

"THE LADYKILLERS"

Screenplay by

Joel Coen and Ethan Coen

Based on the 1955 movie

"The Ladykillers"

by William Rose

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - DAY

A BOAT

Specifically, a garbage scow.

mighty  
We see it from ON HIGH, chugging down the placid but  
Mississippi.

sound,  
Head credits play over COVERAGE of the garbage scow. No  
except for an incongruously heroic score.

with  
film  
The COVERAGE is a little rough, coarse-grained; along  
the overbearing score it almost suggests an industrial  
rather than a feature.

One piece of sound -- the toot of the boat's horn -- is  
obviously library. And not a new library either.

broad,  
steaming  
rise  
squawks,  
The garbage scow passes under a bridge spanning the  
sluggish waters, and proceeds on to its landfill, a  
river island. Disturbed gulls and other scavenger birds  
from where they were picking through trash. Their  
like the boat horn, are not quite believable as SYNC.  
The head credits end as the anthemic music resolves.

EXT. SAUCIER, MISSISSIPPI - DAY

AN OLD HOUND DOG

front  
is  
very  
in  
lies on the weather-grayed and -roughened planking of a  
porch. The porch is half-shaded from the noonday sun. It  
quiet except for the chirr of heat bugs, close by, and,  
distant, many voices in chorus, engaged in divine worship

breeze a Baptist church sufficiently far away that vagaries of  
fan them in and out of audibility.

now We once again hear the toot of the scow's horn, distant  
and played as real, not slapdash effect. At this, the dog  
whining, lifts his nose to catch the breeze, sniffs, and then,  
his lowers his head to the floor and covers his snout with  
forepaws. He huffs briefly and goes to sleep.

We DRIFT UP to show that the dog is sleeping before the  
SAUCIER WORM STORE

Your source for worms, lures, etcetera, etcetera...

structure We TRAVEL OVER TO REVEAL that the modest one-story  
the houses two establishments; its other front door leads to  
SAUCIER MUNICIPAL BUILDING.

a A campaign sign in the window on the municipal side shows  
viewer a black man of late middle-age beaming and giving the  
thumbs-up:

RE-ELECT WAYNE WYNER SHERIFF/He Is Too Old to Go to Work.

INT. SAUCIER MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

We hear snoring on top of a low, steady hissing sound.

stands We are DRIFTING toward the door of the lock-up, which  
open. The small cell is empty, its bed neatly made.

A KEY

We are ARCING slowly around a jailer's key on a ring that  
hangs from a nail. The OFFSCREEN snoring and whirring  
continues.

spider The TRACK'S SHIFTING ANGLE now makes the light catch a  
web spun between the key and the wall.

POLICE SCANNER

steady We DRIFT across the face of the radio. The peaceful  
a hissing jumps in louder at the CUT: it is uninterrupted:  
hiss. transmissionless, crimeless, misdemeanorless idle radio

radio  
desktop.

The snoring is also louder here. As we TRAVEL OFF the  
we are COMING ONTO a pair of feet propped up on the

ring

They belong to SHERIFF WYNER, tipped back in his chair,  
fingers laced on his chest, head lolling forward.

As the MOVING CAMERA FINALLY ENDS on him, there is the  
of a telephone -- muffled, not present.

on a

It nevertheless rouses the sheriff who almost strangles  
snore as he awakes, and then rocks forward to pick up his  
phone.

SHERIFF WYNER  
Sheriff Wyner...

puzzled,

The muffled ringing continues; the sheriff looks,  
at the phone. Now the ringing stops and we hear a muffled  
voice next door:

VOICE (O.S.)  
Worms.

the

The sheriff replaces the phone, leans back again, adjusts  
his hat, and is about to go back to sleep when we hear  
front door open.

The sheriff looks and reacts with genuine, if momentary,  
fear.

smile:

He manages to compose himself and give the intruder a

SHERIFF WYNER  
Afternoon, Miz Munson.

dress

Entering is an elderly black woman in a floral print  
and fruited bonnet.

MRS. MUNSON  
Afternoon, Sheriff. You know the  
Funthes boy?

SHERIFF WYNER  
...Mackatee Funthes?

MRS. MUNSON  
No no, WeeMack! Mackatee's eldest!

SHERIFF WYNER  
Oh yeah, believe I do.

MRS. MUNSON  
Well, he's a good boy but he done

gone down to the Costco in Pascagoula  
and got hisself a blastah -- and he  
been playin' that music!

Wyner is not sure where this is going:

SHERIFF WYNER  
Uh-huh...

MRS. MUNSON  
Loud!

SHERIFF WYNER  
Well--

MRS. MUNSON  
"Left my wallet in El Segundo!"

SHERIFF WYNER  
He--

MRS. MUNSON  
Songs like that!

SHERIFF WYNER  
Uh-huh...

MRS. MUNSON  
Hippity-hop music!

SHERIFF WYNER  
I could--

MRS. MUNSON  
You know they call it hippity-hop  
music, but it don't make me wanna go  
hippity-hop!

SHERIFF WYNER  
No ma'am--

MRS. MUNSON  
And Othar don't like that music  
neither!

Sheriff Wyner now displays an exaggerated solicitousness:

SHERIFF WYNER  
It's been disturbin' Othar then, has  
it?

MRS. MUNSON  
How could it help but do! That kind  
of music! You know what they call  
colored folks in them songs? Have  
you got any idea?

SHERIFF WYNER  
I don't think I--

MRS. MUNSON

NIGGAZ! I don't wanna say the word.  
I won't say it twice, I'll tell you  
that. I say it one time.

SHERIFF WYNER

Yes ma'am.

MRS. MUNSON

In the course a swearin' out my  
complaint.

SHERIFF WYNER

Yes'm--

MRS. MUNSON

NIGGAZ! Two thousand years after  
Jesus! Thirty years after Martin  
Luther King! The age of Montel! Sweet  
lord a-mercy, izzat where we at?

SHERIFF WYNER

Mm-mm--

MRS. MUNSON

WeeMack down to Pascagoula buyin' a  
big thumpy stereo player?! So he can  
listen to that word in the house  
next to mine? Sheriff, you gotta  
help that boy!

SHERIFF WYNER

Help him?

MRS. MUNSON

You gotta take an innarest! EXTEND  
that helpin' hand!

SHERIFF WYNER

(dubious)

Well, we're here to help...

MRS. MUNSON

Well God bless ya. Don't wanna be  
tried and found wantin'.

SHERIFF WYNER

No ma'am.

MRS. MUNSON

Many many tunkalow parzen, Sheriff  
Wyner. Many many tunkalow parzen!

SHERIFF WYNER

Many what ma'am?

MRS. MUNSON

You have been tried and found wanting.  
Don't want that writin' on the wall!

SHERIFF WYNER

No ma'am--

MRS. MUNSON  
Feast a Balthazar!

SHERIFF WYNER  
Mm-hm.

MRS. MUNSON  
John The Apostle said: Behold there  
is a stranger in our midst, come to  
destroy us!

SHERIFF WYNER  
Yes ma'am.

EXT. SAUCIER MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

fan Mrs. Munson closes the door behind her. She wags a paper  
and mutters:

MRS. MUNSON  
He's a good man. Just needs  
instruction. Dog, you in peoples'  
way.

The dog stirs with a whine and ambles off.

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - DAY

street  
beyond  
beyond  
an  
rise.  
of  
With a neatly tended garden. It is the last house on a  
of other similarly modest but well maintained homes;  
it the street disappears down a bluff. The empty space  
suggests a wide river, and indeed we can see the top of  
anchored, gaudily painted paddle-boat poking over the  
The paddle-boat is apparently anchored at the near bank  
the river.

garden  
perfect  
Mrs. Munson is entering by the gate. She stops in the  
and stoops to pull a tiny weed marring the otherwise  
row of flowers.

I/E. MUNSON HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

bell Mrs. Munson lets herself in. A cat lopes up to her, the  
around its neck tinkling, and leans mewing into her leg.

MRS. MUNSON  
You need somethin' to eat, Angel?

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Munson hand-cranks a can opener around a tin of cat food.

MRS. MUNSON  
Mm... gizzards...

into  
cover  
The cat paces back and forth between her legs, leaning them and purring, responding to the snap of tin as the cover comes off the can.

The can contains cubed processed gizzard in a gelatinous medium like the stuff that clings to gefilte fish.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

looking  
mustache  
below  
Above the fireplace is an oil portrait of a serious-black man of late middle-age with a neatly groomed starting to gray. A couple of candles sit on the mantel the portrait, giving it the semblance of a shrine.

Mrs. Munson enters and lights the candles.

MRS. MUNSON  
Othar, I went'n complained about  
WeeMack, I hope it'll do some good.  
That boy hangin' by a thread! Over  
the pit! Fiery pit! "I Left My Wallet  
in El Segundo"!

up  
She shakes out the match and sits in a rocker and takes her knitting. As she sits she gives an audible groan.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Sixty-seven years of life, forty-six years of marriage, you mean to tell me you never one time suffered from piles? It's the human condition, most humans anyway. Like that ball player said: world's got two kinds of folks -- them that's got piles and them that's gonna get 'em. But you was always healthy as an ox...

There is the distant moan of a riverboat horn.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Passed on before you got piles.  
Mmmhmm. Thank the Lord you wasn't sick. You don't wanna sicken 'n die. No, you wanna pass nice 'n peaceful... go to sleep one night, wake up in the glory land... woof...

the  
A gust of wind hums under the eaves; the candles below

portrait flicker. As Mrs. Munson looks around the room, vaguely towards the ceiling, sensing a negative aura, the cat arches its back and hisses.

At this moment the doorbell rings.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Well who's that now, Pickles?

She grunts as she hoists herself out of the chair.

I/E. MUNSON HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

She opens the door--

A draft--

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

up  
The candles below the portrait of Othar go out, sending thin wisps of smoke.

I/E. MUNSON HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

the  
The cat shrieks and bolts out the door, past the man on stoop: GOLDTHWAIT HIGGINSON DORR, III.

hat  
He is a middle-aged Southern gentleman wearing a panama and a cape over a cream-colored suit. He has dark circles under his eyes. The smile he attempts, mournful yet courtly,  
is wiped away by:

MRS. MUNSON  
PICKLES!

DORR  
Ma'am?

MRS. MUNSON  
Go get 'im!

DORR  
I do beg your pardon?

MRS. MUNSON  
Go get Pickles, I didn't let 'im out!

DORR  
(tasting the name)  
Pickles...

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Dorr walks down the stoop followed by the old lady.

MRS. MUNSON



Oh, he's up the tree again. Your gonna have to shimmy on up.

DORR

I am so terribly sorry, madam. But won't the feline eventually tire of his lonely perch and, pining for his master's affection, return on his own initiative?

MRS. MUNSON

Huh? No, he won't come down less you fetch him. He'd set there til Gabriel blows his horn if someone didn't shimmy up. Up with you now!

DORR

Well then couldn't we perhaps offer him kitty treats and enticements, or if not foodstuffs perhaps squeaky little toys of the kind formerly manufactured in Hong Kong but now produced in the other so-called "Little Tigers"...

His fingers form the quotes.

DORR

...of the Pacific Rim? The point bein', do we have to actually ascend the tree--

MRS. MUNSON

Look, I don't want no doubletalk. If you ain't gonna fetch him down I guess I gotta call the po-lice...

DORR

Police...

His face darkens.

MRS. MUNSON

They ain't gonna be happy. Every time they come fetch him down they swear they won't do it no more...

Dorr casts his hat aside and starts awkwardly climbing the tree. He gasps as he climbs:

DORR

No need to call the authorities. I did this often as a youth -- why, I was a positive lemur... Here, kitty...

The cat backs away down a branch, arching its back and hissing.

MRS. MUNSON

Don't upset him, now!

Dorr, on his stomach, inches after the cat, grunting:

DORR

I wouldn't dream of it... harmless  
little felix domesticus... Come to  
G.H...

into The branch breaks, hinging down to slam Dorr face-first  
the trunk, from where he drops the rest of the way to the  
ground.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

bemusedly Othar's portrait, upside-down, seems to be looking  
down on us.

the An OBJECTIVE ANGLE shows Dorr lying on the couch, a damp  
washcloth on his forehead, eyes rolled back to look at  
picture.

his Mrs. Munson is entering with a cup of tea. Dorr swings  
feet out to sit up and accept the tea.

DORR

I thank you, madam, for your act of  
kindness.

MRS. MUNSON

Well you let him out.

DORR

I certainly did and I do apologize  
no end. Allow me to present myself,  
uh, formally: Goldthwait Higginson  
Dorr, Ph.D.

MRS. MUNSON

What, like Elmer?

DORR

Beg your pardon, ma'am?

MRS. MUNSON

Fudd?

DORR

No no, Ph.D. is a mark of academic  
attainment. It is a degree of higher  
learning bestowed, in my case, in  
recognition of my mastery of the  
antique languages of Latin and Greek.  
I also hold a number of other advanced  
degrees including the baccalaureate  
from a school in Paris, France, called  
the Sorbonne.

Munson chuckles.

MRS. MUNSON

Sore bone, well I guess that's appropriate. You ever study at Bob Jones University?

DORR

I have not had that privilege.

MRS. MUNSON

It's a bible school, only the finest in the country. I send them five dollars every month.

DORR

That's very gener--

MRS. MUNSON

I'm on their mailing list. I'm an Angel.

DORR

Indeed.

MRS. MUNSON

They list my name in the newsletter, every issue. I got the literature here, you wanna examine it.

DORR

Perhaps when my head has recovered from its... buffeting. Mrs. Munson, are you at all curious as to why I darkened your door, as the expression has it, on this lovely camelia-scented morn?

MRS. MUNSON

I was wondering, til you let Pickles out. Then in all the excitement--

DORR

I quite understand. The fact is that I saw the sign on your window advertising a room to let, and it is the only such sign among the houses of this charming, charming street.

MRS. MUNSON

Yeah, I got a room. I'm lookin' for a quiet tenant. Fifteen dollars a week

DORR

I quite understand. Madam, you are addressing a man who is quiet -- and yet not quiet, if I may offer a riddle...

He sets down the teacup and rises.

DORR  
...Perhaps you can show me the room,  
Mrs. Munson, and allow me to explain.

MRS. MUNSON  
Well you can see the room, but I  
don't like double-talk.

Mrs. Munson precedes him...

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

...up the stairs.

DORR  
You see, madam, I am currently on  
sabbatical from the institution where  
I teach -- the University of  
Mississippi at Hattiesburg. I am  
taking a year off to indulge my  
passion -- I don't believe that is  
too strong a word -- for the music  
of the Renaissance. I perform in --  
and have the honor of directing -- a  
period instrument ensemble that  
performs at Renaissance fairs and  
other cultural fora...

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - DORR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

brass

They enter a small bedroom. There is a small bed on a  
frame, a chair, a wash basin, and cheerful yellow chintz  
drapes on the window. Dorr appreciatively takes it in.

DORR  
...thoo-out central and southern  
Mississippi. We perform on the  
instruments for which the music was  
originally composed, in the belief  
that... that... Why, this is lovely...

MRS. MUNSON  
Wait a minute. You got some kind of  
band?

Dorr once again wiggles quotes with his fingers:

DORR  
The word "band" would be, in this  
context, something of an anachronism.  
Though we do play together -- hence  
the word "ensemble" -- the nature of  
the music is such that one would  
hesitate to apply the epithet "band"  
with its connotations of jangling  
rhythm and ear-popping amplification.

MRS. MUNSON  
So you don't play hippity-hop, "I

Left My Wallet in El Segundo," songs  
with the titles spelt all funny?

DORR

Madam, I shudder. I quake. The  
revulsion I feel for modern popular  
music, and all other manifestations  
of contemporary decay, is, I have no  
doubt, the equal of y'own. Why, we  
play music that was composed to the  
greater glory of God. Devotional  
music. Church music.

MRS. MUNSON

Gospel music?

DORR

Well-inspired by the gospels,  
certainly. The vintage, of course,  
is no more recent than the Rococo.

MRS. MUNSON

Rococo, huh? Well, I guess that'd be  
okay.

DORR

But I certainly don't propose to  
inflict our rehearsals on you. May I  
enquire -- do you have a root cellar?

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

order  
Dorr ducks while descending the steep, narrow stair in  
to avoid an overhead beam. He is followed by Mrs. Munson.

DORR

Yes, yes, yes, this looks promising...

overhead.  
He pulls on a hanging string to light a bare bulb

MRS. MUNSON

Little dank, ain't it?

DORR

Oh, indeed, but that only improves  
the acoustics...

He experimentally claps his hands.

DORR

...Marvelous. These earthen walls  
are ideal for baffling the higher  
registers of the, uh, lute and, uh,  
sackbutt. That's why so much music  
of the cinquecento was played in  
crypts and catacombs. Yes, this will  
do nicely...

He dry-washes his hands with enthusiasm, but his tone

remains

mournful.

DORR

...This is perfect. This is more than perfect. I can scarcely contain my glee.

MRS. MUNSON

You containing it okay.

billfold:

He starts to peel cash out of a large, well-worn

DORR

Allow me to pay you a week in advance. Allow me to pay you two weeks in advance. Allow me to pay you a month in advance. I cannot countenance the thought of these charming apartments being tenanted by someone unappreciative of their special je ne sais quoi.

MRS. MUNSON

That would be a shame.

INT. CASINO - DAY

TRACKING ON A GARBAGE CART

in

On the cart is a boombox. It is playing "I Left My Wallet El Segundo."

It is being pushed through a casino empty of customers.

As the cart stops and a wastebasket is emptied into it:

VOICE (V.O.)

You gotta peel this shit out sticks to the bottom.

WIDER

shows two youngish black men in the khaki uniforms of custodians. Emptying the wastebasket is WEEMACK-MACKATEE FUNTHES. He is instructing GAWAIN MACSAM.

WEEMACK

...You wouldn't believe this shit, sometimes even out here on the casino floor you gonna find sanitary napkin shit stuck there, Tucks, I don't know what the fuck people do while they're gambling here man.

GAWAIN

I ain't peelin' funky shit with my human hands, man. That's a prescription for disease and viruses

and shit, attackin' y'insides.

is  
The  
at  
garters,  
As they roll on we see more of the gambling floor, which  
on something less than the scale of a Las Vegas casino.  
floor is not yet open and dealers stack and count chips  
the tables, pit bosses with clipboards looking over their  
shoulders. Other dealers strap on visors and sleeve  
preparing to work.

WEEMACK

You gotta do it. Mr. Gudge checks  
everything. Man is a motherfuck.  
Shit -- looka this.

next  
After a furtive look around he plucks a chip from the  
wastebasket and slips it in his pocket.

WEEMACK

...You keep an eye out, man. I found  
a hundred-dollar chip once.

GAWAIN

Fuck that, man. I ain't pawin' through  
used Tucks for a fi' dollar chip.

WEEMACK

I said it was a hundred.

GAWAIN

Man, your guts gonna turn to soup'n  
leak outcha fuckin' asshole.

SERVICE HALL

The cart jitters loudly on the dimpled plastic floor.

WEEMACK

This tunnel leads back onto land. To  
the office for all the people work  
for Mannex. Mannex Corporation. Owns  
the Lady Luck 'n three other boats...

INT. CASINO - SERVICE HALL - DAY

office  
door.  
The two men are entering a windowless fluorescent-lit  
area. A row of wooden office doors and one heavy steel

WEEMACK

...This is where they think on their  
corporate shit, Gudge and them.

He stops to empty a wastebasket.

WEEMACK

...The lights is ugly but it ain't  
as many Tucks.

He bangs on the steel door:

WEEMACK  
...YO, motherfuck! Lemme in!

MUFFLED VOICE (O.S.)  
What's the password?

WEEMACK  
Kiss my ass.

swings  
We hear a deep chuckle and the door, steel reinforced,  
open.

INT. CASINO - COUNTING ROOM - DAY

The two men enter, WeeMack nodding at the security man  
(ELRON).

WEEMACK  
This is where they count the dough.  
You try to take any of it Elron there  
shoot your ass.

fast-  
Again the security man chuckles. WeeMack picks up some  
food wrappers.

WEEMACK  
...This place is a fuckin' pigsty.  
You a pig, man, nothin' but a squeaky  
ol' motherfuckin' pig...

Elron chuckles. He is an enormously fat man; his chuckles  
come from deep, deep in his chest.

WEEMACK  
...You got fuckin' Kocoa Krispies in  
ya uniform man, still got breakfast  
there and you eatin' motherfuckin'  
lunch.

shirt,  
Elron uses one hand to swipe crumbs off his uniform  
chuckling.

WEEMACK  
...You a disgrace before motherfuckin'  
God...

Elron chuckles.

WEEMACK  
...You a motherfuck-- oh, hello Mr.  
Gudge, how we be this mornin'?

A man in a buttoned white shirt nods at him.



GUDGE  
Funthes. How's the new man?

WEEMACK  
He is a cleaning motherfucker, man!

GUDGE  
Is that a fact.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - SMOKING FIELD SET - DAY

HIGH ANGLE

gnarled  
It is a ruin of a field; charred trees point bare and  
limbs toward a gray sky; smoke drifts across the desolate  
waste.

background.  
Something is bounding towards us from the deep  
We BOOM DOWN as it approaches: a bulldog, running avidly  
toward us on its stumpy little legs.

An OFFSCREEN male voice (CLARK PANCAKE):

PANCAKE (O.S.)  
One, Mountain!

dog  
neck  
There is an explosion that showers dirt in front of the  
and makes it veer. Something strapped around the dog's  
bounces as he runs.

PANCAKE  
...Scrub two! Scrub three! Four,  
Mountain!

around  
Another explosion makes the dog veer back so that it once  
again bears on us. The thing that has been bouncing  
its neck flies off.

just  
bowl  
Our CONTINUING BOOM DOWN has brought us to ground level  
as the dog arrives in front of us to feed at a dog food  
in the foreground. The yellow plastic bowl has a K-Ration  
logo facing us.

We hear another OFFSCREEN voice (DIRECTOR):

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Cut, goddamnit. His canteen fell  
off.

the  
The Director's feet enter in the foreground. He hooks the  
dogs belly with one foot and hoists it roughly away from  
bowl. We

CUT UP

TO:

The DIRECTOR. He scowls down at the animal.

DIRECTOR

...Props!

and

A man in a Hemingway field-jacket with multiple pockets, also a loaded utility belt, trots up toward him, his belt jangling as he runs. This is CLARK PANCAKE.

He

Pancake is a florid beer-bellied man in his late fifties.

multi-

has a full blond-grey Grizzly Adams beard and wears pocketed shorts that form an ensemble with his Hemingway jacket.

The director is angry.

DIRECTOR

...The goddamn thing's canteen fell off. It would have been a good take.

Pancake is unperturbed.

PANCAKE

Okay. Okay. We're prepared for that...

his

He hits a button on the radio on his belt and talks into headset:

PANCAKE

... Mountain, bring Otto with the apparatus.

PULLING ANOTHER BULLDOG

his

He strains at his lead, muscling forward as quickly as minder and his own stumpy little legs will allow.

leather

He peers through the two goggly eyeholes of an antique gas mask, its pignose breathing apparatus covering his own snout. His phlegmy breathing is amplified by the device.

own

She

We TILT UP the lead to show his minder, MOUNTAIN GIRL.

beginning

is a solid woman in her late forties with freckles

ribbon.

to merge into age spots. Her long straw-colored hair is tightly braided into Heidi pigtailed bound with red

Otherwise her dress is unadorned.

The director squints at the dog.

DIRECTOR  
What the hell is this?

Pancake's manner is professorial:

PANCAKE  
World War I vintage gas mask. It's authentic. Strapped on, of course, so it can't fall off. The animal is free to be as active as he wants, doesn't inhibit his movement, and I think it really sells the whole doughboy thing--

DIRECTOR  
It looks like a fucking joke.

not Pancake stares at the director for a moment and, though doing anything, makes a sound of concentrated effort:

PANCAKE  
...Nnnnrnff!

The director squints at him:

DIRECTOR  
What?

Pancake comes out of his trance, or whatever it was:

PANCAKE  
No, nothing, uh... you're absolutely right, the gas mask is a whimsical concept--

DIRECTOR  
How the hell does it eat when it gets to the Kennel Rations?

breathing The dog looks up from person to person as each speaks, twisting its neck to peer through the eyeholes. Its is growing louder.

PANCAKE  
Well, you're absolutely right--

DIRECTOR  
Don't let the client see this.

PANCAKE  
Of course not, that would be inappropriate--

DIRECTOR  
Or the Humane fucker.

PANCAKE

No no--

The dog gets down on its knees, slowly, like a camel, breathing ever more loudly.

DIRECTOR

They'll shut the fucking spot down, Pancake. Put the goddamn canteen back on. That says he's a soldier. Dented tin canteen. Just tie the damn thing to his collar.

The dog flops over into the mud.

PANCAKE

Easiest thing in the world. I just thought -- but the canteen is much better. Good concept. Let's go with that--

DIRECTOR

What's he doing?

The dog has started to convulse.

PANCAKE

Well, he's uh... Just breathe normally, Otto.

DIRECTOR

The fucking dog can't breathe.

PANCAKE

Oh, he can breathe, that thing is -- just breathe normally, Otto.

The dog's breath is rasping and horrible.

DIRECTOR

The fucking dog cannot breathe! Get that fucking thing off him!

PANCAKE

Of course. Easiest thing in the world.

He stoops and fiddles at the straps.

PANCAKE

...It's on good and tight, I, uh... Just breathe normally, Otto.

He starts thumping at his pockets.

DIRECTOR

Get the fucking thing off him!

PANCAKE

Don't have my Leatherman. Mountain! Give me your Leatherman! Chop chop!

DIRECTOR

Get the fucking thing off him! Chitra,  
make sure the Humane fucker doesn't  
come over here! Bring him to craft  
services!

As he makes to scoop up the dog:

PANCAKE  
Good idea! Ice water, treats--

DIRECTOR  
Not the dog, you idiot! The Humane  
fucker! Distract him!

PANCAKE  
Right! Of course!

He goes back to work on the mask.

DIRECTOR  
Oh my god, he's bleeding!

PANCAKE  
No, that's me -- I -- the  
Leatherman... here we go.

His hand gouting blood, he finally manages to get the gas  
mask off.

barks  
A crowd is starting to gather and gape. The director  
at a grip:

DIRECTOR  
Put up a couple solids here -- I  
don't want the client seeing this!

Pancake thumps on the inert dog's chest.

PANCAKE  
Come on, Otto!

DIRECTOR  
Otto is fucking dead!

PANCAKE  
Mountain, have electric run me a  
stinger! Don't give up on me, Otto!  
Mountain, I need two live leads!

More people crowd in to look.

MOUNTAIN GIRL  
Clark, the gennie's a hundred yards  
away!

PANCAKE  
Goddamnit! Otto's gonna have brain  
damage in about ninety seconds! Okay!

He pulls the dog's lips back, exposing its teeth and

slobbered

tongue.

PANCAKE  
...Kiss of life!

the

He sucks in a deep breath and starts mouth-to-mouthing  
beast.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

POV

Just

We are looking out from inside a football helmet; we hear  
the super-present breathing of the helmet's occupant.

over the breathing we can hear the muffled shouting of a  
snap count.

call

We are in a crouch position looking downfield. At the  
of "Hike!" we and everyone on the field spring into

action.

A

We sprint downfield, the breathing becoming even louder.

very big person downfield is sprinting toward us.

around

After several yards, still on the move, we PAN quickly

someone

to look back for the quarterback. Barely visible among  
converging bodies, he is releasing the football toward

else.

Easing up on the run we PAN BACK around to look downfield  
just as the oncoming defender is upon us and -- CRUNCH --  
slams into us. A STROBING PAN leaves us looking up at the  
sky. Our loud breathing has stopped.

labored

After a long beat the breathing resumes with a raggedy

a

inhale. It continues irregularly. Another helmeted player  
appears above us to peer down into our helmet. He extends

hand to help us up.

HUDDLE

We are looking back and forth around the circle at our  
gathered teammates.

QUARTERBACK  
Delta thirty-seven. On four!

All, with a simultaneous hand clap:

TEAM  
Huh!

LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

Lined up opposite us is a snarling defender.

shouted

Once again, over loud breathing, we can just hear the count.

lunging

horrific

effort

At "Hike!" we straighten to meet the defensive lineman at us. His mouthpiece clatters against ours and in CLOSE-UP he strains against us, his animal gurgles of audible over our own ragged breath.

and

ground,

With a primal roar from the defenseman our POV tips back up, BOOMING DOWN to stop with a CRUNCH against the staring up. Once again our breathing has stopped.

of

After a beat a foot is planted on our helmet as a looming running back steps on us in his charge downfield. He is pursued by defenders some of whom leap over us and some whom by the sound of it step on various body parts.

HUDDLE

The same back-and-forth PAN.

QUARTERBACK

Okay, Epsilon twenty-two! You the man!... Hey! BUTTHEAD!

This brings our wandering attention PANNING back to the quarterback:

QUARTERBACK

You the man!

A very, very present VOICE (HUDSON):

HUDSON (O.S.)

Me the man?

TEAM

Huh!

LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

The same breathing and count.

On "Hike!" we sprint downfield.

The same distant defender sprinting toward us.

We hear low but very present a dismayed:

HUDSON (O.S.)

Unh... oh no...

Our breathing is torn by rasping wheezes of effort as we continue to run.

We look back.

Every player is looking directly at us.

A huge spiralling football coming at us -- too close, too soon -- and--

BONK!

It bounces off our mouth guard and flies up.

HUDSON (O.S.)

...shit...

We are looking forward just as

CRUNCH!

We are hit by the defender.

We once again land face-up.

defender Very steeply FORESHORTENED, right over us, we see the juggling the live ball.

ball With a moan, our own hand reaches weakly up towards the and the high, distant defender.

He finally gathers in the ball and securely tucks it, and starts back upfield.

in We climb wearily to our feet. We look back upfield just  
in time to see the defender start an elaborate victory dance  
hand the end zone. He pauses for a moment to point a gloved directly at us, then resumes his strut.

Shouting from the sidelines brings our PANNING attention over.

The coach, face twisted with fury, is shouting at us and using his clipboard to wave us off the field.

We trot toward the sidelines.

in All of our teammates stare at us -- some in shock, some anger, some in pity.

ourselves. At the sideline bench our POV swings round as we seat

A hand reaches up to the mouth guard to pull off the



helmet

and we

MATCH CUT

TO:

Our first OBJECTIVE SHOT as the player (HUDSON) finishes pulling off his helmet. He is a big blond boy. His entire body, including his face, is solidly built.

An offscreen Voice:

COACH (O.S.)

Hudson!

The boy, Hudson, turns to look, and we cut to one last

POV

The COACH is striding up, swinging his clipboard at the camera: with a loud CRUNCH! it brings on:

BLACK

EXT. MINI-MALL / HI-HO DONUT - DAY

HIGH ANGLE

It is a typical sunbaked concrete strip mall with a

Seven-

Eleven, a launderette, and a Hi-Ho Donut. The Hi-Ho Donut sign shows a pink donut with sprinkles and says in much smaller lettering: And Croissants.

A beat-up Impala pulls into the lot, pulsing hip-hop

music.

After a long rumbling idle the ignition is killed. Both

front

doors open. Two BLACK KIDS get out and look around with a manner that is if anything too casual.

INT. HI-HO DONUT - DAY

There is faint muzak and loud air-conditioner hum. Glass cases display donuts identified as GLAZED, JELLY, and

FANCIES.

Fancies ooze yellow goo. The jelly on the jelly donuts is developing a crust of age. The glazed also look moth-

eaten.

One customer, a disheveled older man, sits at one of the little formica tables staring into a coffee cup. Next to

the

coffee is a brown paper bag from which a straw protrudes.

Behind the counter is a middle-aged VIETNAMESE WOMAN in a neat white blouse.

The two youths enter pulling out enormous handguns from underneath their windbreakers.

YOUTH #1  
All right Dragon Lady, give us all  
the fuckin' money!

The woman stares blankly.

YOUTH #1  
We want that donut money!

VIETNAMESE WOMAN  
Yao gin nyap!

aged  
suit.  
eyeglasses.  
cigarette.

A man appears from the kitchen in back. He is a middle-  
Vietnamese gentleman in a crisply pressed khaki leisure  
An ascot is knotted at his neck. He wears aviator  
In his mouth smolders a half-burned-down filterless  
This, we shall learn later, is THE GENERAL.

YOUTH #2  
Okay papa-san, we want that donut  
money.

YOUTH #1  
And we ain't fuckin' around, Mr. Hi-  
Ho.

VIETNAMESE WOMAN  
Hi-Ho.

The two youths look at her briefly. Nothing else is  
forthcoming.

The drunk looks up from his paper bag.

YOUTH #2  
Look, this fuckin' thing, it ain't  
complicated. You give us all the  
fuckin' money, you don't get shot in  
the head, you make more donuts, get  
more money. That's how it works,  
see?

seems

The General stares at him. As with his wife, none of it  
to register; unlike his wife, he seems unperturbed.

YOUTH #1  
Give us the money!

He is pointing the gun directly at the General's head.

YOUTH #1  
...You got three fuckin' seconds.  
You understand one-two-three? I'm  
gonna count one-two-three and then  
shoot. Okay? Three sec-- huh!

inside  
on

The General has swung his fist up to hook two fingers  
the youth's nostrils. His gun clatters to the floor. The  
fingers are way, way up his nose. Only one knuckle shows  
each finger.

The youth is staring cross-eyed at his own nose.  
His friend is also stupefied.

YOUTH #1  
(very nasal)  
His fingers are way the fuck up my  
nose.

YOUTH #2  
GET... YA FINGAS... OUT... THE  
MAN'S... NOSE!

The General still impassively sucks on his cigarette. The  
first youth is on the verge of tears:

YOUTH #1  
I think they're in my brain, man...

YOUTH #2  
MOTHERFUCK!

He raises his gun to start firing.

As he does so the General uses his hook-hold on the other  
youth's nose to slam his head backwards, down into some  
Fancies.

lady

The door opens and a customer walks in, a semi-elderly  
with a cane.

pressed

Youth #2, eyes rolling, wildly swings to cover the door,  
then back to the General who has his friend's head

into the Fancies, then uncertainly over to the Vietnamese  
woman who is loudly yelling at him in Vietnamese.

Cigarette still dangling from his lower lip, the General  
calmly plucks a pot of coffee from the coffee warmer and  
tosses it into Youth #2's face.

Youth #2 screams.

EXT. HI-HO DONUT - DAY

HIGH ANGLE

his

The car is still pulsing hip-hop music. Youth #2 stumbles  
out of the Hi-Ho, hands covering his face and sinks to  
knees.

INT. HI-HO DONUT - DAY

the The General now has the first youth's face pressed into  
Fancies from behind. Without disturbing his smoking, the  
General repeatedly kicks the youth in the ass.

a His wife, muttering irritably in Vietnamese, is wheeling  
water bucket and mop to where the floor is covered with  
coffee.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

It At the CUT many voices are swelling in a song of worship.  
energy. is a black Baptist church, and the music has great

the The white-robed choir finishes singing; a preacher takes  
podium.

PREACHER

I know you all remember that when  
Moses came down the mountain, carrying  
the word a God, come down that Sinai  
peak, he caught those Israelites red-  
handed. What he catch 'em doin'? He  
caught 'em worshipping a golden calf.

Shouts of "That's right!"

PREACHER

...He caught 'em with their backs  
turned on God!

More shouts of "That's right!"

PREACHER

...He caught 'em worshipping a FALSE  
God! A God of EARTHLY things! He  
caught them Israelites in DECLINE!

"He caught 'em!"

PREACHER

...Because backslidin' is DECLINE,  
brothers and sisters! You hear talk  
these days, and I know you've heard  
this talk, you hear talk of DECLINE,  
well all that means is we done turned  
our back on God!

"That's right!"

PREACHER

...People say civilization doin'  
this, civilization doin' that,  
civilization in DECLINE! Well it  
ain't no civilization! It ain't no  
them! It's US, brothers and sisters!

"Amen!"

We are TRACKING among the congregants, disproportionately women, mostly of middle age and elderly, mostly wearing elaborate go-to-church hats.

PREACHER

...It's what's in our hearts, each and every one of us when we like them Israelites! Slidin' awa-a-a-ay down that Godly slope, slippin' and slidin' toward the mire and muck a the stinkhole of greed -- that's DECLINE!

"That's decline!"

The CONTINUING TRACK brings us onto Mrs. Munson, wearing, like most of her peers, an oversized hat; hers is adorned with a great deal of plastic fruit.

PREACHER

...And what did Moses do when he saw those declinin' backslidin' never-mindin' sinners?

"What he do?"

PREACHER

...Moses SMOTE those sinners in his wrath yes he did!

"Yes he did!"

PREACHER

...Y'all know what smote is! I smite! You smite! He smites! We done smote!

"That's right!"

PREACHER

...To smite is to go UPSIDE the head!

"Uh-huh!"

PREACHER

...Because sometimes, brothers and sisters, that is the ONLY way!

"Yes it is!"

PREACHER

...To smite is to reMIND! We got to STOP that decline! And scramble back UP to the face a the almighty Gyod!

"Amen!"

PREACHER

...'Stead a worshippin' that GOLDEN

calf, that earthly TRASH on that  
GARBAGE island! That GARBAGE island  
in that shadowland WAY outside the  
Kingdom a God!

"Way outside!"

PREACHER  
...That GARBAGE island where scavenger  
birds feast on the bones a the  
backslidin' damned!

"Yes they do!"

PREACHER  
...And so, let us pray...

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

stands  
It is a white clapboard country church. The preacher  
at the door chatting with the congregants filing out.

WOMAN #1  
You preach a wonderful sermon, Brother  
Cleothus.

PREACHER  
Why thank you, Sister Rose.

MRS. MUNSON  
That man has a lot to say.

WOMAN #1  
Yes he does.

MRS. MUNSON  
And every word of it the truth.

WOMAN #2  
Mm-mm. Jesus well pleased with him.

WOMAN #3  
Deed he is.

PREACHER  
Oh now ladies...

WOMAN #3  
Pleased as he can be.

WOMAN #1  
Mm-mm.

MRS. MUNSON  
Stout, too.

WOMAN #1  
Mm-mm.

PREACHER

Oh now you gracious ladies.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

dollar  
Mrs. Munson is at the kitchen table. She folds a five  
bill into a sheet of paper, raising her voice as she does  
so:

MRS. MUNSON

It was a good sermon. That man has a  
lot to say.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

We have CUT to the portrait of Othar over the mantel. He  
does not answer.

From the kitchen:

MRS. MUNSON'S VOICE (O.S.)

...Stout, too. It would've been a  
comfort to you...

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Munson has stuffed the paper-enclosed bill into an  
envelope, which she is now laboriously addressing to Bob  
Jones University.

MRS. MUNSON

And the choir was all in good voice.  
Mm-mm-

There is a knock at the door.

MRS. MUNSON

...Who could that--

The cat yowls and hisses.

I/E. MUNSON HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

As Mrs. Munson swings open the door.

G.H. Dorr stands on the stoop mournfully dry-washing his  
hands and obsequiously ducking his head.

DORR

My dear Mrs. Munson, I do so hope  
this is not an inopportune time for  
our first practice--

MRS. MUNSON

Somebody die?

DORR

I beg your-- Oh!

parked  
He looks back at the long black vintage Lincoln hearse

at the curb behind him.

DORR

...No no, no bereavement, though it is so kind of you to enquire. No, the hearse is simply a vehicle commodious enough to accommodate all of the members of our ensemble. And of course our instruments, contrived in an age ignorant of miniaturization...

He turns and gestures at the vehicle.

driver's  
At his sign, Gawain, the custodian, emerges from the side.

Clark Pancake emerges from the front passenger side.

khaki  
The General, wearing a different but equally pressed suit and ascot, and with a smoking cigarette in his lips, emerges from a back door.

to  
Gawain goes to the back of the hearse and opens its hatch let out Lump Hudson, the football player.

its  
Lump helps unload five large and oddly shaped instrument cases, each man taking one except for Lump himself, who carries two. As the parade of losers and misfits winds way up the walk:

DORR

...Let me introduce you to my friends, my colleagues, these devoted and passionate musicians... This is Gawain MacSam, our bassoonist...

Gawain nods as he passes by.

DORR

...General Nguyen Pham Doc, viola da gamba...

MRS. MUNSON

No smoking in this house.

he  
The General tosses his cigarette away and bows stiffly as passes.

GENERAL

So sorry.

DORR

...Clark Pancake -- a multi-instrumentalist, but with his remarkable embosser Clark specializes



in wind instruments, and is especially accomplished on the French horn...

He nods, passes.

DORR  
...And, finally, Aloysius "Lump" Hudson. Lump is our sackbuttist and -- thank you, Lump -- I see you've also brought my fiddle...

As he hands Dorr the violin case:

LUMP  
Here's your fiddle, Doctor.

Mrs. Munson sizes up the group.

MRS. MUNSON  
You ain't gonna make a racket, are ya?

DORR  
Oh no. Oh no no no no no. No, we shall recuse ourselves to the basement where we shall be -- I think here the expression is uniquely appropriate...

He gives a sickly smile.

DORR  
...as quiet as the crypt.

MRS. MUNSON  
Hmph.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

from  
smoke  
The General stands stock still, his nose an inch away  
the earthen wall, studying it, squinting through the  
of the cigarette pinched between his lips.

out  
loads  
The rest of the men are opening their cases and taking  
the instruments. Gawain's case contains, however, not a  
musical instrument but a boombox and several tapes. He  
one of the tapes into the machine.

DORR  
What do you think, General? Present any problems?

nothing.  
After a beat the General turns away from the wall to give Dorr a look into which one might read anything, or

Gawain hits play on the boombox and the cellar is filled

with the fussy strains of baroque chamber music.

Dorr nods.

DORR

...Good then.

He spreads a map open on the sackbutt case.

DORR

...All right, gentlemen, why don't we all crowd around and go over the plan.

south

The biggest feature on the map is a wavy, roughly north-south pair of lines: a river. A boat icon sits at one edge and from it a dotted rectangle extends inland.

Dorr taps at the boat icon with his fiddle bow.

DORR

...This, gentlemen, is the Lady Luck, gambling den, cash cow, Sodom of the Mississippi delta -- and the focus of our little exercise. Here is Orchard Street...

rectangle

house

those

He is tracing a street that parallels the dotted rectangle extending from the boat. The street is lined by small house icons on either side; the bow comes to rest on one of those icons.

DORR

...and here is the residence of Marva Munson, the charming lady whom y'all met moments ago. Gentlemen...

Bow taps emphasize:

DORR

...You... are... here. Now. This brings us to this square...

The bow indicates it, and then withdraws.

begins

Dorr uses the bow as a swagger stick to punctuate as he begins to pace.

DORR

...Gentlemen, I believe you are all aware that the Solons of the State of Mississippi, to wit, its legislature, have decreed that no gaming establishment shall be erected within its borders upon dry land. They may, however, legally float

upon any watercourse defining a state boundary. But while the gambling activity itself is restricted to riverboats, no such restriction applies to the functions ancillary to this cash besotted bidnis. The casino's offices, locker rooms, facilities to cook and clean, and most importantly its counting houses-- the reinforced, secret, and super secure repositories of the lucre -- may all be situated... wherever. Gawain -- where is wherever?

GAWAIN

Say wha?

Dorr's smug smile fades. Testily:

DORR

Where is the money?

GAWAIN

Oh. End of every shift pit boss brings the cash down to the hold of the ship in the locked cash box; once a day all the cash boxes're moved to the counting room.

DORR

And where is the counting room?

GAWAIN

Well, uh... in that square there. Where you pointing.

DORR

And what, to flog a horse that if not at this point dead is in mortal danger of expirin', does the dotted square represent?

Gawain hesitates, the question's obviousness suggesting  
to him some trick.

GAWAIN

...Offices. Underground.

Dorr's eyes close. A smile of feline contentment curls  
his lips. He murmurs:

DORR

Underground... Mmm... During the casino's hours of operation the door to the counting room is fiercely guarded, and the door itself is of redoubtable Pittsburgh steel; when the casino is closed the entire underground complex is locked up and

the armed guard retreats to the casino's main entrance. There, then, far from the guard, reposes the money, cosseted behind a five-inch-thick steel portal, yes, but the walls, gentlemen, the walls of that room, are but humble masonry, behind which is only the soft loamy soil deposited over the centuries by Ol' Man, the meanderin' Mississip', as it fanned its way back and forth across this great alluvial plain...

He has pried a fistfull of dirt from the cellar wall.

DORR  
...This earth.

He crumbles it, letting it sift to the floor, and then, pleased with himself, he smiles.

DORR  
...Any questions?

Lump looks around, then hesitantly raises his hand.

DORR  
...Yes, Lump?

LUMP  
What, uh... what does "cosseted" mean?

Once again Dorr's smile fades. He does not dignify the question with answer.

DORR  
The General here, whose curriculum vitae compahends massive tunneling experience thoo the soil of his native French-Indochina, will direct our little ol' tunnelin' operation.

The General acknowledges with a curt nod.

DORR  
...Clark Pancake, while a master of none, is a jack of all those trades corollary to our aim. He will be doin' such fabricatin' and demolition work as our little caper shall require.

Clark acknowledges verbally:

PANCAKE  
Happy to be on board.

DORR  
Gawain is the proverbial "inside man". He has managed to secure a

berth on the custodial staff of the Lady Luck, thereby placin' himself in a position to perform certain chores whose precise nature needn't detain us here, but whose performance shall guide this expedition to its happy conclusion.

GAWAIN

Ya damn skippy.

DORR

And this brings us to Lump. To look at Lump you might wonder, what function could he possibly fill, what specialized expertise could he possibly offer, to our merry little ol' band a miscreants. Well gentlemen, in a project of such magnitude and such risks, it is traditional -- nay, it is imperative -- to enlist the services of a hooligan, a goon, an ape, a physical brute, who will be our security, our fist, our batterin' ram. Lump is our blunt instrument, and on all our behalfs I wish him a warm Mississippi welcome.

LUMP

Thanks, Professor.

DORR

Well gentlemen, here you are, men of different backgrounds and differing talents, men with, in fact only two things in common: one, you all saw fit to answer my little advertisement in the Memphis Scimitar, and, two, you are all going to be, in consequence, very very incredibly rich. Let us revel in our adventure, gentlemen. Let us make beautiful music together. And above all, gentlemen, let us keep it to ourselves. What we say in this root cellar, let it stay in this root cellar.

LUMP

There's no "I" in "team".

All stare at him.

DORR

...Lump has a very excellent point.

The music swells, supported now by a male chorus that has the spirited manliness of the Red Army choir. We

DISSOLVE

TO:

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The men at work, tunneling.

the  
The cat sits on the cellar floor, head cocked, gazing at  
hole now opened in the wall.

Lump, in a sleeveless undershirt, glistening with sweat,  
wields a pickaxe at the forward point.

a  
At the mouth of the hole Clark Pancake shovels dirt into  
heavy plastic refuse bag held open by Gawain.

to  
glasses  
G.H. Dorr sits on a camp chair, one hand idly waving time  
the music, reading an old and yellowed tome with half-  
perched midway down his nose.

neatly  
The General hops nimbly out of the tunnel and unzips and  
steps out of his all-in-one to reveal, underneath, his  
pressed leisure suit and ascot.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

looking  
and  
Later, Dorr stands at the head of the cellar stairs,  
around the empty parlor. He gives a nod down the stairs  
the men troop up past him, carrying sacks of earth.

watch  
Over the mantelpiece, the eternal flame of the devotional  
candle almost animating his features, Othar seems to  
the men as they cross to the front door.

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

The men load the earth into the hearse.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - NIGHT

prologue  
We are at the Mississippi bridge that we saw in the  
to the movie, but now, in dead of night, deserted.

back  
to  
The hearse is pulling up at the middle of the bridge and  
dimming its lights. The men emerge; when they open the  
of the hearse to pull out the sacks, the cat bounds out  
watch from a distance.

of  
bridge.  
We watch the men from HIGH, ANGLED DOWN along the masonry  
a tower that stands in the middle of the suspension

An ornamental gargoyle leers in the foreground.

its The garbage scow is approaching. We hear the low toot of  
horn as it nears the bridge.

Lump is poised with the first sack hugged to his chest,  
leaning over the railing.

The nose of the barge enters below us.

Lump releases the sack.

We watch it drop dead away like a bomb from an airplane.

It thuds distantly onto the barge. The next sack has been  
passed up to Lump and is released.

adjust. The cat watches. Its orange eyes blink. Its pupils

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

A PULL BACK shows that the cat is in fact back in the  
basement.

Its POV: continued tunneling.

noise: Back to the cat, watching, then turning its head at a

At the head of the stairs, the cellar door is opening.

scramble A whistle from the General and Lump and Clark Pancake  
from the tunnel. They whip a curtain over its opening and  
all men grab up their instruments as Dorr, covering with  
a cough, turns off the CD player.

between The General, his ever-present cigarette smoldering  
his lips, tongue-and-lips it up and backwards so that it  
is inside his mouth, which he now closes.

stairs. Marva Munson is heavily and carefully descending the  
Lump As the men come into view they are looking up at her,  
holding his sackbutt but still glistening with sweat and  
smeared with dirt.

MRS. MUNSON  
That's okay, don't stop on account  
of me.

his Lump looks around, saucer-eyed, then blows gamely into  
sackbutt. It sounds like goose farts until Dorr waves him  
down.

DORR

No no, madam, we were about to take a break anyway. The glissandi on this particular piece are technically very demanding and I think we would all welcome a moment of relaxation.

MRS. MUNSON

Huh. I just thought you might like to see-what a you gotten up to, honey? Why you sweatin' like that.

It is directed at Lump, who looks down at his own sweat-stained undershirt.

LUMP

I, uh...

GAWAIN

That man plays one bitch barrelful a sackbutt. Ain't no one can blow the tenor sackbutt like Lump, hoowee! goes at that thing like it was a pu-- uh, like it was a woman! Goddamn! He--

She cuffs him on the head.

MRS. MUNSON

You mind! I don't want that kind of talk in my home, even in the root cellar. This is a Christian house, boy, none of that hippity-hop language.

DORR

Sadly, Gawain is given to--

WHAP! She slaps Gawain again.

MRS. MUNSON

Sometimes it's the only way!

He untenses after what seemed like the final blow, but -- WHAP! -- she slaps him again.

MRS. MUNSON

...I'm tryin' to help you, son!

WHAP!

MRS. MUNSON

...Better yaself!

DORR

As well you should, ma'am. But Gawain at times is so far transported by his love of the music of the early Renaissance as to--

MRS. MUNSON



Don't make no never-mind he's  
transported!

Dorr has her by the elbow and is ushering her back up the  
stairs.

DORR  
I understand your--

She pulls her elbow away and sniffs.

MRS. MUNSON  
You been smokin'?

DORR  
Certainly not, madam. I understand  
your indignation. And I was offering  
explanation, not excuse. I myself am  
offended by those who cannot find  
the proper words to express themselves  
and have recourse to--

Gawain calls up the stairs:

GAWAIN  
Don't you be explainin' me, dawg!  
You can't look into my mind, cape  
man!

DORR  
Yes, yes...

of  
Dorr's tone is soothing as he shuts the door at the top  
the stairs.

DORR  
...A fiery lad! But then Youth is  
fiery! A fact often remarked upon by  
the poets of the Romantic era.

MRS. MUNSON  
My youth I was in church, I wasn't  
walkin' around fiery. Youth ain't no  
excuse for nothin'! Well, anyway...  
only came down to show you the fife.

Dorr  
that  
She hands him a thick, roughly whittled piece of cane.  
holds it, looks at it dumbly. He is, for the first time  
we have seen anyway, non-plussed.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Othar's fife. He burned his own.

their  
Dorr tries to summon conversation as the two sit with  
backs to the fireplace:

DORR

...Did he?

MRS. MUNSON  
Mm-hm. I thought maybe bein' a musical  
man you'd be interested.

DORR  
Oh, I am indeed--

MRS. MUNSON  
Cut it himself and burned the holes.  
Israelites called it a kalil.

DORR  
Ah.

MRS. MUNSON  
Kalil, fife, same thing. You can  
read about it in the Bible. Ain't  
nothin' new under the sun.

DORR  
Indeed not.

MRS. MUNSON  
Gone these twenty years. He was some  
kind of man.

in From Othar's POV, slightly high, we see them both twist  
their chairs to look up at the portrait.

us REVERSE of the portrait, LOW ANGLE. Othar looks down at  
with what appears to be bemusement.

motionless Marva Munson and Dorr gaze up at the portrait for a  
beat. At length, Marva Munson sighs:

MRS. MUNSON  
...Blowed the kalil.

Dorr's eyes remain on the picture as he inquires:

DORR  
...I don't suppose Othar ever turned  
his hand -- or, uh, heh-heh-heh,  
turned his lip -- to the shofar?

Prompted by her silence, he adds:

DORR  
...The ceremonial ram's horn, sounded  
by the priests of the Hebrews?

MRS. MUNSON  
I don't know nothin' 'bout that.  
Othar didn't study no shofar, to the  
extent a my knowledge. The kalil was  
good enough for my Othar...

She gazes at the portrait.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Some kind of man.

INT. CASINO - DAY

TRACKING BEHIND A SASHAYING ASS

following a woman in a red dress.

GAWAIN (O.S.)  
Hey baby, don't be cruel. Jus' sneak  
one little peek...

The woman looks back over her shoulder, smiling, as she  
continues to walk.

GAWAIN  
...Don't let this uniform fool ya--

REVERSE PULLING TRACK

leads Gawain MacSam, pushing his wheeled trash bin.

GAWAIN  
You don't need to be gamblin', honey,  
you lookin' at a sure thing. They  
call me Mr. 21, baby, 'cause that's  
how I measure up. I am the original  
black Jack, honey, accept no  
substitutions. You can pull my lever  
all day long, sweet mama, I ain't  
never gonna come up lemons. That's  
right, sugar, you can blow on my  
dice any ol' time.

INT. CASINO - GUDGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Gudge has his feet up on the desk and is filing his nails  
with an emery board.

GAWAIN  
But Mr. Gudge, she had an ass that  
could pull a bus. This lady was fine,  
fine, dandy, divine.

GUDGE  
I don't care how big her ass was,  
MacSam. You're fired.

GAWAIN  
Say what?

GUDGE  
There is no fraternizing with  
customers on the Lady Luck. Clean  
out your locker.

GAWAIN

But Gudge--

GUDGE  
Get out of here. You're fired.

GAWAIN  
You can't fire me. I sue your ass!

GUDGE  
Sue me? For what?

GAWAIN  
Sue you for fuckin' punitive damages,  
man!

GUDGE  
Punitive damages.

GAWAIN  
Ya damn skippy. I know you firin' my  
ass 'cause I'm black!

GUDGE  
Everyone on the custodial staff is  
black, MacSam. Your replacement's  
gonna be black. His replacement will  
no doubt be black.

GAWAIN  
Fuckin' judge is gonna be black,  
motherfucker, that's who gonna be  
black! You gonna stand tall before  
the man!

EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - DAY

VERY HIGH ANGLE

yellow

We are looking down past the distinctive pylon-mounted  
letters: WAFFLE.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - DAY

of  
informality  
string

The band of miscreants is seated around a table with cups  
coffee. Dorr's wardrobe makes no concession to the  
of the setting; he still wears his cape and a black  
tie. His manner is more mournful even than usual:

DORR  
Oh my. Oh my my my my my. This is a  
severe setback. I am distraught. I  
am more than distraught, I am  
devastated. Oh my, this is quite the  
monkey-wrench heaved into the  
meticulously engineered construct of  
our little escapade.

LUMP

Yeah, it fucks things up.

DORR

I am beside myself. I am at a positive loss for words.

GAWAIN

You still talkin' okay though.

WAITRESS

Have you all decided?

upon  
Dorr's intensely mournful agitation is brought to bear  
her:

DORR

Oh madam, we must have waffles. We must all have waffles forthwith!

They hand in their menus.

DORR

...Oh we must think. We must all have waffles and think, each and every one of us to the very best of his ability! Perhaps if you apologized to the man and gave him flowers, or perhaps a fruit basket, with a card depicting a misty seascape and inscribed with a sentiment.

GAWAIN

Shit, man, it ain't about apologizin'! He fired me 'cause I'm black!

PANCAKE

He can't do that. You could sue him. Open and shut case.

GAWAIN

Fuckin' A.

PANCAKE

This is not 1952.

GAWAIN

Man's a fuckin' bigot.

DORR

Well then, perhaps, surely, a chocolate assortment has been known to warm the heart of even the most hardened misanthrope, especially if it's a premium chocolate, imported, say, from Switzerland, or the Netherlands, or some other of the so-called "Low" countries be they Dutch or Flemish or Walloon--

GAWAIN

Walloon my ass, the man ain't gonna roll over for a fuckin' candy bar!

PANCAKE

I'm afraid there's a setback on the tunneling front too. We've run into a pretty large rock, and--

GENERAL

-- Rock!

a All turn to look at the General. He continues to stare at spot in space. He slowly releases some inhaled cigarette smoke, murmuring:

GENERAL

...Very bad.

DORR

Oh my my, it seems that the poet was right: Troubles never singly come.

PANCAKE

Oh, we can get through the rock, no worries there. Simplest thing in the world. Why we blow right through it; I've got a pyro license, we bore a hole in the rock, pack in a little plastique; igneous blows pretty good, and we--

LUMP

Is he gonna want a piece of the action?

All turn to look at Lump.

PANCAKE

...Who?

surround Lump hesitates, looking at the inquiring faces that him.

LUMP

...Igneous?

A female Voice:

MOUNTAIN GIRL (O.S.)

Hello Clark. Am I ordering the prima cord?

The men look up at her.

PANCAKE

Yes, Mountain, we were just talking about that, and some plastique.

All the men are staring at her, agog.

GAWAIN

...The fuck is this?

PANCAKE

This is Mountain Girl. Mountain is my right hand. She helps me with ordnance. Helps me with damn near everything.

The men stare.

GAWAIN

...You brought your bitch to the waffle house?!

There is tension in the air. Dorr clears his throat.

DORR

I confess myself to be puzzled as well. I thought we all understood that, so far as our little enterprise is concerned, mum, as the saying would have it, is the word--

PANCAKE

Of course. I understand that. But this is Mountain...

He chuckles.

PANCAKE

...I don't keep secrets from Mountain. That's not how you maintain a loving, caring relationship.

GAWAIN

...You brought your bitch to the waffle house?

He looks around.

GAWAIN

...Man brings his bitch to the waffle house!

PANCAKE

Look, you, I'll thank you to stop referring to Mountain that way. She's the other half of my life.

GAWAIN

Everybody lookin' at me like I'm a fuck-up, losin' that sorry-ass job, and this motherfucker bring his bitch to the waffle house!

Pancake lunges across the table, sending dishes clattering to the floor as he grabs Gawain by the shirt.

PANCAKE

You son of a bitch punk! Shut your  
goddamn mouth!

at He shakes him vigorously and rears back to take a swing  
him.

Gawain draws a gun.

GAWAIN

Come and get me motherfuck! Come on,  
baby, let's get it on!

Mountain starts screaming.

People look, aghast.

DORR

Gentlemen, please!

The other men pry Pancake and Gawain apart.

DORR

...Gentlemen, this sort of behavior  
does you no credit in the eyes of  
your colleagues, or in those of the  
other patrons of this waffle house!

his Pancake grumbles as he composes himself and straighten  
clothes.

PANCAKE

...Nobody talks to Mountain Girl  
that way. She had an abusive family!

GAWAIN

Fuck you, man.

PANCAKE

Little punk. I got syrup on my safari  
jacket.

He embraces Mountain, who continues to sob quietly.

DORR

Gentlemen, I propose that we consider  
the matter of this woman, Mountain  
Water, to be--

PANCAKE

Mountain Girl.

DORR

I am so very sorry. I propose that  
we consider this matter to be closed,  
and we shall chose to trust her,  
since we now have no choice, and  
since she shall share only in Mr.



Pancake's portion of the booty.

Over the shoulder of the quietly weeping Mountain Girl:

PANCAKE  
Of course. Wouldn't have it any other way.

GAWAIN  
Damn right you won't.

PANCAKE  
Up yours, punk.

DORR  
Gentlemen! And the manner of disposing of our igneous impediment is also settled. That leaves only the question of Gawain retrieving his job.

LUMP  
Couldn't you just bribe the guy?

All turn to look at Lump.

INT. MUNSON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

mantelpiece.  
ancient  
midway

Othar looks serenely down from his spot over the Marva Munson knits; G.H. Dorr sits nodding over an volume of half-forgotten lore, reading glasses perched down his nose. Curtains waft lazily in the summer night breeze.

MRS. MUNSON  
...You just a readin' fool, ain't you Mr. Dorr.

DORR  
Yes yes, I must confess, madam, that often I feel more at home in these ancient volumes than I do in the hustle-bustle of our modern world. To me, paradoxically, the literature of the so-called "dead tongues" has more currency than this mornin's newspaper.

MRS. MUNSON  
Mm-mm.

DORR  
In these books...

He removes his glasses and lazily twirls them.

DORR  
...In these volumes, there is the accum'lated wisdom a mankind which

succours me when the day is hard or  
the night lonely and long.

MRS. MUNSON

Wisdom of mankind, what about the  
wisdom of the Lord?

DORR

Oh yes, the Good Book, mm. I have  
found reward in its pages. But for  
me there are other good books as  
well; the heavy volumes of Antiquity,  
freighted with the insights of Man's  
glorious age. And then of course I  
love, love, love the works of Mr. Ed  
G'Allan Poe.

MRS. MUNSON

I know who he is. Kinda creepy.

DORR

Oh no, madam, nooooo. Not of this  
world, true; he lived in a dream, an  
ancient dream...

Dorr himself is lost in a dream:

DORR

"Helen, thy beauty is to me Like  
those Nicean barks a yore That gently,  
o'er a perfumed sea, The weary,  
wayworn wanderer bore To his own  
native shore... "

MRS. MUNSON

Who was Helen? She wasn't a loose  
woman, was she? Some kinda whore a  
Babylon?

Dorr is still lost:

DORR

One doesn't know who Helen was, though  
I picture her as bein' very, very  
extremely... pale.

He comes to himself, focuses on Mrs. Munson.

DORR

...Miz Munson, I was tryin' to think  
of some way of expressin' my gratitude  
to you for takin' in...

He chuckles.

DORR

...this weary, wayworn wanderer...

The Professor takes a small ticket envelope from where it  
had served as bookmark, and hands it across.

DORR

...It's just a modest little ol'  
present, why it's practically nothing  
at all.

Beaming, she takes two tickets out of the envelope and  
inspects them.

MRS. MUNSON

Oh Mr. Dorr, why you are such a  
gallant man...

DORR

Oh no madam, I blush. I melt. No, I  
just happened to hear of this gospel  
concert tomorrow night, The Mighty  
Mighty Clouds of Joy, and I thought  
you and a friend from church,  
perhaps...

MRS. MUNSON

Othar loved that music... Yes, I got  
a widow-lady friend...

DORR

The concert is up in Memphis, but I  
have arranged for a car service to  
transport you thither and, needless  
to say, back home at the concert's  
termination. My friends and I will  
be rehearsing here tomorrow evening  
so you needn't worry about the  
security of your charming little old  
house...

There is a knock at the door.

MRS. MUNSON

Huh? Excuse me.

I/E. MUNSON HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

squad

Mrs. Munson swings the door open to Sheriff Wyner. His  
car is parked at the curb.

MRS. MUNSON

Sheriff Wyner, how you doin'...

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Professor's eyes widen with concern as he hears the  
voices, off:

SHERIFF (O.S.)

Evenin', Miz Munson, I just came  
by...

I/E. MUNSON HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

The sheriff is tipping his hat and already backing away,

trying to make his visit brief:

SHERIFF

...to let you know I had a word with WeeMack. He says he gonna comply with your request, keep the music down and neighborly.

MRS. MUNSON

Mm-hm.

He calls from the bottom of the stoop:

SHERIFF

So you have a pleasant evening now, and just let us know--

MRS. MUNSON

Hang on there, Sheriff, somebody I want you to meet.

SHERIFF

Ma'am, I'm a little pressed for time--

MRS. MUNSON

Why, you chasin' a gang of bank robbers? Get on in here say hello.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Voices approach:

MRS. MUNSON

...We was just havin' tea, talkin' about Othar--

The two enter and Mrs. Munson stops short, looking.

The living room is empty. Even the Professor's teacup is gone.

MRS. MUNSON

...Hm... Bussed his own dishes. You can always tell a gentleman.

The sheriff, hat in hand, gazes about.

SHERIFF

Someone was here, ma'am?

MRS. MUNSON

Mm-hm, with me'n Othar.

Once again, he tries to excuse himself:

SHERIFF

Well, maybe I'll catch him next time...

MRS. MUNSON

Come on up to his room.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - DORR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door opens and the two look in.

The neatly made bed next to the small, barren dresser.

MRS. MUNSON

Mm, he's neat.

SHERIFF

Very neat.

MRS. MUNSON

Probably went down to the cellar to play with his friends.

She turns.

SHERIFF

Ma'am, I really have to...

POV FROM UNDER THE BED

Top-teased by a dust ruffle in the foreground, we see

Mrs.

Munson's heavy orthopedic shoes turning to pass Sheriff Wyner's shiny black boots.

REVERSE

shows Dorr, cheek pressed to the floor, his teacup and saucer under the bed with him.

saucer

SHERIFF

...be gettin' back...

BACK TO NORMAL PERSPECTIVE

Mrs. Munson is about to go out the door but notices

something:

A corner of the Professor's cape, protruding from under the end of the bed.

the

MRS. MUNSON

What the...

BACK TO DORR

fearfully watching.

HIS POV

The heavy orthopedic shoes approach, and then, with loud

Mr.

Mogul sounds of effort, Mrs. Munson's hands and knees hit the floor.

against

Her head drops in to view to peer in, her own cheek  
the floorboards.

MRS. MUNSON  
...What the... Why, Professor!

Munson's

We see the Sheriff watching and his HIGH POV of Mrs.  
enormous ass.

MRS. MUNSON  
...What you doin' havin' tea down  
there?!

Dorr makes silent hand waves to disavow his own presence.

Mrs. Munson roars with laughter.

With difficulty she pushes herself back upright, still  
laughing.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Land of Goshen! Get out from under  
there!

SHERIFF  
Miz Munson, my pager just went off...

MRS. MUNSON  
Why of all the...

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - STAIRCASE/FOYER - NIGHT

The Sheriff is already backing down the stairs:

SHERIFF  
'Fraid I gotta respond...

He opens the front door and calls up:

SHERIFF  
...I'll try to meet your friend some  
other time.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - DORR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dorr shimmies out from under the bed.

DORR  
Well that was very... refreshing...  
As you know...

pants.

DORR  
...we academics are inordinately  
fond of wedgin' ourselves into  
confined spaces. At Yale the students  
will see how many of their number

they can enclose in a telephone booth;  
Harvard, a broom closet.

MRS. MUNSON

Why I never!

DORR

There was the goldfish-swallowin'  
craze, of course, a different but  
related phenomenon... Ahem... I hope  
I didn't spill any tea...

INT. CASINO - GUDGE'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON A BOX OF CHOCOLATES

The box is being pulled open.

GUDGE (O.S.)

What the hell is this?

WIDER

desk,  
shows Gawain in Mr. Gudge's office as Gudge, behind the  
looks at the gift-wrapped box.

GAWAIN

It's just my way of sayin', well,  
goddamnit, I don't know what it's  
like walkin' in your shoes, bein'  
all tightass and all, and you don't  
know what it's like to walk in my  
shoes, but, well...

floral  
Gudge is opening a card that was inside the box. Its  
front says in gold script, "I'm Sorry... If I hurt your  
feelings... "

GAWAIN

...You know, there's the custodian,  
and then there's the man inside the  
custodian, y'understand what I'm  
sayin'...

Gudge opens the card. Inside is a hundred-dollar bill.

GAWAIN

...and that man has needs, dig, and  
I guess those needs, Mr. Gudge, which  
they usually involve women with big  
asses, well those motherfuckin' needs  
sometimes well up over the custodian  
like the motherfuckin' Johnstown  
Flood. But my point is it ain't gonna  
happen again. Not if it's humanly  
possible...

Gudge reads the card, flips it over to look at its back.

GUDGE

Hmm...

GAWAIN

But Jesus, if you'd seen the ass on that girl, Mr. Gudge, you'd a wanted her sitting on your face too.

GUDGE

Well, we're all human.

GAWAIN

Ya damn skippy.

GUDGE

This apology buys you a one-week probationary period. Stay away from the customers, MacSam.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

Pancake is on his stomach, wearing goggles, boring a hole into a rock face with a power drill.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

covered

We hear the whine of the drill faintly here, all but by the sound of the chamber music on the boom box.

his

The other men sit around. Dorr gives a casual glance at watch as the whine subsides.

Pancake emerges from the tunnel covered with grime.

PANCAKE

The drill bit's getting awfully hot. Gawain, maybe you could fill a hudson sprayer and spritz it down while I drill.

GAWAIN

Fuck you, man, I ain't your house nigger. I'm the inside man!

PANCAKE

Look, are you gonna have a bug up your ass for the rest of the time we work together?

LUMP

I'll get the sprayer.

PANCAKE

No no, me and this gentleman here have to get square. Let me tell you something, MacSam. You wanna know something?

GAWAIN



I don't wanna know shit from you.

on Pancake leans against the wall and pushes his goggles up his forehead, leaving raccoon eyes.

PANCAKE

I'm gonna tell you how I came down to Mississippi. Wasn't born here, you know. I'm from Scranton, Pennsylvania...

Abruptly, he stares off into space.

PANCAKE

...Nnnff!

GAWAIN

Huh?

Pancake's eyes regain their focus:

PANCAKE

...Scranton, Pennsylvania. Came down here in 1964. Greyhound Bus. With the Freedom Riders. You know who the Freedom Riders were, MacSam?

GAWAIN

I don't give a shit who they were. Just tell me when they gonna leave.

PANCAKE

The Freedom Riders, my fine young man, were a group of concerned liberals from up North -- whites, Negros, and yes, Jewish people -- all working together, just like we are here. Concerned citizens who came down here so that local black people could have their civil liberties. So that people like you could have the vote.

chamber All look at Pancake. Quiet, except for the delicate music.

Gawain's tone softens:

GAWAIN

...You know what, man?

PANCAKE

What, brother?

GAWAIN

I don't vote. So fuck you.

Pancake darkens:

PANCAKE  
Why you fucking--

GAWAIN  
And the bus you rode in on!

PANCAKE  
That's it!

He peels off his coat.

PANCAKE  
...Let's step outside, MacSam!

General  
There is a knock on the cellar door. The men freeze momentarily, then scramble for their instruments. The  
flips his cigarette backwards into his mouth.

Dorr turns off the boom box, then calls:

DORR  
Yes, madam?

holding  
The door opens and Mrs. Munson comes down the stairs,  
a large plate covered by a checked napkin.

MRS. MUNSON  
My friend Mrs. Funthes is here so  
I'm about to go on out. I just wanted  
to leave y'all with some cinnamon  
cookies...

person  
She takes the napkin off and carries the plate from  
to person; each obediently takes a cookie with a murmured  
"Thank you, ma'am."

MRS. MUNSON  
...Y'all sound pretty good. It'd be  
nice if you'd come by the church  
some day, give us a recital.

stairs.  
Dorr takes her by the arm and escorts her back to the

DORR  
Oh madam, you are too kind. Our music,  
however, is -- how shall I put it? --  
rather Roman in its outlook; many of  
our pieces were commissioned by the  
Holy See.

MRS. MUNSON  
Oh, I see all right, but we don't  
make a big whoop-dee-do about  
denominations; everybody welcome at  
our church. We've had Methodists  
come in. Episcopalians. Even had a Jew  
come in once with a guitar back in

the sixties.

DORR

Indeed. Excuse me, one moment, ma'am,  
and I shall see you off...

They have reached the top of the stairs and the Professor  
ushers her out but stays behind himself. He turns to

address

the rest of the men below:

DORR

...If you gentlemen can labor  
harmoniously in the course of my  
absence, then perhaps upon my return  
we shall be prepared to explode that  
vexin' ol' piece a igneous.

GAWAIN

He's the motherfuckin' piece of  
igneous.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Professor emerges from the cellar. Mrs. Munson awaits  
with her friend who is likewise togged out in fancy

Sunday

dress and carrying a shiny black purse.

MRS. MUNSON

Professor, this is Rosalie Funthes,  
Rosalie, Professor G.H. Dorr, Ph.D.

ROSALIE

Oh my, that's an awful lot of letters.

DORR

Well of course in my youth I was  
simply known as Goldthwait...

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

Pancake is taking the boom box off the table to clear

some

space.

PANCAKE

All right, safety meeting, let's  
listen up. General, could you hand  
me the prima cord and the compound  
there. Before we set the charge we'll  
run through our procedure.

Various paraphernalia are laid out on the table.

The cat sits in a corner of the cellar, watching

carefully

and, it seems, listening attentively.

PANCAKE

...I have earplugs for whoever wants

them. Just wedge them in your ears.  
Now here we have -- not yet, Lump.

Lump stops putting in his earplugs.

PANCAKE  
...Now. Prima cord. Gelatinite. C4.  
Time comes, we pack the hole in the  
rock with the C4 and insert two leads.  
A...

He holds up one lead.

PANCAKE  
...and B.

He holds up the other lead.

PANCAKE  
...Charge comes from a battery that  
is inside this plunger. Ordinary  
auto battery, you can pick it up at  
Sears, easiest thing in the world...

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

escorting  
A black town car idles at the curb. Dorr is just  
the two ladies out the front door and down the stoop.

DORR  
I remember my father telling me --  
and it is one of the few memories I  
retain of the man, from one of his  
visits home, and how I do cherish it --  
he said, "Goldthwait, you are not  
formed as other little boys."

ROSALIE  
Mm-mm.

MRS. MUNSON  
He a man of learnin'?

DORR  
G.H. number two was self-educated;  
he had no career, as such, though  
the state recognized the breadth of  
his readin' by making him librarian  
at the state nervous hospital in  
Meridian, where he was a distinguished  
inmate.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

Pancake sets down the two electrical leads and picks up a  
hammer.

PANCAKE  
This is the same procedure we will  
be using when we collapse the tunnel

after entering the casino vault and  
returning to the root cellar.

He looks pointedly at Gawain.

PANCAKE

...This is for your own protection,  
so pay close attention. Once these  
materials are combined only the  
professionals may handle them. That  
means me, or the General. Separately  
they are harmless-completely inert.  
Why, you could light this stuff on  
fire, hit it with a hammer--

He swings the hammer down onto the plastique--

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

house's  
--and there is the dull thud of an explosion and the  
windows rattle in their frames.

the  
The Professor, at the open door of the car into which the  
two ladies have just sat, looks up at the house, as do  
ladies.

MRS. MUNSON

...What in the name of heaven was  
that?

Dorr stares at the house, appalled.

DORR

I'm... quite sure... that there is...  
no cause for alarm...

He struggles for self-possession.

DORR

...Why, I'm not even absolutely  
certain that I heard anything at  
all.

MRS. MUNSON

Didn't hear anything?!

DORR

Well, something, perhaps, but...

Marva Munson starts to get out of the car.

DORR

...nothing that need discompose us,  
was the sense I was trying to  
convey...

He urges her back into her seat.

DORR

...Miz Munson, I will not have you missing your musical recital. Why, you go ahead now. Miz Funthes, you as well, I beg of you...

He is backing up the walk.

DORR

...I shall call the gas company, or the water company, or whatever subterranean utility is implicated in this little... occurrence... I shall see to the matter... as only a highly educated classicist could.

car  
not  
At the door now, he gives the two women peering out the window a smiling but vigorous wave away, which they do heed, and then he enters.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is filled with smoke.

huffy.  
Othar, slightly askew over the mantel, looks a little

We hear clomping and screaming on the cellar stairs.

Lump bursts out, shrieking:

LUMP

Blood, Professor! Oh my God! Blood!

a  
living  
firmly  
The General comes bounding up the stairs like a panther, cigarette burning in his lips. He lands catlike in the room, glides to the blubbering Lump, grabs one shoulder with one hand, and with the other slaps him sharply, once forehand, once backhand.

Lump stares at him, shocked, his blubbering cut short.

More noise is coming from the stairs:

PANCAKE

...why, it's nothing to make a fuss about. Perfectly all right... happens all the time...

GAWAIN

...You gotta go find it, dipshit!

He  
Pancake emerges from the stairwell, his hair singed, his face and the front of his jumpsuit darkened by the blast.

is clutching one hand with the other.

PANCAKE

...No, no. Really, I'm perfectly all right.

Gawain has ascended just behind to hector him over his shoulder:

GAWAIN

Perfectly all right? You just blew your fucking finger off!

PANCAKE

Sure, but--

GAWAIN

Well get back down there and find it, man! I ain't pickin' up your goddamn finger!

DORR

I gather there was a premature detonation--

GAWAIN

They can sew that shit back on, jack! Like that guy his wife cut his dick off! Just sewed that motherfucker back on!

PANCAKE

Of course. Simplest thing in the world. Microsurgery--

GAWAIN

Saw that motherfucker in a porno! Thing still works!

Pancake is pale from loss of blood and his pontifications lack full conviction:

PANCAKE

Oh yes, they have remarkable abilities in the, uh...

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Quiet.

The two women sit in the idling car, looking at the house.

From the house there is very muted bellowing.

Still looking toward the house, Mrs. Munson offers a word of explanation to her friend:

MRS. MUNSON

They using the house to practice music a the rococo.

ROSALIE

Mmmm-hm.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The cat, with a human finger in its mouth, sidles  
cautiously to one side, warily eying someone.

VOICES (O.S.)

Get him!

The General, pluming cigarette in his mouth, tensed arms  
extended outwards, sidles cautiously to cut him off.

DORR

I propose that we get our fallen  
comrade to the hospital, and the  
General shall follow when he manages  
to recover the severed digit.

PANCAKE

I don't know what all the fuss is  
about.

The cat jumps.

The General leaps to follow.

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

The two women looking.

The front door of the house opens. Lump, the Professor,  
and Gawain emerge, escorting Pancake. Just before Gawain  
finishes closing the door the cat slips out.

MRS. MUNSON

PICKLES!

The door is yanked fully open and the General races out  
after the cat.

MRS. MUNSON

...You catch Pickles now!

The cat races across the lawn and, with no break in  
stride, up his favorite tree.

The General follows and, also without breaking stride,  
clammers up the tree after it.

Tree limbs shake with activity hidden by the leaves. We  
hear the hiss of the cat.

The men are bundling Pancake into the hearse. Dorr calls



to

the women before climbing in:

DORR

The house is perfectly in order, but we need medical attention for Mr. Pancake who, during the disturbance, pinched his finger in a valve of the sackbutt.

road.  
The cat leaps out of the tree and runs away down the

MRS. MUNSON

You let the cat out!

pursues  
The General leaps out of the tree to land catlike on the street, arms tensed, casts a look both ways, and then

the animal down the road. We hear the retreating padding footsteps of all six feet.

DORR

The General is even now exercising every effort to retrieve your mischievous little pet. Please go, go and enjoy your concert, and we shall see you later in the evening. Au revoir, mes dames!

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - NIGHT

Mississippi.  
A new day. The garbage scow chugs down the mighty

It toots its horn.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON SCHEMATIC MAP

it  
It shows the underground complex and, stretching towards in a line drawn with a blunt pencil, is the tunnel. It is now almost to the vault.

A violin bow enters to tap at the line.

DORR (O.S.)

Despite our little setback we find ourselves on schedule to penetrate the vault...

The bow taps at the vault outline.

DORR

...here, this afternoon, having successfully blasted that little ol' rock to pieces during Miz Munson's choir practice.

The violin bow withdraws.

DORR

...Clark, perhaps you can run us through the game plan for what remains of our tunnelin'.

A bandaged hand enters frame and a finger-stump points at the end of the penciled line.

PANCAKE (O.S.)

Of course. Why, it's child's play now, easiest thing in the world. Only a couple of feet separate us from the vault...

WIDER

The men are clustered around the map, spread out on the sackbutt case in the cellar. Clark continues:

PANCAKE

...Just the usual spadework until we hit the masonry of the vault, and then we drill through.

DORR

And will you be able to wield the drill with your maimed extremity?

PANCAKE

Oh, I should think so, it's only one finger. Inhibits me in doing finer work, of course. I'll always have to live with that... Ahem. Maybe, and I'm just thinking out loud here, maybe since, as you say, it will present problems later...

DORR

Yes, Clark?

PANCAKE

Well, maybe -- and this is something I've talked over with Mountain Girl, and she agrees with me, so it's not just one person's opinion -- maybe I should get a little extra compensation for the accident.

A long, stony silence.

PANCAKE

...Somewhat larger share. Why, if this were any other line of work I'd be getting workmen's comp, wouldn't I? Might even have a pretty good lawsuit.

GAWAIN

You gonna sue yaself for blowin' off your finger?

PANCAKE

Well that is simply asinine--

DORR

Yes but you see, Clark, this is not what you just called "some other line of work."

PANCAKE

But if it were--

DORR

This is a criminal enterprise, not to put too fine a point on it, entailin' all manner a risks not involved in honest labor. Governmental regulations an' civic safeguards cannot be assumed to apply to antisocial pursuits.

LUMP

Yeah, but he lost his finger.

GAWAIN

We don't give a shit! Man can blow his own dick off, don't make no nevermind to us! We don't gotta pay the man for goin' around blowin' off body parts! Getcha head outcha ass, man!

PANCAKE

Look, you--

DORR

I think that in this instance Gawain has a very excellent point. I--

GENERAL

No extra share!

All stop and stare at the General.

Clark grumbles:

PANCAKE

Well, okay, majority rules, like I say, it was just a trial balloon. Hand's not so bad really, I even get some phantom feeling.

GAWAIN

You pull on your prick you get phantom feeling. Greedy motherfuck.

DORR

Now that that matter is settled, let us synchronize our watches before Gawain reports to work. In... twenty seconds... it will be twelve-sixteen

exactly... fifteen...

PANCAKE

It will be twelve-fifteen?

DORR

No, in fifteen seconds -- now eleven seconds -- it will be twelve-sixteen... eight...

LUMP

Professor?

DORR

Six... five -- yes, Lump?

LUMP

I don't have a watch.

EXT. CASINO - DAY

Lady

It is the weathered doorway to the main entrance of the Luck. A hand enters to rap.

ELRON (O.S.)

Yeah?

GAWAIN

Me, dickwad.

enters.

A low, chesty chuckle. The door swings open and Gawain

INT. CASINO - DAY

RUMBLING WHEELS ON NUBBY FLOOR

floor.

A garbage bin is being wheeled across the empty casino

WIDER

the

Gawain is wheeling it. He is approaching the tunnel to corporate annex.

BACK TO THE WHEELS

As they roll down the tunnel.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Loud singing at the cut. We are looking at Mrs. Munson in the middle of the choir, holding forth in song.

INT. CASINO - SERVICE HALL - DAY

door,

Gawain leans back against the wall next to the vault arms folded across his chest. Faintly, from inside the

vault,  
rolling  
El

we hear the whine of a power tool. Gawain leans over and punches the button on boom box that hangs from the garbage bin. The hallway pulses with "I Left My Wallet In Segundo."

INT. CHURCH - DAY

More singing, Mrs. Munson and the rest of the choir now clapping as they sing.

INT. CASINO - VAULT - DAY

The power-tool whine is louder here. We are looking at a patch of wall.

way, a

After a beat, and with a loud rev as resistance gives drill bit emerges from the wall, spitting out bits of the masonry.

The drill withdraws.

After a beat, hammer blows.

The chunk of masonry begins to buckle.

INT. CASINO - SERVICE HALL - DAY

The General opens the door, still somehow immaculately groomed. Gawain enters.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

organist

The gospel number rising to climax, supported by the and the rest of the congregation.

INT. CASINO - VAULT - DAY

started

Clark and Lump, covered in dirt and plaster dust, have stuffing bundled bills and small sacks into large garbage bags. An irregular hole, about three feet across, gapes

in

the far wall.

Gawain punches off the boombox, looking at all the money.

GAWAIN

Well ain't that somethin'.

Clark suddenly freezes in the act of collecting money. He straightens slowly.

PANCAKE

Hnnnn. Arrunggggh! Rnffff.

He stands stock still, wincing, gazing off into space.

PANCAKE

...Mmmmggh!

He whispers hoarsely, urgently:

PANCAKE

...IBS!

The other men look at him.

GAWAIN

...Say what?

PANCAKE

IBS! Irritable Bowel Syndrome! Is there a men's room down here?!

GAWAIN

Oh man, you shouldn't be using the men's room--

PANCAKE

Or a lady's room! IBS! Quickly!

GAWAIN

You shoulda shit back in the house, man! We don't want Elron finding you in the goddamn crapper!

Clark's voice is still hoarse. He does small knee bends  
of urgency:

PANCAKE

No choice! Quickly! It's a medical condition!

GAWAIN

You are disgusting, man. All right, follow me.

INT. CASINO - DAY

We are CLOSE ON Gawain peering anxiously to one side.

He turns and peers the other way.

We hear a toilet flush and, after a beat, Clark emerges

from

the men's room door next to which Gawain stands. His

manner

is now completely relaxed.

PANCAKE

Feel thirty pounds lighter.

They start walking back to the vault.

PANCAKE

...Thank you for being so

understanding. Not everyone is, of course, which is why the biggest challenge of IBS is educating the public. Afflicts over two million people yet most of us have never heard of it. And it strikes without regard to age, gender or race.

GAWAIN

Oh fuck, man, I don't wanna know about it.

PANCAKE

That's the kind of attitude we're fighting.

GAWAIN

Well maybe you should sign me up, man, 'cause you startin' to irritate my bowel.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Marva  
her  
away.

The choir finishes a number and sits -- all except for Munson, who unties the knot on her robe at the nape of neck, slips it off and, with murmured goodbyes, slips away.

INT. CASINO - VAULT - DAY

As the two men enter Clark is still holding forth:

PANCAKE

...I guess I never told you, that's how Mountain Girl and I met. They had an IBS Weekend at Grossinger's, in the Catskills. Of course the tourist business up there has suffered, with the demise of the Borscht Belt. So they have different promotions, mixers, so on. This was a weekend for Irritable Bowel singles to meet and support each other and share stories.

GAWAIN

Man, I don't wanna hear a single one a them stories.

PANCAKE

Well, some of them are very--

GAWAIN

Not one fuckin' story! You one fucked-up motherfucker! You--

They stop short, looking:

The General and Lump are standing in the middle of the

floor,

stock still, each clutching a bag of money, staring up at the same corner of the ceiling.

Lump turns to Clark and Gawain.

LUMP

Hey, lookit that.

Gawain and Clark join them in the middle of the vault and look up at the corner of the ceiling.

A small video camera, aimed squarely at the four men.

THROUGH THE CAMERA

Black-and-white video, very WIDE ANGLE HIGH SHOT, of the four motionless men below goggling up at the lens. Smoke plumes from the General's cigarette.

BACK TO NORMAL PERSPECTIVE

PANCAKE

Huh. Looks like an Ikegami.

He slips on his reading glasses as he gets a leg up on a shelf just below the camera and hoists himself. He peers

in

at the lens.

THROUGH THE LENS

Clark looming into EXTREME CLOSE SHOT.

PANCAKE

...Oh yeah. Mm-hm. I'm not sure whether it's broadcasting...

NORMAL PERSPECTIVE

PANCAKE

...Um-hm... No...

He is fingering the back of the camera.

PANCAKE

...Hard wire...

seam

Down below, Gawain looks at the wire snaking along the of wall and ceiling. At the opposite corner it travels the joint of the two walls.

down

He traces its path down and then across one wall at

chair-

rail height towards the door. The other men follow in an anxious herd as he traces one finger along it.

Just before reaching the vault door the wire goes through the wall in a hole finished off with a grommet. Gawain



goes

out the vault door...

INT. CASINO - SERVICE HALL - DAY

side,

...and picks up the line where it emerges on the other side, travels down to the joint of wall and floor, and then continues along the floor. Gawain follows it and the

other

men continue to follow him.

The

He traces it anxiously down the hall in a hunched lope.

other men scuttle behind into...

INT. CASINO - MONITOR ROOM - DAY

rail

The wire winds around into the room, back up to chair-

Gawain

height, along one wall, behind some cabinetry which

down

hurries past to find it again on the far side, and then

to a video recorder.

plugged

It is not, however, hooked up to the video recorder: its pronged end swings loose just by where it would be

in.

ejects.

Inside the video recorder is a cassette, which Gawain

it:

The men crowd to look over his shoulder as he examines

"Shevann's Schvanz".

"Charlayne

There is a pile of other videos by the monitor:

and the Chocolate Factory," "Big Dick Blaque's Big Night Out," "Lemme Tell Ya 'Bout Black Chicks," "Anus & Andy." Just next to the pile is an old bowl of Kocoa Krispies.

INT. CASINO - VAULT - DAY

of

The General climbs into the tunnel with a garbage bagful

floor

money, followed by Lump, likewise encumbered. Lump hands back out a satchel to Gawain, who sets it on the vault

heavy.

by the hole. From the way he handles it, it is quite

climb

Pancake, also with a bag of money, is getting ready to

in:

PANCAKE

Look, I didn't choose to have IBS--

GAWAIN

Shut the fuck up!

likewise Lump hands Gawain a smaller, lighter satchel which he sets on the floor.

PANCAKE

There's no cure, you know. Only control. Lifelong condition. Not complaining, just fact. And I did meet Mountain.

GAWAIN

Grab your bag and get in that fucking hole!

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

the Mrs. Munson is leaving, with singing still audible from service that continues inside.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

We are looking from inside the tunnel towards its mouth, where the Professor stoops slightly to peer in, anxiously dry-washing his hands.

A REVERSE shows the hunched-over men scuttling along the tunnel towards us, holding large garbage sacks.

DORR

Welcome back, gentlemen, mission accomplished I see. I am so very very delighted...

He gives a hand down to each man as he exits the tunnel.

DORR

...Congratulations. Congratulations. I have some cold duck on ice for the occasion.

LUMP

Maybe we could have something to drink, too.

INT. CASINO - VAULT - DAY

Gawain, left behind, is muttering to himself as he uses a trowel and other instruments from his satchel to patch up the hole at his end of the tunnel.

GAWAIN

Motherfucker can't stop talking, can't stop shitting. Motherfucker tell everyone about his motherfuckin' asshole. No one gives a shit about his asshole. Nobody interested in another man's asshole. Or his bitch's.

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Munson is letting herself in.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

The men are sitting around the table, champagne glasses raised. On the table sits the money, stacked in orderly piles.

DORR

Gentlemen, to we few. We who have shared each other's company, each other's care, each other's joy, and who now reap the fruits of our communal efforts, shoulder to shoulder, from each according to his abilities so forth whatnot. We have had our little differences along the way, it's true, but I like to think they have only made us value one another the more, each coming to understand and appreciate the other's unique qualities, potencies, and, yes, foibles. I suggest that we shall look back upon this caper one day, one distant day, grandchildren dandled upon our knee, and perhaps a tear will form, and we shall say, Well, with wit, and grit, and no small amount of courage, we accomplished something on that day, a feat of derring-do, an enterprise not ignoble -- we, merry band, unbound by the constraints of society and the prejudices of the common ruck, we happy few. Gentlemen -- to us!

MEN

To us!

They clink.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Upstairs Mrs. Munson runs water into a teapot, humming to herself.

INT. CASINO - VAULT - DAY

turns  
Wallet  
Having finished patching, Gawain starts painting. He on his boombox, and out comes the big bassy "I Left My in El Segundo."

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

glasses.  
The men, having drunk deep, are setting down their Pancake looks at his watch with some concern.

PANCAKE

Charge should've gone off already.

DORR

I do beg your pardon?

PANCAKE

The charge to collapse the tunnel. I set it for eight minutes.

Dorr looks at his watch.

DORR

Well that time, and more, has most certainly elapsed.

FROM INSIDE THE TUNNEL

Looking toward the mouth. The men stoop over and peek fearfully in.

They again stand upright. A silence.

Dorr clears his throat.

DORR

I need not remind you of the importance of obliterating any trace of a connection between the vault and this house. It was of the essence of this plan that it should appear that the money had simply vanished. Without a trace. Spirited away, as it were, by ghosts.

PANCAKE

Of course. I understand.

DORR

The conundrum of the undisturbed yet empty vault, the unsolvable riddle of the sealed yet violated sanctum, is of the utmost importance not only to make our caper intellectually satisfying. It is also exigent as a matter of practical fact: I remind you that if a tunnel is ever found leading to this house, this house's owner knows all of your names.

PANCAKE

She certainly does.

DORR

Therefore -- to draw the unavoidable conclusion -- someone shall have to reenter the tunnel to reset that charge.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

reaches  
smaller.

Pancake, hunched over, scurries along the tunnel. He  
the remnants of a large rock, where the tunnel grows  
smaller.

He drops to crawl position and elbows his way forward,  
toolbelt clanking along.

thuddingly

We are getting closer and closer to a muffled but  
bassy "I Left My Wallet in El Segundo."

INT. CASINO - VAULT - DAY

handheld  
it

The music loudly present at the cut. Gawain takes a  
blowdryer out of his satchel and flips it on, directing  
it  
at the fresh paint on the wall whose repairs are now  
invisible.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

LED-

Music once again muffled. Pancake has reached a little  
displaying timer with leads trailing off of it.  
He grabs it, puts on his reading glasses, squints.  
The display shows: TIME REMAINING: 00:12.

number

The colons in the display rhythmically blink, but the  
does not advance. For some reason, stuck.

PANCAKE

Huh.

He reaches to his tool belt, pulls out his Leatherman.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Munson is setting places at a large table. There are  
about a dozen place settings.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

teeth,  
his

Pancake now has a mini-mag light clenched between his  
aimed down at the timer. He opens the phillips head on  
Leatherman but abruptly stops and stares off into space.

PANCAKE

Nnnnrung...

He is squinting with pain.

The muffled hip-hop song is beginning to recede.

INT. VAULT - DAY

vault  
Gawain is wheeling his garbage cart out the door. The  
is completely empty but looks completely undisturbed.  
He closes the heavy vault door behind him, leaving quiet.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

nothing.  
finger,  
Quiet here as well, now. Pancake's moan trails off to  
He relaxes. The moment, whatever it was, has passed.  
He looks back down at the unit, flicks it with his  
and it emits a soft beep.

PANCAKE

...Huh?

He squints at the back of the unit.

As it beeps again, he turns the unit over to look at its  
face.

The readout now says: 00:10.

glasses,  
by:  
As he watches, peering down through the bottom of his  
it continues to advance with a beep as each second slips  
9... 8...

PANCAKE

...What the--

the  
the  
wriggle  
His eyes widen and he frantically shakes the unit. It  
continues beeping. He briefly and sloppily tries to fit  
phillips head into one of the four screws on the back of  
unit but immediately gives up and starts a panicked  
back up the tunnel, whimpering.

INT. CASINO - DAY

Gawain is wheeling his garbage cart past Elron.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Munson is placing the last piece of silverware, just  
so.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Pancake is in full panicked awkward flight as--

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

--BOOM! We CUT TO the cellar and Pancake is shot out the tunnel like a human cannonball, trailing a comet-tail of dirt, dust, and debris that wafts what were neatly

stacked

bills up into the air.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

looks a

The portrait of Othar jostles back to square. He now little angry.

The cat arches her back, emitting a startled yowl.

trying

Mrs. Munson stands, frozen, then looks slowly around, to assimilate what has just happened.

INT. CASINO - DAY

Gawain and Elron are staring at each other, frozen, also reacting to what just happened.

Finally:

GAWAIN

...You just fart?

ELRON

Heh-heh-heh.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

out

Mrs. Munson is looking at the cellar door. Dust drifts from under it.

She takes a slow step towards it. Another step. She opens the door.

There is no visibility in the cellar due to swirling clay dust.

She takes one step down the stairs, waving at the air in front of her face.

Paper money wafts in and out of the dust.

We hear Voices:

PANCAKE (O.S.)

Perfectly all right. Not a problem.

LUMP (O.S.)

Well there sure as shit ain't no tunnel left.

air.

The clearing dust reveals the caped Professor anxiously dancing from foot to foot, gathering money out of the

As he reaches up to grab a bill that has him facing up in

Mrs. Munson's direction, he freezes.

His POV reveals her through dissipating dust.

MRS. MUNSON  
Professor, I'm surprised.

There is a long beat, through which all stare at her.

DORR  
...Properly speaking, madam, we have  
been surprised; you are taken aback.  
Though I acknowledge that the sense  
you intend is gaining currency through  
increasing use.

there  
Further dissipation of the dust reveals how much money  
is, settling now to cover the floor of the cellar.

DORR  
...You have returned from your  
devotions betimes.

We hear the ring of the doorbell.

MRS. MUNSON  
I hadda fix tea. I wanna talk to  
you, Professor, don't you be leavin'.  
And don't make any more noise! And  
you!

She points at the General who, in the excitement, has  
neglected to hide his ever-present cigarette.

MRS. MUNSON  
...I told you, I don't want any  
smokin' in here!

She clomps upstairs and shuts the cellar door.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

thought.  
We PULL HER towards the front door, angry and lost in  
Her look softens somewhat as she opens the door.

friends  
It is a chattering infestation of hens: all of her  
from church push in wearing church dresses and elaborate  
hats.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

The men are still frozen looking up toward the door. The  
muted cackle of church ladies.

The men gradually unfreeze.

LUMP  
She saw everything. She saw our



hole...

He turns to Dorr, near tears:

LUMP

...She saw our hole, Professor!

Dorr rubs his hands anxiously, thinking:

DORR

Yes... Yes...

LUMP

What do we do?

DORR

Well, first, my dear boy, we follow  
the General's example...

for The General remains staring up at the door, frozen but  
the smoke pluming from the cigarette in his mouth.

DORR

...and refrain from panic. Secondly,  
we coolly, calmly, collectedly think...  
think...

door, The gaze of all the men drifts back up to the cellar  
and we look down at them, gazing up.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Munson The chattering ladies are gathered at the table, Mrs.  
pouring them tea.

The cellar door creaks noisily -- one might almost say  
gothically -- ajar, and the Professor peers out with an  
ingratiating smile.

DORR

Hsst... Madam...

toward The chattering abates and the ladies all look at him. His  
smile broadens into ghastliness and he crooks a finger

Mrs. Munson.

DORR

...Mrs. Munson, if I might have a  
word...

MRS. MUNSON

You get back down those stairs!

DORR

I assure you I shall be--

MRS. MUNSON

Hush! Down those stairs! We havin'  
tea now! I be down shortly.

shut. He nods meekly and retreats, easing the door creakily

footsteps The ladies look inquisitively at Mrs. Munson as his  
are heard descending the stair.

MRS. MUNSON  
...He's the tenant.

LADIES  
Mm-hm.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR DAY

group. As the Professor rejoins the still staring and silent

The money has been picked up and is once again in stacks  
upon the table.

DORR  
She shall be down shortly...

head: Explaining, he indicates upstairs with a jerk of the

DORR  
...Tea. Dainties.

The men nod, murmuring.

careful The cellar door squeaks open. There is the clomp of  
footsteps on the stair.

smoking Using only tongue and teeth, the General flips his  
his cigarette inwards into his mouth and gives Mrs. Munson  
usual deadpan look.

She halts halfway down the stairs, still wearing an apron  
and holding a spatula.

MRS. MUNSON  
I don't know what you boys been up  
to but I wasn't born yesterday and I  
know mischief when I see it. Now I  
want an explanation, but first I  
want you boys to get your fannies up  
here with y'all's period instruments.  
I been tellin' the ladies about your  
music and they wanna hear you play.

to She turns to head back up the stairs but abruptly stops  
turn and give the General a hard look which he innocently  
returns.

MRS. MUNSON

...Hmph.

She turns again and clomps back up the stairs.

The General opens his mouth and, again without using his hands, restores his cigarette to its usual place on his

lower

lip.

Lump is fretful:

LUMP

Professor?

DORR

Yes, Lump?

LUMP

I can't really play the buttsack.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The cellar door opens and the men troop out, G.H. Dorr

leading

and the other men following rather sheepishly behind.

DORR

Madame -- or rather, mesdames -- you will have to accept our apologies for failing to perform since, as you see, we are shorthanded. Gawain is still at work and we could no more play with one part tacit than a horse could canter shy one leg.

LADIES

Mm-hmm.

MRS. MUNSON

Hmph.

DORR

Perhaps I could offer as a poor but ready substitute a brief poetic recital. Though I don't pretend to great oratorical skills, I will happily present, with your ladies' permission, verse from the unquiet mind of Mr. Ed G'Allan Poe.

Lump, Pancake, and the General sit and awkwardly accept

dainty

teacups.

The Professor rises, spreads his hand, and pronounces:

DORR

..."Ladies, thy beauty is to me Like those Nicean barks of yore..."

slowly  
man

CLOSE-UPS of the various ladies, some sipping tea or  
munching biscuits, but all eyes glued to the declaiming  
in the cape.

DORR

"That gently, o'er a perfumed sea  
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore To  
his own native shore... "

Murmuring Voice:

VOICE

Amen.

A slurp of tea from another quarter.

Dorr bears on:

DORR

"On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
To the glory that was Greece And the  
grandeur that was Rome... "

A long silence.

Then, scattered:

VOICES

Mm-mm. Glory hallelujah.

A lady holding a teacup turns to the General:

LADY

That was soooooe poem.

The General stares at her.

LADY

...You know any?

We hear the front door opening and Gawain enters, still  
wearing his Lady Luck custodial uniform. He looks.

seated

His POV: church ladies with teacups and his comrades  
among them, also holding teacups and scones.

GAWAIN

Y'all been celebratin'?.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - FOYER - LATER (EVENING)

leaving;

The bustling and chattering ladies are just finishing  
Mrs. Munson is seeing them off at the door. Evening is  
gathering, and we hear the lonely toot of the distant

garbage

scow.

cheer,

The men as well stand by the door and, affecting good wave off the departing ladies.

DORR

Goodbye, ladies. We had such a pleasant time.

darkens.

Mrs. Munson closes the door and her manner instantly

MRS. MUNSON

Now, I wanna know what's goin' on.

DORR

Yes indeed, and the thirst for knowledge is a very commendable thing. Though in this instance, I believe when you hear the explanation, you will laugh riotously, slappin' your knee and perhaps even wipin' away a giddy tear, relieved of your former concern.

MRS. MUNSON

Hmph.

DORR

You see Lump here is an enthusiastic collector of Indian arrowheads and, having found one simply lying on your cellar floor, a particularly rare artifact of the Natchez tribe, he enlisted us in an all-out effort to sift through the subsoil in search of others. Well, in doing so, we apparently hit a motherlode of natural gas -- I myself became acutely aware of the smell of "rotten eggs" -- and it was at just this unfortunate moment that the General here violated one of the cardinal rules of this house and lit himself a cigarette.

The General stiffly bows:

GENERAL

So sorry.

hands,

The Professor, nodding, smiling, and dry-washing his continues to look at Mrs. Munson, though his story, apparently, has ended.

She returns his ingratiating look with a stare.

MRS. MUNSON

...What about all that money?

Dorr's smile fades.

DORR  
...Ah. The money. The money is...  
Mr. Pancake's.

PANCAKE  
That's right.

DORR  
He only just re-mortgaged his house  
in order to pay for the procedure  
that will correct the wandering eye  
of his common-law wife, Mountain  
Water, who suffers from astygmia and  
strabismus and a general curdling of  
the vitreous jelly. Mr. Pancake  
however is an ardent foe of the  
federal reserve and is in fact one  
of those eccentrics about whom one  
occasionally reads, hoarding his  
entire life savings either under the  
proverbial mattress or, as in Mr.  
Pancake's case, in a Hefty bag that  
is his constant companion.

Under her stare, he elaborates:

DORR  
...Steel Sack.

PANCAKE  
Don't trust the banks. Never have.

She thinks, decides.

MRS. MUNSON  
This don't smell right. I'm callin'  
Sheriff Wyner.

A chorus of gasps.

DORR  
Madam -- if you please. Yes! Yes! It  
was a lie! A fantastic tale! You  
have us! Dead to rights! But please  
allow me to tell you the truth -- in  
private.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

He escorts her to sit beneath the portrait of Othar, sits  
across from her, and leans confidentially in.

DORR  
Madam...

He agonizes. The words do not come easy.

DORR

...What I am about to reveal to you, you may find... shocking. Mrs. Munson, I must tell you that we are not... what we appear.

MRS. MUNSON

Mm-hm.

DORR

We are not in fact musicians of the late Renaissance. Nor of the early or mid period. We are, in fact... criminals! Desperate men, madam! We have tunneled into the nearby offices of the Lady Luck gambling emporium and have relieved it of its treasure!

MRS. MUNSON

Lord have mercy!

DORR

It is true that the Lady Luck is a den of iniquity, a painted harlot luring people into sin and exciting the vice of greed with her false promise of easy winnings. Oh, her gains are ill-gotten, yes, but I offer no excuses -- save one! We men have each pledged half of our share of the booty to a charitable institution -- the General, to a placement service for Southeast Asian refugees; Mr. Pancake to the Blue Ridge Parkway Conservancy; and Lump to the United Jewish Appeal. As compensation for use of your house we had planned to donate a full share to Bob Jones University, without burdening you with guilty knowledge by informing you of same. But you have wrested the information from me! Now it is all on the table. Now you have it, the whole story, the awful truth.

MRS. MUNSON

Stolen money!

DORR

Yes, yes, shamefully I admit it, yes! But find the victim, Mrs. Munson, I challenge you! Even the casino itself, that riparian Gomorra, shall suffer no harm! It has an insurance company, a financial behemoth that will cheerfully replenish its depleted vaults! That is its function! And the insurance company itself is made up of tens and tens of thousands of policy-holders so that -- we have done the calculations, Mrs. Munson! --

so that at the end of the day, at the final reckoning, each policy-holder shall have contributed only one penny -- one single solitary cent -- to the satisfaction of this claim.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Just one penny?

DORR  
Think of it, Mrs. Munson! One cent from thousands upon thousands of people so that Bob Jones University can continue on its mission! Why, I have no doubt that, were the policy-holders aware of the existence of that august institution, why, each and every one of them would have volunteered some token amount to the furtherance of its aims!

MRS. MUNSON  
Well that's prob'ly true...

hands: The Professor, warming, has resumed dry-washing his

DORR  
Yes madam, sadly, the criminal stain is upon my soul, but the benefit shall accrue to any number of worthy causes. As long, that is, as the secret stays with us. And I, surely, shall not be the one to divulge it.

Mrs. Munson nods, musing.

MRS. MUNSON  
Well... it's hard to see the harm in it... One penny...

warm Her gaze drifts around the room, a smile beginning to  
on her face. The smile freezes, though, as her look catches something.

Her POV: Othar, above the mantle, looks down with a disapproving scowl.

MRS. MUNSON  
...I'm sorry, Professor.

Dorr is taken aback:

DORR  
Excuse me, ma'am?

MRS. MUNSON  
No. It's wrong. Don't you be leadin'



me into temptation.

DORR  
Madam, I must strenuously protest--

MRS. MUNSON  
No, it's just plain wrong. Stealin'. I know your intentions were good, and I won't call the police if you give the money back. But I gotta see that you do it.

DORR  
Madam--

MRS. MUNSON  
And all a you gotta go to church with me next Sunday.

The Professor is incredulous:

DORR  
And... engage in divine worship?

MRS. MUNSON  
I made up my mind. You can double-talk all you want, but its church or the county jail.

DORR  
But--

She rises.

MRS. MUNSON  
You think it over. I gotta feed the cat.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

an The men all sit around the card table, lit from below by oil lamp. The General is neatly packing the stacks of banknotes into the sackbutt case.

GAWAIN  
Motherfuck!

DORR  
Yes. Unfortunately, Mrs. Munson has rather complicated the situation--

GAWAIN  
I know how to discomplicate it! Put a cap in the old lady's head! Then everything simple again!

needs The group lapses into silence, considering. Even Gawain proposed. a moment to digest the horror that he himself has

The Professor is solemn:

DORR

...Not easy to do. Many reasons.  
Practical ones: a quiet neighborhood,  
a sleepy town. Reasons of moral  
repugnance: a harmless woman, a deed  
conceived and executed in cold blood.  
No, Gawain; would that it were simple!

GAWAIN

Well -- fuck, man! What we gonna do,  
give the money back and go to church?!

DORR

I shudder. I quake.

He turns to the General.

DORR

...You sir, are a Buddhist. Is there  
not a middle way?

sackbutt

The General grunts as he closes the clasps on the  
case full of money:

GENERAL

Must float like a leaf on the river  
of life. And kill old lady.

The men murmur.

DORR

Well... I suppose you are right. It  
is the active nature of the crime,  
though, that so horrifies -- the  
squeezing of the trigger, the plunging  
of the knife. But, think a moment --  
look at the other tools we have at  
hand.

He looks around.

DORR

...We have the cellar. We have masonry  
and trowel. Perhaps we could simply...  
immure her.

PANCAKE

Sure, easiest thing in the world. I  
could whip up a little mortar in one  
of those snow saucers, lay the bricks,  
anchor in some chains, Mountain has  
a source for the manacles...

DORR

Ahh but gentlemen, we delude  
ourselves. Think of the woman's  
piteous moans as we lay tier upon

tier of brick. Think of her lamentations as we fit the last brick into place, appealing to our better selves, the higher angels of our nature, our recollections of our own sainted mothers... No, I fear that we lack the sand to commit such an act. No... no... shortest and most painless is best. Let us confront reality. Gawain's gun... the retort muffled by a pillow... into the brain... the affair of an instant. The only question is... who wields the weapon.

He looks around the table. Silence. No volunteers.

DORR

...I believe it is traditional, in such circumstances, to draw straws.

PANCAKE

Well, sure, fair enough.

He takes a broom leaning against the wall, bends back and snaps a handful of its bristles.

PANCAKE

...I'm thinking, though, that since I lost my finger -- I mean, literally lost it because of that goddamn cat -- maybe I should be excused from this thing. Hard for me to squeeze a trigger anyway--

GAWAIN

You one whiney motherfucker! I squeeze your nutsack you keep that up!

PANCAKE

Listen, punk--

DORR

Gentlemen, no special pleading, no exceptions. It's in the nature of the situation that we would all prefer to be excused.

one  
group,  
Professor:

Pancake grumbles as he counts out five bristles, takes and snaps it in half, displaying the short straw to the and then hands the four long and one short to the

PANCAKE

Well, okay... it was just a trial balloon...

and  
With a flap of his cape the professor jumbles the straws

encloses them in one hand.

Sweaty CLOSE-UPS. Each man stares at the straws. Some hesitant, some resolute, they draw:

First, the General: long straw. His reaction: impassive.

Next, Lump: long straw. His reaction: relieved.

Next, Pancake. Long straw.

PANCAKE

Long straw. You all see it. All your  
fuss over nothing, punk.

Two straws left. Gawain stares at them, licks his lips.

He reaches for one straw, touches it, hesitates.

GAWAIN

...Motherfucker...

He touches the other straw, hesitates.

it,  
He goes back to the first straw, closes his hand around  
closes his eyes, and pulls.

eyes,  
He lifts the straw into frame before his squeezed-shut  
raises his eyebrows, and slowly opens fluttering eyelids  
to  
look: short straw.

The Professor, smiling, opens his fist to confirm that he  
holds the last long one.

Gawain moans.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

PULLING HIM UP THE STAIRS

him,  
Slowly, slowly, Gawain mounts the cellar stairs. Behind  
gathered in a semi-circle and looking up from the foot of  
the stairs, the other men wait.

Gawain  
is  
reaches  
As he plants one plodding foot in front of the other  
raises the gun, slides back its primer to make sure there  
a round in the chamber, and then slides it shut as he  
the door.

INT. MUNSON - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

old  
In the foreground Mrs. Munson sits knitting, humming an  
temperance tune. In the background the cellar door swings

open. Marva Munson doesn't notice; her knitting needles continue their rhythmic clack.

cautious We PULL Gawain, gun at the ready, as he takes slow,  
steps across the floor.

bowed We INTERCUT his POV of the back of the old lady's head,  
over her knitting.

buries As Gawain passes the sofa he picks up a cushion and  
in it his hand holding the gun.

cautiously He looks back up at the old lady. But now, still  
approaching, he cocks his head, his expression bemused.

perspective HIS POV  
nearing the old lady is now different somehow. The  
is somewhat lower; the humming woman sounds not quite the  
same; the rocking chair and the room itself are subtly  
different.

the WHEN WE CUT BACK TO GAWAIN  
he is a runty, TEN-YEAR-OLD CHILD walking slowly across  
squirring floor; he is cradling not a gun in a pillow but a  
little puppy dog.

Mrs. The dog yips; the woman turns to look at us. It is not  
Munson, but another black woman of about the same age.

MAMA

What you got there, Gawain?

CHILD GAWAIN

Why -- nothin', mama.

MAMA

Nothin' my ass! You got a dog there!

CHILD GAWAIN

No, Mama!

MAMA

A filthy noisy little pest of a puppy  
dog gonna shit all over the house!

CHILD GAWAIN

He won't shit in the house, Mama,  
I'm gonna train him, I promise, gonna  
train him real good--

WHAP! She cuffs him on the side of his head.

MAMA

I'm gonna train you real good! I  
told you don't bring no stray dogs  
into this house!

WHAP! Another slap.

MAMA

...You wait til your Daddy gets home,  
he gonna lay into you proper!

WHAP!

mother: The little boy, weeping, throws his arms around his

CHILD GAWAIN

Please don't hurt me no more! I love  
you, Mama!

MAMA

Daddy gonna kick your ass!

WHAP!

MAMA

...Bringin' in a filthy dirty dog!

WHAP! Gawain's little brothers and sisters, drawn by the  
commotion, have gathered excitedly to watch.

SISTER

Mama's whuppin' Gawain's ass!

BROTHER

(eagerly)

Ain't you gonna use the strap, Mama?

WHAP! WHAP! Gawain is sobbing:

CHILD GAWAIN

Please don't hurt me, Mama!

Now it is the adult Gawain blubbering.

to The clack of knitting needles stops and Mrs. Munson turns  
look.

MRS. MUNSON

What you doin'? What you doin' with  
my pillow there?

sniveling: He surreptitiously slides the gun into his pocket,

GAWAIN

I'm sorry, ma'am, I--

WHAP! She cuffs him on the side of the head.

MRS. MUNSON  
I'm displeased with you! Colored boy  
like you, falling in with that trash  
downstairs!

WHAP!

MRS. MUNSON  
...Ashamed a yourself! Didn't your  
mama raise you right!

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

Gawain is tramping down the stairs.

GAWAIN  
I can't do it!

The men are stunned.

DORR  
Why... this is most... irregular.

GAWAIN  
She reminds me of my mama. I can't  
shoot my mama! You motherfuckers  
just draw straws again.

PANCAKE  
Wait a minute. You've got to accept  
your responsibilities, young man.

GAWAIN  
Fuck you. And your irritated bowel.  
I can't shoot that old lady.

GENERAL  
Must shoot!

PANCAKE  
Now look here, it's the easiest thing  
in the world. Pretend her head is a  
casaba melon, and the gun is a melon-  
baller, and--

GAWAIN  
What the fuck you talkin' about,  
man? You think this a melon-baller,  
you do it, man!

DORR  
My my, this is most irregular.

PANCAKE  
Look, with equal rights come equal  
responsibilities--

DORR  
I'm afraid that Mr. Pancake is right,  
my dear fellow. We cannot draw straws

again; the exercise loses all credibility if you show that the loser can simply beg off doing the job.

GENERAL

Must shoot!

Gawain shoves the gun toward Pancake.

GAWAIN

She just an old colored lady to you -- you do it, man!

PANCAKE

Why you sniveling little coward!

GAWAIN

What you say, you whiney motherfucker? I come up your irritated ass with this -- motherfuckin' gun--

He is waving the gun.

PANCAKE

You think you scare me, you mewling punk! You don't scare me! Bull Connor and all his dogs didn't scare me!

He shoves Gawain.

PANCAKE

...Be a man!

GAWAIN

You fuck!

He shoves him back.

Pancake shoves:

PANCAKE

Be a man!

GAWAIN

You ain't no fuckin' man, fuckin' a sixty-year-old lady in pigtails!

PANCAKE

WHY YOU BASTARD PUNK! MOUNTAIN GIRL IS FIFTY-THREE!

They are shoving each other now, getting into it.

PANCAKE

...SHE COULD RIDE YOUR ASS TO JELLY!

He lunges at him with a bear hug and his inertia sends men tumbling to the floor, where they roll and wrestle.

both



DORR  
Gentlemen, please!

GAWAIN  
I seen Virginia hams I'd rather stick  
my dick in than your old--

BANG! A muffled gunshot.

Quiet.

The two men have stopped rolling.

They stare at each other where they lie, Pancake on top.

At length:

PANCAKE  
...Oh my god...

Horrified, he slowly rises.

PANCAKE  
...I think he's hit!

The men gather round and look down.

Gawain still stares up at the ceiling.

Pancake stoops, waves his hand in front of his eyes. No  
reaction.

PANCAKE  
...I'll just check the carotid artery.

He checks the carotid artery.

PANCAKE  
...That's a negative.

LUMP  
Oh, fuck.

DORR  
Oh my.

LUMP  
Is he dead, Professor?

PANCAKE  
Sure he's dead. I checked his carotid  
artery.

DORR  
Well this is most irregular. We will  
need a Hefty bag.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

THE CELLAR DOOR

Creaking open. The Professor, Lump, and the General peek out.

The living room is empty but a sliver of the kitchen is visible; its light is on, and we can hear water running.

Dorr hisses:

DORR

She is in the kitchen. I shall  
distract her while you steal out  
with the carcass.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

a  
Dorr enters breezily; Mrs. Munson is at the sink, filling  
teapot.

Munson  
Dorr positions himself so that, to talk to him, Mrs.  
has her back to the living room.

DORR

Well, my dear Mrs. Munson, I have  
outlined your position to my  
colleagues and I now return to you  
to return our collective verdict.

MRS. MUNSON

Mm-hmm.

starts a  
Behind her, the General peers around the corner and  
catlike advance across the living room.

DORR

There was much spirited discussion  
and an atmosphere of frank give-and-  
take. Some of our number were  
initially appalled at your proposal  
that we simply return the money;  
some were more receptive.

MRS. MUNSON

I don't care they was receptive or  
not!

DORR

And that attitude, madam, was a factor  
in our discussions. To a man, I must  
say, they were devastated at the  
prospect of not being able to  
contribute to their respective  
charities.

room  
fireman's  
The General signals to Lump who now crosses the living  
with a big garbage bag slung over one shoulder in a  
carry.

MRS. MUNSON

Well that is a shame.

DORR

Indeed. But at the end of the day, your position prevailed, and the men have decided that we shall return the money -- every last cent of it! -- and attend Sunday services, rather than spend the remainder of our years wasting away in the Mississippi Men's Correctional Facility. Though that was the original preference of some.

MRS. MUNSON

Well I'm glad y'all came to see the light, anyway. I'm gonna have some tea and go to bed.

it The Professor, seeing that the General and Lump have made out the door, is anxious to wind things up:

DORR

So the money shall be returned tomorrow at the opening of the casino office. Enjoy your tea, madam...

Backing out, he looks to one side.

pulling Through the living room window he can see the hearse  
Volkswagon away from the curb. There is another car -- an old  
street. microbus -- slowly tooling the opposite way down the

Dorr looks back to Mrs. Munson.

DORR

...and congratulations on having recalled to the fold five poor, confused sheep who had momentarily strayed.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

looking We are at the middle of the bridge, the tower gargoyle blankly down at the doings below.

the In the misty night Lump and the General are braced over railing, looking down, each holding one of the feet that protrude from the Hefty bag cinched around Gawain's

ankles. A cigarette burns on the General's lower lip. Behind the  
two men we can see the idling hearse.

General

There is the toot of the garbage scow. Lump and the release Gawain's feet.

Their POV shows the sack receding and flumping into the garbage piled onto the scow that slips by below.

lifts

A flock of scavenger birds, disturbed by the impact, off the scow with angry caws.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

window,

Dorr skulks at a corner of the living room's picture peering out at the street.

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

DOOR'S POV

street  
been

The Volkswagon microbus again cruises slowly down the in the same direction as previously; apparently it has circling.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Professor scowls.

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

DORR'S POV

The hearse pulls up to the curb.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

The Professor clomps down the cellar stairs. Pancake is loading their digging implements into a satchel.

PANCAKE

They back yet?

Dorr is absent:

DORR

Yes... yes, they just arrived.

Pancake straightens from the satchel.

PANCAKE

Good. I'll go dump these in the hearse.

can

He mounts the stairs with a satchel in either hand. We hear the front door opening as the other men enter.

Dorr, bemused, but apparently moved by a hunch, advances

slowly to the sackbutt case.

He slides the catch that lets its spring clasp pop up.

He lifts the lid.

Mother Jones magazine. Piles of Mother Jones magazines.

DORR

What in heaven's name...

magazine,  
He riffles a pile, confirming that it is in fact all  
no money.

Lump and the General are clomping down the stairs.

DORR

...General!

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

We are PULLING Clark down the street, a satchel in either  
hand.

HIS POV

idling.  
The microbus, parked halfway down the block, ominously

THE BUS

the  
mirror  
We are CLOSE on its side-view mirror. Someone leans from  
driver's seat for a view into the mirror, and in the  
we see her, pigtails swinging: Mountain Girl.

HER POV

empty  
Clark Pancake, still rather small, approaching up the  
street.

PANCAKE

corners  
PULLING him again. A smile is beginning to play at the  
of his mouth.

PANCAKE

No extra share, huh...

The smile abruptly fades.

length:  
He stops in his tracks for no discernible reason. At

PANCAKE

...Nnnrnf.

He pants.

Behind him, in the deep background, we see the General bounding into the street and silently toward us.

PANCAKE

...Oof!

clear

The moment passes. Pancake shakes his head, as if to it, and resumes his walk.

HIS POV

We are nearing the bus.

THE BUS

Mountain Girl sits in the idling bus, waiting.

back

With a thunk and a gentle rock of the bus, we hear its doors opening, and Pancake's voice.

PANCAKE

Mountain.

MOUNTAIN GIRL

Clark.

We hear an oof! of exertion as Pancake hoists each of the two satchels into the back. The oofs are followed by:

PANCAKE

...Nnrung! Aaarmh... Ninnff...  
Offffflleghhll...

MOUNTAIN GIRL

IBS, dear?

WE CUT

TO:

THE BACK OF THE BUS

to show Pancake being garotted by the General.

PANCAKE

Nnnnnmmmmfffgh!

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

The tower gargoyle stares sightlessly down.

Lump and the General are at their accustomed place, each holding a foot shod in a large hiking boot.

Behind them we see the hearse idling.

as

Near them on the bridge, both hands grasping the railing

he gazes dreamily out into the night, is the Professor.

DORR  
"...Like those Nicean barks of yore  
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea..."

We hear the toot of the boat's horn and the men drop the body.

LUMP  
Quick! Grab Clark!

of They quickly stoop and grab another bag-swaddled body out  
which even larger hiking boots protrude.

DORR  
"...The weary, wayworn wanderer  
bore... "

They drop the second body.

DORR  
"...To his own native shore."

birds. We hear the distant flump and the cawing of scavenger

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A FIST

With three protruding straws.

SWEATING CLOSE-UPS:

Lump picks a long straw: relief.

The General picks a short straw. A short grunt.

DORR  
Excellent. I believe, at last, we  
have the right man for the job.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - MRS. MUNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Munson lies on her back gently snoring. At the open window, sheers ripple in the evening breeze.

o'clock. A large clock ticks upon the mantle. It is almost one

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

THE CELLAR DOOR

cigarette It creaks open. The General looks stealthily out. A  
in his mouth plumes smoke.

He pushes the door fully open, emerges.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - MRS. MUNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Munson's snore catches on an inhale. She mutters something, sighs, and resumes snoring.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

The General treads lightly, noiselessly, up the stairway leading to the second floor. He slides one hand into his jacket, pulls out a garotte.

loop

With the faintest whoosh he whips it in a complicated and snags the other handle with his other hand.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

the  
performs  
mouth.

The General emerges from the staircase and advances on closed bedroom door. As he reaches for the knob he the no-handed flip of the burning cigarette into his

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - MRS. MUNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door swings noiselessly open. The General pauses to survey:

The still room. The ticking clock. Mrs. Munson, a large sleeping mound upon the bed.

The General advances, raising the garotte in both hands.

He closes on her sleeping form.

The garotte is lowered toward her exposed neck.

It is a foot -- half a foot -- inches-away...

of--

Somewhere a muted gear ratchets and triggers the toll

instead  
hand

The clock, striking one. It is a cuckoo clock but, of a bird emerging, a berobed Jesus comes out with his resting on the head of a child who gazes up in adoration.

freezes,

The General starts at the noise and then suddenly his eyes widening.

Jesus retreats back into the clock.

The General has swallowed his cigarette.

frenzy,

He reaches up to his throat, panicked. In a silent he yanks loose his ascot.



He gazes wildly about.

He reaches for the water glass at Mrs. Munson's bedside.

He tips it back into his mouth. There is a rattling  
sound.

HIS POV

The uptilted water glass is sending false teeth -- full  
uppers  
and lowers -- rattling toward his face.

THE GENERAL

He frantically -- but still noiselessly -- sets the glass  
back down. Wildly looks about, one hand clamped to his  
throat.

A mad but silent dash for the door.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Plunging for the head of the stairs--

--a brief yowl from the cat--

--recoiling from where its tail has been stepped on, a  
hiss  
and a flash of its claws at the General's leg--

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - STAIRCASE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

--and he falls down the stairs, each thudding impact  
bouncing  
his body like a rag doll's.

At the bottom of the stairs he lies still.

A CLOSE-UP shows his head bent at an unnatural angle,  
unblinking eyes staring. Traces of smoke wisp from each  
nostril and his open mouth.

Over the mantle, Othar returns the dead man's stare. He  
looks  
somewhat smug.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - NIGHT

The Professor and Lump, responding to the noise, look  
slowly  
up toward the ceiling.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

The body is laid out in a garbage bag by the rail.

The Professor stands looking at it, contemplatively.

Lump stands looking at it, contemplatively.

The cat sits nearby on its haunches looking at it, impassively.

The professor muses:

DORR  
...T'was our até brought us to this pass...

LUMP  
What, Professor?

is There is the toot! of an approaching scow. Dorr's manner still absent, his regard still on the corpse:

DORR  
Our overweening pride... The old woman is a more potent antagonist than one had imagined...

He rouses himself, goes over to the bagged corpse. Lump follows him and the two men hoist the body over the rail.

DORR  
...Now, Lump, I'm afraid it falls to you to finish the job.

They let the body fall onto the scow passing below.

DORR  
...The comedy must end.

Gawain's The Professor turns to Lump and tries to hand him gun, but Lump, uncomfortable, declines to take it.

LUMP  
...Professor, I been doing some thinking.

DORR  
Oh dear. Oh dear oh dear oh dear.

LUMP  
Maybe she's right! Maybe we should be going to church!

DORR  
Oh dear, Lump. I feared that those would be your words. Not that I don't appreciate your giving the matter the benefit of your thought. But please recall, young man, our respective functions in this enterprise. I am a professor, the professor as you yourself so often say, the thinker, the "brains of the operation," trained in fact in the arts of cogitation. You, Lump, are

the goon, the hooligan, the dumb  
brute whose actions must be directed  
by a higher intelligence.

LUMP

Yeah, I know, but--

DORR

No buts, dear boy! Do not repeat the  
error of thinking! Now is the moment  
of praxis! Now, my dear boy, you  
must act!

Lump reluctantly takes the gun that the Professor thrusts  
upon him.

LUMP

I can't do it, Professor! A nice old  
lady like that!

DORR

Think of the riches, Lump, that you  
and I alone shall divide! Recall the  
dream of wealth untold that first  
drew you to this enterprise!

LUMP

But--

DORR

And reflect also that if you decline  
to act, forcing me to do so, then  
you shall no longer have any  
entitlement to the money! Your offices  
shall have been nugatory!

LUMP

You mean -- you mean -- you're gonna  
kill her?!

DORR

Of course! My hand would be forced!

LUMP

I can't let you do that, Professor!  
A nice old lady like that!

DORR

You?! Allow? Not allow? What  
presumption! You stupid boy! You  
very very extremely stupid boy!

We hear the toot of an approaching scow -- this one very  
long, sustained under all of the following:

LUMP

Oh yeah?

He points the gun at the Professor and--

LUMP

...Well who looks stupid now?

--squeezes -- click -- on an empty chamber.

LUMP

...Huh?

He turns the gun to have a look.

LUMP

...No bullets?

HIS POV

squeezes shows the foreshortened barrel as he experimentally  
the trigger.

WE CUT

TO:

the Professor on the BANG! and, after a sad shake of his  
head,

CUT BACK

TO:

rail. Lump in time to see him finish toppling back over the

The scow-horn ends.

DORR

Perhaps... it had to be thus.

He goes to the railing to look down.

Disturbed Lump, face-up on a pile of garbage, glides away.  
birds flap upward.

The professor muses:

DORR

"...Lo, in yon brilliant window-niche  
How statue-like I see thee stand..."

His gaze rises with the ascending birds.

eyes Among the white gulls is one black bird. The Professor  
it as it rises past him.

DORR

...Hm. A raven?

FROM VERY HIGH

perch we look down on the Professor, the black bird rising to  
on the gargoyle on the suspension tower in the

foreground.

The bird settles on a loose, teetering piece of masonry.

BACK TO THE PROFESSOR

looking at the receding red light on the bridge of the  
receding scow:

DORR

"...The agate lamp within thy hand...  
"

BACK HIGH

perchless

The teetering chunk of masonry tips away and the  
bird flaps off.

BACK TO THE PROFESSOR

time

very dreamy: he sees something in the distance, beyond  
and space:

DORR

...Ah, Psyche! from the regions which  
Are Holy land!"

scoring

This is punctuated by the crunching impact of masonry  
a direct hit on his head. He falls over the rail.

lifeless.

barge

of

His cape snags on the railing and he hangs limp and  
Directly below his dangling body the stern of Lump's  
is slipping away to leave black waters and the clanking  
chains.

body

The fabric of the Professor's cape begins to tear. His  
drops in fits and starts as the fabric gives way.

second-

receding

Finally the body rips free. It falls away from us. As it  
does so the clanking chains are pulling into view the  
banger -- a garbage barge being chain-towed by the  
scow.

Dorr's body lands neatly on the barge.

A gust of wind.

away

The cape flaps free of the railing and is wind-tossed  
amidst the cawing birds.

The cat, watching, blinks.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - MRS. MUNSON'S BEDROOM - DAY

DRINKING GLASS

It is resting on the very edge of the night table -- protruding, in fact, past the table's edge.

It is morning. We hear rustling from the bed.

empty Hands reach INTO FRAME and hesitate, finding the glass of water and precariously perched.

MRS. MUNSON (O.S.)

Hmm.

The hands tip the glass and take the teeth. We hear complicated oral noises.

EXT. MUNSON HOUSE - DAY

the The door opens away to reveal the morning paper lying on stoop. Mrs. Munson leans INTO FRAME to pick it up and we ADJUST as she straightens to have a look:

The headline says: \$2.6 MILLION DISAPPEARS FROM LADY LUCK CASINO. The subhead: POLICE BAFFLED.

MRS. MUNSON

Mm-hm.

INT. MUNSON HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

Mrs. Munson is walking down the stairs.

MRS. MUNSON

Professor!

She stops midway down and looks:

The empty cellar.

Money stacked neatly on the card table.

Mrs. Munson sadly shakes her head.

MRS. MUNSON

...Hmm. Couldn't face the music.

EXT. SAUCIER MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

Mrs. Munson is climbing the porch in her Sunday best. She feints at the dog who lies curled in the sun:

MRS. MUNSON

Scoot now! Outa the way!

INT. SAUCIER MUNICIPAL BUILDING - DAY

The sheriff is busy on the phone; there is a DEPUTY today also on the phone. The sheriff, seeing Mrs. Munson enter, covers the phone with one hand.

SHERIFF WYNER

Miz Munson.

MRS. MUNSON

Sheriff, I gotta make a statement.

SHERIFF WYNER

Could it possibly wait, ma'am? We're a little busy today.

MRS. MUNSON

I guess it can wait, but it's about that casino money.

The sheriff exchanges a significant look with the deputy, then murmurs into the phone:

SHERIFF WYNER

Call you right back.

He cradles the phone and smiles at Mrs. Munson.

SHERIFF WYNER

...You know something about it?

MRS. MUNSON

Something? Everything! I got it at home.

SHERIFF WYNER

You... you have what at home, now?

MRS. MUNSON

The money. Two point six million dollars. Down in my root cellar. All stacked up nice and neat.

SHERIFF WYNER

Mm-hmm.

The deputy pauses to look up from his phone:

DEPUTY

How'd it get there, Marva?

MRS. MUNSON

Bunch a desperate men that stole it put it there, that's how! They was musicians of the Renaissance period, played the sackbutt and so on -- well, it turns out they really couldn't play, although they could recite poems to break your heart. Their ringleader speaks in dead tongues.

SHERIFF WYNER

Does he now.

MRS. MUNSON  
I tried to get you to see him! That night?

SHERIFF WYNER  
Oh yes.

MRS. MUNSON  
I had to yell at 'em 'bout stealin' all that money and I guess I made 'em feel pretty bad 'cause they picked up and left without takin' the money. But I was peeved with 'em, Sheriff, they'd been up to all sorts of mischief, come close to blowin' up the house, disturbed Othar no end.

SHERIFF WYNER  
Angry, was he?

MRS. MUNSON  
Wouldn't you be? All that racket!

SHERIFF WYNER  
I expect so.

MRS. MUNSON  
And they let Pickles out too!

The sheriff sighs.

SHERIFF WYNER  
So you want us to go fetch him.

MRS. MUNSON  
No, he's back, but what you want me to do with the money?

SHERIFF WYNER  
Well...

at He and the deputy exchange looks. The sheriff looks back  
Mrs. Munson.

SHERIFF WYNER  
...Why don't you just keep it, Miz Munson.

MRS. MUNSON  
Keep it?

DEPUTY  
You keep it, Marva.

MRS. MUNSON  
Well... I know it's only a penny offa everybody's policy...



SHERIFF WYNER  
How's that ma'am?

MRS. MUNSON  
I know folks don't much care. Could  
I... You s'pose I could...

SHERIFF WYNER  
Yes ma'am?

MRS. MUNSON  
Could I give it all to Bob Jones  
University?

SHERIFF WYNER  
That'd be nice, ma'am.

She picks up her handbag and heads for the door.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Well, long as everybody knows.

SHERIFF WYNER  
Thank you for the information, ma'am.

MRS. MUNSON  
You're welcome, sheriff. Just doin'  
my duty.

EXT. SAUCIER, MISSISSIPPI - DAY

day.  
Mrs. Munson is walking home. It is a beautiful spring

hear  
a  
From far off, wafting toward us on the breeze, we can  
the church chorus singing. Mrs. Munson joins in. She has  
strong voice:

MRS. MUNSON  
Leaning, Leaning, Safe and secure  
from all harm. Lean on Jesus, Lean  
on Jesus, Leaning on the everlasting  
arm.

She turns up the walk to her house.

MRS. MUNSON  
...What a fellowship, What a peace  
of mind, Safe and secure from all  
harm. Lean on Jesus, Lean on Jesus,  
Leaning on the everlasting arm...

When she opens the front door the cat slips out.

MRS. MUNSON  
...Pickles!

It races off down the street.

MRS. MUNSON

...Pickles!

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER - BRIDGE - DAY

Pickles scurries along the walkway. We hear the toot! of  
an approaching scow.

The cat reaches the middle of the bridge. He sticks his  
head through the bars of the railing.

When we CUT CLOSE on the cat as he looks down at the  
water, we see that he holds in his mouth a human finger.

As the scow passes underneath, the cat opens its mouth  
and lets the finger drop.

The finger falls away and is barely visible by the time  
it hits the scow.

The cat looks up INTO THE LENS, and blinks. Its sideways  
irises adjust.

The scow is gliding away. With the low mournful toot of  
its horn we tilt up the river to the great garbage island  
where scavenger birds pick through the trash.

THE END