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Eyes Wide Shut

By Frederic Raphael

INT BILL & ALICE'S APT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It is a week before Christmas. The tree is decorated and Christmas cards stand open everywhere in the comfortable Central Park West apartment.

Settled into the couch in the living room, watching TV, are seven year-old , HELENA, and the BABY-SITTER, a young college girl.

BEDROOM:

BILL and ALICE HARFORD, an attractive couple in their thirties, are in evening clothes preparing to leave for a party.

ALICE (looking in mirror)

How do I look?

BILL:

You look great.

ALICE:

My hair okay?

BILL:

Perfect.

ALICE:

You're not even looking at it.

Bill kisses her neck.

BILL:

It's absolutely beautiful. You always look beautiful.

ALICE:

Oh, shut up... OK, let's go.

They walk into the living room. The baby sitter gets to her feet.

BABY-SITTER

Oh, you look so-ooo lovely, Mrs. Harford.

ALICE (laughs)

Thank you, Roz.

(to Helena)

All ready for bed?

HELENA:

Yes, Mommy. I took my bath and

brushed my teeth.

AD-LIBS of praise as BILL and ALICE kiss HELENA goodnight.

BABY-SITTER

What time do you want Helena to go to bed?

HELENA:

Please, Mommy, can I stay up late tonight and watch the (name of TV show) Ple-eease.

ALICE:

When is it on?

HELENA:

Ten-thirty.

ALICE:

Okay, darling, but just for tonight.

HELENA:

Thank you, Mommy.

The house intercom rings. BILL goes to answer it.

DOORMAN (VOICE)

Doctor Harford?

BILL:

Yes.

DOORMAN:

The car is here.

BILL:

OK, we'll be right down.

Bill returns to sitting room.

BILL:

OK the car's here - let's go.

(to Baby-sitter)

Roz, we might be late tonight but I'll hold the car to take you home.

BABY-SITTER

Oh, that's great, Doctor Harford.

Thanks very much.

AD-LIBS of Good nights and have a good time.

EXT HIRED CAR DRIVE-BY (CPW TO 5TH) - NIGHT (2nd Unit)

INT CAR - NIGHT

BILL takes ALICE's hand and gives her a loving wink.

EXT ZIEGLER MIDTOWN MANSION - NIGHT

BILL'S car pulls up behind a stretch limo.

INT CAR - NIGHT

The driver hands Bill a clip board with a form attached to it.

DRIVER:

Can you sign this, Doctor?

The doorman, carrying an umbrella, opens the car door.

BILL (signing)

Okay, thanks..

DRIVER:

Thanks. (handing his card) Just phone about half hour before you want to be picked up.

BILL:

OK. Fine.

DRIVER:

Have a good evening.

BILL and ALICE exit the car and enter the house.

INT ZIEGLER MANSION - NIGHT

Big party already in progress.

Sound of a dance band off.

Many guests still arriving.

Two ladies seated at a table confirm that Doctor and Mrs Harford are on the invitation roster.

Their coats are taken.

The hosts, VICTOR ZIEGLER, a fit, sun-tanned, man in his mid-fifties, and his wife, ILLONA, a Hungarian beauty, stand to one side greeting their guests in the large entrance hall.

ZIEGLER (speaking above the noise)

Bill!...Alice!... I'm so glad you could come. It's wonderful to see you both,

AD-LIBS of further greetings while they shake hands and kiss on both cheeks.

ZIEGLER:

And Alice, my dear, forgive the pitiful understatement but you look totally beautiful.

Victor and Alice exchange if-there-was-world-enough-and-time smiles.

ZIEGLER:

And Bill, that osteopath you sent me to? He was wonderful. You should see my serve now.

BILL:

Yes, he's the top man in the world.

ANOTHER FABULOUS ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

BILL and ALICE, carrying champagne glasses make their way through the glitterati.

They stop to admire the 17 foot Christmas tree trimmed with colored lights and antique ornaments.

BALLROOM - BILL & ALICE DANCING

BILL's attention is caught by one of the musicians on the bandstand.

BILL:

I don't believe it.

ALICE:

What?

BILL:

The guy at the piano. That's Nick Nightingale, I went to medical school with him.

ALICE:

He's plays pretty good for a doctor.

BILL:

He's not a doctor. He dropped out. I'm going to have to say hello to him.

ALICE:

Okay, I'll go and get us some more champagne.

BILL:

I'll see you at the bar.

BILL walks over to the bandstand as they finish a set.

BILL:

Nick!.. Nick Nightingale!

NICK:

Hey! Bill Harford! What a surprise.

How the hell are you?

AD LIBS of greetings as they shake hands.

BILL:

God, how long has it been?

NICK:

Ten years?

BILL:

And a couple.

NICK:

How's life been treating you?

BILL:

Not too bad. And you've become a pianist.

NICK:

My friends call me that.

BILL (laughs)

And how do you happen to playing here tonight?

NICK:

I know my Cole Porter and I work cheap.

They both laugh.

NICK:

How about you. Still in the doctor business?

BILL:

You know how it is, once a doctor,
always a doctor.

NICK:

In my case, never a doctor, never a
doctor. You don't know how that is.

BILL:

I never did understand why you walked
away.

NICK:

No? It's a nice feeling. I do it a lot.
The BAND LEADER comes over and gives NICK a nod and BILL an
polite smile.

NICK:

Okay, we're off again. Listen, if I don't
catch you later, I'm down in the
Village for the next two weeks, at the
Cafe Sonata. Come by if you get a
chance.

BILL (nods)

Cafe Sonata, right. Okay, and listen, it
was great seeing you again.

NICK:

Same here. Take care.

The band starts up again.

The ballroom is crowded and BILL starts to make his way around the
dance floor to the bar.

ALICE is at the bar waiting for him.

She reaches absently for her champagne glass...

and finds she is holding - or touching - a man's hand.

ALICE (smiles)

I think that's my glass.

SZABO:

I'm absolutely certain of it.

SZABO is a handsome man, in his mid-forties with a slight Central

European accent.

He drinks slowly from ALICE'S glass and looks directly into her eyes as he does so.

SZABO:

Did you ever read the Latin poet Ovid
on The Art of Love?

ALICE:

Didn't he wind up all by himself, crying
his eyes out in some place with a very
bad climate.

SZABO:

But he also had a good time first. A
very good time.

SZABO:

By the way, my name is Sandor Szabo.
I'm Hungarian.

ALICE:

Pleased to meet you. My name is Alice.
I'm American.

SZABO:

Would you like to dance, Alice?

ALICE notices BILL across the room talking to two beautiful models.

ALICE:

Why not? - Sandor.

ACROSS THE ROOM - BILL & THE MODELS

GAYLE, the taller model, shouts to BILL above the music.

GAYLE:

Nobody likes you?
(louder)

GAYLE:

Nobody likes you, is that the problem?

BILL:

Put it this way, nobody wants to admit

how much they like me. But I'm confident it can still happen.

GAYLE (laughs)

Do you know Nuala Windsor?

GAYLE asks, putting her arm around her friend's waist.

BILL (smiles)

Nuala...I certainly feel like I do. How do you spell, Nuala?

NUALA:

N..u..a..l..a.

BILL:

Is that a Hawaiian name?

NUALA:

No, it's an agency name.

They all laugh.

GAYLE:

You were very kind to her once.

BILL:

Only once? That sounds like an oversight.

NUALA:

I was on a shoot, modelling at Rockefeller Center, on a very windy day. You happened to be passing by.

BILL (remembering)

And you got something in your eye?

NUALA:

Just about half of 5th Avenue. You were such a gentleman.

BILL:

That can happen when you're in a hurry.

NUALA:

You actually had a handkerchief -

which was also clean!

BILL:

That's the kind of hero I can be
sometimes!

ALICE is dancing with the Sandor. He holds her close to him.

SZABO:

What do you do, Alice?

ALICE:

Well, actually, I'm looking for a job at
the moment. I was an editor at a
publishing house but they went broke.

SZABO:

Perhaps I can be of some help. I know
a few people in publishing.
Alice doesn't reply to this.

SZABO:

And you're married?
ALICE shows him her wedding ring.

SZABO:

And you're here tonight with your
husband?

ALICE:

I am, indeed..

SZABO:

How sad.
Alice makes a that's-life face.

SZABO:

But of course I should have guessed
that. If you weren't with your husband
tonight you wouldn't be so careful.
ALICE laughs.

SZABO:

May I ask why a beautiful woman who
could have any man in this room wants

to be married?

ALICE:

You can ask.

SZABO:

You know why women used to get married, don't you?

ALICE:

Why don't you tell me.

SZABO:

It was the only way they could lose their virginity's and be free to do what they wanted with other men. The ones they really wanted.

ALICE:

Fascinating.

SZABO:

Victor and Illona have a fabulous art collection.

ALICE:

They do, don't they.

SZABO:

Have you ever seen the Impressionist stuff upstairs?

ALICE:

I don't think so.

SZABO:

There are a couple of magnificent Bonnards up there.

ALICE:

Are there?

SZABO:

Do you like Bonnard?

ALICE:

Yes, I do.

SZABO:

Would you like me to show them to you?

ALICE:

Well, maybe not just right now.

SZABO:

We won't be gone long.

ALICE smiles and shakes her head.

BILL AND THE MODELS

NUALA slowly leading BILL to the door.

NUALA:

Do you know what's so nice about doctors?

BILL:

Usually a lot less than people think.

NUALA:

They look so... knowledgable!

BILL:

They are very knowledgeable - about all sorts of things.

GAYLE:

But I'll bet they work too hard. I bet they miss out on a lot of fun.

BILL:

You're absolutely right. Where we going, girls?

NUALA (laughs)

Where the rainbow ends.

BILL slows down a little.

GAYLE:

Don't you want to go where the
rainbow ends?

BILL:

Do I want to go where the rainbow
ends?

Before he can answer, a big man who looks like he stepped right
out of The Godfather walks up - HARRIS, Ziegler's personal
assistant_.

HARRIS:

Excuse me, Doctor Harford. May I
trouble you for a moment?

BILL:

Sure.

HARRIS (nods towards the door)
Could you spare a minute, please?

BILL:

What's up?

HARRIS:

Could you come with me, please?

GAYLE (laughs)

It's something for Me. Z.

BILL:

Okay.

GAYLE:

Come back soon.

The girls blow kisses. Bill smiles.

ALICE AND SZABO DANCING

SZABO:

Alice, you're a fascinating woman.

ALICE makes a can't-help-that face.

SZABO:

I'd really like to see you again.

ALICE:

I don't think that would really be a good idea.

SZABO:

You are cruel. What about lunch, later this week?

BILL AND HARRIS - CORRIDORS AND STAIRCASE

Muffled sounds of the music echo from the ballroom below.

HARRIS stops in front of a large door and knocks quietly.

ZIEGLER (os)

Yes?

HARRIS:

It's Harris, sir.

After a few seconds the key is turned in the lock and the door slowly opens revealing a barefoot ZIEGLER wearing only his pants and undershirt.

ZIEGLER:

Thanks very much for coming up, Bill.

He gestures BILL in. HARRIS waits outside.

A strikingly beautiful, half-naked woman in her late twenties, is sprawled face up, her clothing scattered on the floor.

BILL:

What happened?

ZIEGLER:

She OD'd on coke.

ZIEGLER gestures to the cocaine paraphernalia on the night table.

BILL (checking her pulse)

How long has she been like this?

ZIEGLER:

Maybe ten minutes?

BILL feels her carotid artery.

BILL:

Has this happened before?

ZIEGLER:

Not sure, but probably.

BILL turns her face to the light of a table lamp to check her pupils.
The woman stirs.

BILL:

She's starting to come around.
The woman makes a few unintelligible sounds.
BILL takes her wrist again and looks at his watch.

BILL:

Good...Well...I don't think there's
really anything to worry about. Coke
wears off in half an hour or so.
ZIEGLER is visibly relieved.
BILL continues to watch her in silence.

BILL:

Someone should stay with her, though,
until she's fully herself again.

ZIEGLER:

Okay.

BILL:

Some cold towels on her face
wouldn't be a bad idea.

ZIEGLER:

Okay.

BILL:

Anyone here with her to take her
home?

ZIEGLER:

I'll take care of that...She's a friend of
the family.
Bill nods and watches her for a few moments longer. The he makes
moves like he wants to go..

BILL:

She'll be all right, Victor. Okay if I
leave the rest to you?

ZIEGLER:

Sure... And listen, Bill, I don't know how to thank you enough for this.

BILL:

It was nothing. Glad to be of help.

ZIEGLER:

And, Bill - I know I don't have to say this but I trust this is just between the two of us.

BILL:

Of course.

BALLROOM:

BILL re-enters the ballroom and looks around for the two models but he doesn't see them.

Then... a woman's arm slips through his.

He looks down at the wedding-ringed hand.

It's ALICE.

She is flushed and glad to have found him.

ALICE:

Haven't I seen you someplace before?

BILL:

Could be. What's your name again?

She kisses him.

ALICE:

Can we go home now?

BILL AND ALICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ALICE stands naked in front of her dressing table mirror rubbing face cream. BILL comes up behind her, kisses her shoulder and runs his hands lightly over her breasts.

V.O.

That night they were more blissful in their ardent love than they had been for a long time.

SHOTS TO ILLUSTRATE V.O.

Getting up.

Alice and Helena in the kitchen.
Bill in his office with patients.
V.O.

The gray of morning awakened them
only too soon.

Alice had to take Helena to school.
And Bill had a number of early
appointments.

So the evening hours passed in the
predetermined daily routine of work,
and the events of the night before
began to fade.

BILL'S APARTMENT - HELENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

HELENA reading aloud to BILL and ALICE from "A Child's Garden of
Verses". She finishes her poem and yawns.

BILL:

And now, my darling, time for bed.
What do you say?

HELENA smiles and puts her arms around BILL.

BILL and ALICE kiss her goodnight, turn out the lights and go into the
living room.

LIVING ROOM:

ALICE sighs comfortably.

ALICE:

So, how do you feel about wrapping
some presents?

BILL:

Kind of negative. We can do it
tomorrow.

Bill drops down on the couch, picks up the TV controller and starts
switching channels.

Alice snuggles up to him.

ALICE:

Anything good on tonight?

BILL:

Have you got the paper?

Alice puts her arms around him.

ALICE:

I don't feel like watching TV.
They kiss.

ALICE:

Let's break the law a little first
BATHROOM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Bill takes a Band-Aid box from the bathroom medicine cabinet and
removes a small plastic bag of pot.

BEDROOM:

Alice skillfully rolls two joints.

MINUTES LATER:

Bill and Alice sitting in bed, partly undressed and smoking the joints.
Alice inhales and leans back with an ashtray in her lap.
She is high.

ALICE:

How about the truth game?

BILL:

Always a bit dangerous with pot.

ALICE:

Isn't that the fun?

BILL:

I'm putty in your hands.

ALICE:

Okay, let's start with who were those
those two gorgeous women at the
party last night?

BILL:

Don't really know. One of them just
started talking to me.

ALICE:

I thought they might be patients?

BILL:

No such luck. They're models. One of them said I once removed something from her eyes on windy day in Rockefeller Plaza.

ALICE:

Always on the job.

BILL:

That's me.

ALICE:

And what did they want from you this time?

BILL:

My body - what else?

ALICE doesn't find the remark particularly amusing.

BILL:

Hey, come on - all I did was talk to them... Anyway, who was the guy you were dancing with?

BILL is not that interested and just wants to change the subject.

ALICE:

Sandor?

BILL:

Sandor... Who is he?

ALICE:

A friend of the Zieglers.

BILL:

And what does he do?

ALICE:

I never actually found out?

BILL:

Rich?

ALICE:

Talked like he was.

BILL:

And what did he want?

ALICE:

Sex. Upstairs. Then and there.
The pot makes ALICE think this is hilarious.

BILL:

Well, I guess that's understandable.

ALICE:

Understandable?

BILL:

Well, you're a beautiful woman.

ALICE:

Oh, I see. So does exhaustive
research show that every man I meet
wants to screw me?

BILL:

There might be some exceptions.

ALICE:

Does that mean that all men, with
possibly _some_ _exceptions_, want to
screw all beautiful women, married or
otherwise?

BILL:

I suppose, basically, yes.

ALICE:

So does that mean you wanted to
screw the two models?

BILL:

I did say with some exceptions.

ALICE:

And of course you're an exception?

BILL:

Yes.

ALICE:

How come?

BILL:

Because I love you.

ALICE:

Any other reasons?

BILL:

Because we're married.

ALICE:

Any others?

BILL:

And because I wouldn't lie to you or hurt you.

ALICE:

So basically what it comes down to is that you wouldn't screw the two models out of consideration for me, but otherwise you would.

BILL:

Hey, is this thing on Court TV?
BILL feigns looking around for cameras.

ALICE:

Why don't you just give me a straight answer?

BILL:

Hey, come on, honey. The pot's making you aggressive.
He takes her cigarette and puts it out.

ALICE:

I'm not being aggressive at all - and
how about you not putting out my

BILL:

Okay. Okay. Okay.

ALICE:

Now try to be honest. When some
really great-looking woman comes in to
your office to have her tits checked out,
don't you ever think about screwing
her?

BILL:

Come on, give me a break. I'm a
doctor. It's all very impersonal. And
anyway my insurance requires that a
nurse is always present.

ALICE:

You're being evasive. When you're
feeling her tits, is it never any more
than sheer professionalism?

BILL:

Basically, that's all it is.

ALICE:

Just basically?

BILL:

Oh, come on. There are no absolutes
in anything.

ALICE:

No absolutes... Okay. Fine... And does
the same thing go for women? While
they're having their tits squeezed, do
you suppose your lady patients ever
wonder what your dick might be like?

BILL:

Definitely not.

ALICE:

And why is that?

BILL (laughs)

Because they're too worried about
what I might find.

ALICE:

You know what I mean.

BILL:

No, again. Not most of them.

ALICE:

Why?

BILL:

Well, I suppose that most women are
programmed differently from men

ALICE:

Oh, yes, I forgot. Millions of years of
evolution - right? Men have to put
their sperm into as many women as
they can, but women stay at home
with pretty pink things and take care of
the children?

BILL:

A bit oversimplified but something like
that.

A dispirited smile passes over her face.

ALICE:

Oh, if you men only knew.

The look in her eyes changes, becoming cool and impenetrable,
and BILL allows her hands to slip from his.

BILL:

If we knew -? What do you mean

by that?

ALICE (in a strangely harsh voice)

About what you imagine, my dear.

BILL:

Hey, Alice, hey, look at me... The truth.

Is there something you've kept from me?

ALICE looks down with a strange smile.

BILL (laughs)

You're just trying to wind me up.

ALICE:

If you say so.

BILL:

If I say so? Wait a minute. I'm not going to let you get away with that...

Seriously... Is there's something you haven't told me?

ALICE stops short of saying something.

BILL:

Say it.

ALICE nods.

ALICE:

Well, last summer at Cape Cod - I don't suppose you remember one night in the dining room, there was a young Naval officer sitting near us. He was with two other officers.

BILL:

As a matter of fact, I don't. But what about him?

ALICE:

The waiter brought him a message during dinner, at which point he left the table?

Bill waits for her to continue.

ALICE:

Well...I first saw him that morning in the lobby. He was checking in and he was following the bellboy with his luggage to the elevator.

He glanced at me as he walked past but didn't stop until he had gone a few more steps. Then he turned and looked at me.

He didn't say anything. He didn't smile.

In fact, it seemed to me that he scowled. Maybe I did the same thing.

ALICE stops for a moment.

ALICE:

I was very stirred by him. That whole day I lay on the beach, lost in dreams. She stops.

BILL:

Go on.

ALICE thinks about how to continue.

BILL stares at her.

ALICE:

That afternoon you and I made love and talked about our future, and our child.

Later we were sitting on the balcony and he passed below us without looking up.

Just the sight of him stirred me deeply and I thought if he wanted me, I could not have resisted. I thought I was ready to give up you, the child, my whole future.

And yet at the same time - if you can understand it - you were dearer to me than ever, and I stroked your forehead and kissed your hair, and at that moment my love for you was both tender and sad.

At dinner I wore a white rose and you

said I was very beautiful. It might not have been just an accident that he and his friends sat near us.

He didn't look up but I actually considered getting up, walking over to him and like someone in a movie, saying, 'Here I am, my love, for whom I have waited - take me.'

Well, it was about then that the waiter brought him the envelope. He read it, turned pale, said goodbye to his friends - and glancing at me mysteriously, he left the room.

ALICE stops for a moment.

ALICE:

I barely slept that night and woke up the next morning very agitated. I didn't know whether I was afraid that he had left or that he might still be there... But by dinner I realised he was gone and I breathed a sigh of relief.
Long silence

BILL:

And if he hadn't left?
Alice doesn't reply.

ALICE:

I don't know.
BILL doesn't say anything but there is a scornful expression around his mouth.
The phone rings.

BILL:

Hello?...Oh... When did they call?...
No, I have the address...If they call again say I'm on my way.
He hangs up the phone and starts to put on his shoes.

BILL:

Lou Nathanson just died.

ALICE:

Oh, that's too bad. But you were expecting that, weren't you?

BILL:

Yes..

Bill starts to get dressed.

BILL:

I have to go over there for a while.

ALICE:

Now?

BILL:

I have to show my face.

BILL silently getting dressed.

ALICE:

Obviously, it was a mistake to have told you.

BILL (coldly)

Not at all.. We must always tell each other everything.

ALICE:

It was the pot.

BILL (coldly)

It doesn't really matter. Nothing happened. Just a passing fancy.

EXT MARION'S APARTMENT HOUSE - NIGHT

BILL's taxi pulls up to the stylish, lower 5th avenue apartment.

Doorman opens the door.

INT MARION'S LOBBY

Bill walks to the elevator

INT MARION'S PRIVATE ELEVATOR LOBBY

Bill exits elevator and find's her door ajar.

He knocks softly and enters without waiting for a reply.

BILL (softly)

Marion?

He walks through the quiet apartment.

MASTER BEDROOM:

The body of LOU NATHANSON lies on a large bed with an oxygen cylinder and other medical paraphernalia on tables on each side of the bed.

MARION, the dead man's daughter, a pretty girl in her late twenties, sits at the foot of the bed, exhausted, her arms hanging limply at her side.

She starts to get up but BILL stops her with a movement from his hand, and she merely greets him with a nod, her eyes large and sad. BILL moves to the head of the bed and mechanically places his hands on the forehead of the dead man and on his arms.

He shakes his head a couple of times and his shoulders drop with a slight expression of regret.

BILL:

I hope his last moments were peaceful.

Marion gives him a despairing look.

He puts his hands in his pockets and his eyes wander about the room until they finally rest again on Marion.

BILL:

Well, Marion, at least you weren't entirely unprepared for this.

She holds out her hand to him. He takes it sympathetically.

Marion sighs, woefully.

MARION:

Dad seemed pretty good today. Around nine o'clock he said he felt like taking a nap. So I went into the living room to watch television. I don't think I was out of his room for more than half-an-hour.

Marion starts to weep.

MARION:

When I went back, at first I thought he was still asleep... The I realized he wasn't breathing... I did everything you had told me but.. he was....

She can't bring herself to say dead and she shakes her head, despairingly.

MARION:

I called the emergency people... But when they got here they just said he was...dead and asked whether I wanted them to take him away? She breaks down sobbing. BILL draws up a chair and sits down opposite her.

BILL:

Marion, from what you've said, it sounds like your father died in his sleep. He wouldn't have suffered.

MARION:

Oh, God...I hope not... I've been so afraid of the actual... dying business... But he made it _so_ _easy_, just as he tried to make everything else in my life easy. BILL takes her hands.

BILL:

Have you notified any of your relatives?

MARION:

I phoned Carl - my fiancée.

She does not look BILL straight in the eye when she says, fiancée/

MARION:

He's going to make some calls for me and then he's coming over.

BILL:

Oh, that's good.

MARION:

I think you've met Carl here a few times? We're planning to get married in April.

BILL:

Oh, that's wonderful. I'm very happy for you. They sit for a few moments without speaking.

V.O.

I certainly do remember Carl. So she's going to marry him, Bill thought to himself. I wonder why? She surely can't be in love with him. He's nothing to look at, and he hasn't got any money... He's just an assistant in professor of something or other... But then it's none of my business. Still... if she were my mistress, her hair would be less dry and her lips would be fuller and redder.

Marion suddenly starts to talk.

MARION:

Dad had so many worries and disappointments. My mother was never well... And my _brother_...he was such a disappointment... I don't even know where he is. The last we heard from him was from some small town in Mexico. I can't even remember where.

[POSSIBLE MISSING PAGE]

In spite of himself, BILL places his hand on her head, caressing it. He feels her body begin to tremble and her sobs become louder and finally quite unrestrained.

All at once, she slips down from her chair and kneels in front of him, clasping his legs with her arms and pressing her face into them. She looks up at him with large eyes, wild with grief, and whispers

ardently:

MARION:

I don't want to leave here... Even if you never return... Even if I am never to see you again... I want, at least, to live near you.

BILL looks touched rather than surprised.

BILL:

Please - get up, Marion.

He says this softly, and bending down he gently raises her up.

He glances at the dead man on the bed and only puts his arms around her in a very hesitant embrace and kisses her on the forehead.

At the same time, without knowing why, a sense of anger wells up against ALICE.

Jealous fantasy image of Alice and the Naval officer.

The door bell rings.

He hastily kisses Marion's cheek, as if in gratitude, and goes to the door.

It's CARL standing there - a very ordinary looking man with an umbrella in his hand and a serious face appropriate to the situation. The two men greet each other much more cordially than is called for by their actual state of acquaintance.

They walk to the bedroom and CARL has an embarrassed look at the deceased.

CARL:

Oh, my poor, dear Marion. I am so sorry.

He puts his arms around her.

BILL goes into the next room to write out the death certificate.

When he finishes, he returns to the bedroom where the engaged couple sit, hand in hand, by the bed of the dead man.

The door-bell rings.

CARL:

I'll get it.

While he is out of the room, Marion, with her eyes on the floor, says, almost inaudibly:

MARION:

I love you.

BILL merely pronounces her name tenderly.

BILL:

Marion.

CARL returns with Marion's UNCLE and AUNT, whose presence gives BILL the opportunity to make his goodbyes and leave. At the door.

CARL:

I hope we'll see you soon.

EXT MARION'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill walks outside. It has become even milder. A gentle breeze carries [illegible] from the nearby park to the street. BILL inhales the fresh air.

DOORMAN:

Taxi?

BILL:

No thanks. I think I'll walk for a bit.

EXT STREET TO PARK - NIGHT

Bill walking.

EXT PARK - NIGHT

Walking through the park, BILL notices on some of the benches in the shadows, that couples are kissing, just as if Spring had actually arrived and no danger lurked in the deceptive warm air.

A tramp lies full length on a bench wrapped in newspapers with his hat over his face.

V.O.

The image of the tramp made him think of the dead man he had just left, and he shuddered and felt slightly nauseated at the thought that decay and decomposition had already begun their work in the body he just left.

He was glad he was still alive and in all probability that these ugly things were still far removed from him, and that he was, in fact, still in the prime of life, had a beautiful wife and could have several women in addition, if he wanted to, although doing so would require more free time than he had.

BILL notices a group of rowdy college boys coming towards him, six of them taking up the whole walkway.

He moves aside to keep out of their way.

But as they pass, one of them, a tall boy with an open overcoat, deliberately bumps into him with his raised elbow.

BILL involuntarily stops.

The tall student takes two more steps and turns.

They glare at each other for a moment with only a short distance separating them.

Suddenly, BILL turns around again and walks.

He hears a short laugh behind him.

He wants to turn around and fight but he feels his heart beating strangely.

V.O.

Had he become a coward, he asked himself, and noticed his knees were shaking a little bit. Ridiculous! Why should he get involved in a street fight with some drunken college student who had five friends with him.

BILL keeps walking without looking back.

He, a man of thirty-five, a practising physician, a married man and father of a child. He might wind up in the hospital or worse and tomorrow be in the same position as the man he just left.. Then he thought about his profession? There were dangers lurking there, too, everywhere and at all times - except that one usually forgets about them.

EXT STREET - ON WAY DOMINO - NIGHT

BILL walking.

V.O.

Surely, it had been nothing but common sense to avoid a ridiculous fight with the student... but if he ever meet the Naval officer with whom Alice...

JEALOUS FANTASY IMAGE - ALICE AND NAVAL OFFICER

V.O.

But what insanity! After all, nothing happened... What was he thinking about?... But then, wasn't it really just as bad as if she had actually fucked him - she might just as well have. Wasn't it even worse, in a way. What a joy it would be to teach him a lesson.

EXT STREET - DOMINO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill passes a young girl, DOMINO, who falls into step beside him.

DOMINO:

Hi.

BILL slows down and looks at her. She is very pretty with dark red

lips.

BILL:

Hi.

DOMINO:

How're you doing?

BILL:

Fine. How are you doing?

DOMINO:

I'm doing great...Listen, how would you like to have a little fun?

BILL:

I'm sorry?

DOMINO:

Have a little fun. Come inside with me?

I just live over there.

She points to a nearby doorway.

BILL a little off balance.

BILL:

Come inside with you?

DOMINO:

Yes. It's a lot nicer than it is out here.

BILL:

Do you live there?

DOMINO:

Yes.

BILL:

By yourself?

DOMINO:

I have a roommate but she's not home.

She gently takes his arm.

DOMINO:

It's okay - no one will bother us.
BILL smiles, uncertainly.

DOMINO:

Really, it's okay. Come on.
BILL allows himself to be led to the door.
DOMINO (gently)
Come on.

INT DOMINO APARTMENT LOBBY - NIGHT

She leads BILL through the small, dingy entrance lobby lit by a flickering fluorescent tube to a ground-floor rear apartment.

BILL:

Should we talk about the money?

DOMINO:

How does sixty sound?
BILL nods, a little uncomfortably.

BILL:

Sixty. Sounds good.
DOMINO laughs.
DOMINO (laughs)
I don't keep track of the time.
She unlocks the door and they go inside.
It's a clean, reasonably tidy, ex cold-water railway flat.
The girl smiles sweetly, and walks ahead of BILL into the narrow bedroom where there is a neatly made king-size bed without a bedspread..

BILL:

By the way, what's your name?

DOMINO:

Domino.

BILL:

Domino. That's an unusual name.

DOMINO:

Well, it's my, uh...professional name.

BILL:

Right.

DOMINO:

And what's your name?

Bill hesitates.

BILL:

Bill.

DOMINO:

Hi, Bill.

BILL:

Hi, Domino.

DOMINO:

Would you like a drink or some grass?

BILL:

No thanks. I'm fine.

She puts on some music.

BILL:

Nice little place.

DOMINO:

Yes, it's okay.

BILL:

Is this really your place?

DOMINO:

That's the second time you asked.

BILL:

No, it just that I was under the impression that most girls didn't use their own apartment - too much hassle.

DOMINO:

That's true but I don't do this that

much.

BILL:

Oh, how's that?

DOMINO:

I only work when I get too far behind
with my student loan.

BILL is a little surprised.

BILL:

What are you school are you going to?

DOMINO:

NYU.

BILL:

NYU. What are you studying?

DOMINO:

Sociology.

BILL:

Good sociology department?

DOMINO:

Pretty good. Ever hear of Pearlstein
and Johnson?

BILL:

To be honest, I'm not much into
sociology.

She slowly starts to undress.

DOMINO:

What do you do?

BILL:

I'm a doctor?

DOMINO:

A doctor?

BILL:

Yes.

DOMINO:

GP?

BILL:

Yes.

DOMINO:

My father's a GP.

BILL (laughs)

No kidding? I hope I don't know him.

DOMINO (laughs)

He practises in New Jersey.

BILL:

New Jersey..

She steps out of her panties and tosses them on the table.

BILL:

Listen, I know it's a little late for this
but do you mind if I ask how old you
are?

She stands naked before him with her arms outstretched.

DOMINO:

How old do you think?

BILL:

Well, to be honest, I would have said
sixteen or seventeen but obviously if
you're going to college... eighteen?

DOMINO (laughs)

Nineteen.

She puts her arms around his neck again and gazes into his eyes.

DOMINO:

Well, shall we?

Bleep-bleep.

BILL's cellular phone.

Bleep-bleep

He fumbles in his pockets for the phone and DOMINO has to get off his lap for him to get it out.

BILL:

Hello?

It's ALICE.

BILL:

Hi, honey. Yes, everything's okay... I'm not sure... We're waiting for some relatives to show up... It could be late...

No, don't wait up. Can't really talk...

Okay, as soon as I can... Same here.

He disconnects and puts the phone back in his pocket.

DOMINO:

Was that Mrs Doctor Bill?

BILL thinks for a moment and nods. Then he sighs and gets to his feet.

DOMINO (not a question)

You have to go.

BILL:

I'm afraid so.

DOMINO:

What a shame.

He gets out his wallet and starts to count out sixty dollars.

DOMINO:

Oh, look, you don't have to...

BILL:

No, that's all right.

DOMINO:

Really. It's okay.

BILL:

No, no. Listen, we need more good sociologists.

They both laugh.

DOMINO:

Okay but you've got a raincheck.

BILL:

That's deal.

EXT STREET TO CAFE SONATA - NIGHT

BILL walks aimlessly through the wintry night.

V.O.

Where shall I go now, he asked himself?

The obvious thing was home to bed.

But he couldn't persuade himself to do that.

He thought of going back to the girl but that somehow seemed ridiculous now.

He was overcome with a sense that he was moving farther and farther away from his everyday existence into a completely different world.

By the chance, he passes a small nightclub, Cafe Sonata, and notices Nick Nightingale's name and photograph outside.

He stops and looks at it.

The DOORMAN drifts over.

DOORMAN:

The band's about to wind up but they're still serving.

BILL nods and goes in.

INT CAFE SONATA - NIGHT

The place is about a quarter full. BILL sits down at a table near the band.

Nick sees him and winks.

BILL gestures hello, orders a beer.

The band finishes their last number and take a perfunctory bow to a scattering of applause.

NICK comes over to the table.

NICK:

Hey, Bill!

They shake hands and ad-libs of greetings.

The WAITER swoops in with BILL's beer.

BILL:

What are you drinking?

NICK:

Scotch and soda.

The WAITER nods and hurries off.

NICK:

So what brings you out at this hour?

BILL:

Just happened to be passing by. I have a patient in the neighbourhood.

NICK:

Do you live in the Village?

BILL:

No, we've got an apartment on Central Park West.

NICK:

You're married?

BILL:

Nine years.

NICK:

That was the great looking woman you were dancing with at the party?

BILL:

Yes.

NICK:

Lucky man.
BILL nods.

NICK:

Any kids?

BILL:

An eight year old daughter. How about you?

NICK:

I've got a wife and four boys in Seattle.

BILL:

That's great. So is this your band?

NICK:

No, I'm just filling in.

BILL:

Who do you normally play with?

NICK:

Anybody. Anywhere. As a matter of fact, I've got another gig later tonight.

BILL:

You're playing somewhere else
tonight?

NICK (shrugs)

They only get started there about two.

BILL:

In the village?

NICK:

I don't actually know the address yet.

BILL:

How come?

NICK:

It's in a different place every time, and I only get it about an hour or so beforehand.

BILL:

A different place every time?

NICK:

So far.

BILL (laughs)

What's the big mystery?

Nick opens his palms in a parody of innocence.

NICK:

I just play the piano.

BILL:

What kind of a function is it?

NICK:

What kind of a function is it?... Well, to be completely honest, it's not easy to describe.

BILL:

But you've worked there before?

NICK:

True.

BILL:

And it's not easy to describe?

NICK:

I play blindfolded.

BILL:

What?

NICK:

I play blindfolded.

Something near the entrance door attracts Nick's attention.

NICK (stands up)

Back in a minute.

He walks to the front window of the club and looks out into the snowy street. He doesn't see what he's looking for and returns.

NICK:

Sorry about that. I'm supposed to meet somebody here.

BILL:

With the address?

Nick shrugs, meaning, yes.

BILL:

Listen, you're putting me on about that blindfolded business, aren't you.

NICK:

No, that's the truth. They're very strict about that.

BILL:

This is getting curiouser and curiouser.

NICK:

Maybe so, but listen, I was sworn to secrecy, and please, just forget I said anything at all about it.

BILL:

Nick, you can trust me. I won't say a word about this to anyone but since you've told me this much, you can't stop now.

NICK:

No, really, this is not a joke. I'm not saying anything else.

BILL:

Nick, you can't do this to me. I'll wonder about this for the rest of my life. Trust me.

NICK is very uncomfortable about this but is also dying to talk about it.

NICK:

Okay, well this is just between us.

BILL:

Absolutely.

NICK:

Well...first of all, although I am

blindfolded I can of course still
hear...and the sounds...

NICK closes his eyes and lets the provocative innuendo sink in.

NICK:

And...the last time the blindfold wasn't
tied on that well.

NICK also lets that sink in.

NICK:

Bill...I've seen a few things in my life
but never anything like this... And I
have never seen such women.

BILL:

What does it cost to get into this place?

NICK:

Forget it.

BILL:

What do you mean, forget it.

NICK:

Forget it.

BILL:

Look, I don't care what it costs.

NICK:

It's not a matter of money. These
people aren't interested in money. It's
a completely closed affair.

BILL:

These _people_. Who are _these_ _people_?

NICK:

Put it this way - if I knew their names it
would be worth more than my life to
say them out loud.

BILL:

Nick, don't you think you might just be over-dramatising this a little bit? There must be some way you can get me in.

NICK (shakes his head)
It would be too dangerous.

BILL:
Dangerous?

NICK:
These are not people you fuck with - if you'll pardon the pun.
Nick sees someone looking through the plate glass window.

NICK:
I'll be right back.
He gets up and hurries outside to the street.
BILL watches him through the window, hunched up against the cold, stamping his feet up and down, talking to a man and writing something down.
Nick returns blowing on his hands.
Bill gives him an inquiring look.

BILL:
Was that the address?

NICK:
And the password.

BILL:
Password?

NICK:
Yes. You can't get in without the password and they change it every time.
And, listen, I'm going to have to get weaving pretty soon.
BILL (said with a smile)
Nick, you son-of-a-bitch, you know you are definitely going to have to take me with you tonight. You know that,

don't you.

Nick sighs and shakes his head.

BILL:

Look, I'll tell you what - you give me the password and the address and I'll go there by myself. There won't be the slightest connection with you, whatsoever.

NICK squirms.

NICK:

Look, even if I were crazy enough to do that, you couldn't get in the way you're dressed, anyway.

BILL:

Why not?

NICK:

Everyone there is always masked and in costume.

BILL:

Masked and in costume?

NICK:

Always.

Bill looks at his watch.

BILL:

Okay. Point taken. But there's a possibility I know a place that might still be open.

NICK:

Bill, you're out of your mind. No costume place would be open at this time of night.

BILL:

Look, Nick, what the hell. Just give me a chance. Let me try. If I can't get the

gear I'll forget about the whole thing.

Scouts honour.

NICK looks ready to give in.

BILL:

Okay?

NICK sighs in resignation.

BILL:

Okay. So, let me have the address and the password, and tell me what kind of costume I need?

EXT BUSY GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET - NIGHT

BILL's taxi pulls up in front of a costume shop. A sign says: 'Formal Dress and Costumes.

The place is closed.

BILL:

Shit.

He thinks for a moment, pays the driver and gets out.

He notices a sign that says: "In case of emergency ring apartment 3."

He looks up and sees a light on in the apartment above the store.

He rings the bell for apartment 3, which has the name Gibson

After a couple of rings, a voice comes over the intercom.

GIBSON:

Yes, what is it?

BILL talks to the TV security camera.

BILL:

Mister Gibson?

GIBSON:

What do you want?

BILL:

Mister Gibson, I'm very sorry to disturb you at this hour. I'm a Doctor. My name is Harford. I need to see you. It's important.

Bill holds up his New York State Medical Board card to the doorway TV security camera.

GIBSON:

Somebody hurt?

BILL:

No one's hurt but it's important.

GIBSON:

What kind of important?

BILL:

It would really be better if I could come upstairs for a moment and talk to you.

GIBSON:

You better come back tomorrow.

BILL:

Mr. Gibson, tomorrow will be too late. I really need to see you now. It won't take long.

Silence.

Then the door buzzer sounds.

BILL pushes open the door and goes upstairs two at a time.

A door opens on the chain and a man in his fifties, wearing flannel pyjamas and a heavy bathrobe, who has the looks and manner of a road-company ham actor peers out.

BILL:

Mr. Gibson?

GIBSON:

Yes.

BILL holds up his New York State medical card again.

BILL:

Good evening, Mister Gibson. This is my New York State Medical Board card, just so you know who I am.

Gibson looks at the card and at BILL.

GIBSON:

Okay, so you're Doctor Harford. What's this all about?

BILL:

Mister Gibson, you may not find it that easy to understand the urgency of this, but basically, uhm... I need...a costume and a tux ...

Gibson stares at him in disbelief.

GIBSON:

You need a costume and a tux?

BILL:

Yes.

GIBSON:

I'm sorry, but do you honestly expect me to open my shop for you, at this hour?

BILL:

I can imagine how this may seem to you, Mister Gibson, and I am prepared to pay an extra two hundred dollars for the inconvenience. Gibson doesn't reply.

BILL:

How does that sound to you?

Judging from his expression, this sounds pretty good to Mr. Gibson.

INT COSTUME SHOP - NIGHT

A short while later, Gibson leads BILL through the shop to the dimly lit costume section.

GIBSON:

Okay, now let me get this straight. You want a tuxedo, a black monk's cassock and a mask that completely covers your face?

BILL:

That's it.

GIBSON:

I have to tell you doctor, I've had some very strange requests in my day and this is certainly one of them.

BILL:

It's for a good cause.

GIBSON:

Okay, you're the doctor.

GIBSON chuckles at his own witticism.

GIBSON:

Now, let me get this straight. You want a tuxedo, a monks cassock and a mask that completely covers your face?

BILL:

That's it.

Suddenly BILL hears the clink of glasses from somewhere ahead of him.

GIBSON flips a light switch.

A light come on in a little office at the end of the passage.

The desk is covered with plates, glasses and bottles.

Two JAPANESE MEN, wearing blonde female wigs, naked except for Japanese kimonos, spring up from their chairs besides the desk.

At the same moment, the semi-naked figure of a graceful GIRL disappears under the desk.

GIBSON rushes forward with long strides, reaches across the desk and grabs one of the blond wigs.

Simultaneously, the young GIRL, maybe fourteen, wriggles out from under the desk and runs along the passage to BILL who catches her in his arms.

GIBSON drops the wig and grabs the two kimono garbed men.

At the same time he calls out to BILL.

GIBSON:

Hold on to that girl for me, please.

The GIRL presses against BILL as if now sure of her protection. Her pretty little face covered with powder and a smile of impish desire in her eyes.

GIBSON (shouts)

Gentlemen, you will stay here while I

call the police.

KIMONO 1

Gibson, have you gone mad?

KIMONO 2

We were invited by the young lady.

GIBSON:

You will have to explain this. Couldn't you see the girl is unbalanced?

Then GIBSON he turns to BILL.

GIBSON:

Sorry to keep you waiting.

BILL:

That's okay.

BILL looks down with fascination at the GIRL, who looks up at him with alluring and childlike eyes, as if spellbound.

The two KIMONO MEN start to argue with each other in Japanese..

GIBSON turns to BILL.

GIBSON:

I'm sorry, did you say a brown or black cassock?

BILL:

Black.

YOUNG GIRL (with gleaming eyes)

No. You must give this gentleman a cloak lined with ermine and a doublet of red silk.

GIBSON (to girl)

Don't you budge from there.

(to Bill)

What size are you?

BILL:

I take a 38 jacket.

GIBSON picks up a brown monk's cassock hanging nearby and holds it up for BILL'S approval.

GIBSON:

This will fit you.

BILL:

Fine.

GIBSON:

Okay, let's go and try on the tux..

The two Japanese men are still in the glass partitioned office.

GIBSON locks them in.

KIMONO 1

Gibson, this is preposterous!! You will have to let us out at once.

GIBSON:

I'm afraid that's out of the question, gentlemen. This is now a police matter.

You will kindly wait here until I return.

Ad-libs of further protest from the two men

The girl skips lightly up the stairs ahead of them.

GIBSON:

Now go to bed at once, you depraved creature. I'll talk to you as soon as I've settled with those two.

The girl gives BILL a sad shake of her head and exits.

INT FRONT OF COSTUME SHOP - A LITTLE LATER

Bill has changed into a black tuxedo and waits for Gibson to write up the bill. His clothes and the costume are in two large plastic shopping bags.

GIBSON:

Okay - that's a hundred and fifty for the rental. Three hundred deposit. And the two hundred inconvenience money. That's six hundred and fifty bucks..

BILL:

Okay.

BILL hands him his credit card and his driver's license.

GIBSON:

I'd prefer cash.

BILL:

Sorry, I don't carry that kind of money.

Gibson takes the credit card.

BILL:

Thanks. And - by the way - I hope you won't be too hard on the child.

GIBSON:

I'm sorry doctor but I'm not sure what business it is of yours.

BILL:

Well, it's just that I first heard you say the girl was unbalanced, and then you called her depraved. Those things are a little contradictory.

GIBSON (a bit theatrically)

Well, aren't insanity and depravity the same in the eyes of God?

The last thing BILL wants right now is to get into an argument with GIBSON, so he replies in his most professional manner.

BILL:

Well, in any event, there are things that can be done that might help the situation. Maybe we can have another talk about it tomorrow.

Gibson laughs mockingly without uttering a sound.

EXT STREET OUTSIDE COSTUME SHOP - NIGHT

Bill, carrying two plastic shopping bags with his clothes in them, hails a taxi.

He checks at a slip of paper with the address on it.

BILL:

How do you feel about going out to Sands Point Long Island?

The driver makes a face.

BILL:

How about twenty bucks over the meter?

CAB DRIVER (shakes his head)
I'll have to come back empty.

BILL:

How's fifty?

CAB DRIVER:

Fifty's good.
EXT VARIOUS TAXI DRIVE-BYS - NIGHT (2ND UNIT)
Brooklyn bridge
L.I. Expressway
INT CAB BILL - NIGHT
V.O.

Bills Thoughts:

mad."
EXT LONG ISLAND MANSION ROAD - NIGHT
The cab drives slowly down a wooded road.

INT CAB:

BILL looking out for the house.
Up ahead, he sees a stretch-limo with darkened windows pulling into a drive protected by iron gates flanked by two gatehouses.
As they drive slowly past the gates, BILL sees a sign that says, 'Bletchly Manor'.

BILL:

Okay, driver - that's the place.
Stop a little way down the road.
The car comes to a stop.
The meter says \$75.50
BILL takes out his wallet.

BILL:

Okay, here's eighty dollars and...

BILL carefully tears a hundred-dollar bill in half and gives one part to the driver.

BILL:

...I promised you fifty bucks over the meter but I'll make it a hundred if you wait for me. Let the meter run and

you'll get the other half plus the meter
when I come back... Okay?
The driver gives BILL a wary look.

CAB DRIVER:

How long will you be?

BILL:

That's the thing - I'm not sure. I
could be ten minutes. I could be an
hour or so. But look, I'm leaving all my
stuff in the back. Okay?
The cab driver takes half of the torn hundred-dollar bill.

CAB DRIVER:

Okay.

BILL gets out of the cab, puts on the monk's cassock, throws his coat
over his shoulders and walks back to the gates.

EXT GATES - NIGHT

The iron gates are closed and no one is in sight.

Security cameras look at him.

The road leading to the Manor House curves away into a small wood
which covers the house.

BILL rings a bell at the side of the gate and two men promptly
come out of the gate house.

GATEMAN 1 (polite and well-spoken)

Good morning, sir.

BILL:

Good morning.

GATEMAN 1

Can we be of any help you?

BILL:

I suppose you'd like the password?

GATEMAN 1

If you wouldn't mind, sir.

BILL (slowly)

Fidelio Rainbow.

GATEMAN 1

Thank you, sir.

The gate is opened.

GATEMAN 1

Is that your taxi down there, sir?

BILL:

Uh - yes. Yes - my chauffeur came down with the flu at the last minute.

GATEMAN 1

The cabby could have driven you right to the door.

BILL:

Listen, I'm lucky I got here at all. The guy's straight from Bulgaria.

Bill laughs uncomfortably without getting a penny's change from the men.

GATEMAN 1 (pointing a car)

If you'd like to get in the car, sir. We'll run you up to the house.

BILL:

Okay. Thanks.

They get into the car.

Gateman 2 remains at the gate.

INT CAR:

Bill sits silently next to the driver.

POV - THE LONG ISLAND - MANOR HOUSE - NIGHT

INT CAR:

GATEMAN 1 (tactfully)

This might be a good time to put on your mask, sir.

BILL (casually)

Oh, yes. Of course.

BILL takes the mask from his pocket and puts it on.

EXT MANOR HOUSE - NIGHT

The car pulls up and BILL gets out.

BILL:

Thanks.

He walks up the stone steps and the front doors are opened before he reaches them.

INT HOUSE:

BILL enters a large, candlelit, mirrored vestibule where two servants in black suits, their faces covered by grey masks, whisper in unison:

SERVANTS:

Password?

BILL:

Fidelio Rainbow.

SERVANT 1

Thank you, sir.

One of them takes his coat, while the other opens a door.

BILL enters a long room, dimly lit with candles, with high ceilings and walls covered with black silk.

A line of mirrored doors on each side run the length of the room.

There are about fifty men and women dressed as monks and nuns, their faces completely covered by masks.

Gently swelling strains of Italian liturgical music comes from an organ playing somewhere.

As his eyes become accustomed to the dim light, BILL sees that the women are naked beneath the full-length, black veils that flow down from their head bands.

His eyes wander from voluptuous bodies to slender bodies, from delicate to richly developed figures, and he is filled with inexpressible desire.

Occasionally, eyes turn towards him but immediately look away as soon as he notices them.

A monk brushes against him and nods a greeting, but from behind the mask BILL sense a searching and penetrating glance.

A strange, heavy perfume, as of southern gardens, pervades the room.

Again an arm brushes against him, but this time it is that of a nun. Her face is fully masked, and like the others, naked under the black transparent lace of her veil.

THE WOMAN:

You don't belong here. There's still a chance for you to get away.

BILL is momentarily unnerved by this but he is also completely captivated by the beauty and sensuality of this woman.

BILL:

I'm terribly sorry but I think you've

mistaken me for someone else.

THE WOMAN:

Please don't be foolish about this. You must leave at once.

BILL:

Who are you?

THE WOMAN:

It doesn't matter. You must go.

BILL:

Will you come with me?

THE WOMAN:

That's impossible.

BILL:

Impossible?

THE WOMAN:

Impossible.

BILL:

Is there someplace else here we could go?

THE WOMAN:

Absolutely not. Please believe me, if you are discovered it will go hard with you.

BILL moves closer to her but she steps back.

ANOTHER WOMAN:

What's the matter. Why don't you dance?

BILL sees two men watching him from another corner and suspects that this woman has been sent to put him to the test.

He smiles.

BILL:

I would love to dance.

But just at that moment, THE WOMAN returns.
She pretends that she has just noticed him and says in a voice that
can be heard by the two men.

THE WOMAN:

Returned at last.

(she laughs)

All your efforts are useless. I know you.

Then turning to the other woman she whispers:

THE WOMAN:

Let me have him first - just for a while.

The other woman smiles agreement, and with a light step goes to join
the two men who have been watching.

THE WOMAN:

Don't ask any questions, and don't be
surprised at anything. I have tried to
lead them astray but you can't fool
them for much longer. Go before it is
too late, - and be careful that no one
follows you. No one must know who
you are. There would be no more
peace for you. Go!

BILL:

[illegible]?

THE WOMAN:

There is no way.

He takes her hand and draws her closer to him.

BILL:

I must see you again.

She whispers, despairingly

THE WOMAN:

Go.

BILL:

Is there no way I can ever see you
again.

THE WOMAN:

No. We must never meet again. It could cost your life and mine.

Just at that moment, a tall man stops before them, and with a slight bow, courteous but imperative, says:

TALL MAN:

Will you dance with me?

THE WOMAN hesitates but the TALL MAN puts his arm around her waist and leads her away the adjoining room.

A moment later, a voice whispers behind BILL.

ELEGANT MAN:

Password!

BILL turns around and sees two men.

One, heavy-set, the other, slim and elegant.

ELEGANT MAN:

Password!

BILL:

Fidelio Rainbow.

ELEGANT MAN:

That's right, sir. That's the password for admittance, but may I ask what is the password for the house?

BILL is stuck. He takes a deep breath..

ELEGANT MAN:

Won't you be kind enough to tell me the password of the house?

This time it sounds like a threat.

BILL can't think of anything to say. He shakes his head and shrugs.

BILL:

Sorry. It looks like I must have forgotten it.

The elegant man walks to the middle of the room and raises his hand. Everything gradually comes to a stop.

Blindfolded, Nick stops playing when someone places a hand on his shoulder and whispers something to him.

With all eyes on him, the two men walk back to BILL.

ELEGANT MAN:

The password, sir! I must demand that you give it.

BILL:

Look, I'm terribly sorry but I've told you, I must have forgotten it.

ELEGANT MAN:

That's unfortunate. For here it doesn't matter whether you have forgotten it or if you never knew it.

The rest of the men slowly gather around BILL.

BILL:

Well, gentlemen, I seem to owe you all an apology.

ELEGANT MAN:

It is too late for apologies.

BILL:

Well, be that as it may, you have my most sincere regrets for not remembering the second password.

ELEGANT MAN:

I'm afraid this is not a question of regret but of expiation.

BILL:

Well, gentlemen, you must excuse me now. I am leaving.

ELEGANT MAN:

I'm afraid that is no longer possible.

BILL:

Gentlemen, don't you think this farce has gone far enough?
BILL looks for a way out but no one makes way for him.

ELEGANT MAN:

You will kindly remove your mask.

BILL looks around at the masked faces surrounding him.

ELEGANT MAN (sharply)

Please remove your mask.

BILL slowly removes his mask and puts it in his pocket.

THE WOMAN:

I am ready to redeem him.

There is a murmur of surprise in the room.

THE WOMAN reaches for the veil, which is wrapped around her head, face and neck and unwinds it with a wonderful circular movement.

It sinks to the floor, leaving her naked, her dark hair falling in great profusion over her shoulders, breasts and hips.

ELEGANT MAN:

You are ready to redeem him?

THE WOMAN:

Yes, I am.

There is a low gasp from the assemblage.

ELEGANT MAN:

You know what you're taking upon yourself in doing this?

THE WOMAN:

Yes.

Another murmur from the room.

The elegant man turns back to BILL.

ELEGANT MAN:

You are free. Leave this house at once. But first I must warn you that if you make any further inquiries or inform anyone about what you have seen here tonight, there will be the most serious consequences for yourself and your family. Do you understand that?

BILL doesn't reply immediately.

BILL:

How is this woman to redeem me?

ELEGANT MAN:

That has nothing to do with you.

BILL shakes his head.

BILL:

I can't let this woman pay for me.

ELEGANT MAN:

You would be unable, in any case, to change her fate. When a promise has been made here, there is no turning back.

THE WOMAN:

Go! You cannot save me.

As she says this, she tears off the mask, allowing BILL a momentary glimpse of her face.

Then he is seized by irresistible arms and pushed out.

INT BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It is four o'clock in the morning.

BILL, now changed back into his own clothes, enters his apartment.

Everyone is asleep.

He goes into his study and locks the costume and tux in a closet.

In order not to wake ALICE, he undresses before going into the bedroom.

BEDROOM:

ALICE is asleep, lying with her arms folded under her head

Her lips are half open and painful shadows surround them.

It is a face BILL does not know.

He bends down over her, and at once her forehead becomes lined with furrows, as though someone had touched it, and her features seem strangely distorted.

Suddenly, still in her sleep, she laughs so shrilly that he becomes alarmed.

BILL (involuntarily)

Alice.

She laughs again, as if in answer, in a strange, almost uncanny manner.

BILL:

Alice?

She opens her eyes, slowly and with difficulty.

She stares at him, as though she does not recognise him.

BILL (softly)

Alice?

As she wakes up, an expression of fear, even of terror comes into her eyes.

Half awake, and seemingly in despair, she raises her arms.

BILL:

What's the matter?

ALICE stares at him, still frightened.

BILL:

Alice, it's me.

ALICE breathes deeply, tries to smile, drops her arms on the blanket.

ALICE (in a far away voice)

Is it morning yet?

BILL:

It will be very soon. It's a little past four o'clock. I've just come home.

She nods but barely seems to have heard or understood him.

She stares into space, as though she can see through him.

He bends over and touches her forehead.

She shudders slightly.

BILL:

What's the matter?

She shakes her head slowly and he passes his hand gently over her hair.

BILL:

Alice, you laughed so strangely.

What's the matter?

ALICE (distantly)

I've been dreaming.

BILL (gently)

What have you been dreaming?

ALICE:

Oh, so much, I can't quite remember.

BILL (gently)

Perhaps if you try.

ALICE:

It was all so confused - and I'm tired. You must be tired, too.

BILL:

Not really. I don't think I'll go to bed at all. You know, sometimes when I come home so late it's better to just go straight to work.

ALICE nods without interest.

BILL:

But why don't you tell me about your dream?

He smiles a little artificially.

ALICE:

You really ought to lie down and take a little rest.

BILL hesitates a moment, then he stretches himself beside her, though he is careful not to touch her.

They lie there silently with open eyes, and they feel both their closeness and the distance that separates them.

After a while he raises his head on his arm and looks at her for a long time, as though he can see much more than just the outlines of her face.

BILL:

Tell me about your dream.

Bill says this, once more, as if she had been waiting for his invitation. She holds out her hand to him, he takes it, and as he had often done before, he holds it and plays with her slender fingers, more absent-mindedly than tenderly.

ALICE sighs and begins to speak uncertainly.

ALICE:

I think it started in my parents house.

They weren't there. I was alone. That surprised me because our wedding was the next day and I didn't have a wedding dress.

Then you and I were floating above a ancient city. It was a kind of crazy mix of ancient architectural styles.

Oriental, Egyptian, Greek and Roman architecture. And it was completely deserted. The streets were empty - no people, no animals. And I remember thinking, so this is our honeymoon.

Then it was night and the sky was so full of stars, and so blue and wide it seemed like it was painted. You said it was the ceiling of our bridal chamber and you took me in your arms and made love to me and said you would love me forever.

BILL:

I hope you loved me, too.

BILL says this with an invisible, malicious smile.

ALICE:

Even more than you did me. We made love and it was wonderful, though there was a sadness to it, and a presentment of sorrow.

Suddenly it was morning and we were somewhere in the strange city.

We were still completely alone. But something terrible had happened - our clothes were gone. I was terrified as I had never been before, and felt such a burning shame that it almost consumed me.

At the same time I was furious with you because I thought it was your fault. And this sensation of terror, shame and fury was more intense than any emotion I had ever felt before.

You felt guilty and rushed away naked,

to go and get clothes for us.
As soon as you were gone I felt
wonderful. I neither felt sorry for you,
or worried about you. It was heavenly
to be alone.

I was lying in a lush garden, stretched
out naked in the sunlight, and I was far
more beautiful than I ever was in
reality.

And while I lay there, a young man
walked out of the woods. He was the
young Naval officer I told you about
from the hotel.

He looked different but I knew it was
him. He stopped in front of me and
looked at me searchingly.

I laughed seductively and wantonly, as
I have never laughed in my life, and he
held out his arms to me and sank down
beside me.

ALICE falls silent. BILLS throat is parched. In the darkness of the room
he can see she has concealed her face in her hands.

BILL:

A strange dream, but that's not the
end, is it?

ALICE doesn't reply.

BILL:

Was that the end?

ALICE:

No.

BILL:

Then why don't you tell me the rest of
it?

ALICE:

It's not easy. Some things are not easy
to say.

BILL:

It's was only a dream.

ALICE sighs and continues, hesitantly.

ALICE:

He looked at me...and slowly took me
in his arms...and we began making
love.

ALICE (continuing)

I seemed to live through countless
days and nights - there was neither
time nor space. And the more we
made love the more our hunger for
each other increased.

And just as that earlier feeling of terror
and shame went beyond anything I had
ever felt, so nothing can be compared
with the freedom and happiness and
the..._desire_ that I now felt.

Then I realized there other couples
around us - hundreds of them, and
they too were making love.

Then I was making love to the other
men, and as soon as my longing was
satisfied with one, I wanted another.

I can't say how many I was with.

And yet I didn't for one moment forget
you. And all this time, you were
buying the most beautiful clothes and
jewellery you could find for me.

Then you were being followed by a
crowd of people who were shouting
threats. Then you were seized by
soldiers, and there were also priests
among them. Somebody - a gigantic
person, tied your hands. You were still
naked.

I knew you were going to be crucified
but I felt no sympathy for you. I still
blamed you for everything that had
happened.

I felt that I was far removed from you
but I knew you could see me naked in

the arms of countless men in this sea
of nakedness which foamed around
me.

The soldiers began to whip you and
blood flowed down you in streams. I
saw it without feeling any surprise or
pity.

Then you smiled at me as if to show
you had fulfilled my wish and bought
me everything I wanted. But I thought
your actions were ridiculous and I
wanted to make fun of you - to laugh in
your face.

They began to nail you to the cross
and I hoped that you would be able to
hear my laughter. And so I laughed as
shrill and loud as I could... That must
have been the laugh that you heard
when I woke up.

Neither of them moves or says anything. Any remark at this moment
would seem futile.

BILL realizes he is still holding ALICE'S hand.

She remains silent and motionless.

Ready as he is to hate her, his feeling of tenderness for these slender,
cool fingers is unchanged except that it is more acute.

Involuntarily, he gently presses his lips on the familiar hand before
he lets it go.

ALICE'S eyes are closed and there is the trace of a happy, innocent
smile playing about her mouth.

He feels an incomprehensible desire to make love to her.

He rolls over and puts his arm around her but then checks himself.

He stretches himself out beside ALICE, who now seems asleep.

As he closes his eyes, he thinks:

V.O.

Whore of her dreams.

There is now a sword between us.

We are lying here like mortal enemies.

INT BILL'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAWN

BILL rises at 6 o'clock and dresses while ALICE is still asleep.

He has only had a couple of hours sleep and looks awful.

HELENA'S BEDROOM

On his way out he stops off in his daughter's room. She is asleep in
her bed. He kisses her on the forehead.

STUDY:

He collects his costume and leaves.

EXT CAFE SONATA - DAY

Taxi pulls up and BILL gets out.

He takes a cab to the Cafe Sonata where he met Nick Nightingale.

It is closed but he peers in through the window and sees the chairs are stacked on the tables and the place is being cleaned.

He taps on the glass.

After a couple of "we're closed" wave-offs from the manageress working at a table in the back, the door is finally opened by one of the cleaners.

BILL:

Good morning. I'd like to have a quick word with the manager, if I may.

CLEANING LADY:

Someone for you, Vicki.

MANAGERESS:

Okay.

Bill walks to the table she is seated at.

BILL:

Good morning.

MANAGERESS:

What can I do for you?

BILL:

It's very important that I get in touch with Nick Nightingale.

MANAGERESS:

He'll be in tonight.

BILL:

It's something I need to see him about this morning.

MANAGERESS:

It's not our policy to give out employees

addresses.

BILL:

Of course. I completely understand. But
I'm a doctor...

(shows her his medical card)

...and this is a personal medical matter
I know he'll want to know about as
soon as possible.

EXT HOTEL JASON - DAY

BILL's taxi pulls up. It's a small, mid-town hotel.

INT - LOBBY

There is no one in the lobby except for the DESK CLERK, a man in
his early thirties, reading a paperback.

BILL:

Good morning.

DESK CLERK:

Good morning, sir. How can I help
you?

BILL:

Can you ring Mr. Nightingale's room
for me, please?

The DESK CLERK gives him a strange look.

BILL (smiles)

Nick Nightingale?

DESK CLERK:

I'm sorry, sir, but he's checked out.
The DESK CLERK has a slight, gay lisp.

BILL:

He checked out?

DESK CLERK:

Yes.

BILL:

Did he leave a forwarding address?

DESK CLERK:

No, I'm afraid not.

BILL:

When did he check out?

DESK CLERK:

About five o'clock this morning.

BILL:

Five o'clock. That's a pretty early check out, isn't it?

DESK CLERK:

It is a little bit on the early side.

BILL:

Did you happen to notice whether there was there anything strange about him when he left?

DESK CLERK:

You aren't a detective, by any chance?

BILL:

No, I'm a doctor. Nick and I are old friends.

DESK CLERK:

Well, since you ask, there was something very strange about the way Mr. Nightingale left.

BILL:

What was that?

DESK CLERK:

Well, he came in at about four-thirty a.m. There were two men with him - big-guys.

The DESK CLERK bends his elbows and clenches his fists to make a 'big-guy' gesture.

DESK CLERK:

And I noticed he had a bruise on his
cheek I'm sure he didn't have the night
before.

The two men with him were

well-dressed and well-spoken, but they
weren't the kind of people you'd want
to fool around with, if you know what I
mean.

Mr. Nightingale said he would be
checking out and went up to his room
with one of the men.

The other one stayed in the lobby and
settled his bill, which was a couple of
weeks overdue.

When they came down, I thought Mr.
Nightingale looked...well - _scared_.
Very scared, if you ask me.

He tried to pass me an envelope but
they saw him and took it away and
said any mail or messages for him
would be collected by a person properly
authorised to do so. When they took
him outside, I could see there was a
car waiting for them.

BILL:

No idea where they might have gone?

DESK CLERK:

None at all.

EXT COSTUME SHOP - DAY

BILL enters.

INT COSTUME SHOP - DAY

GIBSON:

Ah-hhh, the good doctor.

BILL:

Good afternoon.

GIBSON:

Did you enjoy your evening?

BILL:

Yes, it was fine.

BILL hands him the clothes. Gibson carefully takes the them out of the bag and lays them out on the counter to check them.

GIBSON:

I think you've forgotten the mask.

BILL:

Oh - isn't it there?

GIBSON:

It's not here. Maybe you left it at the party.

BILL:

I don't know. I must have lost it. Just put it on the bill.

GIBSON:

Okay and if it turns up just bring it in and I'll give you a refund?

BILL:

Fine.

BILL watches as GIBSON writes up the bill.

BILL:

I wonder if this might be a good time to have a word or two about your daughter?

The question a peculiar expression about Gibson's nostrils.

GIBSON:

A word or two about my daughter?

BILL speaks with outstretched fingers resting on the desk.

BILL:

Well, it's just that last night I think you said that your daughter was not quite normal, mentally. The situation in which we found her certainly suggests

something like that. And since I took part in it, or was at least a spectator, I feel I should recommend that you to get some medical advice.
GIBSON smiles at BILL, insolently.

GIBSON:

And I suppose you yourself would like to take charge of the treatment?

At this moment, a door which leads to one of the inner rooms opens, and a young man with a top-coat over his evening clothes steps out. BILL recognises him as one of the KIMONO men from the night before.

He also catches a glimpse of the YOUNG GIRL, in bra and panties getting dressed, behind him before the door closes.

The KIMONO MAN

seems taken aback when he sees BILL, but he regains his composure at once.

He lights a cigarette with a match from Gibson's counter, waves goodbye and leaves the shop.

BILL:

So that's how it is.

GIBSON (with perfect equanimity)

What did you say?

BILL:

Last night you were going to call the police.

GIBSON:

We've come to another arrangement.

Gibson slides the credit-card slip across the desk.

BILL looks it over.

GIBSON:

Okay. It's a hundred and fifty for the basic rental. Two hundred for the inconvenience. Twenty five for the mask. And I've credited the three hundred deposit. Okay?

BILL nods.

GIBSON:

And if the doctor should ever want anything again...

(smiles)

...it needn't be a monk's costume.

EXT BILL'S SURGERY - DAY

INT BILL'S SURGERY - DAY

Possible scene.

BILL'S colleague, MAX

In addition to whatever else they may talk about, BILL says he feels a bit under the weather and asks MAX to take his appointments for the afternoon.

EXT BILL'S SURGERY - DAY

BILL hails a taxi and makes a another deal to go to the house in Long Island.

INT CAB - DAY

BILLS thoughts.

V.O.

To be written

EXT VARIOUS POV'S DAY

59th street Bridge.

L.I. Express way.

EXT LONG ISLAND MANSION - DAY

When the cab arrives there, nothing suspicious is in sight, no cars or pedestrians.

It stops a little past the house and BILL gets out and walks to the gates.

The big gates are locked and there is no one in sight.

He hears the faint whine of the zoom lens motor on one of the surveillance cameras.

He looks up anxiously but is determined to carry out his inquiry.

He rings the bell mounted on one of the gate pillars.

He hears the motor of another surveillance camera, as it pans on to him.

He waits.

A few moments later, a car slowly approaches down the road from the house and stops at the gate.

An elderly servant gets out and walks slowly to the gate.

He holds a letter and without a word pushes it through the iron bars to BILL, whose heart is beating wildly.

BILL:

For me?

The servant nods, walks back to the car and drives back up the road. BILL looks at the envelope and sees: 'Dr. William Harford' written on it in a neat, dignified handwriting.

How did they know his name?

He opens the envelope and unfolds a sheet of writing paper.

Give up your inquiries which are completely useless, and consider these words a second warning. We hope, for your own good, that this will be sufficient.

BILL stands there looking at the note.

EXT CAB - DAY

Driving back to New York

INT CAB - DAY

BILL looks up from the letter, thoughtfully.

V.O.

Second warning -? Why the second warning - and not the last?.

The tone of the note was strangely reserved and seemed to show that the people who sent it by no means felt secure.

The note disappointed him, though, in a way, it reassured him, just why he couldn't say.

But, at least, he now felt the woman had come to no real harm, and that it

would be possible to find her if he went about it cautiously and cleverly.

INT BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

BILL is eating. ALICE and HELENA with him, keeping him company at the table..

Some simple, natural dialog will be worked out for the action, over which the V.O. will be heard.

V.O.

He had gone home, feeling a little tired but surprisingly cheerful, with a strange sense of security, which somehow seemed deceptive.

He was in an excited and cheerful mood and he felt unusually fresh and clear in spite of spending the last two nights without sleep

At the same time, he felt that all this

order, this normality, all the security of his existence, was nothing but deception and delusion.

POV of ALICE smiling.

And, he thought, there she sits with an angelic look, like a good wife and mother - the whore of her dreams who made love to a hundred men the preceding night and laughed when he was crucified, and to his surprise he didn't hate her.

ALICE:

Do you have to go out tonight?

BILL:

I'm afraid so. I've got some patients to see in the hospital.

EXT MARION'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

BILL gets out of a cab..

INT MARION'S LOBBY - NIGHT

He meets, her fiance, Carl, on his way out. Carl holds out his hand cordially and they exchange greetings.

BILL:

How is Marion?

CARL:

Only so-so.

BILL:

I was hoping she would have begun to come to terms with things by now. Carl shakes his head..

CARL:

She's taken it very hard. And when came for the body...it was just terrible.

BILL (nods)

I suppose her relatives are with her now?

CARL:

No, they won't be coming until tonight.
She'll be very glad to have some
company. I'm taking her to stay with
my mother in Connecticut tomorrow.

BILL (nods)

That's probably just what she needs.

CARL (putting out his hand)

Well, good to see you again. It's
unbelievable how much there is to do
to arrange a funeral.

INT MARION'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marion opens the door.

She is dressed in black. Her face becomes slightly flushed.

MARION (smiling wearily)

You made me wait a long time.

BILL:

I'm sorry, Marion. This was a
particularly busy day for me.

In the living room, Marion smiles and offers him a seat on the couch,
sitting down next to him.

BILL takes her hand in his and looks at her warmly.

She makes little attempt to hide her desperate love.

BILL:

I bumped into Carl downstairs. He said
you're going to Connecticut tomorrow.

She gazes into his eyes, mournfully.

MARION:

I won't go if you don't want me to.

BILL gives her a long look, leans forward and kisses her on the lips.
They embrace and fall back on the couch.

MARION:

Oh, Bill, I love you. I love you so much.

He kisses her and starts to fondle her breasts and other regions.

MARION (whimpers)

Oh, Bill, I love you. I love you.

BILL:

Marion.

BILL just pronounces her name softly and continues to undo her clothes.

Then she begins to weep.

BILL tries to ignore this but she doesn't stop.

BILL (whispers)

What's wrong?

At first, MARION doesn't reply.

BILL:

What's wrong?

MARION (smiling through her tears)

Nothing.

BILL (coldly)

Nothing.

BILL sits up.

BILL:

Martion, what is the matter?

MARION:

Oh, Bill, it's just that it all seems so hopeless.

BILL frowns.

MARION:

What's going to happen to us?

This is definitely not what BILL had in mind and he looks away.

MARION:

Are you angry with me for saying that?

BILL:

No, of course not.

MARION:

You are angry.

BILL:

I'm not angry.

She rests her chin on his shoulder.

MARION:

Oh, Bill... Say something nice to me. I

am so confused.
BILL doesn't move.

BILL:

Marion, I guess this is crazy. I'm a happily married man with a child, and you are engaged to Carl. Marion's shoulders droop.

BILL:

I'm sure the best thing for your to do is to go Connecticut tomorrow with Carl as you had planned. A complete change of environment and the fresh air will do you a world of good. Marion sits motionless and tears begin to stream down her face. BILL sits in silence for a few moments, feeling impatience rather than sympathy. Then he looks at his watch and gets to his feet.

BILL:

Marion, my dear, much as I regret it... He would gladly say something kinder to her, but finds it difficult to do so.

BILL:

If we don't see each other before the wedding, let me offer you my most sincere congratulations and best wishes. She doesn't move, as though she understands neither his congratulations nor his farewell. He holds out his hand but she refuses it, and he says almost

reproachfully:

BILL:

I hope you'll keep in touch and let me know how you are. She sits there as if turned to stone.

BILL:

Goodbye Marion.

He leaves the room, stopping for a second in the doorway, as though giving her a last opportunity to call him back.

But she turns her head away.

EXT STREET - ON WAY TO DOMINO - NIGHT

BILL walks.

INT/EXT BAKERY - BILL BUYS A CAKE - NIGHT

Seen through the window.

EXT. DOMINO STREET - NIGHT

Bill walks down the street where he was picked up the night before by the young prostitute, Domino.

He carries a small cake-box tied with a blue ribbon.

He finds the address and rings the bell. The buzzer sounds and he goes in.

INT DOMINO STAIRCASE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

An arty looking woman in her forties opens the door on the chain.

ARTY WOMAN:

Hi. What can I do for you?

BILL:

Good evening. I'm looking for Domino

ARTY WOMAN:

Domino?

BILL:

Yes. Is she in by any chance?

An attractive girl in her twenties, wet hair and wrapped in a towel robe, pokes her head out.

SALLY (smiles)

You're looking for Domino? You'll have to excuse the way I look. I just got out of the bath...

BILL:

Yes. Is she in?

SALLY takes the door off the chain.

SALLY:

Come in for a minute.

INT DOMINO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill enters the apartment.

SALLY:

Hi. I'm Sally. This is Pietra.

Ad-libs of hellos.

Bill looks around - no Domino.

SALLY:

Well, as you can see, Domino's out.

BILL:

Okay. Do you expect her back soon?

SALLY:

I don't think so.

ARTY WOMAN:

Maybe tomorrow.

BILL:

Okay. Well, I'll just leave this cake for her, if I may.

ARTY WOMAN (akes the cake)

Okay. Great. We'll see that she gets it.

BILL:

Is she out of town?

ARTY WOMAN:

Uh--no, actually, she's in the hospital.

Sally gives her a look.

BILL:

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. I hope it's nothing serious.

ARTY WOMAN:

We're not really sure. It was for some kind of tests.

Sally gives her another look and moves close to BILL, her towel robe parting a little to show her naked underneath.

SALLY:

Listen, I'm not sure what's was on your mind but if it was more than cake,

there's nothing wrong with me.

BILL hesitates.

BILL:

Look, I'd love to but some other time.

Okay? I was just passing by with the cake.

SALLY:

You sure?

BILL (nods)

I've really got to go.

EXT DOMINO STREET - BILL WALKING - NIGHT
V.O.

Was this another and final sign that everything he put his hand to was bound to turn out a failure for him? But why should it be. Wasn't the fact that he had just escaped a possibly fatal infection from the girl a good sign? Everything now seemed so unreal; his home, his wife, his child, his profession, and even himself.

Bill felt choked with tears. He had not slept for two days and his nerves were gradually giving way.

He intentionally struck up a quicker pace than he was in the mood for.

EXT STREET - BILL FOLLOWED - NIGHT

Suddenly, BILL feels he is being followed.

He glances back and sees a man about half a block behind him walking at the same rapid pace.

As soon as the man notices BILL has seen him, he stops and looks in a shop window.

SHORT SEQUENCE OF THE MAN FOLLOWING BILL - SEVERAL

STREETS:

STREET - NEWS-STAND NEAR COFFEE SHOP

BILL stops at the news-stand and buys a paper.

He looks back again.

The man is still there, walking slowly towards him.

BILL goes into a nearby Coffee Bar.

INT COFFEE BAR - NIGHT

Bill sits down at a table against the wall, keeping an eye on the door. A waitress comes over with a glass of ice water and a plastic menu.

WAITRESS:

Hi. Would you like to order now?

BILL:

Sure.

BILL manages a tired smile and looks at the menu.

BILL:

I'll have...a cup of coffee and...maybe a cheese Danish.

WAITRESS:

Okay, great.

She leaves, taking away the menu.

BILL opens his eyes as wide as possible, arches his neck and drinks some water. He looks terrible.

He idly picks up the newspaper he just bought and starts to look through it.

A story catches his eye.

EX-BEAUTY QUEEN IN HOTEL DRUGS OVERDOSE

Kelly Curran, 30, a former Miss Wisconsin, was taken to New York Hospital this morning in critical condition after taking a drugs overdose.

She was found unconscious when police broke into her room at the San Carlos hotel after she failed to respond to efforts to contact her.

The night manager told police she had returned to the hotel at four o'clock in the morning accompanied by two unidentified men.

V.O.

Four o'clock in the morning! The same time he returned home!

And accompanied by two men!

Wasn't it two men who took Nick Nightingale from his hotel only an hour later?

There was no compelling reason to believe that Kelly Curran and a certain other woman were one and the same.

And yet - his heart throbbed and his hand trembled.

BILL looks for the waitress to get his check.

At the same time, he notices the man who had been following him sitting at another table.

The man slowly raises a newspaper, partly covering his face.

BILL pays his check.

At the door, he turns to look for the suspicious character at the table but he is already gone.

EXT HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Establishing shot

INT HOSPITAL:

BILL the signs to the Emergency Room Waiting Area.

He walks up a young black woman at the information desk.

BILL:

Good evening, I'm Doctor Harford. I'd like to see a patient of mine who I believe was admitted this morning. He shows her his identity card.

CLERK:

Okay, thanks, Doctor. What did you say the name was?

BILL:

Curran, Kelly Curran.

CLERK:

C..u..r..r..a..n?

BILL:

Yes.
The woman keyboards the letters into her computer. Something comes up on her screen that makes her stop.

CLERK:

Kelly Curran, right?

BILL:

That's right.

CLERK:

I'm sorry, doctor, but I'm afraid she died this afternoon.

BILL:

What?

CLERK:

Yes, at three-forty five, p.m.

BILL stares at her.

He feels strangely relieved.

BILL:

Is the body in the hospital morgue?

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR ON WAY TO MORGUE

BILL follows a black male orderly down a hospital corridor.

INT MORGUE:

The morgue is a brightly lit, white-tiled room with six autopsy tables and fifty numbered crypts.

There is no one else working in the room.

The black orderly checks a slip of paper and goes to that crypt.

He opens the door, slides out the pallet and pulls down the sheet covering the body.

BILL stares down at the naked body of a young woman.

The orderly gives BILL an inquiring look. BILL nods and the orderly crosses the room and lights a cigarette.

BILL lifts the woman's head a little.

Her face is white. Her half-closed eyes stare at him. The lower jaw hangs down limply, the narrow upper lip is drawn up, revealing bluish gums and a beautiful set of white teeth.

He gently lays her head back on the pallet.

His eyes follow the lines of her body.

He touches her forehead and her cheeks, her shoulders and her arms, doing so as if compelled and directed to by an invisible power.

He twines his fingers about those of the corpse, and rigid as they are, they seem to make an effort to move, to seize his hand.

He bends over her, as if magically attracted.

V.O.

Was this the woman he was seeking?

Were these the eyes that had shone at him the day before with so much

passion?

Was this the alluring body for which,
only yesterday, he had felt such
agonising desire?

He bent lower, as if he could extract
an answer from the rigid features.

But he had only seen her face for an
instant, and he knew that if it were
her face, and _her_ eyes, he would not,
could not - and in reality did not want
to know.

He also realized that from the time he

read the account in the newspaper, he
had imagined her as having the
features of his wife.

And he shuddered to realise that his
wife had constantly been in his mind's
eye as the woman he had been
seeking.

He frees his fingers from those of the corpse, and taking her thin
wrists, places the ice cold arms alongside the body very carefully.
He looks at the orderly.

BILL:

Okay - thanks. I'm finished.

Bill watches the orderly slide the pallet back into the crypt and close
the door.

ORDERLY:

Want to wash up, Doc?

He gestures to a row of sinks.

BILL:

Thanks.

BILL goes over and carefully washes his hands with disinfectant.

His cellular phone goes off.

BILL:

Hello... Yes... That's perfectly all
right... Okay... Oh, I guess about
twenty minutes... Okay... Goodbye.

EXT ZIEGLER MANSION - NIGHT

BILL's taxi pulls up.

There are only a few lights on inside, giving the house a more
sombre appearance from the night of the Christmas party.

The butler opens the door and takes BILL's coat.
Ziegler's assistant, HARRIS, appears.

HARRIS:

Good evening, Dr. Harford.

BILL:

Good evening.

HARRIS:

Thank you for coming over so quickly.

BILL:

What seems to be the problem?

HARRIS:

I'm afraid I don't know. Will you follow
me, please?

BILL follows HARRIS. Their footsteps sound loud in the quiet house.
They stop in front of the library door and HARRIS knocks.

ZIEGLER (o.s.)

Come in.

HARRIS opens the door for BILL and closes it behind him, remaining
outside.

ZIEGLER gets up from an armchair and shakes hands.

ZIEGLER:

Hi, Bill. Sorry to drag you over here at
this time of night.

BILL:

No problem.

ZIEGLER:

What are you drinking?

BILL:

Well, I suppose a brandy would be
nice.

ZIEGLER (going to the bar)

It was lovely to see you and Alice the other night.

BILL:

It was a wonderful party and we had a great time.

ZIEGLER:

It's a shame you had to leave so early.

BILL:

We hated to go but I had a couple of early appointments.

ZIEGLER hands him his brandy and they touch glasses.

BOTH:

Cheers.

BILL:

Nice..

ZIEGLER:

Napoleon, 1935.

BILL looks suitably impressed.

BILL:

So - what seems to be the problem?

Someone under the weather?

ZIEGLER looks into his brandy glass.

ZIEGLER:

Can I be frank, Bill?

BILL:

Of course.

ZIEGLER:

I'm afraid what I've got to say is a bit awkward to talk about.

BILL:

I'm your doctor.

ZIEGLER rotates his brandy.

ZIEGLER:

This isn't a medical problem.

BILL:

Oh.

ZIEGLER:

No.

BILL looks at him, quizzically.

ZIEGLER nods and returns a tense smile.

ZIEGLER:

I'm not exactly sure how to begin this.
But maybe the best thing is to just to
put the cards on the table and say that
I happen to know quite a lot about
what you've been doing for the past
twenty-four hours.
He lets this sink in.

BILL:

Sorry, Victor but may I ask what the
hell are you're talking about?

ZIEGLER (quietly)

Bill, please believe me, I know this is
awkward - perhaps as awkward for
me as it is for you. Okay?

Bill says nothing.

ZIEGLER:

Okay?... Now, the reason I wanted to
talk to you is that I think you may be
harbouring one or two
misapprehensions about last night,
which I would like to clear up.
Silence.

ZIEGLER:

Okay. I think I should also tell you that
I was there. At the house.

ZIEGLER says this in a very matter-of-fact way.

ZIEGLER:

I saw everything that happened.
A long pause.

BILL:

Well, what an amazing coincidence.

ZIEGLER:

The words practically right out of my
mouth. An amazing coincidence.

That's what I first thought. But then I
remembered seeing you and your
musician friend, Nick, renewing old
acquaintances at the party, and it didn't
take me very long to realize that the
rotten little prick was the reason you
were there.

Bill gets to his feet. There's no point in denying anything and he has
to protect Nick.

BILL:

Look, Victor, this was all my fault. Nick
did his best to talk me out of it.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I know. He told us. But the fact
remains that the little cocksucker told
you in the first place and gave you the
password and the address.

BILL:

It was all down to me pressurising him.

ZIEGLER:

Maybe so, but I recommended him
to these people and he betrayed my
trust.

BILL hesitates.

BILL:

I went to his hotel this morning.

ZIEGLER:

I know.

BILL:

How's that?

ZIEGLER:

That was my man following you. He told me you spotted him. BILL shakes his head incredulously.

BILL:

Why did you have me followed?

ZIEGLER:

For your own good? To avoid any foolishness?

BILL:

The hotel clerk said two men took him away at five-thirty this morning.

ZIEGLER:

That's right. They gave him an airline ticket and took him to the airport. By now he's probably back with his family in Seattle.

BILL:

The clerk said he had a bruise on his cheek.

ZIEGLER:

Is that all?

BILL:

Is he okay?

ZIEGLER:

He's a lot better than he deserves to be.

BILL:

Nothing else?

ZIEGLER:

He's okay. Phone him in Seattle if you're concerned. I'll give you his phone number.

ZIEGLER pours more brandy.

BILL:

Nick never said anything about a second password. Was that what gave me away?

ZIEGLER:

There was no second password. You gave yourself away as soon as you arrived. Invited guests come in limos not taxis, and they don't get out of their cars half a block from the gate.

After the servants took your coat, one of our people went through your pockets and found the receipt for the rented tux and cassock made out to Doctor W. Harford, a name obviously not on the guest list.

ZIEGLER sips some brandy.

ZIEGLER:

Bill, these were not just _ordinary_ people. I don't think you have any idea how fortunate you are to have got out of that situation as easily as you did. Someday you can thank me for that.

BILL:

What about the woman?

ZIEGLER:

Not at all what you think.

BILL:

Why did she try to warn me?

ZIEGLER doesn't answer immediately.

BILL:

Why was she willing to sacrifice herself for me?

ZIEGLER:

Bill, are you so sure she was the kind of woman for whom the things you imagined were actually a sacrifice? If she attended these affairs and knew the rules so well, do you suppose it would have made any difference to her whether she belonged to one of the men, or to all of them?

Bill, she was just a thousand-a-night- hooker - no more, no less.

BILL stares at him blankly.

ZIEGLER:

Bill, tell me, did you never consider the possibility that the whole thing might have been nothing more than a charade?... A charade played out for the benefit of someone who didn't belong - to frighten them and make sure they keep quiet?

BILL takes a deep breath and tries to absorb what he has just been told.

Then takes the newspaper from his pocket with the story about the drugs overdose.

BILL:

What about this?

ZIEGLER:

What about it?

BILL:

Is it her? I went to the morgue but I couldn't tell.

ZIEGLER:

It is her.

BILL (quietly)

Is this what she meant when she said
she would redeem me?

ZIEGLER:

No - it wasn't But I was afraid you
might think it was, and that's why I
wanted to see you.

BILL:

You say it was a charade but isn't a
but strange, a woman offers herself as
a sacrifice and the next morning she's
dead?

ZIEGLER:

That was a coincidence. An amazing
coincidence, perhaps but a genuine
coincidence, nonetheless.

Bill, please believe me, nothing happened to her that hadn't happened
before. She got a lot of attention, that was certainly true, but nothing
she didn't want. And later, when my people left her at the hotel, they said
everything was absolutely okay. What then happened in her room, she did to
herself, as she had done many times before. But, sadly, this would be the
last time. She OD'd on crack, like the papers said. No chance for foul
play. Her door was locked from the inside and the police had to break it
down. No, I'm afraid for her it was always going to be just a matter of
time - you said as much yourself when she passed out in my bedroom at the
Christmas party.

BILL:

My God, was that her?

ZIEGLER nods, yes.

Several moments of strained silence go by.

Then ZIEGLER stands up with a comfortable end-of-conversation-sigh.

ZIEGLER:

So, Bill, I hope you understand why I
thought it was important to tidy this
up. But now I think all the dishes are
washed and put away. Nobody killed
anybody. Someone died. That's sad.

But life goes on. It always does. Until it doesn't. Okay?

INT BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill quietly enters and goes to his study to undress, as he did the night before.

He enters the bedroom as quietly as possible.

He hears ALICE breathing softly and regularly and sees the outline of her head on the pillow.

Unexpectedly, his heart is filled with a feeling of tenderness and even of security.

Then he notices something dark quite near ALICE'S face.

It has definite outlines like the shadowy features of a human face, and it is lying on his pillow.

For a moment his heart stops beating, but an instant later he sees what it is, and stretching out his hand, picks up the MASK he had worn the night before.

V.O.

He thought he must have dropped it in the morning when he packed the costume away, and Alice had found it and placed it on the pillow beside her, as though it signified his face, the face of a husband who had become an enigma to her.

All at once he reaches the end of his strength. Clutching the mask, he utters a loud and painful

sob - quite unexpectedly - and sinks down beside the bed, buries his head in the pillows, and cries.

A minute later he feels a soft hand caressing his hair. He looks into ALICE'S worried eyes.

BILL:

I will tell you everything.

ALICE raises her hand, as if to stop him, but he takes it and holds it.

BILL:

No, I will tell you everything.

BEDROOM - IT IS NOW DAWN

The grey light creeps through the curtains.

ALICE sits expressionlessly at a small table near the window, finishing a cigarette. A full ashtray next to her.

BILL sits miserably on the edge of the bed staring at the carpet.. He sighs and looks at Alice.

She smiles at him sadly and reaches out her hand.
He gets up slowly and goes over to her.

BILL:

What are we going to do now?
She gazes into his eyes.

ALICE:

I think we should both be grateful that
we have come unharmed out of all our
adventures, whether they were real or
only a dream.
BILL kneels down in front of her.

BILL:

Are you really sure that?
She takes his hands in hers and looks at them.

ALICE:

Only as sure as I am that the reality
of one night, let alone that of a whole
lifetime, is not the whole truth.

BILL:

And no dream is entirely a dream.
She presses his head to her breast.

ALICE:

But I think we're awake now.. And
for a long time to come.

BILL (whispers)
Forever.

Almost before he finishes the word, ALICE lays her fingers on his
lips.

ALICE (whispers as if to herself)

We should never look into the future.

They kiss tenderly and lie down on the bed, dozing a little,
dreamlessly, close to one another - until with the usual noises from
the street, and a victorious ray of sunlight through the opening of the
curtain, there is a knock on the door and their seven-year-old
daughter, HELENA, runs into the room and, laughing, jumps into
their bed. And a new day begins.

The End