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# Phone Booth

By Larry Cohen

**FADE IN:**

NEW YORK CITY - AERIAL VIEW OF DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY  
MULTIPLE STREET SCENES - DAY

The sidewalks crowded as usual. A sea of humanity. People come and go -- always in a hurry. Oblivious of one another. A TRAFFIC JAM -- A STREET being torn up by construction workers; A SANITATION TRUCK loading up refuse; VENDORS PEDDLING nuts and salted pretzels; PANHANDLERS blocking a passerby. Intimidating. Demanding. Almost mocking. We're surrounded by the teeming life of the city as we've come to expect it -- complete with a cacophony of sound. MULTIPLE CUTS -- Phone kiosks and phone booths on the East Side and West Side -- uptown and down. One frustrated caller has lost his money in the slot and he takes it out on the equipment -- smashing the receiver violently against the coin box until the instrument splinters into a dozen pieces.

**NARRATOR:**

There are 237,911 pay telephones in the five burroughs of the city of New York. Many of them are still in working order.

DOZENS OF QUICK CUTS --

NEW YORKERS on the phone in extreme close up. We don't hear the words. Only the facial expressions inform us that these are human beings under tremendous pressure. Life in the city is wearing them down.

MULTIPLE SHOTS - JUST MOUTHS

Lips jabbering into receivers. Cross-cut against one another.

**NARRATOR:**

Despite increased usage of cellular devices, an estimated four and a half million New Yorkers and two million visitors still utilize pay telephones on a regular basis. At thirty-five cents a pop... for the first three minutes.

ANGLE ON CORNER IN MID-MANHATTAN - DAY

There's a phone booth situated on the southeast side of the street.

**NARRATOR:**

You're looking at the telephone booth at the corner of 45th Street and 8th Avenue in the heart of the Manhattan theatrical district. It has been scheduled to be removed and replaced by a kiosk. It's one of the few remaining phone booths left in the city.

CAMERA MOVES IN on the irate caller in the booth -- a very well-dressed gray-haired lady -- totally conservative in appearance.

**WOMAN IN BOOTH:**

(into receiver)

You have lied to me for the last time, you lowlife prick bastard! I don't ever want to hear the sound of your fucking voice again.

(listens)

Yes, well fuck you, too!

She slams down the receiver and exits. The booth remains vacant for a brief interval.

**NARRATOR:**

At least three hundred calls daily originate from this booth. The coins are collected twice a day. This booth has been burglarized forty-one times in the last six months.

Someone is approaching the booth, fishing in his pocket for coins. This is STUART SHEPARD, snappily dressed, his hair styled and his nails manicured. Here is a man who clearly takes excellent care of himself. He sports a Donna Karen suit and silk Armani tie.

He's about to step into the booth when he's accosted by a middle-aged man in a soiled apron who's run out of a nearby restaurant and has finally caught up with him.

**MARIO:**

Stu, we got to talk.

**STU:**

Wish I could accommodate you,  
Mario, but this is my busy time of  
day.

**MARIO:**

How come you cross the street every  
time you go past the restaurant?

**STU:**

Why don't I stop in later for some  
lunch?

**MARIO:**

There's no more drinks or free  
meals until the restaurant starts  
showing up in the columns like you  
said.

**STU:**

I'm doing my level best for you  
people.

**MARIO:**

One lousy mention in the Post and  
you expect to eat for six months!

**STU:**

I got the food critic from the  
Village Voice all lined up to give  
you a review.

**MARIO:**

That's what you tell me last July.  
And he never shows.

**STU:**

I was allowing you time to expand  
the menu. Wallpaper the bathrooms,  
for God sakes. You get only one  
shot with these fucking critics and  
I don't want you to blow a rare  
opportunity.

**MARIO:**

You the one blowing it. How long you think you can fuck everybody?

**STU:**

Hold on right there. I've got a very excellent reputation around this town.

**MARIO:**

So how come you take two nice suits of clothes from Harry and never get his daughter on David Letterman?

**STU:**

Hell, I'm not an agent. I'm a publicist.

**MARIO:**

Mister, you're nothing!

**STU:**

Believe me, Valerie's on the waiting list to audition. Harry's got no complaints. He just let me pick out this tie the other day.

**MARIO:**

That Harry's a damn fool!

**STU:**

Mario, please let me make this up to you. How about I arrange for the opening night party for this new off-Broadway show I'm handling -- to be held at your place with local TV coverage on nine and eleven? I mean I had it promised to another client -- who actually pays me money. But it isn't firmed up yet. And I could throw it your way. Maybe.

**MARIO:**

What is involved?

**STU:**

You'd toss in the buffet for say seventy or eighty. The producers would supply their own vino, of course. I'd deliver you a truckload of celebrities. And if they like the food, they'll all come back, naturally.

**MARIO:**

What celebrities?

**STU:**

You want Liza Minelli? An Oscar winner. Or Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.?

**MARIO:**

Is he still alive?

**STU:**

I saw him last night going into the Four Seasons. I'll bring you over a whole VIP list when we come by for dinner.

**MARIO:**

How come everybody wants to eat but nobody wants to pay?

**STU:**

You can't think small like that. Hey, you still feature musicians Fridays and Saturdays?

**MARIO:**

At least they work for their meals.

**STU:**

What about Harry's daughter as an extra added attraction? She'll belt out five or six showtunes -- two sets a night -- and it won't

cost you a fucking nickel.

**MARIO:**

How come?

**STU:**

Star Showcase! Let me handle setting that up. And when she eventually goes on Letterman, she'll announce I'm currently appearing over at Mario's fine supper club. Right over CBS she'll say that, Mario.

**MARIO:**

You're full of shit. You know that? All bullshit!

**STU:**

That's just a vulgar word for PR.  
(placing an arm around  
him)

Mario, you can't hurt my feelings. Even when I was a kid and they hurled certain invectives my way, it never bothered me. Other kids would fall apart if anybody called them a fucking name. Me, I just loved the attention! 'Shit-for-brains' -- that's what the bigger kids named me. And I answered to it. Hey, 'shit-for brains' reporting for duty. Everybody loved me for that. I could take abuse. After a while, I kind of wore them down. There was nothing more they could say to me. So they stopped. I kind of missed it.

**MARIO:**

I'm sorry I even talked to you.

**STU:**

I'll bet your loving wife put you

up to this. She saw me pass by and she sent you out in the street. But I don't hold it against you personally -- you still serve up superior veal chop.

(entering phone booth)

Now I got urgent business to conduct, Mario.

He slides the booth closed in Mario's face.

The frustrated restaurateur glares at him through the glass before giving up and walking off -- talking to himself as he goes up the block.

INSIDE THE BOOTH, Stu inserts his thirty-five cents and dials.

**STU:**

Hello, Mavis, sweet creature.

MAVIS' VOICE

Where have you been? Do you think I have nothing to do but wait around for you to call?

**STU:**

I'm only a few minutes late, loveliest individual on earth.

MAVIS' VOICE

Stu, I'm so lonely. When can I see you?

**STU:**

Good news in that arena. Kelly goes into rehearsal as of Monday. You know how dedicated she is. By the time she gets back from dancing her ass off, she goes right to sleep. We'll have both our days and certain nights. Not to mention when they take the show on the road.

MAVIS' VOICE

How long is that for?

**STU:**

Four to five weeks -- minimum.



MAVIS' VOICE

Maybe I should quit my job so we can be together full time.

**STU:**

I wouldn't do that.

MAVIS' VOICE

Sometimes I think if I have to give one more fucking manicure...

**STU:**

That's how you met me.

MAVIS' VOICE

I never saw a worse set of nails. Bit right down to the quick.

**STU:**

I'm much better groomed since you've been looking after me.

MAVIS' VOICE

I'm glad you admit it.

**STU:**

Even Kelly remarked on it when I first met her.

MAVIS' VOICE

She could care less how you look. She's only interested in pushing her own career. Some wife you're stuck with!

**STU:**

The marriage is not without its compensations. Do you imagine I could afford that apartment on what I'm earning? Not with everybody cutting back on the publicity. Not to mention a million college graduates coming into the profession trying to cut me out. And one thing you can't expect from your clients is loyalty. They get a couple of bad notices, they dump you. Goodbye.

MAVIS' VOICE

Don't go.

**STU:**

I wasn't saying goodbye to you. I was saying how the clients try to give you the wave off without even a month's notice.

A conservative businessman now stands outside the booth waiting to use it. He deliberately glances at his watch a few times to demonstrate his impatience. This bothers Stu who slides the booth open a crack.

**STU:**

(yelling)

What? Is your watch busted? It's twenty after eleven and I'm gonna be occupied indefinitely with my transaction. So get out of my face!

He closes the booth up again and turns his back to the gentleman who gives up and departs.

**STU:**

Sorry, honey. There will be no further interruption.

MAVIS' VOICE

Why must you always be calling me from some booth?

**STU:**

On account of that phone records are regularly subpoenaed in divorce proceedings. And I don't want some entry showing up on my cellular bill either. She gets the mail.

She looks these items over.

Sometimes she even dials up a strange number to see who it is.

MAVIS' VOICE

Then she suspects something.

**STU:**

It's only because her last husband,

the choreographer, ran around on her. She can't get that out of her head. That's how she caught onto him. The phone bills.

MAVIS' VOICE

She hasn't developed much skill at holding a man.

**STU:**

You know what a self-fulfilling prophecy is? She was so sure I was going to find me a woman that she finally drove me back to you. I thought I'd feel all guilty about it -- but I guess it hasn't kicked in yet.

(beat)

Still, I wouldn't do anything to hurt her. Basically, Kelly's a decent individual.

MAVIS' VOICE

What about hurting me? Like last time?

**STU:**

Hurt? You were glad to be rid of me.

MAVIS' VOICE

For a while I was, 'til I took stock of what was around. You're the lesser of many evils.

**STU:**

That's about the nicest thing you ever said.

MAVIS' VOICE

I'll have it engraved.

**STU:**

We've been up front with each other from the beginning. Let's keep it that way. How about a drink? Say seven o'clock? The Monkey Bar?

MAVIS' VOICE

Meet me in front. I don't like walking in there unescorted.

**STU:**

Yeah, you're great enough looking to be mistaken for one of those thousand dollar a night girls.

MAVIS' VOICE

It happens all the time lately.

**STU:**

And wear that short black number I bought you from Bendel's.

MAVIS' VOICE

Again? I don't know if it's me or that dress you like.

**STU:**

Have a good day. Make plenty of tips. And leave the whole evening open. She thinks I've got Knicks tickets.

He hangs up. Then whips a tiny cellular phone out of his jacket pocket, flips it open and dials. Someone answers on the first ring.

COLUMNIST (V.O.)

Speak!

**STU:**

(into cellular)

It's your boy Stuart. When was the last time I called you for a favor?

COLUMNIST (V.O.)

The column is already full.

**STU:**

I just need one line. Anybody you wanna say was seen dining out at Mario's Stromboli restaurant.

COLUMNIST (V.O.)

Maybe you don't hear so good? I got no space for you.

**STU:**

Who's asking any favors? I'm offering reciprocal information.

COLUMNIST (V.O.)

Since when were you ever a reliable source?

**STU:**

Check it out. Tony award-winning producer Willie Beagle tossed his wife back into rehab again following her third attempt at diving off the terrace at their plush eighteen room residence at the San Remo. I got it from the doorman.

COLUMNIST (V.O.)

I got it from their maid yesterday. It's in the paper today. Or don't you bother to read my shit?

**STU:**

Louis, my intentions were entirely honorable.

COLUMNIST (V.O.)

I'll drop your item in sometime next week. If you promise not to call me for a month.

He hangs up. Stu looks pleased as he folds the cell phone and tucks it away.

Then he starts to vacate the booth. The phone rings. And rings. Curious, he picks up the receiver. There's a voice on the other end of the line. A DISTINCTIVE MALE VOICE.

**VOICE:**

Don't even think about leaving that booth.

**STU:**

What?

**VOICE:**

Stay exactly where you are and listen carefully.

**STU:**

I've got a heavy day, mister.

**VOICE:**

You know better than to disobey me.

**STU:**

I don't know you at all.

**VOICE:**

Are you absolutely sure?

**STU:**

Who is this?

**VOICE:**

Someone who's watching you.

**STU:**

Get lost!

**VOICE:**

Love the gray suit. That red and black tie makes a nice combination.

Stu is taken back by the accurate description of his apparel. He looks around nervously.

**STU:**

Where? Where are you?

**VOICE:**

Closer than you think.

**STU:**

I don't see you.

**VOICE:**

There are any number of windows. Check them out.

Indeed that street corner is surrounded by high rise buildings and hotels.

**STU:**

Okay, you had your little joke.

**VOICE:**

I'm not sufficiently amused. Not yet. We have more to talk about. Stu knows he should simply hang up but something tells him not to. Perhaps it's the strange tone of the man's voice.

**STU:**

Do me a favor. Call up somebody else.

**VOICE:**

But it's you I'm interested in. You know how many people use that booth every day?

**STU:**

Why don't you tell me?

**VOICE:**

Better than two-hundred people on average.

**STU:**

Is that what you do? Count them?

**VOICE:**

What else do I have to do? It's interesting watching people. Trying to guess who they are. And what they're up to.

**STU:**

What are you -- a shut-in of some kind?

**VOICE:**

You might say that. I can't go out. I might be seen.

**STU:**

Somebody's looking for you?

**VOICE:**

Desperately.

**STU:**

The cops?

**VOICE:**

Not yet.

**STU:**

The ex-wife. What'd you do -- run out on child support?

**VOICE:**

What kind of man do you think I am?

**STU:**

Frankly, I could care less. You had your fun. Now goodbye.

**VOICE:**

It's not in your best interests to hang up on me. That would make me angry.

**STU:**

Isn't that just too bad?

**VOICE:**

For you.

**STU:**

There's ten million names in the phonebook. Pester somebody else.

**VOICE:**

I never talk to people I can't see. I need to study their reactions.

**STU:**

Alright, bullshit artist, what am I doing right now?

**VOICE:**

Scratching your forehead with your



left hand. Now you're brushing  
your hair back.

**STU:**

Okay, okay, you got me in your  
scrutiny. So what?

**VOICE:**

So let's talk.

**STU:**

Only I got nothing to say.

**VOICE:**

Oh, you will. You'll do a lot of  
talking before this conversation is  
over. And it'll only end when I  
want it to.

**STU:**

Is that a fact? Well if you watch  
closely, you will see me hang up.

**VOICE:**

I don't think you will.

**STU:**

Why not?

**VOICE:**

I interest you.

**STU:**

Why should I be interested in some  
creep who gets his jollies spying  
on strangers in phone booths?

**VOICE:**

But you're not a stranger, Stu.  
The sound of his own name sends a chill through him.

**STU:**

Who put you up to this?

**VOICE:**

You were my very own selection.

**STU:**

Why me in particular?

**VOICE:**

Because you're so afraid.

**STU:**

Ha! What've I got to be afraid of?

**STU:**

Just about everything. You have so much to hide.

**STU:**

How do you figure that?

**VOICE:**

Why else would a man with a perfectly good cellular bother to make calls from a pay booth?

**STU:**

That's my business.

**VOICE:**

I've made it mine.

**STU:**

All of a sudden I'm required to give explanations to you?

**VOICE:**

In explicit detail.

**STU:**

What is this? Some kind of candid camera gag? Or like that thing on HBO where the cab driver is taping what goes on in the back seat?

**VOICE:**

This is not showbusiness, my friend. This is reality.

**STU:**

Your reality. Not mine, you lowlife fuck.

**VOICE:**

Stu, you'll be made to suffer for your attitude, so let's dispense with the vulgarities.

**STU:**

Now you're threatening me! Fuck you. Could that be any clearer?

**VOICE:**

You're only making it easier for me to do you harm.

**STU:**

Oh yeah. Right. Can you see how I'm trembling?

**VOICE:**

You will be.

**STU:**

Shit, this is a new one. Fucking threatening calls in a goddam phone booth. When are you going to start with the heavy breathing.

**VOICE:**

I'm not the degenerate. You are, Stu.

**STU:**

You don't know anything about me.

**VOICE:**

Infinitely more than you know about me.

**STU:**

Like what?

**VOICE:**

Like the number you dialed when you first entered the booth.

**STU:**

How would you know that?

**VOICE:**

I'm watching through a scope and I could clearly read the buttons you pushed. I have another extension here by the window. Shall I dial that same number back for you?

Would that convince you?

Stu nervously cranes his neck, looking around at all the tall buildings that surround the street corner.

STU'S POV

PANNING up at thousands of windows. The Voice could be coming from anywhere.

BACK TO STU IN THE BOOTH

**VOICE:**

Let's see who's on the other end of the line.

**STU:**

Don't.

**VOICE:**

Too late.

(beat)

It's already ringing. I'll hold the receiver up so you can listen in.

Stu can hear the beeping as the other line rings.

Then Mavis' voice can be heard answering. Stu listens helplessly.

MAVIS' VOICE

Hello?

**VOICE:**

Well, hello.

MAVIS' VOICE

Who is this?

**VOICE:**

Someone who's really tight with your boyfriend -- who just called you from his favorite phone booth.

MAVIS' VOICE

You know Stu?

**VOICE:**

Stu? Oh, I know him better than anyone. What he does -- how he thinks. How he lies.

MAVIS' VOICE

Who the hell is this?

**VOICE:**

Stu is listening in. He knows what we're both saying.

MAVIS' VOICE

Stu? Is that true? Are you there?

**VOICE:**

He doesn't feel like talking.

**STU:**

(shouts)

Mavis! Just hang up the goddam phone.

**VOICE:**

She can't hear you, Stu. Only me.

(a pause)

Mavis, I'm afraid Stu hasn't been totally honest with you. But then he can't be honest with anyone, can he?

MAVIS' VOICE

What's your name? To whom am I speaking?

**VOICE:**

You've never heard of me, Mavis.  
He doesn't want you to know I  
exist. He wishes I didn't exist.  
But there isn't anything he can do  
about that.

(beat)

Still there, Stu? All you can do  
is listen.

**STU:**

Mavis -- the guy is a fucking  
nutcase! Hang the fuck up.

**VOICE:**

She doesn't want to. She wants to  
know all about us. Don't you,  
Mavis?

MAVIS' VOICE

Did his wife put you up to this?  
That bitch, Kelly?

**VOICE:**

Oh yes, the bitch wife, Kelly. My  
very next call.

**STU:**

(yells)

He doesn't know my wife! Don't  
tell him anything else.

Outside the booth, a huge, heavy-set black woman in a too  
tight dress, now appears with the clear desire to use the  
phone. Her name is FELICIA. She taps on the glass.

**FELICIA:**

Could you hurry it along?

Stu ignores her and Felicia glares at him through the glass  
with hostility.

Stu has no inclination to deal with anybody else. He's too  
distracted by the madness happening over the telephone.

**STU:**

Can you hear me, Mavis? Keep your  
big mouth shut.

**VOICE:**

Is that any way to talk to a woman  
you love?

(beat)

Mavis, is he always that abusive to  
you?

MAVIS' VOICE

You're getting me all upset. I  
don't know who you are or how you  
know all this --

**VOICE:**

I find out things -- from watching  
people and listening to them.

MAVIS' VOICE

Just what is your relationship to  
Stu? That's all I want to know.

**VOICE:**

Well, what do you think?

MAVIS' VOICE

Answer me, goddam it!

**VOICE:**

Well alright. Stu and I are --  
longtime companions. A pair. Two  
of a kind. Closer than close.  
Peas in a pod. Spoons in a drawer.

MAVIS' VOICE

You pervert!

**VOICE:**

That, too.

**STU:**

Don't believe a word of it. It's  
all lies.

**VOICE:**

Too late, Stu. She already  
believes it.

MAVIS' VOICE

You can tell that scumbag never to  
bother me again.

**VOICE:**

He won't care. He'll still have me.

**STU:**

It's not true. I do care.  
From outside the booth, there's a louder rapping on the glass. Felicia really wants in.

**FELICIA:**

Get done in there, mister. I got me an important call.

**STU:**

Go away.

**FELICIA:**

Shit I will! Finish up!  
She continues to rap on the glass as Stu tries to focus on the two-way phone call.

**VOICE:**

Why don't you tell me what you think of us?

**MAVIS' VOICE**

You're both disgusting.

**VOICE:**

That's what he said about you.  
Well, if Stu didn't have the balls to come out and tell you the truth, I felt it was my responsibility to clear the air. Goodbye now, Mavis.  
Thanks for your time.  
(the phone clicks off; we hear only a dial tone)  
Back to you again, Stu.

**STU:**

You total asshole! How could you do that?

**VOICE:**



Speaking of females, that woman hovering outside the booth -- may as well tell her that you'll be on the line forever.

**STU:**

Like hell I will.

**VOICE:**

I'm ready for you to take out your cellular and phone home. And this time, I'll listen in.

**STU:**

There's no chance of that.

**VOICE:**

Or should I call Kelly and make up something totally outrageous? You must realize by now I have a vivid imagination.

**STU:**

You don't know our phone number!

**VOICE:**

Are you absolutely sure? I may have been watching you on a regular basis. Keeping track of all the numbers I see you dial.

**STU:**

And I'm supposed to believe that?

**VOICE:**

I've put a great deal of preparation into this -- prior to actually saying hello. Now do you want to dial 832-7165 -- or should I?

The sound of the actual number being spoken shocks him even more than the earlier mention of his name.

**STU:**

What are you going to tell her?

**VOICE:**

You'll do the talking.

**STU:**

What am I supposed to say?

**VOICE:**

Try telling her the truth.

**STU:**

Look, I don't want to hurt Kelly. She's always there for me. It's just my nature to have a little 'strange' on the side. It doesn't mean shit.

**VOICE:**

But you still find it necessary?

**STU:**

Kind of like having a beautiful home. With everything you ever dreamed of. But you still need that vacation now and then. Some nice hotel room with a great view. Maybe a pool. Only you wouldn't want to spend more than a few days in any hotel. Eventually, you want to go back to your home and all your stuff. You're real glad to check out.

**VOICE:**

Kelly is home and Mavis is a hotel? I'm sure they'll both appreciate that explanation.

**STU:**

You're ruining my fucking life, you sonofabitch.

**VOICE:**

Didn't I warn you about calling me names? It makes me vindictive.

**STU:**

What else can you do to me?

**VOICE:**

We haven't even begun.

**STU:**

She's not home. She went out.

**VOICE:**

I'll bet she's back. Now hold the cellular up where I can see it -- so I can be certain you don't misdial on me.

(pause)

A little higher and to your left.

Now I have it in perfect view.

Dial slowly.

More violent rapping on the glass from the persistent black lady outside.

**FELICIA:**

If you got you a cell phone, how come you taking up the whole fucking booth! This here's an emergency!

**STU:**

There's another booth on the next block.

**FELICIA:**

It's busted. Every damn phone on Eighth Avenue is busted but this one.

**STU:**

Well, I'm not through! Go in a restaurant or someplace, but get away from me!

**FELICIA:**

I'm gonna pull you out of that booth and snatch you ballheaded! She tries to pull open the sliding door to the booth but Stu jams it shut, right on her hand.

**FELICIA:**

You assaulted my person.

**STU:**

Let me hear from your lawyer!

**FELICIA:**

You're hear alright. I'm coming back. And your ass better not be around. She stalks off obviously in search of assistance.

**VOICE:**

Good work, Stu. Now let me see you dial. Tuck the receiver under your chin and dial your remote.

**STU:**

I'm doing it. He punches in the digits. The phone rings -- and rings.

**STU:**

I told you she was out.

**VOICE:**

Let it ring. Then a girl's voice is heard. KELLY'S VOICE Shepard residence.

**VOICE:**

Hold it close to the receiver so I can hear. KELLY'S VOICE Hello?

**STU:**

Honey, it's me.

KELLY'S VOICE

What's taking you so long? I thought we were having some lunch at Mario's?

**STU:**

Change of plan. We're not eating in that dump any more.

KELLY'S VOICE

How come?

**STU:**

The Health Department gave them a 'C' rating -- that's how come. Here I'm trying to put the place on the map and he fucks it all up with a major roach problem.

KELLY'S VOICE

That's disgusting. Okay, I'll fix us a sandwich. Where are you now?

**STU:**

Just in a phone booth.

KELLY'S VOICE

How come? The caller ID says you're on your cellular.

**STU:**

Oh yeah, I am.

KELLY'S VOICE

But you're also in some phone booth?

**VOICE:**

Explain that one, Stu.

**STU:**

I only stepped in because the traffic was so loud outside.

KELLY'S VOICE

Well just hurry on back.

**VOICE:**

Tell her you can't.

**STU:**

Not for a few minutes.

KELLY'S VOICE

Are you sure you're alone? I hear somebody in the background.

**STU:**

The guy in the next booth. He's got a bad connection and he's hollering his fool head off.

**VOICE:**

You've got an answer for everything.

**STU:**

I love you, baby.

KELLY'S VOICE

Do you?

**STU:**

You know that.

KELLY'S VOICE

Stu -- who was that man?

**STU:**

What man?

KELLY'S VOICE

Some person who phoned fifteen minutes ago -- just after you went out.

**STU:**

I don't understand...

KELLY'S VOICE

This total stranger rang up and told me to wait by the phone -- because you'd be calling me in a few minutes -- from a booth. And I said what would he be doing in any phone booth?

**STU:**

And what did this guy say?

KELLY'S VOICE

He said you'd be making phone calls. What else?

**STU:**

Making calls is part of my business.

KELLY'S VOICE

To whom?

**STU:**

Clients. People. Planting items like I do.

KELLY'S VOICE

Women?

**STU:**

Once in a while one of them could be a woman. I just called "Elaine's" and talked to her to see who was in there last night.

KELLY'S VOICE

You know exactly what I mean.

**STU:**

You're not going to start that shit again?

KELLY'S VOICE

I just feel something is wrong.

**STU:**

What could be wrong?

KELLY'S VOICE

The way you sound. You don't sound like yourself.

**STU:**

Yeah? Who do I sound like?

KELLY'S VOICE

Someone who's scared. There's fear in your voice like I've never heard before.

**VOICE:**

See, Stu? Kelly agrees with me.

KELLY'S VOICE

I want you to come back home. Now!

**STU:**

I told you. In a while.

KELLY'S VOICE

No. I want you here now. In case he calls back, I don't want to answer again.

**STU:**

Why should he call back?

KELLY'S VOICE

I feel like he's going to.

**STU:**

You're the one that sounds frightened. And of nobody.

KELLY'S VOICE

He's not a nobody. He knows about us.

**STU:**

You're not telling me all he said. What are you holding back?

KELLY'S VOICE

I can't discuss it on the phone. Just get over here!  
CLICK! She hangs up.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

Why did you do that to her? She never did you any harm.

**VOICE:**

How would you know? Everybody does harm to somebody. And then they try their best to forget it.

**STU:**

Maybe me -- but not her. Whatever



I've done, there's no reason to take it out on her.

**VOICE:**

Suppose that's the only way I can get to you? You claim you love her.

**STU:**

Yeah, I do.

**VOICE:**

You don't even love yourself.

**STU:**

But Kelly... I would never hurt.

**VOICE:**

Still you have to uphold your status as an honorary asshole.

**STU:**

Listen, I've treated all my women decent. I never laid a hand on any of them, even when provoked. And I always let them down easy.

(beat)

I'm not ready to let Kelly go. Maybe I never will be.

**VOICE:**

What if she dumps you first? What's the odds she's already taken up with somebody? One day soon you'll come home and find her gone along with the CD player and the VCR.

**STU:**

I'm not gonna let you mind-fuck me all day! That's it. This call is ended.

**VOICE:**

Not until I say it is.

**STU:**

What happens if I hang up?

**VOICE:**

You don't really want to find out.

**STU:**

I'm dying to hear this!!! What the fuck can you do about it -- up in your fucking high window with your goddam binoculars?

**VOICE:**

I never indicated I had binoculars. I said I had a highly magnified telescopic image of you that brought you up so close I could see where you nicked yourself under the chin shaving this morning.

**STU:**

Oh -- while you're at it, have a look up my ass.

**VOICE:**

I may very well do that, Stu. In the meantime, think about what kind of device has a telescopic sight mounted on it.

**STU:**

What? You mean... like a rifle?

**VOICE:**

A high-powered .30 calibre bolt action Remington 700 with a carbon one modification and a state of the art Henzholdt tactical sniperscope. And you're in the cross hairs, Stu.

**STU:**

I'm supposed to believe that?

**VOICE:**

There's only one way I can prove it to you. Hang up the receiver and find out. At this range, the exit wound ought to be about the size of a small tangerine.

**STU:**

And you're just going to kill me for no reason?

**VOICE:**

For plenty of reasons! Because you hung up. For years I hated people hanging up on me. Ex-girlfriends. Women I didn't even know. Prospective employers.

**STU:**

I get hung up on all the time. You get used to it.

**VOICE:**

Or else you don't. I worked for months getting people to switch to MCI -- being insulted at and being hung up on hundreds of times a day. The ones that cursed me out for invading their privacy never bothered me as much as those that clicked off without even bothering to reply.

**STU:**

Then why didn't you go after one of them?

**VOICE:**

Maybe you are one of them.

**STU:**

Hey, I have worked in a boiler room myself peddling "Term Life." I

Would never be rude to a fellow salesperson.

**VOICE:**

Can you feel it on you now? The heat of it. I'm moving the strike zone down to your stomach area. Now I'm raising it up again. Directly above the chest cavity -- sliding up to the forehead just above the left ear.

**STU:**

Shit -- I do feel it.

**VOICE:**

Tell me where I'm going with it now.

**STU:**

Across my forehead -- now back where it was before.

**VOICE:**

I'm amazed how you can do that. You're amazingly accurate.  
(beat)  
Now I know what you're thinking. If I drop down on the floor of the booth and flatten myself out...

**STU:**

No, I'm not thinking that.

**VOICE:**

Oh yes you are. Can I crawl out using the booth as a shield? Can I crawl to that Chrysler illegally parked only three or four feet away? The shattering glass may cut me, but it'll only be superficial. Otherwise, this lunatic will never let me out alive.

**STU:**

No. You will. I know you will.  
If I just cooperate.

**VOICE:**

Where is it now? Think and feel  
for the warm spot.

**STU:**

Below the shoulder?

**VOICE:**

Which one?

**STU:**

The right shoulder.

**VOICE:**

Remarkable how we're in tune.  
You're doing far better than the  
others.

**STU:**

What others? What do you mean?  
(no reply)  
You said 'others!'

**VOICE:**

(finally)  
I'm sure you read about the Italian  
tourist shot dead ten days ago at  
the corner of Forty-fifth and  
Eighth?

**STU:**

I saw it on the news.

**VOICE:**

And where are we now?

**STU:**

Oh, God. Forty-fifth and Eighth.

**VOICE:**

What else do you remember about that killing?

**STU:**

I don't know.

**VOICE:**

Try.

**STU:**

He was gunned down. And nobody was caught. And they didn't even bother to take his wallet or his watch... or anything.

**VOICE:**

Now you know why. It wasn't a robbery.

**STU:**

What did he do?

**VOICE:**

He hung up -- so I disconnected him permanently.

**STU:**

Please -- don't do it to me. You got no reason to do it to me.

**VOICE:**

Don't give me reason.

**STU:**

I'm not looking to. Tell me what you want!

**VOICE:**

Tell me about your job.

**STU:**

What's to tell? I'm in Public Relations. They used to call us "flacks." Now we're media

consultants.

**VOICE:**

What do you do, exactly?

**STU:**

Plant items in the paper and on the tube. More important sometimes, keep stuff out.

**VOICE:**

What've you kept out?

**STU:**

One of my people got nailed for indecent exposure. I managed for the cops to use his real name instead of his stage name so nobody picked up on it.

**VOICE:**

You saved the little deviate's ass, didn't you?

**STU:**

He's in major therapy now. I swear he is.

**VOICE:**

You must hang with some major celebrities. Journalists, newscasters -- those types.

**STU:**

I'm real close with Larry King. And the "Hard Copy" people.

**VOICE:**

Could you get him down here? Larry King?

**STU:**

Why would he want to come here?

**VOICE:**

Because you asked him to.

**STU:**

He comes from Atlanta.

**VOICE:**

Well, who could you get?

**STU:**

I don't know.

**VOICE:**

Wolf Blitzer?

**VOICE:**

Probably not.

**VOICE:**

Regis?

**STU:**

Definitely no chance.

**VOICE:**

You'd be offering them an exclusive newsbreak. I'm talking about more than one homicide.

**STU:**

How many?

**VOICE:**

I don't answer questions. I ask them.

**STU:**

I gotta have the facts. They might not believe me. My record isn't too good when it comes to hard news.

**VOICE:**

You're not considered a reliable



source?

**STU:**

On a divorce or separation, maybe. Or who's gay, or who isn't gay any more. I kind of specialize in that kind of material. I mean I could probably get you Joe Franklin.

**VOICE:**

How about Cindy Adams?

**STU:**

I might have a shot. Are you familiar with Liz Smith?

**VOICE:**

Do you know her number?

**STU:**

Want I should call her? How much can I say?

**VOICE:**

Tell her you're in direct touch with a killer who's willing to speak honestly if she shows up here alone and without notifying the authorities.

**STU:**

She usually likes to have a celebrity involved. If you had an actor or a sports figure held prisoner instead of me, there'd be better odds she's come.

**VOICE:**

Then lie. Pick a celebrity and put them in the booth.

**STU:**

Let's see. Who does she like? Who couldn't be reached to deny it?

**VOICE:**

I'm anxious to see you in action.  
Don't keep me waiting.  
Stu uses his cellular again.

**STU:**

(dialing)  
Sometimes you only get her service.  
(into cellular)  
Hi -- Stu Shepard. Put me through.  
I've got hard news for her. I can  
only talk to her directly. But say  
it regards -- Liza.

**VOICE:**

Liza? That was imaginative.

**STU:**

(into cellular)  
No, I can't call back. I'll have  
to lay in on somebody else.  
Alright, but I can't hang on long.  
(to pay phone)  
She's coming on.  
(to cellular)  
Liz, hello. Sure I'll make it  
brief. Killing two weeks ago in  
the theatre district? Turn out a  
sniper did the job. Yeah, a sniper  
with a rifle. Now he's got another  
victim lined up. Not just your  
anonymous New Yorker, but Liza.  
Now you can't call anybody or Ms.  
Minelli's dead meat and so am I.  
She's hostage in a phone booth  
right in the sniper's sights. But  
he says he'll talk to you and let  
her walk. I know it'll take balls  
to do this, but you're a fine and  
courageous newspaper woman...  
There's a click. Silence.

**STU:**

Hello? Hello?

(to pay phone)

Either she's on her way over or she doesn't believe me.

**VOICE:**

You weren't particularly convincing.

**STU:**

I didn't really believe in what I was saying.

**VOICE:**

Because you don't really believe my Remington is pointed at you?

**STU:**

I do.

**VOICE:**

You're ninety percent sure.

**STU:**

At least ninety-five percent, easy.

**VOICE:**

Let me erase all doubt.

**STU:**

No. Don't shoot.

**VOICE:**

Control yourself, Stu. Glance down at your chest. What do you see.

**STU:**

Oh, my God. A dot. A fucking red dot.

A tiny red dot now moves across Stu's chest.

**VOICE:**

Like you've seen in the movies?

**STU:**

The laser dot. Just before some poor bastard always gets blown away.

**VOICE:**

Usually a supporting player. That lovely but by now generic special effect of the bullet piercing the forehead.

The tiny red laser dot dances around Stu's chest and stomach -- the jumps up and remains between his eyes.

**VOICE:**

This takes all the guesswork out of it. You know exactly where to expect it before I even tighten my finger on the trigger.

**STU:**

Don't tighten. Don't even tickle that fucking finger.

**VOICE:**

How about Geraldo? He's run his ass off to get in on this.

**STU:**

You're talking about the old Geraldo. Look, I can try and reach cable NBC. They're hungry.

**VOICE:**

I'm disappointed. I wanted to go first class.

**STU:**

They do a great job. They'll haul a whole crew over to cover your surrender "live."

**VOICE:**

I never expressed interest in giving myself up. There are so

many other phone booths in the city. I'm just getting warmed up.

**STU:**

That's entirely up to you. Your choice. I'm just trying to set you up with the proper communicator.

(beat)

I suppose Liza wasn't strong enough. I should've said Madonna.

**VOICE:**

Now you're being creative.

Outside the booth, the angry black woman has returned, bringing with her a gaudily dressed pimp named LEON who looks like he means business. He slams his fist against the glass, nearly shattering it.

**LEON:**

Drag your baggy butt out of that booth. We got business to conduct out of there.

**FELICIA:**

He been in there all day.

**STU:**

I'm not through.

**LEON:**

Hang up that receiver or I'll make you eat the fucking thing!

**STU:**

Fuck off or I'll call a cop.

**LEON:**

Do you see one around here? What you think I'm gonna be doing while you're waiting for a prowler car to get assigned? I'm about to cut you a second asshole if you don't vacate those premises.

**STU:**

I can't.

**FELICIA:**

He's got him a fucking cellular.  
What's he need to be on our booth  
for?

**STU:**

I can't explain it.

**LEON:**

I'm not interested in your  
explanations even if you had any.  
He withdraws a switchblade knife from his pocket but doesn't  
open it -- yet.

**LEON:**

If I flick this, I use it.

**STU:**

I'll make it worth your while to go  
away. How much do you want?

**LEON:**

Make me an offer.

**STU:**

Thirty dollars. It's all I've got  
in cash. Take it and go.

**LEON:**

You're offering to rent my phone  
booth? For how long?

**STU:**

I don't know. For as long as it  
takes.

**LEON:**

What's so special in there?

**STU:**

Do you want the money?

**LEON:**

Is that a genuine Rolex you've got on?

**STU:**

Come on, man. That's my good watch.

**LEON:**

That's what it's gonna take.

**STU:**

Then here. Take the damn thing.

**LEON:**

And the thirty!

**STU:**

Take it all.

The pimp pockets the watch and the money. But doesn't go away.

**LEON:**

Now I'm satisfied. But you still got to deal with Felicia here. I believe you spoke harshly to her.

**STU:**

I apologize.

**LEON:**

And did her some injury.

**STU:**

An accident. I'm sorry about that, too.

**FELICIA:**

The man don't sound like he means it.

**LEON:**

I agree.

(to Stu)

Why don't you hang up a minute so we can discuss this matter at length.

**STU:**

It's long distance. I can't lose the call -- I might not get them back.

**LEON:**

Do I have to rip that fucking phone out of there?

**STU:**

That wouldn't be a good idea.  
(into pay phone)  
Would it?

**VOICE:**

Not at all.

**STU:**

I gave you everything I've got.

**LEON:**

That pinky ring looks attractive.  
Felicia might like that.

**FELICIA:**

It might fit.

**STU:**

You want the ring, you've got the ring. If I can get it off.

**LEON:**

I can get it off you.  
Leon reaches in and grabs Stu's ring hand.

**STU:**

Let go of me! It's coming loose.  
There.  
(he tosses it)



Okay, Felicia, with my deepest apologies. Goodbye now.

**LEON:**

What's really going on in that booth -- that escapes the naked eye?

**STU:**

Nothing. Talk. That's all.

**LEON:**

That your connection on the end of the line? Or are you dealing?

**STU:**

This has nothing to do with drugs.

**LEON:**

You gotta be high on something to willingly divest yourself of your valuables -- just to maintain occupancy of a fucking phone booth that the local bums piss in every night.

**STU:**

I knew it smelled for some reason.

**LEON:**

You look like you're ready to piss yourself.

**STU:**

Because I am.

**LEON:**

Maybe if the city provided decent public toilets, folks wouldn't relieve themselves in the subway stations and phone booths!

**STU:**

I'll take it up with the mayor.

**LEON:**

Next thing you know you're gonna claim we mugged you -- took your billfold and watch.

**STU:**

No, you didn't. It was a fair and equitable deal. You had territorial rights to this booth and I paid a license fee. Fair is fair. Now leave me in peace.

**LEON:**

You sure you're alright?  
(to Felicia)  
He don't look well.

**FELICIA:**

Kind of pale. Even for a white man.

**LEON:**

Jaundice they calls it. Probably advanced liver trouble.  
(to Stu)  
If it's cirrhosis, you better find yourself a twelve step program and quick.

**STU:**

Thanks for your interest but I'm in perfect health.

**FELICIA:**

So how come his hand is shaking?

**LEON:**

The man is cracking up.

**FELICIA:**

Lookit the sweat pouring off the sonofabitch. That's one sick mother you started up with, Leon!

**LEON:**

Me? You're the one that brought me over and exposed me to all his germs.

**STU:**

I'm terminal, okay? Now can I close the booth and continue my conversation?

**LEON:**

I'm worried now it might be catching. All that money out of your sweaty pocket is probably crawling with some rare and incurable disease.

**STU:**

Fine. Give it back.

**LEON:**

What good's that? We done touched it.

**STU:**

Well go wash your hands.

**LEON:**

Come on now. Own up to what you're carrying. Is it some of that sexually transmitted shit? Cause in that case, we can relax.

**STU:**

I'm sick of you. Now get out of my face.

**LEON:**

Here we's being solicitous as to your health and you respond by heaping abuse!

**FELICIA:**

Whip his arrogant ass.

Leon reaches into the booth and grabs Stu's jacket.

**STU:**

Touch me and I'll throw up on you.

At the suggestion, Leon lets go quickly.

It looks like a stalemate. Stu isn't vacating the booth and Leon and his lady are reluctant to touch him further. He does indeed look sick.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

You can see what I'm up against here.

**VOICE:**

Want me to get rid of him for you?

**STU:**

What do you have in mind?

**VOICE:**

I'll think of something.

Suddenly the red dot reappears on the forehead of the pimp. Leon doesn't realize it's there. The hooker behind him has no way of seeing it. But to Stu, there's no way to miss it. He reacts.

**STU:**

God -- no.

(into pay phone)

Don't. It's not necessary.

**VOICE:**

You asked for my help.

**STU:**

I'll handle it myself.

**VOICE:**

You're not doing too well. I can settle it in a fraction of a second. Shall I demonstrate?

**STU:**

No.

(to Leon)

For your own safety, mister, just walk away.

**LEON:**

Now the man is turning aggressive... issuing threats upon my person.

**STU:**

You're making this happen.

**LEON:**

If you don't hang up and step out, I'm about to topple this booth into the gutter with you inside it.

Reluctant to touch Stu again, Leon assaults the booth itself. He begins shaking it violently -- trying to rip it from its foundation. And the rickety booth is not too sturdy. It starts rocking back and forth.

Stu is thrown around inside it, barely keeping his footing.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

This isn't my fault.

(shouts)

Stop that!

But Leon continues rocking the booth. It won't come loose -- so in frustration, he punches in a side pane of glass.

The glass shatters all around Stu, who does his best to shield himself from the slivers.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

The guy's insane!

**VOICE:**

Only one way to stop a mad dog.

Give me permission.

**STU:**

I can't.

**VOICE:**

If he forces you out of that booth,  
I've told you what to expect. You  
or him, Stu.

Leon is smashing other panes of glass now -- one after  
another -- as Stu cowers inside.

**FELICIA:**

Don't cut yourself, honey.

A crowd of derelicts and street people are now gathering to  
watch the out of control pimp take out his wrath on the booth  
and its occupant.

**DERELICT:**

Looks like the fucker is comin'  
loose.

**STREET PERSON:**

Shove it out into the oncoming  
traffic.

**DERELICT:**

What'll you bet the bus could knock  
that fifty feet?

The booth is being decimated but Stu hangs onto the phone.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)  
Hello? Hello?

**VOICE:**

(with heavy static)  
You're breaking up. We're about to  
be cut off.

**STU:**

I can't help it!

**VOICE:**

That counts as a hang-up.

**STU:**

No. It can't. That's not fair.

**VOICE:**

I can still make him stop. Say the word. Can you hear me?

**STU:**

Yes.

Stu sees the red dot reappear on Leon's chest as he continues to barrage the booth with punches and kicks.

Then Leon recoils, staggers a step backward. He doesn't realize he's been shot.

There's been no sound of gunfire. Perhaps a silencer was used -- or the downtown traffic drowned out the solitary discharge.

Leon looks confused at first. His ladyfriend has no idea he's wounded -- neither do the derelicts and street people who've assembled on the corner.

Even Stu isn't sure -- until the blood starts oozing from the wound on the pimp's chest -- staining his yellow vest.

He isn't assaulting the booth anymore. He's trying to keep his balance. He slumps forward, hanging onto the booth for support -- only a few inches from Stu's face. The blood runs down the side of the booth.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

You did it!

**VOICE:**

You said 'yes.'

**STU:**

I said 'Yes, I can hear you.' Not 'Yes -- kill the motherfucker!'

**VOICE:**

Don't try to renege on it. I was following orders.

**STU:**

You're twisting it all around. I didn't do this!

Meanwhile, Leon leans upright against the booth. Then his legs cave in and he begins to slide to his knees.

Felicia runs up beside him. She sees the blood.

**FELICIA:**

I warned you not to cut yourself.

(to crowd)

Look at all that blood. He must've hit an artery.

She screams as Leon topples backwards onto the pavement. Now his chest wound is evident.

**FELICIA:**

Oh, Jesus. What is that? Talk to me! What happened?

The crowd tightens around the fallen body. Street people who are fascinated but not shocked.

**DERELICT:**

Gunshot!

**STREET PERSON:**

Yeah. Sucking chest wound right over the heart.

**FELICIA:**

Somebody call an ambulance.

**STREET PERSON:**

Call the meatwagon. He's fucked up.

**FELICIA:**

You shut the fuck up!

Her focus turns to Stu in the battered phone booth.

**FELICIA:**

Why did you do that to him?

**STU:**

I didn't.

**FELICIA:**

(to crowd)

You all saw it! He shot my man without no provocation!



**DERELICT:**

Yeah. Pumped one right into him at close range.

**STU:**

How could I? I don't even have a gun. Look!

**STREET PERSON:**

Everybody get the fuck back! They shoot one -- then they shoot everybody in sight! Kill all the fucking witnesses!

The crowd disperses to doorways and around the corner -- out of immediate range.

**STU:**

Come back. You've got to see -- I'm not armed.

Only Felicia remains, leaning over the pimp's body, staring helplessly.

**FELICIA:**

Hang up and dial 911. Get a doctor!

**STU:**

I can't hang up. That's what this is all about.

**FELICIA:**

You're gonna stand there and let him die?

**STU:**

(takes out cellular)

I can use this.

(he dials)

Emergency. Yes. There's been a shooting at Forty-fifth and Eighth -- on the corner. A man is down. What's the difference who I am? I don't want to be involved.

**FELICIA:**

(shouts)

That's bullshit. He's the shooter.

You're talking to the shooter.

Stu quickly disconnects the cellular.

**STU:**

That wasn't nice.

**FELICIA:**

Go ahead -- make a fucking run for

it. I hope they gun you down --

like you did him!

**STU:**

I'm not going anyplace. I'm

staying right here in this booth.

(into pay phone)

Unless you give me permission.

**VOICE:**

You're attracting a lot of

attention. I suppose when the

police get there, you'll accuse me.

**STU:**

What do you expect me to say?

**VOICE:**

That's up to you. But any mention

of me will not be appreciated.

**STU:**

You mean...?

**VOICE:**

You won't even get to finish your

sentence. Oh look, that little red

dot is dancing around all over you

again. You saw how quickly it can

happen. And how accurate I can be.

**STU:**

They can't blame me -- I'm not armed.

**VOICE:**

Who's going to believe that? With all those witnesses to the contrary.

**STU:**

They can see with their own eyes. Not far away, we hear the BLAST of POLICE SIRENS drawing closer.

**VOICE:**

Remember to leave me out of it.

**STU:**

How can I?

**VOICE:**

You'll put the proper spin on it. Isn't that your specialty? Feeding the public a story that may not have a shred of truth -- and making it totally believable?

**STU:**

This isn't a story. This is real. This is murder.

**VOICE:**

If you'd only dealt with the man reasonably, shown him some respect, this might not have been necessary.

**STU:**

I gave him my money, my watch...

**VOICE:**

But not your respect. Which is what he required of you.

**STU:**

He was a fucking thief.

**VOICE:**

And now he's a fucking dead thief.  
Do you feel better about that?

**STU:**

I don't feel a bit guilty. This is  
all your doing!

**VOICE:**

Now you're being disrespectful of  
me. You never learn. Your job is  
to deal with people -- but you're  
not good at it.

**STU:**

Hey, I'm not taking any more  
criticism from some lunatic sniper  
who gets his kicks killing  
strangers.

**VOICE:**

You keep insisting I'm a stranger.  
Probably because you don't  
recognize the voice. But there are  
cheap electronic devices available  
that disguise the voice. I might  
not even be a man. I might be one  
of those many women you've almost  
totally forgotten. One who doesn't  
forgive easily. One who wants to  
watch you squirm.

**STU:**

You're a man. I know you're a man.  
Women don't kill with telescopic  
rifles. They stab you.

**VOICE:**

You sound so sure of that. But  
you've never provoked any man as  
much as have the women in your  
life. And so many of them, Stu.  
(a beat)

Do you even remember their names?

**STU:**

I've got no time to rehash my whole life. Oh my God! The cops are here.

Police cars are pulling up on all sides of Eighth Avenue. Traffic has suddenly been shut down. Prowl cars have now blocked the streets.

**PRODUCTION NOTE:**

without intercuts.

Half a dozen cops now emerge and approach with drawn guns.

**FELICIA:**

(pointing)

That's him -- in the booth. He's got a gun!

As she hurls accusations, she's lugging Leon's lifeless body out into the gutter into the center of Eighth Avenue.

It's a bright afternoon. In the distance, we hear the maddening HONKING of uptown traffic that is now being rerouted, creating a huge bottleneck and raising the anger of irate motorists and bus drivers whose horns provide their simplest form of protest. It's a discordant concert that echoes the confusion and frustration which Stu now feels...

As the cops surround the booth -- at a distance.

**SERGEANT:**

(into bullhorn)

Throw down your weapon and come out with your hands raised.

**STU:**

(into phone)

They're ordering me to come out.

**VOICE:**

I can see that. Ignore them.

**STU:**

What if they open fire?

**VOICE:**

They probably won't. Look across on the east side of the street. Do you see the tourist with the home video camera?

STU'S POV

A distant crowd gathering on the opposite west side corner behind the police cars. Some tourist is capturing the event on video.

**BACK TO STU:**

**STU:**

What about him?

**VOICE:**

He's going to keep the police on their best behavior. So long as you don't take what could be interpreted as hostile action, you'll be safe.

**STU:**

You call this safe? Six cops with guns pointed my way?

**VOICE:**

You want me to reduce them to three -- or two?

**STU:**

Absolutely no more shooting. Now is that clear?

**VOICE:**

You can always change your mind.

**SERGEANT:**

(with bullhorn)

You know the drill. Hands clasped behind the back of your neck -- moving slowly -- step out of the booth. If we see any sign of a weapon, we will respond.

**STU:**

(shouts)

You won't, because there isn't any.

**SERGEANT:**

(bullhorn)

I repeat. Raise your hands.

**STU:**

I can't. I'm on a phone call.

Now a black POLICE CAPTAIN arrives and takes full command of the situation.

**CAPTAIN RAMEY:**

You have thirty seconds to comply.

**STU:**

I told you. I'm busy. Come back later.

**VOICE:**

Very good, Stu.

The cops take cover behind parked cars, keeping Stu clearly in their sights. He has no place to hide. He's in the battered phone booth in plain view from all sides.

**RAMEY:**

You've been given an order.

The Sergeant slides up beside the Captain to confer.

**PRODUCTION NOTE:**

from Stu's POV. But we can hear their voices and all that is said as if they were in close up. It has an odd, unreal and distancing effect.

**SERGEANT:**

We're dealing with a mental case.

He's looking for us to kill him.

**RAMEY:**

Well he's not getting his wish.

In the center of the street, an ambulance pulls up and a team of medics jump out. They rush to Leon's body. (Again we hear their voices close, even though visually they are far

off.)

**FELICIA:**

Tell me he's gonna be alright.

**MEDIC:**

Step aside. Let us look at him.

The medics push her aside -- then examine the victim. He's DOA.

**MEDIC:**

Nothing we can do. Don't touch the body. They'll need it to mark the crime scene.

Far across the street, the Captain confers with his subordinates. They are small figures on the screen but we hear them sharply.

**SERGEANT:**

Same corner as two weeks ago.

**RAMEY:**

Maybe it's more than a coincidence.

Cover me. I need to talk to him.

**SERGEANT:**

You've got your vest on?

**RAMEY:**

What do you think?

The Captain steps out of cover and boldly approaches the phone booth. He stops cautiously about fifteen feet away.

**RAMEY:**

I'm not armed.

**STU:**

Neither am I.

**RAMEY:**

Yeah, sure. I need to know what happened.

**STU:**



Can't talk about it.

**RAMEY:**

Sure you can. My name's Ramey.  
Captain Ed Ramey. What's yours?

**STU:**

Look, I don't want to be friends.

**RAMEY:**

You look like you need a friend.

**VOICE:**

Tell him you've already got a  
friend.

**STU:**

(yells)

I've got a friend, okay.

**RAMEY:**

Is that who you're talking to on  
the phone?

**STU:**

None of your business.

**RAMEY:**

When somebody gets shot, it becomes  
my business. Let's not have  
anybody else killed. I want to  
hear your side of it.

**STU:**

I've got no side of it.

**VOICE:**

Don't worry, Stu. I've got him  
fixed right in my sights. I won't  
let him hurt you.

**RAMEY:**

Has this happened to you before?  
The need to hurt someone? To put a

bullet in them?

**STU:**

You won't believe anything I say.

**RAMEY:**

Try me.

**STU:**

I couldn't shoot anybody. I'm not armed.

**RAMEY:**

You're right. I don't believe you. What's that bulge in your pants pocket?

**STU:**

That? That's my cellular.

**RAMEY:**

A cellular? Then what are you doing in a phone booth making calls?

**STU:**

Do you want to see it?

**RAMEY:**

Don't reach for it, mister.

**STU:**

Then how can I show it to you?

**RAMEY:**

I don't need to see it. I know what's there. All these witnesses saw you use it on him. From behind a parked car, a HOMELESS PERSON calls out.

**STREET PERSON:**

(hollers)

Damn straight!

Another DERELICT, crouched in a doorway, joins in.

**DERELICT:**

(shouts)

Yeah! Shot him down like a dog!

**STU:**

They're all lying. Nobody saw it because it didn't happen.

**RAMEY:**

A man is dead but it didn't happen.

**STU:**

Not on account of me! This is like some bad dream.

**RAMEY:**

You're walking through a bad dream and you can't wake up. Do you want to wake up?

**STU:**

I'm trying.

**RAMEY:**

And in this dream, you killed that man. He was bothering you so you iced him.

**STU:**

No.

**RAMEY:**

Then who did?

**VOICE:**

Don't tell him, Stu. Or it'll be the last thing he ever hears. His blood will be on your hands.

**STU:**

(to Ramey)

I don't know.

**RAMEY:**

But you saw it happen?

**STU:**

Yes.

**RAMEY:**

You were the closest one to him.  
You must've seen who did it.

**STU:**

No.

**RAMEY:**

We're trying to be honest with each  
other, aren't we?

**STU:**

Not necessarily.

**VOICE:**

I'm losing patience with this cop.

**STU:**

(into phone)  
I'm handling this.

**RAMEY:**

Who do you keep talking to on the  
phone?

**STU:**

Nobody. My psychiatrist.

**VOICE:**

Excellent, Stu. You're getting  
good at this.

**RAMEY:**

What's this doctor's name? It's  
important we know.

**STU:**

He says not to tell you. It's

privileged information.

**VOICE:**

Damn good reply. Now you're having fun. Admit it.

**STU:**

Whatever you say.

**VOICE:**

Playing it so close to the edge. I'll bet you've never felt so alive. That's how I feel when I look through the sight and select somebody.

The Captain begins advancing a few steps closer.

**RAMEY:**

I respect your right to privacy. I've been to therapy myself. The department provides it. I know it's not good form for a cop to be admitting that, but...

**VOICE:**

Tell him not to come any closer.

**STU:**

Stop right there. Back up a few steps. Back where you were.

**RAMEY:**

If it makes you more comfortable.

**VOICE:**

Tell him to read you your rights.

**STU:**

I want you to read me my rights and stop asking questions.

**RAMEY:**

At least tell me your first name.

**STU:**

It's my right not to have any name.

**RAMEY:**

No gun and no name. You're a highly underprivileged person.

**VOICE:**

Demand a lawyer.

**STU:**

And get me a lawyer, too. I want a lawyer brought down here to negotiate my surrender.

**VOICE:**

Brilliant, Stu. Keep winging it.

**RAMEY:**

It'll be hard to find a lawyer willing to risk his life. But if you hand over the gun...

**STU:**

How can I when you won't let me take it out?

**RAMEY:**

We'll take it out for you -- as soon as you exit the booth with your hands raised and...

**STU:**

(interrupts)

Now we're back to that again. It's always "Get out of the booth." 'You can't stay in the booth.' Well, I like it in the fucking booth. It's my whole world now. It's my booth and I'm never coming out.

**RAMEY:**

We're not about to force you

because there could be a miscalculation and then we'd never find out why this happened.

**STU:**

Why is it so important to know? The guy is dead. Isn't that enough? Knowing isn't going to make him alive again. So who gives a fuck!

**RAMEY:**

It's what makes the job interesting. Finding out why. Something drove you to do this. You didn't go out today expecting this to happen. It was a nice day. You were out for a walk. And then suddenly it all changed.

**STU:**

All I wanted was to make a phone call. One lousy phone call for thirty-five fucking cents.

**VOICE:**

Careful, Stu. Don't volunteer too much.

**RAMEY:**

You got some bad news on that call.

**STU:**

The worst.

**RAMEY:**

Something that pushed you over the edge?

**STU:**

And I've been falling ever since.

**RAMEY:**

Time to land.

**STU:**

When you hit bottom, you die.

**RAMEY:**

I'm your safety net.

**STU:**

If I tell you what you want to know

-- you'll die, too.

Something about the implied threat sends a chill through  
Captain Ramey.

**INSERT SHOT:**

The Captain's head as seen through a telescopic sight.

Ramey could be dead in an instant.

**PRODUCTION NOTE:**

perspective is when we see the sniper's POV through his  
scope.

ANGLE BACK ON STU IN THE BOOTH,

the detective fifteen feet away.

Ramey decides to back off momentarily.

**RAMEY:**

I'll go see about that lawyer.

**STU:**

Now that's a good idea.

The Captain withdraws back across the street.

**VOICE:**

He's lucky. I had him centered in  
my cross hairs. I really had to  
restrain myself.

We hear the approach of a helicopter.

Stu peers up ward as not one but two choppers appear above  
the tall buildings.

**VOICE:**

It's not the police. It's the  
media. You're news, Stuart.

The helicopters circle above.



**VOICE:**

You've never gotten this much press for any of your clients. I'm making you a famous person.

**STU:**

They're just hoping for coverage of me dying in the gutter.

**VOICE:**

Their presence is putting the police on their continued best behavior.

**STU:**

Those cops are just looking for any excuse.

**VOICE:**

Then don't give them one.

Then, as if on cue, Stu's cellular phone in his pocket starts ringing.

But he can't allow himself to reach for it. To do so might cause the police to believe he was trying to draw his gun. It rings quietly -- virtually inaudible outside the booth. Drowned out by the traffic horns, the static from the police radios and the newly introduced sound of television helicopters circling over Eighth Avenue taking video coverage of the event below.

**VOICE:**

Who could it be?

**STU:**

Kelly. She was worried about me.

Stu is afraid to reach in his pocket lest the cops think he's going for a gun.

**VOICE:**

Maybe she's seen this on television. It must be on every channel by now. Breaking news.

**STU:**

She doesn't watch daytime TV.

**VOICE:**

One of the neighbors could've alerted her.

The cell phone keeps ringing, almost drowned out by the sound of helicopters circling overhead.

**STU:**

Why are you saying this? You want me to reach in my pocket so you can see them open fire?

**VOICE:**

That's an unwarranted accusation and very unbecoming in light of the good advice I've given in the past. Have I ever steered you wrong?

**STU:**

God -- how I'd love to hear her voice.

**VOICE:**

It might even be worth it. She's insistent, isn't she?  
The cellular won't stop ringing.

**STU:**

If she knows I'm in trouble, she won't give up.

**VOICE:**

Probably glued to the TV by now. I'm watching coverage on two stations now. Channel surfing.  
(pause)

Well, there you are on two and four and five. Not any decent angles on you, though, stuck inside there.

The cell phone continues beeping until the sound of it is maddening. Stu is still afraid to reach for it and provide the cops with an excuse to open fire.

**VOICE:**

But if you'd take one or two steps outside and look up, I think they could get a clear picture of you.

**STU:**

You said I'm not allowed to leave the booth.  
Finally the cell phone stops ringing.

**VOICE:**

I might be willing to bend the rules and let you enjoy your moment of fame. Set the phone down without hanging up... and take a step or two outside. Just for a minute. Then come straight back in or I'll be forced to provide 'live' coverage that should rival the historic Zapruder footage.

(beat)

Nothing like an exploding head to excite viewer interest.

**STU:**

No, thanks. I'll stay where I am.

**VOICE:**

It was only a suggestion. Since you're convinced I'm going to plug you anyway, it can't matter much.

**STU:**

If you shoot me, you give yourself away.

**VOICE:**

Even without a muffler, they'd never hear the report with all this noise. Afterwards, it'd take them a good ten minutes to realize you weren't plugged by some overzealous officer. Then they'll blame the media for inciting a crackpot

vigilante to come down here and do the SWAT team's job for them.

**STU:**

You expected them to come. You had this all worked out.

**VOICE:**

I write the scenario and you all play your parts -- as directed.

The damned cell phone starts beeping again. Stu fights the temptation to grab for it and hear Kelly's voice for one last time.

**STU:**

Poor Kelly. What she must be going through.

**VOICE:**

Why don't you tell her how you feel about her?

**STU:**

I'd never get the words out. Not with fifteen or twenty rounds in me.

**VOICE:**

You can't be certain they'd fire. They'd see it was only a phone.

**STU:**

They wouldn't wait to see. The cellular ringing continues jangling Stu's nerves.

**STU:**

Why doesn't she hang up?

Then Stu notices something in the crowd gathering far across the street behind the police barricades. Countless faces rubbernecking, probably hoping to see some display of violence that would end with him face down dead on the pavement.

And in the midst of them -- one face familiar to him. A female, quite pretty... even in tears. It's Kelly. (We see

her only in LONG SHOT -- a distant figure in bright green jacket that makes her stand out from the crowd.)

**STU:**

It's her! She's not calling me.  
She's over there.

**VOICE:**

Is she?

**STU:**

The blonde girl in the green jacket.

**VOICE:**

Can't miss her. Very attractive,  
isn't she?

**STU:**

She must've heard all the commotion  
and come downstairs.  
The cellular is still ringing.

**STU:**

It's somebody else who knows my  
cell number.  
(beat)  
It's you!

**VOICE:**

You continue to impress.

**STU:**

Why is it so important that they  
kill me?

**VOICE:**

Because that's how I win.

**STU:**

This time you won't. If you want  
me dead, you'll have to do it  
yourself.

**VOICE:**

Either way I can't lose.

**STU:**

It's all a game to you -- because you're incapable of feelings. You're not even human.

**VOICE:**

I pride myself on that. What's so great about being human? It's the lowest form of life on this planet and I've taken it upon myself to thin the herd.

**STU:**

I quit. I'm not answering back any more. I won't hang up but I'm not playing. There's silence now between them.

**VOICE:**

Stu? Stu, don't be that way. You're taking the pleasure out of it.

Stu doesn't take the bait. He remains absolutely silent. A stalemate has been reached.

WE RACK FOCUS ACROSS THE STREET TO THE POLICE clustered behind an emergency vehicle. The Sergeant brings a civilian to meet Captain Ramey of the SWAT unit. The newcomer wears coveralls stenciled "AT&T." (Although they are very far away, we hear their voices close up as they come into sharper focus.)

**SERGEANT:**

This here's Helfand, of New York Telephone.

**HELFAND:**

Glad to help out.

**RAMEY:**

Have you got the number of that booth?

**HELFAND:**

Sure do.

**RAMEY:**

Can you tap into that call?

**HELFAND:**

It can be done.

**SERGEANT:**

But not without a warrant. You could be violating this psycho's civil rights. Especially if he's on the line with his fucking psychiatrist.

**RAMEY:**

Shit. I don't want to blow this on a technicality. Tracing the call isn't any violation, is it?

**SERGEANT:**

As long as we don't listen in. We remain in LONG SHOT of the POLICE as they continue in heated conversation.

**RAMEY:**

(to Helfand)  
Okay, we've got to know who he's talking to and their current location.

**HELFAND:**

That I can handle. As long as they keep the circuit open.

**RAMEY:**

I need the number and an address to go with it.  
Helfand rushes off. At the corner, we can glimpse him entering a phone company utility truck parked on Forty-Fifth Street.  
RACK FOCUS BACK TO PHONE BOOTH

Stu remains tight lipped and silent, refusing to give his tormentor the conversation he so craves.

**VOICE:**

Stuart, my friend. Do you want to see how close I can come without actually hitting you?

Stu resists pleading because he knows his silence is more powerful.

There's no glass in the left side of the booth since the late Leon smashed it all out.

Nothing to shatter when the sniper squeezes off his shot.

**VOICE:**

May I call attention to the yellow pages?

The frayed yellow phonebook dangling from a chain under the telephone shudders under the impact of a direct hit.

There's been no sound of a gunshot, but the damage is there to behold.

Stu reaches for the phonebook.

There's a bullet hole straight through it. Pieces of the .30 calibre slug have shattered into many tiny fragments and are imbedded between the pages, half-way through the thick volume.

Stu pries pieces out of the pages of the directory. He looks at them in the palm of his hand.

**VOICE:**

Hollow points are designed to break up on impact. It would've behaved differently if it had pierced your soft flesh. The pieces would've bounced around looking for a way out. That's where the real damage occurs -- finding an exit -- deflecting off all that bone...

Stu wants to shout "STOP," but restrains himself. Not talking gives him some degree of power.

**VOICE:**

Still the silent treatment? My father used to dish that out when he chose to punish me. Not a word



spoken -- one time for over a month. I'd try and goad him to acknowledge I existed, but he stared right through me. You're bringing back unhappy childhood, Stu. That's not wise.

Stu still declines to answer. His silence seems his only weapon. He tosses the bullet fragments out of the booth onto the pavement.

**VOICE:**

Since you're ignoring me, I'll focus on someone else.

(a beat)

There she is -- nice and sharp. I can see the two little punctures in each earlobe and my God, what kind of a girl would have her nostril pierced?

Stu realizes the sniper now has Kelly in his sights.

**STU:**

No!

**VOICE:**

What was that? Louder, Stu. We must have a bad connection.

**STU:**

Leave her out of it.

**VOICE:**

I didn't expect her to show up here. But since she has -- I'll improvise.

**STU:**

Don't. Please don't. I'm sorry. I'm talking to you again. I'll talk all you want!

**VOICE:**

It's a bad dye job. The black roots are growing in and it makes

her look cheap.

**STU:**

I've screwed up her life enough already. Please don't hurt her.

**VOICE:**

I don't necessarily have to kill her. I could be persuaded to settle for a reasonable mutilation. Which part of her displeases you most? If she turns a bit more in profile, I'm accurate enough to remove the tip of her unpleasantly protruding nose. It's just cartilage. Any decent cosmetic surgeon will have her looking better than ever.

STU'S POV - FOCUS SHIFTS TO KELLY

in the crowd. Distant yet distinct amongst the curious onlookers.

**JUMP CUT:**

CLOSER ON KELLY -- OBLIVIOUS TO HER DANGER.

AS SEEN THROUGH CROSS HAIRS OF TELESCOPIC SIGHT

following her as she forces her way through the crowd toward the police officers.

Her face virtually fills the screen.

**PRODUCTION NOTE:**

POV is when we see the sniper's own POV through his telescopic sight.

**VOICE:**

You can see her talking to the police now. She's identifying herself as your wife. They're very interested in who you are. They're taking her over to see the officer in charge. What was his name?

SNIPER'S POV

Through the cross hairs of the sniperscope, we can see Kelly conversing with Captain Ramey. She's in a state of complete agitation.

**ANGLE ON STU:**

half leaning out of the booth, staring at his wife and the cops in the distance.

RACK FOCUS TO THEM --

and suddenly we can hear them clearly in spite of the distance.

**KELLY:**

What do you mean psychiatrist? He doesn't see any psychiatrist.

**RAMEY:**

Then who'd your husband be talking to?

**KELLY:**

There was some guy that called the house this morning and said weird stuff to me.

**RAMEY:**

Stu seems to be checking things out with this person.

**KELLY:**

He hasn't got many friends -- I can tell you that.

**RAMEY:**

Remain here, please. We may need you later.

**KELLY:**

You won't hurt him?

**RAMEY:**

We'll do our best not to.

Kelly is left alone as the Captain returns to their command center.

Kelly is once again a solitary target. She could be picked off without attracting undue attention.

**VOICE:**

She won't even feel it when it happens.

BACK TO PHONE BOOTH

**STU:**

Take me instead.

**VOICE:**

Don't distract me. Now's the time to be absolutely still. I have to hold my breath as I squeeze gently --

**STU:**

No! I'm hanging up. That's it.

Stu hangs up the receiver. He disconnects.

RACK FOCUS TO LONG SHOT --

The police as they react. We see a flurry of activity across the street. Voices become clear as focus shifts.

**RAMEY:**

Shit. He hung up.

**SERGEANT:**

Maybe they already traced it.

Anyhow, it doesn't matter. Looks like he's coming out.

RACK FOCUS BACK TO STU --

slowly stepping out of the booth. His hands are raised.

**STU:**

(shouts)

I've giving myself up. Take me!

**SWAT OFFICER:**

(distant)

First the gun. We want to see you toss away your weapon!

**STU:**

Shit. I can't.

**SWAT OFFICER:**

(distant)

Freeze where you are! Turn around  
and keep those hands clasped.

(signals the others)

Take him.

The SWAT OFFICERS in protective gear now step out of cover  
and fan out as they approach the booth.

**TIGHTER ON STU:**

He's just outside the booth -- expecting to feel the sniper's  
bullet go through him at any moment.

Then the pay phone starts ringing.

The sniper is calling back.

RACK FOCUS AGAIN

to the police.

All the cops react. Particularly the Captain and the  
Sergeant. Their voices seem close up when they sharpen in  
focus.

**SERGEANT:**

What is going on with these fucking  
phone calls?

**RAMEY:**

(shouts)

Hold your fire. Let him answer it.

The SWAT team backs up but maintain their aim.

**SERGEANT:**

Are you nuts?

**RAMEY:**

Let them talk. He's not going  
anywhere.

(shouts)

He's going back inside the booth.

Indeed we see Stu re-enter the battered phone booth and pick  
up the receiver.

FOCUS RETURNS TO STU

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

Yeah?

A strange voice begins chattering away in Spanish. Totally  
unintelligible to Stu.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

You got the wrong number. Hang up.

The voice, probably a Puerto Rican gentleman, rattles on in Spanish.

**STU:**

Wrong number. Wrong number.

Then the voice on the phone suddenly alters the Hispanic accent. It is the now familiar tone of his tormentor.

**VOICE:**

Aw, relax, Stu. Only yanking your chain. Now can we start over?

**STU:**

Those cops won't wait much longer.

**VOICE:**

What else can they do? They can't afford to just shoot you like I can. Not with so much media coverage. Not unless you make some stupid aggressive move.

(beat)

The ABC Mobile Unit just rolled up.

Across the street, Stu can see various TV units from local stations setting up cameras on roofs of trucks.

**STU:**

Will you look at that? I must be going out over the network. Bet they're pre-empting usual programming.

**VOICE:**

And just think -- if you survive this, your trial will be televised. And you can try and make the world believe I ever existed. I'd be your only defense.

**STU:**

How are they gonna prove that I  
killed anybody when there's no gun?

**VOICE:**

They'll plant one. The police  
aren't above that -- when they're  
desperate to convict.

**STU:**

No, sir. No gun and I walk.

**VOICE:**

Don't you think I took that into  
account? Am I a fool?

**STU:**

What do you mean?

**VOICE:**

Haven't I considered every  
eventuality? I knew they'd come  
and cordon off the block.  
(beat)  
And that there'd have to be a gun  
someplace.

**STU:**

Where?

**VOICE:**

It's a small booth, Stu. Have you  
checked every inch of it?

**STU:**

(looking up and down)  
It's not on the floor.

**VOICE:**

Then what's left?

**STU:**

Up above.

**VOICE:**

Could be. Why don't you reach up there and lift the plastic sheet -- and feel around.

**STU:**

If they see me reach for something, they could open fire.

**VOICE:**

They could. But you have to know if it's there. Don't you?

**STU:**

I totally don't give a shit.

**VOICE:**

In a narrow space, tucked just to the left of the fluorescent bulb. You can almost see it outlined if you look closely.

Stu peers upward at the clouded plastic, now stained and dirty. There are shadows of objects above in the shallows area around the light fixture that automatically goes on when the door to the phone booth is tightly closed.

Stu opens and closes the door a few times, watching the light click on -- watching the shadows around the light.

Could that be an accumulation of dirt, dust, or dead insects? Or could something be stashed up there?

**STU:**

It doesn't matter. I know about ballistics. The slug in that dead guy came from your rifle, not any handgun.

**VOICE:**

You saw how hollow points splinter on impact. There's nothing much for ballistics to match to. The same make .30 calibre bullets are in that handgun. The prosecution rests.

**STU:**



There's no gun up there. I don't see a damn thing.

**VOICE:**

Slide your finger up under the plastic and you'll feel the cold metal surface. There are four rounds left in it. Should you decide to shoot your way out.

**STU:**

I could never shoot anybody.

**VOICE:**

You could shoot me, Stu. You'd do that in a minute if you could.

**STU:**

And I'd fucking love it!

**VOICE:**

Now you're speaking from the heart. Come on, just lift the partition a few inches and feel what's there for you.

**STU:**

I'm not getting my fingerprints on your fucking weapon. What about powder residue? How are they going to explain that to a jury?

**VOICE:**

Do you think that'll matter with so many eye witnesses?

(beat)

Do it... or should I re-focus my attention on Kelly?

**STU:**

No.

**VOICE:**

You carefully distracted me from

her before and I let you get away with it. But if you're not going to play fairly --

(a pause)

There she is again. So close I feel like I could touch her.

**STU:**

Get off her!

**VOICE:**

Then mind me when I speak.

**STU:**

Look! I'm reaching up with my left hand. I'm pushing against the partition. It's giving. I'm feeling around with my fingertips. It's filthy up there.

TIGHT SHOT - STU'S FINGERS

feel about inside the shallow space. The shriveled remains of dead flies -- a layer of dust -- and then a .30 handgun.

**STU:**

I'm -- touching something.

**VOICE:**

One of the finest handguns Remington makes. Lightweight, efficient and highly accurate.

**STU:**

I'm not picking it up.

**VOICE:**

Not right now. But eventually...  
Stu lowers his hand, still empty.

**STU:**

I wouldn't have a chance.

**VOICE:**

I never said you would.

**STU:**

I'm not insane.

**VOICE:**

But you're getting there. It wouldn't take much.

**STU:**

That won't happen.

**VOICE:**

You could pull the gun down, shove it in your own mouth and jerk the trigger. That's another option.

**STU:**

Why would I do that?

**VOICE:**

To please me. And ensure that nothing happens to Kelly. I don't necessarily have to deal with her today in the midst of a crowd of cops. I can take her out any time I like. When she goes to pull down her blinds at night or when she walks the dog first thing in the morning. What is it -- a Jack Russell?

**STU:**

Okay. I know you can do it. But don't talk about that. Please.

**VOICE:**

I'd rather see you remembered as the gallant gunman who tried to shoot his way past an army of police -- than as a coward who sucked the barrel. I'm doing your PR for you. Creating a final image that'll endure. The outraged New Yorker who was pushed too far. When some lowlife street person

tries to invade his territory, he retaliated. And when the forces of the law closed in, he was defiant... to the end.

**STU:**

Like that nerdy sonofabitch who blew those three wiseass kids away on the subway?

**VOICE:**

Exactly. Nobody minded that he was a sicko. He was living out a New Yorker's pet fantasy. Can you remember that movie where Peter Finch started screaming 'I'm not taking it anymore!' And everybody picked up on it.

**STU:**

'I'm mad as hell and I'm not taking it anymore.'

**VOICE:**

That was it. Poor Finch got himself an Oscar for that. But he was dead by then. I mean he really died. Maybe playing that part took too much out of him.

**STU:**

(softly to himself)

'I'm not taking it anymore.' 'I'm not taking it anymore.'

**VOICE:**

That's the way! Psyche yourself up. Everybody respects a man who fights back, even if he goes a little berserk in the process.

**STU:**

Fighting back. That's what it's about.

**VOICE:**

Exactly! We all understand the poor schmuck that gets laid off and comes back and shoots all his bosses. We all thought of doing that. But only he had the balls. The terminally ill husband who gets his policy canceled and machine guns the insurance company offices. Maybe somebody will finally get the message. You can fuck human beings over only for so long before they come back at you. I'm still holding on Kelly and she looks very concerned. I could relieve all that anguish in a fraction of a second. Shall I?

Stu is hearing these words but thinking only of what the man on the line has done to him. His turn has come to fight back. He has an idea.

If the sniper is focused on Kelly, he can't be watching Stu. Turning his back to the police, Stu slowly sinks to his knees.

**STU:**

I'm on my knees begging you.

**VOICE:**

Stand up, Stu. You're embarrassing yourself.

TIGHT ANGLE --

Stu now down on his knees in the booth. He's curled up almost into a fetal position.

By doing so, he hopes to hide the fact that he's reaching into his pants pocket and pulling out his cellular phone. He half expects to hear a shot ring out either from the sniper or the cops. But nothing happens.

**VOICE:**

Stu -- I want you back on your feet facing me. So you can see what I'm going to do to her.

Stu ignores the command. He's quickly dialing.

911.

He's calling police emergency.

SNIPER'S POV

Stu seen through the cross hairs of the sniperscope, crouched, doubled up at the foot of the booth. But the cell phone is hidden in front of him.

**VOICE:**

Be a man, Stuart. Don't let them see you like this. You're an embarrassment to me.

WIDER SHOT - THE BOOTH

with Stu still kneeling.

**RACK FOCUS:**

to police across the street as their voices become clear --

**SERGEANT:**

(listening to transmission)

Officer on east side of the street reports subject removed a dark metallic object from his pocket. We better move.

**RAMEY:**

Hold all fire until you actually identify a weapon. We're doing this on fucking TV!

RACK FOCUS BACK TO -- STU IN THE BOOTH

crouched forward. The pay phone receiver dangles just above his head. The cellular remains cupped in his hand.

Stu never lifts the cell phone. He keeps the palm of his hand over the speaker of the phone to muffle any sound from the other end.

It rings and finally someone answers.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

(faint)

Police. Is this an emergency?

Hello? Is someone on the line?

But Stu addresses himself loudly to the pay phone which he now grips in his other hand. Hoping that his words will be picked up by the emergency operator listening via the cellular. To help in this regard, he reaches back and slides

the door to the booth tightly closed.  
He pretends to be talking to the sniper but his words are  
meant for the 911 operator to hear.

**STU:**

(loud)  
You've made your point. Who's  
going to believe I've got a sniper  
with a telescopic sight holding me  
in a fucking phone booth at 45th  
and 8th?

**VOICE:**

It took you a while to believe it  
yourself.

**STU:**

If you'd put a bullet in that  
Captain Ramey, it would've been a  
different story -- but you were too  
wise to do that.

**VOICE:**

Why don't you do it for me? Wave  
the old captain back over and get  
him nice and close and then use the  
handgun on him.

**STU:**

(talking loud)  
Why me? You could pick off any of  
those cops from your window up  
there. Like you did that pimp.  
And that tourist last week. But  
this time you want me to do your  
killing for you.

**VOICE:**

And you will! To save Kelly.  
EXTREME TIGHT SHOT - CELL PHONE  
cupped in Stu's hand and held low. Can they hear him on the  
other end?  
EMERGENCY OPERATOR  
(muffled, almost

inaudible)

Can you speak up, sir? What is your name?

Stu is concerned that the sniper might hear the voice of the emergency operator. He sets the cell phone down flat on the floor of the booth facing upward. He puts his foot over the receiving end to muffle the incoming voice. Then he stands up.

**VOICE:**

That's better, Stu. Now turn around so I can see you.

Stu talks close into the pay phone receiver now. But keeps his voice raised.

**STU:**

This booth. It's my whole world -- shrunk down to four feet by three feet. Not much bigger than the size of a coffin.

**VOICE:**

They can put handles on the booth and bury you in it.

**STU:**

(loudly into pay phone)

When I saw you put that bullet into that black dude, I knew you'd never let me out of this phone booth alive.

**VOICE:**

You're wasting my time. Reach up and take the gun.

**STU:**

(peering upward,  
squinting)

Let me see you first. What harm can that do you? You're in one of those windows. I've got to know which one.



**VOICE:**

No need for that.

**STU:**

Being so far, I could never identify you. I don't even want to.

**VOICE:**

What is it then?

**STU:**

Don't worry that I'd try to point you out. You'd shut me up with one of your .30 calibre hollow points before I could even raise a finger.

**VOICE:**

Why does it matter so much?

**STU:**

I want to see that you exist. Like God exists. It's not enough to believe. You want to see him -- just once -- even at a distance.

**VOICE:**

And then you'd take the gun down. And use it. We have a deal on that?

**STU:**

Show yourself to me and I'll take the gun down. I swear.  
There's a pause as the sniper mulls it over.

**VOICE:**

I don't have to make deals. And you're irritating me by trying to negotiate. God doesn't have to prove anything. He just strikes you down when he gets in the mood.

**STU:**

Stop! I won't ask to see you anymore.

**VOICE:**

I'm glad that's settled. But look who else has showed up?

**STU:**

Who?

**VOICE:**

I guess she saw the coverage on TV and just couldn't keep away.

**STU:**

What are you talking about?

**VOICE:**

The 'hotel' just arrived. And a very beautiful little hotel she is. Actually, I'd classify her as more of a motel.

**STU:**

Mavis? I don't see her.

**VOICE:**

She's too far back behind the police line. But I've got a fine shot at her from up here.

**STU:**

You don't even know what she looks like.

**VOICE:**

You're in an enviable position now, Stu. You get to choose between them. Tell me which one.

**STU:**

I can't.

**VOICE:**

Which will it be? Kelly or Mavis?

Or should I simply select one?

INSERT SHOT - THE CELL PHONE

lying face up on the floor of the booth. Is anybody listening?

**BACK TO STU:**

Stu looks down at the cellular. He has no way of knowing if the police operator can hear any of his words.

**STU:**

I need time to think...

**VOICE:**

You've got to be more in touch with your feelings. You said you love Kelly.

**STU:**

I do.

**VOICE:**

Then I'm doing you a favor putting you out of the way of temptation.

**STU:**

It wasn't Mavis' fault. It was all my fault.

**VOICE:**

Then take the third option. Reach above you and pick up the gun.

**STU:**

You'll leave them both alone?

**VOICE:**

There won't be much point in harming them without you around to impress.

**STU:**

I'll do it.

**VOICE:**

Let me see you do it.

**STU:**

I need one minute. One last minute, please. Can you give me that?

**VOICE:**

Don't tell me you're going to say your prayers?

**STU:**

Something like that.

WE RACK FOCUS AWAY TO LONG SHOT - THE POLICE assembled on the opposite side of the street.

**RAMEY:**

They should've traced the fucking call by now.

**SERGEANT:**

(listening on transmitter)

There's something else coming in. A 911 operator says your name was mentioned by somebody that's still on the line. Somebody talking about a phone booth. And a sniper.

**RAMEY:**

Patch me through. Hello, this is Captain Edward Ramey. What about that call?

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

The line is still open. It's originating from a booth at 45th and 8th.

**RAMEY:**

We're there! Can you play me back your recording of the entire call?

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

I can't replay the tape while it's still running.

**RAMEY:**

Then switch to another machine and play back what you've got.

EMERGENCY OPERATOR

It's awful faint. He's not talking directly into the receiver.

Ramey begins to listen. We hear snatches of Stu's call picking up words which are at times incomprehensible.

STU'S VOICE

(faint)

'Who's going to believe I've got a sniper with a telescopic sight holding me in some fucking phone booth...'

The uniformed TELEPHONE TECHNICIAN now joins Ramey and the Sergeant.

TELEPHONE TECHNICIAN

Got what you wanted. The call's coming from up the street. The Hotel Broadway.

**RAMEY:**

Have you got the room?

TELEPHONE TECHNICIAN

It's not that easy. Electronic switchboard.

**RAMEY:**

(to Sergeant)

Move your SWAT units to the hotel.

No... wait. Any movement will alert the sniper. If he sees any of us withdraw, he may panic.

**SERGEANT:**

There's another SWAT unit on the way.

**RAMEY:**

Intercept them. Divert them to the hotel.

**SERGEANT:**

It's done.

**RAMEY:**

Send them in from the Forty-third Street side. I don't want any activity the sniper might catch sight of. He's probably high up and facing that booth. He's got to continue to believe our full attention is focused on the man inside -- whoever the hell that poor bastard is.

(to emergency operator)

Hello 911 operator, I missed some of that. Run it halfway back and repeat it.

STU'S VOICE (REPLAY)

(faint)

'... Like you did that pimp. And that tourist last week. But this time you want me to do the killing for you...'

**RAMEY:**

(listening)

Jesus... he's a dead man.

BACK INSIDE PHONE BOOTH

**VOICE:**

The police seem all excited about something, Stu.

**STU:**

Are they? I wasn't looking.

**VOICE:**

I can't wait any longer. Say amen, then reach up for the gun. When your hand comes down, I want to see it.

**STU:**

I'm too afraid.

**VOICE:**

For once, be brave. Surprise yourself.

**STU:**

I'm shaking all over.

**VOICE:**

Guys in combat situations even shit their pants. But they follow orders.

**STU:**

As soon as the cops see a gun, they'll open fire.

**VOICE:**

Then I'd advise you to fire first.

Stu's arm goes up in a supreme act of willpower.

His fingers run along the two clouded plastic sheets that cover the roof of the booth. It raises up easily at the middle where two sheets join.

**TIGHT INSERT SHOT**

The space between the roof of the booth and the sheets of clouded plastic. We see the fluorescent lighting fixture covered with dust. The solitary object -- a cruel-looking weapon.

Now Stu's fingertips protrude into the small space. He touches the gun, brushes back and forth, feeling the roughness of the grip.

**TIGHT SHOT - STU'S FACE**

as below he continues to hesitate -- it's agony --

The sweat pours down his forehead and his eyes are squeezed tightly shut. He can already imagine the police bullets tearing into him.

**A POLICE SNIPER IS MOVING INTO POSITION.**

**POLICE SNIPER:**

(into transmitter)

Give me the word.

**RACK BACK TO STU - IN THE BOOTH**

His arm still raised. He hasn't brought it down with the gun in it. Not yet. He holds the pay phone receiver jammed up against his mouth.

**VOICE:**

Hard part's over. Drop your arm and point it like you'd point your finger and squeeze.

**STU:**

No. You do it. If you want me dead, then fucking murder me!

**VOICE:**

Why must I keep invoking some poor girl's name every time we come to an impasse? I'm focused back on Kelly again. You're obviously not willing to trade your life for hers.

**STU:**

I am! I'm doing it!  
He pulls the handgun down into full view. Curiously, the police do not open fire.

**STU:**

There! You see it? They all see it.  
He waves the gun so nobody can miss it.

**STU:**

Where are you? Damn you!!  
He drops the receiver and steps halfway out of the booth. Still the cops do not open fire. Then Stu starts shooting. Not at the police, but at the high rise buildings across the street. At the thousands of windows that look down upon him. He gets off two shots before a solitary rifle shot rings out in response.  
RACK FOCUS TO THE POLICE SNIPER  
He has fired.

**ANGLE ON STU:**

The remaining glass on the south side of the booth shatters. Stu tumbles forward, sprawling out of the booth onto the



pavement.

RACK FOCUS TO KELLY

She screams, tries to break through but cops restrain her.

INT. PHONE BOOTH

ANGLE ON DANGLING RECEIVER

as it sways back and forth. From it, we hear the voice.

**VOICE:**

Thanks for such an interesting  
afternoon.

THEN THERE ARE OTHER SOUNDS EMANATING FROM THE DANGLING  
SWAYING PHONE.

A wooden door being battered open. A few incomprehensible  
shouts as a SWAT TEAM dashes in. Stu's stalling for time has  
paid off.

THE SOUND OF A BARRAGE OF GUNFIRE.

THE SOUND OF A MUFFLED SCREAM.

The police have broken in on Stu's tormentor and there has  
been a rapid exchange of shots.

A HAND reaches into the booth and grabs the receiver.

ANGLE WIDENS as Ramey places it to his ear.

**RAMEY:**

Hello? This is Captain Ramey.

Somebody talk to me.

SWAT OFFICER'S VOICE

Yeah. We took him out, Captain.

Nobody else got hurt.

**RAMEY:**

What's his condition?

SWAT OFFICER'S VOICE

Critical. The sonofabitch took  
two. Probably won't survive the  
ride.

**RAMEY:**

Get a statement from him. I'll be  
right over.

He drops the receiver so that it dangles again.

CAMERA FOLLOWS RAMEY to where Stu lies surrounded by cops and  
medics. He's stunned, but very much alive.

**MEDIC:**

Don't try to sit up.

**STU:**

What was that?

**RAMEY:**

(kneeling)

Rubber bullet.

**MEDIC:**

You'll have one hell of a nasty welt. Busted rib. Maybe a permanent scar there.

**STU:**

It couldn't hurt much more if you really shot me.

**RAMEY:**

Somebody was going to and we thought it may as well be us.

**STU:**

Did you get him?

**RAMEY:**

Sure as hell did. Thanks to you.

**STU:**

Still alive?

**RAMEY:**

Barely.

**MEDIC:**

We'll be giving him a hypo for the pain. It'll put him out for a while.

Kelly is now brought over by a female cop. She drops to her knees beside Stu and tries to embrace him. The medics restrain her.

**STU:**

It's okay. I'm not really shot.

**KELLY:**

I was so afraid. I thought...

**STU:**

I thought so, too. But we're going to be alright. Both of us.

**KELLY:**

Remember how you swore up and down you'd get me on TV? Well, you did. I already got interviewed on Fox and Channel Eleven and they even want me on A.M. America tomorrow morning.

**STU:**

Bet you didn't think I could deliver on that.

**MEDIC:**

Will you please let go of him, Miss?

A gurney is wheeled over from a police ambulance. The medic is about to administer the hypo but Stu pushes him away.

**STU:**

No. No hypo. I want to see him first.

The medics are now ready to lift Stu onto the gurney and cart him off. But Stu struggles against them.

**RAMEY:**

Relax. The guy's dying.

**STU:**

That's why I've gotta talk to him. Please!

**RAMEY:**

We'll see.

**MEDIC:**

(to Kelly)

You can ride with him in the ambulance.

The woman cop escorts Kelly to the waiting ambulance. Ramey meanwhile tries to resume contact with the SWAT team inside the hotel.

**RAMEY:**

This is Ramey. Over. This is Ramey. Ten-Four.

There's nothing but static, mixed up feedback and multiple garbled voices on the other end of the line.

**RAMEY:**

Shit. Get everybody off this wavelength.

He crosses back to the phone booth -- picks up the dangling receiver.

**RAMEY:**

Hello. Hello! Pick up! Yeah, it's Ramey again. Can you hold the phone close enough so the perp can listen?

COP'S VOICE

He's not saying a word, Captain.

**RAMEY:**

He's not about to talk to us. Maybe to him.

Ramey looks back to where the medics are still trying to lift Stu onto the gurney.

**RAMEY:**

Forget that. Stand him up.  
(to Stu)  
Can you stand?

**STU:**

I can try.

**RAMEY:**

Help him over here.

The medics support Stu and inch him back to the booth. It's painful, but Stu ignores it.

Ramey holds the phone up so Stu can both listen and speak.

**RAMEY:**

Here. Speak up.

**STU:**

(into pay phone)

It's me. Do you hear me? Answer me.

**VOICE:**

(wheezing)

Had to have the last word, Stu.

**STU:**

I finally beat your ass. Admit it, you fuck.

**VOICE:**

But you'll never forget me. I gave you the most thrilling day of your life. Say thanks.

**STU:**

Now you're gonna die, you bastard.

**VOICE:**

I lost a lot of blood. Don't you want to donate some for me? Then we'd really be part of each other.

**STU:**

Hang on. I can't wait to see you at the hospital. So I can yank your fucking air tube out.

**VOICE:**

Wish I could give you that pleasure. You deserve it.  
(coughing)  
... Only I'm out of time.

**STU:**

What's your name? At least tell me

who you are.

There's more violent coughing, then silence. Then a cop's voice is heard.

COP'S VOICE

He's gone.

Stu stares at the receiver.

**RAMEY:**

Don't worry. We'll find out who he is. And why he picked you.

**STU:**

No. You won't.

(a beat)

What do you want to bet you won't?

Stu reaches over and hangs up the receiver. CLICK.

**STU:**

I'll spend my whole life trying to figure that out.

Then he sinks into the arms of the medics who lower him onto the waiting gurney.

The hypo is finally administered. It kicks in immediately, relieving the pain.

He's wheeled away from the booth to the waiting ambulance.

Kelly is already inside waiting to accompany Stu to the hospital.

STU'S POV - BEING WHEELED AWAY FROM THE EMPTY BOOTH

pulling away in LOW ANGLE.

CAMERA SLIDES BACK inside the ambulance with Stu. The doors shut, obliterating our view of the phone booth that was his entire world until moments ago.

**STU:**

(groggy)

Gotta sleep now. No phone calls...

Kelly smiles down at him as the image blurs. Stu passes out -- into a deep sleep he much deserves.

A SIREN BLARES.

CUT TO BLACK.