

SECRET WINDOW, SECRET GARDEN

Written by

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based on the novel by Stephen King

1 EXT. PARKING LOT - DAWN

A guy's tortured face.

MORT RAINES sits in the driver's seat of his car, knuckles white on the wheel. Frozen. His face is wet with tears.

He wipes his cheeks in irritation, puts the car in gear and steps on the gas, pulling out of the parking lot he's been parked in. We roll with him, still staring at his face as he hauls around a corner and out onto the road, into a mid-winter snow storm, just after dawn.

Suddenly he CURSES, double-toots the brakes, steps abruptly in the middle of the road, sit there for a moment --

-- and puts the car in reverse. He backs right back into the parking lot, back to the very spot he was before, where he comes to a stop. He freezes with his hand on the gear shift --

-- then puts it in park and climbs out of the car, leaving the door hanging open, the car BINGING at him about the keys, the lights, you're doing everything wrong.

Mort walks across the parking lot -- still doesn't want to go, still can't stop. He's headed for the doors of a strip motel, the kind where you park your ear in front of your room, a twelve cabins-twelve-vacancies kind of place.

He walks straight toward door number 6, the only door with a car parked in front of it. Two cars, as a matter of fact. He walks right between them, up to the door of the room, and tries the handle softly. Locked, of course.

He thinks for a moment, then turns and walks off to the left. We stay where we are, watch as he walks toward the lighted motel office at the end of the row. Mort goes inside, the door JINGLES, we see through the window as he walks behind the unattended front counter. He takes something off the wall, turns and walks back out, holding a key.

Just as he leaves, we see a MANAGER in a tee shirt come out from the back room, looking around to see what happened.

He figures it out and takes off after Mort, but by that time Mort is already back at the door to number 6 again. He slides the key into the lock, turns the handle and shoves the door open, harder than he intended to.

1A INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

The door BANGS off the cheap drywall, and as the morning light spills into the room we get a look at the instrument of Mort's torture.

We can't be sure, of course, but it's a pretty good bet it's the NAKED COUPLE asleep in the twisted, love stained sheets. Well, they were asleep, now they're awake and all hell breaks loose.

They're horrified, shocked and caught and humiliated.

There's so much noise and jumping around there's no point writing down the dialogue, because we can't make out more than a word or two of it anyway. But all the words have been shouted before verbatim, and by the way Mort is yelling at the Naked Woman and the Naked Man is screaming at Mort to calm down we can tell who got fucked over and who did the fucking.

And now the Motel Manager arrives and jumps into the mix, SHOUTING and waving just like the others. God what a mess.

It's sweaty and ugly and painful, so we pull back the way we came, out the door of the roof, back into the snow-driven parking lot, leaving them to themselves.

Another couple walks past the room, the WOMAN slows down, strains for a look at the wreck, the GUY pulls her along, are you crazy?

The door SLAMS shut in our faces.

Into some rooms you should never look.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. TASHMORE LAKE - DAY

2

Dark shapes slither under the glassy surface of a mountain lake. We fly over the lake, thinking the shapes are fish, but they're too big, too long and scary and twisted for lake fish. Maybe they're not really there.

Six Month Later

We fly toward a house at the edge of the lake, a nice little cabin, somebody built for themselves. Winter's over, it's a beautiful spring day and the windows are open, so we glide through one of them.

3 INT. CABIN - STUDY - DAY

3

Inside the house, we're in a study, the room with the best view, its walls lined with hooks and bound periodicals. The desk is piled high with crap, this guy's not a filer. There's a computer on the desk, bomb words on the screen, we nose close enough to read them.

Four days after George had confirmed to his own satisfaction that his wife was cheating on him, he confronted her. "I have to talk to you, Abby," he said.

The cursor blinks accusingly at the tail of that unfinished thought, the rest of the screen is blank. There's a beat up old leather chair near the desk and a small dog asleep in it — BUMP, a friendly old spaniel with a graying muzzle. We turn, lock through the open door of the study and ace into the living room, where the writer of the unfinished story is also asleep, on the couch.

Mort's put on about six years in the past six months, and the overlong midday nap he's buried in doesn't help. Yeah, there's dried drool.

A KNOCK on the front doer gets no response from Mort but it draws our attention. Approaching the door, we see a DARK FIGURE move to the window next to the door. The drapes are drawn so we just see a silhouette as the figure tries to peer through the window. Then it moves back to the door.

Another knock, louder now. And than, surprisingly, the doorknob turns a few times, stopped by the look. This guy wants in.

A third knock, really a pounding, is abruptly cut off as Mort jerks the door open, revealing the man on the porch.

4 EXT. POACH - DAY

4

JOHN SHOOTER looks about forty-five, very thin, a calm face, almost serene, but carved with deep lines. He wears a blue work shirt, buttoned all the way to the razor-reddened flesh of his neck. Jeans (cuffed), yellow work shoes.

But it's the hat that catches your attention. It's a big black one, a round crown planted squarely on his head, sort of like the kind Quakers wore.

Mort stands there, still waking up, only halfway into the real world. Shooter speaks first.

SHOOTER
You stole my story.

Mort blinks. Huh?

SHOOTER

You stole my story and something's
got to be done about it. Right is
right and fair is fair and
something has to be done.

Mort opens his mouth, finds nothing to say, and closes it again.

SHOOTER

Well?

MORT

(finally)

I --

(no voice, clears his
throat)

I don't know you.

SHOOTER

I know that. That doesn't matter. I
know you, Mr. Rainey. That a what
matters. You stole my story.

He holds out his hand, and it's got something in it. Mort
flinches, but it's only a stack of paper, & manuscript.

MORT

I don't read manuscri-

SHOOTER

You read this one already.

(stating a simple tact)

You stole it.

Unnerving. Mort looks out to his long driveway. Nobody else
there. Nobody around at all, just an extra car parked in his
driveway, an old station wagon with out of state plates.

MORT

(back to Shooter)

I can assure you-

SHOOTER

I know you can. I know that. I
don't want to be assured.

MORT

(sounding a bit pompous
and hating it)

If you want to talk to someone
about some grievance you feel you
have, you could call my literary
agent in-

SHOOTER

This is between you and me.

Bump the dog limps into the doorway, wagging his tail enthusiastically.

SHOOTER

We don't need any outsiders, Mr, Rainey. It is strictly between you and me.

MORT

I don't like being accused of plagiarism, if that's what you're doing.

Bump makes arthritic attempts to befriend Shooter.

MORT

Bump, go inside.

Bump does.

SHOOTER

I don't blame you for not liking it. But you did it. You stole my story.

MORT

You'll have to leave. I have nothing to say to you.

SHOOTER

Yeah, I'll go. We'll talk more later.

He holds out the manuscript. Mort's reflexes make him reach for it, but he pulls his hand back.

MORT

I'm not taking that.

SHOOTER

Won't do you any good to play games with me, Mr. Rainey. This has got to be settled.

MORT

So far as I'm concerned, it is.

He steps back inside and closes the door.

Mort freezes right next to the door as soon as it's closed. He holds his breath and waits for either the knock to come or footsteps to trail away. But he hears neither. Shooter is just standing there.

Bump sits by the door, staring up at Mort — are we going out or staying in?

Finally, there is a soft THUMP, followed by work shoes on porch, then work shoes on gravel. Mort goes to the window and touches the curtain aside.

Through the window, he sees Shooter crunching across the driveway toward his car. From this angle, Mort can make out the license plate's state of issue -- Mississippi.

Shooter opens the door, gets behind the wheel, tosses his hat on the seat next to him. He starts the car, puts it in reverse, and backs all the way down the driveway, cut to the road.

Mort sighs. That's over. But then a worrisome thought crosses his mind. He looks back at the door.

7 **EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY**

7

Shooter's manuscript sits on the front porch, a rook resting on top of the title page to keep it from blowing away. The edges of the pages flutter in the wind.

Mort stands on the front porch, barefoot, hands in the pockets of his khaki pants, looking down at it. Hard to tell how long he's been standing like this, just staring at the thing.

He looks up the driveway, makes sure shooter really is gone. He squats down next to the manuscript, wants to get a closer look but doesn't want to touch it. He picks up the rock, tosses it into the bushes.

The title page blows off the stack, blown by the breeze, and Mort catches it. He turns it around and reads it.

Secret Window, Secret Garden

by Jobs Shooter

Mort breathes a little sigh of relief.

MORT
Haver heard of you, pal.

He scoops up the rest of the manuscript —

8 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

8

-- and tosses it out in the kitchen trash can.

MORT

Never heard of your story.

He washes his hands in the sink, as if to scrub it off himself --

9 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

9

— and flops back down on the couch.

MORT

Now where was I...

He rolls over and resumes his nap.

Bump curls up next to the couch and resumes her nap too.

CUT TO:

10 INT. CABIN - STUDY - DAY

10

Mort stares blankly out the window. He's at his desk, in front of the computer. Next day, maybe? A clock ticks above him. It's 10:26. Somewhere upstairs, a VACUUM CLEANER drones.

Cut on the lake, two motorboats leave wide white wakes behind them, kids grab-assing, playing chicken.

Those TICKS are too damn loud. Mort looks up at the clock. Still 10:26.

He turns and looks at Bump, who is asleep in the leather chair next to the desk, apparently her writing spot.

MORT

Why do I have to do all the work?

Bump lifts his head sleepily, looks at Mort. Are we writing?

MORT

I'm open to ideas, here.

Bump puts his head back down. Mart looks back at the computer screen. Still that same unfinished sentence.

"I have to talk to you, Abby," is said.

Mort looks back up at the clock. Hey, whaddya know, it's 10:27. Time flies.

Upstairs, the vacuum cleaner shuts off.

Struck by inspiration, Mort highlights the mini-paragraph he has written.

And deletes it. Now the whole screen is blank. He looks back at Bump.

MORT
Better, right?

Bump sighs. From the other room, Mort hears a series of loud, clanking THUMPS as somebody drags the vacuum cleaner downstairs. Staring at the blank screen, Mort bobs his head in time to the THUMPS -- ka-bump, ka-bump, ka-bump, I'll go insane if I sit here much longer.

10 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

10

In the kitchen, Mort takes a can of Coke out of the fridge and knocks it shut with his hip. Ha notices a stack of paper on the counter and bends over, not recognizing it. It's spotted with orange juice and a few coffee grounds, but the title page is still clear:

Secret Window, Secret Garden

by John Shooter

How'd it do that? He threw it out. In the background, MRS. GAVIN, the cleaning lady, brings the canister vacuum to a crash-landing on the living room floor, visible through the open door.

Mrs. Gavin treats Mort with the overly kind, somewhat irritating concern one gives a victim of a terminal disease.

MRS. GAVIN
I found one of your stories in the trash, Mr. Rainey. I thought you might want it, so I put it on the counter.

MORT
I see that.

Curious, ha turns over the title page and picks up the manuscript. As he reads the first few sentences, we creep closer to his face and hear his inner voice:

MORT (V.O.)

Todd Downey thought that a woman
who would steal your love when your
love was really all you had was not
much of a woman.

Mort's brow furrows. His voice reads on.

MORT (V.O.)

He therefore decided to kill her.
He would do it in the deep corner
formed where the house and barn
came together at an extreme angle.

A look approaching panic crosses Mort's face.

MORT (V.O.) (COST'D)

He would do it where his wife kept
her garden, the garden she loved
more than she loved his.

Mort's arm twitches out away from him, almost involuntarily -

MORT (CANT'D)

Oh shit.

- and he slams the manuscript back down on the counter, just
to get it away from him, knocking over his can of Coke in the
process.

MORT

Oh SHIT!

Mrs. Gavin comes in a hurry, surveys the situation, sees that
it's just spilled Coke, and grabs a towel.

MRS. GAVIN

Thank God. Prom the sound of you I
thought you'd cut your own throat!
Let as get this, that's my job.

MORT

I'm sorry, I--

He moves out of the way, and the first thing she does is pick
up the manuscript and put it back in his hands. Mort looks
down at the fucking thing in irritation, can't get away from
it. Now it's stained with Coke too.

MRS. GAVIN

I'll take care of this, Mr. Rainey,
you go on back to work. Everybody's
waiting for your next opus, me
included.

MORT
I didn't write this.

MRS. GAVIN
(moving to the sink)
'Scuse.

MORT
It's not mine.

MRS. GAVIN
Oh. I thought it was.

MORT
No, it says John Shooter. Right
here. See?

He holds up the title page and she favors it with a polite,
slightly confused glance.

MRS. GAVIN
Ah hah. Thought it was one of those
whatchacallums. Pseudonames. Or
Nyms.

MORT
I don't use one. I never have.

MRS. GAVIN
I can't imagine why you would. If I
could write stories like you I
wouldn't hide behind some made up
name, that's for sure.

MORT
Somebody else wrote this story.

MRS. GAVIN
Okey dokey then.

She bends down to clean up the soda on the floor,
Mort looks at the story, still in his hands. He's afraid of
it.

CUT TO:

A chair BANGS down on the floor of the study, next to the book case wall.

CLOSE ON the spine of a book on a top shelf - "Everybody Drops the Dime," the author's last name is Rainey. A hand grabs it.

The book THUNKS down on the desk, turns toward us. Full author's name on the front cover -- Morton Rainey. Plus the word "Stories."

Mort's finger skims the table of contents. About a dozen stories Kara. The finger stops at one called "Sowing Season."

Pages riffle by, stop at the first page of "Sowing Season."

Mort stares down at the page, doesn't bother to wit. Two pushins now, one toward the page, one toward Mort's face as he reads it. Again, his inner voice:

MORT (V.O.)

A roman who would steal your love
when your love was all you had
wasn't much of a woman - that, at
least, was Tommy Havelock's
opinion.

(aloud, a half-whisper)
He decided to kill her.

Mort sage into the chair, still reading.

MORT

Fuck me...
(inner voice again)
He even knew the place he would do
it, the exact place:
(aloud)
the little patch of garden
(inner voice)
she kept in the extreme angle
formed where the house and the barn
came together. The garden she loved
more than she loved him.

Mort sits forward again, SLAPS Shooter's story down on the desk on his left, the book next to it on his right.

He reads. Compares sentences.

Pages flip, middle of the story now. Things are moving faster, jumpy.

More pages, near the end, Mort's face is sweaty, he's grinding his teeth.

Last page, shit, this got worse and worse, he shoves them both away from him and sits back, breathing hard. He stares for a moment, shocked still --

-- and then snaps out of it and starts searching the desk, almost frantic. Doors rip open, are rifled and slammed shut, papers overturned, swept aside. Dig, dig, dig, past junk mail, paper clips, cancelled checks, old Doritos. Finally, lifting up thick, heavily marked manuscript, he unearths the mother lode.

A sun-faded, nearly flattened old pack of L&M's. Mort lets go a happy GASP, picks them up and pokes them open.

Three cigarettes are lined up neatly inside, only a little squashed.

A match flares, touches the tip, Mort sucks hard and the tobacco CRACKLES with age.

Mort sits back in the chair, exhales a cloud around his bead.

A thought is right there in the front of his brain. He turns and looks at Bump, gives the thought breath.

MORT
(a touch defensive)
I didn't steal it.

Bump just stares back.

MRS. GAVIN (O.S.)
Mr. Rainey?

Mort looks up, startled. Mrs. Gavin is in the doorway, jacket on, purse in hand. Mort darts the cigarette hand down below the desk so she doesn't see.

MRS. GAVIN
I'm all done.

MORT
Okay, thanks. Thanks a lot. See you
next time.

He looks back down, hoping she'll leave, but she stays there for a moment. She SNIFFS the air lightly, then looks at him with big sad eyes.

She SIGHS and he looks back up.

MRS. GAVIN
Mr. Rainey, I just want to say-

MORT
 (no, please don't)
 Oh...

MRS. GAVIN
 Some women don't know a good thing when they get it. Soon women don't know they got the whole world when it's right in front of their nose. There, that's it, not another word from me. Would you like me to make you something to eat?

MORT
 Nope, thanks, I'm good, thank you, that'll do it, see you next time, thanks.

MRS. GAVIN
 You're a good man, Mr. Rainey.

She sniffs once more, shakes her head sympathetically, and leaves. Immediately, Mort brings the cigarette back up and takes another deep drag. He looks down at the two stories on his desk. Back over at Bump, who is staring at him accusingly.

MORT
 I didn't steal it.

14 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

14

BANG! The door from the study smacks open. Mort staggers into the living room, dizzy from the smoke, sucking the cigarette haze in here with him. He starts for the kitchen, spots the couch —

— and swerves in mid-stride right toward it. He barks his shin on the coffee table on the way, CURSES under his breath, strips his bulky wristwatch off his wrist, dumps it on the table and collapses onto the couch, into it, almost, as if its gravity is three times that of the rest of the planet. It pulls him right down into its deepest recesses, his face buries in pillow.

Bump harumphs to the floor in front of the fireplace, always game for a nap. Mort catches eyes with him.

MORT
 Did I?

And his eyes roll back into his bead as sleep sucks him in.

CUT TO BLACK.

IN THE TOTAL BLACK

we hear a man walking, scraping his way through hard, rusty stalks of something. He's in a -

16 EXT. CORK FIELD - DAY

16

-- corn field, and the person walking is Mort. He seems lost among the tall rows of corn, can't find his bearings. He feels something sharp and looks down at his arm. A line of blood traces through the torn sleeve of his shirt. He's puzzled.

Wincing, he looks down at his other arm. The sharp corn tassles are scraping him, another line of blood traces through his left sleeve as he looks. He shoves the sleeve up, revealing not just one but a half a dozen watches on his wrist, and every one shows a different time.

Ahead of him, the corn on both sides of the row shakes and rustles. AMY RAINES, mid-thirties, the female half of the naked couple from the opening, steps out from one side.

John Shooter steps out from the other. Both of them hold knives.

SHOOTER

I'm confident I can take care of
this business.

They walk toward him.

SHOOTER

I'm sure that, in time, your death
will be a mystery.

AMY

Even to us.

Mort turns to run, but a hand, Amy's hand, reaches out and grabs him by the belt. He falls to the ground, sees only dirt and dark down here at the bottom of the stalks, but then there's something bright, brilliant-bright, it's a knife.

Shooter hands it to Amy, he grabs Mort's face roughly and forces open his right eye. Amy raises the knife, Mort SCREAMS, the knife flashes across his eyeball and just as suddenly as everything went black it suddenly flashes -

18 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

18

— white and loud, really loud, a bell ringing, like a glass bell, on and on and it won't stop. Mort's eyes pop open wide and he sucks in his breath and now he's bathed in sweat and panic and has no idea where he is or how much time has passed, but the reason for the sweat and the bright is easy enough, it's the blinding midday sun, pulverizing his face through the big living room windows. The ringing stops.

Mort sits up, looks a wreck. The ring again, but this time a regular ring, a telephone. Ha answers.

MORT
(nap voice)
'lo?

AMY (O.S.)
Hello, Mort.

Mort freezes, and that visible blanche combined with the woman's voice should tell us it's the ex.

AMY (O.S.)
Hello?

MORT
Yeah.

AMY (O.S.)
Are yon all right?

MORT
Of course I'm all right. Why
wouldn't I be all right?

19 INT. AMY'S KITCHEN - DAY

19

Close on Amy Rainey's face. She's sitting at the table in bar kitchen, a cordless phone pressed to her ear. She's tense, not an enjoyable call for her either.

AMY
I don't know, I -- it's just,
you're alone up there, anything
could happen and nobody would knew.

MORT (O.S.)
I'd know.

AMY
Right.

19A INT. MORT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

19A

An awkward pause. Mort wipes his forehead. Looks at his hand, it's dripping sweat. He softens his tone.

MORT
I'm fine.

AMY (O.S.)
Hey, what's up with the roof? Did Greg Carstairs ever get off his ass and --

MORT
Why'd you call, Amy?

20 INT. AMY'S KITCHEN - DAY

20

Further back from her now, seeing the whole kitchen. It's nice, this is an expensive house someplace. Amy's on the phone in the background. In the foreground, a few pictures hang on a wall. Weird spaces in the picture wall, some have been taken down recently and there hasn't been enough now living yet to fill the spaces.

AMY
Cut past the bullshit, huh?

He answer. She gets up and walks toward us.

AMY
I had one of those feelings I get. I know you think they're stupid and you don't believe them but I believe them, and I had -- I was making a sandwich and I got this sensation that you... that you might not be okay. I held off for a while, I thought it'd go away, but it didn't.
(leans in the door jam)
So here I am.

20A INT. MORT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

20A

MORT
I see.

He picks his watch up off the coffee table and looks at it idly. It's one thirty.

MORT
Right. Well. I don't know what to tell you, 'cept I'm fine.

AMY (O.S.)
And nothing weird happened or
anything?

Mort flips the watch over in his hand, looks at the back side. There's an engraving there - "I Love You, Amy."

He hesitates. Well, something weird did happen, but she's kinda the last parson he wants to tell about it. Still...

MORT
Do you remember "Sowing Season?"

AMY (O.S.)
Huh?

MORT
My story. The one where the guy-

AMY (O.S.)
I remember. Not one of my favorites.

MORT
Good to know.

AMY (O.S.)
Well, it was kinda hostile, don't you think?

MORT
You know, I so miss your constructive criticism.

AMY (O.S.)
(this is headed south)
What about the story?

MORT
Do you remember me writing it? I mean, do you think it's possible that I was... influenced by anybody, or anything in particular while I was doing it?

20B INT. AMY'S HOUSE - DAY

20B

Even further back, down a long hall with ample rooms on either aide. This is a nice house, Amy's still coming toward us.

AMY
Other than Maker's Mark?

MORT (O.S.)

Yeah, I know, that's why I can't remember, I was still drinking then.

AMY

(glances at a clock on the wall)

I don't know. Lemme see. You got weird on that one, wrote it mostly at night, I think. You'd thrash around and thus get up and work on it till breakfast.

She reaches a window at the front of the house, bends down and looks outside.

AMY

What do you man "influenced?"

20C INT. MORT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

20C

MORT

I don't know.

AMY (O.S.)

Like by another story?

MORT

Forget it.

22 INT. AMY'S HOUSE - DAY

22

Amy can tell something's up.

AMY

(gravely)

Mort... did it happen more than once?

MORT (O.S.)

I don't know,

(quickly)

No, it didn't. Never mind, forget it.

22A INT. MORT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

22A

Mort hesitates, something else on his mind.

MORT

(don't ask this, don't do
it, don't do it)
How's Ted?

AMY (O.S.)
He's fine.

MORT
Me and him should have a drink some
time, we've been to a lot of the
same places.

Sing. Pause.

AMY (O.S.)
What was that for, me saying I
didn't like your story?

MORT
I gotta go.

AMY
So do I.

But nobody hangs up. Mort chews his lip, doesn't want to ask
something, can't help it.

MORT
He's there, isn't he.

AMY (O.S.)
No. We're not together.

Hope crosses Mort's face and gives the game away -- he still
wants bar back.

MORT
You're not?

AMY (O.S.)
Uh uh.

MORT
I see.
(pause, trying to keep
the elation out of his
voice)
Wall, I'd be lying if I said I was
sorry to hear that.

Any looks confused for a moment, then realizes the conclusion Mort has drawn and winces.

AMY

No, Mort, what I meant was... I want we're not together at the moment. He's coming over later.

24 INT. CABIN - DAY

24

Mort blinks. Feels like an asshole, which makes him angry again.

AMY (O.S.)

(defensive)

He hardly ever comes here. I go to his place.

MORT

Cool. Thanks for sharing.

AMY (O.S.)

Well, don't ask then, it was working just fine that way.

25 EXT. AMY'S HOUSE - DAY

25

On the sidewalk now, in front of Amy's house, a beautiful old Victorian in Riverdale. She's visible in an upstairs window, checking outside again. The conversation continues as a purply BMW pulls up into the foreground.

MORT (O.S.)

You should have him over more. It's a nice house. I like it. I love it, that's why I bought it.

A man gets out of the car. TED, the male half of the naked couple, gets out and heads toward the house, waving to the upstairs window.

27 INT. AMY'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALL - DAY

27

Amy turns away from the window abruptly.

AMY

Goodbye, Mort.

28 INT. MORT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

28

Mort hangs up hard without another word. He grabs at the air in intense frustration, why did I do that, why did I fuck it up like that, what is the matter with me.

MORT
Fuck fucking stupid stupid...

He grabs a walking stick that's propped in a corner. Snatches a heavy shirt off a hook. And the front door SLAMS behind him.

In front of the fireplace, Bump lifts his head, mildly indignant. You can't go for a walk without me.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. PATH BY THE LAKE - DAY

29

A rock skips two, three, four times across the smooth surface of the lake. Mort strides along the lake path, trying to walk off the phone call.

He reaches a place where the lakeside path forks. He takes the right-hand branch climbing a steep bank back up to the road. As he reaches the top, the sun comes out from behind a cloud and his own long shadow appears in front of him, leading him forward, pointing the way —

— toward the pair of dusty yellow work shoes at the top of the hill. John Shooter leans against his old Ford station wagon, arms folded across his chest, waiting, as if he knew all along Mort would arrive at this spot, at this time.

Mort doesn't allow himself to stop, but can't help a little bitch in his stride. He stops about six feet short of Shooter, opens his mouth to speak, but the other man speaks first.

SHOOTER
You read it?

Mort stares at him. His fingers tighten on the walking stick.

MORT
I did.

SHOOTER
I imagine it rang a bell, didn't it?

MORT
It certainly did. When did you write it?

SHOOTER

I thought you'd ask that.

MORT

Wall, sure. That's the whole point, isn't it? When two writers show up with the same story, it's all about who wrote the words first. Wouldn't you say that's true?

SHOOTER

I suppose I would. I suppose that's why I came all the way up here from Mississippi.

A car approaches, a Scout. Mort turns, waves to the driver, TOM GREENLEAF, an elderly man in a flannel shirt. Tom waves back. Shooter raises a hand slightly, tips a finger in Tom's direction in a practiced, country sort of way. Then turns calmly back to Mort.

SHOOTER

Now what were we saying?

MORT

We were trying to establish provenance. That means--

SHOOTER

I knew what it means. I know I'm wearing shitkicker clothes and driving a shitkicker car and I come from a long line of shitkickers and maybe that makes me a shitkicker myself, but it doesn't necessarily make me a stupid shitkicker.

MORT

Let's cut past the bullshit, okay? When did you write the story, Mr. Shooter?

SHOOTER

Maybe my name's not Shooter. Maybe that's just a pen name.

MORT

Well, what's your real one?

SHOOTER

I didn't say it wasn't; I only said maybe. Either way, that's not part of our business.

He stops, squints up at a cloud, watches it move past the sun. Mort follows his gaze, then turns and shakes his head — why am I even talking to this guy?

SHOOTER
Seven years ago. 1995.

Mort suppresses the surge of victory that runs through him.

MORT
Why'd you wait so long? My book of short stories was published in '96, that's six years ago,

SHOOTER
Because I didn't know. Didn't run across it till I was on a bus trip to Jackson six months ago. Selling my dairy fam to a fella up there owns a lot of dairy farms in Mississippi. Been thinking with a little more money, I could write days, when my mind's fresh, instead of just after dark. Picked your book off one of them wire racks in the Rexall, just grabbed the first book my hand happened on. I read the first half a dozen stories the way up. I didn't think they were any great shakes, but they passed the time.

MORT
Thank you.

SHOOTER
(studies him for a second)
Wasn't offering you any real compliment.

MORT
Yeah, I got that.

SHOOTER
(shrugs)

Anyway, I read two more going back... and than that one. My story. How'd you get it? That's what I really want to know. How in hell did a big-money scribbling asshole like you get down to a little a shitsplat town in Mississippi and steal my goddam story? I'd like to know why, too, unless you stole all the other ones as well, but the how of it'll be enough to satisfy me right now.

MORT
(pissed off)
Drop it.

SHOOTER
Drop it? Drop it? What in hell do you mean, drop it?

MORT
You said you wrote your story in 1995. I wrote mine in late '92. It was published for the first time in June of 1993, in a magazine. Nice try, but I beat you by two years, Mr. Shooter, or whatever your name is. If anybody's got a bitch about plagiarism, it's me.

Shooter moves fast, grabs hold of Mort's upper arms, hard, his thumbs really digging in. He spins him around, SLAMS him against the car and leans into his face, forehead to forehead.

SHOOTER
You lie.

MORT
The fuck I do.

Not one to be pushed around, Mort lunges forward against Shooter, sending him stumbling two or three steps backward. Shooter tenses, about to rush forward, then forcibly stops himself, just stands there, veins bulging with fury.

SHOOTER
Prove it.

MORT

I don't have to prove a thing to
you, go look for yourself. Ellery
Queen's Mystery Magazine, June,
1993.

SHOOTER

And how am I supposed to find that?

MORT

Hell, I'll give you one. It's at
my, uh my wife's house in town.
I've got everything I wrote down
there.

SHOOTER

"Your wife's house?" What the hell
does that mean?

MORT

What do you think, you fucking
cracker? I'm in the middle of a
divorce.

Pause. Shooter contemplates strangling Mort to death.

SHOOTER

We keep on this way we're gonna
have a fight.

MORT

(not fearful, just
direct})

I don't want that.

SHOOTER

Part of you does. Part of you wants
just that. You strike as as the
kinds guy who's on the lookout for
a head he can knock off with a
shovel. But what you don't
understand is that if we do start
to fight, it's not gonna end until
one or the other of us is dead.

MORT

(low and even})

I have had a bad fucking six
months, pal. Really... try me.

SHOOTER

(studies him)

This other house. The one your wife
has now. It's downstate?

MORT

None of your business.

SHOOTER

Means yet. She's there now?

MORT

None of your business.

SHOOTER

Means yes.

(thinks)

I'll give you three day.

MORT

That's very generous of you.

SHOOTER

Don't you make light of me, son.

I'm trying my best to hold my
temper, and doing a pretty good job
of it, but —

Ha leans over and reaches through the open window of his car.
Mort tenses and takes a step back.

MORT

What are you doing?

SHOOTER

Just gettin' m' smokes. Hold your
water.

He pulls his arm put of his car, a red package of Fall Malls
in his hand. He shakes one out, offers another to Mort.

MORT

I don't smoke.

SHOOTER

(lights up)

Three days. You call your ex and
get her to send you the magazine
with your story in it, if there is
such a magazine. And I'll be back.

MORT

I don't want to call her.

SHOOTER

'Course you don't. There isn't any
magazine, is why; I think we both
know that.

MORT?

If I show it to you, you'll go back
to wherever the hell you came from
and leave ma alone? I mean, is this
even worth it or am I wasting my
time?

Shooter goes to the door of his car and opens it.

SHOOTER

Right is right and fair is fair.
The first thing is to get you to a
place where you see I have really
got you, and you can't wiggle out
of this mess the way you've
probably been wiggling out of the
messes you've made all your life.
That's the first thing.

He gets in the car and slams the door.

SHOOTER

The second thing is the real reason
I come.

MORT

Uh huh. And what's that?

SHOOTER

We'll get to it. Meantime you think
about what's right and what's fair
and how things oughta and.

MORT

Okay.

(pause)

You realize you're insane, right?

SHOOTER

You didn't think anybody'd ever
catch you out, did you?

Bs hits the gas and pulls away, leaving Mort standing alone
by the edge of the road, enveloped in swirling dirt and dust.

MORT

(shouts after him)

Always a pleasure to meet a reader!

CUT TO:

Lunch. A bowl of soup and a can of peanuts. Untouched.

Mort's sitting at the kitchen table, arms folded on it, staring down into the chicken noodle, unmoving. Bump the dog sits next to the table, looking at Mort, then at Mort's food, then at Mort, then at Mort's food. You done with that?

Finally, Mort turns, looks across the room. At the telephone. He stares at that for a while, then looks back into his soup.

MORT
(like a kid)
I don't wanna call her.

He looks up at the clock over the sink. 4:12.

He turns, looks through the open door to the living room. He sees the couch. Gazes longingly at the couch, more like.

He turns and looks at Bump, who's staring up at him expectantly.

Mort looks back at the phone. Then back at Bump. Bump stands up -- we doing something?

MORT
(to Bump)
No, no nap. I give her a call about
the magazine. Then I write some
more crap for a couple hours, then
I get to take a nap. Right?

Bump TURNS and limps toward the door. Obviously not getting any food from this joker.

MORT
Seriously, Bump, let's get to work.

Bump reaches the kitchen door and pushes through a doggie door at the bottom, headed outside.

MORT
No wonder you're not published.

32A INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

32A

In the living room, a phone BANGS down on the coffee table. Mort sits on the couch, staring at it.

Looks to his left, to the pillow, which still holds the indentation where his head rested during his last nap. He looks back at the phono and CLAPS his hands together purposefully.

MORT

Right.

He reaches for the phone --

-- and unplugs the cord. He lies back on the couch, settles the pillows in their familiar positions, gets then exactly right, one light punch in the center for the dent --

- and he lets his head fall slowly onto it aa darkness creeps in around the corners of the screen, washing the whole thing -

BLACK.

32B INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

32B

Nighttime in the cabin. Mort's eyes are still closed and his head is drifting, rolling, lolling off the couch, but as he and his body reach the edge, there's nothing underneath, no floor, just a sheer dropoff that gives way to a rocky path a hundred feet below. He loses his balance on the edge of the couch and falls, SCREAMING -

- to the floor. Nice way to wake up.

He sits up, looks around, orienting himself. Night fell while he was asleep and he's in a darkened house. He climbs back onto the couch, turns on a light. Squints at his watch. 10:26. He's slept for six hours.

MORT

Shit.

He sits back on the couch, rolls his head. He's horribly stiff. He notices the phone in front of him, remembers the call he's been avoiding.

MORT

Tanned rested and ready.

He picks up the receiver, is momentarily puzzled by the lack of dial tone, then remembers he pulled the cord. He gets up and goes to pick it up, then freezes.

From this angle, he can see out the front window, to the porch.

He's looking at the garbage cabinet, and there's something on it. Two somethings, actually, a white something and a dark something.

Still not plugging the phone in, he gets up and heads for the door.

33 EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

33

The porch light comes on. Mort walks out the front door and stops dead in his tracks, staring straight ahead.

The white something pinned to the garbage cabinet is an B 1/2 by 11 sheet of typing paper. A few words are printed on it in big, bold, easy to read strokes:

YOU HAVE THREE DAYS.

I AM NOT JOKING.

NO POLICE.

Mort's eyes move slightly to the left, to the other something.

The other something is Bump. Mort's dog is pinned to the door of the garbage cabinet with a screwdriver. Dead.

MORT
Oh God Oh Jesus!

He whirls around suddenly, adrenalins pouring into his bloodstream. He SHOUTS into the darkness.

MORT
WHERE ARE YOU?

His head swivels, he looks six directions all at once.

MORT
GET OUT HERE, YOU SON OF A BITCH!
SHOW YOUR FACE, YOU FUCKING COWARD!

No response. Mort stands there, hands curled into fists, ready for a fight, but the only one willing to engage him is a dog that BARKS in the distance.

He turns and looks back at Bump. He's alone, all alone, not even a pet anymore.

MORT
Oh no... oh Sump...

He approaches the garbage cabinet, his stomach rolling over on him. Cold sweat breaks out on his forehead as he gets closer. Bump's head, is cocked far to the left. Her teeth are bared and her tongue's hanging out. There's a little blood around the blade of the screwdriver at the point where it was driven into her ruff.

MORT

Oh God, Bump... I'm so sorry you.
Oh, Bump.

Mort crumples up the sheet of paper, stuffs it in his back pocket, then puts his hand on Bump's chest. The body shifts slightly, still hanging on the screwdriver. Mort grimaces, thinks he might puck, but needs to finish this.

He closes his other hand around the screwdriver's chipped red handle and pulls it free.

He tosses the screwdriver aside and flips open the doors of the garbage cabinet. He tosses the lid off one of the trash cans and gently places Bump's body inside, tears rolling down his cheeks. He whispers.

MORT

I'll bury you in the morning, girl.

He gently replaces the garbage can lid, cloaca the door, and turns around, peering out into the night. He's out there somewhere in the dark.

MORT

I'll get you for this.
(shouting at the top of
his lungs})
I'LL FUCKING GET YOU FOR THIS!

34 INT. CABIN - NIGHT

34

CLICK! The front door locks, deadbolt turns.

SLAM! Mort closes the bedroom window, turns the lock on top of it.

Another CLICK, two of 'em, this time the back door, both locks, and for good measure Mort slides a chair up under the knob.

Two more windows, the roof access panel, and the house is secured.

Mort stands in the middle of the living room, breathing hard.

What was once a refuge doesn't seem so anymore.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. BACK YARD - DAWN

35

Mort is silhouetted against the dawn, digging in the dirt patch behind the house, the one where its old and new sections come together in an I.

He shovels earth back into a small grave. He finishes, tamps it down, and looks out at the lake, into the fiery sun.

He's sweaty and angry, but calm. He looks down at the shovel in his hands, hafts it.

Shooter was right. Mort would clock somebody with a shovel if he got the chance, and that somebody is John Shooter.

CUT TO:

36 INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

36

A large badge, painted on a storefront window in town. Underneath the badge the words TASHMORE LAKE SHERIFF'S OFFICE, but we're inside the office, so the letters are backwards to us.

DAVE NEWSOME (O.S.)
Bump?! He killed Bump?

Mort sits across the desk from DAVE NEWSOKK, seventy or so, wearing jeans and a sheriff's shirt. Dave works on his needlepoint while he talks.

MORT
Last night, maybe around nine, I
was asleep. He left this.

He slides the note across the desk, the warning that was stuck to the cabinet next to Bump. Dave leans over and reads it, still doing his needlepoint. He shakes his head.

DAVE NEWSOME
"No police." Anytime somebody goes
and writes "no police" that's just
about exactly the time a fella
needs to get himself over to the
police.

MORT

That's what I figured. I've got a detailed description of him, his car... I didn't get the license plate number, but it's from Mississippi.

He slides another piece of paper across the desk to Newsome, who doesn't notice, what with the needlepoint and all.

DAVE NEWSOME
Got a sister-in-law in Mississippi.

MORT
Anything you can find out about this guy, I'd sure appreciate it.

DAVE NEWSOME
My brother's widow.

MORT
See if he has a violent history, let me know what I'm dealing with here. Of course, if you could find him and talk to him, that's even better.

(sliding it closer)
Here's that descrip--

DAVE NEWSOME
So you got yourself a member of the Crazy Folks tribe.

MORT
(shrugs)
They pop up once in a while. Price of selling a few books. Anyway, here's that description.

DAVE NEWSOME
Killing a dog isn't like killing a man, of course. Not sure if it's even a crime, come to think.

MORT
Of course it is! What about animal cruelty? Or at least destruction of private property.

Newsome stops his needlepoint end rubs his hands in pain.

DAVE NEWSOME

Needlepoint. Can you believe it?
Doc says it's good for the
arthritis. I must cut quite an
intimidating law enforcement
figure, huh?

MORT

Yeah.

DAVE NEWSOME
(picks up paper and pen)
Now, I'm going to need a
description...

Mort looks at him and --

CUT TO:

37 EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

37

-- there's an unexpected cut, to the skyline of Manhattan.
The camera zips over to a desk, we're in an office. KEM
KILSLS sits behind the desk, big beefy guy, tattoos under a
Brooks Brothers shirt, former NYPD twenty years and a couple
million later.

Brawn and business together.

KELSCH

Did you steal it?

Mort is sitting across from him.

MORT

What? No!

KELSCH

Kind of an amazing coincidence,
don't you think? The stories being
so much alike.

MORT

Well, obviously, the guy copied it
from me. Whose side are you on?

KELSCS

Yours. But I still need to know the
truth. Which kind of situation is
this, is he a regular wacko like
you've had before, in which case I
can help, or is this something you
should be talking to your lawyer
about?

Mort ignores the slight blush that rises in his cheeks, looks Ken in the eye.

MORT

This guy is just crazy, Ken. That's all it is.

Ken looks at him for a long moment, deciding whether or not to believe him.

KELSCH

Okay. What do you want ma to do?

MORT

Help. You handled that other lunatic. Made him go away.

Kelsch talks fast and squeezes a stress ball, the polar opposite of Dave Newsome.

KELSCH

He wasn't this crazy. That guy was just an obsessed reader who couldn't tell real life from the crap you make up for a living. No offense. He didn't have a beef like this one. When somebody thinks they've got a legitimate grievance it ups the stakes about a hundred times. This guy Shooter, did he threaten your life.

MORT

Not in to many words.

KELSCH

Well, he did break a law with the dog, but it doesn't seam to be a very important law in Tashmore Lake. Your Sheriff Hayseed must be a cat person.

MORT

Call me paranoid, but I don't exactly feel safe with an arthritic seventy year old local sheriff watching my back. Will you help me out, Ken?

KELSCH

(checking hit schedule book)

Uh... I'm on a trail-the-tail right now but I think she's onto me, I was gonna hand it off anyway.
Christ, I haven't slept in a week.
I got a corporate loyalty thing I gotta be back for on Friday, but I could give you a couple days.

He pulls a note pad around and taps a discreet time clock on his desk. Tick tick tick, dollar dollar dollar. He picks up the description Mort has written out and begins to study it.

MORT

My story came out in a magazine a couple years before he wrote his. I've got a copy of the original magazine at Amy's house, I'm going to stop by and get it on the way back upstate.

KELSCH

"Amy's house?"

Mort looks away. Damn, another person I haven't told yet.

MORT

We split up about six months ago.

KELSCH

Shit. I'm sorry,

MORT

So am I.

KELSCH

Amicable?

MORT

Not at first. Better lately.

KBLSCH

What happened? You finally nail one of your groupies at some book signing? I'm picturing the Omaha Barnes and Noble.

Mort just stares at him levelly. Unamused.

KELSCH

That was a dick thing to say.
Rotten profession, makes you into an insensitive prick, I apologize.
You were saying?

MORT

It's just proof Shooter wants, so,
fine, I'll get the magazine and
shove it in his face if that'll get
him to leave ma alone. Maybe you
could come with me when I show it
to him.

KELSCH

No shit I'm coming with you. And if
I so much as don't like the way he
breathes, I got a .38 caliber dick
I'll buy in his ass.

For the first time in a while, Mort smiles. Feels in good
hands.

KELSCH

You remember my rate?

MORT

(getting up to leave)
An obscene fortune, right?

KELSCH

Yeah, plus a little for inflation.
You'll see a black Lincoln in the
driveway tonight when you gut home.
Don't freak out, it's me, keeping
an eye on things. Get a good
night's sleep, you don't lock so
hot.

At the door, Mort turns back.

MORT

Ken. That other guy, a couple years
ago. How'd you scare him off?

KELSCH

(doesn't look np)
You don't wanna know.

MORT

Come on, I might use it in a book
some time.

KELSCH

(laughs, still doesn't
look up)
You don't wanna know.

MORT

No, really.

Kelsch finally looks up. He's not laughing any more.

KELSCH
You don't want to know.

CUT TO:

41 INT. MORT'S CAR - DUSK

41

Mort drives up the West Side Highway as the sun sets over the Hudson. He sees the exit for Riverdale, just north of the city. He takes a deep breath. Flexes his hands on the wheel as he steers the car off the highway.

42 EXT. RIVERDALE STREET - DUSK

42

The sky is darkening on a street in suburban Riverdale, Amy's neighborhood. Mort's car turns a corner and heads toward us.

43 INT. MORT'S CAR - DUSK

43

Mort reaches out and flicks on the lights. The car creeps to a halt across the street from Amy's house. But Mort doesn't get out.

He sits there, staring. Changing to his point of view, we see what he's staring at -- a purple BMW, parked in front of his house. Her house.

Mort stares at the car. Looks up to the house, sees a couple lights on. One is downstairs, might be the living room. The other is upstairs. Could be the bedroom. A shadow passes behind the window shade in the bedroom. Then another shadow. There's two people up there.

Mort stares. The light in the bedroom window flicks out.

Downstairs, one of the lights in the front of the house flicks off. Somebody opens the front door -- it's Ted, ready to leave. He turns, calls back to Amy.

Mort puts his hand on the gear shift, to get out of there. But then he changes his mind, reaches out and flicks off the headlights instead. Hunkers down a bit in the seat.

Now the other light in the front of the house flicks off and Any comes out with Ted. She's carrying a light bag over one shoulder.

Mort watches as Ted opens the passenger door for Any and she gets into his car. Ted comes around to the other side, gets behind the wheel of his purple BMW, and drives away with Mort's wife.

Mort lets his head fall forward till it BANGS softly off the steering wheal.

CUT TO:

44 EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

44

SLAM! Mort parks in the driveway back at his cabin and climbs out of the car. It's black-dark, but there's enough of a moon that he can see Ken Kelsch's Town Car parked in his driveway, just as he said it would be.

Mort walks over to it, feet CRUNCHING on the gravel. As he draws close, he sees Kelsch's outline in the driver's seat. He's upright, but not moving. In fact, he's slumped against the driver's side window.

Mort misses a step; he's thinking what we're thinking.

He walks closer. Kalach's head is listing at an odd angle.

Mort raises a hand to knock on the window, he reaches out slowly, doesn't really want to know the result, Kalsch is either going to turn and look up at him or he's not, and if he doesn't, the shooter problem is a lot bigger than he thought. His hand draws closer to the window, closer, it's an inch away —

— and Kalsch sits bolt upright and whips his head toward Mort, caught in a catnap.

MORT
JESUS!

KETSCH
CHRIST!

They both recoil and laugh too hard, breathe deeply as they get over it.

MORT
Scared the shit out of me...

Kelsch gats out of the car, stretches. A little embarrassed.

KELSCH
Sorry about that. This week musta finally caught up with me.

MORT
This is very reassuring.

KELSCH
Relax, Hemingway –
(checks his watch)
– I was out ten minutes, swear to
God. I already checked the place,
everything's fine. Just waiting for
you to get back to let you know.

MORT
You sticking around tonight?

KELSCH
Not unless you want no to.

Mort looks over at the house. Looks awfully dark and spooky from here. He looks back at Ken.

MORT
(reluctant)
I'm sure it's fine.

KELSCH
Let's take one more look.

MORT
If you insist.

46 INT. CABIN - NIGHT

46

Mort stands in the middle of the living room, looking around. The front door hangs open, all the lights are on in the place.

Ken's void comes from upstairs, a loft-like area that takes up half the house.

KELSCH (O.S.)
No monsters up here!

He comes out of a hallway and starts down the stairs.

MORT
(making fun of himself)
Did you check under my bed?

KELSCH
Even in your toy chest. I'll be
back in the minute, start asking
around in town. Find out who else
saw your nutjob.

He reaches the bottom, takes his jacket off the banister.

MORT
Tom Greenleaf.

KELSCH
Huh?

MORT
Start by asking Tom Greenleaf, he lives in town. I was talking to Shooter yesterday on Lake Drive, about half a mile north of my place. Tom came by in his Scoot. He waved at us when he went by, and both of us waved back. Tom must have gotten a good look at him.

KELSCH
Ton Greenleaf. How do I got a hold of him?

MORT
Drop by Bowie's Store around nine, that's when he gets his coffee.

KELSCH
(heading for the door)
Got it. Don't worry. Once I find out where this Shooter's staying. I'll stop in for a little freak-me-out chat. Use the word "we" a lot. "We know what you're doing." "We want it to stop." "We're watching you." Handy thing about a schizophrenic, it's not hard to convince 'em there's a conspiracy.

MORT
Makes you think he's a schizophrenic?

KELSCH
Well he ain't what you call normal. Trust me, he'll hit the road so hard it'll hit back.

48 EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

48

Kelsch gets back in his oar and SLAMS the door.

48A INT. CABIN - NIGHT

48A

Mort closes the front door and hangs his car keys on a hook, old habit. Tosses his jacket over a chair. Alone now, he turns and looks into the cabin.

He walks further into the living room, under its cathedral ceiling, toward the window-wall facing the lake. He can't see anything in the window except himself, the light from the lamp makes it a mirror.

He looks at himself for a moment, sees how scared he looks. He sees the reflection of the second floor —

— and sees movement up there.

Or was it a bat flying past the window outside?

Mort spins around and looks up to the loft.

48B EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

48B

Kelsch's engine ROARS to life, his headlights flick on.

48C INT. CABIN - NIGHT

48C

Mort, standing in the middle of the living room, licks his lips, his mouth gone dry. He's staring up at the loft. Because of its shade, the lamp down here throws most of its light upwards, the vertical bars in the railing upstairs throw exaggerated shadows on the wall and ceiling, they look like bars of a jail cell.

Mort speaks; it comes out in a soft croak.

MORT

Hello?

48D EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

48D

Tires spin on gravel as Kalach turns his car around and heads down the driveway.

49 INT. CABIN - NIGHT

49

Mort is still staring up at the loft.

MORT

Is somebody up there?

No response -- except for a soft SCRATCHING sound from up there.

Mort turns quickly, sees Ken's headlights flash past his front windows and disappear up the driveway. Ken's gone. Mort's alone.

MORT
(softly)
Shit.

He thinks — am I being ridiculous? Maybe, but why take chances? He walks softly over to the fireplace, not sure why he's tiptoeing, but moving stealthily. He reaches out and gently lifts the ash-shovel from a rack of fireplace tools, considers it, then puts it down and takes the poker instead.

He turns toward the upstairs, brandishing the poker, but uncomfortable with it. He walks to the stairs.

And begins to climb them. Slowly. Deliberately.

He reaches the second floor landing and pauses, his heart pumping in his chest, trying to breathe silently. The door to the guest room is on his left. The door to the bathroom is on his right. Both doors are ajar.

Mort stands stock still, poker held aloft, sweat running out of his hair and down his cheeks, attempting to work up the nerve to open one of those doors, but which one, which one has the prize, or does either one, and he's just about to go back downstairs --

-- when he hears it again. Louder this time. A definite SCRATCHING sound from the upstairs bathroom.

His eyes widen. He turns his head ever so slightly toward it, takes about ten seconds to turn six inches.

The SCRATCHING comes again... then silence.

MORT
(suddenly quite loud)
I know you're in there, Fuckhead!

No answer. Mort wipes sweat off the back of his neck with his free hand.

He takes a step forward. From his new angle, he can just see through the open bathroom door --

-- and he sees Shooter.

Well, he sees a figure. Okay, it's impossible to say whether it's Shooter or not but there's a silhouette in there, there's somebody in there and who the hell else would it be? The figure is in the bathroom, just past the sink, pressed into the far earner and he too is holding a weapon aloft, something long and hard in his hand, just waiting to clock Mort over the head with it.

But Mort has an advantage, shooter apparently hasn't seen him.

MORT

You picked the wrong writer to fuck
with! I've been wanting to kill
somebody since last March and
you'll do as well as anybody!

No answer. No movement.

Mort looks to the other door, through which a double bed is visible. Clearly a bedroom. He looks again to the bathroom door, sees shooter still hiding in there, nearly the same position.

Mort thinks. Speaks calmly, but the shake in his voice betrays him.

MORT

I know you're in the bedroom!

He takes a step toward the bedroom door, but his ayes are darting like crazy to the bathroom.

MORT

I'm counting to five! If you're not
out of the bedroom by the time I
get there, I'm coming in swinging!
You hear me?

He takes another step toward the bedroom, now presenting his back to the bathroom doer and nervous as hall about it. But the man has a plan.

MORT

One!

Sweating profusely, he takes another step to the bedroom door, now fully in front of it, his back completely exposed to the half-open bathroom door.

MORT

Two!

He closes his fingers lightly around the bedroom doorknob.

MORT

Thr--

He lets go of the bedroom door and suddenly launches himself backwards, SLAMMING into the bathroom door with everything he's got.

51 INT. THE BATHROOM

51

the door SLAMS into the wall hard enough to chop through the wallpaper and pop the door's lower hinge. Mort plows inside fast, straight toward Shooter, poker held aloft, ROARING with rage, and Shooter's coming right back at him, also with a raised weapon, eyes wide and insane, utterly insane, his teeth bared in a killer's grin.

Mort brings the poker down in a whistling overhand blow and has just enough time to wince as he realizes that Shooter is also swinging a poker, and to realize it isn't Shooter swinging at all but it's him.

It's just his reflection.

Too late to stop, he SMASHES the poker into the bathroom mirror.

The silver-backed glass sprays every which-way, twinkling in the gloom, and the medicine cabinet falls into the sink, its bent door swung open like a gaping mouth spilling bottles of cough syrup and iodine and Lysterine.

Mort reaches out and flicks on the light, surveys the damage, chest heaving. He laughs suddenly.

MORT

I killed a fucking mirror.

He's about to toss the poker aside when he hears that SCRATCHING sound again and something moves in the tub behind him. He whirls around and slashes sideways with the poker, tearing a jagged gash through the corrugated plastic shower door and knocking it off its tracks.

He raises the poker over his shoulder, steps forward, and peers into the shower.

A fieldmouse scurries frantically in the tub, desperately trying to claw its way up the smooth porcelain sides.

Mort looks at the poker in his hand. He's gripped it so hard there are traces of blood where his fingernails dug into his palm.

He reaches out with hit other hand, pries his own fingers off the handle, and tosses the poker aside with a CLANG.

He takes a hand towel from the rack, bends over the tub, and in one quick gesture scoops the mouse into it, pinching the towel together at the top.

He turns and walks out of the bathroom, past the leaning door with its popped hinge, his shoes gritting on broken mirror glass.

52 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**52**

Showing more purpose than we've seen in a while, Mort comes downstairs and heads directly to the little study in the back of the house.

53 INT. CABIN - STUDY - NIGHT**53**

Mort BANGS on a light and searches the desk with one hand, the other still holding the towel with the SQUEAKING mouse inside it.

Mort finds what he was looking for -- the ancient pack of L&M's, now down to just two half-flattened cigarette.

54 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**54**

Mort scoops up a box of fireplace matches from the hearth and heads for the back door.

55 EXT. CABIN - LAKE SIDE - NIGHT**55**

Mort comes out the back door of the cabin and stares out at the wine-dark lake, glinting under a half moon. He bends down and opens the towel, letting the mouse scurry off into the safety of the darkness.

Mort stands up, shoves the L&M between his lips, raises a match to the scratchy side of the box end gives it a long SCRAPE —

— which illuminates John Shooter (really this time), standing right beside him.

SHOOTER
Thought you didn't smoke.

Miraculously, Mort manages to hold the scream of sheer terror inside his throat, the only physical evidence of his shock is the hesitation in his match hand, which quivers a few inches from the end of his unlit cigarette.

Somehow, he manages to resume lighting the butt, shakes out the match, and tosses it away. He takes a deep drag. It seems to calm him. He speaks levelly, but it's a spitless voice, smoke choking his lungs.

MORT

Took it up recently for my health.

SHOOTER

How are you, Mr. Rainey?

Mort exhales a cloud of smoke.

MORT

I'm fine, Mr. Shooter. How about you?

Mort's ayes are searching, looking for some kind of weapon, anything.

SHOOTER

I'm a country fair. But I don't think you're really all that well. Stealing from another man, that don't seem to have ever bothered you none. Being caught up on, though... that seems to have given you the pure miseries.

MORT

What are you talking about?

SHOOTER

Well, it sounded like you pitched a fit or something is there. Shouting... whacking on thing... or maybe it's just that successful writers like you throw tantrums when things don't go the way they expect. Is that it, maybe?

MORT

The magazine with the story in it is at my house in town.

Mort's ayes dart - a lawn chair, a stack of firewood, a shovel stuck in the dirt. A shovel!

SHOOTER

Why didn't you get it? You were down there today, weren't you?

MORT

How do you knew that?

SHOOTER

Why didn't you go inside? 'Stead of just sittin in your car like a damn fool?

Shit. He followed me. Shit. Mort tries to keep his voice level as he start to walk casually toward the shovel. Shooter moves with him, staying just barely in the light.

MORT

When I get the story and show it to you, will you leave me alone?

SHOOTER

(lazily amused)

There isn't any magazine with that story in it, Mr. Rainey. You and me, we know that. Not from 1933, there isn't. How could there be, when my story wasn't there for you to steal until 1995?

MORT

God damn it, I did not steal your st-

SHOOTER

No, not all of it, true enough. Not the best part.

MORT

What do you want? Tell me! What in the hell do you want?

SHOOTER

You want the second reason I came, is that it?

MORT

Yes!

Mort reaches the shovel, turns so that he's in front of it, blocking its view from Shooter.

SHOOTER

I want you to fix it.

MORT

What?!

SHOOTER

My ending. The one you wrecked.
 Can't decide what's worse, stealing
 my story or ruining the ending.
 Most important part of a story, the
 ending. Mine was perfect, it was a
 real ending, not that phony crap
 you shoved in,

(reciting with contempt)

"He looked in her eyes and saw her
 face as he had first known it, as
 if it were ten years ago and none
 of this had ever happened. He fell
 to the ground and into her embrace,
 down in the dirt, down in the piece
 where now things grow." You have
 got to be pardon my language
 fucking kidding ma, Mr, Rainey. Put
 it back the way it ought to be.

MORT

I don't even remember your ending.

SHOOTER

Oh, I bet yen do. It's hard to
 forget.

(reciting from memory)

"I know I can do it," Todd Downey
 said, helping himself to another
 ear of corn from the steaming bowl.
 "I'm sure that in time her death
 will be a mystery even to me."
 That's how the story ends, Pilgrim.
 It's the only ending. You're gonna
 write it for me and get it
 published. And it's gonna have my
 name on it. Right has got to be put
 right.

Mort sneaks one hand behind his back, feeling for the shovel handle. He speaks, his voice thick with rage.

MORT

The only thing I'll write for you
 is your death-warrant, if you don't
 leave me alone.

Long pause. Shooter eyes hint. Sees where Mort's hand is going.

SHOOTER

Saw that wife of yours, comin' out
of the house.
(exaggerated countryism)
She's purty-

Mort's fingers close around the shovel handle.

MORT
Leave her out of it.

SCOOTER
Would if I could, but I'm startin'
to think you ain't going to leave
me that option.

Mort yanks the shovel from the dirt and swings it around by the handle, straight toward Shooter's head.

Shooter stops it with one hand, lays his other on it and shoves back. Mort stumbles over the pile of dirt and lends an his bask, the wind OOPING out of bin. Shooter falls on him, holds the shovel with both hands, presses it down on Mort's Adam's apple. Mort chokes, Shooter spits words at him.

SCOOTER
Do you want to wake up from one of
your stupid naps and find Amy
nailed to your garbage bin? Or turn
on the radio some morning and hear
she came off second best in a match
with the chainsaw you keep out in
the shed?!

Mort summons his strength, which is considerable, and greater than Shooter's, and hurls the man off him. Shooter lands on his feet as Mort rolls over to his hands and knees, gagging and choking.

SHOOTER
(calmly)
You can't get away with it. Don't
you realize that yet?

He bends down and picks up his hat, dusts it off and sets it back on his head.

SHOOTER
I know what you did, and I ain't
quitting till right gets put right.

On the ground, coughing up spit and blood, Mort watches as Shooter walks away across the yard.

CUT TO:

57 INT. CABIN - BATHROOM - NIGHT

57

The shattered chunks of mirror are still on the floor of the bathroom upstairs. Looking at twenty-six shards, we see twenty-six Mort Rainey's coming at us. His hand grows huge as he reaches down and picks up the largest shard.

Mort tucks the shard into a corner of the door of the broken medicine cabinet, shoves the whole thing back into its hole in the wall.

He leans forward, looking at his reflection in the stand. He touches his neck gingerly, runs his fingertips over the distinctive red line left where the shovel handle nearly choked him to death.

CUT TO:

58 INT. CABIN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

58

Mort lies in bed, staring straight up at the ceiling. Right, like he's gonna be able to fall asleep tonight.

58A INT. CABIN - OFFICE - NIGHT

58A

Still night. Mort's computer screen comes to life. The cursor clinks on the MS Word icon, then picks a file called "Untitled."

Opens it.

The entire page is blank, it the story he deleted the other day. Just a blinking cursor in a big field of white.

Mort, who's sitting at his desk, stares at it ruefully.

MORT

What, you didn't write anything
while I was gone? No wonder you're
not-

He turns and looks at the leather chair Bump always sits in, but at course the chair's empty tonight. Forgot for a second.

Mort stares at the empty chair for a long moment. Then turns back to his desk.

He breaks down and sobs.

FADE TO BLACK.

59 EXT. AMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

59

Amy's house. Nighttime. Mostly dark, but there's a light on in one corner of the house, and as we creep closer to that light, we see a silhouette moving in the window.

Jerking around, really, and as we get even closer we hear CRASHING, breaking sounds. We draw closer and closer still, the curtains in the room are parted, we can see between them. The room must be Mort's old office, the walls are lined with books and bound periodicals, like the lake house, but many, many more.

The figure inside is the familiar form of Shooter, capped by that creepy hat, which, throws a crazy shadow on the fax wall.

He upends the desk, then picks something up off the floor, a bottle, looks like champagne, that's funny, and heads for the door, stuffing some thing in the neck of the bottle, looks like a rag.

He pauses in the doorway, SCRAPES a Zippo and touches the rag, which immediately starts on fire. He tosses the bottle right at us. It lands on the floor and smashes.

The room EXPLODES into flame, that weren't no champagne in the bottle, that was gasoline, end the window we've crept up to SHATTERS in our fade.

From the street, we see the ball of fire rise up from the corner of the dry old Victorian, taking half the roof with it. This baby's gonna burn like cordwood.

CUT TO:

60 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - DAY

60

Daytime now. The unplugged phone cord lies on the floor in Mort's cabin, still a few feet from the phone it should be attached to.

On the couch, the pillow is empty, the indentation is still there, but no head. Where's Mort?

Moving left, we find Mort sitting on the couch, staring straight ahead, still in the clothes he fell asleep in, bed hand. No telling how long he's been awake, it looks like he swung his legs over the edge of the couch end just stopped in that position. He looks awful. That red line is still across his throat.

He notices the phone in front of him. Looks to the floor, sees the unplugged cord. Mustering all the ambition he has at the moment, he bends over and picks up the cord.

He looks at the little clip thing on its end, looks at the phone, debating the merits of plugging it in.

Deciding what the hell, he reaches over and jams the cord into the back of the phone --

which HINGS immediately. Mort twitches. He's jumpy anyway, but you know, you hate it when that happens.

MORT
Is that you, John Wayne?
(answers)
Hello.

AMY (O.S.)
Mort?!

He's relieved, at least it isn't Shooter.

ANY (O.S.)
Mort, are you there?! Mort!

MORT
Yeah, Amy, Jesus, not so loud. What is it?

AMY (O.S.)
Where have you been?! I've been trying to get hold of you all night and this morning!

MORT
I was asleep.

AMY (O.S.)
You unplugged the phone?!

MORT
How may X assist you, Any?

AMY (O.S.)
Oh God...

MORT
(concerned near)
What happened?

ANY
Someone burned down our house?
That's what happened!

CUT TO:

62 EXT. AMY'S HOUSE - RUINS - DAY

62

Mort stands in front of the smoking hulk that was once the green Victorian he and Amy shared at 92 Kansas street in Riverdale. He just stares at it, his face slack with shock and loss.

The site is cordoned off by police tape, there are three or four COPS and two FIRE INSPECTORS picking carefully through the remains. Mort looks at what used to be the house, we peer closely at him, then when we see his point of view again —

MORT'S MENTAL IMAGE - AMY'S HOUSE - NEW

-- the house is back the way it used to be, same angle from the sidewalk, but the house is freshly painted and clean on a summer's day. Amy comes out of the house in a business suit, putting shoes on as she hurries to her car, late for a meeting.

Mort comes to the door in his boxers and SHOUTS after her.

MORT

Hey lady, you only left a hundred bucks on the dresser! You think I give it away?

TWO OLD women passing on the sidewalk overhear.

AMY

(embarrassed but laughing})

Shut up!

65 INT. AMY'S HOUSE - RUIN - DAY

65

Mort chokes back the emotions he feels. He looks up, to where the third floor of the house used to be, and as he looks, it dissolves into place --

MORT'S MENTAL IMAGE - AMY'S HOUSE - NEW

— and the house is restored once more. Now we're looking more closely at a certain window, a window in a corner of the third floor.

67 INT. AMY'S HOUSE - THIRD FLOOR - DAY

67

This room is one of those strangely shaped but cool corner rooms you find in this kind of house. It's being set up as an office, Amy's office. Any is excited, talking to us, shoving us something.

AMY

It's the best room in the house, at least for me. Down here, check it out.

She bends down in a corner, shoves some boxes out of the way, revealing a window in an odd place, down at floor level. You could easily miss it if you didn't look for it.

She slides down the wall next to it, points down.

AMY

See that little patch of dirt? The only place you can see it is from up here. I went to put a garden there.

She pulls her knees up to her chest, stares happily out the window.

AMY

It's a secret window, and it looks down on a secret garden.

67A EXT. AMY'S HOUSE - RUINS - DAY

67A

Back outside, looking up at the third floor, and this time we can see Amy in the window, until she dissolves sway, along with the house.

The smoking hulk is all that remains. Mort is moved, now there's a wistful smile on his face.

AMY (O.S.)

Mort!

He turns, smile still on his lips -

- until he sees Ted striding toward him with Amy, holding her hand.

Suddenly, another -

MENTAL IMAGE - HOTEL ROOM

-- and this one isn't nearly so pleasant. It's Mort's point of view of the ugly scene we saw in the opening. He storms into the hotel room, Amy and Ted struggle to cover their naked bodies, they all scream at each other --

68 EXT. AMY'S HOUSE - RUIN - DAY

68

— and the wistful smile disappears from Mort's face, turning into something hard and hurt by the time they reach him.

MORT

Hi.

He hugs her, she hugs him back hard, over her shoulder, he makes brief eye contact with Ted, who forces a semi-polite grimace.

MORT

(softly, in her ear)

I'm sorry about all of this, Amy.
All of it. Really sorry.

AMY

So am I.

TED

(alight Southern, accent)

Me too.

MORT

(fuck you, Ted)

Thank you, Ted.

Amy retreats to Ted's side. WICKERSHAM, the fire chief, approaches them with a police detective, BRADLEY. Wickersham addresses Ted and Amy.

WICKERSHAM

Mr. and Mrs. Rainey?

Three responses, all at once:

AMY

Tea?

MORT

No.

TED

Uhh...

Wickersham locks back and forth, confused. Any takes a step toward Mort's aide.

AMY
We are. Were. The owners.

WICKERSHAM
(now really confused)
Were? You don't own it anymore?

Bradley gives Wickersham a look – figure it out, idiot. Mort helps him.

MORT
Were Mr. and Mrs. Rainey. Are the owners.

WICKERSHAM
Ah.

BRADLEY
I'm Steven Bradley, I'm a detective with the Riverdale P.D., this is Fire Chief Wickersham. We won't keep you long, the insurance investigator needs to see you in the city at three.

WICKERSHAM
You're definitely the victims of arson. The fire was started by an incendiary device made from a bottle of Moet Chandon champagne and a couple quarts of plain old gasoline.

BRADLEY
So let's start with enemies. You got any?

AMY
No. No one.

TED
Not a soul.

Mort looks at Ted, really irritated.

MORT
Okay with you if I answer these, Ted?

Ted holds up his hands, okay, okay. Mort turns to Bradley.

MORT
Yes. I have an enemy.

Amy looks at him. Bradley pulls out his notebook.

CUT TO:

70 INT. INSURANCE OFFICE - DAY

70

Back in the city, back in another office with a great view, this time at a conference table. Bradley and FRAN EVANS, an insurance investigator in her fifties, are on odd side. Amy, Mort, and Ted are on the other. Amy sits between her two men. This must be fun.

EVANS

I'm sorry I wasn't there to meet you this morning, I spent most of last night poking through the site with a flashlight and a Polaroid.

(stops herself)

Sorry. Broke one of my own rules. I don't like to call it "the site." It wasn't a site. It was a house. Tour house, and I'm very sorry for your loss.

MORT

Thank you...

He glances at her business card, which he's holding in his hand.

MORT

...Mrs. Evans.

EVANS

That still say Mrs.?

(take)

Fran is fine. Look, these meetings are difficult. People in your situation are already upset, understandably so, and quite often they take the presence of an investigator as an accusation that they torched their own property.

AMI

I have to admit, I did feel a little on the spot. Thanks for bringing it up.

Ted nods, so violently that his head might have been on a string. Mort notices, just stares at him. All Ted has to do is breathe to irritate Mort.

EVANS

And in this case we certainly seem to have a plausible suspect in this Mr. Shooter, whom our people will investigate aggressively along with the police, but in the meantime —

(pulls out a file
folder})

The hard part.

She puts the file on the table in front of them delicately.

EVANS

It's a list of your claimed insurable property. You look it over, then sign an affidavit swearing that the items listed still belong to you, and that they were still in the house when the fire occurred. Anything that wasn't there, put a check. I'm told there was --

(tiny pause)

-- separation of residence recently, so that last bit may be particularly important.

MORT

We're in a divorce. It isn't final yet.

AMY

The settlement agreement is all done, everything's ready to go, we're really just waiting for it to be signed.

(with a quick glance at
Mort)

By both parties.

Ted looks at Mort too, not such a quick glance. Mort ignores them.

MORT

(to Evans)

I moved out six months ago, but I hadn't got around to hauling all my stuff out of the house yet.

EVANS

Been down that road. These things just have to follow their natural course. Things wrap up when everybody's ready for that to happen,

MORT
(a returned quick glance at Amy)
(That's been my feeling.)

EVANS
Do the beat you can with the list.

Amy looks down at it. Mort leans in over her left shoulder.

And Ted leans in over her right shoulder. Amy notices and tips the file just a little bit in his direction so they can all see it.

Mort is furious, but holds it in. He reaches out and tips the file back in his own direction.

AMY
Mort...

MORT
(to Ted, softly livid)
Do you actually intend to rubberneck?

The tension in the room is thick as cake frosting. For a moment no one says a word. Detective Bradley's eyes move alertly back and forth between the three of them.

TED
(through clenched teeth)
I hardly think-

MORT
I'm not going to freak out about this. But this was our stuff, Amy.
Ours.

TED
It isn't as if-

AMY
No, he's right, Ted.

EVANS

He is, Mr. Milner. The law says you have no right to be looking at the listed items at all. We wink at something like that if nobody minds... but I think Mr. Rainey does.

MORT

Yes. Mr. Rainey minds a lot.

Amy switches her unhappy look of appeal from Mort to Ted. Ted stares at Mort evenly --

— and then turns to speak to Amy, ignoring everyone else.

TED

Would it help matters if I took a walk around the block?

MORT

Why not make it two?

CUT TO:

72 INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

72

The meeting over, Mort, Amy, Fran Evans, and Bradley walk down the hallway to the elevators. Evans and Bradley are talking to one another in the rear, Mort and Amy are in front.

Amy puts a hand on Mort's arm and pulls closer to him.

AMY

I'm lorry about in there, about Ted. You have no idea how hard it is to be the one in the middle.

Mort sees that she means it and musters up some kindness.

MORT

Shitty situation. So fucking adult, huh?

She laughs dryly and nods. They reach the elevators.

AMY

Mort, I want to ask you...
(she puts a hand on his arm}
I don't want to upset you—

She looks over at Evans and Bradley, who are right behind them but Evans catches the look and she and Bradley retreat a few steps down the hallway and turn away politely.

Mort looks at Amy, warns to her, is even concerned about her.

MORT

What is it?

Amy turns back to Mort, leans in closer and lowers her voice confidentially. He puts his hand on hers.

AMY

Between you and me, okay?

MORT

Absolutely.

AMY

This guy Shooter. His story, I mean, Mort, is this situation... is it like the other time?

Mort's warmth cools. He withdraws his hand. He's furious.

MORT

Look. That was the only time I ever did anything remotely like that, it never happened before or since. I was just out of grad school, we were broke, we thought you were pregnant, remember all that?

AMY

Okay, okay...

MORT

It was stupid and desperate and I've paid for it. I paid the guy everything he asked and I've kept paying, believe me, every single night for about fifteen years. You're the only person who knows about it besides the lawyers, and even though we're not together I expect you to keep it that way.

AMY

Fine.

A horrible thought strikes him. He tries to catch her eye.

MORT

You haven't told Ted, have you?

AMY
(unconvincing)
No.

MORT
Have you?

The elevator BINGS, the doors open, and guess who steps off.

TED
Well, do I have timing or what?

MORT
Yeah, I'm sorry you had to miss
that, Ted. I know how much you like
my things.

Another awkward silence, which Ted has had just about enough of.

TED
(to Mort)
We're going to talk for a minute.

He starts to reach for Mort's arm, thinks better of it, and nods sharply over to a corner of the hallway. Mort looks at the others.

MORT
Excuse me, I'm in trouble.

IN THE CORNER,

Mort joins Tad, who is pissed off. This is not a side of him he shows when he's with Amy.

TED
I've had about enough of your
bullshit.

MORT
You've had enough?

TED
Marriages and. I'm sorry. I didn't
end yours, it was over when I got
there.

MORT
Wow, you must have thought her
wedding ring was weird, then.

TED

Nevertheless, I apologized to you. Months ago. I know you don't want us in your life — guess what, I don't want you in mine either. But until your divorce is done there's not much we can do about it. I just want you to know I decided a long time ago that I will not let you upset Amy any more than you already have. I am not prepared to let that happen. So let's just wrap this up end get out of each other's lives permanent.

(a toothy, weird smile)

Okay? Are we gettin' the message I'm sendin' ?

Ted's Southern accent is a bit stronger on that last line. Mort looks at him, noticing it.

MORT
Where are you from, Teddy?

TED
Tennessee. Norty.

MORT
Really. I thought maybe Mississippi.

TED
No, long way from there. A little town called Shooter's Knob, Tennessee.

Mort furrows his brow. Did he hear what he thought he heard?

CUT TO:

74 INT. MORT'S CAR - NIGHT

74

Mort drives back to Tashmore Lake with his hands clamped to the steering wheel, his spine as straight as a ruler and his eyes fixed firmly on the road. He has the radio on, blasting, trying to stave off thought.

Doesn't work. He SNAPS the radio off, highly agitated. For the first time, we hear his thoughts. (A note about that — Mort's thoughts don't come through clearly, like voice over. They swirl and overlap, the way your thoughts do, some just whispers, some louder than that, and some fragments spoken out loud.)

MORT
 (inner voice)
 Well that's kind of a
 (out loud)
 fucking coincidence
 (inner voice)
 isn't it?

He rubs his head, thinking, thinking.

MORT
 (inner voice)
 Maybe he knows him
 (out loud)
 sending me a message
 (inner voice)
 gonna fucking figure this out,
 Teddy.

He flicks the radio back on, even louder.

CUT TO:

75 EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

75

Headlights splash down the driveway of Mort's cabin as a car pulls in. The headlights stop, shining right on the cabin from about twenty yards away.

76 INT. MORT'S CAR - NIGHT

76

Mort sits in the car, engine idling, looking around the property. No sign of another car.

MORT
 (inner voice)
 Come on, Kelsch...
 (aloud)
 Five hundred a day and where the hell are you when I need you?

He takes one more look around, drops the ear in gear, and pulls right up to the front porch, just a few feet from the first step. He puts it in park, kills the lights, and gets out.

77 EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

77

He climbs the steps quickly, keys the frost door, and goes inside.

77A INT. CABIN - NIGHT

77A

Mort flicks on a light and hangs the keys on the hook by the front door, SLAMMING and locking the door behind him.

The phone RINGS.

MORT

Gee, I bet it's good news.

He reaches for it.

78 INT. CHEAP MOTEL - NIGHT

78

Ken Kelsch is sprawled out on the bright orange bedspread in small town motel, a couple mini-bar bottles are open on the bedside table next to him, he's drinking bourbon and water out of a plastic bathroom cup. The Chestos look good too.

KELSCH

(into the phone)

Where the hell you been all day?

78A INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

78A

Mort's standing in the living room, phone in hand.

MORT

I might ask you the same question.

KELSCH (O.S.)

Relax, you're fine, I checked your cabin an hour ago.

MORT

He shoved up right after you left last night.

79 INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

79

Kelsch sits up.

KELSCH

Really? Then he had a busy night. My office called me about your Riverdale house. I'm sorry.

79A INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

79A

MORT

The worst part is I hadn't got the magazine from my study yet. The one with the story he says I stole. Now it went up in the fire.

KELSCH (O.S.)

You still want to go through with it? Meeting him, showing him the magazine?

MORT

Hell yes. I've spent the last half year walking through a shitstorm, Ken, having things happen to me. This is something I want to handle myself. He can go to jail or go away or go to hell, it's all the same to me. As long as he's gone.

80 INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

80

Kelsch turns, swings his legs off the bed.

KELSCH

Good. Because I called your agent when I heard about the house, I figured he'd have a copy of the magazine. He sent an original by overnight today, you can pick it up at your post office tomorrow after three.

MORT (O.S.)

I knew there was a reason I hired you.

KELSCH

There's something else. I caught up with your Tom Greenleaf today. The guy that drove past you and Shooter on the Lake Road.

81 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

81

MORT

Yeah?

KELSCH (O.S.)

You're not gonna like this.

MORT

He didn't see anything?

81A INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

81A

Kelsch consults his notepad.

KELSCH

Worse. First he says he did go down Lake Drive on Tuesday and he saw you like you said, but then he gets weird, says no no no, come to think of it I didn't. Didn't see anybody. Wasn't even on Lake Drive on Tuesday.

MORT (O.S.)

Well, Tom's seventy-five if he's a day. Might've slipped his mind.

KELSCH

Bullshit. He was way up on a scaffold when I saw him, painting your Parish Hall. Looked strong as an ok to me.

82 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

82

MORT

Doesn't mean his memory's good.

KELSCH (O.S.)

Don't be naive. The guy was scared shitless. Somebody got to him.

MORT

Come on, why would Shooter possibly care if Tom Greenleaf knows he's here?

KELSCH (O.S.)

That depends.

MORT

On what?

KELSCH (O.S.)

On what he plans to do to you. I'm revising my opinion, Mort. I don't think Shooter's just some nut, intimidation of witnesses speaks to a thought-out plan.

83 INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

83

Kelsch speaks carefully. Doesn't want to be too alarming — which of course he is.

KELSCH

We need to consider the possibility that he was hired to do this.

Somebody with a grudge against you, hires a tough guy to rattle you, scare you to death. But he hires the wrong guy. Things get out of control. They go further than they're supposed to... dead doge, burned-down houses. Now he can't call him off.

84 INT. CABIN - NIGHT

84

Mort nags to the coffee table. He speaks quietly.

MORT

Ted.

KELSCH (O.S.)

Who?

MORT

He's trying to gaslight me.

KELSCH (O.S.)

Who's Ted?

MORT

Amy's... the guy Amy left me for. Maybe that's why the guy calls himself Shooter, Ted wants me to know it's him. Trying to intimidate me, send me a message.

KELSCH (O.S.)

Why? What does he want?

MORT

I don't knew.

KELSCH

Did you piss him off? Give him a reason to hate you?

Mort thinks about that, closes his eyes. A flash of something crosses the screen, very fast, it could have been the motel room from the opening, probably was, it's hard to tell. Mort snaps his eyes open.

MORT

Might have.

KELSCH

Okay, here's what we do. What other proof do you have that Shooter was hero? Other than the manuscript, Physical evidence, I'm talking about.

Mort strains to think, a hand to the side of his head, remembering the episode ode with Shooter by the lake. Images from their encounter flash past;

84A EXT. PATH BY THE LAKE - DAY

84A

-- Shooter gats in Mort's face, GROWLS at him;

SHOOTER

You lie.

-- Shooter's hands grab Mort by the biceps and shove him back against the car, hard.

- Shooter's hands, holding Mort's arms, hard. His fingers and thumbs pressing in so hard they're turning white.

86 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

86

MORT

Hold the phone a sec.

He drops the receiver and shoves his sleeves up as far as they'll go. He holds out his arms. At first he sees nothing, than he rotates them outward as far as they'll go and there they are, two yellowing bruises on the inside of each arm, just above the elbow - marks made by Shooter's thumbs.

SACK OH THE COUCH,

Mort picks up the phone again.

MORF

Bruises. On my arms, where he grabbed me.

86A INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

86A

KELSCH

Not very concrete, but it's emotional, it might get to him. You and me are gonna go see Greenleaf together. Bring the manuscript, bring your bruises. I'm gonna push the guy hard, make it impossible for him to lie. If he'll tell the police he was threatened too, then we've got something, it certainly ties him to the fire.

MORT (O.S.)
I'll meet you at Bowie's for breakfast.

KELSCH
9 a.m., sharp.

87 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

87

MORT
See you there.

KELSCH (O.S.)
And bring your six gun, Pilgrim.

Mort, who was about to hang up, freezes at that last word.

KELSCH (O.S.)
I'm kidding.
(no response)
You still there?

MORT
Yeah. I'll see you at nine.

He hangs up quickly. Sits there staring at the phone for a long moment, hunched over it.

CUT TO:

88 INT. CABIN - BEDROOM - NIGHT

88

Mort's in bed. Wide awake. He looks up at the ceiling. Flips over. Flops the other way. He bolts out of bed, dragging the blankets with him and heads -

88A INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

88A

- into the darkened living room, straight for the couch, Except this time we don't even see Mort, we are Mort, drifting toward the couch, sucked in by it, down into its pillow, between its cushions, into its inky recesses.

We roll over, face up at the ceiling. The entire room recedes from us, as if we're falling into a deep deep hole, but we don't mind that much, at least it's quiet, and we know we'll see nothing in that hole that frightens us because at its bottom there is only

BLACK.

88B INT. CABIN - DAY

88B

Just as we went into the hole, we rise slowly out of it, out of the black toward a pinprick of light in the distance. We're pulled toward the light the way we were sucked into the black, but this hurts more, it's that bright.

We come up out of the couch into the living room, wicked bright with morning sunlight.

Mort winces from it, his head still deep in the pillow.

He sits up, swings his legs off the couch -

- and GROANS in pain, a groan so loud it's almost a muted scream. His hands dart up, he tries to hold his back, his knees, and his right arm all at the same time.

MORT
Oh my God...

He rubs his right shoulder, tries to message some life into it.

MORT
(inner voice)
that door
(aloud)
how hard did
(inner voice)
bathroom door
(aloud)
hard did I hit it?

He squints across the room, to a clock on the far wall.

It's a quarter after ten.

MORT
Oh shit.

He gets to his feet, painfully, and whips on a tee shirt.
He's still wearing his pants.

Feet step into shoes and he heads for the door. He reaches up to snatch his car keys from the hook --

– but they're not there. He looks. That's weird. Thought he left them there last night.

He pats his pockets. Hope. Turns and looks around the room.
Huh uh.

90 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

90

Mort's car keys are sitting on the counter in the kitchen. He comes through the swinging door, looks around the room, spots them.

He comes over and picks them up, bounces them thoughtfully on the palm of his hand.

MORT
(inner voice)
Don't like that.
(out loud)
Don't like that at all.

90A INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

90A

Mort crosses the living room, throws open the front door –

91 EXT. FROM PORCH - DAY

91

– and stops in his tracks.

Shooter's hat is lying on the porch in front of the door.

The distinctive black hat with the round crown. Mort stands there looking at it, his heart beating in his ears (and ours).

Mort steps down off the porch, cutting a wide semi-circle around the hat, and stands where his car ought to be, right in front of the porch, where he left it last night. He looks around, sees it parked over next to the garage, a hundred feet away.

He looks down at the keys in his hand, turns and looks back at the hat on the porch.

91A INT. BUICK - DAY**91A**

Mort rips open the door of the car and slides behind the wheel. His eye is caught by the ashtray, which is hanging open, four cigarette butts in it.

He reaches down and pulls one out, pinching it between his fingernails. He holds it up to look at it. Unfiltered Pall Mall.

Mort chuck's it back into the ashtray as if it were radioactive.

92 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY**92**

Mort picks up Shooter's bat with the same distaste he showed the cigarette butt. He flips it over, peers into it. Nothing out of the ordinary, just a very old sweat-stained inner band.

The band is dark and slick. Mort catches a whiff of it and furrows his brow. Recognizes that smell but can't place it.

93 EXT. BUICK - DAY**93**

The hat sails into the trunk of the Buick and the lid SLAMS shut ever it.

The car sprays gravel out of the driveway.

CUT TO:

93A INT. BOWIE'S STORE - DAY**93A**

GERDA
Mort Rainey!

The door to Bowie's Store BANGS shut behind Mort, who winces at the noise as half a dozen heads turn from the counter where GERDA BOWIE, tall and busty and loud, is serving breakfast to a bunch of LOCALS. The store part of Bowie's is in the back, the front is a coffee shop.

GERDA
Haven't seen you in a coon's age!
Writing any good books lately?

MORT
Trying. Falling.

He looks around the place for Kelsch, who isn't there. Damn it, missed him. Mort takes a seat at the far end of the counter, a few stools away from everybody else.

As Gerda finishes serving the others, Mort calls out to her.

MORT

Gerda, you wouldn't make me one of your bacon and cheese and whatevar-the-hell-else-you-got omelettes, would you?

GERDA

Shit no!

She laughs to show she's only joking. The other man at the counter, Public Works guys in green coveralls, laugh along with her.

GERDA

Gimme a minute.

Mort nods as the PW guys steal glances at him. They find him odd, always have, and they're not too shy to stare. Mort's uncomfortable, he looks away.

To his left, a BUSBOY is stocking the cigarette rack next to the cash register. He has a carton of Pall Malls and is taking the packs out one at a time, loading them into the rack. Mort stares at the brand. The Busboy notices and looks back at him.

BUSBOY

Would you like a pack?

He holds one of the red packs out to Mort enticingly.

MORT

I don't smoke.

GERDA

Good for you, honey.

She flips Mort's coffee cup right side up and pours him some.

GERDA

(lowers her voice)

Heard about your divorce, Mort. I'm sorry.

MORT

Thanks, Gerda.

GERDA

Are you taking care of yourself?

MORT
Workin' on it.

GERDA
Because you look a little peaky.

He looks up at her, tries to hide his annoyance.

MORT
It's hard work getting to sleep
some nights. I guess I'm not used
to the quiet yet.

GERDA
Bullshit. It's sleeping alone,
you're not used to yet. But a man
doesn't have to sleep alone
forever, Mort, just because some
fool woman-

MORT
(Getting her off)
Did a guy come in here this morning
looking for me? Around nine
o'clock?

OSRDA
No.

MORT
Big guy, very New York cop?

GERDA
No. No, doesn't ring a bell.

MORT
Nine o'clock? I was supposed to
meet him but I overslept.

GERDA
Maybe he did too, 'cause he sure as
hell wasn't in here.

CUT TO:

Mort pulls up in front of the Parish Sail, one side of which is covered in scaffolding. An old Ford Bronco is parked in front with a camper on the back and a sign reading SONNY TROTTS PAINTING - CARETAKING - CARPENTRY on each of the doors.

Mort gets out of his Buick and walks over to the base of the scaffolding. He calls up to BONNY TROTTS, fortyish, slapping paint onto the aiding three stories up.

MORT
Sonny! Hey, Sonny!

Sonny goes on painting, can't hear Mort over the Roger Whittaker song playing on his boom box.

MORT
SONNY!

Sonny jerks. White paint flies from the end of his brush and for a moment it looks like he might fall, but he grabs onto one of the ropes and steadies himself. He looks down.

SONNY
Why, Mr. Rainey! You gave me a helluva turn!

MORT
I'm sorry. I thought you were going to fall off.

SONNY
Not me. Tom might fall off, maybe, but not me.

MORT
Yon seen him today? Tom?

SONNY
Never showed up. 'Course that ain't unusual for Tom, if his sciatica's at it.

MORT
Anybody come around looking for him?

SONNY
Well...
(thinks)
You.

CUT TO:

97 INT. MORT'S CAR - DAY

97

Mort drives out of town on the main road, headed back to his house. As he passes a gas station he does a double take, catching sight of a car parked at the pumps.

It's a purple BMW.

A guy is standing near the rear of the car, at the gas tank, facing the road. He looks awfully familiar. He should. It's Ted.

A horn BLARES, Mort snaps his head back toward the road to avoid hitting the oncoming truck, then he stomps on the brakes.

Amazement is replaced by anger. He SLAMS the car into reverse and backs up -

98 EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

98

hauling it into the gas station parking lot right up beside Ted's car. Mort gets out of the car coolly and saunters over to Ted, who's screwing the gas cap back on.

MORT
(ice)
What are you doing here?

TED
As a matter of fact, I was just on my way over to your place.

MORT
(glancing around)
Where's your buddy?

TED
I came alone.

MORT
Sure you did.
(looks him in the eye)
I know what you're up to.

TED
Fair enough.

Ted stares at Mort. His tone is vague and threatening, he's choosing his words very carefully.

TED
Look, I admit...

He swallows, and we detect something else in him. Ted is nervous. Or is he scared? Ha's hard to read.

TED

Mort, a lot of what's going on right now is my fault. Most of it, in fact.

MORT

So you're admitting it?

TED

I sort of got this ball rolling, and the truth is now I'm afraid I won't be able to stop it.

Mort stares him down. A quiet rage is brewing inside him.

MORT

What do you want?

TED

I want you to end things. Once and for all.

Ted pulls something from his shoulder bag, a thick sheaf of legal-looking papers.

TED

You need to sign your papers, Mort.

Mort just stares at him, aghast.

TED

Amy and I can't go on until your story is put to rest.

MORT

What the fuck is... my divorce papers?! Tell her to send 'em to my lawyer.

TED

She did. He said you-

MORT

That's what this has all been about? Getting me to sign the God damn settlement?

TED

Just cool down a minute...

MORT

(putting it all together)
My God, it's because of the book deal, isn't it? Because my deal's up in a few months, and you two want me to sign now so I'm locked into higher alimony for the next tea years. That's what this is, it's money, Jesus Christ, this is all about money! And you two think you're gonna muscle me for it?!

TED

I'd hate to see where things could end up if we let this go on. I think you know what I mean.

MORT

Well Teddy, I think I do, but here's the problem. I don't respond well to intimidation. I never have. Brings out my inner asshole.

Ha gives Tad a hard shove is the shoulder, halfway between a punch and a push.

MORT

See what I mean?

He gives me another hard shove, in the other shoulder. Harder than the last.

MORT

Just gets you all riled up, doesn't it? So whatever else you think you got for me, bring it on. You started this? You're gonna finish it? Fuck you, it's out of your control and you know it. I'm going to finish this. Do me a favor and tell -

(a hard finger in Tad's cheat)

-- that to your little friend.

Suddenly enraged, Ted lashes out, unleashing a hard right cross that's headed straight at Mort's jaw. Mort bobs to the right, fast reflexes, just missing the punch, which lands --

-- on the driver's window of Ted's car. There's a sharp CRACK, but the glass is intact, so it wasn't the window. It was two bones in Ted's hand.

Ted CRIES OUT in pain and crumples to his knees. Mort looks down at him.

MORT
Got yourself a temper, huh? So do
I.

CUT TO:

100 INT. CABIN - LIVIBG ROOM - DAY

100

Back home. Mort sits on the couch in his living room, arms folded across his chest, staring at something on the coffee table.

Shooter's hat. Dead center on the tabletop.

Mort sits forward, inspects it more closely. He's just reaching out to pick it up when —

— the phone RINGS at about four thousand decibels. Mort jumps a foot, as if suddenly awakened.

MORT
About time, Ken.
(answers it)
Hello?

SHOOTER (O.S.)
Go to where we met the other day.

Mort freezes, recognizing Shooter's voice.

SHOOTER (O.S.)
Walk down the path a little way.

MORT
Why!

SHOOTER (O.S.)
You impress me as a man who thinks the way old folks chew their food, Mr. Rainey, but I'm willing to give you all the time you need. I'll catch up with you this afternoon. Anybody you call between now and than is your responsibility.

MORT
What did you do?

But there's only a dead line.

MORT
(a whisper)
What in God's name did you do?

CUT TO:

102 EXT. PATH BY THE LAKE - DAY

102

Mort scrambles up the hillside on the path by the lake, through the beaten-down bushes on either side. He's breathing hard, sweating, stumbling, he must have run all the way from his house.

He reaches the top of the hill, comes out into the clearing at the edge of Lake Drive, and sees it.

Tom Greenleaf's Scout, the same car that drove past the other day when Greenleaf saw Mort and Shooter talking by the side of the road.

Two men are inside the car, one in the driver's seat, the other in back. Neither one is moving.

Mort edges closer, starting to hyperventilate.

Tom Greenleaf is behind the wheel with his head thrown back – and a screwdriver buried to the hilt in his forehead, above his right eye.

MORT
Oh God... oh my God... oh Jesus...

Mort's eyes lock onto the screwdriver handle. It's distinctive, a badly chipped red plastic handle, the same screwdriver Mort pulled out of Bump.

It's Mort's.

Mort's head snaps to get the bad news from the back seat, Ken Kelsch is back there, a hatchet planted in the top of his head.

His eyes are open. Brains have trickled down around his ears and dried.

Written along the hatchet's handle in faded but still legible red letters is one word – RAINES.

Mort stands completely still, not even breathing. The world swims around him, it slows to a near stop, most sound drains away, and the sounds that don't become unnaturally loud.

A CHICKADEE calls.

A WOODPECKER taps on a tree.

A freshening breeze raises whitecaps on the lake.

There is a rustling sound behind Mort. He wheels around so fast he almost falls -- would have fallen, if he hadn't had the Scout to lean against.

It's a squirrel. It looks down at Mort with bright hate from where it's frozen halfway up the trunk of a maple tree, blazing with red fall flare.

Mort stares at the squirrel for a long moment. The squirrel stares back. Sweat runs down Mort's cheek. He's still not breathing. He tries to GASP, nothing comes in, his lungs are clenched and empty.

FROM MORT'S POINT OF VIEW

the world divides into dozens of neat rectangular bores, dozens of identical images of the squirrel on the tree, then the images start to move, to tilt up, it's sky, than it's the scout, then it's the ground, we realize Mort is falling --

BACK BY THE PATH

– and his face SMACKS into the dirt as he loses consciousness.

CUT TO:

103 EXT. PATH BY THE LAKE - DAY

103

Mort opens his eyes. He's still lying next to the Scout, but the sun has shifted quite a bit. He sits up groggily and turns his wrist to look at his watch. His ayes are too blurry from sleep, he squints and pulls the watch closer.

SHOOTER (O.S.)
A quarter past two.

Mort looks up. Shooter is standing over him, silhouetted by the sun, which is directly behind his head.

SHOOTER
You been out about three hour.
Thought you had a heat stroke, only
it isn't summer.

Mort tries to get up, but his right leg is dead weight under him, it buckles and he collapses again.

SHOOTER

You laid on the damn thing. Woulda moved you, but I didn't want to wake you.

Mort drags himself back against the Scout, lifts his right leg over his left, and starts pounding on it with his fists, trying to get some blood back into it.

SHOOTER

Got tired of waitin' and almost pinned a note on you. Decided not too. You scare too easy.

MORT

(still pounding his leg)
I know what's going on! I know Ted hired you!

SHOOTER

Hired me? Somebody hired me? I ain't never worked a day for another man in my life. No sir, like I said right off, this is between you and me.

Mort is frantically hammering on his leg, trying to get it to function again.

SHOOTER

Keep bastin' on it like that and you'll never walk.

Mort starts dragging himself away from Shooter, across the dirt and to the head of the path. Shooter follows lazily.

SHOOTER

Wouldn't crawl too far if I were you. You got yourself some work to do here. I hooked you to those two men in more ways than you know. If you leave 'em here and I disappear, Mr. Rainey, you are going to find yourself standing with your head in a noose and your feet in Crisco.

MORT

You don't scare me.

SHOOTER

Yeah, I do. The only thing is, you're startin' to scare me a little, too. I can't quite figure you out.

Mort stops dragging himself, realizing its pointlessness. He turns, looks up at his tormentor, at the end of his rope.

MORT
What do you want from me?

Shooter squats in front of Mort.

SHOOTER
(almost kindly)
Why, I told you that already, Mr.
Rainey. I want you to fix my story.
The one you stole. Or ain't you
ready to admit it yet?

MORT
(for the thousandth time)
I did not... steal... your story.

SHOOTER
(sighs)
No, I expect you'll let yourself go
to Greenhaven for murder before
you'll admit it.

MORT
I didn't! I didn't! You're crazy,
and I can prove it! I have the
magazine, yon lunatic! Do you hear
me? I have the goddam' magazine!

The response to this is no response.

MORT
Did you hear what I said?!

SHOOTER
(softly)
You have it? You have this so-
called magazine? Right now?

MORT
No.

SHOOTER
Well, there...

MORT
It's coming Federal Express. I'll
have it at three, I can pick it up
in town at three o'clock.

SHOOTER

Pick what up? Some fuzzy old thing
that's supposed to be a copy?

MORT

No. The magazine. The actual
magazine, dated 1993, two full
years before you wrote your story.

SHOOTER

There can't be any magazine. Not
with that story in it. That story
is mine!

For the first time, there was - something like real anguish
in Shooter's voice.

MORT

Three o'clock. I'll meet you at
four. Someplace public.

SHOOTER

No. Your house.

MORT

You'll kill me.

SHOOTER

You? No, sir! These others here
were going to get in the way of our
business. I couldn't have that...
and I figured I could use them to
make you face up to your
responsibility. That's all.

(checks his watch)

Your house in two hours.

(jerks a thumb at the
Scout)

You got some heavy lifting here
first. I'd get to it if I were you.

Ha stands up to go.

SHOOTER

By the way.... if you talk to that
Sheriff of yours again, or if you
don't show up at four o'clock... I
will burn your life and every
person in it like a canefield in a
high wind. You'll go to jail for
killing those two men; but that'll
be the least of your sorrows.
Understand?

MORT

And suppose, just suppose, I show you the magazine, and it has my name on the contents page and my story inside. What then?

SHOOTER

(thinks)

Then I turn myself in. But I'll take care of myself before a trial, Mr. Rainey. Because if things turn out that way, than I suppose I am crazy. And that kind of crazy man... that kind of crazy man has no excuse or reason to live.

He starts to walk away, than turns back with one last thought.

SHOOTER

Listen, you got my hat. I'll want it, one way or the other.

And he disappears down the lake path.

Mort turns, shaking, and looks at the Scout and the dead sea in it. From down the road, he hears the HUM of a car engine, sees sunlight glinting off the windshield of an approaching car.

He slithers back onto the incline, out of sight except for his eyes.

The car ZIPS past, takes no notice of the scout and its lifeless occupants. Mort takes a deep breath.

106 A MOMENT LATER - PATH BY THE LAKE

106

We're looking at the door handle of the Scout. Mort's trembling hand, wrapped in his shirt tail, reaches out and opens it slowly, revealing Tom Greenleaf's corpse in the front seat.

Mort stands there, breathing hard. First things first, that screwdriver's gotta come out of his head.

Mort tries to get himself between Tom and the steering wheel, but there isn't room. He reaches down, to the electric seat adjustor, and pushes it toward the back.

The seat HUMS back, sliding Tom along with it.

In back, Ken Kelsch shifts, turning toward Mort abruptly.

Mort SHOUTS and jumps bask, he's still alive!

But Kelsch stops, and Mort takes another look. No way he's alive with a hatchet in his head. Mort pushes the seat lever back again and Kelsch shifts again -- the driver's seat is pushing up against his dead legs.

How there's room for Mort to get between Greenleaf and the steering wheel. He wedges himself in, lays a forearm against Greenleaf's cheat, closes his free hand around the screwdriver --

MORT
I'm sorry, Tom.

— and gives it an almighty yank. Just as the screwdriver starts to slide out with a WET CRUNCH —

CUT TO:

107 EXT. QUARRY - DAY

107

The bloody screwdriver and the axe, both with dried human matter dulling their blades, lie on the ground, removed from their victims.

Mort stands beside the Scout now, its driver's door closed.

We're in a different location, also abandoned. The Scout is running and Mort is reaching through the driver's window, putting his hands on the wheel.

Straining, he reaches over and puts the thing in drive. The car's parked on a slight hillside and it starts to roll. Mort walks alongside, keeping up with it, steering it straight ahead.

It picks up speed and Mort has to jog --

-- toward the edge of a sheer rock face. The sparkling waters of an abandoned quarry are visible far below.

The Scout moves faster still, it'll make it over the edge on its own and Mort is just about to pull himself out when the car goes over a bump and Tea Greenleaf's body pitches forward over the wheel. Tom's a heavy guy, and his weight and awkward posture pin Mort's arms where they are.

The HORN begins to blare.

The Scout moves faster now, Mort is running to keep up with the rolling, bumping, HOMKING thing. Mort yanks his arms as hard as he can and manages to shove Greenleaf's body back off him, but the open part of the cuff of Mort's overshirt slips over the gear shift lever.

Mort is running as fast as he can, struggling like hell to free his arm, now stuck by his shirt to the gear shift. The car's bouncing along fast, Mort's feet lift off the ground, he's running out of real estate fast, he's going over with the God damn thing.

He gives his arm one vicious pull, half the threads in the button at the end of his sleeve RIP out, the other half stay put, the Scout's front tires are just a few feet away from the edge of the rock face —

- Mort HAULS his arm back as hard as he can —
- the final threads RIP free, the button pops off —
- but so does Mort's wristwatch, which falls to the floor of the Scout, the engraved words "I LOVE YOU, AMY" glittering in sun --
- and Mort stops abruptly, windmilling his arms at the very edge of the earth as the Scout tips over the edge and plummets two hundred feet, SPLASHING into the water.

Mort watches as the Scout bubbles and bobs and disappears into the deep-bottomed black quarry waters below.

CUT TO:

109 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - DAY

109

The clock on the wall in Mort's cabin -- it's ten to three.

On the coffee table, the phone RINGS. It's in the foreground, big. After three rings, Mort bursts through the door in the background, dumps his shirt, grabs his wallet, his car keys from the hook (they're there this time) and heads back for the door.

But through it all, the phone keeps RINGING. In the doorway in the background, Mort stops, thinks,

RING. RING. RING. Somebody sure is insistent.

Mort turns, is it biff?

He CURSES and edges over to the phone.

MORT

Hello?

AMY (O.S.)

Mort?

MORT

(mouths the word)

Shit.

(aloud)

Hi.

110 INT. TED'S APARTMENT - DAY

110

Amy is sitting on the edge of a bed in a man's bedroom, a room we haven't seen before. She's been crying, still is. She speaks softly, casts the occasional look to the bedroom door, which is closed.

AMY

Mort, I... I've been so worried
about you.

Mort rolls his eyes, looks over at the clock on the wall.

MORT

I'm okay, Amy.

AMY

Are you sure? When I saw you
yesterday, I thought you looked...
strained. I mean, I know you are
strained, but...
(a new thought)
Do you... Mort, do you...

MORT

What?

AMY

Do you think things would have been
different if we'd had children?

MORT

Jesus, I don't know, Amy. Look, can
I call you later? I gotta be
someplace.

He glances at his wrist to check the time, but his watch is gone. He's puzzled, but doesn't have time to think about it, as Amy starts to cry. Mort sighs and sits on the edge of the coffee table. Please God, let me out of this conversation.

MORT
What is it?

More crying.

MORT
Take a breath.

Sniffling.

MORT
Are yon at Ted's?

AMT
Yes.

KORT
(knows he shouldn't,
can't help it)
How do you feel about him, these
days?

AMY
I love him.

MORT
Right.

AMY
I didn't go with other men. I've
always wanted to tell you that. I
didn't go with other man. Only Ted.
And only the last few months, when
you and me were... when it was over
already.

MORT
It we were "over" when we were
still together, you might have,
mentioned it. Because it was fuckin
news to me.

AMY
That's because you weren't there
anymore. You were gone so much.

MORT
What are you talking about? I
worked at home, for Christ's sake.

AMY

That's not what I mean. Even when you were with me, you wore gone. Up in your head. You used to joke about it, you'd tap the side of your head, "Going up to the attic, honey, see you in a few days." That was no joke. I don't think I looked into your eyes and saw you looking back at me, really with me, for the last two years.

MORT

Yeah, it's all my fault.

AMY

No, I was a coward. Ted wanted us to go and tell you together. He kept asking, and I kept putting him off. I'll never forget the look on your face when you opened the door of that motel room. I'll carry that to my grave.

Mort closes his eyes to try to hold off the memory, but good luck with that --

111 INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

111

We're back in that motel room we saw at the beginning, bursting through the door, first person Mort. We see Amy and Ted in bed, fumbling for the sheets, but this time we see a little bit more, we spin around and see Mort's face, and it's twisted and pained and angry, really angry, but it's just a flash and then we're -

112 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - DAY

112

-- back in the living room, where Mort forces his eyes open, wiping out the unpleasant memory-movie playing on his eyelids.

MORT

I gotta go.

AMY

Can't we-

MORT

No, I really gotta go.

AMY

Will you call if you need ma?

MORT
I doubt it.

AMY
Can I come up there?

MORT
Why on earth would you do that?

AMY
(pause, than blurts it out)
You still haven't signed the papers, Mort. I know you don't want to deal with it, I didn't want to either, but come on. Everything's been negotiated, we don't disagree about a thing, I don't understand why you're refusing to sign. Don't you want it over with?

Mort shakes his head -- so that's why the phone call.

MORT
You're "worried about me." And I believe you. What an idiot.

AMY
I am worried. You sound that way, Mort, you sound like you did six months ago and it's my fault, I think it's my fault and I wish I could take it back but --

MORT
I guess you shouldn't have fucked him, then.

He BANGS the phone down.

113 INT. TED'S APARTMEMT - DAY

113

Amy sits with her hand on the phone, staring at it. Making a decision, she gets up and goes to the dresser. She shaves the sheaf of divorce papers into her purse and turns toward the door. Ted is standing in the doorway.

TED
You're not going up there?

AMY

I don't want to dance around it anymore, once he signs it'll be over with and we won't have to have those horrible conversations every other day.

She leaves the room. He follows.

114 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

114

Amy scoops her car keys off a table near the front door.

TED
I'll go with you.

He goes to get his jacket and we notice his right hand is heavily bandaged.

AMY
I'd rather go by myself.

TED
Amy...

ANY
You threw a punch at him, Ted. You went up to get a simple signature and came back with a broken hand. If you walk through the door with me, just the sight of you is gonna send him off.

Ted can see the truth in that. She puts a hand on his cheek.

AMY
I was married to the guy for ten years. I knew how to talk to him. I just want to get this over with. That's all he wants. Bring things to an end.

TED
Be careful.

AMY
(kisses him)
I'll be back tonight.

And she's gone. Ted teases his coat over a chair and stares at the closed door, thinking.

CUT TO:

115 EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

115

A Federal Express truck ROARS past, revealing Mort's car, parked outside the post office. Mort is inside it, staring at the departing truck.

He looks at the post office. Doesn't want to go in. Is desperate to go in.

ON THE STREET

Mort's car door slams. As he starts across the street toward the building, a VOICE calls to him.

He turns. Down the block, he sees Dave Newsome, the Sheriff he spoke to earlier, gesturing to him.

Mort looks around, not now, Dave. Is Shooter watching him?

He waves back to Newsome and keeps walking, pretending he doesn't hear the Sheriff's "hold up a sec."

He hurries up the steps of the building.

116 INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

116

The post office is nearly empty, but an innocuous government building never seemed so menacing. At the far end, there's a single clerk behind the counter, JULIET STOKER, mid-thirties, born, bred and will die in Tashmore Lake.

She looks right at us, smiles as we float up to her counter. She says something to us, but we don't hear it, just see her lips move. She furrows her brow, worried about us. She speaks again, this time we hear her:

JULIET
Mr. Rainey? Are you all right?

Mort clears his throat, collects himself.

MORT
Sorry, Juliet. My throat kind of double-clutched on me for a second.

JULIET
You're very pale.

She frowns, not sure what to do with him, as if he's a slightly irritating child prodigy who needs special care and feeding.

Mort steadies himself, gripping the counter.

MORT

Something I ate last night, I
guess. Did Federal Express leave
anything for me?

JULIET

No, not a thing.

Mort's finger's squeeze the counter ferociously, turning white.

MORT

Pardon me?

JULIET

(already tuning away)
Just the one thing, I said.

She pulls a package off the hack rack and slides it across the counter to him, its bright red and blue Fed Ex lettering like a lighthouse in a storm.

MORT

(sighs in relief)

Thank you.

JULIET

Welcome. You know, the post office would have a cow if they knew we handle that Federal Express man's mail.

MORT

Well, I certainly appreciate it.

He picks up the package and resists the urge to tear it open on the spot.

JULIET

You won't tell them, will you?

Mort forces a smile and a grisly wink.

MORT

No way.

JULIET

Good.

Mort turns and heads for the door.

JULIET

Because I saw what you did.

MORT
 (STOPS)
 Pardon me?

JULIET
 I said they'd shoot me if you did.
 You ought to go home and lie down,
 Mr. Rainey. You really don't look
 well at all.

MORT
 That's not such a bad idea.

117 EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

117

Mort comes out of the post office and stops. He flips the package over to open it but stops, noticing TWO WOMEN staring at him. One of them whispers something to the other, the second one laughs, the first one SHUSHES her.

Mort hurries toward his car.

118 INT. MORT'S CAR - DAY

118

Mort slides behind the wheel of his car, SLAMS the door. Once again he's about to open the package —

— when there's a KNOCK at his passenger door. He leaps a foot, looks over, sees Dive Newsome smiling at him, bent down, looking through the passenger window.

DAVE NEWSOME
 Hiya! Got a minute?

Mort tosses the still-unopened Fed Ex package on the passenger seat as if it were communicable.

MORT
 Can't right now, Dave! Give you a call in a bit!

Mort drops the car in gear and pulls away.

119 EXT. STREET - DAY

119

Dave Newsome straightens, watching Mort's car drive away.

CUT TO:

119A INT. TED'S APARTMENT - DAY

119A

Ted is sitting in a chair in his apartment, anxious as hell.

Making a decision, he bolts to his feet, grabs his jacket off the chair and his car keys off a desk, and races out the same door Amy went out.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. CABIN - DRIVEWAY - DAY

120

Mort's Buick skids and CRUNCHES to a stop in the gravel driveway of his cabin.

121 INT. MORT'S CAR - DAY

121

Finally, a moment of peace. Mort picks up the Fed Ex package and holds it in his hands, determined to open it this time.

But as he starts to turn it over, a soft grayness comes over his vision. Things dull, bend, darken. He tries to blink it away, his lids close for just a second --

– and then it's gone. Whole thing only took three or four seconds. That's odd.

Okay, no more bullshit. Mort flips the Fed Ex envelope over in his hands, reaches for the tear strip –

– and finds it half pulled off.

The package has already been opened.

MORT
... the fuck... ?

He rips the tear strip the rest of the way off. He turns the envelope upside down and a magazine drops into his lap. Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, the logo says in bright red letters. Beneath that, in much smaller type, June, 1993.

MORT
1993.

Allowing himself a grin smile, he flips it open, looking for the contents page.

MORT
Contents...

He flips back and forth, can't find it. He goes back to the beginning, where the page ought to be, and finds a thin strip of paper in the magazine's gutter. He thinks he knows what that means. With growing alarm, he thumbs frantically through the magazine, dropping it once and picking it up with a little cry of desperation.

On the second pass through he looks more carefully.

MORT
80, 81, 82 --

He flips to the next page, sees the number on it.

MORT
98

He goes back a page. 82 again. And in the margin is the sliced off evidence that pages 83 to 97 have been cut out.

MORT
YOU CUT IT OUT!

He BANGS his fist down on the steering wheel, again and again and again.

MOST
You cut it out, you son of a bitch!
How did you do that?! You cut it
out, you cut it out, you cut it
out!

Mort hears a voice from inside the car, a familiar voice. His own voice.

INNER VOICE (O.S.)
How would he do that?

MORT
I don't know. He did it though.

INNER VOICE (O.S.)
Okay.
(pause)
How?

MORT
I DON'T KNOW!

The car door opens and Mort climbs out, stepping on a bundle of white printed pages right beneath the driver's window. He stalks across the driveway toward the house. The voice follows his.

INNER VOICE (O.S.)
It doesn't make sense.

MORT
Shut up.

He winces as an image flickers through his mind:

MORT'S MENTAL IMAGE - MOTEL ROOM

is that same scene from the motel room, the one we've seen twice before, his point of view as he races in on Amy and Ted, then the camera whips around, sees Mort's face, and it's fierce with anger. We see for the first time he's holding something in one hand. But before we can see what it is -

123 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - DAY

123

Mort BANGS through the door and drops onto the couch, center cushion, arms folded across his chest. Yet again, he finds himself face to face with --

- Shooter's hat. Still sitting on his coffee table, waiting for him.

Mort sits forward. This time he picks it up. He looks at it carefully. And then, for no reason whatsoever and without a moments thought -

- he puts it on. He shudders once, the way you do at a mouthful of strong liquor. But that passes. He smooths the brim. It fits quite well, actually.

ACROSS THE ROOM

the mirror over the entry table fills with Mort as he stands up, hat on his head, and walks forward. He positions himself in front of the mirror. The hat completely covers his hair and just touches the tops of his ears.

Mort's Inner Voice speaks up again -- quiet, gently prodding.

INNER VOICE (O.S.)
Why'd you put it on?

MORT
I don't know.

INNER VOICE (O.S.)
... Maybe he wanted you to.

At this moment, we're looking at Mort straight on. We start to move, to creep around him to his right side.

MORT
Why would he want me to put on his hat?

INNER VOICE (O.S.)
Maybe he wants you to...

MORT
Yeah?

No answer. We settle into a full profile. Mort turns and looks directly at us for the first time.

MORT
Wants me to what?

A face moves in slowly from the side of the frame and whispers in Mort's ear -- it's Mort's face. Mort's inner voice has been given body, Mort's body. Same guy, same clothes. Two Morts, side by side. Talk about talking to yourself...

INNER VOICE
... to get confused.

MORT
I'm already confused. Pilgrim.

No sooner is that last word out of his mouth than he wishes he could snatch it back out of the air. He whisks Shooter's hat off his head and tosses it into a corner.

INNER VOICE
Yeah. Yeah, what about that?

MORT
What about what?

INNER VOICE
"Pilgrim."

Rather than answer, Mort turns and stalks out of the room. We go with him (same shot) as he passes the staircase, where his Inner Voice is now leaning against the railing.

INNER VOICE
"Shooter's Knob."

Mort reaches the kitchen door but stops, as his Inner Voice is already leaning against it.

INNER VOICE
Half a dozen other details you've been ignoring.

Mort just stares at him, breathing hard. The Voice takes a step forward. They are nose to nose, both suddenly quite calm.

INNER VOICE
Are all of these things coincidences?

MORT
(defensive)
I'm wearing his bruises, aren't I?

The Inner Voice doesn't answer, just holds his eye.

MORT
Aren't I?

INNER VOICE
Are you?

Mort rips his shirt off angrily, rotates his arms out, goes to the exact spot where the bruises were yesterday.

But now they're not there.

MORT
It doesn't...

He searches, paws his flesh.

MORT
It doesn't make sense!

INNER VOICE
Would you like to hear something that does make sense?

Actually, no, Mort would rather not. He turns and heads for the door, reaches for the keys on the hook —

— but the Inner Voice is there ahead of him, leaning against the wall next to the hook.

INNER VOICE
Call the police.

Mort turns to the front door but it BANGS shut ahead of him, his Inner Voice is leaning against it.

INNER VOICE

Call Dave Newsome and tell him to come down here and lock you up.

MORT

If I could get a knife and cut you out of me...

He turns away, but the Inner Voice is right behind him.

INNER VOICE

Before you can do any more damage.

MORT

I'm warning you!

He turns again -- Inner Voice is there too. All around him now, wherever he turns before he even turns there.

INNER VOICE

Before you kill anyone else.

MORT

I'LL KILL YOU!

But suddenly the Inner Voice is gone, and Mort is standing alone in the empty living room, chest heaving, screaming at the walls. He holds his head in pain, because here comes another mental image, and this one's a doozy:

MORT'S MENTAL IMAGE - MOTEL ROOM

is that shot in the motel room, the startled lovers, the enraged husband, Mort holding something, and for the first time we see what it is.

A gun.

Held in front of him in a shaking hand, and now we understand why Amy and Ted weren't just shocked and embarrassed and upset, they were terrified, because Mort is SCREAMING at them, RAVING like a lunatic, waving that gun around, shoving it between Ted's teeth, snarling and spitting and completely out of control.

125 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

125

Mort shakes his head to chase away the memory.

MORT

It was unloaded.

The Inner voice is in his ear, it circles him now, walking around and around him in ever-tightening circles, always in his ear, inches away no matter where Mort turns.

INNER VOICE

Was it?

MORT

Yes!

INNER VOICE

Was it, Mort?

MORT

I told them!

INNER VOICE

Was it really unloaded?

MORT

Amy believed me.

INNER VOICE

You almost killed them. You wanted to.

MORT

The gun was NOT loaded!

INNER VOICE

You still want to.

MORT

Shut up!

INNER VOICE

Listen to me. Because this is how it happens. This is how it happens to people.

MORT

Shut up!

INNER VOICE

There is no John Shooter.

MORT

No!

INNER VOICE

There never has been.

MORT
I do not accept that!

INNER VOICE
You invented him.

MORT
I do not accept that at all!

INNER VOICE
Listen to me, not to him. Before
it's too late, before you-

MORT
SHUT THZ FUCK UP AND LEAVE ME
ALONE!

He picks up a heavy ashtray — a dog standing over a large marble basin that's supposed to be for the cigarette butts, go figure — and hurls it at the Inner Voice as hard as he can.

But of course the Inner Voice is gone before Mort even releases and the ashtray SMASHES into the wall just over the entry table. It puts a large dent in the plaster and opens up a crack.

It's a small crack that originates in the middle of the crease made by the ashtray. But as Mort watches —

— the crack grows. It creeps all the way up the wall, CRUNCHING the plaster apart as it grows. Before Mort's wondering ayes, the crack creeps across the ceiling over his head, zig-zagging its lightning bolt way right down the center of the room, directly above Mort, and finally crawling down the far wall, ending in the corner where he has thrown Shooter's hat, now resting cock-eyed against the wall.

Mort stands very still in the middle of the room, staring at the hat.

MORT
What is happening to me?

He turns around, catches sight of himself in the mirror, and GASPS in horror --

— because Shooter's hat is on his head again.

He whips it off and hurls it across the room. The hat skips twice off the floor, and comes to a stop in the doorway of the study —

— where John Shooter is leaning against the door jam. He picks up the hat and twirls it lightly on one finger, smoking a Pall Mall with his free hand.

MORT
(backing away)
You don't exist.

SHOOTER
Oh, I exist, Mr. Rainey.

Mort backs right into the wall. Shooter advances on him.

SHOOTER
I exist because you made me. You thought me up. Gave me my name. Told me everything you wanted me to do.

Mort is horrified, holding his head as the truth pours into his consciousness. We see flashes of his thoughts as Shooter talks:

126 EXT. AMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

126

(This image and all the flashback images that follow fly by fast, fractured and jarring.)

We're looking through the window of Mort's study again, the one at the house in Riverdale, before it burned down. We see Shooter's shadow on the wall, that crazy hat. But we're closer this time, and in a flash of light we see Shooter's face below the hat, but of course it isn't Shooter's face at all but Mort's face, Mort burned down the house.

127 INT. CABIN - STUDY - DAY

127

Shooter is drawing closer.

SHOOTER
You had a job of work needed doing.

128 EXT. BOWIE'S STORE - DAY

128

A shot we haven't seen before, it's morning on Main Street, and Ken Kelsch is walking toward the front door of Bowie's Store when Mort steps out from a doorway and intercepts him.

KELSCH
Thought we said nine?

MORT

I called Tom. He said to pick him up.

129 INT. CABIN - STUDY - DAY

129

Shooter's closer still.

SHOOTER

Didn't have the stomach to do it yourself. But you knew I did.

130 INT. GREENLEAF'S CAR - DAY

130

Tom Greenleaf, alive again, is driving his Scout, Ken Kelsch is in back, Mort is in the passenger seat.

MORT

Right up there, Tom! We were standing right there.

GREENLEAF

(sick about this)

I know, Mort, I saw you. I didn't want to say it in front of him --
 (jerks a thumb back at
 Kelsch)
 - but you were alone.

130A INT. TOM'S CAR - FLASHBACK - DAY

130A

From Tom's point of view, we're driving down Lake Drive on that sunny day. We see a figure up ahead, standing by the side of the road - it's Mort, standing there by himself. Tom waves to him, Mort tips a finger back at him in that practiced, country way.

131 INT. TOM'S CAR - DAY

131

Mort laughs disarmingly at Tom's nervousness.

MORT

I know, I can explain. Just pull over.

As Greenleaf turns the wheel, we drop down next to Mort's leg and see his fingers close around the handle of the hatchet, the one that will soon be buried in Ken Kelsch's head.

132 INT. CABIN - STUDY - DAY

132

Shooter is right in our face.

SHOOTER

I did them things so you wouldn't have to.

133 EXT. LAKE DRIVE - DAY

133

Outside the Scout now, we see Mort whip around from the front seat and SMACK the hatchet down in the middle of Ken Kalsch's skull. We hear Tom Greenleaf's horrified SHRIEK, but it's abruptly cut off as Mort turns to him a split-second later and drives the screwdriver home in the middle of his forehead.

134 INT CABIN - BATHROOM - NIGHT

134

In the shower in his cabin, Mort cleans up, blood swirls down the drain.

135 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - DAY

135

Mort awakens, stretches, grabs his arms and back, can't believe how unbelievably sore he is. Now we know why.

135A INT. CABIN - STUDY - DAY

135A

Shooter smiles.

SHOOTER

Offhand, I'd say you're the one don't exist. Not anymore. Not really.

MORT

What do you want?

SHOOTER

You tell me. Am I done yet? We got things all cleaned up around here?

(no answer)

Do we?

MORT

I don't know!

SHOOTER

Think on it. What's the real reason
I come for?

MORT
Fix your story.

SHOOTER
That's right.

MORT
Fix the ending.

SHOOTER
And how exactly do you suppose you
oughta do that?

Outside, they hear the sound of tires on gravel. They both
turn in time —

— to see Amy's car drive past the front door.

They look at each other.

SHOOTER
"Todd Downey thought that a woman
who would steal your love when your
love was really all you had was not
much of a woman."

Mort takes a step straight forward, but that's where Shooter
is standing, so when he moves ahead —

— he passes right through Shooter, whose image falls all to
pieces, but they're sticky pieces, and they dissolve and
cling to Mort at the same time, it's like walking through a
spiderweb.

Shooter is gone or maybe Shooter was right, and Mort's the
one who's gone. Because when Mort finishes Shooter's
quotation, he is speaking with Shooter's voice and moving
with his mannerisms.

He is Shooter.

MORT
"He therefore decided to kill her."

He turns and looks at the mirror again, and from this angle
he can see the driveway, and Amy's car parked in it. We move
toward the mirror, fast, than we go through the mirror and
zoom in on Amy and in that same shot we find ourselves —

— out in the driveway as Amy SLAMS the door of her car. She takes one step and stops, her attention caught by something in the driveway.

It's a sock, Part of it is a rusty red color. Odd. She looks up from it.

AMY
Mort?

No answer. She starts walking toward the cabin. Up ahead, same white pages are fluttering on the driveway next to Mort's car.

She stoops down, picks one up. It's page 63 of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, lying right where Mort dumped it after he cut it out of his own magazine.

It's a short story:

SOWING SEASON
Short fiction by Norton Rainey

That's weird. Amy doesn't like it. She lets go of the page, it flaps away in the light breeze.

Now she really takes in the view of the cabin, and there are a few more details that aren't quite the way we've been seeing them. The screen door, for example, which is hanging from one broken hinge. And a single shoe sitting on the front step of the cabin, must go with the sock in the driveway.

Amy passes the garbage cabinet and hears flies BUZZIKG. She looks over at the spot where Bump had been pinned to the wood.

No Bump, of course, Mort did bury her, but the wood is stained, big dark red chunks of dog stuck to it, fliss feeding on it.

With a growing sense of alarm, Amy steps up to the screen door and peers through.

AMY
Mort?
(no answer)
You home?

Still no answer. She puts a hand on the door —

— and steps inside. She stops, looking around the room in shook.

The outside of the house was a mess, but inside is a disaster.

Half-eaten "meals" are on plates around the room, the flies are feasting on these too. The ashtray with the dog on it is buried in the wall, where it has started a small creek, about a foot long. The trash can is full and has overflowed onto the floor.

Paper is littered everywhere. It looks as if Mort has exhumed every copy of every manuscript he had in the place and strewn the pages around, the room.

In short, the room looks nothing like it did two minutes ago, when we were looking at it through Mort's eyes. But as we now know, those are very unreliable eyes indeed.

Worst of all, everywhere, everywhere is one word. The word is SHOOTER.

It's written on the walls in chalk and ink, it's sprayed on the window twice in what looks like dried whipped cream — and there's the Redi-Whip can on the floor under the window to prove it.

"Shooter" is written on the stair railings in pencil, neat columns stacked on top of each other like addition problems.

It's even carved into the cherry wood coffee table in great jagged letters three feet high, like a grotesque declaration of love — SHOOTER.

The screwdriver he used to do the carving is lying on the tabletop. It's a familiar-looking screwdriver, with a red chipped handle, and dried red stuff on its steel shaft. We've seen this screwdriver before. Twice.

AMY
(a whisper)
Mort?

She hears a sound. She turns, looks in the direction of Mort's study. The door is closed again.

She walks toward it, kicking the issue of Ellery Queen on the fleer on the way. She doesn't notice.

She puts a hand on the door to the study and pushes it open.

The door swings wide and Amy takes a step into the study. The first thing she notices is Mort's computer monitor, which has been swept off the desk and is lying on its side on the floor, where it imploded.

On the desk in its place is an old Royal typewriter. A typed manuscript is neatly stacked on top of it. Amy takes a quick look around the room and walks toward it --

-- passing Mort, who is standing just behind the door, hands folded primly behind his back, Shooter's hat perched atop his head.

She doesn't notice. And he doesn't move. Amy crosses the room to the desk and comes around behind it, peering down at the manuscript. The title page is on top:

Secret Window, Secret Garden

By John Shooter

Amy stares at it, puzzled.

AMY
(a mutter)
John Shooter... ?

She looks up and sees "Shooter" is also written on the walls of this room, across the walls in a nearly straight line. She follows the line, but as she nears the end of it, the last one doesn't say "Shooter" anymore, somehow it has evolved into two words, two words that are right over Mort's head:

SHOOT HER

Amy GASPS, seeing Mort and the words at the same time.

She's scared as hell, tries to sound normal, fails.

AMY
Hi.

He doesn't reply, just stares at her.

She looks at the hat.

AMY
Where'd you find that old thing?
The attic?

He still doesn't answer, but his face twitches, and as it twitches, we saw a thought that flashes through his mind:

139 EXT. RUMMAGE SALE - DAY

139

Mort, younger, is at a rummage sale in the country with Amy. He puts the hat on, turns around to face her, smiling. He affects a Southern accent, sounds just like Shooter.

MORT
Time to plant the north forty,
ma'am.

140 INT. CABIN - STUDY - DAY

140

The flinch goes away as Mort banishes the memory. He smiles. A Shooter smile. He speaks softly, as Shooter.

MORT
It's my hat. Wasn't ever anybody
else's.

AMY
Mort? What's wrong? What's-

MORT
You got you a wrong number, woman.
Ain't no Mort here. Mort's dead. He
did a lot of squirmin' around, but
in the end he couldn't lie to
himself anymore, let alone to me. I
never put a hand on him, Mrs.
Rainey. I swear. He took the
coward's way out.

Amy looks around the room. One door, and Mort's standing right next to it.

AMY
Why are you talking that way?

MORT
This is just the way I talk.
Everybody down in Miss'ippi talks
this way.

AMY
Mort, stop it!

MORT
Don't you understand what I said?
You ain't deaf, are you? He's dead.
He killed himself.

AMY
(starting to cry)

You're scaring me...

MORT
Don't matter.

He takes his hands out from behind his back. In one of them he holds a pair of scissors.

MORT
(walking toward her)
You won't be scared long.

She stays still for a moment, in total disbelief, but then snaps out of it. She bolts for the door.

Mort lunges toward her, bringing the scissors down in a silver arc --

– but his foot slips on the loose papers on the floor and he falls, missing her by a few inches. The blades stab into the hardwood floor, right through page nine of "Secret Window, Secret Garden."

Mort's mouth BANGS oft the floor and sprays blood. A half-smoked package of Pall Malls shoots out of his shirt pocket and slides across the wooden floor.

Mort yanks the scissors from the floor and gets up on his knees, smiling and snarling through the blood running over his lips and teeth.

MORT
Won't do you no help, Mr. Rainey!

He checks the scissors, seas their blunted tips, and tosses them impatiently aside as he gets to his feet.

MORT
I got a place for you! I got it all picked out!

He walks out the door after her.

142 EXT. CABIN - DRIVEWAY - DAY

142

Amy races dews the front steps of the cabin and to her car. She throws open the door and leaps inside, SLAMMING down the locks.

Through the passenger window, we see Mort walk calmly out of the house after her. She fumbles for her keys, pawing for the right one.

Mort walks toward the car, bending down when he gets near it, just out of our sight, below the window line.

Amy jams the key in the ignition —

— Mort stands up next to the passenger window —

— Any turns the key and the engine ROARS to life --

— and Mort SMASHES the boulder he picked up through the passenger window.

To Amy's credit, she doesn't scream, doesn't let herself get distracted. She reaches over for the gear shift (it's a stick shift) and starts to jam it into reverse.

But Mort lunges through the window and grabs hold of that hand, gets her hard by the wrist. Amy fights him, shoves the car into reverse anyway.

The car starts to move, but Mort's half in it, and he's got both hands on her now.

Amy shoves a foot down on the gas, Mort pulls her with all his strength —

— and hauls her right out through the broken passenger window as the car rolls away.

Now Amy SCREAMS as her legs rake over the jagged broken glass in the window frame. She THUDS to the ground on the gravel driveway as her car rolls in a broad, backward semi-circle, SLAMMING ass-end into a tree and coming to a stop.

143 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - DAY

143

Mort BANGS through the screen door of the cabin, dragging Amy behind him, a firm grip on her hair. She's half-crawling, trying to stop him or at least keep up, it hurts like hell.

Mort reaches the coffee table and grabs the screwdriver, the one he used on the dog and Tom Greenleaf.

MORT
(still Shooter)
Be still, will you.

He knocks her over onto her back, raises the screwdriver, and brings it down. Amy SHRIEKS and rolls away --

-- but the screwdriver buries in her calf. Now she SCREAKS.

He pulls the blade cut and she rolls over, crawling away from him fast.

MORT
No, ma'am.

He grabs her by the ankle.

MORT
No, ma'am.

Amy swings her other leg around hard and connects with his nose, breaking it with a wet SNAP.

He turns and looks back at her as blood runs down his lip.

MORT
I'm about done fussin' with you.

She drags herself to her feet and races toward the back door.

Her right loafer, filling with blood, SQUELCHES and SMOOCHESES on her foot.

She hits the screen door with both hands --

144 EXT. CABIN - LAKE SIDE - DAY

144

-- and staggers out into the back yard. Mort flies out the door behind her and SLAMS into her; a hard tackle. She hits the ground on her stomach, all his weight on her, and the air WHOOSHES out of her.

Mort climbs off of her and flips her over. She's GASPING, the wind knocked out of her, unable to breathe for the moment, certainly unable to stand.

Mort gets up, looks around --

— and grabs the shovel out of the pile of dirt in the back yard.

MORT
I am sorry, Missus. None of this was my idea. It was Mr. Rainey all along.

AMY
(desperate for air)
Mort...

MORI

'Cause right is right. And fair is
fair.

He comes over and straddles her, holding the shovel in both hands.

AMY
You are...

MORT
And something has got to be done.

AMY
You are Mort Rainey...

MORT
I got a place for you.

He hefts the shovel.

AMY
You are Mort Rainey.

MORT
I get it all picked out.

He raises the shovel over his head, about to bring it down on her.

AMY
YOU ARE MORT RAINY!

Mort pauses. (If we're listening carefully at this point, we might have just heard car tires on gravel.)

AMY
YOU ARE MORT RAINY! YOU ARE MORT
RAINY!

Mort's brow furrows. The shovel levers, slightly at first. Amy's tone changes, becomes aura soothing, she's trying like hell.

AMY
You are Mort Rainey. Your name is
Mort Rainey.

The shovel lowers even more, Mort's thinking like crazy now, even cocking his head like a dog.

AMY
Say it. Your name. Mort Rainey.

The shovel lowers even more, he's holding it across his waist now. Is this it? Has she done it? Have her words reached him?

At that very moment, we hear THUNDERING FEET inside the house, we see the outline of a man racing through the house, he calls out a name, we recognize the voice —

TED (O.S.)
AMY?!

— and the back screen door BANGS open and Ted comes barreling outside, just in time to meet —

— MORT'S SHOVEL, which he brings across his chest in a two hundred and seventy degree baseball swing that catches Ted full in the face.

No. Amy's words did not reach Mort.

He was just listening.

Ted flies off his feet and lands on his back on the stairs, SNAPPING two vertebrae.

Amy SCREAMS. She watches as, in a flash, Mort is standing over Ted, raising the shovel again, this time like a long-handled axe over his head, and he brings it down on Ted's head.

We don't see the death blow, but Ted's head sounds pretty much as you'd think it would, like an overripe watermelon.

Amy SCREAMS one more time, for good measure. Mort turns to her, in no mood to fuck around any longer, he walks toward her and raises the shovel up over his head and hesitates, just holding it up there, over his head, deciding whether or not to end this thing, and in that instant of indecision everything goes

BLACK.

145 EXT. BOWIE'S STORE - DAY

145

Downtown Tashmore Lake on a lovely fall day, The leaves have changed, so a few months must have gone by. Mort's Buick parks in front of Bowie's Store.

Mort climbs out and heads into the store, WHISTLING. Two women, the same two woman who watched him when he came out of the post office with the Fed Ex package, stop where they are on the sidewalk as he approaches.

MORN

'Morning, ladies!

The Women stare. The First Woman whispers something to the Second Woman. This time, the second woman does not laugh. They are afraid of him, he's O.J. in Brentwood.

146 INT. BOWIE'S STORE - DAY

146

Mort breezes inside.

MORT
Hiya, Gerda1

Gerda doesn't look at him, doesn't answer. The entire place tenses.

Mort heads for the back counter, not the diner part, but the store part. As he passes the usual Department of Public Works guys having their breakfast at the counter, they turn their heads, one by one. After he passes. Not before. There is no eye contact this time.

AT THE BACK

Mort cheerily picks a few items off the shelves, brings them over to the counter as Gerda meets him reluctantly at the register.

MORT
No time for breakfast today, I'm
afraid.

Gerda rings up the items. There's butter. Morton Salt. A stack of napkins.

Gerda never looks at him.

GERDA
Six twenty-six.

Mort PLUNKS down a ten.

MORT
How's business?

Gerda hands him his change, finally looks him in the eye.

GERDA
Been better.

MORT

Ah, it'll pick up. Always does. "To everything there is a season."
Thanks, Gerda!

He takes his bag and leaves. Gerda watches him go.

CUT TO:

147 EXT. CABIN - DAY

147

Mort's cabin, Mort's Buick parked in front. The trees changing color. You know, this place is just absolutely beautiful.

A police car rolls slowly into the driveway. "Tashmore Lake Sheriff's Department" on the side.

148 INT. CABIN - LIVING ROOM - DAY

148

The back door opens and Mort comes into the cabin from the back, carrying a basket of something from outside.

DAVE NEWSOME
(through the screen)
Mr. Rainey?

Mort jumps, startled. He smiles when he recognizes Newsom.

MORT
Dave! You startled me.

DAVE NEWSOME
May I come in?

MORT
Uh... can you come back? I'm a little busy right now.

DAVE NEWSOME
'Fraid not. Mr. Rainey. Official visit.

But without another word, Mort just turns and walks into the kitchen, carrying his basket.

Dave is surprised. He opens the screen door and comes inside.

He hears a bumping end CLANGING from the kitchen and walks slowly toward the swinging door.

He pushes it open.

149 INT. CABIN - KITCHEN - DAY

149

One hand still on the door, Newsome gradually reveals the view into the kitchen. The piece is a foul, fetid mess. There are stacks of rotting corn husks everywhere, a huge pot boiling on the stove.

Mort chuck's the basket he wee carrying into a corner of the kitchen beside two others. It's full of freshly picked ears of corn.

Newsome looks around, shocked. Mort's at the stove now, putting on hot pads to remove the boiling pot.

MORT
Told you, Dave, I'm kinda swamped.

He carries the pot over to the sink and dumps it into a large strainer there. The boiling water and bright yellow ears of corn tumble out and steam billows up over Mort's head in a great hot cloud.

MORT
Harvest time.

DAVE NEWSOME
So I see.

Mort pulls off the hot pads and plucks the still-steaming ears of corn from the trainer, placing them in a bowl one by one.

Pause, then out with it:

DAVE NEWSOME
We finally found Tom Greenleaf's car. Seems it was at the bottom of Dunsmoor Quarry.

Mort doesn't answer, just carries the bowl of corn to the table and has a seat.

DAVE NEWSOME
And old Tom was in it, along with another body. Too decayed to identify right off, but I got a hunch it's gonna turn out to be that private investigator you hired down in the city. But I expect you knew that already.

Mort still doesn't answer. He picks an ear of corn and jabs two of those prongy corn-eater things into the ends. Easier to eat that way, you don't get your fingers messy.

DAVE NEWSOME

And we found a wristwatch in the car, too. I don't think there's e soul in town has any doubt it's gonna turn out to be yours. Not with that inscription. Yeah, you had us running in circles for a few months there, I'll give you that. We may never find what you did with the body of your wife and Ted Milner, but we got enough now.

Mort slathers some butter over the hot ear of corn, it melts and drips onto the plate.

DAVE NEWSOME

There's a half dozen fellas from the FBI on their way up here right now to put you under arrest. Should be there in three or four minutes. I just wanted to tell you myself.

Mort sprinkles salt on the corn.

DAVE NEWSOME

Did you hear what I said? You're going to jail, Mr. Rainey, and you won't be coming out.

MORT

Oh, I'm not worried about that. The only thing that matters is the ending. He was right to push me on it. It's the most important part of a story, the ending.

He looks up at the Sheriff, his face full of the modest pride of craftsmanship.

MORT

I think I got it right this time. A perfect ending.

He holds the ear of corn up in front of him, studies the shiny yellow kernels, the beautiful oozing butter, the bright white flakes of salt. He recites from memory, in Shooter's voice:

MORT

"I know I can do it," Todd Downey said, helping himself to another ear of corn from the steaming bowl.
 "I'm sure that in time every bit of her will be gone and her death will be a mystery. Even to me."

He leans forward to take a bite, clearing our line of vision, and we notice something waving outside his kitchen window.

Corn stalks.

We drift toward the waving green stalks, across the kitchen, out the open window —

150 EXT. HOUSE - LAKE SIDE - DAY

150

— and into the middle of the garden. Once a bare patch of dirt, it's now full of seven foot corn stalks, their tassels CLICKING against one another in the light breeze.

We keep drifting, but down now, down the lengths of the stalks, down where the irregular shafts of sunlight barely strike, past the base of the stalks, down to the dirt and then into the dirt, still moving, underground now, following the roots of the corn stalks into the moist black earth.

They go deep, these roots, thick at first, then thinner, thinner still, we're six feet underground now and still following the spidery tendrils of corn root down, past the corpse of Bump the dog, all the way down —

— into the decomposing bodies of Amy Rainey and her lover.

151 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

151

MORT

Perfect.

CRUNCH!

Mort sinks his teeth into the corn and tears the kernels free, butter running down his chin.

FADE OUT.