

C O N N I E S K Y

Screenplay

by

Timothy Brandoff

From his novel
Cornelius Sky

CONNIE SKY

INT. SUBWAY CAR (MOVING)

A subway running through a dark tunnel carries an assortment of solitary RIDERS.

Each rider's face offers a variation of humanity in all its loneliness, hope, fatigue, joy and despair.

Consider any number of riders, then find one more:

CORNELIUS SKY - CONNIE. Early 30s but looks older. He too sits alone, surrounded by chaotic tags of graffiti.

Connie wears a doorman's cap and uniform - not ostentatious - simple, standard, navy blue with gold piping.

He appears to enjoy a moment's peace, the cap resting easy on the back of his head.

A title superimposes: **New York City, 1974.**

The train pulls into a station and its doors open as Connie gets up and walks out of the frame.

EXT. 1040 FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

Elegant pre-war 17-story residence in a tony Manhattan zip code. A limestone edifice, a canopy.

Connie rounds the corner of 85th Street, enters the house.

INT. LOBBY - 1040 FIFTH - CONTINUOUS

Without stopping he greets the doorman on duty, BENJAMIN.

CONNIE
Everybody in?

BENJAMIN
Like a ghost town.

CONNIE
Five minutes, Bennie, I'll get you
out of here.

Connie pulls open a door at the rear of the lobby.

INT. BACK HALL / SERVICE ELEVATOR - 1040 FIFTH - CONTINUOUS

Connie enters the service elevator, shuts the door/gate, dips the lever, descends.

INT. SLOP SINK ROOM - BASEMENT - 1040 FIFTH

In a T-shirt now Connie fills a bucket at the sink, gathers a stack of circular buffing pads, inspects their coarseness.

INT. BASEMENT / SERVICE ELEVATOR - 1040 FIFTH

Connie wheels a buffer machine onto the service elevator, loads on other supplies - pads, broom, mop, wooden planks, buckets of solution, a commercial fan.

INT. PASSENGER ELEVATOR / BASEMENT

Beautiful woodwork, shiny brass fixtures. A doorman, CHARLES, sits reading inside the elevator. He looks up, sees Connie.

CONNIE
Charles, do me a favor and stay out
of the lobby, would you?

CHARLES

Yes, Con.

INT. LOBBY - 1040 FIFTH - SERIES OF IMAGES

- Connie moves lobby furniture into the back hall - mats, benches, chairs, side tables, vases, lamps.
- With a dry broom he sweeps the denuded lobby. Spots something, genuflects, takes a putty knife to it.
- He works a solution into the floor with the machine.
- The floor now: stripped, flat, dull, exposed.
- Connie mops in another solution.
- He swaps out a pad on the machine, works a patch of floor with the buffer.
- He walks planks elevated by chocks of wood laid out across the lobby, applying one more coat of solution.
- He puts final polish on the floor with the buffer, the details of the Italian marble brought into vivid relief.
- He turns on the fan to air out the space.

EXT. 1040 FIFTH - NIGHT

Connie props open the front doors, then walks to the sidewalk's edge, lights an unfiltered Camel with a Zippo.

Quiet, middle-of-night stillness. Across the street, the park's stone wall and shadow of trees.

Kitty-corner to the house, the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Now two bundles smack the sidewalk - *thwap-thwap* - the *NY Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

Connie returns the wave of a DELIVERY MAN hanging off the back of a news-truck moving down Fifth.

NEW YORK TIMES FRONT PAGE: a photograph of a beleaguered Nixon, the paper's cost: 15 cents.

Connie produces a pint of liquor, uncaps it, has a taste, slips the bottle back into a hip pocket.

He grabs the two bundles, carries them into the house.

FADE OUT.

EXT. ELLIOTT HOUSES - DAWN

A city housing project on the lower westside.

MAUREEN (V.O.)
On their way the cops, think I'm
kidding?

INT. 3RD FLOOR LANDING - ELLIOTT HOUSES

Connie in his doorman's cap and uniform. Drunk. He tries, and fails, to insert a key into the lock of apartment 3-A.

INCLUDE:

INT. SKY APARTMENT

Behind the door, in a nightgown, MAUREEN SKY.

MAUREEN
When are you gonna get it?

Connie studies the lock, recognizes its new cylinder.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)
Cops, you hear me —

He abruptly assaults the door.

CONNIE
Off the fucking hinges.

He slaps and pounds, then stops.

MAUREEN
Scaring the kids you bastard.

CONNIE
(to self:)
What a fake, what a phony. I don't
even wanna be in there.

INCLUDE:

INT. KIDS' BEDROOM

STEVEN SKY, 9 years old, sound asleep.

Across the room, in his bed, ARTHUR SKY, 13 years old. Arms folded behind his head, he fixes a stare at the ceiling.

CONNIE
(pounding door:)
Off the hinges.

Next-door neighbor, WILLIE, opens the door of apartment 3-B, attempts to diffuse situation.

WILLIE
Connie, Con-Con, what's happening?

To the sound of crackling walkie-talkies the elevator pushes open onto the landing. Willie closes his door.

Two NYCHA cops, WALSH and PACHECO, join Connie. A moment.

WALSH
Cornelius.

PACHECO
Déjà vu.

CONNIE
(beat)
Changed the lock.

PACHECO
That'll happen.

WALSH
Could be she's trying to suggest something.

EXT. BUILDING ENTRANCE - ELLIOTT HOUSES - DAWN

Walsh helps Connie light a cigarette.

WALSH
She gets the restraint order, we got no choice —

CONNIE
My home! I live here!

Pacheco appears out of the building, doesn't stop.

PACHECO

Not anymore. You're done. Get that
through your head.

Pacheco heads toward a double-parked patrol car.

WALSH

Remember now, Con, up to you.

Walsh follows Pacheco. Connie watches them, then considers
the front yard's playground artifacts and benches.

EXT. FRONT YARD - ELLIOTT HOUSS - 45 MINUTES LATER

Connie curled asleep on a bench. Birds in the trees of the
projects make noise. He stirs. Sits up. Pats himself down for
a smoke, when he stops at what he sees:

INCLUDE:

ARTHUR AT 3RD FLOOR BEDROOM WINDOW

Stock still, framed like an apparition.

Connie and Arthur watch each other.

And just when Connie begins a gesture of acknowledgment
Arthur reaches for the window-shade and vanishes -

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. LOBBY - 1040 FIFTH - DAY

The floor's marble, restored to splendor, FILLS THE VIEW.

WALTER (V.O.)

What a job you did.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - 1040 FIFTH

Small, simple, windowless space off the back hall. Black
rotary desk phone, stabbed work orders on a spike.

WALTER MEZZOLA, superintendent. Somewhat older than Connie.
He swivels slightly in chair behind his desk.

Connie, in custodian's garb now, seated with him.

WALTER

The tenants. They are *raving*. They want to know who is responsible. And the staff. The guys. Some of them. They are *jealous*.

CONNIE

So I should do what, Walter, bury my talents just to fit in?

WALTER

No! Don't you dare! You should shine! Like the brightest bulb! Hundred fifty watt!

Walter strikes a match, re-lights a small cigar.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Got another complaint and I don't wanna say from who.

CONNIE

Who?

WALTER

(quick:)
Woman on eight.

CONNIE

Forster?

WALTER

Pain in the ass. Something about you got fresh with somebody, a friend of hers, the elevator?

CONNIE

I'm not perfect.

WALTER

Who is!? These people lose track. Of the fact we are human beings.

CONNIE

Glad you said it.

WALTER

Bottom line: try not to get too fresh, all right? I know you're a good person. People like you.

CONNIE

Certain people.

WALTER

The *right* people. Couple those tenants on the board think you're sliced bread. Some kind of saint they got you pegged for.

The house-phone on the wall buzzes, Walter reaches for it.

WALTER (CONT'D)

(into house-phone:)

Hello? Tell her I'll be there.

Right. Now. No. Right, right.

(hangs up, to Connie:)

So let me get back to work.

Neither move. They smoke, relaxed in each other's company.

INT. LOBBY - 1040 FIFTH

A canvas US mail bag at his feet, Connie cases letters into the slots of a wooden cart on wheels.

CONNIE

George, did you ever tell me what county you're from?

Up on the front door, another doorman, GEORGE, 60s.

GEORGE

(Irish accent:)

County of the North Bronx, let's leave it there.

Connie considers him.

CONNIE

So standoffish. And all I ever wanted to do was love you.

The passenger elevator buzzes.

INT. PASSENGER ELEVATOR

The FLOOR INDICATOR PANEL reads 15. Connie rolls on the mail cart, shuts door/gate, dips the lever, the elevator climbs.

INT. ENTRANCE VESTIBULE - JOHN'S APARTMENT - 15TH FLOOR

Connie opens the elevator directly into the lavish apartment and hands some mail to —

JOHN. 13 years old. Long dark hair. His grin reveals braces.

JOHN
Game a crib, Con, a little later,
maybe?

CONNIE
Can you handle the agony of defeat?

JOHN
In your dreams!

CONNIE
Down the office in twenty.

Connie swings the elevator shut.

INT. BACK STAIRWELL - 1040 FIFTH

A small table and two chairs unfold and snap into place.

Connie and John in chairs at the table.

CONNIE
Look at you.

Before them, on the table, a vintage cribbage board.

JOHN
Look at me.

John counts off peg spaces on the board.

CONNIE
Fives and fifteens all day long.

John grabs Connie's Zippo off the table, reaches beside him, reveals a large bong, holds fire to it, smokes.

John passes it. Connie tokes...exhales.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Whoa.

Connie produces a pint. John gestures for the bottle. Connie hesitates - a feeble attempt at adult discernment.

JOHN
Come on, Con.

Connie hands him the bottle. John takes a swig, almost coughs it up, gets it down, before they exchange bong for bottle.

CONNIE
(re cribbage board:)
This is something.

Connie picks it up.

JOHN
Belonged to my father.

Connie turns it over in his hands.

ON THE CRIBBAGE BOARD: Some initials burned into the board's wooden backing are revealed one letter at a time: J...F...K.

INT. BASEMENT - 1040 FIFTH

Connie asleep on dry cement bags laid out between storage cages containing draped furniture. Footsteps approach and stop. Connie rolls onto his back, opens his eyes.

FRANCIS RAMEY stands there. He wears an inexpensive suit.

RAMEY
They pay you to sleep?

CONNIE
What do you want?

RAMEY
Toilet paper.

Connie slowly sits up. Gets to his feet, moves down the aisle, tucking in his shirt. Ramey follows.

CONNIE
Walk around like you own the joint.

Connie unlocks a supply closet, grabs a roll of toilet paper, tosses it over his shoulder to Ramey, who catches it.

RAMEY
Nothing but a little *drunk*.

CONNIE
Say what?

As Ramey heads down the hall he removes his suit jacket, and we see, clipped to his waist, a small sidearm.

RAMEY
Like it takes the Secret Service to figure that one out.

The bathroom door clicks shut behind him.

INT. EMPLOYEE LOCKER ROOM - BASEMENT - 1040 FIFTH

Half a dozen guys silently prepare to leave or start a shift: Benjamin, George, plus HECTOR, STANLEY, OCTAVIO, CARLOS.

Connie enters talking, goes to his locker, changes out of custodian clothes...back into his doorman's uniform.

CONNIE

Guys listen I understand my incredible lobby buff-job has made some of you uncomfortable. It was not my intention to provoke your envy but please know I cannot dumb down my game just to fit in. I happen to possess a certain outstanding talent based on years of training and I'm duty-bound to share that talent with the world. My suggestion, why not register for one of my floor-buffing tutorials? I'll post the schedule here in the locker room when time permits. You too can learn to buff a floor - not as good as me, that would be delusional, but you have to start somewhere. Thank you, guys, and enjoy your evening.

Connie pops on his doorman's cap, exits. Silence resumes. The room has reacted to his speech...not at all.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE - CHELSEA - EARLY EVENING

Connie comes out of a liquor store and heads down Ninth, when his expression and stride slightly falter.

FLASHCUT - THE NEW CYLINDER on the Sky apartment door.

Connie produces his keys. Removes house key from the ring. As he crosses the avenue, he lets the key slip from his hand.

A truck barreling down Ninth pummels the key into the ground.

EXT. CHELSEA PARK - EARLY EVENING

Fog, mist, low visibility. Connie leans against a fence, watches the vague movements of kids playing roller hockey.

CONNIE
Arthur! Artie!

After a moment, out of the fog, Arthur skates into view.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Meet me over the hole.

Connie walks, Arthur reluctantly skates that way, when Connie slips into the park at a hole in the fence.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Come here, can't see you.

Arthur skates closer, but doesn't stop moving.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
C'mon, couple slices.

Arthur continues to skate in small, choppy circles, repeatedly smacking the blade of his stick into the ground.

ARTHUR
Mommy's cooking.

CONNIE
All right. Then let's just talk.

Arthur starts to skate in faster, tighter circles, he smacks the blade of his stick onto the ground harder and harder.

ARTHUR
About what, talk about what?!

CONNIE
(re the stick)
Stop, gonna crack it.

Arthur heeds the instruction, almost grateful for it, but continues to skate in circles.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Listen. Your mother and me.

ARTHUR
I know, I know.

CONNIE
What do you know?

ARTHUR
Separating, she told me, told me.

CONNIE
For now. Temporary.

ARTHUR
Until when?

CONNIE
Until we see what's what is when.

ARTHUR
Yeah, right.

CONNIE
Yeah right what?

ARTHUR
Nothing.

CONNIE
Say it. What is it?

Arthur removes one of his hockey gloves to wipe away a sudden explosion of tears, snot and saliva from his face.

ARTHUR
Yeah right what OK and like I wish
you were fucking dead already,
that's what fucking what.

Arthur skates away. Connie calls to him.

CONNIE
Arthur.

Arthur keeps skating, cries out:

ARTHUR
Die already. Get it the fuck over
with. Hate you. Find a bench, leave
us alone already, if that's how
you're going to be already.

CONNIE
Arthur. Artie!

Arthur calls out from somewhere inside the fog, the sound of his stick slapping the ground.

ARTHUR
And I'm not going to your fucking
funeral either, tell you that shit
right now.

Connie stands silent. After a moment he steps deeper into the field, city sounds becoming evermore muted. His face soaked by mist. Keeps moving, disappearing into the fog.

EXT. FRONT YARD - SKY BUILDING - ELLIOTT HOUSES - EVENING

STEVEN SKY, 9 years old, sits on the same bench Connie came to on earlier this day. He swings his legs impatiently while his friend ALFONSO, also 9, sets up his next shot on the skelsies board chalked on the ground before the bench.

Steven turns, explodes off the bench -

STEVEN
Daddayyyyy!

Steven runs to Connie, they embrace and kiss.

FLASHCUT ON:

MAUREEN AT 3RD FLOOR LIVING ROOM WINDOW

Watching them.

CONNIE
How you doing, son?

Steven holds his father's hand, escorts him to the bench. Together they watch Alfonso run the skelsies board.

Alfonso makes a shot, his waxy cap coming to rest smack dab in the middle of a box.

STEVEN
Nice.

CONNIE
Good shooting, there, Mr Alfonso.
(beat)
Stevie, listen: Me and Mommy...we're having a few problems.

STEVEN
I know.

CONNIE
How do you know?

STEVEN

Changed the lock is why. Cause your drinking and how you wet the bed, the fooling around and stuff like that, how she said on the phone to aunt Carol and all them.

CONNIE

Listen to me now. I love Mommy and Mommy loves me, and I love you and Artie, nothing ever changes that. Bottom line, no matter what.

Connie hugs him, kisses him on the head.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Stevie, do me a favor, shoot upstairs and let her know I want to pick up a few things.

STEVEN

There she goes right now.

Maureen carries a black Hefty bag and moves toward the center of the yard. Connie gets up and moves to join her, out of Steven's earshot.

MAUREEN

(re Hefty bag)

Some of your things. Want to take a look, see if there's anything else you need for now?

CONNIE

I can't go through my own stuff?

MAUREEN

At this point I have to say you're not welcome in the house.

CONNIE

Yeah I kinda put that together with the new lock on the door. And what about the kids?

MAUREEN

Gimme a break. Pounding on the door like that. Stevie, he's not as happy-go-lucky as he makes out. And I'm worried about Arthur, Con, seriously.

(beat)

You go do what you have to do, get the booze out of the picture.

(MORE)

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

I don't want to tell you what to
do, but if you're drinking?
(she starts away, toward
the building)
And I'm not laying it all on you,
God knows I'm no saint.

INT. GRANT'S BAR

Neighborhood workingman's bar. Brightly lit, a rare stool or two, no juke box, tin ceilings, water-stained walls.

Across from the bar, an oak-paneled telephone booth.

Behind the bar, on an elevated plywood ledge, a large Motorola television.

Longshoremen, mailmen, factory workers, truck drivers, mechanics, printers, all belly up to the bar.

Connie enters, goes to his spot in the corner. The bartender, WHITEY, sets him up with a shot and a beer.

CONNIE

Thank you, Whitey.

ON THE TELEVISION: *ABC's Eyewitness News at 6* broadcast, with co-anchors Roger Grimsby and Bill Beutel.

Connie bangs back a shot, Whitey pours him another.

EXT. GRANT'S BAR - NIGHT

Connie exits, stands there an extended moment, before he turns south on Tenth (away from the projects).

CONNIE

(to self:)
Not one solitary clue, fucko, how
to show another human being any
love at all.

A passing PEDESTRIAN eyes Connie with concern.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE - NIGHT

Connie heads east, when he hears commotion. He turns to see:

INCLUDE:

ARTHUR AND THREE OTHER BOYS

They carry pieces of two-by-four the length of baseball bats. Arthur smacks a garbage can and knocks it over.

The kids head toward the projects when Arthur spots Connie and quick-snaps his face away, his long hair swinging wildly on his head.

Connie watches them rumble out of view.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - WEST 23RD STREET - NIGHT

The clerk, HERBIE, embraces a column of liquor cases as if they were a lover. Wraps his arms around the cases.

HERBIE

Do you see? How I love them?

Connie stands there, a pint of Bacardi 151 on the counter before him. He watches like an objective anthropologist as Herbie simulates his love-making style with the cases.

EXT. BAR IN THE VILLAGE - NIGHT (RAIN)

Connie gets shoved out of a bar, into a downpour.

He uses the Hefty bag as a ridiculous umbrella, hustles to a near corner and descends a subway staircase.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - PRE-DAWN

Quiet, dark, motionless. Connie curled asleep. Stirs awake, instinctively checks his pockets. Touches the Hefty bag next to him on the floor. Sits up slowly, stays still.

EXT 149TH STREET TRAINYARD - SOUTH BRONX - PRE-DAWN

AERIAL VIEW: a large expanse of track. Trains tagged with whole-car graffiti pieces rest here and there.

Connie climbs down out of a subway car. He negotiates track and finds his way out of the yard.

INT. BICKFORD'S DINER - WEST 23RD ST - MORNING

Customers eat breakfast, smoke, read the paper. Connie sits at counter. The waitress, MAY, pours him a cup.

MAY

Two over easy bacon crisp?

CONNIE

And let me get an orange juice. And some home fries if you don't mind.

MAY

I don't mind at all, Con. On the same plate?

CONNIE

All right fine, all together, one big happy family on the plate. Also, an english muffin instead of the toast.

MAY

You got it.

Connie reaches for his glass of water, downs it.

CONNIE

Dying of thirst here.

A man Connie's age seated at the counter in the corner against the wall lowers his newspaper. Drinks coffee, lifts a cigarette from his ashtray, smokes. His name is DAVID.

DAVID

Water's important. To flush out the internal organs.

CONNIE

You a doctor?

DAVID

No but I played a doctor on *The Edge of Night* once.

CONNIE

That right? My wife's favorite.

DAVID

Thank you.

Connie considers him.

CONNIE

Why are you saying thank you? It's a compliment to the show. They gave you a white smock and a clipboard and a couple lines.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

*Nurse, when is so-and-so scheduled
for discharge? A bit player,
correct?*

DAVID

A bit player. Yes.

CONNIE

What are you, Greek?

DAVID

Romanian Jew.

CONNIE

Born in Romania?

DAVID

Bucharest. Grew up in Sunnyside.

MAY

(to David)

More coffee, hon?

She fills both their cups. David spoons in sugar.

CONNIE

Romanian Jew from Sunnyside by way
of Bucharest. Aren't you proud.
What high school?

DAVID

Stuyvesant.

CONNIE

Ah. A brainiac.

DAVID

Something of a prodigy, yes.

CONNIE

Prodigy of WHAT, you son of a
bitch.

DAVID

Mathematics.

CONNIE

Is that right.

DAVID

And music.

CONNIE

Listen to you. One area of expertise isn't enough. And here you sit, in Bickford's with me. What a fall you've taken.

DAVID

Speaking of which. Are there any openings where you work?

CONNIE

What qualifies you for the job?

May sets down Connie's plate.

MAY

Two over easy, bacon crisp, home fries, english muffin.

DAVID

Tell me the most difficult thing about being a doorman.

Connie doctors his food - jelly, butter, ketchup.

CONNIE

You have to be a people person is the long and short of it. Are you a people person?

DAVID

I'm talking to you.

CONNIE

And why is that, do you think?

DAVID

Teach me, Socrates.

CONNIE

Do you have a resumé?

DAVID

On me?

CONNIE

I'd be curious to take a look at it and see what I can do for you.

At this they both laugh.

SAME - LATER

The sun has climbed, the shadows have changed.

CONNIE
Where do you live now?

DAVID
A rooming house around the corner.

CONNIE
Anything available?

DAVID
You serious?

Connie gestures toward his Hefty bag.

CONNIE
Slept on the subway last night, a
bench the night before.

DAVID
I'm on welfare.

CONNIE
I grew up on welfare.

DAVID
What is this, a competition?

CONNIE
Tell me about this rooming house.

DAVID
Better yet, I'll show it to you. I
think she might have something.

EXT. 22ND STREET / ROOMING HOUSE - MORNING

Connie and David walk down a tree-lined block of Chelsea and
turn into a somewhat distressed rooming house.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE

Just inside, on street level, David knocks on a door. After a
while the door opens. An old woman, MRS COOK, stands there.

DAVID
Mrs Cook.

MRS COOK
Oh, hello there, David.

DAVID
Mrs Cook, this is my friend Connie,
he's a doorman as you can see, and
he's looking for a room.
(shakes Connie's hand)
I'm two flights up, number 7. Thank
you for breakfast. He's a good man,
Mrs Cook.

David exits up the staircase.

MRS COOK
Come in why don't you.

INT. MRS COOK'S LIVING ROOM

Connie follows her through the darkly curtained room.

CONNIE
Can I move in today?

MRS COOK
I don't see why not. But you
haven't seen the room yet. Let me
find the key.

They move past A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH on the wall of John F. Kennedy, retouched by some odd colorization: some rouge at the assassinated president's cheeks, a dab of red lipstick.

INT. MRS COOK'S KITCHEN

Just through another doorway on the far side of the kitchen is where Mrs Cook conducts her rooming house business. She takes a seat, searches her desk.

Connie stands in the kitchen, stopped by what he sees:

INCLUDE:

A GAS RANGE

Antique, colorful, spotless, with a clock.

CONNIE
That's some stove.

MRS COOK
A wedding gift from my parents,
believe it or not.

CONNIE
When did you marry?

MRS COOK
1937. I set my watch by the clock
on that stove. But I don't get
around to much cooking anymore.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. CONNIE'S CHILDHOOD KITCHEN - 1951

The stove: reminiscent of Mrs Cook's in make and model.

A disappointed table-and-chairs against the window.

A small plaque - "No matter where I serve my guests, it seems they like my kitchen best," evokes more irony than comfort.

An old Kelvinator fridge.

A tarnished wooden highchair, set off from the table.

NB: These images are presented in a straightforward documentary style, as opposed to gauzy remembrance.

RESUME:

MRS COOK'S KITCHEN

Connie continues to stare at her stove.

MRS COOK
(holding up a key:)
Found it.

INT. STAIRCASE - ROOMING HOUSE

Connie follows Mrs Cook up a flight. She moves slowly.

Above them, on the 2nd floor landing, Connie sees a WOMAN. They lock eyes a moment, before she moves out of view. A door is heard opening and closing on the floor.

Mrs Cook unlocks the door at the top of the stairs.

INT. A ROOM — ROOMING HOUSE

They enter.

MRS COOK

This is it.

CONNIE

Perfect.

A naked, cot-size mattress, smaller than a twin. A hotplate atop a half-pint fridge. A tiny mirror above a tiny sink. A small table and one chair. A closet door. One window.

MRS COOK

It's one hundred fifty five dollars a month, Con Ed included. Today's the 15th. Can we say seventy dollars for the balance of May, would that be all right?

Connie counts off some cash, hands it to her. She tucks the money into the pocket of her housecoat. With her two hands, she places the key flat onto Connie's palm.

MRS COOK (CONT'D)

It's a very easy-going house, and I have a feeling you're a decent man.
(indicates door on the middle of landing)
That's your shared bathroom there.

Mrs Cook starts down the stairs.

MRS COOK (CONT'D)

I can find you a clean pair of sheets, some blankets and towels?

CONNIE

I could use some linen, thank you.

Connie sits on the bed, removes cap and shoes. Goes to the window, opens it. On his knees, he considers THE STREET.

A door is heard opening out on the landing. Connie moves to the room's threshold. The woman seen earlier locks her door on the far side of the floor and moves toward him.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Hello.

WOMAN

Hello.

CONNIE
What's your name?

WOMAN/SUSAN
Susan.

CONNIE
I'm Connie.

SUSAN
Hi.

CONNIE
Can I ask: what day is today?

SUSAN
I'm pretty sure it's Wednesday.

CONNIE
Wednesday. Oh good. My day off.

SUSAN
I have it off, too.

CONNIE
Do you live here?

SUSAN
I do. Did you move in?

CONNIE
Just got the key from Mrs Cook.

SUSAN
Well, then, I'll be seeing you.

They smile. As Susan starts down the stairs:

SUSAN (CONT'D)
I like your socks.

ON CONNIE'S FEET: a pair of green argyles.

INT. CONNIE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Connie empties the contents of his pockets into the skillet on the hotplate - cash, change, keys, smokes, Zippo, wallet.

Undresses to underwear, hangs clothes in the closet. Goes to window, shuts it most of the way, lowers the shade. Lies down, tucks himself into a fetal position, closes his eyes.

FADE OUT.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE - FEW HOURS LATER

David, and a man, JUSTIN, a bit older. A knock at the door.

DAVID

Enter!

Connie enters in a T-shirt and doorman pants.

DAVID (CONT'D)

This is Justin, he's in the room
next door. Sit. Coffee regular?

CONNIE

Please.

Connie sits on the bed next to Justin, facing David in a
chair, their six knees practically knocking.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Cozy.

DAVID

What can you do? We're a close-knit
family. We've all come down a peg.

JUSTIN

Or two.

DAVID

Connie moved in this morning.

Connie lights a smoke. David hands Connie a coffee.

CONNIE

(to Justin)

How long you been here?

JUSTIN

Thanksgiving.

CONNIE

(to David)

What about yourself?

DAVID

Christmas.

JUSTIN

Holidays are a time of change.

DAVID

Shit goes down come the holidays.

JUSTIN
Sunday is Mother's Day.

CONNIE
Fuck Mother's Day.

JUSTIN
"Said the Bishop to the Queen."

DAVID
Does Mrs Cook have children?

JUSTIN
She puts me in mind of a Tennessee
Williams character.

DAVID
Mrs Cook? No, she's not half as
brittle as that.
(beat)
Susan likes the theater.

CONNIE
Wait now.

JUSTIN
She's on your floor.

DAVID
Right below me. I wish we had a
woman on our floor.

CONNIE
She complimented my socks.

JUSTIN
(to David)
I leave the bathroom as I find it.

CONNIE
She's a beauty.

DAVID
She has her charms, a beauty she's
not.

JUSTIN
Has she had, our Susan, any
gentleman callers?

DAVID
That she was quite interested in me
I can state without equivocation.

A bark of astonishment escapes Connie.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I could've had her. No question.
But I'm taking a year off.

CONNIE

I don't know what you're talking
about. She paid me an unsolicited
compliment on my argyle socks, from
which I envision a lovemaking
session in our very near future.

DAVID

Forgive me. I say it to spare you.
The woman liked your *socks*.

CONNIE

Exactly. A woman doesn't say things
like *I like your socks* for no
reason. Ah, David, you'll learn.

JUSTIN

She's a bit of a drinker.

DAVID

I mark her comings and goings by
the clink and clank of bottles.

A knock at the door. Connie reaches for the knob. Mrs Cook
stands there, a small folded stack of clothes in her arms.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What do I owe you, Mrs Cook?

She hands David the laundry.

MRS COOK

75 cents. I ran out of softener, so
I subtracted a quarter.

DAVID

(gives her 2 dollars)
They feel plenty soft.

CONNIE

Mrs Cook, can I follow you
downstairs for linen?

MRS COOK

Yes, you may.

INT. SHARED BATHROOM - 2ND FLOOR LANDING - ROOMING HOUSE

Connie, out of the shower, shaves at the sink's mirror.

CONNIE

(to self:)

I'll ravish her in a way she has never been ravished before.

(nicks his jaw with the blade:)

Ow.

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE / 22ND STREET - EARLY EVENING

Connie leans against the fin of a parked car, smoking. He wears a black cardigan. Nods hello to passersby.

Sound: the *clank* of bottles knocking together. Susan approaches, carrying a plastic bag from the liquor store.

CONNIE

I knew I'd see you.

SUSAN

Did you?

CONNIE

Like what they call a karma thing, maybe, synchronicity or something. I said she's going to show any second. And here you are.

SUSAN

Here I am.

CONNIE

I wanted to ask.

SUSAN

Yes?

CONNIE

Would you like to take a walk downtown and have dinner tonight? Can I buy you dinner?

SUSAN

Tonight?

CONNIE

If it's OK with you.

SUSAN
That would be nice.

CONNIE
Beautiful.

SUSAN
Can you give me a few minutes?

EXT. NINTH AVENUE - EARLY EVENING

Susan has changed into a casual dress and has applied a little makeup. She and Connie walk downtown together.

CONNIE
You look terrific.

SUSAN
Thank you.

CONNIE
Thank you for going out with me.

SUSAN
Thank you for —

CONNIE
All right enough!

Susan laughs —

CONNIE (CONT'D)
No more thank you's. Enough with the heartfelt appreciation, the well-mannered nonsense. Thank you this, thank you that. If I hear one more, one more thank you.

(beat)
Do you like how I walk by the way, how I take each step in stride?

Connie demonstrates his walking style.

SUSAN
Yes. You're quite accomplished.

CONNIE
Wanna take a look at the river?

EXT. ABANDONED PIER ON HUDSON RIVER - EARLY EVENING

Connie extends his hand to help Susan negotiate the uneven planks and debris. They arrive at pier's edge and stand looking out across the river to New Jersey.

CONNIE

There's a clam house in Hoboken. We should go one day, take the tubes.

SUSAN

Where are we going tonight?

CONNIE

Thought we'd get some Italian.

SUSAN

Can we get a drink there?

Connie produces a pint, uncaps it, offers it to her. She grins, takes it, considers the bottle's label.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You're like a Saint Bernard with a barrel around its neck.

(takes a drink)

That has a kick to it!

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - EVENING

A simple, small place, not fancy. Their meal finished, smoking, watching the waiters work.

SUSAN

Justin put me onto the agency. I had never worked as a proofreader or copyeditor, but it turns out I have a knack for it.

CONNIE

What did you do before?

Susan hesitates a minute.

SUSAN

Me and my husband wrote a book on how to beat the draft.

(sheepish grin:)

And we sold drugs.

CONNIE

I don't see you selling nickel bags in the park.

SUSAN

More like kilos. It started as a noble endeavor, with a plan to funnel cash into The Movement, but the noble part didn't pan out.

(beat)

Do you enjoy your doorman job?

CONNIE

I backed into it years ago. I keep getting fired. The union keeps finding me another spot.

SUSAN

And you have children.

CONNIE

Two boys. The older one hates me, the younger one loves me for the time being. The marriage been rocky for ages. We grew up together. Held hands during fire drills in the first grade. Lotta water...

(beat)

What about you, any kids?

SUSAN

No. Well -

I had one, but -

I was going to say I "donated" it, isn't that silly?

I gave him up.

(she's smiling, but her eyes are suddenly wet.)

It's there, you know? A room in my mind. All to itself. And that knock on the door. I know it's coming. He'll be standing there with his one and only question.

Connie watches her.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Why did you ask me out?

CONNIE

I like your face. And beyond looks. A vibe. In the rooming house, when I saw you. I like the space between your nose and mouth.

SUSAN

Do you mean my upper lip?

CONNIE

The indentation. What's it called?
That little dip.

SUSAN

(touches hers)
The philtrum.

CONNIE

The philtrum. Yeah. You're so
smart, to know such a word. And
tell me this, do you like to kiss?

SUSAN

Yes. I would say. Generally
speaking. Kissing as an idea -
(holds empty glass)
Where's our waiter? I haven't been
on a date since I'm thirteen.

INT. SUSAN'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE

Some color, some cookery by the hotplate. A small library.
Drinks in hand, Connie and Susan side-by-side on the bed.

CONNIE

Who are you?

SUSAN

Who am I?

CONNIE

Proofreader. Two brothers. Father
an economist. Mother a librarian.

SUSAN

You getting philosophical with me?

Silence.

CONNIE

Quiet in the back.

He sets his drink down. Takes her jaw in hand, kisses her
fully. She reaches for his dick, finds it, makes a noise.
They kiss for a while. He breaks from her, stands.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I need to unrestrict my balls.

Susan reaches to shut the lamp off, the room lit now by dirty
moonlight. Connie removes his pants.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Can people hear?

SUSAN
Who cares?

Susan lets the dress fall from her body.

CONNIE
Straddle me, would you?

She straddles him on the room's one chair.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
You're so light. The weight of you.

SUSAN
Am I?

He starts to kiss her mouth, and her nipples, which rest in front of his face. Dry kisses, wet kisses.

CONNIE
Are they sensitive?

SUSAN
Yes.

He alternates between breasts and mouth. Susan has difficulty sitting still due to her growing sexual agitation.

CONNIE
I'm gonna need a taste of your
sweet pussy in a minute.

Susan goes to the bed. They hug and kiss, before Connie positions himself to go down on her. Considers her vagina.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
I got to orientate myself.

SUSAN
Would you like a compass?

They laugh.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
A sextant? My clit is true north.

Susan gives him gentle directions. "Slow, slow"; "there, there." She has an orgasm. She reaches to stop him. Connie looks at her, confused.

CONNIE
Is it all right?

She pulls him toward her, wraps her arms around him. Then, she goes down on him.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Careful, careful. Don't forget I
want to fuck you.

SUSAN
Lie back.

Susan straddles him, slides herself down onto him.

CONNIE
Fuck me.

SUSAN
Give me your cock.

She repeats this filthy mantra until they both come. She collapses on him, her cries of pleasure transform into tears.

Connie brushes the hair from her face, kisses her eyebrows.

INT. 2ND FLOOR LANDING - ROOMING HOUSE

Connie appears out of Susan's room, crosses the landing.

INT. CONNIE'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE - LITTLE LATER

He stands at the window, looks out onto the midnight street. Drinks and smokes. Soft knocks at the door. Connie opens it. David enters. They sit.

DAVID
Forgive me. You might not know.
Given your recent arrival.

CONNIE
Spit it out.

DAVID
These walls are like *tissue*.

CONNIE
I'm not sure it happened.

DAVID

Oh, it happened. Listen, I'm going to meet some friends, would you like to take a walk? I can tell you the story of my life.

EXT. 22ND STREET - NIGHT

Connie and David exit the rooming house and head east.

DAVID

The pressure-cooker expectations cast upon me by my parents. As an American you wouldn't understand.

CONNIE

No, you're absolutely right. Continue, please, with your special-case immigrant story.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - NIGHT

DAVID

The bullying from the Irish boys in Sunnyside. Hugging my violin, running their gauntlet.

CONNIE

Cause you're Jewish - or Romanian - or a math genius - or what?

DAVID

Take your pick.

INT. STARLIT DINER - NIGHT

Connie and David enter, A WAITER shakes David's hand, and leads them to a two-top in the rear of the diner.

CONNIE

Coffee for me, and put whatever he wants on my ticket.

DAVID

Black-and-white milkshake, Gary, and the Farmers Boy Special.

WAITER

You got it.

They sit.

DAVID

In summation, I was branded a family traitor. I turned down a full musical scholarship and went to acting school instead – where I had to pay.

Connie considers him a moment.

CONNIE

I don't get it. There's a gap in your story.

A DOZEN MEN AND WOMEN suddenly surround them at the table, talking over each other, laughing. They slide several two-tops together, David and Connie now sit in the middle of what's become a large community table. As this happens:

ALKIE #1

(to David)

Where were you?

DAVID

Who spoke?

ALKIE #2

Guy named Louie from Pax.

ALKIE #3

Powerful. Powerful qualification.

ALKIE #4

(to David, re Connie)

What do you got here, a wet one?

QUICK SHOTS of people at the table, telling jokes, etc.

ALKIE #5

A fountain pen walks into a bar.

ALKIE #6

Half of a horse's ass walks backwards into a bar.

Connie spots Justin seated down the table among the group.

ALKIE #7

I wanted to drink so bad I thought my face was going to explode.

ALKIE #8

Fuck a higher power. I just don't wanna wet the bed anymore.

AKIE #9
Sexually, I don't know if I'm
coming or going.

ALKIE #10
You're in the right place.

More laughter. A man seated next to Connie says:

ALKIE #11
(to Connie:)
How many days you got?

Connie snatches his check off the table, springs from his chair. David watches him rush off.

INT. CONNIE'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE

Connie sits in shadows, drinks and smokes.

He gets up, retrieves a small 12-inch TV from the upper shelf of the closet. Unravels cord, plugs it in. After the tubes warm, he channel-changes to a muted *Combat!* rerun.

Sound: David and Justin climbing the staircase.

Soft knocks at the door. Connie opens it. David stands there.

CONNIE
Come in if you're coming in.

David enters, takes a seat.

DAVID
Are you all right?

CONNIE
How's it work?

DAVID
How's what work?

CONNIE
If a room opens up, you get your
mark settled in?

DAVID
My "mark"?

CONNIE
I know the deal, believe me. Years
ago. Sure. Alcoholics Anonymous.

Silent images of Vic Morrow on the little TV as Connie pours himself another drink.

DAVID
Have you been to meetings?

CONNIE
A few.

DAVID
Where?

CONNIE
Bellevue's flight deck. Coffee, cookies, well-meaning people. I have no grudge against the outfit. Besides which the book draws a line between what *they* describe as an alcoholic – *they*, follow me – as opposed to what you might call a hard or heavy drinker. And I would say, my case, long as we're talking, falls somewhere in the category of hard or heavy. You know, speaking generally.

David starts to...snicker.

DAVID
Goodnight.

David exits snickering. Connie stares off into the shadows of the room. Polishes off a drink, pours another.

EXT. MONKEY BARS / CHELSEA PARK - NIGHT

Arthur and his friends at the monkey bars. ALBERT, ERROL, his brother JOEY, RENNIE, and MICHAEL. All the same age – 13.

ARTHUR
And what about your baldheaded Jew father? That fuck's probably having anal sex with Michael's father right this minute.

MICHAEL
Say what?

RENNIE
Look who's talking.

ARTHUR

Don't get me started on your fat fucking father. Sitting up there, his base station, talking to some spic truck drivers, collecting welfare, smoking his L&Ms, crippled stupid Puerto Rican fuck.

RENNIE

Least I got a father.

ARTHUR

I got a father.

RENNIE

You call that drunken-ass bum a father? That white milk son of a bitch, stumbling around, stupid-ass doorman's uniform. Bet he sleeps in that shit, too. Since we're babies in baby carriages that son of a bitch been drunk. That that motherfucker's still alive is a bigger-ass miracle than the Miracle on 34th Street.

ARTHUR

That right...

RENNIE

Shame on your father, that intoxicated douchebag. Looked like a straight-up crazy-ass drunken bum on the street which when you think about it basically that's what he is. If I didn't know he was your father Artie I would have pushed his white ass in the river and watched him drown just to pass the time a good while ago.

Joey jumps in -

JOEY

I saw Mr Sky take a shit on his own couch one day, remember that, Artie? Pants down to his ankles, motherfucker thought he was in Grant's Bar bathroom.

RENNIE

Scumbag's always packing a taste. He don't blink without a drink your father, Artie.

(MORE)

RENNIE (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch'll be drunk at his own funeral, which by the way should be any second now.

Arthur keeps his head down, the kids watch him.

RENNIE (CONT'D)

Let's be real. Tell me that motherfucker don't urinate in the bed three times a week and I'll eat my straw hat.

ALBERT

Oh shit.

MICHAEL

Ho snap.

ALBERT

See what you did, Rennie.

Arthur: choked by tears.

RENNIE

Go ahead, bitch, cry. Let it out.

They watch Arthur sob with a strange relish. A moment.

JOEY

Speaking of mothers. I'll tell you the truth, Artie, straight up: I'd like to fuck your mother.

They all laugh, Arthur included.

ERROL

Oh shit! Reminds me of a rumor I heard. That Jondie and Ray-Ray fucked Richie Velasco's mother at the same time.

MICHAEL

That's not true.

ERROL

How you know it's not true? Your faggoty-ass father carries a pocketbook on a strap.

MICHAEL

It's a satchel.

JOEY

Artie, I'll be a good stepfather to you and Stevie. Take you to Whelan's counter every Sunday, let you split an egg cream.

Arthur howls, his face still wet with tears.

EXT. SERVICE ENTRANCE - 1040 FIFTH - DAY

Connie, coffee from the Greeks in hand, enters the house.

INT. BACK STAIRWELL - 1040 FIFTH

Connie and John, playing a round of cribbage.

JOHN

How old were you?

CONNIE

Me? Fifteen. Yeah. Me and my wife. Fifteen both. But you don't have to worry about that stuff. You got time for all that. No rush.

JOHN

Already been laid.

CONNIE

Already been laid?

JOHN

Like last year.

CONNIE

You're thirteen. Last year you were twelve.

JOHN

What am I supposed to do, Con? They throw themselves at me. Because of my name. Mostly. Probably.

CONNIE

No. You're a good-looking kid with a good personality. Now let me tell you something. You know what an aphrodisiac is?

JOHN

Makes you more horny.

CONNIE

Correct. Even *more* horny, imagine that, if such a thing were possible. And do you know what the greatest aphrodisiac is?

JOHN

The greatest?

CONNIE

The greatest aphrodisiac is when you really *like* somebody. To be really fond of somebody. You want to have great sex? Find somebody you totally dig. From the ground up. Somebody you just like talking to. Trust me, the main ingredient.

JOHN

I hear you, Con.

John throws down cards, on a run of fives and fifteens.

CONNIE

Look at you.

JOHN

Look at me.
(beat)
Something happened.

CONNIE

School?

JOHN

My mother.

CONNIE

She took off for Washington.

JOHN

This morning. Before she left.
(beat)
I wake up. Go into the kitchen.
Make a bowl of cereal.

INCLUDE:

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - EARLIER THAT MORNING

John in pajamas removes a carton of milk from the fridge, moves to the counter. Some of the following dialogue may come as voiceover as we intercut between the scenes.

JOHN

Get the milk out. And my mother...

MRS ONASSIS appears, moves across the kitchen toward John. (Her face may be kept from view, but) we see her hair, her elegant fashion, her statuesque figure.

JOHN (CONT'D)

She comes into the kitchen. Dressed for the airport. I'm at the counter. She comes over. Says something about me needing a haircut. She'll have Andrea make an appointment for me at the *salon*.

John's governess - ANDREA - appears in the kitchen doorway.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And she - she puts her hand on my shoulder - and then - she like - brushes the hair from my face —

Mrs Onassis brings her hand to John's face...

JOHN (CONT'D)

— then BOOM!

John makes a sudden aggressive move, startling Connie.

CONNIE

Whoa.

JOHN

I tell her, *Don't fucking touch me.*
(beat)
I don't curse at my mother, Con.

CONNIE

I know you don't.

JOHN

(reliving it:)
I say...*Don't fucking touch me* —

John smacks his mother's hand away, slams the carton of milk on the counter and with shoves his mother away from him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And I push her across the room, she almost falls but —

Mrs Onassis stumbles backwards —

JOHN (CONT'D)
Andrea catches her!

— into Andrea's arms.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Milk's all over the place. The whole kitchen's white. She had to change her clothes.

CONNIE
(beat)
Then what?

John looks at Connie.

JOHN
I tell her, *You have one daughter not two. Tell her, I'll get a fucking haircut when I feel like it. And I'll go to a barber, not your goddamn salon.*

John waits for Connie's response a moment.

CONNIE
You didn't do anything wrong, if that's what you're worried about. Things like this...they happen...you know...in families.

Connie shuffles the deck.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
All right let's play some cribbage, and I apologize in advance.

JOHN
Dream on.

John produces a massive joint, grabs Connie's Zippo, strikes the flint against his leg, lights the joint. John passes the joint to Connie, Connie hands the pint to John.

CONNIE
Whew. OK...now wait a minute...

JOHN
What?

CONNIE
(stares at the board:)
Forgot how to play.

John laughs wildly. Connie raises a sudden hand with concern.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Shh, shh, hold up, hold up.

They make a show of being quiet. Connie listens intensely, shakes his head, relights the joint, passes it to John.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Reefer's got me hearing things.

JOHN
Fuck!

CONNIE
What?

JOHN
Bit my tongue. Fucking braces.
Can't eat, can't do shit.
(beat)
I want them out.

John reaches into his mouth, tries to remove braces. Connie slaps John's hand away from his face.

CONNIE
Don't.

Above them, in the stairwell, a door creaks open, and footsteps slowly descend the staircase.

Connie quickly hides the reefer and liquor.

There, on the halfway landing of the stairs, dressed in white painter's overalls, cigar in hand, appears Walter.

JOHN
Hey, Mr Mezzola.

CONNIE
Hi, Walter!

Walter takes in the scene, the two of them seated across from each other at the small table.

John starts to laugh. The more he attempts not to laugh, the redder his face gets. His body convulses.

WALTER
(to Connie:)
He all right?

CONNIE
Nah, you know what it is. He
recently...got the braces.

John holds his face in hands, sobs with laughter.

JOHN
Ahhhhhhh!

CONNIE
They put the damn things in wrong.

WALTER
For the teeth.

CONNIE
Yeah, so he's in pain, and so he
gets a little, I don't know...

WALTER
Do me a favor. My office.

CONNIE
Be right there.

Walter turns, disappears up the staircase. They hear the door
creak open and shut. John calms down.

JOHN
You in trouble?

CONNIE
Nah, it'll be OK.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE

Walter holds fire to his cigar. Connie sits there.

WALTER
Probation as it is.

Walter's wife, MRS MEZZOLA, appears in her housecoat.

CONNIE
Hey Miss Mezzola.

MRS MEZZOLA
Hiya, Con.
(to Walter:)
Ready?

WALTER
Yeah.

MRS MEZZOLA

Here?

WALTER

Why not.

She exits.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Still busting my chops, Forster,
forget the game-playing in the
hall.

CONNIE

Does she know I'm represented by a
labor union?

WALTER

Got to write you up again.

CONNIE

That hurts me.

WALTER

What's wrong with your eyes?
Bloodshot, here to Jersey.

Mrs Mezzola enters with two plates of baked ziti, some salad
and bread on the side. She opens two bottles of Coca-Cola
with a bottle opener, drops a fork on each plate, exits.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Eat.

Connie digs in, drinks some Coke.

WALTER (CONT'D)

So maybe, if you talk to Forster.

CONNIE

Ziti's incredible.

WALTER

Second thought for my wife, that
ziti, a third thought — because
otherwise they insist on something
in the file come the time for me to
terminate you.

Walter picks up a fork, starts eating.

WALTER (CONT'D)

The kid. He all right?

CONNIE
What sense?

WALTER
Play games with him in the hall.

CONNIE
If I got a little time.

WALTER
What do you talk about?

CONNIE
Whatever. You know, he's a kid.

WALTER
My point.

CONNIE
Thing of it is, he's lonely. I'm
like a father figure in a way.

Beat. Walter starts to laugh.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
What?

WALTER
It's funny is all! Could see you
showing up to that compound they
got up there, yeah, and you show up
in your doorman's uniform, and you
say, I'm John's new father! And
who knows, maybe you end up
marrying the mother!

Walter laughs and eats.

EXT. SERVICE ENTRANCE - 1040 FIFTH - DAY

Connie exits, moves toward Fifth carrying a can of Brasso and
some clean strips of T-shirt.

CONNIE
There he is, Mr Fucko in a dirty-
ass pickup.

A man Connie's age sits alone in the passenger seat of a
small Datsun pick-up. Black California license plate with
gold letters. His name is LARRY.

Two cameras hang from straps around Larry's neck. On the
straps, a string of 35mm film canisters.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 (holds up can of Brasso)
 Would the supercilious parasite
 like a taste?

LARRY
 (holds up a camera)
 This one has no film in it. I carry
 it with fuckers like you in mind.

CONNIE
 Try it, scumbag.

LARRY
 Keep rattling my cage, just might.

EXT. 1040 FIFTH - DAY

Connie on his knees polishes the brass of the canopy poles.
 The doorman on duty, George, watches him.

CONNIE
 How are you, George?

GEORGE
 You missed a spot there.

The house-phone buzzes, George exits inside. Connie gets up,
 walks to the corner, crosses street. He looks at:

A LATE-MODEL BEIGE IMPALA

Government plates. Sitting on the park-side of Fifth, across
 from 1040. Secret Service agent Francis Ramey in the shotgun
 seat. His partner, HENRY SLOVELL, behind the wheel.

Connie takes a seat on the top slat of a bench against the
 park's stone wall. Ramey and Slovell watch him. Now Connie
 looks back across the street at:

A MAN STANDING BENEATH 1040'S CANOPY

He checks the address on a 9X12 envelope, then enters the
 house. After a moment George appears and points out Connie.
 The man walks to the corner, crosses the street, approaches.

MAN
 Hello.

CONNIE
 How you doing?

MAN

OK, so...
 (off envelope:)
 Are you, let's see - Cornelius Sky?

CONNIE

Yes.

He hands Connie the envelope.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

What is it?

MAN/PROCESS SERVER

An order of restraint. But it's
 really not my place.

CONNIE

No, please.

PROCESS SERVER

From your wife. You're separated or
 something?

CONNIE

OK - I mean yes.

PROCESS SERVER

The order makes reference to your
 habit of showing up in the middle
 of the night.

CONNIE

Does the order use the word *habit*?

PROCESS SERVER

It states it wasn't a one-shot
 deal, and believe me I'm not
 judging. It's nice around here.

Connie removes a sheaf of stapled pages, peruses them.

PROCESS SERVER (CONT'D)

I wouldn't take it personally. It's
 a form, basically, and they punch
 in different -

Connie jumps up, leaves the Process Server mid-sentence.

CONNIE

Your shtick is tired, stop playing
 dumb you little bullshit artist.

INT. BASEMENT - 1040 FIFTH

On his bed of cement bags, Connie reads the document. He rests the pages on his chest, stares off in thought.

INT. SUSAN'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE

Susan opens her door, Connie enters, the order of restraint rolled into his back pocket. They kiss once, twice. Susan drinks from a wine glass. Connie looks at her.

CONNIE

Would you mind taking that shirt
off?

ON SUSAN'S SHIRT: The portrait of a Black woman. Beneath the portrait, some words: *Free Assata! Break the Chains!*

SUSAN

(smiles confused)
Right this minute?

CONNIE

I like how it fits you, but I don't
like her.

SUSAN

Who?

CONNIE

Her. Joanne Chesimard. I don't care
for her. I don't dig her. I don't
dig what she's about.

SUSAN

Why?

CONNIE

Stone killer's why. The Trooper she
and her friends gunned down, and
here ten minutes later she rates as
a fucking folk hero on a T-shirt.
Are you *joking* me?

Susan fixes a stare at him.

SUSAN

Do you really want to stand there
and talk to me about *killers*? Do
you? Stick to doormanning.

CONNIE

And in the meantime you and your upper middle class *comrades* can go back to your suburbs, your swimming pools and Ivy League educations.

SUSAN

We had a *small* pool, and I went to Antioch, but yes we did have a housekeeper.

CONNIE

And stop blowing my city up.

FLASHCUT ON PHOTOGRAPH OF 11TH STREET TOWNHOUSE destroyed by Weatherman bomb-building attempts a few years earlier. The block a scene of chaos in the explosion's aftermath.

SUSAN

And you can stop posturing as our resident working class hero.

CONNIE

I don't posture.

SUSAN

Yes you do.

CONNIE

No I don't.

SUSAN

Yes you do.

CONNIE

No I - wait - do I?

They laugh.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

C'mon, let's get out of here.

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE - EVENING

Connie and Susan exit.

CONNIE

What time is it? Maybe we can second act a show.

She takes his arm, their pace quickens.

EXT. MOROSCO THEATER - NIGHT

FIVE WORDS on the marquee or glass-encased poster: 1. Moon. 2. Dewhurst. 3. O'Neil. 4. Misbegotten. 5. Robards.

Connie and Susan among the large chattering crowd on the sidewalk beneath the theater's canopy.

A loud bell sounds intermission's end and together they move with the crowd into the theater.

INT. MOROSCO THEATER

Connie and Susan seated down close on the aisle. He takes a hit off his pint, passes it to her, when the theater starts to darken and hush. We stay on them as the curtain rises and the brightness of the stage illuminates their faces.

INT. MCHALE'S BAR

Eighth Avenue theater district neighborhood bar. Connie and Susan at a table. Susan visibly drunk.

SUSAN

Why must every life get derailed?
Every single life. That play. So
much grief. Such remorse. So...

A nauseating recognition appears on her face, she stands abruptly and moves for the restroom.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Gonna be sick.

INT. SHARED BATHROOM - 2ND FLOOR - ROOMING HOUSE

Susan wretches into the toilet. Connie rubs her back.

INT. SUSAN'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE

Connie puts Susan to bed, covers her with blanket.

INT. 2ND FLOOR LANDING - ROOMING HOUSE

Connie exits Susan's room, walks across landing. About to enter his room, he stops...and descends the staircase.

INT. GRANT'S BAR

ON THE TELEVISION: A few patrons chuckle at Don Rickles working the audience of the Johnny Carson Show.

Connie stands at his spot. He turns the pages of the Restraint Order on the bar before him.

CONNIE
(to self)
...Are you kidding me...

Whitey looks at him with concern.

EXT. GRANT'S BAR - NIGHT

Connie stands outside the bar. Ponders his next move, before he turns and heads toward the projects.

INT. FRONT DOOR - SKY APARTMENT - ELLIOTT HOUSES

Connie knocks on the door. Waits. Now he uses the knocker. *Knock-knock*. Waits. After a moment:

MAUREEN (O.S.)
Who is it?

CONNIE
Maureen, I -

MAUREEN (O.S.)
Didn't you get the thing? Just go away, Con, please.

CONNIE
Maureen. Maureen.

He uses the knocker again. Waits. Now he starts to pound the door when it shoots open. Standing there, in dungarees and a T-shirt, the NYCHA cop, Pacheco.

PACHECO
She doesn't want to see you. That's what the restraint order's about.

CONNIE
The *fuck* you doing in my house?

MAUREEN (O.S.)
Raymond don't, just leave it alone when he's like this.

CONNIE

Like what, Maureen? You let this
pig in my house?

Pacheco puts a hand to Connie's chest, shoves him.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Fuck off me, piece of shit.

Connie throws sloppy punches that Pacheco easily deflects before he puts Connie in a full nelson.

PACHECO

You don't listen, do you.

CONNIE

This how you do your job, fucking
pig. Go around banging all the
project women.

Pacheco marches Connie to the elevator, shoves him into -

INT. ELEVATOR - ELLIOTT HOUSES

Pacheco follows Connie into the elevator, pushes a button on the panel, elevator's inner door closes, they descend.

Pacheco gives Connie several jabs and punches to his body.

Grabs Connie by the throat, slams his head against the wall.

He holds him still by the throat with one hand, with his other slaps Connie's face, hard and deliberate.

They stand there in silence. Connie on the verge of tears.

PACHECO

Wait.

Pacheco almost cries, too.

PACHECO (CONT'D)

Come on. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Pacheco awkwardly hugs him.

EXT. FRONT YARD - ELLIOTT HOUSES - NIGHT

Connie on a bench, one eye swelling up a bit.

Pacheco appears out of the building, approaches.

PACHECO

Can I give you a lift somewhere?
 (re Connie's face)
 Doesn't look too bad. Just a mouse.

CONNIE

Slapped me, what you did.

PACHECO

I'm sorry. Seriously. I apologize.

Pacheco walks away, cloaked heavy by remorse.

FADE OUT.

INT. CONNIE'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE - DAY

Connie, fully dressed in his doorman's uniform, stirs awake, a noontime sun at the window. He reaches behind him, produces the rolled-up order of restraint from his back pocket.

He struggles to sit up. Manages to stand. Hobbles to the small mirror above the small sink, considers his face, and spits dried blood from his mouth.

INT. SHARED BATHROOM - 2ND FLOOR - ROOMING HOUSE

Shower running, Connie shaves at the mirror. Touches his face and neck where Pacheco assaulted him.

INT. DRY CLEANERS - CHELSEA - DAY

In his underwear and doorman's cap Connie sits hidden from view on a stool at the back of the store.

A worker, MANNY, from the neighborhood, cleans Connie's doorman's uniform, hangs it on a hook next to him.

CONNIE

Thank you, Manny.

INT. BLARNEY STONE - 34TH STREET - DAY

Connie at a table by the window. SHANE, in a waist apron, sets down a pitcher of beer.

CONNIE

Thank you, Shane.

SHANE

You're welcome, Con.

Shane walks away. Connie peruses the paper, downs a second shot, pours a glass of beer, drinks.

A HOMELESS WOMAN comes into view out on the street. She pushes a shopping cart filled with her possessions. She parks the cart against the Blarney Stone's plate glass window.

She enters, goes to Connie, stands over him. Doesn't say a word, doesn't look at him. Her bearing is regal. She wears a trash bag as if made of the finest cashmere.

Connie picks up some change, offers it. She accepts it.

Connie watches her exit, pushing her cart out of sight.

EXT. 34TH STREET - DAY

Connie heads east on 34th, his haunted appearance goes unnoticed by the swarms of people rushing past him.

EXT. 85TH STREET / MADISON AND FIFTH - DAY

Connie, walking down the block, comes to a slow stop.

LARRY

You OK?

Larry sits behind the wheel of his parked Datsun.

CONNIE

Let me ask. Cause I thought we were friends for a second there.

LARRY

We were, far as I'm concerned.

CONNIE

Nah, all you wanted was info to get your pictures, to sell to some cheesy-ass magazine. What the hell do you want to bother with this family for anyway with your talent?

Larry gets out of his truck, leans against it.

LARRY

What do you know about my talent?

CONNIE

You showed me. That whole series on your brother in the wheelchair.

FLASHCUTS ON LARRY'S PHOTOGRAPHS: A young long-haired man in a wheelchair around a craftsman house in late '60s Los Angeles. Shot: the man aiming a large pistol at a palm tree. Shot: the man carried by another brother into a retrofitted shower stall, laughing. Shot: the man on a daybed against the room's dark wainscoting, severe pain on his face.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

You have a gift. Why you looking at me like that?

LARRY

How am I looking at you?

CONNIE

Like I'm the only person to mention one good word about what you manage to capture with a camera.

LARRY

Might be. Just might be.

CONNIE

You're the real thing, Larry. Why you're wasting your time with this nonsense I don't get.

(beat)

The mother, by the way. Down in Washington.

LARRY

Until when?

CONNIE

Tuesday, I believe.

LARRY

Not upstairs?

CONNIE

Just John, and the governess.

LARRY

OK.

CONNIE

As an olive branch I offer this. Cause if it was just the mother you were after, she's a big girl.

LARRY

When's Caroline coming back?

Connie stops. Shakes his head.

CONNIE

You don't get it. The kids, they need to be protected. Their privacy is sacrosanct.

LARRY

Hey man I got shots of them doing shit I could've sold for a lot of money already, but I didn't, all right? I'm not looking to rat anybody out —

CONNIE

Listen —

LARRY

No you listen, I'm not wealthy like these fuckers around here. I know how to use a camera and this work came up and I took it. Don't get on your high horse —

CONNIE

Go ahead, be a little prostitute.

LARRY

Sacrosanct?! Who are you!

CONNIE

Cut your own talent's throat if you want, but don't take pictures of John. He's a friend of mine.

LARRY

Friend of yours? You're a doorman. You polish the brass. I can't tell if you're serious.

Connie produces a pint, takes a hit.

CONNIE

Point a camera at the kid again and see what happens.

Connie walks away, and as he crosses the street he holds up a hand to stop an approaching car like he owns the block.

INT. VESTIBULE - JOHN'S APARTMENT - 1040 FIFTH

Connie opens the elevator onto the vestibule.

John stands there, grinning, holding a bicycle rack. The strap of a tennis racket case cuts across his chest.

CONNIE
Son of a b.i. biscuit.

A brand new 10-speed bicycle leans on its kickstand.

Connie secures elevator, steps into vestibule to take a stroll around the bike.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
What's this, a - *Bianchi*?

JOHN
Italian.

CONNIE
And this derailleur.

JOHN
Octavio around?

CONNIE
Octavio's day off.

JOHN
Want to put the rack on.

CONNIE
Let me see.

John hands it to Connie. It's a spring-hinged rack for mounting over the rear tire.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
This is nothing. I'll help you.

John rolls the bike onto the elevator. Connie swings the gate/door shut, dips lever, they start to descend.

INT. WORKSHOP IN BASEMENT - 1040 FIFTH

Long workbench. Power tools and table saws on display.

Connie holds the rack in place above the rear tire.

CONNIE
Go ahead, tighten it up, that Allen
wrench, both sides.

JOHN
10-4.

John grabs the wrench, sets to work.

EXT. SERVICE ENTRANCE - 1040 FIFTH - DAY

Connie and John at the mouth of the service entrance. John straddles the bike, the tennis racket bungeed to the rack.

JOHN
Thanks a lot, Con.

John pedals away.

CONNIE
Later.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY

John pedals, keeps his head down, uses pedestrians crossing the avenue as a shield to go unnoticed by Ramey and Slovell from the Impala. He pedals across avenue, into the park.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK / EAST DRIVE - DAY

John tests the squeaky new brakes. Does a few joyful zig-zags. Smiles, pedals hard. Reaches down to the levers on the diagonal crossbar, experiments with gears. Watches the chain climb and drop on the sprockets. Looks up - suddenly brakes hard. The two hands of a man grip the handlebars.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

John stands on the side of the road - no bike.

A patrol car slowly rounds a bend into view. John raises his hand, as if hailing a cab. The patrol car pulls up to him.

INT./EXT. LOBBY / 1040 FIFTH - DAY

Connie stands outside passenger elevator, listening to Benjamin, who mans the front door.

BENJAMIN

She's a good girl. But the drugs
don't care who you are.

The patrol car pulls up. John hops out of the backseat and moves to enter the house when Larry appears with his camera – *flash-flash*. Benjamin opens the door.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

(to Larry)

Come on, enough now.

John enters and moves through the lobby.

JOHN

Can you take me up, Con?

Connie follows John onto the elevator.

INT. ENTRANCE VESTIBULE – JOHN'S APARTMENT

The elevator opens onto the vestibule.

JOHN

Come on, my room.

Connie secures the elevator.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT – SERIES OF CORRIDORS

Connie follows John through the maze of the 19-room apartment, past rich tapestries and furniture.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM

The room caught between two worlds, that of a 13-year-old boy's, and that of his mother's. The chandelier, curtains and moldings collide with John's posters and sports equipment.

John flops on the bed, Connie sits in a stuffed chair.

CONNIE

What happened?

JOHN

Motherfucker took my bike!

CONNIE

Tell me.

JOHN

Goes through my pockets...*Where's your bus pass?* he says. Hope a fucking truck runs him over.

CONNIE

Important thing, you weren't hurt.

JOHN

Cocksucker!

CONNIE

Listen. I can't tell you how many times I've been robbed. On the train. Walking down the street. On the beach. Passed out in the sand, they woke me up to rob me.

John manages a grin.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Another time, right on 23rd, at knifepoint they take a can of baked beans from me.

JOHN

You're funny, Con.

A POSTER OF MUHAMMAD ALI on the wall.

CONNIE

(re: Ali)

He started to box right around your age. You know why?

JOHN

Why?

CONNIE

Somebody stole his bicycle.

John's governess - ANDREA - appears in the doorway. Her expression betrays a small shock at Connie's presence.

ANDREA

John, two detectives will be here in 20 minutes.

JOHN

I already told them everything!

ANDREA

They're coming, and you have to speak to them.

(MORE)

ANDREA (CONT'D)

(beat)
Would you like a sandwich?

JOHN

(to Connie)
Want a sandwich, Con?

ANDREA

Not *him*, you.

JOHN

(bursts out with emotion:)
He's my friend, Andrea!

Connie gets up, moves to exit.

CONNIE

Got to get going, thank you.

JOHN

Game a crib, Con, little later?

CONNIE

Absolutely.

Andrea steps out of the doorway to let Connie pass.

INT./EXT. LOBBY / 1040 FIFTH - DAY

Elevator opens and Connie moves toward the Secret Service agents, the cops, and Benjamin convening beneath the canopy. Connie yanks open the front door —

CONNIE

Want to know the main problem?
(re Secret Service agents)
These two fucking *humps* right here
could give a shit about the kid.

NYPD #1

Hey —

CONNIE

Let me break it down for you.
That's not just any kid, all right,
and these two are the quote-unquote
Secret Service —

SLOVELL

Nothing but a drunk.

CONNIE

Meantime the kid gets robbed for his bike in the park like who the fuck knows why he didn't get stabbed, follow me? No, but you know what, you know what, good in a way, 'cause both of your asses —
 (re Ramey and Slovell)
 — getting shipped out to some cubicle, you and you, supercilious sons of bitches, think I'm playing? Watch and see, watch and —

Connie stops abruptly: they are grinning at him with mockery.

NYPD #1

Go ahead. You're doing good.

CONNIE

Oh. OK. All right. I get it.

NYPD #2

What do you get?

CONNIE

Who's who and what's what vis a vis cahoots.

RAMEY

(to the cops:)

A small taste of what we put with on a daily basis.

BENJAMIN

Con —

CONNIE

Go ahead Bennie, I got the front!

Benjamin exits into the lobby.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Him I can trust. My union brother. But you four right here? Now that I have your number?

(to cops, re Secret Service:)

Surprised at you guys. Two fucking accountants, look at them, and you got *their* back?

Connie hears something, turns to his left — a *pop* sound followed by the *flash* of Larry's camera. Connie holds his face, momentarily blinded.

COPS / SECRET SERVICE AGENTS
Hey now...none of that now...

Connie regains his vision. Looks at Larry.

CONNIE
What did I say? I told you.

LARRY
Somehow you got the idea I take
orders from you.

Connie stares at him.

CONNIE
No. I'll tell you. You're right.
Absolutely right. Let me go see
what's what...

Connie turns to enter the lobby but spins and strikes Larry
across the face. Larry pushes Connie away, unleashes a camera
from around his neck, smashes it down onto Connie's head.
This exchange of violence happens in less than one second.

NYPD #1
Hell are you doing?

Larry walks away, just as Walter approaches from the north -

NYPD #2
You the super?

WALTER
Superintendent, yeah.

NYPD #1
Can we talk somewhere?

WALTER
My office.

Connie holds the door open. Walter leads the NYPDs and the
Secret Service agents into the house.

INT. LOBBY - 1040 FIFTH

Connie stands just outside the elevator. Feels his head where
Larry struck him with the camera, when STANLEY appears from
the back hall. Connie's face scrunches with confusion.

CONNIE
Not even close to six.

STANLEY
Doing what he told me.

CONNIE
Walter?

STANLEY
Wants to see you.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - 1040 FIFTH

Walter behind his desk. Connie appears in the doorway.

WALTER
Come in. Stanley come up?

CONNIE
Yeah.

WALTER
Sending you home, a one-day
suspension. When's the next shift
you're supposed to work?

CONNIE
What grounds?

WALTER
Do you think you can work here and
throw punches all at the same time?

CONNIE
Walter you didn't -

WALTER
I saw enough to see what I needed
to see! Can only look away so long,
which I have done for a good while
now is the truth.

CONNIE
The kid gets robbed in the park on
their watch and I take the fall?

WALTER
You don't curse out the Secret
Service, you stupid or what? Now
what you should do, go home and
figure out if you still want to
work this house. Cause believe me,
Con, you can't see it, I'm trying
to save your job. Now go.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE - CHELSEA - DAY

Still in uniform, Connie crosses the avenue in the same spot as before. Without noticing, he walks past his OLD HOUSE KEY now embedded into the tar of the street.

EXT. BUMS PARK - CHELSEA - DAY

A small park surrounding a free city health clinic that fronts Ninth Avenue. The space is frequented by the homeless.

A man Connie's age sits on a bench, he wears an army jacket. The beard on his face is knotty and chaotic. His name is TOMMY DUNN. He is homeless.

CONNIE (O.S.)

Tommy-Tom-Tom!

TOMMY

Who's that?

CONNIE

It's Connie, Tom!

TOMMY

Hey, Con!

Connie approaches, shakes his hand, sits next to him.

CONNIE

What are you doing, Tom?

TOMMY

I'm good. Doing good.

CONNIE

Tom, now let me ask you something, I've been thinking about something. I'm curious now: exactly how the *fuck* does a guy lose a project apartment? I mean you really have to go out of your way to fuck up in such a consistent and persistent manner for the city to kick you out of the projects, it's staggering to me you were able to succeed in doing such a thing. How did you manage it?

A moment, before Tommy looks up and lets out a great roar.

TOMMY

Ah, Con, that's funny.

Connie produces a pint.

CONNIE

Would it offend you very much if I
had a small taste?

TOMMY

Offend me?

Connie cracks the seal, takes a hit, passes the bottle to Tommy, who takes a good swallow and hands it back.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Thank you, Con.

CONNIE

Tom listen, I've been thinking
about you, and I'm keeping a good
thought for you, and I wanted to
stop, that's all.

TOMMY

Glad you did, Con, for real.

Connie takes a hit, hands the pint to Tommy, and drops a couple of bucks in Tommy's lap before he walks away.

EXT. FRONT YARD - ELLIOTT HOUSES - DAY

Maureen talks to a friend. The friend, with a jut of her jaw, indicates someone's presence.

Maureen turns, sees Connie cutting through the yard. They look at each other. He holds up a sad, simple hand hello...

...when a barrage of items tossed from a high floor explode to the ground all around Connie - a glass jar, some eggs, a head of lettuce.

He keeps moving at the same pace without altering course.

INT. GRANT'S BAR

Whitey sets Connie up with a bat and a ball. Connie downs the shot, considers the crowd of patrons.

SAME - LATER

The crowd gone. Only Connie and an older, disengaged patron, MR RIORDAN, remain. Behind the bar, Whitey approaches.

WHITEY

Mind if I watch the news a minute?

CONNIE

Do your thing.

Whitey moves down the bar, grabs the shaft of a hockey stick, its blade missing. Up by the taped butt of the stick there is a notch Whitey uses to manipulate the Motorola's controls.

INCLUDE:

THE TELEVISION

Whitey changes channels with the stick and lands on *Eyewitness News at 6*, with ROGER GRIMSBY and BILL BEUTEL.

Images on the TV catch Connie's eye: the canopy of 1040. And Benjamin, retreating into the house, away from the camera.

BEUTEL (ON TV)

...occurred late this afternoon in Central Park.

CONNIE

Turn it up - that's - turn it up!

Whitey works the stick, the volume shoots way up.

MR RIORDAN

Lower that damn thing!

Whitey lowers it.

CONNIE

Shhh, Whitey not too low Whitey.

Beutel refers to hard copy on the table before him.

BEUTEL (ON TV)

Son of the late president has just a short time ago been accosted in Central Park. The 13-year-old was on his way to a tennis lesson. There are no reported injuries at this time, but his bicycle and tennis racket were believed stolen.

CONNIE

Brand new bike!

BEUTEL (ON TV)

The young Kennedy remains under the protection of the Secret Service, and as such there have been ongoing reports of disagreements between the agency and family.

GRIMSBY (ON TV)

(ad-libs:)

This isn't the first incident.

BEUTEL (ON TV)

That's right, Roger.

GRIMSBY (ON TV)

The children, on occasion, have been something less than cooperative.

BEUTEL (ON TV)

The agents were unaware John had purchased a bicycle. He generally receives a ride from one of the agents to the tennis courts.

CONNIE

Oh that's bullshit!

GRIMSBY (ON TV)

Mrs Onassis has stated she would like to see the children grow up in as normal an environment as possible, which has made the job of the Secret Service more strenuous.

CONNIE

Son of a bitch!

MR RIORDAN

Shut the hell up!

BEUTEL (ON TV)

I'm sure we'll have more about this story on *Eyewitness News at 11*.

CONNIE

Like it's the kid's fault for getting robbed. Whitey, I work there, that's my building, I know the kid, a good kid.

WHITEY

All right, Con —

CONNIE

This time the bike, next time what?
Zero regard they have. So they
shoot an angle in the press – how
difficult the children make it.
They're kids for Christ sake.
Whitey, break this for me.

Connie pushes a dollar bill forward.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

What kind of outfit blames a *kid* to
cover their ass? And if they think
for one second – you know what, now
that I – *fuck* Eyewitness News! Give
me some good old Ten O'Clock News.
It's ten o'clock, Whitey, do you
know where your children are?

Whitey slaps down some change on the bar.

WHITEY

C.Y.O. until 7:30, then their
mother picks them up.

CONNIE

Don't brag, Whitey.

Connie downs a shot, picks up coins, grabs his beer.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

So I should do what, stand around,
let this deception pass, and me,
what, look the other way at the,
what, expense of the kid?

Connie stops at what he sees through the window:

INCLUDE:

ARTHUR WALKING DOWN TENTH AVENUE

Moving with wild adolescent energy past the bar.

Connie watches Arthur, then stares up into a corner where the
tin ceiling meets a water-stained wall. Now, he goes to the
phone booth, enters, picks up the phone, dials 0.

CONNIE

(into phone:)

Good evening operator. I'd like the
number to WNEW, Channel 5, the
television station, if I could.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 The *Ten O'Clock News*. Yes,
 operator, that's correct.

Whitey positions himself behind the bar to listen.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
 (into phone:)
 All right, fine, let's give the
 news desk a try. That would be just
 great, thank you. Yes, I do indeed.

Connie inserts a dime into the phone.

INCLUDE:

INT. WNEW NEWSROOM

Open sea of desks. A cub reporter, JAMES HARRIMAN, loosened tie and shirtsleeves, picks up the ringing phone.

HARRIMAN
 News room.

CONNIE
 Chances are I got a story for you.

HARRIMAN
 Gimme the nutshell.

CONNIE
 Nutshell's what happened this
 afternoon in Central Park to the
 Kennedy kid.

HARRIMAN
 Already been reported.

CONNIE
 Yeah I saw it but they got it
 wrong, entirely wrong.

HARRIMAN
 How would you know?

CONNIE
 All right I'll tell you how I know
 but do me just one favor and don't
 bullshit me and don't waste my
 time. I'm a doorman in the house.

HARRIMAN
 Doorman at Ten Forty Fifth?

CONNIE

Correct. And I got proof, proof the kid's not being protected, that's the story, story behind the story, not what Channel 7's throwing up there which believe me got spoon-fed if you follow my gist.

HARRIMAN

(grabs pen and pad:)
Where are you?

CONNIE

Right now? 25th and Tenth. Grant's Bar it's called. Southeast corner.

WHITEY

(to Connie:)
What are you doing?

CONNIE

Cornelius Sky.
(beat)
Pardon? My mother and father? I don't see—

HARRIMAN

You need to be vetted. We can't send a crew out on every cold call that comes in.

CONNIE

I hear you, I hear you.
(beat)
Samuel. Mary.
(beat)
S, K, Y. Correct, no E.

WHITEY

(to Connie:)
Don't have them come around here.

CONNIE

I'm in a doorman's uniform...now you're learning! All right, when you get here.

Connie hangs up, steps out of the booth.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

They're coming to interview me.

WHITEY

I don't want cameras in here.

CONNIE

Why not?

WHITEY

What if Gene doesn't want it?

CONNIE

Aw Whitey fuck Gene. Gene's not here. Gene's never here. If Gene gave a shit, *Christ*, Gene don't even come around to pick the bag of money up anymore. Look at this place, all the cash dropped in here, can't slap some paint on the walls, and you're worried about Gene? Whitey, please.

INT. WNEW NEWSROOM

Harriman examines the labels on several boxes of microfilm. Then, with a practiced flair, he kicks off and surfs down an aisle on the wheels of his office chair and comes to a spinning stop before a microfilm reader.

A SOUND GUY, carrying a boom mic, appears behind him.

SOUND GUY

What's up?

HARRIMAN

Pull the boat out, Peter, please.
Grab Donnie, I'll tell Meghan,
we'll meet downstairs in twenty.

Sound guy walks away. Harriman threads a roll of microfilm into the machine. He searches for a story, finds it, and as he reads, his expression hints of disturbance.

EXT. GRANT'S BAR - EARLY EVENING

A wood-paneled station wagon pulls up. The four-person news crew get out: camera guy, sound guy, a female producer, and Harriman. They unload gear.

INT. BATHROOM - GRANT'S BAR

Connie jabs the stem of the Borax dispenser, washes his hands. Splashes water on his face, yanks blindly for a fresh section of towel. Looks in mirror, makes one last camera-ready adjustment to the angle of the cap on his head.

INT. AT THE BAR - GRANT'S

WHITEY

There he is.

Connie approaches. HARRIMAN extends his hand.

HARRIMAN

Mr Sky, I'm James Harriman, we spoke on the phone.

CONNIE

OK. Now let me ask. I mean, how did they decide to send you?

HARRIMAN

I understand. People expect Gabe Pressman and I show up -

CONNIE

Because this isn't some lightweight rookie fluff piece. Talking about the president's only son.

HARRIMAN

Gotcha.

CONNIE

Where do you wanna do it?

The producer, MEGHAN O'ROURKE, walkie-talkie in hand, says:

O'ROURKE

Right where you're standing.

She slips into the phone booth, shuts its door.

SAME - MINUTES LATER

Connie against the bar. A bright camera light shoots on.

CONNIE

Whoa.

HARRIMAN

Want a minute to adjust?

CONNIE

Let's go for broke.

The crew trades hand signals, they start to film.

HARRIMAN
Sir, what is your name?

CONNIE
Cornelius Sky.

HARRIMAN
And where do you work?

CONNIE
Ten-forty Fifth Avenue.

HARRIMAN
Is that the residence of Mrs
Onassis and the Kennedy children?

CONNIE
Correct.

HARRIMAN
Why did you call us?

CONNIE
Tell you what, I saw a report about
the kid getting mugged in the park,
and the way they made it out, like
it was the fault of John himself,
and that's not right.

SHORTY CORDERO, a regular, enters quietly, sees the interview
in progress, stands at a respectful distance down the bar.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Could care less, the Secret
Service, why I called you guys down
here. Kid loved that bike.

HARRIMAN
In what ways have the Secret
Service not done their job?

BUTCHIE MORELLI, enters quietly, joins Shorty.

CONNIE
Sit there in the shade, eat
buttered rolls, drink coffee from
the Greeks, then to have the gall
to turn around blame it on the kid?
He's thirteen years old. Whitey!

Connie holds up empty shot glass. Whitey refills it. Connie
half-turns his back to the camera, downs a shot.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

They should not put it on the kid,
that's all. Let the kid be a kid,
you be the Secret Service.

HARRIMAN

How much have you had to drink
today?

PhD ROY enters, joins Shorty and Butchie at the bar.

CONNIE

Who has reason to count? Few beers.

HARRIMAN

And a few shots.

CONNIE

We're standing in a bar.

HARRIMAN

Yes, and accusing a venerable
government agency of wrong-doing
should not be taken lightly.

CONNIE

So I should do what, put their
reputation before the kid's safety?

HARRIMAN

Of course not.

SPIVEY CURTIS enters, joins the others quietly.

CONNIE

This time the bike, next time what?
And don't tell me people don't get
stabbed in that park for a funny
look, forget a Bianchi. Think about
it: president's son killed in
Central for his bike. How's that
for a story, would you like to
cover that one?

They stare at each other. Then Harriman says:

HARRIMAN

I'd like to ask you about your own
father if I may.

CONNIE

My father?

HARRIMAN

Yes.

CONNIE

He passed. Years ago.

HARRIMAN

How old were you when he died?

CONNIE

Me? I was nine. Nine years old.

HARRIMAN

Can you tell me about the circumstances of his death?

CONNIE

Circumstances?

HARRIMAN

How did your father die?

Connie looks at him a moment. Almost sadly chuckles.

CONNIE

He put his head in the oven.

INT. CONNIE'S CHILDHOOD KITCHEN - 1951

A man's body slumped dead against the open door of the main compartment of the gas range: Connie's father, SAMUEL.

TWO DETECTIVES silently confer.

ONE UNIFORMED NYPD stands like a sentinel in the room.

A CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHER takes pictures. His black-and-white PHOTOGRAPHS add to our consideration of the scene.

INT. GRANT'S BAR

HARRIMAN

Your father committed suicide.

CONNIE

Yes. Yes, he did. Turned the oven on. A common style back then.

HARRIMAN

That must have been difficult.

CONNIE

How so? –
 (raises empty shot glass:)
 Whitey!

HARRIMAN

To lose your father at the age of
 nine. By his own hand. You must
 have felt a terrible loss.

O'Rourke listens through the phone booth's glass door.

CONNIE

Yes and no, yes and no.

HARRIMAN

(beat)
 And the child.

CONNIE

(beat)
 Yes. My brother Edward. Well, he
 didn't realize.

HARRIMAN

Who didn't realize?

CONNIE

My father. He didn't know Edward
 was in the house. Asleep on a bed
 in the back.

INT. A BEDROOM – CONNIE'S CHILDHOOD APARTMENT – 1951

*A 12 month old child, eyes closed, on a bed, his tiny hands
 folded over his belly.*

INT. GRANT'S BAR

Harriman stares at Connie.

HARRIMAN

I'm sorry.
 (beat)
 That's not the story.
 (beat)
 The baby was not found on a bed.

CONNIE

Oh no?

HARRIMAN

The child was discovered *inside* the gas range, Mr Sky. Not negligence - infanticide.

INT. CONNIE'S CHILDHOOD KITCHEN - 1951

Samuel's body collapsed against the oven's open door.

The child's naked feet protruding from the oven.

The two detectives confer.

The uniformed NYPD stands still.

The flash of the crime scene photographer's camera periodically goes off.

We look straight down on the child, its body on the rack, the oven the baby's terrible sarcophagus.

In his doorman's cap and uniform, we now see Connie seated at the kitchen table. His presence unacknowledged by the others in the room. He takes in the horrible scene.

INT. GRANT'S BAR

Connie stares within.

CONNIE

(more to self:)

Of course there were inklings.
Rumors. In the neighborhood.
Because suicide? Dime a dozen. But
to take the life of a child. That's
a whole other legacy.

O'Rourke quietly steps out of the phone booth and stands next to the sound guy who holds the boom just out of frame.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

And what a kick I used to get
holding Edward in my arms.

O'ROURKE

(sotto, to Harriman:)

Proof.

More regulars from the neighborhood have quietly entered the bar. They are gathered together in sympathetic silence.

HARRIMAN

Regarding the Kennedy children, Mr Sky. You said you had proof their safety was not well provided for.

CONNIE

OK. Now I know for a fact those kids have been left alone many times with people who have an official record of problems.

HARRIMAN

In the building?

CONNIE

Correct.

HARRIMAN

What kind of problems?

CONNIE

With let's say mental illness.

HARRIMAN

Are you talking about a tenant in the building? A staff member?

CONNIE

No. Yes, staff.

HARRIMAN

The family's staff?

CONNIE

No, no, there's only —

HARRIMAN

The building staff.

CONNIE

Correct.

HARRIMAN

Who is it?

CONNIE

An employee, let's say.

HARRIMAN

What's his name?

CONNIE

His name?

HARRIMAN

Yes.

Connie look at Harriman a moment.

CONNIE

It's me. Me myself.

He lights a Camel with the Zippo's wild flame.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

As an example of so-called proof I say this to you. So if somebody like me, who's been to Bellevue, who has a small history of mental illness, a nervous disorder, call it what you will, if someone like me, on paper, has access to the kids, the question *then* becomes who else has access? Is it not a reflection of what we're talking about, a laxity, let's say?

HARRIMAN

You've spent time as a mental patient at Bellevue.

CONNIE

Correct.

HARRIMAN

Under what circumstances?

CONNIE

Thought I was gonna kill myself and my wife walked me over, pregnant with our first son. But the main point, vis-a-vis how lame, or forget lame, nonexistent, the background checks.

Harriman adjusts his body, resets himself.

HARRIMAN

And you, yourself, have been alone with the children.

CONNIE

Sure. Many times. The elevator. Part of the job. Which is my point.

HARRIMAN

And do you...yourself...have you ever felt in danger of hurting the children?

CONNIE

Hah?

HARRIMAN

You say you've been to Bellevue.

CONNIE

Right, right -

HARRIMAN

As a patient. That you have a history of mental illness.

CONNIE

I'm listening to you.

HARRIMAN

And you called us yourself, because you're concerned about John and -

CONNIE

Correct.

HARRIMAN

And I'm asking you, directly, if you have ever felt you could possibly hurt them.

CONNIE

Me? Hurt them? I -

HARRIMAN

Have you hurt them already?

CONNIE

Hurt them already?

The lights reveal profound disturbance on Connie's face.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I...wait now.

Connie half turns, reaches for the bar.

HARRIMAN

Is that why you called us, Mr Sky?
To protect the children?

CONNIE
In what...how?

HARRIMAN
Protect them from yourself?

CONNIE
How would I hurt them?

HARRIMAN
You tell me! You're the one with a history of mental illness. You're the one with access to them -

CONNIE
I...you.

HARRIMAN
Have you hurt them?

CONNIE
I called because -

HARRIMAN
Answer my question! Have you hurt the children?

CONNIE
Hurt them? Hurt them? I would never hurt them, never, not ever in a million years. I love those kids too much, I love those kids. I could never hurt a kid.

Connie starts to weep.

PHD ROY (O.S.)
Ah, Christ.

CONNIE
(re lights and camera)
Can you shut it now? To ask me such a thing. Your implication. I could never hurt those kids. I love them too much. That's why I called, to make sure they're protected, that no harm comes to them.

HARRIMAN
Would you like them to be protected from yourself?

Connie stares at him.

CONNIE
 My God, oh my God, to be so
 accused. To be so accused.

Connie hides his face on the bar and sobs.

O'ROURKE
 (sotto, to camera guy:)
 Push in, Donny. Hold on him.

The bar dead quiet, except for Connie's sobs.

O'ROURKE (CONT'D)
 Let's wrap.

The crew starts to strike the set.

EXT. GRANT'S BAR - EARLY EVENING

The crew loads gear into the back of the station wagon.

HARRIMAN
 The baby in the oven is gold.

O'ROURKE
 It's not gold, it's gruesome and
 sensational and we're not going to
 use it. That the audience knows a
 child died is sufficient. Let's
 exercise a little decorum, while it
 still exists.

They get in the station wagon.

O'ROURKE (CONT'D)
 You let him hurt your feelings and
 you wanted to retaliate.

HARRIMAN
 (sincerely)
 Is that what happened?

The vehicle pulls away.

INT. GRANT'S BAR

Connie continues to hide his face on the bar. Whitey brings
 him a fresh shot and a beer.

WHITEY
 Come on, Con.

Connie takes a peek forward, sees the shot and beer, shoots up straight with a grin.

CONNIE
Thank you, Whitey!
(generally, to the bar:)
Did I hang myself out to dry or
what?

The neighborhood regulars gather round him.

SHORTY CORDERO
You sure did.

CONNIE
Why do they call it the fourth
estate, does anybody know?

PHD ROY
What on earth did they do to you?

CONNIE
Took me to the cleaners, Roy.
Railroaded me like nobody's
business.

WHITEY
He called the station himself.

BUTCHIE MORELLI
My heart goes out to you. Reduced
to tears like that.

SPIVEY CURTIS
For all the world to see.

WHITEY
I told him not to call.

FADE OUT.

Over a BLACK SCREEN we hear a station's beep-tone, then:

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
*It's ten o'clock: do you know where
your children are?*

INT. GRANT'S BAR - TWO HOURS LATER

Connie, surrounded by the regulars, in the same spot the interview took place. They all look up at the TV.

ON THE TELEVISION: Connie breaking down during his interview.

A few guys at the bar chuckle...before all of them howl at the sight of Connie in tears up on the TV – including Connie.

EXT. MONKEY BARS – CHELSEA PARK – NIGHT

Rennie, Michael, Albert, Errol and Joey hanging around the monkey bars. They see Arthur moving toward them:

MICHAEL

Fuck's your father going on TV for, that drunk bastard.

ARTHUR

(as he approaches:)

Least my father don't walk around with a pocketbook like your faggoty-ass father.

MICHAEL

It's a satchel.

RENNIE

Before going on TV your father was just one more drunken-ass bum. Now I have a special pity in my heart for you and Stevie, Artie, and your sexy-ass mother, who I still want to fuck by the way.

ERROL

Me too.

ARTHUR

Speaking of mothers.

ERROL

"It's ten o'clock: do you know where your drunken crybaby father is?"

ALBERT

He's in Grant's Bar giving a drunk-ass interview before he breaks down into his beer.

ARTHUR

(to Rennie)

Imagine your mother winding up on TV.

(to Joey and Errol:)

Or your little bald-headed Jew father?

(to Albert:)

(MORE)

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Or your little spic father? Think about it, Albert. Your father fixes flats on Tenth Avenue. That's half a step above a panhandler.

ALBERT

Your white-milk father makes a bad alcoholic look good, that's how bad your father is. Your father should head straight back to Bellevue and stay there where he belongs.

RENNIE

"There's somebody in the building who's crazy," your father says. And then he goes, "It's me."

ERROL

"Yes, that's correct, they put me in Bellevue."

RENNIE

And ho shit Artie I didn't know your grandfather committed suicide!

ERROL

Let's discuss that, shall we?

ALBERT

That shit is contagious.

JOEY

When do you plan on killing yourself, Artie?

RENNIE

I could see you killing yourself Artie one of these days.

ERROL

Right after Mr Sky kills himself.

JOEY

Do you ever see your father acting funny around the stove, Artie?

ERROL

Don't leave your father alone in the kitchen, Artie. If he's hungry get his ass some takeout, but whatever you do, don't let him congregate anywhere near that fucking stove.

JOEY

Let's recap: Your grandfather killed himself. Mr. Sky is doing his best to kill himself. Artie, what about you?

ERROL

Imagine if Artie was dead?

RENNIE

Artie, please don't kill yourself, not yet. We still got some good years to goof hard on your ass.

JOEY

Plus I have plans to get next to your mother and I'm gonna need your help. It's common knowledge I want to fuck your mother, Arthur.

RENNIE

Me too.

ERROL

How those dungarees hug her ass just right.

JOEY

Just right, so very tight. Mm-hm.

They look at Arthur with love and affection. Arthur howls.

INT. LOWER LEVEL PASSAGEWAY - PENN STATION - MORNING

Connie comes to on the floor. A rush of travelers hustle past him. He sits up against a wall. Uses the wall against his back to rise up, then uses it to lower himself to retrieve cap, before he walks away.

EXT. BLARNEY STONE - 34TH STREET - MORNING

Connie at the locked door sees Shane tossing sawdust from a bucket out onto the floor. Connie taps the glass on the door with a coin, Shane looks up.

INT. BLARNEY STONE

Connie at a table in the back. Shane brings him a pitcher of beer and a water glass filled with whiskey, and walks away.

Connie reaches for the whiskey with a shaky hand, stops. Brings mouth to the glass, slurps. Picks it up with two hands, drinks. Pours himself a glass of beer, drinks.

Shane slides a stainless steel tray into a smoky hole at the steam table. Pours himself a cup of coffee, and joins Connie in the booth. They sit together in silence.

INT. 2ND FLOOR LANDING - ROOMING HOUSE

Connie, showered, in uniform, exits his room. About to head down, he hears sounds from Susan's room.

He crosses the landing, knocks on her door. It opens. Susan sits in her chair. Connie steps in and sees David and Justin sitting side by side on the bed. A moment.

CONNIE

Here they are. All gathered together. The Temperance Brigade. With their latest recruit.

DAVID

(an invitation:)
We're on our way to a meeting.

CONNIE

You know, the problem isn't what's *in* the bottle. The problem is your *mind*. *That's* your problem.

Connie shakes his head with patronizing disdain, walks away.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - 1040 FIFTH

Walter behind his desk. Connie in the chair.

WALTER

My job's to tell you I have to let you go from this house. Effective immediately.

Walter slides open desk drawer, produces some envelopes.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Three checks, I don't know, vacation, sick days. And I talked to management. Got them to let you collect 'til you find a new spot.

CONNIE

Thank you, Walter.

Walter's wife enters.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Hey, Miss Mezzola.

She sets down two plates of sausage and peppers sandwiches with potato chips, two bottles of Coca-Cola. She stands over Connie, touches his face with affection, exits.

WALTER
Worried about you, my wife. Straw that broke the back, going on TV like that. Go ahead, eat.

Connie and Walter begin a last meal together.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - LEXINGTON AVENUE - DAY

Connie exits, heads south on Lex. He cracks the seal on a fresh pint, has a taste.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY - ANOTHER DAY

Connie leans against the rail, salty wind at his face, smiling at a seagull hopping toward him on the rail. Connie extends a piece of his hotdog, the bird takes it.

EXT. ROWBOAT ON CLOVE LAKE - STATEN ISLAND - DAY

Connie rows a boat in the middle of the lake. We see him from a distance: Charlie Chaplin in a doorman's uniform.

INT. GAY BAR - ANOTHER DAY

Early weekday morning. A few men here and there. Connie at the bar. A gentle-looking BARMAN serves him.

Connie's nose wrinkles at sight of the international collection of phalluses on a shelf behind the bar.

SAME - LITTLE LATER

Connie weeps. The barman has come from around the bar to comfort Connie, softly embracing him.

BARMAN
There, there, doorman...

INT. LOWER LEVEL PASSAGEWAY - PENN STATION - ANOTHER DAY

Connie unconscious on the floor. Arthur shakes him awake with anger as commuters rush past them.

EXT. STAGE DOOR - MOROSCO THEATER - ANOTHER NIGHT

Connie, drunk, spotted among a crowd of autograph seekers.

INT. TOPLESS BAR - ANOTHER NIGHT

Connie, at a table, watches a woman, JANE, dance.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

A desultory orgy in progress. Connie and Jane among the small group. Connie sits half-naked, watches and drinks.

INT. STAIRCASE - ROOMING HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

Susan, David and Justin descend the staircase past Connie as he climbs. He yells drunkenly at them.

CONNIE
Fuck atta my way!

INT. MOVIE THEATER - ANOTHER DAY

Connie, alone, hugging his bottle, watches Jack Lemmon in a scene from *Save the Tiger*.

EXT. 23RD STREET - CHELSEA - ANOTHER DAY

Connie intentionally walks into traffic, nearly gets hit.

INT. CONNIE'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE - ANOTHER NIGHT

Connie in bed, writhing in turmoil.

FADE OUT.

INT. LIBRARY - XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL - ANOTHER DAY

The walls of the room lined with books.

In the center of the room, four large rectangular oak tables pushed together to make one large table.

Around the table sit twenty or so people.

In chairs at the room's periphery, another thirty people.

Connie sits at the periphery between David and Susan. Bent over in his chair, he looks torn up and disheveled.

Justin, at the head of the table, qualifies.

JUSTIN

And in many respects I was afforded every advantage, my family having opened every coffer on my behalf.

Sound: a thud. It's Connie. Collapsed out of his chair.

People gather round him. A sober alkie physician, HAROLD, goes to one knee, loosens Connie's pants, removes his shoes.

HAROLD

Grand mal seizure. He'll be all right. There's a booth, if you make a left at the end of the hall. Will someone call Saint Vincent's for an ambulance, please?

INT. ALCOVE OFF CORRIDOR - ST VINCENT'S - TWO DAYS LATER

Maureen stands, smoking.

Arthur, balled up knees to chest on the window ledge, stares at the intersection of 11th Street, Greenwich, and Seventh.

Connie, in a hospital gown and foam slippers, sits in an armchair, gently holding the pole of his IV tree.

A tableaux of estrangement - except for Steven, who combs his father's hair, playing the World's Greatest Barber.

STEVEN

(old country accent)

Don't-a you-a worry. Gonna give-a you a good cut. Don't be-a scared.

INT. BANK OF ELEVATORS - ST VINCENT'S

Connie, Maureen, Arthur and Steven wait.

CONNIE
Thank you for coming.

An elevator opens, they move to enter – when Steven turns to Connie in tears, embraces him fiercely. They hold each other, before Steven gets on the elevator and the doors close.

EXT. XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL – ANOTHER DAY

Sober alkies mill about. Connie stands alone. His face: an animal trapped suddenly in a cage that is the world.

An older man, RICHARD, grabs his arm, startling him.

RICHARD
Don't run off. We're going out
after. Me and you.

INT. SIXTH AVENUE DINER

Connie and Richard at a table.

RICHARD
Do you want to save your marriage?

CONNIE
I don't know.

RICHARD
Fair enough. In the meantime we get
you back into a job. You set up a
standing appointment with the kids,
a weekend morning breakfast.
Regardless who shows up, you'll be
there. Let them count on it. You
keep the financial support going.
Otherwise you leave it alone. And
you live in the rooms a while.

INT. CONNIE'S ROOM – ROOMING HOUSE – ANOTHER DAY

A small bucket, a few balled-up newspaper pages, a bottle of vinegar: Connie washes the window, detailing it.

INT. BICKFORD'S DINER – ANOTHER MORNING

Connie and Steven at a table. May stands over them.

CONNIE
Tell May what you want.

STEVEN
Can I get a waffle?

MAY
Course you can. Want some bacon?

Steven nods yes.

MAY (CONT'D)
You got it.

May walks away.

CONNIE
How's your brother?

STEVEN
Chump's there.

Steven spins in his chair, points out the window. At a distance, on a diagonal corner, Arthur loiters.

STEVEN (CONT'D)
Looking for money is all.

CONNIE
Stevie, do me a favor...
(hands him cash)
So he doesn't have to wait around -
(Steven jumps to exit)
- Careful the cars.

EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE - CENTRAL PARK WEST - ANOTHER NIGHT

Seen from across the street Connie works a buffing machine on the lobby floor of a new house.

EXT. OCEAN - ROCKAWAY - ANOTHER DAY

Connie swims, floats on his back, closes his eyes to the sun.

EXT. XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL - ANOTHER DAY - EARLY FALL

Jacket weather. Sober alkie mill about. Connie stands with Richard.

RICHARD
Oh by the way. I spoke to David.
You're qualifying in three weeks.

Connie: rattled to hear it.

INT. BICKFORD'S DINER - ANOTHER MORNING

Connie at his table.

CONNIE

Tell May what you want.

Arthur sits across from him. May stands there. Arthur studies the menu with an unconscious comic intensity.

ARTHUR

Bacon and eggs over easy. Bacon well done. Small orange juice. Home fries. And can I get an english muffin instead of the toast?

May lets her pad and pencil drop onto the table.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

What?

MAY

The same order I've taken from your father for as long as you're alive!

INT. CONNIE'S ROOM - ROOMING HOUSE - ANOTHER NIGHT

Connie asleep. Sounds from the street wake him. He gets up, goes to window, opens it. On his knees, he looks out on to:

INCLUDE:

22ND STREET - NIGHT

No rain, just the wind, and November's fallen leaves, swirling and fighting, chasing each other up and down the block, streaming over parked cars, rumbling from sewer to manhole cover and back again, the ballet of leaves beneath the street-lamps depicting a medley of storylines - love affairs, screwball comedies, epic war sagas.

Connie: riveted by the leaves' display, his five senses coming new to the world. It is exhilarating - and terrifying. As if he has never seen a season change.

EXT. XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL - ANOTHER DAY

Clusters of sober alkies on the sidewalk.

INT. LIBRARY - XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL

David chairs the meeting. He reads from a binder but all we hear are the rapid beats of a fearful heart.

It's Connie's heart. He sits in the speaker's seat. Lights a cigarette, pulls an ashtray on the table to him.

Room sounds fade in. David looks up from the binder.

DAVID

Some of you might recall today's
speaker's rather disruptive first
appearance in the room.

Raucous laughter from the standing room only crowd.

Room sounds fade out once more - just Connie's heartbeat.

Susan and Justin flank Connie in chairs at the table.

Richard is seated somewhere at the periphery.

Among the standing, a bit obscured, find Maureen.

Room sounds return.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Please help me welcome Connie.

Robust applause. The room settles into deep silence.

CONNIE

Connie, alcoholic.

He looks right at us. Hold on him.