

IN THE TEMPLE OF THE LIVING GOD

THE SCREEN IS BLACK.

INSERT: No man is rich enough to buy back his past.
-Oscar Wilde

Wilde's aphorism fades and the following appears:

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA - 1980

FADE IN:

EXT. MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA - NIGHT

We see fishing boats bobbing in the bay and by the wharf.

We RISE and PAN AROUND and see the neat rows of houses on the slope rising from the south end of the bay, facing north.

We close in on a particular street, and a particular house, wedged between other similar houses on small lots.

A Plymouth Fury pulls up in front of the house, under a street lamp.

TWO MEN emerge from the car.

INT. A BEDROOM - NIGHT

We PAN AROUND a boy's bedroom: Sports posters featuring Notre Dame quarterback Joe Montana, San Francisco 49ers' quarterback John Brodie, San Francisco Giants' pitcher John "The Count" Montefusco, and an autographed picture of Joe Dimaggio adorn the walls of a well-kept abode lined with bookshelves filled with Jules Verne, Robert Louis Stevenson, H.G. Wells, plus a shelf reserved for John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*, *The Pearl*, *East of Eden*, *Travels With Charley*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*.

On a small table by the bed, a small rotating animal-skinned lampshade allows light to spill out of its design: a boy, peeing. Next to the lamp is a transistor radio, from which we hear the broadcast of a Giants' game.

A THIRTEEN YEAR OLD BOY sits on his bed, reading John Steinbeck's *The Red Pony*.

The boy hears the front door open, and the voices of adults. He turns off the radio, then closes his book and lays it on the bed.

MAN'S VOICE

(Offscreen)

So, Fredo, gimme the three proofs
Jesus was Italian.

FREDO

(Offscreen)

I dunno, Tazio.

TAZIO

(Offscreen)

He talked with his hands. He had
wine with every meal. He worked in
the building trades.

Tazio laughs uproariously at his own joke. Another MALE VOICE joins in.

SECOND MALE VOICE

(Offscreen)

So, Fredo, you don't think it's funny.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Offscreen)

What do you and our neighborhood cop want?

CLOSE ON the boy as he listens.

TAZIO

(Offscreen)

Have you considered our offer?

FREDO

(Offscreen)

The store's been in the family for three generations, Tazio.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Offscreen)

The answer's no.

SECOND MAN'S VOICE

(Offscreen)

We'll double our offer, Giulietta.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The two men, both in civilian clothes, stand near the front door, relaxed. The HUSBAND, Fredo, and his WIFE, Giulietta, both in their thirties, are tense.

FREDO

(To Tazio)

You been here, what? Five years?
Brooklyn boy, drafted, Fort Ord.
You get out, wash dishes in a Can-
nery Row luncheonette, sleep on
people's floors, and now you're a
restaurateur?

Pause.

MAN #2

Fredo, I've known you since grade school.

WOMAN

Cut the crap, Joe. You came to my communion, I went to the prom with your brother, blah blah blah. So what? Why are you here? Who's this guy to you?

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The boy stands poised by his bedroom door, listening in.

JOE

(Offscreen)

What kinda man lets his wife talk like that, Fredo?

TAZIO

(Offscreen)

Man who left his balls back in Sicily.

CLOSE ON the boy, confused and terrified.

BLACK OUT.

As the OPENING CREDITS roll, we see a MONTAGE of photos of a SMALL CORNER MARKET IN FLAMES: Fire licks a sign that reads PETRO'S MARKET; fire trucks circle the inferno; FIREMEN hold huge hoses that spray the building.

Then we see a BANNER HEADLINE on the *MONTEREY COUNTY BEACON*: "TWO DIE IN CANNERY ROW BLAZE: Investigators suspect arson; boy orphaned."

INT. A CAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a man's well-manicured hand holding a LAMINATED PHOTO I.D. PRESS PASS which says, at its top, ROCKY MOUNTAIN JOURNAL, and below the photo of a RUGGEDLY HANDSOME THIRTY-FIVE-ISH MAN, CODY RANSOM.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Ransom inspecting the press pass. He puts it in his pocket, then looks at the camera on the front seat next to him.

EXT. A SEVEN-ELEVEN PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Smartly-dressed Ransom exits his well-kept BMW and strides to the front door of the mini-mart.

INT. THE SEVEN-ELEVEN MARKET - NIGHT

Ransom peruses the rack display of 35mm film: Kodak or Fuji?

The TWENTY-ISH FEMALE CLERK looks at Ransom and smiles. Ransom smiles back.

A TWENTY-ISH BLACK MAN, dressed in black baggy décor, enters the store. Ransom glances at the black man, then returns to his task.

The black man whips out a gun and points it at the clerk.

BLACK MAN

Empty it out!

The black man points the gun at Ransom, then at the clerk, then at Ransom, then at the clerk as she pulls paper money out of the cash register.

Ransom stands relaxed but alert. He glances up to see if there's a surveillance camera. There is.

The black man sees where Ransom is looking. He shoots the camera, then reaches out and takes the cash from the clerk.

BLACK MAN

And gimme some o' that Wild Turkey.

The clerk looks over her shoulder at the row of liquor bottles.

RANSOM

You old enough?

BLACK MAN

'Scuse me?

RANSOM

She could lose her job, selling to a minor.

BLACK MAN

Yeah, but I ain't *buyin'* it.

CLERK

He's right, sir.

BLACK MAN

'Scuse me?

Ransom nods at the sign beside the cash register that states the law.

RANSOM

This is New Monterey, not Seaside. You want her to lose her job? *(To the clerk)* What're you, a college student? You need this job, right?

The clerk is terrified.

CLERK

Uh...yeah.

RANSOM

(To the black man)

Show the lady your I.D. Then be on your way. Don't jeopardize her job.

Muttering epithets, the black man produces his driver's license and displays it to the clerk.

BLACK MAN

(Keeping one eye on Ransom)

Y'see? I'm twenny-two.

The clerk leans into the license, then leans back and picks up a bottle of Wild Turkey. She tosses the bottle to the black man, who runs out of the store.

RANSOM

Get it? *(The clerk nods)* Call 911.

Ransom throws a five dollar bill onto the counter, pockets a roll of film, and exits the store as the clerk dials 911.

EXT. CANNERY ROW - NIGHT

With Monterey Bay in the near distance, Ransom, his press pass clipped to his shirt pocket, his camera in his right hand, strides past tourist stores and sea food restaurants, into a corridor which contains more theme-oriented stores, most of which have the words "Cannery Row" in their names.

INT. THE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We see a SIGN that says "JOHN STEINBECK BOOKSTORE" over an open glass door. Along the walls are tables, which hold bowls of food, bottles of wine, and coffee dispensers. WHITE-SMOCKED SERVERS stand behind the tables, serving MEN and WOMEN.

Ransom casually searches the crowd. His face grows alert as he sees someone.

POV Ransom: We see a SIXTY-ISH, IMMACULATELY DRESSED, PORTLY SILVER-HAIRED MAN moving smoothly through the crowd, shaking hands and making small talk. He resembles singer Tony Bennett, down to the crooked smile with the lower front teeth jutting in front of the uppers.

MAN'S VOICE

(Offscreen)

"Rocky Mountain Journal." Far from home, pilgrim?

Ransom turns to see a MAN holding a HUGE BLACK POODLE on a leash. The man is reading Ransom's press pass.

The man extends his hand to Ransom, who shakes it.

MAN

Lyle Coventry, Cannery Row Historical Society. Welcome to the opening. Any questions you have, Mister Ransom, just ask.

RANSOM

The dog?

COVENTRY

Charley.

RANSOM

From *Travels With Charley*?

COVENTRY

You know your Steinbeck! *(Beat)* Actually, this Charley's a she. The original Charley's great-great-grand-daughter.

RANSOM

What's Mr. Senestreri's connection?

COVENTRY

Tazio funded the John Steinbeck Museum in Salinas, and he's opening this bookstore on Cannery Row. He's a great fan of our Nobel Prizewinner.

RANSOM

Any truth to the rumors he owns 90% of Cannery Row?

COVENTRY

Man's a shrewd investor. Arrived here penniless, a hardworking, community-minded Italian-American. A tribute to the American Dream.

RANSOM

Inducted into the Knights of Malta in 1993? Nominated by his friend Leon Panetta for the Ellis Island Award?

COVENTRY

You've done your homework, Mr. Ransom.
(Beat) Excuse me...the ceremony's starting.

Coventry and Charley move toward the doorway, under the sign, where Senestreri and other MEN and WOMEN are taking their places behind a large red ribbon.

Ransom takes a position across the hallway with other photographers, and he kneels, his camera at the ready.

COVENTRY

Welcome! As part of our continuing salute to Monterey County's favorite son, we welcome you to our grand opening. Without further ado, please welcome Monterey Mayor Joseph Cass.

Everyone applauds.

CASS

Thanks, Lyle. *(Beat)* He came west like so many pioneers—like Steinbeck's Tom Joad—and found his fortune in the restaurant business. Then this high-school dropout whose motto is "I never let my education stand in my way" turned his energies to philanthropy, starting scholarships and charities in his lovely wife's name. He now serves on the permanent board of our local state university. Ladies and gentlemen, lovers of literature, my long-time friend and poker buddy, Tazio Senestreri!

As the applause dies down, Senestreri takes a huge pair of scissors from Coventry, who then kneels with Charley in front of a row of LOCAL DIGNITARIES.

Flash bulbs light the hallway as Senestreri wields the scissors, attempting to cut the red ribbon. Tazio gives an ironic "I'm a jerk" grin and whips out a pair of manicuring scissors from his coat pocket. Then he cuts the ribbon as everyone applauds.

A WOMAN hands a plaque to Senestreri, who, beaming his jaunty smile, takes it, holds it to his chest, and waits while more flash bulbs go off.

During the entire ceremony, Senestreri has not uttered a word.

People break up into groups as Ransom turns off his camera.

Ransom takes one last look around, then heads down the hallway toward the open air.

EXT. CANNERY ROW - NIGHT

As Ransom strolls away from the building and is admiring the view, he turns and looks back toward the building.

Just outside the entrance, Tazio Senestreri, his hands in his pants pockets, watches Ransom.

The two men regard each other.

Senestreri winks, then turns and glides toward the building.

EXT. BEHIND A NONDESCRIP APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Ransom pulls his BMW into a numbered, covered parking spot and parks.

EXT. THE FRONT DOOR OF RANSOM'S THIRD FLOOR APARTMENT - NIGHT

As Ransom approaches his front door along the third floor walkway, he slows, looks around, then steps in front of his door. He subtly examines the door and the doorframe.

Satisfied all is well, Ransom inserts his key in the door lock.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ransom's living quarters resemble an austere war room. There is very little personalization of the space, which is filled with computer, recording and video equipment, and a television. The only item that connects him with anything personal is an autographed photo of Joe Dimaggio.

Ransom turns on the television, then walks down a hallway to a bathroom. He's turned it into a darkroom, and he places his camera on a sink top after weaving through hanging, drying strips of negatives.

Ransom walks back into the front room, goes to the kitchen opens the refrigerator, pulls out and pops a beer, then strides over to his computer.

We hear various commercials from the television as Ransom fires up his computer, types in his password, then takes a swig of beer as he waits for the computer to get into gear.

TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

(Offscreen)

Welcome to Eyewitness News, covering the Central Coast. Tonight: Planning Department employees get a raise; the Monterey School District struggles with bankruptcy; but leading off tonight we turn to Celia Rodriguez with a bizarre crime report. Celia?

Ransom hits the Internet connect icon. The computer buzzes and moans.

CELIA RODRIGUEZ

(Offscreen)

Lenny, here's one for the Darwin Awards. An armed hold-up was foiled by a quick-thinking clerk. We have tape on that?

This gets Ransom's attention. He rises and goes to a TV viewing chair. He sips his beer.

On the TV, Celia Rodriguez is interviewing the clerk from the convenience store.

RODRIGUEZ

We're here with the woman who foiled the robbery. She's asked we not use her name. Tell us what happened.

WOMAN

Guy walks in, pulls a gun. I empty the register. Then he wants a bottle of Wild Turkey. This other customer goads the guy into showing me his driver's license to prove he's not underage.

RODRIGUEZ

(Barely controlling her mirth)

What happened then?

WOMAN

Guy whips it out and shows it to me.

RODRIGUEZ

Any idea who the customer was?

WOMAN

(Rolling her eyes with pleasure)
A hunk. *(She giggles)* He left right
away. But before the robber shot out
the camera, I'm sure the man was
videoed.

The TV cuts back to Celia Rodriguez, live.

RODRIGUEZ

Police wasted no time in apprehend-
Dale Earl Williams at his Seaside
home. The identity of the mystery
man? Unknown. Back to you, Lenny.

RANSOM

(Flicking off the TV)

Shit.

Ransom takes another swig of his beer, then goes back to
his computer.

Ransom types in a search engine, then types in "joseph cass
monterey."

Several citations come up. Ransom hits one. The screen
jumps, then settles on some text, with a photo.

CLOSE ON a photo of the man who introduced Tazio Senestreri
at the bookstore opening.

CLOSE ON the text as Ransom reads portions of it aloud:
"One time Monterey Police Captain Joseph Cass says entering
politics was a tough decision. But he laughs, 'Hey, the
department was politicized already, and I felt someone had
to step in and straighten things out.' Elected mayor of
Monterey in 1996, Cass has become a fixture in Central
Coast politics..."

RANSOM

I knew you in 1980, motherfucker.

Ransom reads a bit more.

RANSOM

Let's see what your buddy *Tazio's*
been up to...

Ransom punches some keys, then waits.

Ransom stares at the screen, his lips moving slightly.

RANSOM

Worth 500 million, are you? *(Beat)* Whoa!
What's this? Inducted into the Knights of
Malta, 1993? He's *bragging* about it?

Ransom leans back and drains his beer.

EXT. MONTEREY BEACON - NIGHT

The Beacon Building sits in a modern industrial park over a two-lane highway, across from the Monterey Airport. The lighted sign on the building reads "MONTEREY BEACON - A DAY-KIDDER PAPER."

INT. MONTEREY BEACON NEWSROOM - NIGHT

An ATTRACTIVE WOMAN in her mid-30s sits at her desk, in front of her personal computer, typing away. The little sign on her desk reads "JEANNINE TARALLO, CITY EDITOR."

A FAT MAN with a shoulder bag passes in front of her desk on his way to somewhere else.

JEANNINE

Vern! Whatcha got to dazzle my eye?

Vern stops.

VERN

Two rolls. The Steinbeck bookstore opening
and the convenience store robbery.

JEANNINE

Get any shots of the mystery man?

Vern laughs.

VERN

I keep tellin' ya. Find a dating service
on the Internet, Jeannie.

JEANNINE

Develop 'em soon as you can.

INT. A DARKROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a metal device, sloshing some printing paper
around in a developing tray.

RANSOM

(Offscreen)

Come out, come out, wherever you are..

Tazio Senestreri, gamely wielding the big red scissors,
flanked by the others, including Cass and Coventry, comes
into focus.

INT. THE BEACON NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Jeannine Tarallo sips from a styrofoam cup, rubs her eyes,
then leans back.

Vern drops a pile of photos on her desk.

VERN

I'll never be the next Edward Weston
at this rate.

JEANNINE

(Sifting through the photos)

I'll be your Tina Modotti. That good
enough?

VERN

Tina bled to death in a Mexican taxi.

JEANNINE

While saving the *campesinos*, yada yada
yada..

Jeannine stops at one photo.

CLOSE ON the photo. It's a crowd scene at the Steinbeck Bookstore opening, featuring Ransom to one side, talking with Lyle Coventry.

JEANNINE

Vern...who's the new guy?

Following her pointer finger, Vern looks over Jeannine's shoulders.

VERN

Press photographer.

JEANNINE

Yeah, but who? What paper? I've lived here all my life, been a journalist my whole career, Vern.

VERN

Forget it, Jeannie. He's probably married.

JEANNINE

(Ignoring the stale banter)

Can you do a monster enlargement of the press pass?

VERN

Sure.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The second bedroom of Ransom's apartment is a muscle-building gymnasium. One wall is a huge mirror.

Ransom, completely naked, watches himself as he performs several repetitions of curls with two very heavy weights and sings snatches of "My Funny Valentine."

RANSOM

"...You're my favorite work of art..."

(He grunts) "Is your figure less than Greek?" *(He grunts)* "Is your mouth a little weak?" *(He grunts)* "When you open it to speak, are you sma-art?"

INT. THE MONTEREY BEACON SNACK ROOM - NIGHT

Jeannine Tarallo is reading Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* on her break.

Vern approaches, some papers under his arm.

VERN

What, you didn't read that in high school?

JEANNINE

Steinbeck's centennial's coming up. Our favorite restaurateur is throwing a party. I've gotta interview him.

Vern tosses the papers in front of Jeannine. Jeannine goes through them.

VERN

If this paper'd invest in digital equipment, I coulda done better..

CLOSE ON an enlargement of dots.

Jeannine holds the paper away from her face and reads as best she can.

JEANNINE

Rocky Mountain Journal? Cory Random?

VERN

I'd say Cody Ransom.

JEANNINE

Never heard of that rag. And why would they be interested in a bookstore opening?

VERN

The centennial?

JEANNINE

I'm intrigued.

VERN

No, what you are, is bored.

EXT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Ransom, wearing swimming trunks, checks up and down the street, then bends down and picks up his morning paper.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Ransom peruses the paper on his kitchen counter as he grinds a fruit juice, yogurt and fresh fruit smoothie in his blender.

Ransom pours the blend into a glass, then picks up the glass and the paper, and turns to walk toward the kitchen table.

A glossy magazine insert falls out onto the floor. Ransom picks it up and reads its cover.

RANSOM

Dining on the Central Coast. More hard news from *The Beacon*.

Ransom carries the magazine and the paper and the glass to his table. He sits, sips his drink, and looks through the magazine.

RANSOM

Quiche, quiche, more quiche...

Ransom stops at a page. He rips the page out of the magazine, puts it on the table, and reads.

RANSOM

"Two guys with a dream." Oh, how quaint.

CLOSE ON the page, headed "Two guys with a dream." It's an article about Tazio Senestreri's hyper-successful Cannery Row restaurant. Ransom picks up a pencil and circles a photo of TWO SEATED YOUNG MEN in their late twenties, flanking an ELDERLY STANDING MAN who is wearing a 1960s suit, with an ultra-thin tie and a Frank Sinatra fedora, and horn-rimmed glasses. Ransom reads the caption aloud.

RANSOM

"Tazio Senestreri, left, and Frank Tripepi, right, with original backer Renzo Castelli, 1968." (Beat) Renzo Castelli? Who the hell is—or was—Renzo Castelli?

EXT. LOVERS POINT - DAY

Jeannine Tarallo sits on a bench overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

A MAN IN A BUSINESS SUIT sits next to Jeannine.

MAN

Admiring the view?

JEANNINE

I was wondering what song John Denver was thinking of as he went down...

MAN

"Rocky Mountain High"?

JEANNINE

"Take Me Home, Country Roads."

MAN

As macabre as ever, Jeannine. (He lays a small box next to Jeannine) The convenience store video. A copy. Now will you go out with me?

JEANNINE

Mike Ordoloni, you persistent Assistant DA! You been asking me out since Prom Night!

MIKE

We're fated, Jeannine.

JEANNINE

You're married, Mike.

Mike stands.

MIKE

You didn't get this video from me.

EXT. THE MONTEREY LIBRARY - DAY

Ransom parks his BMW in front of the city library. As he emerges from his car, he looks up down the street.

INT. THE LIBRARY'S ARCHIVES - DAY

Ransom is looking through filing cabinets, fingering through files.

At a table, a MAN speaks with a YOUNG HISPANIC MAN who has several files in front of him.

MAN

Sir, there's nothing in these archives about that.

YOUNG HISPANIC MAN

My Latino Studies professor swears there's a contract here between John C. Fremont and Abraham Lincoln, guaranteeing Fremont the vice presidency if he steals California from Mexico!

The archivist rolls his eyes and stands. He looks at Ransom as he speaks to the Hispanic man.

MAN

You're welcome to every drawer here, sir. (To Ransom) May I help you?

RANSOM

At least two files are missing.

MAN

(Sotto voce)

Another conspiracy theorist...

The archivist stands next to Ransom and looks at the files.

RANSOM

"Cannery Row Fires." Four files. Number one is missing.

The archivist checks.

MAN

I'm sure it's misplaced.

RANSOM

And in this drawer, four files on Tazio Senestreri. Number one's AWOL too. (*Sarcastically*) "Tazio: The Early Years."

The archivist looks in that drawer, too.

MAN

So it is.

RANSOM

Both files cover the same years.

MAN

Roughly.

RANSOM

Roughly or not, they're not here. (*He hands the archivist three files*) I'd like a copy of each article, please.

MAN

Of course. Anything else?

RANSOM

There's nothing on a man named Renzo Castelli.

MAN

I've never heard of him.

RANSOM

You new around here?

MAN

Three years. What exactly is your interest?

RANSOM

Heard any rumors about Tazio Senestreri being our local Mafia godfather?

MAN

(Blushing)

Yes. But you must not quote me.

RANSOM

I trust you'll do a thorough search.
If the files don't turn up in a week,
I'll report their theft to the local
police. Across the street.

The archivist looks around uncomfortably at the young Hispanic man. Sure enough, he's been eavesdropping on Ransom and the archivist. The young Hispanic man meets the archivist's eyes with a smirk.

YOUNG HISPANIC MAN

*(In an exaggerated
Anglo accent)*

I trust you'll do a thorough search.
If the Fremont-Lincoln contract doesn't
turn up in a week... *(He turns his hands
palms up)*

INT. JEANNINE'S CONDOMINIUM - AFTERNOON

Jeannine, dressed casually, inserts the videotape copy she received from Deputy DA Ordoloni into her VCR, on top of which sits a boxed video entitled "The Zapruder 8MM: A Thousand Frames That Shook The World."

Jeannine flops onto her favorite viewing chair and watches the videotape.

We see a static black and white shot of the clerk addressing a man's back as he peruses photographic film.

A black man bursts in, points a gun at the clerk. She gives him money. The clerk points with his gun at the shelf of bottles behind her.

The man perusing the film turns to the camera and steps forward. The black man points his gun at the man, who stops in his tracks and raises his hands.

JEANNINE

Sweet Jesus.

Jeannine hits the pause button on her remote control.

CLOSE ON the frozen image.

JEANNINE

Cody Ransom...How do you do?

EXT. A CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Well-dressed WORSHIPERS mill outside a church.

Cody Ransom stands at a distance, observing.

He spots Tazio Senestreri and his WIFE, chatting with friends, including Mayor Joe Cass, as they and other worshipers enter the church.

Jeannine Tarallo pulls up in her Volvo just down the street. She hurriedly parks.

Ransom enters the church after the Senestreri group.

Jeannine, buckling her right shoe as she walks, enters the church.

INT. THE CHURCH - DAY

As the ORGANIST plays, Ransom takes a pew seat a couple of rows behind Senestreri and his wife.

Jeannine sits a row behind Ransom, to the side. She looks around, sees some old acquaintances, and smiles to them.

The PRIEST takes his place before the congregation and begins his lecture.

PRIEST

Today we will speak of purity. From II Corinthians 6, 16-18. *(We hear the rustling of Bibles being opened)* "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

A BABY coughs, then cries, near Ransom. Its mother tries to quiet the infant. The priest stops.

Jeannine looks to see who the mother and child are. Her eyes stop as she notices Ransom. The baby stops crying.

PRIEST

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

While Jeannine studies Ransom, he seems to be boring a hole in the back of Senestreri's head.

Jeannine follows Ransom's gaze, and sees Senestreri.

PRIEST

Where is the temple of the living God?
How do we get there?

Jeannine is riveted on Ransom.

INT. A CONFSSIONAL - DAY

Ransom is fondling a small bulging felt bag on his lap as he speaks.

RANSOM

Forgive me Father, for I have sinned.

PRIEST

(Offscreen)

Yes, my son?

RANSOM

I was serving with Special Forces in Sierra Leone. I met a man in the diamond trade who claimed to be a member of Dictus Dei. There was an uprising. Many natives were killed. I saved this man's life. He gave me a bag of diamonds.

Ransom holds up the bag and shakes it, causing the diamonds to rattle.

INT. THE PRIEST'S SIDE - DAY

The priest is intrigued.

Ransom's hand appears in the little window slot, holding a diamond between his thumb and pointer finger.

PRIEST

Go on.

RANSOM

(Offscreen)

I want to donate them to the church.
I am told Mr. Senestreri runs a children's fund..

PRIEST

Mr. Senestreri does many good works.

Pause.

INT. RANSOM'S SIDE OF THE CONFESSIONAL - DAY

PRIEST

(Offscreen)

Did you smuggle these diamonds out of Sierra Leone?

RANSOM

I did.

PRIEST

(Offscreen)

Your donation will exculpate you.
Call me later this week. Perhaps I can arrange a meeting between you and Mr. Senestreri.

EXT. THE CHURCH - DAY

Ransom exits the church. He squints his eyes in the glare of the sun.

As he passes a grotto containing the Virgin Mary, Jeannine Tarallo steps out in front of Ransom.

JEANNINE

I feel like I know you.

RANSOM

Excuse me?

JEANNINE

Beyond the mystery man Cody Ransom
slash photographer slash foiler of
robberies stuff.

Ransom pushes past Jeannine.

JEANNINE

How's it hangin', Jack?

Ransom stops in his tracks. He turns.

JEANNINE

Been awhile.

RANSOM

You must have me confused with—

JEANNINE

What brings you back to our sorry part
of the world after all these years?
Mr. Petro?

RANSOM

I'm sorry. I don't—

JEANNINE

Jeannie Russo? Eighth grade English?
I sat behind you. We passed funny
notes back and forth.

Pause.

JEANNINE

I can blow your cover in my weekly
column. Or we can talk.

INT. DENNY'S - AFTERNOON

Sitting in an isolated corner booth from where Ransom can see the room, he and Jeannine are finishing up meal of cheeseburgers, French fries, and milk shakes.

JEANNINE

So what happened to them?

RANSOM

The Sierra Leone rebels took our boy,
then killed my woman.

JEANNINE

Wasn't involvement with a local woman
forbidden, under your Army rules?

RANSOM

(Bristling)

I wasn't in the Army. Any other Marine
hears you say that, and-

JEANNINE

Okay, okay, Lieutenant Colonel...hold your
napalm.

Pause. Jeannine sucks her straw.

RANSOM

It was forbidden.

JEANNINE

I don't recall you as a rule-breaker.
But that was before..

RANSOM

Kid loses his mother and father, he
kinda realizes what good rules are.

Pause. Jeannine sucks her straw.

JEANNINE

So that's why you're here. *(Beat)*
Gonna play by the rules?

RANSOM

They didn't.

JEANNINE

Want my help?

RANSOM

Look, just talking to you breaks the mission.

JEANNINE

You promise me no rough stuff, and I'll use my considerable resources to help you find out what happened in that fire. Deal?

RANSOM

Long's you realize there's no hope of a, uh, a relationship.

JEANNINE

Why, Lieutenant Colonel Jack Petro, I oughtta slap you.

RANSOM

Try it, and you'd be on your back in the blink of an eye.

Jeannine gives Ransom a Mona Lisa smile as she sucks on her straw.

JEANNINE

I'm interviewing Moby Dick tomorrow, Cap'n Ahab. It's up to you.

EXT. A LAGUNA SECA FIRING RANGE - DAY

On his belly, Ransom, a pile of pistols and rifles by his side, aims his sniper's rifle at a target placed against a far-off cliffside. He adjusts the sight. He takes aim. He fires. We hear a tremendous noise.

The target explodes.

A MAN in the next space sees the target explode. He looks over at Ransom, who squeezes off three rapid shots, all of them bull's-eyes. Ransom removes his ear protectors.

MAN

Sure that wasn't you in the Dallas Book Repository?

RANSOM

I'm a grassy knoll man, myself.

INT. TAZIO SENESTRERI'S OFFICE - DAY

Senestreri's office is an imperial place with a sweeping view of Cannery Row and Monterey Bay.

Senestreri leans back in his plush leather chair, his hands behind his head. Above him, on the wall, is a huge gold-plated collander.

Across from Senestreri sits Jeannine Tarallo, her press pass affixed to her blouse, her pen poised above her notepad.

Behind her, on a sofa, sits Lyle Coventry, acting as chaperone.

SENESTRERI

We were two kids with a dream, Jeannine. Scraped 980 bucks together and bought a beat-up old warehouse up a steep walk. Our stairway to heaven, you might say. Things were bleak at first. One night, I strained pasta through a *pillow case*.

JEANNINE

(Finishing the old story)

And your partner Tripepi got so tired of hearing that story he gave you that gold-plated collander.

Senestreri looks above and behind him.

SENESTRERI

Ri-i-i-ight. But soon we saw the light at the end of the rainbow, and the rest is mystery.

On the couch, Coventry rolls his eyes.

JEANNINE

(Her pen still poised)

Can I quote you on that?

Senestreri looks at Coventry, his palms up, with his "I'm a jerk" smile.

JEANNINE

I'm here to interview you about your Steinbeck Centennial shindig.

SENESTRERI

Our former congressman and onetime President Stanton chief-of-staff Leo Polenta's gonna deliver the keynote speech.

JEANNINE

The same Leo Polenta who nominated you for the Ellis Island Award for Most Outstanding Italian-American of the Twentieth Century?

SENESTRERI

You've done your homework!

JEANNINE

Mister Senestreri—

SENESTRERI

Tazz.

JEANNINE

Tazz—have you ever read any Steinbeck?

SENESTRERI

'Course I have. The one about the red horse, the trip with the poodle, the Oakies...James Dean was a personal friend. As my wife always says— *(Beat)* Come 'ere, take a look at Thelma.

Jeannine rises, then goes around to Senestreri's side of the desk. As she leans in to see the framed photo, she places a SMALL LISTENING DEVICE under Senestreri's desk.

CLOSE ON the photo, of a raven-haired bathing-suited beauty, circa 1960.

SENESTRERI
Miss Tulare County, 1962.

JEANNINE
You met her through those rich Armenians
from Fresno, right?

Lyle Coventry checks his watch.

COVENTRY
Uh, Tazz...

Senestreri waves Coventry off.

SENESTRERI
You've done your homework.

JEANNINE
You managed a motel, fresh outta the
Army, south of Fresno. Rich Armenian
banged his mistress there every Wednesday.
One day the wife shows up. You ran inter-
ference till the Armenian ditched his
whore. He owed you.

SENESTRERI
And the rest is mystery.

JEANNINE
Speaking of mysteries...who's Renzo Cast-
elli?

Pause.

SENESTRERI
I knew your mother, Jeannine. *(Beat)*
Tell ya what. Bring a date to the Fish
Factory. Dinner's on me.

Lyle Coventry gently touches Jeannine's arm. She rises.

SENESTRERI
I look forward to your puff piece.

Jeannine smiles, then leaves.

SENESTRERI

Jeeze, I'd like to do that broad.

COVENTRY

Tazz, that's such bad taste...

SENESTRERI

Why? I fucked her mother.

COVENTRY

She know that?

SENESTRERI

Not yet.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ransom, in his underwear, wearing headphones, sits at his desk. He's laughing to himself.

RANSOM

"Not yet." That's rich, Tazz.

INT. OUTSIDE BEACON EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Writing on a door says "Lauren Hackford, Editor-in-Chief."

A hand raps it three times.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Offscreen)

Entre vous.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Seated behind her desk, LAUREN HACKFORD, a WELL-COIFFED MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, is reading a book by Martha Stewart. She looks over the book at Jeannine Tarallo.

HACKFORD

Jeannine! Do sit down.

Jeannine sits in a chair across the desk. She looks around the office and notes the generic Monterey County framed posters on the textured walls: Pebble Beach, Big Sur, and a wildflowered meadow entitled "Steinbeck Country."

HACKFORD

I've been going over your copy. The Steinbeck Centennial piece.

We hear some bubbling in the corner, and see a cappuccino machine sputtering away. Hackford goes to it and raises the small pot by its handle.

HACKFORD

Cappuccino?

Jeannine hesitates.

JEANNINE

Sure.

Hackford pours two cups and hands one to Jeannine.

HACKFORD

Your interview was entirely inappropriate.

JEANNINE

*(Imitating Hackford's
mandarin diction)*

A complaint was lodged?

HACKFORD

Mister Coventry.

Jeannine holds her cup with her little finger curled. She sips daintily.

HACKFORD

We don't do hit pieces here at the Beacon.

JEANNINE

Ah, yes. Lifestyle is our forte.

HACKFORD

Do you mock me?

JEANNINE

Au contraire. I affirm you.

HACKFORD

We'll just run the press release.

JEANNINE

Under my by-line?

HACKFORD

If you wish.

JEANNINE

Lauren—may I call you Lauren? (Hackford nods) You came here six months ago from where? Akron?

HACKFORD

Cincinnati.

JEANNINE

Are you aware that our publisher's husband, the lawyer for Tazio Senestreri, has a serious cocaine habit?

HACKFORD

We don't trade in gossip at Day-Kidder Publications. Human interest, yes. Mudslinging, no.

Jeannine moves to place her cappuccino cup on the desk. Hackford grabs a coaster and slides it under the cup, just before it hits the polished wood surface.

JEANNINE

Did you know this paper has never, in over twenty years, run an investigative series on the Cannery Row fires?

HACKFORD

What fires?

JEANNINE

The dozen or so which the feds called "suspicious in origin." For which no one was ever charged. In which two people died. Have you ever wondered, with your journalism degree from Kent State, how a Brooklyn-born college drop-out busboy, within a decade, owned forty per cent of Cannery Row, and by 1981 was worth 100 million dollars?

HACKFORD

And this would be...?

JEANNINE

Tazio Senestreri.

Pause.

HACKFORD

Well, I can't exactly charge you, Ms. Tarallo, with anti-Italian-American bigotry. Class envy, perhaps?

JEANNINE

Oh, let's call it internalized ethnic self-hatred and be done with it.

HACKFORD

Mr. Senestreri is happily-married. Maybe your animus is propelled by garden variety envy.

Hackford's phone rings. She presses the speaker.

HACKFORD

Yes?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Mr. Polenta's on line two.

Hackford waves Jeannine out of the room as she picks up the telephone.

HACKFORD

Leo! How's Sylvia? 'Scuse me. *(She cups her hand over the mouthpiece and calls out to Jeannine)* Remember—this is no longer a union paper.

EXT. THE STREET IN FRONT OF RANSOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ransom, wearing a suit, stands down the street a bit from his building.

Jeannine pulls up in her Volvo.

Ransom jumps in.

INT. JEANNINE'S VOLVO - NIGHT

JEANNINE

Wouldn't hurt to let me come in,
would it?

RANSOM

My place is off-limits.

Ransom gestures with his head for Jeannine to drive.

EXT. THE FISH FACTORY - NIGHT

What used to be an old cafeteria for cannery workers is now a super-snazzy restaurant at the top of a long stairway.

Ransom takes Jeannine by her arm about halfway up.

INT. THE FISH FACTORY - NIGHT

A THIRTY-ISH YEAR OLD MAN greets Jeannine as she and Ransom wait for their table.

MAN

Ms. Tarallo? Bob Senestreri. Tazio's
son. We've reserved a table for you and
your guest in our Presidential Room.
This way?

Senestreri Junior leads Jeannine and Ransom through the bar, through an elegant dining room full of guests, down a hall, up a stairway, and into a room affording a 360-degree view of Monterey Bay and the Peninsula.

There is only one table, immaculately set, with a huge display of rare orchids in the center. A TUXEDOED WAITER stands in a corner.

Senestreri Junior pulls out a chair for Jeannine. She sits. Then Senestreri Junior assists Ransom into his chair.

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

You are both guests of the Fish Factory.
(To the waiter) Silvio?

The waiter approaches the table. He places book-sized menus in front of Jeannine and Ransom.

SILVIO
May I suggest cocktails?

JEANNINE
Old Fashioned.

RANSOM
Manhattan.

SILVIO
I recommend the Bistecca di Vitello, or
the Escargot en Toscani.

Silvio the waiter leaves.

JEANNINE
What do you make of Junior?

RANSOM
The light at the end of the rainbow.

JEANNINE
The rest is mystery!

EXT. THE STREET IN FRONT OF RANSOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A Rolls Royce slows in front of Ransom's building, then
stops. We see TWO FIGURES in the front seat.

INT. ROLLS ROYCE - NIGHT

Lit by the dashboard, Tazio Senestreri cranes his neck for
a view of the building.

SENESTRERI
What a dump.

JOE CASS
Dago Hill was too upscale.

Both men laugh.

SENESTRERI
Think he keeps his diamonds there?

CASS
In a coffee can over the refrigerator.

SENESTRERI

Just like his mother.

This breaks them up.

INT. THE PRESIDENTIAL ROOM - NIGHT

A SINGER serenades Jeannine and Ransom with an Italian love song as they sip their espressos by candlelight, the remains of their desserts in front of them.

As the song ends, and the singer departs, Bob Senestreri reappears.

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

The Fish Factory experience wouldn't be complete without a tour.

Jeannine looks at Ransom. He nods.

INT. A GREEN CURTAINED DINING ROOM - NIGHT

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

Presidents Ford, Reagan, Bush and Stanton entertained their First Ladies here.

JEANNINE

What, Jimmy Carter couldn't leave his Rose Garden?

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

This way...

The party leaves the room and descends down a flight of stairs, into a purple-curtained room that resembles something out of the Hearst Castle, complete with gaslights growing out of the walls and crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. A huge carved wooden table, surrounded by straight-backed carved chairs, dominates the room. One entire wall is a stained glass window depicting medieval scenes.

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

The Malta Room. Dad picked up Mussolini's dining room set on one of his Italian jaunts.

JEANNINE

You rent it out for youth rallies?

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

This is reserved for my father's charitable foundations.

RANSOM

The Knights of Malta?

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

And others... *(Beat)* You are familiar with that venerable organization?

RANSOM

It was formed during the Crusades.

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

To combat Islam, yes.

JEANNINE

So where are they, now that we need 'em?

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

Working globally, as we speak.

RANSOM

What about Dictus Dei?

SENESTRERI JUNIOR

The mythical secret society run out of the Vatican?

RANSOM

Yeah, that poisoned the mythical Pope in 1978, and overthrew the mythical Allende government in the mythical country of Chile. Whose members include the mythical-

Jeannine squeezes Ransom's arm.

JEANNINE

We've had a long day, Mr. Senestreri. Please give my regards to your father.

EXT. RANSOM'S STREET - NIGHT

Jeannine's Volvo comes to a stop by the curb.

INT. THE VOLVO - NIGHT

JEANNINE

Care for a nightcap? Wanna show me
your lithographs?

RANSOM

Look, my place is, uh-

JEANNINE

The protoypical bachelor pad. Old pizza
boxes, beer cans, Cheryl Tiegs on the
wall. Look, I'm not judgmental. Even lava
lamps are acceptable. *(Beat)* I have some
hot leads. We'll talk strategy.

Pause. Ransom opens the car door.

RANSOM

Come on.

EXT. RANSOM'S DOOR - NIGHT

Ransom and Jeannine arrive at his door. Pulling out a pen
flashlight, Ransom inspects around the door's edges.

Satisfied, Ransom inserts his key into the lock.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As the door opens, Jeannine enters first. Ransom flicks on
the light, revealing the surgically clean War Room.

Jeannine whistles.

JEANNINE

Straight outta *Boy's Life* magazine.

RANSOM

Décor by *Soldier of Fortune*.

While Ransom fires up his computer, Jeannine examines the walls, now covered with blown up photocopies of old *Beacon* articles about the Cannery Row fires.

Jeannine stops in front of the autographed picture of Joe Dimaggio.

JEANNINE

Skinflint. Insecure. Vain.

RANSOM

*(Looking at the
computer screen)*

Who?

JEANNINE

Mister 56 Game Hitting Streak.

Jeannine pulls a book from a shelf: *Sex Lives of the Popes*, by Nigel Cawthorne.

RANSOM

Must you pop everyone's bubbles?

JEANNINE

At least three of the games in his streak were saved by official scorers' calls.

As Jeannine leafs through the book, her eyebrows rise and fall. She is engrossed while she speaks.

RANSOM

Which proves the other Mister Monroe's adage that it's important to be well-liked.

JEANNINE

Huh?

RANSOM

Arthur Miller. *Death of a Salesman*.

JEANNINE

(Moving on to other clippings)
Touche. (She stops at a particular clipping)
So here it is.

CLOSE ON "TWO DIE IN CANNERY ROW BLAZE: Investigators suspect arson; boy orphaned."

As Jeannine reads the article, Ransom hits the button on his answering machine.

MACHINE RECORDING

Mister Ransom, this is Bishop Agostini, regarding your meeting with Mister Senestreri. Can you call me please at 555-8643?

Jeannine moves to another article on the wall.

JEANNINE

This article says that a fund was established for you in your parents' name.

RANSOM

I never saw a penny.

Jeannine walks over to Ransom, who's back in front of his computer screen. She places a hand on Ransom's shoulder.

JEANNINE

Maybe you should look into it.

Pause.

RANSOM

Tell me about your mother.

Jeannine pulls her hand away as though Ransom's shoulder contained an electrical current.

JEANNINE

What's she got to do with this?

RANSOM

You wanna "talk strategy"? Or is there some other reason you're here?

Pause.

JEANNINE

We're estranged. When Dad died, I said some harsh things.

RANSOM

Where can I reach her?

JEANNINE

Ebenezer's Card Room, in Marina. She's a Texas Hold 'Em junkie. *(Beat)* What's Bishop Agostini want?

RANSOM

The old pedophile? I wanna make a significant contribution to one of Senestreri's Dictus Dei front groups. A children's charity.

JEANNINE

What do you know about Dictus Dei?

RANSOM

I got a diamond dealer in Sierra Leone drunk one night at a card game. Came away with a wild story and a bag of loot.

Pause.

JEANNINE

They recruited me. At Catholic school. After you were sent away to military school.

RANSOM

They were blatant?

JEANNINE

In English class, the teacher told me I should consider a career in journalism. *(Beat)* Then when I went to confession, Bishop Agostini—you said he's a *pedophile*?

RANSOM

Go on.

JEANNINE

He told me he could arrange a full ride university scholarship at a journalism school.

RANSOM

You accept?

Jeannine is examining something on a bookshelf.

JEANNINE

I saw the set-up. Then I compared notes with others of our best and brightest. Dictus Dei's aim was to install us all over the world as soldiers against communism.

CLOSE ON TWO ANIMAL PAWS IN A SMALL PLASTIC BAGGIE.

RANSOM

You became a journalist anyway.

JEANNINE

(Examining the animal paws)

Not for them. Instead, I write puff pieces for Day-Kidder. Go figure. *(Beat)* What are these from?

RANSOM

Koala bears. Their fingerprints are indistinguishable from humans'.

JEANNINE

I'm imagining sinister applications.

Ransom doesn't take the bait.

RANSOM

Got an assignment for you. You know anyone in the DA's office?

JEANNINE

Mike Ordoloni.

Ransom bursts out laughing.

RANSOM

Michael "Three Balls" Ordoloni? (Sotto voce) Another one who couldn't get away.

JEANNINE

I heard that. Some of us have roots here, Jack. *(Beat)* Sorry.

RANSOM

I want you to get every scrap of paper about my parents' fire--and their deaths. There's gotta be a file somewhere.

JEANNINE

Say please. Say pretty please with sugar on it.

Ransom just stares deadpan at Jeannine.

JEANNINE

Say hi to Mom. Buy her a drink.

EXT. RANSOM'S COVERED PARKING SPACE - MORNING

Ransom, using a mirror on the end of a pole, checks under his BMW.

EXT. EBENEZER'S CARD ROOM - MORNING

Ransom's BMW pulls up in front of Ebenezer's Card Room.

INT. EBENEZER'S CARD ROOM BAR - MORNING

Ransom opens the door, letting in the morning sun. He closes the door and surveys the joint. We see a pool table, a low bandstand, and a long bar. Eight inch by 14 inch framed pastel caricatures of the bar's patrons are lined up all around the room's walls.

A CHINESE WOMAN looks up from her newspaper.

WOMAN

Yes?

RANSOM

The card room?

The woman cocks her head toward the rear. Ransom sees a door.

INT. EBENEZER'S CARD ROOM - MORNING

Ransom enters the card room and surveys it: old pine-paneled walls, a scuffed red carpet, signs all over the walls: ENGLISH ONLY, TEXAS HOLD 'EM RULES, ads for beer.

Only one table is being used, and it's filled to capacity with middle-aged Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, an Arab, and a WHITE WOMAN IN HER LATE FIFTIES. The dealer is a CHINESE WOMAN.

Ransom strolls to the back of the room, near a coffee machine, and sees a glass-paned trophy display case. He sees a bowling trophy, a Pony League baseball trophy, and some yellowing newspaper clippings about Ebenezer's charity work. Ransom's eyes stop at a certificate.

CLOSE ON the certificate: It's from the CHILDREN'S SUPPORT FUND, lauding Ebenezer Morton for his community service to the charity. It's signed by Tazio Senestreri.

Ransom strolls over to the money and chips booth, next to which is an ATM machine. A CHINESE WOMAN greets him from behind a barred window.

Ransom hands the woman 100 dollars and receives some chips.

Ransom goes to the table and waits for a player to leave.

CHINESE DEALER

Who else want to stay in?

LATINO MAN

Thirty dollar. I'm go!

The white woman slides her chips toward the dealer. The Arab and a Native American do the same. The dealer turns over a card.

NATIVE AMERICAN #2

So juicy! So-o-o juicy!

The dealer slides the pile of chips to him.

NATIVE AMERICAN #2

I am a river! A big, flowing river!

The white woman lights a cigarette. The Arab points to a sign on the wall.

CLOSE ON the sign: NO SMOKING. Scrawled beneath this prohibition are the words "Except sumtimes."

The woman stands, picks up her purse, and leaves the room, into the bar.

DEALER

You want in, Mister?

Ransom shakes his head and follows the white woman into the bar.

INT. EBENEZER'S BAR - MORNING

In the empty room, the woman sits at a corner table, smoking, nursing a beer.

Ransom approaches her table.

RANSOM

I've decided not to play. You want my chips?

The woman studies Ransom, then chuckles, sending a plume of smoke into the darkened bar.

WOMAN

What's your angle? *(Beat)* Siddown. And don't waste my time. I gotta get to work.

Ransom sits.

RANSOM

Work?

WOMAN

I'm a lice remover. Guaranteed results in 24 hours. *(She pulls a card out of her purse and holds it aloft)* I can prove it.

Ransom reaches for the card.

WOMAN

In exchange for your chips. I'm into equal value.

Ransom gives the woman his chips. She hands him her card.

RANSOM

(Looking over the card)

I'll be damned. "Beth Russo, Lice Consultant, Salinas School District. Heads Checked & Cleaned. Total Clean-outs. Satisfaction Guaranteed."

BETH RUSSO

Used to be a Pebble Beach real estate agent. Now I check farmworkers' kids for lice. *(Beat)* And you are--?

Pause. Ransom doesn't know which name to use.

RANSOM

Jack Petro.

Beth Russo focuses on Ransom. She stares at him.

BETH

What a handsome man you've become. What brings you back to Monterey? And where the hell have you been?

RANSOM

You have any sick days coming?

BETH

I'll call the office.

EXT. A WEEDY CANNERY ROW LOT - DAY

A quickly-built platform covered in red, white and blue bunting stands in front of a dilapidated aluminum warehouse.

Several men, including Tazio Senestreri, Joseph Cass and Lyle Coventry, mill about on the platform, chatting away.

In front of the platform, men and women wearing press passes mill about. Jeannine Tarallo and Vern stand by a low table sagging with food.

Lyle Coventry taps the microphone. All the reporters come to attention. The men on the stage take their seats.

COVENTRY

Thank you all for coming. Attorney McGrey Lackey has an important announcement.

Jeannine turns to Verne, his camera poised.

JEANNINE

(Whispering)

Our publisher's cokehead hubby.

VERNE

Be good, sister.

McGrey Lackey steps up to the microphone.

LACKEY

The Fish Factory experience continues! We're pleased to announce that escrow has closed on the sale of three hotels to a group of investors led by Tazio Senestreri. Purchase price was \$40 million dollars. Better yet, in a month, construction of a luxury hotel will begin on this very spot. Questions?

JEANNINE

Jeannine Tarallo, *Monterey County Beacon*.

Mayor Cass turns to Senestreri.

CASS

Somewhere, a village is missing its idiot.

JEANNINE

Your press release states that investors include the two Armenian-American gentlemen from Fresno, plus two venerable judges: Roy Dalton, a retired Monterey County Superior Court judge who also owns property in Carmel and Carmel Valley...

JEANNINE

(Continued)

...and Richard Aldrich, who owns a home
in Pebble Beach—

LACKEY

Is there a question hidden somewhere here?

JEANNINE

Aldrich lives in Southern California.
Where he is a justice for the state's
Second Appellate District.

LACKEY

And--?

JEANNINE

Am I the only one who sees what is, at
best, the appearance of impropriety?

Senestreri sits calmly, smiling beatifically.

LACKEY

Anything else, before we move on?

JEANNINE

This new hotel. It's part of a chain
run by a reputed mob family out of Chi-
cago. And would you also comment on the
speed by which the Coastal Commission
approved its construction?

LACKEY

Tazio Senestreri is a hardworking man
who employs thousands of local citizens
in his businesses. Are you against full
employment, and the massive revenue this
project will bring to our tourist-depend-
ent area?

CLOSE ON Jeannine's notebook: She writes, under "Lackey,"
"No comment."

Senestreri rises, and glides to the microphone.

SENESTRERI

Those of us who love Monterey will be thrilled to know that my partner, Frank Tripepi, and his lovely wife Viola, are still in the Tripepi homeland, the Sicilian fishing village of Isola delle Femmine, scouting out new recipes for the Fish Factory!

A REPORTER raises his hand.

SENESTRERI

Yes, my friend.

REPORTER

Will you still be leading the Monterey Delegation at the next Republican National Convention?

Senestreri flashes his crooked grin.

SENESTRERI

Until my friend Leo Polenta persuades me to become a Democrat!

Everyone laughs.

SENESTRERI

Seriously, folks. Irregardless of Leon, whose Italian immigrant parents started a tiny Walnut Farm in Carmel Valley, whose son rose to such heights in the Stanton Administration, I believe the Republican Party is our best bet against Islamic terrorism. And prosperity's best friend. I mean, lookit me, will ya? A Brooklyn kid with a dream, I never let my lack of education get in the way! I remember the time, back in '68, when-

JEANNINE

Excuse me, sir?

SENESTRERI

The pretty lady in the back.

JEANNINE

Speaking of 1968, who is Renzo Castelli?

Senestreri flashes his pearly whites. He pauses for effect.

SENESTRERI

My dentist.

This breaks everyone up.

EXT. THE BIG SUR COAST - DAY

Ransom's BMW cruises southward on Highway One.

INT. RANSOM'S BMW - DAY

BETH

Life made you bitter, Jack?

Ransom smiles to himself.

BETH

Or just royally pissed off?

Ransom keeps driving.

BETH

Was I really a MILTF?

RANSOM

Huh?

BETH

Mom I'd Like To...you know...

RANSOM

Ask Mike Ordoloni.

BETH

*There was a boy with a Mommy Complex.
Even married a yid.*

Beth points ahead, to the right.

BETH

Turn right here.

EXT. HIGHWAY ONE - DAY

Ransom's BMW turns right, into an entrance road, past a sign that reads "Stony Point Restaurant."

EXT. OUTDOOR EATING AREA - DAY

Ransom and Beth, sipping espresso and eating raspberry sherbet with a sprig of mint, sit at a table on a red-bricked patio overlooking the crashing Pacific Ocean. They are alone.

Beth visors her eyes with a flat palm and looks out to sea.

BETH

The whales are migrating. *(Beat)* And you've returned. Why?

RANSOM

I want to know who killed my parents.

Beth sighs.

BETH

Don't we all?

RANSOM

May I be indelicate?

BETH

I like rough men.

RANSOM

Were you Tazio Senestreri's mistress?

BETH

Ha! Can't tell the players without a scorecard.

RANSOM

Meaning?

BETH

Meaning he was rich and Italian. I was one of many.

RANSOM

My mother?

BETH

Lord, no. Jack, I was a successful real estate agent selling million dollar homes in Pebble Beach. When some big actor put his estate on the market, I handled it. Tazz and Miss Tulare County bought it. After screwing me, Tazz did the same with my commission. I sued. He framed me by claiming I'd known about a crack in the foundation.

RANSOM

Did you?

BETH

There was no problem. Tazz paid off the real estate board, and now I pick lice from little Mexicans. All things considered, I prefer my present clientele.

Beth lights a cigarette, then checks to see no one's around to complain.

BETH

You seen Jeannine?

RANSOM

Yeah.

A waiter appears.

WAITER

Ma'am. No smoking.

Beth stubs out her cigarette.

BETH

We're all law-abiding folks here.

The waiter leaves.

RANSOM

You have any leads?

BETH

The usual suspects. *(Beat)* Did you know Fredo and Giulietta petitioned the Coastal Commission for a whole year to install a sprinkler system? *They couldn't get a permit.* Before the embers cool off, Uncle Tazz gets the land and is *granted permission to build.*

RANSOM

'Scuse me?

BETH

Check the Recorder's Office. Guy named Renzo Castelli fronted for him, bought the land. Tazz built some kind of import store there.

Beth shields her eyes and stares out to sea.

BETH

Jack...Fredo played around. You might check into it.

Ransom reaches into his inner jacket pocket and pulls something small out of it.

Ransom places the shiny thing in front of Beth.

RANSOM

I'm flush. Take it.

Beth picks up the diamond, then holds it up to the sunlight.

BETH

Like I said, equal trades. Here's one: Before Tazz was inducted into the Knights of Malta, they sent him to charm school for two weeks. Afraid he'd embarrass 'em.

RANSOM

Who was his teacher? Tony Bennett?

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MONTEREY POLICE DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Deputy DA Mike Ordoloni paces back and forth. He checks his watch.

Jeannine runs up.

JEANNINE

Sorry I'm late. It's the journalist's lot.

ORDOLONI

I'm due in court in an hour. Now look. You so much as open your mouth, I'll staple it shut.

Ordoloni opens the door to the building.

INT. THE ARCHIVES - AFTERNOON

Ordoloni and Jeannine walk down an archive aisle, checking the dates on the ends of the metal cases.

ORDOLONI

I've got two tickets for the San Francisco Opera this weekend.

JEANNINE

Take the yid, Mike. I'll babysit your kids. *(Beat)* Here.

Jeannine leads Ordoloni down an aisle, running her fingers against the folders as she reads the dates.

Jeannine finds a file folder and pulls it from its dusty brethren.

Moving her body to accommodate the low lighting, Jeannine opens the file and glances through the papers.

At the back of the file, Jeannine finds two pieces of thick plastic.

ORDOLONI

What are those?

Jeannine holds an x-ray up to the light.

JEANNINE

Proof that Fredo and Giulietta Petro
were executed.

Ordoloni picks up the other x-ray and holds it up to the
light.

ORDOLONI

This appears to be a bullet hole in the
back of the skull.

JEANNINE

Either they were executed in the store,
or brought there, before it was hit by
Italian lightning.

ORDOLONI

There an autopsy?

Jeannine rifles through the file. She pulls out a piece of
paper.

JEANNINE

"Cause of death undetermined."

ORDOLONI

Who signed it?

JEANNINE

Joe Meyer, Coroner.

ORDOLONI

He died a decade ago.

Jeannine turns to Ordoloni.

ORDOLONI

Before you ask, no. Natural causes.

JEANNINE

There's no statute of limitations on
murder, Mike.

ORDOLONI

What, I'm supposed to re-open this as
a murder investigation? No way.

JEANNINE

What's the opera?

Ordoloni is puzzled, then he puts it together.

ORDOLONI

You'll go to the opera if I push for this?

JEANNINE

I'd even wake up next to you in the Fairmont Hotel.

Pause.

ORDOLONI

No.

JEANNINE

Then I'll break it in my column.

Jeannine pulls out a mini-camera and starts photographing pages.

ORDOLONI

Jeannine, please. There's gotta be another way.

JEANNINE

Go home to the yid and think it over.

ORDOLONI

That's a government-issued camera. Where'd you get it?

JEANNINE

Mutual friend.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Ransom pulls his BMW into a parking spot next to a gold Mercedes with personalized plates that read "CNRVROW."

INT. AN OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Bishop Agostini's office, where Tazio Senestreri sits chatting with the priest, is dark, yet luminous. There's a soft knock at the door.

AGOSTINI

Come in.

Ransom enters. Senestreri looks him over with a gleam in his eye.

AGOSTINI

Mister Ransom. Good to see you. Tazio Senestreri, Cody Ransom.

Senestreri rises and shakes Ransom's hand. Agostini sits behind his desk.

AGOSTINI

We're here to discuss a contribution to one of Mr. Senestreri's charitable foundations. Your gift, Mr. Ransom, is tax deductible.

SENESTRERI

After a test in a BrillianceScope Analyzer.

Ransom lays some diamonds on Agostini's desk.

Senestreri picks one up and examines it.

SENESTRERI

Bishop Agostini has explained to me how these came to you. In a sense, I take it, you're returning them to the organization from which they came.

RANSOM

In a sense.

SENESTRERI

We look very kindly upon such...integrity. Do you seek a position on our board?

RANSOM

(To Agostini)

I have a question or two.

AGOSTINI

Of course.

RANSOM

Do you take John 14:6 literally?

AGOSTINI

We are an inclusive church. We believe the desire for goodness is the same as as accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior.

SENESTRERI

Could you decipher this for us pagans?

RANSOM

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

SENESTRERI

I got around *that*. The Father here told me about the Baptism of Desire. All you gotta-have to do is try to imitate Christ and you're in.

RANSOM

Imitate Christ. A novel concept.

INT. THE BEACON NEWSROOM - AFTERNOON

Jeannine, her journalist's hormones bursting from her skin, bursts into the room. She rushes to her desk, sits at her word processor, and sees a post-it sticker on the screen.

CLOSE ON the sticker: "See me. -Lauren"

INT. LAUREN HACKFORD'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Lauren Hackford stands at her window, admiring the view of Monterey Bay. A television tuned to CNN at low volume sits on a corner table. There's a knock at the door.

HACKFORD

Come in.

Jeannine enters. She looks around. Behind her, TWO ARMED SECURITY OFFICERS stand against the wall.

HACKFORD

I warned you about inappropriate behavior at press conferences.

JEANNINE

Two judges, one of them on the Appellate Court, are in business with Senestreri. That's off-limits? Or did I embarrass our publisher's cokehead shyster husband?

HACKFORD

You have 30 minutes to clear out your desk. We've downloaded your hard drive, in case you get any ideas. Here's a check for two weeks' salary.

As Hackford slides an envelope across her desk, something catches Jeannine's eye on the television.

JEANNINE

Turn it up. *(Beat)* Turn it up!

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN: "Pebble Beach Couple Die On Italian Vacation."

We see Jeannine's finger go to the volume button.

TV ANNOUNCER

...Tripepi and his wife were visiting his grandparents' village.

The television image shifts to videotape of the smoking wreckage of a car at the bottom of a cliff, near the waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

TV ANNOUNCER

(Offscreen)

According to witnesses, another car tried to pass them on a dangerous curve. As details come in, we'll report them.

The announcer reappears on the screen.

ANNOUNCER

Again: Fabled restaurateur Frank Tripepi and his wife, of Pebble Beach, California, dead in a car crash. Our California affiliates are attempting to reach Tripepei's partner, Tazio Senestreri, for comment.

Lauren Hackford turns off the TV with her remote control.

HACKFORD

Jeannine. Call Senestreri's office.
See if you can-

JEANNINE

Wait. Does this mean I'm re-hired?

HACKFORD

Of course it does!

JEANNINE

Great! *(Beat)* I quit.

INT. AGOSTINI'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

AGOSTINI

I take it, then, that you are withdrawing
your offer?

RANSOM

Christ is at the core of this church,
yet you won't give me a yes or no on
John 14:6?

SENESTRERI

I've had it up to here with this
angels-on-the-head-of-a-pin bullshit.
(To Ransom) You gonna shit or get off
the pot?

AGOSTINI

Mister Senestreri!

RANSOM

(To Senestreri)

Maybe you and I can work out something
between ourselves.

Senestreri walks right up to Ransom and stares down at him.

SENESTRERI

Okay, we can start with you coming clean
about who you really are.

Ransom stares at Senestreri.

SENESTRERI

USMC Lieutenant Colonel Jack Petro. After surveillance work in the China Sea, where you designed a new computer program, you were promoted, then transferred to the Balkans, where you distinguished yourself. A special TDY assignment sent you to the Third Special Forces Group in Sierra Leone, where you served with those Army guys you Marines despise. Then you shacked up with a native and had a kid. Am I getting warm?

Ransom is at a loss. No one ever gets the drop on him.

Father Agostini can't believe his eyes.

AGOSTINI

Jack Petro?

Ransom stands, and looks Senestreri right in the eye.

AGOSTINI

Gentlemen! Please!

RANSOM

How do you know this?

SENESTRERI

I got a global reach, bay-bee!

AGOSTINI

Please!

SENESTRERI

Your African whore and the tarbaby were killed. *'Cause you fucked up.*

Ransom coolly explodes with a martial arts move that throws Senestreri to the floor.

Agostini reaches for his phone.

At that moment, a NUN bursts into the room, knocking as she enters.

NUN

Bishop Agostini, I have—

The nun sees Senestreri getting up from the floor.

NUN

-bad news from Italy. (To Senestreri)
Mister Senestreri, your partner and his
wife are dead. A car crash in Italy.

Senestreri has risen only as far as his knees. He stops.

SENESTRERI

Frankie...

Bishop Agostini still can't get over the fact that Jack
Petro has returned to Monterey after all these years. Ago-
stini walks carefully over to Ransom and puts a hand on his
shoulder.

AGOSTINI

Little Jackie Petro...how've you been?

RANSOM

I still tingle when I remember your
hand jobs.

As though spiked with thousands of volts of electricity,
Father Agostini's hand jerks away from Ransom's shoulder.

Tazio Senestreri's still on his knees, oblivious to
everything but the news of the Tripepis' deaths.

SENESTRERI

Frankie...

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Ransom, naked, is doing stretching exercises while
listening to a playback, over his computer's external
speakers, of the bug Jeannine put in Senestreri's office.

SENESTRERI

(Offscreen)

...You got the address, right? And make
sure the card reads "To Thelma, You're
still the Queen of Tulare County. Tazz."
Okay. 'Bye.

We hear the sound of a telephone hanging up.

SENESTRERI

(Offscreen)

She loves when I have shit delivered.

Ransom continues stretching.

RANSOM

(Imitating Senestreri)

She loves when I have shit delivered.

OTHER VOICE

(Offscreen)

A fur coat. Nice. *(Beat)* Any news yet on the biopsy?

SENESTRERI

(Offscreen)

No. *(Beat)* Dad died from the Big C. I'm keepin' my fingers crossed. Don't tell my wife, okay?

OTHER VOICE

(Offscreen)

We keep getting calls for comments on Frank's and Viola's deaths. You wanna stay unavailable for comment? In grief-stricken confusion?

SENESTRERI

(Offscreen)

You're the word man, Lyle. Let's milk it awhile, shall we?

Ransom reaches for the remote control. He points it at the computer and turns off the sound as he approaches the desk.

Ransom sits and fires up the computer.

EXT. THE STREET OUTSIDE RANSOM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jeannine pulls up in her Volvo. She checks her face and hair in the rearview mirror.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

CLOSE ON the computer screen: We see a PORNOGRAPHIC WEBSITE selling videos.

Ransom's looking at the computer screen as he speaks into the telephone.

RANSOM

Yeah, that's right. *Sicilian Sluts*, plus the one with the transvestite nuns. *Butt-hole Bacchanal*. Right. (Beat) A little surprise for a friend. Thelma Senestreri. Have the card read, "To Thelma, You're still the Queen of Tulare County. Tazz." (Beat) The name on the credit card? Tazio Senestreri. 16686 Crow's Nest Drive, Pebble Beach, California, 93903. (Beat) Can you overnight it? Thanks.

The doorbell rings. Ransom clicks off the computer, then goes to the door peephole and peers through it.

RANSOM

Just a minute!

Ransom reaches for a purple silk robe, pulls it on, then opens the door as he ties it tightly closed.

JEANNINE

(As she enters)

Have you heard?

RANSOM

Senestreri's partner and his wife were killed in Italy. Boo-hoo. Were you tailed?

JEANNINE

Huh?

RANSOM

I told you. Every time you come here, you check for tails. Remember?

Jeannine tosses a roll of film to Ransom.

JEANNINE

Develop this ASAP.

RANSOM

Lemme get a quick shower first.

Ransom enters the bathroom and shuts the door. We hear the shower start.

JEANNINE

(Hollering through the door)

This is Pulitzer Prize stuff, Jack!

(Beat) I got a theory on Renzo Castelli!

Ransom doesn't reply. Jeannine goes to one of Ransom's bookcases. She pulls out a book called *Getting Even 2: More Dirty Tricks from the Master of Revenge*, by George Hayduke, and sits on the couch.

CLOSE ON THE BOOK'S COVER, which shows two images of the same man, with huge screws through his head.

Jeannine thumbs through the book, then lays it down.

Jeannine goes over to Ransom's computer desk and starts to snoop. She hears the shower stop. She keeps snooping.

When Jeannine hears the doorknob start to turn, she assumes a relaxed posture, facing the bathroom.

Ransom emerges, with pants and no shirt, drying his hair.

JEANNINE

Quick shower, indeed.

RANSOM

Okay, what's up, Woodstein?

JEANNINE

I was fired, then rehired, then quit, in about ten seconds.

RANSOM

That's my girl.

JEANNINE

Ordoloni and I photographed your parents' file.

RANSOM

What dirty secrets you learn?

Pause.

JEANNINE

They were executed. We saw the x-rays.

Ransom bends over at the waist, his hands on his knees, as though the wind's been knocked out of him.

Before Jeannine can administer the healing touch, Ransom gathers himself and stands erect. He gestures toward a blown up photo on the wall: Castelli standing between the seated Senestreri and Tripepi in 1968.

RANSOM

What's your theory on Renzo Castelli?

JEANNINE

That 1968 photo. He's dressed like an East Coast mobster. You can't find anything about Castelli on the Internet because he kept a low profile. As mobsters do. He might've even arranged for the hit on your parents.

RANSOM

Did you question Senestreri about Castelli at the press conference?

JEANNINE

Yeah.

RANSOM

And?

JEANNINE

He said Castelli was his *dentist*.
Broke up the crowd.

Ransom picks up a shirt from a chair and pulls it on.

JEANNINE

But follow me on the metaphors: extractions, root canals, fillings.

Jeannine paces around the room.

JEANNINE

My working theory? Senestreri knew Renzo Castelli from his Brooklyn street days. Castelli fronted the money for the Fish Factory, then backed up his investment with East Coast muscle. Your Mom and Dad got in the way.

RANSOM

Just a working theory. Pulitzer stuff.

JEANNINE

Develop the file photos, Jack.

RANSOM

How'd our Deputy DA react?

JEANNINE

Guy hasn't changed since junior high. *(Whining)* "I can't open a murder investigation against Senestreri after over two decades!"

RANSOM

I think it's about time I had a talk with our hard-charging Deputy DA.

Ransom nods toward his computer desk.

RANSOM

You find anything?

JEANNINE

(Blushing)

No.

EXT. RANSOM'S PARKING SPOT - DAY

Ransom is checking under his car with the long-handled mirror.

A Pacific Grove POLICE CAR drives up. An OFFICER gets out. As he approaches Ransom, Ransom compresses the handle and opens his car door.

OFFICER
Paranoid? This is Pacific Grove.

RANSOM
"America's Last Hometown." What can
I do for you, Officer?

OFFICER
Are you Jack Petro, aka Cody Ransom?

RANSOM
Lieutenant Colonel Jack Petro. Yes.

The policeman opens up his leather book to a certain page.

OFFICER
(Producing a pen)
Sign this, please. Your signature is
in no way an admission of guilt.

Ransom looks over the paper.

RANSOM
An emergency restraining order? This
is chickenshit.

OFFICER
I understand Mr. Senestreri could have
filed assault charges. *(Beat)* Not that
he doesn't deserve one.

Ransom signs the paper. The officer gives Ransom a copy.

OFFICER
You can contest the permanent order.

RANSOM
As if it would do any good.

OFFICER
I hear ya.

EXT. A RESTAURANT PATIO - DAY

Jeannine and Ransom, nursing their wines, sit under an umbrella at a table on the terrace of a chic restaurant overlooking Cannery Row and Monterey Bay.

RANSOM

He always this late?

JEANNINE

Just don't call him Three Balls, okay?
And let's not make this a high school
locker room reunion.

Mike Ordoloni appears, wearing one of those baseball-type caps so popular with balding babyboomers.

ORDOLONI

Sorry I'm late. The Deputy DA's lot.

Ordoloni sees Ransom as he removes his sunglasses and lets them dangle on their braided leather holders.

ORDOLONI

(To Jeannine)

I though we'd be alone. (To Ransom) You
look familiar.

Jeannine is about to introduce Ransom, and explain the real reason for the meeting, when...

ORDOLONI

The mystery man! The guy at the liquor
store! We've been looking for you! Great
work, Jeannine. I owe you. Hey, what're
we drinking?

RANSOM

Hey, Three Balls. How's it hangin'?

ORDOLONI

Huh?

JEANNINE

It's Jack Petro.

ORDOLONI

Omigod! Jack Petro! *(He reaches across
the table and shakes Ransom's hand)* Last
I heard, you were in military school!

RANSOM

Last I heard, you were married.

Ordoloni shoots a hard look at Jeannine.

RANSOM

Hey, Mike. What kinda food suppresses a woman's sex drive?

JEANNINE

I said, no locker room humor!

ORDOLONI

Wedding cake?

The two men break up. Even Jeannine laughs. Ransom pours Ordoloni some wine from the carafe.

Something dawns on Ordoloni.

ORDOLONI

Wait. This isn't about the liquor store. Jack, I never got a chance to say how sorry I was about your folks.

RANSOM

We were thirteen, Mike. We were giving each other Melvins. *(Beat)* Nice cap. You look like Spanky from *Our Gang*.

JEANNINE

What's a Melvin?

Ordoloni sips his wine.

ORDOLONI

My Santa Clara law degree tells me you want me to open a murder investigation. Look, Jack, I, uh...

JEANNINE

What's a Melvin?

Ransom slides a piece of paper across the table to Ordoloni. Ordoloni takes it and reads it.

RANSOM

(To Jeannine)

Maybe Mike'll demonstrate one on you.

ORDOLONI

(To Ransom)

Posing as "Cody Ransom," you assaulted Tazio Senestreri in the Bishop's office?

RANSOM

He insulted me.

ORDOLONI

And I'm supposed to press my boss for an investigation of Tazio Senestreri for the murder of your parents, over twenty years ago? (Beat) Jack, from what I heard, we couldn't even get him indicted for all those fires we know he set.

JEANNINE

Show some spine, Mike. Afraid your wife'll leave you?

ORDOLONI

Fuck you, Jeannine. Write about it in your column. See where it gets you.

JEANNINE

They got rid of me, Mike.

ORDOLONI

Proves my point. (To Ransom) I should subpoena you for that punk's trial.

RANSOM

But you don't need me for a conviction.

ORDOLONI

These days?

JEANNINE

What, Johnny Cochran's come aboard?

Ordoloni downs his wine.

JEANNINE

You're an officer of the court, Mike.
You saw the file. And the x-rays. Want
me to go to the state attorney general?

ORDOLONI

Maybe I'll surprise you. Maybe I won't.
Get an attorney, Jack. Or get out of
Dodge. (To Jeannine) This meeting never
happened.

Ordoloni gets up to leave.

JEANNINE

Guess the opera's out.

Ordoloni starts to reply, then thinks better of it. He
leaves.

JEANNINE

Think he's got a conscience?

RANSOM

When I was a kid, I read Richard Henry
Dana's *Three Years Before the Mast*. About
his time on a sailing ship. Here's how
Dana described Monterey in 1835: "A man
must leave his conscience at Cape Horn."

JEANNINE

You gonna get an attorney?

RANSOM

A Monterey attorney? I refer you to Richard
Henry Dana's description of what a man must
do when he comes to Monterey County.

Pause.

JEANNINE

What's a Melvin?

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SENESTRERI HOME - DAY

TV station mini-vans are parked in the long driveway
leading to the Senestreri Pebble Beach estate.

A crowd of reporters stands on the lawn, below the Senestreri front door. The front porch is filled with microphones on stands.

The front door opens. Wearing black armbands, Tazio Senestreri, Bob Senestreri, Lyle Coventry, and Thelma Senestreri appear on the front porch. Thelma Senestreri wears dark glasses to cover her puffy eyes.

The reporters, videographers, and photographers begin their work.

TAZIO SENESTRERI

Thank you all for coming during this hour of grief. Condolences are pouring in from all over the world. Frank Triepi and his wife were more than our partners. They were our friends. Their untimely death has hit the Fish Factory family especially hard.
(Beat) My wife Thelma would like to say a few words.

Thelma steps up to the microphones as Senestreri retreats back to Coventry's side.

SENESTRERI

(Whispered to Coventry)

I don't see our eager beaver reporter.

COVENTRY

(Whispered)

Currently unemployed.

SENESTRERI

(Whispered)

Send her a bouquet of red roses.

THELMA SENESTRERI

I'm, uh, not really good at this. (Beat)
Frank and Viola were high school sweet-hearts at Carmel High School.

A UPS TRUCK makes its way up the driveway and parks near the minivans. The DRIVER gets out, carrying a package, as we hear Thelma Senestreri's eulogy in the distance.

THELMA SENESTRERI

Theirs was a solid, forty year marriage.

The driver approaches the press conference.

DRIVER

Excuse me? I'm looking for a Thelma Senestreri?

REPORTER

That's her.

The driver raises his hand. Tazio Senestreri, seizing the moment, motions the driver to come forward.

THELMA SENESTRERI

Yes?

DRIVER

Overnight package for Thelma Senestreri.

Tazio Senesteri excitedly beckons the driver forward.

The driver obtains Mrs. Senestreri's signature and hands her the package.

TAZIO SENESTRERI

(Whispered to Lyle Coventry)

This oughtta make Thel feel better.

(To Thelma) Go ahead, honey. Open it.

Thelma Senestreri reads the card into the microphone.

THELMA SENESTRERI

"To Thelma, You're still the Queen of Tulare County. Tazz."

The reporters are eating it up.

Thelma Senestreri opens the box. She pulls out two pornographic videos and looks at the boxes as the reporters edge up close for a look at the Senestreri love tokens.

EXT. THE MONTEREY WHARF - AFTERNOON

Ransom and Jeannine are strolling along the wharf as sport-fishing boats come in with their customers and their catches. Some fishermen climb the stairs and pass the couple, their salmon in gunny sacks.

JEANNINE

Remember that day on the my uncle's sardine boat?

RANSOM

The *Vagabond*. Sure.

JEANNINE

Uncles, aunts, cousins, musta been sixty of us.

RANSOM

We were about ten. One of the best days of my life.

JEANNINE

We cruised all over the bay, eating mackerel and French bread, drinking Madera wine.

RANSOM

Then it was back up to Dago Hill for a bar-b-cue.

JEANNINE

The smell of the canneries wafting into our backyard.

RANSOM

Jeeze, I hated that smell.

JEANNINE

I miss it so much.

RANSOM

Me too.

Ransom and Jeannine watch the sportfishing boats for awhile. A family of seals breaks the surface as seagulls swarm around the boats.

JEANNINE

What the hell happened to our town?

Pause.

RANSOM

Take a drive?

JEANNINE

Sure.

INT. THE SENESTRERI MANSION - AFTERNOON

THELMA

I've never been so humiliated!

TAZIO

It wasn't me!

THELMA

After all your affairs! Now this!

TAZIO

I swear, I'll find out who did it!
(Beat) Thel...a house divided cannot move
forward.

THELMA

Where do you get these fucking proverbs?

The doorbell rings.

Tazio and Thelma look at each other. Both make a move for
the hallway leading to the front door.

THELMA

We'll both get it.

SENESTRERI

How's 'bout I spring for a maid?

THELMA

Why, so you can fuck her?

EXT. FRONT PORCH, SENESTRERI MANSION - AFTERNOON

A UPS DELIVERYMAN stands at the front door, holding a box.

The Senestreris open the door.

DELIVERYMAN

Overnight delivery for Thelma Senestreri.

Thelma slaps Tazio.

TAZIO

Godammit, Thel, sign for it.

THELMA

What's in this one, a *dildo*?

Tazio smiles his "I'm a jerk" smile to the deliveryman.

TAZIO

A fur coat. Here, read the card.

EXT. JACKS PEAK ROAD, ABOVE MONTEREY BAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Ransom's BMW parks at a lookout. The view of Monterey and Monterey Bay extends into the distance, all the way to Santa Cruz and beyond, in the north.

Dark clouds are moving in from the southwest.

INT. RANSOM'S BMW - LATE AFTERNOON

JEANNINE

This was one of our group's make-out spots.

Ransom thinks this might be a hint. He ignores it.

RANSOM

Over there...the Presidio, containing the Defense Language Institute. Over there... the Naval Postgraduate School. Where I got my Masters Degree in Computer Science. Are you aware of the national security importance of this part of the world?

JEANNINE

All I know is that my ex-husband was teaching at the DLI and ran off with a Chinese instructor. Half hour later, he was--

RANSOM

After September 2001 the DLI instituted
crash courses in Middle Eastern languages.

JEANNINE

Makes sense.

RANSOM

Dictus Dei has begun the Tenth Crusade.
Against Islam.

JEANNINE

Where's this going?

RANSOM

This costs billions, Jeannine. They're not
too particular about where it comes from.
Narcotics trafficking, assassinations,
international banking fraud..

Jeannine's starting to make connections.

JEANNINE

(Musing aloud)

Senestreri...

RANSOM

...donates a tremendous amount of funds
through his charities.

JEANNINE

He doesn't know Islam from *Amos 'n' Andy*.

RANSOM

He's terrified of the afterlife. The
Church has him believing he'll go to
heaven through his donations to the
Cause. In 1993, he bought his member-
ship in the Knights of Malta, many of
whose members served in the Reagan
administration.

Pause. Jeannine is absorbing all this.

RANSOM

Then Dictus Dei came calling. Stanton's then-FBI chief is a member, and Dictus Dei operatives helped formulate our pro-Croatian policies in the Balkans.

JEANNINE

You can verify all this?

RANSOM

Yes. Write about it, Jeannine.

Jeannine is overwhelmed.

RANSOM

Will you do that? Will you swear to it?

JEANNINE

I have no source of income.

Ransom pulls the pouch of diamonds from inside his jacket. He pours some out onto his palm.

RANSOM

Consider this an advance. Swear, no matter what happens to me, or what you might learn about me, you'll write a book about it. *(Beat)* It's Pulitzer stuff.

Jeannine extends her palm.

JEANNINE

I swear.

Ransom lays the diamonds into Jeannine's palm.

CLOSE ON their hands: Jeannine squeezes Ransom's hand.

RANSOM

I have a favor to ask.

JEANNINE

Yes?

RANSOM

This restraining order will be granted.
I'll be forbidden from possessing firearms.

Jeannine pulls her hand away with the diamonds.

JEANNINE

And--? *(She realizes what Ransom's asking)*
Okay. *(Beat)* Could we sit here a bit, watch
the sunset as the storm rolls in?

RANSOM

Sure.

Jeannine kisses Ransom on his cheek.

POV through the windshield at the cloudswept sunset.
Raindrops begin falling on the windshield.

EXT. A 1950S-STYLE GAS STATION, CARMEL HIGHLANDS - NIGHT

As heavy rain falls, we see a FIGURE in the phone booth of
a closed 1950s-style gas station. A gold Lexus is parked
nearby.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

SENESTRERI

Yes, operator. The Vatican. International
code 011, country code 39, city code 06.
74-07-42-59. *(He waits)* Marcello? Tazio
Senestreri. *(Beat)* I don't care what time
it is. What the fuck happened?

As Senestreri listens, he sees his reflection in the phone
booth glass. He straightens out his sopping hair.

SENESTRERI

A phone booth. You think I'm crazy enough
to call from my home or office? *(He listens)*
Frankie was supposed to deliver the money.
(He listens, then smiles) Ah, c'mon, so he
took a commission. Guy was vacationing with
his wife. You have to *kill* him?

As Senestreri listens, he starts a slow burn.

SENESTRERI

Tell your Dictus Dei buddies the deal's off. I don't care if the towelheads build a mosque in *downtown Monterey*, I'm pullin' out. *(He listens)* Gee, this mean I don't go to heaven? *(Beat)* Yeah, well, fuck you. And if I see any of your guys anywhere near my house or business, I'll chop 'em up and serve 'em in my restaurant. *Capiche?*

Senestreri slams the phone into its holder.

SENESTRERI

These assholes are worse than the fuckin' Mafia.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ransom and Jeannine are in Ransom's spartan bedroom.

As Jeannine covertly looks around, Ransom slides open a mirrored closet door.

Jeannine hesitantly sits on the bed. She looks toward the closet as Ransom slides out a large chest.

Jeannine notes the varied clothes hanging in the closet.

CLOSE ON the clothes: We see a POLICE UNIFORM, a PRIEST'S CASSOCK, and a FED-EX UNIFORM, along with regular duds.

JEANNINE

You into dressing up, or what?

RANSOM

(Looking up from the chest)

Huh?

Ransom sees where Jeannine is looking, and slides the closet door shut.

JEANNINE

You always had the best Halloween costumes, too.

Ransom checks the lock on the chest. It's solid.

RANSOM

We'll put this in your bedroom and cover it with a shawl.

JEANNINE

May I-

RANSOM

No. Think Pandora's box. Okay?

JEANNINE

'Kay.

RANSOM

I'm off to a Silicon Valley convention tomorrow.

JEANNINE

You?

RANSOM

A trade show for spooks. *(Beat)* I got a lead on Renzo "The Dentist" Castelli. Interested?

Jeannine gives Ransom a drooling reporter look.

RANSOM

Something else. Looks like Senestreri's got cancer.

JEANNINE

That'll make him very dangerous.

RANSOM

How so?

JEANNINE

What's he got to lose?

INT. SENESTRERI'S OFFICE - DAY

Senestreri paces his office, waving his arms, addressing a MAN who is holding a large black canvas bag.

SENESTRERI

That's right, every inch. My phone, the smoke alarms, the walls. Every inch.

SENESTRERI

(Continued)

And if you find anything, do not touch it. I want fingerprints.

MAN

(Opening his bag)

Gotcha.

The phone rings. Senestreri motions the man out of the room as he answers it.

SENESTRERI

Yeah? *(Beat)* Hi, doc. Whatcha got? *(He listens)* How bad is it?

EXT. SAN JOSE CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Ransom pulls into a full parking lot.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Ransom mills about from booth to booth, looking at various state-of-the-art surveillance devices.

Ransom is trying on some night vision goggles when a MAN appears behind him.

MAN

You watchin' your back?

Ransom rips off the goggles and spins around.

MAN

Losin' your touch?

RANSOM

Charlie! How long's it been?

CHARLIE

The Balkans. Lost track of you in Sierra Leone.

RANSOM

How 'bout some coffee?

INT. A COFFEESHOP BOOTH - DAY

Charlie and Ransom sit at a table in a makeshift coffee-shop, their coffees in front of them. They speak in low tones.

CHARLIE

How's the private sector treatin' you?

RANSOM

Weird. Civilians demonize the military, and they live in a sea of corruption. You?

CHARLIE

Working for a high tech security firm.
(Beat) Listen, Jack...There's scuttlebutt you're messin' with Dictus Dei.

RANSOM

It's ancillary. I wanna find out who murdered my mother and father.

CHARLIE

I remember you talkin' about that on the carrier.

RANSOM

Guy's a Knight of Malta, funneling money to the Dictus Dei.

CHARLIE

I don't have to tell you how connected those fanatics are. You crossed any lines yet?

RANSOM

Depends how you blur it. It's like I've got both hands tied behind my back.

CHARLIE

You took an oath not to use your tools in the civilian sector.

Charlie looks at Ransom as he sips his coffee.

CHARLIE

Gimme your phone number. If I hear anything interesting, I'll call you.

RANSOM

Such as?

CHARLIE

We ex-intelligence guys are all working for private companies. We compare notes. If I hear about anything going down in Monterey, I'll call ya.

Charlie sips his coffee.

CHARLIE

I can imagine what it must've done to you, your parents dying and all...but finding who did it won't bring 'em back.

Ransom reaches for the pen in Charlie's shirt pocket. He removes the pen and examines it.

RANSOM

This the new model?

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE

You won't believe the shit this baby'll do. I oughtta get a concealed weapons permit, just clipping it in my pocket.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom is about one quarter full. Tazio Senestreri sits at the plaintiff's table with his attorney, McGrey Lackey. Cody Ransom sits at his table, alone.

Bishop Agostini sits in the row behind Senestreri. Jeannine Tarallo has placed herself somewhere in the anonymous middle, her pen poised to take notes.

There's a BAILIFF and a STENOGRAPHER. Seated in the judge's chair is ROY DALTON. In front of him is a name sign that reads "JUDGE ROY DALTON, PRO-TEM."

The restraining order hearing is already in progress.

JUDGE DALTON

Lieutenant Colonel Petro, Mr. Senestreri's charges are very serious. You're lucky he's not pressing assault charges. And we've already heard the distinguished bishop describe what you called him. How do you respond?

RANSOM

By asking why you, a business partner of Tazio Senestreri in a 40 million dollar Cannery Row development, are presiding over this hearing. You're also retired.

JUDGE DALTON

I often fill in when judges fall sick. You could have recused me.

SENESTRERI

Your Honor, may I add something?

JUDGE DALTON

Yes.

SENESTRERI

This man is an ex-intelligence specialist. We found a listening device under my office desk. We've turned it over to the District Attorney, where Deputy DA Ordoloni is overseeing the search for fingerprints. Should this man be behind it, I'll file a whole truckload of charges.

CLOSE ON Jeannine: Her face goes white.

JUDGE DALTON

(To Ransom)

Did you place the device?

RANSOM

Your Honor, I'll waive my Fifth Amendment rights. The answer is no.

JUDGE DALTON

Let me remind you: You took an oath to defend our nation against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

RANSOM

As did you. Your Honor. As for me, I'm doing all I can to live up to it. What say you?

JUDGE DALTON

You're within an inch of contempt.

RANSOM

I won't stoop to knock that straight line out of the park, Your Honor.

Judge Dalton stares down Ransom.

JUDGE DALTON

The restraining order request is granted. You are to go no nearer than 300 yards from Mr. Senestreri for three years.
(Beat) Do you possess any firearms?

RANSOM

No.

JUDGE DALTON

You're under oath, Lieutenant Colonel.

CLOSE ON Jeannine: She's about to vomit.

INT. RANSOM'S BMW - DAY

Jeannine is hysterical as she and Ransom drive away from the courthouse, and down Highway One.

JEANNINE

What've you gotten me into?!?

RANSOM

You approached me. Remember? You'd blow my cover in your column. I forced you into nothing. And I've resisted your come-ons. I told you that nothing will compromise my mission.

JEANNINE

What about the guns in my house?

RANSOM

Did you open the chest?

JEANNINE

No.

RANSOM

Then you know nothing.

JEANNINE

What about Ordoloni, and my fingerprints all over that bug?

RANSOM

He's desperate to fuck you, Jeannine.

JEANNINE

Meaning?

RANSOM

Meaning, if push comes to shove, thank God for self-love.

Jeannine is appalled.

They drive a bit.

RANSOM

Subconsciously—and our subconscious is God—we know what we're getting into. You're a *freelancer* now. No more whining about your editors. I've given you several thousand dollars as an advance, plus inside info, for an extremely *commercial* book, plus screen rights and God knows what else. *(Beat)* Time to fish or cut bait.

Pause. Jeannine looks around as they turn off Highway One into the city of Carmel.

JEANNINE

Where we going?

RANSOM

Renzo Castelli. You up for it, news hound? Mrs. Castelli died a decade ago. He lives with a woman not his wife.

They pull up in front of a cottage. Ransom parks the BMW.

JEANNINE

Wait in the car.

EXT. CASTELLI'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Jeannine raps her knuckles on the door.

A SEVENTYISH WOMAN opens the door.

WOMAN

Yes?

JEANNINE

Is Mr. Castelli in?

WOMAN

And you are--?

JEANNINE

Jeannine Tarallo. The Fish Factory will be publishing a book about itself, and I've been sent to interview Mr. Castelli.

WOMAN

Jeannine Tarallo? We read your column every week! *(Calling inside)* Renzo? You present-able?

CASTELLI

(From inside)

Send her in.

The woman guides Jeannine indoors.

INT. CASTELLI'S COTTAGE - DAY

Renzo Castelli, covered in a blanket, sits in a rocking chair, watching a soap opera on TV. He clicks off the TV with his remote control, and extends a feeble hand to Jeannine, who takes it.

CASTELLI

As you can see, I'm not at my best.

JEANNINE

I won't be long. I'm contributing to a book on the Fish Factory.

CASTELLI

That bastard Senestreri send you?

JEANNINE

Not in so many words, no. *(Beat)* I'm just curious about how you came to bankroll him and Frank in 1968.

WOMAN

Oh, isn't it terrible about Frank and his wife?

JEANNINE

Terrible tragedy.

WOMAN

Renzo wasn't even invited to the funeral.

CASTELLI

Please...don't burden the lady.

JEANNINE

It's no burden.

CASTELLI

Senestreri's an unprincipled motherfucker. You gonna print that?

JEANNINE

Well, the book is kind of a salute.

CASTELLI

I think I've given you enough.

JEANNINE

I was wondering how you came to be involved with Mr. Senestreri.

CASTELLI

I thought writers were supposed to be good listeners. Did you not hear me?

The woman touches Jeannine's shoulder.

WOMAN

Renzo's from the old school. He means
what he says. I'll walk you to the door.

INT. RANSOM'S BMW - DAY

Ransom and Jeannine are headed west on Highway 68, toward
Pacific Grove.

JEANNINE

There's a story there, Jack.

RANSOM

(Chuckling)

"Unprincipled motherfucker." I like that.

JEANNINE

I've gotta get his story before he dies.
(Beat) Or is killed.

RANSOM

(Reaching into his jacket pocket)

That's my little news hound.

Ransom extends his closed fist toward Jeannine. She extends
her open hand to him. Ransom drops a diamond into her palm.

RANSOM

Another advance to the lady writer.

JEANNINE

Where's all this going, Jack?

RANSOM

Isn't it great when your very life is
a page turner?

At that moment, the BMW crests a hill. The Pacific Ocean
stretches out below them, and hard sunlight engulfs Ransom
and Jeannine.

RANSOM

I'm hungry. You hungry?

INT. SENESTRERI'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Tazio Senestreri, his son Bob (who is tapping away on a pocket calculator), and Lyle Coventry are in a meeting.

TAZIO SENESTRERI

How's that Saudi Prince's catering thing going, son?

BOB SENESTRERI

Fine, Dad.

TAZIO SENESTRERI

Lyle. The camel jockey prince's son wants to see America while he's here. I thought I'd arrange something after the bash, and you could escort our Arab friend somewhere nice.

COVENTRY

I was hoping to get back to my *History of Cannery Row*.

SENESTRERI

You eggheads...Look, it'll wait. Take a nice day trip with the son of a Saudi Prince, fer chrissake. I'll comp you a suite in Vegas. Get *laid*, Lyle.

EXT. MONTEREY - AFTERNOON

Ransom and Jeannine are walking toward a restaurant. They stop at a corner and wait for a chance to cross the street.

Ransom looks up at a street sign.

CLOSE ON the sign: CASS STREET.

RANSOM

Well, isn't *that* interesting?

JEANNINE

Something else for me to look into.

INT. JEANNINE'S CONDO - AFTERNOON

CLOSE ON Jeannine's answering machine as we hear the door opening: The red light is blinking.

JEANNINE
(Offscreen)

Aw, c'mon in. Check my home for bogeymen.

We see Ransom following Jeannine into her condo.

Jeannine sees the blinking light. She goes to the machine and presses the button.

MACHINE
"Jeannine, this is Mike Ordoloni. Call me ASAP."

JEANNINE
Gawd...what do I do?

Ransom comes up behind her.

RANSOM
Call him back.

JEANNINE
No, I mean...

RANSOM
You're a big girl. You'll do the right thing. In the meantime...

Ransom reaches inside the back of Jeannine's pants. He lifts up her underwear, stretching her panties way up her back, lifting her off the ground.

Jeannine screams with fear and delight.

RANSOM
MELVIN!!!!

Jeannine, giddy, spins around and embraces Ransom. She kisses him passionately on the lips.

Ransom delicately pulls away.

RANSOM

No.

Jeannine's eyes go down. Ransom gently lifts her chin and gazes into her eyes.

RANSOM

I don't wish to cause you pain. Please understand.

Jeannine withdraws.

JEANNINE

You really loved your African woman.
(Ransom *nods*) Okay. I'll set up a meeting with our Deputy DA.

INT. TAZIO SENESTRERI'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

From over the shoulder of a MAN who is seated across from him, we see Tazio Senestreri talking to him in serious tones. We will not see the man's face.

SENESTRERI

The Saudi Prince is a moderate, but his son's a member of that, whadyacallit...

MAN

(*Speaking with a thick Italian accent*)
The Wahabbi Sect.

SENESTRERI

Yeah, the hardliners.

MAN

We know how to deal with them.

SENESTRERI

Right. (*He slides a photo across the desk, to the man*) I'd like you to tail this man.

The man looks at the photo.

MAN

His name?

SENESTRERI

Cody Ransom, Jack Petro, whatever. He's sharp, and he's been messing with the operation. His address is on the back.

MAN

And you want me to--?

SENESTRERI

I'd like a breather from this Dictus Dei crap—excuse my Italian—for awhile. The Tripepi thing kinda shook me up.
(Beat) I deliver the Prince's son, and you get this Petro creep offa my back. Then my wife and I take a long rest.

EXT. LEGION AIR CHARTER SERVICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Ransom parks his BMW in front of a California Mission-style air charter service building. In the background, we see the usual activity of Monterey Airport: jets and planes landing and taking off, aircraft being pulled in and out of hangars, etc.

INT. LEGION AIR CHARTER SERVICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Ransom takes a place in a short line in a large California Mission-styled space with a beige clay-tiled floor. As Ransom looks around the room in his usual way, we see, over his shoulder and through the large glass window, as Ransom removes his wallet from his coat pocket, a SUBURBAN UTILITY VEHICLE pull up and park near Ransom's BMW. A MAN emerges from the vehicle and makes his way toward the Legion Air building.

Ransom approaches the counter where an ATTRACTIVE WOMAN waits.

WOMAN

Welcome to Legion Air. How can we help you?

The man from the SUV takes a place in line behind Ransom. He is the essence of blandness, a meek-looking man who would disappear into any crowd.

RANSOM

I'd like to reserve a plane for 5:30AM
next Thursday to Tucson, Arizona.

WOMAN

I'll need a photo ID. And you'll pay
with--?

RANSOM

(Presenting his driver's license)
Cash.

The woman examines the drivers license.

WOMAN

Tennessee, Mr. Hines?

Behind Ransom, the man from the SUV is paying casual
attention.

RANSOM

I'm an A&R man out of Nashville, scouting
talent.

WOMAN

Find any here?

RANSOM

Lotsa big fish, small pond types.

WOMAN

Maybe Arizona will be better. *(Beat)*
Alright, Thursday morning at 5:30 for
Dale Hines.

Ransom sees the figure on the bill. He hands the woman a
stack of 100 dollar bills. She completes the transaction,
then hands Ransom his change and a copy of the bill.

WOMAN

See you then, Mr. Hines.

Ransom takes the money and the bill and with his usual
efficiency he leaves the building.

The man from the SUV approaches the counter.

WOMAN

Welcome to Legion Air. How can we help you?

MAN

(With the Italian accent)

I wish to reserve a plane for 5:45AM next Thursday to Las Vegas, Nevada. Lyle Coventry of Senestreri Development and a guest, Prince Saeed Banduhar, will be the passengers.

WOMAN

We're always pleased to serve Mr. Senestreri.

INT. JEANNINE'S CONDO - EARLY EVENING

Jeannine, dressed alluringly, stands in front of her open refrigerator door, examining a bottle of white wine.

The doorbell rings. Jeannine puts the bottle back in the refrigerator and crosses toward the front door. As she does this, she checks the wineglasses on her dining room table. Jeannine turns on her stereo. We hear a romantic song sung by Sade, at low volume.

Jeannine opens the door, revealing Deputy DA Mike Ordoloni.

JEANNINE

Michael! How good of you to come!

Ordoloni steps inside. He looks around.

JEANNINE

Take your coat?

ORDOLONI

(Looking around the room)

No, thank you.

Jeannine had other plans. Ordoloni's crisp manner disorients her.

ORDOLONI

James Bond here?

Pause.

JEANNINE

Jack Petro? No.

ORDOLONI

Are we being videotaped?

JEANNINE

(Looking at the wine glasses)

No, Michael.

ORDOLONI

Tape recorded?

JEANNINE

No. *(Beat)* What do you want, Michael?

ORDOLONI

(Still standing)

I'm breaking every procedure by being here.

JEANNINE

I understand.

ORDOLONI

We found your fingerprints on the bug
in Senestreri's office.

Jeannine sits at her dining room table. She starts toying
with a wine glass.

ORDOLONI

You are in serious trouble. All our
old school ties can't extricate you.

JEANNINE

Can't you just...lose the thing?

ORDOLONI

I didn't hear that.

JEANNINE

Oh, *come on*, Michael. This is Monterey
County, for godsake.

JEANNINE

(Continued)

Don't tell me this isn't done when the sheriff's son steals a car, or some rich guy beats his wife, or a judge's son is caught dealing a lethal dose of heroine. All of which happened.

ORDOLONI

All of which your paper didn't cover.
(Beat) Petro put you up to it?

Pause.

ORDOLONI

If Jack Petro induced you to plant a bug in Senestreri's office, it'll help you.

Jeannine throws a wineglass against the wall, where it smashes into shards.

JEANNINE

I'm researching a book, Michael. It'll blow the lid off this county.

Ordoloni laughs.

ORDOLONI

And you'll claim some kind of reporter's privileges, right? See where it gets you.

JEANNINE

This is about you and Jack, isn't it? Two ninth graders, fighting on the playground.

Pause. Ordoloni walks up behind Jeannine.

ORDOLONI

(Whispering)

You're dressed seductively, Jeannine. Right down to the fuck-me pumps. What exactly did you think would happen?

In one motion, Jeannine grabs the other wineglass, swings it around, and smashes it into Ordoloni's head.

Ordoloni slaps Jeannine so hard he knocks her across the room.

JEANNINE

(From the floor)

Go back to your wife, Michael. Till death do you part.

EXT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT DOOR - EVENING

Ransom, as usual, checks his front door for signs of entry. Something catches his attention. He looks more closely at the upper right hand corner of the doorframe.

Then Ransom inserts his key into the lock.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Ransom flips on the television, and as he looks around his apartment for signs of entry, we hear a newscast in progress.

NEWSCASTER

(Offscreen)

The Steinbeck Centennial assumed an international flavor today when the Saudi Arabian yacht *Muhammad IV* anchored in Monterey Bay.

CLOSE ON the TV screen: We see a headshot of Tazio Senestreri.

NEWSCASTER

We caught up twith the busy Tazio Senestreri outside his office: *(Senestreri speaks)*
"Prince Ahmed Banduhar and his son are old friends. My son Bob will personally cater a banquet on their yacht the night of the Steinbeck bash."

By the end of the segment, Ransom stands before the TV, taking it all in.

Then Ransom sees his telephone message machine's light flashing. He hits the replay button.

VOICE

Jack, this is Charlie. I said I'd get back to you if I learned anything. Something's up down your way. Watch your back.

Ransom goes into his bathroom. He removes an electric razor from a drawer, looks into the mirror, and begins cutting off all his hair.

INT. A HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

We PAN AROUND a hotel ballroom, which is set up as a huge dining space, with round tables, surrounded by chairs, all over the room. The stage has a podium and microphone, stage right. The rest of the stage is made up to look like Cannery Row as it appeared in the 1940s. Above the stage is a huge sign that reads "HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY, JOHN STEINBECK!" under a HUGE HIGH-CONTRAST PORTRAIT OF JOHN STEINBECK.

Brightly-clad Cannery Row "PROSTITUTES" stroll around, passing out programs. A row of PEOPLE waits in line to get a piece of Steinbeck birthday cake.

The camera stops at a trio of MEN who are engaged in animated conversation in the center of the ballroom. One of them is Tazio Senestreri. One is a nondescript man. The third man is short, with glasses, a large nose, and olive skin.

TAZIO SENESTRERI

Gee, I dunno. Let's ask Leon.

MAN

How do you see it, Mr. Polenta?

LEO POLENTA

We had a choice. Back the fishermen, or back the fish. We chose jobs, and destroyed the sardine industry.

EXT. MONTEREY BEACH - NIGHT

Ransom, in a black wetsuit, wades into the surf. Ahead of him, we see the lights of bobbing small craft, and the silhouette of a YACHT.

INT. THE BALLROOM - NIGHT

Lyle Coventry's at the podium. He looks down at a table in front.

POV Lyle Coventry: We see Senestreri and Polenta seated next to each other, gabbing away, while Mayor Joe Cass eavesdrops. Next to them, preoccupied, is a MAN who looks remarkably like John Steinbeck.

COVENTRY
(Offscreen)

Tazz?

Senestreri looks up toward the stage. He nods.

COVENTRY
Welcome to the John Steinbeck Centennial!
Let's start off with a song, composed for
the occasion! Lovers of literature, wel-
come Connie Lee Aleri!

A FAT WOMAN dressed as a 1940s prostitute, carrying a guitar, ambles to a microphone at center stage.

ALERI
(Singing a Brechtian minor key dirge)
"Cannery Row is a poem, a stink, a grating
noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit,
a nostalgia, a dream..."

EXT. THE REAR OF THE YACHT IN MONTEREY BAY - NIGHT

At the rear of the yacht, Bob Senestreri leans against the railing, smoking and gazing into the night. We hear party sounds coming up from down below the deck.

INT. THE BALLROOM - NIGHT

At the podium, Mayor Joseph Cass is presenting a plaque to Tazio Senestreri.

CASS
...And so, in the name of John Steinbeck, I
present this award to the King of Cannery
Row, Tazio Senestreri!

The crowd cheers.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE YACHT - NIGHT

Ransom noiselessly swings over the railing, and begins making his way toward Bob Senestreri. A WOMAN emerges from below.

Ransom stops. He holds his breath.

WOMAN

Bobby, you gonna join the party?

BOB SENESTRERI

In a minute, Babes.

WOMAN

Whatcha doin'?

BOB SENESTRERI

Admiring God's work.

WOMAN

See ya, sweetie.

The woman goes back below.

INT. THE BALLROOM - NIGHT

COVENTRY

And now, a local hero who needs no introduction. Literature lovers, former Chief of Staff for President Stanton, Leo Polenta!

Leo Polenta appears at the podium to thunderous applause.

EXT. THE REAR OF THE YACHT - NIGHT

Ransom continues toward Bob Senestreri. We see a BULGE in the chest portion of his wet suit, which is now slightly unzipped.

INT. THE BALLROOM - NIGHT

POLENTA

Steinbeck celebrated diversity. Italians,
Portuguese, Mexicans, Northern Europeans,
and yes, *Okies* were given their humanity.

EXT. THE REAR OF THE YACHT - NIGHT

Ransom comes up behind Bob Senestreri.

RANSOM

Admire *this*, Bobby boy.

Ransom snaps Bob Senestreri's neck. Then he pulls a BRICK out from the chest area of his wet suit and plunges it down the front of Bob Senestreri's pants, into his crotch. Ransom throws Bob Senestreri's body overboard, then jumps into the bay.

INT. THE BALLROOM - NIGHT

POLENTA

And if he were alive today, surely our
Nobel laureate would support the environ-
mental movement to save our oceans! Thank
you, and happy birthday, John!

As we PAN AROUND the ballroom, we hear a rapturous ovation.

The camera stops on Jeannine, videotaping the event from the rear of the room.

INT. RANSOM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A shaven-headed Ransom, wearing a jumpsuit, reaches into his open closet and pulls out the priest's cassock. We see the wet suit thrown on his bed.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Alone in the church, Ransom, bald and wearing the priest's cassock, kneels behind a pew, his palms pressed together at his chin.

RANSOM

"And the publican, standing afar off,
would not lift up so much as his eyes
unto heaven, but smote upon his breast,
saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

Ransom rises, then walks toward the altar, reciting and beating his chest as he approaches.

RANSOM

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknow-
ledge my transgressions: and my sin is
ever before me."

Ransom kneels before the altar and crosses himself.

EXT. SENESTRERI'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Ransom, wearing the priest's cassock, rings the Senestreri doorbell.

A MEXICAN MAID opens the door.

RANSOM

*Disculpeme. Me llamo Padre Kozynski. El
Senor Senestreri quiere hablar conmigo.*

MAID

Si, Padre.

Ransom enters the Senestreri mansion.

INT. THE SENESTRERI MANSION - NIGHT

The maid leads Ransom down a hall, to a door. The maid opens the door. We see a garden.

MAID

Hay una casita por alla, Padre.

The maid crosses herself, then bows.

EXT. THE GARDEN - NIGHT

Ransom walks through a garden, toward a little house at the end of the trail.

EXT. THE LITTLE HOUSE - NIGHT

Ransom peers into a window.

POV Ransom: We see Senestreri leaning back in a chair behind a desk, staring at the ceiling, smoking a cigar, his bow tie dangling from his collar. On the desk is an open bottle of liquor, with a half-full shot glass beside it. This would seem to be Senestreri's private office. Through the window pane, we hear the muffled sound of the recording of a second-tier Italian-American singer, such as Mel Torme or Vic Damone.

Ransom goes to the door. He silently tries the knob. It's locked. He raps gently.

INT. THE LITTLE HOUSE - NIGHT

SENESTRERI

Yes?

RANSOM

(Through the door)

Mr. Senestreri? It's Father Kozynski. Bishop Agostini said you'd requested some grief counseling. In the wake of your partner's death.

Senestreri is befuddled. He rises and goes to the door. Senestreri opens the door to see who's there.

SENESTRERI

I haven't heard of a Father Koz-

Ransom heaves the door open, right in Senestreri's face, knocking him backwards.

Ransom leaps into the room and onto Senestreri. Ransom wrests Senestreri's arms behind him, and binds Senestreri's wrists with a special cord he whips out from inside his cassock.

Ransom lifts Senestreri up and tosses him onto a couch.

Then Ransom locks the door and closes all the curtains.

Ransom sits in Senestreri's chair and stares at the older man.

SENESTRERI

All these awkward meetings, Jack...

RANSOM

I would've made an appointment but, well, with the restraining order and all...

SENESTRERI

So what is it? Money?

RANSOM

Information.

SENESTRERI

Thelma has a habit of popping in unannounced.

RANSOM

This your trysting place?

Pause.

RANSOM

Okay, Tazz. *(Beat)* You kill my parents?

SENESTRERI

No.

RANSOM

You set the fire?

SENESTRERI

I ordered it. The statute of limitations has expired, so... *(Beat)* Y'know, Jack, me bein' Italian and all, I'd talk better if my hands were free.

Pause.

SENESTRERI

Some goon outta Fresno set it.

RANSOM

Who killed my mother and father?

SENESTRERI

Our mayor. Joe Cass.

Ransom's trying to make sense of it.

SENESTRERI

Snap outta your tupor, Jack. Your great-grandparents came from the same Sicilian village as Joe's grandparents. There'd been this blood feud between your families, and-

RANSOM

Cass?

SENESTRERI

Joe changed his name when he decided to go into law enforcement. Didn't want that ethnic baggage.

RANSOM

What'd he change it from?

SENESTRERI

Castelli.

Ransom's head is spinning.

SENESTRERI

Right. Renzo's his Dad.

RANSOM

Your original backer. Renzo Castelli. His mob affiliations are well hidden.

SENESTRERI

He was my *dentist*, Jack.

Pause.

RANSOM

Why'd Cass kill my parents?

SENESTRERI

Your Dad had the hots for Joe's girl-Friend. Joe didn't like that.

Ransom slumps as though the wind's been knocked out of him.

SENESTRERI

Don't misconstrue me. Your Dad by all accounts was a good husband. Only Joe'd been hearing about this Old Country blood feud all his life, 'bout how some Petro'd killed a Castelli over a woman, and like the man sez, history repeats itself. Sins of the fathers and all that.

Ransom sighs.

SENESTRERI

So now, you're s'posed to kill the mayor, right? That how the script goes?

Pause.

SENESTRERI

Just to show ya I'm not the heartless creep you think I am, I'm gonna tell you something. In the top drawer there's a passbook to an offshore account. In all your research, you must've learned a fund was set up for you.

RANSOM

Yes.

SENESTRERI

Every year, for the past twenty years, I put in a hundred grand cash, and invested some, too. You're a very rich young man. If you were smart, you'd get outta town and enjoy yourself.

Pause.

RANSOM

Why?

SENESTRERI

Guilt, goddammit! Every time I looked at my son Bob, I thought of the orphan at military school. You didn't deserve it.

Ransom is thinking that he murdered Senestreri's son. He recovers his cool.

RANSOM

And you find it valuable to have this secret on Cass.

SENESTRERI

Hell yeah. I ram hotel after hotel down the city's throat. The Mick mayor knew I'd set the fires, but he backed me 'cause he wanted the tax and tourism revenue. (Senestreri cackles) Those environmentalist wackos on the Coastal Commission were tough. Until we got to the governor, and he appointed some friends. I gotta lotta friends, Jack. But Joe...let's say he oughtta be term-limited.

Pause.

SENESTRERI

Your whole life's ahead of you, son. Take the passbook, untie my hands, share some Cointreau with me, and get on down the road. Okay? And if you decide to shoot our mayor, don't worry, I'm better off without him.

Ransom opens the desk drawer. He sees a passbook, picks it up, and shows it to Senestreri.

SENESTRERI

That's the one. Now let's toast the future like men, and you be gone.

Ransom walks over to Senestreri, leans over him, and gives him a powerful chop to his neck. Senestreri slumps over.

Ransom reaches inside his cassock and removes two latex rubber gloves. He puts them on. Then Ransom removes a book from inside his cassock and places it on the desk. Next, Ransom removes a baggie from inside his cassock. The baggie contains the koala bear paws. Ransom walks around the room, wiping his prints away with the cassock. Then he takes out the koala bear paws from the baggie and deposits the paws' "fingerprints" all over the room.

Ransom picks up the book. We see its title on the cover:
Cannery Row.

As Ransom passes Senestreri on his way to the door, he places the open book on Senestreri's face.

INT. RANSOM'S BMW - PRE-DAWN

Ransom and Jeannine are driving toward the Monterey Airport.

JEANNINE

It was Cass? Jeeze, Louise...Wait. You believe Senestreri?

RANSOM

His version squares with what I know. But not enough to take Cass out.

JEANNINE

(Looking at Ransom with new eyes)
Take him out?

Ransom hands Jeannine an envelope.

JEANNINE

What's this?

RANSOM

The photos you took of the police file. Now listen closely: I had no time to clear out my apartment. Anything in there you want, take. *(Ransom hands Jeannine a key)* Here's the key. Rent's six months paid-up. There's no hurry. I've signed my car over to you.

Jeannine's absorbing all this.

JEANNINE

I'm starved. Can we get breakfast?

RANSOM

Sure.

EXT. MONTEREY BAY - PRE-DAWN

A MAN and a WOMAN in a small outboard-motored boat are headed toward the Saudi Prince's yacht. The man guides the boat while the woman prepares the fishing gear.

WOMAN

You sure this is the spot?

MAN

Best halibut place in Monterey Bay.

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - PRE-DAWN

The bland Italian man, a spray can in a gloved hand, walks around Ransom's apartment spraying the walls with messages such as "Death to the West" and "America: The Great Satan."

When he passes by Ransom's answering machine, he sees the blinking light. He presses the button with the other gloved hand.

MACHINE

"Jack, this is Charlie. Something big and bad is going down today. Hunker down or get in your car and drive, drive, drive. If I find out more, I'll get to you."

The man presses the erase button.

MACHINE

(Computerized voice)

Message deleted.

Then the man picks up Ransom's computer and yanks it free of its cables.

EXT. ON THE SMALL FISHING BOAT MONTEREY BAY - DAWN

The man and woman are fishing. The man starts reeling his line in when his rod bends over double.

MAN

Wow! I got something *huge*!

The man struggles and pulls, and reels more line in. A body emerges from the depths. The woman sees the body and gasps.

MAN

Omigod. Get out your cell phone and
call 9-1-1.

INT. A HANGER, MONTEREY AIRPORT - PRE-DAWN

The bland Italian man, expensively dressed, carrying a
briefcase, appears in the hangar as a MECHANIC readies a
propeller-driven Legion Air airplane. The mechanic sees the
man.

MECHANIC

Hello?

MAN

Hi. I was told I could look over your
aircraft before deciding whether or not
to use your service. I plan to fly out
later today.

MECHANIC

Be my guest. Any questions, fire away.

The man walks around, inspecting the airplane.

MAN

I was wondering. Do you have a brochure
with the specifications?

The mechanic puts down his wrench.

MECHANIC

Sure.

As the mechanic passes through a door into an inner room,
he mutters something about "Fucking high rollers..."

The man opens his briefcase, takes out a FIST-SIZED
SOMETHING, then reaches up to the engine cowling of the
left wing. He opens the cowling and hides the fist-sized
something inside. Then he closes the cowling.

The mechanic returns with a brochure.

EXT. MONTEREY AIRPORT - DAWN

Ransom and Jeannine stand below the wing of Ransom's chartered plane. It's the same aircraft in which the bland Italian man placed the explosive.

JEANNINE

You'll write?

RANSOM

You know better. *(Beat)* You'll write?

JEANNINE

The book'll be sensational.

RANSOM

I know.

JEANNINE

I'll put Cass away and destroy Senestreri.

RANSOM

(Checking his watch)

And that other thing? You work it out with Three Balls?

JEANNINE

Not exactly. I'll be okay.

Thinking better of hugging Ransom, Jeannine extends her hand to shake his. Ransom shakes her hand.

When he removes it, Jeannine sees the pouch of diamonds in her hand.

RANSOM

I hear they're a girl's best friend.

JEANNINE

What you don't know about women would fill a book.

RANSOM

Write that one, too.

JEANNINE

Any last words?

RANSOM

Call your mother.

Ransom pecks Jeannine on her cheek and climbs up the stairway and into the plane. He turns at the door.

Jeannine holds up a video camera.

JEANNINE

I'll immortalize your take-off from my bench at Lovers Point.

Ransom gives Jeannine a sharp military salute.

The camera rises up and then moves down the airport road to another charter service's hangar, which is wide-open. We see an airplane being pulled out toward the opening by a little towing vehicle. Then it stops.

INT. A HANGAR AT MONTEREY AIRPORT - DAWN

At another hangar, far from the Ransom hangar, Lyle Coventry and the young Saudi Prince Banduhar climb the stairway into their chartered plane.

INT. THE CHARTERED PLANE - DAWN

Coventry and the Arab take their seats.

EXT. LOVERS POINT - DAWN

Jeannine is seated on her favorite bench, her video camera in her hands.

Jeannine sees a propeller-driven plane take off from Monterey Airport. She raises her camera to her eyes and begins taping.

INT. THE AIRPLANE - DAWN

As the plane banks over the bay, Ransom looks out the window at Lovers Point just as the sun's first rays bathe the bay.

POV Ransom: We see a tiny, lone female figure on a bench, a video camera covering her face.

Ransom gives a small wave.

Then Ransom's face contorts.

POV Ransom: We see the Saudi Prince's yacht, and a small distance away a Coast Guard cutter bobs near a small boat, and what appears to be a body recovery in process.

EXT. A DIRT PARKING LOT NEAR LOVERS POINT - DAWN

The SUV pulls up and parks.

INT. THE LEXUS - DAWN

The bland Italian man sits at the wheel. He picks up a radio control unit, pulls up the antenna, and points the antenna at Ransom's plane.

EXT. LOVERS POINT - DAWN

Jeannine is videotaping Ransom's plane as it soars overhead.

JEANNINE

See ya later, alligator.

POV Jeannine: We see the left wing of the airplane explode.

Jeannine screams.

POV Jeannine: Ransom's airplane catches fire as it spins downward toward Monterey Bay.

INT. LYLE COVENTRY'S CHARTER PLANE - DAWN

Lyle Coventry looks out his window. His eyes grow big.

POV Coventry: We see Ransom's plane on fire as it spins downward and crashes into Monterey Bay just off Lovers Point.

COVENTRY

Pilot! Turn the plane around!

INT. THE LEXUS - DAWN

The bland Italian man points his radio's antenna at Coventry's plane.

EXT. IN THE AIR OVER MONTEREY BAY - DAWN

The engine on the left wing of Lyle Coventry's plane explodes. The wing falls off. The plane catches fire and spins downward.

EXT. LOVERS POINT - DAWN

Jeannine, ever the journalist, has not stopped videotaping.

As she follows Coventry's plane into the water, she sees, in the middle distance, the Coast Guard cutter near the yacht.

POV Jeannine: Jeannine zooms the videocamera's lens for a close-up of the boats. She tapes the sight of a body being raised into the Coast Guard cutter.

CLOSE ON Jeannine: She is terrified. She knows something momentous and dark has happened. She doesn't know how or if they're connected. She senses she is in great jeopardy.

FADE OUT.

Over the CLOSING CREDITS, we hear a series of overlapped news accounts:

-“The body of Bob Senestreri, only son of restaurant mogul Tazio Senestreri, was recovered today after he disappeared off the deck of a yacht owned by Saudi Prince Ahmed Ban—”

-“In a double tragedy, two charter planes were blown up over Monterey this morning. One contained passengers Lyle Coventry, associate of Tazio Senestreri, and Saeed Banduhar, son of Saudi Prince—”

-“Onetime *Beacon* reporter Jeannine Tarallo was arrested today after a search of her condominium turned up an arms cache and surveillance devices. Tarallo was already implicated in a surveillance scam in the office of Tazio Senestreri—”

-“Inside sources tell us a brick was found in the crotch of Bob Senestreri’s pants. This is a well-known sign of a Sicilian Mafia hit--”

-“A grieving Tazio Senestreri emerged from his office today to issue a statement in which he said he believes that Arab terrorists are behind this incredible day of violence on the Central Coast. Senestreri added that, in a spirit of Christian forgiveness, he’ll do all he can to show support for Jeannine Tarallo, whom he characterized as ‘a good local girl who got mixed up with the dredges of society.’”

-“Experts from the Monterey Institute of International Studies theorize that yesterday’s violence was the work of Islamic fundamentalists involved in an internecine war between rival Saudi factions. In what seems to be a related development, FBI investigators are combing the abandoned Pacific Grove apartment of ex-intelligence officer Jack Petro. Details are still sketchy.”

-“Local restaurateur Tazio Senestreri was cited this week by *People Magazine* as an exemplar of the indestructible American Spirit. He spoke with us about his recent brush with cancer: [Senestreri’s voiceover] ‘No, I didn’t get this bandage on my nose from a dissatisfied Fish Factory customer. [He laughs] It was just a benign menaloma. Y’know, my Dad died from the Big C, and I-’”

THE END

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