

on writing

A PUBLICATION OF THE WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA, EAST

IN THIS ISSUE: WALTER BERNSTEIN, JEREMY PIKSER AND THE SCREENPLAY, THE FRONT



Are you now, or have you ever been...

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The 1950s are often referred to as the McCarthy Era. But long before Senator Joseph McCarthy rose to prominence on the national stage, a Red scare–fueled blacklist was rampant in the entertainment industry.

The blacklist ruined careers and destroyed lives. So it is not surprising that a film about it involves suicide, ulcers and a prison sentence—but it's a bit unexpected that the film is a comedy.

Walter Bernstein was blacklisted from 1950 to 1958. His script, *The Front*, weaves together his experiences and those of people he knew with fictional characters and situations. The film is a poignant comedy that is not only entertaining, but also provides a sense of life during the blacklist. We are pleased to be publishing it here for the first time along with Jeremy Pikser's conversation with Bernstein about the film.

We are also pleased to have a special introduction by Victor Navasky, chairman of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, former editor and publisher of *The Nation* and author of *Naming Names*, a book about the Hollywood blacklist.

On *The Back Page*, we have Lawrence Block's tribute to author, screenwriter and Writers Guild, East council member Donald Westlake, who died on December 31, 2008. A slightly different version of this piece appeared in *The Third Degree*, the newsletter of Mystery Writers of America.

—Arlene Hellerman



INTRODUCTION

Victor Navasky

FOR ME, THE DOMESTIC COLD WAR IS BEST SUMMED UP by a Herblock cartoon which appeared in the *Washington Post* in the early 1950s. It showed a beleaguered civil servant exclaiming, “But I’m an ANTI-Communist!” as his boss, pointing towards the door says, “I don’t care what kind of Communist you are, you’re fired.”

It is called the cold war, and however one dates it, it was already under way in March of 1946 when Winston Churchill made his speech in Fulton, Missouri, where he famously proclaimed: “From Stetin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent allowing police governments to rule Eastern Europe.”

Although Churchill’s description was a fair one, revisionist historians would argue that blame for the cold war should be equally distributed between the Soviet Union and the United States. In fact, the so-called cold war was fought in two arenas. Internationally it involved the global confrontation which Churchill had referenced: between rival imperial ambitions and ideologies, between capitalism and Communism, between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. But it was domestically, where it involved a clash between the investigators and the investigated, the hunters and the hunted (or, if you prefer, the Red-baiters and the Red Menace), that Churchill’s theatrical or “curtain” metaphor was perhaps most apt.

It was indeed a time of political hysteria:

In the courts, there were the great political trials: the Smith Act cases, the Hiss case, the Rosenberg “atom spy” case.

In the executive branch, there were the loyalty oaths, the Attorney General’s list of subversive organizations and, of course, J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI which seemed to believe that to-be-a-liberal-was-to-be-a-fellow-traveler-was-to-be-a-pinko-was-to-be-Commie-was-to-be-a-spy (not to mention was-to-be-involved-in-a-worldwide-conspiracy-to overthrow-the-government-by-force-and-violence).

In the legislative branch there were, among others, the Senate Internal Security Committee which investigated the press, the McCarthy Committee which investigated, by turn, the State Department, the clergy and the U.S. Army (which ultimately gave rise to the Army-McCarthy Hearings that were the Senator’s undoing). But perhaps first and foremost there was the House Un-American Activities Committee, which in 1947 began its hearings into Hollywood and the entertainment industry, and asked those who came to be known as the Hollywood Ten the question which came to mark the decade: “Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?”

Relying on their First Amendment rights, the Ten declined to answer (my own favorite response was Ring Lardner Jr.’s, “I could answer your question, sir, but I would hate myself in the morning.”) On November 24, 1947, Congress voted to cite the Ten for contempt. Hollywood’s top executives held a quick meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, after which Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America—who had earlier promised, “As long as I live I will never be party to anything as un-American as a blacklist”—announced that the Ten would be suspended without pay and that thereafter no Communists or other subversives would knowingly be employed in Hollywood.

The Hollywood Ten were indicted, tried, convicted and sentenced to terms of up to a year in prison. From that point forward, attorneys advised their clients that if subpoenaed, they had three choices: To do what the Ten had done and risk going to prison; to invoke the Fifth Amendment's protection against self-incrimination (and be blacklisted); or to be a "cooperative" witness and name names. It was explained that if one tried to talk openly about one's self, one could not refuse to answer questions about others because the Fifth Amendment's protection was only against SELF-incrimination.

All of which gave rise to such infelicities as: the phrase "Fifth-Amendment Communist"; the so-called bible of blacklisting *Red Channels*; some temporarily embarrassing performances by such guardians of liberty as the ACLU and ADL, who found themselves for one inglorious moment collaborating with the blacklists (by helping them distinguish the non-Communist wheat from the Communist chaff); and not a few acts of heroic and in some cases, ingenious, resistance—not least among them the invention of the institution of "the front" by writers like Walter Bernstein and his fellow co-conspirators—against the blacklist.

While the Great Fear (as the English writer David Caute has dubbed it) eventually dissipated, some of the aftereffects of the domestic cold war are still playing themselves out. For example, neo-conservatives and others have seized on recently released former Soviet archives (the Venona decrypts) to argue that there was an internal Red Menace after all. The lesson, if there is one: Yes, there were indeed Soviet spies on and in the U.S., but in fact, history suggests that the blatant and massive incursions on freedom and civil liberty in the name of national security were over-reactions unworthy of our democratic society—and that the value of those who resisted when it counted, like the makers of *The Front*, should be a cautionary tale for the rest of us. ☹️



Walter Bernstein

AND

Jeremy Pikser

NEW YORK CITY - AUGUST 5, 2008



PIKSER: What was the genesis of *The Front*?

BERNSTEIN: Martin Ritt, the director, and I were close friends. He had been blacklisted also. And when we were both cleared, we immediately wanted to make a film about the blacklist. The film we had in mind was a straight dramatic story about someone who's a Communist and is blacklisted, what he has to do to survive, what he goes through.... That was the idea we had in mind, which was essentially our own stories. Marty had a certain amount of clout at that time. He had successful movies. But we couldn't get any studio interested in it. And this went back and forth over a number of years. Then I had the idea to go at it sideways: Instead of telling a dramatic story of somebody who's blacklisted, let's tell a comedy, a dark comedy, about a front. Marty resisted this idea at first. He felt somehow that making a comedy would trivialize it. But I finally convinced him and we talked over the kind of thing it should be and came up with the idea of this schlepper, he'll become successful as a front and it goes to his head and then he's presented with a crisis when he himself is called before the [House] Committee [on Un-American Activities]. We took it to several places that rejected it and then, as it happens, the head of Columbia at that time was a man who had formerly been our agent, a man named David Begelman, who was a rather shady character himself.

ON WRITING: Isn't he the one that the book *Indecent Exposure* was written about?

BERNSTEIN: Yeah, he forged checks, he stole money—we liked him, he was our kind of guy. We took the idea to him and he put up some money, a very small amount of money, for a first-draft screenplay. I wrote it and he said, "I like this and I'll do it only if you get a star." And by a star, he meant [Robert] Redford or [Paul] Newman or [Warren] Beatty. We kept saying no, that's not what we had in mind. We were kind of stuck, we couldn't think of anybody. And one day Marty and I were playing tennis, I remember, and he stopped suddenly and said, "What about that kid?" I said, "What kid?" He said, "That funny kid." We went back and forth: I said, "Mel Brooks." He said, "No." I said, "Woody Allen." He said, "Yes, that's who." We both thought that was a great idea. Woody

was in Paris filming *Love and Death*, I think, and we sent him the script; he agreed to do it and that's what made it possible.

ON WRITING: Did he do any writing?

BERNSTEIN: No, he came on the set and said, "I'm here to act, whatever you guys want me to do." The one thing he did that was interesting, after we shot the hearing scene—

ON WRITING:—The scene where his character goes before the Committee at the end of the film—

BERNSTEIN: Yeah. We were looking at it in dailies and we thought—or I thought, somebody thought—maybe it wasn't funny enough. It should be funnier. And Woody said, "Let's shoot again, let me improvise." So we set it up again and he did five or 10 minutes of improv and he was falling-down funny. And it ruined the scene. The scene stopped cold, there was no way of integrating it into the film.

PIKSER: You had the script before you brought him on.

BERNSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

PIKSER: Because I was struck when I was reading an early draft how you almost couldn't have written it more for Woody Allen's style and diction than if you had been writing it for him.

BERNSTEIN: There were a couple of scenes I did that he objected to precisely because of that. I had a very, very early draft where I had given Howard a mother and Woody thought that was too prototypical of Woody Allen and didn't think it was a good idea. And we agreed.

ON WRITING: Howard is Woody Allen's character.

BERNSTEIN: But it was not written with him in mind, not at all. I think it was written out of that kind of Jewish, New York idiom as much as anything.

ON WRITING: What about Zero Mostel who played Hecky?

PIKSER: Wasn't that character derived from Zero Mostel's experiences?

BERNSTEIN: Yes. I had always thought of Zero for that role and in fact, the sequence where he goes to the borscht-circuit hotel was really based on something that happened to Zero when he was blacklisted. I had a car at the time and he asked if I would drive him up to the Concord Hotel where he was going to perform. He had performed there before he was blacklisted for something like \$2,000 and they were offering him \$500. Then when he got up there they cut his fee, just as Joshua Shelley does in the movie. But what I wanted in the film was what actually happened that night: He performed, and the audience loved him—1,500 people were crazy about him. But he was insulting them, he was calling them names, he was so angry. The more he insulted them, the more they laughed, the more they thought he was great and called him back for encores. He was in a rage that he couldn't get off. When he finally left the stage, he drank almost a whole bottle of whiskey and I put him to bed and we went home the next day. But he wouldn't do that in the film. It was still, even after all that time, too painful.

ON WRITING: Do you think he could have recreated it?

BERNSTEIN: He was an actor—but he wouldn't do it. He just wouldn't do it. So we did it the way we did. But the scene after that when Hecky is in Howard's apartment and he starts yelling about Herschel Brownstein is something I took from a thing with John Garfield when I was with him. I didn't know him very well, but I knew him a bit. The Un-American Committee was asking, although he was not a Communist, if he would inform on all his friends and anybody else he knew. He loved being a movie star and he didn't want to give that up. He was caught between John Garfield the movie star and Julius Garfinkel, his real name. And I remember being with him when he made some joke about that, a joke on the square—

ON WRITING:—On the square?

BERNSTEIN: It was not a funny joke. He was—

PIKSER:—Making a sardonic reference.

BERNSTEIN: Exactly. You're a wordsmith.

ON WRITING: So John Garfield wouldn't give people's names....

BERNSTEIN: It was the same kind of situation. He solved it by having a heart attack.

PIKSER: He didn't have to jump out a window.

BERNSTEIN: Yeah. And you talk about movies being a collaborative thing, in the scene I wrote of Hecky's suicide, he lies down on the bed in a hotel room and takes pills. And we went into the Plaza Hotel and prepared to do that. Mike Chapman, the cameraman, said, "I have an idea of how to do the scene differently and do it all in one shot." It was his idea to cut away from Hecky for a moment and pan to the curtains fluttering from the open window. And it's much better, much better than what I had written.

ON WRITING: I want to talk a bit about the script structurally, and then get to scenes that came out of your experiences on the blacklist.

PIKSER: I watched the film again last night, probably the fourth time I've seen it. It's not just a wonderful film, it's a wonderful script, if you don't mind my saying so. In terms of craft, I was particularly struck on this viewing at how brilliantly constructed the last half of the movie was.

ON WRITING: Let me just note that Walter rolled his eyes.

PIKSER: No, but I mean that.

BERNSTEIN: There's a lot of eye-rolling.

PIKSER: The final climax balances at exactly the convergence of Howard's relationships to all the other important characters in the film: his debt to Hecky, what he needs to do to prove himself to Florence, his relationship with the Michael Murphy character, Alfred, and ultimately what he needs to find out about

himself. They all completely come to a climax in that one scene in the hearing. How did you do that? That's so rare, to get every strand, every subplot to completely resolve in one climactic scene.

ON WRITING: Were you aware of that when you were writing it?

BERNSTEIN: Not like that I wasn't aware of it. But it had to come to that kind of climax for the character to pay off dramatically and say what it was I wanted to say about him and the situation.

PIKSER: Did you know that at the beginning?

BERNSTEIN: Yes, that I knew at the beginning. I knew that's what I was heading for. I mean, that was basically the story. The story was about this little shithead who becomes a mensch acting against what seems to be his self-interest. It's a theme that interests me, always has.

PIKSER: What other films have you written with that theme, would you say?

BERNSTEIN: I knew you would ask that. I haven't written ones like that so much as I've liked them—movies like *The Apartment* with Jack Lemmon, the coward who becomes brave. So it isn't something I thought of as hey, I'm going to bring all these things together, except I thought, yes, I've set these people up in relationship to Howard. He risked betraying them in some way and therefore betraying himself. And that's got to be the climax of the movie.

PIKSER: But let me just say that if I had written this script, the big issue at the end would be, is Howard going to somehow betray Alfred and by so doing, would he lose Florence forever. Or would he actually go all the way by going to jail, not betraying Alfred and win Florence? That's a no-brainer. Anybody could have done that. But the two things you did that elevated it to a much higher level of drama, I thought, was first, having that scene with Florence which frames it as an existential moment for Howard: Who are you? You're not anybody. It doesn't just go with the territory that you would have

had that scene. And the other thing was to make the turning point in that interrogation: Give us Hecky, he's already dead, you can't lose anything. Those two things combined to turn a double into a grand slam.

BERNSTEIN: Both of those were always there for me. I needed that scene with Florence where he tells her he was a cashier and they fight about that and in which he is still saying, "I can tap dance through this hearing, trust me."

PIKSER: But he could have done that—and did do that—in the scene in the hospital with Alfred. I thought what was so key about the scene with Florence is not that he still thinks he can tap dance, but that you chose to pick that moment for him to reveal that he's not really a writer to her. And the dilemma to be put upon him is, well, if you say you're not just a cashier and you're not a writer, what are you?

BERNSTEIN: Yes, of course. It needed that. The scene comes out of the funeral of Hecky. So you had to have him say, "I'm not who you think I am." She says, "Who are you?" And his answer is, "You'll see who I am," saving who he really is for that final scene in the hearing. And then, essentially, you had to make it Hecky, precisely because nobody was going to get hurt: Name Hecky, he's dead, nobody cares anymore. You don't have to mention your friend Alfred. You can name this dead person and everybody goes home happy. So that the decision not to do it is that much stronger.

PIKSER: I would go even one step further. Not only is it that much stronger because it's more purely on principle, but it's also that much more inevitable. Because what they think they're saying is it wouldn't hurt anyone. But what they're really saying is the opposite, which is it would be the greatest dishonor. It would be less dishonorable for him to turn in Alfred than to turn in Hecky.

ON WRITING: That's true.

BERNSTEIN: Yeah.

PIKSER: Now, there was one part of the film that I thought seemed a bit ungainly from the point of view of the storytelling.

BERNSTEIN: Now it comes.

PIKSER: No, wait. It wasn't like, this doesn't work; but it seemed like, this is an odd way to do it. And that was to open with the scene between Alfred and Howard where Howard agrees to be the front and then follow that with the scenes that establish what a tight situation he's in financially. And I thought, normally you would present Howard's problem, then Alfred arrives and offers him the solution. Then when I opened up an early draft of the script, I saw that's exactly the way you had done it. So I wondered how that change came about and why.

BERNSTEIN: You know, I don't remember. I don't know why or when that was done except it seemed right.

ON WRITING: I think what's interesting is, structurally, it's introducing the story quickly and then you're given character information rather than the other way around. So it gets right into the story.

PIKSER: For me the issue is less a question of character versus story than, do you pose a problem before you pose a solution.

ON WRITING: But it's just a different problem being posed. Rather than posing Howard's problem, he's a flake, you're posing the movie's problem, which is the blacklist. And it's saying this is what this movie is about. The movie's not about Howard, the movie's about the blacklist.

BERNSTEIN: You solved it. That's exactly my reasoning.

ON WRITING: Do you agree with that?

BERNSTEIN: Yes, I do. I really do. It makes it a little less linear going through.

ON WRITING: Could we go through the movie and talk about what came from where? For instance, the Woody Allen character, Howard—

PIKSER:—I read in your autobiography that one of your fronts had been a gambler, so I thought that must have been Howard.

BERNSTEIN: No, I never had a front like that, of the several fronts that I did have. In that sense, he's a purely invented character. The three writers that he fronts for were based on myself and two other writers, Abe Polansky and Arnold Manoff, who were also blacklisted. The three of us formed a kind of a group to help each other get jobs and to write various shows under different names.

ON WRITING: Arnold Manoff was married to Lee Grant, who was also blacklisted.

BERNSTEIN: Yeah. Because of him, basically. So the idea of a group working together was real, although we each had separate fronts. It wasn't just one front. That was an invention. The business of Zero and the man he has to go to and get clearance from is based on the kind of person who was doing that.

PIKSER: Was there one person in particular that guy was drawn from?

BERNSTEIN: No, it wasn't any one person. It was a couple of ex-FBI guys, one man named Vincent Hartnett, I believe, who put out *Red Channels*. There were a couple of newspaper columnists you could go to and get cleared, a man named George Sokolsky in the Hearst papers. A man named Frederick Woltman.

I think the networks had their own person who they didn't acknowledge as such who you could go to.

ON WRITING: How would you get cleared? What does that mean?

BERNSTEIN: What that means is that, usually set up by your agent or your lawyer, you go to one of these people, you do a mea culpa, you confess your sins—which is what left-wing organizations you belong to—and you name names of people who you knew and you saw at the meetings. You had to give them names, basically. That was the final humiliation. And then you could get cleared.

PIKSER: And you would give those names to Sokolsky?

BERNSTEIN: You'd give the names to Sokolsky, yeah. And they all had contacts with the House Un-American Committee.

PIKSER: So they would funnel the information to them. You didn't necessarily have to go in front of the Committee.

BERNSTEIN: No, not necessarily. You could get out, depending on your eminence.

PIKSER: The more eminent, the less likely you were to have to?

BERNSTEIN: No, the more likely you were to have to. Because they wanted those names.

PIKSER: What about this supermarket guy that has one scene in the movie?

BERNSTEIN: That was based on a man named Lawrence Johnson in Syracuse. I think he owned maybe three markets and he was a rabid anti-Communist. If there was a commercial or a show sponsored by a soap company that he thought hired Communists, he put up a sign next to the product saying that. I know a show on CBS where they were giving this guy lists of the actors who were going to be on the show for him to say okay to. And that's all it took, three supermarkets. They were scared. But at the

same time, there were people who knew that fronts were being used—David Susskind hired blacklisted writers, knowing they were blacklisted.

PIKSER: What was he producing at that time?

BERNSTEIN: He was producing television shows, dramatic shows.

ON WRITING: And the networks let him?

BERNSTEIN: They didn't know.

PIKSER: The scene in the film where Howard is complaining about the quality of the scripts was based on history, right?

BERNSTEIN: That was based on Howard Rodman.

PIKSER: Howard Rodman Sr.?

BERNSTEIN: Yeah.

PIKSER: He was a front?

ON WRITING: Who was he?

BERNSTEIN: There was a very good writer named Howard Rodman. He has a son Howard Rodman who's a very good screenwriter.

PIKSER: And an important member of the Guild.

BERNSTEIN: But Howard Rodman Sr. was a very talented writer for television. He later went to Hollywood and wrote movies and was the story editor of *Naked City*. Anyway, he consented very nicely to front for me on a couple of shows and it was at a bad time in my life. In other words, the scripts weren't very good. And Howard took me for a walk in Central Park and told me he couldn't front for me any more because the shows weren't really up to his standard. And they weren't. I must say, they really weren't. He was a lovely man, Howard was, and I don't blame him for what he did.

ON WRITING: What else came out of your experience?

BERNSTEIN: The man who's trying to get himself cleared and can't because he has the same name as someone who'd been blacklisted, that happened with an actor that I knew.

ON WRITING: And they can't clear him because—

PIKSER:—He has nothing to confess. The only way to be cleared is to confess.

BERNSTEIN: And because he had nothing to confess, they had nothing to clear him of. And the thing about the gas company that wanted gas taken out of the show, that was true.

ON WRITING: I just want to explain that there's a scene in the movie where Howard is called in to do a rewrite at the television studio because the script includes scenes in a concentration camp and the show's sponsor, a gas company—

BERNSTEIN:—Objected to their gassing the inhabitants because it reflected badly on the company. Also, Florence puts out this little magazine which I had put out called *Facts About the Blacklist*.

ON WRITING: What was in the magazine?

BERNSTEIN: Information about who was blacklisting—because of course the networks and the advertising agencies all swore that they didn't do blacklisting.

PIKSER: Why would they swear they weren't blacklisting? Was it just bad publicity?

BERNSTEIN: Because they felt they were breaking the law.

PIKSER: What was that, antitrust?

BERNSTEIN: Preventing somebody from performing services or whatever it was, it was some kind of law that they were afraid of.

ON WRITING: But then how did they justify *Red Channels*?

PIKSER: *Red Channels* didn't say it was blacklisting.

BERNSTEIN: *Red Channels* was just a listing of people and the organizations that they belonged to that were a matter of public record. I had about eight listings, I think, all of them true: Something for Soviet-American Friendship, writing for Communist magazines....

ON WRITING: You were a Communist Party member, right?

BERNSTEIN: Through most of that time. Not all of the time. I stopped being a party member in '56. All these things about me—giving money to republican Spain in the Spanish Civil War, things like that—were true. And if you were in *Red Channels*, you were automatically blacklisted unless you went and cleared yourself. The networks and the agencies didn't have anything to do with putting it out, but it became the bible of who they would hire and who they wouldn't.

PIKSER: Was there always an intention to hire blacklisted actors to play in the film?

BERNSTEIN: Yes. We wanted them to fit the parts obviously, but Marty went out of his way to hire people, most of whom he knew, like Lloyd Gough or Joshua Shelley or Herschel Bernardi.

PIKSER: What parts did Lloyd Gough and Joshua Shelley play?

BERNSTEIN: Gough played one of the Communist writers and Joshua Shelley played the guy who cuts Zero's fee at the Concord Hotel. The mean guy.

ON WRITING: Wow, that must have been interesting for him.

BERNSTEIN: Oh, also, the incident with the girl when Woody first gets to the hotel in the Catskills happened to me. The girl comes up to him and says, "What do you do?" And he says, "I'm a writer," and she walks away.

PIKSER: That was at the Concord?

BERNSTEIN: Yes. I didn't later say I was a dentist, as Woody does in the movie.

ON WRITING: There's another scene I want you to talk about that I think came out of your experience: When the writer walks out of his front door and he's approached by the federal agent.

BERNSTEIN: Yeah.

ON WRITING: Did that happen a lot?

BERNSTEIN: Yep.

ON WRITING: Can you talk about that?

BERNSTEIN: I would get visits from the FBI. Once a month, twice a month they'd come by my house, ring the bell. I'd answer it, they'd introduce themselves, very polite, and say they'd like to talk to me. And I'd say, "I have nothing to say to you, goodbye." And then sometimes they'd stop me coming out of the subway. They stopped me on the subway platform once in the neighborhood—just to make you know that they knew where you were. They never followed up in any way, they were always polite about it. They'd ask the same questions: "We'd like to talk to you," "I have nothing to say, goodbye." And that was it. But it's intimidating and kind of scary. That went on for years.

ON WRITING: I want to ask about your experience being blacklisted. How did you first find out you were blacklisted?

BERNSTEIN: When I was first blacklisted, I was writing for a CBS show called *Danger* that was directed by Sidney Lumet.

PIKSER: What kind of a show was *Danger*?

BERNSTEIN: It was a melodrama, a murderer escapes from Death Row and comes back to accuse the judge who sent him up falsely, that kind of thing. But it

was a good show and they had good actors in it. I had been working for *Danger* initially when Yul Brynner was the director and Martin Ritt was the producer.

ON WRITING: I didn't know he directed.

BERNSTEIN: Yeah, he was a very good director. Then they left and Sidney Lumet became the director and the producer was a former actor named Charles Russell. I was working for them and Russell came to me and said, "I can't use you any more. I'm not supposed to tell you this, but your name is on some kind of list. I'm just supposed to tell you we're changing the direction of the show, we're getting different kinds of writers." But he didn't do that; he was basically a nonpolitical guy and he thought what was happening was wrong and said, "Just put another name on it and I'll say I discovered this new writer." And that's how it started for me. I wrote several shows under a pseudonym and then he came to me and said, "You've got to produce a live body." The executives were feeling that the writers were cunning and everyone wanted to protect themselves and be able to say here's the person. And that's when you had to get a front to go in and be you.

PIKSER: So all that comedy about Howard being on the spot and having to do the rewrite—all of that is really generated by what's inherent in the dramatic situation rather than in real experience?

BERNSTEIN: Yes, exactly. You were working very close to the bone in live television. Once a show started, you couldn't stop it. I got a call from Lumet once saying he was about to go into rehearsal with a script. The sets had been built, everything was ready and CBS discovered that the script had been plagiarized and would I write another script that would fit the set and the actors. And you thought nothing of it, I did it. In two days or whatever, I wrote this half-hour script

and the show went on. It wasn't very good, but it went on. You worked like that. But anyway, Charlie Russell could have lost his job for doing what he did. Then he told Lumet, and Lumet went along with it.

ON WRITING: So then when your front came in, Charlie Russell knew that he was your front? Did you call and say, I'm sending so-and-so?

BERNSTEIN: He didn't have to go in. Charlie just dealt with me really.

ON WRITING: But then what was the human being for?

BERNSTEIN: The human being was if the person above Russell wanted to meet the writer, as happened every once in a while, so you had to send in somebody who could answer. But that didn't happen very often. Several years after this, the man who was the head of dramatic programming at CBS became a movie producer, a man named William Dozier. He wrote me a letter asking if I'd do some job for him. At the end of it he said, "And if you see them, please give my regards to...." and he named all the fronts. So obviously he knew at that time and didn't do anything about it.

ON WRITING: Was it hard to find a front?

BERNSTEIN: Yes, because the front had to be articulate, he had to be able to go in and meet with the producer, if he did. He had to have a little background that made it legitimate that he was a writer. He had to have a good reason for doing it, basically.

ON WRITING: Did you give him 10 percent?

BERNSTEIN: Some I gave money to. Others wouldn't take money. Others wanted to use it as a springboard for their own careers. It wasn't easy to find somebody who fulfilled all that.

PIKSER: This sounds like a stupid question, but I wonder if you try and answer it, we might not hear something interesting. Why did you and Marty feel that you wanted to do a film about the blacklist? What was the importance of a film about the blacklist?

BERNSTEIN: That's a good question. We had both been blacklisted. Obviously we felt very strongly about the experience. We felt it was an important experience, certainly a very important time socially and politically in this country.

PIKSER: In what way?

BERNSTEIN: Well, in the same way that McCarthyism was important, the suppression of civil liberties. The blacklist, I always felt, was a necessary adjunct to the cold war, to impose conformity. It was important to get that history out in a medium where we had some competence and that would reach a lot of people, we hoped.

PIKSER: And what did you want people to take from it?

BERNSTEIN: I wanted people to take from it—apart from the fact that a blacklist was a bad thing—what could happen in this country and what had happened in the past. We are a country, when confronted particularly with an external threat, that will try to go where

powerful elements go very quickly, to the suppression of dissent, to curtailing civil liberties. And the blacklist was an example of that.

PIKSER: Do you believe that the country was faced with an external threat at that point?

BERNSTEIN: It thought it did. I don't mean that the threat was as real as it was made out to be. But the whole Red scare, the whole cold war was based on the idea that we could be attacked by this evil empire and I think people felt a fear, it was pounded into them.

PIKSER: And why was there so much focus on the entertainment industry?

BERNSTEIN: Publicity. They loved getting on the front page of the papers, which they did when they would get movie stars to testify and stuff like that.

PIKSER: And extending that, one of the things I thought was particularly trenchant in the film was focusing on this idea that they didn't really need the names.

BERNSTEIN: What they needed was your name. They had all the names, they didn't need them. They needed the ritual of you being on their side, they needed the collaboration. The naming of the names was the necessary element of that ritual.

ON WRITING: So when did you get off the blacklist?

BERNSTEIN: I got a call from Sidney Lumet saying he was about to direct a movie with Sophia Loren and they needed a script written. The producers were

Sophia's husband, Carlo Ponti, and his partner and it was for Paramount. I met the producer—he didn't know anything about me or the blacklist, it was just on Sidney's recommendation. And they hired me, it was sort of under the radar. Based on what I started writing, Paramount was going to make a deal with me to do more movies with Ponti when my agent called and said, "They're not going through with the contract." I said, "Why not?" He said, "Because they've heard there's a subpoena out for you from the House Un-American Committee." So I said, "Thank you very much," and I packed a bag and I went on the lam.

ON WRITING: To where?

BERNSTEIN: I went to Little Compton, Rhode Island, where somebody loaned me a little shack. I finished the script and would come into town periodically to show Sidney what I had written. And that speech that Sussman has when Howard comes to him was exactly the speech that my agent did. My agent called the head of Paramount and gave him this long thing, "He doesn't have to go, there's no reason he has to go." Then he listened a long time, hung up the phone, turned to me and said, "You've got to go." Ponti had been in Italy and I had a meeting with him when he came back. He didn't speak English very well and we had a meeting with an interpreter, my lawyer and myself in which my lawyer explained what my position would be, which was I would not name names—that was the bottom line, I was not going to name names. I was conflicted about whether I would take the Fifth Amendment or whether I would risk a Contempt of Congress citation by talking about myself, which I was prepared to do. But I knew I wasn't going to mention names. So my lawyer explained and then

the interpreter translated for Ponti and Ponti let loose a long string of Italian and the interpreter turned to us and said, “Mr. Ponti wants to know who has to be fixed and for how much.” This thing is politics, politics is bullshit—making movies, that was what was important.

PIKSER: Howard says that in the film, “Who has to be fixed?”

BERNSTEIN: Yeah. So anyway, they asked if I would meet with the head of Paramount. I went out to California and I met with him, a very courtly Southern gentleman named Y. Frank Freeman, very right-wing. And he had my whole dossier on his desk going back to college—everything politically I had done, where I had lived, what I had joined—and he said, “Would you answer some questions?” I said, “Sure.” He wanted to know was this true, was this not true, would I still do this, would I not. I answered honestly. At that point I felt they’d done as much as they were going to do to me. Some things I said I would do again happily, some things I said I probably wouldn’t. And that was that. He said, “Well, let me take this up with somebody who advises me on this thing who’s the head of the American Legion and I’ll get back to you.”

PIKSER: Now, what year was this?

BERNSTEIN: ’58. Two weeks later, they called me and said, “Okay, you can go to work.” That was the end of the blacklist in movies for me, but I still couldn’t work in television for another couple of years. And then that kind of dissipated.

ON WRITING: Some people didn’t get off until the ’60s, right?

BERNSTEIN: By that time, by ’58, ’59, I think [Otto] Preminger and Kirk Douglas had both hired [Dalton] Trumbo and it was breaking up by that time.

PIKSER: When you first heard that somebody wanted to hire you to write a movie for Paramount and Sophia Loren, did you feel like, am I going to be able to get away with this? Were you nervous?

BERNSTEIN: Yeah. I said, “Do they know about me?” Sidney said, “It’s Carlo Ponti, they’re a couple of Italians and let’s see what happens.”

PIKSER: Do you think the blacklist changed people’s notions of what it meant to be an artist? Not so much the people who were blacklisted, but as a community—

BERNSTEIN:—I would say no. I don’t think so. I think the people who were artists remained artists for the most part. But I come back to this all the time, the fear overcame everything, so I think a lot of people didn’t look at whether it’s the government or the atmosphere, all they were trying to do was to protect themselves for the most part. There was the occasional play like the [Arthur] Miller play, *The Crucible*. But from what I saw, for the blacklisted people it was a matter of survival. That was the most important thing. And also coming to terms with what you believed politically or what you were surviving for, what the content of that survival was.

ON WRITING: What was that? Can you articulate it?

BERNSTEIN: What did you believe in, what was your bottom line, what were you being blacklisted for? I wasn’t blacklisted by mistake. Everything they said about me was true. It was a question of what you felt you stood for or believed in or were willing to be blacklisted for. And that’s really what occupied us for the most part.

ON WRITING: Was it you or Martin Ritt who came up with the idea of putting the people who were blacklisted as part of the credits?

BERNSTEIN: I was initially against it because I thought it was kind of copping a plea.

PIKSER: You were self-aggrandizing.

BERNSTEIN: Yeah, but I was overruled on that.

ON WRITING: Are you happy with it now?

BERNSTEIN: Yeah, I guess. I’m not overjoyed, but I’m happy.

PIKSER: You know what I think is so good about it? It really concretizes it.

BERNSTEIN: Yeah, I guess. That's what everybody said.

PIKSER: This is real people. It happened to the people who made this movie that you just watched, that just made you laugh, that just made you cry, these people dealt with this.

BERNSTEIN: I think that's true.

PIKSER: It's very strong.

BERNSTEIN: So I'm told.

ON WRITING: Were you surprised at the reaction to *The Front*, that people loved it as much as they did?

BERNSTEIN: No.

ON WRITING: You knew it was going to be a good movie?

BERNSTEIN: I thought that the reaction would be mixed, that some people wouldn't know what to make of it. Is it a comedy, is it not a comedy. They were not expecting Woody as a straight character. And I think all that was true in some of the responses. I was pleased with it, and that's all you can hope. It got mixed reviews. The studio didn't push it. It did the same business as Woody's movies did. It did well in the cities and not so well outside the cities. But it hung on. That's what I like about it. It keeps getting shown. After, what, 35 years or more, it still has some life to it.

ON WRITING: And it holds up.

BERNSTEIN: And that's great. I can't look at it, but that's—

ON WRITING: You can't look at it?

BERNSTEIN: No. I can't.

PIKSER: Why?

BERNSTEIN: Because I look at it and it just seems I could have done this better or this scene could have been better. There are only a few scenes that I really, really like.

ON WRITING: What are your favorite scenes?

BERNSTEIN: I like the scene where Zero comes to see Woody just before he commits suicide. I like that scene quite a bit. What else do I like.... Not much. I like the scene with Woody and Florence in the restaurant, I guess because it has a line I wrote that has gotten the biggest response of anything I ever wrote.

PIKSER: I know what line it is.

ON WRITING: What line?

BERNSTEIN: She says, in her family, the biggest sin was to raise your voice and he says, in his family, the biggest sin was to buy retail.

ON WRITING: So did you watch it when it was first out?

BERNSTEIN: Oh yeah. I went to see it and squirmed. I don't know, do you have that feeling about your stuff when you see it?

PIKSER: Only when it's not good. Unlike *The Front*.

BERNSTEIN: But I try to listen to the audience. Are they fidgeting, are they quiet.... And the picture works with different audiences, that's what I like about it. So I'm pleased with it and very happy it was made. ☺

BIOGRAPHIES

WALTER BERNSTEIN's screenwriting credits include *Fail Safe*, *Kiss The Blood Off Your Hands*, *That Kind Of Woman*, *The Money Trap*, *Paris Blues*, *Heller In Pink Tights*, *The Betsy*, *The Molly Maguires*, *Yanks*, *The Front*, *Semi-Tough* and *The House on Carroll Street*. He has also worked uncredited on a number of films, including *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Train*.

Bernstein wrote numerous dramatic television shows under different names from 1950-1958. Other TV credits—under his own name—include *Miss Evers' Boys* and *Doomsday Gun* for HBO, and *Durango* for the Hallmark Hall of Fame. He rewrote *Fail Safe* for a live television broadcast on CBS which starred George Clooney, Richard Dreyfuss and Brian Dennehy. Additionally, he wrote and directed *Little Miss Marker* and *Return to Kansas City* for the HBO series *Women and Men*.

He has recently completed the film adaptations of John Updike's novel *Gertrude and Claudius*, and Katharine Weber's novel *The Music Lesson*. He has written films for HBO about the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the move of the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles and, most recently, about Robert Oppenheimer.

Bernstein has been the recipient of the Writers Guild of America, East Award for Lifetime Achievement, the WGAE Burkey Award for Bringing Honor and Dignity to Writers, the Gotham Award for Writers from the Independent Film Project, the Hudson Valley Film Festival Screenwriting Award and the Nantucket Film Festival Award.

His prose work includes *Keep Your Head Down*, a collection of articles about his service in World War II (mostly from *The New Yorker*). His memoir of war, movies and being blacklisted, *Inside Out*, originally published by Knopf, has been republished in paperback by Da Capo Press.

Bernstein is Adjunct Professor of Screenwriting at New York University and Creative Advisor at the Sundance Screenwriting Workshop. He has been a Writers Guild of America, East council member for over 10 years.

JEREMY PIKSER is the co-writer of the film *Bulworth*, for which he won the L.A. Critics Award as well as Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations. *War, Inc.*, a satire about United States policy in the Middle East, which he wrote with Mark Leyner and John Cusack, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2008. He also wrote *The Lemon Sisters* and worked on the script and production of *Reds*.

He is currently working on a script for director Darren Aronofsky and Universal Pictures about Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (Ram Dass). He is one of the authors of the *Not in Our Name* statement of conscience.

Pikser teaches a graduate screenwriting workshop at the New York University Dramatic Writing Program and is a Writers Guild of America, East council member.

THE FRONT

Walter Bernstein

The Front was released in September 1976.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

WOODY ALLEN.....Howard Prince
ZERO MOSTEL.....Hecky Brown
HERSCHEL BERNARDI.....Phil Sussman
MICHAEL MURPHY.....Alfred Miller
ANDREA MARCOVICCI.....Florence Barrett
REMAK RAMSAY.....Hennessey
MARVIN LICHTERMAN.....Meyer Prince
LLOYD GOUGH.....Herb Delany
DAVID MARGULIES.....Bill Phelps
JOSHUA SHELLEY.....Sam
NORMAN ROSE.....Howard's Attorney
CHARLES KIMBROUGH.....Committee Counselor
M. JOSEF SOMMER.....Committee Chairman
DANNY AIELLO.....Danny LaGattuta

FADE IN:

A MONTAGE: Film clips, newsreel items, commercials, still pictures: Eisenhower, Nixon, Joe McCarthy, Rocky Marciano, the Rosenbergs, troops in Korea—the year is 1953.

EXT. A MOVIE THEATER – NIGHT

The marquee advertises a movie starring John Garfield. Picketing the theatre is a group of American Legionnaires. They carry signs calling Garfield un-American and urge people not to support his pictures. When people approach the box office, the picketers call out to them not to go in. A few people come up and are frightened away.

ALFRED MILLER walks towards the theatre. He disdains the picketers, buys a ticket and goes in. The picketers yell imprecations at him.

INT. THE THEATER – NIGHT

Alfred sits alone. There are only a half-dozen other people in the audience. The sound of Garfield's voice is heard from the screen as the CAMERA MOVES IN on Alfred, worried, deep in thought.

MORE MONTAGE

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A RESTAURANT – DAY

A neighborhood-type place, a bar along one side, booths in the back. Not much action at the moment, the TV over the bar showing a soap opera or game show.

HOWARD PRINCE is behind the cash register; he is the cashier. He is doing card tricks for a waitress. He does them well; she likes him; Howard is attractive to women.

Alfred comes through the front door and up to Howard.

ALFRED Hello, Howard.

Howard's face lights up with surprise and pleasure.

HOWARD Allie! Hey, what are you doing here? Why didn't you tell me you were coming?

ALFRED Just thought I'd drop in.

HOWARD I was thinking about you the other night. Saw your show on TV. (indicating the bar) What I had to do to get those clowns to turn off the ball game!

He introduces Alfred to the waitress.

HOWARD Alfred Miller, my friend, the big TV writer. (to Alfred) This is Margo, the big waitress.

MARGO Pleased to meet you.

ALFRED Hi. (to Howard) I thought before the dinner rush... we could take a walk. Play a little chess.

HOWARD (to Margo) Will you take the register, Marg?

MARGO Sure, Howard.

ALFRED Unless you're too busy—

HOWARD For you?

BARTENDER Hey, Howard—what's the price on the Kid Gavelan-Bassilio fight?

HOWARD Eight to five—Gavelan.

BARTENDER I'll take Bassilio five times.

HOWARD You got it.

EXT. A STREET – DAY

As Howard and Allie walk along.

ALFRED You think Brooklyn again? Or the Cardinals?

HOWARD (crossed fingers) Better be Brooklyn. I'm loaded with the Cardinals.

ALFRED The game is pitching...

HOWARD Well, the Dodgers got that Erskine Branca, Preacher Roe... they could go all the way this year.

ALFRED They're a rough team, the Cards. Lot of speed.

HOWARD What good's speed if you can't get on base?

INT. A CHESS AND PING PONG PARLOR – DAY

Howard and Alfred playing chess. They are both quiet. Alfred seems preoccupied with more than just the chess game.

HOWARD Your move.

ALFRED (after a moment) Howard, I can't work anymore.

HOWARD (sympathetically) Writer's block?

Alfred shakes his head. Howard is concerned.

HOWARD You're not sick—

ALFRED I'm blacklisted.

HOWARD But you feel all right.

ALFRED I feel terrible.

HOWARD But you're healthy. I mean, besides your ulcer.

ALFRED (irritably) They won't buy my scripts. I'm on a blacklist. You know what that means? A list of

names, Howard... the networks have them, the ad agencies... the movie studios. You're on the list, you're marked lousy. You don't work. So what difference does it make if I'm healthy?

HOWARD It makes a difference. What are you blacklisted for?

ALFRED I'm a Communist sympathizer.

HOWARD But you always were.

ALFRED It's not so popular anymore.

HOWARD (shakes his head) How many times did I tell you? Take care of number one. Who can you sue?

ALFRED Nobody. Nobody admits there's a blacklist. They just say your script's not good enough. You're not right for the assignment.

HOWARD Then pay somebody off.

ALFRED This is not like making book, Howard.

HOWARD It's still America. There's always someone you can pay off.

INT. A SMALL CANDY STORE – DAY

An old man mixing two egg creams at the fountain. He hands them to Howard, who carries them to a small table in the back, where Alfred sits.

HOWARD I know people—they're not exactly people—but for fifty dollars, they break a few legs and you're not bothered anymore.

ALFRED That's not what I need.

HOWARD You need money? I happen to know a stock, believe it or not, which is low right now, but it's going through the roof.

ALFRED I need another name.

HOWARD (nods) Yeah... I can see that. Another name. (an idea) Rappaport! Alfred Rappaport. Arnold Rappaport.

ALFRED (shakes his head) Pseudonyms won't work. They know blacklisted writers are using different names. They require a real person.

HOWARD Oh.

He begins to understand.

HOWARD Oh. Of course.

ALFRED Someone they can believe and I can trust.

HOWARD Naturally.

ALFRED I wouldn't ask if—

HOWARD Who else would you ask? I'd be insulted.

ALFRED No one else would know, only you and me.

HOWARD When do we start?

ALFRED Hold your horses! First find out what you're getting into.

HOWARD You want to use my name on your scripts.

ALFRED It's not that simple.

HOWARD Life is complex. If you make it complex.

Alfred takes a deep breath to steady himself, then takes a couple of antacid tablets from his pocket and puts them in his mouth.

ALFRED Howard, in all friendship, you have a slight tendency to be full of shit. Now, listen to me. Remember a show I wrote for in radio? *Grand Central*... remember? Stories about the city.

HOWARD I listened every week.

ALFRED Well, they're turning it into a TV series.

HOWARD (the expert) Smart.

ALFRED I was supposed to write for that series. Now, I can't.

HOWARD (smiling) Now, you can.

ALFRED That's only the first part. I write a script and send it in under your name. They buy the script.

HOWARD Perfect.

ALFRED And then they'll want to meet the writer.

HOWARD So?

ALFRED You'll have to meet them. Really be the writer.

HOWARD So I'll be the writer. (reassuringly) I can do it, what's the big deal? And I want to do it. You're in trouble, I'm your friend... what's a friend for?

ALFRED These days you can get in trouble being a friend.

HOWARD Life is risk. Have another egg cream.

He smiles at Alfred, who is touched, but still a bit dubious.

EXT. HOWARD'S RESTAURANT – DAY

Howard and Alfred standing by the entrance.

ALFRED And I want to pay you for this, Howard.

HOWARD What do you mean, pay? What is that? A friend takes money?

ALFRED (firmly) Ten percent for each script. No arguments, now. You're always in hock, you can use the money. And I'd be paying that much to an agent, anyway.

HOWARD Ten percent?

ALFRED Off the top.

HOWARD (considering this) How much do you get for a script?

ALFRED A name writer... half-hour show... seven-fifty, maybe a thousand. Less for an unknown. Depends on the show.

HOWARD (after a moment) Go home and write. Your troubles are over.

EXT. DANNY'S FRUIT MARKET – DAY

Howard with Danny, who is large and irascible.

DANNY What are you pulling here? You owe me for three winners already. What am I, some kind of charity?

HOWARD Don't get excited. Your money's coming.

DANNY You took bets, you lose, you pay off.

HOWARD What's the matter, you don't trust me? Your money's on the way.

DANNY I don't want to get mad on you, Howard. We been doing business a long time. Don't get me mad on you.

INT. A WHOLESALE FURRIER – DAY

Howard with his older, successful brother in his brother's office. Through a plate glass window, customers and models can be seen, exhibiting and looking at fur coats.

MEYER I don't understand you. What do you do with your salary, flush it down the toilet?

HOWARD I had a tip on a stock. It looked good, so I plunged.

MEYER Where do you come to stocks? Why don't you ask me? I'm familiar with the market. Ask me before you flush your salary down the toilet.

HOWARD Next time I'll ask you.

He is appreciatively watching an attractive model through the window.

MEYER Howard. Howard, what's going to be with you? Momma and Poppa would turn in their graves.

HOWARD I haven't found myself yet. But it's all going to change. You'll see.

MEYER You were always the smart one. Did I get the lessons? You could have gone to college. Instead, you're a bum. How much this time?

HOWARD Six hundred.

MEYER You said on the phone four.

HOWARD Four gets me even. Then I'm blank. But I'm keeping strict accounts.

MEYER You said four, you get four.

He starts writing out a check.

MEYER Enough is enough. I'm at the end of my rope, Howard. I got a business... you know what it costs now to feed one lousy mink? You know what a cutter gets today?

HOWARD (taking the check) Thanks for the money, Meyer.

MEYER At least, if you were realizing your potential... I'd say, fine, that's an investment.

HOWARD I'm working on it.

MEYER At that cockamamie job you got? You call that a job? With a head like yours?

HOWARD You're going to be surprised, Meyer.

MEYER I'm serious—the well is running dry. Sink or swim.

HOWARD Give my regards home.

He turns to leave.

INT. HOWARD'S APARTMENT – DAY

One room, tiny, cluttered, more of a den than an apartment. Studio couch, kitchenette, small table and chairs. The main feature is a rolltop desk covered with scratch sheets, racing forms, newspapers, note pads, a telephone. The shades are down; it's hard to tell that it's day outside. The inside of the lampshades are lined with aluminum foil to cast a better light. On the walls, photographs of girls, inscribed with affection, gratitude and ardor. Howard is on the phone.

HOWARD Danny, I got hit very hard last week. Long shots coming in like relatives... I told you, soon...

soon is soon. Tomorrow, the day after... what are you mad about? It's a promise. Trust me.

He hangs up. The phone rings again. He answers it, disguising his voice.

HOWARD Loew's Sheridan... Who?... Who wants him?... Florence Barrett? (trying to place the name) What do you look like?... Oh?... Oh, yeah... Yeah, I'm Howard Prince the writer... You did? Well, I'm glad you liked it... Oh, sure. When?... No, afternoons are fine. I use the nights to write. Not so much noise, you know... Great. See you then... Ciao.

He hangs up, pleased and expectant.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO – DAY

Howard comes in and pauses to look around. It all seems very confusing: the sets, lights, cables, technicians moving around, actors rehearsing. The amplified voice of the director is heard as he sits in the control booth giving instructions. Other technicians push cameras around the set as the director figures out his shots. There are several monitors on the floor, reflecting what is on camera. Sometimes, when there is a pause, they show instead what is currently going out over the air on that network. It is a hearing of a Congressional committee. It is seen without any sound and no one pays it any attention, but it is there as a kind of subliminal reminder of what is happening in the world outside.

Howard watches with interest, then stops a passing technician.

HOWARD Florence Barrett?

TECHNICIAN (pointing) The one with the hair.

Howard starts over to where a young woman stands talking with a middle-aged, silver-haired man.

FLORENCE AND SUSSMAN

She is very bright, intense and romantic, also idealistic to an infuriating degree. He is a man totally devoted to his own self interest, not stupid or consciously evil, capable of generosity, lacking only principle. They are arguing, Florence on the attack, Sussman defensive.

FLORENCE I won't tell him, Phil. You're the producer, do your own dirty work.

SUSSMAN All Hecky has to do is go talk to the man.

FLORENCE Why should he? Who is this creep, anyway? Because he worked for the FBI? Where does he come off, clearing anyone? Where does anyone come off?

SUSSMAN It's for Hecky's own good.

FLORENCE What's good about it? I'm against the whole rotten business.

SUSSMAN Who's in favor? I'm against it, too.

FLORENCE Then do something.

SUSSMAN I don't run the network!

Howard has come up and coughs discreetly to get their attention. They turn to him, Sussman still irritated by the argument.

SUSSMAN Can I help you?

HOWARD I'm Howard Prince.

SUSSMAN Who?

FLORENCE You're Howard Prince! (holding out her hand) I'm Florence Barrett. I'm so glad you could come. Phil, this is Howard Prince. The writer. (to Howard) This is Phil Sussman, our producer.

HOWARD How do you do?

SUSSMAN (shaking hands) I'm sorry, I didn't connect the name. Listen, that's a hell of a script you wrote. Where have you been hiding? We looked you up, no credits, no nothing. Just like that, out of the blue!

HOWARD I only took up writing a little while ago.

SUSSMAN Well, it's a hell of a script. You got more?

HOWARD (like a foolish question) Are you kidding?

Florence has beckoned to the two actors who have been rehearsing, and they come over. One of them is handsome, about thirty. The other man is older, with a manic manner and the mobile face of a clown. Florence introduces them to Howard.

FLORENCE Howard Prince... this is Steve Parks, who plays our Narrator.

PARKS (shaking hands) Marvelous script.

HOWARD (modestly) Thank you.

FLORENCE And Hecky Brown—

HECKY Who plays with himself.

FLORENCE Who plays the cab driver.

Hecky has grabbed Howard and starts smothering him with kisses.

HECKY Howie! Howie Prince! They let you out finally! Darling!

SUSSMAN You know each other?

HECKY Never saw him before in my life. Who is this man? (calling) Officer!

FLORENCE Excuse us, Hecky, we have to talk.

HECKY (to Howard) Seriously, a first-class script.

HOWARD Thank you.

Hecky and Parks return to the set.

FLORENCE We don't have too much time, Howard, that's why I asked you to come right away. We wanted to meet you, of course, but—

SUSSMAN Your script's a little long, Howard.

FLORENCE Four and a half minutes.

SUSSMAN I was going to suggest cutting the kitchen scene in the first act, I don't know how you feel about that.

FLORENCE I think it's a mistake. To me, the awkward scene is the one in the police station. (to Howard) Don't you think?

HOWARD (judiciously) Maybe. Maybe not. Depends on your definition of awkward.

SUSSMAN The police station at least has some violence.

FLORENCE I'm not saying eliminate it. I just think it can be trimmed. (to Howard) What do you think, Howard?

Howard opens his mouth and then closes it. Until now, he has been basking in approval. Now he realizes they expect him to produce. And he really doesn't know what to say. He starts to say something, changes his mind; they wait. He opens his mouth again; nothing comes out.

SUSSMAN What?

HOWARD (grasping at this) Yes.

FLORENCE Yes what?

HOWARD Yes... I think there are many... a lot of facets here... I don't want to just answer off the top of my head. It's not fair to you, not fair to the show.

SUSSMAN (not really) Look—I know it's not fun to cut your script, but television is television. So you decide. And you cut. I'm not the kind of producer who disembowels a writer's script. I believe in the written word.

HOWARD Absolutely.

SUSSMAN (to Howard) I need it tomorrow morning. But you be happy with it.

He claps Howard on the shoulder and leaves. Florence takes a few sheets of paper from her notebook and hands them to Howard. There is a slight pause, both of them taking stock of the other.

FLORENCE I really liked your script a lot.

HOWARD Thank you.

FLORENCE Most of the stuff I read... I mean, yours had substance. It was about people.

HOWARD Well, I feel if you're going to write about human beings, you might as well make them people. You busy Sunday night?

FLORENCE Sunday?

HOWARD That's my night off. (remembering) From writing.

FLORENCE I'm busy this Sunday.

HOWARD How about afternoons?

FLORENCE (shakes her head) You work at night, I work during the day.

HOWARD Don't you go out to lunch?

FLORENCE I usually have a sandwich sent in.

HOWARD That's not good for you. I'll call you, we'll have lunch.

FLORENCE All right. (after a moment) It was nice meeting you.

She smiles at him, then turns and walks back to where Sussman watches the rehearsal. Howard watches her go, pleased.

SUSSMAN AND FLORENCE
as she comes up to him. They both look off towards Howard.

THEIR POV – HOWARD
as he starts out of the studio.

SUSSMAN AND FLORENCE
watching him.

SUSSMAN I had the pleasure of working with Bill Saroyan once—this guy's got a lot of Bill's qualities. That shyness.

HOWARD
goes out the door, whistling.

SUSSMAN AND FLORENCE
He turns to her.

SUSSMAN You won't tell Hecky?

FLORENCE Absolutely not.

Sussman sighs, then slowly walks over to Hecky.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A RECEPTIONIST'S OFFICE – DAY

A phone rings, a secretary picks it up.

SECRETARY Freedom Information Service... Who's calling?... One moment, please.

She presses down an intercom.

SECRETARY Mr. Hampton from the network.

INT. AN INNER OFFICE – DAY

Pictures on the wall of Gen. MacArthur, Pres. Eisenhower, Chiang Kai-shek and J. Edgar Hoover. Behind his desk: FRANCIS X. HENNESSEY. In his forties, sharp-eyed, implacable, a true believer. Seated before him is a nervous Hecky.

HENNESSEY (on the phone) HENNESSEY... Yes, Tom... Yes, of course. First name Howard. (writes a name on a pad) Got an address on him? Social Security number? (writes those down) I'll check him right out... No trouble at all, Tom, that's what you're paying me for... Yes, as a matter of fact, he's here right now. I'm sure we'll work something out.

Hecky wipes his brow with a handkerchief; he is not so sure.

HENNESSEY (on the phone) Call you as soon as I know anything about Prince... You too, Tom. Carry on.

He hangs up and returns to Hecky.

HENNESSEY Sorry, Mr. Brown.

HECKY Hecky. Everyone calls me Hecky. I'm a household name.

HENNESSEY I can't promise anything, you understand. But if you simply tell me the truth, I might be able to help.

HECKY I'll tell you the truth. I'll do anything.

HENNESSEY (a thin smile) The question, Mr. Brown, is what have you done?

HECKY Nothing. I'm an actor.

HENNESSEY Nothing?

There is a pause, then Hecky sighs.

HECKY Six years ago I marched in a May Day parade.

HENNESSEY is silent, impassive. Another pause. Another reluctant revelation.

HECKY (cont'd) I bought a subscription to the *Daily Worker*. (quickly) But I never read it. Not one word. From the mailbox right to the garbage can.

HENNESSEY remains mute, his silence a judgment.

HECKY (cont'd) I was only trying to get laid! This girl, this Communist girl, she had an ass—

HENNESSEY (coldly) I am not interested in your sex life, Mr. Brown.

HECKY Hecky. I'm just telling you, she was the reason.

HENNESSEY looks briefly at a sheet of paper on his desk.

HENNESSEY Was she also the reason you signed a petition for Loyalist Spain?

HECKY Did I do that?

HENNESSEY And Russian War Relief?

HECKY We were on the same side. Weren't we? (silence) But she was the reason. Honest.

HENNESSEY Would you say then that you were duped?

HECKY Tell me what it means, I'll say it. You want it in writing? Tell me what to write.

HENNESSEY It has to come from you, Mr. Brown.

HECKY (automatically) Hecky.

HENNESSEY From your heart. It has no value otherwise.

HECKY It'll come, don't worry. I'm an actor, what do I know from politics? My life is acting. People all over the country write me letters. When this business happened, believe me, you could have knocked me over with a feather.

HENNESSEY has been thinking and now he nods.

HENNESSEY Write me a letter, Mr. Brown. In your own words. How you were duped, how you feel about it now—

HECKY I'm against it. A hundred percent.

HENNESSEY Whoever else you remember was in that parade. Who asked you to sign those petitions.

HECKY (dubiously) Such a long time ago. And I've got such a bad memory for names. Ask anybody, Mr. ...Morrison?

HENNESSEY Try to remember. Sincerity is the key, Mr. Brown. Anyone can make a mistake. The man who repents sincerely—

HECKY I repent. Sincerely.

HENNESSEY Write me the letter, Mr. Brown. I'll see what I can do.

HECKY And I didn't even get laid.

He shakes his head sadly.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO – NIGHT

A show is about to go on the air. Hecky and Parks take their places before the cameras. Everyone is quiet.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM – NIGHT

A half-dozen little screens reflect what the three different cameras are showing. The director sits by his levers, calls a shot and the show starts. CLOSE on a TV screen.

HECKY This is my station—Grand Central—where a million stories start and finish—

FLORENCE
absorbed as she watches.

CLOSE on a TV screen.

HECKY (cont'd)—and Hecky the Hacky knows them all. Tonight... have I got a story for you.

INT. A STUDY – NIGHT

Alfred sits with a glass of milk in his hand, watching the show.

CLOSE on a TV screen.

HECKY (cont'd) Remember last week, you laughed a lot. Tonight, maybe you'll cry a little. See for yourself—only on Grand Central. Me? I think I'll go make up with my cab. See you later.

INT. MEYER'S DINING ROOM – NIGHT

He watches as he eats, his wife and children around him.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO – NIGHT

The show comes to a highly dramatic finish.

INT. THE CONTROL ROOM – NIGHT

The commercial is on the air and the phone has started to ring. Florence picks it up.

FLORENCE Studio Twelve... Yes, I thought so, too. It was terrific... Thank you.

She hangs up. It immediately starts ringing again. She picks it up again.

FLORENCE Studio Twelve.

She listens, then holds it out to Sussman and points upstairs.

FLORENCE God.

SUSSMAN (on the phone) Hello... Why, thank you. Thank you very much... Yes, I'll tell everyone. Thank you.

Hangs up; it starts ringing again.

SUSSMAN I think we've got a winner.

INT. RESTAURANT – NIGHT

The credits have started to roll and Howard's name comes up: Teleplay by Howard Prince. Everyone applauds. Howard shakes his head in self-deprecation, loving every minute.

INT. ALFRED'S STUDY – NIGHT

The credits have finished. Alfred turns off the set. He finishes his glass of milk. Then he sits down at his typewriter and goes back to work.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AN EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT – DAY

Howard and Florence are having lunch. A waiter has just finished pouring wine for them, taste first for Howard to approve, then filling their glasses.

FLORENCE I usually don't drink at lunch. Makes me sleepy.

HOWARD Take a nap after.

FLORENCE I have to work.

HOWARD That's why we ought to have dinner. What about next Sunday?

FLORENCE Well—

HOWARD Why does it have to be Sunday? I'll take off a regular night. Friday, Saturday—

FLORENCE I'd better tell you, Howard. I'm involved.

HOWARD Married?

FLORENCE No. But involved.

HOWARD So what's the problem? I know... you're one of those. One guy at a time, right? (She nods) Well, just don't bring him along. (She smiles) What does he do? He some kind of writer? (She shakes her head) Musician?

FLORENCE Stockbroker.

HOWARD Yeah? That's very interesting, a stockbroker. I mean, it's one way to go... if you're not talented.

FLORENCE (A little defensive) He's very nice.

HOWARD Listen, I'm not knocking. You do what you can do.

He pours her some more wine.

HOWARD How'd you like the new script?

FLORENCE Marvelous. Even better than the last one.

HOWARD Wait'll you see the next one.

FLORENCE It's so exciting... to see a new talent emerge. May I ask a personal question?

HOWARD Feel free.

FLORENCE How come you started writing so late?

HOWARD Well, you know, you can't be a writer without having lived. Life is experience. I had to get that experience before I could write.

FLORENCE Here in the city? You come from here, don't you?

HOWARD Yeah, but I bummed around a lot. Seaman. Boxer. What you have to do to be a writer.

She looks at him quizzically, not taken in by this.

HOWARD You don't believe me.

FLORENCE Should I?

HOWARD Well, I bummed around a lot. What about you?

FLORENCE (Wryly) Not a lot.

HOWARD I didn't mean it that way. Where are you from?

FLORENCE Connecticut.

HOWARD (Nods) High class.

FLORENCE Proper, anyway. Very well-bred. The kind of family where the biggest sin was to raise your voice.

HOWARD In my family, the biggest sin was to buy retail. (As she laughs) He make you laugh?

FLORENCE Who?

HOWARD The stockbroker.

FLORENCE Yes.

There is a pause. Her voice is low.

FLORENCE The character of the girl in your script... you write about women so well. With such understanding.

HOWARD Tomorrow night... dinner?

FLORENCE I'd have to tell him. I don't know if I'm ready for that yet.

HOWARD You'll know better if you go out with me. (She laughs again) What's so funny? I mean it.

FLORENCE You're so... unexpected.

HOWARD I didn't expect you either.

EXT. A SECONDHAND BOOKSTORE – DAY

Howard seen through the window, talking to a man.

INT. THE BOOKSTORE – DAY

Dim, musty, shelves piled with books. Howard talking to a man his age with a beard as they inspect the book shelves.

BERT How about Dickens? You need any Dickens?

HOWARD That's for kids.

BERT You call yourself a writer? Modern American writing started with Huckleberry Finn, dummy.

HOWARD It did?

BERT Hemingway said that. How about Hemingway? You're low on the moderns. Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson—

HOWARD Give me a Hemingway and two Faulkners.

BERT Remember, you got to pay for these, Howard. No credit.

HOWARD Don't worry.

INT. HOWARD'S APARTMENT – DAY

Howard is on the phone.

HOWARD Danny, I got hit very hard last week, long shots came in like relatives... Soon... Soon is soon, tomorrow, the day after... What are you mad about? It's a promise, trust me...

INT. MEYER'S OFFICE – DAY

Howard there. Meyer angry.

MEYER How can you be broke? You just got a big paycheck. Don't tell me it wasn't a thousand, fifteen hundred—

HOWARD I'm still an unknown.

MEYER What am I talking about? Five thousand, probably. You're making as much as I am.

HOWARD That's how much you know. There's agents... taxes... I got to buy books, paper—

MEYER Money goes through you like Epsom Salts. You're a sick individual.

HOWARD I'll pay you back. I just sold another script.

MEYER Don't play me for a sucker, Howard. I didn't make a business having the fur pulled over my eyes. I'm nobody's fool.

HOWARD Of course not.

MEYER I'm glad finally you're realizing yourself, but not at my expense. A man earns and still borrows? (shakes his head) First you pay back what you owe.

INT. HOWARD'S RESTAURANT – NIGHT

It is closing time. Howard finishes checking out the receipts, waves goodbye to the bartender and Margo and goes out.

EXT. THE STREET – NIGHT

Howard walking off. It is late; few people are seen.

INT. AN APARTMENT LOBBY – NIGHT

The door buzzes and Howard goes in.

INT. A HALLWAY – NIGHT

An apartment door opens as Howard waits. Alfred is seen in his pajamas and bathrobe.

ALFRED Right on time. I just finished.

He holds the door open and Howard walks in.

INT. ALFRED'S STUDY – NIGHT

Alfred leads the way in.

ALFRED Want a drink?

HOWARD Okay. (as Alfred goes to prepare it) You look tired.

ALFRED This was a hard one. Shit, they're all hard. But it turned out good, I think.

HOWARD You really work hard, don't you? It's awful, that blacklist. You having to work like this.

ALFRED I always worked like this.

He hands Howard a drink, takes a swig from a Gelusil bottle to coat his stomach and then holds up his own drink.

ALFRED To work.

HOWARD (after they drink) There must be a lot of writers blacklisted by now. How do they get along?

ALFRED Why?

HOWARD It must be hard.

ALFRED It's hard.

There is silence for a moment.

HOWARD (casually) You know... I got them so snowed... two writers wouldn't be any harder than one.

ALFRED You think not?

HOWARD What do you have to know? It's a snap.

ALFRED (dryly) How about three?

HOWARD Even three.

Alfred looks at him. Howard looks back, guileless.

ALFRED At ten percent each.

HOWARD Well, maybe I could do three for twenty-five.

ALFRED I wouldn't want you to feel cheated.

HOWARD Okay. Ten percent each. (at Alfred's look) You don't think that's fair?

ALFRED It's a bargain.

HOWARD I got the time, you know writers who need help... I'm glad to help.

ALFRED Cut the crap, Howard.

HOWARD It means a lot of running around, you know? Cabs. Lunches. I got to keep up appearances.

ALFRED You want the money.

HOWARD I'm offering a deal. What are you, romantic? That's the trouble with you leftos... you got a thing about money. You want the deal or you don't want it.

ALFRED I want it, but I know you.

HOWARD Money is a tool. It's what you use it for.

ALFRED You're going to take off and fly right up your own ass.

HOWARD I'm willing to help. Take advantage.

INT. A RESTAURANT – DAY

Seated at a back table are Howard, Alfred and two other men: HERB DELANY, about fifty, gray-haired, brusque; and BILL PHELPS, fortyish, pleasant, scholarly.

PHELPS All I can say, Howard, is thanks.

HOWARD It's no trouble.

DELANY (abruptly) I'm a Communist, Howard. I want you to know that right off the bat. The Committee asked me, I took the Fifth. None of their business. But I'm telling you.

HOWARD Listen, it's none of my business.

DELANY I want you to know who you're fronting for.

HOWARD I don't have to know.

DELANY They're trying to sell the cold war, Howard, and using the blacklist against anyone who won't buy.

ALFRED Herb, he doesn't need a lecture.

DELANY I'll send you a few pamphlets.

ALFRED I'll break your arm. Will you leave him alone. He knows who he's mixed up with.

HOWARD Who's mixed up?

PHELPS What Herb means is we're not blacklisted because we're kind to dumb animals. Or because somebody lied about us or made a mistake.

HOWARD You're out of work. What else do I have to know?

Phelps turns to Alfred.

PHELPS What about taxes? That's going to be a problem.

A waiter, balancing four plates of food, has come up in time to hear this. He nods knowingly.

WAITER You need a deductible. Take my advice... natural gas.

HOWARD (interested) I heard cattle.

WAITER Cattle is also good. (expertly dealing out the food) Filet of sole. Vegetable cutlet. Mushroom omelette. Protose steak. Eat in good health.

He leaves. They wait until he is out of earshot.

ALFRED The network pays him, he pays us, less the ten percent. We pay all the taxes we owe. No tricks. Nothing illegal. Everyone declares exactly what he earns.

DELANY What's he paying us for? He's got to put something down.

ALFRED We're his collaborators.

Phelps shakes his head.

PHELPS Anyone reads his return, they connect him to us. Can't we protect him better?

ALFRED The IRS won't care as long as the right tax is being paid.

PHELPS The FBI will and they've been looking at tax returns.

ALFRED For political reasons. He's not political.

Howard has been listening, amused.

HOWARD You guys kill me. They're kicking your brains in and you worry about taxes.

ALFRED We're worrying about you.

HOWARD Just write the scripts. I'll handle my end.

EXT. DANNY'S FRUIT MARKET – DAY

Howard is paying Danny off. Danny smiles and hands him a piece of fruit.

DANNY Have a tangerine.

INT. MEYER'S APARTMENT – DAY

Meyer's wife and two children are thanking Howard for presents as Howard hands Meyer a check.

INT. A CORRIDOR – DAY

HENNESSEY striding along, trailed by a distraught middle-aged actor.

ACTOR But I'm Harry Stone, the actor! It's the other Harry Stone... the director... he's the one you want. I'm blacklisted because they think I'm him!

HENNESSEY I understand.

ACTOR I'm innocent. I never joined anything. A terrible mistake has been made.

HENNESSEY I sympathize. Unfortunately, I can only help people who are willing to make a clean breast of what they've done.

ACTOR But I haven't done anything!

HENNESSEY That's why I can't help you.

He has come to his office and now goes inside, leaving the actor out.

INT. HENNESSEY'S OUTER OFFICE – DAY

HENNESSEY comes in.

SECRETARY Mr. Hampton called from the network. Wants you to call back as soon as you can.

HENNESSEY Get him.

He goes into his office as his secretary picks up the phone and starts dialing.

INT. HENNESSEY'S OFFICE – DAY

He goes to his desk, sits, arranges himself. The intercom buzzes and he picks up the phone.

HENNESSEY Yes, Tom... Yes, I've got a report on Howard Prince... No, no proof he's a member of the Party. Of course, no proof that he isn't. I suggest I keep investigating... No, I don't have to. I can send you a bill right now and forget about it. You're the one has to answer to the American people... Exactly. That's all I'm saying. You can't be too careful these days... No, I don't suppose anyone can object if you keep using him. Nothing to object to. So far.

INT. HAMPTON'S OFFICE – DAY

Hampton hangs up the phone and turns to Sussman, sitting nearby.

HAMPTON You can use him.

SUSSMAN Thank God. He's the best writer I've got. Hell, he's the only writer. I don't know how he does it. What about Hecky Brown?

Hampton shakes his head.

SUSSMAN He wrote the letter.

HAMPTON Wasn't good enough. (defensively) It's not my decision, Phil. They tell me, I tell you.

SUSSMAN And what do I tell Hecky?

HAMPTON You decided he's not right for the part. You're changing the character. You've fired actors before, tell him what you told them.

SUSSMAN He'll know it's not true.

HAMPTON Can he prove it?

EXT. THE CLOISTERS – DAY

Howard and Florence sitting on a bench. They are in the middle of a long kiss, only their lips touching, tentative and sweet. Then they slowly draw back and look at each other.

HOWARD (tenderly) You need a fur coat?

FLORENCE No.

HOWARD I can get you a great buy.

FLORENCE You don't need to get me things.

HOWARD It's no trouble. My brother's a furrier.

They kiss again.

FLORENCE I should be getting back to the office.

HOWARD What's the rush? You're having a script conference. That takes time.

FLORENCE Then we should talk about the script.

HOWARD Later. (as she shakes her head) What's the matter?

FLORENCE You're the only writer I know who never wants to talk about his work.

HOWARD I'm superstitious.

FLORENCE (smiles) No, you're not.

HOWARD Well, the way I look at it, you're a writer or you're a talker.

FLORENCE You're genuinely modest. I admire you for that.

HOWARD (desperate to change the subject) Listen, how do you feel about sports.

FLORENCE I'm embarrassing you.

HOWARD You like sports?

FLORENCE I like swimming.

HOWARD Swimming is not a sport. Swimming is what you do so you shouldn't drown. A sport is what you play with a ball.

FLORENCE I used to play basketball at school.

HOWARD (impressed) You played basketball? (she nods) Maybe we could play one-on-one sometime. No, listen, if you ever want to lay a bet... no, forget that. Listen.

He is being carried away by his genuine feeling about her.

HOWARD I'm not just a writer. I don't want you to think... as a matter of fact... I mean, I want you to know—

FLORENCE I know.

HOWARD (startled) You know?

FLORENCE What Emerson said. “Talent alone cannot make a writer. There must be a man behind the book.”

HOWARD That’s what you know?

FLORENCE (simply) I don’t have to know anything more.

He takes a deep breath, saved from the consequence of an honest instinct.

HOWARD Well... why don’t we just concentrate on the man?

He leans forward and they kiss again.

EXT. A STREET CORNER – DAY

Howard standing furtively. Phelps comes past, hands him a large envelope and continues on. Howard goes off the other way.

INT. SUSSMAN’S OFFICE – DAY

The large envelope on his desk, Sussman reading the script that has been inside. Howard and Florence are there. Sussman looks up at them and shakes his head admiringly.

INT. A BANK – DAY

Howard at a teller’s window, making a deposit.

TELLER You know, I’ve never seen an account like yours. Up and down, up and down... one week a big deposit, the next week... if you don’t mind my asking—what does a man like you do?

HOWARD (enigmatically) Futures.

He turns and leaves. The teller nods, looking after him with respect.

INT. A FANCY MEN’S CLOTHING STORE – DAY

Howard having a suit made to order.

INT. A LUXURY APARTMENT – DAY

Howard examining it approvingly with a real estate agent.

EXT. AN APARTMENT BUILDING – DAY

Delany comes out, carrying a large envelope. As he starts down the street, TWO MEN suddenly appear before him. Neatly dressed, polite, yet somehow threatening.

FIRST MAN Mr. Delany?

He has taken out his wallet and flips it open to show Delany.

FIRST MAN Federal Bureau of Investigation. We’d like to talk to you.

DELANY I’ve got nothing to say.

He starts to move around them but, without seeming to, they block his way.

SECOND MAN We thought you might be ready to cooperate.

FIRST MAN Nobody has to know.

Delany pushes past them and continues walking. They stay where they are, looking after him.

HOWARD
coming down the street towards Delany.

DELANY
coming towards him, the FBI men in the background. The first man calls after him.

FIRST MAN See you again, Mr. Delany.

They cross to a parked car and start getting in.

HOWARD
His face lights up at the sight of Delany.

DELANY
looks past Howard, showing no sign of recognition, but speaking in a low voice.

DELANY Keep walking.

He walks past Howard.

HOWARD AND DELANY
Howard puzzled, but obeying.

THE FBI MEN
in their car, driving away.

THEIR POV – HOWARD AND DELANY
walking away from each other, Howard walking out of the frame, the CAMERA staying on Delany as he continues on.

EXT. RADIO CITY – DAY

A cab pulls up and Howard gets out. He tips the driver handsomely and goes into the building. He carries Delany’s envelope.

INT. THE ELEVATORS – DAY

The starter greets Howard warmly as he gets into an elevator.

INT. A CORRIDOR – DAY

Howard walking jauntily along, nodding to people who pass. Their attitude towards him is deferential.

INT. SUSSMAN’S OUTER OFFICE – DAY

As Howard comes in, the secretary puts down the phone and gets to her feet excitedly.

SECRETARY You’re here! (on the intercom) He’s here! (to Howard) We’ve been trying all over!

Sussman bursts out of his office.

SUSSMAN Thank God!

HOWARD (holding out his envelope) I said I'd bring it in today.

Sussman takes the envelope and throws it to the secretary.

SUSSMAN Forget that one.

He takes Howard's arm and leads him out the door.

HOWARD Forget it?

INT. THE CORRIDOR – DAY

Sussman hurries a puzzled Howard along.

SUSSMAN You've got to rewrite the old one.

HOWARD What old one?

SUSSMAN The one with the flashbacks to the concentration camp.

HOWARD You said it was great.

SUSSMAN It's beautiful.

HOWARD Florence said she cried.

SUSSMAN An award-winning show! Those scenes in the gas chamber... I cried.

HOWARD Then what—?

SUSSMAN The sponsor won't approve it.

He opens another door and pushes Howard inside.

INT. A STUDIO – DAY

The sets built, the actors made up and in costume, but sitting around, waiting. Florence hurries up to Howard and Sussman as they come in.

FLORENCE You found him!

SUSSMAN (to Howard) First they said yes, now they say no... when we're already in dress rehearsal. You want to know why? You won't believe it.

FLORENCE They're a gas company. They decided the show makes gas look bad.

SUSSMAN I still think we can make it a firing squad. After all, they killed Jews that way, too.

FLORENCE Phil, will you leave it to Howard? He's the writer.

HOWARD So they want changes. What's the excitement? Make it a firing squad. Good idea.

SUSSMAN You'll have to write new scenes.

HOWARD I'll go home and write them.

FLORENCE You don't have time to go home.

HOWARD I'll take a cab.

SUSSMAN Howard, you don't realize. Time is of the essence. They're waiting upstairs for the rewrite. The sponsor has to approve... the network. They don't approve, there's no show.

HOWARD They can't wait till tonight?

SUSSMAN They want it now. I'm supposed to keep you here till it's done.

HOWARD But I can't work anyplace but home.

SUSSMAN We fixed you an office, I guarantee you won't be disturbed.

HOWARD I don't get inspired.

SUSSMAN It doesn't have to be inspired, only changed.

FLORENCE There really isn't that much writing. We just have to be careful not to lose the emotion.

SUSSMAN Don't bother him with details. He's got work to do.

INT. A SMALL OFFICE – DAY

A desk, typewriter, pencils and paper, otherwise bare. Howard sitting unhappily before the typewriter. Florence and Sussman at the door.

SUSSMAN Just clear your mind and write.

They go out. Howard doesn't know what to do. He gets up and goes to the window. His first impulse is to jump, but it is too high up. He paces, tries to think, then goes to the door, opens it a little and peers out.

HIS POV – SUSSMAN AND FLORENCE talking in the corridor. They look back at him.

HOWARD as he sees them.

HOWARD I have to go to the bathroom.

Sussman gestures down the hall. Howard comes out and starts down the corridor. They watch him go into the men's room.

INT. THE MEN'S ROOM – DAY

Howard comes in. A man comes out of one of the cubicles. He smiles at Howard, who smiles back. The man goes out.

Howard waits a moment, then opens the door and peers out.

HIS POV – THE CORRIDOR
empty.

HOWARD
Comes out of the men's room, hurries across to a fire door and exits quickly.

INT. THE LOBBY – DAY
Howard in a phone booth, frantically calling.

INT. THE CORRIDOR – DAY
Howard comes out the fire door, exhausted from his climb back up, and goes into his office.

INT. THE OFFICE – DAY
Howard pacing, pausing every once in a while to look out the window. There is a SOUND at the door and he dives back to his seat at the typewriter. Sussman sticks his head in.

SUSSMAN How's it coming?

HOWARD Great.

SUSSMAN I didn't hear the typewriter.

HOWARD I start longhand.

Sussman nods and withdraws. Howard gets up and returns to looking out the window.

INT. THE CORRIDOR – DAY
Florence walking along. She pauses before the door to Howard's office, then hesitates and decides not to disturb him. She looks at her watch and walks on.

INT. THE OFFICE – DAY
Howard at the window. He sees what he has been looking for.

EXT. THE STREET – DAY
A taxi parked at the curb, window open, Alfred inside. He hands an envelope out to Howard on the street.

EXT. THE CORRIDOR – DAY
The fire door opens a crack and Howard's eye surveys the scene. The coast is clear and he comes out, having made the climb up again. Carrying the envelope, he staggers into Sussman's office.

INT. SUSSMAN'S OFFICE – DAY
Sussman behind his desk, holding the script in his hands. Florence there. Howard in a chair, panting. Sussman indicates his condition to Florence.

SUSSMAN That's how we treat talent. Sometimes I'm ashamed.

INT. A PUBLIC SCHOOL AUDITORIUM – DAY
Full of kids making a lot of noise. Harried teachers try keeping them in their place, which is not easy.

Howard is on the stage along with the principal and a few other teachers. The principal is holding up his hands for silence.

PRINCIPAL Quiet, children... quiet!

He points to a teacher trying to quell one of the kids.

PRINCIPAL Send that boy to detention. (calling)
Quiet, now! Everyone back in their seats.

The children slowly get seated.

PRINCIPAL Boys and girls, we have a very special visitor to our assembly today. Not so long ago, he sat in the same seats you're sitting in now. But because he worked hard and studied hard, he is now a famous television writer. (turning to Howard) Howard, I know this prize we give you is a small thing compared to the greater prizes you have won in your chosen field. But it is an honor and privilege as your former principal to present you, Howard Prince, our highest award... Outstanding Graduate of P.S. 161!

Everyone bursts into applause as Howard rises and comes modestly forward to accept.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. HECKY'S DRESSING ROOM – DAY

He is in costume, making up for his part in the TV show. Sussman and Florence are there.

SUSSMAN What can I say! I'm worried. And I'm not the only one. Upstairs—

HECKY From what? The show's a hit.

SUSSMAN So far.

HECKY So far, so good.

SUSSMAN I have to look ahead. Your quality, I don't know what, the character... it's not working.

HECKY You hired me for this character.

SUSSMAN The first impression... tremendous. Don't get me wrong.

HECKY (to Florence) You think, too.

SUSSMAN It's not her decision.

HECKY What decision?

FLORENCE I think you're great, Hecky. So does everyone else.

SUSSMAN No one denies your talent. It's... your personality is too dominant. You belong out front...

like Berle. In a dramatic series... you're throwing the whole show off balance.

HECKY Who says?

SUSSMAN A talent like yours... it needs room. You need a show of your own, where you can dominate. As a matter of fact, I've got a few ideas. We'll make some time, get together and kick them around.

HECKY Is it the letter?

SUSSMAN Absolutely not.

HECKY I wrote what that snake asked me to write.

SUSSMAN Wouldn't I tell you? The problem is artistic.

Florence can't stand anymore, she leaves.

SUSSMAN (cont'd) The female of the species.

The dressing room door slams loudly. Hecky just sits there.

INT. A TELEVISION STUDIO – NIGHT

Howard being interviewed on a talk show. He is at ease, sure of himself.

INTERVIEWER Well, I would say one of the factors that has made your show so successful—

HOWARD (holding up his hand) Don't call it my show, now. I'm just a cog in the wheel.

INTERVIEWER The most important cog, in my opinion. I think you can safely say that *Grand Central* is one of the few television shows where the writer is really the star.

HOWARD Well, there's a lot of wonderful people who work on that show.

INTERVIEWER Of course, I understand the importance of actors and directors—

INT. A RESTAURANT BAR – NIGHT

A show business place. Hecky sits alone at the end of the bar, watching the interview on the TV set.

INTERVIEWER Still, wouldn't you say it all rests on the writer? Ultimately.

HOWARD Well, naturally, the script comes first. Can't have a show without a script.

INTERVIEWER So to come back to what I started to say—

HOWARD Please.

INTERVIEWER The wide range of styles in *Grand Central*... comedy one week, tragedy the next—

HOWARD (nods) We try to mix it up.

During this, Hampton, the network executive, his wife and another couple come into the restaurant. Mrs. Hampton sees Hecky, who has noticed them. She smiles and starts forward to greet him, but Hampton puts his hand on her arm in a small, restraining gesture, and guides her past Hecky into the restaurant. Hecky looks after them. The interview continues.

INT. HENNESSEY'S OFFICE – DAY

HENNESSEY behind his desk. Hecky sitting before him. Hecky is tense, haggard; he has been suffering.

HECKY I wrote I was sorry, I was duped. I didn't know what I was doing. I'll never do it again. What more can I say?

HENNESSEY That's up to you.

HECKY I have to work! I can't get work, Mr. HENNESSEY, the doors are closed in my face. My own agent won't answer the phone.

HENNESSEY I appreciate your situation. I do, Mr. Brown, I've helped people in your situation.

HECKY Then help me, please. Tell me. I'll turn myself inside out. I'll do anything.

HENNESSEY You make that difficult to believe.

HECKY What else can I do? I'll do it, believe me. You don't know what I'm going through.

HENNESSEY I'd like to believe you, but I have the feeling you're not being entirely frank.

HECKY Give me a for instance. That's all... you'll see, I promise...

HENNESSEY You marched in a May Day parade.

HECKY Only because of that girl.

HENNESSEY Whose name you say you can't remember.

HECKY Tessie, Bessie... I was interested in her body, not her name.

HENNESSEY Other people marched in that parade. Other actors, directors... you don't remember their names, either?

HECKY I'm terrible with names.

HENNESSEY They remember you.

HECKY I'm a well-known personality. (a thought) You talked with these people?

HENNESSEY Some of them. Some were kind enough to write letters.

HECKY Then you know who they are. So it's not so important I remember... you know already.

HENNESSEY Your sincerity is important. Your desire to cooperate fully.

HECKY I told you what I did. I apologized. (agonized) I come on my hands and knees, Mr. HENNESSEY, please, all I want to do is work. I don't want to know from anything else. I've got a wife and two growing children. Fine boys... here, look—

He rummages in his pocket for pictures, which he holds out for HENNESSEY to see.

HECKY Plus a wife from before who if the first of the month the alimony doesn't come... last week I sold my car for peanuts. A brand new model. All the money I made... I ask myself, where did it go? So fast? I can't pay the rent, Mr. HENNESSEY. Nothing can go out if it isn't coming in!

He takes out a handkerchief and wipes his face. HENNESSEY simply watches him.

HENNESSEY Do you know Howard Prince?

HECKY I was on his show. A big talent... big.

HENNESSEY Do you know him personally?

HECKY Only from the show. Once in a while, a bite to eat afterwards.

HENNESSEY Do you think you could get to know him better?

HECKY (cautiously) I'm not too good at that sort of thing, honest. Actors inside, you'd be surprised, they're really very shy.

HENNESSEY He knows you already... and you're very likeable. And I'm sure he feels sympathy for you.

HECKY What could I find out?

HENNESSEY Who his friends are. What he does in his spare time. Where he stands on the issues of the day.

HECKY Can't you ask him that yourself?

HENNESSEY If he were part of the Communist conspiracy, could we believe what he said?

HECKY But if he isn't?

HENNESSEY We'd like you to help us find out.

HECKY You want me to spy on Howard Prince.

HENNESSEY We're in a war, Mr. Brown... against a tricky and ruthless enemy who will stop at nothing to destroy our way of life. To be a spy on the side of freedom is an honor.

HECKY And I do that, I can work.

HENNESSEY I don't do the hiring, Mr. Brown. I only advise about Americanism. But in my opinion, as the sign of a true patriot, it would certainly help.

He nods to Hecky, the issue joined, perfectly clear.

INT. HOWARD'S NEW APARTMENT – NIGHT

The table set for an intimate dinner. Champagne in a bucket. Candles. Music. Front door rings. He answers it. It's Florence. She starts talking at once.

FLORENCE I quit. Quit, quit, finished, resigned. Quit! Let Sussman do his own dirty work. I won't be a part of it. No more, not any more, finished! Watching people destroyed, crucified like Hecky. I'm going to fight it.

HOWARD Hi, Florence.

FLORENCE I'm so relieved, you have no idea. I've felt like such a hypocrite... taking their money, keeping my mouth shut.

HOWARD This is my new apartment.

FLORENCE They count on our silence, you know. People keeping quiet, afraid to speak up. But you know what I'm going to do? (he shakes his head) I'm going to publish a newspaper. Well, anyway, a pamphlet. *Facts About the Blacklist*. Do you like the title. I've been on the phone all morning. People are dying to talk... as long as I don't use their names.

HOWARD Would you like some champagne.

FLORENCE We have to break the conspiracy of silence, Howard. People don't know what's going on, they don't have the facts. I've gotten pledges already for the printing costs. And volunteers to collect information. People will act if they only have the facts.

HOWARD Let's not get hysterical.

FLORENCE Oh, we'll shake them up, Howard. I'll do the legwork and you'll do the writing—

HOWARD Not so fast! Florence, I think you're making a big mistake.

FLORENCE I believe in personal responsibility, Howard. If you believe—act.

HOWARD You're throwing away a whole career.

FLORENCE Thought without action is the disease of the liberal.

HOWARD You're the best story editor in the business. You could be a producer... the first woman producer of a half-hour dramatic series in prime time.

FLORENCE If I keep my mouth shut.

HOWARD That is not a terrible idea sometimes.

FLORENCE That's what they're counting on.

HOWARD Florence, listen to me. You are going off the deep end. Have some champagne.

He pours a glass and brings it to her.

FLORENCE (smiles) I warned you, I'm a serious person.

HOWARD You're crazy. You quit your job, you're ready to start a revolution. What are you trying to do?

FLORENCE I want us to fight them. Not get bought off.

HOWARD I'm not mad at anyone!

FLORENCE We live in the world, Howard.

HOWARD You live in the world. I live right here. What are you trying to do to me? You know how long it took me to get here? I like it here! I like what I'm doing!

FLORENCE You're getting shrill.

HOWARD I've got what I want! For the first time in my life—

FLORENCE I'm not trying to take it away from you.

HOWARD But that's what's gonna happen!

FLORENCE (coldly) I'm only talking about a simple commitment, Howard. I didn't ask you to marry me!

HOWARD We got a good relationship going. Why do you want to spoil it?

FLORENCE A relationship isn't only sex, you know. There are more important aspects.

HOWARD I know that. Like what?

FLORENCE Human rights.

HOWARD How about my rights? I'm human. What happened to my rights all of a sudden? I live here. It's clean. What are you putting me on the spot for?

FLORENCE You really want success, don't you?

HOWARD I don't want to make waves. I'm a writer.

FLORENCE I've made that mistake before... confusing the artist with the man.

She puts down her glass and starts for the door.

FLORENCE I just want you to know... I still admire the artist.

HOWARD You going?

FLORENCE Yes!

HOWARD Well, then... go!

He slams the door and stands there, righteous and alone. There is the SOUND of a phone ringing and then Hecky's voice is heard.

HECKY (V.O.) Howard? This is Hecky... Hecky Brown. Am I bothering you?

HOWARD (V.O.) Of course not. I'm sorry about the show, Hecky. Everyone misses you.

HECKY (V.O.) Howard... I'm calling for a favor, but I'll understand if you don't want to do it.

EXT. A HIGHWAY IN THE COUNTRY – DAY

A car driving along.

HOWARD (V.O.) Why shouldn't I do it?

HECKY (V.O.) Well, you know how it is. You don't take for granted these days. I've got this club date in the mountains. I thought maybe you could drive me up.

HOWARD (V.O.) You couldn't have called at a better time.

INT. THE CAR – DAY

Howard driving, Hecky next to him. Hecky is nervous, not knowing how to go about what he has prepared himself to do, not wanting to do it. Howard is in a mood of phony joviality.

HOWARD When you work like I do, you've got to make time to relax. You know... all work and no play—

HECKY I guess you've got a lot of friends.

HOWARD The usual. But you've got to hang loose. Be able to pick up the phone, have a little fun, then get right back to basics.

HECKY What do you like to do... in your spare time?

HOWARD (smiling) The usual.

HECKY Watch your step around this place. The broads up here, you look at them and you think, where has this been? They're coming at you from all directions. Like shooting fish in a barrel. Then you find out you're the fish.

HOWARD Don't worry about me.

HECKY Just don't make any promises. They come up here with lawyers.

HOWARD You play these places much?

HECKY Till I got into television. You know what I used to get for one night? Three grand.

HOWARD That ought to come in handy now.

HECKY You know what I'm getting tonight? Five hundred.

Howard turns to him, unbelieving.

HOWARD That's not fair.

HECKY Where is it written it should be fair?

EXT. A MOUNTAIN HOTEL – DAY

Big, garish. The car parked outside, a bellhop getting out their bags. Howard and Hecky stand by the car, Hecky having his hand pumped by a tanned, polished, over-friendly man.

SAM Hecky, it's a pleasure! How long? A year, two years? It's a pleasure having you back.

HECKY (without enthusiasm) Likewise. (introducing Howard) This is Howard Prince, the great and famous writer.

SAM It's a pleasure, Howard. Any friend of Hecky's.

HOWARD is looking at another car which has arrived. Out of it, a bellhop is maneuvering a dress rack with maybe thirty dresses, pants, suits, fur coats, cloth coats, robes and stoles. Two girls have also stepped out of the car, not very attractive, but anyway girls. One smiles invitingly at Howard as she follows their wardrobe into the hotel.

SAM Come on, we'll go inside, have a little drink.

HECKY You know I don't drink before a show.

SAM We'll have a little talk.

INT. THE LOBBY – DAY

The three of them walk through. Guests know Hecky and point

to him and call out. He responds in his comic way, joking, making faces, the old Hecky. He stops to sign a few autographs.

HOWARD also stops... looking around, taken by the ratio of women to men, which is roughly ten to one. He sees the girl who smiled at him outside and smiles back at her now.

HOWARD Staying long?

GIRL Just the weekend. You, too? (he nods) What do you do?

HOWARD I'm a writer.

GIRL A writer?

She turns away; that is not her image. Howard is a little taken aback, then follows Hecky and Sam, who have gone into an office off the lobby.

INT. THE OFFICE – DAY

Sam is pouring two drinks from a decanter.

SAM You'll have a drink, Howard?

HOWARD Sure.

Sam hands a glass to him, then holds the other up to Hecky.

SAM To a giant of the entertainment world.

HECKY Business looks good, Sam. Full up.

SAM (deprecatingly) Loss leaders... we give discounts so the rooms won't stay empty. To tell you the truth, we're not even holding our own. The upkeep! Which comes to what I want to mention.

HECKY The five hundred. I already accepted, Sam, I don't need the song and dance.

SAM Two-fifty.

HECKY (slowly) You promised five.

SAM I was hoping five. I figured steal a little from the band, from the dance team... make it up that way. But you know the union. They could shut me down.

HECKY You knew this when you said five.

SAM I was still hoping.

HECKY A year ago, I played here for how much? All right, today is not a year ago. But I'm still Hecky Brown. Don't you forget that. You don't pay two-fifty for Hecky Brown!

SAM Maybe three hundred. Out of my own pocket.

HECKY I piss on your three hundred!

SAM (calmly) Don't be foolish. Face facts, there is a cloud over your head. Who else is offering that much?

Hecky does not answer; the logic is irrefutable.

SAM (cont'd) If it was up to me personally, I'd pay you the moon. But business is business. Now, you drove all the way up here. You want to go home empty? Take the two-fifty.

HECKY (after a moment) You said three hundred.

SAM I'll see what I can do.

He pats Hecky on the shoulder.

SAM Break your rule—have a drink. You'll feel better.

He smiles and goes out. Howard pours a drink and holds it out to Hecky, who looks at it, then takes it and swallows it down.

INT. A SUPPER CLUB IN THE HOTEL – NIGHT

Guests seated at tables, eating and drinking, while Hecky performs on a stage. He is enormously gifted. His act is funny, outrageous, larger than life, with a ferocious energy informed now by a towering frustrated rage. He does jokes, imitations, pantomime. He also attacks the audience, insulting them in various languages, calling them names, venting his anger, trying to work off his humiliation. But there is no satisfaction, no release; the more he insults them, the more the audience loves him. They think it is all part of the act and they roar with laughter and call for more.

HOWARD
watching from the wings, holding a bottle of whiskey. Hecky finishes a number, comes off stage, takes a deep swig from the bottle and goes back on again.

HECKY
as he finishes his act. The audience bursts into an ovation. He bows to them, covered with sweat, smiling, blowing kisses, continuing to curse them in words they cannot hear through the applause.

INT. A BAR OF THE HOTEL – NIGHT

Howard is having a drink at the bar, watching Hecky drinking at a table nearby. He is surrounded by admirers and he is carrying on for them, goosing the girls, kissing them, talking dirty, signing autographs, as he keeps on drinking.

HOWARD AND A GIRL
Sitting near him at the bar, also watching Hecky, a different girl from the one in the lobby.

GIRL Isn't he fantastic? I could watch him every night. He's so hilarious! (eyeing Howard) You a guest here? (Howard nods) What do you do?

HOWARD (casually) I'm a dentist.

GIRL Professionally?

Howard nods again. She holds out her hand.

GIRL I'm Sandy.

HOWARD (taking it) Herman. Herman Miller.

GIRL You have your own practice?

HOWARD (nods) But I may have to take in a partner. It's getting too big for one man.

GIRL Are you by any chance... attached.

HOWARD Only to my work.

She moves closer.

HECKY
as Sam comes jovially up to his table, carrying a small envelope. He bends and kisses Hecky on the head.

SAM What can I say? I'm speechless. Words fail me! One of the great performances!

He has slipped the envelope into Hecky's pocket, but Hecky takes it out again while Sam is talking to the people around.

SAM You can tell your children... your grandchildren... you saw one of the all-time greats. Without peer!

Hecky has looked into the envelope and now looks up at Sam.

HECKY Two-fifty?

SAM I did what I could. Maybe next month—

HECKY You said three hundred.

SAM By popular demand—

HECKY Out of your own pocket!

He rises suddenly, drunk and out of control, grabbing Sam, jamming him against the wall. He starts going through Sam's pockets.

HECKY Show me your pockets! What's inside there, show me! What comes out of your pockets? Sympathy? Appreciation?

SAM Leave me go—

HECKY Blood comes out! You vonce, you nothing... promises!

He has turned Sam's pockets inside out, scattering change, cards, keys. People back away, frightened. Waiters run up to pull Hecky off.

HOWARD
hurries over from the bar.

HECKY
struggling with the waiters as they try to drag him off Sam.
The scene is bedlam, everyone yelling, fighting.

HECKY Liar!

SAM Get him out of here... out!

HECKY Lick my shoes!

SAM Drop dead!

HOWARD (coming up) Come on, Hecky—

Hecky pushes him away violently.

HOWARD It's Howard, your friend.

HECKY You're not my friend!

The waiters are dragging him out. Howard follows.

HECKY I'm Hecky Brown!

SAM (yelling after him) You'll crawl in the gutter! Red bastard! Commie son of a bitch!

INT. THE CAR – NIGHT

Howard driving, Hecky beside him, sunk in himself. Howard takes out the envelope and holds it out to Hecky.

HOWARD I found it on the floor.

Hecky does not do anything for a long moment. Then, accepting, he takes the envelope and puts it in his pocket.

EXT. AN APARTMENT HOUSE – NIGHT

The car drives up and stops.

INT. THE CAR – NIGHT

Howard turns to Hecky, who does not move.

HOWARD You're home, Hecky. (Hecky shakes his head) All you need is a little sleep.

Hecky keeps shaking his head.

HOWARD Money's money. Two-fifty is still two-fifty. It buys groceries.

Hecky continues shaking his head.

HOWARD You needed the money. Your wife will understand.

HECKY I can't. I can't.

INT. HOWARD'S LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

He and Hecky have just come in.

HOWARD You can sleep on the couch, it's very comfortable. (pressing down the cushions) See? Brand new.

Hecky sits. His manner is abstracted.

HOWARD You want some coffee?

HECKY It's all Brownstein's fault. I wouldn't be in trouble if it wasn't for Brownstein.

HOWARD Who?

HECKY Brownstein. Hershel Brownstein.

HOWARD Who's Hershel Brownstein?

HECKY You can't make a deal with Brownstein. That's the trouble. He won't listen to reason. You have to kill him.

HOWARD (understanding) Is that your real name— Brownstein?

HECKY If he would only leave me alone... I could do it then. But he won't play ball. To him, it's all black and white. Some things you do, some things you don't do. He thinks he's back on the streets.

He suddenly flings open the window and yells out into the night.

HECKY Brownstein, lay off! You hear me? Lay off or I'll kill you!

HOWARD People change their name, it's no crime.

HECKY (turning on him) What do you know? Who the hell are you, a newcomer?

HOWARD (gently) Why don't you sit down?

HECKY Why don't you shut up? You think you're so special? Talent is no protection. You do what they say or else.

HOWARD (trying to calm him down) Would you like some tea?

But Hecky is prowling the room examining it.

HECKY You've got a nice apartment, very nice.

HOWARD Thank you.

HECKY You've got nice things. Hi-fi. TV. Nice furniture. You like this apartment, I bet. You worked hard for it, you deserve it. You want to keep it right?

HOWARD Cocoa?

HECKY I asked you a question.

HOWARD Sure I want to keep it.

HECKY Then I suggest you answer the question. With sincerity, Mr. Prince. Sincerity is the key.

HOWARD Maybe you should call your wife. Let her know at least where you are.

HECKY Where did you go last week?

HOWARD Nowhere.

HECKY Nowhere is somewhere. From the heart, please, no credit unless it comes from the heart.

HOWARD (humoring him) Here and there. Around and about. What can I say?

But Hecky will not be humored. He advances on Howard, who moves back, not liking this now, but unable to escape.

HECKY Where did you go last year? The year before? Who did you see? Where did you march? What did you sign?

HOWARD Nothing.

HECKY That girl you go with, the one from the show, what's her name—

HOWARD Florence?

HECKY A troublemaker. I heard how she talked on the set. Subversive, a Red. You liked that girl?

HOWARD I like her.

HECKY What's her name.

HOWARD I told you.

HECKY (advancing) Her full name.

HOWARD (retreating) Florence Barrett.

HECKY You know she's a Red?

HOWARD Cut it out, Hecky. I don't like this game.

He trips over a piece of furniture, falls, gets up. Hecky still after him, remorseless, HENNESSEY now, the roles reversed.

HECKY The game? You call this a game? This is no game, Mr. Prince. We are up against a ruthless enemy who you might be helping, aiding and abetting or otherwise duped. You want to keep all this... your fame and fortune?

HOWARD (getting desperate) What do you want me to say?

HECKY In your own words!

HOWARD Sure I do. It's mine.

HECKY Who says?

Howard is getting angry and defensive, caught up despite himself, reacting to Hecky's attack.

HOWARD I paid for it.

HECKY You think that matters?

HOWARD This is my place. I didn't steal it. I didn't hurt anybody to get it.

HECKY Who cares?

HOWARD I care.

HECKY Who are you? You think you're somebody? You think because you paid, you're entitled? We'll blow you out like a match. Answer the question.

HOWARD What question?

HECKY The girl.

HOWARD I don't know.

HECKY You can find out. What does she say to you? At night, in bed, when she thinks she's safe... you're in love, two nice young people, she trusts you—

HOWARD (cracking) We broke up! I don't see her anymore! I don't know anything! Stop it!

There is a silence. Hecky just looks at him.

HOWARD (cont'd) (still upset) Stop it, that's all. Cut it out! I've had enough, Hecky. Lie down or go home.

HECKY (after a moment) He's got me by the throat. He'll never let go, that one. Squeezing, squeezing... I can't breathe. Double double, Brown's in trouble. No way out, they broke his bubble. You didn't know I was a poet. I read some place... a fox caught in a trap, he'll bite off his own leg to get out. A leg... that's easy. He won't settle for a leg. He won't compromise. He won't live and let live. But he won't die. (with total despair) Brownstein, you villain... I hate you so. Why won't you die?

He stands rocking back and forth in anguish. Howard goes to him and gently leads him back to the couch. Hecky lies down without protest and Howard takes off his shoes and fixes a pillow under his head. He goes into the bedroom and reappears with a blanket, which he puts over Hecky.

HOWARD Try to sleep. You'll feel better in the morning.

He turns off the lights and goes into the bedroom and closes the door. Hecky lies with his eyes open, staring into nothing.

INT. HOWARD'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Howard asleep, turning in his sleep, restless.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Hecky prowling around, examining books, pulling out drawers to check any mail.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUSSMAN'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

A party is in progress. Piano player, butler circulating with drinks.

HOWARD

the center of a rapt group as he holds forth.

HOWARD Actually, you could say modern American writing began with Huckleberry Finn. If that's what you want to say.

A YOUNG MAN What about Melville? Especially today... the sense of evil—

HOWARD How can you leave out Melville?

SUSSMAN

with a middle-aged couple.

WOMAN You must be so excited, the show going from a half-hour to an hour.

SUSSMAN I was expecting it. With those ratings... they're not fools upstairs. They know what they've got.

MAN Do you think you can get the same quality in an hour?

SUSSMAN (nods) One thing I've learned in this business... when you've got the talent, you've got the quality.

HOWARD AND SUSSMAN

as Tom Hampton, the network executive, comes up to them with a middle-aged man in tow.

HAMPTON Phil... Howard... want you to meet Hubert Jackson. Jackson Supermarkets, you know... out on the island?

JACKSON Congratulations, gentlemen.

HAMPTON Hubert's a great fan of your show.

JACKSON Never miss it.

HAMPTON But he's a little concerned about some of the actors you've been using.

SUSSMAN We go for the best, Mr. Jackson.

JACKSON Well, in my opinion, some of them are pretty pink, Mr. Sussman.

HOWARD That's the makeup.

HAMPTON (not amused) I told Hubert we're as concerned as he is. Not that they are, of course... the actors... we take every precaution.

SUSSMAN (agreeing) The slightest hint—

He makes a gesture of dismissal.

JACKSON Well, I know my customers. They think a company's sponsoring Reds... they just won't buy that brand.

HOWARD (curious) How do they know?

JACKSON I tell them. Put a sign right up above the product.

HAMPTON I thought you might send Hubert a list of actors you plan to use, Phil. Let him look them over... give you any ideas he has.

SUSSMAN Absolutely.

HAMPTON You'll get full cooperation from us, Hubert. Nothing to worry about. Thanks, boys.

He goes off with Jackson.

HOWARD How many stores has he got?

SUSSMAN Three... maybe four.

HOWARD He's only got three stores and he tells a whole network who to hire?

SUSSMAN Who wants trouble?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE BANK – DAY

Howard has made a deposit and now starts out. The CAMERA HOLDS on a PRIVATE DETECTIVE, watching him, who now starts out after him.

EXT. THE BANK – DAY

Howard exits, whistling, and starts down the street. The private detective comes out and follows him.

INT. RESTAURANT – DAY

The three writers at their regular table with Howard. He is handing out checks. His manner is lordly.

HOWARD Your check, Herb. Yours, Bill. Here you go. Yours didn't come yet, Allie, you were late with the script, remember? Got to watch that. (to Phelps)

And here's your script back. Needs a rewrite, I'm afraid.

He hands the script to Phelps.

PHELPS What didn't Sussman like?

HOWARD Didn't give it to him.

ALFRED What do you mean, you didn't give it to him?

HOWARD Wasn't ready. (patiently) Allie, you don't expect me to hand in just anything. I've got a reputation. My name's going on that script.

ALFRED (dangerously) Howard—

PHELPS (heading him off) I'll try to write up to your standards, Howard.

HOWARD You sure going to an hour isn't too much pressure? The stories seem a little thin lately. The key is "substance." I've been reading the Eugene O'Neill plays... I'd like something more along those lines—

ALFRED Only with more laughs.

HOWARD But gutsy. Also, I made a deal for a new series.

ALFRED We got our hands full with this one.

HOWARD You'll just have to get more writers. Right now, what I need is the pilot script.

DELANY How about Eugene O'Neill?

HOWARD He's dead, Herb.

PHELPS What's the subject?

HOWARD Woman reporter. Great idea, isn't it? Got the perfect actress for the lead. With her and a Howard Prince script—

PHELPS We'll look around for somebody.

HOWARD But good, Bill... remember that. Blacklisted isn't enough.

Alfred has to be restrained from killing him on the spot. The waiter appears with their orders and starts dishing them out.

WAITER Scrambled eggs, loose. Whitefish. Eggplant roast. Soybean casserole. Eat in good health.

He leaves. The CAMERA PANS to a table near the front. The private detective who has followed Howard sits there alone, watching.

INT. A BOOKSTORE – DAY

Howard comes in and marches up to Florence, who is working there.

HOWARD Listen, this is ridiculous. I call you up, you don't even want to talk. Okay, a week, two weeks, that's normal. We had a little argument—

FLORENCE We didn't have a little argument.

HOWARD We had a big argument. Does that mean forever?

FLORENCE We don't think alike, Howard. We don't believe in the same things.

HOWARD You think I like the blacklist? I hate the blacklist. Didn't I send you money for your pamphlet?

The private detective has come in after Howard and hovers unobtrusively near them, taking all this in.

FLORENCE Giving money is easy.

HOWARD Florence, believe me, I didn't come here to argue, but some things you don't know very much about. Giving money is not easy.

She moves away to arrange some books and he follows.

HOWARD And I'll tell you something else if you'll listen. What's easy for you is not so easy for everybody else. You want to be Joan of Arc, okay, that's you. You see what's terrible, you go looking for a gun.

FLORENCE I don't believe in violence.

HOWARD All right, a pamphlet. I go looking for where I won't get killed. Is that a difference we got to break up about?

FLORENCE Maybe it is.

HOWARD You want to stay broken up?

There is a pause; she really doesn't.

FLORENCE You think I want you to lose everything? You think I'm intolerant and demanding and maybe I am. But that's me, Howard. I can't be with a man just because I admire his work. Or like going to bed with him. I need more than that.

HOWARD Then you got to give me time. I never met a girl like you before. You're a whole new experience. But I'm trying. You got to take that into consideration. I even tried to get tickets for the Paul Robeson concert.

FLORENCE You did?

HOWARD But it's the same night as the basketball game. Would you go with me?

FLORENCE I have tickets for the concert.

HOWARD I'll tell you what. I'll give up my tickets if you give up yours. We'll start again even. (as she hesitates) I miss you, Florence.

FLORENCE I miss you, too.

HOWARD You know how much. I even have trouble writing. (she shakes her head at this) We got a date?

She nods. He leans forward. They kiss gently. The private detective watches from the background.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUSSMAN'S OFFICE – DAY

The CAMERA PANNING from Sussman to a surprised Howard.

HOWARD A subpoena? For me?

SUSSMAN (nods) To appear before the House Un-American Committee.

HOWARD When? How do you know?

SUSSMAN They found out upstairs. It hasn't been issued yet, but any minute.

HOWARD But I'm not a Communist.

SUSSMAN So you go and tell them that.

HOWARD I tell you, isn't that enough?

SUSSMAN Howard, you've got to go. I don't like it anymore than you do. But you don't do it, you don't work.

Howard paces the room, thinking, trying to find a way out.

SUSSMAN Why don't they all just go away and let us do the show? Who needs this?

HOWARD You know, Phil, I never believed what Florence said about you.

SUSSMAN Crazy broad...

HOWARD I saw how it was for you to fire Hecky.

SUSSMAN I had a migraine for a week.

HOWARD It just takes one guy to say no to them. Just one.

SUSSMAN What can I do, Howard?

HOWARD (simply) You can be that guy.

Sussman shakes his head, reason prevailing.

HOWARD (cont'd) I'm serious. If one person says no. Especially a guy like you. You're respected... you're a big name. Tell them no. Who the hell are they? (Sussman wavers) Come on, Phil. Take a stand. The real you.

Sussman swallows hard; the image is impressive. There is a pause. Then, decisively, he goes to his desk and picks up the phone.

SUSSMAN (on the phone) Get me Hampton.

He waits, a picture of militancy. When he speaks, his voice is tough.

SUSSMAN (cont'd) (on the phone) Tom? Phil.

There is no reason Howard Prince has to go to that Committee... That's right. It's our network, who the hell are they giving us orders?... No, you listen to me. He doesn't have to go. What are we, sheep? We make a stand. Tell them get off his back. Stop threatening. Piss off or they're in trouble. We fight, Tom. We show them there's some people they can't scare. We tell them flat out—Howard Prince doesn't go!

He stops as Hampton begins to talk on the other end. Howard has been nodding, pleased with Sussman. Now Sussman listens, his mood still militant. He listens, nodding every once in a while, listens some more, then finally hangs up the phone and turns to Howard.

SUSSMAN Well, you got to go.

INT. A LAWYER'S OFFICE – DAY

Howard is there with a LAWYER, HENNESSEY and the private detective. The lawyer is taking Howard through what will be his testimony.

LAWYER Howard, you've got nothing to worry about, nothing to worry about at all. We've dealt with the Committee before and they're really very understanding. They understand our problems, and we understand theirs.

HOWARD And what about my problems?

LAWYER You're cooperating, that's all they care about. Now, this friend of yours, Alfred Miller.

HOWARD We went to school together.

LAWYER You had no idea he was a Communist.

HOWARD He was only twelve.

LAWYER You have no idea now.

HOWARD We don't talk about politics.

LAWYER And the other two men—(consulting a pad)
Delany and Phelps.

HOWARD Friends of Allie's.

LAWYER And the girl, Florence Barrett.

HOWARD That's just sex.

HENNESSEY Is that why you gave money to her pro-
Communist publication?

HOWARD She wanted to start a magazine. I was
dating her. Who knew what kind?

HENNESSEY That's hardly credible, Mr. Prince.

LAWYER (smoothly) Now, Mr. HENNESSEY, you and
your staff have done a splendid job—the network
appreciates your efforts—but Mr. Prince is being
entirely cooperative. I think I can handle the legal
end. Thank you for coming.

HENNESSEY nods and goes to the door.

HENNESSEY Good luck, Mr. Prince.

HENNESSEY and the private detective leave.

LAWYER Don't mind him, he's only doing his job.

HOWARD I still don't see why we can't fix it, pay
somebody off. How much could it cost, they're just
congressmen?

LAWYER It won't be necessary. They've agreed to an
executive session... no reporters, no publicity... you
won't even have to go to Washington, they'll send a
subcommittee here. We'll write you a strong anti-
Communist statement to go with your testimony.
You'll be out of there in no time at all. Take my word
for it. All they want is a friendly witness.

HOWARD Okay, so I'll be a friendly witness.

The lawyer smiles benignly at Howard.

INT. A HOSPITAL CORRIDOR – DAY

Howard walking down until he finds the room he wants. He
goes inside.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM – DAY

Alfred is lying in bed. An I.V. setup drips into his arm. Howard
comes in, cheerful. Alfred is pale, but composed. Delany and
Phelps are also there.

ALFRED Hi, Howard.

HOWARD Gee, you gotta lay off health foods. Why
don't they operate? Get rid of that ulcer already?

ALFRED Then how will I know when I'm angry?

HOWARD Nobody knows how to relax anymore. You
gotta ride with the punches.

ALFRED What about the subpoena?

HOWARD Nothing, it's fine. Relax.

ALFRED They write the statement for you?

HOWARD (nods) I'd let you read it only you'd start
bleeding again. Allie, don't worry. Take care of
yourself. Worry about who'll write the scripts while
you're in here.

DELANY We've got a very good writer. You won't be
ashamed.

HOWARD Blacklisted?

DELANY Impeccably. Named by his own brother-in-
law.

Howard nods, impressed. A nurse enters with a glass of milk,
which she hands to Alfred. She looks disapprovingly at Howard.

NURSE Visiting hours are over.

HOWARD I'm Dr. Prince. (at her dubious look)
Consultation. (she looks at the others) My associates.

NURSE Uh-huh.

But she goes out, letting them stay. Alfred takes a sip of milk,
then puts the glass down.

ALFRED Howard... why do you think they want you to
testify?

HOWARD (lightly) I'm a feather in their cap. Howard
Prince. I'm a big writer.

ALFRED Why do they want you to give names? They
already have our names. Why do they need you to tell
them again?

HOWARD All right, so it makes them look good. So
what?

ALFRED They don't care about names. They care
about getting people to give names. They want to
show there's nothing they can't get people to do.

HOWARD I don't cooperate, you don't work. Nobody
works. Is that what you guys want?

PHELPS I think we're laying too much on him, Al.
Why should he take the rap?

ALFRED I want him to know what he's doing.

HOWARD I'm helping.

ALFRED You're helping them.

HOWARD I'm using them. I'm smarter than they are.

ALFRED Howard, the time for bullshit is over.

HOWARD Who does it hurt if I'm friendly?

His voice rises; he doesn't like the way the conversation is going.

HOWARD (cont'd) Where is the personal crime? I tell them you're my friend... from public school. Am I hurting you more? They already got your name, you said so yourself.

PHELPS He's right. They can't do anymore to us. Why can't he just cooperate?

DELANY Tell them the truth?

PHELPS He won't have to. The network's made a deal. He says the Committee's great, they leave him alone.

HOWARD (nods) Everyone gets what he wants. Isn't that what it's all about? Allie, don't make a big thing. They only want the publicity.

ALFRED They want Howard Prince. As an example. To scare people... shut them up.

DELANY I think he should take the Fifth.

PHELPS They'll blacklist him, he takes the Fifth.

HOWARD What's the Fifth?

PHELPS The Fifth Amendment. Your right not to incriminate yourself.

HOWARD Why should I take anything? It's all fixed.

Alfred throws up his hands. Delany is patient.

DELANY They might ask you some questions you don't want to answer. But if you already answered one... like did you know Alfred... you don't have the right anymore. Then you don't answer, they can cite you for contempt.

HOWARD But I'm going to answer.

ALFRED Schmuck!

PHELPS I think he should. What the hell can he tell them?

DELANY I don't trust the Committee or the network. (to Howard) Take the Fifth.

HOWARD I don't want to take the Fifth.

ALFRED You can't cooperate.

HOWARD Don't be a loser all your life.

ALFRED Stop looking for an out!

The door opens and the nurse sticks her head in, alarmed. Howard quickly hands Alfred his glass of milk.

HOWARD (soothingly) You mustn't aggravate yourself. Drink your milk.

The nurse withdraws dubiously.

ALFRED (after a moment) You did a big favor, Howard... for all of us. I don't have to tell you that.

HOWARD Who's asking?

ALFRED You saved our ass, don't you think I know that? You did what a friend does.

HOWARD I cooperate, your ass is still saved.

ALFRED You can't be on their side.

HOWARD Fine, I don't cooperate. I tell them they can shove it, right? Then you don't work, right?

ALFRED I'll worry about that.

HOWARD And where do I go? Back to the cash register. Right? I don't believe this. You can't use your name, and you're laying here bleeding and you're telling me.

PHELPS Al, we can't ask him to do what he doesn't believe in.

DELANY (to Howard) Protect yourself. Take the Fifth.

ALFRED You always think there's a middle you can dance around in. I'm telling you, there's no middle here. And you can't lay this off on us. Whatever you do; you're doing it for yourself.

INT. HOWARD'S LIVING ROOM – DAY

There is a very loud knocking on his door. Howard throws open the door and Hecky sweeps past him into the room. It is the old Hecky: manic, exuberant, funny.

HECKY Nobody move—this is a raid. Everybody out!

He starts opening closets, drawers, goes into the bedroom, comes out again. Howard is at first startled and then relieved.

HECKY We understand you have a woman in your room. If not, why not? Have you got one for me? Have we met before?

HOWARD You scared me.

HECKY (the joke over) I was in the neighborhood and suddenly everything went black. I'm disturbing you.

HOWARD Absolutely not.

HECKY You really want to know, I came to apologize for that terrible night. I wasn't myself.

HOWARD Listen, you had a right.

HECKY Two rights don't make a wrong. I gave you a very hard time. I'm sorry.

HOWARD Have a drink.

HECKY (shocked) Before the sun is over the yardarm? A small Scotch.

Howard goes to pour the drink.

HOWARD How are things going?

HECKY (cheerfully) Not bad. Club dates... out of town, but not bad. Scranton, Allentown... I'm very big in Pennsylvania. My wife found a job, the kids eat... we all got our health.

Howard brings him the drink and he raises it in a toast.

HECKY To a prince of a Prince. (tosses it down) I never learned to sip a drink. When I was little... every night before supper, my father would pour one shot-glass full of whiskey, say a prayer and down it all went. I thought that was the way you drank. How's it going with you?

HOWARD Fine.

HECKY I hear terrific. It's nice when nice happens to nice. It don't happen too often. You're sure I'm not being a nuisance?

HOWARD Positive.

HECKY You know Johnny Parker... the actor? (Howard shakes his head) Blacklisted... couldn't get arrested. Wife, three kids, you can imagine. Drove a cab for a while. Finally, he gave it all up. He came from someplace out west... Oklahoma, Texas, out there someplace. Owned a little farm his father left him. Miserable... he showed me pictures. You could go crazy there. But at least he could grow his own food, so he went back. We gave him a party... everybody cried. Six months later, right in the middle of his miserable property... they struck oil.

HOWARD You're kidding.

HECKY Honest to God. Oil (starting to laugh) He's a millionaire!

They both laugh.

HECKY (cont'd) So you see, every cloud has a silver lining.

HOWARD Have another drink.

HECKY No really... I came, I apologized, it's time to go.

HOWARD Why don't we have dinner sometime?

HECKY I'd like that very much.

HOWARD Tonight?

HECKY Tonight, I'm busy.

HOWARD I'll give you a call.

HECKY Don't call us, we'll call you. (smiling) If I had a dollar for every time that was said to me... when I was first getting started, of course. Later on, I don't have to tell you... the shoe was on the other foot.

HOWARD I really will call.

HECKY I know you will... I was making a joke. You don't mind I came without phoning.

HOWARD Of course not.

HECKY Some people mind. You're a good person.

HOWARD I'll call you tomorrow.

HECKY Take care of yourself. The water is full of sharks.

He waves to Howard and goes out. Howard smiles after him.

INT. A HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

Dark, as the door opens and a bellhop puts on the light and precedes Hecky into the room. He takes the key from the door and hands it to Hecky, who gives him a very generous tip. The bellhop thanks him and leaves. Hecky takes off his jacket and hangs it up. His manner is jaunty. There is a knock on the door and he sweeps it open. Another bellhop enters with a tray on which is a bottle of champagne in an ice bucket. Hecky pays for this and also tips this man munificently. The bellhop leaves. Hecky opens the champagne, reacting with surprised pleasure at the loud pop of the cork, and grandly pours himself a glass. He toasts himself in a mirror, bows to his reflection and sips the champagne. It pleases him. He sips again, then goes to the bed and tests the mattress. That pleases him. He sits and drains his glass. He gets up and pours himself another, toasting himself again

in the mirror. Then he puts the glass down, takes several vials of pills from his pockets and empties the pills onto a night table. He looks at them and arranges them neatly in a row. Then he starts taking them, one after the other, washing them down with champagne, having to refill his glass in order to swallow them all. Finished, he lies down on the bed. After a moment, he gets up and pours himself the rest of the champagne. He returns to the bed and lies down again. After another moment, he sits up and takes off his shoes, not wanting to dirty the bedspread. He lies down again, looking up at the ceiling, eyes open. Then he turns on his side. He draws his legs up. His eyes start to close, open, close again. All his problems begin slowly to slip away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A FUNERAL PARLOR – DAY

The hearse and a few limousines parked outside. People entering the chapel.

HOWARD
watching from across the street, half-hidden and indecisive.

HIS POV – THE CHAPEL

Florence is among the people going in. Then the CAMERA PANS to show the private detective who had been following Howard. He stands to one side, taking pictures of the people entering.

HOWARD
turns and walks off hurriedly.

INT. FLORENCE'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Florence in bed, reading. The doorbell rings. She gets out of bed and opens the door. Howard comes in, clearly upset. She hugs him.

FLORENCE Where have you been? I was so worried about you. I called and there was no answer.

Howard sits down on the couch.

HOWARD I was just walking around...

FLORENCE Are you all right?

HOWARD I've been thinking about a lot of stuff.

FLORENCE I saved your dinner, I kept it warm for you. Do you want a drink?

HOWARD Yes, but just a drink.

She fixes him a drink.

HOWARD (cont'd) I saw you at the funeral today.

FLORENCE You did? I didn't see you.

HOWARD I couldn't handle it.

FLORENCE I couldn't handle it, either. You're lucky

you're a writer and not an actor. At least with a writer, if he gets blacklisted, he can always still write. An actor... what's he going to do if he can't show his face?

HOWARD How would you feel if I wasn't a writer?

FLORENCE (indulgently) I know you. Whatever else you may have to do to survive... you'll find time to write.

HOWARD Suppose I tell you... I'm not a writer.

FLORENCE I know you as a writer. I love you as a writer.

HOWARD I'm not a writer.

FLORENCE Howard, don't be defeatist.

HOWARD Other people wrote the scripts, not me. I was only a front. They were blacklisted, I helped them out. My name, but their scripts.

FLORENCE That's a very bizarre statement.

HOWARD I am not a writer. I am a front. I front for blacklisted writers.

She looks at him, trying to digest him.

FLORENCE You're not a writer?

HOWARD I can't write a grocery list.

FLORENCE You never wrote any of the scripts?

HOWARD None. Not one of them. I'm practically illiterate.

FLORENCE You never wrote anything?

HOWARD Don't get shell-shocked. I'm not confessing to a murder. Jesus, look at you... you got no color. I'll get you a drink.

FLORENCE I don't want a drink.

HOWARD Put your head between your legs.

FLORENCE You let me think—

HOWARD How could I tell you the truth? I was like a spy.

FLORENCE Did you want to?

HOWARD Of course I wanted to. You think I liked lying to you? Lying is not my nature.

FLORENCE I don't believe this is happening.

HOWARD Florence, I have to testify. Keep your mind on that.

FLORENCE It's like you're a complete stranger.

HOWARD So we got off on the wrong foot.

FLORENCE The wrong foot?

HOWARD I was sworn to secrecy. But we're both on the same side, isn't that important?

FLORENCE Didn't you trust me?

HOWARD I wasn't allowed.

FLORENCE Did you think I'd lose interest in you?

HOWARD You were in love with a writer. You weren't interested in me.

FLORENCE Interested in you? I don't even know you.

HOWARD I shouldn't have said anything. Now you're hysterical.

FLORENCE Nobody's hysterical. When were you going to mention it? When we were ninety?

HOWARD I mentioned it tonight.

FLORENCE Because you're in trouble!

HOWARD For a good reason! Who was I spying for—Hitler? I was helping blacklisted writers. Think of that for a minute.

FLORENCE You lied to me. What are you, really—a druggist?

HOWARD You want to know what I was? I ran a cash register.

FLORENCE (stunned) You were a cashier?

HOWARD That's exactly what I mean, unless it's a writer or artist... catch you in bed with a cashier—

FLORENCE That's not fair.

HOWARD You wouldn't have looked twice at me.

FLORENCE It's not what someone does, it's who he is.

HOWARD You don't even know who I am.

FLORENCE Did you ever give me the chance?

HOWARD I'm giving you right now!

FLORENCE All right, who are you?

There is a long pause.

HOWARD What?

FLORENCE I still don't know who you are. All I know is who you're not. Who is Howard Prince?

Howard softens.

HOWARD It's not easy being in love with you. What you're looking for all the time is a knight on a horse or something—which is not Howard Prince. You know who Howard Prince is? I'll tell you. Howard Prince is his own man.

FLORENCE What does that mean?

HOWARD I think you're going to find out when I come back from the Committee tomorrow.

FLORENCE (concerned) What am I going to find out? You said it was all fixed.

HOWARD I've been thinking about it... everyone's telling me what to do but I don't see why I have to.

FLORENCE What are you going to do?

HOWARD I worked something out.

FLORENCE Are you going to tell them that you're not a writer?

HOWARD I'm going to tell them exactly what I want to tell them.

She takes his hand, moved.

FLORENCE Howard, that Committee's dangerous, they're out for blood. You can't fool around.

HOWARD Take my word for it, all of these people... Allie and Sussman... they're wrong because I can beat that Committee and I can beat them my own way.

FLORENCE How?

HOWARD What's the difference? I'm not going to wind up back at that cash register, and I'm not going to do anything that makes you ashamed of me. Trust me.

He smiles at her. She smiles back, but still worried. They kiss.

INT. A HEARING ROOM – DAY

Three CONGRESSMEN at a long table facing another table at which Howard sits, flanked by the network lawyer. The COMMITTEE COUNSEL is at a third table. The lawyer is reading a statement.

LAWYER ...and we would like to thank this Committee for allowing Mr. Prince to appear and voice his

approval of the great work you are doing for our country. Communist subversion is a real and present danger and you can rest assured that it will never be tolerated on the network both Mr. Prince and I have the honor to represent. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN Thank you, sir. This Committee is here to help keep America just as pure as we can possibly make it.

LAWYER, I can't think of anything more important and I wish to commend this Committee on the job they are doing.

CHAIRMAN Thank you.

LAWYER Thank you.

The chairman motions to the Committee counsel.

CHAIRMAN Counsel...

The counsel leans forward and addresses Howard.

COUNSEL Just a few questions, Mr. Prince, we know you're a busy man. Mr. Prince, do you happen to know an Alfred Miller?

HOWARD Who?

COUNSEL Alfred Miller.

HOWARD Why?

COUNSEL If you'd just tell the Committee—

HOWARD Can't I know why?

CHAIRMAN No need to worry, Mr. Prince. Anyone who comes here and tells the truth, has got nothing to worry about.

HOWARD Which Alfred Miller?

COUNSEL Do you know Alfred Miller, the writer?

HOWARD When you say "know," can you ever really know a person... I grew up with an Alfred Miller but would you say do I know him... in a biblical sense... am I right?

COUNSEL Would that be the Alfred Miller you met with several times at Hammer's Dairy Restaurant?

HOWARD Who says I did?

COUNSEL Is it or is it not true?

HOWARD I asked you first.

COUNSEL Is it true?

HOWARD Is anyone accusing me of anything?

COUNSEL If you would answer the question—

HOWARD Which question? You ask one question, then you go right on to another question.

COUNSEL Do you know Alfred Miller?

HOWARD You already asked that question.

The lawyer leans over and whispers to Howard.

LAWYER Howard, what are you doing?

HOWARD Relax, I'm handling it.

LAWYER You're under oath. You have to answer or they'll hold you in contempt.

HOWARD I am answering, I'm just not replying.

LAWYER Don't split hairs.

HOWARD They can only get me if I refuse to answer. But if I answer without replying—

LAWYER You're getting them mad.

HOWARD So what can they do? Throw me out, right?

He turns back to the Committee, sure of himself.

COUNSEL Do you know Alfred Miller?

HOWARD Do you know that every week busloads of Communists are crossing our borders? What are you doing about that?

CHAIRMAN We are not concerned at this time with anything other than the Communist conspiracy in the entertainment world.

HOWARD Why aren't we? How can you justify such indifference? We should be arming to the teeth. Every young man should know how to use a gun. Why is military school only someplace to send you when you're bad?

CHAIRMAN Mr. Prince, this Committee is just as concerned about the threat of Communism as you are.

COUNSEL All right, Mr. Prince... if your memory is unclear about Alfred Miller... do you know any of these people? (reading) William Phelps. Herbert Delany. Florence Barrett. Herschel Brownstein... also known as Hecky Brown.

HOWARD He's dead.

COUNSEL Did you know him?

Howard does not answer.

COUNSEL Mr. Prince... you came here to cooperate, did you not?

CHAIRMAN Will you excuse us for a moment, Mr. Prince?

He motions for the Counsel to come talk to him.

CHAIRMAN (whispering to the Counsel) I thought we had an arrangement.

COUNSEL With the network, I think he's doing this by himself.

CONGRESSMAN Why don't we just hit him with contempt?

OTHER CONGRESSMAN He's not giving us any grounds for contempt.

CHAIRMAN We can't just let him get away with this, he hasn't even taken an amendment. There's got to be something that you can just nail him on.

The Counsel nods and sits back down. He selects another piece of paper and consults it.

COUNSEL Let me ask you another question. Do you know a Patrick Callahan?

HOWARD Who?

COUNSEL Bartender at the Friendly Tavern... where, I believe, you once worked as the night cashier.

HOWARD I did?

COUNSEL Do you know Daniel LaGattuta?

HOWARD Doesn't he sell fruit?

COUNSEL You placed bets for Mr. Callahan and Mr. LaGattuta, did you not?

HOWARD Well, in a strictly friendly way...

COUNSEL I remind you that placing bets is a crime.

LAWYER (whispering) Howard, is this true? (Howard says nothing) You were a bookmaker?

HOWARD Not professionally.

LAWYER My God. (to the Chairman) Mr. Chairman, may I have a word with you please?

He gets up and goes over to the Chairman. Howard watches.

The lawyer comes back.

LAWYER They're willing to make a deal.

HOWARD (after a moment) Give them names.

LAWYER They're being very reasonable. You don't have to give more than one.

HOWARD Which one?

LAWYER That's up to you. (persuasively) They've got you over a barrel. You want to go to jail? What's one name? If it bothers you, give them Hecky Brown.

HOWARD Hecky?

LAWYER He's dead, anyway. What difference does it make. A token is all they want, something to show your cooperation...

CHAIRMAN Is the witness ready to proceed?

LAWYER Ready, Mr. Chairman.

COUNSEL Mr. Prince, I ask you for the record... did you know Hershel Brownstein?

Howard does not answer.

LAWYER (whispering) Howard, you'll go to jail.

COUNSEL Also known as Hecky Brown.

LAWYER Be practical.

COUNSEL Did you know this man as either Brown or Brownstein?

CHAIRMAN Either name will do, Mr. Prince.

LAWYER Tell them.

COUNSEL Brown or Brownstein.

CHAIRMAN Just the name.

COUNSEL Are you refusing to answer?

LAWYER Talk!

Howard stands and starts walking towards the door.

HOWARD I don't recognize the right of this Committee to ask these kinds of questions and furthermore, you can all go fuck yourselves.

There is a commotion in the room.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. A RAILROAD STATION – NIGHT

Howard and Florence are kissing. Her arms go around him. His arms come INTO the FRAME to embrace her. There is a handcuff around one of his wrists. The ANGLE WIDENS to show the handcuff attached to another handcuff worn by a FEDERAL MARSHAL. He moves obligingly closer as they do.

Howard turns away with the marshal. The ANGLE has WIDENED further to show a small crowd that has come to see Howard off to jail. A few carry signs attacking the Committee. One says "Free Howard Prince!" Howard waves at the well-wishers and walks towards the train.

Alfred is there along with Phelps and Delany. Howard stops and shakes hands with Phelps and Delany, then embraces Alfred. Everyone is waving, blessing, encouraging, sloganizing and calling goodbyes.

HOWARD
waving back, fearless and indomitable, as he goes into the train.

FADE OUT.

THE END











The Back Page

DONALD E. WESTLAKE REMEMBERED
BY LAWRENCE BLOCK

WHEN THE PHONE CALL CAME and brought the bad news, one of the first things that came to mind was John O'Hara's line: "George Gershwin died yesterday, but I don't have to believe that if I don't want to."

I certainly don't want to believe my old friend Don is gone. He's been a part of my life for 50 years. We met in the waiting room at the Scott Meredith agency—we had both worked there, though not at the same time, and we'd both managed the transition from employee to client—and now we introduced ourselves and walked out of there and into a friendship. By then we had already sold our first dreadful books to the same dreadful publisher, and published our first weary stories in the same dreary magazines. We had a lot to talk about, and that never changed.

What a wonderful writer he was. He fell into crime fiction, that's how most of us got there back in the day, but I swear I think he could have written anything. In 1963, he sent me the manuscript of a novel he'd just completed. The title was *Memory*, and it was a dark and gripping novel about a man suffering from amnesia: He was at once attempting to build a new life for himself and find out who he was and where he'd come from. And it was a fool's errand indeed, because he kept losing memories of his new life as he went along.

I don't remember the details—I read it just once, and 45 years ago—but (barring that build-up of amyloid plaques we all dread) I'll never forget the book's impact. It was a powerful existentialist novel, let me tell you, and the reason you haven't read it—the reason nobody's teaching it right now in college courses—is that it never got published. Here was a long, dark novel by a young writer no one had ever heard of represented by an agent with little clout in the world of serious literature.

Years later Don's agent told him the world had changed and he could now probably find a publisher for *Memory*. And Don read it over and decided it was a creature of its time, and that its time had come and gone. I never agreed with the decision, but it was his to make, and he made it. Maybe someone will dig it out and publish it now. I don't think he'd mind. And I'd like the chance to read it again.

I suspect his career would have been different if *Memory* had been published back when it was written. Some years later Don wrote three or four stories about young people in relationships and they made the rounds of the magazines, and they all came back. So he stopped, not because he didn't want to write the stories, but because he didn't get any more ideas. If *Memory* had succeeded, his unconscious would have supplied him with more ideas in a similar vein. When it didn't, other things came to him instead.

One thing that came to him with the years was writing for the screen. The Oscar-nominated *The Grifters* was the highlight of his screenwriting career, but it was but one of many fine scripts of his—including all too many that, in the nature of the business, never got off the shelf.

Novelists often turn themselves into screenwriters, but when the metamorphosis is successful our books often suffer for it. This never happened to Don. Like our mutual friend Evan Hunter, he managed to work seriously and successfully and with great enthusiasm in both areas.

And here's the thing: He sat down to write every day, and for over half a century he never wrote a clumsy sentence or a dull paragraph or a tedious book. It is surely not the only test of a book's

merits that you can read it with enjoyment more than once, but it is a very real test, and Don's books always passed it. Every couple of years I read the whole Parker series all the way through, and I suspect I'll go on doing this.

And I'll miss the man who wrote them. He was a very dear friend. His company, off the page as well as on it, was always a joy.

Seventy years have passed since O'Hara wrote those words about Gershwin, elevating denial to the level of a public virtue. O'Hara has been gone himself since 1970. Yet the line endures—and so do *Porgy & Bess* and “Rhapsody in Blue,” and *Appointment in Samarra* and *From the Terrace*. And so will the Parker books and the Dortmunder books, and *The Ax* and *Dancing Aztecs* and *Adios*, *Scheherezade* and *Baby, Would I Lie?* and... oh, you get the idea. Make your own list.

Donald Westlake died New Year's Eve, and I have to believe it, whether I want to or not. But I don't have to like it. ☹️

