BACKSTROM

PILOT

"DRAGON SLAYER"

Written by

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BACKSTROM
PILOT: "Dragon Slayer"

EXT. REED COLLEGE / BENEATH THE BLUE BRIDGE - DAY

Two Portland Police detectives, an older black man and a melancholy white woman, stand in the pouring rain beneath the pedestrian Blue Bridge at Reed College. DETECTIVE JOHN ALMOND (50's, kind, warm) regards a print-out intently, face semi-obscured by his plastic-wrapped fedora. DETECTIVE NICOLE CARLTON, (30's, adept at suppressing her emotions, sad, competent) stares upward from under her umbrella, her facing getting wet -

CARLTON
And yea, it came to pass that Tobias Percival, evil logger baron, begat Governor Tobias Percival Jr, who begat State Senator Tobias Percival III, who in turn begat Tobias Percival IV.

Almond takes the print-out from her. It's a printed up photo of 19 yr. old Tobias Percival IV, alive, smiling, happy -

ALMOND
Maybe the boy killed himself on account of his name.

COME AROUND TO REVEAL -- A DEAD 19 YR OLD BOY

hangs from the bridge by a leather cord. He is painfully young, athletic, good looking, dressed in a faux-shearling flannel shirt and cargo shorts; on his left foot is a heavy combat-type boot. The right foot is clad only in a sodden work sock, sagging from the steady rain -

CARLTON
This one's gonna get loud.

ALMOND
Where's Backstrom?

CARLTON
At his physical. I sent Moto.
(off body)
You wanna pray for the boy, John? Before the shit hits the fan?

Almond shrugs a "yes". Carlton leaves. Almond looks up at Heaven, removes his fedora, and prays intently -

ALMOND
Jesus, it's my intention to pray for this poor boy's soul but You can see into my dark secret heart so You know that I implore You, please Jesus, to work Your wonders so Backstrom fails his physical or, if it be Thy will, call him home to Your loving arms in Heaven. Amen.

The water streams from Almond's face.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE ASSOCIATION HEALTH BUILDING / OFFICE - DAY

DETECTIVE EVERETT BACKSTROM, 40's, hung-over, worn, wary, in constant opposition to the world, sits in his boxing shorts on the examination table, facing faun-like DR. DEB CHAMAN (East Indian, male, earnest) -

DR. DEB CHAMAN
Any one of the following will kill you: Hyper-tension, diabetes, enlarged liver, emphysema, anemia, leucopenia, high blood pressure, enlarged heart...

BACKSTROM
I quit smoking.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
And -- if your gums are any indication -- started chewing. Are you still drinking, Backstrom?

BACKSTROM
Absolutely not.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
When a patient says "absolutely not" he is absolutely lying.

BACKSTROM
If Hindus are so smart, why do 98% of you live at the dump?

DR. DEB CHAMAN
I feel your pain. Demoted to Traffic for five years. Depressed, you started drinking and smoking to excess.

DR. DEB CHAMAN (CONT'D)
Now, there's a new Police Chief and she delivers you from exile, puts you in charge of the Special Crimes Group. Redemption! But you do understand that I have the power to declare you unfit for duty?

BACKSTROM
I'm an underpaid Hindu police doctor ... how much do I want to pass a guy on his physical? Nobody gets hurt.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
You get hurt because if you don't do as I say, you will die.

BACKSTROM
All the men in my family die young. Nothing you can do about that.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
Your father is a sheriff in Eastern Oregon. In his late seventies.

BACKSTROM
Dad's dead. It's just that God's afraid and keeps sending him back. Same with Satan.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
You must relinquish your vices. Eat a healthy diet. Exercise.

There's a KNOCK on the door and uniformed OFFICER FRANK MOTO (early thirties, an ex-fighter, earnest, honest, not very bright) sticks his head in -

MOTO
Dead body out at Reed College.

BACKSTROM
I'm coming.

Moto nods and leaves. Chaman writes a prescription -

DR. DEB CHAMAN
Here is my prescription.

BACKSTROM
(reading the prescription)
Make a friend.
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
(to Chaman)
What am I? Six?

DR. DEB CHAMAN
Man is a social animal. Alone, his spirit withers and his body dies.

BACKSTROM
I have buckets of friends; I just don't like any of them. People are stupid and boring.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
You have one week to fill my prescription.

BACKSTROM
Two things, Deb. One: the fact that I know I don't have long to live gives me clarity to see things the way they really are and the courage to do what's right. Two: this is America. Deb is a girl's name.

Backstrom leaves. Chaman is exhausted.

CUT TO:

EXT. REED COLLEGE / BENEATH THE BLUE BRIDGE - DAY

Backstrom, drenched photo in hand, wearing green duck shoes, a fluorescent orange poncho and a Portland Winterhawks cap, stands with Almond and Carlton regarding Toby's body hanging from the bridge. Almond and Carlton have coffee -

CARLTON
Any questions so far, sir?

BACKSTROM
Why's the well-hung male model wearing only one boot?

CUT AHEAD TO:

EXT. REED COLLEGE / ATOP THE BLUE BRIDGE - DAY

Carlton, Almond, and Forensics Liaison SGT PETER NIEDERMAYER (late 20's, yoga-slim, iron-man fit, the Perfect Evolved Man) stand over the lone, soggy, laceless boot -

CARLTON
Campus cop, 6am security sweep found the body.

NIEDERMAYER
At first glance the ligature matches the missing lace. No rigor, so dead less than three hours.

BACKSTROM
What's my rule about forensics, Niedermayer?

NIEDERMAYER
It's for lawyers and pinheads, sir.

BACKSTROM
Which are you?

Niedermayer enjoys Backstrom heartily, despite Backstrom's obvious disdain for Niedermayer -

NIEDERMAYER
Not a lawyer. But as the Buddha said, *"Things are not what they appear. Nor are they otherwise."*

ALMOND
What it appears is crazy that a nineteen year old rich, white boy killed hisself.

CARLTON
Maybe he got his heart broken.

BACKSTROM
(to Almond & Niedermayer)
She's projecting. Carlton got dumped by the lady lawyer.

CARLTON
How did you find out?

BACKSTROM
It's literally written on the men's room wall. Expect some calls.

Almond and Niedermayer both look at Carlton with compassion -

CARLTON
Don't look at me with compassion! It happens to every cop.

NIEDERMAYER
Not John. Thirty years married.

CARLTON
Almond’s got Jesus in his pocket giving him everything he wants.

ALMOND
Not everything...
(then)
I'm sorry, Nicole.

CARLTON
You and your church made it pretty clear you never want people like me and Dianne getting married.

ALMOND
I am sorry for your pain.

Carlton can sense Almond’s sincerity and nods grudgingly -

BACKSTROM
I guess your eco-lesbo-pro-bono girlfriend freaked out now that they call you the Angel of Death.

ALMOND
Those shootings were justified, everybody knows it.

NIEDERMAYER
The “Angel” part of that nickname is a real compliment.

BACKSTROM
I’m calling this death suspicious.

Carlton and Niedermayer are befuddled; Almond knows immediately what’s going on -

CARLTON/NIEDERMAYER
(in unison)
Why?

ALMOND
Because the department will pay for breakfast during an active homicide investigation. Right, Backstrom?

BACKSTROM
Absolutely not!

NIEDERMAYER
I’ll need a rationale for the medical examiner to bump this to the top of the autopsy schedule.

Backstrom takes a moment, then -

BACKSTROM
Almond is questioning a suspicious party with murky motives.

CARLTON
What suspicious party?

Scanning the gawkers beyond the crime scene tape, Backstrom picks out one black face amongst the white kids and Asians -

BACKSTROM
That black African-American. Take him in, Almond.

ALMOND
On account of his race?

BACKSTROM
Guy stands out like a raisin in a bowl of buttered popcorn.

Niedermayer LAUGHS, Carlton glares him to silence -

ALMOND
That is campus Security Officer Charles Turner. He found the body and called us in.

BACKSTROM
Like Niedermayer said, it's not what it seems or otherwise. Who's for a hot breakfast on the department, except for Almond?

Almond looks to Carlton. She shrugs. It's Backstrom's unit.

END OF TEASE

ACT ONE

EXT. COLLEGE / THE BLUE BRIDGE - DAY

Carlton makes notes as Tobias Percival's body is removed from the bridge. POLICE CHIEF ANNA HOLT, (40's, shrewd, beleaguered, African-American) approaches Carlton -

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Nicole, sorry to hear about you and Dianne.

CARLTON
Thanks, Chief. I'm okay.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Maybe you can shoot a bad guy, lift your spirits a little.
(off Carlton's look)
Heard a few too many jokes of that nature, huh?

CARLTON
Positive I.D. on the Percival kid.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Gonna be a dragon. Big, noisy case where everybody gets burnt.
(off Carlton's nod)
Son kills himself, Senator's a bad father. Son gets murdered it's a tragedy that gets him elected governor. Cagey political move calling his death suspicious.

CARLTON
Wasn't my call, Chief.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Don't tell me Backstrom. Backstrom is a dragon-slayer with no sense of politics or self-preservation.

CARLTON
A dragon-slayer who loves breakfast.

The Chief sees Backstrom walking toward them, eating a donut, clad in his orange rain poncho and duck shoes -

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Backstrom, bring me up to speed.

Holt takes Backstrom's donut away from him and tosses it -

BACKSTROM
I'm a dead rich kid hanging from a bridge. Chances are I got caught on camera gargling some other boy's sausage, hung myself in shame.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
I was told you suspected homicide.

Oh shit! Backstrom dives for cover -

BACKSTROM
Niedermayer! What's new forensic-wise?

NIEDERMAYER
This isn't a suicide.

Backstrom doesn't mask his delight. Carlton and Holt exchange looks of surprise. Niedermayer stops the body as the M.E.'s attendants are wheeling it by -

NIEDERMAYER (CONT'D)
Tobias Percival died of a heroin overdose.

CARLTON
Doesn't prove homicide. Kid could've taken a little bump to calm down before--

She grabs her throat and makes a quick CHOKING NOISE.

Niedermayer indicates the victim's nostrils. They are caked in a phlegmy-brownish goo. Same with his mouth. Pulling back eyelids reveals demonic, red eyeballs -

NIEDERMAYER
The heroin was jammed into the victim's face with enough force to make his gums bleed, scratch his corneas.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
What's your next move?

BACKSTROM
Uh...search the boy's dorm-room?

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
After we next-of-kin the parents.

CARLTON
I usually do the next-of-kin.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Not this time.

CARLTON
You don't want to expose the senator to the Angel of Death, I get it.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
This is a senator. It's gonna be me and the Head of the Special Crimes Group who tells him crown prince is dead. That's all it is.
(to Backstrom)
Let me do the talking -- and lose the ass-ugly poncho.

Backstrom removes the poncho and hands it to Niedermayer.

CUT TO:

INT. REED COLLEGE / ULTRA-MODERN SOLARIUM - DAY

Backstrom and Holt speak with SENATOR TOBIAS PERCIVAL III (50's) and his wife SANDRA PERCIVAL (40's) are waiting -

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Senator Percival, Mrs. Percival; Det. Everett Backstrom heads up the Special Crimes Group which is investigating your son's death.

BACKSTROM
(by rote)
- sorry for your loss -

The Percivals embrace for a moment, in pain. Backstrom waits for this to be over so he can get to work -

SENATOR TOBIAS PERCIVAL
I suppose Sandra and I were holding out the foolish hope you'd find it wasn't Toby.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
You can confirm down at the morgue but I'm sorry, there's no doubt.

SENATOR TOBIAS PERCIVAL
The internet is full of conjecture that Toby committed suicide.
(MORE)

SENATOR TOBIAS PERCIVAL (CONT'D)
We request that no official confirmation be made until after a full autopsy and tox screen has been conducted. Also, we'd appreciate it if you brought in the State Police and FBI.

BACKSTROM
Oh, I get it. Make people think it's complicated and maybe the boy didn't kill himself.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Backstrom...
(to the Percivals)
That won't be necessary.

SENATOR TOBIAS PERCIVAL
One would think a new and untested Chief of Police would embrace this opportunity to place a senator in her debt rather than make an enemy.

SANDRA PERCIVAL
Toby didn't kill himself.

BACKSTROM
How do you know?

SANDRA PERCIVAL
My son had recently fallen in love. For the first time. He wouldn't tell me the girl's name but when I last spoke with Toby, three days ago, he was standing on the cusp of happiness.

BACKSTROM
I'm a kid, I think I'm in love, she goes back to her old boyfriend, I hang myself from a bridge ... we already know that's not what happened this time.

The Percival's exchange looks, confused -

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Backstrom means your son did not commit suicide. He was murdered.

BACKSTROM
You got any theories on why? Your stand on gun control for example.
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
Any chance that got your boy killed?

SENATOR TOBIA PERCIVAL
We just lost a son. Our only child. And you want to blame me?

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
Senator Percival, Det. Backstrom doesn't mean to be offensive. The fact is, Tobias was murdered and Det. Backstrom is asking a pertinent question.
(to Backstrom)
In a not very nice way.

Sandra Percival's control slips. She is heartbroken for her lost son. Her husband moves toward her in support -

SANDRA PERCIVAL
Toby was murdered? And left to hang from a bridge?

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
My personal condolences for your grievous loss and I promise you we will find who killed your son.

BACKSTROM
(to Percival)
Let's start with a list of people who hate you in case you're the reason he got killed.

CHIEF ANNA HOLT
(to Backstrom)
I'm sure the Percivals understand that you have to get back to work.

Backstrom shrugs and leaves Holt behind with the Senator and Mrs Percival.

CUT TO:

EXT. REED COLLEGE / ULTRA-MODERN SOLARIUM - DAY

Backstrom exits to find Carlton waiting for him -

CARLTON
How'd it go?

BACKSTROM
The kid recently fell in love, wouldn't give Mom a name so maybe it was a boy? And the Senator's going to give us a chance to find the killer before calling in the FBI, also a list of enemies.

CARLTON
You were in there for maybe five minutes.

BACKSTROM
Sometimes people blurt just to stop me talking. Let's search the kid's room.

CARLTON
First we need permission.

BACKSTROM
From who?

CUT TO:

INT. REED COLLEGE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Backstrom and Carlton face President of the University LEYLAND EATON and General Counsel REBECCA OAKES -

PRESIDENT LEYLAND EATON
I am Leyland Eaton, President of the College and this is our General Counsel, Rebecca Oakes.

BACKSTROM
You got any snacks?

Eaton gestures toward a side table of coffee, pastry, and muffins. Backstrom heads over to help himself -

PRESIDENT LEYLAND EATON
The loss of Tobias Percival is a true tragedy for this college. He was an athlete, scholar, highly regarded student leader.

GENERAL COUNSEL REBECCA OAKES
To have someone like Toby Percival take his own life is a mystery beyond all understanding.

Backstrom chooses a cream-filled pastry -

CARLTON
Sir?

Backstrom exchanges the pastry and for a mingy muffin -

BACKSTROM
With all disrespect, something you ivory tower types do not understand is that people who get murdered always deserve it.

GENERAL COUNSEL REBECCA OAKES
Murdered? Campus Security informed us that Toby Percival was found....

CARLTON
He didn't hang himself.

PRESIDENT LEYLAND EATON
Toby was Captain of the rugby team. How many people would it have taken to hang him against his will?

Backstrom bites into the muffin and winces -

CARLTON
Toby Percival died of a forced heroin overdose.

PRESIDENT LEYLAND EATON
Heroin?

BACKSTROM
This tastes like when you lick a stamp. Sugarless, right? My doctor says sugar is a drug and there should be a policy against it like any other dangerous substance.

GENERAL COUNSEL REBECCA OAKES
If drugs were forced upon Percival then technically he did not take drugs and the college's drug policy is moot.

BACKSTROM
I didn't ask about your drug policy. I asked about sugar.

Carlton realizes that Backstrom has seemingly inadvertently jammed his thumb into a sensitive area for these two -

CARLTON
Have there been other serious drug incidents lately? An overdose?

PRESIDENT LEYLAND EATON
Absolutely not.

BACKSTROM
When people say “absolutely not” they’re lying.

GENERAL COUNSEL REBECCA OAKES
You came here for permission to search Toby Percival’s room. You’ve got it.

CARLTON
You’re the college’s lawyer. You should inform your client of the penalties for lying to the police during a homicide investigation.

Leyland looks at Oakes. Oakes nods permission -

PRESIDENT LEYLAND EATON
Heroin overdose. Three months ago.

CARLTON
The student's name, please?

Eaton leans over and whispers into Leyland’s ear, then -

PRESIDENT LEYLAND EATON
Reluctantly, in the interests of the right to privacy of not only the student in question but the entire college community, we respectfully require a warrant to divulge such sensitive information.

Backstrom pinches just a bit of pastry before they leave.

CUT TO:

INT. TOBY'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Backstrom and Carlton stand in the doorway of Toby’s room. It’s a total mess -

BACKSTROM
I’m a typical rich kid who knows someone else will clean up my mess.

CARLTON
Mattress flipped, drawers pulled out, posters ripped from the wall. This room was tossed.

They move in to look around -

CARLTON (CONT'D)
Did you mean what you said? About all murder victims deserving what they get?

BACKSTROM
I mean everything when I say it. Are you having second thoughts about killing those three robbers?

CARLTON
No. They shot at me first -- I'm wondering what a nineteen year old boy did to deserve murder?

BACKSTROM
When we know that, we'll know who killed him.

CARLTON
(indicating)
Laptop charger but no computer.

Backstrom is looking into the closet. Carlton is dialing her cell -

CARLTON (CONT'D)
The room didn't get tossed for a computer in plain view. What were they looking for?

BACKSTROM
(off closet)
Wooden hangers! In college? Rich bastard.

But there is one wire hanger, pulled out of shape, elongated -

CARLTON
(into phone)
Nadia, I got something for you.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SPECIAL CRIMES GROUP / INCIDENT ROOM - DAY

NADIA CHICHIKOV, SCG'S civilian support, 30's, dirty-girl sexy, fatalistic, poetic, Russian immigrant, cell pinned to shoulder by chin, has started a time-line of Toby's murder which stretches along one entire wall. Time of death is marked at 6am, body discovery at 6:32 am, Backstrom's arrival 7:23am -

CHICHIKOV
Shoot it at me.

Carlton watches Backstrom tap around the dorm room like a blind man with the elongated wire hanger -

CARLTON
Just "shoot", Nadia. The college won't cough up the name of a student who OD'ed and a warrant will take days.

CHICHIKOV
Time frame?

Backstrom opens the window and taps the hanger around the eaves and the gables outside -

CARLTON
Three months.

CHICHIKOV
You got it, Hobbit.

They both hang up -

CARLTON
Nadia will track down the overdose victim by computer.

Backstrom catches something with the hook and pulls it in. It's a zipped "Reed College" book bag. He hands it to Carlton -

CARLTON (CONT'D)
How'd you figure out the hanger trick?

BACKSTROM
I'm a boy. Boys hide things from their Dads. My Dad is a sheriff so I got good.

CARLTON
OK, that time you were talking about the actual you, right? Not astral projecting?

Carlton pulls two things from the satchel. One is a plastic-wrapped brick which he gives to Carlton. The other is an envelope full of cash labelled “Cass” -

BACKSTROM
I got about a thousand bucks in twenties.

CARLTON
I got about a pound of heroin.

BACKSTROM
I get murdered, I deserve it. Always and every time.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SPECIAL CRIMES GROUP / INCIDENT ROOM - NIGHT

Final meeting of the day, the entire team, Carlton presiding. Backstrom is more interested in the old pizza he has found in the refrigerator than the debriefing -

CARLTON
Best theory of the crime so far; Tobias Percival is dealing heroin, sells to a kid who O.D.'s, kid comes back, kills Toby with his own heroin.

NIEDERMAYER
Poetic.

BACKSTROM
Killer's name is Cass.

CHICHIKOV
Cass is short for the following: Calista, Cassandra, Casey, Cassidy, Lucas, Chase, Charles, Cassara, Catherine, Castila, Clarissa, Acadia, Cassiopeia, and Cosima. I found 27 possibilities at Reed College and gave them to Moto.

Moto refers to his notebook. He prints like a school-boy -

MOTO
I called every individual. Every individual knew the victim. Four individuals considered the victim a friend, none are missing a thousand dollars and none of the individuals admitted to a sexual relationship with the victim.

CARLTON
Toby's mother says he recently fell in love.

BACKSTROM
With someone named Cass.

MOTO
Seems like everybody's name is Cass.

BACKSTROM
Cheese. What's the verdict? Good or bad?

NIEDERMAYER
Only thing worse than white sugar is dairy.

BACKSTROM
What about anthrax, Niedermayer?

Niedermayer LAUGHS. Backstrom dutifully scrapes congealed cheese off the pizza -

ALMOND
The man's a grown-up, let him eat what he wants. According to his dorm-mates, Toby broke up with a girl named Alyson Cox a month ago.

MOTO
Girls always know who's the next girl. Like a sixth sense.

Backstrom looks in vain for a place to put the cheese blob -

ALMOND
As directed by Det. Backstrom, I questioned the Campus Security Guard who found the body. Charles Turner, 28, no priors, exemplary work record, earned a football scholarship to U of O--

MOTO
Go Ducks!

ALMOND
-- in 2006, injured 2007, the coach got him a job at Reed.

Finding nowhere to put the cheese, Backstrom shoves it in his mouth, totally unconsciously -

BACKSTROM
Next!

CARLTON
The victim's Alienware MX-14 laptop is missing. His house advisor says there's a sticker on it that looks something like ...

Chichikov holds up a sketch of a stripper-like silhouette in Cupid wings, sporting high heels and a bow-and-arrow -

CARLTON (CONT'D)
Forensics?

BACKSTROM
Niedermayer's just gonna say the brick we found is the same heroin got shoved in Toby's face. Next!

NIEDERMAYER
The heroin also contained traces --

BACKSTROM
NEXT!

CARLTON
Finances?

CHICHIKOV
Four withdrawals over the last five weeks, totalling fifty-two thousand, eight hundred dollars leaving a balance of nothing-doing.

ALMOND
Fifty grand? Sounds about right for buying a brick of heroin.

CARLTON
Any luck tracking down the unidentified overdose victim?

CHICHIKOV
Emergency rooms tells us only who comes in, not why. So I think to find students who cancel their student loans cross reference to the E.R. and maybe that's our junkie.

BACKSTROM
I am not on the cusp of understanding what she said.

ALMOND
Narcotics Division says heroin used to come onto the campus through the Laotian kitchen staff. They shut that down, now there is no conduit.

BACKSTROM
No conduit? I'm a rich kid with a pound of heroin? How'd I get it?
(then)
Forget Narcotics, I'll ask my extensive underworld contacts.

CARLTON
That's it Day One. Get some rest and we'll hit it hard tomorrow.

As everyone files out, Niedermayer approaches Backstrom -

NIEDERMAYER
Sir, I left a hemp bag on your desk containing several teas and infusions which will help you rid your body of toxins.

BACKSTROM
So I can eat cheese?

Niedermayer LAUGHS at Backstrom's big joke and leaves -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
Why's Niedermayer helping me pass my physical? What's in it for him?

CHICHIKOV
Maybe Niedermayer's tea are poison.

BACK AT THE TABLE - CARLTON

is pulling together her notes as Almond glowers -

CARLTON
He gets results.

ALMOND
We get results, he gets credit.

CARLTON
Backstrom called this a homicide way early--

ALMOND
--to score a free breakfast.

CARLTON
--he found out about the mysterious lover during a notification, he used a pastry to twist the President of the College into admitting a heroin overdose and he found the heroin poking around with a bent hanger.

ALMOND
Blind stabs and wild guesses. He gets lucky. Luck runs out.

CARLTON
Before it does, let's take advantage and catch a killer.

Carlton leaves Almond alone in the situation room.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTROM'S PLACE - NIGHT

Backstrom, sits in a crazy Sergio Rodrigues designer chair, chewing disconsolately on broccoli, watching GREGORY VALENTINE (late teens/early 20's, gay, whip-smart, fence/entrepreneurial crook) swap out a small sculpture on Backstrom's mantle for a vase. Backstrom's place is strangely FANTASTIC because Valentine uses it as a holding area for stolen art, counterfeit antiques, objets d'art, and acts as Backstrom's de facto decorator -

VALENTINE
After the cops forced the Laotians off campus, a meth-and-weed guy named Visser stepped in.

BACKSTROM
Visser. What's his system?

VALENTINE
Heroin is dead-dropped on campus, Visser's guy picks it up for distribution.

BACKSTROM
Who's Visser's guy?

VALENTINE
It's a mystery. Money exchanges hands off campus, the buyer is given a code word which is repeated to Visser's guy and the buyer gets his fix.

BACKSTROM
Is the code word "Cass"?

VALENTINE
It’s a mystery. I am now bored. Why are you eating vegetables? It's unnatural, like watching a fish eat spaghetti.

BACKSTROM
Deb says I’m gonna die because my heart is too big.

VALENTINE
I find that hard to believe. Who's Deb?

BACKSTROM
My doctor.

VALENTINE
She's right.

BACKSTROM
She's a he.

VALENTINE
Look at you having a drag queen for a doctor! *Tres* progressive.

BACKSTROM
Deb's not a drag queen; he's Hindu. Why do homos make everything gay?

Backstrom indicates a rather large box of bottles -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
That’s all my hard liquor. You wanna buy it? Deb says no more drinking.

VALENTINE
(off liquor)
Hundred bucks.

Backstrom holds out his hand for the money -

VALENTINE (CONT'D)
Does Deb know about the gambling and prostitutes?

BACKSTROM
If it weren't for hookers, I'd never have met your Mom.

VALENTINE
How dare you call my mother a hooker.

BACKSTROM
You were a hooker.

VALENTINE
I was a scintillating underage companion to older gentlemen. Whole other league. What else did Deb say?

BACKSTROM
No nicotine, caffeine, sugar, eat vegetables, exercise, blah-blah and make a friend.

VALENTINE
I'll be your friend.

Backstrom takes a beer from a cooler near his chair -

BACKSTROM
A queer thief/fence/man-companion? That's like filling a prescription for aspirin with rat poison.

Valentine kisses Backstrom on the forehead, picks up his newly purchased box of liquor, and makes to leave -

VALENTINE
Are you allowed beer?

BACKSTROM
In moderation.

VALENTINE
Moderation means one. If you go after Visser, be forewarned: he is a true villain. Take someone who knows how to shoot a gun.

BACKSTROM
You know that cop they call the "Angel of Death"?

VALENTINE
The one who went crazy, shot three liquor store robbers after they called her a dyke?

BACKSTROM
Totally my bitch. Does whatever I command.

VALENTINE
Watch out you don't call her a dyke.

Valentine shuts the door. Backstrom stares at the broccoli hatefully, crunches into it, then spits it across the room -

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTROM'S PLACE - DAY

Backstrom sleeps exactly where Valentine left him, wearing the same clothes. The broccoli is gone but there's a lot of beer cans on the floor beside him and an ashtray with cigar butts in it. His tv displays the morning news -

TV NEWS ANCHOR
...newly appointed Police Chief Anna Holt, generally regarded as a stop-gap appointment, faces her first high profile homicide with the apparent murder of Tobias Percival, son of Senator and Sandra Percival.

SANDRA PERCIVAL (ON TV)
My husband and I have every confidence that Chief Holt and the Special Crimes Group will find the parties responsible for the murder of our beloved son, Tobias.

Backstrom's CELL RINGS. Finally, Backstrom rouses himself and finds the cell amongst the discarded beer cans -

BACKSTROM
What?

Backstrom cycles through the beer cans, draining off the dregs of what he didn't get last night -

CARLTON (OVER CELL)
We're meeting Toby's faculty advisor in half an hour.

Backstrom lights the soggy stump of a cigar -

BACKSTROM
First ask Narcotics for background on a drugger, last name Visser.
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
Then ask Niedermayer if the heroin has any forensics crap on it that gives us a dead-drop location on campus.

CARLTON (OVER CELL)
Why does your voice sound like gravel?

BACKSTROM
I stayed up all night working the case. It's called a work ethic.

He hangs up and drains the last of the beer dregs, puffing on his stogie like it's a lifeline.

CUT TO:

INT. REED NUCLEAR REACTOR - DAY

Backstrom and Carlton speak with PROFESSOR ROMAN CORONADO, handsome, rumpled, brilliant, with an accent -

CARLTON
Can you think of anyone Toby Percival would meet before dawn on that bridge?

PROF. ROMAN CORONADO
I have no idea.

BACKSTROM
This is an actual nuclear reactor?

PROF. ROMAN CORONADO
Yes. A pool-type TRIGA Mark, run by physics students.
(to Carlton)
This is tragic. Tobias Percival was the finest person I've ever met.

CARLTON
Can you think of any reason someone would want to kill him?

PROF. ROMAN CORONADO
If Toby was murdered, it was in the pursuit of something noble.

BACKSTROM
Blow me, you lying beaner.

Coronado and Carlton are both shocked into silence -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
(mimicking Coronado's accent)
"*If Toby was murdered, it was in the pursuit of something noble.*"
(withering)
You're forty years old, you run a nuclear reactor and a 19 year old boy is the finest person you've ever met? Hispanics are in love with aristocracy. Ruined your whole culture.

PROF. ROMAN CORONADO
(to Carlton)
Out of respect for Toby, I will speak with you -- but that *pendejo* must leave my facility.

CUT TO:

EXT. REED COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY

Backstrom sits on a bench, puffing another cigar end while watching a group of Asian students. Carlton approaches -

CARLTON
Feeling guilty for drinking last night, right? Took it out on Coronado?

BACKSTROM
Mexicans are big into drugs. They got whole wars for it.

Carlton takes his stogie and tosses it in the garbage -

CARLTON
Coronado is Argentinian.

BACKSTROM
Heroin comes from Argentina.

CARLTON
You're thinking of cocaine, which comes from Bolivia. Coronado says Toby was a semester behind on fees, desperate for financial aid.

BACKSTROM
(off Asians)
I'm a spoiled brat who decides to defy Dad and be a bad boy.
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
Fifty grand in seed money gets me Visser's campus dope franchise. Vengeful ching-chongs hang me from a bridge to warn off Visser.

CARLTON
Why didn't you go to your parents for the money?

BACKSTROM
I was spending it on something bad.
(then)
Moto's handsome, right?

CARLTON
If you like 'em manly, tough, brave, trustworthy, modest, dumb, and sincere. Why?

BACKSTROM
Because we gotta question Toby's twenty-year-old ex-girlfriend and maybe he can moisten her up.

CUT TO:

INT. ALYSON COX'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Moto faces the beautiful, pathologically cynical 20-yr-old ALYSON COX while Backstrom looks idly around her room, clocking her text books -

ALYSON COX
Toby and I were together for less than six months, so...

BACKSTROM
You dump him because he ran out of money or did he dump you because he met someone new?

ALYSON COX
That's personal, so...

Suddenly, Alyson Cox bursts into tears -

MOTO
Oh, ma'am, I'm so sorry!

Backstrom sees an Alienware computer on Alyson's desk, bearing Cupid/Stripper with a bow and arrow sticker -

BACKSTROM
She's faking. This is Toby's computer.

Backstrom hands the computer to Moto, who opens it. Alyson stops crying, unembarrassed by getting caught -

ALYSON COX
You need a warrant for that.

BACKSTROM
It's stolen property. We don't need a warrant.

MOTO
It wants a password.

ALYSON COX
Good luck. Toby changed it after we broke up.

BACKSTROM
Type in "Cass".
(to Alyson Cox)
How do you stay so thin?

ALYSON COX
Self-control.

BACKSTROM
When did you snatch Toby's computer?

ALYSON COX
I saw Toby was dead on Twitter so I went to get it.

BACKSTROM
What time?

ALYSON COX
Just after 7:30 am.

BACKSTROM
You don't have self control. You're a binge-and-barfer.

ALYSON COX
That is slander!

BACKSTROM
I'm you. I see on my phone that my ex killed himself.
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
First thing I do, I steal his computer. Does that sound like a disciplined person?

ALYSON COX
That's totally creepy, pretending you're me.

MOTO
Bingo, sir.

Moto shows the laptop screen to Backstrom -

MOTO (CONT'D)
Photos of this individual with another boy in a sexual situation.

BACKSTROM
That's a girl, Moto. You can tell because she doesn't have a penis.

MOTO
Wow Her parts are very bushy.
(*Eureka!*)
Toby took these photos and was blackmailing you for lesbianism.

ALYSON COX
Blackmail? Toby Percival was a choirboy. Never lied. Never stole. Never cheated. The shame Toby felt about his father turned stunted his development at the adolescent "white knight" phase -

BACKSTROM
Excellent use of Psych 101.
(then)
I'm you...

ALYSON COX
Again?

BACKSTROM
Toby dumps me for a girl named Cass. To show him I'm totally fine with it, I send him photos of me snorkeling with a girl. What if that's why he killed himself? I better get those pictures back so I don't get blamed.

ALYSON COX
(lying)
I'm not bulimic.

BACKSTROM
How'd Toby's room look when you stole the computer?

ALYSON COX
Clean as ever. Boring Boy Scout.

MOTO
If he's such a boy scout how come he got murdered?

BACKSTROM
Everybody hates boy scouts.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS / LOBBY - DAY

Moto and Backstrom. Moto carries the computer -

MOTO
If I was Toby and I got those photos, I'd have thought it was an invite to a threesome.

BACKSTROM
Had a lot of experience with threesomes?

MOTO
The regular amount.

BACKSTROM
The regular amount is none.

MOTO
I was a Mixed Martial Arts fighter. We attract groupies. I've put that behind me now, sir, to concentrate on my career in law enforcement.

BACKSTROM
You're over thirty and still in uniform. If I were you I'd go back to fighting and threesomes.

Niedermayer and Carlton approach on their way out -

NIEDERMAYER
Bushtits, sir. Bushtit feces.

CARLTON
It's a bird. The heroin showed traces of poop and feathers.

NIEDERMAYER
(off a campus map)
I have in my possession a map displaying bushtit feeding stations on campus.
(off a heroin pen test)
Testing each station for the presence of heroin should allow us to unearth the dead drop.

BACKSTROM
Everything you say sounds like a toast to the queen.

Niedermayer and Moto find that hilarious -

CARLTON
Narcotics came up with hit on “Visser”. First name Eugene, owns a bar in Hawthorne.

BACKSTROM
Let’s go ask Eugene if he got Toby killed.

CARLTON
We don’t have any leverage.

BACKSTROM
I’ll let Visser know, very subtly, that if he helps us with the murder, we’ll turn a blind eye to the dope dealing.

CARLTON
(doubtfully)
Subtly?

CUT TO:

INT. RIVERSIDE BAR - DAY

Backstrom and Carlton with GENE VISSER, (30'S, big, biker-tough, a career criminal.) Visser cracks a raw egg into a boilermaker -

BACKSTROM
Can you tell us where you were yesterday morning at 6am?

VISSER
Why would I tell you anything besides the name of my lawyer?

Carlton holds up a photo of Toby Percival hanging from the bridge. When Visser takes it from her Backstrom slams back Visser's boilermaker -

CARLTON
This boy was murdered out at Reed College yesterday morning.

Visser sees his drink is gone, LAUGHS, starts over again -

VISSER
And you'd like to eliminate me as a suspect?

BACKSTROM
Maybe he got hung up there as a warning. Our dilemma is, do we work you or the Laotians?

Visser digs a card out of his pocket and hands it to Carlton -

CARLTON
(off card)
Congrats. Very good lawyer.

VISSER
(off drink)
She probably wouldn't mind me telling you that the protein in the albumin bonds with the alcohol molecules resulting in a healthful energy drink.

Backstrom drinks Visser's second boiler maker then BELCHES.

BACKSTROM
(to Carlton)
I do feel better. Energized.
(to Visser)
Tell your lawyer that you are about to be the focus of the entire Narcotics Division.

Infuriated, Visser pokes Backstrom in the chest -

VISSER
I'm gonna ask you to pay for ...

Carlton reaches over and deftly dislocates Visser's jabbing finger -

VISSER (CONT'D)
AAAAHHH!

It takes Visser a moment to regain his composure. He snatches back the lawyer's card with his good hand -

VISSER (CONT'D)
You won't need this. My lawyer will find you.

Visser, wrenches his finger back into place.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. SPECIAL CRIMES GROUP / BACKSTROM'S OFFICE - DAY

Backstrom is reading a "Wellness Blog" on his computer when Carlton enters. He is indignant -

BACKSTROM
Visser lied about the egg in the boilermaker being healthy.

CARLTON
Are you trying to get canned? Doing shots while questioning a suspect?

BACKSTROM
Says the woman who wrenched off his finger. He didn't even call you a dyke.

Backstrom pretends to cringe in fear. Carlton is not amused -

CARLTON
That story is inaccurate.

BACKSTROM
You didn't kill three robbers?

CARLTON
They never called me dyke. There wasn't enough time between "freeze motherfucker" and all the shooting.

BACKSTROM
Y'know, that story always sounded wrong to me because who's ever heard of an angry lesbian?

Carlton smiles for the first time in weeks. Chichikov enters and thrusts a print-out into Carlton's hand -

CARLTON
I didn't "attack" Visser. I responded in an appropriate manner when a fellow police officer was assaulted at a pointless meeting.

BACKSTROM
If Visser wasn't involved, he'd have given us an alibi. He's involved.

CARLTON
(reading print out)
You should die for what you did.

CHICHIKOV
That is an e-mail from three weeks ago I found on the victim's computer.

BACKSTROM
Signed "Cass"!

CARLTON
Signed "Archie".

CHICHIKOV
Archibald Danforth. A rugby boy from which Toby was Captain. He dropped out of school a month ago.

CARLTON
Dropped out. Hates Toby. Could be our overdose victim.

CHICHIKOV
He works at *Hallowed Grounds*.

BACKSTROM
The cemetery.

CARLTON
Fancy coffee shop on Lovejoy.

BACKSTROM
I'll take Almond.

CHICHIKOV
Because Nicole can't control her temper?

BACKSTROM
Because rugby's a sport and black guys got the inside edge. Duh.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLOWED GROUNDS COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Backstrom and Almond sit with uniformed barista ARCHIE DANFORTH who regards the printed out email -

ARCHIE DANFORTH
Yeah, I sent Toby the email.

ALMOND
You got your wish. Toby's dead.

BACKSTROM
Can I get some cream and sugar?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
You don't want cream and sugar.

ALMOND
Did Tobias Percival ever provide you with heroin?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
The drug heroin? No! God! What?

BACKSTROM
I do so want cream and sugar!

ARCHIE DANFORTH
Additives obscure the sensory profile of the blend.

ALMOND
You're not supposed to have sugar anyway. Or dairy. Or caffeine.

ARCHIE DANFORTH
Caffeine happens to be a smart drug.

ALMOND
(doggedly)
Did you drop out of school because of Toby Percival?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
Yes.

ALMOND
Not because of drugs?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
Toby diminished me as a man.

BACKSTROM
And that outfit you're wearing doesn't?

Almond can see that Backstrom's coffee jibes are knocking Archie off-balance -

ARCHIE DANFORTH
This is the best coffee shop in the city. Toby hazed me, okay?

ALMOND
Hazing? Is rugby a team sport? I thought it was like handball.

BACKSTROM
English people call it soccer.

ARCHIE DANFORTH
It's not soccer! Jesus. I made an official complaint but the Percival family has waaaay tons of influence and I was out.

ALMOND
The Percivals got you expelled?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
I expelled myself. Post-traumatic stress. It's a real thing.

ALMOND
For soldiers in Afghanistan, son. Not soccer players in Oregon.

BACKSTROM
What'd Toby do? Stick frozen hot dogs up your ass? Super glue his dick to yours and tug o'war? Feed you tapioca, call it semen?

ALMOND
Put sugar in your coffee?

Backstrom LAUGHS. He didn't know Almond could be funny -

ARCHIE DANFORTH
They held me down and Toby smeared black shoe polish on my testicles.

ALMOND
(to Backstrom)
This coffee kid didn't kill nobody.

BACKSTROM
I'm kind of a weinie, working in a weinie coffee shop, I'm thinking how much everybody loved Toby, nobody likes me, I gotta feel a little bit like Toby finally got what he deserved.
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
(off Archie's shrug)
Did you ever see anything, ever, where Toby got what was coming to him when he was alive?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
I saw him get slapped once.

BACKSTROM
By someone named "Cass"?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
A stripper named Cassandra. How'd you know?

Almond is pulled right back into the conversation -

ALMOND
A stripper? What'd he do?

ARCHIE DANFORTH
Private team party. There was a misunderstanding about money and the stripper we hired slapped Toby and threatened to send someone to break his legs.

Backstrom pulls out his phone and speed-dials, headed for the door. Almond makes to follow, then turns back to Archie -

ALMOND
Son, I been a coach -- real football, not botchey-ball soccer -- and you to go back to school and that team, show them, and more important yourself, you aren't in no way diminished as a man.

ARCHIE DANFORTH
After what Toby did to me?

ALMOND
Like the man said, Toby's dead and you're still alive. You win. And I got black balls, son. Not any kind of handicap.

Archie blinks, the lesson landing. He sticks out his hand and shakes with Almond.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Backstrom pokes at his salad and looks longingly at Almond's burger, Moto's pie, Carlton's stew, and Chichikov's sandwich -

CARLTON
Our mysterious Cass is a stripper, name of Cassandra.

Moto raises his hand -

MOTO
I know three strippers personally named Cassandra. We use them as ring girls for our Mixed Martial Arts bouts.

Moto digs for his wallet and pulls out cards -

ALMOND
There's more strippers per capita in Portland than anywhere but Bangkok. Half of them gotta be named Cassandra.

Backstrom snatches Moto's cards -

CARLTON
Almond, you talk to Vice. I'll take the Sex Workers Union. Chichikov, search on-line ads and escort services.

BACKSTROM
(to Moto)
Are you retarded?

MOTO
What?

Backstrom holds up one of Moto's cards. It is for a stripper named "Cassandra LaStrange" and the graphic on it matches exactly the sticker on Tobias Percival's computer -

BACKSTROM
(to Moto)
This why you're doomed to be in uniform your whole life.

MOTO
Why?

ALMOND
That matches the sticker on our victim's computer.

CARLTON
Cassandra LaStrange. *Veni, Vidi, Vagina* Strip Club. Classy.

Moto finally gets it. Almond pats him on the back -

CHICHIKOV
Don't worry. You are a good man in a fight.

Backstrom snags one of Almonds french fries.

CUT TO:

INT. VENI VIDI VAGINA STRIP CLUB / GYNECOLOGY ROW - NIGHT

Backstrom and Carlton watch CASSANDRA LASTRANGE (21, African-American, beautiful, vulnerable, melancholy) as she finishes up her Cupid-themed routine -

CARLTON
Poor thing...

BACKSTROM
I don't buy that whole "victimized stripper" theme. Lotsa girls got bad fathers; they don't end up flashing their vajayjays for a living. You know why strippers strip? Because they hate men and get off on controlling them.

Cassandra fires a suction-cup arrow at a mirror. Bull's-eye!

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP JOINT / DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Cassandra regards a photo of Toby. She is unsuccessfully and unconvincingly putting on a hard face. Backstrom pokes around the room -

CASSANDRA
I don't know him.

Carlton produces the (empty) envelope of cash in an evidence bag and places it in front of Cassandra -

CARLTON
We found this, hidden, packed with cash. You're "Cass", aren't you?

CASSANDRA
I told you. I don't know this boy.

BACKSTROM
Then why'd he tell his mother he loved you?

Cassandra's face crumples, her heart obviously broken -

CASSANDRA
At first I wouldn't go out with Toby. I know there's no such thing as a White Knight. But Toby, he did not give up.

CARLTON
What was the money for?

CASSANDRA
Junior college tuition.

BACKSTROM
I'm a stripper but I want to be a beautician!

CASSANDRA
Social worker. Toby wanted me out of the life but I got debts and I didn't want his money.

BACKSTROM
Unless he tucked it in your G-string.

Backstrom finds a gunked up mirror -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
I guess you being naked so much means you gotta snort or shoot between the toes.

CASSANDRA
I don't use. I don't even drink. This is everybody's dressing room.

CARLTON
Why would Toby have a pound of heroin?

CASSANDRA
Somebody must have planted it.

CARLTON
Can you think of anyone who'd want to kill Toby?

CASSANDRA
No. Toby was beautiful.
(then)
Do you think the Percivals will mind if I go to Toby's funeral? If I got the right clothes?

BACKSTROM
I'm a senator burying my son the dope dealer. Why wouldn't I want the black stripper he was banging showing up for the tv cameras?

Cassandra shakes her head, crying again, heartbroken.

CUT TO:

INT. CARLTON'S VEHICLE (TRAVELING) - DAY

Carlton drives, Backstrom snoozes in the passenger seat without a seatbelt. Carlton jabs at the brakes jerking Backstrom forward into the dash -

CARLTON
Oh, sorry Backstrom. You should be wearing your seat belt.

BACKSTROM
You did that on purpose! You do have anger issues.

CARLTON
What you do is see the worst in yourself and apply it to everyone else. Must be awful.

Carlton's CELL RINGS. She answers it hands-free -

CARLTON (CONT'D)
Carlton.

CHICHIKOV
Cassandra LaStrange's real name is Cassandra Turner. Sister to Campus Security Officer Charles Turner.

CARLTON
The Security Guard?

BACKSTROM
It’s not awful. It’s a super-power. Somebody get me a cape.

CUT TO:

INT. SPECIAL CRIMES GROUP / INCIDENT ROOM - NIGHT

Backstrom, Carlton, Almond, and Niedermayer watch as Chichikov indicates her time-line -

CHICHIKOV
Charles Turner was in Toby's dorm building after the threesome girl but before Backstrom and Carlton.

Niedermayer produces his marked up campus map -

NIEDERMAYER
This bushtit feeding station tested positive for heroin. It’s on Turner’s patrol route. The blue bridge is not on his patrol route so why was he there?

BACKSTROM
Get Turner in the box. I’m a genius in the box.

ALMOND
Goading people into attacking you so you can hold them for another 72 hours isn’t being a “genius in the box”.

NIEDERMAYER
Turner denied knowing a “Cass”. Lying to a police officer in the course of a homicide investigation. You could pick him up on that.

CARLTON
If we bring him in on bush-league charges or technicalities he’ll know we got nothing.

BACKSTROM
Just bring him in. Leave the rest to me.

NIEDERMAYER
Sun Tzu says to attack when the enemy is sluggish.

Backstrom is up and heading out the door -

BACKSTROM
Sun Tzu Turner between three and four tomorrow morning.
(to Chichikov)
I need the name of the student who overdosed.

Backstrom is gone -

ALMOND
Backstrom tosses an epileptic fit and we all pretend it's dancing.

NIEDERMAYER
Backstrom embodies a very highly evolved Buddhist koan: Chaos reveals what Order obscures.

ALMOND
He's lucky.

NIEDERMAYER
It is not luck.
(off Almond's look)
Unlike most people, Backstrom lives intensely in the moment, a higher plane of existence from which he is able to hear the universe speak.

CARLTON
Backstrom exists on a higher plane of existence?

NIEDERMAYER
Living in the moment is also why Backstrom is unable to resist temptation or delay gratification. We have to help him with that.

CARLTON
Nadia, find our overdose victim. John, get some sleep, we bring in Turner at 4am.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTROM'S PLACE - NIGHT

Backstrom sits in his chair, watching the news, sipping one of Niedermayer's teas -

TV NEWS ANCHOR
... investigation into the murder of Tobias Percival has stalled amongst complaints and allegations of improper investigatory techniques.

There is a KNOCKING AT THE DOOR. Backstrom turns off the news and opens the door to reveal Chichikov, cradling a bottle of vodka -

CHICHIKOV
I have found maybe your overdose but I cannot confirm because he has been whiskied away to a mountain rehab.

BACKSTROM
Deb told me I can't drink anymore.

CHICHIKOV
Who is Deb?

BACKSTROM
My doctor.

CHICHIKOV
If you mix this with Niedermayer's healthful infusions then it becomes medicine. Do you play chess?

Which is all the loophole Backstrom needed.

CUT AHEAD TO:

BACKSTROM & CHICHIKOV

play chess. Chichikov drinks from a shotglass, Backstrom out of his teapot. They are both happily inebriated -

BACKSTROM
What do they give me to work with? An angry dyke, a bible-thumper, a retard, a Yoga-master, and a former Russian spy.

CHICHIKOV
Carlton is the Heart; Almond is the Soul; I'm the Brain--

BACKSTROM
I'm the Brain!

CHICHIKOV
I am the Brain. Moto is the Muscle. Niedermayer is the Third Eye.

BACKSTROM
What am I? The Asshole? Checkmate.

CHICHIKOV
You play like a child. You strike out alone, leaving all support behind, ignoring your own defense. Also we are playing with pieces worth twenty thousand grand.

BACKSTROM
We aren't having sex.

CHICHIKOV
No. *Nyet*. No.

BACKSTROM
I'm not asking. I'm telling. But you wanna be friends?

Backstrom shows Chichikov his "prescription" and drinks directly from his tea pot -

CHICHIKOV
Your doctor prescribed you a friend?
(off Backstrom's nod)
What kind of doctor says stop drinking but make friends? These are opposite prescriptions.

They drink again. Backstrom's CELL RINGS -

BACKSTROM
(into phone)
Good evening, this is Everett Detective Backstrom...
(then, aside to Chichikov)
What does the clock say?

CHICHIKOV
It says "*As an Alderege original I am worth more than any honest cop could possibly pay.*"

Backstrom covers one eye to focus on the clock -

CHICHIKOV (CONT'D)
It is 4 am in the morning.

BACKSTROM
(soberly, into phone)
I shall arrive presently.

He hangs up and regards Chichikov accusingly -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
Carlton and Almond arrested Turner and I'm drunk-ass drunk.

CHICHIKOV
With your permission, I will administer a Russian folk remedy.

BACKSTROM
Yes, please.

Chichikov SLAPS Backstrom across the face as hard as she can, knocking him right out of his chair.

CUT TO:

INT. SPECIAL CRIMES GROUP / INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Pre-dawn. Backstrom sits across from Turner, eye swollen, hair wet from a cold shower and guzzling his fourth cup of scalding coffee. Backstrom is, as promised, mostly sober -

BACKSTROM
I'm on a jury. I hear the story of a white golden boy, senator's son. Golden Boy was banging a black drug dealer's stripper sister then gets murdered. Who am I going to convict of that homicide?

CHARLES TURNER
Who you calling a drug dealer?

Backstrom flips over a photo of a long-haired 18yr old boy and pushes it across the table to Turner -

BACKSTROM
Do you recognize this kid?

CHARLES TURNER
Absolutely not!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SPECIAL CRIMES GROUP / OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Almond and Carlton exchange looks -

ALMOND
The “absolutely not” rule can’t be true every time.

BACKSTROM
He says he got the heroin he overdosed on from you.

Backstrom produces a photo of a bush-tit feeding station -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
I’m also going to charge you with endangering bush-tits. We got witnesses that you tossed Toby’s dorm room.

CARLTON
(to Almond)
Backstrom does not shirk from lying to a suspect.

Turner feels more and more pushed into a corner -

BACKSTROM
The question you’re asking yourself now? Answer is lethal injection.

CHARLES TURNER
I didn't kill that white boy. That’s the truth.

BACKSTROM
I don’t care about the truth. I care about the story a jury buys.

CHARLES TURNER
Toby was good, okay? He loved my sister. Toby tried to buy her debts away so she could quit stripping.

BACKSTROM
What debts?

CHARLES TURNER
Cass owed Visser. Visser comes to me says I don’t distribute his dope, he puts my sister working the street. Toby goes brave, steals the junk from the bird nest, tells me, “*Set up a meet with Visser.*”

BACKSTROM
On the bridge at dawn?

CHARLES TURNER
Toby means to trade the heroin for Cass's debt.

BACKSTROM
I'm on that jury, you're getting lethally injected unless I hear a better story.

CHARLES TURNER
Toby brings some of the heroin to the bridge for proof. Visser comes at Toby hard. Toby pulls his .32, Visser laughs, jams the junk in Toby's face.

BACKSTROM
Toby had a gun?

CHARLES TURNER
I could've swore Toby pulled the trigger but I guess not. Toby kicks but once or twice. Visser hangs that boy off the bridge using his own shoelace, tells me "*Call in the body, go get the junk out of Toby's room.*"

UP MUSIC: "TAKE 5" by The Portland Cello Project.

ALMOND
A raisin in popcorn, Backstrom called him. A raisin in popcorn.

Almond leaves, disgusted with Backstrom, himself, and the world.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE BAR - DAY

Music continues over

STYLIZED SEQUENCE ...

Moto, with a shotgun, is going in first. Carlton, with an assault weapon is next, followed by Almond. Backstrom will go around back where he'll be completely safe.

Carlton gives the go sign. Moto goes in...

CUT TO:

INT. RIVERSIDE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Music continues over...

Visser is taking money from another Bad Guy as Moto comes through the door. There are a couple of early drinkers who pose a threat to no one but the Bartender is one of Visser's tough guys and snatches up a shotgun.

Visser has a handgun. He snaps off a shot at Almond, who, struck in the body armor, goes down hard. Moto shoots at the Bartender, who dives for cover. Carlton pulls Almond to cover, firing back at the Bad Guy. Visser heads toward the back door.

Moto sails through the air and kicks the Bad Guy in the head then whirls to shoot the Bartender, who has popped up from behind the bar again.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Music continues over ...

Backstrom at the back door. Visser bursts out. The two men collide. Both guns go flying. Both men struggle to get their guns. Visser is faster but the finger that Carlton dislocated slows him down. Backstrom FIRES just before Visser does, striking Visser in the throat.

Visser falls into the river. Backstrom looks down to see that he's been shot along the ribs.

Carlton exits the back door just in time to see dead Visser slip slowly beneath the surface of the water.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. BACKSTROM'S PLACE - NIGHT

Backstrom washes down a handful of Vicodin with Niedermayer's tea and watches Chief Anna Holt on TV, while playing chess with Chichikov. Valentine is replacing the expensive wall clock with another clock -

CHIEF ANNA HOLT (ON TV)
Det. Backstrom is currently recuperating from the wounds he sustained in the attempt to take into custody the man identified by an eye witness as Tobias Percival's killer.

Valentine sets up a digital camera with a timer, aimed at Backstrom and Chichikov -

CHICHIKOV
So this is true, these things are not Backstrom's?

ON TV, SENATOR AND MRS PERCIVAL -

SENATOR TOBIAS PERCIVAL (ON TV)
Our son, Tobias, was murdered because in the foolish way of heroic young men, he confronted a drug dealer.

VALENTINE
I'm an art and antiques dealer, these things are between owners.

Valentine hurries over to pose with Backstrom and Chichikov -

SENATOR TOBIAS PERCIVAL (ON TV)
We are thankful that Det. Everett Backstrom did not share the same fate in his violent confrontation with the same man. Sandra, and I will never forget you, sir.

BACKSTROM
Check.

VALENTINE
Smile, Backstroke.

Backstrom tries. The camera ClICKS and FLASHES -

CHICHIKOV
They are presenting you for a hero. What's wrong?

BACKSTROM
Where's Toby's gun?

CHICHIKOV
In the river with Visser.

BACKSTROM
Toby had a .32 revolver. Visser shot me with a 9 millimeter.

CHICHIKOV
So what? You are a lazy and selfish man. Enjoy yourself.

VALENTINE
Lazy and selfish but Backstroke can't stand the idea of someone out there outsmarting him.

CHICHIKOV
Sin of Pride! Same as Lucifer.

BACKSTROM
Check.

CHICHIKOV
(to Valentine)
I am a fantastic chess player. How can this *zalupa* beat me?

VALENTINE
He cheats.

CUT TO:

EXT. REED COLLEGE / THE BLUE BRIDGE - DAY

Another cold wet morning. Backstrom, stogie in his mouth, stands on the bridge where Toby died. Backstrom looks over the bridge. The water below is too shallow to get rid of a gun.

But farther away, it deepens into a pond.

CUT TO:

EXT. REED COLLEGE / THE POND - DAY

Backstrom stands on the edge of the pond. He seems to be alone, brooding, until -

CARLTON
If Toby Percival was your son, you'd be proud of him.

BACKSTROM
Toby was stupid, taking on a career criminal like Gene Visser.

CARLTON
If you really believed that everybody gets what they deserve, you wouldn't stink like a cheap cigar. Or are you immune?

BACKSTROM
Cigars are fine as long as you don't inhale.
(off her look)
Arnold Schwarzenegger said so on a cigar afficianado web site.

CARLTON
You struggle with health, I got this thing where I repress all my emotions until eventually I explode. Not just anger. Sadness. Joy. Lust. I'm working on it.

A diver rises from the pond. In his hand he holds a .32 revolver. He removes his mask. It's Niedermayer -

NIEDERMAYER
For him I am not lost; And he is not lost for me.

BACKSTROM
I hate Niedermayer.

CARLTON
Niedermayer says love and hate are the same energy; it's how you receive it that matters. The more hate you throw at Niedermayer, the more love he feels.

CUT TO:

INT. SPECIAL CRIMES GROUP / INCIDENT ROOM - DAY

The gun sits on the table with six bullets. Niedermayer is presenting his findings to Backstrom and Carlton -

NIEDERMAYER
This gun was fully loaded. The trigger was pulled twice but misfired both times.

CARLTON
Toby shot at Visser twice?

Niedermayer shows them two of the bullets -

NIEDERMAYER
The firing pin is filed back. It barely dimples the cartridge.

CARLTON
Turner said Visser laughed when Toby pulled the gun. Visser knew it wouldn't fire.

BACKSTROM
Visser killed the boy but someone else murdered him.

CUT TO:

INT. MULTNOMAH COUNTY DETENTION CENTER - DAY

BACKSTROM'S POV - CASSANDRA & CHARLES TURNER

Cassandra talks to her brother. Charles Turner is obviously distraught. Cassandra is reassuring him, seemingly in vain.

REVEAL BACKSTROM

watches as Charles and Cassandra Turner make their good-byes.

Cassandra approaches Backstrom, upset and vulnerable, tears in her eyes -

CASSANDRA
My brother says the District Attorney went back on the deal and is going for the death penalty even though he didn't kill anyone.

BACKSTROM
When someone is killed in the commission of a felony, anyone involved in the felony can be charged with homicide.

CASSANDRA
But ... Charles cooperated.

BACKSTROM
Let's go somewhere we can talk.

CUT TO:

EXT. MULTNOMAH COUNTY DETENTION CENTER / ROOF - DAY

Backstrom and Cassandra stand in the shadow of Mt. Hood -

CASSANDRA
Can you help my brother?

BACKSTROM
I don't want to help him.

CASSANDRA
Why?

BACKSTROM
Because he's the only way I can get at you.

Cassandra is shocked; she does not understand -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
How many times did you and Visser make this play before? Rich college kid falls in love with stripper -- *oh, poor me trapped in a life I never chose!* -- other boys quit after you bled them dry. But not Toby.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - CONTINUOUS

Carlton and Almond watch on a monitor -

CARLTON
The White Knight.

CASSANDRA
I loved Toby!

BACKSTROM
I'm a soft boy pretending to be a hard man. I need a gun. Do I ask my Dad the anti-gun Senator? The guys on my rugby team who are afraid of shoe polish? My faculty advisor who thinks I'm a prince? No, I ask my lowlife stripper girlfriend. And where does she get a gun?
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
From her boyfriend the lowlife drug dealer. Akuma-matata.
(then)
I bet even your brother doesn't know how far down you go.

Cassandra slips her mask to reveal the reptile within -

CASSANDRA
My brother can go to hell, Visser, Toby, you ... every goddam man in the world can go to hell.

CARLTON
Strippers hate men, Backstrom said.

BACKSTROM
We found the gun. We found your fingerprints on the bullets in the gun. How will you explain that?

Cassandra considers, then drops into her Damsel-In-Distress mode mocking Backstrom, tears springing to her eyes -

CASSANDRA
Yes, I bought Toby the gun. But only because I was afraid for his life. I didn't know the gun was broken.

BACKSTROM
I never said the gun didn't work.

CARLTON
You know that thing where people only reveal themselves in a disaster? Backstrom's the disaster.

Carlton leaves the surveillance van -

CASSANDRA
(confidently)
You're a racist pig who hates women. I lost the boy I love. Who do you think people will believe?

Backstrom leans forward, low and intense, his own underlying fury at the world striving to get out -

BACKSTROM
I'm a stripper who sends the boy who loves her to get killed. Why do I hate him so much?
(MORE)

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
Because there was this moment when he made me believed in him. True Love! White Knights! But someone as rotten as me can't have that kind of faith in another person.

Cassandra gapes at Backstrom for a moment because she cannot understand how he could possibly know such a secret truth -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
I stood on the cusp of an extraordinary life and I chose the wrong path.

Backstrom utters the profound sadness of his own life -

BACKSTROM (CONT'D)
Like people always do.

Carlton comes through the door, handcuffs at the ready -

CARLTON
Cassandra Turner, you are under arrest for the homicide of Tobias Percival.

CASSANDRA
I didn't kill anybody.

CARLTON
Det. Backstrom warned you: if someone dies during the commission of a felony, anyone involved can be charged with homicide.

Carlton handcuffs Cassandra -

CARLTON (CONT'D)
You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be held against you.

CASSANDRA
Wait! What felony?

CARLTON
You bought a gun for Tobias Percival so that he could blackmail Eugene Visser. That's a felony.

BACKSTROM
Yeah, I cheated.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE ASSOCIATION HEALTH BUILDING / OFFICE - DAY

Backstrom, clad again in his boxers, is having his bandage re-applied by Dr. Deb Chaman -

DR. DEB CHAMAN
Your liver tells me you have not quit drinking.

BACKSTROM
It had an egg in it.
(off Chaman's confusion)
My partner dislocated the bad guy's trigger finger because he assaulted me because I drank his boilermaker. Slowed him down enough to save my life. Plus, it had an egg in it.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
What am I to do with you?

Backstrom starts pulling on his clothes again -

BACKSTROM
I'm drinking African tea and eating vegetables--

DR. DEB CHAMAN
--and making friends.
(off Backstrom's look)
I received the signed affidavit.

Backstrom has no idea what Chaman is talking about so Chaman shows Backstrom a very official signed affidavit by Nadia Chichikov -

DR. DEB CHAMAN (CONT'D)
I, Dr. Nadia Chichikov, swear that Everett Backstrom and I play chess and drink herbal tea together. We are true friends.
(then)
She included a photo as proof.

Chaman shows Backstrom the photo Valentine took of the three of them. Valentine and Chichikov smiling widely, Backstrom smiling much less convincingly -

BACKSTROM
We don't sleep together. She's a genius.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
The first statement proves the second.
(off Valentine)
Who is this young man? I see a resemblance. Are you related?

BACKSTROM
No. That's Valentine. He's a gay crook and my decorator and he took away all my hard liquor.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
Perhaps you aren't determined to die. We'll talk next week.

BACKSTROM
I gotta see you every week?

DR. DEB CHAMAN
Yes.

BACKSTROM
I'm a Hindu. I believe we die and come back to try again. So why am I a doctor? What's with my obsession with keeping people here in this life? It's because I'm scared to death reincarnation is a bunch of crap and life is meaningless.
(then)
I'm terrified of dying.

DR. DEB CHAMAN
And you aren't afraid to die?

BACKSTROM
Absolutely not!

And Backstrom leaves. Chaman sighs, and opens Backstrom's medical file. For a moment, before Chaman slips in the photo and affidavit, we see the word "Prognosis ..." before the photo of Valentine and Chichikov's smiling faces covers it up.

END OF STORY