

FADE IN:

EXT. MANSION -- DAY

1

Establishing: Mansion in the country, 100 yards from ocean.

From a distance, we see CYNTHIA (10) and CYBILL,(11), pretty blondes, play ball on the front lawn with three other children of about the same age, ROY, DOT and MAY.

CAROL, 19, wrap over a bikini, leaves the house, hand-in-hand with PAUL, 22, in brand new yachting clothes.

Cynthia, carrying the ball, Cybill and May run to Carol, begging her to play.

She, refuses, kindly, and goes off towards the beach with Paul.

Cynthia pokes her tongue out at their backs and throws the ball away, angry.

Cybill comforts her.

INT. DRAWING ROOM -- DAY

2

AGATHA, old but straight and elegant, with a cane, peers out the window through binoculars.

HAROLD, her brother, sits in an armchair, reading.

HAROLD

That isn't nice you know, Agatha -
spying on newlyweds.

AGATHA

She's my niece and ward.

HAROLD

Was your ward.

AGATHA

Still my niece.

HAROLD

Even so.

AGATHA

I just don't trust him.

HAROLD

Paul seems a perfectly decent young
man. Carol obviously adores him.

AGATHA

(dry)
Obviously.

EXT. YACHT -- DAY

3

THROUGH THE BINOCULARS:

Paul at the tiller of a 22' yacht.

Carol, in a bikini, flirts with him, physically, and goes to him to kiss him.

AGATHA (V.O.)

Upstart!

(beat)

Fortune-hunter!

HAROLD (V.O.)

The boy hardly fits the stereotype.
He's close to his PhD, after all.
Paul's all set for a distinguished
academic career.

AGATHA (V.O.)

So he wanted a rich wife to support
him. There's no money in English
Literature.

NOT THROUGH THE BINOCULARS.

Paul returns the kiss but peering past Carol.

PAUL

I have to watch where we're going,
sweetheart, or I'll run us aground.

CAROL

When I kiss you, you pay attention
to my kiss!

She kisses him with more passion, holding his hair so that
he can't look past her.

AGATHA (V.O.)

I wonder if he'll expect some sort
of sinecure at The Monitor.

HAROLD (V.O.)

If he does, he'll have one. After
all, Carol owns as much of the paper
as you do.

AGATHA (V.O.)

I can vote the girls' shares, in an
emergency.

HAROLD (V.O.)

It'd hardly be an emergency, the
quarter-owner of the paper hiring
(MORE)

HAROLD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
her husband. Nepotism has never
called for emergency measures.

Paul tears free from Carol's kiss and looks to the prow. He is alarmed.

PAUL
Damn!

He bears hard on the tiller.

The sail, swinging round, loses air and hangs limp.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Run forward and fend us off,
sweetheart!

The yacht is heading straight for a sandy beach.

INT. DRAWING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS 4

AGATHA
He's no sailor! The fool is going
to run her aground!

Harold joins her at the window.

EXT. YACHT -- CONTINUOUS 5

Carol snatches up a long pole and dashes to the prow.

Paul fights the tiller.

EXT. PROW/SEA -- CONTINUOUS 6

The end of the pole shoves down, through shallow water, into the sand, at an angle that steepens as the yacht is driven forward.

EXT. YACHT -- CONTINUOUS 7

Carol pushes down on the pole, bending it.

It bucks, throwing her overboard.

PAUL (O.S.)
Carol!

EXT. PROW/SEA -- CONTINUOUS 8

Carol hits water on her back as the prow yaws. The prow swings forward, over Carol's legs, to her tummy, pushing her underwater.

INT. DRAWING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

9

AGATHA
She's gone overboard.

She throws the binoculars down and rushes as fast as she can from the room.

Harold follows.

EXT. GARDEN -- MOMENTS LATER

10

All the children are still playing ball.

Agatha rushes, hobbling, from the house, followed by Harold.

CYNTHIA
What is it, Auntie?

AGATHA
Your cousin Carol, overboard.

She hobbles on, now followed by Harold and the girls.

EXT. PROW/SEA -- MOMENTS LATER

11

Underwater, on her back, Carol, in agony, struggles for air.

Blood begins to billow from her lower body, where she is being crushed by the prow.

The pole stabs into the sand by her head and begins to bend again.

EXT. YACHT -- CONTINUOUS

12

Paul, leaning over the side, pushes down on the pole with all his strength.

EXT. PROW/SEA -- CONTINUOUS

13

Carol manages to sit up, despite being crushed from her tummy down, and gets her face above water for a second.

She sucks air, then screams:

CAROL
You bastard!

EXT. YACHT -- CONTINUOUS

14

Paul pulls the pole up then pushes it down again.

EXT. PROW/SEA -- MOMENTS LATER

15

Carol lays back, just underwater, dead, crushed from her sternum down. The sea is pink with her blood.

EXT. YACHT -- CONTINUOUS 16

Paul is slumped on the deck, sobbing helplessly.

EXT. BEACH -- CONTINUOUS 17

The girls, followed by Agatha and Harold, arrive, see Carol and scream hysterically.

Harold is stone, with tears streaming down his face. He takes a step, clutches his chest, and falls.

EXT. FUNERAL -- DAY 18

A crowd of mourners watch as the coffin is lowered.

Nearby, a second grave and coffin await.

Agatha, Cynthia and Cybill stand on one side of the grave, Paul on the other, with no one standing near him, shunned.

The funeral over, Paul rushes round to comfort the family but is cold-shouldered.

INT. PAINTER'S LOFT -- AFTERNOON 19

It is a crime-scene, with police and forensic people at work, Detective Lieutenant BROWER in charge.

A tall, very thin, man, wearing only his undershorts, is dead, nailed to a wooden door by spikes through his spread hands and crossed feet. His head, which is slumped to his chest, is crowned with a gilded holly wreath.

There is a partly painted portrait of a seated nude female figure on an easel, no facial features painted yet but her lovely body shown in detail.

PHOTOGRAPHER

I need his face Lieutenant, please?

Brower, cool and calm, lifts the corpse's head by its hair.

The photographer takes a couple of shots.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

Done, thanks.

Brower lets the head fall. As it does, the wreath falls to the floor.

At the door, KAREN, 20, lovely red-head, long hair, flashes her reporter's id at a guarding COP.

KAREN

From The Monitor, and...

COP
I'm sorry, Miss, but...

BROWER
She got a photographer with her?

COP
No. She's alone. No camera, neither.

BROWER
Let her in then.

KAREN
Thanks, Officer. I'll be sure to
get your name right.

She rests her bag on a table, one end pointing towards the
corpse, and adjusts its angle an inch.

BROWER
Yeah, be sure you do. Get my rank
right, while you're at it. I'm
Detective Lieutenant Alex Brower.

KAREN
Got it, Lieutenant.
(beat)
What's the victim's name?

BROWER
He signs his pictures 'Dante,' but
his real name is Diego Ramirez. I
guess a greaser name didn't go down
so well with his clients.

KAREN
Hispanic? He looks too pale to be
Hispanic.

BROWER
So would you be pale if you'd been
bled dry the way he has.
(beat)
Here, take a look at this.

He shows Karen a bloodstained sheet of paper, which he holds
in latex-gloved fingers.

BROWER (CONT'D)
The perp left us a clue. If I make
you a copy, can you get it into the
morning's paper? Maybe it'll mean
something to someone? It sure don't
mean nothin' to me.

KAREN

I think I can do even better than
that, Lieutenant.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- EVENING

20

The loft is enormous. The only interior wall is eight feet long, four deep, and accommodates the fireplace.

Before the fireplace, there is furniture for a masculine but luxurious sitting room with a leather couch and several matching over-sized leather armchairs.

On the reverse side of the wall is a fully equipped office.

On the single wall of the office is a large plasma screen. The area also has several large leather armchairs.

One area has exercise equipment. Another is a bathroom, with a sunken tub, hi-tech shower, etc.. The wall around the bathroom is half-silvered so that anyone inside can see out but no one can see it.

The sleeping area and kitchen are also open.

Each area has its own overhead lighting. When Paul moves around his loft, the lights turn on and off automatically so that the area he is using is brightly lit but the rest are totally dark. There are no windows.

The entrance is sealed off by another half-silvered glass wall, with a sliding door.

Paul exits the shower, in the lit bath area, puts on a robe and proceeds through his loft. The area he leaves falls dark and the area he goes through lights up as he enters it.

He passes through the exercise area, into the kitchen, takes the last cold slice from a pizza box, plus a beer from the fridge, through the living room and to his office, where he sinks into an oversized black leather armchair facing the plasma screen.

His chair has extensions on both arms. One is a tray, where he places his make-shift meal. The other is a keyboard, that he swings over his lap, and he keys.

The screen lights up with a half-created crossword in the center and the Across clues on one side, the Down on the other.

He thinks for a moment before typing the next word into the crossword.

SFX: Phone.

Paul hits a key.

PAUL

Yes?

KAREN (V.O.)

Mr Paul Vail?

PAUL

Yes. Who is it?

KAREN (V.O.)

Karen Carstairs, from The Monitor?

PAUL

I don't think I've spoken to you
before, Karen. Are you new?

As he talks, half Paul's mind is on his work. New words
appear on the crossword as he types but are erased almost
instantly.

KAREN (V.O.)

I'm not with lay-out, Mr Vail. It's
not exactly to do with your
crosswords. I'm a reporter.

PAUL

I don't do interviews, Ms Carstairs.
Everyone at The Monitor knows that.

KAREN (V.O.)

'Karen,' please? I'm not trying to
interview you, Mr Vail. It's about
a murder, a particularly gruesome
one.

PAUL

(guarded)

What murder, Ms Carstairs?

KAREN (V.O.)

My editor, Fred, Mr Barnes, suggested
you might be able to help the police.

PAUL

Me? Why me?

KAREN (V.O.)

The murderer left a note with a clue
and Fred thinks it's a crossword-
type clue.

(beat)

Can I come over and talk to you about
it?

PAUL

Perhaps I can save you a visit.
What's the 'clue?'

KAREN (V.O.)
It'd be no trouble...

PAUL
Tell me?

KAREN (V.O.)
It says, 'It might sound rude, but with some initial help from the East, this might start your puzzle for you.

(beat)
Then there are two numbers, separated by a comma, '3' and '5.' It seems it's the numbers that make Fred think it's a crossword clue. Why's that, Mr Vail?

PAUL
It means the answer is two words, first one three letters, second one five.

KAREN (V.O.)
Thanks. Does the clue mean anything to you?

Paul thinks.

PAUL
Was the victim beaten over the...
(beat)
No - was the victim nailed to a cross of some kind?

KAREN (V.O.)
How on Earth did you know that? Not to a cross, but he was crucified. How did you know?

PAUL
Simple. 'Sound like' means a pun or a homophone. The only homophone I can think of for 'rude' is 'rood,' R-O-O-D. That's an archaic word for a cross.

(beat)
There aren't many ways to kill someone with a cross - bludgeoning with one, stabbing with a sharp one, maybe, but more likely 'crucified,' as you told me it was a 'gruesome' murder.

(beat)
'East initially' means just 'E.'
Add an 'E' to 'on a cross' and you get 'one, across.'

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)
 (enthusiastic)
 That's rather neat, the answer to
 clue 'One Across' being 'One Across.'
 (beat)
 It's also rather disturbing.

KAREN (V.O.)
 How?

PAUL
 It indicates that there is to be an
 entire puzzle. Mine usually have a
 dozen or more 'Across' clues and the
 same number of 'Down' clues.

KAREN (V.O.)
 You mean that this murderer plans to
 commit twenty-four murders?

PAUL
 Could be. I hope I'm wrong.

KAREN (V.O.)
 I really need to interview you about
 this, Mr Vail. May I bring a
 photographer?

PAUL
 As I said, I don't do interviews.
 I've solved your clue for you. Good
 night.

He punches a key on his keyboard, severing the connection.

INT. BEDROOM AREA -- NIGHT 21

Paul is asleep in bed, having a nightmare. There are sleeping
 pills on his night table.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- MORNING 22

Paul sits at the breakfast table, eating, with a newspaper
 folded open to the crossword by his plate to his right.

Another newspaper, The Monitor, lays to Paul's left.

SFX: Chime.

Paul pushes a button on his remote.

PAUL
 Yes? Who is it?

KAREN (V.O.)
 It's me again, Karen Carstairs.

PAUL
I told you I don't do interviews.

KAREN (V.O.)
I brought today's Monitor.

PAUL
I've seen it.

He turns his copy of The Monitor over with some distaste.
The headline is: MONITOR GENIUS HELPS COPS.
There is a picture of the crucified man, with his wreath on.

KAREN (V.O.)
There's another clue, Mr Vail.

PAUL
To the murder?

KAREN (V.O.)
Or to another one.

PAUL
Tell me.

KAREN (V.O.)
I'll show you, if you'll let me in.

PAUL
(resigned)
Very well.

He pushes another button on his remote.

SFX: Buzz.

Paul walks towards the entrance wall and thumbs another button.

Bright lights come on in the entranceway, rendering the wall transparent. It shows a freight elevator.

The elevator rises, with Karen.

She exits it and stands, nonplussed by being surrounded by mirror walls.

Paul thumbs again and a section of wall slides open.

Karen, a striking redhead, enters through it, carrying a briefcase.

KAREN
Some security!

PAUL

I'm not a loony recluse, if that's what you think. Years ago, someone was trying very hard to kill me. You can look the case up if you like.

He leads her back towards his kitchen area.

KAREN

I know about it. It was soon after your wife's tragic accident, right?

PAUL

Right.

KAREN

But that must be ten years ago. You don't think whoever it was is still after you, do you?

Paul shrugs.

PAUL

It doesn't matter. I fixed this place up with everything I needed, back then. Now I just don't see any reason to leave.

KAREN

For company?

PAUL

I have friends who visit.

KAREN

So you aren't a total hermit?

PAUL

I have lady visitors sometimes, if that's what you're asking.

(beat)

The clue?

Karen takes a sheet of paper from her case.

KAREN

It appeared on my desk at The Monitor this morning. No one saw it being delivered.

Paul inspects the paper.

PAUL

'She'll die as she lived. 5, 4.'

(beat)

It has to refer to another murder, one that hasn't happened yet.

KAREN

It's like a personal challenge to you, considering my piece in this morning's Monitor, don't you think?

PAUL

(dry)

You set me up as some sort of a genius who is going to catch him, so this would appeal to the killer's vanity.

(beat)

It's hardly a fair clue, is it.

KAREN

Not fair in what way?

PAUL

It could mean anything. The answer will likely be perfectly clear after the murder, not before. The murderer isn't giving me a chance to solve the clues and stop the murder before it happens.

He examines the paper, carefully.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(musing)

Standard photocopier paper, twenty pound.

KAREN

It's Xerox paper, from the office. That's a copy but I used the identical paper just in case there was anything significant to it.

PAUL

Just like you can find in ten thousand offices throughout the City.

(beat)

Printed out on a computer printer? There won't be anything in the typeface, then. It's not like the police should be looking for a typewriter with a damaged 'e' or a slanted 't.'

(beat)

Police forensics have got nothing, then? No fingerprints or the like?

KAREN

Nothing.

PAUL

I'm surprised they're even talking to you, after the piece you wrote.

KAREN

The picture we published annoyed them even more. They wouldn't be talking to me, except I told Detective Lieutenant Brower I could get you to help out. You impressed him, even if I didn't.

PAUL

You told him that, did you?

KAREN

(flirtatiously pleading)

I'm new on The Monitor, Mr Vail. I need this case.

PAUL

At my expense? I've spent years keeping out of the public eye, but now...

KAREN

I'm sorry, really I am.

(beat)

Can I tell Brower you'll meet with him?

(wheedling)

Please?

PAUL

You can tell him what I've told you. I have nothing more to offer, nothing at all.

He starts back towards the entrance, followed by a reluctant Karen.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some crosswords to solve.

INT. TANYA'S APARTMENT -- AFTERNOON

23

It's an open-plan apartment, with an archway to the front hallway. The view from the window shows that we are on a high floor.

TANYA, (30) gorgeous but over made-up, exits her bathroom putting a negligee on over her bra and panties. She is wearing very high heels and black hose.

SFX: Phone.

Tanya picks up and answers in a sexy voice.

TANYA

Tanya. Hello?

(beat)

Yes, I'm free tonight, but not 'free' if you get my meaning. What's your pleasure?

(beat)

I can dig that. It'd be a nice change. Your place or mine?

(beat)

Nine pm? I'll be waiting, and looking forward to getting to know you, intimately.

She chuckles.

TANYA (CONT'D)

You are so naughty! Did anyone ever tell you that you have a very sexy voice?

(beat)

Nine o'clock, then. Bye for now!

INT. TANYA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

24

Tanya is dressed similarly but not identically.

She checks her appearance in a mirror and smiles, satisfied that she is gorgeous.

SFX: Chime.

Tanya marches through the arch to the door. The archway allows us to see her back but not who she opens the door to.

TANYA

Why, you're so good-looking! This is going to be a real pleasure.

EXT. TANYA'S APARTMENT'S BALCONY -- NIGHT

25

Tanya is half over the balustrade, struggling. Seeing from just below, we can't see who is trying to push her over.

She falls.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- DAY

26

Paul activates the door to his entranceway.

Enter Karen, waving a copy of the Monitor.

KAREN

Morning!

PAUL

You might as well have phoned.

He leads her back to his office.

His plasma screen is set up as an almost blank crossword. Top left. Horizontal, is ONEACROSS. Down the right side is, GOINGDOWN.

Karen studies the screen.

KAREN
I don't get it.

PAUL
Your article said she was a high-priced call-girl.

KAREN
Yes?

PAUL
She died as she lived?

KAREN
But...
(beat)
Oh, now I get it!

She looks coy and shocked.

KAREN (CONT'D)
The secluded life you live, I'm surprised you made the connection. I didn't, and neither did the police.

PAUL
I told you that I'm not a hermit.
(beat)
I'll be interested to see how you explain the solution in your next article.

KAREN
I'll find a way.
(beat)
So you think this is a 'Down' clue?

PAUL
It doesn't connect with the first answer, and it does include the word 'down' so maybe, but not for sure.

He touches his keyboard and GOINGDOWN moves to an Across line, below ONEACROSS.

KAREN
It's got two 'O's so maybe that's where they intersect.

Paul keys. GOING DOWN becomes vertical, the 'G' above the first 'O' in ONEACROSS.

PAUL
I doubt it, very much.

KAREN
Why?

PAUL
We know where ONEACROSS has to go.
There can't be anything above it or
it wouldn't be 'ONE.'

KAREN
I see. So maybe the next one will
connect the two answers we've got?

PAUL
Next one?

KAREN
There was a clue left in the dead
girl's apartment. I can't write
about it, not yet, anyway. Brower
made me swear not to. The only reason
he released it to me is so I could
show it to you, Mr Vail.

PAUL
As it looks as if we are working
together, whether I like it or not,
call me Paul.
(beat)
So? The clue?

KAREN
(coy)
I'm not that hard to get along with,
am I, Paul?

She takes a sheet of paper from her case.

Paul inspects it.

PAUL
'Intimate shots. 5 hyphen 3.'

He thinks, keyboards 'Candid' and erases it to replace it
with 'Naked.'

PAUL (CONT'D)
The first victim, 'Dante,' was a
painter, right?

KAREN
Yes.

PAUL
What sort of a painter? Landscapes?
Portrait?

KAREN
Nudes, I think.

PAUL
From life?

KAREN
I have no idea.

PAUL
I need to see the crime scene.

KAREN
You'd leave your nice safe loft?

PAUL
I told you, I don't leave without a
good reason. Now I have one.

Karen smiles.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What's funny?

KAREN
Nothing. I'm just happy to see you
getting out and about. It'll be
good for you.

PAUL
I'm just fine as I am. My friends
don't try to entice me out.

KAREN
Then I won't.

PAUL
Now, if you'll excuse me?

KAREN
I know, you have crosswords to take
care of. I'll talk to Brower and
call you.

INT. PAINTER'S LOFT -- AFTERNOON

27

The door opens.

Brower breaks through the yellow tape across the outside of
the door and enters, followed by Paul and Karen.

BROWER

I don't see what you think you'll
find that our forensic boys haven't,
Mr Vail.

Paul glances around.

PAUL

I want to see his latest canvases,
such as the one he was working on
just before he died.

Bower turns the easel with the half-painted nude on it to
Paul.

BROWER

That's this one.

PAUL

Who is she - the model?

BROWER

If it's from life, I wish I knew.

KAREN

I bet!

BROWER

(dry)

In case she could tell us anything,
Miss Carstairs.

PAUL

It's from life.

He waves to a chair that has a robe draped over it.

PAUL (CONT'D)

That's where she posed. Find her,
Lieutenant Brower. She could be
important.

BROWER

We already thought of that, Mr Vail.
The paint was still wet when we
arrived. She might have passed the
murderer when she left.

PAUL

Could be, but that isn't why it's
important you find her quickly.

BROWER

What is, then?

PAUL

She could be the next victim.

BROWER

Huh?

PAUL

'Intimate shots?' 5 hyphen 3?

KAREN

You've solved it?

PAUL

Not for sure, and not completely, but 'intimate' could mean 'naked' and 'shots' could mean she's going to get shot. If she did see something, the murderer would want to get rid of her.

(beat)

She's a model who poses nude, so...

BROWER

We've already checked every modeling agency but all we have to go on is her body, no face. There were no checks to models paid from the victim's account. Maybe she was an amateur and he paid her in cash, or maybe in kind.

KAREN

In kind?

BROWER

A girl who poses nude might do it for drugs, maybe?

KAREN

You have a nasty mind, Detective. Maybe she did it for love?

BROWER

You've seen the victim, and you've seen her, or her body at least. For love?

KAREN

Love can be blind.

PAUL

Just in case, check this portrait against nude shots in the portfolios of every model from every local agency. Start with the ones that work cheaply. From the look of this place, the victim wasn't rich.

BROWER

(sigh)

We already did that. We aren't fools,
Mr Vail. I had to fight off the
volunteers.

(beat)

Maybe if you checked those pix? You
might see something my boys missed.

PAUL

I could do that, but I'd need this
portrait with me.

BROWER

I'll have it taken to the station-
house.

PAUL

No.

KAREN

Paul doesn't go out much, particularly
to police stations.

BROWER

How come?

KAREN

I'll explain later. If you want his
help, have this painting and the
portfolios delivered to his place,
right Paul?

Paul shrugs, uncomfortable.

INT. BROWER'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

28

Karen sits opposite Brower.

BROWER

So why is your tame genius allergic
to police stations?

KAREN

He's a sensitive man, Detective.
You can see that.

BROWER

So?

KAREN

Years ago, his wife was killed in a
boating accident. Some people thought
it wasn't an accident, but murder.
Mr Paul Vail was interrogated, at
length.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

I imagine a man like him didn't enjoy the process.

(beat)

That's part of it. Since then, he's been something of a recluse. If it wasn't that this is an intriguing puzzle, he wouldn't be doing what he is doing.

BROWER

(Musing)

His crosswords - suddenly very popular - since all the publicity? I hear they've been syndicated in dozens of other papers, now. He make a nice profit out of that?

Karen laughs.

KAREN

So you think he's turned serial killer just to promote his puzzles?

BROWER

Serial killers are all crazy. There's no way to understand them. In this case, there's someone making a profit out of the murders. That, I can understand.

KAREN

And I got a bonus, on account of my pieces on this case. Does that make me a suspect?

BROWER

Of course not, but...

KAREN

And Mr Vail is a very wealthy man. He creates crosswords for fun, not for profit. Money wouldn't even motivate him to leave his loft, let alone be reason enough for him to commit murder.

BROWER

How about 'fame' then?

KAREN

'Fame' is exactly what he most wants to avoid.

BROWER

So he says.

(MORE)

BROWER (CONT'D)

(beat)

You said he knew about the victim
being crucified before you told him?

KAREN

Seconds after I told him what the
clue was. He's very good at crossword
puzzles.

BROWER

He's too good to be true, if you ask
me. For now, he's on my list of
suspects.

KAREN

List?

BROWER

A short one - just one name, 'Paul
Vail.'

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- EVENING

29

The easel with the painting stands before Paul's desk. Paul
and Karen (skirt and shirt) sit behind his desk, going through
a pile of models' portfolios, looking up from time to time
to compare the photos with the painting.

Paul stands, rounds the desk and holds one photograph close
to the painting.

KAREN

Something?

He returns.

PAUL

No. The nipples are similar but not
identical.

KAREN

You think you could recognize a girl
by her nipples?

PAUL

No two women's are exactly the same.

KAREN

Like snowflakes or fingerprints?

(beat)

You've made a study of women's
nipples?

PAUL

No more than any healthy man.

He stretches, yawns, and looks at his watch.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's late. You should be getting home.

KAREN

Are you calling it a night?

PAUL

I'll carry on for a while. Some girl's life could depend on us finding her.

Karen stands.

KAREN

I'll make coffee, then.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- LATER

30

Coffee mugs on the desk. The portfolio piles have moved.

Paul rubs his eyes.

PAUL

My eyes are blurring. It's time to quit. I'll start over early in the morning. In any case, my subconscious does my best work - while I'm sleeping.

KAREN

I'm beat, too. It's hardly worth my going home. Do you have someplace for overnight guests?

PAUL

Just a couch.

KAREN

That'll be fine.

PAUL

You sure?

KAREN

I trust you, Paul. You'll be able to control yourself, even if you have spent the last six hours looking at pictures of naked girls.

PAUL

But...

KAREN

Where's the couch?

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- LATER

31

Karen is curled up on the couch, eyes closed.

Paul brings a duvet, spreads it over her and looks down at her. Impulsively, he stoops and brushes her lips with his.

She returns his kiss, which becomes passionate.

PAUL

I thought you were asleep.

KAREN

Is that what turns you on, Paul?
Being Prince Charming to Sleeping
Beauty?

PAUL

No, and it's not looking at pictures
of naked girls, either.

He kisses her again.

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's you, wide awake, who interests
me.

KAREN

Half awake do?

PAUL

Maybe I can wake you up.

He kisses her, caresses a breast through her shirt, then
toys with one of its buttons.

Karen's hand stops him.

KAREN

(cold)

No!

(warmer)

Can I take a rain-check, Paul? I'm
bushed.

PAUL

(Disappointed)

I'm sorry. When you asked about
sleeping over...

KAREN

I sent the wrong signals. My mistake.
I'm sorry.

He kisses her forehead and leaves her.

Karen opens one eye, frowns in thought, and settles down to sleep, snuggling under the duvet.

INT. BEDROOM AREA -- NIGHT

32

Paul moans and moves in his sleep.

When he rolls over, the lights flicker on and then off.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO -- MORNING

33

The studio's wall is decorated with pin-up calendars and a variety of posters that feature pretty models, including one of a girl dressed in bib-and-tucker, on a tractor, advertising an upcoming agricultural fair.

ANN, photographer, adjusts her camera and the lighting on a small elevated platform which bears an ornate chaise. One light, that is off, is a large Klieg with no filters.

SFX: Knock.

ANN

(calling out)

Liz? You're early. No matter.
Come on in. It's open. You know
where to get changed, right?

She bends over a camera to change its lens, her back to the door.

SFX: Door opening.

SFX: Footsteps approaching.

ANN (CONT'D)

The agency tells me you're pretty
busy, these days, Liz.

CU: A gloved hand hits the back of Ann's head with a sap.

INT. CLOSET -- MOMENTS LATER

34

Ann lays, unconscious, bound and gagged with duct tape, on the floor.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO -- LATER

35

A partially draped model, LIZ poses on the chaise. She is being photographed but we don't see who by as we see her from the photographer's POV.

LIZ

I'm sorry Ann's sick but no, it
doesn't bother me that you're standing
in for her.

(MORE)

LIZ (CONT'D)
 I don't care who I pose for, just so
 they keep their hands to themselves.
 (beat)
 Not that I'm suggesting that you...

Liz changes poses as the photographer comes closer and closer.

LIZ
 (giggling and imitating
 Gloria Swanson)
 I'm ready for my close-ups, Mr
 DeMille!

The camera comes closer and closer.

An unseen hand moves the Klieg in closer.

Liz becomes nervous and shrinks back.

LIZ (CONT'D)
That's real close! Are you sure...

The Klieg clunks on, blinding the Model.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 I can't see! Take that damned...

The Klieg is driven into the Liz's face.

SFX: Electrical flash and sparks.

INT. FRED BARNES' OFFICE -- DAY

36

FRED, the editor of The Monitor, is working at his desk.

Karen bursts in, waving a copy of The Monitor, and throws it
 on his desk, open to a half-page reproduction of the nude
 painting with the caption, WHO IS SHE?

KAREN
 (angry)
 What's this, Fred?

FRED
 The police are desperate to find
 her. We're cooperating.

KAREN
 The Monitor isn't some sleazy tabloid
 to run pictures of naked women.

FRED
 We ran the picture of the crucified
 guy, that you got for us. What's
 the difference?

KAREN

I...

FRED

This...

He taps the picture.

FRED (CONT'D)

...is a 28% boost in circulation.

KAREN

But...

FRED

(stern)

Your references got you a job as a
reporter, not my job.

(beat)

(kinder)

This isn't just a serial killer story,
Karen. Thanks to you and thanks to
that Paul Vail, this is The Monitor's
serial killer story. We have the
inside track.

KAREN

I...

SFX: Phone.

Fred picks up.

FRED

Yes?

(beat)

Got it.

He hangs up.

FRED (CONT'D)

There's been another one.

He scribbles on a pad, tears the sheet off and hands it to
Karen.

FRED (CONT'D)

Better get on it, Karen. Pick Mr
Vail up on your way.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO -- AFTERNOON

37

It is now a crime scene.

Liz is sprawled on the chaise, dead.

MODEL #2 is being questioned and comforted by POLICEWOMAN #1.

Ann is being treated for her head wound by a PARAMEDIC and comforted and questioned by POLICEWOMAN #2.

MODEL #2.

I was late. The door wasn't locked.
I just...

Brower ushers Paul and Karen in.

BROWER

She's unrecognizable but there's
exposed film in the camera. Once
it's developed...

Paul goes to the corpse and inspects it.

ANN

(croak)
Her name's Liz something...

PAUL

This isn't the girl in the painting.

BROWER

How do you know?

KAREN

(dry)
He has his own way to tell girls
apart, don't you, Paul?

Paul studiously ignores this crack.

ANN

(croaking)
The agency can tell you her...

PAUL

What you'll find, when the film is
developed, is a series of close-ups.

BROWER

And how do you know that?

PAUL

Intimate shots? '5 hyphen 3?' The
answer is, 'Close-ups.'

BROWER

Very clever, Mr Vail, but you've
solved it conveniently late, once
again. Convenient for the killer,
that is.

PAUL

Like I said, the murderer cheats.
The clues only make sense after the
crime, not before.

KAREN

What if I said that in my next
article? Sort of challenge the
murderer to show how clever he is by
giving you fair clues to who the
next victim is going to be? More
specific?

BROWER

It's already too late to help the
next victim. The next clue, or clues
this time, were left here.

He holds up a sheet of paper that's sealed in plastic.

Paul reads from it, aloud.

PAUL

'Death isn't always the answer, Mr
Vail.'

BROWER

Meaning?

PAUL

Meaning that we'll be some given
clues that aren't about the next
murder. Those might be needed just
to make the words fit into the right
crossword pattern.

(beat)

So now the killer is talking to me
directly?

(beat)

'The Photographer has already met
one of your kind, and she didn't
like it one bit. 3.'

(beat)

'You and I, collectively, Mr Vail.
2.'

BROWER

And that means?

PAUL

What was the photographer struck
with?

BROWER

We haven't found the weapon, but
something heavy and not too hard.

(MORE)

BROWER (CONT'D)

Not a lead pipe or the like. The blow was intended to knock her out, not kill her.

PAUL

Could it be a sap? Lead shot in a leather case?

BROWER

I know what a 'sap' is. Could be. Why?

PAUL

Now the killer's getting personal and insulting.

(beat)

The photographer didn't like meeting one 'sap,' which implies that I'm another. Three letters, remember.

(beat)

'You and I, collectively, two letters,' is obviously 'us.'

BROWER

And the next clue?

PAUL

This one must be a clue to the next murder. 'Made thread and so got thirsty. 4 hyphen 3.'

(mutters)

Wove?

BROWER

Have you solved it?

PAUL

No. I've got no idea what it means, yet.

BROWER

You never have, till after the fact, have you? It makes you look very clever, but still totally useless.

(beat)

You weren't thinking of leaving town any time soon, were you, Mr Vail?

PAUL

Am I a suspect?

BROWER

Just don't take any trips.

Paul and Karen make for the door.

KAREN

I'm still going to challenge the killer to make the clues more explicit, Paul.

PAUL

Good idea. Whoever it is, is both insane and vain. Provoking him could make him slip up.

KAREN

Insane and vain, maybe, but also very, very clever, Paul.

PAUL

Or he thinks he's clever, at least. Good point. I wonder...

KAREN

Wonder what?

PAUL

Maybe there's a motive, beyond the usual ones for a serial killer.

KAREN

Usual ones?

PAUL

Serial killers want notoriety but they usually also subconsciously want to get caught, and stopped. This one could be different.

KAREN

How?

PAUL

Maybe it's personal with this one. Maybe the idea is to make me look like a fool.

KAREN

You said you weren't paranoid. Someone willing to commit murders, just to make you look silly?

Paul chuckles, but nervously.

PAUL

Maybe you're right. But I wasn't paranoid before. Maybe I should be, now.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- DAY

38

Enter Paul and Karen.

KAREN

I'll make us coffee. Then I have to go write my article.

She makes for the kitchen area.

Paul goes to his desk and starts putting words up on the crossword screen. THREAD. Erase. COTTON. Erase. SILK.

When she returns with coffee, Paul stands and takes her in his arms for a kiss.

She doesn't return it and pulls free.

PAUL

You aren't tired out, now.

KAREN

You're a very attractive man, Paul.
Under other circumstances...

(beat)

Maybe when this is all over, Paul?

PAUL

Do you think I might be the killer, Karen? Is that it?

KAREN

Of course not! It's just - I don't know. I've never known a suspect in a murder case before. It's not that I suspect you. It just feels awkward.

(beat)

I'm sure you aren't the killer, Paul.

(beat)

I have to go write.

PAUL

You could do it from here and file it electronically?

KAREN

Time was, you made it hard for me to get in. Now you're making it hard for me to leave.

PAUL

I didn't know you, then.

KAREN

(teasing)

You think you know me now, Paul?

PAUL

I think I'd like to.

KAREN
Someday, maybe.

She heads for the exit.

Paul takes a step after her and pauses as a thought hits him.

PAUL
Minute!

He keys SPIN SPUN - THIRSTY - ARID - DRY, then erases 'Thirsty' and 'Arid.'

Karen watches, curious.

Paul types SPUN-DRY.

KAREN
That's it?

PAUL
It fits the clue.

KAREN
Someone's going be spun around and around until they die of dehydration?

PAUL
Or killed by a spin-dryer, somehow.
(beat)
I'll call Brower.

KAREN
I'll call The Monitor before Brower gets the chance to stop me.

Both dial out, him by a handset on his desk, her by her cell.

PAUL
Detective Brower, please. It's urgent.

KAREN
No, I haven't written it up yet and yes, he's solved the new clue. The answer's 'Close-ups.'
(beat)
I know, Fred, but there's better. The killer left another clue but this time Mr Vail's solved it before the murder's happened.

Paul covers the mouthpiece of his phone and speaks to Karen.

PAUL

He wants me to meet him downtown.
Can you take me...

Karen signals with a finger: A minute.

KAREN

They want him to go downtown, Fred.
I should go with him, especially now
that idiot Brower has Mr Vail pegged
as a suspect.

Paul speaks into his phone.

PAUL

I'll be there as quickly as possible.

Karen signals, 'Wait.'

PAUL (CONT'D)

Just a minute, Lieutenant.

KAREN

Fred, I can't be in two places at
once. Do I write up old news or get
to where the action is?

(beat)

Right, it isn't old news till another
paper gets it, but...

(beat)

Okay, Fred. I guess.

She hangs up.

PAUL

Can you drive me?

KAREN

Fred's making me go in to write the
latest developments up, but he's
also concerned about you being a
suspect, so he doesn't want you going
in alone.

PAUL

That's thoughtful of him.

KAREN

Thoughtful? Protecting a part owner
of the paper he works for who is
also his exclusive source of prime
news?

(beat)

Anyway, he makes sense. He's sending
the paper's lawyer to pick you up
and take you.

PAUL

I'd rather go with you than with
some stuffy old lawyer.

KAREN

Thanks, but the lawyer is neither
stuffy, nor old. I've met her.
She's kinda cute.

PAUL

Not as cute as you, though.

KAREN

Don't be so sure!

(beat)

Tell Brower you'll be there in a few
hours. It'll take that long for our
lawyer to get here.

PAUL

(into phone)

I'll be there in about three hours.

Karen grabs her bag and makes for the exit.

KAREN

The lawyer is Catherine Rush but she
goes as 'Kit,' just so you know who
you're letting in. I should warn
you, she's quite the 'Kitten.'

INT. INCIDENT ROOM -- EVENING

39

The room is furnished with an old desk and several trestle
tables. One wall is a chalkboard, on which the clues and
their answers are scrawled.

Another wall has a white plastic board, with the names of
the victims and general information on each written on it,
in a variety of marker colors.

There is an easel with a photo of the unfinished nude painting
on it, blown up.

One table is for coffee, with a percolator and a box of
doughnuts. Another has a pc on it, plus a bank of phones.

Brower heads the meeting. Present are a woman cop, BELINDA,
and detectives GRANGE, POLOWSKI, SMART and OLSEN.

BROWER

So there's no trace of any of the
victims having known each other or
having corresponded? Nothing in
their phone records?

All shake their heads.

BROWER (CONT'D)

No links at all, apart from the obvious?

BELINDA

Obvious, Chief?

BROWER

Painter, model - not his latest model, maybe, but a photographer's model could also pose for a painter, right?

(beat)

A whore, even if high-class? A lot of working girls call themselves 'models' don't they? All of the victims were kinda 'fringe' people? Can you think of any other connections?

OLSEN

Sex?

BROWER

None of them'd had sex just before being killed, as far as forensics can tell.

OLSEN

No, I meant 'sex' as in gender?

BROWER

One man and two women?

SMART

Maybe the painter was gay and that counts as female to the killer? Or all three victim's were bisexual and the killer's some sort of religious fanatic? The painter was crucified, after all.

GRANGE

The painter was straight, according to his friends.

BELINDA

He was skinny.

BROWER

So?

BELINDA

What'd he weigh?

Brower consults a file.

BROWER

One-fifty.

Belinda holds a hand up.

BROWER (CONT'D)

Belinda?

BELINDA

Sergeant Lowry.

BROWER

Whatever. Well?

BELINDA

The female victims? All around one-twenty?

BROWER

You think the killer picks 'em by their weight?

BELINDA

They might be easier to kill, if they're light and not too muscular. A light-weight was easier to crucify, for sure.

OLSEN

I can see another connection!

BROWER

Good! What?

OLSEN

Painter, prostitute, photographic model? All begin with 'P.'

SMART

So the next will be a plumber or more likely a pimp? Come on!

BROWER

No, it could be. This is a crossword killer, remember. Maybe the letter 'P' is significant, somehow.

(beat)

Could Mr Paul Vail be leaving his initial?

BELINDA

What did the FBI profiler have to say?

BROWER

Thoms gave us the usual profile for a serial killer - white male, twenty-five to thirty-five - known as a nice guy - a loner - troubled childhood, maybe abused. The only things in his profile that didn't fit just about every serial killer we ever heard of was that the perp does crossword puzzles and reads The Monitor.

(beat)

Ain't that helpful?

GRANGE

Narrows it down to about 15% of the City's population.

SMART

(sarcastic)

Maybe we should get a circulation list from The Monitor.

BROWER

Provided the perp doesn't pick up his copy from a newsstand.

BELINDA

Anything from that Vail on the latest clue?

BROWER

Not so far. He'll likely solve the clue after the murder, as usual. For my money, he's our best bet. He's playing games with us, the bastard.

(beat)

Okay, get out there. Dig up everything you can on Mr Vail. Belinda, work up a file on him. Make it a convincing enough case that we can get a tap on his phone authorized - maybe a search warrant as well.

(beat)

Grange and Olsen, I want you to keep him under surveillance.

(beat)

We'll show Mr Genius Vail who's clever, sooner or later.

INT. COMMERCIAL LAUNDRY -- AFTERNOON

40

The equipment is oversized - giant horizontal drums for washing, centrifuges four-feet across for drying.

Each centrifuge has a steel lid across which a safety-arm has to be swung to make it start.

It's extremely noisy.

A WORKER trundles a large cart laden with sopping wet clothing to a centrifuge, which SONG, diminutive oriental woman, is unloading into an empty cart on the other side.

A whistle blows.

Various WORKERS shut down their machinery. It grows quiet.

DOUG, the supervisor, approaches SONG.

DOUG

It's time to knock off. Didn't you hear the whistle?

Song starts to load wet clothing into her machine.

SONG

I'm behind, Sir. One last load?

DOUG

You've done very well for your first day. You can quit, now.

SONG

One last?

DOUG

Very well, but remember to be careful. These machines are powerful. You get an arm in while it's going and it'll rip it off at your shoulder. I saw it happen once and I don't want to see it happen again.

SONG

Careful, Sir.

DOUG

I'm 'Doug,' Song. Save 'sir' for the big bosses.

SONG

Yes, Sir, Doug, Sir.

Doug exits, leaving Song to load.

Lights close down in banks, except for where Song works.

INT. COMMERCIAL LAUNDRY -- LATER

Song finishes unloading.

SFX: Footsteps.

CU: In shadow, the side of someone wearing a raincoat, one hand dangling a sap from a gloved hand.

SONG
Who there? Doug, Sir?

She peers into shadow and falls unconscious, with a grunt.

From overhead, killer's POV, we see Song, unconscious, folded up into the centrifuge.

The lid clangs down.

A gloved hand swings the safety-bar across the lid.

The inner drum starts to rotate.

INT. ELEVATOR -- NIGHT 42

Paul straightens his tie and smooths his hair as he rides down.

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT 43

Paul exits the warehouse building his loft is in.

A large, late model car waits for him, the passenger door open.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS 44

Paul slides in next to KIT, short raven hair, a tad older than Karen, gorgeous, wearing a very short skirt.

Kit extends a hand, sideways.

Paul shakes it for a moment longer than is normal.

KIT
Catherine Rush, Mr Vail, but call me
'Kit.' I'm to represent both your
interests and the paper's. I trust
there'll be no conflict there?

PAUL
I don't see why there would be.

She pulls away from the kerb.

Paul is distracted by her legs as they move on the pedals with her short skirt up to mid-thigh.

KIT

The important thing, unless they Mirandize you, is if I tell you to shut up, you shut up, instantly. If they do read you your rights, still shut up, but tighter.

PAUL

Huh?

(beat)

Sorry. I was distracted.

KIT

So I noticed. Maybe next time I give you a ride I should wear a longer skirt.

PAUL

Please don't.

KIT

I'll take that as a compliment. Mr Vail.

PAUL

'Paul.'

KIT

'Paul,' then. Questions?

PAUL

Are you married?

KIT

No, but that wasn't the sort of question I had in mind. I meant questions about my representing you, not that you really need legal representation.

PAUL

About 'conflict of interest.'

KIT

Yes?

PAUL

You represent The Monitor, and me.

KIT

Whose interests coincide, don't they? After all, you are The Monitor, or a third of it, at least.

PAUL

How about the other owners?

KIT
Specifically?

PAUL
Agatha Teal.

KIT
I see where you're heading. I know the background, Paul. Years back, she accused you of murdering her niece for her inheritance. You accused her of trying to murder you, for revenge.

PAUL
I didn't exactly accuse her.

KIT
Close enough for a libel case, if she'd pushed it. That's my specialty, libel. That's why The Monitor retains me.

(beat)
I don't know what your concerns in regards to Agatha Teal are, but forget them. She's old, crippled and senile.

PAUL
She was so strong.

KIT
Not after her niece...
(beat)
...died. She just sort of collapsed in on herself, physically and mentally, and suffered a major stroke. She's in a home now, being taken care of in a wheelchair, on good days. She's pretty well paralyzed, or so I hear. You needn't worry about that old lady coming after you with an ax.

PAUL
She could hire someone.

KIT
She can't even sign a check or use a phone. She can barely speak.

PAUL
I'm sorry for her, of course, but I have to confess that's a relief.

KIT
So you can venture out of your stronghold, now.

PAUL
I'm comfortable in it.

KIT
Karen Carstairs told me about it.
I'd love to see it, someday.

PAUL
Maybe...

KIT
We're here.

She parks and opens her door, but pauses.

KIT (CONT'D)
Speaking of Ms Carstairs, are you
two an 'item?'

PAUL
I thought maybe we... It didn't
seem to work, for some reason. Wrong
chemistry?

KIT
It happens.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM -- MORNING

45

It's a luxurious sanitarium. It could be a bed-sitting room in a private house except for the medical equipment. Agatha, aged 20 years in 10, sits upright but immobile in a wheelchair.

Enter NURSE, (large and intimidating) with a bag of knitting and a folded copy of The Monitor.

NURSE
'Morning, Agatha! You're looking
well. Ready for your morning paper?

One of Agatha's fingers taps on the arm of her wheelchair.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Exciting, isn't it, these murders,
and your newspaper being involved?

Agatha's finger taps impatiently for Nurse to get on with it.

Nurse sits in a chair beside Agatha and begins to read.

NURSE (CONT'D)
The Monitor. Decency, democracy,
duty.

(MORE)

NURSE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Headline: Crossword Killer Strikes again.

(beat)

Body of text: Following a lead from this newspaper's genius crossword compiler, Paul Vail, nude model Elizabeth Turner was found...

Agatha purses her lips.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM -- LATER

46

Nurse is at the bottom of the last page, by now a little hoarse.

NURSE

...Lakers, 90.

(beat)

That's it, Agatha.

Agatha's finger points at Nurse, then outlines a heart.

NURSE (CONT'D)

And I love you too, Agatha. You know there's nothing I wouldn't do for you.

(beat)

Well, I've proved that often enough, haven't I?

Agatha taps once.

NURSE (CONT'D)

You must be tired, dear. Time for a nip and a nap?

Agatha manages a small weak smile.

Nurse pulls a pint of whiskey from under her knitting, pours some into a spoon and feeds it to Agatha.

Before she hides the bottle again, she takes a swig herself.

Nurse scoops Agatha up in her arms and lays her gently on the bed.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Pleasant dreams, Agatha.

Agatha taps her finger once.

INT. INCIDENT ROOM -- NIGHT

47

Brower studies the chalkboard.

Belinda enters with Paul and Kit. She sits at a table on which she has been arranging Scrabble tiles into the words of the clues' solutions.

BROWER

Took your time!

KIT

Mr Vail is here voluntarily, out of his sense of civic duty. As you've named him as a suspect, he's entitled to legal representation. It was I who caused the delay, Detective.

BROWER

You're his lawyer? Lucky him! He's not been charged with anything, so why...

KIT

Even so.

BROWER

(to Paul)

You say the next one will be by a spin-dryer? Big help! Most everybody has one. The victim going to have one dropped on him? Gonna have his head bashed against one?

PAUL

The answer to the clue is 'spun-dry.' If the killer's being anything like fair, that means the victim will be spun to death, in a spin-dryer.

BROWER

I doubt that. You couldn't get no one in my wife's dryer, and we've got a big one.

BELINDA

A child? Oh my God!

PAUL

Unless...

Karen bursts in.

KAREN

Did I miss anything?

BROWER

I didn't invite you, Miss, and if you take any more pictures with that fancy hidden camera of yours, you'll be charged with obstruction.

PAUL

As I was saying, you likely couldn't get an adult inside a domestic dryer, but you might be able to get one into an industrial one.

BROWER

Like in a laundry? You know how many laundries there are in this City?

KIT

He can only tell you what he's worked out. It isn't his...

KAREN

The Monitor owns a laundry.

BROWER

Huh? Why on earth would...

KAREN

Our charity work? The Monitor takes donations of old clothing and blankets and gives them to the poor in third-world countries?

BROWER

So?

KAREN

The donations are washed, first, in a laundry we bought for just that purpose, before they're shipped out.

BROWER

But...

KAREN

Mr Vail seems to be being taunted by the killer, for some reason, but maybe it isn't him personally that the killer has it in for. Maybe it's The Monitor? Newspapers step on a lot of toes, Detective. What better way to get at The Monitor than to kill a victim on premises The Monitor owns?

BROWER

(urgent)

Where is this laundry of yours?

He snatches up a phone.

BROWER (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Cruiser, out front, now.

KAREN
 Twenty-first and Commercial.

Brower stabs a finger at Paul.

BROWER
You are coming with me.

He stabs it at Kit.

BROWER (CONT'D)
You can come along, I guess.

He stabs at Karen.

BROWER (CONT'D)
You stay here.

KAREN
 I can get you inside.

BROWER
 I can get inside, believe me.

KAREN
 You're going to break the door down,
 and then what if you find nothing?
 I can see tomorrow's headlines now.
 Police...

BROWER
 Alright, come, but no pix and you
 don't write a word what I don't see
 and okay, before you print it.

KAREN
 Deal.

Brower leads them all but Belinda out, at speed.

EXT. TWENTY-FIRST STREET -- NIGHT

48

A cruiser arrives at the laundry, lights flashing, siren
 howling, and skids to a stop.

Brower, a UNIFORMED COP, Paul, Karen and Kit, pile out.

Doug is waiting at the open door.

DOUG
 What is it? There's no sign of forced
 entry. What would anyone steal?

All push past him without replying.

Doug follows.

INT. COMMERCIAL LAUNDRY -- MOMENTS LATER

49

All enter, stealthily, Brower and the Uniformed Cop with weapons drawn.

Doug turns on the lights.

DOUG

There's no one here. We closed down
at five, like always.

BROWER

No one was here after that?

DOUG

Just one worker, finishing off.
She'd have been done by twenty after
at the latest.

PAUL

A woman? A small woman?

DOUG

Song? Sure, she's tiny, but...

BROWER

(to cop)

You come with me.

(to the rest)

The rest of you, stay here and don't
touch nothing.

He strides ahead, checking centrifuges, most of which have
been left open.

His footsteps ring on concrete, until he comes to Song's
drier, when they squelch.

He looks down. He is standing in a pool of blood which has
drained from Song's machine.

BROWER (CONT'D)

I think I found it.

Karen points to a sheet of paper on top of a bale of clothing.

KAREN

And I think I've found the next clue,
Detective.

BROWER

Don't touch it!

INT. BROWER'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

50

Brower interrogates Paul, Kit standing by. All three are weary.

Belinda is puzzling over her tiles.

BROWER

So the girl-reporter left you alone
at about two?

PAUL

Between two and two-thirty, I guess.
I didn't check the time.

BROWER

And your lawyer-lady here picked you
up around eight-thirty?

KIT

Eight-twenty.

BROWER

So what did you do in those six hours,
Mr Vail? Any visitors? Make any
phone calls?

PAUL

No.

KIT

My client doesn't need an alibi,
Lieutenant. How would he have got
to the laundry and back? By cab?
That'd be foolish if he were the
killer, wouldn't it?

BROWER

It's only about an hour's drive from
his place to the laundry, even in
traffic. He had plenty of time.

KIT

He doesn't own a car. Doesn't drive.

PAUL

I do, Kit. It was a wedding present
from my wife. I haven't driven it
in ten years but I still own it. I
couldn't part with it.

BROWER

And where is this car of yours, Mr
Vail?

PAUL
In storage, in the garage of the
building I live in.

BROWER
And no one's driven it for ten years?

PAUL
No.

BROWER
I'll want the keys. My boys will be
able to tell if it's been driven
lately.

PAUL
Sure.

He takes a ring of keys from his pocket and starts to take
one off.

BROWER
You keep keys to a car you never
drive on you?

PAUL
Sentimental...

KIT
My client is exhausted, Detective.
If you aren't going to charge him
with anything, we are leaving.

BROWER
Go!
(beat)
Oh, and take this with you.

He gives Paul a copy of the latest clue.

BROWER (CONT'D)
This time, solve it before it's too
late, huh?

Paul and Kit exit.

Brower looks down on Belinda's tiles.

BROWER (CONT'D)
You think you're gonna make sense of
that crossword before the 'genius'
does, Belinda?

BELINDA
Sergeant...
(MORE)

BELINDA (CONT'D)

(sigh)

If, like you think, he's the killer,
I might. If Vail is the perp, he's
never gonna give us a solution till
it's too late.

INT. OUTER OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

51

Paul and Kit leave Brower's office and find Karen waiting.

PAUL

You're still here?

KAREN

You think I'd go before I'd seen the
latest clue? What's it say?

KIT

We should discuss it somewhere
private.

KAREN

Private, sure, but with coffee?

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- MORNING

52

Enter Paul, followed by Karen and Kit, all exhausted.

KAREN

I know where the kitchen is.

She makes for it.

KIT

I'll help.

She follows.

Paul heads for his office.

PAUL

Black, and strong, and lots of it.

INT. KITCHEN AREA -- CONTINUOUS

53

Karen makes coffee, Kit watching.

Kit nods towards the area Paul is in.

KIT

Any advice? About him?

KAREN

Don't waste any time.

KIT

You mean I should come on strong?

KAREN

Exactly.

KIT

It can put some men off, if a girl comes on strong.

KAREN

I thought he'd lived ten years as a hermit, celibate or close to it, so he'd be shy, underneath, no matter what he seems like on the surface.

(beat)

I played it coy, luckily, as it worked out. Now it's your turn. Don't reckon on him not having had plenty of girlfriends and lots of experience. Paul Vail gets his, often, but none of his girlfriends have snared him, obviously.

KIT

So whoever does will have to be something extra special, both in and out of bed?

KAREN

You got it.

KIT

Then so will he!

KAREN

Trip him up, beat him to the floor, then make him real glad he fell.

KIT

I can do that!

KAREN

(dry)

I'm sure you can.

INT. OFFICE AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

54

Paul has the clue up on his screen: NOTHING GOOD, INITIALLY, CAN FOLLOW WHEN AN EASTERN BLOSSOM IS OVER-FED. 4,2.

Enter Karen and Kit, with mugs of coffee.

KIT

Your trick lights are fun, Paul.

PAUL

The killer isn't a pro at compiling crosswords.

KAREN

Not many people are, Paul, but what makes you say so?

PAUL

'Initially?' He used that before, in the first clue. A good compiler doesn't repeat in the same crossword like that.

Kit sinks into an armchair with her coffee, making sure to show a lot of leg.

KAREN

'Nothing good, initially?' N and G?

PAUL

Well done!

KAREN

'Ng' doesn't mean anything.

PAUL

It will, when we solve the rest of the clue.

KAREN

If that's the two letters, it doesn't make a word.

PAUL

No, it doesn't. Maybe it's part of the first word and that'll end in I.N.G?'

(beat)

Unless...

KAREN

Unless what?

PAUL

Karen, did you write that article you were talking about - challenging the killer to give me a more specific clue to the next victim, a clue to a name, maybe?

KAREN

No, why?

PAUL

Damn! If you had, 'Ng' is an oriental name.

KAREN

Maybe the killer is ahead of you?

PAUL

Why not? He makes the rules. I just have to figure them out as I go along.

(beat)

Okay, let's assume 'Ng' is a name, then an 'oriental blossom' could be a girl's 'flower name.'

KAREN

Like 'Lily' or 'Violet?'

PAUL

Exactly. And 'over-fed' might be the method, though I'm not sure how that would work. It can't be easy to force-feed someone to death.

(beat)

I should call Brower.

(beat)

Kit, is it okay for me to call Brower with a possible, not sure, solution to the clue? No legal complications in that?

Both Karen and Paul turn to Kit. She has her eyes closed and has slumped down, dragging her skirt dangerously high.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Should we wake her?

KAREN

Let her sleep. We've all had a hard day and a long night. Maybe you should wait before calling Brower. All this might look silly, once you're rested and can think clearly.

PAUL

I can't take that chance. I'd never forgive myself if a 'Lily Ng' was murdered before I woke up.

He picks up his phone.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Detective Brower, please?

(beat)

A message for him then. It could be urgent.

(beat)

The next victim - I'm not sure but I think maybe it'll be another woman,

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)
another oriental, with a first name
that's a flower and the last name
'Ng.'
(beat)
N.G. Ng.
(beat)
That's it. Get it to him as soon as
you can, okay?

He hangs up.

KAREN
I'm heading home to bed.

PAUL
What about Kit?

KAREN
Can you get her to the couch? It's
comfortable enough, as I know.

PAUL
Sure, if you don't think she'll mind?

KAREN
She'd be sure to mind if you woke
her.

Paul scoops Kit up and takes her to the couch, then fetches
the duvet.

KAREN (CONT'D)
Having girls sleep over on your couch
seems to be getting to be a habit,
with you.
(beat)
Going to kiss her good-night? Isn't
that what you do?

PAUL
I only did that because you...

KAREN
Sent the wrong signals, I know.

She yawns.

KAREN (CONT'D)
I'd better get out of here before I
fall asleep, too. You don't want to
wake up to two women in your loft -
unless..? Do you, Paul? Do you
ever have two women...

PAUL

I haven't the energy to cope with even one, right now, Karen. Good night, and thanks.

KAREN

For what?

PAUL

For - you know.

KAREN

For 'being a good sport' about you and Kit? Sometimes people meet and it feels right at first, but it doesn't work. Sure, I regret that, but we didn't really have anything going, Paul. I'm fine with it, really.

(beat)

Enjoy your 'breakfast.'

PAUL

I only just met her. There's nothing going on between Kit and me.

KAREN

Yet. You don't find her attractive?

PAUL

Of course I do.

KAREN

And she does you.

PAUL

What makes you say that?

KAREN

A woman can tell. Good night, Paul.

INT. BEDROOM AREA -- CONTINUOUS

55

Enter Paul. The area lights up automatically, then the light turns off, and on, as Paul undresses.

As he gets into bed, the off/on accelerates.

PAUL

(to self)

Get it fixed. Must remember.

He keys his remote and the light goes off.

He climbs into bed and falls asleep almost instantly. As he moves restlessly in his sleep, the light flickers on and off again.

INT. INCIDENT ROOM -- NIGHT

56

Belinda leads ROLF GURNEY, 50's, heavy, flamboyantly arty and a little disheveled into the room.

She seats him across from her and turns on a tape recorder.

BELINDA

You say you have information regarding
the Crossword Killer, Mr..?

GURNEY

Gurney - Rolf Gurney. That's R.O.L.F.

BELINDA

Information?

GURNEY

I know who he is.

BELINDA

(bored)

Interesting. And who is he, Mr
Gurney?

GURNEY

I don't know his real name.

BELINDA

Shame. We'd like that.

GURNEY

But I know one of his past aliases.

BELINDA

(Interested)

He's done this sort of thing before?

GURNEY

Famous for it. Back then, he went
by 'Spring-heeled Jack,' or 'Jack
the Ripper.'

Belinda sighs.

BELINDA

Wouldn't he be a bit old for it, by
now?

GURNEY

You don't know who I am, do you?

BELINDA

Should I?

GURNEY

My face appears above my column in
Tattle-Tale, every week.

BELINDA

The astrologer?

GURNEY

Psychic. Astrology is mere
superstition.

BELINDA

So your information comes from
'beyond?'

GURNEY

Not exactly.

BELINDA

Jack the Ripper disemboweled women.
These murders are hardly his style,
are they?

GURNEY

He's an old soul, now. He's
developed.

(beat)

Back then, he wrote to the newspapers.
It was the publicity he wanted.
Isn't that what the Crossword Killer
is after, and gets?

BELINDA

But...

GURNEY

But how is he still around? I'll
tell you how. He dies, and then he
returns.

BELINDA

Reincarnation?

GURNEY

Possession!

BELINDA

That's very interesting, Mr Gurney.
I'll file a report.

Gurney stands, irate, and makes for the door. As he goes:

GURNEY

You don't believe me.

BELINDA

Well...

He opens the door.

GURNEY

Aren't you even interested in who
he's in possession of right now?

BELINDA

Sure. Who?

As he passes through the door:

GURNEY

Me, that's who!

He closes the door behind him.

Belinda sits, stunned, for a moment, before getting up and
following him.

INT. STATION HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

57

Belinda bursts into the busy room.

BELINDA

Fat man, fifty! Where'd he go?

Several COPS shrug.

DESK SERGEANT

Search me. Who did you say?

INT. INCIDENT ROOM -- NIGHT

58

Belinda, her Scrabble work on the table, leafs through a
phone book.

Enter Karen, with two coffees and an old box of Scrabble.

KAREN

Double cream, no sugar, right?

BELINDA

Thanks!

KAREN

I dug this up.

She hands Belinda the Scrabble.

BELINDA

Thanks! I was out of 'C's.

KAREN

You're welcome.

(beat)

Anything new?

BELINDA
Nothing, apart from confessors.

KAREN
Confessors?

BELINDA
Every juicy murder, we get 'em. The nuts crawl out of the woodwork. Most of them are regulars so we don't even have to check them out. I just got a new one, so I'll have to, damn it!

KAREN
New one? Any chance..?

BELINDA
Nah. He also confessed to being Jack the Ripper.

KAREN
Really?

BELINDA
Well, possessed by, at least.

KAREN
Crazy enough to be interesting. Maybe I could do a column on him. You got a name?

BELINDA
You won't tell him where you got it from? He's the type, you bump into him and let him know you're a reporter, he'll bend your ear for hours, 'confessing.' He'll likely throw in Hoffa and the Lindburg baby.

KAREN
My lips are sealed, promise.

BELINDA
Well, he's in the same business as you. He's the psychic for Tattle-Tale.

Karen grins.

KAREN
I'd hardly call that rag a newspaper, but thanks. I'll look him up.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- AFTERNOON

59

Kit wakes on Paul's couch. She looks around to be sure she's alone, then carefully arranges the duvet so that she is showing one long lovely leg before she closes her eyes and feigns sleep.

Enter Paul, a white terry robe over one arm, carrying two coffees.

He sets the coffees down, admires the leg for a moment and then pulls the duvet up to cover it.

Kit stirs.

KIT

Um... Time?

PAUL

One in the afternoon. I hope you had no urgent appointments this morning.

KIT

I cleared my calendar. The Monitor is paying me well to look after you. That's my exclusive duty, for now.

PAUL

I'd say that I hoped that 'for now,' lasts a long while, but not if that means there are more murders.

KIT

That's a nice compliment.

PAUL

Coffee?

KIT

I need a shower more than anything.

PAUL

I'll show you how things work.

KIT

I've taken a shower before, Paul.

(coy)

Isn't it a bit early in our relationship for sharing showers?

PAUL

Not how the shower works - how the lights work.

INT. BATHROOM AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

60

Kit stands, in her crumpled clothes, the robe over one arm.

Paul demonstrates the lighting control.

PAUL

The walls are half-silvered glass,
so that if it's brighter in here,
someone outside can see in but if
it's brighter outside, you can see
out but no one can see in.

He turns a knob. The inside dims and the outside becomes visible. He turns it back and the wall becomes a mirror from the inside, then down again so that the outside is visible.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Got it? If you can see out, no one
can see in.

KIT

Got it.

PAUL

I'll make us brunch. Twenty minutes?

KIT

Give me half an hour.

Paul leaves.

Kit hangs her robe on the control knob, perhaps by accident, turning it a fraction.

She starts to strip off, slowly and gracefully.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- MOMENTS LATER

61

Paul walks from the kitchen towards the bath area.

PAUL

(calling out)
Scrambled or fried?

He pauses.

With the lights equal on both sides, Kit's naked silhouette is vaguely visible as she adjusts the shower before getting in.

Paul hesitates.

KIT (O.S.)

Scrambled sounds good!

Paul clears his throat.

PAUL

Uh, Kit?

Her silhouette enters the shower and closes its frosted glass door, so that she becomes totally invisible.

KIT (O.S.)

What is it?

PAUL

Nothing.

He turns back to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN AREA -- LATER

62

Paul is cooking.

Kit enters, in his robe, dewy from her shower.

PAUL

You were quick! Ten more minutes?

KIT

Sure. No rush.

INT. OFFICE AREA -- LATER

63

Kit stands, her back to us, in front of the nude portrait. One shoulder of the robe is down to her elbow and she looks down at herself, then to the painting, and then back.

Paul enters, sees her back, and coughs.

Kit pulls the robe back up but not too quickly.

KIT

She's lovely, isn't she.

PAUL

(teasing)

If you were comparing your body to hers, don't let me stop you. Want a second opinion?

KIT

Paul!

PAUL

If you like, we have hundreds of pictures of naked models on my desk. We could make a day of it.

Kit turns.

KIT
You're naughty!

PAUL
Sometimes.
(beat)
Brunch is on the table.

INT. DINING AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

64

Paul and Kit sit opposite each other, eating brunch.

PAUL
You're right. Whoever that model
is, she is lovely, her body at least.
Shame he didn't get around to painting
her face. She wasn't the victim in
the clue but she could still be in
danger.

KIT
The face wouldn't help.

PAUL
No? Why not?

KIT
Don't you read the 'Background to
the news' page in The Monitor?
(beat)
'Dante' specialized in 'boudoir'
portraits. He used models for the
bodies, then painted his client's
faces in. I guess they were to hang
over the bed and inspire the clients'
husbands.

PAUL
It'd work, if all the models had
bodies like that girl's.

KIT
I've seen better.

PAUL
In your mirror, no doubt.

KIT
That's the second nice compliment
you've paid me this morning - today.

PAUL
You inspire compliments.

KIT

Paul, this is kind of embarrassing,
but there are two things that Karen
told me about you that might...

PAUL

Might what?

KIT

There's some chemistry between us,
isn't there?

PAUL

On my side, there is.

Kit looks at her plate and fiddles with her fork.

KIT

I don't know how to say this without
seeming forward.

PAUL

Just say it. I think I'd enjoy it
if you were 'forward.'

KIT

(in a rush)

Karen thinks you're paranoid, and...

PAUL

I'm not paranoid.

KIT

Let me finish or I won't get it out.

PAUL

Go on.

KIT

Maybe she's wrong about that, but
the other thing she told me was that
you were comparing the girl in the
painting's nipples with those of the
photo models 'cause you thought you'd
recognize them.

PAUL

I'm not weird for nipples, Kit, just
appreciative.

KIT

And then, first chance you got, you
tried to get a look at hers.

PAUL

What? Is that what she thought?

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

She thought I was trying to check her nipples against the model for that painting's? No wonder she suddenly froze on me. I promise you, I was motivated by lust, not paranoia.

KIT

(coy)

I wouldn't want to suddenly freeze on you, Paul.

PAUL

Huh?

KIT

If it happened that we got to know each other better, and...

(beat)

I wouldn't want to think you were making comparisons, me with that model.

PAUL

I wouldn't be.

KIT

How could you help it, if even for a second?

PAUL

Well, I see what you mean, but what can we do about it?

Kit stands.

KIT

Come on. If we get this over with...

PAUL

You mean?

He follows her.

INT. OFFICE AREA -- CONTINUOUS

65

Kit heads straight for the portrait and turns the easel so that Paul can see it.

PAUL

Kit, you don't have to...

He dries up when Kit shrugs one shoulder out of her robe and bares one breast.

KIT
Is she me, Paul? Am I her? Are
there 'points' of similarity?

Embarrassed but aroused, Paul looks from the painting's breast
to Kit's and back again.

PAUL
(hoarse)
There's some similarity, Kit, but
no, you and she aren't identical.
She has a mole and you don't. If it
was the other way around, I'd say
Dante 'edited' but I can't see him
adding a mole. Anyway, you don't
have the same...

KIT
That's out of the way with, then.

Paul approaches her, tentatively.

PAUL
Kit...

She pulls the robe up.

KIT
Not now, Paul. Don't spoil things.
Let our relationship take its natural
course, whatever it might be.
(beat)
If I can get another coffee?

EXT. FLORIST -- DAY

66

The store is called, 'Rose's Roses.'

INT. FLORIST -- CONTINUOUS

67

ROSE NG, working at the back of the store, pours liquid
fertilizer from a large container into a bowl on the floor.

SFX: Bell tinkles.

ROSE
Minute! I'll be right there!

At the door, a gloved hand turns a sign from 'Open' to
'Closed.'

Rose continues pouring.

A gloved hand swings a sap at the back of Rose's head.

She falls face down into the bowl of fertilizer.

A hand holds her down as her breath bubbles up through the liquid and her feet vibrate on the floor.

INT. INCIDENT ROOM -- DAY

68

Brower interrogates Paul, Kit present.

Belinda is at her table, with the Scrabble.

PAUL

I pretty well gave you the name this time, Lieutenant, and before the murder.

BROWER

If you'd given it to me an hour or so sooner, we'd have found her alive, not dead.

KIT

You can't blame my client for that, Lieutenant. He got word to you as soon as he solved the clue, even though he wasn't sure he had it right.

BROWER

Maybe not. Let's see you be a bit faster, this time, Mr Vail.

KIT

Maybe you shouldn't show him the next clue. Maybe Mr Vail should just go home and stay out of this.

PAUL

That might be a good idea. If the killer is committing these murders just to get my attention, if I ignore him, maybe he'll get bored and stop.

BROWER

Brilliant! According to your theory, which is a damned stupid one, by the way, but by you, the killer is murdering people just to get your attention. So far, he's crucified Dante, cooked the face of that nude model, tossed a whore off a balcony, spun that poor woman till she was crushed to death and now drowned this Rose Ng in sh... ..fertilizer.

(beat)

If that's the sort of thing he does just to get your attention, what do you think he's likely to do if he's ignored?

(MORE)

BROWER (CONT'D)

(beat)

I think he'd be real pissed. I think he'd look for something real spectacular, to make sure you got no choice but to take notice. Any idea what this sick bastard might consider 'spectacular?'

PAUL

You have a point, Lieutenant.

(beat)

Give me the clue.

(beat)

Lieutenant, the killer has my attention. What does he want next?

BROWER

My guess? Just to keep on going until you finally solve one quick enough for me to stop him, and to catch him.

(beat)

That's what all serial killers really want, according to the shrinks - to get caught.

Paul and Kit exit.

BROWER (CONT'D)

You track that crazy psychic of yours down yet, Sergeant?

BELINDA

Not yet. The Tattle-Tale says he's on vacation in Mexico with some broad, likely stoned out of his skull.

BROWER

Drop it. He's just a nut-case.

BELINDA

But if he really believes he's the killer, what if he copy-cats?

BROWER

He's just after some free publicity.

BELINDA

(to self)

Just like the Ripper was, and the Crossword Killer is.

INT. OUTER OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Kit and Paul leave the incident room.

Karen waylays them.

KAREN

The next clue? You got it? Where is it?

PAUL

It was one word. A dictionary could have solved it.

KAREN

What word?

KIT

'Farrier.'

KAREN

Huh?

KIT

It means 'blacksmith' and the number of letters, ten, matches.

PAUL

Brower isn't pleased.

KAREN

How come?

PAUL

I pointed out that the intended victim could be an Afro-American, named 'Smith.'

KIT

Or 'Schmidt.'

PAUL

Or some other race, with any name that means 'blacksmith' in some other language.

KIT

Paul also pointed out that someone could have an African or Chinese name that translates as 'Smith.'

(beat)

Brower turned purple.

KAREN

Then what do we do?

PAUL

Us? Nothing. It's up to Brower now.

KIT

I can see to it that there's a warning
in the morning's Monitor, to everyone
whose name might fit.

PAUL

Shame. I was going to offer you
ladies dinner.

KAREN

At your loft? You angling for a
menage, Paul?

PAUL

Of course not! Dinner out - in a
restaurant.

KIT

I'd like that.

KAREN

Which one?

PAUL

Um - I don't know. It's years since
I ate out.

KAREN

I'll make a reservation in the paper's
name, if the part owner of The Monitor
approves?

PAUL

What? Oh, right. Sure.

Karen turns away and uses her cell.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(softly, to Kit)

She's always doing that - hinting
that I'm into something kinky.

KIT

Maybe she's looking for love.

PAUL

Love? I don't get it.

KIT

Isn't that what 'love' is?

PAUL

How do you mean?

KIT

'Love?'

(MORE)

KIT (CONT'D)

Isn't that what we call it when two people can stand each other's company and have matching kinks?

PAUL

What if they actually like each other and share the same kinks?

KIT

That'd be 'Paradise.'

PAUL

That's cynical.

KIT

Really? You'd call someone who was seeking Paradise 'cynical?' I'd call it 'hopelessly romantic.'

(beat)

Are you, Paul?

PAUL

Am I what? Hopelessly romantic?

KIT

No, kinky.

PAUL

Now you're starting!

KIT

Well, when two people get together, it's a big help if their kinks match, isn't it?

PAUL

I wouldn't know.

(double-take)

When two people..?

(speculative grin)

Kit, how about you? Are you..? Do you have a..?

Kit raises her brows, archly.

KIT

Kink? Now why would you want to know about my kinks, Paul?

Karen turns back.

KAREN

Our reservation's for eight-thirty.

KIT

I should go change into something more appropriate.

KAREN

It gives me just enough time to file my story, if I hurry.

(beat)

Paul, okay if I call you a cab and come by about eight, to pick you up?

PAUL

Sure.

KIT

I'll see you two about half eight, then. Bye.

She exits.

Karen takes her cell out again.

INT. CAB -- AFTERNOON

70

Paul as passenger.

The cab passes a billboard for the Agricultural Fair, with a banner, 'Opens Today.'

INT. RESTAURANT -- EVENING

71

A WAITRESS in a 'French Maid' costume, short skirt, long legs, seats Karen (dressed for dinner, but modestly) and Paul in a semicircular secluded booth and presents menus.

WAITRESS

Can I get you a drink while you decide?

PAUL

We're expecting one more. We'll order drinks when she gets here, thanks.

WAITRESS

Certainly, sir.

Paul watches the waitress's legs as she walks away.

Karen notices this.

Kit arrives, drawing glances. She's wearing a dark green velvet hobble skirt and a brilliant lemon blouse, very full, gauzy but not transparent.

Between blouse and skirt, she's tightly cinched into a green and lemon striped corset that covers her from mid-hip to

just below her breasts. It has rear laces. Her slender waist has been reduced to 'wasp.'

Paul slides over and stands.

PAUL

Wow!

KIT

Thanks.

She poses.

KIT (CONT'D)

In this skirt, it'd be easier for me
if you slid in and let me take the
outside seat, Paul.

He slides in, followed by Kit, so he is now between the women.

The Waitress arrives, ready to take their drink order.

Paul looks inquiringly at Karen.

KAREN

Bloody Mary, please. Easy on the
tabasco.

Paul looks to Kit.

KIT

I'll have whatever you're having,
Paul.

PAUL

And two Rusty Nails, doubles, one
cube of ice each, please.

Exit Waitress.

Paul and Karen pick up menus.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Any news from Brower, Karen?

KIT

Can we call a moratorium on talking
about the murders? I think we all
need a break from them.

KAREN

Good idea.

(beat)

I'll have a shrimp cocktail and the
sirloin tips. How about you two?

PAUL

You, Kit?

KIT

Could you choose for me, please?

PAUL

By all means.

The Waitress returns with their drinks.

WAITRESS

Are we ready to order, sir?

PAUL

Shrimp cocktail, a dozen oysters,
the sirloin tips and the rack of
lamb for two, please.

(beat)

Karen, Beaujolais?

KAREN

Thanks.

PAUL

A half of the '89 Beaujolais and a
full bottle of the Chateau Clothilde
rose.

WAITRESS

Thank you, sir.

Exit Waitress.

INT. RESTAURANT -- LATER

72

Their meal has been consumed. Paul pours wine for all three.

KAREN

Kit, I'm going to the powder room.

KIT

I'll come with you.

INT. LADIES' ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

73

Kit and Karen fix their makeup.

KAREN

He seemed hot for me, at first, but
the moment I gave him a gentle 'not
yet,' he cooled right off. It didn't
take him a minute to switch to you,
Kit, but...

KIT

I get your point, Karen. Some men know what 'no' means, it seems, even when we don't mean it.

KAREN

My point was that he's fickle. One negative signal from me and he was after you in an instant.

KIT

I got that point, as well.

KAREN

He's a 'leg man' I think.

She eyes Kit's long skirt.

KIT

I know. I'm prepared for all eventualities.

She leans close and whispers to Karen.

KAREN

Clever girl!

INT. RESTAURANT -- MOMENTS LATER

74

Karen and Kit return.

Paul stands till Karen is seated, then slides in to let Kit join him.

KAREN

I got a call on my cell from Fred Barnes, Paul. He wants a rewrite from me, right away.

PAUL

I'm sorry.

KAREN

Kit, is it too much for me to ask you to give Paul a ride home?

KIT

No problem for me, if it's okay with Paul?

PAUL

Thanks, Kit.

Karen stands.

Paul goes to slide out but Karen signals him to stay seated.

KAREN

I'll leave you two to enjoy your
dessert, then.

KIT

In this corset, I couldn't take
another bite.

KAREN

Sometimes we women have to suffer to
achieve our goals. The more important
our goals, the more we have to be
prepared to suffer to achieve them.

KIT

I'll try to be brave.

PAUL

What?

KAREN

Girl talk, Paul.

(beat)

Bye.

She leaves.

INT. CAR -- NIGHT

75

Paul helps Kit in, her restricted by her tight skirt, and
goes around to enter on his side.

Kit indicates her velvet-sheathed legs.

KIT

I warned you I'd wear a longer skirt
the next time I gave you a ride.

PAUL

It's very attractive, even if it
does hide your legs.

KIT

Thanks, but it's impossible to drive
in it, like this. If you'll excuse
me...

She bends over, takes the hem of her skirt in her hands, and
pulls. The seam is Velcro and parts to just above the top
of her stocking.

KIT (CONT'D)

That's better!

PAUL

It sure is!

Kit starts her car and pulls away, with Paul watching her exposed leg as they pass under streetlights, each one briefly illuminating it.

PAUL (CONT'D)
You're quite the tease, Kit.

KIT
Do you mind?

PAUL
Love it!

KIT
Then be ready for more.

PAUL
Oh, I am! I enjoy being teased.

EXT. ALLEY -- LATER

76

Kit parks.

Paul gets out, goes round the car and helps her out.

She makes a show of it, her skirt-covered leg twisting wide to tug her skirt right away from her other leg, before swinging that one round to join it.

PAUL
You're not 'quite the tease,' Kit.
You're downright wicked!

KIT
Reserve your judgment until later.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- MOMENTS LATER

77

Enter Paul and Kit.

KIT
I know you like this corset, Paul,
but it's so restricting. Would you
mind if I took it off?

PAUL
Take anything you like off.

He moves behind her and nuzzles her neck.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Need a hand with these laces?

KIT
No thanks. There's a secret.

She takes a few steps forward and turns to face him. Her hands grip the front of the corset and tug. It opens along a Velcro seam and comes off.

To Paul's delight, her skirt ends where the lower edge of the corset was, several inches below her navel. Her blouse stops where the upper edge was, immediately below her breasts, in a clinging band.

Kit stretches, elongating her narrow waist.

KIT (CONT'D)

That's better!

PAUL

(hoarse)

Um - yes. It is.

KIT

Run much, Paul?

PAUL

What?

KIT

'Teasing' is all about getting a man to pursue you. You say you like to be teased, so...

(beat)

Catch me!

She turns and runs.

As she passes through each 'room' of the loft, the lights come on and go off.

We get 'snapshot' views of her - running with legs flashing through the slit in her skirt - tossing the skirt aside and revealing her thong - then pausing on the other side of Paul's desk as he reaches that area.

He circles the desk and she circles away from him. As she circles, she undoes her blouse and tosses it away, baring her breasts.

PAUL

My God, you've a lovely body!

He sheds his jacket.

KIT

It's all yours, if you can catch it!

She breaks away, pursued still. In his exercise area, she keeps his equipment between them, circles again, then breaks away again.

At his bed, she pauses, facing him.

He stalks closer, arms wide, then lunges.

Kit twists aside so that Paul flops across the bed.

She leaps onto him, astride him.

KIT (CONT'D)

Got you!

PAUL

I thought I was the hunter and you
the prey.

KIT

That's the way it always starts,
with the guy chasing the girl. In
the end, it's always the guy who
gets caught.

Paul bucks up, tossing her off his back and across the bed,
then leaps onto her, pinning her wrists.

PAUL

Oh yeah? Now who's caught who?

KIT

Just so someone gets caught.

He kisses her passionately, both writhing.

The lights begin to flicker, then strobe, so we see parts of
the action in each flash of light.

PAUL

Damn lights! I keep meaning to get
them fixed.

KIT

I kinda like the effect.

Strobe: The kiss; his hand on her breast; her legs wrapping
his hips; his one hand pinning both her wrists above her
head; his free hand fingering a nipple.

KIT (CONT'D)

Can you do 'rough' Paul?

He grips harder.

Kit bucks, throwing him, and rolls on top of him.

He grabs her wrists.

KIT (CONT'D)

Minute!

She tugs free and wriggles, pushing down on her thong until it is off.

Strobe: Kit rips his shirt open; her teeth worrying his nipple; her sitting up, tugging his pants down and off; her face, fierce, as she bites his chest; him throwing her off; his face on her belly; her leg, extended as far sideways as it can; his face between her thighs; his hands crushing her breasts, her nails raking his back.

KIT (CONT'D)
Ravish me, Paul darling.

PAUL
It was you, ravishing me there for a while.

KIT
Let's ravish each other!

Strobe: Paul taking Kit, missionary; doggy-style; her below again with her ankles crossed behind his neck; woman superior, her pounding.

KIT (CONT'D)
Truce?

PAUL
You want a break?

KIT
No. Just let me be subtle for a while, huh?

Paul lays back, hands behind his neck.

PAUL
'Subtle' away, Kitten.

Kit moves her hips in slow, tightly controlled movements, rotating, leaning to one side, leaning forward, leaning back.

She stretches, hands high, and twists from side to side at her waist.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Oh God!

Kit's rotations accelerate. She lifts her clenched fists high.

KIT
I'm...

PAUL
Yessss!

He half-sits up, bellows, then flops back.

Kit jerks on him, fists still raised, then chokes a sob as she climaxes and punches down, both hands, one impacting the pillow on each side of his head.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I thought for a moment, there, that you were going to punch me out.

KIT

I wouldn't do that. Not when I haven't finished with you yet.

PAUL

Not finished? I don't know if I can...

KIT

Yes you can.

She shimmies back to crouch between his feet. Her mouth heads for his groin.

Paul groans.

PAUL

Maybe I can.

KIT

(mumbling)

And we haven't started on the kinky stuff, yet.

INT. KITCHEN AREA -- MORNING

78

Paul, in a robe, breaks eggs into a bowl.

Enter Kit, with a towel knotted low on her hips.

KIT

Can breakfast wait, Paul?

PAUL

Too early for you?

KIT

I always start the day with my exercises, then breakfast.

PAUL

Exercises?

KIT

You've got a nice home gym? May I? I'd love to try your equipment out.

PAUL
 I thought you already had.
 (beat)
 Of course you may use my exercise
 equipment. Help yourself.

KIT
 Would you spot me, please Paul?

She turns and sways away, dislodging her towel, which slithers
 to the floor.

Paul follows her.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- LATER

79

Paul, in a robe, is in an armchair, using his keyboard to
 rearrange the answers to the killer's clues on his crossword
 screen.

Kit is curled at his feet, head on his thigh, wearing one of
 his shirts, loosely buttoned.

KIT
 Paul?

PAUL
 Hmm?

KIT
 I should go.

PAUL
 Why? I'm the only client on your
 calendar for now, aren't I? If
 anything develops, either Brower or
 Karen will call.

KIT
 I'll come back if you want me to,
 but I need a change of clothes and
 so on.

PAUL
 Of course I want you to come back.
 Why do you need clothes? You look
 fine to me.

KIT
 Wouldn't you like something different
 to take off me?

PAUL
 Well, if you put it that way...

She stands.

KIT

Paul, does the difference in our ages bother you?

PAUL

If we were both younger, it would, but we're both consenting adults, right?

KIT

But would you like it if I was younger?

PAUL

Any younger and you'd be just a child. I'm no pedophile.

KIT

How about just for play?

PAUL

That's not a game I've ever played, though I'm always up for something new.

KIT

You are? That's interesting.

(beat)

I'll be back as soon as I can, Paul.

PAUL

Sooner, if you can.

KIT

I get the feeling you'd like to keep me on a leash.

PAUL

Of course not!

KIT

Shame. That might be fun.

PAUL

You meant that literally? Interesting. You really are a kinky little kitten, aren't you.

KIT

You have no idea how kinky, yet.

PAUL

I look forward to finding out.

She leaves him to go change, shedding his shirt as she goes.

SFX: Phone.

Paul picks up.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yes.
(beat)
Okay.

He hangs up.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(calling out)
Kit, when you're ready, Brower wants
us again.

KIT (O.S.)

He'll have to wait. We have to swing
past my place, so I can change.

INT. CAR -- LATER

80

Kit drives, in the same clothes she wore the night before.

She pulls up outside an apartment building.

KIT

Wait here, Paul. I won't be a minute.

PAUL

I can't come up with you?

KIT

I can change in a minute, on my own.
If you're with me, it might take a
lot longer.

PAUL

I promise I'll be good.

KIT

I can't make the same promise.
(beat)
I'll be right back.

She exits.

INT. CAR -- LATER

81

Kit gets in, in business clothes but a short skirt.

KIT

There!

She adjusts her skirt higher.

KIT (CONT'D)

Consolation prize!

She pulls away.

INT. INCIDENT ROOM -- AFTERNOON

82

Present are Brower, Grange, Polowski, FBI Agent THOMS and psychiatrist VERENA Powers, 30's, attractive.

Belinda brings Kit and Paul in.

PAUL

I thought you'd all be out checking every 'Smith' in the city.

BROWER

I've got twenty men on that.

(beat)

This is FBI profiler Thoms and Ms Verena Powers, his...

(beat)

...associate. Agent Thoms asked us to get together to 'brainstorm' as he calls it.

THOMS

Anything at all, folks. I'm trying to get a picture in my mind of this maniac's character. Just free-associate anything that has occurred to you, no matter how trivial.

BELINDA

I pointed out that all the victims have been light-weights.

BROWER

Belinda, that doesn't...

THOMS

No, that could be significant. It's easier, psychologically, to kill someone who's smaller than you are, right Verena?

VERENA

Could be.

(beat)

What do you think, Mr Vail?

PAUL

About the killer's size?

VERENA

About anything.

PAUL

He isn't an expert in crosswords.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

The first clue was clever but the rest haven't been.

VERENA

Meaning?

PAUL

He had lots of time to think up a good clue, for the painter, but since then...

BELINDA

He's rushing, isn't he? Picking victims by opportunity, then making up clues, quickly, to fit?

THOMS

He does seem to be in a hurry. A death every two or three days? Serial killers usually pace themselves. You expect one a month or thereabouts, or even longer apart.

PAUL

Like he's got an agenda?

POLOWSKI

Like maybe this is all going somewhere, and he's in a hurry to get there?

BROWER

Why?

PAUL

He wants to complete whatever, before he gets caught?

(beat)

Maybe all these killings are just preliminaries leading up to the important one?

THOMS

Well...

INT. INCIDENT ROOM -- LATER

83

Belinda is leading Kit and Paul out.

THOMS

Thanks again, Mr Vail. You've been a big help.

The door closes behind Kit, Paul and Belinda.

Thoms turns to Verena.

THOMS (CONT'D)

Well, what's your expert opinion of him, psychologically?

VERENA

Arrogant, under the polite soft-spoken exterior. He's definitely troubled, though maybe not clinically.

BROWER

Like I said, he's our man.

VERENA

I didn't say that. All I said was...

INT. AGRICULTURAL FAIR -- DAY

84

Crowds mill around - horses and cattle in pens - agricultural equipment, etc.. There are a number of parties of school kids, led by teachers, in the crowd.

A group of SCHOOLGIRLS in uniforms gather around a reproduction of a smithy - with a sign - YE OLDE SMITHY. There is a sign, LAST DEMONSTRATION - 4 PM.

SFX: Clanging.

INT. SMITHY -- LATER

85

The schoolgirls watch as the SMITHY, handsome, large and muscular, pounds on a horseshoe that he heats on an elevated bed of coals.

The younger girls take turns working his bellows.

The older girls are more interested in the Smithy's muscles than his craftsmanship.

INT. AGRICULTURAL FAIR -- LATER

86

The girls leave.

The Smithy exits and changes his sign to: CLOSED FOR THE DAY. He reenters his exhibit and closes the door behind himself.

INT. SMITHY -- MOMENTS LATER

87

The Smithy is cleaning his tools and hanging them up.

Killer's POV: The Smithy's back.

The Smithy turns to face the killer.

SMITHY

Sorry, I'm done for the day.

(MORE)

SMITHY (CONT'D)

Come back tomorrow morning at ten,
if you like.

He turns his back and inspects a rasp.

The Killer picks up a small hammer and hits the Smithy on
the back of his head. He falls face down on his bed of coals.

The killer impales the next clue on a nail.

INT. AGRICULTURAL FAIR -- CONTINUOUS

88

Two girls, ANGELA and BEA pass the Smithy.

Angela holds her nose.

ANGELA

What's that smell?

BEA

Scorched horse-hoof. I was here
last year. Yucky, huh?

ANGELA

Smells more like someone burnt a
roast, to me.

The fair begins to close for the night. People file out.
Cleaners enter.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- EVENING

89

Paul, still in a robe, walks towards the entrance and adjusts
its lighting so that he can see inside the glass enclosure.

The elevator, with Kit, arrives. She is wearing a skin-tight
cat-suit and has her hair brushed up above each ear to
simulate cat-ears.

Her eyes are made up to exaggerate their tilt. She has a
metal-spiked leather collar around her throat.

She is carrying an overnight case.

She leaves the elevator, puts her case down and checks herself
in the mirror wall, to Paul's amusement.

She takes a leash from her case.

Paul's eyebrows lift. He keys his remote to slide the door
open.

Kit stalks in, feline, swaying her hips. She approaches
Paul, pulls his robe aside to bare his shoulder and
deliberately scratches it with a fingernail, one deep scratch.

PAUL

Ouch!
 (beat)
 You bitch!

KIT

You like my little games, don't you?
 Let's see if you can work the rules
 to this one out.

She reaches to scratch him again.

Paul grabs her wrist and doubles it behind her back. His other hand knots in the hair at the back of her head. He drags her face to the gouge on his shoulder.

PAUL

Lick!

KIT

I see you can!

She slowly and lasciviously licks his wound.

He takes the leash from her, spins her so her back is to him and clips it to a ring on her collar.

KIT (CONT'D)

Yes, Paul!

He forces her down to all fours and walks her across the loft.

PAUL

Naughty little kittens have to learn better.

They pass through his office.

SFX: Phone.

He picks it up.

Kit, feline, rubs her head against his leg, purring.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yes?
 (beat)
 Of course. Right away.

He hangs up and drops the leash.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Brower. There's been another one.
 (beat)
 I have to get dressed.

Kit stands.

KIT
I'd better get changed. This outfit
might shock some people.

He heads for his bedroom area.

She makes for her case.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- LATER

90

They meet up at the entrance, Kit in business clothes.

PAUL
It's my fault!

KIT
Why?

PAUL
I let the killer trick me.

KIT
How?

PAUL
All the previous clues were 'cryptic.'
This one was straightforward.
(beat)
And I should have considered it being
a real 'blacksmith.'

KIT
Who'd have thought? You don't think
of there being a genuine blacksmith
in the middle of the city.

PAUL
I should have!

INT. ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS

91

Paul is distraught and slumps against the wall.

KIT
Don't beat yourself up over it.

She cuddles his head down to her chest.

PAUL
Stupid, stupid, stupid!

INT. GARAGE UNDER PAUL'S BUILDING -- DAY

92

The floor is wooden planks.

Police push Paul's 10-year old car towards the exit ramp.

Polowski sits behind the wheel, latex-gloved, steering.

PUSHING COP #1

I don't know why we can't just drive
the bitch.

PUSHING COP #2

Save your breath for getting it up
the ramp to the truck.

PUSHING COP #1

Hell!

INT. AGRICULTURAL FAIR -- NIGHT

93

Outside the Smithy:

Karen holds a mic.

A PHOTOGRAPHER is taking pictures.

Brower is talking to Polowski and Smart.

Uniformed COPS stand around.

Olsen is questioning a CLEANER.

Enter Paul, still distraught, with Kit, in business clothes.

BROWER

I suppose you're gonna tell me the
clue was too easy for yuh, huh?

KIT

Leave him alone!

KAREN

You okay, Paul?

He nods.

Brower takes his arm and urges Paul towards the door to the
Smithy.

BROWER

This way, genius. Let's see what
you can spot that us dumb cops didn't.

Kit and Karen go to follow, trailed by the Photographer.

Brower stops them with a raised palm.

BROWER (CONT'D)

I don't think so, ladies.

The Photographer walks round Kit and Karen.

BROWER (CONT'D)
You neither!

Brower pushes Paul ahead and follows him in.

KIT
Karen, how did...

Paul bursts out, gagging, rushes to a potted plant and throws up in its pot.

Brower wanders after him.

BROWER
Squeamish, huh?

Kit rushes off.

PAUL
It's terrible. He's burned...
(beat)
...to the bone!

KAREN
Was there another clue?

Kit returns, with a container of pop.

KIT
Ginger ale, Paul. It'll help.

He takes it, gratefully.

KIT (CONT'D)
(to Brower)
Why did you subject my client to...

BROWER
He wanted to see the scene of the first one.

PAUL
Because I had an idea to check out.
The body wasn't there.

BROWER
Well, this one is. Makes a difference, huh?

PAUL
The smell!

BROWER
Yeah, worse than that model. He's more burned than she was, of course.

KAREN

The next clue? Aren't you going to show it to Mr Vail?

KIT

Can't you see he's in no condition, Karen?

KAREN

Sorry, but I've got a story to write.

KIT

Heartless bitch!

Karen shrugs.

PAUL

It's all right, Kit, thanks. I have to solve this one in time.

KAREN

That's the spirit! Don't let the killer beat you, Paul. Just because he's outsmarted you easily every time in the past, doesn't mean...

KIT

Karen, that's enough!

She starts to lead Paul off.

BROWER

Don't forget this!

Paul turns.

Brower hands him a sheet of paper.

KAREN

My copy?

BROWER

Sure. I got a copy for you.

Paul reads the clue and starts muttering as Kit leads him away.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- NIGHT

94

Enter Paul and Kit, him still puzzling over the clue.

Kit plucks the paper from his hand and marches over to put it on his desk.

PAUL

But...

KIT

You're exhausted, Paul. What you need is sleep.

PAUL

I have to...

KIT

In the morning. In any case, don't you do your best thinking by letting your subconscious work while you sleep?

PAUL

Perhaps, but it won't work if I take a pill and if I don't take a pill, I'm not going to be able to sleep.

KIT

I've got a better way to let you sleep than any pill.

She shucks her jacket and unzips her skirt.

PAUL

I don't think I'm up to making love tonight, Kit.

KIT

Who said anything about you making love to me?

PAUL

But...

KIT

I'll put you to bed, Paul, and to sleep, and you won't have to do a damned thing but lay back and let me take care of you.

She drops her skirt, takes his hand and leads him towards the bedroom area.

INT. OFFICE AREA -- MORNING

95

Paul, refreshed and dressed, sits looking at his screen, where the latest clue is displayed. HE'S NOTHING LESS THAN WHAT HE LOOKS UP AT AND YOU LOOK DOWN ON, CONFUSED. 4.

Enter Kit, in a towel, with two coffees.

Paul, distracted, takes one.

KIT

Anything yet?

PAUL
 'Confused' hints at an anagram -
 words made by rearranging the letters
 of other words.

KIT
 I know what an anagram is.

PAUL
 Sorry.
 (beat)
 'Nothing less' indicates you have to
 subtract an 'O.'
 (beat)
 I've tried the only five-letter word
 in the clue. It has two 'Os.'
 Dropping one 'O' and rearranging the
 other four letters gives me.
 'L.O.K.S. It doesn't work.
 (beat)
 Unless...

INT. POLICE GARAGE -- MORNING

96

A MECHANIC wipes the hood of Paul's 10-year old luxury car.
 Enter Brower.

BROWER
 Anything?

MECHANIC
 Like I said, new battery, fresh oil,
 recently gassed up and driven, though
 I can't tell how far except not very
 far. The odometer shows 257. It
 could have had almost that much
 mileage on it by the time it was
 delivered.

BROWER
 Nothing else?

MECHANIC
 Not a hair; not a fiber; not a drop
 of blood; not nowhere.

BROWER
 Tires?

MECHANIC
 The usual grit in the treads, like
 you'd find anywhere in the City.
 Nothing to show where it's been.

BROWER

Damn! Still, he said it hadn't been driven in ten years and it for sure has. That's enough for me to bring him in for questioning, at least.

He picks up a phone.

INT. OFFICE AREA -- MORNING

97

Paul and Kit still look at the clue.

PAUL

I think it's a two-layer clue.

KIT

What's that?

EXT. STREET -- MORNING

98

Belinda drives Paul's car, Brower beside her.

They are followed by another car with Polowski and Smart.

INT. GARAGE UNDER PAUL'S BUILDING -- MORNING

99

Belinda drives Paul's car in, followed by the other car.

She parks.

She and Brower get out.

Brower steps on a floorboard, that moves under his foot.

BROWER

Was this board loose when you picked the car up, Polowski?

POLOWSKI

Not that I noticed.

BROWER

Take it up!

INT. OFFICE AREA -- MORNING

100

PAUL

If it's a two-layer clue, I have to solve the clue once, to get a five letter word, then subtract an 'o' from that word and rearrange the letters I have left.

KIT

Tricky.

PAUL
 Shouldn't be that hard.
 (beat)
 He's looking up at what I'm looking
 down on, five letters?

INT. GARAGE UNDER PAUL'S BUILDING -- MORNING 101

Polowski and Smart pry up a third floorboard.

In the cavity below is a body, wrapped in clear plastic -
 Rolf Gurney.

BROWER
 Got him!

INT. OFFICE AREA -- MORNING 102

Paul stands, looking down at the floor.

PAUL
 I'm looking down at something with
 five letters, including an 'o.'
 (beat)
 Got it!

INT. ELEVATOR -- MORNING 103

The elevator rises, with Brower, Belinda, Smart and Polowski.
 Brower looks pleased with himself.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- MORNING 104

Paul, excited, lets the cops in.

PAUL
 I've solved it! I'm looking down on
 what he's looking up at. It's
 'floor.' The victim is under a floor,
 somewhere, and his name is an anagram
 of 'floor' minus an 'o.' The only
 name that fits is 'Rolf.' You have
 to find a 'Rolf' something and...

BROWER
 'Rolf Gurney?'

PAUL
 You know a 'Rolf?'

BROWER
 And so do you, Mr Vail, or you should,
 considering that the floor he was
 under is yours.
 (MORE)

BROWER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Paul Vail, I'm placing you under
arrest on suspicion of murder.
Anything you say...

Enter Kit, dressed.

KIT

Don't say a word, Paul.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- DAY

105

Brower questions Paul, Kit and Belinda present.

KIT

You can't hold him. You have no
evidence.

BROWER

Like a body under his floor isn't
evidence?

KIT

Inadmissible. You had no search
warrant.

BROWER

He gave me his keys. That's implied
permission to search.

KIT

Not under the floorboards, it isn't.

PAUL

What clue was left with the body?
I've got to...

BROWER

As if you didn't know, there wasn't
one. This is your last murder, Mr
Vail.

KIT

Motive?

BROWER

Stark raving crazy do you?

KIT

My client volunteers to submit to a
psychiatric examination and a
polygraph test. He'll cooperate
with you in every reasonable way,
but you can't hold him on what you've
got.

(MORE)

KIT (CONT'D)

The killer has been taunting Mr Vail all along. This is more of the same thing.

(beat)

We're leaving.

BROWER

Go, but not far.

Kit exits with Paul.

BROWER (CONT'D)

Belinda, have him watched, day and night.

BELINDA

It's Sergeant...

BROWER

Whatever.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- EVENING

106

Enter Paul, distraught, with Kit.

KIT

They've got nothing on you, Paul.

PAUL

I can't help...

KIT

You need to get your mind off it all and then a good night's sleep. Things will look different in the morning.

PAUL

Mind off it? Sleep? I don't see how...

KIT

Leave it to me, Darling. I'll find some way to distract you.

(beat)

Go take a nice long shower and I'll see what I can come up with.

PAUL

I'm in no mood for...

KIT

Go!

INT. BATHROOM AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

107

Paul showers.

INT. DINING AREA -- MOMENTS LATER

108

Enter Paul, in a robe.

The table is set for two.

PAUL
(calling)
Kit?

KIT (O.S.)
Coming!

Paul takes a seat at the table.

Enter Kit with two plates of eggs, bacon and toast.

She is dressed as a 'naughty schoolgirl,' flat shoes, over-the-knee white socks, tiny pleated skirt, tailored white shirt, school tie, minimum makeup.

Paul goggles while Kit sets the plates down.

PAUL
More 'games?'

KIT
You said you didn't mind me being
younger than you.

PAUL
I love those 'over-the-knee' socks.

KIT
Talking about 'over the knee,' I
burned the toast. I'm a naughty
girl.

PAUL
That's...

KIT
After you eat, I suppose you'll punish
me?

She sits.

PAUL
Punish you?

KIT
Naughty little girls deserve to be
spanked, don't they? Over-the-knee?

PAUL
I...

KIT

Eat up, before your eggs get hard.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- LATER

109

The debris of the meal are on the table. Kit's skirt is draped over a chair.

As we track towards the bedroom area, we see her tie on the floor, her shirt, his shirt, her shoes, his shoes, her socks and white cotton panties, his pants and underwear.

SFX: Sounds of love-making.

INT. BEDROOM AREA -- CONTINUOUS

110

Paul and Kit lay in bed, in the aftermath.

PAUL

Kit, we do get along pretty well,
don't we.

KIT

I'd say so.

PAUL

And our kinks match?

KIT

Perfectly, so far.

PAUL

Two people who get along and have
matching kinks? Isn't that how you
defined...

KIT

Love? I guess it was. Was I right?

PAUL

Whatever the definition, I do.

KIT

(coy)

Do?

PAUL

I do love you, Kit. How about you -
me?

KIT

You have no idea how long I've wanted
to hear you tell me you loved me,
Paul.

She rolls on top of him.

INT. BEDROOM AREA -- MORNING

111

Paul wakes. No Kit.

He finds a note: EMERGENCY. SICK RELATIVE. HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON, FOR MORE 'GAMES.'

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- DAY

112

Paul paces, checking his watch.

He picks up a phone and dials.

KIT (O.S.)
(Answering machine)
This is Catherine Rush. Maybe I'm
out? Whatever, you know what to do.

He hangs up.

INT. DINING AREA -- AFTERNOON

113

Paul, worried, sits at the table eating soup from a saucepan, a phone beside him.

He dials:

KAREN (O.S.)
(over the phone)
Karen Carstairs.

PAUL
It's Paul. Have you heard from Kit?

KAREN (O.S.)
No, should I have?

PAUL
She left me to go see a sick relative.

KAREN (O.S.)
How long ago was that?

PAUL
About seven hours.

KAREN (O.S.)
And you're in a rush to find her
already?

*

(chuckle)
You're really in a rush, Paul, or
should I say it sounds like you were
in a rush last night, Kit Rush?

PAUL
I'm not in the mood for jokes.

KAREN (O.S.)

Sorry! Look, Paul, Kit's missing for seven hours, when she said she was off to visit someone? Isn't it a bit soon to start panicking? Did she say when she'd be back?

PAUL

'Soon.'

KAREN (O.S.)

That's pretty vague. If she's not back by say, midnight, call me. If she contacts either of us, we'll phone, okay?

PAUL

I guess. Bye.

INT. DINING AREA -- EVENING

114

Paul on phone.

BROWER (V.O.)

(On phone)

Look, Mr Vail, if there's someone missing in this City, it makes more sense to me if I ask you where they might be.

(beat)

As for where your lawyer is, I haven't got a clue.

Paul hangs up.

INT. PAUL'S LOFT -- LATER

115

Paul paces. As he passes the entrance:

SFX: Elevator.

He opens the glass door, then lifts the elevator gate, and finds an envelope on the floor.

As he returns, he opens it and takes out three sheets of paper, which he reads.

Paper #1. One clue at a time seems too hard for you, Paul. Let's make it easier. Here are two. Solve one and you might solve both, as they are related, but you're bound to be too late, as usual.

Paper #2. Nine lives isn't enough when someone has an urgent appointment here. 3. 7.

Page #3. Sounds like a gauzy net, draped over a coffin. 4. 4.

SFX: Phone.

Paul rushes to answer it.

PAUL

Karen?

(beat)

No, she hasn't shown up. I got more clues.

(beat)

Two of them this time. The killer's got Kit, and I know where.

(beat)

Forget Brower. He won't believe a word I say. Can you drive me? I'll explain as we go.

(beat)

Thanks. Hurry? I'll meet you outside my place.

He hangs up, goes to his desk and takes a revolver from a locked drawer.

INT. KAREN'S CAR -- NIGHT

116

Karen drives, Paul passenger.

PAUL

You see? 'An urgent appointment' is 'a pressing engagement.'

KAREN

So?

PAUL

'Press,' as in The Monitor? 'Nine lives,' as in a cat - Kit?

KAREN

How about the other clue?

PAUL

Simple. What you drape over a coffin is a 'pall.' A gauzy net would be a 'veil.' Sounds like? They're puns, for 'Paul Vail.'

KAREN

It's a trap, for you!

PAUL

With Kit as the bait, and also as a victim.

Karen floors the accelerator.

KAREN

Where, at The Monitor? It's an enormous building.

PAUL

That's in the clue, as well. Wherever the presses are.

KAREN

Round the back, then.

She squeals around a corner.

EXT. MONITOR YARD -- NIGHT

117

Karen's car screeches to a halt.

Paul leaps out.

PAUL

Wait here!

Karen follows.

As they run towards the back door.

KAREN

I've got the key, and I'm going in with you.

PAUL

Dangerous!

KAREN

Try to stop me.

At the door, she opens it.

Paul bursts through.

Karen follows.

INT. PRINTING PRESSES -- CONTINUOUS

118

Paul runs, revolver in hand, followed by Karen.

KAREN

They'll hear you!

PAUL

We don't have time to sneak around.

Panting, he comes to the area where the newsprint is unloaded, and stops, aghast.

On a dock, giant rolls of newsprint are stacked, five high, secured by three heavy ropes that run from bottom to top.

Kit, in a simple white dress that is ripped from hem to hip and down one shoulder, classic 'maiden in distress' hangs just above and in front of the top roll of newsprint, from a hook in the ceiling, apparently dangling by her wrists from a rope.

Paul shoves his revolver at Karen.

PAUL (CONT'D)
(calling up)
I'm here, Darling. Hold on! I'll
save you.

He leaps onto the deck and uses the ropes that hold them to begin scaling the piles of rolls.

As he climbs, Kit swings her body. When her feet are above the rolls, she lets go of the rope she was hanging from and drops lithely to the top one.

Paul pauses, puzzled, two rolls up.

KAREN
Hold it right there, Paul.

He looks back down.

Karen is aiming his revolver at him.

PAUL
What?

Kit picks up a knife and begins sawing at one rope.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Kit, not you! I thought you loved...

KAREN
I have my own gun, Paul, but it was
nice of you to give me yours.

Paul looks up at Kit, then down at Karen, confused.

KAREN (CONT'D)
You still don't get it, Paul, do
you? You don't remember poor Carol's
little cousins? Cynthia?

She makes a mocking little curtsy.

KIT
Cybill?

She makes a mocking little curtsy.

PAUL
You two? You're them?

KIT

Exactly. We saw you kill our darling Carol, Paul. The police were stupid but we swore to Auntie Agatha that you'd never get away with it.

PAUL

But...

KAREN

Auntie tried to get you, and failed because you hid yourself away in that loft of yours.

PAUL

This has all been about getting me out of my loft? All those horrible murders?

(beat)

You got me out of my loft right away, after the first one. Why didn't you kill me then?

KIT

Oh no! You murdered our cousin and our uncle and you gave Auntie Agatha the stroke that left her a helpless invalid.

KAREN

You think your death alone would atone?

PAUL

I didn't kill Carol. I loved her.

EXT. BEACH -- FLASHBACK

119

Agatha hobbles, with Harold helping, and the two girls run along the beach towards the yacht.

From a hundred feet, they see Carol's face emerge from the water.

CAROL

You bastard!

KIT (O.S.)

We heard her call you a bastard.

From fifty feet, they see Paul shove the pole down.

KAREN (O.S.)

We saw you push her under.

PAUL (O.S.)
 It wasn't like that. Sure, she
 screamed at me. That was panic.
 I...

EXT. PROW/SEA -- FLASHBACK

120

Carol manages to sit up, despite being crushed from her tummy
 down, and gets her face above water for a second.

She sucks air, then screams:

CAROL
 You bastard!

EXT. YACHT -- CONTINUOUS

121

Paul pulls the pole up then pushes it down again.

EXT. PROW/SEA -- CONTINUOUS

122

The pole drives into the sea-bed, beside Carol's head.

It bends with the strain.

Carol falls back, surrounded by billowing blood, her last
 breaths pink bubbles rising from her mouth.

INT. PRINTING PRESSES -- CONTINUOUS

123

PAUL
 ...just wasn't strong enough.

Kit saws rope.

KIT
 That's what you told the Coroner.
 We saw.

PAUL
 I've mourned her ever since.

KIT
 Like you were mourning when you were
 playing kinky 'games' with me?

A rope parts. Kit moves along to start cutting the far one.

PAUL
 Carol will always have a place in my
 heart, but I'm not a monk.

KIT
That's for sure.

KAREN

We wanted you to suffer, emotionally as well as physically, exactly the way Carol did.

PAUL

How?

KIT

Can you imagine what it's like to be crushed to death, murdered by someone you loved?

(beat)

That's what's going to happen to you, Paul. That's what we planned from the beginning.

The second rope parts and falls past Paul.

Kit moves to the middle one.

Paul's one hand digs into the roll of newsprint, desperate to get a grip, while the other still clutches a rope.

KAREN

First, you had to fall in love. You were supposed to fall for me but you claiming to be able to recognize girls by their nipples spoiled our plan.

(beat)

If you'd seen mine, you might have recognized me as the model in the painting.

KIT

So I took over. I made you fall for me.

PAUL

All the times we made love..?

KIT

Love? I hated every vile minute, but it was worth it.

(beat)

Look out, Karen.

Karen moves aside, keeping the revolver aimed at Paul.

Kit finishes cutting the final rope and steps back onto a roll behind.

Paul lets go of the rope and clutches at the roll he's on as the rope falls past him.

Nothing moves.

Kit sits on her roll, puts both feet on the front one, and pushes.

It rolls.

The roll Kit is sitting on moves, tumbling her forward.

The entire stack falls.

Paul leaps to one side.

Karen fires at him as the stack of rolls, Kit clinging to the underside of one, falls.

The roll with Kit under it hits the dock with one edge and bounces sideways. It lands, Kit still under it, on top of Karen, crushing them both.

Paul is on the dock, wounded in his shoulder, a leg broken, unconscious.

Two feminine hands, interlocked, protrude from beneath the roll, in a pool of blood.

Enter Brower, Smart and Polowski.

BROWER

Good job I had you two following him.

POLOWSKI

Bit late.

BROWER

Whatever.

INT. BROWER'S OFFICE -- DAY

124

Paul, arm in sling, cast on leg, with crutches, sits opposite Brower, Belinda and Verena present.

BROWER

I thought I better fill in the gaps for you, Mr Vail, under the circumstances.

(beat)

After your wife died, the old lady sent her other nieces, Cybill and Cynthia, abroad, to Switzerland, under assumed names, to protect them from the tabloids.

(beat)

Ain't that ironic?

(beat)

After she failed to kill you, she had that stroke what left her

(MORE)

BROWER (CONT'D)

paralyzed. It seems her nieces blamed you for everything, Carol, her Uncle and what happened to the old lady.

(beat)

Being rich, and part owners of The Monitor, it was easy for one of them to get a job on it and the other to become its lawyer.

VERENA

It's a classic case of *folie a deux*, Mr Vail.

BROWER

Huh?

VERENA

When two or more people share a delusion, particularly an obsessive one, each feeds the other, making the delusion more and more intense.

BROWER

As in crazy?

VERENA

Something like that.

BROWER

Anyway, I guess I should say I'm sorry I gave you such a hard time, Mr Vail.

(beat)

By the way, when she heard about her nieces, the old lady had another stroke, what killed her.

VERENA

So what are your plans now, Mr Vail?

PAUL

I have crosswords to compile.

VERENA

Are you going to be alright?

PAUL

Sure.

VERENA

If you need someone to talk to? I am a psychiatrist.

PAUL

Maybe.

He heaves himself up.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Is that everything, Lieutenant?

BROWER
Sure.

Paul leaves.

BROWER (CONT'D)
(to Verena)
So it was them girls being so close
what made them extra crazy, huh?

VERENA
You could say that.

Brower grins.

BROWER
Well, they're still close -
inseparable, according to the coroner.

INSERT: Kit and Karen's hands, protruding from under the
roll of newsprint.

FADE TO BLACK: