

"FLETCH"

Final draft screenplay

by

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Based on the novel

by

Gregory McDonald

FADE IN:

EXT. CALIFORNIA BEACH - DAY

Seagulls squawk, and the waves pound, but we're not talking about Malibu Colony, here. This is a fairly rundown beach area, catering to lower-echelon surfers, vagrants, and strung out druggies of all ages, several of whom stand or sit on their haunches by a dilapidated old hamburger stand. Over the stand is a faded sign: "FAT SAM'S HAMBURGERS".

A simple but haunting electronic melody plays in the b.g.

INT. "FAT SAM'S" - DAY

Seated just inside the stand on a folding aluminum chair is a chubby man in his late thirties. He's wearing a stained valour sweat suit and a cap. This is Fat Sam. He's a dealer. Seated on the sand next to him is Fletch, a rangy man, early thirties, in jeans and a Magic Johnson T-shirt, nodding idly on a battered Casio music machine which he treats lovingly. This is the source of the title music.

FLETCH

So what do you figure?

FAT SAM

No idea.

FLETCH

No idea at all?

FAT SAM

Okay. Some idea.

FLETCH

Like when?

FAT SAM

Like tonight.

FLETCH
For sure?

FAT SAM
No, not for sure. When it comes, it comes. You gonna want some shit?

FLETCH
I think I'd rather have drugs.

FAT SAM
(shakes head and smiles)
Fletch...

FLETCH
Sorry. I find a little humor really brightens things up around here, don't you?

A young junkie with a black eye, Gummy, passes.

GUMMY
Hi Sam. Hi Fletch.

FLETCH
Hi Gummy. How's the eye?

GUMMY
It's okay. The cops did it.

FLETCH
I know.

GUMMY
They busted me last week.

FLETCH
They bust you every week.

GUMMY
I know. I got bad luck or something.

Gummy exits. Fletch and Fat Sam watch him go.

FLETCH
That kid spends any more time in jail he'll have to start paying rent.

WIDER ANGLE THROUGH BINOCULARS

Fat Sam and Fletch conclude their conversation. Fletch walks back among the drifters, the nervous, expectant junkies. He stops to talk to a young man propped up on his elbows on a

towel. Creasy.

CREASY AND FLETCH

FLETCH
Maybe tonight?

CREASY
Whaddyamean 'maybe'?

FLETCH
That's what he said.

CREASY
(getting desperate)
He doesn't know? How come he doesn't know?

FLETCH
I don't know how he doesn't know. He doesn't know.

CREASY
Sonofabitch.

FLETCH
Wonder who his supplier is.

CREASY
I have no idea.

FLETCH
I wasn't asking.

CREASY
He never leaves the beach, Fat Sam. Never leaves. Sits in that chair, he's outta junk. Then he suddenly gets up, he's got junk. So where does it come from? Through the sand?

FLETCH
I think that's highly unlikely, Creasy.

CREASY
(rolls over)
I ought to get some sleep.

FLETCH
Creasy, how old are you?

CREASY
Nineteen.

FLETCH
(a touch of sadness)
You're not taking real good care of
yourself.

WIDER - BINOCULARS AGAIN

Fletch takes his Casio and starts off the beach. The binocular angle follows him. A pelican crosses the water. The binoculars move off Fletch and follows the flight of the pelican as it swoops low over the ocean.

BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY

Fletch emerges into view, walking towards camera, when a Man steps into the immediate f.g., the binoculars at his side large in frame. Fletch stops.

MAN
Excuse me. I have something I'd like
to discuss with you.

FLETCH
What?

REVERSE

A trim man of approximately Fletch's age, wearing a perfectly tailored grey suit, is standing across from Fletch. This is Alan Stanwyk.

STANWYK
We can't talk about it here.

MASTER

FLETCH
Why not?

STANWYK
Because we can't.

FLETCH
Are you on a scavenger hunt of some
kind?

STANWYK
I want you to come to my house. Then
we'll talk.

FLETCH
I think you've got the wrong gal,
fella.

STANWYK

I'll give you a thousand dollars cash just to come to my house and listen to the proposition. If you reject the proposition, you keep the thousand, and your mouth shut.

FLETCH

Will this proposition entail my dressing up as Tina Turner?

STANWYK

(unsmiling, all business)

It is nothing of a sexual nature I assure you.

(Takes a thousand in cash from his pocket)

One thousand, just to listen. I don't see how you could turn that down Mr...

FLETCH

Nugent. Ted Nugent.

STANWYK

(shakes his hand)

Alan Stanwyk.

FLETCH

Charmed.

EXT. BERMAN STREET - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

A Jaguar XJ sedan goes up Berman Street, a dead end. Fletch's hand reaches out of the passenger window and empties sand out of a sneaker.

INT. JAGUAR - DAY

FLETCH

I always liked this part of town.

EXT. BERMAN STREET - DAY

The Jaguar continues on up Berman Street, stopping before massive iron gates marked PRIVATE PROPERTY – NO TRESPASSING -

STANWYK. The gates open electronically.

EXT. STANWYK HOUSE - DAY

The jaguar goes up the center of the drive toward a white-pillared mansion. The lawns and planting are spectacular.

INT. JAGUAR - DAY

Fletch stares out the window.

FLETCH

What a coincidence.

The car stops before the house.

STANWYK

What?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

as they get out of the car.

FLETCH

I came this close...
(holds fingers slightly
apart)
...to buying this place

Stanwyk ignores Fletch and starts toward the house. Fletch follows.

FLETCH

Then I found out Hopalong Cassidy
had shot himself in the game room.
That just blew it for me.

STANWYK

Who?

FLETCH

Hopalong Cassidy. Killed himself
here. Bow and arrow. Strange.

Stanwyk stops before the front door, stares at Fletch

STANWYK

What are you, doped up or something?

Fletch abruptly changes gears, stares at Stanwyk

FLETCH

I don't work for you yet, assface.
Don't talk to me like that.

STANWYK

(after a beat)
Come inside.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Stanwyk and Fletch enter. A Mexican Maid crosses.

STANWYK

Buenas dias.

MAID

Buenas dias.

She disappears.

FLETCH

I commend you on your Spanish.

Stanwyk doesn't reply, keeps on walking. He opens a set of double doors to the left of the winding staircase, then stands to one side, indicating that Fletch should enter.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Massive fireplace. Everything built in teak. Fletch enters, and Stanwyk closes the door behind them.

FLETCH

Ahh, the library. Masculine but sensitive.

Stanwyk wordlessly goes behind the desk

FLETCH

Really, I love what you've done with the place. Must have cost you... hundreds.

Stanwyk turns, looks out a pair of French doors behind his desk, then turns back.

STANWYK

Here's my proposition, Mr. Nugent.

FLETCH

I'm all ears.

STANWYK

I want you to murder me.

FLETCH

Even garrulous Fletch is stopped in his tracks by this remark, uttered in the most business-like manner.

STANWYK

STANWYK

Here. On Thursday. I'd like you to shoot me dead.

FLETCH

He just stares, barely breathing.

STANWYK

STANWYK

The reason I ask you to do me this service is that I am facing a long, painful, and most certain death. You see, I have bone cancer. I don't know if you know anything about bone cancer.

FLETCH

He shakes his head.

STANWYK

STANWYK

It doesn't get any worse than that. Just eats you up, bit by bit.

FLETCH

Finally regains the gift of speech.

FLETCH

You don't look sick, Mr. Stanwyk.

MASTER

STANWYK

I don't feel sick. Not yet. They tell me it'll start getting bad in about a month. After that... well, I'd rather not be around for it.

FLETCH

Why don't you try suicide?

STANWYK

My company has taken out a very large insurance policy on me. And I have a wife. Suicide would nullify my insurance. Murder does not.

FLETCH

So why pick me?

STANWYK

You're a drifter, a – pardon the expression – beach bum. No one would notice if you disappeared. I've watched you for a couple weeks.

FLETCH

Maybe I'm just on vacation.

STANWYK

Not with the scum you hang out with.
I've watched. I've thought. Its a
perfect scheme. I even have a perfect
escape plan for you.

FLETCH

Did it ever occur to you that I might
not want to kill you?

STANWYK

I've got fifty thousand dollars says
you will.

FLETCH

He chews his lip.

STANWYK

STANWYK

Fifty thousand and a guarantee you
won't get caught.

Stanwyk searches Fletch's face carefully for a reaction.
After several beats...

FLETCH

I'm still here.

STANWYK

(turns and goes to
the French doors)
I want it done Thursday evening,
around eight PM. My wife will be off
to the club for a committee meeting.
It's the staff's night off.
(pushes doors open)
These will be open.

FLETCH

FLETCH

Wouldn't they normally be locked?

MASTER

STANWYK

Sometimes yes, sometimes no. The
staff usually forgets.

FLETCH

I have the same problem with my help.

STANWYK

(goes on, unresponsive)

I will be here in the room, waiting for you. The safe will be open and there will be fifty thousand dollars in it. You will be wearing rubber gloves. Do you own rubber gloves?

FLETCH

I rent them. Monthly lease, with an option to buy.

STANWYK

In this drawer....

He opens the top drawer of his desk

INSIDE THE DRAWER

an enormous .357 Magnum.

MASTER

Stanwyk holds up the gun.

FLETCH

FLETCH

A .357.

MASTER

STANWYK

Very good. My .357. Use it and no one can trace it to you. The room will be in some disarray.

FLETCH

So it looks like a burglary attempt. You catch me. I get the gun, and shoot you.

STANWYK

Precisely. Are you a good shot?

FLETCH

(looking at the huge gun)

What's the difference? The noise'll kill you first.

STANWYK

Get me on the first shot, if you can.

FLETCH

I don't think you'll have to worry about that.

A beat. Stanwyk stares at Fletch.

STANWYK

Do you have a passport?

FLETCH

Sure, all drifters do.

STANWYK

Fine. After you kill me, take the Jaguar. The keys will be in the glove compartment.

FLETCH

Take it where?

Stanwyk starts to write down the information on a note pad.

STANWYK

LAX. Go to the Pan Am desk. There will be a ticket waiting for you.

FLETCH

Where am I going?

STANWYK

(hands Fletch the note)

Rio. Flight 306. Departs at eleven PM.

FLETCH

They serve dinner on the flight?

STANWYK

It'll be a first class-ticket. I'm sure you'll enjoy the ride. I would recommend staying down there at least a year, Mr. Nugent.

FLETCH

You've certainly thought this out, haven't you?

STANWYK

I am not someone who leaves a great deal to chance, Mr. Nugent.

FLETCH

You sure those doors will be open?

STANWYK

Yes. All you provide are the gloves, the passport, and the aim. I'll take care of everything else.

FLETCH

The gun, the money, the tickets, and the dying.

STANWYK

That's right.

FLETCH

You sure got the hard part.

STANWYK

What do you say, Mr. Nugent? You'll be doing me and my family a great service.

FLETCH

thinking it over.

STANWYK

STANWYK

Will you kill me?

FLETCH

FLETCH

Sure.

INT. NEWSPAPER BUILDING - DAY

Fletch pushes through the double glass doors, still dresses in a beach mufti – the jeans and Magic Johnson shirt, Puma sneakers.

INT. L.A. NEWS OFFICE - DAY

Fletch is greeted ad-lib by several people as he walks through the cavernous newspaper City Room.

REPORTER

Whoa, check out the beach boy!

SECOND REPORTER

Looking very good, Fletch.

FLETCH

Thank you so much
(to someone else)
Hey, Larry!

Larry, the young "morgue" researcher, hurries over and walks with Fletch. She is fun and flirty, and her feelings for Fletch fall just short of idolatry.

LARRY
Yo!

FLETCH
Can I steal you for a minute?

LARRY
Only if you promise not to return me.

FLETCH
Deal.

LARRY
(pointing to Fletch's
T-shirt)
'Magic' today, huh?

FLETCH
Kareem's in the wash. I need a favor.

LARRY
Shoot.

FLETCH
Don't say shoot, okay.

They pass the office of the city editor Frank Walker, fiftyish. Hold on Walker's office. Upon noticing Fletch, he jumps from his seat, edges his way past the two reporters in his office and runs outside.

WALKER
Fletch. Fletch!

FLETCH AND LARRY

They continue their walk.

FLETCH
Did you hear something?

LARRY
Not me.

FLETCH
Me neither. See what we've got on a

guy named Alan Stanwyk, okay? I need it right away.

WALKER

(running up to them)

Fletch, I take it by your presence here that the story is done. Tell me I'm right.

Fletch holds up a hand.

FLETCH

W-Y-K no 'c.' I'll be down in a minute.

LARRY

No problem, boss.

Larry peels off and Fletch now talks to Walker without breaking stride for his office.

WALKER

Fletch.

FLETCH

Frank, you look a little peaked. Wanna vomit?

WALKER

No, I want an answer, Is the story done?

FLETCH

Uh, almost.

WALKER

'Uh, almost' is not an answer. 'Yes Frank, it's all done': that's an answer.

FLETCH

(as he enters his cubicle)

And a damn fine one, I might add.

INT. FLETCH'S CUBICLE - DAY

A pile of mail is on his desk. On the walls are a team portrait of the Lakers, plus a couple of blow-ups of his column. Fletch writes under the name of Jane Doe. An unused word processor is on his desk, but the keyboard has been moved aside to make room for an old, much-used Royal typewriter.

He bounces some waste paper off the monitor into a

strategically placed waste can. (A lot of crumpled papers lie on the floor all around the can.)

FLETCH

Two...

WALKER

Irwin...

FLETCH

Oh, I hate it when he calls me that.

WALKER

Irwin, professional journalism time, now. Go back to the goddamn beach and finish the goddamn story!

FLETCH

I will, Frank, I will. Something came up, okay?

WALKER

No it's not okay. You have to have this in by tomorrow. Did you see the ad we ran Sunday?

FLETCH

I never read the paper.

WALKER

...never reads the paper...

Walker goes through a pile of unread newspapers on Fletch's desk, finds the Sunday paper.

FLETCH

What's the spread on the game tonight?

WALKER

I don't know.
(holds up paper)
Look!

FLETCH

Looks great.

INSERT - AD

A full-page ad.

"NEXT WEEK A "JANE DOE" SPECIAL REPORT: DRUGS ON OUR BEACHES -
SHAME OF THE CITY"

MASTER

FLETCH

'Shame of Our City' is so good.

WALKER

Now, Irwin, try to follow me. You can't run the ad and then not run the story.

FLETCH

Why not? Oh shit... really?

Walker just stares at him.

FLETCH

Just kidding, Frank. You'll have the story and you'll be damn proud of it.

WALKER

You broke it? You know the source?

FLETCH

Practically.

WALKER

ready to kill.

WALKER

What's 'practically'? Is it Fat Sam? You said you had pictures of him....

MASTER

FLETCH

I have pictures of him. Dealing...

WALKER

So let's go! We run the pictures.

FLETCH

He's not the story! There's a source behind him.

WALKER

Who?

FLETCH

Well, there we're in a gray area.

WALKER

How gray?

FLETCH

I'd say charcoal.

WALKER

(straining for control)

I'm going to bite out your eyeballs,
you know that?

FLETCH

Frank, you animal, I love it. I'll
have the story by Thursday night, I
swear to God.

(to himself as he
exits)

I hope.

INSERT -

NEWSPAPER CLIPPING ALAN STANWYK NEW V/P BOYD AVIATION

A photograph of Stanwyk; a head shot. Hands turn the clipping
paper. Next clipping: a social page spread on the wedding of
Alan Stanwyk. ("GAIL BOYD WED TO ALAN STANWYK.")

LARRY (V.O.)

Everything's recent.

FLETCH AND LARRY

Fletch and Larry examine the file.

FLETCH

'Mr. Stanwyk, of Provo, Utah, is a
former commercial pilot.'

LARRY

Married Boyd Aviation. He's no dummy,
that's serious coin.

INSERT - CLIPPING - TIGHTER ANGLE

FLETCH (V.O.)

'Stanwyk's parents, Marvin and Velma
Stanwyk, also of Provo, were unable
to attend the wedding.'

FLETCH AND LARRY

LARRY

(affected accent)

Not our kind of people, you
understand.

FLETCH

(points to his back)

Spot right here.

She scratches.

FLETCH
Thanks.

LARRY
You doing a story on this guy?

FLETCH
Maybe.

He pours over some more clippings, then stops at one.

INSERT CLIPPING

headlined: "CANCER SOCIETY BENEFIT". A photograph of Alan and Gail Stanwyk, with a gray haired man and his wife.

FLETCH (V.O.)
'...Stanwyk, blahblahblah, with internist Doctor Joseph Dolen.'

FLETCH AND LARRY

FLETCH
I wonder if that's his doctor.

LARRY
Only one way to find out.

INT. DOCTOR'S EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Fletch, stripped to the waist, is being examined by Dr. Joseph Dolen, a rather imperious physician.

DR. DOLEN
So where do you know Alan from?

FLETCH
We play tennis at the club.

DR. DOLEN
Really. The California Racquet Club?

FLETCH
Yes.

DR. DOLEN
That's my club too. I haven't seen you there.

FLETCH
Well, I haven't played in a while because of these kidney pains.

DR. DOLEN

Right, and how long have you had these pains, Mr. Barber?

FLETCH

That's Babar.

DR. DOLEN

Two bs?

FLETCH

One. B-a-b-a-r.

DR. DOLEN

That's two.

FLETCH

But not right next to each other. I thought that's what you meant.

DR. DOLEN

Arnold Babar. Isn't there a children's book about an elephant named Babar?

FLETCH

I don't know. I don't have any.

DR. DOLEN

No children?

FLETCH

No books. No elephants either. No really good elephant books.

DR. DOLEN

(eyes Fletch curiously)

Still, it'd an odd name. I don't remember seeing it on the club registry.

Fletch's eyes drift to Dolen's side table with its unnerving assortment of medical paraphernalia.

FLETCH

Oh, I don't belong formally. I've gone with my aunt.

DR. DOLEN

Your aunt?

FLETCH

Mrs. Smith.

DR. DOLEN

Joan or Margaret Smith.

FLETCH

Right.

DR. DOLEN

Well, which one?

FLETCH

Margaret.

DR. DOLEN

Funny old bird.

FLETCH

Is she ever. I've got some stories....

DR. DOLEN

I'll bet. Shame about Ed.

FLETCH

(vamping)

It was. Really a shame. To go so suddenly.

DR. DOLEN

Oh, he was dying for years.

FLETCH

Sure, but the end was so sudden.

DR. DOLEN

He was in intensive care for eight weeks.

FLETCH

Yes, but the very end, when he actually died, that was extremely sudden.

(quickly)

You know, Alan and I were recently speaking of dying. Told me Boyd Aviation took out a lot of insurance on him. You must have to be in some kind of perfect health to get that kind of policy.

DR. DOLEN

Bend over and drop your pants, Mr. Babar.

FLETCH

Oh really, there's no need to – we don't want to do that...

DR. DOLEN

Just relax....

FLETCH

Honest, I feel fine. You better be married.

Fletch looks alarmed as Dolan pushes him into position. Dolan puts on a plastic glove.

CLOSE - FLETCH

FLETCH

Did I say 'kidneys'? I meant my ear.
Maybe I should see an ear dahhh –
(as Dolan starts to
probe from behind)
Ever serve time?

DR. DOLEN

Breathe easy...

FLETCH

Anyway, I'm surprised Alan got the policy so easily. I know there's a history of cancer in the family.

DR. DOLEN

(noncommittally)
There is?

FLETCH

Whoa, look out there. You really need the whole fist?

DR. DOLEN

Just relax.

FLETCH

(reacts to a poke)
Gee, Alan's been looking kind of sick lately. Is he all right?

DR. DOLEN

I can't discuss another patient. You know that.
(rising into frame
and washing up)
Well, I can't find anything wrong with you.

FLETCH

I'm sure it's not for a lack of looking. Maybe I should get a real complete physical. You give Alan an annual, don't you?

DR. DOLEN

Yeah, we check you into Mt. Hebron for a few days, run lots of tests, charge a bundle. You can pull your pants up now.

FLETCH

I hope they still fit. Do I get to keep the glove?

DR. DOLEN

Tell the nurse when you've got a few free days. She'll make all the arrangements.

FLETCH

Thanks, Doc. Maybe I'll come back with a date. Or an elephant.

INT. HOSPITAL RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Fletch is dressed in shorts, a clean shirt, and is carrying a doctor's bag. He is wearing a stethoscope around his neck, has a beeper on, a lot of pencils and other doctor gadgets. He's standing at the directory

DIRECTORY

Combing it with his eyes, he sees the directory:

PATHOLOGY - THIRD FLOOR

B. ROSENSTIEN, M.D.

H. ROSENBLATT, M.D.

P. ROSENWOHL, M.D.

Fletch goes to a door marked "Stairs."

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Fletch abruptly empties his doctor's bag and puts on a long green gown, a cap and a face mask. He plugs the stethoscope in his ears, removes miscellaneous file folders filled with papers, closes the bag, and heads for Pathology.

INT. PATHOLOGY DEPARTMENT - DAY

It's at the end of a long hall, and adjacent to the Autopsy Room and the Pathology Records Room. Over his shoulder we can see into the autopsy room where a gowned doctor is happily performing an autopsy.

RECORDS NURSE

(to Fletch)

Identification please.

Fletch hastily fumbles through his wallet, deftly dropping and picking up the papers he has brought with him.

FLETCH

It's me doctor Rosenpenis. I just have to take another peek at Alan Stanwyk's file. What have they done with this place?

RECORDS NURSE

(confused at all his activity)
Nothing. They're still there.

FLETCH

Right. Fine.

Still dropping and picking up, shuffling and collating, Fletch starts toward the Files Room, when the doctor performing the autopsy yells at him.

PATHOLOGIST

Hey you!

Fletch stiffens and turns around.

PATHOLOGIST

Give me a hand for a second would you doctor?

Fletch hesitates.

PATHOLOGIST

Come on, come on.

Reluctantly, he goes to the autopsy table, and the cadaver thereon, which is covered by a sheet, except for the mid-section.

TWO SHOT - FLETCH AND PATHOLOGIST

(Note: from here on we never see the body.)

PATHOLOGIST

(poking around)
Have you ever see a spleen this large?

FLETCH

(trying not to look)
Not recently.

PATHOLOGIST

Grab this, will you?

FLETCH

Uh, I'm not really prepared. My hands aren't sterilized.

PATHOLOGIST

You're not going to make this guy any sicker.

We hear a squishing noise as he grabs something large and wet and plops it into Fletch's hand. Fletch stands there holding something icky out of frame, looking uncomfortably up at the ceiling, the floor, anywhere but at the cadaver or at the stuff in his hand. Meanwhile, we hear sounds of further incisions, and the deflating of an organ.

PATHOLOGIST

You never really get used to the smell, do you?

Fletch's eyes roll up, and he falls to the floor in a dead faint.

INT. RECORDS ROOM - DAY - MINUTES LATER

Fletch is on a couch, beginning to regain consciousness. The Records Nurse hovers over him.

RECORDS NURSE

Are you all right, Doctor?

FLETCH

Where am I?

RECORDS NURSE

You're in the Records Room.

FLETCH

I'm fine.

RECORDS NURSE

Can I get you something?

FLETCH

Have you got a make-shift plywood pillory? Heh Heh, just kidding.

RECORDS NURSE

Doctor Holmes went to get you some smelling salts. He was quite surprised that you fainted.

FLETCH

Well, I didn't want to say anything, but I thought the dead man was my brother.

RECORDS NURSE
Oh my God!

FLETCH
It's all right. It wasn't him but
that spleen was a splitting image.

He sits up and sees that just outside the glass is none other
that Dr. Joseph Dolen, talking with the pathologist.

FLETCH
Oh, God, I think I'm about to
hyperventilate. Have you got a paper
bag, or something.

RECORDS NURSE
Yes, right away.

She goes to get the paper bag, and Fletch turns his back on
Dr. Dolen to go through the file cabinet. By the time the
Nurse returns, he's got Stanwyk's file.

RECORDS NURSE
Here you are, Doctor.

FLETCH
Thank you.

He puts the bag over his mouth and breathes deeply as he
continues the conversation with her. (From time to time, we
see Dr. Dolen in the b.g. looking over, but does not come
into the records room or question what's happening).

RECORDS NURSE
Is there anything particular you're
looking for?

FLETCH
My associates did a biopsy on this
man recently.
(thumbs through file)
He's supposed to have a melanoma, or
a carcinoma, some kind of noma. Hmmm.
I can't seem to find any record of
it.

RECORDS NURSE
(taking the file)
Well, if he had one, it would
certainly be in here.
(searches)
Wait. Here it is. Yep. Surgical
removal of two moles. Tissue was
benign.

FLETCH
That's it?

RECORDS NURSE
(shows him the file)
That's it.

FLETCH
(reading it)
This was last month. So Alan Stanwyk
does not have cancer.

RECORDS NURSE
I guess not.

FLETCH
(very puzzled)
He'll be so relieved.

EXT. SANTA MONICA STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Fletch pulls up in front of his building, a 1970's cinderblock apartment complex. Fletch parks his car halfway up the curb, gets out and spots a Mercedes coupe. He starts running toward the rear of his building.

EXT. REAR OF THE BUILDING - DAY

Fletch starts climbing up the fire escape of his building.

FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

Fletch reaches the second floor. He's huffing and puffing.

FLETCH
Christ.

REVERSE

Attorney Charles Gillett is waiting for him on the second floor fire escape. Gillett smiles.

GILLETT
Refusal to pay alimony is a jailable
offense, Fletch.

MASTER

FLETCH
What about breaking and entering?
(points to Gillett's
coat)
Are you wearing anything under that?

GILLETT

I did not break nor enter. I simply chose an advisable location to await my client's delinquent husband.

FLETCH

I hate to conduct business on the lanai. Why don't we step inside.

Fletch takes out a credit card and jimmys open the lock on the window.

INT. FLETCH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fletch climbs in through the window, followed by Gillett. His small apartment is just barely furnished. A low basketball hoop is attached to the wall. Fletch takes a ball, offers it to Gillett.

FLETCH

One on one?

Gillett shakes his head. Fletch does a reverse shot and misses, sending a plastic globe lamp crashing to the floor.

FLETCH

And the foul.

Fletch takes a second, successful shot.

GILLETT

You owe Wendy nine hundred and eighteen dollars.

FLETCH

(still playing b-ball)

She doesn't need the money, for crissakes. She's living with Monty. I know it.

GILLETT

I don't know what you're referring to. Wendy maintains her own residence.

FLETCH

It stinks. I thought woman were independent now.

GILLETT

Until she remarries, Fletch.

FLETCH

Hey, shut up, okay? I just hate this.

GILLETT

I empathize with your plight, Fletch.
However, you threw her out.

FLETCH

She was sleeping with everybody. The
cable TV guy. You can't get lower
than that...

GILLETT

You should have proved that in a
court of law.

FLETCH

My lawyer was a bum.

GILLETT

(smiles)
I agree.

Fletch puts down the basketball, picks up a stack of mail
and rifles through it.

FLETCH

I think he was sleeping with Wendy,
too.

GILLETT

You may be right.

FLETCH

Are you serious?

GILLETT

(shrugs)
That's history, Fletch. You owe us
nine hundred and eighteen dollars.

FLETCH

Wait a minute! Our problems might be
solved.

Fletch holds up an envelope with Ed McMahon's picture on it.

FLETCH

(continuing)
I think I just won a million dollars!

He opens it and looks inside, feigning disappointment.

FLETCH

(continuing)
Damn... lost again. Sorry.

GILLETT

This is no joke. If some kind of

payment isn't made, we're going to have to contact the paper and garnish your wages.

Fletch sighs, takes out the envelope given to him by Stanwyk. He hands a thousand dollars to Gillett.

GILLETT
Cash. I'm impressed.

FLETCH
Found it in a cab. That's a grand.
Apply the difference to next month.

GILLETT
Till then.

Gillett smiles and exits.

KITCHEN - DAY

Fletch opens the fridge. Inside are two six-packs of Coors, a jar of Miracle Whip, a half a cucumber, and a brown head of lettuce. Fletch takes a beer and slams the door shut with such force that we hear breakage inside.

MASTER - APARTMENT - DAY

In a foul mood, Fletch leaves the kitchen, and wanders into the living room. It has the personality of an Abbey Rents.

He picks up the TV remote control. The television clicks on. Chick Hearn is with Jabbar, during a Laker pregame warmup.

FLETCH
Thank God.

Fletch settles back.

TELEVISION

Hearn is gushing over Jabbar.

FLETCH

He watches contemplatively. He is bone tired.

TELEVISION

HEARN
How about Fletch?

JABBAR
Well, Fletch has been great. He's super-strong, really clogs the middle

for us, boxes out, gets the bounds....

FLETCH

He smiles and nods, deep in fantasy.

TELEVISION

HEARN

Now here's a key play in Tuesday
night's game...

Hearn and Jabbar look down at a television monitor.

FLETCH

He's half asleep.

JABBAR (V.O.)

Here I am dishing off to Fletch...

Fletch raises an eyebrow.

TELEVISION

There's Fletch, his hair in an Afro, dressed in Laker gold.
He's on the receiving end of a Jabbar pass, making an easy
layup.

HEARN (V.O.)

Gosh, he makes it look so easy!

FLETCH

asleep, smiling.

PRACTICE COURT - DAY

Gail Stanwyk is on the other side of the net, loading tennis
balls into the automatic serve machine. She is in her late
twenties and quite attractive, but in a much more natural
way than other women we see here. She is good natured and
effervescent.

Fletch steps up to the entrance of the court.

FLETCH

Gail Stanwyk!

She looks up. He enters the court with great delight.

FLETCH

I haven't seen you since the wedding,
Jeez, you look great.

MRS. STANWYK

(genuinely pleased)
I do? Oh, isn't that sweet, thank you. I have to confess something to you. I must have been pretty plowed at your wedding. I really don't have the faintest idea who you are.

FLETCH
Huh? No, not my wedding. Yours.

MRS. STANWYK
Oh, mine! Thank God.
(furrows her brow)
Actually, that doesn't make it any better, does it? Are you a friend of Alan's?

FLETCH
We used to fly together. I'm... John.

MRS. STANWYK
(snaps her fingers in happy recognition)
John! You used to fly together!

Her smile segues right into an "I'm sorry, bit I give up" expression.

MRS. STANWYK
John who?

FLETCH
John Ultrarelamensky.

MRS. STANWYK
(bursts out in laughter)
Oh, I'm sorry. It's a beautiful name, really.

FLETCH
It's Scotch-Rumanian.

MRS. STANWYK
(still loading tennis balls)
That's a strange combination.

FLETCH
So were my parents.

MRS. STANWYK
Mind if I keep practicing? I need to work on my ground stroke a little.

FLETCH

Please.

As Mrs. Stanwyk crosses to the other side of the net, a waiter approaches Fletch.

WAITER

Excuse me sir. Are you a guest of the club?

FLETCH

Yes, I'm with the Underhills.

WAITER

They just left, sir.

FLETCH

They'll be back. He had to go in for a urinalysis.

WAITER

Would you care for a drink while you're waiting? I can put it on the Underhill bill.

FLETCH

Great. I'll have a Bloody Mary and a steak sandwich.

WAITER

Very good sir.

The Waiter leaves, and Fletch watches as Mrs. Stanwyk tries to return the serving machine's serves. She swings so goofily that she can't even get the racket on the ball. She has clearly never taken a lesson in her life, and it is doubtful if she will ever make contact with a tennis ball in this century.

MRS. STANWYK

Damn, I thought I had that one.

FLETCH

You should play with much larger tennis balls. So how's Alan?

MRS. STANWYK

What are you asking me for? He's so busy lately I hardly see him. And he's been so preoccupied.

FLETCH

Preoccupied with what?

MRS. STANWYK

Oh, personal stuff. Look! I hit one!

Indeed, she has. Strait up. She and Fletch crane their necks upward to follow it's flight.

FLETCH

Good. Lobs are a very important part of the game.

She completely misses the next one.

FLETCH

Why do you keep doing this?

MRS. STANWYK

I love the outfits.

The next one she hits with the handle.

FLETCH

Try stepping into the ball with your left foot.

He demonstrates a swing. She puts on a determined face, makes an awkward step and swings at the next ball, missing it completely, and letting the racket fly.

FLETCH

There, much better.

Mrs. Stanwyk laughs happily and dodges the machine-served balls to walk over to Fletch. When she's almost up to him, she turns back to the serving machine and points a finger at it, as if addressing a pet dog.

MRS. STANWYK

Stay!

(to Fletch)

I must be having an off day. I'm really a fabulous player.

FLETCH

I have this effect on lots of women.

MRS. STANWYK

I bet you do.

FLETCH

Say, the reason I asked about Alan is that I bumped into him this morning and you know what I can't figure out?

MRS. STANWYK

(catching him in his lie)

Alan's in Utah.

FLETCH

(after a beat)

I can't figure out why I went to Utah for the morning.

MRS. STANWYK

Okay. I'm delighted to have someone to talk to, and you're very cute, so I'm very flattered, but I'm also very married so you may as well forget – You are trying to hit on me, aren't you?

FLETCH

(thinks, then nods)

I'm such a heel. How'd you guess?

MRS. STANWYK

If I had a nickel for every one of Alan's flyboy buddies who tried to pick me up, I'd be a rich woman.

FLETCH

You are a rich woman.

MRS. STANWYK

See what I mean?

She trots back to her ball machine. Fletch calls after her.

FLETCH

What's he doing in Utah?

MRS. STANWYK

None of your business, now go away. You're throwing my game off.

Fletch chuckles – he likes this woman – and exits.

BOYD AVIATION - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A sprawling, Hughes-like complex.

FLETCH (O.S.)

...then who walks in but George Bush. He took one look around the room...

INT. JOHN BOYD'S OFFICE - DAY

A Secretary is serving coffee to Fletch (now dressed in a three piece suit) and John Boyd, Gail Stanwyk's father. At seventy, he is probably Chairman Emeritus now; no longer running the day-to-day operations of the company, and thus

somewhat grateful from the company.

FLETCH

...and said 'Sorry Mr. President, I thought it was Saturday.'

Boyd Laughs.

FLETCH

I thought I was going to die.

SECRETARY

Sugar, Mr. Poon?

FLETCH

Thank you.

Fletch notices a framed wedding photograph on the credenza behind Boyd. It is of Alan and Gail Stanwyk, Alan beaming a shit-eating grin and holding a happy thumbs-up.

Fletch waits as the Secretary leaves the room, then begins speaking confidentially.

FLETCH

Okay.

He opens his attaché case, allowing Boyd to see an airline ticket, a Washington Post, and a file stenciled "Confidential/S.E.C. Use only."

FLETCH

First of all, let me just reiterate that this is not a formal investigation. I'm not going through formal channels here, because if Alan Stanwyk is not involved in any improprieties, then nobody has to know I was even –

BOYD

Alan Stanwyk is not involved in improprieties. Where the hell does the S.E.C. come off –

Fletch is nodding sympathetically and holds up a quieting hand. Boyd stops in mid-tirade, and watches as Fletch reaches into his briefcase and seemingly turns off a tape recorder.

FLETCH

Look. You know that and I know that, but somebody's bucking for a promotion. I think it's that bozo, Hanrahan, I can't be sure. Anyway, unless I go back there with something,

you and your son-in-law are next week's scapegoats.

BOYD
Unbelievable.

FLETCH
I feel like dirt. They even want to know what he's doing in Utah?

BOYD
Utah?
(laughs)
Jesus Christ! First of all, Alan Stanwyk does not own one share of stock. The three million dollars for the ranch in Provo comes from my daughter who converted some of her personal holdings, not company holdings. Now if anybody in DC wants to make something of that, bring 'em on. Until then, get the hell out of my face.

FLETCH
(stands and closes
briefcase)
God I admire you.

BOYD
By the way: what kind of name is Poon?

FLETCH
Comanche Indian.

ALAN STANWYK'S OFFICE - DAY

Fletch breezes in, right up to the Secretary, whose nameplate reads MADELINE TURNER.

FLETCH
(rapidly)
Oh, Margie, sorry, Frieda lost the number of Alan's realtor in Provo. Can you give it to me real quick?

MARGIE
Jim Swarthout?

FLETCH
Yeah.

She writes it out for him.

MARGIE

And, I'm sorry, who are you again?

FLETCH

(grabbing the paper)

Frieda's boss.

MARGIE

(calling after him)

Who's Frieda?

FLETCH

(out the door)

My secretary.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Pan across the beach...

FLETCH (O.S.)

Larry, it's me...

Fletch is in a phone booth on the sidewalk next to the beach, keeping an eye on "Fat Sam's."

FLETCH

See if you've got anything in Stanwyk's background from when he lived in Utah. Also check on a realtor in Provo named Swarthout. And tell Frank I'm crazy about him and I'd like to discuss his maybe moving in with me.

We hear police sirens. Fletch looks O.S.

FLETCH

Later.

He hangs up.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW - FOUR SQUAD CARS

have pulled up to the beach, lights flashing. The druggies are dispersing.

Creasy is running towards Fletch.

CREASY

Fletch! Take off!

FLETCH

He steps out onto the beach, and starts towards the cops.

MASTER

CREASY
What are you doing?

MASTER

Everyone is scattering. The cops run past everyone, and approach Gummy.

FLETCH AND CREASY

FLETCH
They're after Gummy again. It's weird.

Fletch keeps moving toward the police.

CREASY
(out of breath)
Fletch, slow down.

GUMMY AND THE COPS

Gummy trips and falls in the sand. A Cop kicks him in the head.

COP #1
Let's go, Gummy.

FLETCH AND CREASY

still running toward the cops.

FLETCH
Hey, what are you doing?

CREASY
Fletch, this is dumb.

FLETCH
You don't have to run with me, Crease.

MASTER

The cops drag Gummy toward a squad car.

ANGLE - "FAT SAM'S"

Fat Sam peers out, watching the action.

MASTER

Fletch approaches the cops.

FLETCH

Why are you beating up on that kid?

No response from the cops.

FLETCH

He's defenseless, and you kick the crap out of him. What do you want from –

One of the cops turns and, in one smooth motion, kicks Fletch in the balls. Fletch sinks to the ground.

SQUAD CAR

Gummy is packed into the squad car.

FLETCH

He rises slowly from the sand. He is in great pain. He starts after the cops again.

CREASY

CREASY

Fletch!

MASTER

FLETCH

What goddamn right do you have to take him?

The cop car starts off. Fletch picks up a rock, hurls it at the cop car. It smashes the rear window.

CREASY

CREASY

Fletch!!!

MASTER

The cop cars go off. Fletch bends over. He's hurting. Creasy comes over to him.

CREASY

Hey you're really nuts.

FLETCH

(breathless)

They didn't do anything.

CREASY

What? What are you talking about?

FLETCH

I busted their window, they didn't do anything.

CREASY

You're lucky.

FLETCH

Not luck. They don't want me.

POLICE CARS

In a caravan, they head down the highway.

FLETCH

He turns and looks towards "Fat Sam's."

FAT SAM'S

Fat Sam watches the police cars go down the road, then turns and looks towards the ocean. He pulls his Angels cap down over his head.

CLOSE - FLETCH

He is focusing on something, but has not figured it out yet.

FLETCH

Gummy and two cops...

INT. FRANK WALKER'S OFFICE - DAY

FLETCH

Cool your tool, Frank, I need a little more time. I think I'm really on to something here.

WALKER

You're onto something. That's good. What?

FLETCH

I really don't want to spoil your surprise, Frank. Why don't you read it tomorrow?

Larry, knocks on the door.

WALKER

What do you want?

Larry points to Fletch.

WALKER

Speak, don't point!

LARRY

I need Fletch for a second.

FLETCH

She needs me, Frank.

Fletch turns to Larry. Push to two shot.

LARRY

Nothing on Gail Stanwyk, nothing on Jim Swarthout. But I did —

FLETCH

That's okay, Lar. I gotta put this on the back burner for a while.

Larry starts to exit.

WALKER

Just give me a hint, all right?

FLETCH

All right. Maybe there are some crooked cops involved in all this.

LARRY

(stopping in the doorway)

Did you say cops?

FLETCH

Yeah.

LARRY

That's one thing I did find. It's from last month, so it was in the unsorted pile.

She hands Fletch a clipping.

INSERT - CLIPPING

It is an article and photograph of the newly-appointed citizens on the Police Advisory Board. One of them is Alan Stanwyk.

WALKER

What's that?

MASTER

Fletch pockets the photo.

FLETCH
(puzzled)
More cops.
(then)
I think I gotta go to Utah, Frank.

WALKER
Utah?

FLETCH
Yeah. It's wedged in between Wyoming
and Nevada. I'm sure you've seen
pictures.

WALKER
What about finding the source?

FLETCH
I have some ideas.

WALKER
Who? Donnie and Marie?

FLETCH
Very possibly. Come on, say yes.
I'll buy you a shirt.

WALKER
Go to transportation, get a ticket.

LARRY
(to Fletch as he exits)
My hero.

FLETCH
Nothing to it.

EXT. PROVO, UTAH - AIRPORT -DAY

A Western Airlines flight arrives.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DUSK

Fletch's rented Fairmont speeds down the highway.

INT. FAIRMONT - FLETCH

wearing a polyester brown suit – fiddles with the radio.
Snatches of programs are heard: "easy listening" music;
country-and-western; a revival show; a call in show – "Hi,
you're on the air." "Hello, Bob, I'd like to discuss the
death penalty. As you know, Jesus was in favor of it –"
Fletch whistles and switches the radio off. He turns the car
off the interstate.

EXT. TRAVELODGE - LATE AFTERNOON - ESTABLISHING SHOT

as Fletch drives up.

INT. TRAVELODGE MOTEL ROOM

Fletch dials the phone in the small, sparsely furnished room.

FLETCH

Hi, Jim Swarthout, please. Oh, hello,
my name is Igor Stravinski and I'm
looking for some ranch property.

INT. SWARTHOUT REALTY

Jim Swarthout is a rugged-looking man in his forties. He sits in the den/office of his house talking on the phone, surrounded by pine-paneling, property tract maps and wall-mounted animal heads.

SWARTHOUT

Good, Mr. Starinski, what'd you have
in mind?

(pause)

Uh huh. Oh are you a friend of Alan's?

INT. FLETCH'S MOTEL ROOM

FLETCH

No, I just heard some people at the
club talking about the property you
sold him, and the way it was
described, three million sounded
like a pretty good price.

(pause)

What?

Fletch pauses again to listen, flummoxed over what he has just heard.

FLETCH

Are you sure?

(pause)

Of course. I guess I was misinformed.

Listen, I'd love to come out and see
you anyway. When are you available?

INT. SWARTHOUT REALTY

SWARTHOUT

Well, I'm about to close up shop and
go out for the evening. How about
first thing in the AM?

(pause)

Great. See you tomorrow.

INT. FLETCH'S MOTEL ROOM

FLETCH
Tomorrow.

Fletch hangs up, very interested.

EXT. SWARTHOUT REALTY - NIGHT

Fletch stops his car in front of the ranch-style house. A lighted sign in the yard indicate that this is indeed Swarthout Realty, but the house is dark; no one appears to be home. Somewhere in the yard a dog barks viciously, frantically.

DOG

A killer Doberman is tied up behind a chain link fence. At the sight of the intruding Fletch, the dog's lip is practically over his nose, his fangs are poised and gleaming.

FLETCH

FLETCH
(getting out of his
car)
What's your name fella? Fluff? Pom-
pom?

DOG

completely bananas.

FLETCH

Fletch reaches the front door and looks around. He rings the bell. The dog yowls even louder. Fletch waits. And waits. He rings again. Satisfied that no one is home, he tries the front door. Of course, it is locked. He takes out a credit card, starts to jimmy the lock, and actually seems to be making progress when his credit card snaps in half.

FLETCH
Shit.

He pockets the broken credit card, steps back and looks over the house for another possible point of entry.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW - AN UPSTAIRS WINDOW

Double-hung. Slightly warped, so that the upper half does not exactly true with the lower half.

FLETCH

looks around to see how to climb up to it.

MASTER

There's only one way. Climb up the side of the chain link fence which separates him from the murderous dog. Fletch approaches it warily. The dog is practically foaming. Fletch reaches out a hand to get a hold of the fence, and the dog just about rips the fence apart.

FLETCH
(in his best Barbara
Woodhouse)
Sit-tuh!

This has no effect, so Fletch backs up a few yards, take a deep breath for courage and makes a headlong running start for the fence, using his momentum to get to the top before the dog eats him. He grabs hold and scrambles wildly for the top. He makes it.

FLETCH
Roll over. Play dead. Good boy.

Fletch now grabs hold of the eave on the side of the house, and very carefully pulls himself onto it. It's only about ten feet from there to the vulnerable window, but the angle of the eave is rather steep, and the going is treacherous. As he makes his way, he keeps a wary eye on the dog who keeps leaping up, seemingly getting closer and closer to taking a giant bite out of Fletch's backside.

FLETCH
You any relation to Doctor Dolan?

Now he's at the window. He tries to open it, but despite it's warped appearance from the ground, it is locked. Fletch looks at the lock and can't believe it. He sighs. He shakes his head. He smashes the window with his elbow.

FLETCH
I hate this.

He climbs into the darkened house, leaving the enraged dog to run furiously around the fenced in yard that surrounds the house.

INT. SWARTHOUT'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Fletch tiptoes though the upstairs bedroom and down the stairs. From outside, he can still hear the dog snarling and barking.

INT. SWARTHOUT'S HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

As Fletch passes through the living room he sees the dog snarling at him through the living room window.

INT. SWARTHOUT'S DEN - NIGHT

Fletch enters and looks around.

The dog is now outside the den window.

FLETCH

Make sure nobody comes in, okay?

He goes to the file cabinet and opens it. He flips through the "S" section. "Stanwyk". He pulls it. He thumbs through various documents until he finds what he's looking for. A copy of a deed. He pulls it out.

INSERT - DEED - CLOSE ON THE PURCHASE PRICE

Three Thousand Dollars.

FLETCH (O.S.)

So much for your three million dollar ranch.

FLETCH

takes out a tiny document camera – the kind spies use in the movies – and loads it fumblingly. Then he props the deed up on top of the file cabinet, and moves a lamp into position to light it. Just as he snaps his first shot, we hear a terrible crashing sound.

WINDOW

The murderous Doberman has made a crashing leap right through the den window, sending glass flying everywhere, and he streaks across the room to rip Fletch into bite-sized shreds.

MASTER

Fletch bolts and the dog flies into the file cabinet, knocking it over, scattering all the files over the floor. Fletch dashes for the nearest door, and runs through it just as the dog slams into it.

INT. KITCHEN

Fletch is now holed up in the kitchen, panting to catch his breath, feeling the full course of adrenaline pumping through his terrified veins. He sees that he can get to his car by climbing through the window. But in order to get to the window he has to let go of the door, and that would allow the dog to get in.

Looking around frantically, holding the door shut against the furious slamming of the dog, he reaches for and finally grabs a mop which he props under the door knob, thus keeping the door shut. Letting go of the door gingerly, he satisfies himself that the dog cannot get in, and he makes his break for the window.

He vaults up onto the counter top and is just about to break the window when he sees that the dog's continued efforts are about to result in opening the door.

Fletch knows he has only seconds. Standing on top of the counter, he opens the door of the restaurant-sized refrigerator next to him, and just as the snarling dog bursts into the room Fletch starts hurling food at it. A pot roast, sliced turkey with stuffing, a couple of filet mignons. The dog is momentarily distracted. Fletch pours a large bucket of cranberry sauce on the dog.

FLETCH
Suck on this Cujo!

Then he dumps an equally large bucket of mashed potatoes. With the dog temporarily vision-impaired, Fletch bolts.

EXT. SWARTHOUT HOUSE - NIGHT

Fletch runs as fast as humanly possible towards his car, fishing for his keys as he goes. The dog – having shaken off the people-food from his hateful face – is seconds behind and closing.

Fletch makes it to his car, hops inside, and slams the door just as the dog leaps furiously at the windshield.

INT. FLETCH'S CAR

Fletch makes it to his car, huffing and puffing. The dog jumps across the closed window, snarling and bug-eyed with hatred.

Fletch smiles, waves at the dog, and starts taking its picture with his little camera.

FLETCH
Gimme a smile! There you go... oh,
that's a nice one...
(starting the car)
Everything's fine, now... go take a
little nap...

Fletch is ready to pull out, but the dog is still leaping madly at the window. Fletch points back to the house.

FLETCH
Look! Defenseless babies!

The dog turns to look and Fletch guns it.

FLETCH
That dog is such an asshole.

EXT. FLETCH'S APARTMENT HOUSE - DAY

Fletch parks his car halfway up on the curb, steps out carrying a small overnight bag. He is unshaven and looks beat.

INT. APARTMENT HOUSE - CORRIDOR

Fletch comes down the hall singing "Billie Jean" in an excruciating falsetto.

FLETCH
'Bil-lie, Bil-lie...'

He opens the door to his apartment and is immediately thrown to the ground.

INT. APARTMENT

Fletch is spread-eagled on the floor. Two huge Cops are over him, one holding a gun to his head, the other going through his clothes.

COP #1
(feeling the inseam
of Fletch's trousers)
Oh, what's this?

FLETCH
If I took that out, you guys couldn't
fit in here.

COP #1
Funny boy. Look at this...

He produces a heroin bag.

COP #2
Looks like heroin, Gene.

FLETCH
You just planted that.

Cop #1 kicks Fletch in the ribs.

COP #2
What'd you say?

FLETCH
Read me my rights.

COP #1
Okay. You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to be kicked in the face by me. You have the rights to have your balls stomped. You have the –

FLETCH
Hold it! I'll waive my rights.

EXT. PRECINCT HOUSE

Fletch is lead into the precinct house.

INT. PRECINCT HOUSE

The Sergeant at the desk checks Fletch out.

SERGEANT
Who we booking here, gentlemen?

COP #1
No booking. Chief wants a talk with the boy.

SERGEANT
Oh Yeah?
(smiles at Fletch)
You'll like the Chief. Nice man.

FLETCH
I hear he's mellowed a lot since he came out of the closet.

SERGEANT
I find he gets real mellow after he hits somebody a lot.

DOOR TO CHIEF'S OFFICE - CHIEF'S OFFICE

The cops open the door, pull Fletch inside. Chief Cummings, looking like a modern executive, looks up from his paperwork.

COP #1
Here he is Chief.

They roughly throw Fletch into a chair. The Chief – seemingly oblivious to this brutality – smiles sincerely.

CUMMINGS
Easy fellas.

(To Fletch friendly)
Be with you in just a second.

The two Cops leave. As Chief Cummings continues with his paperwork Fletch looks around the office, which is decorated tastefully – no guns on the wall, no American flags. On one wall there is a Matisse, and on another, various photos of the Chief with local celebrities.

FLETCH

You decorate this yourself or did
Mrs. Chief of Police help you?

CUMMINGS

(laughs)

You should have seen what she wanted
to do with the place. Mauve.

(shakes his head and
pushes his papers
aside)

So what's your name?

FLETCH

Fletch.

CUMMINGS

Full name.

FLETCH

Fletch F. Fletch

CUMMINGS

(skeptical but patient)

I see. And what do you do for a
living, Mr. Fletch?

FLETCH

I'm President of the International
Fletch Corporation.

Cummings just stares at Fletch.

CUMMINGS

Why are you doing this Mr. Fletch?

FLETCH

Frankly sir, you look a little like
my father. Probably explains the
curious feeling of love I have for
you.

CUMMINGS

For a gentleman who was just found
holding a bag full of heroin...

FLETCH

It was planted on me, sir.

CUMMINGS

We're looking at five years, maybe ten. Is that what you want... Jane Doe?

He suddenly kicks Fletch's chair out from under him. Fletch falls to the floor.

CUMMINGS

Your editor called me yesterday to respond to allegations you're about to print about police involvement in narcotics dealing. Fletch starts to get up, but Cummings plants his foot on Fletch's chest, forces him back down.

CUMMINGS

I'm about to break that beach wide open, and I don't need some pennyante Woodward and Bernstein getting in the way of my men.

FLETCH

'Your men' might just be involved in all this.

CUMMINGS

You idiot. Off the record, deep background: I've got that beach crawling with undercover cops.

Cummings picks Fletch up, and holds him by the lapels.

CUMMINGS

If you keep nosing around, you make the bad guys just a little bit more cautious. That makes my job harder. And if you print your story this week, you might get some of my men killed. I can't let that happen, Mr. Fletch.

He throws Fletch against the wall of celebrity photos, some of which fall to the floor.

CUMMINGS

You go back to that goddamn beach, I swear to God I'll make you regret it.

FLETCH

(picks up a picture)
Hey, you and Tommy Lasorda. That's great.

Fletch takes the picture and hurls it across the room. It smashes into the opposite wall and shatters.

FLETCH
I don't like Tommy Lasorda.

JAIL CORRIDOR

Fletch is tossed into an empty cell by the two Cops who brought him in. Cummings watches. The two Cops leave, and we see that all the cells in this corridor are empty.

FLETCH
You can't keep me here.

CUMMINGS
Maybe I'm not going to keep you here.
(takes out a gun)
Maybe I'm gonna blow your brains out.

FLETCH
I'm no lawyer, but I do believe that's a violation of my rights.

The Chief takes a knife out of his pocket, holding it with a handkerchief.

CUMMINGS
After I shoot you, I stick the knife in my arm, then place it in your dead hand. Self-defense. We don't do this very much anymore... but we have. Got rid of a lot of minorities that way.

FLETCH
My God, you're serious.

CUMMINGS
Ask anybody.

FLETCH
Can I ask anybody now?

Cummings looks down the corridor. Deserted.

FLETCH
Can I call my Mom? I'd like to tell here how much I've always loved her.

CUMMINGS
(cocks the gun)
What'll it be Fletch?

Fletch looks in Cummings' eyes. They are steely and cold. He is quite serious.

FLETCH
I hate the beach. Wouldn't go there if you paid me. Besides, I'm way overdue on my story about off-track betting in the Himalayas. You don't think it's the mafia, do you?

CUMMINGS
(opening the cell)
Its been very nice meeting you. I enjoy your column.

Fletch walks out of the cell. Cummings walks with him through the empty corridor to the exit.

CUMMINGS
(very chummy)
Speaking of which, you're not going to print anything before my investigation is through, are you?

FLETCH
Not a prayer.

CUMMINGS
That a boy.

The emerge into the main hallway of the police station, which is filled with officers and civilians. Cummings makes a show of cordially shaking Fletch's hand as if they were old friends.

CUMMINGS
Thanks for coming down to see us.

FLETCH
Not at all, Chief. But next time...
no tongue, okay?

Exit Fletch.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE

Fletch is railing at Frank Walker.

FLETCH
How could you call him?

WALKER

It's called journalism, Fletch. It's called getting both sides of the story. Something you apparently don't know anything about.

FLETCH

It's also called getting me this close to being murdered.

WALKER

Get out of here.

FLETCH

He threw me in a cell, took a gun and a knife and threatened to kill me right there if I didn't promise to give up the story.

WALKER

You know, I've had it up to here with your bullshit. I need a story from you by tomorrow.

FLETCH

You'll have it.

WALKER

But not unsubstantiated charges about dope-dealing cops, and not horse shit paranoid fantasies about homicidal police chiefs.

FLETCH

(exiting)

Thanks for the vote of confidence, Frank.

WALKER

(calling after him)

I want something I can print!

FLETCH

(giving him the finger)

Print this Frank.

Exit Fletch.

EXT. RACQUET CLUB

Fletch again appears in his tennis whites and walks familiarly toward the patio. Rich people are having lunch. Fletch stops the waiter.

FLETCH

Hi, where's Mrs. Stanwyk?

WAITER

In her cabana, sir.

FLETCH

Oh, that's right. She told me to meet her there. That's cabana six?

WAITER

Cabana one.

FLETCH

One.

WAITER

Would you be caring for something to eat or drink, sir?

FLETCH

I would, actually.

WAITER

Charged to the Underhills, sir?

FLETCH

Right. Tell you what – have you caviar?

WAITER

Yes, sir. Beluga. But it is eighty dollars the portion.

FLETCH

(whistles)

I'd better only get two. How about the lobster thermidor?

WAITER

I recommend it.

FLETCH

Fine. And a couple of bottles of Dom Perignon. To cabana one.

WAITER

Very good, sir.

The waiter leaves. Fletch looks around, takes a deep breath.

FLETCH

This is just the nicest place.

EXT. CABANA ONE

A little Spanish bungalow-type affair. Old California money-style elegance. Fletch rings the bell.

MRS. STANWYK (V.O.)

Who is it?

FLETCH

It's John. John...

(forgets name)

Znhcneelsky.

MRS. STANWYK

John Ultramalensky?

She opens the door, clad only in a towel. A towel is wrapped around her head. She seems surprised, but not displeased, to see Fletch. She also seems a little at a loss for words.

FLETCH

Hi.

MRS. STANWYK

(finally)

Hi.

FLETCH

I was hoping you'd say that.

They have just shaken hands, and Fletch notices his hand is now sopping wet.

MRS. STANWYK

Uh... I'm just out of the shower.

FLETCH

Can I borrow your towel for a minute?

She laughs a nervous little laugh. There is a bit of sexual tension here.

MRS. STANWYK

I'm sorry, I'm just surprised to see you. I didn't think... What do you want?

FLETCH

I ordered lunch.

MRS. STANWYK

You ordered it here?

FLETCH

Well, I knew this is where my mouth would be.

MRS. STANWYK

Down boy.

With a nervous glance in both directions, she lets him in and closes the door behind them.

INT. CABANA

They stand there for a few seconds looking at each other.

MRS. STANWYK

I really should change.

FLETCH

No, I think you should stay the same wonderful person you are today.

MRS. STANWYK

I mean put clothes on.

FLETCH

Here, take mine.

He starts to take off his shirt. She is amused, and responds playfully, but firmly.

MRS. STANWYK

Stop that!

He does.

MRS. STANWYK

Have you gotten cuter since I last saw you?

FLETCH

Yes.

She stands there, looking around, trying to act as if her heartbeat weren't speeding up.

SFX: Knock at door.

FLETCH

Lunch...

MRS. STANWYK

God...

She goes sprinting into the bathroom.

FLETCH

Come on in.

The door opens. A second Waiter, Mexican, solemnly wheels in

a cart bearing the goodies ordered by Fletch. The twin bottles of Dom Perignon juts from a silver ice bucket.

WAITER

You want I set up?

FLETCH

No thanks, I'll do it. Give yourself twenty dollars. Underhill.

WAITER

Muchas gracias.

FLETCH

Sierra del fuego.

The waiter bows, leaves, shuts the door. Mrs. Stanwyk scampers back in, gazes at the cart as Fletch takes a bottle of Dom Perignon and pops the cork.

MRS. STANWYK

All this goes on Underhill's bill?

FLETCH

(offering her a glass)
I saved his life during the war.

MRS. STANWYK

You were in the war?

FLETCH

No. He was. I got him out.

She laughs and sighs, knowing she's getting into something she probably shouldn't.

MRS. STANWYK

I can't believe I'm doing this. Well,
lets eat.

She tucks a napkin in her towel like a bib and sits at the table.

EXT. RACQUET CLUB - DAY

The Underhills have just been handed the bill run up by Fletch.

MR. UNDERHILL

Four hundred bucks for lunch???

WAITER

Your guest, sir.

MR. UNDERHILL

We have no guest here today.
(reading the bill)
Two bottles of Dom Perignon, hundred
bucks a pop. Jesus H. Christ! Where
is he?

WAITER

I believe he's with Mrs. Stanwyk.

MRS. UNDERHILL

Gail Stanwyk. Tom, if he's with Gail
Stanwyk –

MR. UNDERHILL

I don't care who he's with! This is
criminal.

MRS. UNDERHILL

Tom...

MR. UNDERHILL

She's where, cabana one?

WAITER

Yes sir.

Mr. Underhill stalks off.

INT. CABANA - DAY

Fletch and Mrs. Stanwyk are having lunch. Fletch sings while
he opens the champagne. She is looking at his back which is
turned to her.

FLETCH

'I've been so many places in my life
and times. I've sung a lot of songs,
I've made some bad rhymes...'

MRS. STANWYK

It's amazing.

FLETCH

'I've acted out my life on stages,
with ten thousand people watching...'

MRS. STANWYK

Your bone structure, shoulders,
neck...

FLETCH

'But we're alone now, and I'm singing
this song for you.'

MRS. STANWYK

Just like Alan. It's freaky.

FLETCH

Can I ask you a question?

MRS. STANWYK

Depends on the question.

FLETCH

Are you still in love with Alan?

MRS. STANWYK

No.

(quickly)

I mean, 'no you can't ask me that.'

I mean, ask me something else.

FLETCH

Why'd you let me in?

MRS. STANWYK

Because I'm bored. Oh, that sounds terrible, doesn't it. I'm sorry. If it makes you feel any better, I also let you in because I'm hungry.

FLETCH

Thanks, I feel much better. Listen, if you're so bored, why didn't you go to Utah with Alan?

MRS. STANWYK

Utah is not exactly a cure for boredom.

FLETCH

Good point.

MRS. STANWYK

Oh, listen to me. I've never even been there and look what I say about it. Anyway, I know there'd be nothing for me to do. I don't even know anybody there.

FLETCH

What about his parents?

MRS. STANWYK

He never sees them and I never met them.

FLETCH

How come?

SFX: Insistent knock at door.

Fletch and Mrs. Stanwyk freeze.

MRS. STANWYK
Yes?

MR. UNDERHILL (V.O.)
Mrs. Stanwyk, I hate to disturb you.
Tom Underhill here... I'm a new
member.

Fletch rises.

FLETCH
Thanks for the great time.

MRS. STANWYK
(sotto voice)
What is this?

FLETCH
Long story.

MR. UNDERHILL (V.O.)
Apparently, someone of your
acquaintance has charged the most
extraordinary lunch to my bill.

MRS. STANWYK
(hissing)
John!

Fletch starts pushing the lunch table towards the bathroom.

MRS. STANWYK
You don't know the Underhills?

MR. UNDERHILL (V.O.)
I'd appreciate an opportunity to
discuss this with you.

MRS. STANWYK
I just stepped out of the shower!
Can you give me a minute?

MR. UNDERHILL (V.O.)
Of course.

Mrs. Stanwyk follows Fletch into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM

Fletch jams the cart into the bathroom.

FLETCH

Take one end.

Mrs. Stanwyk lifts one side of the cart. They lift it and put it up into the bathtub. There's a window in the bathroom. Fletch opens it.

FLETCH

I'll be leaving now, Mrs. Stanwyk.

MRS. STANWYK

I think you should call me Gail, now.

FLETCH

Gail. I hope this won't embarrass you in any way. I think Underhill's a yutz, you won't have any trouble with him.

MRS. STANWYK

Why did you do it?

Fletch shrugs, smiles.

MRS. STANWYK

A four hundred dollar lunch tab!

FLETCH

Yeah.

MRS. STANWYK

I'll cover it. You have any other surprises?

FLETCH

(after a beat)

Yeah. My name's not John Ultramalensky and I wasn't at your wedding.

She stares at him.

MRS. STANWYK

Who.

FLETCH

Irwin Fletcher. I write a newspaper column under the name Jane Doe.

A long beat.

MRS. STANWYK

So?

FLETCH

So, your husband hired me to kill him. That's the truth.

MRS. STANWYK
What are you talking about?

FLETCH
That's what I want to know.

EXT. CABANA

Mr. Underhill knocks again.

MR. UNDERHILL
Mrs. Stanwyk!

INT. BATHROOM

MRS. STANWYK
In a minute!

FLETCH
He told me he was dying of cancer. Not True. That ranch you thought you were paying for in Utah? Not true.

MRS. STANWYK
How do you know about that?

FLETCH
He's a bad guy, Mrs. Stanwyk. Gail. I think he's involved in something very big and very bad.

MRS. STANWYK
What does all this mean?

FLETCH
Have you ever heard the name Jim Swarthout?

MRS. STANWYK
Swarthout. Yes. He's the man who sold us the ranch in –

FLETCH
Wrong. He sold you \$3,000 worth of scrub brush.

MRS. STANWYK
But I've seen the deed.

FLETCH
You saw a forgery.

He takes out his photographs.

FLETCH

That's the real deed.

INSERT - PHOTO OF DEED

It's is so fuzzy, shaky, and poorly framed that there's no way we can read the price on it.

FLETCH (O.S.)

Now, if this were at all legible, you'd believe me.

MASTER

Fletch shows her more of the photos.

FLETCH

Here's this dog that tried to eat me. Here's my motel. Here's the car I rented...

MRS. STANWYK

Stop it.

(angry and concerned)

Are you saying my husband is defrauding me?

FLETCH

I don't know. All I know is that he told me a lot of things and so far not one of them has been true.

Mrs. Stanwyk stares at Fletch. She gets a little teary.

FLETCH

I'm really sorry I have to tell you all this.

MR. UNDERHILL (O.S.)

Mrs. Stanwyk?

MRS. STANWYK

(really screams)

Just wait, all right?!?

(to Fletch)

I'm going to call my father. He'll know what –

Fletch stops her.

FLETCH

No. You can't. Look, I know you don't know me from Adam, but you've got to

trust me.

MRS. STANWYK

Trust you? I may seem a little goofy at times, but I'm not a complete Bozo, you know.

FLETCH

Just give me twenty-four hours. Please. Someone almost killed me today. People are not being nice lately, and I don't want you getting hurt. I think you're terrific. Are you a Laker fan?

Gail is now teary, confused, and scared.

MRS. STANWYK

No... I've got to go to Mr. Underhill...

FLETCH

I'll take you to a game.

MRS. STANWYK

What are you talking about?

FLETCH

I'm talking about how much I'd like to take you to a Laker game.

MRS. STANWYK

Wait a second. What am I supposed to do for twenty-four hours?

FLETCH

(climbing out window)
Act natural.

MRS. STANWYK

I was afraid you'd say that.

FLETCH

If you need me, call the paper. Hand me that extra bottle okay?

EXT. CABANA

Gail opens the door where Mr. Underhill has been waiting.

MRS. STANWYK

Sorry. Here.
(grabs the bill from
his hand)
Thanks. Bye.

She closes the door in his face.

EXT. BOYD AVIATION - PARKING LOT

Alan Stanwyk crosses the parking lot and gets into his Jaguar. He starts the engine, backs out of his reserved space, and pulls out of the lot.

ANOTHER ANGLE - PARKING LOT

Fletch is reading a copy of Sports Illustrated. He puts it down, starts his car, and pulls out of the lot.

SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD

Stanwyk's Jaguar tools down Santa Monica Boulevard. Fletch's car follows, several discreet car lengths behind.

INT. JAGUAR

Stanwyk checks his watch, and makes a turn.

MASTER

Stanwyk has pulled into a service station. He gets out of his car and opens the trunk.

FLETCH

He pulls into a fast-food joint on the west side of the street. He opens the Sports Illustrated and peers over it.

STANWYK

He takes a gas can from the trunk, goes to the pump, fills it, and pays the attendant in cash.

FLETCH

Curious.

STANWYK

He puts the gas can back in the trunk, gets into the car, and starts off.

FLETCH

follows suit.

SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD

We are getting into the increasingly rundown section of Santa Monica. The Jaguar turns off. Hold: Several beats later, Fletch turns off.

OVERPASS

A freeway overpass. Stanwyk stops his car.

FLETCH'S CAR

He pulls off behind a liquor store, in view of the overpass. Fletch waits.

OVERPASS

A second car pulls up behind Stanwyk's. A cop steps out and says something to Stanwyk. Stanwyk gets out of his car and walks over to the unmarked police car, and gets in.

FLETCH

takes out his binoculars.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW

Because he's looking through the reflection of sunlight on the back window of the unmarked police car, Fletch's point of view is fuzzy, but we can just make out the form of someone else in animated conversation with Stanwyk.

FLETCH

A moment of possible recognition. He focuses intently.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW - THE OTHER MAN IN THE CAR

with Stanwyk... is Police Chief Cummings.

FLETCH

FLETCH

Jesus.

He starts up his car and backs out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FLETCH'S APARTMENT HOUSE

Fletch pulls up to his house and stops the car.

INT. CAR

Fletch looks around.

EXT. HOUSE

Fletch doesn't leave the car.

INT. CAR

Fletch sits put, drumming his fingers on the steering wheel. He just has a feeling. He starts the car up, and pulls out.

EXT. HOUSE

Two cop cars, concealed in driveways, scream out, heading after Fletch's car.

INT. FLETCH'S CAR

Fletch sees them in the rearview and stomps on the gas.

FLETCH

Should've known. Goddamn it.

EXT. STREETS

Fletch floors it.

FLETCH

Great. First I'll get a speeding ticket, then they'll shoot me. Terrific.

Fletch cuts through the parking lot of a drug store/dry cleaning complex. The cop cars follow suit. Shopping wagons are tossed about. He turns a corner and realizes he has a few seconds before they're on top of him again. He screeches up next to a teenager in a sports car.

FLETCH

All right, fella, smog check. Move over.

Before the guy can say "who?", Fletch is in the guy's driver seat and tears out, hell bent for leather.

ENTRANCE TO FREEWAY

Fletch peels off onto the Santa Monica Freeway.

FREEWAY

Fletch hits about ninety. So do the cops. Now a motorcycle cop joins the chase.

INT. SPORTS CAR

TEENAGER

Holy shit!

FLETCH

Sorry, youngster, but we have to see what kind of fluorocarbons this thing puts out at ninety-five.

TEENAGER
Holy shit!

FLETCH
Don't worry about the speed limit.
That's what the police escort's for.

EXT. FREEWAY

Indeed, behind them is a gaggle of speeding cop cars and motorcycles.

TEENAGER (O.S.)
Holy shit!

Fletch cuts across two lanes of traffic and gets off the freeway. He loses the motorcycle cop who goes past the exit. The squad cars are thrown behind a bit, but still chase.

INT. SQUAD CAR

COP #1
Shit! He'll kill us if we lose him.

INT. SPORTS CAR

The teenager is sweating bullets.

TEENAGER
Okay, okay, just stop, will you. I admit it. I stole it. I was just taking it for a little joy ride, that's all....

FLETCH
Holy shit.

EXT. CAR

Fletch squeals around a corner, runs a light, and booms into the parking lot of a large Holiday Inn. He's a few seconds ahead of the cops.

FLETCH
Okay, kid. Just stand here with your hands on the car and wait for the cops. I gotta pee. Here, take my hat.

Fletch pops his hat on the kid's head, and runs off.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN

Fletch runs into the kitchen entrance of the Holiday Inn.

INT. HOLIDAY INN KITCHEN

Fletch picks up a case of vegetables and walks through as if he belonged there.

Moments later, two cops enter.

THE COPS

can't see him because of the crate.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - BANQUET ROOM

A testimonial dinner is in progress. A sign on the wall reads:

TRB SYSTEMS SALUTES

FRED DORFMAN

40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Thirty tables of conservatively dressed, older men and women are enjoying lunch. Fletch enters from the kitchen followed by several waiters and busboys. He looks over his shoulder.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW - KITCHEN

Two cops are in hot pursuit.

FLETCH

moves into the middle of the tables as a florid fat Speaker at the dais drones on.

SPEAKER

...and he can truly be called the
Father of Internal Bushings.

A round of applause which Fletch joins heartily, as he quickly sits in the audience at an empty seat at a table in the center.

FLETCH

(to his table)

Hello. I'm with the hotel catering.
Are you enjoying your meal? Carrots
overcooked?

Fletch looks to the kitchen entrance and sees two cops scanning the crowd. One signals to the opposite door.

DOOR

Four more cops converge, looking for Fletch. Distant sirens indicate even more.

MASTER

SPEAKER

And now a man who needs no further introduction...

The police spot Fletch and start moving forward. Fletch stands up. A spotlight swings onto him.

FLETCH

Thank you, Tony, thank you. As a lifelong friend of...
(looks at banner)
...Fred Dorfman, I'm thrilled to be here.

DIAS

Fred Dorfman turns to the people on either side of him and whispers, obviously wondering who the hell this guy is.

FLETCH

The cops are hesitant to move in. They wait for Fletch to finish and get out of the light.

FLETCH

Many of you are probably not aware of Freddie's lifelong commitment to honoring a profession that frequently goes unsung – the police. Many times Fred used to forsake a night with his wife and children to go out and sell tickets for the Policemen's Benevolent Association.

POLICE

look at each other, sensing a trick, and start to move in.

FLETCH

going for broke.

FLETCH

Our men in blue are with us today, and I think we should all extend a shake of the hand, a slap on the back and a 'howdy' to them.

POLICE

moving faster, but impeded by the crowd which rises and follows Fletch's suggestion.

FLETCH

out of the crowd, still encouraging the crowd.

FLETCH

When was the last time you hugged a cop? Do it for my good friend Tommy Lasorda. Doesn't it feel good? Don't you wish you'd done it long ago?

One cop raises his gun towards Fletch, but the crowd is too close, too busy. Fletch shakes his hand and slugs him so hard on the back that he falls over into the crowd.

FLETCH

Let them know how we feel, with a song. For every cop on every beat in every city of this great nation.

(singing)

'For he's a jolly good fellow...'

(calls out)

Everybody!

(sings)

'For he's a jolly good fellow...'

The crowd sings along the rest of the verse. Fletch looks back to the kitchen entrance at the police who are swallowed in a sea of congratulations and singing. Fletch takes his time strolling out of the kitchen.

INT. LAX - DAY

Fletch is at the Pan Am counter, talking with a reservation Clerk.

CLERK

Yes sir, you are confirmed on Flight 306 to Rio tomorrow evening at 11 PM. First Class.

FLETCH

You're kidding.

CLERK

Would you like me to change anything?

FLETCH

(to himself)

So he's going. Uh... are there any other tickets charged to the same

account?

CLERK

We'd have no way of knowing that, sir.

FLETCH

Hmm. It's just that there are some other people from my office going on this trip and... is there anyone in the seat next to me?

The clerk checks the computer.

CLERK

Yes, there is. Cavanaugh.

Fletch shakes his head. He's never heard of him.

FLETCH

Never heard of him. Thanks anyway.

CLERK

You mean her.

FLETCH

What?

CLERK

Sally Ann Cavanaugh. Oh wait, she couldn't work in your office, she's not from around here.

FLETCH

Oh, thanks.

Fletch walks off and we follow him.

CLERK

She's from Utah.

EXT. PROVO AIRPORT - DAY

as Fletch emerges from the Rent-A-Car office and drives off.

EXT. PROVO STREET - DAY

A lower-middle-class area, one that seems to be sliding fast – the plans are scraggly, the houses need paint.

Fletch's rental pulls up over the curb onto the sidewalk. Fletch gets out, checks a piece of paper, and goes up the steps to a dark-shingled two-story house.

TOP OF STEPS

Fletch looks at the name over the doorbell.

CARD

written in smeared ink: "CAVANAUGH".

FLETCH

rings the doorbell. It sounds like a fire alarm in the quiet. Nobody answers. Fletch tries the door. It opens. Fletch hums the old "Dragnet" theme.

INT. HOUSE

still humming the theme.

FLETCH

'Bom-ba-bom-bom...bommmm.'

Fletch enters.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW - LIVING ROOM

The shelves are bare. Furniture is in place.

MASTER

Fletch enters the kitchen, and opens the refrigerator. Inside is a can of coffee, and some vegetables. Fletch leaves the kitchen and heads for the bedroom. We follow him as he enters the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

Fletch opens the closet. It's bare. He pulls open the drawers. Nothing.

Fletch gets down and looks under the bed.

VOICE

Who the hell are you?

In his surprise, Fletch bangs his head as he starts up.

REVERSE

At the door stands a gruff-looking Man in a red and black hunter's jacket, overalls, and a hat with earflaps. He holds a rifle.

MAN

Get up.

MASTER

Fletch gets up.

FLETCH

The door was unlocked.

MAN

Lock's busted.

FLETCH

No wonder.

MAN

I work for the landlord. He told me to watch out for the place.

FLETCH

I commend him on his choice.

MAN

What?

FLETCH

I commend him on his choice

The Man stares at him, holding the gun. He's not the brightest guy in the world, and Fletch has already caught on to that.

FLETCH

I was supposed to meet Mrs. Cavanaugh.

MAN

Who are you?

FLETCH

Don Corleone. I'm a cousin of Mrs. Cavanaugh's.

The Man just stares at Fletch. Fletch starts to move ever so slightly, testing his freedom of movement.

FLETCH

Where is she?

MAN

Moved out.

FLETCH

She moved out?

The Man nods and cocks the weapon. Fletch stops his tentative movements and just looks around the room

FLETCH

I spoke to her last week. She didn't

say anything.

MAN

She moved out.

FLETCH

So you're saying she moved out.

MAN

This morning.

FLETCH

This morning? Christ. We had so much to talk about. Moe Green is out of the Tropicana, and my sons, Michael and Fredo, are taking over.

The Man continues to gaze unblinkingly at Fletch, holding the rifle.

MAN

What did you want under the bed?

FLETCH

Mattress police. There are no tags on the mattress. I'm going to have to take you downtown. Please give me your weapon.

MAN

I'm calling the cops. This is for the cops.

FLETCH

I'm her cousin.

MAN

Tell the cops.

FLETCH

Go ahead. Call them. Better tie your shoelaces first.

The man looks down at his shoelaces. Fletch kicks the gun out of his hand and runs through the house.

EXT. HOUSE

Fletch runs out of the house and jumps into his car.

INT. CAR

Fletch pulls out. The rear window is suddenly blown away.

FLETCH

I'm getting real tired of all this hostility.

EXT. PROVO PIG FARM

Fletch pulls up, gets out of the car and addresses the couple sitting on the porch of the house.

FLETCH

Evening.

(nods toward car)

They oughta recall these things. One bump, the whole window goes.

PORCH

Sitting on the porch is a couple in their late sixties, whom we are about to learn are Alan Stanwyk's parents – Marvin and Velma.

FLETCH

(approaching the steps)

Are you Mr. Marvin Stanwyk?

Marvin nods.

FLETCH

I'm Harry S. Truman from Casewell Insurance Underwriters.

MARVIN

(smiles)

Harry S. Truman?

FLETCH

My parents were great fans of the former President.

MARVIN

Isn't that nice. Good man. Showed the Japs a thing or two.

FLETCH

Sure did. Dropped the big one on them.

MARVIN

Dropped two big ones. Real fighter. You're in the insurance line, Harry?

FLETCH

Right.

MARVIN

Well, I'm fully covered.

FLETCH

I don't doubt it, Mr. Stanwyk.
Actually, my company is the sub-insurer of the subsidiary carriers of a policy held by Alan Stanwyk, who I believe is your son.

MARVIN

Yes. Where you from, Harry?

FLETCH

California. San Berdoo. Utah's part of my route. Can I ask you a few questions?

MARVIN

Come on in.

INT. MARVIN AND VELMA'S LIVING ROOM

Fletch and the Stanwyks face each other on couches that flank the fireplace. Fletch has a clipboard on which he will take notes.

FLETCH

First, a couple of routine things:
are you and you wife currently alive?

Marvin just stares at him.

FLETCH

Regulations, Mr. Stanwyk. And you and your wife, named....

MARVIN

Velma.

Velma smiles.

FLETCH

Velma. You and Velma are the parents of Alan Stanwyk, Beverly Hills, California, executive vice president of Boyd Aviation?

MARVIN

Check.

FLETCH

Okay.
(makes notation)
Now, the last time you saw your son was when?

MARVIN

Oh, about ten days ago.

Fletch is taken aback.

FLETCH

Ten days ago?

MARVIN

That's right. Alan comes by every three weeks or so.

This is all news to Fletch, but he covers his surprise.

FLETCH

Isn't that nice. Since when?

MARVIN

Since he moved to L.A.

Fletch is very interested in all this.

FLETCH

Forgive me now for seeming personal, but we understand that there is a lady friend he sees here in Provo.

MARVIN

What the hell does this have to do with insurance?

FLETCH

Trust me, sir. It's a comprehensive policy.

MARVIN

Well, you can forget about that lady friend business, Alan's the most loyal husband a girl could have. He dotes on that bride of his.

VELMA

Cute young thing, too.

FLETCH

I'm sorry?

VELMA

His bride. Cute as a button.

FLETCH

You've met her?

MARVIN

Well, of course we have. He brings

her with him.

Fletch is getting very puzzled and very concerned about all this.

FLETCH

Has Alan ever mentioned the name Sally Ann Cavanaugh?

Marvin and Velma exchange the oddest of glances between them.

FLETCH

Has he?

MARVIN

Boy, what the hell's the matter with you?

FLETCH

Then he has.

MARVIN

Course he has. That's his wife.

You could knock Fletch over with a straw. Again, he quickly recovers.

FLETCH

Of course, his wife's name is Sally Ann Cavanaugh?

VELMA

Cute thing.

FLETCH

(starting to sweat a little)

Do you happen to have a picture of Alan and his wife?

VELMA

Oh, we've got lots of pictures. Let me show you some.

Velma rummages through a family album on a side table as Fletch tried to sort all this out in his mind. She brings a photo over to him. He looks at it.

INSERT - PHOTO

It's a wedding photo of Alan and a woman we have not seen. She is brunette and quite unlike Gail. Alan wears a similar shit-eating grin, and makes a similar thumbs-up gesture to the wedding photo with Gail that Fletch saw in Boyd's office.

FLETCH

He sighs.

FLETCH

And they're still married... Alan
and Sally Ann.

MARVIN

Of course they are.

VELMA

She's cute as a button.

FLETCH

How long have they been married?

MARVIN

Lets see, it was before he moved to
L.A... four years April.

FLETCH

Mrs. Stanwyk, may I borrow this
picture. I promise to send it back
to you. It's routine, really. The
actuarial people need to –

VELMA

Oh, that's all right, I've got lots
more. Want to see the reception?

FLETCH

(rising)

No, thank you.

VELMA

How about Marvin's sixty-fifth
birthday party?

Exit Fletch.

INT. PROVO MOTEL ROOM

Fletch is on the phone.

FLETCH

Frank told you that?

INT. NEWSROOM - MORGUE

Larry is on the phone.

LARRY

I overheard it. He thinks you're
completely out of control, he said
he was gonna can you as soon as he

got the story. If I were you, I'd just chuck it, Fletch. Screw him. Let him eat three full pages on Sunday.

MOTEL ROOM

FLETCH

You kidding? I got an unbelievable story here, Lar. Un-believable. Jesus. It's the cops, I know it. The Chief! And they're all over Frank.

MORGUE

LARRY

I just thought... sure.
(takes out pad and starts writing)
Sally Ann Cavanaugh.

MOTEL ROOM

FLETCH

Check every hotel in L.A. Start with the ones near the airport. Yeah. He's about to leave the country with her. Thanks, Lar.

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - LATER

Fletch is in the shower, lipsynching to the radio. Elvis is singing, "All Shook Up."

FLETCH

'welluh bless my soul whatsuh wrong with me? I'ma itchin' like a man Inuh fuzzy tree...'

The phone rings. Fletch gets out, throws on a towel and picks up a phone mounted over the crapper.

FLETCH

Yeah... No kidding. The Marriott at LAX. Sonofabitch... Checked in this morning. Great. Thanks a million. And call Gail Stanwyk at the Racquet Club. Tell her I have to meet her tonight. Eight o'clock at the club. Urgent and confidential. Thanks.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Fletch is sitting in a semi-deserted flight on his way back home. He is hunched over an airline meal, eating with his

right hand and turning in his mini recorder with his left.

FLETCH

Question:

But as he pushed the button down, the tape pops out. He fumbles it back in, and then pushes another button.

FLETCH

Question...

TAPE RECORDER

(Fletch's voice playing
back)

Day three on the beach. Fat Sam still
hasn't moved, and –

FLETCH

(stopping the machine)
What's wrong with my life?

He starts it right this time.

FLETCH

Question: Why does a man marry a
millionaire's daughter in Beverly
Hills if he is already married to a
girl who lives in a crappy one bedroom
apartment in Utah? Answer: Three
million dollars. Big Question: What's
with Stanwyk and Cummings? I don't
know. Bigger Question: Why does
Stanwyk want me to kill him?

He takes a spoonful of airline food, chewing meditatively.

FLETCH

Biggest Question: Why do I eat this
sh*t?

(to passing stewardess)

Miss, I believe this has already
been eaten.

EXT. MRS. STANWYK'S CABANA - NIGHT

Fletch knocks on the door, and a tensely white-faced Mrs.
Stanwyk quickly lets him in and shuts the door behind him.

MRS. STANWYK

I want you to know that dramatic
phone calls about secret meetings
scare the shit out of me.

He can sense she is unusually upset.

FLETCH

What's wrong, Gail?

MRS. STANWYK

I decided I was going to tell my husband about you today.

FLETCH

No.

MRS. STANWYK

But first I called the Hall of Records in Provo. They checked on the deed. You're telling the truth. A minute later Alan came in the room and asked me why I was shaking.

Fletch waits anxiously to hear if she told Alan about him.

MRS. STANWYK

So I told him... I told him I was just cold or something.

Fletch sighs with relief.

MRS. STANWYK

I've never lied to him before.
(chokes back a sob)
It's the first time he's ever lied to me. He was just as convincing as when he says 'I love you.'

FLETCH

I think you better sit down.

MRS. STANWYK

Oh God, I hate things that start like that....

FLETCH

Gail, please.

She sits in a chair. he hands her the wedding photo.

FLETCH

I got this from Alan's parents. By the way, they see him all the time.

First she looks at Fletch with puzzlement. Then, she looks at the photo and can't seem to decide what to think of it. But she knows it's bad.

MRS. STANWYK

What is this....

FLETCH

I checked. There was no divorce.

MRS. STANWYK

Are you telling me my husband is a bigamist???

FLETCH

I'm telling you he's not your husband at all.

She is stunned.

FLETCH

And they're leaving the country tomorrow night.

MRS. STANWYK

(rocked)

Bastard.

FLETCH

I don't have all the pieces yet, but I'm close. I'll know tomorrow.

MRS. STANWYK

I'm calling the police. Right now.

FLETCH

You can't do that.

MRS. STANWYK

Don't tell me I can't –

FLETCH

They're trying to kill me!

She is taken aback by that, but there is a determination in her eyes.

MRS. STANWYK

Your twenty-four hours are up, Fletch.

She starts for the phone, but he stops her.

FLETCH

You're going to have to trust me, Gail. You have to. Now listen to me: he's expecting you to go to your meeting tomorrow night. Do it. Stay out of the house.

There is a long beat.

MRS. STANWYK

I'm terrified.

FLETCH
Come here.

He puts his arms around her and holds her tight against him. After a few seconds she raises her head and turns the hug into a kiss. Then the kiss turns passionate.

DISSOLVE TO:

FRISBEE

sails across the surf.

EXT. BEACH - DAY - WIDER

The usual scene – a mix of teeny-boppers, junkies and surfers. Into the f.g. step a couple of "surfers." They're wearing wet suits and carrying surfboards, but they're obviously cops. They sit down. Across the beach, a Sufi, dressed in a turban and flowing garments, crosses the sand.

SURFER COP
A Sufi junkie.

The cops laugh derisively and turn their attention else-where.

CLOSER ON SUFI

It's Fletch. he's got a beard pasted on, and nervously scans the beach.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW - GUMMY

is seated on a towel.

MASTER

Fletch sits near, but not next to, Gummy.

FLETCH
Gum?

Gummy looks around.

FLETCH
I'm the Sufi.

GUMMY
Fletch?

FLETCH
Don't call me Fletch. Don't look at me. Lie back down. We'll talk.

GUMMY
What?

FLETCH
Cops are here. I can smell them.
They're after me. Lie down, Gum.

Gummy lies back down.

GUMMY
Why are they after you?

FLETCH
Because I'm a newspaper reporter and
I'm nailing Chief Cummings as the
source for drugs on the beach. You're
in big trouble, Gummy.

Gummy sits up.

FLETCH
Sit back down.

Gummy lies down again.

FLETCH
Fat Sam is turning state's evidence.

GUMMY
What's that?

FLETCH
He wrote me a nice deposition. He
says he just received the drugs. You
did the selling.

GUMMY
I didn't sell nothing! I didn't sell
nothing! I just carried the drugs
from the Chief to Sam.

FLETCH
Sure you did.

GUMMY
Fletch, I never sold nothing.

FLETCH
Twenty years.

Fletch gets up and adjusts his flowing robes.

FLETCH
Can't do a thing with this robe. One

more question, Gum... don't look at me.

Gummy lies back down.

FLETCH
Where does the Chief get the drugs?

GUMMY
I dunno. Somewhere in South America, I forget.

FLETCH
Rio de Janeiro, maybe?

GUMMY
Maybe, Fletch. Is that Brazil?

FLETCH
That's Brazil.

GUMMY
Yeah. Maybe.

FLETCH
Wait here for me, Gummy.

Gummy looks questioningly at him.

FLETCH
It's the only way you'll be safe.
Believe me.

Fletch crosses the sand, heads for "Fat Sam's".

FAT SAM'S

Sam is reading the National Review. He looks up, sees Fletch approaching, and grins.

FAT SAM
Jesus.

FLETCH
You don't know me.

FAT SAM
(smiling)
My pleasure.

FLETCH
I'm serious, Sam.

FAT SAM
What, the heat here?

FLETCH
Affirmative.

FAT SAM
The two surfer boys?

FLETCH
Affirmative.

FAT SAM
Thought so. What for?

FLETCH
For me. I'm a reporter, Sam. I'm breaking the drug story and I got the chief red-handed. Gummy gave me a deposition.

FAT SAM
(smiles)
You gonna nail the chief?

FLETCH
I'm gonna nail the chief. And you can help or –

FAT SAM
Oh, I'll help, Fletch. I'm a slave to that sonofabitch. He busted me, third offense, gave me a choice: Work for him or do fifteen long. All I get out of this is free snort.

FLETCH
You don't have a piece of the action?

FAT SAM
Noooo. Free snort. That's it.

FLETCH
(hands him a card)
Wait five minutes, and go to my office. You'll get federal protection after that.

FAT SAM
Gonna need it. That boy is dangerous. Fletch?

FLETCH
What?

FAT SAM
You find the source?

FLETCH
Gum thought Brazil.

FAT SAM
Rio. Know how he gets it in the country? Some big shot airline executive flies it in on company jets. Very impressive operation, Fletch. Very impressive.

INT. NEWSPAPER - CITY ROOM

Fletch parades through the city room, still in his Sufi getup. He takes off the beard and heads for Frank Walker's office. Fat Sam and Gummy, looking like fish out of water, follow him.

WALKER'S OFFICE

Fletch marches in with Sam and Gummy. Walker gawks at him.

WALKER
Fletch...

Fletch takes off the turban.

FLETCH
I'm quitting, Frank. As of midnight tonight.

WALKER
What?
(stares at Fat Sam
and Gummy)
Who the hell are they?

FLETCH
This is Fat Sam, and this is Gummy.
(hands two sheets of
paper to Walker)

WALKER
What...

FLETCH
Their statements, naming Chief Cummings as the numero uno drug pusher from here to Oxnard. I want them to have federal protection under the paper's sponsorship.

Walker just stares at the sheets.

WALKER

Jesus H. Christ.
(smiles)
Fletch, this is the greatest.

FAT SAM
He's some reporter, this guy.

FLETCH
I'm out, Frank. You lost faith in me.

WALKER
Fletch, I got nervous. Please....

FLETCH
Forget it.

Fletch takes off his robe and drops it to the floor. Beneath the robes he's wearing cutoffs and a Bob McAdoo t-shirt.

FLETCH
I'm going to write the story. Just hold the last couple of paragraphs till ten o'clock tonight.

Fletch leaves the office.

FLETCH
(to Fat Sam and Gummy)
Make yourselves comfortable, guys, but don't leave the office.

CORRIDOR

Fletch heads for his office. Walker follows.

WALKER
Fletch!

Fletch doesn't answer.

FLETCH'S OFFICE

Fletch enters the office and kicks his door closed. Walker opens it.

WALKER
Fletch, you want an apology?

FLETCH
You were going to can me, right?

WALKER
(fumbles)
Not really.

FLETCH
Not really?

WALKER
I was upset.

FLETCH
I'm sick of this place. I'm going to
try out for the Lakers. They need a
power forward.

WALKER
Fletch.

Fletch sits down and turns on his word processor, ignoring
Walker.

EXT. STANWYK HOUSE - NIGHT

Fletch parks his Olds halfway up on the sidewalk, and gets
out. He climbs over the gates of the Stanwyk home, and drops
down inside. He lands on the grass, trots around the
shrubbery, heads toward the garage, and checks his watch.

WATCH

It's five minutes before eight.

INT. STANWYK'S GARAGE

The jaguar is parked just where it is supposed to be, and
the key is in the ignition. Fletch thinks for a moment and
looks around. He sees a pile of torn rags on the ground. He
removes the key from the ignition and opens the trunk.

INT. TRUNK.

Six large gasoline cans and more rags.

FLETCH
Another piece of the puzzle fits in
place.

EXT. HOUSE

Fletch reaches the rear of the house. He peers inside.

FLETCH'S POINT OF VIEW - STANWYK

is in the library, sitting patiently at his desk.

FLETCH

approaches the French doors and enters.

INT. LIBRARY

Alan rises from his desk to greet him. His hair is combed like Fletch's. We can see that beneath his sports jacket he is wearing a Magic Johnson t-shirt and jeans.

MR. STANWYK

Good evening.

FLETCH

I like your outfit. You got the fifty grand and the plane ticket?

MR. STANWYK

Of course.

Stanwyk nods toward a small briefcase in the corner. Fletch eyes it quickly, and just as quickly looks back at Stanwyk who just stands there by his desk.

MR. STANWYK

Why don't you check it out for yourself, Mr. Nugent?

FLETCH

(smiles)

Because I trust you, Alan. By the way, the name's Fletcher. I.M. Fletcher. I write a newspaper column under the name Jane Doe.

MR. STANWYK

What?

Fletch holds out an envelope.

FLETCH

Read this, please.

MR. STANWYK

Wait a second –

FLETCH

Cut the crap and read it.

Stanwyk unfolds the paper.

FLETCH

Unless my people hear differently, this letter goes out at midnight.

INSERT LETTER

We see that it is addressed to:

JOHN BOYD
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
BOYD AVIATION

STANWYK

MR. STANYK
(reading)

'Dear Sir: Alan Stanwyk murdered me tonight. The charred remains found by the police in the Jaguar are mine, not his. Mr. Stanwyk, using my name and passport, boarded Pan Am Flight 306 for Rio, where he intends to establish residence with –'

He stares at Fletch.

FLETCH
He is lifting Stanwyk's two attaché cases.

FLETCH
Pretty hefty. Keep reading.

STANWYK

MR. STANWYK
(reading)
'...with his legal wife, the former Sally Ann Cavanaugh.'

Stanwyk stops. He's stunned, and not about to read anymore of this.

GAIL'S VOICE (O.S.)
Keep reading, Alan.

Stanwyk spins to the doorway.

GAIL STANWYK

standing in the doorway.

MRS. STANWYK
Don't worry, I can take it.

MASTER

FLETCH
You shouldn't be here.

MRS. STANWYK

I want to hear this.

Fletch takes the letter from Alan.

FLETCH

He doesn't read my stuff well.

(reads)

'Sally Ann and Alan were married four years ago and never divorced, making Stanwyk a bigamist even in Utah. Stanwyk is also traveling with three million dollars in cash, the result of Gail Stanwyk's conversion of Boyd Aviation stock. Mrs. Stanwyk believed the money was to be used to purchase property in Utah, but it wasn't; a fact that can be confirmed by realtor James Swarthout of Provo.'

(aside)

That was stupid, Alan.

MR. STANWYK

I'd have been long gone.

FLETCH

Ahem.

(continues reading)

'Sally Ann can confirm all this when the police pick her up at the Airport Marriott.'

Mr. Stanwyk blanches. Fletch continues.

FLETCH

'By the way, Alan is a very big drug smuggler, but you can read all about that in tomorrow's paper. Sincerely yours, I.M. Fletcher. P.S. Have a nice day.'

Alan mulls over all this for a few seconds, then smiles wistfully.

MR. STANWYK

Bravo, Mr. Fletcher.

FLETCH

The thing that really tipped it off for me was something your wife said to me while we were in bed together.

Stanwyk shoots a surprised look at Gail. She returns it with an innocent shrug.

MR. STANWYK
(to Fletch)
And what was that?

FLETCH
How similar in build you and I are.
Then I figured it. You bump me off,
throw me in the car, and burn me up.

MRS. STANWYK
My God, Alan, you really are an
asshole, aren't you?

Now it is Alan's turn to shrug innocently.

MR. STANWYK
Sorry, darling.

MRS. STANWYK
You sonofabitch.

MR. STANWYK
Yes, I suppose I am. But I'm not a
stupid sonofabitch.

Mr. Stanwyk reaches into his desk and pulls out his gun, and levels it at Fletch.

MR. STANWYK
I was already prepared to commit one
murder. What makes you think I won't
commit two?

FLETCH
Whoops.

MRS. STANWYK
(her bravado deflated)
'Whoops?' What do you mean 'whoops?'
Don't say 'whoops.'

MR. STANWYK
I mean, by the time your story gets
published, I'll be on the beach. I
understand extradition from Rio is
very complicated. I'll bet for two
murders it's even more so.

FLETCH
That is a lighter, isn't it?

Just then, the French doors swing open, and Chief Cummings enters.

CUMMINGS

Greetings, everyone.

FLETCH
(dryly)
Thank God, the police.

MR. STANWYK
What the hell are you doing here?

CUMMINGS
Put the gun down, Alan. I'll take care of them.

Stanwyk lowers the gun.

MRS. STANWYK
(to Fletch)
I thought you had this all figured out. Good going 'Irwin.'

FLETCH
Don't ever call me 'Irwin,' okay?

MR. STANWYK
(to Cummings)
I've got it all under control, Jerry. You can go now.

CUMMINGS
(laughs)
Under control? You idiot. You didn't know who he was?

During the following dialogues, Fletch starts nudging the fireplace's gas lighter jet key with his foot.

CUMMINGS
Fat Sam left the beach today. So did Gummy. It began to occur to me that some things are beginning to happen that maybe I should be aware of.

MR. STANWYK
I said I'll take care of it. Now, a man of your position shouldn't be a part of what's about to go down. So go home and I'll call you tomorrow.

CUMMINGS
What, 'long distance?' I couldn't help but hear you say something about Rio, Alan. You're not leaving with the eight hundred thousand dollars I staked you for the next load, are you?

FLETCH

Whoa. Well, you two obviously have a lot to talk over, so we'll go catch the last ten minutes of Dynasty.

Fletch and Gail actually start to leave, but Cummings draws his gun and fires over their heads. They dive for the floor, landing on the side of the fireplace. Fletch palms a Zippo lighter from his pocket.

MR. STANWYK

Jerry, you're simply going to have to trust me. I've got a foolproof way to get rid of this guy and now you're jeopardizing everything.

CUMMINGS

Your 'foolproof' way is going to land my ass on the front page while you're basking in Rio.

FLETCH

...with your money.

Cummings turns his head momentarily to consider what Fletch has said, and Stanwyk takes advantage of the distraction to go for his gun. But he is too slow. Cummings shoots once, striking Stanwyk in the chest, killing him instantly.

Gail screams in horror. Cummings turns to Fletch.

CUMMINGS

This one's going to be even more fun.

FLETCH

(striking the Zippo)
Go ahead. Make my evening.

Fletch hurls the lighter into the fireplace, causing a great whoosh of flames. Cummings throws his hands up in front of his face and Fletch leaps at him, wrestling him to the ground. Cummings is the stronger of the two, and just as he starts to gain dominance over Fletch, Gail Stanwyk staggers to her feet, picks up her husband's tennis racket in its wooden brace, and slams it against Cummings' head with all her might.

The Chief is knocked out.

Fletch lies there, panting, trying to catch his breath. He looks up at Gail, still holding the racket, and staring at Alan's body. Fletch hustles her out of the room.

HALLWAY

FLETCH

I'm calling the police. Then I'm leaving. You wait here for them.

GAIL

Where are you going?

FLETCH

Away. I think it might take you a while to get your life back together. You don't need me around.
(indicates the library)
Don't go back in there.

He starts to leave. She calls after him.

GAIL

(still holding the racket)
I really creamed the sonofabitch, didn't I?

FLETCH

(smiles)
You sure did.

Fletch exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO - DAY

With Sugarloaf Mountain in the b.g., Fletch lies in a lounge chair, sipping an exotic drink, watching the cavorting lovelies and playing his battered Casio. This is obviously at some very expensive beach club or hotel, as witnessed by the uniformed servant who brings a telephone.

WAITER

(Brazilian accent)
Your call is come through.

FLETCH

Far out.
(to the phone)
Larry? It's Fletch.
(pause, looks around)
Well, it's not 'Fat Sam's', but...
any port in a storm.
(pause)
Oh, tell Frank I need a couple of months. The fifty grand's lasting longer than I thought.

He pauses again to listen to Larry, but sees something O.S. that takes over his attention. he doesn't wait for Larry to finish what she's saying.

FLETCH

I gotta go, Lar.

He hangs up and stands. We see that Gail has just walked up to him. The way they look at each other indicates they have not seen each other for awhile, and her arrival is a surprise to Fletch.

GAIL

John Ultramalensky, right?

FLETCH

Right.

GAIL

God, I haven't seen you since the wedding.

FLETCH

Gee, I must have been shit-faced at your wedding, I don't –

GAIL

Not mine, stupid. Yours.

FLETCH

(big smile)

What are you doing here?

They start walking down the beach. We stay right with them.

GAIL

I couldn't sit home and play the mournful widow anymore, and the police didn't need me, so I tried watching a Lakers game on TV, but the announcer talked to fast and I couldn't understand a lot of what was happening, so I figured if I came down here maybe you could explain the rules to me, and besides, I missed you.

FLETCH

No problem.

He puts his arm around her, as we watch them leave us behind and walk off down the beach.

FLETCH

Basketball, of course, was invented

in France, and is played with a large
ball, two tongue depressors and a
fish...

Fletch ad-libs just like Chevy Chase would as they walk
further away down the beach until we...

FADE OUT

THE END