

The Walking Club

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FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH -- NIGHT

A full moon over the ocean.

FX: Continuous shot encompassing the shore, a small strip of parkland, containing a toilet block and picnic shelters, a road, and then on across the road to a park. Slowly swing onto a handsome set of apartments in a street opposite. Closer, one apartment on the second floor is selected, and getting closer the sounds of two people arguing become audible.

Closer, a man, JACK, sits at a table, as a woman, his wife, BERNICE, moves baggage toward and out their front door.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jack, dressed in a suit (his work clothes) has his tie loosened and is quite drunk. He sits, his hand on a glass of scotch.

JACK

Well you tell me! You tell me what you want!

BERNICE

I have told you and told you and told you! You don't listen!

JACK

So refresh my memory.

BERNICE

That's just it, Jack, you don't have one! What few brain cells you have left are totally committed to lifting that glass over and over to your mouth.

JACK

(drinking)

That's not true...I sometimes take a Leak, which requires concentration.

BERNICE

Oh...

JACK

Oh, c'mon, Bernice, you're going to throw twenty-five years out the window just 'cause I got a little drinking problem. You know what, I think you got the problem.

BERNICE

Oh, me?!

JACK

Yeah. You're so uptight, honey. Need to relax. I think all you need is a good stiff one, followed by another good stiff one.

BERNICE

Oh, you know, I don't know why I bother. And for that matter the only good 'stiff one' you've had for years is in your hand right now.

Jack slowly switches his hand from the glass to his crotch.

BERNICE

And for your information, I've been having that taken care of by someone else for the past five years.

JACK

Oh yeah, right, so now you got a toy boy.

BERNICE

No, but once a month I go to a cheap motel with a twenty-eight year old moron who has big pecs, a big dick and a little brain, and I let him hump me half to death.

Jack is stunned.

BERNICE

Yeah, and I pay him two hundred dollars for that humiliating privilege, and you know why? 'Cause I want to keep this (indicating her crotch) in working order until I can find someone worth loving.

She has moved her last bag into the passageway outside.

BERNICE (Cont'd)

I did love you, Jack, and I suppose the reason I am even bothering now is to make sure I expunge every last droplet of that love before I leave. I don't have the 'problem'. The 'problem' is you just gave up on our marriage. You stopped listening, and now you're stone, stone deaf.

JACK

I thought things were fine.

BERNICE

Jack, when's my birthday?

JACK

What?

BERNICE

My birthday. When?

JACK

Well...May.

BERNICE

May what?

JACK

The third?

BERNICE

The twenty-third. You'd think in twenty-five years you might have learnt that. When's our anniversary?

JACK

Oh, come on!

BERNICE

Where did we go on our honeymoon?

JACK

The Caribbean.

BERNICE

Which Island?

JACK

It was.....um...

BERNICE

You are a totally self-absorbed,
self-centered, selfish and arrogant
prick.

She crosses to the door.

JACK

This only proves one thing, Bernice.

She turns, waiting for the wise-crack she knows must come.
He toasts her with his glass.

BERNICE

Can't drink and have a memory too?

Jack is surprised, about to say just that.

BERNICE

Jack, you don't appreciate those who
love you, even though you have no right
to expect any love at all.

She tosses her keys onto the table.

Jack looks at the keys and the finality they represent.

Bernice closes the door and we hear a lift arrive outside.

Jack's facade crumbles. He puts his hand slowly to his
forehead.

EXT. JACK'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

Bernice puts her bags in her car (an expensive,
executive-looking vehicle). She drives off.

Camera follows until she is well away, then pans to the
playground opposite.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- POST DAWN.

The Walking Club MEMBERS materialize along with dawn light.
They are doing their rounds - groups of people walking in
circles (within concentric circles) around the playground.
They walk anti-clockwise on different circumferences, marked
by small flags pushed into the ground (Each circle has
different colored flags). There is a low pulse sound each time
they pass a flag (the bigger the circle the faster you must
go).

Camera drifts around onto Jack's apartment.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Jack rolls over in bed. His glazed eyes open and looking for a bedside clock on Benice's side of the bed. His eyes close again, then open and close again. Bernice's clock is gone. He checks his watch. Finally he sits up in fright.

JACK

Oh!

He just as suddenly registers his hangover.

JACK

Ohhhh.

Groaning, he gets shakily to his feet and staggers from frame.

OS a shower comes on.

INT. UNDERGROUND CARPARK -- DAY

Jack, in a business suit, carrying a briefcase, gets to his car (a similar vehicle to his wife's). He starts up, but immediately stalls it. He tries again and succeeds in driving out.

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jack comes up the carpark ramp and pulls into traffic. There is a screech of tires as cars have to throw on the anchors to avoid a collision. Jack, however, has not braked, but drives swiftly on.

EXT. EXECUTIVE TOWER -- DAY

ESTABLISHING: An office skyscraper.

INT. LIFT -- DAY

The lift is crowded. Jack stands toward the back. Everyone seems perky, but Jack looks exceedingly seedy, almost asleep on his feet. The bell rings as they arrive at his floor. Jack pushes his way out, not excusing himself.

INT. JACK'S OUTER OFFICE -- DAY

JACK'S SECRETARY sees him coming.

JACK'S SECRETARY

Morning Mr. Price.

JACK

Coffee.

Sighing at his bad manners she watches him pass.

He opens his office door, but hesitates.

JACK

Oh, and that, um, that, that thing
I'm working on.

JACK'S SECRETARY

The Turner Account?

JACK

Yeah.

He enters his office.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack, coat off, is at his desk when his Secretary comes in with a pot of coffee and two files.

JACK

Thanks.

JACK'S SECRETARY

I also brought you the Divepak account.
Don't forget you've been asked to sit
in on the meeting at one.

JACK

Yeah, thanks. Oh, and, ah, can you
get my lawyer on the line.

JACK'S SECRETARY

Do I have his number?

JACK

(pouring coffee)

Yeah, Fred Peterson.

She goes out. Checking the door, Jack opens his bottom drawer and pulls out a half-bottle of scotch. He pours a big nip into the coffee. The phone rings, startling him in his illegal act. He stows the bottle and takes the call.

JACK'S SECRETARY (telephone FX)

Mr. Peterson for you.

JACK

Thanks.

There is an audible click.

JACK

You there, Fred?

INTERCUT:

INT. FRED PETERSON'S OFFICE -- DAY

FRED, who speaks rapidly, signs papers and hands a brief to his SECRETARY as he talks.

FRED

Hey, Jack. What can good old Fred do for you?

JACK

It's Bernice. Think she's going to divorce me.

FRED

Oh? That's not good. How're you coping? Like I give a shit.

JACK

Well, she just packed her bags and left last night, but she didn't leave me in much doubt she meant business this time.

FRED

This time? She's done it before?

JACK

Yeah, coupla times. But a lot more bags This time.

FRED

How many more.

JACK

All of 'em.

FRED

Still, how do you know she means it?

Fred's Secretary departs.

JACK

'Cause she told me she's been banging a gigolo for the last five years. Sorta strikes me wives don't say that unless they mean business.

FRED

Oh, I dunno, my wife said she did a gigolo ten years back. We're okay.

JACK

Yeah? When'd she tell you that?

FRED

Friday.

Fred laughs.

FRED

Nah, I'm just messing with you. Truth is, buddy, you're screwed. You can expect a big fat writ any day now.

Fred laughs.

JACK

I'm glad you find this amusing.

FRED

Yeah, well, it's revenge for all those lawyer jokes.

INT. APARTMENT LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jack, Fred and FRED'S WIFE are having drinks. Jack and Fred's wife are laughing hysterically, as Fred looks on, barely able to appear amused.

JACK

...because deep down Lawyers are really nice guys!

BACK TO.

JACK

So, what do you suggest?

FRED

Got any proof she's banging this guy?

JACK

No.

FRED

She ever stolen money from you, forged checks, falsified accounts?

JACK

No, we got separate accounts. Think she earns more than me anyhow.

FRED

What have you got in common besides the apartment?

JACK

We like to argue. Um, there's my boat, and we bought a farm, well, an investment property. Big acreage somewhere. We have our own share portfolios...

FRED

What's the farm worth?

JACK

Jesus, I don't know. About...eight, nine fifty.

FRED

So would you say the apartment plus boat equals the farm, roughly?

JACK (unsure)

Yeah.

FRED

Ever get any fun out of the boat?

JACK

Yeah. I love my boat. What's that got...?

FRED

Ah, 'my' boat. So she hated it, right?

JACK

Yeah?

FRED

Thought we could do a trade with monetary consideration. But, if you loved it and she hated it she'll want it.

JACK

What?

FRED

S'the female brain at work. When it comes to divorce, women don't want money, they want revenge.

JACK

Money is revenge.

FRED

Only for men. My advice to you is scuttle that sucker right now and grab the insurance. Possession is nine tenths of the law. Make sure you sink it in a deep hole, though, see if you can get to international waters and we never had this conversation...

JACK

I'm not scuttling my fucking boat!

FRED

Hey, Jack, I'm helping, buddy, work with me...

JACK

You're supposed to be my lawyer for Chrissakes...

FRED

No, don't ever say that. I am a man first, your friend second, and a lawyer third. I have seen too many on our team go like lambs to the slaughter. S'why I only represent men now.

JACK

You're kidding?

FRED

Hey man, it's us against them.

JACK

What's your wife think about that?

FRED

She thinks I do property conveyance. Know what I did? I put everything in her name. The house, the land, the cars, the kids, everything. Then I took out loans against the lot, mortgaged it to the hilt. So you know what happens in a divorce? She gets the property, with debt, and I get the loot.

JACK

God, that's so ruthless. She's your wife.

FRED

Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer. Sun Tzu "Art of War". I've seen 'em in court, case after case. They turn into some sort of predator. They lie, they cheat, they blackmail, they cry crocodile tears and they have only one goal. To make your life a living fucking hell for not finding them fucking attractive anymore. Where's that whore at now?

JACK

She's not a...

FRED

Ahh! Don't blink, Jack!

JACK

No idea.

FRED

We'll find out where she's holed up and get back to me. I'll move for immediate disclosure. Pin her shoulders first round.

JACK

"Nothing is more difficult than the art of maneuvering"

FRED

What the fuck is that?

JACK

Sun Tzu.

FRED

Look, if you can, patch it up, otherwise prepare for a writ so grievous you will have to disclose income back to and including your first job as a messenger boy.

Jack chuckles weakly.

FRED

Oh, you laugh? Wait and see. There is no logic to anything they do, it's just to piss you off. S'why they don't like us to play golf, shoot pool, or go to a game, and when they do make us stay home, it's the best, 'cause then they can deny us sex.

JACK

Well, thanks, Fred. It was a drink waiter, by the way, my first job.

FRED

Fine, then she'll want half your tips, audited and amortized. See you on the phone, pal.

He hangs up.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Looking more together, Jack stands beside a filing cabinet. He is filing a folder titled 'Divepak'. There is a tap at the door. He looks round.

MATT (bigger, affable) pokes his head in.

MATT

Goin' for lunch. Wanna come?

Jack looks up at a clock. It's five to twelve.

JACK

Where?

MATT

Delaney's.

Jack grins and pushes the cabinet drawer shut.

INT. DELANEY'S BAR -- DAY

Jack and Matt are at the bar, drinking.

MATT

I tell you, when Florence left it was the best. You should fall on your knees and give thanks.

JACK

Why?

MATT

'Cause you get your life back. You can go out when you like, come home when you like. Every time when you leave the house you don't have to say, I'm just going down to get a paper, hon, or I'm just going to the garage to get some gas, sweetlips. When I look back, I think, what the fuck was I doing there? It's like living with the Gestapo. But it's a Gestapo with a Cinderella complex.

JACK

Why?

MATT

Well you can't raise your voice to it. You object to something and they clam up, point blank refuse to talk, and you go, 'But honey, you always say I don't communicate effectively, but now I'm trying to communicate that I'm pissed off and you won't even talk to me.'
(Girl's voice) 'Oh, but you're being nasty!' (Baby talk) 'Well if I say it nicer will you give me a fucking straight answer?' (Girls' hurt voice) 'Oh, now you're being sarcastic!'

JACK

You know that's true, it's true.

MATT

And they run out the room. I say to Florence once, you know, you never initiate sex not since we got married. I mean, what is it? They must feel like it sometimes when we haven't got the urge, so why don't they just fucking ask, or why don't they just fucking do it? But you know why, I tell you why.

JACK

Why?

MATT

'Cause they got one thing and one thing only we want, and if they let us know they sometimes want what we got just as bad, then there goes their power. How can you blackmail someone 'less you got something you can hold over 'em? If we ever found something like that we could blackmail 'em straight back!

JACK

And we would.

MATT

Fucking A!

The BARMAN comes by. Jack indicates he wants two refills.

MATT

Be like a masochists and sadists convention. Hey don't you gotta be at that meeting by one?

Jack glances at a clock on the wall. It is ten to one.

JACK

Plenty of time.

MATT

Hey, you sure? Divepak's a big client.

JACK

Ah, I just have to sit there and look intelligent. Just to make fucking Olsen look good, like he's got a crack team of old farts working for him 'cause he's a whiz kid. You know, I'd really like to bust that sucker in the mouth.

Their drinks arrive.

MATT

Watch yourself, Jack. He's got a black belt in Taekwondo, and besides he's totally fucking ruthless.

JACK

Well maybe I'll just send him a vicious
fucking memo... anonymously.

They laugh and toast glasses.

MATT

To women, the source of all the joy and
pain in this world.

JACK (conceding with admiration)
In a nutshell.

They drink.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

OLSEN, the young exec vice-president, sits on one side of a
long conference table and is flanked by older EXECUTIVES
either side. Opposite them are the PRESIDENT and two of the
BOARD OF DIVEPAK.

PRESIDENT

Well what I'm 'alluding' to is that
we're going to end up with our asses in
a sling.

OLSEN

You mean a liquidity problem?

PRESIDENT

Damned right. Ours.

Jack enters. He carries a file. As he crosses to sit Olsen
notices him and glances at a clock on the wall opposite. It
is one fifteen. Jack is not outwardly drunk but is clearly
tipsy.

JACK

Sorry. My secretary misfiled this
and...

He shakes his head and half-laughs in affected annoyance as
he sits down. Jack rests back and assumes an intelligent and
attentive pose. Olsen has watched him closely, but turns back
to the Divepak President.

OLSEN

Sorry, um, what was it you said you
bought?

PRESIDENT

Heavy lifting eye beams.

OLSEN

And what are those exactly?

PRESIDENT

They sit in a girdle and lift heavy braided towing strops. Then you can hook up a super tanker if you want, tow it straight through a hurricane.

OLSEN

So you bought these braided towing strops, and...

PRESIDENT

No. We bought heavy lifting eye beams.

OLSEN

Right, and, now Mascom has gone belly up, yet you have to pay Cyclops for those beams.

PRESIDENT

Yeah, so Cyclops hit us with a section two eleven. We don't ante up with a half mill in the next month and we're screwed. We are screwed, 'cause Mascom went broke. We're their major creditor.

OLSEN

(tapping his lip, considering)
And you're already 5 mill in the red with the Bank of Hong Kong.

They lapse into silence, waiting on Olsen's thoughts. Jack, thinking Olsen is a jerk, snorts quietly through his nose and looks away. As his head swings back, he is surprised that people heard him.

PRESIDENT

Find something amusing here?

Jack shakes his head.

PRESIDENT

'Cause if you do I'd like to hear it. I've come to you people for help, not to be laughed at by some pot-bellied old fart who can't even make a meeting on time!

OLSEN (embarrassed, apologetic)

Well I'm, I'm sure...

Jack looks away and snorts again.

PRESIDENT
Hey, you do that again, pal, and we're
stepping outside.

JACK
Fine.

PRESIDENT
What?

OLSEN
Jack!

JACK
I said fine. Then we'll have a
bull-necked old pit bull and a
pot-bellied old fart beating the crap
out of each other in the hall, but when
we come back in here you'll still be
going broke.

PRESIDENT
Yeah, but I'll feel a lot better. So you
got a solution, smart ass, or you just
want to...?

JACK (ignoring the threat)
What's the bottom line here?

He looks around the room. No one has an answer.

JACK
Survival. You feed off Mascom, but
Mascom is now dead. Cyclops feeds off
you and the Bank of Hong Kong wants its
pound of flesh. But the bottom line is,
when Mascom died, everyone else turned
cannibal.

PRESIDENT
So? What do I do about Cyclops?

JACK
Tell 'em to go fuck 'emselves.

PRESIDENT
What?!

OLSEN

Can I just say here, that this man is a very junior advisor on my staff and...!

PRESIDENT

He's either a drunk, an idiot or a genius. Shut up while I find out. (To Jack) Okay, so I tell 'em to go fuck 'emselves, then what?

JACK

Sue 'em.

PRESIDENT

What? What for? I can't sue 'em, they got a wind up notice on me.

JACK

'Course you can. You sue 'em and the wind up notice goes on hold. Sue 'em 'cause the eye beams they supplied weren't up to spec. Fuck 'em up the ass and break it off.

OLSEN

I want to say that this man is in no way speaking on behalf of this firm!

The President holds up his hand for silence, still looking at Jack.

PRESIDENT

We tested their stuff. It's well above spec. Spec is a thousand tons, they didn't crack 'til one-five.

JACK

What do you want a fucking ethics badge? I'm talking survival here. You throw a counter-suite on 'em. That'll set 'em on their ass for a while. Buys you precious time. Time to generate income to keep the bank happy. They'll have to retest their beams just to make sure they don't have a case to answer, then when the results are in they'll get all indignant and say they're going to fight this 'til the end of time. Then their legal bills start rolling in.

PRESIDENT

So will ours.

JACK

Trust me, you won't even go past one fifty large before they fold. Where did they lodge the section two eleven?

PRESIDENT

Singapore.

JACK

(shrugs)

You got offices here. Ask for jurisdiction to be shifted here. That'll take twelve months at least. So what are we up to now, eighteen months?

He taps the file he brought in.

JACK

I noticed you also got offices in two other states here and Hong Kong as well. Shift jurisdiction to each in turn. You'll be looking at three, maybe four years delay. Cyclops is a small supplier. They can't live off their fat as long as you can. They'll either go belly up or throw in the towel. Either way the problem goes away, and you survive.

President looks long and hard at Jack, then nods, almost respectfully. He looks back at Olsen.

OLSEN (heated)

What he just said in no way should be construed as official advice from this firm. It's...It's unethical, unprincipled, and more so I doubt it would even work!

JACK (mumbling to self)

Used it before you were born.

OLSEN (snapping)

What?!

LANDSDALE, one of Olsen's executive lackies, gives Jack a scowling look.

PRESIDENT

Well what's your suggestion?

Olsen is stuck momentarily.

OLSEN

Ah, this is a complex matter with an inter-tissue of parameters that need thorough examination. I'd prefer to take it under advisement and get back to you with a properly developed counter-offensive strategy document.

President looks at him for a while.

PRESIDENT

An inter-tissue of parameters, huh?
Okay,

He begins to get up.

PRESIDENT

I look forward to receiving your...?
(freezing)

OLSEN

Counter-offensive strategy document.

PRESIDENT

(Continuing to get up) Yeah. That one.

Everyone else also gets up, except Jack.

Jack is not paying much attention. He burps quietly to himself.

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack stands with a mug of coffee, gazing idly out his window. The door opens and Olsen fills it.

OLSEN

Hello, Jack.

Jack is surprised. He looks round, open-mouthed staring. Olsen comes in and shuts the door.

OLSEN

Hard at it I see.

Jack's expression still hasn't changed.

OLSEN

Just spoke to your secretary, asked her if she misfiled the Divepak brief. She said she gave it to you first thing this morning. So why were you late for the meeting?

JACK (coming clean)

Had a doctor's appointment. He went overtime, gave me some anti-depressants. Made me a bit light-headed.

OLSEN

Well then I guess that explains your performance in the boardroom.

JACK

Yeah...Yeah. Yeah, sorry about that.

OLSEN

And that's it?

JACK

What?...Yeah.

OLSEN

So you're sorry. That fixes it?

JACK

No, I'm real sorry? Really.

OLSEN

Going to let you go, Jack.

Jack is aghast.

JACK

...Why?

OLSEN

'Course you're a liar, and a drunk, you are not a team player and you have absolutely no respect for me.

JACK

Listen, ah, I'm really sorry about, you know, today. I know I was disrespectful, and I didn't mean it that way, I was only trying to help. Guess I'm somewhat...

OLSEN

I've given you the best severance package I can. You also have your retirement fund...

JACK

Oh, hey, come on! Look, my wife, my wife left me last night. After twenty-five years she just up and walked. Yeah, alright, yeah, I had a few drinks at lunch, and I'm sorry if I embarrassed you and the firm in front of Divepak and I promise never to be late or irresponsible again. I know I'm not myself...

Olsen has been walking toward the door.

OLSEN

You can stay to the end of the month if you want, you're paid up 'til then. But I don't have any problem with you leaving right now. I think it would be less stressful on everyone if you did just that.

He goes to leave.

JACK

Hey!...You don't just come in and sack a man my age and walk out like it was nothing. Jesus, my whole life is going down the toilet in the space of twenty-four hours. Cut me some slack, please. No one's going to touch me after this.

OLSEN

I'll give you a good reference.

JACK (realizing all hope is lost)

Well...You know what you can do with your reference.

OLSEN

Let me guess. Shove it up my ass and set it on fire? See, that's the trouble, Jack. You're in the wrong, yet you are insolent in the face of generosity. I mean, look at your body language now. You'd like to just bust me in the mouth, wouldn't you.

JACK

More than you can possibly imagine.

Olsen crosses back to him and stands too close.

OLSEN

Well, we're all alone here...give it a shot.

Jack thinks it over.

JACK

Mind closing your eyes?

Olsen half-laughs, but then decides to call his bluff. He shuts his eyes and folds his hands calmly in front of him, daring Jack. Jack looks him over. He gulps the rest of his coffee, then sighs, lowering his eyes. The sigh causes Olsen to open his eyes, and he looks at Jack in mock question.

JACK

Well, guess you're right, Mr. Olsen. I'm not only not a team player, and insolent, I'm also a physical coward. But now that you've taught me this lesson, and I appreciate the lesson, and if I promise to watch myself in the future, may I please keep my job?

Olsen looks derisively at him, snorts a half-laugh, and saunters to the door. He pauses and turns to say something. Instantly he is hit in the head with Jack's coffee mug. It explodes. Olsen collapses.

EXT. JACK'S OUTER OFFICE -- DAY

Jack carries a box with his meager belongings in it. In the background Olsen sits in Jack's Secretary's chair as Landsdale applies a cold compress to his head. Landsdale gives Jack a filthy look.

JACK

Oh, shut up, Landsdale.

As Jack walks away from his office, he is aware he is being stared at by STAFF. He presses the lift button, feeling self-conscious. Presently the lift doors open and he steps in. He is in an agony of embarrassment waiting for the lift doors to shut. He gets annoyed and stabs the 'doors shut' button several times. The doors finally close.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jack enters. He crosses to a table, drops the box and sits. His hand goes to his forehead.

JACK
Whoa, huh...whoa.

He shakes his head, sits back, and pulls the half-bottle of scotch (used in his office) from the box. He spins off the lid and drinks from the bottle. He grabs a smoke and lights up, then has another drink.

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT, PATIO -- DAWN.

Jack has a fixed stare. He has considerable beard growth, suggesting he's been on the booze for around a week. He is barely hanging in there. The ash from his cigarette, long and unnoticed, breaks off under its own weight onto the table.

OS can be heard the low frequency pulse of the walking club timer.

JACK'S POV: The WALKERS go round and round the playground.

Back to Jack.

JACK (slurring)
Walk, walk, walk. Zombies. Go on.
Living fucking dead. There's
a whole fucking beach just there
...Jesus! So why walk there, spoil
my view.

He tries a derisive laugh which ends in a cough.

One of the Walkers breaks from the circles and comes toward the fenceline.

This isn't registering with Jack.

INTERCUT:

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

Matt is at the fenceline.

MATT

Hey, Jack!

Jack doesn't register.

MATT

Jack!

Jack hears his name. He leans forward and looks at the man down on the fenceline. He doesn't register who it is.

MATT
(waving)

Jack!

Jack doesn't get it. He looks to his right, then his left, checking to see if there is anyone else out on their balcony.

MATT
Jack, it's me, Matt...from work!

Jack frowns, barely making the connection.

Matt holds up his finger for Jack to wait. He climbs over the fence, falls awkwardly and hurries across the street.

Barely comprehending, Jack leans forward and watches Matt until he is out of view under the building. He is surprised when the door buzzer sounds behind him.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jack appears beside the video phone by the front door. He looks at the screen. Matt is on it. He presses the talk button.

JACK

Hello?

MATT

Open the door, Jack, it's me!

JACK

Who?

MATT

Matt!

JACK
You mean Matt from work?

MATT
No, Matt from Mars. Open the fucking
Door!

Jack looks at the screen for a long moment, then pushes the door buzzer/release.

Jack looks around, about to cross to the table, when there is a knock at the door. Jack frowns, leaning forward to listen.

JACK
Yeah?

MATT
It's me! Open up!

Jack opens the door.

JACK
God! That was so fast.

MATT
What? It's two flights. Jesus,
look at you.

Jack has been patting at his pockets for a cigarette but with no luck. He spots a packet on the balcony and heads for it.

MATT
Jesus, you look like shit!

JACK
Oh? Explains the way I feel.

MATT
I heard what happened. Couldn't believe
it. Did he press charges?

Jack has lit a cigarette and comes inside, carrying his glass.

JACK
Who?

MATT
Olsen!...The guy you hit in the head!

JACK

Oh! That prick!

MATT

Jesus, man, you know, you are not well. In fact, you look like you fell out of a tall horse's ass. What have you been doing to yourself?

Jack is not comprehending.

MATT

You know, you ought to join the Walker's Club.

JACK

Been in it for years, Johnnie and me.

He half smiles. Matt doesn't get it.

MATT

They saved my life. I was put on the list for a by-pass. But I divorced Florence and joined the Welsh Walkers. I'm fine now.

JACK

Welsh...?

MATT

Those people...over there...The people walking over there.

JACK

They're Welsh? Been watching them for years. What-are-they-doing?

MATT

Walking.

JACK

You know, you are a very observant young man! Goddamned right! I'm glad we concur! They're walking!

He starts coughing, pointing vaguely at the playground, describing circles in the air.

JACK

They should go walk in their own country.

MATT

No, it's a system. Look, you're obviously a bit...well, look I'm going to do you a favor. I'm going to make an appointment for you to see Dr. Welsh. He's the guy who started it, the Walker's club.

Jack has not understood.

MATT

Look, have you got a key?

JACK

What?

MATT

A key, have you got a key to your door!

JACK

Yeah. Thanks, got one.

MATT

No, I need a spare key so I can collect you tomorrow. Take you to see Doctor Welsh?

JACK

What?

MATT

A spare key to your door!

Jack picks up his keys on the table. But sees Bernice's key and picks it up.

JACK

Here. This is hers. She left me you know.

Becoming immediately tearful.

JACK

Just up and...just like...After twenty-five...

He begins to cry. Matt goes to him, and Jack sobs on his shoulder.

MATT

Oh, it'll be alright. There there, there there. Oh, yeah, that's right. Let it all out. There, there there. Shhh.

EXT. MATT'S CAR INT -- DAY

Matt drives. Jack is hung over. He slumps as Matt chats.

MATT

He's a really interesting guy, Dr. Welsh. Hey, you ever see that movie, "The Great Escape" you know, with Steve McQueen? You know, where there's this mass breakout from the German prisoner of war camp? Well, Dr. Welsh was one of them, you know, that got away.

JACK

He's an actor?

MATT

No, no, he was one of the real men that got away. He was one of the very few guys that made it back to allied lines.

JACK

Well, say, if he was twenty at the time, that would make him a hundred and..

Jack can't be bothered completing the computation.

MATT

Oh, yeah, then I guess he must be the son of the guy who escaped.

JACK (sarcastic)

Or the grandson.

Jack is no longer paying attention.

MATT

I mean, he's really ancient, but bright as a button, still got all his marbles. Hope I'm that focused when I'm that old. Hope I get that old. Just shows what walking can do for you. I'm a convert.

While Matt has been talking, Jack was hardly listening. His attention has been captured by a sign which reads "BAR". His eyes follow the sign longingly as they go by.

INT. SURGERY, FITNESS TEST -- DAY

Jack is on a treadmill, sensors stuck all over him. He is walking. DAISY, Dr. Welsh's assistant, comes into view.

DAISY

Just going to elevate the angle
and pick up the pace a bit.

She presses buttons and the treadmill tilts up, and the belt rate increases. Jack is forced to go from a fast walk into a jog. He looks at Daisy, concerned.

INT. WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Matt waits, reading a magazine. He glances at his watch and looks up, then grins and looks back at his magazine. He is patient, a nice guy, a good friend.

BACK TO:

INT. SURGERY -- DAY

The treadmill is going quite fast and at a high angle. Jack is at his limit, glancing desperately at Daisy.

DAISY (unconcerned)
(studying data)
Few seconds more.

What seems an interminable amount of time for Jack goes by, and finally Daisy flicks off a switch. Jack almost falls over the front of the machine.

DAISY
There you go.

She leaves frame. Gasping, Jack can barely keep his feet.

INT. SURGERY -- DAY

Jack has a nose clamp on and a large hose stuck in his mouth. He stands in front of a lung capacity machine.

DAISY
Okay, big breath, and blow, blow, blow,
blow, blow. Keep blowing... keep
blowing...keep blowing... keep...

Jack faints, falling from view. Daisy's tone is routine.

DAISY
We got a fainter here!

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack sits opposite DR. WELSH, who is very old and studying his test results. Jack is getting tired of waiting.

JACK
So what's the news, doc, am I going
to live?

Long pause.

DR. WELSH (amused)
(not looking up)
No.

Jack, who had been joking, becomes a little unsettled. He waits. Finally Dr. Welsh looks up.

DR. WELSH
We all die.

He grins, and taps Jack's file as he puts it down.

DR. WELSH
Some sooner than later.

He sits back and looks at Jack for a long while. Jack becomes more uncomfortable.

DR. WELSH
We'll do the calculations, work out
what level you should start at. When you
come in the morning, see Daisy, the girl
who tested you, she'll tell you where
you should start and show you the ropes.
We start at 5:30, but better to be there
around 5:15 on your first day.

JACK
Oh...say, um, you know, I'm not
obligated to come to this thing am I?

DR. WELSH
'Course not. Strange question. Why did
you come here at all?

JACK
I...oh, Matt brought me.

DR. WELSH
Matt Forbinger? Oh. Good man, Matt. But
I got to tell you, he was in better shape
than you when he started with us, and
he was triple by-pass material.

JACK
You mean...I might need a...

DR. WELSH

You? No. You need a transplant.

Jack looks stunned.

DR. WELSH (reassuring)
Oh, coupla years yet.

JACK
Jesus.

DR. WELSH
Well what do you think protoplasm is?
S'just biologic material, mainly
water. You stick nicotine and a few
hundred other toxins and carcinogens in
it, then drown the whole thing in
alcohol, and in no time protoplasm
breaks down.

JACK
You mean, I could die?

DR. WELSH
Why, what's so special about you?

Jack can't answer that.

DR. WELSH
When you've lived as long as I have you
only find a few things wondrous
anymore. I'm down to three. People's
capacity to destroy themselves, and the
body's capacity to resist it. You might
just be able to pull yourself back from
the brink. But that's up to you. Once
you pass fifty, no one really gives a
shit whether you live or die anyway.

JACK
And the third wondrous thing?

DR. WELSH (as if obvious)
Sex.

After a moment he raises his eyebrows suggestively several
times.

Jack is staring.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- PRE-DAWN.

A key can be heard being inserted into the lock on the other
side of the front door. The handle turns. Matt enters, dressed
for walking.

MATT
Hey, Jack, you up?

He shuts the door.

MATT
Jack...Jack!

He moves toward the bedroom.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM -- PRE-DAWN.

Jack is asleep in bed. Matt is a silhouette holding the door open.

MATT
Hey, Jack. Hey, Jack, wake up. Jack.

He stops at the end of the bed.

MATT
Jack...Jack!...Hey, Jack!!

Jack sits up in fright.

JACK
Oh!

He sees Matt standing over him.

JACK
Ahhhhh!

MATT
It's me!

Jack grabs his heart and falls back, panting.

JACK
Oh...don't ever do that...Oh...Oh.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

Jack, looking out of place in shorts and sneakers, walks with Matt through the circle of Walkers, already going round. There's about 50 people walking, mainly late middle-aged and elderly.

MATT
We gotta go over there first and sign on.

Matt is nodding/waving.

MATT
Bill...Sally...Hi, Molly.

EXT. PLAYGROUND. SIGN-ON DESK -- DAWN

As Matt signs on Jack opens a box with cards in it. He takes a card out and reads it. Matt notices.

MATT
Oh, don't touch those, they're
everyone's personal files.

Jack puts the card back, takes the pen off Matt and signs on. SUE, a bright, bubbly, pretty assistant bursting with health, appears in front of Jack.

MATT
I'll see you out there, buddy. Sue'll
take care of you.

He departs.

SUE
(Offering her hand)
Hi, I'm Sue, and you are?

JACK
Hi. I'm Jack.

She keeps smiling and retains his hand until he confesses his surname.

JACK
Price.

SUE
Oh, good!

Her fingers dive into the membership box and she finds his card in the P section.

SUE
Yes, here we are! Follow me, Jack!

She sets off at pace toward the biggest circle. Jack hurries to catch up.

JACK
Oh, ah, Doctor Welsh said I should see
Daisy.

SUE

Yes, I know. Like to follow me?

Stupid question for a guy like Jack. His eyes drop down to her backside, which, in tights, is seriously cute.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

Sue, followed by Jack, approaches Daisy, walking with OLD LADY 1.

SUE
There she is! Oh Daisy, got a minute?!

Daisy excuses herself and comes over. Sue hands her Jack's card.

SUE
This is Jack, he's starting today.

Daisy looks at Jack. He waves hello.

DAISY (unimpressed)
Oh, yeah.

She snorts to herself and looks at the card.

DAISY
Come with me...Jack.

SUE (cheery)
Bye.

Jack grins weakly and follows Daisy. She crosses to one of the innermost circles. On the way...

JACK
Oh, we met yesterday.

DAISY
Yeah, the fainter.

JACK
Yeah, well...

DAISY
S'alright, lot of chronic cases faint.

Jack absorbs her opinion.

DAISY
My father was a drunk too. God I loved that man.

JACK

He died?

DAISY

Oh, yeah, 'bout your age. Still, as my mother used to say, there is something intangible about the self-destructive soul. Therein lies the ironic poetry of life. Then she'd say, fuck that prick for dying and leaving me with three bloody kids.

They arrive at an inner flag.

DAISY

Okay, now, you'll be starting on the yellow flags here at 15. Now, you hear that sound?

She is referring to the pulse sound from the black box in the circle center.

DAISY

When you hear that you should be either at or halfway to the next flag.

JACK

(looking around)

Hey, um, you sure I have to walk this circle? I mean there's much older people out there.

DAISY

Yep, fifteen. Okay, ready to go? Let's go.

She sets off. Left at the starting gate, Jack catches up.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAY

MOVING.

DAISY

See, it's a very nice, easy pace here, just like going for a stroll. There's the sound, see, we're about halfway...and now...at the flag. Nothing to it.

JACK
And how long do I have to do this?

DAISY
Just an hour. We go 5:30 to 6:30 sharp.

JACK
Not much of a challenge.

DAISY
Oh, you'd be surprised.

As they walk Jack looks outward and behind him. Matt is on an outer circle, going at pace. He waves cheerily.

Jack looks away, bored.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAY

On the door again - a key can be heard on the other side. The handle turns and the door opens. Jack, lathered in sweat, leans against the doorframe, holding the door ajar, too exhausted to come inside. He eventually musters the strength and enters. He falls onto a chair and like a man deprived of water grabs his cigarettes, lights one, and gasps the smoke in with relief. He puts his head back and groans.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- DAWN

Jack sleeps. His bedroom door flies open. Matt enters, seeming not unlike a drill sergeant rousing weary troops.

MATT
Okay, up and at 'em, Jackie boy! C'mon, Jack! C'mon, Jack!

Jack has his leg across a pillow, mouth agape, sleeping soundly. He barely responds. Matt starts poking him.

MATT
C'mon, Jack. C'mon Jack. C'mon Jack.

Jack wakes enough to try to push him away, but Matt is persistent, poking him rapidly in synchrony with each word.

MATT

C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon,
c'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon...

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

Jack walks. OLD LADY 2 is walking in the circle one out from his. She looks fine, but Jack is sweating heavily.

OLD LADY 2

This your first time, honey?

Jack looks deliriously round at her.

JACK

Second.

OLD LADY 2

You're sweating an awful lot.

JACK

It's hot.

OLD LADY 2

No...

She tugs slightly on her sweater.

OLD LADY 2

My Tom used to sweat like that you know,
when he was walking here.

JACK

Really? Maybe he's got a high
metabolism like me.

Old Lady 2 cracks up laughing.

JACK

What?

OLD LADY 2

That's what he used to say.

JACK

S'pose you're going to tell me he's dead
now, right?

OLD LADY 2

Last Christmas. Best present I ever got. He was one royal pain in the butt that man. Miserable? The word takes on new meaning.

JACK

Well, he was old, they can get like that toward the end.

OLD LADY 2

Tom? He was my son!

Jack pulls up. Old Lady 2 notices he is gone and comes back.

OLD LADY 2

What's wrong, honey? Is it your heart?

JACK

No, I just...you go on. Gonna get some...water.

Jack moves toward the sign-on desk, passing through the circles on his way. Matt streaks past.

MATT

Hey, Jack! How's it going?!

JACK

Dandy!

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- DAWN

Jack's form is in bed, covers over him. The door springs open and Matt enters.

MATT

Okay, Jack, rise and shine, buddy!
c'mon, c'mon, c'mon, c'mon.

He's poking again. Suddenly Jack looms from behind. Matt catches a glimpse before he is poleaxed with a pillow. Knocked onto the bed, he looks up in shock.

MATT

What'd you do that for?!!

JACK

(crossing to the bathroom)
'Cause I always hated Woody Woodpecker.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

Fifteen WALKERS are lined up along a tape pulled tight from the speaker box at the circle's center. The Walkers are five yards apart along the tape and each holds a number of colored flags. After advancing uniformly in a ten yard arc, they all stop and push a flag into the ground, then continue on. Thus the walking circles are formed.

Jack and Matt are crossing behind them on their way to the sign-on table.

MATT

Hey, heard Olsen's been saying nasty stuff about you round the office. Wonder why he never pressed charges.

JACK

'Cause then he'd have to admit publicly I clobbered him.

MATT

Hey, you know who got your job?

Jack doesn't care.

MATT

Lansdale!

JACK (sarcastic)

You're kidding?

MATT

No. Seriously.

JACK

Oh, makes sense, Lansdale never said the wrong thing. Course it's hard to hear someone who's got their head stuck up your ass.

MATT

He does take brown-nosing to new heights.

JACK

Depths. And that's all boy-wonder wants, 'yes men' either side so's he looks good.

MATT

(nodding)

Picks old guys too. Makes him look

better by contrast.

He misses a pursed-lip look from Jack.

MATT

Hey, you know, it's Friday. Want to come for a few beers, see if we can't pick up some poontang?

Jack stares at him.

MATT

Bit of fluff, bit of skirt, bit of (barking)...

JACK

Are you on medication?

MATT

What?

JACK

I'm just getting off the sauce, in fact, that's what I thought you were helping me with, and now you want me to get back on it?

MATT

Well, you don't have to drink. I just thought, you know, it'd be nice to have a hunting partner.

JACK

(noticing someone)

Well, I hunt alone...Who is that?

Matt looks. Over at the sign-on table an attractive middle-aged woman, CAROLINE, signs on.

MATT

Oh, Caroline. Nice ass but a total bitch. Say hello, see what you get.

Caroline bends over the table. Jack 'ooh's' to himself.

EXT. SIGN-ON TABLE -- DAWN

Jack and Matt approach as Caroline is leaving.

JACK

Hello.

CAROLINE

(grinning, sexy)

Hi.

She continues on and Matt's mouth drops open. Jack grins, slapping him with the back of his hand.

Matt signs on first and departs. Jack is next.

Sign-on book: Jack signs on, then his finger goes above Matt's signature and checks Caroline's. Her name is Caroline Hendershot. Jack's finger taps the name twice. He looks around, searching for her.

She is touching her toes.

Jack groans at the ongoing torture.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

Walking is underway. Jack has positioned himself so he walks behind Caroline. She is on a circle three out from his own. Jack can stare to his heart's content. He grins, now with a reason to exercise.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- EARLY MORNING.

Daisy times OLD MAN 1's pulse as Jack approaches. Old Man 1 nods his thanks and departs as Jack arrives.

JACK

Daisy.

DAISY

Jack.

She grabs his wrist automatically and starts taking his pulse.

JACK

Oh, I just wanted to ask a question.

DAISY

(not letting go of his wrist)
Well, it's an excuse to hold hands.

She checks her watch.

DAISY

Yes?

JACK

Well, how does one progress to a wider circle?

DAISY

One progresses to a wider circle by bringing one's pulse rate down via exercise.

JACK

So when does one know one's ready to go up a grade?

DAISY

One doesn't, I do. You be a good boy and come see me after class every day, and I'll tell you when you can graduate.

She stops taking his pulse.

JACK

(leaving)

How am I doing?

DAISY

(leaving)

Lucky you're not a horse.

Jack hangs slightly in mid-air as he gets her meaning, but keeps walking.

INT. DINER -- DAY

Fred, Jack's lawyer, is already sitting in a booth, holding a menu when Jack comes in.

FRED

Hey, how y'doin'?

JACK

Hi.

Fred signals for the Waitress.

FRED

Well, I got good news and bad. The bad news is she's going for the jugular. You just got hit with a writ the size of Texas.

JACK

You're shittin' me?

Fred pushes it across to him then checks the menu.

FRED

Trust me, I'm a lawyer. How'd she find out so quick you lost your job?

JACK

I don't know.

FRED

Probably a private dick working for her lawyer. She wants half your severance plus half your retirement payout.

JACK

Jesus!...So what's the good news?

FRED

I was right again!

The WAITRESS arrives with a coffee pot and cup.

JACK

Oh, no thanks. Um, could I just have a juice.

FRED

Hey, I'm gonna have a cream cheese bagel. Y'want a bagel?

JACK

No, ah, make mine a salad sandwich on wholemeal, and, ah, no butter.

WAITRESS

Sure.

JACK

Thank you.

She departs.

FRED

What's with you? Never seen you eat shit like that in your life!

JACK

Oh, got a bit of a heart thing...

FRED

Oh, hey, great! We'll use it. Like, is it bad? Is it terminal?

JACK

Will you, Jesus, will you listen to yourself? What if it is terminal? You gonna gloat about it so's you can win the case?

FRED

Well, sorry for gloating in your best interest, buddy.

JACK

So what else'd she ask for?

FRED

The boat, the fucking boat, like I said. She wants you to sell the apartment too. You're out, buddy, you're on the street. You're picking up aluminum cans come Saturday.

JACK

She say why?

FRED

Yeah, some legal bullshit about 'implausible evaluation', which just means she doesn't trust you to get a fair and proper assessment of all claims held in common.

JACK

Well, can't the court appoint a valuer?

FRED

Course it can, but only if both parties are in agreement to that process. Ergo, you're fucked. This is what happens when you let women into politics.

Fred waves his hand before Jack's eyes.

FRED

Hello? You home yet? You just stepped into the ring with a T-Rex and you're still in your jammies. No, change that, change that. Utah Raptor. About the same size but got twice as many slashing, emasculating weapons. Sorta like a real life Freddie Krugar. Remember "The First Wive's Club", the movie?

Jack nods. Fred slaps the table.

FRED

Laughed myself silly! What a send up. Nothing, like women do to their husbands in real life. They'll fuck your best friend, they'll fuck your boss to get you fired, they'll even fuck your lawyer! In fact it's the guilt from that case that turned me into the misogynist I am today.

JACK

What happened to your client?

FRED

I think the less said about Osama Bin Laden the better. (Closing the menu) Think I'll have me a custard tart.

The Waitress arrives, dropping their orders on the table. Fred is sexually interested, and she happens to be wearing pale yellow. His eyes flick down to her breasts.

FRED

So how're your custard tarts today, sugar?

WAITRESS (amused, getting his drift)
They're just fine, fresh and tasty.

FRED

Oh, I'll bet they are! Guess how many I'll be having?

The Waitress grins knowingly and leaves.

FRED

There you go. (He watches her leave and looks at Jack, excited) God, I love women! S'like running with the bulls, isn't it. Like, which one of us will they gore next?! S'like passing your hand slower and slower through a flame!? Knowing you'll get burned, but just hoping you won't!

Jack can only stare at him.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAY

A DELIVERY MAN plugs a lead into a socket and straightens up. He picks up a clipboard and hands it to Jack. As he does so Camera reveals he has just installed an electric, walking/running machine.

WORKMAN

There you go, Mr. Price. The best money can buy.

JACK

(signing)

Just remember, they say the same about senators.

He hands back the clipboard.

WORKMAN

Thank you, sir.

JACK

Thanks.

Workman leaves.

Jack looks over the machine, nodding to himself, assessing it as though a mighty, potent weapon. As he studies and admires its clean lines, he taps a cigarette on the pack. Oblivious to the contradiction, he lights it.

JACK (realizing)

Jesus!

He crosses to the kitchen and drops the smokes into the garbage disposal, then turns it on. He shakes his head.

EXT. BEACH HEADLAND -- LATE AFTERNOON.

Jack approaches down a long beach. He perspires heavily, really beat. He arrives at the headland rockface, touches it with a weary hand, turns around and begins to trudge homeward.

EXT. LONG BEACH -- LATE AFTERNOON.

OLD MAN 2 studies a steel pole that has a 'No dogs past this point' sign on it. The steel pole is rusted three quarters the way through, and Old Man 2 is shaking his head as he looks at it. There is a shimmering heat haze. Jack passes by, trudging like a survivor in the Sahara. Old Man 2 indicates the rusted out pole and shakes his head to Jack as he passes. Jack merely looks, too tired to acknowledge.

EXT. SIGN-ON TABLE -- DAWN

Caroline approaches the sign-on table. She slows as she sees someone.

A tall, good looking man, BILL, around the same age as her, is signing on.

Caroline continues to approach the table.

Bill sees her and is not pleased.

CAROLINE

Hi.

He walks by on his way to his circle.

She watches him forlornly.

EXT. SIGN-ON TABLE -- DAWN

Caroline approaches the table, picks up the pen, and signs on. As she turns to leave...

JACK

Hi.

CAROLINE (disinterested)
Hello.

She continues on. Jack was hoping for more but is not too depressed. He notices no one else is around and opens the card file box and flicks quickly through to the H's. He finds the card he is looking for and takes it out: "HENDERSHOT, Caroline 14 Mary Ave, Mermaid."

DAISY (OS)

What're you doing, Jack?

JACK

Oh... (putting the card back) She seems pretty fit and I wanted to see what her heart rate was.

DAISY

Oh, well these are personal, and we don't put the heart rate on your card. But from memory Caroline's about sixty-two resting, one twenty-five working.

JACK

Wow. So that's what I should aim for?

DAISY

Let's just try for a pulse.

JACK

(leaving)

You're a riot.

Daisy grins as she watches him go. Her eyes drop down to the card box and the cards tipped forward, separated at H and I. Daisy flicks them back, closes the box, and looks suspiciously at Jack.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

MOVING: Jack walks. He has positioned himself as usual behind Caroline and is watching her. He is, however, unaware she is watching someone else.

Caroline walks. She has positioned herself behind Bill, who is on a wider circle.

Bill, unaware, walks quite fast - a bit of a pro.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- DAWN

OLD LADY 3 is having her pulse taken by Daisy. Jack, with a good sweat up, approaches and waits for Daisy to be free.

DAISY

One ten, that's fine.

Old Lady 3 smiles and departs. Daisy automatically takes Jack's pulse. After a minute...

DAISY

Huh, well...Welcome to the land of the living.

JACK

So can I go up a flag...you know, a bigger circle?

DAISY

Tell you what. Bring me this same pulse
three days running and I'll let you go
wider.

JACK

You got it.

DAISY

We'll see.

She moves from Jack and takes OLD MAN 3's pulse. Jack heads
homeward. Daisy glances round at him.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- LATE AFTERNOON.

The sun is setting, painting Jack's living room in reds. Jack
sweats as he jogs pathetically on his running machine, but
he *is* jogging. He hits the kill switch and collapses over the
machine, puffing hard.

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE. 14 MARY STREET -- NIGHT

Jack, in smart casual clothes, strolls along the street. He
stops in front of a house.

The house number is 14.

Jack checks out the place. It is a modest dwelling, low-set
brick. Faint orchestral music comes from inside. Jack looks
around ensuring he is unobserved, then steps over a low fence
and enters the yard. He moves down the side of the house.

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE, SIDE YARD -- NIGHT

Jack comes down the side of the house. There is a rose garden
hard up against the house, and the window beside it is the
only one illuminated. Jack steps into the garden and peeks
inside.

Caroline sits on a divan, legs drawn up, reading a book as
the music plays. She idly strokes a Persian.

Jack looks through the window, enchanted by her. Caroline
looks round and Jack ducks down. Suspecting he might have
been seen he leaves hurriedly. Caroline goes back to reading
her book.

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jack comes hurriedly from the yard.

MATT (OS)

Jack?!!

Jack jumps in fright. He sees it is Matt, standing on the sidewalk in front of Caroline's house. He has a small dog on a leash.

MATT

Jack?! What the fuck are you doing?!

Jack signals him to keep his voice down until he has stepped back over the fence. He leads him away.

JACK

Just wanted to see if I could cut through to the main road, save me walking all the way round. What are you doing?

MATT

Walking my fucking Great Dane, what's it look like? I just live round the corner. You'd know that if you ever came round to shoot pool like I keep asking. I'm just on my way to get milk. C'mon, we can talk.

JACK

Oh, I'm actually going that way. It's why I wanted to cut through.

MATT

Hey, do you know who lives in that house?

JACK

No.

Beat.

MATT

Me neither. You want to watch yourself though. They got Neighborhood Watch round here, which is another way of saying they're all bored-shitless voyeurs.

JACK

(walking in the other direction)

Oh, I didn't know that. Thanks for the warning.

MATT

Oh. Okay. Well, see you tomorrow, sunrise.

JACK

Yeah, see you there, Matt, bye!

Jack hurries away. Matt watches him leave, then looks at Caroline's house, then back at Jack. He makes a kissing noise to his dog and goes on his way.

EXT. JACK'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jack approaches his building, about to enter. He gets the odd feeling, though, that he is being watched. He turns and looks around, frowning thoughtfully.

There are no obvious signs of anyone following.

Jack is spooking himself, and enters his building.

MUSIC MONTAGE.

- A) Jack walks on the beach. He waves hello to a WALKER coming the other way. He is setting a good pace.
- B) Jack jogs quite well on his treadmill.
- C) Daisy takes Jack's pulse. She nods approvingly.
- D) Jack walks along the beach. He says hello to fellow WALKERS going the other way, but notices they have dropped something. He picks it up, runs to them, gives it back, and waves cheerily, hurrying energetically on his way.
- E) Jack is on the treadmill. His pace has improved.
- F) Jack does push ups on an exercise station beside the beach.
- G) Jack does some sit-ups on the exercise station.
- H) Jack tries unsuccessfully to do a chin up.
- I) Jack approaches the headland wall and taps it energetically. He turns and hurries back in the other direction.
- J) Jack walks behind Caroline as usual, but this time he is on a circle which is only one removed from hers. He checks out her backside and grins saucily.
- K) Daisy takes Jack's pulse. He asks the question. She nods. Jack clenches his fist and makes a 'Yes!' gesture. Daisy smiles.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAWN

Jack, in a nice track suit, combs his hair in a mirror.

JACK

Hi...Hello...Hey, how y'doin'? What circle are you on today? Oh, blue, same as me. Well...see you out there.

EXT. SIGN-ON TABLE -- DAWN

Caroline signs on. Jack appears behind her. She turns.

JACK

Hey, how y'doin'?

CAROLINE

(barely aware of him)

Hi.

JACK
What circle are you on today?

CAROLINE
Green.

JACK
Oh blue, same as...Oh...getting
fitter?

CAROLINE
Yeah, been doing aerobics at home.

She departs.

JACK
Great...Wow...Cool.

EXT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE, SIDE YARD -- NIGHT

Jack sneaks down the side again, looking around cautiously, making sure he is not seen. Music with a beat comes from inside. Jack peeks in the window.

Caroline, in a g-string leotard, no tights, is doing aerobics.

Jack's mouth falls open. She is a major turn on.

MUSIC MONTAGE SEQUENCE.

A) Jack powers along the beach. Old Man 2 looks at the rusted post again, shaking his head. Jack looks too, and shakes his head in agreement with him as he rushes by.

B) Jack does situps on the exercise station more vigorously.

C) Jack does pushups on the exercise station more vigorously.

D) Jack runs very well on his treadmill.

E) Jack does a chinup on the exercise station successfully.

F) Jack does knee high runs over a small array of logs in the park (as in an obstacle course).

G) Daisy takes Jack's pulse. He asks the question. She nods. Jack is delighted and spins her round in a little dance. She laughs and pushes him off, and begins to take someone else's pulse, while still smiling at Jack.

EXT. SIGN-ON TABLE -- DAWN

Jack lingers near the table, waiting, looking around for Caroline. Daisy approaches, carrying some cards for the box, and notices him.

DAISY

Jack, what're you doing?

JACK

Oh, ah, just, waiting...for Matt.

DAISY

He's already out there.

JACK

Yeah?

DAISY

Yeah, right there. On purple.

JACK

Oh. Huh, can't see for looking.

He sees she is staying.

JACK

Well, better get out there.

He walks reluctantly out, still looking around for Caroline.

A little perplexed, Daisy watches him.

EXT. MARY STREET -- NIGHT

Jack, unusually nervous, is pacing in front of Caroline's house.

JACK

Hi, ah, didn't see you at... Thought maybe you're sick or ...No...need a reason. Ah...Look, I stole a look at your card, 'cause I find you very attractive and I hope you don't mind my dropping by like this.

He drops the act.

JACK

Yeah, fuck it, tell the truth. I think you're pretty, you've got a great ass, and I want to know if you'll let me wear it as a hat...Bound to work.

He walks into her yard.

EXT/INT. CAROLINE'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Jack approaches the front door and rings the bell. No answer.

He rings the bell again. No answer. There is a brass knocker on the door so he decides to try that. As he knocks, though, the door swings open, already unlocked. Jack pokes his head in.

JACK

Caroline?.....Caroline?!

The house is in darkness. Jack steps cautiously inside.

JACK

Hello?!.....Anyone naked in here?! I mean...

He tries to laugh, but dries. He fumbles around and finds a switch. It is a faint light.

JACK

Hello?! Anyone home?

He takes a few paces down the hall and pauses.

JACK

Caroline?!

He continues on.

As he approaches the living room he sees the Persian walking back and forth on the divan, agitated.

Jack frowns as he notices the cat is leaving wet footprints on the dark leather divan.

Suddenly he sees Caroline's lower leg on the floor.

JACK

Caroline!

He edges in more cautiously. Her body is slowly revealed. She seems to be merely lying on the floor.

JACK

Ah...you awake?

Jack crosses to a lamp on the other side of Caroline. He turns it on. He gasps.

Her head is bloodied and rests in a pool of semi-congealed blood.

Jack falls back into an armchair, staring in horror.

Taking a moment to get over his shock, he looks to one side and sees something. It is a phone.

INT. CAROLINE'S HOME -- NIGHT

Following a FORENSIC DETECTIVE as he enters the house. He carries a plaster cast of a footprint in a clear plastic bag. The crime scene is alive with POLICE. As Forensic Detective enters the living room, DETECTIVE MITCHELL is revealed talking to Jack.

JACK

Well, like I said, I hardly knew her. She's in the same walking club as me, that's all.

MITCHELL

So what were you doing here?

JACK

Just came to check on her 'cause she didn't come walking this morning.

MITCHELL

But you just said you hardly knew her?

JACK

Yeah, but, you know, I was...you know...calling on her.

MITCHELL

So she gave you her address?

JACK

Well, no, I was...That is, I have a friend who lives around the corner and I came 'round his place one night to play pool and I noticed Caroline entering this house. That's how come I know where she...

MITCHELL

And what's this guy's name? Your friend.

JACK

Matt.

MITCHELL

His full name.

JACK

Matt Forbinger.

MITCHELL

And what's his address?

JACK

Um, actually I know where it is
but I forget the actual address.

MITCHELL

No problem, we'll find him. So let
me get this straight. You hardly knew
Caroline, and yet you dropped around,
unannounced, at night, because you
noticed she was not at your walking
club this morning. Is that it?

Mitchell notices the Forensic Detective and his head flicks
back, asking the question.

FORENSIC DETECTIVE

(indicating rose bushes outside)
Found some clear tracks in the garden
bed. Pretty distinctive gym shoes.
Expensive. Pumas I'd say.

Mitchell looks down at Jack. He is wearing expensive Pumas.
Mitchell takes the plaster cast and looks at it. He leans down
next to Jack's leg.

MITCHELL

You mind?

Jack reluctantly lifts his leg, and Mitchell checks his tread
next to the plaster cast. He comes back up and looks at Jack.

MITCHELL

Snap.

JACK

I, ah, well, I, I knocked, and she
didn't answer, so I went down and looked
in the window, and...

MITCHELL

Not what you said earlier, Mr. Price.

He looks at the Forensic Detective, who shakes his head.

FORENSIC DETECTIVE

Not new tracks. Coupla days old at
least. Also the perp was not that tall,
I'd say around five ten. He had to stand

on his toes to look through the window.

MITCHELL
(holding out his hand)
License.

Jack pulls out his wallet and extracts his license.

MITCHELL
Says here, Mister Price, that you are
five feet ten inches tall.

He hands back the license and produces a set of cuffs, dangles them and grins humorlessly.

MITCHELL
Hands together, please.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Jack is brought up from the holding cells by a JUNIOR DETECTIVE. As he approaches, Jack sees Matt sitting on a chair outside, waiting. Matt waves and grins encouragingly. Jack is steered away into Mitchell's office.

INT. MITCHELL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Mitchell is at his desk. Jack is surprised to hear him say.

MITCHELL
Take the cuffs off. Let him go.
You're free to go, Mr. Price. But I
advise you not to leave town and to
always be contactable through the
normal means. I'll be in touch.

He goes back to work, signing papers.

JACK
Hey, you know, I didn't do it.

Mitchell keeps working. Jack takes the hint, and leaves.

INT. WAITING ROOM, POLICE STATION -- DAY

Jack approaches Matt. They begin to leave.

MATT
Woe, bro, they had me worried for a while!

INT. LONG PASSAGE TO CARPARK - DAY

JACK

God, Matt, how'd you know I'm here?

MATT

They hauled me in. I was inside with that Detective dude and he was asking me all kinds of shit.

JACK

But did you tell him about seeing me in Caroline's yard that time?

MATT

No, shit, no. What d'you take me for? I don't tell cops nothing. I knew what you were doing in her yard. Just between between you and me, pal, I peeked in her window once or twice myself. Only dumbass me, she caught me doing it. That's how come she was such a bitch to me.

JACK (relieved)

...Fuck.

MATT

Although I did tell 'em you never came round my place to play pool.

JACK

Oh, shit.

MATT

Nah, said we played once a week.

JACK

Huh, Jesus. You know, I've never told you this before, but you're one Hell of a good friend. Saved my ass, that's for sure.

MATT

So you want me to pucker up before you plant one on me.

JACK (laughs)

No, I want it to be a surprise... for both of us!

MATT (laughing)

You should have seen the look on your face when I asked, 'Do you know who lives in that house?!' and you said, 'No!'

They both laugh.

JACK

Oh, you got me good! I owe you one! I promise, I'll get you back when you least expect it!

MATT

Yeah, but seriously, when you look at it, what a couple of douche bags we are. Risking our freedom just to spy on a coupla cute rump steaks wrapped in a g-string. Like it's a major crime checking out someone's ass.

JACK

Yeah, but perfectly packaged and presented rump steaks you've got to admit. But you're right, there's no fool like an old fool.

MATT

Hey, save it, buddy, you're the old fool here, I already got the message. Just another reason to give up on women. Hey, so who do you think had it in for her?

JACK

A great ass hater, obviously. Beating someone to death like that. Someone's seriously sick. That's real hatred.

MATT

Hey, now you're coming out for a beer with me tonight, and I won't take no for an answer.

JACK

Christ, I don't know, Matt...

MATT

Bullshit, you owe me, and I know what it's like when you're under pressure, you need someone to talk to. Pick you up at seven. Gotta get to work. Want Me to drop you somewhere?

He shakes his hand and hurries away into a carpark.

JACK

Hey Matt!

Matt turns but does not stop.

JACK

Thanks.

Matt waves him away as if it was nothing and continues on. Jack continues down a passageway to the street.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Jack is shocked to emerge into street full of REPORTERS and TV CREWS. He is bombarded with questions. He spots a cab coming down the street and hails it.

REPORTER 1

Mr. Prize, have you anything to say about the savage murder of Caroline Hendershot?!

REPORTER 2

Why have you been released?!

REPORTER 3

Sir, why were you in your victim's living room when you didn't even know her?!

REPORTER 4

Do you deny clubbing Caroline Hendershot to death?!

EXT. CAB INT, TRAVELLING - DAY

Jack humps in and shout to the DRIVER.

JACK

Drive!

He is only in the cab for seconds before his phone rings. He answers it while ineptly putting on his seatbelt.

JACK

Yeah, Fred?

INTERCUT:

INT. FRED'S HOUSE - DAY

Fred is in his sitting room at home, dressed for work and watching the news on TV while he drinks coffee. His THREE KIDS are playing noisily all around him and his WIFE is mopping the floor behind him, but Fred concentrates on the image of Jack escaping into a cab and being chased by the Press. A caption at the bottom of the screen reads, "Businessman Jack Prize suspected of brutal murder is released!"

FRED (Mexican accent)
Hey senor, I hear you need a lawyer, and
I want you to know that at Henandez and
Friends we have the cheapest rates in
all...

Jack hangs up. He waits for the phone to ring. It does. He
answers it.

FRED
Hey, it's me!

JACK
I know. Not in the mood. Played ringa
ringa rosey all night with a big black
man who thought I'd look good in
mascara.

FRED
(coffee in hand)
Yeah, just watching you on TV. You know
you're quite photogenic.

JACK
Jesus, what?!

FRED
Even spelt your name wrong. Wouldn't
think they could fuck up Jack Price
would you.

JACK
What do you want?

FRED
Well, I thought you might like me to sue
the TV station seeing you're not even
convicted yet.

JACK
Sure, knock yourself out.

FRED
Oh, and your prelim with your wife is
tomorrow at eleven.

JACK
Oh, Jesus! What?!

FRED

I know, never rains but it pours.
Hey, nice move popping that dame. Bound
to intimidate your wife.

JACK

Hey, fuck you, Fred.

FRED

See you at eleven!

Jack hangs up. The phone rings immediately. Jack answers.

JACK

Listen I don't appreciate that. I
didn't 'pop' anyone, in fact, I was
quite taken with that woman.

INTERCUT OR SPLIT SCREEN WITH:

INT. DAISY'S HOME -- DAY

Daisy has a newspaper on her lap.

DAISY

'Scuse me?

JACK

Who's this?

DAISY

Daisy.

JACK

Who?

DAISY

You know, from walking. Daisy.

JACK

Oh.

DAISY

Listen, just thought I'd give you a call
seeing you're in so much trouble.

JACK

Good news travels fast.

DAISY

It may be nothing but I thought you should know that Caroline Hendershot had this like, ah, how should I put it, fixation on Bill Hendershot, you know, her estranged husband.

JACK

Who?

DAISY

Bill Hendershot. You know, that big hunky guy with the dark hair, grey at the sides. He's a doctor or engineer or something. Anyway he's loaded. He walks on thirty-five.

JACK

What color's that?

DAISY

Purple.

JACK

Oh, yeah. And she was married to that guy?

DAISY

Yeah, but he caught her screwing round or so the story goes and never forgave her. And she always wanted him to. Was pretty obvious too the way she always stared at him. She only joined 'cause he joined, you know.

JACK

Well, that's interesting. Listen, thanks for filling me in.

DAISY

Sure. Hey, you know they spelt your name wrong?

JACK

S'okay, I'm suing 'em.

He hangs up, thoughtful.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Jack walks along the beach, still dressed as per the night before, a dejected figure. He walks past the rusted post. It falls down, barely missing him. Unaware, Jack trudges on.

INT. DELANEY'S BAR -- NIGHT

Jack drinks with Matt. Matt is in the middle of telling a joke.

MATT

...and so she's downstairs basting the turkey, you know, waiting, you know, grinning, knowing he has the turkey guts in his shorts. Then she hears him wake up and fart. Then there's this scream and she hears him run for the bathroom. 'Bout twenty minutes goes by, and then all of a sudden he comes walking down the stairs, and he says, 'Honey, you were right. I did fart my guts out, but by the grace of God and these two fingers, I managed to get 'em all back in!

Matt cracks up, Jack is barely amused.

MATT

Hey, c'mon, that's gold!

JACK (listless)

Yeah, well...guess I'm just not in the mood.

A cheap but attractive WOMAN approaches the bar beside Jack.

MATT

Hey, if I'm going to cheer you up you gotta help me out a little, you know.

Matt is still laughing. Jack has noticed the Woman.

WOMAN

(smiling)

Hi.

JACK

Hi.

WOMAN

That's a nice shirt.

MATT (suddenly aggressive)
Alright you, fuck off!

WOMAN

What?

MATT

You heard me!

WOMAN

Hey, screw you, mister.

Matt looks dangerous, as if he will attack her, leaning over Jack.

MATT

Hey, you wanna end up on your ass out in the alley...?!

Jack restrains him.

JACK

Hey hey hey, what're you doing?

Scared, the Woman departs.

JACK

What the hell was that?

MATT

(throwing down a scotch)
I know her type.

JACK

Thought you said you wanted to meet women?

MATT

She's a frigging hooker!

JACK

How do you know that?

MATT

'Cause I know her type, that's why. Fuckin' hookers. Slip you a mickey and take your wallet and leave you in an alley.

He throws his drink down.

MATT

C'mon, let's get out of here. I know a better bar round the corner. C'mon.

Jack is reluctant but Matt is overriding him.

MATT

C'mon, c'mon.

Uneasy, Jack shrugs, leaves his drink and follows.

INT. GAY BAR -- NIGHT

It is not obviously a gay bar, but it is an upmarket bar populated only with MEN. Jack is sitting at a table while Matt brings some drinks from the bar.

Olsen, Jack's ex-boss, grinning, drinks with a man at the bar (the man not yet revealed). Olsen looks around and sees Matt and Jack. The grin dries and he stares. Matt arrives with the drinks at Jack's table.

MATT

Hey, not bad. Wonder why I've never come here before. It's a very clean bar.

JACK

Certainly not polluted with women.

MATT

Yeah, you're right. Still, another way of looking at it, no hookers.

JACK (grinning)

Got that right.

MATT (smiling)

(toasting)

Here's to swimmin' with bow-legged women.

JACK

(toasting)

Bottom's up.

They drink.

Jack frowns as he realizes his drink is alcoholic.

A young, well-groomed GAY MAN appears beside Matt. He is dressed in a suit.

GAY MAN (to Jack)

(leaning down)

Hi, excuse me, you guys are new? I don't want to seem impolite but would you mind if I danced with your partner?

He leans down further and smiles at Matt. Jack almost chokes on his drink. Matt jerks on the Gay Man's tie. His head hits the table hard, and his nose is immediately bloodied. Matt is quickly up and hauls the Gay Man by the throat to his feet, about to punch his lights out.

MATT

Hey! You think that's funny?! You think it's funny?!

Jack grabs Matt's fist and stops the punch. Even with both hands Jack is flat out containing Matt's arm.

JACK

Hey, Matt! Matt! Hey, c'mon! C'mon, man!

Matt finally settles down and releases the man, who collapses. He looks around.

The whole bar is frozen in shock, looking at them.

Jack is also aghast at Matt.

JACK

Hey, you know, c'mon, let's get out of here. We're in the wrong place.

MATT

(looking around, just getting it)
What, you mean...?

JACK

Yeah. C'mon. Gay men can fight.

Matt agrees reluctantly and they leave.

Olsen at the bar, watches them go. His face darkens.

EXT. CITY STREET -- NIGHT

JACK

Hey, listen, you want to split a cab. I'm going to call it a night.

MATT

What?! Jesus, Jack, we just got started!

JACK

(hailing a cab)

Yeah, I know, but, to tell the truth, I'm not in the mood, and I gotta go to that meeting against Bernice tomorrow, and you know, I only wanted to thank you for helping me out. And then you bought me a drink.

MATT

I bought you a drink?!

JACK

Yeah, Matt, I'm an alcoholic.

MATT

Well excuse fucking me all to hell!

A cab pulls up and Jack heads for it.

MATT

Aw, c'mon, Jack, what're doing?! Don't get in the cab! Jesus! Don't get in the cab!

JACK

C'mon, I'll give you a lift.

MATT

Hey, look, you know, that thing in there. I'm sorry, I just can't stand gays.

JACK

I don't care. C'mon.

MATT

Oh, no, fuck, Jack, you call this a night out?!

JACK

C'mon, get in, let's go! C'mon!

MATT

No. Go on, you go. I'll...I'll drink alone.

JACK

Aw, c'mon, don't do that. You sure?

MATT

Yeah yeah. Go on, you go. Go.

JACK (to himself)

(getting in and closing the cab door)

God, you make it sound like I'm
banishing you.

The taxi drives on. Matt watches it go. He is dejected,
resentful.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- MORNING.

Matt, looking hung over, crosses to the sign-on table. Walking
is already underway. Jack goes past in his circle in the
company of Old Lady 2.

JACK

...but by the grace of God and these two
fingers, I managed to get them all back
in.

Old Lady 2 roars with laughter.

Matt shakes his head to himself, pissed off with Jack. His
look could be described as murderous.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- EARLY MORNING.

Jack goes to Daisy to have his heart rate taken. After a
moment...

DAISY

Been drinking?

JACK (surprised)

Jesus, you can tell from my pulse?

DAISY

I can smell it on your sweat.

JACK

Shouldn't you be working for Border
Control, sniffing bags at the airport?

She is not amused. Jack confesses.

Went out with Matt last night.

DAISY

Matt, huh?

JACK

Why?

DAISY

You know Caroline Hendershot caught Matt peeking in her window. She told me. I nearly had to ban him for that.

Jack looks guilty. She lets his wrist go.

DAISY

I'm dropping you a level.

JACK

Why?...Because I had a drink with Matt?

DAISY

To make you stop and think. You shouldn't toy with people, Jack, especially yourself. If people here see you weaken, they weaken. It's a community of people about to die.

JACK (amazed)

Wow.

Displeased, she takes OLD MAN 4'S pulse.

Jack walks away, but stops, thinking, and looks back at her, perplexed.

INT. LEGAL CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

MATCHING SHOT: Jack still has the same expression.

Jack and Fred sit on the far side of the long conference table. An ARBITRATOR sits at the head of the table. A COURT STENOGRAPHER in the corner is ready to record proceedings. They wait in silence. Presently the door opens, and Bernice, accompanied by her female lawyer, RICKY, enters.

FRED

Ricky.

RICKY

Fred.

Jack looks at Bernice but she will not meet his eyes.

ARBITRATOR (utterly bored, reciting)

Okay, I should warn you that today's proceedings have been convened in the hope that mediation will avert needless legal costs to both disputing parties.

The purpose of today's meeting is to find common ground, not to drag up old grievances, but in the interests of not clogging our courts with needless litigation...and so, please refrain from raising your voice or using profanity, and... (drying, looking at Fred) There something else...?

FRED

That bit about equitable outcome.

ARBITRATOR (yawning)

Oh, yeah, and please seek an equitable outcome, not forgetting that you both entered into your marriage openly and as equals and should therefore do your best to part company on fair terms.

He nods and gestures formally to Fred to begin. Fred accepts with a formal nod of his head, then looks at Ricky.

FRED

Screw you.

BERNICE'S LAWYER

Oh, yeah? You'll be sorry.

FRED

Oh yeah? Tell it to the judge, sister.

BERNICE'S LAWYER

Oh, yeah? Like the judge is going to listen to someone going down for murder one.

As Fred and the Lawyer bicker, Jack looks at Bernice, and eventually she meets his eyes.

FRED (OS)

S'clear case of mistaken identity and if you even allude to that I will slap a suite on you so fast you'll be able to claim multiple whiplash.

BERNICE'S LAWYER (OS)

Hey, bringing current and or pending criminal charges up in a matter of marital property settlement is totally germane to the character of your client and indicative of the duress my client had to frequently endure at the hands of a drunken and possibly murderous spouse.

Jack comes to a decision.

JACK (to Arbitrator)
Hey, excuse me.

FRED
Oh, yeah, who's been watching reruns of
'Boston Legal'. You're so young you
wouldn't know Raymond Burr from Ted
Bundy.

JACK (to Arbitrator)
Excuse me!

FRED
What?! (Confidentially) I'm in the
middle of very complex legal argument
here, Jack.

JACK (to Arbitrator)
I want to say something.

FRED (confidentially)
Oh I wouldn't advise that.

JACK
Tell someone who cares. You there!

The Arbitrator snaps out of it.

ARBITRATOR
Huh?

JACK
I want to say something.

ARBITRATOR
Oh, I wouldn't advise that.

Jack frowns heavily at him.

ARBITRATOR (caving immediately)
Please.

JACK
Bernice. I know I let you down. In fact,
you were right. You tried hard and I
just never saw it and never listened.
I tell you something else. I cheated on
you a few times...

FRED (aghast)
Hey, shud-dup will-ya!

JACK

But only with hookers, and only in Vegas.

Everyone nods and shrugs as though Vegas is understandable, even Bernice.

JACK

So, what I'm trying to say is...you were right and I was wrong. I am a drunk. I was. I am selfish, arrogant, and self-centered. And, anything you want, babe, the apartment, the boat, the farm...I'll be okay, honey. You take it all.

FRED

(pointing at the Stenographer)
I want that immediately struck from the record! (To Arbitrator) And I want an immediate adjournment as of ten seconds ago!

Bernice is looking at Jack. Her eyes have filled with tears and she is shaking her head a little.

BERNICE

All I wanted was a happy marriage, Jack.

JACK

I know, honey. And I let you down. I let us down.

She bursts out crying, but controls it enough to say.

BERNICE

Keep your damned boat and apartment, I'll keep the farm.

She gets up, mopping at tears, sobbing fully, and leaves. Her Lawyer, in shock, hurries after her.

Fred looks in awe at Jack.

FRED

I am in the genius of fucking presence...I mean...

He sits back in astonishment, shaking his head.

JACK (dismissive)

S'a gift.

He scratches his brow, shading his eyes.

Fred stares off in astonishment, trying to comprehend the wondrous lesson he has learnt this day.

INT. HALLWAY. OFFICES -- DAY

Jack and Fred walk together.

JACK
Hey, you know you said Bernice's lawyer
has a private dick working for her?

FRED
Yeah?

JACK
You got one?

FRED
Sure. Why?

JACK
Oh, want to find out something.

EXT. BILL HENDERSHOT'S HOUSE -- DAY

Bill Hendershot comes from his house. He carries bundles of plans, a hard helmet, and a brief case. As he drops them onto the front seat of an expensive four wheel drive vehicle, Jack approaches.

JACK
Bill Hendershot?

BILL
Yes.

JACK
A word.

BILL
Don't I know you?

JACK
Yeah, I'm the guy...

BILL
You're the guy who...

JACK
Yeah, that guy, and I'm pretty ticked
off.

BILL

I don't think I should be talking to you.

Jack grabs him and throws him up against the car.

JACK

You think I give a monkey's ass what you think? Huh? I'm not going down for murder one while a guy who obviously did it walks away.

BILL

What?!

JACK

I'm onto you, pal. I found out about your little scam, now I'm going to the law.

BILL

What're you talking about?!

JACK

What am I talking about? What am I talking about?! Does five hundred grand in insurance ring a bell? Payable to only one beneficiary?

BILL

Who? Me?

JACK

Oh, yeah! Like you didn't know?!

BILL

I didn't, I just got home from Papua.

JACK

Where?

BILL

Papua. New Guinea. We've got a bridge project there. Would you mind letting go, please.

JACK

Yeah, I fucking mind.

Bill grabs him in a simple thumb hold.

JACK

Ah! Ah! Ahhhhh!

When he has pushed Jack away, Bill lets go. Jack is doubled up in pain, holding his thumb.

JACK

Jesus, does every son-of-a-bitch know martial arts except me?!

BILL

Think it's a generational thing. Does it hurt?

JACK (nodding in pain)

What was that one?

BILL

Akido. It's a purely defensive martial art.

JACK

(starting to walk away)

Think I'll learn that one. Can already beat Taekwondo...Long as I've got a coffee mug.

BILL

You know, I really don't know about the insurance.

JACK

(stopping)

I somehow find that hard to believe.

BILL

Look, Caroline was strange. She went frigid on me for over a year, and no matter how much I asked why she wouldn't say. Then one day I came home and she's screwing the pool guy. What's more, she knew I was due home, knew I'd catch her. So I asked her to leave. Then she starts stalking me. She was obsessed. I can show you drawers full of love letters. She'd follow me everywhere. I'd join a bowling club. She'd join a bowling club. I'd look out the window on rainy nights, she'd be standing here with no umbrella.

JACK

(leaving, nodding)

Yeah...my wife did the same.

As he leaves...

BILL
Hope you get off!

Without turning, Jack acknowledges with a small wave.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- DAWN

Jack's clock alarm goes off. Jack turns it straight off, already awake. He goes back to thinking.

INT/EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAWN

Jack, in a business suit, sips coffee as he steps onto his balcony. The walking club is already in session across the road. Jack watches, thinking.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Jack, in the business suit, is shown into Mitchell's office by the Junior Detective.

JACK
Good morning.

MITCHELL
(getting up)
Morning. Would you mind putting your hands on the desk, please. Spreading your feet apart.

Jack is surprised.

JACK
What?

Mitchell pushes him around roughly and makes him assume the position.

MITCHELL
Sure, like you don't know.

He frisks Jack.

JACK
What are you doing?! I just came to give you information!

Mitchell cuffs him.

MITCHELL
You have the right to remain silent, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law....

JACK (over)
What the fuck are you doing?!

INT. HOLDING ROOM HALLWAY -- DAY

Jack is making his phone call as the Junior Detective stands nearby.

INTERCUT OR SPLIT SCREEN WITH:

INT. JAIL CELL -- DAY

Jack sits in his cell. He looks warily across at a PRISONER, who is definitely strange, and who is staring fixedly at Jack. The Junior Detective appears beside the cell.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE
C'mon.

Relieved, Jack picks up his coat, and while the Junior Detective opens the door...

JACK (to the Prisoner)
Nice talking to you.

Prisoner follows him with his weird stare until Jack is gone.

INT. HOLDING ROOM, CLINIC -- DAY

As Jack and the Junior Detective enter Fred is chatting up the attractive NURSE.

FRED
No, I got divorced quite a while back...
Oh, hey, buddy, what's new?

JACK
Nothing, I just like to meet my friends
here. Saves travel.

The nurse immediately sits Jack down and has a tourniquet on his arm in secnds.

FRED
Oh, God, I hate needles.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE (to Jack)
You have the right to refuse this
procedure.

JACK
What do you want my blood for?

JUNIOR DETECTIVE

DNA.

FRED

So why do I have to be here?

JUNIOR DETECTIVE

So the prisoner's legal representative counter-signs the sample.

FRED

And what's that going to be used for?

JACK (snapping)

He just told you. DNA. So as my legal representative do you think I should refuse?

FRED

I don't know. What are they going to use it for.

JACK

I believe they make a very nice black pudding.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE

We have DNA on the murder weapon.

FRED

Which murder?

JACK

Caroline Hendershot.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE

No, Bill Hendersot.

JACK

Bill Hendershot's dead?!

FRED

What're you murdering the whole family?!

JACK

(panicking, indicating Fred)
No, no! I'm refusing the blood test on the grounds he hates needles!

FRED

You can't refuse on those grounds!

NURSE

(releasing the tourniquet and revealing a vial of blood)
Too late.

Fred leans confidentially to Jack.

FRED

It's okay, we got grounds to sue.

INT. POLICE STATION -- DAY

Jack is brought up from downstairs by the Junior Detective. As before, as Jack approaches he sees Matt sitting on a chair outside, waiting. Matt waves and grins encouragingly. Jack is steered away into Mitchell's office.

INT. MITCHELL'S OFFICE -- DAY

The Junior Detective is in attendance. Mitchell is signing some papers.

MITCHELL

Alright, like last time, don't leave town and make sure you're easily contacted.

JACK

Hey, fuck you.

Mitchell looks up and sits back.

JACK

You want to tell me why you locked me up when I came to you voluntarily?

Mitchell concedes and picks up some computer printout photographs. He tosses them across the desk to Jack.

Jack looks at them. They are snapshots of him attacking Bill Hendershot.

MITCHELL

You attack Mr. Hendershot in the street, then that night he turns up dead, same MO as Caroline Hendershot. Clubbed to death with a heavy, blunt instrument. I may not be the sharpest detective, Mr. Price, but I do believe you are the common denominator in these two murders.

JACK

I...Jesus, I know what it looks like,
but I...see, I hired this private
Dick...

MITCHELL

You mean, detective?

JACK

Yeah, sorry, and he turns up that
Caroline Hendershot was carrying an
insurance policy for half a million and
the sole beneficiary was Bill
Hendershot.

MITCHELL

So why confront him? Why not come to me?

JACK

'Cause a) I'm pissed off, and b) I
wanted to see how he'd react.

MITCHELL

And?

JACK

Well, tell the truth I don't think he
did it.

MITCHELL

Hmm. Well...There is only one thing I
find puzzling in this case, Mr. Price,
and that's why a middle-aged gay man
would kill both a man and a woman.

JACK

Who're we talking about?

MITCHELL

Why...you.

JACK

What?

Jack laughs in disbelief.

JACK

I'm not fucking gay!

MITCHELL
(indicating Matt)
Oh, I just assumed, because of your partner.

Jack, still laughing incredulously, looks around in confusion, wondering who he can mean.

Matt is watching them through the glass.

Jack laughs louder.

JACK
Matt? What, you mean Matt? Matt isn't gay!

He keeps laughing, but sees Mitchell is staring back humorlessly. Jack is suddenly serious.

JACK
Why are you saying he's gay?! The man beats up gays for a hobby!

MITCHELL
Common form of denial.

JACK
He was married for Chrissakes!

MITCHELL
They often are, especially those who live in denial. You were married, weren't you.

Jack laughs, flabbergasted.

JACK
That proves I'm gay?!

Mitchell moves to a video player.

MITCHELL
We have micro-video cameras set up in all the toilet blocks along the coast, mainly just to prevent tourists being bashed and robbed. But we also pick up a lot of homosexual activity.

He presses the play button and fast forwards.

MITCHELL

I check this from time to time, just so
I know what's going on. I'm also good
with faces.

On screen a man goes into a toilet cubicle with another man.
For the briefest moment he turns toward camera. Mitchell
rewinds a tad and allows it to go through frame by frame. He
freezes it. It is Matt.

Jack is frozen, staring at the screen.

INT. POLICE STATION. HALL -- DAY

Jack walks next to Matt. Matt slaps his shoulder.

MATT

I tell you, we gotta stop meeting like
this.

Jack's eyes drop to the hand resting on his shoulder.

BACK TO:

INT. MITCHELL'S OFFICE -- DAY

JUNIOR DETECTIVE

So why let him go?

Mitchell is fiddling with the video player. He presses play.

Jack appears on screen, grabbing Bill Hendershot by the
throat.

JACK

I'm onto you, pal. I found out about
your little scam, now I'm going to the
law.

Mitchell pauses the picture.

MITCHELL

We knew about the insurance. Jack Price
isn't our man. But he's the only lead
we have, so I may as well see what he
turns up.

Junior Detective nods.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Jack, still in the suit, but with his coat over his shoulder,
is walking on the beach.

INTERCUT FLASHBACKS:

a)

MATT

To women, the source of all the joy and
all the pain in this world.

b)

MATT

Oh, Caroline. Nice ass but what a bitch.
You say hello, see what happens.

c)

MATT

I live just round the corner.

d)

MATT

I just thought it'd be nice to have a
hunting partner.

e)

WOMAN

What?

MATT

You heard what I said!

f)

Matt has the Gay Man by the throat, about to punch his lights
out.

MATT

Hey! You think this is funny?! You think
it's funny?!

g)

MATT

Oh, no, fuck, Jack, you call this a
night out?!

h)

Matt is hugging Jack.

MATT

There there, there there.

As yet unrecognized, the President of Divepak walks past Jack
on the beach.

i)

MATT

A key, have you got a key to your door?!

Jack stops dead. He has given a killer the key to his apartment.

JACK

Oh, shit.

PRESIDENT (OS)

Hey!

Jack doesn't move, preoccupied with his thoughts.

PRESIDENT

Hey, you!...Hey!

Jack snaps out of it and turns around. He points at himself.

PRESIDENT

Yeah!

The President approaches.

PRESIDENT

You're that guy, the guy at the meeting.

JACK

What?

The President removes his sunglasses.

PRESIDENT

Divepak.

JACK

Oh, yeah, hi.

PRESIDENT

Heard you got canned.

JACK

Yeah. I hit Olsen in the head with a coffee mug.

PRESIDENT

He deserve it?

JACK

I thought so. Then again, I was drunk. Had a bit of a problem back then.

PRESIDENT

How are you now?

JACK
Oh, minus a wife, but back on the rails.

PRESIDENT
Good. That's good.

JACK
That problem you had sort itself out?

PRESIDENT
Actually I took your advice. We're shifting jurisdiction right now. Everything's going down just like you said. Thanks.

JACK
You're welcome.

PRESIDENT
Hey, you looking for a job?

JACK
Maybe.

As he speaks the President takes out his wallet and hands him a business card.

PRESIDENT
Well I think a fella like you could come in handy. Probably cheaper in the long run.

JACK
What's the job?

PRESIDENT
How's corporate planner sound?

JACK
Sounds good.

PRESIDENT
Just one condition. Give it to me in plain fucking English, not in a leather bound report.

Jack nods.

PRESIDENT
Good. Call me at the end of the month.

President walks on.

Jack looks at the card, impressed.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jack sits at the table and finishes drawing a line around his phone on the bottom of a tissue box. He then uses a Stanley knife to cut three of the four sides he had drawn. That done he then switches his phone to 'microphone' and slips it into the slit he had created. He turns the box over so it is right way up, then sits back to test it.

JACK
Hey, Matt, how you doin'?
I said, how you doin'?

He turns the box over, extracts the phone, and presses play. The playback is quite clear.

Jack is pleased, nodding to himself.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The table is set for dinner: a couple of plates and some chili sauce. The door buzzer sounds. Jack comes from the bedroom, dressed in a track suit. He activates the phone, tips the box upside down and tapes the slits closed. The buzzer sounds again twice, impatiently. Jack hurries to the small video screen and presses the intercome. Matt is onscreen.

JACK
Yeah?

MATT
It's me.

Jack presses the door release. He opens his front door a little and races for the table, pulls out a chair for Matt and places the tissue box near it. There is a tap at the door as Matt enters.

JACK
Matt Forbinger!
MATT (finding the greeting odd)
Jack Price!

They shake hands and Jack indicates the chair he pulled out for Matt.

JACK
How come you didn't use your key?

MATT
Key?..Oh, yeah, forgot I had that.

I don't know. Seems a bit strange if a guy invites you to dinner and you let yourself in. I mean, you know, a bit too 'pal-zy'.

Matt sits in the chair Jack indicated while Jack enters the kitchen.

JACK (OS)

Hey, do my eyes deceive me or have you shown up without any beer?

MATT

Yeah, well, I thought you might not appreciate watching the game with a guy who's half-loaded.

JACK (OS)

Well, that's thoughtful of you. Actually we're both being considerate.

He enters carrying a beer and hands it to Matt.

After all, I'm the one with the drinking problem, not you.

MATT

(taking the beer)

Wow! Yeah! Thanks!
Who'd you order the pizza off?

JACK

Oh, local crew. Mumma-Mia I think they're called.

MATT

Really? I'm kinda fussy about my pizza, you know.

JACK

It's pretty hard to stuff up a pizza, Matt. Anyway, I got the one I always Get, seafood, they're good.

MATT

Hey you didn't get anchovies, did you? I hate anchovies.

JACK

No, not an anchovies man myself.

MATT

And pineapple. Not too crazy about pineapple. Who the fuck puts pineapple

on a pizza anyway? There should be a law.

JACK

Jesus, you sound like my aunt fucking Mary.

MATT

What time's the game?

JACK

Oh, we got ten minutes.

They lapse into silence. Matt suddenly pulls about three tissues from the box in quick succession. He blows his nose. Jack is alarmed.

JACK

Got a bit of a cold there?

MATT

Yeah. I think. Been coming for a while.

Matt coughs loud straight at the tissue box. He then puts his hand on the box and drums his fingers.

MATT

Hey, suppose I should give you the key back.

Jack is watching the tissue box, getting annoyed.

JACK

Well, I suppose you'd like me to say 'just keep it'.

MATT

What? Why?

JACK

Would you mind not doing that?

MATT

(stopping)

What?

JACK

Got a headache.

MATT

Oh, here. Got some aspirin.

He pulls some from his pocket, and hands them to him. Jack looks at them.

JACK

You're always anticipating,
aren't you?

MATT

What do you mean?

JACK

Well, you know, the aspirin. Who
the hell walks around with aspirin in
their pocket?

MATT

People with a cold. What do you mean I'm
always anticipating? How'd you know I
had a cold? Are you anticipating with
these? Hey, this is a heavy box!

Jack snatches it off him and takes a tissue for himself. He
puts it down away from Matt.

JACK

What I mean is, I lose my job, go on a
bender, and the next thing you turn up
at the walking club.

MATT

So?

JACK

Bit of a coincidence.

MATT

Yeah. Lucky one for you.

JACK

And you just happen to live round the
corner from Caroline Hendershot, and
happen to show up the night I'm in her
yard. Another coincidence.

MATT

That was Caroline's yard? (shocked) You
mean you were lying when I caught you?

JACK

No, you were lying when you caught me!

MATT

No, no, no, you lied first! Then I
lied, but I was joking lying!

JACK

Yes, but you were lying like you had the lie prepared.

MATT

Oh, yeah, I had it prepared just in case I ran into you running around Caroline's yard at night while I was walking my doggie! (laughs derisively) Let's face it, man, we're both a couple of lying perverts!

JACK

Oh, like you didn't know. I tell you I'm interested in Caroline, and the next minute she wakes up dead.

MATT

What the fuck are you saying? That I had something to do with that?

JACK

Then I go around Bill Hendershot's place and the next minute he turns up dead. Clubbed to death, by a very strong, jealous man.

MATT

(holding up a finger)

Ah, three questions. How do you know it was a man? How do you know he was jealous? And how the fuck could I know you visited him while I'm at work?

JACK

That night when we went out drinking. That woman in the bar, she was no hooker, she just found me attractive.

MATT (getting angry)

What? What?! You're playing with yourself. I know she was a hooker 'cause a year back it was my drink she spiked and my fucking wallet she stole.

JACK

S'that right?

MATT

Yeah that's fucking right.

JACK

Then how come she didn't recognize you?

MATT

Probably 'cause she rolls five guys
a week, you dick!

JACK

Then the next thing I know you're
beating the crap out of some poor
homosexual just 'cause he finds me
attractive. Why'd you suggest we go to
that bar anyway?

MATT

Well for a start, he was asking me to
dance, not you, and 'cause it's round
the corner from Delaney's and I've
Never tried it! What the fuck is this?!

JACK

And you didn't know it was a gay bar?
You don't go there all the time?

MATT

Did you know it was a gay bar? How come
you've never been there?

JACK

And how come you keep asking me round
to shoot pool at your house? That's not
you being a bit too pal-zy?!

Matt goes silent, fixing him with a hard stare.

MATT

You ungrateful turd. How come you
invited me round to dinner? You faggot!

JACK

Ungrateful, maybe. Love-struck
murderer, I don't think so.

MATT

Why you...!!

He leaps at Jack and hits him. He hauls Jack off the floor,
and hits him again. They struggle and end up on the running
machine, which their struggles activate, both forced to run
on it. Matt eventually knocks Jack off the machine but falls
off himself. He hauls Jack off the floor once more and pins
him by the throat to the wall. Jack grabs his thumb in the
hold Bill Hendershot showed him.

MATT

Ahh! Ahh! Ahhhhhh!

Jack breaks away and rushes for the door. Irrationally, he comes back and grabs the tissue box, then rushes out the door. Matt recovers and gives chase.

EXT. JACK'S BUILDING -- NIGHT

A PIZZA DELIVERY MAN is about to push Jack's buzzer when Jack rushes from the building, knocking him down. Pizza goes everywhere. Jack continues to the sidewalk. He looks around, unsure of which way to go. Matt falls over the Pizza Man. Pizza goes everywhere. Jack heads for the playground.

EXT. PLAYGROUND -- NIGHT

Jack runs across the playground, tissue box under his arm. He looks behind him. Matt chases him, yelling. Jack heads toward the beach.

EXT. ESPLANADE -- NIGHT

Jack crosses the street, entering the park next to the beach. He sees the toilet block and heads for it.

MATT

C'mere!!

Matt is gaining on him.

INT. TOILET BLOCK -- NIGHT

Jack enters, gasping. He desperately looks round for the video camera.

JACK

Where...Fucking micro shit?!

He starts waving as if trying to catch someone's attention.

JACK

Hey! Hey! Help! Help!

Suddenly Matt enters. They struggle. Every now and then Jack manages to get free and waves to the walls.

JACK

Hey, c'mon! This guy's killing me here!!

Eventually it comes down to trading blows, most of which are landing on Jack. He is out on his feet when suddenly...

CLOSE ON: KILLER'S gloved hand. A flick-knife is produced. Matt is stabbed.

MATT
Ahh! Jesus Christ!!

He has been stabbed in the butt. The killer is gone. The knife is protruding from Matt's backside. Jack looks up at him.

JACK
You've been stabbed in the ass!

MATT
I know I've been stabbed in the ass!
Don't you think I know that?! Oh God,
get it out, get it out!

Jack gets up.

JACK
Well, turn around.

Matt turns around, leaning over a handbasin. Tentatively, Jack grabs the knife.

JACK
You ready?

MATT
Yeah, yeah, just get it out!

With a sudden jerk, he pulls it out. Matt cries out.

MATT
Son of a bitch!

POLICEMAN 2 & 3 burst into the toilet and see Jack in position to stab Matt. Policeman 2 pulls his revolver.

JACK
Ahhh!

Matt steps between them.

MATT
No!

Policeman 2 fires. Matt falls down next to the tissue box. Jack drops the knife.

JACK
You shot Matt! What'd you shoot Matt
for?!

Jack is rushed, knocked off his feet, and handcuffed. He is protesting the whole time.

FADE OUT.

INT. MITCHELL'S OFFICE -- DAY

FADE IN: Mitchell watches the incident with Jack and Matt in the toilet. The Junior Detective is present. Mitchell rewinds on 'play' and approaches an edit point frame by frame. A gloved hand suddenly enters frame and plunges the knife into Matt's buttock.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE
Well...happened the way he said.

Mitchell sighs, irritated.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE
Who do you think it was?

Mitchell shakes his head.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE
You'd think it was someone who
new them both, wouldn't you, sir?

Mitchell looks at him.

JUNIOR DETECTIVE
Seems to me pretty obvious the
attacker was trying to protect
Jack Price.

Mitchell looks back at the screen. Eventually, he shakes his head.

FADE OUT:

EXT. WALKING CLUB SIGN-ON TABLE -- DAWN

FADE IN. Jack approaches the table and slows, seeing someone.

An attractive middle-aged woman, DENISE, is signing on. Daisy is nearby, talking to Old Man 3.

Jack approaches the table, just as the woman is turning away from it.

DENISE
Hi.

JACK
Hi.

Denise
(Offering her hand)

I'm Denise.

Jack takes her hand.

JACK

Jack. You're new?

DENISE

No, just coming back from overseas.
What circle are you on today?

JACK

Blue.

DENISE

Blue? Oh, same as me! Well, see
you out there!

She gives him an interested smile and moves on.

His eyes linger on her for the moment. He proceeds to sign
on.

Jack finishes signing on and his finger touches her signature.

JACK

Den-ise.

He grins slyly but becomes aware Daisy is now beside the table.

JACK

How you doin', Daisy.

DAISY

Hi, Jack. Haven't seen you for a while.

JACK

Oh, yeah. Well as you know I'm a
hardened criminal, murder, assault,
standover, and I pick up hitman
jobs when I can.

DAISY

One needs the daily bread.

JACK

(looking at Denise)

Yeah, but I also have a new job
It appears.

DAISY

That's nice. Prison guard?

Jack chuckles.

JACK

Yes, heard that rumor myself.
I should never have started it.

He turns back to her and they exchange a long look. Jack grins, friendly. He moves toward the walking track, looking at Denise.

DAISY

Say, um, you wouldn't like to...?

JACK

Sorry?

Jack's eyes linger on Denise before he focuses back on Daisy, and she realizes where he is looking.

DAISY

...Nothing.

Jack keeps walking, but then half-realizes he might have missed Daisy's intent. He looks back, but she is busy ordering the card box

EXT. PLAYGROUND. WALKING CIRCLE -- EARLY MORNING

Jack walks. A seductive smirk on his face.

DENISE walks in front of him. She has curvaceous buttocks.

Jack, in little boy heaven, is startled by:

(OS) SFX: A SHORT BLAST OF A POLICE SIREN.

Jack looks to the roadside and stops. Mitchell is standing beside his car. Jack sighs and crosses to him.

EXT. PLAYGROUND FENCE -- EARLY MORNING

Mitchell leans on the fence as Jack arrives.

JACK

That's nice of you. It saves a lot
of members having to ask me if I'm
really a murderer.

MITCHELL

Just thought you'd like to know we're
not pressing charges against your
partner.

JACK

(frowning)
Friend. Matt is just a friend. Why?
Didn't you listen to the recording?

MITCHELL
Well, what we can hear, doesn't amount
to anything. What makes you think a tape
is admissible in court anyway?

JACK
It isn't?

MITCHELL
Not since... (remembering)... Nineteen
seventy... Well, a long long time ago in
a galaxy far far away.

JACK
Oh.

MITCHELL
We do have a murder weapon though. Found
an iron bar in Matt Forbinger's garage.
Has matching DNA from the two victims
on it.

JACK
Well then, even my 'partner' will have
to admit, 'case closed', 'slam dunk',
Jack Price was right. Celebrations all
round.

MITCHELL
Did you know we can lift DNA from
fingerprints these days?

JACK
No... So?

MITCHELL
There's only smudged prints on the bar,
but we got enough to run the DNA. Not
Matt Forbinger's. Or yours...
Unfortunately.

JACK
Oh. So where does that leave us?

MITCHELL
Your partner claims the bar is a plant,
never seen it before. Reckons he'd have
to be pretty stupid to leave such an
obvious clue in his garage. I agree.

JACK
Then I repeat, where does that
leave us?

MITCHELL
That leaves me wondering why someone
wants him out of the way.

JACK
Well they achieved that.

MITCHELL
Mmm. But that's the question.

He pauses and looks hard at Jack.

JACK
Is it?

Mitchell continues to stare at him.

EXT. PLAYGROUND, SIGN-ON TABLE -- EARLY MORNING

As Mitchell's car drives away, and Jack, nonplused, watches
him leave, Daisy watches them both.

INTERCUT:

EXT. PLAYGROUND, WALKING CIRCLE -- EARLY MORNING

Jack rejoins the blue walking circle just as Denise is
approaching. She looks him up and down, somewhat seductively.

DENISE
Bit of a bad boy, huh?

JACK
No, just helping him with their
inquiries, as they say.

DENISE (send-up titillated)
Ooh. I love a good mystery.

Jack grins.

As they continue on Daisy's eyes drop to her hands.

She has one of the cards from the box in her hands. Written
on the card is: ROBERTS, DENISE, 21 Surf Court, Palm Beach.

Daisy taps the card thoughtfully against her hand. Her eyes
come up slowly.

Jack and Denise walk together, smiling, chatting.

An ambiguous expression is on Daisy's face as she watches them.

EXT. PLAYGROUND, WALKING CIRCLE -- MORNING

Jack checks his watch as Denise speaks.

DENISE

And so the bastard left me for his
twenty-six year old secretary, but
thanks to my friend in the tax
department he's now bankrupt.

JACK

So it wasn't enough you just broke up
with him...Well...that's me done.

DENISE

Leaving so soon?

JACK

Yeah, got an early appointment

DENISE (vain)

(taking a business card from her fanny pack)
Look, you're probably too much of a
gentleman to ask, so...

Jack looks at the card in her hand. He comes back and takes
it. He looks astonished as he studies the card.

JACK

Wow. My psychiatrist was right. No does
mean yes.

He looks at her a little crazy, then walks away, shaking his
head in wonder and looking at the card. Denise is not sure
he was joking.

EXT. PLAYGROUND, SIGN-ON TABLE -- MORNING

Daisy is taking Old Man 4's pulse as Jack approaches. Daisy
nods to Old Man 4 and he nods back, moving on. Daisy tenses
a little as Jack offers his wrist. Looking a little shy, she
takes his pulse.

DAISY

Taking an early mark?

JACK

You were going to ask me out before.
I didn't realize...Sorry.

Daisy can barely disguise her surprise.

DAISY

What?

Jack stares at her, grinning slightly.

DAISY

No...I...

JACK

Yes?

DAISY

...I...

Jack looks into her eyes, and Daisy finally meets his.

JACK

How's my pulse?

DAISY (innocent, defenseless)
Strong and steady.

EXT. PLAYGROUND, FENCELINE -- MORNING

Jack approaches the fence. As he steps over it, he flicks Denise's card away and keeps walking.

EXT. MARINA -- NIGHT

Jack pushes Matt in a wheelchair along a jetty, by many boats. Matt is covered with a blanket.

MATT

You know, I was thinking today, Jack, it's funny what life throws at you. I had to get shot and stabbed just so we could realize what good friends we are.

JACK

Yeah...Maybe find a better way to test it next time.

Matt chuckles.

EXT. A NEARBY, QUIET STREET -- NIGHT

There are numerous apartment buildings in the street.

MATT

Hey, you know, I know this sounds weird, but lately I've had this strange feeling I'm being followed.

JACK

Really? Me too.

MATT

You're kidding?

JACK

No. Been feeling that for a long time.

MATT

Wow. Why do you think that is?

JACK

Got me.

A girl, dressed in a little black dress and looking pretty, closes a gate as she exits an apartment building in front of them.

MATT

Hey...jeeppers creepers Daisy?
Is that you?

Daisy, looking a million bucks, looks round in surprise. Jack stops pushing.

DAISY

Well, hi. (To Jack) Hi. Out for a walk?

MATT

Jack was just showing me his boat. He's going to take me out in it. I didn't know he had a boat. I didn't know you lived here.

DAISY

I don't. Just visiting a girlfriend.

MATT

Wow, you look sensational. Jack, doesn't she look sensational?

JACK (surprised)

Yeah. You look sensational, Daisy.

DAISY

Thanks. You look terrible.

MATT

Thanks. That's an improvement. Last week I was 'abysmal' and the week before I was. 'appalling' So what've we got? A night on the town?

DAISY

Well, yeah, but my girlfriend's not feeling too hot. Guess I'll just take in a movie. Say, um, you guys want to join me?

MATT

Well, thanks, but I'm not really up to that yet. But hey, Jack, you go.

JACK

Well, thought you wanted to play cards.

MATT

Actually, you know what I really want? To go to bed. But you kids go, go on, have a good time.

JACK (to Daisy)

Well, yeah, sure, I'd like to.

DAISY

Great. Well, ah, you want me to wait or...

JACK
Well, what session you going to, nine
o'clock?

DAISY
Yeah.

JACK
Local?

Daisy nods.

Well, how about I meet you there?

DAISY
Sure, okay. Sure. See you there.

She smiles and crosses to her car. Jack starts pushing again.

MATT
Say, what are you going to see?

DAISY
(rounding her car)
I have no idea!

MATT
Seen it! Crazy title! You'll love it!

Daisy, waves, smiling, getting into her car.

INT. DAISY'S CAR -- NIGHT

Looking out through the windscreen, over a small part of the steering wheel.

Daisy watches them walk away. She grins ambiguously.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET, MATT'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jack pushes Matt in the wheelchair as they approach his building and go down the carpark ramp.

MATT
That was an amazing co-incidence.

JACK (thoughtful)
Yeah...Yeah, was.

MATT
You know, I think Daisy likes you.

JACK
Yeah? Actually I quite like her too.

MATT
Quite?

JACK
Well I'm way too old for her.

MATT
True.

Jack rolls his eyes.

A car similar to Daisy's is parked further along the street, facing their way. The lights go out.

MATT
Yeah. Noticed her checking you out a coupla times.

JACK (suspicious)
Really?

MATT
Yeah. Shit, she looked good too, didn't she. Wow, didn't know she had great legs like that.

JACK
Yeah. And she just happened to walk out in front of us.

The car again, looking ominous.

MATT
You know, Jack, I reckon you could be just about to turn a corner. Know what I mean? You're off the sauce. New job, nice young poontang got the hots for you. I reckon you're getting a whole new direction in life.

Matt pulls a remote control from beneath his blanket as they go down the ramp and the garage door slides up.

INTERCUT:

INT. A CAR -- NIGHT

As before, looking out through the windscreen, over a small part of the steering wheel, fingers on a gloved hand, like the one that stabbed Matt, grip the wheel. Jack and Matt enter the carpark and the door comes slowly down...

JACK (V.O.)

Well, hope you're right, Matt. Mightn't deserve it, but I could use some good luck for a change.

MATT (V.O.)

No, I'm a great believer in karma. I reckon you get out of life what you put into it. You get what you deserve.

JACK (V.O.)

Hope you're right, old buddy. Hope you're right.

The door closes.

EXT. SHOPPING COMPLEX, BRIDGE -- NIGHT

Jack wanders over a canal/river bridge, about to enter a shopping mall. He stops and leans on a rail, looking down at the water, thoughtful.

INTERCUT FLASHBACKS:

a)

DAISY

My father was a drunk too. God I loved that man.

JACK

He died?

DAISY

Oh, yeah, 'bout your age.

b)

DAISY

(not letting go of his wrist)
Well, it's an excuse to hold hands.

c)

DAISY

Listen, just thought I'd give you a call seeing you're in so much trouble.

d)

DAISY

Matt, huh?

e)

DAISY

You shouldn't toy with people, Jack.

f)

JACK

You mean, I could die?

DR. WELSH

Why, what's so special about you?

g)

BERNICE

Jack, you don't appreciate those who love you, even though you have no right to expect any love at all.

h)

DAISY

Strong.

i)

DR. WELSH (as if obvious)

Sex.

After a moment he raises his eyebrows suggestively several times.

BACK TO:

Jack straightens up, having achieved an insight. He looks up at the shopping center and a Cinema sign.

INT. SHOPPING MALL CINEMA COMPLEX -- NIGHT

Jack stops as he sees Daisy standing in front of the cinema complex entrance, waiting.

He is reflective for a moment, but decides to go ahead.

He crosses to Daisy and she smiles when she sees him. She crosses to him, and kisses his cheek.

DAISY

Wasn't sure you'd come.

JACK

No...

He watches her for a long moment, before adding...

...I'm all yours.

Daisy finds what he said significant and gives him a long, ambiguous look. She takes his arm and grins. They enter the cinema together.

Close on a gloved hand. Car keys drop down from the glove.

Camera moves up the person's arm to reveal who it is.

Landsdale, Olsen's lackie, who got Jack's job, watches as the couple enter the cinema.

CUT TO:

INT. GAY BAR - NIGHT

As before, Olsen is watching Jack and Matt leave the bar. Now, however, the man he is talking to is revealed. Landsdale turns and also looks toward Jack and Matt. He has a strange psychotic stare.

BACK TO:

Outside the cinema Landsdale turns and walks slowly away.

(VO extracted from earlier scene, voices fading out.)

JACK (VO)

...He's never said the wrong thing.
Course it's hard to hear someone who's
got their head stuck up your ass.

MATT (VO)

He does take brown-nosing to new
heights.

JACK (VO)

Depths.

CRANE UP, FADE OUT.