

"TRUE BELIEVER"

Screenplay by

Wesley Strick

SHOOTING DRAFT

EXT. OSSINING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - EARLY MORNING

Mist shrouds the prison.

C.U. - EYES

Closed. Then the lids fly wide open.

INT. CELL

An ASIAN MAN sits up on his cot, coming out of sleep with a gasp. SHU KAI KIM is in his late 20s. With a muscled torso and shaved head meant to inspire fear. And to hide it.

INT. CELLBLOCK - LATER

The electrified doors slide OPEN. Shu steps out of his cell. ORTEGA – a rugged young Chicano – steps out of a nearby cell. The two cons trade small nods.

INT. CORRIDOR

The CONS walk in single file. Ortega is behind Shu. Ortega speaks softly, with barely perceptible lip movement.

ORTEGA

Fear will kill you.

Shu's replies are like a ventriloquist's, as well. The two men are running through some sort of arcane drill.

SHU

I'm not afraid.

ORTEGA

You know I'd stand in for you... But then, believing you are weak, they'd come for you anyway.

SHU

No. I want this.

ORTEGA

Good. Right after chapel... it's going down in the yard.

Now Shu and Ortega file into:

INT. PRISON CHAPEL - MORNING

On the dais, the MINISTER leads a small CONVICT CHOIR.

REVERSE - THE CONGREGATION

The cons have segregated themselves into sullen groups of black, white, and brown.

CLOSE - FOUR CONS

At the rear. SHU is flanked by TWO stringy CHICANOS. Ortega sits behind Shu. All four stare ahead with an intense blankness.

ANGLE - FROM THE SIDE

Now we see what's really happening: Shu grips two sharpened spoons. The Chicanos wrap duct tape around Shu's fists – so that even if he wanted to, he couldn't let go of the knives.

ANGLE - A WHITE CON

In front. DUANE LINDEMAN is burly, with long blond locks, his arms decorated with SWASTIKAS. Tattooed on one cheek are three black teardrops. Lindeman is surrounded by OTHERS like him. All SINGING a hymn to the Lord Jesus.

THROUGH THE CHAPEL DOORS

A disturbance out in the hall: we hear THUMPS, loud CURSING.

DUANE LINDEMAN

and FRIENDS just keep on singing.

WIDE

The rest of the Congregation turns around, to see what's going on. The TWO CORRECTIONS OFFICERS at the rear of the Chapel venture to the door and peer out, truncheons drawn.

TWO WHITE INMATES spring out of opposing back row aisle seats and SLAM SHUT the Chapel doors on the C.O.s – who immediately start POUNDING on the doors with their STICKS.

ONSTAGE - A hulking WHITE member of the CHOIR discreetly moves to block the fire exit offstage.

SHU AND ORTEGA

turn back around to face what appears at first glance to be a grotesque apparition:

DUANE LINDEMAN

seems to be flying from the front of the chapel toward them, blond hair flowing, arms waving, a warlock...

In fact, he's racing from the top of one pew-back to the next – and his HANDS are duct-taped, too, around not sharpened spoons, but long, serrated blades.

ORTEGA

Motherfuckers! Not in here!

A SIREN WAILS as Lindeman leaps at Shu – who executes a perfectly timed karate throw, sending Lindeman over his shoulder to land sprawling in the aisle.

Lindeman's tattooed ACCOMPLICES move to help. Ortega holds them off. Before Lindeman can right himself, Shu pins the blond Goliath. Brings a fist to Lindeman's neck, sharpened spoon pressed against the neo-Nazi's jugular.

Outraged, the MINISTER claws his way through the crowd of rubbernecking cons.

Shu is breathing too hard to demand that Lindeman concede. But his message is clear. Now, in gasps:

LINDEMAN

Kill... me.

Instead, Shu lifts the sharpened spoon away from Lindeman's neck. Carefully climbs off, steps back.

Lindeman lies there defeated. Then looses a startling banshee SCREAM and springs, blades flashing, at Shu.

They're like two snarling cats. Wrestling so furiously, we see only a blur of flesh, glint of metal. Splash of blood.

A RING of INMATES forms around the combatants. Some CHEER, others SHOUT for the fight to stop. None dare interfere.

Now the BACK DOORS virtually fly off their hinges as a HALF-DOZEN C.O.s in RIOT GEAR charge the Chapel.

It takes all six to drag the bloody cons apart. Shu immediately goes limp; Duane Lindeman is slack, twitching.

Horrified, the Minister backs off, vestments soaked in gore.

CUT TO:

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - MORNING

A CAB merges onto the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway.

AERIAL SHOT - MANHATTAN ISLAND

We PAN to the Brooklyn Bridge and PICK UP the CAB as it hits Mannattan.

INT. CAB

In the back seat, face pressed to the glass, is ROGER BARON. A 25-year-old whose persona straddles two worlds: In his Brooks Brothers suit he'd be welcome in any boardroom. With his Buddy Holly glasses and conceptually cropped hair, he's someone you'd want in your band. Roger checks his watch.

ROGER

Could I give you some extra money,
have you drop me at the Courthouse
and bring my luggage to the hotel?

The CABBIE turns around, at a red light. No creepier than
the average New York Cabbie. He is smiling.

CABBIE

No problem.

Roger smiles back. Big problem.

EXT. 100 CENTRE STREET

Manhattan's fortress-like Criminal Courts Building. Roger
climbs out of the cab, lugging a suitcase, a briefcase, a
duffel bag and a garment bag.

INT. COURTHOUSE CORRIDOR

To a COURT OFFICER:

ROGER

I'm looking for the court where Edward
T. Dowd is defending a Mr. Nevins.

The Court Officer consults the docket sheet.

ROGER

That's the Edward Dowd.

The Court Officer blinks at Roger.

COURT OFFICER

Part 73, Room 1113.

Then, deadpan:

COURT OFFICER

That's the Room 1113.

INT. COURTROOM

An Assistant D.A. stands before the JURY, in mid-summation.

D.A.

Edward Dowd is an inventive lawyer.
I'm sure he'd like you to believe
that the pound of pure cocaine found
in his client's home was intended
for personal, recreational use.

Several JURORS stifle snickers.

D.A.

He may claim that the many pounds of
baby laxative were intended to help
Mr. Nevins stay regular.

More muted SOUNDS of amusement, from the gallery, as Roger ENTERS. He quietly deposits his luggage in the empty back row, then moves to the front row, behind the defense table. Seated there is a slick, natty DEFENSE ATTORNEY. Next to him is a wired and weird-looking DEFENDANT in a threadbare suit, the cut decades out of date.

D.A.

What will Mr. Dowd say the defendant
weighed on his laboratory scales?
Oh, he'll think of something... But
bear in mind that you jurors control
the scales that really count – the
scales of justice. Only you can ensure
that the defendant – a man who sells
dangerous drugs to teenagers, for
profit...

ANGLE - THE DEFENDANT

winces. He's in his mid-40s, his face framed by a MANE of HAIR that hangs to his shoulders. His vintage suit accented by an embarrassingly wide and loud floral-print tie.

D.A. (O.S.)

...will pay a penalty. Be wise, be
fair, and have courage. Thank you.

As she crosses to the Prosecution Table:

JUDGE BAUM

Thank you, Ms. Jessum. Mr. Sweeney,
may I have a word with you?

As Mr. Sweeney – the Court Officer – confers with the Judge,
Roger leans forward. Whispers to the Defense Attorney:

ROGER

Roger Baron. Sorry I'm late.

The Defense Attorney looks mildly baffled. Regardless, Roger
extends a hand.

ROGER

This is an honor. And a thrill.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Really?

But what the hell: he shakes with Roger.

Now the DEFENDANT turns, to see what's going on. Trying to
breathe as much empathy as he can into the one syllable:

ROGER

Hi.

The Defendant has fixed Roger with the sort of soul-piercing
stare it takes many acid trips to perfect. So, delicately:

ROGER

What're you, um, accused of?

DEFENDANT

All sorts of things. How 'bout you?

ROGER

Me? N-no, I'm a lawyer, I'm here to
work with Mr. Dowd...

Nodding at the Defense Attorney. We HEAR a POUNDING gavel.

JUDGE BAUM

Mr. Dowd, would you care to make

your closing argument?

Roger pats the Defendant's shoulder. Reassures:

ROGER
You're in good hands.

The Defendant lifts his eyebrows, as though to say "Is that so?" Turns back around. And, for some reason, he rises.

DEFENDANT
I would, your Honor.

ROGER

Confused, at first – then mortified: omigod, that's Dowd!

EDWARD C. DOWD

takes three long, crooked strides over to the Jury Box, hands clasped behind his back, hair streaming.

EDDIE
Brian Nevins' pound of pure cocaine
was quite clearly intended for sale.

The JURORS look surprised. So does the D.A. So does BRIAN NEVINS.

EDDIE
The baby laxative – dealers use it
to dilute their coke before selling
it. They can – quadruple their
profits...

NEVINS throws a jittery glance at the jury.

EDDIE
...and of course you can't sell
cocaine without a laboratory scale.

Eddie strikes a tone of cosmic lamentation.

EDDIE
Cocaine is evil. Selling cocaine is

evil.

Nevins checks his mental Rolodex for a great appeals lawyer.

EDDIE

Pity this foolish merchant. Dislike him if you must. But despise the tactics the police employed to snare Brian Nevins... Don't lose sight of what's really on trial here – our basic personal freedoms, our quality of life...

"Freedoms" and "life" are rendered as startling SHOUTS that make the Jurors sit up straight.

EDDIE

Sublime concepts, such as "the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures..."

Eddie's delivery suggests an unholy but hard-to-dismiss hybrid of rabbi and diva.

EDDIE

For when we condone the bugging of our citizens' bedrooms, when we allow the police to enter our citizens' homes with specious warrants, when we invade our citizens' privacy in a frenzied quest for a wicked white powder, aren't we capitulating to the evil, aren't we surrendering to the drug? Aren't we saying cocaine is more potent than our Constitution?

EXT. COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON - LATER

Roger maintains a discreet distance behind Eddie and Nevins as lawyer and client stroll down the steps.

NEVINS

Wow, that speech... It was beautiful.

Amazing horseshit.

EDDIE
(tight smile)
Amazing client.

Nevins isn't sure how to respond. So he gives Eddie a quick, vigorous, almost hostile hug.

NEVINS
Eddie Dowd... Everybody should own
one.

OMIT

Nevins spins away, hops into his girlfriend's double-parked Porsche. As the happy couple blasts off down the block, Roger draws even with Eddie.

OMIT

ROGER
About the mix-up back there... I,
ah, never saw your photo, I just
read every civil liberties brief you
filed in the '60s...

Eddie distractedly nods. Then rotely sticks out his hand.

EDDIE
Hey, it was nice meeting ya. Gotta
get back to the office.

It takes Roger a beat to realize the awful truth.

ROGER
Roger Baron, Oberlin undergrad,
Michigan Law? None of this rings a
bell?

Exactly. Amused, now, by the absurd series of missteps:

ROGER
You hired me? To clerk for you? My
letter...? Top 5 percentile, Law

Review, salary is no object...?

This last detail apparently jogs Eddie's memory.

EDDIE
That's right.

They start trudging to the subway station. Roger awkwardly lugs his suitcase, garment bag, duffel bag and briefcase.

EDDIE
Here, lemme help you.

He grabs the briefcase.

EXT. SHERIDAN SQUARE - LATER

Several streets converge here; so do gays, yuppies, and diehard bohemians. As Eddie and Roger emerge from the IRT station, and cross 7th Avenue:

ROGER
...read your Chase Manhattan bombing case summation in the '71 Leftist Law anthology...

Eddie lives and works over a landmark cigar store and an eyesore of an all-night deli. As he unlocks the downstairs door, Roger takes in the seedily picturesque Square.

ROGER
So this is Greenwich Village?

Eddie smiles. Somewhere between sarcastic and self-effacing:

EDDIE
Yes Roger. You've arrived.

He starts up the stairs. Roger follows.

INT. LAW OFFICE

Balding rugs, macrame hanging things, birdcages, Salvation Army couches. TWO leather-clad SCARECROWS pace; a teenage GIRL with blue hair squats on the floor, comforting her

SQUALLING INFANT. Then there's the slick young COUPLE in Ralph Lauren Polo ensembles, here with a furtive STRAIGHT-ARROW who scans the Wall Street Journal.

A crew-cutted secretary (BILLY) types with one hand, grabs the RINGING PHONE with the other. To judge by her typing and telephone skills, she was hired for her capacity to manage this menagerie.

Roger has struggled up the stairs, behind Eddie. Though he quickly notes the office's squalor and questionable clientele, what catches his eye is the trio of cracked and yellowing PHOTOGRAPHS tacked on a wall in the foyer.

Eddie in his late-'60s glory days: On a dais, igniting an anti-war rally. Hugging a pair of Black Panthers outside a courtroom, his face suffused with joy. In a swarm of student activists outside a Federal courthouse, held on the shoulders of the crowd like a conquering hero.

As his gaze lingers on the photographs:

ROGER

...and re-read that summation til I
knew it verbatim. You were my age
when you defended that case.

Eddie edgily pushes Roger past the photos.

EDDIE

I was never your age.

The SCARECROWS clamor for Eddie, e.g., "You gotta call my parole officer!" and "Did we get the continuance?" Eddie ignores. Addresses his secretary.

EDDIE

Billy – this here's Roger, the new
assistant.

Eddie wheels away, answers the RINGING PHONE (grunting a perfunctory promise into it), then gestures for Straight-Arrow and Slick Couple to come into his inner office. Roger starts to follow, but Eddie shuts his inner office door behind him.

BILLY

You want to be an "assistant" or an "associate"?

Roger turns to see Billy tugging on her denim jacket.

BILLY

Some of them like "assistant," some like "associate". Up to you.

ROGER

– How many others are there?

As Billy, wearing a slight smirk, bustles out the door:

BILLY

You're the current one.

Roger wistfully watches her go. OS, he HEARS:

MAN'S VOICE

You Eddie's new partner?

SCARECROW 1 is standing a tad too close for comfort. Still, Roger is grateful for the attempt at friendliness.

ROGER

Not exactly. Well, kind of.

Roger flinches, lets out an involuntary YELP as Scarecrow grabs his lapels, shakes him.

SCARECROW

You gotta call my parole officer!

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE CORRIDOR - DAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

A spruce ASSISTANT D.A. (GLENN FULTON) jauntily exits a courtroom. Followed by a grim-faced Eddie, with Roger and CLYDE GRUNER, a sullen, street-hardened PUNK.

EDDIE

(to his client)
Clyde, you wait here.
(to the D.A.)
Glenn, got a minute?

FULTON

I had a minute before the Mapp hearing –
but I couldn't get you on the phone,
Eddie...

EDDIE

Yeah, well I had reasonable cause to
believe the judge might've heard of
the Fourth Amendment.

We TRACK with Fulton, Eddie and Roger as they thread through
the THRONG of milling lawyers, clients, relations and cops.

FULTON

Hey – Gruner was caught with three
pounds of methedrine. The legality
of the search and seizure was the
only issue. The Judge refused to
exclude the evidence. No deal.

He turns a corner. So does Eddie.

EDDIE

No it's not the only issue. There's
another issue, for the jury. What
about entrapment?

FULTON

What about entrapment?

Fulton veers into the Men's Room. Eddie follows.

INT. MEN'S ROOM

Roger enters, behind Eddie.

EDDIE

Glenn, the government sent an
undercover cop to dangle the lure of
fantastic profits before Clyde

Gruner's eyes. Anyone so sorely
tempted might succumb!

Roger lingers at the sink as Eddie follows Fulton to the
urinals.

EDDIE

We don't prosecute people because in
the abstract they might be weak.
Judge Brandeis said it best:
Entrapment is a "dirty business!"

FULTON

Can't I take a simple piss without –

Eddie's voice trembles with outrage and inspiration.

EDDIE

Don't you see? Planting the idea of
being a criminal is just one step
away from planting the evidence!

Fulton flushes. Grudgingly:

FULTON

Haven't heard that one before, Ed.
(zips up, sighs)
But I guess I'll be hearing it again.

EDDIE

Not necessarily...

Roger backs out of the bathroom.

INT. CORRIDOR

Clyde is standing out here. Roger has nothing to say to Clyde.
He goes to the water fountain for a very long sip.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

At this hour, the office is empty. As EDDIE and ROGER enter:

BILLY

Nevins stopped by. It's on your desk.

As he lopes toward his inner office:

EDDIE

We pleaded out Clyde Gruner to five years' probation.

BILLY

Score another point for truth and justice.

Eddie stops, shoots Billy a "fuck you too" look. Then turns to Roger and staunchly reaffirms:

EDDIE

The last struggle for constitutional rights is being waged over drugs...

INT. INNER OFFICE

Atop his desk is a package wrapped in newspaper. Eddie tears it open, revealing small bills bundled with rubber bands. As he counts the cash:

EDDIE

And we're in the ring, Roger, doing battle with Big Brother.

Roger turns away from the drug money, embarrassed and ashamed.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTER OFFICE - NIGHT - LATER

Now Billy is gone as well. ROGER sits in his cramped anteroom of an office, mechanically making notes. OS, there's a KNOCK.

ROGER

'S' open.

He doesn't bother looking up – who cares which East Village doper or Yuppie coke dealer it is? But then he hears:

WOMAN (O.S.)
...Edward Dowd?

ANGLE - TWO ORIENTAL WOMEN

are in the outer office. One is college-age, assimilated. The other is in her early 40s, with the aspect of an immigrant. A vinyl satchel is slung over her shoulder. The younger woman has come – reluctantly, it seems – to translate for the older.

TRANSLATOR
Edward Dowd, please.

Roger gets up from his desk. Hurries into the big room.

ROGER
I'm Roger Baron – Mr. Dowd's
associate. Can I help you?

The Immigrant anxiously peers past Roger. She knows he's not Edward Dowd.

TRANSLATOR
Mrs. Kim needs a lawyer. Her son
stabbed a man to death.

In response Mrs. Kim – who evidently understands English – makes a passionate point, in a foreign tongue.

TRANSLATOR
It was self-defense. In prison.

This clarification elicits another burst from Mrs. Kim.

ROGER
(calls)
Eddie...

TRANSLATOR
(amends)
He didn't belong there in the first
place. Eight years for a murder he
didn't commit.
(adds)

I'm her neighbor's daughter.

Without turning away:

ROGER

Eddie...

Finally Eddie comes striding in from his office. Waving away a cloud of pot smoke that's followed him out. He gives the women his patented reassuring smile.

EDDIE

I'm Eddie Dowd. What's up?

Mrs. Kim starts in again, rapid-fire. The Translator spews:

TRANSLATOR

Her son didn't shoot anybody. He's the wrong guy. You meet him, you see he wouldn't stab a guy for fun.

EDDIE

He shot a man and stabbed a man?

Mrs. Kim violently shakes her head as she chatters.

TRANSLATOR

He didn't shoot anybody! Eight years in jail! The wrong guy! A good boy. From a fine home in Seoul, Korea. Shu Kai Kim.

Mrs. Kim finally quiets. The Translator takes a breath. And explains:

TRANSLATOR

That's his name. Shu Kai Kim.

Eddie nods, solemnly taking all this in. Then:

EDDIE

I'll bet he's a wonderful boy.

Roger watches Eddie, to see where he's going. Hides his disappointment when he hears:

EDDIE

But I can't help him. You see I have a specialty. Lawyers specialize, Mrs. Kim, and these days I do mostly...

He doesn't bother explaining.

EDDIE

Anyway, I couldn't even go see your son without looking at the files on his case, first.

In response Mrs. Kim swings her satchel – bulging with Shu's files – into Eddie's arms. It's like taking a medicine ball to the chest. When he catches his breath:

EDDIE

How did you find me?

TRANSLATOR

(over Mrs. Kim)

She went to all the courthouses. She talked to pot smokers, pill sellers... They all speak of you, they all say the same thing.

Eddie can't help but puff up a little.

EDDIE

What do they say?

Mrs. Kim answers in Korean. Translator hesitates. Then:

TRANSLATOR

You do cases cheap.

Roger stifles a laugh. Eddie lowers Mrs. Kim's satchel to the floor and places a hand on her shoulder.

EDDIE

Tell you what. Mr. Baron and I will review your material and get back to you as soon as possible.

Mrs. Kim intently peers at Eddie to gauge his sincerity. He boldly meets her gaze as he steers her to the door.

EDDIE

Thank you for stopping by.

Evidently convinced, Mrs. Kim makes a parting remark.

TRANSLATOR

She thanks you in advance for saving her son.

Eddie flashes one last smile, then closes the door on the women. Roger shakes his head, bemused and moved.

ROGER

"She thanks you in advance for saving her son."

He picks up the vinyl satchel, starts pulling out papers.

Eddie feels compelled to poison the moment.

EDDIE

Talk about hard-sell, huh?

He snorts, incredulous, as he crosses the room.

EDDIE

Show me a guy who's not somebody's son.

Roger looks up at this remark. Then sets down the satchel.

INT. EDDIE'S INNER OFFICE

Eddie has re-lit his evening joint. As he settles back to enjoy it, there's Roger in the doorway.

EDDIE

– Hit?

Rather than reach for the joint, Roger mops his brow.

ROGER

Whew. That was close... We almost defended a guy who wasn't a dealer. Who knows, might even be innocent.

Eddie chuckles, defensive. Then:

EDDIE

We have a full caseload, Rog.

ROGER

Right, I forgot... We're pledged to protect every mid-level drug dealer in the Tri-state area.

(shivers)

It's an awesome responsibility.

EDDIE

I don't venerate drug dealers, Roger. To the contrary.

ROGER

Of course.

THE OUTER OFFICE

EDDIE

...through use of informants, eavesdropping, unreasonable search and seizure...!

ROGER

Right. You're right.

EDDIE

Damn right I'm right.

Roger starts for the door. Stops. Turns.

ROGER

It's just... I leave behind friends, family, a coupla good job offers in Chicago and in three dizzying weeks I've helped acquit a coke dealer, a speed dealer –

EDDIE
I specialize, Roger...

ROGER
– an angel dust dealer –

EDDIE
I'm not a kid anymore, I can't be
all over the map –

ROGER
– a speed manufacturer –

EDDIE
So go take your job on Wall Street.

ROGER
Don't tell me where to work. I moved
to New York to work for Edward Dowd.
But I can't believe that Edward Dowd
has nothing better to do these days
than invoke exalted legal issues to
get off guilty little –

EDDIE
Hey. You plan to be a criminal defense
attorney, know this going in:
Everybody's guilty.

This buys Roger's silence, for two beats. Then, sadly:

ROGER
You wouldn't've said that ten years
ago.

He grabs his briefcase. Starts for the door. As he swings it
open he HEARS:

EDDIE
Ten years is a long time.

ROGER
(stops, turns)
Look – I'm tired, I'll see you in

the morning, Eddie.

Eddie watches him walk out. Drops the joint and vengefully grinds it out on the floor. To the closed door:

EDDIE

Long time.

Alone, now, he surveys his shabby domain and sighs, deeply. As he exhales, Eddie seems to be trying to blow away all the pot smoke that has clouded the room and shrouded his heart.

Then he shambles across the office and through the door that leads to his living quarters. We TRACK with EDDIE past a kitchenette equipped with no labor-saving devices into:

INT. BEDROOM

Small, and beyond spartan. Single bed in one corner, plain wooden bureau opposite. The only color is provided by Eddie's festive trial ties, casually strewn. Eddie's bedroom is not unlike a cell we saw at the beginning of the movie.

Eddie stands at the window, trying to stare past the security bars into the New York night. But all he can see is his reflection.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EARLY NEXT MORNING

ROGER is roused from sleep by a persistent KNOCKING. He stumbles out of bed, staggers to the door.

ROGER

– Yeah?

EDDIE'S VOICE

(through the door)

We're late. Let's get going!

Roger opens up. Eddie looks alarmingly revved.

ROGER

Where?

EDDIE

Ossining Correctional Facility. Sing
Sing. Everybody's innocent there,
man... Just ask 'em...

EXT. ROUTE 9 - LATER

Wending north along the Hudson. ANGLE Eddie's rusty old Buick
Riviera as it wheezes its way upstate. OVER:

ROGER'S VOICE

At 16 Shu Kai Kim emigrated with his
family from Korea to New York...

INT. RIVIERA - MOVING

Roger extracts the pertinent info from the newspaper clippings
in Mrs. Kim's files.

ROGER

Kim got busted at 19 for burglary.
At 20 he was convicted in the shooting
death of a young Chinese gang lord...
The prosecution claimed Kim did it
to get into "the Joe Boys"?

EDDIE

Chinatown street gang.

ROGER

Kim denied it. But he admitted the
gun was his, and he got life. Seems
to have been an okay prisoner for
eight years, til the... incident
with Duane Lindeman.

EDDIE

– The Nazi he knifed?

But Roger is staring ahead now, speechless.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

The turrets and watchtowers of the Ossining Correctional

Facility loom... all too real...

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON

TWO CORRECTIONS OFFICERS lead the lawyers through a security checkpoint.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

The room is large and bare but for a long wooden TABLE, four chairs. Leaden light leaks through one high, barred window. Eddie and Roger, on one side of the table, anxiously wait. Roger jumps at the CRUNCH of a deadbolt lock, turning.

Two hefty OFFICERS enter escorting SHU, in manacles. One pulls out the chair for Shu, the other sits him down. Eddie waits for them to back out of the room and re-lock the door.

EDDIE

I'm Eddie Dowd. I'm a lawyer. This here's Roger Baron – also a lawyer.

Shu's eyes, beady and suspicious, bore into Roger.

Roger wants to smile. But he can't. He stares down at his notebook.

Now Shu peruses Eddie's long hair, peculiar suit.

SHU

My mother find you?

EDDIE

That's right.

SHU

Figures.

EDDIE

(undaunted)

Want to tell me what went down here?

SHU

(very slowly)
Racist asshole came at me.

EDDIE
Exactly what happened then?

SHU
(coolly)
I killed the motherfucker.

EDDIE
...Okay...

Roger is now furiously scribbling notes; we can almost hear him whimper.

EDDIE
The night that kid was shot to death
in Chinatown, you were... where?

Shu doesn't answer. Eddie reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls out a pack of cigarettes. Offers one to Shu. Shu wordlessly plucks the cigarette from his fingers, careful to avoid any contact. Eddie lights it.

Now Roger wills himself to look up from his notebook.

ROGER
At the trial, you said you were at
your apartment that night. Alone.

EDDIE
– Remember?

SHU
(stubbornly)
That's eight years ago. Long time.

He studies his cigarette. No – he's staring at the shackles on his wrists. Stares for one, two, three beats. Gravely:

SHU
Real long time.

Eddie's eyes flicker: He's heard that phrase, or one quite

like it, somewhere before.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRISON - LATE AFTERNOON

The lawyers head for Eddie's Riviera, in the visitor's lot.

ROGER

...So what would we claim? He stabbed
Duane Lindeman in self-defense?

EDDIE

With two knives taped to his hands?
Forget it, Rog.

Roger sighs. Shrugs.

ROGER

I feel like I've been mugged... Guy
scared the shit out of me. You made
your point, Eddie... I'm relieved
we're not taking the case.

EDDIE

We're taking the other case.

ROGER

What other case?

EDDIE

Eight years ago. The Chinatown hit.

Roger stares, baffled, as Eddie orates.

EDDIE

Some gang punk gets wasted in front
of the tourists. The mayor pressures
the cops. The cops pressure the rival
gang – the Joe Boys. The Joes give
up Shu Kai Kim – the schmuck kid
from Korea who's been pestering 'em
to get in.

ROGER

You really think that's what happened?

EDDIE

I don't know but it makes one hell
of an opening statement.

As they reach the Riviera, Eddie's in his all-the-world's-a-courtroom mode; i.e., he shouts, does semaphore.

EDDIE

We prove Shu should never have been
imprisoned in the first place, D.A.
'll back off the Lindeman charge...!

The lawyers climb in.

OMIT

ROGER

– Easy as that, huh?

EDDIE

Easy? No... We have to find some
piece of evidence that got buried,
to reopen the sucker.

ROGER

...Are you sure we want that?

Eddie shifts into gear. Pensive, now, as he steers out of
the prison parking lot:

EDDIE

He's a victim, Roger. He deserves to
see the sun again, breathe the air.
He's been in prison too goddamn long.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - LATE NIGHT - A FEW DAYS LATER

A block of warehouses in lower Manhattan, under the shadow
of the West Side Highway. Out of the drizzly darkness comes
the RIVIERA, headlights doused. The car GROANS to a halt.
Eddie and Roger climb out. Furtively glance around...

Roger follows Eddie to the fortified ENTRANCE of one of the warehouses. Eddie KNOCKS (in a pattern) on the reinforced steel door. Three sets of TUMBLERS TURN. The door opens.

Filling the doorframe is the imposing silhouette of a MAN in Nikes, chinos and windbreaker that must be standard issue for plainclothes cops. In a Darth Vader voice:

COP (TOMMY)
Okay. C'mon.

INT. WAREHOUSE

BLACK. Then Tommy flicks ON a row of OVERHEADS, lighting a long, tall aisle of gunmetal gray LOCKERS. Aisle after aisle, in shadow, to either side. Reverently, to Roger:

EDDIE
...the Exhibit Warehouse.

END OF THE AISLE - LATER

Tommy paces, checking his Timex.

Eddie and Roger squat on the asphalt, sifting through piles of paper. Each has two large boxes to process.

ROGER
Transcript... transcript...
exhibits...

He pauses to contemplate a grisly photo.

INSERT - THE PHOTO

A man's face, in 3/4 profile, with gaping entrance wound above the left eye. The man is young, Asian, very dead.

SCENE

Roger hurriedly tucks the picture away. But the next item he comes upon is:

ROGER

– The murder weapon.

He gingerly holds a sealed plastic bag sagging with the weight of a handgun.

ROGER

They found four of Shu's fingerprints on this thing.

Eddie impatiently glances over.

EDDIE

When did you start working for the goddam D.A.?

ROGER

Eddie... I don't know about this...

But Eddie has already resumed his search.

DISSOLVE TO:

An hour later. Roger holds a form, yellowed with age.

ROGER

Eddie... What's a DD-5?

EDDIE

A Complaint Follow-Up form.

ROGER

– Listen: "November 5, 1980. Cecil Stipe walked into 5th Precinct. Says he witnessed Chin shooting, saw suspect's picture in Post. Says Shu Kai Kim wrong man."

EDDIE

"Cecil Stipe"? Have we seen any affidavit with that name?

Roger looks at Eddie, slowly shakes his head. Time stops. Roger looks back down at the memo. Reads:

ROGER

"Also says he knows who killed Kennedy."

Time starts again. Roger lets the memo flutter to the floor.

EDDIE

Keep looking. Something'll turn up.

DISSOLVE TO:

EDDIE'S HANDS

Reaching for another sheaf of documents. Rifling through the pages, running his index finger down columns of text...

END OF THE AISLE - DAWN

Piles of paper everywhere. By the lawyers' haggard looks, we know something didn't turn up. Tommy surveys the mess.

TOMMY

Clean-up time.

Eddie looks up, exhausted – but scheming, still.

EDDIE

How's your brother, Tommy?

TOMMY

You kept him out of the slammer and I thank you, Dowd. But if you're not gone before the day shift shows up, I'm back to emptying parking meters.

Eddie surveys all this evidence, that they've been through twice. Looks over at Roger.

EDDIE

That DD-5.

ROGER

What, the lunatic who –

EDDIE

"Cecil Stipe." Find it.

CUT TO:

EXT. MACDOUGAL STREET - MORNING - TWO DAYS LATER

KITTY GREER strides down the West Village street. Kitty's 40, once cute, now simply sexy, and not apologetic about it.

INT. CAFFE REGGIO

The hangout that time forgot. Kitty finds the table where Eddie and Roger sip espresso. With studied detachment:

KITTY

Hi Eddie.

Eddie stands. Pulls out Kitty's chair.

EDDIE

Roger Baron, Kitty Greer.

(to Kitty)

Roger's my new associate. Top of his class at Michigan Law.

Kitty smiles at Roger.

KITTY

You read Eddie's Chase Manhattan Bombing summation in the Leftist Law anthology?

ROGER

– Eddie told you?

Eddie clears his throat. Kitty smiles some more.

KITTY

My skip-trace turned up two Cecil Stipes. One's in Butte, Montana. Other's at Riverhead Veterans Psychiatric.

ROGER

I'll take odds on Cecil Number Two.

KITTY

So what'd this guy do? Snitch off a dealer?

EDDIE

(casually)

Murder witness.

KITTY

You're doing a murder case?

EDDIE

It hasn't been that long.

Kitty disagrees. She starts counting the years, to herself, on her fingers. Before she can run out of fingers:

EDDIE

Stipe was just one of four eyewitnesses who came forward, Kitty. Y'oughta start looking for the others...

KITTY

Eddie, I'm not working on this case. You boys have fun.

She checks her watch.

KITTY

I have business back on Planet Earth.

She stands.

EDDIE

Lemme guess. Some corporate V.P.'s banging his secretary over lunch and you have to focus your camera and plug in your little tape recorder.

KITTY

Beats getting paid in twenties by slimedogs selling angel dust to high school seniors.

EDDIE

Kitty, where exactly do you place the microphone to catch the most incriminating moans?

Roger is trying to disappear behind his espresso cup.

KITTY

Just which Constitutional amendment protects our right to peddle PCP?

EDDIE

Forget it. You've blown your chance to participate in this case, Kitty.

KITTY

I'm kicking myself, Eddie... Right out of here.

She briskly exits the coffeehouse.

Eddie turns to Roger. Wearing a little grin.

EDDIE

We got her.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERHEAD VETERANS PSYCHIATRIC - DAY

A gray edifice just outside a blue-collar Long Island town. As Eddie and Roger ENTER:

EDDIE

You have to gently pressure a guy like this to test whether he'll keep it together on the stand...

INT. DAYROOM - CLOSE ON CECIL STIPE

Hollow-eyed, tousle-haired, late-30s. In pajama bottoms and an olive-drab t-shirt.

STIPE

Dr. Berger said you g-guys needed to

talk to me...?

WIDE - THE DAYROOM

Depressing in proportion to the attempts to make it cheery. Eddie and Roger sit at a round wooden table we last saw in nursery school. As he pulls out a chair, for a wary Stipe:

EDDIE

'lo, Cecil.

STIPE

See-cil.

EDDIE

See-cil. I'm Eddie Dowd, this is Roger Baron. We're lawyers.

Stipe looks at Roger. Then at Eddie. To Eddie:

STIPE

You're a Lawyer?

(beat)

I... I haven't had my meds, or m-my vital signs t-taken yet. I...

ROGER

Mr. Stipe. A young man named Jimmy Chin was shot to death eight years ago, in Chinatown. Do you remember talking to the police?

STIPE

(beat, then)

That guy they arrested – he was the wrong g-guy.

EDDIE

Cecil, we want to reopen the case, and we can't without your testimony. I want to use what you have to say so badly – but I must add, my friend, that I think you're fucking full of shit.

Roger winces: this is "gentle pressure"?

ROGER

I think what Eddie wants to say is –

STIPE

No! They g-got the wrong guy! I saw it! The killer wasn't Chinese.

EDDIE

Oh come on, Cecil.

STIPE

Hey, Chinese people have this energy field that vibrates at a particular frequency.

Eddie and Roger trade glances. Then:

ROGER

Uh, Cecil... What's all this about the Kennedy assassination?

Stipe's voice goes hollow. He should've known.

STIPE

You're from the Company.

He anxiously peers past the lawyers – as though looking for a hospital orderly, as though looking for help.

ROGER

(incredulous)
CIA?

STIPE

Telephone.

(sarcastic)

I suppose you don't know the phone company killed Kennedy because he was trying to b-break it up – and they'll never let that happen. They control everything: what you say in the mouthpiece is never exactly what comes out the other end, and –

ROGER

The phone company was broken up.

STIPE

(with muted contempt)

And you b-believe that.

EDDIE

– Cecil.

(places his hand over
Stipe's)

Are you what heroes are made of?

Stipe looks down at Eddie's hand, touching his own. Waits for a lethal bolt of electricity. But nothing happens.

STIPE

I did two tours in 'Nam...

EDDIE

Good. Now we're going to take an affidavit from you, but only concerning the facts of the Chinatown shooting. We honestly don't give a shit about the Kennedy assassination.

Stipe considers whether Eddie and Roger might be on the level.

EDDIE

Are you willing to testify that the man you saw shoot Jimmy Chin was not the man the cops arrested?

STIPE

They g-got the wrong g-guy.

EDDIE

When the D.A. hears I filed the writ, he'll send someone here, maybe claiming to be a journalist. That person will ask you lots of questions. Just be truthful, Cecil, okay? To all of us?

STIPE
I always t-tell the truth.
(sad smile)
That's why I'm here.

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT - MORNING - SIX WEEKS LATER

No jury. CECIL STIPE on the stand. Hair freshly cut, beard trimmed. In a suit no worse than Eddie's best.

Eddie speaks softly, so as not to excite the mental patient.

EDDIE
...You told the Desk Sergeant you
were certain Mr. Kim wasn't the
killer?
(Stipe nods)
You left your telephone number?

STIPE
Y-yes, sir.

EDDIE
Did the police make any attempt to
phone you, to follow up?

STIPE
No, s-sir.

EDDIE
Thank you, Mr. Stipe.

Eddie rejoins Roger at the defense table.

JUDGE
Mr. Rabin? You may cross-examine.

Assistant D.A. DEAN RABIN, 30, jumps up – alert and vigilant, as though he were the bodyguard of Justice herself.

RABIN
Mr. Stipe, for how long have you
been a patient at the Riverhead

Veterans Psychiatric Hospital?

Overlapping, Eddie leaps up, ROARS:

EDDIE

Objection, your Honor! The fact that the witness is currently a patient is immaterial!

JUDGE

Sustained.

RABIN

Alright. Mr. Stipe, how long have you resided at the Riverhead Veterans –

JUDGE

Mr. Rabin, you're out of line. The question is stricken.

But so, unfortunately, is Stipe: his whole body twitches. Now Rabin moves in for the kill.

RABIN

Mr. Stipe: you're under oath to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. Who killed President Kennedy?

EDDIE

– Objection! Irrelevant! The witness is not an expert in –

RABIN

(overlapping)

Your Honor, the question relates directly to the witness's bail-

STIPE

(overlapping; tremulous)

I'd like to answer the question.

EDDIE

Mr. Rabin has no right to –

CLOSE - STIPE

He's answering. But, given the din of the lawyers' battle, he can't be heard. Until the Judge POUNDS his gavel.

STIPE

Lee... H-Harvey... Oswald.

To mouth this hideous lie has taxed all Stipe's strength and self-control.

In mid-argument, Eddie stops shouting. He sits.

RABIN

Never mind, your Honor.

He's left sheepishly smiling at the Judge, who's wondering what the hell that was about.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON CELL BLOCK - THAT AFTERNOON

Shu is escorted along the tier by TWO C.O.s.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Enter the two C.O.s, with SHU. EDDIE and ROGER wait here.

EDDIE

Shu, the judge has ordered a retrial in the Chinatown murder case.

Shu's lips move. No sound emerges.

ROGER

If we can prove reasonable doubt on your imprisonment eight years ago, we feel sure the D.A. will reduce the charge in Lindeman's death. You may get out of here much sooner.

Now Shu is standing, breathing hard.

SHU

Do I – have to be in the courtroom?

Eddie knows that Shu isn't eager to relive the last trial.

EDDIE

The State won't want to retry an eight-year-old case... At the pre-trial conference, an offer'll be made. Odds are we'll cut some kinda deal.

Roger is searching Shu's face for a ray of hope. Instead he hears, constricted:

SHU

– I can't pay you.

ROGER

(gently)

That's okay, Shu. We're not billing.

This makes Shu even more uncomfortable. His eyes bore into Eddie's, searching for an answer.

Finally Eddie supplies it.

EDDIE

You've done enough time, Shu.

Shu holds Eddie's gaze for a beat. Then he nods. And then, without expression, he backs out of the Conference Room.

CUT TO:

CLOSE - X-RAY POSITIVE

As we contemplate a man's shattered skull we hear:

ROGER

According to the evidence, the bullet, the wound, the powder burns, Shu's gun – they're a perfect match.

INT. EDDIE'S INNER OFFICE

Eddie sits at his desk, across from Roger.

EDDIE

Hey. The cops tell the eyewitnesses, "Don't doubt your ID, we got 'em dead on the gun." Meantime they tell their ballistics expert, "Hey, it's cool – three people saw the guy fire the gun." It's a game, man. And you know what?

As Eddie continues, Roger queasily flips through a stack of forensic exhibits. We SEE x-ray positives of Jimmy Chin's skull, prints of microscopic autopsy slides...

EDDIE

In the eight years since the first trial, advances in forensic ballistics analysis will enable us to piss on the evidence.

The phone starts RINGING.

Now the door swings open – it's KITTY. As she casually strips off her overcoat:

KITTY

Of the prosecution's three original eyewitnesses, one's dead, one's moved to Montreal and won't budge...

Kitty catches Roger watching her with a look of pleasant surprise. With a little smile:

KITTY

You getting this?

ROGER

– Every word.

KITTY

(sits)

But they've still got Laura Gordon – and she was the closest, about 20 feet from the killer.

Eddie appears untroubled.

EDDIE

Gee, maybe she saw the gun.

He pulls a joint from the desk drawer and lights up.

ROGER

Do you have to do that?

EDDIE

"Have to"? No...

He takes a hit. Then turns to Kitty.

EDDIE

Start looking into the Joe Boys –
who assigned the hits in 1980, what
rank generally did the hits...

(pointedly)

Your extensive law enforcement
contacts should be of some use.

KITTY

(to Roger)

I was never politically correct enough
for Comrade Dowd.

The phone starts RINGING again. Shouting through the wall:

EDDIE

Billy...

No result. So Eddie picks up, as Kitty and Roger continue
TALKING, in b.g.

EDDIE

Yeah. Who?

Eddie grinds out his joint. Signals his colleagues to shut
up. His customary braggadocio giving way to bafflement:

EDDIE

Put him through.
(then)

Speaking.
(listens, then)
Sure. Fine. See you then.

Eddie hangs up.

EDDIE
That was Donald Reynard.

Roger has heard of Reynard. With a trace of incredulity:

ROGER
The Manhattan D.A.?

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK ATHLETIC CLUB

On Central Park South. Where Manhattan's oligarchs go to stay hungry. Several generations of WASPs stride in and out, attache cases in their left hands, racquets in their right.

EDDIE hurriedly enters this sanctum of health and wealth, too self-conscious to notice the startled WASPs noticing him.

INT. CLUB BAR

With a Rare Book Room ambience. A MAITRE D' steers an edgy Eddie past POWER BROKERS who stop brokering, briefly, to gape at this bizarre interloper. Excepting one self-absorbed MAGNATE who pontificates on the trade gap at FOUR REPORTERS.

Eddie is delivered to a table in the center of the room. Settled here, sipping a scotch, is Manhattan D.A. DONALD REYNARD: mid-40s, sharp-featured, soigne. At Reynard's elbow sits Dean Rabin. Wearing a vindictive little grin.

MAITRE D'
Mr. Reynard...?

Head bowed, Eddie awkwardly thrusts out a hand.

EDDIE
Edward T. Dowd.

REYNARD
(shaking)
Don Reynard.

He offers Eddie a seat. Indicates the human terrier at his side.

REYNARD
Of course you know Dean Rabin, one of my Assistant D.A.s. Dean generally handles nuisance cases like the... what's the man's name?

EDDIE
Shu Kai Kim.

REYNARD
You won't remember this, but in '72 I was one of several prosecutors assigned to the Black Panther-Police Shootout.
(laughs)
We had a whole team, and you walked into court by yourself and kicked our collective butt.
(beat)
So what've you been up to since then?

EDDIE
This and that.

REYNARD
My staff tells me it's been mostly drug pushers... I said that can't be the same Edward Dowd.

EDDIE
(evenly)
It's in the area of narcotics, Mr. Reynard, that the government tramples on the Fourth Amendment.

REYNARD
Let's not drag the Constitution into

this.

Rabin can contain himself no longer.

RABIN

Mr. Dowd, you used the testimony of a paranoid schizophrenic to overturn a murder conviction that had stood unchallenged for eight years. Now we don't intend to sit back and –

Reynard holds up a palm, silencing Rabin.

REYNARD

What you did was very cynical. I'm annoyed with you, Ed.

Clearly a supreme understatement.

EDDIE

I'm sorry if I've ruined your day, Mr. Reynard. But my client's had a rough eight years behind bars and –

REYNARD

Your client is guilty. Don't dick around with me.

Rabin glows. He's getting revenge, albeit vicariously.

REYNARD

Back in the Seventies I spent years putting away gangsters in a Colombian syndicate called "the Ochoa". These guys are very dangerous, Ed. When I hear that a small-time dope lawyer is conniving to spring one of these guys, I see red.

EDDIE

I'd have that checked, Mr. Reynard.

Reynard is not amused.

REYNARD

Now maybe you got this case reopened because you see yourself as a thorn in society's side, or you want to walk into any restaurant in Chinatown and get free dumplings...

EDDIE

Are you implying that my motives are less than sincere?

REYNARD

Yes, but that's not the issue. What's on your wish list, Ed? Pleading Kim out to first degree man on both homicides, with an agreed sentence of 15 to life running concurrent? Come on... What're you looking for here?

EDDIE

What am I looking for? You're the one talking deal.

REYNARD

Friday's the drop-dead date on the offer.

EDDIE

Please don't bullshit me, Mr. Reynard. You've got witness problems, you've got proof problems...

REYNARD

You're my only problem, Ed. What does it take to make you go away?

Eddie doesn't have to ponder long.

EDDIE

8-1/3 on both counts to run concurrent, and credit for time served.

Reynard pretends to do some calculations.

REYNARD

I see: He'd walk out next month.

EDDIE

That's right.

REYNARD

We reconvict, your man's looking at 25 years on two counts, served consecutively. So what I'd like to ask, Ed, is: Are you joking?

EDDIE

(rising)

I never joke about waiving a client's Sixth Amendment right to trial.

REYNARD

You're pissing me off again, Ed.

EDDIE

You know you're very tense, Mr. Reynard. Y'oughta take a week off, fly the wife and kids to Oahu.

Eddie turns. As he lopes away –

REYNARD

Don't forget: after Friday, no deal.

ANGLE - A REPORTER

at the Trade Gap table sniffs a story.

INT. CORRIDOR

Eddie waits for the elevator. And HEARS a confidential:

REPORTER

Excuse me... Len Davis.

Eddie turns.

REPORTER

Looks like you've wriggled up

Reynard's ass... What gives?

EDDIE

You're not a reporter...?

REPORTER

Daily News.

He reaches for his press card. The elevator arrives.

EDDIE

I can't talk to you.

Eddie boards. Slow enough that the Reporter has time to follow him in. The door closes.

INT. LOBBY - ON THE ELEVATOR DOOR

as it opens; Eddie and the Reporter step out. The Reporter madly scribbles notes as Eddie declaims.

EDDIE

...not saying there was a conspiracy.
Law enforcement is too disorganized
for that... No, I suspect sloth was
the culprit – lassitude... My client
made a convenient patsy...

They stride past CAMERA, Eddie just warming up, as we:

CUT TO:

INT. CAFFE REGGIO - NEXT NIGHT

At this hour, the espresso has given way to red wine. KITTY, EDDIE, ROGER and assorted West Village characters have taken over a table in the middle of the room.

ROGER

"Edward C. Dowd, retained to defend
Mr. Kim, has disclosed that a witness
will corroborate Mr. Kim's alibi"?

Roger reads from the Daily News – everyone at the table has a copy. On an inner page is a file photo of Eddie under the

headline "Stunning Revelations in 'Wrong Man' Murder Case."

EDDIE

I embellished.

KITTY

"Dowd also reports that his team of private investigators..."?

EDDIE

I embroidered.

KITTY

"...are close to naming the man they believe actually killed Jimmy Chin"?

EDDIE

I lied.

Roger gives Eddie a thin smile.

ROGER

Shoulda told the one about Shu being the bastard child of Mother Theresa.

EDDIE

(smiles back)

Saving it for the Sunday Times.

Eddie stands, stretches.

EDDIE

I'm heading home – get some sleep...

EXT. MACDOUGAL STREET - NIGHT

As Eddie starts north, a STREET DEALER calls from the shadows:

OMIT

STREET DEALER

Hey Eddie... Loose joints? Buy one, get one free.

EDDIE

I get 'em all free.

ON SHERIDAN SQUARE

Eddie crosses Seventh Avenue. Pulls out his keys, to let himself into his building. OS, hears:

VOICE

Hey, Eddie.

A MAN stands, silhouetted, at the top of the subway stairs.

MAN

Spare a quarter?

EDDIE

reaches back into his pocket. And gets RAKED across the jaw with a short length of PIPE.

HIS ASSAILANT

is a muscular PUNK in a black sleeveless t-shirt. Two black teardrops tattooed on his cheek. In a WHISPER:

PUNK

Race traitor. Gook lover.

INT. SUBWAY STAIRS

The Punk flings a stunned Eddie halfway down the stairs, to continue the beating out of plain sight. On the landing, the men bob back and forth, drunken dance partners –

– and then Eddie manages to grab the Punk's face, squeezing it with his ebbing strength, SMUDGING the TEARDROPS.

EDDIE

puzzles, for an instant, at the smeared "tattoos".

THE PUNK

senses something's awry. In his eyes, a flicker of panic.

SCENE

Then the Punk's eyes go cold again as he smashes Eddie's head against the tile. As Eddie collapses:

PUNK
Enemy of the Aryan People.

Punctuated with a kick of his combat boots. Eddie curls up to protect himself.

PUNK
Commie. Faggot. Motherfucker. Jew.

EDDIE
(gasps)
– Only half.

For this, Eddie gets another kick. Then the ultimatum, told as a "Confucious say" joke:

PUNK
Aryan Warriors say: If the Chink goes to trial, you die.

Eddie groans, his eyes roll back. FADE to BLACK. While the SCREEN stays BLACK, we HEAR:

DETECTIVE 1'S VOICE
In my humble opinion, Mr. Dowd, you opened a Pandora's box of ugly shit.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT - LATER

EDDIE, in the Detective Bullpen – ice pack pressed to his bruised jaw – leafs through a mugbook. ROGER, beside him, addresses a DETECTIVE, across the desk.

ROGER
Oh, Eddie deserved this. I guess rape victims want to get laid at gunpoint.

But Eddie could care less. Indicating the mugbook:

EDDIE
These are all the known Aryan Warriors
in New York?

IN THE BOOK

Mugshots and descriptions, four to a page. Several subjects sport the teardrop tattoos.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)
Every last delightful one.

SCENE

Eddie stops paging. Squints.

CLOSE - A MUGSHOT

of the Punk. Sure enough, no teardrops on his face. His name:
CHUCKIE ROEDER.

Eddie's HANDS enter FRAME. His fingertips still smudged with
black ink, from Roeder's cheeks.

BACK TO SCENE

Eddie studies the photo, his fingertips. Abruptly shuts the
mugbook.

EDDIE
Y'don't mind, I'll look some more
tomorrow. Starting to see double.

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS

As they emerge, Roger grips Eddie's upper arm, to steady
him. Quietly:

EDDIE
His name is Chuckie Roeder. But
something's very weird.

ROGER
– You found his mugshot?

They round the corner. In b.g. is the County Coroner's Office; official AMBULANCES are double-parked in front.

EDDIE

The tears... they weren't real.

Roger gives Eddie a questioning look.

OMIT

CUT TO:

EXT. EXPRESSWAY - LATE NIGHT

As we TIGHTEN on Eddie's wheezing RIVIERA we HEAR, OVER:

ROGER'S VOICE

I don't believe we're going to talk to a bunch of Nazis. At night.

EDDIE'S VOICE

They only think they're Nazis.

INT. RIVIERA - MOVING

Roger drives. Eddie, in the passenger seat, massages his swollen jaw. In his free hand are scribbled directions.

EDDIE

They're just frightened, fucked-up losers that prison fucked up worse.

ROGER

(tense, snaps)

I didn't ask for a closing argument.

EDDIE

There's no one else to talk to. The tattoos were phony!

ROGER

– Yeah?

EDDIE

So an upstanding member of the Aryan

Warriors wouldn't paint them on.
They take those teardrops seriously –
they're badges of courage, of honor.
Only their most vicious killer elite
get to wear them...!

ROGER

I feel much better now.

EDDIE

Hey, Clyde Gruner sold these guys a
pound of crystal meth at cost. We're
Clyde's buddies, it's cool.
(checks the directions)
Next exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROW HOUSES - LATE NIGHT

A desolate, sub-working-class-outpost on Staten Island.

Eddie KNOCKS on a door. Roger waits with trepidation. The
door is answered by:

A BOY

Towheaded, in pajamas. No more than eight years old.

EDDIE

Hi there. Is your daddy home?

INT. ARYAN WARRIOR HOUSE

The little boy GIGGLES, then leads Eddie and Roger through a
nightmare LIVING ROOM strewn with pizza cartons, shotgun
shells and dogshit. A MAC-10 submachine gun is propped in a
corner. In another corner, an old b&w TV. Flickering across
the screen: a rerun of "Love, American Style." TWO ARYAN
WARRIORS were slumped in front of it, swigging generic beer
while ogling the '60s bikini queens. Now they sit up straight
and reach for the guns as the lawyers pass, into:

INT. BEDROOM

The little boy wraps his arms around a pair of legs. ANGLE UP on a young man whose face is marred by a single teardrop tattoo.

EDDIE

I'm a friend of Clyde Gruner's...

The walls are decorated with white power posters, portraits of Hitler and Jesus.

TEARDROP

We know who you are. You're the race traitor who's defending the gook.

O.S. we hear:

MAN'S VOICE

You've got balls coming here.

Eddie and Roger turn. Behind them another Aryan Warrior has materialized. Chewing a Slim Jim.

SLIM JIM

We respect balls.

Roger exhales.

EDDIE

Who's Chuckie Roeder?

TEARDROP

Chuck? Rhymes with suck?

(cackles, then)

Chuckie Roeder is no longer a comrade in the resurrection of our nation.

We expelled that faggot junkie last year.

Eddie and Roger trade glances.

EDDIE

Do you know where he can be found?

TEARDROP

Hanging with his tongue out and a

sign around his neck says "I Betrayed My Race" along with the rest of society's scum, on the Great Day of the Rope.

ROGER

Um... prior to the Great Day of the Rope, where can Chuckie be found?

TEARDROP

Mixing with mongrel races.

EDDIE

– A job? An address?

Teardrop doesn't answer. Hoping to help him out:

SLIM JIM

Art supplies, right?

Teardrop shoots a look at Slim Jim. If looks could kill, Slim Jim's brains would be decorating the walls.

Teardrop turns back to Eddie and Roger.

TEARDROP

Now get the fuck out of here.

Instead Eddie steps forward, in Teardrop's face.

EDDIE

A man jumped me tonight. He said he was an Aryan Warrior, and you're saying he wasn't. I have to hear it really clear: You guys weren't behind this.

Very slowly, so Eddie gets it straight:

TEARDROP

If we were, you wouldn't be standing here, asking.

CUT TO:

INT. RIVIERA - MOVING - EARLY MORNING

Route 9, North. An excited Roger drives, a little wildly, on the empty road. Eddie stares out into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. OSSINING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - DAYBREAK

ROGER is asleep, in the back seat of the Riviera. PAN TO:

EDDIE

At the main gate, that isn't open yet. Eddie stands still, head bowed, hands clasped behind his back. A supplicant. Waiting to get in.

INT. VISITORS ROOM - MORNING - LATER

Eddie and Shu are separated by a plexiglass pane. They talk over telephones. Shu strives to remain impassive as he HEARS:

EDDIE (O.S.)

Shu, the D.A.'s offered us a deal. I can make a counter-offer I know he'd accept. You'd be free in four years.

Shu's response:

SHU

Who did that to you?

Eddie worries his discolored jaw.

EDDIE

An Aryan Warrior with black teardrops painted on his face.

SHU

"Painted"?

Eddie nods.

SHU

That wasn't an Aryan Warrior.

Eddie nods.

EDDIE

But why would a guy would do that?
Paint black teardrops on his face?

SHU

I guess he... wanted you to think he
was... somebody he wasn't.

EDDIE

But why?

SHU

Maybe... because someone's afraid.

EDDIE

Afraid of what?

SHU

I don't know. The truth, maybe.

EDDIE

– About what?

SHU

About Chinatown. What went down.

EDDIE

What went down?

SHU

You tell me, man.

EDDIE

No. You tell me, Shu.

SHU

How can I tell you what I don't know!

EDDIE

You can't. So tell me what you do
know – say it!

SHU

I don't know shit, man! Goddammit –

EDDIE

Well I know that you're innocent,
Shu – even if you forgot.

Shu sucks in a breath. The curses are like stifled sobs.

SHU

Shit... fucking... bitch bastard...

Tears are spilling down Shu's rock-hard cheeks.

Eddie brings his palm up against the plexiglass divider.
He's breathing hard too.

EDDIE

Shu. We take this deal, that's the end. I don't look for the scumbag that jumped me, don't get him on the stand to tell the court who put him up to it, don't go after the fuck who put him up to it – the fuck who did the crime and let you do the time... We take this deal, we walk away without knowing what really went down, never get a shot at nailing some guilty bastard's balls to the wall.

Shu swipes at his face, roughly wiping it dry.

SHU

No.

EDDIE

"No," what?

Now Shu raises his palm. Presses it against the plexiglass, where Eddie's palm is. Slowly, emphatically:

SHU

Fuck the D.A.'s deal.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHINATOWN STREET - DUSK - VARIOUS SHOTS

Hungry tourists, hyper street vendors, harried locals... Roasting chicken carcasses, counterfeit merchandise aggressively hawked, tiny old ladies bent over bins, squeezing strange fruits... The air a shivaree of piped-in flutes and drums, dissonant mercantile chatter, clogged honking traffic...

On Pell Street we FIND Eddie striding down the sidewalk, nose in trial transcript. To himself:

EDDIE

Jimmy came east on Pell. He stopped on the corner to let a car go by.

Eddie stops.

EDDIE

At the last instant he must've sensed something. He turned –

Eddie looks up from the text, turns his head. There's:

ROGER

About twenty feet away. He looks up from his transcript.

ROGER

Laura Gordon stood here. No bus stop, phone booth, stop sign in the way...
(chagrined)
She had a perfect view of the killer's face.

Eddie adamantly shakes his head as he moves to Roger.

EDDIE

But she couldn't have, could she, because she thinks she saw Shu and now we know she didn't see Shu...

Roger looks dubious. Eddie grabs his shoulders, marching him

east on Pell, the way Jimmy Chin came...

EDDIE

You're cruising along without a care
but now I'm stalking you, I'm right
behind you, there's rage in the air.
You feel the rage, like an electrical
charge – you turn –

He yanks Roger's head around.

EDDIE

I pull out a loaded gun –

Eddie shapes the fingers of his right hand like a gun.

EDDIE

– Time contracts, space explodes,
perceptions can't be trusted when I –

Eddie violently whips his finger-gun into Roger's face. Roger
flinches – we HEAR a shattering GUNSHOT – and we're in:

INT. FORENSIC BALLISTICS LAB - A FEW DAYS LATER

A forensic ballistics expert (GEORGE) has just test-fired
Shu's gun into a long wooden box. He and Roger remove their
ear-protectors. (Eddie hadn't bothered wearing one.) To Roger,
as he opens the box's lid:

GEORGE

Some guys in the field, they'll try
to bullshit you that comparison
microscopy's an exact science.

ROGER

...Not exactly.

GEORGE

I'm saying, we need to finesse a
little, we'll finesse.

Eddie adamantly shakes his head.

EDDIE

George – I told ya – ! We don't need to finesse this one!

GEORGE
Jesus! Jump back...

He recovers the bullet with a pair of sterile forceps.

GEORGE
You wanna hang out, Eddie, I'll have something preliminary in an hour.

EDDIE
My associate'll wait, George. I've got good news of my own to deliver.

CUT TO:

EXT. CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING - DAY - LATER

The D.A.'s office is on the south side of the building.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
Is Mr. Reynard expecting you?

INT. REYNARD'S RECEPTION AREA

Reynard's Receptionist is politely but terminally skeptical.

EDDIE
This'll only take a minute.

RECEPTIONIST
I'm sorry but Mr. Reynard is running about an hour behind schedule.

EDDIE
Then just leave word: Mr. Dowd and Mr. Kim plan to proceed with trial.

INT. CORRIDOR

Grand, marbled. Eddie's footfalls ECHO as he lopes to the stairs. And now he hears a deep, sepulchral:

MAN'S VOICE

...Ed?

ANGLE - ROBERT REYNARD stands at the far end of the corridor, shirt-sleeves rolled up, arms akimbo.

REYNARD

Did my girl hear your message correctly?

Eddie ambles toward Reynard.

EDDIE

I guess so, or you wouldn't be standing there, am I right?

The D.A. shakes his head, disappointed in himself.

REYNARD

Why did I think I could deal reasonably with a man who defends coke pushers for free?

The lawyers face off, salvos reverberating.

EDDIE

Coke pushers pay cash. That subsidizes the pot possession cases.

D.A.s slip past, careful to stay out of the line of fire.

REYNARD

But now you've strayed from your area of expertise – dope – into street assassins. A subject on which you're dangerously ignorant.

EDDIE

But I'm a quick study. Tell your Deputy D.A. – Rabin? – that I'll see him in court.

REYNARD

No, Mr. Dowd, you'll see me in court. I'm prosecuting this case.

Eddie takes a beat to absorb the news. Then:

EDDIE

Why am I surprised? It's consistent.

Reynard nods in solemn accord.

EDDIE

You seem to have a talent for putting non-whites behind bars...

A frost settles on the District Attorney's face.

REYNARD

I'll prosecute anyone who fucks up.
If that makes me look racist, it's a trade-off I'll live with, Ed.

EDDIE

That's big of you, Bob.

He gives Reynard a farewell-for-now salute.

EDDIE

I'll see you in court.

He does a little pirouette. Reynard's words, swelling out, follow him as he dances down the hall.

REYNARD

I'll beat you, Ed. You can hide behind the whole Bill of Rights...

Eddie hurriedly descends the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST VILLAGE - THAT NIGHT

As we PAN the quaint townhouses and tenements we HEAR, OVER:

EDDIE'S VOICE

You guys shoulda been there.

FIND a WINDOW in which THREE SILHOUETTES are seen. In the context of the cityscape, there's a poignant – even fearful – sense of their smallness and isolation.

EDDIE

The fuckin' D.A. himself.

INT. OUTER OFFICE

Eddie paces, gesticulates.

EDDIE

Dude was quaking.

Finally Roger feels compelled to deliver bad news.

ROGER

Uh, Eddie? The, um, ballistics guy,
George...? He called, and...

(uneasily)

His tests show that Shu's gun fired
the bullet that killed Jimmy Chin.

EDDIE

George is a fucking burnout case. I
didn't want him on the stand anyway.
Get more names from Billy.

Eddie turns to Kitty.

EDDIE

Did you find me an expert witness on
the Joe Boys?

Kitty is nearly as reluctant as Roger.

KITTY

The best expert in New York is a Soc
professor at Columbia...

(carefully)

Apparently doing a hit was the way
to get into the Joe Boys.

Eddie levels a "So what are you telling me?" look at Kitty.

KITTY

So there goes your theory about the Joes giving up Shu to protect their trigger man.

EDDIE

But I like that theory. And since I'm not putting Twerp Professor on the stand, and since I don't have a better theory, I'm sticking with that theory. Meantime I want pictures of the Joes. What'll you bet there was a guy in the gang looked enough like Shu to fool the eyewitnesses!

Kitty and Roger halfheartedly nod. Eddie tries a pep-talk.

EDDIE

Our guy is innocent. We prod in enough places, I don't care how solid this case against Shu looks – there's a weak spot somewhere and when we hit it the whole hideous thing collapses. Better yet, we get our hands on Chuckie Roeder, we don't have to grope in the dark. Chuckie is the answer man!

Kitty snakes her head.

KITTY

I've phoned every art supply retailer and wholesaler in the Tri-state area. No one's heard of Chuckie Roeder.

EDDIE

Have you considered that Chuckie Roeder's not calling himself Chuckie Roeder these days? Get his mugshot from one of the many law officers who've got hotpants for you... then canvass those art supplies places. We're gonna win this one, Kitty, but ya gotta believe...

ROGER

Uneasy with Eddie's optimism, he stands, wanders back toward the bathroom. Then notices that the door leading to Eddie's living quarters is slightly ajar.

THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR

Roger sees a single bed in one corner, plain wooden bureau opposite. But on the walls, something strange and beckoning. As Eddie exhorts in b.g., Roger slips into:

INT. EDDIE'S BEDROOM

Hung on a hundred hooks and nails are as many TIES. The wide, thrift-shop kind that Eddie wears to court. From a distance we can't distinguish the prints; the room is lit only by a blinking neon across the street. As Roger sifts through the ties, we go in CLOSE on the big amoebas, the zaftig mermaids, the oddball, dated patterns and paintings. It's as though each tie stands for a case won or lost, but fought. As though each loud, shameless tie is a piece of Eddie himself.

Now, as he pulls the ties from their hooks to examine them, Roger exposes old PHOTOS tacked to the wall and forgotten.

THE PHOTOS

are mostly yellow, cracked, faded. Here is EDDIE twenty-five years ago, hair cropped, a Princeton undergrad. Five years later he's sprouted a beard and is posed with his graduating class at Yale Law School.

Now it's the glory days of the mid-sixties and Eddie's in his prime, a longhaired defense attorney in denim and leather... At a press conference, flanked by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. In Washington Square Park, igniting an anti-war rally.

At a Sheep Meadow Be-in, arm around a lovely young woman, toddler balanced on his shoulders, infant cradled in her lap. Eddie's family on a long-ago spring day.

And here is Eddie, about 30, in a swarm of student activists outside a Federal courthouse, clearly after winning an

acquittal, held high above the crowd like a conquering hero. Now we BRING UP an excited BUZZ of VOICES – as though the crowd, in the photo, were somehow coming to life. OVER:

JUDGE'S VOICE
Matter of People vs. Shu Kai Kim.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPERIOR COURT - MORNING

We've hit the big time; it's clean, spacious, echoic. The previous courtrooms were, by comparison, mere vestibules.

JUDGE QUEALY BANGS his GAVEL.

JUDGE
This case has been tried before, but
you the jurors must make no...

Now the Judge notices something amiss. He squints –

AT THE DEFENSE TABLE

There's SHU. With his new bristly growth of head-hair and oversized suit, he appears thin and mild-mannered, almost bookish. At Shu's left sits ROGER, looking around, bemused. The chair at Shu's right is empty.

JUDGE
– Where is Mr. Dowd?

INT. MEN'S ROOM

Eddie is alone in here, at the sink. He's just doused his face. He examines his reflection in the dirty mirror, trying hard to like what he sees. HOLD for several silent BEATS as Eddie gathers his strength and courage. Then:

REYNARD (V.O.)
You will hear from the detectives
who arrested Shu Kai Kim and found
the murder weapon in his apartment.

INT. COURTROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Eddie has now taken his seat beside Shu. Reynard is in the midst of his opening statement.

REYNARD

An eyewitness will testify that she saw Mr. Kim shoot Jimmy Chin in cold blood. An expert who examined Kim's gun, and the bullet that tore through Jimmy Chin's brain, will testify that Shu Kai Kim was the killer.

He strides over to the jury box.

REYNARD

But this trial is about much more than Mr. Kim's guilt. It's a test of our legal system – the fairest, most liberal in the world, in world history... So fair and liberal that lawyers like Mr. Dowd can manipulate it on a whim to re-try convicted killers. Well that's a trade-off we can live with, provided we have the courage to meet our civic obligations. You twelve are all that stand between society and every Shu Kai Kim itching to get free. Quite a responsibility. But one I know that each of you can handle.

TIME CUT:

EDDIE paces off a large circle – a territorial act in which he is claiming the courtroom as his.

EDDIE

Picture this. In a part of town that thrives on its spirit of celebration... good food, friendly faces... one young man walked up to another, out on the street, in front of the tourists, and committed murder.

As Eddie pivots, we see that his hair is pulled back with a

bright blue ribbon. The Jurors see this, too. If he didn't have it before, Eddie's now got their full attention.

EDDIE

I wonder if Chinatown's shopkeepers and restaurant owners pleaded with the Mayor... I wonder if the Mayor put pressure on the Police Commissioner...

Eddie jigs over to the jury box.

EDDIE

What do you think the Mayor said to the Police Commissioner? I think the Mayor said, "Arrest somebody..."

He's trailed off; the last word is whispered. As he opens his mouth again –

– TWELVE JURORS crane forward to hear.

EDDIE

...ANYBODY!"

An older woman GASPS. The others merely flinch.

TIME CUT:

The homicide detectives lead off. First up is MONTELL. Early 40s, beefy, black, with a tough-but-fair persona.

Reynard concluding his direct.

REYNARD

And so, having brought Mr. Kim in for booking, you arranged a line-up with six other Asian males.

MONTELL

That's right.

REYNARD

And the results of the line-up?

MONTELL
All the eyewitnesses picked Kim.

TIME CUT:

Eddie smiles broadly at Montell, who smiles back. Then:

EDDIE
Isn't it a fact that the "six other Asian men" in the line-up were all of the classic Mongoloid type, whereas Shu has the distinct facial bone structure of a Korean?

REYNARD
Objection. The witness is not an expert in racial classification.

EDDIE
Isn't it a standard trick to pack a line-up with men who resemble each other but look different than the suspect, so the suspect will stand out for the eyewitnesses?

REYNARD
Argumentative.

JUDGE
Sustained.

Eddie takes a beat, flashes another smile. Montell reciprocates. Now Eddie shifts into his empathetic mode.

EDDIE
You had to use less than scrupulous methods, true? The Mayor was pushing you hard for an arrest, wasn't he?

Montell sadly shakes his head. As empathetic as Eddie:

MONTELL
I don't want to disappoint you. But the Mayor and I have never spoken.

A few TITTERS in the GALLERY.

EDDIE

I was being metaphorical, Detective Montell.

MONTELL

Is that a fancy way of being wrong?

The half-dozen REPORTERS can barely suppress their snickers.

INT. COURTROOM - NEXT DAY

Next up is SKLAROFF, a coiled, rangy cop in his late 30s.

EDDIE

Exactly what information led you to arrest my client just two-and-a-half hours after the shooting took place?

SKLAROFF

We had a description of the suspect.

EDDIE

A "description"? What, Asian male 18 to 30, black hair, brown eyes?

From the prosecution table –

REYNARD

Badgering.

SKLAROFF

We had intelligence.

EDDIE

You had intelligence...?

Phrased to sound as likely as peace in Beirut. Sklaroff struggles to contain his resentment. Carefully:

SKLAROFF

We had information bearing on Mr. Kim's desire to gain admission into the Joe Boys by assassinating a member

of a rival gang.

EDDIE

Didn't this "information" come from the Joe Boys themselves – did they not all but hand you Shu Kai Kim, a Korean, an outsider?

REYNARD

Objection! Your Honor, this isn't cross-examination, it's Mr. Dowd's opening argument again – and again, it's pure fabrication.

JUDGE

Sustained.

Eddie essays another line of attack.

EDDIE

Isn't it unusual for a man who's just committed a murder in plain sight to bring the weapon back to his apartment?

REYNARD

Calls for speculation.

JUDGE

Sustained.

But Sklaroff has weathered enough abuse. Indignantly:

SKLAROFF

You're implying that I planted a gun?

EDDIE

Not at all –

SKLAROFF

Kim's prints were all over it – He admitted it was his gun, f'r godsake!

EDDIE

(hastily)
Your Honor, the witness' response
was non-responsive... I ask you to
strike it from the record...!

As Judge Quealy does just that, OS, Eddie backs away from
the excitable detective.

EDDIE
No more questions.

As he drifts back to the defense table, Reynard stands.

REYNARD
The People call retired Detective
Vincent Badalato.

Eddie sits. Wearing a confident grin for the benefit of any
jurors who may be watching. Only Roger and Shu can HEAR:

EDDIE
...I'm dying out there.

SHU
(quietly reassures)
It's okay, Eddie.

The Bailiff escorts the last homicide detective into court.

ROGER
You've got another shot.

ANGLE - DETECTIVE BADALATO

enters. In a wheelchair, pushed by his sister CONNIE. He's
overweight and droopy-eyed, probably on pain pills. She's
got the gait, physique and complexion of a spinster alcoholic.

ANGLE - THE DEFENSE TABLE

EDDIE
(sotto, to Roger)
A fucking wheelchair?

ROGER

(explains)
A spinal injury, in the line of duty.
It was in Kitty's report...

TIME CUT:

Reynard concluding his direct. Mellifluous and caring, a pediatrician to a kid with mumps.

REYNARD
And you left the murder scene...?

Badalato clutches his original report. His eyes rake the page, find the relevant section. He adjusts his glasses. His voice is a whisper thickened by painkillers.

BADALATO
At, un, ten-thirty, sir.

REYNARD
And then what did you do, Officer?

As Badalato replies we FLASH BACK TO:

EXT. CHINATOWN STREET - NIGHT, NOVEMBER 2, 1980

The scene has been secured, photos and statements taken. Police tape holds back GAWKERS. Jimmy Chin's shrouded BODY is loaded, on a stretcher, into the rear of the paddywagon.

FIND BADALATO – young, fit – at the driver's side door of the paddywagon, discreetly conferring with the DRIVER. Now the DRIVER steps out, and Badalato climbs in, in his place. As he pulls the paddywagon away we HEAR, OVER:

BADALATO (V.O.)
I proceeded with Decedent's body to
the office of the County Coroner.

REYNARD (V.O.)
Thank you. No further questions.

INT. COURTROOM - EDDIE

questions the disabled detective, careful to be cordial.

EDDIE

Detective Badalato. You reached the County Coroner's and signed over the body, when?

Badalato finds the relevant section of the report. Focuses. Fusses with the pages. Starts to answer – then succumbs to a terrible coughing fit. COMPASSIONATE MURMURS from the JURY.

The Bailiff hurries over, gently pats Badalato's back, pours him a cup of water. Badalato downs it with effort. Then:

BADALATO

...Eleven-thirty.

Eddie opens his mouth, to continue his cross. But now his eyes dart to the jury box, and what comes out is:

EDDIE

No more questions, your Honor.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE - AFTERNOON

Eddie hurries past Reynard, in the rotunda, surrounded by REPORTERS. Looking well pleased with himself, the D.A. is engaged in a spontaneous, genial Q & A.

Roger and Kitty catch up with Eddie, making for the exit.

EDDIE

A fucking wheelchair?

KITTY

I didn't put him in a wheelchair. Reynard did. He can get around without one – it's all in my report.

EDDIE

I don't have time to read every word in every report, I'm too busy getting killed in court... Meantime my crackerjack investigator can't find

the goddam art supplies store where
Chuckie-fucking-Roeder works!

EXT. 100 CENTRE STREET - AFTERNOON

As the trio descends the steps:

KITTY

I'd love to chat but I'm meeting a
cop for drinks. He'll be bringing
the Joe Boys' mugbook, circa 1980.

Eddie tries not to look overly impressed.

EDDIE

And I need an expert on the Joes I
can put on the goddam stand!

Kitty pulls a BAG from her pocketbook.

KITTY

Eddie? Stick this up your ass.

She hops into an idling CAB.

Eddie pulls a length of PIPE from the bag. He and Roger trade
baffled looks. Then Roger notices the PRINTING on the BAG.

CLOSE - BAG

As Roger reads.

ROGER (O.S.)

"Art's Supplies."

SCENE

Suppressing a smile, Eddie reads the rest.

EDDIE

"Everything For The Plumber".

CUT TO:

ESTABLISHING - LONG ISLAND CITY - EARLY EVENING

Light manufacturing and loft-dwelling refugees from SoHo, separated from Manhattan by the East River. TIGHTEN ON:

"ART'S SUPPLIES"

as Eddie and Roger enter the warehouse.

INT.

Roger notes the PLAQUES that line the walls, from the Chamber of Commerce, Urban League, etc., naming Arturo Esparza "Equal Opportunity Employer of the Year". At the front desks are three tough-looking SECRETARIES.

EDDIE

Is "Art" around?

SECRETARY 1 squints at this bizarre interloper.

SECRETARY 1

He expecting you-all?

EDDIE

No, but this won't take long.

ANGLE

A coffee-colored YOUNG WOMAN gets up from her desk in the far corner. She hurries over to rescue the Receptionist.

WOMAN

I'm Mariquilla Esparza – Art's wife.

Eddie is abashed at her fine, radiant features. Roger tries not to stare.

EDDIE

"Mariquilla"? It's a lovely name.

Mariquilla turns her face, to hide her blush.

MRS. ESPARZA

Thank you, Mister...

And then a compact, powerful-looking LATINO (bald, bearded, bespectacled) charges INTO FRAME.

LATINO

Art Esparza. How can I help you?

He nods at Mariquilla – she makes herself scarce.

EDDIE

Eddie Dowd.

ROGER

Roger Baron.

They wander past Esparza, and into:

THE WAREHOUSE

A multi-tiered space crowded with sinks, toilets, tubs...
Black, white and brown MEN load skids, ride forklifts.

ESPARZA

You can't come back here... Anything happens to you I'm liable.

EDDIE

(pleasantly)

I'm a lawyer. The firm is thinking about renovating. Everything dates back to the Sixties.

ESPARZA

I noticed.

EDDIE

(to Roger)

Do you see a toilet here you think is really me?

Roger joins in the snoring of Esparza.

ROGER

We're considering one of those high tech designs, what do you call it, a "lowboy"?

ESPARZA

Excuse me but we're not a store and
we're not a showroom...

Eddie has slipped away. Hoping to distract Esparza:

ROGER

Didn't I read it's healthier? To sit
lower on a toilet? Y'know, with your
knees up, and –

Esparza is suddenly – angrily – aware he's been had.
Sharply:

ESPARZA

– Where's your friend?

ON EDDIE

Striding down a long AISLE bounded by tall walls of piping.
He ducks around a SKID stacked with industrial sinks... Runs
into a waist-high CONVEYOR BELT loaded with large cartons.
Starts to back away – then sees, below the conveyor belt –

PAIR OF BOOTS

The combat boots that he last saw aimed at his eye.

EDDIE

Freezes, for a beat – then takes off down the length of the
conveyor belt... But the belt goes on and on, and so Eddie
drops down and scuttles under it. As he gets to the other
side and leaps up, he sees –

CHUCKIE ROEDER

Who sees Eddie, lets out a startled cry and drops the carton
he was checking, then spins on his heels and sprints away...

EDDIE

gives chase, slipping on the contents of the spilled carton...
scores of loose spigots... Then he finds his footing, and

paces after Roeder down another:

AISLE OF PIPES

This one about thirty yards long. Now from the other end, moving quite fast, comes a FORKLIFT. Roeder dives out of its way, climbing up the wall of pipes.

Eddie clambers after him as the forklift DRIVER frantically downshifts – and the point of a prong catches Eddie's pantleg, tearing it, as –

ROEDER

scurries over the now-collapsing wall of pipe, onto a double skid of horizontally stacked HOT WATER HEATERS...

SCENE

Eddie stumbles after him... Both men struggling to stay balanced... Now, just as Eddie is about to seize him, Roeder reaches a steep ladder – he breathlessly climbs up to:

A CATWALK

Eddie claws his way up the ladder, right behind... He takes a flying leap at Roeder, grabbing hold of his belt...

But the catwalk sways, sickeningly, and Roeder kicks free, nearly sending Eddie over the side. Now Roeder bolts to the far end of the catwalk, fairly flying down the ladder there...

Meantime, Eddie takes a breath and drops off the catwalk... twenty feet down, and just an arm's length from Roeder. But as he thrusts out his hand, a HUGE MAN intercedes, hurling Eddie to the concrete.

ROEDER

dashes across a sea of TUBS, his boots CRACKING several... Then OUT a BACK DOOR, disappearing into the night.

SCENE

Eddie – winded and disoriented – is yanked to his feet by

a flushed Art Esparza.

ESPARZA

You fool.

Muscular EMPLOYEES, brandishing pipe-wrenches, etc., have formed a menacing ring around Eddie.

ESPARZA

Everything's cool! Back off... take five!

He starts briskly walking Eddie back to the front office.

EDDIE

Look, I'm a lawyer and –

ESPARZA

– I don't care who you are. You could've been killed. Every man and woman in here has done hard prison time. And we look out for each other.

EDDIE

"We"?

ESPARZA

I did five years in Attica. Lot of cons helped me in the joint. But I never got help from any lawyer... I built this business for guys like me who couldn't get a break anywhere else. "Art's Supplies" is for ex-cons. Not lawyers.

They're reached:

THE FRONT OFFICE

Roger is waiting here.

EDDIE

Chuckie Roeder's a material witness in a murder case, Mr. Esparza.

Esparza is pained to hear it.

ESPARZA
Chuckie... Never learn...

Then remembers he's with civilians. Collects himself.

ESPARZA
"Art's Supplies" is founded on trust,
Mister –

EDDIE
Dowd. Eddie Dowd.

ESPARZA
If you'd had the sense to ask for my
help, I might've helped you. But
you've probably scared Chuckie Roeder
off for good, I have a whole bunch
of jumpy employees to handle and
you're both going to be on your way.
Now.

EXT.

As Eddie and Roger cross to the Riviera:

EDDIE
Goddam it... the little punk bests
me again, I get thrown down and
lectured at and where the hell were
you?

ROGER
1530 Rivington Street.

EDDIE
– What?

ROGER
Chuckie's address. I sneaked a peek
at the Rolodex.

EDDIE
You sneaked a peek at the Rolodex.

(then)
Nice.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVINGTON STREET - EARLY EVENING

Eddie parks at a hydrant, the lawyers hop out. Eddie goes to the trunk, forces it open, finds what he was looking for. Tucks the tire iron into his pants.

Roger was already checking the addresses on this stretch of lower East Side transient hotels and pawn shops.

ROGER
...Eddie? 1530 Rivington...

ANGLE - 1530 RIVINGTON

A hole in the ground, surrounded by a fence that's decorated with a fanciful sketch of a luxury condominium that'll never be built and some pretty words about urban renewal signed by His Honor Edward I. Koch.

ANGLE EDDIE

on the corner pay phone.

EDDIE
Kitty, when they demolish a residential hotel, the city has to relocate the tenants! Housing Authority'll have records of –
(then)
You taught me that? So why'm I wasting my breath?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Pleasant, middle-class decor. We haven't been here before. We HEAR a persistent KNOCKING.

KITTY crosses to the door, squints through the peephole and

sighs. Then opens the door. ENTER:

EDDIE

– Find him?

KITTY

Eddie, these things take time.
Particularly at this hour...

Eddie's all over the room, edgily picking up odds and ends.

KITTY

My guy at Housing's waiting at home
for a pass to get back in his office.

Meantime Eddie has found a BINDER on Kitty's coffee table.

EDDIE

The Joe Boys in 1980...!

KITTY

A number of them are dead, three are
in prison, one's a waiter... Two –
you'll enjoy this – two are actually
members of the Chamber of Commerce.

ON THE MUGBOOK

Like the one the cops showed Eddie. But instead of sneering
tattooed whites, here are sneering tattooed Asians.

SCENE

Eddie looks up from the book.

EDDIE

Doesn't do me much good unless I
know what Shu looked like back th–

Kitty hands him a photocopy of Shu's 1980 mugshot.

EDDIE

(studying it)
Whoa.

THE MUGSHOT

An ornery-looking Shu Kai Kim wearing a greasy shag haircut.
A far cry from Mrs. Kim's "Small, Small World" photo.

SCENE

EDDIE

Boy, I was right about the distinctive
facial bone structure of a Korean. I
thought I was bullshitting.

He's all over the room, waving Shu's photo, fulminating:

EDDIE

The odd man out always takes the
fall! Haven't I been saying all along
that –

Suddenly aware that Kitty's watching him play Edward C. Dowd,
Legendary Hell-For-Leather-Lawyer, he falters, embarrassed.
But Kitty's expression is affectionate, approving – this is
just the spirit that drew her to Eddie years ago.

Sensing this, Eddie relaxes. His voice softens.

EDDIE

I haven't thanked you for your work,
Kitty. You're doing good work.

KITTY

I'm a professional, Eddie. Getting
paid is all the thanks I require.

EDDIE

(realizes)
I haven't paid you.

KITTY

(little smile)
Right.

A beat passes between them that's both intimate and awkward.

EDDIE

Got any booze in the house?

KITTY

You don't drink "booze".

EDDIE

You do.

KITTY

Eddie, if I wanted to make love with you again, I'd do it sober.

Eddie gently places his big hands on Kitty's slim shoulders.

KITTY

Eddie this is silly... are we supposed to pretend nothing's happened in the last ten years and –

EDDIE

Nothing has. But that's all changing.

Touched by Eddie's optimism, Kitty kisses him. It's meant to be quick and light but he embraces her and the kiss continues.

CUT TO:

BLACK. A phone RINGS. It's answered. Groggily:

KITTY'S VOICE

...Yes?

(then)

Oh. Great...

CUT TO:

EXT. DELANCEY STREET - LATE NIGHT

Kitty repeats Roeder's current address, in VO.

KITTY'S VOICE

913 Delancey...

As Eddie's Riviera pulls up to a Bowery flophouse. He goes to his trunk, for that tire iron.

INT. LOBBY

The ancient NIGHT CLERK is asleep, his head resting on the Front Desk. Gimlet-eyed, Eddie peers at the NAMES taped to the mailboxes behind him.

UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR

Musty, narrow, dimly lit. Muffled, debauched LAUGHTER... Eddie squints at one door, then another, then: Room 2D.

He takes a breath, pulls out the tire iron, KNOCKS with it. No answer. Eddie tries the door. It's unlocked.

INT. ROOM

CHUCKIE ROEDER sits quietly at a plain wooden desk in the darkened, unadorned room. Scattered across the floor are well-thumbed copies of Guns & Ammo and Blueboy.

EDDIE
– Roeder?

CLOSER - ROEDER

Waxy and still – like a Duane Hanson sculpture. Right hand suspended over the left forearm.

EDDIE

sharply inhales as he ventures closer.

CLOSER

A SYRINGE in Roeder's right hand, needle jammed in a vein. The left arm is dotted with track marks.

SCENE

Eddie slowly backs away from the upright corpse. Gripped not by horror, but the strangest sort of pity.

CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE - MORNING

Chuckie Roeder is laid out in a locker drawer. On one side stands a MORGUE TECH; on the other, Detective 1 (from the police headquarters scene).

Roger is off in a corner, giving a statement to Detective 2.

Eddie stands nearby, moodily contemplating the demise of his last, best hope. OS, he HEARS:

MAN'S VOICE

– I guess you found him.

ART ESPARZA has entered. His face is flushed with emotion.

ESPARZA

He had no family. I have to I.D.
him. I'm his family.

Eddie nods, not sure what to say. Esparza grimly regards Roeder's corpse, then nods at Detective 1. A tear slides down his cheek as the MORGUE TECH slams shut the drawer. Esparza turns to Eddie. His voice thick:

ESPARZA

You won't be able to use him now,
will you?

Roger wraps an arm around Eddie's shoulder.

ROGER

C'mon, Eddie, let's go.

ESPARZA

– That's goddam tragic, isn't it?

He starts for Eddie, who doesn't speak or even move to defend himself. Detective 1 grabs Esparza in time, holds him back.

DETECTIVE 1

C'mon, get outta here, Dowd.

EXT. MORGUE - MORNING

Eddie and Roger exit with Detective 2. They're in the City Hall district, not far from the Criminal Courts Building.

As the Detective crosses, returning to Police Headquarters, adjacent:

DETECTIVE 2

You're in over your head, Dowd...
Don't you defend pot smokers?

Eddie ignores. He and Roger keep walking, the other way.

ROGER

So what're we gonna do?

EDDIE

...What do you mean?

ROGER

Well, I mean, Roeder's gone, now...
A dead end. Believe me, I'm sorry
too, but...

EDDIE

But what?

ROGER

(breaks the news)
I've heard from the last ballistics
expert on the list. It's an even ten
who say Shu's gun killed Jimmy Chin!

EDDIE

That's why I hate experts.

ROGER

Eddie... it's one thing to compare
Clyde Gruner to Jesus Christ. It's
even okay to claim that Shu Kai Kim
is just slightly holier than the
Pope... as long as you don't really
believe it!

EDDIE

Hey – you believe what you want.

Shu Kai Kim is innocent.

ROGER

– Eddie...

EDDIE

You know how I know? 'Cause Reynard says he's guilty, and Reynard's full of shit! Look –

Intoxicated by his illogic, Eddie yanks out his battered wallet. Tugs out one of his two photos of Shu – the "Small, Small World" snapshot from Mrs. Kim.

EDDIE

It's not the face of a killer!

He hands it to Roger, who hands it right back.

ROGER

You're carrying that around like it was a picture of your girlfriend!

(blurts)

I don't want to see your heart broken when this case crashes and burns!

EDDIE

(grim resolve)

That's not gonna happen. I'm gonna create reasonable doubt. Buckle your seatbelt and watch me work.

Eddie steps into the street, into traffic. Cars wildly swerve around him, drivers HONKING in outrage. Roger looks both ways, dashes out. Catching up:

ROGER

But Roeder's dead. Ballistics says it's Shu! We don't have one witness – unless we put Cecil Stipe on the stand...

EDDIE

I'm not that desperate.

ROGER

I am. Eddie – we've got nothing.

EDDIE

I've got a meeting in Chinatown.

ROGER

(resigned, sighs)

Let's get a cab.

EDDIE

– Roger – ?

Indicating with a gesture that they're only blocks from Chinatown. Puzzled, Roger peers back the way they came.

ROGER

That's weird – I pictured the morgue being way across town.

After two beats he turns around to find Eddie gone.

CUT TO:

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - LATE MORNING

Empty but for a banquet table Eddie shares with SIX PILLARS (ranging in age from 30 to 80) of the Asian community. The table is laden with delectable dim sum dishes. Eddie is the only one not eating – he's too busy sucking up to his hosts.

EDDIE

We need you in court. The jury'll be swayed by your support. You men are the backbone – the conscience – of your community!

The Pillars are unmoved. Eddie lightens up.

EDDIE

Only people who've sat on my side of the courtroom so far are a wino trying to stay warm and a bail bondsman I owe money to.

Nothing.

EDDIE

C'mon, guys – the dignity of your race is being threatened here!

Finally he gets a reaction.

PILLAR 1

If the dignity of our race is threatened, it is threatened by your reopening of this ugly case.

PILLAR 2

When a violent thug is taken off the street, our quality of life – and commerce – immeasurably improves.

The other Pillars nod. Eddie's gorge rises as they resume eating, sipping tea, quietly conversing in Cantonese.

EDDIE

"A violent thug"? I happen to know that two of you were once Joe Boys.

This gets the table's full attention.

EDDIE

But I'm not here to point the finger. I did dumb things when I was 19 too – we all did. Wrong time, wrong place, everybody here could've made a perfect fall guy instead of our lives turning out how they did. This case is about all of us. And you're gonna feel like a bunch of goats when the truth comes out.

Clearly, one wouldn't try to bully such a venerable bunch unless one were desperate, unhinged, or a bit of both.

EDDIE

You'll kick yourselves for standing on the sidelines while the D.A. made you out to be fungible!

Now PILLAR 1 whispers to PILLAR 2, who whispers to PILLAR 3.

PILLAR 3

Excuse me. But what is "fungible"?

EDDIE

Interchangeable. As in, "Hey, maybe we got the wrong guy but what the hell, one slanty-eyed sonovobitch is the same as the next"!

Eddie stands.

EDDIE

Enjoy your dumplings, gentlemen.

He lopes out of the restaurant.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Reynard concludes his direct examination of the Police Gang Expert, a florid, 50ish Irish Detective.

REYNARD

So according to your information, Detective, the Joe Boys normally used aspiring members – like Shu Kai Kim – to do the "hits"?

GANG EXPERT

That's how you got into the gang.

REYNARD

Thank you. Your witness, Mr. Dowd.

REVERSE

In the GALLERY, on Eddie's side of the room, sit the SIX PILLARS. Some have brought their equally dignified WIVES. And several sweet-looking CHILDREN.

EDDIE rises INTO FRAME as he stands at the defense table,

newly energized. he straightens his mermaid tie and assumes a look of colossal incredulity.

EDDIE

You're the police expert in Chinatown gangs?

GANG EXPERT

...For ten years, now.

EDDIE

Do you speak Cantonese, Mandarin, or both?

GANG EXPERT

– Me? Neither.

Eddie cups his ear.

EDDIE

Pardon... Which dialect do you speak?

GANG EXPERT

Neither.

Eddie turns to the gallery.

EDDIE

Neither?

The hoped-for HUBBUB among the Pillars et al. SHU cranes to see, heartened and slightly amazed at the support.

Turning back to the government witness:

EDDIE

You don't speak any Chinese dialects?
Then you get your intelligence from snitches?

REYNARD

Badgering.

GANG EXPERT

(between gritted teeth)

They're Chinamen who speak English.
We call them informants.

EDDIE

(thunders)

And I call your testimony hearsay. I
have no more questions for you.

TIME CUT:

On the wall opposite the jury hang TWO POSTERS. Apparently identical photos of a spent BULLET, deformed by impact. In front of them, wielding a pointer, stands Reynard's venerable BALLISTICS EXPERT.

BALLISTICS EXPERT

Bearing in mind that every gun barrel
leaves a distinctive mark on the
bullet it fires, we must conclude
that the bullet that killed Jimmy
Chin was fired from Mr. Kim's .38.

REYNARD

And the powder burns at the site of
the victim's entrance wound...?

BALLISTICS EXPERT

...Can also be linked to the bullet.

REYNARD

Thank you. Your witness.

ON EDDIE

as he jigs over to the wall and grabs the pointer.

EDDIE

The photo on the left shows the bullet
that killed Jimmy Chin, true?

BALLISTICS EXPERT

True.

EDDIE

And the one on the right is the bullet

you test-fired from Shu's gun?

BALLISTICS EXPERT

Correct.

Eddie contemplates these apparently identical photos. And manages to sound a note of outraged disbelief.

EDDIE

You would have the court believe that these two bullets were fired from the same gun?

BALLISTICS EXPERT

Absolutely.

Eddie presses the tip of the pointer to a thin smudge along the lower edge of the right bullet.

EDDIE

I see a groove here. I don't see a groove here.

Pointing, now, to the lower edge of the left bullet.

BALLISTICS EXPERT

It's not a significant difference.

Eddie's pointer finds another mark on the rear of the right bullet. Or maybe it's the shadow cast by the pointer.

EDDIE

And what about this? I don't see this on the other bullet.

He points to something else on one of the enlargements – but so quickly, we're not even sure what he was pointing at.

EDDIE

Or this – is this a significant difference?

BALLISTICS EXPERT

No it is not, Mr. Dowd.

As though baffled by the Expert's criteria, Eddie sets down the pointer.

EDDIE

To the best of your recollection,
were you sober when you performed
the tests?

REYNARD

Objection.

A GIGGLE from the Jury Box.

EDDIE

Forensic ballistics isn't an exact
science, is it?

BALLISTICS EXPERT

It most certainly is.

EDDIE

Isn't there a ten to fifteen-percent
margin of error?

BALLISTICS EXPERT

Absolutely not. No more than seven
percent.

EDDIE

In other words, seven times out of a
hundred, you're wrong!

The EXPERT stews.

The PILLARS nod.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - NEXT DAY

On the stand: LAURA GORDON, the young white eyewitness.

REYNARD

Would you tell the court exactly
what you remember seeing on that

evening?

MS. GORDON

I'll never forget it. I was walking
east on Pell Street...

As she continues, we FLASH BACK TO:

EXT. PELL STREET - EVENING, NOVEMBER 2, 1980

MS. GORDON (V.O.)

A man walked past me. I noticed him
for two reasons.

HER POV

The KILLER hurries by. ONSCREEN for only a second – but
long enough for us to see he looks a lot like Shu.

MS. GORDON (V.O.)

He was walking very fast and his
hand was shoved inside his jacket. I
was in front of a restaurant called
Andy Lee's... Something told me to
turn...

We watch the Killer's back as he races to an intersection
where several PEDESTRIANS wait for the Walk signal. We glimpse
his face again as he pulls a gun... The YOUNG MAN in front
of him whirls, there's a sharp CRACK and then the YOUNG MAN
is lying in the street, blood welling around his head.

The Killer takes off running.

BACK TO COURTROOM

REYNARD

And the man whom you saw murder Jimmy
Chin. Is he in this courtroom?

Ms. Gordon nods at Shu.

MS. GORDON

That's him sitting right there.

TIME CUT:

EDDIE stands before the witness box.

EDDIE

Ms. Gordon. I have studied the diagrams and the photographs and I have visited the murder scene and the conclusion I keep reaching is... and I hate to have to say this... You weren't even close enough to see the killer's gun.

Ms. Gordon is shocked by the rawness of Eddie's accusation.

REYNARD

Does Mr. Dowd have a question?

His eyes boring into Ms. Gordon's:

EDDIE

Come now. Did you see the gun?

MS. GORDON

I can describe it.

EDDIE

(scoffs)

Oh really?

MS. GORDON

It was silver, with a stubby barrel... snub-nosed, I think they call it... It wasn't automatic, it had one of those... cylinders...

EDDIE

You can't remember that – !

MS. GORDON

I can see the hammer still, it was cocked...

EDDIE

(as though pained)

How can you remember that?

MS. GORDON

I didn't take my eyes off it!

EDDIE

Ah.

Eddie is facing the JURY – only they can see the smile that's sprouted on his face.

EDDIE

Thank you, Ms. Gordon.

A HUSH in the COURTROOM. And now Ms. Gordon realizes she's been tricked. As Eddie returns to the defense table:

MS. GORDON

Not the whole time, of course. I –

EDDIE

(sitting)

No further questions.

SHU turns to Eddie. The look on his face says "Hell, we're actually holding our own."

As the frustrated eyewitness is led off the stand we HEAR a calm, resonant –

REYNARD

Your Honor... The People wish to call a witness whose name does not appear on the witness list. He –

Eddie's smile evaporates. He leaps up.

EDDIE

Your Honor, that's trial by ambush!

REYNARD

We just discovered him, your Honor! His appearance is critical to a fair presentation of our case! He is an inmate at Ossining Correctional and –

EDDIE

– Objection, your Honor! This case has no connection with any subsequent act my client may be charged with!

REYNARD

The witness will substantiate Mr. Kim's modus operandi. It's circumstantial evidence in the case at hand!

As Judge Quealy ponders, the D.A. keeps up the pressure.

REYNARD

The witness is recalcitrant, your Honor – I had to personally make a body attachment this morning – it took two Marshalls to drag him here!

EDDIE

The great personal sacrifices endured by Mr. Reynard have no bearing on the legal issues, your Honor – !

REYNARD

Your Honor, I know as much about these gangs as anyone; I'm well aware of the secrecy in which their machinations are cloaked... I assure you this witness offers the court a rare opportunity to place the defendant's crime –

EDDIE

– alleged crime –

REYNARD

– in a context.

The lawyers anxiously wait as Judge Quealy considers. Now:

JUDGE

I will allow the witness to testify.
With the understanding that your

questions are confined to the area of Mr. Kim's modus operandi.

EDDIE

– With objection!

JUDGE

So noted.

Eddie skulks back to the defense table.

REYNARD

As their final witness, the People call Richard Ortega.

The Bailiff swings open the rear door. Escorted by the a forementioned MARSHALLS, enter ORTEGA, from the opening scene. He looks resentful and scared.

TIME CUT:

Reynard begins his direct examination.

REYNARD

Mr. Ortega, you've known the defendant at Ossining Correctional for how long?

ORTEGA

I would tend to plead the Fifth.

JUDGE

Invalid invocation, Mr. Ortega. What I call "name, rank and serial number" questions are not covered by the 5th Amendment. You must answer counsel.

REYNARD looks pleased; ORTEGA, grim.

ORTEGA

Five years.

REYNARD

Mr. Ortega... What is "La Compania"?

ORTEGA

A Cubano army, basically... inside
and outside prisons.

REYNARD

And its purpose?

ORTEGA

Fighting the Aryan Warriors and the
Black Guerrillas, basically.

REYNARD

For control of the prison drug trade?

ORTEGA

I would tend to plead the Fifth.

JUDGE

Mr. Ortega, you've already answered
questions about La Compania. You
cannot now selectively invoke the
5th Amendment.

Reynard glows with satisfaction.

EDDIE

Your Honor, that's not fair – !

JUDGE

(testy)

Complain to the Bar Commission.

Judge Quealy turns back to the witness.

JUDGE

Answer the question, Mr. Ortega.
Your unserved time can double...

The prospect of an extra day in prison fills Ortega with
despair.

REYNARD

Do the rival gangs compete for control
of the prison drug trade?

ORTEGA

Yeah, we do some of that.

REYNARD

What is your rank within La Compania?

Ortega hesitates. With a tight smile, Reynard reminds him:

REYNARD

"Name, rank and serial," Mr. Ortega.
Let's not hide behind the Fifth.

ORTEGA

(surly)

I'm a soldado in the G-Wing Regiment.

REYNARD

And what does a soldado – a soldier –
do?

ORTEGA

A soldado, he runs messages and
materiel between the regiments...

REYNARD

"Materiel"? What do you mean by that?

ORTEGA

Cigarettes, candy bars...

(then, concedes)

PCP, crack...

REYNARD

If a member of the Aryan Brothers
tries to cut in on your distribution?

ORTEGA

...A soldado, he takes care of it.

REYNARD

By "takes care of," you mean "kills".

ORTEGA

(a beat, then)

That's right.

At the Defense Table, Shu stiffens. So does Eddie.

REYNARD

Mr. Ortega, what is Shu Kai Kim's rank within La Compania?

ORTEGA

Soldado.

REYNARD

Isn't it unusual for an Asian to be accepted into a Cuban prison gang?

ORTEGA

Shu's the only one I know of...

REYNARD

And why was an exception made?

ORTEGA

Chinatown. Sounded pretty cold...

REYNARD

You mean to say Mr. Kim told you that he murdered Jimmy Chin?

EDDIE

Objection. Leading.

His tone is stern. But for once he doesn't stand.

JUDGE

Overruled.

Ortega looks past Reynard, at Shu. Mournfully:

ORTEGA

Man, they got me all fucked up here.

Judge Quealy POUNDS his GAVEL.

JUDGE

Mr. Ortega! I warn you...

REYNARD

– Did Mr. Kim confess to you that he killed Jimmy Chin?

ORTEGA

...I think he mentioned it, yeah.

Reynard turns to face the jury.

REYNARD

In other words Shu Kai Kim is, and always has been, a killer for hire.

Reynard's epithet reverberates in the courtroom.

EDDIE

Objection.

JUDGE

Sustained.

REYNARD

Withdrawn. The People rest.

AT THE DEFENSE TABLE

Shu stares down at his penny-loafers. Eddie rises. Dully:

EDDIE

I move that the witness's testimony be stricken. He has clearly been terrorized by the prosecution, he's –

JUDGE

The testimony will remain in the record. Do you wish to cross-examine?

Before Eddie can answer, Ortega jumps up and SHOUTS, at Shu:

ORTEGA

I'm sorry, man – ! Motherfuckers...

The Bailiff rushes to the witness box as Judge Quealy POUNDS his GAVEL. And suddenly SHU leaps to his feet.

SHU

Take me outta here! I never wanted
this – !

The Marshalls obligingly drag Shu toward the prisoners' entrance, behind the bench.

The JURORS appear shocked and alarmed. The SPECTATORS stare, transfixed.

JUDGE

Court is hereby adjourned until ten
a.m. tomorrow!

Eddie just stands there. The sky has fallen on him. Now Reynard rises at his desk. He catches Eddie's eye.

REYNARD

I hope you've learned something, Mr.
Dowd.

Then he and Rabin briskly exit the courtroom together.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE CORRIDOR - LATER

The spectators – including KITTY – emerge. The PILLARS and their FAMILIES disperse quickly, silently.

Here comes EDDIE. What has seemed a merry jig in court now looks like a limp.

ROGER behind Eddie. He moves to catch up, but sees that Eddie is moving toward Kitty, waiting at the exit door. So Roger hangs back.

But without even slowing down or giving a sign, Eddie moves right past Kitty, and out of the building.

Shocked, Roger goes to Kitty. Gently touches her arm.

KITTY

It's okay. It was always like that.

ROGER
Shouldn't one of us...?

KITTY
No – leave him be. It's better for everyone.

Roger nods, resigned – and then someone else in the departing CROWD catches his eye.

A WOMAN

Furtive and alone, hurrying away.

SCENE

Roger turns to Kitty, an odd look on his face.

ROGER
...Would you excuse me?

Kitty shrugs: sure.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON VISITORS ROOM - EVENING - LATER

The lawyer and his client face each other through a pane of bulletproof plastic. Each has a telephone in front of him; both fretfully finger their receivers. Eddie picks up first.

EDDIE
Quite a bit you didn't tell me.

SHU
When I joined up I took an oath of secrecy. I told you what you needed to know.

Eddie's words hiss, like steam escaping.

EDDIE
I didn't need to know that a man I'm defending on a gang-murder rap is a prison soldier who kills over drugs?

SHU

It was self-defense.

EDDIE

Jimmy Chin? Was that self-defense too?

In response Shu hangs up. Eddie POUNDS on the plastic, to get him to pick up again. Shu does, provisionally.

EDDIE

I'm sorry, it's just – You'll laugh but there was awhile when I thought, Hey, we're two sorry assholes who need each other. Who can help each other.

As though he couldn't possibly have heard this right:

SHU

– How could I help you?

EDDIE

By trusting me. Shit, man...

He trails off, momentarily defeated by the magnitude of what's been lost. Now:

EDDIE

I got my face kicked 'cause I trusted you. I couldn't find an expert to say it wasn't your gun killed Jimmy Chin but it didn't matter... I went up against the goddam D.A. himself but I didn't care because I trusted you, because I believed in you, because I thought there was a bond between us!

Like a spurned lover who can't let go, Eddie implores Shu, through the plastic:

EDDIE

Didn't you feel that?

Shu looks at Eddie as though he were an alien life form.

SHU

You're out there and I'm in here. My bond – my trust – is with the dudes in here that watch my ass. I took an oath of loyalty to them. You're out there. Who are you to me?

As he continues, a simmering resentment heats up his words.

SHU

When you leave this place you're going out to dinner or a movie or get laid. Where's our bond? I'm going back to my cell and wait to die. So tell me: Where's our bond?

EDDIE

For awhile we had this dream we were innocent. That was our bond... but then we woke up. And now I'd like to hear everything.

Shu's eyes narrow.

SHU

What do you mean, "everything"?

With exaggerated calm, to cover the rage:

EDDIE

Tell me about Chinatown, Shu. Tell me the tr–

Shu hangs up. Rocks to his shackled feet. And shuffles out of the room, to return to his cell.

CUT TO:

EXT. ART'S SUPPLIES - EVENING - LATER

Through the gated window, a WOMAN and MAN – surely Art and Mariquilla Esparza – are seen in silhouette. Business hours

are over; the couple is alone in the front office. Mariquilla sits at her desk, Art paces the office. Now, as he passes her chair, Art leans down and kisses the top of his wife's head. She involuntarily stiffens.

Art takes umbrage. MUFFLED WORDS. Mariquilla rises, grabs her raincoat. Art touches her shoulder, entreating. Mariquilla shakes her head.

EXT. STREET - ROGER

Watching this shadow play from the opposite curb. In b.g., the shimmering lights of the 59th Street Bridge and Manhattan's skyscrapers seem worlds away from this misery.

BACK TO "ART'S SUPPLIES"

As Mariquilla exits the building.

EXT. STREET - EVENING - WITH MARIQUILLA

As she hurries along, lost in her thoughts. Now Roger falls into step beside her.

ROGER
...Mrs. Esparza?

She startles slightly, then quickly recovers her composure.

MRS. ESPARZA
What do you want?

ROGER
I'm Roger Baron. I work with Edward Dowd.

Mariquilla gives no sign that this means anything to her.

ROGER
What were you... Why were you at Shu's trial this afternoon?

MRS. ESPARZA
– What trial?

Her pace quickens.

ROGER

I followed you here from court.

MRS. ESPARZA

(flustered)

I knew Jimmy Chin. The boy who was shot. Okay?

ROGER

(trying to make sense)

...And you were at the trial to...
to see that justice was done?

MRS. ESPARZA

That's right.

She briskly rounds a corner. Roger stays on her.

ROGER

Then it was your idea to have Chuckie
Roeder scare Eddie off the case?

MRS. ESPARZA

– Why don't you ask Chuckie?

ROGER

(reminds her)

Chuckie OD'd, Mrs. Esparza. He's
dead.

Mariquilla seems to flinch.

ROGER

Art didn't tell you...?

Mariquilla abruptly stops and turns to him. Imploring.

MRS. ESPARZA

Look. Mister –

ROGER

– Roger –

MRS. ESPARZA

You mustn't talk to Art. You mustn't
tell Art that I was at the trial. Do
you hear me?

There is animal fear behind Mariquilla's eyes.

ROGER

But you lost a friend... You've got
a right to...

A realization forms.

ROGER

Wait... Were you and Jimmy Chin...?

Mariquilla gazes into Roger's open, questing eyes. They're
the same age, but one has lived much longer than the other.

MRS. ESPARZA

I can't talk to you anymore. Go away,
please... Never come back.

With that, she crosses the street. Slipping into darkness.

ROGER

watches her disappear. And then, after two beats, he resumes
walking, back the way he came, toward the subway station.

REVEAL

A figure, lurking in the shadows, lights a cigarette. As the
match flares we make out the face of ART ESPARZA.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT

A glassy-eyed Eddie KNOCKS and KNOCKS. Finally the door,
still chained, opens a crack. An eye peers out.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh, Christ.

EDDIE

...Do you realize I haven't gotten stoned since the trial started?

The door closes. Then reopens, unchained. Kitty stands there in a robe she's thrown on.

KITTY

Eddie... A guilty client's not the end of the world...

EDDIE

EXACTLY!

He slams his fist against the wall. OS, NEIGHBORS SHOUT for him to shut up.

EDDIE

It's liberating! I feel free!

More COMPLAINTS, OS. Shouting back at the neighbors:

KITTY

Go fuck yourselves.

Kitty turns back to Eddie. Tenderly:

KITTY

Eddie... go home. Get some sleep.

EDDIE

I don't need sleep!

KITTY

I need sleep. Some of us are mere mortals.

EDDIE

Screw you too, Kitty.

He turns, and skulks back down her hallway into:

EXT. KITTY'S BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

A converted brownstone in Chelsea. Eddie sinks down on the

stoop, head in hands. Presently KITTY emerges, and sits down next to him. Several silent BEATS. Then Eddie speaks., looking straight ahead, not at Kitty.

EDDIE

For years I've defended scumbags. Dealers. Hitters... And somehow it seemed fine until this kid came along who knew me as a true believer who'd fought the good fight and... but... he seemed so damned disappointed in who he found... and then, out of nowhere, here we were fighting to free an innocent man – an innocent man, I don't see many of those in my line anymore and I thought, Wow, the kid brought me good luck, y'know? For one minute I was a true believer again. Well, my minute is up, Kitty. I'm going back to defending scumbags... But not just dope dealers anymore. From now on: Child molesters. Porno merchants. Repeat drunk drivers, and I'm gonna get 'em all off. Hit men... Send me every contract killer... None of 'em does time ever again.

He rises, faltering a little. Kitty stands, steadies him.

KITTY

Eddie. We can discuss this... after you get some sleep.

Eddie shakes his head. As he stumbles down the steps:

EDDIE

I told you, Kitty – no more sleep for me.

CUT TO:

EXT. GROVE STREET - NIGHT - LATER

Eddie wanders up to his funky building.

There's a SLEEPING BUM curled up in front of the door. Eddie wearily leans down, to nudge the Bum aside. But it's ROGER.

EDDIE

The hell're you doing here?

Roger awakens very fast. He jumps to his feet.

ROGER

Eddie – it's Art Esparza!

EDDIE

What's Art Esparza?

ROGER

I think he hired Shu to kill Jimmy Chin... It wasn't a Chinatown gang hit – Jimmy Chin and Art's wife were lovers! She just about told me...!

EDDIE

(baffled)

You phoned up Art Esparza's wife?

ROGER

I followed her from the courthouse.

Eddie blinks.

EDDIE

Esparza's wife was at Shu's trial?

Roger nods.

EDDIE

And you spotted her in the crowd?

Roger nods. Eddie takes a breath.

EDDIE

What're you, trying to show me up here?

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - LATE NIGHT

DOLLY PAST the odd HOOKER and VAGRANT being led from booking to the bullpen. The unnatural quiet bespeaks the late hour.

CAMERA PUSHES into Records, closed for the night... Pacing here is TOMMY, the cop who'd opened up the Exhibit Warehouse for Eddie, earlier. Tommy appears to have been dragged out of bed. Under his car coat is a flannel pajama top. Between tense puffs on his cigarette:

TOMMY

Dowd... We're even now...

PUSH PAST Tommy, to TWO FIGURES huddled at a desk in the corner. ROGER looks on as EDDIE rifles through a DOSSIER.

EDDIE

Esparza's security clearance to go inside the jails for parole hearings.

CLOSE - PHOTO

A passport-type snapshot of the chubby, bald, bearded, bespectacled ART ESPARZA.

EDDIE'S VOICE

Wonderful work Esparza does...

INTERCUT EDDIE AND ESPARZA'S FILE

Pictures, warrants, complaints. We can't make out the fine print, only the PHOTOS as Eddie flips through them.

EDDIE

Skipping back two years.

THE NEXT PHOTO - A grainy telephoto shot of Esparza emerging from Art's Supplies. His hair was thicker, he was thinner. Wore a walrus moustache.

EDDIE

Esparza was being watched by Narco.

Suspected of using his warehouse as a drug drop... Surveillance terminated.

NEXT PHOTO - A set of mugshots. Esparza is dramatically thinner here. Lots more hair. Aviator glasses.

EDDIE

Four years ago. Esparza charged with assault. Dismissed.

NEXT PHOTO - More mugshots. Esparza even thinner. Hair thicker, longer.

EDDIE

Accessory to extortion. Dismissed.

Eddie flips, faster, through the file.

EDDIE

Dismissed for lack of evidence.
Dismissed, dismissed...

Roger looks questioningly at Eddie.

EDDIE

This little prick is protected.

He glances, suddenly skittish, at Tommy – who picks up on Eddie's paranoia and promptly reciprocates.

TOMMY

That's it – I'm outta here. You owe me one, Dowd.

Frowning, Eddie returns his attention to the file.

EDDIE

Dismissed...

CLOSE ON ESPARZA'S FACE

As he gets younger, the moustache shrinks. Seven years back, and it disappears.

EDDIE
...dismissed. Shit!

Eight years ago: Esparza's black hair is cut in a shag, and the glasses are gone.

EDDIE
(softly)
Shit.

Something new in Eddie's voice commands Roger's attention.

ROGER
– What?

EDDIE
I've seen this picture before.

He reaches into his wallet, pulls out Shu's old mugshot. Holds the two mugshots next to each other. Hushed:

EDDIE
They could've been brothers. It's why the eyewitnesses picked Shu.

ROGER
Christ... Shu is innocent.

INSERT - THE PHOTOS

Given that they're of different races, the resemblance between Art Esparza and Shu Kai Kim, in 1980, is startling.

ROGER
"The killer wasn't Chinese" ... Cecil Stipe was right. !

EDDIE
Everyone else was wrong and the one fucking lunatic was right!

Roger wears a tense smile.

ROGER
Does this mean Kennedy was killed by

the phone company?

INT. HEADQUARTERS CORRIDOR

The two lawyers hurry out. Roger smiles at the DESK SERGEANT with exaggerated amiability.

EDDIE

(quiet intensity)

But Shu's gun is an absolute match...!
How could that be, goddammit?

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - LATE NIGHT

The lawyers bound down the steps, dart into the street—

— and are nearly run down by an AMBULANCE that whizzes past, pulling into the garage of the County Coroner's Office.

ROGER

...Jesus!

EDDIE

Least we'd already be at the Morgue.

Briskly shaking off their brush with eternity, Eddie and Roger proceed down the block.

ROGER

Let's make a citizen's arrest of
Esparza! We'll need back-up... Who's
the meanest motherfucker you ever
got off?

As Roger ducks into a phone booth:

EDDIE

Fuck that, Rog. Esparza's nobody.
This goes higher than him...

Roger feeds the phone.

ROGER

Gotta start somewhere. Gimme a name —
any client who owns a Magnum.

(beat)
Eddie?

Eddie's staring at the PHONE BOOTH. It's pagoda-style, with Chinese-red pent roof.

EDDIE
Wait a second.

Eddie squints down the street...

ANGLE

Even at this late hour we see enough decoration and signage to recognize Chinatown, not seven blocks uptown.

EDDIE
(softly)
How long did it take Badalato to drive Jimmy Chin's body from Chinatown to the morgue?

ROGER
... An hour.
(realizes)
That's why I thought the morgue was on the other side of town.

Eddie fairly pushes Roger out of the phone booth. Thumbs through the White Pages, finds the page he's looking for, tears it out and stuffs it into his pocket.

As he races for his Riviera, parked in a towaway zone:

EDDIE
Roger... I may be late for court this morning.

He hops in, revs the old heap.

EDDIE
Fill in for me, huh?

And Eddie peels out.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUYVESANT TOWN - LATE NIGHT

A mammoth '50s housing project by the East River. The monolithic buildings are like giant tombstones jutting into the night sky.

INT. BEDROOM

Dark. The front door buzzer BUZZES. We HEAR a groggy:

WOMAN'S VOICE

– Who the hell...?

A frowzy CONNIE BADALATO snaps ON a LIGHT. Reflexively reaches for the bottle of Seagrams on her night-table.

AT THE DOOR

stands the long-haired creep from last week's murder trial.

EDDIE

Hope I didn't wake you. I'm Edward
C. Dowd. You're Mrs. Badalato?

Connie waves her bottle of scotch like a weapon.

CONNIE

Ms. Vin's sister.

EDDIE

I have to talk to your brother.

CONNIE

The hell you do. At this hour?

As he brushes past her, Connie grabs his ponytail. Eddie whirls and grabs Connie's bottle – waves it over her head.

CONNIE

Gimme back my bottle.

EDDIE

Let go of my hair.

Connie lets go, Eddie relinquishes her bottle. As he backs up, toward Badalato's bedroom, he points a finger.

EDDIE

– Stay.

Like a good dog, Connie hangs back. Whimpering, slightly.

INT. BADALATO'S BEDROOM

Eddie gasps – stops short.

Badalato lies propped up in his robe and socks. He's staring at the test pattern of a TV on his bureau. He's dead.

No he's not... Expressionless, still staring ahead:

BADALATO

Do I know you?

Eddie crosses to the inert ex-cop.

EDDIE

I'm Eddie Dowd. I cross-examined you.

(beat)

But not very well.

Badalato's eyes are shiny as marbles. On his night-table we notice a half-dozen prescription vials.

EDDIE

What did you do with Jimmy Chin's body?

Badalato's lips part, but there's no sound. Eddie shakes him.

EDDIE

What did you do with Jimmy Chin's body?

Badalato's lids flutter.

BADALATO

I brought it... to the coroner.

EDDIE

An hour after you picked it up!

Badalato reaches for a vial, casually fishes out two pills.
Drowsily concedes:

BADALATO

An hour later...

He pops the pills.

EDDIE

From Chinatown... Which is right up
the street from the morgue! Where
did you go with the body? What did
you do with it?

BADALATO

Please... I need to sleep...

Eddie slams Badalato up against the headboard.

BADALATO

You're fishing. You don't know shit.

EDDIE

I know about Esparza.

A cloud crosses Badalato's face. OS, we HEAR:

CONNIE'S VOICE

– It wasn't Vin's idea.

Connie has advanced to the doorway.

EDDIE

Whose idea was it?

Badalato tries to focus on his sister.

BADALATO

Connie get outta here... this is

official business...!

CONNIE

You were pressured... Tell the man!

BADALATO

Dammit Connie – go back to bed!

As she backs out of the room, to Eddie:

CONNIE

The little guys always take the rap
for the big shots.

BADALATO

(growls)

Connie!

Connie leaves. Eddie turns back to Badalato. Before he can
resume his inquisition:

BADALATO

Montell... one of my partners... he
said it'd work if it was a thru-and
thru.

Eddie inhales sharply. Lets go of the ex-cop. His voice
shrinking to a near-whisper:

EDDIE

What's a "thru-and-thru"?

Badalato reaches for another pill.

BADALATO

I have this chronic pain...

He pops the pill, leans back.

BADALATO

Eight years I'm waiting for some
genius to notice it took me an hour
to drive seven blocks.

He lets his eyes close. One, two, three beats. Then:

BADALATO

I drove Chin's body to The Firing
Line. Pistol range, near the Battery.
Lotta cops used to go there...

FLASH BACK to NOVEMBER 2, 1980:

BADALATO'S POV - MOVING - MIDNIGHT

As he pulls the paddywagon into an alley, marked by a sign
overhead: "THE FIRING LINE". The SHOT has the floating quality
and irresistible forward motion of a dream.

BADALATO (V.O.)

Sklaroff brought Shu Kai Kim's gun.
Montell was already there...

INT. PADDYWAGON

Badalato (younger, fit) lifts his end of the stretcher bearing
the sheet-covered corpse. Slides it out, to Montell.

BADALATO (V.O.)

He said we'd only have three hours.
After that, with the body cooling,
and the clotting... it wouldn't look
right to the pathologist.

INT. PISTOL RANGE

The cops squat beside the stretcher. Badalato strips the
bloody sheet down to the corpse's waist. Sklaroff grips Jimmy
Chin's shoulders and carefully hoists his torso upright.
Chin's head lolls, empty eyes staring.

BADALATO (V.O.)

Chin was hit once in the forehead by
Esparza's .32. The bullet exited
clean.

(beat)

That's a thru-and-thru.

Badalato gingerly tugs on a hank of Chin's hair, to raise up
the corpse's head.

BADALATO (V.O.)

All Montell had to worry about was firing Kim's .38 at the same angle.

Montell, with gloved hand, brings Shu's gun to Jimmy Chin's forehead. Tilts it, just so. And FIRES.

INT. BEDROOM - BADALATO

The ROAR of the GUN-BLAST, no less loud as it echoes in his head eight years later, has startled open Badalato's eyes.

BADALATO

We recovered the bullet and that was it – an airtight case...

Eddie is trying to wrap his mind around this awful thing.

EDDIE

But why? All to protect Esparza?

Badalato reaches, unsteadily, for another pill. His lids have drooped again.

BADALATO

Nasty little bastard. He stepped in shit...

Badalato's head slumps. The impact of his chin striking his chest surprises him awake again.

BADALATO

...we had to lick his boots clean.

EDDIE

(realizes)

He was your snitch.

BADALATO

(sardonic smile)

Our own Colombian Connection... For three years... Three years of ball breaking detective work. And we put a lotta bad guys behind bars.

EDDIE
And one good guy.

Badalato reaches for the vial again. Eddie grabs it first.
Reads the label.

EDDIE
Demerol? What the fuck is your
problem, man? You wanna die?

BADALATO
I'm dead. We're both dead.

Eddie hurls the open vial across the room: the pills scatter.

EDDIE
Nobody dies till I hear the truth!
Who ordered the frame on Shu?

Badalato stubbornly shakes his heavy head.

EDDIE
It was wrong, Vinnie – you know
that! But we can make it right... if
you'll fucking stand up!

Badalato looks up at Eddie. His eyes fill with tears. Still
he doesn't move. Eddie grabs the ex-cop's pudgy hands.

EDDIE
Get up, godammit!

And Eddie hauls Badalato off the bed.

INT. HALLWAY

Eddie drags Badalato past Connie, chewing her cuticles.

CONNIE
Don't hurt him.

EDDIE
Where's the nearest hospital?

CONNIE
Bellevue. Straight up First –

INT. ELEVATOR

Badalato is slumped in the corner. The car descends with painful slowness. Eddie nudges Badalato's shoulder.

EDDIE
Stay awake, Badalato. Vinnie... Come on, man, talk to me!

Badalato's response: A faint SNORTING sound.

EDDIE
Did I say snort? No, I said talk.
Please... I need you to live...
(an idea)
Hey: When was the first time you got laid?
(no answer, then)
Okay, I sympathize, I blocked mine out myself. She had a moustache...

Finally the car stops. The door creakily slides open. As Eddie pulls the hulking ex-cop upright:

BADALATO
...Where're we goin'?

EDDIE
That-a-boy. Hospital.

BADALATO
I don' need a hospital... I feel fine.

EDDIE
Too fine, Badalato. The bad news is, you're gonna live.

In response Badalato GURGLES – it sounds, disconcertingly, like a death rattle.

EDDIE

Make y'a deal. You clean up, I clean up. No more dope.

(amends)

No more dope for a year.

(amends)

For the rest of the year.

He hauls Badalato OUT of the elevator, and right into – SKLAROFF AND MONTELL Montell, the burlier of the two, flings Eddie against the wall. With an odd, brutal melancholy:

MONTELL

Why'd you have to come here, you hippie-dippie fuck?

Meantime Sklaroff helps Badalato down the access stairs as he murmurs soothing assurances in the ex-cop's ear.

As Montell roughly pat-searches Eddie:

EDDIE

Montell... listen to me: Vinnie took a buncha pills. He needs a hospital.

MONTELL

Makes two of ya.

He knees Eddie in the groin, then tosses him into:

INT. ACCESS STAIRS

Eddie tumbles down the short flight. Then picks himself up as Montell hurtles after him. Eddie makes a break, into:

INT. UNDERGROUND GARAGE

but ESPARZA's waiting here. He hauls off, smashing Eddie's head against the concrete wall.

MONTELL

Goddammit Art, get back in the car!

Meantime Sklaroff walks Badalato past a row of dark sedans huddled like hearses... Past a mesh gate that guards the building's ancient furnaces, crackling with flame, spewing

steam... To an UNMARKED CAR parked at the far end of the garage. Softly, suppressing his unbearable tension:

SKLAROFF

Vin... What'd you tell the lawyer?

He opens the back door, maneuvers Badalato onto the seat.

BADALATO

Lou...

With infinite kindness, infinite patience:

SKLAROFF

I'm here, Vin. So's Dave. We need to know what you told the lawyer.

Badalato nods, slowly. A stoned, beatific smile forms.

BADALATO

I came clean...

Pain stabs Sklaroff's face. He pats Badalato's knee.

SKLAROFF

Good, Vinnie... You wait here.

As he starts back to where Montell and Esparza stand over Eddie, Sklaroff draws the gun from his shoulder-holster.

His face, in the dirty yellow fluorescent light down here, is a taut, shiny death mask. Quietly:

SKLAROFF

Vinnie told 'im everything.

Woozily, as he mops the blood from his brow with a sleeve:

EDDIE

What, "everything"? You shot a corpse. I don't give a shit about that – !

ESPARZA

Let's snuff this lowlife!

EDDIE

(to Esparza)

Hey – the fact you popped Jimmy Chin in broad daylight proves it wasn't premeditated. Jury'll sympathize – dude was banging your wife, right?

ESPARZA

Shut your sewer mouth!

He lunges at Eddie. Montell pulls him back.

EDDIE

Killing me in the middle of the trial would cause quite a stink...

(to Esparza)

It won't be clean like with Chuckie. What, y'treat him to a match-head of pure smack...?

Esparza shakes Montell loose.

ESPARZA

That's right – I'm a generous guy!

Montell gazes with loathing at Esparza.

MONTELL

– Who'd y'waste now, Art?

Meantime Sklaroff levels the gun at Eddie's face.

SKLAROFF

Goddam you.

ESPARZA

Do it. So we can go home.

Sklaroff's finger twitches, on the trigger.

EDDIE

Still letting your snitch run you?

Sklaroff's eyes flash. Eddie's touched a nerve.

MONTELL
Lou... We have to.

ESPARZA
Waste him, y'little worm!

Sklaroff's gaze flies from Esparza to Eddie to Montell. All four men's faces are slick with sweat.

ESPARZA
(draws his .32)
Okay then I'll put this filthy lawyer
freak out of his mis—

Abruptly Sklaroff swivels, jams his gun against Esparza's ear and FIRES. As Esparza topples backward, eyes and mouth wide:

SKLAROFF
Shut up, Art.

Eddie jumps up in horror. Montell blinks at Sklaroff.

SKLAROFF
Shoulda done that eight years ago.

Waving his gun at Esparza's ruined head, Sklaroff hoarsely shouts at Eddie:

SKLAROFF
You see that? You wanna be like that?

EDDIE
No. No...

SKLAROFF
You fucking swear to shut up!

Montell registers shock at his partner's offer.

MONTELL
...We can't trust this fuck...

SKLAROFF

(at Eddie)
You gonna keep quiet – ?

Eddie considers for a moment that feels like forever. Then:

EDDIE
I can't do that... Keep quiet? You
can't ask me to do that!

MONTELL
(explodes)
Shoot 'im, f'r Chrissakes!

Desperate, Sklaroff kicks Esparza's corpse.

SKLAROFF
That's the motherfucker killed Jimmy
Chin. It's justice...!

Eddie nods... he agrees...

EDDIE
But I have a client eight years in
prison didn't do it...

Montell grabs the gun from Sklaroff.

MONTELL
You sorry bastard.

Eyes fixed on the gun, Eddie takes a step back.

EDDIE
My guy's gotta walk. You hear me?

Montell swallows hard, then raises the gun.

EDDIE
You hear what I'm saying? It's over –
all the bullshit. Your bullshit, my
bullshit – all the lies – that's
it, party's over, enough's enough...
Y'live a lie, you die inside – don't
you know that?
(then, softly)

I have to go now. I have to be in court.

Eddie turns.

MONTELL'S GUN

Pointed at Eddie's back. His finger tightens on the trigger.

EDDIE

crosses the oil-stained concrete... past the row of black sedans, the clanking furnaces... barely able to breathe... waiting for the bullet.

MONTELL'S ARM

starts to shake, just slightly. He brings up his other arm, to steady the gun.

EDDIE

has traversed this humid half-acre of hell... he reaches the unmarked car. A bleary Badalato looks up at him, Eddie holds out a hand. His voice catching:

EDDIE

Vinnie... You coming?

Badalato reaches up. And takes Eddie's hand.

MONTELL AND SKLAROFF

Sklaroff places his hand on Montell's wrist. He helps his partner slowly lower the gun. Party's over.

EDDIE AND BADALATO

awkwardly walk up the ramp. The sun is just rising over New York City. The two men squint as they come into the light.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTOOM - NEXT MORNING

The Pillars have bailed out. Shu sits at the Defense Table.
Not happy to be here. Roger stands.

ROGER

Your Honor, Mr. Dowd indicated that
he may be detained this morning...
He asked me to fill in for him...

JUDGE

This doesn't amuse me, Mr. B—

The door opens. It's EDDIE. Tattered, bruised and tired.

AT THE PROSECUTION TABLE

Rabin nudges Reynard. It appears that the defense has been
on a titanic bender.

SCENE

The Judge puts on a sarcastic smile.

JUDGE

Good morning, Mr. Dowd. Do you think
you might be up to cross-examining
Mr. Ortega this morning?

EDDIE

Your Honor: I imagine that, no matter
how careful my questioning, Mr. Ortega
would, in his well-intentioned way,
dig my client's hole even deeper.

Judge Quealy nods. Not without a trace of compassion.

JUDGE

Well then, does the defense have any
witnesses?

EDDIE

I suppose I could find an inmate
who'd say that Shu boasted about
Chinatown just to survive in the
joint – though he didn't really do
it...

AT THE DEFENSE TABLE

Shu looks up. Interested, again, in the proceedings.

SCENE

EDDIE

I guess I could find witnesses to dispute every point made by the D.A. But in the end, would we be any closer to understanding what really happened eight years ago? As Mr. Reynard has said, these matters are cloaked in secrecy... How can we, here in the safety and sanctity of this court, presume to pass judgment on Shu Kai Kim, a refugee...

AT THE DEFENSE TABLE

Reynard trades smug looks with Rabin and starts packing his briefcase.

EDDIE'S VOICE

...who has spent his young adulthood like a caged animal in a prison where kill or be killed was the code...

SCENE

His impatience tinged with pity:

JUDGE

– Then you don't wish to call any witnesses, Mr. Dowd?

EDDIE

I would like to put Shu's alleged crime in a context, your Honor. And we do have the foremost expert on prison and street gangs right here in this room... If it please the court, I'd like to call Mr. Reynard.

AT THE DEFENSE TABLE

DEAN RABIN looks outraged. REYNARD is merely annoyed.

REYNARD

I would ask opposing counsel to make an offer of proof that this is anything more than a desperate tactic.

JUDGE

Will you both approach the bench...?

Reynard strides up. As Eddie joins him:

REYNARD

– Can't Mr. Dowd find his own expert witness, your Honor?

EDDIE

I'd need a continuance. Three weeks at least.

Judge Quealy sighs. He doesn't have three weeks to waste.

JUDGE

Your questions would of course be restricted to Mr. Reynard's area of expertise.

REYNARD

It's a last-ditch ploy, your Honor... The Defense clearly hopes that my presence on the stand will create the opportunity to call for a mistrial.

He flashes Eddie a grim smile.

REYNARD

But the Defense is mistaken.

Reynard proceeds to the witness box. Though it's clearly a formality, the D.A. must be sworn in.

CLERK

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

REYNARD

I do.

Eddie ambles over to the witness box.

EDDIE

Let's start by establishing your credentials as an expert witness, Mr. Reynard. In the late '70s you led an investigation into a Colombian crime syndicate called "the Ochoa"?

As though indulging a child:

REYNARD

Yes, Mr. Dowd.

EDDIE

Didn't this investigation, with its attendant publicity, catapult you into the office you now hold?

REYNARD

If I were sitting where I normally sit, I would say "Calls for speculation."

THE JURORS are charmed by Reynard's ironic bonhomie.

EDDIE

Did you do any hands-on work or did you just supervise, from on high?

REYNARD

Mr. Dowd, I was personally involved with all phases – and principals – of the investigation.

EDDIE

And who were the detectives who assisted you, Mr. Reynard?

REYNARD

glances into Eddie's eyes, to read what's behind them.

EDDIE

His expression gives away nothing.

SCENE

Reynard, as he answers, manages to sound perfectly casual.

REYNARD

Lou Sklaroff, Vin Badalato, Dave
Montell.

EDDIE

The same three detectives on the
Jimmy Chin case.

Judge Quealy perks up considerably.

REYNARD

In those days, they often worked as
a team.

EDDIE

And who was Arturo Esparza?

Reynard hesitates. Then:

REYNARD

I don't think I know that name.

EDDIE

– But you just said you were
personally involved with all the
principals of the investigation.

REYNARD

I can't be expected to remember the
name of every informant eight years
after the fact.

EDDIE

I didn't say he was an informant.
But since you mentioned it, wasn't
Esparza your primary informant?

REYNARD

(bristles)

You're trespassing into the area of
witness protection, Mr. Dowd. Such
showboating puts lives at risk.

Heedless, Eddie hammers at him.

EDDIE

Isn't it true that without Esparza,
you had no investigation?

REYNARD

(scalding contempt)

I think you're a dangerous man, Mr.
Dowd.

EDDIE

I hope so, Mr. Reynard.

Eddie moves in closer.

EDDIE

On the night of November 2, 1980,
did Art Esparza phone you at home to
say, "I just killed a man in Chinatown –
people saw me do it"?

The REPORTERS trade looks, then start to madly scribble.

REYNARD

(ice)

No.

EDDIE

No? Then what did he say?

DEAN RABIN

has no idea what's going on. All he knows is that he must do

something. He stands.

RABIN

Objection. Badgering the witness.

Judge Quealy's withering glance causes the Deputy D.A. to sink back down and stay down.

EDDIE

You'd worked too hard to let Esparza's crime of passion spoil everything. You ordered your team to comb through the mugbooks. Find a patsy. Frame him.

(beat)

Protect your case.

(beat)

Protect your career. Isn't that so?

The COURTROOM sucks in a collective breath.

REYNARD

That's an outrageous accus...

Reynard trails off as, in the back of the courtroom:

VIN BADALATO

is helped into the courtroom by CONNIE. Who pointedly sits her brother behind the defense, with Kitty and Mrs. Kim.

REYNARD

A cornered animal. His gaze flicks from Badalato to Eddie.

SCENE

This time Eddie returns Reynard's gaze.

EDDIE

Putting away one punk enabled you to keep your informant out of prison and in place.

SHU has gone pale. Tears stream down MRS. KIM's face. KITTY

reaches an arm around her shoulders, to comfort her.

EDDIE

By keeping your informant out of prison and in place, you were able to complete your work. Ultimately you saved scores of lives, didn't you?

No answer. Now Eddie invokes the D.A.'s pet principle:

EDDIE

It was a trade-off, wasn't it?

Quietly, with a kind of tragic dignity:

REYNARD

A trade-off, yes...
(then)
I'd do it again.

Eddie nods. Then returns to the defense table and sits, between Roger and Shu. Eddie looks drained but exalted. He can sleep now.

EDDIE

The defense rests.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON CELL - MORNING

Shu Kai Kim sits on the edge of his cot. Listens to the ECHO of FOOTSTEPS that grow LOUDER. In eight years of waiting, a man learns patience.

The FOOTSTEPS STOP, tumblers TURN. Still, Shu doesn't move; moving might break the spell. The cell DOOR slides OPEN.

C.O.'S VOICE

C'mon, Kim. Time to go.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Shu emerges from the Main Gate, toting a sad little vinyl

valise. Blinking, as though he hasn't seen daylight in years. He heads toward the concrete depot where a bus will take him south, to New York City. How strange to walk without shackles, handcuffs, armed guards. OS he HEARS:

MAN'S VOICE

Need a lift?

Edward C. Dowd lounges against his Riviera.

Shu cocks his head, stares at the lawyer.

Eddie shrugs, stares down. Three beats. When he looks up –

Shu is standing before him. Searching for words. Failing to find them. At last:

EDDIE

Shit, man – let's get out of here.

Now ROGER steps out of the car, holds open the door for Shu.

THE RIVIERA

Spewing clouds of pollution, Eddie's car pulls away.

RISE over the turrets and towers and electrified fences as Eddie, Roger and Shu drive away from the prison, to freedom.

FADE OUT:

THE END