

LOVERS, MUGGERS & THIEVES

(Pilot)

By

Jonathan Tudan

Based on a true story - in the autobiography,
Lovers Muggers & Thieves
A Boston Memoir

By

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FADE IN:

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - NIGHT

INSERT TITLE: "Boston - 1969"

The shadowy figure of an ADULT MALE crosses through a darkened foyer and stops before a solid pair of doors. The doors pivot on its hinges and he is greeted by the plaintiff wail of a solo blues guitar. He enters a dim, cavernous, subterranean atmosphere of testosterone, weaving through a sea of MALES, adult white men, toward the focal point of the room, the STAGE, a platform 10 feet wide by 10 feet deep.

The entrails of silver cigarette smoke waft through yellow beams of light encircling over the performance of a scantily clad DANCER, KITTY, 35, voluptuous, skin like polished ebony, bright red lipstick and blue eye shadow. Kitty's long mane of black banana curls drops below her shoulders. She is wearing a spangled-ruby skirt and vest over a white, silk blouse, opened wide from the neck down to her belly, revealing the hint of a scarlet bra. A choker of pearls grips tight around her throat, matching the pair of garters clutching her upper thighs.

The ADULT MALE passes scores of tables surrounded by seated MALES. The tables, crowded with drinks, form a deep horseshoe pattern around the STAGE.

The ADULT MALE takes a ring-side table and is met by a COCKTAIL WAITRESS who leans over, displaying a warm smile and welcoming cleavage. The COCKTAIL WAITRESS places a bottle of beer on a dartboard size table in front of the ADULT MALE.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

(winking)

On the house, Honey.

The ADULT MALE is settled-in by the stage. KITTY, seated on a cane-back chair, makes eye-contact with the ADULT MALE, affecting a coy smile.

Notes beseeching from the blues guitar play in syncopation with KITTY'S movements on STAGE. White light from above sends sparks off her crimson-clad body. The light falls across her reclined figure, barely seated on the chair, head tilting back, her thick mane nearly brushing the STAGE.

KITTY'S posture becomes more compromising as she languidly lifts her hips in rhythm to the music, bringing them down slowly, gliding open her legs in a dreamy motion.

She doesn't acknowledge the adulation of the swarm of MALES surrounding her, howling through the darkness, their shouts a jumble of vulgar taunts and wanton lust.

KITTY gyrates off the chair, losing her vest in the move. Standing tall, she plays with the crowd, feigning disapproval; shaking a long finger in their face like a schoolteacher scolding misbehaving students. The howling amplifies, practically drowning out the music.

Suddenly, KITTY rips her blouse from her body and throws it to the floor. As the music continues to flow, her skirt is shed from her hips, not in haste... but slowly, teasingly, leaving behind only a scarlet heart tied to a G-string. The bra slips to the floor; her nipples are topped with pasties like red cherries.

KITTY
(French accent, purrs)
More, children?

A chorus of MALES begs with hands out-stretched like starving men grabbing for morsels of meat. Standing tall beneath the spotlights, KITTY spreads her long legs and places both hands on the side of her head, elbows out akimbo to the stage.

KITTY yanks off her banana-curls, tossing the wig behind her back. Her head is crowned with short, black strings of hair. The crowd goes bananas! The MALES slap their hands on their tables, echoing like gunfire.

A MALE in the crowd cups his hands in front of his mouth, bull-horn style.

MALES
(shouts)
Take it off!

KITTY
More? Are you sure?

A lustful, masculine roar surrounds her performance.

MALES
Yeah! Come on! Do It!

KITTY opens her mouth wide. Long, sinuous fingers reach inside her throat, appearing to be swallowed, and pull out a full set of false teeth. She licks her naked gums with her tongue and throws her head back in a shameless laugh.

Shining eyes beam in the face of the ADULT MALE, JONNY, 18, white, Paul McCartney haircut, fashionably dressed in a powder-blue dress shirt bejeweled with silver cufflinks. He smiles and claps softly, joining the overflow of adulation.

FLASHBACK

INSERT TITLE: "Hartford - Summer of 1968"

EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW - DAY

JONNY's face is seen from outside his bedroom window; his hair is cut short. His eyes have a worried look.

INT. BEDROOM (CONTINUOUS)

Posters of Robert Kennedy and Bob Dylan are tacked to the wall. Little-league trophies stand beside model cars that line the book shelves; a crucifix is fixed to the wall above the bed. JONNY stands beside his second-floor window gazing down into his back yard. Balloons are tied to fruit trees and the clothes line. FRIENDS and FAMILY surround a picnic table. JERRY, 21, JONNY's older brother, wearing a polo shirt and Bermuda shorts is standing in the doorway.

JERRY

(anxious)

Hey Bro! Cake and candles! Come on!
We're all waiting. What the hell
are you doing up here?

JONNY

Thinking.

JERRY

Thinking? About what?

JONNY

Tomorrow... next week... next year.

JERRY

Well, start thinking about now.
It's not every day you turn 18.

EXT. JONNY'S BACKYARD - DAY

Rock & roll music blaring on the radio. A GROUP is gathered around a picnic table. JERRY, MOTHER, FATHER, SISTERS and JONNY'S high school buddy, PAULIE, white male, 18, all clap hands as JONNY joins the party. PAULIE, turns down the radio and the GROUP breaks into singing Happy Birthday.

JONNY has a sheepish smile on his face. He stands behind the cake, closes his eyes and blows.

PAULIE

What'd you wish for?

JONNY

World peace.

PAULIE

Bullshit!

The GROUP begins to enjoy the cake and ice cream. JONNY takes his plate, sits on the ground beneath an apple tree. JERRY and PAULIE join him.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

I know what you wished for. You're hoping to finally get laid... bang some slutty co-ed when you hit Boston.

JERRY

(defensive)

Hey, get off my little brother. He's not gonna do it with just anybody.

(a beat)

You want to find the right girl to pop your cherry. Ain't that right, Jonny-boy?

JONNY

(laughs)

I'm just wishing I make it through the first semester.

CUT TO:

INT. DRUGSTORE - NIGHT

JONNY walks up and down the aisles with a shopping list in one hand, a basket in the other. He scans the list and drops a variety of medicinal products into his basket.

Drug store employee, PAULIE, wearing a white Pharmacist's jacket, is behind the counter, servicing an ELDERLY WOMAN.

JONNY walks up to the counter and hands his basket to PAULIE, who empties the contents on to the counter.

PAULIE

You plan on getting sick?

JONNY

(shrugs)

First aid kit. My Mom thought I should be prepared when I get to Boston.

PAULIE rings up the stuff on the cash register. He eyes the ELDERLY WOMAN.

PAULIE

(sotto voce)

Anything else... to get you prepared? We got Benzedrine, Dexedrine, codeine... all kinds of study-aides.

JONNY

(leaning-in)

Well, there is something I could use. Can you score me some rubbers?

PAULIE

Rubbers?!

The ELDERLY WOMAN gives both boys a disapproving glare.

JONNY

Jesus Paulie, can you speak a little louder? I don't think they heard you across the street.

PAULIE

(smiling)

What kind you looking for?

JONNY

Oh, I don't know... large?

PAULIE

I don't want to know the size of
your dick, asshole. What brand? You
know, Trojans, Sheik?

JONNY

(tentative)
Trojans.

PAULIE

All right lover-boy.

PAULIE looks over his shoulder and eyes his BOSS (Pharmacist,
40-year old white guy) a few feet away.

PAULIE (CONT'D)

(apprehensive)
I can't deal with this now. After
you get settled in drop me a line
and let me know where to send them.

EXT. BUS STATION, DOWNTOWN HARTFORD - DAY

An overcast sky starts to open-up and drizzle. The bus to
Boston idles by the curb. JERRY stands beside his younger
brother, leans forward and gives him a goodbye hug. JONNY'S
bag is by his feet. He hugs him back.

JERRY

Make us proud, Mr. Architect.

JONNY

(smiling)
Hey man, no pressure.

JERRY

(feigning seriousness)
Mom told me to remind you to go to
Confession.

JONNY

I got nothing to confess.

An ELDERLY BLACK PORTER takes the bag from JONNY'S hand and
pitches it into the belly of the bus.

EXT. INSIDE THE BUS (CONTINUOUS)

JONNY drops into an open seat. He leans his face against the
glass, peering through a veil of drizzle.

JONNY eyes capture the filmy broken windows and sooty brownstone walls of the once muscular Union Station across the street. A wino convention hugs up against the entrance, passing a bottle while squeezing a bit of shelter beneath a shallow overhang.

JONNY'S hand casually rests on the open seat beside him.

OBESE MAN (O.C.)
Hey, buddy, move your hand!

An OBESE MAN drops his body, hitting the seat with a muffled thud, squeezes down into position. He slips his stocking feet free from his loafers, lights a cigarette and reclines to enjoy his smoke.

JONNY
Ugh... would you mind not smoking?
It sort of bothers me.

The OBESE MAN blows smoke in JONNY'S direction.

OBESE MAN
(sneering)
Yeah? Would you mind minding your
own fucking business?

EXT. WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY QUAD - DAY

JONNY, steps on to campus in his sport jacket and penny loafers. He marches ahead, following make-shift cardboard signs directing him to the Architecture Department for the freshman class with last names beginning with the letters N through Z.

INT. DRAFTING STUDIO CORRIDOR - DAY

CLASSMATES, all white young adult males, assemble in the corridor waiting to enter the drafting studio. They all look the same in their conservative attire, except for one guy standing alone in the corner leaning against the wall; VAN HELDEN, 18, mixed-race, half Dutch, half Indonesian. VAN HELDEN looks like a rock star.

INT. DRAFTING STUDIO (CONTINUOUS)

Seat assignments displayed by cardboard cards with each student's names written in bold block letters stand on the desks, an army of little pup tents.

JONNY finds his seat, placed next to VAN HELDEN. They acknowledge each other with friendly nods.

A tall, humorless man in a drab business suit enters the room; MR. PEDERSON, white male, fifties, shaped like an eggplant, completely bald save for a ring of thick hair looping around his big ears like a dead mink. He gives the assembly a commanding glare, bringing the room to quick attention.

MR. PEDERSON

Today, gentlemen, you are about to embark upon your career as technical experts in the built environment. This college was founded in 1904 on a commitment to excellence, and since that time we have sustained a worthy reputation for matriculating some of the finest professionals in this field. Consequently, we graduate only the best of the best.

(a beat)

Take a look at the man sitting next to you...

JONNY and VAN HELDEN give each other a dumb smile.

MR. PEDERSON (CONT'D)

...because he'll probably be gone before this semester is out. You may have found it easy getting into this program, but by God, I promise you, you will not find it easy leaving here with a degree. Remember these words... commitment, honor and respect.

(a beat)

Study hard, display a moral character, and follow the rules of this institution... and you just might be here next spring.

INT. STUDENT UNION CAFETERIA - NOON

JONNY spreads out the contents of his lunch tray. Two members of his class take a seat around the table: ANDREUS THEODOKIS, 21, tall, handsome, grinning like he's enjoying himself immensely; and VAN HELDEN.

JONNY

Well, fuck a duck, guys. Welcome to
Wentworth.

ANDREUS shoots his hand fast across the table for JONNY to
shake.

ANDREUS

(a heavy Greek accent,
grinning)

My name is Andreus! I am pleased to
meet you, my fine friends!

JONNY extends his hand, which ANDREUS pumps heartedly like a
peasant cranking water from a well.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)

I live in Framingham, but I come
from a beautiful village in Greece;
My family taught me to work like a
horse and don't complain. It is
joyful to be here!

JONNY

(smiling)

I think you're gonna fit in just
fine, Andreus. I'm Jonny, from
Connecticut. I'm living in Mattapan
with my uncle.

JONNY turns to the VAN HELDEN and extends his hand.

JONNY (CONT'D)

And who are you?

VAN HELDEN

(Dutch accent)

Ahhh... a very good question. Who
am I? I guess whoever I want to be.

JONNY

Mystery-man. I think you're John
Lennon.

VAN HELDEN

(Extending his hand to
JONNY)

Robert Willem Van Helden. You can
call me Van Helden.

CUT TO:

INT. WENTWORTH CLASSROOM CORRIDOR - DAY

A bell rings and classroom doors swing open. JONNY and VAN HELDEN walk through the CORRIDOR joining scores of STUDENTS headed for their next class. They pause before a poster tacked to the wall announcing a dance Saturday night in Wentworth's gymnasium. The poster announces that Wentworth, an all-male institution, will be joining Fisher College, all-females, in a Fall Mixer with live music performed by the R&B Preachers Club. JONNY points to the poster.

JONNY

I wouldn't mind showing up for this. I could dig a little R&R with a few chicks.

VAN HELDEN

R&R? What's that?

JONNY

(smiling)

Rock and roll, my man, rock and roll.

CUT TO:

INT. WENTWORTH GYMNASIUM - SATURDAY NIGHT

JONNY and VAN HELDEN enter the gym walking side by side. Except for the spotlights showcasing the bandstand, the room is dimly lit, making the cheap decorations and bunting festooned from the ceiling even more unnecessary. The R&B PREACHERS CLUB, five animated young black men, are rhythmically covering Sam Cooke's *Bring it on Home to Me*. JONNY and VAN HELDEN weave through the crowd, surveying the terrain. VAN HELDEN spots FOUR CO-EDS grouped together twenty-feet away and nudges JONNY.

VAN HELDEN

This way.

VAN HELDEN walks up to the FOUR FEMALES and starts a conversation. JONNY remains standing in place, watching his friend, too far away to hear them talking. VAN HELDEN takes the hands of two of the FEMALES and escorts them towards JONNY, one on each side. They stop in front of JONNY.

VAN HELDEN (CONT'D)

You feel like dancing?

JONNY
(bemused)
Sure.

VAN HELDEN smiles at the FEMALE to his right and places her hand out to JONNY. The two couples move cordially on to the dance floor and begin slow-dancing. The song ends and they remain standing in front of the bandstand.

The R&B PREACHERS CLUB's FRONT MAN speaks into his mic. His smooth, baritone voice sounds clean coming from the room's speakers.

FRONT MAN
We are the R&B Preachers Club,
people!

Cheers erupt throughout the GYM.

FRONT MAN (CONT'D)
We want to thank you all for being
here on this magical night in
Boston. It's magical because...
(a beat)
We got so much soul, we don't need
no music!

FRONT MAN (CONT'D)
(singing acapella)
We got so much soul, we don't need
no music.

The FRONT MAN sings this refrain several times before walking among his BAND MATES and holding the mic up to each one. In turn, each sings the refrain, but in different octaves and inflections, all melodic.

BAND MATES
(singing acapella)
We got so much soul, Baby! We don't
need no music!

The FRONT MAN leans out from the bandstand with his mic to the pack of REVELERS in front, inviting anyone to join in and sing. One by one, people step up.

REVELERS
(singing)
We got so much soul, we don't need
no music!

The FRONT MAN moves his mic in Jonny's face.

JONNY
(belts out)
We got so much soul, Mama! We don't
need no music!

VAN HELDEN
All right, Jonny!

EXT. MATTAPAN SQUARE STATION - NIGHT

JONNY steps off the trolley, drawing his coat in tight and heads for home, his UNCLE ARTHUR'S double-decker.

EXT. UNCLE ARTHUR'S DUPLEX (CONTINUOUS)

JONNY approaches the front door in silence, slips in his key.

INT. UNCLE ARTHUR'S DUPLEX (CONTINUOUS)

JONNY ascends the stairs toward his section of the house, a room on the second floor.

UNCLE ARTHUR (O.C.)
Jonny, is that you!?

JONNY
Yeah.

UNCLE ARTHUR (O.C.)
Can you come here a minute? I need
a little help.

INT. ARTHUR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

JONNY walks into the room and finds UNCLE ARTHUR, fifties, bald, lying flat in bed on top of the covers in his pajama bottoms, holding a plastic bottle out towards JONNY'S face.

JONNY
(stammers)
I'm gonna do a little homework
before supper.

UNCLE ARTHUR flips over and extends the bottle in JONNY'S direction.

UNCLE ARTHUR

Jonny, would you mind rubbing lotion on my back? My skin is so itchy. This cream's the only thing that helps.

UNCLE ARTHUR'S flesh has the color and consistency of Silly Putty.

JONNY

(repulsed, hesitant)

Sure.

JONNY takes the bottle, squeezes out a healthy gob, covers every square inch of skin of his Uncle's back in three-seconds flat, drops the bottle on the bed and makes a beeline to his room.

INT. JONNY'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

JONNY, wearing pajamas and sitting at a desk, closes his book and snaps off the light. He gets up to kneel beside his bed. His knees make two thumping sounds as he hits the floor to pray.

JONNY makes the sign-of-the-cross; his lips move as he whispers a few seconds of prayer, and climbs into bed.

INT. STAIRWAY INSIDE UNCLE ARTHUR'S DUPLEX - MORNING

JONNY scurries down the stairs, book bag strapped over his shoulder, chomping on a piece of toast. He passes UNCLE ARTHUR, standing in his bathrobe and slippers beside an open door, arms folded across his chest, a Kent dangling from his lips with a one-inch of ash. UNCLE ARTHUR is casting a grimacing look at JONNY.

UNCLE ARTHUR

What's all that thumping going on in your room at night?

JONNY

Huh?

UNCLE ARTHUR

My bed is right below you. Every night I hear these two thumps on my ceiling, bah-boom! It wakes me up. Whatever it is you're doing, stop it.

JONNY
(Embarrassed)
Maybe it's me doin' push-ups?

UNCLE ARHTUR
Well, whatever it is, cut it out.
You're waking me up.

CUT TO:

EXT. INSIDE PHONE BOOTH - COPLEY SQUARE SIDEWALK OUTSIDE OF
SENIOR PIZZA, BACK BAY BOSTON - DUSK

JONNY drops a dime into the phone and dials the operator.

JONNY
I want to place a collect call to
Hartford, Connecticut.
(a beat)
525-2710. Tell them Jonny is
calling.
(a beat)
Thank you.

JERRY (O.C.)
What's up? Have they kicked you
out of school?

JONNY
Not yet. Just checking in. Thought
I just call to say hi.

JERRY (O.C.)
How's Uncle Art treating you?

JONNY
It's freaky living here. He wants
me to rub lotion on his back at
night. It fuckin' creeps me out.

JERRY (O.C.)
Well, what are your options? If he
starts asking you to rub his feet,
tell him that's where you draw the
line. Hang in there, Jonny-boy.

JONNY
Thanks. I just wanted to say hi. I
gotta go. I'm meeting a friend.

JONNY stands beside the entrance to SENIOR PIZZA. Using his palm as a visor, he leans his face into the storefront window and examines the CLIENTELE, a society of campus radical mod British rocker Jesus apostles in an atmosphere of hippie camaraderie.

Tilting back, JONNY catches his clean-cut reflection in the glass and lets out a heavy sigh. A little intimidated, he ventures inside and begins hunting for VAN HELDEN.

INT. SENIOR PIZZA - A MOMENT LATER

JONNY spots VAN HELDEN sitting alone, absorbed in a newspaper, a cigarette dangling from his lips. JONNY walks up and kicks his foot, triggering a hearty salutation.

VAN HELDEN
(Jumping out of his chair)
Jonny!

They stand, grinning like a couple of clowns, letting a few seconds pass in silence before dropping into their seats.

VAN HELDEN (CONT'D)
(Beams happily)
Thanks for coming out.

JONNY
(Smiling)
My pleasure. So, what do we wanna do tonight?

VAN HELDEN
I got a friend, Nathan, lives close by on Marlborough. We're gonna kick back, do a little wine, do a little music.
(a beat)
Unless you got a better idea?

JONNY
Are you shittin' me? I'm just happy to be out of the house. I'd be jazzed if you told me we're gonna stroll down Comm Ave and pick up litter.

VAN HELDEN reaches for a smoke to replace the one he extinguished seconds ago. He slips out a butt and tilts the box towards JONNY.

JONNY (CONT'D)

No thanks.

(P.O.V.) JONNY

Every table in the place is smoking up a storm. VAN HELDEN lights up, leans back and blows a lazy cloud, folding into the haze above their heads.

JONNY (CONT'D)

(Shrugs, pulls one from
the pack)

Gimme a light.

VAN HELDEN obliges.

VAN HELDEN

How's it going with your uncle?

JONNY

I got to get the fuck out of there.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

JONNY and VAN HELDEN squeeze through a tight vestibule and meander up two flights of winding stairs into a dark corridor.

VAN HELDEN

Nathan's got a sweet deal going.
They made him the building super;
gave him this apartment. All he has
to do is collect rent from a few
tenants and sweep the halls.

JONNY

(impressed)
Cool.

Stopping at the last door, VAN HELDEN wrinkles his nose and takes a healthy sniff. He looks at JONNY and raises his eyebrows and proceeds to give the door three good knocks. The door opens a crack. NATHAN, white male, 20, hippy with hair like Bozo-the-Clown, peers out.

NATHAN

(scrutinizing)
Van Helden? Who's this?

NATHAN squints suspiciously at JONNY who is standing uncomfortably with a forced smile on his face.

VAN HELDEN

This is Jonny. He's cool.

NATHAN scans JONNY up and down.

INT. NATHAN'S APARTMENT

The door swings open into a darkened room encircled in a cloud of smoke. Donovan's *Season of the Witch* is playing on the stereo. A streetlamp outside a bay window throws a shaft of light across a frayed rug, dimly illuminating THREE HIPPIES sitting cross-legged in a circle, smoking from a hookah.

The HIPPIES pass the stem between them with tribal serenity, drawing smoke into their lungs and holding it in for several seconds before releasing their breath in a long sigh, floating out in a haze of ghostly silver blue. With each inhalation, the embers in the bowl burn red while watery-bubble sounds gurgle from within.

JONNY apprehensively waits his turn at the pipe.

The hose is passed to JONNY. He closes his eyes and raises the tip of the stem to his lips. Instead of drawing fire into his lungs, he blows hard into the pipe. Water bubbles from inside the bowl and shoots up the stem and into the shot-glass cup, extinguishing the embers and overflowing the contents onto the rug in a messy pool of soggy shit.

HIPPY #1

Hey, fuck face!

HIPPY #2

Jesus Christ! What the hell did you do that for?!

EXT. INSIDE THE TROLLEY - NIGHT

JONNY is riding back to UNCLE ARTHUR's duplex, with a dejected look across his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNCLE ARTHUR'S DUPLEX - DUSK, RAINING HARD

JONNY approaches the front door. Snapping his umbrella shut, he notices a package the size of a loaf of bread leaning up against the entry. Upon picking it up he reads his name printed in block letters across the package, with a return address of his home-town pharmacy.

JONNY
(loud whisper, smiling)
My rubbers! Paulie, you came
through!

INT. UNCLE ARTHUR'S DUPLEX INSIDE JONNY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS
LATER

The box is wrapped tight in butcher paper. JONNY rips off the paper and stares down at a department store shoe-box between his hands. He sits down on his bed and places the box across his knees, flips off the lid and lifts the contents from the box, removing its tissue paper wrapping. In his hands is a shiny pair of black rubbers, the kind you wear to keep your wing-tips dry.

JONNY
(dejected, looking down at
his wet shoes)
Well, I guess I can put these to
use.

JONNY bends down and slips one of the rubbers over his shoe, but can't quite get it over his toe. He pulls the rubber from his foot, shaking it. A twelve-pack box of Trojans falls to the floor, along with a note, "Wear them in good health."

MONTAGE VARIOUS STREETS
OF BOSTON - DAY
BACKGROUND MUSIC, TIM BUCKLEY'S *PLEASANT STREET*

EXT. BOSTON PUBLIC GARDEN

JONNY passes a giant willow tree beside the Duck Pond. He eyes a GROUP of HIPPIES sitting on the grass beneath the tree, camp-fire style, passing a joint between them. One HIPPIE looks up and catches JONNY'S eye and smiles, a joint burning between his teeth.

EXT. CHARLES STREET

JONNY walks along the street's red-brick sidewalk and stops in front of a LEATHER SHOP, admiring the goods displayed through the storefront window. He steps inside.

EXT. BOYLSTON STREET

The window of an ARMY-NAVY SURPLUS STORE displays mannequins in military-style clothing. JONNY is wearing his new leather vest. He pauses in front of a male mannequin dressed in black turtle-neck sweater and combat gear before entering the store.

EXT. NEWBURY STREET

JONNY'S hands are buried deep in the pockets of his new Army fatigue jacket, a cigarette dangling from his lips. He jaywalks across the street, drops his smoke to the concrete, crushing it out with his foot, and enters a doorway below a sign that reads, THE EYES HAVE IT! The shop's windows are lined with a variety of sun-glasses and eye-wear.

EXT. CHARLES RIVER ESPLANDE

JONNY walks along the bank of the river's meandering path, pausing by a PLAYGROUND full of scampering CHILDREN having the time of their lives. His fatigue jacket is opened to his black turtle-neck. Round, blue-tinted wire-rim glasses keep the bright glare of the noon-day sun from his eyes.

END OF MONTAGE

CUT TO:

EXT. WENTWORTH CAMPUS QUAD - DAY

JONNY and VAN HELDEN walk across the QUAD shouldering old army ammo satchels as book bags, T-squares strapped to their backs like battle lances. JONNY, in bellbottoms and his fatigue jacket, has a 90-day growth of hair. VAN HELDEN's side-burns have become fashionably long.

JONNY

What's it like living in the dorm?

VAN HELDEN

There are too many rules. You can't cook any food. No loud music. No girls. I hate it there. My roommate's not such a bad dude. But most of the guys in there are real dip-shits.

JONNY

It can't be as bad as where I am. I would swap places with you any day.

INT. DRAFTING STUDIO - DAY

Students sift between desks taking their seats. MR. PEDERSON enters the room. A wide necktie hangs disheveled from inside a cheap blazer. He is making a surprise impromptu dress code inspection.

MR. PEDERSON marches up and down the aisles of desks like a Nazi singling out victims based on appearance. He taps VAN HELDEN and JONNY on the shoulder. The two boys rise from their seats, along with DANNY RONCIOLI, 18, white male, five-foot-two and scruffy, looking like a pocket-sized James Dean with long sideburns.

MR. PEDERSON

You three. Step over here. You boys are aware of the dress code. You will be back in class on Monday with a proper appearance. Your hair must be cut above the collar, and your side burns... properly trimmed.

(a beat)

Mr. Roncioli, come forward.

RONCIOLI steps up. MR. PEDERSON sizes him up with his eyes and lifts a pencil from his shirt pocket. He squats on his beefy haunches like a gorilla taking a crap and inserts his pencil into RONCIOLI'S ear, holding it parallel to the floor. The point of MR. PEDERSON'S tongue protrudes sideways between his lips like the tip of a Pink Pearl eraser.

MR. PEDERSON (CONT'D)

Mr. Roncioli, your sideburns must be above the mid-point of your ear. Trim them.

MR. PEDERSON shifts his eyes to JONNY.

MR. PEDERSON (CONT'D)
Cut your hair.

JONNY
What?

MR. PEDERSON
You heard me. Get it trimmed, above
the collar. I want to see the top
of your ears.

VAN HELDEN stands erect, his face showing no emotion.

MR. PEDERSON (CONT'D)
(showing disgust)
Mr. Van Helden, I don't even know
where to begin. Everything about
you is so wrong. Do you understand
what you must do?

VAN HELDEN
(grits his teeth)
I'll think about it.

EXT. WENTWORTH QUAD - LATER THAT DAY

JONNY and VAN HELDEN are walking to their next class, they
slow their pace.

VAN HELDEN
Are you gonna listen to that guy?

JONNY
This is bullshit! Get a trim, my
ass.
(a beat)
Did you check out that crop of nose
hair he's got going? Someone ought
to stick a pencil up his nose. Trim
that, motherfucker!

VAN HELDEN
I didn't go to college to have some
clown tell me how to look.

JONNY
We can fight this.

The boys walk in silence for a few seconds. VAN HELDEN stops
and grabs JONNY'S sleeve.

VAN HELDEN

Hey, guess who's in town today?
That hillbilly-fucker who's running
for president. He's giving a
speech, or having a rally or
something. What's his name?

JONNY

I know who he is. George Wallace.
He's a joke; a dangerous joke. I
bet Pederson's voting for him.
(a beat)
Let's find out where this thing is
happening. This ought to be a goof.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKMAN BANDSTAND - A CONCRETE-COLUMNED PAGODA ON
THE BOSTON COMMON - LATER THAT DAY

The atmosphere is charged with fiery energy burning from a
MOB of five-thousand hecklers besieging the BANDSTAND. A
country-western band from Alabama is performing "*Make the
World Go Away*"; OLDER MEN with guitars slung over their
suitcoats are doing their genial best to diffuse the angry
crowd. JONNY and VAN HELDEN are twenty-feet away, surrounded
by a sea of anti-WALLACE signs. A formation of BOSTON
POLICEMEN stands between the MOB and the candidate. JONNY has
a red bandana tied to his brow, Apache-style.

The song concludes and the BAND LEADER steps forward and
leans into the microphone.

BAND LEADER

(shouts)
Now we all love America, don't we!!

MOB

(loud chants)
Go home! Fascist! Peace!

BAND LEADER

Everybody who loves America raise
your hands!

Hands go up from a scattering of SUPPORTERS. JONNY and VAN
HELDEN join the MOB in throwing up their middle fingers.
WALLACE appears, beaming behind a big bullet-proof podium
which covers all but his head and shoulders. SUPPORTERS in
the crowd let out whoops of greeting, but they're drowned out
by the MOB'S heckling.

A bedsheet ten feet square is hoisted aloft right opposite the podium proclaiming, "George Wallace Your Friendly Fascist". WALLACE waits for the noise to die down. He puts on his glasses to read his speech. The loud-speakers work very well.

WALLACE

I want you to know that I have never acted against any man because of what he says or on account of his color!

JONNY, VAN HELDEN, AND THE MOB

(roars)

Pig! Boooo! Go fuck yourself!

SUPPORTERS

(loudly)

Let him speak! Why won't you let him speak!?

WALLACE addresses himself to the hecklers in front, looking directly at JONNY and VAN HELDEN.

WALLACE

I bet this is the first speech like this you Harvard boys have ever heard. You just wait till November!

JONNY

(screaming)

We want peace you fucking bastard!

WALLACE

(calm and collected)

You make lots of noise now, but the day is coming when the good people of Massachusetts will have their say.

MOB

(chanting)

Peace! Peace! Peace!

WALLACE

As you boys at Harvard say, let's have a little 'rapport' and a little 'dialogue' between the good people of Alabama and the good people of Massachusetts.

The booing peaks. The MOB does its best to drown him out, shouting before he can complete his lines.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

We'll make the streets of Boston
safe again to walk down.

The MOB shrieks their outrage, answering each line with angry chants. WALLACE goes on, beginning to play with them.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

Here's what I'll do for all my fans
in the front rows. When I get
through speaking, come on up here
and I'll autograph your sandals.

JONNY, VAN HELDEN, AND THE MOB

(chanting)

Go Home! Go Home! Go home!

WALLACE blows kisses to the throng at his feet as the howling intensifies.

WALLACE

(pointing and waving)

They believe in free speech. These
are the free speech folks. My
friends, you are proving just what
I have been saying all over this
country. You folks from Harvard
make a lot of noise, but wait until
November. You're a minority in this
country, and you are about to find
that out.

The MOB returns vulgar chants at the top of their lungs. WALLACE looks solemn. JONNY and VAN HELDEN are enjoying themselves. JONNY taps VAN HELDEN on his shoulder.

JONNY

(nodding and smiling)

Fuck this guy.

WALLACE

I wish...

WALLACE waits as the crowd suddenly becomes quiet.

WALLACE (CONT'D)

I wish I could take you youngsters
all the places I go, because you
give me a million votes every time
you come.

Wallace gives a last hardy wave, and vanishes behind a fast-moving phalanx of SECRET SERVICE MEN who hustle him through a sparse spot in the crowd. BOSTON POLICEMEN on horses and on foot, armed with varnished riot sticks three feet long, keep the MOB back. The booing fades away and JONNY and VAN HELDEN turn to leave. Two SUPPORTERS approach them.

SUPPORTER #1

I think you're a disgrace to
humanity. You call yourselves
students? I call you apes.

JONNY

What? Are you kidding me?

SUPPORTER #2

(peering anxiously around)
I've heard of you odd-looking
people, but I have never seen you
up close. Wallace is right! You
people have to be controlled. You
scare us!

CUT TO:

INT. WENTWORTH STUDENT UNION CAFETERIA - NOON

JONNY, VAN HELDEN, and ANDREUS leave the lunch line with trays of food. They each drop in a seat around a 4-top, and begin eating their lunch.

VAN HELDEN

You know what I heard? Some kid in
Mechanical Engineering is suing
Wentworth over the hair thing! A
bunch of lawyers are fighting this
out in court.

JONNY

(pleasantly surprised)
You shittin' me? Where did you hear
that?

ANDREUS

Yeah. I heard it, too.

VAN HELDEN

They were talking about it in my dorm. A judge passed some kind of rule. As long as this thing's in court they can't make us cut our hair. They called it an injunction.

JONNY

This is good news!

ANDREUS

I have some news, too. We have an opening at my brother's apartment building. My brother needs a superintendent.

JONNY

(curious)

Your brother owns a building?

ANDREUS

(proudly)

My brother, Lykos, owns lots of buildings. He is a big business man. He asked me to find someone to run his downtown apartments. This job is very easy... very good. You live in the building, collect rent, watch what's going on; pay no rent.

VAN HELDEN

What's this place like?

ANDREUS

It's beautiful! Nice neighbors. All the apartments are furnished.

JONNY

How come you need a building superintendent? Why don't you do it?

ANDREUS

We need someone to live in the building. It's been hard to find someone to stay there and manage it.

JONNY

Why's that?

ANDREUS

Some people call the neighborhood a combat zone; they say the neighborhood is unsafe. But, that's not true. It's very safe, very nice people. We never have any trouble.

JONNY

What do you mean it's a combat zone?

VAN HELDEN

(stunned)

Jonny, he doesn't mean it's a combat zone; it's the Combat Zone!? Haven't you heard about that place? It's Mondo Bizarro! I walked through it once. It's where they have all the strip clubs. Lots of crazy shit going down.

JONNY

Sounds pretty bad.

VAN HELDEN

It's wicked bad.

JONNY

I'll do it.

VAN HELDEN

You'll do what?

JONNY

I'll take the job.

ANDREUS

Good! We give it to you.

JONNY

(hesitant)

I don't have to do this thing alone, do I?

(a beat)

Come on, Van Helden, let's do this thing together! You hate living in the dorm. Get your ass out. I need a place. You need a place. This is perfect timing.

VAN HELDEN

Actually, I'm thinking of dropping out. They treat us like shit here. You know what I'm saying? This place is a joke... it's worse than high school. I'm not coming back next semester.

JONNY reaches across the table and grabs VAN HELDEN'S arm.

JONNY

(glum)

Whoa... you kidding me? You're really leaving?

JONNY'S voice goes up an octave.

JONNY (CONT'D)

(excited)

So what if you drop out! You don't have to leave town, do you? Stay here! Get a job! We move in and run the place together. This sounds like such a sweet deal! How can we pass this up?! Live rent-free in the city of Boston! Come on!

VAN HELDEN

This is insane.

(a beat)

Free rent?

ANDREUS

(smiles)

And a free telephone.

JONNY

Come on! Shoot the dice!

VAN HELDEN

I tell you what. Why don't we go there Saturday and check out the scene?

JONNY

(smiling)

You're on!

EXT. THE COMBAT ZONE - WASHINGTON STREET - NIGHT

JONNY and VAN HELDEN exit the Chinatown T Station and enter Boston's RED-LIGHT DISTRICT - strip clubs, bars, triple X peep shows and adult bookstores. Sidewalks are brimming with dozens of WHITE MEN dressed like Dads at a Little League game, and BLACK MALES, colorfully dressed. Scattered among them are small groups of FEMALES, white and black, dressed to catch your eye, and a few PROSTITUTES, dressed sexy/trashy, working the sidewalks.

Standing in front of the NORMANDY LOUNGE, a popular strip club, an EVANGELIST, white male, early thirties, looks like a junior high vice-principal, holds a placard with "JESUS SAVES" printed in bold letters. The EVANGELIST shouts into the face of a wino shuffling by clutching a paper bag.

EVANGELIST

Jesus loves you!

The top of a green bottle pops out from the bag like the head of a turtle. The WINO raises his turtle in the air.

WINO

(shouts)

Whiskey loves you!

JONNY and VAN HELDEN stand beneath the marquee of the NORMANDY LOUNGE, checking out the glossy black and white photos of SEMI-NAKED LADIES displayed on wall panels flanking the door. They turn to approach the entry.

VAN HELDEN

(hesitant)

Do you think they will card us?

JONNY

Try not to look 18.

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE FOYER - NIGHT

The DOORMAN, an adult, white male with a complexion like raw hamburger, dressed in a shabby dark suit, eyes JONNY and VAN HELDEN without comment as he accepts their one-dollar entry fee. The boys cross the club's darkened foyer and through a set of double doors.

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE MAIN ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

The cacophony of SEATED GENTLEMEN fills a dark, cavernous room surrounded with scores of tables crowded with drinks. A raised PLATFORM stands dark and empty, waiting to receive the next performance. JONNY and VAN HENDEN wander deeper into the club and find a table up front. A cocktail waitress (SAM, white, attractive, 21-years old, Southie accent) leans over their table, her cleavage close to VAN HELDEN'S face.

SAM

What can I get for you boys?

VAN HELDEN

This is some place you got here.

SAM

Pays the rent.

SAM steps back and assesses VAN HELDEN.

SAM (CONT'D)

Do girls ever tell you how pretty you are?

VAN HELDEN

Maybe when they're trying to impress me.

SAM

Two-drink minimum, Sweetheart. Do I impress you?

VAN HELDEN

I'll have a beer. I don't know.
(a beat)
Jonny, does she impress you?

JONNY

She's got my attention. I could dig a beer, too.

SAM

Four beers, coming up.

JONNY

Four? We only ordered two.

SAM

Pay attention to the program, Sweetheart. I said, two-drink minimum.

JONNY

Oh? No problem. How much are the beers?

SAM

A buck a bottle. Can you handle that, Rockefeller?

SAM disappears into the clouds of the dark room to hustle up some beers. A spotlight above the PLATFORM snaps on above the figure of a 40-something WHITE DUDE with a face like a rat, a cheap toupee, and a loud tweed sport jacket. He clears his throat into the mike.

WHITE DUDE

(speaking at high-speed)

A couple goes into an art gallery. They find a picture of a naked lady with her private parts covered with leaves. The wife doesn't like it and moves on but the husband keeps staring. The wife asks, 'Harold! What are you waiting for!?' The husband says, Autumn!

SEATED GENTLEMEN

Get the fuck off the stage, numb-nuts! Blow me, asshole! You suck!

WHITE DUDE

Ladies and gentlemen, the Normandy Lounge is pleased to welcome back this evening's very special guest, the forever fabulous, eternally enchanting, completely captivating
(a beat)
Kitty!!

The throbbing beat of the Door's *BREAK ON THROUGH (TO THE OTHER SIDE)* is blasting from the speakers flanking the PLATFORM. The SEATED GENTLEMEN join voices in a lustful roar.

SAM returns to the table, two beers in each hand.

SAM

Here you go, boys. Do you want to start a tab?

JONNY

No thanks. We'll pay up now.

Jim Morrison's clear baritone voice consumes all other sounds within the room. VAN HELDEN slides back his chair and stands, inches away (to be heard) from SAM.

VAN HELDEN
This place got a bathroom?

SAM
Sure. It's one of our many hidden
treasures. Follow me.

VAN HELDEN disappears into the fog, trailing behind SAM.

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - BACK ROOM HALLWAY (A MOMENT LATER)

SAM comes to a stop, points her finger at the bathroom door.

CUT TO:

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - MAIN ROOM (SAME MOMENT)

KITTY is having fun with all the SEATED GENTLEMEN. Playfully teasing them, gyrating her body and shedding her clothes to the rhythmic beat of the Door's throbbing organ. JONNY and KITTY make eye contact.

CUT TO:

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - BACK ROOM HALLWAY (A MOMENT LATER)

SAM steps aside to allow VAN HELDEN access to the door. VAN HELDEN puts a hand on the door, pauses, turns and faces SAM.

VAN HELDEN
(smiling)
Want to join me?

CUT TO:

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - MAIN ROOM (SAME MOMENT)

KITTY has moved to the lip of the PLATFORM, inching closer to JONNY, never losing eye-contact. She is dancing only for him, or so he thinks. Jim Morrison's strong baritone voice vibrates through the room.

CUT TO:

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - BATHROOM (A MOMENT LATER)

Music pours through the cracks and crevices of the old bathroom walls. VAN HELDEN has his back against the door to the stall. SAM approaches slowly, predatory, inches-in, kissing. Kissing without touching. They both stop for a brief second and stare at each other. SAM breaks first, pushing VAN HELDEN'S body hard, sailing him into the stall. SAM steps in, clicks the door shut.

CUT TO:

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - MAIN ROOM (SAME MOMENT)

KITTY is working JONNY. JONNY keeps his eyes on KITTY, reaches for his beer and takes a pull on it.

CUT TO:

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - BATHROOM (A MOMENT LATER)

The music continues. SAM is leaning over with her back to VAN HELDEN; her mini-skirt below her knees, his pants are down to his ankles. He thrusts into her from behind. They move together with the syncopation of lovers. The gliding of his hips slowly recedes, until it stops altogether.

SAM starts putting herself back together.

SAM

Well, that was one quick quickie.

SAM leans over and plants a kiss on VAN HELDEN'S check.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's been real.

(a beat)

But, I must be going.

VAN HELDEN, with his pants down, watches SAM as she exits the stall, the hinged door swinging back into his face.

VAN HELDEN

Wait!

(a beat)

What's your name!

INT. NORMANDY LOUNGE - MAIN ROOM (A MOMENT LATER)

The music ends and the cacophony from the SEATED GENTLEMEN returns. KITTY steps into a robe, steps down from the PLATFORM and stands in front of JONNY.

KITTY

(French accent)

Hey, college boy, you know it's
okay to tip sometime?

KITTY drops into the open seat at JONNY'S side, crosses her legs, pulls a cigarette to her lips. A SEATED GENTLEMAN close by leans over and snaps his lighter to KITTY'S Newport.

KITTY (CONT'D)

(blowing smoke)

Thank you, Child.

JONNY

What makes you think I'm a college
boy?

KITTY

Don't you tell me you ain't no
college boy! I see how tight you
are with a dollar; like all them
college boys. You not making money,
you just spending it. Spending what
Daddy gives you. Ain't that right,
college boy?

JONNY

Listen, I got nothing against
tipping. I just didn't come
prepared. We already dropped six
bucks and we've only been here
fifteen minutes.

(a beat)

My Daddy gives me nothing but
advise. And, yeah, okay, I'm a
college boy.

VAN HELDEN rejoins JONNY, steps into the conversation just as
KITTY stands to leave.

VAN HELDEN

Sorry, I missed your act. You
looked beautiful up there. My name
is Van Helden. I guess you've met
Jonny?

KITTY

Well, hello Van Helden, and,
goodbye Jonny.

(a beat)

Like the man said, I am the forever
fabulous, eternally enchanting,
completely captivating... Kitty!

(a beat)

And, it's not an act.

VAN HELDEN

Cool. Pleased to meet you.

(a beat)

Hey, do you know the name of the
girl that waited who on us?

KITTY

Sam?

VAN HELDEN

Sam? That's her name, Sam?

KITTY waves her fingers at the two boys and backs-away from
the table.

KITTY

Yes, it is. Good-bye, children.

JONNY and VAN HELDEN are seated, facing each other. They
each take a swig off their beer. They stare at each other
for a second, in silence.

JONNY

I'm out of money, and unless you're
loaded, I suggest we finish our
beers and split.

VAN HELDEN

Why?

JONNY

The dancers here expect us to be
tipping them.

(pointing)

They want us to put bread in their
jar.

A COCKTAIL WAITRESS passes by VAN HELDEN'S shoulder. He waves
for her attention.

VAN HELDEN

What happened to our waitress, Sam?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

She just closed out.

VAN HELDEN

She what?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS

Her shift ended. I guess she went home, or something.

JONNY

So, what do you think about moving here? You gotta admit, this part of town is kind of nuts.

VAN HELDEN

Well, this place does have its hidden treasures. Sure. Let's do it.

EXT. INSIDE ANDREUS'S CAMARO - NIGHT

JONNY is sitting shotgun, VAN HELDEN's in the back as ANDREUS weaves through city traffic.

ANDREUS

Tonight is a very good night to be moving in. We will walk to all the rooms and collect this week's rent. Monday is a good time to catch them at home.

(a beat)

Lykos wants to meet you. He will be coming by later.

EXT. LA GRANGE STREET - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The street is dark with few functioning lamp posts. The CAMARO travels down the block and rolls up slowly to the curb. ANDREUS parks beside the rear entry of the CLOUD 9 APARTMENTS, a narrow, 6-story, dilapidated, brick building with blacked-out windows. A rusty fire escape runs up the façade.

EXT. INSIDE THE CAMARO

ANDREUS kills the engine. He's eating a donut from a paper bag, indifferent to the surroundings.

He puts on a broad grin, doughnut crumbs sticking to his teeth. He turns to face JONNY.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)

Here we are!

Two PROSTITUTES wander up to the CAMARO. PROSTITUTE #1 leans over and taps on the glass, her cleavage next to ANDREUS'S face. PROSTITUTE #2, chewing gum, smiles at JONNY.

PROSTITUTE #1

You looking for somethin', Lover?

ANDREUS

(ignoring PROSTITUTE #1)

I like to park behind the building.
We will walk around to the front
door.

Both boys are squinting up through the car windows. Their faces are apprehensive.

VAN HELDEN

This is it?

JONNY

Jesus... Andreus, is this your
beautiful building? It looks like
someone took a dump and put an
address on it.

The boys exit and stand on the sidewalk beside the car, holding their bags while ANDREUS grabs a flashlight from the trunk and stuffs it into his back pocket.

EXT. TREMONT STREET - THE CLOUD 9 APARTMENTS - NIGHT

The boys follow ANDREUS around to the front of the building. The CLOUD 9 is squeezed between two rowdy saloons with neon-lit entries. A small, unappealing diner takes up the first floor of the building. JONNY stares up at the sad looking facade.

JONNY

(sardonic smile)

Home sweet home.

ANDREUS fumbles with a hunk of keys, extracting one to open the door.

INT. CLOUD 9 FOYER - NIGHT

The trio enters a narrow FOYER with soiled yellow walls the color of old bananas; a single fluorescent tube hangs low from the ceiling, buzzing like an angry bee.

VAN HELDEN and JONNY follow on the heels of ANDREUS. They pass down a skinny corridor that dead-ends at a gate to an elevator that looks as if it was installed 100-years ago.

ANDREUS presses the call button. An elevator the size of a phone booth descends in a shaft groaning with old pulleys and gears. It hits the ground floor with a bang.

ANDREUS slides open a cage-like gate and the trio enters the skinny box.

INT. INSIDE THE ELEVATOR (CONTINUOUS)

ANDREUS

There is no stair up front. If the elevator stops working you must come in from the back door. There is a stairway in the back.

(a beat)

The buzzer does not completely work. If someone buzzes you, you must come down to let them in.

JONNY

Sounds like a major pain in the ass. You gonna fix this thing?

ANDREUS

Of course! Anything broken, we fix.

INT. SIXTH FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A narrow, empty CORRIDOR is flanked by an open staircase; fluorescent tubes hang from a water-stained ceiling, spreading white light across dingy linoleum-tile and grey plastered walls.

The quiet scene becomes disturbed by cranky, groaning gears discharging from the elevator shaft. The sound coming from the shaft abruptly stops.

The cage slides open and ANDREUS steps into the HALLWAY, followed by JONNY and VAN HELDEN. A few steps later the trio faces the door to APARTMENT 6C.

INT. APT. 6C - NIGHT - A MOMENT LATER

ANDREUS snaps on a light and they all walk inside a single room twenty feet deep and sixteen feet wide, with a kitchenette squirreled away in the corner; a scummy film inhabits the surface of everything.

JONNY and VAN HELDEN share the same indifferent look, a counterpoint to the big smile across ANDREUS'S face.

The trio's breath surrounds their faces in wreaths of fog. JONNY drops his bag and blows into his hands.

JONNY

Jesus Christ, you can hang meat in here.

ANDREUS bends over the radiator and turns the knob. Steam begins to hiss into the pipes. He puts a positive spin on everything.

ANDREUS

All our units are furnished; the rent is \$30 a week. They must pay in cash.

VAN HELDEN walks up to the kitchen sink and works the faucets. Brown water spills from the spout. He enters the BATHROOM, flips on the light and surveys a tight room containing a tiny sink beside a soiled toilet sharing space with a musty shower stall. He flushes the toilet and watches the water swirl down.

JONNY inspects the furnishings; a vinyl couch with a pull-out mattress, one twin bed, an old card table edged with cigarette burns, three mismatched wooden chairs, porcelain lamps resting on skinny end tables, and a wooden dresser painted baby-blue. He gazes out a window that faces an airshaft and turns the window crank, peeking into a dark abyss; the stench of garbage juice blows across his face. JONNY walks over to the other window across the room and gazes down at the lights across the street glittering on colorful signs advertising GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS!

An oily gentleman, LYKOS, white male, early-thirties, dark wavy hair, Brooks Brothers suit, diamond pinky-ring, strides into the room, one hand in his pants pocket jingling change. He paces back and forth impatiently, as if looking for a way out.

LYKOS

How do you like your apartment?
It's nice, isn't it? I'm giving you
the nicest room in the building.
It's the quietest. You'll see.

ANDREUS

(Smiling)
Jonny, Van Helden, this is my
brother, Lykos.

LYKOS

Only ten of my units are occupied.
The others we'll rent after you get
in there and clean. Don't worry
about scrubbing them too good, just
sweep the floors, dust-off the
furniture, wipe down the kitchen
and bathroom.

LYKOS gives VAN HELDEN and JONNY a stern look of disapproval,
as if they screwed up already.

LYKOS (CONT'D)

(Admonishing tone)
Let me tell you about the people
here. They like to play tricks with
you; sometimes they won't answer
the door when you come to collect.

LYKOS pulls out a golden key of polished brass, turning it
between his thumb and forefinger as if he is about to perform
a magic trick.

LYKOS (CONT'D)

(Fixing a glare on VAN
HELDEN)
This is your master-key. It opens
every door in the building. Never,
ever misplace it. Never drop it on
the floor. Never lend it to anyone.
Never leave it out where someone
will take it. This key will cost me
five thousand dollars to replace if
you ever lose it. Guard it with
your life. Do you understand me?

VAN HELDEN

Yessir.

LYKOS shifts his glare on JONNY.

JONNY

Yessir.

LYKOS

If you go to collect the rent and the tenants are playing hide and seek, open up the door, look inside. You'll probably catch them lying in bed. They will always say they have no money... come back tomorrow. They'll pretend to cry, hope you'll feel sorry for them. You have to know when they're lying. You're college boys. You're smart; you can figure things out. If they start to play games with you, use psychology. Do you understand psychology?

VAN HELDEN AND JONNY

(in unison)

Yessir.

LYKOS turns and heads for the door.

LYKOS

Good! Andreus, teach these boys well. I will arrange for a phone to be installed tomorrow.

Looking at JONNY, LYKOS mimics a telephone with an outstretched pinky and thumb up to his mouth and ear.

LYKOS (CONT'D)

Then, I will call you.

ANDREUS slaps the receipt book in his hand.

ANDREUS

(Brightly)

Let's go collect some rent. You can meet your new neighbors. But first, you must see everything. Come with me.

EXT. TREMONT STREET ENTRANCE TO CLOUD 9 CAFÉ - NIGHT

ANDREUS pauses beside the entry and turns to JONNY and VAN HELDEN.

ANDREUS

The food here is pretty good.

INT. CLOUD 9 CAFÉ (CONTINUOUS)

ANDREUS heads towards the rear of the café with JONNY and VAN HELDEN following close behind. Two COOKS, white males, thirties, Greeks with disheveled dark hair and dirty aprons, are working behind a counter.

ANDREUS passes by, addressing the COOKS in Greek before coming to a stop in front of a door. ANDREUS opens the door to reveal the top landing of the basement stair.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)

This is where you enter the cellar.
You may never need to go down here,
but you must know how everything
works. All the power is in the
cellar.

INT. CLOUD 9 SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR - LATER

ANDREUS, leading JONNY and VAN HELDEN, stops by the door to Apartment 2A.

ANDREUS

Karen is very nice; always pays on
time.

ANDREUS knocks on the door.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)

And she's pretty.

The door opens to a smiling KAREN, 25, white, affably attractive and very cosmopolitan. She holds up her index finger signaling the boys to wait one second as she fumbles through her purse.

The elevator twenty-feet away bangs to a stop. BARRY, large black male, 20, exits the elevator and walks straight up to ANDREUS like he's gunning for him. He presses his nose up against ANDREUS'S face.

BARRY

(Angry)

Where's my fuckin' heat, man!?

ANDREUS

It's not working? You owe me for last week. Last week you had heat.

BARRY

Listen, man! You don't get a dime until I get my heat.

ANDREUS

Tomorrow, I will send over a mechanic. Turn your oven on tonight and open the door. That will warm things up till he gets here. Barry, I want you to meet the new building superintendents, Jonny and Van Helden. They moved in to Apartment 6C.

BARRY

My oven? Warm things up!? What the fuck do you think I'm doing up there?

(a beat)

Baking motherfuck'n muffins?

BARRY snaps his eyes over at JONNY and VAN HELDEN, not offering his hand to shake.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Do you two fuck-wads know what the fuck you're doing?

JONNY and VAN HELDEN are silent; shifting uneasily on their feet. BARRY points at ANDREUS and backpedals towards the elevator.

BARRY (CONT'D)

I'll be looking for that mechanic tomorrow, Andreus. Make sure he comes or you get nothing!

ANDREUS, takes KAREN's cash and continues leading JONNY and VAN HELDEN, stopping by the door to Apartment 2C and knocks.

ANDREUS

This guy drives a taxi all night. It's hard to catch him home. His name's Delmonti. He owes me for three weeks.

ANDREUS knocks twice, waits a brief moment, takes out his master-key and opens the door.

INT. APT. 2C (CONTINUOUS)

ANDREUS, JONNY and VAN HELDEN scan the dark room for a brief second, and exit.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)

Mr. Delmonti must pay this week.
You will have to speak with him.

INT. SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR - A MOMENT LATER

ANDREUS knocks on the door to Apartment 2B. The door opens to two adult FEMALES standing in the doorway smoking cigarettes; KITTY and SAM.

KITTY

Well, well. Lookee here! It's the college-boy!

JONNY

Kitty!?

VAN HELDEN

Sam!?

SAM

What the hell are you doing here?
And, how do you know my name?

ANDREUS

(surprised)
You all know each other?

JONNY

Yeah. It's just like old home week.

ANDREUS

These guys are your new building managers. They moved into 6C.

SAM

(pleasantly)
You're our new Supers? This ought to be interesting.

ANDREUS

Rents due.

KITTY retrieves her purse and hands over the rent money and ANDREUS scratches out a receipt. She snatches the receipt from ANDREUS' hand.

KITTY
(frowning)
Either of you children know how to
fix a toilet?

ANDREUS
You mustn't be throwing things into
the pot that don't belong there.

VAN HELDEN
Do you both live here??

KITTY
This is my place.

SAM
I live upstairs, in 6B. I guess I'm
your next door neighbor.
(laughing)
You can come over and borrow some
sugar.

KITTY
(impatient)
Fix the goddamn toilet Andreus.

The trio continues to tour the building, rounding the staircase up to the next floor.

INT. THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR (LATER)

JONNY and VAN HELDEN follow ANDREUS as he stops in front of the next apartment. A loud argument is spilling out the opened door. A combative couple, JULIE, white female, mid-twenties, and CHARLES, black male, mid-thirties, is in the middle of a fiery dispute. CHARLES and ANDREUS make eye contact, and the CHARLES instantly slams the door shut in ANDREUS'S face. ANDREUS steps back on his heels.

ANDREUS
You guys can come back later. They
look busy.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR (MOMENTS LATER)

A bluesy beat from an electric guitar is smoothly passing into the hall through the open door of Apartment 4A. JASPER, 25, black male, Little Richard mustache and wavy lacquered hair, wearing a spectacularly colored outfit spots ANDREUS coming his way and places his guitar down.

INT. APT. 4A (CONTINUOUS)

JASPER
(gently)
Hello, Sir. What can I do for you?

ANDREUS
It's rent time again. Jasper, say hello to your new managers, Van Helden and Jonny. They moved in tonight.

JASPER shakes hands with the boys.

JASPER
(pleasantly)
Very nice to meet you. I hope I wasn't disturbing you with my music.

JONNY
No way. Very cool.

VAN HELDEN
No worries.

JASPER pulls a roll of cash from his pocket and hands over his rent.

JASPER
I was just practicing. My band plays the Downtown Lounge. We all live here, in the building. Pretty convenient. Come by sometime and see us play.

The trio says goodbye and moves to the next apartment.

JONNY
Nice dude.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR (CONTINUOUS)

The muffled sound of angry voices can be heard coming through the closed door of Apartment 4B. ANDREUS taps his ring-finger on the door. The discord from behind the door abruptly stops.

MARVIN (O.C.)
(loud voice from behind
the door)
What!?

ANDREUS
Rent's due!

MARVIN (O.C.)
Come back later! We're busy?

ANDREUS taps his finger again, but harder. The door swings open.

INT. APT. 4B (CONTINUOUS)

BENNY, black male, 21, skinny, bushy afro, jittery, retreats from the doorway and sits down at his kitchen table beside his brother, MARVIN, 25, strong, handsome black male, sitting up straight with his arms crossed. JONNY and VAN HELDEN follow ANDREUS into the room. ANDREUS points at MARVIN.

ANDREUS
Oh, good! You're here, too. I got
you both! I need the rent from both
of you.

MARVIN
(agitated)
My brother and I are having a
private talk, and you're
interrupting us. Show us some
respect and come back later.

ANDREUS
No, this is a good time.
(a beat)
I want you to meet the new
managers, Jonny and Van Helden,
they're staying in 6C.

JONNY and VAN HELDEN stand rigid beside ANDREUS. BENNY and MARVIN eye the boys up and down.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)

Benny lives here in 4B. Marvin's upstairs in 5A.

(a beat)

I need your rent.

BENNY pushes back his chair and stands, facing ANDREUS.

BENNY

Look! I ain't got it. My old lady has all the money, and she ain't here right now. She be coming home later.

MARVIN

I'm not carrying any cash.

ANDREUS

OK. But these boys shouldn't have to return looking for you. You bring your money to them. Later... tonight.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR (A MOMENT LATER)

ANDREUS knocks on the door to Apt. 4C. PAMELA, 25, pleasant smile, attractive, answers the door. Upon seeing ANDREUS, she extracts a small roll of bills secreted within her cleavage, hands the cash over to ANDREUS in exchange for a receipt.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

PAMELA

My pleasure. Nice doing business with you.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR CORRIDOR (A MOMENT LATER)

The threesome reach the FIFTH-FLOOR landing and slows their step. JASPER'S mellow guitar-solo can be heard coming from the floor below. THREE MEN, white males, mid-twenties, are queued up against the wall in front of the door to Apartment 5A. One SLIMY STUD, acne scars on his face, stretches out his leg, resting his shoe on the banister, blocking their path.

SLIMY STUD

(grinning)

Who the hell are you?

ANDREUS
(stops, takes a deep
breath)
I own the building. And you don't
belong here.

The SLIMY STUD drops his shoe to the floor and stands erect,
facing ANDREUS.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)
(calm and collected)
I want you and your friends out of
my building in two minutes.

INT. SIXTH FLOOR CORRIDOR IN FRONT OF APT.6C (A MOMENT
LATER)

ANDREUS, JONNY and VAN HELDEN pass through the hallway,
stopping in front of the boy's new apartment.

JONNY
(pointing down)
Who were those guys?

ANDREUS
The building gets a lot of visitors
that don't belong here. I don't
want any trouble, so I asked them
to leave. No problem. You'll see.

ANDREUS stops in front of the elevator, pushes the call
button to exit. He hands his receipt book over to JONNY.

ANDREUS (CONT'D)
Keep good records, my friends.
Never take money without giving a
receipt. Always, always give a
receipt. If they say they paid, you
say, show me proof.

The elevator arrives, ANDREUS, slides back the gate and steps
inside. The elevator door closes, and the cab makes its
descent.

ANDREUS (O.C.) (CONT'D)
(Descending voice coming
from the elevator shaft)
Good luck, my friends!

INT. APT. 6C - LATER THAT NIGHT

VAN HELDEN plugs in a radio and dials up a rock station. JONNY and VAN HELDEN confront their collection of junk yard furniture and begin pushing the stuff around into homey positions. Cleaning products are put to use, sweeping floors and cleaning countertops.

INT. APT. 6C - ONE HOUR LATER

JONNY and VAN HELDEN drop down on the couch, spent. VAN HELDEN pulls out a smoke and tips the pack towards JONNY.

JONNY

Sure.

JONNY pulls out a cig and stretching his legs.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Pretty weird bumping into those chicks downstairs.

VAN HELDEN

I gotta tell you something. Remember Saturday Night?

JONNY

(interrupting)

You know what we need here?

JONNY points to the air in front of his legs.

JONNY (CONT'D)

A coffee table. Where the hell are we supposed to put our feet? They belong up on a coffee table.

Loud knocking is coming from the apartment door, sounding anxious. Both boys approach the door and open it cautiously. Many of the TENANTS they had met earlier are lined up in the hallway. MARVIN walks in confidently and plops down on the couch. On MARVIN's heels comes his younger brother, BENNY, joined by JACKIE, 21, white female, BENNY'S girlfriend, skanky, short red hair, taking angry drags off her cigarette. JACKIE lifts one foot up and steps down hard on the seat of a kitchen chair.

The door remains open. JONNY crushes out his cigarette and faces MARVIN.

JONNY (CONT'D)

Are you here to pay the rent?

MARVIN

No. This got nothing to do with that.

KITTY, dressed for a night on the town glides into the room with JULIE, Barbie-doll body, her head topped in a wig of golden fleece, walking close behind in shiny-white Nancy Sinatra boots and a tight mini. Both ladies share serious expressions. KITTY drops down on JONNY'S bed; JULIE remains standing.

JONNY

Ahh... What can we do for you?

KITTY

We need to talk business.

JASPER and CHARLES, dressed in bright colorful satin suits, enter looking for a place to sit. JONNY faces KITTY.

JONNY

Business?

SAM, cocky, hands on the hips of her slender frame, enters chewing gum with her mouth open.

VAN HELDEN

What's going on?

CHARLES

(angry, drunk)

The police be coming here to close this place! And you boys gotta stop em!

JONNY

(confused)

We just got here. We don't know anything about the police.

Marvin motions in Jackie's direction with his chin.

MARVIN

She's gone! These boys...

MARVIN points at VAN HELDEN and JONNY, their faces blank.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

Run her ass out with the rest of
them whores. Evict them. That's it.
No whores, no cops. End of story.

MARVIN brushes his palms together like he is wiping off dirt.

JACKIE approaches MARVIN, takes another angry drag from her
cig and breathes a line of smoke into his eyes.

BENNY, agitated, spins in circles in the center of the group.
He steps in front of JONNY and VAN HELDEN, with his arms out-
stretched.

BENNY

(frantic)

Are you gonna do this?

JONNY

What's this about the police?
They're coming here? When,
tonight? It's getting kinda late

JACKY

I'm not going nowhere!

BENNY

(pleading)

She not doin' her business here!

CHARLES sticks a finger out at KITTY.

CHARLES

We getting raided because this dumb-
ass bitch is talkin' to the poll-
lease!

Kitty has been reclining lazily on twin bed next to SAM. She
springs up advancing towards CHARLES. JULIE pushes between
them.

JULIE

Stop it! They talked to me, too! If
Kitty hadn't done it, I woulda
myself! The police won't bother
nobody who ain't got somethin' to
hide.

CHARLES shoots JULIE a homicidal look. JULIE stares back at
him, defiantly.

JONNY
(hesitantly)
The police can't shut down a
building.

JONNY looks VAN HELDEN in the eye.

JONNY (CONT'D)
(sotto voce)
Can they?

VAN HELDEN shrugs his shoulders.

JASPER
I don't get in nobody's business.
It's easy livin' here. But I worry
some nights, coming home with my
old lady. I see them white dudes in
the hall... watchin'... a white
girl with a black man.
(a beat)
They lookin' like they wanna kill
me. Things gonna be bad some
night... I just know it.

CHARLES turns to face VAN HELDEN and JONNY, replacing the
cold look on his face with one of satisfied contrivance.

CHARLES
We don't have to have no trouble.
These boys give Lykos a call. Get
him to tell the police to back off.

JONNY
How's that going to happen?

CHARLES
You work for the man. You should be
the one to make the call. We all
know how Lykos make his bread.
Shit, that man own the police. If
he say keep away from my building,
they do it!

JONNY surveys all the faces in the room. He stops and locks
eyes on CHARLES.

JONNY
I don't see us getting into this.

CHARLES

(confrontational)

You the Supers! You in charge here!
You involved whether you like it or
not!

SAM rises from the edge of the bed, crossing between them,
diffusing the tension.

SAM

I walk through the front door every
night and there ain't a guy out
there on the sidewalk who doesn't
think I'm a hooker. Frankly, it's
starting to get on my nerves,
especially if I'm with a guy I want
to bring upstairs. He starts
looking at me strange... like the
trip up's gonna cost him twenty
bucks.

SAM walks close to VAN HELDEN and gives him a flirty smile.

SAM (CONT'D)

(smirks)

So what if the cops come? Big deal.
Leave these boys alone. Step aside,
let whatever happens happen.

MARVIN

What are you saying? Don't do
nothin'?

SAM

That's right.

MARVIN

It's a little too late for that.

MARVIN rises from the couch and tracks a worried pace in the
center of the room.

MARVIN (CONT'D)

You don't know the police the way I
do. You give them a reason to bust
your head, and they do it! And here
we are, opening the goddamn door.

SAM

The police will come. But not
because we invited them;

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

they're coming because it's no
secret where the hookers are in
this neighborhood.

SAM approaches JACKIE, looking her hard in the eye.

SAM (CONT'D)

(crooked smile)

Any girl here taking in tricks
tonight is a fool. There'll be
someone knocking on her door and it
won't be a John.

JULIE, still standing, turns to face JACKIE.

JULIE

Things gotta change around here. I
see Johns every night crawling
around our hallways like rats. It's
getting dangerous. We can't keep
living like this.

SAM walks over to the window and scans the street scene
below.

SAM

Look where we're living, people.
It's all around us, and it ain't
going nowhere. You want to change
your life?

(a beat)

Change your address.

JULIE throws her head back laughing.

SAM (CONT'D)

Leave these boys alone. Whatever
happens, happens. Whatever goes
down, they got nothin' to do with
it.

SAM walks out of the room. MARVIN takes a few steps to follow
her out, stops to address the boys.

MARVIN

Keep the police out. You hear me?

All the TENANTS shuffle from the room. VAN HELDEN closes the
door as the last of them leaves. He steps over to the window,
his foreboding eyes gaze down at the street scene; STREET
WALKERS proposition MEN in cars. A trio of DRUNKS ramble from
the bar next door, laughing at nothing;

one DRUNK leans over the curb and vomits. A POLICE CRUISER speeds by with its siren wailing. VAN HELDEN turns back and faces JONNY.

VAN HELDEN

(foreboding)

Do we really want to do this? This place is a freak show.

JONNY

Welcome to the Combat Zone.

FADE OUT.

Queue the music to the opening chords of "Dirty Water", by the Standells.