

SEQUENCE "A"

FADE IN:

A-1 THE MAN-MADE MOUNTAIN PEAKS OF MANHATTAN

on a sunny day in October, 1938. THE CAMERA PANS ACROSS the distant ridge of midtown buildings, then slowly FINDS A FOREGROUND: THE REAR OF A SMALL APARTMENT HOUSE on East 55th Street.

It is a 4-story affair of brick, housing some eight apartments, half of them giving on the garden or rather on the routine back yard with a sumac tree, a stone bench, and some mouldy flower boxes in which geraniums are dying.

THE MOVING CAMERA CONCENTRATES on the 4th-floor apartment, which boasts three windows. Two of them give on the living room, one on the bedroom of the brothers Birnam. THE CAMERA NARROWS its interest to THE BEDROOM WINDOW.

It is open, like a million other windows in New York that warm day. What gives it individuality is that from an awning cleat there dangles down the outside wall something which very few people hang from their windows: a bottle of whiskey.

Through the window we can see the brothers Birnam packing.

A-2 INT. BEDROOM

It is a smallish room with twin beds in opposite corners, both of them unmade. There are books on the night tables, two chests of drawers with some of the drawers open, and the closet is open too. One door leads to the living room, another to the cramped entrance hall.

(Maybe this is the time to describe the apartment. You've seen that living room a hundred times if you know literate, artistically inclined people. On one wall are bookshelves surrounding a marble fireplace, on which stands a tiny plaster bust of Shakespeare. In the shelves, art books and serious works of fiction: Thomas Mann, F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Joyce and the like. There are Picasso, Van Gogh and Utrillo reproductions on the other walls. A comfortable, elderly armchair stands near one of the windows. There is a studio couch, a low, tiled table -- oh, you know.

Off the living room is the familiar kitchenette for the light housekeeping of two bachelors -- i.e. coffee and coffee.

The bathroom, inconveniently enough, is off the entrance hall. A floor plan, authenticated by the author of the book, will be furnished on request).

To get back to the bedroom and the Birnam brothers: a small suitcase lies open on each bed. DON, the brother nearest the window, is bent over one, putting in socks, shirts, etc. He is thirty-three, an extremely attractive guy, but ten pounds underweight, and in his eye there is something rebellious, something sly.

WICK, two years younger, is much sturdier, kindly, sympathetic, solid gold. He wears glasses and is smoking a cigarette. He is on his way from the closet to his suitcase with some stuff. He throws a sweater across to Don.

WICK

Better take this along, Don. It's going to be cold on the farm.

DON

Okay.

WICK

How many shirts are you taking?

DON

Three.

WICK

I'm taking five.

DON

Five?

WICK

I told them at the office I might not be back till Tuesday. We'll get there this afternoon. That'll give us all Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday. We'll make it a long weekend.

DON

Sounds long, all right.

WICK

It'll do you good, Don, after what you've been through.

Don has crossed to the chest of drawers and fished out more shirts and socks.

WICK

Trees and grass and sweet cider and buttermilk and water from that well that's colder than any other water.

DON

Wick, please, why this emphasis on liquids? Noble, upstanding, nauseating liquids.

WICK

Sorry, Don.

DON, his back toward Wick, is bent over the suitcase, packing. His eyes travel to the window.

DON

Think it would be a good idea if we took my typewriter?

WICK

What for?

DON

(Indignantly)

To write. To write there. I'm going to get started on my novel.

WICK

You really feel up to writing?

DON

Why not?

WICK

I mean, after what you've been through.

DON

I haven't touched the stuff for ten days now.

WICK

I know you haven't. Where's the portable?

DON

In the living room closet, kind of
towards the back.

Bent forward tensely, he watches Wick go into the living room. Left alone, he acts with lightning rapidity. He takes the sweater, goes over to the window, pulls up the whiskey bottle, wraps the sweater around it so that only the top with the string around it shows. He tries to loosen the noose but he's nervous and loses a precious second.

From the living room has been coming the sound of Wick opening the closet door and ransacking. Now comes:

WICK'S VOICE

You sure it's in the closet? I can't
find it.

DON

(Working desperately)
Look by the big chair.

WICK'S VOICE

(Approaching fast)
Isn't it under your bed?

Don sees he can't loosen the string in time. In the last fraction of a second before Wick enters, he manages to lower the bottle back down the wall. With what nonchalance he can muster he bends down and looks under the bed just as Wick enters, a sheaf of white paper in his hand.

DON

Of course. Here it is.

He pulls out a Remington portable, 1930 model.

WICK

Here's some paper.

He puts it in Don's suitcase.

WICK

We'll fix a table on the south porch.
Nobody to disturb you -- I'll see to
it. Except maybe Saturday night we'll
go over to the Country Club.

DON

I'm not going near that Country Club.

WICK

Why not?

DON

Because they're a bunch of hypocrites and I don't like to be whispered about: Look who's here from New York. The Birnam brothers -- or rather the nurse and the invalid.

WICK

Stop that, Don. Nobody there knows about you.

DON

No? We get off the train and the alarm is sounded: The leper is back. Better hide your liquor.

Footsteps have been racing up the stairs outside the flat, and now there is a distinctive ring of the doorbell: short, short, long, short.

DON

Helen.

WICK

I'll take it.

He goes toward the door while the bell resumes short, short, long, short.

From the bedroom we see him open the door. It's HELEN, all right. She is a clean-cut, good looking girl of twenty-six. Her face is brave, gay piquant. She's wearing a three-quarter-length leopard coat. The Indian Summer day is a good ten degrees too warm for the coat, but that doesn't stop Helen from wearing her beloved. In her hand are two books wrapped, and another small package. She enters breathlessly.

HELEN

Hello, Wick. Where's Don?

Seeing him, she crosses to the bedroom.

HELEN

Glad I made it. I was afraid you might be gone. Presents.

She puts the packages in the suitcase.

HELEN

The new Thurber book, with comical jokes and pictures, and a quiet little double murder by Agatha Christie.

(Putting in the second package)

Cigarettes and chewing gum.

DON

Thanks, Helen.

HELEN

Now have a good time, darling. And remember -- lots of sleep, lots of milk --

DON

And sweet cider and some of that nice cold water from the well.

HELEN

Bend down.

It's a running gag between these two. Don bends so that she can kiss him on the cheek.

HELEN

I'd better be going. I've missed ten minutes of the concert already.

DON

What concert?

HELEN

Carnegie Hall. Barbirolli conducting. They gave me two tickets at the office.

DON

Who are you going with?

HELEN

Nobody.

Something flickers in Don's eye.

DON
What are they playing?

HELEN
Brahms' Second Symphony, something
by Beethoven, something by Handel,
and not one note of Grieg.

DON
Sounds wonderful.

HELEN
Goodbye, boys. See you Monday.

WICK
Tuesday.

DON
(Holding Helen by the
arm)
Just a minute. Wick --

Wick looks up.

DON
I just had a crazy idea.

WICK
As for instance.

DON
Who says we have to take the two-
forty-five train? We could go on the
six-thirty.

WICK
What are you talking about?

DON
I just thought we could take a later
train and Helen wouldn't have to go
alone to the concert. She's got two
tickets, hasn't she?

HELEN
No. I'm not upsetting any plans.
You're going on that two-forty-five.

DON

But Helen, it's so silly! A whale of a concert and an empty seat next you.

WICK

No, Don. Everything's all set. They'll be at the station to meet us. Dinner'll be waiting.

DON

So what? We put in a call that we're taking the late train, have supper at nine o'clock, be in bed by ten.

WICK

Nothing doing. We're going.

HELEN

Wick's right. And don't worry about that empty seat. I'll find myself a very handsome South American millionaire.

DON

There. Did you hear her? And now we'd have to break our necks to catch the train anyway.

HELEN

(Looking at her wrist watch)

Two-twenty.

DON

See?

WICK

(Giving up)

All right. Go ahead.

DON

Wait a minute. I'm not going.

WICK

Then what are we talking about?

DON

I want you to go. You and Helen.

WICK
Me and Helen?

DON
Yes. That was the idea. Who likes
Brahms, you or I?

WICK
Since when don't you like Brahms?

DON
I'll stay right here and finish
packing. Take a little nap maybe.

WICK
Nonsense. If anybody goes... Helen's
your girl.

There is an exchange of suspicious looks between Wick and Helen.

HELEN
There's something in that, Don.

WICK
What's more, I don't think you should
be left alone.

DON
I shouldn't?

WICK
No.

HELEN
Really, Don.

DON
Why? I can't be trusted. Is that it?

WICK
What I meant to say --

HELEN
Wick.

WICK

After what Don's been through --

DON

After what I've been through, I
couldn't go to a concert. I couldn't
face the crowd. I couldn't sit through
it with all those people around. I
want to be alone for a couple of
hours and kind of assemble myself.
Is that such an extraordinary thing
to want?

WICK

Don't act so outraged, would you
mind?

DON

All right. Anything else?

HELEN

Please, boys.

Wick, who has been smoking a cigarette throughout the scene,
throws it out the window. None of the three see, but we do,
that it doesn't fall out the window but ricochets against
the opened casement to the window sill, where it lies
smouldering.

WICK

Come on, Helen.

HELEN

You'll stay right here, won't you?

DON

Where would I go?

HELEN

Then you'll be here when we come
back?

DON

I told you I'm not leaving this
apartment.

WICK

You've told us a good many things,
Don.

Furious, Don takes a bunch of keys from his pocket.

DON

All right, if you don't believe me,
why don't you take my key and lock
me in like a dog.

HELEN

(To Wick)

We've got to trust Don. That's the
only way.

WICK

Sorry, Don.

(To Helen)

Here we go.

HELEN

So long, Don.

DON

So long.

HELEN

(Pulling him by the
lapel)

Bend down.

His face is now close to hers. She kisses him. Wick turns
away. His eyes fall on the cigarette still smouldering on
the sill. He goes toward the window.

Don, held by Helen, watches him tensely. Wick flips the
cigarette into the garden and is about to turn back into the
room when his eyes fall on the cleat and the string. He leans
from the window.

Don lets Helen go, staring at Wick, panic in his eyes. Helen,
sensing something amiss, looks from one brother to the other.

WICK

(Hauling up the bottle)

What's this, Don?

Helen and Wick watch Don. Don's face relaxes into an innocent
grin.

DON

That? That's whiskey, isn't it?

WICK

How did it get there?

DON

I don't know.

WICK

I suppose it dropped from some cloud.
Or someone was bouncing it against
this wall and it got stuck.

DON

I must have put it there.

WICK

Yes, you must.

DON

Only I don't remember when. Probably
during my last spell, or maybe the
one before.

His eyes meet Helen's. Hers are infinitely distressed.

DON

Don't look at me like that, Helen.
Doesn't mean a thing. I didn't know
it was there. And if I had, I wouldn't
have touched it.

Wick has twisted the string off the bottle.

WICK

Then you won't mind.

DON

Won't mind what?

Wick, the bottle in his hand, goes through the living room toward the kitchenette. Don looks after him, then follows him, a stubborn smile on his lips. Helen trails after them, acutely embarrassed.

A-3 KITCHENETTE

Wick has stepped to the sink. He opens the bottle, turns it upside down and lets the whiskey run out. Don and Helen come to the door from the living room and stand watching. Don has

something of the feeling of a man watching the execution of a very good friend, but he senses Helen's eyes upon him and preserves his nonchalant expression. The bottle emptied, Wick puts it in the sink.

WICK

Now you trot along with Helen.

DON

Why? On account of that?

(Pointing at the bottle)

You think I wanted you out of the apartment because of that? I resent that like the devil, and if there's one more word of discussion, I don't leave on your blasted weekend.

HELEN

Let's go.

Wick shrugs and goes to the hall for his hat.

HELEN

(To Don)

Be good, won't you, Don, darling?

She turns to go, but Don holds her back.

DON

Of course, Helen. Just stop watching me all the time, you two. Let me work it out my way. I'm trying, I'm trying.

HELEN

We're both trying, Don. You're trying not to drink, and I'm trying not to love you.

She kisses him on the mouth, a woman hopelessly in love. Then, so that he won't see her moist eyes, she turns and hurries into the entrance hall.

A-4 LITTLE ENTRANCE HALL - BIRNAM APARTMENT

Wick stands, hat in hand, holding the door open. Helen comes out quickly and taking a handkerchief from her bag, hurries past Wick into the hall. Wick turns toward Don, who has followed Helen to the entrance hall.

WICK

You call the farm, Don. Tell them
we're taking the six-thirty train.

DON

Sure.

WICK

So long.

He goes out, shutting the door behind him. Don steps quickly to the door, presses his ear against it to hear what the two are saying outside.

A-5 FOURTH FLOOR HALL AND STAIRCASE - APARTMENT HOUSE

It is narrow and simple. There is no elevator. A skylight, somewhat obscured by dirt and dust, lights the fourth floor back. Every so often down the stair there is a light bracket, always burning.

Helen stands at the top of the stairs, blowing her nose. Wick takes her arm quickly.

WICK

Come on, Helen.

HELEN

Oh, Wick, what are we going to do
about him ever.

WICK

He'll be all right.

HELEN

What if he goes out and buys another
bottle?

WICK

With what? He hasn't a nickel. There
isn't a store, there isn't a bar
that'd give him five cents' worth of
credit.

They descend a few steps.

HELEN

Are you sure he hasn't another bottle

hidden somewhere?

WICK

Not any more, he hasn't. I went through the apartment with a fine-toothed comb. The places he can figure out!

They go on down the stairs.

A-6 INT. THE APARTMENT

Don stands at the door, panic in his face. Has his brother discovered the other two bottles? He puts the chain on the door to insure his privacy, then dashes into the bathroom.

A-7 BATHROOM - BIRNAM APARTMENT

It's old-fashioned, with a bath tub on claw feet, a shower curtain above it -- all the plumbing on that scale. Don dashes in, takes a nail file, kneels beside the grille of a register in the side wall, pries it out with the file, looks inside, puts his hand in. The bottle is gone. He looks at the hole wide-eyed, pushes back the grille and runs out.

A-8

Don comes running in, goes to the couch, pulls it away from the wall, throws himself on his belly on the couch and reaches under the side of it which was towards the wall. His hand explores among the springs. There is no bottle there. He sits up. His face is covered with sweat. He takes out his handkerchief and wipes his face.

Just then, from the direction of the entrance door, there is the noise of a key being turned in the lock. Don freezes, his eyes turning towards the door, horrified.

A-9 ENTRANCE DOOR TO THE APARTMENT (FROM DON'S ANGLE)

It opens as far as the chain will allow, stops with a sharp bite of metal on wood. There is another try. Then the doorbell is rung.

He has not stirred. He rises slowly from the couch, takes a few steps towards the entrance door.

DON

Who is it?

No answer. Just the doorbell being rung again.

DON
WHO IS IT?

A-11 CORRIDOR OUTSIDE BIRNAM APARTMENT

At the door stands MRS. FOLEY, a middle-aged charwoman with a large utility bag over her arm. Her key is in the door, which is open as far as the chain will permit.

MRS. FOLEY
Mrs. Foley. Come to clean up.

A-12 DON

DON
(His nerves on edge)
Not today. Does it have to be today?

A-13 MRS. FOLEY

MRS. FOLEY
I ought to change the sheets, and today's my day to vacuum.

A-14 DON

DON
You can't come in. I'm not dressed.

A-15 MRS. FOLEY

MRS. FOLEY
Shall I wait, shall I come back, or what?

DON'S VOICE
You come on Monday.

MRS. FOLEY
All right, Mr. Birnam. Is your brother here?

DON'S VOICE
No, he isn't.

MRS. FOLEY

How about my money? Didn't he leave
my money?

A-16 DON

He stands galvanized. The word "money" has sent an electric
current through his mind.

DON
What money?

MRS. FOLEY
My five dollars. Didn't he leave it?

DON
(Stalking his prey)
Probably. Where would he leave it?

MRS. FOLEY'S VOICE
In the kitchen.

DON
Where in the kitchen?

MRS. FOLEY'S VOICE
In the sugar bowl.

Don breathes like one who's found the combination to the
safe with the crown jewels.

DON
Just a minute.

He goes to the kitchenette.

A-17 KITCHENETTE

On the counter under the cupboards stands the sugar bowl.
Don lifts the lid. There's nothing but sugar in the bowl,
but lining the lid is a folded five-dollar bill. Don takes
it out, goes into the entrance hall and even though Mrs.
Foley can't see him, instinctively holds the five dollars
behind his back.

DON
Sorry, Mrs. Foley. It's not there.
He must have forgotten.

A-18 MRS. FOLEY

MRS. FOLEY

Oh, Putt! I wanted to do some shopping.

DON'S VOICE

You'll get it Monday all right.

MRS. FOLEY

Goodbye, Mr. Birnam.

She closes the door, takes the key and starts down the stairs.

A-19 DON

He brings the five dollars from behind his back. He looks at it, folds it neatly, pockets it, puts on his hat, then, with an afterthought, goes into the living room. He pushes the couch back against the wall with his foot, then goes out.

A-20 FOURTH FLOOR HALL AND STAIRS

Don goes to the balustrade, looks down.

A-21 STEEP SHOT OF THE STAIRS

Don's head in the foreground. The coast is clear of Mrs. Foley. Like a convict escaping, Don slips down the stairs.

SLOW

DISSOLVE TO:

A-22 BROPHY'S LIQUOR STORE - (TRANSP.) - CLOSE SHOT OF LIQUOR BOTTLES

A rackful of them, filling the screen. THE CAMERA IS BEHIND the rack of liquor in a store on Third Avenue. THE CAMERA MOVES slowly toward them so that only about eight bottles fill the screen and we can see, between them, the shop, its window on Third Avenue, its entrance door. No one is visible in the shop.

Through the glass door we see Don Birnam hurrying up. He gives a quick glance in each direction, to see that he's not observed. He peers into the shop to make sure there are no other customers, then quickly steps inside and stands breathing heavily.

A salesman rises in the foreground, his back to the CAMERA.

Don points to two bottles in the foreground.

DON
(With all the
nonchalance he can
scrape together)
Two bottles of rye.

SALESMAN
I'm sorry, Mr. Birnam.

DON
What are you sorry about?

SALESMAN
Your brother was in here. He said
he's not going to pay for you any
more. That was the last time.

DON
He won't, huh?

He takes the five dollars from his pocket and unfurls it,
like a card trickster.

DON
Two bottles of rye.

SALESMAN
What brand?

DON
You know what brand, Mr. Brophy. The
cheapest.

SALESMAN
All right.

DON
None of that twelve-year-old, aged-
in-the-wood chichi. Not for me. Liquor
is all one, anyway.

The salesman has taken two bottles from the rack in the
foreground and put them on the counter. Don gives him the
money and picks up the bottles like a miser grabbing gold.

SALESMAN
Don't you want a bag?

DON

Yes, I want a bag.

The salesman hands him a bag and steps out of the shop towards the cash register. We hear the ping of its bell, the opening of its drawer. Meanwhile, Don thrusts the bottles in the bag. It is a little short and the necks of the bottles protrude. The salesman hands him his change. Don pockets it.

SALESMAN

You know, your brother asked me not to sell you anything even if you had money, but I can't stop nobody, can I, not unless you're a minor.

DON

I'm not a minor, Mr. Brophy, and just to quiet your conscience, I'm buying this as a refill for my cigarette lighter.

Another customer enters the shop. Don takes the package and walks past the newcomer towards the door, hiding it from him gracefully, like a football in a sneak play.

A-23 THIRD AVENUE, OUTSIDE BROPHY'S LIQUOR SHOP

Don comes out with the bottles in the paper bag. He wants to start down the street but about twenty-five feet away stand two middle-aged Hokinson ladies, one of them kerbing her dog on a leash. They are chatting.

Don stops. He'll have to pass them if he goes down the street and he doesn't want to, not with these bottles peeking out of that bag. He turns back and approaches the grocery store next door to Brophy's. In front of it is a fruit stand. Screening his gesture from the ladies with his back, he picks up three apples and puts them in the top of the bag, to camouflage the bottles. He puts down a coin, then walks down the street toward the ladies, flaunting a paper bag which is obviously full of apples.

The lady with the dog sees him. Don removes his hat in a courtly bow, very much at ease with the apples.

DON

Good afternoon, Mrs. Deveridge.

MRS. DEVERIDGE
Hello, Mr. Birnam.

Don passes the ladies.

MRS. DEVERIDGE
(Confidentially, to
her companion)
That's that nice young man that
drinks.

The other lady tsk-tsks. They both look after Don.

Don is about ten feet beyond them. Perhaps he has overheard the remark. In any case, he is looking back. His look meets theirs. Embarrassed, they turn. Mrs. Deveridge jerks on the leash.

MRS. DEVERIDGE
Come on, Sophie. Let's go.

They walk down the street in the opposite direction from Don.

A-24 DON

He looks after them. He is just in front of NAT'S BAR. He steps hurriedly into the bar.

A-25 INT. NAT'S BAR

A typical dingy Third Avenue bar. The sun slants dustily into the walnut-brown room. There is a long bar with a mirror behind it, some marble-topped tables and bentwood chairs. The woodwork, the furniture, the plaster of the place have absorbed and give forth a sour breath of hard liquor, a stale smell of flat beer.

As Don enters with the two bottles and the apples, there are three people in the bar. Nat, the bartender, a broad-shouldered, no-nonsense type of guy, squeezing lemons in preparation for the evening trade; and, sitting at a table in the corner, a girl named GLORIA, with an out-of-towner who hasn't bothered to take off his hat. He's about fifty and the manager of a hardware store in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Gloria is a shopworn twenty-three. She's brunette, wears net stockings and a small patent leather hat, and is a little below the standards of the St. Moritz lobby trade.

Don crosses to the bar.

DON
And how is my very good friend Nat
today?

NAT
(On guard)
Yes, Mr. Birnam.

Don sits on a bar stool, putting down the paper bag.

DON
This being an especially fine
afternoon, I have decided to ask for
your hand in marriage.

NAT
(Wiping his hands)
Look, Mr. Birnam --

DON
If that is your attitude, Nat, I
shall have to drown my sorrows in a
jigger of rye. Just one, that's all.

NAT
Can't be done, Mr. Birnam.

DON
Can't? Let me guess why. My brother
was here, undermining my financial
structure.

NAT
I didn't tell him nothing about the
wrist watch you left here, or your
cuff links.

DON
Thank you, Nat. Today, you'll be
glad to know, we can barter on a
cash basis.

He takes the bills and change from his pocket, puts it on
the bar.

NAT
(Reaching for the

bottle and the jigger)
One straight rye.

DON
That was the idea.

Nat pours the drink, then returns to squeezing lemons. Don picks up the glass, is suddenly acutely aware of the people at the table, of Nat's eyes. The glass freezes halfway to his mouth. He puts it down and starts playing the nonchalant, casual drinker -- the man who can take it or leave it. He fingers the glass, turning it round and round. He takes a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and shakes one out, lights it. As he puts the match in the ashtray, his eyes fall on that jigger of whiskey. It's hard to resist it any longer. He takes a handkerchief from his pocket, wipes his forehead, then his parched mouth. The time has come now. He puts the handkerchief back in his pocket, lifts the glass and drains it in one gulp. Actually, Don doesn't like the taste of liquor, actively hates it indeed, as a one-legged man might hate the sight of his crutches but need them in order to walk.

Now that he has the drink in him, a kind of relieved grin comes back to Don's face. He holds the empty jigger in his hand. Nat has come up with the bar towel to wipe off the wet ring left by the glass.

DON
Don't wipe it away, Nat. Let me have my little vicious circle. The circle is the perfect geometric figure. No end, no beginning... What time is it?

NAT
Quarter of four.

DON
Good. That gives us the whole afternoon together.

(He holds out his
glass for another
drink)

Only remind me when it's a quarter of six. Very important. We're going to the country for a weekend, my brother and I.

From the table in the background comes Gloria, headed for the powder room. Passing Don, she runs her finger through the neckline of his hair.

GLORIA

Hello, Mr. Birnam. Glad to have you back with the organization.

DON

Hello, Gloria.

She goes on. Don turns back to Nat.

DON

Not just a Saturday-Sunday weekend. A very long weekend. I wish I could take you along, Nat. You --

(With a gesture towards
the liquor shelves)

and all that goes with you.

Without a change of expression, Nat pours the second drink.

DON

Not that I'm cutting myself off from civilization altogether.

He points at the bag with the apples showing. Nat looks, but doesn't get it. Like a magician, Don takes two apples out, revealing the necks of the bottles.

DON

(Gulping down the
whiskey)

Now of course there arises the problem of transportation into the country. How to smuggle these two time bombs past the royal guard. I shall tell you how, Nat, because I'm so fond of you. Only give me another drink.

Nat pours one.

DON

I'm going to roll one bottle in a copy of the Saturday Evening Post, so my brother can discover it like that.

(He snaps his fingers)

And I want him to discover it, because that'll set his mind at rest. The other bottle --

(Confidentially to
Nat)

Come here.

Nat leans over the bar towards --

DON

That one I'm tucking into my dear brother's suitcase. He'll transport it himself, without knowing it, of course. While he's greeting the caretaker, I'll sneak it out and hide it in a hollow of the old apple tree.

NAT

Aw, Mr. Birnam, why don't you lay off the stuff for a while.

DON

I may never touch it while I'm there. Not a drop. What you don't understand, all of you, is that I've got to know it's around. That I can have it if I need it. I can't be cut off completely. That's the devil. That's what drives you crazy.

NAT

Yeah. I know a lot of guys like that. They take a bottle and put it on the shelf. All they want is just to look at it. They won't even carry a corkscrew along, just to be sure. Only all of a sudden they grab the bottle and bite off the neck.

DON

Nat, one more reproving word and I shall consult our lawyer about a divorce.

He points to the empty glass for Nat to fill it. Nat pours another jigger.

DON

Quarter of six. Don't forget. My

brother must find me at home, ready
and packed.

Gloria is back from the powder room. On her way to her
gentleman friend at the table, she runs her finger through
the neckline of Don's hair. She is almost past him when he
catches her hand and pulls her towards him.

DON
Shall we dance?

GLORIA
You're awfully pretty, Mr. Birnam.

DON
You say that to all the boys.

GLORIA
Why, natch. Only with you it's on
the level.

DON
Is it? Whatever became of your
manicurist job?

GLORIA
I've still got it. Only I find I
can't work more than four hours a
day, three days a week. It's too
tough on your eyes, all those little
hangnails.

DON
Sit down.

GLORIA
No thanks. Thanks a lot, but no
thanks. There's somebody waiting.

Don looks off toward the table.

DON
Him? I bet he wears arch supporters.

GLORIA
He's just an old friend of the folks.
Lovely gentleman. Buys me dimpled
Scotch.

DON

He should buy you Indian rubies, and
a villa in Calcutta overlooking the
Ganges.

GLORIA

Don't be ridic.

DON

Gloria, please, why imperil our
friendship with these loathsome
abbreviations.

GLORIA

I could make myself free for later
on if you want.

DON

I'm leaving for the weekend, Gloria.
Maybe another time.

GLORIA

Any time.

And as she leans over, she runs her forefinger again through
the neckline of his hair.

GLORIA

Just crazy about the back of your
hair.

She returns to the table. Don drinks his drink, puts down
the glass.

DON

(To Nat)

Nat, weave me another.

NAT

You'd better take it easy.

DON

Don't worry about me. Just let me
know when it's a quarter of six.

NAT

Okay.

He pours.

DON

And have one yourself, Nat.

NAT

Not me, Mr. Birnam.

DON

I often wonder what the barman buys,
one-half so precious as the stuff he
sells.

Nat has poured the drink. Don points at it.

DON

Come on, Nat. One little jigger of
dreams.

NAT

Nope.

DON

You don't approve of drinking?

NAT

Not the way you drink.

DON

It shrinks my liver, doesn't it,
Nat? It pickles my kidneys. Yes. But
what does it do to my mind? It tosses
the sandbags overboard so the balloon
can soar. Suddenly I'm above the
ordinary. I'm competent, supremely
competent. I'm walking a tightrope
over Niagara Falls. I'm one of the
great ones. I'm Michelangelo moulding
the beard of Moses. I'm Van Gogh,
painting pure sunlight. I'm Horowitz
playing the Emperor Concerto. I'm
John Barrymore before the movies got
him by the throat. I'm a holdup man --
I'm Jesse James and his two brothers,
all three of them. I'm W. Shakespeare.
And out there it's not Third Avenue
any longer. It's the Nile. The Nile,
Nat, and down it moves the barge of
Cleopatra. Listen: Purple the sails,
and so perfumed that The winds were

love-sick with them; the oars were
silver, Which to the tune of flutes
kept stroke, and made The water which
they beat to follow faster, As amorous
of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description.

During the last two lines he has picked up the jigger of
rye. THE CAMERA is on the wet rings which the wet glass has
left on the bar.

Gradually the music swells under the Shakespearean quotation
and drowns it out. In two QUICK DISSOLVES we see the five
rings, then six, then nine. Over the last, the light has
changed.

DISSOLVE TO:

A-26 THE BAR AGAIN

It is dusk. The electric lights are on. The place is about
half filled -- eight customers at the bar, five tables
occupied. Gloria and her friend are still there.

Don, an empty jigger in his hand, stands at the same spot,
only now leaning with his back against the bar. He is doggedly
quoting Shakespeare, more to himself than to the others at
the bar, who are ignoring him.

DON

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous
palaces, The solemn temples, the
great globe itself --

Nat puts drinks before some other customers, then goes over
to Don, taps him on the shoulder.

NAT

Mr. Birnam, you ought to go home.
You're late.

DON

Yea, all which it inherit shall
dissolve --

Nat leans forward as tactfully as possible.

NAT

You ought to be home, on account of
your brother.

Don half turns to him.

DON
Who says so?

NAT
You said so yourself. On account of
you're going away somewheres.

DON
Huh?

NAT
Don't you remember?

He pushes the bag with the bottles and the apples towards
Don. Don looks at them. Suddenly it penetrates. He is seized
by alarm.

DON
What time is it?

NAT
Ten past six.

DON
Why didn't you tell me?

NAT
What do you think I've been doing
for half an hour?

Don snatches up the bag, the apples spilling out as he does
so. He turns to go. Nat points at the few coins which is all
that is left of Don's money.

NAT
Take your change.

Don scoops up the money, a few dollar bills and some silver,
and hurries out.

A-27 THIRD AVENUE, CORNER OF 55TH STREET - (EVENING)

Don comes from Nat's bar, runs around the corner to his house.

A-28 APARTMENT HOUSE WHERE THE BIRNAMS LIVE

Don, clutching the bag with the bottles, runs into the house.

A-29 FIRST FLOOR HALL, APARTMENT HOUSE

Don dashes in and starts upstairs. After a few steps he stops. What if his brother is up there already? He stands undecided, then sneaks down the steps and walks to the rear of the entrance hall, where there's a glass door leading into the shabby garden.

A-30 GARDEN IN BACK OF APARTMENT HOUSE - (DARK)

Don comes out, walks far enough to be able to look up at the back of the building. Are the lights on in their apartment on the fourth floor? There is a light on the second floor, nothing on the third, and on the fourth the lights are on in the living room and the bedroom windows, all of which are open.

Don stands looking up. What shall he do? Go up and face the music? Run away? Weakly he walks over to the stone bench and sits down, putting the bottles on the bench next him. He takes out his handkerchief, mops his forehead. His eyes go up to the lighted windows again.

A-31 THE LIGHTED WINDOWS, FROM DOWN BELOW

Someone has stepped to the bedroom window. It's Helen. He can recognize her, silhouetted against the light of the room.

A-32 DON, SITTING ON THE BENCH

His eyes fixed on the window above. Instinctively, he draws back into the shadow of the sumac tree, as though Helen could see him through the darkness.

A-33 EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW, FROM DON'S POINT OF VIEW

Helen disappears from the window into the room.

A-34 INT. BEDROOM

Helen is moving away from the window. Wick stands before his suitcase, which is open and all packed save for slippers and bathrobe, which he is rolling together.

HELEN

Do you suppose he's at Morandi's, or Nat's bar, or that place on Forty-second Street?

WICK

What difference does it make?

HELEN

You're not really going, Wick.

WICK

I certainly am.

He puts the robe with the slippers inside it into the case.

HELEN

You can't leave him alone. Not for four days.

Wick slams shut the suitcase, snaps the lock.

HELEN

Wick, for heaven's sake, if he's left alone anything can happen! I'll be tied up at the office every minute, All Saturday. All Sunday. I can't look out for him. You know how he gets. He'll be run over by a car. He'll be arrested. He doesn't know what he's doing. A cigarette will fall out of his mouth and he'll burn in his bed --

WICK

Oh Helen, if it happens, it happens. And I hope it does. I've had six years of this. I've had my bellyful.

HELEN

You can't mean that.

Wick takes his suitcase, goes into the living room.

WICK

Yes, I do. It's terrible, I know, but I mean it.

Helen follows him.

A-35 LIVING ROOM

Wick comes into the living room, sets down the suitcase and during the ensuing scene takes a topcoat from the closet.

HELEN

For heaven's sake, Wick --

WICK

Who are we fooling? We've tried everything, haven't we? We've reasoned with him, we've babied him. We've watched him like a hawk. We've tried trusting him. How often have you cried? How often have I beaten him up? We scrape him out of the gutter and pump some kind of self-respect into him, and back he falls, back in, every time.

HELEN

He's a sick person. It's as though he had something wrong with his lungs or his heart. You wouldn't walk out on him because he had an attack. He needs our help.

WICK

He won't accept our help. Not Don. He hates us. He wants to be alone with that bottle of his. It's the only thing he gives a hang about.

Helen turns away from Wick, leans against the wall, hoping he won't see that she's crying.

WICK

Why kid ourselves? He's one of the lost ones.

(OR, ALTERNATE LINE:)

Why kid ourselves? He's a hopeless alcoholic.

Wick leans into the bedroom, snaps off the light. He picks up the suitcase, puts the topcoat over his arm, takes her very gently by the arm.

WICK

Come, Helen.

He leads her towards the entrance door.

A-36 DON, ON THE BENCH IN THE DARK GARDEN

He stares towards the windows.

A-37 THE WINDOWS, FROM BELOW

The bedroom window is dark. In the next second the lights in the living room go off.

A-38 DON, IN THE GARDEN

He picks up the bottles, rises, walks across the garden towards the glass door to the hall, peers through it cautiously.

A-39 STAIRCASE AND HALL, FIRST FLOOR OF THE APARTMENT HOUSE
(FROM DON'S POINT OF VIEW)

Wick and Helen come down the stairs, Wick carrying the suitcase and topcoat. They go out the front door.

A-40 EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE

Wick and Helen have come out. Wick is hailing a taxi.

WICK

Taxi! Taxi!

(To Helen)

I'll give you a lift as far as Grand Central.

HELEN

No thanks, Wick. I'm going to wait here.

WICK

You're crazy.

HELEN

Because I won't give up? Maybe I am.

A taxi drives up.

WICK

Oh Helen, give yourself a chance.
Let go of him.

HELEN

Goodbye, Wick.

Wick opens the door of the taxi.

A-41 DON, AT THE GLASS DOOR TO THE GARDEN

He stands with the bag of bottles in his hand, peering through the entrance hall out to the street.

A-42 STREET (SHOT FROM BEHIND DON)

Wick gets in the taxi, it drives off. Helen paces up and down in front of the house.

Don opens the glass door, steps cautiously into the entrance hall.

A-43 ENTRANCE HALL

Squeezing close to the staircase wall so that Helen won't see him, Don gets to the staircase, then leaps up the stairs as though pursued.

A-44 EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE

Helen waits outside the house. A couple of kids chasing each other on roller skates almost run into her. She steps back and stands in the doorway, looking up and down the street.

A-45 STAIRS BETWEEN THE THIRD AND FOURTH FLOORS

Don is hurrying up on tiptoe, two steps at a time. Suddenly the door of a third-floor apartment toward the street is opened. Don flattens himself against the wall, not to be seen by Mrs. Deveridge, who is coming out with her dog, Sophie, to give Sophie her evening airing. Sophie gives one bark in the direction of Don, but Mrs. Deveridge pays no attention and descends the stairs. Don starts up the stairs again, as silently and as fast as he can.

A-46 FOURTH-FLOOR LANDING

Don gets to his door, opens it cautiously, slips inside.

A-47 INT. LITTLE ENTRANCE HALL OF BIRNAM APARTMENT

The only light is the light from outside, coming from living

room and bedroom. Don steps inside, closes the door. He doesn't turn on the light but very carefully adjusts the chain on the door, puts his hat away.

A-48 LIVING ROOM

Dim but for the light outside. As Don enters, he slips the bottles from the paper bag and puts them on a table next the armchair. He crumples the bag and throws it in the fireplace. He takes one bottle, starts towards a bookcase and is about to hide it behind the books when he changes his mind. He looks around the room. His eyes fall on the ceiling. He goes to the table next the couch, pulls it into the middle of the room, brushes some magazines to the floor, takes a small chair, puts it on the table, climbs to the table, from the table to the chair. He is now directly below the ceiling lighting fixture, an inverted metal bowl about two and a half feet in diameter. Don reaches over the edge and deposits the bottle inside the bowl so it can't be seen from the room. He climbs down, readjusts the table, the chair, and puts the magazines back. Don picks up a glass which is over a carafe on the mantelpiece. He puts it next the bottle by the wing chair. He opens the bottle, pours a glass about three quarters full, puts the glass down. He loosens his tie and lets himself fall into the easy chair. He looks through the open window on the lights of New York. His eyes slowly wander to the glass. He smiles. It's a smile of relief, of contentment at being alone with his vice. There's a little pain in his smile, too.

A-49 THE GLASS OF WHISKEY

THE CAMERA MOVES TOWARD IT until the glass isn't visible any more -- just a smooth sea of alcohol, with a little light playing on it. THE CAMERA plunges deep into that sea.

FADE OUT:

END OF SEQUENCE "A"

SEQUENCE "B"

FADE IN:

B-1 STAIRCASE AND LANDING, FOURTH FLOOR - DAY

Through the skylight streams a dazzling shaft of sunlight, falling square on the door to the Birnams' apartment.

On the threshold lies a copy of the New York Times, and beside it stands a quart of milk. Pinned to the door is a piece of paper from a notebook.

From inside there is the sound of the chain being detached, and the door opens slowly. Don emerges. He is dressed exactly as he was the day before -- same suit, same shirt, same tie. He has slept in them and they are wrinkled. He hasn't shaved. As he comes out and the sun hits his face, he squints in agony. As he carefully closes the door, his eyes fall on the note. He reads it.

"Don dear: I waited for you to come home. Please be careful. Get some sleep. Eat. And call me, call me, call me. Helen"

There's a sly expression on Don's face as he closes the door, leaving everything just where it is -- note, milk bottle, paper. Peering down, he assures himself that the coast is clear, slips down the stairs.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-2 EXT. APARTMENT HOUSE - DAY, SUNNY - LIGHT TRAFFIC

The entrance door is half open and Dave, the janitor, an Italian-looking man about fifty-five, is sweeping the sidewalk in front of the house. Don comes to the doorway, waits until Dave's back is turned, then hurries out and slips down the street, CAMERA WITH HIM.

Two houses down, in a semi-basement, is MRS. WERTHEIM'S HAND LAUNDRY. Don goes down the steps into it.

B-3 INT. MRS. WERTHEIM'S LAUNDRY

The outer room is a kind of office, with a counter and shelves of clean laundry in boxes and paper packages. Steam issues from the actual laundry at the rear.

MRS. WERTHEIM, a gray-haired, stocky woman, is sorting laundry. The shop's bell rings as Don comes in. His nerves are on edge but he manages to work up a little nonchalance.

DON

Guten Tag, Mrs. Wertheim. How's business?

MRS. WERTHEIM

Business he is good, thank you. There isn't a fortune in it, but you know: small fish, good fish. And I keep young and healthy. Why shouldn't I, sitting in a Turkish bath all day for free?

She has picked a package from the shelf, puts it on the counter.

MRS. WERTHEIM
Three dollars and ninety.

DON
I wonder if you could do me a favor, gnaedige Frau?

MRS. WERTHEIM
Always glad, Mr. Birnam.

DON
My brother's gone away for the weekend and he took the checkbook along...

MRS. WERTHEIM
Oh, you want a blank check?

DON
It's not that. It's just that I'm a little short.

MRS. WERTHEIM
(Sizing up his stature)
What do you mean, you're short?

DON
I wonder if you could let me have a little cash, bitte schoen?

MRS. WERTHEIM
A little cash?

DON
I thought about twenty dollars, maybe. Only till Monday, when my brother comes back.

MRS. WERTHEIM
You thought... No, Mr. Birnam. I

cannot. Not that I don't want to,
because I want to, but I cannot. And
when I say not, I mean absolutely
not.

Her eyes fall on his tortured face. It's too much for her.
She rings open the cash register.

MRS. WERTHEIM
I'll let you have five dollars.

DON
That's all right.

She hands him the five dollars.

DON
Danke schoen, Mrs. Wertheim.

He turns and leaves, doesn't even hear:

MRS. WERTHEIM
Your laundry, Mr. Birnam! How about
your laundry?

She looks after him but there's only the ringing of the shop
bell as he leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-4 NAT'S BAR - BRILLIANT SUNSHINE OUTSIDE

No one is in the bar but Nat: he is cooking some ham and
eggs for himself on an electric plate behind the bar. The
floor has been mopped and is still shiny. The chairs are
piled on the tables.

Into the bar comes Don. He is walking rather slowly but it's
a tremendous effort not to race in and yell for what he needs
so desperately.

NAT
Hi.

Don goes to the bar and sits. He takes the five dollars from
his pocket, puts it on the bar.

NAT

Thought you were going away for the weekend.

No answer from Don. He sits holding his head in his hands. The bar is silent except for the sizzling noise of the eggs and ham. Suddenly Don pounds the bar and explodes.

DON

For the love of Pete, what are you doing, Nat. Give me a drink!

NAT

Right with you, Mr. Birnam. Just fixing my lunch.

DON

Well, stop it and come on and give me a drink, for heaven's sake.

(Banging the bar)

Come on, come on!

NAT

Okay.

He stirs the food once more and takes the skillet off the stove, snaps off the electricity with a slowness agonizing to Don.

DON

(Quietly, though his nerves are cracking)

Can't you hurry it up a little, Nat?

Nat pours a jiggerful.

NAT

Here you are, Mr. Birnam.

DON

Thank you, Nat.

Don chokes it down and holds out the jigger for another. Nat pours it.

NAT

That young lady stopped in last night, looking for you.

DON

What young lady?

NAT

The one with the leopard coat.

DON

Yeah?

NAT

She was acting like she just happened to drop in, but I know she was making the rounds after you.

DON

(Panicky)

What did you say to her?

NAT

I said you hadn't been in for two weeks.

DON

Good. I can't let her see me. Not now while I'm "off" like this.

NAT

Then why in the name of -- Why don't you cut it short?

DON

You're talking like a child. You can't cut it short! You're on that merry-go-round and you've got to ride it all the way, round and round, till the blasted music wears itself out and the thing dies down and clunks to a stop.

Nat brings over the plate of ham and eggs.

NAT

How about you eating this?

DON

Take it away.

NAT

You got to eat something sometime.

DON

Give me another drink.

NAT

Look, Mr. Birnam, this is still morning.

He pours another drink. Don downs it.

DON

That's when you need it most, in the morning. Haven't you learned that, Nat? At night this stuff's a drink. In the morning it's medicine.

NAT

Okay if I eat?

DON

Move it a little to one side.

Don taps with the jigger. Nat fills it, then sits down to his ham and eggs.

DON

Nat, are you ever scared when you wake up? So scared the sweat starts out of you? No, not you. With you it's simple. Your alarm clock goes off and you open your eyes and brush your teeth and read the Daily Mirror. That's all. Do you ever lie in your bed looking at the window? A little daylight's coming through, and you start wondering: is it getting lighter, is it getting darker? Is it dawn or dusk? That's a terrifying problem, Nat. You hold your breath and you pray that it's dusk, so you can go out and get yourself some more liquor. Because if it's dawn, you're dead. The bars are closed and the liquor stores don't open till nine. You can't last till nine. Or it might be Sunday. That's the worst. No liquor stores at all, and you guys wouldn't open a bar, not until one o'clock. Why? Why, Nat?

NAT

Because we got to go to church once
in a while. That's why.

DON

Yes, when a guy needs it most.

He drinks his jiggerful.

NAT

How about those two quarts? Did you
polish them off last night?

DON

What two quarts?

NAT

The two bottles you had.

An electric current runs through Don.

DON

That's right, I did have two bottles,
didn't I? I hid one of them. I've
still got it. I'm a capitalist, Nat!
I've got untapped reserves. I'm rich!

He taps the glass on the bar.

NAT

(Pouring another drink)

Mr. Birnam, if you had enough money
you'd kill yourself in a month.

From the street enters Gloria, wearing a shirtwaist and skirt,
another foolish little hat, and high-heeled shoes with bows.

GLORIA

Say, Nat, was there a gentleman --

(She sees Don)

Hello, Mr. Birnam. Didn't you go
away for the weekend?

DON

Apparently not, Gloria.

GLORIA

(Back to Nat)

Was there a gentleman in here asking

for me?

NAT

Not to my knowledge there wasn't.

He is drinking his coffee.

GLORIA

He was supposed to come around twelve o'clock. He's from Albany.

DON

Another friend of the folks?

GLORIA

More a friend of a friend of the folks type. A fellow telephoned me about him. Wants me to show him the town.

NAT

Like Grant's Tomb for instance?

GLORIA

But def.

NAT

Amazing, ain't it, how many guys run down from Albany just to see Grant's Tomb.

GLORIA

(To Don)

Sometimes I wish you came from Albany.

DON

Where would you take me?

GLORIA

Oh, lots of places. The Music Hall, and then the New Yorker Roof maybe.

DON

There is now being presented at a theatre on Forty-fourth Street the uncut version of Hamlet. I see us as setting out for that. Do you know Hamlet?

GLORIA

I know Forty-fourth Street.

DON

I'd like to get your interpretation of Hamlet's character.

GLORIA

And I'd like to give it to you.

DON

Dinner afterwards, I think. Nothing before. Always see Shakespeare on an empty stomach.

GLORIA

Not even a pretzel?

Don shakes his head.

DON

But afterwards, dozens of bluepoints in the Rainbow Room. And a very light wine. Vouvray perhaps. Do you care for Vouvray?

GLORIA

(Mystified)

Why, natch.

DON

We may blindfold the orchestra so that I can dance with abandon.

GLORIA

Aren't you going to dance with me?

DON

Of course, little Gloria.

A man has entered the bar, a round-faced, middle-aged man with pince-nez. There is a Guide of New York sticking from his pocket. He's the guy from Albany, all right.

ALBANY

(Rather loud)

Could I have a glass of water?

NAT

Why, sure. And what shall it be for
a chaser?

ALBANY
(Confidentially)
Tell me: this is Nat's Bar, isn't
it?

NAT
That's what the man said.

ALBANY
I'm looking for a young lady name of
Gloria.

With his thumb, Nat indicates Gloria.

ALBANY
(Beaming)
Are you Miss Gloria?

GLORIA
Who, me? No, I'm not. I just live
with Gloria. She's not here.

ALBANY
She isn't?

GLORIA
And she won't be. She's down to the
Aquarium.

ALBANY
Aquarium?

GLORIA
Feeding bubble-gum to the jelly fish.

ALBANY
Beg pardon?

GLORIA
Ruptured appendix. Middle of last
night. Went like that!
(She lets out her
breath with an
exploding noise)
Scared the life out of me.

ALBANY

That's terrible.

GLORIA

Goodbye.

ALBANY

Goodbye.

He takes a couple of steps towards the door, turns.

ALBANY

Could I have a word with you?

GLORIA

No thanks. Thanks a lot, but no thanks.

ALBANY

You're welcome, I'm sure.

He walks out, bewildered.

DON

Wasn't that rather rude, Gloria, to send that nice man all alone to Grant's Tomb?

GLORIA

When I have a chance to go out with you? Don't be ridic.

DON

Oh, is our engagement definite?

GLORIA

You meant it, didn't you?

DON

Surely, surely.

He downs the jigger of rye.

GLORIA

I'm going to get a facial, a fingerwave, a manicure. The works. Right now.

(With a sudden thought)

You're going to call for me, aren't

you? If you are, what time?

DON
What time do you suggest?

GLORIA
How about eight?

DON
Eight's fine.

GLORIA
I live right in the corner house.
You know where the antique shop is,
the one with the wooden Indian
outside? They've got the Indian sign
on me, I always say.

DON
I'll be there.

GLORIA
Second floor. Oh, Mr. Birnam, all
I've got is a semi-formal. Will that
be all right?

DON
That'll be fine.

GLORIA
(Happily)
Goodbye, Not.

She starts for the door, turns.

GLORIA
You know, this show you're taking me
to. If it's too highbrow, I can just
lean back and look at the back of
your neck, can't I? Eight o'clock.

She exits.

DON
One last one, Nat. Pour it softly,
pour it gently, and pour it to the
brim.

NAT

Look, Mr. Birnam, there's a lot of bars on Third Avenue. Do me a favor -- get out of here and buy it someplace else.

DON
What's the matter?

NAT
I don't like you much. What was the idea of pulling her leg? You know you're never going to take her out.

DON
Who says I'm not?

NAT
I say so. You're drunk and you're just making with your mouth.

DON
Give me a drink, Nat.

NAT
And that other dame -- I mean the lady. I don't like what you're doing to her either.

DON
Shut up.

NAT
You should've seen her last night, coming in here looking for you, with her eyes all rainy and the mascara all washed away.

DON
Give me a drink!

NAT
That's an awful high class young lady.

DON
You bet she is.

NAT
How the heck did she ever get mixed

up with a guy that sops it up like
you do?

DON

It's a problem, isn't it. That nice
young man that drinks, and the high-
class young lady, and how did she
ever get mixed up with him, and why
does he drink and why doesn't he
stop. That's my novel, Nat. I wanted
to start writing it out in the
country. Morbid stuff. Nothing for
the Book-of-the Month Club. A horror
story. The confessions of a booze
addict, the log book of an alcoholic.

(Holding out the jigger)

Come on, Nat. Break down.

Nat does break down and pours a drink.

DON

Do you know what I'm going to call
my novel? The Bottle -- that's all.
Very simply, The Bottle. I've got it
all in my mind. Let me tell you the
first chapter. It all starts one wet
afternoon about three years ago.
There was a matinee of La Traviata
at the Metropolitan --

SLOW

DISSOLVE TO:

B-5 EXT. METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE - AN AUTUMN AFTERNOON,
HEAVY RAIN

HIGH CAMERA, SHOOTING DOWN past the glass-and-iron marquee
towards the entrance, beside which is a billboard announcing
Verdi's LA TRAVIATA. A crowd of people is streaming into the
building. They are wearing raincoats, carrying umbrellas.

B-6 THE VESTIBULE AND CLOAKROOM WINDOW AT THE METROPOLITAN

It is doing a land-office business, checking dripping
umbrellas and apparel. Among the crowd is Don Birnam. He is
alone and wears a bowler and a straight raincoat. He takes
off his hat and shakes the rain from it, then peels off his
raincoat. In the side pocket of his suit is a pint of liquor.
It bulges and the nose projects. For a second Don considers

whether it'll pass muster, but it's a little too prominent. With a quick gesture he transfers the bottle to the pocket of the raincoat, rolls the raincoat up like swaddling clothes around a precious infant. Seeing an opening in the line at the cloak room counter, he steps into it.

There is a great confusion of hands, coats, coat checks, customers and overworked attendants. Don hands his coat to an attendant. His eyes linger on its pocket with a certain tenderness, then he turns and starts towards the door of the auditorium.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-7 A SECTION OF SEATS AT THE METROPOLITAN

Don sits about five seats from the aisle. He is under the pleasant spell of the overture of La Traviata.

B-8 DON

He sits between an elderly daughter and her age-old mother, and a middle-aged man and wife. He is glancing through the program as the curtain rises (changing the light on our group). Don looks up.

B-9 THE STAGE

The set is a Louis XIVth salon, in the year 1700. It's Violetta's supper. The guests are singing "Libiamo, libiamo," which is a drinking song in waltz time.

B-10 DON

He loves music and especially Italian opera, but maybe he'd have come late if he'd remembered the content of the first scene.

B-11 ON THE STAGE

Powdered footmen are pouring wine into the glasses of the over-vivacious guests.

B-12 DON

Thirst in his eyes, he looks away from the stage, tries to concentrate on the ceiling of the Metropolitan. No go. His eyes wander back to:

B-13 THE STAGE

Alfred and Violetta are battling the drinking song back and forth, as the chorus, glasses in hand, stands slowly swaying, echoing each couplet.

B-14 DON

That thirst is coming up again. The first drops of sweat are gathering on his forehead. As he looks at the stage, his imagination is working at top speed.

B-15 STAGE

The swaying echelon of choristers SLOWLY DISSOLVES to a row of raincoats, exactly like the one Don wore. They hang from hangers and sway slowly to Verdi's rhythm.

B-16 DON'S FACE

His eyes glued to what he sees on the stage. He takes the handkerchief from his pocket and wipes his forehead.

B-17 THE STAGE

The raincoats swaying slowly. THE CAMERA APPROACHES one of them. From the pocket projects a bottle of whiskey.

B-18 DON

He is wiping his parched mouth. He puts the handkerchief back. He fishes the coat check from his pocket, buries it in his fist, fighting the foolish impulse. It's a short struggle, which he loses. He rises and, to the irritation of his neighbors, leaves his seat amid some disapproving shushings from the row behind.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-19 CLOAK ROOM AND VESTIBULE

It is completely empty save for the elderly attendant, who is dozing over his paper. From inside comes Verdi's music and Don Birnam. He puts the check on the counter. The attendant looks up from a newspaper.

ATTENDANT

Did you forget something?

DON

No. Going home, if it's all right
with you.

The attendant takes the check and leaves. Don rolls his
program and sticks it into the sand of the cuspidor. He is
filled with a nervous anticipation of the drink which is on
its way. The attendant returns.

ATTENDANT

Say, this isn't yours.

Don looks. The attendant holds a short leopard coat and a
lady's small umbrella.

DON

No, it certainly isn't.

ATTENDANT

(Comparing the check
with the number on
the hanger)

That's what it says though -- 417.

DON

I don't care what it says.

ATTENDANT

The checks must have got mixed up.

DON

Maybe they did. Find me my coat.
It's a plain man's raincoat and a
derby.

ATTENDANT

Are you kidding? Do you know how
many plain men's raincoats we have
on a day like this? About a thousand.

DON

Let me get back there. I can find
it.

ATTENDANT

That's against regulations, sir.

DON

I'm not going to wait till the end
of the performance.

ATTENDANT

You can get your coat tomorrow.

Don's nervousness is mounting. He is searching his pockets.

DON

Look, man, there's something in the
pocket of that coat I -- It so happens
I find myself without any money and
I need that coat. And I need it now.

ATTENDANT

Listen, if everybody went in there
digging through those coats... There's
regulations. There's got to be
regulations.

DON

What do you suggest?

ATTENDANT

You just wait till the other party
comes and then you can swap.

DON

I want my coat.

ATTENDANT

As far as I'm concerned, that's your
coat.

He shoves the leopard coat and umbrella close to Don.

DON

You're a great help.

He is biting his lips, unable to find another argument. The
attendant has returned to the other end of the counter and
resumed his doze. Don gets out a cigarette. Without opening
his eyes, the attendant calls it.

ATTENDANT

No smoking.

DON

(Sourly)
I thought so.

He puts the cigarette away, leans back on the counter, arms folded.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-20 VESITBULE, NEAR CLOAK ROOM

Empty, save for Don, who paces up and down nervously, carrying the leopard coat and the umbrella. He glances over the coat a little, at the initials inside, at the label. Over the scene comes a muted aria from the second act.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-21 A STAIRCASE LEADING TO THE GALLERY

Empty, save for Don, who sits on a step, the coat next him. With the umbrella he is nervously tracing the pattern in the carpet. Inside, the music rises to a finale and the first people start streaming down from the gallery. Don grabs up the coat and hurries towards the cloak room.

B-22 VESTIBULE AND CLOAK ROOM

People are streaming up from all sides to get their belongings. Don comes into the shot and, standing on his toes, tries to locate the claimant of his coat and hat.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-23 VESTIBULE AND CLOAK ROOM

It is almost empty. Don still stands with the coat, looking. As the last few people leave, at the far end of the counter he sees Helen, in a little leopard hat, his coat over her arm, his derby in her hand. She sees him with her coat and her umbrella and the two approach slowly.

DON
(Trying to control
his irritation)
That's my coat you've got.

HELEN

And that's mine, thank heaven. They mixed up the checks.

DON

They certainly did. I thought you'd never come.

He takes his coat rather brusquely, thrusts the leopard coat at her.

HELEN

You can't have been waiting so long.

DON

Only since the first aria of the first act. That's all.

HELEN

Do you always just drop in for the overture?

Don takes the coat, feels it hurriedly to make sure the bottle is still there, and starts away.

DON

Goodbye.

Helen is left with the leopard coat and his bowler.

HELEN

(Waving the hat toward Don)

Hey, wait a minute!

Don comes back, takes the hat, starts away again.

HELEN

My umbrella, if you don't mind.

His patience exhausted, Don stops again, takes the umbrella and tosses it in Helen's direction. Helen, who is getting into her coat, can't catch it. It falls right next to her.

HELEN

Thank you very much.

Don stands abashed. He goes back, picks up the umbrella.

DON

I'm terribly sorry.

HELEN

You're the rudest person I ever saw.
What's the matter with you?

DON

Just rude, I guess.

HELEN

Really, somebody should talk to your
mother.

DON

They tried, Miss St. John.

HELEN

My name's not St. John.

DON

St. Joseph, then.

HELEN

St. James.

DON

First name Hilda or Helen, or Harriet
maybe?

HELEN

Helen.

DON

You come from Toledo, Ohio.

HELEN

How do you know?

DON

I've had three long acts to work you
out from that coat of yours. Initials,
label -- Alfred Spitzer, Fine Furs,
Toledo, Ohio.

HELEN

Maybe I should have explored your
coat.

DON

But you didn't.

HELEN

Didn't have time.

DON

Good. My name is Don Birnam.

As they go on talking, they walk from the cloak room, through the vestibule, to the street, Don carrying his coat over his arm.

DON

How do you like New York?

HELEN

Love it.

DON

How long are you going to stay?

HELEN

Oh, sixty years, perhaps.

Don doesn't get it.

HELEN

I live here now. I've got a job.

DON

Doing what?

HELEN

I'm on Time Magazine.

DON

Time Magazine? In that case perhaps you could do something for me.

HELEN

Yes.

DON

Could you help me to become Man of the Year?

HELEN

Delighted. What do you do?

DON

Yes, what do I do? I'm a writer. I've just started a novel. I've started quite a few novels. I never seem to finish one.

HELEN

In that case, why not write short stories.

DON

I have some of those. The first paragraph. Then there's one-half of the opening scene of a play. It all takes place in the leaning tower of Pisa and explains why it leans. And why all sensible buildings should lean.

HELEN

They'll love that in Toledo.

DON

Are you by any chance coming here to Lohengrin next week?

HELEN

I don't know.

DON

Because if you are, I'm not going to let this coat out of my hands.

HELEN

Don't worry.

DON

I do, though. To be really safe, maybe we should go together.

HELEN

We could.

DON

Are you in the telephone book?

HELEN

Yes, but I'm not home very much.

DON

Then I'll call you at the office.

HELEN

Editorial Research. If Henry Luce answers the phone, hang up.

They have reached the curb outside the Metropolitan. It is dark and the rain has settled to a drizzle.

DON

Taxi?

HELEN

No, thank you. I'm taking the subway.

DON

Very sensible.

HELEN

As a matter of fact, I'm going to an extremely crazy party on Washington Square. If you want, I'll take you along.

There is a split second of indecision but it is ended by Don's awareness of the bottle in his raincoat.

DON

Thank you very much, Miss St. James, but I have to see a friend uptown.

HELEN

Goodbye, Mr. Birnam.

DON

Goodbye.

He is unfurling his raincoat in order to put it on before he steps from under the marquee. Helen is about a step and a half away when there is a crash. She stops and looks down, as does Don. On the sidewalk lies the pint of whiskey, broken.

HELEN

Who threw that?

DON

(Casually)

It fell out of my pocket.

HELEN

Do you always carry those things?

DON

You see... that friend, the one uptown, he has a cold. I thought I'd take this along and make him a hot toddy.

HELEN

Now he gets hot lemonade and some aspirin.

DON

I shall.

HELEN

Goodbye.

She goes. Don looks at the broken bottle, then after Helen. With sudden decision he calls after her.

DON

Miss St. James!

HELEN

(Turning)

Yes?

DON

What kind of a party was that you asked me to?

HELEN

A cocktail party.

DON

Invitation still stand?

HELEN

Of course. Come on.

He joins her, takes the umbrella out of her hand and holds it over them both as they go down the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-24 NAT'S BAR

As we have left it, empty save for Nat and Don. Sunlight outside. Nat is now taking the chairs from the tables and arranging the bar for the afternoon and evening trade, while Don leans back against the bar, the jigger of whiskey in his hand, and goes on talking.

DON

How's that for a first meeting, Nat? Cute, full of laughs. A charming girl, an extra special girl. Her coat-check might just as well have been mixed up with the coat-check of a solid citizen, the son of the chairman of some insurance company, highly eligible, no vices except that sometimes he plays the cello. But oh no, that would have made everything too simple. It had to be that young man with the bottle.

NAT

Listen, once that bottle smashes, doesn't she catch on?

DON

No, she doesn't.

NAT

Okay. So they go to that cocktail party and he gets stinko and falls flat on his face.

DON

He doesn't. He's crazy about that girl by then. He drinks tomato juice. Doesn't touch liquor for that whole week -- for two weeks, for six weeks.

NAT

He's in love, huh?

DON

That's what's going to be hard to write. Love's the hardest thing in the world to write about. So simple. You've got to catch it through

details, like the early morning
sunlight hitting the gray tin of the
ashcans in front of her house. A
ringing telephone that sounds like
Beethoven's Pastoral. A letter
scribbled on her office stationery
that you carry in your pocket because
it smells of all the lilacs in Ohio.

NAT

And no drinking?

DON

He thinks he's cured. If he can get
a job now, they can be married and
that's that. Only it's not, Nat. Not
quite. Because one day, one terrible
day --

(He taps the jigger)

Pour it, Nat.

Nat does.

NAT

Yeah?

Don drinks.

NAT

Well, go on.

DON

You see, that girl's been writing to
her family in Toledo They want to
meet this young man. So they come to
New York. They stay at the Hotel
Manhattan. Their very first day,
she's to introduce him to her parents.
One o'clock. Lobby of the hotel...

SLOW

DISSOLVE TO:

B-25 INT. LOBBY OF THE MANHATTAN HOTEL - (MIDDAY)

It is filled with the routine activity of a big commercial
hotel on a hot summer day.

Don Birnam, in a light summer suit, paces up and down the

lobby. Under his arm is a florist's box. He keeps eyeing the doors to the elevators. He walks toward one of those circular plush settees common to hotels, sits down, puts the flower box next to him and adjusts the knot of his tie, his eye still on the elevator doors.

On the other side of the settee are a middle-aged couple. Don can't see them, they can't see him, as he overhears their conversation, and it takes him a little time to realize that they are Helen's parents.

MR. ST. JAMES is wearing a linen suit and a good but yellowing panama hat, the brim turned up. MRS. ST. JAMES is a cheerful little woman with glasses pinned to her dress, the kind that pull. Mr. St. James is fuming a little.

MR. ST. JAMES

Just walked in for a simple haircut. No, that wasn't enough, not for New York. They gave me a shampoo, a scalp massage, a manicure. Thought they'd tear my shoes off and paint my toenails.

Mrs. St. James laughs comfortably.

MRS. ST. JAMES

I had a lovely morning. Just did a little window shopping. I didn't want to get all tired out.

MR. ST. JAMES

On account of meeting that young man? Now, Mother.

MRS. ST. JAMES

Who did you get a haircut for?

MR. ST. JAMES

Wonder what's keeping Helen.

MRS. ST. JAMES

She'll be here.

MR. ST. JAMES

This Birnam fellow went to Cornell, didn't he?

MRS. ST. JAMES

I believe so, but Helen says he never graduated.

MR. ST. JAMES
I wonder why. How old is he?

MRS. ST. JAMES
Thirty-three.

MR. ST. JAMES
He has no job. As far as I can find out, he never had one. I wish Helen wasn't so vague.

By now Don knows only too well that he is the subject of their discussion. He leans his head against the back of the settee, acutely uncomfortable.

MRS. ST. JAMES
Maybe he has a little money. Some people do, you know, Father.

MR. ST. JAMES
He ought to have a job anyway.

MRS. ST. JAMES
He's a writer.

MR. ST. JAMES
A writer? What does he write? I never heard of his name.

MRS. ST. JAMES
Now Father, relax. You always expect the worst. I've made up my mind he's a well-brought-up young man who wipes his feet before he enters a house and doesn't even smoke.

MR. ST. JAMES
I hope he realizes Helen's our only daughter and we ought to know a few things about him.

MRS. ST. JAMES
Those'll all come out -- his background, his prospects, his church affiliations.

Don can't take any more of this. He picks up the florist's box, rises and moves away from the settee. When he has reached the security of some potted palms, he looks back. Through one of the revolving doors comes Helen, in a new spring suit. She looks around, sees her parents, goes up to them. There is a greeting, some conversation apparently about Don and the fact that he'll get there any minute. She sits on the settee between her parents, all three of them waiting for Don.

Don stands undecided, then looks around, locates the public telephone booths, steps into one of them.

B-26 INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH

Don deposits a nickel and dials the number of the Hotel Manhattan, which is above the mouthpiece of the phone.

DON
Manhattan Hotel?... Will you page
Miss St. James? She must be in the
lobby.

He holds the phone and looks through the glass door of the telephone booth.

B-27 LOBBY, FROM DON'S POINT OF VIEW - (SILENT, AS IT IS SHOT THROUGH THE GLASS OF THE PHONE BOOTH)

A bell-hop crosses the lobby, paging Miss St. James. Helen rises and follows him over to the line of house phones on a shelf. She picks up the phone, speaks.

B-28 DON, AT THE PHONE

DON
Helen?... Don. I'm terribly sorry
but I can't get there for a while.
Please go ahead with your lunch and
apologize to your parents... No,
nothing serious. I'll be there.
Goodbye.

B-29 LOBBY, FROM DON'S ANGLE, THROUGH THE GLASS OF THE PHONE BOOTH

Helen has hung up too. She goes towards her parents, her face a little crestfallen. As she joins them she evidently starts to explain.

B-30 EXT. TELEPHONE BOOTH

Don emerges with the florist's box, careful not to be seen. He leaves through one of the side doors.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-31 LIVING ROOM, BIRNAM BROTHERS' APARTMENT - TWILIGHT

SHOOTING TOWARDS hall and entrance door. In the dim foreground stands a small table, beyond it the vague contours of Don lying on the couch. On the floor beside him an empty bottle, in his hand a half-filled glass. There are footsteps from the stairs. A key is turned in the lock, and Wick enters. He wears a hat and carries a brief-case. He switches on the light in the little entrance hall, flips his hat jauntily to a hook on the coat-rack and comes into the living room. As he crosses the threshold he becomes aware of Don's presence.

WICK

Don?

He snaps on the light, sees Don on the couch, drunk. Don doesn't move an inch, only his eyes close.

DON

Turn off that light.

WICK

For heaven's sake, Don.

DON

Turn it off!

Wick snaps off the light. From now on the scene plays in dimness, save for the shaft of light from the entrance hall. Wick throws the briefcase into a chair.

WICK

I thought you were with Helen and her father and mother.

No answer.

WICK

What happened?

Still no answer. Wick goes and sits beside Don, takes the glass from his hand.

WICK
(Gently)
Come on, Don.

DON
I couldn't face it.

WICK
You couldn't face what? Didn't you go to see them?

DON
Certainly I went. One o'clock sharp. And I saw them, all right. Only they didn't see me.

WICK
How was that?

DON
Such nice, respectable people. I couldn't face them, Wick, and all the questions they'd ask me. I couldn't face them. Not cold. I had to have a drink first. Just one. Only the one didn't do anything to me.

WICK
So you had another and another. You poor idiot, Don. Won't you ever learn with you it's like stepping off a roof and expecting to fall just one floor?

Don puts his arm over his face.

DON
You're right, you're right. There's nothing I can say.

There is a long second of silence, Wick looking at Don.

DON
Go ahead. Bawl me out, Wick, let me have it. Why don't you take that

bottle and smash it over my face.

There is another pause. Wick speaks very quietly.

WICK

It's a quarter of eight. I suppose they're still in that hotel, waiting for you.

DON

Call her up, Wick, will you? Tell her something. Tell her I'm sick. Tell her I'm dead.

Wick has bent over Don and loosened his tie.

DON

Will you call her?

WICK

Yes, I'll call her.

DON

She must have written them a lot of nice things about me. What a gentleman I am. A prince.

WICK

Which hotel is it?

DON

The Manhattan. Mr. and Mrs. Charles St. James from Toledo, Ohio.

Paying no attention to the sound of steps which has been coming from the staircase, Wick rises, puts the glass of whiskey on the table and is about to cross towards the telephone when the doorbell rings -- short, short, long, short. Wick freezes. Don sits up on the couch. They know that ring. There is a helpless look in Don's eyes.

WICK

(Whispering)

Get up, Don.

Don, clinging to Wick's arm, pulls himself up. Wick pushes him through the doorway to the dark bedroom, closing the door after him. The bell rings again, that same ring.

WICK

Just a minute, Helen.

He snaps on the lights in the living room, rolls the empty bottle under the couch, takes the glass of whiskey, puts it behind the pile of records. As he is starting towards the door, the bottle rolls from under the couch. Wick stops and rolls it back again, then goes into the hall and opens the door. Helen, in a great hurry, stands outside, nervous.

HELEN

Hello, Wick. Is Don here?

WICK

Don? No.

Helen comes into the living room.

HELEN

Any idea where he could be?

WICK

Wasn't he meeting you?

B-32 DON, IN THE DARK BEDROOM

He stands leaning against the wall, breathing heavily. His eyes gleam with anxiety. Coming from the living room, stabbing him deep, is:

HELEN'S VOICE

He was supposed to meet us for lunch,
then he telephoned he'd be late.
Mother's beginning to think I just
made him up.

B-33 LIVING ROOM

HELEN

Do you suppose something's happened
to him?

WICK

Nonsense.

HELEN

But surely he'd have called back if
he were all right.

WICK

Where did he call you from?

HELEN

I don't know.

WICK

I think I've got an idea. He called from out of town.

HELEN

Out of town? Where?

WICK

Philadelphia.

HELEN

What's he doing in Philadelphia?

WICK

There's an opening on the Philadelphia Inquirer, The Book Section. Don wrote them. He wired. I think this morning early he just took a train.

HELEN

He never told me a word about it.

WICK

I'm not supposed to tell you either. He wanted it to be a surprise.

HELEN

He did!

B-34 DON, IN THE DARK BEDROOM

He suffers like a dog as he hears what's being said in the living room.

WICK'S VOICE

He probably couldn't get to the right people right away, missed a train. You know how it is.

HELEN'S VOICE

Oh, it would be just wonderful if he got the job and started working. Or would it, Wick, with him in

Philadelphia and me in New York?

B-35 LIVING ROOM - WICK AND HELEN

HELEN

Don't ever tell him I said that
though, will you?

WICK

Of course not.

Suddenly his eyes are transfixed. From under the couch has
rolled the bottle. As Helen speaks, he tries to get near it
without her noticing.

HELEN

I could never understand why somebody
like Don, a person with so much
talent, such flashes of real
brilliance... Maybe I'm a little
prejudiced.

Suddenly she sees Wick trying to kick the bottle back under
the couch.

HELEN

What are you doing, Wick?

WICK

Nothing, Helen.

HELEN

Where'd that bottle come from?

WICK

It just rolled out.

HELEN

From under the couch?

WICK

Yes, Helen.

(With an attempt at
casualness)

It's my guess that Don caught an
early train.

HELEN

(A wild guess)

Is that Don's bottle?

WICK
What makes you think that?

HELEN
There was a bottle the first time we met.

WICK
There was?

HELEN
It fell out of Don's pocket.

WICK
It was for me, Helen.

B-36 DON, IN THE DARK BEDROOM

He stands with his head against the door post, listening, harassed.

WICK'S VOICE
This one is mine, too. You might as well hear the family scandal. I drink.

B-37 WICK AND HELEN IN THE LIVING ROOM

WICK
Don thinks I drink too much.

He walks over to the records and picks up the glass.

WICK
I had to promise I'd go on the wagon. That's why I hid the bottle, so he wouldn't see it.

He takes a drink.

HELEN
I'm so sorry, Wick. I shouldn't have started asking questions. It was none of my business.

WICK
Forget it.

B-38 DON, IN THE DARK BEDROOM

His brother's gesture has shaken him.

HELEN'S VOICE

I'd better be getting back to the hotel. Don may be there already. And don't worry, Wick, I won't mention this to him.

WICK'S VOICE

Thank you, Helen.

HELEN'S VOICE

Goodbye, Wick.

WICK'S VOICE

Goodbye.

She must be on her way to the front door. With sudden decision Don opens the door to the living room and walks slowly out.

DON

Helen!

B-39 LIVING ROOM & ENTRANCE HALL

Almost at the door to the entrance hall, Helen turns back. Wick stands, the glass of whiskey in his hand, startled taut at the sight of Don who comes in, not too steady on his feet.

DON

I'm sorry, Helen. I can't let you go. Not like that.

HELEN

Don!

WICK

Shut your mouth, Don.
(To Helen)
I'll take you downstairs.

DON

Thank you very much for your Philadelphia story, Wick. Nice try.

Helen comes back into the room, staring at Don. She is beginning to realize that he's drunk. Don looks at the glass

in Wick's hand.

DON

That looks so silly on you.

He takes the glass out of Wick's hand.

WICK

(To Helen)

Don't listen to him.

DON

You don't have to. Just look at the two of us.

HELEN

Yes. What's all this covering up?

WICK

All that happened is that Don was nervous at the idea of meeting your parents and so he took a couple of drinks.

DON

Come on, Wick, she'd have found out sooner or later.

HELEN

Stop it, both of you. Don's a little tight. Most people drink a little. A lot of them get tight once in a while.

DON

Sure. The lucky ones who can take it or leave it. But then there are the ones who can't take it, but can't leave it either. What I'm trying to say is I'm not a drinker. I'm a drunk. They had to put me away once.

WICK

He went to a cure.

DON

Which didn't take. That first day we met, you see, the dirty trick was I should have had the decency to get drunk, just for your sake.

HELEN

For my sake? We're talking about you.

(Turning to Wick)

Is it really that bad, Wick?

DON

Yes, it is.

WICK

Can't we go over this tomorrow, Don when you're feeling more like yourself?

DON

Helen's heard the facts. That's all there is to it.

HELEN

I've heard them and they're not very pleasant. But they could be worse. After all, you're not an embezzler or a murderer. You drink too much. That's not fatal. One cure didn't take. There are others.

WICK

Of course there are.

DON

This has a familiar ring.

HELEN

There must be a reason why you drink. The right doctor can find it.

DON

I'm way ahead of the right doctor. I know the reason. The reason is me. What I am. Or, rather, what I'm not.

HELEN

What aren't you that you want to be, Don?

DON

A writer. Silly, isn't it? You see, in college I passed for a genius.

They couldn't get out the college magazine without one of my stories. Boy, was I hot. Hemingway stuff. I reached my peak when I was nineteen. Sold a piece to the Atlantic Monthly. It was reprinted in the Readers' Digest. Who wants to stay in college when he's Hemingway? My mother bought me a brand new typewriter, and I moved right in on New York. Well, the first thing I wrote, that didn't quite come off. And the second I dropped. The public wasn't ready for that one. I started a third, a fourth, only about then somebody began to look over my shoulder and whisper, in a thin, clear voice like the E-string on a violin. Don Birnam, he'd whisper, it's not good enough. Not that way. How about a couple of drinks just to put it on its feet? So I had a couple. Oh, that was a great idea. That made all the difference. Suddenly I could see the whole thing -- the tragic sweep of the great novel, beautifully proportioned. But before I could really grab it and throw it down on paper, the drink would wear off and everything be gone like a mirage. Then there was despair, and a drink to counterbalance despair, and one to counterbalance the counterbalance. I'd be sitting in front of that typewriter, trying to squeeze out a page that was halfway decent, and that guy would pop up again.

HELEN

What guy? Who are you talking about?

DON

The other Don Birnam. There are two of us, you know: Don the drunk and Don the writer. And the drunk will say to the writer, Come on, you idiot. Let's get some good out of that portable. Let's hock it. We'll take it to that pawn shop over on Third

Avenue. Always good for ten dollars,
for another drink, another binge,
another bender, another spree. Such
humorous words. I tried to break
away from that guy a lot of ways. No
good. Once I even bought myself a
gun and some bullets.

(He goes to the desk)

I meant to do it on my thirtieth
birthday.

He opens the drawer, takes out two bullets, holds them in
the palm of his hand.

DON

Here are the bullets. The gun went
for three quarts of whiskey. That
other Don wanted us to have a drink
first. He always wants us to have a
drink first. The flop suicide of a
flop writer.

WICK

All right, maybe you're not a writer.
Why don't you do something else?

DON

Yes, take a nice job. Public
accountant, real estate salesman. I
haven't the guts, Helen. Most men
lead lives of quiet desperation. I
can't take quiet desperation.

HELEN

But you are a writer. You have every
quality for it. Imagination, wit,
pity --

DON

Come on, let's face reality. I'm
thirty-three and I'm living on the
charity of my brother. Room and board
free, and fifty cents a week for
cigarettes. An occasional ticket for
a concert or a show, out of the
bigness of his heart. And it is a
big heart, a patient heart.

WICK

Now, Don, I'm just carrying you along
for the time being.

DON

Shut up, Wick. I've never done
anything, I'm not doing anything, I
never will do anything. Zero, zero,
zero.

HELEN

Now you shut up. We'll straighten it
out.

DON

Look. Wick has the misfortune to be
my brother. You just walked in on
this, and if you know what's good
for you, you'll turn around and walk
out again. Walk fast and don't turn
back.

Helen looks at him for a second, then takes off her hat and
throws it into a nearby chair.

HELEN

(To Wick)

Why don't you make some coffee, Wick?
Strong. Three cups.

Wick goes into the kitchenette.

DON

Do yourself a favor, Helen. Go on,
clear out.

HELEN

Because I've got a rival? Because
you're in love with this?

(She points at the
bottle)

You don't know me, Don. I'm going to
fight and fight and fight. Bend down.

He doesn't bend. She raises herself to her tiptoes and kisses
him warmly.

DISSOLVE

BACK TO:

B-40 NAT'S BAR - LATER IN THE DAY

Nat and Don alone. Nat is behind the bar, putting tooth-picks into olives which he takes from a bowl and arranges in a row on a plate. Don, about ten wet rings in front of him and what's left of Mrs. Wertheim's five dollars, is playing with a full jigger of rye.

DON

That was three years ago, Nat. That's a long time to keep fighting, to keep believing. They'd try a health farm, a psychiatrist, a sanatorium in New Jersey, No go. She'd be patient. She'd be gay. She'd encourage him. She'd buy a new ribbon for his typewriter -- a two-color job, black and red. Just write, Don. Keep writing. That first paragraph came off so well... There was no second paragraph. There were drinks. Drinks sneaked in secret. In the bathroom, here, in Harlem. Promises again, lies again. But she holds on. She knows she's clutching a razor blade but she won't let go. Three years of it.

NAT

And what? How does it come out?

DON

I don't know. Haven't figured that far.

NAT

Want me to tell you? One day your guy gets wise to himself and gets back that gun. Or, if he's only got a dollar ten, he goes up to the Empire State Building, way up on top, and then --

(he snaps his fingers)

Or he can do it for a nickel, in a subway under a train.

DON

Think so, Nat? What if Helen is right, after all, and he sits down and turns

out something good -- but good --
and that pulls him up and snaps him
out of it?

NAT

This guy? Not from where I sit.

Don jumps up.

DON

Shut up, Nat. I'm going to do it.
I'm going to do it now. It's all
there. You heard it.

NAT

Yes, Mr. Birnam.

DON

That's why I didn't go on that
weekend, see, so I can be alone up
there and sit down at my typewriter.
This time I'm going to do it, Nat.
I'm going to do it.

NAT

By gosh, maybe you will.

DON

Thank you, Nat.
(he's up on his feet)
Am I all paid up?

NAT

Yes, Mr. Birnam.

DON

Goodbye, Nat. I'm going home. This
time I've got it. I'm going to write.

NAT

Good luck, Mr. Birnam.

DISSOLVE:

B-41 INT. BIRNAM APARTMENT - (DAY)

Don enters, the fire of real purpose in his eye. He hangs
his hat on the hatrack, goes to the bedroom, picks up the
typewriter, grabs the sheaf of typewriter paper Wick has

laid on top of his suitcase and carries them into the living room. He puts the typewriter on the desk. Sitting down, he inserts a sheet of paper in the roller and begins to type:

THE BOTTLE

A Novel by Don Birnam

He pauses, then types underneath:

For Helen - With All My Love

He rolls the sheet of paper up, studies what he has typed as though it were a painting. Then he begins to try and formulate that first sentence of his book. To do so is absolute agony for him. He gets up, puts a cigarette in his mouth, takes a match from a folder, lights the cigarette, throws the folder on the small table next to the big chair. As he does so his eyes fall on the empty bottle and glass. He looks at them for a minute, then goes over to the bookcase, puts his arm in back of the books and runs his hand along the rear of the shelf, looking for that bottle. It's not there.

He runs into the bedroom, hurries to his bed, where his suitcase lies packed but not closed. He wipes the suitcase from the bed, the contents spilling over the floor. He pulls up one end of the mattress, looks under it. Nothing.

He goes back into the living room, pulls the couch from the wall and, lying on his stomach, probes among the springs. Nothing there. He lies on the couch, breathing heavily.

DON

You had another bottle, you know you did. Where did you put it? You're not crazy. Where did you put it?

He jumps up, runs back to the bookcase, starts pulling out books, row by row. He goes to the closet, opens it wide, pulls out all its contents, throwing them on the floor. Nothing there.

He goes back to the big chair, throws himself down, exhausted. His eyes fall again on the empty bottle and the empty glass. Behind the glass lies the folder of matches. Something is written on it but it is distorted by the glass. However, it attracts Don's attention enough to make him push the glass to one side. The folder reads:

HARRY'S & JOE'S

Where Good Liquor Flows 13 W. 52nd

St.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-42 INT. HARRY'S & JOE'S ON 52ND ST

You know how those places look: the lower floor of a brownstone house, narrow, intimate, smoky. One side is a bar. Along the other wall there is a long, built-in bench with individual tables in front of it. At a miniature piano a guy is playing and singing "It Was So Beautiful."

Don Birnam sits on the bench at one of the small tables. In front of him is an empty cocktail glass. It is about his fourth. At the next table on the bench sits a couple -- a show girl type, about twenty-four, and a man about thirty-five. They are nuts about each other and are holding hands as they listen to the hoarse pianist. However, to Don the music means little. He is very much the man of the world, holding his alcohol superbly, smoking a cigarette. He snaps his finger at a waiter, who is passing with a tray of drinks. The waiter stops.

DON

Where is my check.

WAITER

Right here, sir.

The waiter takes the check which is thrust between his vest and his stiff shirt and puts it face down in front of Don, then hurries on with the tray of drinks. Don turns the check over. It's for four dollars. Suddenly his financial situation dawns on Don. He puts his hand in his pocket and pulls out what cash he has. He does it very cautiously, under the table, so that no one else can see it. He hasn't enough -- only two one-dollar bills and some small change. Panic seizes him. At that moment the waiter returns, expecting to be paid.

WAITER

Yes, sir.

DON

(A little stiffly)

One more gin vermouth.

WAITER

Yes, sir.

Taking the check, the waiter leaves. Don has gained a little time, but what shall he do with it? He considers the situation. The door is some thirty feet away, and the check-room girl stands in front of it. Don looks around. Nobody in the bar he knows. Next him the couple is cooing away like Spring, -- but on the bench between him and the girl lies her bag. It's a handsome leather bag with gold initials, M. M. It's about a foot and a half away from him, but it seems like a mile and a half to Don. There must be some money in that bag. Don looks around the room, his plan forming. No one is looking at him. As though inadvertently, he drops his hand on the bench beside the bag.

The man is whispering something into the girl's ear. She is shaking her head. Don pulls the purse imperceptibly closer to himself. Guests and waiters are passing by. Very calmly Don smokes his cigarette, a great gentleman. The bag moves very close to his coat. Now, switching his cigarette, Don crosses his other arm so he can pull the bag up under his coat. He pulls it to his armpit and holds it there, tucked close to his ribs. Nothing in his face betrays him.

The lovers are still at it. The waiter comes back with the drink.

DON

(The young Duke)

Thank you. Where is your wash room?

WAITER

Over there, sir.

He points to a door at the other end of the room. On its panel is the stylized profile of a gentleman with a top hat.

Don starts to rise. The waiter pulls the table away for him. Don carries the bag under his open coat by the pressure of his upper arm. Between his fingers is a cigarette, so that the whole thing looks fairly natural. There is a tiny puzzled look from the waiter as Don walks slowly towards the wash room.

B-43 INT. WASHROOM

It's a two-wash-basin affair, with a colored attendant who, as Don enters, is brushing a customer.

ATTENDANT

How's about a carnation, sir?

CUSTOMER

What for?

ATTENDANT

(Chuckling)

For your buttonhole, sir.

CUSTOMER

Okay.

On the shelf above the washstand between talcum powder, nail files and brushes, there stands a tumbler with carnations. The attendant takes one, puts it into the customer's lapel. The customer tips him and walks out.

Don is left alone with the attendant, who points to the other bowl, runs fresh water in it.

ATTENDANT

Right here, sir.

Don steps to the wash bowl. His brain is functioning perfectly.

DON

Wipe my shoes, will you?

ATTENDANT

Yes, sir.

As Don picks up the cake of soap, he watches the attendant get a polishing rag and bend down to dust off his shoes. Now Don doesn't lose a split second. He plays his cards like a master. He puts down the cake of soap, pulls out the bag, opens it. There, between a compact, lipstick and keys, are some bills. He fishes out a ten-dollar bill, thrusts it in his pocket and is about to close the purse when he sees the carnations. He can't help smiling at the idea which flashes into his mind. He takes one of the carnations, puts it into the purse, closes the purse and thrusts it back under his coat. Just as the attendant straightens up, Don puts both hands into the water. The attendant holds out a towel, Don wipes his hands.

ATTENDANT

How's about a carnation?

DON
(Raffles by now)
I took one.

ATTENDANT
You did, sir?

He looks at Don's lapel, mystified,

DON
Yes, for a very kind lady.

Don tips the attendant with a fifty-cent piece. The attendant doesn't get the joke but chuckles automatically and opens the door into the bar.

B-44 THE BAR

The piano isn't being played and the place is strangely quiet. Don walks from the wash room, slowly towards his table. Suddenly he stops. The space where the lovers sat is empty now. That's the storm signal. Don looks around. Near the little piano stands Don's waiter, the head waiter, the piano player and the lovers. They're staring at Don. In fact, he's suddenly aware that he is the focus of every eye in the room. In the next second the storm breaks.

WAITER
That's him. That's the man.

HEADWAITER
You were sitting here, sir?

DON
I beg your pardon.

He doesn't play it very well now. M.M.'s escort is right at him, grabbing him by the coat.

M.M.'S ESCORT
You took this lady's bag, didntcha?
Come on, give it back.

DON
(With very little
hesitation and a wan
smile)
Of course.

He takes the bag out from under his coat and hands it to the lady.

M.M.'S ESCORT
Somebody call a cop.

M.M.
No, George, no. It doesn't matter as long as I have the bag.

M.M.'S ESCORT
Well, look in it. Maybe he's taken something.

DON
Ten dollars, to be exact.

Don holds out the bill. M. M.'s escort snatches it from his hand.

M.M.'S ESCORT
I ought to kick your teeth in.

M.M.
George, George! He's drunk.

HEADWAITER
(Grabbing Don)
Get out of here.

WAITER
How about the check?

DON
Exactly. That's why I had to borrow from the lady. I didn't have enough.

He fishes what money he has left from his pocket. The waiter snaps it up.

DON
I'll come back and pay the rest.

HEADWAITER
Don't you show your face here again ever.
(Shouting towards the entrance door)

Mike! Mike!
(To waiter)
Come on, Charlie.

He and the waiter grab Don, start him towards the door. From the street comes Mike, the huge doorman-bouncer. He helps with the ejection.

DON
(To the entire bar)
I assure you I'm not a thief. I'm
not a thief!

As they drag him toward the entrance door, the pianist, in an access of delicate humor, begins to pound the piano and sing, "Somebody stole my purse, Somebody stole my purse."

By this time they've got Don to the door. The headwaiter gets Don's hat from the checkroom girl's hand. He puts it on Don's head, the bouncer pulls him through the door.

B-45 EXT. FIFTY SECOND STREET (NIGHT)

A line of waiting taxis along the brilliantly lighted night club street. The bouncer, dragging Don from Harry's and Joe's, gives him one last shove down the street.

Don comes to a stop and leans heavily against an iron railing, wiping his face with his hand. He straightens his hat, looks back. The doorman and the taxi drivers are staring after him. Don turns, straightens himself as best he can and starts for home, shame weighing down every limb.

DISSOLVE TO:

B-46 STAIRCASE & FOURTH FLOOR LANDING, BIRNAM APT. HOUSE
(NIGHT)

It is meanly lighted by the wall brackets. The newspaper, the bottle of milk, Helen's note -- are all as they were.

Don drags himself up the last few steps, unlocks the door and goes in, leaving paper, bottle and note untouched.

B-47 INT. BIRNAM APARTMENT - DARK

Don has entered. Automatically he switches on the light in the corridor. In a stupor of shame and misery he stumbles

over to the living room couch, flings himself down on it and lies covering his face with his arms. After a time he brushes the tears from his eyes with his sleeve and as he does so, catches sight of something which rivets his attention, brings a half-crazed smile to his lips.

On the ceiling is the shadow of the bottle which he hid in the light fixture.

With new strength Don gets to his feet, nervous laughter shaking him. He pulls the coffee table under the light fixture, puts the chair on it, climbs up and retrieves his bottle. He climbs down again, opening the bottle fiercely. He goes to the table where his empty glass stands, pours it half full. Over his face as he looks at the glass of whiskey comes the uplifted peace of a worshipper at the high altar. There the glass stands, gleaming in the light from above. Again the CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES TOWARD IT, immerses in its depths. Oblivion again.

FADE OUT:

END OF SEQUENCE "B"

SEQUENCE "C"

FADE IN:

C-1 THE BIRNAM APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

About 9:30 the next morning. The living room is in the same wild disorder -- books on the floor, a table on the chair under the ceiling fixture, the couch moved from the wall, clothes and shoes spilled from the closet. Two empty bottles and a sticky glass stand about, and the portable, with its almost virgin sheet of white paper in the roller.

It's a nasty sight, and its nastiness is emphasized by the sunlight streaming in and mixing with the yellow pallor of the electric light, forgotten and burning on.

Don is not in sight. Only the telephone, which stands on the desk next the open portable, is alive. It is ringing at the top of its bell.

C-2 BIRNAM APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Here reigns the same confusion: the suitcase flung on the floor, the window shade flapping, and on the unmade bed, not

in it, fully dressed -- shoes, suit, tie -- lies Don, the comforter and bedspread pulled up over him.

The telephone rings remorselessly. Don opens his eyes slowly. The brightness of the day stabs them, he shuts them. Again the telephone.

Don gets up. He is weaker than he thought. Steadying himself on the bedpost and holding the door frame, he slowly moves out of the bedroom.

C-3 LIVING ROOM

Don enters. He seems to be going straight to the ringing telephone, only he isn't. He passes it and goes to the open window. He puts his arm against the window frame, presses his forehead against it, stands there, every vibration of the telephone bell shaking his nerves.

DON

Stop it, Helen, stop it, stop it.
I'm all right. I just can't talk.
Stop it.

There is another ring and another, then the phone stops. Don's eyes fall on the bottle and the glass by the big chair. He moves slowly towards it, picks up the bottle, holds it upside down over the glass. One slow drop is all it yields. Don puts down the bottle, goes to the other bottle on the mantel shelf, picks it up, goes to the kitchen.

C-4 KITCHEN - BIRNAM APARTMENT

In the sink is the bottle Wick emptied that first afternoon. Don picks it up, goes back into the living room.

C-5 LIVING ROOM - BIRNAM APARTMENT

Don goes to the glass, holds the two bottles upside down over it. Two more meagre drops emerge, like thick syrup. They barely stain the bottom of the glass.

Don puts down the two bottles, picks up the glass, empties the pitiable three drops into the parched desert of his throat. For a second it seems that he has found some relief. That's not true. His need for alcohol has been multiplied tenfold by that mockery of a drink. He's got to get another bottle, another drink.

What are his finances? Quickly he goes through his pockets. In the palm of his hand there are exactly two cents. He looks around the apartment. There on the desk stands the typewriter. Don walks towards it, rips the sheet of paper from the roller, slams the lid of the cover shut, picks up the typewriter. It is heavy, terribly heavy. He drags it to the little hall, picks up his hat and puts it on.

At the door, weakness overcomes him. Dragging his hand with it, the typewriter sinks to the floor.

DON

You'll never make it. You'll never
make that hock shop. It's a block
and a half away.

He is crouched helplessly against the door. At that moment the telephone shrills again. Once more Don straightens himself, opens the door and leaves.

C-6 OUTER DOOR - BIRNAM APARTMENT

The note from Helen is still pinned to the door. There are now two newspapers, two bottles of milk. Don steps over them carefully, closes the door and starts down the stairs.

DISSOLVE TO:

C-7 EXT. BIRNAM APARTMENT - (SUNNY MORNING)

Mrs. Deveridge and her dog Sophie are outside the apartment house. Mrs. Deveridge is talking to Dave, the janitor, who leans on his broom.

Don comes from the house with the typewriter. He stops to make sure the two are absorbed in conversation, then steps quickly past them down the street toward Third Avenue. Looking back to see whether they have seen him, he turns into Third Avenue and starts uptown.

C-8 THIRD AVENUE

This is to be Don's Via Dolorosa, this black, roaring, perilous street up which he, drags the hellish weight of that portable -- that portable which grows heavier with every step -- in quest of a pawn shop which will give him a few dollars for it. A few dollars which will mean drink, drink which he needs to live.

Setting his jaw and whipping on his will, he reaches the first hock shop. A steel gate is drawn across its entrance. Don stares at the obstruction, completely mystified. There is a woman standing nearby, wheeling a baby in a baby carriage. Don turns to her.

DON
This isn't Sunday, is it, lady?

WOMAN
Huh?

DON
I asked is this Sunday.

WOMAN
No, Sattaday. Why?

DON
Because it's closed.
(Looking around)
Nothing else is closed.

WOMAN
Well, somebody passed away, most likely.

Don stands helpless for a moment, then, feeling the woman's intrusive stare, straightens up. In the next block, miles and miles away for the way he feels, is another pawn shop. He starts for it.

Again every step is agony. Overhead the elevated thunders excruciatingly. Sweat pours from his forehead. He changes the typewriter from one hand to another.

At last he makes the second pawn shop. It too is closed. He peers through the iron gate into the dark shop, turns around.

Across the street, in the same block, is the third pawn shop. He must make it, but to get there he must cross the raging torrent of Third Avenue.

He makes a pillar of the el, leans against it, shaking. When a trolley car gets out of his way, he continues to cross the street.

That pawn shop is closed too. Don takes a bar and shakes it.

DON

What's going on? What is it? Did you
all go to a funeral, all of you?
Maybe it's you that died, Don Birnam.
Maybe it's your funeral.

He pulls himself away and recrosses the street.

Reason has entirely deserted him, but blind instinct drives
him on.

Sixty-first Street, Seventy-first Street. Four more pawn
shops, all of them closed. Seventy-ninth Street. He's almost
struck by a car. The typewriter falls from his hand. A truck
runs over it but straddles it. Don gets it again.

Up the street, up the street, up the street. One pawn shop
closed after another. His feet are burning, as if the sidewalk
were hot lava. His ears are bursting.

Eighty-ninth Street, Ninety-fifth Street. Past bars, funeral
parlors, children on roller skates, and always the recurrent
torture of the elevated overhead. On and on, unable to stop.

Finally, half dead, he reaches a pawn shop on 120th St., and
finds the answer to his crucifixion. Two men in dark suits
with black bowlers and prayer books under their arms watch
him as he rattles the closed gate of the pawn shop, almost
out of his mind.

1ST MAN

What's the matter with you?

DON

Why are they all closed? They're all
closed, every one of them.

1ST MAN

Sure they are. It's Yom Kippur.

DON

It's what?

1ST MAN

It's Yom Kippur, a Jewish holiday.

DON

It is.

That makes sense to him. Or does it?

DON

What are you talking about? How about Kelly's? How about Gallagher's?

1ST MAN

They're closed too. We've got an agreement. They keep closed on Yom Kippur and we don't open on St. Patrick's.

The two men stand grinning.

DON

(Almost weeping)

That's a good joke. That's funny, that's very funny.

He picks up the typewriter, turns and starts walking back. THE CAMERA goes slowly up to a sidewalk clock with a diadem of three balls, which stands outside the hock shop. The time is twenty minutes of one.

VERY SLOW DISSOLVE

TO:

C-9 THE CLOCK IN NAT'S BAR

It says five minutes of four. THE CAMERA PANS DOWN. Nat is at the bar. He and two or three customers are listening to race results on a little radio. Don drags himself in, drenched in sweat, his breath as short and agonized as that of a dying man. He goes to the end of the bar closest the door, hoists the typewriter on it with a final awful effort, leans his head on it.

DON

Nat --

Nat comes to him.

NAT

What's the matter, Mr. Birnam?

DON

Let me have one, Nat. I'm dying. Just one.

NAT

I thought you were home writing that book.

DON

They're playing a trick on me. A dirty trick. Give me one, Nat. I'll pay you when I can. Just don't let me die here.

NAT

No credit, and you know it.

DON

All right, so it's charity. I'm begging you for one. Give me one.

NAT

Yeah, one.

(Pouring a drink)

One's too many and a hundred's not enough.

He shoves the drink at Don.

Don is shaking so that he can't pick up the glass. He bends down, sucks half of it, then lifts the glass, drains the rest. He holds out the empty glass to Nat, his eyes imploring.

NAT

That's all.

DON

Come on, Nat, come on. I'll let you have my typewriter.

NAT

I'm no writer. You're the writer. Now go. Go away.

DON

Nat --

NAT

I mean it. Get out.

Don takes the typewriter, drags himself out of Nat's place.

C-10 THIRD AVENUE, OUTSIDE NAT'S

Don emerges, starts dragging himself up the street towards home. As he passes the antique shop, suddenly he stops. There stands the wooden Indian Gloria spoke about, pointing up. That's where Gloria lives. Second floor, this same house. Don walks into the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

C-11 STAIRS AND HALLWAY OUTSIDE GLORIA'S DOOR

This is a really crummy Third Avenue house -- dark woodwork, paint peeling from the walls. Beside the door at the head of the stairs there are about three bells, for the several occupants of the apartment within. Don drags himself up the stairs, puts down the typewriter and inspects the name tags by the bells. One of them says: GLORIA DE VRIES. Don rings the bell beside it. From inside comes:

GLORIA'S VOICE

Who is it?

Don rings again.

GLORIA'S VOICE

Who is it?

DON

It's me.

The door is opened by Gloria. She is wearing a dressing gown and bedroom slippers. Her hair is the ruined elaborate hairdress of yesterday, and her eyes are blazing with anger.

GLORIA

Why, Mr. Birnam, as I live and breathe! Only if you're coming for our date, you're a little late, aren't you, Mr. Birnam? And if you're coming to apologize -- no thanks. Thanks a lot, but no thanks.

DON

Gloria --

GLORIA

Save your saliva. I've had enough of

you. Def, but def. What do you think I am? I break a business date. I buy an evening purse, a facial, a new hair-do. Well, maybe you can do that to your ritzy friends. You can't to me, understand?

DON

Gloria.

GLORIA

Okay, what do you want, Mr. Don Birnam Esquire?

DON

I need some money.

GLORIA

You what?

DON

Could you let me have some money?

GLORIA

Say, you out of your mind? Don't be ridic. Get out of here. Make with those stairs. Go on!

She starts back into the apartment, but Don gets her by the hand, pulls her towards him and kisses her. At first she resists, then her hand creeps up to the back of his neck, clutches it hungrily.

GLORIA

I was waiting half the night, like it was the first date I ever had. And the other half I was crying.

(She looks at him)

How much money?

DON

Could you let me have ten or five, or something?

GLORIA

I'll see.

She slips into the apartment, leaving the door about three inches ajar. Don leans against the door jamb, breathing

heavily.

After a couple of seconds Gloria reappears with a wallet. She takes five dollars out, gives it to him. Don takes it with a shaking hand.

GLORIA
(noticing)
You look awful sick, honey. You got
a fever or something?

She brushes his forehead with the back of her hand.

DON
I'm all right now.

He takes her hand and kisses it. Gloria looks at him, then at her hand.

GLORIA
Thank you a lot. You do really like
me a little, don't you, honey?

DON
Why, natch, Gloria. Natch.

He bends, picks up the typewriter and starts downstairs. Gloria looks after him. From inside the apartment comes:

NAGGING WOMAN'S VOICE
Gloria, where are you?

GLORIA
Coming.

She reenters the apartment, closing the door.

C-12 STAIRCASE - GLORIA'S HOUSE

Don is coming down, holding the banister with his left hand, the typewriter in his right. Up the staircase comes a little girl about seven, running a stick along the spindles of the banister and singing the Hut Sut Song. The sound makes Don wince, and as the child gives no sign of yielding precedence to him, he switches the typewriter to his other hand and leans against the stair wall.

The child passes him. As Don goes on, he slips, starts falling, clutches a light bracket trying to check his fall.

It pulls from the wall under his weight and he falls, clutching the typewriter, down the long flight of stairs. A terrible, back-breaking fall.

The little girl stands horrified, then starts crying and runs up the stairs. For an instant Don lies at the foot of the stairs, still clutching the typewriter. His hat has fallen off. He struck his head. It is in wild pain. He gets to his knees, to his feet, lunges towards the door to the street, taking the five dollars from his pocket.

C-13 THIRD AVENUE

Don comes out of Gloria's house, staggers towards Nat's bar, the typewriter in one hand, the five dollars in the other.

DON

Nat! I've got money now, Nat, I've got money!

The fall has been too much for him. He sinks to his knees, drags himself a few feet.

DON

I need a straight one, Nat! Quick, quick!

He collapses. People become aware of him -- one, two, four. A crowd closes in.

Don lies on the sidewalk, looking up helplessly. His eyes are dim. He tries to hold the money up but is too weak. His hand drops back. The ring of faces looks down at him, among them the familiar face of Nat.

DON

Nat. I got the money, Nat.

There is the clang of an ambulance, the shriek of brakes. The faces part to let two stretcher-bearers bend over Don and take him on a stretcher.

Don is carried to the ambulance as the crowd watches.

The doors of the ambulance are closed. The ambulance starts off, bell ringing like mad.

Nat has picked up the typewriter and looks after the ambulance, his eyes full of pity.

C-14 INT. MOVING AMBULANCE

Don lies half-conscious, his eyes staring through the ambulance window.

C-15 TO C-25 OUT OF THE AMBULANCE WINDOW - (TRANSPARENCIES)

Fleeting impressions of a wild 'U' turn on Third Avenue -- the elevated, the Chrysler Building, the tall midtown structures, the lower houses of downtown, a high iron fence, the entrance of Bellevue Hospital.

C-26 DON - IN THE AMBULANCE

His eyes close. He loses consciousness.

FADE OUT:

END OF SEQUENCE "C"

SEQUENCE "D"

FADE IN:

D-1 A WIRE BASKET WITH FOUR MILK BOTTLES IN IT

moving away from the CAMERA. Gradually we see that it is in the hand of a milkman ascending the stairs of the Birnam apartment house. He leaves a bottle by the door of the rear apartment on the third floor, one in front of Mrs. Deveridge's, then starts up to the fourth floor.

As he gets halfway up, he stops momentarily in surprise.

In the embrasure by the banister at the top of the stairs, wrapped in her leopard coat, is Helen St. James, dozing wearily. Beyond her is the door to the Birnam apartment, Helen's note still pinned to the panel, two milk bottles and the newspapers of the last two days on the threshold.

The milkman resumes his walk, careful not to wake up the young lady. He deposits a milk bottle beside the others and descends carefully. As he reaches the third floor, Mrs. Deveridge, in a kimono, has just opened her door and is taking in her milk bottle.

MRS. DEVERIDGE
(Briskly)

Good morning.

The milkman gestures to her not to speak so loudly, then makes a mysterious gesture of the thumb indicating the upper hall. Mrs. Deveridge looks up. The milkman proceeds down the stairs. Mrs. Deveridge sets down the milk bottle and goes up the stairs. As she goes, she calls sharply.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Anything wrong up there? Anything wrong?

Helen wakens at the first syllable, orientates herself as to where she is, and gets up.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Are you all right?

HELEN

I'm fine, thank you.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Have you been here all night?

HELEN

I've been waiting for Mr. Birnam.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Mr. Don Birnam?

HELEN

Yes. I suppose he must have stayed overnight with -- some friends. He has some friends on Long Island.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Now, now, what kind of story is that?

HELEN

I beg your pardon?

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Look, I'm his landlady. I know what goes on in this house. I know Mr. Don Birnam. I knew all about him the first week they moved here, three years ago. Heard those bottles rattle in their garbage can. I know all about you. You're Don Birnam's girl.

I also know he's not staying with any friends in Long Island. He's off on another toot and you know I'm darned right. Now come on down and I'll make you some breakfast.

HELEN

I don't care for any breakfast, nor do I care for that kind of talk, even supposing you were right.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Which I am. Now you're going to have some coffee.

They start downstairs, Mrs. Deveridge talking as they descend.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

I could have kicked him out fifty times. The last when two taxi drivers dumped him into the entrance hall, out cold on the floor, with all my tenants going in and out, and children leaving for school.

HELEN

Oh please, please!

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Well, I didn't put him out, not as long as his brother could pay the rent. You couldn't help liking him anyway. He was so good-looking, he had such nice manners. He always had a little joke.

HELEN

Stop talking about him as if he were dead.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Did I? I didn't mean to. Hope it wasn't bad luck.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-2 THE ALCOHOLIC WARD

We start on Don Birnam's face. He is lying on a cot, his eyes closed. He has a three-day growth of beard. His face has the pallor and immobility of death.

Over the shot come curious sounds of moaning, of incoherent mumbling, of slippered feet shuffling along a concrete floor, of a mysterious metallic chattering.

Don isn't dead. The sounds reach his ears at last. His eyes open for a second. Then his gaze is directed emptily upward.

D-3 THE BILE-COLORED CEILING OF A LARGE ROOM

Over it the same strange noises. Don's eyes (i.E. THE CAMERA) slowly descend the bile-colored walls, broken by opaque leaded-glass windows and the large glassed swinging door leading to an outer room. At last the nature of the room itself is revealed. It is filled with rows of strangely low cots, about thirty of them, standing on dwarf legs. Eight of them are occupied by men whose ages range from 20 to 60. Six of them are white, two of them colored, All are unshaven and dressed in shabby flannel hospital pajamas.

Don's dull eyes don't quite comprehend. His head aches furiously. In the cot next him is a man about 50, burrowing into the mattress in drunken sleep, his mouth fallen open. In the cot opposite him, a very thin young fellow lies shaking and sweating profusely. His entire frame, all of it, trembles as if a fine motor operated somewhere beneath the mattress itself.

On the other side of Don's cot, a huge negro lies babbling incoherently. No words are audible, save now and then a number. His voice has the sound of infinite worry.

Against the wall, not far from Don, stands a man about 30, in a faded terry-cloth bathrobe. He has an incredibly sensitive face. One ear is bandaged. He looks as though he wanted to crawl into the wall from shame. The rest of the men in the cots are sleeping lumps.

Don addresses the man standing against the wall.

DON
What's this place?

The man looks at Don but doesn't answer.

DON

Hey, you, what's this place?

The man stands staring at him, terrified.

DON
I'm talking to you.

The man drifts away eerily.

From the opposite direction comes a male nurse. He is a robust guy with a sarcastic mouth. He makes constantly with the jokes, all of them at the listener's expense. His name is BIM.

BIM
Good morning, merry sunshine. How's your head?

DON
Where am I? What is this?

BIM
This? This is the Hangover Plaza.

DON
What hospital is this?

BIM
Alcoholic Ward. How's the head?

DON
It aches.

BIM
We thought you'd fractured her till we seen the X-rays. All in one piece. Just a concussion.

DON
Why did they put me in the Alcoholic Ward?

BIM
Are you kidding? We took a peek at your blood. Straight applejack. Ninety-six proof.

DON
What day is this?

BIM

Sunday.

(He holds out the key-
ring)

These yours? They fell out of
somebody's pocket. You and the colored
fellow was being undressed at the
same time.

DON

They're mine.

Bim throws them at him.

DON

Are you a doctor?

BIM

Nope. I'm a nurse. Name of Dolan.
They call me Bim. You can call me
Bim.

He gets a pad and pencil from his pocket.

BIM

What's your name?

DON

Birnam.

BIM

What kind of Birnam?

DON

Don Birnam.

BIM

Where do you live?

DON

Two hundred and nine East Fif --
Say, what do you need that for?

BIM

For the post card.

DON

What post card?

BIM

To your folks, so's they'll know where honey-boy is and where they can pick him up when he's feeling better.

DON

No address.

BIM

Okay. We'll get it out of the telephone book, or the directory, or maybe you've got it in your wallet.

DON

(On his feet)

No post card. Understand? Nobody's going to pick me up.

BIM

The management insists. If we let you guys go home alone a lot of you don't go home. You hit the nearest bar and bounce right back. What we call the Quick Ricochet.

DON

Listen, I'm as well as you are. I can leave right now.

BIM

You think so?

DON

Where are my clothes?

BIM

Downstairs.

DON

How do I get out of this place?

BIM

(Pointing to the glass doors)

Right through here.

Don has risen. He is wearing flannel pajamas like all the

rest of the patients. There are canvas slippers on his feet. He is not quite as steady on his pins as he thought. However he manages to make the swinging glass door.

Bim stands quietly watching him, a great big grin on his face.

D-4 THE ANTE-ROOM

It is L-shaped, about fourteen feet wide. Along the walls are benches and a collection of wheel-chairs. Sitting on them and milling aimlessly around, are some thirty alcoholics. They wear terry-cloth bathrobes over their pajamas, canvas slippers on their feet. They are well on their way to normality, but they are still not a pretty sight -- unshaven, bunged-up, shame-faced.

In the listless, burned-out collection, Don is the only person who moves with purpose. He scarcely notices the men as he passes them, intent on finding the door. He goes around the bend of the ell and there is the door, a heavy wooden one with a grated peep-hole and beside it a uniformed guard. Don goes to the door, tries to open it.

GUARD

Where do you think you're going?

DON

To get my clothes.

GUARD

You got your discharge?

DON

My what?

GUARD

Your release?

DON

I'm all right. Let me out.

At this moment the door is opened by another male nurse, carrying a pile of clean sheets and pillow cases. Don tries to take advantage of the opening of the door to get out, but the guard pulls him by the arm, while the entering nurse locks the door with his own key.

GUARD

Go on, get back.

DON
Keep your hands off me.

Over the shot comes:

BIM'S VOICE
Birnam!

Don turns, At the bend of the corridor stands Bim, with a tumbler of medicine in his hand.

BIM
Come here, Birnam.

Don approaches him slowly.

DON
Is this a jail?

BIM
Well, this department -- it's kind
of halfway hospital, halfway jail,
but we run it more like a flophouse.

He guides Don back toward the ward, CAMERA AHEAD OF THEM.

DON
Listen, Bim, in my clothes there's
five dollars. That's for you if only
you won't send that post card.

BIM
Nothing doing.

DON
I don't want anybody to know.

BIM
Listen, your folks might as well get
used to our little post cards,

DON
What are you talking about?

BIM
There'll be more of them, You'll be
back.

DON

Shut your face.

BIM

Listen, I can pick an alky with one eye shut. You're one and you'll come back. They all do.

He points at a man in a wheel-chair,

BIM

Him, for instance. He turns up every month, just as sure as the gas bill.

(He points at another man)

And him there. That's another repeater. This is his forty-fifth time. Big executive in the advertising business, A lovely fellow. Been coming here ever since 1927. Good old prohibition days. You should have seen the place then. Say, this is nothing. Back then we had really a turnover. Standing room only. Prohibition! That's what started half these guys off. Whoopee!

They have reached the ward by now.

D-5 THE WARD

Bim seats Don on his bed.

BIM

Now lie down like a good boy and drink this.

DON

What is it?

BIM

Doctor's orders. It'll calm you down.

DON

I don't want it.

BIM

You better take it. Come the night

there's apt to be a little floor
show around here. Might get on your
nerves.

DON

Floor show?

BIM

Didn't you ever have the D.T.'s?

DON

No.

BIM

You will, brother.

DON

Not me.

BIM

Want to make a small bet? You're
just a freshman. Wait till you're a
sophomore. That's when you start
seeing the little animals.

(He holds out the
drink)

Drink it.

DON

I don't want it.

BIM

That stuff about pink elephants,
that's the bunk. It's little animals.
Little tiny turkeys in straw hats.
Midget monkeys that come through the
key-holes. See that guy in the corner?

He points to the man with the sensitive face, who stands
against the wall.

BIM

With him it's beetles. Comes the
night, he sees beetles crawling all
over him. Has to be dark, though.
It's like the doctor was saying to
me, "Delirium is a disease of the
night." Well, good night.

And on the grinning face of Bim,

DISSOLVE TO:

D-6 THE WARD - (NIGHT)

It is lighted by a faint blue light, but the lights are on in the anteroom and some light comes through the glass doors. There are the sounds of a ward full of drunken men -- sighs, heavy breathing, snoring, babbling, moaning. On his cot lies Don, his eyes wide open. Suddenly there comes a sharper sound -- a violent slapping of a bed. Don pivots in the direction of the sound.

On a cot in the corner is the man with the sensitive face and the addiction to beetles. He is slapping wildly at his bed, moaning. He rises and begins to slap the wall and scream.

Don stares at him through the dimness.

Through the glass doors come two male nurses with flashlights. They run to the cot of the D.T. victim. There is a wild scrabble as he fights them off. One of the nurses races back to the door and calls:

NURSE

Straitjacket! And the doctor!

By now, from several other beds in the ward comes demented screaming. A third nurse races in, throws a straitjacket to the first nurse, hurries to one of the other beds.

Seen through the glass doors, a doctor comes running down the ante-room, followed by another male nurse with a cart on which are hypodermic syringes, etc. The doctor must have been in another building, because over his shoulders is flung a dark blue overcoat. He enters the ward and dashes in the direction of the beetle patient. As he goes, he tosses the overcoat on the empty cot next Don.

Don looks after the doctor, then is fascinated by the coat lying beside him. In the corner the three nurses and the doctor are working over the beetle patient, the doctor giving him a hypo, the nurses getting him into the straitjacket. The ward is now really going off like a bunch of firecrackers.

DOCTOR

(To the nurses)

Get him up to the violent ward.

From the cot on the other side of the ward, the third male nurse calls:

3RD MALE NURSE

Help me with this one, will you,
Doc?

The doctor goes to him while the nurses drag the beetle patient through the swing door into the ante-room.

Don slips from his bed and, crouching on the floor, pulls the doctor's coat from the cot and, holding it tight, crawls to the swinging glass doors and slides through them.

D-7 THE LIGHTED ANTE-ROOM

It is empty save for the two nurses, who are leading the beetle patient around the bend of the ell. In a crouching position, Don makes his way down the ante-room, holding the coat close. At the bend he looks.

The two nurses with the beetle patient have reached the outer door, beside which stands a night guard.

1ST NURSE

Violent ward. Get the elevator.

The guard opens the door and leads the way. The nurses drag the patient out.

Don makes his way to the door, glances through the peephole, then sneaks out.

D-8 CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE WARD

The guard, the two nurses and the patient are at the elevator. Don sneaks behind them, through the door to the fire stairs.

D-9 FIRE STAIRS

Don runs cautiously down, putting the coat on as he goes. He feels something in the pocket, takes out a package of cigarettes, matches, a couple of nickels. He hurries down the stairs.

D-10 GROUND FLOOR CORRIDOR OF HOSPITAL

A guard stands at the steps leading from the main entrance to the psychiatric hospital. He is talking with three female nurses. Don slides behind them and out the entrance, which is by now grey with the cold dawn.

D-11 EXT. ENTRANCE TO PSYCHIATRIC WARD

Don comes out, orientates himself quickly, runs through the gate and up the deserted street.

D-12 A STREET IN THE 20'S

Deserted except for a water wagon. Don runs up it toward the entrance of the elevated.

D-13 THE STAIRS OF THE ELEVATED

Don runs up them just as a train rattles in. THE PANNING CAMERA catches the train as it leaves for uptown.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-14 DON - IN THE ELEVATED (PROCESS)

He sits watching the first rays of sunlight strike the tall buildings in the East 40's. The train comes to a stop and Don gets up.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-15 43RD STREET - ABOUT 6:30 IN THE MORNING

Don comes from the elevated, hurries down the street. CAMERA PANS with him. Don stops in front of a shop. On its window is painted LIQUOR AND WINES, and a couple of bottles are in the foreground. It is closed. Don crosses the street and stations himself in front of the building opposite, leaning against an iron railing.

Elderly people pass him and go up some steps. Slowly Don becomes aware that he is standing in front of a church and the people are going to morning mass.

THE CAMERA PANS up the church to the cross on its gable, then SWINGS ACROSS to the Chrysler Building opposite, now bathed in bright sunlight. As the CAMERA PANS along the clear sky,

DISSOLVE:

D-16

THE CAMERA CONTINUES DOWN to the one-story building which houses the liquor shop. It is 9 o'clock by now and the owner, a middle-aged man in hat, coat and muffler, is just unlocking the door.

Don, tormented by the long wait, sees him open it and starts to cross the street.

D-17 INT. THE LIQUOR STORE

The proprietor enters, hangs up his hat, takes off his muffler and is about to take off his coat when Don comes in. The scene between the two is played very quietly.

DON

I want a quart of rye. Quick.

PROPRIETOR

All right if I take off my coat first?

DON

No.

The proprietor senses that there is something wrong. He looks at Don. As his gaze reaches Don's pajama trousers and canvas slippers. Don speaks.

DON

No cracks, no questions. Just a quart of rye.

The proprietor grasps that this is no joking matter. He picks up a bottle.

PROPRIETOR

That'll be two fifteen.

DON

Give it to me.

PROPRIETOR

Two fifteen.

DON

Come on. I need that liquor, I want it, I'm going to get it. I'm going to walk out of here with that quart of rye, understand. One way or another.

There is murder in his eyes. The proprietor is completely under the spell of that terrible glance. He hands over the bottle. Don takes it and walks out. The proprietor takes a few steps toward the door as if he were about to summon help and catch Don, then he thinks better of it. With a what-the-hell gesture, he starts taking off his coat.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-18 EXT. THE BIRNAM APARTMENT HOUSE

Don, holding the bottle under his blue coat, slips quietly past Mrs. Wertheim's laundry and into the entranceway. He looks inside, to be sure he is not observed, then fishes the keys from his pajama pocket, where Bim dropped them, and opens his mail box. The post card is there. He takes it out, crumples it and, putting it in the pocket of his over-coat, goes inside the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-19 INT. THE BIRNAM APARTMENT

Don enters, looks around the apartment, which is still in utter disorder. The electric lights, burning on heedlessly, offend him and he snaps off the light switch. Automatically he takes the chain to hook it into its socket, but misses the socket. The chain slips down and dangles.

Don, not noticing, walks to his big chair. On the small table next it stand the three empty bottles. He sweeps them to the floor. He takes the new bottle from his pocket and, sinking into the big chair, starts opening it.

On the desk behind him, the telephone starts ringing. He doesn't seem to hear it. Without winking an eyelash, he pours his glass half full, lifts it so that glass and hand obscure his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-20 THE APARTMENT (NIGHT)

In the dark sits Don, passed out. The bottle next him is four-fifths empty. He opens his eyes, still in a half-stupor, stares straight before him. Out of the corner of one eye he sees something and slowly and with difficulty turns his head.

In the wall above the couch, close to the door, there is a hole in the plaster, as if left by a large nail carelessly withdrawn so that some of the plaster went with it. Out of the hole peers a small mouse.

At first Don draws back, repelled, but the mouse is such a friendly, harmless creature that after a moment his face relaxes and he half smiles at it.

Just as he does so, from the direction of the window there whirs past him a strange winged thing. It is a bat, swooping in slow loops around the room. Don crouches into the back of his chair, staring in wild distaste. The top of the bat's hooked wing nicks his forehead as it speeds in swift but fluttering flight straight at the mouse.

Don stiffens against the back of his chair.

The bat has made another swoop and spread its wings over the mouse. Beneath those black wings some hideous pygmy struggle is going on. Apparently the bat has seized the mouse in its claws.

Don gives a cry of horror.

Now from behind the struggling wings comes a spurt of blood.

Don cries out so hard his throat seems to burst apart, buries his horrified eyes in the back of his chair.

From downstairs comes the barking of Mrs. Deveridge's dog.

D-21 STAIRCASE TO THE FOURTH FLOOR AND THIRD FLOOR LANDING

Mrs. Deveridge stands about four steps up, looking at the door to the Birnam apartment. She must have been listening from Don's first scream. Sophie, standing beside her, is barking wildly. Beyond her, the door to her apartment is open.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Shut up, Sophie! Shut up!

Dragging Sophie after her, she hurries into her apartment.

D-22 LITTLE ENTRANCE HALL OF MRS. DEVERIDGE'S APARTMENT

The telephone is on the table by the door, a memorandum pad beside it. Mrs. Deveridge picks up the phone and, glancing at the pad, dials a number.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

(Into phone)

Miss St. James?... He's back. He's upstairs... This is Mrs. Deveridge. He's back! In the apartment. I heard him yelling. He's just got to remember that there are other tenants... Miss St. James? Miss St. James?

Helen has obviously hung up. Mrs. Deveridge, a little indignant, does the same.

DISSOLVE TO:

D-23 INT. BIRNAM APARTMENT

Don still cowers in his chair, his face hidden in his arms, his breathing heavy with terror. From outside comes the sound of footsteps racing upstairs toward his door, then the door-bell: short, short, long short.

Don's eyes turn slowly toward the door. His brain is still functioning, for there is new terror in those eyes.

D-24 EXT. DOOR OF BIRNAM APARTMENT

Helen stands outside, ringing the bell. No answer.

HELEN

Don, open the door. Open it, please.

Still no answer and she raps on the door.

D-25 DON, INT. APARTMENT

He sits staring at the door, holding his breath not to betray his presence.

HELEN'S VOICE

Don, won't you let me in? I know
you're there. Please open the door.

Don doesn't move, doesn't answer.

D-26 HELEN, AT THE DOOR

HELEN

Don, don't you hear me? I want to
help you.

She bangs on the door, rattling the doorknob helplessly.

D-27 DON

staring at the door.

HELEN'S VOICE

I won't go away, Don. Do I have to
get the janitor with the pass key to
let me in?

Don sits bathed in sweat, tears of terror in his eyes.

D-28 HELEN AT THE DOOR

She turns and runs down the stairs. Mrs. Deveridge stands in
her door, peering up. She hurries to the stairwell and calls
down it.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Dave! Dave!

DAVE'S VOICE

Yes, Mrs. Deveridge?

MRS. DEVERIDGE

Come on up with the pass key.

D-29 DON, INT. APARTMENT

His eyes are on the door. Now they focus ON THE DOOR CHAIN.
It is not hooked in place but hangs limply. Don realizes
he's forgotten to put it up, but it's not too late, is it?
With a desperate effort he flings himself to the floor and
starts inching his way to the door.

D-30 STAIRS LEADING TO THE FOURTH FLOOR

Dave, the janitor, a ring with labelled keys on it in his hand, leads Helen and Mrs. Deveridge up the stairs.

D-31 INT. BIRNAM APARTMENT

Don is almost at the door. There is the sound of ascending footsteps. With his last strength Don raises himself against the door, stretches out his hand, gets the door chain, tries to slip it in its notch, but misses. The foot-steps have stopped by now. There is the noise of a key being pushed into the key-hole. Don tries again, but by this time the door is open. Don throws all his weight against the door but it is no use.

D-32 OUTSIDE THE DOOR

Dave has opened the door and holds it open as far as he can. Helen slips into Dave's place in the doorway. From behind the door comes the sound of Don's agonized breathing.

HELEN

(Holding the doorknob)

Thank you very much.

MRS. DEVERIDGE

You'd better let us come too. You can't go in there alone.

HELEN

I'll be fine, thank you.

She stands waiting until Dave and Mrs. Deveridge start downstairs.

D-33 INT. THE APARTMENT

Don crouches behind the door. A shaft of light comes from the corridor. Helen enters, closing the door behind her. She kneels down beside Don.

HELEN

Don, darling --

DON

Go away, Helen.

HELEN

I'm here to help you, Don.

DON

No, no.

HELEN

Look at you. How long is it since you've had anything to eat?

Don doesn't answer.

HELEN

You want to get up, Don. Put your hand on my shoulder.

Don blindly does as she says.

HELEN

You'll have a bath. I'll help you shave. You'll eat and sleep, and when Wick comes back everything will be all right.

They are beside the light switch. Helen snaps it on.

DON

No, Helen, no!

HELEN

What's the matter, Don?

DON

The wall. Don't look.

HELEN

What wall?

Don gestures toward the spot where the bat and the mouse were.

DON

The mouse and the bat.

HELEN

What mouse? What bat?

DON

That hole in the wall --

HELEN

There isn't any hole in the wall.
Look.

She leads Don toward it. He stares at the smooth, unstained wall.

HELEN
See?

Don runs his hand over the wall.

HELEN
You had some kind of a nightmare.

She leads him into the bedroom, talking as they go.

HELEN
Stop shaking, Don. Everything will
be all right. I'll stay right with
you.

She seats him on the bed. Don is panting hard, completely oblivious of the fact that Helen is in the room.

DON
Little animals. It's always little
animals. That's what Bim said.

HELEN
You're not making much sense.

She turns on the bed lamp.

DON
And do you know what Nat said about
the ending? Like this.
(He snaps his fingers
vertically)
Or like that.
(He snaps them
horizontally)

He goes on repeating the gesture, growing despair in his eyes.

FADE OUT:

END OF SEQUENCE "D"

SEQUENCE "E"

FADE IN:

E-1 A WINDOW IN THE BIRNAM APARTMENT - TUESDAY MORNING

It is raining outside and from the eaves comes a steady drip in the exact rhythm in which Don snapped his fingers -- "like this, or like that, like this or like that."

THE CAMERA PANS to include the whole living room. Helen lies asleep on the couch, using the pillow and the comforter from Wick's bed. She is wearing Wick's foulard dressing gown. The room is all tidy now. On the armchair near the kitchen door lies Helen's leopard coat.

In the door to the bedroom stands Don. Now that he is shaved, we can see how pale his face is. He wears the dark suit (the one he wore to the opera) and as his eyes shift from Helen to the coat, he is just tying his tie. He has not yet buttoned the buttons on the points of his soft collar. Very cautiously he begins to tiptoe toward the chair. He picks up the leopard coat and starts towards the entrance door. He opens it carefully but it does creak a little.

Just as he is slipping out, comes --

HELEN'S VOICE

Don! Don!

Don shuts the door behind him. In the next second Helen hurries into the shot. She is barefooted, just wearing the foulard dressing gown. She flings open the door and runs out.

E-2 FOURTH FLOOR LANDING AND STAIRS

Helen runs to the banister and looks down. Don has already reached the second floor and is hurrying down the stairs, the fur coat over his arm, not paying any attention to Helen.

HELEN

Where are you going, Don?

DISSOLVE TO:

E-3 EXT. PAWN SHOP, THIRD AVENUE - LIGHT RAIN

Don is just coming from it. He walks down the street about ten steps when Helen comes up to him. She wears the dress she wore last night. No hat, no coat.

HELEN

All right, Don. Give me the pawn ticket.

Don disregards her, tries to go on. Helen overtakes him and blocks his way.

DON

No scene, please.

HELEN

No scene. Just give me the pawn ticket.

DON

I don't want you to go in there now claiming it. It would look queer.

HELEN

You're ashamed of what the pawn broker may think, is that it? It doesn't matter what I think.

DON

Wick'll get you back your coat.

HELEN

You couldn't have taken my bracelet or my pay check? It had to be that coat?

DON

You mean the one that brought us together? Stop being sentimental.

HELEN

I have, Don, I assure you. It's finished. It's dead. For three years they couldn't talk me out of you. I was the only one who really understood you. I knew there was a core of something... And there was a core, and now I know what it is. A sponge. And to soak it full you'll do anything ruthless, selfish, dishonest.

DON

I asked you not to make a scene.

HELEN

Then give me the ticket.

DON

No, Helen, not now I told you. Cut it out.

HELEN

I don't want the money. You can get as drunk as you like for all I care.

DON

Thank you.

He goes on. Helen stands looking after him for a moment, then turns angrily and proceeds toward the pawn shop.

E-4 INTERIOR PAWN SHOP #1

The pawn broker has put Helen's coat on a hanger and is brushing it. Helen enters, very matter-of-fact.

HELEN

A gentleman was here a while ago. How much did you give him for that coat?

PAWN BROKER

Huh?

HELEN

I want it back. It's my coat.

PAWN BROKER

It's your coat?

HELEN

It's all right. He had my permission. How much did you give him?

PAWN BROKER

He didn't want any money. He wanted to swap it.

HELEN

For what?

PAWN BROKER

Something he hocked here a long while
back.

HELEN

What?

PAWN BROKER

A gun. Now if you want that coat I
can --

Helen is already out of the shop and running down the rainy
street.

DISSOLVE:

E-5 DON'S DESK

On it lies a revolver and the second page of a letter on
which Don is writing:

...But amid all the grimness can we share one little joke,
dear Wick: I did finish something, didn't I? Goodbye. Don.

E-6 THE BIRNAM APARTMENT

Don is seated at the desk. As he has been out in the rain,
his hair is still a little damp. He puts down the pen, gets
up, stands the letter conspicuously on the desk, picks up
the revolver, gets the cartridges from the drawer and loads
the gun. With a last look at the room, he walks into the
bathroom.

Don stands and looks at himself in the mirror, the gun in
his hand. He notices the unbuttoned points of his collar and
with a rueful smile at the funny timing of his urge for
tidiness, buttons one. As he is buttoning the second, there
is a sound from outside. Startled, Don puts the gun into the
empty wash bowl.

The door is being opened. Dave, the janitor, is letting Helen
in. She looks around wildly. She is breathing hard from her
race to get there. There is rain on her hair and her face,
and her dress is wet.

Don comes from the bathroom. Helen stands staring at him,
wiping the rain from her face, and maybe some tears too.

DON
What is it, Helen?

HELEN
(To the janitor)
Thank you very much.

DAVE
That's all right, Miss.

He leaves, closing the door. Don and Helen are alone. During the following scene, Helen's eyes are constantly on the lookout for the gun.

DON
What's the matter? Come on.

HELEN
Nothing's the matter, except the rain's worse and I can't get a taxi. Perhaps you can lend me a coat under the circumstances.

DON
Sure. How about my raincoat?

He takes it from the hook.

HELEN
Funny, after all these years we should wind up just as we met -- I with your raincoat --

DON
And I with your leopard coat. I always got the best of the bargain. Goodbye, Helen.

HELEN
Goodbye.

She stands looking about.

DON
What are you looking for?

HELEN
I just thought if you had anything

for my head --

DON
Would you care to wear my black
bowler?

HELEN
Some old scarf or something.

DON
All right.

He steps to the chest of drawers in the bedroom.

Helen, looking around desperately, sees something reflected
in the shaving mirror: THE GUN IN THE WASH BOWL.

Before she can step toward it, Don is back with the scarf.

DON
Here you are.

HELEN
Thanks.

DON
Well, goodbye.

HELEN
Oh, Don, there was still some whiskey
left in the bottle when I cleaned up
last night.

DON
Was there?

HELEN
Would you like to know where I put
the bottle?

DON
No.

HELEN
Don't you want a drink, Don?

DON
No.

Helen goes to the umbrella stand, takes out the bottle.

HELEN

Just one. Look, it's right here.

She puts down the raincoat and the scarf and goes to the kitchen for a glass.

DON

What are you up to?

HELEN

Nothing. I'm just ashamed of the way I talked to you, like a narrow-minded, insensitive, dried-up, small-town teetotaller.

DON

I don't feel like a drink. Not now, I told you.

HELEN

Come on, Don. Just one. I'll have one with you. I'm in no hurry. This is my easy day at the office.

DON

Helen, there are a few things I want to put in order before Wick comes.

HELEN

Let me stay.

DON

No.

He picks up the raincoat and the scarf.

DON

I'm sorry. You'll have to run along.

He bends down for a kiss. Helen stands looking at him.

DON

Don't let me bend for nothing.

Helen holds out the glass.

HELEN

You need this, Don. Drink it. I want you to drink it. I'll get you some more. I'll get you all you want.

DON
What kind of talk is that?

HELEN
It's just that I'd rather have you drunk than dead.

DON
Who wants to be dead?

HELEN
Stop lying to me.

She turns and runs into the bathroom and picks up the gun. Don follows her.

DON
Give it to me.

Helen holds it behind her.

DON
Helen!

Helen turns toward the window, lifting her arm to throw the gun out. Don catches her arm and twists it.

DON
Let go!

Helen drops the gun.

Don picks up the gun.

DON
Go on now.

He half pushes, half leads her into the entrance hall.

DON
And no fuss, please. Don't call in the neighbors. It won't do any good, I promise you.

HELEN

I won't. You've made up your mind.
Could you tell me exactly why?

DON

Because it's best all around, for
everybody. For you, for Wick, for
me.

HELEN

That's not true. We love you, Wick
and I.

DON

All right. Just for me, then. Selfish
again.

HELEN

That's a sad final word, Don.

DON

Look at it this way, Helen. This
business is just a formality. Don
Birnam is dead already. He died over
this weekend.

HELEN

Did he? What did he die of?

DON

Of a lot of things. Of alcohol, of
moral anemia, of fear, of shame, of
D.T.'s.

HELEN

Oh, that Don Birnam. And now you
want to kill the other one.

DON

What other?

HELEN

There were two Dons. You told me so
yourself. Don the drunk and Don the
writer.

DON

Let's not go back to a fancy figure
of speech. There's one Don, and he's
through.

A wave of weakness overcomes him and he sags against the door.

HELEN
(With a gesture toward
him)

Don --

He pushes her away.

DON
I'm all right. I have enough strength
left.

HELEN
I know you have. I can see it. Don't
waste it on pulling a trigger, Don.

DON
Let me get it over. Or do you want
me to give you another one of my
promises that I never keep?

HELEN
I don't want you to give me your
promise. I don't want you to give
your promise to anybody but Don
Birnam.

DON
To me? It's too late. I wouldn't
know how to start.

HELEN
The only way to start is to stop.
There's no cure besides just stopping.

DON
Can't be done.

HELEN
Other people have stopped.

DON
People with some purpose, with
something to do.

HELEN

You've got your talent, your ambition.

DON

Talent. Ambition. That's dead long ago. That's drowned. That's drifting around with a bloated belly on a lake of alcohol.

HELEN

It's not. You still have it.

DON

Oh, Helen, I couldn't write. What do you expect, a miracle?

HELEN

Yes, yes, yes! If I could only make you see --

The buzzer sounds.

DON

Who is it?

NAT'S VOICE

It's me, Mr. Birnam.

DON

What is it, Nat?

NAT

I got something for you.

Don goes to the door and opens it. Nat stands outside holding something under his wet raincoat.

NAT

You know when you had your accident? Well, afterwards I found this floating around on the Nile.

He pulls out Don's typewriter.

DON

Thank you, Nat.

NAT

She writes real good. I oiled her up a little. And I didn't oil her up so

you can hock her.

Helen comes up.

HELEN
I'll take it, Nat.

NAT
Hello, Miss.

Helen takes the typewriter, carries it toward the desk.

NAT
Goodbye, everybody.
(Discreetly, to Don)
How's all them lilacs in Ohio?

HELEN
Well, Don. here it is. What do you
say now?

DON
Say about what?

HELEN
This. Someone, somewhere, sent it
back. Why? Because He means you to
stay alive, because He wants you to
write. I didn't ask for a big miracle.

DON
Write! With these hands?
(He holds them out;
they are trembling)
And a brain that's all out of focus?

HELEN
It'll clear up again. You'll be well.

DON
And I'll be sitting there in front
of that white piece of paper, scared.

She puts a cigarette in his mouth, lights it.

HELEN
No you won't. You've forgotten what
it feels like to be well.

DON

And what will I write about? What?

HELEN

What you always wanted to write.

Where's that page?

(She picks it up)

"The Bottle. A Novel by Don Birnam."

What was that going to be?

DON

About a messed-up life. A man, a woman and a bottle. Nightmares, horrors, humiliations, things I want to forget.

HELEN

Put them on paper. Get rid of them that way. Tell it all, to whom it may concern. It concerns so many people, Don.

DON

Yeah.

HELEN

I'll fix us some breakfast.

She starts into the kitchen.

DON

We have quite a supply of milk.

Helen goes into the kitchen, puts the gun away, runs water into the percolator.

DON'S VOICE

You'll notice I didn't even find a first line.

HELEN

Of course you couldn't write the beginning because you didn't know the ending. Only now --

She looks into the living room and her face freezes.

Don has risen from the couch and has picked up the glass of whiskey. There's a second of hesitation, then he uses it for

an ashtray, dropping the cigarette into it.

A smile of relief comes on Helen's face.

HELEN

Only now you know the ending.

Don has sunk back on the couch again.

DON

I'll send one copy to Bim, one to that doctor who loaned me his coat, and one to Nat. Imagine Wick standing in front of a book store. A great big pyramid of my books. A Novel by Don Birnam. "That's my brother, you know."

Helen enters the shot.

HELEN

That's by my fellow. Didn't I always tell you?

DON

I'm going to put the whole weekend down, minute by minute.

HELEN

Why not?

DON

The way I stood in there, packing my suitcase...

SLOW

DISSOLVE TO:

E-7 FIRST SHOT OF THE PICTURE

Only this time in reverse: We start with Don standing on that sunny day in the bedroom, packing. THE CAMERA MOVES AWAY, GOES DOWN THE WALL to the bottle hanging there, and MOVES ON ALONG THE BACK OF THE FACADE OF THE APARTMENT to the splendid panorama of New York.

DON'S VOICE

(continuing)

Only my mind wasn't on the suitcase,

and it wasn't on the weekend. It wasn't on the shirts I was putting in, either. My mind was hanging outside the window. It was suspended about eighteen inches below the sill... And out there in that great big concrete jungle, I wonder how many others there are like me. Poor bedevilled guys, on fire with thirst. Such comical figures to the rest of the world, as they stagger blindly towards another binge, another bender, another spree...

FADE OUT:

THE END