

THE CLUB

Written by

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A Unique Detective Thriller

WGAw# 1284033

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FADE IN:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. An alarm clock ticks away, as a car drives by outside.

It's headlights swipe across a man's desperate looking face, THURMOND QUIGLEY, elegant, balding, in his late 60s.

He's staring nervously out the window.

EXT. DESERT PALMS, NEVADA - NIGHT

THURMOND QUIGLEY'S POV:

Down the street, TOWNSPEOPLE holding torches and CHANTING, parade toward the hotel. A light snow is falling, making the town of neatly decorated shops and houses, Christmas card perfect.

The lone traffic light cycles from red to green. It sways in a light wind.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Thurmond Quigley watches the COURTHOUSE CLOCK chime midnight. Suddenly, the steps CREAK, then there is a soft KNOCK at the door.

POLITE VOICE

(other side of door)

Mr. Quigley. It's time...

The door opens and a hand, holding a .38 caliber pistol, comes into frame.

Quigley SIGHS, takes the revolver, walks to the window. He sights it down at the Townspeople who are CLAPPING their hands in a rhythmic BEAT. He slowly lifts the gun to his head.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The Camera focuses on the room.

BANG!!! The SHOT is deafening.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. SANTA'S VILLAGE - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

SUPER: 'ONE YEAR LATER'

MUSIC: "IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS..."

A large house, several small ones. Mechanical reindeer happily move back and forth.

EXT. SANTA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A candy cane cottage. A sign hangs over the door: "SANTA'S HOUSE". An ELF lies below it, face down in a pool of blood. MRS. CLAUS and TWO OTHER ELVES stand to one side, overwhelmed by the horror of it all.

SANTA CLAUS is being handcuffed, read his rights next to a LAPD car with FLASHING LIGHTS.

CRIME LAB PERSONNEL are all over the place and SPECTATORS have gathered behind a police barricade.

HARRY GILES late 30s, handsome, ducks under the barricade, strolls over to LIEUTENANT JOHNS. The police seem to know Giles as he enters barricade.

GILES

Hey, Frank.

JOHNS

Hell of a thing, Harry. I guess Santa had a bad day.

GILES

Not as bad as the elf.

They watch as Santa is placed in the police car.

JOHNS

Which one you working for?

No reply.

JOHNS (CONT'D)

...Unless you just came to tell the fat man what you wanted for Christmas.

He looks at Giles, challenging him to lie.

GILES

Santa hired me. The elf was banging his wife.

John looks at him.

JOHNS

The elf was banging Mrs. Claus?

GILES

Not Mrs. Claus. The guy's real wife.

Lieutenant Johns shakes his head in disbelief. Giles pats him on the shoulder, starts to leave.

GILES

Love to stay and untangle it for you, but I have to catch a plane.

JOHNS

Where're you going?

GILES

Vegas.

JOHNS

I thought you quit gambling.

GILES

(confident)

It's only gambling if you lose.

Giles ducks under the barricade, then remembers something, turns back.

GILES (CONT'D)

When you talk to Santa, remind him he still owes me a grand.

JOHNS

He's not going to pay you. He needs an attorney now, not a private investigator.

GILES

Oh, Santa'll pay...

(holds up an envelope)

Because this is going to help him beat the rap.

Lt. Johns reaches for the envelope, but Giles pulls it back.

GILES (CONT'D)

Privileged information.

JOHNS

Not if it's going to help him!

Johns snatches it, rips it open.

JOHN

It's empty.

GILES

I know, but it's going to cost Santa a thousand dollars to find that out.

JOHNS
 (grins)
 You are a devious sonavabitch.

Giles laughs, leaves.

GILES
 So long, Frank. It's going to be
 a great Christmas.

EXT. MC CLELLAN AIRPORT LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

A Southwest Airline 737 lands on the tarmac.

EXT./INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - NIGHT

ROULETTE TABLE
 Giles is struggling, throws \$500 in
 chips on Black.

GILES
 Let it fly.

Red comes up. Giles shrugs, doubles his bet to \$1000 on
 Black.

GILES(CONT'D)
 Again...

The CROUPIER smiles and lets the wheel roll. Red.

CROUPIER
 One more time, Harry?

GILES
 Not tonight, Lou.

Giles smiles his All-American smile, moves to the Blackjack
 Table, seemingly without a care in the world.

BLACKJACK TABLE: Giles puts down \$2000 in chips. The DEALER
 throws him a card down, King up. The DEALER shows a Seven.
 Giles looks at his down card- a Two. The Dealer looks at his
 cards. Giles motions for another card- Ten. Busted! He throws
 his cards over, shrugs.

GILES (CONT'D)
 Damn... Again... Come on, man.

Giles puts down the rest of his chips. The Dealer deals him
 a card down, a Five up. The Dealer shows a Nine. Giles
 checks his down card-- a Seven. He nods, is given another
 Seven. Giles breathes easily, until the Dealer turns his
 bottom card over revealing an Ace.

DEALER
Pay twenty-one.

The Dealer smiles, rakes in Giles' chips.

DEALER
Having a bad run, Mr. Giles?

GILES
It'll change, Lenny. You know me.

Giles gets up, walks elegantly toward the exit. He stops briefly, wipes the sheen of nervous sweat from his forehead, then exits.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - MORNING

The sun is shining. The sky is clear. It's a perfect winter day.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

A funky looking 2-story modern structure. The sign in front reads: "Harry Giles & Associates - Discreet Investigations."

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

SUSAN handles the switchboard as Christmas music plays in the background -- LINDA MORRIS the beautiful office manager in her mid 20s, reads a fax she just received off the fax machine.

LINDA
Damn him!

She wads it up, crosses the office to the door marked "HARRY GILES - Investigator".

INT. GILES' OFFICE - MORNING

Sparsely furnished. Broken shutters filter the outside light. Linda yanks a file drawer open, starts looking for something. She flips on the overhead lights-- jumps.

LINDA
Harry Giles, what the...!!!

Giles is lying on his desk, sleeping.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Didn't anyone you tell you
that's what beds are for?

He groans, takes a shot of Scotch from a bottle.

GILES

Care to join me? -- Go away...

He covers his eyes with his arm. Linda stands over him.

LINDA

Guess what little surprise I got
this morning?

He opens an eye, shrugs.

LINDA (CONT'D)

An empty payroll account. I told
the bank there had to be a
mistake, but they faxed me a copy
of the withdrawal slip and guess
whose signature is on it?

She holds the crumpled fax out to Giles, but he doesn't
bother to look at it.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Did you gamble our money away?

(beat)

Jesus, Harry. You bet your own
payroll?

GILES

Why do you always assume I lost?

LINDA

Because you always do. \$50,000
dollars...

(snaps her fingers)

Just like that, you bastard.

She glares at him.

GILES

Oh, I'll make it good later.

LINDA

How? The bank isn't going to lend
you any more money...

Puts her notepad down.

LINDA [CONT'D]

Who's going to explain to everyone
why they aren't getting their
paycheck right before Christmas?
Are you going to do it? Hell no,
you're going to leave it to me.

GILES

That's because you're so fucking good at it.

Linda shoves him off the desk.

GILES

I said I'd take care of it.

LINDA

No more bullshit. Do you hear me?

Giles sighs, climbs into his chair.

GILES

Okay...alright.

Linda stares at him coldly.

GILES (CONT'D)

I said okay! Now, what-a we got?

Linda consults her daily planner.

LINDA

Two divorces, one fiancée check and a couple of business security set-ups.

GILES

Irate couples, clinging parents and paranoid businessmen.
(plops back in chair)
Bore. Boring. Bored. I need stimulation- Some REAL action.

He raises his eyebrows suggestively. Linda tries not to laugh, but finally gives in. Giles rolls his chair to her, pulls her onto his lap.

Suddenly, the phone RINGS. Linda reaches over, answers.

LINDA

Harry Giles' office.

(beat)

Thank you, Susan.

Linda gets up.

LINDA (CONT'D)

There's a client waiting in the conference room.

GILES

Send one of the assistants.

LINDA
She absolutely insisted on you.

She opens the office door. Giles sighs, exits with Linda.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Come on Harry, Maybe, just maybe
you can earn back some of the
cash you blew.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Linda and Giles cross to the elevators. Linda straightens Giles' sweater as Giles pushes the call button between the elevators.

GILES
Twenty bucks says the one on the
right opens first.

Before Linda can answer, the elevators DING and the right one opens. Giles smiles, delighted at winning.

GILES [CONT'D]
I'll take it out of your check.

Linda frowns.

GILE [CONT'D]
What? That was harmless.

He steps onto the elevator. Linda follows.

LINDA
Grow up.

The elevator doors close.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Giles moves behind Linda, kisses her neck. Linda resists, but starts to give in. He hits the "stop" button, moves his hand lightly up her stomach to her breasts. Linda arches back, enjoying but stops him.

LINDA
We have a client waiting.

GILES
Let'em wait.

Giles slides his hand up Linda's dress as she strains to unzip his pants.

GILES(CONT'D)
Who is it?

Linda purrs.

LINDA

Why Mr. Giles, it's just little old me, checking to see what you've got to offer.

GILES

No. Who's waiting in the conference room?

LINDA

(blushes)

Marian Quigley. She called this morning. Said it couldn't wait.

GILES

The actress?

Linda almost falls as Giles steps away to check his reflection in the polished brass.

GILES(CONT'D)

How's my hair?

He does a quick breath check, starts the elevator moving. Linda can't believe it.

GILES(CONT'D)

(defensive)

The client's waiting.

LINDA

I'm sure she'll appreciate the security breach at Los Pantolones.

He looks down, zips up.

DING! -- The door opens. Giles hurries off as a couple of ASSOCIATES are waiting for the elevator.

GILES

Careful guys, the elevator's sticking mid-floor. Let's get it checked.

Frustrated, Linda hurries to catch up.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MARIAN QUIGLEY looks out the window. She's in her forties, but still retains the beauty which made her one of the most desirable and richest actresses in the and 1980's. Though dressed conservatively, all eyes naturally gravitate toward her. She knows and expects this.

LINDA

Ms. Quigley, I'm Linda, we spoke earlier on the phone. This is Harry Giles.

Giles extends his hand.

GILES

It's an honor to meet you Ms. Quigley. Love your movies.

She ignores it, lights a cigarette, also ignoring the "No Smoking" sign.

MS. QUIGLEY

I've had you checked, Mr. Giles. They tell me you're one of the best in... say 'discreet' cases.

Giles smiles as Linda rolls her eyes, starts writing in her notepad.

GILES

I'm flattered. Have a seat please, Ms. Quigley.

He motions her to a chair.

As she sits, Giles peeks at her cleavage. She coolly looks at him, fully aware of what he's doing. Giles smiles, sits on the other side of the table.

MS. QUIGLEY

I am willing to pay good money, but I expect you, not one of your 'underlings' to take care of this. Do we have an understanding?

Giles leans back.

GILES

What exactly would you be paying me good money for?

MS. QUIGLEY

To find out what happened to Thurmond M. Quigley III.

GILES

Your husband?

MS. QUIGLEY

Very bright, we're off to a good start.

Giles and Linda exchange a glance over this remark.

GILES

I think I read he died in a car accident in, uh..?

MS. QUIGLEY

Desert Palms...Near Vegas. It's extremely rural. Don't believe everything you read, Mr. Giles.

GILES

Are you suggesting that your husband's death wasn't an accident?

MS. QUIGLEY

That's right, Mr. Giles.

Giles looks at her, wants more.

MS. QUIGLEY (CONT'D)

Every year Thurmond would stay at the Palms Inn for a few days for the banker's convention and returned to New York by December 22nd. We always give... Gave...a rather lavish Christmas Day dinner. It was a tradition Thurmond adored. There had to be a very potent reason to compel him to stay in Desert Palms.

LINDA

Perhaps the Palms was booked up?

Ms. Quigley ignores the remark.

MS. QUIGLEY

He had a standing reservation. And it wouldn't have mattered. He would have returned by the 22nd. Thurmond loathed being anywhere but New York for Christmas.

GILES

What else makes you think this was no accident?

MS. QUIGLEY

Thurmond would never have driven an economy car and he never wore a seatbelt. It ruined the press in his Dior shirts. Yet, they tell me he was doing all these things when he died.

GILES

He might have been...

Ms. Quigley stands, impatiently, cut him off, then lays a thick wad of \$100 dollar bills on the table.

MS. QUIGLEY

This should be enough to get you started. Discreetly, and I expect to hear from you the moment you know anything.

She starts to leave, but turns, her eyes welling-up with tears.

MS. QUIGLEY (CONT'D)

I loved my husband, Mr. Giles. I loved and cared for him.

She exits. Linda looks at Giles, fingering the money.

GILES

Tell everyone to put what they're doing on the back burner.

LINDA

Are you sure? We don't know if there's really a case here.

GILES

For 25G's, I'll make sure we make one.

Linda sticks her hand out.

LINDA

Give it up! This goes against what you lost.

He tosses the envelope to Linda, quickly moves to the window to watch Marian Quigley leave the building.

GILES

Bet you ten bucks the sizzling Lady lights a cigarette before she gets to her car.

Linda doesn't bite.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Marian Quigley stops, lights a cigarette, then hurries into her waiting limousine.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Linda looks at Giles, quite pleased with herself.

LINDA
She's not a lady, Harry. Ladies
don't walk down the street smoking
cigarettes. Keep your ten bucks.
She turns, walks out the door.

INT. LINDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Giles and Linda are in bed making love. Suddenly Giles stiffens, looks past her.

GILES
Goddammit!
LINDA
What???

Giles quickly returns his attention to her.

GILES
Nothing.

Linda glances at the foot of the bed. A television is there. A basketball game has just ended. Linda moves away from Giles.

LINDA
How much did you lose this time?

GILES
There you go again, assuming I
lost.

LINDA
"Goddammit" is not the words of
a happy winner.

Giles realizes Linda has him, doesn't reply. Linda puts on her robe, gets out of bed.

LINDA (CONT'D)
I'm going to take a bath. Don't
be here when I get out.

Giles jumps out of bed, stops her.

GILES
It's the playoffs. You know the
Lakers are my team.

Linda looks at him, then at the TV.

LINDA
That's not the Lakers!

Giles steps back.

GILES
Yeah...well..that's what I was
looking to see...

She looks away. Giles takes her hand, pulls her back to bed.

GILES(CONT'D)
I'll be good. I Promise.

He kisses her gently on the cheek. She stares at him hard,
then slaps him in the face.

LINDA
Get your shit together, Harry...

She goes into the bathroom.

EXT. GILES OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

Giles enters, carrying his briefcase.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

The two ASSOCIATES are gathered around the large table,
sipping coffee. MANLEY is 64 with glasses, LAWRENCE is 55.
Linda waits, ready to take notes. The whole room looks
expectantly at Giles as punk, JADE, 22 storms in takes her
seat.

GILES
O.K., why was Thurmond Quigley
in Desert Palms?

The Associates look at one other.

MANLEY
Helio-Therapy, whatever that is.

Giles looks around the table, obviously annoyed.

GILES
It's Greek: Sun-therapy, dummy.

Giles waves at them to tell what they've found out.

LAWRENCE
I found the Quigley's seem to have
money problems.

GILES
A banker? What kind?

MANLEY

Don't know, but it got worse after he died, she's hanging by a thread.

LINDA

Let me guess. With the insurance money Marian Quigley can now save the bank, which apparently she heads.

Jade, with spiked red hair and several piercings, butts in.

JADE

How many times have we danced to that tune?

MANLEY

That's not what the band's playing. Thurmond's life was only insured for 200K.

Giles sits up.

GILES

Are you serious?

MANLEY

As far as we can tell, he'd cashed all the rest in before his death.

JADE

Two hundred thou ain't peanuts. I'd probably kill you for it.

LINDA

You'd kill for a good nose-ring. Marian Quigley wouldn't think it was worth getting out of bed for.

GILES

If she had Thurmond killed, why hire us to stir up what the police have already dismissed?

LINDA

Good question.

GILES

What else? Anything that ties into Desert palms or Vegas? Linda tosses a computer print-out on the table.

LINDA

This is the Quigley's portfolio.
Not one investor, debtor or
creditor from either place.

GILES

What about personals?

LINDA

Nope. No family, friends, or
enemies currently living there.
And no one seems to know why he
went there, other than a suntan.

Giles leans back, stares at the ceiling.

LINDA(CONT'D)

We're working on getting his phone
records.

GILES

Do we have the accident report?

LINDA

Ms. Quigley's requested Desert
Palms to send us everything.

Giles stands, signaling that the meeting is over.

GILES

Get on it, people.

The Associates leave. Only Giles and Linda stay.

LINDA

So...??

GILES

I'm still thinking about the money.

LINDA

They definitely needed some.

GILES

No, the money she paid me. She
didn't ask a price. People who do
that are either stupid or rich.

LINDA

And Marian Quigley would appear to
be neither. But, why did she wait
almost a year to investigate? And
why did she insist on you to
handle the case?

GILES

Don't know... Obviously the
answers are in Desert Palms.

He bends down, gives her a peck on the cheek. She frowns, not
happy with his decision.

LINDA

No gambling.

Giles raises his hand.

GILES

Absolutely - NOT!

Exits.

EXT. SKY - DAY

A JET AIRLINER ROARS into the sky.

EXT. MC CARRAN AIRPORT - DAY

Forlorn and cold. What isn't iced over is gray. Giles pulls
away from Hertz-rent-a-car, in a medium size Chevy, toward
the open desert with the Black Mountains in background.

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

Giles drives along with the sun shining. He turns off the
highway at Desert Palms in the Black Mountains, parks his car
and gets out to look at the small community -- The place is a
lovely hidden gem of a town high in the mountains surrounded
by pines and palms. There is only one winding road in and out
and difficult to travel.

DISSOLVE TO:

Giles crosses a narrow bridge, through a narrow pass, down
the highway into Desert Palms: population 103.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

He stops the car, can't believe what he sees.

GILES' POV: Surreal. A picture perfect Village.

CHRISTMAS CAROLERS fill the air with their songs. SKATERS are
on a man-made pond. Behind them, CHILDREN are sledding, off
to the side a MAN ice fishes. A horse drawn sleigh with a
wreath on it, moseys past him as we HEAR: "OH, TANNENBAUM,
OH, TANNENBAUM..."

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Giles moves down the street. The store windows are full of
Christmas merchandise.

A few SHOPPERS move down the sidewalk past a SANTA CLAUS ringing his bell, merrily greeting everyone. In fact, everyone greets everyone with much waving and good cheer.

EXT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL - DAY

A turn-of-the-century brick building.
Giles pulls up front, gets out, spots the police station down the street.

GILES
(to himself)
What is this, The Twilight Zone?

A car slowly passes by, its DRIVER waves merrily. Giles frowns at the Driver, tries the hotel door. It's locked. He knocks, but no response. He looks in, can't see anyone -- Suddenly, a HORN blows. Giles jumps, turns to find JOHN ARLSON, an old farmer, 60s, in his shiny new pickup.

ARLSON
Key's under the mat! Check yourself in.

Giles looks under the mat, picks up the key.

GILES
You're sure?

ARLSON
Yep! George, he'd be the owner, is on his annual Christmas hunt. Might not see him all week. Just go on in and take room #15 if you're planning on spending the night.

Arlson waves, starts to drive on, then thinks of something and backs up.

ARLSON (CONT'D)
I'll let Daisy know they got a guest. She'd be George's sister. She'll be by later to run the switchboard providing she'n get a sitter for her kids. Usually she uses Mrs. Tillson, that'd be old Mrs. Tillson, not her daughter-in-law down in the city, but this weather's been playing the devil with her arthritis and she's not getting around none too good so I don't know if Daisy can get her to watch the kids or not. In the meantime, there's a pay-phone in
(MORE)

ARLSON (CONT'D)
the park if you'd be getting the
urge to make a call.

Giles laughs.

GILES
I could steal everything.

Arlson looks at the hotel, considering this possibility.

ARLSON
Hotel's being renovated. Nothin'
much worth taking... Besides that,
there's only one road out of here,
over the bridge and through the
pass.
(He winks)
You'd never get away with it.

He waves and drives off.

ARLSON (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas, young fella.

Giles looks at a bench next to the entrance. A brass plaque
reads "Donated By Mr. & Mrs. O. Schwartz." -- Another car
goes by. The DRIVER waves. Giles appears bewildered.

INT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Deserted. Giles enters, looks around. A telephone switchboard
sits prominently behind a long wooden counter. The room is
clean and neat, but some of the walls are ripped out, others
plastered with faded wallpaper. A partially decorated
Christmas tree stands by the stairs. It's quiet and a little
creepy.

Giles reaches behind the counter, grabs the key to room #15,
heads for the stairs.

INT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Giles unlocks the door to #15, cautiously pushes it slowly
open.

GILES POV: It's sparse, but seems fine. It's the same room
Thurmond Quigley had -- He enters, closes the door.

EXT. MAIN STREET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Giles walks down the street lit up for Christmas. He passes
Jake's Jewelry, but backs up to look in the window, loaded
with watches and diamond rings. He briefly looks at the
diamond rings, then continues on to the Police Station where
three Police Cars are parked- Mercedes-Benz SUV.

EXT. DESERT PALMS POLICE STATION - DUSK

A sign on the door with the police station hours: 7:00pm.

INT. DESERT PALMS POLICE STATION - DUSK

HERMAN, one of Desert Palm's finest is reading a paperback novel. RUPERT, another policeman, sits at his desk opening and closing drawers for no apparent reason. Giles stands in front of Herman's desk, waits to be acknowledged. He isn't.

GILES

Excuse me.

Herman holds up a hand. Giles stands there dumfounded. Finally, Herman earmarks his book, looks at Giles.

GILES(CONT'D)

Is Chief Rex in?

HERMAN

(yells)

Chief..!

CHIEF REX, 50s, comes out of his office.

CHIEF REX

I'm Louis Rex.

Giles extends his hand with a business card.

GILES

Harry Giles, P.I..

CHIEF REX

Ah, the detective from Los Angeles?

GILES

How'd you know?

CHIEF REX

Just sent a file to your office, yesterday.

GILES

Oh. I was told you were going to...

Chief Rex motions Giles to one of the chairs, gets a bottle of Pepsi out of the fridge. Giles stares at the Pepsi fridge, waits for Chief Rex to offer him one. He doesn't. Instead, Chief Rex pops the top and leans back against the wall.

CHIEF REX
(sudden thought)
What brings you to these parts?

GILES
The Quigley case. Just checking to see if the police missed something.

CHIEF REX
I see.

GILES
Mind if I ask you a couple questions.

CHIEF REX
Not at all. How can I help you, Detective Giles?

For some reason Chief Rex isn't happy to see him there.

GILES
Let's go back to the beginning to Thurmond Quigley's accident. You remember it by any chance?

Chief Rex gives him a long hard look, pulls open the top file cabinet drawer revealing three files.

CHIEF REX
Let's see, we got traffic fatalities for the past eighteen months here. Everything filed nice and neat.

GILES
What happened?

CHIEF REX
Driving too fast, I guess. Highway 26 was icy. Musta' went barreling over the edge.

Chief Rex demonstrates with SOUND EFFECTS and his hand.

GILES
Anything unusual?

CHIEF REX
Nothing comes to mind. He just went right down the hill slick as a whistle. Almost as if he meant to drive down there... Ka-boom!
(shrugs)
Crashed and burned himself up.

GILES

Then how come you're so sure it was him?

CHIEF REX

Dental records. Besides, he had Otto Schwartz's car.

GILES

Who?

CHIEF REX

Otto Schwartz. Mr. Quigley's fancy car broke down and Otto loaned him his. He was on his way to Vegas to get a car part when the accident occurred. Otto Schwartz. Yes, sir, he's a Christian man. Generous.

GILES

I'm just trying to get the facts. Where do I find Otto?

Chief Rex writes a telephone number on a pad, hands it to Giles.

CHIEF REX

That's his number. Been the same for God knows how long.

Giles looks at the number: 555-1212, puts it in his pocket.

INT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Giles enters, immediately encounters two well-dressed children. JACKIE (9 and JANIE (7), quietly doing their homework.

GILES

(calls out)

Hello...Is your mom around?

They both smile at him, but say nothing.

GILES(CONT'D)

I said, is your mom around?

Suddenly, a young woman, DAISY, pops up from behind the counter.

DAISY

Hi, there. Can I help you?

She's voluptuous and cheerful and seems to find most everything anybody says funny. Giles notices her pretty face, then the old fashioned phone patch cords over her shoulder.

GILES
You must be Daisy.

DAISY
Wow, you really are a detective.

Giles looks at her quizzically.

GILES
How'd you know that?

DAISY
(laughs)
Oh, it's all over town. Say, I'm
just dying to know, you ever worked
with Gil? You know, C.S.I.-Vegas?

GILES
No, and you mean William Petersen.

DAISY
(disappointed)
Shucks, we watch him a lot around
here. We coulda' seen you.

JACKIE puts his book down, runs over and stomps on Giles' foot, then races out of the hotel. Daisy chuckles, makes no move to reprimand him. Janie speaks for the first time.

JANIE
That's Jackie. He's mean. I'm
Janie. Merry Christmas.

She puts her book down, curtsies, and hurries out of the hotel to follow Jackie.

DAISY
Yep, kids...They can be ornery
little devils sometimes. Couldn't
find a sitter, but figured I'd
best get over here in case you
wanted to make a call.

She indicates the old fashioned switchboard behind the counter.

GILES
That's OK, I have my cell phone.

He takes his cell phone out of his pocket. Daisy clucks her tongue, shakes her head.

DAISY
Oh, that's not gonna work here.

GILES

Why not?

Giles checks, dials a number: BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, BEEP!
He looks at the phone: "NO SERVICE" flashes on the screen.

DAISY

No tower. Can't get a signal. No,
we're pretty much isolated here.

GILES

You're kidding?

DAISY

No, sir. We like it like that.
Last person who stayed here was
from San Francisco. He was so full
of his big city ways and not being
able to call seemed to upset him.

(pause)

I don't mean to sound rude, but he
was something of a...

She looks around to make sure none of the children are
listening.

DAISY(CONT'D)

(spells it out)

S-h-i-t, if you understand. Just
use the phone in your room.

Giles starts upstairs then stops, looks back.

GILES

Did Thurmond Quigley ever stay
here?

DAISY

Who?

GILES

Thurmond Quigley. You may have
heard of his wife, Marian- the
actress?

DAISY

The actress?

GILES

That's right, as in actor.

DAISY

No. I understand he died in a car
accident last year, but, no he
never stayed here.

GILES

How can you be so sure without looking it up in your guest register?

DAISY

Because she's Marian Quigley and famous people never stay here.

Giles thinks about it then comes back down the stairs. Daisy has her hand on a black Guest Registry ledger.

GILES

Where are the workers?

DAISY

What?

GILES

The hotel help... you know, maids, etc.?

DAISY

Oh, you don't have to worry about them. They're off until after the first of the year.

GILES

I see. So I also see you have a guest Registry.

He points to the black book under Daisy's hand.

DAISY

Lord no. We don't get that kind of traffic that we'd need one.

Giles nods.

GILES

What's that?

DAISY

Oh, that? That's an inventory book...for the renovation.

GILES

Could've fooled me. O.K., thanks.

Giles gives her a cool look, retreats up the stairs.

INT. HARRY GILES DETECTIVE AGENCY - NIGHT

Linda sits at Giles' desk, goes over some papers. The phone RINGS. She absently picks it up.

SPLIT SCREEN:

LINDA
 Harry Giles office. This is
 Linda Morris speaking.

GILES
 It's me.

LINDA
 Harry! How's Desert Palms? Are
 you getting anywhere?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles sits on the bed.

GILES
 Easiest money we ever made. I
 think old man Quigley died just
 like the papers said- a car
 accident.

Daisy at reception suddenly pops on the phone.

DAISY (V.O.)
 I could have told you that.

GILES
 Daisy?! What, do you listen to
 everyone's calls? Get off the line.

Daisy is offended.

DAISY (V.O.)
 I'm just trying to be helpful.
 Don't be so grouchy.

GILES
 Hey, hang up the damn phone!
 CLICK.

GILES CONT'D
 (to Linda)
 These people are weird around here.
 OK Linda, let me know if you find
 anything else.

LINDA
 We received Thurmond's personal
 effects today. What do you want me
 to do with them?

GILES
 Send them to the Riviera Hotel.

They know me well there.

LINDA
Are you in Desert Palms or Vegas?

GILES
I wouldn't trust anything being delivered here. Send it to the Riviera in Vegas in my name.

LINDA
Is it that bad?

GILES
Actually, it's very beautiful. But the people here are strange.

LINDA
Well, take care. I miss you.

GILES
I miss you, too. And don't worry, I'll be back by Christmas. Big kisses.

He hangs up, walks to the window. It's beginning to snow. He moves back to the phone, picks it up.

DAISY (V.O.)
Yes, Mr. Giles.

GILES
Get me 555-1212.

DAISY (V.O.)
(laughs)
The Schwartz's, yes, of course.

GILES
And make sure you hang up when I'm connected this time!

DAISY (V.O.)
Fine.

GILES
Great... Now get the Schwartz's please.

EXT. SCHWARTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

A gingerbread house. Well kept, but not restored. It simply has never been allowed to decay.

PHONE IS RINGING...

INT. SCHWARTZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Beautiful antiques, white crocheted doilies everywhere. IRMA SCHWARTZ, a very sweet looking older lady, 70s answers the RINGING phone.

IRMA

Hello...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles starts to hang up, but snatches the phone back to his ear.

GILES

Mrs. Schwartz?

IRMA (V.O.)

Yes?

GILES

(winging it)

I'm a friend of Thurmond Quigley.
He gave me your number.

DAISY (V.O.)

That's a lie. He just...

GILES

Get off the GODDAMN phone!

IRMA (V.O.)

(agreeable)

Very well, dear.

GILES

No, no, not you Mrs. Schwartz.

(CLICK!)

Mrs. Schwartz..?

IRMA (V.O.)

Yes, dear.

GILES

Before he, ah, passed on, Thurmond suggested I call you.

IRMA (V.O.)

Oh, that is nice. You have money problems too?

GILES

(surprised)

No, I have plenty of...

Irma pleasantly cuts him off.

IRMA

I'm terribly sorry, but I don't
think we can help you.

CLICK. She hangs up. Giles looks at the phone, perplexed.

EXT. DESERT PALMS - EARLY MORNING

The sun is rising. Heavy clouds are on the northern horizon.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Daisy is at the dresser going through Giles' wallet.
Giles opens his eyes and is startled by Daisy's presence.

GILES

What the hell are you doing?

Daisy quickly drops the wallet, turns. She's cheerful as
ever, shakes a little silver bell, starts singing...

DAISY

Ding-a-ling-ling-ling...I thought
maybe you were going to sleep the
whole day away.

CLOSE ON GILES- He stops, realizes the blankets are off him.
He's naked and yanks the covers up.

GILES

Would you mind? Leave so I can
get dressed. Out, out!

DAISY

Aren't you the modest one? Well,
don't worry. You're not gonna
shock me with something I haven't
seen before.

She starts straightening his room.

GILES

(points)

I said leave, woman!

Daisy looks at him, offended.

DAISY

I guess you're not a morning
person, are you?

She leaves. Giles walks to the bathroom, stops and puts his
room key in the door lock so she can't get in again.

EXT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL - MORNING

Giles walks out of the hotel and gets in his car. As he starts the motor, he notices several of the townspeople staring at him. CAMERA POV follows Giles wherever goes.

EXT. RIVIERA HOTEL - DAY

Giles pulls up in front of the RIVIERA, valet takes his keys.

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL - DAY

Giles enters, goes directly to the front desk CLERK.

GILES

I'm expecting a package...
Fed Ex...from Los Angeles...

DESK CLERK

Yes, Mr. Giles. Fed Ex usually
arrives around ten am.

They both look at the wall-clock: 9:40.

GILES

Thanks, Ron... let me know.

He tips him \$20 bucks then turns and spots the slot machines. He starts toward them, stops, looks into the adjoining room.

THE BIG CASINO: Giles enters, looks around for a moment.

GILES (CONT'D)

Nah...

He turns, leaves, raises his fist triumphant for having avoided the temptation. He HEARS coins dropping from the slots---CHING, CHING, CHING--- as he goes back through the lobby and out the door.

HOLD ON THE DOOR- Immediately, Giles re-enters and goes into the Casino, directly to the CASHIER.

OSCAR

Harry, you know you're not
supposed to be in here...

Giles grins, hands him some bills. Oscar shakes his head, slides him a small stack of chips. Giles hands him a \$50 for a tip.

OSCAR(CONT'D)

You guys never learn do you?

GILES
 (confident)
 Where's the hot table?

Oscar looks around, leans in to him.

OSCAR
 (quietly)
 Try the second one over there.

GILES
 Thanks, pal.

CUT TO LATER:

Giles is depressed as the COUPIER rakes in a stack of his chips. Giles puts his remaining chips on RED. The wheel turns -- ball stops on Black.

PLAYER #1
 Shit!

GILES
 You can say that again.

Giles gets up, passes Oscar who waves to him.

OSCAR
 I tried to warn you...

Not a happy camper, Giles exits the casino and enters the lobby.

INT. RIVIERA LOBBY - DAY

Giles goes directly to the Desk Clerk. The Clerk smiles, hands him his package. He starts to leave, but has a second thought.

GILES
 Did you know a Thurmond Quigley?

CLERK
 Yes. The banker. Mr. Quigley's group stays at the Mirage and here every year about this time... Unfortunately, he didn't make a reservation this year.

GILES
 I don't think he's going to. He's dead.

Clerk looks confused. Giles starts to leave, but stops.

GILES(CONT'D)
 He was here last year?

CLERK

Oh, yes... Every year like
clockwork.

GILES

You're certain? Can you check?

CLERK

No need to check. He stayed like
he always does, December 18th
through the 22nd.
Giles is perplexed.

GILES

Absolutely, certain?

CLERK

How could I forget?

GILES

Thanks.

Giles leaves the counter and exits the hotel.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Giles races through the familiar narrow pass to Desert Palms. The tires squeal as he navigates each turn. He pulls over and stops as he reaches a deadly turn at the top of the pass to the narrow bridge -- He gets out and walks to the edge of the cliff. It's 2000 feet of vertical, straight down.

GILES POV: Nothing but granite boulders, palms and pines and the road snaking through the desert.

He walks along the packed snow on the side of the road back to his car. When he reaches the critical point of the turn, he suddenly jumps!!

GILES

Shit!!!

He lifts his foot, looks at several puncture holes in his sole. He bends down and digs in the snow. Immediately, he jerks his hand away! When he resumes digging, he does so more cautiously -- He uncovers a long SPIKE-STRIP that police use to puncture tires in high speed chases. It's covered in rust. He throws it behind a large Pine tree, then goes back to his car and gets back in.

INT. DESERT PALMS CAFE - AFTERNOON

BERT, the heavy-set cook, is frying burgers. Christmas carols and farm reports are on the TV.

A WAITRESS pours Giles coffee as he dumps the contents of the Fed Ex package on the table.

WAITRESS
Beautiful day, ain't it?

Giles looks out the window at the cold, winter, day.

WAITRESS(CONT'D)
They say a big storm's a coming.
Hope it don't ruin everyone's
Christmas plans.

She fills his cup to the brim, checks out the items on the table.

WAITRESS(CONT'D)
What would you like, hon?

GILES
Grilled ham and cheese on
sourdough.

WAITRESS
Don't have sourdough. White or
wheat.

GILES
O.K., wheat.

Giles waits for her to leave, goes back to the contents on the table.

He picks up two condoms that were in the package, exams them. Suddenly, he realizes that FOUR ELDERLY LADIES are looking at him. Three are full of disapproval, but the fourth smiles knowingly, raises her penciled eyebrows suggestively.

Embarrassed, Giles tosses the condoms back into the envelope, picks up an old black and white photo- A young man and an older woman.

Giles studies it then flips it over. The back is worn and rubbed black. The MAN in the truck comes over.

ARLSON
See you got checked in alright.

Giles turns, sees John Arlson in the next booth.

ARLSON(CONT'D)
Good room, ain't it?

GILES
Just fine...thank you.

ARLSON

Name's Arlson, John Arlson... have a little ranch 'bout a mile out of town. Came in to do some Christmas shopping for the family.

Arlson proudly flips his wallet open to show a picture of his family as the waitress delivers his sandwich.

ARLSON (CONT'D)

That's all seven of us. Christmas, few years back.

He slides the picture out, hands it to Giles. He turns it over, looks at the back. There are black rubbings, similar to the other photo.

GILES

Nice...

Giles hands the picture back to Arlson, scoops Thurmond Quigley's effects back into the envelope and takes a bite from his sandwich -- Giles throws some bills on the table, rises and hurries toward the door.

ARLSON

Merry Christmas to you.

Everyone calls Merry Christmas to Giles. He smiles, automatically waves back, exits.

EXT./INT. GILES' OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Linda sits at her desk, shuffles through some papers. The phone RINGS...

SPLIT SCREEN:

LINDA

Harry Giles' office...

GILES

It's me.

LINDA

You're back??

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

GILES

Question: Didn't Marian Quigley say that Thurmond stayed in Desert Palms last year because the Vegas Riviera was booked?

INT. GILES' OFFICE - AFTERNOON

LINDA

That's what she said. Why are you asking?

GILES

Just confused.

LINDA

About what?

GILES

Nothing. Forget it. That woman could be listening in again.

LINDA

You know you're missing the Christmas party.

GILES

Sorry. Look wire me five thousand, will you?

LINDA

What? No, way. You'll gamble it away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

(Cut back and forth between Giles and Linda as Daisy listens in.) Giles examines the photo of Thurmond.

GILES

There's some extra expenses that have come up. I just need a little cash.

LINDA

Forget it...I'm not wiring you a dime until I see some receipts. Besides, I thought you had this thing wrapped up.

GILES

(pissed)

Soon...What do you know about the photo?

LINDA

It's Thurmond and his mother.

GILES

It was in his wallet. Do you have the wallet?

LINDA

There wasn't one. It must have
burned up in the car.

Giles is not happy with her answer.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Are you ready for some big news?

(beat)

Manley found there was another
insurance policy. A million
dollars. Marian Quigley's the
beneficiary.

GILES

She'd definitely get out of bed
for that.

LINDA

It gets better. Thurmond was
insured as a board member of "Club
Nevada" a small Corporation set up
in Desert Palms. The Chairman is a
Mr. Otto Schwartz.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Daisy listens, takes a deep breath, not happy to hear this.

GILES (O.S.)

Daisy? Are you on the fucking line
again? -- Get off!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

There's CLICK on the line.

GILES

Damn her... Linda, why didn't we
know about this Club Nevada thing
before?

LINDA (V.O.)

Thurmond was appointed to the board
just before he died and the
insurance settlement only paid out
a few days ago.

INT. GILES OFFICE - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door.

LINDA

Come in...

(back to Giles)

So, what did happen?

Jade sticks her head in. The Sex Pistol's "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree" floods the room.

GILES (V.O.)

Maybe Mr. Schwartz can shed some light on it...Look send me some friggin' money, will you?

LINDA

No way. No receipts, no money.

She hangs up, looks askew at Jade to turn down the music.

JADE

(tipsy)

You're missing the party. Santa's a hottie - whewwee!

Jade hands Linda a glass of wine. In the background, a SEXY MALE STRIPPER dressed as Santa is down to his jingle bell briefs. Red ribbon tied in bow is wrapped around his crotch. Linda joins Jill as they move out of Giles' office to join the party.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Giles goes to the desk, pulls out a telephone book, scans the pages to find "Nevada Club Ltd."- 555-1211. He pulls out the slip of paper with the Schwartz's number on it- 555.1212.

Too close for comfort. He picks up the phone.

DAISY

Yes, Mr. Giles?

GILES

Ever hear of the Club Nevada?

DAISY

Never heard of it.

GILES

I was certain you had. You seem to know everyone here.

(beat)

Get me 555.1211...

Giles hears the number being dialed and the phone RING.

VOICE

The number you have dialed is not in service... Please check the number and dial again.

Giles hangs up the phone.

EXT. SCHWARTZ HOUSE - DAY

A light snow is falling.

Giles is parked out front watching, JOSEPH, 50s, shovel the nearly nonexistent snow off the walk.

GILES

Is this the Schwartz house?

Joseph leans on his shovel, happy for the break.

JOSEPH

Yes, sir.

Joseph watches Giles walk up to the house.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Won't do no good to knock, sir. If they're home, they're having their naps.

(checks pocketwatch)

'Bout fifteen minutes till they're up, that is if they're here. I think they may have gone shopping into Vegas for the day though.

Joseph smiles knowingly as Giles KNOCKS on door- No answer.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You're part of the Club, aren't you?

GILES

Club?

JOSEPH

You don't have to play dumb with me.

GILES

Club Nevada?

Joseph gets a sick look on his face.

JOSEPH

Think maybe I spoke out of turn.

Starts shoveling like crazy, quickly finishes, hurries down the street.

GILES

(calling)

Tell me more about the club.

Giles shrugs, KNOCKS on the door. No answer. He goes back to his car.

EXT./INT. POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

Giles enters. Chief Rex puts his paper down.

CHIEF REX
Afternoon, Mr. Giles.

GILES
Question...

Chief Rex goes back to his paper.

GILES(CONT'D)
If Mr. Quigley's car blew up and he was burned beyond recognition, how come his wife knows the color of his shirt and trousers when he died, or if he was wearing a seat belt. Wouldn't that have been destroyed by the fire?

Chief shrugs.

CHIEF REX
The reports from the State Police showed that the seat belt didn't burn. It melted over part of his shirt and trousers giving us their color. What is your point, Mr. Giles?

Giles slides the black and white photo in front of the Chief.

CHIEF REX(CONT'D)
So?

GILES
It's Thurmond Quigley and his Mother. So, where's the wallet?

Chief Rex briefly glances at the picture, takes out his six-shooter revolver, starts spinning the chamber.

CHIEF REX
Don't know. What's your point?

GILES
Do you know the first thing a real policeman would consider in a suspicious fire?

CHIEF REX

Money?

GILES

Burnt personal photos. They're
keepsakes money can't replace.
People take them out before they
torch the place.

CHIEF REX

And you think this Quigley fella
took this photo out so it wouldn't
burn with him?

GILES

I would guess, but it doesn't make
sense -- There's nothing to
indicate he came here to die in a
fire... I smell a set up.

Chief Rex points the gun at Giles. Giles stares back,
defiant.

CHIEF REX

It was a simple accident, Mr.
Giles.

GILES

So tell me about Club Nevada.

CHIEF REX

Never heard of it...

GILES

Of course not!

Giles' casually palms the gun barrel away from his face,
leaves.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - EVENING

Giles enters an empty lobby, immediately looks behind the
counter for Daisy.

GILES

(calling)

Daisy!!!

He moves to the rear window and looks outside. The streets
are nearly empty. In a snow covered field, Daisy helps a
group of children practice their archery by shooting arrows
into a snowman.

Giles quickly slips behind the counter, opens the black book.
It is a Registry Book, filled with names and dates. He
scrolls down the short list until he comes to the initials
"TMQ" and the date "December 20th." Giles looks at his watch.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Giles exits, ducks into the doorway of Jake's Jewelry as the lights from the Police Station are turned off.

EXT DESERT PALMS POLICE STATION - NIGHT

GILES POV: Chief Rex exits, strolls toward the Cafe. Giles slips out of the shadows, crosses to the police station.

He zips open the small case- lock picks. He selects one, then notices the door is slightly ajar. He pushes it open.

GILES
(to himself)
Only in Desert Palms.

He slips inside.

INT. DESERT PALMS CAFE - NIGHT

Chief Rex enters, grabs a newspaper and takes a seat.

BERT
Hi, Chief. Meatloaf Monday. A little bit of heaven coming your way.

He reaches for his glasses. The case is empty.

CHIEF REX
Sounds good. Oops, forgot my glasses.

Bert nods. Chief Rex exits the cafe.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Giles holds a penlight in his mouth, scans a file folder. Nothing -- He looks around, moves to Chief Rex's desk. He opens the drawer- girlie magazines. Under them is a large manila envelope. He looks inside- four empty wallets.

GILES
(to himself)
Sonavabitch!!!

He puts them back, keeps looking. Then he finds several files on accidental deaths. Suddenly he hears FOOTSTEPS outside.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Chief Rex opens the door, enters.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Giles snaps off his penlight, drops to the floor.
ON the open drawer...

GILES

Shit!

Chief Rex enters, crosses to his desk. He fumbles around until he finds his glasses. He stops at the open drawer. He looks around suspiciously -- then pushes the desk drawer closed and exits.

Relieved, Giles gets up quickly exits, walks away.

EXT. DESERT PALMS TOWN PARK - NIGHT

The swings CREAK as they sway in the cold winter wind. Giles huddles in the only phone booth in town.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Giles holds the phone to his ear, waits. The phone RINGS. He speaks as soon as the phone is answered.

LINDA (V.O.)

This is Linda...

GILES

Hi, beautiful. Miss you...

LINDA (V.O.)

...please leave a message...BEEP.

He stops, realizes he's gotten Linda's machine.

GILES

It's me. I may be on to something...

He starts to say something else, then stops.

GILES(CONT'D)

Talk to you later...Kisses.

He hangs up, leaves the booth as the swing begins to CREAKING again. He turns to see Daisy's children- Jackie and Janie, swinging.

JACKIE

Who're you talking to?

GILES

What are you two doing out this late? It isn't safe.

JACKIE
It is for us!

He laughs.

GILES
Get home now, before I call your
mother.

The kids look at each other, share a laugh, but stop swinging and leave. A cold wind hits the back of Giles' neck. He pulls his coat up around his shoulders, lifts his collar. He turns and gives one last glance at Daisy's kids, but they've disappeared!

Giles walks toward the hotel, but suddenly hears WHISTLING behind him. He spins around--

GILES(CONT'D)
Hello?

No one replies. He looks intently into the darkness, but sees no one.

EXT./INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Herman is reading the paper. Giles breezes in.

GILES
I'd like to speak to the Chief...

Chief Rex enters the room.

CHIEF REX
Morning, what can I do you for?

Chief Rex motions Herman out of the room.

GILES
Question: Are you sure Quigley's
wallet wasn't part of his
belongings?

CHIEF REX
You calling me a liar?

GILES
Well, you've had four accidents
like Quigley's' in three years.
Why?

CHIEF REX
(surprised)
I told you. It's the roads.

GILES

All have been outsiders and they
all died around this time of year.

CHIEF REX

Yep. Proves my point. The damn
tourists don't know our icy roads.
Besides, they drive like shit...
Again, what's your point?

GILES

This isn't exactly vacationland.
I can't believe you'd get that
many tourists around here,
much less that many accidental
deaths.

CHIEF REX

Don't underestimate the charm of
a country Christmas. A lot of
people want that kind of holiday.
It's only natural that a few of
them are going to die.

GILES

Something's going on here and
you're not doing anything about it.

CHIEF REX

(smiles)

Now, why would you think that, Mr.
Giles?

GILES

What do you know about Otto
Schwartz's connection to Quigley?

Chief Rex loses his smile, sits up-right.

CHIEF REX

No connection at all. You seem to
have the bull by the cock and you
think it's his nose.

GILES

I do, huh?

CHIEF REX

Mr. Quigley's big old car broke
down. Bad solenoid...Otto loaned
him his car to get a new one. He
died in a car crash on an icy
road. End of story. There's
nothing else to know.

Giles just smiles at the Chief, turns and leaves.

EXT./INT. RIVIERA CASINO - DAY

Giles enters the Casino.

Oscar sits in the cashier cage reading a book. Giles walks over to him, puts his Visa Card on the counter.

GILES

Do you take credit cards?

Oscar smiles.

OSCAR

Short of cash again?

GILES

What do you think, smart ass?

OSCAR

(points)

Sorry. We don't. But there's an ATM over there.

Oscar looks at the card, hands it back to Giles.

GILES

Thanks, pal.

Giles heads for the ATM machine, inserts his card, enters the PIN number. BEEP! -- The card spits out.

OSCAR

Something wrong?

Giles walks back to Oscar.

GILES

Do you take checks?

OSCAR

Sorry, Harry, but you'll only be able to get cash from one of our banks.

GILES

Where's that?

OSCAR

Well now, that's another story. All the banks are closed until after Christmas. You've got the gambling-jones bad, don't you?

GILES

It's only gambling if you lose.

OSCAR
That's certainly the right
attitude. Is money the problem?

GILES
Only when you don't have it.

Oscar smiles strangely, quickly looks around to make sure no one is listening, then leans into him.

OSCAR
(quietly)
Maybe I can help. I know of a
high-stakes game looking for a
fourth. No cash needed. Maybe
you'd be interested?

Giles leans in, intrigued, motions for him to speak.

INT. DESERT PALMS CAFE - NIGHT

Giles sips coffee, writes in his notebook.

LINDA (O.S.)
Hello...

He jumps, looks up.

GILES
Jesus. What are you doing here?

LINDA
(slides into booth)
I wanted to surprise you.

GILES
I hate surprises.

LINDA
Merry Christmas, to you too.

Giles doesn't answer.

LINDA (CONT'D)
These your notes?

She starts to look at them.

GILES
They're not done yet.

LINDA
Since when have you cared if I saw
your notes?

GILES
This is different.

The Waitress comes over with a pot of coffee.

WAITRESS
Coffee, sweetie?

LINDA
No thanks.
(to Giles)
I'm listening.

GILES
Are you checking on me?

LINDA
Harry, I just thought it would be nice if we could spend Christmas together. Maybe go skiing.

GILES
Before or after you checked on me?

Waitress continues to stand there, listens.

LINDA
Are you fooling around with someone here?

GILES
No, for Christ's sake.

He looks at the Waitress.

GILES (CONT'D)
(to Waitress)
Do you mind?

WAITRESS
Oh, no...go ahead.

He glares at her.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
Well, alright.

GILES
Wait! Have you ever heard of a Club Nevada?

WAITRESS
No never.

She gives Giles a dirty look, moves to another customer.

LINDA
You said you were on to something.
What?

GILES
Nothing. I cleared it up.

Linda looks at him a long moment.

LINDA
Obviously, there's something you
don't want me to know about.

She gets up, starts to walk away. Giles grabs her arm, stops her.

GILES
Come on, sit down. Order something
(reassuring)
I love you, you silly thing...

Linda looks at him, sits.

EXT./INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Linda and Giles enter an empty lobby with Linda's luggage.

LINDA
Where is everyone?

GILES
Don't worry. When you least expect
it, Daisy'll pop up. Come on.

Giles hustles Linda up the stairs.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The room is dark, sexy. A dim light shines through the partially closed door to the bathroom. Linda and Giles are in a passionate love-making session. They are both breathing heavily. You can barely see the sweat glisten from the dim light.

Giles is on top, rolls over. Now Linda is on top. She pulls back seductively, looks at him passionately, then SUDDENLY SCREAMS.

GILES
What??? Is it that good???

LINDA
No...No, there's someone out
there, Harry!!!

Giles sits up and anxiously looks out the window.

GILES

Where? I don't see them.

LINDA

On the roof, across the street!!!

Suddenly, the head of a MAN appears on the roof directly across the street with a hunting rifle with scope.

LINDA (CONT'D)

There!!! There he is!!!

GILES

I see him!

He quickly disappears. CUT back and forth between the roof and Giles and Linda -- Giles jumps out of bed, grabs his trousers, pulls them on as he stares out the window. The Man disappears.

GILES (CONT'D)

He's gone.

LINDA

Are you sure?

GILES

Yes. Go get dressed...

Linda heads into the bathroom, shuts the door. Linda's in the shower as the phone rings. Giles frowns, looks at the phone, hesitantly answers.

GILE

Yes...

LAWRENCE (V.O.)

Harry? It's Larry. Sorry to bother you. Linda gave me this number... in case of emergency...

GILES

Is everything okay?

LAWRENCE (V.O.)

NO...Everyone's getting ready to walk out. They said they weren't coming back until you paid them.

GILES

I always pay them...I know it's Christmas Eve...but...

LAWRENCE (V.O.)
The bank called too...

GILES
What are you talking about? Who called? I just got off the phone with them!

LAWRENCE (V.O.)
Ned Davin, Beverly Hills Branch.

Giles writes the number down.

GILES
Look, tell everyone to stop worrying. They'll get paid.

He hangs up.

GILES (CONT'D)
Fuck!

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Empty. Giles and Linda descend the stairs.

LINDA
Doesn't anybody work here?

GILES
Only Daisy, if she can get a babysitter.

He grabs her arm, hurries outside.

EXT. DESERT PALMS MAIN STREET - MORNING

A light snow is falling. Linda happily takes everything in. Giles makes subtle glances at his watch.

EVERETT HENSEN stands outside his SPORTING GOODS STORE, checks the window display.

EVERETT
Howdy folks. Christmas eve...
Better get your shopping done. We close at six tonight...won't re-open until after the first.
(to Linda)
You have a nice flight from Los Angeles?

LINDA
Yes, thank you.

Linda is puzzled, turns to Giles.

LINDA(CONT'D)

How did he know I flew in from
L.A.?

GILES

They know everything you do.

LINDA

You must have told someone.

GILES

Didn't know till you got here
and you been with me ever since.

Linda stops to admire some wedding rings in Jake's Jewlery
window.

LINDA

Wow, Harry! Look at those.

Giles checks his watch.

GILES

Look, I have an appointment. Why
don't you get some breakfast at
the cafe. I'll meet you back at
the hotel in a couple of hours.

LINDA

I'll go with you.

GILES

No...

(covering)

It's just a little detail.

LINDA

Then let it go.

GILES

It's important.

LINDA

You said it was a little detail.

GILES

An "important" little detail.
Besides, I want this case finished
today so we can spend Christmas in
L.A...with full payment from Marian
Quigley.

Linda finally gets it.

LINDA

Oh, Harry...You're going to get me
a present.

Giles beams, kisses her on the cheek.

GILES

I'll be back in couple of hours.

Linda heads for the cafe, she turns to see Giles enter Jake's
Jewelry. Satisfied, Linda continues on her way.

Giles emerges from Jake's, peeks down the street. Linda is
not in sight. He hurries to his car-- but again we get the
sense that someone is watching them wherever they go.

EXT./INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Daisy's at the counter, her kids are everywhere. Linda,
enters, is nearly knocked over by Jackie being chased by
Janie.

DAISY

Merry Christmas, Miss Morris. I'm
Daisy.

Linda smiles. It quickly fades.

LINDA

How'd you know my name?

Daisy thinks about it, shrugs.

DAISY

Must have heard it somewhere.

LINDA

(friendly, but
insistent)
Where?

She thinks again.

DAISY

Don't know.

Looks at her, silently demands an answer.

DAISY(CONT'D)

(remembering)
Right, Mr. Giles, he called you on
the phone. All calls have to go
through our switchboard here.

LINDA
Oh...and you were the one
listening in.

She starts upstairs.

EXT. SCHWARTZ HOUSE - DAY

A light snow is falling as Giles approaches the Schwartz's home.

INT. SCHWARTZ HOME - MORNING

Joesph sets up a card table. The ever so sweet OTTO and IRMA SCHWARTZ stand off to one side, overseeing and admiring the set-up.

EXT. SCHWARTZ HOME - MORNING

Giles KNOCKS. Otto and Irma, open the door. Irma has a shawl around her shoulders to ward off the cold drafts.

OTTO
Mr. Giles?

GILES
Yes.

OTTO
Oh, Mr. Giles. We were wondering
where you were. Merry Christmas.
Come in. We're delighted you could
make it. I'm Otto and this is Irma.

Giles enters.

INT. VICTORIAN PARLOR - MORNING

Otto and Irma usher Giles into the parlor, three players--- BRUNO, SALLY and WALTER sit at the card table. Irma offers Giles the forth chair.

IRMA
Please have a seat, dear. We'll
be right with you.

GILES
I'm not sure I'm going to play.

Otto and Irma look at him nervously. Giles sits, checks his watch.

Sally chain smokes, ignores everything except the glowing tip of her cigarette. She has brown tobacco stains on her fingers;

Walter, dressed in black leather, stares at the wall, never blinking; Bruno, a bit older than the other players, clutches his rosary, silently prays-- Bruno looks at him, runs a finger inside his sweaty collar.

BRUNO
Kinda warm in here?

Giles nods. Bruno extends his hand.

BRUNO(CONT'D)
Bruno Borghese.

They shake.

GILES
Harry Giles.

Bruno accidentally farts, doesn't acknowledge it.

BRUNO
I don't win this, I don't know
what I'm going to do.
(laughs)
I guess if I don't win, the
future's the least of my worries,
huh?

Giles gives him a tight smile as Irma freshens the room with air spray -- Bruno slides over closer to Giles.

BRUNO(CONT'D)
(whispers)
That guy there...
(nods toward Walter)
He stole money from his boss. He
loves the women and they love the
high-life. Know what I mean?

WALTER
Merry Christmas, asshole.

Bruno holds up his hands to show he didn't mean any offense.

BRUNO
The Chick bets the ponies. Problem
is she bets on losers... And we,
I discovered coke.
(sniffs)
Everything I had went up my nose.
Now I got debt collectors...They
ain't the kind to wait.

Giles nods, realizes Bruno's waiting to hear his story.

GILES

What?

SALLY

Tell us about you, handsome.
Regular gambling just doesn't
quite cut the mustard anymore,
does it?

She takes a drag off her cigarette, lets the smoke roll off her tongue as a long ash falls to the floor.

GILES

I'm not sure I'm in this game.

SALLY

Don't put me on. You're here for
the thrill... Gets your dick real
hard, don't it Slugger?

GILES

It's not...

Sally interrupts.

SALLY

Don't fool yourself, champ. These
Losers...
(looks other two)
...are here for the money. But
people like me and you, we gotta
play.

Suddenly, the doors open. Otto and Irma Schwartz, followed by Oscar and several of the TOWNSPEOPLE, enter.

OTTO

Ladies and gentlemen, Irma and I
want to welcome you to our annual
Christmas Club.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Linda sits by the window. Daisy enters carrying a tray with a tea pot and cup on it.

DAISY

Here's a nice cup of hot tea
compliments of the Ladies
Auxiliary. A little amenity they
provide to anyone on a watch.

LINDA

A what?

DAISY

Oh, dear. That does sound rather crude, doesn't it? No offense intended. It's just a little nickname we have for anyone waiting for someone to come back from the game.

LINDA

Game?

DAISY

(confused)

Isn't that why you came here?

(beat)

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you knew about the Club.

LINDA

Club Nevada?

Daisy nods. Linda closes the door and stands in front of it.

LINDA(CONT'D)

Tell me about it...

She backs Daisy against the wall, gets in her face.

INT. VICTORIAN GAMEROOM - DAY

Otto RAPS his pipe on the smoking stand, gets everyone's attention.

OTTO

The annual gathering of the Christmas Club will come to order. We're very fortunate to have found a fourth player. We have Oscar to thank for his help.

Otto nods toward Oscar, who waves to the room.

OSCAR

Merry Christmas, everybody...

There is light APPLAUSE for Oscar.

OTTO

Mr. Velton will be along in a moment to take care of the insurance details. Meanwhile, Dr. Anton has the paperwork on your physicals.

DR. ANTON steps forward with some papers. Giles turns to Bruno.

GILES
Physicals? What's that about?

Bruno puts his finger to his mouth.

BRUNO
Shhhh..! There ain't insurance
without a physical and no game
without insurance!

He points to Otto who continues to speak.

GILES
Oh...

OTTO
But first I would like to welcome
the beloved founder of our club,
my father, the elder Mr. Schwartz.

THE ELDER MR. SCHWARTZ, older than 'father time' himself, is helped to his feet by TWO TOWNSPEOPLE. There is enthused APPLAUSE for him. The elder Mr. Schwartz raises his cane in the air, almost falls over acknowledging them.

ELDER MR. SCHWARTZ
Carry on everyone...

The Waitress from the cafe, nudges Giles.

WAITRESS
That man is a genius. He dances
with sunlight.

GILES
Looks like there was an eclipse.

The Waitress, straightens up, drops her smile.

WAITRESS
I hope you lose.

MR. ERNEST VELTON enters, followed by Chief Rex and Deputy Herman, each one carrying a suitcase.

MR. VELTON
Sorry, we're late.

Giles and Chief Rex stare at each other for a moment. Chief Rex and Deputy Herman open their suitcases and begin piling large bundles of money onto a side table. The players are dazzled as all heads turn to see what a million dollars looks like.

BRUNO
 (sniffs, elbows Giles)
 Jesus H. Christ, well lookie that!

Otto takes four bundles and places one in front of each of the players. Sally, Bruno and Walter immediately rifle their bundle to see all the hundred dollar bills. Giles just stares at the bundle in front of him, stunned, his jaw slightly open.

SALLY
 (smells the bills)
 Oh, baby...

IRMA (O.S.)
 What insurance company are we using this year, dear? I'm sure the club would like to know who to expect their money from.

Mr. Velton pulls out four packets of documents and distributes a packet to each of the players.

VELTON
 Lloyds of London. It's best we go out of the country this year.

IRMA
 Right, but I was so hoping we'd use All-State. The way they treat old people is criminal. It's time they were due a little pay-back.

VELTON
 Point well taken, Irma. I'll make sure to use them next time.

Mr. Velton laughs, catches himself.

MR. VELTON
 The policy in front of you is for five million dollars. You'll note on page two that each of the other players in the game is named a million dollar beneficiary of your policy, plus two million to the Club's Trust Fund. The other document is addressed to the Trust Fund in which you direct it to assign a million dollars to Desert Palms and a million dollars to a beneficiary of your own choosing.

Giles to Bruno.

GILES
(quietly)
Sounds complicated.

SALLY
A million bucks ain't complicated,
no matter how you get it!

BRUNO
Have you ever seen so much money
in your life?

Giles nervously shakes his head as he stares at the large pile of money.

Mr. Velton holds up four gold pens. Each player takes one, except for Giles.

GILES
(to Velton)
I'm still not sure yet.

SALLY
Don't tell me that nice hard dick
of yours just went limp?

Mr. Velton ignores them, lays the pen in front of Giles.

MR. VELTON
Be sure and fill in your
beneficiary on the Trust document.
We'll notarize your signatures
later.

GILES POV: Sally fidgets, looks like she's on her way to a sexual climax. No one seems to have noticed.

He turns to Bruno, sweating profusely, like he might be having a heart attack.

BRUNO
I just know. I'm the fuckee here.

SALLY
Keep thinking that way...
(to Giles)
Have you ever seen such a loser?

Bruno squirms uncontrollably. Giles has to admit, Bruno is a loser and begins to dismiss any doubts about being here.

SALLY(CONT'D)
 Think of it, a million bucks,
 honey...one hellava Christmas
 party. The ultimate gamble.

Giles picks up the insurance policy, starts reading. The decision to play is inevitable.

SALLY(CONT'D)
 (to Giles)
 Gets you hot, don't it?

Giles continues to read, ignores Sally.

Mr. Velton lays another official document in front of each player.

MR. VELTON
 This is the last one. It makes
 each of you a Board Member of this
 year's corporation, "Nevada Palms,
 Ltd" and establishes insurable
 interest in each other.

Giles takes pen, rotates it in his hand, not sure what to do.

INT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Linda glares at Daisy, who is actually delighted to be able to spill the beans.

LINDA
 You're lying.

DAISY
 (insulted)
 I never fib. Whoever gets the ace
 of hearts, clubs or diamonds wins
 a million tax-free dollars.

LINDA
 And the ace of spades..?

Daisy looks away evasively.

LINDA(CONT'D)
 What about the ace of spades?

DAISY
 (mumbles)
 We...
 (beat)
 they have an a-c-c-i-d-e-n-t...

LINDA
Accident? What the hell are you
talking about?

DAISY
Don't get excited. There'd be an
investigation if we didn't.

Linda grabs her coat.

LINDA
Where's the game?

Daisy just stares at her.

LINDA(CONT'D)
Tell me, damn it!

Linda clinches her fist.

INT. VICTORIAN GAME ROOM - DAY

Sally, Walter and Giles finish signing their papers. Bruno
just stares at his, suddenly stands.

BRUNO
I can't do this.

Sally tosses her pen down.

SALLY
Sit your ass down!!!

Irma looks at Sally.

IRMA
Please dear, it isn't necessary to
use that kind of language. You all
know the rules. Anyone can drop
out until the cards are dealt.
(to Bruno)
You do what you must, dearie.

ON CARD TABLE-- Bruno looks at Giles.

BRUNO
I just can't...I'd rather...

SALLY
Fucking wimp.

Irma wags her finger at Sally.

IRMA
Now, now...that just isn't

Christian like.

SALLY
(to Bruno)
Don't you owe people money?

BRUNO
Yes.

Giles can't help being drawn into the argument.

GILES
What are they going to do to you
if you go back to them empty-
handed?

BRUNO
(nervous)
I'll take my chances.

SALLY
They're going to kill you! That's
dead. Here you have a 75% chance of
winning- Three out of four win.

GILES
You'll never get odds like that
again.

Bruno looks at them while this information sinks in.

BRUNO
You're right. Let's play!

Giles smiles. He and Bruno sign their papers while Otto and Irma quietly high-five each other on the side.

EXT. DESERT PALMS STREET - DAY

It's snowing more. Linda drives around a corner, hits some black ice, slides. POW! She hits a snow bank, stops. She hits the gas, but the tires just spin. Frantic, she jumps out, starts running.

INT. VICTORIAN GAME ROOM - DAY

Mr. Velton collects the papers, places them in his briefcase.

MR. VELTON
(to table)
Good Luck!

He leaves. Otto tries to break the seal on a deck of cards, can't. Irma notices, takes them from him.

OTTO
 (rubbing knuckles)
 Damn arthritis.

Irma removes the ACES, shows them, puts them back in pack.

OTTO(CONT'D)
 I'll deal.

She gives a couple of shuffles, then hands them to Otto.
 Sally gleefully watches the tears roll down Bruno's face.

SALLY
 (to Bruno)
 One of us has twelve hours to
 commit suicide.

Bruno squirms.

WALTER
 Bitch!

Otto nods, glad Sally got this unpleasant detail out of way.

OTTO
 Chief Rex and Mr. Joseph Jenzen,
 our handyman, will assist with
 your final needs.

Chief Rex nods as Joseph waves. The townspeople lightly
 applaud.

OTTO (CONT'D) I also
 find it my rather unpleasant
 task to warn you that
 should you fail to comply with the
 rules, the club is prepared to
 take care of things for you.

He looks at the Players to emphasize this, then smiles
 sweetly.

OTTO(CONT'D)
 I'm sure that won't be necessary.
 You all seem to be honorable
 people.

Otto hands the aces to Irma who kisses them, hands them back.

IRMA
 Good Luck everyone.

OTTO
 One more thing. If anyone objects
 to this form of gambling, do so
 now.

He looks at the Players. Nothing. Sally rubs her hands in excitement.

SALLY
Deal 'em, honey buns.

Otto looks at Giles.

OTTO
Mr. Giles?

Looks at the million dollars on the side table.

GILES
(confident)
It's only gambling, if you lose.

Otto deals 5 cards, face down- 5-Card Stud.

SERIES OF SHOTS playing one hand of poker -- Cards are flying back and forth in FAST then SLOW MOTION. Sally grips her last card, slowly lifts the edge of it, closes her eyes... Suspenseful, she takes a deep breath, looks at it.

SUDDENLY the door flings open with a loud BANG! -- All heads turn to see Linda.

LINDA
(to Giles)
Let's go, right now!!!

Sally flips her cards over. It's a straight with an 'Ace of Diamonds.' She gives an orgasmic SIGH.

SALLY
Can't! You're too late!

She takes a long hit off her cigarette.

WALTER
Fuck it.

Walter flips his cards over... Four of a kind with Clubs! All heads turn to Bruno- He stares at his card, sweats.

SALLY
Let's go fatso!

He closes his eyes, blesses himself then kisses his rosary.

SALLY(CONT'D)
Hurry up!

Bruno peeks at his card, starts crying.

IRMA

We need to see them, dear.

He flips them over. Whoops! It flies off the table lands face down in SLOW MOTION -- Everyone GASPS, leans forward to see it. Irma bends down, places it on the table, turns them over-- Full House with an 'Ace of Hearts'.

BRUNO

(sobbing)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph!!!

All eyes turn to Giles.

Giles looks up, meets Linda's gaze. He can't read her. He turns his attention to his last card and the pile of money in front of him.

Irma gently turns his card over slowly-- Three of a kind with the Ace of Spades!

LINDA

NO! -- It can't be!

OTTO

Hush woman! A brandy for Mr. Giles.

Giles' face goes white - he's lost the game!

IRMA

(patting Giles' hand)

Come along. A nice brandy will do you wonders.

Giles doesn't reply. A couple of TOWNSPEOPLE help him to his feet.

IRMA(CONT'D)

This way, dear...

Irma leads them to the parlor. Joseph follows with a snifter of brandy as Chief Rex and Deputy Herman begin putting the money back into their suitcases.

LINDA

Come on, Harry, let's go!

He starts to follow Linda, but Chief Rex and Deputy Herman stop packing the money, and block his way.

Otto, shakes his head, shows her the door.

OTTO

He'll be along in a little bit.
You can say your goodbyes then.

EXT. SCHWARTZ HOUSE - LATER ON

The cars are gone except for a new Mercedes-Benz. Joseph Jenzen sits behind the wheel. A dazed Giles exits with Otto and Irma.

Otto pats Giles shoulder.

OTTO

At least you have a beautiful snowfall. Mr. Quigley had that terrible sleet storm on his final day last year.

Giles looks around.

GILES

Where's my car?

Otto nods toward Joseph.

OTTO

Joseph, our handyman will drive you wherever you wish to go.

IRMA

Do not worry about your car, dear. We'll make sure it gets back to the rental agency so as not to adversely affect your credit.

GILES

(sarcastic)

That's a load off my mind.

He gets in the Mercedes, SLAMS the door shut.

IRMA

Anger.

Otto puts his arm around Irma, happily agrees.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Two well-dressed men, CHRISTOPHER MULLER and ANDREW, wait for Giles. He finally enters.

MULLER

Mr. Giles, I'm Christopher Muller, Muller's Clothiers. This is Andrew, my assistant manager.

Andrew smiles, wraps his measuring tape around Giles' waist.

ANDREW
 (to Muller)
 (thinks again)
 Better make it a 33.
 (explains to Giles)
 People tend to bloat when they're,
 you know...

Muller jots it down. Andrew starts to measure Giles' sleeve.
 He instinctively pulls away.

GILES
 What are you doing?

ANDREW
 Measuring for your funeral suit.
 (looks Miles over)
 A nice black vested or dark
 charcoal, I think.

Muller nods in agreement. Andrew hands Giles a cloth swatch
 in each of these colors.

GILES
 I don't want a funeral suit.

Andrew grabs Giles' sleeve.

ANDREW
 Not to worry. The Club pays for
 everything.
 (to Muller)
 ...and a half.

Giles jerks away.

GILES
 Don't touch me! I don't need a
 funeral suit.

Andrew gives Muller a knowing glance.

ANDREW
 Anger or denial?

Muller nods as Giles hurries up the stairs.

MULLER
 I think anger. Don't worry, I can
 fudge on the rest.

INT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Linda lies on the bed as Giles enters. She quickly rises.

LINDA
I thought of a headstone. "Here
lies Harry Giles who died from a
self-inflicted stupidity."

GILES
I don't need this right now.

LINDA
Oh, that's right! You need to
think about your suicide.

She slaps him across the face.

LINDA [CONT'D]
What about me? What am I supposed
to do when you're gone?

Giles puts his hand to his face, feels the sting.

GILES
You get to live.

LINDA
Then, what about us, Harry? In
case you haven't figured it out,
there is no "us" without you.

GILES
I can get out of this.

LINDA
How..?!

He grabs her hand, pulls her toward the door.

GILES
Come on. I'll show you.

INT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Giles hustles Linda through the empty lobby.

LINDA
What the hell are you doing?

GILES
They took my car, but you still
have yours.

Linda yanks free of his grip.

LINDA

These people have played this game before, Harry. Do you really think they're going to fall for the old take the other car trick?

He moves her to the window.

GILES POV: SEVERAL TOWNSPEOPLE stroll down the sidewalk, Holding candles, singing: "SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT." Giles spots the guy on the roof again with the hunting rifle.

GILES

Think their pretty smart, eh? If we can't out-think them, I should welcome death.

EXT. DESERT PALMS HOTEL - DAY

Giles exits, looks around. Linda follows. The Carolers continue down the street SINGING.

GILES

Which one's yours?

LINDA

The one they towed away.

GILES

That's grand theft auto.

LINDA

I get it back at midnight, when you're dead.

GILES

That's not funny.

LINDA

No one's laughing, Harry.

Giles turns, almost knocks over the dapper MR. BECKER.

MR. BECKER

Good afternoon, Mr. Giles. I've come to ask if you prefer wood or metal?

He holds a black umbrella over his head to keep the snow off.

GILES

What?

MR. BECKER
Your casket. Should it be wood or
metal?

He unfolds a color pamphlet.

MR. BECKER (CONT'D)
I have no wish to influence your
decision, but our Prestige Oak
line is gorgeous this year.

GILES
Go fuck yourself.

Becker is horrified. Giles shoves past him, starts down the
street.

MR. BECKER
(calling)
I understand. You're under a lot
of stress, but these are important
decisions.

Linda grabs Giles' arm.

LINDA
Will you stop for a minute?

GILES
I'm kind of on the clock here, in
case you haven't noticed.

LINDA
Calm down. I can't help you if
you're going to keep going off
like an imbecile.

Mr. Becker taps on Giles' shoulder.

GILES
(turns)
What?!

Giles is blinded by a CAMERA FLASH.

MR. BECKER
For Miss Johnson, our make-up
lady. When you get to your
eternal reward we want you to look
as natural and life-like as you do
right now.

Giles stomps off. Linda turns to Mr. Becker, gives the
finger.

LINDA

Sit on it!

She hurries back into the Hotel.

INT. DESERT PALMS CAFE - DAY

Sally, Bruno and Walter celebrate with coffee and cake.
Bert's frying something as Giles enters.

BERT

How's about a little lunch?

Bruno reaches for his wallet, but Bert waves him off.

BERT(CONT'D)

It's on the Club's tab.

Giles ignores them, walks to the phone.

GILES

I just want to use the phone.

Bert shakes his head.

BERT

Phone's out of order. Lines are
down.

WAITRESS

The storm and all, don't you
know...

Sally, Bruno and Walter are trying hard not to laugh.
Giles looks around.

GILES

(to everyone)

Anyone got a car or truck I could
rent? I'll pay top dollar.

MAN AT COUNTER

Michael Kruschner would have
something.

BERT

(nods)

Michael Kruschner'll rent you damn
near anything.

GILES

Where can I find him?

BERT

Sacramento.

Sally, Bruno and Walter LAUGH.

BERT(CONT'D)

He spends Christmas there every year.

(to others)

His daughter, ain't it?

The others nod in agreement. Giles takes his wallet out, holds it above his head.

GILES

Three hundred dollars to give me a ride to Vegas.

MURPHY (O.S.)

You paying that in cash?

Giles turns to MURPHY, the bread deliveryman, sitting in the back booth.

GILES

Absolutely.

MURPHY

I'll take you.

Murphy wipes the food off his mouth.

The mood in the place instantly sours. Giles smiles at them, follows Murphy toward the door.

BERT

You don't want to ride with him. He's a convicted murderer.

Several customers chime in.

GILES

I'll take my chances.

SALLY

Five hundred dollars to let him walk.

GILES

A thousand...

MURPHY

Cash?

Giles nods. Bruno, Sally and Walter empty their pockets.

MURPHY(CONT'D)

Can you do better?

The three Club Players count the cash between them, come up short.

SALLY

Shit!!!

Giles follows Murphy outside.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Sally, Bruno, Walter and several Customers rush outside.
Bruno looks sick.

SALLY

Do something you assholes..!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Murphy leads Giles to his bread truck. He opens the door--
puts his hand out.

MURPHY

Where's the money?

Giles reaches for his wallet, pulls out his Visa Card.

GILES

You'll get it when I'm in Vegas.

MURPHY

I don't take credit.

Murphy hops in, starts the motor.

GILES

Wait!!! I'll give you five
thousand in Vegas!

MURPHY

Sorry. I don't trust plastic.

He drives away. Giles jogs after him.

GILES

At least stop in Vegas and call
the police for me. Have them come
here.

MURPHY

I don't know. I'd sure hate to
get involved with the police,
especially for a welcher and liar.

Giles turns toward the cafe. Everyone is gone. A "CLOSED"
sign hangs in the window.

EXT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Linda watches from the window.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Daisy, Jackie, Janie and a couple of other children trudge into the hotel. Giles spots them, brightens.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Giles enters and is immediately surrounded by the children, SINGING, holding hands.

CHILDREN

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall..."

A young boy kneels down behind Giles as Jackie gives him a shove.

Giles CRASHES to the floor! The children roar with laughter.

GILES

You little monsters!

Daisy stands up from behind the counter.

DAISY

Kids...They just love to have
fun.

She turns to the children.

DAISY(CONT'D)

You all go outside now and make a
snowman.

The children obey, except for Jackie who gives Giles a cold smirk before exciting. Giles rises from the floor, moves back so Jackie can't stomp on his foot.

DAISY(CONT'D)

What can I do for you, Mr. Giles?

GILES

I need to make a call.

She nods to the weather outside.

DAISY

Sorry, lines are down.

GILES

You're lying.

He quickly leaps over the counter, dials a number. Nothing.

GILES(CONT'D)

Damn, come on already!

DAISY

I told you. Watch your language
in front of the children.

He nods nervously, hurries outside.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Giles is in a phone booth. An AUTOMATED VOICE comes on the
line:

VOICE

"Sorry, service has been
temporarily interrupted. Please
call back..."

GILES

Shit! Shit! Shit!

He smashes the receiver against a plaque that reads: "Donated
by Mr. And Mrs. Otto Schwartz."

KNOCK, KNOCK! -- Joseph Jenzen, the Schwartz's handyman
stands outside the phone booth.

JOSEPH

How're you doing, sir?

Giles walks past him. Joseph falls in alongside him, takes
out a notebook and pen.

JOSEPH(CONT'D)

Opened or closed?

GILES

What?

JOSEPH

Do you want the casket opened or
closed? You have to decide.

Giles keeps walking.

JOSEPH(CONT'D)

It affects your choice of demise.
Let's say you decide to check out
by sticking your head in a lawn
mower. That's not a very popular
choice, I'm just using it as an
example. But it would pretty much
rule out an open casket funeral.

Joseph cringes.

JOSEPH(CONT'D)
 You'd put people right off the
 funeral luncheon.

GILES
 I don't have to decide because I'm
 not going to die.

JOSEPH
 Ah, denial! You're moving right
 along, sir. That's good.

Giles picks up the pace.

JOSEPH(CONT'D)
 So, let me guess...
 (studies Giles)
 You sir, are a jumper. Am I right?

GILES
 Screw off.

JOSEPH
 A shooter?
 (no reply)
 A burner.

Joseph snaps his fingers.

JOSEPH(CONT'D)
 I've got it -- A suffocator.
 (smiles)
 Am I right?

Giles stops, shakes him hard by the shoulders.

GILES
 Wake up! I am not dying here!

He finally lets go, hurries toward the hotel.

JOSEPH
 (calls out)
 With all due respect, sir, don't
 you think you've been in denial
 long enough? It's time to move on.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DUSK

Giles paces the floor. Linda watches him.

GILES
 What are we missing?

LINDA

Nothing. Think about it. The towns around here are dumps. This one's perfect. Every fool who joins the Club is this town's livelihood. They're not going to let you just walk out.

Giles looks out the window, sees a State Highway Patrol Cruiser parked in front of the Police Station.

GILES

(bravely)

Ha! Pack your bags because this fool is getting us out of here.

He grabs his coat.

GILES(CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

He leaves.

INT. WALNUT GROVE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Two HWY PATROL OFFICERS STESSMAN and CHRISTENSEN, interview Giles. Chief Rex, Herman, and Rupert look on.

CHRISTENSEN

(to Giles)

And then you had the bread delivery man send us over here?

GILES

Yes.

STESSMAN

That's quite a story, Mr. Giles.

CHIEF REX

And that's just what it is. You think something like this could go on in my town and I wouldn't know a thing about it?

GILES

You do know about it.

(to Stessman)

They all know about it.

CHRISTENSEN

Yeah, yeah. I already got that part. Now, who exactly threatened you?

GILES

What do you mean?

CHRISTENSEN

Did anybody say they were going to kill you?

GILES

No, not exactly. They want me to commit suicide.

CHRISTENSEN

Wishing a man dead is not a crime.

GILES

No, but holding me here against my will is.

CHRISTENSEN

They won't let you leave?

GILES

That's right.

CHIEF REX

Look, I don't know what this kook's problem is, but his car is right over there...

(winks to cops)

If he wants to drive away in the middle of a snowstorm, so much the better as far as I'm concerned.

Giles walks to the window.

GILES POV: His car is in front of the hotel. There's even snow on it, as though it's been there awhile.

GILES

But it wasn't...

He shuts up.

GILES(CONT'D)

Sorry to have troubled you officers.

He exits.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Giles brushes the snow off the windows, gets in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Giles starts the car. It CRANKS over immediately.

GILES

Yes!!!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Police Officers Stessman and Christensen get into their car, drive away.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Giles backs up. Linda rushes out of the hotel, gets in next to him -- He immediately gasses it, flips a finger at Chief Rex as he drives past him -- then suddenly, the car sputters, and the engine dies out.

LINDA

(afraid)

What happened?

Giles looks at the GAS GAUGE-- full. He tries the ignition. Nothing.

GILES

They messed with it!

He looks down the street. The Police are gone.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Giles jumps out of his car. Linda follows. Chief Rex calls to him.

CHIEF REX

Could be the carburetor. Sometimes they get cold and outta whack...

(snaps fingers)

just like that!

GILES

Yeah right, and fuck you, too.

Chief Rex laughs, goes back to the police station.

LINDA

What is this 'Deliverance' with all the crazy hicks around here?

Giles stands there, ponders his next move.

GILES

I got it! Come on!

He runs toward the hotel.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Daisy's at the desk. She smiles sweetly as Giles rushes in, followed by Linda.

DAISY

Evening, Mr. Giles, Miss Morris.
You both seem awfully jumpy
tonight. Anything I can do for
you?

LINDA

Yeah, get lost.

Daisy shrugs, turns back to the switchboard.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles SLAMS open the door, grabs his tool case. He looks at Linda who watches him from the doorway.

GILES

Meet me out front in ten minutes.

LINDA

Where you going?

GILES

Just dress warm.

He hurries past her.

LINDA

Wait!

He doesn't.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Daisy watches as Giles bolts down the stairs and out the door.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Giles walks down the sidewalk. Deputy Herman, in his Mercedes SUV Police car, cruises beside him. He makes no secret of his presence and his passenger is carrying a hunting rifle. Giles suddenly turns, goes into the tavern.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Most of the lights are off. A lone Bartender wipes off the bar as he enters.

BARTENDER

Sorry, I'm closed. Christmas eve.

GILES
Yeah, right, pal... Merry
Christmas.

He hurries out the back door. The Bartender watches him go.

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The Bartender calmly exits, calls out to Herman.

BARTENDER
He went out the back.

HERMAN
Thanks. I'd better get the Chief.

Herman floors it.

EXT. BACK OF WARREN FARM EQUIPMENT STORE - NIGHT

Giles stands at the front door alarm, holds two wires together. He selects a mini-clamp from his tools, uses it to hold the contacts together. He tenses, then pulls the door open. Nothing. He collects his tools, enters.

INT. WARREN FARM EQUIPMENT STORE - NIGHT

Multi-colored Christmas tree lights dance around the display window, providing cover for Giles as he shines his penlight to survey the store.

GILES POV- Tractors, motor parts, snow blowers. The latest model snowmobile sits in the display window. Giles removes the gas cap, shines his penlight into the gas tank- It's dry!

GILES
Oh, man, what is this..?!

He shines the light around the store, stops on a large door which leads to the "Repair Area."

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Chief Rex exits with Herman. Rupert is being dragged down the street by five large, BARKING dogs.

CHIEF REX
Let's find the squeamer before
he gets too far. It's too damn
cold to be chasing him all over
the countryside.

Suddenly little Jackie rushes up.

JACKIE

Mother saw...
 (catching a breath)
 a light in Warren's Farm Store. I
 think the...
 (spells it out)
 b-a-s-t-a-r-d might be in there.

A number of Townspeople have joined the search. They hurriedly crisscross the area with flashlights.

INT. WARREN'S FARM STORE - NIGHT

Giles shines his penlight on a storage area, runs the penlight over several shelves containing paints and thinner. Then spots what appears to be a gas can. He opens it and smells it, picks it up and hurries to the snowmobile.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Linda waits in the dark, anxiously looks at her watch.

LINDA

(whispers)
 Come on, baby. Come on...

Down the street, Linda sees the Police hurrying toward Warren's Farm Store being pulled by the BARKING dogs.

EXT. WARREN'S FARM STORE - NIGHT

Chief Rex, Herman and Rupert arrive at the of front the store with the BARKING dogs.

The ROAR OF AN ENGINE is heard, then-- SMASH! The front window shatters as Giles careens over Chief Rex on his snowmobile -- Giles hits the street, races toward the hotel.

ON Chief Rex as he picks himself up off the ground. Chief Rex stands FIRES several shots at Giles: BANG!!! BANG!!! BANG!!!

CHIEF REX

(yells)
 Get every friggin snowmobile we
 got! -- Block off the roads. Put
 out an alarm. And for Pete's sake
 let the dogs lose on 'em!

Rupert lets them loose, and dogs immediately give chase.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Giles slides to a stop in front of Linda at the entrance.

GILES

Hop on, we're outta here!

Linda jumps on back as we hear music from a loud speaker:
"SLEIGH BELLS RING ARE YOU LISTENING..."

Giles opens it up full throttle and races out of town.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A group of six SNOWMOBILES slingshot around the corner--
Chief Rex directs them toward a grove of trees. A CROWD,
including Sally, Bruno and Walter, watch them go by.

SALLY

That limp-dick cocksucker's gonna
rob us of our money...

EXT. GROVE OF TREES - NIGHT

Giles and Linda on a SNOWMOBILE.
Linda bounces around, trying to hold on tight. The trees
whip by at a terrifying pace.

LINDA

Lookout!!!

Giles swerves, avoids a large rock. Linda turns:

LINDA'S POV- BARKING DOGS coming up fast and the HEADLIGHTS
of snowmobilers entering the grove. Giles weaves around a
tree into an open field.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Chief Rex stands by his Mercedes SUV, looks through his
binoculars- The dogs are gaining. Giles guns it, pulls away.

CHIEF REX

He's heading for the Pass.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Chief Rex jumps into his SUV, floors it. "JINGLE BELLS,
JINGLE BELLS, JINGLE ALL THE WAY, OH WHAT FUN IT IS TO RIDE
IN A ONE HORSE OPEN SLEIGH..."

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Giles flies over a hill, SEES a barbed wire fence directly in
front of them.

GILES

Oh, Christ -- Hold on!!!

He turns sharply. Too late, they slide into the fence.
Linda SCREAMS! Her pants are torn, her leg bleeding.

GILES(CONT'D)

You okay?

LINDA

(panicked)

Keep going!

He gasses it, floods the engine.

GILES

Oh no, not now!

He tries the ignition, but it's no use. Nothing.
Then a spotlight hits them. Giles jumps off the snowmobile,
grabs Linda's hand and starts running up a hill.

EXT. TOP OF HILL - NIGHT

Giles pulls Linda to the top. They drop to their knees,
gasping for air.

He pulls out his cell phone, dials: BEEP, BEEP, BEEP! "No
service." He throws it away.
Linda grabs his arm. Something's strange.

LINDA

Listen...

It's deadly silent. Even the dogs have quit barking.

SUDDENLY, a match FLARES in the darkness as Chief Rex lights
his cigar.

CHIEF REX

(calmly)

Mr. Giles. Miss Morris. We'd be
delighted to give you a ride back
to town.

Deputy Herman stands next to Chief Rex. Giles looks at
Linda, realizes they're beat.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles is sprawled across the bed, Linda's at the window,
crying.

GILES

Who would have thought I'd be done
in by hillbillies wearing flannel
nine months out of the year.

LINDA

We can't give up.

GILES
 I'm not. I'm just thinking.
 (pause)
 You know I don't have any photos
 in my wallet.

Linda wipes her eyes, looks at him, puzzled.

GILES(CONT'D)
 Even a dipshit like Thurmond
 Quigley had a photo... But not
 me... I never allowed myself to
 care about anyone enough.

Linda quietly folds her arms, listens.

GILES(CONT'D)
 You know, I went to get help for
 gambling once.

LINDA
 You did?

GILES
 When I thought I might lose you.
 I took a hard look at myself in
 the mirror.

LINDA
 And..?

Giles shrugs.

GILES (CONT'D)
 I didn't like what I saw.
 (shrugs)
 But, I still couldn't change.

He sits up, looks at Linda sincerely.

GILES(CONT'D)
 I think it's important that you
 know...how much I need you...how
 much I've always needed you and
 that...
 (whispers)
 ...I have loved you for a long
 time.

Linda looks at him, tears roll down her face as she starts
 crying again. Giles goes to her.

GILES(CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. That was a stupid
 thing to say.

Linda shakes her head.

LINDA
It was perfectly right.

He pulls her to him and embraces her, tightly.

INT. VICTORIAN KITCHEN - NIGHT

A light over the sink is on. Otto, dressed in his robe and pajamas, stirs a cup of warm milk when the doorbell CHIMES. Otto, glances at the clock on the kitchen wall- 11:30 pm.

INT. VICTORIAN ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Otto opens the door. It's Linda, shivering in the cold.

OTTO
Oh, Miss Morris. What a pleasure
to see you again. Do come in.

Linda enters, hands him a piece of paper.

OTTO (CONT'D)
What's this?

LINDA
An I.O.U...
(pleading)
Please let my Harry go!

Otto smiles pleasantly.

LINDA [CONT'D]
I promise we'll pay you the money
if it takes us twenty years.

OTTO
I have no doubt that you and Mr.
Giles would eventually pay us the
money. However, once he returns
to Los Angeles, it's conceivable,
is it not, that he might change
his mind. Then what would we do?

LINDA
I'll stay until Harry sends you
the money. I'll be a hostage.

OTTO
Very noble of you my dear, but a
man who would foolishly risk his
life on a bet, is not likely to
(MORE)

(CONT'D)

put a high value on someone else's
life.

Irma calls from upstairs.

IRMA (O.S.)

Who is it, dear?

OTTO

It's that nice Miss Morris.

IRMA (O.S.)

Is everything all right?

OTTO

Mr. Giles has moved from renegeing
to bargaining.

IRMA (O.S.)

Oh, my. I would have thought he'd
moved past that. He should be
into depression moving toward
acceptance by now.

LINDA

Oh, he's depressed alright.

Irma enters the room, followed by Marian Quigley, Sally,
Bruno and Walter.

IRMA

I'm here with all of the actors.
Linda, would you like some warm
milk, dear?

Linda is stunned seeing Marian Quigley and the card players.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles paces nervously, looks out the window.

GILES POV- Chief Rex's sits in his Mercedes SUV across the
street, watches the hotel with Herman and Rupert. Behind
them, several townspeople have joined the watch.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles gives them the finger, sits down on the bed, defeated.

INT. VICTORIAN PARLOR - NIGHT

Linda sits in a chair facing Sally, Walter and Bruno who sit
on the couch going through their routine, as Irma and Marian
Quigley watch admiringly on the side.

BRUNO
 (sobbing)
 I just know I'm going to lose.

SALLY
 You're right, asshole!
 (to Linda)
 Ever seen such a loser?

They laugh as Linda watches in disbelief.

MARIAN QUIGLEY
 You are sooo good. I wish I played
 a character like you in my movies.

SALLY
 (to Bruno)
 I think you get better every year.

BRUNO
 (to Sally)
 Well, you got me with some of your
 line readings. I tell you, the
 Desert Palms Players have never
 been better.

Linda can hardly speak, looks at Marian.

LINDA
 I don't understand. I thought you
 loved your husband...

MARIAN QUIGLEY
 It's called acting, Miss Morris...
 I hated Thurmond. He gambled away
 every dollar I ever earned. The
 bastard even ruined our business
 while he was sleeping with every
 woman he met, whether she was
 beautiful or not...The Schwartz's
 saved me, just like they're doing
 for you.

Irma enters with several cups and a pot, begins to pour warm
 milk.

LINDA
 But, why Harry?

MARIAN QUIGLEY
 Easy target. Through my husband,
 I knew every casino and every
 Dealer in Vegas.

FLASHBACK:

INT. RIVIERA HOTEL -NIGHT

Giles puts down the rest of his chips. The Dealer deals him a card down, Five up. The Dealer shows a Nine. Giles looks at his down card- a Seven. He nods, is given another Seven. Giles breathes easily, until the Dealer turns his bottom card over revealing an Ace.

DEALER

Pay twenty-one.

The Dealer smiles, rakes in Giles' chips.

DEALER(CONT'D)

Having a bad run, Mr. Giles?

GILES

It'll change, Lenny. You know me.

Giles elegantly walks toward the exit, wipes the sweat from his forehead.

CAMERA SHOT WIDENS TO REVEAL- Marian Quigley at the next table, moving next to the Dealer.

MARIAN QUIGLEY

Who was that, Lenny?

DEALER

Harry Giles. Private Dick outta L.A.

MARIAN QUIGLEY

Likes to gamble, does he?

DEALER

Reminds me of your husband.

INT. THE SCHWARTZ' LIVING ROOM AGAIN - NIGHT

LINDA

(accusingly)

My God... You set him up!

MARIAN QUIGLEY

(dryly)

No, Miss Morris. His compulsion for gambling set him up. Harry Giles deserves his fate. You'll be much better off without him.

IRMA

Drink your milk dear, it's good
for your health...allows you to
sleep well.

She pours another cup of warm milk for Otto.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles paces. Suddenly, he stops, looks out the window.

EXT MAIN STREET - NIGHT

GILES POV- No one is there.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles looks at the courthouse clock- It's almost midnight.

INT. VICTORIAN ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Irma and Otto usher Linda to the door.

OTTO

Thank you very much for stopping
by with your kind offer, but if
it's all the same to you, we'll
stick to our original plan.

(to Irma)

Isn't that right, dear?

Irma nods.

LINDA

And what about me..?

Otto appears offended.

OTTO

Why, nothing will happen to you,
Miss Morris. We wouldn't harm a
hair on your head. No one in
Desert Palms would...

(beat)

Why that would be unchristian!

Irma smiles, pats Linda's hand gently.

IRMA

Chin up dear. Think about the
million dollar check you'll be
receiving, just like Ms. Quigley.

LINDA

What million dollar check?

IRMA

Didn't you know? Mr. Giles listed you as beneficiary on his insurance.

Linda's stunned.

LINDA

He did?

MARIAN QUIGLEY

(smiles smugly)

You've hit the jackpot, Miss Morris. But next year you have to help the Schwartz's find a new player.

Linda spits it out.

LINDA

A million dollars, if Harry..?

They all chime in.

ALL

Yes...yes...yes!

MARIAN QUIGLEY

No more financial worries.

Linda thinks about it a moment.

SALLY

You'll be set for life, kiddo!

IRMA

That's right dear.

LINDA

God, wouldn't that be nice.

Linda nods her head, thinks, gives a sly smile.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I understand now. Thank you.

IRMA

We knew you would.

Linda takes this in, gives Irma a quick kiss on the cheek, then exits. Otto shuts the door.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Isn't she a nice lady?

OTTO

Yes, dear. And smart too.

EXT. STREET NIGHT

The TOWNSPEOPLE, holding torches and circling a bonfire, have reached a fevered pitch and start marching toward the hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Giles paces frantically, pounds his fist against the wall. We HEAR the Courthouse clock CHIME midnight. Giles stops pounding the wall, listens. Suddenly, the steps CREAK, then comes a soft KNOCK at the door.

DAISY (V.O.)
(other side of door)
Mr. Giles. It's time.

The door opens and a .38 caliber pistol comes into frame.

GILES
(frantic)
What?! -- Jesus Christ!

He grabs the pistol, slams the door shut.

His hands shake as he looks at the weapon. He hefts it back and forth, thinking.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The Townspeople have reached the hotel, the tension is high. They begin CLAPPING their hands in BEATS anticipating the sound of a gunshot.

As they look toward the window of room #15, a chair suddenly CRASHES through the window, falling to the ground below. Giles follows. He slides down the roof with the gun in his hand, hits the ground and starts running.

EXT. TOP OF A STORE - NIGHT

Deputy Herman watches Giles with night-vision goggles.

HERMAN
(into his radio)
Darn it. He's running again.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

The CROWD begins to shout, angrily.

CROWD
He's running!!!

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Chief Rex looks at his radio.

HERMAN (O.S.)
Did you hear me? He's a runner!

CHIEF REX
(into radio)
Take him down now!!!

EXT. TOP OF A STORE - NIGHT

Herman not sure he heard right.

HERMAN
(into radio)
What?!

CHIEF REX (O.S.)
(on radio)
Shoot the S.O.B. so we can all
get to bed!!!

Herman raises his rifle, gets Giles in his sight-- BANG!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Giles zigzags across the street, jumps as bullets spray around his feet. BANG, BANG, BANG! Herman keeps shooting, hits everything but Giles.

EXT. HENSEN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE - NIGHT

Giles picks up a bench, heaves it through the window. He quickly scrambles inside as the ALARM pierces the night.

INT. VICTORIAN PARLOR - NIGHT

Irma and Otto claim their upstairs as the phone RINGS. Irma rushes to answer it.

IRMA
Hello...
(listens, calls to Otto)
We have a problem, sweetheart.

INT. HENSEN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE - NIGHT

Several guns line the counter. Giles systematically checks them for ammo. There's plenty. Chief Rex calls to him over a bullhorn outside.

CHIEF REX (O.S.)
(outside)
Harry Giles... This is Chief Rex.

Giles moves to the window, peeks out.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

A CROWD has gathered. Chief Rex stands behind his cruiser.

CHIEF REX
(on bullhorn)
COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS ABOVE
YOUR HEAD!

Giles calls out the window.

GILES (O.S.)
Get a life, pal.

Chief Rex tosses the bullhorn aside.

CHIEF REX
(yells)
You might as well give up, Mr.
Giles. You're surrounded...
There's no way out.

SALLY
Why don't you die like a man?

GILES (O.S.)
Get stuffed you old douche-bag!

Several townspeople GASP.

WAITRESS
Gil on C.S.I., would never have
gotten himself into a pickle like
this.

DAISY
And if by chance he had, he
certainly wouldn't have resorted
to profanity.

SALLY
Let's hurry up, I'm cold as hell.

Chief Rex reaches for his gun.

DAISY
Just shoot him, then burn the
body, There'd be no evidence and
no one would be the wiser.

Everyone nods in agreement.

HERMAN
What if he shoots back?

Chief Rex considers this.

DAISY
He won't shoot. He's yellow.

GILES
(yells)
Consider your next move very
carefully, gentlemen.

Chief Rex eases his pistol back to his holster.

GILES (CONT'D)
(yells)
I want a car with a full tank of
gas out there in ten minutes.

WALTER
(yells back)
Or what? You'll shoot yourself?

Chief Rex and the others chuckle.

GILES
(yells)
Or, I'll shoot you!

BANG! He FIRES a shot past Chief Rex's head. Everyone hits
the ground except Daisy.

DAISY
Lord have mercy!

She covers her mouth with her hand as she's pulled to the
ground by Chief Rex.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Otto and Irma slowly drive the Quigley's Rolls Royce down
Main Street.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The crowd has moved in front of Hensen's Sporting Goods
Store. Otto and Irma get out of their car, hurry to Chief
Rex.

OTTO
Where is he?

CHIEF REX
Holed up in the store. The way
he's flinging bullets around I
(MORE)

CHIEF REX (CONT'D)
figure he's got enough ammo to
last him till the spring thaw.

Another CAR, a classic Jaguar in perfect condition, arrives.
Joseph jumps out, hurries to open the door for the elder Mr.
Schwartz.

JOSEPH
(whispers to Irma)
He seems to be running on all
cylinders tonight.

Otto looks at the elder Mr. Schwartz.

OTTO
Papa, I just don't understand
this. He should have moved from
depression to acceptance. They
always do.

Several people nod.

CHIEF REX
What should we do?

They all look at the elder Mr. Schwartz, await his words of
wisdom.

MR. SCHWARTZ
Dynamite the bastard...
(confides to Otto)
Never known a good blast to fail
to lift the spirits of everyone.

IRMA
I don't think dynamite's the
answer.

MR. SCHWARTZ
No?
(thinks it over)
Then shoot the living hell out
him.

Sally raises her arm in agreement.

SALLY
Give me the gun, I'll shoot him.

CHIEF REX
Shoot a man full of holes? You'd
pretty much have to burn him to a
crisp to cover it up.

Daisy agrees.

DAISY
That's what I said. Just like Mr.
Quigley.

SALLY

Fine, then burn the store down?
It's an ugly eye-sore anyhow...

Everett Hensen, the owner interrupts.

EVERETT

Burn down my own store?

Suddenly, Linda appears. She walks directly to Otto and Irma as the crowd quiets.

LINDA

Let me try...

Otto looks at her for a brief moment, then turns to Irma.

OTTO

(to Irma)

Let her try. If it doesn't work,
then we'll burn him out.

IRMA

Right you are, dear.

Linda nods, hurries inside. Chief Rex turns to the crowd.

CHIEF REX

Move back everyone! Give us room
to work...

(to Otto and Irma)

Are you sure about her?

IRMA

(knowing)

Sooner or later, everything comes
down to money.

INT. HENSEN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE - NIGHT

Linda rushes inside. They quickly move away from the window.

LINDA

They're going to burn this place
to the ground, Harry.

Giles jumps to his feet.

GILES

You shouldn't have come.

LINDA

No! They're not going to do
anything to harm me.

GILES

What?!

LINDA

It's part of their twisted moral code: You have to die, but it would be unethical for me to even get a scratch.

GILES

They can't let you walk. You'll tell everyone.

LINDA

They've been investigated before. It doesn't bother them one bit.

Giles thinks about that a moment.

EXT. HENSEN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE - NIGHT

The crowd is growing anxious. They begin to CHANT and CLAP their hands in a BEAT. Chief Rex turns to Otto and Irma.

CHIEF REX

She's got five minutes then we're gonna burn'em out.

Suddenly, young Jackie makes a break from the crowd and races toward the store.

DAISY

(shouts)

No! Jackie you get back here, right now!!!

Jackie ignores her and doesn't break his stride.

INT. HENSEN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE - NIGHT

Jackie rushes in, confronts Giles and Linda.

JACKIE

My mom says you're a dead man, Humpty Dumpty.

Giles grabs him by the arm.

GILES

Think so, you little shit!

EXT. HENSEN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE - NIGHT

The crowd watches, unsure of what's going to happen. Then they HEAR Giles calling to them...

GILES
We're coming out!

The door opens.

The Crowd GASPS as Giles exits with a pistol pointed at Linda's head. With his other hand, he pulls Jackie along by his arm.

DAISY
You let him go, you bully!

Giles moves the gun back and forth from Daisy to the Crowd, to Linda and Jackie.

GILES
Anyone moves, I'll kill the both
of them.

Chief Rex and Herman immediately pull their guns and train them on Giles.

CHIEF REX
I swear to God, I'll...

He cocks his pistol.

Linda gives Irma a hard look, signals her with a "WINK." Irma returns the signal with a smile and a nod.

CHIEF REX (CONT'D)
(to Irma)
I told you we shouldn't have let
her go in there.

IRMA
Don't shoot!

Irma motions for him to hush. Giles looks at Chief Rex, commands him...

GILES
Give me your keys.

CHIEF REX
Hell, no.

IRMA
Give him the keys.

CHIEF REX
What?!

GILES
You heard her, the keys.

Irma lays a hand on Chief Rex's arm to give up the keys.

CHIEF REX
But they have Jackie.

Irma nods, yes. Chief Rex reluctantly tosses Giles the keys. The crowd parts allowing Giles Linda and Jackie to move to the Mercedes Police SUV. Giles keeps Linda and Jackie between him and the crowd. Then Daisy steps in front of him.

DAISY
You're a cruel man, Mister.

GILES
Get back, you silly woman!

Jackie squirms, but Giles tightens his grip.

GILES (CONT'D)
Out of my way, or else...
(to Linda)
Start the car.

Linda moves to the driver side of the SUV, gets in and cranks the motor. It fires immediately. Giles keeps Jackie between him and the crowd as he opens the door on his side.

GILES (CONT'D)
Everyone down on your knees.

Reluctantly, they obey.

GILES (CONT'D)
Now on your stomachs...hands
behind your head.

Chief Rex and everyone lies down in the snow, puts their hands behind their head as commanded -- Suddenly, Giles kicks Jackie in the butt, pushes him toward Daisy, jumps in the SUV and fires his gun in the air: BANG!!! BANG!!!

JACKIE
(holding his butt)
OOWWEEEEE!!!

Linda and Giles immediately drive away. The crowd begins to get up as little Jackie yells out...

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Shoot him..! Shoot him..!

CHIEF REX
(to Irma)
Why didn't you let me kill him?

IRMA
You'll have your chance.

Crowd starts CHANTING...

CROWD
Kill him!!! Kill him!!!

CHIEF REX
(into radio to Herman)
Kill'em...

EXT. TOP OF A STORE - NIGHT

Herman traces the car with his rifle scope.

HERMAN
(into radio)
Soon as they turn the corner,
I'll have a clear shot.

INT. SUV - NIGHT

Giles looks back at the townspeople, puts the pistol down.

GILES
They aren't following us.

He turns back around, but immediately spots Herman on the roof just ahead.

GILES (CONT'D)
Uh, oh...!

He stomps on Linda's foot. The SUV shoots forward, slides around the corner.

EXT. TOP OF A STORE - NIGHT

BANG! Herman fires, the SUV shoots forward, slides around the corner as a barrage of bullets spray the windshield. Linda loses control of the SUV and it fishtails and CRASHES!

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The townspeople watch with great excitement and continue to CHANT...

TOWNSPEOPLE
(yelling)
Kill him!!! Kill Him!!!

Irma raises her hand, quiets them.

IRMA
It's alright. The game isn't over
until the last card's been played.

They all look at her, puzzled.

IRMA (CONT'D)
(knowingly)
If you had to choose, which would be
more important to you? Love or
money?

The Townspeople quiet down, confused and disgruntled.

EXT./INT. POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Giles and Linda are shaken up. Giles is bleeding from his
forehead.

LINDA
I've learned something from this,
Harry...

She picks up the pistol.

LINDA (CONT'D)
That sometimes you just have to
play the game.

She aims the pistol at him.

LINDA (CONT'D)
They want you, not me...

She aims the pistol at him.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The crowd HEARS several shots: BANG! BANG! BANG!

IRMA
(gentle laugh)
They always choose money.

The Townspeople begin to cheer and race toward the car.

EXT./INT. SUV CAR - NIGHT

The townspeople run to the SUV.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The children begin SINGING "Humpty Dumpty" again'

Irma walks up to Linda in SUV)

IRMA

Good shooting, my dear.

Linda opens her door, gets out, moves around the car to face the crowd. The crowd quiets down, lets Linda go to Otto and Irma. Linda has blood spattered on her clothes.

LINDA

I want my own car back now!

IRMA

Of course. I must say, that was well done.

She gives Linda a high-five.

LINDA

Excuse the blood...

She raises her hand, signals Joseph to pull Linda's rental up next to the SUV. Linda opens the door to the SUV to expose the dead bloody body of Harry Giles. She looks at him, then yanks the locket from her own neck, opens it.

LINDA'S POV- A picture of her and Giles; She drops it on Giles' body and closes the SUV car door. Joseph pulls her car up and gets out, leaves the motor running.

LINDA (CONT'D)

He didn't want to die without a picture on him.

Linda looks at Daisy and Irma.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Don't burn him. I don't want that.

IRMA

Of course, dear.

Linda moves to her car with the motor running, gets in.

DAISY

Don't you worry your pretty little head Miss, we'll take care of everything.

Linda cuts her off, fighting back tears.

LINDA
 Just make sure my name is spelled
 right on the insurance check...
 Morris... M-o-r-r-i-s!

They all clap as Linda closes her door and drives away.

OTTO
 Okay, we have work to do people.

Everyone moves off to do their job.

OTTO (CONT'D)
 Get the police car and the body to
 the shed.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Linda drives, wipes the tears from her face as she glances in
 the rearview mirror.

LINDA
 You can come up now.

Giles' head pops up from the back seat, holding his
 bleeding hand.

GILES
 You shot me! I can't believe it!

LINDA
 You're alive aren't you?

He climbs in front, wraps a torn piece of his shirt around
 his bloody hand. Linda looks at him.

LINDA (CONT'D)
 You deserved it... Every time you
 even think of dealing a card, or
 pulling a slot machine, I want
 you to look at that hand and
 remember Thurmond Quigley.

GILES
 I guess you had to shoot me.

LINDA
 Yeah, Harry, I did. Just consider
 it the luckiest thing that ever
 happened to you.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The crowd is moving off as Joseph opens the door to the SUV,
 there's blood everywhere, but no Harry Giles.

JOSEPH

He's gone!!!

CHIEF REX

O.K., Get the snowmobiles, they
won't get far.

IRMA

And I thought she was such a nice
lady.

Suddenly, the elder Mr. Schwartz falls to the ground, grabs
his heart. Irma pats his arm, comforts him as his body jerks
and he dies.

IRMA

Oh, my goodness, he's gone!

The Townspeople gather around stunned. Chief Rex looks at
Otto and Irma.

CHIEF REX

Now, see what you've done?

Irma has an idea.

IRMA

Put your thinking cap on, Chief.
If we cremate Papa, who'll know it
isn't Mr. Giles? We have his
signature and we'll have the ashes.

OTTO

Papa always wanted to be cremated.

Daisy gasps.

DAISY

(smiles)

That's n-a-u-g-h-t-y.

IRMA

But, Papa wouldn't mind. He'd be
doing a civic duty to the community.

The Townspeople nod in agreement.

OTTO

He'd be right pleased.

MR VELTON

Might work, certainly worth a try.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Linda's car approaches the bridge at the narrow
pass. INT. LINDA'S CAR - NIGHT

Linda drives as Giles looks to see where they are.

GILES

Stop!

Linda SLAMS on the brakes.

LINDA

What now, Harry?

Giles ignores her, gets out of the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Giles moves quickly to a pine tree, reaches down and
retrieves the SPIKE-STRIP he left earlier in the week.
He places it across the narrow road behind his car, and gets
back in.

LINDA

That won't stop them long.

INT. LINDA'S CAR - NIGHT

Giles gets in again.

GILES

O.K., hit it. They're coming.

As they pull away Giles looks back to see cars driving
across the spikes; One car after the other swerves and
crashing behind the other in a pile up. Drivers get out
cursing and shoot at Giles and Linda as they speed away.

But Chief Rex's SUV goes around the spikes in hot pursuit.

Giles stops the car again as they approach the narrow bridge.
He gets out, pulls a couple sticks of dynamite from his coat
and plants them on the end of the bridge traversing the Pass.

He takes out a lighter to light the fuses at the edge of a
cliff when suddenly Linda's CAR TRUNK springs open, and crazy
Sally crawls out with a pistol pointed at them!

SALLY

Hold it right there! You're both gonna face the music now... You put that lighter down and sit.

(to Linda)

And you... get out the car where I can see you.

Sally lights a cigarette as Linda gets out and sheepishly joins Giles.

GILES

Come on, Sally, you don't want to kill us. Where's the game in it?

Sally laughs until she's coughing, wheezing her lungs out. Linda side-glances Giles, then...

LINDA

Oh, the heck with it!

Linda charges Sally, lands a right-hook to her jaw, a GUNSHOT FIRES OFF as Linda knocks Sally over the cliff. There's a long, muted HOWL as Sally's on her way down-WHOOWOOOOAAAAH!

LINDA (CONT'D)

Gets you real hard doesn't it, slugger?!

Giles gives Linda a big hug and kiss. Then runs back and lights the fuses to the dynamite. They hop back in the car and speed quickly over the bridge.

GILES

That should do the trick. It'll be summer till they can get out, ha!

As Linda's car makes it across the bridge they hear a loud KA-BOOM! Looking back they see the opposite end of the bridge crashing down into the ravine.

Chief Rex and rest of them stop at the other end of the bridge. They get out with clenched fists, cursing them.

LINDA

Now, that was clever!

Linda notices a red spot on Giles' shirt and stops the car.

LINDA (CONT'D)

What's that, Harry?

He looks down, sees a small BULLET HOLE in his chest.

GILES

Uh, oh, I think I've been hit.

Linda looks at Giles wound, concerned.

LINDA

We have get you to a hospital!
Let's go...

She starts the car, drives him speedily down the road.
He's looking pale and woozy, not looking too good.

LINDA

How you doing, Harry? Keep awake.

GILES

I am, just keep your eyes
on the road.

LINDA

Grab something out of the suitcase
in back to put pressure on the wound.

Giles painfully reaches in the back, pops open the suitcase.

HIS POV: It's over-flowing with \$100 dollar bills!

GILES

How in the hell?! -- When?

LINDA

What do you think took me so long
to get to Hensen's Sporting Goods?

GILES

I coulda' been killed!

LINDA

Coulda'... yep, and you might've
gotten what you deserved.

He coughs up blood.

GILES

(weakly)

Hey, I'm not feeling so good...
Slow down and pull over for sec.

Giles pulls out a COIN, flips it in the air.

GILES (CONT'D)

How much wanna bet I'll never
make it down the hill? Heads,
I win...

Linda gives him a dirty look, and as he flips the coin,
he fades and dies in his seat.

She stops the car, casually leans over, and kisses his
forehead with tears in her eyes.

LINDA

Jesus Harry, you never learned
did you?

She shakes it off, then drives on with Las Vegas skyline in
the far distance, stars sparkling in the sky as dawn rises
gloriously on the wide open deserted desert horizon.

CLOSE ON COIN on the backseat next to the money--
It's heads!

THE END

FINAL CUT