

GRAND THEFT PARSONS

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OPENING TITLE.

**"ALTHOUGH THIS MOTION PICTURE IS INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY,
CERTAIN CHARACTERS AND EVENTS ARE FICTIONAL."**

FADE IN:

SUPER: 'SEPTEMBER 1973'.

INT. PHIL KAUFMAN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

A phone rings in the dark. A little light falls from the open window, illuminating an old bakelite telephone. It sits on a small table alongside a large amount of empty bottles and a couple of overflowing ashtrays.

EXT. PHIL'S TRIKE. NIGHT

A three wheeled motorcycle is being driven through the night at great speed. The trike is moving very quickly, its headlights cutting through the darkness, its wheels sending a spray of sand flying towards us, as the driver fights to keep it on the road. This is PHIL KAUFMAN, and he's in a hurry.

INT. JOSHUA TREE INN - ROOM 8. NIGHT

Two figures are struggling on the floor. The male is naked. The woman sits astride him, her movements urgent, her breath fast. They appear to be having sex.

EXT. TRIKE. DAWN

The Trike cuts through the night, and we pull back to show desert, more desert, and then... a giant bright, flickering neon sign: 'Welcome to the Joshua Tree Inn'.

INT. PHIL KAUFMAN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

That phone - still ringing; shrill, insistent. There is a bed next to the table. It is covered in clothes, but there is also a man's shape, which now moves.

INT. JOSHUA TREE INN - ROOM 8. NIGHT

A little more light, and it now appears as if our man and woman are struggling. There is fear on her face.

INT. PHIL KAUFMAN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

Still that insistent ringing, and the covers suddenly fly off the bed. We see the man from behind as he shakes the sleep away and looks for the damn phone.

2.

INT. JOSHUA TREE INN - ROOM 8. NIGHT

The woman is screaming now, and banging on the man's chest with her fists. He is motionless underneath her.

EXT. OUTSIDE JOSHUA TREE INN. DAWN

The Trike skids to a halt amid a cloud of dust and the driver leaps off. He runs at the door, throwing it open in one movement, disappearing into the room. A broken striped 'No Entry - Police' band flutters to the ground.

INT. PHIL KAUFMAN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

The man finally answers the phone. At last the ringing stops.

PHIL

Hello?

EXT. OUTSIDE JOSHUA TREE INN - ROOM 8. NIGHT

The door bounces back open, and we can see the Phil walking quickly through the room.

As he searches, we hear:

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh my God please help me! I found your number in his pocket and I don't know... I don't know what to do.

PHIL'S VOICE

Ah, what... who are you?

WOMAN'S VOICE

He's dead... he's dead... and
I'm... just... I don't know what
to do.

The man glances into the bathroom and opens some drawers.

PHIL'S VOICE

Hold on. Tell me who's dead.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Parsons. Gram Parsons. We met
in a bar and we had a lot to
drink and he just...

PHIL'S VOICE

Are you sure he's dead?

He looks under the beds.

3.

CON TINUE D:

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yeah. He's really dead. He
just...

PHIL'S VOICE

Listen. Call an ambulance.
Where are you?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Joshua Tree. Joshua Tree Inn.
Room eight.

He checks on top of the wardrobe.

PHIL'S VOICE

Have you got a car?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yes.

PHIL'S VOICE

Call an ambulance. Then get out
of there. Okay? Okay?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yeah, okay. I'm goin'...

He picks up a sheet of paper from the bedside table and
glances at it. He turns and walks past us to the car and

for the first time we see Phil Kaufman's face.

EXT. JOSHUA TREE HOSPITAL. MORNING

The Trike skids to a halt outside the small white hospital. There are a couple of press vehicles parked outside, and a reporter is recording a piece to camera in the background. Phil sits for a moment, and then opens the door and walks to the entrance.

INT. JOSHUA TREE HOSPITAL. MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

We move through the reception area up to the nurses' station. Phil is in conversation with a large woman in a nurse's uniform.

NURSE

You wanna run that by me again, sir?

PHIL

Okay. I'd like to see Gram Parsons.

They stare at each other.

4.

CON TINUE D:

NURSE

You want to see Gram Parsons?

PHIL

Yes. Alone, if possible. And would you have a gurney standing by in case I need to move him?

She looks carefully at the pyjamas which peek out from under the shabby overcoat. His hair is on end. He is wearing biker boots and is holding an unlit but half-smoked cigar.

NURSE

And you are.... his physician?
Or perhaps a close relative?

Phil clears his throat.

PHIL

Actually, I'm his road manager.

The big nurse smiles mirthlessly.

NURSE

So you're not his physician or a close relative?

A beat.

PHIL

No.

NURSE

Mister Parsons is awaiting a post mortem. He will then be delivered to his family. I suggest you speak to them if you wish to pick through his personal effects. Sir.

She turns away.

PHIL

Now listen here...

NURSE

No, you listen here. Mister Parsons is dead and no longer appears to need a road manager. Which makes two of us.

The nurse turns and marches down the corridor. Phil waits until she's gone and then walks through a door marked 'Admittance only to Authorized Hospital Staff'.

5.

INT. HOSPITAL LOCKER ROOM. MORNING

Phil slips off his overcoat and stuffs it into the trash. He tosses away the unlit cigar, grabs a white coat from a hook and puts it on. He walks out through another door.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. MORNING

Phil wanders down the corridor, glancing into rooms and checking signs. He pushes open a door marked 'Pathology'.

INT. HOSPITAL PATHOLOGY LAB. MORNING

The room is empty, except for a couple of covered bodies on trolleys. Phil checks under the first sheet, and recoils at whatever it is which lies beneath.

PHIL

Sheesh!

He walks over to the next gurney and lifts the sheet. He stares down at the body, visibly moved.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Hello buddy. How you been?

He stands for a moment, gripping the gurney and looking down at his friend. Then he snaps out of it.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Well, I can't stand around here chatting with you all day. Things to do...

He wheels the gurney towards the door.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR. MORNING

Phil wheels the gurney down the corridor towards the exit. A doctor in green scrubs approaches and glances down at a clipboard.

DOCTOR

Can I help you?

PHIL

Naw, I'm cool thanks.

The doctor reads the tag on the body's toe.

DOCTOR

What are you doing?

PHIL

Just taking some stiff down to neurology.

6.

CON TINUE D:

DOCTOR

We don't have a neurology department.

PHIL

Urology.

The doctor grabs the end of the gurney. Phil tugs and the doctor tugs back. After a moment, Phil sighs and shakes his head in frustration.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Okay. Just hold your horses -
I'll go check the paperwork.

The doctor holds up his clipboard.

DOCTOR

I have the paperwork.

PHIL

No. You have your paperwork. I
need to go check my paperwork.

for He slips through the exit. The doctor waits awkwardly
a few seconds, and then pushes open the door.

DOCTOR

Hello? Hello...

He glances around in surprise, but there is no-one in
sight.

EXT. DESERT. MORNING

To Phil's trike accelerates as it approaches a T junction.

the right the sign points to 'Joshua Tree Town', to the
left 'Los Angeles'. The trike doesn't even slow as it
skids left, sending a spray of sand and gravel flying
across the road.

NB. There will be several shots of Phil driving through
the desert, set to music.

EXT. PHIL'S STREET. DAY

The Trike pulls up outside a rambling old house. Two
enormous plaster eagles flank the front door, a giant
Harley Davidson sign hangs from the roof, and there's a six
foot flashing neon star in the front window. Phil gets
out, walks up to the door and pulls some keys out of his
pocket.

7.

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

Phil walks into the room and pours himself a drink. He
slumps onto the couch, takes a sip and closes his eyes. We
see movement behind him, as an attractive girl slips

through a door and approaches Phil from behind. This is SUSIE, and she puts her hands over his eyes.

SUSIE

Guess who?

PHIL

Martin Luther King.

SUSIE

Try again...

Susie leans over the back of the chair and gives Phil a long slow kiss. She jumps over the couch and resumes kissing, this time more passionately. Phil tries to pull away with little success.

PHIL

This.... ..isn't.... ..the
best time... ..Baby....

Susie continues regardless, Phil is now finding it hard to resist. He eventually gives in, and they begin to kiss passionately.

INT. PHIL'S KITCHEN. DAY

Phil and Susie are sitting at the kitchen table. He takes a drag from her cigarette and passes it back.

SUSIE

God damn! I'm so sorry, baby.

PHIL

Yeah, out of a job again.

SUSIE

Would never have happened if you were there.

PHIL

How do you know I wasn't?

SUSIE

Well, if you were, you wouldn't have let him die.

PHIL

I was still 'on staff'. He was still my responsibility.

8.

CON TINUE D:

They sit quietly for a moment. Then:

PHIL (CONT'D)

So where have you been, anyway?

She sighs, and stands up.

PHIL (CONT'D)

How long this time? Two weeks?

SUSIE

Yeah, let's have this conversation again. Like you haven't just done six weeks on the road...

PHIL

Yeah, but I usually leave a note. And there's a paycheck involved.

Susie disappears through the door. Phil's shoulders sag and he slumps against the wall. Then Susie reappears with a bottle of Jack Daniels and a couple of glasses. She pours out two generous measures and hands one to Phil.

SUSIE

Come here...

After a moment, he gets up and follows her out of the room.

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

Susie guides Phil to a chair and sits him down.

PHIL

What's this?

SUSIE

This is a remembrance.

She crosses to a record player and turns it on, pausing to let down the blind on the way back. 'In My Hour of Darkness' (or similar music) fills the room.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) PHIL TAKES A DRINK.

B) GIRL IN TEARS TO CAM OUTSIDE THE JOSHUA TREE MOTEL:

GIRL

(Earnestly)
He was so beautiful, and he
understood what my heart was
feeling. I'll...

(MOR E)

9.

CON TINUE D:

GIR L (CONT'D)

never laugh again. My inner joy
has gone. It evaporated when
Gram departed.

C) MUSIC 'EXPERT' ON CHAT SHOW

EXPERT

He sang country music in a way
that it had never been sung
before. It was 'country rock',
if you like. And it was kinda
catchy. At least, the young
people seemed to lap it up. It's
fair to say that when Gram
Parsons died, he died a star.

D) PHIL TAKES ANOTHER DRINK. HE MAY BE CRYING.
E) HIPPIE TO CAM FROM A STREET IN LA:

HIPPIE

It's like... I can't... It was
real, kinda... I... Oh, man.

F) PHIL SLEEPS, AND THE GLASS SLIPS FROM HIS HAND.

G) REPORTER TO CAM FROM OUTSIDE JOSHUA TREE HOSPITAL:

REPORTER

And another light burns out in
the desert. Gram Parsons - the
standard bearer of the new
country music movement - is dead,
following an overdose of drugs.
While many of America's young
people are today in mourning,
their parents will view this as
another example of how today's
drug culture can so easily claim
a life. We'll leave you tonight
with the young man's own words.
Gram Parsons wrote a song called
'In My Hour of Darkness', which
contains these words: 'In my hour

of darkness...'

We are back in Phil's sitting room. Fade up on the music, to match the reporter's words, as Gram's voice fills the room: (or similar music).

GRAM'S VOICE

In my hour of darkness, in my
time of need, Oh Lord grant me
vision, Oh Lord grant me speed.
Oh Lord grant me vision, Oh Lord
grant me speed.

10.

CON TINUE D:

Susie tenderly throws a blanket over the sleeping Phil as the record ends. She turns the light off and the room goes dark.

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

Susie walks in with a coffee. She sits beside Phil and strokes his head until he wakes. She kisses him and passes him the cup.

PHIL

Hello.

SUSIE

Hi.

He sits up and stretches. She leans over to kiss him, then stands and starts to tidy. He watches her. She picks up some clothing from near his chair and moves away. He drops another piece of clothing on the same spot. She says nothing and picks it up. He takes a sock off and drops it. It has stopped being a game and started being a statement. She picks the sock up and drops it in his lap. He pushes it back onto the floor. She opens her arms and everything falls to the floor. She walks out of the room and into the kitchen. He follows.

INT. PHIL'S KITCHEN. DAY

Susie leans on the table, staring out of the window. Phil walks up behind her.

PHIL

When you're here, I spend my time
wondering when you're going. And
when you're back, I wonder where
you've been.

She turns and walks round to face him.

SUSIE

Phil, you give me laughs and a great time. But I'm not sure if that's enough.

PHIL

You mean there's more than that?

SUSIE

Yes, there's more than that! There's dependable, responsible, reliable...

11.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

There's dull, boring, normal. You should hook up with someone who works in a bank. I know a guy, actually. He has fish for dinner every Friday, cleans his shoes twice a week and buys his ties in bulk because it works out cheaper that way. I'll put you in touch.

SUSIE

I don't mind loving a crazy bastard, Phil. But you've got to be for something and not just against everything. You have to choose something to represent.

PHIL

I represent the combined forces of charm, enchantment and exuberance.

SUSIE

Your job is to arrange other people's lives. Maybe it's time to put a little thought into your own.

Susie walks out of the room.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. DAY

A suburban street of small, neat bungalows. We move down the street, past house and identical house, until we rest outside another that is identical to the rest. The front door opens, and a nondescript man emerges, carrying a small overnight bag. He carefully locks the door and walks down the path to where a cab waits. We can clearly see 'New Orleans Taxi' marked on the door.

MAN

Airport, please.

This is STANLEY PARSONS, Gram's father.

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

There is a loud banging on the front door. Phil glances out of the window, and looks momentarily puzzled. He opens the door, and a beautiful woman stands on the step.

PHIL

Long time, no see, Barbara.

12.

CON TINUE D:

BARBARA

Don't try and schmooze me,
Kaufman, you repellent slimeball.

She notices Susie standing behind Phil.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

The latest victim?

Barbara walks past them into the kitchen. Susie looks quizzically at Phil.

PHIL

Meet Barbara.

Barbara calls out from the kitchen.

BARBARA

It's a lot tidier than I
remember.

Susie raises an eyebrow at Phil.

SUSIE

Who the hell is she?

PHIL

Gram's ex-girlfriend.

Phil points at his temple as if to say she's nuts.

SUSIE

Girlfriend? Isn't he married?

Barbara walks back into the hall.

BARBARA

Welcome to the seventies.

PHIL

What do you want, Barbara?

Barbara lights a cigarette.

BARBARA

I'm here to fulfill Gram's wishes.

She waits for him to speak.

PHIL

That's nice. I have no idea what you're talking about.

She holds up an old piece of writing paper.

13.

CON TINUE D: (2)

BARBARA

Do you know what this is?

Phil reaches for it, but Barbara snatches it away.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

It's Gram's will.

She reads it out.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

To whom it may concern: I would like it to be known that it is my wish to leave Barbara Mansfield my assets and belongings in the event of my death. Signed: Ingram Cecil Parsons.

Phil looks surprised.

PHIL

Did he write that with joined up

writing or was it before he knew how?

Barbara gives a wry smile.

BARBARA

Still the jester Kaufman, and still very unfunny.

PHIL

That's not a will Barbara, and you know it.

BARBARA

It's better than a will, actually. It's a signed promise from Gram to leave me all his assets and belongings. And anyway, it's really none of your business what this is. I've come for the guitar.

Phil shakes his head.

PHIL

Guitar?

BARBARA

Yes. Gram's guitar. He always kept it here.

PHIL

It's been a while since you were around, Barbara.

(MOR E)

14.

CON TINUE D: (3)

PHI L (CONT'D)

Gretchen, his wife, took it back six months ago.

Barbara leans forward until their noses are almost touching.

BARBARA

I don't believe you, Kaufman.

Barbara pushes past Phil who gives no resistance. She walks straight over to the couch and starts pulling up the cushions. Susie moves to stop her, but Phil holds her back and lets Barbara carry on.

INT. PHIL'S LOUNGE. DAY

Phil and Susie sit on the sofa, an island of calm in a sea of chaos. Around them, the floor is covered with papers, clothing, empty record covers, torn open cushions and books. A broken drawer is propped against the table. A lampshade hangs crazily from its bearings, throwing strange shadows around the room. Suddenly, Susie gets up and kicks a cushion across the room.

PHIL

Hey, well done. You found the only unbroken thing.

SUSIE

Why did you let her in?

PHIL

It's all part of the grieving process.

SUSIE

How can she behave that way? Gram's not even in the ground yet.

Phil stares at her.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

What?

PHIL

Nothing.

He continues to look at her oddly.

SUSIE

Don't you freak out on me.

PHIL

Do me a favor and get the guitar, sweetheart.

15.

CON TINUE D:

He disappears into the kitchen.

SUSIE

Where are you going?

PHIL

(O.S)

I gotta make a call.

INT. JOSHUA TREE FUNERAL HOME. DAY

A man with glasses and an ill-fitting black suit does some paperwork. He is surrounded by coffins displaying garish 'special offer' price tickets. The phone rings, and the undertaker takes his time answering it.

UNDERTAKER

Afternoon. Joshua Tree
Obsequies.

INT. PHIL'S KITCHEN. DAY

Phil is holding the phone. He frowns.

PHIL

(into phone)
Obsequies? What the hell does
that mean? I'm...

INT. JOSHUA TREE FUNERAL HOME. DAY

We hear the rest of Phil's mutter from the phone in the undertaker's hand.

UNDERTAKER

It's Latin. It means burial. Is
there anything I can help with?
Who am I speaking to?

INT. PHIL'S KITCHEN. DAY

Phil straightens up. He speaks curtly.

PHIL

Yes, you can help me as a matter
of fact. I am...

INT. JOSHUA TREE FUNERAL HOME. DAY

Again, we hear Phil's voice trumpeting out of the phone. The undertaker changes his tone.

UNDERTAKER

Mister Parsons? I'm sorry, I'll
take a look immediately.

16.

CON TINUE D:

He puts down the phone and flicks through a big book. He purses his lips. He wipes his nose with a white silk handkerchief. Then he picks up the phone.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

Yeah, he was here.

Mutter.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

New Orleans. Although he only just went, so he'll still be on his way to Los Angeles Airport. Big thrill for us here, as we're only a small facility. Nearly got Jane Mansfield in '67 when she passed through, but she got diverted to Frisco. Hello?

No mutter.

UNDERTAKER (CONT'D)

Hello. Hellooo...

INT. PHIL'S KITCHEN. DAY

The phone sits on the table but the room is empty.

SUSIE

(O.S)

Phil?

Susie walks in, looks around, and leaves.

EXT. PHIL'S DRIVEWAY. DAY

Phil is lying down in the back of Susie's station wagon, his feet sticking out of the back. Susie comes out of the house carrying the guitar, and sits on the steps, where she watches him. After a minute:

SUSIE

What are you doing?

PHIL

These things aren't that big.

SUSIE

Okay. Is that a problem?

PHIL

Not really.

Susie is confused.

17.

CON TINUE D:

SUSIE

Well, that's good.

her
No answer. Phil continues to check out the inside of
car.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

So what are you up to?

PHIL

It's best you don't know.

Without a word, Susie gets up and walks into the house. Phil lies still. After a moment, she reappears with her bag. She flounces theatrically past him and opens the car door. Phil gets out of the back.

SUSIE

I don't know what this madness is, but I'm not getting involved.

PHIL

Well, that's the point.

SUSIE

I mean, I don't know what it is you're planning, but I'm not bailing you out again.

PHIL

Right.

SUSIE

I'm going.

PHIL

Again.

She gets into the car and slams the door. She starts the engine, and Phil stands back, but the car doesn't move. After a moment the window winds down.

SUSIE

This time, I'm not coming back.

She gives him a 'so there' smile.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I'm going to find a man who buys
his ties in bulk.

She drives away.

EXT. LARRY OSTERBERG'S HOME. DAY

Phil arrives on his trike outside a small house.

18.

INT. LARRY OSTERBERG'S HOME. DAY

A man is sitting cross-legged on the floor. A joss stick burns beside him, and sitar music plays in the background. This is LARRY OSTERBERG, and he is meditating. There is a loud hammering on the door. Larry shows no sign of having heard anything. More hammering at the door, but still no response. Then the letter box creaks open and an eye appears in the slot. After a moment, the eye disappears and Phil's face appears momentarily at the window. The window seems to be slightly higher than Phil, so his face appears every time he jumps up to peer into the room.

PHIL

(O.S)

Hello? Anyone there?

Then Phil is gone. Larry expels a big breath. The letterbox creaks opens again and the eye is back.

PHIL (CONT'D)

(O.S)

There you are. I'm looking for
Larry Osterberg.

Larry sighs, and stretches. He gets up slowly, gently shakes himself to relax his muscles and walks to the door, which he opens.

LARRY

The door is unlocked.

Phil barrels in and closes the door behind him. He turns to take a look around the room.

PHIL

You Larry Osterberg?

LARRY

Yes. Welcome to my house.

This might be sarcastic, but any nuance is lost on Phil, who props the guitar up against the wall.

PHIL

Very nice. What's that noise?

LARRY

Manomanjari on the sitar by
Nikhil Banerjee.

(NB. Similar music may
be used in this scene)

Phil stares at him.

19.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

(carefully)

Okay.

He pops a cigar into his mouth.

LARRY

There's no smoking in here, I'm
afraid.

Phil stares meaningfully at the burning joss stick, but
puts the cigar away.

PHIL

Right.

LARRY

Who are you, please?

PHIL

Oh, I'm Phil Kaufman.

LARRY

And how may I help you, Phil
Kaufman?

PHIL

I'd like to hire your car.

LARRY

Why?

PHIL

Well, I need to pick someone up
at the airport.

LARRY

Don't you know anyone with a car?

PHIL

Yes, of course. It's just that I'm told your car is more suitable.

LARRY

I see. In what way is my car more suitable?

PHIL

Well... it's a hearse.

LARRY

Yes.

They both look at each other. Larry waits for Phil to speak.

20.

CON TINUE D: (2)

LARRY (CONT'D)

And how is a hearse going to be suitable for picking someone up from the airport?

PHIL

It's... a joke.

LARRY

A joke?

He doesn't look entirely convinced.

PHIL

A prank. A surprise.

LARRY

Well, okay. Is it two hundred dollars worth of surprise?

PHIL

No, it's more of a fifty dollar surprise.

LARRY

I can lend you a bicycle. Besides, the car is booked.

PHIL

Booked how?

MAN

I use it to carry equipment for a band.

Phil pulls some cash out of his pocket and sorts through it.

PHIL

Well, here's two hundred dollars to unbook it. Let 'em carry their own trombones.

Phil passes the money over. Larry starts to count it.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You don't need to count it. You could trust me.

Larry doesn't pause counting.

LARRY

Let's see; I've never met you in my life, you shout through my mail slot, you want to hire my hearse as a joke, and...

(MOR E)

21.

CON TINUE D: (3)

LAR RY (CONT'D)

you're twenty dollars short. Why should I trust you?

PHIL

That last twenty is for gas. Anyway - I haven't even seen the car yet. I'm the one who's operating on trust.

LARRY

It's a hearse. What else do you need to know?

EXT. OUTSIDE LARRY OSTERBERG'S GARAGE. DAY

The garage doors swing open and a hearse drives out into the sun. It is bright yellow and covered in painted flowers. One of the side windows is broken and a headlight hangs out. Phil's jaw drops open. Larry gets out of the driving seat and pats the roof, proudly.

LARRY

Meet Bernice.

PHIL

Bernice?

LARRY

Bernice is a Cadillac Superior Royale Tiara Limousine Funeral Coach. We've got a Seven gallon V8 engine offering three hundred and forty bhp at four thousand six hundred revolutions per minute. You're looking at a twenty one feet beauty with a one hundred and fifty six inch wheelbase containing a four barrel Rochester Quadrajet carburetor with Turbo Hydramatic transmission. Bernice weighs over six thousand pounds.

There is a very long silence.

PHIL

It's yellow.

LARRY

Yes, it's yellow. Bernice comes in yellow.

PHIL

It's supposed to be black.

LARRY

But they're all black.

22.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

That might be my point.

LARRY

So how is a yellow hearse covered with flowers less of a surprise than a black hearse?

PHIL

I paid you two hundred dollars for a black hearse.

LARRY

(patiently)

No, you paid me a hundred and eighty dollars for a hearse, and a hearse is what you've got. If you take a long, hard look at Bernice, you'll see that she's one of a kind. She's big, she's fast, she's comfortable, and she's beautiful. But she's not black.

They stare at each other for a moment. Then Phil sighs deeply.

PHIL

Okay. Where are the keys?

LARRY

Why?

PHIL

I gotta go.

Larry looks from Phil to Bernice and back again.

LARRY

Oh, no. She doesn't go anywhere without me.

Phil thinks this over.

PHIL

Okay. Well, let's boogie.

Larry runs across and closes the doors on a pile of amps and band equipment that now sits in the garage. Phil puts the guitar in the back seat and they get into the car.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Larry pulls a screwdriver out of the glove compartment and jigs it about in the ignition until the engine catches.

23.

CON TINUE D:

Then he turns the keys and pull up and down to undo the steering lock. Phil watches curiously.

LARRY

Someone stole her last summer.

PHIL

Well, I've paid top dollar, so
it's nice to see I'm getting the
best...

LARRY

How did you hear of Bernice and
me?

PHIL

You are famous throughout the
greater Los Angeles area.

Larry looks pleased.

PHIL (CONT'D)

But you are the only guy with a
hearse. Don't go getting carried
away...

EXT. LA HIGHWAY. DAY

One backfire, and Bernice is ready. The hearse weaves
erratically across the road and then disappears in a cloud
of exhaust smoke.

INT. BARBARA'S HOME. EVENING

Barbara sits at a table in her shabby kitchen, reading the
will. She lights a cigarette and sits back in her chair.

EXT. LAX. EVENING

The hearse drives under a huge sign which reads 'Welcome to
Los Angeles Airport' and peels off the main road past some
offices and cargo stores. Bernice drives into a giant
hangar and pulls up outside a dark and shuttered office.

INT. HEARSE - OUTSIDE MORTUARY. EVENING

Phil glances out of the window.

PHIL

Pull over.

Larry parks, and Phil looks at his watch.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Shit.

24.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

What's the matter?

PHIL

Nothing.

LARRY

Well... What flight are they on?

PHIL

We'll wait here.

LARRY

Okay. Well, what time is the flight due?

PHIL

Soon.

LARRY

Okay. How soon?

PHIL

Why do you ask so many damn questions?

LARRY

Well... I don't know.

There is silence.

Then:

LARRY (CONT'D)

Shouldn't we be at arrivals?

PHIL

Look, will you please shut up asking me stuff?

LARRY

Okay.

He looks out of the window, and then back at Phil, who now has his eyes closed.

LARRY (CONT'D)

So how long are we going to wait?

Phil doesn't answer for a moment. Just as Larry opens his mouth to ask again, Phil speaks.

PHIL

Morning.

Larry looks at Phil with astonishment.

25.

CON TINUE D: (2)

LARRY

Morning? What do you mean,
morning?

PHIL

We'll make the pick-up in the
morning.

Larry tries to start the car. Phil leans over and plucks the screwdriver from his hand. He reclines his seat and closes his eyes.

LARRY

You wait till morning. I'm going
home.

Larry opens the door and gets out of the car. He slams the door shut behind him and stomps off into the gloom. Phil doesn't move.

INT. HEARSE - OUTSIDE MORTUARY. EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

The drivers' door opens and Larry gets back into the car.

LARRY

I'm only back because I don't
trust you with Bernice. I don't
even know you, and if you think
I'm going to leave my car with
you and just walk away, then
you've got another thought on the
way.

He stares at Phil, who hasn't moved an inch: eyes still closed, unlit cigar hanging out of the corner of his mouth, feet up on the dash.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'm staying right here. Where I
can keep an eye on things...

There is still no response from Phil. After a moment, Larry settles back in his seat and closes his eyes.

EXT. OUTSIDE MORTUARY. NIGHT

The hearse disappears into the gloom as the light fades and

night falls.

EXT. OUTSIDE BARBARA'S HOME. MORNING

A door swings open, and Barbara appears. She is looking quite stunning, with a tight black suit doing equal justice to her womanly curves and her duties as a mourner. She strides down the sidewalk, and as a group of schoolchildren appears around the corner Barbara scatters left and right.

26.

CON TINUE D:

Then she cuts across the road, and a delivery van skids to a halt inches away, horn blaring. The driver leans out of the window, furious.

DRIVER

Hey, lady!

Barbara stops and whips round, her hair cascading across her shoulders, her blue eyes flashing. The man simply stares at her, enchanted by her beauty.

BARBARA

Yes?

He continues to stare, and is only shaken back to his senses by a burst of abuse from further back in the road.

DRIVER

You... should be careful.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

Why, thank you...

INT. AIRPORT CHECK IN DESK - LAX. MORNING

Stanley is standing at the Airport Airlines check-in desk, facing the check-in clerk.

STANLEY

Parsons.

The clerk checks her paperwork.

CHECK-IN CLERK

You've just arrived from New Orleans, mister Parsons?

STANLEY

Yes.

CHECK-IN CLERK

And you're flying directly back to New Orleans? On the same plane?

STANLEY

That is correct.

The clerk awaits an explanation, but none is forthcoming. She raises an eyebrow.

CHECK-IN CLERK

Okay. Well, enjoy your stay at Los Angeles Airport, Mister Parsons.

27.

CON TINUE D:

STANLEY

Thank you.

Stanley turns to go, but then pauses.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I've come to pick up my son's body.

The line behind him falls quiet, and the officious clerk wobbles slightly. Stanley raises his voice.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

My son died out here, you see?
So I've come to bring him home.

Everyone looks at Stanley. Stanley looks at the clerk.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

I'm wondering if that's enough information for you?

CHECK-IN CLERK

Yes. Yes. I'm sorry. We'll... see to it that you get every assistance on your journey, sir.

STANLEY

Most kind.

INT. BANK. MORNING

There is a line leading to the information desk, but Barbara ignores it. She walks up to a female teller, who is serving another customer, and cuts in.

BARBARA

I'd like to see the manager,
please.

CUSTOMER

Wait your turn.

Barbara's eyes immediately water, and her lower lip trembles.

BARBARA

I'm sorry. It's just that the
man I loved died yesterday. I
was forgetting my manners...

She dabs at her eyes with a lace handkerchief. The
customer looks embarrassed.

CUSTOMER

I'm sorry. Please... go ahead.

28.

CON TINUE D:

Barbara fixes the teller with a no-nonsense look. The
teller responds with a similar look.

BARBARA

The manager?

EXT. MORTUARY. MORNING

A man unlocks the shutters with a clatter and goes inside.

INT. HEARSE - OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

The sound wakes Phil, who glances around and stretches,
before getting out of the car.

EXT. OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

Phil walks over to the door and walks inside the mortuary.

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

The clerk busies himself opening up. Phil wanders around
and knocks into a coffin. The lid bangs closed and the
sound echoes around the hangar.

CLERK

Can I help you?

PHIL

I'm here to pick up a... coffin.

The clerk looks Phil over. He's dressed in denim, with scuffed Harley-Davidson cowboy boots, topped off with a cut-down denim jacket with 'Sin City' stitched into the back.

CLERK

No you're not.

PHIL

Yes I am.

CLERK

No. You're here to pick up a casket.

Phil looks irritated.

PHIL

Okay. A casket.

CLERK

What flight number?

29.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

It was due out on the next flight to New Orleans, but I'm driving it now. The stiff doesn't like to fly.

The clerk stares at him.

CLERK

You're one of those funny guys, right.

PHIL

Yeah, but it's my day off.

CLERK

Name?

PHIL

Mine or the...?

CLERK

The deceased.

Phil moves to the desk.

PHIL

Parsons.

The clerk turns and shouts over his shoulder.

CLERK

Barney - bring up Parsons.

INT. BANK - MANAGER'S OFFICE. MORNING

The Bank Manager is staring at the piece of paper.

BANK MANAGER

I simply can't give you any money based on this piece of paper.

Barbara is totally calm.

BARBARA

It's not a piece of paper. It's a promise from Gram to leave me all his money.

BANK MANAGER

Well, I'm sorry, but it's highly likely that the estate will go to probate and be divided up accordingly, subject to a valid will existing.

30.

CON TINUE D:

She just looks at him. He tries again.

BANK MANAGER (CONT'D)

Mister Parsons was a customer of ours. We can't just pass his money across to someone who says they're in the will. There are... rules.

Barbara, realizing that she's getting nowhere, starts to cry.

BARBARA

You don't seem to understand. These are his wishes.

Barbara is now sobbing, and the bank manager is becoming

increasing uncomfortable. He gives her his handkerchief.

BANK MANAGER

No... I do... understand, Miss Mansfield. Really I do.

BARBARA

Please tell me how I'm supposed to get my money.

BANK MANAGER

Well I imagine that you first need to prove that mister Parsons is actually dead.

BARBARA

Are you saying that I'm lying?

BANK MANAGER

No, absolutely not. But getting a copy of the death certificate would probably be a good first step.

INT. PLANE - LAX. MORNING

Stanley takes a swig from a hip flask and looks out of the window. A very overweight, red-faced man squeezes into the next seat. He bangs Stanley with his knee as he sits, but Stanley doesn't move. He peers at Stanley and shuffles in his seat, but there is still no reaction. Next, a deep sigh is forced out between his fat wet lips - he is plainly keen to start a conversation. Stanley keeps looking out of the window. He is watching the cargo being loaded.

P. J. GAMBRELL

Paw on the space, don'tcha think?

Stanley turns slowly.

31.

CON TINUE D:

STANLEY

I'm sorry?

The fat man smiles and extends a chubby hand, which Stanley shakes awkwardly and reluctantly.

P. J. GAMBRELL

P J Gambrell, at yer assistance. Pernell Jayson. Jes' saying paw on the space in dese buckets.

Stanley is obviously having problems fully understanding what is being said. After a moment:

STANLEY

Stanley Parsons.

P. J. GAMBRELL

Gowna be a trip. Besta know yer otherwise gowna be a slow one.

STANLEY

Yes. I suppose so.

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

The clerk scribbles on a form.

CLERK

Papers?

PHIL

They'll be along. With this being a rush job, they said you'd understand.

He passes a folded banknote across. The clerk pockets it without a change of expression.

CLERK

Well, you'd better tell them that we've got rules.

The men stare at each other. Then Phil pulls another note out of his pocket and passes that over. Again, the clerk pockets it.

CLERK (CONT'D)

And this is the exception which proves that particular rule.

A beat. Then:

CLERK (CONT'D)

Although you don't need to tell them that.

32.

CON TINUE D:

Phil smiles broadly at him. The clerk turns and selects a casket from a gurney behind the counter.

CLERK (CONT'D)

And this... is your deceased.

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

Phil is wheeling a casket on a gurney down the middle of the hangar. He can see Larry peering through the window at him. He can also see a uniformed policeman approaching Larry from the other side of the street. As he speeds up to try and reach Larry first, the clerk calls out from his desk.

CLERK

Good luck with her.

Phil closes his eyes and slows to a halt.

EXT. OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

Larry is jumping up and down nervously outside the window. The policeman appears at his shoulder.

COP

Excuse me, sir. Is that your
hearse?

Larry turns slowly.

LARRY

Hearse?

The cop points at Bernice.

COP

That hearse.

Larry has started to sweat profusely.

LARRY

That hearse?

The cop looks at him carefully.

COP

Are you okay, sir?

LARRY

Okay? Sure...

He leans against the window for support.

INT. PLANE - LAX. MORNING

Stanley is looking out of the plane's window, but the fat man is now locked on. He gestures around him.

PJ GAMBRELL

Jes sayin' 'bout the space.

Another thoughtful pause from Stanley.

STANLEY

Yes.

He glances out at the cargo loaders.

PJ GAMBRELL

Space ma game, kinda.
Partitions. Fixed. Slidin'.
Demountable. Integrated.

STANLEY

Right.

PJ GAMBRELL

Always say. Why have one room?
When you can have two?

STANLEY

I see.

He leans forward to watch a loader wheeling a casket towards the back of the plane.

PJ GAMBRELL

What's your bidness?
Stanley watches the coffin and doesn't answer. A tear rolls down his face. The fat man pulls some candy out of his pocket and takes a bite.

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

Phil and the clerk peer into the open casket.

PHIL

Yup. That's a she.

CLERK

And yours is supposed to be male?

PHIL

Yeah...

The clerk walks back to the counter and peers at his paperwork.

34.

CON TINUE D:

CLERK

Well... Gone.

PHIL

Gone? Whaddya mean, gone?

CLERK

We got the wrong box. Your box
is being loaded.

PHIL

Nice work. So how do I get my
box back?

The clerk raises an eyebrow. Phil understands
immediately.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You're a damn thief.

CLERK

That's very hurtful.

Phil reluctantly hands another note over and the clerk
speaks into a radio.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Barney. You receiving?

EXT. OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

Larry is standing by the hearse. The cop is reading
his license.

COP

So, whatcha doin' here?

LARRY

Doing? Here?

INT. PLANE - LAX. MORNING

Stanley has his eyes closed. The fat man eats. Suddenly,
Stanley's eyes snap open and he peers out of the window. A

motorized cart chugs into view with the casket covered in a blanket on the back. It is driving away from the plane.

STANLEY

What the hell?

He stands up and turns to the fat man.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

PJ GAMBRELL

Why?

35.

CON TINUE D:

STANLEY

I need to get off the plane.

The fat man reluctantly struggles to his feet and squeezes out into the aisle.

PJ GAMBRELL

Sheesh. Only jes' got settled.

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

Phil glances nervously out to where Larry is being interrogated by the cop. The clerk is reading a paper.

PHIL

Can you speed things up?

CLERK

What's the hurry?

Phil is distracted, watching the cop and Larry out of the window.

PHIL

I'd like to get to the Joshua Tree while it's still light.

The clerk looks up.

CLERK

I thought you were taking him to New Orleans?

PHIL

What?

CLERK

When you came in, you said you were driving the casket out to New Orleans. But just now you said you were headed for the Joshua Tree...

Phil is under pressure.

PHIL

Joshua Tree, yeah.

A buzzer sounds. No-one moves.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Joshua Tree, Louisiana. Just outside the city.

CLERK

Never heard of that.

36.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

It's small. Just another local community struggling to get by.

The buzzer goes again, and Phil attempts to change the subject.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Use your phone?

After a moment, the clerk nods towards the phone on the desk, before turning and disappearing into the rear of the mortuary. Phil wipes some sweat from his forehead, picks up the phone and dials.

INT. PHIL'S LOUNGE. MORNING

Susie is packing. The phone rings and she hesitates for a moment. Then she continues loading her case, leaving the phone unanswered.

INT. CHECK IN DESK. DAY

Stanley tries to ask a question at the check in desk, but gives up and walks toward an exit.

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

The clerk returns with a casket on a gurney and Phil replaces the receiver as the clerk flips open the top of

the casket and peers inside.

CLERK

(into casket)

Hello there. We was looking for you.

He wheels the casket over and Phil has a quick look inside.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Need you to sign for it again.

Phil signs the papers.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Looks like it's your lucky day after all.

PHIL

Yeah. I'm a real lucky guy.

Phil again glances out of the window.

37.

EXT. OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

The cop is wandering around the hearse. Larry trails behind him, disconsolately.

COP

I don't like the look of you.

LARRY

(miserably)

No. Fair enough.

COP

Wherever there's a hippie there's a crime, even if it hasn't happened yet. That's what I always say.

LARRY

Right. Good saying.

He prods at the broken light with his baton.

COP

So whatcha doing here?

LARRY

We're meeting someone off a flight.

COP

You're meeting someone off a flight?

LARRY

Yes.

COP

In a hearse?

LARRY

Yes. It's a... surprise.

COP

Which parts the surprise: The fact that you're in a bright yellow hearse, the fact that you're dressed like something out of a horror film, or the fact that you're half a mile from the terminal and they're gonna have to walk across two runways to reach you?

Larry is looking increasingly desperate.

38.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

Well... the first part.

The cop nods and repeats it to himself.

COP

The first part.

They stare at each other.

COP (CONT'D)

Okay, now why don't you tell me what the hell's going on?

LARRY

Going on?

They stare at each other. The cop shifts position and

purses his lips. Larry stares at the ground looking for some kind of inspiration. Just when the silence moves beyond uncomfortable, the door of the mortuary opens and Phil clatters out with the casket.

PHIL

Well, I don't care if it is first thing in the morning - but I sure need a coffee. I tell you, I've never seen so many darned bits of paper to sign! It's paperwork which is slowing this great country down. We're drowning in triplicate!

He's busying himself at the back of the hearse, and appears to notice the cop for the first time.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Good morning officer.

The cop peers at him suspiciously.

COP

Mornin'.

PHIL

I was just saying how people with work to do - people like yourself, officer - are just getting engulfed by paper. Grab the end, will you? Doesn't that just drive you plain crazy?

The cop hesitates and then takes the end of the casket and helps load it into the hearse.

39.

CON TINUE D: (2)

COP

I guess it does.

Phil gestures at Larry to get into the car, which he does.

PHIL

One casket, six sheets to sign. Six! That can't be right. Does that sound right to you?

He closes the back doors and gets into the passenger seat.

COP

Nope. Sure don't.

PHIL

And the very last thing I want to do is to hold you up further with my chatter. Thank you for your help, officer. You have a good day, now.

It looks like they've got away with it. But:

COP

Just a moment, boys.

Phil smiles up at him.

PHIL

Yessir?

COP

Your sidekick here has just finished telling me that you're gonna pick someone up from the terminal. A surprise, he said. And here you are loading a coffin into your vehicle...

Phil doesn't miss a beat.

PHIL

And there you have it, officer. You see the gentleman we're meeting from the plane doesn't yet know about the sad passing of his... aunt.

COP

And you're gonna meet him off his flight with her coffin?

He raises an eyebrow.

40.

CON TINUE D: (3)

COP (CONT'D)

That's a real nice touch.

PHIL

Yeah. We're doing it this way for the avoidance of doubt.

He gestures at Larry to start the car. Larry pulls out the screwdriver and starts to jig it about in the ignition. The cop watches. As the engine refuses to catch, Larry starts to panic.

LARRY

Ignition's a bit temperamental.

COP

Right.

More fiddling. No ignition.

LARRY

Have to use a screwdriver.

COP

I see that.

The car starts.

PHIL

Thanks for everything, officer.
We'd best be off...

He looks meaningfully at the cop, who grudgingly moves back. As they move off, Stanley hurries round the corner with his overnight bag in his hand.

INT. HEARSE - OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

Inside the car, Phil bangs on the dashboard in joy and exultation.

PHIL

Yes! We did it!!

LARRY

Did what? What did we do?

Phil changes the subject.

PHIL

What was all that babbling about earlier?

LARRY

I didn't babble. I just... have a problem with authority.

41.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

What the hell does that mean?

LARRY

I don't like them and I don't know what to say to them. They make me feel uneasy.

PHIL

Well of course they make you feel uneasy. They're supposed to make you feel uneasy.

Larry sulks. Phil shakes his head and glances back at the cop and Larry crashes the car straight into the hangar wall.

EXT. OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

We pull back to reveal the enormous opening that Larry has missed.

INT. HEARSE - OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

They both sit there, staring out of the windshield at the wall.

PHIL

You hit the wall.

LARRY

I clipped it. I clipped the wall.

PHIL

(shouts)

There's a gap fifty yards wide!
You just had to aim for the gap.
How could you miss the gap?

LARRY

(babbles)

I was distracted. We're supposed to be picking someone up and you arrive with a coffin and I'd only just woken up and...

The cop peers in at the window and gestures at Phil to wind it down. As he does, the glass falls out.

PHIL

Hello, officer. I guess they make these hearses wider than

they need to...

The cop ignores him and concentrates on Larry.

42.

CON TINUE D:

COP

Are you on drugs, boy?

Larry swallows hard.

LARRY

Uh, not at this time, no sir.

COP

Not at this time. Okay, well let's see. You just missed a gap of fifty yards and hit a wall in broad daylight. Why was that?

Larry licks his lips.

LARRY

Well...

Pause. Phil wills him to speak.

PHIL

Well...

Still nothing. Larry looks like he's trying to form words, but nothing emerges.

COP

Now I'm gonna...

The radio in his car crackles into life. We - and he - are too far away to hear what is said. He is torn for a moment, but then:

COP (CONT'D)

Wait.

He walks back to his car.

Phil shakes his head.

PHIL

Fantastic. Well done.

LARRY

Oh, right. So it's all my fault?

PHIL

You... you just drove into a wall! Of course it's your fault. Jesus!

They both stare out of the window at the cop, who is talking animatedly into his radio. Then the flashing lights and siren go on.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Here it comes...

43.

CON TINUE D: (2)

The police car drives up to, and then past, the hearse, before disappearing out of the hanger at speed. Phil and Larry look at each other.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Well?

LARRY

Well what?

PHIL

Well, what are we doing now?

LARRY

He said to wait.

Phil just stares at him. After a moment, Larry reverses Bernice and then drives the battered car through the gap and out of the hangar. Phil slumps back in his seat.

PHIL

Nice going, hippie. Went right through the gap that time.

Larry says nothing. Phil leans back in his seat.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Well, we got it. Whoooh!!!

Larry slams the brakes on and the huge car skids to a halt in a cloud of dust. Phil is flung forward in his seat.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Jesus... What now?

LARRY

Get out.

PHIL

What are you talking about?

He looks nervously out of the back window.

PHIL (CONT'D)

C'mon, we gotta keep moving.

LARRY

Get out and take your friend with you.

PHIL

Look, I can see you're a bit... sensitive about this whole... casket thing.

44.

CON TINUE D: (3)

LARRY

Get out.

PHIL

(shouts)

Stop saying that! I can't get out.

LARRY

Why not?

PHIL

I... look, it's not right to throw me out onto the street with a coffin.

Larry slips the car into gear and it moves forward.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Thank God.

Larry makes a U-turn.

PHIL (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

LARRY

I'm driving back to the mortuary.

PHIL

You can't do that.

Nearly at the turn now. Phil opens the car door with a mind to jump out, but one look at the fast-moving road

changes his mind. He glowers at Larry and shuts the door. The hearse skids round the corner, Larry slams on the brakes and the car slides to a halt outside the mortuary.

LARRY

Talk.

PHIL

What talk?

Larry gestures towards the back of the car.

LARRY

Who's the stiff?

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

The clerk is standing at the counter staring at Stanley.

CLERK

Parsons?

45.

CON TINUE D:

STANLEY

Parsons.

The clerk looks worried.

CLERK

Long blond hair, blue eyes, mid-twenties?

STANLEY

Well... yes.

CLERK

Was he in a Berkeley?

STANLEY

What's a Berkeley?

CLERK

A luxury casket of solid mahogany, finished with a split-hinged lid, eight brass plated casket handles and an engraved inscription plate.

INT. LA DEPARTMENT OF BIRTHS MARRIAGES & DEATHS. MORNING

Barbara is sitting in a cubicle opposite a middle-aged woman in a suit. Her allure appears lost on the official, who gives the dress a disapproving look.

BARBARA

Parsons.

OFFICIAL

Parsons. And he's a... musician?

She says 'musician' with great distaste.

BARBARA

Was. He was a musician.

The woman flicks through some papers on her desk. Barbara watches her. Eventually:

OFFICIAL

I'm afraid we have no official notification of death.

With a flourish, Barbara places a copy of the LA Times on the table. The headline is 'Country-Rock Pioneer Dead' in large black print. The official glances at it and gives a thin smile.

46.

CON TINUE D:

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

At this current time, the Greater Los Angeles registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths does not regard the local newspaper as an official recorder of record.

INT. HEARSE - OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

Larry is staring at Phil. Waiting.

PHIL

Can we please talk about this later? This is not a great place to be right now.

Larry moves to get out of the car. Phil grabs his

arm.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Oh, just a minute. Now I understand... You think there's a

body back there.

He starts to laugh.

PHIL (CONT'D)

You think there's a body in the coffin!

Larry watches him laugh. Phil catches the look and stops laughing.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I can fully understand why you'd think that. I mean, it is a coffin and all. But would I - would I really - steal a real live dead body?

INT. MORTUARY. MORNING

Stanley and the clerk are staring at each other.

STANLEY

You just gave the body away?

CLERK

Well, it's not like this is a bank. People round here don't generally take dead bodies they're not entitled to.

STANLEY

Why did you give it to him?

47.

CON TINUE D:

CLERK

Well, he signed for it.

STANLEY

Who signed for it?

The clerk peers at his paperwork. When he eventually speaks, it is wearily.

CLERK

John Nobody.

STANLEY

And where do I find this John
Nobody?

The clerk's attention switches to a point just above Stanley's shoulder. He points out through the window to where the hearse is parked over a hundred yards away.

CLERK

There.

INT. HEARSE - OUTSIDE MORTUARY. MORNING

Larry is staring at Phil.

LARRY

Empty?

PHIL

Absolutely, completely, totally.

LARRY

It looked pretty heavy, for an empty casket.

PHIL

They are made of finest... poplar. That's very heavy wood.

LARRY

Poplar? No way? Mahogany, or oak, but not...

PHIL

Look, I'm not going to argue with you now. Poplar is very well suited to the making of coffins.

Larry stares hard at Phil. We see the door of the mortuary open over Larry's shoulder and Stanley and the clerk emerge. Then:

48.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

Okay. So why have we got an empty coffin in the back of the car?

Phil glances at the approaching Stanley.

PHIL

I'm... selling them on to a company in Palm Springs. Lots of stiffs, lots of money. And then of course, it's very environmentally sound. And... look, under the circumstances, perhaps we should renegotiate the financial arrangement between us.

Larry still stares at Phil. Stanley is almost at the car.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Fifty-fifty? That baby's worth two grand.

Stanley is getting ever closer. Phil can see him in his wing mirror. Larry releases the safety brake and the giant car roars away, leaving Stanley standing in a cloud of dust.

INT. LA DEPARTMENT OF BIRTHS MARRIAGES & DEATHS. MORNING

Barbara picks up the newspaper and rips it into pieces, which she scatters onto the desk. She walks towards the door.

OFFICIAL

Don't forget now...

Barbara keeps walking.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Notification of death.

Barbara is gone, the door slamming behind her.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Larry drives. Phil is still pitching. They are driving alongside the airport runway.

PHIL

So then Bobby transfers 'em into hardboard boxes just prior to the cremation and I drive the caskets over to a guy I know in Palm Springs who resells them.

LARRY

As new?

PHIL

Well I'm not sure the 'one careful owner' thing works with coffins.

LARRY

The whole thing is completely immoral.

PHIL

Yeah, well. I saw how outraged you were back there, when I mentioned money. Just think of it as recycling.

LARRY

Look, I really need to get home.

PHIL

Why?

LARRY

I just... do.

Larry is sweating.

PHIL

Well, while I acknowledge the power of your argument, we have to be somewhere else. So just settle back and enjoy the ride.

Larry slows the car down.

PHIL (CONT'D)

What now?

LARRY

Gas now.

Larry pulls the car onto a Gas station forecourt.

EXT. GAS STATION FORECOURT. DAY

An attendant is filling Bernice. He looks Phil over.

ATTENDANT

You an undertaker?

PHIL

Sure am.

50.

CON TINUE D:

ATTENDANT

Ain't yer surposed to be in
black?

PHIL

Nope. We're special rock 'n roll
undertakers. Musical morticians.

INT. REST ROOM - GAS STATION. DAY

Larry is sitting on the toilet seat - still fully dressed
but bent double with cramps. Then Phil bangs on the door
and calls from outside.

PHIL

(O.S)

C'mon, hippie - let's roll.

Larry turns to look at his reflection in the grimy mirror.
He is shaking.

EXT. GAS STATION FORECOURT. DAY

The tank is full, and the attendant screws the cap back on.
Phil reaches into the back and pulls out his jerry can. He
passes it to the guy.

PHIL

High test.

ATTENDANT

This car runs on regular.

Phil raises an eyebrow, glances across at the casket, and
winks.

PHIL

Who says it's for the car?

The man gapes at him. Larry walks over to the car and Phil
gets into the passenger seat. He passes some money to the
attendant and takes the can.

ATTENDANT

Ain't fer the car?

PHIL

Nope.

Larry jiggles the screwdriver, slips Bernice into gear, and they're gone. The attendant watches them go.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Larry is driving, Phil is looking out of the window. They are still in a built up area with cars around them.

51.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

We could go back.

PHIL

Why would we want to do that?

LARRY

I wasn't expecting a long trip. I haven't packed any spare clothes. We could pick up some supplies and drive out tomorrow.

PHIL

You want to go home to pick up fresh clothes?

LARRY

Well, yes.

Phil stares at him.

PHIL

And then drive back out tomorrow?

LARRY

We could do that.

PHIL

Just drive the car, okay?

LARRY

We could just...

PHIL

No.

LARRY

It would...

PHIL

No.

LARRY

I...

PHIL

No.

INT. BARBARA'S HOME. DAY

Barbara is standing in her sitting room, the phone to her ear.

BARBARA

You might need to repeat that.

52.

CONTINUED:

Her mouth drops open and she sinks down onto her couch.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Stolen? What the hell do you mean, stolen? Who steals a body?

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Phil is smoking. Larry is driving, his fingers tapping nervously on the wheel. He looks distracted and speaks to break the silence.

LARRY

I still don't fully understand what you do.

PHIL

Well, I do everything.

LARRY

Everything?

PHIL

This little number is for drinking money. By trade I'm a Road Manager.

LARRY

Oh, one of those. Like a well-paid gopher.

PHIL

No, not like a well-paid gopher. I'm responsible for movement,

maintenance and management. I'm a confidante and a companion, a partner and a patron, an ally, agent and ambassador. I'm like an executive nanny. Not a gopher.

Larry backs down with hint of sarcasm

LARRY

An executive nanny, not a gopher.
Thanks for clearing that up.

EXT. 10 FREEWAY. LA. DAY

Bernice cruises along the freeway then takes an exit for Joshua tree.

INT. MORTUARY. DAY

Stanley and the clerk are standing just inside the hangar door.

53.

CON TINUE D:

STANLEY

So where are the cops?

The clerk pulls the money out of his top pocket and looks at it. He shrugs his shoulders.

CLERK

I called them.

STANLEY

There's supposed to be a funeral in New Orleans. I need to find my boy.

CLERK

New Orleans?

Clerk points into the distance.

CLERK (CONT'D)

The man said he's going to Joshua Tree, Louisiana.

STANLEY

Joshua Tree?

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

Susie is moving her suitcases into the sitting room when there is a banging on the front door. Susie opens the door and Barbara is standing outside.

BARBARA

Where's the son of a bitch?

SUSIE

The son of a bitch isn't here.

BARBARA

Well, he's stolen Gram.

Susie looks bemused.

SUSIE

Stolen Gram?

Barbara lights a cigarette.

BARBARA

They had some kind of weird pact. I think Phil's taken Gram out to the desert.

SUSIE

Why?

54.

CON TINUE D:

BARBARA

Some kind of voodoo thing with hot wax and dolls to stick pins in.

SUSIE

Don't be ridiculous.

Barbara glances down at the packed bags and smiles.

BARBARA

Now that is a wise move, if you ask me.

SUSIE

I didn't ask you.

EXT. MELON STALL. DAY

The hearse is parked by the side of the road, near a rickety stall where an old lady sits, selling melons. Larry sits inside and Phil walks to a phone by the side of

the road. He dials.

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

The girls are still arguing.

BARBARA

You'll learn about Phil Kaufman.
If you stick around long enough.

SUSIE

And you know him?

BARBARA

I know he's a brainless,
interfering asshole, yes.

SUSIE

I don't need to listen to this
garbage.

The phone starts to ring. Susie instinctively moves
towards it, then stops. Barbara watches carefully.

BARBARA

That's him, isn't it?

SUSIE

Generally, it's best to answer
the phone to discover who's
calling.

She still makes no move to answer it.

55.

CON TINUE D:

BARBARA

Fine.

She walks across the room and picks up the phone.

EXT. MELON STALL. DAY

Phil is holding the phone.

PHIL

Hello baby, it's the love
machine. How are ya?

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

Barbara smiles unpleasantly.

BARBARA

Hello Kaufman. I know what you're up to, you thieving bastard. I know where you're going, and I know about your sick, revolting plans, and I'm coming after you. And when I catch you...

EXT. MELON STALL. DAY

Phil looks surprised.

PHIL

Hello Barbara. How nice to hear from you again. And so soon...

Suddenly the door of the hearse flies open and Larry runs out. Phil holds the phone away from his ear as Barbara's shouting can be heard coming out of the receiver. He watches as Larry just makes it to a cactus and is violently sick. He glances across to where the old melon woman watches, expressionless, from her stall. After a moment, Larry wipes himself down and walks back to the car.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Sorry Barb, gotta go.

He goes to replace the receiver, and then pops in a last comment.

PHIL (CONT'D)

It's been real, though.

He puts the phone down, cutting off Barbara's squawk and watches Larry get into the hearse. He frowns.

56.

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

Barbara slams the phone down. Then she picks up the receiver again and smashes it onto the table.

BARBARA

Sonofabitch!

She walks to the door, brushing past Susie. Then she stops.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Okay, honey. Do you want to see who Phil Kaufman really is? Do you want to see what he's capable of?

Barbara shows Susie the door.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Or maybe you already know I'm right.

Susie hesitantly dismisses the challenge.

SUSIE

You don't know shit about him.

BARBARA

Well why don't we find out?

Barbara turns and walks out. Susie looks at her packed bags then follows.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Phil gets into the hearse, looks back at the coffin and sniffs. He looks down at the air conditioning and turns it up full. Larry starts the engine and the car stalls.

PHIL

So what's that about?

LARRY

Sunstroke.

Phil shakes his head.

PHIL

You've hardly left the car since we met. How can you have sunstroke?

LARRY

I'm susceptible.

57.

CON TINUE D:

Phil doesn't look convinced.

PHIL

You're a winner, that's what you are. A winner...

Eventually, the engine catches. Phil immediately gestures at a small road that heads off into the desert.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Turn off here.

LARRY

This isn't the way to Palm Springs.

Phil winks at him.

PHIL

It is if you're a coffin smuggler.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY

The old woman watches them go.

**START TIME
LAPSE:**

We stay on the old woman and her melon stall as the light rapidly changes, cars and pedestrians whizz by, and an hour passes in moments.

END TIME LAPSE.

As we slow to normal speed, a car drives past, stops, and reverses back to park by the stall.

EXT. MELON STALL. DAY

Stanley gets out of the Avis/Budget hire car.

STANLEY

Good afternoon.

OLD WOMAN

Hello.

He points at a melon.

STANLEY

I'll take that one, please.

OLD WOMAN

Fifty cents.

STANLEY

I was wondering... Have you seen a hearse pass this way in the last couple of hours?

OLD WOMAN

What's it look like?

The question throws Stanley.

STANLEY

Well... It... It's a big car. A big yellow car. Two guys inside.

OLD WOMAN

Was one of 'em sick in them bushes?

STANLEY

Well... I don't know. Maybe.

The old woman nods.

OLD WOMAN

Yup. I seen it.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Larry drives and talks, Phil looks tense.

LARRY

See, the Yin is the negative - the darkside. And the Yang represents positive - good. If you like, the first is earth and the second heaven.

DISSOLVE

TO:

INT. HEARSE. DAY - A LITTLE LATER

Larry still talks. Phil now looks bored.

LARRY

The Yin Yang symbol is really evocative about the whole concept. As you travel around the circle, white or black will increase until the opposite color is almost gone. But never

totally gone, right? And this cycle then repeats for the opposite color.

DISSOLVE

TO:

59.

INT. HEARSE. DAY - A LITTLE LATER

Larry still talks, glancing across to Phil to make his point every now and then. Phil is tossing a cigarette into the air and trying to catch it between his teeth.

LARRY

What seems like Yin is often supported by Yang, and vice versa. Let me give you an example: To truly know good, you must first know evil, and without good as a comparison, nothing can be evil. So by allowing Yin to flourish, you welcome Yan. By letting go of Yin, you are waiting for its return. Another example is...

There is a crash, and the car slams to a halt. Larry is thrown forward, but manages to grab the wheel. Phil is not so lucky, and catapults into the dashboard, before being thrown back into his seat, the crumpled cigarette still gripped between his teeth.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY

Bernice has driven into a road sign set into a concrete pillar. In fact, the sign that Bernice has driven into is the only thing anywhere near the road for miles in any direction.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Phil is dazed. He checks his forehead, which is bleeding. Then he gazes out at the desolate road and the solitary, buckled sign.

PHIL

It would be really nice if we could get through a couple of

hours without crashing the car.

LARRY

I was distracted.

Phil looks out of the window at the vast expanse of nothing but desert.

PHIL

Of course you were.

60.

CON TINUE D:

There is a faint noise. Larry hears it first and then Phil and then, as they strain to identify it, they see a tiny dot on the road ahead of them, which grows and grows as they watch it, and they peer hard into the wind to identify it and... it's a motorcycle cop.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I don't believe it. Middle of nowhere, and... quick - stand in front of the car!

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY

They jump out of the car and shuffle sideways, until they are standing in front of the actual point of collision.

LARRY

What now?

PHIL

Pretend we're having a conversation.

The buckled sign hangs dangerously above them as they both grin at the approaching policeman in a friendly manner.

LARRY

Okay. What about?

PHIL

I don't know what about! Ever since I met you, you've talked. Yabba, yabba, yabba, every waking minute. Religion, your supersonic, supercharged car, the darkside. Now you need to talk, and you can't think of anything to say.

him. The cop slows down but drives past. Phil waves at

PHIL (CONT'D)

Whatever your damn fool religion
is called, I think it works.

LARRY

Well... it's more a philosophy
than a religion.

The cop does a U-turn and motors towards them.

PHIL

Oh, well done. Good work.

bike He shoots a vicious look at Larry. The cop parks his
and removes his helmet.

61.

CON TINUE D:

As he opens his mouth to speak, a headlight falls off the
car and rolls off the road. They all watch it go.

MOTORCYCLE COP

Afternoon.

PHIL

Afternoon, officer. How's it
going today?

sideways The sign gives an ominous creak. Larry takes a
step, out of danger.

MOTORCYCLE COP

Oh, it's going fine, thank you.
How are things with you?

PHIL

Fine, fine. We just... stopped
to take a look at...

He waves his arm at the desert.

PHIL (CONT'D)

...the fine view you folks have
got around here.

The cop takes his sunglasses off and takes a look around,

as if it's the first time he's seen it.

MOTORCYCLE COP

Well, it is mighty nice around
these parts. If you like desert.

They all look appreciatively at the desert, and the cop
glances down at the keys in Larry's hand.

MOTORCYCLE COP (CONT'D)

(to Larry)

And how are things with you
today, sir?

Larry looks flustered.

LARRY

Ooooh, I'm well. Really well,
actually. Thank you.

The cop doesn't respond, just keeps looking at Larry with a
pleasant half-smile on his face.

MOTORCYCLE COP

The reason I ask, is that you
appear to have driven into one of
our road signs.

62.

CON TINUE D: (2)

Larry turns and appears to see the huge buckled pole for
the first time.

LARRY

Oh.

MOTORCYCLE COP

I'm surprised that you hadn't
noticed earlier, as it does
appear to be impeding your
forward progress.

Phil starts to laugh.

PHIL

That's a great line...
The cop turns to Phil. He is still smiling.

MOTORCYCLE COP

Thank you.

A long pause. Then:

MOTORCYCLE COP (CONT'D)

I wonder if you gentlemen can help me?

PHIL

Anything.

MOTORCYCLE COP

I'm looking for some fellows who stole a body back there at the airport.

Larry wobbles with shock.

LARRY

A body? Stole a body?

MOTORCYCLE COP

A body. Rather like the one in the back of your car.

LARRY

That's an empty coffin, officer.

The cop ignores him. Phil lights his cigar.

63.

CON TINUE D: (3)

MOTORCYCLE COP

I know it sounds strange. But these guys - there are two of them - they stole a body, loaded it into the back of an old yellow hearse painted with flowers, and they're supposed to be driving out this way.

Larry thinks hard.

LARRY

Hearse. Flowers.

He looks to Phil for support. Phil raises an eyebrow.

PHIL

I think he's onto us, Larry. He's just having a little fun at our expense.

The cop is no longer smiling.

MOTORCYCLE COP

In the car, please.

Phil opens the door and empty beer bottles cascade out into the road. They get into the car and the cop cuffs them together through the steering wheel and takes the car keys. Then he walks back over to his bike and starts to talk into the radio.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Phil closes his eyes and shakes his head.

PHIL

God damn!

LARRY

He said a body. He said we stole a body.

Phil opens his eyes.

PHIL

He meant a coffin.

LARRY

He didn't say 'coffin'. He said 'body'. Tell me we haven't stolen a real person.

64.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

Look, the place that I get the coffins from probably haven't filed a report yet. It'll all be sorted out within the hour. Trust me.

LARRY

Oh, I'm just overflowing with trust for you, man. I feel this overwhelming feeling of... trust every time I look at you.

He shakes his head.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna check inside that box just as soon as we're out of here.

cuffs They both stare out of the window. Phil bangs the
against the wheel.

PHIL

Jesus!

They sit glowering out of different windows at different bits of desert. The motorcycle cop can be heard talking into his radio.

LARRY

What are we going to do?

PHIL

Time.

LARRY

What?

PHIL

(bitterly)

We're going to be arrested,
that's what we're going to do.
Then we'll go to court and then
we'll go to jail and we'll do
that for a while.

Larry mulls this over.

LARRY

What about if I could slip out of
these cuffs?

Phil treats the theoretical question with indifference.

65.

CON TINUE D: (2)

PHIL

Yeah, that would be great. Then
we could suspend you from a
bridge in a straitjacket and set
the rope on fire.

LARRY

No, really. I really can slip
these cuffs.

He has Phil's attention now.

PHIL

Okay. Show me.

Larry pops his middle finger out of its socket, squeezes his hand and slides it out of the handcuff. He hands the other cuff to Phil, who stares at him in astonishment.

LARRY

Do you think we should go?

PHIL

Yes, I think we should go.

Larry starts the car. He throws it into reverse and the bumper slowly disengages from the metal signpost. Suddenly the car tears loose and flies backwards, smashing into the cop's motorcycle, leaving him holding the radio and its trailing wire. Larry slams on the brakes.

LARRY

Oh shit.

PHIL

Nicely done.

He rolls down his window and addresses the cop, who is staring with horror at his ruined motorcycle.

PHIL (CONT'D)

We'll be moving on, now that your sign no longer appears to be impeding our forward progress.

Bernice accelerates away but slowly starts to turn in a wide ark and circles the smashed bike. The cop chases them.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Phil screams at Larry.

PHIL

What the hell are you doing?

66.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

The steering lock is on.

PHIL

Well... turn it off!

LARRY

I can't - he's got the keys.

Phil turns to watch the chasing policeman.

PHIL

So, we've escaped but we can only
drive in a circle?

LARRY

Yes.

EXT. DESERT. DAY

They do another circuit. The exhausted cop stops,
breathing heavily, and then watches in astonishment as the
hearse turns and heads back towards him.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Phil and Larry stare at the policeman out of the window as
the car sweeps past. The cop gets his gun out of his
holster, and Phil reaches into the glove box and pulls out
the screwdriver. He leans across Larry, jams it into the
wheel column, and snaps the steering lock in two. The
hearse's direction immediately changes.

PHIL

Can we please go?

LARRY

Okay.

EXT. DESERT. DAY

The hearse roars away and the cop watches it go.

INT. BARBARA'S CAR. DAY

Barbara drives and Susie sits in the passenger seat. It
doesn't look as if they've spoken for hours.

SUSIE

If you hate Phil so much, why are
you chasing him across
California?

BARBARA

He's got Gram and I need him.

67.

CON TINUE D:

SUSIE

Well, that's really touching.
But... you've got to come to
terms with the fact that he's
dead.

Barbara shoots her a withering look.

BARBARA

I know he's dead, Honey. But he
hasn't been officially
identified, and there's no
certificate of death.

SUSIE

I don't understand.

BARBARA

Let's just say I'm overly
sentimental, okay?

SUSIE

This is all about money, isn't
it?

BARBARA

Isn't everything?

SUSIE

Why do you think you deserve
anything?

BARBARA

I was a great support to Gram
before Kaufman came along and
spoiled the party.

SUSIE

Phil's not responsible for your
problems with Gram.

BARBARA

What do you know?

SUSIE

I know that he can be a pain in
the ass, but when it came to
Gram, Phil only ever did the
right thing.

BARBARA

In his whole life, Phil Kaufman
didn't do anything because it was
the right thing to do. You can

bet the ranch that wherever he is, he's having some fun.

68.

CON TINUE D: (2)

SUSIE

Maybe that's what I like about him.

BARBARA

Sure it is, honey. That's why your bags were packed.

SUSIE

Have you any idea what it's like to really love someone?

Barbara laughs.

BARBARA

You might exclusively love Phil Kaufman - but unfortunately, so does he. You're just handy to have around.

SUSIE

I don't have to listen to this.

Susie leans over, grabs the safety brake and pulls it up hard. The car swerves and skids to a stop.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Okay, you vindictive bitch. I'm going with you to Joshua Tree because my life seems to have been turned upside down and I want to know why. But you don't know me and I won't let you judge me. Do it again and I'll smash that pretty little face of yours off the fucking road. Got it?

Barbara dismisses her anger with a tight little smile.

BARBARA

The truth can hurt, can't it?

INT. HEARSE. DAY - LATER

Phil finishes his beer, rubs his eyes and slumps back in his seat. He looks terrible, but not as bad as Larry who

is pasty and sweating.

LARRY

Well, that's it! They're going to lock me up and throw away the key.

PHIL

Why would they do that?

69.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

You saw what happened. I drove over that cop's bike. That's destruction of police property, or something.

PHIL

You worry too much.

LARRY

Not 'til I met you...

Phil finishes his beer and peers at the empty bottle. Then something catches his eye and he leans forward in his seat.

PHIL

Jesus - what the hell is that?

A large plaster dinosaur appears ahead.

LARRY

It's a dinosaur.

PHIL

Very perceptive. What's it doing?

As they get nearer, they can see that the huge model is carrying a sign.

LARRY

(reads)

'The Polyonax Place'.

(aside: to Phil)

A Polyonax is probably some kind of dinosaur.

Phil shoots him a look.

LARRY (CONT'D)

(reads)

'Dinoburgers, Reptile Steaks and Primeval Soup. Titanosaurion portions, prehistoric pricing. Liquor served'.

PHIL

Pull over - let's... eat.

LARRY

Let's not. The cops'll be after us and we should just get on to Palm Springs and do the thing, and then I can get home and you can... do whatever it is you do. Let's do that.

70.

CONTINUE D: (2)

PHIL

We need to stop. I'm starting to get hungry. I'm not nice hungry.

LARRY

You surprise me. I vote we keep going.

PHIL

What gave you the impression this was a democracy?

EXT. POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

The hearse pulls up around the back of the building, and parks in a place that is hidden from the road. Phil gets out and stretches. He is joined by Larry, and they both peer round the side of the building to check that they have not been observed. Then they walk towards the entrance.

EXT. DESERT ROAD. DAY

A Police Car with siren blaring and lights flashing speeds past on the road.

INT. KITCHEN - THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

We are with a short-order cook. He expertly flips a burger from a hotplate and adds it to a plate overflowing with bacon, sausage and fries. He slips this plate onto a tray on which there is a second plate containing two pieces of

plain bread and some lettuce. He dings a bell and a waiter enters and picks up the tray. We move with the tray as he carries it from the kitchen and into the dining area. He stops at the bar to load three foaming glasses of beer and a glass of water onto the tray, and delivers it to Phil and Larry, who are sitting in a window booth. Larry has his head resting on the table. He lifts it as soon as the food arrives.

PHIL

You frighten him.

LARRY

I do not.

PHIL

Everyone else, he announces the food when he brings it. Diplodocus this and Allosaurus that. Us he just slaps it down and runs for cover.

They both look at Larry's bread and lettuce.

71.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL (CONT'D)

It's probably the rabbit food.

LARRY

Look, I'm a vegetarian. I have a problem with dead flesh. Okay?

PHIL

I understand. Really I do. That stuff'll mess you right up every time.

Phil picks up the first beer and downs it in one go.

INT. STANLEY'S CAR. DAY.

Stanley is driving along the road. He puts his hand in his pocket, takes out his hip flask, pops the lid and goes to take a drink. It's empty. Then he notices the dinosaur.

INT. THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

Phil pushes his full plate away and finishes off the third beer. He gets up. Larry notices he hasn't eaten anything.

LARRY

I thought you were hungry.

Phil ignores him.

PHIL

Gotta make a call.

He glances around and then walks over to the bar.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Hey man, where's the phone?

BARMAN

Out back.

He jerks his head by way of direction. Phil wanders off just as the door opens and Stanley walks in.

STANLEY

Good afternoon.

BARMAN

Yup.

STANLEY

Do you have a telephone I might use?

BARMAN

In a minute, I do.

72.

CON TINUE D:

STANLEY

In a minute?

BARMAN

Yeah. Phone's for customers.

Stanley looks confused.

Then he understands.

STANLEY

I'd better order, then.

BARMAN

Right.

Stanley picks up a menu.

INT. 'OUT BACK' - THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

Phil dials a number on the phone.

INT. PHIL'S SITTING ROOM. DAY

The sitting room is empty. The phone rings. And rings.

INT. 'OUT BACK' - THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

When it becomes clear that no one is going to answer, Phil replaces the receiver and walks back into the diner. He pushes past Stanley as he goes to the bar.

INT. THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

Phil joins Larry and puts a bag of beers on the table.

LARRY

Speak to her?

PHIL

Who?

LARRY

Your girlfriend? Your wife?

PHIL

None of your damn business.

LARRY

So you didn't?

A pause.

PHIL

No.

73.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

Maybe she's out. Shopping, or something.

Phil pours the rest of his beer down his throat, before signaling the barman to serve him another.

PHIL

Yeah, that'll be it. Shopping.

He raises an eyebrow at Larry. Behind him, we see Stanley walk in and take a seat at the bar.

STANLEY

(to barman)

Beer.

The barman gives Stanley his beer.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Would you put a scotch in there,
please?

BARMAN

Sure.

He pours the spirit in.

BARMAN (CONT'D)

Bad day?

Stanley rubs the top of his head.

STANLEY

Yeaaaaah. Yeah, a real bad day.

BARMAN

What happened?

STANLEY

My boy died out here the other
day, and some punks have stolen
his body.

Stanley reaches for his pocket. The barman puts his
hand up to refuse the money.

BARMAN

That's worth a shot on the house.

The barman tips a little more scotch into the beer.

STANLEY

Thanks.

74.

CON TINUE D: (2)

Stanley takes a drink. Phil slips some money on the bar
and stands up.

PHIL

(to Larry)

We gotta go.

Larry is listening to the conversation.

LARRY

Haven't finished my drink.

BARMAN

(to Stanley)

Why would someone steal a body?

Phil picks up the glass of water and drinks it down.

PHIL

All gone. C'mon.

He turns and walks to the door.

STANLEY

Well, maybe they were souvenir hunters or something. My boy's kinda famous...

BARMAN

Who is he?

Phil is back.

STANLEY

Gram Parsons.

The Barman looks surprised.

BARMAN

Gram Parsons?

Phil reaches across and grabs the back of Larry's jacket.

LARRY

Gram Parsons?

Both the Barman and Stanley look round, but Larry's stool is now empty, spinning. He and Phil are already at the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

Phil propels Larry outside.

75.

CON TINUE D:

LARRY

Gram Parsons? Is Gram Parsons dead?

PHIL

Better get going.

LARRY

He said someone took Gram
Parson's body. Two people...

PHIL

Yeah, he was a real blabbermouth.
In fact, I thought he was never
gonna stop talking. Anyway,
although that's real interesting,
we've gotta keep to the schedule.

LARRY

Schedule? What schedule? There
is no schedule...

PHIL

Well, I think we should just make
our delivery as soon as possible,
don't you? Get our package to
Palm Springs. Remember?

Larry looks horrified.

LARRY

Package? We've stolen that man's
son.

PHIL

Stolen... his son? That's
outrageous! I'm appalled that
you could even think we'd do such
a thing.

They move round the back of the Polyonax Place, where
Bernice is hidden behind an outhouse.

LARRY

I don't know what you take me
for. I want to see in that box.

Larry walks round to the back of the car.

PHIL

We've really got to go.

Larry swings open the back window and pulls at the casket.

LARRY

It's heavy.

CON TINUE D: (2)

Phil glances at his watch.

PHIL

Okay, then. Well, if you're satisfied, let's go.

LARRY

I said it's heavy.

PHIL

Heavy, yes. Well, it is made of wood. Wood is heavy. Actually.

LARRY

Yeah, I remember. Finest poplar.
Larry slides the top of the casket off and looks inside.
He recoils.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Jesusjesusjesus...

He drops the lid and looks at Phil, horrified. Phil walks over and looks inside.

PHIL

Gosh, they must have given us a full one. We'll have to sort that all out when we get to Palm Springs and...

Larry is staring at him with horror.

LARRY

Oh my God. You stole Gram Parsons.

Phil gives up.

PHIL

Well, technically, we stole Gram Parsons.

LARRY

I stole a coffin, I didn't know there was a body in it.

PHIL

I'd save that line for court.

As the enormity of the news starts to sink in, Larry hops up and down in panic. Phil watches him.

PHIL (CONT'D)

What are you doing now?

77.

CON TINUE D: (3)

Larry is losing control.

LARRY

I don't know! What am I doing?
I mean... What-am-I-doing? Why
am I here? Why am I with you?
WHAT IS GOING ON?

PHIL

Calm down.

LARRY

I thought it was bad enough when
I ran over the cop's bike, but
now I'm a fucking body snatcher.

PHIL

Well, when you've quite finished,
we should go.

Larry goggles at him. His voice takes on a level of
hysteria.

LARRY

Go? You go. I tell you what I'm
going to do. I'm going inside
and I'm going to give that man
his son back. I'm going to do
the right thing, I'm going to
follow my conscience, I'm going
to...

Larry walks towards the bar, then quick walks, then runs.
Phil tackles him around the legs and they both fall.
Larry's head hits the ground hard and he lies there
unconscious.

PHIL

Shit!

Phil picks him up, slings him into the passenger seat, and
slides behind the wheel. The hearse moves off.

INT. THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

Stanley takes another drink and glances out of the window, just as the bright yellow hearse drives past. He stands up and walks to the window.

STANLEY

Son of a bitch!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE POLYONAX PLACE. DAY

The hearse picks up speed and powers down the highway out into the desert.

78.

INT. BARBARA'S CAR. DAY

Susie seethes and Barbara smokes.

SUSIE

You're not a very nice person,
are you?

BARBARA

Nice? No, I suppose not. Does
it matter?

Susie looks surprised.

SUSIE

It might get you further.

BARBARA

I do okay. Listen, I was an
orphan at fourteen and a waitress
at fifteen. I do what I do
because it puts food on my table,
and because if I don't look after
myself, no-one else will.

SUSIE

So what do you want from us?

BARBARA

I don't want anything from you.
It would be a bonus to see
Kaufman crash and burn, but I
don't need to be there when it
happens.

SUSIE

Why do you hate Phil so much?

Barbara lights another cigarette.

BARBARA

Gram was the first good guy I ever hooked up with. He wasn't perfect, but it worked between us. We just seemed to fit together. But Gram was already wild, and I made him wilder. Kaufman watched over him like a hawk, and when he felt things were getting out of control, he turned Gram against me. I lost the only decent thing in my life.

SUSIE

Surely Phil was just looking after Gram?

79.

CON TINUE D:

BARBARA

Gram was an adult. He didn't need a nursemaid.

SUSIE

Except that now he's dead.

BARBARA

Yeah. Without my help and while Kaufman was babysitting.

Silence for a moment.

SUSIE

I don't like you much, Barbara.

BARBARA

That's fine. I just want what's mine and then I'm gone. Gone real fast.

EXT. HIGHWAY. EVENING

The hearse powers through along the desert highway. They pass a sign which reads 'If You're Looking for the Joshua Tree National Monument, You're Getting Close. If You're not, You're Getting Lost...'

INT. HEARSE. NIGHT

Phil is getting very tired, his vision is blurring and he shakes his head to wake himself up. He glances across and sees that Larry is awake and staring at him.

PHIL

Welcome back, hippie.

LARRY

So why d'ya do it?

PHIL

Do what?

LARRY

Have a guess.

There is a moment's silence.

PHIL

Well, I gave my word. This is what Gram wanted.

LARRY

What, cruise around the desert until he starts to smell? Were you - both bombed?

80.

CON TINUE D:

Phil looks offended.

PHIL

Do you have friends?

LARRY

Of course I have friends.

PHIL

Well, what would you do for them?

LARRY

Anything, within reason.

Phil stares out of the window.

PHIL

That's what I hate about people like you. Everything's 'within reason'. There are always boundaries, provisos. You only

operate with a safety net.

Larry is confused.

LARRY

Tell me something - if it was the other way round, would Gram be sitting here, driving your bones out into the desert?

Phil says nothing.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Well?

PHIL

You've missed the point. See, it doesn't matter what he would do, or what you and your tie-dyed friends think is the correct way to behave. To me, it only matters what I do. Where you have boundaries and limits and thresholds - I only have right and wrong. If I make a promise, I keep it - that's right. If I break that promise - that's wrong.

Phil rubs his eyes, tired. Suddenly, Larry smashes Phil across the head with a bottle of Jack Daniels. Phil slumps back in the seat and Larry, dropping the bloodied weapon, reaches across to grab the wheel and slow the hearse.

81.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT

Bernice fishtails across the road as Larry struggles to retain control. It eventually slides to a halt. Larry gets out and runs round to the drivers' door.

INT. HEARSE. NIGHT

Larry stares down at Phil.

LARRY

Ohmygod.

He slides Phil across the seat and slips behind the wheel. He shouts at the unconscious Phil.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You made me do it, you bastard!
I've never hit anyone in my life,
but you pushed and you pushed
and... you gave me no choice.

Larry prods Phil to ensure he's unresponsive.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT

The hearse executes a wide U-turn before gently rejoining the highway and heading back towards town. A moment after completing the turn, the one remaining headlight stutters and goes out. Bernice pulls off the road.

INT. HEARSE. NIGHT

LARRY

Shit.

He flicks the headlight switch, but to no avail. Then, in the distance, he sees a car approaching. Stanley can be glimpsed in the driving seat as the car flashes past.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Shit. Shitshitshit.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT

Bernice rejoins the road and drives slowly off into the darkness after Stanley.

INT. HEARSE. NIGHT

Phil is motionless, and Larry peers out into the darkness as the car limps on, lit only from the light of the moon. Larry sees a glow in the distance ahead, and drives towards a neon sign; 'Welcome to the Joshua Tree Inn'.

82.

CON TINUE D:

He stops by the entrance to the inn and stares at Stanley's car parked in the bay outside room 8. He glances across at Phil, turns the car around and drives in.

EXT. JOSHUA TREE INN. NIGHT

Bernice glides to a stop in the bay next to Stanley's car. Larry gets out and looks around. After a moment, he walks over to the door of room eight and knocks.

EXT. OUTSIDE ROOM 8 - JOSHUA TREE INN. NIGHT

A tired-looking Stanley opens the door.

STANLEY

Yeah?

LARRY

Hi.

STANLEY

Hello.

They stare at each other.

LARRY

Um. I'm one of the guys that
took your son.

After a moment, Stanley steps back and opens the door.

STANLEY

You'd better come in.

EXT. HIGHWAY/CAR PARK - JOSHUA TREE INN. NIGHT

A car drives past the inn and then brakes sharply and skids across the road. It reverses and pulls in, parking next to the hearse. Barbara and Susie get out and look around. Then Susie walks over to the hearse's passenger window and raps on the glass, and Barbara marches to the back of the hearse and attempts to open it. She can't.

BARBARA

Where's the catch on this piece
of shit?

Susie notices Phil, slumped in the seat.

SUSIE

Phil? Phil!

83.

INT. HEARSE - JOSHUA TREE INN. NIGHT

Phil comes to. He looks out of the window at Susie, then at the 'Joshua Tree' sign, then at the door to room eight, then round to the back of the shaking hearse as Barbara tries to get the door open. His jaw drops open and he rubs his eyes again, before getting out of the car.

EXT. OUTSIDE ROOM 8 - JOSHUA TREE INN. NIGHT

Phil stands in front of Susie.

SUSIE

What happened to your head?

He touches his head and looks at the blood on his fingers.
His handcuff hangs from his wrist and Susie stares at it.

PHIL

A hippie hit it. I thought you'd
gone.

SUSIE

Hold that thought.

PHIL

What the hell does that mean?

SUSIE

I need to know what it is you're
doing.

Barbara shouts from the back of the car.

BARBARA

I told you what he's doing! He's
going to set fire to my Gram in
some freaky ceremony with witches
and black magic and... dolls.

PHIL

Dolls?

SUSIE

Dolls to stick pins in.

PHIL

What the hell are you talking
about?

BARBARA

(shouts)

I want my man back!

PHIL

Enough of this shit.

84.

CON TINUE D:

Phil walks over to the door of room 8.

PHIL (CONT'D)

They've gotta be in here. It's
fate.

He opens the door and walks in.

INT. JOSHUA TREE INN - ROOM 8. NIGHT

Larry and Stanley are sitting on the bed. Phil
shoots a vicious look at Larry.

PHIL

Whatever happened to peace, love
and understanding, hippie?

STANLEY

You're Kaufman?

PHIL

Yup.

Stanley folds his arms. Susie and Barbara follow
Phil into the room.

STANLEY

And you are?

SUSIE

I'm with him.

She indicates Phil.

BARBARA

Hello Stanley. Remember me? The
psychotic girlfriend?

STANLEY

Hello Barbara. Nothing wrong
with your memory.

He turns to Phil.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Did you sell tickets or
something? Now, you boys want to
tell me why you stole my son?

LARRY

Well, I didn't even know he was
in the box.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

I'm going to cremate him, here in the desert where he felt most at home. That's what he wanted.

BARBARA

The hell you are, Kaufman.

Stanley picks up the phone and starts to dial.

STANLEY

You know I can't let you do that?

PHIL

I know you have to.

Stanley smashes the receiver down onto the table. Everyone jumps.

STANLEY

I don't have to do anything, Mister Kaufman. This is MY loss! This was MY son! How dare you try to take my grief away from me.

PHIL

It's too late to claim him now.

STANLEY

What the hell does that mean?

They are almost nose-to-nose now.

PHIL

It means that you were never there when it mattered to Gram. It means that you stopped being a father the moment he stopped doing your bidding. It means that you learned to care too late. That's what it means.

STANLEY

I don't have to justify my relationship with Gram to you.

PHIL

Not to me, no.

Stanley sits down.

STANLEY

It's true that when Gram left college, we drifted apart.

(MOR E)

86.

CON TINUE D: (2)

STANLEY (CONT'D)

He was a disappointment to me, because he wouldn't use his brain. He had so much to offer, but he let it trickle away.

PHIL

No - he gave it his all, but in a way you could never understand. And all he ever wanted from you was approval. He wanted you to be proud of what he had achieved.

STANLEY

I kept everything. Every record, every article, every photo.

PHIL

It's no good telling me. You should have told him.

STANLEY

I loved him.

PHIL

Too late...

Stanley looks up at Phil.

STANLEY

I understand that you were his right-hand man, as well as his friend?

PHIL

I was both, yes.

STANLEY

And that you weren't there when he died? When he needed you most?

A beat, then:

PHIL

Yes. That's right.

STANLEY

So the guilt isn't all mine,
then?

PHIL

I guess not.

Susie walks over and takes Phil's hand. Stanley says
nothing for a moment, but his eyes fill with tears.

87.

CON TINUE D: (3)

STANLEY

You boys took away my son. I
lost him once in life, and now
you're trying to take him from me
again.

He starts to cry. Larry shoots an imploring look at Phil.
Barbara glances around the room.

BARBARA

Can we just cut through this?

She gestures at Phil and Larry.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

You two stole the body. Theft.
Indicates Susie.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Sweetie, I'm sorry, but you seem
to be in the whole thing up to
your neck. Accessory.

Waves a hand at Stanley.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

And you are an old fool who
should have called the police,
but hasn't. Stupidity.

She walks over to the phone.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Now, let's just call the cops and
get it done. The sooner we get

us a death certificate and bury him, the sooner his soul will be properly laid to rest.

Phil walks over to Barbara, picks her up and carries her into the bathroom.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Hey! What the hell are you doing?

He emerges and slips the back of a chair under the handle, effectively locking the door.

STANLEY

Son, you had your chance to look after Gram, and now he's dead.

There is a 'bang' from the bathroom, and the door shakes.

88.

CONTINUE D: (4)

BARBARA

(O.S)

Bastard!

PHIL

I only failed because I couldn't save him from himself. You failed him all his life. You never believed. I never doubted.

Stanley pauses.

STANLEY

Okay. You tell me why I should let you take my boy.

PHIL

I was his road manager and his friend. We loved it out here in the desert, and we made a pact that whoever died first, the other would come down here and set them free. Gram gave his word and I gave mine.

Stanley thinks about this.

STANLEY

You're a couple of druggies. Why should I believe you?

Phil doesn't like the inference.

PHIL

I don't take drugs.
Another 'bang' from the bathroom. Stanley turns to Larry.

STANLEY

What about you? Are you a
druggie?

There is a long pause. Then:

LARRY

Yes. Yes I am.

Phil closes his eyes. Stanley picks up the receiver and starts to dial. Then Phil jumps up off the bed and walks out of the room. After a moment, Larry and Susie follow.

EXT. OUTSIDE ROOM 8 - JOSHUA TREE INN. NIGHT

Phil is waiting by the car.

89.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

(to Larry)
Nice work. Let's go.

Larry gives Phil the screwdriver.

LARRY

I can't do this. This isn't
right.

Larry walks away leaving Phil with Susie. He looks
at her.

SUSIE

Just do whatever feels right to
you.

PHIL

God damn!

After a moment, Phil walks back into room eight.

INT. JOSHUA TREE INN - ROOM 8. NIGHT

Stanley is sitting on the bed, the receiver in his hand.

Phil sits facing him.

PHIL

Did you call them?

STANLEY

No.

PHIL

Are you going to call them?

STANLEY

Well, you haven't given me a reason not to.

The
There is another 'crash' from inside the bathroom.
door shakes.

PHIL

There isn't a reason. If someone tried to steal my son's body, I'd stop them. For sure.

Larry and Susie quietly enter the room.

STANLEY

So you are prepared to go to jail?

PHIL

I'm expecting to.

90.

CON TINUE D:

BARBARA

(O.S)

Don't you worry - it's gonna happen!

LARRY

Mister Parsons?

Phil and Stanley look up.

STANLEY

What is it, son?

LARRY

I've been a junkie for over four years. I started taking heroin on June 5th 1969 at a concert in

Indiana. I...

STANLEY

You don't need...

Larry holds his hand up to stop Stanley.

LARRY

I've taken heroin, speed, uppers, downers, blues, morphine, methadone, mushrooms, quaaludes, acid, valium, barbiturates, straight LSD, marijuana, marijuana laced with opium, nembutal, mescaline of course, and medical methaqualone, which made me shake uncontrollably for six weeks and vomit every hour.

STANLEY

(dryly)

That's very impressive, son.

LARRY

Not my point.

PHIL

Better make the point.

LARRY

I started working my way through that list on June 5th 1969, and since then there hasn't been a day when I didn't at least smoke one joint.

Phil shoots Larry a dangerous look.

91.

CON TINUE D: (2)

PHIL

Are we sure that this is helping?

Larry ignores him.

LARRY

And now I've stopped. I stopped because it seems that I had something more important to do.

They all look at him. He gestures at Phil.

LARRY (CONT'D)

He's doing this because he gave his word. I'm prepared to do this now because I think it's right. And because I believe that each body has a soul. And Gram's soul doesn't belong in a family plot surrounded by strangers. It belongs here, where he was happiest.

In the silence, Susie walks over and grips Phil's hand. Then Stanley gets up off the bed.

STANLEY

I'm going to go say goodbye to my son.

Everyone looks surprised. Phil gives Larry a look of appreciative approval. Barbara starts to kick furiously at the door from inside the bathroom. Stanley pauses for a moment, and then walks outside. Phil and Larry watch him go, and Susie walks over to kiss Phil.

PHIL

What's that for?

SUSIE

That's for failing to reinforce my expectations.

PHIL

Well... I'll have to do that more often.

The three of them move to the door, and Phil turns to Larry.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Did you really take all those drugs?

LARRY

Of course not.

92.

CON TINUE D: (3)

He grins at Phil.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I may have got a little carried away...

The door of the bathroom shakes and one of the hinges flies across the room.

PHIL

C'mon, time to go...

EXT. OUTSIDE ROOM 8. NIGHT

Phil, Larry and Susie leave room eight. They look around with surprise, but there is no sign of Stanley. Phil opens the back of the hearse and takes a quick peek inside the casket.

PHIL

Just checking.

LARRY

Yeah, he took the body and stuffed it in the trunk of his car before escaping into the night.

Larry is already behind the wheel. Phil opens the car door and looks at Susie.

PHIL

Are you coming?

She smiles at him.

SUSIE

I reckon I am.

She gets in. There is a final, almighty 'crash' from inside room eight. The three of them look at each other, and then Bernice is gone into the darkness. A moment later Barbara runs outside. She leaps into her car and screeches after them. In the distance a blue flashing police light suddenly materializes.

INT. BARBARA'S CAR. NIGHT

Barbara is on the road, driving fast. Suddenly a blue flashing police light fills her mirror.

BARBARA

Thank God!

She pulls over and the police cruiser pulls in behind her. The traffic cop walks up and looks through the window.

CON TINUE D:

TRAFFIC COP

Evenin' ma'am.

Barbara gives it everything.

BARBARA

Please help me, they've got my boyfriend's corpse and they're going to perform a ritual with his body.

The cop turns on his torch and peers at her carefully.

TRAFFIC COP

May I see your driving license please, ma'am?

BARBARA

My driving license?

TRAFFIC COP

Please.

BARBARA

I've just told you that they've stolen a body and you want to see my driving license?

He just stares at her. Barbara is losing it.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

You people are supposed to be on the lookout for a hearse. A hearse is a big long car. You can usually tell which ones are the hearses, because they have coffins in the back. The one we're looking for is painted yellow. Does this look like a yellow hearse to you, asshole?

Long pause. Barbara realizes that she might have gone too far. He starts to write a ticket.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Is that a ticket? Are you writing me a ticket?

TRAFFIC COP

Yes it is, ma'am. And yes I am.

INT. HEARSE. NIGHT

Phil indicates an area just off the road.

94.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

Cap Rock. This is perfect.
Really peaceful...

Larry pulls the hearse over near the rock. They all sit there for a moment. Phil and Larry look at each other.

EXT. DESERT. NIGHT

Phil opens the back of the hearse and slides the casket out of the car. He notices that Larry has made no move to help. Susie sits on a rock and watches.

PHIL

You wanna give me a hand here?
Larry walks over and grabs the other end of the casket. They walk it away from the car and lay it down. As they lower it, the coffin slips out of Phil's hands and bangs down in the sand.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Sorry, Gram.

They stand and stare at the casket. Susie walks over
with the guitar and takes Phil's hand.

LARRY

What now?

PHIL

Now we... do it.

He gets the gasoline can from the car and stands over the casket.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Take the top off.

LARRY

Why?

PHIL

Flesh burns easier than wood.

LARRY

I can't believe you just said that. I'm not taking the top off.

He walks off. Phil puts the can down and removes the top of the casket. He peers inside.

95.

CON TINUE D:

PHIL

(to Gram)

Hey, man. Looking a little peaky...

SUSIE

Some decorum would be nice.

PHIL

Right.

He pours some gasoline into the casket.

PHIL (CONT'D)

Do you think that's enough?

Against his better judgment, Larry walks over and peers inside.

LARRY

Well, I don't know. Maybe a little more.

Phil pours a little more fuel in. He looks over at Susie.

PHIL

Enough?

SUSIE

I'm not having a conversation with you about how much gasoline you need to burn a body.

She backs off.

LARRY

I think that'll do it.

Phil stops pouring and shakes the can.

PHIL

Only a little left.

He pours the rest of the can into the casket. Susie walks over to stand next to Phil. He looks down at Gram.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I wasn't there for you when it mattered, but I was there before, and I've been there ever since. Gram, good luck to you, wherever you are.

They all stare at the casket. Phil wipes a tear away and tucks a can of beer into the coffin.

96.

CON TINUE D: (2)

PHIL (CONT'D)

That's my last one, man.

He rests Gram's guitar against the casket, takes big puffs on his cigar to get the flame up, then tosses it into the coffin. They wait. Nothing happens. Phil edges nearer and looks inside. Then the coffin explodes into flames. All three of them are thrown backwards by the blast.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT

The traffic cop is finishing the ticket when there is a ball of flame in the distance. Barbara just scowls.

TRAFFIC COP

Jesus! What the hell's that?

BARBARA

That'll be Gram Parsons, on fire.

TRAFFIC COP

Get in the car, ma'am. Now.

EXT. DESERT. NIGHT

Phil, Larry and Susie pick themselves up. They stare at the pyre. Phil is close to tears, and Susie puts her arm around him. For a moment, Phil thinks he sees the flames morph into the shape of an angel over the burning coffin. The image disappears when Larry speaks.

LARRY

Maybe too much fuel.

PHIL

Nah, I just didn't factor in the

booze inside of him. Gram
always...

He breaks off as a flashing police light appears in the
darkness, followed by a siren.

PHIL (CONT'D)

I think our work here is done.

Larry and Susie run to the car. Phil lingers a moment,
looking down at the flames. Then he follows the others.

INT. HEARSE. NIGHT

Phil jumps into the car.

PHIL

Go!

97.

CON TINUE D:

The huge car screeches off into the darkness, with no
lights.

INT. CAR. NIGHT

Stanley watches as the hearse flies past him. He glances
back at the fire, smiles sadly, and bows his head for a
moment. Then he turns on the ignition and drives away into
the darkness.

EXT. DESERT. NIGHT

The police car arrives at the scene. Barbara and the
cop get out. He peers into the flames.

TRAFFIC COP

How do you know it's your
boyfriend?

BARBARA

(sarcastically)

I recognize that birthmark on his
shoulder. Look, can I make an
observation?

TRAFFIC COP

Be my guest.

BARBARA

We're in the desert. It is dark.
If you want to catch someone in
the dark, it's best not to turn
on big flashing lights and make a
loud noise with a siren.

TRAFFIC COP

Do you want to know what I think,
ma'am?

BARBARA

No. But I'm really, really keen
to find out.

The traffic cop stares into the fire.

TRAFFIC COP

I think it was suicide. He just
wanted to get away from you.

INT. HEARSE. DAWN

Phil is fast asleep and snoring in Bernice's passenger
seat. He wakes slowly and shields his eyes from the bright
sunshine that pours through the windscreen. He pulls a
flask out of the glove compartment and takes a long gargle,
spitting the result out of the window.

98.

CON TINUE D:

Then he glances in the rear view mirror and sees the man
sitting in the casket bay.

GRAM

Sure is hot.

PHIL

Hello, Gram.

GRAM

Phil.

Gram pulls himself along the bay and onto the back seat.
He then climbs into the front, settles next to Phil and
holds his hand out for the flask.

PHIL

Do you think you should?

GRAM

Not gonna hurt me now, is it?

He takes a drink and looks around.

GRAM (CONT'D)

Nice wheels. Very stylish.

PHIL

They're very handy for transporting dead people around. Nothing better.

GRAM

I am dead, then?

PHIL

You're more than dead, Gram. You and the box are down to bones and brass.

GRAM

Oh, well. Here's mud in your eye.

He takes another drink and hands the flask back to Phil.

PHIL

What can I do for you, Gram?

GRAM

You assume I want something.

PHIL

Well, you're here. And seeing as I just burned you to a cinder, you shouldn't be.

(MOR E)

99.

CON TINUE D: (2)

PHI L (CONT'D)

So I'm guessing you've got some kind of reason.

GRAM

Well, okay. I just wanted to say thanks.

PHIL

What for?

GRAM

Doing the thing that we agreed, keeping your word, keeping them

all away...

PHIL

Well, that's okay, Gram. But I don't need thanking.

GRAM

You don't?

PHIL

I'm just taking care of business. That's what you paid me for - that's what I do.

Gram grins.

GRAM

You shooting for a raise?

PHIL

Actually, I just quit.

Gram holds his hand out for the bottle and takes a drink.

GRAM

Well, I s'pose I should be getting along.

PHIL

Goodbye, Gram. I'm glad it all worked out.

GRAM

What?

PHIL

I said I'm glad it all worked out.

And Gram is now Larry, peering down at Phil.

LARRY

All what worked out?

100.

CON TINUE D: (3)

Phil sits bolt upright and looks around the car. Larry and Susie stare back at him.

PHIL

Doesn't matter. Can we go now? I'm getting sick of sand.

EXT. HIGHWAY. DAY

We hear Gram's: 'Return Of The Grievous Angel' or some similar music.

We follow Bernice as she drives through the desert, and into Los Angeles. We follow her through the city streets, and we stay with her as she parks.
Fade down music.

INT. HEARSE. DAY

Phil turns off the ignition and sits back in his seat. He and Larry look at each other.

LARRY

Well, we did it. We saved a soul.

He leans across to hug Phil, who looks awkward and pats him on the shoulder instead.

PHIL

Singed my damn mustache, that's for sure.

Phil pulls a cigar out of his pocket and lights it. The handcuff dangles from his wrist and bangs against the dash. He stares at the match as it burns.

LARRY

Well, shall we?

Phil blows the match out.

PHIL

Yeah. Let's roll, hippie.

They all get out of the car.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET. DAY

Phil turns to Susie.

PHIL

Where d'you think you might be when I'm done?

101.

CON TINUE D:

SUSIE

I'll be waiting.

PHIL

Yeah, but where?

There is a small moment of tension, before Phil grins at her. They kiss.

SUSIE

Get out of here. Finish it.

Phil pats Bernice's battered wing as he walks away and over to where Larry is waiting. They cross the road and walk into a building through heavy wooden doors. Pull back to reveal a sign: 'Los Angeles Police Department'.

FADE UP ON SUPER: Phil Kaufman and Larry Osterberg appeared in West L.A. Municipal Court on November 5, 1973 - Gram Parsons's 27th birthday. Since a corpse has no intrinsic value, the two were charged with misdemeanor theft for stealing the coffin and given a token punishment: \$708 in damages for the coffin, and a \$300 fine for each of the bodysnatchers.