

DIAGNOSIS MURDER

"Beached Blonde"

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

It's dawn over Santa Monica Beach...the FISH SHANTY RESTAURANT... and a LIFEGUARD TOWER. WENDY HEWITT, 20s, stands on the shoreline between the restaurant and the lifeguard tower, stripping off her sweats to reveal a tight bathing suit. California doesn't get any more California than this.

Her beautiful figure isn't lost on

THE HANDSOME LIFEGUARD
in his 20s, wearing his red swimsuit,
watching her from the tower.

BACK TO SCENE

And she knows it, shooting a glance and a smile at him before running into the water and diving headlong into the waves.

If the water is cold, she certainly isn't showing it. She cuts into the water with an enthusiasm and confidence of an experienced swimmer.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

As she swims towards camera, we can see the Handsome Lifeguard walk down the tower toward the shore, watching her.

Suddenly, she grimaces with pain, seized by an agonizing cramp. She lets out a frightened yelp as another spasm hits her.

THE HANDSOME LIFEGUARD
seeing her struggle, charges into
the water.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Wendy looks back desperately at him, struggling to keep her head above water as she's seized by cramps.

The lifeguard cuts through the water toward her, his RED LIFEGUARD FLOAT trailing behind him. Her fear dissipates as he nears her, and she reaches out to him.

He smiles reassuringly, takes her hand, and then suddenly grabs her head with his other hand and SHOVS HER UNDER. His grin disappears. And as we push in on his GRIM RESOLVE, the sounds of her struggle wane, and we FADE OUT.

END OF TEASERACT ONE FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - EARLY MORNING

A tranquil, peaceful sea, creating a mood that's ruined as soon as the CAMERA PANS to the shore, where POLICE and CORONER vehicles are haphazardly parked. STEVE SLOAN rises up from a crouch beside Wendy's body and heads toward the lifeguard tower, where a handsome lifeguard has his back to him, talking to a POLICE OFFICER.

LIFEGUARD

...by the time I got her ashore, she was already dead.

STEVE

Do you know her?

The lifeguard turns around, and we see it's not the one we saw before. JAKE "RIP" McCORD, 20s, is just as ruggedly good-looking, but a lot more grief-stricken.

RIP

She swims every morning. We never actually met.

STEVE

Did you see anyone on the beach?

RIP

No -- but that doesn't mean there wasn't anyone here.

(guiltily:)

I was studying late last night. I'm working towards an MBA.

Steve glances into the lifeguard tower and sees textbooks, papers, and about a dozen styrofoam cups of coffee (Winchells, Fish Shanty, etc.). Steve sighs wearily.

STEVE

It's too early in the morning to expect me to read between the lines. Frankly, it's too early to expect me to read anything at all.

MANS VOICE

It's as clear as the lifeguard insignia on his shorts. Rip McCord was asleep.

Steve turns to see LT. BUCK DENTON, 30s, a husky, tanned man in a perfectly creased LIFEGUARD UNIFORM, standing in the sand. Beside him is ELECTRA, 20s, a stunning figure squeezed into a one-piece lifeguard swimsuit that's thankfully one size too small.

BUCK

On my sand.

Steve glances at Rip, who cowers a bit.

RIP

I dozed off. Only for a minute. Maybe two.

BUCK

And it cost Wendy Hewitt her life.

STEVE

(to Buck:)
You knew her?

BUCK

I make it a priority to know everyone on my sand.

He shoots a grim glance at the body bag and blinks back a temporary emotion as he strides up the tower to Steve and Rip.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Lt. Buck Denton. LA County Lifeguard. Wendy Hewitt is -- was -- a freelance journalist and top-notch swimmer. She shouldn't have drowned.

STEVE

Are you suggesting some kind of foul play?

BUCK

I'm suggesting a lifeguard didn't do his job.

RIP

It was an accident, I--

BUCK

Lifeguard's don't have accidents, people do. That's why we're here. To save them.

(then, disgusted:)
But you wouldn't know about that.

STEVE

(low, to Buck:)
Now's not the time.

BUCK

Yeah, now it's too late.
(to Rip:)
Turn in your shorts. You're fired.

RIP
But I need this job.

BUCK
Not as much as Wendy Hewitt needed
you.

Buck pins him under a stern gaze. Rip starts down the ramp,
weak-kneed.

STEVE
You didn't have to be so hard on the
kid. He's carrying enough guilt as
it is.

BUCK
There's no room for mistakes when
your job is saving lives.

Rip wavers, then FAINTS, tumbling down to Electra's feet.
Steve rushes down to Rip.

STEVE
(to an officer:)
Call an ambulance!

Buck marches down the ramp and around them. He stares out at
the sea.

BUCK
(to Electra:)
Take him to the hospital.

Buck peels off his shirt.

BUCK (CONT'D)
I'll man this tower.

And on Buck's grim determination, we CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Jack talks to Electra, who wears a small pair of red shorts
over her Beachwatch bathing suit. It's sort of like wearing
a G-string over a thong.

ELECTRA
Mention lifeguards and most people
think of some sleepy jock with white
stuff on his nose hitting on high
school girls. But we're much more
than that.

JACK
So I see.

ELECTRA

Everyone in Beachwatch is there for one reason: To save lives. It's all we think about, from the minute we pick up our cans in the morning until we peel off our suits at night.

(off his dreamy look)

Sorry. When I start talking about saving lives, I can't stop.

JACK

No, it's fascinating. Especially that part about peeling off your suit...

BEHIND A PRIVACY CURTAIN

Mark Sloan looks over an EKG as Jake "Rip" McCord sits dejectedly on the examination table.

MARK

The good news is, your heart looks fine.

RIP

And the bad news is, that woman isn't. She died because I fell asleep.

MARK

Let's take this one problem at a time. Have you been under a great deal of stress lately?

RIP

No more than usual.

MARK

And usual is...?

RIP

There's my lifeguard job, of course. And my night job managing a video store. Studying for my MBA, which will probably be useless because no one's hiring, which will leave me with thousands of dollars in student loans.

MARK

I see.

RIP

I'm still looking for a place to live, since my girlfriend announced she'd met a new guy and he was moving into our apartment.

MARK

Uh-huh.

RIP

Which is making it really tough to find the time to visit my grandmother in the old folks' home, but since Grandpa died last month --

(off Mark's look)

What is it, Doctor? Do you know why I collapsed?

MARK

I have a rough idea. What I don't understand is how you've stayed standing for this long.

RIP

Is it something serious?

MARK

It's called exhaustion.

RIP

But I can't be tired. I drank a dozen cups of coffee this morning.

INT. MARKS OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Delores sits at her desk, checking some paperwork, when Norman sweeps grandly in.

NORMAN

I've decided to forgive him.

DELORES

Big of you. For what?

NORMAN

Not much. Just ruining my life. Emptying my savings account. Destroying any chance I might have ever had for a happy retirement.

Delores sighs heavily. She's heard this song before.

DELORES

It's not Mark's fault you were audited. And it's certainly not his fault you only declared a third of your income for the last decade.

NORMAN

It's called averaging. I hardly made any money in my teens.

(over her objection)

And it is Mark's fault. He's the one who let that harpy stalk our halls.

DELORES

If you mean Gretchen McCord, there's something you should know.

NORMAN

The only thing I need to know about that harridan is the fact that Mark finally kicked her out of his life. That we won't have to see her gargling like grim death around every corner. That she's been consigned to the dustbin of history.

DELORES

That, and the fact that she's in Mark's office.

The door to the inner office swings open, revealing GRETCHEN MCCORD. From her face, she seems to have heard everything. Norman puts on his best smile.

NORMAN

Gretchen, how lovely to see you again.

She glares at him.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Jack is still talking to Electra. A nuclear bomb could fall, and he wouldn't move.

ELECTRA

And then there was another time when this lady went swimming and got caught in a riptide. So you know what I did?

Having heard more than a few stories with the same ending, Jack takes a wild guess.

JACK

Don't tell me. You dove in the water and rescued her?

ELECTRA

(astonished)

Were you there?

That's when Amanda comes in, steaming and carrying a breakfast tray. She marches over to Jack.

AMANDA

Don't eat without me, you said. Order me the French toast, you said. I'll be right in, you said. Forty-five minutes ago.

JACK
 (to Electra)
 Pardon me. Medical emergency.

He pulls Amanda across the room.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Sorry. I was in the middle of an
 important professional consultation.

AMANDA
 And what profession would that be?
 (checks out Electra)
 No, let me guess. Since we don't
 have any rocket scientists at
 Community General, she must be the
 new brain surgeon.

JACK
 This woman has saved more lives than
 many doctors at this hospital.

AMANDA
 Stiff me for breakfast like this
 again and you'll have a chance to
 sample her skills.

That's when the privacy curtain is pulled back, revealing
 Mark and Rip.

MARK
 Jack, glad you're here. Rip is going
 to stay with us overnight for
 observation -- could you see him
 through check-in?

JACK
 I was sort of in the middle of
 something...
 (off Mark's look)
 ...that I'd be more than happy to
 finish later.
 (to Rip)
 Come on. We'll find you one of our
 deluxe suites.

As he leads Rip away, Rip snags the coffee off the tray Amanda
 has put down.

RIP
 Is anyone drinking this? 'Cause I've
 got a ton of studying to do tonight.

And on their looks...

INT. MARKS OFFICE - DAY

Gretchen sits stonily at Mark's desk, facing a very nervous Norman.

NORMAN

I realize that a narrow-minded view of the tax-code doesn't see a cat as a dependant, but once you realize --

The door opens and Mark comes in.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Mark, at last. Gretchen, look, it's Mark. Who I'm sure is much more interesting than me. Much.

Mark is surprised to see Norman there -- and more surprised to see Gretchen.

MARK

This is an interesting surprise. How have you been?

GRETCHEN

Let's lose the happy chat, Mark. I don't want to see you any more than you want to see me.

MARK

If you didn't want to see me, you certainly chose an interesting place to do it.

GRETCHEN

Lifeguard headquarters told me they sent my nephew Rip to Community General.

NORMAN

Your nephew? You mean, you aren't here about my taxes?

Norman would like to shoot himself.

MARK

(realizes:)

Jake McCord! You know, it never even occurred to me. Cute nickname, "Rip." I like the double-meaning, Riptide and Rip--

GRETCHEN

I thought we were losing the happy chat.

MARK

Right. He's in 1242, which is three doors down from --

(off her stern look)

Why don't I just take you to him?

She smiles tightly and gets up. He leads her out. Norman shudders. Delores comes in, smiling warmly.

DELORES

If only they could start over again. Forget the silly little problems that drove them apart.

NORMAN

Silly? She was auditing all his friends, or have you forgotten, Miss "Look, I Got A Five Thousand Dollar Refund?"

DELORES

Deep down, they belong together.

NORMAN

You're half right. Deep down is where she belongs. Six feet down.

DELORES

They're in love, and they always will be. I'd put money on it.

NORMAN

How about putting something more valuable on the line?

(off her look)

If they get back together, you can have my job for a week. But if they don't, you organize the entire hospital filing system. Without overtime.

DELORES

I've always wanted your job. I could use the sleep.

They shake on it.

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Mark and Amanda are walking down the hall when Jack shows up with with a file.

JACK

Just got the blood tests back on Rip McCord. Kid was taking tranquilizers.

AMANDA

That's odd -- nurses keep catching him swiping coffee from the doctor's lounge.

MARK

For someone trying to hard to stay awake, you'd think tranquilizers would be the last thing we'd find in his system.

(then:)

Something isn't right about all this.

AMANDA

I think I'll take a look at the Medical Examiners autopsy of Wendy Hewitt.

Jack closes his file.

JACK

Why don't I go down to lifeguard headquarters and ask around.

MARK

I could do that.

JACK

No!

(off their looks:)

I mean, you're far too busy. It would be my pleasure.

Jack rushes off before Mark can argue. Mark shares a smile with Amanda and we go to:

EXT. LIFEGUARD HEADQUARTERS - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A blue building on the sand. Several yellow lifeguard rescue trucks are in the parking lot.

INT. LIFEGUARD HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The place is packed with LIFEGUARDS and young people in bathing suits. Jack strides in, dressed casually for a day at the beach. He approaches the counter, where he's met by lifeguard EDDIE.

JACK

Excuse me, I'm here to see Electra.

EDDIE

Take a number.

JACK

(smiles:)

I'm sure she's very popular, but I'm a special friend.

EDDIE

Take a number.

The lifeguard hands Jack a plastic card with a number on it. Jack looks at it, embarrassed.

JACK

I don't think you understand--

That's when Electra comes up behind him, genuinely happy to see him.

ELECTRA

I can't believe you're here.

JACK

You made quite an impression on me this morning. In fact, I haven't been able to stop thinking about you.

ELECTRA

But you're a doctor. Where will you find the time for this?

JACK

I've got some days off coming. Besides, being a doctor is only part of who I am.

(meets her gaze:)

Some things are too important to let your career get in the way.

ELECTRA

Wow. I've never seen such dedication.

JACK

When I want something, I don't let anything get in my way.

She snatches the number from him and tosses it to Eddie.

ELECTRA

He won't be needing this.

Jack shoots Eddie a smug grin.

ELECTRA (CONT'D)

(to Jack:)

You're moving to the front of the line.

(offer clipboard:)

Just sign here, and get a swimsuit out of the locker.

Her looks at the clipboard, puzzled.

HIS POV - THE CLIPBOARD

It reads BAYWATCH ROOKIE SCHOOL SIGN-UPS.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack realizes there's been a terrible misunderstanding. Now he notices all the other people are holding NUMBERS.

JACK

Wait --

ELECTRA

See you on the beach!

But she's already off. Jack looks at Eddie, who's shooting him a smug grin. Eddie understands exactly what's gone down.

JACK

(as he signs:)

How bad can it be?

EXT. BEACH - DAY

as dozens of swimmers run ashore, where they are greeted by a handful of lifeguards, including LT. BUCK DENTON, ELECTRA JACKSON, and SPRING DANO, 20s, who looks like she just stepped out of the Sports Illustrated bathing suit issue. Jack straggles out of the water, cold and utterly exhausted, gasping for breath.

ELECTRA

Congratulations -- you aced the qualifying swim!

JACK

I think I need mouth-to-mouth.

ELECTRA

(low, teasing:)

Later.

JACK

Really -- I need it now.

He falls to his knees.

ELECTRA

You joker you.

She suddenly runs past him into the surf to save a struggling, aspiring lifeguard. Spring helps Jack to his feet and gives him a towel.

SPRING

You should consider quitting now, while you can still walk.

He catches his breath.

JACK

You got an interesting way of encouraging aspiring lifeguards.

SPRING

I don't want to see you drown just so you can get some nookie and she can get a promotion.

JACK

I don't see how sleeping with me could get anyone promoted.

SPRING

Signing a doctor up as a part-time lifeguard is bound to impress Lt. Denton. If you survive.

JACK

You're either a very caring person -- or up for the same promotion.

Spring abruptly lets go of Jack, who falls back on his knees.

SPRING

With Rip out of the running, it's just Electra and me. She'll do anything to get it, even if it means sacrificing you.

JACK

What if I told you I really want to be a lifeguard?

She shakes her head and walks away. Jack gets to his feet and joins the other aspirants gathered around the lifeguard tower.

LT. DENTON

stands on a lifeguard tower with a bullhorn.

BUCK

The ocean isn't your backyard swimming pool -- it's treacherous and unpredictable. If you can't cut a thousand meter swim in choppy salt water, we don't want you.

He looks over the crowd.

BUCK (CONT'D)

But you're among the elite few who walked out of the water on your own two feet. You're in -- in for a grueling three day training program.

Jack turns to Electra.

JACK
There's more?

ELECTRA
Not much. Just some swimming, some
running, nothing a man in your...
(admires him:)
Excellent condition can't handle.

Jack looks dubious.

JACK
Couldn't I take the written test
instead?

ELECTRA
I adore a man with a sense of humor --
almost as much as I adore lifeguards.

Jack's stuck. He turns back to Denton.

BUCK
When it's over, you'll know if you're
a lifeguard. If this is still just a
pretty stretch of beach -- you aren't.
But if you look at it and see your
sand -- you've made it, pal.

And on Jack's look, we CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Mark is in line. Norman slides up beside him.

NORMAN
Psst - Mark.

MARK
Hello, Norman. I thought you always
brought a lunch.

NORMAN
I've been eating here for days, which
just goes to prove you have no idea
what is going on around you. I bet
you haven't even noticed Dr. Thorpe.

MARK
Who?

He starts to look over his shoulder, but Norman shoves him.

NORMAN
Don't look!

MARK

Why?

NORMAN

You'll embarrass her.

(then, low:)

She's wild about you, Mark. She only comes in when she knows you're going to be here. And then she sits alone, at a great big table by the yogurt machine, just waiting for you to come over.

MARK

Really?

Mark starts to turn again, but Norman shoves him.

NORMAN

Don't look!

MARK

Why?

NORMAN

She's looking right at you. Did I mention she used to be a Playboy centerfold?

Before Mark can comment, Delores pushes Norman aside and faces Mark.

DELORES

You glutton.

MARK

(defensively:)

I'm just having a bagel and some cream cheese.

DELORES

I suppose that giant basket of muffins isn't enough for you.

MARK

What basket?

He turns to see a BIG GIFT BASKET OF MUFFINS on a table, a RED RIBBON on the handle. He sets down his tray and walks over to it.

MARK (CONT'D)

Blueberry, my favorite.

(reads card:)

"I'm sorry, Gretchen."

(then:)

How sweet.

Delores shoots Norman a victorious smile. Mark picks up the basket.

MARK (CONT'D)

I wonder if Dr. Thorpe likes muffins.

And as Mark makes his way to a AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, 40, content by herself at a table, who smiles when she sees Mark approach. Norman shoots Delores a victorious smile.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Denton addresses the aspiring lifeguards, including Jack, once again. In the distance, a flag is set up in the sand. In the water are two red bouys. Just beyond them, two lifeguards sit on paddleboats, waiting. Other lifeguards line the shore.

BUCK

We call this exercise "run -- swim -- run." Run to the first flag, then into the water, swim around the two red bouys, then run back here. If you can't make it, don't hesistate to call for help. This isn't a job worth dying for. Go!

The lifeguards dash across the sand, Jack among those in front. Electra cheers him on. Spring scowls.

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Rookies dolphin into the waves. Some do it perfectly, others are slammed back into the surfline, where they are rescued by lifeguards. Jack makes it just fine.

EXT. WATER - DAY

The aspiring lifeguards round the first bouy and then second, Jack in the lead. But something catches Jack's eye. He abruptly breaks from the pack and heads back out. Electra watches from the shore, worried.

ELECTRA

Jack! This way!

Spring smiles to herself.

EXT. WATER - DAY

Jack swims up to a MAN lying face down in the water. Jack grabs him, and swims back to the beach. We don't see the other man's face.

ON THE BEACH

as the other wanna-be lifeguards run out of the water and back to the flag. Electra stares out at water.

ELECTRA

What's he doing?

Lt. Denton joins them, and following their gaze, lifts a set of binoculars to his eyes.

BUCK

Good God, he's got someone.

Electra and Spring charge into the water to meet Jack. They help him drag the man to the sand. Jack leans forward, as if to do mouth-to-mouth, and abruptly stops. As he sits up, we see it's the man he brought in is THE KILLER, and he's wearing a FISH SHANTY t-shirt and jeans. Lt. Denton rushes up.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Move aside -- this man needs artificial respiration.

JACK

Too late. He's dead.

And on their dire looks, we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. BEACH - LATER

The police are at the scene. The aspiring lifeguards mill around outside the police line. Steve and Jack squat beside the victim.

JACK

The guy's got a broken neck and a dislocated shoulder. I don't know if that's what killed him, but it helped.

STEVE

Whatever it was, I don't think he was out for an afternoon swim.

Steve carefully searches the man's pockets, finding a wallet and a set of car keys. He examines the wallet.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Meet Larry Tivnan of Venice, California.

(then:)

Wendy Hewitt drowned this morning after having breakfast at the Fish Shanty. Now a waiter there turns up dead. I don't like it.

JACK

Maybe he went after her for the tip.

Steve shoots him a look, then rises up and tosses the keys to an officer.

STEVE

(to officer:)

This key fits a Chevy. Check around.
My guess is you'll find it parked
nearby.

The officer nods and rushes off. Steve turns to Jack.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Not that I don't appreciate your
revealing insights into the criminal
mind but ... what are you doing here,
anyway?

Before Jack can answer, Electra rushes up and gives Jack a big kiss.

ELECTRA

I am so proud of you. You're a natural
born lifeguard.

STEVE

Nevermind.

ELECTRA

Lt. Denton is very impressed.

JACK

Good -- does that mean I don't have
to swim any more? Important parts of
my body have gone into hiding.

She laughs and saunters off. Steve admires her, then turns to Jack.

STEVE

Where do I sign up?

BUCKS VOICE

If you're half the lifeguard this
man is, you're hired.

Steve turns to see Lt. Denton approaching. Denton smiles at Jack.

BUCK

Hell of a rescue, mister. You've got
what it takes in spades.

JACK

I didn't rescue anybody.

BUCK

But you've got the instinct, and I can teach you the skill. Consider yourself a lifeguard trainee. Starting tomorrow, you're in a tower with a lifeguard.

Jack glances at Electra, who shoots him a sexy smile. Steve can't believe this.

JACK

All day, just the two of us?

BUCK

Think you can handle it?

JACK

Oh yeah.

The officer comes up to Steve.

OFFICER

We found the car, sir.

EXT. FISH SHANTY RESTAURANT - DAY

as Steve, Lt. Denton and the officer stride across the parking lot towards a Camaro, they are joined by a TERRY SCHWARTZ, 30s, who, if he wasn't the owner of the Fish Shanty, could be a professional Alan Hale Jr. impersonator, judging by his "Skipper" outfit.

SCHWARTZ

Will that coroner's wagon be on the beach long? It's ruining the view and, frankly, it's an appetite killer.

STEVE

I can only handle one killer at a time. You know Larry Tivnan?

SCHWARTZ

He's a waiter. Only been here three weeks and already he's showing up late. Why?

STEVE

He won't be showing up at all. Unless you're catering a party at the morgue.

BUCK

(to Schwartz:)

If it weren't for us pulling your drunken customers out of the water, most of your clientele would be there right now.

SCHWARTZ

(to Denton:)

I can understand your anger. We wouldn't want anything disturbing a lifeguard's nap.

Denton makes a move for Schwartz, but Steve stops him.

STEVE

What was Wendy Hewitt talking with you about this morning?

SCHWARTZ

She was interviewing me about the exciting Bayview Energy Resources project.

BUCK

In other words, an oil rig in your parking lot. An eye-sore that's going to soak the beaches with raw crude.

SCHWARTZ

(ignores Buck:)

I showed her the artist's rendering of the pump's adobe-facade ... I think it's a stirring tribute to our Hispanic community and so did she.

They reach the car. Steve motions to the officer to open the trunk. The TRUNK LID opens, revealing a WET LIFEGUARD BATHING SUIT. Steve looks at Denton.

STEVE

Did he work for you?

BUCK

No.

(then:)

My lifeguards wouldn't set foot in this hellhole.

SCHWARTZ

Except when I'm handing out free coffee.

Steve slams the trunk shut, startling both of them.

STEVE

Thank you for your help. I'll be in touch.

They glare at each other one more time, and march off. And on Steve's look, we CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. RIP'S ROOM - DAY

as Mark comes in to find Rip in bed.

MARK

Good news -- all the tests have come in. You're in fine shape. But I'd stop juggling tranquilizers and caffeine if you want to stay that way.

RIP

I've been living on coffee and no-doze to stay awake -- why would I want to take a sleeping pill?

Good point. Mark stews on this for a moment.

MARK

You said you drank a dozen cups of coffee yesterday morning -- where did you get them?

RIP

Everywhere. A donut chop, lifeguard headquarters, the Fish Shanty.

MARK

Stick to decaf from now on -- doctor's orders.

RIP

Then I can go?

MARK

Just don't forget to tip the doorman on the way out.

Mark smiles and leaves.

EXT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Mark is walking down the hall, lost in thought, and nearly collides with Gretchen as she comes in, holding a BOUQUET OF FLOWERS.

MARK

Good-morning, Gretchen. What a lovely bouquet.

GRETCHEN

They're beautiful. And the fragrance is just divine.

She smells them and holds them out to Mark. He sniffs.

MARK

Indeed it is. But really, there's no need to give me any more gifts. Your apology was enough.

GRETCHEN

My apology?

MARK

Stop torturing yourself. It's forgotten. I forgive you.

Gretchen throws the flowers at Mark.

GRETCHEN

(furious:)

You self-centered, ego-maniacal jerk.

MARK

You're right, I don't know how I could have been so insensitive. I was only thinking of myself.

GRETCHEN

That's more like it.

MARK

If you feel you have to shower me with gifts to overcome your guilt, go right ahead.

Mark is lucky there's nothing left to throw at him.

GRETCHEN

You'd better hope your tax return is perfect...or I'll break you.

She marches past him into Rip's room. Mark, bewildered, spots a card on the floor amidst the fallen flowers. He picks it up.

HIS POV - THE CARD

It reads "I'm sorry. Mark."

BACK TO SCENE

And on Mark's confusion, we go to:

EXT. BEACH - LIFEGUARD TOWER - DAY

Tight on Jack, slumped in a canvas chair, bored to death, facing the sea.

BUCKS VOICE

The lifeguard rescue floats were originally made of a metallic alloy,
(MORE)

BUCKS VOICE (CONT'D)
 which is why we still call them "cans"
 to this day.

ANGLE WIDENS to include Lt. Buck Denton, sitting beside Jack in another canvas chair, admiring his rescue can.

BUCK
 Then came large, rubber torpedo buoys but, with the advent of plastic, we switched to these the small, easy-to-handle babies. There was some talk about changing the shade of red, but that's another story.

JACK
 Someone should write a book about it. It's that fascinating.

BUCK
 Funny you should say that. I've got seven chapters finished. They're handwritten, but I think you can make it out.

Jack looks desperately for something, anything, to save him from this living hell.

JACK
 I'd love to, but--

HE SPOTS:

HIS POV - THE BEACH

Terry Schwartz and three CONTRACTORS are on the sand taking measurements with survey equipment and consulting BLUEPRINTS.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack grabs his lifeguard can and gets up.

JACK (CONT'D)
 One of those guys could stumble, fall, and get washed away by a big wave.

Buck follows Jack's gaze, bolts out of his seat, and marches down to the sand. Jack follows after him.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Buck storms over to Schwartz, who shoots him a cocky grin.

SCHWARTZ
 Uh-oh, we woke up the lifeguards. We better lower our voices.

BUCK
What do you think you're doing?

SCHWARTZ
Taking some final measurements for the pipeline. We're gonna run it under this patch of sand, then straight down until we hit black gold.

JACK
Texas tea. Next thing you know, Jed's a millionaire.
(off their looks:)
"Beverly Hillbillies."

BUCK
(to Schwartz:)
Pack it up and go.

SCHWARTZ
We're conducting a survey.

BUCK
(to Schwartz:)
Not on my sand, pal.

SCHWARTZ
The planning commission approved the project, Denton. Nothing you can do about it. Besides, this is a public beach.

One of the men puts a SURVEYOR'S STAKE in the sand.

BUCK
You can either leave, or I can fine each of you \$1000 for littering.

SCHWARTZ
We haven't littered.

Buck picks up the surveyor's stake and waves it in his face.

BUCK
Interfering with a lifeguard is a violation of the criminal code. If you want to spend the night in jail, keep talking.

SCHWARTZ
You can't be serious.

Jack, wondering the same thing, looks at Denton.

BUCK
Try me.

Schwartz motions to his men.

SCHWARTZ
 (to his crew:)
 Let's go.
 (to Buck:)
 We'll be back.

Schwartz and his men pick up their stuff and trudge back towards the Fish Shanty. Buck watches after them.

JACK
 What was all that about?

BUCK
 Saving the sand from it's natural predators -- greedy "entrepreneurs." If something goes wrong with that rig, we'll have an oil slick stretching from Malibu to Redondo.

JACK
 Sounds to me like your beef isn't with him, but the planning commission.

BUCK
 He only won the Planning Commission's approval by one vote -- and I know the fish fryer bought it.

JACK
 What makes you so sure?

BUCK
 Wendy Hewitt. That's what her article was gonna be about.

And as Jack mulls the implication, we go to:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. MARK'S OFFICE - DAY

Delores comes in with his freshly pressed WHITE COAT.

DELORES
 Here's your jacket, clean and pressed.

MARK
 Just in time for my rounds. Thanks, Delores. I don't know what came over her.

DELORES
 Mad, passionate love.

MARK

What was your first clue -- when she audited me or threw a bouquet in my face?

DELORES

It's obvious. She wants you, but at the same time, she's afraid to be hurt again. So she does everything she can to turn you away, while inside, she's yearning for you.

Mark considers it for a moment.

MARK

You really think she's yearning?

DELORES

Desperately.

Mark slips on his jacket and stethoscope and heads out for rounds. Delores smiles after him.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Mark doesn't get far when he's met by Norman and a beautiful WOMAN, 40s, in a crisp, business-like suit.

NORMAN

Just the man I wanted to see.

(to woman:)

This is Dr. Mark Sloan, chief of surgery.

(to Mark:)

I'd like you to meet Randy Lofficier, our new, unmarried head of public relations.

They shake hands.

MARK

If I can be any help at all, just let me know.

RANDY

Thank you.

NORMAN

She's from France, where they speak French, which, as we all know, is the language of love.

MARK

(to Randy:)

How long have you been in the US?

RANDY

Twenty-eight years.

NORMAN

And never married.

Both Mark and Randy give Norman a look. Suddenly something dawns on him.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

It's Friday. This is Friday isn't it?

RANDY

Yes.

NORMAN

It's my brother's bachelor party. I forgot all about it. Gosh darn -- and I've got two tickets to "Les Miserables."

(to Mark:)

Say, why don't you take them, Mark. If you can find a date on such short notice.

He hands the tickets to Mark and not-too-subtly motions to Randy. Mark spots Amanda coming his way and sees an opportunity for escape. He promptly hands the tickets to Randy.

MARK

Welcome aboard.

He quickly dashes off with Amanda.

MARK (CONT'D)

(low:)

Something very strange is going on.

AMANDA

I know. I just finished going over the Wendy Hewitt autopsy with the medical examiner. I found traces of flagyl in her system.

MARK

That's an anti-diarrheal drug. Why would she have a big meal -- and go for a swim -- if she was having stomach problems?

AMANDA

That's not all I found. She had a bloody mary with her breakfast. Mix alcohol with flagyl and you're going to get...

MARK

Cramps.

Realization suddenly dawns on Mark.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - NIGHT

as an UNMARKED POLICE CAR roars down the highway, it's lights flashing.

MARK

No doubt about it, Wendy Hewitt was murdered.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Steve drives, Mark is in the passenger seat.

MARK

You and Jack both told me she was investigating Terry Schwartz, owner of the Fish Shanty. That was where she had breakfast the day she drowned.

(then:)

I think he put a drug in her food which, when combined with alcohol, would give her cramps.

STEVE

But how could he possibly know she'd drown?

MARK

By giving Rip McCord, the lifeguard on duty, a free cup of coffee...laced with tranquilizers.

STEVE

(realizing:)

So when she cramped up, there'd be no one there to rescue her.

MARK

She must have been on to something big.

EXT. FISH SHANTY - NIGHT

as the sedan pulls up. The lights are on, but there is only one car in the parking lot. Mark and Steve get out and stride up to the restaurant. Mark studies the menu, posted under a light by the door.

MARK

Deep fried clams. Deep fried shrimp. Deep fried salmon. We ought to name the cardiology department after this guy.

Steve tries the door. It's unlocked. They go inside.

INT. FISH SHANTY - NIGHT

as Mark and Steve come in. Fishing knick-knacks are everywhere, casting ominous shadows through the dark, empty restaurant. The only sound is the crashing surf, the only light cast by the full moon. Steve pulls out his gun.

STEVE

(to Mark:)

Stay here Dad, and don't move.

Steve moves slowly ahead in the shadows, carefully weaving between the tables.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Mr. Schwartz?

(then:)

It's Det. Sloan, LAPD. We want to talk with you.

Mark gets fidgety by himself. He goes in a different direction, moving slowly through the dark.

MARK

(whispers:)

Hello?

He rounds a corner and comes face-to-face with an ENORMOUS MOUNTED FISH. Ahhhh! Mark staggers back, startled, bumping right into

THE LOBSTER TANK

full of live lobsters...and dead
TERRY SCHWARTZ.

BACK TO SCENE

Mark stares at the tank. He calls out to Steve.

MARK

He's over here.

After a moment, Steve comes up beside his father.

MARK (CONT'D)

You want to ask him the first question, or shall I?

And on their grim looks, we FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. MARK'S OFFICE - DAY

as Steve marches in to talk with Mark.

STEVE

We got a court order and opened Wendy Hewitt's safe deposit box. You'll never guess what we found.

MARK

Evidence that Terry Schwartz was bribing members of the planning commission.

STEVE

Okay, guess what color I'm thinking of.

MARK

Now we know why Schwartz killed Wendy and drugged Rip's coffee -- but you know what I can't figure out?

STEVE

Magenta.

MARK

Who killed Schwartz and his waiter.
(then:)
And why.

STEVE

Driving over here, I saw a Corvette in that color. Now I can't get it out of my head.

MARK

One thing I do know -- Rip deserves his job back.

Mark heads for the door. Steve looks after him.

STEVE

Bet you can't guess what number I'm thinking of.

EXT. LIFEGUARD HQ - ESTABLISHING - DAY

INT. LIFEGUARD HQ - DAY

Jack comes in to see Spring and Electra arguing as they load up a yellow lifeguard truck with med kits, floats, etc. He hangs back to eavesdrop.

SPRING

I've got seven commendations and a year more experience than you -- I deserve that promotion.

ELECTRA

Then why am I getting it?

SPRING

You got it because you're a slut.

ELECTRA

I'm not the one who slept with Buck Denton. You gotta be pretty desperate to do that.

SPRING

You seduced Jack just so you'd have a high-profile recruit to wow Buck with. You couldn't earn the promotion, so you had to resort to dirty tricks.

ELECTRA

Jack volunteered for rookie school, I had nothing to do with it.

(then:)

If I was gonna use dirty tricks, I'd tell Buck you were sleeping with Terry Schwartz too -- right up until he went bobbing for lobsters.

Electra turns to pick up a box of supplies, so her back is to Spring who, enraged, picks up lifeguard can and charges at Electra with it. Electra whips around, grabs Spring by the wrist, and in one lightning move, pulls Spring forward, twisting Spring's arm behind her back with one hand and grabbing her around the throat with the other. Spring is choking. Jack rushes out of hiding and grabs Electra from behind.

JACK

That's enough, girls.

(to Electra:)

C'mon, let her go.

Electra releases Spring and pushes her away. Spring gasps for breath, and clutches the shoulder of her pinned arm.

SPRING

This isn't over.

ELECTRA

Any time, Barbie.

Spring goes. Jack grins at Electra.

JACK

Pretty fancy move. You're the only one I've ever seen use it besides my Uncle Roy.

ELECTRA

What does your Uncle do?

JACK

Time.

(off her confusion:)

I'll explain over dinner. As long as you promise not to use that move on me.

ELECTRA

I've got a few other moves in mind.

And on their shared smiles, we CUT TO:

TIGHT ON BUCK DENTON

lying shirtless on the sand, lifting free weights, the sound of crashing surf behind him. He lifts, straining against the weight... when a person's SHADOW falls over him.

MARKS VOICE

Sorry for intruding, but your front door was open. They told me at lifeguard headquarters I could find you here.

Buck drops the weights and sits up, the sand sticking to his sweaty skin, and the ANGLE WIDENS to reveal we're not on the beach at all...

EXT. BUCK'S HOUSE - DAY

...we're in the backyard of Buck's modest house. His entire backyard is covered in WHITE SAND. There are a couple boulders in the corners of the yard.

MARK

I'm Dr. Mark Sloan, Rip McCord's physician.

Mark glances at the simple landscaping, a bit confused. Buck notices it.

BUCK

What do you think of the place?

MARK

Guess you don't have much of a water bill.

BUCK

I couldn't afford to live at the beach on my salary, so I created a piece of heaven in Van Nuys. I work out here every day.

Buck picks up a handful of sand and let's it strain through his fingers.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Genuine Caribbean sand, straight from the unspoiled beaches of the Bahamas.

(motions to rocks:)

Those are speakers. What you're hearing is the perfect surf off some nameless atoll in the South Pacific.

MARK

I prefer Artie Shaw, but to each his own.

BUCK

Exactly. This is my sand. If only the Santa Monica shoreline could be as pristine.

MARK

One way to start would be to put Rip McCord back on duty.

BUCK

No way.

MARK

What happened to Wendy Hewitt wasn't his fault. Schwartz drugged his coffee.

BUCK

Doesn't matter -- the kid created the opportunity by juggling other jobs. By wearing himself down. He forgot that saving lives was his top priority.

(then:)

I like Rip. I'm the one who gave him his nickname.

MARK

And a darn clever one, too.

BUCK

But his days on my sand are over.

GRETCHENS VOICE

So are yours.

They turn to see Gretchen McCord marching into the backyard.

MARK

What are you doing here?

GRETCHEN

(to Buck:)

Did you pay import duty on this sand?

BUCK

I don't remember, but--

GRETCHEN

And I'll bet you didn't get a permit from building and safety either. If you're this lax with regulations, I can't wait to see what your tax return looks like.

Buck looks at Mark.

MARK

Trust me, you don't want her looking at your taxes.

BUCK

I've had some time to think it over. Perhaps I was too harsh on Rip.

And on Mark's smile, we CUT TO:

EXT. DENTON'S HOUSE - DAY

Gretchen walks Mark to his Jag.

GRETCHEN

I was surprised to see you here.

MARK

I felt I owed it to Rip.

GRETCHEN

It was very nice of you to stand up for him like that. You didn't have to do it.

MARK

He's loves his job, he shouldn't lose it for a mistake he didn't make.

GRETCHEN

And I love my job, but you shouldn't lose your friends for a mistake I made. I was overzealous -- my job became my life. I should never have audited your friends.

MARK

It wasn't all bad. Delores bought a new car with the refund you discovered she was owed.

GRETCHEN

But I lost you.

She gives Mark a gentle kiss on the cheek.

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)

Maybe some day we can start over.

She walks away. Mark looks after her, touched.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Jack and Amanda walk down the corridor...

JACK

I had to run five miles on sand, swim three more through icy, polluted waters, and then run all the way back along the highway.

AMANDA

All this effort for a girl. I hope she's worth it.

JACK

How would I know? Every time we're alone together, I fall asleep.

...and run into Mark and Steve, who are coming from the other direction.

STEVE

Is that you, Jack? I didn't recognize you with your clothes on.

JACK

Glad you haven't lost your spirit. You may not be able to solve those murders, but you can always find time to come up with witticisms.

Steve's working on a cutting retort when Mark steps between them.

MARK

Actually, Steve came all the way over here to tell us something very interesting. The dead waiter served time for armed robbery in Oklahoma.

STEVE
(pleased with himself)
Seems Tivnan and a girlfriend played
Bonnie and Clyde all through the
cornbelt.

Mark and Steve wait for a reaction. Jack and Amanda exchange blank looks.

AMANDA
And that means...?

Now Mark looks at Steve blankly. He never thought past the initial news.

MARK
Son?

STEVE
(annoyed)
I don't know.

JACK
Keep up the good work, Steverino.
You'll have this case cracked in no
time.

STEVE
You're so smart, you tell me who
killed Terry Schwartz.

JACK
Wish I could, but I've got a buoy to
swim around.

He starts to leave, but Steve pulls him back.

STEVE
It's easy to make smart cracks, beach
boy, but try solving a murder with
no physical evidence.

AMANDA
That can't be right. In all my years
as a pathologist, I've never seen a
murder with no physical evidence.

Steve thrusts the file at her. She looks at it.

STEVE
We found the murder weapon. A oar
from the restaurant's wall, and didn't
have any prints. We checked the area
around the tank. Know what we found?

AMANDA
 (reading the file)
 Sand. Salt. Tiny fragments of crab,
 conch, and lobster shells. Trace
 amounts of cooking grease.

STEVE
 In a beachfront restaurant, imagine
 that.

He grabs the file and hands it to Jack.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 Here you go, Columbo. Take this
 evidence and find us a killer.

MARK
 He doesn't have to. You already have.

They all turn and look at Mark. He smiles. And we FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

INT. MARK'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Mark comes cheerfully into the outer office from the corridor,
 to find Delores looking upset.

MARK
 Delores, I need you to call the Fish
 Shanty and --
 (notices her expression)
 Are you all right?

DELORES
 It's nothing. I'm just a little
 worried about a friend.

MARK
 Oh. I hope everything works out.
 (then:)
 Anyway, I need you to call the Fish
 Shanty on --

Delores lets out a long, languorous sigh.

DELORES
 A very dear friend. One whose
 happiness means more to me than he
 could possibly know.

MARK

I'd be happy to talk about this later. But right now I need you to call the Fish Shanty on Pacific Coast Highway and arrange to rent the place for a private party this afternoon.

He starts to walk past her.

DELORES

A friend who is going to end up all alone in life, missing the one true love he's destined for. All because he's too bullheaded to let go of the past.

MARK

Delores, are you trying to say something?

She lets out another heavy sigh.

DELORES

Me? What could ever give you that idea?

MARK

Good. Let me know when we've got the Fish Shanty set.

He goes into his office. She scowls and starts to pick up the phone. But before she can dial, Mark pops his head out the door.

MARK (CONT'D)

Then call Gretchen and let her know our party for Rip is on.

He pops back into his office. Delores lights up with a huge grin. She grabs the phone and dials.

DELORES

(into phone)

Mr. Briggs? You better get down here. There are a ton of phone calls that Mark needs you to make.

She hangs up, grinning. CUT TO:

EXT. FISH SHANTY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The parking lot is packed with cars, including Mark's distinctive Jag.

INT. FISH SHANTY - DAY

The place is packed with lifeguards, festive and happy. A big banner reads: WELCOME BACK, RIP. Food and drinks are

everywhere. Steve, Jack, Mark, Gretchen and, of course, Rip are all there. Rip takes a bite out of a FRIED SHRIMP.

GRETCHEN
How's the shrimp?

Rip snaps angrily at her.

RIP
(snaps:)
Maybe if you gave me a chance to swallow it first I could tell you.
(off their looks:)
Sorry. I've been trying to cut down on the caffeine...

MARK
Give it some time. Just stay away from sharp objects.

That's when Lt. Denton comes in, wearing a freshly pressed uniform.

BUCK
Congratulations, Rip. Glad to have you back on my sand.

Rip is thrilled to see him.

RIP
Lieutenant. I didn't expect to see you here, knowing how you feel about the place.

BUCK
The place is fine. It's Terry Schwartz I couldn't stand. I wouldn't set foot in here while that scoundrel was alive.

MARK
Technically, I suppose that's true.

BUCK
Excuse me?

MARK
Terry Schwartz was alive last time you came here, but you killed him before you left, so I suppose what you said is accurate.

All heads turn to Buck. He meets Mark's gaze.

BUCK
I don't take lives, pal. I save them.

MARK

You made one exception.

(then:)

The police found sand around the lobster tank.

BUCK

You can find sand around the whole restaurant. It's called a beach.

MARK

It wasn't just any sand. It was your sand. There were bits of conch shell in it -- and conch isn't indigenous to Southern California. It is, however, to the Caribbean.

BUCK

And you can probably find Idaho trout scales and Alaskan King crab shell on the floor, too...

because we're in a seafood restaurant.

MARK

True. But conch isn't on the menu. The only place you can find it around here is in your back yard.

Buck sags, defeated, then darts across the restaurant. Steve tackles him, and they both go flying into a table full of food. Covered in fish and tartar sauce, Steve pins Denton's hands behind his back, handcuffs him, and lifts him to his feet.

STEVE

You're under arrest for the murder of Terry Schwartz, pal.

All his lifeguards stare at him shock. Spring is crying.

SPRING

How could you?

BUCK

I always knew Schwartz had to be involved in Wendy's death -- and when I saw the lifeguard suit in his waiter's car, I figured it out.

MARK

Schwartz drugged her so she'd cramp up. Then Larry Tivnan drowned her -- while pretending to be a lifeguard.

The revelation sinks in among the lifeguards. Denton is grim.

BUCK
 Schwartz wanted to discredit the
 lifeguards so he could ruin my sand.
 I couldn't let him get away with it.

Steve hands Denton off to a POLICE OFFICER.

STEVE
 Read him his rights.

Denton is lead away.

GRETCHEN
 (to Mark:)
 If Buck didn't figure it out until
after the waiter was killed ... who
 killed the waiter?

Mark hadn't thought of that.

JACK
 Electra did.

Everyone turns to Electra. She breaks into a big smile.

ELECTRA
 I love this guy's sense of humor.
 Always kidding around.
 (then:)
 You are kidding, aren't you?

JACK
 You stole the lifeguard suit for
 Tivnan. Because he was your old
 boyfriend, you know, the one you
 held up stores with.

Suddenly Electra darts for the door. Steve groans and starts
 after her, but Jack motions him away.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Allow me.

Jack chases after her, and tackles her before she can get to
 the door, the two of them flying into A FISH TANK, shattering
 it and spilling water all over the floor. Sopping wet, she
 comes at him from behind with A GLASS SHARD, but he uses the
 same MOVE on her she used on Spring. He spins, pulls her arm
 forward, then twists it behind her back, forcing her to drop
 the glass, and then holds her by the neck with his other
 hand.

ELECTRA
 (defiant:)
 How did you know?

JACK

It was this hold -- the one you used on Spring. My Uncle learned it in the prison yard. You use it when someone tries to stick a shiv in your back. You did time.

STEVE

(realizing:)

That's why the waiter had a broken neck and a dislocated shoulder. She used the hold on him -- only she went too far.

JACK

(to Steve:)

You're really getting the hang of this detective stuff.

Jack releases Electra, who is immediately cuffed by an OFFICER.

ELECTRA

Every day I was in prison, I dreamed of the beach. All I wanted to be was a lifeguard. But Buck would have fired me if he knew I was an ex-con. Larry threatened to tell. So I stole the suit for him, but then he wanted more...

(then:)

My money, my body -- it had to stop.

SPRING

Yeah, before he wanted your brain, and discovered you had nothing to give.

Electra sneers at Spring.

ELECTRA

Guess you got your promotion after all, Barbie.

The officer takes her away. Mark looks after her.

MARK

And they call these people "lifeguards"....

And on Mark's dismay, we DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY GENERAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

NORMANS VOICE

Dr. Sloan's office, can I help you?

INT. MARKS OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Norman is at Delores' desk, answering the phone.

NORMAN

Three-thirty in operating room twelve.
He'll be there. Thank you.

He makes a notation in the calender. He looks up to see Delores coming in, dressed in a crisp Ellen Tracy suit, a briefcase in her hand.

DELORES

Good-morning, Norman.

NORMAN

Ms. Mitchell.

DELORES

As you know, we have more doctors than we have parking spaces. So I've had to do some reassigning. From now on, you'll have to park on Sprague Street.

NORMAN

But that's six blocks away.

DELORES

A little exercise never hurt anyone.

She's about to go, when Gretchen marches furiously into the office and hammers on Mark's door. He opens it, and barely sticks his head out, when Gretchen slaps him.

GRETCHEN

You make me sick.

She marches out again. Delores and Norman stare in shock. Mark manages a sheepish grin.

MARK

Stimulating morning, don't you think?

He closes the door. The moment it's closed, Norman stands up, walks around the desk, Delores drops her briefcase and settles into her seat.

DELORES

I'll meet you in the file room in a few minutes, Mr. Briggs.

NORMAN

That will be fine, Delores.

He leaves, a smug grin on his face.

INT. MARK'S OFFICE - DAY

Mark peers through his partially-opened door at his outer office and snickers to himself. His other door opens and Gretchen tip-toes in, smiling.

GRETCHEN

Did I really hit you that hard?

MARK

Nah, it's an old theatrical trick.
You missed me entirely.

She examines his red cheek.

GRETCHEN

You're such a sweet man to lie to me
like that.

(then:)

What's next?

MARK

Hate me for another day or so, the
file room needs organizing, then
fall in love with me again, Norman
could use a little humility...and
exercise.

GRETCHEN

Can I fall in love with you a little
bit now?

MARK

I suppose a little practice couldn't
hurt.

And on their KISS, we FREEZE FRAME.

THE END