

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE

C A S T

BARBARA HAMILTON

MRS. EMMA HAMILTON

DEBORAH HARVEY

JANICE HARVEY

MR. BENNET HARVEY

MRS. CLARICE HARVEY

TERRY JONES

ELLEN LEARNER

CHRIS MAYHEM

KURT PIERCE

ERNIE RISBECK

JIM TYLER

RANDY WHEELER

TEASER SCENE 1

EXTERIOR NIGHT IN FRONT OF A MODEST SUBURBAN HOME

The hand of a teen-age girl, DEBORAH HARVEY, pushes the doorbell of the home. The camera moves to her face. She is very pretty, but there is fear in her eye and she is breathing heavily. Impatient, she pushes the doorbell again and looks over her shoulder. The door opens and a middle-aged man appears. He looks puzzled.

DEBORAH

Excuse me, but can you help me? My friend and I had a fight and I need a ride home. I can't hitch. My parents are out so I can't call them. I saw your lights on...

From the MAN's point of view, we see a blue Pinto sedan to the left of the house. The parking lights of the car are on. The car is dark inside, but we can see a silhouette in the darkness.

MAN

(assessing the situation)

Sure, okay. I'll drive ya. Relax. You look nervous. I'll get you home safe.

CUT TO

TEASER SCENE 2

EXTERIOR NIGHT A DESERTED STREET IN A WELL-TO-DO NEIGHBORHOOD

A car stops in front of a very impressive house with a large front-yard. There are hedges that border the property of the house. Inside the car are DEBORAH HARVEY and the MAN who offered to give her a ride.

DEBORAH

You can let me out right here.

MAN

You sure you're gonna be okay now?

DEBORAH

Yeah, I'll be fine--my folks will be home any minute, Thanks alot for the ride.

From the front of the MAN's car, we see DEBORAH get out of the car on the passenger's side. There are a couple of cars behind the MAN's car. One of them is a blue Pinto with its lights out. Unlike before, there is no silhouette visible in it now. DEBORAH sticks her head inside the MAN's car.

DEBORAH

Thanks again. Just goes to show that once in awhile, you can trust strangers. Bye, now.

From the driver's point of view, DEBORAH crosses in front of the car. She steps onto the sidewalk and moves towards the space in the hedges where the path to the house is located. The hedges are about as tall as DEBORAH herself. We switch to DEBORAH's point of view. In front of us is a darkened path, hedges on either side. From the right a fist appears clutching a kitchen knife. The blade of the knife is long and it shimmers in the darkness, looming large in front of the camera. DEBORAH lets loose a blood-curling scream.

FADE TO BLACK

TEASER SCENE 3

EXTERIOR NIGHT DESERTED STREET IN A WELL-TO-DO NEIGHBORHOOD

Simultaneously, lights go on in the houses near DEBORAH's and people emerge running out of their homes. The MAN who drove DEBORAH gets out of the car and runs to DEBORAH. We hear a car door slam and see that someone has gotten into the blue Pinto. A man across the street reaches the body which is in a lump, the blood forming a stream running to the sidewalk.

NEIGHBOR 1

My God, its Deborah!

NEIGHBOR turns to MAN who drove DEBORAH. MAN is staring in disbelief.

NEIGHBOR 1

(in a panic, to MAN)

I'll take her. You follow that car. And get the license plate.

MAN gets back into his car. Blue Pinto zooms away. MAN follows but is obviously too far behind to be able to catch the Pinto. Various neighbors, all in shock, stare at the body being picked up by NEIGHBOR 1.

NEIGHBOR 1

In the name of the Lord, someone call an ambulance!

A woman moves from the crowd, running to her house. Camera pans the faces of all the neighbors, stunned, sickened by the sight of a bloody murder. The camera pulls away as we hear the ambulance sirens and see the red flashing lights.

DISSOLVE

ACT 1 SCENE 1

EXTERIOR DAY IN FRONT OF A HIGH SCHOOL

As the opening credits roll, we see students and teachers filing into the school for the first day of classes. We see them at ankle level and all of the students are wearing similar foot-ware: Roeboeks and Nikes, perhaps some top-siders. After seemingly endless amounts of the same shoes, a pair of pointy black ankle-high boots passes in front the camera. At this point, the camera moves up this person's body. She is wearing tight black jeans, a mustard-colored turtleneck underneath a black motorcycle jacket. Continuing upwards, we see that she is wearing much red lipstick and is chewing gum. Her look is defiant, different. Her hair is bleached blonde, long and teased in front, short everywhere else. This is TERRY JONES. The camera then moves behind her, following her up the steps of the high school. A group of girls is in front of her, making no bones that they are talking about her by pointing and gawking. As TERRY passes them, she sticks her tongue out.

TERRY

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but
words will never harm me.

CUT TO

ACT 1 SCENE 2

INTERIOR DAY HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

An assembly has been called first thing in the morning. Everyone is in attendance--all students, all faculty. The administrators are on the stage and the principal of the school, ELLEN LEARNER, is at the podium. At the right side of the stage is the American flag. MS. LEARNER is in her mid 30's, quite tall, and dressed conservatively, almost corporate-looking. She is an impressive, imposing figure.

ELLEN LEARNER

Good morning. I hope everyone has had an enjoyable and education summer.

As ELLEN LEARNER gives her speech, the camera moves about the auditorium, lingering on the main characters who are in attendance: JIM TYLER (the English teacher), RANDY WHEELER, JANICE HARVEY, TERRY JONES, and BARBARA HAMILTON.

ELLEN LEARNER

As we all know, there has been a brutal murder of one of our students, Deborah Harvey.

ELLEN LEARNER (cont.)

She was a marvelous young woman, a tribute to this community, this school and to our educational community. She was destined for greatness in the larger world and this is something all of us recognized. Not only did she score the highest in the English and History boards in the entire school but she was also Captain of the cheerleading team. And she was also a good-hearted warm person, extremely well-liked by students and teachers alike. It is very hard to believe that anyone could have hated her so much that they have done such an abominable act. We all suffer because Deborah Harvey is not here with us. We are left without a woman who would her mark in the field of her choice and the world is left without a woman who most certainly would have gone on to become a real leader. I would like a minute of silence in her honor so that all of us can reflect on the circumstances of her death and on our loss.

The auditorium is silent. The camera moves about the hall, showing many guilty-looking faces. The camera moves to TERRY who is painfully aware that she is being stared at by more than a few people. TERRY stands out as an island of black in a sea of preppie pink and blue. Close-up of her face as she closes her eyes trying to evade the stares. The principal resumes her speech as the minute of silence is over.

ELLEN LEARNER

I hope that in the next few days the murderer will come forward if he or she is among us now. I know already that there is much gossip and I don't want the rumour mill grinding out false accusations here. The police are involved and we will cooperate with them even if it means being taken out of class from time-to-time. I ~~can~~ only the criminal ^{can} come forward and confess so that all of us can return to our routines. Remember, withholding evidence is a crime as well. Whoever has any information whatsoever must give it to the police so they can successfully finish their investigation. That is the law and I know we are a law abiding group. I am in the business

ELLEN LEARNER (cont.)

of teaching, not of criminal investigations. You are all here to learn not to point fingers, not to trade false secrets. We cannot act as if nothing has happened but we must go on teaching, studying, exercising, growing. I will not have this school disrupted and I will not allow anyone to mistreat anyone else.

(She raises her voice)

It will not be tolerated here! I repeat, it will not be tolerated! Everyone here is innocent. Innocent, that is, until an official court reaches a verdict that someone is guilty. I remind that this is the basis of our justice system, and that too will be our motto here. Now I want all of you to report to your appointed homerooms. Let's hope this will be a calm, peaceful, and productive school year. Good day.

Everyone scrambles out of the auditorium, some whispering to their neighbor, already trading secrets despite the speech of the principal. Close-up of English teach, TYLER, who is frowning at the "cattyness" of the student body.

DISSOLVE

FADE IN

ACT 1 SCENE 3

INTERIOR DAY HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR

TERRY walks before us down the corridor, which is empty. RANDY WHEELER, wearing a varsity football jacket, pursues her. We follow him. He catches up, grabs her by the shoulder. Startled, she turns. The two are alongside a classroom door.

TERRY

Ah, my ole buddy Randy Wheeler. What's up?

RANDY

I want to talk to you, Terry.

TERRY

Yeah? What about?

RANDY

You know what about.

Randy opens classroom door.

RANDY

Come on. In here.

RANDY hustles her into the classroom. Closes door to view. Inside the classroom, we see the rows of desks, the blackboard with algebra problems on it, the teacher's desk. In the backround there are large windows with blinds up, views of the courtyard, and another wing of the building behind the courtyard. The lights in the room are out and remain so. RANDY sits on the front desk, TERRY to the left opposite him on the writing surace of a student's desk-chair unit.

RANDY

(angry)

Look, I've got to know the truth.
Everyone in town is saying--

TERRY

(interrupting him)

I know what they're saying. It's
a lie and you know it.

RANDY

(threatening)

Prove it, then.

TERRY

Guilty until proven innocent, right?
Well, I don't have to prove anything.
The police checked my alibi. They've
had months to find your girlfriend's
murderer, and they've turned up no-
thing. They even made me take a lie
detector test.

RANDY

That alibi sure was a good one. How
do I know you didn't get your boyfriend
to lie and say you were at this house
that night?

TERRY

What about Chris' mother? She was
there with us. She'd have every-
thing to lose if she'd done that,
wouldn't she?

RANDY

I don't know what she's like or what she'd do to protect you. I bet you're smart enough to fool a lie detector.

TERRY

Randy, I don't want to argue. I didn't kill Deborah and that's the truth. You've got to believe me, that's all.

RANDY stands up and walks to the window, looking out. We see what he sees--high school students in groups milling about in the quadrangle. We switch to a close-up of RANDY.

RANDY

I think I want to, but I don't know if I can. I loved Debbie. She loved me.

There is a PAUSE in the dialogue. TERRY follows RANDY to the window. We face the window, RANDY left, TERRY right. RANDY continues to look outside.

TERRY

I know this is a hard thing to say to you, but I heard something at the time. I heard that she was about to break up with you before she died.

RANDY turns to face TERRY.

RANDY

Who told you that?

TERRY

Then, it is true.

RANDY

I...I don't know why. We had a good thing. I remember the night before it happened. She called me on the phone, said she was breaking up with me. I asked her if there was another guy. She said no, but I always thought there was. She said she had to choose

RANDY (cont.)

what she wanted to do, who she saw,
and what she did, and that I never
left her any room to live.

TERRY

And you knew that she could have had
any boy in school, right? You never
let her out of your sight. You two
were always together, joined at the
hip, like Siamese twins.

TERRY stops for a moment and there is an awkward silence.

TERRY

If you were that jealous, and she
told you she wanted to see other guys,
then I think it looks like you had
more of a motive than I did. There
was no love lost between Deborah and
me; that's no secret. But if you
were convinced there was another
guy...

RANDY

ME? You can't be serious.

(RANDY regains composure)

RANDY

No, I see your trap, and I'm not
stepping into it.

TERRY

(backs down)

Okay, I don't really think you did
it. But you never know with killers,
do you?

RANDY

No, I guess you don't.

They stare at each other, surmising the situation.

RANDY

Yeah, it looks like someone in this
school is getting away with murder

RANDY (cont.)

and I want to know who. I owe it to Debbie. I feel responsible.

TERRY

You feel responsible? What happened?

RANDY

Nothing happened.

RANDY turns and looks out the window. Not looking at TERRY, he continues.

RANDY

Maybe I drove her away. If we had still been together, we might have gone out that night and...

TERRY

And it wouldn't have happened? You can't blame yourself or you'll be in as bad a place as I am. Look, I want to know who did it as well. Do you think I enjoyed having them all stare at me back there, whispering accusations? There's even a joke around--I hear they're going to put my picture in the yearbook with the caption: "Terry Jones, the girl most likely to get the chair."

RANDY

No?

TERRY

It's no joke to me. It just shows you what they're like. Its no wonder that I stopped hanging out with the well-scrubbed slime in this school. Slime is slime even if its been cleaned up, made pretty. A year ago, they even wanted me to join the cheerleaders. That's when I knew I didn't want to be one of them. Like Groucho Marx

TERRY (cont.)

I wouldn't want to be part of any club that would have me. I rejected them, I started to look different, and they've never forgiven me for that. I don't know if I trust you either, but I'll help you if you think you can find the murderer.

RANDY

Do you know what the girls were saying? Who was she, or rather, who might she have been seeing?

TERRY

Yeah, like I hang out with all the little cheerleaders. I'm a real regular on the slumber party circuit.

RANDY

You know what I'm saying.

TERRY

I wouldn't know for a fact, but they were saying that she was having an affair on you. And one or two times, after school, I would see her go into the classroom of a certain English teacher.

RANDY

Tyler?

TERRY

(sarcastic)

How did you guess?

RANDY

You think that she and he were...? I'll kill him.

TERRY

Debbie was a real winner, a glamour girl. She knew how to get people on her side, get just what she wanted. Besides a lot of girls have had crushes on Mr. Tyler.

TERRY (cont.)

Except me, of course. Even a young English teacher is too old for me.

RANDY

I'll see about Mr. Shakespear himself.

The bell rings for classes.

RANDY

Look, I've got to go to class. We'll talk later. You know what?

TERRY

What?

RANDY

I don't think you had anything to do with it.

TERRY

That's a first.

TERRY and RANDY smile at each other. They both move to leave the classroom. RANDY holds out his arm, playing gentleman, indicating that she should go first. Instead she moves behind him and gives RANDY a playful shove.

TERRY

Come on, let's get out of here.

CUT TO

ACT 1 SCENE 4

INTERIOR DAY HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR

We are in the hallway outside the classroom where RANDY and TERRY were talking. The door to the classroom is at the left, lockers and students at the right. A few students cross. Bell rings, same bell as in Scene 3. BARBARA SMITH is seen coming down the corridor. BARBARA is the quintessential mousey girl, awkward and shy. There are three or four young women, all better-dressed than she, who are behind her a few paces. BARBARA stops at her locker, turns the combination, and after failing to open it at first, she pulls the locker handle up and books and papers come falling out and scatter on to the hall floor. The young women stop and laugh at her as she rushes nervously to retrieve the papers and

pile the books beneath the open locker.

GIRLS IN HALLWAY

(making fun of Barbara)

Aww...look at poor Barbara, dropped all her books.

At this point, JIM TYLER, the English teacher, parts the crowd and kneels down to help BARBARA.

TYLER

Having a little problem, Barbara?

BARBARA

(Flushed with embarrassment and excitement)

Why, ah, I guess I am.

The GIRLS IN HALLWAY talk animatedly amongst themselves, all watching the movements of TYLER.

TYLER

Then let me help you.

GIRLS IN HALLWAY

Ooo, luck Barbara!

TYLER quickly scoops up the papers and places them neatly on the stack BARBARA has started. At that moment, the door to the classroom opens and TERRY and RANDY step out. They stop; awkward glances are exchanged between the two and TYLER (of whom they have just been speaking) TYLER stands up, brushes himself off, whiles BARBARA moves stiffly back into the small crowd to watch.

TYLER

Hello, Terry, Randy. Using the classroom for some sort of extra-curricular activities?

The crowd in back laughs. The bell rings again indicating that the next class is about to begin,

TYLER

Ah, saved by the bell. 'Tis pity, 'tis true, 'tis true, 'tis pity. I want to inform you all that you are late for class. A shame we have to break up

TYLER (cont.)

the party, but let's all go to our
appointed places.

The crowd disperses quickly in both directions. TERRY, RANDY, and TYLER leave to the right. The hall view is empty, except for BARBARA, who sighs and returns to her open locker, and quickly piles everything back in, having no time to organize any of it. Close up on her doing this and then fade.

Act 2 Scene 1

FADE IN

EXTERIOR DAY IN FRONT OF THE HIGH SCHOOL

It is the end of the school day. Students are filing on to yellow school buses, with the camera focusing on JANICE HARVEY, who is silent while all the others are noisy, jabbering away at each other. When the school bus that JANICE boarded is full, the bus driver, who shakes his head in disbelief at the incredible noise level, starts driving away from the school. The bus winds its way through the town. The town is very clean and scenic on this early fall day and the large houses seem very beautiful in the late afternoon light. The sidewalks are empty. This is seen from JANICE's point of view. Close-up of JANICE who is staring blankly at the familiar streets beyond the window as everyone is busy cavorting with one another. JANICE turns and her glance hits BARBARA, who stops talking to her neighbor and meets JANICE's glance. At this point the bus stops, the door opens and out walks JANICE, slowly, sloth-like. She walks up to the house which is the same house where the murder happened. From behind her, we see her pass the tall hedges, walking up the path that slices the well-manicured front lawn in two. She arrives at the front door, takes out her key, and opens the rather ornate door.

MRS. HARVEY

Janice, is that you?

JANICE

(quoting a Monty Python sketch)

You were expecting the Spanish Inquisition?

MRS. HARVEY

Janice, there is someone here I want you to meet.

JANICE

Oh, a new uncle?

Janice walks through the entryway. The living room is at the right, sunken. From her point of view, we see MR. and MRS. HARVEY on the couch, the father with his arm around his wife.

CLARICE HARVEY is very prim and proper, but has red around the eyes as if she has been crying. BENNETT HARVEY is in a business suit. There is a man, KURT PIERCE, very goodlooking, not much more than 30 years old, sitting on an armchair across from the Harvey's.

MRS. HARVEY

Janice, this is Mr. Kurt Pierce.

PIERCE looks her straight in the eye and stands up.

PIERCE

Pleased to meet you.

JANICE

(Reluctant, yet intrigued
by Pierce)

Hi.

MRS. HARVEY

Mr. Pierce has agreed to help us find out who killed your sister. I hope you'll be nice to him.

JANICE

What do you mean, help us? Out of the goodness of his heart?

MR. HARVEY

No, Janice, he is a Private Investigator.

JANICE

(angry)

What's the matter? The police aren't good enough for you? What can he possibly do? I know who did it, the whole town does. This is ridiculous. Why don't they just lock her up?

PIERCE

Terry Jones might well have committed the murder, Janice. But the police seem unable to come up with conclusive information that would lead to her arrest. That's why I'm here.

PIERCE (cont.)

And if Terry Jones didn't do it, I'll find out who did.

JANICE

And what do you know? You look more like an actor playing a Private Eye than a real one. How much are they paying you?

MRS. HARVEY

Janice, one doesn't ask such questions. We need his help. We need to know who killed her. We need to be sure that it was Terry Jones. The president of your father's firm recommended Mr. Pierce. He is not some stranger, nor is he an actor. He is a professional person offering us his services and for that we have agreed to pay him.

JANICE turns and begins to leave.

JANICE

I know who did it. Are you going to raise my allowance if I get the right evidence?

JANICE leaves the living room and up the stairs beyond the foyer.

CUT TO

ACT 1 SCENE 2

INTERIOR DAY BEDROOM IN HARVEY HOME

JANICE slams the bedroom door. The slamm reverberates throughout the house. Inside the bedroom, the room is full of stuffed animals, more like a child's room than a teen-ager's. JANICE moves on to the bed and begins to sob. She clutches her favorite teddy bed. As she lifts her head up, we switch to her point of view, and we see a framed photo of her dead sister on the night table.

JANICE

(sobbing)

God, Debbie, even when you're dead you get more attention than me. Do you

JANICE (cont.)

know that? You've still got control
over me.

JANICE picks up the framed photo and throws it against the
wall. The glass shatters loudly.

MRS. HARVEY

(yelling up from the living
room)

Janice, are you okay?

JANICE

(collecting herself)

Yes, mom. I'm fine. I just dropped a
glass. That's all. I'm fine.

CUT TO

ACT 2 SCENE 3

INTERIOR DAY HARVEY LIVING ROOM

CLARICE HARVEY is talking, BENNETT HARVEY is silent. Detective
PIERCE is attentive, taking notes in a small notebook.

MRS HARVEY

She used to light up this house. She
really did. Sometimes I still think
that she and Janice will be coming
home together from school, laughing
and kidding with one another, talking
about boys, chattering about teachers.
I can almost still hear her voice. But
instead, its Janice, coming home alone,
half-dead herself, walking like a zom-
bie. You see--I'm still a naive person--
I just can't think that anyone could be
capable of doing such horrible things
to my daughter.

(she begins to cry)

I don't mean to boast, Mr. Pierce, but
my daughter was very special.

PIERCE

I'm sure she was. Looking at her report

PIERCE (cont.)

card, I can see she was an excellent student, on the honor roll, taking all sorts of Advance Placement courses.

(he pauses)

I know this is a very typical detective question but did she have any enemies that you know of or anyone that had any reason to do her harm?

MRS. HARVEY

No. No one.

MR. HARVEY

Well, I heard her talk about how much she dislike that Terry girl.

MRS. HARVEY

Everyone hates her. The whole school. The whole town.

PIERCE

Did she ever receive any strange or threatening phone calls?

MRS. HARVEY

No, she used to have her own phone. She'd spend hours on the phone with her girlfriends. I always used to hear her laugh on the phone in the evenings. It was amazing that she had enough time for her studies.

PIERCE

Did she have a boyfriend?

MRS. HARVEY

Yes, she was going out with that wonderful young man, Randy Wheeler. He's captain of the football team and surely on his way to Harvard or Yale. He's from a good family--I'm on the board at the Historic Society with his mother and Bennett works with his father.

MRS. HARVEY (cont.)

The four of us used to joke around and say that our two eldest children were sure to get married. The two of them have known each other since they were kids.

PIERCE

Were they getting along recently?

MRS. HARVEY

Oh yes. Randy had given her a ring. They were officially going steady.

MR. HARVEY

Well, actually Mr. Pierce, she did confide in me that things weren't that great. See Randy was always suspecting that our daughter was dating someone else. She told me it wasn't true but nothing she could say or do would convince him.

MRS. HARVEY looks shocked.

PIERCE

(directing his question
to Mr. Harvey)

When did she tell you this?

MR. HARVEY

About a week before it happened. I was home early from the office and she came home alone and she looked very upset. We talked. She told me she thought it might be best for them to break up.

MRS. HARVEY

What, you never told me this!

MR. HARVEY

She didn't want you to know. You've been planning their wedding since she was six years old.

MRS. HARVEY

(to Pierce)

But he'd never do anything like that.
He's a good boy. Besides that witness
could've sworn that it was a girl.

PIERCE

It was dark out. And these days, with
everyone wearing short hair and high
school girls also being athletes, its
so hard to tell.

MR. HARVEY

Randy was always getting into fights
when he was a kid.

MRS. HARVEY

(to Mr. Harvey)

Wait a minute. I will not have you bad
mouth Randy Wheeler. He's almost a
member of this family. He did not kill
our daughter. I sware to you it was
that Terry.

PIERCE

(almost angry)

You hired me to find the murderer, not gather
evidence against Terry Jones. If she did
the murder, fine. I'll find that out. If
she didn't, I'll find that out too. But
please, allow me to conduct this invest-
igation unhindered by your hunches and
prejudices.

DISSOLVE

FADE IN

ACT 3 SCENE 1

EXTERIOR EARLY EVENING A SIDEWALK

TERRY JONES is walking home, carrying her books, wearing the
same outfit we saw her in earlier. The camera is in front of
her, keeping the same distance as she moves. We hear the sound
of footsteps behind her. She begins to look scared. We see her
pointy black boots, then the black shoes of the footsteps.
The footsteps get louder. TERRY begins to quicken her pace.
She looks frightened. Switch back to the pair of black shoes
and now they are running.

PIERCE

Wait a second. You don't have to be scared.

TERRY stops and turns. She sees KURT PIERCE.

TERRY

Why shouldn't I be scared. When I hear a pair of footsteps behind me, I start to run. This town ain't as safe as it looks. Who are you?

PIERCE

Kurt Pierce, private investigator. And you, judging by your appearance, must be Terry Jones.

TERRY

Yeah, I'm Terry Jones. What of it? There are a million other Terry Jones is this world.

PIERCE

I'm investigating the murder of Deborah Harvey.

TERRY

I had a feeling that's what you're doing. If you show me some ID, I'll let you come into my house so we can talk.

TERRY leads PIERCE into her house, which is the next house on the left. She opens the door which was left open and brings them into the living room which, like the Harvey's, is on the left hand side. TERRY's house, however, is not as fancy.

TERRY

Sit down then.

PIERCE takes off his coat, throws it over the back of the couch and sits, as does TERRY.

TERRY

I know who hired you, so let's not pretend. If the Harvey's sent you here to catch me in their net, you can tell them that I know that I don't have to

TERRY(cont.)

talk to you if I don't want to. I am only doing it to prove I have nothing to hide.

PIERCE

You don't really like them very much, do you?

TERRY

You mean did I hate their daughter? No. Not hate. I wasn't fond of her, but I didn't want her to die. There's more important things to hate. I'm not as complicated as I look.

PIERCE

I'm not so sure about that, you look like more of the type that gets her feelings out in view.

(Pierce pauses)

Let me allay any fears you might be having right now. I've done my homework, and it looks like your alibi checks. Two people were with you that night and are willing to testify to it.

TERRY

Then just why are you here--to do the hatchet work of Deborah's parents and the rest of them who want me arrested?

PIERCE

Okay, keep being suspicious. It's a survival skill some of us pick up sooner than others. My job is to find out all I can about this case. To do that, I need your help. I don't want to see any more innocent victims suffer for this crime. Least of all you.

TERRY

Why are you worried about me?

PIERCE

Because I've heard that you're the town's prime suspect, and frankly I can't agree with that judgement.

PIERCE(cont.)

Not only that, but you seem to be a kind of mental wall that no one can get over. Everyone I've talked to today suddenly stops after a few questions and says: "Why are you talking to me. Go see Terry Jones; see what you can get out of her." It looks like my biggest problem. The sooner I've convinced people that you've got nothing to do with the murder, the sooner they'll remember what they're forgotten. So, here I am.

PIERCE smiles. RANDY studies him, sees he is sincere, and relaxes a bit.

TERRY

You're the second.

PIERCE

Second what?

TERRY

The second person who's said they believe I'm innocent. If this keeps up, I'll be popular in a week's time. I don't know if I could stand that, having done my best to avoid it.

PIERCE

So, got anything for me?

TERRY

Funny, I was just thinking about something I told someone else. About hearing that Deborah was having an affair. But rumours fly like vampire bats around that school, drawing blood where they can. Today I guess I said too much myself. No end to suspicion lately.

PIERCE

No. Don't make any accusations until you have the proof. At least not in

PIERCE(cont.)

public. With me, however, you can say anything you like and be certain it will go no further.

TERRY

I told Randy, Deborah's boyfriend, the big captain of the football team, that I saw her go into Mr. Tyler's room a couple of times after school. The English hall is where I have my locker. Then, after I told him that, we saw Mr. Tyler. We were coming out of an empty classroom and he was picking up that stupid Barbara Smith's books for her. He asked us if we were using the room for extra-curricular activities. Such a funny man. But he's a real sleaze. He makes me skin crawl.

PIERCE

A teacher and a student. That's a pretty serious charge. Definitely keep quiet about that. But if there's anything to it, then it looks as if he was carrying on some extra-curricular activities of his own. You think the rumour is true this time?

TERRY

I don't know. People are weird. Especially in this town. I don't know what to think. You think that most of them are just boring and usual, then they turn around and get vicious for no good reason like Doberman Pinchers. That's what scares me. Anybody might have killed her, even the Principal. She might have been seeing Mr. Tyler herself, for all I know. For a long time I thought Randy might have killed her. He looked like he had a reason. And he's the tough jealous type. But when we talked, he seemed as confused as I am.

PIERCE

So far no good. I need more to go on.

TERRY

What about Barbara Smith. She was the one he was helping. She let her papers fall out of her locker, just like her too. A real spaz. She wants to be liked by everyone. But there was no way they would let her into the cheerleader set. She didn't have the natural grace, and certainly not the money. Still, she showed up eagerly at every semester's tryout-- I'm sure she'll be there tomorrow too. I pity people like her. I was like that for awhile. I went and tried out. I made it too.

PIERCE

(pretending to be
astonished)

I never would have guessed. What happened to change your mind?

TERRY

I saw how stupid it was. I was supposed to be on the rah-rah squad for a bunch of overgrown boys running from opposite sides of the field, smashing into each other, going CRUNCH!!! When I pictured myself with those little skirts and pom-poms, I started laughing. I couldn't go through with the whole show. So fake. What was left? I had to get out of that whole status-conscious social scene, or there would be nothing left of Terry Jones. I'd just become some removable attachment to some football player's ego.

PIERCE

That's one way of looking at it. But you must have known you were slaughtering the sacred cow. How did it feel to be such a notorious woman?

TERRY

Fun, for a little while. I liked shocking them. It was so easy.

PIERCE

Were you happier?

TERRY

I don't talk about happiness. I don't even think happiness matters.

PIERCE

Then what does?

TERRY

It matters that I've been more satisfied that I was doing what I wanted. I have a boyfriend, you know. We have our own friends. People like us. We go into the city and see bands. Hang out. Its the kind of social life I like. And no one in school knows who I'm with and what I'm doing.

PIERCE

At least you're not a recluse. I know that it hasn't been easy in a town like this, where any difference is suspect. The people you alienated must have started talking about you, huh?

TERRY

Yeah, and it's tuned into an all-out war on me in this town.

PIERCE

I'm sure the head of the cheerleaders had a lot of sway on social opinion. So it must look like you had a reason to hate her to the rest of them. That's why they've turned on you, if I figure it right.

TERRY

I never looked at it that way. I suppose so.

PIERCE

Let me see what I can do to make your life less complicated. If the police chief had done his job, he would have

PIERCE (cont.)

have stopped the blame from falling
on you. As it stands, I have to ask
you to hang in a while longer, until
I can solve this case.

TERRY

I'll try, but I don't know if I can.
All eyes are on me wherever I go. And
the police don't have a clue.

PIERCE

I ask you--does it look like I don't have
a clue.

TERRY takes a moment to study PIERCE. He is sharply
dressed, conservative, yet stylish, and exceeding charming.

TERRY

Well, you're not a cop.

PIERCE

At least I get some credit.

TERRY and PIERCE trade smiles. PIERCE gets up from the couch.

PIERCE

I've got to get back to my books.
I'll talk more with you later. Stiff
upper and all that.

TERRY rises to show him to the door.

TERRY

You're the first private eye I've
met that I've ever liked.

PIERCE

And I bet I'm the only one you met.
Most people think we only exist in
movies.

They laugh as PIERCE walks out of the house, towards the street.
PIERCE turns to TERRY as he is walking.

PIERCE

Now, Terry--don't give them any more
rope.

DISSOLVE

FADE IN

ACT 3 SCENE 2

INTERIOR DAY POLICE CHIEF'S OFFICE

The office is plush, with expensive furniture, nice curtains, and carpeting. Through the vertical blinds from the main office, we see KURT PIERCE sitting across the desk from ERNIE RISBECK, the police chief. At first their voices are muffled and then the camera moves to a close-up of PIERCE.

PIERCE

I would like to know exactly why this case has been such a problem for you.

RISBECK

Well, we don't get too many murder cases in this town, especially ones that apparently have no motive.

The camera moves back and forth, moving from RISBECK's perspective to PIERCE's.

PIERCE

Without motive? You mean you think some stranger picked Deborah Harvey up and drove her around. Then, after she went to the house of the man who drove her home, this unknown followed that car, ran up to her house in time to lie in wait.

RISBECK

Stranger thinks have happened.

PIERCE

Right, and you think as well that Deborah would have gotten into a car with a total stranger.

PIERCE

Well she went up to the house of a total stranger.

PIERCE

Flawless logic.

RISBECK

I only know that we don't have any more leads to go on.

PIERCE

There isn't much you do know around here, is there? Least of all proper investigatory procedure. I suppose you went over the stories taken down after the murder and checked every alibi? At least you've done that, right?

RISBECK

We checked all the alibis that we thought necessary. The rest we confirmed with polygraph tests. They showed that all the kids questioned, while nervous, were telling the truth.

PIERCE

You mean to tell me you did not check the alibis?

PIERCE is astounded. In response, RISBECK is getting more and more defensive.

RISBECK

Like I said, the polygraphs showed...

PIERCE

I don't care what some damn machine showed. I don't care what "expert" interpreted the pretty little graphs. I do care that a girl who's story does check is being blamed for the crime. But I suppose that's no concern of yours. You're far too busy tallying up parking violations.

With this, PIERCE picks up the graph of RISBECK's desk with the legend "Parking Violations" at the bottom and the last six months in column in a line at the top. Close up of the police chief's reaction.

RISBECK

I don't think you have any right to come in here and criticise the workings of this department.

At this moment, a very well-dressed woman storms into the office, grasping a handfull of parking tickets. RISBECK and PIERCE stare at her in disbelief. When she reach the chief's desk, she rips the tickets up and lets them fall on to the desk.

WOMAN

You don't really expect me to pay these do you? Tell your men to stop trying to accessorize my car with this worthless paper and save us both the trouble, huh.

The WOMAN turns and leaves, exactly as she came in, unannounced.

PIERCE

You can't mean that no one is allowed to criticize your mishandling of the case. What about Deborah's parents. What have you been telling them? "I don't have anything to tell you about your daughter but I can show you some fantastic charts that prove the existence of a villainous illegal parking gang."? I'm sure they'd love to hear about the confetti that landed on our your desk this morning, as well.

We see both of them in profile from the side of the desk, their noses almost meeting over the desk. RISBECK stands up.

RISBECK

That was uncalled for. We've done all we can.

PIERCE

That's what you keep saying. And what I find hard to swallow. Well you might as well sit back, because I'm in this to the end. And I want access to all documents, all witness accounts, all statements made to the police, or I'll have Mr. and Mrs. Harvey get a court order to compel you to. And frankly, I don't think your job could stand the heat of the press.

RISBECK

(dazed, he pauses)

Wait a minute. All right. You'll get what you need. But you'll have to use the records here while we're open.

PIERCE

And have you monitor my calls and then then take credit when I solve the case?

PIERCE (cont.)

Not on your life. I intend to use the documents, data, even the pretty graphs from the lie detector tests, everything...after this place is closed. Furthermore, I intend to use your office to do it. Don't worry--I won't make a mess. And if I do, I'll clean it up. Are we clear?

RISBECK stares back, mouth open, then sinks back into his chair.

RISBECK

Clear.

CUT TO

ACT 3 SCENE 3

INTERIOR DAY CLASSROOM

From the English teacher, MR. TYLER's point of view, we see the students sitting in the chairs. RANDY WHEELER is in the center of the desks. The bell rings and all the students scramble out of the classroom, except for RANDY who remains in his seat, staring impassively.

From RANDY's point of view, we see TYLER gather up papers to leave. Papers in hand, he notices RANDY and stands up straight.

TYLER

Yes, Randy what is it?

From TYLER's point of view, we see RANDY.

RANDY

Mr. Tyler, there is something I have to talk to you about.

TYLER

Yes and what would that be?

TYLER has moved to sit on the front of his desk. We see TYLER left, RANDY right.

RANDY

I kind of hear a rumour going around.

TYLER

And just what kind of rumour did you hear?

RANDY

It's pretty serious. I don't even want to talk about it, but it's about you and Debbie.

TYLER

I'm not sure I'm getting you.

RANDY

They said you were seeing each other after school.

TYLER

Are you sure you heard that correctly?

RANDY

Somone said they saw her going into your room after class.

TYLER

Let me see if I have this right. I suppose by "seeing each other" you mean having an affair.

RANDY

You know exactly what I mean---don't try to get around me.

TYLER

I was only trying to clarify the subject of our dialogue.

RANDY

I want you to answer the question. Were you or weren't you?

TYLER

No. That's as clear as I can make it.

RANDY

But she did come in here after school.

RANDY is quite upset at this point.

TYLER

Listen, calm down a little Randy. Yes, she did come in to talk to me on several occasions. As you know, I ask

TYLER (cont.)

any student having personal problems
to feel free to talk to me about them.
Many teachers do, and I guess she felt
that I was someone she could trust.

RANDY

But what possible personal problems
could she have been having?

TYLER

I'm not sure that I should tell you.
The discussions were in confidence.

RANDY

I have a right to know.

TYLER

I think you do know already.

RANDY

I've got to know if she was...

RANDY stops in mid-sentence.

TYLER

And during your relationship wasn't that
always the question? Whether she liked
someone else? Whom she was with when she
wasn't with you. On and on. Did you ever
pause to consider she might have wanted
some time to herself? Did you ever begin
to recognize that jealousy is a very cruel
way to show affection? Did you want to
love her or to possess her outright?

RANDY

Is that what you talked about?

TYLER

I wouldn't say, but...

RANDY

(sulkily)

I don't see what went wrong, even with all
you've told me. It's not like I'm dif-
ferent from the other guys. If you love
a girl, you're not supposed to let her go.
That's how it is.

TYLER

No, that's not how it is--that's what it becomes. Not love anymore, just holding onto someone else because you don't see what else to do. Until the grip becomes a stranglehold and neither of you can breathe. Am I making any sense to you?

RANDY

I guess you must be, but I couldn't see it then and if I had, I don't know. I haven't seen anyone who knows a way out of that.

TYLER

Like fate, perhaps?

RANDY

How do you mean?

TYLER

I don't hold with the idea of inevitability. If you don't see a sign that says "this way out of the trap" then you've got to find it on your own. No matter how hard it seems. You can't blame your mistakes on the fact that no one else does much better. Most relationships fail when people stop listening, stop making any effort. No, it's not easy. You've suffered a great loss, more than a mere high school break-up. I'm sorry. I know that I've given you a lot to think about. I hope you can handle it.

RANDY stands up.

RANDY

Its kind of hard to take all at once. But I'm glad I know. I should never have doubted her. She was one of the best people I'll ever know. I miss her. It hurts to know.

TYLER

I know. We have all lost something.
Keep going on, though, if not for
yourself, then for her.

RANDY

To Debbie.

The two smile, and shake hands. RANDY leaves the classroom.
TYLER leans back against the desk again, a worried expression
on his face.

TYLER

Yes, Randy, I know how you feel.

ACT 4 SCENE 1

INTERIOR DAY HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR

TERRY JONES is fiddling around with her locker. She seems unable to get the combination right in order to open it. After trying a couple of times, she finally succeeds in opening it. From her point of view, we see a 10 inch long kitchen knife. Then we see her face in complete shock. She looks to see if anybody is around. Although there are students in the hallway no one seems to have noticed her. She quickly closes the locker.

TERRY is running down the corridor. Everyone in the hallway stops and stares at her. RANDY is one of those watching.

RANDY

Terry, what's wrong? Why are you running?

TERRY

(keeps on running)

I'll tell you later.

TERRY turns and reaches the administrative office of the school. Outside of the Principal's office sits a secretary, bespeckled, who looks like an old-fashioned school marm.

TERRY

(panting)

Is she in there?

TERRY indicates MS. LEARNER's office.

SECRETARY

Yes, but she is in a meeting. And she is not to be disturbed.

TERRY

Consider her meeting interrupted.

TERRY opens the door without knocking. From her point of view, we see the Principal, MS. LEARNER sitting behind the desk and KURT PIERCE sitting on a chair on the other side of the desk. Both are shocked by TERRY's bold entrance.

TERRY

(still out of breath)

There's something you got to come see. Both of you. I opened up my locker for the first time this semester and you wouldn't believe what I've found.

TERRY (cont.)

A knife. About ten inches long. From what I can tell, it looks like its supposed to be the murder weapon.

PIERCE

(jumping out of his seat)

Let's go.

MS. LEARNER gets up. The three of them walk briskly out of the office. SECRETARY stares after them, befuddled, shaking her head.

TERRY

I swear to God, someone's trying to frame me for this murder. And I don't like it.

MS. LEARNER

(to Pierce, as Terry walks ahead)

And that someone must have known that the police were planning on examining all lockers after school today to look for clues.

DISSOLVE

EXTERIOR DAY FOOTBALL FIELD

From a distance we see the final play of high school football practice. We move in by means of a path. We hold as KURT PIERCE enters from below. Our view has been his point of view. Players emerge from the field in small groups. PIERCE lets them pass, and waits to their left.

Closer in, PIERCE stops one of the players.

PIERCE

Are you Randy Wheeler?

RANDY WHEELER stops, breaks from the line to face PIERCE.

RANDY

Yeah. Who wants to know?

PIERCE

I'm Kurt Pierce. I'm a private detective. I've been hired to look into --.

RANDY

So, you're the one they got. I knew the Harvey's were looking.

PIERCE

So much for confidentiality.

RANDY

What do you expect? It's a small town.

RANDY looks PIERCE up and down, judging him.

RANDY

You want something from me, or is this a social call?

PIERCE

(Winces)

Can you give me any background on Deborah Harvey?

RANDY

I don't know if I want to go into our personal thing. That's something I'm working out on my own now.

PIERCE

Then do you have an idea of any enemies she might have had? Someone in the past that had trouble with her? You might know something no one else would.

RANDY

Nothing that serious. The usual likes and dislikes. You see, everybody loved Debbie. She might have been the president of the class this year.

PIERCE

Seems the school has chosen its own suspect. What do you think?

RANDY

Look, I don't know anything about that. Mr. Pierce, I think you've got all you're going to get.

PIERCE

Not so fast. About your alibi --.

RANDY

(Rising to full height.)

What about it? I was at a party. There were witnesses.

We switch to close-ups of each during the rest of the dialogue.

PIERCE

I don't mean to put you on the defensive, but we both know what parties are like. You go outside for whatever reason. No one notices or cares. You come back, and it seems you've been there all along, right?

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE (4, 2 continued)

RANDY

I don't get this. Who the hell do you think you are, anyway?

PIERCE

But you do know where Terri Jones keeps her locker?

RANDY

Oh yeah. What do you want me to say? That I caused what happened today? That I murdered my girlfriend? No. And Terri didn't do it either. But you can't get away with what you're pulling here.

RANDY points his index finger and taps PIERCE'S chest.

RANDY

I've got to get showered and changed. If you have any more of your questions, I'm sure you'll find me, okay?

We see the two together in one view again.

PIERCE

(Slight shrug, steps back)

Okay, but if you think of anything else.

RANDY

Yeah?

PIERCE

You can forget it; let it go on like it is. Or you can help me out. I just want the truth, that's all. I work late into the night at the Police Chief's office. Here's the number.

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE (4,2 continued)

PIERCE hands RANDY a piece of paper from his jacket pocket.
RANDY takes it.

RANDY

All right. I'll see you later.

PIERCE

Sure, later.

RANDY WHEELER stalks off. Full view of PIERCE watching him go. He has a wary expression. He turns to his left as if to go, then halts, seeing something in the distance. He registers surprise.

CUT TO

ACT 4 SCENE 3

EXTERIOR DAY LOWER FIELD OF SCHOOL

From KURT PIERCE'S point of view, we see Terri emerge from the back of school. Turning to our left a bit, we see a group engaged in cheerleader try-outs.

We switch to TERRI JONES' perspective, heading up another path that draws alongside the try-outs. The CHEERLEADER HOPEFULS, in their own short skirts, holding pompoms, are lead by the HEAD CHEERLEADER, in full uniform.

CHEERLEADER HOPEFULS

S-U-C-C-E-S-S ! That's the way to
spell SUCCESS! Our team's great,
our team's good. Our team's
coming to your neighborhood!

We stop approaching as TERRI moves before us.

TERRI

(muttering)
Oh, brother!

She hesitates before going on, then does. She draws alongside them, and they stop as one. The HEAD CHEERLEADER follows their glances, and swings to confront TERRI.

HEAD CHEERLEADER

Hey look, guys. It's the girl most likely to get the chair.

The bunch laughs. Terri says nothing, makes a start back up the sidewalk.

HEAD CHEERLEADER

Hey, Terri, off to the local jail or what? I know you're going to love the fashions there. Uniforms, short hair. They're very punk, you know.

TERRI

(Tensing, and turning)

Leave me alone. All of you!

We switch from Terri's point of view to the HEAD CHEERLEADER'S in the next segment.

CHEERLEADER

That isn't what you did to Janice's sister, is it?

JANICE HARVEY, now seen in the pack, draws back.

CHEERLEADER

You didn't leave her alone, did you?

TERRI

Look witch, I have better things to do with my time than slice up fluff-heads like you. Besides, whoever the murderer is, they've got a thing against cheerleading captains. So I'd be scared if I were you.

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE (4,3 continued)

JANICE HARVEY steps forth. We are in a wider view now.

JANICE

Are you calling my sister a fluff-head?

TERRI

(faces her)

Look Janice, I'm very sorry about what happened to your sister. I really am. Debbie and I were best friends in junior high. You remember that the three of us were always together. Since then we went our separate ways. But you have to believe I didn't kill her. That detective Pierce even believes me. He may get fired for it. All of you better tell him what you really know, so we can know the real murderer.

Terri turns back to the HEAD CHEERLEADER. Face to face again.

TERRI

And speaking of crime, I could take you to court for libel. Although I don't think you know what that means.

HEAD CHEERLEADER

You don't fool me for one minute. You're a killer, and you're free to stomp around this school like you own it, looking like some kind of freak.

JANICE moves in from the left and behind CHEERLEADER. Facing us she now forms the far apex of a triangle, dividing the two in confrontation.

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE (4,3 continued)

JANICE

(to the CHEERLEADER)

Hey, ease up. Leave her alone for now. Okay?

HEAD CHEERLEADER

What do you mean leave her alone? She's the one that killed your own sister. My best friend.

JANICE

(Raising her voice)

I said leave her alone. I can't take hearing any more of this.

TERRI

(To JANICE)

Thanks, Janice.

CHEERLEADER moves back a bit. The triangle opens up a bit and the CHEERLEADER HOPEFULS move in and disperse around JANICE and HEAD CHEERLEADER.

TERRI

(To CHEERLEADER)

Can't you see that all this is upsetting Janice?

CHEERLEADER relaxes pose. TERRI addresses whole group.

TERRI

Well, guys, I take it I won't be seeing any of you down at AWOLS tonight. Too bad you'll miss the Circle Jerks.
(laughs to break tension)
And, oh, there's Barbara.

BARBARA HAMILTON in the group, shifts uneasily.

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE (4,3 continued)

TERRI (continued)

Back for another vain attempt to make the squad? Well it's good to see that all of you still got the old team spirit. Even if you all do like a bunch of Barbie dolls.

BARBARA HAMILTON

(Tenses at the joke, says in a low voice heard in the silence)

That murderer.

The others glance at her, then all focus on TERRI, upset with her picking. Deprived of the last word, TERRI stops smiling. She looks away. In close-up, we see tears form in her eyes.

HEAD CHEERLEADER

(Faces group)

Okay, guys. That's enough. Now let's get back to work. All right?

The next cheer starts.

We turn to watch TERRI leave. She walks up the sidewalk toward a car pulled up to the curb of the parking lot. CHRIS, her boyfriend, is sitting on the hood. We follow her a bit, then pause and hold.

From behind, the muffled cheer begins.

MOVE IN ON

ACT 4 SCENE 4

EXTERIOR PARKING LOT OF SCHOOL DAY.

TERRI reaches CHRIS at the car. He sits on the hood. The car is a vintage mustang convertible. CHRIS is also 'punk' looking, with short jet black hair and a leather jacket. Despite his rather severe clothing, there is a gentleness in his face and in his pose.

In the background, as we cut to a view of TERRI approaching, we see cheerleading resume.

CHRIS

You look upset. What happened over there with that bunch?

TERRI

They wanted me to give them my famous beef stroganoff recipe. Naturally I refused.

CHRIS

Come on, Terri, what did they do?

TERRI

The same accusations I've been getting the last two days and the same ones I'll probably get tomorrow. Hey, can we drive somewhere? I can't go home like this. I need somewhere far away from this school.

CHRIS

Sure, let's go to the 'park.'
The gang will be there I bet.

TERRI

Great, let's get out of here.

DISSOLVE TO

ACT 4, SCENE 5

EXTERIOR SUNSET ROADWAY

From behind we see the car driving through a wealthy part of town. The mustang turns into a not-so-nice district. In the sound background we hear the song "Wild Thing," version by X. This comes up to full volume. We then make a jump into the car's back seat, profiling TERRI's face, which is strong but upset and tired. Soon they are in the 'run-down' section, with old warehouses and abandoned factories.

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE (4,5 continued)

We look out from the window of the back and the windshield, as if we were in the place of a passenger. Twilight casts the scene in ghostly relief. The car stops at an abandoned industrial park with very large impersonal grey cinder-block buildings. The song ends. Chris turns the car off.

There are more than a few cars outside.

CUT TO

ACT 4, SCENE 6

EXTERIOR INDUSTRIAL PARK TWILIGHT

We are at a point outside the car. There are quite a few young people, all dressed in dark colors. Many have brightly colored hair, one or two with mohawks. A young black man with bleached white hair gestures, leader-like, to the group around him. Others are in smaller blocs.

CHRIS and TERRI get out of their car.

CHRIS

Look.

(Pointing at the black man)
Jimi dyed his hair.

TERRI

It looks absolutely fabulous.

The two exchange greetings with the group. There is a 'boom-box' playing Run- D. M. C.'s "It's Like That" in the sound background. Some dance. A meeting-place of outcasts.

TERRI

Chris, I want to talk to you. Can we go somewhere a little more private?

CHRIS lights a cigarette.

CHRIS

Sure. (Pointing) Over there somewhere.

TERRI and CHRIS walk away from the crowd.

JIMI

Off for a little romantic stroll through
the industrial wasteland?

CHRIS

You bet.

We follow CHRIS and TERRI, and they evade us by ducking behind
a building. We take up a position in the alley and watch them.
The streetlights in the park draw angular shadows across the pair.

CHRIS

So, what's up?

TERRI

Brace yourself, it's bad. I found
the knife in my locker today.

CHRIS

What the hell!?

TERRI

Someone planted a knife in my locker.
It's easy to bust in with a screwdriver
or something. Whoever did it knows
that I hardly use the stupid thing
and probably knew that the police
were planning a general search after
school.

CHRIS

Oh, my God! The bastard. What did
you do with it? Did you touch it?

TERRI

No, that's just it. I ran and got
Principal Learner. The detective
was there, Kurt Pierce.

CHRIS

I guess you did the right thing.
What else could you have done?
What did they think?

TERRI

I know Pierce thinks I'm innocent.
And Ms Learner, you know. She follows
the prevailing winds. Of course it
got out. Spread like sewage from
a jammed toilet. They all think
they know I'm the killer. Even after
that assembly where the principal
told them to lay off. They all
stared at me. It was like the Inqui-
sition.

And just before I saw you, the Head
Cheerleader pushed me until I broke.
Even that creepy little Barbara joined
the 'murderer' chorus.

And I'm a vegetarian and do all this
animal rights work. I'm committed
against violence. Do they see that?
They see the outside and hate me
for not being another carbon copy
of themselves.

CHRIS

Who cares what they say? They've
got to play their little games. I
mean, what else are they? You've
got a lot. Your pride, the truth
and me on your side.

TERRI

I know. I know it. But you try
living with their eyes on you
every minute, everywhere you go.
It's like the walls of the building
are watching me and it's scary.

TERRI (continued)

I look at them and all I see is hate. They pass notes and whisper in class and the teachers don't even notice. I showed up their stupid little pretenses. I have some of the best grades in my class. I could have been a better cheerleader, a better athlete, than any of the others. If that was what I was into.

I just could care less about pompoms and short skirts and bouncing around like a damn fool, crazy about some overgrown monkeys banging their heads together on a football field.

CHRIS

So, why don't you change schools. Go to my school. I'm on the nine-year plan or something. We'll graduate together. Or withdraw for a while until this blows over. Just get the hell out of there before you go out of your mind.

TERRI

That'll make it look like I really did it. I've got to fight this. I have to find out who the killer is. Chris, Debbie's parents have already tried and convicted me, despite what they say. The police could arrest me. All they need is a case and they're getting one. The Harvey's are very powerful in this town.

CHRIS

But I'm your alibi. You were at my house, with me and my mother. If they won't believe me they have to believe her.

TERRY
(Continued)

Chris, Debbie's parents have tried and sentenced me. They're very powerful in this town. They could get me arrested.

CHRIS

Nevermind that. You've got an alibi. You were with me. My mother saw you there.

TERRY

Come on Chris. We know the facts don't matter when they want to get you. A jury could believe, be made to believe, that both of you lied to protect me.

CHRIS
(Tenses, his motions agitated)

Terry. You have to stop thinking like this. The police know a killer doesn't hand over the murder weapon.

TERRY

Maybe. Maybe they think I wanted it to look that way. I know what the kids think.

CHRIS
(Places a hand on her shoulder)

You can't let them get to you. If you're going to fight, then you have to be strong.

TERRY

I know. I can't help it. It's like a witch trial. The town won't rest until they see me on the stake going up in flames. They'll probably roast marshmallows and sing campfire songs.

TERRY starts to cry uncontrollably after a burst of sad laughter. CHRIS moves in and holds her. CLOSE-UP of CHRIS, almost in tears himself. TERRY looks up after a moment and sees this. They hold each other tighter.

CHRIS

Don't worry, Terry. I won't let them do anything to you.

TERRY

I don't know what you can do to stop them. If you stay with me through this, I know I'll be all right. That's all I need now. Will you?

CHRIS

You got it. Through all that happens, I'll be here.

TERRY

Hey, we're smart people. We can defeat the killer, and prove the whole town wrong. We can show them, can't we?

CHRIS

(Close-up, looking off a bit, unsure, trying to sound sure)

You bet we will. You must believe it, Terry. Oh, Terry. You and I are gonna make it through this, just like we've made it through the lies and hate and fear all along. We're gonna win, and we'll stay together. You'll see. You'll see.

TERRY

Chris. I believe you. Now, just hold me for a while.

We move back to frame them embraced in the shadows.

FADE OUT

A CRIME OF INNOCENCE

ACT 5 SCENE ONE

EXTERIOR NEXT DAY, SHOPPING CENTER, CENTER OF TOWN.

BARBARA HAMILTON and HER MOTHER are sitting in a car. The car is a mid- to late-70's Impala beginning to look rusted and worn. MRS. HAMILTON is in the driver's seat. BARBARA sits next to her, chewing gum, idly reading a space-age superhero comic book. We move in to watch the pair through BARBARA'S window, which is open.

MRS. HAMILTON

Barbara, must you read such trash?

BARBARA

Sorry, Mother. But this one's my favorite.

MRS HAMILTON

Just as long as you keep on reading the Bible, my child. The words of Our Lord are truly the only words to live by. Read them over and over and you will know how to live right.

BARBARA

Yes, Mother.

MRS HAMILTON

Now, you stay here while I pick up the groceries. I won't take long.

BARBARA

All right Mother.

From a front angle we see MRS HAMILTON get out of the car. She is dressed in grey and brown clothes, drab and timeless. From BARBARA's point of view, we see her walk into the supermarket. Then we look down to see BARBARA's hands flip the page of the comic book.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

INTERIOR SUPERMARKET CHECK-OUT LINE.

Fluorescently bright. Inside we take in an isle or two of the supermarket turning to MRS HAMILTON at the express line. In front of her in the line is MRS HARVEY in subdued, well-made clothing.

MRS HAMILTON

Excuse me, Mrs. Harvey?

MRS HARVEY

(Turning, startled)

Yes? Can I help you in some way?

MRS HAMILTON

I'm Sylvia Hamilton. I met you at a PTA meeting last Spring. I'm Barbara's mother. I sat next to you, remember? .

MRS HARVEY

Why, yes. I remember.

MRS HAMILTON

I just wanted to tell you how sorry I was about your daughter. Barbara was a class-mate of hers. I'm sure Deborah was wonderful and precious to you, as Barbara is to me.

MRS HARVEY is obviously annoyed. People on the line are noticing the two women.

MRS HARVEY

(Haughtily)

Yes, my Deborah was indeed a treasure. I don't remember her speaking of your daughter, however.

MRS HAMILTON

Oh yes, they knew each other well.
They both had an interest in cheerleading.
Barbara was never picked to be one,
but she --.

MRS HARVEY

Yes, Well, Deborah was the captain of
the football cheering squad.

MRS HAMILTON

(Out of the blue)

Remember, God can help you in these
times of distress and grief. I just
wanted to say I know your daughter
is safe in heaven.

The line moves up. Mrs. Harvey places her gourmet foods on
the conveyor belt. Perrier water, et cetera.

MRS HAMILTON

.. (Continuing awkwardly.)

You must realize that Debora is an angel
now, sprouting wings. I know. Do not
hesitate to call on the one above for
support and guidance. You'll see.
He will remind you of the way.

MRS HARVEY

(Now quite disturbed)

Thanks for the tip. I'll keep it in
mind.

(She pays the cashier and picks up her bag.)

Goodbye now, Mrs. Hamilton.

MRS HAMILTON places her items on the conveyor belt. Cat food,
mayonnaise and white bread. We turn to watch the stylish MRS
HARVEY hurry out of the supermarket, into a waiting dark BMW.
We turn back to see MRS HAMILTON take her groceries.

CUT TO

MRS HARVEY at the wheel of her car, in the lot.
Close-up of her deeply worried expression. She wipes a
tear from her eye with the back of her hand, reaches down,
and starts the car.

DISSOLVE TO

MRS HAMILTON asking for and getting Green Stamps, which she places in her bag;and leaving. Her CHECK-OUT GIRL turns to the one behind her as we look on from an angle. They exchange a glance and continue to work while talking.

CHECK-OUT GIRL #1

Boy, that woman sure was weird.

CHECK-OUT GIRL #2

Oh her? Yeah. That's Barbara Hamilton's mother.

CHECK-OUT GIRL #1

Oh. Too bad for Barbara.
Hey, did you see that new movie...

CUT TO

Barbara's hands, tightly gripping the color-filled comic book pages.

DISSOLVE TO

ACT 5, SCENE 3

INTERIOR FINE RESTAURANT, THAT EVENING.

From a view of ELLEN LEARNER'S hands on a glass filled with white wine on a white tablecloth, we open the frame to take in ELLEN LEARNER AND KURT PIERCE at a simple, elegant table. In the background we see more of the same. Dim light and candles set the tone.

ELLEN LEARNER

Kurt, I'm glad you asked me here. It gives me a break from the school's problem.

KURT PIERCE

Problem? More like a major crisis.

ELLEN LEARNER

Oh Kurt, don't start. I suppose I should have expected it, going out with a private detective.

KURT PIERCE

What else do I have to think about?

ELLEN eyes him oddly.

KURT PIERCE

(Continued)

Strike that. Still, you know, I keep returning to Terry Jones. I don't see how she handles the pressure.

ELLEN LEARNER

Don't forget that she's still a suspect.

KURT PIERCE

Come on Ellen. You saw what I saw. The real killer is setting her up.

ELLEN LEARNER

I thought you were supposed to be cool and objective. Believe me when I tell you that Terry is a very smart girl.

KURT PIERCE

So smart that she'd put the knife in her locker, then bring us to it? Is that smart, stupid, or just plain crazy?

ELLEN LEARNER

None of the above; just possible. After all, she knew about the locker search.

KURT PIERCE

So did half the school, I suspect.
Some kid hears two guards talking and
in an hour the rest know.

ELLEN LEARNER

I can't help wondering, 'what if she
had done it?' If she wanted to fool
us all the way, by planting the weapon
in her own locker at the absolute worst
moment to do so, she would make herself
seem the least likely suspect. The
reaction from her peers would be harsh,
but more than compensated for by throwing
off the investigators.
It's something no one in their right
mind would do. At least, so it would
appear.

KURT PIERCE

Convoluted logic, but I admit that it's
dimly possible. I don't see that kind
of deviousness in her, Ellen.

ELLEN LEARNER

We all tend to underestimate her.
I think that is how she came to be
an outcaste. Who knows how far that
process of alienation went? How much
does she trust any of us, do you think?

KURT PIERCE

(Shifts uneasily, framed in our view)

Can I make a plea for her alibi?

ELLEN LEARNER

That's worth what a jury might believe.
The boyfriend and his mother are too
close, too interested to seem reputable.
I'm not saying anything against them,
of course.

" KURT PIERCE
(Caves in a bit)

You present a good case. I am going on instinct here. I think you know that.

I see what you're saying, but I can't believe that Terry had any connection with the murder. She's so much the bad magician's forced card. So far the trick has fooled the audience.

The waiter arrives with water. We change our main perspective to view them from the other side of the table.

KURT PIERCE
(Relaxing)

Now, I suppose, we actually change the subject, and get to order dinner.

They order. We break from the two to note the bar area to the front of the restaurant. Dim figures are seated there. We draw back again and notice that ELLEN is looking now in that direction, away from us.

CUT TO

A view of JIM TYLER, finishing a drink at the bar. He stands, turns and retrieves his jacket from a coat rack. He notices the two across the room. After a moment of hesitation, he starts toward them.

CUT TO

A closer view of ELLEN and KURT as TYLER unsteadily enters the background.

ELLEN LEARNER

Kurt, don't look now; but Jim Tyler is here and coming this way.

KURT PIERCE

I seem to remember that name from the files.

ELLEN LEARNER

You should. He's the Chair of the English Department at school.

KURT PIERCE

(turning to look at the man.)
And slightly drunk, by the looks of things.

JIM TYLER

(appears at the table)

Good evening, Ellen. I thought I'd say a brief hello before leaving.

ELLEN LEARNER

Hello, Jim. I'd like you to meet Kurt Pierce. And Kurt, this is James Tyler of the English Department.

(The two shake hands and mutter pleasantries.)

ELLEN LEARNER

(continued)

Jim, Kurt is investigating the Harvey case.

TYLER

I have heard. Case proceeding well? The school was in total chaos today after the discovery of the lethal weapon that we assume was used in the murder. I really should change the readings to modern suspense novels. The kids can't seem to focus on poetry and classics.

KURT PIERCE

(Dryly.)

No wonder.

TYLER

I suppose that you're used to the darker side of human nature. I only see it through the lens of literature. Who knows? The killer, cloaked in black, may be stalking the hallways of the school as we speak, plotting ever more fiendish crimes.

ELLEN LEARNER

(Takes a sip of wine and puts the glass down.)

Jim, let's not overdramatize. Mr. Pierce is here to take a break, can't you see.

TYLER

Perhaps he gives that appearance. Yet we all know that the true sleuth never rests until he has his man. Or woman. Right Ellen?

(She shifts uncomfortably.)

TYLER

(continued)

Yes, who would suspect the mild-mannered English teacher. Does he have a secret Mr. Hyde lurking within? Is the sweetly innocent Principal really a Harpy out to do in her charges? Who knows our pasts?

TYLER

(continued)

Has one of us spent years in prison?
Escaped and assumed a new identity?

ELLEN LEARNER

That's quite enough, Jim.

TYLER

What, something to hide? Think of it,
Mr. Pierce! You could be having dinner
with a modern Lucretia Borgia. Or listening
to the words of a Jack the Ripper.

KURT PIERCE

(Standing to full height).

I think that you'd better go now. You're
upsetting Ellen with no reason to. And you
don't amuse me either. Go home and sleep it
off. If you remember what you've said, you
can apologize to Ellen in the morning.

TYLER

(Backs off a step or two.)

Okay. I guess it's best to leave what is
frightening, but possible, unspoken. Sorry,
Ellen. Mr. Pierce...I wish our meeting had
been more pleasant. Good night.

KURT PIERCE

And take a cab home.

TYLER

More good advice. I'm inundated with it tonight.

We watch, with ELLEN and KURT, as he goes. We move in to
the two again, but the intimacy is broken, they sit back rather than
lean in, and don't let their eyes meet often.

KURT PIERCE

Would you mind telling me what brought that
attack on? If he's got a violent nature,
I would like to know about it.

ELLEN LEARNER

Jim Tyler just gets into some bad moods, you see.
Nothing dangerous that I've witnessed.

KURT PIERCE

How well do you know him, then?

ELLEN LEARNER

Kurt, I would rather not talk about Jim Tyler.
I think I see our dinner approach.

KURT turns to look as a waiter approaches.

CUT TO

A frame of ELLEN LEARNER'S hand on her wine glass, fingers tapping, subtly nervous.

FADE OUT

ACT 5, SCENE 4

EXTERIOR NIGHT HARVEY HOME.

A Car pulls up into the Harveys' driveway. After a moment,
KURT PIERCE gets out. Glances at his wristwatch.

KURT PIERCE

10:30 and they're still up. Must be watching
some snooty British program on public television.
(Goes into an accent) And dow we come to
episode eight hundred forty-seven of "Where
Has Our Empire Gone?"

He walks up and rings the doorbell.

CUT TO

INTERIOR OF HOME.

The HARVEYS, including JANICE, are watching, in fact, some
drawing room drama on tv.

DOORBELL RINGS.

MRS. HARVEY

Who would interrupt such a dramatic moment
as this? Janice, will you see who it is.

JANICE

(Goes to window near front door,
a few steps up the staircase, and
looks out from an angle)

It's Mr. Pierce.

MR. HARVEY

Well let him in, Janice. If you don't mind,
that is.

(He gets up, as does MRS. HARVEY).

KURT PIERCE enters, says a hello to JANICE, and looks up.

MRS. HARVEY

(moves toward him)

At last! You know, I have been trying to reach you for days.

KURT PIERCE

(walks to her. She clasps his hand.)

Good evening, Mrs. Harvey. I hope I've not come too late. Evening, Mr. Harvey.

MRS. HARVEY

Nonsense. But I assume you must have some news. At least, I hope you do.

KURT PIERCE

(Shifts uneasily)

I would like to speak with you for a moment.

MRS. HARVEY

Certainly. Janice, don't you have some homework to finish? I'm sure you do. Now run upstairs. I'll tell you all about it in the morning.

JANICE makes a move to protest. Seeing that her mother will not back down, she frowns and departs up the stairs. The other three step into the living room. As MR. HARVEY is heard offering KURT PIERCE a drink, which is declined, JANICE appears again at the top of the stairs, creeping down to take a position out of view from the living room.

KURT PIERCE

(Motions them to sit, which they do.)

I don't know if my news is real news or not. I just wanted to give you some sort of progress report. (pauses) I seem to be narrowing down the field of suspects. I have an idea that I will know the truth in a day or two.

MRS. HARVEY

Surely you must have some, well, favorite among them.

KURT PIERCE

I do, but I would rather not say.

MRS. HARVEY

I hear you've questioned Teri Jones extensively. Tell me, did she elaborate on her cooked-up alibi?

KURT PIERCE

As I said, I would rather not name names. But let me be more forceful. Either I solve the case by tomorrow evening, or I will have to admit defeat. And that I've never done in any investigation.

MR. HARVEY

I don't know what to say...

MRS. HARVEY

My husband and I trust your judgment in this. I ask that you do all you can. Mr. Pierce, can't you see that we have nowhere else to turn? You've done so much. Made the police work harder than they had been.

MR. HARVEY

We want you to know that we appreciate your efforts. We know that you will find the killer, because you have to. Right, dear?

MRS. HARVEY is no longer involved in the conversation, staring at the photo and reminders of Deborah in their place of the room. We follow her gaze and frame these images for a moment.

We note KURT PIERCE observing MRS. HARVEY, suddenly still and serious. He realizes what he must do for the sake of this family, as never before.

KURT PIERCE

(Gently stepping back.)

Mr. and Mrs. Harvey. I've got to get back. You have my promise that I'll do all in my power. You can reach me at the police chief's office. Call me if you need to.

MR. HARVEY gets up and takes him to the door. We notice Janice looking out, concealed at the top of the stairs now.

MR. HARVEY

(in low tones)

You see, my wife is taking this pretty hard, again. All these memories stirred up, when she was just getting over her grief.

KURT PIERCE

Don't feel you need to apologize. (draws a breath) Mr. Harvey, you'll have your answer. Goodnight.

MR. HARVEY

(opening up the door to let him out)
Goodnight, Mr. Pierce. We'll be waiting to
hear word from you.

KURT leaves. MR. HARVEY closes the door and moves off toward
the living room.

We see JANICE creep quickly, stealthily, down the stairs.
She turns to make sure she has not been seen, then slips out the door.

CUT TO

ACT 5, SCENE 5

EXTERIOR NIGHT, HARVEY HOUSE

Front view of the house. Facing us, PIERCE is leaving the door.
He walks down the path to the driveway, grave.

JANICE steals out of the house and runs down to him. She
catches him on the shoulder. He starts at this, and wheels
to face her. We cut-in to see the two, seeing his reaction
change from startled, to perplexed.

JANICE

I have to talk to you, Mr. Pierce. I know
who the murderer is.

KURT PIERCE

You know, Janice; you shouldn't eavesdrop.

JANICE

How did you know--?

KURT PIERCE

I didn't, not for certain, until you admitted
it.

JANICE

You're pretty smart.

KURT PIERCE

You're not so dull yourself. Now, what's
this all about?

JANICE

I, I think I know who killed my sister.

KURT PIERCE

All right, what did you happen to overhear?
And if you say the name Terri I'll lose conscious-
ness right where I'm standing.

JANICE

No, not her. I think it was that psycho boyfriend of Debbie's. You know, Randy.

KURT PIERCE

(Indulging her)

Oh yeah?

JANICE

You don't believe me. That figures. No one pays any attention to what I say around here.

I heard Randy and Debbie arguing one day just before it happened.

KURT PIERCE

You don't miss much, do you?

JANICE

I got home from school early. They came in and thought they were alone. Debbie sounded upset. I think she wanted to break up with Randy. Anyway, he said: 'I swear I'll kill you if I find out you're seeing someone else.' And Debbie screamed back: 'Don't you threaten me.' Then Randy stormed out of the house. What about that?

KURT PIERCE

Janice, people say things they don't really mean when they argue. You know that. Even if it were the case, he would only have a motive if Deborah was actually discovered by him with another guy. Was that the situation?

JANICE

(Hesitates, thinking)

I don't know. That no-neck Randy followed her around like a little dog. But she was so popular. She had to do things without him. She talked on the phone with a lot of people, and sometimes she'd go and study with friends. Some of them were boys. Hey, what if Randy just saw something he thought looked wrong. He wanted to believe the worst about Debbie.

KURT PIERCE, close in, gives a pondering look. He can't completely dismiss what she is saying.

KURT PIERCE

Okay, Janice. I'll check into what you're saying. And I suppose you'll have a new suspect for me tomorrow. I think that you miss your sister no matter what rivalries you might have had.

JANICE

Mr. Pierce, I loved my sister...

KURT PIERCE

I hear a 'but' there. You felt some resentment toward her. She was always winning awards, being popular. I suppose you were in her shadow all the time. That hurt you, didn't it?

JANICE

(Alarmed)

What are you talking about?

PIERCE

Deborah wasn't easy to live with, was she?

JANICE draws back, alarmed by the implication. At this moment we see the door of the house open. MRS. HARVEY is framed in the light of the entryway. The yellow outside light goes on.

MRS. HARVEY

Janice? What are you doing out here? Come inside this instant.

She walks down the steps.

MRS. HARVEY

(continued)

Mr. Pierce, I am sorry about this. Come on, Janice. Don't just stand there.

Janice, closer view, casts a sly and wary glance at KURT PIERCE.

JANICE

Good night Mr. Pierce.

Wider view again, JANICE turns and walks toward her mother, glancing back one more time.

JANICE

(Continued)

Coming, Mom.

As KURT sees it, the two are going up the steps, MRS. HARVEY scolding her daughter. They go inside. The light outside goes off. We see him stand, looking at the house, a dark silhouette. He swings to face us, walks down the walk slowly to his car.

FADE OUT.