

VICTIM

A Play in Two Acts

by

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SYNOPSIS

On a September night in 1977, after the July blackout and the August capture of the Son of Sam, two men meet at the Badlands bar at the foot of Christopher Street in New York City's West Village. In the morning, one of them is dead. Is he a victim of the serial killer who's been dismembering men and dumping their remains in the Hudson River? Randy, a detective, has gone undercover to find out. And Arthur, a gossip columnist, has been contacted by the killer who wants to tell his side of the story. As Arthur introduces Randy to the West Village demi-monde, the dance of death between the two strangers who met for a one night stand reaches its fatal conclusion.

The killer once apprehended, is eventually exploited by Randy and Arthur for their own purposes, and, subsequently, by a Hollywood director making a film about a serial killer in New York's leather scene.

The play ends as the killer is released from prison and confronts the new normal of today's gay community.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PAUL BATESON
ADDISON VERRILL
ARTHUR BELL
RANDY JURGENSEN
WILLIAM FRIEDKIN
A DETECTIVE
A BARTENDER
A YOUNG MAN

Friedkin, the Detective and the Bartender can be played by one actor.

Addison Verrill and the Young Man should be played by the same actor.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

- Scene 1: A studio apartment in the West Village
Wednesday, September 14, 1977 3:30 A.M.
- Scene 2: A West Village Dive Bar
Friday, August 19, 1977 11:00 P.M.
- Scene 3: A room in the Sixth Precinct, NYC
Thursday, September 22, 1977 3:00 P.M.
- Scene 4: The studio apartment.
September 14, 1977 2:00 A.M.
- Scene 5: The bar
September 5, 1977 11:00 P.M.
- Scene 6: The studio apartment
September 14, 1977 4:30 A.M.
- Scene 7: The bar
September 13, 1977 11:00 P.M.
- Scene 8: The studio apartment
September 14, 1977 7:00 A.M.

ACT TWO

- Scene 1: The studio apartment
Wednesday, September 14, 1977 3:00 P.M.
- Scene 2: A room in the Sixth Precinct/The Men's House
of Detention
September 1977-September 1978
- Scene 3: A trailer on a movie set, NYC
Friday, July 20, 1979 Noon
- Scene 4: A West Village Bar
Last night

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(In the dark, a recorded MAN's voice; calm, reassuring:)

MAN

Can you sit up? Scoot over here... Little more... Good. I'm just gonna move you down on the table... Just for a short time... Very sticky... Now you're gonna feel something a little bit cold and wet... Okay, now you're gonna feel a little stickier. (Firm:) Don't move. Good... Okay, now you're gonna feel some pressure here. Now don't move.

(The sound of the thump, thump, thump of an arteriogram machine. That recorded sound is replaced by the live sound of squeaking bedsprings. Lights come up slowly a studio apartment in a pre-war high-rise in Greenwich Village. The apartment is all sleek, monochromatic, '70s style; industrial Art Deco. A sofa bed. Lots of built-ins. A very small kitchen off the main room. A door to a bathroom. A door to a closet. A door to the hall. Windows with a view of nothing. ADDISON is fucking PAUL on the sofa bed. After a few seconds:)

PAUL

You can stop if you want. Not that I don't love it.

ADDISON

No, I want you to come.

PAUL

Not gonna happen. Not that I'm not having a good time. Great time. I am.

ADDISON

But you didn't come. Makes me sad.

PAUL

Awww, you're sad? That's sweet.

ADDISON

Sorry I don't turn you on. Think about your favorite porn star.

PAUL

That's not it. You do. You really do turn me on. It's not about that.

ADDISON

Coke dick?

VICTIM I-1-2

What? PAUL

Sometimes, if I do too much blow, it takes me forever. ADDISON

No, no... PAUL

I'm gonna stop then. ADDISON

That's fine. PAUL

I feel bad. ADDISON

Don't feel bad. I want you to feel good. PAUL

No, I do. I do feel good. I can't get enough of you. ADDISON
(A pause)
Let me get you a towel.

No, don't get up yet. Let's just stay like this for a while. PAUL

Sure. ADDISON
(A pause)
I wouldn't have pegged you as a cuddler.

A leather jacket doesn't always mean a tough hide. PAUL

And a poet besides. ADDISON
(A pause)
Sorry, I need a towel.
(Gets up, goes to bathroom. Running water. PAUL sits up in bed, turns on the lamp next to the bed. ADDISON returns with a towel)
Here. I brought you a hot towel.

(HE wipes PAUL off)

God. That feels so good. PAUL

Mmmmm. You're still hard as a rock. Want me to jerk you off? ADDISON

PAUL

Aww, thanks, won't do any good. I'm just not... It's hard for me, no pun intended, the first time I'm with someone. I usually can never come the first time.

ADDISON

That must be frustrating for all parties involved.

PAUL

Forget it. Never mind.

ADDISON

No, do you... do you wanna talk about it?

PAUL

It's just... I've allowed you to put a part of yourself inside of me. It's a very defenseless place to be.

ADDISON

On second thought, let's not talk about it.

PAUL

Don't you think we're all a little... orgasm-centric?

ADDISON

(Laughs) No.

PAUL

Do you have to come every time?

ADDISON

Yes.

PAUL

Are you making fun of me?

ADDISON

No. It's just... if I... If I have dust in my nose, I wanna sneeze.

PAUL

Is that what this was? A sneeze?

ADDISON

Okay, bad example. If I... tell you my best joke and you don't laugh, it feels...

PAUL

People laugh in different ways.

ADDISON

Not really. I can tell if you found it... funny.

PAUL

I did. It was hilarious.

(Kisses him)

VICTIM I-1-4

ADDISON

Geez, I thought I signed up for a fuckfest, not a seminar.

PAUL

Sorry, no more talking. I should probably go.

ADDISON

"Going so soon? I wouldn't hear of it."

PAUL

No, I think it's time.

ADDISON

No, that was a quote. Look: half a bottle of Scotch left. The night's young.

PAUL

Is that how you tell time?

ADDISON

(Points to the bottle:) "That's how much longer you've got to be alive."

PAUL

Huh?

ADDISON

Come on. "Wizard of Oz"? The witch? The hourglass?

PAUL

Your references are a little esoteric for me.

ADDISON

You sure you're gay?

PAUL

Want me to prove it?

ADDISON

I wish you would.

PAUL

Nah. Really. I should go.

ADDISON

Fine.

PAUL

What?

ADDISON

No, really, fine. Bye.

PAUL

Awww, are you pouting? Like a little girl?

ADDISON

Yeah, and this little girl's about to shove her eight inches up your butt again.

PAUL

Promises, promises.

ADDISON

The polite thing to do would have been to wait until I was asleep and then slip quietly away.

PAUL

Who says I'm polite?

ADDISON

So? What, you going back to the Mineshaft? Find somebody tougher? Bigger?

PAUL

Nah, I think I'm all fucked out. Don't wanna outstay my welcome.

ADDISON

So far, you're more than welcome.

PAUL

Sometimes I talk too much. Gets me in trouble.

ADDISON

Let me give you my card.

(HE finds his pants, gets his wallet,
hands PAUL a card)

Can I give you money for a cab?

PAUL

No, no, thank you. That'd make me feel like a whore.

ADDISON

That's what you are. A filthy little whore.

PAUL

(Nuzzles him:) Mmmmm. Now quit, or I won't leave.

ADDISON

No, go ahead. You got your jollies. Now leave.

PAUL

But I didn't get my jollies. That's why I'm coming back. I need to prove that I'm capable of ejaculation.

ADDISON

Ooooh, stop with the dirty talk. Or I'm going to get an erection in my penis.

PAUL

You making fun of me?

VICTIM I-1-6

It's so easy. ADDISON

That's not nice. PAUL

You just don't get my sense of humor. Call me. ADDISON

I will. PAUL

When? ADDISON

Soon. PAUL

Promise? ADDISON

No promises. PAUL

Then go. ADDISON

I am. PAUL

So you've got my number. You not gonna give me yours? ADDISON

I can't. PAUL

So you do have a boyfriend. ADDISON

It's... not... PAUL

No, I don't wanna know. So, I have to just sit by the telephone? ADDISON

You've got an answering machine. PAUL

So we'll "call each other Tuesday or my service will explain?" ADDISON

Tuesday? What about the weekend? PAUL

No, it's... I forgot: you hate my record collection. ADDISON

Okay, well... See ya. PAUL

(PAUL goes to the door, opens it)

Hold it! You're not leaving. ADDISON
(PAUL turns around)
Have you got my blow?

I don't think so. Wanna search me? PAUL

If necessary. ADDISON

Hmmm. PAUL
(PAUL reaches into his pocket, pulls out
ADDISON's "Bullet")
Well, whaddya know?

Rude. You'll be severely punished. ADDISON

Hm. What's the sentence? PAUL

Five to ten. Between my legs. ADDISON

(PAUL snorts)

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

(The elbow of a dive bar in the West Village. RANDY and the BARTENDER at the bar. Elvis Presley on the jukebox)

BARTENDER
Some old queen is working my last nerve with all this Elvis shit.

RANDY
Respect. The King is dead. Is that why this place is so empty? Everyone went to Memphis for the funeral?

BARTENDER
This crowd? If only to get a glimpse of Ann-Margret.

RANDY
I always thought he was hot. Didn't you?

BARTENDER
Was. By the end, he was just sweaty. Put him out of his misery.

(PAUL enters. Sits at the bar. After a pause:)

RANDY
Hey.

PAUL
Hey.

RANDY
Empty.

PAUL
Huh?

RANDY
For a Friday.

PAUL
I like it.

RANDY
Everyone must be on the Island this weekend.

PAUL
Huh?

RANDY
The Island.

(A pause)
Fire Island. End of summer. Last chance to get blown in the meat rack.

Sorry? PAUL

Are you from out of town? RANDY

No. No, I... I'd like to afford to go away for the weekend. PAUL

Who wouldn't? The humidity. Can I get you a beer? RANDY

I'm good. Thanks. PAUL

So you live in the city? RANDY

Mmmm. Further east. PAUL

Nice. RANDY

Not really. (To the BARTENDER:) Dewar's. Rocks. PAUL
(A long pause while the BARTENDER pours)

Did you hear? They found another one. A floater. RANDY

Huh? PAUL

You sure you're from here? I was down by the Morton Street pier while they were dragging him in. Just pieces. Four trash bags. They think it's the same guy. Like a gay Son of Sam. RANDY

You really know how to sweet-talk a guy, don't you? PAUL

(Laughs:) Sorry. I can't get the image out of my head. Did I tell you there was no head? Aren't you just a little bit scared? RANDY
(PAUL shrugs)

When your time is up... PAUL

VICTIM I-2-10

RANDY

Maybe now they've got Berkowitz the cops will actually direct some manpower towards the queers. Those motherfuckers. Why do you think he's doing it?

PAUL

(Shrugs:) He's crazy?

RANDY

Well, sure, but... why? Don't you have a theory?

PAUL

Haven't really thought about it.

RANDY

Well, let's say you were him. Why do you think you'd do it?

PAUL

Well, obviously he hates himself for being gay, so he's trying to get rid of those impulses by destroying them in someone else.

RANDY

Hmm. Interesting. Are you, you know, at ease in your own, you know...

PAUL

If you're trying to get me to go home with you, playing shrink isn't gonna cut it.

RANDY

Hey, whoa. Who said anything about...?

PAUL

Sorry if I was being presumptuous.

RANDY

Whoa, college professor with the five dollar words...

PAUL

Skip it. I really just came here to get hammered, not plowed.

RANDY

Just making conversation. And since it's the only thing anyone is talking about.

PAUL

Then why is it on page 59 of The Post?

RANDY

Well, you know how they feel about queers.

PAUL

They?

RANDY

The press. The public.

PAUL

It's the cops. They're the ones don't give a shit.

RANDY

Oh, I don't know about the cops. I don't think... I mean, with all the budget cuts, there's probably not enough manpower...

PAUL

Bullshit. I wouldn't ask a cop to piss on me if I was on fire.

RANDY

Well. Hmm.

(A pause)

They're saying they think he's a doctor. Or a butcher. From the way he cuts 'em up.

PAUL

Hmmm.

RANDY

What do you do?

PAUL

Not a doctor. Not a butcher.

RANDY

Then what?

PAUL

I'm... Right now I'm... in film.

RANDY

An actor? Aren't you afraid you'll be recognized in here?

PAUL

Not an actor.

RANDY

Behind the scenes kinda stuff?

PAUL

Way behind. What do you do?

RANDY

No, I asked you.

PAUL

And if I wanted to be interrogated, I'd go down the street to the Sixth Precinct.

(A long pause. PAUL stares at him)

Does he go to their place?

RANDY

Huh?

VICTIM I-2-12

PAUL

The psycho.

RANDY

No, no. It appears the killings happen... elsewhere. Or that's what they're saying.

PAUL

So there's no crime scene?

RANDY

No. Not yet. But he'll slip up sooner or later.

PAUL

Sounds like a pretty cool customer. Accidents only happen in the heat of the moment. He's got this pretty well thought out, it seems. They're not gonna find him.

RANDY

No, he'll make a mistake.

PAUL

You seem to know an awful lot about it. Makes me nervous.

RANDY

Yeah, well, I got a friend... my cousin's on the force.

PAUL

I'm surprised he shares so much about an open investigation.

RANDY

Yeah, well, he knows... you know, about me. He just wants me to be careful.

PAUL

Well, I hope he gets his man.

(PAUL stands)

RANDY

Hey, where ya goin'? I like this: it's interesting. Stick around.

PAUL

Why don't you come back to my place? I've got some excellent weed. We can... theorize all night long.

RANDY

What's wrong with right here? Come on, I'll get the tab.

PAUL

Mmmm. I'm just a few blocks away. We can pick up a six-pack. I'm not comfortable here.

RANDY

I can make it comfortable. You're a good-looking guy.

PAUL

Hmm. You know, one thing you should learn: the way to a man's brain is through his dick. Like a water pump; you want results, a few quick tugs on the handle and everything comes pouring forth. But you can't just stay on the sidelines. Sometimes you have to get your hands dirty.
Detective.

(HE exits)

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

(A room in a police precinct.
RANDY, FRANK and ARTHUR)

RANDY
Bateson. Must be a joke, right?

FRANK
Huh?

RANDY
Bateson. Bates' son. Like a take on Son of Sam. Son of
Bates.

FRANK
Who's Bates?

RANDY
You know. Psycho.

FRANK
Which one? Everyone I know's a psycho.

RANDY
The movie, Dope. Hitchcock movie.

FRANK
This guy wasn't killed in the shower.

RANDY
But he was stabbed.

FRANK
Well, among other things. So you're thinking now that we've
got Son of Sam, this guy's picking up the slack? Like a
copycat?

RANDY
Dunno.

FRANK
You think he's a serial? Doesn't really match up with the
"Fag in a Bag" murders.

RANDY
Don't say that. It's offensive.

FRANK
Gimme a break.

RANDY
No, really. Let's say your Mom gets chopped up and shoved
into a filing cabinet. Would you want me to refer to her as
the "Whore in a Drawer"?

FRANK
Not funny.

RANDY

Exactly my point. Sorry, Arthur. That was rude; he doesn't know any better.

ARTHUR

As if I expect more from the police.

RANDY

We're trying, Arthur.

ARTHUR

My patience. I'm scared. Do you understand THAT? If he's got my phone number, he's got my address. I'm trying to keep a low profile, but he could be anywhere.

FRANK

Keeping a low profile by wearing a lavender suit?

ARTHUR

Well, I'm not giving up style for safety, Whippersnapper. That's YOUR job. And it's periwinkle. I could be wearing a potato sack. (Pointedly:) Or a polyester blend sports jacket. I still feel like I've got a bullseye on my back. I want twenty-four hour surveillance.

RANDY

Come on. You know how broke the department is. They haven't fixed the coffee machine in six months. I'll have a patrol car go by your place every half hour.

ARTHUR

What the fuck good will that do me?

RANDY

Lay low. Find someplace else to stay.

ARTHUR

Do you think that I have friends that I can knock on their door and say, "Hi, put me up indefinitely"?

FRANK

Well, I can understand THAT.

ARTHUR

Why don't I come stay with you?

RANDY

I'm sure my wife would love that that.

ARTHUR

Your wife?! I assume that's a euphemism.

RANDY

Yes, my wife. And daughters.

ARTHUR

What's her name? Bruce?

VICTIM I-3-16

RANDY

You really don't believe I'm married?

ARTHUR

Didn't I see you at Julius' two nights ago?

RANDY

I'm working undercover, you idiot. I wanna catch this guy.

ARTHUR

Well, congratulations, you blend perfectly. Making out with that guy in the toilet was good cover.

RANDY

(To FRANK:) He's joking.

ARTHUR

Am I? (To FRANK:) Am I?

RANDY

So go back over what you told me.

ARTHUR

They met at Badlands. Had some drinks.

RANDY

Who picked up who?

ARTHUR

Didn't say. They went to the Mineshaft. More drinks. Did some blow. Had sex. Then Verrill tried...

FRANK

Wait, wait. They had sex? In the bar?

ARTHUR

It has a backroom.

FRANK

Huh?

ARTHUR

(To RANDY:) This guy needs to get out more. So I guess Verrill tried to give him the slip, but Bateson hung on. They went back to Verrill's apartment and... well... He sounded drunk. Very drunk.

RANDY

And why do you think this isn't some loon? Looking for some limelight?

ARTHUR

He knew too much. He knew the address.

RANDY

That was in the paper.

ARTHUR

He knew the floor.

RANDY

That could be a blabbermouth doorman.

ARTHUR

He described the apartment. Where the body was. What he took with him.

RANDY

You didn't record any of this?

ARTHUR

He's confessing a murder over the phone and I'm gonna say, "Hold on while I set up my tape recorder?" Look, I'm just giving you a lead. You follow up on it. And keep him from killing me.

RANDY

If he calls back, and I'm betting he will, steer him toward the other killings. See if you can get him to connect the dots.

ARTHUR

I'm not sensing a connection, Randy. What makes you so sure all of these other victims are gay, for one thing?

RANDY

Certain similarities.

ARTHUR

Such as?

(FRANK takes out a folder of photographs. Throws it open)

FRANK

Ear piercings.

ARTHUR

Maybe he has a particular animus towards pirates.

FRANK

The skin on the bodies was very tan.

ARTHUR

That makes them gay?

FRANK

No tan lines.

ARTHUR

(To RANDY:) You don't actually pay him a salary, do you?

RANDY

We traced garments found in several of the bags to the same leather shop on Christopher Street.

VICTIM I-3-18

ARTHUR

Oh. Well, 'nuff said. (Looking at a photo:) What... What is THAT?

FRANK

It's where the fish must've got to him.

(ARTHUR looks intently at the photo)

ARTHUR

A fish chews a perfect square in some guy's arm? It was a tattoo. He cut out the guy's tattoo.

FRANK

Ewww. Souvenirs.

ARTHUR

Well, I was thinking so he'd be harder to identify, but I like where your mind goes. (To RANDY:) And what's the connection between this and Verrill's murder?

RANDY

Well, you said Bateson said he was a medical technician. These guys were... very professionally... disarticulated.

ARTHUR

Then why is Verrill still in one piece? And not (Sings:) "Floating in the Hudson with the other garbage"?

RANDY

I guess that's the \$64,000 question.

ARTHUR

That was two questions.

RANDY

Well, that's what I need you to find out. Draw him out. Obviously, he feels some kind of connection to you.

ARTHUR

I write a fucking gossip column. I'm not going to turn into Nancy Drew.

RANDY

Really? So I suppose you're going to be turning this story over to a more experienced journalist?

ARTHUR

Not on your life.

RANDY

Exactly. Well, now you've become the story, Arthur. Follow it through.

ARTHUR

I've done my job. Now you do yours.

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

(ADDISON and PAUL in the apartment)

ADDISON

This is it.

PAUL

Wow. Great taste.

ADDISON

You think so? Thanks. They're telling me "industrial" is on its way out.

PAUL

I like it. Clean.

ADDISON

Yeah, but you leave the slightest bit of clutter and it looks like a pigsty. You leave one drawer slightly ajar and it's the only thing your eye sees. One piece of lint on this carpet looks like a boulder. Listen to me, chattering away. Sorry. Strangely, I think I'm a little nervous. I don't usually bring men home.

PAUL

So you thought you'd just plow me in that backroom and disappear?

(A long pause)

ADDISON

And I suppose you always let them stay for breakfast?

PAUL

Which is the bedroom?

ADDISON

Um. You're standing in it. (Gestures to the sofa:) That pulls out.

PAUL

Oh. Well, what are you waiting for? Pull it out, baby.

ADDISON

You want a drink? I do.

PAUL

Sure.

(ADDISON goes into the kitchen)

ADDISON

I've got scotch and... scotch.

PAUL

Scotch is fine.

VICTIM I-4-20

Another bump? ADDISON

Sure. PAUL

In my jacket pocket. Help yourself. ADDISON

Thanks. You've got connections. PAUL

What do you mean? ADDISON

This. Primo. PAUL

(HE takes a bullet out of ADDISON's jacket, does a bump, puts the bullet in his pocket. ADDISON laughs)

What?

I thought they only said "primo" in movies. Or in Bay Ridge. ADDISON

Oh. Well. I dunno. Sorry. PAUL

No, it makes you hotter. ADDISON

You go there a lot? PAUL

Where, the bar? Not an inordinate amount. I'm not a barfly. ADDISON

You sure seemed popular. PAUL

Oh, that's just... I have a bunch of friends who like to hear show biz gossip. ADDISON

You in show biz? PAUL

Well, peripherally. I write movie reviews. ADDISON

Wow. The Times? PAUL

No. ADDISON

PAUL

Wow. I'm impressed. I was in a movie once.

ADDISON

You're an actor? Ugh.

PAUL

No, no, not really. I'm a... medical technician. Well, was, I guess. They were shooting a scene in the hospital where I was working and the director decided to use me instead of an actor. I'll bet you saw it, too.

ADDISON

Do you want water? Soda? Straight up? Rocks?

PAUL

Ummm... rocks. Black Label. Classy.

(ADDISON returns with the drinks)

ADDISON

You're very pretty. Cheers.

PAUL

Pretty? Is that a compliment?

ADDISON

Of course.

(HE lights a cigarette)

Oh, sorry. Smoke?

PAUL

No, I don't smoke.

ADDISON

Oh, of course. Medical technician.

PAUL

Oh, that's not why. My mother was a chain smoker. The smell of it just catapults me back.

ADDISON

In that case...

(HE stubs it out)

PAUL

Oh, no, you go ahead, it doesn't bother me.

ADDISON

Not if I'm going to remind you of your mother.

PAUL

Do you have a view of the park?

(PAUL goes to the window. ADDISON reaches into his jacket pocket)

VICTIM I-4-22

ADDISON
Unfortunately, no. But the rent is fifty bucks cheaper than the ones that do.

PAUL
You don't think it's worth the fifty bucks?

ADDISON
I'm frugal. Have you got the blow?

PAUL
I put it back in your jacket.

ADDISON
I can't find it.

(As ADDISON goes through his jacket,
PAUL reaches into his pocket, finds the
bullet)

PAUL
Oh, I do have it.

(PAUL hands it to ADDISON)

ADDISON
Sneaky.

PAUL
That must've been some schlep, seventeen flights in a blackout.

ADDISON
Oh, that was the easy part, once I got home. It was getting here that was traumatic. I was in a screening room on 42nd Street. Coming home was thirty blocks of terror: breaking glass, sirens, black thugs carrying television sets, wild-eyed crazies. Where were you?

PAUL
Pier 46.

ADDISON
Hmm. That must've been fun.

PAUL
Sometimes I just go there to meditate.

ADDISON
I'll bet. Did anyone even know there was a blackout?

PAUL

Oh, no, you could tell. Suddenly, it got really, really quiet. Even the sounds of sucking and fucking stopped. There was still light from Jersey, but we all knew something was happening. And suddenly I felt this... presence. Hard to describe. Not the presence of a single entity, it was this overwhelming... this huge presence, like some malevolent orca rising up out of the Hudson. Something like ninety degrees in there, but I felt ice-cold to my bones. I got outta there as fast as I could.

ADDISON

Well, not to get crude, but what is this gonna set me back?

PAUL

What?

ADDISON

You know what I mean.

PAUL

Set you back?

ADDISON

I mean, my booze, my drugs, I have to wash the sheets in the morning; I hope you'll give me some credit.

PAUL

Credit for...?

ADDISON

Please stop playing at being naïve. This is humiliating enough.

(A pause)

Fine. How much?

PAUL

How much what?

(A pause)

Oh my God. You think that...? That is by far the best compliment I've ever gotten. And I thought you were about to ask me to chip in for the drugs. No, no charge.

ADDISON

In that case, let me get my money's worth.

(HE kisses him)

PAUL

Whoa, sorry, um... I'm not really big on the kissing.

ADDISON

Oh. Okay. Well then.

PAUL

You have a boyfriend?

VICTIM I-4-24

ADDISON

What? Yeah, he's behind the sofa, listening, and jealous as hell. No. Do you?

PAUL

I dunno. Would it turn you on if I said yes?

ADDISON

Maybe.

PAUL

What if I said I had a wife? And a kid?

ADDISON

You're making me hard all over again.

PAUL

I do.

ADDISON

You don't.

PAUL

I do. I was a mixed-up kid. I just wasn't ready for that whole nine-to-five, bring-home-the-bacon, dinner-on-the-table-at-six, kids-in-the-station-wagon kind of thing. She found someone who was. Not my scene.

ADDISON

Your "scene"? What are you, some kinda hippie?

PAUL

Hardly. I met her when I was in the army.

ADDISON

The army? Mmmm, I'm getting hotter.

PAUL

It was a desk job.

ADDISON

Oh, don't ruin it with too much information.

PAUL

It was Germany in the '60s; what kind of action do you think I saw?

ADDISON

Awww, and here I had this image of a barracks full of sweaty privates.

PAUL

I won't say another word. Think whatever you like.

ADDISON

Too late now. You know, I might wanna see you again and it'll be hard to have a zipless fuck if I know your favorite color. Where you went to college. How you take your coffee.

PAUL

Zipless fuck?

ADDISON

No questions asked. No information given. But still... Now that you're here, I'm curious.

PAUL

What do you want to know?

ADDISON

Well, since you can stay out 'til three on a weeknight, you're either incredibly rich or you're homeless.

PAUL

Huh.

ADDISON

Where do you live?

PAUL

Twelfth Street.

ADDISON

Hmmm. East or West?

PAUL

Mid-village.

ADDISON

I see. Well, that could mean you're an heiress living in a Gold Coast townhouse.

PAUL

Mm-hmm.

ADDISON

Or you could be a graduate student in an NYU dorm.

PAUL

Hmmm.

ADDISON

And the clothes don't help anymore. Used to be you could tell by the shoes. Nowadays, everyone's got workboots. Sometimes the underwear gives it away. A ten dollar pair of jeans over a seventy-five dollar pair of underwear.

VICTIM I-4-26

PAUL

I'm not wearing underwear.

(A long pause)

I didn't realize the Mineshaft had a door policy. Lucky I was with you.

ADDISON

Cologne. You were wearing cologne.

PAUL

What's wrong with cologne?

ADDISON

Blocks the pheromones.

PAUL

I don't know. I've never been turned on when a guy smells like a bowl of rancid French onion soup.

ADDISON

I'm not wearing cologne.

PAUL

But you smell...

(HE smells ADDISON's neck. Lifts
ADDISON's arms over his head, smells
under his arms)

You smell sweet.

ADDISON

And you smell like your leather jacket.

PAUL

You like that?

(ADDISON puts PAUL's hand down the front
of ADDISON's pants)

ADDISON

Need I say more?

PAUL

I would say that...

ADDISON

(Cutting him off:) Hey! I've got an idea. Let's stop talking.

(A pause)

BLACKOUT

Scene 5

(RANDY at the bar. ARTHUR enters)

ARTHUR
Look who's here! Is this work or pleasure?

RANDY
Don't blow my cover, Arthur.

ARTHUR
Oh, I see. Is this going to turn into a raid? Should I go to the bar across the street?

RANDY
Shut up. Just don't... Be discreet, please.

ARTHUR
Are you allowed to drink on duty?

RANDY
It's ginger ale.

ARTHUR
So professional!

RANDY
I'm gonna move to the other end of the bar if you don't stop.

ARTHUR
I'll follow you. Relax. I'm gonna pretend to pick you up.

RANDY
Great.

ARTHUR
If you wanted to, you could really score in here. There are some gay men who are only attracted to straights.

RANDY
Really?

ARTHUR
Sad but true.

RANDY
Why?

ARTHUR
(Shrugs:) Stockholm Syndrome.

RANDY
Are you one of those sad men?

ARTHUR
Oh, no, I like 'em gay, gay, gay.

VICTIM I-5-28

RANDY

What's with all the beards and moustaches?

ARTHUR

Overcompensation. You mean to tell me you've never had any kind of sex with another guy?

RANDY

No, Arthur. Not everyone is gay.

ARTHUR

No, I don't mean gay. Didn't you fool around with other boys when you were a kid? Circle jerks? Sleepovers?

RANDY

Well, sure, but everybody does that.

ARTHUR

No, not everybody, Randy.

RANDY

Fuck you.

ARTHUR

Read Kinsey. It depends on how often. And how recently. And how much you liked it. And if you're planning on doing it again.

RANDY

Leave me alone.

ARTHUR

So? How much did you like it?

RANDY

This conversation is over.

ARTHUR

You need to get over this misconception that every gay man...

RANDY

(Gestures to ARTHUR's neck:) Wears a paisley ascot?

ARTHUR

Exactly.

RANDY

A lot of these guys are... wow, look at him... way butcher than me. Not like the kids we used to beat up in high school. I wouldn't wanna go up against HIM.

ARTHUR

Well, they refuse to be victims anymore. But most of those muscles are just cosmetic. Sure, they can bench press two hundred and fifty pounds, but God forbid you ask one of them to help you up three flights with the groceries. Suddenly, their back is bothering them.

(A pause)

You were one of those bullies used to beat up the queers?

RANDY

Well, not... not on a regular basis, no.

ARTHUR

You know they say the guys who beat up queers are really trying to suppress their own homosexuality.

RANDY

Do they? Who's they?

ARTHUR

You know. Them. Do you wanna explore that?

RANDY

Not particularly. So why don't you have a... what do you call them? A lover?

ARTHUR

Nope. No thanks.

RANDY

I don't get it, Arthur. You're a good-looking guy. Funny as hell. What's wrong?

ARTHUR

Are you flirting? And what makes you think something's wrong? Maybe I like it like this. Maybe I don't think the world has to be Noah's Ark.

RANDY

Really? I don't know. I think that's the main reason I... I just think it'd be lonely. A lonely life.

ARTHUR

The main reason you what?

RANDY

Sometimes you just need somebody there. When you get home. To hear you. Who gets you, you know?

ARTHUR

And for you that somebody has to be a woman?

RANDY

Well... I don't know. Why don't you like women?

ARTHUR

Don't you dare. Haven't you ever had a crush on another guy?

VICTIM I-5-30

RANDY

Nope.

ARTHUR

I don't believe it. Some boy at school? Captain of the football team?

RANDY

I went to school in the Bronx. No such thing as a football team.

ARTHUR

There was never another man in your life who... I don't know. You couldn't wait for him to call? You looked forward to the next time you were going to see him? You thought about what you'd wear when you saw him? You wanted to be like him?

RANDY

Well, sure, but I didn't want to suck his dick.

ARTHUR

Doesn't matter. Still counts.

RANDY

But I admire you, Arthur. I look forward to your calls. But you want to be alone. You wouldn't make an exception for me, Arthur?

ARTHUR

In a New York minute.
(RANDY laughs. A pause)
Shall I hail us a taxi?

(BARTENDER enters)

BARTENDER

The guy at the end of the bar wants to buy you a drink.

ARTHUR

Who, me?

BARTENDER

No, him.

(A pause. ARTHUR looks at RANDY, then at the BARTENDER)

ARTHUR

By George, I think she's got it.

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

(The apartment. PAUL rimming
ADDISON on the sofa)

ADDISON
Mmmmm, fuck yeah. Oh, fuck. Yeah. Oh, man. Mmmmm.

PAUL
You like that, huh?

ADDISON
(Laughs:) Everyone likes that, Dope.

PAUL
I'll make it better.
(HE reaches over to the table)
Don't move. Shit.

ADDISON
What?

PAUL
Nothing. The poppers... Here. Put this...
(HE puts a handkerchief under ADDISON's
nose)
Aren't you glad you got me to stay?

ADDISON
Mmm, four times in one night; I'm about to achieve my
personal best.

PAUL
I love your skin.

ADDISON
Mmm. Good genes.

PAUL
You feel so good.

ADDISON
Ummm... Hup-up-up-up-up. Whatchu think you doin' Bucko?

PAUL
That's just my finger.

ADDISON
Nuh-uh. No fingers. That door only goes one way.

PAUL
It's just rusty. With a little oil, I think I can get it to
swing in the other direction.

ADDISON
Ha ha. Sorry. No swinging tonight.

VICTIM I-6-32

PAUL

Awww, it's my turn.

ADDISON

Sorry, buddy, this isn't Monopoly. No turns involved.

PAUL

I thought you felt bad. I thought you wanted me to come.

ADDISON

Not that bad. Besides, I think Godot will come before you do.

PAUL

That hurt.

ADDISON

It was a joke.

PAUL

It was?

ADDISON

See? You don't get my sense of humor.

PAUL

Okay, it was a little bit funny.

ADDISON

Nope. Too late. Speaking of too late. Unlike you, I'm not a lady of leisure, I've gotta be at work in about four hours, so...

PAUL

Are you kicking me out?

ADDISON

No, I'm not kicking you out, you're welcome to stay. But I'm about to conk out.

PAUL

No, well, that's okay, I'll leave.

ADDISON

Up to you. But be sure and leave me your number. We gotta do this again.

PAUL

Really? When?

ADDISON

Don't get like that, Missy. You're starting to sound like a teenage girl.

PAUL

What's your weekend like?

ADDISON
Ummm... I can't. I'm going to the Hamptons for the weekend.

PAUL
Well, excuuuuuuuse me.

ADDISON
It's business.

PAUL
Good for you. So...?

ADDISON
So?

PAUL
Is this a kiss-off?

ADDISON
You're being unnecessarily... reactive. I told you I want to see you again.

PAUL
Just not anytime soon.

ADDISON
The weekend starts in two days. I need some time to recover, baby. You drained me dry.

PAUL
I'll stay until you fall asleep.

ADDISON
Awww, that's sweet, but not necessary.

PAUL
I want to.

ADDISON
Well, I won't be able to fall asleep if I know you're watching me. (HE kisses him) Call me. We'll get together again. Promise.

PAUL
So I'll just... Do you wanna see me out?

ADDISON
Don't worry, the door will lock behind you.

(PAUL goes to leave, turns and looks at
ADDISON who turns away from him)

BLACKOUT

Scene 7

(The bar. RANDY enters, tentatively. Sits. BARTENDER approaches)

BARTENDER

So am I supposed to pretend I don't know you're a cop?

RANDY

Hey. How ya doin'? I'll have a rum and Coke. Bacardi. And Coke.

BARTENDER

And when your lieutenant asks...?

RANDY

I'm off duty.

BARTENDER

I see. We're starting to grow on you. Where's your boyfriend?

RANDY

Sorry?

BARTENDER

You're always here with Arthur.

RANDY

(Laughs:) Oh, Arthur's just been giving me some pointers. About, you know, the scene.

BARTENDER

Be careful around Arthur. A few hours with him and you'll end up upside down at the Anvil with a fist up your ass and clamps on your tits wondering how THAT happened.

RANDY

I like Arthur. He's the sand that creates the pearl. (Raises his glass:) Cheers. So you figured out I was a cop? I'm that obvious?

BARTENDER

Did you forget Arthur writes a gossip column? But I'dve figured it out. Your attempts at cruising read as surveillance.

RANDY

So he's told you about the case I'm working on?

BARTENDER

Hope you find him.

RANDY

Must be bad for business.

BARTENDER

Not so much. It'd take more than a homicidal maniac to get these boys to stay home.

RANDY

You're probably the one I should really be talking to. Anybody stand out from the pack? If you were working the case?

BARTENDER

In my experience? It's always the ones that seem the most pulled-together that come apart at the seams.

RANDY

Huh.

BARTENDER

In fact, you seem a little tightly wound yourself.

RANDY

I'm just not used to... thinking about myself as an object of desire. Don't you get worried? Spending so much time around 'em?

BARTENDER

What, like I'm gonna catch something?

RANDY

Forget it. Stupid thing to say.

BARTENDER

Too late, anyway. I've been with my lover for fourteen years.

RANDY

Get outta town. You're not. You are? I had no idea. You've got... I assumed the Mob ran this place.

BARTENDER

I just work here. I don't care about what happens offstage. I bring all my friends. Their money's green. And the minute I leave here I slip into a pair of rhinestone mules and a baby-doll negligee.

RANDY

Really?

BARTENDER

No.

(A pause)

So you're here to socialize?

RANDY

Well, this job, there's no such thing as "off duty," really, just on the clock or off.

BARTENDER

So you're off?

VICTIM I-7-36

RANDY

I'm off. But it's all research, you know. Getting to know the lay of the land. But whatever you do, don't tell Arthur I was here. He won't understand my real reason for being here.

BARTENDER

And the real reason is...?

RANDY

Like I just said. So how do you... what's the approach? How does a guy pick up another guy? Is there a method?

BARTENDER

You're kidding, right?

RANDY

Well, I'm sure you don't just go up and ask, like "What do you want?" "Do you like it up the ass?"

BARTENDER

Please. What do you do to pick up a chick?

RANDY

(Laughs:) It's been so long; I've been with my old lady since high school. I buy her a drink, I guess.

BARTENDER

Well, look at that. We're not so different after all.

RANDY

Don't make fun. So then what? Small talk?

BARTENDER

What would you say to a woman?

RANDY

Shit, I don't know. "You have beautiful eyes"?

BARTENDER

That'd work on me.

RANDY

Okay, so let's say things are cooking. How do you decide who goes to whose place?

BARTENDER

Well, if you're the one putting on the moves, it's usually taken for granted that you're gonna host.

RANDY

Well, what if I have... I mean, what if the guy has a lover at home?

BARTENDER

Everything's a negotiation, kiddo.

RANDY
Again, if you say anything to Arthur about this...

BARTENDER
I'm a bartender. Like a lawyer; client privilege.

(ADDISON enters, goes to the bar)

ADDISON
Can I get two Heinekens?

BARTENDER
Sure thing.

(A pause)

RANDY
Hi.

ADDISON
Hey.

RANDY
Buy you a drink?

ADDISON
Sorry?

RANDY
(Tongue-tied:) Drink? You. I'll buy. Sorry.

ADDISON
Huh. When it rains, it pours. Love to, but I've got a live one over in the corner.

RANDY
Oh. Well. Good luck, I guess.

(ADDISON pays for the beers)

ADDISON
Thanks. Wanna give me your number?

RANDY
Umm, can't. We'll meet again.

ADDISON
Hope so. This doesn't work out, I'll be back, buddy.

RANDY
I'll be here.

ADDISON
What's your name?

RANDY
Oh. Um. Randy.

VICTIM I-7-38

Huh. And are you? ADDISON

Huh? RANDY

Randy? ADDISON

Oh. Ha. Got you. Yeah, I guess I am. RANDY

See ya. ADDISON

(HE exits. A pause)

There ya go. Baby steps. BARTENDER

BLACKOUT

Scene 8

(The apartment. PAUL in the kitchen frying eggs and bacon in a cast iron skillet. ADDISON in bed, wakes up)

ADDISON
What're you...? I thought you left.

PAUL
Morning. Nah, I just went out for some provisions.

ADDISON
Provisions? How'd you get back in?

PAUL
I borrowed your keys.

ADDISON
How'd you get past the doorman?

PAUL
He wasn't at the desk.

ADDISON
Great. So much for HIS Christmas bonus. That smells... so disgusting.

PAUL
For me, there's nothing better for a hangover than something big and greasy.

ADDISON
I hate eggs. Just the smell. Please. Turn that off.

PAUL
Almost done.

ADDISON
What time is it?

PAUL
Just past seven.

ADDISON
Ugh. I don't have to be at work until noon. Please. Put that down and let me get back to sleep.

PAUL
Have some coffee. You'll feel better.

ADDISON
What did I do with my watch?
(HE checks the table next to the sofa)
What the...? The poppers... you knocked over the poppers!
Jesus Christ, it's eaten right through the finish.

VICTIM I-8-40

PAUL

Yeah, sorry 'bout that. Clumsy me.

ADDISON

It's completely ruined. And it's almost new.

PAUL

No worries, I can totally fix that. It just needs refinishing. I'll bring over some sandpaper, some stain, some polyurethane. It'll be good as new.

ADDISON

Okay, friend, it's time to go.

PAUL

Just let me... Really, I can fix it.

ADDISON

The night's over. It's daytime. You're turning into a pumpkin.

PAUL

(Laughs:) Now THAT reference I get. Relax, I'll take care of it. Come eat.

ADDISON

Last night was really fun, but let's try to salvage this with some shred of...

(HE goes to the kitchen)

I'm serious. Come on, Suzy Homemaker, put it down. You gotta go.

(HE tries to take the pan, some of the grease spills onto his wrist. HE screams)

Jesus Christ! Asshole! I said put it down! Put it down! Put it down!

PAUL

(Overlapping:) Shit! Shit, I'm sorry. I'll get some butter. Here. Run it under some cold water.

ADDISON

(Overlapping:) No, get out. Get out. GET OUT.

PAUL

Please, just let me...

ADDISON

I swear to God, I'll call the cops.

PAUL

Come on, please, please...

ADDISON

Get out! Get out! I don't want a goddamned wife!

PAUL

Shut the fuck up.

(PAUL throws the frying bacon at him.
ADDISON trips over himself trying to get
away, falls behind the sofa bed.
Screams)

Stop! Shut up!

(PAUL raises the skillet, hits him. The
screaming stops. A pause. HE hits him
again. Then four more times. HE drops
the skillet, looks at what HE's done.
HE goes back to the kitchen, turns off
the stove. HE looks around the kitchen,
starts putting things away.
Perfunctorily tries wiping his
fingerprints off anything he thinks he
touched. ADDISON gurgles, his bloody
hand appears on the back of the sofa as
HE tries to pull himself up. PAUL
turns, sees him, goes over to the sofa,
looks at ADDISON struggling to get up.
ADDISON tries to speak, gurgles instead.
PAUL goes to the kitchen, takes a knife
from the butcher block and stabs ADDISON
behind the sofa. Five times. PAUL
stands. Drops the knife)

I told you I'd fix it.

(A pause)

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

VICTIM I-8-42

ACT TWO

Scene 1

(RANDY, FRANK and ARTHUR in the apartment. ARTHUR bumps into a table, knocks something over)

ARTHUR

Oops.

FRANK

What is he doing in here anyway? It's a fucking crime scene.

RANDY

'Cause he's the only press that gives a shit about the trash bag murders. I thought he might see something we don't. The crew has already been through.

FRANK

(Looking behind the sofa bed, speaking into a tape recorder:) Blood spatter present on wall, back of sofa. Unidentified white substance on chest, face, carpet.

ARTHUR

Is it powder?

FRANK

No, it's... gooey.

RANDY

Semen?

FRANK

Not like any semen I've seen before.

RANDY

You've seen a lot of other guy's semen, have you, Frank?

FRANK

Fuck you. No, it's... oily-like. And still white.

RANDY

Some new party drug, Arthur?

(ARTHUR looks)

ARTHUR

No, it looks like...

(ARTHUR goes into the kitchen)

Aha!

(HE returns with a can of Crisco)

Your party drug.

FRANK

Jeez! Fingerprints!

ARTHUR

Well, it looks like there's about a hundred sets of fingerprints on the side of the can; surely even someone with your resources can pull a set.

FRANK

Why the hell would he have Crisco on him?

ARTHUR

(To RANDY:) This guy isn't really a detective, is he? (To FRANK:) You see, except for when I'm close to you, Frank, guys don't usually self-lubricate. We need a little help.

FRANK

What the fuck is he talking about?

ARTHUR

Let's put this in terms you can understand. Lift up the hood of your car, Frank. How do you get the pistons, or whatever the hell they are, to go up and down? Or in and out?

(HE makes a hand gesture)

FRANK

Grease.

ARTHUR

Exactly.

FRANK

Huh?

(ARTHUR makes the hand gesture again)

FRANK

He's trying to make me puke.

ARTHUR

You'll never look at grandma's cherry pie the same way again, will you? So? Who is he?

RANDY

Apartment's rented to a guy named Addison Verrill.

ARTHUR

And is that Verrill?

RANDY

Not sure yet. Can YOU tell what he used to look like? This one's gonna need dental records.

ARTHUR

Robbery?

RANDY

We found his wallet. No cash.

No forced entry.

FRANK

How can you be sure? Turn him over.

ARTHUR

Huh?

FRANK

Forget it. Gallows humor.

ARTHUR

Look, Randy, some sort of accelerant. All over the nighttable.

FRANK

Doesn't look like he tried to ignite it.

RANDY

Smells like... dirty gym socks.

FRANK

(ARTHUR picks an empty bottle of poppers off the floor)

Here's your accelerant. Major destruction averted. Next, he was gonna make an A bomb out of nail polish remover. This is a party drug. It expands the blood vessels. Makes your orgasm more... explosive.

ARTHUR

Huh. Where would you pick up something like this?

FRANK

(To RANDY, gesturing to FRANK:) Get her.

ARTHUR

Tastes like shit.

FRANK

No, sweetie, you don't drink it, you sniff it. Jeez, it's good you two bozos have a queer on scene to set you straight. As it were. (Points to something on the floor:) What's that, Charlie Chan?

ARTHUR

(FRANK picks it up)

Leather bracelet?

FRANK

Nope. Care to give it a go, Thin Man?

ARTHUR

No, it's a leather armband. These S and M types, they wear lots of... accessories.

RANDY

ARTHUR

(Sound of a game show buzzer:) Wrong. It's a cock ring. You wrap it around your junk, stay hard all night long. See, you can adjust it, so no matter how big... (To FRANK:) ... or how small... Tell your girlfriends. Pathetic. I thought I was on the scene with a couple of hard-boiled dicks. Instead: poached pussies.

RANDY

So who are we looking for?

ARTHUR

(Shrugs) Your average workaday faggot. I mean, this isn't a smash 'n grab hustler score. He's not some straight guy out to roll some fag. Crisco, poppers, cockrings; they got down to business. There's come on the sheets. And then it looks like they had breakfast. This isn't the same guy, Randy. Your other vics: did you test the contents of what was left of their stomachs? I'll bet they didn't have homemade biscuits. Is it simply that all of these stiffes sucked cock? Is that all you're hanging your case on? And this doesn't feel like some hard-core leather scene. Your Saran-wrapped guys, maybe. But this... it's almost domestic. They probably met at some East Side sweater bar.

FRANK

Sweater bar? That sounds kinky.

ARTHUR

Means they all wear designer sweaters, Frank. Get your mind out of the gutter.

RANDY

So where do you wanna go from here?

ARTHUR

What, now I'M in charge? Okay, let's put Frank on the leather bar detail, let him get his feet wet. So to speak.

FRANK

What?

ARTHUR

A joke. Relax.

RANDY

Don't just stand there with your mouth open, Frank. Ring some doorbells. See if any of the neighbors heard anything, saw anything.

(FRANK exits)

Seriously. Where would you go with this?

ARTHUR

Seriously. I'll write an article about it. And I'll banner it on the front page, not let it get buried. You use whatever pull you have with the major papers. I'm not saying they're gonna put "Faggot Murdered" on the front page of the Post. The sports section, maybe. The entertainment section. That's how I plan to handle it. As entertainment. I'll include as many lurid details as possible. Somebody knows this guy. He's on the scene, not somebody just passing through. No matter how aloof everyone pretends to be, the West Village is really like Anatevka.

RANDY

What?

ARTHUR

Ummm... Grover's Corners?
(RANDY stares at him, shakes his head)
Save me.

BLACKOUT

Scene Two

(An interrogation room at the Sixth Precinct. A table. Three chairs. PAUL sits in one. RANDY stays standing)

I was drunk.

PAUL

Are you drunk now?

RANDY

Maybe a little. I think I've tried to stay drunk for the past week.

PAUL

So that's what you're sticking with? "I was drunk"?

RANDY

Before that, I hadn't had a drink in, like, three months. I was doing really good.

PAUL

Your roommate said... He IS your roommate?

RANDY

Uh-huh.

PAUL

Nothing more?

RANDY

No. Not any more.

PAUL

Said he hadn't seen you all week.

RANDY

I've been at the Baths on Second Avenue.

PAUL

What about when they close?

RANDY

(Laughs) They don't. Something about listening to non-stop fucking twenty-four/seven makes you thirsty.

PAUL

Non-stop?

RANDY

Well, there's a bit of a lull between nine, when the guys who want a quickie before work, and noon, when the lunch hour crowd hits, but otherwise, yeah.

PAUL

RANDY

So take me through it. You went to his place...

PAUL

He said he brought me home thinking I was a hustler. But he had only fifty-seven fucking dollars in his wallet. Liar. That was his fantasy, not mine.

RANDY

So you did it for the money?

PAUL

No, no, that had nothing to do with it. I'm not THAT desperate. That was just an afterthought. I took his stuff to make it look like a robbery, I guess. It was stupid. I didn't even get anything. He kept throwing literary references 'round the room to show how much smarter he was. Showing off his high class taste in music. Show tunes, for fuck's sake. Treating me like I was McDonalds when he's used to eating Beef Wellington every night. He needed to be taken down a peg.

RANDY

Well, death seems like several pegs, Paul. So: resentment. Is that it? He's a high-living faggot and you're... what? A ticket-taker in a porn house? He can flaunt himself all he likes, while you... you have to pretend. You have to keep up this mask... of respectability... of normalcy... you don't have the freedom to be whoever you want, flirt with whoever you want to, tell your friends, your family. Who you really are. How you really feel. But he could. He was able to be his true self, while you... you couldn't even admit to yourself... who you really were. Are. That must've been hell. Am I close?

PAUL

No, that isn't exactly...

RANDY

He got under your skin. I get it, Paul. You may think I don't, but I do. Why the knife? Why the overkill?

PAUL

Well, he tried to get up. I thought he was out cold, but then he... I went in too high; I should've gone in just under his nipple, hit the pericardium, and he'd have bled out internally. Instead, I went in too high and made a mess.

RANDY

You seem to know your anatomy.

PAUL

I was pre-med for awhile.

RANDY

So you'd have a pretty good idea about... the human body. The muscles. Joints. And so forth.

PAUL

Sure. I suppose.

RANDY

Dismemberment. Things like that.

(HE throws open a folder of photographs)
Wanna tell me about this?

(PAUL stares at the photos)
I'll give you a moment.

(RANDY exits. ARTHUR enters)

PAUL

I was drunk. Didn't know what I was doing.

ARTHUR

I get drunk every weekend. I don't go around hitting people over the head with frying pans. Or stabbing them God knows how many times.

PAUL

I can't explain it. Something snapped. He started calling me "girl." "Hey, Girl!" "Miss Thing." "Her Ladyship." I went from being a hot stud to being some limp-wristed fag in the blink of an eye. I wanted to be his buddy, not just another girlfriend.

ARTHUR

Well, cooking him breakfast couldn't have helped.

PAUL

That's it! I cooked breakfast for him, the bastard. Well, the way to a man's heart... (HE laughs) I thought we were moving toward something... deeper. I wanted a soul connection, you know?

ARTHUR

From someone you met in a backroom? You don't think that's a bit... unrealistic?

PAUL

It wasn't a backroom; we met in the bar. I'm not THAT trashy. My parents met at the VFW Hall. Is that so much more... what? Romantic? And what's OUR version of that? We don't have one.

ARTHUR

Do we want one?

PAUL

You like slinking around in the shadows?

ARTHUR

I don't know, Paul. Sometimes it has a certain appeal.

PAUL

And he wouldn't let me fuck him! I let him do whatever he wanted to me, but then when I wanted to become one... to be inside... to enter...

ARTHUR

I know what you mean, Paul.

PAUL

He shut me out.

ARTHUR

Not everyone is versatile.

PAUL

No! No! It's not about versatility. It's about vulnerability.

ARTHUR

Not everyone is vulnerable.

PAUL

He tried to get so high falutin' on me. My last lover was a manager at the Met, for chrissake.

ARTHUR

The museum?

PAUL

God, no. The opera house. THAT'S class. I went to opening nights. Covent Garden. La Scala. He was showing off his collection of original cast albums as if they were pirated Maria Callas recordings. Please. I've had dinner with Balanchine and he going on like George Bernard Shaw because he reviews porn movies. You know that's what he did, right? Not even a second string critic. He was like eighth string.

ARTHUR

So you killed him because he was a snob? So am I, Paul. I'm a gossip columnist who thinks he's a journalist. Do you wanna kill me too?

PAUL

Of course not, Arthur. I like you. You're the only one who listens to me.

(A long pause)

What?

ARTHUR

It occurs to me that if I'd been at the bar that night, I'd have taken you home with me in an instant.

PAUL

You wanna make me your wife, Arthur?

ARTHUR

No, you're perfect husband material.

(A long pause)

PAUL

Thank you, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Would you have ripped me off, too? Is it just that you were broke? Would you kill ME for fifty-three dollars?

PAUL

Fifty-seven. I just grabbed whatever I could, since he gave me nothing. Just things. The money didn't mean anything. Whatever I could get my hands on. His underwear. A couple of cans of tuna fish. He took from me, I felt I should get something in return.

ARTHUR

So he took... what? Your dignity? Your... affection? And you took his life. Oh, and some tuna fish. Explain that logic to me.

PAUL

I started to think I could love him.

ARTHUR

Paul...

PAUL

In time! But he didn't even want to take five minutes to see if he could love me. I guess that makes me seem feminine, right? And there's nothing more grotesque than that, right?

ARTHUR

Not everyone is looking for love.

PAUL

Now you think I'm pathetic. I could use a drink.

ARTHUR

You know I can't sneak booze in here.

PAUL

I'm just saying. I could use a smoke. I never smoked until I got here; it's what passes for currency. Can you see if you can get a smoke from the guard? Tell him it's for me.

ARTHUR

Um... Sure.

PAUL

I never forget a favor, Arthur.

(ARTHUR exits. BILL enters)

BILL

Hey, Paul. Bill. Remember me?

(THEY shake hands)

PAUL
How could I forget you, man? That was, like, the happiest day of my life. Good to see you.

BILL
Well, that makes me happy. But sad, too. Don't you have a son? Wasn't that a happy day?

PAUL
Hell, we weren't even in the same country the day he was born.

BILL
So why was it the happiest?

PAUL
(Shrugs) You listened to what I had to say. But if you're planning a reunion, I'm unavailable.

BILL
That's good. Never lose your sense of humor. No, I'm working on a project I'd like to talk to you about.

PAUL
You got a part for me? You gonna spring me, take me to Tinseltown?

BILL
(Laughs) 'Fraid not, Paul. But your case. Could. Shed some light.

PAUL
Any money in it for me?

BILL
(Laughs) At this point, I don't know if there's money in it for me. But of course if I use anything, you'll certainly get credit.

PAUL
So you're gonna try and psychoanalyze me?

BILL
I wouldn't dare, Paul. At this point, I only want to talk about facts. Don't talk to me about feelings. At this point, they don't matter. Or they won't help me. I'll probably try to make up your feelings, anyway. Just facts.

PAUL
Have you read the transcripts? My intake report?

BILL
Sure. Yes. Of course.

PAUL

Then you probably know the facts better than I do. You know I drank. Was drinking. My memory... Something happened to me that summer, Bill. I don't know. Is it okay if I call you Bill?

BILL

Of course.

PAUL

I started drinking again. I was sober for three months; I was doing so good. But then... They started throwing me out of meetings. I poured a bottle of Jack Daniels' on my sponsor's doorstep. I was always at the Baths. When I wasn't at the Baths, I was at the Piers. It was like I was possessed, or something. I mean, my head wasn't spinning around three hundred and sixty degrees, but I'm sure you know what I mean.

BILL

Sure.

PAUL

It was on the Piers. The night of the blackout. Something... happened. There was... something there. I don't know if it was specifically waiting for ME, but it was waiting. Like the blackout, the darkness, the silence, set it free. And it followed me. It's been following me ever since.

BILL

H.P. Lovecraft.

PAUL

Is that a ship?

BILL

(Laughs:) No, a high-falutin' literary reference. Don't mind me. Are you religious, Paul? I notice you've got a crucifix.

PAUL

The only thing I have left from my mother. But no, I'm not especially religious. This thing is giving me a bit of a rash. All of the soap here has lye in it. Burns my skin. Lots of guys say they find Jesus in here. I've looked, but I haven't seen him.

BILL

Is that what it's about, Paul? Do you see yourself as some sort of avenging angel? That killing those guys was, what? Doing God's work?

PAUL

God has nothing to do with it.

BILL

Tell me about Verrill.

PAUL

What do you want to know?

BILL

Well... why? Is there an answer for that?

(A pause)

I mean, he WAS a film critic, so you won't get any complaints from me.

(HE laughs. PAUL doesn't)

He was a lonely, bitter old queen? You wanted to put him out of his misery?

PAUL

No, it was...

BILL

You took his passport, Paul. What was that about? Did you want to "become" him? Were you trading places with your victim somehow?

PAUL

Victim? Oh, you think HE'S the victim?

BILL

Well, he's the one who's dead.

PAUL

I never thought about it. It was just in the drawer next to his underwear. I took what I could get my hands on.

BILL

Well, sure, you pick up his underwear, you think "I can use this." But picking up his passport. What went through your mind?

PAUL

I don't know. "Take it." That's all I thought.

BILL

The underwear. Tell me about that. They had his smell on them? Is that how you re-live the experience?

PAUL

No, I took them out of the drawer. They were clean. I'm not THAT twisted.

BILL

As a souvenir? Is that it? Do you have other souvenirs? From the others?

PAUL

The others...

(RANDY enters)

RANDY

Were you drunk with the others?

PAUL
The others?

RANDY
The other guys.

PAUL
What other guys?

RANDY
Awww, it's too late to start playing games with me, Paul.

PAUL
When I'm drunk, you know, sometimes I don't remember...

RANDY
Did you go to their place?

PAUL
I black out. Sometimes I wake up in a stranger's apartment. Sometimes the Baths. Sometimes that hotel at the end of Christopher Street. The Keller.

RANDY
The killer? Yes?

PAUL
(Laughs:) No, the hotel. It's called the Keller.

(ARTHUR enters, gives PAUL a lit
cigarette)

ARTHUR
He made me light it before I brought it in. So tell me about the others. They didn't love you either?

PAUL
I don't know what to say about that. He gave me a deal. When you wake up in the morning and can't remember what happened the night before, do you automatically assume you've killed someone?

BILL
What did you take from the others? Is it always the same thing? Something intimate? Something they kept next to their skin?

RANDY
So what happens? You check in first? With your... tools? Then go out on the hunt?

PAUL
I don't hunt. I fish. I throw out my lure and wait for a nibble. (HE laughs)

RANDY

How many is it, Paul? Is it five? We found five. Are there more? Son of Sam got six, Paul. Can you top that? That'll get you a headline for sure. If that's what all this is about. You won't be forgotten.

PAUL

I mean, won't you sell a lot more papers if you say that I killed who knows how many guys and not just one lonely old fag?

ARTHUR

My first article about you sold more issues than my exclusive with Diana Ross.

BILL

This film is going to show a side of the gay experience that's never been shown before. It's gonna break new ground in the same way my other films have broken ground. And I want you, I need you to be a part of that, Paul.

PAUL

How can I be a part of it from in here?

BILL

You're my advisor, Paul. You can bring a reality to this project no one else can. And if we've got a hit, and I think we do, you'll be rewarded for it. And that reward will be waiting for you. When... Your time is up.

RANDY

So, where do we stand, Paul? I've got you dead to rights on Verrill's murder. You've confessed. Your fingerprints all over. His property on you. Fibers. Hairs. I've gotten convictions with one-tenth of the evidence I've got on you. Unless you can afford F. Lee Bailey, your conviction is assured. Right? Am I right?

PAUL

Well... sure.

RANDY

So? How do you want to play this?

PAUL

I don't get you.

RANDY

We've got five CUPPIs stacked in a fridge in the morgue. We wanna move 'em.

PAUL

Cuppies?

RANDY

Sorry. "Cause Undetermined Pending Police Investigation."

PAUL

And you think I can...

RANDY

I'm a detective who doesn't like mysteries, Paul. And the District Attorney is the same way.

ARTHUR

Did you kill all those other guys? Why?

PAUL

What does it matter? They get me either way. Might as well go out in a blaze of glory, right Arthur?

ARTHUR

Not if you didn't do it.

PAUL

He gave me a deal. He said I could be out by 1912.

ARTHUR

I think you mean 2012.

PAUL

Right.

(A pause)

2012. But if I go to trial... I'd be taking my chances.

ARTHUR

Not if you didn't do it. Not if there's somebody still out there.

PAUL

Well, if somebody else turns up in a trash bag in the Hudson, you'll have your answer.

BILL

What was your relationship with your mother like?

PAUL

I think you're barking up the wrong tree, Bill.

BILL

Set me straight.

PAUL

I told you! Can't I just say I killed him 'cause he was a faggot and you write me a ticket for disorderly conduct?

RANDY

We're not that backward, Paul.

PAUL

Aren't you?

RANDY

Things are different now than they were.

PAUL

Are they?

BILL

The others. Did you tie them up? Did you... prolong it? Tease them? Torture them?

PAUL

I told you, I don't remember. I. Was. Drunk.

(ADDISON enters)

ADDISON

Puh-leeze. You weren't THAT drunk, really. I had more to drink than you did.

PAUL

My resistance was low.

ADDISON

I didn't hold a gun to your head. Or a knife to your chest. You know, there are lots of other ways I'd've liked to have my mother find out I was gay. Over a cup of tea at Charleston Gardens, maybe, after a day of shopping. While having a cigarette between acts at "Pacific Overtures." Doing the dishes after Sunday dinner, perhaps. Not some cop calling her up at six in the morning: "We found your son, naked, with a knife in his chest and an ass full of Crisco." I was moving up in my job, you know. And true, I worked in "the show business", but I was only out to a select few. That cop makes it sound like I flounced around the newsroom in a feather boa. Yes, I reviewed porn. Straight porn. They thought I knew what I was talking about. I was starting to get quoted. In articles, books. Porn was going mainstream, it's not just for men in raincoats. Hell, Jackie O went to see "Deep Throat." They were going to move me up to review features. Major Hollywood A-list releases. Do you think Vincent Canby would be first-string if they thought he was swishing around on Christopher Street? John Simon at the Ramrod? Pauline Kael at the Duchess? But because you had some twisted, yes, twisted idea that we were soulmates after one fuck, you had to... Jesus.

(ADDISON looks at the folder of photos)

God. Not my finest moment. Lighting really IS everything. That's about ten thousand bucks in dental work you ruined.

PAUL

I'm sorry. Really. If I could take it all back...

ADDISON

Spare me. That's what they all say. But you can't take it back. It's done. I'm done. Congratulations. Your feminine side is a thing of the past. You take responsibility for nothing. Just like a real man.

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

(A production trailer on a film set. ARTHUR in a chair in tank top, shorts, visor cap with a whistle around his neck. BILL enters)

BILL
Okay, Arthur, you've got ten minutes. What the fuck do you want from me?

ARTHUR
They're setting lights, so that's an hour at least. I've been on a film set before, Bill.

BILL
I still have meetings, I have to talk to the DP, I have to... I'm not getting into this. Just tell me what you want.

ARTHUR
You know what we want.

BILL
Oh, I see. "We." You're the Martin Luther King of the group?

ARTHUR
If you will.

BILL
Well? What do "you" want?

ARTHUR
To shut you down.

BILL
Truly?

ARTHUR
Uh-huh.

BILL
Well that's not gonna happen.

ARTHUR
Then we're not leaving.

BILL
You think a major studio is gonna shut down production because a couple of fags get pissy?

ARTHUR

I'm not sensing a spirit of cooperation. Have you looked out the window of your trailer? There's more than a couple. Your sound department is going to have trouble setting levels through our chanting and whistle-blowing. We have megaphones. Have you seen the guys on the roof with the full-length mirrors? Your DP might get a little frustrated when we reflect sunlight into his lens. Don't know if your location manager has let you know that the Mineshaft backed out of letting you shoot there. Maybe your Mafia connections can help you find a place, but no gay-owned business is gonna open it's doors to you. You're here a month. We're here for good. We're not playing around.

BILL

I'm friends with the mayor.

ARTHUR

Believe me, Miss Edwina doesn't want this particular spotlight shining on her.

BILL

Hmmm. Have you considered how the straight press is going to position a bunch of homosexuals suppressing free speech? It's self-defeating, Arthur. We couldn't buy the publicity you're giving us. We'll gross a hundred million, minimum.

ARTHUR

Not if it stinks, Bill. And from what I've read, it stinks. You're a very talented man, I'll grant you that, but even YOU can't turn "Hopalong Cassidy" into "Midnight Cowboy."

BILL

Have you seen the way the press is treating you? You look like a fool, Arthur. A bigger fool.

ARTHUR

You're making a case for the extermination of gay men.

BILL

You don't know what the hell you're talking about.

ARTHUR

I've read the script, Bill!

BILL

Impossible. The only people who have access to a full script...

ARTHUR

(Overlapping:) I write a gossip column! Is this just willful naiveté? I know key grips, I know best boys, I know gaffers, I know department heads, do you really think I can't get my hands on your stupid screenplay?

BILL

Do you really believe... that it is my intention...? Come on, Arthur, I'm not a Neanderthal. I've known many gay men that have been...

ARTHUR

(Overlapping:) If the next words out of your mouth are "Some of my best friends," I'll projectile vomit pea soup on you. And I know all about François.

(A pause)

BILL

Well. Then you know I'm... simpatico. Christ, Arthur, I've made one of the most, maybe THE most important gay film ever. Ever.

ARTHUR

The jury's still out.

BILL

So, what? You want me to make all the gay characters heterosexual? Only straight people are killers?

(HE laughs)

ARTHUR

We're not victims anymore, Bill. Wake up. It's almost ten years since we stopped being victims. Better get used to it.

(A pause)

I saw Randy on the set.

BILL

Yes? And? He's a friend.

ARTHUR

He's got his own trailer.

BILL

It's a film about cops, Arthur. He's a cop. He's an advisor.

ARTHUR

It's also a film about queers. Where's your queer?

BILL

Ahhh, the clouds part. You want a job.

ARTHUR

No, Bill, I don't want a JOB. I'm trying to save you from sending your career into the toilet.

BILL

My God, Arthur, I had no idea you were so magnanimous.

ARTHUR

I'm serious. I think you're a brilliant film director, Bill. You've made three classic movies, movies which will outlive us both, and you're not even fifty! I just think this film, this script, as it stands now, is unworthy of you.

BILL

Do you?

ARTHUR

Yes. I mean, I see what you THINK it is, what you WANT it to be. But it's not there yet. Randy can't help you.

BILL

I see. But you can. Okay. Give me a sense of the kind of changes you think might appease your... cult followers?

ARTHUR

Well, for one thing, you've got a cast full of straight men playing gay. You might at least hire a token.

BILL

Lemme get this straight. Sorry for the pun.

(HE laughs)

ARTHUR

So tired.

BILL

You think I'm painting this picture of all gays being either sex fiends or deserving murder victims, yet you want one of your "brothers" to play one?

ARTHUR

It's a foot in the door. A way for us to start to effect change.

BILL

Okay, great, I'll hire a gay actor. Name a few.

(A pause. ARTHUR stares at him)

Exactly. Paul Lynde isn't exactly what I need for this particular script. Also, I need someone under forty.

ARTHUR

Ummm. That kid that was in "Equus" toward the end.

BILL

He's out of the closet?

ARTHUR

He should be. Just let me have a pass at the script. I mean, I surely can't do worse. Your characters speak like... like some straight guy's idea of how gay men talk to each other. No, worse, they sound the way Anita Bryant and her husband think gay men talk to each other. No gay man I know talks like that. No human being I know talks like that. Who did you get to write this trash?

BILL

I wrote it.

(A pause)

ARTHUR

Well. You've read my column; tact isn't a strong suit.

(RANDY enters)

RANDY

I'll come back.

BILL

No, no, Randy, stay. I could use your help.

ARTHUR

Randy.

RANDY

Arthur. How've you been?

(ARTHUR snorts)

The policeman's union thanks you for all of the overtime you've been necessitating.

ARTHUR

My pleasure.

BILL

You on the job this weekend?

RANDY

No, me and the old lady went out to the Island.

BILL

Where do you go? Hamptons?

RANDY

Too rich for my blood. I stay on the North Shore.

BILL

I was out in Amagansett. On the boat.

RANDY

Yeah, I finally broke down and got a boat.

BILL

What'd ya get?

RANDY
Just a little Boston Whaler. Nothing like your behemoth.

BILL
Do any fishing?

RANDY
Some.

BILL
What'd ya get?

RANDY
Some fluke. Porgies.

BILL
Aaah, I use those for bait.

RANDY
Nah, it's a good eating fish.

BILL
If you live north of 110th Street.
(RANDY laughs)
I hooked a fifteen foot swordfish.

ARTHUR
Jesus! Are all conversations between straight boys this dreary?

RANDY
What?

ARTHUR
Bill, didn't you have a development deal with Streisand?

BILL
And?

ARTHUR
And?! And you're talking about fish?

BILL
Arthur thinks he can do a better job on the script.

RANDY
How so?

ARTHUR
'Cause I know the way these characters speak to each other.

RANDY
So do I, Arthur.

ARTHUR
Like hell.

RANDY

I've been working the scene for almost three years, Arthur. I think I know the way queers talk.

ARTHUR

Yeah, you're showing admirable compassion. I can say "queer". You can't. And I've been "working the scene" my entire life, Randy. And not from the outside looking in. You may know what you hear, Randy, but you don't know what is MEANT.

RANDY

I've done everything I can for your community, you know that. I think I deserve a little more credit.

ARTHUR

Nope. Not a scintilla. Not until you can tell me you've woken up in a stranger's apartment with his come drying in your navel and you can't remember his name.

RANDY

Who says I haven't?

(A pause)

ARTHUR

Huh. Your god-awful script says. This is all about Paul Bateson. This script wouldn't exist without him, and you wouldn't have him without me. He came to me first. He gave you the facts; he gave me the truth. This is my goddamned story.

(A pause)

BILL

Okay, Arthur, okay. Have a go at it.

ARTHUR

Seriously?

BILL

On spec.

ARTHUR

Of course, of course.

BILL

And if anything's useable...

ARTHUR

Can I get that in writing?

BILL

I said on spec.

ARTHUR

Not a contract, I just want you to write that you're asking for input.

BILL
This is Hollywood. We don't put our lunch orders in writing. You'll have to take my word.

ARTHUR
Your word?

BILL
If that's not good enough...

ARTHUR
I just don't want you getting a poppy seed stuck in your dentures tomorrow morning and forgetting this conversation took place.

BILL
Randy's here. He heard me.
(A beep)
I'm being paged. Thank God. Give me a call when you've got something, Arthur.

(BILL exits. A pause)

ARTHUR
This is MY story, Randy. I'm not letting it go.

RANDY
I know, Arthur, I know. Listen, I...

ARTHUR
Are you working on another murder case?

RANDY
No, why?

ARTHUR
Are you still undercover?

RANDY
I'm working an art forgery case.

ARTHUR
Hmmm. Some friends have told me they've seen you at the Ninth Circle quite a bit.

(A pause)

RANDY
They have a great jukebox.

ARTHUR
Ha. You go there for the music?

RANDY
And they have a pool table.

ARTHUR

Yeah, I can't think of another bar that does.

(A pause)

I guess I just wasn't your type, huh, Randy?

RANDY

Not every man wants candlelight and roses.

ARTHUR

Who said anything about candlelight and roses? I'm talking a hot and sweaty seven minutes.

RANDY

Some men prefer someone... a little less...

ARTHUR

Strident?

RANDY

No.

ARTHUR

Proud?

RANDY

Someone a little more demure. You're just too butch for me, Arthur.

ARTHUR

(With an edge:) Well, isn't that the sweetest thing you've ever said to me.

(RANDY exits. ARTHUR faces the audience)

ARTHUR

Needless to say, I never heard from Bill again. About a year later the movie opened. Not to lines at the box office or howling protests, but to something resembling a collective yawn. And I suppose history will see me out as to whether Bill ever made another decent film. Randy had a cameo role in the finished film. As far as I'm concerned, his acting abilities rival his ability as a screenwriter. I guess the moral here is that criticism is subjective. So no matter how much you may disagree with a critic's opinion, you shouldn't go hitting him over the head with a frying pan.

(A pause)

I didn't survive the '80s. I wasn't murdered; I didn't end up floating in the Hudson in a Hefty bag. But I contend that I was murdered. By Ronald Reagan, I like to say.

(A pause)

Paul Bateson was found guilty and served the maximum sentence for killing five faggots in the 1970s. You can imagine. In other words, he's free. And even though he confessed to all those other killings, no evidence ever tied him to them. But the killings stopped. So...

ARTHUR (CONTINUED)

Once he was paroled, he lived with a relative on Long Island. Got a job, lived a quiet life. Of course he didn't make a cent from the movie. Aside from its status as a major fiasco, the Son of Sam laws prohibit a felon from profiting from his crimes.

(A pause)

No one cares about his story anymore. The gay boys that might've remembered his fame, as it were, died years ago. And there've been so many more interesting serial killers since. He's got a clean slate. He's in his seventies now. And a cab ride from his front door to Christopher Street costs about fifty dollars. Excluding tip.

(PAUL enters, walking with a cane)

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

(The bar. PAUL and A YOUNG MAN. The BARTENDER within earshot)

PAUL
Thanks for listening. Let me buy you a drink.

MAN
Not necessary.

PAUL
No, I know, but. I want to. You've let me bend your ear for an hour. What're you drinking?

MAN
He knows.

PAUL
Can we get another round?

BARTENDER
What was this?

PAUL
Oh! Dewar's. Rocks. And...

(HE gestures to the MAN's glass)

BARTENDER
Got it.

PAUL
Been so long since I've been in the city. Hardly recognize it. This place, though, this place... always stays the same. Used to be an older crowd. That's why I'M here. What about you?

MAN
It's gotten hip.

PAUL
Is that a good thing?

(MAN shrugs. BARTENDER returns with drinks)

BARTENDER
Sixteen.

PAUL
Dollars? Whoa. I HAVE been away too long. Used to be you could get through a whole Saturday night on sixteen bucks.

(HE hands the BARTENDER a credit card)

Cash only. BARTENDER

Oh. Really? I don't... PAUL

There's an ATM in the back. BARTENDER

I don't... PAUL
 (HE searches his pockets)
 I don't have my bank card.

You don't have your credit card linked? MAN

I haven't figured out how to do that yet. I'm sorry, I'm going to have to... PAUL

No worries, I got it. MAN
 (HE hands the BARTENDER a bill)

No, you shouldn't... Thank you. I'm... Now I feel bad. PAUL

Well, as long as you feel bad. MAN

Been so long since somebody bought me a drink. I feel like a girl again. Cheers. PAUL
 (THEY toast)
 Do you live nearby?

Bushwick. MAN

Wow. That's a trip. PAUL

Not so bad. Couple stops on the L. MAN

Cheap, I'll bet. PAUL

Oh, it's getting up there. MAN

You must be the only white person left. PAUL

Seriously? MAN

VICTIM II-4-72

PAUL
I don't suppose there's still that ten-buck-a-night hotel at the end of Christopher?

MAN
Was there?

PAUL
Back in the day.

MAN
No, that's long gone.

PAUL
Sometimes I'd sleep on the piers if I didn't have the ten bucks.

MAN
Those are gone, too.

PAUL
What? How could they be gone? Did they move the river?

MAN
(Laughs:) No. It's a park.

PAUL
Looks like I'm gonna have a hard time finding... companionship. Everyone's... young. This place used to be for pensioners and the hustlers they spent their pensions on.

MAN
It's late. They leave when Happy Hour ends.

PAUL
Now that I no longer have a tight ass. You can't bounce a quarter off my stomach anymore.

MAN
Lots of guys are into old... older... more experienced... Um...

(A pause)

PAUL
Too late. You're already in too deep. And when did they start letting women in here?

MAN
What have you got against women?

PAUL
Nothing, nothing. But don't they... muddy the waters?
(A pause. The MAN shrugs)
Are they all fag hags?

MAN
That's really politically incorrect. And some of 'em come with their boyfriends.

PAUL
Huh. And do they leave with their boyfriends?

MAN
Some of 'em are lesbians.

PAUL
Don't they have their own bars anymore?

MAN
Oh, you're one of those old school queers hates dykes?

PAUL
No, no, it's just... Some of my best friends...

(HE laughs, lights a cigarette)

MAN
Oh my God, what're you...?

(The BARTENDER rushes over)

BARTENDER
What the fuck?

PAUL
What?

BARTENDER
Out!

(PAUL quickly puts it in his drink)

MAN
You can't smoke in bars.

PAUL
Oh. Sorry. I've... I've been away.

MAN
Where? The moon?

PAUL
Could you bring me another?

BARTENDER
Jeez.

(HE takes PAUL's glass and exits)

PAUL
Thanks for the drink. I'll make it up to you. In whatever way I can.

MAN

No worries.

(A pause)

Some tired old queen has commandeered the jukebox with oldies.

PAUL

This is an oldie?

MAN

If my mother knows it, it's an oldie. I need to start thinking about packing it in.

PAUL

It's only... It's not even midnight. Hell, when I was your age, I was out 'til three, four in the morning.

MAN

Yeah, me too. Then I discovered rehab. Or it discovered me.

PAUL

But you're off the wagon tonight?

MAN

Ginger ale. Booze was never my problem. Back in the day, I'd be up for seventy-two hours straight. But I decided I'd rather keep my teeth and be home at a decent hour.

PAUL

You're wiser than I ever was. I went cold turkey, but not by choice. This is my first sit-down-in-a-bar cocktail since... well, let's just say the last time I had a drink in a bar, you were probably a zygote. What are you, under thirty?

MAN

You have to ask? I'm changing my moisturizer.

PAUL

I look at it as the best thing that could've happened to me. If I'd been out in the world, I'dve kept drinking 'til my liver exploded, or I'dve fucked myself to death. Instead, I dried out and I missed the plague.

MAN

They must have a lot of self-help books in the prison library.

PAUL

What makes you say that?

MAN

You've made it pretty obvious. You've either been locked up or on a desert island. Or amnesia.

PAUL
Amnesia would be nice. Yep, if I'd stayed free, it would've been a death sentence. That's called irony, youngster.

MAN
What'd you do?

PAUL
I don't wanna scare you away.

MAN
Okay, now I'm REALLY interested.

PAUL
A misunderstanding.

MAN
That's awfully vague. You gonna make me worm it out of you?

PAUL
(Playfully:) You're asking about some very intimate details. Things I might not be prepared to talk about in public. What's the best way to Bushwick?

MAN
Oh, honey, sorry...

PAUL
I've really like rapping with you.

MAN
Rapping?

(HE laughs)

PAUL
Let's keep this going. I'll pay you back for the cab.

MAN
Look, I'm really sorry, but that's not gonna work. I've gotta be up really early. And it's been a little TMI.

PAUL
TMI?

MAN
Too much information. It's been nice talking to you.

PAUL
Way back when, you would be TMT.

MAN
Huh?

PAUL
Totally my type.

MAN
You have a good night, Buddy.

(HE exits)

PAUL
We'll see each other again, I'm sure.

(A pause. The BARTENDER approaches)

BARTENDER
How you doin' over here?

PAUL
I need to learn to nurse.

BARTENDER
I'll get this one.

(HE pours PAUL another)

PAUL
Thanks. You've been here awhile, huh?

BARTENDER
Longer than I care to remember.

PAUL
The place looks pretty much the same as the last time I was here. And that was... long ago.

BARTENDER
The cobwebs have landmark status.

PAUL
Doesn't anybody cruise anymore?

BARTENDER
They do. They are.

PAUL
Everyone's looking at their phones.

BARTENDER
Exactly.

PAUL
Back in the day, there'd be a line of guys pinned up against that wall. We called it "the gauntlet." And what's with all the tourists?

BARTENDER
We're in the guidebooks.

PAUL
Nobody used to dare to vulture this far worst. Huh. West. This is going right to my head.

BARTENDER
You gonna need some help getting home?

PAUL
The night's young.

BARTENDER
Well, I'm here 'til closing if you want me to get you a cab.

PAUL
Don't worry about me. Sooner or later, I'll find someone.

(HE stares into the audience. A very
long pause)

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY.