

TRUE CRIME

Screenplay by
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Adapted from the novel by
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FIRST REVISION

May 11, 1998

FADE IN:

1 INT. SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON - CREDIT MONTAGE - NIGHT 1

A SERIES OF VERY TIGHT CLOSEUPS: a convict, FRANK BEACHUM, is being examined by a prison doctor, DOCTOR ROGER WATERS. We do not see his face until the end of the sequence. Instead we see only the parts of his body that are being examined, and from these we can tell that he is black, well-muscled, and in his late twenties. CLOSEUP ON his chest as his prison shirt (stenciled CP-133) comes off.

A stethoscope against his chest.

Dr. Waters looking down at his watch.

Second hand of the watch.

DR. WATERS (O.S.)
Sixty-five. Normal.

The prisoner's muscular arm, with a blood-pressure cuff on it. Dr. Waters rips off the cuff. Underneath is a mean-looking tattoo of a bleeding heart with a knife through it.

DR. WATERS (O.S.)
Blood pressure, one twenty over seventy-five. Normal.

The prisoner's legs. Dr. Waters taps his knee with a reflex hammer.

DR. WATERS (O.S.)
Reflexes normal.

The prisoner's mouth, open, with a tongue depressor stuck in it. The prisoner gags: "Agh!"

DR. WATERS (O.S.)
Looks fine. Healthy as a horse.

CLOSEUP of a clock on the wall: 10:17.

The face of LUTHER PLUNKITT, the San Quentin Prison warden, watching the examination, and then looking at the clock. Plunkitt is white, fortyish, and a little soft in the gut. He's seen enough in his years at San Quentin to be neither a pushover nor a martinet. To him, the exam is routine, but he's also mindful of its significance: It's the final exam before Beachum's execution in about twenty-six hours. He nods toward a guard who is sitting at a typewriter. The guard types.

CLOSEUP of the page in the typewriter. It's the prisoner's chronological.

(CONTINUED)

1

CONTINUED:

1

The guard types: "22:17 -- med exam completed."

DR. WATERS
Just one more thing, Luther.

Plunkitt looks at the doctor. Then at Beachum.

PLUNKITT
You gotta whizz in the cup, Frank. Then
we're done.

CLOSEUP of Beachum's face. We see that he is young, and that he might have been scary once -- might, in fact, have been someone's worst nightmare. Now there's something else in his face: a terrible weariness, hopelessness mingled with the struggle against fear.

As the CREDITS END, the clock on the wall ticks to 10:18.

CUT TO:

2

OMITTED

2

3 EXT. DEAD MAN'S CURVE - NIGHT 3

A stretch of parkway that swings to the left at an acute angle. A gas station, closed, is situated to the right of the turn's apex. Warning signs and blinking yellow lights.

4 INT. GORDON'S BAR - NIGHT 4

The warm wooden interior is hung with lanterns and ads for microbrews. At the bar sits STEVE EVERETT, a newspaperman with the face of a smart-ass. He has wicked eyebrows and a wicked smile. Everett is thin-waisted, broad-shouldered, and muscular from lifting weights. He is having a drink -- a non-alcoholic drink -- with MICHELLE ZIEGLER, a novice reporter who is very young, very alluring, and very ambitious. Her skirt is too short, and her lustrous eyes gleam with the superiority of the recent college graduate.

MICHELLE

Well, fuck 'em.

EVERETT

(sighing)

Oh, God. Now we're going to talk journalism.

MICHELLE

You call this journalism? You're telling me that --

EVERETT

Michelle, it's been a long weekend. People kept shooting each other. I kept writing about it...

MICHELLE

I'm serious. I've had enough of this crap. I'm going back to school, get my Ph.D. -- write things that matter.

EVERETT

Michelle, I hate to break this to you, but you're twenty-three. You don't know anything that matters.

MICHELLE

(laughing)

And fuck you too, Ev.

EVERETT

All right, pull up a shoulder. What'd they do to you?

(CONTINUED)

MICHELLE

Not they. He -- Alan. Killed my sidebar on the Frank Beachum murder. If you ask me, something about the whole case stinks anyway, but what I was trying to get at --

EVERETT

Michelle, I read that sidebar --

MICHELLE

Hey, it was good, Ev. You gotta admit. Best stuff I've written in months.

EVERETT

Oh, yeah. Wasn't that the piece about -- now don't let me fuck this up: 'the media glorified Beachum's victim in order to mask our patriarchal culture...'

MICHELLE

Which created the very violence that destroyed her! Exactly!

EVERETT

Alan shouldn't have killed it like that.

MICHELLE

Fuckin' A.

EVERETT

I would have tortured it first.

Michelle laughs in spite of herself and gives Everett a naughty look.

MICHELLE

It might've enjoyed that.

EVERETT

Honey, it would have begged for more.

The bartender, NEIL, pokes his head over the bar.

NEIL

'Nother round?

EVERETT

Yeah, Neil. Margarita for the lady, and my usual.

NEIL

Not your usual usual.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (2)

4

EVERETT
My new, improved usual.

NEIL
Virgin Mary.

EVERETT
Yeah. Heavy on the virgin.

Michelle looks at him curiously.

MICHELLE
Tell me something, Ev. If you're such a hot shit, what are you doing stuck here in Bumfuck, California?

EVERETT
(sliding closer)
Looking for love.

She lets him put his arm around her.

MICHELLE
Well, you've come to all the wrong places.

EVERETT
(closer)
Not from where I sit.

For a moment they melt into each other's arms. Then Michelle pulls away.

MICHELLE
No. Unh-unh. Not smart.

EVERETT
What's smart got to do with it?

MICHELLE
I gotta go. I can't do this. You're married and you're -- I can't do this!

She gets up and wobbles out of the bar. Everett watches her, more amused than sorry. He glances at the bartender, Neil, who is just arriving with the drinks. Neil shrugs.

NEIL
Next time.

EVERETT
(winking)
Next time for sure.

- 5 EXT. GORDON'S BAR - NIGHT (LIGHT RAIN) 5
Michelle exits into the rain, a sexy little grin on her face: "Next time for sure."
- 6 INT. MICHELLE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT (LIGHT RAIN) 6
Michelle is driving, still smiling to herself.
- 7 MICHELLE'S POV 7
THROUGH her windshield, smeared, the wipers ragged, the road barely visible.
- 8 INT. MICHELLE'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT (RAIN) 8
Michelle turns ON the RADIO. ALTERNATIVE ROCK pumps into the car. Michelle responds enthusiastically, dancing in her bucket seat, beating on the steering wheel. She's feeling good.
- 9 EXT./INT. DEAD MAN'S CURVE - NIGHT (RAIN) 9
The same angle as before. It's coming up much too quickly. The car's tire catches the edge of a retaining wall and jerks sideways.

INTERCUT WITH:
- 10 INT. MICHELLE'S CAR - NIGHT (RAIN) 10
Michelle swings the wheel violently; the car zig-zags and slides sideways into the gas station lot. The wall of the station hurtles toward us.

MICHELLE
Please!

The CAR SMASHES head-on into the wall.

Michelle rips through the windshield; the GLASS EXPLODES outward. The GRIND of METAL AGAINST METAL, and then, gradually, the NOISE SUBSIDES. The smoke settles, revealing a hole in the windshield framed by a crumpled steering column. The HISS of hot, leaking FLUIDS SLOWLY SEGUES INTO...

... the sound of a POWER MOWER.
- 11 DREAM SEQUENCE - EXT. BEACHUM'S YARD - ANGLE ON BEACHUM'S HANDS - DAY 11
Gripping a lawn mower.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

BEACHUM'S POV

Green grass, sunshine, a small white house against a blue sky. BONNIE, a pleasant-looking young black woman, calls to him from the barbecue. In her hand is a small brown object, which she waggles back and forth. From under the sound of the mower, the COOING of a BABY. We LOOK DOWN AND TO THE RIGHT: There's a plastic sandbox shaped like a turtle, and in it is Frank's little daughter, GAIL, whacking the sand with her shovel and cooing at her father. Beachum's gaze returns to Bonnie, still calling to him, wagging something.

BACK TO SCENE

BEACHUM

What?... Just hold on. I can't hear you.

The sound of the LAWN MOWER GRADUALLY TURNS INTO a CLACKING sound -- the sound of a TYPEWRITER.

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE.

12 ANGLE ON PRISON TYPEWRITER

We see the chronological being typed:

"6:21 -- prisoner awakes."

ANGLE ON BEACHUM'S FACE

His eyes fly open. He jerks up, looking around him.

INT. DEATH ROW - MORNING

Through the bars he sees the duty officer, REEDY, typing.

REEDY

Morning, Frank.

Beachum nods.

REEDY

Can I get you anything? Some breakfast?

Beachum sags, pulls himself up, struggles to answer.

BEACHUM

If you got, like, a roll? Some coffee?

REEDY

We'll get that right away, Frank.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: 12

Reedy types, then gets up and murmurs to another guard stationed outside the cell. Then Reedy sits down and types again. We see the words: "6:24 -- Breakfast order relayed to CO Drummond."

13 OMITTED 13

14 INT. OAKLAND TRIBUNE - PRESSROOM - MORNING 14

We're in the bowels of the building. Two large presses crank out the next edition. It's hot and noisy and dirty down here, just the way ALAN MANN likes it. Alan emerges from the cafeteria carrying an extra large Styrofoam cup of coffee. He stops to schmooze with the guys who run the presses -- newspaper guys, ink-stained and tough. Alan is tall and broad-shouldered, with a belly that hangs over his belt; he looks like an athlete gone to seed. He's the newspaper's editor-in-chief.

BOB FINDLEY, the city editor, is younger and softer. As he approaches Alan, he is wearing a neatly-pressed pink shirt and a cheerful tie; no jacket. Bob composes his face and takes a deep breath. He prides himself on being caring. Just now, he has the look of a man who is about to impart some serious news.

BOB

You hear?

ALAN

Yeah.

BOB

What a tragedy.

15 INT. ELEVATOR - MORNING 15

They enter. Alan punches "four" with his free hand and impatiently stabs at the "close door" button.

ALAN

What was she, drunk?

BOB

(a pained smile)

I don't know. It was up at -- you know, that vicious turn onto the parkway? They ought to do something about that place.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

ALAN

Do we have to cover for her? Did she have anything big on?

BOB

She had that interview with Frank Beachum at San Quentin. Then she was going to witness the execution tonight.

ALAN

Christ.

BOB

It's a little worse for Michelle, Alan.

16 INT. NEWSROOM - MORNING

16

A large, chaotic open space partitioned into smaller cubicles. Alan crosses the city section where a handful of reporters are making phone calls and pecking away at computer keyboards. Bob follows, a few paces behind.

BOB

I don't know if the warden'll go for a replacement on the interview with Beachum. But I thought I'd take Harvey off the fraud meeting and --

ALAN

Put Everett on it.

BOB

Steve? Uh, Steve's got the day off.

ALAN

Not any more he hasn't. He can do the interview, then he can witness the execution. What's-his-face, the warden down at San Quentin -- Plunkitt. Steve's dealt with him before. I can get him in.

They pass JANE MARCH, Bob's assistant. She catches his eye and offers a sympathetic look: 'What a tragedy.'

17 INT. ALAN MANN'S OFFICE - MORNING

17

Alan strides in, with Bob right behind him. Bob shuts the door. Alan stands behind his desk.

ALAN

You think Everett's an asshole.

(CONTINUED)

17

CONTINUED:

17

BOB

I don't think he's an asshole.

ALAN

You're wrong. He is an asshole. Trust me: I know him. A lot of people who're good at their jobs are assholes, Bob.

Alan plunks himself into his seat, reaches into his inside coat pocket, and removes a packet of crumb cake, which he slams down on the desk as though making a declaration. He opens his coffee and looks up expectantly at Bob.

BOB

(earnestly)

I know that, Alan. It's just, Everett thinks everything's a big investigative witch hunt. Like on that Mike Vargas piece --

ALAN

He was a drunk then. He's not now.

BOB

Right. Two months ago he was a drunk, now he's sober -- if you say so, Alan. Anyway, that's beside the point. The point is, this isn't a Steve Everett slash-and-burn job. It's a sidebar. It's an issue piece.

ALAN

(wide-eyed)

Ooh! An issue piece! Well, dog my cats!

BOB

Come on, Alan. Capital punishment -- you know. I mean, the state is putting a man to death tonight. Killing a human being.

ALAN

(enjoying this)

Oh, well, stop the presses! Hey, was Amy whatsherface, the pregnant broad old Frankie shot in the chest -- was she a human being? Is that part of the issue?

BOB

Okay, yeah. That's part of the issue.

ALAN

Crumb cake?

(CONTINUED)

BOB

No. No.

ALAN

Let me tell you something, Bob. Issues are the shit we make up to give us an excuse to run good stories. Judge grabs a female attorney's tits, that's the sex discrimination issue. Nine-year-old kills his brother with an Uzi, that's the child violence issue. People want to read about sex organs and blood. We make up issues so they don't have to feel too nasty about it.

BOB

I guess I should call Steve Everett then. Because that's his attitude exactly.

ALAN

(leaning back)

Bob, you've been here, what? Three months now? I've been working with Steve Everett for three and a half years, and let me tell you something: The guy is good, as good as I've ever seen. You know why he was kicked out of New York? You know the story?

BOB

I've heard a coupla things.

ALAN

Steve Everett busted the mayor, Bob. The mayor of fucking New York City. Steve got hold of a secret memo on a contract bribe between Hizzoner and one of the ex-borough presidents, and he ran with it in his column.

BOB

So?

ALAN

The paper tried to kill it, 'cause the owner was in bed with the mayor. So what'd Everett do? Didn't whine -- didn't back down, either. He walked.

A long silence. Bob shoves his hands in his pockets.

BOB

All right. All right, it's your paper.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (3)

17

ALAN

And, Bob -- when you send flowers to the girl's family, would you include my name? Thanks. 'Preciate it.

Bob goes out. Alan watches him for a moment, smiles and shakes his head.

ALAN

Gullible bastard.

18 INT. BATHROOM - CLOSE ON TOILET - MORNING

18

where Everett, stark naked, is emptying an ashtray. Butts fall into the bowl, and then we see hands using toilet paper to wipe out the ashes. We hear Everett's voice, as though he's talking to someone in another room.

EVERETT (O.S.)

Hey, I could have been happy in New York forever -- They were about to let me run the investigative team. That would have put me on the Pulitzer track.

He finishes the job and emerges into the adjoining bedroom.

19 INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

19

On the mussed bed, looking wondrously shapely and wondrously naked, is PATRICIA FINDLEY, Bob's wife. She watches Everett's approach admiringly, but there is something sardonic in her smile. Everett puts the ashtray on a bedside table.

EVERETT

It was a nice life -- Broadway shows, downtown clubs, Elaine's every night, veal chops up the wazoo.

He does a little dance, singing James Brown's "Got the Feeling," playing imaginary maracas.

EVERETT

'Baby, baby, baa-by. Baby, baby, baa-by. Baby, baby, baa-by.' 'Course, they never served anything like this.

He swoops down and bites Patricia on the buttock.

PATRICIA

Ooh! Now you have to kiss it and make it better.

(CONTINUED)

Everett does. And while he's still kissing:

PATRICIA

So you were the king of New York. Why are you hacking out Metro stories at the Oakland Tribune?

EVERETT

Got caught in the supply room with a seventeen-year-old desk assistant.

PATRICIA

No!

EVERETT

Yup. Turned out to be the daughter of the paper's owner. Blackballed me all over town.

PATRICIA

You bad man! What'd your wife say?

EVERETT

(not without pain)

Well, we'd just had the kid, you know. It was tough on her, but she wanted to keep us together. And when Alan said he'd take me on, I guess she figured, you know, another town, another change.

PATRICIA

You bad man. First the owner's daughter. Now the editor's wife. Do I detect a hostility toward authority figures?

EVERETT

Only the ones I work for.

PATRICIA

And is that what you're going to say in the next city, with someone else?

(imitating him)

Oh, I got caught with the editor's wife. You know how that is.

Everett gets up and begins pulling on his pants.

EVERETT

I get caught with you, I don't know how many other cities will have me.

Patricia watches him dress, affecting a pout.

(CONTINUED)

PATRICIA

So playtime's over?

EVERETT

You gotta get to work. I gotta get home. See if the wife and kid still recognize me.

PATRICIA

You're not going to tell me how awful we're being, are you?

EVERETT

Well... Bob's a decent guy. Good newspaperman. Solid editor.

PATRICIA

So this all just stinks, right? What we're doing.

EVERETT

You and me, Patricia, we're just two simple people swept away in a whirlwind of passion. Something like that.

Everett finishes putting on his shirt and bends over to give her a kiss. Then he turns away, looking for his wallet and keys.

PATRICIA

Look, it's all right. It's not like I love you or anything.

EVERETT

(smiling)

Thanks. I don't love you too.

The PHONE RINGS. She picks it up.

PATRICIA

Hello? Uh... All right...

Everett makes for the door, blowing her a kiss and mouthing a "bye." But Patricia holds up her index finger: "Wait a second."

PATRICIA

(on the phone)

Yes... yes, all right.

She hangs up and then looks at Everett, who is waiting expectantly.

(CONTINUED)

19

CONTINUED: (3)

19

PATRICIA

You won't believe this.

EVERETT

What?

PATRICIA

That was Bob.

EVERETT

What'd he want?

PATRICIA

He was looking for you.

Everett is stunned.

EVERETT

Who told him?

PATRICIA

How the hell should I know?

Everett looks at her, hard. He wheels and heads out the door.

20

OMITTED

20

21

INT. SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON - DEATHWATCH CELL - DAY

21

Plunkitt steps into the cell. Reedy stands in front of his typewriter. Plunkitt nods and turns toward the prisoner.

Beachum sits at a small table behind a wall of bars. The table is covered with several sheets of paper and a Bic pen. Beachum holds a cigarette between two of his fingers, sending a zig-zag of smoke to the ceiling. The ash has grown long. It drops to the table of its own weight. Beachum doesn't move his hand at all.

PLUNKITT

Morning, Frank.

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM

(softly,
respectfully)

Mr. Plunkitt.

PLUNKITT

Anything I can get for you? Anything
you need?

BEACHUM

No. Can't think of nothin'.

Beachum is eerily still, his eyes cast to the floor.

PLUNKITT

There're some matters I gotta discuss
with you. Figure we do it first thing,
get it out of the way.

Frank nods slowly, as if it were a very great effort.

PLUNKITT

Your dinner tonight, for one thing. It
can be pretty much anything you want.

Frank nods again. More ash falls to the floor.

PLUNKITT

You go 'head and tell Reedy here when
you decide. Now, about your personal
effects and belongings --

BEACHUM

My wife'll take 'em.

PLUNKITT

And your remains? Does that go for your
remains, too? Because if she can't
afford the funeral expenses --

BEACHUM

No, no. Her church raised some money.
It's all right.

PLUNKITT

So your wife will be claiming your
remains, then.

Frank draws a breath. He straightens slightly and his
plastic chair scrapes the floor. Plunkitt winces a bit
at the sound.

BEACHUM

Yes sir, that's right.

(CONTINUED)

PLUNKITT

Okay. Now, I want to give you some idea here of what's going to happen tonight. We'll have to ask your visitors to leave at seven P.M. You'll be given your dinner and a fresh set of clothes. There's a sort of plastic underwear thing we have to ask you to put on. No one'll be able to see it or anything, but we need it for sanitary purposes. We'll make sure it's removed before your wife claims the body.

Plunkitt pauses and stares at Beachum's cigarette, at the ash lengthening on the end of it. Then he snaps himself back.

PLUNKITT

We'll come for you, oh, about a half hour before the procedure. You'll be taken into the procedure room and they'll hook an E.K.G. up to you and the intravenous lines at that time. But nothing's gonna happen early or anything. Right up until 12:01, we'll be monitoring the phones. We got open lines to the attorney general and the governor, and those'll be checked right through to make sure they're in working order. You got any questions about any of that?

BEACHUM

(very, very quietly)

No.

PLUNKITT

Now, there's just one more thing, and then I'll leave you in peace here. It's about the sedative.

Beachum stiffens. The line of smoke coming up from his cigarette smears as his hand shakes.

BEACHUM

I don't want no sedative.

PLUNKITT

Sedative's completely optional, Frank. I would just like to advise you that it can make things a whole lot easier.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: (3)

21

BEACHUM

(tightly)

I don't want it.

(beat)

I appreciate it, Mr. Plunkitt. But I wanna be clear in my mind. When I see my wife, I wanna be clear for that. All right?

PLUNKITT

Fair enough. You change your mind, you let the duty officer know. I just had to give you my little sales talk, is all.

Beachum keeps his eyes lowered, watching his hands. The cigarette has burned down to the filter, and Plunkitt stands there a moment, looking nervously at it. Finally Beachum reaches to the tinfoil ashtray next to him and crushes it out.

22 INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - DAY

22

Plunkitt is met by his deputy warden, ARNOLD McCARDLE. Arnold is a jolly fellow with sparkling eyes and a three-hundred-pound frame. Reading notes from a folder, he breathes heavily, keeping pace with Plunkitt.

MCCARDLE

Badges'll go down to the gate at nine. Got the witness list. What else? Roadblocks are up. Demonstrators are light so far.

PLUNKITT

Visitors all squared away?

MCCARDLE

Wife and kid. Your girlfriend from the 'News,' Michelle Ziegler -- she's coming at four.

PLUNKITT

Mea culpa. She was pretty persuasive.

MCCARDLE

Hey, let her persuade me next time, would ya?

Plunkitt gives him a look. They approach the death chamber. Plunkitt pauses.

PLUNKITT

Arnie, what do you think of Beachum?

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

MCCARDLE

I don't. Sometimes I think about the girl he shot dead over 96 dollars. But mostly I think about doing my job.

Plunkitt nods. "Of course, that's right." He opens the door and ushers McCardle into the death chamber.

23 INT. DEATH CHAMBER - DAY

23

REUBEN SKYCOCK, the prison's maintenance engineer, is fussing with the stainless-steel lethal-injection equipment, checking his toggles, stopwatch, and signal lights.

As Plunkitt and McCardle move toward the machine, a SHEET-COVERED FIGURE on the gurney suddenly thrusts upward into a sitting position.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER ATKINS
(FIGURE)

Warden! Sir! I repent!

MCCARDLE

(laughing)

Jesus, Atkins! Jesus God!

Plunkitt turns away. He's a little shaken and would rather the others not notice.

24 EXT. OAKLAND TRIBUNE BUILDING - DAY

24

The PUSSY MAN: a middle-aged homeless man, reeking of wine and urine, in a filthy gray overcoat, his yellow eyes streaked with red. He is romancing every passing female.

PUSSY MAN

Gimme some of that pussy, baby. You got pussy on toast. I need some pussy on toast, baby. Gimme some of your pussy on toast...

Everett approaches the entrance.

PUSSY MAN

Steve! Is that you, newspaper man? Now I know you got my money. You got money on toast. Gimme some of that money on toast.

Everett hates this guy.

EVERETT

Back off.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

Everett reaches into his pocket.

PUSSY MAN

There's that money. Gimme five, gimme ten, gimme twenty -- twenty dollars, Steve. Twenty dollars on toast.

Everett hands him a fiver.

EVERETT

Don't spend it on food, asshole.

PUSSY MAN

Five dollars? That's all you gonna give me? You could give me twenty dollars. You could give me a hundred dollars, you got so much money. You got money on toast, Steve.

A woman passes. The Pussy Man jerks toward her.

PUSSY MAN

Hey, sister, I know you got some sweet pussy. You got sweet pussy on toast...

25 INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

25

As Everett enters, he sees Bob Findley watching him from the city desk at the far end of the room. Suddenly Everett is terribly self-conscious; every step feels wrong. He walks, hands in pocket, as casually as he can. As he reaches the city desk, Jane March looks at him, looks at Bob, looks back at him.

EVERETT

Morning, all. Heh!

He clears his throat. Silence. Bob stares at him.

BOB

You got my message.

EVERETT

Uh. Yeah.

BOB

Apparently, it seems we have a problem, you and I.

Everett's synapses go on alert, constricting the majority of his favorite muscles. He waits. Bob shuffles some papers.

EVERETT

Do we?

(CONTINUED)

BOB

Yes. We do.

EVERETT

Look, Bob, I --

BOB

Michelle Ziegler was killed last night
in a car wreck.

Everett wasn't expecting this. The news knocks the wind
out of him. He holds onto the desk to steady himself.

EVERETT

What? Michelle? I was just -- I saw
her last night. We were... Fuck! She
was just twenty-three or something.

JANE

Dead Man's Curve.

EVERETT

Jesus. Poor kid. Just got out of
school. She was twenty-three or
something. I should have...

A long moment. They all look away from each other.

BOB

(watching him)

Michelle had an interview scheduled
today with Frank Beachum.

EVERETT

(still stunned)

What?

(beat)

Oh, Beachum. The guy they're gonna
juice today. Yeah. She said she had a
seat for the show. Poor kid.

BOB

She also had an interview with him. At
four, face-to-face in the Deathwatch
cell. Alan wants you to cover for her.

EVERETT

(still stunned)

Right. Sure. Oh man! So... okay.
Beachum. Killed a pregnant girl or
something.

(CONTINUED)

25

CONTINUED: (2)

25

BOB

A college student. Amy Wilson She was working the summer in Richmond, place called Pocum's Grocery. Owed Beachum ninety-six bucks or something -- repairs he'd done on her car. He shot her dead.

EVERETT

Nice. Anything special about him?

BOB

Black, tough. Mechanic over at the Amoco station on Clayton.

Jane is reading the Beachum file.

JANE

Says here Beachum's one of those born-again.

CLOSE ON EVERETT

EVERETT

They all get born again on Death Row. Place has the highest birth rate in the country.

JANE (O.S.)

Cynical.

26

SERIES OF SHOTS

26

Raw and grainy, with a video feel, like something out of the TV show "Cops." The shots are punctuated with flashes of light, as though from police flashbulbs.

JANE (V.O.)

Came from Michigan -- broken home, alcoholic mother. He'd been in and out of jails, violent assaults, barroom fights, drugs, more drugs. Did two years in the state pen for beating up a cop who tried to give him a ticket --

EVERETT (V.O.)

Sounds like a reasonable young fellow.

JANE (V.O.)

-- and then another three for breaking into a convenience store.

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED:

26

OVER the above:

A) BEACHUM'S RAMSHACKLE CHILDHOOD HOME

B) HIS DRUNKEN MOTHER

On an unmade bed in ratty underwear.

C) MUG SHOTS

of Beachum.

D) BEACHUM

splayed against a car, being arrested and handcuffed.

E) BLEEDING BODY

of a cop, writhing on the ground.

JANE (V.O.)

Then he got out of the slam and met his wife. Nice girl, born-again. Led him straight to Jesus. They had a daughter, bought a house in Richmond.

EVERETT (V.O.)

And now suddenly he was a nice guy.

OVER the above:

F) SHOTS OF BONNIE

as if for a home video.

JANE (V.O.)

I guess not. Six years ago, July Fourth, he walks into Pocum's. Amy Wilson is working the register.

G) GROCERY STORE

Beachum walks in, looking cold and intent. He walks up to the counter.

EVERETT (V.O.)

Let me guess. Frank says, 'Where's the ninety-six bucks you owe me?' She says, 'I ain't got it, Mr. Beachum, sir.' And old Frank kinda loses that nasty temper of his.

OVER this: CLOSE ON Beachum.

CLOSE ON Amy Wilson.

27

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

27

EVERETT

I hope he at least expressed his
heartfelt remorse.

Jane is perusing the file.

JANE

Nope. Get this. He still says he just
went to the store for some
A-1 Steak Sauce.

EVERETT

A-1 Sauce. Nice touch.

JANE

Looks like Nussbaum had two strong
witnesses.

EVERETT

Black or white?

JANE

Uh, let's see. Both white, looks like.
Woman in the parking lot who saw him
running away. And then this poor guy
who drives in because his car
overheated, he goes in the store to use
the phone, and there's Beachum standing
over the body, gun in hand, blood all
over him.

BOB

Okay, okay, don't overload him. All I
want is the human interest, all right?
Death row, the final day, what's it
like.

EVERETT

No problem. Uh, Bob? That's all you
need from me. Right?

BOB

(too deliberately)

That's all, Steve.

EVERETT

Okay, Bob. Hokey-dokey. I'll be...
I'll get... right on it.

He turns and begins to walk away, pure relief on his
face. Then he stops. Something is bugging him. He can
feel Bob's eyes on his back. The smart thing to do would
be to forget about it. But something is sticking in
Everett's craw. Slowly, he turns.

(CONTINUED)

27

CONTINUED:

27

Bob's lips, pressed together. His glare.

BOB

Something more you want to talk about,
Steve?

EVERETT

Yeah. Uh... that witness, the guy who
drove in and then found Beachum standing
over the body. Well, he must have heard
the shots, right?

BOB

(much too softly)

The shots.

EVERETT

Yeah. I mean, his car is overheating,
he drives into the parking lot, gets
out, probably opens the hood, sees the
engine steaming, walks in the store.
See, if a shooting was going on all that
time, he must have heard the shots.

JANE

So he heard the shots.

A long pause. Bob stands very still, growing redder by
the second. His jaw is very, very tense. Jane watches
him like a bus passenger sitting next to a ticking
parcel.

BOB

(very controlled)

I don't know, Steve. I don't know if he
heard the shots or not. Maybe he did.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (2)

27

BOB (CONT'D)

What I would like you to do please is to get an interview with Frank Beachum about his feelings today. Then I would like you to write it up as a human interest sidebar. Do you think you can just do that please?

EVERETT

Yup. Yeah. You bet, Bob. Right.

BOB

Thank you.

Everett turns on his heel. Jane lets out a long breath. Everett zips back down the aisle. Jane nods at Bob and follows him.

28 AT EVERETT'S DESK - DAY

28

Grubby, cigarette-scarred, littered with papers, Chinese takeout containers, a picture of his wife and son, a tape recorder.

Everett sits in his swivel chair, examining the Beachum file on his computer. Jane appears carrying files and disks and tapes.

JANE

Close one. I don't know what you did to him, but he's on your case. I figure we were about two seconds away from a full Bob Findley explosion.

Everett grins, shakes his head, and reaches toward his shirt pocket, half-pulling out a pack of cigarettes. Jane looks at him in alarm.

JANE

What are you, crazy? You're gonna light up now, after Bob's big no-smoking speech last week?

EVERETT

I missed it.

JANE

Yeah, that was smart, too.

She hands him the files.

JANE

Try to be a good boy, all right?

She winks and walks away.

(CONTINUED)

28

CONTINUED:

28

Everett grabs Michelle's files. The first thing he seizes upon is a tape cassette marked "Beachum." He slams it into his recorder and stuffs the earphone in his ear.

ANGLE ON EVERETT'S COMPUTER SCREEN

The Beachum file. As Everett listens to Michelle's tape, he flashes to various photos and newspaper clippings on his computer screen.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Beachum case. Okay. Victim, Amy Wilson, married, twenty-year-old coed, shot in the chest with a .38 as she stood behind her counter at Pocum's grocery in Richmond. Six months pregnant at the time; both she and the baby died. Okay, let's see. Two witnesses. Um-um-um-um -- right. First witness, Nancy Larson. Housewife, mother of three. Drives her car into the parking lot at Pocum's...

29

IN EVERETT'S MIND - EXT. POCUM'S PARKING LOT - DAY

29

NANCY LARSON pulls into the parking lot, where she sees a dark late-model car with the hood up; it belongs to a smallish, conservatively dressed man, DALE PORTERHOUSE, who is about to enter the store. Nancy pulls up to the soda machine, leaves the ENGINE RUNNING, gets out, drops money in the slot, buys a soda, and climbs back in her car. She begins to back out but then looks in her rearview mirror and SCREECHES to a halt. There, in the mirror, we see Frank Beachum, running wildly, his face and shirt covered with blood. (The mirror reveals him only down to his chest.)

30

AT EVERETT'S DESK - DAY (PRESENT)

30

Everett listening to Michelle's tape.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

... Larson couldn't see whether he had a gun or not. Uhhh, no weapon was ever found. Oh, but she later picked Beachum out of a police line-up, and that was the same line-up, uh, let's see, where Beachum was picked out by Dale Porterhouse, C.P.A...

31

IN EVERETT'S MIND - EXT. POCUM'S PARKING LOT - DAY

31

The CAMERA PICKS UP Porterhouse on his way to the front door of Pocum's.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

31

He's a balding, pudgy man with a weak chin and a weaker moustache. He opens the door.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

He was passing through the neighborhood.
Car overheated, so he drove into
Pocum's to call Triple A.

32 INT. POCUM'S GROCERY - PORTERHOUSE'S POV - DAY

32

He scans the store -- racks of food, food sale posters in the window, and, above the front counter, a TV BLARING. But no one, apparently, minding the store.

CLOSE ON PORTERHOUSE

The door slams behind him.

BACK TO SCENE

At the sound of the SLAMMING DOOR, Beachum pops up from behind the counter. His face and shirt are bloody, his eyes wild. He and Porterhouse stare at each other, and then Beachum panics and runs for it, scampering from behind the counter and straight out a service door on the counter's left side. As he goes, we can see him from...

PORTERHOUSE'S POV

Beachum's whole body is IN VIEW, and there is clearly a gun in his hand.

CLOSE ON PORTERHOUSE

Shocked and frightened, and not certain at first of what he has seen.

PORTERHOUSE'S POV

He moves toward the counter, and as he does, we begin to discover what is behind it -- the corpse of Amy Wilson, her eyes open in horror, a hole in her chest, from which blood is still oozing. Porterhouse's SCREAM FADES BACK INTO Michelle's V.O.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

... Porterhouse calls the cops, picks Beachum out of the line-up that same day. Records later show that Amy Wilson owed Beachum ninety-six dollars for work he'd done on her carburetor. Note for future essay -- why so few female car mechanics?

33 AT EVERETT'S DESK - DAY (PRESENT)

33

Everett grins, shakes his head, and switches off the tape recorder. He distractedly pulls his cigarette pack out of his pocket. He stares at the screen. He types, and we see the words: "BUT DIDN'T P. HEAR SHOTS?"

The Trends editor, BRIDGET ROSSITER -- busty and dressed to show it off -- is walking by Everett's desk.

BRIDGET

Want coffee, Ev? It's back in fashion as a late-morning pick-me-up.

EVERETT

God bless you, Bridget. Make it a big one.

BRIDGET

Women can fetch coffee in the office now because improved job opportunities have given us new confidence.

EVERETT

Bridge, darling. You think being Trends editor is maybe getting to you?

BRIDGET

Don't know. Was I an insane person before? You take it black, right?

EVERETT

I do. You're the best.

He looks up at the clock on the wall. It reads: 11:30.

EVERETT

(to himself)

Fuck.

He picks up the phone, taps in his number, and starts lifting transcript pages out of the Beachum file. As we hear the PHONE RING on the other end, he jerks a cigarette into his mouth. He reaches for his lighter and then suddenly looks up. At the other end of the hall, Bob is watching him.

Everett's wife, Barbara, answers the phone.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Hello?

EVERETT

It's me, sweetheart.

(CONTINUED)

33

CONTINUED:

33

BARBARA (V.O.)
Steve, thank God. Where are you?

EVERETT
(an exaggerated
sigh)
I'm at the paper. They roped me in.

BARBARA (V.O.)
Oh no. Did they call you at the gym?
They tried here but I wouldn't tell them
where you were.

EVERETT
I stopped off to get something on my way
back. Got caught.

A long pause. Everett plucks the unlit cigarette from his lips and starts leafing distractedly through the transcripts.

BARBARA (V.O.)
You have a good workout, honey?

EVERETT
(smiling to himself)
Mmm. Hell of a workout.

BARBARA (V.O.)
Oh, good. Anyway, you really did
promise Kate you'd take her to the zoo.

EVERETT
(wincing)
Ah Christ. The zoo. I forgot.

BARBARA (V.O.)
She's been talking about it all morning.

Everett's attention has focused on the page in front of him, and we see what it says:

DALE PORTERHOUSE: So I left the car there and went toward the store.

BARBARA (V.O.)
Steve? Did you hear me? She really is
expecting you.

EVERETT
What? Yeah. Right. I know. Christ, I
feel awful.

(CONTINUED)

33

CONTINUED: (2)

33

BARBARA (V.O.)

And you worked all weekend. She didn't see you at all. You know how she loves her daddy.

EVERETT

Mm-hmm.

Everett is completely absorbed in the page in front of him: It reads:

CA: Did you have any idea that a crime was in progress?
DALE PORTERHOUSE: No, no idea at all.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Steve? I know it's work, but I really feel it would be a bad idea to let her down like this again.

He pulls the lighter out of his pocket and lights his cigarette. A long drag. Across the room, we can see Bob's face riveted to the spectacle of Everett smoking. Everett snaps to attention.

EVERETT

(utterly distracted)

Uh, Barbara? Uh, the thing is: There's been an accident. Remember Michelle Ziegler? You met her at Christmas.

BARBARA (V.O.)

That college girl who kept following you around?

EVERETT

Yeah, well, she ran her car into a wall near Dead Man's Curve.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Oh, no. They really ought to do something about that place. Is she hurt?

But Everett is back to the transcript. It reads:

DALE PORTERHOUSE: I don't think I would have gone in there...

CA: If you had heard shooting.

DALE PORTERHOUSE: No, not if I had heard anything like that.

EVERETT

No, not if I had heard -- Oh. Yeah. Dead.

(CONTINUED)

33

CONTINUED: (3)

33

BARBARA (V.O.)

That's awful. What do they want, you to fill in for her?

EVERETT

Huh? Yeah. She had a ticket for the execution at San Quentin tonight.

A long pause. Everett notices Bob watching him darkly from across the room. He hunkers down in his seat.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Steve, don't tell me they couldn't get someone else for this. I mean, you were working all weekend.

EVERETT

(reading)

Yes! Finally!

We see what he is reading:

CA: When you were in your car, you did not hear any gunshots? Any screams?

DALE PORTERHOUSE: No. No, but I wouldn't have.

BARBARA (V.O.)

What? Where are you?

EVERETT

Honey? Hi. Listen. I don't have to be at the prison until four. I can come home now and pick up Kate, take her over to the zoo, and then I'll bring her back around three, all right?

Bridget appears with the coffee and sets it in front of Everett.

BRIDGET

Coffee time!

He nods at her, and holds up a finger. He draws desperately on his cigarette.

BARBARA (V.O.)

What about her nap? She's supposed to go down for her nap right after lunch.

EVERETT

Her nap.

BRIDGET

I thought you had the day off.

(CONTINUED)

33

CONTINUED: (4)

33

Everett puts a finger to his lips in a shushing motion.

BARBARA (V.O.)

You know how cranky she gets without her nap.

EVERETT

Oh. Right. Well, I'll bring her a double espresso when I come.

He winks at Bridget.

BARBARA (V.O.)

Steve...

EVERETT

It was a joke.

BARBARA (V.O.)

I'm busting a gut.

EVERETT

Look, I'll be there in a half hour. Twelve thirty at the latest. All right?

BARBARA (V.O.)

Why'd you have to go in there on your day off? Honey? Are you still trying to make up for that Mike Vargas thing?

Everett winces -- she's hit a nerve. He's about to say something, and then thinks better of it.

EVERETT

Anyway. Twelve thirty, all right?

He hangs up. Bridget looks at his cigarette.

BRIDGET

Ooh. More and more office workers are insisting on their right not to breathe second-hand smoke.

EVERETT

Yeah, well, more and more scumbags don't care. Thanks for the coffee. You're an adorable girl.

BRIDGET

(wagging a finger)

Sexual harassment: What are the guidelines?

EVERETT

Who can say?

(CONTINUED)

BRIDGET

I hate my job, Ev.

EVERETT

I know it, kid. But I love watching you do it.

She gets up and cocks her head toward Bob's office. Bob has stood up and is staring in the direction of Everett and his cigarette.

BRIDGET

Don't look now...

Everett lets out a blast of smoke, yanks open his desk drawer, and stubs out his cigarette in a butt-filled secret ashtray there. Meanwhile, he's reading the transcript. Bridget peers over his shoulder.

BRIDGET

Gosh, Mr. Reporter. Is that what real newspapermen get to read?

EVERETT

(reading aloud)

'Dale Porterhouse: I couldn't have heard any shots, because I had all the windows rolled up and I had the radio playing, and the air conditioning was on. That's probably why the car overheated." Close quote. So that settles that, right, Bridge? Another hunch down the drain.

BRIDGET

My condolences.

EVERETT

No great loss.

He glances up at the clock. 11:45.

EVERETT

Fuck. 'Bye, Bridget. If anybody asks, I'll be at the zoo.

BRIDGET

(indicating the newsroom)

Me, too.

Everett grins at her and races out of the office.

34 INT. BATHROOM (SAN QUENTIN) - DAY

34

The REVEREND STANLEY B. SHILLERMAN gazes into a mirror and adjusts his hair. He has great hair, and right now his comb is making the most of it. When he's satisfied, he releases a small, humorless smile. The one that makes the men trust him so. The one all the pros have -- Schuller, Fallwell, all the pros.

35 CLOSE ON ENVELOPE

35

A hand inserts a neatly folded note and seals the envelope. The hand-lettered address reads: "For my darling Gail, when she is 18 years old."

INT. DEATHWATCH CELL - WIDER ANGLE - DAY

Frank Beachum stuffs the envelope under him and sits on it.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

Good morning, Frank.

Shillerman stands at the cage, his voice soggy with compassion.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

I thought maybe... you know, if there's anything I can do, anything you'd like to talk to me about -- I want you to know I'm here, I'm available.

Frank slowly reaches for a cigarette.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

I understand you're a Bible-reading man, Frank. That's right, isn't it?

Shillerman's WALKIE TALKIE, strapped to his belt, erupts in a fit of SQUAWKING. He turns it down, but not off. It continues to emit STATIC and DISTANT VOICES. Frank lights his cigarette and draws deeply. Shillerman sits down in a metal chair and slides it next to the cage, leaning forward to encourage intimacy.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

But you know, Frank, just reading the Bible -- that isn't quite enough, is it? A man can't go to his Maker with the sins of his soul unrepented of. With the hurt he's done folks just... you know, unrepented of.

Frank slides his chair around so his back is to Shillerman.

(CONTINUED)

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

There's a lot of folks out there who'd feel a whole lot better to hear that you were remorseful for the pain you caused them. You could do a lot of good with those words, Frank.

(beat)

Frank?

BEACHUM

I don't got anything to tell you.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

Frank...

BEACHUM

Reverend Shillerman, I want you to leave. I got my own pastor coming later.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

Now... son. Son, I don't need to tell you that there is gonna come a time, and I'm afraid that time is not far off.

BEACHUM

Reedy!

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

... when you may wish you'd made a different decision. But it'll be too late. There's no sense mincing words...

BEACHUM

Reedy!

Reedy gets up from his chair.

REEDY

What can I get you, Frank?

Shillerman shuts up and rises. Beachum rises, too, and meets Shilerman's eyes.

BEACHUM

You can get this goddamned son-of-a-bitch out of here. Calls himself a man of God...

He lifts his cigarette, his hand trembling so that the ash falls off. Reedy takes Shillerman's arm.

REEDY

Reverend Shillerman...

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM
 (muttering)
 Reverend Shit-For-Brains.

Shillerman's smile freezes and his eyes go red. He keeps talking to Beachum as Reedy pulls him away.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN
 Now, Frank, I myself would not want to be strapped to that table tonight with the wrongs I've done unrepented of...

REEDY
 Reverend, come on...

REVEREND SHILLERMAN
 Because when they stick that needle in your arm, Frank...

REEDY
 Jesus, Reverend, come on. Spiritual counseling's voluntary.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN
 ... And you feel your blood run to ice...

REEDY
 Reverend! That's enough.

BEACHUM
 Get him out of here.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN
 I'm sorry for you, Frank.

BEACHUM
 I'm sorry, too. Believe me.

REEDY
 Reverend, I mean it. We don't want no trouble here.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN
 All right, all right. I just felt, it may be upsetting, but I have a job to do here, and I, I just felt...

Shillerman backs into the shadows. Reedy returns to his desk.

REEDY
 Everyone wants in on the action. right, Frank?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED: (3)

35

REEDY (CONT'D)

(beat)

Frank?

No longer angry, Beachum seems to have shrunk into himself. In a small voice --

BEACHUM

Yeah.

He pulls another cigarette from the pack and looks at the clock: 12:01. He lights his cigarette.

CUT TO:

36 CIGARETTE

36

being lit. We PULL BACK to see that it belongs to Everett.

37 EXT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

37

The car is brown and decrepit. One of its fenders is rusted through, a taillight is secured by gaffer's tape, and two hubcaps are missing. It is what is commonly known as a shitbox.

Nevertheless, Everett is driving it as though it were a Lamborghini. He has the window down and is banging on the rusty door as he (very loudly) sings along to the RADIO, which is playing "MY SHARONA." Everett makes up most of the words, but he joins lustily on the "My Sharona part.

38 INT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

38

The SONG ENDS and Everett switches channels.

RADIO (V.O.)

... and that makes it time for a Radio 820 news update. Well, twelve hours from now, convicted killer Frank Beachum will be executed by lethal injection. This will be only the third time this method has been used by the State of California since the landmark decision...

EVERETT'S FACE

He lights a cigarette and listens.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: 38

EVERETT'S POV - ROAD

A sign announcing: Richmond 1 mile.

39 EXT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING - DAY 39

Weaving in and out of freeway traffic.

40 INT. EVERETT'S CAR - ANGLE ON EVERETT - MOVING - DAY 40

looking at his watch: 12:04.

RADIO (V.O.)

... Beachum was convicted six years ago
of the brutal slaying of 23-year-old
coed Amy Wilson and her unborn child
at Pocum's Grocery in Richmond...

EVERETT'S POV - EXIT SIGN

along the road: Richmond next exit.

RADIO (V.O.)

... Wilson, who was married and six months
pregnant, was working as a cashier at
the grocery when Beachum shot her during
an argument over 96 dollars she owed him...

EVERETT'S POV - RICHMOND EXIT

approaching on the right.

ANGLE ON EVERETT

The Richmond exit just about to slip by.

EVERETT'S FACE

Suddenly, Everett grabs the steering wheel and pulls hard
to the right.

41 EXT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING - DAY 41

It plows across lanes of traffic, heading perilously for
the Richmond exit. It SCREECHES onto the ramp and careens
down it.

42 EXT. POCUM'S GROCERY - PARKING LOT - DAY 42

The car pulls into a space.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

The grocery is a one-story red brick bunker with a dingy awning. To one side of the door, a Coke machine.

FRONT WINDOW OF POCUM'S

Just over a line of withering oranges and tomatoes, a hand-lettered sign has been taped: "An Eye for an Eye! Beachum has to Die!"

Underneath, a dripping syringe with a death's head on the tube.

Everett raises his eyebrows. He gets out of the car.

As he does, he accidentally kicks something that has rolled from under his seat -- an old (very old) cantaloupe. It splashes to the ground and shudders there for a moment. Everett makes a sometimes-I-even-gross-myself-out face, gingerly picks up the rotting cantaloupe, and throws it into the vacant lot next door. As it hits the ground and explodes, Everett makes a "bomb exploding" noise with his mouth.

43 INT. POCUM'S GROCERY - DAY

43

The market is a long rectangle with a counter at one end, behind which sits a sullen, bloated woman in a bulging white T-shirt. The grocery racks are perpendicular to the counter, and above the counter a television is blaring. Everett stands for a moment, wiping his cantaloupe-tainted hand against his pants. On the TV screen, a reporter is doing a stand-up outside the San Quentin prison walls, talking about the somber mood there, the tight security, and so forth.

Everett strolls toward the counter, looking around.

COUNTER WOMAN

(to Everett)

Help you?

He gives her his handsome guy smile, and, as he does, he notices a button on her T-shirt: "Remember Amy."

EVERETT

I'm a reporter. With the Tribune. Say, this is the place where the Wilson girl was killed, isn't it?

COUNTER WOMAN

It sure is. She was right behind this same counter. Almost six years ago exactly.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

Wow. Gee.

EVERETT'S POV

We take in the room with him: the racks of food, the counter where the woman is still yapping at him --

COUNTER WOMAN (O.S.)

Mr. Pocum says the needle's too good for him. For Beachum. Me, I say they oughta bring back the chair, that's what I say. Really let him have a jolt of something.

-- the two doors (the front door and, along the same wall, the service entrance to the left of the counter), and the little entryway in the back.

BACK TO SCENE

EVERETT

What's back there?

COUNTER WOMAN

Bathroom. Mr. Pocum was always real nice about letting folks come in and do their business.

Everett nods, and for a moment he is at a loss.

EVERETT

Well, thanks a bunch. I'm gonna come back one of these days and do some serious shopping.

COUNTER WOMAN

Am I gonna be in the newspaper?

Everett doesn't answer. He's just spotted something on the floor to the side of the counter, and now he crouches down for a better look.

EVERETT'S POV

On the floor, the kind of white outlines that might have been left in the linoleum if a foot rack had once been placed there.

Everett gets up.

EVERETT

Hey, did there used to be something here?

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: (2)

43

COUNTER WOMAN

Oh, yessir, there was. That's where we used to keep the potato chips. But Mr. Pocum moved the rack over there --

She indicates the other side of the counter, where customers might line up to pay.

COUNTER WOMAN

-- so's it'd be what you call an impulse kind of purchase. This part of your story you're writing?

Everett pauses a moment, looking around.

EVERETT

Nope. Good point. It's not part of the story I'm writing. I'm writing a human interest sidebar. Know what that is?

COUNTER WOMAN

I don't think I do.

EVERETT

I don't think I do, either. Hey, thanks.

He grins and goes out the door, which slams behind him.

CUT TO:

44 EXT. EVERETT'S CONDO - DAY

44

Everett slams the door of his car as he gets out. The CAR keeps COUGHING and SPUTTERING as he glances at his watch: 12:50. He looks up at the small apartment building where he lives. There, at the bedroom window, is his wife BARBARA. She is young, elegant, even beautiful, but she looks hurt and surprised, as if someone had just slapped her across the face. She has pushed back a white curtain and is watching Everett approach. Their eyes meet. She does not smile. She lets the curtain fall and disappears.

45 INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

45

Barbara opens the door and lets Everett in.

46 INT. EVERETT'S CONDO - DAY

46

Everett enters, raising his hands in apology. Barbara doesn't react.

EVERETT

Sorry. I got held up.

(CONTINUED)

46

CONTINUED:

46

He goes to her and kisses her. She stiffens, and his kiss catches the right quarter of her compressed lips. Their eyes meet.

BARBARA

In the old days, I would have smelled the Scotch. Now I just think you don't give a damn.

Now it's Everett who looks as though he's been slapped.

He takes a deep breath and moves toward the living room. There, in front of the TV, sits his 4-year-old daughter, KATE. At the sight of her dad, Kate turns away from her umpteenth viewing of Cats Don't Dance, and her chubby face blossoms into smiles. She climbs to her feet and runs toward her father.

KATE

Are we, are we, are we...

EVERETT

(picking her up)
Kate! My little princess!

KATE

Are we, are we going to, we are going to the hippotamus!

EVERETT

Don't you want to turn off the tape and put some shoes on?

KATE

Oh, yeah.

Barbara has appeared in the b.g.

BARBARA

Shoes're in her room. I'll get them.

She leaves. Kate reaches for the remote and punches the stop button. On the TV screen, the animals disappear, giving way to Dale Porterhouse, C.P.A.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

(on TV)

... and the look on that face right before he ran-- I've never looked into eyes that were, I don't know, they were empty, like a goat or something. I don't wish anybody dead, but I guess I'll feel a little safer with Frank Beachum gone.

(CONTINUED)

Everett is mesmerized. He's forgotten all about Kate, who is sitting on her haunches, watching the TV. Now Porterhouse disappears and a news anchor comes on.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

(on TV)

That was Dale Porterhouse, an accountant with the firm of Smoke, no, I'm sorry, that's Stokes and Whitney, Stokes and Whitney. Mr. Porterhouse was the state's key witness in the Amy Wilson case six years ago, a case that at one minute after midnight tonight will finally culminate in the execution by lethal injection of Frank Beachum.

Almost as if in a trance, Everett has picked up the telephone and is pressing buttons.

KATE

No, no, Daddy. No talk on the phone. We go the zoo now.

EVERETT

(on the phone)

We'll go to the zoo just as soon as you get your shoes...

VOICE ON PHONE (V.O.)

Information. What city please?

EVERETT

Oakland. The number for Stokes and Whitney. It's an accounting firm.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

(on TV)

... we go to Wilma Francis, who is talking with murder victim Amy Wilson's father, Frederick Robertson. Wilma?

WILMA FRANCIS (V.O.)

(on TV)

Thank you, Tom. I'm here with Frederick Robertson, Amy Wilson's father, and I just wanted to ask, Mr. Robertson, do you feel justice is finally being done in the case of your daughter's brutal slaying?

Everett, on the phone, tries to concentrate on Porterhouse's number, but he's also glued to the TV and is keeping a wary eye on Kate as well.

(CONTINUED)

TAPED VOICE (V.O.)

The number you requested, 555-0791 can be automatically dialed by pressing one, or saying 'yes' at the dial tone for an additional charge of... seventy-five cents. Again, the number you requested is 555-0791. If you need further assistance...

Everett pushes the button and begins dialing. Barbara enters carrying Kate's sneakers and socks. Kate runs to her and reaches up-- she seems upset. Meanwhile, the TV BLARES.

BARBARA

(looking hurt)

Steve! What now?

Everett holds up a finger. The PHONE is RINGING on the other end. On the television, Frederick Robertson, a stolid, impressive man in a cheap suit and tie, is talking.

ROBERTSON (V.O.)

(on TV)

Wilma, I don't think there's any such thing as justice in a case like this.

Barbara shakes her head, goes to a cushioned chair by the window, and hoists Kate into her lap, where she puts her socks on, all the while glaring at Everett.

ROBERTSON (V.O.)

(on TV)

If you haven't gone through it I don't think you can understand what happens to a family when a child is taken from you in this terrible way...

EVERETT

(to Barbara)

It's just a hunch. You know the way I get. It's-- I've just gotta find out this one thing, and then--

TELEPHONE VOICE (V.O.)

Stokes and Whitney.

EVERETT

Yes, is Dale Porterhouse there, please?

TELEPHONE VOICE (V.O.)

I'm sorry. Mr. Porterhouse is at lunch.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERTSON (V.O.)

(on TV)

For six years now, our whole life has been screwed up by this, this anger and rage. And nothing's going to end that rage except the death of that monster who killed my daughter and my unborn grandchild. Nothing.

KATE

I got my shoes on now, Daddy! Now we can go to the zoo!

Kate leaps off her mother's lap and runs to Everett, clutching at her father's pants leg. Everett, ever more distracted, pats her on the head. Barbara glares. The TV BLARES.

EVERETT

Could I leave a message? This is Steve Everett. I'm a reporter for the Oakland Tribune. Could you ask Mr. Porterhouse if he could call me as soon as he possibly can? It's in connection with the Beachum case.

KATE

Don't talk on the phone, Daddy. Don't talk on the phone.

TELEPHONE VOICE (V.O.)

I'll let him know as soon as he comes in.

EVERETT

I'll give you my beeper number.

BARBARA

Steve! Please! Don't take your beeper!

KATE

Don't talk on the phone.

WILMA FRANCIS (V.O.)

(on TV)

But should the state sanction a murder just to satisfy your rage, Mr. Robertson?

EVERETT

It's area code 510-555-1439.

TELEPHONE VOICE (V.O.)

I'll make sure he gets that.

(CONTINUED)

46

CONTINUED: (5)

46

EVERETT

Thank you.

ROBERTSON (V.O.)

(on TV)

My daughter was shot in cold blood for no reason. For ninety-six dollars, and he took her ring and a locket I gave her for her sixteenth birthday. That wasn't a man who did that. That wasn't a human being. That was someone who doesn't deserve the same rights as a human being.

Everett puts aside the phone and hoists Kate up in his arms.

KATE

Are we going now?

EVERETT

Yup! Here we go! Zoo time! Just gotta get something from the bedroom, come on, we're going.

BARBARA

You're not.

Everett heads for the bedroom with Kate in his arms; he calls back to Barbara as he walks.

EVERETT

I just have to ask this guy one question. It's just a hunch. No big deal.

47

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

47

Everett rifles the drawers for his beeper. In his arms, Kate keeps whapping him on the head as if it were a drum.

KATE

Daddy. Daddy. Daddy. Daddy.

EVERETT

(distractedly)

That's right. Yep. Okay, here it is.

He finds the beeper in a bedside table and hooks it to his belt.

KATE

What's that, Daddy?

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

EVERETT

That's Daddy's beeper. It goes beep,
beep beep-- you'll hear it.

They go back into the living room.

48 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

48

Kate keeps whapping Everett's head.

KATE

Beep beep beep.

They head for the front door. Barbara watches, her arms
crossed beneath her breasts. On the TV, Wilma Francis is
talking.

WILMA FRANCIS (V.O.)

(on TV)

Strong words and strong emotions from
murder victim dad Frederick Robertson.
Stay with us for a different point of
view. After a break we'll be talking to
someone who thinks capital punishment is
never the solution, no matter how violent
and brutal the crime. After the break.

KATE

(waving to Barbara)

'Bye, Mommy. 'Bye!

BARBARA

'Bye, sweetheart. Have a great time!

Everett opens the door, looks back, cocks an eyebrow at
Barbara. She purses her lips and turns away. Everett
and Kate go out.

EVERETT

(under his breath)

Never should have stopped at that
goddamn grocery.

(to Kate)

Right, kid?

BARBARA

(behind him)

You have the car seat?

Everett's face: oh no, the car seat. He hands Kate to
Barbara.

49 INT. EVERETT'S CAR - PARKED ON STREET

49

Everett struggles to attach a child seat in the back of
the car.

(CONTINUED)

49

CONTINUED:

49

He is digging for an elusive seat belt, and as he does, he unearths all manner of garbage-- old sandwiches, an empty Johnny Walker pint, newspapers, oil containers, greasy rags, a mystery garment, a second Johnnie Walker pint, this one containing a few remaining drops. Everett glances wistfully at the bottle and tosses it on the floor.

BARBARA

(yelling to him)

Is everything all right?

EVERETT

(yelling back)

Just about got it.

He reaches into the seat one more time, pulls out a blackened arm, and gives up. With a shrug, he grabs the solo seat belt strap, loops it around the child seat, and ties a knot. He shakes the seat. Loose as a goose and clearly a worthless fix.

50

EXT. EVERETT'S CAR - PARKED ON STREET

50

Barbara and Kate wait on the sidewalk, each clutching the side of a stroller. Everett springs from the car.

EVERETT

Seat's ready!

51

EXT. ZOO - ANGLE ON KATE'S FACE - DAY

51

KATE

It went beep beep beep!

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to find Kate sitting in a stroller at the zoo, playing with her father's beeper while Everett talks on a pay phone. Everett is nodding and grinning at Kate, desperately trying to keep her amused while he makes his phone call.

EVERETT

Mr. Dale Porterhouse, please. It's Steve Everett of the Tribune.

(to Kate)

Shh. I'm sorry, darlin'. I have to do this. We'll get back to the zoo in a sec.

KATE

We go to the zoo. In a sec.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

Dale Porterhouse. What can I do for you?

(CONTINUED)

51

CONTINUED:

51

EVERETT

Hi! Steve Everett, from the Tribune.
I'm covering the Frank Beachum execution
today, and I know you were one of the
chief witnesses.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

Yes. Yes, I was.

KATE

Daddy, why did it go beep beep beep?

EVERETT

I was wondering if you had some time to
talk about the case. Ten minutes, tops.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

Glad to. But I can't talk now. You
want to meet somewhere?

KATE

Daddy, why?

EVERETT

That'd be great.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

What if we met downstairs, The Bread
Company. You know it? The restaurant?

EVERETT

Pine Street. Yeah, sure.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

Say in half an hour?

EVERETT

Perfect.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

See you then.

EVERETT

'Bye.

(to Kate)

Okay, sweetheart. It's time for-- speed
zoo!

KATE

Speed zoo.

EVERETT

Ready?

Everett takes off like a rocket, pushing the stroller at
breakneck speed.

52

EXT. MONKEY CAGES - DAY

52

A) They rip by.

EVERETT
Monkeys!

KATE
Monkeys!

EVERETT
Speed zoo! We go fast!

KATE
We go fast!

They don't see a thing, but Kate's getting a thrill.

B) AVIARY

EVERETT
Birdies in the sky!

KATE
Birdies!

EVERETT
Speed zoo!

KATE
Speed zoo!

C) REPTILE BUILDING

They rush past its exterior.

EVERETT
Uh oh! Big snakes!

KATE
Big snakes!

EVERETT
What do you say?

KATE
Speed zoo!

D) POND

They fly by. All Kate can see is a whirl of visitors standing at the railing.

EVERETT
Look out! Big ol' alligators!

(CONTINUED)

52

CONTINUED:

52

KATE

Alligators!

EVERETT

And big ol' hippopotamus!

Big mistake.

KATE

Where hippopotamus?

EVERETT

Speed zoo!

KATE

(craning his head back)

Where hippopotamus?

EVERETT

We go fast!

KATE

(screaming)

Where hippopotamus?!

Everett, still running at full tilt, turns the stroller back toward the zoo's entrance. One of the wheels nicks the curb.

STROLLER

flips on its side.

KATE

goes sprawling across the pavement.

EVERETT

horrified, both at Kate's predicament and at himself.

He gathers Kate up in his arms while the child howls. Everett pulls a wad of Kleenex from his pocket and begins to wipe Kate's scraped forehead and upper arm. Meanwhile he is smothering the girl with kisses.

EVERETT

I'm so sorry, darlin'. Daddy's fault.
Ooh, I know it hurts. But you're brave.
Wow, are you brave! Hey, didn't we go
fast? We did speed zoo. You went so
fast, so fast...

Suddenly his eyes well with tears.

53 INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

53

Barbara opens the door as Everett reaches for it. Kate is festooned with zoo paraphernalia: zoo cap, T-shirt, badges, sunglasses. She's holding an enormous, dripping ice cream cone. She has Band-Aids on her forehead and upper arm, and a nice scrape across her cheek. Her screams have been reduced to a few pathetic but insistent hiccups. Kate's arms fly out towards her mother. She takes her and begins to examine her wounds while she whimpers in her neck.

KATE

(muffled)

I wanted to go, to go-- to the zoo. I wanted the hippopotamus...

EVERETT

I gotta tell you. She's a real trooper. She really--

BARBARA

What is wrong with you!

He is about to reply, but she closes the door in his face. He stands for a moment, with a look on his face that says, "What is wrong with me?"

54 INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - CLOSE ON SHOES

54

-- CLACKING down the hall. First, a pair of standard-issue, black correctional-officer brogans. Following these, a pair of woman's open-toe sandals. Then, somewhat incongruously, a pair of shiny, black Mary Janes and white frilly socks. We also see the hem of a little girl's Sunday dress. The girl holds a drawing in one hand and a box of Crayolas, open at one end, in the other. Sounds of LOUD BOOM BOXES, TELEVISIONS, and caged, VIOLENT MEN.

55 INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

55

LEESHA MITCHELL, an overworked, black attorney in her late twenties, leans forward into a pile of backlogged briefs.

LEESHA

(on phone)

How you holding up?

INTERCUT WITH:

56 INT. DEATH WATCH - CELL - DAY

56

Beachum leans his head against the bars, phone in hand.

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM

Okay.

LEESHA

Like I said, there's always a chance.
But you know, with all the feeling about
the girl and all...

An associate pops into Leesha's office carrying a large birthday cake. He gestures, "Where do you want it?" Leesha nods toward an end table. The associate points to his watch and slips out.

LEESHA

Here's the thing. You know how the governor's all tough on crime and so forth. So Mr. Berris says maybe if you can tell him about how remorseful you feel... know what I'm saying?

Beachum dredges up four heavy words.

BEACHUM

I didn't do it.

LEESHA

I understand, I understand. I'm just telling you. That's what we're facing here, all right?

The door to the Deathwatch cell is opening. In steps CO Atkins, followed by Frank's wife, Bonnie, and their seven-year-old daughter, Gail.

BEACHUM

(slowly, firmly)

I can't say I'm sorry for what I never did.

Gail breaks into an excited smile and runs to the bars of the cage. Bonnie follows, a little unsteadily, holding Beachum's eyes with hers, trying to smile but starting to cry.

LEESHA

No. Sure. Okay. Listen. I'll call back when the appeal comes down, all right? Should be soon. We're not going to forget about you --

Frank has already dropped the phone, which swings freely from the wall. Reedy moves to replace it.

(CONTINUED)

GAIL

Hi, Daddy. I brought you a picture but I'm not finished so I have to finish.

Beachum clutches at his girls through the bars, fighting back tears, searching for strength.

BEACHUM

Hey, that's great, sugar. Just a minute, they'll let you in and I can have me a better look.

Reedy disengages the electrical lock on the wall. Moving to the bars, he unlocks the mechanical. Everybody takes a small step back as the bars slide open.

Gail bursts in first, wrapping herself around Frank's leg. He holds both their heads to his and breathes deeply.

FLASHBACK - BEACHUM

Mowing his lawn. He stops and breathes deeply. Fresh grass, fresh air. Turning, he looks toward --

Bonnie barbecuing. She smiles and waves an empty bottle of A-1 Sauce. "We're out."

Gail in the sandbox, whacking the sand with a shovel.

BACK TO PRESENT - CELL

BEACHUM

(to Bonnie;
indicating Gail)

We're not sad about this. We're not afraid.

GAIL

Daddy, I'm going to finish my picture.

BEACHUM

Why don't you work right here while I have me a little talk with your mama.

Beachum clears the small table for Gail. She puts her picture down and sets up the Crayola box. He kisses her on the head.

Bonnie comes to him and falls into his arms. For a moment, she struggles against the tears, and then she lets them surge. Frank holds her, murmuring in her ear, fighting not to break down.

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM

Come on, girl. Come on. I'm just going to dreamland, baby, that's all. Gonna set the table for you. Gonna be holding two places at the table for you.

Over this, Gail is talking to him, brandishing her picture.

GAIL

Look, it's green pastures, Daddy. See? This is the blue sky. I made it at the motel. Daddy? It's not finished yet.

BEACHUM

(murmuring to Bonnie)

We're not sad. We know there's a place beyond this place, don't we, baby?

Bonnie finally pulls away and looks at him through her tears.

BONNIE

Okay, Frank. Okay.

BEACHUM

Thing I worry about, thing I worry about most in all this is --

His eyes go to Gail. She's going through her crayons, touching each one with the top of her finger, talking to herself.

BONNIE

She loves you, Frank.

BEACHUM

I don't want her ever to think, you know...

BONNIE

She won't think that. She knows you.

GAIL

I can't find green, Mama. Do you have it?

BONNIE

All the crayons are in the box, baby.

GAIL

(getting perturbed)

Well, I can't find it.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: (4)

56

BEACHUM

(to Bonnie)

Don't ever let her think it. You make sure now, okay?

BONNIE

I'll make sure, I swear.

GAIL

It's lost! I can't find it anywhere!

BONNIE

Can you use another color?

GAIL

(crying now)

I have to have green! It's green pastures!

BEACHUM

Well, let's look for it, it has to be around here...

BONNIE

I'm sure Daddy won't mind what colors you use.

GAIL

It has to be green! It has to be green! It's green pastures!

BONNIE

Gail, calm down.

VOICE (O.S.)

Mrs. Beachum --

They turn to find Plunkitt facing them outside the bars.

PLUNKITT

What parking area did you use?

57 EXT. SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON - PARKING AREA - DAY

57

A prison guard searches an area around Bonnie's car.

A second guard traces Bonnie's path toward the entrance. His eyes are focused on the ground. He taps a grass strip with a litter pole.

58 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL - DAY

58

Reedy's PHONE RINGS. Beachum and Bonnie fall silent.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

REEDY
 (on phone)
 Just a moment. Frank --

BONNIE
 Maybe it's the appeal. It must be.
 Don't you think? It's the, it's the
 appeal, the stay. Don't you think?

REEDY
 Your lawyer again --

He moves to hand Beachum the phone. Beachum leans toward
 the bars and brings the phone to his ear.

59 INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - WIDE ANGLE

59

Two guards slowly walk toward us, their flashlights and
 eyes locked on the baseboards.

60 INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

60

LEESHA
 Frank --

INTERCUT WITH:

61 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL

61

BEACHUM
 Yeah.

LEESHA
 We lost it. I'm sorry.

Beachum's stomach sinks. He clears his throat.

BEACHUM
 Okay.

62 INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - DAY

62

One of the GUARDS speaks into his walkie-talkie.

GUARD
 Control, I believe the material has been
 located.

He holds a Crayola close to his face.

63 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL - CLOSE ON BEACHUM

63

LEESHA (O.S.)

Now, Mr. Berris'll still be at the governor's desk late this afternoon, all right? But we gotta be honest about what's going on here, know what I'm saying?

BEACHUM

Okay.

LEESHA

Frank... I'm really sorry, Frank.

Beachum hands the phone back to Reedy. Bonnie watches him, waiting for an explanation, her wet eyes still hopeful. Gail bounces a look between the two as if sensing an event.

BONNIE

Is there... anything?

BEACHUM

No. No, nothing yet. You know these legal things, baby. Takes forever.

REEDY

Good news, everybody. They've found the crayon. It'll be here momentarily.

BEACHUM

You hear that, sugar? Now you can show me some real pastures.

GAIL

(uplifted)

Green Pastures!

BEACHUM

That's right, baby. Green pastures!

CUT TO:

64 INT. BREAD CO. RESTAURANT - PASTORAL MURAL - DAY

64

A painting of green pastures, in fact, and of wheat being harvested. We are looking at the wall mural at the Bread Company Restaurant, a place where yuppies go to munch lunch. The CAMERA FINDS Steve Everett, who is sitting at a table with Dale Porterhouse. Porterhouse is wearing a suit.

PORTERHOUSE

I do think there's such a thing in this world as good citizenship.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

PORTERHOUSE (CONT'D)

And I do think that when a man sees an injustice being done, let alone a cold-blooded murder --

EVERETT

You're not saying you saw the murder.

PORTERHOUSE

Of course not. I never said that.

EVERETT

So what exactly did you see?

PORTERHOUSE

Look, I've been all through this a million --

EVERETT

Sorry. I can't seem to put it all together in my head.

PORTERHOUSE

It's simple. I came in to use the phone -- my car had overheated. And soon as the door shut behind me, Beachum jumped up from behind the counter.

65 INSIDE EVERETT'S MIND - CLOSE ON BEACHUM

65

We OVERCRANK, and Beachum rises from behind the counter, looking bloody, looking mean. He stares at Porterhouse, then runs out the door.

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

He was bloody all over, and he had a gun in his hand. I guess he had been bending over Amy, uh, Mrs. Wilson, and that must have been when he took her ring and necklace. Anyway, he got one look at me and ran out of the service entrance.

CLOSE ON PORTERHOUSE

Shocked and dismayed. Now he runs over to the counter. We hear his BREATHING. He looks behind the counter.

PORTERHOUSE'S POV

Behind the counter, Amy Wilson lies dead in a pool of blood.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

PORTERHOUSE (V.O.)

My first concern was the girl, so I immediately called 9-1-1 -- I figured rather than chase a killer with a gun, I'd let the police handle it.

66 INT. BREAD COMPANY RESTAURANT - DAY

66

EVERETT

And they did.

PORTERHOUSE

And they sure did. As I say, we live by the rule of law in this country, and, uh -- aren't you going to take notes or record me or something? Usually when I've talked to reporters --

EVERETT

Oh, I... have a photographic memory.

PORTERHOUSE

What? Are you kidding?

Everett pulls a notebook and a Bic out of his pocket.

EVERETT

Sorry. Not myself today. Ate a bad oyster.

PORTERHOUSE

Yes. Well, my point was simply this...

During his next speeches, Everett pretends to be writing in his notebook. Actually he is drawing something.

EVERETT

Can I just, do you mind if I just cut to the chase? Didn't you ever have any doubts? About your testimony?

PORTERHOUSE

Never. Why should I?

EVERETT

You definitely saw Frank Beachum's face. And the gun in his hand.

PORTERHOUSE

Obviously, if I'd had any doubt, I would have told the police.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

Ooh, boy. Musta been scary. He was pointing the gun right at you?

Everett makes a gun shape with his fingers and points it at Porterhouse. Porterhouse is a bit taken aback.

PORTERHOUSE

No. Thank God, no.

EVERETT

Waving it high in the air?

Everett holds his hands over his head, bugs his eyes, and pretends to wave the gun.

PORTERHOUSE

Of course not. He had it down by his side in a very normal way.

CLOSE ON EVERETT

EVERETT

Well, how could you see it over the potato chips?

A pause -- just a split-second.

Everett is staring into Porterhouse in a way we haven't seen before: his eyes are like lasers. He's not trying to spook Porterhouse, he's just looking into him, deep into him, searching out the truth.

PORTERHOUSE

I don't understand. What potato chips? I had a very clear view.

Everett thrusts his notebook in front of Porterhouse. On the paper, he has sketched a rudimentary blueprint of the store -- the counter, the two doors, and the potato-chip rack that had left the white outlines on the floor.

The sketch segues into an OVERHEAD SHOT of the store, and the CAMERA GLIDES DOWN TO the show what Everett is narrating:

EVERETT (V.O.)

I mean, you came in, right? You saw Beachum stand up behind the counter, and you saw him run. But between you and the service entrance, well, see, that's where the potato-chip rack was.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

EVERETT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And it just kind of seems to me you couldn't have seen the gun over that rack, if Beachum wasn't waving it in the air or something.

Over this speech, we see Beachum running out the service door again, but this time the potato-chip rack stands between him and Porterhouse: Porterhouse can see Beachum only from the chest up. Plainly, no gun is visible.

68 CLOSE ON EVERETT (PRESENT)

68

Still staring into Porterhouse. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to show:

INT. BREAD COMPANY RESTAURANT - DAY

PORTERHOUSE

Why would I say I saw the gun if I didn't?

EVERETT

You tell me. Maybe you felt good talking to the police, the reporters -- maybe you wanted to give them a little more than you really had. Maybe you wanted to be the man, tell the girls around the coffee machine --

PORTERHOUSE

(angry now)

This is absurd! You think I would jeopardize a man's life to impress the people in my office?

Everett looks at him, and knows that he has no real evidence. Nothing but those white outlines on the floor of Pocum's -- that, and what he saw for a nanosecond in Porterhouse's eyes.

EVERETT

I don't know, Mr. Porterhouse. We only just met.

PORTERHOUSE

Listen, wise guy. I did a little research on you before I returned your call. You're the guy who did the big crusade to get that rapist released last year, that lying what's-his-name --

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

(ruefully)

You wouldn't be referring to Mike Vargas?

PORTERHOUSE

Yeah, you had the facts then, didn't you? Except when you threatened him with a D.N.A. test, he confessed. I'm surprised you didn't get fired on the spot, Mr. Everett.

EVERETT

Yeah. Me too.

Everett takes a deep breath and rubs his eyes. He visibly sags: Is this another Mike Vargas case? Does he have anything, anything at all, to go on?

EVERETT

Look, I'm sorry. I was out of line. I thought there was -- I don't know what I thought.

PORTERHOUSE

You're damn right you don't. And if you go to press with some pack of lies and innuendos, believe me -- my lawyers will sue you and your paper so fast you won't know what hit you.

Everett looks down at the table. The encounter is clearly over.

A WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

May I tell you gentlemen about our specials today?

CUT TO:

wrapped in cellophane flying through the air. It plops on a folding table. We PULL BACK TO:

EXT. PRISON - AREA ADJACENT GUARD TOWER - DAY

Plunkitt and his execution team sit around the table on a catwalk overlooking the main yard. Below, a few prisoners are milling around, lifting weights, smoking in small groups. ZACHARY PLATT is Plunkitt's deputy warden.

(CONTINUED)

PLATT

Who gets the roast beef?

PLUNKITT

Over here.

Platt tosses a sandwich to Plunkitt. Arnold McCardle peeks under his rye bread.

MCCARDLE

Seems like there's more fat and less meat every time I get this here.

SKYCOCK

Ain't that the way you order it, Arnold? Hold the meat, leave the fat.

PLUNKITT

Now, Arnold's all right. More of him, the better.

Plunkitt looks around the table, proud of his team.

PLUNKITT

Okay, what do you say we do some work while we feed our faces? You all know that at eighteen hundred hours, the whole procedure staff meets here for a final briefing. And be advised --

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

Uh, 'scuse me, warden...

PLUNKITT

Right. Right. The Reverend Shillerman here'll be holding a prayer meeting at the end of the briefing which is optional for anyone who wants to stay.

Atkins turns away and rolls his eyes. The others suppress guffaws. Attendance could be low.

PLUNKITT

Also, be advised, there's a change in the sixteen hundred interview thing. The girl had some accident or something and they're replacing her with a guy named Steve Everett.

ATKINS

Damn!

PLUNKITT

Now I realize his butt ain't quite up to the standard of Michelle's, but that's who's coming. Everybody clear on that?

70 AT EVERETT'S DESK - DAY 70

Everett sits for a moment, lost in thought. He is staring at a photo of Beachum and a photo of Porterhouse, and he is wrestling with his doubts. Finally he smacks his fist on the desk, gets up, and starts walking toward Alan's office.

71 INT. NEWS ROOM - DAY 71

Bob is staring malevolently as Everett strides toward Alan Mann's office. As Everett passes Jane, she looks up at him and then back down, shaking her head.

Inside Alan's office we can see the editor talking with a very distinguished-looking, gray-haired man in an expensive suit. This is HENRY LOWENSTEIN, the newspaper's owner.

Everett knocks on Alan's glass wall, and Alan motions him in.

72 INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY 72

Everett enters. Alan and Lowenstein rise.

LOWENSTEIN

Well, speak of the devil. Alan here tells me I'm paying you too much.

EVERETT

Yeah, but you can rest assured that I'm frittering it away on booze and girls.

LOWENSTEIN

(laughing)

Hah! You're a dyed-in-the-wool sonuvabitch, Everett, anyone ever tell you that?

EVERETT

Only my friends and loved ones. Hey, I didn't mean to interrupt. I can come back --

LOWENSTEIN

I was just leaving. Seriously -- still sober as a judge, right?

EVERETT

You obviously haven't partied with the sixth circuit court lately.

But this time Lowenstein really is serious -- he wants an answer.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

Yes, Mr. Lowenstein. Still sober as --
an ex-drunk.

LOWENSTEIN

Good to see you, Steve. Alan.

He nods toward them both and leaves.

Alan sits down and motions for Everett to do the same.
Alan pulls a Snickers out of his drawer.

ALAN

Stop fucking Bob's wife. He doesn't
like it.

EVERETT

What, did he put it in the company
newsletter?

Alan points his Snickers at Everett.

ALAN

If he comes to me and wants your ass,
I'm gonna have to give it to him. Then
you'll just be a hole with no ass around
it.

Everett pulls out a cigarette and lights it, hiding
momentarily behind the flame. Alan bites his Snickers,
gazing at Everett.

ALAN

You know what, Ev? You're a fucking
womanizer, that's what. You're fucking
up your whole career and you're fucking
up your marriage and if you can't keep
your goddamned prick in your pants I'm
not gonna be able to goddamned protect
you. How was she?

EVERETT

None of your goddamned business. Not
bad.

ALAN

Lucky bastard. I always liked her. I
ever tell you about the assistant D.A. I
fell for in New York?

EVERETT

No, and if you tell me now, I'm going to
throw myself across your desk and rip
your throat out with my bare hands.

(CONTINUED)

72

CONTINUED: (2)

72

ALAN

I'll save it for another time. Edifying story, though.

EVERETT

I've got a problem.

ALAN

Oh, the nickel finally drops. Christ, boy, don't you know Bob's been after you since you got here? In that quiet, earnest, reasonable way of his. He's probably glad you fucked Patricia so he has ethical reason to annihilate you.

EVERETT

Great. I live to make him happy. But that's not my problem.

ALAN

You should've fucked my wife. I'd've just punched you.

EVERETT

I did fuck your wife.

ALAN

Lucky bastard. How was she?

EVERETT

Real wildcat. But that's not my goddamned problem, Alan.

ALAN

All right. What's your goddamned problem? Tell papa. You soulless sack of shit.

EVERETT

Frank Beachum. I think he could be innocent.

73

EXT. AREA ADJACENT GUARD TOWER - DAY

73

The prison official pass a trash bag around the table.

PLUNKITT

After our briefing, Reuben and Pat are gonna be checking all the phones in the chamber, make sure we got the open lines working.

SKYCOCK

Don't want the Governor to get a busy signal.

(CONTINUED)

ATKINS

Don't worry, I got call waiting put on that phone.

MCCARDLE

(giggling)

Jesus, Atkins.

PLUNKITT

Arnold, you'll make sure the clocks in there are synchronized and the one in the press room, too. Norm, you've got the strap-down team, okay?

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

I, uh, I myself had a personal heart-to-heart with the prisoner myself this morning, and, going by my experience with the men, he won't be any trouble, in my opinion.

Plunkitt fantasizes the hard point of his shoe making contact with Shillerman's ass.

Just then, a shadow falls across the table. The men look up and go silent.

Standing quietly above them is the executioner. He nods to the men. They nod back somberly, and we see their faces, one by one.

ATKINS

Hey.

SKYCOCK

Joe.

MCCARDLE

Hiya, Joe.

PLUNKITT

Joe.

For a moment, nobody says a word.

sliding into Alan Mann's mouth.

CLOSE ON CIGARETTE

being puffed by Everett.

(CONTINUED)

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Alan chews mightily. Across from him, Everett smokes. They look at each other, two old friends enjoying a mock standoff.

ALAN

All right, all right. What have you got on Beachum?

Everett lifts his cigarette hand as if to speak -- but what, indeed, has he got? He puts the filter to his lips and sucks hard. Alan watches him, shaking his head in mock horror.

ALAN

Oh... oh, Ev.

EVERETT

No, no, wait...

ALAN

Ev, ev, ev...

EVERETT

Just listen to me a moment...

ALAN

Ev. I don't have to listen to you. I'm looking at you. I'm looking and I see a reporter who's about to tell me that he has a hunch.

EVERETT

Alan, I've done some checking up...

ALAN

Do you know my opinion of reporters who have hunches?

EVERETT

I talked to one of the witnesses, Alan. He says he saw a gun, but I know he didn't.

ALAN

I can't fart loud enough to express my opinion.

EVERETT

Alan, even Michelle knew this thing stinks. There are discrepancies.

Alan brings his chair forward sharply. His eyes bug.

(CONTINUED)

ALAN

Discrepancies? Did I hear you say there were discrepancies? After a police investigation? A trial? Six years of appeals? You found discrepancies? What did it take you, half an hour?

EVERETT

Come on. You know the appeals system. Beachum's first lawyer was probably some twelve-year-old Legal Aid guy, and if he didn't object to something at the trial, then the appeals guys had nothing to work with, no matter how sharp they were, which of course they weren't.

ALAN

Ev...

EVERETT

Alan, for Christ's sake, they're gonna kill this guy.

Everett crushes out his cigarette and stares at Alan. Alan stares back. Finally, he sighs and grins ruefully.

ALAN

All right, all right. You're saying you can turn this routine execution piece into some kind of big fight-for-justice story. And that'll give me an excuse to stand up for you when Bob asks me to transfer you to the toilet.

EVERETT

I need this one, Alan.

ALAN

You'll still lose the wife and kid, you know. She's gonna find out.

EVERETT

Don't say that. Don't even -- I gotta fix that. I'm gonna --

ALAN

I don't have to tell you what'll happen if you pull another Mike Vargas on me, right? You come up with something, okay, I'll run it, but it'd better be good.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

Look, I was drinking back then, all right? You drink, you lose your story nose. My nose is back. I'm sure of it.

ALAN

I guess we'll both find out.

EVERETT

There's just one thing. What if I really find something, you know? We can't just wait for it to run tomorrow.

ALAN

Ev, I know what you're thinking. I can hear your little brain ticking -- I really can. And let me just remind you: if you go to Lowenstein thinking he'll call the governor --

EVERETT

The gov'll listen to Lowenstein.

ALAN

-- it better be awfully good. Or he not only won't call the governor, he'll eat your heart and throw your body to the dogs. You won't have to sleep with his wife, pal. He'll fire you for free.

EVERETT

Okay, Alan. Honest to God, I'm gonna... Anyway, thanks

ALAN

Hey, don't thank me. I don't know whose ass you're trying to save here, Beachum's or your own. But if your nose for a story's gone, you're gone, too. I'm not running this paper to salvage what's left of your smarmy little existence. So she was really pretty good, huh?

EVERETT

Fuck you.

ALAN

Lucky bastard.

Everett laughs, gets up, gives Alan a look, laughs again. Alan starts whistling to himself. Everett leaves the office.

75 INT. CITY ROOM - DAY

75

Everett makes a beeline for the supply room. In the b.g., we can see Bob watching him, giving him the evil eye. Everett looks at the clock.

ANGLE ON CLOCK

It reads 2:50.

76 INT. SUPPLY ROOM - DAY

76

Everett enters and begins scouting for pads. He grabs two from a pile and shoves them into his back pocket. He takes a couple of Bics and clips them to the pocket of his shirt. He turns.

Bob Findley is standing in front of him, smiling a mirthless, pitying smile. Everett watches him in horror.

BOB

You know, I don't know what to say to you. All day, I've been trying to think of what to say to you.

EVERETT

I really am sorry, Bob. Really. I am.

BOB

(a bitter laugh)

You know, I really don't think you are. I actually don't think you're capable of feeling sorry. I don't think you're capable of feeling anything for others.

This hits Everett unexpectedly hard.

EVERETT

You might be right, Bob... I... you might be right.

(beat)

How'd you find out, anyway?

BOB

She told me.

EVERETT

She...?

BOB

Patricia saved some of your cigarette butts. Left them in an ashtray by her bed. That was her way of telling me.

Another blow. For a moment, Everett is stunned.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

EVERETT

Yeah. I guess that's all I was to her -- just a way of getting your attention. Bob, I don't know if it helps anything, but I feel like shit. I really -- feel like shit.

BOB

You're right, Steve. It doesn't help anything at all.

Bob exits, leaving Everett in the supply room.

77 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL - DAY

77

A uniformed female guard slips quietly into the cell and makes eye contact with Reedy.

CLOSE ON GAIL'S DRAWING

A colorful, open landscape, now dominated by pine green.

WIDER ANGLE

Beachum and Gail huddled closely on the cot.

BEACHUM

This is beautiful, baby. I'll keep this with me always, all right?

GAIL

Can we come back tomorrow? Can we stay at the motel again?

BEACHUM

Well, tomorrow morning you and Mama get to go back home.

GAIL

I don't want to go back. I want to stay with you.

She begins to whimper and cry.

BEACHUM

Lookit, baby. You're a big girl. You know what's happening here, don't you?

GAIL

Yes...

BEACHUM

You know, after today... after today, you won't be able to see your daddy no more.

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

77

Gail suddenly buries her face in his shoulder. He holds her, breathing her in. Bonnie turns toward the wall, sobbing.

BEACHUM

But I'll be there, baby. I will.
Listen to me, okay? You'll always be
able to talk to me. All right?
Remember, we talked about the baby
Jesus? Well, I'll be up with Him. I'll
be watching you, and I'll wait for you.
And any time you need to talk, I'll be
right there, listening. And --

He stifles a sob.

BEACHUM

-- and I'll miss you so bad, honey.
(beat)
Look. I wrote you a letter...

He reaches for it, but Gail's face shows she doesn't understand.

BEACHUM

Your mama will have it for when you need
it, later on. So you go on now. I love
you, baby. I'll always love you.

Beachum gently delivers Gail to the female guard. He's trying desperately not to choke up as Gail follows the guard meekly for a few steps before turning back --

GAIL

Why can't you just come home? You
should just kill all these people and
come home!

The guard starts to pull her away. Beachum puts an arm over his face -- this is more than he can bear. Bonnie holds her face in her hands, sobbing. The door closes, but we can still hear her shrill little voice.

GAIL (O.S.)

Goodbye, Daddy! Goodbye, Daddy!

78 INT./EXT. EVERETT'S CAR - DAY

78

The car is rocketing along at a rate far beyond its apparent aerodynamic capabilities. Blue smoke plumes from the tailpipe.

Inside, Everett is revved up. On the RADIO, ELVIS sings "Jailhouse Rock." Everett bangs the dashboard and sings along.

79 EXT. PRISON - EVERETT'S POV - DAY 79

It looms over the horizon, a sobering hulk of gray stone.

80 EXT. OUTSIDE THE PRISON GATES - DAY 80

Everett's car passes a growing crowd of protestors and death-penalty advocates camped out at the gate. It's a macabre tailgate party. Everett glances at the "Remember Amy" posters.

FEATURING POSTERS

The same photo of Amy Wilson that we have seen on TV -- the drab blouse, the gold locket, the mousy brown hair.

81 EXT. PRISON PARKING AREA - DAY 81

The CAR pulls in, COUGHING blue smoke. It shudders for a moment after Everett TURNS OFF the ENGINE. He gets out.

A very old steak, still in its supermarket packaging, thuds to the ground as he steps out. He looks at it curiously for a moment -- When did he intend to cook it? How drunk was he? -- and then he picks it up. It seems to be oozing. Gingerly, Everett tosses it in the back seat. He heads for the prison.

82 INT. STARK PRISON CORRIDOR - DAY 82

Thick concrete walls. Sound of BARS CLANKING shut. Everett follows Atkins.

83 INT. DEATH ROW - DAY 83

Everett glances at each passing cell.

EVERETT

(to Atkins)

Nice place. Remind me never to commit a violent crime.

ATKINS

(deadpan)

They lie, you know.

EVERETT

What?

ATKINS

The prisoners. That's what they do. Every word they say is a lie.

EVERETT

Everyone lies, pal. I'm just here to write it down.

84

INT. DEATHWATCH CELL - ANGLE ON REEDY - DAY

84

He types in the chronological: "16:04 -- reporter arrives for interview."

Then he looks up at Everett, who is looking down at him.

REEDY

You've got fifteen minutes, Mr. Everett.
By order of Warden Plunkitt. Keep it
to fifteen minutes.

EVERETT'S POV

Beachum moves toward the bars. His face is marked by a profound weariness. He looks drained, hollowed out, almost spectral. Now Bonnie rises up behind him and moves toward the bars too, her hand clutching Beachum's, the knuckles white.

BACK TO SCENE

Reedy pulls up a chair in front of the cell for Everett.

Beachum sticks his hand through the cell, and Everett shakes it.

BEACHUM

Mr. Everett, I'm Frank Beachum. Have
a...

He gestures toward the chair.

EVERETT

Yeah. Thanks.

Everett sits and pulls out his notebook and pen. Beachum gently disengages himself from Bonnie and lowers himself into the chair at the table in front of Everett. Bonnie sinks back down onto the cot, her eyes on Everett. Everett fiddles for a cigarette, jerks one halfway out of the pack, and offers it to Beachum.

BEACHUM

I got 'em.

They light up, and then they smoke for a long, awkward moment.

BEACHUM

How's... that girl? That other, that
Michelle. She had some accident?

EVERETT

Yeah. Car crash. She's... she didn't
make it.

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM

Oh, man. I'm sorry to hear that.

EVERETT

Yeah. She was... yeah. Thanks.

Another awkward silence. They smoke.

BEACHUM

Well... I guess you want to talk to me about how it feels. In here.

EVERETT

Yeah, that's it. It's a human interest story.

Everett watches the long, sad, tired face pushing the words out at him through the bars, through the smoke.

BEACHUM

(his voice flat)

I been thinking about that. Hey, look what my daughter drew me. My daughter Gail. Calls it 'Green Pastures.'

Beachum shows him the drawing. Everett tries to look interested.

BEACHUM

Well, only thing I want to say, I wanted to tell everyone that I believe in Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior.

Everett scribbles dutifully on his pad: "B'lieve in JC, Lord + Sav..."

BEACHUM

And I believe... I'm going to a better place and there's a better justice there, you know, and... I won't say I'm not afraid 'cause I think...

A loud sob from Bonnie, who is sitting on the cot.

BEACHUM

... 'cause I think everyone's afraid of dying pretty much. I came to my faith late in life, you know. I done some bad things when I was younger, but that was then, you know. Anyway, I know the crooked will be made straight -- that's what the Bible says, and I believe that.

Everett scribbles: "crooked made straight."

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM

So that's how I feel about it.

He looks at Everett, but for some reason Everett can't manage to look back. Everett just keeps staring down at his pad.

BEACHUM

Is that all right, Mr. Everett?

Everett can't look at him. He glances over at Reedy.

REEDY

You got nine more minutes.

BEACHUM

Is that what you wanted or...

Everett finally looks up, blowing a stream of smoke in an unsteady breath. He leans forward, forcing himself to look at this condemned, roiling man living out his last hours -- the pain in that face, and the toil. Bonnie looks up, watching Everett.

EVERETT

Mr. Beachum... You don't know me, Mr. Beachum, but I'll tell you, I probably got a screw loose somewhere. To tell you the truth, I don't give a rat's ass about Jesus Christ. And I don't care about justice, in this life or the next. To be honest, I don't even care about what's right and wrong. Never have.

Everett drops his cigarette to the floor and rubs it out with his shoe. Beachum and Bonnie are watching him, mesmerized.

Everett taps his nose.

EVERETT

You know what this is?

BEACHUM

Is this some kind of joke?

EVERETT

It's no joke, Mr. Beachum. It's my nose. And my nose -- well, to tell you the pitiful truth, it's my whole goddamn life. When my nose says something stinks, I gotta have faith in it, just like you have your faith in Jesus.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT (CONT'D)

When it's working, I know there's truth out there somewhere. But if it leads me astray, well, I may as well drive off a cliff... I really -- I'm nothing. The point is, lately I'm not a hundred percent positive my nose is working right. So I have to know. Did you kill that woman or not?

BEACHUM

(dully,
disbelieving)

What?

EVERETT

What happened, dammit? In that store. The day Amy Wilson was shot.

The two men stare at each other. We see that Everett is looking right into Beachum, the way he looked right into Porterhouse.

BEACHUM

I... went in to buy a bottle of A-1 Sauce.

EVERETT

And you paid Amy for it at the counter.

BEACHUM

Well, no, I never got it. Look, I told them all this --

CLOSE ON EVERETT

EVERETT

Tell it again.

Beachum enters through the main door. To his left, behind the counter, is Amy.

BEACHUM

Hey, Amy. Where you keep the steak sauce?

AMY

Hi, Frank. It's back, you see where the ketchup and relish is?

BEACHUM

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

He starts to go, but when Amy calls to him he approaches the counter.

AMY

Frank, you know I been meaning to talk to you.

BEACHUM

Yeah. I bet I know what about.

AMY

I don't got it, Frank. I could pay you thirty now. But I don't got the whole thing.

BEACHUM

When could you do the whole ninety-six?

AMY

After I get paid, fifteenth of July.

BEACHUM

You're not always gonna do me this way, are you?

AMY

I swear it, Frank. We just had some extra expenses, end of the school year and all.

BEACHUM

It's cool. July fifteenth. Hey, I'm just gonna use the bathroom, okay?

AMY

You know where, right?

Beachum nods and heads toward the back of the store. The bathroom is in a small entryway, and as Beachum heads toward it, we hear the front DOOR SLAM. Beachum struggles for a moment with the sticky bathroom door and goes in.

86 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL - DAY

86

EVERETT

So you weren't even mad about the money?

BEACHUM

Well, I wanted her to understand I didn't like doing business that way. But she was cool. I liked her.

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED:

86

EVERETT

Were you carrying a gun?

BEACHUM

No way, man.

EVERETT

So then what?

87 INT. POCUM'S GROCERY - BATHROOM - DAY

87

Beachum is standing in the stall (it's a one-toilet bathroom), humming to himself. We hear MUFFLED VOICES outside, and at first Beachum doesn't notice them. He finishes and FLUSHES the TOILET. Over the sound of the flush, the VOICES GROW LOUDER. Beachum can't be sure what he's hearing. Then he hears Amy's anguished voice□--

AMY (O.S.)

Please! Not that!

-- followed by a GUNSHOT. For a moment, Beachum stands paralyzed. Then he bolts out of the stall, pushes at the sticky bathroom door, kicks it open, runs down the small entryway, and emerges into the main body of the store.

88 INT. POCUM'S GROCERY - BEACHUM'S POV - DAY

88

The door to the service entrance is slamming. There's no one else in sight. Beachum runs toward the counter; behind it, Amy Wilson is lying on her back, her eyes wide, her chest torn open by a bullet, the last breaths rattling out of her.

Outside, very distantly, the sound of a CAR DOOR being SLAMMED, and then the SCREECH of TIRES.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Beachum falls to his knees by Amy's side, trying everything he can think of, making up his own brand of CPR as he goes along -- thumping her chest, breathing into her mouth, trying to staunch the blood with his hands, calling her name. Blood soaks his shirt, splatters onto his face, runs down his fingers. Amy looks into his eyes, terrified, and then her eyes go blank.

Dimly, he hears the FRONT DOOR CLOSE. And a voice:

PORTERHOUSE (O.S.)

Hey! Anybody here?

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

88

Beachum pops up from behind the counter. Porterhouse's jaw drops.

PORTERHOUSE

Hey! What's going on? Oh my God!

For a moment, he and Beachum stare at each other, and then, for another split second, Beachum looks down at himself, realizes how all this must seem, and bolts for the service door. We see clearly that the potato chip rack stands between him and Porterhouse.

89 EXT. POCUM'S GROCERY - BEACHUM'S POV - DAY

89

He is RUNNING OUT the service door INTO a small passageway full of garbage cans, fire extinguishers, boxes and crates. OUT the outer screen door, RUNNING -- and wham! Nancy Larson's car nearly backs into him.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Beachum looks up, and we see Larson's eyes looking back, startled, from her rear-view mirror. Then Beachum runs out of the parking lot.

90 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL - DAY

90

EVERETT

'Please, not that.'

BEACHUM

'swhat I heard.

Everett pops a cigarette into his mouth, never taking his gaze off Beachum's face.

EVERETT

Why'd you run?

BEACHUM

I shouldn't have. But you know, I'm a two-time loser, Mr. Everett. And there I was with all that blood and a dead girl right next to me and a white man staring at me like I was -- I just panicked.

EVERETT

So who shot her, Frank?

Bonnie gasps. She is staring at Everett.

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM

I don't know.

EVERETT

Did Porterhouse see the gun?

REEDY

(threateningly)

You got five minutes, over there.

BEACHUM

I told you. Wasn't no gun.

EVERETT

Did he see the shooter?

BEACHUM

I don't know. How should I know?

EVERETT

Of course he didn't. 'Cause by the time he pulled into the parking lot, the shooter was gone. That's why he didn't hear the shots, either.

REEDY

Mr. Everett...

BEACHUM

I don't know. I don't know when anything happened.

EVERETT

'Cause you don't know how long you were down on the floor trying to save Amy's life.

Bonnie sobs, but Everett ignores her. Beachum begins to slump and look away, but Everett only grows more intent. In the b.g., Reedy picks up the phone and talks anxiously into it. He never takes his eyes off Everett.

EVERETT

So what was it, Frank, a simple robbery? Who else could have been there? Come on, Frank. Someone have something against her?

BEACHUM

I just don't know. I didn't see.

EVERETT

(bearing down
on him)

Come on, give me something.

(CONTINUED)

BEACHUM

(worked up)

I don't know what you want.

Reedy squeaks his chair and stands up.

REEDY

All right, that's it.

Bonnie flings herself off the bed and rushes toward the bars.

BONNIE

No!

Everett looks at her desperate, tear-stained face, but already Reedy is grabbing him, moving him forcefully away.

BONNIE

You believe us. Don't you? Do you believe us?

EVERETT

(to Reedy)

All right, all right.

REEDY

Let's go. Upsetting people...

BONNIE

Do. You. Believe. Us?

BEACHUM

Don't, Bonnie. Don't.

REEDY

Come on, dammit.

For a moment, everything stops. Everett stares at Bonnie and Bonnie stares back.

EVERETT

Yes. I believe you. For Christ's sake.

Bonnie closes her eyes and begins weeping against the bars. Reedy pulls Everett toward the door.

EVERETT

All right, dammit.

REEDY

Coming in here, upsetting people.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

90

CONTINUED: (2)

90

REEDY (CONT'D)

Where's your goddamn heart, man? Don't
you think these people have enough?
What do you think this is?

EVERETT

All right. Sorry. Yeah.

They are at the door, but now Everett looks back. Bonnie
is staring at him the way you'd look at a child who had
just done something thoughtless and cruel.

BONNIE

Where were you? Dear God, where were
you all this time?

Reedy starts to move Everett out, but Everett resists.

EVERETT

It wasn't my story. There was an
accident -- It wasn't supposed to be my
story.

Reedy pushes Everett out into the hall.

91

INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - DAY

91

As Reedy pushes Everett into the corridor, Plunkitt is
waiting for him. He looks quizzically at Everett and
holds out his hand.

PLUNKITT

(shaking hands)
Everett.

EVERETT

Warden. Good to see you again.

PLUNKITT

(gently)
I'll walk you to your car.

They walk.

PLUNKITT

Terrible about Ms. Ziegler.

EVERETT

Yeah. Horrible thing.

PLUNKITT

You know, she gave me to understand that
she wanted to talk to Beachum about, you
know, his emotions before the execution.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

PLUNKITT (CONT'D)

Human interest stuff. 'Cause otherwise, we do most press interviews by phone at this point. Less risk of upsetting the prisoner.

EVERETT

Yeah. I probably should have prepared better. Kind of a last-minute thing.

92 EXT. PRISON PARKING LOT - DAY

92

Plunkitt accompanies Everett toward his (Everett's) car.

PLUNKITT

You know, people come in here, the press. Prisoners tell 'em things-- all kind of heart-wrenching things. And then the next day, in the paper, we're the ones who come off sounding like hard guys. It can get pretty frustrating, is all.

EVERETT

Sure. Of course.

PLUNKITT

We have to do what the state tells us to do. Makes it a little tough on us here if we show up in the newspaper as bloody murderers or anything like that.

EVERETT

Right. I understand completely.

PLUNKITT

Knew you would.

(beat)

You know, these things go through all kind of trials and appeals before they get to us. It's no use trying to figure out who's naughty and who's nice and then come sliding down the chimney like a hero -- not on execution day. You're not Santa Claus. No such thing as Santa Claus.

They reach the car. Plunkitt seems as though he wants to say something else, but instead he just stands there.

PLUNKITT

Well...

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

Everett looks at him expectantly, but Plunkitt can't find the words. Suddenly, Everett's expression changes.

EVERETT

You're not sure, are you, Luther?

Plunkitt looks at Everett for a long moment, then slaps his shoulder.

PLUNKITT

You drive safe now.

Plunkitt turns and walks back toward the prison doors.

93 EXT. DOWNTOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

93

CECILIA NUSSBAUM, circuit attorney, comes out the formal door and starts down a series of long stone steps. She's a small, ugly woman with a big, fleshy beezor sticking out of a face that resembles a collection of frowns all glued on top of one another. She's accompanied by WALLY CARTWRIGHT, an imposing black attorney in a concrete-gray suit. Everett bounds up to them.

EVERETT

Cecilia!

Nussbaum and Cartwright look but never break stride.

EVERETT

Wait. This is urgent.

NUSSBAUM

Not a good time, Everett.

EVERETT

I know you're busy, but --

Cartwright crosses laterally like a good linebacker. Everett is shoved off-course. He staggers a step to the side.

NUSSBAUM

Not now. Call my office.

EVERETT

Cecilia, I'm telling you --

He reaches out to slow her. Cartwright pokes him in the chest.

CARTWRIGHT

Look...

Everett knocks the finger away.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

Oh, bullshit. You're a fucking circuit attorney, I'm a reporter. You wanna hit me or you wanna keep your job?

NUSSBAUM

Why don't you get in the car, Wally?

EVERETT

Yeah, why don't you get in the car, Wally.

Cartwright wavers a moment, and then moves toward the car.

CARTWRIGHT

(murmuring)

New York asshole.

NUSSBAUM

What is it, Everett?

EVERETT

(still fuming)

All right. Frank Beachum. Who else was there?

NUSSBAUM

Are you back on the bottle?

EVERETT

When Amy Wilson was killed, who else was there? Porterhouse, Nancy Larson, Beachum. And who else?

Once again, Everett's eyes have become a laser beam. He is watching Cecilia's eyes the way he watched Porterhouse's eyes and Frank Beachum's eyes. Cecilia's eyes are very still.

NUSSBAUM

What difference does it make?

Everett's face: He knows he's right.

EVERETT

He's the shooter, Cecilia. Whoever he was, he shot Amy. Who was he? Come on.

NUSSBAUM

Everett, I don't know what kind of cockamamie conspiracy theory you're working on, but this is a solid case. I don't send innocent men to the Death House.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

I know that, I do. But this time you made a mistake.

Sitting in the Cadillac, Cartwright HONKS the HORN. Without even looking up, Nussbaum holds up her index finger.

EVERETT

Beachum was in the bathroom when Amy got shot. He only went to Pocom's to buy a bottle of steak sauce.

NUSSBAUM

You've always been a gullible sonuvabitch, Everett. Read the transcripts. A witness saw Beachum with the gun.

EVERETT

He didn't see the gun. There were potato chips in the way.

NUSSBAUM

You're telling me he said that.

EVERETT

No. But I could see it in his face. I could tell.

Nussbaum's face changes to a mask of leathery disdain.

NUSSBAUM

You haven't got jackshit.

EVERETT

He didn't do it! How much jackshit do I need?

Nussbaum studies him for a second and then begins heading down the stairs toward her car. Everett follows.

EVERETT

There was someone else, wasn't there?

NUSSBAUM

(without looking
back)

A kid. Bought a Coke from the machine. He didn't even look inside.

EVERETT

He shot Amy Wilson.

(CONTINUED)

NUSSBAUM

We interviewed him. We issued a description of his car and he came in of his own free will. His story checked out. He didn't see a thing.

EVERETT

He shot her! You didn't get him to say anything because you had already arrested Beachum -- you thought you had the guy. But the kid was the guy!

Nussbaum reaches the car. Everett thrusts himself between her and the door.

EVERETT

Tell me his name.

NUSSBAUM

He was nothing to the case. We put him in the same lineup Beachum was in. Both our witnesses looked right at him and still fingered Beachum as the killer.

She looks at Everett triumphantly -- and indeed, for a moment, Everett is shaken. But he quickly recovers.

EVERETT

Okay, but what do you expect? Your witnesses didn't even get there till the shooter was long gone. Look, just give me the kid's name. Let me talk to him.

NUSSBAUM

How'm I supposed to remember his name after six years? He was nothing to the case.

EVERETT

It's in your files, your notes. Somewhere.

NUSSBAUM

(opening the car door)

Call me tomorrow. I'll see if I can find it.

She begins to get into the car, but Everett grabs the door, drawing it back -- and her with it. Everett is burning with rage.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

If you let it wait till tomorrow, then you better sleep goddamn well tonight. 'Cause after today, I'm gonna haunt you, lady. I'm gonna hound the living shit out of you.

Nussbaum lets the door go and turns to face Everett. She is not large, but she looks utterly terrifying.

NUSSBAUM

(too quietly)

I'm not Wally, Steve. I'm a lot bigger than Wally. And if you threaten me again, there'll be little pieces of your life all over the gutter. 'Cause I'll blow the rest away.

Everett stares at her. She shuts the door with a heavy thud. Wally is about to drive away when Nussbaum opens the car window.

NUSSBAUM

One more thing, barfly. Just thought you oughta know before your latest lost cause confesses. Anyone ever tell you that Beachum volunteered for a lie detector test? Yeah. He flunked, big time. Sure, it's inadmissible -- that's why you didn't read about it in the transcripts. Still, it kind of captured our interest. Why don't you go pour yourself a tall one and think it over?

Everett stares at her. The car speeds off.

For a moment, Everett crumbles. He sits down on the steps of the courthouse and puts his head in his hands.

As Everett walks in, he sees Bob Findley smiling at him -- a tight, terrible little smile that says: I have you by the balls. Everett goes to his desk, turns on his computer, and unwraps a ham sandwich. He lets out a long sigh.

At the desk next to him, TOM DONALDSON, a plump reporter in his forties, rolls his chair over. He holds a glass of Scotch.

DONALDSON

Hey, Ev.

(CONTINUED)

Everett nods. For a moment he looks longingly at the Scotch. Donaldson notices.

DONALDSON

Hey, you want a nip?

Everett's eyes say yes, but then he shakes his head.

EVERETT

No. Thanks, Tom, I don't think I better.

DONALDSON

Sorry, Ev. I forgot. Hey, what's with you and Bob? He's been giving you the evil eye all day.

EVERETT

Yeah, and you know what? It's working.

DONALDSON

No, really -- did something happen at the prison? Some big uproar?

EVERETT

Tell me something, Tom. Why would a guilty man volunteer for a lie detector test?

DONALDSON

Happens all the time. Perp gets cocky, thinks he can slide one by. Course, innocent men flunk 'em sometimes, too. Why? Bob want you to take one?

EVERETT

There's a cute idea. No, I don't think my guilt's in any doubt. Hey, is Bridget still here? I was going to try and get her to do some scutwork for me. Women are feeling more secure these days, you know.

DONALDSON

She went home. But I'll get you a cup of coffee if you'll give me head.

EVERETT

Cool. Could you see if you can track down any of the detectives who worked the Beachum case? See if anyone ever heard of another witness at the murder scene -- a kid. I just need a name and address.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT'S POV

At the other end of the room, Alan is opening his office door to look out. And Bob is standing up from the city desk, ready to join the attack.

DONALDSON

You got it.

BACK TO SCENE

EVERETT

And, Tom. Could you get me a cup of coffee?

Donaldson blows him a kiss and walks away. Everett picks up the phone and punches in some numbers. He gives Alan a friendly wave. Alan glances at Bob, who returns the glance. Alan goes back in his office. Bob sits back down at his desk.

VOICE (V.O.)

(on phone)

Legal Services.

EVERETT

It's Steve Everett at the Tribune. Who can talk to me about Beachum.

VOICE

All of us. Anyone here.

EVERETT

Okay. Before Beachum goes in the store, a kid drives into the parking lot. Right?

VOICE

Wrong. Anyway, there's nothing like that in the files.

EVERETT

How do you know? Aren't you gonna check?

VOICE

(laughing)

Believe me, Mr. Everett, we all know. Everybody here has memorized these files the last two weeks. There are no other witnesses. Porterhouse, Larson -- that's it. But a lot of circumstantial on top of that.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED: (3)

94

EVERETT

(sighing)

Right. Okay. Thanks anyway.

Everett hangs up the phone and looks at Donaldson.
Donaldson shakes his head.

EVERETT

Shit.

Alan's door opens again. Alan steps out.

EVERETT

Shit.

DONALDSON

(hanging up)

That was Benning, the whip on the
investigation. Says it rings a bell,
but turned out to be nothing. Doesn't
remember any names.

EVERETT

Shit.

DONALDSON

And Ardsley, who headed the
investigation, he's retired. Florida
somewhere.

EVERETT

Shit.

ALAN

(from across the room)

Everett! Get in here.

EVERETT

Shit.

Everett sees Bob rise and head toward Alan's office.
Everett walks across the big room. It's a long walk.

95 INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY

95

Alan waves Everett inside, and Bob comes in behind him,
smiling his tight, satisfied little smile.

EVERETT

(to Bob)

Well, you don't have to look so happy
about it.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

I'm not happy. Why would you say that?

Alan sits down and rubs his forehead.

ALAN

I understand your interview at the prison went somewhat beyond the requirements of a human interest sidebar.

Everett grabs his cigarettes and shoots one into his mouth.

EVERETT

Okay. I colored outside the lines a little. I don't think Plunkitt's sore.

Everett lights the cigarette and draws hard on it.

BOB

No, Steve. He just figured you were back on the booze. And by the way, there's no smoking in this building.

ALAN

Boys, boys. Come on. I can't have this. Everett, say you're sorry. Bob, punch his lights out.

BOB

(looking surprised)

This isn't a personal matter, Alan. This was an important story. I gave Steve very specific instructions on this. The paper made promises to Plunkitt...

EVERETT

The guy's innocent!

BOB

(rolling his eyes)

Oh.

EVERETT

(angrily)

He is! Bob, it's not a human interest sidebar. It's a cruci-fucking-fiction, man! What did you want me to say to him, how's the weather up there, Mr. Christ?

Everett pulls out his notebook and slaps it on the desk.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

Look, I got all that personal crap you wanted. He believes in God. He's going straight to heaven. He's happy as a pig in shit, all right? He can't wait to be juiced. You can use that in the sidebar.

BOB

(more in sorrow than anger)

That's not the point.

EVERETT

You bet it's not the point.

ALAN

Well, look. We'll take Everett off the execution and put Harvey on it instead.

BOB

Fine. But that's still not the point.

ALAN

Yeah, well, we all know what the point is.

BOB

(very deliberately)

The only point is that I can't work with you anymore, Steve. Maybe you're a good reporter. Everyone says so. But there are other good reporters and they don't have your attitude and they follow instructions. I can't work with you.

Alan lets out a low moan. Everett smokes, studying the floor. Bob gazes at him righteously. Then Everett explodes.

EVERETT

Why don't you just hit me, Bob? I deserve it. I'll fall down. I'll bleed. You'll love it. It'll be great. Punch me out, man.

(beat)

Then you can go home and hit your wife, too. She likes it.

Bob's head goes back a little, but he retains his icy calm.

(CONTINUED)

BOB

I guess we can't all live in the world of your imagination, Steve. I'm not going to hit anybody, no matter what they want. If Patricia needs some other kind of relationship, she'll have to go find that. But my marriage is none of your business. What matters is that you're a thoughtless, mentally unbalanced man, and I can't work with you anymore.

Alan moans again, covering his eyes with his hand. Suddenly, Everett realizes that he's losing his job. He turns to Alan.

EVERETT

Alan, listen. I've got the shooter.

ALAN

(lowering his hand)

You what?

BOB

I don't think we should confuse two separate issues.

EVERETT

I got the guy who shot Amy Wilson.

BOB

Look, even if he knows who shot Kennedy--

ALAN

Shut up, Bob. How have you got him?

EVERETT

I know who he is.

ALAN

All right. Who is he?

EVERETT

He's... he's a guy. A guy who was there.

Alan pinches the bridge of his nose and closes his eyes.

ALAN

You're telling me the shooter was a guy who was there? Good work, Steve. Should I hold the front page or do you wanna get two unnamed sources on it?

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

I'm telling you. The C.A., Nussbaum, has his name. She just won't give it to me.

ALAN

What about the defense?

EVERETT

I checked. It's not in their files.

BOB

This is ridiculous.

ALAN

The cops?

EVERETT

Don't remember. Or they're sitting on it.

BOB

Have you tried the Yellow Pages? Under S?

Everett angrily stubs out his cigarette and turns toward the window. Bob moves toward the desk, a mournful look on his face.

BOB

Alan, I'm sorry. I really am. I know this is causing problems for everybody, but I want to be clear about this. I'm ready to leave. I love this paper, but I'm not going to spend my life in an environment that has become intolerable.

Everett watches the traffic. The buses are still rolling. People still go about their business.

ANGLE ON EVERETT

Inspiration hits. His eyes light up. He whirls around.

EVERETT

You have to give me notice, Alan.

ALAN

What?

EVERETT

It's in my contract. You can't just axe me. You have to give me notice.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED: (5) 95

BOB

Just how much notice do you want, Steve?

Everett looks up at the clock. We see it, too: 5:53.

EVERETT

Six hours and seven minutes.

96 SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON - DUSK 96

A large, red sun slips behind a guard tower.

97 INT. STORAGE ROOM - ADJOINING EXECUTION CHAMBER - 97
CLOSE ON RED PHONE

with a taped label stuck to its base. McCardle picks up the headset.

MCCARDLE

Testing red... testing red...

He replaces the receiver and moves to a tan phone labeled "Communications Room." We notice two other phones, one white (Corrections Dept.) and one black (Governor's Office).

MCCARDLE

Testing tan... We're testing tan...

A worker sprays Windex on a window facing the chamber. We MOVE PAST him INTO the chamber, where two members of the strap-down team inspect the gurney.

MCCARDLE (O.S.)

Moving to white...

Reuben Skycock tests the injection machine. He works at a metal cabinet that contains three syringes. As he does we:

INTERCUT WITH:

98 EXT./INT. EVERETT'S CAR - EVENING 98

Everett is zooming along, his RADIO ON the NEWS.

RADIO REPORTER (V.O.)

... The first syringe will deliver five grams of sodium pentothal, and that will basically put him to sleep within a matter of a few seconds, we're told.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

RADIO REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then the line will be flushed with twenty CCs of saline solution, and then he will be given fifty CCs of pancuronium bromide. Now that is a muscle paralyzer, and his muscles will be paralyzed at that point -- he won't be able to breathe. And finally, fifty CCs of potassium chloride, and that'll stop his heart. We talked with Prison Doctor Roger Waters earlier today.

DR. WATERS (V.O.)

(on the radio)

It should be a very pleasant, a very rapid sleep, and then the prisoner will know nothing else after that.

99 INT. DEATH CHAMBER - EVENING

99

Over the preceding:

Skycock testing the syringes.

We see each syringe as the radio reporter mentions it.

The CAMERA CONTINUES TO ROAM THROUGH the prison as we hear EVERETT'S RADIO IN V.O. We see:

100 PLUNKITT

100

conferring with Dr. Waters.

101 OTHER PRISONERS IN OPEN AREA

101

Watching TV.

RADIO NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Thanks, Terry. And, as we told you earlier this afternoon, the governor met with the murder victim's father and mother, who urged him not to grant Beachum a pardon. Governor's aide Harry Mancuso spoke to us after that meeting.

MANCUSO (V.O.)

This administration is determined to remain as tough on crime as it has always been, and we are determined to see justice done for the family of Amy Wilson and the people of this state.

102 EVERETT'S POV THROUGH WINDSHIELD OF CAR

102

We see a large warehouse-like structure -- the loft building where Michelle Ziegler lived.

103 McCARDLE 103

Moving on to test the black phone.

104 CLOSE ON RINGING PHONE 104

It's in the kitchen of Everett's condo. Barbara, his wife, goes to answer it.

BARBARA

Hello... Yes, this is... yes, Steve's wife. Why? Has something happened to him?

105 CLOSE ON EVERETT'S FACE 105

Wreathed in eerie light. Suddenly the light goes out.

EVERETT

(in a hoarse
whisper)

Shit!

EXT. MICHELLE'S LOFT BUILDING - NIGHT

We PULL BACK to see that Everett is trying to pick the lock of the outside door with a credit card. He has just dropped his flashlight; he picks it up again, and it shines for a moment on Michelle Ziegler's name on the buzzer. Everett monkeys with the credit card until he hears a CLICK.

Only it isn't really a click. It's the SNAP of his CREDIT CARD breaking in half. He withdraws it and watches the other piece fall to the ground. His flashlight jiggles on it for a moment.

EVERETT

Shit!

He looks guiltily over his shoulder. The streets are deserted. Stealthily, he reaches down and picks up an object out of the darkness. A tire iron.

He rises. The wooden door has a windowed top. Everett taps against it gently, stealthily.

The whole PANE SHATTERS with a resounding CRASH. Everett looks around again, reaches in, and turns the inside knob.

106 INT. MICHELLE'S BUILDING - NIGHT 106

He enters and hurries through the entryway. GLASS CRUNCHES under his feet.

107 INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT 107

Everett goes up the steps two at a time, panting. We can hear his BREATH sawing in and out of him. Three flights.

108 INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT 108

Everett reaches the top and runs down the hall. When he gets to Michelle's door he collapses against the wall, gasping.

Finally, he wills himself away from the wall, staring at the column of stalwart locks on Michelle's door. Somewhat daunted, he nevertheless fits the wedge of the tire iron into the jamb.

The door swings slowly open. Surprised, Everett stumbles in.

109 INT. MICHELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 109

Everett's flashlight sweeps the loft space, revealing boxes, tapes, and stacks of paper everywhere.

Everett kneels down to examine the contents of one box.

Suddenly, a hand lashes forward and grips his arm.

VOICE (O.S.)

Vultures!

EVERETT

Jesus!

VOICE (O.S.)

Already the vultures come!

Everett pulls away, staggers, hits a desk, and fumbles for the lamp switch. He turns it on. In the light, he sees an ELDERLY MAN sitting on the edge of Michelle's huge circular bed. He is slumped and droopy, but he is watching Everett like a hawk.

MAN

So steal. Go ahead.

EVERETT

Mr. Ziegler?

The Man makes no reply, but he sighs and slumps even further.

EVERETT

I'm not a thief, Mr. Ziegler. I'm a friend of Michelle's. A colleague. Worked with her at the paper.

(CONTINUED)

MR. ZIEGLER

My friends, most of them knock.

EVERETT

Right. Sorry.

(beat)

I'm sorry about Michelle. I liked her a lot. She was a terrific reporter. Top-notch.

MR. ZIEGLER

So you come to give the eulogy?

EVERETT

No, I -- she was working on a story. See, there's a man, an innocent man, and they're going to execute him tonight. And I think there may be something in these papers that could save his life.

MR. ZIEGLER

Something Michelle did?

EVERETT

Yeah. She was onto something. That's why I --

MR. ZIEGLER

So look.

Everett glances at his watch: 6:45. He starts rummaging through boxes. As he does, Mr. Ziegler talks to him in a far-away voice.

During the next few exchanges, we INTERCUT Everett's searching with Mr. Ziegler's talking and CLOSEUPS OF what Everett finds among Michelle's boxes: photos of atrocities, notes about other murder trials, pictures of chalk outlines, a bag of marijuana, etc. Dust rises in the air, and Everett coughs as he works.

MR. ZIEGLER

I've been going through her things, too. You see this?

He holds up a little plastic horse. Everett looks up politely, but he's getting increasingly desperate.

MR. ZIEGLER

Gave it to her when she was nine. She loved it. Know what she named it?

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

(checking his watch)

No. What?

MR. ZIEGLER

Mr. Id. Can you imagine that? Nine years old. Mr. Id. Oh, she saved everything. Look at this. I don't know when she did it -- must have been four or five.

He holds up a child's drawing. Not exactly "Green Pastures," but remarkably similar. Everett takes a cursory glance, and then looks again.

PICTURE

A daddy separated from a mommy and small daughter by a vast field. It's signed, "Gail."

EVERETT (O.S.)

Do you know where you found this?

CLOSE ON MATERIAL

dumped on the dining table.

Everett's hand feverishly combing through the pile of documents, photos, clippings, tapes, and notes, all pertaining to the Beachum case.

PULL BACK to show Mr. Ziegler is standing now, watching Everett work. Everett doesn't notice a notebook that he has dropped. Achingly, rheumatically, Mr. Ziegler bends down and picks it up.

MR. ZIEGLER

This anything?

EVERETT

(not even looking up)

What?

MR. ZIEGLER

Says, 'Warren Russel. Seventeen years. 4331 Knight Street. Interviewed July seventh at own request.'

Everett grabs the notebook and reads.

EVERETT

'Bought soda and left. Saw nothing. Something fishy here?'

(looking up)

Thank you, Mr. Ziegler. Michelle -- she would have been one of the best.

110 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL

110

Luther Plunkitt walks quietly to Frank's cell. Reedy sits behind him and types in the chronological: "19:04 -- Warden Plunkitt enters Deathwatch cell."

Plunkitt lifts one hand in a gesture of apology.

PLUNKITT

Sorry, Frank. We're gonna have to ask Mrs. Beachum to leave now.

BEACHUM

Give us a minute, okay?

PLUNKITT

Sure.

Plunkitt retreats, and Frank and Bonnie face each other.

BONNIE

Oh God.

BEACHUM

No. No, baby.

BONNIE

I swear I don't know how I'm gonna...

BEACHUM

I won't get a chance later, you know, to say good-bye. You take care of our little girl, Bonnie.

BONNIE

You know I will, baby.

Beachum hands her the letter he wrote for Gail.

BEACHUM

And you give her this. Don't forget. It's not much, but it's the only thing--

He stops, struggles for composure.

BONNIE

It'll be precious to her, Frank. It'll be her most precious thing.

Her tears are falling now. Beachum's voice is trembling.

BEACHUM

I sure didn't mean for this to happen to us, Bonnie. I meant to be there for you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

BEACHUM (CONT'D)

I wanted -- I wanted to see my little daughter grow up. Now you're gonna have to do that for the both of us, Bonnie.

BONNIE

We gotta be thankful for the time we had, Frank. It's just -- it was too short. It was so short, Frank.

BEACHUM

Least we made Gail together. We made something beautiful in this world. When you look at her, you gotta remember me, all right? Can you do that?

BONNIE

Oh, Frank, I'm so scared.

BEACHUM

If I can see you, you know? At the end there, if I can see your face...

BONNIE

I'm gonna be there, Frank. And I'll talk to you. Every day I'll talk to you.

BEACHUM

You talk to me, baby. I'm gonna need to hear you talking to me.

Crying, she studies his face, trying to memorize it. Beachum bites his lip, but it quivers anyway. Finally, Bonnie collapses in his arms, and they both break down, sobbing.

BONNIE

Oh God, Frank. How did this ever happen to us?

BEACHUM

God bless you, Bonnie. You gave me the only life I had that was worth a damn. God bless you, baby. God bless you.

111 EXT. BROWNSTONE TENEMENT - NIGHT

111

An upstairs window. An elderly black woman, ANGELA RUSSEL, pokes her head out and looks down.

MRS. RUSSEL

Who's there?

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

Everett is standing on the stoop, ringing her bell. Behind him, some very young, very tough-looking kids are circling his car.

EVERETT

Steve Everett, ma'am. I'm a reporter with the News.

The window slams shut. Everett waits for a moment, wondering, eyeing the nasty-looking kids.

The door opens. Mrs. Russel is a powerful-looking woman in her fifties. She wears a shapeless floral housedress that ends at the shoulders and the knees, and she twists a gold locket that she wears around her neck. Suddenly she yells.

MRS. RUSSEL

Go home!

Everett is startled. It takes him a moment to realize that she is yelling at the kids behind him.

MRS. RUSSEL

Quit casing that man's car. It's your dinner time. Go home.

The kids edge away sulkily. Mrs. Russel examines Everett.

MRS. RUSSEL

Sorry about them kids.

EVERETT

No, that's all right. I'm just so, I mean I'm amazed I could find you here after six years --

MRS. RUSSEL

You thought I mighta moved to the suburbs?

(beat)

Come on in.

She turns and Everett follows her in.

112 INT. MRS. RUSSEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

112

It is stifling and airless. Mrs. Russel opens a window. The steady DIN of TRAFFIC fills the room. The room is sparsely furnished -- a rocking chair, a TV, a ratty couch, a dresser with pictures on it.

(CONTINUED)

EVERETT

So you're...

MRS. RUSSEL

Angela Russel.

EVERETT

And Warren...

MRS. RUSSEL

My grandson.

Everett has caught sight of a picture on Mrs. Russel's dresser. We see it, too -- a younger Mrs. Russel with a smiling teenager wearing a backward baseball cap.

EVERETT

That Warren?

MRS. RUSSEL

It is. You wanna tell me why you're here?

EVERETT

Mrs. Russel, it's very important that I talk to Warren. I need to see him tonight.

MRS. RUSSEL

Is that right? And what could be so important, if you don't mind my askin'?

EVERETT

There's a man on death row, and he's going to be executed tonight. They say he killed this grocery store cashier Amy Wilson six years ago. I think he's innocent. And I also think your grandson may have... may know something about it.

MRS. RUSSEL

Now why would you think a thing like that?

EVERETT

Because he was the only other one there.

MRS. RUSSEL

Oh? And how do we know that?

EVERETT

Because... the witnesses didn't see anybody else.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. RUSSEL

So there was witnesses even though nobody else was there? Now help me out here. I'm getting confused.

EVERETT

All right, yes. There were two witnesses. An accountant and a housewife.

MRS. RUSSEL

White people.

EVERETT

Yes...

MRS. RUSSEL

And I'll just bet that Amy Wilson was white too, wasn't she?

EVERETT

She was, but I don't think --

MRS. RUSSEL

You don't think these nice white people would ever kill that nice white girl. But they all looked around and, whaddaya know, there was a black boy.

EVERETT

No, it wasn't like that. It was -- Mrs. Russel, think back. Six years ago. Was Warren using drugs?

MRS. RUSSEL

(as if to an idiot)

Yeah. He was using drugs.

EVERETT

Does he own a gun -- or did he then?

MRS. RUSSEL

Oh, they all got guns, Mr. Everett. Don't you know that? All those black drug-fiend boys got guns.

EVERETT

Can I just talk to him, Mrs. Russel? Do you know where he is?

MRS. RUSSEL

Yes, I do. And no, you can't.

EVERETT

An innocent man is going to be killed!

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED: (3)

112

MRS. RUSSEL

Well, I seen a lot of innocent folks get killed in this part of town. But it's funny: I ain't never seen you here before.

EVERETT

Mrs. Russel, I know you think this is a race thing. It's not a race thing. That innocent man on death row -- he's black, too. Did you know that? They're going to kill him at midnight. I'm just -- I just need to know the facts.

MRS. RUSSEL

Only fact I know, Mr. Everett, is that my grandson Warren been in his grave now going on three years. Stabbed out there in the park.

She wraps her hands around the locket and is suddenly near tears.

MRS. RUSSEL

My Warren was a loving child. And I didn't see you coming around looking for the facts when he was killed. No one came around looking for the facts then.

113 EXT./INT. EVERETT'S CAR

113

Everett is driving, fumbling with his RADIO, getting STATIC. He bangs on it angrily -- we can see he's frustrated and upset, and not principally about the radio.

EVERETT

(banging)

Loser!... Fuck!

He finally finds a station that comes in clearly.

RADIO NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

... and we're told he is now having the last meal he requested earlier -- steak and French fries and Budweiser beer. Oddly enough, he also requested two six-packs of Coke...

EVERETT'S POV

THROUGH the windshield, we see that he is coming up on Dead Man's Curve, the very curve that took Michelle Ziegler's life.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

RADIO NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

... Prison authorities agreed to one six-pack, but refused his request for a second. And, in case you're just tuning in, we'll repeat our top story. Convicted killer Frank Beachum has for the first time confessed to his crime...

Everett's face: thunderstruck.

RADIO NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

... However, a source close to the governor's office says that despite Beachum's expression of remorse for the murders of Amy Wilson and her unborn child six years ago, the execution will proceed as scheduled at one minute after midnight tonight.

114 EXT. SERVICE STATION - ADJACENT TO DEAD MAN'S CURVE - NIGHT

114

Everett pulls up next to the shattered remains of Michelle's car. He gets out, slams the door, and strides over to the nearby vending machine. He drops in some quarters, and pushes the Dr. Pepper button. The can drops down with a loud THUNK. Everett takes it out and heads back toward his car, but when he reaches the ruins of Michelle's car, he stops, drops the Dr. Pepper, and squats down. He rocks for a moment in despair, seemingly communing with the hole in the shattered windshield.

The CAMERA GOES THROUGH the hole, INTO the dark. There, strangely, we see Everett's little daughter, Kate. He is looking out at us curiously. He reaches up and...

115 INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

115

... Kate grabs Everett's hand. Everett is now sitting by her bedside, gazing at his daughter. Kate strokes the hair on her father's forearm thoughtfully.

KATE

(happy to see him)
Why are you here?

EVERETT

(forcing a laugh)
Where else would I be, silly?

KATE

Where did you go?

EVERETT

Wild goose chase, m'dear.

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED:

115

KATE

You... you went chasing?

EVERETT

Chasing salvation, sweetie. Couldn't catch it.

KATE

Why?

EVERETT

It disappeared. Poof!

He makes a magician's gesture with his hands. Kate looks at him uncomprehendingly.

EVERETT

Hey. Sorry about today at the zoo. But I'll make it up to you, okay? You wanna go this weekend? We'll do Slow Zoo.

KATE

And can we see the hippopotamus?

EVERETT

Oh yeah. I already called him. He's expecting us.

KATE

(fondly)

My little daddy... I will go to sleep now.

EVERETT

Good move.

He stands and moves to the door. For a moment, he watches his daughter lying there. Kate turns her head and peeks at Everett. Seeing him still there makes the girl smile.

EVERETT

Go to sleep, darlin'.

He turns out the lights and goes into the hall outside. For a moment, he pauses and leans against the wall with his head bowed.

116 INT. EVERETT'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

116

Barbara is sitting over an empty cup of coffee, rubbing the fingers of her left hand with her right. Everett sits down next to her, almost says something, and finds he cannot. Then he looks at what she's doing with her hands.

(CONTINUED)

Barbara has worked off her wedding ring. Now she sets it on the tabletop, as far from her -- and as close to Everett -- as she can.

BARBARA

If that were a bullet, you'd be dead.

Everett picks up the ring and examines it. The inscription on the inner curve reads: "Steve and Barbara." A long silence.

EVERETT

So I guess -- what? Bob called you?

BARBARA

What's the difference who called me?

Everett shrugs. Right; makes no difference.

BARBARA

It's over, Ev. I know you're going to apologize. I know you'll try and do better. Honey, it's too late.

EVERETT

(reeling)

Won't this be kind of... hard on the kid?

BARBARA

Good time to think of it, Ev.

EVERETT

Look, I can change. Can't we just erase all this? I've had a ridiculous, terrible day -- everything I did was wrong. Everything I thought was --

BARBARA

Ev, it isn't just today.

EVERETT

(desperate)

Yeah, but today was the end of it. Today I understood -- Look, I know I'm easily tempted. I know that. But is that so -- Barbara, I love you. I'm falling apart here, and it's my own goddamn fault. I need you. I want to put the pieces back together.

Barbara looks at him very gently and ruefully.

(CONTINUED)

BARBARA

Ev, I feel sorry for you. You and your famous nose for a story. You think you can just sniff your way along, you know, from one hunch to another, one woman to another, one drink to another when you're drinking. But people aren't stories, Ev. You can't line up all the facts and think you know something. Your hunches are shit, Ev. Even when they're right, they're shit.

EVERETT

They're all I've got.

BARBARA

Well, I hope they do somebody some good one of these days, because they haven't done a thing for this marriage.

(beat)

I've packed your stuff. You can take it now or come back for it later.

EVERETT

Barbara --

BARBARA

Get out of here, Ev.

(beat)

Get out!

He sits for a moment, staring down at the table, pressing his lips together so they won't tremble. Then he puts the ring in his shirt pocket, gets up, and leaves.

Luther Plunkitt bursts through a door, his rage suggested by the ferocity of his pace. Behind him, Reverend Shillerman, trotting to keep up.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

... of course, you know, from time to time, the governor's aides will, uh, phone me on matters of concern to the governor himself...

Plunkitt attempts to blast through another door, but it's locked. He smacks it and does a U-turn. Shillerman follows.

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

... now in the course of spiritual counseling and ministrations, it's true that I might have misunderstood something the prisoner might have said to me...

Plunkitt passes a small holding area. A GUARD leans out.

GUARD

Warden, South Wing is looking for you.

Plunkitt pushes through an exterior door.

118 EXT. EXERCISE YARD - NIGHT

118

Plunkitt strides toward the center of the yard.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

... but if he says to me, meaning the prisoner, says to me 'I'm sorry' and it's under these extreme conditions, then when the governor's aide calls me, expecting --

Plunkitt whirls to face Shillerman.

PLUNKITT

Shillerman, you know what you've done, don't you? Now I have to call the governor's office. I have to issue a retraction to the press, tell them there was no confession. Beachum has his own pastor coming in anyway. So what did you think you were doing?

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

Well, sir, I guess I --

PLUNKITT

You made me look unprofessional, Shillerman. Not a good thing to do. Spiritually speaking.

Plunkitt leaves Shillerman in the middle of the empty yard.

REVEREND SHILLERMAN

(calling after him)

If any of the men feel they could use some counseling tonight, I'll be here. Long as they need me. I'll be here.

119 INT. GORDON'S BAR - NIGHT

119

It's the same bar we see Everett in at the beginning of the movie, during his last conversation with Michelle. Tonight, Everett is back on the bottle. The bartender, Neil, pours him another. ON the TV, a BALL GAME.

NEIL

You sure you want to do this, Ev?

EVERETT

Does a bear shit... on Goldilocks?

NEIL

I don't know. No one ever asked me that before.

EVERETT

Trouble with having a kid. Fucks up your quips.

NEIL

So you're seriously rolling off the wagon. Must have been a rough day.

EVERETT

Lost my wife, my kid, and my fuckin' job. Izzat pretty rough?

NEIL

You lose your car, too? 'Cause if you're planning on driving --

EVERETT

(already pretty
sauce)

Hey, Neil. I am the greatest driver on the continent.

NEIL

I see. I'm talking to a dead guy. Would you leave me your stamp collection?

Everett downs some more and fingers the empty pretzel bowl.

EVERETT

Madder music and more munchies, Neil. Haven't eaten hardly all day.

Neil replaces the pretzels. On the TV, a NEWS REPORT is coming on about Beachum. Everett lights a cigarette, but he can barely get the flame to the tip. Neil looks at him.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

NEIL

Jesus Christ, Everett. Go the fuck home, will ya?

EVERETT

Got no home, Neil-o. No fucking home.

He reaches into his shirt pocket and pulls out the ring. Neil walks away to watch the TV report. Everett stares moonily at the ring, examines the inside, and then fumbles it.

As it spins on the counter, we SLIGHTLY OVERCRANK. On the TV is the now-familiar picture of Amy Wilson in her drab blouse, wearing the locket.

EVERETT'S POV

The ring on the bar and the locket on TV seem to line up for a moment, gleaming together.

FLASHBACK - CLOSE ON MRS. RUSSEL

Twisting the small locket around her neck.

BACK TO PRESENT - CLOSE ON EVERETT

Trying hard to focus through his alcohol-induced haze.

CLOSE ON FREDERICK ROBERTSON

Amy's father, on TELEVISION.

ROBERTSON (V.O.)

... For ninety-six dollars, and he took her ring and a locket I gave her for her sixteenth birthday...

FLASHBACK - EVERETT WITH MRS. RUSSEL

EVERETT

So you're...

MRS. RUSSEL

Angela Russel.

CLOSE ON LOCKET

The florid, engraved initials: "A.R."

BACK TO PRESENT - EVERETT

His eyes on the ring, on the picture on TV, on the picture in his mind.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (2)

119

Suddenly Everett stands up. He can barely stay on his feet. The look in his eyes is wild, desperate.

CLOSE ON Everett.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

120 IN EVERETT'S MIND - INT. POCUM'S GROCERY

120

Beachum is already on his way to the bathroom, but this time we watch him from the front of the store.

BEACHUM

You're not always gonna do me this way, are you?

AMY

I swear, Frank. We just had some extra expenses, end of the school year and all.

BEACHUM

It's cool. July Fifteenth. Hey, I'm just gonna use the bathroom, okay?

AMY

You know where, right?

As Beachum goes into the entryway toward the bathroom, we hear a NOISE at the FRONT DOOR. We WHIP-PAN TO the door, and in comes WARREN RUSSEL, looking nervous and mean. He scans the room and saunters over to the counter.

AMY

Help you?

Warren whips out a small gun and points it at Amy.

WARREN

Gimme the money.

Terrified, Amy opens the cash register and begins pulling out bills.

AMY

Don't hurt me, okay? Okay? Just take it.

He motions with the gun, and she hands him all the cash from the drawer.

(CONTINUED)

120 CONTINUED:

120

WARREN

That it? That all you got?

AMY

I'm sorry. It's Fourth of July. We haven't been that busy.

Warren stares at her, hopped up, not ready to go yet. Amy is weeping with fright.

CLOSE ON AMY'S LOCKET

It glints in the sun. We can see the initials: "A.R."

Warren points the gun at the locket around Amy's throat.

WARREN

Gimme that. Quick!

Amy moves her hand protectively toward the locket, which is hanging on her chest, just below her throat.

AMY

(crying out)

Please! Not that!

In the rear of the store, the TOILET FLUSHES. Warren looks back toward the bathroom, startled.

His face: wide-eyed.

Suddenly he SHOOTS Amy in the chest. Amy falls back behind the counter, gurgling.

In a flash, Warren is on top of her. He rips the locket from around her neck and pulls a ring off her finger. We can hear the bathroom DOOR OPENING. He sees the service entrance, jumps up and runs out.

We see him scampering through the service entryway, out the screen door, through the parking lot to his beat-up car. The MOTOR is already RUNNING. Warren jumps in, tosses the locket on the seat beside him, and PEELS OUT.

We see Warren's car leave the parking lot and drive. About a block away, a man is mowing his lawn and looks up at the car.

121 INT./EXT. WARREN'S CAR - THROUGH HIS WINDSHIELD - DAY

121

Warren drives. An oncoming car. It is Porterhouse. Steam is coming from his hood, and Porterhouse is looking desperately at his dashboard indicators.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED: 121

He doesn't notice Warren. He spots Pocum's and puts on his turn signal.

CLOSE ON LOCKET

next to Warren.

We PULL BACK, and now we are looking at the locket on TV.

122 INT. GORDON'S BAR - NIGHT (PRESENT) 122

Everett, thunderstruck, drunk out of his mind. He wobbles determinedly toward the door. Neil is still watching the TV.

TV ANCHOR (V.O.)

(to his co-anchor)

And, still on the Beachum execution story, you'll recall that report we got about an hour ago in which...

Everett has reached the door. He grabs the handle and pulls it open. The edge smacks into his forehead -- hard. It draws blood.

EVERETT

Ow! Shit!

Blood seeps down his brow and onto his fingers. Neil notices him leaving and yells after him, but Everett is already gone.

NEIL

I hope you're not driving, Ev! Hey, Ev!

Neil turns his attention back to the TV, and we PAN UP TO it.

TV ANCHOR (V.O.)

... Frank Beachum was said to have confessed his crime. Well, apparently that report was in error. We're now told that Beachum has not confessed and is still scheduled to go to his execution just about an hour from now without having expressed a word of remorse for the killing six years ago of twenty-year-old co-ed Amy Wilson...

123 INT. DEATHWATCH CORRIDOR - NIGHT 123

Four guards head toward Beachum's cell. Each carries a plastic riot shield; rubber truncheons dangle from their belts. The lead guard carries a brown paper bag.

124 INT. BEACHUM'S CELL

124

The door snaps open. Beachum bolts upright, his eyes darting between the clock and Luther Plunkitt. Beachum is sitting with his own pastor, REVEREND FLOWERS, who now rises. The lead guard hands the paper bag to Plunkitt.

PLUNKITT

Reverend Flowers, I'm just going to ask you to step into another room for a moment, all right?

Flowers nods, nods to Beachum, and steps away. We can hear Reedy in the b.g., typing the chronological.

PLUNKITT

Now, Frank, this is the change of clothes we talked about. I'm gonna ask you now to put these clothes on, including the special underpants that are provided for hygienic reasons. This is required, and I have to ask you if you're going to give me any problems with this.

Beachum passively accepts the bag.

PLUNKITT

Good. Now, it would be wise at this point, Frank, if you took the opportunity to use the toilet, for your own comfort. Since there might not be an opportunity later on. I'll wait outside.

Plunkitt exits. Beachum stares at the paper bag in his hands.

125 EXT./INT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING - THROUGH WINDSHIELD - NIGHT

125

We're working very hard to stay in our lane. With minimal success.

EVERETT

C'mon, ya motherfucking hunk of tin! Ya shuddering pile of roasted shit, come on!

EVERETT'S POV

The car veering, nearly plowing through a crowd, back on course, veering again.

Over a bridge -- skimming the guard rail in a shower of sparks.

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

KEE-RUNCH! We BASH into the rear of a CAR sitting at a red light. The car slams into the car in front of it. Sounds of SHATTERED HEADLIGHTS and TAILLIGHTS dripping to the pavement.

Angry drivers emerge from their cars. Everett backs up.

Everett starts to drive away, making a huge arc around them.

Everett moves into the intersection against the red light. A car entering from across street smashes on its brakes. Everett clips the car's rear fender, leaving a nice crater.

126 INT. DEATHWATCH CELL

126

Helpless and childlike, Beachum stands in his blue plastic diapers. Quickly, he covers them with loose green trousers.

127 EXT. PRISON GATES - NIGHT

127

Reporters are gathered alongside a number of protestors holding a candlelight vigil and a handful of death-penalty supporters. A WILMA FRANCIS confers with her FIELD PRODUCER. Their crew eavesdrops.

WILMA FRANCIS

So there are two executioners? What, they each have a button?

FIELD PRODUCER

They each have a button, but a computer scrambles the circuits so nobody knows which button actually does the trick.

WILMA FRANCIS

Can we talk to one of them?

FIELD PRODUCER

They're kept anonymous. For security reasons.

WILMA FRANCIS

Man, can you imagine? Who are these guys?

128 CLOSE ON LETHAL INJECTION MACHINE

128

The tubes leading through the wall, a red button that will activate the plungers, a black button that shuts everything down, and another red button to activate the plungers. We PULL BACK to reveal a heavy man standing next to the second red button.

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

He is the second executioner. He scans the room. There is Reuben Skycrack, hovering near the machine. Beyond him, stands McCardle, next to the shelf of colored phones. There are Dr. Waters and his nurse. The second executioner looks down at his watch, then up again. Now he spies the man he's looking for: the executioner, the man we have been following throughout the film.

The executioner comes to the machine, shakes Skycrack's hand, nods to the second executioner, and assumes his position next to the first red button.

129 EXT. ANGELA RUSSEL'S STREET - NIGHT

129

Dark and scary, with the same mean-looking kids hanging out.

Suddenly, Everett's battered CAR comes SCREAMING around the corner. The kids take one look and scatter. The car mounts the sidewalk, smashes into a garbage can, slips back down into the street and comes to a STEAMING, shuddering halt. We hear a DISTANT BELCH.

130 INT. PRISON VISITOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

130

The wall clock reads: 11:30.

PANNING DOWN, we FIND Bonnie Beachum sitting alone among the plastic tables and chairs. The loud BANGING of a METAL DOOR opening startles her. A PRISON CUSTODIAN sticks his head in.

CUSTODIAN

Oh. Sorry.

The door bangs shut. Bonnie folds her hand in her skirt. Her sunken eyes stare at nothing.

131 EXT. ANGELA RUSSEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

131

Everett leans on the BUZZER. He looks up. The windows are dark. Everett looks at his watch: 11:32. He jams the BUZZER AGAIN AND AGAIN, the frustration building in him. Then he hits the door, hammering the frame with his already-bloody fist. He kicks it. Finally he collapses against the door, the wood against the blood on his forehead. He groans, extends his arms along the wood, and then slumps, the energy oozing out of him. One last slap.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK. And then... Angela Russel opens the door. She is wearing a bathrobe.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

MRS. RUSSEL

I was hoping you'd come back. I swear
it to Jesus.

Everett straightens, tries to pull himself together.

EVERETT

Mrs. Russel, you and I need to --

MRS. RUSSEL

We gotta hurry, Mr. Everett.

A little stunned, and very drunk, Everett grabs Mrs.
Russel's arm, and they head toward his car.

MRS. RUSSEL

That Robertson man -- on the T.V., you
know, the girl's father. I saw him.
And then I started in remembering that
night when Warren gave me that locket --

EVERETT

Because it had the same initials[]--

MRS. RUSSEL

Her maiden name, and I was remembering
Warren's face that night -- oh, I could
always read that boy's face.

Suddenly Mrs. Russel is near tears.

MRS. RUSSEL

Oh God, Warren. Warren. He did a real
bad thing, Mr. Everett. He wasn't a bad
boy, but I know he did a real bad thing.

They get in the car.

132 INT. EVERETT'S CAR - NIGHT

132

Everett puts the key in the ignition, and turns it over.

MRS. RUSSEL

They gonna kill that man in less than
half an hour. We can't get to the
prison in that time.

EVERETT

You're right, lady. Fasten your
seatbelt!

133 INT. CORRIDOR TO DEATH CHAMBER - BEACHUM'S POV 133

FLUORESCENT LIGHTS, BUZZING, strobing. The guards lead Beachum down the corridor to the death chamber. Reverend Flowers strides behind the procession.

FLOWERS

... I will say of the Lord, He is my
refuge and my fortress; my God; in Him
will I trust. Surely He shall deliver
thee from the snare of the fowler...

134 EXT./INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT 134

The car is zooming along. Everett's driving is erratic, to say the least. But his mind is on something else.

EVERETT

(half to himself)

The locket is good. The locket is good,
but...

MRS. RUSSEL

There's this boy sold Warren a gun
around that time.

EVERETT

What?

MRS. RUSSEL

He's in jail -- this boy. Might talk to
them if they give him some time off.

Everett turns toward her, and the car veers.

EVERETT

I could kiss you.

MRS. RUSSEL

Watch the damn road!

135 INT. DEATH CHAMBER 135

Beachum is watching the strap-down team, a ghostly, empty look on his face. When the gurney is ready, the strap-down team very quickly lifts him onto it. He looks up at the clock. The men pull the leather straps across his body and fasten them.

136 EXT. CITY STREETS - HELICOPTER SHOT - NIGHT 136

Everett's car rips recklessly through an intersection, fishtails wildly, almost loses it, recovers, and accelerates hard, the ENGINE cranked to its limit. The car spews blue smoke.

137 INT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING WITH ABANDON - NIGHT 137

Everett passes a row of cars in the oncoming lane. Mrs. Russel pushes against the dashboard with both hands.

MRS. RUSSEL

You drunk, now aren't I right?

EVERETT

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. RUSSEL

You a terrible driver, you know that?

A city bus looms ahead. Everett's car careens wildly to avoid it.

EVERETT

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. RUSSEL

Let me drive. What kind of white man drives a shitbox like this anyway?

Suddenly the car is filled with red and white light -- and the sound of SIRENS.

CLOSE ON REAR-VIEW MIRROR

A police cruiser is following them, and we see a second one come skidding out of a McDonald's lot.

MRS. RUSSEL

Gun it, mister!

Everett flashes her a scary grin.

EVERETT

We go fast.

138 INT. DEATH CHAMBER 138

A nurse snaps Beachum's sheet down to his waist. She attaches two pads to his chest and runs the wires over the gurney's side.

NURSE

This is just for the E.K.G.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

She goes behind a white screen and returns holding a cotton ball and a needle. She pushes the needle through its wrapper and swabs the bend of Beachum's elbow.

NURSE

This'll be easier if you make a fist.

CLOSE ON PLUNKITT

watching, hoping she'll find the vein easily.

She does. The connecting tube runs over the wall. She sticks two Band-Aids over the needle in an X to hold it fast. She tugs the sheet back up to Beachum's throat.

Plunkitt watches Beachum's face. It's the face of any frightened patient on a gurney, looking to a nurse for reassurance. To his chagrin, Plunkitt finds his right hand trembling against his pants leg. He slips the hand into his pocket and moves to a more private corner of the room. He takes a deep breath.

139 CLOSE ON EVERETT'S REAR-VIEW MIRROR

139

One of the cruisers zigs to the side and overtakes Everett.

INT./EXT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Everett looks out the window and sees the side of the cruiser edging closer his car. He hears the cop's LOUDSPEAKER.

COP (V.O.)

Pull over! Pull over and stop the car!

Everett takes his foot off the gas and the car slows at once.

MRS. RUSSEL

Well, don't slow down now!

The cruiser moves in front of Everett's car and we see its brake lights flare. That's when Everett hauls the steering wheel to the left and stomps on the gas.

Everett's car shoots forward into the empty pocket left by the cruiser. Everett speeds into the night as the cruisers get going again behind him.

MRS. RUSSEL

You had a real car, we would have lost 'em.

140 INT. DEATH CHAMBER - BEACHUM'S POV 140

Quiet now, a blurred MURMURING of VOICES. His body stilled by straps, Beachum's eyes dart around the room. They find Plunkitt talking softly to a guard; the sweeping hands of the clock; the saline solution running into Beachum's arm; and finally the window behind which the witnesses will sit.

Beachum hears the sounds of PLASTIC BENCHES SCRAPING behind the blinds as they enter the room. Is Bonnie there? He peers into the dark.

141 EXT. DEAD MAN'S CURVE - NIGHT 141

It looms in the dark just as we remember it: the same yellow lights. We hear APPROACHING SIRENS because --

142 EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT 142

Everett's car is coming at a blinding speed, followed by the two WAILING POLICE CRUISERS.

143 INT. EVERETT'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT 143

EVERETT
(yelling over
ENGINE ROAR)
Mrs. Russel, I have to tell you
something.

MRS. RUSSEL
(yelling back)
What?

One of the cruisers begins to pull alongside them.

EVERETT
(yelling)
I want you to prepare yourself, all
right? I'm about to attempt a
maneuver...

THROUGH the WINDSHIELD --

Dead Man's Curve, approaching very, very fast.

144 EXT. DEAD MAN'S CURVE - NIGHT 144

Everett's car burns over the straight edge of the boulevard and tears into the curve.

Mrs. Russel shrieks. Everett shrieks, too.

Everett's foot comes off the gas and hovers over the brake.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

144

The two cruisers shoot past the car into the curve.

Everett's CAR begins to SKID. Everett turns into the skid. The CAR SCREECHES under him.

The world goes by in a carousel blur.

The two cruisers lift into the air as they break across the curb. One slides into the car lot. The other follows and SMASHES broadside into the first one's TRUNK. Both cars sit, smoldering, while the police inside them slowly climb out.

Everett straightens the car out and hits the gas.

EVERETT

They really ought to do something about that place.

He looks over at Mrs. Russel. She stares straight ahead, her jaw dropped, her body as rigid as a tree trunk.

MRS. RUSSEL

Now that's some driving.

145 INT. LOWENSTEIN HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

145

A GRANDFATHER CLOCK TICKS QUIETLY. On the STEREO, DEBUSSY'S "Clair de Lune." A Persian rug, rare books, a dainty escritoire by the window. MRS. LOWENSTEIN is bent over her needlework. Mr. Lowenstein, the paper's owner and the governor's pal, sits in a leather wing chair, writing a letter.

SIRENS. DISTANT at first, but insistent.

LOWENSTEIN

Must be something going on.

MRS. LOWENSTEIN

A fire, maybe. Or another accident up on the curve.

Another sound. A RUMBLING, CLATTERING sound.

Mr. Lowenstein glances at the grandfather clock: 11:48. He stands, pulling his bathrobe closed over his silk pajamas. He moves to the window and peers out toward the street below.

HIS POV - EVERETT'S CAR

Its muffler unhinged and dragging, pulls to a stop in a shower of sparks. The hellish METALLIC BANGING SUBSIDES into a HISS.

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED:

145

Everett rushes from the car and helps support what appears to be a very shaky black woman. They hurry to the front door.

MRS. LOWENSTEIN

What is it, dear?

LOWENSTEIN

It's... Steve Everett. From the paper.

MRS. LOWENSTEIN

Oh? One of your reporters?

LOWENSTEIN

Mm. A dyed-in-the-wool sonuvabitch. But he's a goddamned bulldog with a story.

146 INT. DEATH CHAMBER

146

The tan PHONE RINGS. McCardle picks it up.

MCCARDLE

McCardle... Yes, sir.

He replaces the phone and presses the intercom button. Zachary Platt, the deputy warden, picks up McCardle's call.

MCCARDLE (O.S.)

We have a go.

Platt nods to Plunkitt. Plunkitt looks at the clock. Midnight. He removes the folded death warrant from his pocket. Platt pulls a cord that raises the blinds covering the witness window.

WITNESS ROOM POV - THROUGH WINDOW

The stark white death chamber. The gurney. Beachum's face poking out from beneath the white sheet. Plunkitt reads from the death warrant.

Bonnie jerks forward on her bench. Beachum cranes his neck, desperately searching the window for her face.

Bonnie moves to the window.

INSIDE DEATH CHAMBER

PLUNKITT

(finishing)

... by the state of California and sentenced to death by lethal injection. Have you anything to say?

(CONTINUED)

146 CONTINUED:

146

Beachum says nothing, but scans the window, which we now see to be one-way glass. He can see only the chamber's reflection.

Unseen by Beachum, Bonnie presses her face against the window and mouths the silent words, "I love you."

Plunkitt looks at the clock. The second hand is sweeping up to 12:01. McCardle looks toward Plunkitt. He waits for a signal.

The executioner's hand lingers near the red button. He waits.

Platt glances at a clock. Thirty seconds past 12:01. The guard near him lifts an eyebrow.

McCardle looks at Plunkitt, then at the clock. It's sweeping past 12:02.

MOVING CLOSER ON Plunkitt. He appears to be frozen. CLOSER INTO his face and then his eyes, still and distant. Slowly, he turns TOWARD CAMERA and nods deeply to the mirror.

McCardle nods. The executioner nods. Both executioners look at each other, ready to coordinate their actions.

They push the red buttons.

BONNIE'S FACE

Full of anguish and love.

BEACHUM'S FACE

Looking desperately for her, mouthing the words, "I love you" to the empty glass.

WIDEN -- the first syringe, the sodium pentothal, plunging slowly down.

The arm tube with the sodium pentothal streaming through it.

BEACHUM'S FACE

He grits his teeth, his eyes flutter, he strains to keep them open.

Suddenly, the black TELEPHONE RINGS.

McCardle jumps. He snaps up the handset. The executioners look at one another.

(CONTINUED)

MCCARDLE

(yelling out)

Yes, sir... But it's too late!

Platt is frozen. McCardle is speechless. The executioners stand stunned.

Suddenly Plunkitt is moving, looking neither right or left, pushing through the death chamber like a broken-field runner. In a single motion, he rips away the Band-Aid from Beachum's arm and brings the IV tube with it. He throws it to the ground. Blood spurts from Beachum's arm. Solution spurts from the writhing IV tube on the ground.

BONNIE'S FACE

Breathless, speechless, silently screaming. Behind her, the witnesses are on their feet.

BEACHUM'S FACE

Eyes closed, empty, gone.

PLUNKITT

Doctor! We gotta save this man's life!

Dr. Waters is standing in the corner, within eyesight of the lethal injection console. He looks at it. The first syringe is completely empty, but the other two are still full. The second plunger begins to go down.

DR. WATERS

It's only the pentothal! Nurse!

Dr. Waters, the nurse, McCardle, and two guards converge on Beachum's gurney. Platt reaches over and pushes the black button. The lethal-injection CONSOLE HISSES to a halt.

A strange BANGING sound. It is --

BONNIE

Her eyes wide, her mouth open, her arms extended: She is pounding on the window with her fists, screaming.

BONNIE

Frank! Frank!

The RHYTHMIC POUNDING SEGUES INTO another sound, a RHYTHMIC JINGLING as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

147 CLOSE ON JINGLE BELLS 147

PULL BACK -- A SANTA CLAUS is shaking them on the sidewalk outside the Union Station Mall. People toss money in his pot. His voice sounds vaguely familiar as the CAMERA SWEEPS PAST.

SANTA CLAUS

It's official. It's for charity. It's for kids.

148 INT. UNION STATION MALL - DAY 148

The place is decked out for Christmas. The CAMERA FINDS Steve Everett entering a toy store.

149 INT. TOY STORE - DAY 149

Bright colors, happy MUSIC, fuzzy stuffed animals. And an unusually bright and attractive COUNTER GIRL.

COUNTER GIRL

Hey, Ev. Kate like that dalmatian?

EVERETT

Loved it. Even my ex managed a convincing display of affection. So now I need something even better for Christmas.

COUNTER GIRL

Sheep dog? Collie? Saint Bernard?

EVERETT

You got a hippopotamus?

The Girl grins, goes to a shelf, and picks out a strangely familiar-looking stuffed hippopotamus.

COUNTER GIRL

Check it out. Local designer. Based on the one at the zoo.

EVERETT

Beautiful. Can a homeless man afford it?

COUNTER GIRL

You're not homeless.

EVERETT

I'm jobless, I'm wifeless, and I live in a hotel. Unless you want to put me up.

COUNTER GIRL

In the first place, everybody says you have a big, fat book contract...

(CONTINUED)

149 CONTINUED:

149

EVERETT

Money's already spent.

COUNTER GIRL

In the second place, everybody says you're about to win the Pulitzer Prize or something...

EVERETT

Everybody's being real optimistic.

COUNTER GIRL

And in the third place, I have a boyfriend.

EVERETT

Aw, that's nice. He in town for the holidays?

COUNTER GIRL

(giggling)

Cash or charge, Ev?

150 EXT. MALL SIDEWALK - DAY

150

Everett comes out of the mall, breathes in the cool air, and lights a cigarette. Behind him and a few yards away, the Santa Claus is plying his trade. The voice is familiar.

SANTA CLAUS

Gimme some charity. Gimme some charity here on toast. It's for kids. It's official. Gimme some charity on toast.

Everett whirls. It's the Pussy Man in a Santa Claus costume, his red-streaked eyes peering from under the elf's cap.

EVERETT

Shit.

PUSSY MAN

Steve! You got charity! Now you're famous, you're rich and famous, you got charity money on toast.

Shaking his head, Everett pulls a ten out of his pocket and gives it to him.

EVERETT

Take it, before my wife does. And get out of here. Go drink yourself to death.

(CONTINUED)

PUSSY MAN

A ten? You got more money than that,
Steve. You got money on toast.

Everett glares at him.

PUSSY MAN

Okay, okay, newspaper man. I been out
here two hours; I'm freezing my ass off.
I'm going home.

EVERETT

You don't have a home.

PUSSY MAN

Hey, I got no wife, I got no elfs
neither. You wanna be Santa Claus these
days, you're on your own.

He begins to shuffle away. Everett shakes his head.

EVERETT

I'm with you there, buddy. Santa Claus
rides alone.

Just then he hears a child's voice.

VOICE

Da-deee! Come on!

He turns. There, in the parking lot, is Frank Beachum
being pulled along by his daughter, Gail. Bonnie is with
him, laughing happily. Beachum suddenly stops when he
sees Everett.

GAIL

Come on, Daddy! Come on now!

Beachum stays another moment, giving Everett a long look.
And Everett looks back intently, a bit the way he looked
into the eyes of Porterhouse, and Beachum, too, that day
in the prison. Then, slowly, Beachum raises his hand,
lays his finger against his eyebrow, then lowers the
finger and points it at Everett in a kind of salute.

Everett raises his cigarette and tilts it back at him,
and Beach laughs. Then Gail pulls him away, and Beachum
wraps his arm around Bonnie's shoulder. The three of
them go off. Everett smiles a deep, satisfied smile.

He tosses his cigarette into the gutter and walks away.

FADE OUT.

THE END