

A HOLLYWOOD HEIST

An original screenplay

By

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FADE IN:

INT BANK VAULT - SOMEWHERE IN LA - MORNING

The circular door to the metal bank vault comes into view. Shiny, immense, secure.

Two bank employees - one male, one female - operate dual custody combination dials. Massive cylinder bolts CLICK, disengage.

THE YOUNG MALE EMPLOYEE steps forward and releases the lever, effectively swinging open half a ton of titanium and steel, revealing a huge store of gold ingot bars stacked in glistening piles.

BENNY

Well, blow my socks off!..So,
that's what four hundred million
bucks worth of bling looks like.

BENNY TRUEBLOOD, slim, of dapper appearance, early forties, is carrying a silver attache case and is glaring wide eyed at the bullion.

Crisp white shirt, cotton pants, red suspenders, a soft felt fedora aloft. Benny likes to dress in the style of a character from his favorite movie - 'Goodfellas'.

EXT: BANK (METROPOLITAN) LOS ANGELES - SAME TIME.

Establishing shot of - FIRST UNION BANK -

INT: BANK VAULT MOMENTS LATER

THE SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF, a sour faced looking woman; a little older than Benny, picks up on the business at hand.

ASSISTANT BANK MANAGER

Whilst the Board of Directors
have instructed the Bank to offer
your Film Company whatever
assistance we can, obviously,
mister Trueblood-

(Gesturing in the direction of the gold bars)

-it goes without saying that our
bullion reserves will be
transferred to our new location,
ahead of the scheduled filming...
Now, if you'd like to follow me
Mister Trueblood, I'll take you
through to where we house our
safety deposit boxes.

BENNY

You bet, Sweet Cheeks.

The woman casts her visitor a disparaging look, before assisting her male colleague in closing the huge door of the vault and reactivating the locking mechanism.

INT: BANK LOBBY - DAY TIME

'BANG' - 'BANG'.

A MASKED GUNMAN empties both barrels of a sawn-off shotgun into the ceiling. He screams at the customers through the opening in his clown's mask.

MASKED GUNMAN 1
We mean business...now get down
on the floor.

A SECOND MASKED GUNMAN is also brandishing a shotgun. Meanwhile, A BABY CRIES in its MOTHER'S arms; as petrified customers and staff cower in the midst of the robbery.

A suitably HANDSOME HERO, a customer, seizes his opportunity as the second robber turns his back on his hostages.

Our hero springs into action, scissor kicking him to the ground, sending him sprawling, knocking the shotgun from his hands.

Quick as a flash, our hero scoops up the 12 gauge, fixing it on the accomplice who reacts by bringing his shotgun round to threaten our hero. There is a tense stand-off.

The robber slowly inches his way towards our hero, who is now shielding the petrified mother and baby.

MASKED GUNMAN 1
Drop the weapon; or I'll let mom
and the kid have it.

The robber lowers his aim to target mother and child, but our hero does not flinch.

OUR HERO
(Growls)
I reckon you won't.

Our hero steps within range. Both barrels at the ready.

MASKED GUNMAN 1
What makes you so sure pilgrim?

OUR HERO
'Cos you're holding an English
made Purdey, double-barrel twelve
gauge shotgun...it's a side by
side...and Pilgrim, you've had
your two shots.

Glancing up at the shotgun blasts in the ceiling.

Our hero swings and strikes with the butt of his weapon, sending the 'bad guy' crashing to the ground.

MALE - DIRECTOR (O.C.)
 (Posh English accent)
 CUT!...Okay darlings, mark it,
 that will do us people...Let's
 prepare for the next scene,
 luvvies.

ON SET

The full extent of the film set is revealed, as technicians and assistants make busy.

A solitary, though theatrical, CLAP, CLAP, CLAP can be heard from behind one of the lighting rigs, courtesy of the ebullient Benny Trueblood; sporting his trademark fedora and Hollywood smile.

Benny strolls masterfully onto the film set, full of bogus enthusiasm. He draws level with 'our hero'; ageing international movie star TONY NEVADA. He looks up into his 'A-lister's' million dollar blue eyes.

BENNY
 Tony, Tony, you ooze charisma
 baby, pure class Tony, pure
 class...you remind me of a young
 BRANDO. Did I ever tell you about
 - (shock) - Hey what's up?

The Star is holding a handkerchief over his face.

TONY NEVADA
 (Muffled)
 Uh. It's just a nosebleed. They
 come on when I get tense, mister
 Trueblood.

Benny throws his arms up in despair, calling out to the runners on set.

BENNY
 Hey!... Will someone get me
 medical, we got a goddam screen
 legend dying here.

Clearly embarrassed by the unwanted attention, Tony Nevada tries to downplay the situation.

TONY NEVADA

(waving away the matter)
I'm fine, I'm fine...while you're here Mister Trueblood, any news on my double? (wiping nose) Only my people ain't happy abo-

BENNY

Tony, Tony!...What's With all this Mister Trueblood baloney, you kidding me. To you, I'm Benny, okay? Don't picture me as some hard ass producer...think of me as a...as a...as a friend - (cell-phone rings).

Benny digs out his cell-phone from his pocket.

TONY NEVADA

And my stunt double, any word on my double?

BENNY

Oh, he's in traction...(pressing the phone to his ear), doctors say he's doin' real good though Tony...real good.(talking into the cell-phone)...Is that you, Syd?...He'll be walking again in no time, trust me...(talking Into the phone)..No, not you, Syd, I'm with Tony Nevada.

Benny, holding the phone to ear, gestures to the actor.

BENNY

They did what, Syd?...When?...Get outta here!

EXT: DAY - SAN REMO TOWER- LA.

It's a clammy, sticky, sunny LA day. Benny swings his classic 1959 Cadillac Eldorado drop-top into the parking lot of the San Remo.

INT: MOMENTS LATER - HALLWAY 16TH FLOOR SAN REMO TOWER

SUITE 1621 - SYDNEY GROLSCH (ACCOUNTANT LLP CPA)

Benny pauses for breath outside door 1621 and wipes a bead of sweat from his brow with a silk handkerchief, before knocking and entering.

INT SAME TIME - SUITE 1621

SYDNEY GROLSCH - balding, pot-bellied, pensionable age - looks up from his glass of bicarbonate soda.

His beady eyes are magnified under the thickness of his black rimmed spectacles. He burps and gestures across his desk to the vacant chair. A laptop sits open on his desk.

SYDNEY

Take the weight off. (He burps again). Apologies Benny, damn chilli burritos...Montezuma's revenge...a client's nephew has just opened a new Tex-Mex joint around the corner.

BENNY

Fascinating, Syd, but tell me something I need to know.

Benny puts down his case, lays the fedora on the desk and brushes a hand through his thick black hair. He takes a seat, and stares expectantly across at his accountant.

SYDNEY

So what d'ya want, the bad news or the bad news?

BENNY

Way to go Syd...(nodding toward the desk drawer)...Why don't you just finish me off now, with that nine millimeter (smiles) you're keeping in your desk drawer..you got a permit for *that* thing?

Syd shifts uneasily in his chair, fumbles with his laptop.

SYDNEY

I just took a call from Mike Turner in accounts, over at Central Pictures...Whisper's on the street, you're way behind schedule and that you're gonna over run big time. The studio's gettin' jittery (burp) they're putting your picture on notice.

BENNY

Is this some kinda sick joke?

SYDNEY

They want an indemnity...
(pointing to an e-mail)
The honchos over at Central Pictures want you to come up with ten per cent of the movies overall budget as security, or they say they're locking you out of the studio.

BENNY

But that's three million bucks...
are you kiddin'? Are you shittin'
me, Syd?

SYDNEY

That's what it says *here*.

Benny rages.

BENNY

Are you shaftin' me? Have you
been spreading rumors around
town?..What is it? You gotta
another client lined up, and you
want my studio, is that it? Give
me that damn gun, Syd.

Benny springs to his feet and charges around the side of
the desk, like a madman.

SYDNEY

Take it easy Benny-

BENNY

(Still raging)

Give me the gun, Syd. Give me the
gun. Give me the goddam gun!

Syd is pushed aside as Benny desperately rummages through
the desk drawer, eventually finding the gun. The Smith &
Wesson pistol. He feverishly begins checking over the
weapon, and apparently has now idea how to use it.

SYDNEY

What are you doin'?...give me
that, give me that gun, now!

BENNY

Where's the safety catch, Syd?
Where's the goddam safety
catch?.. when I find it I'm gonna
shoot you like the low down
stinking accountant that you
are...ugh!

There is a loud THUD, then a CLUNK.

Senior citizen Syd, brings Benny down with a tackle worthy
of an NFL running back. The gun spins across the floor.

OFFICE FLOOR

Accountant and Producer begin to wrestle on the floor in a
truly undignified display of combat - handbags at noon -
like a pair of teenagers at a high school prom, scrapping
over a slight.

Syd straddles his client, pinning him facedown on the office floor. Both men are hollering at each other.

SYDNEY
Have you gone mad?

BENNY
(screaming back)
Sure!..I must be mad hiring you.
My old man always said you
Grolsch's weren't kosher -

SYDNEY
Don't bring your father into
this; he's a good man -

Both men are near their expiry date, wheezing and panting.

A sort of truce has broken out, with the weight of Syd on top of the spread-eagled Benny, making further resistance futile. Both men momentarily stop struggling, catching their breath. A childish glee wells up on Syd's face.

SYDNEY
Hey! I think I've cured my wind.

Benny has the Smith & Wesson in his sights and, with an outstretched arm, he makes one last play for it.

BENNY
I'm still gonna shoot ya
Syd...you scumbag, snake in the
grass, no good piece of -

Syd grabs Benny by the legs, and is furiously yanking him backwards like a wheelbarrow. Then comes a distinct RIPPING sound of cloth torn from cloth. Syd suddenly stops and lets go of his client's limbs, but somehow retains the left leg of Benny's grey suit. There's an uncomfortable silence.

Benny casts a slow doleful eye the length of his fleshy, partially denuded left leg. He looks up with disdain at his balding, bespectacled accountant. Overweight and out of breath, Syd stands fumbling with the shredded remains of an eight hundred dollar suit.

Syd, looking culpable, meekly tosses back the leg of Benny's pants, which accidentally hit Benny in the face.

BENNY
(dismissive whisper)
This isn't right, Syd...This
isn't how making movies' supposed
to be...(shaking his head) I
didn't sign up for this-

Syd quietly crosses the room and picks up the gun. Benny gathers up the left leg of his suit, and gets to his feet.

BENNY

-I've won awards Syd... 'ON A WING AND A PRAYER' Best picture, Tuscon - Golden Stetson, 2004, remember?

SYDNEY

Yeah, but the movie bombed at the box office.

BENNY

(Defiantly)
The Lake Winnipeg - Breakthrough Cinema award, 2005.

SYDNEY

The movie still bombed, though.

Benny's pride's wounded, and perhaps Syd feels responsible.

SYDNEY

Look, Benny, as far as box Office goes you've gotta face the facts. Besides any movie about a narcoleptic pilot was always going to be a tough sell...it didn't play well in the mid-west.

BENNY

Spare me the Hollywood review, Syd.

SYDNEY

I guess folks just weren't willing to pay good money to see a picture where the Star spends most of the movie unconscious. (Shrugs his shoulders) Especially if it's not billed as a comedy.

BENNY

(exasperated)
It was a disaster movie.

SYDNEY

You ain't kidding...I'm your accountant remember.

BENNY

What about VEGANS VEE ZOMBIES? Highest grossing box office Zombie picture of the decade-

Wagging a finger skyward.

BENNY

You know, Syd? That kind of juice goes a long way in this business. Benny Trueblood's still got a helluva reputation in this back stabbing, cesspool of a town.

Syd returns to his desk, discreetly slipping the Smith & Wesson back into the drawer. He removes a bottle of bourbon and a couple of glasses, before locking the drawer and easing himself back into his swivel chair.

SYDNEY

Sure, Benny, but you haven't made a movie in over seven years, Hollywood's Changed. These days movies get made by a bunch of committees...The studios are all run by lean, mean, over ambitious kids with more college degrees than they got pubic hairs.

The cell-phone sounds in Benny's ripped trouser pocket.

Benny ignores Syd's misgivings, and hurriedly delves into his tattered threads. The sight of his ruined pants is a further slap in the Producer's face.

Syd pours himself a bourbon, takes a slug, then slumps back wearily in his chair.

Benny is nodding, ear to the cell, clearly taking instructions from a voice on the phone. He slowly turns his back on Syd and speaks in a hushed tone.

BENNY

Yeah, sure, I know where it is. Okay, I can be there in forty -

looking down at the slither of suit in his hand.

- Make that an hour.

Syd pours himself another shot of bourbon. He begins talking, but Benny isn't listening.

SYDNEY

You see the problem with the beast that's Hollywood is, Benny, it can't figure out whether it's in the business of making art, or the art of making business.

Syd looks to the door closing quietly behind his client.

INT: UNDERGROUND CAR PARK (WEST HOLLYWOOD) - AN HOUR LATER

A brooding 'heavy' is standing vigil alongside a black stretch-limousine. Dark glasses, boxer's knuckles; a packed shoulder holster peeking from under his jacket.

Benny's Cadillac sits nearby, and apart from the stretch-limo it is the only other vehicle in sight.

INT: BLACK LIMOUSINE - SAME TIME

Behind tinted glass. Cocooned within the soft leather interior of the limousine, GREGOR, the tall silver-haired man sitting across from Benny, is patiently outlining the predicament in his thick Russian accent.

GREGOR

We are all prisoners of our circumstances...Do you not agree?

Gregor's gloved hand presses on a door panel. An electric motor whirs and a small drinks cabinet slowly emerges.

Benny, (fresh suit), looks apprehensively across at the Russian. When Benny speaks there's desperation in his voice

BENNY

But Gregor I thought we had a deal, heck, I know you guys don't do paperwork, but -

Benny nervously watches the actions of Gregor who is slowly and meticulously removing his black leather gloves.

BENNY

I thought we had an unwritten contract, an agreement, you know, a gentleman's agreement.

GREGOR

Unfortunately the gentleman your agreement is with, *is* no longer with us...

Gregor sighs.

GREGOR

You see Benny, we are all truly prisoners of our circumstances.

BENNY

But Mister Berensky loved the screenplay. He even said he wanted to come on the set and meet the actors, remember?

GREGOR

Last week, I take orders from Berensky, he is boss...then (clicking fingers)..BANG. BANG. This week message comes back from East Coast. I now take orders from Ivan 'the terrible', and Ivan says he wants his eleven million dollars back.

BENNY

But, but...We've already begun shooting. What d'you guys expect me to do, just pull the plug on the friggin' picture?

A knife scar below the Russian's right eye creases, just a little; his face gradually contorts into gentle mirth.

GREGOR

(gesturing towards the mini bar).
You wanna drink my friend?

Benny declines. Gregor pours a very large measure of vodka, replaces the bottle on the mini bar and then nonchalantly plucks out his GLASS EYEBALL, and plops it into the clear alcohol, turning the vodka cloudy and opaque.

He looks at Benny with his one good eye and blackened socket, then smiles.

GREGOR

Russian vodka. Perfect antiseptic...I get some small pieces of sand no, not sand, of greet. Greet is that how you -

Benny finds himself giving an English lesson.

BENNY

Grit. We say grit-

GREGOR

(Seizing on the vowel)
Grit, yes grit...most uncomfortable.

Benny stares at the eyeball resting at the bottom of the glass of vodka.

BENNY

(Opines)
I got commitments out there
Gregor, y'know people are going to expect to get paid -

This time Gregor Chuckles to himself.

GREGOR

I like you Benny, we say in
Russian Special Forces - 'balls
like a bison' -

BENNY

Nice of you to say so.

Benny's attention is suddenly taken by the feint - THUMP,
THUMP - sound, heard coming from the trunk of the limo.

Gregor's fingers fish out his GLASS EYE. He blows away the
excess moisture, uses a cloth to polish the eyeball and
then pops it back into its socket before remarking, with a
hint of menace.

GREGOR

The problem is, my friend.. The
bigger the balls..the bigger the
risk of losin' them.

The feint sound of thumping continues. Still the Russian
chooses to ignore it. Instead he selects two small clean
glasses and begins pouring two shots of vodka.

GREGOR

Enough business. Let's drink to
friends, family, c'mon my friend.

Gregor passes a fresh glass of vodka to Benny who
reluctantly accepts it. The Russian raises his glass.

GREGOR

Zazdarovje!

BENNY

Down the hatch.

Both men toss back a shot of vodka.

GREGOR

And Benny senior, what news?..I
know you have a son's concern.
Last time we meet you speak of
this man Carpenter from hospital-

Benny cuts in.

BENNY

CARPENTER...The administrator.
He's a goddam prick.

FLASHBACK - HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

The name plaque on the desk reads: GORDON CARPENTER-
HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR.

The forty something sitting behind the desk is wearing a punctilious expression of indifference; hyphenated by a perfectly trimmed moustache.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR

(wearily)

I'm sorry, Mister Trueblood, rules are rules...Until all the arrears on the medical bills are settled I am duty bound to move your father out of our deluxe-care ward, and into one of our standard-care wards.

INT: BLACK LIMOUSINE - SAME TIME

The knocking reaches a crescendo.

GREGOR

Come, come. I've surprise.

Opening the passenger door. Both men step out.

INT UNDERGROUND CAR PARK - SAME TIME

Gregor and Benny stare down at the source of the noise, a bound and gagged victim curled up in the trunk of the limo.

The 'Heavy,' drags the captive from the trunk and pulls out a switchblade. The hostage mumbles fearfully from behind duct-tape, as the binds about his legs and wrists are swiftly cut away.

Gregor steps forward and unceremoniously rips the tape from the man's lips, taking with it a layer of moustache. Benny suddenly recognizes the petrified man as Gordon Carpenter the Hospital administrator.

GREGOR

Mister Carpenter has some good news for you Benny...don't you Mister Carpenter?

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR

(spluttering)

Yes, yes, uh! Uh!

BENNY

What's he doin' here?

GREGOR

Well go on Mister Carpenter

The administrator regains a little composure before directly addressing Benny.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR

(trembling)

After eh!...further
Consideration, my
department...has, has revisited
your father's case...and agreed
to reinstate him back into our
hospital's Deluxe-care ward.

Gregor screws up his one good eye. The administrator
shudders, then compliantly adds.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR

With immediate effect.

Gregor smiles. Satisfied.

Benny stares back at Gordon Carpenter, a frightened little
bureaucrat, trembling in his crumpled suit. 'A prize jerk-
off', for sure; and yet there is a tiny part of Benny which
almost feels sorry for the guy.

There is a SQUEALING and a SCREECHING of tires as a family
saloon careers into view. The vehicle is brought to an
abrupt halt, just yards from where the hospital
administrator shivers. Another of Gregor's 'heavies' gets
out and tosses the vehicles keys at Carpenter's feet.

Gregor steps forward and perfunctorily brushes down the
creases on Carpenter's jacket, then folds a crisp hundred
dollar bill and tucks it inside the administrators's breast
pocket.

GREGOR

I think now... you get into your
car, and on your drive home you
stop, you buy missus Carpenter a
big bunch of flowers...and after
you have eaten her delicious
food, and told her how beautiful
she still looks, you *take* her
right *there* from behind.
(smirks)...then, mister hospital
administrator -

The Russian gently squeezes his captive's loins and hisses
into his ear.

GREGOR

-You *will* find your balls again.

EXT: FBI BUILDING - LOS ANGELES - DAY TIME

Establishing shot. FBI Field office - Wilshire Boulevard,
Los Angeles Division.

INT: FBI BRIEFING ROOM - SAME TIME

A Field Intelligence Group of a dozen or so Special Agents are focused on the images being projected on a large screen. As they sit, some making notes, they are being addressed from behind a lectern by their Assistant Director in Charge (ADC).

The ADC - a confident, forty something male in a dark three piece suit is briefing his agents by microphone. Using a Power-point, his thumb clicks on the remote control

SCREEN IMAGE:

Grainy black & white Soviet Police mug shot - 6/25/1974

A bald headed male in his late twenties with a boyish face as round and chubby as Buddha, stares defiantly into the camera. He holds up a Prisoner number: 5159025.

ADC

Ivanov Yemeninsky. This is the only known image of him in circulation, two years after it was taken he escaped from a Soviet labour camp. Believed to have entered the US in 1982 on a false passport and over the past thirty years has slowly positioned himself at the heart of Russian organized crime, on both the East and West coasts... Drugs, arms, robbery, extortion, money laundering you name it; And Washington now believes he ordered the killing of his former boss Berensky.

The ADC takes a few steps away from the lectern and gestures towards a man seated in the front row.

ADC

I'm gonna hand you over now to a familiar face, leading our Field Intelligence Group here in LA. Special Agent Bob Lazarus.

Lazarus gets to his feet, adjusts his jacket and accepts the remote from his superior. Tall enough for the NBA, and younger than his boss, he dwarfs the lectern as he faces his fellow agents, bright white teeth and a winning smile.

AGENT LAZARUS

Evolving Intel supplied by our agents in the field-

Lazarus clicks the remote control.

AGENT LAZARUS
-identify this man as being
Yemininsky's chief enforcer here
on the West Coast, and most
probably Berensky's killer.

SCREEN IMAGE:

Color portrait photograph of a younger looking Gregor dressed as a Russian military officer.

AGENT LAZARUS
Captain Gregor Zhukov retired,
Russian Spetsnaz Special forces,
decorated for missions undertaken
in the 80's in Afghanistan, lost
an eye to a Chechen sniper in the
1990's, entered the US on a visa
in 2001. Married a US citizen in
California, 2003.

Agent Lazarus' mood hardens. He lifts the microphone from its stand. Gone is his earlier smile. He moves front of stage to address his audience.

AGENT LAZARUS
Some of you here in this room may
have been with the Bureau long
enough to have worked alongside
Special Agent Gus Staunton...
There's a picture of his ugly mug
outside on 'The Wall of the
Fallen'...Gus was a dear friend,
and one of the finest agents to
ever carry the badge.

There is a ripple of acknowledgement around the room, verbal salutes at the mention of a former colleague's name.

AGENT LAZARUS
He was working on a case back in
2007 involving a rogue arms
contractor. Yemininsky was the
middle man on the deal.

Lazarus' voice cracks a little and there's raw emotion when he speaks.

AGENT LAZARUS
Gus wound up in a ditch in San
Diego with his throat slit.
A murder weapon turned up a
couple of days later with Gregor
Zhukov's prints all over it.

Lazarus returns to the lectern.

AGENT LAZARUS

Had it not been for the screw up of a rookie cop, contaminating the evidence, Gregor Zhukov would be doing life without parole in a federal penitentiary for the murder of Special Agent Gus Staunton.

Lazarus clicks through a number of FBI surveillance photographs.

AGENT LAZARUS

Washington have been waiting a long time for this crew to surface.

SCREEN IMAGE:

GREGOR ENTERING A HOTEL / GREGOR TALKING TO ARCHITECTS - CONSTRUCTION SIGHT / BLACK LIMOUSINE LICENCE PLATE.

AGENT LAZARUS (O.S.)

The bureau are using integrated teams of analysts between East and West coasts, they're going over every scrap of Intel and Surveillance data on known and suspected associates of Zhukov-

SCREEN IMAGES:

WOMAN KISSING GREGOR OUTSIDE CASINO / GREGOR SHAKING HANDS- GROUP OF BUSINESSMEN ON RESTAURANT TERRACE / GREGOR BOARDING A FLIGHT AT LA AIRPORT.

AGENT LAZARUS (O.S.)

You guys have been brought in to support our existing agents in the field. Ladies and gentlemen we can not afford screw ups on this one.

(Final) SCREEN IMAGE:

MAN IN FEDORA HAT EXITING CAR PARK / DRIVING 1959 CADILLAC ELDORADO DROP-TOP.

EXT: HIGHWAY INTERSECTION - DAY TIME

Benny waits at a red light, drop-top down, sweating, frustrated, tapping fingers impatiently on the wheel.

RADIO DJ (O.S.)

We got ten after two here on GWRK
radio 88.9...and boy oh boy! It's
hot, hot, hot in the City -

Benny has barely had time to switch the radio off before...
CRASH! He's shunted forward in his seat from the impact of
the car behind, slamming into and rear-ending the Cadillac.

He recovers from the shock, adjusting his fedora, only to
be again surprised by the appearance of a flustered woman
wearing a dowdy dress. She is slightly younger than the
movie producer. The woman taps on the glass window.

PAMELA

Oh I'm sorry! Oh I'm so, so
sorry!

The woman stands, wriggling, biting her fingernails, as the
traffic TOOT their horns and weave by. Benny looks up at
her in disbelief. She points to the rear of the Cadillac.

PAMELA

I don't think there's much damage

BENNY

Well, try backing up lady...have
another go! Why don't you?

Benny storms out of the car and walks back to inspect the
damage. PAMELA totters after him, tripping in her ill
fitting high heels.

She fiddles with her long scraggy hair and tries to
introduce herself by hesitantly offering her hand to shake.

PAMELA

My name's Pamela Ronson, I'm so
sorry it was an accident -

Benny is too busy trying to re-attach the rear fender to
even care. He glances over in disgust at the tatty Nissan
responsible for the damage.

PAMELA

See, I'm kinda of a newbie to
this driving thing, and the
pedals, well...(removing her high
heels) Sometimes I get confused.

BENNY

It's an automatic, you've only
got two pedals, lady. On one side
you got gas, on the other side
you got the frigging brake...

Pointing to the offending Nissan.

BENNY

How difficult can it be?

PAMELA

I'll just get my details

The girl scurries away to her vehicle.

A poser driving a gleaming sports car, smugly sounds his horn, encouraging Benny to drop the fender and gives him 'The finger'.

EXT: METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES - EARLY MORNING

A bright sunny LA day. High above, an unremitting sun beats down on Benny's fedora.

Benny is staring down a gaping MANHOLE; the jurisdiction of The City of Los Angeles, Department of Public Works.

A rusty access ladder runs down, about 10 metres to a large underground pipe shaft. Benny calls down. His voice echoes.

BENNY

Hello...Hello...Who's in charge
down there? Who's in charge?

GROUND LEVEL

The Producer has trespassed well inside the barriers and notices: 'DO NOT CROSS' - 'MEN AT WORK' - 'NO PUBLIC ACCESS'.

Benny, belly to the ground, head squeezed alongside the thick slab of manhole cover is staring down into the shaft.

Behind Benny, and the barriers, are a line of trucks, trailers, vans. The occupants, a film unit of about 30 people have spilled out of their vehicles and are having some very animated conversations.

Benny leans a little further into the hole, but then his felt fedora slips from its place, tumbling the 30 feet to the floor of the pipe, he curses.

BENNY

Shit! Shit!...

He rolls over and calls across the barrier.

A busy road bustling with early morning traffic runs parallel with the location. Beyond that and the sidewalk - about 300 metres 'as the crow flies' - stands the First Union Bank.

BENNY

Hey! Are one of you shirkers
actually gonna earn the
exorbitant salary I'm paying you,
and come and give me some kinda
help here?

The producer's plea goes unanswered, lost amidst the hubbub and frenzy of the chattering crew. Resigned to the fact that he is on his own, Benny lowers himself into the hole.

INT: SUBTERRANEAN SHAFT - DARK - SAME TIME

Benny carefully negotiates the rusty access ladder, gingerly stepping down off the last rung onto the channel floor. He holds a handkerchief over his nose and stares around at his damp, dank surroundings.

The producer fumbles in his pocket for his cell-phone, using the screen light to locate his hat. He tut-tuts, brushes the fedora down and tips it back on his head.

With what little light there is from his cell-phone, he makes his way down the vast network of tunnels towards the red hot flashes and sparks spraying off into the darkness, some hundred or so meters along the shaft.

BENNY

(calling out)

Hey! Hey!...Hello...Who's In
charge down here?

The sparks are extinguished and a flashlight comes on. Benny walks towards the beam, peering into the gloom at the approaching figure.

BENNY

(calling out)

Hello, are you in charge?

Benny squints as a powerful beam of light hits his face. The flashlight is lowered and a voice with a lazy southern drawl meets him head on.

WORKMAN (CARL)

Y'all all lost there...took a
wrong turning.

The workman, a wiry, earnest looking character with a thick bushy moustache, steps out of the dark and confronts Benny.

WORKMAN (CARL)

Heck your not authorized to be
down here, sir. I need ya to go
back, topside, sir.

A long pony tail dangles from under his hard hat. A set of goggles are wrapped around his neck and a pair of ear protectors hang from the top pocket of his overalls. A radio transmitter dangles on his belt clip.

BENNY
(lowering handkerchief)
Are you the boss man buddy?

The workman casually taps at his badge.

WORKMAN (CARL)
Well unless you, or any of the rodents down here, got one of these, then hell! I guess I am.

Benny eyes the workman's ID TAG.

CARL TUCKER 00223 / Senior Maintenance engineer / Department of Public Works / City of Los Angeles.

CARL
Now I'm gonna have to ask you to return to the surface, sir, 'cos I got work to do in these shafts.

Benny rummages through his jacket pocket until he finds the letter. It is crumpled and he begins smoothing it out.

BENNY
Benny Trueblood, movie producer. I think there's been a mistake here Carl, I got a thirty man second unit upstairs costing me ten big ones an hour and we're burning daylight buddy, can I call you Carl? I mean take a look at this letter from the district office Carl.

Benny thrusts the crumpled letter into the unprepared hand of the engineer who shines the flashlight on it.

CARL
I must insist you leave right away, sir. I got work to do.

BENNY
(rapidly)
I think you would agree, Carl, it clearly states 'herein the Metropolitan district Council authorize, under sub-section etcetera...etcetera-

Benny leans in and points to the relevant section.

BENNY

-Reasonable access to environs enclosed by Bude Street at the intersection of Union Avenue, for the purpose of commercial motion film, granted to Zabba dabba doo Productions, that's me Carl, so you see buddy I'm sorry for all the inconvenience, but it looks like they got you working on the wrong tunnel, so if you don't mind shutting down, I've gotta get back to work, cos my director's got a movie to finish.

Carl casts his flashlight over the letter.

CARL

It's signed off here by the Department for Media and Public Relations (long pause).

BENNY

(Aghast)

Well?

CARL

Well, Sir, us maintenance folks don't get to dealing with media types much.

The engineer hands back the letter.

CARL

You see, down here, we tend to deal with crap of a different kind; y'all preferring to call it the City's effluence. So, like I said, I'm gonna have to ask you to go back topside, cos me and my cousin Reggie back *there* have got three days of maintenance work to do down here in this shaft.

BENNY

Look fella I appreciate you got a job of work, but I'm about to get righteous on your ass in the name of art, so I'm just gonna have to take it upstairs on this one buddy, now let me have the phone number of your department chief.

CARL

That would be 213 473 32 32. Sir.

Benny hurriedly stabs at the digits on the cell.

CARL
I'm afraid y'all gonna have to
'take it upstairs' if you wanna
to make that call sir.

Benny is staring down at his cell phone screen. It reads.

NO SIGNAL RECEIVED.

The radio transmitter on Carl's belt crackles into life.

REGGIE (O.S.)
Hey! Carl, what the hell's going
on man?

Benny concedes a technical defeat and takes out his pocket book. He begins fingering through a few large bills.

BENNY
Hey! Look, why don't I make it
worth you guys just shutting down
operations for the day to give me
a chance to sort out this whole
sorry mess with someone in Public
Works?..what Shall we say, four,
five hundred bucks a piece?

REGGIE (O.S.)
Carl, you OK? You copy me buddy?

Carl turns away, casually ignoring the 'sweetener', looks back up the shaft, begins talking on the radio.

CARL
Copy Reggie...we got ourselves a
real life Hollywood movie
producer down here...he wants to
shoot a picture of our life story
for the big screen...

REGGIE (O.S.)
Don't tell me cuz, 'Shit and the
City' right?...hey ask the guy
what his last movie was.

Carl turns back to the Producer.

CARL
Cousin Reggie wants to know what
movies you've made.

BENNY
Tell him 'On a wing and a prayer'

CARL
Never heard of it...what else?

BENNY

Hey Carl you're messing with my head *here* buddy!..What d'ya want, my God damn resume?.. How about Vegans vee Zombies, the highest grossing box office Zombie movie of the decade.

CARL

(flabbergasted)

Vegans vee Zombies. Man! You made Vegans vee Zombies.

Benny has at last struck a note of accord, he smiles then goes in for the kill.

BENNY

Starring Brett Thorn and the glamorous Tiffany loola, directed by l'enfant terrible Zach Torr and produced by yours truly (Conjures up a business card).

CARL

(gratefully accepting the card). Hell fire! Mister Trueblood, why didn't you say so earlier, Vegans vee Zombies that's one of my favorite goddam movies man, me and cousin Reggie, we all from Louisiana see, back *there* we just love those shit kickin' Zombie movies..(Talking back into the two way radio)..Reggie..Copy? You'll never guess who in the hell we got down here cuz?..Benny Trueblood.

REGGIE (O.S.)

Who?...Over.

CARL

Only the dude who produced Vegans vee Zombies.

Both the voices of Reggie and Carl simultaneously mimic their immortal line from the movie, something they have obviously rehearsed together a thousand times.

CARL / REGGIE (O.S.)

'I don't usually eat meat but I think on this occasion I will'
(Joint laughter)

BENNY

A movie some in Hollywood said
'could never be made'..Indeed
some said 'should never be
made'..but, I, Benjamin Trueblood
worked these fingers to the bone
and got that picture made...and
now these same hands are pleading
with you Carl to shut down your
operation and let my director get
on with directing my new picture

REGGIE (O.S.)

Ask the dude if he's making
another Zombie movie, down here.

CARL

No...our man says his got a crew
up top waiting to shoot some
movie scenes, and a whole bunch
of paperwork from the City
Council, he wants us to clear
out..Copy (pause)...what do you
think cousin?..over

There is a long pause, forcing Benny to wait nervously on
Reggie's response. Eventually Reggie's voice crackles back.

REGGIE (O.S.)

I guess we could always move the
rig across to fifty ninth street
and fourth, there's whole pile of
slip-lining we got do in those
shafts. Over.

CARL

Copy that.

Benny looks expectantly at The engineer for the final seal
of approval. Carl smiles.

CARL

Heck! Vegans ripping the heads
off zombies. Fucking 'A' man!

He hands over the flashlight to Benny and then delves into
the pocket of his overalls, he produces what looks like a
map.

CARL

This is a plan of the Metro sewer
system, overlaid with a ground
level street grid, going building
by building.

The engineer unfolds the chart and hands it over to Benny,
taking back the flashlight as he does so.

CARL

This whole area's undergoing major repairs, so the City have temporarily diverted sewerage to give us time to work on the shafts in this part of town....

The engineer takes a pen out of his pocket and uses it to indicate their grid location by flashlight.

CARL

See we're here at the intersection of Slauson Avenue and Van Ness Avenue, so I figure we can move our rig and equipment to a series of shafts several blocks across. *Here* at fifty ninth and fourth, just below the Worcester Cleve Department store...we got a couple of weeks work in those shafts at the least... but it's going take us a few hours to shut down things here and move the rig across.

BENNY

(Benny smiles and hurriedly folds up the map)...Hey! I really appreciate this buddy, if you guys ever need any Zombie masks or Vegan cloaks you just call up my merchandising people..number's right *there* on the card...just tell them Benny sent you, they'll give you a great deal.

REGGIE (O.S.)

Carl, you fixed things up with that producer dude yet, cos I'm mighty hungry and planning on getting me a burger from the canteen...over!

CARL

Copy that cuz.

Carl waves the beam in the direction of the utility hatch.

CARL

Now you get yourself back top side, before we change our mind Mister Trueblood, follow the beam, now go (he begins to shoo Benny away)

Benny turns and scampers for the exit hatch, halting once he reaches the first metal rung of the ladder.

Benny realizes he's still holding the engineers plan in his hand. He hesitates before finally stuffing it into his pocket and hauling himself up onto the first rung.

EXT: MAN HOLE - MOMENTS LATER

Benny's head pops out above ground. Catching his breath, inhaling sharply he swallows a lung full air and gasoline.

INT: WEST PALM HOSPITAL - SANTA MONICA DAYTIME

DELUXE ROOM

The sound of an NFL match COMMENTARY on TV - (San Francisco 49ers versus San Diego Chargers)

An elderly male patient shrouded in a robe begins coughing and wheezing. Thin and gaunt with pale blotchy skin; an NFL scarf draped around his neck. At first the wheezing is slight but it soon develops into a pant and then a real struggle for breath. The man clasps the ventilator mask to his face, and before long his shoulders relax as the life giving air is pumped back into his cardiovascular system.

The old man recovers, steadying himself against an adjacent desk, disturbing two framed black and white family photographs. After a brief pause for breath he slowly hitches himself upright in his wheelchair. He refocuses his attention on the large flat screen TV hanging on the wall opposite, and the NFL match in progress.

The patient is sitting alongside a state of the art multi-frame medical bed which is hooked up to the latest in High-tech medical equipment. The room is bright and airy. A large window looks down onto Santa Monica.

There's a knock at the door and a stressed looking Benny ambles in swinging his attache case.

The old man mutes the TV on the remote, looks across from the screen and scowls.

FATHER

You're late.

BENNY

Sorry pa, It's the housekeeper's day off. I had to stop off at the laundromat.

FATHER

You need to settle down son, find yourself a wife, get some kids.

BENNY

How you feeling today pa?

Benny crosses the room, takes off his fedora and lays the attache case on the bed.

FATHER
Well did you bring it?

The old man studies the case like a hawk eyeing a worm.

Benny swiftly tumbles the combination lock, then flicks the catches and slowly lifts the lid.

Apart from a carton labelled 'ABE'S DELI' the trunk of the attache case is otherwise empty.

Benny's fingers nimbly pries open the carton and then peel away the tin foil, revealing a large meaty looking sandwich. The old man's eyes sparkle, he licks his lips.

FATHER
Abe's salt beef on rye now that's
a sight to behold, did you bring
the mustard?

BENNY
I got it here somewhere pa.

FATHER
Good, now go get us some plates
from the juice bar and come and
watch the game with me.

Benny looks around at the deluxe accommodation.

BENNY
(nodding with approval)
Juice bar. Pretty swanky set up
you got here pa.

Benny sidles over to a cabinet brimming with fresh fruits.

FATHER (O.S.)
I told that son of a bitch
administrator I was gonna sue the
crap out of the hospital if he
didn't get me out that hell hole
they're running downstairs.

Benny begins mixing himself a fruit drink.

BENNY
I guess they listened to you pa.

FATHER (O.S.)

Reckoned there was some mix up with the medical insurance, so they try sticking your old man in a room the size of a 'John', with a pay on demand TV set...I sure told the son's of bitches they could stuff it up their ass.

BENNY

You want a fruit juice?

FATHER (O.S.)

No, the stuff gives me the shits! Didn't you bring any tequilla?

BENNY

Damn it pa, you're in a medical facility not a casino in Vegas.

FATHER

Don't cuss in the presence of your mother and brother.

The father fleetingly gazes across to the monochrome images that he had earlier disturbed.

CLOSE UP: TWO BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS (MID 1970'S)

An ATTRACTIVE WOMEN in her early thirties embracing Benny's FATHER, a much younger, plumper man. Alongside this photograph stands another depicting a smiling BOY, about ten years old, cradling A BABY.

BENNY

I just figured with the way the security guys downstairs were looking at me, trying to sneak in a bottle of tequilla might have been pushing my luck.

FATHER (O.S.)

(incensed)

So we Trueblood's all look like terrorists now, is that what your saying?

BENNY

No! That's not what I'm saying at all, calm down pa.

FATHER

Have you forgotten boy, it's Apache blood coursing through those veins of yours?

Benny returns from the juice bar.

FATHER

...Do you think your great grandfather - Tall Trees Trueblood, crossed the deserts of New Mexico at Geronimo's side so that his descendants could be mistaken for a bunch of ass wipes calling themselves Al 'fucking' Quaeda?

BENNY

Take it easy pa -

FATHER

So much for my boy (he begins wheezing)- 'The big-shot movie producer'...What do those bozos downstairs think you were gonna do anyway, reek mass destruction with one of Abe's deli specials?

The father turns back to the photographs, then, resigns to gently laying them face down. He looks across at his son.

FATHER

Holy mother of God! (he begins to pant for breath) This World's become a lunatic asylum.

Benny rushes over to aid his father who is fumbling with the straps to his ventilator. The mask is swiftly placed over the patient's face and the inhalation process begins.

A relieved Benny sits down on the bed, next to his attache case. His father gradually recovers, but with the sound still muted on the TV there is an uncomfortable silence enveloping the room. Benny finally breaks the spell.

BENNY

What do the doctors say, pa?

FATHER

They give me a couple of months. Three, tops.

SILENCE

This time the father disarms the silence.

FATHER

Heck, son! What d'you expect them to say, that I'm gonna be fit enough to play for the Chargers?

SILENCE

The old man gazes wistfully out of the window onto the Palm lined streets of Santa Monica; looking down upon the miniature figurines scurrying about below. Down *there*, life still pulsated in all its tiny comings and goings.

BENNY

Well anyway, Syd sends his regards-

FATHER

How is the fat fuck, still setting up off shore accounts for little old ladies with money to hide?...Hey where's those plates, this beef's begging to be eaten.

Benny gets up and goes across to the juice bar.

BENNY

Don't be mean pa, Syd's got a lotta respect for you, besides, he's making the books on my latest movie.

FATHER

Cooking them more like...Hey son! Tell me, when does someone decide to become an accountant?

Benny returns with a single knife and plate, and sits back down on the bed.

BENNY

I don't know pa. When *does* someone decide to become an accountant?

FATHER

When they realize they don't have the charisma to be an undertaker.

Benny's father begins to wheeze at his own joke but soon slaps on the mask, taking in a burst of Oxygen.

BENNY

(smiling)

Here, have some of Abe's salted beef on rye and leave Syd alone.

Benny passes across a plate with a large slice of salt beef sandwich, mustard on the side, and a knife. The father takes the plate with a look of surprise on his face.

FATHER

Where's your plate son?

BENNY

I gotta be going pa...I gotta meeting scheduled.

FATHER

What are you working on, another two bit zombie movie?

BENNY

Actually, it's a gritty heist movie if you really want to know.

FATHER

Who you got?

BENNY

Tony Nevada.

FATHER

Quite a coup. I hear he still puts bums on seats...I remember taking your ma to see him in 'Midnight to thunder' before you were even born, y'know who he reminded me of back then?

Benny knows his father's observation by heart.

BENNY

A young Marlon Brando?

His father isn't listening, and takes a mouth watering bite out of the salt beef sandwich.

FATHER

A young Marlon Brando...

BENNY

Well, he's shipping a toupee these days and gets nosebleeds.

FATHER

Who's the gal?

BENNY

Sofie Banghard.

FATHER

Never heard of her, I'd remember the name.

Benny's father turns his attention to the screen. He stabs at the remote and the TV commentary comes on.

TV COMMENTATOR NFL AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Benny closes up his attache case.

FATHER
Stay and watch the game son.

BENNY
I can't pa, gotta go.

FATHER
As I remember, you never were
much on a football field as a
kid...Kept dropping the damn ball

Benny pats down his shirt, slips his fedora on. He picks up the attache case, swiftly kisses his father on the forehead and moves for the door.

FATHER
Now that older brother of your's,
he was a real ball player.

Benny reaches the door and turns back to his father.

BENNY
It's been nearly forty years pa,
they ain't coming back.

He opens the door.

BENNY
(mournfully)
I'm all you got left.

EXT: PACIFIC OCEAN MID DAY

A 90 foot Princess Motor yacht is swaying gently at anchor, out on the horizon.

ON BOARD 'CAP D'ANTIBES' - UPPER AFT DECK

Long slender fingers scrawl sensually over a bronzed, middle aged-man's back.

CAESAR
Hell! Benny pal you know if I
could help you I would but eleven
big ones, man I can't cover that.

CAESAR, a grey haired, middle aged Casanova wearing only sunglasses and the tightest of trunks, is lying face down on the aft deck of his luxury yacht. A buxom, blonde haired girl in a skimpy bikini sits astride him; sensually massaging his ageing skin.

Benny sits cross-legged on the polished teak deck alongside Caesar and the girl.

Trueblood, hat on, fully clothed apart from his shoes.

A Sultry looking brunette wearing a stars and stripes bikini sits opposite, silently rolling a big fat 'joint'.

BENNY

I got distributors crawling all over me for it, Caesar, believe me. We just gotta keep shooting the damn thing, keep wheels in motion, finish the movie.

CAESAR

I don't know Benny, eleven million - that's a lot of dough your looking for (pause). Hey honey, put a little a lotion on-

The girl squirts a trickle of sunscreen from a bottle and proceeds to spread it evenly across Caesar's shoulders.

CAESAR

Who you got directing?

BENNY

Rupert Carter-Everington

CAESAR

That pompous 'limey fag'...Did he show you his Oscar?

Caesar turns over onto his back, the girl dismounting him (so to speak). He faces Benny.

'Stars and stripes' lights up her joint, takes a long toke before passing it across to Caesar.

CAESAR

The way I see it Benny, if Investors of mine ever wanted their money back, before payola day that is-

He sits up, draws back on the 'joint' before offering it to Benny, who declines.

CAESAR

-I'd set my lawyers on the 'mothers' and take pleasure in watching them tear their ass apart in court...

BENNY

(mumbles)

There's no written contract.

CAESAR

So it's 'soft money'...a fuckin' personal loan, in court its your word against theirs.

BENNY

Well sort of-

CAESAR

Whaddya mean, 'sort of', don't bullshit a bullshitter kid...who are these guys?

Benny looks sheepishly across in the direction of 'Stars and Stripes' who is caressing sunscreen oil along the length of her long slender arms.

CAESAR

Hey girls, say, why don't you go and fix Benny and me a drink?

Both girls smile rather mechanically at Caesar and start to move their curvaceous bodies to the lower deck. Caesar watches their exit, admiringly.

CAESAR

Fucking beautiful ain't they? (He draws on the 'joint') Stars of the future, you mark my words Benny.

With both girls out of the picture, Caesar returns his attention to his guest.

CAESAR

So tell me?...Who are these guys?

BENNY

A Russian syndicate.

Caesar practically chokes on his 'joint'.

CAESAR

Are you kidding?...You took eleven fuckin' million bucks off the Russki's.

Benny tries to make light of the situation.

BENNY

They wanted to get involved in the Picture business. Y'know, movies, Tinsel town, the red carpet, the whole nine yards...They had some 'iffy' money to invest, so I took it.

CAESAR
So what's changed?

BENNY
(Shrugging shoulders)
I don't know, they got some
internal politics shit going on,
back in New York. Seems like the
Top dog's just got whacked and
the new guy wants a refund.

Caesar casts him a look of incredulity.

BENNY
Hey! You're not telling me you
and Gambini family haven't
hustled a few bucks under the
table in the past.

CAESAR
Maybe a few hundred gees here or
there, but eleven million, you
don't need lawyers on this one
buddy, you're gonna need a
fucking funeral director.

EXT PACIFIC OCEAN EVENING

Feint sound of LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC

Caesar's luxury motor yacht bobs gently up and down at
anchor on a darkening blue Ocean.

EXT: 'CAP D'ANTIBES' LOWER AFT DECK - NIGHT

THE SOUND OF A BOSSA NOVA BEAT

The deck lights are on. The two trim Starlets - still
bikini clad - are at the rear of the boat. Scattered all
around them are half empty champagne and liquor bottles. On
a table sit the remnants of a lobster buffet.

The 'blonde' together with her friend 'Stars and Stripes'
are sensuously swaying in rhythm to the beat of the Bossa
nova oozing from the deck speakers. The starlet's sexy
bodies come together, entwine, lock, then pull apart; and
they are really putting on a good show.

EXT: 'CAP D'ANTIBES' UPPER AFT DECK - SAME TIME

FEINT SOUND OF LATIN MUSIC

Caesar and Benny are sitting on the upper deck sipping
drinks, looking out upon a tranquil ocean. Caesar is still
in his trunks but is wearing an unbuttoned shirt revealing
a gold medallion and a mat of greying chest hairs. Benny is
still sporting his trademark fedora.

BENNY

Have you still got any juice over at Central Pictures?

CAESAR

I used to a couple of years back... Sure I was in pretty thick with Eddie Cummins the head honcho over there, that is until he up and had a heart attack!

BENNY

What do you make of the current guy. Theodore Arlington?

CAESAR

Arlington?...Don't talk to me about that douche bag, his family came over on the Mayflower, and they have been fuckin' up the movie industry ever since...Hey! didn't you once bang his old lady-

Benny quickly adds.

BENNY

That was a long time ago Caesar, a party, a one night thing, you know how it goes.

CAESAR

I can never get the guy to return my calls, the jerks always on the golf course.

BENNY

Really?

CAESAR

Yeah! They reckon he swans around down at the Sand Dunes Clubhouse like he owns the god damn Joint.

BENNY

You don't say?

CAESAR

I miss the old days Benny...You'd be still in diapers. We didn't need jerks like Arlington back then. Back in the day we knew how to make pictures, non of this digital three 'fucking' 'D' nonsense...Back then Benny baby we told stories and we sold dreams in thirty five millimeter-

Caesar's nostalgic ramblings are suddenly interrupted by the voice of a siren calling out.

FEMALE (O.S.)
Oh Caesar, Caesar baby.

Another voluptuous, bikini clad guest pops her head up from the lower deck.

FEMALE
Oh Caesar, Caesar, sugar.

The red-headed bombshell steps haughtily onto the upper deck. She carries a cocktail glass in one hand and a riding crop in the other. She flashes Caesar a wicked grin.

FEMALE
Spanky, Spanky time.

INT: DINER - LOS ANGELES - EARLY MORNING

Syd and Benny are sitting together in a booth at a downtown diner. Syd is hungrily devouring the '\$4.95 Olympic breakfast'- while Benny waves his coffee cup. In full flow.

BENNY
So d'ya know what she had the nerve to say?

Syd is far too engrossed in his breakfast to look up.

SYDNEY
Mmm, nah.

BENNY
(mimicking Pamela) 'Ooh I'm sorry. I get a little confused over the pedals', she says. I ask you, a fifty nine Eldorado in front of her and she can't work out her freaking left from her right. Syd, Syd you listening to me?

Syd looks up from his plate.

SYDNEY
Sure, Benny. Insurance will cover it. No probs -(Waving an egggy fork)-You got her details, right?

BENNY
She gave me a Contact phone number...It turned out to be a Chinese takeaway?

SYDNEY
What's the Peking Duck like?

BENNY

Very drool Syd, but remember,
that dame totalled the fender on
my Caddie. Nineteen hundred bucks
plus taxes she owes me.

Syd returns his gaze to his breakfast plate.

SYDNEY

So where is she now?

BENNY

How the hell do I know, like I
said, she duped me. She gave me a
dummy number.

SYDNEY

No, I mean the 'caddie'.

BENNY

Oh! I had to put her in the shop.
A couple of days they tell me.

The diner's busy so Syd gestures across to the waitress.
She swings by with a fresh pot of Coffee.

WAITRESS

Refill, gentlemen?

She swiftly refills their cups.

SYDNEY

(mouthful of breakfast)

Can you get me some more bread
rolls honey?

The waitress smiles and leaves.

Syd pushes a fork full of hash brown into his mouth,
pointing his knife at Benny's lone cup of coffee.

SYDNEY

You're missing out...Breakfast's
the most important meal of the
day and that's a scientific fact

BENNY

You think every meal is the most
important meal of the day, Syd.

SYDNEY

No, it's been scientifically
proven. Scientists say breakfast
gives you an energy boost, sets
you up for the day ahead.

Benny's cell-phone rings.

BENNY

But Syd, they ain't suggesting
you go and eat *your own body-*
weight in Carbs every morning.

Benny looks at his cell-phone - CALLER NUMBER WITHHELD -
he puts the phone to his ear and listens, then reacts.

BENNY

(into cell-phone)
You got one helluva nerve lady.

He covers the phone with his hand and turns to Syd.

BENNY

Believe it or not, it's that
crazy broad I've just been
telling you about.

Benny removes his hand from the phone.

BENNY

Are you trying to scam me here
lady? (pause) You what?...You
want to put things right?

Benny shuts up for a moment and listens to his caller.

BENNY

OK, but you'd better not be
trying to shake me down, lady.

He ends the call before looking forlornly across to Syd.

Syd puts down his fork and reluctantly searches through his
pocket, eventually producing a small bunch of keys. He
holds them up in front of Benny.

SYDNEY

Two days Benny, no longer, wife
will kill me if she finds out.

Benny snatches the keys away.

BENNY

Thanks, Syd...I owe you one.

EXT: SANTA MONICA BEACH - MORNING

Pamela (the girl from the accident) is walking beside
Benny. They are strolling along the wide, sandy Santa
Monica beach. She is very verbal, very animated. A gust of
warm wind blows off the Pacific ocean forcing Benny to
readjust his fedora. The girl is wearing a pair of cut-off
denim shorts, flip flops and a Donald Duck T shirt.

PAMELA

So, I wake up this morning and I say to myself 'No Pammy, this is not the way your parents brought you up, you're better than this, what goes around, comes around'. Blah, blah! It's all a question of karma, don't you think?

BENNY

Lady, I ain't got any frigging idea what your talking about.

PAMELA

Your Buick!

BENNY

You mean my Cadillac.

PAMELA

My bad, your Cadillac.

BENNY

It's in the repair shop.

PAMELA

Do you hate me? I bet you hate me, you must so totally hate me.

BENNY

Hey! Calm down lady, I don't hate you...I don't even know you.

The couple are just South of the Santa Monica Pier. Up ahead the Pacific Park's Ferris Wheel revolves against a clear blue sky.

INT: CAFE - SANTA MONICA PIER - MOMENTS LATER

Pamela is sitting at a table near the window. Benny approaches, carrying two cups of coffee. He places them down on the table and takes up a seat opposite her.

Benny pushes a coffee across the table to Pamela. He removes his fedora, placing it down on the table, and brushes a hand through his shiny black hair.

PAMELA

(accepting the coffee)

Thanks...Hey, look I'm really sorry about that whole Chinese takeaway thing, I don't know what came over me, I panicked I guess.

The girl leans across the table, cupping a hand to her mouth and assuming a hushed, almost conspiratorial tone. Benny instinctively leans forward, co-opted into the 'conspiracy', lest the secret be made public.

PAMELA

See, I've got no drivers permit.

Benny grimaces and buries his head in his hands.

PAMELA

Oh don't you worry, I'm gonna pay you back every cent I owe for the damage to your car. This is LA, right, so once I get some work I'll be able to clear everything-

She looks across to Benny for reassurance but his head remains buried in his hands.

PAMELA

(eagerly)

Look, I can pay you some now.

The girl ferrets through her pockets and pulls out some crumpled dollar bills and a handful of coins. Benny looks up in disbelief, watching as the girl smooths the creases out of the crumpled bills. She proudly lays them down on the table in front of her. Like a player at a gaming table, she deftly counts then stacks her pile of coins.

PAMELA

Here, I can give you Seventeen dollars and sixty five cents for now, and I'll pay the rest just as soon as. By the way how much do I owe you in total? (smiles)

Benny looks like he dearly wants to explode with rage but the sight of the girl pushing her last seventeen bucks across the table knocks the hard ass out of him.

He sips at his coffee and doesn't take his eyes off her.

She's pretty, without being obvious, maybe it's the energy he detects in her eyes, her perpetual optimism, bordering on naivety; whatever it is the film producer warms to her

The seventeen sixty five sits unclaimed on the table.

BENNY

Where are you from?

PAMELA

Detroit.

BENNY

Huh! Motor City, that figures.

Pamela looks down at her cup and begins slowly stirring her coffee. Benny notices the gold ring on her finger.

BENNY

So, are you married?

PAMELA

Widowed.

Pamela, seemingly disaffected by her revelations, takes a sip of coffee and looks around her at the melee of customers entering and leaving the cafe.

Benny's gaze carries over the girls shoulder, out through the glass window, to the waves breaking on the beach below. He considers his options. Finally he puts down his cup and starts to rise from the table.

BENNY

Look, lady, I gotta go, so let's just forget the whole thing. (He flicks a crisp ten dollar bill onto the table) The Coffee's on me. No hard feelings hey.

Benny picks up his fedora. Pamela looks crossly up at him.

PAMELA

Thank you, but I don't need your pity, nor your charity mister Trueblood and, and when I say I intend to pay you back, then (flustered), then that's exactly what I mean to do.

Benny freezes, then slowly begins to sit back down, clearly impressed by his feisty companion. He looks across at her.

BENNY

Braaavo...Katherine Hepburn, right? Who's your agent?

The girl looks nervous a little unsure of what to say.

BENNY

Who's repping you, your an actress right?

The girl appears relieved, shakes her head.

BENNY

Your a dancer? A singer?

She shakes her head and fidgets uncomfortably in her seat.

PAMELA
I'm a secretary.

Benny sighs, slightly deflated.

A momentary break in their conversation ensues, with only the TAP, TAP sound of the girl's finger against her cup.

Benny picks up where he left off.

BENNY
I figure you can read, right?

The girl flashes Benny a look that could 'kill'.

BENNY
So d'ya want a job?

EXT: STUDIO LOT - CENTRAL PICTURES - DAY TIME

The revolving sign board high above the lot boasts:

CENTRAL PICTURES - 'MAKING MOVIE MAGIC'

Staff, technicians, artists come and go on the back lot, some of whom acknowledge Benny with a smile, a nod. Pamela has changed into more sober clothing and is being guided by Benny, past the giant hangars, towards a white double storey building. They climb the wooden stairs to the second level. The sign above the door reads:

ZABBA DABBA DOO PRODUCTIONS - BENNY TRUEBLOOD & ASSOCIATES

The pair enter.

INT: PRODUCTION OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER

The Producer strides the short corridor, Pamela trails.

BENNY
This is where we keep all the
spec scripts.

Benny stops outside a door, produces a key from his pocket and unlocks it. He turns to his new employee.

BENNY
I call it the Hurt Locker.

He swings the door open and they both enter.

INT: OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The office is plain, functional, measuring about 12 meters by 10 meters. A single window throws natural light into the room.

Stacked against all four walls, from floor to ceiling, are piles upon piles of drafts. Plain covers, white A4 pages bound with sturdy, brass pronged, fasteners.

A desk and swivel chair occupies the centre of the room. High above, dangling from the ceiling, someone has strung up a hangman's noose.

BENNY

Sorry about that. (pointing to the noose.) Some of the comedy writers down the hall are convinced they've got a sense of humor...I'll get someone from maintenance to take it down.

Pamela looks around the room, mouth open in disbelief at the mountains of paper.

PAMELA

You mean people just send you all these stories?

BENNY

That's Tinseltown, honey.

PAMELA

(Flicking through scripts)

Wow!

Benny Crosses the office and begins adjusting the shades.

BENNY

Ninety nine percent won't be worth the paper they're written on but hey, it's a free country.

Pamela is slowly walking around the room, delicately brushing her finger over the spines of the scripts.

PAMELA

So you're looking for that very special one percent, right?

Benny watches the girl as she slowly circumnavigates the office and, if truth be told, he is being held spellbound by her.

BENNY

Yeah! That very special one per -

The girl suddenly stops, looks excitedly across to Benny.

PAMELA

It's like we're panning for gold.

BENNY
 You got it kid...Find me a
 'Casablanca'.

Benny moves across to the desk and rather self-consciously begins re-arranging the pens and writing pads.

PAMELA
 But don't you think there's just
 too many *here* to read?

Benny looks at the girl and smiles.

BENNY
 Reader's Rule one, you got to
 have a system.

Benny grabs a random handful of screenplays from a pile.

BENNY
 So you take five screenplays.

He lays them face down, in a line across the desk. He points a finger and begins his own version of the playground selector.

BENNY
 Eeny, meeny, miny, mo,
 punch a critic on the nose,
 if they holler let them go,
 eeny, meeny, miny, mo.

Benny's finger halts on one particular screenplay. He turns it over to reveal the title page: 'ESKIMO EXPRESS'.

BENNY
 Start with this one.

Benny sweeps up the other four screenplays and tosses them in the trash can.

BENNY
 Rule Two, never work with unlucky
 people.

EXT: ENTRANCE TO SAND DUNES GOLF COURSE - MIDDAY

Benny steers Syd's Station Wagon past the sign: SAND DUNES GOLF COURSE / MEMBERS ONLY.

EXT: PUTTING GREEN 17TH HOLE - SAME TIME

The ball rolls sweetly along the green towards the 17th hole and gently drops in.

A gloved hand delves into the hole and collects the ball.

EXT: FAIRWAY - SAND DUNES GOLF COURSE - MOMENTS LATER

Wearing a Ryder Cup pro golf cap and pastel cream golf pants, THEODORE ARLINGTON - late fifties, Waspish, blue eyed and clean shaven - stands purposefully, hands on hips, looking straight down the fairway towards the 18th.

Raising a gloved hand, Arlington summons over his CADDY. The man scampers across, ferrying the large bag of clubs under the hot midday sun. Benny is standing a little distance away, near a golf buggy. He calls across.

BENNY

like I was just saying mister
Arlington, we've only got a few
more studio scenes to do, and-

Arlington doesn't appear to be taking any notice of what Benny is saying; he's too busy addressing his Caddy.

ARLINGTON

I'll take a nine iron

The caddy hesitates before handing over the club.

CADDY

(apologetically)
I think you might need an eight
on this one, mister Arlington.

Arlington smirks.

ARLINGTON

I didn't hire you to think...
hand me a nine iron.

The caddy duly complies. Arlington shapes up at the tee. Benny moves a little closer and tries again.

BENNY

If your studio could just give us
one or two more weeks, I swear to
you we could nail this picture-

Arlington is Showboating a little at the tee. He takes a few practice swings and talks back over his shoulder.

ARLINGTON

You're forgetting the not
inconsequential matter of our
completion agreement, mister
Trueblood.

Arlington swings, strikes the golf ball perfectly. He watches its two hundred yard progress onto the green.

ARLINGTON

A contract with Central Pictures
that, to date, mister Trueblood,
you have failed to uphold.

The golf ball rolls across the lush putting green finally
coming to rest less than three yards from the 18th hole.

FAIRWAY

Arlington looks back at Benny with a measure of smugness
festering across his face.

CADDY (O.S.)

Magnificent sir.

ARLINGTON

Of course mister Trueblood,
Central is quite willing to
accept a three million dollar
security indemnity, returnable
naturally, thereby keeping our
studios at your disposal.

Arlington tosses the nine iron to the caddy and then
strides past Benny and climbs into the driver's seat of the
golf buggy.

INT/EXT: GOLF BUGGY - GOLF COURSE - MOMENTS LATER

Arlington steers the golf buggy over the course towards the
18th hole, impervious to Benny's appeals, while his caddy
struggles with the oversized bag and clings to the cart.

BENNY

Throw me a bone here mister
Arlington. I'm levelling with
you. I got distributors climbing
all over me for the rights, how
about we work out some kind of
deferment deal mister Arlington?

Benny looks for a sign that Arlington might relent, but
it's not forthcoming.

ARLINGTON

You don't play golf, do you
Trueblood? (The question's
rhetorical)...No! That's not how
your type roll, is it? You're a
maverick, is that it? Always
operating outside the box, right?
Giving the system the finger... A
regular Cool hand Luke.

Benny glances at Arlington clearly wondering where this is leading to, but Arlington has eyes only for the green up ahead. He brings the buggy to a sharp halt on the fairway just a few paces from the edge of the green. He springs from his seat. Benny and Caddy clamber out in pursuit.

EXT: PANORAMIC VIEW OF 18TH HOLE

A meandering fairway leads down to golden sand traps; the bunkers, and then onto a perfectly manicured putting green.

ARLINGTON

Look around you Trueblood. What do you see?

Arlington selects a shiny putter.

ARLINGTON

I'll tell you what you see, you see civilization, you see order, stability-

BENNY

(Utters)

-Privilege?

Arlington chooses to ignore Benny's barb, brushing past him onto the green; his Caddy trailing in his wake.

PUTTING GREEN

Arlington's ball sits some eight feet short of the 18th.

ARLINGTON

Let me tell you something Trueblood. When my ancestors first set foot on these shores, the land supported little else but savages and rattlesnakes... First they tamed the savages, then the land.

The caddy lifts the flag pole from the 18th.

Arlington squats down and assesses the optimum line for a clean putt to the hole.

ARLINGTON

If they could see what America's become today, they'd turn in their graves; y'know the trouble is Trueblood, we've grown soft as a nation. Emasculated by the liberals and the Politically Correct, pandering to the whining sensitivities of the 'blacks' and the 'kikes' and the 'wetbacks' -

Arlington steps forward with putter in hand, straightens his back and addresses the golf ball.

ARLINGTON

Someone up on Capital Hill needs
to get a grip, and get a grip
real soon before this Country
finally goes down the TOILET.

Benny has heard enough. He drops the zipper on his pants.

BENNY

Talking of which mister
Arlington.

He steps up to the 18th hole and casually urinates into it.

INT: CLUB HOUSE BATHROOM

A pair of soapy hands lather themselves under a running faucet. A weary Benny looks up, stares into the mirror above the basin. His reflection is etched with the Sand Dunes logo; his hands still foaming with soap .

The cell-phone beeps away in his pocket.

Benny instinctively makes to grab for the phone but realizes his hands are completely lathered up, so he looks to the towel dispenser but the last sheet has been used.

The cell-phone beeps away in his pocket.

He fumbles for the phone in his pocket, smothering his pants in white foam in the process.

INT: DEN - (APARTMENT) - SOMEWHERE IN LA - SAME TIME

The den is a testament to machismo. Everywhere, from its sturdy, dark oak wood floors to the photographs hanging on its walls, of young men in battle-dress posing for war. The room surely reeks of testosterone.

Gregor Zhukov is sitting at his desk holding a magnifying glass against his one good eye. He is very delicately painting WING INSIGNIA onto a scale model, military aircraft. (A circa 1980 Russian MIG fighter jet).

As he paints he talks into a receiver located on his desk. There's a measured, calm, belligerence in his tone.

GREGOR

Perhaps BENNY, my friend, we are not, we are not explaining to you the importance of our boss' demands in the correct way, cos perhaps you think Gregor is a joke man, yes? (pause)

Gregor selects another tiny brush and chooses a different color from his pallet.

INT: CLUB HOUSE BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Benny is about to plead when his phone slips from his soapy hands and bounces under the wall mounted hot air dryer. As he stretches to recover the phone he accidentally activates the very noisy hot air blower system.

INT: DEN - (APPARTMENT) - SOMEWHERE IN LA - SAME TIME

UNDER MAGNIFYING GLASS

Gregor dabs his brush, etching out the MIG's combat 'kill tally' - A line of tiny, painted skulls.

The Russian appears to be waiting for a response from Benny, but all he gets in reply is the sound of rushing air, like a vacuum cleaner or dryer.

Gregor stops what he's doing and listens to the whooshing sound coming through the receiver, he curses in Russian then threatens in English.

GREGOR
(switches off the phone)
(Russian curse)... I'll take your
balls Benny Trueblood.

INT CLUB HOUSE BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Benny finally scoops up his phone, but it is already too late as the call has been terminated.

Suddenly the door bursts open, Benny looks over to the pair of burly, uniformed security men glaring at him across the bathroom floor. Benny braces himself for impact.

BENNY
Hey fellas, can we get some
friggin' towels in this bathroom?

They rush at him like snorting beasts, sending him crashing to the ground.

EXT GOLF CLUB CAR PARK - MOMENTS LATER

The security guards are man handling Benny out of the club house door. They hurl the trespasser onto the pebble-stoned car park, tossing his fedora after him.

Theodore Arlington stands by the entrance waving his putter and verbally raging at the Producer.

ARLINGTON

You're finished in this town
Trueblood. You're a dead man
walking, d'ya hear me?

INT: EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT LA - NIGHT TIME

Soft music, soft lighting, expensive food, exclusive
company. A Bel-Air restaurant, Los Angeles.

A smartly dressed waiter discreetly withdraws from the
table after pouring the second of two glasses of wine.

Benny gazes across at the girl sitting opposite him. Gone
is her scraggy hairstyle of their first encounter. Tonight
she's made a real effort. Painted nails, rouge tinted
lipstick, she's turning heads. Unrecognizable from the
scrawny stranger who'd collided with him on the highway.

BENNY

(bashfully)

You scrub up pretty good, I, I
just mean I like what you've done
to you hair and all.

PAMELA

(smiling)

So do you bring all your new
employees here?

Benny raises his hands.

BENNY

No!...Guilty as charged.

INT: RESTAURANT KITCHEN - SAME TIME

A busy kitchen. Head Chefs barking orders at sous Chefs.
Two expertly prepared starter dishes prepped and plated.

INT: RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Benny and Pamela are enjoying their first meal together.

BENNY

You got anything yet for me on
that Eskimo piece?

PAMELA

Oh it's a beautiful story, you
really must read it.

BENNY

Hey! Maybe I should save myself
the time, hire someone to read it
for me, what d'ya think?

Pam looks quizzically over at her boss but realizes he's teasing, she lets out a sigh at being so easily taken in.

INT: RESTAURANT KITCHEN

The kitchen is in full swing, plates of rich gourmet dishes are sent on their way, all spinning under the control of an army of dextrous waiters and waitresses.

INT: RESTAURANT - SOMETIME LATER

Benny picks at his main dish with his fork, listening to Pamela's account.

PAMELA

(excitedly)

It's all set in Alaska you see, and it's all about an Eskimo, well actually we should call him an Inuit, cos it's not PC to call them Eskimo's anymore...Anyway there's this Inuit who tries to save a wounded Polar bear from foreign trappers. It'll make a wonderful movie. Frozen glaciers, snowy landscapes, clear blue arctic skies-

BENNY

So where's the love interest. The girl? I Can't sell it to the studios without a girl.

Benny beckons an attendant waiter.

The waiter leans in and Benny whispers into his ear.

BENNY

(whispering)

Have a bottle of your finest Champagne sent over to *that* table over *there*. (pointing)
Compliments of Benny Trueblood.

The waiter nods, departs.

INT: RESTAURANT KITCHEN

A chocolate fondue is drizzled onto a bed of fresh tropical fruits. The edge of the plate is wiped clean of errant chocolate and the dish is whisked from the kitchen.

INT: RESTAURANT - SOMETIME LATER

The girl enjoys her exotic desert, savoring every mouthful.

A man sitting at a table of four, just across from Benny, accepts a bottle of champagne from the waiter. The immaculately coiffured diner looks over and acknowledges Benny with a wave of his hand.

Benny smiles and conspicuously waves back.

PAMELA

A friend of yours?

Benny's expression contorts and he winces at the girl's suggestion.

BENNY

Who, SEYMOUR SELLECK, nah! The guy's an idiot. I swear if he's IQ was any lower they'd have to water him. (pause) But I hear he's just inherited a couple of oil wells in Texas.

A WAITER with a fake French accent appears from nowhere.

WAITER

Bonsoir, is everything to sir and madam's liking?

Pam smiles, nods, a mouthful of fruit and chocolate in mid transit. Benny looks up.

BENNY

Everything's swell buddy.

The waiter smiles and backs away. Benny picks up his conversation.

BENNY

So Pammy, what brought you to LA?

PAMELA

My Nissan.

BENNY

(a Joe Pesci impression)
A 'wise guy' huh! I can see we're gonna get along just swell lady.

The waiter re-appears, refills the glasses, lays a wine bottle in the ice bucket, nods then demurely withdraws. The girl lifts her glass and takes a sip of her wine, but its clear her mood is more sombre.

PAMELA

After my husband was killed, well Detroit didn't have anymore hold on me. (pause)

The girl adopts a more stoic mood.

PAMELA

So, Pammy paid off all her debts,
packed up her little world,
filled the tank with gasoline,
kept driving West and, 'ta da',
here she is.

BENNY

So how did your fella die?

The girl stops eating and lays down her spoon. She looks around at the affluent diners in the restaurant.

BENNY

Hey, hey look I'm sorry, I...I
Shouldn't -

The girl turns back to face BENNY.

PAMELA

No that's fine Benny...You've
been good to me, real good. I
want to tell you. (Pause) My
husband Cal died six months ago
trying to put out a fire in an
apartment block...See he worked
for the Detroit Fire department.

The girl tries to raise a smile.

PAMELA

Nobody ever doubted he's
commitment to fighting fires. The
guys at the station joked that
the bookies laid odds on Cal
being first guy into a burning
building.

Benny watches as the girl fidgets with her wedding ring.

PAMELA

Yup! He loved that damn job.

INT RESTAURANT KITCHEN - SAME TIME

The mood in the kitchen is frenetic.

Heat and flames soar up in front of the chef, and only once the flames subside and the '*flambee*' is complete are the shrimp lifted and plated.

The head CHEF screams across the kitchen.

CHEF (O.S.)

Allez, allez!

The dish is passed along for the next stage of preparation.

INT: RESTAURANT - LATE EVENING

Benny and the girl are finishing their coffees. The mood is lighter. Pam taps the table excitedly.

PAMELA

So! Is it true, that you're a real Apache, Benny Trueblood?

BENNY

Half Apache.

PAMELA

Which half, top or bottom?

The girl bursts into a fit of laughter.

BENNY

(Smiling)

Ooh, You're on a roll tonight Pammy.

PAMELA

Sorry, I couldn't resist.
(Composing herself)...Seriously though, tell me your story.

BENNY

What's there to tell?...I ain't brave like your old man was if that's what you're wondering...In fact lady your looking at a fully paid up member of The Cowards Union.

PAMELA

Well then, tell me about what it's like to be a Hollywood producer?

BENNY

Well honey, it's a dirty job but someone's got to do it.

The girl does her own impression of a Scorsese 'gangster'

PAMELA

A 'wise guy' huh! I can see we're gonna get along just swell buddy.

BENNY

(smiling)

You wanna know what I do Pammy?

Putting his coffee cup down.

BENNY

Well, you see, I get to sit down with the devil's lieutenants and bullshit them, only we call it a pitch, and I do all this just so I can scrap enough bucks together to put some neurotic writer's catalog of cliches up on the big screen.

Wiping his lips with a napkin

That way it can be seen by a whole bunch of folks sitting in the dark, in some mall, munching pop corn...The thing is see, these folks aren't just looking for cliches...It's like the man said 'they want the same but different'.

Benny polishes off his coffee.

BENNY

Folks out there want the thrill of being scared, yet deep down they long to be safe.

The girl hangs on Benny's every word, nodding in agreement.

BENNY

It's like we got this need sometimes to just run away inside our own head. Well, y'see, that's what the movies are for.

PAMELA

Escapism!

BENNY

Yeah! That's it, escapism. Besides, folks have dropped their hard earned ten bucks at the box office, so you better give em a show, or else they'll kick your ass and movie right out of town.

LATE IN THE EVENING.

Diners are slowly leaving the restaurant.

The oil baron Seymour Selleck, his party of three in tow, approach Benny's table on route to the door.

Selleck, lanky, uncoordinated, stops at Benny's table. Benny immediately gets up and makes a big play of their encounter by man-hugging him in full view of fellow diners.

BENNY

Hey! Seymour buddy, great to see you. How ya been? I hear you're putting something together over at Columbia, congrats-

SEYMOUR SELLECK

Uh! Y'know, there's talk I might wanna do a co-production, but y'know it's early days Benny. I've still gotta err, read the script they sent me, y'know.

BENNY

Funny you should say that cos Pamela here, who's my new head of acquisitions has only gone and found me -

Selleck interrupts, though Benny is keen to continue.

SEYMOUR SELLECK

Seymour Selleck, err very pleased to make your acquaintance ma'am.

The oil magnate smiles at the pretty girl and extends a hand across the table. Which she graciously accepts.

Selleck gestures to his party, with Benny still desperately trying to anticipate a pause in the formalities.

SEYMOUR SELLECK

This is TINKERBELL my fiancee.

A slightly woozy looking female, dressed from tits to toes in diamonds, wobbles slightly on her stilettos.

TINKERBELL

Enchanted.

SEYMOUR SELLECK

And *this* is my err.. good buddy CLINT and mmn! his wife CLARISSA.

A Louise Brooks look alike, Complete with bobbed haircut, leans against her tall husband's thin bony frame. The couple are synchronized and nod and smile in unison.

BENNY

As I was saying Seymour, Pamela here has just sniffed out a peach of a spec, I'm telling you it's a winner buddy, got Oscar nomination written all over it.

SEYMOUR SELLECK

Really?

Seymour's guests appear bored but the oil baron's gullibility continues to be tested by Benny.

BENNY

Sure!..It's called Eskimo Express, it's all about this classy New York fashion model lost up there in the Arctic, and being pursued by a bunch of human traffickers, but this Eskimo and his pet polar bear come to her rescue. (He begins to paint a picture in the air with his hands). Frozen glaciers, snowy landscapes, clear blue arctic skies. We get Angelina to play the girl.

Seymour's guests have heard enough and Clint discreetly leans in and whispers into his buddy's ear. A waiter hovers around the table, clearing the empty coffee cups.

SEYMOUR SELLECK

Uh! Sounds great Benny, let me Uh, think more on it, maybe we can get my people to sit down with, uh, your people.

Seymour Selleck attracts the attention of the waiter by gesturing to Benny's table.

SEYMOUR SELLECK

See that uh, everything's uh, put on my account.

WAITER

(nodding)

Of course Mister Selleck.

SEYMOUR SELLECK

Well err, Good night Benny, Pamela. A Pleasure to meet you.

EXT: STREET OUTSIDE A WEST HOLLYWOOD APARTMENT - NIGHT

Benny and the girl are stepping out of a taxi. He is holding her by the waist and accompanying her up the steps to the apartment block. The taxi waits.

OUTSIDE ENTRANCE TO APARTMENT BLOCK

The couple are standing at the entrance to the apartment. Both appear to be waiting for the other to speak. Finally the tension is broken when they simultaneously say.

BENNY/PAMELA
(together)

So!

They both laugh. The taxi remains at the kerb-side.

BENNY
(again)

So, this is where you live?

The girl is amused by the banality of the question.

PAMELA
Yes Benny, this is where I live.

BENNY
So, if you want I, I could always
come up, y'know tuck you in.

The girl smiles and gives him a peck on the lips.

PAMELA
Maybe next time Benny.

BENNY
Sure, Sure...I understand.

The girl thrusts a key in the door lock. She stops and suddenly turns.

PAMELA
Thank you for a wonderful
evening, Benny...how about I come
on the set with you tomorrow?

EXT: METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES - DAY TIME

The area around the manhole cover has been secured by Zabba Dabba Doo Productions. A large second unit crew, complete with trucks and generators has commandeered the location.

A security fence prevents public access. Some distance away stands THE FIRST UNION BANK.

While the cast, crew and technicians, mill about the place clutching bottles of water, sweating under the hot Californian sun, Benny is engaged in torrid discussions with his (English) Director; A pale faced man old enough to be his grandfather - white shirt, white flannels - shading himself under an parasol.

BENNY
Rupert baby, goddam it! I know
it's hot but this is LA, not
frigging Leamington on Spa. So
you gotta pick up the pace, the
Studio's climbing all over me.

Pamela stands nearby watching the pair squabbling.

Three men pass by, wearing clown masks, two of them are carrying sawn off shotguns. They walk over the manhole cover and climb into a car being worked on by a mechanic.

RUPERT CARTER-EVERINGTON
(English R P)

Come, come dear boy let us not
make a drama out of a drama.

Like a hapless character from a P.G Woodhouse novel, Carter-Everington refuses to grasp the nature of Benny's woes.

BENNY

See, there you go again, doing
that British thing you guys
do. (He mimics the director)
'come, come, dear boy'. Look I'm
sick and tired of hearing it.

Rupert simply tut tuts, like a disappointed parent. Turns his back and walks off.

Enraged by the snub, Benny's eyes fall upon the bull Horn in the hands of one of the unit crew.

Benny grabs hold of the bull horn and begins to mega-harangue his director, as he disappears into the distance.

BENNY
(amplified by Bullhorn)

So you've won a damn Oscar, but
I'm warning you Rupert, start
taking me seriously.

EXT: FBI BUILDING - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Establishing shot of FBI BUILDING - Wilshire Boulevard.

INT: OFFICE - FBI BUILDING - SAME TIME

Special agent Bob Lazarus sits at his bureau desk, surveillance photographs lay strewn across it. His fingers settle on one of the photos, he picks it up.

CLOSE UP.

10 X 8 color photograph of a man -(Benny)- in an open top Cadillac, driving into an underground car park.

The Agent scrutinizes the image. After due deliberation Lazarus presses an intercom on his desk.

AGENT LAZARUS

Pull up what we got on Benjamin Trueblood...Talk to IRS. Get a Judge to give us access to his bank accounts. I wanna know where every cent he gets comes from.

EXT: FIRST UNION BANK - METROPOLITAN LA - AFTERNOON

The location of the film shoot is just outside the Union Bank. It is Sunday, which means that the few bystanders in attendance are easily marshalled behind barriers.

A couple of LAPD cops lean against their patrol car 'Serving and protecting', chewing gum and watching the show. Their vehicle sits unobtrusively across the way.

Someone is checking the light and the Camera crew is readying itself on the sidewalk outside. The clapper board is in position.

Benny and the girl watch attentively from the sidelines

RUPERT CARTER-EVERINGTON (O.C.)

Aaand action!

Some extras are introduced onto the sidewalk as passers by. Suddenly there's a screech of car tires, heavy braking.

A Ford saloon (seen earlier) pulls up outside the Union bank. The three occupants of the Ford are all wearing clown masks. The rear doors are thrown open and two masked men, carrying shotguns, spring from the vehicle.

RUPERT CARTER-EVERINGTON

(through a mega-phone)

CUT!...Marvellous darlings, marvellous.

SIDELINES

Benny looks affectionately at the girl and smiles.

INT: FBI OFFICE - EVENING

Agent Lazarus sits at his desk playing back a communication on his laptop. It is an intercepted phone call.

VOICE RECORDING

Perhaps Benny my friend, we are not explaining to you the importance of our boss' demands in the correct way, cos perhaps you think Gregor is a joke man, yes?

Lazarus listens intently to the WOOSHING sound that follows the message. He turns up the volume on his computer; replaying the sound effect over and over again.

EXT: METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES - night

The film unit trucks and other vehicles stand dormant, locked behind the high, meshed security fence. Crew and technicians have long since departed. Days end.

The area would otherwise be deserted but for the footsteps of Benny and the girl as they cross over the manhole cover on route to the exit gate.

SECURITY CABIN

An elderly security guard puts on his hat and steps out of his porta-cabin (situated just inside the gate).

Benny and the girl slowly approach the exit gate.

SECURITY GUARD

Good night mister Trueblood.
Good night miss.

BENNY

Night, Clyde.

The pair are passing through the steel gate when Benny slowly turns back to the security guard.

BENNY

Say Clyde, did You get your boy
into that College?

SECURITY GUARD

Oh yes sir we did sir, his
mother's so proud of him.

Benny smiles and takes the girl by the hand. The guard watches as the couple pass through the gate.

The couple step into a waiting cab. The taxi pulls away.

INT: FBI OFFICE - SAME TIME

Special agent Lazarus opens his office door and sticks his head into the operations room. Desks, phones, computers, all unmanned. Only one agent remains still at his desk, sipping coffee, downloading data.

AGENT LAZARUS

Ted, can I borrow you a minute?

Ted looks up from his screen.

TED

Sure, Bob.

INT: TAXI CAB - NIGHT

The couple are sitting together in the back of the taxi cab, outside the girls apartment block. The girl turns to Benny with a smile. A look of curiosity in her eyes.

PAMELA

Your an interesting man, Benny
Trueblood.

Benny looks doubtfully at the girl.

BENNY

Really?

PAMELA

No, I mean it you really are.

BENNY

I've been called a lot of things;
but never (pause) 'interesting.'

PAMELA

You never seem to forget a name
or miss a detail, do you? Take
back *there* earlier, Clyde the
security guard.

BENNY

What can I say? I like details,
little details are what make the
difference. Hell, maybe I
should've got a job working for
the Feds, besides you sound like
my old high school head when she
found me selling copies of the
school exam.

PAMELA

(Gasps)
You did what!

BENNY

Sure, back in tenth grade I'd
managed to sneak a peak at an
exam paper when they first
arrived at our school, memorized
it, and made a tidy profit
selling copies to the other kids.
The Head finally nailed me.

PAMELA

(with incredulity)
No way!

BENNY

(Adopting a stern frown)
 'Trueblood' she said. 'You've got
 an eye for detail, a photographic
 memory, and a bad, bad attitude.'
 Then she threw me out of the
 goddam school.

PAMELA

(smiling)
 Well it's not all bad BENNY, at
 least you've still got that
 photographic memory.

The girl presses the door handle. Benny puts his hand on hers.

BENNY

I'd trade it to be with you.

The girl freezes. She looks at Benny with empathy and slowly shakes her head, before delivering one of romantic cinema's great cliches.

PAMELA

It's too soon Benny...It's just
 too soon.

The girl slowly opens the car door, makes to leave. She leans over and gently kisses him on the cheek, then she steps out of the vehicle.

EXT: FBI BUILDING - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Establishing shot of FBI building. Upper floor, lights on.

INT: FBI OFFICE - SAME TIME

The WHOOSHING sound is being replayed.

Agents Bob and Ted are huddled around the laptop. Finally Agent Lazarus switches the recording off.

AGENT LAZARUS

What d'ya think it is Ted, a
 filter, a jamming device?

TED

Sounds to me Bob, mighty like the
 same noise coming from our hand
 dryer in the John, downstairs.

Agent Lazarus meets Ted's grin with a chuckle. He gets to his feet and heads over to the coat stand. He sigh's.

AGENT LAZARUS

It's time I went home.

Lazarus puts on his jacket, returns to his laptop and begins shutting the program down.

AGENT LAZARUS

You'd better get it over to the lab tomorrow Ted, get a positive analysis on it. Also, (Picking up the photo of Benny)...I'm gonna want everything we've got on this guy, talk to the field Agent. (Handing over the photo)

INT: DINER - LOS ANGELES - MORNING

Syd is sitting in his usual spot in the diner, chomping on his 'Olympic breakfast', occasionally he looks up and glances through the plate glass window at the build up of early morning LA traffic, heading in off the highway.

A THUMP, THUMP on the plate glass gives Syd such a start that he nearly chokes on his breakfast. Benny is standing outside, grinning back through the glass.

ENTRANCE TO DINER

Benny breezes into the diner, beaming from ear to ear, Syd looks up.

SYDNEY

What's the who? You look like the cat that got the cream.

Benny lifts his fedora and takes up a seat opposite Syd. He steals a couple of fries from Syd's plate and then gestures across to the waitress for a coffee.

BENNY

I'm in love Sydney.

SYDNEY

Have you been seeing that Turkish belly dancer again.

BENNY

No Syd, I mean real love.

SYDNEY

Get outta here, they ain't built a woman yet that could color your black heart.

BENNY

I've changed, Syd.

SYDNEY

Yeah right! (tucking into his breakfast) and I'm going on a lettuce diet straight after this.

The waitress arrives with a cup and a pot of hot coffee.

SYDNEY

So who's the lucky gal. (He loads up his fork with food). I'm assuming it's a female.

BENNY

(Giving Syd the finger)
Swivel on it Syd!

SYDNEY

No seriously, who is it?

BENNY

Well as a matter of fact it's that girl who totalled my fender.

SYDNEY

Get outta here!

BENNY

Oh, that reminds me, Syd.

Benny produces a set of keys, slides them across the table.

SYDNEY

You leave any gas in the tank?

Benny takes a sip of coffee.

BENNY

Claim it back on my IRS declaration.

Syd finishes the last of his breakfast and burps.

SYDNEY

So what's she like in the sack?

BENNY

Take it easy Syd, she's only been widowed six months.

Syd pushes his plate away and pats his ample belly.

SYDNEY

The 'too soon' scene, eh...
Still, you know what they say about the need for sex Benny?

Benny stares disinterestedly out of the window.

BENNY

No Syd, what do they say?

SYDNEY

Well sex is like air, it only becomes really important when you ain't getting any.

BENNY

Shame on you Syd, there's my old man laying in a hospital on a ventilator and your making wise-cracks about oxygen.

SYDNEY

(suitably chastised)

I was making a wise crack about the denial of sex actually, but I take your point Benny, It was remiss of me. (adding)...On account of your old man and everything, I apologize.

Benny puts on his fedora and gets up to leave.

BENNY

Apology accepted. Now I gotta be going. Breakfast's on me, put it on my tab.

EXT: WEST PALM HOSPITAL (CAR PARK) - DAY

A fully repaired Cadillac sits in a hospital parking bay.

INT: WEST PALM HOSPITAL SAME TIME

A male nurse carefully re-introduces the intravenous drip into the patient's pale, wrinkled arm.

Benny sits at his father's bedside. His father lays in a weakened state, clutching the oxygen mask. The NURSE runs a check on the IV drip, all the way back to the saline bag. Satisfied, he gives a cheery smile.

NURSE

Now you try and get some rest mister Trueblood. I'll pop back to check on you a little later.

The nurse gives a courteous smile, and a nod to father and son before crossing the room to leave.

The old man struggles in his attempt to sit up and Benny assists by propping pillows against the small of his back.

BENNY

There you go pa.

The old man lifts his oxygen mask and coughs.

FATHER

I'd like to get my hands around
the neck of that son of a bitch
who came up with ASBESTOS.

BENNY

Take it easy pa, you've gotta
save your strength.

The old man lets go a weak smile and breathes into his mask

FATHER

Huh!...Was a time I used to be
strong. Do you remember, son?

EXT: (NORTH)- JUST OFF HIGHWAY 405 - DAY

Benny is driving north up into the Hills. Top down, shades
on, fedora aloft. He glances in the rearview mirror.

- Black Dodge SUV, tinted windows -

The edge of the road falls away into the valley below. The
Sun blasts its rays through the upland forest. Ahead the
route is clear though narrow and curving sharply.

The Dodge goes for the overtake on a tight bend almost
forcing Benny off the road; the sound of Benny's car horn
trails in the SUV's wake.

BENNY

(Shouting)

Can I borrow your brain?...I'm
building an idiot.

Benny's Eldorado makes the bend but as he completes the
sweep he can see the black Dodge slowing down up ahead,
finally it stops. Tail lights come on and the Dodge slowly
begins to reverse.

Given the narrowness of the road, Benny is forced to bring
his Cadillac to a sharp halt, only yards from the SUV.

Two men jump out of the Dodge. Both dressed in all black:
Boots, combat fatigues, woollen Balaclava. They approach.

BENNY

Hey! Fellas -

One of the men leans into the car, grabbing hold of Benny,
pinning him back in his seat. The other stabs a needle into
the side of his neck. The Producer's eyes glaze over, and
he would recall no more of the event.

EXT: FOREST - NIGHT

HEAVY BREATHING - SACK CLOTH - DARKNESS.

The CRUNCH of spade breaking dry soil. Footsteps circling.

GREGOR (O.S.)
(Russian) - Enough, Enough!

Gregor yanks the hood from Benny's head. Benny squints at the light thrown from the beams of parked vehicles. The Producer is bent on his knees, somewhere in a forest. Gagged, wrists bound in front him, looking down at the freshly dug shallow grave laid out before him.

GREGOR
My boss, Ivan, he is not a
patient man, and you have still
not paid him back his money.

Benny, terrified, looks up to where Gregor is standing. The Russian crouches down so that he can whisper into Benny's ear. Gregor breaks out one of his menacing smiles.

GREGOR
He is prepared to lose the money
you owe, just to set a..an
(Gregor searches for the word)
exam..ple, yes example. Between
you and me Benny, I believe my
boss is a bit of a psycho.

Benny struggles on his knees against his binds and gag; so much so that in all his twisting and turning he loses his balance and topples head first into the grave.

All three men standing over him start laughing. The two men dressed in all black, seen earlier on the road and now unmasked, begin to haul Benny out of the grave.

GREGOR
(Laughing)
Not yet Benny, not yet, I have to
kill you first.

Benny looks around at his tormentors.

GREGOR
You have met two of my
boys...no?... Ex sergeants
Suvorov and Lunev.. Special
forces, Sixteenth Independent
Spetsnaz brigade.

The two former sergeants stand to attention at the mention of their brigade.

GREGOR
 (Saluting)
 Captain Zhukov, sixteenth brigade
 reporting for duty Benny.

Gregor begins to circle the shallow grave. Benny desperately tries to call out under the gag, to no avail.

GREGOR
 Afghanistan, Chechnya...You know,
 mother Russia gave me medals
 Benny, fucking medals.

Gregor stands at one end of the shallow grave, staring across at the beads of sweat trickling down Benny's face.

Gregor crosses the ground and stands over his battered victim, who's growing more terrified by the second.

Gregor pulls a pistol from under his shirt. Hunkering down beside Benny he presses the barrel against his temple.

GREGOR
 last requests?

Gregor's other hand busies itself, untying Benny's mouth gag. Benny furiously spits out the cloth and it falls to the ground. The gun still pressed at his head.

BENNY
 (Bellowing)
 I'll get your money Gregor, I
 swear, I swear to God. I know how
 to get it, ten, twenty times the
 amount. Honest to God! Honest to
 God! Just Let me explain.

INT: WOOD SAWMILL - SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Benny's bedraggled body is thrown over a wooden bench. Hands still tied. One of his captors presses down on his spine forcing his head down against the wooden surface.

GREGOR (O.S.)
 (In Russian) Sit him down.

Benny is yanked back onto his feet and hurled into a chair, placed in the centre of the shed.

The Producer's eyes focus on his surroundings, a sawmill. A large cabin like structure with a high ceiling, a tiny window and flickering moths hovering over a strip light.

Gregor crosses the room and hoists himself onto the bench, facing Benny.

The Russian aimlessly swings his legs, he picks his teeth with a switchblade, never once taking his gaze off his captive. The two former sergeants stand, implacable, either side of the only exit.

GREGOR

So Benny, my friend, I give you five minutes to convince me not to cut your balls off.

Benny wastes no time, leaning forward in his chair he begins to speak rapidly.

BENNY

I know a bank vault, see, and, and it's being used as a temporary store for the Federal reserve. It's friggin full of gold bars. I mean Gregor, you gotta see it to believe it, there's a whole stack of shiny bars just sitting there waiting to be lifted.

Gregor's interest is suddenly stirred by the mention of Gold. He stops picking at his teeth.

BENNY

And I know a way in -

GREGOR

Keep talking.

Benny needs no encouragement.

BENNY

Well if you'd read the script 'The Vault breakers' I gave Berensky you'd know that I'm shooting a movie about a bank heist, only I'm using a real bank cos that way it looks real on-screen, we're shooting interiors over at Central studios.

GREGOR

Tell me about the way in.

BENNY

It's sweet Gregor, there won't be any need for guns or violence, just a big old smash and grab.

Gregor is struggling to keep up, he becomes incensed.

GREGOR

What is this smash grab, what the fuck you talking about?

BENNY

I mean, that we go in underground, up into the vault and take the lot, before anybody knows we're there.

GREGOR

You want to dig a fucking tunnel in middle of LA...I think I cut you now.

Gregor drops down of the bench.

BENNY

No wait. We can use the city sewer, you know the tunnels, underground where our crapola goes. See, this vault I'm talking about is right over a main sewer pipe, so all you got to do is cut a big hole into the floor and we got our hands on a pile of gold.

GREGOR

How do you know all this?

BENNY

I've been down there, right...And besides I gotta map of the place.

GREGOR

So where's this map?

BENNY

its, its in the glove box of my car, and look Gregor I'd even be willing to take a forty - sixty split on this one.

Gregor takes a long hard stare at his captive, clearly weighing up the options. He removes Benny's car keys from his pocket and tosses them across to the man guarding the door. The man exits.

GREGOR

How much gold?

Benny, in his enthusiasm, tries to stand but is discouraged by the expressions on the faces of his captors.

BENNY

You're not gonna believe it when I tell you Gregor, but that bank is sitting on four hundred million dollars in gold, and that's more gold than you can shake a stick at.

Gregor takes out a cell-phone, taps in a number. The recipient picks up the call, Gregor walks to the far end of the room, out of earshot. (Though the fact that he is speaking in RUSSIAN can just be discerned.)

Gregor finishes the call. One of his men re-enters the room carrying the map. Gregor strides across the room stopping only to collect the map from the man and to whisper an instruction into his ear.

The man nods then removes the pistol tucked into his belt and proceeds to stand guard directly in front of Benny. At the sametime his comrade is standing vigil at the exit. Gregor reaches the door, turns, and calls over to Benny.

GREGOR

They have orders to kill you if necessary.

Gregor is out the door. Benny glances up at the big man - *this* veteran of wars - Benny tries a charm offensive.

BENNY

We're going get along just fine, aren't we fellas?...There's nothing like a bit of male bonding to keep a guys spirits high, ain't that right big man?

Benny's banter falls on deaf ears, for his captor remains stony faced.

As the moments tick by in silence, Benny's attention turns to his confines. Apart from a few old rickety looking wooden chairs and a bench, the room is otherwise devoid of furniture. Hanging ominously from the walls are an assortment of woodcutting tools, axes, blades, handsaws. In the far corner of the shed standing idle are a couple of rip-cutting machines. Piles of wood-chip pepper the floor.

Benny struggles against the binds about his wrists. He tries his luck again, and attempts to get up.

BENNY

Any of you guys fancy a game of pee-knuckle?

The swift blow to Benny's stomach collapses him back into his seat; knocking the wind right out of him.

Benny steadies himself by taking long deep breathes.

BENNY

(breathing heavily)
I'll take that as a 'no' then.

From outside, the noise of a vehicle being parked up and car doors slamming cuts through the silence in the shed. The sound of people talking in Russian grows louder.

Benny looks up to see Gregor and another man walking in. Gregor looks pleased with himself and smiles at Benny.

GREGOR

Benny, meet my good friend YURI. Now Yuri knows all about breaking into places and breaking out of places. Twenty years, Russian Airborne Engineers, and believe me Benny these guys they blow stuff up for fun.

Gregor playfully slaps Yuri on the back. Both men roar with laughter. The former soldier standing guard over Benny rejoins his comrade by the door.

BENNY

Got any soldiers left in Russia?

Yuri smiles, scratches his bushy beard and looks quizzically back at the wise cracking American. Meanwhile Gregor is shaking dust off a couple of wooden chairs while positioning them in front of their prisoner. He picks up a a foot long stick of wood, an off-cut discarded on the floor, and pokes it into the wrist bound hands of Benny.

Gregor lays open the MAP/PLAN on the ground in front of Benny.

PLAN OF LA SEWER SYSTEM.

Gregor and Yuri occupy the two seats facing BENNY, like Grand Inquisitors.

GREGOR

Now Yuri is going to ask you some questions, Benny, and if he doesn't like the answers then-

BENNY

(wearily)

-Your gonna cut my balls off, I get the picture already.

Gregor turns to Yuri, clearly relishing the moment.

GREGOR

See, I told you, a smart guy.

Benny readies himself for the pitch of his life.

Yuri starts in. His English is excellent.

YURI

How do we get access?

BENNY

There's a utility shaft running right under our film unit.

Benny stabs with the stick at the location of his film unit

YURI

How far to floor of vault?

BENNY

According to *this* it's no more than three hundred metres.

Benny drags the stick a couple of inches over the map and along a line which passes directly under the FIRST UNION BANK. Gregor watches as Yuri slowly nods approvingly.

YURI

And what do you think will happen to the sensor alarms when we start cutting into their floor mister American?

BENNY

Today's Tuesday right, so we got to do this job next Sunday night into Monday or we can forget the whole thing.

Benny lets go the stick and it falls onto the map.

In his eagerness to set out his plan, Benny tries again to stand up. And again he is coerced by a blow to the stomach into remaining seated, this time by Gregor.

GREGOR

Sit the fuck down!

BENNY

(Gasping slightly)

See originally we'd arranged with the bank to shoot exterior night scenes around the building, scheduled for next Monday AM, but the bank came back to our tech crew and said they didn't want us anywhere near the place until the following day, reckoned they had trucks coming in at that time to transfer a consignment to LA airport, and that the place would be crawling with National Guard....Well that's got to be for the gold right?

Dawn is breaking, and a slither of light creeps in through the tiny window. Benny presses on.

BENNY

So here's the kicker, someone at the bank then goes and mentions to our tech crew that they've got a problem with a trip switch on the sensors and they are having to switch them all off on Sunday evening for twelve hours, for fear that the noise of the incoming trucks will set them off; which would put the vault into automatic lock down

Benny waits for the realization of what he is saying to sink in, it doesn't come. Instead Gregor scowls at him.

GREGOR

You want we take on the National Guard. Do we look stupid to you?

BENNY

No, no! Don't you see...Look the trucks and the Guard aren't due to arrive until the early hours of Monday morning, which is why they wouldn't let us do any filming at that time.

Gregor glances at Yuri. Benny presses on with his pitch.

BENNY

Now we know the sensors will be down from 6.00 PM Sunday until 6.00 AM Monday...and that gives you guys a window of opportunity to get into the vault and clean it out before The Guard arrive.

Benny waits for a reaction. Yuri strokes his beard, deep in thought. Gregor is first to react.

GREGOR

And so what you gonna say when LAPD knock, knock on your door mister movie producer?

BENNY

Believe me Gregor with a share of four hundred million bucks, I'm gonna be long gone by then.

Gregor turns to Yuri.

GREGOR

What you think?

YURI

It's a big job, and we're going
to need a THERMAL LANCE,
ACETYLENE, SONAR EQUIPMENT,
GENERATOR, PULLEYS-

Gregor interrupts the shopping list. Speaking in Russian.

GREGOR

(*Russian*) But can it be done?

YURI

Da! Da!. If this guy is for real,
sure, sure it's possible Gregor.

Benny breathes a sigh of relief and settles back. Gregor stands up. Draws his switchblade from his pocket and approaches the Producer. The Russian cuts his captors binds

GREGOR

You've bought yourself a few more
days Benny Trueblood, now go play
at being a Movie Producer. We
will contact you.

EXT: WEST PALM HOSPITAL - EARLY MORNING

Early morning, a hazy, shimmering light from the sun is emerging over the City. Carbon fumes vent skyward from the growing snake of traffic building up on the highways.

The digital display board on the hospital's facade reads:

Temp: 74 Degrees Fahrenheit - Time: 07.30 AM

The rear doors of an ambulance are slammed shut.

In no time the siren is wailing, lights flash, and the vehicle is speeding out of the hospital fore-court.

INT: HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME

In the centre of the room stands A Shaman- A Chiricahua- Apache - in full ceremonial dress. He is swaying from side to side in the manner of his forefathers, softly CHANTING, and shaking the severed tip of a rattle snake's tail.

The rhythmic sound of the ventilator's pump adds a twenty first century poignancy to the ancestral ritual.

The shades have been drawn, allowing minimum light into the room, adding to the solemnity.

Benny Trueblood, fedora in hand - clean white shirt, sits in silence at his dying father's bedside.

EXT: STREET - DOWNTOWN LA (FILM SET) SAME-TIME

The actor Tony Nevada lays bleeding to death on the street, from a gunshot wound to the chest. The Female he saved from the bank robbers (a mother in one of his earlier scenes) is desperately trying to comfort him. She clutches his hand.

FEMALE ACTRESS

Oh! Johnny, Johnny, just hold on,
baby they'll be here soon.

In true Hollywood style our hero (Tony Nevada) clutches the bleeding wound and tries to utter his last words. The girl gently presses her fingers to his lips.

FEMALE ACTRESS

Hold on Johnny, you're gonna make
it...(then she softly adds).
We're gonna make it.

DIRECTOR (O.C.)

CUT! Marvellous, marvellous.
Someone get me a hanky darlings,
and where's that bloody Producer
Trueblood.

In reveal, the crew and extras can be seen boisterously clapping their star turns. The actors themselves are getting to their feet, graciously accepting their applause.

INT HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME

Benny stands over the bed of his frail father, now clinging to life on a ventilator; And with the Shaman's invocations filling the room, Benny gently takes hold of his father's hand. He leans down to whisper in his ear.

BENNY

I've got to away pa... And maybe
for a long time(then he softly
adds), but it's gonna be okay pa,
every things gonna be okay.

Benny gently lets slip his father's grasp. Then he turns from his father's bedside and slowly walks away.

EXT: PARK - SOMEWHERE IN LA - AFTERNOON

It is a hot sunny day. Syd is sitting on a park bench chomping on a doughnut and feeding bread to the birds. Benny wearily approaches. Syd looks up.

SYDNEY

Where the hell have you been? I thought we were gonna go over the figures. I've Been trying to call you all morning.

Benny, wiping the sweat from his brow sits wearily down beside his accountant.

BENNY

Sorry, guess I got a lot on my mind at the moment.

Syd breaks off some more crumbs of bread and tosses them.

SYDNEY

Is it your old man?

The expression on Benny's face confirms it *is*.

Nearby some young children are playing 'tag' in the park, they shriek and run around endlessly. A couple of lovers walk blissfully by, their arms entwined.

SYDNEY

He's a good man your father. Y'know we grew up in the same neighborhood. It seems funny looking back at it now. A Jew and an Apache growing up in the same part of town (smiles to himself)

Syd shakes out the last crumbs of bread from a paper bag.

BENNY

(glibly)
God bless America, hey!

SYDNEY

I was just a kid, and I'd never really worked up the courage to speak to your pa. What with him being that few years older than me; he was practically a man as far as I was concerned. I recall the year he left school, started working over at the refrigerator factory.

Syd's feeding has attracted a large flock of pigeons.

It was the day after my Bar Mitzvah. So there I am a thirteen year old runt being chased into a back alley by a gang of punks out for an afternoon's 'Jew baiting'.

Benny tilts back his hat.

SYDNEY

Well, they've got me cornered, six of them, and I literally start peeing my pants. Then along comes your old man on his way home from work, swaggering by, lunch box under his arm, minding his own, whistling a Johnny Ray tune.

A small 'yappy' dog scatters the flock of pigeons.

So you're old man sees what's going on, drops his lunch box and right *there* in the alley he squares up to the gang. He takes one long look at the biggest guy on the 'block' and says 'who wants to be the first to get a bloody nose'.

Syd slaps his thigh and laughs.

SYDNEY

Well, I swear to you Benny, that gang stood crapping themselves. Then they up and scattered faster than *those* pigeons. Afterwards your old man looked me right in the eyes and said. 'Kid, never show the other guy you're scared' (Nodding). I'm telling You Benny, your old man's a true Mensch.

BENNY

Promise...If anything should happen to me Syd, you'll make sure his wishes are kept. You see he's gotta be cremated, scattered to the winds. Our ancestors way.

SYDNEY

Sure thing, but nothing's gonna happen to you Benny...You've got more lives than a cat.

Syd wipes some strawberry sauce from his lips and offers up the pastry box.

SYDNEY

Do you want a doughnut?

INT: DEN - (APPARTMENT) - SOMEWHERE IN LA DAY

Gregor is sitting at his desk speaking (In Russian) on the telephone. At the same time he is inspecting the miniature model aircraft that he has been working on.

GREGOR

(Russian)..All arrangements are being made mister Yemeninsky. Yes it's in the air..Of course I will be waiting for you at Long Beach airport...The Villa is at your disposal.

EXT: FBI BUILDING - LOS ANGELES DAY

Establishing shot.

INT FBI BUILDING - SAME TIME

(LAZARUS') OFFICE

An assortment of photo's are spread out on an FBI desk.

CLOSE UP: SUPER ENLARGED COLOR PHOTO - BENNY IN CAR

FBI Agent Lazarus stares down at the blown up image. A file with the name BENJAMIN TRUEBLOOD sits alongside.

There's a knock at the door. A man with weary eyes and a sweat stained shirt bursts in, flapping a one page report.

WEARY FBI AGENT

We may have a breakthrough!

The weary Agent glances at the paper in his hand.

WEARY FBI AGENT

Just got a flight plan in from ATC Long Beach. They had a Corporate Jet depart en route to New York, just over an hour ago. No passengers on board and the pilot's filed a return flight plan for later today, and get this. Its registered to a Moscow based Company TRANS-GLOBAL HOLDINGS, formerly owned by an Igor Berensky.

Agent Lazarus smiles the smile of the vindicated.

AGENT LAZARUS

Yemininsky's on the move.

Lazarus crosses to the coat-stand. Collects his jacket.

WEARY FBI AGENT
Do you want me to liaise with New
York Office?

AGENT LAZARUS
Sure! Talk to Laura the ADC.

Bob Lazarus turns back to his Agent, pointing at the photo.

AGENT LAZARUS
Pull the Field OPs out, and this
guy in. Our Benny Trueblood knows
something, and we're gonna
squeeze until he squeaks.

EXT: ENTRANCE TO CENTRAL PICTURES - DAY

The guard on the gate lifts the barrier and waves Benny
through. The Eldorado turns left onto one of the back lots.

INT: OFFICE - ZABBA DABBO DOO PRODUCTIONS.

Benny sits behind his desk, brooding, bouncing a tennis
ball on the desktop. Catching it. He stops, looks up.

There, hanging on the walls, and writ large for all the
world to see is Benny's legacy to Motion Pictures.

Movie Posters:

'ZOMBIE DAWN' - 'ZOMBIE DAWN 2' - 'THE RETURN OF ZOMBIE DAWN'
'VEGANS vee ZOMBIES' - 'ON A WING AND A PRAYER'.

Benny continues bouncing the ball. There's a knock at the
door. Benny drops the ball.

BENNY
Come in.

The door opens. Benny looks up.

Two men in dark suits stride into the room and approach
Benny at his desk. It falls to the taller of the two men to
speak first.

AGENT COWELL
FBI Agent Cowell and my colleague
Agent Durrant.

Benny interrupts.

BENNY
(casually)
Guys! Auditions and casting are
down the hall.

Both men flip open leather ID wallets in unison.

AGENT DURRANT
We'd like to talk to you, over at
the Bureau Office, mister
Trueblood.

BENNY
What the hell is this? You guys
got an arrest warrant or what?

AGENT DURRANT
No...But I'm sure it can be
arranged mister Trueblood.

INT: FBI BUILDING - LOS ANGELES

Establishing shot of FBI building, Wiltshire Boulevard.

INT: FBI INTERVIEW ROOM - SOME TIME LATER

A basketball revolves on a fingertip.

Agent Lazarus has his collar open, shirt sleeves rolled up. He is standing watching the ball spinning at the end of his hand. The Assistant District Chief calls across the room in a jovial manner.

ADC
Hey Bob! Show us some moves.

From beneath the brim of his hat, Benny gazes vacantly off into the distance. The Bureau's ADC sits opposite.

On the table there is a lap top, a blank piece of paper (headed witness statement); And a pen.

Standing at six foot ten, dark and lean, FBI Agent Bob Lazarus could never be accused of blending in. He slams the ball down. Deftly runs through a few crossover dribbles, lays the basketball around behind his back, then brings it forwards between his legs.

Benny tilts back his fedora. The ADC slaps the desk like a true fan.

ADC
Way to go Bob! (turns excitedly to
Benny)...Bob was a NBA rookie
y' know.

Bob Lazarus takes a pro hop, powers up and lofts the ball over Benny's head. The basketball drops with a THWACK directly into the trash basket on the other side of the room. The ADC slaps the desk again.

BENNY

Impressive stuff Bob, but I'm sure you guys didn't just ask me over for a little one on one, so what d'ya do for an encore?

ADC

He's right you know Bob. Mister Trueblood is a very busy man. A movie producer, isn't that so mister Trueblood? I got this young nephew wants to be a writer, he's a punk but maybe you'd take a look at his stuff.

Benny wearily rubs his forehead.

BENNY

(Disinterestedly)

Sure. Send it over to my office, Can I go now?

The ADC smiles to himself. Special Agent Bob Lazarus gathers up a bunch of buff colored files piled up in the corner of the interview room. He tucks them under his arm.

ADC

Well. Here comes the boring bit of the job...See we gotta ask you a few routine questions about some business associates.

The ADC gives a nod to agent Lazarus.

ADC

Its all kinda procedural, but the Bureau would really appreciate your cooperation mister Trueblood

Lazarus presses a button on a wall mounted tape recorder. He talks in an official tone, and to no-one in particular.

AGENT LAZARUS

Interview- Benjamin Trueblood -
5.17 PM - Also present Bureau
ADC, and Agent Lazarus.

ADC

So what can you tell us about your association with an Ivan Yemininsky, mister Trueblood?

Silence ensues:

ADC

A mister Igor Berensky then?

Silence.

ADC

Okay. What about a Gregor Zhukov?
Trans-Global Holdings?

BENNY

I'm taking the fifth! You've seen
the movie. I got nothing to say.

The ADC looks across at Bob Lazarus and smiles. Lazarus produces some photographs of Zhukov's limousine, and then some of Benny in his Cadillac leaving the same car park.

Benny feigns a disinterested glance at the photo's.

BENNY

So! You got a bunch of
photo's...Since when's it been a
federal crime to park a car in LA

The ADC leans over and taps the keyboard on the computer.

LAP TOP VOICE RECORDING.

GREGOR (V.O.)

'Perhaps Benny, my friend, we are
not explaining to you the
importance of our boss' demands
in the correct way, cos perhaps
you think Gregor is a joke man,
yes?

The intercepted call momentarily knocks Benny off guard.

The Feds turn up the pressure. The ADC taps the keyboard again and part of a second intercepted call is heard.

GREGOR (V.O.)

'Mister Yemininsky wishes to meet
with you-

EXT: LONG BEACH AIRPORT (AIR-SIDE) DAY (SAMETIME)

Inverted heat lifts as a shimmering haze from the tarmac.

A black limousine slides onto the apron. A tinted window drops as Gregor glances across the runway. The Jets wing is reflected against the lens of his dark glasses.

INT: FBI INTERVIEW ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The ADC Pushes the witness statement and pen across the table. Benny looks down warily at it.

Silence:

Agent Lazarus draws a number of documents from the files.

AGENT LAZARUS

We asked IRS to take a good look at your past couple of years accounts mister Trueblood...We've also got a judge to clear copies of your bank statements, they're right here.

Lazarus unceremoniously drops the wad of paperwork down in front of the anxious movie producer.

ADC

Take a look. It makes interesting reading (leaning across the desk to point at the paperwork). We've even taken the trouble to mark up in red for you the really interesting bits. Particularly these amounts from a Trans-Global Holdings.

EXT: LONG BEACH AIRPORT (AIR-SIDE) DAY

A Lear-Jet taxies into view. There's a hissing sound from the turbines as the aircraft's engines are powered down.

Gregor is waiting on the tarmac. He is leaning against the limousine chewing gum.

INT FBI INTERVIEW ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Benny is starting to sweat a little and takes off his hat, laying it down on top of the paperwork. The ADC looks up at his agent and smiles.

ADC

It's a lot of money Bob.

The Agent plays along.

AGENT LAZARUS

Sure is chief!

ADC

What do they say it totals Bob?

AGENT LAZARUS

A little over eleven million dollars.

The Agents begin milking the scene for all it's worth.

ADC

A little over eleven million dollars, heck Bob, that's more than you or I could expect to earn in a lifetime. So you'd think if you were getting that sort of money from somewhere, you'd tell someone about it, like the IRS or your accountant, wouldn't you Bob?

AGENT LAZARUS

I know I sure would, chief.

The ADC stops smiling and looks Benny straight in the eyes.

ADC

So, do you want to tell us all about it mister Trueblood?

BENNY

I'm saying nothing without my lawyer present.

Benny moves uneasily in his chair, trying to regain some of his bravado. The ADC tries to conceal his irritation.

ADC

Let's get you a cup of coffee.

He gives a nod to Agent Lazarus.

AGENT LAZARUS

(Procedural tone)

5.59 PM. Interview paused.

Lazarus switches off the tape recorder and leaves the room.

The ADC waits for the door to close behind the Agent before leaning in, to continue the conversation in a hushed tone.

ADC

Strictly off the record Benny, and believe me when I tell you this, you're in a whole heap of shit, my friend.

Benny stares down at the witness statement and then the pen. The ADC's fingers tap idly away on the table top. The time ticks by. The door opens and Agent Lazarus re-enters carrying a tray with three steaming coffees in paper cups. He dispenses the drinks.

The ADC picks up where he left off.

ADC

Your looking at ten to fifteen in a Federal Penitentiary for Money laundering. We're gonna try and pin complicity to defraud, aiding and abetting, not to mention tax evasion, and anything else we can think of. Hell! By the time we get through, you'll be in the frame for sinking the Titanic.

Bob laughs.

AGENT LAZARUS

You don't wanna end up in prison Benny, having some 'dick slinger' banging away on your ass?

Benny throws his hands up in exasperation.

BENNY

For God's sake fellas! I'm a civilian. I just make movies.

The ADC taps the blank WITNESS STATEMENT.

ADC

Hey! Listen. The Bureau might be willing to talk to the DA. Maybe we can cut you an immunity deal.

AGENT LAZARUS

If you testify under oath, as a Federal Witness, against Zhukov and Yemininsky in court, tell us everything you know, then maybe you can walk away from all this.

BENNY

Yeah right!. Why don't you just hand me over my own death warrant to sign...Do you think an outfit like that wouldn't have enough muscle left out there to put me in the ground?

AGENT LAZARUS

Look, we'll put you on THE WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM. Re-location, you're outta here.

ADC

Sure, where do you want to go?...New Identity, a little start up money, the works. What do you say?

Benny stares at the witness statement.

BENNY

I just don't know, fellas.

ADC

Finish your coffee, think about it. Maybe Special Agent Zebrowska can help you make your mind up.

The ADC gets to his feet, both he and Agent Lazarus prepare to leave the room with their coffees.

EXT: LONG BEACH AIRPORT (AIR-SIDE) SAMETIME

The Lear-Jet comes to rest on its Stand. The name TRANS-GLOBAL HOLDINGS is emblazoned across the fuselage.

The cabin door opens and Gregor walks towards the aircraft.

INT: FBI HALLWAY (INTERVIEW ROOM)

The ADC and Agent Lazarus are stood together in the hallway drinking coffee. They are gazing through a large two-way mirror at an anguished looking Benny Trueblood.

VIEW THROUGH TWO WAY MIRROR - (INTERVIEW ROOM)

Benny sits head bowed, contemplating his fate and the document in front of him.

AGENT LAZARUS (V.O.)

Do you think he'll cooperate?

ADC (V.O.)

A guy like that, who knows? Says on his file he's descended from Apache on his father's side. His Mother and older brother were killed by a drunk driver, shortly after he was born. What do the movie people say about him Bob?

AGENT LAZARUS (V.O.)

That he's a fuck wit!

ADC (V.O.)

And what do his friends say?

AGENT LAZARUS (V.O.)

That he's a likeable fuck wit!

INT FBI HALLWAY

The ADC looks up at Bob, smiles and takes a sip of coffee.

VIEW THROUGH TWO WAY MIRROR - (INTERVIEW ROOM)

The door to the interview room opens and in walks Special Agent Susan Zebrowska (AKA Pamela 'Pammy' Ronson).

Benny looks up with a start; and stands up with a jolt.

Startled - staggered - stunned; no amount of exposition could ever record the look of sheer disbelief registering across Benny's little face.

He begins shaking his head with all the frustration of a toddler denying the existence of bedtime.

She slowly nods her head then folds open the leather ID wallet in her hand.

He mouths some words and she wearily shakes her head. He gestures 'me & you' with his hands.

She looks at him with more sympathy than he can stand. He slumps dejectedly back in the chair.

He takes an angry swipe at the empty paper cup, knocking it to the other side of the room.

She clearly mouths the words 'sorry Benny' then crosses the room and switches on the tape recorder.

EXT SANTA MONICA CONDO/TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

150 Ocean Park Boulevard third floor Condo/Townhouse.

INT BEDROOM (OCEAN PARK) - SAME TIME

A ceiling fan spins above a double bed.

Benny is tossing and turning in his sleep.

SURREAL DREAM SEQUENCE (BLACK & WHITE)

INT: COURT ROOM

Something's not right here. Benny stands in the dock being lambasted by Gregor the prosecution lawyer, who's dressed as Groucho Marx, and who for some reason insists on speaking in French and pointing his cigar directly at Benny who is now sweating profusely.

GROUCHO MARX / GREGOR

J'accuse! J'accuse!

J'accuse!...J'accuse!

The Public gallery is in uproar, and the jury packed with Hollywood Icons (from Central Casting) glare accusingly back at Benny: (Marlon Brando, Marilyn Monroe, Humphrey Bogart, Marlene Dietrich, James Dean, Audrey Hepburn, Charlie Chaplin, Betty Grable, Ava Gardner, John Wayne, Mae West, Errol Flynn).

CUT FROM SURREAL DREAM

INT: BEDROOM (OCEAN PARK)

BENNY is still tossing and turning in his bed.

CUT BACK TO DREAM SEQUENCE

INT: COURT ROOM

The witness clasps a tobacco pipe in his left hand and flashes 24 carat gold cuff-links. An immaculately groomed middle-aged man with a Roman emperor's nose. Fine black hair, slicked back behind large ears. He takes to the Witness stand and raises his right hand. A white handkerchief adorns a tuxedo pocket. Always the 'Showman'.

SAM SPIEGEL

I, Sam Spiegel, deceased - who, many of you out there might say, is the 'producer of all producers'-(smiles at the jury)- do solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The witness coughs and clears his throat then looks across at the defendant.

SAM SPIEGEL

Your honour, Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. That man standing over there, Benny Trueblood, is a shmuck. A shmuck who couldn't produce a decent movie if his life depended upon it!

CUT FROM SURREAL DREAM

INT: BEDROOM (OCEAN PARK) SAME TIME

SAM SPIEGEL (V.O.)

(echoed)

If his life depended upon it...If his life depended upon it...If his li-

Benny wakes with a start from his nightmare, panting, sweating, the damning testament of the late great Sam Spiegel ringing in his ears. He grabs his cell phone from under the pillow.

INT: BEDROOM (WEST HOLLYWOOD) SAME TIME

Syd snoozes blissfully in bed, wife faithfully alongside.

The cell-phone on his bedside table BEEPS. An outstretched hand fumbles for the bedside lamp. The light comes on. Syd rubs his tired eyes, picks up the phone. Digits on the alarm clock read 3.25 Am.

INTERCUT - BENNY'S BEDROOM / SYD'S BEDROOM

BENNY
(hyped up)
Syd is that you?

SYDNEY
(Yawning)
No. It's his butler who the hell do y'think it is? More to the point Benny why are you calling me at this God forsaken hour?

BENNY
Calm down Syd, chill-lax, watch the blood pressure, I just need a profit and loss, collateral assessment that's all.

SYDNEY
You wanna what?

1ZZY
A company report, Zabba dabba doo productions, a collateral assessment. You know, the numbers. I want the figures.

SYDNEY
Have you been drinking?

BENNY
I'm asking you what the Company's currently worth, Syd!

SYDNEY
(Long silence) What kinda dumb ass question is that?

BENNY
(wearily)
Your the accountant, just give me the figures, Syd, y'know, say I cashed in my chips, sold my Zombie franchises, came in on budget with *this* heist movie.

SYDNEY
(mocking laughter)
Oh that's beautiful Benny, that's just damn-well beautiful, are you out of your tiny mind?

BENNY

Y'know, say I took a bit of early retirement, what's my net worth? Throw me a ball park figure Syd.

Benny senses a tide of anger flowing back down the line.

SYDNEY

How about Zero, Benny, Zilch, Nought, Nada, a Big fat O...Do you like any of them figures, or do I have to spell it out? There's no pot left to piss in! Now get off the end of this line and let me get some goddam sleep.

Benny glares at the call ended on his cell.

BENNY

Syd? Syd?

EXT: LUXURY VILLA - BEL AIR - DAY

Gregor's black limousine approaches the gate to the Villa.

The Iron gate slides open and the 'limo' gently eases its way over the gravel and past the two men dressed in suits, carrying sub machine guns. On past the immaculately trimmed lawns, the rose-beds, the water features, finally coming to a halt outside a Venetian styled villa with granite steps leading up to a fabulously ornate portal.

INT: LUXURY VILLA - MOMENTS LATER

Gregor leads Benny down the palatial hallway. The cold TAP, TAP, TAP rhythm of their footsteps beat against the finest Italian marble.

A sweeping collection of classic renaissance art seems almost to sneer down upon its modern audience.

Californian sunshine floods in through the grandest window frames money can buy.

Benny is having difficulty keeping up with Gregor's stride.

BENNY

Pretty fancy joint he's got himself here. So why do they call him 'Ivan the terrible'?

Gregor turns.

GREGOR

It could be to make him sound more, more-

The Russian searches his mental lexicon for the word without breaking his stride.

GREGOR

Scary...yes scary this is the word, it could be to make him sound scary.

Benny quickens his pace in an attempt to catch up.

GREGOR

(casually)

Or it could be because he enjoys to bite off the ears of his enemies.

Benny winces and then involuntarily brushes one of his own - attached - ears.

BENNY

Cutting nuts, biting ears, what is it with you people?

They are coming to the end of the hallway.

INT: PRIVATE - LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Benny and Gregor are standing all but naked, except for the white linen towels wrapped around their waists. Gregor is wearing a patch over his glass eye, his upper torso a canvas for tattoos and battle scars. Benny is complaining.

BENNY

Is all this really necessary Gregor?

Gregor, at six foot plus, puts an arm across Benny's slender shoulders by way of reassurance.

GREGOR

My boss has many enemies, people talk, FBI plant wires, you know how it goes in these days.

Benny is outraged by the suggestion.

BENNY

You think I work for the Cops, are You kidding me!

GREGOR

No, no,.its just that he is a little bit -

Gregor searches for the word.(He does that thing where a person twists their finger at the side of their head to indicate mental issues).

BENNY
'Paranoid?'

Slapping Benny on the shoulder.

GREGOR
Yes...Paranoid.

BENNY
So I owe money to a paranoid
psycho... nice.

GREGOR
Don't worry, If Ivan like's you
then the job is on (pause) and if
he doesn't well-

Gregor becomes a little evasive. Benny presses him.

BENNY
Well, what?...I get it..The old
'Cojones' and ears trick huh.

Gregor, arm still across Benny's shoulders, gently guides his 'guest' towards the exit.

INT SAUNA ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Benny feels the heat as soon the door opens and he enters the 'furnace'. Gregor follows him in.

Through the steam and heat of the sauna the newcomers are met by the sight of 3 men, wrapped from the waist down in towels. They sit in a row, along a wooden bench, sweating.

Two burly looking characters with hairy chests flank a tiny man who could easily be mistaken for a sixty year old 'baby'. Bald head, big blue eyes and a face as round and chubby as Buddha.

'Baby face' hops down off the bench, securely holding the towel about his waist. He approaches Benny, and stands in front of his wary 'guest'. He looks up at Benny and doesn't so much as blink.

Gregor stands just off to the side of the pair, and makes the introductions.

GREGOR
Benny this is my boss mister
Yemininsky.

Benny offers a hand, but Ivan simply lets it hang in the air, instead Ivan puffs out his diminutive though muscular chest like a feather-weight boxer entering the ring.

BENNY
 (dropping his hand)
 Pleased to make your
 acquaintance.

Ivan continues to glare up into the eyes of the Hollywood producer. Rivulets of sweat cascade from the pores of Benny's skin. He clutches the towel around his waist like an infant child clinging to their security blanket. Ivan addresses Gregor in Russian, eyes still fixed on Benny.

IVAN YEMININSKY
 (Russian) Is everything ready?

GREGOR
 (Russian) Da, Da, we're good to
 go mister Yemininsky.

Ivan slowly begins to circle the reddening figure of Benny. The Russian appears to be weighing up the American, as if he were a slab of meat on a butcher's hook. Benny is becoming more self-conscious by the second. Ivan, having completed a 360 degree tour of Benny, stops and again stares up at him. He calls back over his shoulder.

IVAN YEMININSKY
 (Russian) Give me the rod.

The bodyguard, who dwarfs his boss, scurries off the bench and hands his boss a slim, cylindrical bar of metal - about a foot in length and an inch in diameter- similar to that of a track athlete's baton (only thinner).

Ivan hands over the rod to the uncertain Benny, who accepts it. Ivan begins simulating a bending action with his hands.

GREGOR
 He wants you to bend it, Benny.

BENNY
 What? I don't get it.

GREGOR
 (Insistently)
 He wants you to try to bend the
 bar, go on Benny you must try.

Benny looks at the shiny silver rod in his hands and then at the expectant 'baby face' stood before him.

Benny forces his grip against both ends of the rod and heaves against it with all his might. He huffs and he puffs, the veins practically popping under his skin but still the rod remains perfectly symmetrical.

After several unsuccessful efforts Ivan leans across and snatches the bar from Benny's hands.

Ivan grips both ends of the bar and slowly applies great pressure along the length of the rod. Benny watches as the Russian's powerful fingers gradually lever the metal bar into a perfect U shape. Ivan smiles and holds the mangled rod up for Benny to see; Then tosses it across the room.

Ivan suddenly lets his bathing towel drop to the floor and stands directly in front of Benny, in all his honed and natural glory. Ivan puffs out his chest, cups his hands behind his head and directs Benny.

IVAN YEMININSKY
(Russian)...Hit me!

GREGOR
He wants you to punch him as hard
as you can..In the stomach.

Benny turns away, he's seen enough. He looks at Gregor

BENNY
Now why would I want to go and do
a thing like that?

GREGOR
Because Ivan told you to.

Benny gets the point. Reluctantly he shapes up in preparation to deliver a punch.

GREGOR
When he say 'da' you punch him as
hard as you can, no sissy boy
punch or he will know.

Ivan Yemininsky stands ready.

IVAN YEMININSKY
Da!

Benny swings with all his strength and delivers a forceful blow to his host's stomach.

Benny's fist may as well have hit a brick wall, for the little Russian does not flinch. Benny wrings out his hand, as it's hurting like hell.

GREGOR
Now it's my boss' turn.

BENNY
What!

Ivan is already shaping up for his turn.

GREGOR
It is only fair, no?

Benny looks back at the baby faced gangster. He hears the voice of his old man swaggering into his head.

FATHER (V.O.)

'Kid! Never show the other guy
you're scared'.

Benny starts to do some shoulder stretches, like a true 'pro', which even takes Ivan by surprise. Benny drops his towel and looks stoically into the Russians steely eyes.

Like two gunmen in a Spaghetti western neither men occasion to blink. Benny bares his smooth chest, closes his eyes and calls out.

BENNY

Hit me!

Benny waits for what seems an interminable amount of time.

Then suddenly Ivan drops his arm and bursts out laughing, everyone except Benny bursts out laughing. Ivan slaps Benny on the back and turning to his fellow Russians, speaks in English for the first time, mimicking Benny.

IVAN YEMININSKY

'Hit me' he say. Crazy American.

Ivan turns to Gregor.

IVAN YEMININSKY

We do it!

EXT FIRST UNION BANK - METROPOLITAN LA - EVENING

Fading daylight.

The LCD sign above the entrance automatically triggers -
FIRST UNION BANK - Sunday 2 October 17.45

EXT: MAN HOLE COVER - SAME TIME

Establishing shot of rusty the manhole cover.

SECURITY GATE - METROPOLITAN LA (MANHOLE)

A large truck bearing the insignia - 'INTERNATIONAL FILM PRODUCTIONS' - Stops outside the security gate; following on behind is the black Dodge SUV -(Seen earlier).

The security guard, carrying a clip board, unlocks the gate and approaches the driver, who leans out of the cab.

TRUCK DRIVER

Howdy. They told me to park to
this up over *there* with the rest
of the trucks (pointing).

Checking manifest.

SECURITY GUARD

Your not down on the list buddy,
must be a screw up somewhere. Let
me just go make a call.

A man dressed in the now familiar paramilitary black, steps around the front of the truck and fires a tranquilizer dart into the neck of the security guard. He collapses. The shooter rushes back and throws open the gate, ushering the truck and Dodge into the compound.

MAN HOLE

A lifting bar is used on the metal cover, quickly exposing the utility entrance. The truck's back doors are swung open and crates of equipment are busily unloaded. Several of the men strap small flashlights to their heads, and then slip agilely down into the utility shaft.

INT: BLACK LIMOUSINE - SAME TIME

Gregor and Benny are sitting in the back of the limo.

The Russian adjusts the strap on his shoulder holster; he too is wearing combat fatigues and military boots. In stark contrast, Benny appears to be dressed for a Press Conference: Cotton pants, jacket, snappy shirt, and of course trademark fedora. Gregor is teasing the producer.

GREGOR

I see you've come dressed for the
job, Benny my friend.

BENNY

(staring out the window)
Let's face it Gregor there's no
point me being here anyway. I'm
hardly Jesse James. You've got
the map. I'm sure you and your
boys are more than capable of
handling it.

EXT: HIGHWAY - SAME TIME

The 'limo' speeds into metropolitan Los Angeles.

INT: BLACK LIMOUSINE

Gregor leans across and points a figure at Benny.

GREGOR

You are my Insurance Benny, just
think of it that way.

Gregor's Cell-phone starts to ring. He answers.

GREGOR

Da, Da.

He hurriedly pockets the phone and announces with a smile.

GREGOR

As you Americans like to say.
Game On!

EXT: METROPOLITAN LOS ANGELES - LATER

Though the light maybe fading, the pace above and below ground is frenetic.

Electrical cables are rolled out, and a mixture of Russian and American voices call out instructions to each other.

INT: BELOW GROUND (BANK SHAFT) - SAME TIME

A number of cables have been run the length of the shaft. A lighting rig has been set up and a portable generator is in place. Even a narrow gauge track has been laid, complete with a miners barrow to ferry away debris, then the gold.

A team of three men are below the bank vault standing on scaffolding. Above them is the metal cylindrical curve of the service shaft. (Above that is about a meter of rock and clay, and above that sits the bank's titanium floor).

One of the crew is wearing a set of headphones connected to a hand held Sensor meter-box. Five wires, with suction pads on the ends, run from the box. The other two members of the crew press the suction pads against the roof of the shaft.

The man wearing headphones concentrates intensely, and carefully watches the meter dial.

The dial does not move. He nods to his colleagues. They quickly reposition the suction pads. Again the man wearing headphones concentrates intensely. The dial does not move. He takes off his headphones and calls back up the shaft.

CREWMAN 1

Da, Da.

The generator fires up and lights come on in the shaft.

INT: ADJACENT SHAFT - SAME TIME

Special Agent Susan Zebrowska (aka 'Pammy') crouches down in the darkness of an adjacent shaft. A flashlight rests against the FBI insignia emblazoned across the girl's cap. She has an earpiece and is listening to her controller's radio message. She carries a Glock.22 pistol in her hand. Behind her are a team of four heavily armed SWAT officers wearing helmets with infra red cameras, and body armor.

AGENT LAZARUS (V.O.)

Only move in once they've broken
into the vault. I repeat only
move in once they've broken into
the vault...Copy?

BANK SHAFT - SAMETIME

One of the crew below the vault produces a can of aerosol paint from his pocket and quickly sprays a big red circle around the area being worked on.

EXT: STREET - UNKNOWN LOCATION MET LOS ANGELES -SAMETIME

A street has been cordoned off. Further teams of SWAT officers pour from dark vans; slipping down into the city's sewer system, carrying semi-automatic rifles.

EXT: SECURITY GATE - MOMENTS LATER

Gregor's limousine pulls up to the security gate at the compound. The bogus security guard unlocks the gate and the vehicle enters. The limousine draws up alongside the truck.

INT: BELOW GROUND

The three men, beneath the bank vault, are wearing welders masks and fireproof clothing. They are holding up a thermal lance (Burning iron rods in pure oxygen) and the intense heat is cutting away any obstruction in its path.

INT: UNKNOWN SHAFT - SAMETIME

Teams of SWAT officers move silently through the network of sewer shafts.

INT: BELOW GROUND

Rock and debris are being hurriedly transported away from the cutting area. The shaft is a hive of activity.

The cutting crew look up at the metal floor above them. They slap each other on the backs and re-insert new rods into the thermal lance. An oxyacetylene torch is then used to ignite the rods. They burn bright. The thermal lance is then repositioned onto the titanium steel under-floor.

INT: BLACK LIMOUSINE SAME TIME

The cell-phone goes off in Gregor's pocket. He puts the phone to his ear. He listens, nods, then finishes the call.

GREGOR

It's time to join the party.

Gregor opens the passenger door.

Benny remains put.

GREGOR
Well, aren't you coming?

BENNY
(glumly)
I'll stay here, if it's all the
same to you.

GREGOR
(beckoning)
Come, come. I insist...You've
just become a very rich man.

Benny wearily pulls tight his hat and climbs out.

INT: BELOW GROUND

With a final surge of the lance, the last of the steel floor is cut away and the crew can see directly up into the vault. The cutting crew remove their masks, Yuri's face beams. They withdraw and a second crew arrive with ladders and quickly ascend up into the vault.

Benny is being led along the now familiar shaft by an exuberant looking Gregor; Shoulder holster in place.

Benny lags behind, handkerchief held over his nose.

INT: BANK VAULT - SAME TIME

The cages have been broken into and the gold bullion bars are hurriedly being loaded into nets.

INT: BELOW GROUND

Basketfuls of gold bars are being winched down to the shaft from the vault and into the waiting barrow.

The pair stop short of the exposed vault floor. Gregor watches the baskets being lowered. He hollers up.

GREGOR
(Russian) I'm coming up.

ADJACENT SHAFT.

Special Agent Zebrowska gives the signal.

AGENT ZEBROWSKA
All units move in...I repeat all
units move in.

EXT: OVERHEAD (AERIAL) - SAMETIME - NIGHT.

A Los Angeles Police helicopter buzzes the area.

Sirens wail on the warm sticky night, as FBI and LAPD cars appear from nowhere, all converging on the scene.

INT BANK SHAFT

Below ground, pandemonium breaks out as SWAT teams and FBI Agents can be heard and seen moving in from all sides with their weapons trained.

Gregor draws his pistol and anxiously looks around at the warren of shafts for an escape route.

Law enforcement officers begin to bark orders as gang members are flung to the ground. Benny, perhaps knowing what to expect, has ducked down and out of sight behind the mining barrow.

Several of the gang raise their arms in surrender.

A solitary shot is heard as it smashes into the generator, shutting it down and plunging the shaft back into momentary Blackness.

Confusion and mayhem descends in the shaft as gang members try to evade the beams of their pursuers flashlights; And in those twenty or so seconds it takes for the average human eye to readjust to a dramatic change in light, Gregor has put his pistol to the head of Agent Zebrowska and is taking her hostage.

In the ensuing melee only Benny spots the girl's plight, witnessing her being dragged back at gunpoint into a nearby shaft; And with so much confusion going on, he too is able to slip away unnoticed.

EMPTY SHAFT

The sound of Police making arrests can just be heard echoing from the now distant shaft. Gregor and the agent have stopped midway along the apparently empty channel. He still has a gun to her head. The agent's earpiece activates

AGENT LAZARUS (V.O.)
Report...Copy...Report.

Gregor pulls the wire from the agent's ear and stamps on it. He snatches the flashlight from her cap, strapping it about his own head.

He pats the girl down - searching for weapons- pistol still in hand. As he searches his fingers linger longer than they should, over the girls breasts. She spits at him full in the face. He smiles and wipes away the spittle with his fingers, then slowly and deliberately licks them clean.

The agent snaps back at him in fluent Russian.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
 (Russian) Face it Zhukov, you're
 no more than a rat trapped in a
 cage, but if you kill me, they'll
 throw away the key.

Zhukov puts the gun to her lips. He speaks softly but
 malevolently, first in Russian then in slow English.

GREGOR
 (Russian) Bravo Sister. They have
 trained you well.
 (English) Did you know that the
 last FBI agent I killed, squealed
 like a piggy when I slit his
 throat.

Gregor pushes the girl further into the shaft at gunpoint.

INT: BANK SHAFT - SAME TIME

The gang below the vault have been subdued by the heavily
 armed SWAT teams. Spotlight beams pick out the gang members
 as they are cuffed and led away down the shaft. Several
 officers stand guard over the piles of gold.

A SWAT TEAM LEADER is in communication on his radio.

SWAT TEAM LEADER
 Echo, Mike, Lima...report
 situation neutralized. No sign of
 Agent Zebrowska..No positive ID
 for target. Gregor Zhukov...Over.

EXT: ABOVE GROUND (MANHOLE COVER) - SAME TIME -NIGHT

AGENT LAZARUS
 Ssshit!

Agent Lazarus leans against the roof of his car, amidst the
 sirens and flashing lights. He is wearing a head microphone
 and angrily bangs a fist on the roof.

The area surrounding the open Manhole cover is now full of
 Police cars and SWAT vans. Various state and federal
 officers are mopping up the final members of the gang. The
 police helicopter continues to buzz overhead.

He begins to talk into his radio mike.

AGENT LAZARUS
 Have you got a guy down there who
 answers to the name of Benny
 Trueblood.(testily) dresses like
 fucking Al Capone...Over.

A momentary silence ensues, then the SWAT Officer's voice comes back on transmission.

SWAT TEAM LEADER (V.O.)
Echo, Mike, Charlie...Copy
that...Read negative...repeat
negative...Over.

Agent Lazarus is losing his patience. He watches the arrested gang members being led up to the surface, and then being bundled into the waiting vans.

AGENT LAZARUS
I want you to find 'em...Over!

INT BANK SHAFT - SAME TIME

SWAT TEAM LEADER
Echo, Mike, Charlie...Sir, we got
miles of shaft down here, and
limited assets. They could Be
anywhere, sir, over.

AGENT LAZARUS (V.O.)
I don't give a damn, you just
find them.

INT UNKNOWN SHAFT - SAME TIME

Gregor pushes the agent on at gunpoint, deeper and deeper into the sewer system. The beam of his flashlight strapped to his head is constantly seeking out an escape route.

As the pair turn a corner into another shaft Gregor beckons to the girl to halt. He raises his finger to his lips.

GREGOR
Ssshhhh!

He listens, then slowly glances over his shoulder.

The beam of light picks out only the empty shaft leading back to the corner they have just turned.

Gregor pushes the agent forward.

They have advanced only a few paces when Gregor senses movement behind him.

Gregor turns, keeping the gun on the Agent.

The word 'GERONIMO' screams out of the darkness and the snarling face of Benny Trueblood fills the beam of Gregor's flashlight.

-THUMP-

Benny Trueblood delivers one 'mother' of a kick right between Gregor's legs; reddening his loins and dashing all the breathe out of the Russian faster than air leaving a pricked balloon.

Gregor, drops his gun as involuntarily as he drops to his knees. Benny fist punches the air in celebration.

BENNY

You had it coming Gregor, I never liked you anyway. Suck it up!

Agent Zebrowska shouts to Benny.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA

Come on Benny, Let's go.

Gregor, tries to recover the pistol from the floor but Benny is able to kick it out of his grasp, and it goes bouncing back down the shaft.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA

Come on Benny!

Benny turns and takes flight along with the FBI agent. Both flee into the darkness of shaft ahead of them.

Gregor sighs, rubs at his groin and gropes around on the floor of the sewer searching for his gun.

SHAFT (Benny & Agent)

Benny and the Agent are negotiating their way through the cavernous underworld. Benny is using the glow from his cell phone to light their path. He is clearly out of breath.

They make for the second of a pair of shafts running parallel, the girl continually encouraging Benny on. The producer is puffing and panting, struggling to keep up. He pushes down on his fedora and follows her in.

SHAFT (Gregor)

Gregor's hand snatches up the recovered pistol.

The existing magazine clip is ejected and a fresh clip of bullets is slammed into the grip.

SHAFT (Benny & Agent)

Benny pants for breath in the darkness of the shaft. His arm reaching out to the wall for support. The agent stops and turns back for the exhausted movie producer. She whispers in the dark to him with genuine sincerity.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
 What you did back there I'll
 never forget...It was amazing
 Benny.

BENNY
 No it wasn't. It was stupid, in
 fact lady it was the most dumb
 ass thing I have ever done...I
 take that back, It was the second
 most dumb ass thing I've ever
 done, the first was getting
 involved with you.

The girl is stung by the remark.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
 Benny, sure, take it out on me
 above ground. Maybe I deserve it,
 but we ain't got time now.

Benny is about to push on when he spots a rusty plaque on
 the wall of the shaft. Benny casts the light of the cell
 phone over the rusty plaque.

PLAQUE READS: 60th / 5th

He calls over to the Girl.

BENNY
 Hey! Elliot Ness, look (pointing)
 we're on sixtieth and fifth
 avenue, and I think I know a way
 out.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
 How do you know?

BENNY
 (smiling)
 Little details remember?

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
 Sssh! Listen.

As they both huddle in silence they can hear the steady
 progress of boots pounding against the floor of the shaft,
 and its coming from one of the shafts behind them.

BENNY
 (whispering)
 We've got about two hundred
 meters to cover, then we'll come
 to an intersection, we gotta do a
 right onto fifty ninth and fourth

AGENT ZEBROWSKA

So what then?

BENNY

I know some engineers who have been working a rig in that shaft, and I'd lay odds there's going to be an exit somewhere close.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA

Let's go find it.

They make off towards 59th/4th. Benny bringing up the rear.

SHAFT (Gregor)

Gregor slows, momentarily, forced to decide as to which of the two shafts he should enter.

SHAFT (Benny & Agent)

Benny and the FBI agent come upon the engineer's rig.

Scaffolding, storage units, discarded materials, but no utility hatch.

Under the glow of the cell phone the pair scour the walls of the shaft for an access ladder, but cannot find one.

Downbeat and downcast, the weary movie producer slumps disconsolately back against one of the storage units.

BENNY

Sweet Lord!

The girl snatches the cell-phone from Benny. She tries to raise the mood. She tries her best Joe Pesci impression.

AGENT ZEBROWSKA

Heck, if you ain't livin' life on the edge buddy, you're taking up too much room!

A feint smile leaves Benny's face by way of appreciation.

SHAFT (Gregor)

Gregor crouches down, casts the beam of his flashlight over the floor. A small trickle of watery sewage remains in the well of the shaft. He looks for a sign, a track. He finds it. A freshly made boot print. Gregor slowly nods, then makes off into the second of the two shafts.

SHAFT (Benny & Agent)

Agent Zebrowska passes the engineering rig and the storage units. She is holding the cell phone above her head.

As she turns the corner into a continuation of the shaft the light picks out the rusty metal ladder leading up to a utility hole. She calls back.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
Hey! Over here.

The spot is a further 25 meters on, just around the corner from the rig. She dashes towards the utility exit and swiftly hoists herself onto the metal rungs.

SHAFT (Gregor)

Gregor is jogging the length of the shaft, gun in hand. A man eager for the chase, trained for the kill.

SHAFT (Benny & Agent)

Benny has joined the girl on the rusty ladder, cell phone gripped between his teeth, and together they are both pushing on the underside of the manhole cover; but despite their best efforts it won't budge.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
We need a crowbar.

SHAFT (Gregor)

Gregor has quickened the pace.

SHAFT/RIG (Benny & Agent)

Benny and the agent have returned to the area of the rig and can hear the sound of Gregor approaching from a neighboring shaft. His combat boots eating up the ground.

The girl slides the bolt on one of the storage units. A whole bundle of foam piping falls out. She tries the other storage unit. Welders masks, Overalls, Oxyacetylene bottles

AGENT ZEBROWSKA
So, what are we gonna do now?

Benny throws his hands up in despair.

BENNY
You're the FBI! You go figure it.

The girl holds up the cell phone, casting her eyes over the items at her disposal.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
Take your jacket and shirt off.

BENNY
Too late lady! You had your chance.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
Very funny, give them to me.

Benny shrugs his shoulders but complies, stripping down to his vest, handing over his jacket and shirt along with his dignity.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
(taking the shirt)
You ever heard of ID?

Before Benny has had a chance to respond.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
Improvised detonation, a little
trick they taught us down on the
Farm.

The agent looks at Benny's fedora.

BENNY
Oh no, not the hat.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
Yeah quick, let me have it.

Benny reluctantly parts with his fedora. The girl passes the cell phone to Benny, and then quickly begins inserting foam piping down the length of Benny's shirt sleeves.

She carries over a bottle of the Oxyacetylene and wraps Benny's shirt around it, swiftly doing up the buttons.

BENNY
This scene ain't gonna play lady.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
It'd better.

Then she drags the gas bottle across to some discarded wooden crates; Turning it upside down before Finally placing the fedora over its base.

She returns with more bottles, scattering them. Turning some of them on.

SHAFT (Gregor)

Gregor has almost reached the intersection of 59th/4th and can hear the murmurs echoing back from the shaft up ahead. He carries the unwholesome look of a maniac. He begins hollering.

GREGOR
FE...FI...FO..FUM...I SMELL THE
BLOOD OF AN AMERICAN...FE..FI..FO
..FUM..I..SMELL..THE ..BLOOD....

SHAFT (Benny & agent)

The agent props the makeshift figure up behind a wooden crate, extending the foam arm so that it is supported on top of the crate and pointing in the direction of the shaft. Benny tilts the fedora slightly, just for effect.

FBI AGENT ZEBROWSKA
Come on, let's both give that
cover one more try.

The half naked movie producer follows the agent, bemoaning his fate all the while.

BENNY
Talk about taking the shirt off a
man's back...I swear, my lawyer's
gonna call this whole thing
entrapment.

Gregor turns into 59th and 4th, the same shaft as BENNY and the Agent.

EXT: FOURTH AVENUE - SAME TIME

A young couple walk arm in arm down 4th Avenue. She's a little tipsy, she giggles, he cuddles her.

INT: SHAFT SAMETIME

Benny and the agent both hang precariously on the utility ladder. They are pushing with all their combined strength against the manhole cover but it does not move, they rest.

From down below, they can hear Gregor's repetitive 'war cry' as he makes his way towards them.

EXT: FOURTH AVENUE - SAME TIME

A front wheel of a blue Chrysler is parked over a manhole cover on 4th Avenue.

INT: SHAFT - SAME TIME

Benny and the girl try again to lift the manhole cover, but are again exasperated by their failure to raise it.

In the beam of his flashlight Gregor can just make out the rig up ahead. He spots a shape, a human form, wearing a fedora. He ducks down. Turns off his flashlight.

EXT: FOURTH AVENUE - SAME TIME

The young couple get into their car. He turns the key in the ignition and slowly begins to reverse.

INT: BELOW GROUND - SAME TIME

Gregor stands up switches on the flashlight and advances rapidly towards the rig, firing a volley of rounds into the fedora.

BOOM! The Oxyacetylene bottle explodes, setting off a chain reaction, BOOM, BOOM, igniting the other cannisters, until a huge fireball sweeps the length of the shaft.

Benny and the girl heave against the metal plate, one more time, and just as the billowing tide of red hot flame roars ferociously below them, the manhole cover pops free.

EXT: FOURTH AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER NIGHT

They cough and splutter, emerging into the cool LA night. Benny lays by the side of the road looking up at the stars. The FBI agent hurriedly flags down a passing car.

INT: BELOW GROUND - SAME TIME

Gregor emerges blackened from the smoke and fire, he's burnt and smouldering, still pointing his revolver. Then he tilts forward and collapses to the floor of the shaft.

INT: DINER - LOS ANGELES - EARLY MORNING

Syd is chewing a hot dog watching the news events on the establishment's wide-screen TV.

WIDE-SCREEN TV:

A female newscaster is earnestly relaying events. Behind her, various Law enforcement agencies come and go.

FEMALE NEW REPORTER

I'm standing outside the First Union bank here in metropolitan Los Angeles where, in the early hours of this morning, FBI Agents and the LAPD foiled what would have been the largest and most daring heist in US history...The haul, believed to be an estimated four hundred million dollars in gold bullion has all now thankfully been recovered.

Ambulances and fire trucks arrive.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER

News is still coming in but it is believed that up to twelve gang members have been arrested, one of whom is in intensive care, critical with third degree burns.

(MORE)

FEMALE NEWSCASTER (cont'd)
A number of the gang are thought to be of Russian origin and may have been former members of Spetsnaz, an elite Russian special forces unit...further arrests are expected.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

INT: CREMATORIUM

A coffin is gently slid into the crematorium's furnace.

INT: MEMORIAM CHAMBER - SOMETIME LATER

CLOSE UP:

Ashes and dust are spread out on a stone white table.

A silver plated hand trowel collects the ashes and deposits them into a golden urn, which stands about 10 inches high. The vessel is beautifully engraved, etched with galloping bison. The urn is wrapped in foam and placed in a white cardboard box. This is then secured with tape.

EXT: SNOWY TERRAIN - NORTHERN CANADA - DAY

A 4x4 Land Cruiser speeds along a Canadian highway, approaching the northern frontier. The radio is on.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)
That concludes the local news,
let's hand over to Marie Topin on
our International News desk.

MARIE TOPIN (O.S.)
Yesterday a Federal Court in the
US sentenced, Russian born, Ivan
Yemininsky to two hundred and
thirty eight years in a Federal
penitentiary for his part in the
murder of an FBI agent back in
2007.

A gloved hand turns up the radio.

MARIE TOPIN (O.C.)
 Yemeninsky, known as Ivan the
 terrible was also sentenced for
 the murder of his former crime
 boss Igor Berensky, and on
 charges of extortion,
 Racketeering and money laundering-

The radio is switched off. Up ahead The Maple leaf flaps in
 the breeze alongside the Stars and Stripes.

The vehicle stops at the border crossing. The driver lowers
 the window and hands over some ID.

The border guard looks at the FBI badge, then the photo. He
 smiles and hands it back. The barrier lifts.

BORDER GUARD
 Welcome to the state of Alaska,
 agent Zebrowska.

The 4x4 drives off into the glistening wilderness of Alaska
 Frozen glaciers, snowy landscapes, clear blue Arctic skies.

INT: 4X4 LAND CRUISER - SAME TIME

Agent Zebrowska glances across at a copy of the Hollywood
 Reporter laying alongside, on the passenger seat.

(FRONT PAGE)

Hollywood heist movie nominated for Oscars - '**Producer
 still missing!**'

EXT: SMALL TOWN - DAY

The 4X4 approaches the entrance to a small arctic town. Log
 Cabins, wood fires crackling, skidoos and barking huskies.
 The large sign reads: Welcome to Buff Cove - Inuit
 Community - Population 25,000.

The 4x4 comes to a halt outside Buff Cove's Primary School.

INT: SCHOOL THEATER HALL - DAY

A class of Inuit children - 5th Grade (Nine Year-old) have
 just finished rehearsing their school play on stage in
 front of their NEW DRAMA TEACHER.

Their drama teacher steps out of the wings, applauding and
 looking remarkably like Benny Trueblood.

DRAMA TEACHER (AKA BENNY)
 What can I say...you guys nailed
 it...that was on the money!

The young children listen, then descend into a playful state of riotous anarchy. The drama teacher calls over to one of the young boys who appears to be running around the hall, making lots of noise, pretending to be a helicopter. The kid stops and rushes over to his drama teacher.

DRAMA TEACHER

Hey! Kid that was a great performance you gave, up there, you know who you remind me of, a young Marlon Brando.

The kid picks his nose and gawks at his crazy teacher.

DRAMA TEACHER

Look kid, I know some people back in LA -

The Kid's heard enough, he runs off, and dashes around acting out the experience of being his favorite helicopter.

Suddenly the young HEADMISTRESS enters the hall and calls for attention. She claps her hands once. Very loudly.

HEADMISTRESS

Children, children please, please settle down. (acknowledging her drama teacher). Good morning mister Dorado.

Eventually the children do as they're told and settle down.

HEADMISTRESS

Today children, we've got a very special visitor and her name is Susan, and she's come all the way from California just to see you, so let's all welcome our guest by giving her a big clap.

Special Agent Susan Zebrowska steps forward. Under her arm, she carries a white cardboard box. The children applaud.

She smiles across at the Hollywood producer.

He smiles back at her.

THE END.

