Film Noir—Purveyor of Cold War Anxiety

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Doctor of Philosophy

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This dissertation titled
Film Noir—Purveyor of Cold War Anxiety

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a tripartite creative writing project consisting of an essay on film noir and a feature-length screenplay (film noir) based on a short story I wrote (pulp fiction). This unique project permitted me to pursue several passions simultaneously while creating a cohesive study of film noir narrative culminating in the feature-length screenplay. The challenge was studying various interrelationships of the arts from multiple perspectives and finding an ideal project for the culmination of my Individual Interdisciplinary Doctorate with an emphasis in cinema. The degree included defining a multiple-disciplinary field of education and acquiring training in the fields of theory, criticism, and practicum as they apply to the narrative in the following forms—cinema, drama, print media (literary and journalistic), and, in this specific instance, post-World War II American cinema.

Extensive film analysis is employed in my reading of the 1954 Elia Kazan film On the Waterfront and Robert Aldrich’s 1955 film Kiss Me Deadly. The period for the Troubled Man screenplay I have written is 1955 (the death of James Dean and birth of Rock ’n’ Roll) and the aforementioned films provide cinematic touchstones for this specific period. The flashback incorporates previous time periods pertinent to the shaping of the characters and events that occur in Troubled Man’s contemporary setting.
The second section includes the short work of fictional prose, “Brotherly Love: The Return of Frank Milhorn,” on which the third and final section (a feature-length film noir screenplay) is based. The entire process is from a creative writing perspective in which I present evidence of my understanding of film noir in the first portion, synthesize that process through the filter of the short fiction, and create a screenplay. The project displays a highly skilled understanding of film noir, screenwriting and the entire creative writing process, focusing on the iconic noir attributes of flashback and voiceover.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Robert W. Miklitsch

Professor of English
I have been fortunate enough to have many excellent teachers from all walks of life beginning with my parents (Walter and Faye) and six older siblings before my compulsory elementary education ever began. All helped to quench my thirst for knowledge and, like a dry sponge, I absorbed and, like the sociologist, I observed.
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Education is for me a thirst for knowledge. Reading leads to power and one’s flight through life is sustained by knowledge. However, as W.E.B. Du Bois relates in his seminal writing, *The Souls of Black Folk*, “before the Temple of Knowledge swing the Gates of Toil.” Truer words were never written. I truly believe that one’s life journey is a lifelong learning experience: if one is to gain rapture from it, one must engage the experience to its fullest.

First and foremost among instructors of note I have benefited from are my chair Dr. Robert W. Miklitsch with whom I share an “ossessione” with *film noir*; Dr. Charles C. Alexander for recommending me as custodian of his popular American baseball history courses upon his “retirement” in 2007 at Ohio University as a Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus; and Prof. Erle C. “Jack” Wright who has mentored the screenwriting portion of this dissertation.

Among others of personal note are Dr. Paul C. Castagno who chaired my masters program at Ohio University in Theatre History and Criticism; Ohio University icon and Professor of Film Emeritus, Dr. George S. Semsel, with whom I developed an ongoing conversation beyond the classroom; Dr. William F. Condee of the Interdisciplinary Arts Department; and professors Daniel N. Denhart, Dennis L. Delaney, and Erik Ramsey of the Ohio University Theatre Department who all played a part in shaping this project in one way or another. Finally, Dr. Thomas J. Scanlan was inspirational when I first returned to Athens.
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    The mediocre teacher tells.
    The good teacher explains.
    The superior teacher demonstrates.
    The great teacher inspires.
    —William Arthur Ward
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Part I: Film Noir Essay

In this essay, I will define the film noir genre and its parameters as well as the historical events that shaped the apocalyptic shift in American cinema. Additional changes in Hollywood history pertaining to film noir will be explored via two sub-genres generated by film noir—boxing noir and apocalyptic cinema. Commentary on the historical and cultural content of noir, a definitive explanation of film noir via Paul Schrader’s “Notes on Film Noir,” and a comment on noir’s legacy as a movement in social and political thought in American cinema history will also be provided.

The apocalypse of Kiss Me Deadly will be juxtaposed with director Henry Hathaway’s The House on 92nd Street (1945), which can be considered the first film of the “apocalyptic” genre. The concepts of postmodernism and the rhetorical aspects of form and genre outlined in the next section will illustrate the apocalyptic shift and the film noir themes found in Kiss Me Deadly and The House on 92nd Street.

Postmodernism rose to prominence at the same time as noir films in post-World War II America. Apocalyptic films, typically in the science fiction genre of the 1950s, also became prominent during the post-World War II era; more specifically, the appearance of apocalyptic themes in the form of atomic bomb technology shows the flexibility and relevance of film noir in the post-World War II Hollywood canon. The historical section will explain the downfall of the Hollywood studio system’s oligopoly via the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the rise of a social, reflexive style.
Film Noir’s Generic Parameters

Although there is still no consensus about whether or not film noir is a genre or merely a style, it will be considered a genre here, a claim the following two sections—“Film Noir’s Generic Parameters” and “Noir’s Four Catalytic Elements and Seven Stylistic Devices”—will substantiate. Much like the chronological parameters of film noir, which Paul Schrader in his seminal “Notes on Film Noir” (1972) has determined as beginning with The Maltese Falcon (1941) and concluding with Touch of Evil (1958), the compositional make-up of it is in constant flux as it is reexamined by critics. Similar to the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, film noir’s rise and fall are more complex than just one film or event. For example, among the reasons causing the Studio’s decline as well as noir’s were the HUAC’s investigation into Hollywood’s Communist ties (1947 and 1951), the U.S. Supreme Court’s Paramount Decree of 1948, competition from television (eighty percent of U.S. homes possessed a TV by 1958), and the collapse of the Production Code Administration (PCA).

Having roughly delimited the temporal parameters of film noir, it is time to turn to a closer examination of its generic ones. In Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action, Karly Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson name four constants of generic critical approaches:

1. Classification is justified only by the critical illumination it produces, not by the neatness of classificatory schema.

2. Generic criticism is taken as a means toward systematic, close textual analysis.
3. A genre is a complex, an amalgam, a constellation of substantive, situational, and stylistic elements.

4. Generic analysis reveals both the conventions and affinities that a work shares with others; it uncovers the unique elements in the rhetorical act, the particular means by which a genre is individuated in a given case (18).

Film noir illustrates all four of Campbell and Jamieson’s constants and one of noir’s most substantive elements—terse, dry rhetoric. An excellent example is illustrated near the end of Double Indemnity (1944) when protagonist Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) is suffering from a bullet wound and returns to his office building where the elevator operator says, “Working late, Mr. Neff?” “Yea, let’s ride,” Neff responds. This terse dialogue, which became a convention of the genre, was appropriated from pulp fiction writers. The language, especially sexual innuendo, pushed the censorship envelope of the studio era. In fact, the exchange between the protagonist and femme fatale of Double Indemnity not only pushes the envelope but seals it. “The insurance ran out on the fifteenth. I’d hate to think of your having a smashed fender or something while you're not, uh, fully covered,” Walter Neff says to Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck), who is clad only in a towel and an anklet.

Campbell and Jamieson go on to define a genre as:

An angle of vision, a window that reveals the tension among elements, the dynamic within the rhetorical acts of human beings, in different times and places, responding in
similar ways as they attempt to encompass certain rhetorical problems (21).

Noir’s unique fusion of forms and “angle of vision” reflects the postmodern, urban American landscape, making it a dynamic and original genre for filmmakers. Even though they were not cognizant of the new genre they had created, noir furnished filmmakers with a unique way to bring contemporary cultural and societal tensions to the silver screen.

Apocalyptic fervor, alienation, nihilism, disillusionment, existentialism, social realism and humanity’s battle with urbanization are all themes explored by American film noir of the 1940s and ’50s. The film noir style and tone were tailor-made for the fatalism and pessimism pervasive in American society of the Cold War era. Although many backwater pockets of rural America may have not felt the pangs of the Cold War, many Americans in cities experienced this antagonism. Perhaps the greatest illustration of this would be when, on Dec. 16, 1950, President Harry S. Truman proclaimed “a national state of emergency in order to fight world conquest by Communist imperialism.”

The noir world creates a subculture on the periphery of mainstream society that is ripe for gambling, corruption, and amoral characters who propagate like a communicable disease. Stories of ambiguity and duplicity comparable to the social thought of the time are rampant in noir narratives (e.g., The Maltese Falcon [1941], Out of the Past [1947], The Narrow Margin [1952], Kiss Me Deadly [1955] and Odds Against Tomorrow [1959]). The urbanization associated with postmodernity is parasitic and, like noir, leaves many in the wake of its self-destructive path. The drama of the city supplies
cinema of the period with a convenient vehicle in which a “typical” male American, almost invariably a poor urban pug, attempts to overcome obstacles, personal weaknesses, and temptations, sometimes in a Christian allegory. This drama parallels the newfound independence of women in the post-World War II era as well as veterans’ attempts to reassimilate into society. Characters in the film noir world struggle desperately to survive. The “American Dream” and noir are a perfect marriage in an imperfect world because the battle against urbanization is often portrayed as a morality tale of a hopelessly preordained destiny that fragments the individual.

In Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film, Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frentz argue that “postmodern interpretations are invaluable for comprehending the conditions of contemporary society” (11). “Postmodernism has no platform beyond the condition of fragmentation to provide a broader perspective from which to interpret it” (Rushing 12). Postmodernism is most evident in the fragmentation of the nuclear family in 1950s film noir and the Western (e.g., On the Waterfront and The Searchers respectively.) However, since postmodernism “ultimately offers no cure because the malady is all that it can see” (Rushing 12), a successful solution is never offered to noir’s protagonists.

Postmodernism, as a critical approach, replaces modernism’s mind/body dichotomy with a trichotomy of mind/body/machine, and the mind and body are at “once fighting a Cartesian battle of preeminence” and are “vulnerable to annexation by technology” (Rushing and Frentz 14). As symbolized by the atomic bomb plots in the
*noir* films *Kiss Me Deadly* and *The House on 92nd Street*, technology now holds humanity in its thrall.

James Naremore in *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* writes: “film noir belongs to the history of ideas as much as to the history of cinema; it has less to do with a group of artifacts than with a discourse—a loose, evolving system of arguments and readings, helping shape commercial strategies and aesthetic ideologies” (14). However, there is a discourse in *film noir*. This discourse rose during post-World War II in tandem with the U.S. Supreme Court’s “Paramount Decree” which forced studios to dismantle their oligopolies, providing filmmakers with a platform to explore the postmodern fragmentation of the individual as the film studios were themselves fragmenting.

*Noir’s* Four Catalytic Elements and Seven Stylistic Devices

The classic era of *film noir* (1941-1958) is a period of unprecedented artistic achievement in Hollywood even when compared to the so-called “golden age” of Hollywood in the 1930s: “*Film noir* was an immensely creative period – probably the most creative in Hollywood’s history – at least if this creativity is measured not by its peaks but by its median level of artistry” (Schrader 53). This fusion of artistic style and creativity gave birth to a genre that is one of the most pervasive in recent film studies. “Because *film noir* was first of all a style, because it worked out its conflicts visually rather than thematically, because it was aware of its own identity, it was able to create artistic solutions to sociological problems” (Schrader 63).

According to Schrader, there are “four catalytic elements and the distinctly *noir* tonality draws from each of these elements” (54):
1. The war and postwar disillusionment within American society.
2. A movement to postwar realism.
3. The influence of German expatriates.

These four elements produced a paradoxical period during the Hollywood Studio System that elevated “pulp” through, among other things, chiaroscuro lighting. Disillusionment became one of *film noir*’s core themes. In a classic self-reflexive manner in which art imitates life, “the disillusionment that many soldiers, small businessmen, and housewife/factory employees felt in returning to a peacetime economy was directly mirrored in the sordidness of the urban crime film” (Schrader 55). Many *noirs* portray male protagonists as private detectives or returning veterans confused by a changed society they can no longer comprehend. These males of the immediate post-World War II era were cast off or left as prodigal sons wandering and searching for a role in the wake of a society that was defining new roles for both genders.

*Film noir* is often viewed as an extremely misogynistic genre; however, the *femme fatale* tends to exhibit empowerment vis-à-vis her male counterparts, paralleling the new-found freedoms women experienced during the war. “The threat embodied by the woman in the public sphere was neatly contained, both socially and cinematically, in texts that required the female characters to accept responsibility for the social disruptions of the postwar period” (Wager 122).

After the war, the antagonism shifted from the Axis powers (*The House on 92nd Street*) to an inward battle against fragmentation (*Kiss Me Deadly*): “The war continues,
but now the antagonism turns with a new viciousness toward American Society itself” (Schrader 55). Noir explores issues of inner conflict and self-identity against an urban landscape. And this man-made landscape swallows up the ordinary citizen tempting fate in a postmodern society, a world that cinema-goers expected to be portrayed in a more visceral manner after the war.

The movie audience’s thirst for location shooting established an iconography in which “realistic exteriors remained a permanent fixture of film noir” (Schrader 55). Schrader argues that the origins of the paradoxical lighting of film noir can be found in “the German expressionist influence, with its reliance on artificial studio lighting, [which] seems incompatible with postwar realism, with its harsh unadorned exteriors; but it is the unique quality of film noir that it was able to weld seemingly contradictory elements into a uniform style” (56). Shadows, neon lights, nightlife, and cigarette smoking (regardless of gender) were realistic elements portrayed in noir and very often on location shooting with expressionistic lighting. However, this contradiction of elements establishes one of noir’s most identifiable aspects with its “exhilarating combination of realism and expressionism,” producing the renowned cascading ribbons of light and shadow (Schrader 56).

The final catalytic element of noir, according to Schrader, was originated by “the hard-boiled writers [who] had a style made to order for film noir; and, in turn, they influenced noir screenwriting as much as the Germans influenced noir cinematography” (Schrader 56). The aforementioned Chandler and Cain are both recognized as iconic
writers (e.g., *Murder My Sweet* [1944] and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* [1946])
who became harbingers of the *noir* recourse to pulp fiction.

*Noir*, due to its pulp fiction roots, rejected the idyllic portrayal of American life in
Hollywood’s factories and began dealing with the proletariat and their struggles to
achieve the “American Dream” in an often brutal, gritty and unrelenting urban jungle.
The quintessential example of a *noir* that embraces all four catalytic elements is the
German expatriate Billy Wilder’s 1944 *Double Indemnity*, a film that anticipates the
disillusionment Schrader writes about in the postwar era; it possesses German
Expressionistic lighting as well as location shooting, and the screenplay was written by
Wilder and pulp fiction writer Chandler, with the source material being a story by
novelist Cain. It is also an iconic example of *noir*’s stylistic devices.

In terms of the dark side of *film noir*, there are seven stylistic devices and
recurring themes: (1) ambiance, (2) lines, (3) lighting, (4) action, (5) water, (6) mood, and
(7) time. Schrader notes that the majority of scenes are lit for night (*noir*’s main diurnal
preoccupation is sleeping—see Bogart in *In a Lonely Place*) while oblique and vertical
lines are preferred to horizontal ones. In terms of lighting, equal emphasis is given to
actors and settings; while “compositional tension” is preferred to physical action in most
instances even in the scenes containing acts of violence, composition is vital. Almost any
*film noir* would also be incomplete without the intervention of “Mother Nature” in the
form of a scene with steady rain, what Schrader calls the genre’s “Freudian attachment to
water.” The mood created by *film noir* is *temps perdu*, “an irretrievable past, a
predetermined fate, and an all-enveloping hopelessness” (Schrader 58). Finally,
manipulation of time within the narrative is often employed by noir directors, most notably in the flashback.

The recurring themes that are rampant in film noir are defined by “loss, nostalgia, lack of clear priorities, and insecurity” (Schrader 58). This thematic definition is developed further in what Schrader labels the third phase (1949-53) of film noir. The shift to a fallible protagonist (anti-hero) was testament to the movie audience’s desire for more extensive “realism” on the screen, not only in the mise-en-scène and location shooting but also in the form of human characters and their attributes.

Verisimilitude was the order of the day. This realism in cinema was first realized in 1930s French “poetic realism.” The French films of the 1930s (e.g., Julien Duvivier’s Pépé le Moko [1937], Jean Renoir’s Grand Illusion [1937]) are known for their characters on the periphery of society (including criminals) who are presented one final chance at success in financial or romantic matters. After initial success, disillusionment or death prevails in the fatalistic finish.

The Decline of the Studio System

The decline of the Hollywood Studio System began in the late 1940s and was precipitated by government intervention. However, the decline of the Studio System led to an extremely creative period in Hollywood that produced the stylistic and expressive movement of film noir (noir began before the decline of the Studio System, but thrived during this period). The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) severely hampered Hollywood with hearings in 1947 and 1951 that buckled the liberalization manifest in many films immediately after World War II (e.g., anti-Semitism in 1947’s
Crossfire and Gentleman’s Agreement). In 1948, the U.S. Supreme Court’s Paramount decision ruled that studios must submit to anti-trust laws and tear down their oligopolies. This meant the major studios that controlled most of the production of feature films in the U.S. were forced to dismantle their vertical integration (production, distribution, and exhibition). Studios sold off their theatres, the exhibition portion of vertical integration. (Ironically, Howard Hughes, owner of RKO Radio Pictures and a notorious maverick, was the first to comply).

This ruling encouraged many independent producer-actors (Kirk Douglas, Burt Lancaster, James Stewart, John Wayne), producer-directors (John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Otto Preminger, and William Wyler), and producer-screenwriters (Ernest Lehman and Dalton Trumbo) to seek financing for projects that were personal passions. Westerns became the choice of weapon in the era for producer/actors because they were a consistent box office bonanza in the 1950s and began to display noir qualities as early as 1947’s Pursued and 1948’s Blood on the Moon— star vehicles for noir alumnus Robert Mitchum and made by veteran noir directors Raoul Walsh and Robert Wise, respectively.

Although Hollywood personnel were blacklisted for alleged Communist ties and had their livelihood severed in Tinseltown until the 1960s, film noir was the beginning of the liberation of Hollywood cinema from the Production Code Administration (Hays Office) which had begun to flex its muscle in 1934. (Outside pressure exerted by the Catholic Legion of Decency that censored and rated films for its religious members forced the Hays Office into action.) There was a longstanding Hollywood tradition of self-censorship that prevented an all-out assault on cinema taboos, mores and
conventions, but *noir* challenged the status quo in the Hollywood factories. Jans Wager in *Dangerous Dames: Women and Representation in the Weimar Street Film and Film Noir* describes the birth of *film noir* as inconceivable. “It seems amazing that film noir developed at all considering the code’s strictures.”

In the 1940s and ’50s, *film noir* provided a platform for socially and politically conscious directors such as Elia Kazan, among a myriad of others, to explore and experiment in the McCarthy era. Although *noirs* were sadistic and perverse, “they used violence in a socially conscious way, fusing prewar images of economic depression with anxiety about fascism and cataclysmic destruction” (Naremore 103). *Noir* filmmakers were interested in the social and psychological “darkness” and nourished this newfound anxiety with location shooting and nihilistic characters.

Apocalyptic Shift via *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955) and *The House on 92nd Street* (1945)

The apex of the classic *film noir* era can be found in Robert Aldrich’s *Kiss Me Deadly*, the *noir* opus of 1955 that historically culminated all the Cold War anxieties and fears in one apocalyptic climactic scene. In retrospect, 1955 was a monumental year in American culture with the notable deaths of Albert Einstein (seven Nobel Prize winners all told died that year), James Agee, James Dean, Ira Hayes, Shemp Howard, Charlie Parker, Honus Wagner, Cy Young, and the incomparable Portuguese-born Brazilian samba singer Carmen Miranda. The *Brooklyn* Dodgers finally defeated the invincible New York Yankees and Armageddon appeared as a reality of the Cold War ferment. The same year gave birth to two other American cultural movements. Bill Haley and His Comets’ “Rock around the Clock” became the first Rock ’n’ Roll song to reach the top of
the Billboard charts (Haley would record the atomic apocalyptic platter “Thirteen Women” in 1959), and a Montgomery, Alabama, seamstress named Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man and was arrested, prompting the participatory democracy of the Civil Rights Movement. Another movement was precipitated by Kiss Me Deadly, an enigmatic film that can simultaneously be viewed as the premature death of classic film noir and the rebirth of liberalism in American cinema, in which noir can be viewed as a definite antecedent of the New Left cinema of the 1960s, just as 1930s French poetic realist films are antecedents of American film noir.

In order to understand the contextual, apocalyptic shift of Kiss Me Deadly, a brief analysis of Henry Hathaway’s The House on 92nd Street (1945) is necessary in order to juxtapose the approaches to apocalyptic fervor taken by filmmakers in a scant ten-year period. Hathaway’s film is a straightforward docu-noir that portrays the FBI’s story of keeping the atomic bomb “Process 97” documents out of the hands of Nazi spies in the United States. Authentic locales were used whenever possible, as were FBI employees and documentary footage. The counter-espionage operations are represented in a simple, unflinching manner which rings true, is not sensationalized, and is highly dramatic, especially for the time of its release—Sept. 10, 1945—thirty-two days after the second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. “All [Hathaway’s noir films] have on-location camera work, a fascination with law enforcement protocol, and the appropriately ominous voice-over that informs us of their grave purpose” (Dickos 188). With its double identities, double crosses, triple crosses, cross genders, and right crosses, the film contains numerous noir themes. However, while The House on 92nd Street appears to
have a more democratic, propaganda-type tone, \textit{Kiss Me Deadly} does not supply a
solution to the atomic dilemma faced by the first Cold War generation; if \textit{The House on
92\textsuperscript{nd} Street} is emblematic of what Schrader has referred to as antagonism toward the Axis
powers, \textit{Kiss Me Deadly} illustrates the shift to an inner antagonism within both American
society and the individual.

Ralph Meeker’s portrayal of Mickey Spillane’s Mike Hammer in \textit{Kiss Me Deadly}
is ambiguous to the extent that he can be viewed as the conventional tough guy private
eye or a narcissistic monster. Spillane wrote seven Hammer pulps between 1947 and
1952 that sold more than 15 million copies, and is regularly attacked as misogynistic
(Hammer’s surname can be a starting point), racist, an avenging angel who deals out
brutal, sadistic punishment to Commie traitors and voluptuous dames. In order to appeal
to reviewers and mainstream exhibitors, director Aldrich and screenwriter A.I.
Bezzerides were required to perform a balancing act between Spillane’s loyal readers and
Hollywood’s Production Code Administration. The Catholic Legion of Decency was at
its zenith, wielding its power in censoring American cinema by demanding changes to
\textit{Kiss Me Deadly}, most notably an alternate ambiguous ending in which audience
members are not sure if Hammer and Velda have escaped the incendiary blaze of the
house.

\textbf{Fragmentation in \textit{Kiss Me Deadly}}

\textit{Kiss Me Deadly} presents social-realist scenes of urban decay and visions of
hyper-modern America--a consumerist world of fast cars, pinup girls, monosyllabic tough
guys, and nuclear fission (the antagonist is a Dr. Soberin who is a trafficker in atomic
material and a sadistic torturer). This shift to atomic material trafficking is a clear recognition of the Cold War anxiety of the time. The torture scenes in *Kiss Me Deadly* are also a more blatant form of the sadism found in classic *noir*. The postmodern setting in *Kiss Me Deadly* includes Bel Air swimming pools and Malibu beach houses, where the spectacular finale is shot. Hammer tools around in a two-seater Jaguar convertible in the opening of the film before moving to the latest version of the Chevrolet Corvette convertible. In the process, Hammer illustrates Frentz and Johnson’s thesis in *Projecting the Shadow* that humans interact with machines and vice versa, creating a trichotomy that fragments the individual.

In the pre-credit sequence, Hammer nearly runs over a hysterical, panting woman clothed in only a white trenchcoat, then he gives her a ride. She is critical of his affluent, narcissistic “playboyish” character which she has analyzed and deciphered rather quickly from his outward appearance and material possessions—a flashy sports car, jazzy television, and fancy clothes that equate to a hedonistic, self-serving pose. “Sorry I nearly wrecked your pretty little car,” the spunky, intrusive woman named Christina says. “I was just thinking how much you can tell about a person from such simple things. Your car, for instance.” In classical, tough-guy monosyllabic speak, Hammer retorts, “Now, what kind of message does it send ya?” Christina continues to describe the protagonist in non-flattering terms. “You’re one of those self-indulgent males who think about nothing but his clothes, his car, himself. Bet you do push-ups every morning just to keep your belly hard. You’re the kind of person who never gives in a relationship, who only takes.”
Her summation accurately describes his discordant relationship with his secretary Velda Wakeman.

In *Kiss Me Deadly*, Hammer’s sphere of operation has been changed from New York to Los Angeles, allowing Hammer to drive a foreign sports car (the Jaguar) that acts as a catalyst in bringing him a case that involves “somethin’ big.” Another deviation from Spillane’s original story is the change in the criminal element from drug dealers (director Otto Preminger released *The Man with the Golden Arm* without the PCA’s seal of approval the very same year) to scientists dallying with a box that contains atomic material. Christina is tortured to death by Dr. Soberin and his associates while a beaten, semi-conscious Hammer lies on a bare, mattress-less bed frame. Christina screams until her ultimate demise, with her naked legs dangling and twitching behind the nearly comatose Hammer. Their bodies are placed in Hammer’s car and it is pushed off the side of a cliff. Hammer’s own mercenary quest for “somethin’ big” leads him on a self-serving odyssey, not a noble pursuit to avenge Christina’s death. “An ordinary little girl gets killed and it rings bells all the way to Washington. There’s got to be a pitch. I picked up a girl. If she hadn’t gotten in my way, I wouldn’t have stopped. She must be connected with somethin’ big,” Hammer surmises after being grilled by an Interstate Crime Commission.

Hammer is a playboy who lives in an apartment with a fancy telephone answering machine (reel-to-reel), and his lifestyle revolves in a proto-Bond ambience that has him specializing in divorce cases and illegal investigations (a theme revisited in Roman Polanski’s retro-noir *Chinatown*, 1974). Hammer’s apartment (#904) is an elaborate L-
shaped suite that is a marvel of the latest, materialistic possessions and gadgets. In addition to the answering machine, it has a full liquor bar, a television and hi-fi, golf clubs and a front window vista overlooking a tree-lined Wilshire Boulevard in posh Los Angeles. Disdainful Police Detective Pat Murphy assumes that Hammer's underworld investigation will be brutal, callous, and shabby, like his own demeaning profession. “Too many people like you have contempt for anything that has to do with the law. You'd like to take it into your own hands. But when you do that, you might as well be living in a jungle.” Murphy, commenting on the fragmentation of individuals in a postmodern society, notes how people can be alone in a crowded society, lost in an “asphalt jungle.”

The police detective vainly tries to force Hammer to mind his own business: "Mike, why don't you tell us what you know? Then step aside like a nice fella and let us do our job." Hammer counters that he is only in it for his own personal gain, “What's in it for me?” Soon afterwards, to apply pressure on him, Murphy revokes Hammer's private investigator license and his gun permit, while helping himself to Hammer's vodka.

The *noir* cityscape has become ever more corrupt in *Kiss Me Deadly* by incorporating Hollywood—the very personification of decadence and narcissism. Casual sex with no moral qualms is part of Hammer’s rough moral code. He manufactures his own evidence by seducing wives and having his secretary, Velda, gather the evidence on the male counterparts. As a “bedroom” detective, he uses his devoted secretary as date-bait to snare potentially adulterous husbands. Framed in the foreground, Hammer stares off into blank space somewhere off-camera, as the questioners answer their own inquiries:
FIRST QUESTIONER: Your full name, please, Mr. Hammer.
SECOND QUESTIONER: Michael Hammer. 10401 Wilshire Boulevard. Los Angeles, California.
THIRD QUESTIONER: Now, just what do you do for a living?
SECOND QUESTIONER: According to our information, he calls himself a private investigator.
THIRD QUESTIONER: His specialty is divorce cases. He's a bedroom dick.
SECOND QUESTIONER: He gets information against the wife. Then he makes a deal with the wife to get evidence against the husband...
THIRD QUESTIONER: Thus, playing both ends against the middle.
FIRST QUESTIONER: Just how do you achieve all this? You crawl under beds?
SECOND QUESTIONER: Nothing so primitive.
THIRD QUESTIONER: He has a secretary. At least that's what he calls her.
FIRST QUESTIONER: What's her name, Mr. Hammer?
SECOND QUESTIONER: Velda Wakeman.
THIRD QUESTIONER: She's a very attractive young woman. Real woo-bait. Lives like a princess. He sics her onto the husbands and before you know it, he's got his evidence and he's ready for the big squeeze.
FIRST QUESTIONER: Who do you sic onto the wives, Mr. Hammer?
SECOND QUESTIONER: That's his department.
HAMMER: All right, you've got me convinced. I'm a real stinker. Now if that's all you've got on your minds, I'd like to get along home.

FIRST QUESTIONER: Yes, I know. You're anxious to get back to your life's work. You're free to go. (As Hammer exits) Open a window.

Everyone has come to L.A. to become a hustler and is looking for the big score; Hammer is no different from all the other hustlers. Meeker’s portrayal of Hammer emphasizes not only his brutishness, but also his compulsion for violence, in addition to sadism via his sarcastic and cynical repartee. He is a borderline sociopath who has acquiesced to greed in a postmodern society controlled by consumerism and the theology of the buck. “Aldrich’s adaptation deepens the cynicism and pathology evident in Spillane’s original novel and in doing so has turned Hammer into a metaphor for America and how its vast potential for destructiveness has turned on itself” (Palmer 97).

_Kiss Me Deadly_ achieves elevated stature in its use of cultural signifiers. Christina Rossetti’s poem “Remember Me” is the final epitaph of the female hitchhiker, while the criminal mastermind, Dr. Soberin, makes several mythological references throughout the film that the box may contain Cerberus or Medusa, even calling it “Pandora’s Box.”

DR. SOBERIN: Curiosity killed a cat and it certainly would have you if you’d followed your impulse to open it. You did very well to call me when you did.

LILY: Yes, I know. But what's in it?

DR. SOBERIN: You have been misnamed, Gabrielle. You should have been called Pandora. She had a
curiosity about a box and opened it and let loose all
the evil in the world.

LILY: Never mind about the evil. What's in it?

DR. SOBERIN: Did you ever hear of Lot's wife?

LILY: No.

DR. SOBERIN: No. Well, she was told not to look back.
   But she disobeyed and she was changed into a pillar
   of salt.

LILY: Well, I just want to know what it is.

DR. SOBERIN: Would you believe me if I told you?
   Would you be satisfied?

LILY: Maybe.

DR. SOBERIN: The head of the Medusa. That's what's in
   the box. And whoever looks on her will be changed,
   not into stone, but into brimstone and ashes. Well,
   of course, you wouldn't believe me. You'd have to
   see for yourself, wouldn't you?

LILY: Where are we going?

DR. SOBERIN: Where I am going, it is not possible for
   you to go. I had no illusion about deceiving you.
   You have the feline perceptions that all women
   have...

LILY: Whatever is in that box -- it must be very precious.
   So many people have died for it.

DR. SOBERIN: Yes, it is very precious.

LILY: I want half.

DR. SOBERIN: I agree with you. You should have at least
   half. You deserve it, for all the creature comforts
   you've given me. But unfortunately, the object in
   this box cannot be divided.
LILY: (She points a gun at him) Then I'll take it all (pause) if you don't mind.

DR. SOBERIN: Listen to me, as if I were Cerberus barking with all his heads at the gates of Hell, I will tell you where to take it. But don't, don't open the box.

Dr. Soberin alludes to Lot and his wife, who are a metaphor for man’s insatiable curiosity with atomic power. Hammer himself listens to jazz singers Nat King Cole and Madi Comfort:

The night is mighty chilly
and conversation seems pretty silly,
I feel so mean and wrought
I'd rather have the blues than what I've got.
The room is dark and gloomy;
you don't know what you're doing to me,
The way it has got me caught,
I'd rather have the blues than what I've got.

All night, I walk the city,
watching the people go by.
I try to sing a little ditty,
but all that comes out is a sigh.
The street looks very frightening;
the rain begins and then comes lightning.
It seems love's gone to pot;
I'd rather have the blues than what I've got.

Hammer also destroys a record of Enrico Caruso to obtain information necessary for his case.

When it was originally released, Kiss Me Deadly was not reviewed by the New York Times, the Legion of Decency condemned it, the British banned it altogether, and United Artists had difficulty advertising it in Midwestern and Southern towns. The French, however, embraced it wholeheartedly as evidenced by Raymond Borde and
Etienne Chaumeton’s *A Panorama of American Film Noir*, which was written during the year *Kiss Me Deadly* was released. Today *Kiss Me Deadly* (which was a precursor to Stanley Kramer’s *On the Beach* [1959]) is universally hailed as a masterpiece of *noir*.

*Kiss Me Deadly* contains multi-layered indictments of postmodern American culture and the greed-blinded pursuit of an object that turns out to be worthless, illustrating in the process the shifting anxieties of the post-war era. “The film identifies the dark world of *serie noire* fiction with the everyday reality of fast-moving postwar culture. America has become a nation where maintaining the right image and looking out for number one have become the two elemental rules of conduct” (Palmer 104). This idea of self-serving interest is portrayed best by Marlon Brando as Terry Malloy in *On the Waterfront* (1954) when he informs Edie Doyle (Eva Marie Saint) that his philosophy of life is to: “do it to them before they do it to you and if you don’t look out for yourself no one else will.” In 1999, *Kiss Me Deadly* was deemed “culturally significant” by the United States Library of Congress and selected for preservation in the National Film Registry.

**Boxing Noir**

One of the greatest motifs in *noir* is boxing. No other sporting endeavor has represented the temptation of glory and the escalation of moral consequence than boxing – *noir*’s most explicit, physical form of sadism. The seduction of celebrity (the promise of a world championship boxing title) beckons until personal honor or principles become the “heavy” dues collected for the boxer’s “success.” Boxing *noirs* portray protagonists searching for capitalistic mobility in the “American Dream.” While boxing *noirs* expose
crime, poverty, and ethnic isolation as obstacles, the sport is very often portrayed as
corrup (its pugilistic protagonists often are not corrupt initially but become so). This
description of the sub-genre suggests that noir is the American cinematic version of
Greek tragedy. There is often a fate-destiny struggle as protagonists becomes obsessed,
alienated, vulnerable, pursued or paranoid. They suffer existential despair as they act out
narratives that raise the question of whether they are making their own choices or
following a course dictated by fate.

Boxing films contain some of American cinema’s most venerable themes that are
subverted by film noir in a realistic manner. The sadism found in film noir is exacerbated
in boxing to the point where the pugilists are treated as inhuman commodities,
fragmented to an almost machine-like degree. The late 1940s and early 50s mark the
high-water point for film noir, a period that produced several boxing noir gems such as
Body and Soul (1947) and Champion (1949). The boxing noirs are the ultimate example
of man’s struggle against fate. The protagonist is attempting to gain riches and status in a
brutal, primal endeavor that is showcased in urbanized centers where people pay to see
violence in a commercial venue.

Boxing is the glove to film noir’s hand because it is “the only sport in the world
where two guys get paid for doing something they’d be arrested for if they got drunk and
did it for nothing” (as Paul Stewart as Haley says in Champion). These noir pictures
reveal a distinct shift in the classic boxing genre and its traditional pugilistic values. The
training gyms and boxing rings serve as compelling arenas for broken dreams. Even if
there is a gesture in the direction of a happy ending, the group reformed is damaged and
cannot return to prior innocence. During the post-World War II era, directors began to see the opportunities that abounded in boxing noir for more prosaic scenes of confrontation both inside and outside the fighting arena. “Control and corruption in the noir boxing films merely reflect a comparable ruthlessness in general society” (197), Andrew Dickos observes in his 2002 book *Street with No Name*. The similarity between the pessimistic world of film noir and the realm of boxing noir is that the protagonist must endure the torment of a divided self or become helplessly corrupt or quite possibly D.O.A. at the film’s conclusion.

The pinnacle of American boxing films coincides with the pinnacle of America as a country. As the genre matured, taut film noir dramas appeared like *The Set-Up* (1949), *The Harder They Fall* (Humphrey Bogart’s final 1956 film as an opportunistic “sports hack” using a child-like, 6’10” South American colossus with a glass jaw for capital gains), and *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1957 teleplay by Rod Serling and a 1962 feature film). Exposés of boxing’s corrupt underbelly became a recurring motif in *Body and Soul* (1947) and *Champion* (1949). This corruption (inspired by Rocky Graziano’s real-life dive), coupled with disillusionment and alienation, suited the spirit of the post-World War II era, linking the boxer to the existential hero who must face the most difficult choices alone without any clear set of moral guidelines.

*On the Waterfront*–Boxing Noir’s Greatest Gem

Elia Kazan’s 1954 film, *On the Waterfront*, is the greatest boxing noir ever made. “Despite its happy ending, its preachments and a somewhat slick approach to some facets of dockside strife and tribulations, ‘On the Waterfront’ is moviemaking of a rare and high
order” (Weiler 18). Dissenters will remark that the film is an apologia or vindication for Kazan and screenwriter Budd Schulberg for their actions during HUAC’s investigation of Hollywood. Additional naysayers will say that *On the Waterfront* contains no *femme fatale*, no boxing and an upbeat “happy” ending.

Filmmakers have always recognized that the story behind the fight bears some emblematic relationship to the fight itself. Such is Kazan’s and Schulberg’s intent with their anti-hero: washed-up boxer Terry Malloy, played brilliantly by Brando and described by his on-screen brother, Charley “The Gent” Malloy (Rod Steiger), as “one rubber-lipped ex-tanker who’s walking on his heels” and fighting corruption on the New York and New Jersey docks. The filmmakers “read” the fights symbolically, creating a dichotomy that epitomizes the agon between good and evil, brutality and dignity, black and white, instinct and intelligence, body and soul. Boxing is used in *On the Waterfront* to expose the larger story of racketeering versus the workers’ attempt to become a legitimate union.

The boxing vernacular in the film is threaded within the plot like a magic carpet where the viewer comes to know Malloy’s background. His character is the extension of a boxer who threw a fight and spends the rest of his life reliving his past (e.g., David Clarke as Gunboat Johnson in *The Set-Up*). For example, there are several instances in the narrative in which Malloy displays his Marquis of Queensbury training. This boxing motif is present in numerous conversations and serves as *On the Waterfront*’s “flashback.”
The “great” union leader Johnny Friendly (expertly played by Lee J. Cobb) affectionately refers to Terry as “slugger” and is watching the fights on television when he barks out, “Them bums can’t fight. There ain’t nobody tough anymore.” This is symbolic of Terry’s past pugilistic prowess as well as his current debased status. The words “slugger” and “bum” are direct references to boxing. Edie becomes hip to the boxing language and tells Terry later in the movie, “No wonder everybody calls you a bum.” Even a panhandler calls Terry a “bum,” suggesting that any ex-boxer who never won the championship is emphatically and eternally a “bum.” (Malloy could be construed as a symbol of the futile Brooklyn Dodgers of the same period.) Friendly continues the use of the vernacular in his opening scene—“Remember the night he took Furillo. We won a bundle”—a response that exposes the inherit corruption of boxing.

Later in the scene, Johnny tells Terry to count a wad of cash. When Terry is distracted, Big Mac continues the boxing trope, saying, “the only arithmetic he ever got was hearing the referee count up to ten.” Terry takes offense and Johnny asks Charley, “What’s the matter with our boy,” which is another reference to the fix Johnny and Charley imposed on Terry’s boxing career. Charley rejoins, “Too much Marquis of Queensbury. It softens ‘em up.” An officer from the Waterfront Crime Commission approaches Terry on the roof of a building where he keeps his pigeons and continues the onslaught with, “Say, didn’t I see you fight at the Garden?” In a conversation with Edie, Terry tells her any admiration anyone has for him is “because I boxed pro for a while.” The bartender (Pat Hingle) serves their drinks and asks Terry, “Didja see the fight last night? Just like you used to, two hands.” Edie asks Terry about his past boxing
experiences, “Were you really a prizefighter?” “I figured if I was going to have to scrap, I might as well get paid for it,” Terry replies.

In classic noir fashion, Friendly and Charley come upon Terry walking at night and during the course of the conversation Friendly broaches the boxing “flashback” again. “How many times you been knocked out?” Friendly asks. “Two times,” Terry says. “That’s two times too many. That’s what I get for gettin’ mixed up with this punch-drunk brother of yours. He was alright hangin’ around for laughs, but this is business,” Friendly concludes.

*On the Waterfront* contains only two studio scenes. One, which has become part of movie legend when the two brothers discuss “survival” in the back seat of a cab, alludes to another noir iconographic motif by containing a Venetian blind in the rear window.

The greatest use of boxing vernacular is also apparent in the taxi cab scene:

CHARLEY: Look, kid, I – how much you weigh, Slugger?
When you weighed one hundred and sixty-eight pounds, you were beautiful. You coulda been another Billy Conn, but that skunk we got you for a manager, he brought you along too fast.

TERRY: It wasn’t him, Charley, it was you. Remember that night in the Garden you came down to my dressing room and you said, “Kid, this ain’t your night. We’re going for the price on Wilson.” You remember that? “This ain’t your night!” My night! I coulda taken Wilson apart! So what happens? He gets a title shot outdoors in a ballpark and what do I
get? A one-way ticket to Palooka-ville! You was
my brother Charley, you shoulda taken care of me
just a little bit so I wouldn’t have to take them dives
for the short-end money.

CHARLEY: Oh, I had some bets down for you. You saw
some money.

TERRY: You don’t understand. I coulda had class. I coulda
been a contender. I coulda been someone, Charley,
instead of a bum, which is what I am, let’s face it.
I’m a bum. It was you Charley.

This iconic scene summarizes the fate of all boxers who take the “short-end” money for a
dive.

*On the Waterfront’s* great noir attributes, in addition to the boxing “flashbacks”
already discussed, include the realistic location shooting. “There is first the location
shooting in midwinter Hoboken, using real longshoremen as extras as well as a number
of authentic boxing ‘ heavies,’ Tony Galento, Tami Mauriello and Abe Simon – erstwhile
heavyweight boxing contenders” (Weiler 18). All three boxers fought Joe Louis and
bring a decided realism to the boxing motif. Furthermore, there is a strong sense, at least
in the first hour, of ordinary life captured in a way that blends French realism, Italian
neorealism, and traditional Hollywood into prosaic but powerful scenes about life and
death.

The numerous nocturnal scenes in *On the Waterfront* commence with a murder.
Along the way there are gang beatings, in a churchyard no less, and two more murders.
Kazan uses the city landscape to explore numerous oblique and juxtaposed lines by going
“vertical” and using the rooftops of the city as a recurring motif. The local union is corrupt and the story becomes a highly provocative and symbolic tale of good vs. evil. The cast features the enviable acting ensemble of Brando, Cobb, Karl Malden, Steiger, and Saint, who all received Academy Award acting nominations.

Leading the way is Brando’s luminous portrayal of Malloy, which has set the standard against which all great male cinematic roles must be compared. Malloy’s moral awakening, vulnerability, and sensitivity are untouchable. Saint duplicated Brando’s feat of capturing an Oscar as Best Supporting Actress in her very first role. She plays the muse, Edie Doyle, who awakens Malloy’s conscience. Their chemistry elicits the greatest *cinema vérité* scenes in the film. The first is a long shot of Terry and Edie talking on a playground where Brando chivalrously retrieves one of her gloves from the ground, eliciting a moment of natural improvisation and emotional realism. The second scene, where Terry wants to come clean and tells Edie the truth about her brother, relies on the audio track. The movie audience cannot hear what the actors are saying, but receive more in visual reactions than a thousand words of dialogue could ever communicate.

In the melodramatic ending of the film, Terry is not martyred as he was in the original screenplay. Kazan soft-pedals the climax with a “semi-happy” closing scene, but *On the Waterfront* received twelve Academy Award nominations and was awarded eight statuettes on Oscar night March 30, 1955, losing only in the Best Supporting Actor and the Best Score categories. *On the Waterfront* was listed as the eighth greatest film on the American Film Institute’s “The 100 Greatest American Films of All Time” in 1998. If
Kazan had “martyred” Terry, the closure would be much more poignant and noirish; nevertheless, the movie still packs a terrific wallop on both fronts, boxing and film noir.

Conclusion

The Cold War era was an extremely volatile time in U.S. history, creating a strange brew of political, social, and individual anxieties. This ever-changing cultural make-up became a fertile and experimental ground for filmmakers to explore what became known as film noir, America’s cinematic version of Greek tragedy. A pessimistic future, irretrievable past, predetermined fate, all became elements of a genre that delivered on a cinematic, emotional, and didactic level.

*Kiss Me Deadly* and *On the Waterfront* are two iconic examples of film noir that epitomize the fragmentation of the individual in postmodern society. While *Kiss Me Deadly* was the first film to broach the issue of atomic annihilation in a serious manner, *On the Waterfront* was written and produced in response to the politics in vogue during the McCarthy era. Kazan had turned informer and named names during the Hollywood witch hunt and used Malloy as vindication for what he had done and what many Hollywood insiders considered an act paramount to Benedict Arnold’s.

The above two films and post-war noir offer a stark critique of the U.S. during the tumultuous time in which they were made. The noir world of sadism, tension, and hopelessness is an explosive setting for individuals searching for salvation and moral redemption—a search that very often fails. Noir realized the fears and anxiety of movie audiences during the Cold War era and portrayed them in a realistic fashion, displaying how cruel society had become for certain citizens. Although the themes that resonated
throughout the post-war era and its films were inhibited by censorship, *film noir* represents classic Hollywood at its most galvanizing.
References

Books


Films


Periodicals


Part II: Brotherly Love—The Return of Frank Milhorn

By Matthew J. Gladman

The door opened and he walked into Tiny’s. The bell over the door announced his entrance and the ringing hung in the air like a calling card. Rudy was whistling and polishing glasses behind the bar when Theo came shuffling over to the cigarette machine like the ex-Golden Glove boxer he was. Even though it was early afternoon at the L.A. bar, the place was dark as midnight when the door closed sans a few ribbons of cutting light. Parting with his quarter for a pack of Lucky Strikes, Theo positioned himself at the bar so he could see the front and rear entrances. Things had changed quite a bit since he first met Frank Milhorn. It was a name he had not heard for almost a decade. Theo was hoping he would never hear it again, but Jean, his wife, said Frank stopped by earlier that day. Rudy continued to polish glasses and was setting a glass of Scotch on the counter in front of Theo when he lit a cigarette making him cough. Rudy did not have much education, book-wise, but he was astute enough to know that Theo did not want to make with the gab. He was deep in thought, so Rudy left him there and was going to mince words with someone at the other end of the bar.

Frank Milhorn was one sadistic jackal. Rumor was that he had killed his father when he was fourteen to notch his first kill. Theo met Frank during the war and they fought side-by-side, Theo for his country and Frank because he liked to kill. In fact, he relished it. Frank would like to see how close he could get before carrying out the deed with the precision of a nine-to-five office job. It was a game to Frank. A game he never quit playing. Theo was discharged on V-J Day and was praying he would never see
Frank Milhorn again in this lifetime. Frank accumulated a ton of uniform salad, three bronze stars, Silver Star, French Legion of Merit, but he was more murderer than soldier to Theo. Frank was recommended for the Medal Honor, but Theo drew the line, filing a report that not only sabotaged Frank’s Medal of Honor but was instrumental in bringing a court-martial sanction against him. Theo was hoping Frank would go to Leavenworth, but he was merely dishonorably discharged because of his immaculate killing record in the war.

At the court-martial, Frank swore revenge on Theo. If it was the last thing he did on earth he was going to exact revenge, get a little payback like a Las Vegas slot machine. Theo left D.C., heading home for Brooklyn. He did not stay long because when it came to killing, Frank Milhorn was a man of his word. Mom, pop, and even grandma were inquisitive about Theo’s plans for the future. “Hell, I’m lucky to be alive,” Theo thought, but he didn’t tell them that. He was troubling over Frank’s vendetta. Theo knew it was best for everyone if he left the old neighborhood and this time for good. Frank knew his parents’ address and even though Theo’s parents had moved by then, Frank was likely to find them like a lion scenting after the blood of his prey. Theo told them he was going to Chicago, the Windy City. He enjoyed the city when he trained at the Great Lakes Naval Station. Besides, he could visit Lizabeth, the WAC nurse who had taken care of him when he was receiving his first two Purple Hearts. The reunion with Lizabeth was a welcoming respite from the lingering threat of Frank Milhorn.

Theo decided to push on to San Diego, the port of call when he was leaving the European Theatre for the Pacific Theatre. Theo was trying to remember how he felt.
“Why did they call it a theatre,” he thought, “war was more like a god-damn nightmare than theatre.” He earned a degree from Columbia on the G.I. Bill, but was trying to find solitude and sanctuary with a position at the zoo for a half decade while summoning the will to face Frank when he came. And he would come just like Christmas and New Year’s. Maybe not this year or the next but when you were least likely to expect it.

Since his marriage to Jean, Theo had forgotten all about Frank Milhorn until this fateful day. Frank was never one to make an idle threat in his life, maybe idle thoughts but not idle threats. His threats were better than promises; they were notarized contracts without formality, and more importantly, without paper. You can believe Frank would be coming for a little C.O.D.

Theo had moved to L.A., the City of Angels, in 1950 and was submerging into his own personal version of Dante’s Inferno at Tiny’s Tavern this day. He hooked onto a technical director’s position at Twentieth Century-Fox Studio because of his military experience. He loathed his military experience most of the time because of Frank. Theo missed two years of movies while in Korea. Theo possessed more lives than a cat and had a fistful of Purple Hearts to prove it. This time they were legit. The first two were military propaganda. Frank shot Theo, not once, but twice in Germany. Jean said Frank stopped by to see his “old war buddy.” “Yea, old war buddy. You psychotic bastard,” Theo thought. Theo was never one to talk about either war. Theo was not yet thirty years of age, but felt like he was living a lifetime of agony because of Frank and he was back in his life.
Theo set there staring at his Scotch at Tiny’s. Only the alcohol was no longer appealing. Jean’s appealing graces had replaced it and he was thankful for that. The dream was over and the reality of Frank Milhorn’s second coming was near—judgment day. Theo was listening to his beloved Brooklyn Dodgers finally whip those damn Yankees. A diehard Brooklyn fan, he felt no elation for ’dem Bums who triumphed over their old nemesis. The mention of Frank Milhorn’s name deflated what should have been a joyous occasion to even the slightest Dodger fan. Hell, Frank Milhorn would have brought sin to the Garden of Eden if he got there before Eve. No, there was no joy in Mudville or Tiny’s. Only gloom and despair were hanging in the air like the thick smoke in the bar. “James Dean was dead and ’dem Bums beat the Yankees,” Theo thought. “What the hell’s the world coming to, Armageddon?” he surmised as he lit another cigarette.

The only time he caught himself smoking or drinking hard liquor was when he was in Tiny’s. Maybe that’s why he was frequenting it less and less, or maybe it was because of Jean. She gave his life purpose again. Jean was a neurosurgeon’s nurse at County General. Theo took a long drag on the cigarette and began coughing again. The nicotine burned his lungs. He forgot the last time he had had a cigarette and the last time he had been to Tiny’s. He was watching Rudy polish those glasses till they were shining like a twenty-two karat diamond. Jean domesticated him, but he didn’t mind. She was the most perfect woman he ever met. Jean even let him play doctor on occasion. Theo smiled. Frank Milhorn’s name was modulating in his ears earlier that day and wiped the slightest whisper of a smile from his face.
The shadows were growing long and afternoon light was sparse when the clang of the bell over Tiny’s door brought Theo out of his torpor. There, in the flesh, stood the antichrist himself, Frank Wilkes Milhorn. Theo was sizing him up. It was Frank all right. He was only a few years older than Theo was but he looked middle-aged—no, beyond middle age, in fact quite ancient. When the killer began to smile at him in the doorway, Theo knew he was ready to pounce and just as deadly as the snake he had always been.

“Hey! T-man, don’t you recognize me,” Frank said. Theo took a final drag on his cigarette and was putting it out as he stood. “I could never forget you as long as I breathe and then some,” Theo said. Frank was walking toward Theo. “You don’t sound happy to see me,” Frank said. Two men accompanying Frank through the doorway were blocking most of the fading sunlight. “You boys want a drink?” Frank said to his henchmen. “How about one of those funny Hollywood drinks?” Frank said to Rudy. “Barkeep, stingers all around. Four stingers.” Rudy the bartender was creeping along like a traffic jam during rush hour as he was making the stingers. Tension filled the air like fireworks on the Fourth of July. Frank offered a stinger to Theo. “I already have a drink,” Theo said staring at his glass, which had accumulated more dust than a Hoover. “What’s the matter, T-man? Won’t you drink with your old war buddy?” Frank hollered.

Bevo and Robin were swilling their drinks like true Olympians. Both men were paunchy and slow on the take. Theo was surmising again. They appeared to be Frank’s type. No beating too small, no job too tough, no killing unjust, just business. “We were wondering if we could have a little talk with you out back?” Frank said it like a question
but it was an order. “Same old Frank,” Theo thought. Theo didn’t move except for a slight side shaking of his head when Rudy gestured to a blackjack behind the bar. Theo remained silent as he was walking toward the back entrance. Theo went into the alley; he was horrified by what he saw.

Bevo was holding Jean who had at least one black eye, a swollen lip, and a somewhat comatose appearance. “You sadistic jackal!” Theo screamed. “You always thought you were better than me with your Ivy League education, didn’t ya, college boy,” Frank shouted as he pulled out a .45 automatic. “No Frank, that’s something you always thought that I thought,” Theo said as a garbage can was knocked over, rolling down the alley, close enough to startle everyone, including Frank. A man about thirty-five was shambling down the alley with a slight limp. Eternity was near when the man reached the quintet. “Anything wrong?” the stranger asked. Theo knew he had to play this perfectly because he could feel Frank’s gun poking in his back. “No,” Theo said. “Just me and my brother here planning my wedding to my fiancée next week,” he added, pointing at Frank. “The lady looks a little done in,” the stranger said. “She was celebrating a little too much inside,” Theo said coolly. “Sure you don’t need any help?” the stranger asked again. “No! Now beat it before I cripple your other leg,” Frank said. The stranger was painfully shambling down the alley and Frank said, “You played that real cool. What made you know what to say?”

Before Theo could respond, a pistol report was heard as the stranger fired a shot at Frank from the rear entrance doorway. Frank’s gun hand went limp. Theo was lunging at Bevo who released Jean as the gunplay headed for a crescendo. Frank was producing a
hideout .32-caliber in his left hand and shot at the stranger who crumpled in the doorway. A shot was heard from up the alley as a bullet went ripping into the back of Robin’s skull, making it a red, shredded mess. He hit the pavement with a painful thud, deader than a convict on execution day. Theo, enraged by Jean’s appearance, began to subdue Bevo with a flurry of punches that made Marciano look like a ballerina. Frank and the stranger were waltzing over Frank’s second pistol when Theo joined the ballet. Theo was leveling Frank’s .45 at his left temple causing Frank to quickly disengage with his pugilistic efforts against the stranger.

Frank was looking into Theo’s eyes when he said, “Go ahead and shoot. You’d be doing me a favor.” Cocking the hammer, Theo knew his sovereign moment was upon him. Theo was holding the gun steadily at Frank’s temple for a minute. Finally releasing the hammer he said, “No, Frank. That would be the merciful thing but not the just. I’m going to see that you go to Quentin’s gas chamber. You were right, Frank, I am better than you are. You’re going to that gas chamber to die just like those two German boys I saw you murder. They were surrendering, Frank. They didn’t even have weapons. They had their hands up. You shot them, you murderer.”

“You murdered, too!” Frank pleaded. “No, Frank, I killed in battle. If you can’t see the difference you haven’t got the sense God gave geese,” Theo said. Enraged, Frank was bellowing like a wounded animal and came charging at Theo who was walking away. Wheeling around, Theo kicked Frank squarely in the mouth, dislodging a couple of teeth. Theo was pummeling Frank when the stranger appeared between them. “That’s enough, Theo,” he barked as he yanked Theo away from a bloody and bludgeoned Frank Wilkes Milhorn. The stranger, turning towards his partner who was
making his way up the alley, said, “Aloysius, this woman needs an ambulance. That fellow there needs the coroner and these two need a prowler.” “Sure thing, Vincent,” Aloysius said, “You alright?” “Yea, he got me in my wooden leg,” Vincent said.

“I need a doctor too,” Frank bellowed. “We’ll make sure you’re healed up to be gassed,” Vincent said to Frank. “Let’s go inside,” Vincent said to Theo as Aloysius returned. Vincent and Theo were ambling over to the bar where Theo’s drink was patiently standing at attention. Finally speaking, Rudy said, “Everything alright?” Theo nodded his head. “I called Vincent as soon as you went out back, Theo,” Rudy said. “Thanks, Rudy,” Theo said. “You played that real cool. What made you know what to say?” Vincent asked. Theo looked amused at the expression and smiled for the second time since hearing Frank Milhorn’s name earlier that day. “Jean and I were in a tight spot,” Theo said as he was pouring the grain alcohol down his gullet. “Besides, how’s he supposed to know you’re the only brother I have?”

Vincent finished his drink. “Mom and pop are over at my place. They arrived a week early for the wedding. Do you want to go over and see them?” Vincent said. “No,” Theo said, “I’m going to see Jean at the hospital.” “Okay. Mom and pop said they might stay here permanent to get away from the eastern winters,” Vincent said. “That’s great,” Theo said, “By the way, Vincent, thanks.” “Don’t mention it, little brother,” Vincent said as the two brothers walked out of Tiny’s into the gloaming while Rudy commenced with his whistling and went about polishing his shiny glasses.
Part III: Screenplay—*TROUBLED MAN*

By Matthew J. Gladman

Biographical Sketches of Main Characters

THEO V.G. TROYANVICH (protagonist): born Dec. 7, 1925, in Brooklyn; he is the
younger of two boys and the final child his parents (two died in childbirth) were
able to have which left Theo with psychological baggage because his mother
always wanted to have a large family. Theo is introverted, intelligent, a scholar,
enigmatic and a man of high moral fiber, a carbon copy of his brother except for
the fact that Vincent was more extroverted. Vincent was born on April 6, 1920.
Vincent and Theo are first-generation Americans and proud of that fact as are
their parents, Blaine and Thelma Troyanvich.

Theo was valedictorian of his graduating class of 1944 (graduating a semester earlier than
his class), has always been fond of literature, and is an avid reader. He inherited
these traits from his mother. Theo is a true Renaissance man in the fact that he
was a star athlete and often compared to his older brother and he writes poetry.
Many Brooklyn barroom fights were begun over which Troyanvich was the
greater football player or greater boxer. There was an extremely close familial
attraction between Theo and Vincent; they are competitive with each other, but
never vindictive or allow outside influences to affect their relationship. They both
know that their mother wanted to have a large family, but that dream was taken
away and they made a pact when Vincent went away to college to look after one
another.
Vincent became a police officer in Brooklyn, but enlisted the day after the Japanese
attack on Pearl Harbor. The sixteen-year-old Theo protested Vincent’s enlistment
and said that Vincent had to take him with him. Theo withdrew from all previous
activity and concentrated on becoming a physical specimen (actually to help
protect his older brother and uphold his end of the pact they had made when he
was ten years old.) He became the middleweight Golden Glove boxing champion
of New York and was awarded a scholarship to Columbia University and the
Jewish Theological Seminary (his mother had always wanted Theo to become a
rabbi).

Theo was intent on living up to the familial pact with his brother during the war and on
his eighteenth birthday, he enlisted in the army. The only issue was that Vincent
was fighting in the Pacific and Theo was being trained for the big push that was
expected at the end of spring in 1944, the Normandy Invasion. Frank W. Milhorn
had been like a surrogate older brother to Theo on the boat ride to Normandy
when Theo was about to see his first action at Utah Beach. Frank had saved
Theo’s life more than once on the beach, and Theo always felt he owed Frank a
debt of gratitude, a debt he paid many times when he came to Frank’s defense
over minor military infractions. Frank wore out the fellowship by V-E Day when
Theo witnessed Frank murdering two sixteen-year-old German soldiers. Frank
shot Theo that same day, same time, same place. Frank swore revenge against
Theo at the court martial and actually served in a military prison because of
Theo’s testimony.
After the war, Theo no longer had any use for religion (a practicing agnostic) and chose to attend Columbia on the G.I. Bill because he had earned it. He enrolled in the School of Arts and graduated first in his class (1949). Vincent took up residence on the West Coast after his medical discharge and wanted Theo, Blaine and Thelma to come as well. Theo became a wandering nomad with no real apparent direction or purpose. He stopped off in Chicago, San Diego, and finally L.A. before re-enlisting for the Korean War. He was an officer and a leader of men by the time the war concluded; Theo was beginning to think of Frank Milhorn and he wondered what had happened to him.

Theo became a military advisor for 20th Century-Fox Studios and that is where he met Jean Mallernee. When she met the handsome, enigmatic Theo Troyanvich on the set of the 20th Century-Fox Studios things changed. She finally found a man who was challenging and worth pursuing, while Theo found a woman who could understand his complex nature that made him unique from other males of the human species.

FRANK W. MILHORN (antagonist): born Nov. 11, 1921, in Hell’s Kitchen. He was quite young when his mother died, something his alcoholic, abusive father never let him forget. He was an only child who was orphaned when he killed his father in a knife fight after one of his father’s drunken escapades in which his father was using Frank as a punching bag. Frank was fourteen years old when he justifiably killed his father, but the act haunted him all his life. He became a street urchin with a chip on his shoulder living by his animalistic instincts, leading to numerous
misdemeanor arrests and three convictions. He was a junior high drop out that never had much use for education and was always in search of the fast buck.

Under the three strikes you’re out policy, Frank was offered a one-way ticket to Sing Sing or enlistment to go and fight the Hun.

Having seen enough of the inside of jails, Frank opted for military service and finally found a vocation he was quite good at, killing. Frank was a natural born killer; his animalistic instincts during the war produced the only real success he ever enjoyed. He was cunning and thrived on the power a weapon in his hands gave him. It was the only power he understood. His absence of morality led to his downfall when Theo Troyanvich reported Frank’s war crimes at his court martial.

Being locked up for seven years cultivated Frank’s animalistic behavior and gave rise to a being that was surely less than human. His manners, speech, and habits were more simian than human. He returned to crime and killing as he searched the continent for Theo and the trail was white hot when he arrived in L.A. in the early autumn of 1955. He did not care who stood between him and his prey. His only desire was to put a bullet in the head of the surrogate brother, who in Frank’s eyes had betrayed him.

JEAN MALLERNEE TROYANVICH (Theo’s wife): born Mar. 20, 1934, in Santa Barbara, a California girl who was also an orphan of the storm when her parents were killed in a train-car crash that a young Jean survived. She was a vivacious, beautiful brunette with doe-like brown eyes and all her life she yearned to help people because of the accident that killed her parents. She was charming, but
fiercely independent, hardworking and an avid reader. Jean put herself through college and earned a nursing degree by the time she was twenty. While earning her degree she waitressed at a diner and was an assistant librarian at the public library. She aspired to become a doctor someday.

Jean was equally apt at cooking a meal at home or filling out a bathing suit at the beach. She was in perfect harmony with herself and her world and wanted to help this troubled man with worries that were furrowing his young handsome brow. She wanted to solve the mystery behind Theo Troyanvich and relieve his troubled mind. Theo aroused desires and dreams within her she had never felt and this feeling was mutual. Talk of dreams and aspirations led to marriage that occurred on June 11, 1955. They were enjoying married life when Frank, the viper, invaded their world and turned it into a nightmare.
Troubled Man Screenplay

SUPER: “Aug. 18, 1941, Pirates vs. Dodgers at Ebbets Field.”

MONTAGE - Footage of the game action in addition to the crowd and the Troyanviches watching Theo’s hero, Pete Reiser, from the centerfield bleachers.

Radio announcer Red Barber’s play-by-play can be heard over the visual montage.

Images of the Dodger Sym-phonies and rabid fan Hilda Crane should be included in the montage along with additional images of Ebbets Field.

THEO (VO)

Dad had been a Giants’ fan, but Vincent and I were diehard Brooklyn fans because they were our “home” town team. And Vincent and I were slowly converting Pop to a Dodger fan, but mainly it was the exploits of Pete Reiser and Ebbets Field.

Reiser’s homer in the ninth that day, a long blast over the 40-foot fence in right field onto Bedford Avenue, provided the winning margin in a 6-5 victory over the Pirates that gave the Dodgers a one-game lead over St. Louis. A lead they would never relinquish.

Reiser would homer in Whitlow Wyatt’s, who was having his career year, pennant-clinching win in Boston against the Braves on Sept. 21.

The Troyanvich men were at Grand Central Station with what seemed like half-a-million other Brooklyn denizens to welcome the Dodgers home with their first pennant since 1920. It was a simpler time. The time of Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, and Pete Reiser—the rookie Brooklyn demigod and war…

FADE TO BLACK.
Battlefield audio track explodes with gunfire and explosions.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD NEAR GERMAN FARMHOUSE — 1945.

Black screen.

SUPER: “Germany 1945.”

U.S. troops (including THEO V.G. TROYANVICH) advance on a German farmhouse through a hail of bullets and smoke.

One G.I. FRANK W. MILHORN is willfully spending cartridges as a white flag is waved from the farmhouse.

There is a ceasefire.

    FRANK
    Didja see that T-man! I must’ve killed fifteen.

    THEO
    I saw it Frank.

INT. INSIDE THE FARMHOUSE.

Frank and Theo enter the farmhouse cautiously and proceed to check for any hidden German soldiers.

They move from room to room and arrive at the stairs to the second floor.

Boards creak as they ascend the stairs to search the second floor.

They enter separate rooms.

They continue the search until they reach the last two rooms.

    THEO
    (Screams loudly)
    All clear here, Frank!

Frank enters the last room and smiles.

Two German soldiers not more than sixteen years of age have their hands up in surrender fashion and no weapons on their person.
FRANK
I got a couple in here. I’m gonna dust’em.

Theo rushes into the room.

Frank loads a fresh magazine.

THEO
Frank, they’re just boys and they’ve surrendered.

Theo crosses in between the boys and Frank.

The German soldiers are frightened by Frank’s antics.

FRANK
Get out of my way, Theo!

THEO
No way, Frank.

FRANK
If you don’t move, you’ll get the same as them, Flatbush.

THEO
You’re going to have to kill me if you want them to die.

Franks pauses for a moment.

THEO
It’s your conscience, Frank.

Frank unloads with a barrage of fire that hits Theo and the two young German soldiers.

Frank lights a cigarette and wears a killer’s grin.

U.S. SOLDIER
What’s going on up there? Milhorn?
Troyanvich?

Frank rushes to the top of the stairs.
FRANK
There wuz a couple of stragglers. But we
got’em. They screamed.

INT. SCHWAB’S DRUG STORE.

THEO (VO)
Murder had been committed in the early
hours that morning and a couple of L.A.’s
finest detectives were on the job at
Schwab’s.

Drug store counter where two plain clothes policemen, L.A. homicide detectives, are
taking in their morning java and breakfast.

 Numerous customers and drug store happenings are occurring as they converse.
One man, VINCENT TROYANVICH is reading the paper while the other ALOYSIUS
devours his breakfast.

ALOYSIUS
What’s happening, war hero.

VINCENT
Not much, the usual.

ALOYSIUS
Anything about the series.

VINCENT
Yep, Yankees expected to prevail like they
have four times before.

ALOYSIUS
Five, five times before.

Vincent takes a drag on his cigarette and removes an ample amount of coffee from his
mug.

ALOYSIUS
1953, 1952, 1949, 1947 and…

VINCENT
1941. Pop and me and my brother went to
game four. Oct. 5, 1941, a Sunday. Ebbets
Field in October is like heaven on earth. Yankees led the Dodgers two games to one, all one-run games and the Dodgers lead game four, 4-3, in the top of the ninth.

ALOYSIUS
Owen’s gaffe.

VINCENT
(Nods)
We always sit in the bleachers, but it looked like Casey’s spitter exploded and Owen could not have caught it with a coal chute.

ALOYSIUS
Yanks score four runs, win 7-4 and take game five, 3-1, and the series again.

VINCENT
‘Dem bums.

Al and Vince begin laughing.

SODA JERK
You guys are wanted on the phone or your car radio. Sounds like an emergency.

ALOYSIUS
Probably a homicide or someone’s cat’s caught up in the tree. Don’t they know that’s the fire department’s territory?

VINCENT
You get the car. I’ll phone the station.

Vincent heads for the phone booth limping slightly.

Aloysius exits the building to bring the car around.

FADE TO BLACK.

INTERCUT – THEO’S OFFICE/JEAN’S KITCHEN – TELEPHONE CONVERSATION.
JEAN
Theo? Theo? Are you still there?

Theo remains silent as he fidgets with papers on his desk.

Theo moves a chess piece on a board on his desk.

JEAN
Theo? Are you in encyclopedic mode, Flatbush mode or alien mode?

THEO
I’m playing chess.

JEAN
With yourself?

THEO
What were you saying?

JEAN
I need you to stop at the store on the way home.

THEO
Sure thing, honey. What do you need?

JEAN
We really need milk, bread and a dozen eggs.

THEO
OK, eggs, bread and milk.

JEAN
Pick up a bottle of wine so we can celebrate.

Silence on Theo’s end.

Theo is moving another chess piece.

JEAN
Did you hear me Theo?
THEO
Yes, I heard you. What kind of wine?

JEAN
(She hesitates)
Buy the kind you like because I won’t be drinking any. It’s dealer’s or buyer’s choice.

THEO
That doesn’t make any sense. Then why the vino? You don’t have to inebriate me to take advantage of me.

JEAN
(Laughing)
Just bring the wine and I’ll explain it to you later.

I have some good news. In fact, great news, I’ve already told your family, bye.

Theo begins to hang up the phone but is stopped by Jean shouting.

JEAN
Theo! Theo!

THEO
Yes, Jean.

JEAN
There was a man who stopped by to see you.

Theo looks perplexed.

JEAN
He said he was an old friend from the war days. He had nothing but praise to say about you. It was all very odd.

THEO
(Agitated)
What did he want?
JEAN
He just wanted to see you. He said he had
something to deliver to you.

In fact, it all seems somewhat mysterious
now. Are you in any trouble?

THEO
No, I’m not in trouble. Did he tell you his
name Jean?

JEAN
Yes, he said it was, Frank, Frank.

DISSOLVE TO COURTROOM (FLASHBACK) WASHINGTON D.C. – 1945.

Frank is sitting at a table with army officers.

There is a head table with several army officers convening the court martial.

Theo, in dress uniform, is seated in the courtroom audience.

Both Frank and Theo possess plenty of honors on their dress uniforms.

ARMY OFFICER
Milhorn, the defendant, will please rise.

Frank rises with his defense counsel.

Theo turns away and looks far away to another time.

The courtroom drama continues in the background.

Theo is smoking a cigarette.

ECU: THEO (VO)
Frank Milhorn was one sadistic—jackal.
Rumor was that he killed his father when he
was fourteen to notch his first kill. I met
Frank during the war and we fought side-by-
side like brothers, me for my country and
Frank because he liked to kill. In fact, he
relished it.
Frank would like to see how close he could get before carrying out the deed with the precision of a nine-to-five office job. It was a game to Frank. A game he never quit playing.

I was discharged on V-J Day and was praying I would never see Frank W. Milhorn again in this lifetime. Frank accumulated a ton of uniform salad, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Legion of Merit, *Croix de Guerre*, and three Bronze Stars, but he was more murderer than soldier.

Frank was recommended for the Medal of Honor. I drew the line, filing a report that not only sabotaged Frank’s Medal of Honor but was instrumental in bringing a court-martial sanction against him. I was hoping Frank would go to Leavenworth. He had saved my life, but the lunatic shot me not once, but twice. One of them happened…

Theo covers a scar on his left wrist by pulling his sleeve down over it.

When he says “twice” he rubs his right clavicle as a reminder of where the second bullet wound was.

INT. LCT 6 June 1944.

MONTAGE of LCTs heading for Normandy D-Day.

Camera pans slowly on all the men on Theo’s LCT in which he is seated next to Frank Milhorn.

Men are nervous and sick and the actions shown on the LCT parallels Theo’s voiceover.

**THEO (VO)**

At dawn on the 6th of June, 1944, the greatest armada ever assembled stood ready a few miles off the landing beaches. I was seated next to Frank W. Milhorn. I met him at our embarkation camp.
He was of sound mind then but by the end of the war he had snapped or something. He was from New York City. Somebody from home. Imagine that in the VII Corps, 4th Infantry Division.

D-Day would be my first action. For Frank it was “just another day.” For many, irrespective of their length of service, D-Day would be their last action, the dawn that morning being the last they would ever witness.

The journey had been long and arduous. We had set out during the early morning of June 5th. The sea was rough, so rough that troops were violently seasick and they could not wait to get ashore and face the enemy. Most wanted to leave the seasickness behind.

Eighteen hours on this death trap, laden with troops, tanks, crews, officers—sleepless hours. The craft was awash with vomit. Between vomits, everyone was constantly scanning the sky and sea for German activity.

Theo jumps up and attempts to spew over the high wall of the LCT.

FRANK
Don’t worry about it, kid, we’re knee deep in the muck and once we’re ashore, it won’t matter anyhow.

THEO
How can you stand the stink, Frank? I sure can’t stand it.

Frank breaks his cigar in two and hands him half.

FRANK
Suck on this awhile and concentrate on something else.
THEO
Frank, I’m kind of scared of what’s going to happen today.

FRANK
Who ain’t? Anybody says different, they’re lying.

THEO
Frank?

FRANK
Yea, kid.

THEO
If anything happens to me today, do you, do you think you could visit my folks.

FRANK
Sure, kid. Stick close to me and I’ll get you through this mess. Now try and get some shuteye. The world’s going to break loose at six-thirty.

FADE TO BLACK

0630, Theo is awakened by the bombardment of the Normandy shore. Officers are barking out commands as his LCT begins its approach. Combat audio is heard at the highest possible decibel. Camera visuals parallel voiceover.

THEO (VO)
A full hour before the British and Canadians landed at Gold, Sword and Juno beaches, the men of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division began landing on Utah beach.

Our U.S. Navy was there, the Royal Navy’s “O” and “G” LCT squadrons both divided across the two landing zones.

We were the initial wave—1st Battalion 8th Infantry. It was bad and I don’t know how I
made it ashore, but I just kept plugging away.

East of Utah beach was the formidable cliff face of the Pointe du Hoc, atop which intelligence sources believed were heavy guns. The task was assigned to the men of the U.S. 2nd Ranger Battalion.

The guns had the potential to wreak havoc on the incoming craft and troops making for Omaha and Utah beaches.

As we slugged it up the beachhead, I watched in awe as the Rangers established the beachhead and began scaling the cliff by way of grappling hooks fired from the LCTs.

It reminded me that someone always has it tougher than you do.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN.

Hours later Theo comes across Frank on the established beachhead.

THEO
Hello, Frank. Glad to see you could make it.

FRANK
(Lighting a cigarette)
What’s up, kid? I didn’t see you after we hit the beachhead, but I’m glad you made it, too.

THEO
Is it like this all the time?

FRANK
That’s the worse I’ve ever seen, kid. Hopefully the worst is behind us, because believe me, I’ve had a bellyful.
THEO
How long you been in, Frank?

FRANK
Joined just after Pearl Harbor. It was that or go up the river.

THEO
Oh.

Officer comes up to the two infantrymen.

CAPTAIN
Milhorn, I need you to volunteer for something.

FRANK
Sure thing, captain. Can I finish my cig?

CAPTAIN
It may be your last, so hurry up and bring your pal. It’s a two-man job.

DISSOLVE TO.

Theo and Frank are making their way to a machine gun bunker with a satchel charge.

FRANK
Now when we get up there, you draw their fire and I’ll set it and throw the charge. Got it.

THEO
Got it.

FRANK
I don’t want to get killed up here after what we went through on the beach. When I say “fire in the hole,” you scamper back down here and don’t look back. Got it!

Theo nods.
Frank and Theo continue to make their way to the bunker and Frank motions Theo to move to his right and begin attracting the enemy fire.

Theo begins the barrage and Frank readies the charge.

Once it’s lit he yells “fire in the hole” and Theo takes off followed by Frank.

Frank slips running down the hill and his gun fires bullets into Theo’s shoulder and wrist. He goes down...

FRANK
Sorry about that, kid.

THEO
Where’d that come from? I thought we had it cleared out up to here.

FRANK
Here, kid, let me give you a hand.

Frank supports Theo as they make the way back down to safety as the charge blows the machine gun bunker to smithereens.
American troops cheer and the two volunteers make it back to their disembarking point.

CAPTAIN
You boys ought to be up for medals for that action.

What’s the matter, Troyanvich?

FRANK
He’s been shot.

CAPTAIN
Really! You know what that means.

Theo is about to lose consciousness, but is still aware of what is going on.

CAPTAIN
Purple Heart. Holy cow, the Purple Heart.

THEO
I don’t want a Purple Heart. I just want a drink of water.
CAPTAIN
Milhorn, take this hero and get him some water and then report back to me.

Frank finds a water vessel, refills his canteen and offers it to Theo.

THEO
Thanks, Frank. (Taking a drink). Why do you always volunteer?

FRANK
I don’t. The captain knows I’m a three-time loser and if I don’t do what he says, it’s prison for me.

THEO
Thanks anyhow, Frank.

FRANK
(Lighting a cigarette)
No problem, Flatbush. Now let's see if I can find you a medic.

FADE TO BLACK.

BACK TO SCENE-COURT MARTIAL.

ARMY OFFICER
This court sentences the defendant, Frank W. Milhorn, to serve hard labor at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, for a time no longer than seven years and no shorter than three years. This court stands adjourned.

FRANK
(Angrily)
If it’s the last thing I do, I’ll git yer for this Theo. Ya hear me, Flatbush! If it’s the last thing I do. Ya hear me, Theo! I’ll be.

BACK TO SCENE
INTERCUT – THEO’S OFFICE/JEAN’S KITCHEN – TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

THEO (VO)
Back! And now he was back. Good old reliable Frank W. had returned and I finally had to face my past and the demons pursuing me.

Theo comes out of his torpor.

THEO
(Speaking into the receiver)
Whatever you do, Jean, don’t let that man back in the house. Do you hear me!

JEAN
Yes, I hear you. Don’t let him in the house.

THEO
I mean it, Jean!

JEAN
Don’t forget to pick up the groceries on the way.

INT – APARTMENT OF A HOMICIDE VICTIM.

Vincent and Aloysius are exploring the crime scene that is the apartment’s bathroom.

There is a woman’s body in the bathtub.

One of her legs is draped over the side of the tub.

The water has turned a crimson red.

There is a radio submerged in the water as well.

Vincent is smoking a cigarette and Aloysius a cigar.

VINCENT
Home. Right in her own home. Can you believe it, Aloysius?
ALOYSIUS
Looks like we’re dealing with a real lunatic.

VINCENT
That’s an understatement.

ALOYSIUS
Look at those bruises and lacerations. Geezus.

VINCENT
Someone or someones were using her for a punchin’ bag. I wonder what they were after.

ALOYSIUS
Information, money, prostitution, drugs. She looks like the type who would trade for some fast money. Big and fast money.

VINCENT
She looks vaguely familiar. Do you think she was dead before they electrocuted her?

ALOYSIUS
Hard to tell. But her jaw looks like it’s broke.

Possibly some ribs and look at that other leg.

VINCENT
They were vicious, Aloysius.

ALOYSIUS
They?

VINCENT
What’s that tattoo on her, on her?

ALOYSIUS
Chest?

VINCENT
Say?
ALOYSIUS
It’s just a little heart with an arrow through it that says, “His.”

VINCENT
(Rhetorically)
Yea, but who’s the “His” in this case? Let’s see if we can get a line on her.

Vincent and Aloysius head for her bedroom and begin exploring the closet and dresser drawers and other personal items.

ALOYSIUS
Look at this? (Pointing to closet) This dame was high maintenance.

VINCENT
You oughta see her jewels. Same notation. Not there, on the dresser.

ALOYSIUS
What do you make of it?

Several other crime and law enforcement personnel enter.

VINCENT
I don’t know yet. But we better run this through the interstate crime commission and FBI files and see if we can find a pattern or see if it’s a random act, old boyfriend or whatever.

ALOYSIUS
You want to get some brainpower?

VINCENT
It’s about that time again isn’t it? Sure.

ALOYSIUS
Where do you want to go?

VINCENT
You choose. I picked last time.
ALOYSIUS
OK. How bout going to…

EXT – THEO WALKING ON THE STREETS OF L.A.

A light rain begins to fall as Theo turns his raincoat collar up and adjusts his hat.

He is walking languidly towards some destination on a street with no name—call it fate or destiny.

THEO (VO)
Tiny’s. I could use a good, stiff belt. I had forgotten all about Frank W. Milhorn until this fateful day. Jean made me forget about unpleasant things and Frank Milhorn was the most unpleasant thing I had ever experienced.

Theo stops by a newsstand and picks up an evening newspaper and asks for a pack of Lucky Strikes, but decides against them and continues his journey to Tiny’s.

The headline on the paper reads “Yanks and Dodgers in 7th game duel.”

Theo continues to walk down the street towards the grocery store.

THEO (VO)
Frank was never one to make an idle threat in his life, maybe idle thoughts but not idle threats. His threats were better than promises; they were notarized contracts without formality, and more importantly, without paper. You can believe Frank would be coming for a little C.O.D. How long had it been since I saw him in that Pentagon courtroom?

INT. RUNDOWN HELL’S KITCHEN TENEMENT APARTMENT-FLASHBACK.

Father is performing domestic violence on his only son, a scene that has occurred many times before.

The father is yelling and screaming at the boy who is attempting to run from the blows his father is dishing out.
FRANK SR.
Didn’t I tell you to go get me another bottle of liquor today?

FRANK SR. slaps Frank Jr. again as he throws him back against a wall. The scenario has become second nature to the boy and he no longer cries out in pain.

FRANK JR.
They said you don’t got no more credit there or anywhere else in the neighborhood.

FRANK SR.
Don’t back sass me, Francis.

FRANK JR.
I’m not back sassing you. My name is Frank. Same as yours. Why mom ever wanted to name me after you is beyond me. I’m only telling you what the clerk said.

FRANK SR.
You’re just like your ma. Always dragging me down and telling me what to do. She use to do the same thing you’re doing and you know what happen to her, don’t ya?

FRANK JR.
Maybe if you didn’t drink so much.

Frank Sr. begins to hit Frank Jr. with his fists as he chases him around the dirty, dingy apartment in a scene that has played out so many times before neighbors no longer notice or care.

FRANK SR.
You know what happened the last time you backed yourself into this corner with me, Francis.

FRANK JR.
Yea, I know and I’m telling you if you ever do that again, send me away when I get back I’ll kill you.
FRANK SR.
Well, well, maybe you have some backbone after all.

FRANK JR.
I’m just tired of you beatin’ on me like you did mama.

Frank Sr. assaults Frank Jr. again.

FRANK SR.
Don’t ever talk to me like that. (As he continues the beating) Don’t ever, don’t ever, ever, ever.

Frank Jr. collapses on the floor and Frank Sr. continues his blatant act of sadism he has performed many times before.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN.

Frank Jr. is beginning to regain consciousness.

He is badly beaten and struggles to regain his faculties and balance as he attempts to stand.

He walks to a mirror, assesses the damage, and begins to clean up his cuts and bruises.

FRANK JR.
(Talking to himself)
Don’t ever talk to me like that. Don’t ever, don’t ever, ever, ever—I saw him do it to mama and he’s been doing it to me for five years since she’s been dead. It ain’t gonna happen again because I’ll kill you, you son-
(passing train whistle). Do you hear me?

Frank Jr. screams it as he walks over to Frank Sr. passed out on the couch.

FRANK JR.
You can’t hear a thing. Only what you want to hear. But I promise you this, papa, the
next time you do this, it will be the last thing
you ever do on this earth, if it takes me the
rest of my life.

BACK TO SCENE – THEO WALKING THE STREET TOWARDS THE GROCERY
STORE.

THEO (VO)
Almost 10 years. It had been ten years since
I left D.C., heading home for Brooklyn. I
didn’t stay long because I was troubling
over Frank’s vendetta declaration. I thought
it was best for everyone if I left the old
neighborhood and this time for good. Frank
knew my parents’ address and even though
my parents had moved by then, Frank was
likely to find them like a lion scenting after
the blood of his prey.

Theo enters a grocery store, picks up a basket, and begins to fill Jean’s short list of items.

THEO (VO)
I told the family I was going to Chicago. I
enjoyed that city when I was at the Great
Lakes Naval Station. (He smiles) Besides, I
was able to renew my acquaintance with
Lizabeth, the WAC nurse who had taken
care of me when I was receiving my first
two Purple Hearts.

The reunion with Lizabeth was a welcoming
respite from the lingering threat of Frank
Milhorn. I still can’t believe she followed
me to L.A.

INT. – NIGHTCLUB CALLED THE BLUE ORCHID – NIGHT (FLASHBACK).

Saturday night at the Blue Orchid, L.A. 1955.

The club is packed with patrons.

Smoke permeates the air.
A torch singer, LIZABETH, is singing “Always Chasing Rainbows” into a mike with accompaniment.

Theo is seated in good proximity to view the torch song.

He sits alone with a glass full of Scotch on the table.

Lizabeth finishes her song and the orchestra takes over the entertainment.

Lizabeth sashays over to Theo’s table and sits down.

LIZABETH
You haven’t finished the drink I sent over for you.

THEO
I don’t drink Scotch much anymore since I’ve been.

LIZABETH
Married. I know, I know. You don’t mind if I have one, do you?

THEO
By all means, take mine if you wish.

LIZABETH
(Sarcastically)
By all means, take mine if you wish.

Do you have to be so damn polite?

Liz takes out a cigarette which Theo lights for her.

THEO
I just meant.

LIZABETH
I know what you meant, but it would be a lot easier on me if I hated you. I don’t know how anyone could ever hate you.

A waiter brings Lizabeth a drink.
THEO
Why do you want to hate me?

LIZABETH
You’re the one with the college degree. You figure it out Einstein.

THEO
You’re jealous of Jean.

LIZABETH
You just won the Nobel Prize, now why don’t you head for Stockholm and pick it up. Why’d you think I followed you to L.A. from Chicago?

THEO
You can cut out the sarcasm, Liz. It’s undignified and a very unpleasant curtain call.

LIZABETH
Undignified, undignified.

Lizabeth finishes her drink.

THEO
Enough with the drunken, jealousy act too, why did you want to see me? I know you don’t want to discuss early 15th Century Renaissance Art. Now what do you want?

LIZABETH
I only wanted to see how married life was treating you and to see if we were kaput for good!

THEO
I’m a happily married man, Liz. Something I never thought I would be married, that is.

She takes another cigarette from her case and Theo lights it again.
Theo fidgets with his hat on the table.

Liz takes a drink and puffs on her cigarette.

LIZABETH
You’re absolutely right I’m jealous. Don’t you think that I might want to get married sometime?

THEO
I thought you were a lone wolf.

LIZABETH
Yea, I thought you were, too.

THEO
I was Liz, but Jean changed me and I’m glad she did. I didn’t realize how unhappy I was until she came along to show me.

LIZABETH
So you discard me like a piece of old linen.

Out with the old laundry and in with the new lace. I bet she was a virgin when you met her.

Lizabeth flags another drink.

She takes another cigarette from her case and Theo lights it again.

THEO
Liz, we were on the skids a long time before I started going out with Jean.

LIZABETH
But what about me? What am I suppose to do?

THEO
Are you saying I’m the first man you parted company with?
LIZABETH
No, but you’re the first one I cared about.

What am I suppose to do?

The first one I followed. What am I suppose to do?

Theo stands up and grabs his hat from the table.

Liz unloads the cigarette into the ashtray and quickly sets her drink down.

Liz grabs Theo’s wrist as he picks up the hat.

He doesn’t take his hand away.

After a moment, he bends over and kisses her on the forehead.

Lizabeth begins to cry.

THEO
I wasn’t the first and I won’t be the last.
You’re a big girl in all the right places.
You’ll figure it out. You’ll find someone new. You always do, Liza.

Theo kisses her on the forehead again.

LIZABETH
The only time you call me Liza is when we're making love.

THEO
We are making love, Liza. For the last time.
Nice tattoo by the way, it suits you.

Zoom in on tattoo “His.”

Theo leaves the table and heads for the exit.

Liz resumes her addictions.

BACK TO SCENE – GROCERY STORE.
Theo finds the milk, adds that to his basket, and heads for the next item on the list.

THEO (VO)
I decided to push on to San Diego when I was leaving the European Theatre for the Pacific Theatre.

I was trying to remember how I felt.

“Why did they call it a theatre,” I thought, “war was more like a nightmare than theatre.”

I was trying to find solitude and sanctuary with a position at the San Diego Zoo for a half decade while summoning the conscience to face Frank when he came. But.

EXT. – San Diego Zoo scene.

ZOO WORKER/RUDY
What’s a guy with a college degree from Columbia University shoveling elephant dung in San Diego?

THEO
I needed to think.

ZOO WORKER/RUDY
If you wanted to think and stink, you’ve come to the right place.

Theo and Rudy continue to clean the elephant habitat and continue their discussion.

ZOO WORKER/RUDY
Seriously, what are you doing here, mister college graduate.

THEO
I’m not sure; maybe I’m running from myself.
ZOO WORKER/RUDY
Who isn’t? Something gnawing at your conscience, kid?

THEO (VO)
It would be the longest conversation Rudy and I ever had. But he was someone I felt I could trust and I was tired of running.

There was something about him that made you feel good all over. Not just once and a while, but all the time.

THEO
I guess so, but it really doesn’t matter.

RUDY
You married?

THEO
No.

RUDY
Not yet, huh? Well it ain’t cracked up to be all that everybody says it is.

THEO
Come again.

RUDY
It stinks, like this elephant dung, that’s all.

THEO
Maybe you married the wrong woman.

RUDY
They’re all the wrong woman.

THEO
I see no reason to be misogynistic about it.

RUDY
I’m just saying it ain’t the greatest.
Them dames take your money, saddle you with kids and just like that elephant over there they crap on you.

THEO
*(realizing)*
Rudy, have you ever been married?

RUDY
No.

THEO
How do you know then?

RUDY
I just do. Call it my woman’s intuition.

THEO
You’re a work of art, Rudy, you know that.

RUDY
Yea, kid. I’m a modern art masterpiece, but I will tell you one thing, kid.

Theo laughs heartily and Rudy joins him.
Rudy continues the onslaught.

RUDY
You got a great smile, kid. Keep smiling. So whatcha running from?

Or whom? That’s good English ain’t it?
Whom?

THEO
Yea, whom? *(Changing the subject)*

Rudy, I was thinking of heading to L.A. for a change of scenery, you interested in tagging along.

RUDY
Who, me? My girlfriend won’t let me go anywheres by myself.
You going up there to fight?

THEO
Naw, I think I’m through with my pugilistic endeavors.

RUDY
I will tell you one thing, kid. When the going gets tough, you can count on Rudy to do the right thing.

THEO
Thanks, Rudy, that’s nice to know.

RUDY
So you goin’ to let me in on it. The man that’s doggin’ ya.

THEO
Naw, Rudy, my brother doesn’t even know about it. I don’t want to burden anyone with it. It’s my quagmire; I don’t want to bring anyone else down.

RUDY
That’s what friends is for. Helping to hold you up when you feel like you’s sinking into quicksand. That’s what a quagmire. Is itn’t. Quicksand?

THEO
Something like that. Alright, Rudy, I’ll let you in on it.

Theo relates his tale to Rudy.

Numerous cuts of them working at their jobs while they talk before sound becomes audible again.

Finishing his story.

THEO
That’s about it.
RUDY
That’s some story, kid. I tell you what, you head up to L.A., get yourself settled and I’ll come along later to watch your back.

THEO
You don’t have to do that, Rudy. But thanks for listening, I do feel better.

Theo begins to walk away.

THEO
Rudy, put my notice in for me. I’m headed for L.A.

RUDY
Sure thing, kid. And remember, I’ll be along after I can let Alice down easy.

Don’t forget, kid, do it to him before he does it to you.

Theo walks out of frame.

Rudy continues to clean.

RUDY
Poor kid, I hope everything turns out alright.

FADE TO BLACK.

BACK TO SCENE – GROCERY STORE.

THEO (VO)
And Frank would come just like Christmas and New Year’s.

Maybe not this year or the next but when you were least likely to expect it. And today was the day.
Theo secures the dozen eggs and places them into his basket before heading after a loaf of bread Jean requested.

THEO (VO)
I moved to L.A in 1950. Latched onto a technical director’s position at Twentieth Century-Fox Studio because of my “military” experience. I loathed my military experience most of the time because of Frank.

I missed nearly three years of movies while in Korea. I felt like I possessed more lives than a cat and had a fistful of Purple Hearts to prove it. This time they were legit. The first two were military propaganda. Friendly fire compliments of Frank Milhorn of course.

Theo places a loaf of bread in his basket, proceeds to the cash register, and pays for the items.

He heads out to the streets of L.A. and back into the rain.

THEO (VO)
It had been five years since I moved to L.A.

INT. THEO AND JEAN’S HOUSE.

IN THE KITCHEN.

Jean is screaming.

Frank Milhorn is hovering over her along with two henchmen, ROBIN and BEVO, who have Jean in the clenches.

Frank squeezes Jean’s face.

FRANK
Angel’s goin’ ta tell us what we want or I promise we’ll givya somethin’ ta scream about. Now where is he?
Frank raises his hand to strike Jean.
Jean screams again.

    FRANK
    Answer me!

    JEAN
    Maybe he worked late and I, I, I asked him
to stop by the store on the way home.

    FRANK
    Which store?

    JEAN
    He usually stops at the one around the
corner.

    FRANK
    (To Robin and Bevo)
    Didja hear that?

    JEAN
    But he had to walk home tonight so he
probably stopped somewhere else.

    FRANK
    Stop playin’ games. Ya know where he’s at
and what time he gets home. Let ‘er have
some more dessert time.

Robin pinions Jean while Bevo batters her with a few slaps.

Jean is screaming and crying the entire rest of the scene.

    FRANK
    Care to try again?

    Where’s his hang out?

Jean doesn’t speak.

    FRANK
    Ya want some more?
Jean shakes her head no.

FRANK
We can start on the baby next.

JEAN
(Frantic)
How did you know? Please, not my baby. Please, not my baby.

FRANK
I didn’t know. I was only guessin’ but now I do know.

I want some information and I’ll have it even if it means usin’ ya for a punchin’ bag.

Jean doesn’t speak but continues to sob and whimper.

FRANK
Last chance. Give ’er some more.

Another beating is meted out.

Jean is battered.

FRANK
Cough it up, lady, or they’ll start to work on yer belly.

JEAN
Sometimes, he goes to Tiny’s.

FRANK
Alright. Give ’er a little more, boys, and bring’er along.

That way Theo knows I mean business. Besides, I want to see the look on his face.

Bevo and Robin administer more punishment.

Frank looks in the phonebook.
FRANK
I got the address. Come on, boys. Let’s head out.

EXT. – THEO APPROACHING THE ENTRANCE TO TINY’S

THEO (VO)
Tiny’s was the usual watering hole where I went to dilate my pupils.

Only the alcohol was no longer appealing. Jean’s saving graces had replaced it and I was thankful for that.

I remember hearing my name being called.


The director has just called for a wrap up of an afternoon shoot.

Actors, production crew, etc., are milling around finishing up their professional duties and talking about the evening shoot.

Theo is smoking a cigarette when a production crewmember approaches him with an attractive looking woman, Jean.

PRODUCTION ASST.

THEO
Nice to meet you, Miss…

Theo extends his hand for Jean to take; they shake hands. The production assistant is called away.

JEAN
It’s Miss.
THEO
Miss Mallernee.

JEAN
(Shyly)
Nice to meet you, Mister Troyanvich.

THEO
Please call me Theo.

Theo offers her a cigarette that she refuses.

JEAN
(She smiles)
Only if you promise to call me Jean.

THEO
It’s a bargain then. Do you want to get a cup of coffee or something?

JEAN
I don’t know. I just arrived on the set and I’m supposed to meet.

THEO
Everybody will be on break for at least two hours while they set up for the next scene.

Come on and what else were you going to do anyhow? Come on. (Pleading)
Come on.

JEAN
Alright, Mister, Theo, but only if we go Dutch.

THEO
Heck, you can even buy mine if you want, just as long as we get off this set before I’m trapped here.

JEAN
Oh, I’m sorry. This is my first day.
THEO
Well let’s hit the bricks and I’ll explain the routine to you. Hey, there’s a coffee shop just a couple of blocks away. And I was wondering…

Theo lights another cigarette as they exit the lot.

INT. – THE DRUGSTORE COFFEE SHOP – STILL LATE AFTERNOON.

Jean and Theo sit at a table with coffee cups and he has a cigarette going in the ashtray. They are conversing and laughing as the camera isolates on them.

THEO
How did you get stuck with this gig?

JEAN
The doctor I work for was contacted by Darryl.

THEO
F. Zanuck. Enough said on that topic. Just make sure you’re on the payroll.

JEAN
What about you Mister, Theo?

THEO
What about me?

JEAN
How did you end up with this gig?

THEO
(He laughs)
I’m a military technical advisor. They hired me in 1950 and I’ve been here for five years except for time off for good behaviour during the Korean War.

JEAN
I was wondering, Theo, does our name appear on screen?
THEO
I don’t know, honestly. Besides, who’s going to care fifty years from now?

JEAN
Our, your grandchildren, that’s who.

Theo laughs heartily and smiles.

JEAN
It’s good to see you smile and hear you laugh. I don’t think people smile or laugh enough any more since the bomb. You have such a beautiful smile. I’ve never met anyone quite like you before.

THEO
Thank god.

JEAN
No, I mean it. I’ve never seen anyone so sad, smile so happily.

Theo laughs and smiles again.

THEO
It can’t be half as beautiful as yours. I don’t think I’ve ever met a happier person in all my life.

JEAN
(She is blushing)
I try to be, but I’m like anyone else. I’m not always happy.

Theo takes a drag from his cigarette.

Jean fans the air in front of her.

THEO
I’ve only known you for a very short while and I can’t picture you ever being unhappy.
Jean blushes again.

Theo smiles at her.

He touches her cheek.

THEO
So how do you like the West Coast?

JEAN
I like it. I was born here. The weather, the beach, even though I haven’t been to the beach in years.

THEO
You haven’t been to the beach in years? You’re joking?

JEAN
No.

THEO
Where have you been?

JEAN
At home, or I go for walks or to the library.

THEO
The house of knowledge, huh? You had better watch that or you’ll end up an old maid.

Theo takes her hand affectionately.

THEO
And besides, there’s a beach patrol in L.A. now that arrests you if you don’t get to the beach at least once a month.

JEAN
Really? You’re making that up.

Jean retrieves her hand from Theo’s.
THEO
No, I’m not. I’m a member of the beach patrol and I’ll have to have your phone number and address to check you out. It’s either that or I run you in for a complete shakedown right now.

Theo takes out a notebook from his suit pocket and places it in front of Jean.

JEAN
But I have to.

THEO
Get back to the set. I know, I know, so do I. So it would probably be easier if you just give it to me now.

Jean humbly submits.
Jean writes down the information as Theo smiles.

She gives him back his notebook.

THEO
Now that we have that out of the way, what are you doing Sunday?

JEAN
Sunday? I go to church.

THEO
How about going to the beach with me after church? That way I don’t have to arrest you. I’ll pick you up and we can make a day of it.

I’ll bring a picnic lunch and what do you like to do besides avoid the beach and be a nurse?

JEAN
I like to read.

THEO
Ah, yes. Read what?
JEAN
Magazines, books, poetry, mostly.

Theo stands up and looks confident.

THEO
That’s right; you’re a lifetime member of the Carnegie Institute. Alright you bring some poetry to read and I’ll bring the cigarettes. I mean the picnic lunch.

THEO (VO)
She seemed like the ocean I was searching for. I could have dived in and drowned.

I wouldn’t have found that a totally repulsive proposition. She had a face with a view. Was she a fantasy or was she the real thing?

Theo lays money on the table as they head for the exit of the drugstore.

BACK TO SCENE — INT. TINY’S TAVERN – LATE AFTERNOON.

THEO (VO)
The dream was over and the reality of Frank Milhorn’s second coming was at hand – judgment day.

The door opens and the bell above the doorway rings.

Theo walks in wet from the rain.

Rudy is behind the bar whistling and shining glasses, etc.

Smoke fills the room like smog.

The television behind the bar is broadcasting the 1955 World Series Game 7.

The Brooklyn Dodgers are about to finally win a World Series.

Theo shuffles over to the cigarette machine.
He buys a pack of Lucky Strikes.

Sets his groceries down by the cigarette machine.

RUDY
Didya see the fights last night?

Theo shakes his head no.

RUDY
One kid looked almost as good as you usta.

Rudy sits a glass of Scotch in front of Theo.

Theo lights a cigarette and takes a drag. He coughs.

Rudy continues to polish his glasses.

Rudy moves on back down the bar to leave Theo alone.

Rudy is conversing with other patrons at the other end of the bar.

THEO (VO)
Rudy, what a great guy. Not much education book-wise, but he knew enough to know I didn’t want to make with the gab. What do you know, the Dodgers were beating the Yankees.

I felt no elation for ’dem Bums. The mention of Frank Milhorn’s name brought doom to what should have been a joyous occasion. Frank Milhorn would have brought doom and gloom to the Garden of Eden if he arrived there before Eve.

Theo eyes his Scotch and picks up his glass.

THEO (VO)
That’s funny. The only time I smoke is when I’m at Tiny’s. For that matter, the only time I drink hard liquor is here. I had been frequenting Tiny’s less and less. Maybe
smoking and drinking were no longer appealing or maybe it was Jean. Jean was a neurosurgeon’s nurse at County General when I met her on the 20th Century lot.

He sits the glass back down undisturbed and lights another cigarette.

Theo takes a long drag on his cigarette and coughs again.

Sandy Amoros’ catch in the 6th inning of Yogi Berra’s slicing liner is heard over the bar television.

Perhaps the Brooklyn Dodgers’ greatest hour.

BAR PATRON
(Reacting to the play on the television)
Can you believe that catch? What a heckava play.

Theo nods his head “yes” as he covers his mouth while he’s coughing.

THEO (VO)
Boy, that nicotine really burns. I can’t remember the last time I had a cigarette. Rudy’s going to wear a hole in those glasses.

Where was I, Jean the perfect woman? She was on my mind day and night after I met her.

EXT. JEAN’S APARTMENT COMPLEX – FLASHBACK.

Theo pulls up in his convertible, parks and heads for Jean’s apartment.

THEO (VO)
I hadn’t been this excited in years. Probably since the Dodgers won the pennant in ’41.

If there was such a thing as a perfect woman, I think I found her.
Theo rings the doorbell.

**THEO**

*(Before Jean opens the door)*

Beach patrol. We’ve had a complaint about you, Miss Mallernee.

Jean opens the door and smiles at the bouquet of flowers he has brought.

**THEO**

Miss Jean Mallernee, isn’t it?
We received a formal complaint about you at the beach patrol office.

**JEAN**

Not so loud, the neighbors will hear. Where did you find flowers on a Sunday?

**THEO**

*(Whispering)*

I don’t care who hears.

*(Normal voice)*

You ready to vamoose?

Do you need help carrying anything?
Street vendor.

Jean disappears for a moment and returns with a beach bag and picnic basket.

**THEO**

Hey! I’m suppose to bring the victuals.

**JEAN**

I thought I better and who wants to eat victuals.

**THEO**

You got me there, we’ll feast on yours and leave mine undiscovered.

As they walk to the car and load up for the beach.
THEO (VO)
She was beautiful. She was the most aesthetically pleasing woman I had ever met for my taste.

Her personality and disposition were beyond belief. I never met anyone quite like her. I heard that somewhere before.

As they drive to the beach.

THEO
So why haven’t you been going to the beach?

JEAN
I don’t know, maybe I just didn’t have the time, I guess.

THEO
You’re a California girl and you’ve haven’t been going to the beach?

I’m a Brooklyn boy and we use to hit Brighton and Coney everyday during the summer and usually both when the mercury shot up above ninety.

JEAN
I prefer to read and mostly it was the time factor.

I worked as a waitress at a diner and assistant librarian while putting myself through nursing school.

THEO
What happened to?

JEAN
Train crash. Killed both my mother and father and sister. I haven’t talked about them in a long, long time.
THEO

(Pauses a moment)
I don’t know what to say, Jean.
But if your parents could see you now, I bet
they’d be proud because I think you’re
wonderful.

JEAN
Thanks, Theo. What about you?

THEO
Mom and pop are still in Brooklyn; at least I
think they are. My older brother’s here in
California and wants them to come out. I’ve
been sort of disconnected.

JEAN
Disconnected?

THEO

(Changing the subject)
Education, that’s the golden ticket as my
father used to say.

He was so proud when I graduated from
Columbia.

JEAN
You graduated from Columbia?

THEO

(Lighting a cigarette)
Yea, does that surprise you?

JEAN
Yes, No, not really, but you seem…

THEO
Not the academic type.

JEAN
Don’t take this the wrong way—
Abnormal—meaning unusual in a good
sense.
They arrive at the beach parking lot. They gather their accoutrement and head for the beach.

THEO
Thank you, Doctor Freud.

JEAN
I didn’t mean anything by it. You have the look of truth about your face and I always want to be truthful with you, Theo.

They set up their blanket, umbrella, etc. on the beach.

THEO (VO)
You have to love an honest woman. I know I do.

I thought I would never fall in love with a woman again,

but Jean Mallernee was more than a woman. Heart, head and hips, she had it all!

JEAN
Shall we go in and get wet.

THEO
Cool off a bit after that Freudian diagnosis. I could use a good cleansing, Sigmund.

JEAN
Just a moment.

Jean disrobes and Theo is flabbergasted by her physical beauty as he strips to his swim trunks.

JEAN
What’s the matter?

THEO
(swallowing)
Nothing. I’m trying to smile, but my heart’s stuck in my throat.
JEAN
What’s that supposed to mean.

THEO
Were you really a librarian? (Jean nods yes).

That must have been some library.

Jean heads for the water.

JEAN
Come on, let’s get wet, you Columbian Lion.

Theo chases Jean into the water.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN.

They return and are playful all the way back to their umbrella on the beach. They dry and relax on their blanket. Theo lights a cigarette.

THEO
Columbian Lion. How’d you know that?

JEAN
(Brushing her hair)
I told you I read a lot. I have a college education too, you know.

THEO (VO)
Yea, I knew alright and the more I knew the more I liked Jean Mallernee. I was ready to commit murder in the first degree premeditated.

JEAN
Theo. You weren’t even listening to me.

THEO
Huh, what? Sorry, I was thinking. What?
JEAN
Do you think women can become good doctors?

THEO
If they’re anything like you, I believe a woman can become anything she wants.

JEAN
I just mean, “The woman’s place is in the home.” What do you think about that?

THEO
(Hesitating)
My mother liked being a housewife. She reveled in it and, in fact, she probably would have gone on having kids all her life.

But some women aren’t cut out to be homebodies, just like some men aren’t cut out to be husbands.

JEAN
I mean we’ve had two wars in our lifetime already and everything seems more complex, faster, better, stronger, more progressive and on and on.

It makes it tough on normal family life. Wouldn’t you say?

THEO
Things definitely get complicated when you get past eighteen, but we are a product of our times and you either change or become obsolete. Maybe the family structure as we know it has become obsolete.

JEAN
You don’t mean that, do you? I hope not. I want to become a doctor, have at least five children, twenty grandchildren or more, and
live to see more good than evil in the world. I almost forgot that one.

THEO
(Smiling)
You’re quite the practical, ideal realist, aren’t you?

JEAN
(Continuing)
Not necessarily in that order, but those are things I want.

THEO
Let’s start with this good vs. evil thing.

JEAN
Well, first we have this A-bomb thing and now the H-bomb. Now why can’t these things be used to harness good things for people instead of being used for destruction—political retaliation. I mean, what’s the difference between “A” or “H” nuclear annihilation?

Theo not realizing Jean is being satirical.

THEO
Basically, they’re two kinds of nuclear weapons. The A-Bomb works through nuclear fission.

Its energy comes from the atom’s nucleus and can be caused by the “gun” method or the “implosion” method.

Both cause an exponentially growing nuclear chain reaction.

While the H-Bomb uses fusional reactions of hydrogen isotopes of deuterium and tritium.
Unlike fission weapons, there are no inherent limits on the energy released by thermonuclear weapons, the H-Bomb.

Sorry, I slipped from Flatbush mode to encyclopedic mode. I read quite a bit, too.

Theo has been pacing back and forth during his oration.

Theo, realizing Jean is amused by his oration, suddenly stops.

THEO
I think I love you.

JEAN
You think, buster, you better find out.

THEO
You are an idealist and there’s never been a more beautiful one.

He approaches her as they’re supine on the blanket and kisses her.

They kiss again. Jean finally regains her composure.

JEAN
What is it that you want, Theo?

THEO
Steady job, a couple of extra potatoes.

JEAN
Marlon Brando—On the Waterfront.

THEO
(Smiling)
Yea, I don’t know, maybe that’s my problem. I’m a wandering, dipsomaniac with a chronic nicotine addiction.

JEAN
No, you’re just a drowning man who needs to be taken off the Titanic.
THEO
Are you going to be my saving grace? My Joan of Arc. My Oomph girl.

Jean jumps up and begins to gather up things to leave.

JEAN
One never knows, does one?

They embrace and kiss again; items begin to fall from their hands as they grasp each other’s bodies and ease back onto the blanket.

JEAN
No inherent limits on the energy released.

FADE TO BLACK.

BACK TO SCENE AT TINY’S.

THEO (VO)
Jean had brought a transformation into my life. In fact, you might say she domesticated me. That’s alright, though, because sometimes she let’s me play doctor.

Theo lights another cigarette.

THEO (VO)
Einstein was dead and so was James Dean and ’dem Bums sound like they’re going to finally beat those damn Yankees. What the hell was the world coming to? Armageddon? Baseball, what a great sport. My favorite player was Pete Reiser. The ol’ Kingpin of Flatbush. Harold Patrick Reiser. Pistol Pete.

Ebbets Field—I loved it there, so did my brother and so did my dad, especially Pop. He had gone there the first year the park opened, even though he was a Giants fan. He went there for an inter-league exhibition game against the New York Yankees on
April 5, 1913. The first season they were called the Yankees.

EXT. BROOKLYN Aug. 18, 1941.

FLASHBACK—MONTAGE.

Panorama of Brooklyn, the borough of churches.

Visual montage of Brooklyn Bridge, and the happenings being described by Theo in the voiceover.

THEO (VO)
In Brooklyn, most families on Union Street did not go away for the summer and try to beat the hot August heat. They simply could not afford it.

We played in the street, ate Bungalow Bar ice cream, went to Brighton or Coney Island to swim and went to the air-conditioned movies when it got real hot.

We lived in an apartment four blocks north of Ebbets Field. It was before WWII, the Depression was still going strong despite President Roosevelt’s New Deal.

Things were much better than they had been for everyone. Even for those bums on the ballfield.

INT. TROYANVICH APARTMENT morning of Aug. 18, 1941.

MA TROYANVICH is preparing the family breakfast.

Theo is performing chores, cleaning his room, taking the garbage out, bringing milk bottles in, etc. Vincent is seated at the kitchen table reading the newspaper drinking a cup of coffee.

MA
Boys, better have all your chores done.
VINCENT
Ma, at my age it’s called work and you can better believe Theo will have everything performed immaculately so he won’t get an argument from Pop about going to the game.

MA
What’s happening in the newspaper?

VINCENT
Hitler continues to grind his heel into Europe and claims to be in England by Christmas, again. Concentration camps.

MA
What a madman he is.

THEO
Has anyone seen my ball glove?

MA
You had better learn to take better care of things. It’s behind the sofa where you threw it after your game.

VINCENT
Ma’s right Theo, you need to grow up some. It looks like this war in Europe is going to get worse before it’s over and if I go off to war, you’re going to have to pitch in and help Ma and Pop.

THEO
Do you think it will last long enough for me to go? Off to war, I mean.

MA
Let’s hope not. Besides you’re going to become a rabbi, aren’t you, Theo?

THEO
Ma, don’t start.
The door opens and POP TROYANVICH comes in from his midnight shift.

Walks wearily to Ma and gives her a peck on the cheek and hands her some money.

    PA
    For the college fund can. You boys ready for the game?

    VINCENT
    I’m not sure if I’m going, Pop.

    PA
    Sure ya are, Theo will be starting his second year of high school this fall and I’m afraid your generation will probably be heading off to fight the Hun again.

    Besides, we’ve never missed a game, you, Theo and myself. It’s all for one and three for you.

    VINCENT
    It’s “all for one and one for all,” Pa.

    PA
    That’s what I said. Where’s Theo?

    THEO
    Found it!

Theo darts into the kitchen with his baseball glove and notices that his father has arrived home.

    THEO
    Hi, Pop. How about a game of catch.

    PA
    Sure. How about you, Vincent?

    VINCENT
    I’m going for a walk down to the recruiting station.
PA
What for? You just became a cop.

MA
Vincent, don’t go making any rash decisions.

VINCENT
I won’t, Ma. Hank Greenberg’s been in since May and I just want to be prepared if we go to war.

MA
A Jewish player for the Tigers. He refused to play on Yom Kipper. He’s a native New Yorker.

VINCENT
Right, Ma.

MA
Good for him on all three counts, being Jewish, not playing on Yom Kipper and being from New York.

VINCENT
(Shakes his head in disbelief)
I’ll meet you guys at the game. Bleachers to see Reiser. (Laughs).

THEO
You know it, Vincent. Pirates versus ’dem Bums.

PA
Alright, Theo and I’ll have a game of catch after I have a nap. We’ll meet you at the bleacher entrance for the game.

EXT. TROYANVICH APARTMENT late morning of Aug. 18, 1941.

MONTAGE – visuals match the voiceover.
Pa and Theo conclude the game of catch in the street and begin to head to the ballpark down Bedford Avenue to the subway for the nickel ride to Ebbets Field.

THEO (VO)
The only thing diverting us from the summertime heat were those fabulous Brooklyn Dodgers of 1941 when they not only got hot, they won the National League pennant for the first time in twenty-one seasons.

A whole generation of Brooklymites had been lamenting “‘dem bums” until they got hotter than the summer heat.

The loquacious Red Barber announcing games on the radio, the indefatigable Larry MacPhail and Leo “the Lip” Durocher and of course ’dem bums, those beautiful players of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

A game for us at Ebbets Field made the world come to a standstill. It was our heaven on earth. Our Sunday place of worship. Pop, Vincent, me and about 35,000 other rabid Dodger fans.

Several children are playing at the subway entrance and seeking autographs from several men.

THEO (VO)
We used to park ourselves outside the subway station on Franklin Avenue. Pencil and pad ready to get ball players’ autographs. Until after World War II most ball players came to the ballpark on the subway—nickel a ride.

We collected our autographs—Pete Reiser, Pee Wee Reese, Dolph Camilli, Dixie Walker, Whitlow Wyatt. Retreads Billy Herman, Joe Medwick, Mickey Owen and
Cookie Lavagetto. Pete Reiser—what a ballplayer.

National League batting champion his rookie season in 1941 before his reckless abandon and World War II derailed him, his Hall of Fame potential unfulfilled.

Pete Reiser converted my father to a Brooklyn fan.

Theo and Pa reach the subway and begin conversing. Pa is reading the newspaper he has appropriated from Vincent.

THEO
Pa, you think we’ll end up in this war, huh?

PA
Yep, ’fraid so, why?

THEO
Nothing, just wondering.

PA
Wondering what?

THEO
Well, if Vincent joins up, will you allow me to sign up?

PA
Your mother won’t allow it.

THEO
Well, how are we going to take care of each other, Vincent and me, if we’re at war and I’m not permitted to join the ranks?

Pa turning a page, contemplates.

PA
That’s an astute observation. Bring it up again when you turn eighteen and not before.
THEO
We’re here, Pa. And those Pirates better watch out for Pistol Pete.

Theo and Pa detrain and emerge from the subway stairs and greet Vincent who has secured the bleacher seat tickets.

INT. TROYANVICH APARTMENT, Dec. 26, 1941.

Vincent is packing for boot camp.
Theo follows him around as he gathers up items he will not need.
Ma and Pop Troyanvich are in the kitchen having coffee and attempting to avoid the fact that their eldest son has joined the ranks.

THEO (VO)
Christmas at our house was strange. Ma was a practicing Jew, while Pop wasn’t. In fact, I don’t know what Pop was.

I never asked and he never told. He always had a Christmas tree in the house, though.

It was the only time my parents were divisive. Christmas 1941 was the strangest ever. Our country was at war and the world was becoming more complex.

Vincent continues packing.

THEO
You think the war will last long enough for me to join in?

VINCENT
I hope not. You see how bad it is on Ma and Pop. How do you think she’s going to feel if we’re both in harm’s way?

THEO
I guess I wasn’t thinking.

VINCENT
That’s OK, someday you may do too much
thinking and you’re balancing things out today.

THEO
You think you’ll have to kill anybody, Vincent?

VINCENT
I hope not, but that is one of the side effects of war. I suppose you have to think in this manner – if it comes down to kill or be killed, you’ll probably know what to do.

THEO
I hope so.

Theo picks up his mitt and begins playing catch with himself.

THEO
You want to have a game of catch before you go?

VINCENT
Sure, you’re getting good, you know.

THEO
You think so?

VINCENT
You bet, before you know it Ma and Pop will have to make more room for all the hardware you’re going to bring in the house when I’m gone.

THEO
I hope so, but it’s going to be hard to live up to your reputation.

VINCENT
Don’t worry about me, be your own man. Think for yourself, Theo. You’re either a natural born leader or I taught you well.
They both laugh.

Vincent grabs his mitt and pounds his fist into it.

VINCENT
I really love baseball. There is nothing like it.

THEO
Football?

VINCENT
Nope.

THEO
Boxing, you love boxing.

VINCENT
Baseball, more team-oriented. The only thing more important is family, Theo. Remember that.

THEO
I’ll remember, Vincent.

Both boys walk into the kitchen.
Ma begins to weep.
And the men of the family attempt to console her.

PA
Now, now, Thelma. You knew this day was coming since the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor.

VINCENT
Don’t carry on so, Ma.
I’m only going to boot camp. Not a concentration camp, sorry ma.

MA
(Sobbing)
It’s alright, Vincent, but my baby boy’s all grown up.
VINCENT
Has been for some time and you and Pop have done a fine job if I may say so.

THEO
You still got me, ma. At least until I’m eighteen.

Pop gives Theo the evil eye for his faux pas.

She begins sobbing even louder.

PA
Vincent, you want me to walk to the station with you?

VINCENT
Sure Pop. Theo and I were going to have a game of catch before I go. Do you care to join us?

PA
Not this time, but I will when you come back. The three of us will have a game of catch when you return. Now say goodbye to your mother and call me when you’re ready to walk to the station.

Vincent walks toward his sobbing mother, hugs and kisses her.

He heads for the door.

VINCENT
Come on, Theo, let’s see what you got.

EXT. TROYANVICH APARTMENT, IN THE STREET, Dec. 26, 1941, where Theo and his father played catch earlier.

Snow still lies on the ground.

VINCENT
Show me what you got, Pistol Pete.
Theo and Vincent begin their game of catch.

THEO
I can’t believe those bums lost the series.

VINCENT
They caught a bad break, they’ll beat’em someday.

THEO
I hope so, I’m tired of hearing Jimmy brag on how good the Yankees are and how bad the Dodgers are.

VINCENT
Don’t sweat the small stuff, kid. You’ll get old before your time.

THEO
You ever think I’ll be as good as the Pistol or even you.

VINCENT
Sure, you’re better than me when I was your age. You just lack self-confidence.

Believe in yourself and there’s no limit to what you can accomplish, Theo.

THEO
You think so? Imagine—me, you, and the Pistol in the same outfield together for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

VINCENT
(Laughing)
I know so, especially in baseball and boxing. You’re physically superior to me at the same age.

Theo and Vincent stop throwing and sit on the stoop.
VINCENT
You’re going to have to pitch in and help more around the place for Ma and Pa.

They’re not getting any younger.

THEO
Sure thing, Vincent, but what about our pact?

VINCENT
We still have our pact, you and I.

Who knows, you may end up having to look out for me in the future, but I’ll always be there for you, Theo.

THEO
That’s nice to know.

Theo begins to walk away.

VINCENT
Where you going?

THEO
You’re my brother, Vincent, but you’re leaving and Donna’s still going to be here.

Besides, she wants to show off to me what she got for Christmas.

VINCENT
Alright, kid, see ya when I get back.

Theo walks away as Vincent yells up for Pop.

THEO (VO)
Vincent was the best older brother a guy could ever have. He was simply the best.

He inspired me to be myself and be all that I could be. We were best pals in our halcyon days in Flatbush. Still are.
Pop emerges from the downstairs apartment door and helps Vincent with his last minute details.

**PA**
Vincent, you’re off to war. Make your mother proud, make your brother proud, make yourself proud and make your country proud.

**VINCENT**
That’s just about everybody but you Pop. What about you?

**PA**
You’ve already made me proud. I was listening to what you told Theo, here and upstairs.

**VINCENT**
I had a good teacher (*they shake hands and embrace*). I’ll see you when I get back. Better see about ma.

**PA**
You bet (*wiping a tear away*). Take care of yourself.

Vincent walks away and leaves Pop in the shadows.

Vincent continues walking to the station.

**THEO (VO)**
Pop and Vincent were the best men I knew. I often wondered what Christmas was like for Jean when she was growing up or, for that matter, Frank.

**EXT. MONTAGE OF THEO’S ATHLETIC PROWESS.**

VISUAL MONTAGE—The intent of this is to show the competitive nature of the Troyanvich brothers and the filial bond that ties them together along with the pact of protecting each other if at all possible in WWII combat.
A. FOOTBALL TOUCHDOWN RUNS.

B. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTING ATHLETIC EXPLOIT (e.g. Troyanvich TD Run Saves the Day).

C. BASKETBALL VISUAL MONTAGE OF GAME.

D. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTING ATHLETIC EXPLOIT.

E. BASEBALL VISUAL MONTAGE OF GAME.

F. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTING ATHLETIC EXPLOIT.

G. TRACK VISUAL MONTAGE OF GAME.

H. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTING ATHLETIC EXPLOIT.

I. BOXING VISUAL MONTAGE OF GAME.

J. NEWSPAPER HEADLINE HIGHLIGHTING ATHLETIC EXPLOIT (e.g. Troyanvich Surpasses Brother’s Pugilistic Prowess).

THEO (VO)
Milhorn used to call me the Lord of.

INT. TINY’S TAVERN – LATE AFTERNOON

AT THE BAR

Smoke still fills the air like fog on the marshes.

The television continues to play 1955 World Series Game 7.

Theo eyes his Scotch.

Rudy is polishing glasses and whistling.
The bell over the doorway clangs.

There stands a smiling Frank Milhorn.

    FRANK
    Flatbush! T-man, don’t ya recognize me.

Theo takes a final drag on his cigarette.

Theo puts his cigarette out as he stands.

    THEO
    I could never forget you as long as I breathe
    and then some.

Frank walks toward Theo.

Robin, a henchman, accompanies Frank through the doorway, blocking most of the sunlight.

Frank idles up beside Theo.

    FRANK
    Ya don’t sound happy to see me.

Frank turns to Robin.

    FRANK
    Ya want a drink? How’s bout one of those
    funny Hollywood drinks?

    Barkeep, stingers all around. Three stingers.

    RUDY
    The name’s “Rudy,” wise guy.

    FRANK
    OK, OK, Rudy, three stingers.

Frank picks up Theo’s drink and sniffs it.
LONG TIME NO SEE, T-MAN. HOW YA BEEN?

FRANK

Did yer little woman tell ya I wuz looking for ya? I told ya I would come for ya.

Rudy brings three stingers.

Frank offers a stinger to Theo; he declines.

Robin downs his drink like a true Olympian.

THEO

I already have a drink.

FRANK

Whatsa matter, T-man? Won’t ya drink with yer ol’ war buddy?

Rudy heads for the cash register and telephone behind the bar.

Theo is silent as Frank continues.

FRANK

We wuz wonderin’ if we could hava little talk witcha out back?

SERIES OF SHOTS.

Rudy gestures to a blackjack behind the bar.

Theo shakes his head no.

Frank has a .45 automatic poking in Theo’s ribs.

Theo walks to the back entrance.

Frank and Robin exit into alley with Theo.

EXT. IN THE ALLEY.

Bevo holds a beaten and disheveled Jean.
Theo is shocked by her appearance.

THEO
You sadistic jackal!

FRANK
You always thought ya wuz betterin’ me with your Ivy League edjewcation didncha, ya college boy.

THEO
No, Frank, that’s something you always thought that I thought.

A tremendous clatter is heard up the alley.

A garbage can rolls down the alley, startling everyone. Vincent is shambling down the alley with a slight limp. He reaches the quintet.

VINCENT
Anything wrong?

Frank’s gun finds a home in Theo’s back.

THEO
(pointing to Frank)
No, just me and my brother here planning my wedding to my fiancée next week.

VINCENT
The lady looks a little done in.

THEO
She was celebrating a little too much inside.

VINCENT
Sure you don’t need any help?

FRANK
No! Now beat it before I cripple the other one.
Vincent shambles down the alley.

    FRANK
    You played that real cool. What made ya
    know what to say?

    THEO
    You’re the one dealing the cards, Frank. I’m
    playing the hand the best I can.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A pistol shot rips into Frank’s right arm.

Frank drops his gun.

Theo lunges at Bevo who releases Jean.

Frank produces a .32-caliber pistol in his left hand.

Frank shoots at the doorway and hits Vincent.

A shot from Aloysius’ gun goes ripping into the back of Robin’s skull as he
produces a rod.

Theo subdues Bevo with a flurry of punches.

Frank and Vincent battle over Frank’s second pistol; Frank’s shirt is ripped in the
fray, revealing a little heart tattoo over his chest with an arrow
through it saying, “Hers.”

Theo levels the .45 at Frank’s left temple.

BACK TO SCENE.

    FRANK
    Go ahead and shoot. Ya’d be doin’ me a big
    favor.
Theo cocks the hammer.

He holds the gun steadily at Frank’s temple for a minute.

Finally, he releases the hammer.

    THEO
    No, Frank. That would be the merciful thing
    but not the just. I’m going to see that you go
    to Quentin’s gas chamber. You were right,
    Frank. I am better than you. You’re going
    to that gas chamber to die just like those two
    German boys I saw you murder. They were
    surrendering, Frank. They didn’t even have
    weapons. They had their hands up. You shot
    those boys in cold blood, you murderer.

    FRANK
    (screams)
    You murdered, too!

    THEO
    No, Frank, I killed in battle. If you can’t see
    the difference, you haven’t got the sense
    God gave geese.

Theo walks away and Frank charges at him.

Theo wheels around and kicks Frank squarely in the mouth, then uses Frank for a
punching bag.

Vincent moves in between them.

    VINCENT
    That’s enough, slugger!

Vincent turns toward Aloysius who has come up the alley.

    VINCENT
    (as he handcuffs Frank)
Aloysius, this woman needs an ambulance. That fella yonder needs the coroner and these two need a patrol car.

Aloysius has Bevo handcuffed as Vincent finishes speaking. Theo is attending to Jean.

ALOYSIUS
They’re on the way already. You alright?

VINCENT
Yea, he hit my wooden leg.

Aloysius leads Bevo back to their car.

FRANK
(bellows)
I need a doctor, too!

VINCENT
We’ll make sure you’re healed up to be gassed. Now shut your mouth before I let him finish the job. How are you doing, Theo?

THEO
Better, when I see you. I don’t think anything is broken, but I’m not sure. I hope she’s healed in a couple of days.

Aloysius returns and begins to lead Frank away.

The ambulance has arrived and medical personnel are attending Jean. Theo attempts to board the ambulance, but the medical technicians block his way.

VINCENT
Aloysius will take care of everything out here. Al, I think you’ll find he’s our homicide killer as well.

Look at that tattoo.
Well, let’s go inside, Theo. There’s an awful odor out here and it isn’t coming from the usual.

INT. THEO AND VINCENT ENTER TINY’S FROM ALLEY ENTRANCE

RUDY
*(ending a story to a patron)*
Garbage.

Theo and Vincent walk over to the bar where Theo’s drink is sitting. Rudy quickly works his way down to their end of the bar and places a drink in front of Vincent.

RUDY
Everything jake?

Theo nods.
Rudy smiles and continues to polish his precious bar glasses.

RUDY
I called Vincent as soon as you went out back, Theo. The dispatcher said they wuz only a block away.

THEO
Thanks, Rudy.

Rudy begins to whistle and ambles down to the other end of the bar.

VINCENT
You played that real cool. What made you know what to say out there?

Theo looks amused and smiles.

THEO
Jean and I were in a tight spot.

Theo pours the alcohol down his gullet.

THEO
Besides, how’s he supposed to know you’re my brother?
Vincent slaps Theo on the back and laughs.
Vincent smiles and finishes his drink.

VINCENT
Mom and Pop are over at my place. They arrived a week early.

Do you want to go over and see them?

THEO
No, I’ll stop by later. I’m going to the hospital.

VINCENT
Okay. Mom and Pop said they might stay here permanent to get away from the eastern winters.

Only thing that would make it complete is if the Dodgers move here. Who won the game?

RUDY
‘Dem bums, two-to-nothin’.

THEO
That’s great, by the way, Vincent, thanks.

VINCENT
Don’t mention it, little brother. Is he what’s been troubling you all these years?

THEO
Yea, I can’t believe what he did to Jean. I shouldn’t have let that happen.

VINCENT
Well, it’s over now and his days are numbered. Jean’ll be alright in a week or so and so will the kid.

THEO
Kid?
VINCENT
Yea, you’re gonna be a father.

THEO
A baby. That’s what she was trying to tell me.

VINCENT
Yea, a baby. Now let’s get out of this godforsaken place! So you can go see the expecting mother. I’ll give you a police escort and we’ll probably beat the ambulance to the hospital.

The two brothers walk out the front of Tiny’s into the eventide while Rudy continues with his whistling and polishing his shiny bar glasses.

NEWSPAPER BARKER
Extra! Extra! Read all about it. Brooklyn ends misery, defeat dreaded Yankees, 2-0, to win the series. Get your paper! Read alllll about it!!!

FADE TO BLACK.