

DIAGNOSIS MURDER

"Many Happy Returns"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL – ESTABLISHING – DAY

INT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL – DAY

as MARK SLOAN enters, scowling, though not far from his usual, cheery/ebullient self. He's holding RAGGED, BULGING BROWN GROCERY BAGS each arm. Jack catches up to him and flashes a smile.

JACK

Brown-bagging it today, Mark?

Jack tries to peer into a bag but Mark jerks away, snapping:

MARK

It's Doctor Sloan. Where's the Marshall work-up?

Jack's smile evaporates. He offers Mark his clipboard.

JACK

Right here.

Sloan snatches it, almost dropping his bags. He gives it a cursory glance and shoves it back into Jack's hands.

MARK

Sloppy! Very sloppy.

Sloan marches on, Jack trailing after him, bewildered.

JACK

What do you mean? I ran all the tests, I even double-checked them myself. What could possibly be--

That's when Amanda joins them, interrupting Jack with:

AMANDA

Good-morning, Mark.

MARK

It's Doctor Sloan. Have you got the Turlington autopsy?

AMANDA

I was just taking it to your office.

She hands it to him. He gives it a cursory glance, Jack peering over his shoulder, then hands it back to her.

MARK

Sloppy! Very sloppy!

(then:)

This is a hospital. Lives are at stake. We can't afford to be--

JACK

Sloppy.

Mark glares at him.

MARK

Exactly!

And he marches on, Jack and Amanda staring after him.

AMANDA

What was all that about, Jack?

Jack shrugs, then gives her a stern look.

JACK

It's Doctor Stewart.

She swats him with the file and goes on her way.

INT. SLOAN'S OUTER OFFICE – DAY

Sloan storms into his outer office, and before a smiling DELORES can say more than:

DELORES

Good--

MARK

(interrupts:)

Hold my calls. I don't want to be disturbed.

He continues into his office, slamming the door shut with his foot.

DELORES

--morning.

The phone rings. She snatches it up.

DELORES

(into phone:)

Dr. Sloan's office.

(then:)

I'm sorry, Mr. Briggs, he's unavailable right now. I'll have him call you as soon as he's free... yes, I'll remind him not to park in your space.

She hangs up the phone. The door to Sloan's office flies open.

MARK

Who was that?

DELORES

Norman Briggs.

MARK

Why didn't you put him through? I need to talk to him stat. Get him on the line!

He slams the door again. She shakes her head, picks up the phone, and dials. After a moment:

DELORES

(into phone:)

Hello, Mr. Briggs. Dr. Sloan's returning your call. If you'll hold one moment please...

She sticks him on hold, and is about to buzz Sloan, when she thinks better of it. She sets the phone down, goes to the door, and is about to knock, when she reconsiders. Instead, she suddenly throws open the door.

DELORES

Mark?

INT. SLOAN'S OFFICE – DAY

Mark, startled, jumps up from his seat, sending STACKS OF ITTY-BITTY RECEIPTS flying off his desk.

MARK

Ahhh!

Delores stands in the doorway, watching as Sloan scrambles on his hands and knees to collect the scattered papers.

DELORES

What's going on?

He chases after the receipts, gathering them together in clumps on his desk.

MARK

Sloppy. They say my record-keeping is sloppy. Can you believe that?

DELORES

Who?

MARK

I'll show them sloppy. I've got every single receipt right here. Except for that one under your foot.

She lifts up her foot and picks up the receipt.

DELORES

You bought a Slim Whitman box set?

MARK

(snatches receipt:)

Business expense. I play it in the operating room to relax me.

DELORES

(realizing:)

You're being audited.

MARK

How did you know that?

DELORES

I recognize the symptoms from my last boss, Doctor Wallengren.

Nice guy.

MARK

Don't know him.

DELORES

No, but you know his work. He made your license plate.

(off his look:)

Just kidding.

Before Sloan can respond, the door flies open and Norman Briggs huffs in. He marches over to the desk and picks up Sloan's phone.

BRIGGS

(into phone)

Norman, terribly sorry to keep you on hold for so long. Next time, I'll make an appointment like a civilized person.

He slams down the phone and heads for the door.

MARK

Hold it right there.

BRIGGS

I've been holding. How much longer do you expect me to wait for you?

DELORES

How about ten-to-twenty?

MARK

Good-bye, Delores.

She leaves.

BRIGGS

What's got into you?

MARK

The sharp claws of the IRS.

BRIGGS

Playing fast and loose with the rules again, Sloan? I always said it would catch up with you someday.

MARK

The only thing that's caught up with me is listening to you. And that idiot accountant you recommended.

BRIGGS

Stan Goldstein? I hear he's great.

MARK

You hear? He isn't your accountant?

BRIGGS

I do my own taxes. And I'm proud to pay every penny I owe.

MARK

Then where did you find this guy?

BRIGGS

My shrink spoke very highly of him.

MARK

Your what?

BRIGGS

Not that there's anything wrong with me. Just a few insignificant phobias. Heights. Spiders. Cheese.

Sloan sinks into a chair, realizing he may be in worse trouble than he knew.

MARK

I'm staying calm. After all, your shrink's not in jail.

BRIGGS

Of course not.

MARK

So Goldstein's done a good job for him.

BRIGGS

Goldstein isn't my shrink's accountant. He's a patient.

MARK

Thanks so much, Norman.

Sloan gets up, grabs his paper bags, and marches out. Briggs looks after his retreating back.

BRIGGS

I hear he's a very good patient...

But Sloan is gone. Briggs shrugs.

EXT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE – DAY

A modest suburban home. Mark Sloan's car is parked out front.

MARK'S VOICE

Are you sure you know what you're doing?

INT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE – DAY

Stan Goldstein's office/den is cluttered with papers and teetering stacks of bulging files. Goldstein, 40s, a short, balding man in a cardigan sweater, is busily preparing a tax return while Sloan examines the crooked, framed degrees on the wall.

GOLDSTEIN

Of course I do. Don't worry about it.

There's a KNOCK at the front door. Goldstein yells out at his bombshell secretary NADINE, 30s, who is at her desk outside the den, accepting a BOX from a DELIVERYMAN from BENTON OFFICE SUPPLY.

GOLDSTEIN

You wanna get that?

Nadine goes to the door, where a CHINESE FOOD DELIVERY MAN is waiting. She steps outside on the porch.

MARK

If there's nothing to worry about, I wouldn't be getting audited.

GOLDSTEIN

You don't think they actually look at each return, do you? You were picked at random out of a slush pile of millions.

MARK

Really?

Sloan mulls that comforting thought a moment, beginning to feel a bit relieved.

MARK

So it doesn't mean you or I did anything wrong. It's just bad luck I'm being audited.

GOLDSTEIN

Exactly. Pure chance. So relax. I've been through hundreds of'em.

MARK

(gulp:)

Hundreds?

Goldstein yells out to Nadine.

GOLDSTEIN

I know you're smoking out there.

Sure enough, Nadine is out on the front porch, stealing a smoke.

She sets the cigarette in a flower pot and marches in with the bag of Chinese food.

NADINE

What do you care, I was outside wasn't I?

GOLDSTEIN

You have no idea where those carcinogens are going. They could be sucked in by the air conditioner and blown right into my face.

Nadine unceremoniously drops the sack on Goldstein's desk.

NADINE

Here.

MARK

Everything on my tax return is on the up and up, right?

GOLDSTEIN

Sure. Just the creative accounting you pay me for.

(to Nadine:)

No MSG, right?

NADINE

No MSG.

MARK

"Creative accounting?"

GOLDSTEIN

I got to leave my mark, don't I? Each tax return that comes out of here is a reflection of my personality.

(sniffs bag:)

I'm definitely smelling MSG. Take it back. And while you're out, pick up my laundry. Make sure they put a crease in my slacks.

She snatches the bag and leaves in a huff. Goldstein turns to Sloan.

MARK

You're coming to my office at 10 a.m. sharp to explain your accounting methods to the IRS agent.

GOLDSTEIN

Can't get away. You'll have to come here.

MARK

I have a hospital full of patients who need my attention. So you'll be there, or it won't be the second hand smoke that kills you, it'll be me.

Sloan leaves. Goldstein looks after him, concerned.

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL – ESTABLISHING – DAY

INT. SLOAN'S OFFICE – DAY

Mark paces nervously back and forth, then grabs the phone and punches in a number. He listens, then:

MARK

Same message I left before. Only doubled!

He slams down the phone and snatches up a stack of receipts.

That's when Jack and Amanda rush in.

AMANDA

What is it, Mark?

Mark whirls around, surprised, and once again his piles of receipts go flying.

MARK

Aaaah!

JACK

You said there was an emergency!

MARK

There is -- the IRS agent is due here any minute and my accountant hasn't shown up. I need your help!

(then:)

Well, don't just stand there. Give me a hand.

Jack and Amanda get down and help him gather up the receipts.

AMANDA

You called us down here to help you pick up your receipts?

MARK

No--

There's a knock at the door. Delores opens it a crack and sticks her head in.

DELORES

There's an Agent McCord to see you.

MARK

Send him right in.

(to Jack:)

If Goldstein isn't here in five minutes, you desperately need me in ER. Understand?

JACK

No.

MARK

Just do it!

Then, just as GRETCHEN McCORD, 40s, comes in, Sloan turns professorial:

MARK

That will be all, doctors. And remember, I want those reports written in explicit detail. I won't tolerate any sloppiness.

Jack and Amanda nod and leave, passing McCord, who's soul as tightly wound as the bun on her head. She comes in, flashing her ID like Steve McGarrett.

GRETCHEN

Gretchen McCord. IRS.

MARK

Mark Sloan. MD. And may I say, you look much too young to be an IRS agent.

(off her stony look:)

Which is not to imply that you're anything but supremely qualified for this job. Or for any job. Would you like a job? Of course not, you have one. And a damn fine job it is.

He checks his watch, feeling himself sinking.

GRETCHEN

There's no need to be nervous, Doctor.

MARK

Nervous? Me? Not at all. Just poised for action. In a bustling hospital like this, you never know when you'll have to drop everything of personal importance to solve that next life-or-death emergency.

(to himself:)

Although sometimes you can predict it pretty well...

INT. SLOAN'S OUTER OFFICE – DAY

Jack checks his watch.

JACK

Two more minutes.

Amanda nods. That's when both their beepers go off. They exchange a look. Uh-oh.

INT. SLOAN'S OFFICE – DAY

She eyes the stack of receipts.

GRETCHEN

Please have a seat, Doctor. And try to relax.

He sits. Stiffly. Checks his watch.

MARK

Relax. Right. Why wouldn't I be relaxed? My accountant should be here any second. I'm very relaxed.

GRETCHEN

I know it sounds crazy, but some people get quite agitated during an audit.

MARK

No...? Really?

GRETCHEN

So I always try to make clear to the subject that this is not a criminal investigation, it's a simple accounting procedure, and I'm an accountant, not a police officer.

(pulls out a notebook)

Now, you have the right to remain silent...

(off his look:)

A little IRS humor there, just to break the ice.

MARK

I feel myself melting already. Excuse me.

He jumps up from the chair and marches to the door, which he flings open.

INT. SLOAN'S OUTER OFFICE – DAY

Mark's face falls when he sees that Jack and Amanda are gone.

MARK

Where are they?

DELORES

Medical emergency. Imagine that happening in a hospital.

MARK

If they don't call me in five -- make that two -- minutes, you call.

DELORES

About what?

MARK

A medical emergency!

INT. SLOAN'S OFFICE – DAY

He slams the door, then goes back to Gretchen, who is studying his pile of receipts.

GRETCHEN

Interesting accounting method.

MARK

Pays to be organized.
She picks up a receipt and reads it.

GRETCHEN

Rollerblades, \$149.

MARK

Ah, yes. You see, this hospital is so big and I have to get around it so fast, I found that roller-skating instead of walking allows me to perform my job much more efficiently.

GRETCHEN

Interesting. Unique. Disallowed.

She makes a note in her notebook. He nervously checks his watch, drums his fingers on the desk. McCord take two calculators out of her case and set them on the desk in front of her.

MARK

Two calculators?

GRETCHEN

I'm ambidextrous.

MARK

Did you hear a knock? I distinctly heard a knock.
Sloan sticks his head back out the door.

INT. SLOAN'S OUTER OFFICE – DAY

Mark sticks out hsi head just as Delores hangs up the phone.

MARK

What happened? Did your watch stop?

DELORES

The phones have been ringing off the hook.

MARK

That's a good place to leave them -- buzz me in 30 seconds!

He pops back into his office.

INT. SLOAN'S OFFICE – DAY

Gretchen picks up a receipt, looks at it, and shakes her head. She makes a calculation.

MARK

What? What?

GRETCHEN

A \$1000 leather recliner?

MARK

It's where I read all my medical journals. Got to keep up on the latest innovations in medicine, you know. My accountant assured me it was legal.

GRETCHEN

Of course it's legal. Just not deductible.

He settles into his seat like a man being strapped into the electric chair. That's when the door flies open -- it's Briggs. Sloan bolts out of his chair.

BRIGGS

Sorry to interrupt, Mark, but--

MARK

You have a crisis that demands my immediate attention.

(to McCord:)

This will have to wait. A life is at stake.

Before McCord can respond, Sloan dashes out of the office, taking Briggs with him, slamming the door behind them.

INT. SLOAN'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Sloan turns to Delores, who is stuck on the phone. She shrugs helplessly at him.

MARK

Traitor.

(to Briggs:)

What can I do for you, Norman.

BRIGGS

You parked in my space again!

MARK

Because someone parked in mine.

BRIGGS

That's not my problem, Mark.

MARK

It is if I park in yours.

Sloan hurries out. Briggs glares after him. CUT TO:

EXT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE - DAY

as Sloan marches up to the house and knocks insistently on the splintered door, which is slightly ajar.

MARK

Open up, Goldstein. Your days are numbered!

He pounds on the door again, harder this time.

MARK

I'm warning you. If you don't open up right now, you're a--

The door swings open to reveal:

HIS POV

Goldstein lying on the floor, a suitcase beside him, a STEAK KNIFE in his chest. Mark leans down and takes his pulse.

MARK

Dead man.

Uh-oh. That's when someone SCREAMS. Sloan whirls around to see Nadine standing behind him, horrified.

NADINE

Oh my God -- you've killed him!
And on Sloan's look, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Cops swarm everywhere, collecting evidence. Mark and a hysterical Nadine are giving their statements to a UNIFORMED OFFICER.

NADINE

--so I came in late and I found him...

(motions to Mark:)

..hovering over the body.

MARK

I was leaning, leaning!

NADINE

Admiring his handiwork.

MARK

Examining the wound!

NADINE

His hands wrapped around Mr. Goldstein's throat.

MARK

Taking his pulse!

(to the officer:)

Why would I strangle him if I stabbed him?

OFFICER

So you're admitting you stabbed him?

MARK

No!

That's when Mark sees DETECTIVE CLAIRE VAN SICKLE, 30s, striding through like a drill sergeant inspecting a barracks. He jumps up in front of her.

MARK

You're in charge. You've got to listen to me.

CLAIRE

Have we met?

MARK

Well, no, not yet--

CLAIRE

Have I asked to question you yet?

MARK

Actually, no--

CLAIRE

Then you can wait until I'm ready.

MARK

It's just that I'm a doctor and I have patients...

CLAIRE

Good. Use it.

MARK

I didn't mean patience, I meant patients --

Too late, she has walked away to examine a telephone answering machine, turning her back to him and leaving him in anxious frustration. Just then Steve rushes in.

STEVE

Dad! I got here as soon as I heard. Are you okay?

MARK

Not even close. In another five minutes I could be on death row. Can you get me out of here?

STEVE

No problem.

They both look at Claire, who taps the "play" button of the machine with a pencil. Steve recognizes her and is immediately filled with dread.

STEVE

Uh-oh.

MARK

Uh-oh what?

They reach her as the machine spits out its first message:

NADINE'S VOICE

(on the machine:)

Stan, this is Nadine, I overslept. I'm really, really sorry. I'll be in as fast as I can.

STEVE

Hello, Claire.

CLAIRE

That's all you can say after what you did to me?

MARK

(to Steve:)

Perhaps we should leave the detective alone. She's very busy--

DECKER'S VOICE

This is Alan Decker calling. You can't duck me forever, Goldstein. I know where you live. And you know something? Most fatal accidents happen at home. Think about it.

STEVE

I tried to call.

CLAIRE

There I was, in a cozy bed and breakfast by the sea, looking forward to the perfect romantic getaway.

STEVE

I was going out the door and they dragged me into a drug raid. What could I do?

CLAIRE

I waited for you all night, watching the candles melt, the caviar rot, and the champagne go flat.

MARK

(to Steve:)

I think we've taken enough of this young lady's valuable time--

JOE KOVE'S VOICE

(on the machine:)

I warned you once, Goldstein. And Joe Kove doesn't repeat himself. Now you gotta pay, and Joe Kove is gonna collect.

STEVE

I called -- there was no one registered under your name or mine.

CLAIRE

Of course not, it was supposed to be a secret!

STEVE

Well it worked!

CLAIRE

Admit it -- you never intended to show up. I was just another tawdry one-night stand.

STEVE

(embarrassed:)

We can discuss this later.

(glances at Mark:)

But not in front of my father, okay?

CLAIRE

He's your father?

STEVE

He's also a medical consultant to the police department. So I'm sure you won't mind if he leaves now.

(to Mark:)

Bye, Dad.

Mark starts to go, but Claire blocks his way.

CLAIRE

He's also a possible suspect in a brutal murder.

STEVE

What about all those threats on the answering machine? Aren't those people your suspects?

CLAIRE

I'll look into them in due time. But none of those people were found hovering over the body.

MARK

Leaning, leaning.

STEVE

C'mon, what possible motive could my father have?

SLOAN'S VOICE

(on the machine:)

Goldstein, this is Mark Sloan.

All heads turn to the answering machine.

MARK'S VOICE

If you're not in my office in five minutes, I'll kill you.

MARK

(off their looks:)

It's just a figure of speech. I didn't mean anything by it.

MARK'S VOICE

(on the machine:)

Same message I left before. Only double.

CLAIRE

Detective Sloan, I never want to see you again. And Dr. Sloan, I advise you to call your lawyer.

MARK

Now wait a minute--

CLAIRE

I'll do better than that. I'll wait until ten o'clock tomorrow morning.

Be in my office when I get there.

GRETCHEN

I'm afraid he already has a ten o'clock.

They turn to see Gretchen behind them, flashing her ID.

GRETCHEN

Gretchen McCord, IRS. We were in the middle of an audit when Dr. Sloan had a "medical emergency." So I went looking for his accountant instead.

(to Mark:)

Imagine my surprise when I got here.

CLAIRE

A criminal investigation takes precedence over a tax audit.

But if you want him immediately afterwards, I can hold him for you.

MARK

Hold me?

GRETCHEN

I'd be grateful. But perhaps it would be beneficial for both of us to pursue my investigation first.

MARK

What investigation?

CLAIRE

You think the murder may be tied into Dr. Sloan's finances?

GRETCHEN

It's certainly possible. Of course I'd share any relevant data with you immediately.

Mark pulls Steve aside, out of earshot of the two women.

MARK

You should have called her!

STEVE

I tried!

The two women, their business complete, walk toward them.

CLAIRE

Then it's settled. You can meet with Dr. Sloan tomorrow morning, and I'll see him in the early afternoon. Then we can compare notes and coordinate our attack.

MARK

Attack?

GRETCHEN

Fine. I think it's going to be a pleasure working with you, Claire.

CLAIRE

Likewise, Gretchen.

They shake, firm friends, and walk off in separate directions, leaving the Sloans to themselves.

MARK

(to Steve:)

When two women shake hands, it's never a good sign.

And on Mark's grim look, we DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL – ESTABLISHING – DAY

INT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL – LUNCH ROOM – DAY

Steve sits alone at a table, picking at a piece of toast and looking around nervously. Sloan comes up and pulls up a chair.

MARK

Boy, am I glad to see you. I really need your help on this one.

STEVE

Sssh! I'm not here to help you.

MARK

You're not?

STEVE

If I were to aid a possible suspect in a murder investigation, I could be fired. Or worse.

MARK

Then...

STEVE

I came for breakfast. I love the food here.

MARK

Ah.

STEVE

And now that I'm done, I'm going to bus my tray. I'll just leave the file I borrowed from Claire Van Sickle here on the table until I come back. I don't think anyone will disturb it, do you?

He slides a case file over to Sloan and gets up. That's when Jack comes by, beaming.

JACK

I knew you couldn't turn your back on your own father.

MARK

Sssh!

STEVE

Sssh!

MARK

He's not helping me. He's eating.

JACK

Got it.

Jack picks up the file and reads. Steve tries to grab it, but he's too late.

JACK

Hey, did you know Goldstein got his accounting degree from a correspondance school? Probably had to draw Sparky to get in. That's when Amanda comes up. She grins at Jack.

AMANDA

That's ten bucks you owe me.

(to the others:)

I told him Steve would help.

STEVE & MARK & JACK

Ssshh!

Amanda takes the file from Jack before Steve can get it.

AMANDA

Isn't there a forensics report in here?

Steve makes a grab for the file, but Amanda holds it away.

AMANDA

Says here Goldstein died from a stab wound in the heart with a steak knife. It came from a personalized set he gave his clients at Christmas. The report also says there's a bruise on his stomach, probably from a kick or a punch.

MARK

Isn't there anything about the two guys who left threatening messages on the answering machine?

Jack grabs the file and reads.

JACK

Yeah, one's an attorney named Alan Decker and the other is Joe Kove, a karate instructor. Both were Goldstein's clients.

MARK

Detective Van Sickle did say I should contact an attorney. You don't have Decker's address in there, do you?

STEVE

Oh, no, Dad. Don't do this.

AMANDA

I've been interested in learning some self-defense, maybe Joe Kove has an open class.

STEVE

Now hold on--

JACK

No one knows more secrets about a guy than his secretary. I think I'll have a talk with Nadine.

STEVE

Stop!

Steve blocks the door so they can't get out.

STEVE

I only shared this information with you to satisfy your curiosity. Claire Van Sickle is handling this case, and if you get in her way, she'll mow you down. And me with you.

MARK

Don't worry, son. If you don't want us to get in her way, we won't.

STEVE

Thanks Dad. I knew you'd understand.

Steve grabs the file and leaves. Sloan turns to Jack and Amanda.

MARK

So if you see her when you're talking to Kove and Nadine, run.

They step into

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

and have only gone a few steps when Agent McCord grabs Sloan by the arm.

GRETCHEN

You and I have an audit to conduct, remember?

MARK

Agent McCord, can't this wait a few days? My accountant has been murdered.

GRETCHEN

And you're a suspect.

SLOAN

Possible suspect.

GRETCHEN

What if you did it? Should I reward you by stopping the aud—
Just as she says the "ah" in "audit," Sloan sticks a tongue depressor in her mouth and peers into her throat.

MARK

Say ahhh.

GRETCHEN

Ahhhh?

MARK

When was the last time you had a check-up?

GRETCHEN

Ahhhh!

Sloan motions to Jack and Amanda without taking the tongue depressor out of her mouth.

MARK

Doctors? What do you think?

GRETCHEN

Ahhhh!

Jack shines a flashlight into her eyes.

JACK

Look at how her pupils are dialating.

Now she's seeing spots and gagging on the stick.

GRETCHEN

Ahhhh...

AMANDA

She seems disoriented to me.

MARK

This woman needs to be admitted immediately.

Sloan pushes her into a wheel-chair, and gives Jack an order.

MARK

I want a full work up. If she's got something wrong, I want to know about it.

Jack rushes her away, Mark and Amanda make their escape.

Gretchen tries to get out of the chair, but Jack is pushing her way too fast.

GRETCHEN

Wait! Stop!

JACK

This won't hurt a bit.

INT. KARATE SCHOOL – DAY

The walls are adorned with posters of JOE KOVE, who looks like a menacing mountain of muscle and sweat. A class is practicing their moves with an instructor in front of a mirror. Amanda comes in, looking at the posters. Clearly, Kove is an awesome, towering fellow to be reckoned with.

KOVE

May I help you?

Amanda turns to see Joe Kove -- all 5'2" of him, tops.

AMANDA

You're Joe Kove?

KOVE

In the flesh.

She steals a quick glance at the posters, then back at him.

KOVE

Would you like to see more of it?

AMANDA

Excuse me?

He motions to a display case of Joe Kove memorabilia.

KOVE

I've got Joe Kove videos. Joe Kove posters. Joe Kove active wear. Or perhaps you'd like to join the Joe Kove fan club?

AMANDA

Actually, I'm interested in private lessons.

KOVE

Of course you are. Everybody wants to learn from the master. But Joe Kove is a martial arts superstar. His time is very valuable.

AMANDA

If I couldn't afford it, I don't think my trust fund manager would have recommended you.

KOVE

Trust fund? Why didn't you say so? You don't want lessons.

AMANDA

I don't?

KOVE

What you want is a Joe Kove prospectus.

He takes a brochure from the display case and hands it to her.

KOVE

Now's your chance to join the elite few lucky enough to own shares of Deathkicker, Joe Kove's new powerhouse motion picture.

He spins on his feet and delivers a powerhouse kick to a punching bag. Amanda makes a mental note.

AMANDA

I didn't know you were a movie star.

KOVE

No one knew Steven Seagal was either, until he made a movie.

People who didn't invest back then are kicking themselves today.

(laughs to himself:)

Get it? Kicking themselves? See, Joe Kove has a lighter side, too.

Makes him very appealing to women.

He gives her his best suave grin.

AMANDA

It's all very interesting, but I don't make any investments without talking to Stan Goldstein first.

KOVE

Stan Goldstein manages your money?

AMANDA

As a matter of fact, yes--

Kove snatches the prospectus away from her.

KOVE

You're wasting my time.

AMANDA

But what if I want to invest?

KOVE

If Stan Goldstein is your accountant, whatever cash you had is long gone.

He walks away. And on Amanda pondering what she's learned, we

CUT TO:

INT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Nadine is going through some files when she hears SOBBING. She turns around to see Jack standing over the CHALK OUTLINE on the floor, choking back tears.

NADINE

Can I help you?

JACK

Is this where he--?

He starts to cry, unable to finish. She goes to him.

NADINE

You knew Stan?

Jack nods, tries to get a grip.

JACK

My Uncle.

NADINE

Funny, Stan never mentioned he had a nephew. In fact, he never even mentioned a sister.

JACK

They stopped speaking years ago -- some silly argument no one even remembers. A few months ago Mom took sick. Lying in her deathbed, she says to me, go to Stanley, tell him I love him, tell him--

He loses it. Nadine reaches for him, but he turns away.

JACK

I was too late.

(then, gets grip:)

Don't mind me and my little problems. You go back to your work. I'll be fine.

NADINE

You poor man. Could I get you something? A glass of water? A box of tissues?

JACK

Coffee would be nice.

She gives his hand a squeeze and disappears into the kitchen. As soon as she's gone, Jack's grief completely disappears and he starts searching Goldstein's desk for anything that might be a clue.

JACK

Mom finally wanted to patch things up. Now it'll have to wait until they are reunited in heaven.

She comes in with his cup of coffee. Jack drops the papers and grips the desk for support, grief-stricken again. He takes the cup of coffee.

NADINE

That's terrible. I wish there was something I could do to help.

JACK

Cream. Please.

She gives him a sympathetic smile, then goes back into the kitchen. Jack returns to his search, but she comes back sooner than he thought with the cream. He snatches a picture off the desk to cover for his actions.

JACK

(re: picture)

I haven't seen my uncle since I was a baby, but I recognize him as if he was my own reflection.

NADINE

(re: picture)

That's Elvis.

JACK

It wasn't Uncle Stanley on the postage stamp? And Mom was so proud.

(chokes back a sob)

Do you have any sweet'n'low?

Jack wipes away a tear. She nods and goes back to the kitchen. He yanks open the desk drawer and sees something. He pulls it out -- an AIRLINE TICKET TO THE CAYMAN ISLANDS made out to Goldstein. This means something.

JACK

Cayman Islands, one-way...

Jack's so intrigued he doesn't even notice Nadine coming back in until she's standing right behind him. He covers, his chin trembling with emotion.

JACK

Good ole' Uncle Stanley, nothing could stop his wanderlust.

NADINE

He never the left the house.

JACK

Of course he didn't, not after ... after the plane crash, the two weeks in the snow, the cannibalism--

Jack is too choked up to go on.

NADINE

He sent me out for everything.

JACK

It was the shame. He thought everyone was staring at him. That everyone knew who -- I mean what -- he ate. It must have taken him years to find the courage to travel again.

NADINE

That explains why he was so nervous about having me book his tickets. I had no idea ... I thought it was because of his Cayman Island accounts.

(then, low:)

They are sort of hush-hush.

Jack takes her hand.

JACK

Mom will be happy to know her baby brother had someone so kind to look after him. So kind... and so beautiful.

She's putty in his hands. At least until the phone RINGS.

NADINE

The late Stan Goldstein's office.

(then, angry)

No, I'm not alone. I've got the entire World Wrestling Foundation with me. And they're all better than you.

(then:)

Sure, come on over. I won't be here.

She slams down the phone and turns back to Jack.

NADINE

My ex-boyfriend thinks he still owns me. He's so jealous he even thought I was shacking up with Stan, of all the idiotic, disgusting -- (remembering Jack)

Not that your uncle wasn't a great guy and everything.

JACK

(choked up:)

Maybe I should go. I have to call -- Mom.

He turns his back on her, and leaves. Too choked up even to say good bye.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Mark emerges from the elevator, sees a sign reading ALAN DECKER, A PROFESSIONAL LAW CORPORATION on a door. He opens the door and

HIS POV - DECKER'S OFFICE

The waiting room is CROWDED with INJURED PEOPLE, wearing makes-shift neck braces, leaning on crutches, their arms in home-made slings, etc.

INT. DECKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Mark, bewildered, winds his way to ROLAND, a beefy receptionist.

MARK

Excuse me, I'm Dr. Mark Sloan. I'd like to see Alan Decker.

ROLAND

One moment please.

(into intercom:)

There's a Dr. Sloan to see you, sir.

Suddenly the door flies open behind Roland and ALAN DECKER, 30s, Corbin Bernsen's evil twin, bursts out.

DECKER

It's about time you got here!

MARK

(startled:)

It is?

Decker grabs Mark by the arm and leads him across the room.

DECKER

I've been waiting for you all morning.

MARK

You have?

DECKER

Take a look around you.

MARK

It's like a train wreck.

DECKER

I wish it was. Think how much easier it would be filing the claim.

Decker opens a door to reveal A SMALL EXAMINATION ROOM that adjoins the waiting area. There's a stack of FORMS on one of the counters.

DECKER

You'll find everything you need right here. You know the drill. When you finish the exam, send the patient back and we'll process them right away. If you need more insurance forms, let Roland know.

And with that, he gives Mark a shove inside, turns around and yells:

DECKER

Number 118. You're up.

NUMBER 118, a young man with what seems to be a sore ankle and a pinched nerve in his neck, hobbles into

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM – DAY

and closes the door. Number 118 hands Mark his number-stub and hobs up on the exam table. Mark looks between the stub, the closed door, and the stack of claim forms, then approaches 118 with a smile.

MARK

So, what happened to you?

NUMBER 118

I was rear-ended by a truck.

MARK

Where does it hurt?

NUMBER 118

Everywhere.

Sloan examines the man's knee, and gently moves the man's head from side-to-side as they talk.

MARK

Do you feel a tingling in your toes?

NUMBER 118

Oh, yes.

MARK

Shooting pains in your nose, cramps in your thumbs and itchy underarms?

NUMBER 118

Night and day.

MARK

I see. There's nothing wrong with you.

NUMBER 118

Then how am I gonna get the insurance settlement Decker promised me?

MARK

You aren't.

Mark opens the door and ushers the man out. Before he can say another word, a woman shoulders her way in, waving her number stub. She's wearing a neck brace.

NUMBER 119

I'm next.

MARK

And what's wrong with you?

NUMBER 119

I was rear-ended by a truck.

MARK

Must be an epidemic. Next time, look both ways before you cross. He pushes her out the door, slams it, and turns to grab a few insurance forms, which he stuffs into his jacket. Suddenly the door flies open, and in storms:

GRETCHEN

I don't recall seeing anything about a private practice on your tax return.

MARK

What are you doing here?

GRETCHEN

I followed you from the hospital. You can't get rid of me that easily, so you--

That's when DECKER comes in. Sloan jams a tongue depressor in her mouth to shut her up.

DECKER

What the hell is wrong with you?

MARK

Please. That's no way to talk to a patient.

McCord tries to pull Sloan's hand away, but Sloan grabs her wrist.

As they struggle, Decker goes into a tirade:

DECKER

These people were in terrible car accidents -- no treatment, no expense, should be spared. I want to see this woman leave here on a stretcher!

Decker storms out. Sloan removes the depressor from McCord's mouth.

MARK

Now do you understand? This is a scam!

GRETCHEN

It certainly is. And you're not getting away with it anymore.

She grabs him by the arm and

INT. DECKER'S OFFICE - DAY

drags Sloan out, much to the surprise of Decker and Roland. No sooner are they out the door, than in comes a MAN WITH A DOCTOR'S BAG.

DR. WESTPHAL

I'm Dr. Westphal, is Mr. Decker in?

DECKER

You're the doctor I asked for?

DR. WESPHAL

I'm sorry I'm late, but traffic was hell.

DECKER

Then who was he?

Dr. Westphal shrugs. Decker, furious, pulls Roland aside.

DECKER

Follow "Dr. Sloan." I don't care whether he's an insurance investigator, a reporter or a cop. Just see that he takes whatever he learned about us to the grave.

(then, with a grin:)

And don't forget our company motto.

ROLAND

(grins back:)

Make it look like an accident.

EXT. ROAD – DAY

as Gretchen is behind the wheel of her government sedan, unaware of the car closing in behind them.

INT. GRETCHEN'S CAR – DAY

Mark pleads with Gretchen.

MARK

This is all a big misunderstanding. If you'll just give me a chance to explain --

GRETCHEN

You're a tax cheat, a felon, and common crook. What more do I need to know?

Suddenly, they're SLAMMED FORWARD as someone rear-ends them!

MARK

For one thing, who's trying to kill us.

Sloan looks over his shoulder and sees

HIS POV

Roland's car closing in for another -- BASH! They are jerked forward again.

EXT. ROAD – DAY

Roland swerves into the next lane and SLAMS against the side of the car, forcing it towards a COLLISION with a parked car.

INT. GRETCHEN'S CAR – DAY

Gretchen swerves to avoid certain doom and:

EXT. ROAD – DAY

Gretchen's car flies off an EMBANKMENT and ROLLS down a hillside. Roland drives off, tires peeling rubber. And on the battered car, dirt and dust settling around it, we FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. SLOAN'S HOUSE – DAY

A black-and-white patrol car is parked at the curb, an OFFICER waiting at the front door. Claire pulls up in a sedan. Just as she is getting out, Steve pulls up in a car behind her.

CLAIRE

Stop following me.

STEVE

I'm not -- you wouldn't return my calls, so I went looking for you. I didn't expect to find you at my father's house!

CLAIRE

Why? I always search a suspected murderer's house for evidence.

STEVE

What about Joe Kove and Alan Decker? Aren't they suspects, too?

CLAIRE

I didn't find them hovering over the body.

STEVE

He was leaning.

(then:)

Please, Claire. You have to believe me. I wanted to be with you. It's all a terrible misunderstanding.

CLAIRE

(to officer:)

You got the warrant?

The officer nods. She motions to the door.

CLAIRE

Break it down.

STEVE

Wait!

Steve steps between the officer and the door and holds up a key. He unlocks the door.

CLAIRE

Once again, you rob me of any pleasure.

They go inside.

INT. SLOAN'S HOUSE – DAY

Steve pulls Claire aside.

STEVE

As I remember, you didn't have any complaints the last time we were together.

CLAIRE

I wouldn't trust your memory. If it was any good, you wouldn't have forgotten the weekend we planned together.

STEVE

I didn't forget. I wanted to be there. I still do.

CLAIRE

You'll say anything to get your father off the hook.

STEVE

This isn't about my father. It's about us. He had no motive and you know it.

She starts walking towards the kitchen.

CLAIRE

Goldstein was skimming from his clients -- including your father. Dr. Sloan caught him just as he was about to skip to the Caymen Islands to enjoy your father's money. We law enforcement professionals call that "motive."

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

They approach the counter.

STEVE

What do you hope to find here?

CLAIRE

It's what I'm not going to find.

She motions to the knife rack. One of the knives is missing.

STEVE

So he's missing a steak knife. That doesn't mean a thing.

She pulls out one of the knives and shows it to Steve.

THE KNIFE - HIS POV

The handle reads: "Take a bite out of your taxes! Goldstein Financial Management."

CLAIRE'S VOICE

The knife in Goldstein's back was from a unique set that he gave out to his clients at Christmas.

BACK TO SCENE

Steve looks concerned.

CLAIRE

Like father like son. Now I know where you learned to stab people in the back.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY

We are TIGHT on Gretchen's car, or what remains of it.

MARK'S VOICE

This is terrific.

GRETCHEN'S VOICE

We were run off the road by a deranged killer!

We PAN UP to find Mark and Gretchen climbing out of the ravine and onto the roadway -- disheveled, dirty, a bit cut and bruised, but otherwise just fine.

MARK

Exactly. Best thing that's happened all day.

GRETCHEN

That car was entrusted to my care by the United States government. It's a complete wreck. They'll be taking it out of my paycheck for years.

MARK

Declare it as a loss on your taxes. I would.

GRETCHEN

(furious:)

Of course you would -- it's not deductible.

MARK

Then you can have the satisfaction of adding one more criminal offense to the dastardly felon's charges.

She gives Mark a withering look.

GRETCHEN

Oh, I intend to.

MARK

Not me, the murderer. Don't you see? This proves I didn't kill Stan Goldstein.

GRETCHEN

All it proves is that they'll give any lunatic a drivers license.

MARK

Whoever tried to kill us probably murdered Stan Goldstein. It means we're getting too close.

GRETCHEN

We certainly are. It's time we split up and I turned you in to the police.

She starts to walk away, when Sloan grabs her.

MARK

Wait -- you need immediate medical attention.

GRETCHEN

I'm not falling for that again.

Mark rolls up her torn sleeve to reveal a BIG LACERATION. She takes one look at it and faints into Mark's arms.

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Mark is stitching up her wound. She's looking away.

GRETCHEN

Sorry I fainted. I can't stand the sight of blood.

MARK

And that didn't disqualify you as an IRS agent?

GRETCHEN

Don't push your luck, Doctor.

That's when Jack ambles in.

JACK

There you are -- I've been looking all over for you.

GRETCHEN

You and God knows how many law enforcement agencies.

Jack motions Mark away.

JACK

Can we talk? Privately?

MARK

We can talk in front of her. I've got nothing to hide.

GRETCHEN

Except your private practice.

JACK

I didn't know you had a private practice.

MARK

I don't.

(then:)

What did you find out?

JACK

Nadine booked Goldstein on a flight to the Cayman Islands. One-way. A lot of my relatives do their laundry there, if you catch my drift

GRETCHEN

(realizing:)

I do.

MARK

What did Amanda learn from Joe Kove?

AMANDA'S VOICE

He told me if Stan Goldstein is your accountant, your cash is long gone.

They turn to see Amanda coming in.

AMANDA

Which is what you'd better be if you don't want to get arrested. The police just got here.

Mark looks distraught. Gretchen comes to a decision. She turns around and starts barking orders.

GRETCHEN

Don't just stand there, call the morgue for him and bandage my head.

And on Mark's confusion, we CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY – DAY

Claire is marching down the hall with a POLICE OFFICER in tow when she passes Jack and Amanda, who are heading the opposite direction. Jack is pushing a gurney with a body bag on it. Amanda is pushing a lady, her head wrapped in bandages, in a wheelchair.

CLAIRE

Where's Dr. Sloan?

JACK

Examination Room three, down the hall and to your left.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

As Claire marches on, Jack and Amanda rush the gurney and the wheelchair out the exit door.

EXT. HOSPITAL – DAY

Jack quickly unzips the body bag. Mark sits up out of the bag.

Amanda unwraps the gauze from Gretchen's face.

MARK

(to Gretchen:)

So you believe me after all.

GRETCHEN

I believe the sooner we catch the real killer the sooner I can nail you for tax fraud.

Mark is about to argue, but Jack gives him a push.

JACK

Go!

Mark and Gretchen dash off. Jack turns to Amanda.

JACK

Keep the police busy.

AMANDA

Where are you going?

JACK

Goldstein's place. Maybe I can find something in his files to tie him into Decker's insurance scam.

And as he goes, we CUT TO:

INT. SLOAN'S OFFICE – LATER

Claire and some officers, all wearing plastic gloves, search Sloan's office. Delores watches, horrified, from the outer office as Steve rushes in.

DELORES

Thank God you're here. Look what they're doing to Dr. Sloan's office.

STEVE

Don't worry, Delores. I'll take care of it.

He marches in, furious, and confronts Claire.

STEVE

That's it. This has gone far enough.

CLAIRE

It certainly has. Now your father is a fugitive from justice.

STEVE

Damn it, Claire, I've spent more time apologizing for that weekend than we would have had together if I'd made it. If you can't forgive me, at least forgive my father.

CLAIRE

If I wanted to get back at you, I would have reported your interference in this case to Internal Affairs a long time ago.

STEVE

Then what are you doing this for?

CLAIRE

It's my job. Now if you want to be a good son, tell your father to turn himself. He can only make things worse for himself.

That's when she discovers the SHEAF OF INSURANCE FORMS on his desk.

CLAIRE

Though not by much.

She holds the forms out for him to look at.

CLAIRE

Bunco has been on to Alan Decker for months. He stages accidents and gets his pet doctor to file false medical reports. Now we know who the doctor is.

STEVE

I'm sure there's a reasonable explanation for this.

CLAIRE

Of course there is. Dr. Sloan did the fake exams, Decker filed the phony documents, and Goldstein laundered the cash. Goldstein got greedy and was about to skip out with the cash. So your father performed open-heart surgery on him with a kitchen knife.

STEVE

That's insanity.

CLAIRE

He can plead it, but I don't think the judge will be fooled.

She drops the papers into an evidence bag. And on Steve's frustration, we CUT TO:

EXT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Jack creeps up the walk and, making sure there's no one around, forces the door open.

INT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Jack comes in quickly, closing the door behind him. He turns on the flashlight and heads straight for the filing cabinet. He slides open the "D" drawer and is reaching for the Decker file when

A DARK FIGURE

appears behind him wielding a fireplace poker. Jack sensing movement, turns around just in time to see the poker crashing down on him. He falls to the ground. The dark figure snaps on the lights, revealing itself to be Nadine.

JACK

What are you doing here?

NADINE

What are you doing here?

NADINE

I worked late and fell asleep. And it's a good thing I did.

She hefts the poker menacingly. Jack vamps.

JACK

No. It's a great thing.

NADINE

Let's see if you're still saying that when the police come.

JACK

Let them. I've got what I came for -- another look at the first person whose shown me any kindness since...

He lets his gaze drift over to the chalk outline. She throws down the poker and drops to her knees by him.

NADINE

Oh, you poor man. How you must have suffered.

She kisses him. Jack goes along -- it's better than getting hit with the poker again. That's when the door explodes open. Joe Kove stands in the doorway, muscles flexing angrily.

KOVE

That's nothing compared to the way he's gonna suffer.

NADINE

Joe!

KOVE

Nobody two-times Joe Kove. I thought you learned that when I took care of your boss.

JACK

Joe Kove is your boyfriend?

NADINE

Ex-boyfriend.

(to Kove)

Leave him alone.

Jack scrambles to his feet as Kove casually knocks some furniture out of the way.

KOVE

So you've heard of me.

Jack tries to back away, but there's not much backing room.

JACK

I'm your biggest fan. Did I mention what an honor it is to meet you?

KOVE

Great. After I'm done, I'll autograph your casts.

Kove flexes into kung-fu position and prepares to launch himself at Jack. Jack grabs the fireplace poker. Kove knocks it out of his hand with one swift kung-fu move. Uh-oh. Jack picks up a potted plant and drops it on Kove's foot, then uses the distraction to grab Kove's neck. Kove doubles over in pain.

NADINE

What are you doing?

JACK

Nerve pinch. Very simple. Incredibly painful.

KOVE

That's not fair!

JACK

Neither is a knife in the heart, but that didn't stop you from killing Stan Goldstein.

Nadine gasps.

NADINE

Joe killed Stan?

KOVE

No! I just roughed him up. Gave him the old spin kick to the chest. He was feeling no pain when I left.

Jack gives Kove's neck a squeeze. Kove squirms in pain.

JACK

Why should I believe you?

KOVE

The knife. Joe Kove does not use weapons. Joe Kove is a weapon.

Jack thinks about that, then lets Kove go.

NADINE

Not so fast.

She rushes over and grabs Kove exactly where Jack did. Kove writhes in pain.

NADINE

It's time to talk about our relationship.

And on Jack's smile, we CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL – HALLWAY – NIGHT

Delores motions Amanda to the phone.

DELORES

You have an urgent call from Dr. Kimble. He needs an assist.

AMANDA

Dr. Kimble? I don't know any--

(then, realizing:)

Ah yes, Dr. Kimble.

(takes the phone:)

Hello, Richard. Where are you?

INT. DANCE HALL – NIGHT

Mark is standing at a phone booth. In the BG, old couples dance to recorded, big-band music.

MARK

The Belle Reve Dance Hall.

AMANDA

Strange time to go dancing.

MARK

I'm hiding out, at least until you and Jack can come up with something that'll clear me.

AMANDA

Jack's working on it. As soon as he gets back, we'll head down there.

MARK

Thanks -- I appreciate it.

AMANDA

Watch out for the one-armed man.

Mark hangs up and makes his way to a booth, where Gretchen is sitting.

MARK

I want to thank you again for believing me. I promise I'll return the favor by sitting through the audit without raising a single--

Gretchen starts to cry.

MARK

What's the matter?

GRETCHEN

I'm ruined.

MARK

Are you kidding? You go out on a simple audit and end up clearing an innocent man of murder.

Now she starts to REALLY bawl.

MARK

What did I say?

GRETCHEN

For eight years I sat behind a desk, double-checking figures, begging for a field assignment. No, they said, she's too soft. She's too nice. Finally, they gave me an audit, a chance to prove myself... She looks at Sloan. Mark realizes...

MARK

I was your first case?

GRETCHEN

A return so riddled with fraud, even "Soft Serve" McCord couldn't screw it up. I was gonna break you like a piggy bank, just to show'em I could. And what happens?

MARK

You saw beyond the numbers on a tax return to the human being behind them. You let reason and understanding triumph over blind dedication.

GRETCHEN

Exactly. I'm finished.

MARK

Surely even IRS agents are allowed to be human.

GRETCHEN

You're so naive.

She looks away. Mark studies her for a moment.

MARK

Up until now, you've been a terrible pain-in-the-butt.

GRETCHEN

(brightens:)

Really?

MARK

Aggravating. Irritating. A living terror. Rotten to the core.

Despicable, even.

GRETCHEN

So there's hope for me?

MARK

Sadly, yes.

And on her smile, and Mark's, we CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION – NIGHT

Steve walks over to Claire's desk. She hangs up the phone and gives him a cool look.

STEVE

Claire, I --

CLAIRE

We've put an APB out on your father. He's wanted for questioning on insurance fraud, tax evasion, and murder. Any other information you can get from the Times.

STEVE

That's not what I --

CLAIRE

I've got work to do.

She gets up to go. He grabs her arm.

STEVE

Not until you hear me out.

CLAIRE

Great. We'll schedule a harassment hearing and you can say it all then.

She pulls away angrily. He yanks her arm, pulling her up against him. She struggles, but can't move.

STEVE

I was wrong to accuse you of using this case to get at me. I treated you like a jealous teenager, not like the competent professional I've always known you are.

She stops struggling a little.

CLAIRE

Is this a trick?

STEVE

It was only my own masculine ego that led me to presume you'd let your personal feelings interfere with your job.

CLAIRE

Really?

STEVE

I respect your professional accomplishments tremendously.

She melts in his arms. They kiss. She wraps his arms around him and slides her hands down his back. But he stops her before she can grab his butt -- and discover the paperback sticking out of his back pocket: HOW TO TALK TO WOMEN -- WHAT BABES WANT TO HEAR IN THE NINETIES. That's when an OFFICER calls from across the room.

OFFICER

Sloan! Telephone!

STEVE

I'd better take this at my desk.

CLAIRE

Only if you promise to come back.

Steve shares a look with her, then rushes to his desk and snatches up the phone.

STEVE

Homicide. Sloan.

MARK'S VOICE

Hi son, how's business?

Steve lowers his voice and steals a quick glance at Claire across the room as his whispers:

STEVE

Dad! Where the hell are you?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DANCE HALL – NIGHT

Mark is on the phone.

MARK

Well, I'm not sure I should say.

STEVE

You've got to stop running.

MARK

I can't.

STEVE

Why not?

MARK

People are chasing me!

STEVE

As long as you're on the run, you make yourself look guilty.

Meanwhile, no energy is spent investigating other suspects.

MARK

I'm investigating -- and Alan Decker is on the top of my list. I think he just tried to have me killed. Can you look into it?

Steve glances over to see Claire staring at him.

STEVE

That's one more reason to turn yourself in.

MARK

Sorry son, I can't do that.

I'll let you know what I find.

Sloan hangs up. Steve stares at the phone for a moment, hangs it up slowly, and comes to a decision.

INT. DANCE HALL – NIGHT – LATER

Mark and Gretchen are dancing.

GRETCHEN

This is a very strange audit.

MARK

It's not exactly what I expected either.

GRETCHEN

Chased by killers. On the run by police. Dinner and dancing.

MARK

This part isn't so bad, is it?

GRETCHEN

It's very nice. In fact, for the first time today, I feel comfortable, in control.

MARK

That's because you're leading again.

He tries to steer her in a different direction. She resists.

GRETCHEN

Who put you in charge of the dance?

MARK

It's tradition.

GRETCHEN

It's a stupid tradition.

Jack and Amanda show up.

AMANDA

Nice to see running from the law hasn't gotten in the way of your social life.

Mark and Gretchen, self-conscious, immediately part.

MARK

What have you found out?

JACK

Joe Kove and Nadine were lovers. Kove thought Goldstein was making moves on her, so he went over there to beat him up. Only Goldstein wouldn't come out of the house.

AMANDA

So Kove broke in, and gave Goldstein one of his famous spin-kicks. That's how Goldstein got the bruise on his stomach.

MARK

Which leaves us right back where we started.

JACK

With a dead accountant, a plane ticket to the Cayman Islands, and all the clues pointing to you.

MARK

(realizing:)

The plane ticket!

GRETCHEN

Don't get too excited, you can't write that off, either. It's not a business expense.

MARK

But it's a killer's confession.

CLAIRE'S VOICE

And I'll be glad to take yours right now.

Our heroes turn to find themselves surrounded by police, led by Claire Van Sickle.

CLAIRE

But before we talk, you should be informed of your rights. Steve?

STEVE

He knows his rights, Claire.

Steve steps out from behind her, a dour look on his face. Sloan is astonished.

MARK

You turned me in?

STEVE

Sorry, Dad.

And on Sloan's shock, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. DANCE HALL – NIGHT

Sloan glares at Steve.

STEVE

I knew if I stayed on Jack and Amanda, they'd lead me to you eventually.

MARK

How could you? You're my son.

STEVE

I had to -- it's for your own good, Dad.

MARK

I should never have let you play cops-and-robbers when you were a kid.

Claire takes Sloan by the arm.

CLAIRE

And now you're coming downtown with me.

McCord grabs Sloan by the other arm.

GRETCHEN

Not so fast.

CLAIRE

We're bringing him in for questioning.

GRETCHEN

Then you haven't charged him.

CLAIRE

Not yet--

GRETCHEN

Then our Federal Indictment takes precedence.

CLAIRE

What Federal Indictment?

GRETCHEN

Dr. Sloan plead guilty to income tax evasion.

STEVE

(to Mark:)

You did?

MARK

I couldn't live with the guilt.

GRETCHEN

(to Claire:)

You can have him when I'm through with him. Which will be in about 20 years.

(to Mark:)

Come with me.

She drags Mark away, and on everyone else's surprise, we CUT TO:

EXT. DANCE HALL – NIGHT

Sloan and McCord, handcuffed together, walk down the street and around the corner, out of sight of the police.

GRETCHEN

So, what's our next step?

MARK

You're going to finish your audit.

GRETCHEN

And what are you going to do?

MARK

Leave the country, of course.

And on her confusion, and Sloan's smile, we CUT TO:

INT. GOLDSTEIN'S HOUSE – DAY

Nadine answers the door, a cigarette in her hand.

NADINE

Yes?

Gretchen McCord flashes her ID.

GRETCHEN

Gretchen McCord. IRS. I'd like to talk with you.

NADINE

Sure. Come in. I was just boxing up all of Stan's records.

Gretchen comes in. Sure enough, the files are all going into cardboard boxes.

GRETCHEN

Well, you'd better start unpacking them. We have a lot of work to do.

NADINE

We?

GRETCHEN

Sorting all the files, examining each account, verifying and rechecking every transaction for the slightest irregularity. You're a vital member of the team.

NADINE

What team?

GRETCHEN

The prosecution. We can't build our case against Dr. Sloan without you. You're our key to unlocking the secrets of Goldstein's files -- and finding Dr. Sloan's motive.

NADINE

You think Dr. Sloan killed Stan? I don't believe it. Dr. Sloan seemed like such a nice man.

GRETCHEN

He never fooled me.

Gretchen heads for the door.

GRETCHEN

We start first thing tomorrow. I hope I can count on your full cooperation.

NADINE

Absolutely. It's the least I can do for Stan.

GRETCHEN

Thanks, I appreciate it.

Gretchen leaves. Nadine closes the door, mulling what she's learned. CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY (STOCK)

To Establish.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

TransContinental flight 223 for the Cayman Islands, now boarding at Gate Seven.

INT. AIRPORT GATE SEVEN - DAY

as Nadine rushes to the gate, holding her suitcases. The sign at the gate says "Flight 223 - Cayman Islands." She gives her boarding pass to the attendant and hurries on board.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

as Nadine hurries in, sticks her bags in the overhead bin, slams it shut, and settles into her first class seat. Whew. She takes a deep breath, and starts to light a cigarette. The stewardess politely admonishes her.

STEWARDESS

No smoking until we're in flight.

NADINE

Sorry.

Nadine puts the cigarettes back in her purse.

MAN'S VOICE

Does flying make you nervous?

Nadine looks up, shocked to see Mark Sloan sitting across the aisle, a smile on his face.

MARK

Or are you worried about going to prison?

NADINE

Dr. Sloan --

(then, getting a grip:)

You should be asking yourself that question, not me. You're the guy who killed him.

MARK

I didn't kill Stan Goldstein, you know that. You did. You admitted it the moment you booked him on this flight.

NADINE

Something wrong with Stan wanting to get a tan?

MARK

Stan Goldstein would never go to the Cayman Islands. Or anywhere else. He was agoraphobic.

NADINE

That's ridiculous. No one wears angora on the Cayman Islands. It's a tropical resort.

MARK

Agoraphobic. Stan Goldstein was afraid of open spaces.

NADINE

Maybe he was afraid of spiders, too. But we'll never know, unless he's speaking to you from beyond the grave.

MARK

Why do you think he worked out of his home, earned his degree through the mail, had all his food delivered, and sent you off for anything else he needed?

NADINE

Because he was a fat, lazy bum who thought I was his personal slave.

MARK

He was afraid to leave the house. That's why he wouldn't meet me at the hospital... and why he was talking to a psychologist who specializes in phobias.

(then:)

He wouldn't take a walk to the curb, much less a flight to the Cayman Islands.

NADINE

Maybe he was trying to conquer his fear.

MARK

Perhaps. But he would have done it from the non-smoking section. He hated cigarette smoke, remember?

Gotcha. She abruptly bolts for the door, only to find Steve Sloan and Claire Van Sickle blocking the way, Gretchen McCord and a uniformed officer behind them.

STEVE

You can forget about any frequent flier miles, Nadine. You won't be needing them where you're going.

The OFFICER takes Nadine away, the others come in to see Mark.

MARK

(to Gretchen:)

I think you'll find Nadine was the one skimming the accounts, not Goldstein. She booked Goldstein on the flight to make him look guilty -- instead, she did it to herself.

CLAIRE

I guess I owe you an apology, Dr. Sloan.

MARK

Not to me, you don't.

He motions to Steve. Claire reluctantly turns to Steve, who is grinning from ear to ear.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry, Steve. How can I ever make it up to you?

STEVE

I know this wonderful bed and breakfast on the coast...

Steve puts his arm around her and leads her away, leaving Sloan and Gretchen alone.

MARK

Well, that's that.

GRETCHEN

Not quite. There's still the matter of your taxes.

MARK

We just solved a complex murder. Can't the audit wait?

GRETCHEN

Sure -- I'm not the one paying the mounting interest and penalties.

MARK

Don't you think you're being awfully hard on me?

GRETCHEN

(flattered:)

You're just saying that...

And on Sloan and Gretchen walking off arm-in-arm, we DISSOLVE

TO:

EXT. DANCE HALL – ESTABLISHING – NIGHT

INT. DANCE HALL – NIGHT

Mark and Gretchen are dressed to kill, gliding across the dance floor.

GRETCHEN

All things considered, I think everything turned out very well.

MARK

Easy for you to say.

GRETCHEN

We recovered the \$30,000 Nadine skimmed from your account, didn't we?

MARK

Which will just about cover my \$30,000 tax bill.

GRETCHEN

See? Isn't that nice?

MARK

You know, you are the meanest, coldest, most vicious woman I've ever met.

GRETCHEN

You're just being a gentleman.

MARK

I even complained to your supervisor.

Gretchen kisses him on the cheek.

GRETCHEN

You're wonderful.

That's when we see Claire and Steve dance past them.

STEVE

(to Claire:)

You're leading again.

CLAIRE

(to Steve:)

You can't stand the idea of a woman being in charge, can you?
And on Mark and Gretchen sharing a smile, we FADE OUT.
THE END

\$ 16.

\$ 39.

\$ 58.

66.