

THE



RESTING
PLACE

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by
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Moving Target
630 Idaho Ave, Ste. 304
Santa Monica, CA 90403

A BOTTLE OF MILK.

Cold and pure and innocent and pale as poison-death.

It's sunup and the bottle is being delivered outside a kitchen door. ANOTHER BOTTLE, an empty one, is already sitting there, right beside the MORNING PAPER: FDR TO SEEK 2nd TERM! Happy news to the MILKMAN who collects the empty with a spotless white-gloved hand and bounces down the stairs and whistles his way up the alley.

Good thing he's gone, because anybody that clean and happy doesn't belong in this neighborhood.

The nicest feature around here is no feature at all. It's a VACANT LOT, a square patch of dirt that acts as a sort of a all-purpose playground-garbage dump-doggie breeding pen. Thankfully, it's tucked behind a warped WOODEN FENCE and three of the ugliest buildings west of the New Jersey Turnpike.

First off, there's TREAT'S DRUGSTORE. Not that it's actually marked on this side, but you can read the name in reverse on the front window by peeking through the windows here at the back. Its rear door is deadbolted and papered with signs - NO TRESPASSING! NO SOLICITING! NO LOITERING! Friendly guy, this Mr. Treat. Above the store there's an apartment, which, by the way, is where the milk was delivered.

The boarded-up shack next to it used to be a FILLING STATION. About all that's left is a rusted gas pump and a gutted '28 Chevy.

That leaves THE HOTEL IMPERIAL. Fifty cents a night or three bucks a week. Cash only, in advance. On its upper floor, someone - a very tired looking someone - is staring out the BACK WINDOW.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

Not much to say. Four bare walls, a few sticks of furniture and the brownest white wash basin you've ever seen.

That tired someone is still by the window, slouched in a bentwood chair. His name is JOHN BENNETT SAND, JR.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

THUMP... THUMP... THUMP.

Whoever's knocking on his door has a sledgehammer for a hand. Besides that, it's damned early for a visitor.

From his wrinkled trousers John slips out a POCKET WATCH - 14 karat gold, covered with filigree and as out of place as that squeaky clean milkman.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

John rubs the last of the Wild Turkey out of his eyes, shuffles over to the door and opens up.

Filling the outer hallway with three cent cigar smoke is a rat-shaped man with a RAT KILLER face.

RAT KILLER

Are you Sand? John Sand?

JOHN SAND

The one and only.

The Rat Killer slips past him and dumps off his CANVAS TOOL BAG in the middle of the room.

RAT KILLER

Ya got a rat problem, I hear.

JOHN SAND

Have the rats been complaining?

RAT KILLER

Ya know the Wop family that used to live downstairs - the Sabatinis?

John shrugs as if he doesn't know or doesn't care.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)

Seems their little bambino got bit by a rat and died. Anyway, the doctor who punched her ticket squealed to the Health Department who didn't do squat until some social worker finked on 'em to the Daily News and they ran with the story on accounta it's an election year and the Mayor's one of the owners of this dump so the Mayor hires me to kill the rats. Seen any?

JOHN SAND

Any what?

RAT KILLER

Rats. Seen any rats?

JOHN SAND
In the closet, last night.

RAT KILLER
A big one?

JOHN SAND
He threw a shoe at me.

Can't hear that and not be curious. Rat Killer edges the closet door open and pokes his head in.

RAT KILLER
A big Norway, like you said. Look at the size of that rat hole.

JOHN SAND
Norway?

RAT KILLER
Norway rat. That's what we call 'em. Course they ain't really from Norway.

JOHN SAND
Yeah, I noticed he wasn't a blonde.

RAT KILLER
Nah, they're from Mongolia. Mongolia China. You remember them Mongol hordes - tough as nails! And brains!

He taps his skull.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)
Inscrutable. They really got the old Magoo. All them Chinks is like that. Ghengis Khan and Charlie Chan and all them others. That's what makes 'em so hard to get rid of. Ya gotta be even smarter than they are, and believe me bein' smarter than a chink rat ain't easy.

JOHN SAND
I believe you.

From the side pouch of his tool bag the Rat Killer pulls out a dented WHITE OWL CIGAR TIN and gives it a shake.

RAT KILLER
Fresh oats.

Out comes a second tin - identical except for a BIG BLACK X.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)

Same exact oats - only you eat these and an hour later it's like you're being strung up by your own innards.

John winces at the thought of that one.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)

There's enough poison in this one little can to kill every rat in this city. You got any idea how many rats that is? Five million! Five million! Why, there's more rats in this town than people.

JOHN SAND

You don't say.

RAT KILLER

So what we do first is we spread out the good ones, see, and tonight the rat has the swellest meal he's had in years and tomorrow we feed 'em again, only better...

JOHN SAND

I wish you'd stop saying 'we.' The rat might be listening.

RAT KILLER

By Sunday all he's thinkin' about is dinner. That's when we serve up Brand X and...

With one hand he rattles the poison tin and with the other chokes himself with a make-believe intestinal noose.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)

(scooting into the closet)
Just gimme a minute.

JOHN SAND

Take your time.

John checks his watch - 8:00 AM - and goes to the window.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

Some LOCAL KIDS are down there now, playing baseball, and so is a yapping FOX TERRIER - and they're all making plenty of racket. And then MR. TREAT shows up.

From his upstairs landing he starts belching out curses. At least I think they're curses - they're all in Russian or something. Anyhow, the kids get the meaning. They scatter like cockroaches!

As names go, 'Treat' is pretty accurate. Picture a four hundred pound candied apple. He bends over - no easy feat - grabs his MILK and NEWSPAPER and thuds downstairs.

JOHN SAND (O.S.)

Unbelievable. Up at six, breakfast at seven, yelling his ass off at eight. I can set my watch by that guy.

RAT KILLER (O.S.)

(from the closet)

What are ya talkin' about?

JOHN SAND (O.S.)

Treat, the druggist.

At the bottom of the stairs, Treat meets up with the fox terrier who's using the bottom step for a fire hydrant.

RAT KILLER (O.S.)

Treat! That miserable sack of Russian blubber!

The fat man rears back and kicks the dog so hard it almost vomits up a lung!

JOHN SAND (O.S.)

Oh, you know him.

RAT KILLER (O.S.)

Know him. Who do ya think owns this place?

JOHN SAND (O.S.)

I thought you said the Mayor...

RAT KILLER (O.S.)

Sure, the Mayor owns a piece, so does half the City Council. That's how Treat keeps 'em greased. Cuts 'em in on all his deals.

(MORE)

RAT KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 And brother, the things that fat
 Russkie is up to!

Treat pulls out a crowded KEY CHAIN and sets about unlocking
 the drugstore's back door.

RAT KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Rumor has it he was some big-time
 operator back in Moscow, only he
 had to scam outta there on
 accounta that Revolution. So what
 does he do? Comes here like all
 them other cabbage-eaters. Even
 joins the Army - the Medical Corps
 no less - like he's Florence
 Nightingale or something. Except he
 isn't. See, the whole time he's
 stealin' medical supplies - robbin'
 Uncle Sam blind...

Treat's first customer has arrived - smart tailoring, nice
 manicure, and the SWELLEST haircut this side of Cary Grant.

RAT KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 A million bucks worth of stolen
 dope - that's what they say he took
 - and it all gets peddled out that
 back door.

After a polite handshake, Treat ushers the Swell inside.

RAT KILLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 But what the hell, all rats are
 natural born thieves and a rat
 can't help bein' a rat, can he?
 Okay, we're all set.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

Rat Killer scuttles out of the closet and starts dusting off
 his overalls. Before he can finish, those rat eyes of his
 catch the 14 karat glint of John's watch.

RAT KILLER
 What a beauty! Do you mind?

Mind or not, the watch is swiped from John's hand.

RAT KILLER (cont'd)
 Cruet and Company, Geneva. Don't
 get any better than that.
 (MORE)

RAT KILLER (cont'd)
 Bimetallic balance, helical
 hairspring...

JOHN SAND
 You an expert?

RAT KILLER
 My family is.

JOHN SAND
 Watchmakers?

RAT KILLER
 Pickpockets.

He flips the watch over and finds an inscription.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)
 To John Bennett Sand, Jr., from
 J.B. John Bennett Sand, Jr. -
 that's you?

John nods yes.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)
 And who or what is J.B.?

CUT TO:

EXT. J.B. BANKERS TRUST BUILDING - DAY

The 'what' J.B. is ten stories high, a city block long and
 made of the finest Pennsylvania gray granite.

John is climbing its steps, fifty of them, to where the
 entrance is. Standing guard up there is a big marble PEDESTAL
 with an inscription of its own:

FOUNDER OF THIS INSTITUTION
 JOHN BENNETT SAND, SR.
 J.B.
 WHO ENTERED INTO REST
 MAY 16, 1935
 HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH

Crowning this pedestal is a BRONZE BUST of the 'who' J.B. -
 and if this statue is anything like the original J.B., he
 must've been some piece of work.

JOHN SAND
 Hello father.

Even for a bronze statue, J.B. is giving his son a mighty
 cold welcome.

And it's plain as day that John has gotten that reception before. He pushes a cigarette between his lips and finds himself a match.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

I missed you too.

The match is scratched across the statue's nose.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Another cigarette, one of John's last, is crushed into an almost full ashtray.

John tears open his buttoned-up collar and dredges out his watch. Whatever it says makes him slump that much deeper into the couch.

Finally, the door labeled HENRY J. SAND, PRESIDENT cracks open and a neat NO-NONSENSE blonde fits her head out.

NO-NONSENSE

Mr. Sand, your brother will see you now.

CUT TO:

INT. HENRY SAND'S OFFICE - DAY

Getting up from behind the big desk is John's younger brother, HENRY J. SAND. This is what comes of a lifetime of saying your prayers and washing behind your ears.

HENRY SAND

Jackie, come on in. Sorry about the wait. Not too long I hope.

JOHN SAND

Three hours and eighteen minutes.

HENRY SAND

Not really? Three hours?

JOHN SAND

And eighteen minutes.

HENRY SAND

Some younger brother I am. Well, sit down and tell me how I can make it up to you, Jackie.

JOHN SAND

For starters you can cut out the Jackie business.

HENRY SAND

Okay, no more Jackie. Sensitive subject. I forgot. Come on, have a seat.

Henry offers John the padded red leather chair that's facing his desk, then sits down himself.

HENRY SAND (CONT'D)

To tell you the truth, this head of mine hasn't been on straight all day. A merger coming and appointments back to back. Lucky for you - what I mean is, a gentleman generally doesn't come to this office looking... well, without a necktie.

JOHN SAND

(noting Henry's neckwear)
Speaking of neckties...

HENRY SAND

Yeah, one of father's. His favorite.

JOHN SAND

It suits you. It all suits you.

On Henry's desk there's a framed 8x10 of J.B. himself.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Well, lookie here. Father is everywhere, isn't he? Just like God.

John spins the picture around for a closer eyeballing.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

That statue thing out front is a better likeness.

HENRY SAND

(replacing the picture)
Well, father didn't look himself at the end. You wouldn't know - being in prison and all - but those last five years weren't easy ones.

(MORE)

HENRY SAND (CONT'D)

He couldn't sleep after that, not really. Just kept taking those pills, until finally... Not that I'm blaming you, of course.

JOHN SAND

Of course. Listen Henry, much as I'm enjoying this, it's not why I came. I thought maybe...

Henry's raised index finger stops John in mid-maybe. That same finger drops onto the key of the INTERCOM.

HENRY SAND

Miss Aswell, there's a check made out to my older brother - from my personal account. Could you bring it in for signature, please.

His finger pops off the key.

JOHN SAND

I'm not here for a touch.

HENRY SAND

No, you came for a job, and I'd like to help, really I would, but it's out of the question. This is a bank after all and we depend on people's trust. I mean, we can't be employing someone who... that is...

JOHN SAND

The word is thief, Henry, thief. It's someone who steals from people without hiding behind a necktie.

The temperature is rising fast, but before it can boil over that No-Nonsense blonde re-appears, sets the CHECK in front of Henry and exits.

HENRY SAND (CONT'D)

Thank-you, Miss Aswell.

Henry scribbles in his signature.

HENRY SAND (CONT'D)

Of course no provision was made for you in father's will, none whatever, but I felt you were owed something and I wanted to square that account - keep the family books in order you might say - that way you and I can start over, well... even.

JOHN SAND

Oh, I'd say you were getting even all right, wouldn't you, baby brother?

HENRY SAND

Not quite, Jackie.

The check is creased in half and shoved over to John's end of the desk.

HENRY SAND (CONT'D)

Now we're even.

Just for the record John picks it up and reads the amount.

JOHN SAND

Exactly five hundred dollars exactly.

He refolds it, slides it back where it came from and gets to his feet. Henry gets up too.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

I wonder what my share of the Court of Miracles would've been worth? I mean, if I'd stayed here as vice-president in charge of making the lame walk and the blind see. How much? A hundred thousand?

HENRY SAND

Don't be stupid. Ten times that.

John leans forward, crushing his fists into Henry's desktop.

JOHN SAND

Ten times a hundred thousand and you figure five hundred bucks makes us even?

They're nose to nose. Henry is standing his ground, but he's scared - you can smell it.

Slowly, John raises his arm, extends his index finger and pokes it into Henry's throat. Even if Henry had enough spit to swallow, he couldn't.

And then John's finger makes a razor sharp slice straight down, unknots Henry's TIE and slips it off his collar.

Henry deflates into his chair.

Calmly, John rebuttons his top button, slides the tie around his own neck and strolls casually to the exit.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

So long, baby brother. Now we're even.

CUT TO:

EXT. STABLER AND SLOAN ACCOUNTING - DAY

A 'NOW HIRING' sign is taped to the window. Inside, John is putting on some act for MR. STABLER, with a little help from that necktie. Only it isn't helping.

CUT TO:

EXT. WETZEL MOVING AND STORAGE - DAY

Another 'NOW HIRING' sign and another pitch. This one's going even worse.

CUT TO:

EXT. WESTERN CHEMICAL COMPANY - DAY

John rolls back the iron-barred gate, strikes a match across the 'HELP WANTED' sign that's wired to the fence, lights his Pall Mall and storms off.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL IMPERIAL - DAY

That damn necktie is choking the life out of him.

John claws the knot away from his throat, flips a fresh cigarette in his mouth and starts groping for another match. Only he can't find one.

What he does find is a plain door set inconspicuously under the Imperial's main stairwell. The sign on the door reads: FURNACE ROOM.

JOHN SAND
(readjusting his
cigarette)
What the hell.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - DAY

John fires up his Pall Mall in the furnace, sucks down a big drag, nudges the furnace door shut and has a little snoop around the basement.

There are only a few points of interest down here and they all belong to the GIRL IN THE CALENDAR who's hanging on the far wall.

John invites himself over.

JOHN SAND
Tell me, Sugar Plum, where did we
go wrong exactly, anyhow?

Whatever Miss November thinks, she's keeping to herself.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
It's okay, I don't know either.
The question is: What do we do now?

Before Miss November can have a think on that one, a SCREAM echoes into the basement by way of the air vent at the top of the wall.

With the help of a few apple crates, John gets himself up to the vent and has a look outside.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - DAY

Treat, the fat sweating pig, is wrestling his way out his back door with a real armload - a SCREAMING ten year old boy and a very panicky fox terrier.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - DAY

Fast as he can John is off the crates, up the stairs and out.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAY

Like the Green Bay Packers - all eleven of them - John rushes in, grabs the kid by the belt and yanks him right out of Treat's hand.

JOHN SAND

Don't you know it's illegal to beat a child in this city without a permit.

TREAT

Thees nun uv yer beezness. Leetle COCKROACH ees thief and he gonna pay.

COCKROACH

Liar! I never took nuthin'!

TREAT

Shuddup you!

COCKROACH

Shut up yourself and let go of my dog!

As Cockroach lunges forward John snags him by the collar.

JOHN SAND

Put it in neutral, would ya!

He turns to the fat druggist and his four-legged hostage.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Come on, give the kid a break.

TREAT

(tightening his grip)
No! Doggee help hem steel!

JOHN SAND

Did the dog pull a gun or was he only driving the getaway car?

TREAT

Doggee he run behind counter. When I chaze doggee out, thees one he steels candee.

COCKROACH

I didn't take nuthin', swear to God mister, look.

Out of his pants pocket the Cockroach pulls a NICKEL.

COCKROACH (CONT'D)

Look, I got money. Why would I
steal somethin' when I got money to
buy it?

TREAT

Leetle bug ees good liar. To hem I
dun do nutheeng. Leetle doggee I
gunna cut hees throat.

From behind Treat's back comes a KNIFE. It's short and sharp and Treat is handling it like a man who knows a thing or two about cutting throats.

John doesn't blink. He slips a COIN from his pocket and flicks it off Treat's fat belly.

JOHN SAND

Here's a nickel. Go buy yourself a
Hershey bar and a new personality.

Deadly silence. Then an interruption. Another 'CUSTOMER' has shown up at Treat's back door.

With a quiet smile, Treat slides the knife blade under the dog's LEATHER COLLAR, cuts it in two and lets the dog flop to the ground.

TREAT

Next time I catch leetle doggee I
gunna carve hem up and eat hem! You
hear - I gunna eat hem!

Greedily, he snatches up the nickel, spits on it, gives it a polish between his fingers and pops it into his mouth. Then he strikes off for more important business.

Cockroach opens his arms wide.

COCKROACH

Come here, Jackie!

And the puppy dives in.

JOHN SAND

Jackie? The dog's name is Jackie?

COCKROACH

Sure, why not?

John lets it pass. Eventually, Cockroach sets Jackie down so he can shake John's hand.

COCKROACH (CONT'D)
Gosh mister, I dunno how to thank you.

But John knows how. He stomps down on the kid's feet, pins his wrists together and jerks him taught as an E-string. With his free hand John steals the kid's nickel from his pants pocket, then fishes his arm inside the kid's sweater.

What does he find? A colossal rainbow-colored LOLLIPOP!

JOHN SAND
No need to thank me, kid.

He chucks the Cockroach right back on his ass.

COCKROACH
You ain't gonna squeal on me, are ya mister?

John opens his mouth and shoves in the lollipop.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (VIEW FROM JOHN'S WINDOW) - NIGHT

Another SATISFIED CUSTOMER stumbles from the drugstore, massaging his left arm. Treat follows him out, locks the deadbolt and trudges up to his apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are off and things are quiet. Almost. If you listen closely there's a SCRATCHING sound coming from the TRASH CAN under the sink. Faint, but growing louder.

The can starts to wobble. Over it goes and the garbage spills onto the floor: three gum wrappers, some cigarette butts, an empty pint of Wild Turkey and a BROWN RAT as big as a Buick.

The only thing left in the can is the sticky half-eaten lollipop and the rat is scrambling back in after it. He's just about pried it loose...

Incoming! A rat seeking missile, size 12D, CLANGS off the rim of the can. Time for the rat to ditch out.

John charges in and rearms himself with the shoe. Too late.

Only now there's a new sound - coming from outside - more of a SQUEAK than a scratch. There it is again... SQUEEEEEAK.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S KITCHEN (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

Treat is pouring some MILK into a saucepan on his stove. He opens his REFRIGERATOR DOOR... SQUEEEEEAK... Puts the bottle back inside and elbows the door shut... SQUEEEEEAK.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

John digs out his watch. 10:03 PM.

JOHN SAND

Three minutes late. You'll miss
your beauty sleep.

He staggers over to the orange crate that doubles as his nightstand. Under a stack of old magazines, John finds a small PILLBOX and shakes it out. Empty.

Back to the trash can to see if there's a drop left in that Wild Turkey bottle. Nah, it's dead. And so is John. He butt-flops into the bentwood chair.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S BEDROOM (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

The fat man is all tucked in. He slugs down his warm MILK, kills the light and rolls over.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

JOHN SAND

(blowing a kiss)
Sweet dreams, lover.

John pulls a rumpled Pall Mall from his rumpled shirt pocket and nabs the top book off a nearby pile. What book is it? It doesn't matter, not really. He pulls the chain on his imitation Tiffany floor lamp, matches his cigarette and starts reading.

It's going to be a long night.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

A cigarette butt drops onto the rug. Nineteen others are waiting for it.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

John coughs his way over to the door.

RAT KILLER

How ya doin' this morning?

Same as yesterday, Rat Killer flicks his cigar ash onto the hallway carpet and worms into the room.

JOHN SAND

(still groggy)

If you're here to view the body, you're in for a disappointment. I think the rat's the healthiest one in the building.

RAT KILLER

Nah, we're on a three day plan.

JOHN SAND

(tapping his forehead)

That's right, we're outsmarting him.

RAT KILLER

(grabbing the tin of oats)

Another ounce of pure Iowa sunshine today and tomorrow...

JOHN SAND

I know - strung up by his own innards. Don't remind me.

Nothing pleases a Rat Killer more than being quoted.

RAT KILLER (O.S.)

(bouncing into the closet)

I'm not gonna put out as much this time - save some room for that big Sunday dinner...

Whatever else he says is drowned out by the goings-on outside.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

It's a rerun of the Mr. Treat show: FILTHY RUSSIAN DIALOGUE, SCREAMING kids, even that Cary Grant look-alike - The Swell.

Having grabbed up his MILK and NEWSPAPER, Treat makes a move back to his kitchen, but The Swell chokes out a fake COUGH - one of those, 'Hey fatso, I'm not here for the view' numbers.

Treat takes the hint. He stuffs the milk and the newspaper into his overcoat pockets and motors down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

8:00 AM. Same as yesterday. John puts his watch back in his trousers and sags against the window casement.

RAT KILLER (O.S.)

All set.

The assassin crawls out and gathers up his tool bag. Meanwhile, John has moved to the sink to splash some cold water in those tired bloodshot eyes.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)

Hope ya don't mind my sayin' so,
but you look like one a them horror
picture walking dead guys.

JOHN SAND

It's called insomnia. A little gift
from my father.

RAT KILLER

Can't sleep, huh? Ya know my wife
had the same problem till she went
ta see my uncle.

JOHN SAND

He's a doctor?

RAT KILLER

Nah, he's a janitor at the dog
track but he's a real crummy
sleeper. Anyway, he hooked her up
with the track steward whose cousin
is this terrific Jew doctor who
gave her this great stuff...

Out comes yet another rusted CIGAR TIN.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)
(rattling the can)
I use it sometimes myself. Works
better than a ball-peen hammer
behind the ear.

JOHN SAND
No thanks.

RAT KILLER
No really, ya gotta try this.

JOHN SAND
That's okay, I've got my own Jew
doctor.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

THE OFFICE OF DR. SOLOMON J. WEISS.

At least that's what's printed at the top of the prescription
pad. Below it, a PRESCRIPTION is written out in big clear
letters:

100 MG. SECANOL
TAKEN AS NEEDED. TWO TABLETS PER NIGHT ONLY.

The paper is peeled off the pad, folded once down the middle
and passed to John.

JOHN SAND
Thanks Sol, as always.

'Sol' is short for Solomon - Doctor, Philosopher and Old
Testament King.

SOLOMON
I've upped the dosage so this
should make you sleep, only be
careful.

JOHN SAND
Careful is my middle name.

SOLOMON
No, Bennett is your middle name,
same as your father and this is the
stuff that killed him, so don't
screw around.

JOHN SAND
 (jokingly)
 I always figured you were the one
 that bumped off the old man.

SOLOMON
 I loved your father. It's you I
 can't stand.

One look at that three thousand year old face and you know
 this guy isn't kidding. John knows it too, and he doesn't
 like it one bit.

JOHN SAND
 And God granted Wisdom unto Solomon
 that he may act as judge over all
 his people.

SOLOMON
 Nice tie.

That nails John right where it counts. Sheepishly, he tucks
 his brother's tie back inside his jacket.

JOHN SAND
 Why do you help me, Sol?

SOLOMON
 I don't know. Why do you steal?

CUT TO:

EXT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE (FRONT) - DAY

The way John is feeling right now, even his cigarette isn't
 helping much. He takes a final drag, straightens his tie,
 double-checks the PRESCRIPTION, tacks on a bogus smile and
 plows through the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - DAY

The entrance bell JINGLES nervously.

JOHN SAND
 Afternoon, Mr. Treat.

Treat has heard him all right, but goes on stocking his
 shelves with bars of Ivory Soap.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
 I said, 'Afternoon...'

TREAT

What you want? Need medeceene agin
for the sleep?

JOHN SAND

You make sleep sound like a
disease.

TREAT

I got cure. Take hundred peels and
swallow all of them!

JOHN SAND

Not so rough lover, I cry easily.

Down goes the soapbox and Treat moves up to the counter - a
few feet from John, but well within throat cutting range.

TREAT

Maybe you see how rough I get.

For added emphasis, Treat hacks a wad of spit on the floor.

JOHN SAND

Okay, so you wanna get even with me
on accounta yesterday. I
understand. Only save the scary
routine for the kiddies and get me
my pills, huh.

TREAT

You theenk because you got brother
what ees beeg noise everybodee
gonna crawl for you like doggee?

The word 'brother' has wiped that phony grin off John's face.

JOHN SAND

Right now, all I want to do is turn
this light off that's inside my
skull, and if I'd wanted stupid
talk from stupid people I'd've
stayed in prison.

TREAT

I am stupeed? You go to preeson but
I am stupeed? How anybodee ees
stupeed enough he go to preeson?

JOHN SAND

I stole.

TREAT

To steel ees natural, to get caught
thees ees stupeed!

If anyone else said that, John would kick his teeth in. Then again, he could really use those sleeping pills.

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP...

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP...

JOHN SAND

I think somebody's at your back
door, Einstein.

Cautiously, Treat backs the dozen or so steps down the aisle, twists the door knob backhanded, and turns around.

TREAT

Hello FRIEND! Come een!

Not much of a friend - just an empty bag of bones in a rescue mission brown suit.

He tries to come in, only he can't - he can barely stand up. So Treat muscles him through the door and leans him against the back wall.

TREAT (CONT'D)

Hard day, huh? I feex you up good!

Treat pries open Friend's cadaverous right hand, retrieves a wad of SWEATY DOLLAR BILLS and scoots back up the aisle.

When he reaches the counter, he pulls out that crowded KEY CHAIN and ducks out of sight.

CLICK... GRRRRRRR... He's unlocked something, but what?

John has a quick peek.

Can't see much. Treat's big fat ass takes care of that. What John can see is the open CABINET DOOR - a sturdy steel cage job with a heavy duty DEADLOCK. Treat has pulled something from the cabinet - no idea what - and shoved it in his shirt pocket. Now, he's grabbed something else - a SYRINGE it looks like - and pocketed that as well.

THUD!

Friend has slid face down onto the floor tiles. BLOOD, thick black blood, is oozing out his nose and mouth.

TREAT (CONT'D)
Sunuvabeetch!

Treat hustles back, hauls the man up by his lapels and backhands him right across the chops. Not a stir.

TREAT (CONT'D)
Dun nobodee die here!

He pulls Friend's lifeless arm over his shoulder, clamps onto his bony wrist and pushes him toward the exit. Somehow Treat squeezes them both outside, then reaches back with his foot and yanks the door shut as hard as he can... BANG!

The window frames RATTLE, the counter tops TREMBLE, the jar lids BOBBLE...

... And slowly, soundlessly the cabinet door glides open.

So here we are. It's quiet as a tomb and John is all by himself and the cabinet where Treat keeps his stash is wide open and just begging to be robbed.

This is what's known as temptation.

John leans over the counter. Without Treat's ass in the way he's got a much better view of things, except there's not much to see - just seven ordinary looking CARDBOARD BOXES.

What's in them? It's tempting to find out, but John tries to get his mind on something else.

For instance, the framed diplomas on the back wall. Most are from foreign sounding universities - awarded to MAXIM VASILYEVICH TRETYAKOV. One is in English - an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army Medical Corps. It's made out to plain old MAX TREAT.

Interesting stuff, but John's eyes keep straying back to that cabinet. So he moves to the far end of the counter, right next to the LOLLIPOP JAR which also happens to be right next to the CASH REGISTER.

JOHN SAND
What the hell.

He hits the key... CHA-CHING! The drawer shoots open.

Seventy-five cents in change.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Figures.

He bumps the drawer shut and reaches for a lollipop. His eyes flash over to the cabinet door again... Wide open and...

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Aw, screw it!

The lollipop drops back in the jar.

Inside the cabinet, the seven cardboard boxes are in two neat stacks, one behind the other. Stamped across the front of each box: PROPERTY OF U.S. ARMY MEDICAL CORPS.

John pulls out the top box and flips open the lid. Rolling around the bottom is a single GLASS AMPULE with a plain paper label with one word on it: MORPHINE.

John slips the ampule into his pocket.

Wait, better idea. He puts the ampule back and trades that box for the unopened box behind it. Inside this one there's a folded sheet of paper - some kind of PACKING SLIP also marked U.S. ARMY MEDICAL CORPS. Under it are twenty four neatly arranged ampules of morphine.

Eagerly, John shovels them into his overcoat.

TREAT (O.S.)
Sunuvabeetch!

That voice is close! Real close!

Triple-quick John pockets the last few ampules. Without looking he grabs what he assumes is the PACKING SLIP and drops it into the empty box. The box goes back on the shelf and the cage door is locked behind it.

(O.S.) Treat's elephant FOOTSTEPS arrive at the back door.

John pats his hair flat and straightens his coat.

The door SNARLS open.

TREAT (CONT'D)
Sunuvabeetch!

Treat is a mess! Sweaty and panting and smeared all over with black blood. He peels off his overcoat and has his shirt completely undone before he notices John.

JOHN SAND
Remember me?

John grabs that other FOLDED PAPER off the counter - the paper he thinks is the prescription - and wags it at Treat.

TREAT

Geet out! Got theengs to do.

The fat man chucks his shirt into the big black puddle on the floor and mushes it around with his foot.

TREAT (CONT'D)

Geet out.

For once John should take this guy's advice. Instead, he jabs the needle a little deeper.

JOHN SAND

Your friend is okay, isn't he?

TREAT

What you mean?

JOHN SAND

He didn't do something stupid like die or anything, did he?

That does it. Treat charges up the aisle - loaded, cocked and ready. For his part, John is loving every second.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Well, even if he did, what would it matter? The cops would never trace the body back here, would they? Nah, you're way too smart for that!

John taps his skull.

TREAT

Sunuvabeetch!

Treat snatches away the folded paper - he hasn't noticed anything funny about it either - crumples it into a ball and bounces it off John's chest.

TREAT (CONT'D)

Keep prescription. I make gift for you.

A quick about-face and the fat man vanishes down the aisle. That makes John smile for real. But not for long.

His eyes have zeroed in on that CRUMPLED PAPER on the counter and it's started to hit him that something's wrong. As wrong as wrong gets! He flattens out the paper...

UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS	
QUANTITY	CONTENTS
24	150 CC MORPHINE

At this instant John is probably clinically dead - no pulse, no heartbeat, no respiration... Almost unconsciously he slides the crumpled packing slip into his pocket...

BAM! A SMALL PILLBOX is slammed onto the countertop.

TREAT (CONT'D)

Take peels.

John doesn't hear a word, he's somewhere else...

TREAT (CONT'D)

Go on, take. Ees my gift. TAKE!

That snaps John back to the here and now...

TREAT (CONT'D)

You want I say please? Please you take peels what ees my gift to you.

Better do something before Treat gets suspicious. Hesitantly John reaches for the pillbox...

Treat clamps his hand round John's wrist like a power shovel.

TREAT (CONT'D)

Only you dun see nutheeng!

John's knuckles are turning snow white.

TREAT (CONT'D)

Nutheeng!

John wrenches free. Cautiously, very cautiously, he picks up the pillbox.

TREAT (CONT'D)

You dun see nutheeng today or you dun see nutheeng agin never! Never!

John just stands there, not saying a word, and tries to rub some color back into his fingertips.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

He may still be tight-lipped when he comes in, but the way John SLAMS the door says a mouthful. He heads straight for the closet.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (VIEW FROM JOHN'S WINDOW) - AFTERNOON

Treat is trudging upstairs carrying his overcoat and button shirt - both rinsed clean of the black blood. After he drapes them over the top railing to dry, he lets himself into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

A tired LEATHER SUITCASE trampolines onto the bed. It's chased by three shirts, a dirty windbreaker and John himself who rushes to the bureau.

From the top drawer he hoists out a load of jockey shorts; about a third of them actually make it into the suitcase. Next, he starts emptying his overcoat of the morphine.

But he forgot about the pillbox! It squeezes out of his pocket, spills onto the floor and scatters pills everywhere. John drops to his knees, and starts sifting the tablets back into the box.

(O.S.) SQUEEEAK.

John stops sifting.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S KITCHEN (JOHN'S POV) - AFTERNOON

The fat man is gulping MILK straight from the bottle. He mops his upper lip on his sleeve, sets the bottle back and ass-bumps the door shut... SQUEEEAK.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

The wheels start to turn again.

John's eye's drift away from the window and down to the FIVE SLEEPING PILLS resting in the hollow of his hand.

JOHN SAND
To get caught, this is stupid.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - AFTERNOON

John has taken up position along the back wall, spying through a crack in the blind, waiting for the right moment.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE (JOHN'S POV) - AFTERNOON

The entrance bell JINGLES.

In walks the RIGHT MOMENT, complete with split skirt, black nylons and spiked heels.

Treat is up the aisle faster than a housewife on dollar day.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - AFTERNOON

That's John's cue to slink up the stairs to the kitchen door. It's locked, of course, but John jiggles the knob just to make sure.

Time for plan B. First, his shoes come off. Then, with his butt planted on the top railing, his legs are slung outboard and his right foot is stretched toward Treat's bedroom window. He's practically doing the splits, but somehow he's able to hook his toes on the sill. Now, if he can shift his weight, swing over and snag the window frame... Got it!

Noiselessly, he slithers into the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

With his first step, John stumbles over something and nearly falls on his face.

Sticking out from under the bed - just far enough to trip over - is A BASEBALL BAT, an authentic Louisville Slugger.

Carefully, John resets it and hobbles to the kitchen. And I mean, "hobbles" - the bat has sprained his ankle but good.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

SQUEEEEE-- That refrigerator door could wake the dead!

What John needs is something to grease those hinges, and luckily he's found just the something. A CAN OF CRISCO is sitting on Treat's stove. He fingers out some LARD, globs it on the hinges and gives the door a quick test - 100 percent squeak free.

On to the real business. John peels the lid off the MILK BOTTLE and - one at a time - drops in the sleeping pills. He gives the milk a swirl and checks it against the light. All clear.

The bottle goes back on the shelf and that new improved refrigerator door glides shut.

As John limps to the bedroom, we notice something he didn't: A SMUDGE OF CRISCO is now on the refrigerator door handle.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Treat tramps up the stairs, collects his shirt and overcoat from the railing and lets himself in.

Onto the kitchen counter he dumps off his clothes, unpockets the morphine and the syringe, drops off his KEY CHAIN and heads for the bathroom at emergency speed.

It's the perfect chance for John to come out of hiding and sneak to the kitchen. He scoops up the KEY CHAIN, taking care not to jingle the keys, and tiptoes outside.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (VIEW FROM THE WINDOW) - NIGHT

Down the stairs, across the lot, hop-stepping for home - John disappears from our view here at the window.

In the meantime, Treat wanders into the kitchen, zipping up his fly as he goes. He centers the saucepan on the burner, lifts the handle on the refrigerator door, reaches inside, withdraws his arm... and the MILK BOTTLE squirts through his fat slimy fingers and shatters on the floor!

TREAT

Goddamit!

Treat inspects his hand. Sure it's greasy, but a greasy hand is just something you wipe off on your clean pant leg.

From his overcoat he pulls out the MILK BOTTLE that was delivered this morning. He pours some milk into the saucepan and places that bottle in the fridge.

Next, he gets a rag and a dust pan so he can clean up the mess on the floor. After that's done and the broken glass is safely in the garbage, Treat returns to the saucepan and his milk.

Finally, John arrives at his window. The events of the last minute - the BOTTLE being dropped, the OTHER BOTTLE being substituted - he has missed.

Now, he watches intently as Treat fills a glass with warm milk.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

According to John's watch, it's 10:10 PM

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S BEDROOM (JOHN'S POV) - 10:15 PM

The GLASS OF MILK is waiting on the nightstand.

Right on schedule, Treat crawls under the covers, takes up the glass and slurps down his night cap. Doesn't spill a drop. With his pajama sleeve he erases the tell-tale white moustache, then snicks the chain on the bedside lamp and rolls onto his side.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - 10:16 PM

A big wet smooch is blown his way.

JOHN SAND
Sweet dreams, lover.

John twirls the fat man's KEY CHAIN on his index finger.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - MIDNIGHT

A KEY can be heard - barely - CLICKING into the deadbolt.

Easylike, John steps inside, presses the door shut behind him and limps up the aisle to the front counter.

As best he can see through the steel mesh cabinet door, the cardboard boxes are still there. The big question: Which of Treat's thirty odd keys opens the lock?

The first key won't even go in. Neither will the next or the next. But number four fits perfect. Just a hair more pressure and...

CLINK! The key head snaps off in John's hand.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 12:15 AM

A BROOM HANDLE is wedged into the corner of the cabinet door. It busts in two.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 12:25 AM

A METAL RULER is jimmied under the lock. The first push bends it into a right angle.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 12:30 AM

How about a SCREWDRIVER?

It's working - the door frame is bowing out... Almost open... SNAP! The busted screwdriver handle goes one way, the shaft goes the other and John fans his gouged hand like a windshield wiper.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 12:38 AM

CLACK! CLACK! CLACK!

John has found a HAMMER and is using what's left of the screwdriver as a chisel.

Suddenly, a SLIVER OF LIGHT sweeps over his head. John hunkers down and sneaks an eye at the front door.

No mistaking that silhouette - it's a cop, a BEAT POUNDER.
But he's moving on - must be making his rounds.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 12:45 AM

One more good hit ought to do it... CLACK!

The lock pops off and the door jitters open. John grabs the second box in the stack and flips up the lid.

A PRESCRIPTION from DR. SOLOMON J. WEISS is sitting in the bottom of the box, right where John left it.

JOHN SAND
(addressing the Eternal)
Whew. For a minute there, I
actually thought You wanted me to
get caught.

In the next instant a BASEBALL BAT - an authentic Louisville Slugger - pounds onto John's back with a CRUNCH that's almost as loud as John's SCREAM. Almost.

TREAT
Sunuvabeetch, I gunna keel you!

And Treat means it. He swings again. Single off John's left arm. And again. Ground rule double. He winds up and goes for the bleachers.

Only this time the tip of the bat catches the countertop and splits apart. It's the opening John needs. He drills into that fat belly and drives Treat backwards onto the tile floor.

On top of him now, John fires off five quick punches. The fourth shot puts out Treat's front tooth and the fifth breaks his nose. Hard as he can Treat buries the splintered end of the bat into John's side. That sends John careening into the counter and gives Treat a chance to get off the floor.

TREAT (CONT'D)
Now I cut yer heart out!

Out comes the KNIFE from his bathrobe pocket.

In one motion John rolls onto his shoulder, snatches up the hammer and gets to his feet. The fat man lunges. John jumps aside, swings the hammer down and demolishes Treat's wrist. He swings again. This one catches Treat behind his left ear.

Those flabby knees are buckling but Treat manages to pin John in a bear hug and drag him back to the floor. With no small effort John squeezes a hand free and smothers it over that fat toad mouth. Big mistake!

Jagged yellow teeth tear into John's palm. And does it ever bleed - gushing out his hand and choking its way down Treat's throat.

Eventually, John gets his other hand loose enough to go groping for the hammer. Instead, he finds the SCREWDRIVER and drills that straight into Treat's back. Only Treat doesn't let go, so John stabs him a second time and a third and a fourth. It's getting messy but Treat is hanging on... five... six... And John keeps punching holes in Treat's lungs... nine... ten...

Finally, those big powerful meat hooks go limp.

John cocks his ear to Treat's chest. Not a peep.

Come to think of it, not a peep coming from anywhere. Not a scream or a siren or a barking dog or a mating cricket.

John gets himself untangled.

It's a very peaceful scene, what with Treat sitting there with his fat belly sticking out and his legs folded lotus-style and his hands resting palms up and a quiet smile pasted on his big round face. You'd think he was Buddha if he didn't have a screwdriver stuck between his shoulder blades.

John backs away for a better look, and inadvertently crunches down on the EMPTY MORPHINE BOX.

Empty? He picks it up and unfolds the mashed down sides. As bad as the light is, it isn't that bad. The prescription is gone!

Frantically, he sweeps his arms across the linoleum tiles. He searches behind the counter and under the shelves and every place in between. It's not anywhere.

And the whole time Treat is just sitting there with that quiet inscrutable grin.

JOHN SAND

You know what's coming, don't you?
They find you, they find that
prescription, they cut open that
big fat bucket of yours and out
pours the Milky Way chock full of
my sleeping pills.

(MORE)

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

And six months later they'll cinch a rope around my neck and drop me through the door and I'll crap my own pants. And they'll call your death a senseless tragedy and they'll call mine a humane execution. And the last thing I'll remember is that fat grin. That fat grin that says I was too stupid not to get caught.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - 1:04 AM

Tired anxious eyes are searching for... what? There's nothing much here - a slab of dirt, an old wooden fence, a couple of rundown buildings.

Maybe if he had a cigarette an idea would come. He dangles a Pall Mall in his lips and frisks himself for a match...

And then he notices SMOKE pouring from the Imperial's chimney pipe. Smoke from the furnace.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - 1:09 AM

Well, this isn't going to work.

The FIRE in the furnace is almost out and there isn't enough COAL left to cook a hot dog, let alone burn a body.

John lights his cigarette, closes the furnace door and scans the room for a fresh idea.

Like before, the only thing of interest down here is Miss November.

JOHN SAND

Any ideas, Sugar Plum? Can't burn him up tonight - not enough coal. Only I gotta hide him somewhere, but where?

A few feet away there's a STORAGE BIN, more or less coffin-sized. Looks perfect. John has a peek under the lid.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Whaddya think?

Miss November's gaze is definitely disapproving.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Okay, kinda obvious. You got a
better idea, I suppose?

In fact, she does. While she's using her left arm to cover herself - and doing a pretty inadequate job - with her right arm she's pointing...

Pointing across the room, past the remnants of the coal pile... All the way to the COAL SHOVEL.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Ya know what, Sugar Plum, I think
you're on to somethin'!

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - 1:20 AM

Using the shovel, John is scratching at the ground in the darkest corner of the lot - the corner where the fence meets the drugstore, where everybody dumps their garbage.

Seems like a good spot for a shallow grave. It's completely hidden from the street and there are plenty of trash cans and packing crates to cover up any signs of digging.

So John begins clearing a space - and covers a trash can with BLOODY HAND PRINTS.

Have to do something about that.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 1:30 AM

A package of gauze is torn open, but John doesn't bandage the wound just yet.

Now that the blood's cleaned off, the BITE MARKS on his hand look like a dental chart. He crosses over to Treat's upright body and slides his palm inside that fat half-open mouth. It's an exact impression.

Without a second thought, John collects the hammer off the floor, takes a firm grip on Treat's skull and forces his jaw open - exposing those incriminating blood-stained ivories.

JOHN SAND
You understand, don't you?

With John's help, Treat nods an effusive 'yes'. John draws the hammer back and swings...

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - 3:15 AM

A shovelful of dirt is dumped into a shallow pit.

At the bottom is a hammer, a screwdriver, a broken handled broom, some open packets of bandage, a bent ruler, five bloodied rags, both halves of an authentic Louisville Slugger and a dead body.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 5:35 AM

John stacks the MORPHINE BOXES under his chin and wedges the cabinet door shut as best he can. With a handkerchief he wipes his fingerprints from the counter, then turns and hobbles down the aisle. He stops.

Somebody is coming.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - 5:36 AM

A NEWSBOY - red-haired and freckled the way a newsboy ought to be - pulls a PAPER from his canvas satchel, tosses it in the general direction of Treat's kitchen and trots off.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - 5:37 AM

John sets down the boxes and ducks out the door.

While he's gone we have a chance to inspect the joint. Other than that mangled cage door, it's clean enough to make any mother proud.

Back inside comes John, DAILY NEWS tucked under his arm. He unfolds it and checks the Sunday morning headline: MAYOR VOWS TO CLEAN UP CITY!

JOHN SAND
(admiring the room)
You're welcome.

The paper goes on top of the morphine boxes, the boxes go under John's chin and John goes out the door.

The door latch CLICKS shut.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - 5:40 AM

On comes the light.

Once again the trash can is dumped over and that big brown Norway rat is tugging on his stale sticky dessert.

A shoe rockets in, ZINGS off the can, and it's back to the closet as fast as four scrawny pink legs can go.

John rights the trash can, tosses the spilled garbage back inside and collects his shoe.

His eyes get big as eight balls.

On the sole, wedged part way under the heel, there's a small folded sheet of paper tacked on with dried blood. Printed along the top edge:

THE OFFICE OF DR. SOLOMON J. WEISS

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

EXT. VACANT LOT - DAWN

Morning - tired, gray and hung-over - finally crawls in.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - DAWN

John is parked on the bed stuffing morphine ampules into one of his SOCKS. The toe-end is tied to another sock which is already filled, and then to another and another - a string of ten lumpy wool sausages.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

No doubt about who that is. Hurriedly, John sweeps the bedspread over the socks and goes to the door.

RAT KILLER

Wow! What does the other guy look like?

The question throws John for a loop, but it shouldn't. Not after the going-over he got with that baseball bat.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)
 Don't tell me - the rat did it!

Already, he's inside the room and his tool bag has been deposited in the usual spot.

JOHN SAND
 That's the trouble with you exterminators, you've got all the best answers.

Poison tin in hand, Rat Killer makes for the closet.

RAT KILLER (O.S.)
 It's insight. Killin' things gives you insight.

JOHN SAND
 Into rats or people?

RAT KILLER (O.S.)
 Rats and people are more alike than people think. Take our friend in here. Tonight, he's gonna have the best Sunday dinner he's ever had - the very best...

(O.S.) Poison oats PATTERN onto the closet floor.

RAT KILLER (O.S.)(CONT'D)
 ... and it never enters his brain that he'll be dead in an hour. And an hour later - courtesy of Brand X - he is dead. And an hour after that you're dumpin' his body in the trash and the only thing that says he was ever here in the first place is a hole in your closet. Yep, just a plain ordinary rat hole.

He's back out again, fingers busily restringing the rubber band that keeps the tin sealed up.

RAT KILLER (CONT'D)
 Now I ask you, what use is a rat hole to anyone except another rat?

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S closet - MORNING

What use is a rat hole? For one thing, it makes a swell hiding place.

So those morphine sock sausages are getting fed into the hole. And they fit perfect.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

With the help of the closet door handle, John babies himself up.

(O.S.) ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF... ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF...

That much barking can't be good. John had better find out what's up.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

Jackie the terrier is digging in the yard and there's no need to tell you where.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

However much John is hurting, he sprints out the door at light speed.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - MORNING

All that can be seen of Jackie is a wagging tail and fifteen feet of cheap rope snaking out between his hind legs. The rest is burrowed under the junk pile throwing out dirt faster than a hungry dog digging up a fresh bone.

The instant John arrives he latches onto the rope and starts reeling Jackie in. Before John can get hold of him, Jackie gives the rope the slip and bolts through the fence.

Seeing as he's alone, John scuffs the dirt back in the hole, tamps it down with his heel and turns for home.

He manages about ten steps.

ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF... ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF

Jackie's back again all right. So John stomps over and pulls him out by the ear.

ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF...

Probably, John should beat the kibble out of him - but look at that face.

COCKROACH (o.s)
Jackie! Jackie!

ARF, ARF, AR-- The dog's mouth is cuffed shut.

JOHN SAND
(whispering)
Would you pipe down.

COCKROACH (O.S.)
Jackie! Jackie!

John will have to act fast. From around his neck, he slips off his brother's TIE and makes for the side of the Imperial.

COCKROACH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Jackie, where are ya?

On the fly, John loops the necktie around Jackie's snout and cinches it up tight.

JOHN SAND
(sotto voce)
That oughta hold ya.

To John's right is the Imperial's COAL CHUTE. Jackie is pitched inside and the chute door is pushed shut.

At that same moment, Cockroach rounds the corner.

COCKROACH
Hey Jackie, ya in here, buddy?

It's hard to recognize the kid at first - he's all done up in his Sunday best. Immediately, he finds the length of rope lying in the yard.

COCKROACH (CONT'D)
Jackie, Jackie... Oh God...

Two at a time he vaults up the steps and starts hammering Treat's kitchen door with his fists.

COCKROACH (CONT'D)
Whaddya done with him! Whaddya done!

Of course no one answers, so the kid scrambles back down the stairs, over to the junk pile and fishes out a 2x4 to use as a battering ram. Before he can bash Treat's door down, John catches the 2x4 on the back swing.

JOHN SAND

Whoa... easy does it, soldier!

COCKROACH

Ya don't understand, he's got my dog. He's got Jackie!

Cockroach mounts another charge, but John hooks him by the shirt collar.

COCKROACH (CONT'D)

Lemme go, don't ya see, I gotta get him back before somethin' bad happens.

JOHN SAND

(doing a little alibi-ing)
Well, you're not gonna find him in there. Treat cut out a half hour ago.

COCKROACH

Did he have Jackie?

JOHN SAND

Listen kid, ya gotta stop thinkin' about it. You're not gonna get your dog back.

COCKROACH

Never?

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Not right away anyhow. I mean, we both know what kinda guy Treat is.

The boy's eyes drop in resignation, and fall on Jackie's leather collar - the collar that Treat sliced off the other day. He picks it up and squeezes it tight.

COCKROACH

I just don't understand. We went to church - my mom and me - like you're supposed to, and we both said a prayer to my dad on accounta he's with God.

(MORE)

COCKROACH (CONT'D)

And I asked him to make sure - to make completely sure - that nuthin' bad would happen - that I'd never steal again or nuthin' if only he'd look after Jackie... and I promised him... I promised him...

JOHN SAND

And it didn't do any good, did it?

Cockroach shakes his head.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

It never does. Believe me, kid , I used to fall for all those lines myself, till I wised up.

COCKROACH

What am I supposed to do now?

John wraps a fatherly arm around the boy's shoulder.

JOHN SAND

Only one thing to do: GET EVEN!

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

At the window John is taking in the view, most especially a certain spot at the far end of the vacant lot about three feet under the dirt.

JOHN SAND

One other thing. This morning, what I said about seeing Treat - I was lying. He's dead, murdered - stabbed a dozen times with a screwdriver and buried down there with the rest of the garbage. I oughta know - I did it. And I sure never thought you'd be the one to catch me.

ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF.

Yep, Jackie the terrier is acting as John's confessor.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
 Anyway, until we can find a safer
 resting place for our friend out
 there, you and I are going to be
 roommates, and that means we gotta
 do something about your name
 because I hate the name Jackie.

ARF, ARF.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
 You too, huh? It's what my father
 used to call me. And now my baby
 brother's joined in. 'Sit down,
 Jackie.' 'You're looking swell,
 Jackie.' 'Jackie, crawl over here
 and lick my foot!' Like I was a dog
 or something!

RRRRRR...

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
 Sorry.

John plunks down in his chair.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
 They're all trying to put the
 screws to me, aren't they? My
 father, my brother, Treat...

Jackie tilts his eyes toward Heaven.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
 Yeah, maybe Him too. Whaddya think,
 champ? Ya think He's got a score to
 settle with me?

Jackie answers as only he can - by peeing all over the rug.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - DAY

The front page of the Daily News is spread out on the floor
 and Jackie is set down in the middle of it.

JOHN SAND
 There. Now you can go all you want.

But Jackie has no idea why he's standing on a newspaper.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Come on buddy, give. Look, it's
Roosevelt - he's a dog lover.

With a quick flick, Jackie sends Roosevelt into the corner.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Okay, let's try sports.

A fresh sheet is put down, but Jackie pushes that away too.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Not a sports fan either, eh? How
about the funny pages.

Gone as quickly as the others.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
You wanna read the classifieds?

Definitely not.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Look champ, all we got left here is
the society page.

The last section is unfolded and laid flat. Immediately,
Jackie scampers on and starts looking it over. He seems
genuinely interested.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Great. I've got a dog who's a
friggin' snob.

Now, as if possessed by some sort of infinite inner calm,
Jackie squats and relieves himself.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
That's more like it.

His business finished, the dog is scooted aside so John can
dispose of the wetted pages.

Is he in for a surprise.

Where the paper is stained, there's a photo of a middle-aged
man - stiff, stone-faced and over-dressed for anything short
of Louis XIV's coronation. Below him is a caption:

THE HONOREE OF LAST NIGHT'S GALA - MR. HENRY J. SAND

John sweeps up Jackie and plasters him with a big wet kiss.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Behold, I send my Prophet, and he
shall be called John - John, The
Baptist.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - NIGHT

Rain. A drop or two at first, but before you know it, it's turned the vacant lot into an Olympic-sized mud puddle.

Three stories above this mess, at John's unlit window, is a dim four legged silhouette. You can't see it very well, but boy can you hear it.

AWOOOOO...

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

John's in bed, only he's not sleeping. Nobody could sleep with all this noise, maybe not even Treat.

AWOOOOO...

Enough already! John springs up and arms himself with his trusty 12D brown leather shoe grenade.

AWOOOOO...

Much as he'd love to cut loose with a bean ball, even he can't look at that floppy-eared little face and not be reminded of vanilla ice cream and puffy clouds and running through sprinklers on hot July days.

He drops the shoe.

JOHN SAND
At least learn another tune.

AWOOOOO...

He gathers up his trousers and, despite the darkness, manages to hop and stab into them on his way to the window.

AWOOOOO...

John replaces Jackie in the chair and sets the dog in his lap.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Do you have any idea what time it
is?

AWOOOOO...

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
I didn't think so.

Out comes the pocket watch.

AWW-- And instantly Jackie stops yowling. Could it really be
that easy to shut him up?

John dips the time piece back in his pocket. AWOOOOO...

He pulls it back out. Silence.

Back in. AWOOOOO...

Back out. Silence again.

The ticker is put to Jackie's ear and the dog nearly faints
with ecstasy.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Well, whaddya know.

John flips the watch around so he can show Jackie the
inscription.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
See that. That's you, J-O-H-N.
It's my name too. I got this for my
sixteenth birthday - the first and
last time my father ever called me
John.

Slowly, John lowers the watch onto the floor via its braided
gold chain. Jackie hops after it, does four or five clockwise
circles and curls up beside his new found buddy.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
It's yours now. Bimetallic balance,
helical hairspring and all.

But Jackie doesn't hear, he's already in slumberland. So John
has a yawn and an arm stretch and an eye rub and gives the
outside a quick squint.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

Nothing other than rain. Wait a second...

Someone is down there, clinging to the shadows of the Filling Station.

JOHN SAND (O.S.)

So that's what you were howling at.

One thing for sure, he's no copper, not with that BLACK DERBY HAT he's sporting. On the other hand, he isn't doing anything, which is damn peculiar on a night like tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

JOHN SAND

Whaddya think, champ? Should we keep an eye on this character?

Easier said than done. John stiffens his back and pops open his eyelids as far as they'll go.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

The Black Derby is just standing and waiting and getting wet.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

That's not enough to keep John alert. His head rocks forward to his chest, then bobs up again. Then sinks.

Going, going...

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

EXT. TREAT'S UPSTAIRS LANDING - MORNING

A BOTTLE OF MILK.

It's sunup and the bottle is being delivered by that too cheerful milkman. The MORNING PAPER is already waiting there.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

John snorts himself awake and checks downstairs.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

The Black Derby is gone and there's no sign of any monkey business around the junk pile. There's only mud and fresh puddles of water and the Good Milk Fairy trying to get back to the street without messing up his spotless white uniform.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

After he unties the knots, John leans over to collect his watch. Only Jackie is still curled around it fast asleep. So instead, John cocks his head to read the dial: 8:04 AM.

John's eyes rabbit back to the window.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S UPSTAIRS LANDING (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

The quart of milk and the newspaper are on the door stoop.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

It has occurred to John that by 8:04 AM, they shouldn't be.

JOHN SAND

Guess I'll have to keep Treat's
schedule for him, won't I?

He makes for the exit, with a brief detour to grab his overcoat from the closet.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - MORNING

John starts to round the corner, then quickly tucks himself back against the wall. Someone - a pint-sized someone - is already upstairs at Treat's kitchen door.

It's the Cockroach and from the looks of things he's up to no good - although just what exactly is anybody's guess - he's got his back turned.

In any case, John doesn't have a chance to find out.

From the other end of the alley comes a LOUD HOLLOW CLANG - that clang that only empty garbage cans make.

CUT TO:

EXT. TROYER AVENUE (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

Sure enough, TWO GARBAGEMEN are collecting the trash and making a damn noisy job of it.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - MORNING

All that CLANGING has spooked the Cockroach but good. He vaults the upstairs handrail - accidentally kicking over the MILK BOTTLE in the process - and makes a crippling one point landing on his right ankle.

 COCKROACH
 (in agony)
 JEEPERS!

As best he can, he hippity-hops away on his one good foot.

All he leaves behind are some muddy footprints, the newspaper, that kicked-over milk bottle and a slightly bewildered John.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S UPSTAIRS LANDING - MORNING

Thanks to Cockroach, there's a big MUDDY SNEAKER MARK across the side of the MILK BOTTLE. John scrapes off the worst of it before he slips the bottle into his overcoat pocket. The newspaper gets shoved in with it.

What John should do now is get out of there and fast, only he doesn't. A certain incriminating EMPTY MILK GLASS is winking at him through Treat's bedroom window.

So John goes in after it - with the help of TREAT'S KEYS - by way of the kitchen door. En route he finds two more items, namely the MORPHINE AMPULE and the syringe that were left on the counter.

But first things first.

He collects the empty glass off the bedside nightstand and takes it back to the kitchen for a quick rinse job under the faucet. Once that's done, he goes after that other piece of evidence - the DOPED-UP MILK.

He pops the refrigerator door open, grabs up that other MILK BOTTLE and, no shock to us, has the damn thing nearly squirt out of his hand.

His fingertips, just like Treat's, are slick with GREASE. So is the refrigerator door handle. And right beside the refrigerator is that open can of Crisco with John's own claw marks still visible in the lard.

Over he goes to the trash can and ferrets a hand into the garbage and comes out with the BROKEN-OFF NECK of a milk bottle.

For John, it has all finally added together and turned into one monstrous practical joke that he's played on himself.

And all he can do is laugh.

Very quickly though the laughter dies away and his attention shifts out the kitchen window.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV FROM TREAT'S KITCHEN) - MORNING

Mr. Debonair himself, the Swell, is waltzing up the alley, past the two garbagemen and straight for the drugstore.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. TREAT'S KITCHEN - MORNING

John ducks down, crawls over to the counter and snags the AMPULE OF MORPHINE.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - MORNING

Gray-gloved knuckles are tapping on the drugstore door. And tapping. And tapping. Obviously, Swells aren't accustomed to waiting, especially in dumps like this. Also, this one probably needs a fix real bad.

Suddenly, behind his back, there's a loud CRASH - shattering glass by the sound of it - and the Swell nearly jumps out of his Italian loafers.

Ever the gentleman, he smartens up his jacket and straightens his tie before stepping over to the junk pile to investigate.

Sure enough, the area is littered with shards of glass - the remnants of a broken milk bottle.

The Swell isn't positive what to make of this, but he's not waiting around to find out. He turns to leave... And runs smack into John.

They hold a brief and very uncomfortable staring contest. And then, into the satin lining of the Swell's upturned fedora, John tosses the ampule of morphine.

JOHN SAND

Shall we talk?

CUT TO:

EXT. TROYER AVENUE - MORNING

The amber liquid is admired against the cold blue autumn sunlight.

THE SWELL

Splendid color, isn't it.

JOHN SAND

Ravishing. Really brings out your eyes.

THE SWELL

And you have how many of these?

JOHN SAND

A hundred and forty four, not counting...

THE SWELL

(playing catch with the ampule)

Not counting my free sample.

JOHN SAND

Sure. The price is five hundred.

THE SWELL

A bargain. Shall we say tomorrow after din-din, around elevenish.

JOHN SAND

What's wrong with saying tonight-night?

THE SWELL

Tonight, I'm having a little soiree, a sort of open house and... unless of course you'd like to stop by and...

JOHN SAND

Tomorrow at eleven'll be fine.

THE SWELL

It's just off Sutton Drive. Thirty two rooms of incomparable Gothic splendor at the end of the cul-de-sac.

JOHN SAND

I know the place.

THE SWELL

Do you?

JOHN SAND

I used to live in the neighborhood.

The Swell turns a more critical eye on John.

THE SWELL

Of course. Then you would be...

JOHN SAND

No, I wouldn't. Anything else?

THE SWELL

Be an angel food cake and come through the back, by the tennis court.

JOHN SAND

Sure. Anything else?

THE SWELL

Don't forget to wipe your feet.

A tip of the hat and the Swell is on his way.

John is on his way too. But the moment he turns for home, somebody nearly runs him over - **SOMEBODY IN A BIG HURRY.**

Up ahead, twenty or thirty LOCALS are ringing in a spot alongside the Imperial. At the center of the circle are the two garbagemen.

As bad as this seems, John moves closer.

Now another somebody - in an even BIGGER HURRY - peels off from the crowd and heads in John's direction.

JOHN SAND

What gives, skipper? You look like you seen a dead body or something.

BIGGER HURRY

Never seen a deader one.

Not exactly the answer John was hoping for.

BIGGER HURRY (CONT'D)

(as he sprints off)

Hey fellas, come quick, ya gotta see this!

Making a break for it is out of the question, not with all these gawkers around. So John inches forward, which isn't easy with this seven ton hunk of concrete sitting in his stomach.

At the edge of the crowd he stops, takes a deep breath and leans forward...

COP (O.S.)

Awright, let's get a little less intimate here...

Everyone backs up a half step, the COP muscles his way in and John gets to see what all the hoopla is about.

Stuffed in a trash can is a skinny corpse in a rescue mission brown suit that's painted all over with black blood.

COP (CONT'D)

Cute. Who found dis?

One of the garbagemen, the GROUCHY one, speaks up.

GROUCHY

Go on, tell him.

His GRUMBLING partner answers.

GRUMBLING

How should I know what to tell him, you found the guy.

GROUCHY

I know I found him. He wants to know what you know about my findin' him.

GRUMBLING
Is that really what ya wanna know?

COP
Just forget it.

The cop turns to the crowd.

COP (CONT'D)
(pointing at the body)
Come on, break it up. This guy
ain't gonna do an encore.

As folks stray off, John notices someone in the crowd. He doesn't catch the face, only the Black Derby Hat.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

JOHN SAND (O.S.)
Now what's he up to?

'He' is the Black Derby and what he's up to is absolutely nothing, unless leaning against a wall counts as something.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

Moments like these are why cigarettes were invented.

John lights up, tips his chair back and props his feet on the window sill. Jackie is beside him, and believe me if he could smoke he would.

JOHN SAND
(to the Black Derby)
Do something, would ya?

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

Black Derby must've been listening because he's on the move straight for the drugstore.

From his jacket he pulls two short sections of iron pipe and fits them one into the other. His shoulder pushes in on the door and the two-piece iron jimmy is wedged down the crack in the door jamb. Three seconds later, he's in. A real pro.

JOHN SAND (O.S.)

And he seemed like such a nice
young man.

A light snicks on, a FLASHLIGHT probably, and the beam starts pouring over the store's insides - left to right, top to bottom, front to back. Then, for no reason, it clicks off and the Black Derby ducks behind the counter.

Another flashlight beam starts sweeping through the room, only this one is coming from outside, from the front. Now the door knob is RATTLING - must be that Beat Pounder that came by the other night.

And then everything goes quiet.

Black Derby rises slow and easy. He's keeping his flashlight off and his eyes glued to the front of the store.

JOHN SAND (O.S.) (CONT'D)

What's this?

Making his way along the back of the drugstore is the cop. He's got no idea there's a burglar inside, which is just fine because the burglar has no idea there's a cop behind him. He strolls right past the window, past the door and heads straight for the junk pile.

Directly in front of a trash can he stops, sweeps back his topcoat, unzips his fly and starts watering Treat's grave.

JOHN SAND (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If he only knew.

Convinced now that the coast is clear, Black Derby turns for the exit.

Out the door he comes, completely unaware of the big fat cop with his back turned and his pants undone and his bladder working harder than a fire pump.

When the door latch CLICKS shut, the Beat Pounder cocks half an eye over his shoulder.

Beat pounder

Jesus, Treat, you almost scared the
piss outta... Who the hell?!!

The cop tries to spin and draw Gary Cooper-style. Unfortunately, the safety strap on his holster is still buckled, so in pulling his gun out he also tears his own pants off.

Black Derby takes the offensive. With a single punch he doubles the cop in half, then reaches across his back and pulls his heavy blue topcoat over his head.

Now, Black Derby can really give this guy an overhaul. Hooks, crosses, uppercuts - all to the face.

The cop is using one hand to keep his pants from dropping to his ankles, while the other is busy freeing the .38 special that's all balled up inside his sleeve.

KA-BOOM!

A .38 caliber slug rips into the burglar's gut, blows out his back and burrows itself into the drugstore wall.

The cop manages to get the coat off his head - and it's a mess under there! From his eyes he mops away enough blood to find Black Derby who is propped in the drugstore doorway, clawing at the hole in his stomach.

BEAT POUNDER (CONT'D)
(aiming his .38)
Dirty stinkin' mother...

The gun's report drowns out the rest of the insult.

Five sharp CRACKS, five incandescent white flashes and Black Derby drops face first into the mud, deader than a bag of Portland cement.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

John looks at Jackie and Jackie looks at John and neither one of them can believe what they've just seen.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

They're all here: shutter bugs, press bloodhounds, uniformed officers, ambulance chasers, night owls, sidewalk loafers, stray cats and the just curious.

And what a show they're getting! Supposedly, The Beat Cop is reenacting tonight's events, only in this version he's fighting off a small army of attackers. A sort of Custer's Last Stand - and this time Custer wins.

Meanwhile, a little man in a DETECTIVE brown trench coat has wandered unnoticed from the drugstore.

He couldn't care less about the show. With his detective brown oxfords, he steps off the back landing and slops into the mud around Black Derby's corpse.

It's laying belly down exactly as it was a few hours ago, with one minor change. The outstretched left hand now contains a cheap SMALL CALIBER AUTOMATIC.

The Detective circles the body, stabbing at it with his MALACCA CANE as if it's some kind of man-sized underdone baked potato. Nothing seems to interest him much until he reaches that gun.

He spears the trigger guard, flicks his cane up and let's the gun slide down into his hand. He ejects the clip - it's loaded - snaps it back, has a whiff of the barrel, and lets the gun drop back into the mud.

His curiosity leads him over to the bullet riddled doorway. With his finger he cleans out one of the slug holes, then jams in the tip of his cane and lets it hang free so it can act as a pointer.

It points directly at the junk pile.

The Detective saunters over. Straightaway, he finds a tell-tale yellow puddle beneath one of the garbage cans - and his whole body begins to convulse with laughter.

Behind him, the Beat Pounder is playing out the climactic gun battle between himself and the Black Derby, using his index finger as his police .38.

He strikes a final heroic pose, the PHOTO-BOYS aim their cameras...

...and their FLASH BULBS start popping.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

ARF! ARF! ARF! ARF!

As each FLASH blinks through the window, Jackie gives an accompanying BARK. Hurriedly, John claps his hand over the dog's mouth.

JOHN SAND
Always tryin' to get my neck
stretched, aren't you? Come on.

John hustles him to the closet, pulls out his pocket watch, drops it into the middle of the closet floor, tosses Jackie in after it and slams the door shut.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Safer for both of us.

John gets all of three steps.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Jesus!

He flings the door open and dives in.

JOHN SAND (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stupid sonuvabitch!

From inside the closet comes the THUD of a shoe tip and an ear-piercing YELP of pain.

Jackie executes a perfect triple back end-over with a full twist on his way into the room.

It takes the dog at least twenty seconds to untie himself. By then, John has come back out, his right hand piled high with OAT FLAKES.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Okay, all clear.

Gently, using his instep, John brushes the dog back into the closet.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
And try to keep it zipped in there.

Over to the nightstand he goes to get the BOX OF SLEEPING PILLS. He pulls the box open with his teeth and empties the pills into the WATER GLASS that he keeps at his bedside. Carefully, he sifts the oats into the box and shuts the lid.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

A visitor at this hour can't be a good thing. John runs to the window.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

Sure enough, the Detective is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

John's eyes turn back to the room and give the place the quick up and down.

Nothing incriminating, except maybe that mud-scuffed MILK BOTTLE from Treat's door, and that's easily taken care of.

He stashes the bottle in the trash can right beside what's left of the lollipop and then crosses back to the hallway door so he can open up.

DETECTIVE
(flashing his badge)
Sorry to bother you, but your light was on and I thought... Something wrong?

Not wrong exactly, just something John hadn't noticed from up here - the Detective is Asian.

JOHN SAND
Nothing... come on in.

DETECTIVE
Thanks, this is swell of you.

JOHN SAND
If you want in, you're gonna come in, whether I want you to or not.

DETECTIVE
Always nice to meet a guy who knows the score.

Two steps into the room and already the Detective is casing the joint. He makes for the window and has a peek outside.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Some night, huh? Mind if I park it?

JOHN SAND
Help yourself.

The Detective swivels the bentwood chair off its usual spot, and reveals four deep scars in the floor - scars made from those endless hours in front of that window.

Self-consciously, John shoves his own bite-scarred hand into his pocket.

DETECTIVE
(flopping into the chair)
Whew! That's easier.

JOHN SAND
Tired?

DETECTIVE
Nah, bored mostly.

JOHN SAND
That is a dead body down there,
isn't it?

DETECTIVE
Yeah, DOA. Stiffs are always
boring. Suspects on the other hand,
now they're interesting. That's why
I came up here, to find myself a
suspect. You read all these books?

His attention has in fact shifted to the STACK OF BOOKS
alongside the chair.

JOHN SAND
Most. What am I suspected of?

DETECTIVE
(reading from the book
spines)
Coleridge, Heine, Alphonse Daudet,
Wilkie Collins... The Holy Bible?

JOHN SAND
It's a real page turner.

DETECTIVE
No kiddin'. Me, I love a good
story.

JOHN SAND
You're missing a pretty good one by
being up here, aren't you?

DETECTIVE
Strictly routine. A member of the
city's finest locked in mortal
combat with four desperate felons.

JOHN SAND
Only four? Sounds good to me.

DETECTIVE

Sure, it's got everything except surprise. To be great a story's gotta have a surprise. Take me, for instance. The minute I walked in here, you're thinkin', how did a Chinaman, a slant-eye make detective? Come on now, admit it.

JOHN SAND

Okay, ya got me.

DETECTIVE

Well, the truth is, I'm not Chinese at all. Here, look...

The Detective pulls out his WALLET and flashes John his ID.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

That's me, Axel Gundersen, Jr. Yep, a momma and a poppa born and raised in Oslo - Norwegians, both of 'em.

He snaps his wallet back.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Surprised, aren't you?

JOHN SAND

I gotta admit.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Yes sir, surprise is everything. Why, I'll bet even you've got a surprise or two in ya.

JOHN SAND

As for instance?

DETECTIVE

How many times have you been in the jug anyway?

JOHN SAND

Why grandma, what a big nose you have.

DETECTIVE

How many? Four, five, ten?

JOHN SAND

Five. Four stretches in county and one upstate.

DETECTIVE

Buster and screw man, right? Nah, too messy. You're the artistic type. Strictly five finger stuff, I'll bet.

JOHN SAND

My last hitch was for boosting a diamond broach at my niece's coming out party. Fifteen square cut blue white stones in a platinum setting shaped like a ladybug.

DETECTIVE

Sounds charming.

JOHN SAND

The stones were paste.

DETECTIVE

State college over one phony broach?

JOHN SAND

Five years. The judge was an old family friend.

The Detective busts out laughing.

DETECTIVE

You see what I mean - surprise!

He collects himself out of the chair and heads for the door.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Tell you what, you get a good night's sleep and tomorrow maybe you'll have another great story for me.

JOHN SAND

I don't suppose you'd tell me what you think I've done?

DETECTIVE

How should I know, it's your story.

The Detective pulls the door shut as he leaves.

John goes into the closet, and returns with a dog and a gold watch and a very unhappy look.

JOHN SAND
(stroking Jackie's coat)
Trouble.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - MORNING

BIG BLACK CHUNKS OF COAL - hundreds of them - tumble down the coal chute.

CLUNKITY - CLUNKITY - CLUNKITY...

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

(O.S.) CLUNKITY - CLUNKITY - CLUNK!

John's crusted-over eyelids crack apart.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

A TRUCK, black all over with coal dust, is making the delivery. Other than that, the place is deserted.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - MORNING

John leans to starboard to catch the time. His watch is there on the floor but Jackie isn't.

JOHN SAND
Where are ya, champ?

No answer. John unglues his sweat sticky pants from the seat of his chair and slouches over to the closet. It's empty.

As he turns back around his left foot brushes something across the floor - the cardboard PILLBOX. It's perforated with little doggie bite marks and one end is nearly chewed off. Reluctantly, he picks it up.

A single white OAT FLAKE dribbles out and floats feather soft onto the tip of his shoe.

And then John sees Jackie.

Funny how different a thing can look once it's dead. Almost like a stuffed toy that got tossed under the bed because some kid got tired of playing with it.

John's throat does its best to swallow.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - MORNING

A TERRIER-SHAPED PARCEL, lovingly wrapped in the Society Page of the Daily News, is set on the furnace fire.

John intakes a breath, enough for a long speech... But what is there to say?

JOHN SAND

So long, champ.

The furnace door is hinged shut and John lets his chin drop to his chest. It's a solemn moment. Solemn and brief.

A familiar sounding SCREAM comes from the vacant lot.

Once again, with the help of those apple crates John gets up to the air vent at the top of the basement wall.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

It's the Cockroach again, only this time his opponent is Detective Gundersen.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - MORNING

John grunts his way off the boxes - he's still nursing that ankle - and makes for the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - MORNING

As John arrives, the Cockroach is just getting loose. Already, he's kicked Gundersen in the shin and is doing a sort of pretzel twist with his wrist. Gundersen lets go and the kid hops away - he's got ankle problems of his own - dives head first into the dirt and shinnies under the fence.

JOHN SAND

Hey kid!

DETECTIVE
 (rubbing his leg)
 No, let him go.

JOHN SAND
 What's got into him?

DETECTIVE
 You mostly.

John's eyebrows pop into that 'who me?' formation.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 Not that it matters much. The kid
 doesn't know anything worth
 knowing. Not about the murder,
 anyway.

JOHN SAND
 The shooting last night, you mean?

DETECTIVE
 No, I mean the murder. Treat's
 murder.

CUT TO:

INT. TREAT'S DRUGSTORE - MORNING

The conversation has moved inside.

DETECTIVE
 The first thing I noticed was the
 cabinet door.

JOHN SAND
 So the lock's busted.

DETECTIVE
 It's a mess. That guy last night
 was a pro, maybe the best cold
 prowler this town's got. This
 cabinet was boosted by a nickel-n-
 dimer, a coolie, a jerk. Besides
 that, it was empty and the morphine
 wasn't on the body.

JOHN SAND
 The morphine?

DETECTIVE
 Listen to you. St. John the
 Innocent.

JOHN SAND

Okay, okay. So someone stole the morphine before last night.

DETECTIVE

Not just someone. Someone who had the keys. Look...

Gundersen nudges the back door open and runs his malacca cane across the scratches on the door frame.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

One set of jimmy marks. That means the other guy had keys to get in.

JOHN SAND

So why didn't the other guy unlock the cabinet?

From his pants pocket, Gundersen fishes out the BROKEN END OF A KEY.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Like you said, an amateur, a jerk... Of course Treat could've broke the key himself, grabbed his stash and taken off.

DETECTIVE

He could've. That's why I had a look around his apartment.

JOHN SAND

And you found something I guess, or you wouldn't be telling me this.

DETECTIVE

Not something. Everything! His watch, his wallet, his pants, his shoes and socks, his overcoat... Everything except...

JOHN SAND

Everything except his keys.

DETECTIVE

Yeah, and his bathrobe.

JOHN SAND

So he took off in a big hurry.

DETECTIVE

I also found five thousand dollars in cash. I don't think anyone is in that big a hurry.

JOHN SAND

That's a lot of hurry all right.

DETECTIVE

Fifty freshly minted C-notes stashed in the false bottom of a can of Crisco.

JOHN SAND

Did you say, 'Can of Crisco?'

DETECTIVE

Uh-huh.

JOHN SAND

Just how did you figure that one?

DETECTIVE

Shortening is something you cook with. Treat wasn't the cooking type.

JOHN SAND

Damned clever, you Norwegians. So then somebody croaked him in bed, took his keys, robbed the drugstore and flushed his body down the toilet.

DETECTIVE

No, he was killed here, in this room. On the spot where we're standing right now.

And they are standing on the spot. And that shakes John to the bottom of his bvd's.

JOHN SAND

You know this for a fact or are we taking it on faith.

DETECTIVE

Faith doesn't solve murders, curiosity does. Look at this joint, it's cleaner than my mother's house.

JOHN SAND

Good for your mother. Where does
the curiosity part come in?

DETECTIVE

Why does someone make a storeroom
cleaner than the store?

JOHN SAND

Unless that someone is getting rid
of evidence, you mean.

DETECTIVE

And if a place has been cleaned up,
where do you look for clues?

In the corner, a WET MOP is resting innocently in an empty
bucket. Gundersen pulls it out and begins to fuss with the
mop strings.

JOHN SAND

You found Treat's body in the mop?

DETECTIVE

Well, almost.

From the cargo pouch of his trench coat comes a clean white
linen handkerchief. Gundersen lays it out in the middle of
his palm and unfolds it.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

When I find the rest of him, and I
will, I'll know who did it.

At the center of the handkerchief is a single BROKEN TOOTH.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT - NIGHT

A full moon is standing watch over Treat's grave.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - NIGHT

John squirts the last morphine ampule out of his sock and
drops it into his SUITCASE. He starts to close the case using
the two leather binding straps, but the second strap breaks
off in his hand. Try as he might, there's no way to re-attach
it. Luckily, he's got a substitute.

Slung over the end of the bed is his brother's NECKTIE. He unthreads it from the bedpost, slips it around the bag and cinches it up. All ready to go.

But John pauses - there's something about that necktie...

CUT TO:

EXT. SUTTON DRIVE - NIGHT

A full moon is standing watch over this place as well.

Only don't think for one second it's the same moon. This neighborhood gets its own special brand of moonlight - extra quiet and made of 14 karat gold.

It's shining down on a big wide cobblestone driveway that's guarded by a twelve foot high wrought iron gate and a pair of mammoth Canova Lions. Below one of the lions, carved a foot deep into the granite pedestal are two letters: J.B.

A TAXICAB pulls up in front of the driveway. John piles out the back door, suitcase first, and makes straight for the driver's window.

JOHN SAND
(groping for his change)
What's the damage?

HACK
Like I told ya, Mack, ya got the wrong address. Why, ya can't even get into a joint like this without a necktie.

JOHN SAND
I got a necktie. How much?

HACK
Twenty cents.

JOHN SAND
Here's a quarter, keep it.

HACK
Rockefeller.

The cabbie's vision shifts past John, up the driveway to a sign that's posted on the iron gate. 'NO TRESPASSING,' it says and it has a P.S. - 'VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED!'

HACK (CONT'D)

Listen, you seem like a nice guy, only maybe ya had some bad breaks and, well, I kinda get the feelin' you're gonna do somethin' tonight, somethin' we'll both feel bad about tomorrow. So whaddya say ya jump in and I'll run ya back to town - no charge.

JOHN SAND

What would you say if I told you I grew up in this house, that I got homesick tonight and that I wanted one last look before I left town forever.

HACK

Have it your way, Mack. It's no skin off my nose if ya burn in Hell.

JOHN SAND

Man of conscience, eh?

HACK

Getting some religion was my mother's dying wish. Personally, I think this good deed stuff is a lotta horseradish.

The cabbie rams it into gear and bullets away from the curb. After the exhaust clears, John ambles up to the gate and presses his face against the cold iron bars.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND ESTATE (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

The house isn't so much. Smaller than Yankee Stadium and fewer rooms than the Waldorf Astoria.

In a picture window on the bottom floor you can make out John's brother relaxing in an oversown easy chair. He's got a good book and a warm brandy and a fire in the fireplace and an Irish setter asleep at his feet. The whole deal.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUTTON DRIVE - NIGHT

With brotherly care, John undoes the necktie from around the suitcase.

Beside him, on the gate post, is a metal CALLBOX with a buzzer inside. John reaches over and extends his index finger. Before he pushes the button he takes one more look.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND ESTATE (JOHN'S POV) - NIGHT

Over the mantel that's above the fireplace that's above the dog that's snoozing on the Persian rug - above everything else in the room - is a big ugly PORTRAIT of John's father.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUTTON DRIVE - NIGHT

John's finger wilts back into his hand.

He picks up the suitcase, turns his back on his old home and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCKINGHAM DRIVE - NIGHT

A dense juniper hedge lines the roadside.

Between two of the bushes John makes himself an opening, tucks the suitcase into his chest and ducks in.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SWELL'S MANSION - NIGHT

He emerges on the other side. And what an other side it is.

Gothic splendor is one thing, but this place looks as if Cinderella's Castle was gang raped by a miniature golf course.

John crosses the spearmint green lawn to the candy-striped slate patio and finally to the back door. It's a Tudor-arched job with a cast iron squirrel for a door knocker.

He lifts the squirrel's tail and THONKS it against the door plate. A moment later, the porch lamp, which is about the only light source out here, is turned off. Then the door cracks open. Whoever is in there, it isn't the Swell. This guy is younger and tubbier and a whole lot SHORTER. Much else, you just can't see.

SHORTY

You got the stuff?

JOHN SAND
Yeah, I got it.

John flashes the bag.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Is Gepetto around or are you the
business end of this toy shop?

SHORTY
Very funny, asshole. Now gimme the
case and get lost.

Shorty's little puppet hand stretches for the suitcase handle
but John spanks it away.

JOHN SAND
Not so fast, Pinocchio.

SHORTY
I got your dough.

A PLAIN WHITE ENVELOPE is passed outside. To John, this seems
a bit too easy to be on the level. He clamps the suitcase
between his legs so he can inspect the envelope's contents.

SHORTY (CONT'D)
Count it at home.

Shorty tries for the bag again, but John keeps it vised
between his legs.

JOHN SAND
You've got to learn patience,
Woody, or you'll never become a
real boy.

John slits the envelope with his finger. There's a thick wad
of bills inside, but before he can count them the barrel of a
.45 AUTOMATIC is poked into his crotch.

SHORTY
I said: Count it at home!

John's thigh muscles relax and the case falls to the ground.
With his free hand Shorty hooks the case and drags it into
the house, all the while keeping John covered.

The door is bolted from the inside.

John double-times it over to the side of the house, to a
small lighted window, so he can see what's what in the
envelope.

There's a genuine ALEXANDER HAMILTON on top, but the rest of the stack is made from the CUT-UP PAGES of a book.

John stuffs the envelope into his pocket and swaps it for his brother's necktie. Tight as he can, he binds the tie around his knuckles and then, with a single straight punch, busts out a pane of leaded glass.

The hole is just big enough to get two fingers to the latch.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SWELL'S MANSION - 11:15 PM

It's black as a fairy tale forest.

John feels his way across the foyer to the main stairwell. Overhead, on the third floor, there's an open doorway with a light on.

Calmly, John slips off his shoes and starts up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SWELL'S MANSION (upstairs) - 11:16 PM

As John reaches the third floor landing, he flattens himself against the wall and slides commando-style to the edge of the doorway. From here, he can make out the suitcase splayed open on the bedroom carpet. An EMPTY MORPHINE AMPULE is next to it, and a SYRINGE, and next to that an L-shaped lump of black steel - the .45.

John untenses himself enough to step through the doorway.

Two eyes, pink and glazed-over and expressionless, are peering up from the floor.

SHORTY

(slurred)

You?

JOHN SAND

Surprise!

John scoops up the gun, which doesn't seem to bother Shorty one bit. He sits up and folds his stubby legs under himself in the lotus position. Beside his knee is a PAIR OF SCISSORS and an open book with a bunch of pages cut out.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

What'd you do with my money?

SHORTY

I already gave it to ya, remember?

John grabs his hair, peels his head back and raises the gun like a hammer.

JOHN SAND

This is gonna hurt!

SHORTY

(grinning stupidly)

I'll just close my eyes and make a wish.

But John can't do it - especially not to a guy sitting there like a smiling Buddha. He lowers the gun.

JOHN SAND

Where's the man of the house?

SHORTY

Won't get nuthin' outta him.

JOHN SAND

You wanna bet.

SHORTY

Next room. He's takin' a little nap.

John pushes Shorty backwards onto his elbows.

JOHN SAND

Thanks, Woody. I hope all your dreams come true.

Back out to the hallway and down to the next room. John is about to bust in, but first he chambers a round into the automatic.

He needn't have bothered.

As advertised the Swell is in bed, only he isn't sleeping. There's a pillow shoved over his face with a .45 caliber hole through the middle of it and enough dried blood to fill up a grown man's skull.

John sags against the door jamb and tries to decide what to do next.

Suddenly, the room is filled with a fresh SPRAY OF BLOOD!
John's blood.

Shorty has wedged the scissors deep into John's lower jaw. As John crumples to the floor Shorty gets on top of him, throwing fists and knees and elbows and generally using John's head for target practice. The pain is blinding but John manages to pry the scissors out of his mouth.

In the meantime, Shorty has gotten both hands around the barrel of the .45 and is corkscrewing it out of John's grip.

It's now or never. John rams his shoulder up, jack hammers Shorty off his feet, drives him backwards across the hallway and slams him full force into the guardrail. The impact rips Shorty loose, spills him over the top railing, into midair and then straight down thirty feet.

John droops himself over the railing and tries to make out what happened below.

Apparently, there was a contest between Shorty's head and the marble floor. The floor won.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SWELL'S MANSION - 2:45 AM

The .45 automatic is laced into Shorty's dead fingers.

John mops his handprints off the gun barrel with his shirttail, then slides back over to the stairs so he can put on his shoes.

Obviously, he's suffering plenty, but at least he's managed to clean up his face and get it bandaged.

With his shoes back on, John decides to add one final touch. He kneels beside the body, spreads open the dead man's pants pocket and stuffs in a key chain - TREAT'S KEY CHAIN.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCKINGHAM DRIVE - 3:00 AM

Emerging from the juniper hedge, John hitches up his collar against the pre-dawn cold, stumbles off down the street and vanishes into the lightless black nothing.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAWN

Yesterday's newspaper is blowing along the almost empty sidewalk.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL IMPERIAL - MORNING

As exhausted as he is, when John reaches the front stoop he doesn't head up to his room.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - MORNING

From his pocket John yanks out the PLAIN WHITE ENVELOPE.

The fire in the furnace is stoked and ready, but before the envelope gets cremated John removes the only real bill. Ten bucks is ten bucks.

The envelope hits the HOT COALS and ignites instantly.

That done, John scrunches his face into a ball so he can peel off the taped bandage. Underneath it, his jaw has turned a stunning shade of inflammation red.

Onto the fire goes the bandage. Its damp cotton pad fuses with the strips of tape, then blackens and curls and flakes into tiny embers that evaporate in a sort of spiral waltz up the flue.

With such an enchanting show, John hasn't noticed the CAR NOISES in the alley above him.

(O.S.) An engine turns off, car doors open and shut and two pairs of FOOTSTEPS move toward the front of the building.

Finally, John stops watching and starts listening... And hears the one voice he didn't want to.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

Are you the building superintendent
I spoke to?

JITTERY (O.S.)

Yeah, I'm the guy you threatened on
the phone so maybe we could just
get this over with.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

After you.

(O.S.) HARD SOLED SHOES make their way down the concrete steps, down to the basement door, down to John.

And that leaves him only one option.

CUT TO:

INT. STORAGE BIN - MORNING

John lays himself out and lets the lid drop.

It's damn crowded in here, but fortunately the sides of the bin are made from loosely spaced 1x8 planks so at least he won't have to breathe on the installment plan.

(O.S.) Door hinges let out a WAGNERIAN HIGH-C.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

This door ever locked?

JITTERY (O.S.)

If people wanna come down here they come down here. I mean, that's their own business and I don't think it's none a mine.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

Suppose you let me do the thinking.

JITTERY (O.S.)

Sure, sure.

John puts his eye to a KNOTHOLE in the side of the bin.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

Detective Gundersen has arrived downstairs. Next to him is a husky-type in navy blue pinstripe - must be his PARTNER. That means the JITTERY voice belongs to the guy with the chewed off fingernails and the used car salesman moustache.

JITTERY

(pointing at the furnace)

Well, there she is. Now, if you fellas don't need me for nuthin' else...

Gundersen slaps his cane across the mouth of the stairwell.

JITTERY (CONT'D)

Gimme a break, would ya. Like I said on the phone I don't know nuthin'.

He's beginning to circle, the way an eight year old boy does when he's waiting for an empty stall in the men's room.

JITTERY (CONT'D)

Sure, I work for Treat - that is I manage this building for him - but that ain't a crime, is it?

DETECTIVE

I don't know, is it?

JITTERY

Okay, so maybe Treat ain't straight up. All I know is he pays his bills and takes care of his friends. And he has the kinda friends a guy needs - important-type friends.

DETECTIVE

I know Treat has big important friends. I also know you're not one of them.

JITTERY

Sure, sure, I just meant that whatever else he did - and I ain't sayin' he did anything - but if he did, it ain't nuthin' to me and if somebody bumped him off that's nuthin' to me either.

Jittery's sweaty hand tries to push the cane aside, but Gundersen drills the tip into his sweaty trembling chest.

JITTERY (CONT'D)

Okay, so maybe I ain't seen the guy in a coupla days, only I don't think that makes him dead.

DETECTIVE

I thought we agreed I'd do the thinking.

JITTERY

Sure, sure. I just mean that if he is dead I had nuthin' to do with it.

Out of pity - and because this guy's heart might explode at any second - Gundersen lowers his cane to the floor.

JITTERY (CONT'D)
Hey, thanks buddy. If there's anything I can do to help...

DETECTIVE
You have a trash can we could use?

JITTERY
In the alley. I'll go get it, be glad to.

He blows through the door, up the steps and gone.

From under his arm, Gundersen's Partner draws out a CANVAS TARP and begins to unfold it.

PARTNER
Ya wanna gimme a hand?

CUT TO:

INT. STORAGE BIN - MORNING

While the detectives stretch out the tarp, John tries to make himself more comfortable, only he's got a slight problem.

A BIG BROWN RAT is scurrying across his shoe. Could even be the chow hound from upstairs, but who knows? Rats are pretty much the same. Anyway, before John can figure it out his attention is pulled back to the knothole.

By the sound of those GRUNTS, the trash can is on its way.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

Jittery wrestles a FORTY GALLON DRUM to the bottom of the steps. Exhausted, he tips the can onto its edge and rolls it over to Gundersen who is crouched beside the furnace. Gundersen's cane has been traded in for one of those small BLACK IRON SHOVELS and he's using it to scoop ASHES from the furnace trap.

Jittery lets the trash can fall back on its base.

JITTERY
Here ya go, fellas. Anything else?

DETECTIVE
We'll be in touch.

JITTERY
Sure, sure. Well, I hate to run.

But he does run and fast!

PARTNER
So what now?

Out of Gundersen's trench coat comes an ordinary kitchen FLOUR SIFTER. He underhands it to his partner.

PARTNER (CONT'D)
What am I supposed to do with this?

DETECTIVE
What do you think?

PARTNER
This is nuts. Why, for all you know the body's lying right over there in that damn storage bin.

He points at the bin and unknowingly straight at John.

CUT TO:

INT. STORAGE BIN - MORNING

John's eyeballs almost tap dance out of his head.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)
Only an idiot would hide something in a place that obvious. Besides, I checked there yesterday. Now stop bellyaching and get to work.

John mouths a silent thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

Finally Gundersen's partner gets to his knees and starts sifting through the ashes.

PARTNER
You don't really think you're gonna find him in all this?

DETECTIVE
Treat's gotta be somewhere.

CUT TO:

INT. STORAGE BIN - NOON

John and his furry brown companion are watching the matinee.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM (JOHN'S POV) - NOON

Nearly all the ash has been sifted. Next to the ash pile there must be three dozen charred objects: buttons, bottle tops, bits of metal and other things, mostly unidentifiable.

A tired Detective Gundersen climbs to his feet, arches his back and tries to walk some circulation into his legs.

Meanwhile, his partner is poking around in the bottom of his sifter.

PARTNER
Hey Axel, I think I got somethin'!

Whatever it is, it's black with soot and about the size of a FINGER BONE. Partner passes it over to Gundersen who examines it against the light.

PARTNER (CONT'D)
Hold on, there's some more.

Three more pieces are picked out of the bottom of the sifter.

PARTNER (CONT'D)
They look like bones, don't they?

Gundersen organizes them on his flattened palm: four evenly tapered, perfectly interlocked BONY KNUCKLES.

DETECTIVE
I think we just solved a murder.

PARTNER
What is it, a finger?

DETECTIVE
Nope. It's a tail.

CUT TO:

INT. STORAGE BIN - AFTERNOON

The time is 1:38.

John crams his gold watch back in his pants and settles in for the final stretch.

The rat, who probably doesn't care what time it is, crawls back into the wall.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The last pile of ash slides out of a DUST PAN and into the trash barrel.

Gundersen, all alone now, spanks the ashes off his hands, gives his suit the quick once-over, and replaces the dust pan on the basement wall.

Right beside it is our favorite calendar girl. Gundersen can't help but give her the eye.

DETECTIVE

I get the feeling you know more
than you're telling, baby.

As with John, Gundersen notices that extended finger with the blood red nail polish pointing across the room directly at the COAL SHOVEL.

He wanders over. Seems like any other shovel. Or does it? Along its metal edge, there's some DRIED DIRT. Not a lot, but enough to make Gundersen suspicious.

His eyes jump to the vent that faces out to the vacant lot.

PARTNER (O.S.)

Axel, Axel, come quick!

Gundersen's partner charges in.

PARTNER (CONT'D)

Come on, come quick!

DETECTIVE

What's up?

PARTNER

What's up? The case just busted
wide open is what's up!

(MORE)

PARTNER (CONT'D)

Some cleaning lady this morning - she found it all - the morphine, the keys, the murder weapon, two stiffs, the whole shebang!

DETECTIVE

And where was this?

PARTNER

Some pansy house in the Sunshine District. The guy who owns it is one of Treat's best customers. Captain wants us up there pronto.

But Gundersen's focus continues to shift between the shovel and the vacant lot outside.

PARTNER (CONT'D)

Well, come on. Whaddya waiting for?

DETECTIVE

Nothing that won't keep till tomorrow, I suppose. Let's go see what the story is.

Reluctantly, Gundersen sets the shovel back against the wall, and the two men clear out.

Now, John can set about resurrecting himself from his storage bin coffin.

It's a painful operation, but once he's out, he goes straight to the shovel. That dried dirt along its metal edge is looking pretty suspicious all right.

He crosses over to the apple crates, climbs up to the air vent and has a look outside.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - AFTERNOON

There sits Treat's grave - damp and cold and unquiet.

JOHN SAND (O.S.)

We'll have to do something about you, won't we. When it gets dark.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - MIDNIGHT

Well, it's certainly gotten dark down here. Also a lot less busy - only it's not going to stay that way for long.

From the outside, John yanks open the coal door, heaves a fat, muddy, dead-as-dead-gets CORPSE through the opening and dumps it down the chute.

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - 12:35 AM

Treat has been moved onto the concrete floor beside the ash-filled garbage can. Right beside that are the original graveyard relics: the screwdriver, the hammer, the broken bat. There are also some new items - a hacksaw, for instance, and a hatchet and some gizmo you'd prune a tree with. A very large tree.

John is stoking the furnace and has the perspiration to prove it. He mops about a quart off his brow before moving over to Treat's body.

His hand reaches for the dead man's bathrobe collar, but snaps back like a broken rubber band.

JOHN SAND

Ow! Son of a bitch!

BLOOD is streaming down his arm, and for good reason. The first joint of his fourth finger has been bitten off!

Out springs his attacker - sharp teeth, furry brown complexion, tiny pink hungry eyes.

John retaliates hard and fast with the shovel. Judging by the rubber toy SQUEAK he hasn't missed either.

He drops his weapon and pinches off the end of his finger to slow the bleeding as best he can.

And then John stops worrying whether he's bleeding or not.

RATS, dozens of them, are pouring out from under the bathrobe and swarming all over Treat's body.

Hastily, John rearms himself. Too late. One of them has scampered up his pant leg and buried his needle sharp teeth in John's ankle.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Goddamit!

John rips his assailant loose, chucks him to the floor and guillotines him with the blade edge of the shovel.

As fast as he can John keeps swinging, but he can't stem the tide. Reinforcements are coming from every direction - out from the crags in the walls, up through the cracks in the floor and down from the steam pipes overhead. All of them gnawing eagerly at John's neck and back and thighs.

In desperation, he hurtles his body against the white hot iron furnace door. That does it! Rats SIZZLE and SCREECH and flop to the ground.

Quickly, John re-opens the furnace, shovels up a load of HOT COALS and spews them across the floor.

There follows a hellish chorus of SCREAMS.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Run, you little bastards, run!

He dishes up a second helping.

As the rats scatter, John sets about taking his revenge. On everybody!

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Dead! Dead! Dead! Dead!

And with every declaration, the shovel smashes down!

CUT TO:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - 3:30 AM

John is nearly finished with the clean-up. John is nearly finished, period.

Into the furnace he dumps a stack of scorched rat pancakes, then lets his body sag against the shovel handle. He slips a Pall Mall from his shirt pocket and dangles it in his mouth, then gathers up enough energy to collect the last few things off the floor.

One at a time he feeds them into the fire - the hammer and then the screwdriver and then Treat's bathrobe and then the two halves of the broken bat. The only item remaining is Treat's left BEDROOM SLIPPER. John reaches it into the furnace just far enough to ignite its little leather tassel and uses that to light his cigarette.

JOHN SAND
Well, ashes to ashes as they say.

The slipper is chucked onto the burning coals and the iron door is CLANGED shut.

FADE OUT/FADE IN:

INT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - MORNING

A HUMAN SKULL, scarred and toothless and black from the fire, is set in the trash barrel and shoved deep under the ashes.

John unrolls his shirt sleeves, buttons his cuffs and retrieves the overcoat which has been hanging on the same hangar with the dust pan. He blows Miss November a final goodbye kiss and heads to the exit.

A blast of cold air sweeps down the stairwell.

GROUCHY (O.S.)
Down here, right?

John freezes.

GRUMBLING (O.S.)
How should I know, you talked to the guy.

They're coming. All John can do is duck behind the furnace.

GROUCHY (O.S.)
I know what he told me, I wanna know what I told you that he told me.

GRUMBLING (O.S.)
You told me that he told you that it'd be down here.

They've landed. John can't see anything, but we recognize them as the garbagemen who found Friend's body.

GROUCHY
(pointing at the trash barrel)
Right where I said he said it'd be.

GRUMBLING
Wish I'd said that.

Grumbling wheels a SMALL DOLLY over to the trash barrel. As for Grouchy, he's already fallen under the spell of the basement's resident Circe.

GROUCHY
Get a load of that dame!

Immediately, he's over to the wall to get better acquainted with Miss November. From here, John is plainly visible, or would be if Grouchy bothered to look, which he doesn't.

GROUCHY (CONT'D)
How come nobody never throws
nuthin' like her away, huh?

He gives Miss November a friendly pat on the rump, then turns back, and finds his partner poking his finger in the trash barrel.

GROUCHY (CONT'D)
Whaddya think you're doin'?

GRUMBLING
Makin' sure there ain't no dead
bodies in this one.

GROUCHY
Cute. Now cut the clownin' and get
that thing outta here.

The dolly is wedged under the trash barrel, tipped back and trundled over to the foot of the stairwell. Grumbling positions himself on the second step so he can hoist up the dolly. Grouchy keeps both hands firmly in his pockets.

GRUMBLING
You gonna help or what?

GROUCHY
With my sciatic nerve, are you
crazy?

Grouchy maneuvers around his partner and up the stairs. All Grumbling can do is start the dolly CLUNKING up after him.

After about ten CLUNKS, John comes out from behind the furnace.

GRUMBLING (O.S.)
You gonna get the door at least?

There is a long pause.

GRUMBLING (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Sorry I asked.

(O.S.) The basement door CREAKS open and shut.

Cautiously, John sneaks up the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. IMPERIAL FURNACE ROOM - MORNING

The basement door cracks open just wide enough for John to see out.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. TROYER AVENUE (JOHN'S POV) - MORNING

One half of the garbage detail is muscling the trash barrel into the back of a rusted three axle CHEVY. The other half is planted in the passenger seat.

GROUCHY
(yelling back)
Come on, I'm freezin' to death up
here!

GRUMBLING
I should be so lucky.

The dolly is heaved up alongside the trash barrel and Grumbling jumps into the driver's seat.

With a little coaxing the engine COUGHS to life and the truck SPUTTERS away from the curb.

CUT TO:

EXT. TROYER AVENUE - MORNING

John comes out from behind the basement door so he can catch a final glimpse of the truck. A final glimpse of Treat.

The garbage wagon rounds the far turn, the ENGINE NOISE fades off to infinity, and it's all over and done with. Or is it?

John cocks a skeptical eye towards Heaven.

JOHN SAND
Is that it?

And the Angels give their reply. A single SNOWFLAKE floats feather soft past John's nose and lands on the tip of his shoe. It remains only briefly, then dissolves into nothing. A moment later there's another one to take its place. Then another. And another.

It's really coming down. And not your everyday run-of-the-mill shovel-out-the-driveway kind of snowfall either. This is one of those too-perfect movie-backlot Santa-comin'-down-the-chimney jobs.

It's completely irresistible, even to a five minute egg like John. He turns his face up and closes his eyes so he can feel the tickle of each snowflake on his eye lashes. He opens his mouth so each flake can melt into pure contentment on the end of his tongue. He spreads out his arms and starts to spin and it seems to John that maybe, just maybe, he really is flying.

Round and round he goes until he collides with the Imperial's front stoop. Then it's wing-over, dead stick loop and tail-high landing.

He tries to sit up. Bad idea - his head is still spinning at a thousand RPM's.

ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Jackie?

Nah, it couldn't be, could it? John turns in the direction of the barks. Or maybe the barks turn in the direction of John. Or maybe he just imagined the whole damned thing.

ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF.

Nope. They're for real. All John needs to do is get up, which he does more or less, and rubber legs into the alley.

ARF, ARF, ARF, ARF.

They seem to be coming from under a small trash pile. John peels back a soggy cardboard box...

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Well, I'll be a son of a bitch.

As mutts go, this is a real MUTT. Equal parts terrier, beagle, bulldog and used toilet scrub brush. Five weeks old - if that - skinny, scruffy and soaking wet. All the same he's damn cute.

John crouches down to give him a pet.

GRRRRRRRRRR..... RUP! RUP! RUP!

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

(pulling his hand away)

Never mind, I can take a hint.

And then he sees what's making this mutt so defensive.

There's another dog lying in the trash. Make that four dogs -
A MOMMY AND THREE PUPS.

Carefully, John snags the mutt by the scruff of the neck so he can put a hand to the mother's chest. Just as he thought, she's dead. Her other pups are dead too.

The snowfall is fast becoming a snowstorm. John tries to shelter the pooch under his coat, but he's having none of it.

GRRRRRRRRRR..... RUP! RUP! RUP!

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Little scrapper, huh? Gonna take on
the whole world single handed.

John looks the puppy square in the eye.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Well, like it or not you're gonna
need somebody to look after you and
I think I know just the somebody.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. SOMEBODY'S HOUSE - MIDDAY

John mops the frost off somebody's snow covered window.

Gradually, there appears a small bed, a three drawer dresser, a first baseman's glove, some dirty blue jeans, a milk crate full of comic books, a soup can full of marbles, and a RED LEATHER DOG COLLAR sliced neatly in half with a little tin tag stamped 'Jackie'.

Using the heel of his hand, John punches upward on the window frame. After a few hard jolts he's able to wedge his fingers under it and shinny it the rest of the way up.

From his overcoat he pulls out a four legged ball of damp yarn and holds it up to the newly opened window.

JOHN SAND
(gesturing into the room)
Shall we?

CUT TO:

INT. SOMEBODY'S HOUSE - EARLY AFTERNOON

The milk crate has been emptied and John is lining it with a torn-up comic book. Once that's done, he takes the soup can which is now filled with fresh water and sets it inside.

JOHN SAND
That oughta do it.

RUP! RUP!

John fishes the mutt out of his overcoat and dangles him above the crate.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Just remember, champ - the Lord
preserveth the fatherless, but the
wicked...

The mutt is flipped onto his head.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
...He turneth upside down! So brush
your teeth and mind your manners.

GRRRRRRRRRR...

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Yeah, tough guy.

He spins the dog rightside up and settles him into the crate.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
Good luck, champ.

A goodbye wave and John starts for the window.

AWWWOOOOOOOO...

AWWWOOOOOOOO...

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)
I shoulda known.

John scrounges inside his overcoat, into his trousers and mines that ten ounce piece of gold he calls a POCKET WATCH.

He flicks up the stem, adjusts the minute hand and winds the mainspring, all with a kind of reverence that's due an old friend.

He stretches out the long braided gold chain and lowers the watch into the crate.

If the puppy's silence and John's expression are any indicators, the watch is doing its job.

John tiptoes to the window, slithers onto the porch and eeks the window shut.

But he can't leave, not yet anyway. He presses his face to the glass and has a last look. A last look at puppy dogs and comic books and shooting marbles and playing first base and being innocent about anything.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Well champ, time for me to go.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

According to the big ROMANESQUE CLOCK the time is V - that's 5:00 PM to all you non-Romans out there. Underneath this, in a massive Roman Temple facade, is a long row of ticket windows. At the moment only three people, all non-Romans, are trying to buy tickets. One of them is John.

CUT TO:

INT. TICKET BOOTH - AFTERNOON

Facing John at the window is the TICKET AGENT - and no man ever looked less like Julius Caesar.

TICKET AGENT

Where to, Mister?

JOHN SAND

As far as ten bucks'll take me.

John's very sorry condition is surveyed through the Agent's thick horn rims.

TICKET AGENT

How 'bout the County Hospital?

JOHN SAND

I was thinking of someplace with a few more laughs.

TICKET AGENT

More laughs on ten bucks, huh?
Let's see...

The Agent's finger skims over the schedule book.

TICKET AGENT (CONT'D)

There's a train leaving for Seattle
in an hour, how does that sound?

JOHN SAND

Kinda chilly. Got anything nearer
the equator?

TICKET AGENT

This ain't a travel agency ya know.

JOHN SAND

Not if you act this way, it isn't.

TICKET AGENT

Awright, awright... Ya got
Pittsburgh, Denver, Frisco,
Boston... Here's one - Phoenix,
Arizona. That suit ya?

JOHN SAND

Phoenix, Phoenix ...Phoe-nix. Of
course! Phoenix, reborn from the
ashes. Why, it's inspired, it's
genius...

TICKET AGENT

It's nine bucks even.

John passes him the ten spot and the agent fiddles in his
cash drawer for right change.

TICKET AGENT (CONT'D)

Course the train don't leave 'til
eight o'clock tomorrow morning.
You got somethin' to do 'til then?

JOHN SAND

(suppressing a yawn)
I sure do, Pal.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - SUNSET

Next to the bed, on the orange crate nightstand, is John's
stash of tiny white SLEEPING PILLS.

They're piled in the bedside water glass and they haven't
been touched since the night Jackie died.

Now the glass is turned over and the pills are emptied out
and a single tablet is selected.

Armed with this little white dream-maker and the empty water glass, a new and improved JOHN SAND, Jr. marches over to the sink. New and improved because John is bathed and shaved and dressed in a pair of clean cotton pajamas. He balances the pill and the glass on either side of the sink so he can corral his soap bar and wash his hands. After that, he wets the frazzled end of what he calls a toothbrush and gives his Pall Mall stained mouth a brisk going-over.

He gargles, spits twice, fills the water glass and reaches for the pill.

Before he can pop it in his mouth, the glass squirts through his soapy fingers, does a one hopper off the sink and shatters on the floor.

JOHN SAND

Damn it!

John drops onto all fours and starts chucking shards of glass into the trash can. Already, the can is filled up with used bandages and cigarette butts and peed on newspapers and leftover lollipops and - of most interest to John - the QUART OF MILK that was stolen from Treat's door step.

The bottle is ice cold, same as everything else in the room, so John peels off the lid and has a sniff. Seems okay.

Once he's back on his feet - easier said than done - John flicks the pill to the back of his throat and chases it down with a big slug of white heaven.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Well, whaddya know.

Three more long swallows and his whole body, his whole everything is starting to relax.

So he keeps drinking and keeps relaxing and wanders over to the window for a look outside.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - SUNSET

One thing about SNOW, it brings out the kids.

The whole local gang, minus the Cockroach, is downstairs having a monster of a snowball fight.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN SAND'S ROOM - SUNSET

Much as John is enjoying the show he can't keep his eyes open. And besides, he's out of milk.

He dumps the EMPTY BOTTLE in the trash, then reaches above the window and threads his first finger through the ring of the roller shade.

Down comes the shade and the room goes quietly dark.

Time to cross over to the bed and pull back the thin coverlet and the scratchy wool blanket and the grayish cotton sheet. Time to let the body roll into the saggy center of the mattress and tuck the blanket under the arms and fold the hands across the chest and smile the calm smile and let the eyelids draw peacefully shut.

THUNK! THUNK! THUNK!

Those eyelids snap unpeacefully back open.

THUNK! THUNK! THUNK!

John begins to unpeaceful the other parts of his body and transport them over to the door.

And what he finds on the other side of that door wakes him right up.

DETECTIVE

(noting John's wounded
jaw)

You have some kind of accident?

JOHN SAND

No, I did it on purpose.

Gundersen makes straight for the bentwood chair, spins it around and parks his butt in the seat.

JOHN SAND (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything? A glass of water? Bologna sandwich? A suspect?

DETECTIVE

Don't even need the suspect. I solved Treat's murder.

For a beat, just a single heartbeat, John pauses before he asks the big question.

JOHN SAND
Who's the lucky winner?

DETECTIVE
Nobody special. A couple of rich
pervert types. Morphine addicts,
Treat's own customers.

JOHN SAND
Is that so.

DETECTIVE
Yep. Stole his keys, robbed his
drugstore, knocked his teeth out
and flushed his body down the
toilet. After that, well, the
killers couldn't live with
themselves. So one guy blew the
other guys brains out and jumped
off a third floor balcony.

For added effect, Gundersen does the FALLING BOMB WHISTLE and
the BIG WET SPLAT.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
A guilty conscience is a terrible
thing.

JOHN SAND
I wouldn't know.

DETECTIVE
No, I guess you wouldn't. Anyhow, I
wasn't positive that's what
happened, not at first anyway. You
see I had a visit from a cabdriver.
Seems he'd taken some no-good to a
certain address three blocks from
the murder house. Imagine my
surprise when I found out who lived
at that certain address.

JOHN SAND
Would that be bank president, Eagle
Scout, and seventh degree Mason,
Henry J. Sand?

DETECTIVE
The very same. In fact, he's the
reason I'm here.

JOHN SAND

Don't know what he could've told you.

DETECTIVE

Why, he said you spent the whole evening together. That's right, isn't it?

JOHN SAND

My brother said that?

DETECTIVE

Not right away, but after I told him you were a suspect in a triple homicide, he remembered all about it. Hell, it made perfect sense to me - two brothers catching up on old times - what could be more natural?

JOHN SAND

Henry and I have a lot in common all right.

DETECTIVE

Anyone can see that. And yet, I still wasn't positive. I mean, when you've come from a crime scene with guns in people's hands and keys in people's pockets it sort of offends your sense of subtlety. You know, no chance to play inscrutable master detective.

Gundersen taps his skull.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

And then the Mayor phoned me, and the Chief of Police, and the D.A., and three reporters and half the City Council and I think maybe even J. Edgar Hoover - all congratulating me on solving the case. Personally, I thought everyone was being a wee bit... hasty, seeing as I hadn't even filed a report. But once they explained how good this would be for my career - and anyway if I didn't want to say the case was solved they'd get somebody who would - well...

(MORE)

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
who am I to hold back the wheels of
justice? And so the whole grubby
business has been...

JOHN SAND
Put to bed?

DETECTIVE
Buried. That brother of yours sure
is a mighty important fellow.

JOHN SAND
And that's why you're here, to tell
me what a big man my brother is?

DETECTIVE
He said you'd forgotten something
the other night. He asked me to
bring it over.

A familiar looking slip of paper, folded once down the
middle, is handed over to John.

JOHN SAND
Exactly five hun... Exactly five
thousand dollars exactly.

DETECTIVE
He thought you might want to make a
fresh start somewhere.

JOHN SAND
Like Outer Mongolia. I'm way ahead
of him.

Off his nightstand John snaps up his TRAIN TICKET and tosses
it over to Gundersen.

DETECTIVE
Phoenix? Why Phoenix?

JOHN SAND
Just sounded like a good place for
a nice long rest.

DETECTIVE
A nice long rest sure isn't much of
a reason.

The ticket is tossed back to John.

JOHN SAND
You gonna see my brother again?

DETECTIVE
Hadn't planned on it.

JOHN SAND
Not even on police business?

DETECTIVE
Such as?

John's overcoat is draped across the end of the bed. From its side pocket John slides out another familiar item.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Nice tie.

John gives it over.

JOHN SAND
It was stolen from my brother. See he gets it back, would ya?

As if consenting, Gundersen rolls it up and stores it inside his trenchcoat.

DETECTIVE
No other message?

JOHN SAND
Tell him this makes us even.

DETECTIVE
What's with everybody getting even all of a sudden?

JOHN SAND
What everybody?

DETECTIVE
This afternoon I went round to visit a little boy we both know. Had some bad news for him. You see, I'd found his dog, or anyway what was left of it, only somebody else had already been there.

JOHN SAND
So what if they had?

DETECTIVE
Never thought of you bein' in the good fairy racket. Or did you have some other motive?

JOHN SAND

What's this have to do with...

DETECTIVE

We're coming to it. You see, the kick in the head is that the kid won't be able to keep that dog. Not where he's going.

JOHN SAND

Don't tell me. He got five years for stealing a lollipop.

DETECTIVE

Stealing? More like attempted murder.

JOHN SAND

Very funny.

DETECTIVE

On the level. Attempted murder. The kid tried to murder Treat. Poison him.

JOHN SAND

Poison?

DETECTIVE

Yep. Snuck right up to his kitchen door and dumped a whole tin of poison in his bottle of milk. Not five minutes after the milkman delivered it.

John's eyes shoot down to the trash can. Resting beside the half-eaten lollipop is the EMPTY MILK BOTTLE with the remnants of Cockroach's muddy shoe print still on its side.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

So I asked him, 'Why'd you do it?' And you know what he tells me? 'To get even of course!'

It's all flooding back - Cockroach on the upstairs landing - doing God knows what... And getting so spooked by those CLANGING trash cans... And that panicky jump over the railing... like he'd just committed a murder or something.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Don't look so shocked. Said you gave him the whole idea.

But John is only half-listening...

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Not that I think the little rat needed any encouragement. In fact, I don't think it was the doing it that ever bothered him. I think it was the getting away with it.

JOHN SAND

Like you said, a guilty conscience is a terrible thing.

DETECTIVE

And like you said, you wouldn't know.

John puts his hand to his stomach.

JOHN SAND

So what happens now?

DETECTIVE

He did a rotten thing, then again Treat was a rotten guy, so who's to say? Punishment isn't my line. That's up to the judge.

JOHN SAND

Maybe somebody'll put in a good word for him.

DETECTIVE

You never know. Course the big worry right now is what happened to that bottle of milk. We can't find it anywhere.

JOHN SAND

(a last glance at the bottle)

Some idiot stole it, probably.

DETECTIVE

(checking his watch)

Some idiot who's in for a big surprise. Well, it's getting late and I got a family waiting.

Gundersen spins the chair around, resets the legs onto the four scars that are worn into the floor and starts for home.

JOHN SAND
(holding his belly)
One more question. Just curious.
Did the kid say what he used? I
mean, what he put in the milk?

DETECTIVE
Are you kidding? Rat poison! With
all the rats we got in this town,
it's all anybody ever uses!

Which is exactly what John figured.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Well, so long. Have a nice long
rest.

The door closes and John is alone.

He goes to the window and tugs on the ring of the roll-up
shade and guides it back into the roller at the top of the
window frame. Then he sits down in the bentwood chair and
stares out the window and we can see on his face that he's
trying to make sense of it all.

And no expression ever said less.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. VACANT LOT (JOHN'S POV) - SUNSET

The children have all gone home, and what's left - the fence,
the filling station, the empty ownerless drugstore and the
vacant lot that separates each from the other - the whole
bloated black corpse of a neighborhood has finally been
buried.

Buried and put to sweet rest under a thick white shroud of
SNOW.

Cold and pure and innocent and pale as fresh milk.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END