

# **DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS**

by

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From the novel by

Walter Mosley

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3rd Draft

A battered wooden desk drawer groans open and light brown skinned hands with dirty fingernails twist the cap off a pint of rye whiskey and pour liquor into a coffee cup.

O.S. VOICE

You know, when you fire somebody  
you have to stick to your guns.

They screw the cap back on and lay the bottle in the drawer.

O.S. VOICE

(continuing)

The men might get to thinkin' that  
I'm weak if I take you back.

The cup rises to the face of BENNY GIACOMO, late forties, with salt and pepper hair that was once jet black. Skin darker than a Louisiana Creole.

He takes a sip and bares his teeth in a grimace from the whiskey. As he talks we gradually see more of him -- feet kicked up on the desk, fully in charge.

A Betty Grable like pin-up girl is giving us background in more ways than one in a swimsuit and high heels on a calendar tacked to the wall: May, 1948.

BENNY

(continuing)

And I didn't tell Dupree that I'd  
give you your job back... All I  
said was that I'd be glad to talk  
to you if you said the right  
thing... Do you have something to  
say?

A stream of cigarette smoke snakes through as the back of a man's head and shoulder nudges in and shifts nervously.

MAN

Mr. Giacomo, when one of the white  
guys has come off a double shift  
and says he's too tired to work  
overtime, you don't fire him.

BENNY

Fella, what'd I tell ya? If you're  
not willing to give a little extra,  
Champion can't use you.

EASY RAWLINS, thirty, handsome and a much darker brown than Giacomo, takes a drag off a Chesterfield cigarette.

1 CONTINUED:

1

Through the window behind him, a team of men pour over a partly assembled airplane, their voices echoing in the hangar that surrounds the office.

Benny measures out his words one at a time.

BENNY (O.S.)  
Now... Do... you... have...  
something... to say?

Easy swallows his frustration in silence and thinks about swallowing his pride as well. And then:

EASY  
I want my job back, Mr. Giacomo. I  
need to work and I need a good job.

BENNY (O.S.)  
Is that all?

Easy looks down into the smoke and sits up straight to keep from bowing his head.

EASY  
No, that's not all... I need money  
so that I can pay my mortgage and  
eat... I need a house to live in  
and a place to raise children... I  
need to buy clothes so I can--

BENNY  
I'm sorry, fella, but I gotta get  
back to work...

And he swings his feet down and stands up to go. But Easy is up too, blocking his way out the door.

EASY  
Ezekiel, Mr. Giacomo.

BENNY  
Hunh?

EASY  
My name is Ezekiel... Ezekiel  
Rawlins.

Benny clinches his fists and focuses on Easy's chest like a fighter. And Easy rocks back on one foot ready to score a field goal with his right knee.

Slowly, Giacomo's face creases into a plastic grin and he shrugs.

1 CONTINUED: (2) 1

BENNY  
S'cuse me, Ezekiel.

And he walks around Easy, shaking his head as if amused.

Easy watches him go as the low moan of the baritone sax from Duke Ellington's "Absinthe" snakes up like sin and we

2 FADE TO BLACK 2

And watch the titles, the last one reading "Two Weeks Later"...

FADE IN:

3 EXT. JOPPY'S BAR - DAY 3

Black and grey cars, Packards and Buicks from 1928 to 1948, come and go on Central Avenue. Two-storied storefronts with canvas awnings, above black men and women in hats... all in a hurry.

The Red Car rumbles through and then a white Cadillac convertible pulls to the curb in front of a butcher shop.

Above the shop on the next floor are large partly open windows with JOPPY'S BAR in boldface letters. Inside sits Easy, back to the window reading the classified ads.

4 INT. JOPPY'S BAR 4

T-Bone Walker's "Westside Baby" plays on the jukebox as Easy takes a final drag off his cigarette and stubs it out.

THE FRONT PAGE of the LOS ANGELES TIMES lies face up on the table beneath the ashtray displaying A PHOTOGRAPH of a middle-aged white man and his pretty young woman companion smiling and waving.

Above the happy couple is a headline "CARTER DROPS OUT OF RACE"... The caption under the photo reads "Wealthy civic leader, Todd Carter, shown here with his lovely bride-to-be, Daphne Monet, at a fundraiser last month was unavailable for comment on his surprising withdrawal from the Mayor's race."

O.S. VOICE  
Catch ya later, Joppy.

BACK TO SCENE

SPLACK! An older black man hitching up his pants underneath a bloodstained butcher's apron has slapped his empty beer glass down hard on the counter on his way out.

JOPPY

Hey, watch the marble! Dammit,  
what'd I tell you?

The fifty-year-old burly bartender leans over his big stomach checking for cracks and buffing the veiny marble top of the bar with a filthy rag. Behind him is a yellow billboard from 1932 with big black letters reading "Fuller vs. Shag. 10 ROUND MAIN EVENT." We could make out more of the poster and the eight-by-ten framed boxing photos around it if it wasn't so smoky in the place.

EASY

Joppy, how much they payin' out  
there at McDonell Douglas?

JOPPY

I don't know. Don't it say--

His words hang as his eyes stray toward the door.

Easy looks up also at

THE DOORWAY which fills with the large frame of the white MAN in an off-white linen suit, his pale eyes surveying the room. Satisfied that all but two of the six tables in the tiny room are unoccupied, he smiles at Joppy and walks to the far end of the bar.

Easy is surprised to see Joppy, tough ex-heavyweight that he is, duck his head and smile as he makes his way over like he's answering a summons. The white man extends a friendly hand and the two of them shake like old friends and lean in close to talk in private.

Easy finds it hard not to watch their conversation as he takes a sip from a short glass of bourbon on the rocks. After a moment...

JOPPY

Easy, come on over here. This  
here's somebody I want ya to  
meet... Come on. This here's a  
friend of mine.

Easy drains his glass and stands up, then walks over.

JOPPY

Yeah, Easy. This here's Mr.  
Albright.

ALBRIGHT

You can call me Dewitt, Easy.

4 CONTINUED: (2)

4

He extends his hand and Easy shakes it.

EASY

How ya doin'?

JOPPY

(bowing and grinning)

Mr. Albright and me goes back to before the war when I was still in the fight game.

ALBRIGHT

(to Easy)

Ever seen this guy fight...? Any time Joppy Shag stepped in the ring you knew you were gonna see some real knock-down-drag-out-fisticuffs... Where you from, Easy?

EASY

(awkwardly)

Houston.

ALBRIGHT

Houston... Joppy's hometown.

Joppy pours Albright a straight shot of Wild Turkey and the big man sips it.

ALBRIGHT

So I hear you need a job.

Easy throws a look at Joppy, but Joppy is busy buffing the bar and putting more of Easy's business in the street.

JOPPY

Aw yeah, Easy always tryin' to do better. Got his high school certificate from night school. He's threatenin' up on some college. And he's one of the few colored men around here who owns his own house. Shoot, he pays a mortgage every month just like a white man.

ALBRIGHT

Property owner, hunh?

He turns up his drink and sets the empty glass down on the counter.

4 CONTINUED: (3)

4

ALBRIGHT

(continuing)

These big companies, don't give a damn, do they?

He reaches in his coat pocket and produces a business card and scribbles something on it.

ALBRIGHT

(continuing)

If you need a job, drop by this address at seven tonight.

Easy takes the card and glances at it.

EASY

What kind of work you do?

ALBRIGHT

I do favors... I do favors for friends. Drop by.

He nods to Joppy and walks out the door.

EASY

Who the hell is that, Joppy?

JOPPY

Just somebody I know... A bidness man.

EASY

What kinda business?

JOPPY

Oh, I don't ask him all that. He comes in here every so often looking for somebody to do a little job for him... He pays good.

EASY

In other words, he's a gangster.

JOPPY

I didn't say that... But if there's a dollar laying in the street I don't think he'll let a little dirt stop him from picking it up. If you worried about making that house note this month, maybe you wanna pay him a call. All them pretty girls you be with ain't gonna buy you a house.

4 CONTINUED: (4)

4

Easy cocks his head "Are you crazy?"

JOPPY

(continuing)

Sound like he just wants you to keep your eyes open for somebody... He'll pay you whether you see anything or not... If it was me I'd take that man's money and go on about my bidness... Ain't nothin' to worry about.

Easy is still suspicious, but can't take his eyes off the card.

EASY (V.O.)

When somebody tells me "Don't worry," I usually look down to see if my fly is open... I noticed Albright didn't bother to pay for his drink.

5 EXT. EASY'S '46 PONTIAC - DAY

5

Little single family houses with tiny yards of St. Augustine grass rush toward the amber Indianhead hood ornament on Easy's car.

6 INT. EASY'S CAR

6

Duke Ellington's "Mood Indigo" plays on the radio as Easy heads for home in thought.

EASY (V.O.)

(continuing)

DeWitt Albright reminded me of somebody I knew back in Houston. His name was Raymond Alexander but we called him Mouse... Mouse called hisself a businessman too. And I found out that I shouldn't be nowhere around when Mouse got down to his business... I learned that the hard way.

A neighbor sweeps out her front porch and waves at Easy as he slows down in front of his house.

7 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY

7

He gets out of his car and a group of children chasing a man giving goat cart rides, washes past him in the street.

7 CONTINUED:

7

A MAN with an unruly head of hair and full beard pushing a wheelbarrow with a double edged axe wheels up behind Easy as he opens his gate.

WOODCUTTER

Want me to knock down some of them trees back there for you?

EASY

(irritated)

No... Just leave the trees alone.

Easy continues up his walkway past flower beds of dahlias and wild roses and stops on his front porch to check on his African violets in a jar next to the front door.

8 INT. EASY'S HOUSE

8

He walks into his tiny living room and tosses his jacket onto the sofa. Then moves on through the kitchen and out the back door.

9 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

9

He picks up a water hose and turns on the faucet, watering and admiring his apple, avocado, pomegranate and banana trees as he lights a cigarette.

EASY (V.O.)

I had moved to Los Angeles right after the war with three hundred dollars and the G.I. Bill... And I liked coming home to a place that was mine... According to President Truman I had that comin' to me 'cause I had fought in 'the good war' against Hitler in Europe... But that didn't mean a damn thing to a lotta white folks including the foreman on my job... So, here I was out of work needin' thirty-two dollars to pay the mortgage... That was three days pay on my old job -- and I had about three days to get it.

10 EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

10

Easy parks in front of a large Spanish-style building. He gets out and walks to the black wrought iron entrance.

11 EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT 11

Easy makes his way through the overgrown patio with roses and vines cascading down from office windows on the second floor.

A12 INT. OFFICE - NIGHT A12

Someone is watching Easy as he looks for the right office.

12 EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT 12

A small white MAN pops out from behind a hedge startling Easy. He wears a suit that also serves as a uniform.

SECURITY GUARD

What are you doing here?

EASY

I'm looking for, uh...

SECURITY GUARD

We only take deliveries between nine and six...

EASY

No, no... I...

SECURITY GUARD

Yes, we do! Now you'd better leave.

He clutches a baton in his hand and swats it into his open palm.

EASY

Uh... Albright!

SECURITY GUARD

What?

EASY

I'm here to see Mr. Albright. DeWitt Albright!

SECURITY GUARD

Where's your delivery?

He holds out his scrawny hand.

EASY

I have an appointment -- I'm supposed to meet him.

12 CONTINUED:

12

SECURITY GUARD

Did he give you a note to come in here after hours?

Easy only stares, hating this little man.

SECURITY GUARD

Well, did he? Because if he didn't--

EASY

Forget it, man. Next time I see him I'll just tell him you wouldn't let me in.

Disgusted, Easy turns to leave.

SECURITY GUARD

Hold on.

He sizes up Easy and then points across the courtyard.

SECURITY GUARD

(like an order)

Across that way to the left and down the stairs...

Easy half nods/half glares and walks away.

13 OMIT

13

At the other side of the garden Easy turns a corner and heads down concrete steps. At the bottom he opens a door leading into

14 INT. BASEMENT - CORRIDOR

14

He looks into the boiler room but turns into an empty corridor stopping at a heavy steel door at the end.

He knocks. After a moment a tall and slight MAN with curly brown hair and the complexion of an East Indian opens the door.

15 INT. MAINTENANCE ROOM

15

A short and stocky kind of Chinese-looking MAN stands against the door at the far end. The Tall Man ushers Easy into the clutter of heavy metal tools, cans of paint and cleaning solutions. A card table with two chairs sits idly. The Tall Man closes the door and holds out his hand. Easy reaches to shake it but the man starts to pat Easy on his side and Easy pushes him away.

15 CONTINUED:

15

EASY

Hey, man! What's wrong with you?

The Chinese Man slips a hand inside his coat and the Tall Man smiles.

TALL MAN

(with an accent)

Mr. Rawlins, put your hands up a little from your sides, please.

EASY

Keep your hands to yourself. I don't let no man feel on me like that.

The Chinese Man pulls some kind of weapon halfway out and takes a step forward, and the Tall Man tries to put his hand against Easy's chest but Easy grabs his wrist.

TALL MAN

Don't worry, Manny. He's okay. Just a little shaky.  
(indicating the door)  
Let him know.

Manny pushes his weapon back in his coat and knocks on the door behind him.

After a moment, DeWitt Albright opens up.

ALBRIGHT

(smiling)

Easy.

TALL MAN

He doesn't want us to touch him.

ALBRIGHT

Leave it, Shariff. I just wanted to make sure he was solo.

SHARIFF

You're the boss.

ALBRIGHT

You guys can go now. Easy and I have some business.

16 INT. MAINTENANCE OFFICE

16

Easy follows Albright inside and the big man goes behind a big wooden desk and puts his bone-colored shoes up next to a half full bottle of Wild Turkey. On the other end of the desk a small radio scratches out the Glen Gray Orchestra's "Gotta Be This or That."

16 CONTINUED:

16

There is a paper calendar hanging on the wall behind him with a picture of a basket of blackberries, but other than that the room is bare.

ALBRIGHT

Have a seat, Mr. Rawlins.

Easy takes a seat in a chair in front of the desk and tries not to stare at the tan leather shoulder holster under Albright's arm with the muzzle of the pistol almost reaching his belt.

EASY

(gesturing back)

Your friends, hunh?

ALBRIGHT

Like you, Easy. I need a little help? I give 'em a call... Drink?

EASY

Sure.

Albright pulls another glass from the desk drawer and pours a fresh one for Easy and fresher one for himself.

ALBRIGHT

One thing I like about working for myself... I always have a bottle on the table... You wanna drink with me? Fine. You don't? Door's right behind you... Joppy tells me you're a war hero... Said you went in with Patton.

Easy nods, proud but polite, and Albright pushes him a glass of whiskey.

ALBRIGHT

So, you want the job?

EASY

Depends on what kind of job. I don't want to get mixed up in nothing.

ALBRIGHT

Walk out the door in the morning, Easy, and you're mixed up in something. Only thing that matters is if you're mixed up to the top or not.

16 CONTINUED: (2)

16

EASY

I mean I don't wanna get mixed up  
with the law...

ALBRIGHT

Neither one of us wants to get  
mixed up in that. That's just rich  
people trying to keep me and you in  
our place.

He laughs and takes a healthy swig and Easy takes a drink  
too.

ALBRIGHT

I'm looking for somebody for a  
friend.

He pushes a newspaper across the desk to Easy and Easy holds  
it up.

NEWSPAPER

It's the front page with the photograph of the wealthy Todd  
Carter and his beautiful bride-to-be... Despite her smile,  
there's a sadness in the eyes.

ALBRIGHT (O.S.)

Daphne Monet... fiancée of Todd  
Carter, one of the richest men in  
town... Been gone for two weeks...

BACK TO SCENE

EASY

She leave him?

ALBRIGHT

Evidently... You know how it is  
with women, Easy... Happens to the  
best of us...

He rears back in his chair as if expecting a sign of  
recognition.

EASY

I ain't never heard of her before.  
I wouldn't know how to find a woman  
like that.

ALBRIGHT

That's a shame.

He laughs a conspiratorial, lecher's laugh and Easy allows a  
smile.

16 CONTINUED: (3)

16

ALBRIGHT

See, Daphne has a predilection for the company of Negroes. She likes jazz and pigs feet and dark meat, know what I mean.

The insult takes Easy off guard but he should've known.

EASY

So you think she might be down in Watts.

ALBRIGHT

I'm sure of it. But I can't go looking for her myself because I'm not of the right persuasion, so to speak. I've been asking Joppy for over a week, but all he could do was introduce me to you.

EASY

What do you want me to do?

ALBRIGHT

Just get a location on her. Mr. Carter wants to make up with her...

EASY

That's all.

ALBRIGHT

(smiling)

That's all.

He pulls out a brown secretary-type wallet and counts out 10 ten-dollar bills into a neat stack next to the whiskey.

ALBRIGHT

One hundred dollars, and I pay in advance.

Easy eyes the money. All he has to do is pick it up.

EASY

I just have to tell you where she is?

ALBRIGHT

That's right. And keep it, you know, confidential...

He freshens Easy's drink and Easy eyes the money some more.

16 CONTINUED: (4)

16

ALBRIGHT

Joppy tells me you used to frequent an illegal club down on Eighty-ninth and Central. Somebody saw Daphne there a few nights ago. You could start tonight.

Easy takes a drink and looks again at the money.

17 EXT. JOHN'S PLACE (MARKET) - NIGHT

17

Stripped down to its dark, naked self, Central Avenue has drawn a crowd from all over town. Neon glistens off slick pomade and silk clings to the contours of simmering flesh.

An outrage to police even before the era of Police Chief Parker's personal crusade, a squad car sits idling while two dicks in blue manhandle a brother in a grey sharkskin zoot suit, prodding and whapping with nightsticks, searching for something -- anything -- because his date is a young white woman. A few onlookers stand back watching, but since this white woman is not Daphne Monet, Easy only glances and walks inside.

18 INT. JOHN'S BAR

18

Easy sees his fifth white MAN that day in a disheveled but expensive dark blue suit staggering toward him, reeking of gin.

DRUNK

Hey, colored brother. I need you to do somethin' for me--

O.S. WOMAN'S VOICE

Go on. What'd I tell you about hair-assing my customers.

Easy looks over to see HATTIE PARSONS, the small, brown-skinned manager of the place, glaring daggers at the drunk man while watching the commotion out the window.

Easy starts over toward Hattie and the drunk turns and tries to grab Easy's arm. But his desperation causes him to trip and he winds up sitting against the wall.

Easy steps over him and joins Hattie at the window.

HATTIE

I just paid these damn cops and they still roustin' my customers. Well, that's what he gets for being with that white woman.

18 CONTINUED:

18

She walks over to the cash register of this neighborhood corner store; and Easy follows, the drunk beckoning him to bend down to talk as he passes.

DRUNK

Come on, brother help me...

HATTIE

Don't worry 'bout him. I rung Junior ten minutes ago to come get him.

Easy pulls out two dollars and Hattie deposits them into the till.

HATTIE

I ain't got nobody tonight but Lips and his trio -- Holiday came through here last Tuesday.

EASY

Yeah?

HATTIE

Yeah.

Heavy FOOTSTEPS are heard pounding down a stairway in the back of the store and big burly JUNIOR FORNAY lumbers in with a cigarette hanging from his lips.

JUNIOR

Where's he at?

Hattie points to the drunk man as he struggles to get to his feet.

HATTIE

Over there. Let Easy in upstairs and when these cops leave throw his ass out.

EASY

Hey, Junior. What's goin' on?

JUNIOR

Not too much. But stick around.

Junior leads the way back up the stairs.

19 OMIT

19

A20 INT. JOHN'S SPEAKEASY STAIRWELL

A20

EASY  
You got a cigarette?

JUNIOR  
Sure.

He pulls out his pack and stops to light Easy up. Easy starts coughing as they continue up the stairs.

EASY  
Damn! How do you smoke these things?

JUNIOR  
Don't you hafta work tomorrow?

EASY  
Naw. I got fired.

A hint of a smile appears on Junior's face.

JUNIOR  
The last time I heard these fellas playin' tonight was back in Houston, the night your ole buddy Mouse had to pull me up off your ass.

Easy grins and shakes his head.

EASY  
That's the way you remember it, hunh?

JUNIOR  
Hell, that's the way it was.

And he stops to unlock the door.

JUNIOR  
(continuing)  
When you gonna admit that you helped Mouse kill old man Navrochet?

EASY  
Aw, man, get off that. I ain't had nothin' to do with that.

Junior opens the door and Lips' alto horn slaps Easy in the face. Half of Houston, Texas seems to be jammed into this place.

A20 CONTINUED:

A20

EASY

Boy, it's happenin' tonight.  
Where's all the white women at?

JUNIOR

I don't pay them white girls no  
mind.

EASY

(sarcastically)  
Yeah... I bet you don't.

And he steps in.

JUNIOR

That's right. Just like you didn't  
help mouse kill his stepfather.

EASY

Go on, man.

And he starts away inside.

JUNIOR

Hey, Easy. Did you help him kill  
his stepbrother, too?

Easy turns to glare at Junior and the surly field hand slaps  
his thigh and roars with laughter as he closes the door.  
After all these years the two men still hate each other.

20 INT. JOHN'S SPEAKEASY

20

Easy looks around to see couples trying to dance; finding  
themselves wrestling between tables packed with five and six  
people each.

He heads for the bar pointing a finger at a man in a black  
silk shirt and a foot-high pompadour hairdo.

EASY

Alphonso Jenkins!

ALPHONSO flashes pearls.

ALPHONSO

Hey, Easy!

EASY

Hey, man, you seen a girl named  
Dahlia or somethin'... White girl  
supposed to be somethin' to look  
at.

ALPHONSO

Naw, but if I see her I'm gonna  
keep her to myself.

Easy claps him on the shoulder and waves at skinny RITA COOK  
who is sitting at a table with five MEN.

RITA

Hey, Baby.

EASY

Hey, Rita!  
(under his breath)  
What do they see in you?

Finally, Easy spots a fifty-year-old MAN in an old grey  
tweed jacket sitting in a corner at a table by himself.  
Looking like the God fearing, all fearing Baptist deacon  
that he is -- he is as out of place as a whore in church as  
he nervously gazes about the room and massacres a plate of  
barbecued ribs.

Easy leans over the counter to the bartender.

EASY

Hey, Lewis. Gimme a couple glasses  
and a pail of ice and send a quart  
of bourbon over there to Odell's  
table.

Lewis scoops up ice into a small bucket and plops it onto  
the bar with two short glasses.

Easy lays a dollar on the counter and carries the set up  
over to the corner as he watches...

THE BAND

burn it up.

BACK TO SCENE

Easy stops at Odell's table.

EASY

Hey, Odell.

ODELL

Easy.

EASY

How's it going tonight?

Odell doesn't miss a bite as he scopes the crowd.

ODELL

(slowly)

Well... It's goin' alright. It  
sure is goin'.

O.S. VOICE

Easy Rawlins, is that you?

Easy looks up to see

DUPREE, a big black man with a wide white grin in a white  
suite with blue pinstripes and a ten-gallon hat.

DUPREE

You ain't jumped outta no windows  
yet?

EASY

Not yet, Dupree.

DUPREE

Miss you down at the plant... You  
know Coretta, don't ya?

He has her in tow like a toy wagon and she offers a coy  
smile. Short and roundish with cherry-brown skin, she leads  
with her bosom.

EASY

Hey, Coretta, how are ya?

Coretta rests her sloe-eyes on Easy and Odell and the church  
going man almost chokes.

ODELL

Oh, my goodness.

CORETTA

Could we sit down with y'all?

EASY

Sure. Sure.

Dupree and Coretta settle in.

DUPREE

You know Benny just wants you to  
say you're sorry, Easy. And he'll  
give you your job back.

EASY

I'm a sorry man, all right. Any  
man without his paycheck is sorry.

20 CONTINUED: (3)

20

Dupree laughs, smacking the table so hard it rattles like an earthquake. And Coretta's smile ignites like a slow fuse causing Easy to feel it all the way down his spine.

A man with his hair marcelled back swoops in and pulls a quart of Old Crow from his overcoat and sits it on the table.

Easy reaches for his wallet but Dupree beats him to it.

DUPREE

I got it, Easy. Your money ain't no good up in here.

EASY

Naw, Dupree. This one's mine--

DUPREE

You sure? You the one outta work.

Coretta frowns at Dupree as Easy counts out three dollars.

CORETTA

And you're the one ain't never got no money.

DUPREE

Aw, Baby...

(to bootlegger)

Get us another couple glasses.

And he peels off a dollar and hands it off.

EASY

Either one of y'all seen a white girl named Dahlia or somethin' with a 'D'?

Odell shakes his head "no," and Coretta looks away as if insulted leaving silence until

DUPREE

Hey, Coretta got a new job at the phone company.

He squeezes his woman in close and Coretta softens up and burns that smile again.

Easy grins and nods "congratulations."

21 THE BOTTLE

21

It's less than a quarter full now because it's three hours later.

21 CONTINUED:

21

BACK TO SCENE

John's is only half full and the band is gone. The jukebox echoes Lena Horne's "Prisoner of Love" and Dupree leans back in his chair, snoring -- mouth wide open.

Odell gets up and starts to amble off.

EASY

Hey, you goin' home, Odell?

Concentrating totally on keeping his balance, Odell waves feebly without looking back.

Easy is droopy-eyed from the booze but Coretta just looks a little sexier. She straightens Dupree's hat on his head and twists up her nose.

CORETTA

He used to play till the cock crowed. But that ole cock don't crow nearly so much now...

She levels her perpetual "come on" onto Easy and he nods sluggishly and lifts himself to his feet.

EASY

Think I'm gonna head out.

CORETTA

You be sorry if you go.

She slides her hand inside her blouse and discreetly lifts her bodice to air her breasts.

EASY

I think I'd be more sorry if I stay...

He turns to go.

CORETTA

Daphne sleep by now. You can't get none of that tonight.

Easy turns and Coretta plays with the ice in her glass.

CORETTA

You been telling everybody Dahlia, but her name is Daphne.

EASY

You know her?

21 CONTINUED: (2) 21  
 Coretta leans back and fans her bosom.

22 EXT. CORETTA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 22  
 Easy struggles with Dupree, and Coretta gives him a hand as they drag him from Easy's car to her front door, the big man's feet plowing two deep furrows in the lawn.

23 INT. CORETTA'S HOUSE 23  
 Coretta pushes the door open and Easy hauls him in.

CORETTA  
 Throw him in there on the bed,  
 Easy.

Easy pulls and pushes Dupree's dead weight into  
 THE BEDROOM

CORETTA  
 Threw him outta his place, 'cause  
 he couldn't pay the rent. I  
 shouldn't even let him sleep here.

Finally Easy manages to pile Dupree onto the bed and then stands up panting and sweating.

EASY  
 Damn...

Coretta leads him out into

24 THE LIVING ROOM 24  
 EASY  
 I need a cigarette.

Coretta shines her hazel eyes on him.

CORETTA  
 That all you need?

Easy grins nervously and clears his throat.

EASY  
 Coretta, sun catch me tip-toein'  
 out your door and no tellin' what  
 your neighbors say...

CORETTA

Dupree run through his money, fall  
asleep on me. And you just gonna  
walk out on me like I was dog  
food...

EASY

You got a man in the other room...  
Why don't you tell me 'bout your  
friend Daphne?

Coretta strolls up to Easy, pressing her body against his.

CORETTA

Why you keep askin' 'bout her?  
Colored women ain't good enough for  
you no more?

She undoes a button on his shirt and kisses his chest, and  
unbuttons another working her way down. Easy sweats harder  
than when he was lifting Dupree.

EASY

What if he hears somethin'?

CORETTA (O.S.)

Way he snorin'?

ON THE SOFA - MINUTES LATER

CORETTA

Oh yeah, daddy. You hittin' my  
spot! Oh yeah... yeah!

The top of her dress undone, Coretta is straddling Easy who  
is hitting her spot and his too, in a rhythm. Eyes  
closed, he bites his lip to hold in the ecstasy so as not to  
awaken Dupree, who is sawing logs -- shredding 'em -- in the  
bedroom.

Suddenly Coretta tears herself off of him and sits back on  
his knees. Easy writhes and shakes like a power line  
shorting out.

CORETTA

(coy, shy)

Oooh, that's just too good, Easy.

Easy tries to pull her back but she twists down to the  
floor.

CORETTA

I can't give up that much love,  
daddy, not the way things is.

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

EASY  
 (out loud)  
 What things?

She shushes him with a finger and twists her head toward the bedroom.

CORETTA  
 You know, Dupree's right there in the next room.

EASY  
 (full voice)  
 Forget about him! You got me goin', Coretta!

Coretta quiets him again and he comes back to his senses.

CORETTA  
 But it ain't right, Easy. Here I am doin' this right in the next room and all you doin' is nosin' after my friend Daphne...

EASY  
 Daphne?  
 (and then remembers)  
 Oh, yeah... I ain't after her, baby. That's just a job.

CORETTA  
 What job?

EASY  
 Man wants me to find her.

CORETTA  
 What man?

EASY  
 Who cares, what man? I don't want nobody but you...

He pulls her toward him but she pushes him away.

CORETTA  
 But Daphne's my friend--

Frustrated, he sits back against the sofa and Coretta, sensing that he is snapping out of her spell, slides forward onto him giving him her spot again. And within moments they are back at it.

24 CONTINUED: (3) 24

CORETTA  
Oh, baby. Oh, daddy, you hittin'  
my spot! Oh, yeah...

EASY (V.O.)  
I went on hittin' her spot until  
just before sun-up.

DISSOLVE TO:

25 EXT. CORETTA'S HOUSE - DAWN 25

The sky is light purple as Easy stumbles down Coretta's porch. She waves half-heartedly and closes the door as he straightens his clothes and looks around for any "witnesses" on his way to his car.

DISSOLVE TO:

26 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY 26

Easy's Pontiac pulls to a stop in front and he gets out.

EASY (V.O.)  
It occurred to me that Coretta had found out a lot more about what I was up to than I had wanted her to. But I had found out that the rich man's woman had a colored boyfriend... It had cost me a sawbuck to get Coretta to give me that information... Well, let's just say somethin' had cost me ten dollars.

27 INT. EASY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER 27

Golden morning light streams in through the window. Outside, a dog is barking at a bird on the fence.

Coffee percolates on the stove and Easy walks over and pours himself a cup. He moves to the breakfast table and sits down by the window looking out onto the street as he opens up a blue envelope in a stack of mail.

Gradually he begins to silently mouth the words and sits up, his eyes getting bigger until he finds himself reading aloud.

EASY  
"Since Etta Mae has left me and I am a bachelor I figured I could come out and visit and we burn down the town...

(MORE)

27 CONTINUED: 27

EASY (CONT'D)

Write me and tell me when's a good time."  
 (looks up)  
 Aw shit.

28 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY 28

Easy waters his lawn in deep thought.

EASY (V.O.)

The letter from Mouse was worrying me in more ways than one... All I had to do was call Albright to earn the hundred dollars I already had in my pocket... But the last time I got money that easy I got it from Mouse -- fifty dollars -- And the next day I had to join the Army to leave town.

FLASHBACK:

29 INT. STOLEN CAR - NIGHT 29

A younger Easy is driving, his hair greased up high in a pompadour with a pencil line moustache framing his top lip.

A man in a wide brim Homburg hat looks away out the passenger window.

MAN

Drive to the trainyard, Easy!  
 Let's dump this damn thing.

EASY

(suddenly alarmed)  
 This ain't your friend's car?  
 What'd you do Mouse?

MOUSE

(still looking away)  
 Just drive this sumbitch!

The drone of the engine takes us

30 BACK TO SCENE 30

A TRUCK with a whole family's belongings tied down onto a flatbed rolls up. A WOMAN and a bunch of KIDS fill up the cab.

WOMAN

Bye, Easy!

30 CONTINUED:

30

EASY

Where you goin', Sophie?

WOMAN

Back to Texas... It's too fast for  
me out here.

She waves and keeps on trucking.

He watches her wistfully and then catches sight of

THE WOODCUTTER across the street in a neighbor's front yard,  
axe in hand, about to swing on a lemon tree.

EASY

Get away from there!

He picks up a rock and throws it, and then chucks another  
sending the scruffy vagabond wheeling his barrow off down  
the street.Easy shuts off the water and walks back up on his porch. He  
picks up a glass of lemonade that sits at the foot of a  
chair on top of

A NEWSPAPER

A front page heading reads "CARTER'S WITHDRAWAL LEAVES TERAN  
ON TOP." Below itA PHOTOGRAPH of a smiling Matthew Teran, with lips too thick  
for a white man, getting out of a limousine.

31 O.S. THE PHONE IS RINGING. It's

31

LATER - NIGHT

Easy is asleep on the porch. Finally, he wakes up to the  
ringing and heads into the house.

32 INT. EASY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

32

Easy flops on the bed and lifts the phone off a cherry wood  
nightstand.

EASY

Hello?

O.S. VOICE

Mr. Rawlins, I've been expecting  
your call.

EASY

What?

32 CONTINUED:

32

O.S. VOICE

I hope you have good news for me.

EASY

Mr. Albright, is that you?

ALBRIGHT

Sure is, Easy. What's shakin'?

Easy clears his head. He has slept away the day.

EASY

I got what you want. She's with--

ALBRIGHT

Hold on to that, Easy. I like to look a man in the face when we do business. Meet me at the Fisherman's Pier in Malibu at the hamburger stand in an hour.

EASY

Uh... I don't know about that Mr. Albright -- Mr. Albright?

He realizes that Albright has hung up, and swears under his breath.

33 EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - NIGHT

33

The headlights from Easy's car illuminate the cliffs that fall alongside the winding two-lane highway.

34 INT. EASY'S CAR - NIGHT

34

Easy is cautious, checking the rearview mirror more often than usual.

EASY (V.O.)

I wasn't used to going to white communities, like Malibu, to conduct business. Champion Aircraft was in Santa Monica but I drove out there in the daytime, did my work and came home. I never loitered nowhere except among my own people, in my own neighborhood.

A35 EXT. MALIBU PIER - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A35

The lights from the pier can be seen in the distance as Easy parks his car. And the voices of teenagers in raucous conversation can be heard above Glenn Miller's big band playing "Silhouette In The Moonlight" on the jukebox.

A35 CONTINUED:

A35

Easy gets out and starts toward the pier.

35 EXT. MALIBU PIER - NIGHT

35

Easy walks past the hamburger stand and on to the railing that looks out over the ocean.

O.S. VOICE

Hi.

He spins around and sees a chubby 17-year-old white GIRL in a tight-fitting skirt.

He nods respectfully and turns away to look out at the water, hoping she'll leave.

GIRL

It's pretty out here, huh?

EASY

Yeah. It's all right.

GIRL

I'm from Des Moines in Iowa. Where are you from?

EASY

(without looking back)

Huh?... Uh... Texas...

GIRL

Do they have an ocean in Texas?

EASY

The Gulf, they have the Gulf.

She leans on the rail next to Easy and he glances over his shoulder, seeing a couple of the young men looking around like they've lost someone.

EASY

I think they're looking for you.

BARBARA

Who cares? My sister brought me 'cause my parents made her. All she wants to do is make out with Herman and smoke cigarettes.

PIMPLY-FACED BOY

Hey, you! What are you doing?

The five-foot-six-inch twenty-year-old charges straight up to Easy.

BARBARA

(yelling)

Leave him alone, Herman! We were just talking!

HERMAN

You were, huh?

(to Easy)

We don't need you talking to our women.

Easy braces himself as five of Herman's FRIENDS rush over, including one built like a football player.

FOOTBALL

Hey! What's wrong?

HERMAN

Nigger's trying to pick up Barbara.

BARBARA

Leave him alone! We were just talking about the ocean!

BARBARA'S SISTER

Barbara!

Football gets right in Easy's face.

FOOTBALL

Hey, fella, what's wrong with you?

A couple of the other boys have picked up sticks and are surrounding Easy against the rail.

EASY

I don't want no trouble.

FOOTBALL

You already got trouble, boy.

EASY

Listen... I was just being polite.

HERMAN

No, you weren't. You were talkin' about the ocean!

O.S. VOICE

Excuse me.

Easy sees Albright's Panama hat appear behind Football.

FOOTBALL

What do you want?

And he whirls around to Albright's smiling face, just in time to see him pull that rifle-like pistol from inside his coat, leveling it at his eyes.

ALBRIGHT

I want to see brains. I want you to die for me.

Albright cocks the hammer. It sounds like a bone breaking, and Barbara starts crying in her sister's arms.

FOOTBALL

(quickly)

I'm sorry, sir.

Easy nods but Albright is not satisfied.

ALBRIGHT

The question is: "Are you sorry enough?"

FOOTBALL

Yessir.

ALBRIGHT

Then prove it... Show him... Get down on your knees and suck his peter.

Football starts crying.

EASY

(to Albright)

I think he got the point--

ALBRIGHT

(to Football)

You heard me.

He presses the barrel to the boy's forehead and Football goes down to his knees. The other young men look on in horror.

ALBRIGHT

Son of a gun. You were gonna do it, weren't you?

THUNK! He slaps the barrel of the pistol into the side of the boy's head. Football screams and the others scatter.

35 CONTINUED: (3)

35

ALBRIGHT

Sick bastard.

THUNK! He smacks him again, and blood is everywhere.

ALBRIGHT

Get out of here. You call the  
cops, I'll kill ya!Football manages to stagger to his feet and stumbles away  
into the darkness back out toward the parking lot.36 Albright wipes his gun with a handkerchief and slides it  
back into the holster.

36

ALBRIGHT

I don't think they'd dare call the  
cops.

(giggles)

But it'll cost me a few bucks if  
they do.He claps Easy on the back as if it's all been in fun and  
giggles like a kid on his way toward the hamburger stand.Easy looks at him numbly and tags alongside, clutching his  
anger in tightly clenched jaws.

ALBRIGHT

What you got, Easy?

EASY

You sure no harm is gonna come to  
that woman 'cause of me?

Albright doesn't break stride.

ALBRIGHT

Course not. Mr. Carter wants to  
buy her a gold ring and live  
happily ever after -- What do ya  
got?

Easy exhales, feeling trapped, but he's come this far...

EASY

Woman told me she's with a man  
named Frank Green.

Albright stops; the charm gone, he's all business.

ALBRIGHT

Where?

EASY

He's got an apartment at the Skyler Arms on Skyler and Eighty-third.

Albright scribbles it down on a note pad.

ALBRIGHT

Anything else?

EASY

Frank's a gangster. A hijacker...  
Liquor and cigarettes. He's real good with a knife.

Albright is unable to suppress a smile.

ALBRIGHT

Ever seen him in action?

EASY

Naw. I just heard about him.

Albright, still grinning, pulls out the brown "secretary" and counts out more bills.

ALBRIGHT

Here's another hundred.

He shoves the money into Easy's hand.

ALBRIGHT

Buy ya a burger, Easy?

He starts into the screen door of the hamburger stand but Easy declines.

EASY

No thanks, Mr. Albright.

ALBRIGHT

How come you let those boys get around you like that? War hero should have been able to pick 'em off one by one before they got you against the rail.

EASY

I don't kill children.

For some reason this is hilarious to Albright. He throws his head back and wheezes out an almost silent belly laugh, then winds down.

36 CONTINUED: (2)

36

ALBRIGHT

Take it easy.

He disappears into the hamburger joint and Easy walks away back toward his car.

37 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

37

Easy pulls in front of his house and notices a dark Ford parked across the street as he gets out of his car.

A tall, skinny white MAN in a dark blue suit gets out just ahead of his slightly shorter and heavysset FRIEND.

Easy watches them as he moves toward his walkway.

SKINNY MAN

Mr. Rawlins.

EASY

Yeah.

They approach fast but cautiously, the fat one with a hand in his pocket.

SKINNY MAN

Mr. Rawlins, I'm Miller and this is my partner, Mason.

They both hold out badges. Mason is a slob with grease spots on his wrinkled tan suit.

MILLER

We want you to come with us.

EASY

Where?

MASON

You'll see.

And he takes Easy by the arm.

EASY

You arresting me?

MASON

You'll see.

And he starts pulling Easy toward the street.

EASY

I got a right to know why you're taking--

37 CONTINUED:

37

WHOMP! Easy takes one to the diaphragm, and as he doubles over the fat detective slips the handcuffs on behind his back.

MASON

You got a right to fall down and  
break your face, nigger. You got a  
right to die.

The two cops drag Easy to the car and dump him into the back seat where he lies gagging as the car whisks away.

38 INT. POLICE STATION

38

Easy's head sags down as he's dragged through the front door past blurred blue bodies that talk.

POLICEMAN (O.S.)

You got 'im, huh, Miller?

MILLER (O.S.)

Yeah, we got him coming home.  
Nothing on 'im.

A door opens and Easy finds himself being flung inside.

39 INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

39

On his knees he hears the door close and looks up at a single, bare wooden chair resting on the corroded linoleum floor.

He crawls to one of the urine-stained corners, and looks down on a dry, flat corpse of a mouse. He pushes his shoulder against the unpainted plaster until he's standing and then stumbles over to the chair and sits. He looks up at the bare pipes that run along the ceiling, dripping water, and at a window with criss-cross chairs instead of glass framing, overgrown branches and leaves pushing their way in.

THE DOOR opens and Miller comes in first carrying a notebook.

MILLER

Ezekiel Rawlins.

EASY

Yes, sir.

Mason follows and closes the door.

MILLER

We can take off the cuffs if you  
wanna cooperate.

EASY  
I'm cooperating.

Miller motions to Mason and he removes the cuffs.

MILLER  
Where were you this morning at  
about five A.M.?

EASY  
(stalling)  
What do you mean?

MASON  
He means--

He plants his foot in Easy's chest and pushes him over  
backwards.

MASON  
--this morning.

Easy has caught himself and stands back up.

EASY  
I don't know... I was out drinkin'  
and I helped carry a friend home.  
I could've been on my way home... I  
don't know... I didn't look at a  
clock...

MASON  
(wandering over)  
He didn't look at a clock.

WHOCK! Easy takes a fist to the ear and struggles to keep  
his balance, wiping away blood streaming down.

MILLER  
You were drinkin' down on Eighty-  
ninth and Central... At an illegal  
club called John's, weren't you?

Mason moves again but this time Easy turns to face him and  
the fat man looks back with an innocent face, his palms  
turned up.

MILLER  
You may as well answer 'cause you  
got bigger troubles than us bustin'  
an illegal bar, Ezekiel.

EASY  
What do you mean? What's goin' on?

39 CONTINUED: (2)

39

Mason has taken off his shoe and is swatting it against the palm of his hand.

MASON

Means we can take your black ass out behind the station and put a bullet in your head.

MILLER

Now. What time did you leave Coretta James' house this morning?

EASY

I guess about five... five-thirty...

Miller and Mason glance at each other, and Mason kicks the chair over toward Easy.

MASON

Sit down.

EASY

Why, I'm gonna sit down and you keep trying to knock me down?

But he sits down anyway.

MILLER

Did you go back and see Miss James later in the day?

EASY

No, sir.

MILLER

Did you and Dupree Brouchard have words over Miss James?

EASY

Huh?

MASON

You heard 'im. Did you two argue over Coretta James?

EASY

Naw. He was asleep.

MILLER

She went to sleep too, Ezekiel. But she won't be waking up...

Easy's face goes sick...

39 CONTINUED: (3)

39

MILLER

(continuing)

Where'd you go when you left Miss James' house?

Easy is too stunned to answer.

MASON

You heard him, where'd you go?

Easy stares into space, answering in barely a whisper.

EASY

I went home with a hangover...

CHOONK! CHOONK! Mason fires off two punches and Easy grabs his wrists and pulls him down to the floor, swinging around, straddling Mason sitting on his ass...

Miller's police special presses into Easy's temple and Miller speaks to him quietly, deadly.

MILLER

Get up slow... Real fuckin' slow or you know what's gonna happen.

Easy raises his hands and uncoils to his feet, backing away cautiously.

Mason is winded and furious.

MASON

Okay. Let's take him out back.

He gets to his feet and reaches for his gun, but Miller stops his hand.

MILLER

No. Let's go.

MASON

Bullshit, I'm gonna blow his--

MILLER

Let's go!

He pushes Mason toward the door.

MASON

Son-of-a-bitch! Son-of-a-bitch!

They exit the door and Easy rubs at his bloody ear.

40 EXT. L.A. CITY JAIL - NIGHT

40

Easy walks down the steps of the station buttoning up his top shirt button, his hand cupped to his aching ear to keep out the chill of the night air.

The street is dark and deserted like a giant black alley except for the black and white patrol car that sits at the curb. A taut-faced officer leans out the window.

OFFICER

Hey, Buddy!... It's a long walk...  
why don't you let us give you a  
ride?

Easy walks across the street off into the darkness...

41 EXT. FOURTH STREET BRIDGE - NIGHT

41

A snatch of MUSIC and LAUGHTER startles Easy as he trudges home and a car full of teenagers shoots by. And then...

A BLACK CADILLAC LIMOUSINE

cruises up behind and drives alongside.

VOICE FROM CAR

Hey, you! Ezekiel Rawlins!

The window rolls down all the way and a white face in a black cap appears in the window.

CHAUFFEUR

Ezekiel, hold on.

Easy keeps walking.

CHAUFFEUR

Come on, fella. Somebody in the  
back wants to talk to you.

EASY

I don't have time right now.

He doubles his pace, almost running.

CHAUFFEUR

Jump in. We'll take you. My boss  
wants to talk to you.

Easy cuts behind the limo and into the street headed for the other side of the bridge but

41 CONTINUED:

41

The Cadillac whips a U-turn blocking his way in the middle of the street while cars pass, honking, on either side. The tall angular chauffeur gets out of the car and holds up his hands as if making peace.

Easy starts to make another move to escape but:

CHAUFFEUR

(continuing)

Come on. If we wanted to hurt you  
it would have already happened...

He opens the back door and after a few moments, Easy gets in.

42 INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

42

Easy settles into the seat with his back to the driver.

Edith Piaf's "Parles Moi D'Amour" adds sugar to the strong smell of cologne and the portly form of Matthew Teran sits across from him with a small MEXICAN BOY in pajamas seated next to him holding a small elephant.

TERAN

I can see that the police roughed  
you up a bit... That's a terrible  
practice of theirs which has to  
change, Mr. Rawlins... Has to  
change.

He opens his gold cigarette case and offers Easy a cigarette. Easy accepts and Teran lights them both up.

TERAN

(continuing)

She was beaten. And died from a  
heavy blow to the back of the head,  
Mr. Rawlins.

Easy begins to feel nauseous.

TERAN

The evening's events have caught my  
adopted son and I quite off  
guard... My household was asleep  
when we got the call that the  
police had a suspect in Coretta  
James' murder... Did you know that  
she was a friend of mine, Mr.  
Rawlins!?

EASY

No I didn't, Mr. Teran.

TERAN

Oh, you know who I am?

EASY

I read the papers. You're runnin' for mayor.

TERAN

(correcting)

I am the next mayor, Mr. Rawlins... And luckily for you, a friend of the Negro... When I arrived at the station I knew right off that you were being improperly detained as is Coretta's boyfriend, Dupree Brouchard. It's this sort of thing that my administration will not tolerate, Mr. Rawlins. Absolutely will not...

He sits back in his seat self righteously and offers a nod of assurance and awaits Easy's gratitude... Then after a moment...

TERAN

(continuing)

Yes... Coretta answered phones for a while in my campaign office on 103rd and Western. In fact my people got her a job in the phone company. So when I heard what had happened I got out of bed immediately, personally because of my concern... Was anyone there with you Mr. Rawlins besides Mr. Dupree Brouchard?... Any... other friends of Coretta's?

EASY

No, sir...

TERAN

No young lady perhaps?

EASY

Nobody...

TERAN

Of course not, Mr. Rawlins. And why should you tell a man whom you've only just met. But, believe me, Mr. Rawlins. You can trust me.

42 CONTINUED: (2)

42

EASY  
 (shrugging)  
 There was no one else.

Teran's face sags with disappointment and then...

TERAN  
 Well don't worry, Mr. Rawlins... I  
 won't tolerate your being  
 harassed... You or any of my  
 constituency -- I was a city  
 councilman in the Watts area for  
 two terms with a large contingent  
 of colored -- I value all of my  
 supporters equally... humble though  
 they may be -- where can we drop  
 you, Mr. Rawlins?

EASY  
 You can let me out here.

TERAN  
 Are you sure, Mr. Rawlins? This  
 must be quite out of your way.

EASY  
 It's okay.

The little boy stares up at Easy through big, dark almond-shaped eyes in the silence that follows. And then, Teran picks up the ivory horn that hangs next to his head.

TERAN  
 Norman, pull the car over.

43 EXT. WAREHOUSE AREA - NIGHT

43

The limousine stops and Easy pushes the door open and gets out.

TERAN  
 Mr. Rawlins, may I offer you cab  
 fare?

Teran's stubby fingers hold out crumpled bills.

EASY  
 No thanks.

Easy closes the door and watches the long Cadillac glide away.

43 CONTINUED:

43

EASY (V.O.)

There had been nights during the war that I still had trouble claiming as part of my life... Insane nights I wasn't sure ever really happened. And here I was again... Had I really just gotten out of a rich man's car who was runnin' for mayor?... Running against the man I was supposed to be working for... Was he really lookin' for the same woman I was trying to find? My ear was killin' me and the buses had stopped running. And I was feeling sick... Sick from wondering if I had really hard that Coretta was dead.

44 INT. EASY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

44

The room is a mess; trousers strewn here, shirt and shoes over there. And from the corners are haunting, ghostly whispers.

CORETTA'S VOICE

You be sorry if you go...  
(heavy breathing)  
I can't give up that much love,  
daddy, not the way things is.

A PINT OF BOURBON, 3/4 full, sits atop the cherry wood nightstand. Another empty bottle lies next to it on its side, in front of a water glass with 1/2 inch of liquor at the bottom.

EASY'S HEAD rests on a pillow on the bed behind it, sweating, tossing and turning as the ghost gets louder.

CORETTA'S VOICE

Oh yeah, daddy. You hittin' my spot... Oh yeah... oh yeah...

The voice of the ghost is reaching closer for his ear.

CORETTA'S VOICE

Oh, that's just too good, Easy. Oh daddy... oh yeah...

The voice is right up in his face.

CORETTA'S VOICE

Oh, baby. Oh, daddy, yeah... Oh yeah!! Oh Yea-a-h!!

44 CONTINUED:

44

SCREAM. He jerks up, awake, and the phone is RINGING. It jingles a couple more times and Easy almost knocks the receiver out of its cradle reaching for it.

EASY

Huh?

VOICE

(a woman's)

Hello? Is this Mr. Rawlins?

EASY

Who is this?

VOICE

Daphne... Daphne Monet...

He sits straight up.

DAPHNE

You're looking for me.

A pause on the line.

DAPHNE

I think you should come and talk to me, Mr. Rawlins... alone.

EASY

Look, it's late--

DAPHNE

Mr. Rawlins, Coretta has been killed...

Another pause.

DAPHNE

And if you don't want any trouble from the police then you'll come... And you won't tell anyone that you're coming.

EASY

Now wait a minute, Daphne. I don't know nothin' about all this stuff...

DAPHNE

I'm at the Sunridge Motel on 112th and Grand, Room 102.

- 44 CONTINUED: (2) 44
- Easy holds his hands up, helplessly -- "what do you want from me?" -- but no one can see and she has hung up the phone.
- 45 EXT. SUNRIDGE MOTEL - NIGHT 45
- It's a Spanish-style set of rooms with tile roofs set around a square parking lot.
- Easy's car pulls into the alley behind it.
- He gets out and scans the area looking down from a rise at the back entrance to the parking lot. And then walks down.
- 46 OMIT 46
- 47 EXT. SUNRIDGE MOTEL - ROOM 102 - NIGHT 47
- Before Easy can knock, he hears:
- DAPHNE (O.S.)  
Mr. Rawlins?
- EASY  
Yeah.
- The door opens and she's standing there, more beautiful than the photograph. They take each other in for a moment before she steps back from the door.
- DAPHNE  
Please come in.
- 48 INT. MOTEL ROOM 48
- It's a regular drab, cheap motel that she has given a warmer touch with colorful scarves draped over the two lamps.
- DAPHNE  
Would you like a drink?
- She indicates a pint of scotch on the dresser with an empty glass and one that she's been drinking from.
- EASY  
No, thanks.
- She indicates the chair.
- DAPHNE  
Please sit down.
- She's wearing a blue dress that's plain, cutting just below her knee with a ceramic pin just over her left breast.

DAPHNE

What happened to you? Have you been fighting?

Easy stubs out his cigarette in an ashtray and sits down.

EASY

Why don't you just tell me what you want?

She sits down too, her calm but brittle exterior betrayed at the hands. She stops wringing them when she sees that he notices and takes a drink -- more medicine than pleasure.

DAPHNE

I should be asking you that question. Why have you been asking about me?

EASY

I heard about you. Fellas at John's said you were something to see.

DAPHNE

So...? You've found me.

EASY

Uh... yeah... Guess I have. But you got a boyfriend I don't want no part of... Frank Green.

She lights a cigarette.

DAPHNE

You can stop pretending, Mr. Rawlins. I know someone hired you to look for me. In fact I had to pay Coretta not to tell you where I was... you know how Coretta is...

(forces a weak smile)

She told me you two became 'good friends' yesterday...

(tears gather in her eyes)

I talked to her this morning before she died.

(regaining control)

I... uh... need to go across town to see someone. It's very important... I can't seem to reach him by phone. I'm afraid I'd better have someone go with me.

EASY  
Uh... Miss Monet--

DAPHNE  
Call me Daphne.

EASY  
Daphne--

DAPHNE  
I can understand why you'd be nervous... because I threatened you with Coretta... I'm very sorry, but I couldn't think of any other way to get you to come.

She takes another drink and stubs out her cigarette though it's less than a third gone.

EASY  
I can't -- why don't you ask Frank?

She gets up and starts to pace nervously about the room.

DAPHNE  
He's out of town -- I... I'm willing to pay you.

EASY  
That's nice of you but, see, I'm not really a detective--

DAPHNE  
--I know that.

EASY  
I was just hired to ask around to try to find you for a man--

DAPHNE  
I know all about that, Mr. Rawlins.

EASY  
But this is a gettin' a little out of hand--

DAPHNE  
--Mr. Rawlins--

EASY  
--Easy.

48 CONTINUED: (3)

48

DAPHNE

Easy... If you don't help me, then I'll call the police and tell them that you were with Coretta before she died and that you've been after me too.

That stops Easy.

EASY

You'd do that?

DAPHNE

Yes, I would. I don't want to but I would.

She hates herself for threatening and decides to change direction, moving in close.

DAPHNE

Please let me pay you.

EASY

No. I can't do that.

DAPHNE

Why?

EASY

I don't want no part of all this.

DAPHNE

Please, I'll pay you twenty dollars.

EASY

No dice.

DAPHNE

Thirty... or even more. Name your price.

She moves in closer, massaging with her voice.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Go ahead. There's gotta be something that you want.

Her eyes make an offer, but he's a better man than me and he's not taking.

48 CONTINUED: (4)

48

DAPHNE  
 (angrily,  
 sarcastically)  
 What? Are you afraid I'll yell  
 rape or something?

She walks away and turns up her glass, her desperation, raw, unguarded.

EASY  
 Uh, Miss Monet... Daphne, I'm sorry  
 but I really better be goin'.

He starts out and she runs to stop him.

DAPHNE  
 Easy, don't touch that door--

He opens it and

SCREAM! Like an alarm, she's SHRIEKING all of the scale.

49 He looks out and sees

49

LIGHTS GOING ON in other rooms.

50 BACK TO SCENE

50

He looks back frantically and grabs her by the shoulders.

EASY  
 Crazy assed broad! What the hell  
 are you doing?!

DAPHNE  
 I'm really very sorry. I really  
 am.

She pulls on a coat and grabs her purse.

DAPHNE  
 (continuing)  
 I didn't want to do this but...  
 Shall we?

She grabs an already packed suitcase and is out the door.

51 EXT. LAUREL CANYON - NIGHT

51

Easy's Pontiac snakes up the winding road, city lights glimmering in flashes below as it rounds the curves.

52 INT. EASY'S CAR - NIGHT

52

Ben Webster's "I've Got It Bad" plays on the road as Easy shifts nervously in his seat, his eyes searching in the rearview mirror and all around for headlights that might be unfriendly. Daphne leans back against the passenger door, taking him in.

Easy passes a police car pulled over to the side.

He looks in the rearview mirror and its headlights go on. He takes a deep breath, bracing for the worst and Daphne looks back concerned.

But the lights arch a U-turn and head back the other way.

DAPHNE

They must not have seen us that well... God, Frank and I have been pulled over so many times I thought--

She catches herself and looks over at Easy.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Easy, I'm sorry... Don't be mad at me.

Easy keeps his eyes on the road.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Come on.

She tries to touch his arm and he pulls away.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

You really hate me, don't you?

EASY

How much further is it?

DAPHNE

Around the next bend...

(she grins)

You remind me of Frank when he gets angry.

EASY

Ain't nothin' about me like Frank.

DAPHNE

Your jaw sets just like his when--

52 CONTINUED:

52

EASY

I don't get no kick outta risking  
my life for some white woman's  
entertainment.

DAPHNE

(sighing)

Just park behind the Studebaker.

53 EXT. RICHARD'S CABIN / INT. EASY'S PONTIAC

53

The Studebaker is parked at a deadend in the street. Easy  
pulls in behind.

The cabin is so overgrown with ivy that all this is visible  
is the mailbox and address.

DAPHNE

Did you bring a gun or something?

EASY

What? No.

DAPHNE

Easy, that's not very smart.  
Everybody carries a weapon now a  
days.

EASY

(defensively)

Well then where's yours?

DAPHNE

Search me sometime. You'll find  
it.

She gets out of the car.

EASY

Damn...

He frowns and gets out of the car.

54 OMIT

54

55 EXT. RICHARD'S CABIN - NIGHT

55

Daphne waits, clutching her suitcase and lets Easy lead the  
way.

They get to the door and find it ajar. Easy takes a look  
inside and then cautiously steps in.

56 INT. RICHARD'S CABIN - NIGHT

56

He flicks on the wall switch. It's a typical little hideaway that the rich kept for summer use. The living room, dining room, and kitchen are all in one with a long counter separating the kitchen.

On the left is a wooden couch with a Mexican rug thrown across it and a metal chair with tan cushions for the seat and back. The opposite wall is all glass with the city lights blinking in the distance.

DAPHNE

Mr. McGee...

No answer. Easy leads them to a door and opens it.

57 BEDROOM

57

Another wall of glass and

A DEAD MAN spread out on the king-sized bed, with the contents of the dresser and closet strewn all over the room.

DAPHNE

Oh, my God!

She gags and backs out of the room with her hand over her mouth in case she throws up.

Easy takes out a handkerchief and holds it over his mouth and nose as he gets a closer look at the body.

It's the drunk white man he had seen at John's Speakeasy in the same blue suit. He's lying on his back like a crucifix with a butcher knife buried in his chest. There's blood that has drained from his chest and gathered around his face and hair so dark and thick you could scoop it up like Jello.

Easy actually does throw up and doubles over, dropping to a knee to keep his balance and some control. He stays there for several moments regaining his composure and then spots a spilled ashtray and a cigarette butt. He lifts it off the floor and smells it. He wipes his mouth with the handkerchief and then wraps the butt inside and puts it in his pocket. He gets up.

EASY

Daphne!

He hears a CAR ENGINE start up and GEARS SHIFTING. Then runs out the door.

58 EXT. RICHARD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

58

A pink Studebaker whips backward out the driveway. Easy runs alongside trying to stop Daphne as she screeches into the street.

EASY  
Hey, wait a minute!

She speeds off down the canyon.

EASY  
Dammit!

He stands in the middle of the street, watching her go.

59 INT. EASY'S CAR - SUNRISE

59

Fiery orange light bounces off the hood of the car into Easy's face as he turns the corner onto his block. He is surprised to see

A WHITE CADILLAC parked in front of his house. And now it's his front door that's open.

BACK TO EASY

He pulls in behind the Caddy and gets out.

60 INT. EASY'S HOUSE

60

He pushes open the door. Shariff loiters just inside, grinning at him, and Manny stands in the middle of the living room looking at the floor. From a RADIO in another room Tommy Dorsey plays "Blue Skies" with Frank Sinatra out front. And so Easy walks past the two hoods into

THE KITCHEN

Albright turns from looking out the backyard window with a porcelain coffee cup cradled in his right hand.

ALBRIGHT  
Easy.

Easy looks at the coffee pot on the stove and again at Albright, smiling loose and friendly but looking tired in the same clothes he had on at the pier.

EASY  
What you doin' in my house, man?

ALBRIGHT  
I expected you to be home, so Manny used a screwdriver on the door. What happened to your face?

EASY

You got no excuse to be breakin'  
into my house -- What if I broke  
into your place?

ALBRIGHT

(still smiling)

I'd tear your nigger head out by  
its root.

Easy boils inside and then goes over to the counter to pour  
himself a cup of coffee.

EASY

So what do you want?

ALBRIGHT

Where have you been this time of  
morning, Easy?

EASY

I went to see a girl. Don't you  
get none, Mr. Albright?

The smile leaves Albright's face and his eyes turn even  
colder.

ALBRIGHT

I didn't come here to play, boy.  
You got my money in your pocket and  
we've been over at that address  
waitin' all night for Frank Green  
and now we've found out that he  
moved from there over a year ago.

Easy is scared and confused but he plays it off.

EASY

So what do you want me to do about  
it? You don't think I did my job.  
Shit, I give you the money back.

And he reaches for his pocket, but Albright reaches too --  
and suddenly, Manny and Shariff are in the room and on Easy  
like a vice. Albright presses the barrel of the .45 against  
Easy's forehead.

ALBRIGHT

Do you believe in God, Easy?  
'Cause I'm curious to see if death  
is any different for a religious  
man.

Easy looks down, away from the gun, and swallows hard.

60 CONTINUED: (2)

60

EASY

I seen her.

After a moment, everyone relaxes and Easy sags out from under their grip and staggers into

61 THE LIVING ROOM

61

Manny and Shariff surround him as he sits down in a chair and Albright stalks in holstering his gun.

ALBRIGHT

Where?

EASY

She called me. Had me drive up to the Hollywood Hills.

ALBRIGHT

How'd she know about you?

EASY

I guess Coretta... the girl that told me about Daphne and Frank Green.

ALBRIGHT

Why didn't you call me?

EASY

I couldn't. She threatened to tell the cops that I had killed Coretta...

Albright looks over at his henchmen.

ALBRIGHT

Where is she?

EASY

She took off.

ALBRIGHT

(dangerously)

Where is she?

EASY

I don't know! While I was looking at the body she split.

ALBRIGHT

(nodding)

Uh-hunh.

61 CONTINUED:

61

Albright looks around the room as if answers lie in the corners, but he is not surprised to hear about a body.

ALBRIGHT  
You call the cops?

EASY  
I tried my best to keep in the speed limit. That's all I did.

ALBRIGHT  
What'd she do, take his car?

EASY  
Hunh?

ALBRIGHT  
McGee. Did she take his car?

Easy hesitates, "How did Albright know his name?"

EASY  
Uh... Yeah...

ALBRIGHT  
Where'd you pick her up at?

EASY  
She left that place--

ALBRIGHT  
--Write it down!

To his shame Easy flinches and gets paper from his end table, then scribbles down the address and hands it to Albright who takes Easy's seat and examines the note.

ALBRIGHT  
Get me some whiskey, Easy.

Easy studies Albright who sits knees wide apart, now the master of the house, and he can't help himself.

EASY  
Get it yourself... Bottle's in the cabinet.

Albright looks up and Easy braces himself for Albright to bring on the end, all at once. But slowly a smile spreads across Albright's face and he laughs, stamping his foot.

61 CONTINUED: (2)

61

ALBRIGHT

Well, I'll be damned. Get us a drink, Manny... Easy, you're a brave man. I need a brave man working for me... But you gotta find Frank Green, so he can lead us to her.

EASY

No, thanks, Mr. Albright. People are gettin' killed all around me... You never said anything about all this...

ALBRIGHT

Easy, you're connectable to two murders. You'll do whatever I tell you to do.

Manny brings Albright's drink and the captain turns it up and gives Manny back the glass.

ALBRIGHT

(continuing)

Now you got three days to find him. And you make sure you count 'em right.

He walks out the screen door with Manny and Shariff following.

62 KITCHEN

62

Easy grabs the bottle from the counter, where Manny has left it, and pours himself a stiff one. But he only stares into the glass.

FLASHBACK:

63 EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

63

Dense black smoke masks everything but two vague figures in a struggle. The BOOM of heavy artillery gives way only to the deafening CHATTER of automatic fire.

We are hurtling forward into a horror-stricken Easy in combat gear, repeatedly stabbing an already lifeless German soldier. Tears are streaming down Easy's face, his mouth gaped open in an inaudible SCREAM.

64 BACK TO SCENE

64

He studies the glass and pushes it away. Then looks

65           OUT THE WINDOW 65

Albright and his two goons get in the white Caddy and cruise away.

66           BEDROOM 66

He dials the operator.

EASY (V.O.)

I needed help... Albright didn't flinch at hearing that Coretta was dead and he seemed to know all about Richard McGee too...

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Number please...

EASY

Raymond Alexander on...

He pauses, speechless as

OPERATOR (O.S.)

Yes?

EASY

(after a moment)

Forget about it, operator.

He hangs up, his eyes trained in thought.

A67           EXT. JOPPY'S BAR - DAY A67

A crowd has gathered along the street to watch a three convertible car caravan: the first car bearing a four-place band playing "Happy Days Are Here Again"; the second with someone who could be Lana Turner holding up a "Teran for Mayor" placard with a man in the front passenger seat announcing through a megaphone; and last, but hardly least, Matthew Teran blowing kisses and waving two small American flags.

Easy looks up for a moment as he closes the trunk of his car to watch the parade. Then stuffs a ball peen hammer in the waistband at the small of his back, under his jacket.

He walks with a purpose into the open door next to the butcher shop.

B67           INT. JOPPY'S BAR B67

Easy stops in the doorway, seeing

JOPPY as usual buffing the marble top of his bar. T-Bone Walker's "They Call It Stormy Monday" is on the jukebox.

B67 CONTINUED:

B67

BACK TO EASY

He scans the bar and sees that there are no customers, and walks in.

JOPPY

Hey, Easy.

Easy stops at the bar and stares at Joppy.

EASY

That girl called me last night.

JOPPY

What girl is that?

EASY

The one your friend is lookin' for.

JOPPY

Uh, huh. That's pretty lucky, hunh?

EASY

No, Joppy... Wasn't no luck at all. It was you.

Joppy inadvertently clenches his fists and notices Easy's aggressive stance.

EASY

You and Coretta was the only ones that had my phone number who knew I was lookin' for her. And Coretta was busy scammin' Daphne so she wouldn't have done it... It was you, man.

JOPPY

Maybe she looked in the phone book.

EASY

I ain't in the phone book, Joppy...

Joppy's eyes narrow.

JOPPY

What the hell you mean, coming up here all mad like you gonna do something?!...

B67 CONTINUED: (2)

B67

EASY

(yelling)

You damn right! Coretta's dead!  
Your friend Albright is on my ass.  
The cops done brought me down once  
-- Why didn't you just tell  
Albright your damn self?

JOPPY

(yelling back)

What did I tell you? To just take  
that man's money! I didn't tell  
you to do nothin'! I call myself  
trying to help you save your  
house... Don't come up in here  
startin' no shit with me.

And he pulls a baseball bat from behind the bar, but Easy has pulled his hammer and SMACKS it down hard, cracking the beveled wood that frames the marble.

JOPPY

(continuing; panicked)

Easy, wait! Watch my marble! My  
uncle left me that when he died!

EASY

And goddammit, he's about to get it  
back.

He draws back for the downswing, and Joppy drops the baseball bat, holding up his hands.

JOPPY

Let's talk. Let's just talk.

EASY

What you got me into, Joppy?!

Joppy inhales, forcing himself to be calm.

JOPPY

She asked me to help her 'cause I  
told her that Albright was lookin'  
for her. And I figured I could  
help you make a few bucks and throw  
Albright off the trail too. She  
wanted to know something about you  
so I told her... I guess I must've  
give her your phone number...

EASY

Where is she, man?

B67 CONTINUED: (3)

B67

JOPPY

I don't know...

EASY

Don't lie to me, Joppy!

JOPPY

I ain't lyin'... I don't even know her that good. She just asked me to help her. And she asked me not to tell nobody... I guess 'cause of her and Frank Green.

EASY

What's she runnin' from Joppy?

JOPPY

I swear I don't know. She didn't tell me. I didn't mean to get you into nothin', Easy... I just... she just... I mean you seen her, Easy... Man, she's something else.

Easy can see "sucker" written all over Joppy as he fumbles for a cigarette with one hand and shakes his head with disgust as he lights up.

EASY

Damn, Joppy. Is there any white woman that ever gave you the time of day that you wasn't a sucker for?

Joppy frowns painfully and continues to wipe the bar.

67 EXT. T. CARTER FOUNDATION - DAY

67

Easy turns into the winding driveway through the stone entrance way that bears the name of this distinguished institution on a bronze plate.

He parks the car and gets out, adjusting his dark brown Stetson which matches his pin-stripped suit. He looks around at the massive and well manicured grounds and walks into a patio area of this Spanish-style complex.

EASY (V.O.)

Albright had said that when you're mixed up in something it's best to be mixed up to the top. I could see his point. So that's where I was going... all the way to the top.

68 EXT. CARTER FOUNDATION PATIO

68

An ELDERLY SECRETARY descends an outdoor curved stairway carrying a file. She spots Easy looking around confused and immediately becomes annoyed.

SECRETARY

May I help you?

EASY

Uh... yes. I came to see Mr. Carter.

SECRETARY

Do you have an appointment?

EASY

No, I don't.

SECRETARY

Well, I'm sorry, but Mr. Carter is a very busy man.

Easy pulls out Albright's business card and hands it to her.

EASY

Well, tell him Mr. Albright sent me, and it's real important.

She looks at the card and then up at Easy with annoyed superiority.

SECRETARY

May I ask the nature of your call, Mister...?

EASY

Rawlins. But I'm not so sure he'd want me to tell you.

SECRETARY

I'm quite sure, Mr. Rawlins, that whatever you know is nothing I can't know as well.

EASY

Okay. Well, anyway, tell him I'm here with information about that little chippy of his that dumped him.

SECRETARY

Is this some sort of joke?

O.S. VOICE

Uh... Excuse me...

68 CONTINUED:

68

Easy and the secretary turn to see a TALL MAN in a dark grey suit with bushy black hair and thick eyebrows standing in the doorway. He forces a smile and comes out.

BAXTER

Mr. Rawlins was it?

He holds out his hand and Easy shakes it.

EASY

Yes. Mister...

BAXTER

Baxter.

(to the secretary)

I'll take care of this.

(and back to Easy)

Why don't you come with me, sir?

They walk through the door into

69 A HALLWAY

69

BAXTER

Not very smart talking about Mr. Carter's business to a secretary.

EASY

I don't wanna hear it, man. It's too much goin' on for me to give a damn about what you think is smart.

Baxter bristles up and slows down his walk, about to put Easy in his place. But Easy slows down too and squares up on him. Baxter reconsiders and leads the way up a stone staircase.

70 INT. CARTER'S OFFICE

70

Baxter ushers Easy into a huge elegantly furnished room more closely resembling a hall than an office with large arched doors and windows leading out onto a stone veranda overlooking a canyon.

Alone looking out at the greenery on the opposite hillside is TODD CARTER.

Baxter walks out and speaks with Carter, while Easy watches them from inside the office. The rich man perks up with interest and hurries inside with Baxter who throws Easy a dirty look on his way out. He pauses uncertainly wearing a simple Sears Roebuck-looking tan suit with a plain open-collared white shirt. The dark circles under his eyes show nights without sleep.

CARTER

Mr. Rawlins.

He runs a hand through his thinning red hair, and offers an overstuffed sofa. They sit on either end.

CARTER

(distraught)

Has something happened to Daphne?

EASY

The last time I saw her she looked fine.

CARTER

You saw her?

EASY

Yeah. Last night.

CARTER

She's still in town?

EASY

She was last night.

CARTER

What did she say -- what was she wearing?

EASY

A blue dress. Blue heels.

CARTER

And a pin on her chest?

EASY

Yeah, on the left side.

CARTER

(carried away)

Oh yes, that's her. That's her. You know I've never known a woman who could wear perfume so slight that--

EASY

--Mr. Carter, Mr. Carter--

CARTER

What did she say? What did she say?... Oh, I'm sorry. Brandy?

70 CONTINUED: (2)

70

He points to a crystal decanter near Easy. Easy pours himself a drink and takes in Carter as he wrings his hands to keep from going to pieces. This guy's got it bad.

EASY

Mr. Carter. I came here to get some answers.

CARTER

Yes...?

EASY

I don't know... I'm takin' a helluva chance...

Carter runs his hand through his hair again, the suspense killing him.

EASY

(continuing)

I guess it's just that when I'm working for somebody, I wanna know what I'm gettin' myself into...

Carter leans in as if he missed something.

CARTER

I beg your pardon.

EASY

Well, I'd like to know the real reason why Mr. Albright hired me.

CARTER

(after a moment)

Mr. Albright?

EASY

Yeah. The man you hired to find Daphne.

CARTER

There must be some mistake... I'm sorry, busy... Who are you talking about?

Easy and Carter stare at each other, not sure how to proceed.

EASY

You didn't hire somebody to find your girlfriend?

CARTER

No... Until just now I was sure that she was hundreds of miles away from here... You say someone is looking for her?

Easy nods, his brow furrowed in thought. Carter gets up and walks to the door, looking out into the canyon.

CARTER

(half to himself)  
Someone is looking for her.

EASY

What's goin' on between you two?

Carter shrugs and stammers nervously.

CARTER

Uh... I don't know... We were going to be married... We had a fight...  
(then recovering)  
Uh... that's none of your concern, Mr. Rawlins.

He stops and looks to the floor, the gravity pulling him down... way down.

CARTER

(continuing)  
Someone's... after her? A Mr. Albright? And he said he's working for me?

EASY

Yeah... Do you know a man named Richard McGee?

CARTER

No... I can't say that I do.

EASY

Why would someone be after her, Mr. Carter?

CARTER

Uh... I can't say -- I don't know...

He's lying and Easy knows it.

CARTER

(continuing)

Do you think you could find her again?

EASY

I don't know.

CARTER

It's important, Mr. Rawlins, for her sake... I'm willing to pay you.

EASY

Mr. Carter, why did she leave?

CARTER

I can't tell you any more Mr. Rawlins -- I'll pay you to find her...

Easy thinks about it, and then nods.

EASY

Okay... a thousand dollars.

CARTER

A thousand dollars?!

EASY

Yeah. I'll take two hundred right now.

CARTER

Mr. Rawlins. I think you're trying to take advantage of me. But left me inform you that the incumbent mayor and the chief of police eat at my house regularly.

EASY

Good. Then they can help us--

CARTER

--No. They can't!

Carter is too emphatic and Easy waits for him to give more, but instead he turns and gazes out again at the canyon.

BAXTER

I'll have Baxter write you out a check.

70 CONTINUED: (5)

70

EASY

(after a moment)

Mr. Carter, why'd you stop runnin'  
for mayor?

CARTER

(terse)

I'll have Baxter write you a check.

EASY

Why is Matthew Teran looking for  
her too?

CARTER

(with finality)

Baxter will write you a check!!

Easy takes him in and then holds out his hand.

EASY

I'll take cash, Mr. Carter.

Carter fumbles in his wallet, and too nervous to count the  
money, shoves the wallet at Easy.

CARTER

Take it all... Just take it all.

Easy nods and strides out of the room.

71 OMIT

71

A72 EXT. T. CARTER FOUNDATION - DAY

A72

Easy walks to his car, gets in and drives away toward the  
entrance.

EASY (V.O.)

So Albright was working for Matthew  
Teran. And whatever Teran had on  
Carter was strong stuff... too  
strong even for Carter to go to the  
police... But because Teran was  
desperate to find the girl too,  
that gave me the best hand. I had  
seen her once, and if I played it  
right, I'd see her again.

72-75 OMIT

72-75

MONTAGE SEQUENCE:

76 POOL HALL - THAT NIGHT 76

Easy talks to the short, squat, suspicious woman who runs the place. Through the smoke, other distrustful eyes fix on him from pool tables and dark corners.

EASY (V.O.)

Everywhere I went was a familiar place, but different because I was asking about buying hijacked liquor from the man nobody wanted to talk about. Frank Green...

DISSOLVE TO:

77 NIGHTCLUB - NEXT NIGHT 77

Upscale, with a balcony. Billy Eckstine fronts the band. Blacks and whites are dressed to impress, including Easy, who leans into the bartender.

EASY (V.O.)

It was actually looking more and more like I might not make it through this little adventure I was having. But I was likin' the chill in my blood, and the freedom of working on my own.

DISSOLVE TO:

78 ABE AND JOHNNY'S LIQUOR - NEXT DAY 78

The two JEWISH OWNERS unveil for Easy a case of hijacked liquor in a wooden crate.

EASY (V.O.)

There were times in the war when I had felt like this. When life or death where the only two choices. That made it simple. And that was alright by me.

79 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY 79

Easy unlatches the gate and pushes it open. He's tired, and he trudges up the walkway to the porch. He sees

THE WOODCUTTER standing on the front lawn of the next door neighbor's, waving at him.

79 CONTINUED:

79

BACK TO EASY

He throws a rock and then unlocks the door. But he notices THE POT OF AFRICAN VIOLETS lying broken on the cement. He looks up just in time to see a TWO-BY-FOUR swing down. BONK! And Easy is seeing stars.

A big man, dressed in black, kicks open the door and drives Easy head first into

80 INT. EASY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

80

Easy slams to the floor but manages to roll out of the way of a lethal CRACK! of the board onto the floor.

He grabs a lamp and hurls it at the oncoming figure who catches it on the arm and keeps on coming, snapping a blade from his fist which leaps out like a chrome-colored flame.

Easy scrambles back, his head butting up against the couch, his forehead streaming blood, his eyes wide with the sight of sure death advancing.

EASY  
(terrified)  
Frank! Wait a minute! I need to  
talk to you!

Frank looms over him, his sinister but handsome brown face framed by a short-rimmed, black Stetson hat and a black shirt and coat. He holds the knife to Easy's neck, letting the blade press into the skin as he talks.

FRANK  
You the reason why she told me to  
lay low, hunh.

Easy buries himself back against the sofa.

EASY  
(machine gun quick)  
Naw. I got five hundred dollars  
for you. Rich man wants to talk to  
a white girl you know. Daphne...

Frank's eyes flame and he presses the knife, drawing blood.

FRANK  
You a dead man--

WHAP! WHAP! WHAP!

O.S. VOICE  
Easy, you in there?

Frank's head whips toward the door and Easy knocks the knife away and comes up tussling.

Frank scrambles to get away and Easy tackles him, straining to keep Frank from reaching the knife.

THE FRONT DOOR springs open and SPATS ON PATENT LEATHER SHOES clump in, the last one stomping down on Frank's outstretched fingers. Frank screams and cradles his hand in agony.

Easy scrambles up to his knees and gawks up at

MOUSE, dressed in a plaid zoot suit with Broadway suspenders down the front of his shirt, a long-barreled .41 caliber pistol held loosely in his hand.

MOUSE  
Want me to kill him?

EASY  
(exhaling relief)  
Mouse! Aw, man naw, it's all right...

MOUSE  
Well, what's happenin'?

He holds out his hand and helps Easy to his feet.

Frank makes a slight move towards the knife and Mouse levels the pistol at his head, his gold-rimmed teeth glittering from a smile that wants Frank to go for it.

MOUSE  
I'll blow your goddamned nose off...

EASY  
No, don't!  
(to Frank)  
Where's Daphne Monet?

Frank just stares up at Easy, his eyes sharp and defiant.

EASY  
Look, if you don't know where she is, maybe we can help each other find her.

After a moment, Mouse cocks the hammer.

80 CONTINUED: (2)

80

MOUSE

Nigga, you heard him.

EASY

No, Mouse. Don't kill him.

The phone RINGS next to Mouse and he picks it up, eyes still on Frank.

MOUSE

Huh?... He's busy right now, you gonna have to call back.

He hangs up.

EASY

Frank, a rich man she knows is willing to pay a thousand dollars just to talk to her. A thousand bucks, man.

Frank still won't talk and that does it for Mouse. He releases the hammer.

MOUSE

Easy, lemme try.

THUNK! He slaps Frank upside the head with the pistol.

MOUSE

You better...

(THUNK!)

Talk...

(THUNK!)

You stupid--

Easy grabs Mouse's arm and Frank slumps to the floor.

EASY

Let him go!

MOUSE

Get out of my way!

EASY

Let him be!

The two friends struggle, and Frank rears up and plows into Easy, sending him sprawling to the floor on top of Mouse. Then Frank, covered in blood, hurls himself across the room, out the door.

81 Mouse gets to his feet and runs to the door aiming the pistol, but it's too late. Easy stands up and Mouse points the gun at him. 81

MOUSE

Damn you, Easy. Don't you never grab me when I got a gun in my hand!

Easy silently eyes the pistol and gives Mouse a chance to calm down. After a moment Mouse looks down at his jacket.

MOUSE

Look at the blood you done got on my coat. Why you wanna go and do that?

He looks out the door and grabs a small suitcase. Then spots the bathroom and moves to it, taking off his jacket and hanging the pistol in his belt.

Easy holds his fingers to the bump on his forehead and catches his breath as Mouse runs water in the bathtub.

MOUSE

Now we got to find that girl so we can get that money.

EASY

No, we don't, Mouse. I don't need your kinda help or I would've called you.

Mouse comes out of the bathroom, scrubbing at a spot on his jacket with a washcloth.

MOUSE

You standing there with a knot on your head the size of a twelve-year-old tittie and you "don't need my kind of help"?

EASY

(angrily)

This is the same shit you pulled five years ago when you asked me to drive you out to your stepfather's house, then come to find out you killed him and your stepbrother.

MOUSE

Aw, easy, that was a long time ago.

Easy glares at Mouse and dabs blood from his forehead with a handkerchief.

81 CONTINUED:

81

MOUSE

(after a moment)

Come on, Easy. Cut me in on this.  
I could help you. I let you run  
the show. I swear I will.

He ambles over to Easy apologetically and holds Easy's  
shoulders with both hands.

MOUSE

I swear, I ain't gonna do nothin'  
you don't tell me to do.

Easy knows he can't believe this but

EASY

Everything I say?

MOUSE

Everything you say.

With no choice, Easy nods and walks into

82 THE BATHROOM

82

He runs cold water onto a washcloth and looks in the mirror,  
dabbing at his forehead.

EASY

Who was that called?

MOUSE (O.S.)

I don't know... Sound like some  
white girl.

Easy turns toward the door "Aw Man!"

83 INT. EASY'S CAR - DAY

83

Mouse, in a plum colored double-breasted suit and a brown  
felt derby hat, turns on the radio and the Ink Spots' "We'll  
Meet Again" purrs out. He starts to turn the key, but then  
remembers and honks the horn.

84 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY

84

Easy opens the door and stands on the porch.

MOUSE

Hey, Easy, was it a left on  
Richland or a right?

84 CONTINUED:

84

EASY

A right. And if Dupree ain't over there in Compton, just come on back 'cause I might have heard from the girl.

Just then a car cruises around the corner and Easy watches MASON AND MILLER pull up across the street and get out. He glances over at Mouse.

85 INT. EASY'S CAR - DAY

85

Mouse shuts off the radio and slumps down in the seat out of view.

86 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY

86

Easy watches them stroll up the walkway.

MILLER

Mr. Rawlins... We came to ask you a few more questions.

MASON

(grinning)

So why don't you just invite us inside...

(holding open the door)

After you.

And Easy and Miller go in.

MASON

What happened to your head? I don't remember doing all that.

He laughs and closes the door behind them.

87 INT. EASY'S HOUSE

87

Miller looks around suspiciously. The room still shows signs of the struggle with Frank Green. He exchanges a look with Mason.

MILLER

Been having a party, Ezekiel?

Mason pushes Easy into the chair and Miller plants his foot on the seat between Easy's legs and leans in.

MASON

You got a lotta cuts and bruises to be an ordinary working stiff.

MILLER

It's looking worse and worse for you, my friend. What do you know about Richard McGee?

EASY

Who?

On the other side of the room Mason picks up a chunk of the broken lamp from the fight.

MILLER

A dead white man in a cabin in Laurel Canyon.

Mason comes over and stands over Easy next to his partner. He fingers the sharp porcelain shard of the lamp, threatening.

MASON

He hangs out with some of those same nigger friends of yours down on Central Avenue.

Easy eyes the sharp edge, making up his mind to kill this fat son-of-a-bitch if he gets too creative, and die with him.

MILLER

He just happened to have a note in his pocket with 'C. James' written on it.

He holds the slip of paper up for Easy to see.

MASON

Any of this making you feel talkative at all, 'cause I'll bet ya six bits to a bottle of piss that we're looking at a double here... All we need is to place you in the dead man's house.

EASY

I ain't been there.

MILLER

Where?

EASY

I ain't been in no dead man's house.

Miller stands back and pats his pockets for a smoke.

87 CONTINUED: (2)

87

MILLER

How 'bout a smoke, Ezekiel?

Easy taps out one and Miller places it in his mouth.

MILLER

Got a light?

Easy pulls out his lighter and sparks the flame.

MILLER

May I?

Easy shrugs and passes the lighter to Miller who fires himself up.

MILLER

Nice lighter...

He holds the lighter out of Mason who wraps it up in a handkerchief.

MILLER

And we got our print.

EASY

What do you mean?

MASON

Oh, hadn't you heard? We found a cigarette lighter in the dead man's house with the killer's fingerprints on it.

EASY

(total disbelief)

Naw, man. I didn't do it.

MASON

Course you did, we got evidence.

EASY

(frantic)

I didn't do it. You know I didn't...

And Miller leans in hard.

MILLER

We know that you know more than you're lettin' on. And now a white man's been killed.

(MORE)

87 CONTINUED: (3)

87

MILLER (CONT'D)

Now you better tell us what you know, or you're goin' down for the murder of Richard McGee and Coretta James.

He straightens up and Easy stands up, too.

EASY

(shouting)

I don't know nothin'.

MILLER

(to Mason)

Put the cuffs on. Let's take him down.

As Mason reaches for the cuffs, Easy sees Mouse peek out from the kitchen doorway then disappear inside.

EASY

Uh, listen! I don't know who did it!

MILLER

But we do...

He sees Mouse draw his gun, his eyes trained on Miller's back.

MASON

And that's all that counts.

EASY

Dammit, I didn't do it.

MILLER

Tell it to the D.A.

Mouse is trained with the hammer cocked and Easy is about to give the signal, but then:

EASY

Look, gimme some time to find out.

MILLER

Forget it.

EASY

Gimme till tomorrow... Tomorrow mornin'...

Miller thinks about it and then--

87 CONTINUED: (4)

87

MILLER

Okay. Tomorrow morning, that's it.

He nods to Mason and Easy looks up to see Mouse raise the gun and slide back into the kitchen.

Mason unlocks the cuffs.

MASON

Have a nice evening, Ezekiel.

And he and Miller walk out.

Easy looks out the doorway watching

A88 EASY'S POV

A88

MILLER AND MASON

get in their squad car and drive away.

BACK TO SCENE

B88 He turns back to see Mouse standing in the living room.

B88

EASY

(wearily)

I guess you know what would have happened if you had shot them two cops in my house?

MOUSE

(shrugging)

Hell yeah. They'd be dead.

Easy shakes his head.

EASY

Come on, let's go.

He grabs a jacket.

88-91 OMIT

88-91

A92 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY

A92

Easy hurries out of his house pulling on his jacket with Mouse right behind.

MOUSE

What they tryin' to pin on you?

A92 CONTINUED:

A92

EASY

I'll tell you on the way. You got the keys?

MOUSE

Yeah.

And he hurries around to the driver's side.

EASY

Before we run out to Compton we got one other place to stop by...

He freezes seeing the Woodcutter watching and listening.

EASY

(to Woodcutter)

Man, don't you mess with my trees while I'm gone.

He gets in as Mouse cranks the engine.

EASY

You heard me. Leave my trees alone.

As Mouse starts away the old man smiles mischievously and starts to sharpen his axe.

Easy leans out the car window, yelling back as the car pulls away.

EASY

I mean it now. Don't you mess with my trees!!

92 EXT. PORTLAND COURT - DAY

92

It's a horseshoe of tiny apartments with over a dozen little porches and doorways staggered in a semi-circle around a small yard that has a half-dozen stunted magnolia trees growing in brick pots.

Easy and Mouse step into the courtyard, passing elderly tenants sitting inside screened doors. Jimmy Lunceford's "I'm Walking Through Heaven With You" floats out into the yard.

They arrive at the closed door of number eight. Easy knocks and then knocks again, hard. Something CRASHES on the inside and heavy FOOTSTEPS pound to the door.

VOICE BEHIND DOOR

Who's that?

92 CONTINUED:

92

EASY

Easy!

The door opens and JUNIOR FORNAY stands there behind the screen door in blue boxer shorts and a white T-shirt.

JUNIOR

What you want?

EASY

It's private, Junior. Lemme in.

And he reaches to pull open the door, but Junior throws the latch.

JUNIOR

I ain't got time now. I'm tryin' to get some sleep.

MOUSE

Why don't you open the door, Junior, 'fore I have to shoot it down.

Mouse steps out into the doorway, in plain view.

JUNIOR

Mouse.

MOUSE

Open up. We ain't got all night.

Junior forces a smile and lets them in.

93 INT. JUNIOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

93

Filthy and junky, with old car parts scattered amongst old furniture, the room is unpleasant with only the benefit of a dim light -- just like Junior.

JUNIOR

Y'all want a beer?

He nods at a card table with one folding chair and throws two others into place on his way to the refrigerator.

Easy and Mouse sit down and Junior brings over a quart of PABST BLUE RIBBON BEER and two glasses that he wipes out with a rag.

EASY

What ya smokin'? Zapatas?

Junior tosses his pack onto the table and pours beer into the glasses for Easy and Mouse, and drinks from the bottle.

Easy unfolds the handkerchief in his pocket on the table, uncovering the cigarette butt from Richard McGee's house.

EASY

(to Junior)

This is one of yours, ain't it?

Junior looks at the butt and shrugs.

EASY

You the only one I know cheap enough to smoke this shit... Why'd you kill Richard McGee?

JUNIOR

Huh? What you talkin' 'bout?

EASY

Ain't no time to play, Junior. I know you the one killed him.

JUNIOR

You crazy, man. You crazy!

And he stands up to emphasize his indignation.

MOUSE

Sit down, Junior.

Junior shifts awkwardly from side to side and then sits back down.

EASY

Tell me what happened, Junior.

JUNIOR

I don't know what you talkin' 'bout.

EASY

Well, the police will. When they find out that they got your fingerprints up there in that man's house.

JUNIOR

What fingerprints? What house?

EASY

Hattie had you pull that man out of John's the night I was there. And he was laying up there dead with the same suit on and a knife in his chest.

JUNIOR

I ain't killed nobody.

EASY

Quit lyin', you big ole sweaty-thick headed-cornbread eatin'--

Mouse can't keep from laughing and Junior starts up after Easy.

JUNIOR

You thick-headed, ya damn self!!

But Mouse is up, still laughing with the pistol in his hand.

MOUSE

Sit down, man... 'fore I blow your brains out.

JUNIOR

What kinda shit y'all trying to pull here?

MOUSE

(last warning)  
Sit down.

Junior sits down and throws himself around in the chair like a child throwing a fit.

EASY

You better tell it the way it happened. And maybe I'll forget what I know... Otherwise, I'm gonna tell Mouse to shoot ya 'cause you know I don't like your ass and he don't like you either.

Mouse slaps the table, laughing so hard he's in tears.

MOUSE

Aw, man...

And he aims the pistol and cocks the hammer, causing Junior to throw himself around some more.

EASY

You killed him to take his money,  
didn't ya?

JUNIOR

I don't even know who you--

EASY

You just had to rob him, didn't ya!

JUNIOR

I didn't! I didn't touch nothin'  
in his house!

SILENCE. But it's in the open now and Junior frowns and  
shakes his head.

JUNIOR

Hattie had me take him out to his  
car. And he say he give me ten  
dollars to drive him home.

Mouse is busy working a toothpick between his front teeth.

MOUSE

I know you took that.

JUNIOR

Hell, yeah. Then he asked me about  
that white girl you was askin'  
everybody about at the club. And I  
told him I seen her with Coretta...  
What the hell I care if he know?

EASY

You tell him but you won't tell me.

JUNIOR

I don't like your ass, Easy. And  
he gimme fifty dollars.

EASY

(disbelievingly)  
Fifty dollars? Just to tell him  
you seen her with Coretta?

JUNIOR

Naw. To deliver a letter.

Easy is stopped for a moment.

EASY

What letter?

93 CONTINUED: (4)

93

JUNIOR

How should I know? He just said to give it to her.

EASY

And you knew where she was?

JUNIOR

I didn't say that! I give it to Coretta to give it to her the next mornin'!

EASY

You 'spect me to believe that? Why would he trust you to give it to the girl if it was worth fifty dollars?

JUNIOR

'Cause he had to blow town, fool!

Easy stops to make the connection.

EASY

Why?

JUNIOR

He didn't say!

EASY

(after a moment)

You better be tellin' the truth. Let's go, Raymond.

He and Mouse get up.

JUNIOR

I'm tellin' the truth. I ain't killed nobody. That man was alive when I left him!

Easy opens the door, looking back at Junior, who's still going on and walks out.

94-95 OMIT

94-95

96 INT. EASY'S CAR - DUSK

96

Compton looks a lot like Texas, with unpaved streets and little country-styled houses set back away from the road behind vegetable gardens and chicken coops and small sheds with a horse or a cow tied up.

96 CONTINUED:

96

Easy and Mouse pull into the gravel driveway of a little house and are met by the usual barking dog you find in the country -- part Spaniel, part Shepherd, and some kind of Retriever. It dogs Easy and Mouse's heels as they get out of the car.

97 EXT. DUPREE'S SISTER'S HOUSE - DUSK

97

They notice the light in the front window go out and the shade pull back slightly as they walk toward the front door. Moments later the door opens and the dark figure of Dupree Brouchard appears.

DUPREE

(to the dog)

Go on. Go on in the back.

The dog obeys and Easy and Mouse walk up the walkway.

EASY

Hey, Dupree. Been trying to call you.

DUPREE

Yeah, Easy! Cops just let me out today. My sister gone to work and I didn't feel much like talking... Raymond...

MOUSE

Hey, big man! Them pigtailed I smell?

DUPREE

Yeah. Lula Mae made some 'fore she went to work.

Dupree ushers them in.

98 INT. DUPREE'S SISTER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

98

Dupree's face under the kitchen light shows two swollen black eyes from a brutal police "questioning." His eyes are heavy with liquor and tears glisten down his cheeks.

DUPREE

Why somebody wanna kill her like that? Why?

EASY

I don't know, Dupree... I don't know...

Dupree pours rye whiskey into a water glass in front of Mouse, who swallows half the shot without looking up from his plate of food.

Easy declines when the bottle comes his way, feeling the pressure of time running out.

EASY

Did Coretta ever say anything to you about a letter she was keeping?

DUPREE

Letter? What kinda letter?

EASY

For that white girl...

DUPREE

Naw. But I know it was on account of her that Coretta got killed.

Easy rears back in his chair with keen interest and Mouse looks up from his pigtails.

Dupree takes a drink and his eyes narrow in anger.

DUPREE

(continuing)

Everything between Coretta and that Daphne was always such a damn secret... I mean that ole girl didn't think nothin' about two-timin' on Frank... She probably 'innerduced' Coretta to one of them ole guys she knew... And when he came to the house after Coretta...

(starting to break)

...he found out she wasn't that kinda woman... Cops said she fought him... aw my Gawd... fought him 'cause she wouldn't have nobody but me-e-e...

He buries his face into his hands and Easy throws a sad but frustrated look to Mouse.

DUPREE

(continuing)

Aw Gawd, I can't even go to sleep... 'cause I can still see her face that mornin' 'fore I went to work...

(MORE)

98 CONTINUED: (2)

98

DUPREE (CONT'D)

Junior had been by and just left the house... and she came runnin' out to the car carrying her bible... And she said, 'Keep this for me, baby.'

Easy and Mouse exchange looks. JACKPOT! And Dupree falls apart.

DUPREE

(continuing)

Police won't even let me go near her house. So it's the only thing I got left from her. It was a sign... I know it was a sign, 'cause she was so religious...

MOUSE

It's all right, big man... it's all right...

And he pours Dupree a half glass of rye.

99 THE BOTTLE - LATER, NIGHT

99

Barely a "corner" of whiskey lies at the bottom and

DUPREE is snoring like a buzzsaw, sound asleep.

MOUSE squints into his glass, wondering why it's empty, and looks down the length of the kitchen leading into

100 THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

100

Drawers are pulled out on the dresser, and Easy is rifling through another until he pulls out a bible. He fans the pages, finding

THE LETTER

already opened. His fingers pull out a photograph and then two more.

BACK TO EASY

His excited face goes sick, and he silently mouths:

EASY

Holy shi-it...

100 CONTINUED:

100

EASY (V.O.)

I was as nauseated from fear as I was from what I saw... Pictures of a much younger Matthew Teran and children... innocent, helpless, naked children...

101 KITCHEN

101

Easy hurries in holding up the letter.

EASY

I got it. Come on, I think that girl is gonna call again.

MOUSE

That Dupree is a good man, but he sure can't hold his liquor.

Easy grabs his coat off a chair and starts to put it on, stuffing the letter in his coat pocket.

EASY

You got your sails up pretty far too, Raymond.

MOUSE

You callin' me drunk?

EASY

Well, you been puttin' it away along with him and--

MOUSE

If I was drunk could I do this?

And in less than a heartbeat he has pulled that long-barreled pistol and is aiming it at Easy's forehead.

MOUSE

Ain't a man in Texas can outdraw me!

EASY

(forced calm)  
Put it down.

MOUSE

Go on.

And he puts the gun back in his shoulder holster.

101 CONTINUED:

101

MOUSE

Go for your gun. Let's see who gets kilt.

EASY

I don't have a gun, Raymond. Come on, let's go.

MOUSE

You fool enough to go without a piece then you must wanna be dead.

He lays the pistol on the table then draws a .32 automatic from his waist, this time cocking the hammer, the muzzle only inches from Easy's head.

Easy can tell from the glazed look in Mouse's eye that instead of seeing him, his friend is glaring at some demon he carries around in his head. So he stands stock still.

EASY

(quiet, soothing)

Let him go, Raymond... He done learned his lesson. If you kill him then he won't have got it.

MOUSE

He fool enough to call me out and he ain't even got no gun? I'll kill the motherfucker.

EASY

Let him live, Raymond, and he be scared whenever you walk in the room.

MOUSE

Motherfucker better be scared. I kill a motherfucker. I kill him!

Easy stares down the barrel of the gun for a long moment until Mouse blinks, then nods and lets the pistol fall down into his lap. His head on his chest, he's sound asleep.

Easy takes the gun and puts it on the table with the other. Then walks to the doorway and turns out the light.

102 INT. EASY'S CAR - NIGHT

102

The dim street lamps of Easy's neighborhood streak past as Easy scans the streets and sidewalks, wary for anybody who might be staking him out.

102 CONTINUED:

102

EASY (V.O.)

The pictures were burnin' a hole in my pocket... I had no doubt that Albright had killed McGee... and that he had done it for Matthew Teran... But Teran hadn't known who killed Coretta. I was sure of that, too.

103 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

103

Easy's car pulls up and he gets out and looks around cautiously before starting up the walkway.

EASY (V.O.)

(continuing)

For the first time I hated walking up to my house... I still didn't know if I could go to the police. But Albright was liable to be showing up in a few hours asking about Frank Green. I was thinking I oughta forget the girl and leave town, back to Houston or Galveston where they didn't know me too good.

Easy gets to the door, still literally looking over his shoulder, and hears the phone RINGING inside. He unlocks the door and bursts in.

104 INT. EASY'S HOUSE

104

He races through the dark living room and into

105 INT. BEDROOM

105

And picks up the phone but the dial tone DRONES on the other end.

EASY

Shit! Damn!

He whacks the nightstand with the receiver, dying with frustration. And SOMETHING MOVES in the dark. He lunges and grabs

DAPHNE MONET

and pulls her into the light, then sits down onto the bed before the shock can knock him down.

DAPHNE

Are you all right?

105 CONTINUED:

105

Easy shakes his head in disbelieving relief and she reaches to touch the bump on his forehead.

DAPHNE

What happened?

EASY

Your boyfriend, Frank Green, threw a surprise party for me.

DAPHNE

I'm sorry, Easy...

He pulls away.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Easy, Coretta's boyfriend, Dupree, got out of jail today. And...

DAPHNE

(continuing)

I need you to help me find him.

EASY

(he joins her)

You need me to help you find him.

Easy shakes his head, amused, and lights a cigarette.

EASY

--I already have the pictures...

Daphne stiffens, as if from an electrical shock, and then:

DAPHNE

Easy, I paid seven thousand dollars for those pictures. They belong to me.

EASY

Oh yeah? Matthew Teran may have somethin' to say about that.

DAPHNE

Easy, you wouldn't dare.

EASY

Try me. Who killed Coretta?

DAPHNE

I don't know -- I'll pay you for them. I'll give you a thousand dollars.

EASY

You gave Richard seven.

105 CONTINUED: (2)

105

DAPHNE

Okay, I'll give you seven.

EASY

Where'd you get seven thousand dollars from?

DAPHNE

Never mind. I'll give it to you. Easy, please. They're very important to me.

EASY

Coretta's life was important to a few people too. What's say you tell me who killed her?

DAPHNE

Easy, honey, I don't know.

EASY

'Honey?' Do Frank and Carter really fall for that stuff? Come on... You and Todd Carter have a fight and all of a sudden he doesn't wanna be mayor no more... You leave, he's worried but he can't even get his buddies in the police department to help him find you... And now you wanna buy some pictures of Teran. Why? 'Cause he's got some dirt on you.

She gets up and walks away.

DAPHNE

Easy, why don't you just take the money!

EASY

Is that what Frank told Coretta?

She whirls around to face him.

EASY

(continuing)

Was she being too nosy? Or was she just being Coretta and trying to bargain up the price?

DAPHNE

Easy, please. How much do you want?

105 CONTINUED: (3)

105

EASY

Tell me. Is Frank your husband or  
your pimp?

SMACK! She swings and open hand across his face, and SMACK!  
He returns the gesture, sending her back onto the bed...

He picks up the phone and dials "0."

DAPHNE

Easy, put the phone down.

EASY

Why don't you try screaming again?  
'Cause I bet police like white  
women with Negro boyfriends who  
hijack trucks...

DAPHNE

Easy, please.

She reaches for the phone and he pushes her away.

EASY

I bet they like pimps, and whores,  
too, who scam rich white men like  
Carter runnin' for mayor.

DAPHNE

Easy, please, put it down...

EASY

And I'm sure they like it when  
these white girls tell their  
colored men to lay low 'cause they  
killed a woman over some pictures  
of another rich white man.

She gathers herself, just as:

OPERATOR'S VOICE

Number please...

DAPHNE

(soberly)  
Frank is my brother.

Easy is about to speak, but then stands still.

OPERATOR'S VOICE

Number please?

He hangs up.

105 CONTINUED: (4)

105

She looks away, worn out, tired.

DAPHNE

We have different fathers. Mine is white... Frank doesn't even know that Todd and I broke up. So far I've kept him out of all this.

She gets up and takes Easy's cigarettes and taps one out.

DAPHNE

See, Coretta's the only one out here in L.A. besides my brother who knew about me...

(she lights up)

And about a month ago she took a job working for, of all people, Matthew Teran. She made friends with one of the girls in the office who told her that she'd heard that Teran was a pedophile. And Coretta got carried away and told her that Todd Carter was engaged to a colored woman. She was sorry and didn't think it would get to Teran... but it did and he got a hold of my birth records.

EASY

Who killed her, Daphne?

Daphne exhales smoke and brushes hair out of her face ignoring the question.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Todd and I broke up and I paid a guy for the pictures of Teran. But somehow Coretta got them.

EASY

Who killed her?

DAPHNE

It was an accident. Coretta and I were still mad at each other. I mean, she threatened to sell Teran the pictures.

EASY

Who killed her goddammit!?

105 CONTINUED: (5)

105

DAPHNE

I just asked Joppy to go over and put a scare in her... It was an accident.

FLASHBACK:

106 INT. KITCHEN - CORETTA'S HOUSE

106

Joppy points a finger in Coretta's face, backing her against the counter. She grabs a knife from a rack of dishes left out to dry.

DAPHNE (V.O.)

Joppy said she pulled a knife and tried to dump hot water on him...

She swipes at Joppy and he backhands her against the stove... She struggles to grab a pot of boiling water, but he wrests it from her and slings her across the room against the counter, her head striking the tile on the way down.

107 BACK TO SCENE

107

Daphne looks down at her hands.

She stubs out her cigarette and sits on the bed.

DAPHNE

God, I didn't mean to hurt anybody... It's just that with the pictures I can--

EASY

What? Marry Carter? Be white again?

DAPHNE

Don't judge me, Easy! Do you think I like pretending that I'm someone else? Do you know how I've been treated by people, colored and white, when I've tried to live as a colored woman in a colored community. Do you have any idea what any colored man whose ever been with me has had to go through? Don't you dare judge me!

She sees Easy hesitate and she stands up.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Come on, Easy. Help me.

107 CONTINUED:

107

She moves in close, caressing.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Come on, you know it's the right thing to do... You know if things were different what would happen between us.

EASY

I'll tell you what can happen between us. You get Carter to clear me up from all this and you can have your pictures. That's all that could have ever happened between us.

DAPHNE

(genuinely hurt)

Sure, baby. Of course, sweetheart...

The sound of the front door pushing open startles them, and Albright knocks on his way in.

ALBRIGHT

Well I'll be damned. You found her.

And Manny and Shariff step in, too, carrying baseball bats.

EASY

Wait a minute, Albright.

Daphne breaks for the back way and Easy tries to bar Shariff from going after her.

EASY

Hey!

Manny swings the baseball bat into Easy's side. and Easy yells and plows into him, wrestling him against the wall.

Albright grabs Easy from behind and pries him free enough for Manny to uppercut him to the chin with the fat end of the bat.

Easy sinks to his knees seeing double.

Shariff leads Daphne back into the room, her face contorted into tears, her arm twisted up behind her in a hammerlock.

107 CONTINUED: (2)

107

ALBRIGHT  
 (to Daphne)  
 Where are the pictures?

DAPHNE  
 (terrified)  
 I don't know.

SMACK! He backhands her.

Easy grabs for the wall to get to his feet and Manny swings the bat down into his kidney.

ALBRIGHT  
 Where are they?

DAPHNE  
 (indicating Easy)  
 I wouldn't tell him! And I won't tell you!

ALBRIGHT  
 Sure you will.  
 (to Shariff)  
 Let's go.

Shariff leads Daphne outside and Manny draws his forty-five automatic and trains it on Easy, cocking the hammer.

ALBRIGHT  
 What're you doin'? Who are we gonna give 'em to cover this shit, hunh?... Use your head.

He shoves Manny through the door and pushes Easy onto his side with his foot and he's out the door.

Easy strains to get back to his knees as car doors slam and the sound of a car engine growls to life.

He thrusts himself up from the floor and stumbles toward the front door like a boxer who should have stayed down for the count. He gets it open in time to see...

108 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

108

The blurred white form of Albright's Caddy screaming away, shattering the dark, shrieking in flight.

Dogs are barking and a baby is screaming somewhere in the neighborhood while lights are going on up and down the block.

Easy stumbles back inside and into

109 THE BEDROOM

109

Where he manages to dial the phone. It RINGS several times on the other end, and finally:

MOUSE'S VOICE

(groggy)

Yeah.

EASY

Mouse...

MOUSE'S VOICE

Hey, Easy?

EASY

(slurring)

Get Dupree's car. Drive it to 78th and Central... The butcher shop.

MOUSE'S VOICE

You alright?

EASY

Hurry up.

He puts down the receiver, missing the cradle, and staggers out of the room.

110 INT. EASY'S CAR - NIGHT

110

Easy is ripping through the night, the streetlights flashing by in blurs of light. The windows down, he's coming to.

EASY (V.O.)

It had come to me in less time than it takes to think that Albright was taking Daphne someplace more isolated than that office building downtown... Someplace where there would be no witnesses... And I was being left alive to take the fall.

111 EXT. BUTCHER SHOP/JOPPY'S BAR - NIGHT

111

The street is still alive. A couple of late night juke joints are coughing up the last drunken bits of the party onto the sidewalk to straggle home. Easy's car screams around the corner, and then skids in, sending a heavy-hipped young sister, about to cross the street, scrambling for cover.

He jumps out just as Mouse scorches the tires on Dupree's '38 Packard in behind him.

111 CONTINUED:

111

EASY  
 (to the woman)  
 Sorry, baby... Lemme give you  
 twenty bucks for them stockings you  
 got on.

It takes a moment to register, but when she sees him pull  
 a twenty from his pocket, she gets busy.

He runs back to Mouse.

EASY  
 Gimme one of them guns you got.

Mouse smiles, loving this side of Easy, and trades him a set  
 of car keys for a .32 automatic.

EASY  
 (continuing)  
 Start up my car. I'm comin' out  
 fast.

He runs back to the woman he almost hit and hands off the  
 twenty, grabbing one of the nylons, leaving her still  
 stripping as he runs into

112 INT. STAIRWAY

112

He takes the steps two at a time, pulling the stocking down  
 over his face as he reaches the top and bursts through the  
 open door leading into

113 INT. JOPPY'S BAR

113

He charges through the raucous laughter of the half-full  
 room right up to the bar.

Joppy nearly drops the glasses he is clearing away as he  
 looks down the barrel of the pistol aimed at his face.

EASY  
 Come on, Joppy. Let's go!

Joppy hesitates, recognizing the voice.

EASY  
 You heard me. I'll blow your head  
 off!

And he cocks the hammer, causing Joppy to get a move on from  
 behind the bar.

Easy shoves him through the door, calling back to the  
 startled crowd on his way out.

113 CONTINUED: 113

EASY  
Don't follow me, goddammit!

And he's gone.

114 INT. JOPPY'S BAR - NIGHT 114

Easy hides the piece in his coat pocket as he bum rushes Joppy to the car.

JOPPY  
Easy, what the hell you--

EASY  
Shut up!

And he shoves Joppy into the back seat, getting in next to him.

EASY  
Drive this damn thing, Mouse!

Mouse pulls off, around the corner, down the street into an alley.

A115 INT. EASY'S CAR - IN THE ALLEY A115

Mouse pulls to a stop.

EASY  
(to Joppy)  
Albright's got the girl. He's gonna kill her. Where would he take her? And you better get it right.

JOPPY  
Man, I don't--

EASY  
(screaming, pressing the gun)  
Don't fool with me, man!

JOPPY  
There's a cabin out in Malibu on Route 9...

EASY  
Make a right, Mouse!

B115 EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

B115

The car roars down the alley and turns right onto the street.

115 INT. CAR - INDUSTRIAL STREET - NIGHT

115

EASY

(to Joppy)

You sure 'bout this place?

JOPPY

I guess so. He's done this kinda thing out there before.

MOUSE

Easy, what's done got into you? Thought y'all was friends.

EASY

He killed Dupree's girlfriend.

MOUSE

You lyin'.

EASY

Naw.

MOUSE

Son-of-a-bitch!

And he pulls out his pistol, aiming it back over the seat at Joppy as he drives. KABLAAM! The bullet slams through the rear window just to the side of Joppy's head.

EASY

Mouse! What're you doin'?

KABLAAM! This one digs out a chunk of upholstery between Joppy and Easy.

EASY

Hey! Watch out!

The car screeches to a halt and Mouse tries to aim again. But Easy struggles with Mouse's gun hand still holding a pistol on Joppy.

EASY

Mouse, we need him to lead the way!

KABLAAM! This one rips through the roof.

Joppy's yelling, afraid that Easy's gun will go off.

115 CONTINUED: 115

EASY  
 Mouse, the girl offered me seven  
 thousand dollars for the pictures.

Mouse glares into the rearview mirror.

MOUSE  
 You lyin'!

EASY  
 No, I swear I'm not.

MOUSE  
 Aw shit!

And he fumbles with the ignition and shifts gears.

MOUSE  
 Oh, my God!... Oh, my goodness!

116 EXT. L.A. STREET - NIGHT 116

The engine roars from a punch to the accelerator, and Mouse's voice can be heard cutting through the darkness as the car powers off down the street.

MOUSE (O.S.)  
 Oh, my goodness!

117 INT. EASY'S CAR - NIGHT 117

Easy, with the gun on Joppy, strains to see the dimly lit road in front of them.

EASY  
 Is that it up there?

JOPPY  
 Yeah, that's it.

118 THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD 118

The headlights bounce off a signpost: "Route 9."

119 EXT. ROUTE 9 - NIGHT 119

The Pontiac makes the turn onto a graded dirt road.

120 INT. EASY'S CAR - NIGHT 120

A ranch-style cabin emerges up off the road, drawing nearer in the headlight beams.

121 BACK TO SCENE

121

EASY

Shut off the headlights, Mouse.

Mouse kills the lights.

EASY

Is that it?

JOPPY

Naw. It's farther up.

EASY

How much farther?

JOPPY

Another ten minutes, I guess.  
 Easy, I swear, I ain't done nothin'  
 to nobody. I swear, I ain't.

122 EXT. ROUTE 9 - NIGHT

122

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: House lights show through thick  
 shrubbery.

JOPPY

There it is.

Mouse pulls to a stop and kills the engine.

EASY

There's some rope in the trunk,  
 Raymond.

Mouse gets out of the car and is heard opening the trunk.

JOPPY

Easy, come on, man. That girl is  
 lying if she told you I killed them  
 folks.

EASY

Who said she told me?

SCREAM! It's muted and distant. But it's a woman all  
 right. SCREAM!

Easy pushes out of the back door on the right as Mouse opens  
 the opposite door on the driver's side.

EASY

Stuff this in his mouth. I gotta  
 get up there.

He tosses Mouse the stocking.

122 CONTINUED:

122

MOUSE

Let's just shoot him.

EASY

(on the run)

No, Mouse. And they'll hear it.

123 EXT. ALBRIGHT'S CABIN - NIGHT

123

The cabin draws nearer as Easy scrambles up the hill. He can hear Daphne crying out something, but he can't make out the words.

It quiets down as he nears and sees shadows crossing a window with the shade pulled down.

He moves cautiously, quietly to the window and peers through the crack between the shade and the windowsill. He can make out a sliver of what looks like a large room with a low ceiling. SMACK! And Daphne screams again.

ALBRIGHT'S VOICE

Come on, talk to me. Talk to me while you still can.

DAPHNE'S VOICE

(sobbing)

Please! I don't have them! Easy has them!

Easy can barely make out Shariff passing the window. He strains to see more.

ALBRIGHT'S VOICE

You said he didn't know anything.

DAPHNE'S VOICE

I was lying!!

ALBRIGHT'S VOICE

Okay. Grab that for me, Shariff. It's ready.

And then SCRE-E-EAM!! The kind that drops the bottom out of your stomach. The kind more akin to fear than the word itself... The kind that fries your skin with the cold chill of horror. S-C-R-E-EAMS again!!

DAPHNE'S VOICE

No-o-o-o! Please. No-o-o-o!

ALBRIGHT'S VOICE

Now talk to me, goddammit!

123 CONTINUED:

123

DAPHNE'S VOICE

No-o-o!

124 Easy's gotta make a move. KABLANGALANGLE! He smashes the window with the gun and the shade rattles all the way up. 124

Manny looks right up at his face as Daphne arches and flails, trying to get free from his hands that are pinning her down on a battered old sofa.

Albright is holding a glowing red poker that Shariff, standing in front of the fireplace, has just handed him.

Easy starts blasting. KABLAAM! Manny takes one to the throat. KABLAAM!

Albright and Shariff lunge for cover, and Daphne ducks down behind the back of the sofa, screaming and screaming.

Manny, hand to his throat, pulls his gun on reflex, firing into the floor and then half runs, half staggers out the side door just ahead of another KABLAAM! that digs out a chunk of the wall.

Easy hears the screen door open and then ducks down, getting ready for Manny who should be coming his way from the side door. He HEARS more steps stumble out and then... SILENCE.

And then, KABLAAM! BLAAM! Two huge blasts rip right through the wall next to Easy's head, and he scrambles to the side of the house, underneath another window with the shade pulled down.

ALBRIGHT (O.S.)

(to Shariff)

Who the hell's out there?

SHARIFF

(getting frantic)

I don't know!

ALBRIGHT (O.S.)

That you, Easy?

(SILENCE)

Tell us what you want, buddy. See what we can work out.

Easy HEARS footsteps coming alongside the house where he had been moments ago. KABLAAM! BLAAM! Albright has fired from the inside again, thinking it's him.

EASY

(whispering)

Mouse?

124 CONTINUED:

124

But it's Manny, clutching his throat, gurgling for air, stumbling aimlessly off down the hill. A walking dead man... EASY hears him tumble into some shrubbery and after a moment the gurgling stops.

ALBRIGHT (O.S.)

Easy... Hey, Buddy  
(then to Shariff)  
Come on, goddammit!

Daphne cries out and KLABLANGLE! Easy breaks the window with the gun but KABLAAM! BLAAM! BLAAM! The windowsill tears out above his head and Daphne screams again.

Easy looks up to see Shariff, holding her in front of him as a shield. He's headed straight for Easy, drawing a bead on him for the kill. And then KABLAAM! the back of Shariff's skull flies off and

MOUSE is in the side door, blasting. BLAAM!

Albright breaks for the window. BLAAM! The slug spins him halfway around but he hurls himself through the window backwards.

Easy scurries to the front of the house and BLAAM! The bullet goes wide and Albright manages to get into his car and returns fire. BLAAM! BLAAM!... Easy hits the deck.

Albright's engine roars to life and he SQUEALS out on the gravel. Mouse appears on the other side of the house and CLICK! CLICK! he's out of ammo. He pulls out the other pistol, but it's too late.

MOUSE

Damn, damn, damn! I hit him! I hit him!

Easy gets up from the ground and trudges into the front door.

125 INT. ALBRIGHT'S CABIN

125

Easy finds Daphne standing in the middle of the room, her whole body quaking in shock. He takes off his jacket and drapes it around her.

EASY

Come on... You all right?

Her top lip is swollen and bloody and she has a dark bruise on her cheek... She jerks her head, nodding "yes."

- 125 CONTINUED: 125
- As he leads her through the doorway, he stops to look back at Shariff's legs sprawling out on the floor from behind the sofa.
- 126 EXT. ALBRIGHT'S CABIN - NIGHT 126
- He leads her down the front porch and hears.
- MOUSE
- There's blood all over here... I got him.
- Mouse gets up from squatting down, grinning, the gold rims of his teeth catching a glint from the light coming through the door. He looks Daphne over, admiring.
- MOUSE
- Damn. Sweetheart.
- Easy leads her past, quickly.
- MOUSE
- She okay?
- EASY
- Yeah. Let's go.
- 127 EXT. ROUTE 9 - NIGHT 127
- Mouse opens the back seat door of the car and Easy sees that there's no one there.
- EASY
- Where's Joppy?
- And then he looks around quickly, seeing
- JOPPY'S BODY lying off on the side of the road.
- EASY
- What happened?
- Mouse shrugs.
- MOUSE
- I didn't have time to be tying him up.
- Daphne sees the body too and starts gagging. Easy's face twists into helpless pain and he holds a handkerchief to Daphne's mouth.
- EASY
- Why, man? Why?

127 CONTINUED:

127

MOUSE

Why what? You just said don't shoot him. And I didn't... I choked his ass...

Easy helps Daphne into the car and closes the door.

EASY

Damn Mouse! Why?

MOUSE

How I'm gonna help you back there foolin' 'round with him?

EASY

He was tied up! Why?!

MOUSE

Aw, man. If you didn't want him kilt you shouldn't have left him with me.

And he goes around to the passenger side of the car to get in.

Unlike up at the house this was murder -- the same as it had been in Texas with Mouse's stepfather and brother. Tears of rage well up in Easy's eyes as he hears the car door close.

DISSOLVE TO:

A128 EXT. GLENDALE TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

A128

Daphne sits in the car, her eyes staring straight ahead, still in shock.

128 EXT. PLATFORM - NIGHT

128

A few people hurry to board the train, Easy and Mouse among them.

EASY (V.O.)

I convinced Mouse to take the two o'clock train to Pomona and to let me handle everything else. He could get a train back to Houston later that morning... He was fine with that but only because he was seven thousand dollars richer. Daphne had gotten the money out of a locker at the YMCA without a word...

(MORE)

EASY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Because she was still in shock and  
couldn't really talk... Maybe too  
because she had stolen about four  
times that much from Carter.

MOUSE  
Listen, if you think you gonna have  
trouble with that dude Frank, I can  
run by and kill him and take that  
evening train to Houston.

EASY  
Naw, man.

He has had enough of Mouse for a while.

MOUSE  
Oh. This is for you.

And he pulls out something wrapped up in a brown paper bag  
from his coat.

MOUSE  
I cut you in for half 'cause I knew  
you was too big a fool to take your  
share from that white girl  
yourself.

Easy stares numbly at the package and then takes it.

The conductor gets on board and the train starts making  
those metal on metal sounds.

MOUSE  
Send my grip to Etta Mae. I'm  
gonna see if she'll take me back  
now that I'm flush.

He slaps Easy on the shoulder and boards the train.

MOUSE  
Oh, here's the keys to Dupree's  
car.

He tosses them, and the train starts moving.

MOUSE  
And if you need somebody to run  
them streets with ya, gimme a call.  
You know how to put some money in a  
nigga's pocket.

And he laughs, flashing gold teeth pulling away.

128 CONTINUED: (2)

128

Easy watches.

EASY (V.O.)

I knew I would see him again and I didn't know how I felt about that... 'cause, unlike Mouse, my legs were like rubber... the way they had been in the war the whole two years I was there.

129 EXT. GRIFFITH PARK OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

129

Easy sits in his car smoking a cigarette, rubbing his aching chin, looking out at

DAPHNE AND CARTER

standing on the lawn in front of the planetarium. Carter wanders after Daphne, explaining while she paces back and forth in anger.

EASY

I could tell how it was gonna go when Carter asked us to meet him at the Observatory instead of at his house... She knew it, too. But she had come this far and she had to play it out.

Suddenly, Daphne stops abruptly and strides hurriedly back toward the car. Carter follows behind.

CARTER

Daphne! Daphne, sweetheart!

He starts over, too, but then stops, knowing here's no use.

130 INT. CAR - NIGHT

130

She gets in.

DAPHNE

Come on, Easy. Let's go.

Easy throws a look over at Carter.

DAPHNE

(continuing)

Don't worry, you can give him the pictures yourself.

And she throws them down on the seat.

131 OMIT 131  
 132 Easy fires up the engine and pulls away with Daphne 132  
 looking straight ahead.

EASY

Hey, I'm sorry.

The slight twist of her head amounts to a shrug and then the tears flow. The sun is coming up over the city below...

EASY (V.O.)

For the first time I felt that I could fall in love with her, too... I was even wondering if it was starting to happen when I dropped her off at 63rd and Dinker where her brother, Frank, was waiting... Then it occurred to me that she still had Carter's money... and I felt like a fool.

133 INT. CITY HALL 133

Easy walks onto the rotunda holding a hand to his aching kidney. A secretary comes out to meet him and as she leaves, Todd Carter and a group of men in business suits converge on him, shaking hands.

EASY (V.O.)

Evidently Carter had told all his cronies about the pictures because they were all smiles and handshakes and "how do ya do"... The Mayor, the police chief... The newspaper; land developers. All the men who ran the City, and who really stood to gain by who was the Mayor for the next six years.

The group fans out leaving Carter and Easy alone to walk off down a hallway.

134 OMIT 134

135 OMIT 135

136 INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE 136

Spacious and heavy in leather and wood with a not-so-spectacular view of the mountains. It's cold and official like the job itself.

Carter pulls a brown envelope from inside his coat pocket, not unlike Albright.

136 CONTINUED:

136

CARTER

Here's the remaining eight hundred that I owe you... in cash... And another thousand which I hope will keep this whole thing... you know.

Easy nods a tentative "sure."

CARTER

(continuing)

And I've taken care of your problems with the police. You'll have no more trouble there. And that's a promise.

Easy nods and starts to go, but...

CARTER

(continuing; to Easy)

Mr. Rawlins... did Daphne ever say... she loved me?

Easy shrugs, not knowing how to answer.

EASY

Would it really matter if she did, Mr. Carter?

Carter nods sadly and Easy walks away leaving him a lonely figure amidst all his power.

137 EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

137

Easy holds his kidney and lowers himself gingerly down the granite steps.

EASY (V.O.)

I'd been thinking about Daphne, too... wondering if she meant what she said about what could have happened between us... But at the moment I was wondering if there was any such thing as a sprained chin. But other than that and a headache, a loose tooth and a kidney that a doctor would need to look at, I felt like five thousand, three hundred dollars... And unless Albright was alive somewhere, that feelin' was gonna last a while.

O.S. VOICE

Hey, Ezekiel.

137 CONTINUED:

137

Miller and Mason are waiting outside their car at the curb. They come over.

MILLER

You got some mighty powerful friends up there... mighty powerful. But, see, we got a problem.

Easy listens disinterestedly.

MILLER

(continuing)

With the Chief sealing these things up like this, it doesn't do much for the morale of the men who've been working on these cases.

MASON

Yeah. Makes 'em feel like shit.

MILLER

There's a guy who's been callin' on the phone. And we're pretty sure that he was up there with McGee.

MASON

A... uh... colored guy... sounds kinda dumb...

MILLER

(correcting)

Not very bright... But he said you accused him of the murder. And he swears you were up there, too...

MASON

In fact, he's out and out pointing the finger at ya.

MILLER

How about a name?

MASON

He'd do it to you...

Easy waits to make sure they're finished, and...

EASY

Sorry, fellas. But I gotta go.

He starts away.

137 CONTINUED: (2)

137

EASY

(continuing)

Why don't you go back to the station and, uh... wait around for my call.

MASON

You son-of-a-bitch... You watch yourself, you hear! Don't you even spit on the fucking sidewalk... I better not even--

Mason's voice fades under.

EASY (V.O.)

It might be the last moment of my adult life spent free was walking away from City Hall.

138 EXT. EASY'S HOUSE - DAY

138

A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE reads: "Carter Back In Race."

The subheading reads: "Quiet Civic Leader Returns As Flamboyant Teran Quits."

EASY (V.O.)

The paper treated the mysterious flip-flop like it happened every day. And I could tell that Matthew Teran wouldn't spend a day in jail... Back in the second section of the paper was a small article about an unidentified man found dead, slumped over the steering wheel of a white Cadillac just north of Malibu...

FURTHER BACK, we see that Odell is reading the newspaper, nursing a can of ale.

EASY (V.O.)

It scared me to think about a world that could kill a man like DeWitt Albright... What could a world like that do to me?

ODELL

Hey, Easy, where's your car?

Easy looks up from pulling weeds.

EASY

In the shop... I'm havin' it fixed up a little.

ODELL

Yeah. Man can't get no decent job in this town without a car.

EASY

Shoot. I ain't studyin' no job.

ODELL

Ain't thinkin' 'bout no job? How you gonna live?

EASY

I'm gonna go to work for myself. Take a little money I got saved up and go into real estate... Start fixin' up folks' gardens again... and do a few favors on the side... Favors for friends.

ODELL

What you talkin' 'bout, 'favors'?

EASY

Well, like a woman offered me thirty dollars to go track down her husband for her.

ODELL

You talkin' about private investigatin' or somethin'... You could get in trouble doin' that.

Easy keeps working.

EASY

Like a man once said to me, Odell: 'Walk out your door in the morning and you're already in trouble'... It's just how you're mixed up in that trouble that counts.

Easy gets up and turns on the water hose.

EASY

(continuing)

Odell?

ODELL

Yeah, Easy...

138 CONTINUED: (2)

138

EASY

If you got a friend that does bad  
and you still keep him as your  
friend, even though you know what  
he's like... Do you think that's  
right?

ODELL

All you got is your friends,  
Easy...

Easy starts to nod, but then spots

THE WOODCUTTER

hovering over a rosebush in a neighbor's yard across the  
street, his shears ready to cut.

EASY

(calling out)

Get out of that yard!

(to Odell)

Bastard cut down two of my trees.

Easy picks up a rock and sails it. Odell comes off the  
porch and does the same. Then a neighbor from across the  
street joins in.

THE WOODCUTTER ambles off toward another block, leaving  
Easy, Odell and the neighbor gathered in the middle of the  
street.

139 UP THE BLOCK

139

a man with a pony is setting up a camera. A few children  
have gathered, and more are running over from other parts of  
the neighborhood.

The man props up a hand-painted sign, "Cowboy Pictures -- 15  
Cents," and lifts the first customer onto the pony  
positioning a cowboy hat on the child's head.

140 BACK TO SCENE

140

Another neighbor joins Easy and company, and they continue  
to laugh and talk, looking up from time to time to wave at  
friends in passing cars.

EASY (V.O.)

I thought about what Odell had said  
about friends and it made sense to  
me...

(MORE)

EASY (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Odell goes to church every Sunday,  
so he would know... Later on, he  
challenged me to a game of  
dominoes. And what'd he do that  
for? We got to talkin' 'bout Texas  
and fooled around and drunk almost  
a quart of whiskey... And I forgot  
about Daphne Monet, DeWitt Albright  
and Carter and them... And sat with  
my friend, on my porch at my  
house... and we laughed a long  
time...

FADE OUT.

THE END