott's real tobacco
cigarettes.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Tell me about Marlene; when did
you first realize she was
missing?

WALCOTT

(quietly)

It was after my birthday party.
I had a little too much to drink
and I -- I passed out. When I
came to, she was gone. Abducted.

BRYCE

Are you sure she didn't just
leave with someone?

WALCOTT

(strong, sharp)

Marlene would never leave me.
She loves me; I'm her whole
world.

BRYCE

I'll bet. You got a picture of
her?

INT. DEN - LATER - ALL FOUR WALLS

are devoted to shifting, three-dimensional photographs of MARLENE. Wayne leads Bryce into the room, then locks the door behind him. This is a private place, a secret shrine to the woman.

Bryce is impressed -- Marlene is incredibly beautiful, with long, thick brown hair and intelligent green eyes. Each photo is a close-up of her glorious face...

BRYCE (V.O.)

Marlene was stunning, an angel incarnate. She was always smiling, so why did I think she looked so unhappy?

(spoken)

Why all the secrecy, Mr. Walcott? Locking the door, masking why I'm here?

WALCOTT

Marlene and I have a very special relationship. It's personal and private. My family, my friends... they just wouldn't understand.

MOVE IN ON BRYCE intently staring at Marlene's image...

BRYCE (V.O.)

I didn't understand either. Why would a vision like that go for a fossil like Walcott? Was money really that important? Dumb question.

(spoken)

My fee is two hundred dollaryen up front, another eight when I find her and fifty a day plus expenses... And a bag of ice... And a freezer.

WALCOTT

What?!

BRYCE

Okay, a mini-freezer.

WALCOTT

Out of the question.

BRYCE

(shrugging)

You could hire someone else of course, but most in my line are a lot worse than me. Big sweaty bodies, dirty fingernails, foul mouths, wrinkled clothes...

Wayne is furrowing his brow and crinkling his nose...

BRYCE (V.O. CONT'D)

Walcott was squirming like the fish in his pond. Now all I had to do was reel him in.

(spoken out loud)

... 'course if we make a deal you don't have to go through all this again. You know, having a private dick for breakfast, discussing touchy affairs with a stranger...

Once again, Walcott's visage is severe... but he quickly tempers it... and actually smiles before nodding his head.

WALCOTT

Alright. A mini-freezer, delivered upon completion.

(slaps Keith on back)

You drive a hard bargain, young man.

BRYCE

It's a hard world, Mr. Walcott.

INT. MAIN HALLWAY - LATER - BRYCE WALKS WITH WALCOTT

BRYCE

I'll need a guest list from the party.

WALCOTT

That won't be necessary. The party was on the back patio, Marlene was upstairs the entire time. The truth is, none of my guests have ever met Marlene. I'm sure you'll find the kidnapers broke into the house.

BRYCE

But who would want to kidnap Marlene?

WALCOTT

I have enemies, ideological enemies, who would gain by trying to hurt me. You see... I'm on the board at Amerapan.

BRYCE

You're one of "The Two Hundred"?

WALCOTT

(chuckling)

That term is something of a misnomer. Actually, there are two hundred and twelve of us.

BRYCE

Quite a little club. The richest men in the country.

WALCOTT

Don't believe everything you see in the press. Irregardless, I'm not in Amerapan for the money.

BRYCE

(subtle sarcasm)

Oh? Philanthropy perhaps?

WALCOTT

Precisely. Amerapan is energy, water, synthetics, construction, foodstuffs, and so much more. Amerapan is the fuel that propels the nation. The open hand that serves the people and the iron fist that keeps us strong!

BRYCE

Some don't quite see it that way.

WALCOTT

There are always those who are against progress -- against anyone making an honest profit and looking to the future. These are the people who seized my Marlene: they're terrorists, pure and simple.

BRYCE

That's funny... my dad always said one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

Walcott frowns but doesn't bite. Bryce stops before the front door and retrieves his trenchcoat from a closet...

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Mr. Walcott, how much do you know about me? Was there any special reason I was hired?

WALCOTT

Not at all. Frankly, save for the luck of the draw, I'd be standing here with one of your competitors.

BRYCE

Then you're luckier than you know.

(emphatically)

Don't worry... I'll find Marlene.

The older man seems visibly relieved at the very sound of those words. He grasps Keith's shoulder with a touch of desperation and looks at the detective with watery eyes.

WALCOTT

Please... bring her back safely and I give you my word you'll be justly rewarded.

EXT. FRONT OF WALCOTT MANSION - WIDE ANGLE

as Bryce walks down the pathway that leads away from the house. Sprinkler systems are running on adjoining lawns and Walcott's gardener is watering the hedges. Bryce comments to him as he passes...

BRYCE

(breezy, sardonic)

Water, water, everywhere --
except where it's needed most.
What a world, huh chum?

INT. SECURITY DROP BOX - BRYCE RETRIEVES HIS GUN

and puts on his shoulder holster while looking up at the sky, basking in the illusion of spring...

BRYCE

Ahh what a beautiful day... not a fake cloud in the sky.

The androgynous SECURITY VOICE booms down at him again.

SECURITY VOICE

You will now exit the dome.

Bryce is moving toward the exit but making a point of taking his time.

BRYCE

What's the rush, sweetheart?
Wanna go swimming on someone's
front lawn?

SECURITY VOICE

(stern)

Exit now. This is your last
warning.

BRYCE

My, my -- no manners and no sense
of humor. Just like a machine.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO DOME - NIGHT - ON BRYCE

having just come through the open double doors that act as a gateway to Iceland Park. Bryce looks back and watches them slide shut; the image of a thriving, peaceful green world disappears from view. Bryce is locked out.

He turns and faces the reality of night: the city lies before him, twinkling in the heat. Bracing himself for the challenges ahead, he begins to walk toward it...

FADE TO BLACK:

End of Act One

"DARK CITY"

Act Two

FADE IN ON:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT - BRYCE

is back in the heart of the city. Pedestrians brush by, in a hurry, bumping shoulders; everyone's trying to squeeze as much life as they can into thirteen hours of darkness. The air is full of sounds: MUSIC, a futuristic mix of ELECTRIC VIOLIN and SLIDE GUITAR, soars from an open window in a tenement building. Beneath the song, we can hear A COUPLE FIGHTING.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I headed downtown for my rendezvous with the police, visions of a mini-freezer dancing in my head. If I could find Marlene I could cool off... feel ice against my skin... real ice.

Bryce turns a corner and slows, spotting something that makes him pause.

BRYCE (V.O.)

And ice wasn't the only thing on my list.

BRYCE'S POV: a waterbed is romantically featured in a store window. Palm trees and cool neon colors make it look like it's floating in paradise. On the wall behind it we see "SLEEPSOFT COOL-KING WATERBED -- For A Night Fit For A King."

ANGLE ON A SALESMAN, Latino, in a form-fitting one-piece tuxedo, taking note of Keith's presence. He crosses behind the bed and reappears at the street entrance to the store, speaking to Bryce with a cool grin. His deep, ultra-mellow voice would be fitting of a late night FM disc jockey.

SALESMAN

Back again, I see.

BRYCE

Can't help it; you're on the way to the precinct.

SALESMAN

Still having trouble sleeping?

BRYCE

What makes you say that?

SALESMAN

I can see it in your eyes, in the way you look at The CoolKing. It's not just a bed, you know, it's a first-class ticket to a whole new sleep life.

BRYCE

Shelve the pitch, I'm sold on the bed.

SALESMAN

You'll be floating on a cushion of soothing Arctic seawater. You'll feel the gentle movements of the waves.

BRYCE

You just can't help yourself, can you?

SALESMAN

Not when I'm talkin' bout the CoolKing I can't.

BRYCE

Tell me... do you see a guy in a black hat, about a half block back?

The salesman is cool; he casually looks in that direction. ANGLE ON A SHADOWY FIGURE IN A BLACK FEDORA "innocently" pausing to light a cigarette a half block behind Bryce.

SALESMAN

Uh-huh. You bein' followed?

BRYCE

Ever since I left Iceland Park. Easy to spot really; cops these days are as subtle as a sledgehammer.

(walking on)

Speaking of cops, I'm due at the asylum.

The detective is walking away but can't resist one more look over his shoulder at the bed in the window. The amused salesman calls after him...

SALESMAN

Better hurry back hombre. The CoolKing won't be here for long.

STAY ON THE SALESMAN cackling to himself, watching Bryce go. In a few moments, THE TAIL in the black fedora comes striding by. The salesman adjusts his tuxedo-jumpsuit bow tie...

SALESMAN

Good evening officer, wanna buy a bed?

Something about the question strikes a nerve in The Tail. In a frightening instant he pivots and drives the salesman back against the wall, his hand gripping the man's throat.

THE TAIL

No.

The Tail roughly releases his grip and continues on his way without another word. The salesman remains amazingly laid-back: he simply brushes off his jacket, straightens his hair and turns his attention to a young woman coming up the block...

SALESMAN

Having trouble sleeping? I can see it in your eyes.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT - ON BRYCE

walking, trying to get the bed out of his mind, He passes a massive street side billboard featuring the image of a TRUSTWORTHY WHITE-HAIRED MAN. He's an everyman type, unassuming and soft spoken, the lead in a Capra movie, and he's speaking to passing pedestrians in a pre-recorded message...

BILLBOARD MAN

(folksy, sincere)

You know, a lotta folks are concerned about F-E-28, the city wide water conservation law that goes into effect tomorrow. And there's been a lotta muckrakers and subversives telling ya this and that, but rarely telling ya the truth. Fact is we're mighty low on water and conservation makes sense. It's good for you; it's good for me.

(gentle chuckle)

I'm sure gonna obey the law; it'll make me feel good about myself, just knowin' I'm doing the right thing. Why not join me and together we can achieve FutureGreatness!

Bryce passes the billboard and turns a corner. A pack of burly teenagers blast by, running full tilt, roughly bumping into Bryce as they roar past. The detective absorbs the contact and even dishes out a few elbows of his own. He continues on, unfazed, used to this kind of thing.

Bryce leaves the sidewalk and heads up a ramp to a small building that looks something like a large store in a mini-mall. The neon-like sign above the doors says "Precinct 74."

INT. PRECINCT SEVENTY-FOUR - BRYCE

moves through the waiting room, past hookers, thugs, drunks, and white-collar criminals. The desk sergeant acknowledges him as he passes by...

BRYCE (V.O.)

History lesson: to maintain a gun permit and city license, all private detectives must accept temporary deputization when called upon by the police. So says the law -- a law I've come to hate. Overmatched and underfunded, the cops use us as bounty hunters and strong-arms when they can't or won't get around to something themselves.

INT. CAPTAIN MELROSE'S OFFICE - CLOSE ON LEE MELROSE

a conservative black police detective in his mid-forties. He's tough, smart, by the book -- a firm believer in God, country and the police force. He'd be a staunch Republican if that party still existed.

MELROSE

We've got water riots in Riverfront: lots of looting, wilding, the usual. The W-P boys say Ellenwood and Penn Gardens may go rabid too. We're temp-depping all security guards and private eyes, just in case. Twenty-four hour call, no exceptions.

ANGLE TO REVEAL BRYCE standing across from Melrose's desk, arms folded across his chest. OFFICER RIXX AYALA, Capt. Melrose's partner, is also present. She's a true amazon at six-foot four, with an incredibly powerful torso.

BRYCE
 (laughing
 disbelief)
 Riot control? Me? Is that what
 we're talking about here?

Melrose takes a huge bite out of his syntho-turkey burger.
 He seems to be enjoying Keith's discomfort.

MELROSE
 Let's hope it doesn't come to
 that. But if you hear this sound
 on your pager --

He presses something on his wristwatch and TWO SHRILL
 BLASTS emanate from Bryce's trenchcoat police pager. It's
 a jarring, urgent sound.

MELROSE (CONT'D)
 -- you got twenty minutes to
 report your assigned firezone.

BRYCE
 Tell me something Rixx, how'd a
 nice girl like you end up with a
 partner like that?

MELROSE
 Figures you don't like me, Bryce.
 I'm hard-working, honest, tough,
 good-looking -- everything you're
 not.

BRYCE
 You left out bald.
 (Rixx laughs)
 Look, I'm on a case, an important
 one; just by being here, wasting
 my time, you guys are taking
 money out of my pocket.

MELROSE
 My heart bleeds.
 (to Rixx)
 Deputize.

RIXX
 Sorry Keith.

Rixx faces Keith and raises her giant hand, speaking by
 memory as she goes through a routine she's obviously very
 used to.

RIXX

By the powers vested in me by Federal Law 68937A, I hereby tender temporary deputization to Keith Ellis Bryce, I.D. code 7727.

BRYCE

(exiting)

Gee thanks. It's my lucky day.

MELROSE

Hold on hotshot, we're not done yet.

(pause)

Heard from Mrs. Bryce lately?

Rixx cringes. Bryce turns around, working to keep his cool.

BRYCE

Sure, I get a postcard every day. She sends you love and kisses.

MELROSE

This ain't no joke. She and her radical friends are lighting mental fires all over the city -- urging people to disobey the new law -- causing a hell of a lotta unrest. If you're in touch with her, you have a legal duty to notify us of her whereabouts.

BRYCE

I don't know where she is Captain, and if I did I sure as hell wouldn't say. And you can tell your flunky in the black hat to quit tailing me, you got that?

MELROSE

I don't know what you're talking about.

BRYCE

Yeah, sure you don't. A policeman never lies and it still snows in Colorado -- what do you take me for?

Bryce glowers at Melrose, nods at Rixx, and exits.

RIXX

You could go a little easier on him, Lee. He is on our side, after all.

MELROSE

He's on his side. You should know that by now.

Melrose finishes his burger and turns back to the window, looking out at the jungle that is his city: we hear SCREAMS, DISTANT SIRENS and BREAKING GLASS. Melrose dabs his sweaty forehead with a white pocket handkerchief and speaks under his breath...

MELROSE (CONT'D)

Sweet Jesus... how we supposed to keep the peace when it's so damn hot?

RIXX

Here, put your coat on and cool off.

She hands him his trenchcoat -- we catch a glimpse of insulated tubing inside it. Trenchcoats are more than a style statement, they are self-contained refrigeration units. Melrose adjusts a dial and smiles with relief.

MELROSE

Ahhh... that's better.

INT. POLICE STATION - BRYCE

is walking out the same way he came in. He halts in his tracks, making a face as HIS WRISTWATCH BEEPS AGAIN...

BRYCE

Dammit Ogden, what is it now?

OKUDA (V.O.)

It's not Ogden, it's Okuda. Think you could get to a screenphone? What I have to say... well, I'd rather do it face to face.

Bryce rolls his eyes and walks into a HOMICIDE DETECTIVE'S office. The detective is busying himself with a stack of paperwork...

BRYCE

Mind if I use your phone?

POLICE DETECTIVE

Help yourself.

Bryce touches the desk top before him and a small square of the lacquer surface becomes a viewscreen: Tim Okuda appears ON SCREEN.

OKUDA

I've been feeling a bit guilty. I guess there's something you should know.

(deep breath)

Ogden's creator may have been a little unbalanced -- they say he was given to wild, unpredictable mood swings. It seems he, uh, well, he may have ingrained some of his own bizarre personality traits into Ogden's memory cells.

BRYCE

You're saying my new computer is a manic depressive?

OKUDA

I should've told you up front but Ogden's on his final run now. If he's returned a fourth time, he'll be scrapped -- it's the law. I'm hoping you'll still give him a chance.

BRYCE

I don't like the things in the first place and now you want me to let a psycho run my house?

OKUDA

No, no, he simply tends to be a little moody now and then, that's all. And I uh, I understand he's a bit of a TV addict.

BRYCE

Oh great -- now I can see why he's so cultured. Look, I'll give him another day or two, just to be fair. After that, what you do with him is up to you. Thanks for telling me.

Bryce presses the counter and the screen becomes the desk top again. The detective looks up from his paperwork...

POLICE DETECTIVE

Say Keith...

(sheepishly)

... your ex-wife's hanging near
the locker room. Thought I
better warn you in case you're
headed that way.

INT. POLICE STATION/HALLWAY - BRYCE

angrily pushes open swinging double doors beneath a sign
reading: "Locker Rooms, Rec Rooms, Backstreet Exit." He
finds himself pausing before a SERIES OF WANTED POSTERS.
He's drawn to three figures -- a man and two women -- all
listed as members of the "environmental terrorist" movement
known as "MOTHER EARTH":

"WANTED! -- for multiple acts of urban violence
including bombings of corporate
interests"

MOVE IN ON THE WOMAN IN THE MIDDLE: she is RAVEN BRYCE, the
smiling bride in the photo on Keith's dresser. She still
possesses intelligent, sultry, sharp-planed good looks, but
in this photo she looks thin and tough, her long auburn
hair swept back under a green headband. The poster speaks
of a large reward for her capture, dead or alive.

TWO STREET COPS are changing in the locker room behind
Bryce. They take note of his mesmerized interest in the
posters by holding a "private" conversation in LOUD
VOICES...

FIRST COP

(mocking)

Raven Bryce, what a shame. From
detective's ex-wife to subversive
slime in one fell swoop.

SECOND COP

(laughing)

Yeah. I've heard of a woman
leaving a guy for another guy,
but never for somebody's Mother!

Bryce turns and begins to head toward the exit -- a path
that will take him by the cops. They continue their
laughing conversation, as if he weren't even there...

FIRST COP

What kind of man would protect a
disgrace like that?

He cuts off as Bryce passes by, brushing against him, but
never looking him in the eye.

FIRST COP (CONT'D)

You'd think he'd want the bitch
dead, considering what she's
become --

Bryce reacts, catching the big cop off-guard. With an economy of motion, he slams his head into the locker and fells him with a well-aimed chop to the neck.

Bryce instinctively ducks under the haymaker aimed from behind by the second cop. The detective spins, kneeing him in the gut, doubling him over. The first cop rises and is about to retaliate -- Bryce wheels and catches him with a brutal backhanded elbow.

The detective backs away, pointing a finger at the fallen cops...

BRYCE

And it's my wife! Not my ex-
wife. Got it?

Bryce exits, leaving the two cops groaning.

FADE TO BLACK:

End Of Act Two

"DARK CITY"

Act Three

FADE IN ON:

EXT. SEPTEMBER'S BAR - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

of the art-deco bar done up in dreamy neon. September's has a faded elegance; she's a relic of an era come and gone and come again.

INT. SEPTEMBER'S - NIGHT - PANNING ACROSS THE ROOM

it's the kind of place that once had a cigarette girl: soft red lamps, black tables, black enamel ashtrays, and a 45 RPM Wurlitzer jukebox playing BILLIE HOLLIDAY. The tone is sultry and escapist; there's the feel of hiding out from the real world here. The refractive lighting soaks up the colors of surrounding things, casting moody shadows. Slow moving ceiling fans provide atmosphere and help keep the temperature reasonable.

We MOVE past trenchcoated customers scattered around the half-full room -- past pretty waitress DARCY LOGAN serving drinks to four tough-looking women at a table -- past a man with a black eye quietly drinking alone -- until we come to the dark mahogany bar.

Soft green light emanates from a smoke-glass mirror behind the bartender, fronted with a variety of bottles. PANNING ACROSS THE BAR we see an AUSTRALIAN WOMAN... a few empty stools... and then VLAD, a handsome, well-tailored Soviet diplomat. Vlad is an America-phile, right down to the slang he tends to spice his heavily accented English with. He raises his glass for a toast...

VLAD

To a beautiful lady: The Statue
Of Liberty. Loved her the first
time I saw her.

Smiling bartender FRANKLYN MANN raises a glass with the svelte Soviet. Franklyn is 30, black, broad-shouldered, loyal, physically powerful, with an infectious, optimistic personality. Franklyn is Keith Bryce's closest friend.

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN

(overhearing,
buzzed)

Bloody Yanks and Soviets...
always agreeing on everything.
Makes me sick.

VLAD

Yeah? Well eat your heart out
honey.

(a little morose)

Biggest mistake we ever made was
not running the world together
when we had the chance.

FRANKLYN

Cold truth.

Franklyn clinks Vlad's glass in agreement. Darcy Logan, a
petit, curvacious, sharp-eyed blonde, comes by to hand
Franklyn an order.

DARCY

I saw a star tonight. From the
roof, before I came to work; it
was wonderful.

FRANKLYN

(fixing drinks)

I saw a couple myself, not two
weeks back. It's a sure sign:
things are getting better.

DARCY

You really think so?

FRANKLYN

Trust me, the best minds on the
planet are working round the
clock. We're gonna clean this
world up again, you'll see.

VLAD

Used to be you could see stars
just about every night.
Hundreds, sometimes thousands.

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN

Bull. That's what old people say
but I don't believe a word of it.

(sad, soft)

No one could ever see the stars.
No one.

The disgruntled woman turns away, choosing not to argue
about it.

VLAD

Who is old around here? Is she
calling me old -- Hey! My man --
my main man!

Vlad has spotted Bryce walking in. Handshakes all around as Bryce reaches the bar and is warmly greeted by his friends.

FRANKLYN

What'll it be, Cool Breeze?

BRYCE

(sly grin)

Spring water.

Everyone's a bit taken back: it's the equivalent of ordering an expensive glass of champagne.

VLAD

Big spender! You must be flying high these days, eh stud?

Franklyn serves Bryce his water and catches the detective momentarily locking eyes with the waiting waitress.

FRANKLYN

Am I being rude here? Darcy Logan's our new waitress. Darcy, meet Keith Bryce.

DARCY

We've met. Whiskey neat, last Tuesday night.

VLAD

(slaps Keith on back)

She remembers you, bro! A good sign, always a good sign.

BRYCE

She remembers my drink.

DARCY

Your drink put change in my pocket; your smile never paid my bills.

Darcy shoots Bryce a cool smile; Vlad pounds his fists on the bar, getting a big kick out of her line.

DARCY

You guys are old frinds I take it.

VLAD

There's that word again.

Franklyn places the first drink on her tray.

FRANKLYN

Best friends. We were in the war together.

DARCY

Which war?

FRANKLYN

The First Water War -- against the Syrians and Chinese.

DARCY

(to Vlad)

You too?

VLAD

Damn straight, baby. The Yanks and The Reds: side by side, brothers in arms, kicking ass. Za pobedu!!

The macho Soviet downs a shot to punctuate the point. Franklyn begins to fill Darcy's tray with drinks...

DARCY

(remembering)

The first war... wasn't that the one where the Chinese...

She tails off, thinking better of asking the question. Franklyn answers it anyway...

FRANKLYN

Where the Chinese used the swarm.
(somber, indicates Bryce)

We were there, weren't we buddy.

Bryce nods solemnly but doesn't say anything.

FRANKLYN (CONT'D)

We took everything they had to give and spit it right back at them.

Vlad ROARS in agreement and zestfully high fives the bartender. Darcy notes that Bryce looks a bit uncomfortable with this conversation. He quietly drinks the rest of his water, looks back at the staring waitress, then leans toward Franklyn...

BRYCE

(quietly)

I came to see September, Frank.
Is she in?

INT. SEPTEMBER'S OFFICE - SEPTEMBER MCVEE

the owner of the bar, looks up as there's a KNOCK on the door. She's a handsome, vibrant woman, elegant and classy, probably mid-forties but could be quite a bit older. Her smooth voice betrays Southern roots...

SEPTEMBER

Come.

She breaks into an affectionate smile when Bryce walks in.

SEPTEMBER (CONT'D)

Well, hello bright eyes.

She hugs him warmly and speaks with motherly concern...

SEPTEMBER (CONT'D)

It's so good to see you. Are you
holding up okay?

BRYCE

Yeah... yeah I'm fine. And you?

SEPTEMBER

Same old same old, darlin'. I
haven't had lunch yet, care to
join me?

BRYCE

I can't. I'm working a case and
I ... I need to talk to Raven.

(turns away)

I realize she doesn't want me to
know where she is.

SEPTEMBER

That's only for your protection
Keith. If the police used you to
find out --

BRYCE

(resigned)

-- Right, I know. Some cop's
been tailing me all night;
typical isn't it? But don't
worry, I'll cover my tracks.

Frustrated, Bryce goes to the window and looks out at the street. He speaks in a faraway voice...

BRYCE (CONT'D)

I'm looking for a woman who may have been kidnapped by environmental activists. I figure Mother Earth'd be aware of anyone attempting that.

SEPTEMBER

Do you think they did it? Could Raven actually be involved?

BRYCE

I hope not.
 (looks at
 September)
 But I won't know for sure until I see her... and ask her, face to face.

September wrings her hands, agonizing over whether to tell Bryce what she knows.

BRYCE

I could find her myself, September -- you know that.

SEPTEMBER

(looks down, nods)
 You just need me to speed up the process.

Bryce's only answer is uncomfortable silence. September takes his hands and looks deep into his eyes... and comes to a decision. She writes something on a piece of paper and gives it to him.

SEPTEMBER (CONT'D)

I trust you Keith. I hope I'm doing the right thing.

Bryce studies the location she's given him... then tears it up. He looks at her with respect and gratitude... gives her a warm kiss on the cheek, grabs his hat and quietly exits.

MOVE IN ON SEPTEMBER sadly watching him go.

EXT. SEPTEMBER'S BAR - NIGHT - BRYCE EXITS THE BAR

casually looking left... then looking right... before walking off down the block and OUT OF FRAME. After a few moments, The Tail in the black fedora steps INTO FRAME and mirrors Bryce's steps, following in the same direction.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT - ON BRYCE WALKING

BRYCE

I'd run some checks on the guests at Walcott's party: seems they all left together after Wayne passed out. Barring a blue blood conspiracy, I ruled them out as kidnapers.

(pause)

Now, I was faced with the disturbing possibility that my wife's movement was involved.

There's a growing sense of unrest on the streets; a buzzing undercurrent that can be felt more than heard. Amidst the swirling urban rumble, Bryce comes upon three ten year-old kids, two boys and a girl, playing some sort of ball game in the street. SHAYLA, a pretty, precocious little tomboy, beams as she spots the detective...

SHAYLA

Keith, Keith, come play with us!

She tosses him a multi-colored sphere, shaped like a small basketball.

BRYCE

(checking his watch)

Hey, it's not even midnight yet. Why aren't you guys in school?

SHAYLA

(playful)

There's no school on Monday! What's wrong with you?

BRYCE

I must be getting old. We used to go five days a week.

The kids LAUGH in disbelief at the very thought.

SHAYLA

Come on Keith, pleeease -- let's play catch.

BRYCE

Okay, Squirt, but just for a minute. I'm working tonight.

SHAYLA

(teasing)

Yeah, sure you are!

Bryce arches his eyebrows at her, pretending to be mad -- he changes the ball's shape into a football and spirals it back to her. The ball trails brilliant red, white and blue streamers of light as it flies through the air before being snared by the delighted little girl.

Shayla cocks her arm, preparing to throw -- and freezes. Her face displays wonder; all the children's eyes are riveted on the sky above Keith's head. The detective spins in time to see a slow moving steak of light rising into the night and lighting up like a green flare...

ANGLE ON THE SKY as the flare transforms itself into a holographic image: the three people from the wanted poster, including RAVEN BRYCE, fervently speak to the city as they float across the sky.

REVOLUTIONARY MAN

Mother Earth is friend to the people -- we bring you the hard truth and urge you to rise up and take action.

RAVEN

The water crises is manufactured, the new law is a lie! Fight the powers that be; stand tall for your rights! Excess water is being diverted to the rich, that's why they want you to cut back.

Bryce sees that a police sharpshooter has climbed onto a nearby roof and is taking aim on the drifting image.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

A false shortage drives up the price; Amerapan and the mega-corporations profit from your plight! Don't let the great rip-off shackle you! Reject the big lie --

Pedestrians GASP AS A GUNSHOT rings out and the image of the Mother Earth three is hit. It begins to break up and lose altitude.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

(garbled)

... we demand..... your
constitu.... the corrupt ones
who.... Amerapan!

ANOTHER SHOT and the tattered, descending image explodes, sending glowing fragments back to Earth. One lands up the block and the street kids run over to pick it up. In the distance, the shattering sound of BREAKING GLASS seems to punctuate the message that the city has just heard. Bryce can feel rebellion in the air as an excited Shayla comes back holding a piece of the wreckage...

SHAYLA

Look Keith, look what I found!

Bryce gingerly takes the debris from the little girl: we can see an image of a woman's hand, frozen at the time of the explosion. Bryce's face reflects a myriad of emotions as he zeroes in on the wedding ring that still sparkles on her finger...

The detective gently hands the fragment back to Shayla; the little girl can sense he's seen something that's affected him.

BRYCE

(whispery)

I've gotta go... Bye Shayla.

SHAYLA

(soft, confused)

Bye Keith.

MOVE IN ON the puzzled little girl, looking down at the woman's hand on the frozen image.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW BLOCK PAST STREET CORNER - BRYCE

turns the corner. ANGLE BACK ON THE TAIL several steps behind, following in his tracks. The Tail comes around the corner -- Bryce springs out of a crack between buildings and catches the man completely off-guard.

In one smooth motion Bryce disarms him while roughly shoving him up against a building wall. Bryce throws The Tail's gun up the block and goes nose to nose with the man, whose distinguishing characteristics are a cruel, tough-looking face and a powerful enforcer's body.

BRYCE

I'm sick of seeing my shadow,
 understand? Tell Melrose he's
 wasting his time: if I knew where
 Raven was I wouldn't be dumb
 enough to lead a pinhead cop like
 you to her door. Now shove off!

Bryce pushes the man into a pile of garbage cans,
 scattering them like bowling pins. CLOSE ON THE EMBITTERED
 TAIL as he angrily rises, retrieves his black fedora, and
 stares after Bryce, who has disappeared down the block.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ENTRANCE TO INNER-CITY ALLEY - NIGHT

This is a dark and foreboding place. Bryce reaches the
 point where the mouth of a grimy alleyway meets a rundown,
 litter-strewn street. It's quiet here, unnaturally so.
 Bryce hesitates... then cautiously steps forward.

EXT. THE ALLEY - ON BRYCE

moving ahead slowly, scanning the decaying structures that
 flank him, for any sign of movement. A warm wind whips up
 discarded papers, TWO CATS can be heard fighting in the
 distance, an unseen machine WHOOSHES AND HISSES, a plastic
 box tumbles by, driven by a strong gust.

Bryce has reached the center of the alley. The place looks
 deserted: there are no people, only manmade refuse, and a
 scattered pack of scurrying rats.

The alley walls are saturated with sprawling multi-colored
 graffiti: a strange combination of English, Spanish and
 Asian slang, mixed in with hieroglyphic symbols.

Bryce touches something on the end of his right trenchcoat
 sleeve and a beam shoots out of his cuff, acting like a
 flashlight and illuminating a patch of the decaying wall.
 Scanning from left to right, he discovers a pair of
 quotations scrawled amidst the chaotic hodgepodge of words
 and symbols:

"A great revolution is never the fault of the people,
 but of the government." -- Goethe, January 4, 1824

"If the abuse be enormous, nature will rise up, and
 claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt
 political system." -- Samuel Johnson, July 6, 1763

Bryce smiles to himself, seeing the hand of Mother Earth in the writing on the wall.

Suddenly, with shocking, aggressive precision, men and women appear between walls and shacks, arise from manhole covers and descend from fire escapes. In a matter of seconds, Bryce is completely encircled. The lean, dirt-streaked assailants (many in green headbands) roughly back him against the wall and pin him there, pressing lethal, razor-like stilettos against his body.

Their leader is STROM, a muscular, one-armed American Indian.

STROM

(menacing)

Well lookey here... a little lamb
has lost its way.

He shows Bryce his glinting knife, then places it against the detective's throat, applying a little pressure.

STROM (CONT'D)

You got three seconds friend,
before I separate your head from
your body. Now... tell me true
things. Why are you here?

Bryce takes a long look at the hostile faces that surround him... then brazenly grab's Strom's wrist and angrily pushes the knife away.

BRYCE

I'm here to see your boss,
jackass.

INT. ENTRANCE TO ALLEYWAY BUILDING - STROM

pushes his way through two ragged hanging towels which form a makeshift back-alley entrance to a small building. He leads a blindfolded Bryce, flanked by two female Mother Earth soldiers, into the dark building.

A small step-ladder is pulled out and Bryce is prodded into climbing it. Then, he's guided down a shaky ramp toward a closed door. The door is opened and the blindfolded detective is pushed inside. A thick cloud of steam surrounds him, and a powerful, acrid smell permeates the room. HISSING, RUMBLING, and a GRATING METALLIC SCREECH ring out all around him. Bryce can hear PRESSING MACHINES and the labored sound of an ancient LAUNDRY SORTING CAROUSEL.

Strom and the soldiers lead Bryce out of the steam and over to a large, circular, rusted ventilation grate. Despite his disability, Strom quickly and expertly removes the grill and hoists Bryce into the shaft. Together, Bryce, Strom, and the soldiers crawl across the dank metal until the shaft slants downward and slides them into a warehouse-like room where they land with A THUD.

INT. WAREHOUSE - BRYCE IS RELIEVED

to feel cooling air from a giant fan, blowing across his body. He rises and unfastens his blindfold; Strom doesn't try and stop him. Bryce rubs his eyes and squints into the darkness. He can make out stacked cartons and crates but little else.

And then... he hears the sound of A STRUCK MATCH. An amber lantern is lit, and a small, lithe figure approaches, using the lantern as a beacon to guide her way.

BRYCE POV: the figure is wearing a dark red, form-fitting jumpsuit, with a sash around the waist. Her dark-auburn hair is swept back under a green headband. On her shoulder is a design, featuring the planet Earth with a benevolent woman's face superimposed underneath it.

TWO SHOT

as the woman approaches the detective. She holds the lantern up and for the first time in a long time, Keith Bryce looks into the burning eyes of RAVEN BRYCE.

FADE TO BLACK:

End Of Act Three

"DARK CITY"

Act Four

FADE IN:

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - WIDE ANGLE ON BRYCE

Raven and Strom; the two women soldiers stand cross-armed in the background. Two more hanging lanterns have brightened the room considerably...

STROM

(to Raven, harsh)

Why should we tell him anything?

(to Bryce)

It's well known, you could've joined us. Could've devoted your life to a cause instead of the almighty dollaryen.

BRYCE

You sound just like my wife, what a coincidence.

STROM

(angered)

Your wife joined the struggle. She leads the fight against those that rape the Earth and poison the sky in the name of profit --

BRYCE

-- Save the speech Cowboy, I've heard it all before and I agree with it, so quit trying to convert the converted. I'm just not the type to stand on a soapbox -- or blow up a soap company for that matter.

STROM

He says he agrees with our cause yet he works with our enemies.

RAVEN

You needn't worry Strom, Keith's no cop-lover. That much I know.

Strom is clearly unconvinced; Bryce ignores him and addresses Raven...

BRYCE

I came here to talk to you, as in you, singular.

(indicates others)

You think we could continue this conversation without The Mother's Grimm listening in?

Raven hesitates, seems wary of being alone with her husband, but finally agrees, nodding to the others to leave.

STROM

Raven --

RAVEN

-- It's alright.

Strom recognizes this as a directive to acquiesce without debate. He reluctantly joins the two women and exits, glaring at Bryce and brushing into him as he walks by.

BRYCE

Nice company you're keeping, Rave.

RAVEN

(pointed)

They're my family now. Ann was a lawyer, Jill a housewife, Strom a chemical engineer. They've each given up everything, evervthing, to join the movement. They'd lay down their lives for me.

BRYCE

(hands up)

Alright, alright, I believe you. I didn't come here to argue.

RAVEN

Right, you seek information on a missing woman. Well we don't kill, Keith, and we don't kidnap, despite what the government says. Therefore we know nothing of this Marlene.

BRYCE

Would you know if someone else, someone with similar beliefs, was involved?

RAVEN

We'd know. It hasn't happened;
you have to trust me on that.

BRYCE

I've always trusted you, Raven.

Bryce moves forward and looks into his wife's eyes...
Keith's usual, hard, sardonic edge melts away and a
yearning vulnerability shows through.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

I've missed you so much. I
respect your convictions but I
can't help feeling this is wrong.
We should be together.

RAVEN

Then join us.

BRYCE

And take orders from a bunch of
half-cocked revolutionaries?
(shakes his head)
You know that's not my style.

RAVEN

Seems we've had this conversation
before. Seems it never gets us
anywhere.

Bryce gently puts his hands on her shoulders.

BRYCE

Maybe not. But I know I still
love you.

Smoothly, deliberately, he pulls her to him and kisses her:
a powerful kiss full of longing and deep-seated emotion.
She gives in to it fully and seems dazed and confused when
it's done.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

(whisper)

And you still love me.

She pulls back, with tears in the corners of her eyes.

RAVEN

That's not enough for me... Not
anymore.

Raven turns away from him, hoping to hide the tears that
are running down her cheeks. She tries to maintain
strength in her voice...

RAVEN (CONT'D)

They robbed us of our chance...
our chance to be a real family.

BRYCE

(empathetic)

No. It was a miscarriage. I
know it hurt us but... we could
try again --

RAVEN

-- The air, the water... they
poisoned it for years... poisoned
me. We could never have a child,
not until the world is healthy
again. That's what we're
fighting for.

BRYCE

Raven, I --

RAVEN

-- You shouldn't have come here,
it only opens old wounds. We
live in different worlds now. We
may never be together again,
accept it.

He moves to her, but back turned, she shrinks from his
touch.

RAVEN (CONT'D)

Marlene wasn't abducted by any of
us. You'll have to look
elsewhere.

Raven senses that Bryce is searching for the right words...

RAVEN (CONT'D)

-- Don't. Please don't say
anything... just go.

With a heavy heart, Bryce slips a gentle arm around his
wife. She softly kisses his hand, then keeps her back to
him as he sadly exits. MOVE IN ON RAVEN, alone, silently
weeping...

RAVEN (CONT'D)

(whispering)

And take care of yourself.

EXT. STREET NEAR BRYCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - ON BRYCE

head bowed, walking up the block toward his place.

BRYCE (V.O.)

My encounter with Raven left me talking to myself... Alright Bryce, you're a tough guy, quit being so morose. Gotta put Raven out of your mind... get her out of your head -- concentrate on Marlene. If Walcott's guests and environmental enemies weren't involved in her disappearance, who else was in the mansion that night?

Bryce climbs the stairs to his duplex.

BRYCE (V.O., CONT'D)

I decided to renew my search with a band called The Astrodots who were hired to play at Walcott's party. I headed home to get a lead on their whereabouts.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLOSE ON THE WALL TV

featuring a hyperactive GAME SHOW HOST in a bright orange suit, with a ring in his nose. TV addict Ogden is watching with delight...

GAME SHOW HOST

Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh yeah!!!

The studio audience goes wild. ANGLE TO INCLUDE THE TWO CONTESTANTS: SYLVIA has 80 points, ABDUL, 75.

GAME SHOW HOST (CONT'D)

Twentieth Century Conflicts the category: in what well-known war did a fat Brit named Churchill become famous?

A BUZZER goes off.

GAME SHOW HOST

Abdul!

ABDUL

Korean War!!

A HORN blasts.

GAME SHOW HOST

That's absolutely wrong!

Ogden and the audience collectively GROAN. Then, ANOTHER BUZZER.

GAME SHOW HOST

Sylvia!

SYLVIA

World War... Two?

GAME SHOW HOST

Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh yeah!!

Ogden cheers, the audience roars and A SIREN GOES OFF.

GAME SHOW HOST (CONT'D)

We're out of time and that means... Sylvia is our winner!

Sylvia hops up and down crazily, flush with victory.

GAME SHOW HOST (CONT'D)

And what's on tap for our winning contestant? Johnny?

JOHNNY (V.O.)

Our lucky winner will receive A WEEK OF COLD SHOWERS, courtesy of Polar Spa's, the place to go for the tomorrow body, today.

Ogden and Sylvia are thrilled with this prize. They're even more excited when they hear A DRUM ROLL... Unseen by Ogden, Bryce enters the room, frowning at the sight of his new computer watching his TV.

ON SCREEN: THE DRUM ROLL is reaching a crescendo...

JOHNNY (V.O., CONT'D)

And that's not all, Sylvia, for we've secured government permission to fly you and a friend to... an all expense paid weekend in... cool, clean, SASKATCHEWAN!!

BUZZERS and SIRENS go off -- the camera shakes, giving the feel of an earthquake. Ogden's eyes light up and he rolls his head in excitement...

OGDEN

Saskatchewan -- WOW! What a lucky dame.

ON SCREEN: Sylvia's family members are streaming onto the set to mob and congratulate her.

GAME SHOW HOST

Yeah, yeah, yeah, oh yeah! We'll see you again next week friends, and remember -- "Name That War" was brought to you by: Amerapan... Where People Come First!

BRYCE
(irritated)

TV off.

Ogden spins his head in surprise at the sound of his owner's voice as the television screen becomes the wall again.

BRYCE
I can't stand that show.

OGDEN
Yeah. Me too.

BRYCE
Listen Ogden -- Ogden, how'd you get a name like that anyway?

OGDEN
(proudly)
My creator named me after the great Ogden Nash. I'm sure you're familiar with his work.

Before Bryce can protest, Ogden barrels into a Nash soliloquy: speaking with zest, reciting from memory and rolling his "R's" as he dons an affected, upper-class British accent.

OGDEN (CONT'D)
Two nudists from Dover -- being purple all over -- were munched by a cow -- when mistaken for clover.

BRYCE
Thanks. I get the idea --

OGDEN
-- There is nothing more perky than a masculine turkey. When he struts, he struts, with no ifs ands or buts.

BRYCE
Ogden --

OGDEN

-- When his face is apoplectic,
his harem grows hectic, and when
he gobbles, their universe
wobbles... Ha, Ha, I know
hundreds --

BRYCE

-- That's really annoying.
Really annoying.

The crazy smile disappears from the computer's face,
instantly replaced by a look that says his feelings have
been hurt.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

If you're gonna work here we've
gotta get a few things straight.

OGDEN

Of course Keith.

BRYCE

And let's start with that; I'd
rather you didn't call me Keith.

Ogden really looks sad now; Bryce almost finds himself
feeling sorry for him.

OGDEN

You don't want me to call you
Keith... I see.

BRYCE

It's uh, unprofessional.

OGDEN

(down)

Yes. I suppose so.

After a few moments of silence, Bryce wonders why he's
feeling guilty. Irked, he activates the wall telephone
without turning on the screen...

OPERATOR (O.S.)

(cold, impersonal)

City information -- what subject?

BRYCE

Entertainment. I'm looking for a
band called "The Astrodots."

OGDEN
 (overhearing)
 The Astrodots?! Gee Keith, are
 you into them too?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Checking... What type of music,
 sir?

BRYCE
 (glowering at
 Ogden)
 I have no idea.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
 Found. I show them performing
 tonight at The Midwest Tavern,
 first show one a.m. Tickets
 available at the box office.

Without another word, the operator terminates the call and
 the blank screen becomes the wall again.

OGDEN
 Oh please boss, take me, will ya?
 I've never seen The Dots live! I
 fit inside a bowling bag --

BRYCE
 -- Out-of-the-question.

Ignoring the fact that Ogden is pouting, Bryce puts on his
 hat and coat, and prepares to leave.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
 How do you know this band,
 anyway? I've never even heard of
 them.

OGDEN
 One of my former owners was a big
 fan; I know every song they do by
 heart.

(pause)
 It might be real handy to have me
 along, you know.

BRYCE
 Ogden, no means no, okay?

Ogden is dejected. He gives his new owner a hound dog
 look: "I'm depressed" is written all over his face.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
 Don't look at me that way.
 (pause)
 It won't do you any good.

EXT. THE MIDWEST TAVERN - NIGHT - BRYCE

steps up to the box office window carrying an open athletic bag.

BRYCE

One.

The sour-faced old lady TICKET TAKER takes a prolonged look at the bag.

TICKET TAKER

What about him?

BRYCE

Who?

The top of a bald head is sticking out of the open bag...

BRYCE (CONT'D)

Oh him. What about him?

Ogden straightens his head until about half of his sheepish face is visible.

TICKET TAKER

You'll need two tickets. That'll be fourteen dollaryen.

BRYCE

Fourteen? Doesn't he get in for half-price?

TICKET TAKER

Only children under twelve are half-price, sir. Fourteen D-Y's.

BRYCE

Ogden, how old are you?

OGDEN

Three.

Satisfied, Bryce smacks some money down on the counter.

BRYCE

Ten fifty.

INT. MIDWEST TAVERN - NIGHT - BRYCE IS SEATED

at a table near a small stage, surprised to find he's far and away the youngest guy in the place. Stocky, barrel-legged waitresses serve beer, knockwurst and pretzels to elderly customers.

Ogden is perched on the table beside Bryce. loving every minute of being out on the town. ON STAGE an M.C. with a derby hat and polka dot bow tie grabs the microphone, a few scant feet from where Bryce and Head are sitting...

M.C.

And now ladies and gentlemen, the moment you've all been waiting for... put your hands together for the song stylings of THE ASTRODOTS!!

The Astrodots take the stage to enthusiastic applause: four beefy old guys in red, playing accordion, tuba, clarinet and drums. This is a polka band.

MOVE IN ON BRYCE as the band breaks into A BARRELING POLKA TUNE. The detective looks slightly horrified; it's the look of a classical pianist trapped in a room playing Led Zeppelin.

MORT, the lead singer/clarinetist, growls out a popular polka classic...

MORT

(singing)

Someone stole the keeshka,
someone stole the keeshka,
someone stole my keeshka from the
butcher shop.

Ogden is bouncing to the tune, moving his head from side to side.

MORT (CONT'D)

Who stole the keeshka, who stole
the keeshka, who stole my
keeshka, someone call a cop!

Bryce cringes as Ogden starts to sing along, his voice booming and just slightly off-key.

MORT/OGDEN

Round, firm, fully packed, it was
hanging on the rack -- someone
stole the keeshka when I turned
my back!

BRYCE

Shhh!

Ogden is enjoying himself way too much to pay any attention to his boss.

MORT/OGDEN

You can have my shinka, take my fine kilbosa, munch on my pork blintzes but please bring back my keeshka!

Old people at neighboring tables are clapping hands and staring over at Bryce and his rollicking mechanical companion with simpering "isn't that cute!" looks on their faces. Bryce sinks down into his seat...

BRYCE (V.O.)

I'd come a long way to talk to The Astrodots, but that meant sitting through an entire set. The next sixty minutes took ten years off my life.

OGDEN

Yorgi stole the keeshka! Yorgi stole the keeshka! Yorgi stole the keeshka but now he brought it back!

INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM - LATER - ON MORT

the frog-voiced leader of the Astrodots, removing his stage make-up. The other Dots are changing in the background, occasionally interrupted by seventy year-old groupies who've worked their way backstage.

MORT

Sure I recall the Walcott gig: Iceland Park, who could forget? Stuffy rich people, with too much time and money on their hands; we should all have such problems.

ANGLE TO INCLUDE BRYCE as he pulls out one of the shifting 3-D photos of Marlene and shows it to Mort.

BRYCE

Did you see this woman that night?

MORT

Uh-uh, her I would've remembered. I may be old but I'm still alive from the waist down.

BRYCE

What can you tell me about the party?

MORT

Kind of a dull bash save for the birthday boy. The guy's a mean drunk: kept requestin' songs then changing his mind after eight bars. If a clarinet could kill, Walcott'd be dead and buried, believe me.

BRYCE

Anything else? Anything unusual? Memorable?

MORT

The food! They catered from "The Tasty Slice". First class all the way: chefs, waiters, cocktail girls, the works!

BRYCE

The Tasty Slice huh? Okay, Mort, thanks for your time.

Bryce shakes Mort's hand and starts to exit...

MORT

Hey, we're playing Junior's Clam House, Tuesday. It's Polish Polka night: you bring a polish girl, you get in for half price.

BRYCE

A polish date, The Clam House and you guys? How could I miss it?

Bryce winks at the band leader and exits.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE MIDWEST TAVERN - NIGHT - BRYCE

is carrying Ogden in the bag. The Talking Head is on a high; he swivels his head completely around to check out a long-legged girl as she walks by.

OGDEN

Where to now K.B.?

BRYCE

K.B.?

OGDEN

It's just the shank of the evening and I'm feeling alive. I hear The Polar Palace is happening. Or how 'bout September's, your favorite hang-out, for a nice warm beer!

BRYCE

I'm going to The Tasty Slice. And you're going home.

OGDEN

But --

Bryce holds up a finger, silencing him.

OGDEN (CONT'D)

But --

Bryce does it again, a clear warning for Ogden to drop it. The computer is momentarily stymied but just can't give up; he opens his mouth to say something else --

BRYCE

Sleep.

(Ogden sleeps)

Sorry pal but you're gonna have to learn: the tail does not wag the dog.

CLOSE ON OGDEN sleeping with his mouth open wide, about to form a word. Slowly, the head straightens and the mouth goes shut, leaving just the trace of a smile, as though he were somehow dreaming of his big night on the town.

EXT. TASTY SLICE CATERERS - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

of a high class catering establishment, whose marquee reads: "For over thirteen years, serving real Alaskan beef to a select few".

INT. TASTY SLICE KITCHEN - ADDISON KEMP

leads Keith Bryce through the kitchen where several racks of beef are being marinated. She's the manager: an efficient looking young woman, glasses, hair pulled back, wearing a dark pants suit with exaggerated shoulder pads.

ADDISON

I'm not sure this is relevant Mr. Bryce, but one of our employees quit, the day after the party.

BRYCE

Why?

ADDISON

I can't say really. He disappeared; we can't even find him to pay him.

INT. SMALL MANAGERIAL OFFICE - ADDISON IS CROUCHED DOWN going through a filing cabinet.

ADDISON

(finding file)

Ah, here we are: Tommy Landers. Nice boy, kind of a loner. Been working here almost two years.

BRYCE

Had Tommy ever been up to the Walcott Mansion before?

ADDISON

Yes, a number of times. They're regular customers, you know.

She hands him the file... and hesitates before continuing.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

Tommy's got a friend, a Onename called Tarinda -- I'm sure she'd know where he is.

BRYCE

I thought you couldn't find him? Why not just ask her?

ADDISON

Don't know where she lives, only where she works. And I can't send someone there; our insurance company would never allow it.

BRYCE

Why not?

ADDISON

Well... she works in a club called The Tunnel.

BRYCE

So?

Addison can't resist an ironic grin.

ADDISON
It's in Jungletown.

Bryce shuts his eyes and grimaces as though he suddenly had a headache.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
You're not thinking of going out there?

BRYCE
(tipping his hat)
Afraid so. Thanks for the tip, Miss Kemp.

With concern in her eyes she watches him go. After a few moments, her eyes go cold and she activates her phone screen. She speaks to the unseen person who answers...

ADDISON
He's on his way.

EXT. JUNGLETOWN - NIGHT - CLOSE ON TWO BOUNCERS

huge musclemen, their faces streaked with war paint, guarding the entrance to a club called "THE TUNNEL."

PAN TO REVEAL THE STREET: it teems with wild pedestrians, bumping into one another like some giant urban slam dance. We pass rabid face after face until we come to Bryce, clawing his way through the human wall, toward the club. All around him, random violence seems to be the norm, with people being flung left and right for no apparent reason.

This is a place people come to willingly and at their own risk. It is truly a savage Bohemia.

A THROBBING, SYNTHESIZED DRUM BEAT vibrates all along the street. Overt sexuality abounds: young women, barely dressed, swan dive out of second-story windows, to be caught by waiting masses of men and women on the street below.

Bryce pushes forward, dodging swan divers and fending off clutching hands. Some guy grabs his hat: Bryce decks him, grabs it back and keeps moving. A SCREAMING GIRL bursts out of the crowd, wrapping her limbs around Keith in a not unfriendly way. He slithers away, leaving her to jump on the next guy.

Bryce can see the glowing "TUNNEL" sign up ahead now. He uses his arms to swim through the churning throng before a massive, angry-looking MADMAN with half a beard and half a head of hair (on opposite sides of his head) blocks his path and grabs him by the lapel...

MADMAN

I don't like you! I don't like
your face!

The angry man pulls Bryce closer, shouting at him, eyes on
fire...

MADMAN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna adjust it for you!

Bryce surprises him with a quick, straight right to the
face. The behemoth HOWLS and grabs his nose, releasing his
grip. Bryce quickly slips away, losing himself in the
tumult.

ANGLE ON THE GIANT BOUNCERS as Bryce finally reaches the
Tunnel doors. They close down on him, roughly shoving him
backwards.

FIRST BOUNCER

What makes you think you're
getting in here, sly?

BRYCE

(flashing badge)

What makes you think I'm not?

The bouncer studies the badge and waves it off.

FIRST BOUNCER

No go. He's just a lousy temp-
dep.

BRYCE

Lousy? Now you've done it;
you've gone and hurt my feelings.

The first bouncer looks at his partner and frowns, not sure
how to take that.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

But I'll be forgiving, since
you're a man who knows the law.
You're aware that the badge gives
me carte blanche to shut this
joint down, yes?

(switch to V.O.)

I was lying through my teeth of
course, but I was betting Atilla
wouldn't know the difference.

The two bouncers confer... then with a rough nod of the head, they reluctantly indicate Bryce can enter. As Bryce walks by, he notices a tattoo on the second bouncer's arm: a snarling cobra with the word "Mother" underneath it.

BRYCE

Always thinking of mon. That's nice.

INT. THE TUNNEL - A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

with a green beehive hairdo leads Bryce into a room with lace curtains over blacked-out windows. Mosaic spider webs, shooting stars and Tarot Card figures surrealistically adorn the walls. TWO YOUNG WOMEN, one Hispanic, the other pale with a short shock of white-blond hair, are lying on separate couches, wearing torn clothes that barely cover their glistening bodies.

BEEHIVE

These are The Tarot Twins.
Enjoy.

She exits and the women lazily rise and begin their routine. The Hispanic girl breaks into a slow, sensual, twisting dance, while her "twin" sits at a table and shuffles the cards. The dancer moves to Bryce, rubbing his shoulders...

BRYCE

You guys are twins?

DANCER

We have a karmic bond.

BRYCE

Which one's Tarinda?

DANCER

Well it's not me, honey.

Bryce looks over at the pale girl, who continues to shuffle the Tarot deck without looking up. The dancer is close to undressed now; Bryce hands her a bright orange, five dollaryen bill...

BRYCE

Give us some privacy, okay?

DANCER

You only want one of us?

(shrugs)

Your loss.

She strokes his face seductively and exits. The detective moves toward TARINDA, who is still concentrating on her cards. Her skin is like white porcelain, her features exceptionally delicate. She wears red contact lenses, which, coupled with her paleness, gives her the desired vampire look. Her long nails are two-tone black and red, her palms are embroidered with vivid Tarot tattoos.

Tarinda shuffles, never looking up...

TARINDA

Your life is in my hands: your past, your future... in my hands.

BRYCE

I'm not here to --

TARINDA

-- First the cards, then me. That's the way I work.

She deals the first card: a hooded man on horseback.

TARINDA (CONT'D)

The Knight Of Rods. You.

She deals again: people on the street, battered by the elements.

TARINDA (CONT'D)

Five Of Pentacles. Your environment.

The next card is a figure sitting up in bed, holding his head. Swords are all around, pointing at him.

TARINDA (CONT'D)

Nine Of Swords. You've been dreaming too much. Bad boy.

Dealing again: a black tower, upside down, being struck by lightning... She doesn't comment, turning over the next one which depicts a horned devil, grinning, chained to a man and woman. Tarinda seems disturbed as she reveals another: a laughing skeleton on horseback, riding over a field strewn with dead bodies.

Tarinda sweeps the cards back into the deck and throws her head back to look at Bryce for the first time.

TARINDA

Who are you? You didn't come here for the usual read and rub.

BRYCE
I'm a private investigator,
Tarinda. I've come to ask for
your help.

Tarinda's crimson eyes hone in on Bryce's. She leans back in her chair, analyzing him as she pulls a purple celery-like stalk out of a pouch and begins to chew on it.

TARINDA
Root?

BRYCE
I don't do root.

She sizes him up while sucking on the stalk.

TARINDA
Why should I help you?

BRYCE
Because I'm The Knight Of Rods?

TARINDA
Nice try. Try again.

BRYCE
I'm looking for your friend Tommy
Landers, and I --

TARINDA
(bitter whisper)
-- Still looking for Tommy. Why
don't you people leave him alone?

Bryce has no idea what she means by that.

TARINDA (CONT'D)
Are you another mercenary, Mr.
Knight? Do you even know Tommy
or is this just another job?

BRYCE
I don't know Tommy. What can you
tell me about him?

She seems surprised by his interest.

TARINDA
We were in a triad together once
but it really wasn't his thing,
you know? Tommy's a true
romantic -- he actually believes
in monogamy, can you beat that?

BRYCE

You say someone else was looking for him?

TARINDA

Another man; same questions.

BRYCE

What did he look like?

TARINDA

Like you. A meaner, uglier version of you.

BRYCE

That's a scary thought. Did he say why he was after Tommy?

TARINDA

Said it was personal; some stolen property or something.

Bryce rises and walks a few steps from the table, thinking discouraging thoughts.

BRYCE (V.O.)

My hopes for a quick resolution were fading. His going AWOL probably had nothing to do with Marlene; for all I knew, Tommy was hiding out from a creditor or a bookie. Still, I had to see it through...

(spoken)

Tarinda... are you psychic?

TARINDA

Of course. Ninety two percent accuracy.

BRYCE

Then you must know: I'm not connected to that other man.

Tarinda studies Bryce, eerie red eyes blazing.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

A woman's been kidnapped. I just want to talk to Tommy, see if he knows anything about it. I don't want to bust him, don't want to hurt him -- you have my word on that.

TARINDA

(soft, leery)

The other man wouldn't take no for an answer. I really think he would've killed me... if one of our bouncers hadn't heard me scream.

BRYCE

Maybe Tommy needs help. Maybe I can help him but you've gotta tell me where he is.

TARINDA

(looking down)

He's out of money... holing up... waiting for a chance to exit the city.

BRYCE

Where?

TARINDA

I can't tell you.

(sad smile)

You see... there's always that other eight percent, ready to lurk up and bite you in the ass. I can't take that chance.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO THE TUNNEL - BRYCE WALKS OUT

past the same massive bouncers. The street is even wilder than before; street lamps are strobing as Bryce prepares to wade into the crowd. Nightmare images come in and out of focus as the reckless, thrashing, moving mass of bodies is thrown into total darkness every few seconds.

He reaches the edge of the turmoil but is stopped by a WOMAN'S VOICE calling from behind...

DANCER (V.O.)

Mr. Knight?

He spins to find the other Tarot Twin standing just outside the entrance to the club.

DANCER (CONT'D)

My Twin wanted you to have this.

She hands him a Tarot card: The Five Of Cups.

DANCER (CONT'D)

Tarinda said if she's right about you, this will take you where you want to go. If not... it'll lead you nowhere.

Bryce looks down at the card: the Dancer slinks forward, running her hands through his hair and WHISPERING a warning into his ear.

DANCER (CONT'D)

And she says to watch your back
-- the cards are not in your favor.

The dancer steps back without another word and disappears into the darkness of The Tunnel.

Still looking at the card, Bryce begins to push his way through the crowd. He pockets the Tarot just as a pair of colossal hands clamp down on his shoulders from behind. He painfully swivels his neck just enough to see the crazed, half-bearded madman he punched in the nose, reaching over several bodies to grab Bryce by the collarbone.

MADMAN

You're deadmeatdeadmeatdeadmeat!!
I'm gonna crush your skull --

Bryce drops straight down, grabs the man's wrists, and pulls, using the giant's own strength against him. The madman goes pinwheeling overhead, coming down with a crunch on the crowd just in front of Keith.

Shaking like an angry, decked fish, he starts to get back up, just as a swan-diving girl lands right on top of him. The madman is buried under a sea of eager young men leaping in to try and catch her.

BRYCE

Always a pleasure. Call my agent, we'll do lunch.

OVERHEAD SHOT: the furious madman is GROWLING from somewhere inside the moving pyramid of bodies. Bryce moves on, scraping, pushing and fighting his way out of Jungletown.

FADE TO BLACK:

End Of Act Four

"DARK CITY"

Act Five

FADE IN:

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CLOSE ON THE TAROT CARD

Tarinda gave to Bryce (The Five of Cups), featuring a young man in a black cloak, head bowed, his back to us. In the foreground we see a flock of birds in a cloudy sky, circling a castle on a hill that overlooks a shoreline. Five golden cups surround the man -- three lie on the beach spilling red liquid onto the sand.

PULL BACK to see it's on Bryce's desk, being intently studied by the detective. We can see Ogden in the background, looking on from his perch on the mantle, the autographed still of The Astrodots hung up on the wall behind him. Bryce is bewildered, thinking out loud...

BRYCE

Black cloak... birds... a castle,
sky and water... and five cups?

OGDEN

If I might offer an educated
opinion sir: obviously the key to
said depiction is the figure with
his back to us. Therefore, the
individual you seek must be
hiding out in a back alley.

(profound)

Find this alley and you'll find
your man!

Bryce shoots him a pained look.

OGDEN (CONT'D)

(scrambling)

On the other hand -- if I had
hands that is -- it may be the
cups themselves that hold the
clue to his whereabouts. Or the
number five, or the beach, or --

Bryce waves his hand, indicating Ogden should shut up. He looks back at the card and frowns... as something Ogden said dawns on him.

BRYCE

The beach you say? Maybe... Yes,
that could be it.

Ogden nods enthusiastically, flashing a cocky smile.

OGDEN

The beach: I knew it.
 (pause, frowns)
 Why the beach, sir?

Bryce is already up and moving, grabbing his coat and hat. He responds to the Head on his way out the door...

BRYCE

Only those at the end of their credit, or their rope, would stay anywhere near the ocean. That sounds like Tommy Landers to me.

OGDEN

Right! Exactly what I was thinking when I zeroed in on that lonesome stretch of sand in the picture. It's a gift I have Keith, kinda like a sixth sense.

BRYCE

(dry, as he exits)
 You're full of surprises, Ogden.

EXT. THE BEACH - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

of a thin stretch of beach, shielded from the ocean by a huge wall that runs along the coast line, acting as a breaker. The ocean rages, over-gorged by melting polar ice caps; angry waves rhythmically bash into the wall with the sound of BOOMING THUNDER.

On the land side of the beach, small houses and motels dot the area, half-obsured by patchy ground fog.

EXT. THE SUNKEN CITY MOTEL - ESTABLISHING SHOT

of a rundown "oasis" complete with plastic palm trees.

BRYCE (V.O.)

I scoured the beach front motels: The Sea Chest, Mariner's Village and The Blue Lagoon -- all dives, all devoid of one Tommy Landers. It was three hours to dawn by the time I reached "The Sunken City."

INT. SUNKEN CITY "LOBBY" - MOVING IN ON THE MANAGER

a sorry looking guy, with an open magazine his desk; it talks to him as he turns the page...

MAGAZINE GIRL

Hi, I'm Samantha, and I like a man who's brutal yet sensitive. My favorite music is The Phlegms, The Cockroach Killers and Beethoven. My favorite movie is "Rocky Sixteen" --

She cuts off as the manager again turns the page and a new voice replaces her.

SECOND MAG GIRL

Hi, I'm Bambi, and my favorite place to --

The manager shuts the zine as Bryce walks up to the counter.

BRYCE

I'm looking for a man named Landers. Tommy Landers.

MANAGER

(bored, rude)

We don't reveal the names of our guests. No exceptions.

Bryce plunks a yellow two dollaryen bill on the counter.

INT. SUNKEN CITY HALLWAY - CLOSE ON BRYCE'S FIST

RAPPING on the door to room #19.

BRYCE

Tommy? My name is Keith Bryce; I'd like to talk to you.

Bryce can hear an unusual flurry of commotion and movement coming through the door. He deliberates, then kicks it in.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - BRYCE BURSTS IN

to find a nervous, backpedaling TOMMY LANDERS, seemingly alone in the cheap-looking room. Landers is 29, short and slight, his baby-face covered by a three day beard. Breathing hard, he points a gun at Bryce with shaky hands.

BRYCE

(moving forward)

You plan on using that? Go ahead then.

Scared, Landers cocks the barrel... with swift assertiveness, Bryce lunges and grabs it right out of his hands. The detective shakes his head and discards the gun when he finds it's not even loaded.

BRYCE

Where is she Tommy?

(V.O.)

I could tell from the look on his face I'd hit pay-dirt. He knew who I was talking about.

Bryce scans the room: the motel walls shudder each time the ocean waves crash into the nearby sea wall. The detective quickly spots the silhouette of a woman's face behind the closed curtains. He moves toward it...

TOMMY (CONT'D)

No!! Don't touch her! Please!!

Tommy tries to slow Bryce down; the detective effortlessly shrugs him off and reaches for the curtains...

BRYCE

It's alright Marlene, Mr. Walcott hired me to help you --

CLOSE ON BRYCE'S FACE as he pulls the drapes back. At first his eyes are uncomprehending... slowly, shock turns to pained realization and Bryce begins to LAUGH -- laughter roars from his gut until his sides hurt...

ANGLE TO REVEAL MARLENE: she's a Talking Head resting on the window ledge!

BRYCE

(wiping eyes)

Well now I've seen everything;
all this over a lousy computer.

(to Tommy)

What were you waiting for kid?
If you're gonna ask for ransom,
there's no point in delaying.

TOMMY

Ransom? Is that what you think
this is about? You'd better
think again.

Tommy begins to pace, running shaky hands through his hair.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I was at Walcott's mansion a month ago when I heard someone sobbing. I traced it to a locked door but it seemed the person crying couldn't let me in. So I picked the lock... and found Marlene. When I learned what he'd been doing to her... I bided my time... and waited for the chance to set her free.

Tommy moves to Marlene and gently strokes her hair.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Let me show him.

MARLENE

(quietly ashamed)

No. It's ugly.

TOMMY

We need to make him understand.
Trust me.

MARLENE

(whisper)

Yes. I trust you.

She closes her eyes and Tommy carefully pulls her hair back...

TOMMY

(emotional, angry)

Take a look, Mister. Take a good look...

Somehow Bryce doesn't want to... but he looks. BRYCE'S POV: Marlene's scalp is dented in dozens of places, each mark the clear result of heavy impact. Bryce knows she's only a machine, yet he's disturbed by what he sees.

BRYCE

Walcott did this?

TOMMY

(bitterly)

That's not all.

Landers indicates the nape of her neck and the darkened skin behind her ears...

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Cigarette burns.

Repulsed and troubled, Bryce turns away.

BRYCE

I don't like Walcott any better than you do -- but Marlene is his property, and I still have a job to do.

TOMMY

I love her Bryce. I can't let you take her.

BRYCE

How can you love her? She's a computer! A mass of circuits and --

TOMMY

-- No, she's kind and caring. She has a soul --

BRYCE

-- Where's your common sense? You can't love a machine!

MARLENE

(sad, trying to be strong)

Mr. Bryce is right of course.

Bryce spins to look at Marlene. She's trembling...

MARLENE (CONT'D)

I am only a machine... to be bought and sold as a commodity.

TOMMY

No, Marlene, no.

MARLENE

(begins to sob)

You can take me back but please... don't harm Tommy. I care for him... very much... and I couldn't bear thinking he'll suffer because he helped me.

Marlene's beautiful face is extremely expressive; it's a window to the pain and turmoil she feels inside. Tommy tries to comfort her, and amazingly, tears begin to fall from her eyes.

MOVE IN ON BRYCE, closing his eyes in silent frustration.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Why is it a woman's tears can
always make me change my mind?
And this time the woman wasn't
even a woman. Still, life with
Wayne Walcott was a form of
slavery -- how could I possibly
return her to it?

Marlene is crying hard; Tommy Landers is feeling each tear.
Bryce SIGHS and turns away from them...

BRYCE (V.O., CONT'D)

All the things in life that were
just out of reach flashed through
my mind like a dying man's last
thoughts. The waterbed, the
mini-freezer, a vacation... gone,
in an instant.

(spoken, resigned)

I'll tell Walcott I couldn't find
you.

Tommy and Marlene react with joy and relief, realizing
Bryce is actually going to let them go.

MARLENE

I don't know what to say.

BRYCE

Just go -- get out of the city
now. The next guy Wayne hires
won't be as big a sap as me.

TOMMY

Out of the city? You know how
tough it is to get a City To City
visa. It takes big money --

BRYCE

-- Or big connections.

Bryce pulls out the two hundred DY's Walcott gave him to
start the case. He tosses the roll of bills to Tommy...

BRYCE

Loading dock, Pier 14: see a man
named Glick, Matt Glick. Tell
him you want a stowaway ride on
an inter-city produce truck.

TOMMY

But that costs way more than --

BRYCE

-- He owes me. Say you're my friends and you'll get your ride.

MARLENE

(emotional)

How can we thank you, Mr. Bryce?
We'll always be grateful for
having such a friend.

THE TAIL (V.O.)

Now ain't that touching?

Surprised eyes look to the door. ANGLE ON THE MAN IN THE BLACK FEDORA wielding a pistol with a silencer.

THE TAIL (CONT'D)

True friendship always gets to me: especially when it's between a thief, a talking tin can and a scumbag Judas detective.

The Tail enters the room sporting a cruel, superior grin. With jolting suddenness he viciously raps Bryce across the jaw with the butt-end of the pistol.

THE TAIL (CONT'D)

That's for bein' so anti-social earlier this evening.

Keith is holding his jaw -- the man in the black fedora slams him in the stomach, doubling him over.

THE TAIL (CONT'D)

And that's for calling me a cop!
No one calls me a cop.

He uses the gun again to backhand Bryce across the face. The detective slumps to the ground, heavily dazed. The Tail LAUGHS and pulls Bryce up by the collar; he speaks with a sadistic smile plastered across his hungry face.

THE TAIL (CONT'D)

I do things for Wayne Walcott: whatever he needs, I get it done. I would've found the mechanical bitch for him but that red-eyed voodoo queen wouldn't give. So Mr. W. figured hiring a private dick would speed up the process. I wasn't supposed to kill ya til you found the Head. But now I can... and I'm gonna enjoy it.

BRYCE

(weak)
Why kill me?

THE TAIL

You know about Wayne's "interest"
in Marlene; that's a fatal
mistake.

(turns to Tommy)
And when I'm through splattering
his brains, punk, your ass is
next --

Bryce kicks his legs out, scissoring them around The Tail's and pulling the unsuspecting thug off his feet. The gun goes off, putting a hole in the ceiling. Bryce dives on top of The Tail and the gun goes sliding under the bed. The two men struggle to their feet, locked in a brutal, fast-paced battle.

Bryce slams short, quick punches into The Tail's midsection, driving him backwards, breaking a rib. The Tail brings his knee up, catching Bryce in the chest and stopping him in his tracks. The Tail fires judo-like chops into Keith's neck, momentarily paralyzing him. He follows up by pulling a light fixture out of the wall and flinging it at Bryce's head; the detective ducks and it shatters near the window where Marlene is perched.

Marlene teeters from the concussion, then topples off the ledge. Tommy dives, snaring her before she hits the ground, like a wide receiver making a shoestring catch. He cradles Marlene against his chest, shielding her from the rampant violence that's destroying the small motel room.

BACK ON BRYCE throwing a right cross that sends The Tail reeling. By chance, The Tail's foot kicks a gun that's been lying unseen on the floor. He picks it up and aims it at the charging Bryce. The Tail pulls the trigger at point-blank range, just before Bryce can stop him... but the gun is Tommy's, and it's unloaded.

Keith slams into him with a rolling shoulder block and the two men literally crash right through the decaying motel wall.

EXT. BEACH BEHIND MOTEL - NIGHT - BRYCE AND THE TAIL

plummet ten feet before crash landing on the strip of sand behind the hotel. The sound of the frenzied, swollen ocean is awe-inspiring here.

Battered and groggy from the fall, the two men pull themselves to their knees. The Tail claws at Keith's throat; Bryce chops at the Tail's arms, knocking them away, and scores with a powerful right. Bryce ducks a wild left and scores with a counter punch that flattens his opponent. Bryce pulls him up by the shirt and finishes him off with two clubbing overhand rights.

The Tail lies prone on his back, exhausted and unable to rise. He smiles weakly, somehow enjoying the feeling of being beaten into the ground.

Breathing hard, hands on knees, Bryce leans over the defeated man...

BRYCE

And I'll call you a cop anytime I feel like it.

THE TAIL

No problem.

Slowly, painfully, Bryce staggers to his feet and looks up at the motel.

BRYCE POV: a huge yellow moon hangs over the Sunken City. Tommy and Marlene are side by side, looking down at him from the hole in the motel room wall. Ironically, from Keith's perspective, only their heads are visible; they look like a normal, handsome young couple, deeply in love in the pale moonlight.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WALCOTT MANSION - DINING ROOM - NIGHT - WAYNE WALCOTT

is hosting a dinner party of eight. The guests are the epitome of Iceland Park residents: well-dressed, conservative and exceptionally wealthy. They are enjoying dessert and after-dinner coffee as THE BUTLER'S VOICE comes in over the intercom...

BUTLER (V.O.)

Mr. Bryce is here to see you, sir.

WALCOTT

Bryce?

Walcott tries not to look alarmed as Bryce enters the room sporting a cool smile. Bryce takes note of the fact that restaurateur Addison Kemp is one of the dinner guests; Walcott makes a detached comment about the detective's bruised and swollen face...

WALCOTT (CONT'D)

You look a mess, dear boy. What on Earth happened to you?

BRYCE

I punched some guy in the knee with my face, then cracked him in the fist with my stomach. Know the man I'm talkin' about? He wears a black hat in more ways than one.

The detective reaches into his trenchcoat pocket and drops a voucher on Walcott's lap.

BRYCE (CONT'D)

You owe The Sunken City Motel a new room nineteen. It seems your boy's bad manners stood out like a hole in the wall.

Wayne becomes visibly nervous. He rises, sensing where this conversation is heading.

WALCOTT

(flustered)

Perhaps we should speak privately. If you'll excuse us for a moment, ladies and gentle --

BRYCE

-- Marlene is gone. Forever.

WALCOTT

(stunned whisper)

What?

BRYCE

She's in love with another man; a better man than you. I helped them get away, someplace you'll never find her.

Walcott is deeply disturbed by the news.

FEMALE GUEST

What's he talking about Wayne? Who is Marlene?

BRYCE

He hasn't told you guys about Marlene? Wayne, I'm surprised at you, keeping secrets from your friends.

WALCOTT

That's enough --

BRYCE

-- Marlene is Wayne's girl, well sort of. He holds her prisoner in a room upstairs, likes to torture her from time to time to show how much he cares.

WALCOTT

Get out!

BRYCE

Only problem is, Marlene's a Talking Head.

Walcott is coming unhinged: his troubled mind reels back and forth between a hollow sense of loss over Marlene and a bitter anger leveled at Bryce.

WALCOTT

Get out or I'll call the police!

BRYCE

Good idea -- we'll tell 'em how you tried to kill me, what do you suppose they'd think of that?

The guests GASP as Bryce lifts Wayne by the collar...

BRYCE (CONT'D)

You didn't hire me by chance, you knew who I was all along. There was a dual agenda: Mother Earth had nothing to do with Marlene but you set me up, hoping I'd lead you to them along the way. Kill Raven and retrieve Marlene: two birds with one stone.

The older man's dignified, genteel demeanor is completely stripped away now. He spits back words at Bryce with a snarling aggressiveness...

WALCOTT

It's only a matter of time before we cage Raven Bryce like the animal she is! And I'll be there when they hang her till her neck snaps --

An angry Bryce pulls Walcott close until they're eye to eye. He WHISPERS a deadly warning...

BRYCE

-- You harm my wife... and I'll harm you. That's a fact.

(releases grip)

You're a lonely, pathetic old man. And now you can twist in the wind, knowing you've lost Marlene.

Bryce pushes Wayne back into his chair and lets those words sink in before turning his back on him. Addison Kemp enters the room, wheeling a tray filled with fancy dessert items. She's caught off-guard by the sight of Bryce; the detective shoots her a knowing look, swipes an éclair off the tray and addresses the stunned dinner guests as he exits...

BRYCE (CONT'D)

That's some friend you've got there, folks. He can't even love a machine the right way.

ANGLE FAVORING WALCOTT upset and outraged, watching Bryce walk out the door. He rises, livid, and SHOUTS after the detective...

WALCOTT

I'll find them both, you son of a bitch! I'll punish them for what they've done, do you hear me?!

Bryce never turns, he just keeps walking right out the door.

Uncomfortable silence hangs over the shocked guests at the dinner table, who've seen a side of Wayne Walcott they'd never seen before. In a last fit of rage that makes his friends jump, he rakes the fine plates and wine glasses off the table with an open hand.

SLOWLY MOVE IN ON WALCOTT as he slumps down into his seat, anger turning to deep despair. At last he closes his eyes and buries his head in his hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET WHERE BRYCE LIVES - DAY - THE GIANT RED SUN

is setting over the bleached-out city buildings. The air SIZZLES from the heat.

INT. BRYCE'S LIVING ROOM - BRYCE LIES BARE-CHESTED

on his couch, staring at moving photos of his estranged wife. A perturbed Zand Stellini IS SPEAKING to him over the wall/telephone (the screen is turned off of course).

ZANE (V.O.)

What are we runnin' here, a charity for Christsakes? A zero buck commission ain't gonna pay my alimony, tiger. Not to mention a powerful new enemy you just made. We don't need rich guys like that being against us; we need rich guys to be our friends, so they will pay us! I keep trying to tell you that but you don't listen.

(deep breath)

And turn the screen on, already.

Bryce is preoccupied, gazing at the images of Raven.

BRYCE

Tommy and Marlene... you shoulda seen the two of them. I know it sounds crazy but it looked like love to me. Even a guy like you would've let them go.

ZANE (V.O.)

That's where you're wrong! I would've ta-ken the mo-ney, and so would you if you were acting normal. You know what your problem is, Keith? This thing with Raven has gotten to you -- made you soft in the head.

The words sink in -- Bryce puts the photos of Raven away.

ZANE (V.O., CONT'D)

And will you please, please, please... TURN ON THE SCREEN!!!

Bryce smiles at the sound of Zane's raw exasperation and activates the telephone screen: Zane appears, wearing wrap-around sunglasses, a Hawaiian shirt, and paste-on mutton chop sideburns. Keith BUSTS UP -- Zane does a slow burn.

ZANE (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

Bryce is trying to stop laughing...

ZANE (CONT'D)

Is it my sideboards? Well listen, smart guy -- mutton chops are coming back in a big way!

KEITH

(laughing harder)

I can't take it, Zane, it hurts
too much to laugh. Ciao for now.

Bryce kills the viewscreen, effectively hanging up. His laughter is mixed in with groans because of aching ribs.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER - BRYCE IS LOOKING

at his bruised face in the mirror, touching little blue squares about the size of poker chips, against his discolored skin.

BRYCE (V.O.)

Look at me... not even a sight
for sore eyes. I was broke,
battered, bruised and bleeding:
I'd been punched, kicked, and
pistol-whipped. My net profit
was lunch in Iceland Park and a
few real cigarettes. But at
least I had my self-respect and
proof that my heart still ruled
my head.

The blue squares are working instantly -- removing the swelling and healing the discolored skin. Bryce's face returns to near normal right before our eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER - CUT TO A PROFILE SHOT OF BRYCE

and a sleeping Ogden, almost nose to nose. Bryce has the owner's manual in hand...

BRYCE

The book says you can't hear
anything when you're sleeping.

(reads from it)

"A safeguard to protect the
privacy of the owner." Doesn't
say anything about dreaming
though.

(tosses it aside)

Maybe Okuda's wrong; maybe you're
dreaming right now. But what
would you dream about... nuts and
bolts lying naked on a table?
Or... or walking in the sunshine.

(softly, serious)

Yeah... I dream about that too.

Bryce stares at the computer face, deliberating...

BRYCE (CONT'D)
 (resigned)
 Alright Ogden.

Ogden's eyes snap open -- he pulls back a little, surprised to see Bryce staring at him from a foot away.

OGDEN
 Sir?

BRYCE
 I've decided to keep you -- for
 the time being.

Ogden is deeply touched -- too deeply for Keith's taste.

OGDEN
 (looking left)
 Home.
 (looking right)
 Home.
 (to Bryce, sigh of
 contentment)
Home.
 (reciting)
 Home is where I want to be,
 Home is just the place for me,
 Home is cookies and warm milk,
 Home's for people of my ilk.

Bryce is speechless.

OGDEN (CONT'D)
 You've made a wise decision boss,
 if I may just say a few words --

BRYCE
 -- No, you may not. Sleep.

The Talking Head instantly deactivates.

BRYCE (CONT'D)
 Home's the junkyard if you don't
 stop with the poems.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK - OVERHEAD SHOT

looking down at the bed through the slow moving ceiling fan. Bryce lies on his back, just falling into a deep sleep...

BRYCE (V.O.)
 I was deader than dead beat. I
 hated to miss half the night but
 I'd been up all day and there was
 no juice left in my caboose.

DISSOLVE TO GROUND LEVEL and PULL AWAY FROM THE BED in the exact inverse of the opening shot... We MOVE past the drawn curtains... past items strewn across the dresser... past the framed wedding day photo of Keith and Raven.

BRYCE (V.O., CONT'D)

(dreamy)

Rest. The word never sounded so good. I climbed aboard a canoe made of rose petals and lay on my back, floating down a river of sleep... I passed Ogden and The Astrodots -- they were singing something on the shore but I couldn't hear them -- this was a good dream. I drifted on, my tired mind slipping into blissful nothingness...

TWO SHRILL BLASTS (the police riot signal) ring out in Bryce's bedroom; Bryce wakes with a start and bolts up in bed. The RIOT SIGNAL blasts again: Keith can't help but hang his head and CHUCKLE at the irony. Sleptime is over.

DISSOLVE TO AN EXTERIOR SHOT of Bryce's bedroom window. PULL BACK SLOWLY to include the whole building...

KEEP PULLING BACK to include the entire block at dusk. People are stirring: in the background we can hear "THE FIVE MINUTE WARNING" blaring through the city streets...

A yellow moon is rising. The Dark City is coming alive.

FADE TO BLACK:

The End