

GAME 6

Written by
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INT. LOFT APARTMENT - MANHATTAN - MORNING

STEVEN SCHWIMMER, a drama critic, asleep on his bed. He wears a sleep mask.

The bed is a mattress on a makeshift platform.

Papers strewn on the floor.

An exercise bike.

A desk with and old manual typewriter, reference works, periodicals, Styrofoam cups.

A cast-off sofa with pants, shirts, sweater, underwear and socks tossed haphazardly on the cushions and arms.

A counter that sets apart the kitchen area. A portable TV set on the counter. The remains of dinner for one.

A row of stacked cardboard boxes with mail spilling out on the floor. Boxes are labeled in crayon: HATE MAIL.

A coffee table with a candle nub in a saucer and six gleaming rounds of ammunition scattered next to a Llama Comanche .357 Magnum with a checkered walnut stock -- overall length, nine and a quarter inches.

A Port-O-San toilet, about seven feet high, orange, scarred and dented -- scavenged from a construction site.

A snapshot on the bedside table. It's a blurry picture of Steven holding a cat. Steven wears a peaked cap, and a shadow falls across his face. Next to the picture is a clock radio, which comes on with a buzz as the clock shows nine AM.

RADIO ANNOUNCER begins to speak --

LONE EAGLE (V.O.)

(softly)

Traffic flowing smoothly on the Deegan right now but if you're lucky enough to have a ticket for tonight's game, be sure to leave early because it's going to be bumper to bumper.

Steven does not stir.

EXT. LOFT BUILDING2

Steven's loft is in an old squat building on 47th Street near Twelfth Avenue. The structure looks abandoned. Graffiti everywhere. Entranceway filled with debris.

LONE EAGLE (V.O.)

Another day of traffic. Traffic everywhere I look. Cars stop and move and stop again. People sit at the wheel thinking their thoughts.

EXT. UNITED NATIONS PLAZA APTS - - MORNING

The shimmering glass facade of the United Nations Plaza Apartments at 48th Street and First Avenue. A man visible at a window on one of the high floors, a cup of coffee in his hand.

LONE EAGLE (V.O.)

Day in, day out. Red light, green light. Traffic on the major arteries and traffic in the little veins.

From his POV we see the traffic below creeping along, nearly at a standstill.

LONE EAGLE (V.O.)

Cars, vans, taxis, trucks, limos, Mopeds, bikes and buses. Emergency vehicles screaming and wailing. Birth and death, walk and don't walk.

The man takes a sip of coffee.

LONE EAGLE (V.O.)

Traffic yesterday, today and tomorrow. Bumper to bumper, soul to soul. This is Lone Eagle over and out.

EXT. 47TH STREET AND FIRST AVENUE - A LITTLE LATER

The same man -- the playwright Nicky Rogan with his hand in the air, hailing a cab. He is forty-five, vigorous, wearing well-made sporty clothes.

In a corner of the screen --

OCTOBER 25, 1986

INT. TAXI

Stalled in traffic.

NICKY

I used to drive a taxi.

DRIVER

Where you're going, mister?

Nicky glances at the driver's name plate

KAGANOVICH

ANATOLI

NICKY

I used to drive a taxi.

DRIVER

I used to be head of neurosurgery. Big hospital in USSR. This hospital, I'm not kidding.

NICKY

Very big.

DRIVER

I opened thousands of brains.

NICKY

What did you find?

DRIVER

Big mess every time.

NICKY

I loved my taxi. Went twelve hours nonstop. Stopped only to pee. I peed under the Manhattan bridge. Peed many times in parks and playgrounds.

EXT. STREET CORNER

47th Street and Third Avenue. A man is dancing with a life-size cloth doll. His tape player is on the sidewalk, playing and instrumental version of "Beautiful Dreamer" and there is a cigar box for donations. A few people look on from a distance. The man wearing an old cutaway, with running shoes, and the doll has long red tresses and wears a frilly gown.

Nicky emerges from a taxi at the corner and walks rapidly past the dancing man.

Nicky crosses the courtyard to Buchanan Apartments.

INT. FOYER

JOANNA BOURNE reaching for the door. Joanna is fifty-ish, handsome, stylishly dressed.

INT. BUCHANAN APARTMENT - SECONDS LATER

Nicky and Joanna embracing with wordless abandon.

They are in the hallway clutching each other, stumbling. The walls on either side are hung with expensive art.

They grapple past the living room. Fleeting look at the paintings by Longo and Fischl, a poster by the Guerilla Girls.

The edge of the bedroom. Nicky is crawling into the room and Joanna is hanging on to him, being dragged. They are fully dressed except for one of Joanna's shoes.

The bedroom. A Lichtenstein, a Hockney, a silk-screen of Joanna by Andy Warhol. A Jeff Koons piece. Nicky and Joanna roll on the floor until they are halfway under the bed.

INT. HALLWAY

Muffled sounds from the bedroom. We track to:

The maid's room. The maid is smoking a cigarette and reading New York magazine. The cover is partly obscured by her hand but we can see a blurry black-and-white photo of a man hurrying along a street with a newspaper over his face, shielding himself from the camera. Over the photo, three words visible: THE PHANTOM WHO -- A second line of type is too small to be legible.

INT. BEDROOM -- LATER

Nicky and Joanna are undressing after the fact, very slowly and distractedly. Joanna stands by a chair near the window. Nicky is on the other side of the bed and he alternates between standing and sitting as he takes off his clothes.

JOANNA

Last night. Alan Albright called me a handsome woman. Second time he's done that. Son of a bitch.

NICKY

I hear Alan's sick.

JOANNA

Alan's very sick. He has to go to New Mexico and sit in a lukewarm solution.

NICKY

You know about Adele.

JOANNA

What about her?

NICKY

She's dying.

JOANNA

She died.

NICKY

I talked to her two days ago.

JOANNA

Apparently it didn't help. You know about Peter, of course.

NICKY

Our Peter?

JOANNA

Peter Redmond. They found out why he can't remember his lines. There's something living in his brain. A parasite he picked up in Borneo, doing the movie.

NICKY

Can he get through it?

JOANNA

They're watching him closely.
There's a special rehearsal set for
this afternoon. To bolster his
confidence. And that's not all.

NICKY

I've got bigger problems, Joanna.
Personal problems.

JOANNA

That's not all, Nicky. I've been
backing your plays for fifteen
years. And I've never been more
depressed.

NICKY

About what?

JOANNA

Steven Schwimmer. The most powerful
critic in America gets his first
crack at Nicky Rogan.

NICKY

(hiding his concern)

Look. All I want is a haircut. I'm
not worried about this guy.

JOANNA

Ever since he started reviewing the
Broadway theater, nobody in this
business has been worried about
anything else.

NICKY

They can send their heartless
brilliant boy-critic. There's a
much bigger thing going on than
tonight's opening.

JOANNA

What?

NICKY

The Red Sox

JOANNA

You mean the World Series? I
thought the Red Sox were winning.

NICKY

Three games to two. But if you know
their history, you realize there's
a tragedy in the making. I've been
carrying this franchise on my back
since I was six years old.

JOANNA

It can't be all that personal.

Joanna enters the walk-in closet to finish undressing and get a nightdress.

NICKY

If you have a team you've followed all your life, and they raise your hopes and crush them, and lift them and crush them, do you want me to tell you what it's like? It's like feeling your childhood die over and over.J

JOANNA

I mean Nicky, really, no.

Nicky follows her into the closet, still in his shirt and boxer shorts.

JOANNA

I'm proud of this play. It's so different from anything you've done.

NICKY

This is how we've managed to last.

JOANNA

We're able to surprise each other.

NICKY

In and out of bed.

JOANNA

Because we're completely mismatched.

NICKY

We don't even like each other, do we?

Nicky walks out of the closet, takes off his shirt, gets into bed.

JOANNA

I used to tell myself. Talent is more erotic when it's wasted. Will I see you tonight?

NICKY

The Red Sox blow a chance to win their first World Series since 1918. You expect me to miss that for an opening night?

Joanna emerges from the closet in her nightdress and gets into bed.

JOANNA

It makes me so mad. Steven
Schwimmer ready to strike. The
exterminating angel.

NICKY

It's all worked out. They'll lose
tonight. Then they'll lose
tomorrow. I see it with stunning
clarity.

JOANNA

It's your best play, Nicky.

NICKY

They'll lose because they're my
team.

JOANNA

He will absolutely hate it.

INT. STEVEN SCHWIMMER'S LOFT

Steven is just waking up. The radio plays soft music.

He reaches over and hits the off button, then activates the
cassette player. He struggles out of bed and Sufi music
begins to fill the room.

He stands at the foot of the bed, a man in his mid-twenties,
hollow-chested, slightly potbellied, wearing rumpled pajama
bottoms and a Mostly Mozart T-shirt.

He does not remove the sleep mask.

The music has a sensuous, driving beat. Voices begin to
chant.

Steven holds his arms parallel to the floor. Slowly he begins
to turn, clockwise. The beat picks up and he whirls more
quickly, his mouth coming open.

Now he begins to whirl about the room. The chanting grows in
intensity. Although he is blindfolded, Steve deftly avoids
running into furniture and other objects.

Steven stops whirling at the precise moment the music stops
playing. He is back at the foot of the bed, arms stretched
wide.

INT. TAXI

Creeping along. Nicky leaning toward the driver.

NICKY

I wrapped my sandwiches in tinfoil.
I ate and drove. I had one of those
big checkered cabs.

DRIVER

You are going where?

NICKY

Crosstown.

DRIVER

Very bad today.

Driver's nameplate --

CHOUDHURY

RAMASWAMY

NICKY

I cleaned out the ashtrays
religiously.

DRIVER

I am sitting here five years in
traffic. It is one continuous
traffic since I arrive. Why must it
be?

A taxi pulls up alongside. Nicky notices the young woman in
the rear seat. It is his daughter Laurel. He opens his
window.

NICKY

Laurel, stay there.

(to his driver)

Keep the meter running. And try to
stay abreast.

Nicky leaves his taxi and gets into Laurel's.

INT. SECOND TAXI

Nicky pushes in next to her. Laurel is eighteen, slightly
overweight, with a pleasant and expressive face. She is
carrying books in a nylon haversack.

NICKY

I never see you anymore. Where are
you all day?

LAUREL

I go to college. I thought you
knew.

NICKY

Do you want to get some coffee?

LAUREL

I don't drink coffee, Daddy. And
this is not what we should be
talking about.

NICKY

What do you want to talk about?
I'll talk about anything. What's
this?

Nicky lifts a small radio and headset out of her bag.

LAUREL
I'm seeing your play tonight,
remember?

NICKY
Why do you need a radio?

LAUREL
So at the intermission I can listen
to the ball game. Do you know that
mother is seeing a prominent
divorce lawyer?

NICKY
That's completely crazy.

LAUREL
Is it?

NICKY
Don't talk like that. How
prominent? What are you implying?

LAUREL
She's doing like those Iranians. 'I
divorce thee. I divorce thee. I
divorce thee'

NICKY
(indicating driver)
And he hears it the same time I
hear it? What happened to family
secrets?

Driver's nameplate ---

TABATTABI
ABULHASSAN

LAUREL
Mother is totally, you know, upset.

NICKY
Abulhassas, we'll be getting out
here.

Nicky pays the driver.

EXT. THE STREET

Nicky stands alongside the first taxi and pays his original
driver. Laurel reluctantly exits the second taxi.

INT. COFFEE SHOP

47th Street between First and Second Avenue.

Nicky and Laurel enter the coffee shop they are greeted by the owner, a hefty Greek named GEORGE.

GEORGE

Nicky, you don't come in for a while. Everything's okay?

NICKY

Hello George. You're so healthy and thick-bodied I want to punch you in the chest. This is my daughter Laurel. Just to hear the sound it makes.

GEORGE

I saw your picture in the paper. Two papers.

NICKY

That means they're getting ready to kill me.

GEORGE

That's not what I hear. I have four, five actors working here. `His best play since "Yessiree Bob" I'm telling you, they say it.

LAUREL

He doesn't want to hear it.

He leads them toward a booth.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Nicky is launched into a full breakfast. Laurel has a tea bag in a cup -- no water.

NICKY

If lawyers for the mob are called controversial, why are divorce lawyers called prominent?

LAUREL

Because they get outstanding settlements. And Mother is determined that this time there's no turning back.

NICKY

I just had breakfast with her. She didn't say a word about this.

A young waiter recognizes Nicky and unobtrusively points him out to another waiter.

LAUREL

Because you refuse to believe she's serious. You've always refused.

NICKY

Don't be so steely-eyed. It's that course you're taking in criminology.

LAUREL

Oh please. Not now.

(beat)

She wants you to stop seeing What's-Her-Name. Finally. Now and forever. Do you think that's too much to ask? For a wife of nineteen years.

NICKY

You're too young to be studying criminal behavior. It's making you obsessive.

LAUREL

She is kicking you out.

NICKY

Your mother and I have something between us that's too strong to damage permanently. Believe me, I know this. That's right, nineteen years. And what about the days and minutes? Sharing small moments, sharing memories, raising a beautiful child. We're wedded in the deepest and strongest ways. Lillian isn't only my wife. She's my best friend.

Nicky shrugs.

LAUREL

Bullshit, Daddy.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NEAR THE CASH REGISTER - LATER

Nicky and Laurel stand on a short line at the cash register, each holding a check.

LAUREL

Mother won't tell me how long you've been seeing this person. She's embarrassed to tell me. So why don't you tell me?

NICKY

Don't call her Mother all the time. It makes her sound tragic and unforgiving. What happened to Mom?

LAUREL

I didn't turn her into Mother. You did.

NICKY

This person and I are a thing of the total past. I promise you.

Nicky takes Laurel's check away from her, intending to pay himself.

Laurel snatches it back.

LAUREL

Know what Mother said to me? Daddy's demons are so intense he doesn't even know he's lying.

EXT. THE STREET

Bank towers. The Bank of India, Banco di Napoli, Bear Stearns, the Bank of New York, The Chemical Bank, Manufacturers Hanover. A sense of real institutions looming over the busy street. The bank names engraved on bronze markers, carved in granite, incised on glass.

Street level. A glimpse of the bronze statue called "Taxi on Park Avenue" -- a man with and attache case and raincoat, hailing a cab. The real people hailing cabs, well-dressed men and women striding along with briefcases -- purposeful, successful.

INT. TAXI

Nicky rides again.

NICKY

It's life, it's taxis. People trying to make contacts, make deals, meet their lovers. Taxis are sexy. You can't have Manhattan without taxis. I was proud of my taxi. I kept my taxi clean.

Nicky shifts his gaze. He sees Elliot Litvak slinking across the street, looking faintly unclean and shows a trace of a smile. He watches Elliot enter the lobby of the Chemical Bank.

INT. BANK

Elliot is at a cash machine, making an elaborate transaction.

Nicky appears, approaching the adjacent machine. Elliot sees him.

ELLIOT

Nicky. I was thinking about you. I

went to the preview last night.

NICKY

I don't want to hear about it.

Nicky attends to his own transaction.

ELLIOT

(whispering)

A lovely piece of theater. Small but important.

NICKY

Shut up, Elliot.

ELLIOT

Quietly effective.

Nicky takes his cash and begins to move away.

We don't appreciate what they've built for us. We're artists who are too dumb to see that this is the peak moment of Western culture.

NICKY

You're an artist. I'm a craftsman.

ELLIOT

Press a button and they give us money.

NICKY

Ride with me. We need a haircut.

INT. TAXI

Stalled between Park and Madison. The driver has opened the door and is standing just outside the cab, trying to determine the cause of delay.

ELLIOT

(whispering)

How is Lillian? I haven't seen her.

NICKY

She wants a divorce.

ELLIOT

Don't talk like that.

NICKY

It's over, finished and done with.

ELLIOT

That sounds so final. But are we really surprised?

NICKY

I'm completely stunned. I don't want this to happen.

ELLIOT

But didn't we know it would happen?

NICKY

Don't needle me, Elliot. Tell me how bad you feel. We're suppose to feel bad together. This is what friends do.

ELLIOT

(whispering)

Joanna Bourne. So rich and crisp. This woman lets you touch her body? You put your hands on her personal parts?

Nicky hits Elliot -- a token blow to the arm. Elliot thinks about it, then hits back.

They swat each other, half kiddingly, each of them leaning away from the other to prevent being hit in the face.

EXT. THE STREET

A whitish brown mist is building the west. There is a sense of scurrying people.

INT. TAXI

The driver re-enters.

DRIVER

We must abandon.

NICKY

What do you mean, we must abandon?

DRIVER

Ruptured steam pipe.

ELLIOT

Ruptured steam pipe.

DRIVER

Asbestos lining. Do not inhale.

NICKY

We must abandon.

DRIVER

Contaminated substance. Very dangerous. Shooting mud.

NICKY

Do not inhale.

ELLIOT
We must abandon.

DRIVER
Ruptured steam pipe.

NICKY
Very dangerous.

ELLIOT
Asbestos lining.

NICKY
We must abandon.

ELLIOT
Do not inhale.

Driver's name plate --

BODENHEIM
YEHOSHAFAT

Nicky pays him.

EXT. THE STREET

The driver flees eastward. Nicky and Elliot run across Madison Avenue. A snowstorm of asbestos is shooting out of a man hole cover west of Fifth Avenue, reducing visibility to near zero. Cars and people are white shadows.

The two men, with collars raised and hands over heads hurry into a restaurant on 47th Street between Madison and Fifth.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

A small narrow room. Handsome wall paintings -- a Tuscan hill town. Very slow day.

Nicky and Elliot sitting with a carafe of wine, a bottle of mineral water and some bread sticks. Glancing at menus intermittently.

NICKY
I'm trying to think. When did you start looking so terrible? You look awful.

ELLIOT
I can tell you the year, the day, the night, the minute.

NICKY
You used to love life. You don't exude this any more.

ELLIOT
What do I exude?

NICKY

Suffering. You exude a person who sits in a small dark apartment eating soft white bread.

ELLIOT

Tonight you find out what it means to suffer.

NICKY

Tonight. What's tonight?

ELLIOT

Shit. They don't have any carrot soup.

NICKY

You mean because What's-His-Name.

ELLIOT

You will suffer because he is in the theater. And you will suffer a thousandfold when his review appears.

NICKY

It's just a review.

ELLIOT

It is just a review. Do not inhale. Very dangerous.

NICKY

What's the fuss? I don't get it.

ELLIOT

That's what I said eighteen months ago.

NICKY

What happened eighteen months ago?

ELLIOT

Before his Broadway days. He reviewed the one-act I did at the Fulton Fish Market. We did this play at four AM, outdoors in the rain. One performance. For the fish handlers.

NICKY

And he was there?

ELLIOT

Steven Schwimmer. I memorized every word of this review.

NICKY

That's awful.

ELLIOT

I recite it to myself with
masochistic relish.

NICKY

A year and a half later? You're
still brooding?

A patron approaches the table and stares at Nicky with a
fixed grin of crazed recognition.

MAN

Yessirree Bob! Yessirree Bob!

Nicky's jaw becomes set and he pours himself a glass of wine
as the man backs off.

ELLIOT

You don't know about obscure
writers, Nicky. How we have our
anger to nurture and love. Our
murderous fantasies for any amount
of fame, money, power and sex.

The waitress comes by. She is Paisley Porter, attractive, in
her mid-twenties.

PAISLEY

Guys ready to order?

ELLIOT

Paisley Porter. I didn't know you
were waiting tables.

PAISLEY

Elliot?

ELLIOT

(to Nicky)

This is a great young out-of-work
actress.

PAISLEY

Elliot Litvak. Have you been ill?
And Mr. Rogan. How nice.

NICKY

What's good?

PAISLEY

We have a very nice pasta today.
Alla Putanesca.

ELLIOT

Say it again.

PAISLEY

Alla puttanesca.

ELLIOT

(to Nicky)

Isn't she great? What did I tell you? A talent.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER - SAME TABLE

The food has arrived. Nicky is eating compulsively -- in contrast to Elliot, who sips his mineral water, dabs his mouth with a napkin, looks around the restaurant between bites. When Nicky is finished with his food, he begins picking among the items on Elliot's plate. Elliot uses his fork to deflect Nicky's fork and the two men have a brief duel with utensils, fencing silently but intently, using knives and spoons to vary action.

EXT. STREET

The asbestos mist still clings. Men in protective suits and masks move slowly, like moon walkers. Halted traffic, abandoned cars. Mud covering the sidewalks and shop windows. A gauzy stillness, dreamlike.

INT. STEVEN SCHWIMMER'S LOFT

Stillness. A slow whirling 360-degree shot. The kitchen area is empty. The door of the portable toilet is open and no one is inside. The makeshift wardrobe is empty except for four or five hangers with shirts and jackets. There is no one at the desk or exercise bike.

A sound, faint but persistent, like an intake of air.

The bathroom. The toilet bowl has been ripped out and taken away, leaving a hole in the floor. Brownish water drips from the tap into the wash basin, which is indelibly stained. The drip makes a two-part sound and it matches the rhythm of the intake of air. One-two. Pause. One-two. The bathtub has been sprayed by a graffiti artist. Multi-colored swirls and arabesques.

Steven is sitting on a mat in the tub, arms in the air and folded so that his fists are close to his ears. He is in lotus position, breathing in serious meditation -- a deep intake of breath followed by a softer expulsion, matching the beat of the dripping faucet.

He is still wearing the sleep mask.

INT. RESTAURANT - MAIN ROOM - LATER

The kitchen staff is eating at a group of tables pushed together. Nicky's table has been absorbed by this cluster and he sits reading the sports section in a tabloid and having an espresso with his cigar.

Elliot, Paisley and actor-waiter stand at the small bar in conversation.

Next to Nicky, two kitchen workers talk about the ball game.

FIRST MAN

I got a good feeling about tonight

SECOND MAN

We got Ojeda going. He pitched beautiful last time out.

FIRST MAN

Plus Darryl's due for a big game.

NICKY

I hate the Mets.

SECOND MAN

How come?

NICKY

When the Mets lose, they just lose. It's a flat feeling. But the Red Sox -- here we have a rich history of interesting ways to lose a crucial game. Defeats that keep you awake, that pound in your head like the hammer of fate.

Paisley walks across the room toward the kitchen. Nicky pauses to watch her, then resumes speaking.

NICKY

You can analyze a Red Sox defeat day and night for a month and still uncover layers of complex feelings - - feelings you didn't know you were capable of. The pain has a memory all of it's own.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM

The parking lot is empty. The stands are empty. A few members of the crew move the batting cage into place for batting practice.

INT. SHEA STADIUM - LOCKER ROOM

The empty visitor's locker room. Uniforms hang on the doors of the lockers in preparation for tonight's game. We see the 3names Henderson, Stanley, Buckner.

INT. THE MEN'S ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Cramped quarters. Intensely claustrophobic. Elliot at the urinal. Nicky at the hand-dryer. An actor-waiter standing between them at the sink.

ELLIOT

(quoting Steven Schwimmer)

'One thing saves Elliot Litvak's work from complete mediocrity, and this is his lack of ambition.'

WAITER

It gets funnier.

ELLIOT

(zipping up)

It gets funnier. See, Nicky? They chart the laughs. This from a critic who lives like a fallen monk. Whose address is a carefully guarded secret.

WAITER

A critic who has to disguise himself.

NICKY

What do you mean?

WAITER

To go to the theater. Wears I don't know what. Make-up, padding.

NICKY

Why?

WAITER

Because he is so deeply hated by so many people in the business.

ELLIOT

He has to disguise himself, Nicky.

WAITER

For his own safety and peace of mind.

The waiter squeezes past and leaves.

ELLIOT

Do you want me to tell you what it was like, reading that review at the newstand with trucks rumbling past and street vendors facing Mecca?

NICKY

What was it like?

ELLIOT

I said, 'I'm dead'. He killed me.

INT. RESTAURANT -LATER

Elliot standing near the front window, in a shaft of sunlight, examining a white after-dinner candy. He puts it in

his pocket for later.

Paisley eating lunch at the end of the long table, looking up to see Nicky approach with liqueur and a glass on wine. He sits opposite her, placing the wineglass in front of her.

NICKY

You've worked with Elliot?

PAISLEY

I was in the fish-market play. What happened to him?

NICKY

There was a review.

PAISLEY

I think I remember.

NICKY

So does Elliot.

PAISLEY

Not one of Steven's finer moments.

NICKY

Oh. You know him.

PAISLEY

A little.

NICKY

And he has finer moments now and then.

PAISLEY

He has -- something. A funny little quality I find --

NICKY

Endearing.

PAISLEY

Engaging.

NICKY

Elliot wants to kill him with a railroad spike.

PAISLEY

A little drastic maybe?

NICKY

Say it again.

PAISLEY

What?

NICKY

You know what.

PAISLEY

Alla puttanesca.

NICKY

One more time.

INT. THE ENTRANCE WAY - A LITTLE LATER

Elliot watches Nicky embrace Giorgio. Nicky carries the tabloid he'd been reading -- the "Daily News". Elliot and Nicky stand at the door and watch the whitish mist that continues to linger.

ELLIOT

Is it safe?

NICKY

Do we care?

ELLIOT

I think we Nought to wait.

NICKY

I say we go.

ELLIOT

You say we go?

NICKY

Do not inhale.

ELLIOT

I'm not ready.

NICKY

Here we go.

They pull up their collars and run outside.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The street is deserted. Nicky holds the newspaper over his face for protection. Each man has an arm in the air, trying to hail a taxi. They are standing near a trash receptacle that carries an advertisement for "New York Magazine". It is a reproduction of the cover that we'd glimpsed earlier in Joanna's apartment when her maid was reading the magazine. A furtive man shielding his face with the newspaper -- and a headline about a Phantom. Nicky and Elliot do not see the receptacle.

A bus comes down the street with a large horizontal ad covering its right side. It is the same ad -- five of them actually, five "New York Magazine" covers side by side. Elliot is trying to hail a cab and doesn't notice the ad. As the bus bears down, Nicky steps out of the way, removing the newspaper from his face and getting a clear look at the five photos on the side of the bus -- a man concealing his face

with a newspaper.

Nicky reads the text under the logo of "New York Magazine".

THE PHANTOM WHO HAUNTS BROADWAY

Learning to hate Steven Schwimmer

Nicky stares after the bus. Another bus comes along, carrying the same ad.

Nicky watches darkly.

EXT. STREET - LATER

This is the diamond district. Store signs reading:

Antique Jewelry We Buy Diamonds Gold Emporium
Wholesale Jewelry All Brand-Name Watches Reduced

INT. THE TAXI - NICKY AND ELLIOT

Nicky is reading the newspaper. The driver is speaking Chinese into his two-way radio. Squawky replies from the dispatcher in machine gun Chinese.

ELLIOT

The man has taken over my mind.
He's not only out there. He's in my
head and I can't get rid of him. I
can't write a word without
imagining his response. I'm
paralyzed as an artist.

NICKY

I don't have the problems that
artists have.

ELLIOT

You've been saying that for years.

NICKY

What?

ELLIOT

(mockingly)

'I'm just a professional. A dues-
playing member of a guild.' Because
you're afraid, Nicky. That's the
darkest part of you. You don't
think you're good enough.

Nicky lowers the newspaper.

Driver's nameplate:

WU LI

EXT. THE STREET

About a dozen people gathered together including several diamond merchants in their beards, black suits and fur hats. They are watching the man in the cutaway dancing with his cloth doll. Someone places a donation in the cigar box. From the tape player: "Dancing in the Dark."

Elliot ends up near the Gotham Book Mart, on the north side of the street. Nicky looks right past him into the bookstore window. He sees something that interests him.

ELLIOT

Where are you going?

NICKY

Don't wait Efor me.

ELLIOT

What about the haircut?

INT. GOTHAM BOOK MART

Nicky walks along the main aisle, looking at a woman standing in the poetry nook.

Only a few people in the shop.

He enters the back room and gets a glimpse of a woman walking through the opposite doorway back into the main room.

He squeezes past a browser and looks through the doorway. Someone is just leaving the shop.

He walks to the rear of the store, where the office is located. The door is open, the room is empty.

He re-enters the main room and sees a woman seated on the top step of the stairway that leads to the basement stacks. Her back is to Nicky and she is reading a book. He approaches slowly and then squats by the doorway to get a closer look at her.

She turns. It is Paisley Porter.

INT. GOTHAM BOOK MART - A MOMENT LATER

Nicky and Paisley in a corner of the back room.

NICKY

You keep slipping away. How do you do that?

PAISLEY

I was one of those silent, listening children. Glued to the shadows.

NICKY

I was all noise. Played the radio

loud. Battled constantly with my brother and sister. Here I am, world.

PAISLEY

I hear good things about the new play.

NICKY

So do I. Over and over.

PAISLEY

Peter Redmond is an actor I admire enormously.

NICKY

Would you like to meet him?

PAISLEY

He doesn't want to meet some out-of-work ingenue.

NICKY

I'm trying to prolong our afternoon. In case you haven't noticed.

PAISLEY

The fact is, I have to get going.

NICKY

Is it true?

PAISLEY

Is what true?

NICKY

He wears a disguise.

PAISLEY

Steven goes to extremes to protect his privacy. No friends. No phone.

NICKY

But you're his friend.

PAISLEY

Sort of. Sometimes. You're not building an obsession about Steven, are you? Look. I understand opening-night jitters, but you've got one of the great actors in American theater starring in your play.

EXT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER

47th Street between Broadway and Eighth Avenue.

INT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER - STAGE ENTRANCE

Nicky has been cornered just inside the entrance by the stage manager, a small, fierce woman named RENEE SIMON.

RENEE

I can't take this anymore. He forgets simple lines. He forgets where to stand. We tell him and tell him and tell him. I know he's a sweet man. I love Peter. It's not his fault. But I've never worked in a show where the leading man has 4parasites in his brain.

INT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER - THE ORCHESTRA

Nicky sits down in the orchestra, looking darkly into space, brooding. He surveys the set, a working class kitchen, behind it a backdrop of dark streets and looming tenements. A portly well-dressed man appears, moving along the row toward Nicky. This is SIDNEY FABRIKANT, the producer.

NICKY

aybe we ought to postpone the opening.

SIDNEY

Joanna loves this play. She has sunk tons of money. She is completely Ncommitted.

NICKY

appreciate that, Sidney. But our leading man can't remember his lines. And his understudy can't carry the play.

Nicky looks out at the rehearsal in progress on stage. The director, JACK HASKINS and the actor PETER REDMOND (50)confer, move about gesturing and blocking.

SIDNEY

I had lunch with Joanna. She said she told you about Peter. You weren't concerned, she said.

NICKY

hat was this morning.

SIDNEY

So what happened since? You're worried about this kid who writes these reviews?

Nicky looks across the theatre. Paisley Porter sits alone, tenth row center, watching rehearsal with rapt attention.

NICKY

'm not worried about this kid.

SIDNEY

Well I am. Worried sick. Everybody quotes Steven Schwimmer. He's here to announce the death of civilization. He kills a play every time he farts.

NICKY

Postpone. We have every right.

SIDNEY

Too late. All the elements are in place. Delay the opening and we lose the theater.

NICKY

I've had three straight washouts, Sidney.

SIDNEY

(deliciously)

You're dangling from the last letter of your last name.

INT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER -THE STAGE - NICKY AND PETER

REDMOND - A LITTLE LATER

The actor sitting on the sofa. Nicky on one knee, leaning towards him in intimate conversation.

NICKY

Sidney remains optimistic.

PETER

Sidney.

NICKY

Sidney Fabrikant. Our producer.

PETER

I was educated by nuns.

NICKY

Yes.

PETER

I have excellent long-term memory.

NICKY

Yes.

PETER

I kissed Shirley Felder on the teeth.

NICKY

Yes, Peter.

PETER

But my parasite is consuming all
the new memories. Eating my lines.

NICKY

You have to see the words. Try to
build a mental picture of the
script. Imagine your lines high-
lighted with a felt tip pen.

PETER

What color?

NICKY

What was your favorite color
crayon, growing up?

PETER

Burnt sienna.

NICKY

Mine was cobalt blue.

PETER

This is your history, isn't it?
Nicky? All around us. And my
parasite is consuming it.

NICKY

Yes.

PETER

I kissed her while she was
laughing.

NICKY

Yes.

PETER

I can see her face so clearly. Dear
God. My heart was flying out of my
chest with love.

INT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER - THE WINGS

Jack Haskins and Renee Simon

RENEE

I hear he got the parasite in
Burma.

JACK

I heard Borneo.

RENEE

Why do we blame the Third World for
our parasites? Maybe he got it in
Denver or Minneapolis.

JACK

Maybe he got it in Borneo.

INT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER - THE STAGE

Nicky and Peter still conferring. Jack and Renee approach.

PETER

I feel shaky about one line in particular. If I can get past this line. I think I can handle the last long speech.

RENEE

Which line, Peter?

PETER

The Son says to the Father, This could be it.

NICKY

And the Father replies?

PETER

That's the line I can't ever, for the life of me remember. I just can't get it.

JACK

It's the same line. The Father simply repeats what the Son says to him.

RENEE

This could be it.

NICKY

This could be it.

PETER

I know it sounds easy. But something happens between the time I hear the line and the time I'm suppose to Jrepeat it.

JACK

This could be it.

PETER

(long pause)
This could be it.

JACK

Let's work on it.

PETER

(long pause)
Let's work on it.

INT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER - AISLE - A LITTLE LATER

Nicky and Paisley Porter make their way out of the theatre.

PAISLEY

Do you think he can do it?

NICKY

I don't know.

PAISLEY

He's a very sweet man.

NICKY

Where are you going now?

PAISLEY

Home.

NICKY

Someone waiting for you?

PAISLEY

No one's waiting.

NICKY

There's a certain kind of wounded young man who uses his oddness to get laid. Is that our Steven?

PAISLEY

If I'm sleeping with him, and I haven't said I am, then so what?

NICKY

(quietly)

So everything. That's so what. So I begin to hate him. So I want to do him grave harm.

PAISLEY

But you don't even know me. How can you care what I do with whom?

NICKY

I know you both. Enough. How much knowledge does it take before a man does something crazy.

PAISLEY

Do you want to talk about doing crazy things.

NICKY

Yes.

PAISLEY

Never mind.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

They enter lobby daylight, squint a little.

NICKY

What? Come on, Paisley.

PAISLEY

Our Steven not only disguises himself.

NICKY

Yes.

PAISLEY

He goes to the theater armed.

MUTED BACKGROUND VOICES ON THE LOBBY PA: Jack Haskins and Peter Redmond.

JACK (V.O.)

This could Pbe it.

PETER (V.O.)

This could be it.

They look up at the speaker.

PAISLEY

He feels he has to defend himself if necessary.

NICKY

I'm actually beginning to enjoy this.

EXT. BARRYMORE THEATRE - DAY

Wide of the theater. Nicky says goodbye to Paisley.

Reverse angle, Elliot watches them from across the street.

Nicky goes back inside the theatre. Paisley walks west on 47th street.

Elliot waits for a moment, then follows her.

INT. STEVEN SCHWIMMER'S LOFT

The Port-O-San. Steven emerges and goes to the stacked cardboard boxes against the wall. His hate mail. He is wearing a bath towel like a prayer shawl over his sweat clothes.

He drags one of the boxes to the ratty armchair. He sits in the chair by the filthy window that looks west toward the early-setting sun.

He takes a letter from the box, opens it, reads it, lets it fall to the floor. Takes another letter, opens it --

There is a knock at the door.

Steven tenses, does not move.

Another knock.

He moves warily toward the door.

PAISLEY (V.O.)

Steven, it's me. Will you open please.

Steven releases the dead-bolt lock and opens the door.

STEVEN

You've come to me. I wanted to believe you would one day.

PAISLEY

I haven't come to you.

STEVEN

But you're here. So you must have come to me.

INT. STEVEN SCHWIMMER'S LOFT - A LITTLE LATER

Steven is back in the chair by the window. Paisley nervously prowls the loft.

PAISLEY

In other words I never understood until today how much pain and anxiety you've been causing with your reviews. Steven, it's so unfair.

STEVEN

Of course it's unfair. The truth is always unfair. Why do you think I live this way? Hiding out. Stealing electricity from a lamp post. Because people who write the truth are outcasts of society. I can't live openly, in a nice clean doorman building, with my name on the mailbox. They'd come after me in packs.

PAISLEY

Not if you stopped hurting people. Write the truth gently.

STEVEN

The truth is never gentle. Listen to me carefully. Each of us lives

in the thinnest possible wrapping
of wishes and dreams. Truth is the
force that penetrates this wispy
skin. It hurts and maims.

(reaching down to clutch a
fistful of letters)

Look how they hate me for telling
the truth. It's an education,
Paisley. The College of Raw Nerves.
Letters dripping blood. Cries of
revenge.

PAISLEY

Yes. I've seen your victims. One
past and one future. I thought I
might convince you to reconsider.

STEVEN

And I thought, at last, she's here,
she wants me.

PAISLEY

I don't want you, Steven.

Paisley moves towards the door.

STEVEN

Stay. Teach me to be compassionate.

PAISLEY

I'm going home to my machine.

EXT. STREET CORNER CASH MACHINE

Elliot looks up and sees Paisley emerging from Steven's
building. He crosses the street toward her.
When Paisley sees him, she seems to freeze.

EXT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER

47th Street between Broadway and Eight Avenue.

Nicky walking slowly backwards, arm raised, trying to hail a
cab. It is getting dark. He glances left, sees a large two-
panel poster in front of the theater. One half is a black-and-
white photo -- a younger Nicky Rogan, in a tuxedo, holding an
award in his raised hand.

The other half is all type --

SIDEWALKS

The new

Nicky

ogan

He sees someone enter the theater lobby. It is his daughter
Laurel. He follows, catching up to her at the end of a short
line of people at the ticket window.

NICKY

Laurel. Tickets are all set. I double-checked.

LAUREL

Thanks, Daddy. But I just need one. Mother's not going.

NICKY

Opening night?

LAUREL

I know -- why should a bitter divorce interfere with tradition?

Laurel reaches the window and speaks to the clerk.

LAUREL

Rogan, Laurel. You also have a Rogan, Lillian. She won't need it. Sell it.

NICKY

Take it yourself. Take a date.

LAUREL

I don't have a date. I don't want a date.

They leave the window with Laurel's ticket.

NICKY

And you blame me. It's because we never talk. Let's talk.

LAUREL

I have a class. I'm late.

NICKY

Can we talk later? Will you be at the party?

LAUREL

I'm not sure.

She is out the door, hurrying across the street. Nicky stands under the marquee, calling out to her.

NICKY

I'll find you. After the show. Somewhere.

INT. TAXI

Moving very slowly.

Driver's nameplate --

MOSHOESHOE
IBRHIM

DRIVER

A man is hit the other day by
another taxi. I mean he is flying.
Crash against the windscreen. Right
here in my face. Blood is
everywhere.

NICKY

I never left the garage without my
Windex.

DRIVER

I was barrister in Kenya. I said to
him, get off from here. I cannot
drive with your body on my
windscreen.

NICKY

I drove twelve hours straight
through. Ate at the wheel.

RIVER

You have to eat at the wheel. You
cannot get anywhere.

NICKY

That's the drama. We're waiting for
life to continue. Where do you pee,
Ibrahmin?

DRIVER

Under the Manhattan Bridge.

NICKY

That's where I peed.

EXT. THE STREET

47th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenue. A hotel, a high
school, brownstones with fire escapes.

INT. MICHAEL ROGAN'S KITCHEN

Michael, Nicky's father, is making an omelette on the old
stove. He is pushing eighty, slow-moving, with a two-day
stubble.

Knock at the door.

Michael goes to the intercom, inches from the door.

MICHAEL

(into speaker)

Who is it?

NICKY (V.O.)

I'm at the door.

MICHAEL
(into speaker)
Go way. I'll call a cop.

NICKY (V.O.)
Pop, will you let me in?

MICHAEL
(into speaker)
Where the hell are you?

NICKY (V.O.)
Right here. At the door.

Michael goes to the door and looks through the peephole.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

MICHAEL
What do you want?

NICKY
It's me. Nicky.

MICHAEL
Nicky comes on Sunday's.

NICKY
Where are your glasses? Go get them.

MICHAEL
If it's you, what are you doing here?

NICKY
I'm on my way to get a haircut.

MICHAEL
Where does Nicky get his hair cut?

Nicky stands against the door, speaking softly into the peephole.

NICKY
Across Ninth Avenue. Dodgie's.
Where you've been getting your hair cut for fifty years. Where Uncle Billy and Uncle Marty got their hair cut. Where Jim Rorty shot a man for cheating at poker.

MICHAEL
It was rummy, not poker. But I'll take a chance and let you in.

INT. MICHAEL ROGAN'S KITCHEN - LATER

Michael is eating his omelette at a small enamel-topped table in the kitchen. Nicky stands by the boxlike refrigerator, drinking a beer. This is the kitchen that is the centerpiece of the theatre set. The new play is Nicky's young life.

NICKY

It's a constant shock to me, how small this place is. How did we do it? Five people in these little rooms.

MICHAEL

Get yourself something to eat.

Nicky takes some eggs out of the refrigerator.

NICKY

We must have been heroic.

MICHAEL

Five's not so many. There were families with seven kids. A grandmother. A dimwit uncle.

NICKY

Lillian says it once a week. 'Why doesn't he come live with us?'

MICHAEL

You know the answer to that.

NICKY

I do know the answer to that. Why don't we watch the ball game later? We'll go to Mannion's.

MICHAEL

They're only gonna lose.

NICKY

Of course they're gonna lose. We'll watch them lose. What good is heartbreak if we don't experience it firsthand?

MICHAEL

The Red Sox are your problem. I never understood about you and the Red Sox. Everybody rooted for the Yankees.

Nicky is scrambling the eggs.

NICKY

Remember 1949? Last two games of the season. Against the Yankees. The Sox lost on Saturday. Then they lost on Sunday. First I cried for

twenty-four hours. Then I had fist-fights the rest of the week.

MICHAEL

It's one thing for kids. You get older, you Nhave other things.

NICKY

It's all connected, Pop. It's one life. Baseball is memory. How do fathers and sons show their love? They go to a ball game together. Thirty-five years later, they sit in the kitchen and remember.

MICHAEL

But the son is suppose to stop crying.

NICKY

I could have grown up happy. A Yankee fan. A divorce lawyer.

Nicky sees his father's glasses on a shelf above the stove. He puts them on the table.

NICKY

You'll need these. Tonight. For the play.

MICHAEL

Don't make me sit through one of your plays.

NICKY

Hey, Pop. I know you don't like the commotion of opening night. But I especially want you to see this play. It's new territory for me. And for you too. I have to know what you think.

MICHAEL

Since when did that matter?

NICKY

Let's not start that again.

MICHAEL

My back is killing me.

NICKY

Where's your elastic brace?

MICHAEL

I can't find it.

NICKY

You're suppose to wear it when your

back gives you trouble.

MICHAEL

I lost it. I lose everything.

NICKY

I'll go get you another one. You
have to wear it.

Nicky takes a roll off the counter, makes a sandwich for his
scrambled eggs, takes a bite and heads for the door.

NICKY

Be right back. Take a good look at
me.

Michael puts on his glasses.

MICHAEL

So I know who I'm letting in.

Nicky leaves the apartment.

EXT. THE STREET

The man in the cutaway dances with his doll. The tape machine
plays "In The Still of the Night.

" The street is completely empty except for the dancer.
Nicky, a small paper bag in his hand, reenters his father's
building.

INT. MICHAEL ROGAN'S LIVING ROOM

The room bears some resemblance to the living room set at
the Barrymore. Michael sits at the end of the sofa, weary.
Nicky is taking an athletic bandage -- about four feet long
and three inches wide -- out of the package.

He sits in a chair that is set perpendicular to Michael's end
of the sofa, so that Nicky is looking at his father in
profile.

MICHAEL

`Why doesn't he come live with us?'
Because everything is here.

NICKY

I know, Pop.

MICHAEL

I'm lucky they don't knock down the
building. It could happen anytime.
And everything worth remembering is
right here.

NICKY

I think the building's okay. At
least for the time being.

MICHAEL

You didn't think it was okay when you lived here. You wanted to get out so fast I thought you were running a marathon.

NICKY

Normal boy's ambition. I like coming back. You know that.

MICHAEL

You tell your friends your father used to work the docks. Callused hands. But you had an attitude when you were growing up that wasn't easy for your mother and me to understand.

Nicky is gradually unbuttoning his father's shirt so that he can wrap the bandage around the old man's chest and back.

NICKY

I was in a hurry to do big things, make big mistakes. Any mistakes were okay as long as it was big. But I'm trying to see these things clearly and honestly. That's the play they're going to kill starting tonight. There's a guy out there getting ready to rip it apart. And that's us. Who we were and where we come from.

MICHAEL

So what are you going to do about it?

NICKY

What do you want me to do?

MICHAEL

Show him who we are.

Nicky takes off the shirt.

Michael struggles out of his T-shirt and we see that he is wearing the elastic bandage he thought he had lost.

He is sitting with his head tilted up, eyes closed, and is unaware that he is wearing the bandage.

Nicky takes the new bandage, winds it tightly and puts it back in the box.

His father has gone to sleep.

EXT. STREET BUILDING

It is dark and cold. Nicky emerges and walks west, diagonally across the street, to a barbershop on the other side of Ninth Avenue.

Elliot is on the stoop waiting for him.

INT. THE BARBER SHOP

Nicky sits in the barber chair. Elliot pulls up a customer's chair and sits with his back to the mirror, more or less facing Nicky. The barber, an elderly hawk-eyed man named Dodgie, begins his preparations for Nicky's haircut.

NICKY

He carries a gun.

ELLIOT

Then you should carry a gun.

He places the sheet over Nicky's upper body and fastens it at the neck.

NICKY

I used to carry a gun when I drove a cab.

ELLIOT

Where is it?

NICKY

I gave it away. I thought, I'm a writer now.

ELLIOT

That was a big mistake.

DODGIE

You should never be without a gun. In this city?

ELLIOT

If he carries a gun, you have to carry a gun.

NICKY

We're making too much of this.

ELLIOT

No, we're not.

NICKY

I'm not a lonely spooky writer like you. Nursing a hundred grudges. I'm a man who loves life.

ELLIOT

We're talking about something deeper than grudges. How do we respond to personal attack?

DODGIE

In this city? And you don't carry a gun?

ELLIOT

How do we maintain our dignity and self-respect?

NICKY

In other words why should we suffer silently at this kind of abuse? The man is out there ruining lives.

ELLIOT

It's your best play, Nicky.

NICKY

He'll hate it.

ELLIOT

He'll kill it. He'll write a review so devastating it will shatter your career and cause the most unmanageable psychic grief. What happens to your apartment on the East River? Your house in Connecticut, where you watch things grow.

Dodgie goes to the cabinet on which the cash register sits. He opens the cabinet door, slides out a drawer and removes some hand towels. There is something there he wants Nicky to see. An old pockmarked revolver.

Nicky sees the gun.

NICKY

We were thinking of putting in a pool.

ELLIOT

(quoting)

'The most interesting thing about Elliot Litvak is that he writes the way he looks -- fuzzy, grubby and shifty-eyed.'

(beat)

I'm telling you as a friend.

NICKY

What?

ELLIOT

There are things that speak to us from the past.

DODGIE

In this city you don't walk five

feet out the door and there is somebody trying to take what's yours.

ELLIOT

Your truth is locked in your past. Find it. Know it for what it is.

(beat)

Shoot him, Nicky.

NICKY

Shoot him.

ELLIOT

The American theater doesn't need people like that.

NICKY

Shoot him, Nicky. Not that we really mean it. But where does he live?

ELLIOT

Keep going west. Last building before the river.

NICKY

How do you Eknow.

ELLIOT

Paisley Porter.

NICKY

What do you mean?

ELLIOT

About an hour and a half ago. I saw her come out of a place. She said she was visiting a friend. But she wouldn't tell me who.

NICKY

Had to be him.

ELLIOT

She was very evasive.

Nicky gets out of the chair. Dodgie removes the sheet for him and Elliot smooths down his clothes and hair, like a pair of grooms attending a warrior.

Nicky goes to the cabinet, gets the gun. He returns to the chair.

NICKY

I'm enjoying this more every minute.

Elliot takes an after-dinner candy out of his pocket -- the

candy he pocketed in the Italian restaurant after lunch. He blows the lint off and eats it.

DODGIE

How do you want the sideburns.

NICKY

Elegant and refined.

EXT. SHEA STADIUM

Crowds of people pouring down the ramps from the train station, hurrying, late.

The umpire's room -- six men nibbling cookies, smoking a last-minute cigarette, adjusting equipment.

An unidentified room somewhere in there lower reaches of the stadium. Twenty cases of Great Western champagne stacked and ready for the postgame celebration.

INT. STEVEN SCHWIMMER'S LOFT

Steven shaving. He does it symmetrically. A stroke under the left sideburn; a stroke under the right sideburn. Left side of jaw; right side of jaw.

Steven standing in his shorts, applying putty to his jaw to make it square. Then a false mustache and a wavy blond hairpiece. Then a thick bronze makeup paste.

Steven in front of a full-length mirror near the bed, putting on a bulletproof vest, which gives him a solid appearance, bulking his caved-in chest and concealing his pot belly.

Steven putting on black trousers, a brash shirt with a bright bow tie, which he tips slightly askew. A pair of black and white shoes with elevator heels. Then his shoulder holster.

Steven leaning over the coffee table, inserting bullets into the chamber of the revolver.

With the gun in his holster, he stands in front of the mirror. Takes the gun out, aims it, puts it back in the holster.

Does a dazzling karate move.

Steven putting on a metallic rayon sport coat. A long silk scarf.

We see a handsome, dashing young man.

He puts on a pair of dark glasses and heads for the door.

EXT. THE BARRYMORE

pening night crowd. The sidewalk is mobbed. Limousines and taxis pulling up. Men in tuxedos, other men scalping tickets.

The TV crew with a female reporter doing interviews: talking to Joanna Bourne and Sidney Fabrikant.

A couple of ten-year-old break dancers entertain the well heeled opening night crowd.

INT. TAXI

Stuck in traffic. Nicky in the rear seat.

The driver is a black woman around fifty. Next to her in the front seat is her grandson, Matthew, who is ten.

The interior of the taxi is homelike. A plastic drinking cup magnetically rooted to the dashboard. A small battery-operated fan next to the cup. The steering wheel is upholstered. There are family photographs on the dashboard and visors.

Matthew's schoolbooks are next to him on the front seat. He is doing his homework.

Driver's name plate --

MOSEBY
TOYOTA

NICKY
I loved my taxi. A checkered cab.
Big and rumbly.

TOYOTA
I'm looking at you trying to think.
Put your face in the mirror. I know
I recognize you from somewhere.

NICKY
Everybody else does. Why not you?

TOYOTA
You're Frankie Lazzaro. The
gangster from Rhode Island.

NICKY
Oh yeah?

TOYOTA
Matthew, look at him. When I lived
in Roxbury, the media followed this
man everywhere. He was bigger than
ten movie stars.
(to Nicky)
Where's your white Lincoln limo?

Nicky is delighted at the mistake and alters his voice slightly, using a gangsterish inflection.

NICKY

(to Matthew)
Some little kid stole the hubcaps.

TOYOTA
The most charming gangster in New England. Where are we going, Mr. Lazzaro?

NICKY
Call me Frankie. And it looks like we're going nowhere.

TOYOTA
Might be an accident on the West Side Highway.

NICKY
How come you got the kid with you?

TOYOTA
Matthew's my grandson.

NICKY
A grandmother. God bless you.

TOYOTA
He does bless me, each and every day. Matthew's mother works a hospital shift, so I pick him up at school. We stop for a meal usually around this time. He does his homework and gets some experience meeting people. But we never had a famous mobster before.

NICKY
It's the kid's lucky day.

TOYOTA
This is one charming crook. If shooting people is charming.

NICKY
Now that's a complicated subject.

TOYOTA
That's a simple subject.

NICKY
Look, we're stuck here front and back. It's dinnertime for you, game time for me. Let's park the cab and go to Mannion's. What do you say, Matthew? We'll drink beer and talk baseball.

GRAINY IMAGE

Filling the screen. Actual footage. A man in a parachute

coming down on an expanse of grass. It is the infield at Shea Stadium. He carries a sign reading "Let's Go, Mets". Security men hustle the parachutist off the field and into the Mets dugout as the game begins.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN

We see that the image is on a TV screen over the bar. The place is crowded, a neighborhood tavern.

Near the door: Nicky embracing the owner, a beefy man named Georgie. People coming and going.

NICKY

Georgie.

GEORGIE

Nicky, God bless. You're well? Your family's well? That's all that counts.

NICKY

Are you absolutely sure?

GEORGIE

Hey. I love this guy. Be good. Stay well. I'm serious: Give my best to everybody.

They embrace.

Faces lining the bar.

TV images from the game.

People at tables standing occasionally for a better look at the game.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE -LATER

Nicky sits facing Toyota and Matthew. A young waiter is placing their food on the table.

MATTHEW

What happens if somebody comes in here right now and shoots you?

NICKY

This place becomes famous. Tour buses. Blind people feeling around for bullet holes in the wall.

TOYOTA

You see what you're doing, don't you?

NICKY

What am I doing?

TOYOTA
You're charming the boy.

NICKY
Hey, Toyota. He asked me a question.

TOYOTA
Frankie Lazzaro. Coming down the courthouse steps every day in the media. Children see this. They think you're the Secretary of the Treasury.

NICKY
That's my cousin, Angelo.

INT. THE BARRYMORE THEATER - DRESSING ROOM

The actor Peter Redmond and the director Jack Haskins. A second actor, who is about fifteen, witnesses the exchange.

JACK
This could be it.

PETER
This could be it.

JACK
This could be it.

PETER
This could be it.

JACK
Does it feel comfortable?

PETER
Does what feel comfortable?

JACK
This could be it.

PETER
This could be it.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE MAIN ROOM - LATER

People cluster around TV sets.

Raucous noise.

A waiter with a tray of food standing transfixed, watching the game.

Nicky is now sitting next to Matthew and they are watching the game.

MATTHEW

What's it like to shoot somebody?

NICKY

I respect a kid who does his homework in a taxi. But let's put a lid on the questions.

TOYOTA

Go on, tell him. Tell the truth. Tell him how you feel, shooting a piece of hot metal in somebody's flesh who was once a child, who was once the same age as this boy. Somebody's flesh who was innocent once.

NICKY

It's complicated. It's a whole life. A person doesn't commit an act of violence out of nowhere. There are strong forces at work.

TV audio: derisive shouts from the stadium crowd directed at Red Sox players.

Action on the field.

TV VOICES

Dew-eeey! Rog-errrr!

The bar crowd picks up the chant.

TV images. The Red Sox have scored and lead 2-0.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

Nicky stands to see the action better. His jacket swings open and Toyota sees the revolver tucked into his waistband.

INT. THE BARRYMORE

People seating themselves in the orchestra.

Noise from the tavern TV continues to be heard from the subjective viewpoint of a man in the theater who has a miniature TV and earphones.

Steven Schwimmer in an aisle seat in the orchestra. He sees Paisley sitting in the theatre some distance away.

House lights go down.

Two figures hurrying down the aisle. An usher leading a young woman. The woman is Laurel Rogan, Nicky's daughter, wearing her headset antennas.

Laurel squeezes past some people and takes her seat, and Steven, sitting three rows back, watches her with interest.

The curtain comes open.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - LATER

Cheering from the bar crowd.

Nicky is a little disheveled. He has finished his dinner and is eating from Toyota's plate finishing and watching the game.

TOYOTA

You're a family man, Frankie?

NICKY

Wife and daughter. My father's still alive.
He outlives me, starting tonight.
Because the Mets just tied the score. It was only a matter of time, wasn't it?

TOYOTA

An how many years does it take a person to make his family safe and secure and happy, and then in one dumb moment, what does he do?

NICKY

I don't know Toyota. What does he do?

TOYOTA

And the people he hurts the most are the people who love him.
Despite who he is and what he does for a living. We're always saying we want to take control of our lives. You don't want to take control. You want to lose control. Jesus knows it.

Nicky is standing again but he's not looking at the TV screen this time. His gaze is directed at someone who has just entered the tavern.

A woman stands at the entrance, middle-aged and somewhat anxious, looking for someone. She is Lillian Rogan, Nicky's wife.

NICKY

It's a complicated subject.

TOYOTA

It's a simple subject.

Nicky gestures that he will be right back.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE BOOTH

LILLIAN

Your father said you might be here.

NICKY

Two-all after six.

LILLIAN

I've been looking for you because I want to let you know what's been going on before you read about it in a gossip column.

NICKY

We stranded five runners in the first two innings. This will come back to haunt us.

LILLIAN

I want to be fair-minded, Nicky.

NICKY

All right. What's been going on?

LILLIAN

I've been talking to a prominent divorce lawyer.

NICKY

How prominent?

LILLIAN

He has his own submarine. I'll be getting everything that matters. I'll get New York and I'll get Connecticut.

Happy roars from the bar crowd.

A young waiter arrives with menus.

NICKY

I'll have whatever she's having.

LILLIAN

(to Waiter)

I don't want to be responsible for his food. Just a small green salad. And a Perrier.

NICKY

Bring me the bay scallops with mercury poisoning.

WAITER

Yessiree, Bob.

NICKY

Get the hell out of here. I don't want you bringing our food. Send a

real waiter.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE BAR

TV images: action on the field.

Crowd at the bar. Noise like a massive pulse beat. Bar crowd picks up chant from stadium crowd.

BAR VOICES

Rog-errrr! Dew-eeey!

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE BOOTH - LATER

Dinner has arrived with a bottle of wine. A cigarette burns in the ashtray in front of Lillian.

NICKY

Opening night, Lillian.

LILLIAN

Who the hell cares?

NICKY

The whole thing is my fault. I took unfair advantage of your patience and understanding. You understand me.

LILLIAN

That's always been my problem.

NICKY

And you've been extremely patient.

LILLIAN

You know why, don't you? Because I am patient, chain-smoking Lillian.

NICKY

You smoked because I smoked. We were falling in love, remember? I used to see certain movies only because you had seen them. I wanted to see what you saw.

LILLIAN

I'd forgotten that.

NICKY

I went because you went. You smoked because I smoked.

LILLIAN

That's very lovely actually.

NICKY

Laurel wants us to be honest and open. Let's be open with each

other.

LILLIAN

Be open with me. I'd like that.

NICKY

There may be things you'd rather not know about.

LILLIAN

I want to know. We haven't talked this way in years.

NICKY

I had an affair -- are you sure you want to hear this?

LILLIAN

Joanne Bourne.

NICKY

Alma Wetzel.

LILLIAN

Nicky, no. This is insupportable. How could you?

NICKY

I'm a man. She's, you know, a woman.

LILLIAN

She's my gynecologist.

Lillian begins to weep lightly.

NICKY

I am really, deeply sorry.

LILLIAN

It violates so many trusts.

NICKY

It was an animal thing. No real intimacy.

LILLIAN

I never thought of Dr. Wetzel as having a sex life outside the office.

NICKY

We did it in the office. She thought her apartment was too impersonal.

LILLIAN

I'm glad we're having this talk.

NICKY

I feel great. I feel impeccably
alive. I'm elated. Eat something.
Please. I love you.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE BAR

Moans from the bar crowd.

TV images.

Scoreboard: Red Sox lead 3-2 in the seventh inning.

EXT. THE STREET

Nicky with one arm raised, hailing a taxi. He and Lillian
kiss sweetly.

A taxi pulls up and Lillian gets in. She and Nicky hold hands
through the window.

LILLIAN

You look awful, sweetheart. Get a
haircut. Get a lawyer.

Across the street, the man in the cutaway is dancing with his
doll. The tape machine plays, "In the Wee Small Hours of the
Morning."

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN

Nicky rejoins Toyota and Matthew. He carries the wine bottle
and his glass.

MATTHEW

Great game. Red Sox are winning.

NICKY

They're always winning. Until they
lose.

TOYOTA

Your problem is you take the easy
way out. Losing is easy.

NICKY

Winning is easy. Losing is
complicated. It's a lifetime's
work.

TOYOTA

It may be work but it's not honest
work. Faith is the real work.

MATTHEW

Clemens has a blister. Look.
They're pinch-hitting for him.

TV SCREEN

Mike Greenwell comes up to hit for Clemens. Two pitches, two strikes.

NICKY

He's a twenty-four-game winner. He pitches seven solid innings. We scratch out a one-run lead. Of course he gets a blister. Of course they put up Greenwell even though Baylor's sitting on the bench. Of course Greenwell strikes out.

Third pitch. Greenwell strikes out.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

TOYOTA

You made him strike out. You wished it on him. You want to lose. It's too hard for you to believe in something. It's hard to have faith. It's hard Nwork to trust somebody.

NICKY

(reciting)

"It looked extremely rocky for the Boston nine that day."

TOYOTA

You're afraid to risk believing. Believe in them. Believe in your self. Take a risk. It will humanize you as a person.

NICKY

I want to believe.

TOYOTA

If you believed, you wouldn't be walking around with a handgun in your belt. What does that tell me? You want to make the night come down.

INT. THE BARRYMORE

iew from the wings. Jack Haskins and Renee Simon looking on.

The stage. Peter Redmond as the Father sits at the end of the sofa. The fifteen-year-old actor who plays the Son approaches him, sitting on a footstool and leaning close.

FATHER

I always thought a night's sleep is what you get for a hard day's work. But these last weeks I lie there helpless. Hour after hour. I've come close to praying for the first

time since I was your age. Pray to
God to put Sme out.

SON

I talked to the doctor again, Pop.
He said she's not getting any
better. He wants to talk to you. I
think he means right away.

FATHER

How bad is she?

SON

This could be it.

Peter stares at the Son, a look of desolation slowly entering
his face.

In the wings, Renee looks at Jack. She is equally desolate.

INT. THE BARRYMORE - THE ORCHESTRA SEATS

Laurel in the audience leans forward, waiting for the next
line.

teven Schwimmer watches, giving nothing away.

INT. THE BARRYMORE - THE STAGE

Peter staring at the Son. The Son looking increasingly
bewildered.

Sound of coughing in the audience.

INT. THE BARRYMORE - THE WINGS

Renee takes a newspaper off a chair, offers a section to
Jack, keeps the rest for herself.

8Sound of coughing intensifies.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN

Boisterous noise from the bar crowd.

Two women exchanging high fives.

TV images.

Scoreboard: 3-3 after nine innings.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

Nicky is finishing his wine. Matthew is next to him,
standing.

TOYOTA

Say it and you'll believe it. Life
is good. Say it.

NICKY

I want to say it because my whole life may depend on these next few moments.

TOYOTA

Then say it.

NICKY

Life is good.

TOYOTA

Speak it like it's real. Matthew.

MATTHEW

Life is good.

NICKY

Life is good.

Raucous, mocking cries from the Bar Crowd.

BAR CROWD

Hen-duuu! Hen-duuu!

TOYOTA

What are people?

NICKY

I don't know.

TOYOTA

Matthew.

MATTHEW

People are dependable.

NICKY

I don't know if I can say that.

TOYOTA

People are dependable.

MATTHEW

People are dependable.

NICKY

Let's see what Henderson does.

TV SCREEN

Dave Henderson stands at the plate to lead off the Red Sox tenth.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

A real waiter arrives -- obese, slow-moving, with hair curling out of his ears -- and he brings ice cream for

Matthew, coffee for Toyota and a stinger for Nicky.

NICKY

Finally, I get a waiter who doesn't know "Macbeth".

WAITER

But I know you, don't I? I seen you on a poster in the theater district. I'll think of your name in just a --

Nicky lifts his hand to stop the man.

NICKY

You know--

BAR CROWD

Hen-duuu!

Then a moan and deep silence.

Nicky disengages from the altercation and looks at the TV screen.

TV SCREEN

Dave Henderson has hit a home run and the Red Sox now lead 4-

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

Toyota and Matthew are jubilant, and Nicky is quick to join them. It is the only lively table in the place.

MATTHEW

People are dependable.

TOYOTA

Life is good.

NICKY

Baseball is life.

TV SCREEN

The Red Sox push across another run when Barrett singles, driving home Boggs.

NICKY

Enjoy your ice cream, kid. When you're an old man it'll come back to you. The same deep sweet soft toothy taste. And you'll remember where you were and what you saw.

Scoreboard shows: Red Sox 5, Mets 3, going into the last of the tenth.

INT. THE BARRYMORE

he theater is nearly emptied out. A few people still heading toward the exits. Laurel Rogan remains seated, wearing her headset, listening to the ball game. She is concentrating deeply, fists clenched.

Only one other person is still seated, three rows back. It is Steven and he is looking intently at Laurel.

The house lights dim.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN

Toyota, Matthew and Nicky are huddled closely, watching the screen. Matthew is seated now and Nicky leans over him from behind, framing the boy's head in his hands so that Matthew's attention will be directed unswervingly to the action on the screen.

The bar crowd is somber.

Nicky drops his mob accent.

NICKY

This is something no one has been privileged to see in almost seventy years. Very few people now alive can say that they have seen what you are about to see, Matthew. The Red Sox win a World Series. This is deeply, intensely personal. All the mistakes I've made, all the envy, fear and violence that's encased in this little envelope we call a person -- all washed away in the next few minutes. And your grandmother knows why.

TOYOTA

Because God loves a winner.

NICKY

He used to love losers. But the laws of physics changed.

TV SCREEN

Backman flies out to Jim Rice. One out.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

NICKY

Backman flies to Rice. It's like a beautiful song lyric.

TV SCREEN

Hernandez flied out to Henderson.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

NICKY

All the times I died when the Red Sox lost an important game they should have won. All the awful things I said to my mother and father. To Tmy wife and daughter.

TOYOTA

Washed away.

NICKY

Because life is good.

TOYOTA

Because faith is rewarded.

INT. RED SOX LOCKER ROOM

Attendants putting plastic in front of the lockers to prevent champagne damage. Camera crew setting up. Men wheeling the twenty cases of champagne into the clubhouse. A man peeling foil from the tops of the bottles.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

NICKY

All the failures, all the fatalism.

MATTHEW

Washed away.

NICKY

One more out.

TV SCREEN

Carter singles to left.

The bar crowd remains silent.

NICKY (V.O.)

One more out. One more out.

Mitchell singles to center.

Slight stirring among the bar patrons. A few people, about to exit, return to the bar.

TOYOTA (O.S.)

It's all right, Frankie. Just a little touch of suspense. Life is good.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

Baseball is life.

NICKY (O.S.)

One more little out. A nubber. A
pop-up. All year long, thousands of
outs. We want one more little out.

Knight singles to right center. Carter scores and Mitchell
goes to third. The score is 5-4.

The whole tavern is rocking.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

TOYOTA

Don't worry. It's a test.

NICKY

It's a test all right. They're
bringing in Stanley.

TV SCREEN

Bob Stanley trots in from the bullpen.

NICKY (O.S.)

It's Stanley. It's the Steamer.
Fate has spoken to this man in the
depths of the night.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

What did it say?

NICKY (O.S.)

A thousand things.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

MATTHEW

You're hurting my head.

Nicky releases his grip on Matthew's head.

The bar crowd begins to chant.

BAR VOICES

Mookie, Mookie, Mookie, Mookie!

TV SCREEN

Mookie Wilson stands in against Bob Stanley.

MATTHEW (O.S.)

We're still winning. That's what
counts.

First pitch to Wilson -- he swings and misses.

Silence from the bar crowd, cheers from Nicky's table.

Second pitch to Wilson -- he fouls it off. No balls, two
strikes.

Sound begins to fade. Wilson fouls off a pitch. Wilson takes a ball, outside. Wilson fouls off another pitch.

Absolute, unnatural silence.

Stanley prepares to throw. The silence suddenly breaks and for the first time we hear the TV Announcers clearly.

ANNOUNCER 1
The Sox are one pitch away.

ANNOUNCER 2
One pitch away.

ANNOUNCER 1
Stanley's getting ready.

ANNOUNCER 2
This could be it.

ANNOUNCER 1
This could be it.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

Nicky recognizing the line from his play.

NICKY
This could be it!

MATTHEW
This could be it!

TOYOTA
This could be it!

NICKY
This could be it!

Nicky is charged with excitement, hearing the line as a favorable sign, a positive connection between the play and the game.

TV SCREEN

Stanley winds up and throws. It's a wild pitch. Mitchell comes in from third with the tying run.

The bar crowd erupts in cheers.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

Shock and dread.

MATTHEW
It's all right. It's a tie game. We can still win it next inning.

Nicky drinks his stinger.

BAR CROWD

Mookie, Mookie, Mookie, Mookie!

TOYOTA

This is the time. Trust in people.
Believe in life. Faith is hard
work. Don't give in. Don't give up.

MATTHEW

Life is true.

NICKY

Life is real.

TOYOTA

Trust your team.

TV SCREEN

Stanley delivers to Wilson. Sound fades away. Action is in super slow motion.

Wilson swings and hits a bouncing ball toward first base. Stanley moves off the mound to cover first. Wilson drops his bat and races down the line. Bill Buckner, the first baseman, ranges to his left to field the ball.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE TABLE

Nicky watches as if in a trance. Complete silence around him. He is separate from everybody else, the only clearly defined figure in a group of shadowy and indistinct people.

TV SCREEN

Nicky's viewpoint. An image of Bill Buckner in silvery light expanding out of the TV screen to fill the larger environment. Moving soundlessly in slow motion, Buckner fields the bouncing ball and heads toward the bag. He beats Wilson to the base by an eyelash and the inning ends with the teams tied at 5-5.

Frozen moment: Buckner holding his glove hand aloft, the ball securely gripped. In the drama of the moment, Buckner seems to be crying out a word or name, but his face is twisted with tension and exertion and we can't make out what he is saying.

INT. THE BARRYMORE

Laurel Rogan, seen from behind, is somewhat slumped in her seat. She turns off the radio, removes the headset and rises. She moves along the row toward the aisle.

She appears to be the only person in the theater.

She moves trudgingly up the aisle toward the exit. At the head of the aisle she is startled by a figure standing in

dimness.

It is Steven Schwimmer.

They look at each other. Sound of the cleaning crew in the lobby and then a door opening at the rear of the orchestra. Light from a flashlight plays across the seats and walls. The beam hits Laurel first and then Steven.

The beam holds on Steven. What Laurel sees is a strikingly handsome young man, dramatically lighted . He takes off his dark glasses, so she can see his eyes.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - MEN'S ROOM

Cramped space. Nicky at the washbasin, disheveled but happy, washing his face.

One man at the urinal. SECOND MAN behind him, waiting his turn.

Nicky drying his face with a paper towel.

NICKY

Great game.

FIRST MAN

Unbelievable.

NICKY

Classic.

SECOND MAN

Scintillating.

FIRST MAN

I still don't believe it.

NICKY

Have to hurry back.

SECOND MAN

Hurry back. Hurry back to what?

NICKY

Eleventh inning. What else?

FIRST MAN

(zipping up)

I think you're a little confused.
Nothing personal friend.

NICKY

What are you talking about?

FIRST MAN

What are we talking about?

NICKY

Yes. What are you implying?

The second man approaches the urinal.

SECOND MAN
Game six is history, pal.

NICKY
You're not making sense.

FIRST MAN
We're not making sense.

SECOND MAN
Did you see Mookie hit the ball?

NICKY
Of course I saw it.

FIRST MAN
Did you see the winning run score?

NICKY
You're not making sense. Make sense.

Nicky throws his paper towel at the men. No one moves. They are trying to interpret this action.

NICKY
You're implying I missed something.
What did I Fmiss?

FIRST MAN
You missed the boat, Popeye the
Sailorman.

Nicky charges the men. He and the First Man wrestle each other into the stall.

SECOND MAN
Hold him till I zip up, Tommy.

Nicky and the First Man are grappling in the stall. Second Man hurriedly washes his hands at the basin.

NICKY
Baseball is life. Life is good.

All three men in the stall, wrestling. Nicky has one foot in the bowl as someone's elbow strikes the handles and the toilet flushes.

INT. MANION'S OLD TIMER TAVERN - THE BAR AREA - A LITTLE 103

LATER

The crowd is slowly breaking up. A few people still clustered near the TV sets, which are showing replays.

Nicky is standing alone near a small set at the back on the room. His clothing torn and stained. One shoe and pants leg dripping wet. A bruise on his forehead.

He is watching a replay.

TV SCREEN

Wilson hits the ball. It bounces twice, then goes under Buckner's glove. Knight scores from the third with the winning run. A 6-5 victory for the Mets.

The main light in the tavern goes out. The TV sets keep replaying Buckner's error. Regular speed, slow motion, color, black and white.

Nicky stands in the darkness, brooding.

EXT. LOFT BUILDING

The condemned building where Steven Schwimmer lives. The street is deserted.

INT. STEVEN'S LOFT

Steven and Laurel on the sofa. He is unbuttoning her blouse.

Two sources of light. A candle on the coffee table. The small TV set on the counter -- showing a newscast, with sound turned off.

LAUREL

Why won't you tell me your name?

STEVEN

It's only our first date.

Steven undoes the last button.

LAUREL

I'm willing to tell you my name.

STEVEN

Names are incredibly intimate. We barely know each other. Trust me on this.

She decides she will trust him. They kiss softly.

LAUREL

You have to tell me what you thought of the play.

STEVEN

First you tell me.

LAUREL

Brilliantly moving.

She begins to remove his jacket.

STEVEN

What else?

LAUREL

Packs an emotional wallop.

STEVEN

What else?

LAUREL

A flat-out hit.

Together they get his jacket off.

STEVEN

Are you majoring in theater
criticism.

Laurel sees the shoulder holster and gun.

LAUREL

Criminology.

They kiss passionately.

STEVEN

If you're wondering about the
firearm.

LAUREL

Yes.

STEVEN

This building is not secure.

They are all over the sofa, working on the removal of
Steven's shirt.

INT. THE ENTRANCEWAY

Nicky makes his way past the debris. The front door is gone,
the inner door smashed and battered -- door knobs gone and
locking mechanism ripped out.

He starts up the stairs past a dead or sleeping body.

INT. THE LOFT

On the sofa, Laurel is straddling Steven, whose shirt is
almost completely off, exposing his bulletproof vest. Laurel
is blouseless and barefoot, with her unzipped skirt still on
and her bra dangling from one shoulder.

LAUREL

I have this thing where I have to
know a person is being honest with

me before, you know, I can feel completely free to be myself.

STEVEN

We're strangers in the night. The last thing we want is honesty.

LAUREL

What do we want?

STEVEN

Mystery. Deception.

LAUREL

Deception isn't something I personally consider sexy.

STEVEN

What's sexy?

LAUREL

Knowing who a person is. Down deep.

STEVEN

Even if the truth about a person is sad or depressing or shocking?

LAUREL

You won't even tell me your name. What's shocking about a name?

Steven maneuvers himself into a sitting position so that he and Laurel face each other at equal height and at close quarters.

STEVEN

Even if the truth requires a certain adjustment?

Steven begins removing the cosmetic putty around his naturally shallow chin. He uses Laurel's hair clip to scrape his jaw clean. Then he peels off his fake mustache. And borrows Laurel's dangling bra cup to wipe the bronzing agent off his face.

INT. THE LANDING

Nicky stands with his back to Steven's door. His gun is out. He holds it up near his face, muzzle pointed up.

He looks at the gun as if it had feelings and personality, and he speaks to it as to a sympathetic friend.

NICKY

I used to go to the movies all the time
I saw a hundred situations like
this. A man and a gun -- and a
locked door. Lee Marvin or Steve
McQueen. And I used to say to

Lillian because we went to a hundred movies that we saw together or that I saw because she had seen them, and I'd say, 'Watch him kick in the door with one kick,' And it might be Steve McQueen or Jeff Chandler, holding the gun up like this, and he would turn and kick the door and it would fly open at once, and I would say to Lillian, 'How completely phony. Whoever made this movie has no idea how hard it is to kick in an actual door in real life.' I still love Lillian. But it's not easy to kick in a door. I knew they would lose and they lost, so what are we so upset about? They lost tonight, they'll lose tomorrow. It's written on the wind.

INT. THE LOFT

Laurel is on her feet, backing away slightly. Steven removed his shoes and stands in his stocking feet, noticeably shorter than he'd been earlier.

He begins to unstrap the bulletproof vest, causing Laurel to retreat further.

INT. THE LANDING

NICKY

These wives named Lillian. I used to say to her, 'You don't kick a door once or twice and expect it to open. It's only in the movies a man can kick in a door with such amazing ease. Because a real door requires a tremendous and prolonged pounding before it finally gives way.' He's a great player...how could that ball go through his legs?

Nicky turns, steps back and kicks the door. It opens at once.

INT. THE LOFT

Steven and Laurel are briefly immobilized by shock as the door comes flying open.

Nicky moves toward the candle-lit couple.

Laurel realizes who he is and stands by the sofa. She zips her skirt.

Nicky is trying to understand what he sees, then he gets it.

NICKY
(quiet)
Laurel.

Nicky holds his gun hand aloft, repeating the image of Bill Buckner with the baseball in his glove -- Nicky's hallucination.

Then Nicky issues a cry, a sound from the time before humans acquired language. It is the audible anguish of his life, from the fetus onward.

We hear what he is saying in overlapping echoes and we realize he is crying out a name. We recognize the look on his face and the formation of syllables on his lips as elements we'd seen earlier -- on Buckner's face when he shouted something as he made N the "third out" of the tenth inning.

NICKY
Ste-vennnn Schwim-merrrr!

Laurel reacts with horror to the revelation of Steven's identity. She rearranges her bra.

Nicky stumbles, drops his gun. It goes off.

Steven flees toward the shadows at the back of the loft, his hand moving toward the gun in his shoulder holster.

Nicky picks up his gun and begins to stalk him.

Steven fires twice striking a nearby lamp. The room is dark now. Lit only by the blue glow of the TV.

The TV sports roundup, which has been showing football highlights, has switched to baseball -- highlights of the Red Sox-Mets.

Nicky reaches Laurel.

NICKY
(crying out)
This is my daughterrrrr!

Steven is wide-eyed at the news.

LAUREL
I don't think he knew, Daddy.

Nicky sees the photo of Steven and his cat. He shoots twice, blows it away.

LAUREL
Daddy, I'm sorry. But he was so beautiful. I trusted him. When I saw what he really looks like --

A voice from shadows:

STEVEN

(OS)

Am I really so deeply repugnant?

LAUREL

Yes.

NICKY

Go home, Laurel. Tell your mother I will be late.

Nicky walks toward Steven's voice, toward the shadows.

NICKY

You're going to die. You're a dead man. You're dead.

He notices Laurel following behind him.

NICKY

Look. I'm sorry you keep running into dishonest men. But you're only eighteen. We can still turn it around.

LAUREL

Except I won't have a father anymore.

NICKY

I'll see you all the time. I'll get a place right nearby. One room. No distractions. We'll talk.

He shouts into the darkness.

NICKY

YOU'RE DEAD!

Laurel puts her hand on his shoulder.

LAUREL

What will we talk about?

NICKY

Everything.

Nicky sees one of the New York Magazine ads, Steven Schwimmer's face mounted on the cardboard. He fires three times, wiping out Schwimmer's eyes.

LAUREL

Will I believe you when you tell me something?

NICKY

There's nothing left for me to lie about.

Nicky starts into the darkness only to see Steven emerge from the shadows, his gun lowered. Oddly, he seems distracted by something on another part of the room. He is looking at the TV set on the counter.

Nicky watches him approach the kitchen area. He follows, gun raised.

Steven sits on a stool to watch TV.

Nicky approaches warily, his gun aimed at Steven's head, which is blue-lit by the TV screen.

NICKY

You're dead. I see you on a morgue slab drained of all fluids.

Laurel follows at a distance to see what they're so interested in.

Nicky puts the gun muzzle flush against Steven's temple.

NICKY

I see the outline of your body in chalk on this very floor.

LAUREL

(whispering)

Daddy, wait.

Steven is watching slow-motion footage of Bill Buckner missing the slow roller.

STEVEN

Then they lost?

NICKY

Why does it matter?

STEVEN

If they lost tonight, they'll lose tomorrow. It's all over.

NICKY

Why do you care?

STEVEN

They're my team.

NICKY

No. They're not your team. They're my team.

Nicky cocks the hammer.

STEVEN

They're my team, too. I grew up on Boyleston Street. Right by Fenway

Park. I went to fifty or sixty games a year. All by myself. I was one of those kids with scabby elbows. I called out to the players. `Look over here. Hi, I'm Steven. My parents are divorced.'

NICKY

I went to college in Boston so I could be near the Red Sox. I took summer classes and the cut them to go to the game. My wife is from Boston. Lillian Ziegler?

STEVEN

The Red Sox were my world. I surrendered my existence to a team that couldn't win the big one.

NICKY

If you're such a devoted fan, why were you at the play tonight instead of the game? Answer carefully. This is important. You could have gone to the theater last night. There was no game last night.

STEVEN

Because I can't bear to watch. When they lose, I die inside. It's like some little person named Steve just crumples up and dies. I wait for the scores. I still die, hearing the scores, but it's over in a second. I can't survive the game pitch by pitch, inning by inning. I've done it too many times. And I can't do it anymore.

Nicky lowers the gun.

NICKY

I was six years old the day Pesky hesitated throwing home and Slaughter scored all the way from first. That's when I knew the Red Sox were my team. Pity and terror.

STEVEN

When I traveled through Asia this summer, I went to tremendous trouble and expense to rent a car with a phone so I could call up Sports Phone in New York and get the scores. I drove through the war in Afghanistan calling Sports Phone like every hour on the hour, for updates.

NICKY

What about my play?

LAUREL

Yes. And no more evasive tactics.

STEVEN

It's your best play, Nicky.

LAUREL

See, Daddy.

STEVEN

I've seen it twice. I went back tonight to be sure. It's a brave and honest piece of work.

LAUREL

What else?

STEVEN

An artistry and sensitivity you've never shown before.

NICKY

And you're not saying that because of the gun in my hand?

STEVEN

You're out of bullets.

Nicky points the gun at the palm of his own left hand and pulls the trigger. A click.

LAUREL

See, Daddy.

STEVEN

And Peter Redmond helped immensely. These pauses were exquisitely timed. He made us wait and wait. He built a gorgeous tension and suspense.

NICKY

We worked very hard on the pauses.

Nicky places it on the counter.

STEVEN

I called Sports Phone from Lhasa, Tibet. Freezing in my little rented Fiat. Sheep on a hillside. Rocky debris dating back millions and millions of years, from the time the Himalayas thrust up when the plates of India and Asia collided. Red Sox 3, White Sox 2. A moment in

the history of the world.

Nicky takes Steven's head and moves it tenderly against his chest. When Nicky releases the head, he has Steven's toupee in his hand. He looks at it briefly, then hands it to Laurel.

EXT. 48TH STREET NEAR ELEVENTH AVENUE

A yellow taxi comes speeding past, moving eastward on 48th Street. We see it from various perspectives and elevations. It is a large checkered cab, the only thing moving in the night. Steam comes billowing from funnel vents. The taxi catches every light just before it turns red.

INT. TAXI

Nicky is driving, his face showing intense satisfaction. Laurel sits next to him.

Driver's name plate ---

MEMLUK
SULEYMAN

The driver sits in the middle of the rear seat, looking somewhat nervous.

LAUREL
Faster, Daddy.

EXT. 48TH STREET

The taxi crosses Park Avenue, speeding past the bronze statue of a man hailing a cab.

It approaches First Avenue, where a road divider bisects the thoroughfare. Nicky swings into a sharp turns, barely averting contact with the divider, and stops abruptly.

Three doors open. On the empty street, Nicky hands the driver a wad of bills. Then he and Laurel step over the divider. He puts his arm around her shoulders and they cross the avenue to the glass tower where they live.

The sun begins to climb out of the East River.

THE END