

Spenser: For Hire □

"Sleepless Dreams"

ACT ONE □

FADE IN:

A SPOON

plunges into a jar of roasted coffee beans.

SPENSER'S VOICE

I once knew a detective who liked
stake-outs. It gave him an excuse
to eat all the greasy fast foods his
wife wouldn't let him touch.

THE BEANS

slide off the spoon into a grinder and are instantly ç

pulverized.

SPENSER'S VOICE

For me, stake-outs are hell. But the one I had been on for the last 24 hours was better than most. It wasn't that the case was particularly interesting -- I was helping a shopkeeper who didn't want to pay protection money to hoodlums.

INT SPENSER'S KITCHEN - MORNING

SPENSER pours the pulverized beans into the funnel of a drip coffee maker. He's been up for 24 hours, and it's starting to show.

SPENSER'S VOICE

It was the location. Four blocks from home. No chili dogs and donut shop coffee for this detective.

While the coffee drips, Spenser pulls a plate of BAKED ç
CHICKEN BREASTS out of the refrigerator. He gives them a ç
proud, almost paternal smile. Guess who cooked them before ç
going on stake-out?

SPENSER'S VOICE

The stake-out was still a tedious bore
-- just sitting around waiting for the
bad guys to show up and try something
nasty -- but at least it wouldn't be
fattening.

EXT SPENSER'S PLACE - MORNING

SPENSER emerges from his building carrying a picnic basket. ç
He walks around the corner -- and right into a beautiful ç
young woman in her early 20s (LAURIE). She's in a simple ç
black dress and pearls -- and not watching where she's going ç
any more than Spenser is. When they collide, she falls to the ç
ground.

LAURIE'S PEARL NECKLACE

breaks off and falls on the sidewalk.

EXT SPENSER'S PLACE - MORNING

Spenser, truly apologetic, helps her up.

SPENSER

I'm really sorry. I haven't slept.

Makes me a little stupid.

LAURIE

It's all right.

She's up, and it looks like she hasn't slept much either. ç

Spenser should remove his hand from her arm. He doesn't. He ç

stares at her. She's beautiful...and familiar. She tries to ç

move away, but he's still holding her.

LAURIE

Thank you.

Spenser suddenly realizes he's still got her. He lets go of her self-consciously.

SPENSER

I've seen you before. Your office window is across from mine. My name's Spenser.

LAURIE

I have to go.

She turns to leave. Spenser is a little startled by her abruptness. Then he realizes she's forgetting something.

SPENSER

Wait! Your pearls!

Spenser bends over and picks them up, but when he looks up

SPENSER'S POV -- THE STREET

Laurie is gone.

EXT SPENSER'S PLACE - MORNING

Spenser, a little confused, puts the pearls in his jacket ç
pocket.

SPENSER'S VOICE

I'd spent months stealing glances at her
through my window. It wasn't that I had
any romantic notions, but she was pleasant
to look at and idly daydreaming about
her was better than doing my paperwork. Now
I had finally met her.

He snaps out of it -- time to get back to business. He turns ç
and hurries off in the opposite direction, a bounce in his ç
step.

SPENSER'S VOICE

And she was wild about me.

CUT TO:

EXT STREET - MORNING

HAWK'S BMW sits down the street from a small shop, MAHLER & SON, FINE FASHIONS. Hawk may have spent the last 24 hours cooped up in the car, but he wears it better than Spenser does. Spenser opens the passenger door and gets inside.

INT BMW - MORNING

SPENSER, in the passenger seat, opens the picnic basket for HAWK's approval.

SPENSER

Baked chicken. Fresh vegetables. Served
in a BMW.

HAWK

Looks good.

SPENSER

Good? Just good? Do you realize we've

pioneered a new kind of detective work?

No, and Hawk doesn't care.

SPENSER

The first Yuppie stake-out.

Spenser pulls out a thermos and pours Hawk a cup of fresh-ground brewed coffee.

SPENSER

And here's the best part. Pure Jamaica Blue Mountain. Twenty-five bucks a pound -- but we're worth it.

Spenser hands Hawk the cup and pours himself one. Hawk sips from his coffee -- then sneers at it.

HAWK

You been burned, Babe. One hundred percent Venezuelan.

Spenser can't believe it. He tries the coffee. His face ç
falls, and he pours his cup out the window.

SPENSER

I don't have time to chat about
food. We're on a stake-out.

EXT STREET - MORNING

Spenser gets out of the car and marches across the street to ç
a building near the shop. He jumps up, grabs the fire escape, ç
and climbs up to

EXT ROOFTOP - MORNING

He goes to the far edge and peers over.

THE SHOP - SPENSER'S POV

He has a clear view of the back of the shop. He can also see ç
Hawk's BMW.

EXT ROOFTOP - MORNING

Spenser, still miffed, tries to make himself comfortable. ç

SPENSER

(to himself)

Venezuelan.

He HEARS something CLATTER in the alley. Spenser peers over ç
the rooftop's edge and sees

THE SHOP - SPENSER'S POV

A young MAN emerges from the shadows. He's holding a SHOTGUN.

SPENSER

casually pulls out his gun. Case solved. Stake-out over.

SPENSER

Don't move.

THE MAN

has a better idea. He whirls around and FIRES up at

SPENSER

who ducks just as the bullets blow off a chunk of rooftop ç
beside him.

HAWK

hearing the gun blast, pulls out his massive gun and rises ç
menacingly out of his car.

SPENSER

is mad. So much for the easy way. He peers into the alley.

THE MAN - SPENSER'S POV

is dashing away. He'll be gone by the time Spenser can climb ç

down.

SPENSER

grimaces, steps back, and takes a running leap onto THE NEXT ç
BUILDING.

EXT ALLEY - MORNING

Spenser dashes across that rooftop, then takes a running leap ç
onto the next building, runs across it, and leaps onto the ç
next building. He is racing parallel to THE MAN in the alley ç
below, who has no idea Spenser is chasing alongside him on ç
the rooftops.

THE MAN

scared, weaves through the grimy alley, looking over his ç
shoulder frantically to see if Spenser is giving chase -- but ç
it's all clear. He charges towards the street when suddenly

A FIRE ESCAPE

comes crashing down in the man's path. Spenser's on it, c
aiming his gun at him with one hand and holding onto a rung c
of the fire escape with the other.

THE MAN

stops cold, uncertain what to do and really scared. We see c
now the guy can't be more than 20-years-old.

HAWK

(off)

Boo.

The man looks over his shoulder and there, right behind him, c
is Hawk, a black monolith with a huge gun. The man drops his c
shotgun. Spenser picks it up and tosses it to Hawk, who c
casually catches it in his hand, right around the barrel. c
Spenser holsters his gun, grabs the man by his shirt, and c
pulls him close to his face.

SPENSER

You tell your boss that Richard Mahler

doesn't need protection. We're
his protection.

The man looks utterly confused.

MAN

Are you crazy? I'm Richard
Mahler.

Now it's Spenser's turn to look confused.

SPENSER

You're not Rich--

Mahler interrupts, his fear turning into anger.

MAHLER

Junior. As in Mahler and Sbn

Hawk groans and holsters his gun.

SPENSER

What are you doing running around
with a shotgun?

MAHLER

Looking out for what's ours.

SPENSER

That's my job. That's what
your father hired me for.

MAHLER

I didn't know he did that. I
thought you were one of those
animals.

Spenser releases him. Hawk turns and walks off.

MAHLER

Where are you going with my gun?

HAWK

With you two watchbirds busy
watching each other, who's watching

the store?

Oh, yeah. Spenser and Mahler start to follow Hawk when they ç
hear A CAR SCREECHING around a corner. Spenser shares an "oh ç
no" look with Hawk and the three men run into the street just ç
as

EXT MAHLER AND SON - MORNING

The storefront EXPLODES in a fireball of glass, plaster, and ç
pleated wool slacks.

EXT STREET - MORNING

The three men shield themselves from the smoke. Bits of ç
rubble rain on the street around them.

SPENSER

Terrific.

Hawk hands Spenser the shotgun and shakes his head.

HAWK

Don't think your Yuppie stake-out
gonna catch on.

Mahler, enraged, glares at them both.

CUT TO:

INT STAIRWELL - MORNING

Spenser trudges up the stairs to his apartment. He looks like ç
he could use a shower and about 12 hours sleep.

SPENSER'S VOICE

I felt awful. I hadn't slept in 24
hours and I had screwed up what
should have been a simple case.

He can hear his phone RINGING, but he is in no hurry to ç
answer it as he slowly opens his door.

SPENSER'S VOICE

All I wanted was to crawl into bed.
Maybe I'd wake up and the whole
disastrous morning would just turn
out to be a bad dream.

INT SPENSER'S PLACE - MORNING

Spenser shuffles into his dark apartment, ignoring the ç
RINGING phone. He takes off his jacket and shoulder holster ç
and dumps them on the couch. As he strides across the room, ç
he passes the desk -- and the RINGING phone.

SPENSER

(to the phone)

Go away.

The phone continues to RING. He opens the blinds and sunlight ç
streams in. And there she is.

THE BUILDING - SPENSER'S POV

Across the way, in the next building, he can see LAURIE sitting at a drafting table, apparently working intently. She really is beautiful. Why does Spenser ever bother leaving his place?

SPENSER'S VOICE

Talk about dreams. I had dreamed a hundred life stories for her. It was a great way to ignore my work but, unfortunately, life has a way of catching up with you.

SPENSER

reluctantly turns away, picks up the phone, and answers it sharply.

SPENSER

Yes?

His anger softens as he listens. He looks very, very tired.

SPENSER

(contrite)

No, Mr. Mahler, that's not how I
usually do my job...I'm ~~ve~~ry□
sorry about what happened...

Spenser glances out the window again.

SPENSER'S POV

Laurie is standing at her window, looking out.

SPENSER

smiles, but

LAURIE

doesn't notice him.

SPENSER

turns his back to the window and paces, the phone in his ç
hand.

SPENSER

I didn't have an "attitude," your
son took a shot at me.

He turns and paces back towards the window.

SPENSER

No sir, I wouldn't think of
billing you....

He looks out the window and sees

SPENSER'S POV

Laurie standing on the ledge, the wind whipping her hair ç
wildly.

SPENSER

horrified, drops the phone and charges to the window.

SPENSER

No!

LAURIE - SPENSER'S POV

looks up at the sound of his cry, stares right at him...and ç
jumps. She falls silently.

SPENSER

stares in horror.

ANGRY VOICE

(on phone)

Spenser? Are you listening to me?

Spenser☒

CUT TO:

EXT STREET - DAY

A MOB crowds around a POLICE CORDON, all trying to get a peek at the woman before she's loaded into the ambulance.

SPENSER stands inside the police line, looking down sadly at the unconscious woman as AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS lift her onto a stretcher. SGT. FRANK BELSON comes up to him. He puts his hand sympathetically on Spenser's shoulder.

BELSON

Hell of a morning, Spenser.

Spenser nods, his gaze still on Laurie.

BELSON

I was just at Mahler's store.

What a mess. Totally destroyed.

Spenser gives Belson a stony look.

SPENSER

I know. I was there.

BELSON

Yeah, well, that's why I'm here.

When I heard you called this
in, I figured you could use
a friendly face about now.

SPENSER

That's nice, Frank, but --

BELSON

Listen, I know what it's like to
screw up that bad. Worst feeling in
the world. But you can't win
them all. And then to see that
poor woman jump...

Belson shudders. Spenser just looks at him. Then, after a ç
moment, turns away and watches the attendants hurriedly slide ç
Laurie's stretcher into the ambulance.

SPENSER

Any idea why she tried to kill
herself?

Belson looks confused.

BELSON

No, I thought you'd know. Wasn't
Laurie Fisher a friend of yours?

SPENSER

Didn't know her.

The attendants slam shut the ambulance's rear doors. Belson
shrugs.

BELSON

Well, if she makes it, you can
ask her.

Spenser glares at Belson.

SPENSER

That's the police investigation?

BELSON

Priorities, Spenser. We'll be lucky if we can figure out half the deaths of people who wanted to stay alive.

SPENSER

Something made her desperate enough to jump.

The ambulance screeches off, its sirens blaring. Spenser and Belson watch it go.

BELSON

It's too late to do anything about that now.

Spenser, his eye still on the ambulance as it races off, knows Belson is right. Belson claps Spenser on the shoulder.

BELSON

Go home, Spenser. Get some sleep.

Spenser nods and walks across the street to his building. ç

Belson watches him go sympathetically.

SPENSER'S VOICE

Sleep. Sounds easy.

CUT TO:

INT SPENSER'S PLACE - DAY

THE CURTAINS

are drawn to keep out the light and noise.

SPENSER'S VOICE

With every muscle in my body screaming
from fatigue, sleep would be paradise.

A HALF-EMPTY GLASS OF ONCE-WARM MILK

and the small pan it was heated in.

SPENSER'S VOICE

As soon as my head hit the pillow,
I would be out for hours.

THE TELEVISION

is on without the sound. The millionth rerun of some black-and-white Warner Brothers western flickers on the tiny screen.

SPENSER'S VOICE

That's the way it was supposed to work,
anyway.

A HARDCOVER BOOK

Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables," the "long" version, rests open on the COFFEE TABLE, Spenser's glasses resting on a page.

SPENSER'S VOICE

But every time I closed my eyes, I saw
Laurie Fisher standing on that ledge.

And beside the coffee table is AN OVERSTUFFED CHAIR and

SPENSER

is sitting in it, bathed in shadows, rolling her PEARL ç
NECKLACE in his fingers.

SPENSER'S VOICE

And if I kept them closed, I saw what
happened next.

Spenser closes the necklace in his fist and gets up.

CUT TO:

LAURIE

unconscious, her soft face bruised. She is surrounded by ç
IVs and machines that are keeping tabs on her life signs.

Her arms are heavily bandaged. One leg is in a cast. Even so, ç
her beauty isn't obscured.

SPENSER

is standing in the corridor, watching her through a large ç
WINDOW, entranced. He looks awful.

INT INTENSIVE CARE WARD - DAY

Belson, holding his notebook, comes up behind him. Spenser ç
doesn't bothering shifting his gaze.

BELSON

Shouldn't you be asleep?

SPENSER

I am.

Belson shakes his head. He doesn't understand Spenser at all.

BELSON

What are you doing here?

SPENSER

I wondered how she was.

BELSON

They had to operate. Something
about a torn spleen. But she's
gonna make it.

Spenser looks relieved.

BELSON

Whoever she is.

Spenser turns around, confused.

SPENSER

What?

Belson motions at Laurie with his notebook.

BELSON

I checked her out. Her I.D. is phony. I don't know who she is, but Laurie Fisher doesn't exist.

Spenser is surprised, not only at the revelation but that Belson bothered to check into her.

SPENSER

What happened to "priorities?"

BELSON

The hospital doesn't save lives for free, Spenser. I was looking for a relative, or at least somebody who'd pay the bills.

SPENSER

She must have someone.

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BELSON

I'm telling you, Spenser, this
lady just walked out of thin
air.

Spenser glances at Laurie. Now he has something to stick his ç
teeth into, something he can ~~to~~

SPENSER

Thanks, Frank.

Spenser turns on his heels marches down the corridor. Belson ç
looks after him, baffled.

BELSON

For what?

CUT TO:

INT LAURIE'S OFFICE - DAY

A DRAFTING TABLE

Clean, clear, shining white. A box of PENCILS sits on one side; a stack of large, heavy DRAWING PAPER on the other, and an ARTIST'S PORTFOLIO next to it.

SPENSER'S VOICE

The best way to unravel a mystery is to try and see things from the other person's perspective.

EXT SPENSER'S WINDOW THROUGH LAURIE'S WINDOW - DAY

A perfect view into Spenser's apartment.

SPENSER'S VOICE

What was she thinking when she worked at this window? What was she thinking when she looked at me?

INT LAURIE'S OFFICE - DAY

SPENSER stands by the window, looking into his own window.

SPENSER'S VOICE

What was she thinking when she jumped?

Spenser turns from the window and looks around the office. He opens the portfolio and sees Laurie's drawings. They're not exactly what he expected.

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THE DRAWINGS

depict comic book scenes of knights in shining armor fighting dragons, saving damsels in distress; of horrible monsters advancing on frightened people; of science fiction landscapes on distant planets. The running theme through all her work is people threatened by overpowering monstrosities.

SPENSER

engrossed in the drawings, accidentally brushes against a box of pencils.

THE PENCILS

clatter to the ground.

SPENSER

bends over to pick them up. Boy, is he tired. Then he sees ç something on the floor under the window -- a BUSINESS CARD. ç He picks it up.

THE BUSINESS CARD

reads: "Harry Slade, Discreet Investigations," followed by a ç San Francisco address. On the bottom is a handwritten ç notation: "Boston Belmont Hotel, Rm 408."

MAN

(off)

How did you get in here?

SPENSER

looks up to see

SPENSER'S POV

A 30ish man whose tastes in dress and grooming haven't changed since 1968 (JIM MOYLAN) stands in the doorway, trying to look menacing. He points an ANTIQUE BLUNDERBUSS at Spenser. It looks silly, but it's still a gun.

SPENSER

gets up slowly, slipping the card into his pocket. This is a little strange.

SPENSER

The door was open. There was no one out front.

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JIM

That's because the office is closed.

We've had a tragedy. What are you
doing here?

SPENSER

I'm a private detective. I want to
know about Laurie. I want to help
her.

JIM

Why?

Spenser points to his window.

SPENSER

That's my apartment.

JIM MOYLAN

looks at the view and understands. He studies Spenser for a ç
moment, then lowers the blunderbuss.

JIM

You saw her jump.

CUT TO:

A LINE DRAWING

of a scene on a 19th Century pirate ship -- one seaman being pursued by an entire crew of pirate zombies. The seaman has been forced to the very edge of the plank and can either face the monsters, or fall into a raging sea.

JIM

She's the gentlest person I've ever met, but she sure has a violent imagination. Good thing, too, because it sells comic books.

INT JIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Very cluttered, littered with antique odds and ends -- of which the Blunderbuss is one -- and stacks of comic books. FRAMED COMICS -- the first issues of Jim's books "Bloodstorm,"

"Starwatcher Comics," and "Circe's Lair" -- hang above his desk.

Jim hands Spenser the drawing they were just looking at.

JIM

This is what she was working
on this morning. Vivid stuff,
huh?

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Spenser nods.

SPENSER

It says a lot.

JIM

It sure does. It says: "This girl
has talent," just like the work
I saw her doing in some throwaway
newspaper a year ago. I hired her
away and taught her all about
comics.

SPENSER

Did she tell you anything about her
past?

JIM

Nope. I asked once, and she got
very uptight, so I never asked
again. Talent is talent, it doesn't
matter where it comes from.

SPENSER

I used to watch her from my window.
I never would have guessed this was
what she was working on.

JIM

I know what you mean. I've worked
with her for a year, and I still
have trouble believing it. Most
artists you meet in this racket
are pretty far-out. They look like
they are drawing from experience.

SPENSER

Maybe she was.

Spenser looks at the drawing in his hands again.

SPENSER

Can I borrow this, and some of
the others?

Jim shrugs.

JIM

Sure, why not? But I don't see
how it can help you.

SPENSER

It's a lot easier than trying
to read her mind.

INT HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

as the ELEVATOR DOORS slide open and Spenser emerges into the
ç
corridor of a hotel that charges \$150-a-night and tries real ç
hard -- with fancy wallpaper and useless, fake antique ç
furniture in the hallway -- to convince the guests that the ç
place is worth it.

It's been about 36 hours since Spenser has had any sleep and ç
it looks like the circles under his eyes were drawn with ç
magic markers. He quickly finds room 408 and raps impatiently ç
on the door.

The door swings open, releasing a toxic cloud of cigarette ç
smoke exhaled from the nostrils of one HARRY SLADE, 40s, a ç
guy with a haircut like Dick Tracy and a face that's been ç
sandblasted by years of hard-drinking and hard-living. He ç
hasn't always had the Brooks Brothers pin-stripe suit, Rolex ç
watch, and gold cuff links -- but he's adapted to them just ç
fine.

SLADE

Yeah?

SPENSER

Harry Slade?

Slade takes a drag on his cigarette stub and gives Spenser the once-over. He isn't thrilled with what he sees.

SLADE

Who's asking?

SPENSER

My name's Spenser. I'm a private investigator.

Slade chuckles, gives Spenser another once-over, and shakes his head. Slade doesn't think much of this private investigator. Spenser ignores the implication and tries to remain polite.

SPENSER

I want to ask you some questions.

SLADE

I don't give lessons. Try the hotel
dick. I'm sure he can give you
some pointers.

Slade starts to close the door, but Spenser steps in front of ç
it. Slade is all grins.

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SLADE

You're a real tough guy.

SPENSER

I'm not looking for trouble, Harry,
I just want to help Laurie Fisher.
She tried to kill herself today.
I'd like to fix things so when she
gets well, she doesn't try again.

Slade flicks the cigarette stub into the hallway and looks ç

Spenser in the eye.

SLADE

I'm gonna do you a favor, Spenser.

I'm gonna ask you to buzz off.

Usually I'd just make you.

Consider it a professional courtesy.

Now disappear.

Spenser sighs wearily. He's doesn't need this crap.

SPENSER

You aren't going to be a big help,

are you?

SLADE

Sure I am. I'm gonna let you step

back before I slam the door.

Spenser steps back and Slade slams the door shut. Spenser frowns and trudges back to the elevator.

SPENSER'S VOICE

Slade thought he was pretty tough. I think I'm pretty tough, too. I suppose we could have duked it out and proved which one of us was tougher. On a better day, I might have enjoyed that. But it was a rotten day and I wasn't in the mood.

CUT TO:

INT MUSTANG - DAY

Spenser is sitting in his car outside the Bentley Hotel. ç
He's tanking up on coffee and keeping an eye on the lobby.

SPENSER'S VOICE

Besides, what I needed was information,
not bruised knuckles.

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EXT BENTLEY HOTEL - SPENSER'S POV - DAY

A brown SEDAN glides up in front of the hotel. REDD NAPLES -- ç

six feet, two inches of towering muscle in a trim, tailored ç
suit -- sits behind the wheel. Harry Slade comes out of the ç
lobby and gets in the passenger side. Spenser starts his car.

EXT STREET - DAY

The sedan merges into traffic and Spenser follows.

SPENSER'S VOICE

So, being not only tough but resourceful,
I decided on a less direct approach.

EXT DIFFERENT STREET - DAY

Spenser follows a discreet distance behind Slade's sedan. ç
Slade turns the corner. Spenser turns the corner onto

EXT THE NEXT STREET - DAY

just as Slade's sedan screeches into oncoming traffic, ç
weaving between the cars and charging towards the next busy ç
intersection. Spenser has been made.

INT MUSTANG - DAY

Spenser scowls and wrenches the wheel.

EXT INTERSECTION - DAY

as the sedan fish-tails through a left turn and charges down the street. The mustang barrels into the intersection two seconds later, skids into a sharp left, and speeds after the sedan.

THE STREET - SPENSER'S POV

The sedan is gone.

INT MUSTANG - DAY

Spenser slows and looks around. An alley bisects the street. He looks down it both ways.

THE ALLEY - SPENSER'S POV

it's empty. A few scraps of paper, tossed in the sedan's ç
wake, flutter to the ground.

INT MUSTANG - DAY

Spenser makes a hard right and goes into the alley. He isn't ç
ready to give up yet.

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EXT ALLEY - DAY

as Spenser speeds down the alley.

THE SEDAN

suddenly bursts out of a garage and screeches across ç
Spenser's path.

EXT ALLEY - DAY

The Mustang skids to a stop, coming within an inch of ç
crashing into the side of Slade's car.

INT MUSTANG - DAY

Spenser jams it into park, but before he can get out, Redd charges from the shadows beside the Mustang and PUNCHES HIS GLOVED FIST through the driver's side window. Spenser gets hit right in the jaw and gets showered with glass.

SPENSER

falls across the passenger seat. He's dazed, and covered with glass shards.

REDD

reaches into Spenser's coat, pulls out his gun, and aims it at him as

SLADE

comes up beside Redd and peeks into the car at Spenser.

SLADE

Great tail, Spenser. What are
you gonna do next? Tie a string
of tin cans to my bumper?

Slade shakes his head and walks away. Redd smirks at Spenser.

REDD

Pathetic.

REDD

drops the gun on the ground and follows Slade, leaving ç
Spenser dazed in his car and us at the

END OF ACT ONE □

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ACT TWO □

INT HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Spenser is picking the lock on Slade's hotel room door -- and ç
he looks just like you'd expect a man to look after a good ç
beating and 36 hours without sleep. It isn't pretty.

SPENSER'S VOICE

I didn't know why Laurie Fisher had
Slade's card, but I wasn't going
to wait for him to volunteer the
information. Call me paranoid, but I
get suspicious whenever someone answers
an innocent question with threats. When
they start pounding on me, I get
downright nosy.

The lock CLICKS and the door swings open.

INT SLADE'S ROOM - DAY

The room is neat and clean. Spenser closes the door and ç
moves lethargically around the room, searching for clues.

SPENSER'S VOICE

If this were a good day, I would find
Slade's file on Laurie, complete
with notations on why she jumped.

He pulls out the drawers in the bureau. Slade may be a creep, but he folds his clothes nicely. He runs his hands under the drawers and doesn't find any scintillating documents taped underneath them.

SPENSER'S VOICE

If this were a good day, I would at
least find a clue to what Slade was
doing in Boston.

He opens the closet. Just more expensive suits.

SPENSER'S VOICE

But then, if this were a good day,
I wouldn't have let Slade and his
goon get the drop on me.

Spenser sits down glumly on the side of the bed. He looks ç
like he might just fall back and go to sleep.

SPENSER'S VOICE

I'd be at home asleep.

He glances at the nightstand.

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THE NIGHTSTAND - SPENSER'S POV

There's the PHONE, the BIBLE and a HOTEL BROCHURE.

SPENSER

picks up the bible, holds it upside down and shakes it. No ç
vital clues fall out. He sets the book back down -- and ç
notices the brochure. He looks at it.

THE BROCHURE

proclaims the advantages of EXPRESS CHECK-OUT.

SPENSER

smiles. For the first time in a long while. He picks up the phone and dials.

SPENSER

This is Harry Slade in 408. I'd like
to check out.

Spenser hangs up the phone, feeling pretty superior. Then he glances in the mirror.

THE MIRROR - SPENSER'S POV

Ouch. Spenser realizes he looks as rotten as he feels.

CUT TO:

SPENSER

shirtless, leaning into the shower, holding his head under

the stream of cold water. He endures it for a few more ç seconds, then pulls his head out and turns off the water.

INT BATHROOM - DAY

Spenser dries his face with a towel and looks at himself in ç the mirror again. He looks better, but he's still not fooling ç himself. The circles under his eyes didn't wash away, and ç neither did those big bruises on his stomach.

SPENSER'S VOICE

I suppose I should have been comforted
by how tired I looked. It gave me an excuse
for blowing everything I did that day.
Somehow, it didn't make me feel much
better.

There's a KNOCK at the room door.

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INT HOTEL ROOM - DAY

SLADE'S BILL slides in underneath it the door.

Spenser, buttoning his shirt, picks up the bill. He studies it.

THE BILL

is for four days, eight room service meals, several cable movies, and FIVE LONG DISTANCE PHONE CALLS to two San Francisco numbers.

SPENSER'S VOICE

It's amazing what you can learn about a person from his hotel bill. Slade liked meat and potatoes, late-night movies, and was from San Francisco. Best of all, I knew he made five long-distance calls back home to two phone numbers, and those numbers were right there on the bill. That's what we in the detective trade call a

lead.

INT HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Spenser smiles -- just what he was looking for. He sits down on the bed and picks up the phone. He dials and puts the receiver to his ear.

SECRETARY

(on phone)

Hello, Slade Investigations.

Strike out. Spenser hangs up. He dials the other number.

YOUNG WOMAN

(on phone)

Kincaid residence, who's calling
please?

The woman sounds harried, and a baby can be heard WAILING in the background.

SPENSER

Mrs. Kincaid?

YOUNG WOMAN

(on phone)

They went to Boston today and left me with
the baby. Can I take a message?

Spenser smiles big. Bingo.

☒
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SPENSER

I'm supposed to meet them for
dinner in Boston tonight and forgot
where they're staying. Can you tell me?

CUT TO:

INT ANOTHER HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

A much nicer hotel this time, really top of the line. ç

Everyone here is high-class. Everyone, that is, except for ç

HARRY SLADE and REDD NAPLES, who are with a nice, upper-class

ç

couple in their late '20s (KEITH AND LAURIE KINCAID). A ç
bellhop carries their luggage past them to the registartion ç
counter.

SPENSER'S VOICE

In movies, detectives hide behind
newspapers and spy on people in hotel
lobbies. I always thought it was
silly.

Slade and the Kincaids walk past a man sitting behind a ç
newspaper.

SPENSER'S VOICE

I never thought I'd do it.

The man lowers his paper. Of course, it's SPENSER.

SPENSER'S VOICE

What the hell -- it works.

Spenser eavesdrops on their conversation:

Slade looks at Keith and motions to the bar.

SLADE

Let's get a drink. We need
to talk.

Keith turns to his wife.

KEITH

Check us in.

TRACY

I'm a little thirsty myself.

KEITH

Do I have to ask you twice?

Tracy reluctantly trudges off to the registration counter
while the three men head off to the bar.

763□

ä INT LOBBY REGISTRATION COUNTER - DAY

Tracy goes to the desk. Just as she gets there, Spenser ç
appears beside her.

SPENSER

Sorry I couldn't meet you at the
airport, Mrs. Kincaid. Let me take
care of this for you.

TRACY

I'm sorry, do I know you?

Spenser gives her his most ingratiating smile.

SPENSER

Spenser. I'm involved with Mr.
Slade on this case.

She seems a little distracted, but smiles back at him. A ç
CLERK appears at the window and Spenser turns his smile ç
towards him.

SPENSER

(to clerk)

Reservation for Kincaid.

Tracy watches him approvingly.

INT KINCAID'S SUITE - DAY

A sumptuous suite, the kind that comes with chocolate mints ç on the pillows at night and a "welcome" basket of fruit. The ç door opens and Spenser leads Tracy in. He carries her bags.

TRACY

You people do good work. We haven't
seen Laurie in five years.

Oh, would Spenser love to jump down her throat with a million ç questions. But that probably wouldn't be a good idea -- since ç he's supposed to be one of the guys who have already found ç the answers.

SPENSER

I'm sorry we couldn't have found her
a few days earlier.

TRACY

It might have been better if you
hadn't found her at all.

Spenser can't help it -- he looks shocked. She doesn't notice ç
at first.

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TRACY

Did they give you an odd-looking
key when you checked me in?

Spenser looks at the folder in his hand. Yup, they did. He ç
hands it to her. She uses it to open the minibar.

TRACY

Drink?

Spenser shakes his head. Tracy pulls out a bottle of wine and ç

opens it. She pours a very healthy slug into the glass and c
drinks.

TRACY

Do I sound cold when I talk about
Laurie? I don't mean to. It's just that
my husband isn't the easiest person
to live with. They had a big fight
just before she left -- and I'm
not sure she wanted to be found.

SPENSER

That would explain why she was living
under a fake name.

TRACY

So much effort to hide from her own
brother. Do you think it was wrong
for us to look for her when she didn't
want to be found?

SPENSER

That's not my business.

TRACY

Maybe it should be. Did you ask Laurie
if she wanted to see us?

SPENSER

I haven't talked to her.

TRACY

I lived with Keith and Laurie for
two years, Mr. Spenser. She's a
very fragile girl, she needs a
lot of attention, and Keith gladly
gives it to her. Doesn't leave him
much room for anything -- or anybody
-- else. It may have been a good
thing she ended it when she did.

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SPENSER

By running away? That hardly seems
like a good ending.

She knocks back her wine and pours herself another glass of ç
wine.

TRACY

We're all running away from something,
Mr. Spenser.

SPENSER

You don't get very far by running into
a wine glass.

TRACY

Laurie might not have jumped if she
hadn't been found. I gave Keith the
money to find her. I don't know
where else I can run to forget that.

Spenser is about to say something when the door opens and ç

KEITH, SLADE, and REDD come in. Keith looks agitated. Tracy smiles at Slade.

TRACY

Your associate won't drink with me, Mr. Slade. Doesn't that violate the gumshoe bylaws or something?

Slade isn't impressed to see Spenser, he's just pissed.

SLADE

You don't learn too fast, do you Spenser?

Spenser smiles charmingly at Tracy.

SPENSER

(to Tracy)

He's been giving me private eye lessons, but somehow I just can't seem to catch on.

SLADE

Don't worry, you'll remember the
next lesson.

Keith, thoroughly baffled and angry, goes protectively over to
to his wife.

KEITH

What's going on, Slade? I thought
this was between us.

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SLADE

Spenser was just leaving.

SPENSER

Yeah. But I'll be around.

Tracy toasts Spenser goodbye with her glass.

TRACY

The bar is always open, Mr. Spenser.

Spenser gives her a pleasant smile and slips through the door, passing Redd Naples, who is holding open the door and glaring at him.

SPENSER

Nice doorstep. He's found his calling.

Spenser leaves. Redd simmers. Slade and Keith exchange hostile looks and we...

CUT TO:

INT SUSAN'S PLACE - NIGHT

The room is dark. The remains of a candle-lit dinner for two are scattered on the table. The two flickering candles have melted practically down to the holders. What was once a roaring fire is now a few glowing embers in the fireplace.

Spenser is sitting on the floor, sipping wine, and watching the fire die, his back against the couch. SUSAN SILVERMAN is

sitting next to him, intently studying Laurie's drawings. She
winces at one of them.

SUSAN

Yeesh.

SPENSER

I told you it wasn't Norman
Rockwell.

SUSAN

Far from it. That's what's so
interesting about them.

SPENSER

I know a clue when I see one.
That's why I get paid the big
bucks.

It was a wasted witticism. She's not listening to him. She's
absorbed in the pictures.

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SUSAN

When I work with children, I
have them draw pictures for me.

She thumbs through the drawings again.

SUSAN

It's a common technique. The
pictures can tell you a lot
of things the kids don't
know how to say. It's almost
like peeking at their dreams.

She sets the drawings on the coffee table and thinks for a ç
moment. Spenser picks up a drawing and shakes his head.

SPENSER

It looks a lot more like nightmares
to me.

SPENSER

SUSAN

They aren't all nightmares. Some of Laurie's drawings are of other worlds, places very far removed from planet Earth. She wants to escape.

SPENSER

From what?

SUSAN

Those monsters. It's obvious from these drawings that Laurie feels that something terrible is closing in on her from all sides.

SPENSER

If I can find out what, I can help her.

Susan looks at Spenser with concern and gives him a kiss.

SUSAN

You're a man who cares, and I
love you for that. But whatever
the problem is, it's between
Laurie and Keith to work out.

SPENSER

I'm not so sure. There's a secret
here, and whatever it is, Harry
Slade is willing to break bones
to keep it quiet.

☐

She kisses him again, more ardently this time.

SUSAN

I know a private eye who sometimes
goes overboard to protect the
people he cares about.

He thinks about that one a second. You know, maybe she's ç
right. Besides, Spenser really does want to let go, get ç

some sleep, forget...

SUSAN

Besides, I know another woman who
needs your help. Desperately.

He smiles and caresses her cheek.

SPENSER

Two hundred dollars a day plus
expenses.

She smiles. That's more like it.

SUSAN

Let's negotiate.

They pull each other close and they kiss, long and sweet. And ç
we tactfully...

CUT TO:

INT SPENSER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Susan is sound asleep, curled up beside Spenser, who is sitting up, wide-awake, his vacant eyes seeing...

LAURIE

standing behind her window, looking right at him. She is sad, and alone.

SPENSER

standing behind his window, his palms against the glass, trying to reach her, calling to her without being heard.

LAURIE

The window gently opens outward. A breeze sweeps in, tossing her hair, billowing her black dress. Her gaze doesn't leave Spenser.

☒3☐

ä SPENSER

becomes more desperate. He pounds his open palms insistently ç
against the glass.

LAURIE

steps gracefully onto the ledge. Her hair is flying. Her eyes ç
are glued on Spenser.

SPENSER

is frantic now, pounding at the glass, yelling "no" ç
soundlessly.

LAURIE

she whispers something to him and then jumps, falling slowly.

SPENSER

is horrified. He presses himself against the glass, watching her helplessly as she falls.

LAURIE

Her body is on the pavement. She is sprawled on her back, her lifeless eyes staring up at him.

SPENSER

steps back, saddened and angry. His window gently opens on its own, and Spenser hears the soft echo of a single word drifting in with the breeze -- "help."

INT SPENSER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Spenser shakes off the waking nightmare and, careful not to wake up Susan, slips out of bed.

CUT TO:

EXT RANCE'S DONUT HEAVEN - DAWN

The class of restaurant known as "greasy spoons" are a cut ç above this place. This is part of that large class known as ç "filthy dirty spoons." Spenser is standing outside as Belson ç emerges, carrying an armload of donuts and a huge styrofoam ç cup of coffee called "The Coffee Troffee"

BELSON

Spenser? What are you doing here?

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SPENSER

Taking a walking tour of Boston's gourmet restaurants. Listen, Frank, I need your help.

Uh-oh. Belson hurries along, as if someone just cracked a ç whip over his head, and barely manages to balance his booty ç as he marches down the street. Spenser keeps up alongside ç

him.

BELSON

No way Spenser. You know things aren't like they used to be. We aren't at your beck and call anymore.

SPENSER

You took an oath to serve and to protect.

BELSON

Yeah, to serve my boss and protect my butt.

Belson is losing his grip on his Coffee Troffee, but Spenser catches it from him before it drops. Spenser turns his face away from the offensive-smelling steam rising from the Coffee Troffee.

SPENSER

C'mon Frank, I found out who Laurie

is and I need a little background
check, that's all.

Belson stops and faces Spenser.

BELSON

Maybe you haven't heard. I work
for a guy named Webster, not you.
If he catches me doing your
errands, I could end up directing
traffic until I retire.

Spenser holds the Troffee at arms' length.

SPENSER

Her name's Laurie Kincaid, she's
from San Francisco. She jumped
off that ledge after a private
eye her brother hired found
her here.

BELSON

Spenser, are you deaf?

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SPENSER

No, I'm tired. Very tired. And
I don't think I'm going to get
any sleep until I find out
why Laurie Kincaid wanted to
die.

Belson sighs and looks pained. He knows he's going to help ç
Spenser and he already regrets it.

BELSON

I'm not promising you anything
Spenser, but maybe if I have a
couple free minutes and Webster
ain't around--

SPENSER

Thanks, Frank, I owe you one.

Spenser fits the Troffee in snugly between the crook of ç
Belson's elbow and Belson's chest and dashes off into the ç
street.

Belson turns to watch Spenser go and sees

SPENSER

too tired to notice, is stepping right in front of

A MAC TRUCK

rumbling down the street.

BELSON

drops his donuts and Troffee and yells:

BELSON

Spenser!□

SPENSER

freezes at the cry, and

THE MAC TRUCK

rushes by, horn blaring, passing within a foot of him.

SPENSER

stunned and relieved, leans against a parked car.

BELSON

looks down at the spilled donuts and coffee.

763

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BELSON

Now you owe me two

CUT TO:

INT INTENSIVE CARE WARD - MORNING

Spenser walks down the corridor and stops outside the ç observation window to Laurie's room.

INT LAURIE'S ROOM - SPENSER'S POV

Laurie is GONE. TWO ORDERLIES strip the dirty sheets off the ç bed. The window is open; the curtains blow in the breeze.

SPENSER

looks stunned.

SPENSER

No.

Laurie can't be dead. She ~~can't~~" be dead. He POUNDS on the ç window with his open palms -- just like in the dream.

THE ORDERLIES

stare at Spenser. One lets loose with a long streak of ç SPANISH. The other just laughs. The curtain blows in the ç

breeze.

SPENSER

near panic, near despair, stares helplessly.

GRAVELLY FEMALE VOICE

(off)

You're wasting your time.

Spenser whirls around to see NURSE KRYS DEMKOWICZ, 50 and ç tougher than most Marines standing behind him. Spenser stares ç at her, horrified. Kryz doesn't understand his despair.

KRYS

They moved her last night. Room 2701.

Spenser pauses for a moment as he lets that information soak ç in, then goes off down the hall. Kryz watches him for a ç moment, then goes down the corridor in the other direction.

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263□

ä INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR OUTSIDE ROOM 2701 - DAY

SPENSER stops to catch his breath -- and his perspective; ç
he's still recovering from the momentary panic. But is this ç
the right door? Spenser's almost frightened to find out. A TV ç
GAMESHOW blares from inside.

GAMESHOW HOST

(off)

...And it can all be yours --
you picked the right door. Let's
find out.

To a great round of GAMESHOW APPLAUSE, Spenser pushes open ç
the door and goes in.

INT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The APPLAUSE BUILDS AND PEAKS. In the room, the curtains are ç
drawn, and the only light comes from the TV gameshow. It ç
takes a moment for Spenser's eyes to adjust. But as soon as ç
they do, he sees

LAURIE

asleep in bed. In the dim light, he can't see how badly she's hurt -- she looks beautiful.

GAMESHOW HOST

(off)

...four hundred pounds of raw fish!

SPENSER

turns off the T.V.

LAURIE

stirs awake. She sees

SPENSER - LAURIE'S POV

Spenser sitting in a chair by her side.

INT HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Laurie looks puzzled.

LAURIE

The man across the street.

He puts the PEARL NECKLACE on her bedside table.

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SPENSER

Last time we met, you dropped this.

I thought you'd want it back.

She nods, accepting it. Tranquilizers do that to you. And ç
she's been qiven a lot. She studies the pearls.

SPENSER

I want to help you.

She doesn't seem to hear him. She's in another world. She ç
smiles.

LAURIE

I made it.

Spenser nods and smiles. This sounds healthy. He squeezes her ç hand.

SPENSER

Yeah, you did. You made it.

But they're not talking on the same wavelength.

LAURIE

Free. I made it. The sole survivor.

Spenser gets it now -- the comic book she was working on when ç she jumped. But why is she so out of it? He gets her chart ç from the foot of her bed and checks her medication. He ç doesn't like what he sees.

SPENSER

They pumped the whole drugstore into
you.

LAURIE

The sole survivor.

Spenser puts the chart down and goes back to her side.

SPENSER

Laurie. Listen to me.

Her expression changes to one of horror. She screams.

LAURIE

I won't go. Don't let them take me!

SPENSER

It's all right, Laurie. It's only
a comic book story. You're safe.

But she doesn't hear him. She's staring past his shoulder.

☒3☐

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LAURIE

Don't let them take me! Stay away!

SPENSER

You're safe□

KEITH

(off)

Laurie.

Spenser whirls around to see KEITH standing in the doorway. ç
That's who she has been looking at. He meets Spenser's gaze and ç
looks at the private eye angrily.

KEITH

You shouldn't be here.

LAURIE

Stay away! Don't let him take me!

Spenser goes over to Keith.

SPENSER

I'm not the one she doesn't want
around.

KEITH

She's my sister. I think I know
what's best for her.

Laurie is getting more unhinged.

LAURIE

Go away!

SPENSER

She doesn't want to see you.

She is shrieking frantically. Keith is both concerned and
very uncomfortable. He'd like his sister to shut-up and
Spenser to disappear.

KEITH

Please, Mr. Spenser, will you
leave the two of us alone?

Laurie's shrieks have become an inarticulate scream. ç
Spenser isn't quite sure what to do when the door bursts open ç
and a KryS comes in and rushes to Laurie's side to try to ç
calm her.

KRYS

(to the men)

You'd better go. You're just
upsetting her.

☒3☐
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KEITH

She's my sister. I'd like to
stay.

KRYS

(to Spenser)

Okay, but I want you out.

They both look at Spenser sternly. He reluctantly leaves, ç
taking one last look at Laurie as he passes through the door.

SPENSER'S POV -- THROUGH CLOSING DOOR

Keith goes to Laurie's bedside, despite her obvious objections, and sits in the chair. He reaches for her hand. And then the door closes, and Spenser can't see anymore.

EXT BELMONT HOTEL - DAY

HARRY SLADE stands on the curb, putting his suitcase in the back seat of his rented sedan. A HAND grabs his shoulder and yanks him out. Slade is not too surprised to see it's SPENSER holding him. Boy, does Spenser look awful.

SPENSER

You're going to tell me what's going on with Laurie Kincaid.

Slade sneers.

SLADE

I'm in a hurry, Spenser, I don't have the time to beat you up again.

Spenser doesn't have time for this either. He slams Slade ç
back against the car.

SPENSER

Why is she so afraid of her brother?

SLADE

I get paid to keep secrets.

Buy a crystal ball.

Slade snaps his fingers and REDD NAPLES appears behind ç
Spenser. Slade sneers, feeling superior.

SLADE

You remember my investigative
associate, Redd Naples.

(to Redd)

Make it fast. We got a plane to catch.

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#63

ä This is where Spenser should shrink back, petrified in ç

terror. But that doesn't happen. Because appearing behind
Redd is HAWK, who rests one powerful hand on Redd's shoulder.

HAWK

Howdy.

ç

Redd looks at Hawk and, to his credit, he knows he doesn't
stand a chance against him. Spenser smiles grimly at Slade.

SPENSER

My investigative associate is
bigger than your investigative
associate.

Slade looks to Redd for some help. Redd can't shrug Hawk off.
Hawk smiles.

SPENSER

So now that the kiddie games are
over, I want some answers.

SLADE

Answer this.

He tries to slam his fist into Spenser's stomach, but Spenser was expecting it this time. Spenser deflects it and gives him a solid right to the jaw. Slade stiffens and falls right into Spenser's arms. Spenser stares in shock -- it was a good punch, but not that good.

SPENSER'S POV -- SLADE'S BACK

has a bullet hole in it.

SPENSER

lets him drop and dives behind the car.

SPENSER

Get down!

But he's too late. This time he hears the GUNSHOT and

REDD

falls down dead.

HAWK AND SPENSER

down on the ground, pull out guns and scan the roofs for the ç
sniper, but

THEIR POV -- THE ROOFS

are deserted. The sniper is gone.

SPENSER

stares at the carnage around him. What the hell is going on ç
here?

END OF ACT TWO □

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ACT THREE

SLADE

lies on his back, quite dead, captured for posterity in the
FLASH of a camera's bulb.

BELSON

(off)

We found the shells, Lieutenant,
right where Spenser thought they'd
be.

EXT BELMONT HOTEL - DAY

This isn't the start of a great day for LT NICHOLAS WEBSTER
-- at least, that's the attitude he's oozing as he stands
from his crouch beside SLADE'S BODY.

Belson, eager to please, is standing self-consciously behind Webster, unable to read the mood of his new boss.

Webster steps back from the body and nods at the POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER, who moves in for a few more choice shots. Webster peers over the top of Slade's sedan to the rooftops across the street.

EXT ROOFTOP - WEBSTER'S POV

A POLICE OFFICER waves at Webster and holds up a BAGGIE containing two spent shells.

BELSON

(off)

Probably a high-powered rifle,
like Spenser said.

EXT BELMONT HOTEL - DAY

Webster turns, gives Belson a dark look, and then faces the front steps of the hotel, where Spenser and Hawk are sitting,

watching the CORONER'S ASSISTANTS lift up REDD'S BODY BAG in front of them.

BELSON

Took'em both out with one shot each. Spenser's right, this guy is a pro.

Webster ignores him and walks over to Spenser and Hawk, Belson in tow. Spenser looks agitated -- he's tired of standing around when he should be doing something. The sleepless days are bringing him close to losing it completely.

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WEBSTER

According to Belson here, you have all the answers.

Belson grimaces, now realizing he said the wrong thing.

WEBSTER

So I'm sure you can tell me why these men are dead and who killed

them.

SPENSER

Of course I can. I've just been holding back for two hours because the other twenty cops who asked didn't say the magic word.

Webster looks back at an obviously uneasy Belson, then turns back to Spenser.

WEBSTER

Okay, let's try a simple one.
Who are you working for? Please. □

SPENSER

No one.

Webster just looks at him. Spenser sighs angrily.

SPENSER

I saw a woman jump out a window.

And since no one in the Boston PD gave a damn, I decided to find out why. Harry Slade was involved -- and was about to tell me how when he was killed.

Webster shakes his head. Unbelievable. Belson looks uncomfortable. Webster looks at Hawk. Hawk is unreadable. Webster shifts his his gaze back to Spenser.

WEBSTER

Leave the woman and her family alone. If she wants a private detective, she can hire one.

Webster glares at Spenser some more, then walks away. Belson follows, shooting Spenser a worried glance. Spenser turns to Hawk.

SPENSER

I need you to find the shooter for me.

73□

??Hawk gives him a long, appraising look. He sees that Spenser's in trouble.

HAWK

Man's got a point. You losing your cool.

SPENSER

I didn't ask for attitude lessons. I asked for a favor.

HAWK

You don't know this shooter is tied up with your little family. Hate travels, and slime like Slade leave a long trail.

SPENSER

That's profound. I love your oblique ghetto-zen poetry. But today I'm in a

hurry. Are you with me or Webster?

Hawk gives him a long, cold stare. If anyone besides Spenser said that, he'd be praying for a quick death. But friendship forgives a lot. Hawk turns and walks away.

Spenser watches him go in disgust. What's wrong with everyone around here? Then he sees BELSON and walks off in the opposite direction.

Spenser corners Belson where the cop is conferring with some OFFICERS.

SPENSER

Get the information I needed?

Belson shoos away the officers and looks pleadingly at Spenser.

BELSON

Geeze, Spenser. Are you trying to get me fired?

Belson pulls Spenser behind the corner of the hotel.

EXT STREET - DAY

They're on the sidewalk beside the hotel, out of sight of the officers on the crime scene. Spenser's Mustang, with its shattered driver's side window, is parked a few feet away.

BELSON

You heard what Webster said. You're supposed to drop this thing.

73□
??

SPENSER

I will, just as soon as you tell me what Laurie's story is.

Belson knows he can't win. He reluctantly digs through his pockets, pulling out crumpled candy wrappers, lint, change, and various papers. Spenser is antsy.

SPENSER

Well?

BELSON

Keith Kincaid is a lawyer. Slade
did a lot of work for his firm. But
it's his wife's money he's spending.
Her Dad owns the biggest newspaper
in the city.

Belson finally finds one last crumpled sheet of paper.

BELSON

The rest is here.

Belson hands the wadded paper to Spenser, who uncrumples it.

THE PAPER - SPENSER'S POV

is a "faxed" police report from the San Francisco Police
Department.

BELSON

(off)

That's it.

SPENSER

ignores him, as he reads the report hungrily.

BELSON

looks sternly at Spenser.

BELSON

I'm through with this Laurie
Kincaid thing, and so are you.
Okay?

SPENSER

is so engrossed he doesn't even look up from the paper.

BELSON

shakes his head and walks away.

73□
??

BELSON

(mutters, to himself)

Okay.

CUT TO:

EXT BOSTON - DAY

as Spenser's car winds through the streets.

SPENSER'S VOICE

On that crumpled piece of paper was a story of crumpled lives. When Laurie was 14, her mother was stabbed to death by a burglar. Laurie and her 18-year-old brother Keith saw it happen. The killer was never found. Keith raised his sister and two years later married Tracy, who moved in

with them.

EXT HOSPITAL - DAY

as Spenser's car pulls up front.

SPENSER'S VOICE

Not long after that, Laurie disappeared.

I could understand her pain. I could

understand her running. I couldn't

understand why she wanted to die.

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Spenser heads towards Laurie's room. As Spenser approaches,

he can hear an argument in Laurie's room. He hangs back to

eavesdrop on it:

INT LAURIE'S ROOM - DAY

She is in bed, looking better than she did yesterday. She is

clearly not as sedated as she was before. She is distraught,

but she's hardly the shrieking wreck she was yesterday. Keith is doing his level-headed best to be persuasive, but he's failing.

KEITH

I just want what's best for you.
Come home with me, let us take
care of you.

LAURIE

No! Why won't you listen?
I won't go back with you.
Not now, not ever.

73□

??

KEITH

You know it's the right thing
to do. We need each other. You
need me.□

LAURIE

I need to be left alone.

It's a losing battle, and Keith knows it. He gives her an appraising look. He's disappointed.

KEITH

You aren't thinking straight. You don't know what you're saying.

LAURIE

Go away. Please.

He goes to the door and leaves, going into

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Keith isn't pleased to see Spenser -- and there's little doubt that Spenser was eavesdropping.

KEITH

What are you doing here?

Keith closes Laurie's door behind him and places himself

firmly in front of Spenser.

SPENSER

I came to see Laurie.

KEITH

She doesn't want to see you.

SPENSER

I think that's for her to decide.

KEITH

I don't care what you think. Nobody
asked you to barge into our lives.
You're not wanted here -- not
by Laurie, not by me, and not by
this hospital. Just go away and stop
bothering us.

SPENSER

It's not just a family matter
anymore. Harry Slade was killed

while I was talking to him. That makes it my business.

73□

??

KEITH

It's a sad thing, and I feel terrible about it, but it has nothing to do with my sister. Slade had a lot of enemies.

SPENSER

Why did your sister try to kill herself?

Keith glares at him.

KEITH

You didn't hear a word I said.

SPENSER

You haven't said anything I want

to hear.

Keith leads Spenser away from the door and then speaks to him quietly.

KEITH

I'm a reasonable man, and I'm trying to be reasonable with you. Laurie is a very unstable girl. She can't face a barage of questions and the last thing she needs to hear about is Slade's murder.

SPENSER

That doesn't explain why she ran away from you, or why she wanted to die.

KEITH

I could take legal action and bar you from getting with 100 yards of my sister. But I don't want

to do that.

Keith is quiet for a moment, weighing his words carefully before he speaks.

KEITH

You strike me as a smart man. You probably already know we saw our mother killed by a burglar when we were teenagers. You can't ever recover from an experience like that, but I've managed to cope with it. Laurie never did. She can't face any kind of stress or conflict. If she lives with me, I can give her the stable environment she needs.

73□

??

SPENSER

If living with you is the answer to her problems, why did she run away?

KEITH

I'm not perfect. We do our best
and sometimes we make mistakes.
We had an argument and, because
she can't face tension of any
kind, she ran away.

SPENSER

So you think she jumped because
she couldn't deal with the stress
of being found.

KEITH

Exactly.

Spenser isn't sold, but he doesn't have any leg to stand on.

Keith spots a DOCTOR going into Laurie's room.

KEITH

I hope that settles things.

(firm)

Goodbye, Mr. Spenser.

Keith follows the doctor into Laurie's room, and Spenser leaves, digesting what he's heard.

CUT TO:

INT SPENSER'S PLACE - NIGHT

as Spenser comes in, still peeved from his encounter at the hospital, and sees Susan sitting on the couch, setting down the book she was reading before he came in. Spenser goes straight to the refrigerator.

SPENSER

Hi.

SUSAN

That's it, "hi?" I thought I'd get a little more attention than that.

He pulls out a beer and twists off the top.

SPENSER

Sorry, but all my attention is
on Laurie Kincaid right now.

73□

??Susan looks at him with concern.

SUSAN

I know. I'm worried about you.

Spenser takes a drink, turns and looks out his window at
Laurie's office.

SPENSER

There's nothing to worry about.
I can take care of myself.

SUSAN

Spenser, you haven't slept in days.
Something is wrong. Maybe we can
talk it out.

SPENSER

I'm okay.

SUSAN

No, you're not. I'm trained to recognize these things. You're exhausted and irrational. You could get yourself or somebody else killed.

Spenser turns and looks at her.

SPENSER

It's just this case. I can't stop thinking about it. There's something that doesn't fit, and if I can find it, maybe I can make everything right.

She walks over to him.

SUSAN

Why do you have to make everything
right?

SPENSER

I saw her jump. I saw her try to
kill herself.

SUSAN

That doesn't make you responsible
for her life. There are a lot of
hurting people out there. If you
take responsibility for all of them,
who's going to take care of you?

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□3□

He gives her a look full of love. He knows.

SPENSER

You.

She smiles and they kiss. She pulls back slowly.

SUSAN

It's bedtime for you, buster.

Spenser smiles. Sure is. He sets the beer down. She takes his hand and leads him towards the bedroom.

SUSAN

C'mon.

He follows her, taking one last look out his window.

LAURIE'S WINDOW - SPENSER'S POV

There's someone in there, he's just come in. And he's got a RIFLE. And the someone knows he's been spotted.

SPENSER

tackles Susan and they hit the floor as

SPENSER'S WINDOW

explodes in a hail of GUNFIRE from the next building.

SPENSER

pulls out his gun and crawls towards the window.

SUSAN

Spenser, no!

He is almost at the window when he hears GUNSHOTS from a
DIFFERENT GUN.

He flattens himself against the wall and chances a peek out
threw window.

LAURIE'S WINDOW - SPENSER'S POV

He can just make out the figure with the rifle hurriedly
shuffling away from the window, forced back by someone elses'
gunfire, but Spenser can't see who the otehr guy is doing the
shooting.

INT SPENSER'S PLACE - NIGHT

Spenser rushes to the door.

73□
??

SPENSER

Stay down. Don't open the door
for anyone.

SUSAN

Spenser!

But Spenser is already gone.

INT STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Spenser flies down the stairs, taking them three at a time.

EXT STREET - NIGHT

Spenser throws open the door and spills into the street,
just as

A CAR

screeches around the corner, fish-tailing wildly, coming straight for

SPENSER

who doesn't have time to shoot. He barely has time to LEAP OUT OF IT'S PATH.

EXT STREET - DAY

Spenser hits the ground, rolls and comes up FIRING, shooting at the car as it speeds away.

The car disappears around the corner. Spenser stands up, pissed, and hears the sound of rushing FOOTSTEPS coming up behind him. He whirls around, aiming his gun right at

HAWK

who is holding his massive, silver-plated gun, a look of

frustration on his face.

HAWK

He's gone, but he's carrying
my bullet.

And we FADE OUT on Spenser's confused reaction.

END OF ACT THREE □

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ACT FOUR □

EXT SPENSER'S PLACE - NIGHT

SPENSER catches his breath from the chase as HAWK impassively
holsters his gun.

SPENSER

Not to sound ungrateful, but
what are you doing here?

HAWK

My own Yuppie stake-out: Staking
out a Yuppie who's too stupid to
know when he's falling apart.

Spenser is not overjoyed at the news -- or at Hawk.

SPENSER

Great. What about the help I
asked for? Find out anything
about the shooter?

HAWK

Yeah. Think that was him shooting
at you.

Spenser's really not in the mood for Hawkish wit. But he
restrains his temper.

SPENSER

Aside from that?

HAWK

Still looking.

SPENSER

Then why the hell are you wasting
your time watching me?

HAWK

Figure anyone talks to me the way
you did today either got a death wish or
too tired to know what he's doing.
Either way, you in trouble.

Spenser almost snaps, but Hawk's words have an effect. Maybe everyone's right and he is acting like a jerk. He nods his apology.

HAWK

Did find one thing about your
shooter. Not too many people
mourning his victim.

73□

??

SPENSER

Slade?

HAWK

Good detective. Bad man. Uses his
detecting skills to find nasty
information about people. Then charges
not to detect anymore.

Spenser brightens a little -- for the first time in ~~ages~~□
Here's something he can work with.

SPENSER

A blackmailer.

HAWK

You getting quicker every minute.

CUT TO:

INT SPENSER'S PLACE - NIGHT

As BELSON and two UNIFORMED OFFICERS are leaving. Belson is pocketing his notebook. Susan and Hawk are sitting on the couch, talking MOS.

BELSON

You ever thought about moving,
Spenser?

SPENSER

I like this neighborhood.

BELSON

It doesn't like you.

Belson hands Spenser a piece of paper. Spenser reads it, surprised.

BELSON

Guy handed it to me downstairs.
Don't expect to be invited to any
block parties.

Belson leaves. Hawk motions to the note.

HAWK

Fan mail?

SPENSER

A petition. The neighbors have
all signed a letter asking me
if I'd consider living somewhere
else.

73□

??It doesn't surprise Susan.

SUSAN

Maybe you should promise them
there'll be no more shoot-outs
or car crashes after 5 p.m.

That doesn't help Spenser's mood. Spenser gives her a look,
and is preparing his own witty retort, when the phone rings.
Spenser snaps it right up.

SPENSER

Spenser.

(he listens)

I'll be right there.

Spenser hangs up and grabs his coat.

SPENSER

Tracy Kincaid wants to see me.

She says it's important.

Susan looks concerned.

SUSAN

You need ~~to~~ sleep□

Spenser heads to the door.

SPENSER

(to Susan)

I'll be fine.

(to Hawk)

I need one more favor. Stay here and
watch Susan for me.

HAWK

She not the one needs help.

Spenser, if he heard Hawk's remark, doesn't care. He leaves.

INT KINCAIDS' HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Spenser knocks on the Kincaids' door. After a moment, TRACY
opens the door, holding a glass. She looks surprised at
Spenser's appearance -- he really looks terrible. She smiles
drunkenly.

TRACY

It's bad enough to run into a bottle.
You look like you ran into a Mack
truck.

Spenser attempts a smile. It doesn't work very well. He's not

thrilled to see Tracy drunk.

73□

??

SPENSER

You said it was important.

TRACY

Right to business. No small talk.

You're a man of action, Spenser.

She moves out of the way. He goes into the room.

INT KINCAIDS' HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Spenser goes straight to a chair and collapses into it. Tracy

lurches over to the minibar.

TRACY

I don't suppose you want a drink.

Spenser shakes his head, a little irritated. This woman

claimed this was urgent, and now she's playing kiddie games.

TRACY

Dumb question.

She takes her time making herself one. Spenser is tired, and doesn't have the patience for this.

SPENSER

Is there a reason you called
me here, or do you just hate
to drink alone?

She sits down opposite him and downs half her drink.

TRACY

My husband hired a private
detective to find Laurie. I want
to hire you to lose her again.

Spenser is really irritated. This is ridiculous.

SPENSER

Lose her?

TRACY

Help her runaway again, but do
it right so next time she isn't
found.

Spenser, fed up, stands to go.

TRACY

I'm offering you a job, Spenser.
Or do you just handle charity cases?

He heads for the door.

73□

??

SPENSER

It's been fun playing games with
you, Mrs. Kincaid. But there's a
woman waiting for me at home, and
she never says anything she's ashamed
of the next day.

Tracy jumps up to stop him.

TRACY

Laurie's going back with Keith.
He's packing her things at the
hospital right now. We're leaving
tonight.

Spenser stops. Tracy downs the rest of her drink and goes up
for a refill.

TRACY

I knew that would interest you.

SPENSER

I thought she refused to go back.

TRACY

She should have. Keith is crazy about
Laurie. And I mean crazy. When she
lived with us, he spent every minute
watching over her. Telling her what she
could do, what she could say, even

what she could think. And she let him.

Spenser has a flash of insight.

SPENSER

That doesn't leave much room in Keith's
life for his wife.

She gives Spenser a sharp look -- is she that transparent?

TRACY

But Laurie finally began to rebel.
And after months of fighting, she
ran away. As much as I love her,
I didn't miss her.

SPENSER

The honeymoon started at last.

.pa

⌘

TRACY

Four years of honeymoon. The only
time Keith brought up Laurie was

when he asked for money to hire
detectives. Who knew he'd hire one
who could actually find her?

SPENSER

And Keith has been ignoring you
ever since.

TRACY

I drink, Spenser, and I say
things I'm ashamed of the next day.
But I do care about other people.
This isn't just about me.

She pours herself a fresh drink.

TRACY

Keith has been completely obsessed
since he found Laurie. He's been
pouring out huge sums of my money.
He wiped out our joint savings account
-- twenty thousand dollars.

She stirs the drink with her finger and licks it.

TRACY

When he asked for more this afternoon,
I said my purse was empty. And tonight
some bum showed up, said he was coming
for the rest of his money. I told him
the bank was closed. What's Keith
spending it all on?

SPENSER

Ask him.

TRACY

He doesn't talk to me anymore. All
he cares about is having Laurie back.
Whether she wants to go or not.

SPENSER

Apparently, she does.

She takes a long drink.

TRACY

He's a powerful man, Spenser. I think
he made her choose between two hells:
go back with him, or be committed to the
looney bin.

73□

??She polishes off the drink.

TRACY

I think she chose the wrong hell.

EXT STREET - NIGHT

SPENSER'S MUSTANG cruises towards the hospital.

INT SPENSER'S MUSTANG - NIGHT

SPENSER drives wearily. He's exhausted. He can barely keep
his eyes open.

SPENSER'S VOICE

Was Laurie an emotionally disturbed woman who needed her brother's loving care, or was she her brother's unwilling prisoner?

SPENSER'S POV

The lights ahead blur and dance in Spenser's exhaustion-clouded vision.

INT SPENSER'S MUSTANG

Spenser rubs his eyes, trying to get them to work for just a little while longer.

SPENSER'S VOICE

The only one who could tell me was Laurie. If she was going back of her own free will, fine. But I had to hear it from her, and this time nothing was going to stop me.

But something is -- Spenser's own physical limitations, which have finally caught up with him. He fights to keep his eyes open, but they droop closed. And Spenser dreams...

LAURIE

stands in her window, looking sad and alone.

SPENSER

desperate, pounds his open palms insistently against the glass.

LAURIE

jumps. And SCREAMS. Only her scream is actually the sound of a CAR'S HORN BLARING.

73□

??INT SPENSER'S MUSTANG - NIGHT

Spenser jerks awake to see that

SPENSER'S POV

He has run a red light and another car is screeching towards him.

SPENSER

twists the wheel violently.

THE MUSTANG

barely misses the other car and hurtles up on the curb before coming to a stop.

INT MUSTANG - NIGHT

Spenser desperately tries to get the engine started, but it's dead. He's frantic -- the dream has put him in a completely other world.

EXT STREET - NIGHT

Spenser jumps out of his car. He runs down the center of the wet street towards the hospital.

EXT HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Spenser up dashes into the hospital.

INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Spenser runs down the corridor, finds Laurie's room and tears open the door.

INT LAURIE'S ROOM - SPENSER'S POV - NIGHT

Spenser has startled everyone. Keith and Krys, the nurse, freeze. They were about to shift Laurie, now very alert, onto a gurney.

INT LAURIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Spenser catches his breath. He looks straight at Laurie.

SPENSER

Laurie, wait.

Keith recovers from his surprise.

KEITH

Get out of here, Spenser. Now.

73□
??

SPENSER

(to Laurie)

Is this really what you want
to do?

Laurie looks indecisively at Spenser. Keith looks mad, shifting his gaze between Laurie and Spenser. When Keith speaks, it's directed at both Spenser and Laurie.

KEITH

It's what best for her, and
she knows it.

LAURIE

I need help.

KEITH

And the best place to get it
is back home.

Spenser's gaze hasn't left Laurie, and he speaks calmly and evenly.

SPENSER

What's the hurry? San Francisco
isn't going anywhere.

The nurse has been holding her tongue, and she just can't anymore -- what Spenser says makes a lot of sense for her patient.

KRYS

(to Keith)

I wish you'd let her stay a few

more days.

KEITH

The doctor said it was fine.

KRYS

The doctor said he'd rather
you waited.

Spenser turns his attention to Laurie.

SPENSER

What do you want, Laurie?

She looks sad. And scared.

LAURIE

To be me. To be Laurie Fisher.

Keith shakes his head and angrily confronts Spenser.

73□

??

KEITH

You see what I mean? She's not
making any sense. She's sick
and you're just making it worse.

Spenser, his eyes on Laurie, ignores him completely.

SPENSER

So do it. Be whoever you want
to be.

LAURIE

I can't. I have to go back.

Keith quickly seizes the moment.

KEITH

She's come to her senses, why
don't you, Spenser?

He rushes over to Laurie's side to resume putting her onto
the gurney.

KEITH

(to Krys)

Come on, nurse, we have a plane
to catch.

But Krys hesitates. She's waiting to see how this plays out.

Again, Spenser pays no attention to what Keith has said.

SPENSER

(to Laurie)

Why? Because he told you? You
can make your own decisions.
You have for four years. Why
stop now?

Keith looks her in the eye.

KEITH

Remember what we talked about.
We made a decision.

Spenser picks up on the fear in her eyes.

SPENSER

You aren't trapped, Laurie. No
one is going to make you do
anything you don't want to do.

She looks at him hopefully. She wants to believe him.

SPENSER

I promise.

73□
??

Laurie's lower lip trembles. She's on running head-long
towards a tremendous hurdle. She is looking straight into
Spenser's eyes, and gaining strength from him.

LAURIE

I'm staying.

She bursts into tears, but there's a smile on her lips. She's
just passed a major hurdle -- and hit the ground running. Her
sobs are like water pouring through a broken dam.

LAURIE

I'm staying.

Krys and Spenser are relieved. Keith is absolutely stunned -- and frantic.

KEITH

No, no. You have to come home.

SPENSER

You heard the lady. This is home.

Krys leaves, smiling gratefully at Spenser as she goes out. Keith stares at his sobbing sister, then turns, enraged, on Spenser, and it makes Laurie very nervous.

KEITH

I don't care what she says. She can't make her own decisions.

SPENSER

She just did.

KEITH

She's sick, and she's coming home!□

I'll go to a judge if I have to.

It's for her own good. I-

Laurie yells out suddenly, stopping Keith cold.

LAURIE

(to Keith)

You killed my mother.

Keith jerks like his been shot and turns slowly towards her,
a pleading with his eyes.

KEITH

It was the intruder. Remember?

You saw him.

73□

??Laurie is wracked with sobs. She just jumped the biggest hurdle of all.

LAURIE

You killed her.

Keith looks imploringly at the Spenser.

KEITH

There was an intruder. He broke in.

He killed her. Laurie saw him.

She even told the police.

But nothing can't stop Laurie now that the truth is finally coming out.

LAURIE

You killed our mother and you made

me lie about it for all those years.□

Keith is devastated, Spenser stares at him. Now it all fits.

SPENSER

Slade found out, so-

Keith, almost in a daze, interrupts.

KEITH

I hired an old client. A mean
one.

It's finally over. Spenser suddenly feels all the fatigue of
all the days without sleep hitting him. Not a good time for

THE DOOR

to fly open and THE HITMAN to burst into the room, a SILENCED
GUN in his hand. His left shoulder is bloodied, he's feverish
and he's pissed off.

INT LAURIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

What happens next moves happens too fast for a weary Spenser
to do anything about it.

HITMAN

(to Keith)

Nobody stiffs me and nobody
sets me up.

He aims his gun at Laurie.

KEITH

No!

73□

??Keith hurls himself at The Hitman as the gun FIRES.

KEITH

is hit point-blank in the chest, taking the bullet meant for
Laurie. He drops, dead.

LAURIE

screams.

SPENSER

sensing perhaps his only real opportunity, goes for

THE HITMAN

whoturns to shoot him.

SPENSER

deflects the hitman's gunarm and drives his fist into the
hitman's stomach.

THE HITMAN

doubles over, and Spenser bashes him in behind the head. The
hitman drops to the floor and Spenser kicks the gun away.

SPENSER

stumbles over to Laurie, now hysterical, and comforts her as

KRYS and several ORDERLIES, drawn by the screams, rush in around them.

CUT TO:

EXT HOSPITAL - MORNING

as Spenser, looking horrible, walks out, Susan and Hawk on either side of him, and heads towards Hawk's BWM. Several POLICE CRUISERS are parked haphazardly nearby, their lights still flashing.

SUSAN

And the hitman?

SPENSER

Keith hired him to kill Slade, then me. But Hawk put a bullet in him instead. The hitman thought he was being set up.

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5P3□

HAWK

Fact Keith didn't pay off in
advance made the shooter sure
he was taking a fall.

They get into Hawk's car. Spenser piles into the back seat,
Susan sits up front with Hawk.

INT BMW - MORNING

They drive off.

SPENSER

I'm still worried about Laurie.
What happens to her?

SUSAN

looks at the road in front of her and ponders the thought.

SUSAN

Thanks to you, she gets help. Real
help. She's facing years of

psychiatric care, and it won't be
easy, but at least her life is in
her own hands. She'll ne--

A loud SNORE interrupts her. She twists around in her seat
and we see

SPENSER

sound asleep in the back seat.

SUSAN AND HAWK

share a smile.

HAWK

Sleeping beauty.

They laugh and we FADE OUT.

THE END □

