

Gods of Bell
by
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FADE IN:

INT. NASSAU COUNTY COURT -- N.Y. -- LATE AFTERNOON

SUPER: along bottom of frame: "1982 - When the telephone company was a monopoly."

CHARLIE LONGLEY, 30's, casual in dress, serious in attitude, sits in the middle row of a half-filled courtroom.

Next to him sits AL HARDING, same age, button-down shirt, tie, business all the way. A pad with the letterhead "Newsday" sits on his lap as does the morning newspaper.

CORDOVA, short, mid-20's, and his ATTORNEY, sit at the defense table across from the PROSECUTOR who is impatiently strumming his fingers on the table.

The JUDGE bursts through his chamber doors and the bailiff motions for all to rise (AD-LIB). The Judge appears angry.

JUDGE

We are bound by law to Mirandize those we arrest. Reading Cordova his rights while pounding his head on the hood of his car is NOT Mirandizing a suspect. It sickens me to do this. Appeal is granted. Jury selection will start next week.

The Judge bangs his gavel. Charlie just sits in silence. Stoic - hiding his anger.

EXT. BOTTOM STEPS OF THE COURTHOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Al hits Charlie with a newspaper and shrugs his shoulders.

CHARLIE

How did this happen, Al? A maggot kills my wife and he's got rights?

AL

He's got a Godfather somewhere.

Charlie watches Cordova and a FRIEND burst from the courthouse doors. They skip down the stairs 'hi-fiving' each other. A car pulls up. Cordova points and ...

CORDOVA

It's my bro'.

Cordova jumps in the back and hugs his BROTHER around the neck. His friend jumps in the front seat.

Charlie takes the newspaper from Al and writes on it. He hands the paper back to Al.

AL
What's this?

CHARLIE
You heard him. He's staying with his brother. His license number.

Al gives the paper back to Charlie.

AL
You're driving me nuts, Charlie.

CHARLIE
You're the investigative reporter. All you have to do is make one phone call. What's the problem?

AL
No problem. I'm not doing it.

While Charlie and Al head for the parking lot, Al watches Cordova peel out and also notices an expensive Lincoln following Cordova.

CHARLIE
Whatever. I gotta go to work.

Al hands Charlie a press pass.

AL
Here. Mets opener. It'll get your mind off all of this.

CHARLIE
Don't want to get my mind off this.

Charlie takes the press pass. Al looks back at the Lincoln.

INT. CORDOVA'S CAR

Cordova's friend lights up a joint; passes it to Cordova.

CORDOVA'S BROTHER
We did it, man. Hey, you call Jenko tonight. He's got a deal.

They pull up to a light. The Lincoln creeps up next to them. Cordova watches JACK NICOLS get out of the Lincoln. Cordova slams on the lock. Jack, the strong, patient type, knocks on the window.

The Lincoln's back seat window rolls down, and the sight of SENATOR POLSTON changes Cordova's defiant demeanor. He surrenders and unlocks his door. Jack jumps in.

The light turns green and both cars move forward. Jack hands Cordova an airline ticket.

JACK

Sunday night. Be on it.

Reluctantly, Cordova takes the ticket. Jack hands him another envelope. Cordova checks it's contents. Money.

CORDOVA

Not enough. This is shit.

Cordova's friend reaches for the glove compartment, presumably for a gun. Jack pulls his gun from his body holster, shoots the glove compartment, then turns the gun on Cordova's face.

CORDOVA

Okay. It's plenty. I'll go.

Jack smacks Cordova's brother in the head as a signal to pull over. Obediently, the brother pulls over as the Lincoln pulls up next to them. Jack gets out of Cordova's car and jumps in the back seat of the Lincoln with Senator Polston.

INT. LINCOLN CAR

JAMIE, the driver, eases ahead. Off screen we hear Cordova's brother yelling something about the ruined glove compartment.

JACK

He got the message.

Polston appears smug. Jack's demeanor? It's just a job.

SENATOR POLSTON

Problem?

Jack shakes his head and stares out the window.

EXT. AT TRAFFIC LIGHT -- LATE AFTERNOON

While waiting at a red light, Charlie's mind drifts.

BEGIN DAYDREAM

Charlie walks his pregnant wife, LOIS, from the apartment complex into the cold, wet night. She laboriously breathes in and out. Charlie mimics her.

CHARLIE

We can practice at home, you know?

LOIS

I'm fine. In our next life, you
come back as the woman.

INT. POLICE CAR - SOMEWHERE NEARBY

TWO POLICE OFFICERS observe a fast moving vehicle with two male occupants. The two officers take off after them.

INT. FAST MOVING VEHICLE

Cordova drives as his friend snorts cocaine from a BAG. Cordova notices the police. A SIREN sounds. Cordova grabs the BAG, hangs it out the window, and the powder disperses in the air and splatters on the police window.

The friend yells obscenities. He hasn't got a clue. Wasted.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR

Charlie holds Lois' hand and squeezes gently. He releases his grip and makes a right turn while rubbing her belly.

CHARLIE

I think I feel a fullback in there.

LOIS

It feels like the whole damn team.

The car steers erratically through a patch of ice as Cordova and the police burst into view from down the street.

Cordova swerves around a patch of ice and heads straight for Charlie's car. Lois braces her hands on the dashboard as Charlie tries desperately to get out of the way. They collide.

SECONDS LATER: Charlie, banged up but okay, slowly looks to Lois whose face is covered with blood. Charlie screams his torment and bangs on the car HORN.

MATCH CUT:

EXT. AT TRAFFIC LIGHT -- END OF CHARLIE'S DAYDREAM

Charlie, sitting at a green light now, hears the sound of the car HORN behind him, which snaps him out of his trance. He moves on and pulls into a telephone building parking lot. (NOTE: a 1982, per-divestiture symbol hangs on the building.)

INT. TELEPHONE BUILDING - GUARD STATION - SECONDS LATER

Charlie walks into the building. CONNIE, dressed in dungarees and a t-shirt walks in shortly afterwards.

CHARLIE

How's the local bizz doin', Connie?

Charlie and Connie flash their badges to the GUARD.

CONNIE

Fine, Charlie. How's long distance doin'?

Charlie gives Connie a 'thumbs up' sign and walks to the elevator. Connie heads for the door marked "New York Telephone Switching Room" which is close by.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - 4:15 PM

Charlie barrels through the door, passes by channel banks and carrier equipment, and walks into a room of multiple rows of cord boards, or testboards.

CLARENCE, white button-down shirt and tie, sits at a desk while JIMMY, 20's, dungarees and t-shirt, sit at the boards with his headset on, working. Clarence spots Charlie.

CLARENCE

Charlie, we gotta go over the index before I leave.

JIMMY'S POV: he keeps Clarence and Charlie in view while he sneaks a testboard cord into a jack of a trunk group labeled, CHICAGO. Through his headset we can hear ...

WOMAN (V.O.)

I miss you sweetheart.

MAN (V.O.)

Oh, I miss you too, honey.

Jimmy quietly flips the TALK/MONITOR SWITCH to TALK and softly burps into his headset. He waits for a response.

Charlie notices Jimmy goofing on the public and he throws Jimmy a dead pan stare to 'knock it off'.

CLARENCE

You run the Newark group over and over tonight, maybe a dozen times. That should bring the index up.

Charlie nods. Clarence AD-LIBs his good-byes and leaves.

Jimmy is still listening to the conversation. Taking the sound cue of the exit door closing, Jimmy flips the talk key and lets out with a loud, disgusting burp this time.

WOMAN (V.O. FROM HEADSET)
My God, Fred. Are you feeling okay?

MAN (V.O. FROM HEADSET)
I ... but ... what the ...!

The sound of the exit door opening prompts Charlie to yank the cords out of the circuit.

CHARLIE
Knock that crap off, knucklehead.

MARY, in her 20's, enters. She appears very upset.

MARY
My machine is going crazy
downstairs. I'm getting stuck
senders from LA.

JIMMY
YOUR machine.

MARY
From four in the afternoon to
midnight, it's MY machine. And
don't YOU forget it. Knucklehead!

Charlie walks to another testboard where flashing lights above the circuit jacks marked "Los Angeles" indicate a condition of failure. He pulls out a cord, flicks a toggle switch at that bay and "locks out" the circuits.

MARY
Thank you. So, how did it go today?

CHARLIE
Not good.

As Mary and Charlie AD-LIB a conversation, Jimmy plugs into another circuit. The Voice Over is from Jimmy's headset.

MAN (V.O.)
Yeah, I think you're screwing
around on me. I go on a business
trip, and you're not home when I
call. Where the hell were you?

WOMAN (V.O.)

I was at the mall buying you a birthday present. Take a pill, Damien.

MAN (V.O.)

Hmm. Maybe I should beat you like some other husbands do.

Jimmy takes off his headset, holds it at arms length, and flips the talk/monitor switch to "talk" and whispers ...

JIMMY

Hurry up, sex-muffin. Dump this guy and get back into bed.

Loud screams from Damien emanate through Jimmy's headset. He starts to laugh but reconsiders when he sees the disdain in Mary's face.

MARY

Frank's laid-off, Charlie. I can't afford to lose my job.

(pause)

Why does Jim do that?

CHARLIE

Because he's an only child.

JIMMY

(to Mary and Charlie)

What's with the pissy attitudes?

MARY

My children like eating every day. They've gotten used it, Okay!

JIMMY

Yeah! So, what's your point, Mary?

MARY

Come on, guys. All long distance phone calls go through this office. A few complaints about some jerk breaking in on conversations and ... it won't take a genius to figure out who's doing it.

JIMMY

The phone lines get crossed. It happens all the time.

Mary's face tells all.

CHARLIE

Jimmy, stop, okay? Mary's right.

(to Mary)

I know I promised to stop, but I need to do something. It's important, so don't give me an attitude. Okay?

Charlie motions for Jimmy to follow him.

INT. PRIVATE LINE TESTBOARD - SAME FLOOR - SECONDS LATER

These boards line the wall with hundreds of private line circuits that are visibly tagged with such names as IRS, Reuters, Banks and the MOTOR VEHICLE BUREAU.

As Jimmy, Charlie, and Mary walk into the area ...

JIMMY

So, I goof on the public, and this is a bad thing. You want me to help you break into the Motor Vehicle Bureau, and this is okay to do?

CHARLIE

Shut up. This is different. Help me with the testbay.

They roll a portable TEST EQUIPMENT BAY to the PC and hook cords between the pieces of equipment with precision, as if they have done this many times before.

Charlie grabs a trouble ticket, fills it out and puts it on the hook next to the one of the circuit bays.

MARY

I don't believe you two numb-nuts.

Jimmy plugs a cord into a jack on the board whose tag reads "MOTOR VEHICLE". Charlie hits the return key several times. A query response appears on the screen.

MARY

No log-in ID? No password?

CHARLIE

The session is already up. All you really need is a dumb terminal and VT one hundred emulation.

Jimmy types "HELP". A series of options scroll down the screen. He selects "4" which is a "PROFILE" option. A form appears. The cursor rests on LICENSE PLATE NUMBER.

MARY

It's not gonna to take a wizard to figure out what's happening here.

JIMMY

Would that be a female wizard?

MARY

Up yours, pinhead. I'm not having a PMS epiphany here. We could ALL lose our jobs if you get caught.

CHARLIE

Cordova was released today. He's staying with his brother and I need to find out where that is. Don't worry. We're not going to get caught.

Charlie retrieves a piece of paper from his pocket, reads it (AD-LIB), and Jimmy types the number into the computer. After a beat, the Cordova brother's name and address appears on the monitor. Charlie scribbles down the address.

Clarence enters from the back area, out of Charlie's view. Mary coughs - a warning to Charlie that is ignored. Jimmy coughs. Startled, Charlie turns around.

CLARENCE

What's this? What are you doing?

Charlie, always composed, grabs the trouble ticket he had filled out before and,

CHARLIE

Garble on Motor Vehicle circuit.

CLARENCE

What's with the jury-rig stuff. You have a twenty-thousand dollar PAR machine right here. Use it. And leave the Newark run on my desk. I'll figure out the index tomorrow.

(to Mary)

Shouldn't you be downstairs minding the shop?

MARY

Just came up to say hi.

Clarence leaves and Mary waits until Clarence is out of hearing range. As she leaves,

MARY

My heart can't take this crap!

Charlie and Jimmy stay poised for a few beats.

CHARLIE
Where's the recorder?

Jimmy reaches into the cabinet and retrieves the recorder and suction cup. Charlie grabs them and as he rushes off,

CHARLIE
I went to dinner, if anyone asks.

EXT. SOME RESIDENTIAL STREET IN A LONG ISLAND TOWN - NIGHT

Charlie pulls curbside and parks the car. He looks at the paper in his hand and verifies the house number.

He gets out of the car, scurries across the lawn to the side of the house, peeks through the window, and sees Cordova's brother sitting on a sofa smoking pot.

Charlie spots Cordova hanging up the kitchen phone and walking into the room. Charlie ducks down, wets the suction cup, and sticks it on the window. He hears a few seconds of broken English, then ...

CORDOVA (O.S.)
Here, tomorrow night ... kilos ...
smack ... give me a hit.

Charlie slips. A noise. Cordova moves toward the window as Charlie takes the suction cup off the window. Slowly, he sneaks away. Cordova reaches the window but sees nothing.

INT. NEWSDAY OFFICE - NEXT DAY - LATE MORNING

The N-E-W-S-D-A-Y lettering dominates the inside wall. Charlie rushes in, makes a couple of turns. We follow him as he briskly enters the newsroom and past a maze of desks to Al's office.

CHARLIE
Listen to this.

Charlie hands Al the recorder and Al stares at it for a beat, then presses play. Some muffled sounds.

AL
So?

CHARLIE
Drug deal. At his brother's place.

AL

How did you figure that?

CHARLIE

What do mean. It's right there.
'Tomorrow night'...'smack'. I heard
him say eight o'clock.

AL

I didn't hear him say that.

Charlie slams the desk hard attracting others in the room.

CHARLIE

That piece of shit killed your
sister. Where the hell is your ...
your ...?

AL

You're embarrassing me, so shut the
hell up and sit down.

Charlie sits.

AL

Listen, everyone is damaged by
this. We all find ways to cope.
Move on with your life, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I can't. Lightning strikes once per
customer, Al. I'll never have a
relationship with a woman again.
Not like I had with Lois.

Al thinks, then massages his face, neck.

AL

I investigated Cordova after the
accident, remember? He was
connected to three bank accounts.
One to Senator Polston. I was this
close. How could electronic records
vanish like that?

CHARLIE

I want Cordova to pay.

Al reaches for his telephone book.

AL

You give me nothing but grief.
What's the brother's address?

Charlie reaches in his shirt pocket and pulls out a piece of paper. Al picks up the phone and dials.

AL

I know this DEA agent ...

(into the phone)

Hello. Detective Leary please. This is Al Harding.

(cups the phone)

Maybe I can make a deal with these guys. I give 'em this info, I get the exclusive. Pulitzer. Hmm.

CHARLIE

Always an angle.

AL

Don't be condescending, Charlie. You sit in that TELCO building goofing on the public ... you're lucky you still have a job. Look at you. You're a mess. You need a woman in your life. It's time, you know.

Someone answers the phone at the other end, and while Al AD-LIBS, he swings his chair around and gives Charlie his back.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - NIGHT

Charlie is on a ladder taking register readings at a bay and marks the readings in a 'INDEX MEASUREMENT' book.

Jimmy is listening to a private conversation between TWO WOMEN. Jimmy takes notes on a half-tag while he listens.

WOMAN ONE (V.O.)

Are you telling me size doesn't matter to you?

WOMAN TWO (V.O.)

My cosmo man should be six foot, black hair, blue eyes, a tight butt and his penis size? Hmm, six inches is plenty.

Jimmy hooks a cord into the RING GENERATOR and pushes a button. A RING is heard through his headset.

The women stutter, confused. He repeats the step - another RING. The women AD-LIB their confusion. Laughter. Jimmy flips the TALK/MONITOR switch to TALK.

JIMMY

Hello.

The women remain silent for a beat, then laugh.

JIMMY

Wait a second. Is this Joyce?

WOMAN ONE (V.O.)

You don't understand. I'm Helen from New Orleans, and Jackie is from Queens. Our phones got crossed...

Charlie climbs down the ladder, cursing.

WOMAN TWO (V.O.)

You sound cute. How old are you?

WOMAN ONE (V.O.)

How tall are you?

JIMMY

(reading his notes)

I'm six foot tall. Got black hair, blue eyes and a six inch cock ...

Charlie reaches over Jimmy and pulls the cords down.

JIMMY

Why did you do that?

CHARLIE

Listen. I'm right in the middle of something very important. I don't need Mary on my back. Got the picture?

(surrender)

I gotta go. Cover for me.

JIMMY

Yes, God! Come back soon, will ya.

The SOUND of the exit door slamming prompts Jimmy to search for the conversation he just lost.

EXT. A STREET BY CORDOVA'S BROTHER'S HOUSE -- SAME NIGHT

Charlie pulls behind Al's car which is across the street from a beat-up DEA van. Charlie gets out of his car, rushes to Al's car and jumps in the passenger's side.

AL

What the hell are you doing here?

CHARLIE

I couldn't miss this.

A pinging SOUND is heard off of Al's window. DEA AGENT LEARY is throwing M&M candy. Al rolls down his window.

AGENT LEARY

Who the hell is he?

AL

He's ... the photographer.

Leary mumbles obscenities as Al rolls up the window.

AL

Don't say a word. Be invisible.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S LONG ISLAND OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

LYNN RAGONA, well dressed, attractive, sorts letters at her desk in the reception area. A Harvard Master Degree in Sociology hangs on the wall above a UPI monitor/printer.

Glass partitions separate the remaining two rooms where Polston and Jamie are busy on the telephone. Jamie hangs up.

ON SENATOR POLSTON: He struts while sitting in a leather chair by a mahogany desk. While talking on the phone, he waves to Jamie through the window to come in.

POLSTON

(into the phone)

Yes, sir. He's going to El Salvador. Believe me, he won't be talking to anybody after tomorrow. Don't worry.

Polston hangs up the phone, sighs deeply as Jamie enters the office. Polston picks up a newspaper and reads the headline.

INSERT NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: 'VICE PRESIDENT HAS CANCER'

BACK TO SCENE

POLSTON

Make sure Cordova gets on that plane.

(pointing to the paper)

And keep your eye on the UPI.

As Jamie leaves, Lynn enters and hands Polston a folder.

LYNN

A day care center is being condemned. A demolition crew is scheduled to tear it down tomorrow. Condo going in. Problem is, the day care company needs two more weeks to find a new place. The comptroller is playing hard ball. Wants them out now.

(another folder)

Papers on the demolition company. Lofano Construction. Call Smitty.

POLSTON

Okay, what else?

LYNN

Nothing, except it's late.

POLSTON

I know. Thanks for waiting for me. I'll drive myself tomorrow.

INT. AL'S CAR

More pinging sounds. Al rolls down the window.

AGENT LEARY

We'll give it ten more minutes.

Just as he says this, a car pulls up in front of Cordova's house. TWO MEN get out with a large attaché case and approach the house. The two men are greeted and escorted in by Cordova.

DOWN THE STREET: fire engines whiz by with sirens blazing.

FROM THE VAN: AGENTS exit the van. Agent Leary on a two-way:

AGENT LEARY

Let's go. We're going in.

ON THE HOUSE: a young boy walks to Cordova house.

AGENT LEARY

Freeze! Everyone get down.

Cordova answers the door. He yells in Spanish at the boy, then pushes him away and closes the door. After a beat, the door opens. Cordova pulls the boy inside.

ON LEARY

AGENT LEARY
 (into the hand radio)
 We can't wait. Let's go. Move it.

ON THE HOUSE

four men enter the scene from different angles. Two go around the back of the house. The others appear on the lawn, duck behind bushes, etc.

ON LEARY

He walks to Al's car and,

AGENT LEARY
 Stay put until I wave you on.

We follow Agent Leary as he continues to coordinate the break-in, silently motioning to the others to the front door. On his count, they break into the house. After a beat ... loud noises, then shots.

FROM AL'S POV: he grabs his camera and gets out of the car. He ducks behind a nearby bush and watches. Cordova bursts through the front door of the house with gun in hand. He runs across the lawn towards Al.

Al positions the camera as an agent shoots at Cordova and misses. Cordova shoots back wildly. Then, Cordova gets shot from behind just as Al snaps a picture.

FREEZE FRAME on Cordova while getting shot.

Cordova then falls to the ground. Dead!

ON CHARLIE: he gets out of the car and crawls marine-style to Al. Cordova's body is a few feet from his face.

ON AGENT LEARY: he comes out of the house and waves Al in.

ON AL AND CHARLIE: Al hands Charlie the camera then lights up a cigar. Charlie gets up, kicks Cordova's body, then snaps pictures, as if the camera is a surrogate gun.

AL
 Hey, hey! Lighten up.

In the background: SOUNDS of fire trucks and their sirens.

INT. CORDOVA'S LIVING ROOM

AGENT ONE escorts an ADDICT and shoves him on the couch.
 AGENT TWO walks in with the young boy.

A needle is in his arm. The agent yanks the needle and pushes the boy into the corner. The boy slides down the wall and sits on the floor.

Charlie and Al enter and look around.

ON THE TABLE

They notice an opened attaché case filled with drugs. Next to the case are lines of cocaine, a dozen pills, a pipe, and a bent spoon.

BACK TO SCENE

AL motions for Charlie to take pictures. He snaps a few and then walks into the kitchen. A mouse runs across the floor. He snaps a couple of more pictures.

We follow Charlie to the bedroom. A naked woman - tracks on her arm. The walls - stained with decayed food. More pictures.

He heads to the bathroom. More filth. Phew! Charlie tries to wave the stench away. SNAP! SNAP! He cannot stay there the smell is so bad. He quickly moves back to the living room and sits in a chair, emotionally spent.

Charlie just stares at the boy who is rocking back and forth and mumbling nonsense.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lynn peers out of Jamie's office window at the fire trucks and emergency vehicles which are racing by.

Jamie hovers over the UPI teletype while it is printing.

INSERT

GULF WAR: INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS SAYS IRAQ IS HOLDING 50,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS ... (Next story starts to type) WASHINGTON: VICE PRESIDENT WILL NOT RUN ...

BACK TO SCENE

ON POLSTON, who is talking on the phone.

POLSTON
Smittie, delay Lofano two weeks.

SMITTIE
Senator, incentives have been paid.

POLSTON

I've done business with Lofano before. Just tell him I'm making a request.

SMITTIE

Okay. Senator. Okay.

Polston hangs up and motions through the window for Lynn to come in. Jamie burst in the office waving the UPI story.

JAMIE

Just came over the wire. The VP's not running next year. President's considering three possibilities for replacement. Senator Neuberger from Florida, Governor Almqvist from Texas.

(reads with reverence)

And Senator Polston from New York.

Lynn comes in with coat on.

POLSTON

(to Jamie)

That's what we've been waiting for.

(to Lynn)

They have a two week stay.

LYNN

Good. Can we go now?

As Polston gets up and reaches for his coat, sirens HOWL in the background, and the phone RINGS. Jamie answers.

JAMIE

(pause; to Polston)

There's a six-alarm fire not fifteen minutes from here.

POLSTON

I don't do fires, Jamie.

Lynn sits down; Jamie hangs up.

JAMIE

The apartment building is blocked off to everyone, so the media went to the hospital. You go there. It's a great PR opportunity, Senator.

INT. CORDOVA'S HOUSE

While the agents are busy inspecting the house, Charlie looks around the living room at the mess of drugs, needles, general filth, and the convulsing boy.

Al walks over to Charlie.

AL
Vengeance is sweet, huh?
(looks around)
Disgusting!
(looks at Charlie)
What's with the you? I thought
you'd be happy. Cordova's dead!

CHARLIE
It's not how I thought it would be.
(nods at the boy)
How old could he be? Fifteen?

Al shrugs and walks to the dealer who is handcuffed to a radiator. He opens his pad and begins asking him questions.

Charlie gets up and approaches Agent Leary.

CHARLIE
That boy over there. He needs
medical attention.

Agent Leary ignores Charlie. Charlie grabs his arm.

CHARLIE
That boy's going to die if he
doesn't get help.

AGENT LEARY
(to Agent One)
Call for an ambulance for the kid.

As Agent One picks up the phone, Charlie walks to the boy. Shaking, the boy stares off to nowhere and mumbles nonsense.

AGENT ONE
(to Agent Leary)
There's a six alarm fire and all
the ambulances are tied up.

Agent Leary looks to Charlie and shrugs his shoulders suggesting that he has done all he is going to do.

Agent Two bolts onto the scene, assesses the situation in the room, and takes extra notice of the boy and Charlie.

AGENT TWO
 (to Agent Leary)
 Sir. Handcuffs for the boy over
 there?

Hearing this, Charlie picks the boy up, puts him over his
 shoulder, and heads for the door.

AGENT LEARY
 Where do you think you're going?

CHARLIE
 To the hospital.

AGENT LEARY
 (to Agent One)
 Go help him out.

EXT. CHARLIE'S PARKED CAR

Charlie throws the boy in the front seat, rushes to the
 driver's side, and quickly takes off. Agent One follows.

INT. LYNN'S CAR - ON THE WAY TO THE HOSPITAL

Lynn drives. Polston studies Lynn for a few seconds.

POLSTON
 What's wrong, Lynn?

LYNN
 Nothing.

POLSTON
 Nothing? I don't think so.

LYNN
 I gotta get a life, Uncle Ted. I
 haven't had a date in over a year.

POLSTON
 Oh, so that's it! Okay. I'll get
 you set up ...

Lynn slams her hands on the steering wheel.

POLSTON
 We can't have another incident.

LYNN
 You're not going to let me forget
 about that, are you?

POLSTON

The White House is so close, Lynn.
Nothing can jeopardize that now.

The hospital is drowned in chaos: news media; lights from emergency vehicles; bodies being rushed in from everywhere; PEOPLE in white garments are running in every direction;

POLSTON

We'll talk later.

Lynn pulls into the middle of it. As Polston gets out of the car, a NEWSPERSON yells his name. Polston AD-LIBS greetings.

NEWSPERSON

Senator, how did the fire start?

POLSTON

Now, Philip, let's not disturb
these great workers of miracles.
I'm just here to see if I can help.

A critically burned PATIENT is being rolled on a gurney on the grass. It gets stuck. Polston helps the ATTENDANT.

Lynn, a deep breath already taken, exhales loudly. She walks to the emergency entrance and enters the hospital.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR - ON THE WAY TO THE HOSPITAL

Agent One's car, in front of Charlie, turns on the siren temporarily to move a slow-moving vehicle. Charlie looks alternately to the road and to the sleepy boy next to him.

CHARLIE

Hey. Stay awake.

Charlie pulls on the boy's arm. The boy opens his eyes.

CHARLIE

Do you know who I am?

Lazily, the boy shakes his head.

CHARLIE

I'm your guardian angel.

BOY

(slurs)
Wow! I used to pray to my angel.

CHARLIE

I'm taking you to the hospital.

BOY
Wow! My own angel?

The boy doses off again as Charlie pulls into the hospital entrance. Chaos still rules. Charlie stops the car then turns to the boy and holds his chin. The boy opens his eyes.

CHARLIE
Repeat after me. I NEED HELP.
(no response)
Hey. I'm your guardian angel,
remember. Say, I NEED HELP. Say it.

BOY
I need help.

CHARLIE
Keep on saying that in your mind.
If someone asks you a question, you
say 'I need help'.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM

Lynn spots Charlie with the boy over his shoulder. He urgently looks for a place to put the boy. Lynn is curious and stays focused on Charlie. We follow Charlie.

A MAN with a hand injury lies on a gurney, moaning. Charlie pushes the man's feet off the gurney, grabs him by the shirt, and props him into a sitting position.

Charlie then puts the boy on the gurney next to the man and takes the man's good arm and puts it around the boy.

CHARLIE
Hold him. Don't let go.
(to the boy)
What's your name?

BOY
I need help.

Charlie pats the boy on the head and collars a nearby DOCTOR.

Lynn tries to get closer to Charlie while he is explaining the boys condition to the doctor (AD-LIB).

Charlie leaves the doctor and pushes his way through a maddening crowd of news PEOPLE, DOCTORS and ATTENDANTS.

Lynn follows Charlie outside.

Charlie spots a POLICE OFFICER ticketing his car. While Charlie pulls out his wallet an emergency crew rushes by and knocks the wallet's contents to the ground.

While Charlie picks up his belongings, Agent One comes by and shows his badge to the Police Officer.

AGENT ONE

It's alright, Officer. He's with me.

Charlie gets into his car and glances back at Lynn. Their eyes meet. A connection between them is established.

Lynn looks down and sees Charlie's LICENSE on the ground. Too late. Charlie has vanished into the darkness.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - LATE MORNING - NEXT DAY

Charlie is in the bathroom cleaning the toilet bowl.

MONTAGE - to establish Charlie's living space.

A) AT THE REFRIGERATOR: Charlie throws out mold-ridden food.

B) LIVING ROOM: He vacuums the same spot repeatedly.

C) THE BEDROOM: he polishes the furniture and notices his wedding picture. As he looks at it, tears fill his eyes.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. - MARY'S HOME - A LITTLE LATER

Mary, the switchwoman introduced earlier, makes sandwiches for FRANK, her husband. Frank feeds their one-year old SON. Mary plops the sandwich down on the table and grabs her neck.

FRANK

What's the matter.

MARY

My neck. My shoulders. Tight.

Frank stops feeding the baby and guides Mary to a chair just as Charlie knocks on the door. Frank looks up.

FRANK

Hey, it's Charlie.

Charlie walks in with a newspaper. He puts the paper on the table and sits down. Frank massages Mary's neck.

MARY

It's hard. It feels like there's a knot there. Oooh, that feels so good. I seem to get this way every time I sleep on my side. What do think the problem is?

Charlie begins feeding the baby.

FRANK

I don't know. I would have to give you a complete physical.

(winks at Charlie)

You should get bras that support you better, Mary. Listen to me. I know about these things.

She smacks Frank's hand indicating that she's had enough.

MARY

You're a real character, you know.

(to Charlie)

Want a sandwich?

Charlie nods while Mary goes to the counter to make it while Frank notices a picture in the newspaper and -

FRANK

Holy cow. Look at this. Blayer. Hmm. That's your brother-in-law?

FRANK

Look at this, honey.

Mary serves Charlie a sandwich and sits down.

MARY

(to Charlie)

You happy now?

FRANK

(to Mary)

Hey. He did what he had to do.

Mary ignores her husband. Frank begins feeding the baby.

MARY

I'm glad Lois is avenged, Charlie. But what now? I can't afford to lose my job. Frank is laid-off ...

FRANK

I'm tenth on the list. And construction is picking up.

CHARLIE

It's over, Mary. I have no more need to interfere with the public.

Mary eyes Charlie. He is under suspicion.

MARY

Good. Now all you need to do is corral that corn-fed numbnuts you work with.

Frank sneaks an exaggerated look of fear to Charlie.

INT. RECEPTION AREA, POLSTON'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Jamie, alone, hears loud, muffled voices approaching. Polston and Lynn argue as the door opens and they appear.

LYNN

I bumped into him at the hospital. What's the big deal?

POLSTON

Every Tom, Dick and Jane in the media would love to get something on me. Give Jamie the license. No arguments.

(to Jamie)

Have Jack check him out.

(to Lynn)

If he checks out, you can personally return it to him.

Lynn gives Jamie the license and sits at her desk while Polston rips the news story off the UPI printer and motions for Jamie to come into the office with him.

POLSTON OFFICE

Polston sits at his desk and reads from the printout.

POLSTON

Administration reversed it's long-standing U.S. policy by advocating a buildup of the nation's deadly chemical arsenal.

Jamie nods as if there's a secret between them. Changing the topic, Polston puts the paper away.

POLSTON

Adler. I need him in my corner. He's got the President's ear.

JAMIE

Senator Adler hates your guts.

POLSTON

Hell, Jamie, have you ever slept with anyone you didn't like at all.

JAMIE

No. Well, I think ... no. Maybe.

POLSTON

I need Adler saying nice things about me to the President. Check with our friend at the bureau. See what you can get on Adler.

INT. POLSTON'S OFFICE - LATER

Polston, while in mid-conversation on the telephone, gets up and catches Lynn looking at him. He turns his back to her.

POLSTON

All I'm asking from you, Adler, is to make sure the President knows that I believe a strong Israel makes for a peaceful Mid-East.

ADLER

But you don't believe that.

Polston raps on the glass and queries Jamie for some information. Jamie's on the phone. He nods excitedly.

POLSTON

Sure I do. If you're referring to why I voted 'no' on the last appropriations bill ...

ADLER

You're voting history has nothing to do with it. It's the way you do business. I'd resign if you ever became Vice President.

LYNN'S POV: watches Jamie as he holds a piece of paper up to the glass. It reads, "SON IS GAY - DRUGS".

BACK TO POLSTON who catches Lynn eying him, sits down and swivels his chair around, showing Lynn his back again.

POLSTON

Listen, I didn't want to do it this way, Mel.

MEL

Do what?

POLSTON

We all have our dirty secrets, you little prick. You're son is gay and he's on drugs. The bad news - the bureau knows about it. The good news - I know about it too, and I can keep the bureau quiet.

A long pause follows.

ADLER

You are a prick, Polston.

POLSTON

Don't take it personally, Mel. Do it, and I'll treat it as a favor. Then I'll owe you. That can be a good thing, Mel. Think it over.

ON LYNN: As Jamie approaches, she eyes him with suspicion. He hands her Charlie's license.

JAMIE

Jack checked him out. He's clean. Telephone worker down the street.

LYNN

What was that all about in there?

JAMIE

Don't ask.

Jamie walks into Polston's office. Lynn watches Polston hand Jamie a manila envelope. More secrets?

POLSTON'S OFFICE

Polston reaches for the newspaper, turns to the drug-bust story and slams the paper down on the table.

JAMIE

Saved you from a nasty job. What a coincidence.

POLSTON

Yeah, what a coincidence.
(points to the envelope)
The usual drop off. Tomorrow. Noon.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Charlie reads a paper at the desk while Jimmy listens to a conversation from Chicago. VO is from Jimmy's headset.

DAVID

If I told you once, I told you a hundred times, Mom. I don't know where I'm going to minister.

MOM

You preach here in Long Island, son. God wants you here.

Charlie tosses Jimmy a deadpan stare.

INT. TELEPHONE BUILDING - GUARD STATION

Lynn walks into the building just as Mary walks out of the elevator. They eye each other briefly then,

MARY

Can I help you?

LYNN

I have Mr. Longley's driver's license.

MARY

Charlie? Give it to me. I'll see that he gets it. I know him.

LYNN

I'd rather give it to him myself.

Mary walks over to the guard station and calls upstairs. She waits a beat, then Charlie picks up.

MARY

Charlie. A woman's down here with your driver's license.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I didn't even realize I lost it. I'll be right down.

Charlie HANGS UP but Mary STAYS ON THE LINE. We stay on her.

MARY

Oh, and Charlie, stop by later. I got that special cream you wanted for that ... itch.

She hangs up. As she walks away she winks at Lynn and,

MARY

He'll be right down. Don't shake
his hand. He's got this nasty rash.

Lynn waits a few beats. The elevator door opens. Charlie
walks out and shows surprise.

CHARLIE

I've seen you before.

LYNN

At the hospital. You dropped this.

She hands Charlie his license delicately, as if she's trying
to avoid skin contact. They both stand there for a few beats.

LYNN

Well, I guess I'll go now.

Lynn turns to leave. Anxiety flushes across Charlie's face.

CHARLIE

Wait. How about a cup of coffee?
Embassy Diner. Down the road.

LYNN

How's your rash doing?

Charlie looks confused.

LYNN

A woman was here before and said...

Charlie looks towards the switch office and sees Marie
peeking out the of the door. Lynn shoots a look in the same
direction and catches a glimpse of Mary just as she ducks out
of view.

CHARLIE

That's Mary, the practical joker.

LYNN

Oh. I see.

CHARLIE

So, what do you say? A cup of
coffee at the Embassy Diner. I have
a few minutes I can kill.

LYNN

Why not. I'll meet you there.

INT. DINER - A LITTLE LATER

Charlie and Lynn sit in a booth in the middle of a conversation. The waitress serves them coffee then leaves.

LYNN

That's quite a story. Sad.

CHARLIE

Cordova's head bounced off the sidewalk like a basketball and his blood poured on the ground and was suck into hell. Sorry for the imagery. I didn't feel differently. I didn't feel happy or sad that he died. Odd. I thought I would.

LYNN

You managed to save a kid's life. He called you his guardian angel. Some positive things were going on there.

They both remain silent for a beat. Then Lynn smiles.

LYNN

So, you work on telephones?

CHARLIE

I work for the long distance side of the house. I make sure the quality of the connection is good when you make a call. Enough about me. Who's Lynn Ragona? More about you.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT

Jack (from the Lincoln car scene) takes pictures of Charlie and Lynn through the diner window from his car.

INT. DINER

The waitress serves them more coffee and leaves.

CHARLIE

Harvard! A degree in sociology! I'm impressed.

LYNN

I didn't have good enough grades to get into Harvard. But my uncle certainly had enough influence.

CHARLIE

Is your uncle someone important?

LYNN

Just someone with influence. I've always wanted to be a social worker. But I don't want to talk about me. Your brother-in-law. You said he was a reporter?

CHARLIE

For Newsday.

LYNN

What's he like?

CHARLIE

He's an anal-retentive with a magnifying glass.

LYNN

Please, say he's a sports writer.

CHARLIE

He was. Covers politics now. Why?

Lynn shakes her head. Appears disappointed.

CHARLIE

He thought Cordova and Senator Polston were linked somehow. Drug money used to buy guns for El Salvador rebels, some crap like that.

Lynn, visibly disturbed now, prepares to leave.

LYNN

Really? What do you think?

CHARLIE

Once politicians are elected, the power is too much for them to handle, I think. They become pocket-lining jerks who can't resist the low road.

Lynn searches for something to say. She gets up to leave.

LYNN

I gotta go.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry. Did I say something ...

LYNN

No. I just gotta go, Charlie.

She leaves. Charlie smacks himself in the head.

CHARLIE

(to himself)

You opinionated ... idiot.

INT. PRESS BOX AT SHEA STADIUM -- EARLY AFTERNOON

Charlie flaunts his press pass and eases his way in the Shea Stadium press room. Al spots Charlie and waves him over. Charlie sits next to Al. Al hands him a pair of binoculars.

CHARLIE

Good article. Nice scoop, aay.

AL

It's a Pulitzer. I can taste it. That was quite a stunt you pulled with the boy. Quite the heroics.

CHARLIE

All's well that ends well.

Al looks through a pair of binoculars.

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

Lynn, Polston and Jamie are walking down a first base aisle.

BACK TO SCENE

AL

My son's Bar Mitzvah is Saturday?

CHARLIE

I know. I'm coming.

AL

Good. Check Polston out. First base line. That's his niece with him. Lynn Ragona. A real looker, huh?

Scans the first baseline with his binoculars.

CHARLIE

That's Polston's niece!!!
(faces Al squarely)
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What do you know about Polston besides the fact that he's a crook?

AL

At seventeen his father died. The insurance money put him through Harvard. Law, of course. Didn't have a pot to piss in when he graduated.

Charlie goes back to the binoculars.

CHARLIE

(while looking)

And his niece?

AL

Polston's sister, Lynn's mother, died in a plane crash. Lynn was nine years old. He looked after her.

(pause)

There's someone I'd like you to meet this Saturday.

Charlie puts the binoculars down again.

CHARLIE

For crying out loud, Al. You setting me up with a blind date at your son's Bar Mitzvah? Have you no shame?

AL

She's a foxy lady who's hungry for a studly man like yourself.

Charlie is obviously not impressed. He ignores Al.

AL

You're like a ship upon a vast ocean without a chart or compass; driven by every wind and wrecked upon the shores of some unknown, barren island, or something like that.

CHARLIE

Wordworth?

AL

I forget.

CHARLIE

Stupid.

(pause)

Stop setting me up. I'm going to tell Cynthia.

AL

You have a lot of woman in your life, do you?

CHARLIE

No. And I'm not looking, either.

AL

Yeah, yeah. My sister was one in a million.

Charlie scoops up the binoculars again.

CHARLIE

I met Lynn.

AL

Polston's niece? Really. When were you planning on telling me. Where?

CHARLIE

I lost my license. She found it. We had coffee together. I didn't know she was Polston's niece until now.

Al takes out a pad to take notes. Charlie gets up.

CHARLIE

I have to go to work.

AL

The hell you do. Get back here. Tell me. What did she say?

As Charlie leaves,

AL

Bar Mitzvah. We'll talk then.

EXT. HUNTINGTON TRAIN STATION SALOON - DAY

Jamie sips on a beer while watching a GULF WAR newsbrief on the TV above the bar (AD-LIB). The news switches to a story on the Vice President's cancer also AD-LIB.

Jamie removes the envelop marked 'ZIPPER' from his attaché case. He then gets up and on his way out he deposits the envelop in a garbage can near the door.

Seconds later a hand reaches into the trash can and retrieves the Manila envelope.

INT. NEWSDAY OFFICE - LATER

A mailroom worker drops a legal-size envelop on Al's desk. He casually picks it up and opens it.

INSERT: A picture of the 1948 Harvard graduating class with circles drawn around Senators Polston and CLAYTON, and HENSEN.

INT. NEWSDAY INFORMATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Al approaches a glass door that is stenciled, INFORMATION SPECIALIST. He enters and sees STEVE typing at a terminal.

Al has the photo in his hand. Steve looks up and ...

STEVE

Albert. What can I do for you?

Tosses the photo on Steve's desk.

AL

I need some information, Steve.
Someone dropped off this photo.
Three people are circled. Look.
Harvard, class of forty-eight.
There's Senator Polston and Senator
Clayton. Can you find any info on
this third guy?

(points at the photo)

His name is Frederick Hensen
according to the names listed
underneath.

Steve types FREDERICK HENSEN at the computer terminal and waits for a response. The cursor blinks for a beat or two, then the screen fills with information.

STEVE

He's the CEO of Chem Corp.

AL

Can you find out anything on Chem
Corp? Government contracts maybe?

STEVE

We just have articles in this data base, Al. Let's see what we got.

Steve hits some keys and they wait.

STEVE

It says Chem Corp made record profits this quarter.

(pages down the screen)

Oh. Here's something. It received a seventy million dollar contract from the Clayton defense subcommittee.

AL

That's it.

(hits print button)

Find who the shareholders are? Percent ownership, etcetera?

Steve thinks then shakes his head.

STEVE

We don't have that kind of info.

AL

The information is public ...

STEVE

The S.E.C. can give it to us. FORM TEN, or maybe it's FORM THREE.

AL

Let's go get it, then.

STEVE

I have to either go down to Washington, in which case you need to talk to my boss, or I can make a formal request and they'll mail it.

AL

That'll take too long, and I don't want to raise a flag on this yet.

STEVE

I got a friend at the commission. Let me see what I can do.

Al smiles, then kisses Steve on the head.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

Charlie is washing dishes. The phone rings. He picks it up.

AL

Charlie. It's me, Al. I need help.

CHARLIE

What can I do for you, chum?

AL

Lynn is a major stock holder in a company who received a seventy million dollar government contract.

CHARLIE

(sits)

Yeah, so.

AL

The Senator's niece ... conflict of interest ... get the picture?

CHARLIE

I don't think so, Al. Polston's probably using her. She has a degree from Hartford in Sociology ...

AL

Oh. That's right. You know her. Been her buddy for years. I forgot.

CHARLIE

Don't be a smart ass. I don't think she would knowingly do anything illegal, is all I'm saying.

AL

Okay. Then help me prove it.

CHARLIE

How?

AL

You have the IRS computer circuits going through your office, right?

CHARLIE

Oh, no. There's no way, Al. I'd get thrown in jail for thirty years!

AL

Of course. What am I thinking?

CHARLIE

Al, you're not squeezing anything from me. I had a friendly, PRIVATE talk with her. And that's that.

AL

Sure. Don't forget the Bar Mitzvah.

INT. DINER - MID-AFTERNOON

Lynn, Jamie, and Polston are sitting in a booth already engaged in a conversation.

POLSTON

Now, more than any other time, you must be careful what you say to the press. Both of you.

JAMIE

Sure. To change the topic. We have a cocktail party on Saturday.

LYNN

Do I have to go?

JAMIE

Yes. We have to show solidarity.

POLSTON

(to Lynn)

And I want you to meet someone.

Lynn groans, and stares out the window. She spots Charlie pulling into the parking lot.

JAMIE

Ted, you need to review your speech for this afternoon.

Polston dismisses Jamie with a hand wave.

JAMIE

Senator. On the abortion issue, you have to be more non-committal.

ON CHARLIE

He enters the restaurant and stands at the counter. He spots Lynn and smiles at her, a nervous smile. Lynn waves him over.

CHARLIE

(to himself, softly)
 Oh, boy. I'm going to die.
 (to the waitress)
 Coffee regular. I'll take it over
 there. To go. How do I look?

WAITRESS

Marvelous.

Charlie pays in advance. We follow him as he walks over to the booth and stands in front of the table.

LYNN

Uncle Ted. Jamie. Charles Longley.
 He saved that boy the other day.

JAMIE

Ah! The man who lost his license.

POLSTON

Mr. Longley. How do you do?
 (pause)
 We were just discussing the virtues
 of politics and we all came to the
 conclusion that there wasn't any.

Polston looks to Charlie for a response. Lynn sits back, annoyed with Polston for being cagey.

The waitress comes over with Charlie's coffee and leaves.

CHARLIE

I'm afraid I don't know.

POLSTON

You don't have an opinion, or
 you're ignorant ... of the matter?

LYNN

Uncle Ted!!!!

Lynn looks to Jamie for help. Jamie shrugs his shoulders. Charlie starts to leave, but then quickly returns.

CHARLIE

Good to see you again, Lynn.
 Senator, maybe the question you
 should ask is whether politicians
 have virtue. I think high position
 and great wealth can create a sense
 of honor and virtue if the power
 doesn't destroy them.

Charlie leaves and, after a beat, Lynn gets up to follow him. Polston grabs Lynn's wrist tightly.

POLSTON

SIT DOWN!

OUTSIDE THE DINER

It looks as if Polston is accosting Lynn from Charlie's POV. He makes a motion to return but Lynn signals him to go.

BACK TO LYNN

She sits down but Polston refuses to release her. She yanks her arm away and rubs her wrist.

LYNN

You were hurting me, Uncle Ted.

POLSTON

This is not a game, Lynn. You don't think I know that his brother-in-law is a Newsday reporter.

Lynn sees Charlie get into his car. Both of them keep their gaze on each other. She tries to smile, but can't.

POLSTON

You forget the POST reporter? He screws me in the paper while he's poking my niece.

LYNN

How many times do I have to apologize for that?

Lynn looks out the window and watches Charlie drive away.

INT. THIRD FLOOR PRIVATE LINE TESTROOM - EARLY EVENING

Cords are strung from the IRS circuit to a PC. Jimmy and Charlie watch weird characters scroll on the monitor.

CHARLIE

We can get in real trouble for this.

JIMMY

It doesn't matter. Can't crack this, anyway. The IRS alternates between a dozen cryptic methods.

Charlie pulls the cords from the circuit.

JIMMY

I'll call my buddy from San Fran.
He might have some suggestions.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - NIGHT

Charlie finishes reading a paper and chucks it on the desk.

CHARLIE

I'm going downstairs.

Charlie leaves and when Jimmy hears the SOUND of the exit door closing, he quickly hooks two conversations (circuits) together. (VO from headset)

JIMMY

Wilma and Sally, meet Frank and whoever.

WILMA, CONVERSATION ONE

Who the hell are you?

MAN TWO, CONVERSATION ONE

Get off the line, you retard.
Frank, you there?

WILMA, CONVERSATION ONE

This is our line. You get the hell off. Sally? Sally, can you hear me?

SALLY, CONVERSATION ONE

(giggles)
Yes, Wilma. I'm still here.

Jimmy chuckles. He listens to a third conversation and plugs it into the first two conversations.

Chaos ensues. While everyone screams over each other, Jimmy flips the switch to the talk position and BURPS loudly.

WOMAN ONE, CONVERSATION THREE

Revolting, you pig. Who did that?

INT. LONG DISTANCE SWITCHROOM

Charlie and Mary are sitting at a desk.

MARY

I've been your friend for a long time. We loved Lois dearly. But I gotta tell you, Charlie. You are borderline. Certifiable.

CHARLIE

Mary. Something's wrong here.

MARY

I don't give a crap, Charlie. You don't have the right to play God and try and save the world every time you have an epiphany.

Clarence, their supervisor, enters.

CLARENCE

Paychecks!

Clarence hands them their paychecks.

CHARLIE

I'll take Jimmy's.

CLARENCE

That's okay, Charlie. I'll poke my head upstairs and say hi.

Charlie and Mary look at each other, then to Clarence.

CHARLIE

I'll go with you.

Charlie motions to Mary to call up to Jimmy to warn him.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM

Jimmy has five conversations hooked into each other. HEADSET VO: people are burping and yelling at each other.

Jimmy can't hear the buzz from the intercom from Mary. He doesn't hear the door open from down the hall either.

Charlie and Clarence walk onto the scene. Clarence surveys the multitude of cords crossing each other.

CLARENCE

What the hell is this? What are you doing?

CHARLIE

(to Jimmy)

Did you find the spurious tone?

(to Clarence)

We've been getting spurious tones.

It's here, then it's there. We

can't seem to nail it down.

CLARENCE

Dump the cords. That's no way to
troubleshoot a carrier problem.

Jimmy takes down the cords. Clarence hands Jimmy his check.

CLARENCE

Follow me. We'll track it at the
carrier.

Obediently, Jimmy and Charlie follow Clarence. Charlie raises
his hand to smack Jimmy in the head.

INT. NEWSDAY NEWSROOM -- NEXT DAY

Al doodles a noose around Polston's neck on a newspaper
picture of him.

INSERT: A picture of Polston and HEADLINES: Mall Grand
Opening: Senator Polston to appear.

PHIL enters and sits at his desk which is next to Al's.

PHIL

Aren't you going to the mall?

AL

Yes. I'm wondering what to ask
Polston without sounding like a
jerk.

Al notices an envelop on his desk that has not been opened.
He opens it and finds a New Jersey local newspaper article.

INSERT: Headlines: "BOY DIES - CAUSE UNKNOWN".

ON AL

He looks around for its sender, but he sees no one.

AL

Who the hell is sending these
things?

INT. SHOPPING MALL -- CENTER WALKWAY - - DAY

Charlie and Frank walk past several people who are putting
the finishing touches to a makeshift stage. Mary, close
behind, is walking her son in a stroller.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL ENTRANCE -- A LITTLE LATER

Jamie, and Lynn get out and walk towards the mall. Two BODYGUARDS get out of another car. They all enter the mall.

Al pops into the scene and enters the same door.

INT. SHOPPING MALL

Polston marches towards the stage and rubs his hands.

POLSTON

Ok, let's have some fun today.

Polston spots a group of reporters at the stage area.

POLSTON

(whispers to Jamie)

Who belongs to us?

JAMIE

The one with the red hat. And the one with the green jacket.

Al runs up to Polston, surprising him.

AL

Senator, my sources tell me that Mercy hospital in New Jersey...

One of the Senator's bodyguards gets in front of Al, thus slowing Al down and allowing Polston to move ahead.

INT. SHOPPING MALL STAGE AREA - A LITTLE LATER

Lynn stands on a box and scouts the area. She spots Charlie and her face beams, but quickly sours when she sees Mary sneak up from behind, putting her arm around him.

She sees Frank behind them pushing the stroller. Mary turns her attention to Frank and hugs him. Lynn sighs in relief.

CHARLIE'S POV

He spots Al. They nod at each other. Charlie spots Lynn. Their eyes meet. They smile, and Lynn jumps down from the wooden box. It is obvious she is desirable to men, as they watch her walk towards Charlie.

Introductions begin on the stage and reporters hurl AD-LIB questions at Polston.

Lynn appears and Charlie smiles cordially.

CHARLIE

Hi. Lynn, this is Mary and Frank.
This little scoundrel is their son.

Frank shakes Lynn's hand. As Mary extends her hand,

MARY

We've met. Guard station.

Lynn nods, shakes her hand, then messes with the boy's hair.

LYNN

What a handsome child.

Mary raises her eyebrow to Charlie, giving her approval.

ON AL BY THE PODIUM

AL

Senator. Can you tell us anything
about the death of the Nesbit boy
from New Jersey? His father works
at Chem Corp and he was stricken
...

While Al is speaking, Jamie tugs at Polston's sleeve and,

JAMIE

It was in the papers.

POLSTON

(to Al)

Yes. A terrible flu in Jersey. I'm
sure the doctors have it under
control. It's been in the papers.
Or don't you read the papers.

Everyone laughs. Al forces a laugh then,

AL

Yes, I know. But his father was
just hospitalized with the same ...

POLSTON

I suggest you talk to the doctor in
charge.

The reporter with the red hat jumps in with,

REPORTER

You've been quoted in today's NEWS
as saying a strong Israel is an
obstacle to peace. Any comments.

ON LYNN AND CHARLIE

As Polston responds (AD-LIB), Lynn points to Al.

LYNN

(pointing)

The reporter over there. Who is he?

CHARLIE

Oh, that's Al Blayer.

LYNN

The brother-in-law?

CHARLIE

Guilty!

LYNN

(to herself)

It figures.

(to Charlie)

He's not too friendly to my uncle.

CHARLIE

He's not very friendly to anyone.

Charlie smiles. Lynn smiles back

MARY

sees their attraction for each other and nudges Frank.

BACK TO LYNN AND CHARLIE

LYNN

I want to apologize for my behavior
at the diner.

CHARLIE

It wasn't you. Your Uncle was ...

LYNN

No. Not that time, Charlie. When we
were at the diner alone and I left
abruptly. That was rude of me.

CHARLIE

You were angry. If I knew your
uncle was Senator Polston, I
might've of used different words.

LYNN

You were being honest. A rare
quality these days. No offense, but
I gotta go.

Charlie nods. Lynn AD-LIBS her good-byes.

INT. A TEMPLE -- BAR MITZVAH -- SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Charlie enters and sees the Temple is packed with PEOPLE.

Al recites the Torah in Hebrew at the podium. He stops as
soon as he spots Charlie and yells to him in front of the
congregation ...

AL

I have to talk to you later.

Al continues reciting the Torah in Hebrew.

Charlie spots CYNTHIA BLAYER, Al's wife, in her 30's. SILVIA
BLAYER, Al's mother, sits next to Cynthia. Cynthia waves
Charlie over and moves in, making room for him. As he sits,
she leans over and lends him her cheek. He kisses it.

AL

(in Hebrew)

Cynthia, daughter of Joseph Blayer,
please come forward.

Cynthia gets up and walks to the podium. Charlie sneaks a
peak at Silvia who looks straight ahead avoiding Charlie.

SILVIA

You skutch. It takes my grandson's
Bar Mitzvah for you to see me?

CHARLIE

(while patting her hand)

Hi, Mrs. Blayer.

SILVIA

Shut up. I'm angry with you.

Cynthia leaves the podium.

AL

Silvia Blayer, daughter of Jessup
Stein, please come forward.

SILVIA

Putz! I told that little shit I'm
too old for this up-and-down crap.

Silvia gets up. Charlie stands, steps into the isle, and lets
Silvia get out while Cynthia approaches and gets in.

INT. LYNN'S APARTMENT -- LATE AFTERNOON

Lynn, wrapped in a towel, talks to herself in the mirror
while putting on mascara. A red blouse lays on the bed.

LYNN

(dignified)

Senator Sweeney. I'm Lynn Ragona.

(southern belle)

I'm Lynn Ragona, Congressman.

(sexy)

I'm Lynn Ragona, and I'm hot. And
don't you forget it.

(true feelings)

I hate these get-togethers. Yuk!

Lynn drops the towel exposing her shapely body. She takes the
blouse on the bed and puts it on. She turns sideways while
trying to button the back of the blouse.

LYNN

(frustration)

I've gotta get a maid,

(more humorous)

Or a butler,

(more serious)

Or a husband.

INT. SIDE ROOM OF TEMPLE -- A LITTLE LATER

The room is lined with tables of food, and full with people
chattering. Charlie takes a seat next to an old man.

CHARLIE

Hello. My name is Charlie.

OLD MAN

Rediculous. Charlene lives in
Mexico.

Charlie looks at the food. It does not look appetizing.

OLD MAN

You don't even look like Charlene.

Cynthia appears and ...

CYNTHIA

You're sitting with us, Charlie.

Charlie appears grateful, gets up and walks with Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

What's going on with Al, Charlie.
The past couple of weeks ...

Al comes over and pulls on Charlie's arm. As they walk away,

AL

Sorry, Hun. I gotta talk to Charlarlie.

(whispers)

A kid dies. Two days later the
father checks in with the same
disease. And guess where he works?
Chem Corp. You know, the company
that Lynn is heavily invested in.

CHARLIE

So.

AL

So! So, the doctors aren't talking
... Nevermind. We'll talk later.
Just be available tomorrow. We're
going to Mercy hospital. New Jersey.

INTERCUT - a cocktail party at a politician's house with this
temple Bar Mitzvah.

INT. COCKTAIL PARTY AT A POLITICIAN'S HOUSE

Fashionable PEOPLE gather in groups evenly spaced in an
elegant room. Polston and Jamie are in separate groups.

ON GROUP ONE: JOHN SWEENEY, an OLDER CONGRESSMAN and Polston
are in the middle of a discussion.

OLDER CONGRESSMAN

We'll pass the Authorization Bill.
Why? Because Russia is producing
deadly chemicals. No garment can
protect against it. 'Yellow rain',
they call it.

JOHN

I read somewhere that stuff is killing pigs in Laos. Didn't a bio-chemist say 'Yellow Rain' was caused by bee excrement, or something like that.

ON LYNN: while Polston speaks, we follow Lynn as she casually walks through the room.

POLSTON (O.S.)

Politics. Defense Bill comes up soon so opponents quote some Yale-nobody bio-chemist who says Yellow Rain is caused by bee shit and not to worry. Normal diversionary crap.

OLDER CONGRESSMAN (O.S.)

You hit it on the head, Polston. Good ol' American Politics.

BACK TO GROUP ONE

POLSTON

(spots Lynn: to John)

Ah. I want you to meet my niece.

Polston excuses himself with the congressman and escorts John to Lynn. We follow them. Lynn approaches and stops.

POLSTON

John, meet my niece. Ms. Ragona, this is Congressman John Sweeney from New York City, Seventh District.

AT THE BAR MITZVAH

Al and Charlie are talking loud above the background music.

CHARLIE

So, a kid dies and the father is having a hard time breathing. Big deal. What's the angle?

AL

Don't know yet. But get this, my boss got a call from the Polston's camp complaining that I was taking pot-shots at the him at the mall.

CHARLIE

Well, maybe you were, Al.

AL

It's a politician's job to answer tough questions. Anyway this mystery person is giving me clues. Pictures. Don't you see. I'm on to something very big, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You watch too many movies.

AL

Someone is trying to tell me that something is rotten in Denmark. Well, in New Jersey, actually.

Al spots REBECCA. She is young, sexy, and maneuvers her body provocatively.

AL

Rebecca. Who invited you?

REBECCA

You did, you schmuck.

AL

My darling cousin. Rebecca, meet Charlie, my brother-in-law. I bet you two have a lot in common. Gotta mingle.

(to Charlie)

Tomorrow. We go to New Jersey.

Al winks at Charlie and leaves.

REBECCA

He's such a kidder, isn't he?

CHARLIE

Yes.

(pause)

You want a drink?

AT THE COCKTAIL PARTY

Lynn is standing next to John. From Lynn's bored look, John has obviously been talking a long time.

JOHN

... and then after a year in the law firm, I decided to run for Congress. This year was a very big year, let me tell you. Your uncle ... Wow! He's helped me a lot.

During this conversation, Lynn's eyes meets Jamie's and her expression is a subtle, pleading look to be saved.

JOHN

Your Uncle has been very helpful.
He's taken me under his wing.

Jamie comes over and holds Lynn's hand.

JAMIE

John, you wouldn't mind, would you?
I need to talk to Lynn.

Lynn and Jamie go off to the side.

LYNN

You're a life saver. I don't think
I could've lasted much longer.

JAMIE

I noticed.

AT THE BAR MITZVAH

The bartender hands Charlie and Rebecca the drinks and they both stare out into the dance floor. Finally ...

REBECCA

So. You're a private investigator?

CHARLIE

Is that what Al told you?

REBECCA

He said you were investigating
important people for him.

Charlie nods his head several times. Silvia appears and while pulling him away ...

SILVIA

(to Rebecca)

I need to talk to Charlie.

They sit at an empty table. She pinches his cheek.

SILVIA

You skutch. How's your love life?

CHARLIE

Nothing much there, Mom. Although
Rebecca seemed pretty hot. Al's
been trying to hook us up.

SILVIA

Don't make me puke. She's too young.

(pause)

It's been an acceptable time, Charlie. You can go and meet other women now, you know. There's no one?

CHARLIE

There is one woman. But she's out of my league.

SILVIA

You listen to me, Charles Longley. Any woman would be lucky to get you. So go out with her. You'd make an old lady very happy.

AT THE COCKTAIL PARTY

Polston appears submissive, talking to someone who is poking him with his finger. The man's face cannot be seen.

ON LYNN AND JAMIE

Lynn notices her uncle with the stranger.

LYNN

Who is that with Uncle Ted?

JAMIE

Some financial analyst, I think.

LYNN

Jamie, what's going on? My Uncle has changed. What's happened to him?

Jamie and Lynn are distracted as SENATOR ADLER (Senator with gay son) walks by. He appears a little tipsy.

JAMIE

Hello, Senator.

ADLER

(squints)

You're with Polston.

(pause)

You know, I haven't talked to my son in ages. You know why?

JAMIE
No, Senator. Why?

ADLER
Because he's a fag.
(yells)
MY SON IS A FAG.

Adler sways a little too far left. Jamie must hold him up.

ADLER
But you two know that already,
don't you. Shame on you. Shame on
you both.

Adler walks away. After a few seconds ...

JAMIE
I see Ted has that 'come hither'
look. I gotta go. Listen! Your
uncle would kill me if he hears
what I'm about to say. Quit. Go out
with that telephone guy. Get a
life.

After Jamie leaves, Lynn takes a panoramic view of the room. People networking. Mouths jabbering. She puts her drink down and walks to the exit door. She's had enough.

END OF INTERCUT

INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM -- A LITTLE LATER

Charlie, sitting on his bed with the phone book opened, picks up the telephone on the night table. While dialing ...

CHARLIE
Hello, this is Charlie.
(hangs up)
Just do it. Don't think about it.

INT. LYNN'S APARTMENT -- SECONDS LATER

Lynn puts the key into the door just as the phone rings.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

Charlie waits anxiously for Lynn to answer. She answers.

CHARLIE
This is Charlie.

LYNN

Yes, Charlie. How are you?

CHARLIE

Fine. I was at a Bar Mitzvah.

LYNN

Oh. How was it?

CHARLIE

Good. Good. Good ... Actually, it was boring. How are you?

LYNN

I'm fine, Charlie. You?

CHARLIE

Good. I mean well. 'WELL' is the right word. I think.

(winces)

LYNN

Why did you call, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I called? Agh, yes. I did.

(pause)

Listen, Lynn, I haven't done this in a long time, and I guess what I'm trying to say is, I would you like to go out with you on a date.

LYNN

Sure. Why not. I haven't been on a date in a long time either.

CHARLIE

How about dinner? Tomorrow?

LYNN

That sounds nice, Charlie. I live at the HILLS. Apartment twelve J.

CHARLIE

Okay. I'll pick you up. How about six?

LYNN

I'll see you tomorrow at six.

Charlie hangs up. Leans against the refrigerator as if he needs support. He holds his heart.

INT. NJ MERCY HOSPITAL'S INTENSIVE CARE -- LATE AFTERNOON

The elevator door opens and we see Al and Charlie come out.

AL
I'm told he's not contagious any
longer. Like Chicken Pox, I guess.

Al peeks through the glass windows of the double doors.

AL
Let's do it. We're just working
stiffs coming to see our buddy.

They walk through the double doors to the receptionist.

AL
(to the receptionist)
Paul Werner? We work with him.

RECEPTIONIST
Three-oh-eight.

INT. HOSPITAL IC ROOM 308

PAUL sleeps while breathing through an oxygen mask. Wires invade his body, measuring his vital signs. MRS. WERNER sits in a chair reading a book. Al and Charlie enter.

AL
Hi.

MRS. WERNER
You from work?

AL
Yeah.

The woman sobs. Al approaches her.

MRS. WERNER
Don't come near me.

Charlie approaches Paul's bed which alarms Mrs. Werner.

MRS. WERNER
Get away from him.

Paul awakens and motions for Charlie to come to him. Charlie moves closer, and Paul grabs his wrist tightly. Off Screen, Al tries to calm Mrs. Werner who AD-LIBS hysteria.

PAUL
(muffled)
Must stop them.

A NURSE rushes into the room and heads straight for Al and Mrs. Werner who are, seemingly, in a wrestling match.

Paul pulls his mask off. He breathes laboriously and tries to speak. He pulls Charlie closer.

PAUL
Must stop them.
(chokes on his saliva)
No antidote.

Paul chokes again then falls silent and releases his grip on Charlie. Paul's spent body triggers the vital-signs alert alarm. The nurse rushes out of the room to get help.

ON MRS. WERNER: she collapses into her chair, exhausted. Al grabs Charlie and they sneak away.

INT. AL'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Al peels out of the parking lot. Charlie breaths in and out in short spurts. Anxiety.

AL
What did he tell you?

Charlie pokes his head out the window and takes deep breaths.

AL
Snap out of it. What did he say?

CHARLIE
He said we must stop them and then mumbled something about no antidote.

Al hits the steering wheel. Charlie pulls his head back in.

AL
Hell, man. I knew it.

CHARLIE
What? What do you know?

AL
I don't know, exactly. But whatever I don't know, Polston's behind it.

CHARLIE
Behind what? What?

AL
I don't know, I just said. But I'm
going to find out.

CHARLIE
Just make damn sure you do it
without involving Lynn. Okay? This
adventure of yours is getting out
of hand.

INT. PRIVATE LINE TESTROOM -- EARLY EVENING

Jimmy has cords connecting the PC to the testboard. He picks
up the telephone and dials.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Charlie is dressing when the phone rings. He picks it up.

INT. PRIVATE LINE TESTBOARD

Jimmy, scrolls through some VISA outputs on the PC.

INTERCUT - telephone conversation between Jimmy and Charlie.

JIMMY
Polston doesn't have a charge card.
However, I've got Lynn's VISA file
in front of me.

Jimmy scans the monitor which has some of Lynn's charges.

JIMMY
Your girl likes Godiva Chocolates.
Macy's ... a couple of gas stations
... That's about it.

CHARLIE
Good. Anything more on the IRS?

JIMMY
My buddy sent me an old encryption
device. Maybe we'll get lucky.

CHARLIE
Okay. See ya tomorrow.

JIMMY
Have a nice night off.

INT. LYNN'S APARTMENT -- LATE AFTERNOON

Charlie walks up to Lynn's door with a wrapped gift. He knocks and she answers and they AD-LIB their greetings.

CHARLIE
I thought you might like this
instead of flowers.

Charlie hands her the gift. She opens it while Charlie scans her apartment which tastefully decorated in a modern design.

LYNN
Oh, I don't believe it.

CHARLIE
You like chocolates?

LYNN
I do. But I'm allergic to them. I
buy these for my sister all the
time. She loves Godiva.

CHARLIE
Well. Give it to her then.

LYNN
I will. Thank you, very much.

Lynn puts the chocolates on top of the refrigerator.

LYNN
I'm ready.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Charlie gazes at the orange glow on the horizon and shares this good feeling with Lynn in a smile.

CHARLIE
A beautiful night.

LYNN
Charlie. I need to say something. I
don't want you to get offended.

CHARLIE
Shoot.

LYNN
My uncle's behavior the other day
was awful.

(MORE)

LYNN (CONT'D)

I offer no excuses for him, except to say he worked hard to get where he is. A Vice Presidential candidate, that's pretty big bananas. The news media is unfair to him at times. What I mean to say is, I know your brother-in-law is a reporter and if you have any thoughts of using me to get to my Uncle, then be a decent man and tell me now.

CHARLIE

Of course not. I wouldn't. Never!

A moment of silence. Lynn nods, accepting his answer.

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Lynn are steeped in a conversation.

LYNN

My dad had money problems after Mom died. Uncle Ted jumped in and helped out. I guess that makes me obligated.

CHARLIE

What about your dreams of becoming a social worker?

LYNN

When the time is right? Not now. My Uncle needs me.

Lynn notices an auction sign.

LYNN

Oh, an auction. I love auctions.

Charlie turns around and pulls into the parking lot.

INT. AUCTION HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Lynn walk through the back entrance.

Some PATRONS sit in chairs in the center of the room while OTHERS stand along the perimeter looking at the merchandise. The auctioneer is at the podium while an assistant steps forward with an old doll.

AUCTIONEER

A dollar, a dollar fifty, two, two
fifty, three ... three ... Sold to
number six for two fifty.

Charlie and Lynn scout the perimeter passing by tools,
baseball cards, a washing machine, and old clothes. She
inspects an exotic hat and puts it on her head, sporting it
for Charlie.

CHARLIE

Are you sure it's a hat?

LYNN

I haven't the foggiest.

They both laugh.

EXT. AUCTION HOUSE PARKING LOOK -- SOME TIME LATER

Lynn and Charlie come through the door laughing from the
belly. Charlie has a Sherlock Holmes hat on and twirls a
walking cane. Lynn has a mink stole wrapped around her as if
she's a 1920's movie star.

CHARLIE

Not bad for five bucks.

LYNN

You look marvelous. Mr. Masterson,
I presume. Or is it Sherlock.

CHARLIE

(WC Field accent)
You don't look bad yourself.
(Jimmy Stewart accent)
I really don't do ... do
impressions all that well, you see.
I'm more of a ... home body.

Lynn appears charmed by this new side of Charlie.

LYNN

Let's not go to any fancy place.
How about Johnny's Hot Dog Stand.

INT. JOHNNY'S HOT DOG STAND -- AT A TABLE - LATER

Charlie and Lynn are in conversation while eating.

LYNN

The only part of my job I really
like is when people write for help.
(MORE)

LYNN (CONT'D)

I get a chance to do some good then.

CHARLIE

If I may be so bold, your Uncle does seem to have an attitude.

LYNN

He's probably more paranoid than anything. He got burnt by a reporter who posed as a teacher. He became my boyfriend for a couple of months, and some very private information found it's way into the papers. My Uncle is still rankled over that.

EXT. CAR -- OUTSIDE JOHNNY'S HOTDOG STAND

Jack Nicols focuses his camera on Charlie and Lynn. He snaps a picture, then leans back. Closes his eyes.

JACK

(to himself)
There's gotta be a better way.

BACK TO LYNN AND CHARLIE

LYNN

Let's just say that I'm trying to seek balance right now.

Charlie sends her a weak smile. They continue eating.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOTDOG STAND -- A LITTLE LATER

Upon leaving, music plays loudly from around the corner.

LYNN

I hear music.

Charlie grabs Lynn's hand. They follow the music.

INT. JACK'S CAR

Jack pulls out a mustache and a black beret hat from a bag. He puts them on, gets out of his car and follows them.

INT. BAR/DANCE PLACE - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Lynn sit at a table. A WAITRESS leaves having just taken their order. A slow romantic song begins playing.

CHARLIE

Dance?

Lynn gets up and they fall into an embrace. They fit perfect together. Lynn buries her head in Charlie's neck.

ON JACK

He sips on a drink and watches. Forever watching.

INT. LONG DISTANCE STOCKROOM -- TELCO BLDG -- NEXT EVENING

Jimmy hovers over a decoder box, soldering two male jacks to it, while Charlie reads the VISA outputs.

JIMMY

So, did ya have sex?

CHARLIE

It's none of your business. We had a nice time. That's all.

JIMMY

Gonna see her again?

CHARLIE

(still reading)
I might. Probably. Yes. These reports don't tell me anything.
(beat)
I feel like I'm spying on her.

JIMMY

Here. Hold these wires.

Jimmy hands Charlie some wires while Jimmy continues to solder the wires on the decoder.

CHARLIE

Where did your friend get this?

A puff of smoke goes up.

JIMMY

He worked for the IRS for a year. Found an old encryption schematic and built this thing. Became his master degree project, actually.

CHARLIE

This is a Federal crime, you know.

Jimmy finishes soldering the cord. He picks up the box.

JIMMY

You want to stop? Say the word.

CHARLIE

No.

Jimmy plugs one end of the cord into the PC, then plugs the other end into the decoder. Another cord dangles from it.

JIMMY

Plug the loose end into IRS.

A SOUND indicates the exit door is opening down the hall.

MARY

Hey schmuckos. You got a carrier failure. I'm getting stuck senders.

JIMMY

I'm not doing this with her here.

CHARLIE

I'll take care it. Stay busy.

Charlie plugs the cable into the IRS circuit then bolts.

Jimmy hits the return key and we wait. All of a sudden information pours onto the scene.

SPFX

We pan to the IRS circuit, then up cable rack, down to the frame, to an underground cable, a tandem office, another cable, a local switcher, another underground cable, to the Holtsville IRS building and, finally, to the IRS computer.

The computer hums and gurgles as if it is human.

END OF SPFX

Jimmy hits the F1 key. The PC screen shows a series of options. Number "5" is "QUERY". Jimmy quietly celebrates his success and hits the "5" key. The screen picks up a form requesting "last name, address, etc". He begins typing.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM

Charlie "locks out" and plugs the circuits that are involved in the carrier failure while Mary watches on.

MARY

Your cheeks look awful rosy.

Charlie throws her a deadpan look.

MARY

She seems very nice.

Charlie sits at the desk.

CHARLIE

She is very nice.

INT. PRIVATE LINE TESTROOM

Jimmy moans with excitement as the PC screen fills with data. The printer prints out a hard copy.

JIMMY

(to himself, whispers)

I don't freakin' believe this. We got into the IRS computer.

(to the ceiling)

What power!

(to himself)

They're gonna have to kill me now.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT -- LATE MORNING NEXT DAY

Charlie sprawls Polston's and Lynn's IRS returns on the coffee table. A knock on the door, then the door flings open and Al runs in excitedly.

AL

Let's see. Let's see.

Al sits down on the couch and begins reading the returns.

AL

My god! She made a half-million on dividends from Chem Corp. See. I told you, damn it. I told you.

Charlie turns away, somber.

AL

Look at the deduction to this charity. World Strategies. Did you ever hear of them?

CHARLIE

No. It's obvious she's being used.

Al immediately focuses his attention on Polston's return. He looks, slowly at first, then more quickly.

AL

Polston's return looks like a
jigsaw puzzle. How the hell do you
read it? God, this is a gold mine.

Charlie reaches for the returns. Al grabs them.

CHARLIE

I made a mistake, Al.

Charlie reaches for the forms, but Al folds the returns and
moves away from Charlie.

CHARLIE

You damn ...

(pause)

Give me those forms. They're
illegal.

AL

Don't get so high and mighty with
me now, Charlie. If Lynn is guilty,
well ... I'm sorry. Shit happens.

Al heads for the door.

CHARLIE

You'll ruin her and Polston will
get off scott-free. Please ...
wait.

Al is almost out the door.

CHARLIE

WAIT, GODDAMN IT!

Al turns, faces Charlie and patiently waits.

CHARLIE

I have a plan.

AL

What kind of plan?

INT. LONG DISTANCE SWITCHROOM -- EARLY EVENING

While Mary is on a ladder logging numbers into a book,
Charlie bolts through the door and wheels in a two-pair wire-
reel which is on platform and rollers.

Charlie raises one panel of the raised floor and sees cables
running through to the NY Tel office next door.

CHARLIE

When does Connie go to break?

MARY

Six. What are you doing?

He puts the tile down, raises another. The area under the floor is clear. The clock on the wall reads 5:58.

CHARLIE

I'll crawl through here.

Charlie grabs Mary's tool pouch on the desk which has frame wire-wrappers, wire-cutters, etc. Mary jumps off the ladder and briskly walks to Charlie and grabs at the tool pouch. Charlie refuses to let go.

MARY

What the hell are you doing?

CHARLIE

I'll crawl to New York Tel next door and tap Polston's phone line.

MARY

I didn't hear that. Besides, you don't know how to do that.

CHARLIE

I can wing it.

MARY

You know how to use the console, get onto the computer? You know how to do that, mister big shot?

CHARLIE

That's not the only way. They got a frame card bin. I'll cross-reference the frame number to the phone number and wheel the wire tap in here.

Charlie puts on the tool pouch, positions the reel of wire so he can pull the wire while he crawls under the floor.

MARY

You son-of-a-bitch.

The clock on the wall reads six.

CHARLIE

Watch for him. Please!

We follow Mary and look through the door with her. We see the NY Telephone Switchman, Connie -- introduced in an earlier scene. He opens his door and disappears into the hallway.

MARY

He left.

Charlie ducks under the floor tile and pulls on the quad of wire. He disappears from view while the wheel turns.

MARY

I hope this chick is worth it.

CHARLIE

It's for the interest of justice.

INT. LOCAL SWITCHING OFFICE - NEXT DOOR

A floor tile eases up and we see Charlie's head peak out.

He is next to the frame bays. He gets out and wraps the wire on a frame post and runs around the corner to the card bin.

One area of the bin reads, "SORTED BY FRAME NUMBER", and another side that reads, "SORTED BY TELEPHONE NUMBER". He thumbs through the "SORTED BY TELEPHONE NUMBER" bin.

INT. LONG DISTANCE SWITCHROOM

Mary is by the door looking for Connie to come back.

MARY

Justice, my ass. He just wants to get his whistle wet. Damn! Damn!

INT. LOCAL SWITCHING OFFICE

Charlie finds the card, writes down the frame numbers onto a piece of paper and puts the card back into the bin.

We follow Charlie as he runs to the frames and alternately looks at the paper and at the bay numbers. He continues to do this until he finds the right term block bay.

He scans for the correct term block. He finds it; scans the block for the right pair. Finds it. The pair has a red tag on it, indicating that this is an important circuit.

Charlie takes the wire pair that's tied to the post and brings it to the term block where the tap will be placed.

INT. LONG DISTANCE SWITCHROOM

Mary sees the spinning wire-wheel come to a stop. She lets out with a large sigh and then opens the door a crack and looks for Connie. She ducks back in.

INT. BUILDING CAFETERIA

With a sandwich from the machine in one hand, Connie deposits coins in the soda machine with the other. The soda drops. He retrieves it and heads back to the office.

INT. LOCAL SWITCHING OFFICE

Charlie removes one red tag, strips the wire, puts it into the gun, wires the lug and puts the red tab back on. He wipes the sweat from his brow.

CHARLIE
(whispering to himself)
Two more to go.

INT. LONG DISTANCE SWITCHROOM

Mary sees Connie approaching his office. She opens her door.

MARY
Hey, Connie. Howya doin', bud?

Connie stops and looks. Mary waves him over.

INT. LOCAL SWITCHING OFFICE

Charlie puts the last wire on. He tucks the new wires into the cable and out of sight.

INT. LONG DISTANCE SWITCHROOM - DOOR ENTRANCE

Connie takes a bite of his sandwich and mumbles ...

CONNIE
What do you want, Mary?

MARY
What time do you have?

Connie looks at the watch on Mary's wrist.

MARY
It's busted.

Connie looks at his watch.

CONNIE

It's six-ten.

Connie saunters back to the door and punches the numbers in the security lock. He looks back at Mary and shakes his head.

INT. LOCAL SWITCHING OFFICE

Charlie finishes tucking the wires into the cables. He hears the door open, so he moves faster.

Connie walks through the door and turns to the right to go to the console area. He hears a noise behind him, so he turns around and walks to the aisle where Charlie is.

As Connie turns the corner, the floor tile is seated into place, indicating that Charlie is on his way back to the Long Distance Switching Office.

INT. LONG DISTANCE SWITCHROOM

As Charlie's head appears above floor, Mary curses, slaps his face, then helps him up and out. She slaps him again.

CHARLIE

That hurts. Stop it. I'll take it
down in a couple of days, alright?
Geese, Mary ...

(pause)

Where's the patch trunks?

Mary points. Charlie brings the wire over to the patch trunks marked, "third floor testboards". He cuts the wire and begins to connect the tap to upstairs.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Charlie hooks a patch from the patch bay to the testbay. He hooks in a speaker and Jimmy stands on the testboard desk running wire up to the cable rack. He hooks the other end of the wire to the tape recorder.

JIMMY

Ok. The recorder is in place.

Charlie reaches for the phone and dials. Multifrequency tones emanate from the speaker which indicates that Charlie's call is coming in on Polston's line. He hangs up.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Charlie is in the middle of taking register readings when multifrequency tones emanate from the speaker again.

Charlie flips the recorder on from underneath the bay. Polston answers. It is an AD-LIB, short-lived conversation with a telemarketer. Charlie turns the machine off.

LATER

The clock on the wall reads 8:30. Charlie and Jimmy are reading at the desk when we hear multifrequency tones again. Charlie bolts to the recorder and turns it on.

SENATOR POLSTON

Hello, Polston here.

MAN

It's confirmed. The boy got infected from the father. And the father got it from the project.

SENATOR POLSTON

What about the doctor?

MAN

The boy's doctor signed the death certificate ... complications from the flu. But the doctor who treated the father is not co-operating. Says he wants to do an autopsy.

SENATOR POLSTON

Ok. I'll deal with that. I've called off the project. Too much at risk without a fix. Dump the chemicals, shred the evidence.

MAN

Ok, Senator.

Charlie and Jimmy look at each with their jaws wide open.

EXT. AL'S HOUSE -- 1 AM

Charlie knocks on the door and waits. He knocks harder. The lights go on and AL answers the door in his bathrobe.

AL

Charlie!

CHARLIE
(excitedly)
I got it. I got it.

CYNTHIA
(from upstairs)
Who is it, Al?

AL
It's okay. It's just Charlie.

CHARLIE
Al! I got Polston on tape.

Charlie waves the tape in his hand as they walk into the den. Al pulls out a tape recorder from the desk. It already has an ear piece plugged in.

Charlie hands him the tape. Al sits, puts the ear piece into his ear, and plays the tape. As the tape plays, Al's smile grows. After listening, Al slams his hand on the desk, stands up and reaches for Charlie's hand. They shake.

AL
I believe you've done it, Holmes.

Cynthia yells from upstairs.

CYNTHIA
Is everything alright, Charlie?

AL
Yes ... Yes ... Yes. Charlie's fine. He's finally got a girlfriend and he can't sleep.

CYNTHIA
Geez, Al. When was the last time you were that restless over me?

AL
I'm very secure in our love, my dear. Go back to bed.
(whispers to Charlie)
Listen, pal. I'm sorry about before. I know you care for this chick ...

CHARLIE
She's not a chick, Al. Lynn is someone I care for. Leave her be.

AL
Sure. I will. I will.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE - MORNING

Polston, alone, reads a cover note to a report.

INSERT NOTE

IF YOU CONTINUE, USE MYCOTOXINS AS SUGGESTED. WE CONTINUE TO SYMPATHIZE. SORRY - PROJECT TERMINATED.

BACK TO SCENE

The phone rings. Polston puts the papers in an envelope marked, ZIPPER.

INT. NEWSDAY OFFICE

Al is on the phone and is waiting for Polston to pick up.

POLSTON

Hello.

AL

Senator, this is Blayer. Newsday. A source gave me some damaging information concerning CHEM CORP.

Al waits for a response but there is none.

AL

I know you canceled the project. I know some evidence is being shredded as we speak.

INT. CHARLIE'S KITCHEN -- LATE AFTERNOON

Charlie hands Al a cup of coffee.

AL

And then there's silence. He wanted to curse at me, I could feel it. But he doesn't. He just says, 'That's interesting. Too bad I don't know what you're talking about'. He hangs up. Ten minutes later, I get a call from his aide. Wants to meet me at nine tonight at Cherrywood Lounge.

CHARLIE

This is getting very complicated.

AL

No it's not. This the way things
happen in the world of ...
espionage.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Jamie and Polston sit at opposite ends of the desk. Lynn
walks in and sits down at her desk.

JAMIE

He's just poking around.

POLSTON

Maybe. I'm sending Jack anyway. I
want this idiot to play out his
hand. Change of topic. One last
drop-off.

ON LYNN: she sees Polston give Jamie a manila envelope. As
they talk, Lynn sees it is addressed to Zipper.

INT. DINER - A LITTLE LATER

Charlie and Lynn sit in a booth drinking coffee, talking.

CHARLIE

You know how I feel about the
subject. If you are that unhappy,
then leave.

LYNN

You don't understand. I just can't
right now. When the elections are
over in November, then I'll go.

Charlie nods. Makes a feeble attempt at smiling.

CHARLIE

How about a real dinner this
weekend?

Lynn nods. Smiles back.

EXT. A DARK ALLEY BEHIND THE CHERRYWOOD LOUNGE - NIGHT

Al pulls into the alley and gets out of the car. An attaché
case is locked to his wrist with a set of hand cuffs. He
walks slowly until he hears a voice.

A VOICE

Over here.

Al moves towards the sound.

VOICE

That's close enough. Start talking.

Al opens his case, fumbles for the recorder and turns it on.

MAN

The boy's doctor signed the death certificate ... complications from the flu. But the doctor who treated the father is not co-operating.

SENATOR POLSTON

Ok. I'll deal with that. I've called off the project. Too much at risk without a fix. Dump the chemicals, shred the evidence.

Al shuts the recorder off, and then the man steps into the light holding his wallet and flashing a PI card.

JACK

I'm Jack Nicols. Private Eye. Oooh, I love saying that.
(snaps his fingers)
Let's have the tape.

Refusing, Al throws the recorder in his case and locks it.

Jack eyes the handcuffs on Al while lighting up a cigar. He sucks in a couple of puffs taking his good ol' time.

JACK

Well, aren't we the cowboy?

Jack motions Al to follow him to the car. As they walk,

AL

I thought the Senator was going to send his aide.

JACK

I am his aide. Interesting tape you got there. How did you get it?

AL

Does it matter?

They stop at Jack's car. Jack holds out his cigar.

JACK

Here hold this, will ya?

As Al takes the cigar, Jack whips out another set of cuffs from his pocket and within a blink he has Al's other wrist handcuffed. Jack snaps the other end to a fence post.

AL

Hey. Uncuff me.

As Al complains (AD-LIB), Jack opens his trunk. We see a lot of tools - hack saw, hammer, etc. He pulls out an industrial cable cutter and Al shuts up.

JACK

Goddamn rookies! Give me your pinky.

(pause)

Just kidding.

With one quick motion, Jack cuts the handcuffs off the attaché case and takes possession of it without a struggle.

JACK

We can do this the easy way, or we can do it the hard way. What's the combination to this?

Al is silent. Jack reaches into the trunk for the crowbar.

AL

Alright, alright. Seven, five, six.

Jack opens the case, takes the tape and puts it in his pocket.

JACK

Did you make a copy of this tape?

The expression on Al's face says he did NOT. While Jack inspects the briefcase ...

JACK

You thought this little charade with the handcuffs was enough?

(laughs)

You were a sportswriter awhile back? I remember the article you wrote about Mohammed Ali. Very Good. Hmm. Well, well. What do we have here?

Jack pulls out the tax returns.

AL

I made copies of those.

JACK
I bet you did.
(reads)
This is pretty interesting stuff.

Jack throws the returns in the back in the case, then unlocks the handcuffs from the Al's wrist and fence post.

JACK
Let's cut the crap. You're a fair reporter, but you're an amateur at this cloak and dagger stuff. Haven't you received enough clues the past couple of weeks?

AL
So you're the one. Why?

JACK
(patting the case)
You can't use this stuff. Inadmissible. And you could be thrown in jail. Where did you get it, anyway?
(silence)
All right. Have it your way.

Jack tosses the case in the car and jumps in.

JACK
You had the scoop. Where did Werner and his son lead you?

Al goes to say something but stops. Shakes his head.

JACK
Well, it may be too late anyway. The cover up has already started. It's like a virus. Do yourself a favor.

AL
What's that?

JACK
From here on, stay out of my way.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Polston and Jack sit at opposite ends of the desk. Polston shuts the recorder off and then pages through the tax returns.

POLSTON

Check for bugs in this office first. Then check the central office for taps. Check out that telephone idiot whose hungry for my niece while you're at it.

Jack nods and points to the tax returns.

JACK

I wouldn't call him an idiot. My guess, he's the one who got those.

POLSTON

How?

JACK

Holtsville IRS is linked to a national network of IRS computers. The communication hub is in his office.

Polston thinks long and hard.

POLSTON

Well, you never mind, then. I'll take care of him myself.

JACK

What that's supposed to mean?

POLSTON

It's none of your concern. You just go find the phone tap.

Polston flicks his hand to dismiss Jack, but Jack sits back, defiant. Polston queries him with a raised brow.

JACK

I don't want to do this anymore, Ted. I want you to release me.

POLSTON

Aren't we forgetting something.

JACK

I've paid you back tenfold.

POLSTON

Can't release you, Jack. I need you now. Maybe after this is all over.

They stare at each other for a beat. Jack leaves.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE -- EARLY MORNING - NEXT DAY

Jack, alone, checks Lynn's desk for a tap. Nothing. He goes into Polston's room, checks around the desk, opens one of the drawers and sees a GUN.

He slowly picks the gun up, checks the barrel, puts it back, and continues checking.

We follow him to Jamie's room. He ducks under the desk to check the Telco wires. He hears someone at the front door.

ON THE FRONT DOOR

There's a fiddling noise in the lock and then Lynn enters. She walks right into Polston's office. She takes a key from her pocket and opens Polston's desk. In one drawer she notices the GUN. She inspects it and puts it back.

She continues checking and notices a folder marked, "CORDOVA". She reads it and lets out a large sigh. She puts the folder back and continues looking. She pulls out a folder marked, "ZIPPER" and reads its contents for a few beats.

She puts it back and pulls out a folder marked, "WORLD STRATEGIES". She opens it, then slowly reads.

ON JACK: He gets up from the floor in the next room purposely making noise.

ON LYNN: In a panic, she puts the folder back, closes the drawer. She looks through the glass window adjoining Jamie's room and sees Jack. We follow her as they both walk into the reception area and both appear suspicious of each other.

IN THE RECEPTION AREA

JACK

Eating worms for breakfast, are we?

They both look at the clock together. It's Six AM.

LYNN

What are you doing here so early?

JACK

Just following your Uncle's orders.

LYNN

Yeah? And what kind of dirty work might that be?

JACK
Phone taps, actually.

LYNN
You're tapping our phones?

JACK
Hardly. Checking for bugs. For a change someone has the upper hand on your uncle it seems.

LYNN
Who?

JACK
Your friend, Charles Longley.

Although still suspicious, Lynn relaxes some.

LYNN
My Uncle told me last night what you found. I didn't believe him, so that's why I'm here.

JACK
Spying on your uncle?

LYNN
I just can't believe Charlie would do this to me. What does he have to gain from my tax returns?

JACK
Hate to say it, but maybe he's helping his brother-in-law.

Lynn sighs deeply. She slumps down at her desk.

LYNN
I thought Charlie was different.

JACK
Aagh. I'll find out what's going on. I'll let you know.

LYNN
Why do you do this for him, Jack?
What does my uncle have on you?

JACK
I thought ... Ted's never told you?

LYNN
Tell me what?

Jack pulls up a chair to Lynn.

LYNN

My relationship with my uncle isn't what it used to be, Jack. He's changed. He doesn't trust me anymore, and I don't trust him. So, tell me.

JACK

(groans)

All right. I got nothing to lose.

(takes a moment)

I'm two months from retirement. I was on a stake-out. Interstate drug traffic case. There was a suitcase of money. Two hundred thousand.

(deadpan)

My son had a brain tumor. Doctor's at Children's Hospital said my insurance wasn't enough. Another agent was shot that day. He saw me take the money. He signed a deposition against me two days before he died. So, I confessed.

(beat)

And the money didn't even help. My son died anyway. My career, my pension, my son, were all gone.

(snaps his fingers)

Just like that.

LYNN

But you're retired from the FBI.

JACK

Well, there's the rub, Lynn. Your Uncle stole the signed testimony and my signed confession. Dead men don't talk, and I wasn't about to confess twice. So they dropped the charges. And I am forever showing my gratitude so the missing information will never return to the Bureau. They can still take my pension away if it ever does.

LYNN

Hell, Jack! How long has this been going on?

JACK

Five years, but who's counting?

Lynn appears touched.

JACK

I've been trailing Charlie and you
for the last few weeks, you know?

Lynn slams her hand down on the desk.

LYNN

Jesus, Jack. You, my Uncle,
Charlie. I am so upset with all of
you.

(sighs)

I just saw the Cordova file. Did
you know that Cordova killed
Charlie's wife and Ted helped
Cordova get off?

Jack nods.

LYNN

I am so confused. I feel so trapped
and used.

JACK

Well, toots, I gotta tell ya. I
think your friend there is in deep
trouble. I don't know how Charlie's
involved, but that doesn't matter
right now. Your Uncle sees him as a
threat, and I think Charlie is in
danger.

LYNN

Of what?

JACK

Your Uncle is capable of anything,
Lynn. I don't know everything, but
your Uncle is involved with some
heavy hitters overseas.

Lynn folds her arms on the desk and buries her head.

LYNN

This is not happening.

JACK

(coy)

If you want to help Charlie, I have
a plan.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - EARLY EVENING

Charlie is at the testboard. With cords in one of the circuit jacks, he presses a button. The overhead meter lights up. A noise measurement appears. He writes the result in the measurement book.

The phone rings. Charlie answers it.

CHARLIE

Hello.

(pause)

Sure. I can be over there in ten minutes. Okay. Bye.

Jimmy walks around the bays as Charlie hangs up.

CHARLIE

It was Lynn. She doesn't sound right. I'll be right back.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Jack has his feet up on Jamie's desk reading a paper. Polston sits at his desk in his room.

A woman stands in front of Lynn's desk as Charlie walks in.

LYNN

(to the woman)

Just fill out this form and mail in your contribution. Thanks.

The woman leaves and Charlie steps forward. Lynn pulls out her tax returns from a pile of papers.

ON POLSTON

Jack bangs on the window and head nods to Lynn. Polston notices Charlie and watches him carefully.

ON CHARLIE AND LYNN

CHARLIE

I ... I ...

(gives up)

It's not what you think, Lynn.

Lynn gets up and faces Charlie.

LYNN

I'm not one of those high-haired,
low class, tightass, New York
bimbos who deserves this, Charlie.

Charlie looks towards Polston, then back at Lynn.

CHARLIE

It's not what you think.

Lynn slams a clenched fist into Charlie's stomach. Charlie doubles over.

Lynn appears concerned for Charlie's welfare, but Jack enters, giving her courage to stay the course.

LYNN

(to Charlie)

I trusted you.

Charlie stands, tries to gulp air. Lynn starts to reach out to him but Jack steps in between them and faces Charlie.

JACK

I think you better leave.

Jack has his back to Polston and gives Lynn a critical look and a head-nod suggesting that Lynn has more to do.

LYNN

Leave Charlie. And don't ever come
back into my life.

Charlie leaves, moaning.

ON POLSTON

His icy glare could mean anything.

INT. NEWSDAY EDITOR'S OFFICE -- NEXT DAY

TIM GANTRY with loose tie, disheveled shirt, has the phone to his ear. He peers through the glass window. The room is busy with reporters typing at their terminals.

TIM

Yes, of course, it was wrong of
him. But Polston's not squeaky
clean here either. Yes, I know it
was illegal. Yes, I'll make sure he
understands.

Tim hangs up and pokes his head out of his door.

TIM

Blayer! Front and center.

Through the glass window, we see Al get up from his desk. He walks past a few curious reporters, enters the editor's room and closes the door behind him.

TIM

I was just talking to Morgenstern.

AL

Our publisher? What's up with her?

TIM

Sit down.

Al sits. Tim sits as well.

TIM

You want to tell me how you got Polston's tax returns?

AL

From a source. They're public.

TIM

Don't go there. His niece's return is not public.

(trying to stay calm)

Don't you have anything legal? What about the chemical company?

AL

Nothing panned out. Nobody's talking. Polston's done a great job of closing the lid. Again!

TIM

Where did you learn your ethics?

AL

Hofstra.

TIM

It was a rhetorical question, Al.

Tim reaches into his desk and pulls out a cigar. He gets up and goes to the window. He lights it up and blows the smoke out the window. He looks at the cigar as if he hates it.

TIM

You're making it extremely difficult for me to quit.

AL

I'm sorry.

TIM

Shut up.

(pause)

You've lost your objectivity, Al. Polston is what he is, and always been a step ahead of us. But that doesn't excuse you soliciting illegal information. We're after the news, not people. I have a mind to discipline you. Officially, you're on the transit strike with Roger. Unofficially, get the hell out of here and go get something legitimate on Polston.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM - EARLY EVENING

Charlie sits at his desk, picks up his phone and dials. An answering machine message (VO) comes on, then a beep.

CHARLIE

Lynn. I'm so sorry. Can we talk?
(hangs up.)

Jimmy takes a noise measurement from the overhead meter. He scribbles something down in a book and moves to the next circuit. A conversation is on it. He listens briefly, looks around, then flips the TALK key and whispers into his headset.

JIMMY

Because I don't love you anymore.

Jimmy flips the TALK key back to the monitor position and listens. A painful expression crosses his face as if someone in the conversation is very angry.

Charlie sits listless, not moving. Not caring.

INT. TELEPHONE BUILDING - GUARD STATION -

The guard sits at his desk, nodding off.

EXT. TELEPHONE BUILDING - PARKING LOT

Jack steps out of his parked car and looks around. He approaches the entrance and peeks in the door and sees the guard dozing off. He sneaks in with ease.

INSIDE THE BUILDING ENTRANCE

Jack quietly steps past the guard and peeks into the glass door to the switchroom and sees Mary. He spots a sign next door that reads 'New York Telephone Switch'. He walks over to it. The door is locked.

He peers in the door window and sees Connie. Connie moves away from view. Jack pulls out a very thin strip of metal and runs it between the door and the jam. He wiggles it until he hears a click sound. He goes in.

Jack maneuvers around the switchroom, avoiding Connie. He finds the card bin and thumbs through the side that reads, "SORTED BY TELEPHONE NUMBER" until he comes upon Polston's office number. He writes down the frame number.

He hears Connie coming, so he ducks around the bay. The door opens and closes. Connie has left, so Jack hunts for the right frame. He finds it and searches for the right pad and lugs. He fiddles with the lugs and cable and spots the tap.

JACK

Well, I'll be damned.

He takes a full grip on the wire and starts to pull the tap off the lug, but stops. He turns to a wall-phone and dials. After a ring, he whispers ...

JACK

I found the tap.

POLSTON

Good. Did you take it off?

The door opens and footsteps indicate that Connie is back.

JACK

Yes. I gotta go.

Jack hangs up, looks at the lugs, emphasizing that he DID NOT remove the tap, then follows the wires to the floor board. He picks up a tile and sees that the wires travel next door. Jack heads for the exit door and leaves, undetected.

INT. TELEPHONE SWITCHING ROOM -- A LITTLE LATER

Mary is up on a ladder reading registers and writing down her findings in a book. Close-by, Jack inspects the floor boards for wiring coming in from the next room. While Mary is on the ladder, he's safe from being discovered.

Jack spots the wire, traces it to a bay, and follows it.

Mary steps down off the ladder, tosses the book on the desk, and walks away from the console area.

Still following the wire, Jack moves to the front of the bay and notices the lug marked "THIRD FLOOR PATCH TRUNK".

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM

Jimmy is still doing noise measurements. Charlie sits at the desk in a trance, staring off into space.

Jack sneaks behind one of the bays.

Charlie notices the speaker is off. He gets up and turns the speaker on. He sits back down and sighs. Jack can hear all.

CHARLIE

I think I'm in love with her.

JIMMY

I thought you said you'd never fall in love again.

CHARLIE

I was wrong.

The exit door opens and Mary enters. Jack ducks behind the ladder so Mary does not see him.

CHARLIE

No way I can have a relationship with her, now. I'm out of her league, anyway. What the hell was I thinking?

Mary appears.

MARY

Everyone is out of your league. Face it, you're a pity-pot misfit.

Multifreq tones come from the speaker. Then two rings and,

POLSTON

Hello, Polston here.

ZIPPER

(Mid-East accent)
Hullo, Senator. Dis is da Zipper.

POLSTON

You idiot. You were told never to call me here.

ZIPPER

Too bad. Dis not a friendly call.
Your last message was not received
berry good back home.

POLSTON

I'm sorry. That's the way it is.

ZIPPER

No. Dat's no good answer. We paid
ten million dollas.

POLSTON

You got a taste of the recipe.

ZIPPER

Need more. Also need antidote.

Charlie falls over himself trying to get to the tape recorder. He hits the toggle switch just in time to catch,

POLSTON

Listen. Tell your people that a
terrible mistake was made. We
engineered a contagion chemical and
we thought we were able to find an
antidote. But we can't. Do you
understand that? No antidote

ZIPPER

Dats good.

POLSTON

Dats no good, you little shit.
We're not going to give you the
power to contaminate the world
without being able to stop it. That
would be stupid. Besides, it's
pretty damn hot right now. Tell
your boss to get back to me through
the normal channels. This
conversation is over.

The conversation ends and Charlie stops the recorder just as Jack steps into view.

JACK

Well, well, well. What do we have
here, little boys and girls?

CHARLIE

What are you doing here?

JIMMY

Who are you?

JACK

My friends call me Jack.

CHARLIE

How did you get in here?

MARY

Oh, dear.

Jack looks at the recorder hook-up and while inspecting,

JACK

A retired FBI agent, actually.
Working for Polston right now. I've
had better clients, let me tell
you. This is quite a set up. How
did you get into the IRS? Where are
your private lines?

JIMMY

(pointing)
Down the hall.

CHARLIE

(to Jimmy)
Shut up.
(to Jack)
I'm going to call security.

JACK

Call the police, why don't ya.

MARY

Oh, dear!

Jack takes out a little black book and reads from it.

JACK

Better yet. Call your boss,
Clarence. Five ... five ... Five

CHARLIE

All right, I got your point.

MARY

I don't feel so good.

JACK

Relax. I'm not a cop. But you guys
are doing very bad things here.

Jack pulls the wires which are hooked to the tape recorder. The recorder tumbles down. He removes the tape from the recorder and sticks it in his shirt pocket.

JACK

I'm pretty impressed, to tell you the truth. How would you folks like to work for me?

Jack chuckles, amused with himself.

Charlie holds his head as if he has a migraine.

Mary appears scared out of her wits. In shock, almost.

JACK

When do you guys get off work?

CHARLIE

Night tour comes in two hours.

JACK

You know the diner down the street?

They all nod.

JACK

I'll meet you there in two hours. We'll talk and work things out.

CHARLIE

Talk about what?

Jack pulls out the tape from his pocket.

JACK

About this. About what you do at the private line, and about how you're going to set things right with Lynn.

ON CHARLIE: if skeptical looks could kill ...

JACK

See you folks later.

CHARLIE

Why the hell should we trust you?

ON JACK

JACK

Do you really have any choice?
(leaves)

ON MARY

MARY

I knew it. I might as well kiss my
life good-bye.

EXT. TELEPHONE BUILDING - PARKING LOT - TWO HOURS LATER

Charlie, Jimmy and Mary bolt from the building entrance as if they have a mission. As they all walk to their cars ...

CHARLIE

Let's just be calm and hear him
out. What can we lose?

MARY

Charlie, I'm scared.

CHARLIE

I know, Mary. So am I.

They all head to their respective cars.

EXT. STOP LIGHT BY THE EMBASSY DINER -- MOMENTS LATER

They wait at a light. Charlie's car is first, and behind him is Mary, and then Jimmy.

A truck is at the intersection adjacent to them. It has a green light but is not moving. Instead, the driver guns the engine in idle. The SOUND is intimidating. Menacing.

INT. EMBASSY DINER - AT A TABLE

Jack has a good view of the intersection through the diner window. He sees Charlie at the light.

EXT. STOP LIGHT BY THE EMBASSY DINER

The light turns green for Charlie and red for the truck driver. As Charlie moves forward, the truck driver guns the accelerator, charging towards the side of Charlie's car. Charlie accelerates hard and out maneuvers the truck.

Jimmy sees the danger and turns off the road.

The truck driver is gunning for Charlie, but the turn is too sharp and the trailer slides into Mary's car sending it reeling across the street and into a pole.

The truck tips over on its side and the gas tank ruptures, spilling out gasoline onto the road.

ON JACK

Jack sees the accident and bolts out of the diner.

BACK TO SCENE

Charlie pulls off the road and runs to Mary's car. She is bloodied and pinned in her seat, but she is still alive. Her seat belt is choking her and Charlie releases the belt.

The truck driver walks slowly towards Mary's car. He pulls a KNIFE from his pocket, and just as he gets close to Charlie, Jack bolts onto the scene and pushes the driver aside. The driver hides the knife and backs off.

Charlie is oblivious to what's going on except for the need to get Mary out of the car.

CHARLIE

(to Jack)

Help me. She's pinned.

Jimmy bursts onto the scene and pitches in. He notices a STREAM OF GASOLINE heading towards the car and nudges Charlie. Jack and Charlie look up and see the GASOLINE oozing towards them. They all frantically pull and tug on Mary.

The stream gains momentum and all seems lost but then it suddenly shifts to the right hitting a pot hole and stalling its progress momentarily. The hole fills. After a beat the stream shifts again and heads towards Mary's car.

Jack sees the stream heading towards them.

JACK

Quick, boys.

The truck driver pulls out a lighter from his pocket, lights it, and throws it into the streaming gasoline. A fire erupts and travels in two directions: a stream of flames travel towards the truck; another towards Mary's car.

The truck explodes just as the men free Mary. They run with her and the car explodes, sending them flying to the ground.

Jack pokes his head up and sees the truck driver get into a passenger car. It spins off into the darkness.

INT. A HOSPITAL -- EARLY MORNING

Mary lies motionless in bed with tubes and wires hooked to monitoring equipment. Frank is by her bedside. Charlie is at the foot of the bed looking haggard. Worried.

Charlie walks over to Frank and puts his hand on his shoulder. Frank pats Charlie's hand.

MOMENTS LATER - Charlie and Frank are in the middle of a conversation. The men do not notice Mary opening her eyes.

CHARLIE

He came out of nowhere, Frank. It looked like he was gunning for me, and got Mary instead.

FRANK

Maybe that prick Senator had something to do with it.

Charlie - thinking, nodding.

CHARLIE

I should've listened to Mary. I could've had something going with Lynn without trying to be the hero.

(pause; reflective)

It seems that I've always known Lynn. I can't explain it. Maybe we met in some other time, in another life where our lives touched closely. I never thought it would happen again.

Mary tries to say something, but the words come out slurred.

FRANK

Honey. Baby.

MARY

(whispers)

Tell Charlie he's full of shit.

Charlie laughs. Frank sighs in relief.

MARY

You think the Senator did this?

CHARLIE

Possibly. Who else would do such a thing. Who else has a motive.

MARY

Then go get that son-of-a-bitch.

Charlie looks to Frank and raises his eyebrows

FRANK
(to Charlie)
You heard her.

Jack bolts into the room. He has a vase full of flowers and he sets them on the table.

CHARLIE
Frank, this is Jack Nicols.
(to Mary)
He helped get you out of the car.

Frank shakes Jack's hand. Jack takes a flower from the vase and hands it to Mary.

JACK
Will you excuse Charlie and I?

Mary nods. Jack takes Charlie outside the room.

OUTSIDE MARY'S ROOM

Jack escorts Charlie to a place where no one can hear.

JACK
I don't expect you to trust me, but I'm going to give you a piece of truth to bite on. We both think Polston is slime and I have a plan to expose him.

CHARLIE
Why should I trust you?

JACK
Two reasons. First, you're the big loser so far in this drama and you have a prison term to face if things go down hill from here.

CHARLIE
Is that a threat?

JACK
It means you have nothing to lose.

CHARLIE
The second reason?

JACK
It's personal, and it's none of your damn business.

Jack takes the ZIPPER tape from his pocket, waves it.

JACK

I copied the tape. You're going to have to sound like the Arab-guy. Practice. Lynn says you can do it.

INT. TELEPHONE TESTROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Clarence is at the desk while Charlie and Jimmy appear busy at the testboard shooting a trouble.

CLARENCE

Adios, boys. Time to go.

Charlie and Jimmy AD-LIB their good-byes and Clarence leaves.

When Charlie hears the exit door close, he takes a piece of paper from his shirt pocket and hands it to Jimmy.

CHARLIE

Got to have this done by five, Jimmy. No mess-ups on this one.

Charlie and Jimmy head for the private line testboard.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lynn sits at the reception desk and eyes the UPI circuit while Polston locks his desk, preparing to leave.

Lynn looks at the clock on the wall which reads 5 PM.

INT. PRIVATE LINE TESTBOARD

While Jimmy is typing, Charlie puts one end of a cord into the PC and leaves the other end dangling in the jacks of Polston's UPI circuit.

Jimmy finishes typing. Charlie reads the screen.

ON THE MONITOR

SOURCES CLOSE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL SAY CHEMICAL SECRETS WERE LEAKED TO ARAB REBEL FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE COUNCIL IS CLOSE TO LINKING A SERIES OF MIDDLE MEN TO HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

BACK TO SCENE

The sound of the exit door startles Charlie.

Charlie nervously paces, bites his fingernails while Jimmy pushes the equipment out of view.

CHARLIE

Let me go and see who it is.

AT THE MESSAGE TESTBOARDS

Charlie runs up and greets Clarence.

CLARENCE

Paychecks.

He hands Charlie a check. Charlie tries grabbing Jimmy's check, but Clarence pulls it back.

CHARLIE

I'll give it to Jimmy. He's working on a Private Line trouble right now.

CLARENCE

Nah. I'll take it to him.

He heads to the private line area, hesitates and comes back.

CLARENCE

Oh, I forgot. I have to go to parent teachers tonight. I'm late. Here.

Clarence gives Charlie Jimmy's paycheck and promptly leaves.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE

Polston retrieves his jacket from the coat rack. He checks his pockets and pulls out his keys.

Lynn appears nervous as Polston walks towards her. She looks at the clock ... at the UPI printer ... at Polston.

LYNN

I have, umm, some papers for you to sign. Bills.

Lynn searches her desk for the papers while he stands in front of her.

POLSTON

Tomorrow. Let's call it a day.

Lynn appears flustered. Finally,

LYNN

Wait. I'll walk out with you.

Lynn is slow in her movements.

INT. PRIVATE LINE TESTBOARD

Jimmy is punching a few keys on the terminal.

CHARLIE

Come on. Come on.

Charlie has the cords ready to insert in the UPI circuit.

JIMMY

Done. Okay. Do it.

Charlie pushes the jacks in at the board, and Jimmy hits the send key on the PC.

INT. SENATOR POLSTON'S OFFICE

Lynn has her coat on. Unable to delay any longer, she grabs her pocketbook and walks with Polston out the door. The UPI printer begins tapping away.

LYNN

Oh, hell. Let me just see what the heck that is.

She runs over to the printer and reads the message. Polston's demeanor reveals his impatience.

LYNN

Interesting.

Lynn leaves the office with Polston and closes the door behind her. While walking down the hall, Polston eyes Lynn.

POLSTON

Well?

They reach the street door and after momentary silence ...

POLSTON

So, what was the message?

LYNN

Nothing that concerns us. Something about Iraq and germ warfare secrets.

Polston nods nonchalantly as he opens the outside door. He lets Lynn out first, then he steps out into the walkway.

POLSTON

Oh. What's the matter with me. I left my keys in my office. Hey, you go. I'll see you tomorrow.

Lynn nods and leaves.

INT. TELEPHONE TESTROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Jimmy sit at the testboard staring at the speaker. Jimmy fiddles with the volume control.

CHARLIE

It's on. Leave it alone.

They wait a few more beats, then multifrequency tones emanate from the speaker. Charlie takes a deep breath.

CHARLIE

This is it.

A ring sound vibrates through the speaker. After the second ring Charlie engages the TALK key, and with a MIDEAST accent,

CHARLIE

Hullo.

POLSTON

Polston here. We need to talk.

CHARLIE

Okee. Tawk.

POLSTON

No. Not on the phone. I'll meet you at the drop-off site.

CHARLIE

No. Dat's no good. We meet in alley. Cherrywud lounge.

An abnormally long pause makes Charlie wince. Then,

POLSTON

In one half-hour.

Charlie pulls the speaker cord out, and holds his chest.

CHARLIE

Whew. My heart can't take much more of this. Do you think we did it?

JIMMY

I don't know. That was a pretty shitty interpretation of an Arab.

(pause)

How did you know Polston was going to call 'da Zipper' anyway.

CHARLIE

We didn't. We just assumed he would.

Jimmy turns to the testboards and searches for calls.

CHARLIE

Don't do that crap, man. Not now. What's the matter with you?

JIMMY

Oh! It's okay if we're fighting for truth and justice, but when I want to have fun, it's not allowed. Who are you, God?

EXT. CHERRYWOOD LOUNGE -- HALF-HOUR LATER

Polston, already out of his car, ambles into a back alley.

We see a MIC hidden in a rafter. Close by we see a SHADOW of a person hiding.

ON POLSTON: He walks slowly into the darkness and stops at the alley entrance. A rustle noise startles him. It's a cat.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TESTROOM

Charlie paces the floor. He stops suddenly.

CHARLIE

I have to see how this turns out. I've got to go.

JIMMY

Don't mess it up.

CHARLIE

(points to the boards)
Leave the public alone.

Charlie leaves and Jimmy eyes the testboard for conversations. He begins searching.

EXT. CHERRYWOOD LOUNGE ALLEYWAY

Polston moves closer to the rafter with the microphone.

VOICE IN THE DARKNESS
That's close enough.

POLSTON
Come out where I can see you.

After a long pause Jack comes out.

POLSTON
What the ... What are you doing here?

JACK
Just trying to tie things up, Ted.

POLSTON
Tie things up?

JACK
I'm tired of doing your dirty work.

POLSTON
We already talked about this.
You're on my payroll for as long as I want you or else ... do I have to say it.

Jack pulls out some affidavits.

JACK
You mean these. My confession.

POLSTON
How did you get those? Only Lynn and I had the combination ...
(realizing)
Lynn! I see. What now, Jack?

JACK
You almost killed that telephone woman, Ted. She's married. Has a kid, for chrissakes.

POLSTON
That was an accident. It was meant for ...

JACK

I know who it was meant for.

Polston reaches into his pocket and pulls out the knife and tosses it to Jack. Jack catches it, then drops it. Polston pulls out his gun and a silencer.

POLSTON

Thank you for obliging me with your fingerprints. It just goes to show you, Jack, when you want things done right, you got to do it yourself.

Polston begins screwing the silencer on his gun.

POLSTON

This is too bad, Jack. It didn't have to be this way.

He finishes screwing on the silencer.

POLSTON

With those papers in your hand, and your fingerprints on the knife, I should be able to wiggle out this quite nicely. There'll be questions, but I've been in tougher situations.

JACK

I put blanks in the gun, Ted.

POLSTON

That was you? I couldn't quite understand why they were in there.

Polston pulls out the blanks from his pocket and lets them fall to the ground. He aims the gun at a soda bottle close by. He shoots and shatters it. The NOISE of the glass ...

EXT. CHERRYWOOD LOUNGE ALLEYWAY TWO

Charlie, in an adjacent alleyway, jumps at the NOISE of the glass breaking. He rushes quietly to alleyway one.

EXT. CHERRYWOOD LOUNGE ALLEYWAY ONE

Polston laughs. Jack's demeanor seems to be submissive.

POLSTON

Jack!! What are you trying to pull here?

(MORE)

POLSTON (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea what's at stake? There are great powers at work here. More than you know.

JACK

Committee For World Peace? What kind of title is that? Not very creative.

POLSTON

We're trying to befriend the Arabs in the peace meetings in Damascus. Show them that we are sympathetic to their cause.

JACK

And selling them chemical secrets shows our sympathy?

POLSTON

The future is with the Arabs, Jack. The secrecy is so that we don't piss-off Israel.

JACK

What about the moral issues?

Charlie finally reaches Polston and Jack. Silently, slowly, Charlie creeps up on Polston.

Polston laughs. Evil.

POLSTON

Moral issues? What moral issues? It's about money. Balance of power.

From behind, Charlie grabs a two-by-four piece of wood.

POLSTON

After the Defense Bill is passed, we will spend over five billion dollars on our own chemical bombs, antidotes and detectors.

JACK

And some of that passes to you through Lynn? Or does it go to a Swiss account? I'm confused about that.

POLSTON

There's a hundred avenues and most all of it goes to an international group ... Wooops.

(MORE)

POLSTON (CONT'D)
 (forced humor)
 I shouldn't've said that.

Polston throws the tip of his fingers to his lips.

POLSTON
 I've talked too much. You're not
 worth my breath, anyway.

Polston takes aim at Jack, but from behind, Charlie makes a noise. Polston jerks around and shoots at Charlie. Although Charlie gets a hit in the arm, he is able to swing the two-by-four, knocking the gun out of Polston's hand.

Polston and Jack go for the gun together. Jack's foot reaches the gun first. He kicks it and draws his own gun and holds it on Polston.

Jack takes the recorder, which is down by his feet, and turns it off. He yanks the cord to the microphone and the mic drops from the rafter and into his hand.

JACK
 Very damaging, Ted.

While keeping his aim, he turns to Charlie who is moaning and bleeding. Jack bends down and inspects the wound.

JACK
 (like Bogart)
 Just a flesh wound, kid. You're
 lucky.
 (to Polston)
 You wouldn't believe this guy, Ted,
 if you saw it yourself. The set up
 he has at the Central Office?
 Amazing.
 (laughs)
 You gotta know the charade is over.

POLSTON
 You got nothing on me.

JACK
 We'll see about that. Let's go.

INT. POLICE STATION - SIDE-BAR ROOM - MORNING

LT. NICK ROSSELLI and Jack stand alone in mid-discussion.

NICK
 Jack, I'm getting pressure like you
 wouldn't believe.
 (MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

The mayor has me on notice. My job is on the block. I'm not to charge Polston with anything. Not even a parking ticket.

JACK

Nick! The mayor is getting pressure from big-wigs in Washington. A world-wide organization is pulling the strings and it has a lot of power. They control a lot of people.

NICK

Come on, Jack. A little far fetched, no? Don't screw around with me.

JACK

Facts are stranger than fiction sometimes, Nick.

NICK

I can't press charges, and that's that. You sound out of control, Jack. Maybe you should go see a shrink.

JACK

All right. Just take my lead, is all I ask. Give me ten minutes. If it doesn't work out, I'll see a shrink.

INT. POLICE STATION - LT. ROSSELLI'S OFFICE

Polston, his LAWYER, and Charlie silently sit around a desk. Charlie's arm is bandaged.

POLSTON

(to Charlie)

You talk or press charges on me, you parasite, and your life will not be worth spit.

The lawyer coughs and shakes his head.

POLSTON

Breaking into the IRS circuit, that gets you twenty years I would think. Maybe more. My titless niece is in big trouble as well.

(MORE)

POLSTON (CONT'D)

You say anything, you twerp, and I'll kill her. I will.

LAWYER

Ted ... shut up, please.

Polston raises his hand. The Lawyer shuts up.

POLSTON

I'll kill her. You hear?

Charlie is visibly shaken as Nick and Jack walk in.

POLSTON

(to Nick)

Did you talk to the mayor yet?

NICK

Yes, I did.

POLSTON

Good. Can I go?

NICK

Soon. I need to come to closure on a couple of things. Jack ...

JACK

It's simple, Ted. We have affidavits linking drug money with arms sales to El Salvador. That was a couple of years ago.

POLSTON

Are those affidavits ... signed?

LAWYER

Ted, you don't have to respond.

Ted holds up his finger, and the lawyer obeys.

JACK

No. Not by you.

POLSTON

Then they're not affidavits. Just meaningless pieces of paper.

JACK

We'll see about that. And then there's Chem Corp. Now, let's see how this works ...

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

they developed chemical compounds, Hensen gives it to you with a promise they will find an antidote. But they can't, and your Arab friends don't like that too much. Then an employee came in contact with the chemicals. You didn't count on that, did you? He contaminates his son and they both die. What was the plan, Ted, to supply rebel Arab forces with a deadly chemical bomb? My God! What would you do if they turned it on us?

NICK

Oh, dear God!

JACK

Tell me something Ted, was it the consortium who decided which countries should be overthrown, and which would stay, unopposed? A secret group of people making millions by starting wars no one can win?

POLSTON

Consortium? Please! Again, you don't have proof of anything.

JACK

But we have the tapes.

Polston seems a little more serious. Vulnerable almost.

POLSTON

Illegal! Inadmissible!

JACK

True. But the media won't care, will they now? And then, of course, I saw you shoot Charlie here. Try and explain away that.

Jack looks to Charlie for support. Charlie looks to Polston then to Jack. Quickly, Jack turns to Polston.

JACK

We have enough to stop the President from picking you as his running mate. And the press ... once they get started you won't be able to stop them.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

They'll start casting light on
where the dollars are going, who's
voting for what.

Beads of sweat appear on Polston's forehead.

Polston looks to Charlie, or more like through him.

POLSTON

(to Charlie)

You like my niece, do you? She
sells herself to lion-hunters who
are related to faggot newspaper
reporters. She's a whore. And so
are you.

(to Jack)

You're the worst whore of all. A
crooked agent who preaches. That's
like Judas giving a tutorial on
friendship.

After the Lynn comment, Charlie summons the strength.

CHARLIE

(to Polston)

You know, I was keeping silent
because I feared what you might do
to Lynn. But keeping you in
commission is far more dangerous to
the world at large. I would be the
scum of the earth if I didn't do
everything I could to oppose you.
I'm willing to pay for my mistakes.
But I won't let you destroy Lynn
and put millions of people in
harm's way.

(to Nick)

I'm pressing charges against this
prick. He tried to kill me.

Nick sighs. He looks to Jack for help.

JACK

(to Charlie)

That's my boy.

(to Polston)

What do you say, Nick? Media's
going to have a field day on this.
You'll be a hero, not a goat.

Just as he says this there is a knock on the door. The door
opens and Al's head pops through the crack.

AL
(to Nick)
I was asked to come here.

Jack gets up and walks to the door.

JACK
(to Al)
In a couple of minutes.

He pushes Al out the door and closes it. He turns to Nick.

JACK
Newsday reporter. He's a little
early.

NICK
Jesus, Jack.

JACK
(to Polston)
I'm gonna offer you a way out, Ted.
You tell the reporter outside you
have health problems and you're
taking yourself out of the running
for Vice-President. And not only
that, you tell him you are
resigning your current office. You
do this, and we all go away.

Polston falls silent. Defeated.

JACK
It's over Ted. It's all over.

EXT. POLICE STATION EXIT - MOMENTS LATER

Charlie and Jack burst through the doors.

JACK
It was easy once I saw what was in
the 'zipper' file. The Arab had a
low tolerance for pain. Actually, I
didn't even touch him. I took out
my cable cutter and told him I was
going to start with his pinky. That
threat always works.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Anyway, he squealed like a pig, and I put two-and-two together and realized the American munition dollars that is flowing into countries who can't defend themselves but who are willing to fight for our interests were being exploited by Ted and ... others.

CHARLIE

... that world organization group?

JACK

Yes. They are going to be a little tough to bring down, but this is a good beginning. I have trust in our news media and the First Amendment. We live in a great country.

Jack looks for his car. He sees it then proceeds.

CHARLIE

All this is too scary, Jack. But, I don't mind telling you I'm a little upset. Al gets his scoop. Lynn gets to pursue her dreams. You get your freedom. And what do I get?

They reach Jack's car. He unlocks it and opens the door.

JACK

You get a pint of blood and a hearty thank you from a PI who has nowhere to go and nothing to do.

Jack gets into his car and opens the window.

CHARLIE

Did she mean it ... when she hit me, I mean?

JACK

I knew Polston was coming after you. I figured if he saw Lynn dump you, so to speak, then he might back off. But it didn't work. He still came after you.

(pause)

Listen, pal. Let me tell you a secret. The most important part of a woman's body is her heart.

Jack starts the car.

JACK

That's what you won in all this, my friend. You've won Lynn's heart.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but I'm afraid I've disrupted her life too much. I think I'm just going to let her go and let her live in peace.

JACK

Well, that's up to you.

(smiles)

Hey. There's still a lot of work to do. We would make a great team. We could find out who's who in that consortium, maybe. You got the access. Banks, UPI, financial institutions.

CHARLIE

I don't know about that.

JACK

We could do a lot of good together. Think about it. I'll stay in touch.

Jack drives off leaving Charlie to his own thoughts.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT -- NEXT DAY, LATE EVENING

Charlie is sitting on his couch watching Polston on TV. His arm is bandaged. A picture of Lois is on the coffee table.
ON TV

Polston is trying to get to his car. Several newspeople try to corner him.

TV NEWSPERSON ONE

Senator, do you have a comment on today's NEWSDAY story? Why have you backed away from the VP offer?

TV NEWSPERSON TWO

Why are you resigning, Senator?

Mobbed, Polston struggles to reach his car.

POLSTON

My doctor says I need to slow down. It's my heart. It's time to retire.

BACK TO CHARLIE

Charlie turns off the TV and sighs. The door bell rings. He takes his time answering it. He opens the door and is taken by surprise at the sight of Lynn. She has flowers.

LYNN

My guardian angel told me that you needed some comforting.

Charlie takes the flowers as she walks in.

LYNN

Listen, Charlie, I'm trying to work some things out, including my anger towards you for invading my privacy. So, having said that, I'm willing to give us a try. A cautious try.

CHARLIE

Please don't take this the wrong way, Lynn. I'm on drugs, I'm tired and I'm a nervous wreck. I just need a little time to think right now.

LYNN

I understand.

Lynn walks back into the hallway and leaves. Charlie closes the door and returns to the couch. He turns on the TV.

After a beat, he picks up the picture of Lois and kisses it.

CHARLIE

I have to move on, Sweetheart.

He takes the picture and puts it into the top drawer of the cabinet. He shuts the TV off, runs to the window, opens it, and sees Lynn walking to her car.

CHARLIE

LYNN.

Lynn looks up.

CHARLIE

I'm done thinking. Let's go for it.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

A trail of clothes leading from the living to the hallway tells all.

Off screen, a series of AD-LIB "ouches" and sounds of ecstasy convey the mixture of feelings.

INT. TELEPHONE BUILDING - GUARD STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Charlie walks into the building, shows his badge to the guard, and walks to the elevator as Connie enters.

CHARLIE

Hey, Connie. How's the local bizz doing?

CONNIE

Fine. How's the long distance business doing?

CHARLIE

Couldn't be better.

INT. LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE TESTROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy, at the testboard, listens to a telephone conversation. He hears the exit door open. He waits a beat, then Charlie appears, happily humming a tune.

Charlie ambles over and pulls the cords from the testboard.

CHARLIE

No more, Jimmy. No. No. No.

Charlie stares at Jimmy real hard, then walks away.

CHARLIE

I'm going to the private line board to see if there are any troubles to shoot.

Charlie disappears from view.

Jimmy sees that a Chicago circuit has a call in progress. He plugs his headset in and listens. From Jimmy's headset,

CALLER FROM CHICAGO

Hello, Mom.

MOM

David. My baby. How are you?

DAVID

I'm fine, Mom. Two more weeks, and I'm graduated.

Jimmy has heard these two before in an earlier scene.

JIMMY

Oh, no. Not you again. Why don't you just do what your mom wants?

MOM

Yes, I know. So where are you going to preach?

DAVID

My counselor has set me up with five interviews. All of them are right here in Chicago, Mom.

MOM

Oh, David. Why don't you be a minister in Long Island? Close to your mother.

JIMMY

Yeah, why don't you do that David?

DAVID

I've told you before, Mom. I think God wants me to preach out here.

MOM

Now, how do you know that, David?

JIMMY

Yeah, David. How do you know that?

DAVID

I just know it. He wants me here.

Jimmy puts his headset down on the desk top. He flips the talk/monitor key to the 'talk' position and speaks through his cupped hands and into the headset in a melodious, god-like voice ...

JIMMY

David ... Oh, David. Honor thy Mother.

DAVID

Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Mother. Did you hear that?

A look of great accomplishment crosses Jimmy's face.

FADE OUT:

-THE END-