

PIED PIPER
BASED ON A TRUE STORY

Written by

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FADE IN

EXT. TUCSON, ARIZONA - DAY

The year is 1963, but someone forgot to tell Pima County. Squeaky clean store fronts and clothing styles suggest the mid 1950s, if that.

A BOY SCOUT lugs a red wagon full of newspapers down a quiet suburban street.

An OLD WOMAN sits on a rocking chair, smiling, on the porch of a large house. The sign on the front lawn reads Hillcrest Nursing Home.

A MILK-FED COUPLE, letter-wearing jock and prom queen, shares a milkshake at a diner.

A LOCAL MAN and LOCAL WOMAN stand in front of a flower store. The woman looks straight ahead and sounds wooden.

LOCAL WOMAN

Tucson's really such a lovely,
all-American place. The desert
is beautiful, and it's sunny
every day.

She turns and looks at the man, who seems unconvinced. He is about to speak when-

ON TV

The image of the couple blurs, condenses into a tiny dot, then disappears.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- DAY

KATHARINE SCHMID, a husky, raven-haired woman in her late fifties, is crouched down by the television. She stares at grey screen, hand still hovering by the dial. She rises, smooths out her full skirt, and walks over to the

BATHROOM

CHARLES "SMITTY" SCHMID, JR., a petite man who looks to be in his thirties, has his head under the running bathtub faucet. Katharine reaches over and rubs her hands through her son's black hair, slowly, turning the water murky.

INT. GRETCHEN'S BEDROOM- DAY

GRETCHEN FRITZ, a skinny 16-year old, removes curlers one by one then lightly brushes her short, flaxen hair. She is sitting at a wooden vanity in her bathrobe, staring at her living doll reflection. Non-threatening teen idol pin-ups decorate her walls.

INT. SMITTY'S BATHROOM- DAY

Katharine dries off Smitty's hair while he looks into the medicine cabinet mirror. A clothespin is hanging from his lower lip, pulling it down into a pout. He removes it, posing for the mirror. Without looking down, he raises a make-up sponge to his face and applies a light tan-colored foundation. His mother smiles meekly and leaves the room.

INT. GRETCHEN'S BEDROOM- DAY

Gretchen lies on her pink canopy bed, putting the finishing touches on her polished toes. The sunshine from the window casts her in a radiant white light. She waves her hand back and forth over her foot, then leans back against a pillow. She picks up a tawdry pulp paperback with one hand, and a slim, burning cigarette with the other.

INT. SMITTY'S BATHROOM- DAY

Smitty peers into the mirror, applying a thick layer of filmy chapstick. Then, with black eyeliner, he pencils in a small black birthmark on the side of his face. He stares at his reflection the entire time, never even looking down at his 'tools.'

EXT. SMITTY'S HOUSE- DAY

Smitty's bungalow is tiny, simple and surrounded by a chain link fence. He looks striking and strange as he strides down the walkway, limping slightly towards his car. He's wearing a dark suit and tie, his black hair slicked into a pompadour, his pointy cowboy boots kicking up rocks. He slides on a pair of sunglasses.

RICHIE BRUNS, a tall, dangerously skinny 19-year-old with light hair and sunken eyes, leans up against a gold Thunderbird convertible. He, too, is wearing a dark suit. Richie has a box of pots and pans in his arms. He drops them in the back seat, then lingers as Smitty gets behind the wheel.

RICHIE
Can't I come along?

SMITTY
And what? Wait in the car?

Smitty pulls out of the driveway slowly.

RICHIE
I told you- anyone will tell
you- she's trouble!

SMITTY
And what am I?

Smitty smirks at his friend in the rear view mirror, turns up the radio, then speeds away.

INT. GRETCHEN'S BEDROOM- DAY

The doorbell rings. Gretchen sighs and puts down her book and cigarette, hiding the ashtray in a drawer.

INT. THE FRITZ'S HALLWAY

Gretchen floats down the stairs in her robe and opens the front door. Smitty is standing there, grinning, a cast iron pot in his hand. They give each other the once-over.

SMITTY
Are you the lady of the house?

GRETCHEN
Lady? Depends on your
definition, I guess.

Smitty laughs hollowly. Gretchen raises an eyebrow, hand on her hip.

SMITTY

You'll do. As you can see, I'm selling cookware. But not just any cookware, this is what the best chefs in the world use—New York, Los Angeles, Paris. Ever been to Paris, young lady?

GRETCHEN

Have you?

SMITTY

Well, no, you got me there. But I can assure you that the chefs in Gay Par-ee use nothing but the best. And by the best, I mean pots and pans made by the fine—

GRETCHEN

Listen. I don't cook. My mother doesn't cook. The cook cooks. So...

Gretchen begins to close the door.

SMITTY

Hey, I understand. You're probably more of a fast food girl yourself. A burger and fries on Speedway after a dip in the pool. You a member?

Gretchen opens the door a little wider, tilting her head.

GRETCHEN

Yeah...

Smitty smiles bashfully and looks down at his feet.

SMITTY

I have a confession to make.

GRETCHEN

(playfully)

Well, there's a church down the road.

SMITTY

I'm not really a door-to-door salesman.

GRETCHEN

So what are you? A pervert?

SMITTY

I spotted you swimming at the Dip 'n' Drink on Speedway last week and, well... I knew I had to meet the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen.

He stares at her intensely with his pale blue eyes. Gretchen is unimpressed. And unafraid.

GRETCHEN

So you followed me home? You are a pervert.

Smitty backs off a little.

SMITTY

Hey, I didn't have to follow you anywhere. You're pretty popular. I just asked around.

GRETCHEN

I'll bet.

SMITTY

Uh huh. Everyone seems to have a story about you.

Gretchen smiles slyly, leaning against the doorframe.

GRETCHEN

That's kind of the pot calling the kettle black, isn't it Smitty?

She touches the pot's handle. Smitty is stunned.

GRETCHEN

What? Didn't think I knew who you were? How many salesmen wear boots like those? How many people do?

They both look down at Smitty's black cowboy boots. He lifts a pant leg to reveal the elaborate structure of one- the laces up the back, the high, angled heel.

SMITTY

Elvis does.

GRETCHEN

Really?

SMITTY

Yup. We both had them custom made.

Gretchen is growing warmer. Smitty is slowly moving himself closer to her - and further inside the house.

GRETCHEN

So. What have you heard about me?

SMITTY

Warnings, mostly.

Gretchen is enticed.

GRETCHEN

Yeah? Like what?

SMITTY

That you're trouble.

Gretchen snorts. Smitty feigns seriousness, bringing his face closer to hers, voice lowered.

SMITTY

That you're a kleptomaniac,
that you've been suspended
from school a dozen times,
that you're a pathological
liar who needs psychiatric
treatment...

Gretchen backs away suddenly, her eyes watering.

GRETCHEN

Get out of my house!

She shoves the bewildered Smitty out the door.

SMITTY

What, why?

GRETCHEN

Who sent you here?

SMITTY

No one!

GRETCHEN

Oh? You just decided on your own to come here and... tease me?

SMITTY

No! I told you. I came here because-

GRETCHEN

I don't care why you came! And neither will my brother-in-law. Maybe you've heard of him, or the Tucson Mafia.

Gretchen is teetering between violence and tears. Smitty lowers his head and speaks gently.

SMITTY

I came here because I think you're beautiful. But I guess I'll just have to admire you from afar.

He slumps his shoulders and begins to inch away.

GRETCHEN

Well?

Smitty turns. Gretchen is swinging the door back and forth behind her, lifting a leg a little so her naked thigh shows.

GRETCHEN

Are you going to make me a cocktail or what?

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- NIGHT

Wholesome-looking TEENAGERS dance to airy pop around a worn red easy chair and other second hand furniture. Smitty strolls through the room, beer in hand. Ponytailed GIRLS fawn over him, BOYS in Hawaiian shirts and sneakers look just as eager for attention. He is the perfect host- a compliment or inquiry for each guest. He does a little two-step right into the

KITCHEN

where the mood is somewhat less jubilant. Richie is standing by the fridge, drinking, next to MARY FRENCH. She is a curvy teenager with a pale, sour face, overpowering teased brown hair, and clothes like a librarian. Smitty greets them and opens the fridge. He sighs, closing it.

MARY

What is it?

SMITTY

Out of beer. I guess I'll have to go raid my parent's fridge...

RICHIE

You can have mine.

SMITTY

Come on, Richie. I have other people to think about.

MARY

Let me go get it.

Smitty places his hand on Mary's shoulder.

SMITTY

Thanks. That means a lot.

Mary blushes. Richie rolls his eyes.

MARY

It's only next door.

Mary scurries out, looking at the ground.

RICHIE

I guess she doesn't know about Gretchen.

Smitty spins around.

SMITTY

What about Gretchen?

RICHIE

What about Darlene Kirk? I saw you two going at it at the drive-in last Friday. They're going to find out, you know. All of them.

SMITTY

I think I can handle it, Richie. I've handled a lot more. You know that.

Smitty gives Richie a light punch and winks at him. Richie looks like he's going to vomit.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- NIGHT

Smitty does the Twist with a group of TEEN GIRLS, drink in hand. He gives each breathless nymphet a turn with his grinding hips.

INT. SMITTY'S BEDROOM- MORNING

Smitty wakes up in his bed: a satin-sheeted mattress on the cluttered floor. He turns to find Mary next to him, asleep. He elbows her gently and, when she wakes up, pretends to still be dozing himself.

MARY

(Whispering)

Smitty? Smitty.

SMITTY

Wha-

Smitty wipes his eyes, yawns, and looks around.

SMITTY

Wow. This place got pretty messed up last night.

MARY

Always does.

SMITTY

I guess I'd better-

Smitty attempts to rise, but clutches his temples and falls back down.

MARY

No, don't get up. I'll find you some Aspirin.

Mary exits the room. Smitty grins sleepily.

SMITTY

Try my parent's house!

Mary re enters.

MARY

Okay, but last night they watched me like I was trying to swipe something.

SMITTY

Ah, they love you. Oh, and ask my mom to come back here with you so she can help us clean up.

MARY

Sure. You just go back to sleep.

EXT. SMITTY'S HOUSE- DAY

Smitty, dressed, ambles out of his house and across the litter-strewn lawn. Mary is raking trash and Smitty's mother is dropping beer bottles into a bag, neither one really looking at the other.

SMITTY

Mom, you don't have to do this. Can't you get someone from Hillcrest to come over?

Katharine stops. She speaks with a faint German accent.

KATHARINE

I don't mind. Charles. Look at you, such a handsome boy. What's the occasion?

MARY

Yeah. Where are you going?

SMITTY

Nowhere special. Just out for a ride.

Smitty straddles his motorcycle, revs the engine, and drives away.

KATHARINE

Doesn't he look handsome?

Mary leans on her rake, watching Smitty ride away. She gazes at him as if he were a rock star.

MARY

Always does.

EXT. SPEEDWAY- DAY

Gretchen is thrilled, clinging to Smitty's waist as they speed down the main strip on his motorcycle. TOWNSPEOPLE watch them fly by from mini-golf greens and drive-thru restaurants.

GRETCHEN

Where are we going?

Smitty doesn't seem to hear her.

EXT. THE ROADSIDE- DAY

Smitty stops his bike on a quiet stretch of road. He and Gretchen dismount. He rolls the motorcycle along as they leave the road and walk through tall, pale grass towards the desert. Gretchen scurries to keep up, wincing as a branch hits her ankle.

EXT. THE DRINKING SPOT- DAY

Smitty and Gretchen arrive at a sandy clearing in the desert. There are traces of a campfire, some old alcohol bottles and a few crates turned over to use as makeshift stools. Smitty lifts a crate and, from under it, pulls out a wool blanket. He spreads it out under the shade of a blossoming Palo Verde tree, most of its flowers dry and covering the ground. He removes a bag of food from under his motorcycle seat, and he and Gretchen lie down side-by-side with their sandwiches.

GRETCHEN

You've come here before.

SMITTY

All the time. We drink here, race bikes.

GRETCHEN

Who's "we"?

SMITTY

Everyone who's anyone.

Gretchen snorts and spreads out on her stomach, accepting a soda opened by Smitty.

GRETCHEN

If you were anyone else, I'd call you a liar.

Smitty laughs and kisses her. She pulls away playfully.

GRETCHEN

You know what would make this perfect?

Smitty holds up a finger, silencing her, then bolts up and returns with an old radio.

GRETCHEN

What else you got over there?

Smitty smiles and hits the buzzing radio, turning the dial until a rock song comes on.

GRETCHEN

I love this song.

The music gets louder. They lock eyes.

INT. THE DRINKING SPOT- LATER

Smitty and Richie are sitting, drinking, exactly where Smitty and Gretchen were earlier on.

RICHIE

No way. Already?

SMITTY

Yes, sir.

RICHIE

Yes sir! The four F's: find
'em, feel 'em, fuck 'em,
forget 'em.

Smitty rolls his eyes.

SMITTY

It's a little more poetical
than that. A real process.
First, you get her laughing...

INT. DRINKING SPOT- EARLIER THAT DAY

Gretchen breaks eye contact, turns onto her back and puts her hands behind her head. Smitty grabs his empty cola bottle, holding it like a microphone. He serenades a giggling Gretchen with a lip synch of the song playing over the radio.

SMITTY

(VO)

That's when you go into Act
Two.

He drops the bottle and crawls towards her. She wriggles away. He puts his hands on her shoulders, holding her down. She's unfazed, and whispers in his ear.

GRETCHEN

Hey. I'm not going anywhere.

They kiss. She holds his head as he grabs her waist. She glances at her hand, now stained with black grease from his hair and brown make-up from the side of his face. She wipes it off and continues kissing him.

SMITTY

(VO)

Just when you're kissing her
passionately, feverishly,
that's when you stop.

RICHIE

(OS)

Stop?

Somehow, Richie is there, sitting under the sun, drinking, three feet away from Smitty and Gretchen. Smitty looks up, speaking directly to Richie.

SMITTY

Stop.

Smitty pushes Gretchen aside and turns away from her suddenly. She is dumbfounded.

SMITTY

Only if you're serious about getting some.

Smitty furtively opens a tiny packet of fast food salt, drops some on his finger, then dabs it on his eyes.

GRETCHEN

Smitty...

Smitty turns back to her, his eyes tearing.

GRETCHEN

What's wrong?

SMITTY

That's where you start to spew the real tender garbage. Say something like...

Smitty turns back to Gretchen.

SMITTY

Nothing's wrong, darling. Everything is right. These are tears of happiness. Never, no, never, have I been so fortunate to kiss someone as beautiful as you. Then you kiss her again, on the hand, gently.

Smitty kisses Gretchen's hand, then her neck, then her cheek, all the while leering over her shoulder at Richie, still sitting nearby. He speaks to Gretchen again.

SMITTY

You must be an angel, for every time I kiss you I feel so clean inside. Then more kisses, more garbage, more kisses, more crap. The hardest part is not laughing. Harder than getting her bra undone through her shirt. Finally, a kiss on the mouth and it's on to Act Three.

Richie shrugs.

RICHIE

What's Act Three?

SMITTY

If you have to ask...

He forgets about his friend and kisses Gretchen passionately again. He pulls her blouse off. She undoes his shirt, revealing how pale his muscular chest is compared to his tanned face and neck. Richie watches.

EXT. THE DESERT- EVENING

Smitty stands in the light of the setting sun, urinating onto the sand. He whistles a tune and looks over at Gretchen, sitting far in the distance. He picks a small item up off the ground. It is an old, rusted hair curler with a few wisps of hair stuck inside. He twirls it between his fingers then drops it, using his boot to cover it up with sand.

EXT. THE DRINKING SPOT- EVENING

Smitty returns to find Gretchen in her underclothes, smoking a cigarette and looking through his wallet. He rushes to her.

SMITTY

What the hell are you doing?

GRETCHEN

Just collecting my fee.

Smitty reaches for the wallet, but Gretchen plays Keep Away.

GRETCHEN

What? Didn't you know I was a hooker? I mean, if I'm going to do it, why not get paid?

Smitty grabs the wallet. A small photo flutters out. Gretchen picks it up. In it, Smitty is posing with Richie, Mary and JOHN PAUL SAUNDERS, a good-looking brunette boy wearing a thuggish scowl.

GRETCHEN

Who are they?

SMITTY

That's Mary and my second in command, Richie. And that's JP.

GRETCHEN

Ooh, he looks tough. What's his number?

SMITTY

I dunno. How do you call up the army?

GRETCHEN

Whistle. You know how to whistle, dontcha?

Gretchen leans into Smitty as if for a kiss, then takes his wallet back and sprints away. She grabs a wad of bills and throws them into the air. He stands, laughing, then runs after her.

EXT. THE FRITZ HOUSE- NIGHT

Smitty's motorcycle pulls up in front of Gretchen's large, white, pillared house. She gets off and gives him a little wave, suddenly shy.

GRETCHEN

Well, see you around.

SMITTY

How about tomorrow?

GRETCHEN

You want to go out again?

SMITTY

Of course! And again... and again... If you don't mind.

Gretchen is a little surprised by this post-coital attention.

GRETCHEN

Well, my summer classes are over at three. I usually hang around the parking lot for a while. I guess you could pick me up.

SMITTY

Great! I'll be there.

He plants a kiss on her and rides away, leaving her happy, albeit confused.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- NIGHT

Smitty is staring straight ahead intently.

SMITTY

I've been meaning to give you
this for quite some time. As a
symbol of the requited love
I've always sought.

He produces a cheap-looking silver ring with a blue,
heart-shaped stone. Mary gasps from across the couch. She
wraps her arms around his bare chest.

MARY

I knew Richie was lying! He
kept going on about some
spoiled brat you were scheming
on and I told him-

Smitty puts his hand to her mouth.

SMITTY

There's not a soul here but
you and me. It'll always be us
against the world. You can get
a job to help me out until I
sign a record deal. And then,
then we'll live in a mansion
with a swimming pool...

She showers him with kisses. The front door opens, and
CHARLES SCHMID SR., Smitty's father, appears in the
doorway. He is a small man in his late sixties. He wears
a sweater-vest and horn-rimmed glasses, and bears little
resemblance to his son. He has a thick Eastern European
accent.

CHARLES

Oh. Mary. I'm sorry, I...

MARY

I'll go.

She nods at Smitty's father then casts her eyes downward.
She smiles quickly at the ring and at Smitty, then slips
by his father and out the door. Smitty glares at Charles.

SMITTY

Ever heard of knocking?

CHARLES

Your mother wanted me to let
you know dinner's ready.

SMITTY

Then ever heard of phoning?

Charles walks over to the phone, which is under a pile of clothes and an open girlie magazine, beeping. He puts it back in its cradle, peering down at his son disapprovingly. He silently scans the room, glaring at the empty beer bottles and overflowing ashtrays.

SMITTY

Yes? Is there something else?

CHARLES

You're going too fast,
Charlie.

Smitty guffaws and picks his guitar up off the floor.

SMITTY

Oh please. If you were me,
would you slow down?

He smiles up at his father and begins strumming. Charles, Sr. leaves.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- NIGHT

Smitty is sitting, fully clothed, electric guitar on his lap. A dozen or so of the usual TEENAGERS are crowded at his feet. Mary, Richie and DARLENE KIRK, a bespectacled redhead, sit on the couch. TESA BROWN, a thin, gawky brunette sits by them on the floor.

DARLENE

Play a song, Smitty!

Everyone cheers. Smitty acts as bashful as possible, considering the guitar is already plugged in and by his side.

TESA

Come on, Smitty!

Richie leans over from his place on the couch and squeezes Smitty's arm lightly.

SMITTY

Okay, okay. One song. This is
for a special lady.

Smitty begins to play and sing a rock cover. Both Darlene and Mary grin at him slyly. A few girls sitting on the floor smile up at him, too, dreamily. Smitty is a true performer, stretching his voice and doing tricks with the guitar.

The song ends and everyone applauds. GIL, a doughy boy with dirty blonde hair, takes Smitty's guitar from him and puts it away carefully. Smitty bows and blows kisses. A lone person continues clapping longer than the others. Smitty looks up to find Gretchen, in a mini skirt and cropped top, in the doorway. Everyone turns to look at her.

GRETCHEN

Heard there was a party.

Richie and Mary are wary. Smitty doesn't miss a beat.

SMITTY

Everyone, this is Gretchen.
She's a cherished acquaintance
of mine, so treat her well.

A few boys whistle. Gretchen curtsies and heads over to Smitty. She leans over, her face close to his. He kisses her, bending her over in front of everyone. There are a few more whistles and words of approval. Mary gets up and leaves the room, head bowed under her mop of hair. Someone puts on a record and the dancing continues.

Richie looks at a slightly drunk Darlene, who seems unruffled by this public display of affection. She removes a tiny ring with an orange, heart-shaped stone and places it in Richie's hand.

DARLENE

Give this to Smitty, will you?
I don't know why I thought he
could change.

RICHIE

He'll never change.

DARLENE

Oh well. I guess he was just a
stand-in for Elvis, anyway. I
never really liked him.

Richie is shocked, and almost in awe of this girl. He shakes his head.

RICHIE

Everyone likes him. He's a star.

DARLENE

Elvis or Smitty?

She takes a swig of her beer and flashes him a smile. Richie continues to grin at her, wide-eyed.

INT. SMITTY'S KITCHEN- NIGHT

Mary and Richie are at the small table, drinking and looking sullen. Gretchen enters, a burst of music from the party following her in. She dances a few steps, tipsy, finishing her beer before retrieving a new one from the fridge. Mary and Richie watch her coldly. She doesn't seem to notice.

GRETCHEN

Can you believe all the kids he can fit in here? This place is tiny! Smaller than my room!

Neither respond.

GRETCHEN

And how old are some of them? I saw one girl from my school who can't be more than thirteen and- hey, how old is Smitty, anyway?

Again, neither answers her slurred questions. Gretchen puts one hand on the table, lowering her voice in a vain attempt to be covert.

GRETCHEN

Hey, you guys are his friends, you can tell me. That mole on his face- real or fake? Come on. I swear it's gotten bigger since I met him.

She cackles and leaves.

INT. SMITTY'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Smitty lies on his bed while Gretchen walks around the room, scanning his shelves, fingering records and knick knacks. Muffled music and laughter can be heard from the ongoing party. Smitty's mole does look bigger and slightly smudged.

SMITTY

You like to snoop, don't you?

GRETCHEN

Yup.

SMITTY

That's going to get you into trouble one of these days.

GRETCHEN

Already has.

She finds a girlie magazine on his bedside table and flips through it, unimpressed. He grabs it and tosses it aside, shooting her a look that's somewhere between playful and threatening.

SMITTY

Well stop it.

GRETCHEN

Why? Got something to hide?

He plants a kiss on her. She pulls away, pouting.

SMITTY

What's the matter, baby doll?

GRETCHEN

I don't think your friends like me.

SMITTY

What? Who? I'll straighten 'em out.

GRETCHEN

I don't want to say. You won't like it.

SMITTY

Tell me, baby.

GRETCHEN

Well, Richie hardly said two words to me. And that girl, the one with the rat's nest, she's been giving me the evil eye all night.

SMITTY

Yeah well, Mary and Richie aren't very social. They'll warm up to you. Everyone will. 'til then, who needs them?

Smitty opens his bedroom window. Gretchen picks his keys up off the table where a little black book lies.

GRETCHEN

I'll drive.

Smitty exits through the window. Gretchen starts to follow him, then hangs back. She grabs the little black book and drops it into her purse, then continues out the window.

EXT. THE FRITZ HOUSE- NIGHT

Gretchen and Smitty pull up in Smitty's car. Gretchen brushes off her dress then looks up at her house. The downstairs lights are all on.

GRETCHEN

Shit. My parents are home.

SMITTY

Are you in trouble?

GRETCHEN

Who cares? But you'd better go around back. I'll open my window and you can climb up.

SMITTY

Why? Are you ashamed of me?

GRETCHEN

If they don't like you, it'll just be another reason to hate me.

SMITTY

I have a way with people's
folks. Trust me.

Gretchen looks doubtful, but doesn't stop him from following her inside.

INT. THE FRITZ LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

DOCTOR FRITZ sits in a large leather chair, smoking a pipe and examining Smitty, who is by himself on a delicate love seat. Gretchen, the immaculate MRS. FRITZ, and WENDY, Gretchen's twelve-year-old tomboy sister, all sit on a long sofa. There is a teapot and a tray of tiny cakes on the coffee table in the center of the room.

DR. FRITZ

So what happened to your face?

Wendy laughs. Mrs. Fritz chokes slightly on her tea and turns to her husband, who's holding a glass of scotch.

MRS. FRITZ

Ronald!

DR. FRITZ

Well look at the kid, Cici
It's not like he doesn't know
he's wearing make-up.

MRS. FRITZ

I don't think-

DR. FRITZ

He's probably got a good
explanation for it, and I'm
just curious what that is.

Gretchen shoots Smitty a smug look. He remains unfazed.

SMITTY

That I do, Doctor Fritz.
The thing is, I'm a singer.
This is like stage make-up.
It's part of my persona. I
play guitar, too, in a band.

WENDY

Do you have a record?

Dr. Fritz snorts.

MRS. FRITZ

Wendy, of course not, he's only-

SMITTY

Actually, we've got plans to cut one soon. We've just got to smooth out a few kinks.

MRS. FRITZ

Oh? What's your band's name?

Gretchen turns to Smitty, awaiting his reply.

SMITTY

Well, ah, this month? Burn Rubber.

DR. FRITZ

What's that? Rock 'n roll?

Smitty glances across the room at a shelf of records.

SMITTY

Not really, sir. I'd describe it more as Sinatra meets Johnny Cash.

Dr. Fritz is warming up.

DR. FRITZ

Oh? You like Johnny Cash?

SMITTY

Who doesn't?

DR. FRITZ

You'd be surprised. Cici and the kids can't stand it when I play his records. Would you like to see my collection?

SMITTY

Would I!

Both men rise and walk over to the teak cabinet that holds the record player. Dr. Fritz crouches down and lifts the top two records off the teetering pile- Johnny Cash and Frank Sinatra. Smitty swoons over each album shown to him by Dr. Fritz. They settle on one and Dr. Fritz places it gently on the turntable.

SMITTY

Come on, ladies! Aren't you going to dance?

MRS. FRITZ

I don't know. It's almost ten o'clock. Wendy should be in bed by now.

WENDY

No way, Mom. Don't be square!

Wendy gets up and dances with her father, then Smitty, who lifts her up into the air.

WENDY

When you make your record, will you come over and play it for us?

SMITTY

Sure thing. I'll give you all tickets to come to my concerts, too. And if you're good, you can come backstage with Gretchen.

Wendy looks delighted. Mrs. Fritz is smiling at the affection Smitty is showing her, and finally stands herself, dancing awkwardly with her husband. Gretchen sulks in the background.

INT. THE FRITZ'S HALLWAY

Smitty walks towards the doorway, with the whole family behind him.

WENDY

Can't you stay a little longer?

Smitty crouches down.

SMITTY

Sorry kiddo. But I'll see you real soon. Maybe I'll even sing a song for you.

Wendy hugs him and he stands back up. Mrs. Fritz touches Smitty's arm and they kiss one another's cheek softly.

MRS. FRITZ

Great to meet you, Smitty. I have to say that you're a cut above the boys Gretchen's usually running around with.

Dr. Fritz shakes his hand. Gretchen glares at the scene.

DR. FRITZ

I couldn't agree more. It's been a pleasure.

SMITTY

Oh, the pleasure's all mine. Gretchen's a lucky girl.

More smiles and pleasantries are exchanged. Gretchen approaches Smitty, the rest of her family still watching. She removes a wad of gum with one finger and French kisses Smitty lewdly. He gives them a "What can you do?" look over her shoulder.

INT. GRETCHEN'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

Gretchen stretches on her bed in her bathrobe. She removes the stolen notebook from her purse, lays it on her pillow and opens it to a random page. It is full of doodles and Smitty's handwriting. A diary. Gretchen briefly reads a passage and turns to another, then another. Finally, she settles on a page, her lips moving as she reads. Her eyes widen.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT- DAY

Smitty pulls up in his convertible, music blaring. Gretchen is smoking and talking with three SCHOOL FRIENDS. She looks unusually subdued. Her friends giggle and stare as Smitty waves, and she walks over, hopping into the passenger seat. Her face is expressionless.

GRETCHEN

Drive.

They pull away.

EXT. SPEEDWAY- DAY

Smitty and Gretchen drive along silently. A soft ballad plays quietly on the radio. Smitty finally stops outside the Family Feedbag drive-thru restaurant. He turns to her. She cuts him off before he can speak.

GRETCHEN

When you came to my house that day, you didn't fool me one bit. I used to watch you and Richie hang around outside school and talk to the older girls. I saw your picture with all those gymnastic trophies. My friends were jealous when you took me out.

Smitty looks bashful, then notices Gretchen's hard expression.

SMITTY

Wait, is this about Darlene and Mary? I told you, Darlene's out of the picture, and Mary's just a friend...

Smitty trails off, faced with Gretchen's glare. She clears her throat and looks out the window, reciting.

GRETCHEN

'I poked him with a stick, then touched his skin. Finally, I was sure he was deceased. I should have been relieved, and I suppose I was. But I was also so energized, so turned on. I wanted to re... resuscitate him just so I could bash his brains in again for... for what he did to my sweetheart.'

Smitty slaps Gretchen. She hardly flinches. He sits back and laughs quietly.

SMITTY

Wow. You memorised all that?

GRETCHEN

It would have been harder not to remember.

They sit in silence, cars and PEDESTRIANS passing in the background.

SMITTY
Have you told anyone?

GRETCHEN
Have you?

SMITTY
No. Not about that.

Gretchen looks away, then turns to him.

GRETCHEN
What else is there?

SMITTY
How did you get my journal?

GRETCHEN
I took it. Now answer my question.

Smitty jumps on her suddenly, cursing and hitting her head against the dashboard. She fights back viciously.

EXT. SMITTY'S CAR- DAY

Smitty and Gretchen grapple. The townspeople pass by briskly, paying them little heed.

INT. SMITTY'S CAR- DAY

Smitty and Gretchen both sit back down, seething. He's got a scratch on his face. Her lip is bleeding. His eyes darken and his voice is cold.

SMITTY
So now you know what I'm capable of. What I've done. If you're smart, you won't cross me.

She smiles through her bloody teeth.

GRETCHEN
I won't cross you? Are you kidding? I know your secret, not the other way 'round.

He looks away, angry. Her expression softens.

GRETCHEN

Don't get me wrong, Smitty.
I'm not scared. I'm not mad.
In fact...

Gretchen straddles Smitty, to his surprise.

GRETCHEN

I think it's kind of romantic.

SMITTY

Really?

GRETCHEN

Yeah. Getting revenge on that
guy 'cause he got your girl in
a car crash. It's exciting.
You're exciting. That's what
all the girls say, and now I
know.

SMITTY

You don't know the half of it.

Gretchen raises her eyebrows. He ravishes her.

MONTAGE

Smitty wins a drag race on a desert back road, and
Gretchen is at the finish line to congratulate him. The
whole thing is so overly wholesome it's surreal.

Smitty helps Gretchen hold her ball at a bowling alley.
Richie and Mary are sitting, scowling, in the background.

Smitty, wearing an apron and holding tongs, tells a well-
received anecdote at a Fritz family barbecue.

Gretchen sees Smitty hugging Mary on his front lawn. She
runs after him until he's forced to escape up a small
tree.

Smitty and Gretchen make out at the desert drinking spot,
with a few other COUPLES around.

At a drive-in movie theatre, Gretchen approaches Smitty's
car drinks in hand, to find Smitty flirting with a YOUNG
GIRL.

Smitty exits his house to find the words "RAT BASTARD" written on the side of his car with black shoe polish. He lifts a clenched fist, but in what seems to be mock anger.

Gretchen borrows a book from a MALE CLASSMATE in the school parking lot only to have Smitty appear, angry.

Smitty dictates a letter to a cheerful-looking Richie, who types away. CLOSE UP ON the letter: "To The Arizona Health Department, I must warn Pima County residents about a resident spreading Sexually Transmitted Diseases to most of the male population..."

Smitty and Gretchen share a milkshake outside the Family Feedbag, then start kissing.

Smitty dresses at the drinking spot, then notices that Gretchen is in his car. He runs after her as she drives away, laughing. He chases her into the sunset.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- DAY

Smitty is sitting in a chair, speaking on the phone. Richie sits on the couch, pretending to watch TV but listening in.

SMITTY

No! I'm busy! None of your business who's here! Maybe, maybe not. I didn't say it was Richie. No I- I- I'll have whoever I want over to my house!

Smitty slams the phone down. It rings. He picks up the receiver.

SMITTY

I don't want to talk to you!
Nobody's here, okay? Nobody!

He hangs up again. It rings once more, and he picks it up again.

SMITTY

I don't want to talk to you!
Go rob a liquor store you
goddamn slut!

He pulls the phone cord out of its plug and throws the phone across the room, fuming. Richie looks up slowly.

RICHIE

Gretchen?

SMITTY

Gretchen who?

Richie looks confused.

SMITTY

Of course it was Gretchen!
It's always Gretchen!

RICHIE

So drop her, man. All you ever do is fight with her and bitch about her, so just dump the whore and get it over with. It's not like you've never done it before. Goddamn. You never used to let chicks talk to you like that.

SMITTY

She's not just a chick.

RICHIE

Oh man. Don't tell me you're in love.

SMITTY

What? No! It's not that. Richie... she knows about Alleen.

RICHIE

Everyone knows that story.

SMITTY

It's not just a story. And I've got Mary and JP to think about.

RICHIE

Well... How did Gretchen find out?

SMITTY

She just did! Now she won't shut up about it.

RICHIE

So shut her up.

Smitty chuckles and leans back.

SMITTY

Can't say I haven't thought about it.

RICHIE

I could do it for you, you know. So you wouldn't get in trouble. I could put a rufie in her beer or something.

SMITTY

I think you underestimate her.

INT. THE SCHMID DINING ROOM- NIGHT

Gretchen is at the dinner table with Smitty and his parents. The wallpaper is a pattern of faded flowers, and there are two mounted headshots in simple frames- one of John F. Kennedy and a larger photo of Smitty on a pommel horse. Everyone present looks uncomfortable.

KATHARINE

You should have seen Smitty's friend John Paul when he was here. Eating like an animal, wiping his hands on the tablecloth. Isn't that right, Charlie?

Charles, Sr. looks as if he's about to speak.

SMITTY

Ma, that was a year ago. He was just out of Fort Grant.

KATHARINE

Richard went there, too, and he's not half that bad. Really. Some children never learn manners.

She looks straight at Gretchen, who is cutting her meat awkwardly and has her elbows on the table. She looks up and delivers a phony smile.

GRETCHEN

When I was going to private school, we took etiquette classes every week. What a bore- they cut right into our lacrosse games.

KATHARINE

Etiquette classes? What a lovely idea. Charlie, darling, do you think Mary would be interested? My treat, of course. Just call it an engagement present.

Gretchen's hand stops in midair, a piece of meat dangling from her fork

EXT. THE SCHMID'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Smitty and Gretchen exit, the screen door slamming behind each of them. Mr. and Mrs. Schmid can be heard raising their voices inside. Smitty walks ahead. Gretchen grabs his arm.

GRETCHEN

Turn around, you little fink!
I thought you two were over!

Smitty keeps walking. Gretchen halts.

GRETCHEN

You're sick, you know that?
What do you think Mary would say about Alleen? Or the police?

Smitty turns.

SMITTY

I've been questioned. My reputations's intact. Unlike some people...

GRETCHEN

Yeah? Well I know stuff they don't.

SMITTY

Is that what you think?
Everybody knows, and nobody
cares.

GRETCHEN

What about the boy you killed?
The one in your diary.

SMITTY

I made that whole thing up for
stupid dames like you to read.
You love that dramatic crap.

He continues walking, but she remains in one place,
stomping her foot in childish anger.

GRETCHEN

I'll kill you!

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- DAY

Smitty is pacing around the room while Richie sits on the
couch.

RICHIE

...or throw acid in her face!
That'd shut her up, stop her
from strutting around Speedway
like she's some kind of beauty
queen, better than the rest of
us.

SMITTY

What are you, jealous?

RICHIE

That way, no guy would ever
touch her again.

SMITTY

But what would I do with some
ugly chick?

EXT. THE FRITZ HOUSE- DAY

Richie descends the steps of the Fritz's front porch and turns the corner, where Smitty is waiting in his car. His fake tan is darker, his lips paler and his mole bigger than ever before. Richie shakes his head and gets in.

RICHIE

The maid said the whole
family's in California.

SMITTY

That's a drag.

Smitty starts the car, music blaring. Richie removes a baseball bat from under his seat, smashing the Fritz's mailbox off its post as they drive away.

EXT. SPEEDWAY- NIGHT

The usual teens are sitting around at picnic tables and on the fronts of cars outside the Family Feedbag. Gil pulls up in a dilapidated red car.

GIL

Guys! Smitty's place! He paid
off a delivery truck driver
and he says there's enough
booze for three weeks!

The teens snap out of their boredom. They pile into cars, laughing and screaming. Darlene remains seated at a picnic table. Tesa rises across from her.

TESA

Aren't you coming, Darlene?

DARLENE

I don't really feel like it.

TESA

Oh come on! You know you'll
have fun. And you can just cut
out if you don't.

Darlene is obviously struggling with something on her mind. Her voice is barely a whisper.

DARLENE

Tesa... You know that missing
girl, Alleen Rowe?

TESA

Sure, my sister had Algebra
with her.

DARLENE

Well... I heard something
crazy. That she's dead. That
Smitty and some of his friends
did it.

TESA

Uh huh...

DARLENE

You've heard it, too?

TESA

Sure. Who hasn't? Now come on!

Tesa goes to her car. Darlene remains seated. She watches
all of her friends drive off, excited and carefree. Tesa
motions for her to come over to a small black car.
Darlene finally gives in, slowly rising.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- NIGHT

Smitty's party is in full swing. The music is louder than
it's ever been, the lyrics more suggestive. Teens are
dancing close, drinking hard and passing around a joint.

Smitty leans over Darlene, clearly buzzed, fingering a
strand of her hair.

SMITTY

You know, you'd make a
bitchin' blonde.

Richie and Gil, both drunk, wrestle playfully while their
friends watch and cheer.

Smitty leans over Tesa who looks close to tears.

SMITTY

They think it might be cancer.
I might not have long.

Richie tries to emulate Smitty. He whispers in Darlene's
ear, and she slaps him. But just as Smitty passes by
holding Tesa's hand, Darlene holds Richie's face and
plants a kiss on him.

EXT. SMITTY'S HOUSE- DAWN

Smitty rides his motorcycle on the lawn, with Tesa on the back. The sky is a pale grey as the sun begins to rise. Smitty is carried inside by a crowd of laughing teens.

INT. SMITTY'S HOUSE- THE NEXT EVENING

The crowd of partygoers is beginning to diminish. Some rouse passed out friends and leave, others continue dancing and drinking. Smitty attempts to croon along to a record, shimmying unevenly, beer in hand. Richie catches him as he falls. Mary enters, looking down at Smitty with disgust. He sees her and speaks into his microphone.

SMITTY

Thank you. Thank you very much.

He stumbles over to her. She is visibly angry.

SMITTY

Mary, baby, where have you been?

As usual, Mary is uncomfortable with an audience, however small. She looks down at the floor, her voice a low growl.

MARY

I want these people to leave.

SMITTY

But baby, it's a party. How can I tell them to go?

MARY

I want to talk. Alone.

SMITTY

That's all well and good, baby doll, but I've got to be a good host.

MARY

Smitty, I'm knocked up.

Smitty isn't listening to Mary, instead looking over her shoulder at Gretchen, who has just entered.

SMITTY

Gretchen! Baby!

The teens present stop their conversations short to observe what's going on. Gretchen strides over to Smitty, determined, sneering at Mary.

GRETCHEN

What's she doing here?

MARY

Me? What are you doing here?

GRETCHEN

I'm his girlfriend!

MARY

Well I'm going to be the mother of his child.

Gretchen's eyes widen, then she relaxes and laughs.

GRETCHEN

Really? You sure it's his?

They swipe at each other. Gretchen is vicious, grabbing Mary's hair, but the larger girl overpowers her easily. Smitty watches, first horrified, then amused.

SMITTY

Girls, girls, girls...

Gretchen looks up from a headlock, all saliva, bloody lips and wild eyes.

GRETCHEN

Guess what, Smitty. I'm preggers, too!

MARY

She's lying!

GRETCHEN

If it's born a bastard, I just don't know what my father would do. Come on. Let's drive to Vegas.

SMITTY

Gretchen, baby, I can't get hitched.

Gretchen pushes Mary away. She stands, turning slowly, feeling the eyes of all the partygoers on her. She grabs the beer from Gil's hand and throws it at Smitty, bottle and all.

GRETCHEN

Smitty, you rat!

Gretchen runs from the house. Mary scowls then plods away.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- THE NEXT DAY

Smitty awakes to find himself on the couch and his mother sitting by his legs, a mug of coffee and painkillers in hand. He takes both.

KATHARINE

Your friends came over this morning while you were asleep. They told me you might have a headache.

SMITTY

Naw, I'm fine. I didn't even drink last night. Really, Ma, I took a nap while everyone else was playing spin-the-bottle.

KATHARINE

I know. You're my good boy.

She runs her hand through his dark hair, revealing paler roots. Smitty beams up at her.

SMITTY

Hey, how about I take you out to lunch and down to the nursery? We could pick up some flowers for Hillcrest. Brighten the home, cheer up the oldies. Whaddya say?

KATHARINE

Oh Charlie. You're such a little gentleman. One day I'm going to lose you to a very happy woman.

SMITTY

You'll never lose me, Ma.
You'll just share me. And
you'd better get used to that
idea, 'cause I've got a lot of
potential daughters-in-law
lined up for you.

Katharine looks around his room, distracted.

KATHARINE

Yes, so many girls.

SMITTY

Don't tell Dad, but I might
take his advice.

KATHARINE

What's that?

SMITTY

He told me to settle down, and
I gotta say I'm considering
it. Starting a real, solid
business. Really concentrating
on cutting a record, maybe
putting a band together again,
like I had in high school.
Buying a house.

KATHARINE

What's wrong with this one?

SMITTY

It'll be okay at first, but
I'm sure the old lady and me
will want some privacy. Plus,
there won't be room for your
grandkids in this place.

Katharine looks desperate.

KATHARINE

You're serious.

SMITTY

Uh huh. I want to get hitched.
For real, Ma, no fooling.

KATHARINE

To who?

SMITTY

I think Gretchen's the one,
Ma. I know you didn't get to
see the real her, but she's
special. And I've got it all
planned out. I'm going to
blindfold her, drive her down
to the desert.

Smitty begins to act his plan out, standing before his
mother. Suddenly, they're in-

THE DESERT

Katharine is wearing a thin summer dress that blows in
the midday breeze. A checked blanket and the contents of
a picnic basket are spread out under a tree in full
bloom. Smitty, in a white dinner jacket, smiles and
speaks to his mother, a stand-in for Gretchen.

SMITTY

I'll have a picnic laid out
when we get there, Richie can
do that. There'll be wine and-
That's where I'll put the
ring, in her glass! I'll have
to watch her the whole time so
I can figure out the exact
moment she notices it. Then
I'll get down on one knee and
say, 'Gretchen, you're the
most beautiful girl on Earth.'
Second, really, but I won't
let her know that. Then I'll
say, 'I want to spend my life
singing every single love song
I know to you. Marry me?'

BACK IN SMITTY'S DEN

Smitty is on one knee by his mother's side.

SMITTY

Think she'll say yes?

Katharine purses her lips, checks the clock and walks
over to the television. She turns it on. He sits back
down.

KATHARINE

Charlie. Charles. Gretchen and
her sister have disappeared.

She exits quietly, leaving Smitty to watch the news.

REPORTER

(VO)

The girls told their mother
they were going to see the
seven-thirty showing of Tickle
Me, an Elvis Presley picture.
That is the last anyone has
heard from them.

ON TV

WILLIAM HELIG, a forty year old, baby faced detective,
stands behind a hotel on Speedway in front of a pink
Cadillac that's surrounded by POLICE OFFICERS.

HELIG

The local police have informed
me that sand and soil were
discovered inside Gretchen
Fritz's car. Whether this will
hold any clues to the girl's
disappearance is yet to be
discovered.

Smitty changes the channel.

ON TV

Tesa's grinning face fills the screen.

REPORTER

(VO)

... becoming another teenage
runaway statistic by fleeing
down South.

TESA

If you ask me, they're in
Mexico by now. She was always
talking about Mexico, and all
the kids are going there. I
guess her sister went along
for the ride.

Smitty flips again. Footage of JFK is playing on the news, along with commentary about another witness to the assassination being killed in an accident. A nature show. American Bandstand. Smitty finally relaxes, sipping his coffee and closing his eyes to the sound of an interview with one of the show's overenthusiastic TEEN DANCERS.

DANCER (OS)

It's got a great beat, really
easy to dance to.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM- THE NEXT DAY

Detective Helig is in a beige linen suit with the buttons undone and the cuffs pushed up. He stands at one end of the room, and Richie cowers, seated, at the other.

HELIG

Don't be scared.

RICHIE

I'm not. I've been in the big
house before, and I ain't
afraid to go again.

Helig consults some papers.

HELIG

That would be... juvenile hall?

RICHIE

Yes.

HELIG

Is there a reason why you'd be
sent back to prison?

RICHIE

No! But I didn't do nothing
last time, and I wound up in
juvi. So it doesn't really
matter, does it?

HELIG

I heard you took part in a
robbery.

RICHIE

You heard wrong.

HELIG

I heard there were witnesses.

RICHIE

You coppers think you know everything. Witnesses lie. People just wanted to get me in trouble.

HELIG

I'm not a cop, Richie. I used to be, but now I'm just trying to help a couple find their daughters. Can you let me do that?

Richie relaxes a little. Helig sits down at the rectangular table, across from Richie.

HELIG

Did you know Gretchen well?

RICHIE

Not really. She went with Smitty, but I guess you know that.

HELIG

Did you like her?

RICHIE

The truth?

HELIG

I hope so.

RICHIE

I hated that bitch. Everyone did, secretly. She was just playing, slumming it, and Smitty didn't even see that.

HELIG

I thought the Schmids were well off.

RICHIE

They used to be, but the bank is taking back the old folks' home and Smitty stopped getting bread from 'em.

Helig looks surprised and consults his file.

HELIG

He was getting an allowance?

RICHIE

Three hundred bucks a month,
plus the old bungalow he lives
in.

Helig shakes his head and gets back to his original questions.

HELIG

What about Gretchen's sister,
Wendy?

RICHIE

Never met her.

HELIG

You sure?

RICHIE

Uh huh.

HELIG

Until the night they
disappeared.

RICHIE

Huh? No. I never met Wendy.
What would anyone want with
Gretchen's kid sister?

HELIG

You tell me.

RICHIE

I can't, 'cause I don't know.

Helig looks straight into Richie's eyes.

HELIG

Do you know what happened to
the Fritz sisters?

RICHIE

Sure.

Helig looks surprised. He leans forward, whispering.

HELIG

What?

RICHIE

They ran away. I thought you knew that.

Helig sighs. Richie looks sincere, if not confused.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM- DAY

Smitty shifts in his seat, looking more annoyed than nervous. Helig remains standing.

SMITTY

Are you even a real cop?

HELIG

I used to work for California State Police.

SMITTY

Do you carry a gun?

HELIG

Two, actually.

SMITTY

I never really cared for guns. They seem so cowardly to me. So impersonal. Can you sing?

HELIG

What?

SMITTY

Well, in case this Private Dick thing falls through. You've got the looks of a country western star.

HELIG

Well, thanks. Now maybe we should get back to-

SMITTY

I sing. Write my own songs, too. People say I could be the next Elvis.

Smitty is laying on the painfully phoney charm, boasting like a schoolboy. Helig looks doubtful.

HELIG

I'm more of a Sinatra fan.

SMITTY

Want to know a secret?

Once again, Helig is expecting a breakthrough. Smitty lowers his voice conspiratorially.

SMITTY

I never really cared for him, either. Presley, I mean. Actually, I think the guy's kind of a creep. But he's what the girls are going for, until they get something better. That'll be me.

HELIG

Really?

Smitty nods enthusiastically. Helig's patience has run out.

HELIG

Tell me about your relationship with Gretchen.

SMITTY

Gretchen? She's a great kid. A bit of a live wire, hates her folks, 'specially her old lady- Say, I'm hungry. Can I go get a burger or something?

HELIG

Legally, I can't hold you, but-

SMITTY

Great! Nice meeting you.

Smitty gets up, shakes Helig's hand, and exits the room, smirking away his mock naiveté.

INT. THE POLICE STATION- DAY

Smitty strolls towards the station's front door. SHERIFF GILMORE, an old man with a bushy moustache, stops him.

SHERIFF

Everything go all right in there?

SMITTY

Sure. Is that guy going to interview everyone in Tucson or what?

SHERIFF

Just friends of Gretchen's.

SMITTY

Seems to me he should be looking for enemies. I guess that's big city policemen for you.

SHERIFF

So I've heard.

SMITTY

Coming in here thinking they'll find the Fritz sisters when they're probably sunbathing in San Diego.

SHERIFF

You could be right, Smitty. You could very well be right.

The sheriff is nodding as Smitty leaves, but his weathered face can't hide a suspicious look.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- DAY

Smitty is sitting in boxer shorts and a silk robe, drinking coffee and reading the comics section of the newspaper. Rain patters at the window gently. Richie walks in, wet, shaking like an abandoned dog. Smitty doesn't even look up, chuckling at a panel. Richie stands, waiting.

SMITTY

Richie, baby, why so uptight?

RICHIE

He talked to you, too, didn't he?

SMITTY

Who? Oh, that sorry excuse for Dick Tracy? He barely even knew who Elvis was. I hope you didn't do anything stupid.

RICHIE

What's 'anything stupid?'

Smitty looks up, nonchalant.

SMITTY

You're asking me? Okay, well, what did you tell him?

RICHIE

Nothing. I mean, there was nothing to tell. Gretchen and her sister ran away. Right?

SMITTY

That's what people seem yo believe. Far be it from me to contradict them. So what did the copper ask you about Gretchen?

RICHIE

He said he wasn't a cop!

SMITTY

Sure he is. He's a p.d. for Dr. Fritz. What did you think he was doing, volunteer work? So what did you say about her?

RICHIE

Nothing. Just... I said that you two fought sometimes, that you wanted to break up but she wouldn't let you.

SMITTY

I see... And did you mention how happy that would have made you? How jealous you were of her?

Smitty leaves Richie alone with his thoughts, returning to his newspaper. Moments later, he puts it down. Richie is still standing, staring at him, his nervousness highlighted by Smitty's serenity.

SMITTY

All right. Wheels are turning.
I guess you've figured it out.

RICHIE

What?

SMITTY

What really happened.

Richie obviously has yet to catch on.

RICHIE

Huh?

SMITTY

Alleen Rowe.

RICHIE

But... you never...

SMITTY

Gosh, Richie, you've really
outdone yourself. I mean, try
to keep up with the class. I
killed them! I strangled
little Wendy right where
you're sitting.

Smitty bares his teeth briefly and makes a strangling motion with his hands. Richie jumps to a standing position, staring in horror down at the couch. Smitty laughs.

SMITTY

Come on! I didn't even bury
them this time. There are two
bodies in plain sight, in such
an obvious place, begging to
be found. Come on, coppers!
Come arrest me!

Smitty, already standing, grinning widely and breathing hard, runs out the front door.

EXT. SMITTY'S HOUSE- DAY

Smitty lopes down the front path of his house, dropping his robe, laughing. He stops and looks up at the dark sky as the rain beats down harder. His voice is almost drowned out by the downpour and the wind.

SMITTY

Come on, God, punish me!

There's a crack of thunder. Smitty sighs and relaxes again, sitting down on his front stoop and chuckling quietly. Richie hands him his robe and sits down.

SMITTY

I just don't care anymore.

RICHIE

Why not?

Smitty shrugs.

SMITTY

Remember that list I made last year with Mary and JP?

RICHIE

The one with people's names on it. The one with Alleen's name on it.

SMITTY

That's the ticket. You're catching on, Sport. Gosh, I remember when my mom found it—thought it was a list of party guests, not people I wanted to kill. Same difference, I guess. Anyway, I kept that paper in my journal. Gretchen had it for a while, but I got it back. That little transgression won her a place right at the top. Her sis was just a last minute adjustment. I have to say, though, by the time I got to her, the whole process was remarkably... easy.

A huge grin spreads across Smitty's face. He puts his arm around Richie's shaking shoulders.

SMITTY

So, party tonight? We could call it Smitty's Sunday Sock-Hop. I'm sure the kids would show up. Richie, come on. Relax. They're all on our side.

RICHIE

Our?

SMITTY

The Fritz family already showed me their cards- a La La Land candyass in a cheap suit. There's nothing to worry about.

Richie is frozen, expressionless. Smitty rubs his friend's knee, as if to warm him out of his coma-like state, but to no avail.

INT. SMITTY'S BEDROOM- NIGHT

The lights are off. Smitty's eyes shoot open. He listens, hears nothing, then relaxes. A pair of GLOVED HANDS grab him and tie a gag around his mouth. He is dragged off his bed by the scruff of the neck.

EXT. SMITTY'S HOUSE- NIGHT

The trunk of a large, dark car is opened and Smitty is pushed in, next to Richie. Smitty manages to spit out his gag as the roof slams shut and he finds himself

INSIDE THE DARK TRUNK

SMITTY

Someone is playing a cruel trick on me.

INT. A WAREHOUSE- NIGHT

The warehouse is bare, damp and dark. Water drips somewhere in the background. The occupied corner is lit by a single, bare bulb. Richie and Smitty, sitting on metal chairs, aren't bound by anything but the presence of several cigar-smoking LARGE MEN. A skinny old man with wild eyebrows stands before them - CHARLES "BATTS" BATTAGLIA.

BATTS

Do you boys know who I am?

SMITTY

Gretchen said something once about the Tucson Mafia, but I don't think they really exist.

A few of the men chuckle.

BATTS

Who said anything about Gretchen? Dino, Joey, take the skinny one outside and talk to him.

DINO

Sure thing, Boss.

DINO and JOEY take Richie away, leaving Batts as well as a few other henchmen by the door.

BATTS

So you're the famous Smitty.

SMITTY

I guess so.

BATTS

What's your story?

SMITTY

Sir?

BATTS

What do you say for yourself?

SMITTY

About what, in particular?

BATTS

You told the Sheriff that you thought Gretchen might be in San Diego.

SMITTY

You found that out? You guys are good. There really could be a Tucson Mafia.

BATTS

So far, we've only heard Mexico. Why California?

SMITTY

Aw, it was just a guess. She was always going on about the beaches, how she met a guy over there.

BATTS

A boy? What's his name?

SMITTY

I really wish I could tell you. I think it might have been Byron... Aaron... I couldn't say for sure.

BATTS

Whatever it is, you're going to help us, help Dr. Fritz, find his daughters. Be prepared to go to San Diego.

SMITTY

When?

BATTS

When we come for you.

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET- NIGHT

Richie and Smitty walk down the wet sidewalk. Smitty looks energized, skipping along in slippered feet. Richie, traumatized.

SMITTY

-felt like I was on a movie set at the MGM studios or something. Real gangsters. Just wait 'til everyone hears this one. Just wait. Fuck Folsom Prison!

RICHIE

I can't take this anymore. Everyone asking me all these questions I don't know how to answer... I want to call someone. JP, the cops, anyone who can get us out of this.

Smitty stops.

SMITTY

The cops. Good idea. But not the local screw-ups, the real deal. The FBI. J. Edgar Hoover himself.

Smitty has a determined look in his eye.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- NIGHT

Richie is seated on the couch, wringing his hands. Smitty has an array of phone books and scraps of paper in front of him.

SMITTY

...Uh huh... and when will he be in? Yes, but... is there a number or... yes, I'll hold. Again...

Smitty shakes his head and puts the phone down.

RICHIE

Nothing?

SMITTY

What a travesty. It's my constitutional right to be able to speak to the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

RICHIE

So what now?

SMITTY

Well... two hands digging are better than one finger dialling.

RICHIE

What?

SMITTY

We're going to have to bury those bodies. I'll pick up a six pack. It'll be fun. Like old times with JP.

RICHIE

What bodies?

Smitty tilts his head, staring into space, a strange smile on his face.

SMITTY

You still don't get it to you?
I guess you gotta see to believe.

EXT. THE DRINKING SPOT- NIGHT

Smitty parks his convertible off the beaten track and exits, flashlight in hand, after turning off the headlights.

SMITTY

Leave the radio on.

Richie exits the car, holding a flashlight as well as two small shovels. He hands one to Smitty. Smitty mutters to himself while searching the area with his beam of light. He zeroes in on a recently extinguished campfire, then jerks the light up by a clump of bushes.

SMITTY

Bingo.

He dances around to the music with his shovel a bit, waving it like a cane, then motions for Richie to come over. Richie does, and begins to cough and gag.

SMITTY

Tell me about it. Well, at least it smells worse than it looks.

Smitty casts his light on the ground, revealing a decomposed silhouette sunken into the sand. He then shifts his flashlight towards a smaller form, a rag still apparent where the deceased's legs were bound.

SMITTY

Yep. That sun's a killer. Okay, I guess you'd better get digging.

Richie is stunned, but manages to dig a shallow grave by Gretchen's remains. Smitty drags her body into it. Richie is about to cover it when Smitty stops him.

SMITTY

Wait.

He pulls the cuff of his shirt over his hand and wipes off Gretchen's shoes.

SMITTY

Prints.

While Richie covers Gretchen, Smitty walks over to Wendy's remains. He picks a small sandal up off the ground near her and, winding up like a baseball player, throws it into a bush. He then ambles back to the car.

RICHIE

Hey, wait! Where are you going? I can't bury the little one by myself!

SMITTY

Then don't! Leave her! I'm bored- let's go cruise.

EXT. SPEEDWAY- NIGHT

Smitty's car is stopped at a red light. Two PRETTY GIRLS in a convertible pull up beside them. They wave. Smitty honks the horn appreciatively.

PRETTY DRIVER

Hey there, handsome. Got a dollar for gas?

SMITTY
What's in it for me?

The two girls giggle.

RICHIE
(to Smitty)
Not now. Please.

SMITTY
(through his
teeth)
Why the hell not?

Richie looks worried. Smitty just keeps on beaming, throwing smiles and winks over at the girls while growling quietly to his friend.

SMITTY
Listen, buddy. You're in this
as deep as I am now.
(to the girls)
Hey, how 'bout following us to
the Feedbag for a bite?

The girls look at one another.

PRETTY DRIVER
Sure!

RICHIE
What about the bodies?

PRETTY PASSENGER
What?

SMITTY
What?

Richie is desperate and doesn't even try to lower his voice.

RICHIE
The girls. The dead girls.

Smitty, finally turning away from the pretty girls, continues to speak to Richie through his smile.

SMITTY
What girls? What are you
talking about?

The light changes and both cars turn.

INT. THE SCHMID KITCHEN- DAY

Charles, Sr. and Katharine enter to find Smitty rummaging through the cupboards and fridge, throwing food into a paper bag.

KATHARINE

Charlie, what's going on?

SMITTY

Grocery shopping, Ma.

KATHARINE

No, Charlie. I mean those missing kids. Men came to see your father and me.

Smitty rushes to his mother's side.

SMITTY

Are you okay? What kind of men?

KATHARINE

Police officers.

Smitty is relieved.

CHARLES

FBI Agents, Katharine. What the hell have you gotten yourself into, Charles?

SMITTY

Are you sure they were real coppers?

CHARLES

They were real.

SMITTY

Yeah? How do you know?

Katharine lifts a magnet and takes a business card off the fridge. She hands it to Smitty.

KATHARINE

Here. Agent Enn O'Brien. He's the one you're supposed to phone if you have any information. I tried to tell him you didn't, that you already told Sheriff Gilmore and that detective everything you know. I told him you were a good boy.

Katharine puts her arms around Smitty. Charles, Sr. looks on, disapprovingly.

INT. SMITTY'S DEN- NIGHT

Smitty walks inside his house cautiously, keeping the front door open.

Something stirs in the dark. He grabs a knife from his pocket and slides his arm along the wall, flicking on the light.

TEENS

Surprise!

The record player whirrs into motion. There are dozens of teenagers, the usual crowd along with some younger NEWCOMERS, filling Smitty's den. Tesa and Darlene rush to his side.

TESA

Richie told Darlene what you'd been through. We thought we'd help you get your mind off all that serious stuff.

Smitty is still a little wary, and surveys the room. Tesa holds his arm affectionately, handing him a beer.

TESA

Everybody's here!

SMITTY

What did Richie tell you?

DARLENE

You know. About that detective bringing you in.

TESA

And picking on you. Very unfair.

SMITTY

That's all?

Darlene lowers her voice and brings Smitty off to the side.

DARLENE

Sure, but... Um... Richie's been acting kinda weird lately. Hanging around my house and stuff.

SMITTY

I thought you two were going out.

DARLENE

So did I, I guess, but he won't even touch me. He keeps going on about how I need to be protected. He can't stand other guys even looking my way. I know he's your friend and all, but I hope he doesn't show up tonight.

SMITTY

He just needs to relax.

DARLENE

Speaking of relaxing... I have a proposal for you.

Smitty leers at her. Darlene laughs.

DARLENE

Not that. A friend of the family just moved to town. Her name's Diane. Tiny, fifteen. Anyway, she's heard all about you, and she asked me to see if you're interested.

SMITTY

I dunno. Why should I accept your proposal when you already rejected mine?

Smitty feigns hurt. Darlene rolls her eyes.

DARLENE

Mine is genuine. I just want you to take her out a few times, make her fall in love, that whole deal... Then drop the brat like a ton of bricks. There's ten bucks in it for you.

SMITTY

Blonde?

DARLENE

Brunette.

SMITTY

Okay. There's always bleach. Hey, speaking of the loves of my life, where's Mary?

TESA

Who knows? She hasn't been around lately.

Darlene shrugs, but eyes Smitty sideways, worried. He catches her, and she forces a smile.

INT. SMITTY'S CAR- NIGHT

The car is parked at the Speedway Drive-In, top up. Next to Smitty is a petite brunette, DIANE. She snaps her gum and stares ahead at the movie screen. Smitty puts his arm around her.

DIANE

Whatcha doing?

SMITTY

Nothing. So...I don't want to embarrass you, but word has it you were asking about me.

DIANE

Who said that? Darlene?

SMITTY

Was she lying?

DIANE

Naw, I heard you were king
shit around here and stuff.

Smitty looks a little put off, but clears his throat and
shifts closer to her.

SMITTY

Oh?

DIANE

I figured going out with you
would get me a really good
rep.

Moving even closer...

SMITTY

Or a really bad one.

Diane, still facing the front, blows a pink bubble.

DIANE

Sure. Whatever. Anything's
better than Nevada. I can't
believe Darlene even let me go
out with you. I thought she
hated me. You know, yelling at
me and locking me up whenever
we came to visit. But I guess
she thinks I'm grown up.

SMITTY

Why's that?

DIANE

You're the bitchiest guy in
town, so she says. So everyone
says. Like Elvis fuckin'
Presley.

SMITTY

You like Elvis?

DIANE

I guess. He's kind of old.

Smitty pauses, examining this small, rude creature.

SMITTY

Marry me.

DIANE

Yeah. Okay.

He is serious. So is she. She blows a bubble. He puts his arm around her and they both watch the film, a cheesy surfer flick.

INT. RICHIE'S ROOM

Richie sits at a small wooden desk, assembling a model plane. His room is a barren cubicle with a plaid bedspread and a large crucifix over the door. The phone rings. Richie picks it up carefully.

RICHIE

Hello? Who is this?

EXT. A SAN DIEGO BOARDWALK- DAY

Smitty is standing at a phone booth by the boardwalk. He's wearing sunglasses, his Hawaiian shirt is unbuttoned and his pant legs are rolled up.

RICHIE

Richie, baby, it's me. Don't play dumb. Smitty! I'm in San Diego. Batts wasn't kidding- they flew me here and everything.

BRUNO, a sweaty man in a navy suit, approaches the phone booth. Smitty motions for him to hold on.

SMITTY

Darn it, I gotta go. Duty calls. Just tell the gang I'm okay. Especially Diane. What? No, not Darlene, Diane. My fiancée. But hey, give Darlene a kiss for me, too. Oh, and you be sure to tell my mom I'm doing fine. Great, even. Free vacation. Okay, good-

Bruno hangs the phone up for Smitty, mid-sentence. Smitty looks annoyed, then smiles widely.

SMITTY

So, Bruno. What's on the agenda for today? Wish I'd brought my trunks.

BRUNO

Yeah, too bad. I'm going to see what I can do about this Aaron boy-

SMITTY

Or Byron. Aaron or Byron Jean.

BRUNO

And you-

Bruno hands him a large photo of Gretchen. She is smiling like a beauty queen.

BRUNO

You show this to everyone on the beach.

SMITTY

Wow. She sure was a looker...

Bruno gives him a look.

SMITTY

Still is! I'd better get to work.

BRUNO

I hope you didn't do nothing stupid, kid.

Smitty gives Bruno a little salute, then stomps awkwardly across the beach to a small cluster of BEACH BUMS.

EXT. THE BEACH- DAY

Smitty walks around with the photo, showing it to BEACHGOERS, joking around with OLD COUPLES and LITTLE KIDS.

EXT. DARLENE'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Darlene carries an oversized trash bag down her walkway and drops it at the curb. She turns and screams as Richie suddenly appears from behind a garbage can.

RICHIE

No, no, no. Shhh.

He puts a hand over her mouth. She struggles to escape his grasp.

RICHIE

Wait, I just want to talk.
Don't scream. Please don't
scream.

He lowers his hand, lifts it back up when she opens her mouth, then lowers it again as she settles down. He reaches into his pocket and removes a crumpled paper.

RICHIE

Read this.

Darlene is reluctant to touch it.

DARLENE

If this is another love
letter...

RICHIE

It's not. It's from Smitty.

Darlene takes the paper and reads to herself.

RICHIE

Go ahead. Out loud.

Darlene reads aloud with little emotion.

DARLENE

Um... 'held your books- you
held my heart, knew it was
love from the start. Why did
you say no to me Darlene? You
used to love me every day, but
then I asked you if I'-

Richie grabs the paper violently, and Darlene shrieks a little. He reads with passion, tiny flecks of spit hitting her face.

RICHIE

'...if I may. You said no, you wouldn't be wed. I got so mad, wished you were dead... Maybe you're just the devil in disguise, and I got tricked by your pale blue eyes. You shouldn't have said no to me Darlene.' Don't you see?

DARLENE

What?

RICHIE

It means you're next.

DARLENE

What are you talking about?

RICHIE

That's a song he wrote. He's gonna kill you.

DARLENE

Who?

RICHIE

Smitty!

Darlene begins to back away.

DARLENE

Smitty hasn't said a word to me since he got married. And this, how do I know you didn't write it?

RICHIE

What? I'm here to protect you! From him!

Richie starts advancing, his hands raised.

DARLENE

Stay away...

RICHIE

Just let me protect you. Won't you let me?

He grabs her, tries to cradle her in his thin arms. She screams. The front porch light comes on. Richie stops, and Darlene runs inside.

JUDGE WILDE

(VO)

After much consideration, I've decided to be lenient...

MONTAGE

Richie patrols outside of Darlene's house.

JUDGE WILDE

(VO)

...I believe your behavior was harassment...

Richie watches Darlene through her bedroom window.

JUDGE WILDE

(VO)

...that your intentions were innocent...

Richie by the front porch, looking through a stack of the Kirk family's mail.

JUDGE

(VO)

...but that your judgement was impaired, due to this pubescent infatuation...

Richie follows Darlene up her walkway, and she ignores him.

JUDGE

(VO)

...And I believe the best remedy for this so-called "puppy love" is to leave the state of Arizona for no less than three months. I've been informed that your grandmother can provide you with a place to stay in the state of Ohio...

Darlene watches from her bedroom window as Richie is arrested on the street.

EXT. A SAN DIEGO BEACH- DAY

Smitty is lying on a checkered blanket next to BONNIE, a sunbathing blonde teenager. He is blatantly flirting with her, and she's lapping it up.

BONNIE

You don't look like a cop.

SMITTY

It's true.

BONNIE

Yeah?

SMITTY

Sure. You think I'd lie to you?

BONNIE

You don't even know me.

Smitty lifts his body up a little and removes something from his pocket- the business card his mother gave him.

SMITTY

There you go. Agent Enn O'Brien, in black and white.

BONNIE

Shouldn't you have a badge or something? I mean, I'll bet you could just make a card like that yourself.

SMITTY

What would I do that for?

BONNIE

So you'd have an excuse to talk to girls like me.

SMITTY

You're clever. Anyone ever tell you that?

A hand yanks Smitty up. It's Bruno.

BRUNO

Mr. Battaglia wants to see you.

Both men glance back at Bonnie, who waves as they leave.

EXT. SAN DIEGO BEACH CAFÉ- DAY

Smitty and Batts sit outside on a terrace, sipping drinks. Batts shoos Bruno away.

BATTS

No luck?

SMITTY

I'm sorry. And believe me, if these people could remember seeing anyone, it'd be Gretchen.

They both look down at her photo.

BATTS

No word on the boy she knew.

SMITTY

Like I told you before, it was just a guess.

Batts nods in agreement, appearing not to blame Smitty for the failure. A WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

Can I get you gentlemen something else to drink?

BATTS

We'll have more of the same, sweetheart.

She takes their empty glasses. Batts gives her a ten dollar bill.

SMITTY

And keep the change.

She giggles. Batts is amused.

BATTS

Your friend. The skinny kid-

SMITTY

Richie?

BATTS

That's it. Him, I don't like.
You, on the other hand, I
could use a guy like you
working for me. Someone who
can separate work and play,
doesn't let emotion get in the
way of business.

SMITTY

You've obviously never heard
my heartbreaking rendition of
"Crying in the Chapel."

Batts laughs. The waitress returns with their drinks.
Batts raises his, as does Smitty.

SMITTY

Here's to finding Gretchen and
Wendy.

BATTS

Safe and sound.

They clink glasses and drink. Batts turns serious.

BATTS

For your sake, you'd better
not be mixed up in this.

SMITTY

I'm not. Sincerely.

BATTS

And Richie?

SMITTY

Naw, Richie's all right.

INT. OHIO- RICHIE'S GRANDMOTHER'S- THE KITCHEN

The whole room is decorated with yellowed crochet wall-hangings and plastic flowers. Richie's GRANDMOTHER, a small, dotty woman, sets a plate of food in front of him and sits down across the circular table. He ignores it, nursing a beer instead. Richie's grandmother lifts up the newspaper while prattling on, and a front page photo of Gretchen and Wendy stares Richie in the face. His grandmother's voice fades out as he gets lost in the fuzzy portrait of the girls.

GRANDMOTHER

Come on, Richard. Eat up. How old are you? You should be filling in by now. I can't believe how skinny you are! Is your mother feeding you at home? Probably not. That's the root cause of delinquency, you know. Malnutrition. Kids who go hungry commit ten times more crimes, and wind up in jail or on the streets. That's who my knitting circle is raising money for this Christmas- the street kids, the runaways. Of course, I'm doing double duty with you here.

His grandmother's voice has become a distracting background noise. Richie tries to look away, but his eyes are fixed on those of Wendy Fritz.

GRANDMOTHER

But I don't mind clothing you and feeding you, taking you to church with me. It'd be a sin to help those street kids and leave my own grandson to rot away in a broken home, all those thieves and loose women around. Why, I believe the Bible even says-

Richie grabs his head in his hands violently. His voice is at a near scream.

RICHIE

I can't take it!

His grandmother is shocked silent. She reaches for his beer tentatively.

GRANDMOTHER

Perhaps you've had enough, Richard...

RICHIE

He did it! I did! I saw the them. They're all out there, and there'll be more if I don't tell somebody.

EXT. A SAN DIEGO BOARDWALK- EVENING

Bruno, Batts and Smitty move across the pavement. A CALIFORNIA POLICEMAN grabs Smitty's arm.

SMITTY

What's going on?

CALIFORNIA POLICEMAN

You don't look Irish.

SMITTY

Is that a crime?

CALIFORNIA POLICEMAN

Is your name Enn O'Brien?

SMITTY

Charles Schmid. Junior. Is that a crime?

CALIFORNIA POLICEMAN

No, but impersonating an officer of the law is.

SMITTY

Hey, I've been with these two all-

Smitty turns. Batts and Bruno are long gone. Smitty shrugs, defeated.

EXT. DESERT- DAY

A series of photos are taken by REPORTERS buzzing around the open crime scene. FLASH. Richie looking reluctant and worried. FLASH. Detective Helig speaking to a TALL REPORTER. FLASH. Sheriff Gilmore overseeing OFFICERS with shovels. FLASH. Hands lifting a skull out of a small hole.

EXT. KATHARINE'S CAR- EVENING

Katharine and Smitty sit parked in front of his bungalow with a suitcase between them. He stops and looks across the street at an OLD COUPLE on the porch of Hillcrest.

KATHARINE

Did you have a nice time?

SMITTY

Yeah. Kind of exciting,
really.

KATHARINE

Not like here.

SMITTY

Here can be exciting.

KATHARINE

You make it exciting. I always
tell people that, I say, "My
Charlie can light up a room."

SMITTY

Gosh, Ma, save it for my
eulogy.

She tousles his hair.

KATHARINE

Your roots are beginning to
show. Want me to pass by the
drugstore after work tomorrow?

He pushes her hand away lightly.

SMITTY

Diane can do that for me now.

Katharine pulls back. Diane comes running towards them
from Smitty's lawn.

DIANE

Smitty!

KATHARINE

Speak of the devil...

SMITTY

Ma...

They hug and he exits the vehicle. Diane kisses Smitty
and grabs his hand. Katharine drives away.

DIANE

I missed you so much! You gotta see how those bulbs you planted are comin' in! And I got the most bitchin' album ever! They're four guys, not even American but... What is it?

Smitty notices a large black car with tinted windows inching along the street. He puts his arm around Diane protectively as they head towards his bungalow. The front door is ajar.

SMITTY

Did you leave the door open, baby?

DIANE

Maybe. I can't remember. Why?

Smitty drops his bag at the door. He pushes Diane inside gently. She turns towards him, looking over his shoulder. Her eyes widen. Two POLICE OFFICERS grab Smitty's shoulders roughly from behind.

Smitty jerks free, running out to the lawn, where more officers wait. He turns to them, hand in his pocket. They draw their guns. Smitty pulls his hand out, his finger shaped into a pretend pistol. He's smiling.

SMITTY

Bang.

They swarm and grab him roughly. Diane is yelping as they drag him away.

SMITTY

Baby! Get my mother!

Diane runs towards the Schmids' house. The police officers look at one another, but make no move to stop her. One of them cuffs Smitty. He struggles.

SMITTY

How do I know you guys are for real, that I'm not going to be kidnapped again?

Snorting, OFFICER OLSEN, a young, self-assured cop, produces a badge in a leather wallet. Smitty eyes it carefully. Olsen brings Smitty over to a squad car parked on the lawn. OFFICER HEWITT calls something in on his radio. Sheriff Gilmore emerges from another squad car.

Katharine comes thundering over, with Diane trailing behind.

KATHARINE

What in the hell do you think you're doing to my boy?

SHERIFF

Well, Ma'am, Charles here is under arrest. We're bringing him to the station.

KATHARINE

It takes a dozen of you to drive him there?

OLSEN

We didn't want any problems.

Katharine notices a group of officers by the bungalow's door.

KATHARINE

Oh no you don't!

She runs up to the doorway and stretches her arms across the frame.

KATHARINE

Do you have a warrant to go inside?

SHERIFF

No, Ma'am. But we can get one.

KATHARINE

Then that's what you'll have to do. Diane, go to Hillcrest and get my husband. Tell him to call a lawyer.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Smitty sits at the table listening to the tape-recorded confession from a blubbering Richie. Helig stands in the room, as does Officer Olsen. Smitty looks sceptical, feigning boredom.

RICHIE

(recorded)

...and then he said he brought Wendy inside, into the den, and killed her, too...

SMITTY

What is this? Is this for real? What is this?

RICHIE

(recorded)

...he said that he left the bodies out on purpose, but I guess he got scared later 'cause he brought me there to see them. To bury them. And they were dead and black and... he told me not to tell, that if the FBI didn't get me, the Mafia would... and there's a diary, a list of people, more girls he'll go... go after and...

In the recording, Richie breaks down into sobs. Officer Olsen shuts the tape player off. Smitty folds his hands.

SMITTY

Well, he certainly sounds stable.

Officer Olsen smirks a little, then turns serious as Helig shoots him a look.

HELIG

Would you like to hear side two or four?

SMITTY

How about five? Or maybe I could bring in my own recordings, from home. I've got me playing a killer version of 'Last Kiss'- I used to do that one at parties. Lip synced it, too. No one ever noticed.

OLSEN

Real smart, kid. This is going to put you on death row.

SMITTY

Listen Detective. Officer. Y'all talked to Richie. He isn't the smoothest smoke in the pack, and it's nothing new. He'll say anything to anyone if he thinks he'd get into trouble otherwise. A pathological liar. Not to mention a sexual deviant. You really think a jury'd believe some guy who was hiding in a chick's garbage can for a week? If I were you...

CUT TO-

INT. INTERROGATION VIEWING ROOM

Sheriff Gilmore stands with Richie and OFFICER HEWITT, watching the interview through a two-way mirror. Smitty's voice is slightly muffled though a speaker.

SMITTY

(OS)

...maybe I'd stop paying attention to what this guy's blaming on me, and start piecing together what he's saying about Gretchen.

SHERIFF

Let's see if he changes his tune with his pal in there. Bring Richie in.

INT. THE INTERROGATION ROOM

Officer Hewitt and the sheriff escort Richie into the room. Smitty tenses, but compensates for his surprise by being overly amicable. Richie looks ashamed, sitting down across from Smitty, and keeps his eyes on the table and the law officers present.

SMITTY

Richie, baby! Long time no see! How's life treating you?

The officers watch both of the young men carefully.

SMITTY

Come on, Richie. Whaddya hear, whaddya say? Have you met Diane, yet? Hoowee, what a catch, right? This place ain't half bad when she comes to visit.

Richie doesn't answer, looking at his cuffed hands. Smitty pauses, then lowers his head to make eye contact with his friend, speaking slowly and deliberately.

SMITTY

Hey, speaking of visitors, has Darlene been by your place lately?

Richie's head shoots up and he glares at Smitty.

RICHIE

No. Even if she wanted to, I'd never let her. She's safe now.

SMITTY

No one's ever really safe, Richie. Remember how we used to talk about that?

Smitty stares into Richie's eyes, and suddenly they're on-

EXT. SMITTY'S STREET- DAY

The two men sit on the curb outside of Hillcrest in their street clothes. They watch as a pair of PARAMEDICS bring a stretcher down off the porch. Richie advances towards the home, but Smitty holds him back, speaking.

SMITTY

(VO)

You and me, side by side,
outside Hillcrest? When Mrs.
Barber died? You wanted to go
over and see her before she
got loaded into the ambulance.
But I wouldn't let you. You
got mad and said you wanted to
see someone dead, a woman, up
close. 'Just once,' you said.

Richie mouths the words "Just once" as Smitty speaks.

CUT BACK TO-

INT. THE INTERROGATION ROOM

RICHIE

He's lying! He said that!
Listen to him, he's lying
through his goddamn teeth!

None of the men present in the room move or speak, all of
them waiting for a spontaneous confession from Smitty,
who looks flabbergasted.

SMITTY

I don't know why you think I'm
lying, Richie. I don't have
anything to lie about. I
wasn't the one sent to Ohio
for terrorizing Diane...

RICHIE

I was saving her!

SMITTY

...sending her death
threats...

RICHIE

From you!

SMITTY

When all this is cleared up,
maybe I'll pay her a visit.
Apologize on your behalf.

RICHIE

Stop it! Make him stop! Tell him about our deal, how you're protecting her!

SMITTY

Is that what they offered you in exchange for this fabrication? You made this up just to impress Darlene?

Silence. Smitty is becoming increasingly annoyed with his situation, and begins to match Richie's glare with one of his own.

SMITTY

I think we both know why you're doing this.

The men present all brace themselves. Richie and Smitty go silent and cold. Sheriff Gilmore sighs and shakes his head.

SHERIFF

That's enough. Take him away.

Smitty stands. Helig pushes him down.

HELIG

Not you.

Richie is taken away by the Olsen and Hewitt.

SMITTY

That was a dirty trick.

HELIG

What trick? You're going to die thanks to him. We were just being nice, trying to let you confess while you still had a chance.

SMITTY

Oh, how altruistic. And I don't need any chances, I've got the trial, during which I'll prove my innocence.

HELIG

Trials. You killed three girls, remember?

SMITTY

Right...

Smitty seems to agree, then smirks at his perceived slip-up.

SMITTY

You feebies think I murdered
three people.

Officer Olsen re enters and whispers something to Helig, who backs away from Smitty. All the men play innocent as WILLIAM TINNEY enters. He's a nervous, fumbling man in a wrinkled suit and oversized glasses.

TINNEY

Hello. My name's William
Tinney. I'll be representing
Mr. Schmid.

INT. BOOKING ROOM

William Tinney and Sheriff Gilmore try to wrangle the REPORTERS, who are all milling about, taking pictures as Officer Olsen fingerprints Smitty. Smitty looks sullen, but a little too much so, as if he's playing the part of a hardened criminal with a penchant for pouting (or, more likely, a rebel without a cause). Olsen escorts him over to the classic mug shot backdrop. It indicates that Smitty is about five foot seven. The POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER is about to take a picture, but the Sheriff stops him, looking down.

SHERIFF

Hold on a sec. Son, you're
going to have to remove those
boots.

Smitty shakes his head. Officer Olsen approaches. Smitty shies away and takes a seat on the ground, like a child. He finally manages to yank off one boot. He's not happy about it.

OLSEN

(Quietly)
What the...

Smitty removes his other boot, still pouting on the floor, then crosses his arms. Officer Olsen shakes a boot upside down, emptying out the contents: old rags, squashed tin cans, cardboard pieces. The improvised insoles fall into a storage box. Reporters scribble and snap away. Smitty stomps back in front of the camera, now several inches shorter.

EXT. GAS STATION- DAY

Officer Olsen and Sheriff Gilmore sit in their unmarked squad car at a dilapidated gas station, looking at a large mugshot of a scowling, bruised JP Saunders. A GAS STATION EMPLOYEE fills the tank and cleans the windshield while they speak.

OLSEN

Who is this kid?

GILMORE

John Paul Saunders. He and Richie met at reform school. He moved in with Smitty for a bit, did a stint in the army, then back in the big house. One count of manslaughter.

Gilmore hands him a file. Olsen scans it.

OLSEN

Holy, listen to this 'the prisoner shows signs of prolonged abuse, and is incapable of sleep unless physically restrained.' I guess the weirdos stick together.

Gilmore points to part of the paper.

SHERIFF

He was also questioned, off the record, after Alleen Rowe's disappearance.

OLSEN

Let's go.

Both men exit the vehicle. The attendant exits the gas station with their bill. It is JP, wearing a mechanic's outfit. He knows what is coming, and doesn't even put up a struggle as he's pushed up against the hood of the car.

INT. DINER- DAY

Officer Olsen and Sheriff Gilmore sit at the counter of a greasy spoon. A TRUCKER nearby reads a newspaper, a photo of Smitty's boots on the cover. Mary, in a waitress uniform, has her back to them. She is wiping one dish over and over, looking tired and aged.

SHERIFF

Excuse me...

Mary turns.

MARY

What'll it be?

OLSEN

We're not here to eat.

MARY

You're here about Smitty.

SHERIFF

Right. We flew all the way just for you, to talk about him.

She doesn't care. She doesn't sound like she cares about anything. She's distant and cold.

MARY

I didn't ask you to.

OLSEN

We've already spoken to Richie.

MARY

So what? Richie's a feeb. Anyone can tell.

OLSEN

And JP Saunders.

MARY

That hood? What did he tell you?

OLSEN

The truth. That Smitty killed Allen Rowe, and that he and you helped bury her in the desert.

MARY

I didn't even know Alleen.

SHERIFF

He could be lying, though.

Officer Olsen looks surprised, and Mary raises a brow slightly.

SHERIFF

Maybe you killed Alleen.

OLSEN

Your word could be the difference between community service and the gas chamber.

Nothing. The sheriff takes a kinder tone.

SHERIFF

We, um, your aunt told me you lost the baby. Our apologies.

Mary doesn't move a muscle.

MARY

I have to get back to work. You want my statement? No comment.

SHERIFF

Okay. We tried.

Officer Olsen looks surprised again. Both men rise from their seats and begin to leave. Sheriff Gilmore turns back.

SHERIFF

Oh, by the by, Smitty said to tell you 'Hello' from him and his parents. And his wife, of course.

Mary's eyes finally shine. She stops in her tracks.

MARY

His wife?

The two men exchange a hidden smile and head back to their seats.

INT. SMITTY'S HOUSE- DAY

Police officers are ransacking each room, flipping through magazines and turning over furniture. Diane sobs in a corner. Katharine stands by the door, fuming.

DIANE

What are you looking for? I'll give you anything you want!

OFFICER HEWITT

A guitar string.

DIANE

What?

HEWITT

A guitar string. Were there any missing from his guitar?

KATHARINE

He doesn't even own a guitar.

Diane, choking on her tears, looks at Katharine but neither confirms nor denies what the woman said.

Tesa, Gil, and Chris appear at the doorway. They look like they're ready to go on a picnic, in denim and gingham, and don't seem spooked by the police presence.

TESA

Hey, what's going on?

GIL

Is Smitty around?

HEWITT

How did you kids get in here?

(to Officers)

Get them out!

(to the kids)

You guys are about to get some real bad news about your little hero.

EXT. THE DESERT- EARLY MORNING

A flashbulb goes off. JP and Mary, both stonefaced, lead an enormous swarm of police officers and reporters through the desert. The two don't look at each other or at any of their followers. Mary slows down then stops, noncommittally, waving vaguely to a patch of dirt. JP does, too, feet away from her, hands in pockets. Officers begin to dig.

ON TV

A shot of a dozen or so LOCAL TEENS, all familiar faces from Smitty's parties, giggling and digging in the desert. A LADY REPORTER interviews Sheriff Gilmore.

SHERIFF

We're lucky to have the local teens helping out. They really feel for their missing friend and we can cover a lot more area in less time.

The reporter turns and looks into the camera.

LADY REPORTER

Experts believe Arizona's most recent hurricane played a role in destroying or moving the body, as nine hours of searching has yielded little potential evidence in this tragic case.

A police officer holds up a rusted hair curler, carefully examining it in the light of the sun.

INT. THE SCHMID'S DEN- DAY

The television plays as Charles, Katharine and Diane watch.

ON TV

NORMA ROWE

(OS)

Those are hers! One girl in a million uses long pins like that!

NORMA ROWE's teary eyed face fills the screen, her name written on the screen. Her face is that of a local madwoman- bright, overdone make-up and wild red hair.

NORMA

I've known for eighteen months that my daughter was killed by those thrill-seeking teenagers, but no one but my husband would believe me! I had a dream about her body being in the desert. I know she's here.

Katharine snorts slightly, incredulously, and changes the channel.

ON TV

A TABLOID REPORTER stands in the desert.

TABLOID REPORTER

-learning of this sex club that Alleen Rowe was invited, coaxed, and finally forced to join.

Norma Rowe's face fills the screen once again.

NORMA ROWE

She told me 'the club's the thing. You've got to be in to belong.' Those ruffians couldn't understand that she was a good girl, going steady with a university boy. A violinist. She was wearing his ring.

Katharine gets up off the couch.

KATHARINE

This is ridiculous.

She exits the room. Charles and Diane continue to watch as the screen's image changes back to teenagers helping out with the dig, creating a treasure hunt-like atmosphere. Two TEENS giggle and hold their palms out, showing their discoveries- small rocks, some bottle caps and an ancient shotgun shell- to the forensic experts.

TABLOID REPORTER

Local teens are helping out in every way, using whatever they can to dig.

Tesa crouches, holding up a spoon. Gil waves to the camera from behind her.

TESA

I figure the body's been buried awhile, so it's probably fallen all apart and things.

The teens take a break, sitting in a circle eating burgers and fries.

The television image changes to one of Speedway. A stream of cars with foreign plates moves slowly, the TOURISTS inside pointing and snapping photos.

TABLOID REPORTER

(VO)

Adolescents aren't the only unexpected visitors to the possible gravesite. Tourism in Pima County has increased ten-fold since the story broke, and families from as far away as Vermont have made their way down here, displeasing many locals.

A FATHER carries his YOUNG SON on his shoulders, standing outside the motel where Gretchen's car was found.

A MAN snaps a photo of his FAMILY, all grinning, in the desert, the crew of police officers in the background.

INT. COURTROOM- DAY

JUDGE GARRETT a decrepit man with bird-like features, presides.

JUDGE

How do you plead to one count of murder in the first degree?

JP sits in an old suit, unflinching, relieved.

JP

Guilty.

INT. COURTROOM- LATER THAT DAY

JUDGE

...one charge of concealing
and compounding a felony and
of being an accessory to
murder. How do you plead?

Mary's face shows no sign of emotion.

MARY

Guilty.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY

JP, restrained, exits next to his LAWYER and a POLICE
OFFICER. He gives the finger to a photographer.

EXT. COURTHOUSE- DAY

Mary, her LAWYER and MRS. FRENCH descend the front steps
of the courthouse.

LAWYER

No comment, no comment.

He whisks Mary away, but Mrs. French is trailing behind
and gets blocked by a group of microphone-wielding
REPORTERS.

NOSY REPORTER

How do you feel about your
daughter's involvement in
these crimes?

It becomes apparent where Mary inherited her cold and
passive demeanour. Mrs. French shrugs, frowning.

MRS. FRENCH

You play the game, you pay the
piper.

INT. SMITTY'S CELL- NIGHT

Smitty lies on his stomach, writing on a legal pad that he's decorated with little doodles and cartoons of cars and sunglasses. His holding cell is small and barren.

SMITTY

(vo)

My dearest Diane. As I'm sure you know by now, I'm being held without bail and without reason. Oh, honey, I miss you so much. When I get out of here, we're going to do everything we had planned for us and even more 'cause that's the way I am.

Suddenly, he's on the-

BEACH

Smitty and Diane are lying together on the sand, the waves lapping at their legs, *From Here to Eternity*-style. Fantasy music swells in the background.

SMITTY

(VO)

...I want to hold you and make love to you and have a real honeymoon. I want us to go to Hawaii and California to laugh and cry and play in the ocean...

Then they're in-

THE SCHMID DEN

The room is full of Christmas decorations.

SMITTY

(VO)

I want to have a Christmas tree and a snowball fight. Diane, Oh baby, I've got to have fun and have a blast whenever I can because life is short and we deserve to be happy. Believe it or not, I really want kids some day, after we've done everything we planned. They'd make our love even stronger. Can you imagine it? They'll be ours, all ours, and damn won't they be dolls.

Smitty, wearing a cardigan and smoking a pipe, and Diane, who is visibly pregnant, enter the house. Katharine and Charles Sr. welcome them with open arms. A LITTLE BOY with large brown eyes and dark hair runs in, followed by a LITTLE GIRL with blonde hair and rosy cheeks. They rush to their grandparents, hugging them tightly. Everyone laughs and marvels over how sweet these creatures are.

INT. PRISON CAFETERIA

Smitty trudges along behind a row of prisoners, and it is painfully obvious how small he really is. He looks like a little boy behind the hardened men. After receiving his tray of slop, he sits alone, writing in a notebook.

SMITTY

(VO)

Dearest Diane, What do you do every day? I get up, eat, vomit, go to sleep, play cards, throw up some more, go to mail call, then to garbage - I mean supper - play cards and hope I'll see you or somebody, then I go to my cell and crawl under my bed...

Once again, he's out of the real world and in-

A SOUND STUDIO

Smitty sings into a microphone, watching Diane, who's wearing a scarf and movie-star sunglasses, through the soundproof glass.

SMITTY

(VO)

Diane, my love, I'm so damned glad you don't want kids. We won't have time to settle down once I'm out. I'll buy a real tough car and get a band together to cut a song. I'll make it big or I won't make it at all, we'll either be rich or poor. I won't settle for middle road anymore. It's not worth it...

INT. COURTROOM- DAY

Smitty, in complete make-up and a leather jacket, watches Diane walk in wearing a disguise - a red wig and glasses - that only highlights her presence to everyone present. He blows her a kiss. She wipes a tear from her eye.

SMITTY

(VO)

Diane, Diane, Diane. You know, it's funny, we haven't been in the rain together yet. You sure looked sharp during the preliminary. I eat up on the way you dress, the way you try to hide in those sheer black stockings. I dig that wig, and all that's bitchin' in between. But no more! I mean it. The press is not going to figure out who you are. Until we meet again...

INT. SMITTY'S CELL- SUNRISE

SMITTY

...love Smitty, soon to be the next Elvis Presley, but better. PS, you should probably start saving at least 25 bucks a week so we'll have something to travel on when I'm out.

Smitty puts down his pen and stands, in his prison uniform, as Tinney enters, holding a garment bag.

INT. COURTROOM- DAY

The SPECTATORS murmur as Smitty enters, and the JURORS eye him curiously. He is escorted in by two COURT OFFICERS, and looks clean-cut in a conservative brown suit and no make-up. He takes a seat next to Tinney. DISTRICT ATTORNEY WILLIAM SCHAFER, old and distinguished, sits at the opposite table with an ASSISTANT. A FEMALE SPECTATOR speaks in a hushed whisper behind Smitty's table, irking him.

FEMALE SPECTATOR

He's really very small, isn't he?

Judge Garrett bangs his gavel. He holds up a paper, adjusting his glasses.

JUDGE

Excuse me, Mr. Tinney, but what is this you've sneaked onto my desk?

Tinney speaks quickly, prepared to give this speech.

TINNEY

A motion to dismiss, Your Honor. As it says there and as my expert will vouch for, these jurors may be as honest as the day is long, but they cannot control what remains in the human subconscious after exposure to pre-trial publicity.

JUDGE

Psychiatry is hardly an exact science, Mr. Tinney. What your expert tells me today could be discredited tomorrow. Until the study of the mind becomes more credible than voodoo, your motion is denied.

Tinney looks disappointed, but not surprised. He sits back down.

JUDGE

Now, let's see... The defendant has entered a plea of guilty.

Smitty's jaw drops. Schafer smirks, as do most of the reporters and spectators, as well as the COURT STENOGRAPHER. Tinney half-rises.

JUDGE

Well, oh, pardon me. I meant the defendant is pleading not-guilty.

SMITTY

(VO)

Dearest Diane. Remember how I told you that I could see the future, if I could just concentrate hard enough? I see it now, and it just blows my mind. I am going to literally be murdered for something I did not do.

INT. COURTROOM- HALF AN HOUR LATER

Tinney is by the jury box, ending his less-than-excellent opening statement. He stutters slightly and has a thick accent.

TINNEY

...Mr. Schafer says that the whole reason you and I are here, the so-called motive my client would have for killing the Fritz sisters, is Alleen Rowe. What we in the legal profession call a lack of corpus delecti. Her body cannot be found, if she is indeed dead. So I ask you not to focus on this desperate attempt to implicate Mr. Schmid, but on the crime at hand- the murder of Gretchen and Wendy Fritz- and on who might want them out of the picture. Namely, Mr. Richard Bruns.

INT. COURTROOM- MINUTES LATER

SCHAFER

The prosecution calls its
first witness- Mrs. Cecilia
Fritz.

Mrs. Fritz enters. She is wearing a nice suit, but her
red eyes and loosely done hair betray her misery.

COURT OFFICER

Do you swear to tell the
truth, the whole truth, so
help you God?

Mrs. Fritz curls the fingers of her raised hand and looks
up at the ceiling.

MRS. FRITZ

So help me, God.

The officer steps aside. Schafer holds up two large
evidence bags, one containing a sundress and one
containing capri pants and a camisole. He turns them
towards the jury, then to Mrs. Fritz.

SCHAFER

Could you identify these, Mrs.
Fritz?

She covers her mouth and sobs a little, speaking
suddenly.

MRS. FRITZ

They're theirs.

SCHAFER

Whose?

MRS. FRITZ

They... They look like
something my daughters might
have worn.

SCHAFER

Which is it, Mrs. Fritz?

She cries a little.

TINNEY

Objection. The bodies have already been identified through dental records as the Fritz girls, I don't see how getting their crying mother to confirm this will help anyone. Article 352 reads 'should evidence necessitate undue consumption of time or-

JUDGE

That's enough, Mr. Tinney. Objection sustained. Please, Mr. Schafer, save it for the experts.

Schafer nods politely and turns back to Mrs. Fritz.

SCHAFFER

Had you ever met the accused, Mr. Schmid, before today?

MRS. FRITZ

Yes, many times. He came by the house and... he was always a perfect gentleman around my family.

SCHAFFER

That's fine, Mrs. Fritz, but I didn't ask you to elaborate. Did Gretchen ever express to you any fear of Mr. Schmid?

MRS. FRITZ

No, never. And she never told me anything about-

SCHAFFER

That's fine, Mrs. Fritz. I'm done with this witness.

Schafer is annoyed and looks regretful. Tinney stands and slowly walks over to the still tearful Mrs. Fritz. He places his hands on the edge of the witness stand.

TINNEY

Good afternoon, Mrs. Fritz. It's a darned shame you have to be here at all, so I'll try to keep this short and relatively painless. Now, you already spoke of your daughter's relationship with Mr. Schmid. What, if anything, did she have to say about Mr. Richard Bruns?

MRS. FRITZ

Well, she told me once that he had a gun, silver, and that he waved it in her face.

SCHAFFER

Objection! Hearsay. We can't very well put Gretchen on the stand to confirm this.

A few people grimace at Schaffer's distasteful remark.

JUDGE

Overruled. You forfeited that claim when you asked for Gretchen's opinion about Mr. Schmid. Besides, I can't see why Mrs. Fritz would have any reason not to tell the truth, under the circumstances, when it comes to her own daughter. Go on.

TINNEY

Don't worry, I've just got one more question. As a mother, would you say Gretchen was afraid of Mr. Bruns?

MRS. FRITZ

I wouldn't say afraid... but she definitely disliked him.

TINNEY

Thank you, that's all.

Mrs. Fritz steps down and walks out of the room, brushing Smitty lightly, barely noticeably, on the shoulder as she passes him. He doesn't look up at her, but a small smile creeps to his lips.

INT. COURTROOM- NEXT AFTERNOON

In the background, DR. HIRSCH, a forensic expert (or what passes for one in the 1960s) is surrounded by enlarged photos of the crime scene.

DR. HIRSCH
Which is why the remains were too mummified to determine the exact cause of death.

After noticing the COURT ARTIST scribbling away, a bored Smitty puts his head in his hands, pouting and posing for the man.

INT. COURTROOM- LATER ON

A young, acne-ridden SEARS EMPLOYEE sits at the witness stand. He is examining a guitar cord in an evidence bag and a large photo of Smitty playing guitar. Finally, he looks up and hands the two to Schafer.

SEARS EMPLOYEE
Yes, it fits that guitar...

Schafer turns, smug with satisfaction.

SEARS EMPLOYEE
Of course, it's a popular model. Very popular.

The young man flashes a grin at Smitty. When he is dismissed, he sits in the back of the room next to a row of newly bleached blond teenage girls. Smitty leans over and writes in his notebook.

SMITTY

(VO)

Maybe I'm wrong, dollface.
It's nice how all my friends
are really helping right now.
It's about time. Maybe
everyone else will find out
what a rotten rat ding-dong
Richie really is.

MONTAGE

A newspaper headline reads: Guitar Cord Murder Weapon,
over the pic of Smitty that was used to attempt to prove
just that. A pair of scissors cuts the article out - it's
a TEENAGE BLONDE, who then sticks the article to her
wall.

Newly bleached BLONDE GIRLS, among them newly-flaxen Tesa
and Carol, begin showing up each day in the last two rows
of the audience.

Familiar teenagers hang out by the courthouse steps,
smoking, listening to music and generally annoying the
lawyers who work there.

INT. COURTOOM- NEXT DAY

JP sits at the witness stand, sullen. He is wearing a
wrinkled dress shirt and has a thin beard and moustache.

SCHAFFER

Please state your name for the
court.

JP

I take the fifth.

There's a murmur in the courtroom. Smitty lets out a
small, brief smile.

JUDGE

Young man...

JP

I refuse to answer your
question on the grounds that
it may incriminate me under
the laws of Arizona and the
United States of America.

This sounds rehearsed. JP is a rock.

SCHAFFER

Well if you won't tell us your name, could you inform us as to your relationship with the defendant?

JP

I take the fifth.

SCHAFFER

Were you present on the night Alleen Rowe was murdered?

JP

I take the fifth.

SCHAFFER

But you did enter a confession with the Tucson police?

JP

You already got me once. What more do you want?

Schafer looks, for once, pleased. Tinney stands.

TINNEY

Your Honor, he knew this witness would put my client in a negative light! I demand that the jury disregard his statements, and that he be taken off the stand immediately.

JUDGE

I'm still the judge, Mr. Tinney, but I'll grant one of your 'demands.' Take Mr. Saunders away. The court will take a recess until one o'clock.

EXT. COURTHOUSE ALLEYWAY- SECONDS LATER

Two COURT OFFICERS take a shackled JP out a side door, where a few reporters loiter. They all shove microphones in his face.

JP

I'd like everyone to know that
I was forced to take the
stand. I despise the Tucson
police, its newspapers, and
you.

JP looks straight into a news camera before being ushered
into a police car.

INT. COURTHOUSE CAFETERIA

JP looks angrily out of a black and white television in
the corner. Tinney sits at a plastic white table, a half-
eaten meal in front of him.

SCHAFER

(OS)

Can't tear yourself away from
this place, can you, Willy
Boy?

Tinney turns and smiles at Schafer, who takes a seat and
looks down at Tinney's half-eaten meal.

SCHAFER

You can't come for the food.

Both men are relaxed and obviously have a friendlier
rapport outside of the courtroom. Schafer seems a little
less stuffy than normal, and Tinney a little less of a
hayseed.

TINNEY

Just like Ma used to make.

SCHAFER

I swear, Willy, the stronger
your accent, the weaker your
case. You really think you can
get this kid off?

TINNEY

That's my intention.

SCHAFER

Maybe so. I just always took
you to be a man of integrity.

TINNEY

What's that supposed to mean?

SCHAFFER

Don't tell me you think the
kid's innocent.

TINNEY

One thing's for sure, he's not
right in the head.

SCHAFFER

I didn't notice him pleading
insanity.

TINNEY

The only people crazy enough
to do that are-

SCHAFFER

Insane.

The men sit back and sigh a little. Schaffer looks at his
watch.

TINNEY

I guess we oughta be gettin'
back soon. You just try to
hold up your end in there.

Tinney retrieves his wallet to pay for his meal. Schaffer
notices two BLONDE GIRLS eating at the counter.

TINNEY

He seems to have a way with
the ladies, doesn't he? It's
downright creepy.

SCHAFFER

You know what my daughter said
when she saw his photo in the
paper? 'Kinda cute, Pa.'
Barely eleven, and she was
eyeing a murderer like he's
some kind of movie star.

TINNEY

Murderer?

They sit in silence for a moment.

TINNEY

Ready for my next guest star?

SCHAFFER

Either way, you think I'd tell
you?

TINNEY

Prison guards are calling her
the Ice Queen.

SCHAFFER

I guess she'd have to be.

INT. COURTROOM- NEXT DAY

The doors at the back of the courtroom open. Mary French walks in wearing a cheap grey suit and poorly-applied make-up. The blonde girls in the back row elbow each other and whisper, and all the spectators turn to stare. Even the jurors sit up. Mary strides, shoulders slumped, head down, past Smitty. A glimmer of something- guilt or regret- shows in his face.

INT. COURTROOM- MINUTES LATER

Mary stares straight ahead. She doesn't seem to be looking at anything with her glazed-over eyes.

SCHAFFER

Go on.

MARY

I was in the car with Smitty
and JP.

JUDGE

Could you speak up, please?

She turns to him and glares, then speaks in a voice that is slightly louder but aching monotonous.

MARY

I was in the car with Smitty and JP. Smitty's car. We drove up and down Speedway for a while, drinking. At eleven o'clock, we went to Alleen's house. That's when her mom leaves to go work at the hospital. I got out and knocked on the window. Alleen was watching The Beatles on TV. She came out straight away, in her bathing suit and a sweater. Her hair was up in curlers. She looked cold.

The crowd is hypnotized by Mary's deadpan voice, even Smitty. His head tilts backwards and he blinks slowly, thinking of-

THE DESERT- NIGHT

Smitty's convertible pulls up, grinding to a halt in the middle of nowhere. JP, Smitty, Alleen and Mary get out. They sit around talking and laughing.

MARY

(VO)

Smitty drove past our usual spot. We all got out and talked for a bit. Smitty said that he and I should get the radio from his car. While we walked away, there was a scream.

Smitty stops, motions for Mary to go to the car, and runs back in the direction they came from. Mary sits in the car's front passenger seat.

MARY

(VO)

I waited in the car for about ten minutes. Smitty came back. He said that Alleen was dead, that John hit her with a rock. Smitty's clothes had blood on them. He told me 'I did it for you. I love you very much.'

Smitty leans into the car and, after speaking to Mary, kisses her.

MARY

(VO)

Smitty had two shovels in his trunk, so he and I brought them to the wash.

Smitty and Mary approach the scene of the crime carrying shovels.

MARY

(VO)

Alleen was full of blood and just in her bathing suit, lying on her sweater. Smitty said 'dig' so I dug.

Mary and JP dig with slow and steady stabs into the dirt while Smitty surveys.

MARY

(VO)

After she was under, Smitty buried his dirty shirt. Then we all wiped his car clean, and decided on a story-

BACK IN THE COURTROOM

Mary still has a vacant look on her face as she finishes her testimony.

MARY

...that Alleen and JP had a date that night at the Feedbag, but she never showed. Just in case.

Tinney rises to question Mary.

TINNEY

So when you saw Alleen being killed, what did you do?

MARY

I didn't.

TINNEY

Pardon?

MARY

I didn't see her being killed.

Tinney acts confused, looking down at a paper on his desk.

TINNEY

Sorry, my mistake. But afterwards, when you saw her on the ground, you're sure she was dead?

MARY

No.

TINNEY

Surely you tried to help her.

Mary speaks, as she has been, without an ounce of remorse.

MARY

No.

TINNEY

But you did help bury her. Because Smitty asked you to. You and he were very close.

MARY

Yes.

TINNEY

You and Smitty fought, though, didn't you?

MARY

Yes.

TINNEY

Over another girl?

MARY

Yes.

TINNEY

And was that other girl Gretchen, or someone else?

MARY

Gretchen.

INT. COURTROOM- AFTERNOON

Once again, everyone present seems a little tired.

SCHAFFER

The prosecution calls Richard
Bruns to the stand.

And, once again, the spectators and jurors are woken up by the sound of that familiar name. They also get an eyeful as Richie- with a huge pompadour, Beatle boots and purple sunglasses- enters. He removes his sunglasses only when he takes the stand. His dress looks even more outrageous compared to Smitty's uncharacteristically conservative suit.

INT. COURTROOM- MINUTES LATER

Smitty's eyes shoot daggers up at Richie, who looks nervous and won't gaze down in his former friend's direction.

SCHAFFER

Didn't it concern you that
your scarf was at the burial
site?

RICHIE

No. I wasn't even wearing it
that night, and I don't know
how it got there.

SCHAFFER

I see. And weren't you afraid
you might be considered a
suspect in the murder of Wendy
and Gretchen Fritz?

RICHIE

Not really.

SCHAFFER

Thank you, Mr. Bruns. Not just for your imperative testimony, but for coming forward in the first place. Lest we forget, it was you who led the police to the bodies, the evidence, in the first place. You who defied your closest friend, the most popular man in town, so that Dr. and Mrs. Fritz could find justice. Thank you.

The Judge rolls his eyes. Smitty scoffs, and Tinney hushes him before cross-examining Richie.

TINNEY

Tell me, Mr. Bruns, do you have a girlfriend?

RICHIE

No.

TINNEY

But you did recently. Darlene Kirk, am I right?

RICHIE

Yeah, we went steady for a while.

TINNEY

And why did it end?

SCHAFFER

Your Honor! We're talking about high school love and passing fancies. I don't see the relevance of listening to Mr. Bruns's side of a teenage break-up.

TINNEY

Actually, the only side I'm interested in is Judge Wilde's.

JUDGE

Oh? What of my colleague?

TINNEY

I have the court transcripts,
but maybe Mr. Bruns would like
to tell us why he was sent to
Ohio.

Tinney gives a stack of paper to the judge. Richie is
adamant.

RICHIE

For protecting Diane!

TINNEY

How so?

RICHIE

Smitty had it out for her. I
knew it.

TINNEY

Not 'from whom', Mr. Bruns. I
want to know how you went
about protecting your ex-
girlfriend.

RICHIE

I stayed around her
neighbourhood, patrolled the
streets. I asked her to tell
me every time she went out.
She didn't, so I blocked her
car with mine and... nailed
her windows shut.

Judge Garrett raises his eyebrows.

TINNEY

Well, sounds to me that Smitty
wasn't the one she was scared
of.

SCHAFFER

Objection. Speculation. Mr.
Bruns is not on trial, here.

JUDGE

If he believed Ms. Kirk was
indeed in danger, I won't stop
him from saying so. But tread
lightly, Mr. Tinney.

TINNEY

Did Mr. Schmid know about all this?

RICHIE

Mr. Schmid?

TINNEY

Smitty. Did he know that you were supposedly protecting Darlene from him?

RICHIE

No, he just thought me and her weren't getting along. He said we should go get Gretchen's body and hang her from a noose outside Darlene's window. He said that would bring her around.

TINNEY

And did you?

RICHIE

What? No.

TINNEY

Why not?

JUDGE

Mr. Tinney...

TINNEY

Your Honor, this witness made no secret of his hatred for Gretchen Fritz during his taped confession. He also didn't seem to have a problem with handling her corpse. So why, Mr. Bruns, didn't you go ahead with that particular plan of Smitty's?

RICHIE

He was just kidding.

TINNEY

Just kidding. Thank you.

INT. COURTROOM- LATER ON

Darlene is perched at the witness stand in an elaborate dress and updo. It is her turn to scowl and shoot dirty looks at Smitty, and his turn to avoid looking her.

SCHAFFER

So you were alone?

DARLENE

I was the only girl there, yeah. It was pretty late. Some kids left for the Creature Feature, but most went home.

SCHAFFER

Were any calls placed or received?

DARLENE

I was on the couch when the phone rang. JP got it. He told Smitty that it was Gretchen, that she wanted to meet him or else she'd tell her father.

SCHAFFER

Tell him what?

DARLENE

I didn't hear, but I can guess.

JUDGE

That's all right, Miss Kirk. All we want from you is what you actually witnessed. Go on.

DARLENE

So Smitty got all mad and said...

Darlene pauses, biting her lip. The courtroom is silent. She looks straight at Smitty.

DARLENE

'I'm gonna get that bitch if it's the last thing I do.'
Pardon my language.

There are raised brows all around, though whether they're over the violence of the quote or the foul language coming from such a sweet-looking girl is anyone's guess.

SCHAFFER

There's no need to apologize,
Miss Kirk. What happened next?

DARLENE

He and JP left with a black
briefcase and two butcher
knives.

SCHAFFER

And when did they return?

DARLENE

About one thirty. They were
really messed up. JP left a
while later, and Smitty came
up to me and said 'Now I can
go out with anyone I want.'

SCHAFFER

Your witness.

Tinney approaches Darlene.

TINNEY

So, after Smitty and JP got
back from their supposed
outing, you left?

DARLENE

Yes I did.

TINNEY

How long did it take you to
get home?

DARLENE

I... Twenty minutes, I guess.

TINNEY

Twenty minutes? All right. So
you got home around two in the
morning. Did you get into
trouble?

DARLENE

No...

TINNEY

You didn't? Don't your parents care about your well-being?

JUDGE

Mr. Tinney...

DARLENE

They do.

TINNEY

They don't mind you getting drunk on a school night?

DARLENE

They didn't know about that part. They just, they knew I was safe.

TINNEY

They were a little off, considering the circumstances, but all right. So, Gretchen and Wendy didn't come inside late that night and sit on the couch?

DARELENE

No.

TINNEY

So Mr. Bruns is lying.

DARLENE

I don't know.

TINNEY

You don't know? Either he lied about Smitty's confession or you're lying now.

DARLENE

Maybe Smitty lied.

TINNEY

Smitty lied a lot, didn't he? He made up stories.

DARLENE

Yeah. He always wants attention.

She shoots Smitty a look, but can't keep eye contact.

TINNEY

And you? Do you want
attention?

Darlene's lip starts to tremble. She looks down at her
lap, then up at the jury.

DARLENE

I want to be at home. I want
Smitty to go to jail for what
he did.

TINNEY

And that would be?

DARLENE

Killing those girls!

TINNEY

Not for cheating on you?

Darlene is hysterical.

DARLENE

What about that? He killed
people! Who cares about his
girlfriends or guitar strings
or anything? If he gets out,
the police said I'd be the
first one he'd go after!

Tinney looks pleased.

INT. COURTROOM-LATER

Gil sits nervously at the witness stand.

GIL

Richie was always cussin' out
Gretchen, talking about
killing her. He said that she
wasn't good enough for Smitty.

TINNEY

Isn't it true that he idolized
the defendant? That he dressed
like him?

GIL

Yeah.

Schafer rises to question the witness.

SCHAFFER

Did you?

GIL

I dunno. Lots of guys did.

INT. COURTROOM- LATER

Tesa, wearing a fuzzy pink sweater and with newly platinum hair up in a bouffant-do, sits casually at the witness stand.

TINNEY

Did you see Ms. Kirk at the party?

TESA

Oh yeah, she's always there. And she's always the first one to pass out.

TINNEY

What about Mr. Saunders?

TESA

JP? He was there.

TINNEY

Are you sure?

TESA

I should be. We left together.

More gasps from the spectators and giggles from the blondes in the back row. Tesa shrugs nonchalantly.

INT. COURTROOM- MINUTES LATER

Chris is at the stand.

SCHAFFER

And did you attend the party with Mr. Bruns, as he claimed earlier?

CHRIS

I was there, but we weren't there together. I ain't no pantywaist, you know?

SCHAFFER

I'll rephrase. Mr. Bruns and you drove there in the same car and sat in the same room for some time?

CHRIS

Uh, yeah.

SCHAFFER

Did you talk to each other?

CHRIS

Uh huh.

SCHAFFER

And to Smitty?

CHRIS

Sure.

SCHAFFER

About what?

CHRIS

Cars. Girls.

SCHAFFER

Ever about Alleen Rowe?

CHRIS

No. Even if we did, I would never fink on him.

Tinney rises.

TINNEY

Is that what you kids usually do at these parties? Talk?

Chris laughs crudely.

CHRIS

No. Things usually heat up. I was in a back room for a while before I left.

TINNEY

Doing what?

CHRIS

You know.

JUDGE

You'll have to be more specific.

CHRIS

I was with a girl. You can ask her if you want, she's right back there.

He motions to the back of the courtroom, where Carol blushes and the others giggle.

TINNEY

I'll take your word for it. And I assume Mr. Bruns was in no way involved.

CHRIS

Of course not!

TINNEY

What time, about, did you last see Mr. Bruns?

CHRIS

Six thirty.

TINNEY

And you left at?

Chris smiles smugly.

CHRIS

Ten o'clock.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Smitty writes in his journal.

SMITTY

(VO)

Diane, babe, I feel like you've forsaken me. I want ever day to be bitchin' and for all you kids to have a good time whether I'm around or not, but I feel like this show is slipping away from me. Tomorrow, my parents take the stand.

INT. COURTROOM- THE NEXT DAY

Charles Schmid, Sr. is at the stand. He speaks curtly.

CHARLES

I was in the den watching television the whole time.

SCHAFFER

And you didn't see your son all night?

CHARLES

Right, but I did call once to tell him to turn down the music.

INT. COURTROOM- AN HOUR LATER

Katharine is just as sure about her testimony as her husband.

TINNEY

But your husband claimed he didn't see Smitty all night.

KATHARINE

Charles fell asleep on the couch. He always does. Smitty was over for at least two hours. We ate pizza. I remember it perfectly.

TINNEY

Can you also recall the color of the strings on your son's guitar?

KATHARINE

Black.

TINNEY

Are you quite sure they weren't grey?

KATHARINE

Like the one you found? No. I'd bet my life on it. Smitty played for me all the time. He had to sell his guitar for spending money. He didn't want to ask me or his father for any, because he knew the business wasn't doing well. They were grey. Like my eyes.

INT. COURTROOM- MINUTES LATER

Schafer is examining Katharine Schmid.

SCHAFFER

Your son sounds like a benevolent child. Did he also obtain employment when he learned of your financial difficulty?

KATHARINE

You mean did he get a job when we were broke? No. Just errands around our place and the nursing home- mowing the lawn, repaving the walkway. He was always ready to do anything I wanted, whatever I asked him for.

SCHAFFER

Popular?

KATHARINE

Of course.

SCHAFFER

With girlfriends and parties?

KATHARINE

Yes, not that a real gentleman speaks of such things with his mother.

SCHAFFER

But you did meet Gretchen Fritz?

KATHARINE

Yes.

SCHAFFER

Did you like her?

KATHARINE

I did not. I knew she had a bad reputation, and that she'd gotten boys into trouble before.

Schafer looks as if he's done, but turns back.

SCHAFFER

Say, Mrs. Schmid, how tall are you?

Katharine is surprised.

KATHARINE

Five foot three, I believe.

SCHAFFER

And your son?

She narrows her eyes. She knows where this is going.

KATHARINE

About the same.

SCHAFFER

Were you aware that he used to buy oversized boots and stuff the soles to make him taller?

KATHARINE

Yes. I wasn't aware that that was illegal.

The audience titters.

SCHAFFER

Do you love your son?

KATHARINE

More than anything.

SCHAFER

But he isn't your real son, is he?

Schafer holds up a photo of a thin, pretty BLONDE WOMAN in her twenties. The spectators are confused.

SCHAFER

Can you identify this woman?

KATHARINE

I've never seen her before.

SCHAFER

It has been over 20 years, so I'll forgive your memory. This is Charles's birth mother.

More confusion as Schafer shows the photo to the jury and the spectators. Tinney looks down, flabbergasted, at his client, who is trying to contain his rage.

SCHAFER

Isn't it true that he went to meet her two years ago and that she slammed the door on him?

TINNEY

What this has to do with anything, Your Honor, is-

SCHAFER

Thin. Blonde. The profile of Smitty's victims didn't begin with Alleen Rowe, it began with this unwed woman who abandoned him at Hillcrest Nursing Home!

Katharine's head is lowered, as if she's about to sob, but instead she composes herself with icy grit.

KATHARINE

And for that I'm eternally grateful. I've raised him since he was one day old, and he's the best son a mother could ask for.

Tinney looks as if he's about to object, but it's too late. The damage has been done.

INT. COURTROOM- THAT AFTERNOON

Smitty watches Schafer deliver his closing statement. Suddenly, Smitty is at a-

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Smitty is standing, handcuffs still on. Snippets of Schafer's speech can be heard in the background.

SCHAFFER

...influencing our teens isn't from a rock sensation or a movie star, but from a local man. A corruptor, a seducer who supplied them with alcohol, drugs, and a place to do them. But three girls paid the price... impossible to return to normal if this man remains in our midst... even now, the streets aren't safe... If he isn't punished, I shudder to think where he might lead more of our children.

The door to a trailer home opens. The blonde woman from the photo, his birth mother, stands there with a cigarette. She looks angry, mouths something to him and slams the door.

Smitty is still at the door as Tinney's speech begins.

TINNEY

...it's all circumstantial evidence... most important words in the English language where law is concerned, 'reasonable doubt'...

The door opens again. This time, Smitty's birth mother is cleaned up, dressed in a sweater set and pearls. She beams at him. They hug.

BACK IN COURT

TINNEY

... ask yourself, 'where was
Bruns after six-thirty on
August sixteenth?'

Tinney looks far from confident, but Smitty either doesn't notice or doesn't care, because he has his eyes closed and a grin on his face.

INT. COURTROOM- MINUTES LATER

Reporters begin to yap away, people exit the courtroom. Schafer, followed by his assistant, speaks to a COLLEAGUE on the way out while a CAMERAMAN films them.

SCHAFFER

As the gas chamber is
involved, I wouldn't expect a
verdict anytime soon. But I
know they'll do the right
thing.

Both men turn and nod solemnly in the camera's direction.

INT. POLICE VAN- 30 MINUTES LATER

Smitty is shackled in the back of the van, gazing out the barred window. The vehicle jerks to a stop. He leans forward.

SMITTY

What's going on?

OFFICER OLSEN

We've got to go back. They've
reached a verdict.

INT. COURTROOM HALLWAY

Katharine stays back as Mr. Schmid and Diane go inside, along with other spectators and reporters who are surprised to be filtering back in so soon. The blonde girls all hold hands and pray quietly.

INT. COURTROOM- MINUTES LATER

Everyone sits in silence. Detective Helig, Officer Olsen, Officer Hewitt, and Sheriff Gilmore stand near the back. A middle-aged juror, the FOREMAN, stands, holding a piece of paper. The judge nods at him.

JUDGE

In the case of the state of Arizona versus Charles Howard Schmid, Jr., how do you find the defendant?

FOREMAN

We find the defendant guilty and set the penalty at death.

DIANE

No!

The blonde girls begin to cry. Tinney leans back and blinks, stunned. Smitty doesn't move. Even Schafer doesn't look completely happy with the verdict. Tinney speaks in a robotic voice, devoid of hope.

TINNEY

I request that the jurors be polled individually.

JUDGE

Fine. Juror number one, how did you find the defendant?

JUROR ONE, an old woman, speaks apologetically.

JUROR ONE

Guilty.

Smitty begins to rock back and forth slowly. The voices of the jurors fade in and out.

JUDGE

Juror number two, how did you find the defendant?

JUROR TWO, a young woman, looks down.

JUROR TWO

Guilty.

It's painful for everyone- spectators, Schafer, even other jurors- to watch and listen.

JUDGE

Juror number three, how did-

TINNEY

Your Honour! I request the right to interview each juror about the possible influence of pre-trial evidence. I want a trained psychiatrist present and-

Tinney is grasping at straws, and he knows it.

JUDGE

Request denied, Mr. Tinney, as it was before.

Suddenly, Diane jumps over the barrier and wraps her arms around Smitty. He holds her head to his chest. The blonde girls wail.

JUDGE

Order! Order! This is not a show!

SMITTY

(in a loud
whisper)

It's okay baby, it's okay.

A photographer snaps a picture of him cradling her in his arms. He moves her hair out of his face.

EXT. COURTHOUSE- EARLY EVENING

The blonde girls remain in a mass, even as some of their PARENTS attempt to bring them home. Mr. Schmid gets stopped by a reporter and speaks without emotion.

MR. SCHMID

We will stand by our son.

He tries to console Katharine as he escorts her to the car along with Diane, reporters at their heels. Diane spins around and screams.

DIANE

You vultures! Vultures!

Tinney manages to ascend the front steps unnoticed, but is finally stopped by a group of reporters.

REPORTER

Will you appeal, Mr. Tinney?

REPORTER 2

What next?

TINNEY

I don't know about you, but I'm going home to my wife for dinner.

Schafer seems at ease surrounded by a mob of reporters.

SCHAFER

This is the quickest verdict I can recall involving the death penalty.

REPORTER

But you're pleased. Justice was done today. A murderer is locked up.

Tinney walks by, catching Schafer's eye.

SCHAFER

Well yes, but that isn't entirely the point-

INT. SMITTY'S CELL- DAY

Smitty sits in the prison's common area, writing in his journal. He looks older, his hair is a mess of light roots and fading black tips.

SMITTY

(VO)

You were right to divorce me, Diane. I wasn't the man you needed. I truly wish I could have been a great lawyer, an artist, a teacher. Now I've got nothing left... Even Tinney stopped coming by. I wish I could figure out why I did it, maybe help someone else...

A FELLOW INMATE turns on the television.

ON TV

REPORTER

(VO)

A nightmare Pima County
thought would never end has
come to a close.

Shots from past newscasts flash on screen, a mix of black
and white and faded color. Teens digging in the desert, a
close-up skull, idyllic shots of the town.

REPORTER

(VO)

In the three years after his
conviction, Charles Schmid,
Junior made news several
times, though often as a
footnote. Once in the wake of
a fake suicide attempt, then
an escape attempt. The last
time this station reported on
him, the death penalty was
temporarily abolished and his
sentence commuted.

Smitty sits in his cell with a small stack of mail. He
opens one envelope and removes a glamour shot of a
teenage blonde. He smiles, just barely, then sticks it on
his wall next to a collage of articles and photos.

REPORTER

(VO)

Some say his friends and
family are only just now
moving on. That up until
recently he was receiving fan
mail from as far away as
France.

Smitty's saved the best for last - a small cardboard box.
He opens it and beams, then takes it with him as he
leaves his cell.

INT. PRISON WASHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Smitty stands at the sink, the package close by. He reaches in and removes a sponge, which he uses to apply dark foundation. He makes a large mole with an eyeliner pencil, circling and circling until it's as big as a quarter, then applies layers of white chapstick. As smile creeps to his lips as he covers his hair in what appears to be black shoe polish. He looks like he's greeting an old friend.

Suddenly, a BALD PRISONER at the sink next to Smitty lunges at him with a knife, piercing his side and pushing him into the shower area. Two other INMATES join in, stabbing Smitty in the chest and face. One dumps the package's contents onto the floor. Finding only a pack of cigarettes, the prisoners get angry and flee.

Smitty lies, motionless, by a running shower. Droplets fall onto his face, causing his blood and make-up to run down his cheek and reveal the pale skin underneath.

ON TV

A female reporter in a polyester suit stands outside the prison.

REPORTER

And finally, 'Smitty' was put to death not by the state, but by a prison gang.

CLIP

A slightly blurry clip of William Schafer

REPORTER

(OS)

Justice was done today. A murderer is locked up.

SCHAFFER

Well yes, but that isn't entirely the point. Yes, he is guilty and deserves to be executed. But the question here, which seems to be overlooked, is why all these kids who knew what he'd done didn't say a thing. Kids from good homes, the kids who are being warned about men like him. I know I won't be sleeping well tonight.

He leaves, passing the usual huddled BLONDE TEENAGERS outside the courtroom.

CLIP

Shots of the Tucson countryside.

A local man and woman stand in front of a flower store.

LOCAL WOMAN

Tucson's really such a lovely, all-American place. The desert is beautiful, and it's always sunny.

LOCAL MAN

It's a shame one bad apple had to ruin it for everyone.

The woman looks unsure for a brief second, then smiles at her husband.

More shots of the town.

Little kids splash in the Speedway public pool.

A family plays mini golf.

Some teens sit by their sleek cars outside a drive-in restaurant. Their hair is a bit longer, their clothes a bit different, but they've got the same bored look in their eyes. They're all waiting for something exciting to happen. Anything.

FADE OUT