

THE PRIVATE EYE OF HIRAM BODONI

by
Frank Gagliano

(A TV screenplay
OR
Multi media theatre piece)

In which the brilliant — but currently disturbed — detective Hiram Bodoni tries to solve — in a television studio — the mysterious and surreal deaths of a TV star, an Executive Producer, and an actor's Agent.

[Hampered by his own fevered existential crisis — disoriented by the surreal studio detritus of props, menacing cables, cameras and fragments of stage sets — irritated by having to constantly expose the characters he meets (who keep changing masks and personas) — and exhausted, too, by his pursuit of the world's evil doers and by his pursuit, too, of his elusive, exquisite muse, the "Lady In White" (who suddenly appears, in and out of his studio-caper delirium) — Hiram Bodoni (in some ways, an innocent) journeys on to the mind-blowing solution of the mystery, and the unexpected conclusion of his "Lady-in-White" yearnings]



Characters

**[One Actor plays]
Detective Hiram Bodoni**

**[One actor plays]
Tybalt Connors
Eric Kornzweig
(in Photo) The Old Fat Lady
(in Photo) Chestnut Man,
(in Photo) Gypsy Palm Reader
Blind Camera Man
Ted Ahearn**

**Robo Voice of the Renegade Camera
Various Voices (Off)
Camera (Final Scene)**

**[One Actress plays]
Cleo Croyden
Girl-In-White
Constance (babble-girl) Phone Voice
Various other voices
(Off)**

IN THE BLACK, THIS LEGEND ON THE SCREEN:

NEW YORK CITY.

***1969.
A TELEVISION STUDIO.***

MUSIC: ORGAN FOR TYPICAL 1969 TV SOAP OPERA. HELD UNDER

LEGEND ON THE SCREEN:

ON THE SET OF THE 1969 DAYTIME SERIAL:

“AS THE CLOCK TICKS.”

FADE IN: CLOSE UP OF A MAN’S HAND SQUASHING OUT A CIGARETTE INTO AN ASHTRAY. THE ASHTRAY HAS A PLAYBOY BUNNY IMPRINTED IN IT. THE CAMERA STAYS WITH THE HAND UNTIL INDICATED. THE FINGERS DRUM THE TABLE, FIDDLE WITH THE ASHTRAY. ON OCCASION, THE THUMB ROLLS THE WEDDING BAND OF THE RING FINGER. NEXT TO THE ASHTRAY IS A FOLDED-UP COPY OF THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF SEX, A PHOTO OF A PLAYBOY BUNNY IN A GOLD FRAME, AND A RED PIN CUSHION IN THE SHAPE OF A PLAYBOY BUNNY – THE TAIL BEING MADE OF PINS. ON OCCASION, THE STUBBY HAND PLAYS WITH THE PIN CUSHION.

MAN’S VOICE

(Over)

Yes, Constance, I urged Marianne to have the abortion

MUSIC: PUNCTUATES

MUFFLED VOICE BABBLE FROM THE PHONE.

MAN’S VOICE

(Over)

I know. I know, Constance! Ever since — every *time* I look in the mirror — I want to smash it! Smash my image out of my sight — out of EXISTENCE!

BABBLE AGAIN

MAN'S VOICE

(Over)

Oh, Constance, don't you think I've called myself worse names?

BABBLE

CLOSE-UP OF THE MAN ON THE PHONE. HE WEARS AN ELEGANT DRESSING GOWN AND CRAVAT

MAN

(Into phone)

Like what?... Like... Like – “No-good bum.” That's like what.

MUSIC: ORGAN PUNCTUATES

BABBLE ON THE OTHER END OF THE PHONE

MAN

(Continues. Into phone)

What do you mean, “That's nothing!” All my life, that's all I ever heard. “The world is filled with phonies,” Mommy would say,” and your dad is phony numero uno— *a no-good bum!*” Every day of my life she'd say it, Constance. In kindergarten: “If they ask you about your father, don't let on he's a phony, a no-good bum,” she said.— And even, Constance — even when I went away to Camp — even then—I could not get it out of my head. And do you know why, Constance? Do you know why I could not get that “*no-good bum*” out of my head? Because, Constance . . . because mother bribed Murray, the Counselor, to put a little speaker under my pillow — a little speaker attached to a little tape recorder, Constance, with a little loop of tape, that kept going around and around, and mother's voice, Constance, kept drumming into my little head — “*No-good bum!*” “*No-good bum!*”. . . No, Constance, “No-good bum” IS the worst thing I could call myself.

BABBLE ON OTHER END OF RECEIVER

MAN

(Continues. Into phone)

All right! What, then? What could be worse than “no-good bum?”

BABBLE GOES ON AND ON. OBVIOUSLY CONSTANCE IS COMING UP WITH SOME GOOD ONES)

MAN

(Continues. Into phone)

All right, Constance. . .Now hold on, Constance. . .Kindly COOL IT, Constance. . .That's all with that Nonsense, Constance. . .Enough. . . Genug! . . Basta! . . Cut it, Constance, *YOU NO-GOOD BUM!*

HE POUNDS HIS HAND DOWN, OUT OF THE FRAME. SURPRISED, UNBEARABLE PAIN REGISTERS ON HIS FACE. HE PICKS UP HIS HAND. THE PIN CUSHION IS STICKING TO IT. HE LOOKS IN DISBELIEF AT THE PIN CUSHION, STUCK TO HIS HAND.

FREEZE FRAME!

CAMERA ZOOMS BACK FAST AND WE SEE THAT WE'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS ON A TELEVISION MONITOR. THE CAMERA KEEPS PULLING BACK AND WE'RE IN A TELEVISION STUDIO CONTROL ROOM AND WE ARE SEEING THE SAME FREEZE-FRAME CLOSE UP OVER A SERIES OF MONITORS FROM THE TD'S CONSOL POV. INCLUDE, AND KEEP IN SHOT, THE TD'S HAND.

VOICES CHATTERING OFF CAMERA IN THE CONTROL ROOM. THE NO-GOOD BUM'S FACE ON THE MONITOR BEGINS TO DISSOLVE INTO THE FACE OF A CLOCK, AS THE ORGAN SWELLS, AND LOUD TICKING IS HEARD.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

(Coming from monitors)

Shame and Pain — *AS THE CLOCK TICKS*. . .

ON MONITOR, CREDITS ROLL AS THE ORGAN SWELLS

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

(Coming from monitors)

Tune in tomorrow, to — *AS THE CLOCK TICKS* —when Tybalt Connors. the “No-Good Bum,” faces a despairing Mary Ann, and Constance fans the flames of Tybalt's corroding conscience, when she says:

CONSTANCE

(Over)

Tybalt — I'm going to have your baby.

ORGAN SWELLS TO AN EXCESSIVELY SUSTAINED CLOSING CHORD.

—**SUDDENLY!** THE IMAGE ON THE MONITOR BECOMES A SCRAMBLED SERIES OF SHOTS FROM THE SOAP OPERA SEQUENCE WE'VE JUST SEEN, MIXED IN WITH:

- 1) A DEAD MAN WITHOUT A FACE.
- 2) A MATRUSKA DOLL-WITHIN-A-DOLL.
- 3) A DEAD GIRL, WITH A WHITE MASK MASKING HER FACE.

DIRECTOR (Voice Off)

What's happening?

TD (Voice Off)

Don't know. Can't seem to control the tape.

IMAGE ON MONITOR STEADIES ON THE ACTOR WHO WAS PLAYING "THE NO-GOOD BUM" SITTING ON CHAIR, FROZEN IN THE LAST POSITION WE SAW HIM — SAME DOUBLE-TAKE LOOK ON HIS FACE, HIS EYES WIDE OPEN, THE PINS STILL STUCK TO THE PALM OF HIS HAND.

DIRECTOR (Voice Off)

Can't you get beyond that freeze?

TD (Voice Off)

That's not the freeze.

DIRECTOR (Voice Off)

Find out what's going on down there.

AD (Voice Off)

What's going on down there?

ON MONITOR: MAN'S HAND COMES INTO SHOT AND SHAKES TYBALT.

FLOOR MANAGER (Voice Off)

Don't know. He hasn't moved and— . . . Hey. . . Looks like he's . . . dead. . .

CAMERA MOVES IN A BLUR TO LIMBO AREA AND CLOSE UP OF ERIC KORNZWEIG.

KORNZWEIG

(Very amplified, with noticeable German accent)

Dead? Larry Lekarew. . . DEAD?

THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING, KORNZWEIG PACES AWAY FROM THE CAMERA AND THEN BACK TO THE CAMERA. DURING THE LONG SHOT — IN

THE LIMBO AREA — WE SEE THAT KORNZWEIG LIMPS. HE WEARS THICK EYEGASSES — AS THICK AS MAGNIFYING GLASSES. HE WALKS STIFFLY WITH THE USE OF A CANE. AT THE MOMENT KORNZWEIG HAS THE CANE HOOKED IN THE CROOK OF HIS RIGHT ARM. IN HIS RIGHT HAND IS A HUGE STEIN OF BEER WITH A “K” ON IT. EVERY STEP HE MAKES TOWARD AND AWAY FROM THE CAMERA SEEMS TO BE A TORTUROUS ONE.

KORNZWEIG

Dead? The most popular character actor on my soap opera: Larry Lekarew! Dead?

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

Larry Lekarew, who just joined my Tick-Tock family and played such an attractive Rouè that he became the frigid Frau’s favorite, and so became the one hope to save my show — dead? Of unknown causes yet — dead? No sign of foul play, if you please? — My lousy eyes, no sign of foul play! No! Someone is out to do Kornzweig in — keep me snowballing down that rating hill to the abyss! We shall see!

TURNS TOWARD THE CAMERA, DRINKS DEEPLY FROM THE STEIN AND A MUSTACHE OF FOAM REMAINS ON HIS UPPER LIP.

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

One thing is clear. I need help. And I need the best!

INSERT FREEZE FRAME OF CU OF HIRAM BODONI IN UPPER RIGHT HAND CORNER OF THE SCREEN.

AS KORNZWEIG TALKS, THE FREEZE-FRAME GROWS AND THE FACE OF HIRAM WILL FINALLY FILL THE SCREEN. WIPING KORNZWEIG OUT.

KORNZWEIG

(Voice over)

Get me Bodoni!

REVERB: “BODONI” “Bodoni,” “bodoni” “bodoni” . . .”bodoni” . . .

There is something big out to do Kornzweig in. So I need more than a detective. I need a legend, philosopher, inventor. I need

REVERB (Over): “BODONI” “Bodoni,” “bodoni” “bodoni”. . .”bodoni”. .

KORNZWEIG

Bodoni! Get me the incorruptible Hiram Bodoni!

BY THE TIME KORNZWEIG’S VOICE OVER IS FINISHED, THE FREEZE-FRAME OF HIRAM UNFREEZES AND HIRAM BRINGS A GADGET UP CLOSE TO HIS SERIOUS FACE. IT IS A WHEEL-LIKE GADGET, RAZOR SHARP ON THE CIRCUMFERENCE, THAT ROTATES ON A SPECIAL HANDLE.

HIRAM TESTS THE GADGET WITH HIS FINGER AND SHARPNESS, SATISFIED, HE LOWERS THE GADGET.

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS IT DOWN TO A LARGE PIZZA.

THE GADGET IS A PIZZA SLICER. HIRAM SLICES THE PIZZA INTO LARGE WEDGES.

FADE IN: MUSIC. SOPRANO SINGING FAURE’S “*APRES UN REVE*” AS OPENING CREDITS COME UP OVER HIRAM’S HAND, CUTTING THE PIZZA.

AFTER THE OPENING FEW CREDITS, THE FOLLOWING LEGEND IS SUPERIMPOSED:

“PART ONE: HIRAM BODONI AND THE TELEVISION PRODUCER”

HIRAM’S HAND, CU, FOLDS A LARGE SLICE OF PIZZA.

BODONI

Have a slice of Pizza, Kornzweig.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL KORNZWEIG AT A DESK, SITTING OPPOSITE HIRAM, THE STEIN OF BEER IN FRONT OF KORNZWEIG.

KORNZWEIG

We really must talk about Larry Lekarew’s death, Bodoni.

BODONI

The Larry Lekarew caper is hot — will *stay* hot for a bit, Kornzweig. But a pizza slice gets cold fast. You know that, Kornzweig. Here.

KORNZWEIG

I could not touch it, Bodoni. In point of fact, I love that stuff. But my mouth is too sensitive.

BODONI

Trust me, Kornzweig. A new day has dawned for all pizza lovers with sensitive mouths.

BODONI PLACES THE SLICE NEAR KORNZWEIG'S MOUTH. KORNZWEIG CLAMPS HIS MOUTH SHUT AND SHAKES HIS HEAD, LIKE A CHILD REFUSING TO EAT SOMETHING.

BODONI

Kornzweig, essentially I'm an officer of the law. Would an officer of the law ever lie to anyone?

KORNZWEIG SUDDENLY CHOMPS A BITE OUT OF THE PIZZA.

KORNZWEIG

Why — why it does not hurt my mouth at all. In point of fact, it feels good.

BODONI

My newest invention. A mentholated mozzarella sauce that soothes the roof of your mouth as you burn it.

KORNZWEIG

In point of fact, it is not even cold. It's nice and warm. How—?

BODONI

New kind of flour I've developed. Forms layers of air pockets as the crust rises. Works sort of on the principle of thermal underwear.

KORNZWEIG

Incredible! I had heard about your "inventions for the common man". But how do you find the time — I mean with all your detective work, Bodoni?

BODONI

Selfishness, Kornzweig. Like you I'm plagued with a sensitive mouth. Canker sores, bleeding gums. And like you, I love this stuff. Ergo— . . . But I can assure you, Kornzweig, that had I no overwhelming liking for pizza, I would not have solved the problem. Selfishness. Selfishness did it.

KORNZWEIG

Typical human reaction, Bodoni.

HE DRINKS BEER FROM THE STEIN. FOAM MUSTACHE BIT AGAIN.

BODONI

Exactly. You pursue what means the most to you and — and —

BODONI CAN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER. HE SUDDENLY REACHES OVER AND WIPES THE FOAM-MUSTACHE OFF KORNZWEIG'S FACE.

BODONI

(Continued)

Sorry, Kornzweig, but I'm compulsive.

KORNZWEIG

That's all right, Bodoni. Now can we—?

BODONI

Selfishness. "Doing your own thing."

(Shudders)

I caught a murderer recently, Kornzweig. He couldn't understand why he had to be stopped. "But it's my thing. Murder is my thing," he kept saying.

KORNZWEIG

But, Bodoni —

BODONI

I know murder is not the kind of "typical human reaction" you meant, Kornzweig. But I take things to their logical conclusion. That's one of my curses. That's what depresses me, Kornzweig. Selfishness *is* so typically human. Let me illustrate.

BODONI HOLDS UP WHAT LOOKS LIKE A LARGE DICTIONARY.

BODONI

(Continued)

Can you guess what this is, Kornzweig?

KORNZWEIG SUDDENLY JUMPS UP.

KORNZWEIG

(Pointing cane over Bodoni's head)

Shh! Careful!

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL THAT WE'VE BEEN ON A STUDIO SET AND THAT WE'VE BEEN LOOKING AT ONLY PART OF AN OFFICE SET, THE KIND OF FORMICA OFFICE SET FOUND ON FORMICA TALK SHOWS.

KORNZWEIG IS POINTING TO A MIKE BOOM OVERHEAD. BODONI ACTS FAST. GRABS A BOX OF PLASTIC BAGGIES THAT IS ONE OF FIVE STACKED ON THE END OF THE DESK — OPENS THE BOX, RIPS OFF A PLASTIC BAGGIE, JUMPS UP ON THE DESK AND PLACES A PLASTIC BAG OVER THE HANGING MIKE.

KORNZWEIG

(Voice off)

In point of fact, Bodoni, we'd best keep on the move. . .
around the studio. . .who knows who might be listening. . .

DISSOLVE TO ANOTHER HANGING MIKE WITH PLASTIC BAGGIE ON IT. CAMERA PANS DOWN TO A HUGE ABSTRACT PAINTING OF AN EYEBALL. WE'RE ON THE SET OF AN ART GALLERY. CAMERA KEEPS MOVING FORWARD AND STOPS IN FRONT OF BODONI AND KORNZWEIG SITTING ON A MARBLE BENCH IN FRONT OF THE EYE. THE EYE STAYS IN THE BACKGROUND, OUT OF FOCUS.

KORNZWEIG

Now we can get down to focusing on—

BODONI

Focus first on *this*: what is it, Kornzweig?

KORNZWEIG

In point of fact, it looks like a dictionary, Kornzweig.

BODONI

“Looks like!” Very good, Kornzweig. You just got to the heart of the metaphysical problem. “Looks like.”

Appearance versus reality. Appearance: a dictionary. Reality—

BODONI TRIGGERS SOMETHING AND THE DICTIONARY BECOMES A SMALL PLATFORM.

KORNZWEIG

Why! It looks like a small platform, Bodoni.

BODONI

It's a small platform, Kornzweig. Old ladies can use it to step onto busses that never stop at the curb.

KORNZWEIG

A boon to old ladies, Bodoni. But can't we—?

BODONI

That's not why I invented it, Kornzweig! Oh no! I invented it because a very heavy old lady, struggling to get on a too-high step on the bus, fell back on me and crushed my coccyx. Ergo – my invention of *this*.

TRANSFORMATION AGAIN OF DICTIONARY INTO PLATFORM.

KORNZWEIG

I understand, Bodoni. And I'm sorry a natural selfishness apparently bothers your conscience. But could we not speak about something, perhaps, a bit more important? To me? Namely, the death of Larry Lekarew and—?

BODONI RISES AND PACES IN FRONT OF EYE.

BODONI

Damn it, Kornzweig, it's what things mean to *me* that's important! —See? Sorry. There I go again with "*my own thing*." But, in this case, Kornzweig, my own thing may be yours. To tell you the truth, I wasn't going to take this case. Because I'm tired of things, Kornzweig. — Not tired, exactly — just not interested. No— numb! I'm into *a-deep-in-the-soul* despair. So I must multi task here: Work out *that* crisis, while working out yours. And that means that my modus operandi here may necessitate my meandering into—what?—*monologue mode*? —to—

KORNZWEIG

Now you just hold on a minute Bodoni! I'm not paying you to detour into any goddamn "*monologue mode*." "*Monologue mode*," in point of fact, can —I don't know—put on the brakes at a stop sign to —to — distract you from your main "*mode*"—which is—*in point of fact*—to find *a which way to turn mode* —to find the killer of—

BODONI

(Into Kornzweig's face)

Kornzweig! Let's get the ground rules straight here!
If you want my services, you *WILL* listen to all the monologues
I mode — because, at this point in my life—at this very moment,
“*in point of fact,*” I AM PREGNANT WITH MONOLOGUE! You *will*
have your killer, Kornzweig—I promise. AND I *WILL* HAVE MY
MONOLOGUE MODES! Understood?” . . . UNDERSTOOD?

KORNZWEIG

(Cowed)

Understood.

(Zippers lips)

BODONI

Good. Now I'll move through — as you put it—
that *stop sign* and turn to focus on *your* — Oh no. No. . .

MUSIC: FADE IN SOPRANO SINGING FAURE'S, *APRES UNE REVE*.
CONTINUES UNDER

KORNZWEIG

What's the matter, Bodoni.

BODONI

That song. . .

KORNZWEIG

What song?

BODONI

No. Of course *you* don't hear it. But I do. Portions of it drift in
and out of my life again, Kornzweig.

(Hums along along. Then. . .)

“Je reve le bonheur, ardent mirage”

“I dreamed of happiness, happy mirage.”

In and out of my life.

INSERT A QUICK, ALMOST SUBLIMINAL SERIES OF STILLS, AS DESCRIBED.

BODONI

(Continued. Voice over)

Buying chestnuts that song!

INSERT STILL #1: BODONI WITH CHESTNUT MAN.

CHESTNUT MAN VERY MUCH THE ITALIAN STEREOTYPE. HEAVY, VERY CURLY HAIR, RED BANDANNA AROUND HIS NECK, BLACK HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE. HE SMILES, THREE FRONT TEETH MISSING. BODONI HOLDS BAG OF CHESTNUTS AND IS LOOKING OFF TO THE SIDE, AS IF HEARING MUSIC.

BODONI
(Continued. Voice Over)
Having my palm read—that song!

A VERY HEAVY-SET PALM READER. SHE WEARS BANDANA ON HEAD, HAS ENORMOUS EARRINGS, DARK COMPLEXION, PEASANT DRESS, SHAWL OVER SHOULDER, VERY HEAVY LIPSTICK. BODONI LOOKING OFF.

BODONI
(Continued. Voice Over)
Fighting the mob—that song!

INSERT STILL #3: BODONI GIVING KARATE CHOP TO MAFIOSO. BODONI LOOKING OFF.

AS WE CUT TO BODONI IN FRONT OF THE GIANT EYE,

BODONI
(Continued)
I was married once. Kornzweig. Her name was Magda.

MUSIC AND SOPRANO CUTS OUT.

**LEGEND ON SCREEN:
*HIRAM BODONI IN MONOLOGUE MODE.***

THROUGHOUT HIRAM'S MONOLOGUE , WE STAY TIGHT ONTO HIRAM'S PAINED FACE, AND SEE FAST — ALMOST SUBLIMINAL DISTORTED IMAGES OF THINGS HE MENTIONS: *BIG HIPS, MICROWAVE OVENS, ELECTRIC TYPEWRITERS, SLEEPING MASKS, EAR PLUGS, COP TAKING BRIBE, GOURMET DISHES, ETC.*

BODONI
We had nothing in common, Magda and I — *except that* song. We had met at one of the yearly farewell vocal recitals of the tenor, Pietro Saputo. — Cried together when Saputo, in his croaky old voice croaked, "*Après Une Reve.*" That song, I knew immediately, was a metaphor — a symbol? — no! this is music—Ah! *a motif* — a musical *motif* — and if I know nothing else, Kornzweig, I know my musical motifs — and

BODONI

(Continued)

“*Après Une Reve*” was the soul-deep musical motif for our love. Whatever else we didn’t have, we had that “*Après Une Reve*” motif. So, naturally, Magda and I got married.

. . . Magda was darkly beautiful, with big hips. And, if truth be told, I’m a big-hips man, Kornzweig.

Magda and her hips were fond of doing . . .nothing.

Except listening to that song and crying over Nicaragua or Bangladesh — or whatever poor country was currently being raped on television. I soon

discovered that she was also fond of acquiring *things*.

She especially had to have a number of microwave ovens.

I was perplexed, Kornzweig, and — yes — a little hurt.

Because I had thought that her *tears of sensitivity* meant

denying material things. I never said anything to her directly,

of course. For I respected the introspection of those big hips.

But once — and in one of the few times she gave me

a glimpse of her mind — she said: “Oh, Hiram, in today’s world,

microwave ovens and Bangladesh go hand-in-hand. In fact, in

today’s world, that’s the *way* of the world.” So I had to

moonlight to keep her in microwave ovens. And somehow,

she had it in her head that I would become a *star* cop.

But when she realized that I would never become a star —

because one has to *want* to become a star and I,

she finally concluded, did not want cop stardom —

when she realized *that*, she withdrew into herself . . .

looking sad, and just quietly snacking on pumpkin seeds

and crunchy granola. Only, at moments, the

“*Après Une Reve*” song would return,

and revive whatever it was that had brought us together.

But, finally, she left me. . .There was a note on the IBM

Executive portable typewriter — one of the five we were

still paying off. She left, the note said, because I had

refused a bribe — a bribe, that an all honesty, would

have made us rich. And it wasn’t so much that I wouldn’t

take the bribe, that she left me — it was because I

couldn’t explain *why* I wouldn’t take the bribe,

that she left me. Gone. Gone. Gone. Out of my life.

But then

(smiles)

— ah, yes — *then* — at first — I felt that initial

sense of relief I had always heard about, when one is

set free. . .But soon — soon — oh, how shall I put it:

Soon. . .I felt a profound. . .emptiness. . .

A soul-deep ache. . .

SOPRANO AND MUSIC OUT.

DISSOLVE TO THICK FOG THAT QUICKLY CLEARS REVEALING HIRAM BODONI LEANING AGAINST A BOAT RAILING. HE WEARS A TRENCH COAT, COLLAR UP. HIS BACK IS TO THE CAMERA.

SOUND: FOG HORN AND BOAT WHISTLE BLAST.

BODONI

(Voice over)

I missed her. Someone. A woman. The eternal female.

BODONI TURNS TO FACE THE CAMERA. A TORMENTED EXPRESSION ON HIS FACE, TEARS IN HIS EYES,

BODONI

(Continued)

My work suffered. My inventions were devoid of their usual genius. My gourmet dishes that I then realized I had devised for her — *her* — had lost their subtle flavors. And most depressing of all was the way the tears would automatically come whenever I looked those microwave ovens in their carousals. In short, Kornzweig, I was lost. I set out to find her. Don't you see? I *had* to find *her*!

THE BOAT BEGINS TO ROCK. WIND. BODONI'S HAIR BLOWS.

MUSIC: "THE FLYING DUTCHMAN" OVERTURE.

CAMERA MOVES INTO THE FOG.

BODONI

(Continued)

It wasn't easy, Kornzweig. I mean, I had forgotten how to make contact.

IN THE DISTANCE, THE BACK OF A LONG-HAIRED MANIKIN IS SEEN. THE CAMERA QUICKLY MOVES IN ON IT.

At first I was crude. Simply tapped a young lady on the shoulder. It was during that bad air pollution scare, when old people were being dumped dead into carts and we all had to wear gas masks. You recall?

MANIKIN TURNS. IT HAS ON A GAS MASK.

BODONI
(Continued)
I said hello to the young lady.

MASK FALLS OFF MANIKIN. IT'S THE FACE OF A BOY.

It was a boy, Kornzweig.

THE CAMERA MOVES ON THROUGH THE FOG.

BODONI
(Continued)
Even in my mild despair at that, I was at least mildly amused. But the next encounter was a horror!

MUSIC: OUT

IN THE DISTANCE, A NEON SIGN FLASHING "*COCKTAIL LOUNGE*" AND A WOMAN MANIKIN SITTING AT THE COCKTAIL LOUNGE TABLE. THE CAMERA MOVES IN FAST.

BODONI
(Continued. Voice over)
All I said was, "*hello.*" She immediately turned on me!

CAMERA CUTS AND KEEPS CUTTING TO MANY ANGLES OF THE WOMAN MANIKIN.

"I'm a divorcee with three children," she expositioned.
"Oh, you'll say that *that* doesn't matter," she laughed.
"That you *like* children," she smirked. "That you'll marry me even *with* the children," she mimicked. "But all the while I know what you really will be after, *with no marriage intended,*" she ejaculated! "Because you are all alike," she sneered. "Well, let me tell you something, Mr. "*Hello,*" she mocked: "Forget all that with this lady. Because," she jeered, "*I wear a chastity belt!* That's right," she bravadoed. "And the key to *my* box is in my safety box at the bank!" she triumphed. "You don't believe me! Do you, Mr. Randy "*hello*" Twit?" she sneered. "Well, come on. . ."

SCREEN FILLS WITH FOG.

BODONI

(Continued. Voice over)

Before I could say anything, she pulled me away. . .

FOG CLEARS AND WE SEE BODONI WALKING IN A DAZE TOWARD US

She was telling the truth, Kornzweig. She was telling the truth.
I was stunned! As stunned as a puppy sniffing around
a porcupine's anus.

DISSOLVE BACK TO BODONI IN FRONT OF THE EYE

BODONI

(Continued)

How can I explain the kind of despair that filled
my inner void then, Kornzweig? I took to bed. For
weeks, it seemed. *Under* the covers. With a sleep
mask on, yet! Shutting out *all* light!
My masked head turned to the wall.
AND THEN THAT SONG RETURNED.
I plugged my ears with ear plugs. But still the song persisted
in my *mind's* ears and overrode the plugs. *THEN.*
Your dead Lekarew call came! And I asked myself the
dramatic question: Can I still do it? The detective thing?
Should I do it? Do I even *want* to do it anymore? I had to find
out. How? . . .Work! Get back to work! "*De-sleep-mask*
yourself, Bodoni," said I to myself, from under those
sheets and blankets and mask of despair! Yes! Get back to work!
And here I am. And, I guess, happy to *be* here.
I think. But still the song persists. That song.
Is it telling me that there's something more
important than my detective gift? Could it mean I've got to
search for the woman again?

MOVE BACK TO INCLUDE KORNZWEIG.

KORNZWEIG

Either that, or perhaps — as I suspect — you are going
out of your mind, Bodoni.

BODONI

I wish it were as simple as that, Kornzweig. But I function
too well. At least in what I apparently was born to do.
For example, even as I speak, my mind is on a thousand
small things that mean more to me than the death of
Larry Lekarew. BUT. The detective habit stays lodged in the marrow of

BODONI

(Continued. Voice over)

my bones and brain, and I stay aware of all the nuances of danger about me that may have something to do with Larry Lekarew's death. Even stay super sensitive, I do, to the changes in rhythm in the air that may mean danger to *me*. I know, for example, that something, something, perhaps evil, is behind – *THIS!*

HE TURNS AND RIPS IN TWO THE PAINTING OF THE EYE, DUCKS AND PULLS OUT A PISTOL. BEHIND THE PAINTING — A TV CAMERA!

MUSIC: SOMETHING MOMENTOUS.

THEN A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS GIVING VARIOUS ANGLES OF THE CAMERA — ALSO ZOOMING IN AND OUT — FINALLY STEADYING ON A TWO SHOT OF HIRAM CONFRONTING THE CAMERA.

MUSIC OUT.

HIRAM

What's the camera doing here, Kornzweig?

KORNZWEIG

It belongs here, Bodoni! This *is* a TV studio.

HIRAM

Let's move on.

MUSIC: SOMETHING CELESTIAL, PLAYS UNDER.

SERIES OF DISSOLVES OF STUDIO AREAS AND STUDIO PARAPHERNALIA: HANGING LIGHTS, CLUMPS OF CAMERAS, GRIDS, MONITORS, CABLES, ETC.

KORNZWEIG

(Voice Over Dissolves)

You must admit, I've stayed a good sport throughout this monologue mode. And now. In point of fact, Bodoni, I'm happy to see that your mind *is* on this case. I was beginning to —

BODONI

(Voice Over Dissolves)

Detective's reflexes, Kornzweig. Hooked on the detective habit, they are. But, at this moment, my mind is recalling two sweet little girls and a little boy who sold lemonade to a friend of mine.

INCLUDE STILLS OF SWEET LITTLE GIRLS AND A BOY IN FRONT OF A LEMONADE STAND HAWKING LEMONADE.

BODONI

(Continued, Voice Over)

The girls were blonde. And they each had ribbon bows to bind their hair. The boy was a Caravaggio cherub. They found out later that he was their pimp. And my friend came down with gonorrhoea. Impossible, you say? He hadn't even touched them, you postulate? Ah! But they hadn't cleaned the drinking glasses, Kornzweig! *They hadn't cleaned the glasses!*

DISSOLVE TO BODONI IN FRONT OF THE GIANT LEG AND FOOT OF THE COLOSSUS THAT'S FOUND IN THE PIAZZA COMPADOGGIO IN ROME. THIS IS APPARENTLY A SET FOR THE COMPADOGGIO. IT DWARFS BODONI.

I had to bring those kids to justice because they were polluting a neighborhood of human beings. The detective in me, you see. While the inventor in me gloried in the chance to invent an extra pair of prophylactic lips to protect me from a similar fate. And the Absurdist in me stood aside and laughed and cried at the same time for my friend — *who hadn't even had a good time!* From a drinking glass, Kornzweig! — Not even from a toilet seat! And you're happy my mind is here. No! It's fragmented! On minutiae and disparate happenings that seem to be the only things that really matter to me now. Murder? A bore. It's just too common, Kornzweig. Violence? Ditto. I was called in to investigate a battered child case. I get them all the time now. But this was the worst.

SLOW DISSOLVE IN OF A MATRUSKA DOLL.

BODONI

(Voice Over)

Do you think the sight of that battered boy moved me? Not really. Oh, I would find the father and bring him to justice. The reflexes, you see. But what really got to me was a Matruska doll the kid kept playing with.

THE MATRUSKA DOLL HAS COMPLETELY FADED IN, STANDING ALONE IN BLACKNESS.

BODONI

(Voice Over)

One of those dolls within dolls.

CHILD'S HAND COMES INTO SHOT AND BEGINS TO DISMEMBER ONE DOLL, PULL OUT THE NEXT SMALLER ONE, AND SO ON, UNTIL ALL THE HALF DOLLS ARE LINED UP NEXT TO EACH OTHER.

BODONI

(Continued. Voice Over)

I stayed questioning that child, but nothing he said moved me, angered me, excited or disgusted me. But that doll — ah! — one within the other! Kornzweig, I threw up.

HAND KNOCKS THE DOLL AWAY.

CUT BACK TO BODONI IN FRONT OF COLOSSUS FOOT.

BODONI

I got sick over dolls, Kornzweig! Deeply, profoundly sick! Now I ask you: What is that? Some kind of Joke?

HE PUTS HIS FIST THROUGH THE LEG OF THE COLOSSUS.

KORNZWEIG

(Voice off)

And what are you, Mr. Hiram Bodoni? A joke also?

PULL BACK TO INCLUDE KORNZWEIG BEING DWARFED BY THE COLOSSAL HEAD OF THE COLOSSUS.

KORNZWEIG

You're supposed to be the best in the business. Tough. Shrewd. A detective natural. In point of fact, *Mr. Detective*, a murder — at least I think it was a murder — was committed here. Why? In point of fact, the loss of Larry Lekarew could have a profound effect on my entire entertainment empire and — Bah! — In point of fact, I humored you, listened to you, hoping you'd move into *make sense mode* about all this. Instead —

BODONI

You're a phony, Kornzweig. Does *that* make sense?

HE BEGINS TO MOVE IN ON KORNZWEIG.

CUT TO BODONI'S POINT OF VIEW.

IT'S AS IF THE CAMERA IS BODONI.

BODONI/CAMERA

(Moving in)

Your walk is phony. That dead arm is alive.

Your eyes are good. And you don't have

that German accent.

KORNZWEIG

(Still backing off.

Holding onto the accent)

You *are* out of your head, Bodoni.

KORNZWEIG WALKS BACKWARD THROUGH A WALL AND HE IS NOW OUT ON THE STUDIO FLOOR. HE BACKS INTO A CAMERA THAT IS IN THE WAY. KORNZWEIG SCREAMS.

BODONI/CAMERA

And the hair on your head is phony too, Kornzweig.

BODONI'S HAND REACHES INTO SHOT AND PULLS TOUPEE OFF KORNZWEIG'S HEAD.

KORNZWEIG

No! That's real!

BODONI/CAMERA

(Voice off. Hand in shot, holding toupee)

Is it, Kornzweig?

KORNZWEIG

(Hardly any trace of accent at all now)

I thought that *that*, at least, was real. I'd forgotten.

KORNZWEIG TAKES THE TOUPEE IN HIS RIGHT HAND AND, SADLY, LOOKS AT IT. INCLUDE HIRAM BODONI WHO TAKES OFF KORNZWEIG'S GLASSES.

BODONI

(Stepping back)

Now, Kornzweig, I want you to read this.

CLOSE UP OF BODONI'S CHEST. HE OPENS HIS JACKET. A LITTLE ROLLED-UP SHADE THERE. BODONI'S HAND PULLS DOWN SHADE. IT'S AN EYE CHART.

BODONI

C'mon, Kornzweig. Cover one eye. Read!

KORNZWEIG, STILL DAZED, COVERS ONE EYE AND BEGINS TO READ.

KORNZWEIG

Z K J L P D Q

F J K Z K F P

BODONI

Skip to the bottom line, Kornzweig.

KORNZWEIG

K O C S V W A

HIRAM BODONI LETS THE EYE CHART ROLL BACK UP.

BODONI

No need to do the other eye, Kornzweig. I'm sure you're eyes are as sharp as the pectin oculi of the Vermiculated Screech Owl.

BODONI TAKES THE ROLLED-UP EYE CHART, UNHOOKS IT FROM HIS CHEST AND USES IT TO POINT AT KORNZWEIG.

BODONI

Anyway. I knew that any human being who said, "*In point of fact,*" as often as you did, had to be a phony. What's the story, Kornzweig?

KORNZWEIG, DEFEATED AND DEFLATED, LEANS AGAINST A CAMERA.

KORNZWEIG

Garbage, Bodoni. Garbage.

LEGEND ON SCREEN:

KORNZWEIG IN MONOLOGUE MODE.

MUSIC: GERMAN CHORUS SINGS "DEUTSCHLAND UBER ALLES."

KORNZWEIG

(Continues, over music)

My Uncle Hermann was known as the garbage King of Bavaria. Up until Hitler. I was a teenager and, *until* Hitler, Uncle Hermann would always preach his doctrine of garbage to me. "*As long as there's a Germany,*" he'd always say, "*there will always be garbage.*" And then he'd get very emotional as he went on to predict how garbage would overwhelm us. The excitement would overwhelm him as he'd contemplate how his private garbage company would cash in on it all. "*Today the garbage of the Hofbrau House! Tomorrow the garbage of the world!*" he'd say. I listened with great respect. But, frankly, my heart wasn't in garbage, Bodoni.

MUSIC: OUT.

BODONI

What was your heart in, Kornzweig?

KORNZWEIG

Lederhosen, Bodoni.

MUSIC: ZITHER, HELD UNDER.
SUPERIMPOSE TYPICAL ALPINE STILLS.

KORNZWEIG

Lederhosen. Those little leather pants and the green suspenders and the high stockings, up to the dimpled knees. *Lederhosen* meant hiking along the Isar, singing while breathing in the smell of fresh pine. Skeet shooting, with a gang of other *lederhosen* rascals. And zither playing, Bodoni. And girl chasing, Bodoni. Yes! Chasing the braided blonde girls, screaming past the painted gasthouses with the murals of Christ and the last supper. And rolling, rolling forever down the sides of the landscaped Alps.

SUPERIMPOSED ALPINE STILLS OUT.

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

Gemutlichkeit, Bodoni. A oneness of fellowship and humanity in fresh air. *Lederhosen*.

MUSIC: ZITHER, OUT.
 SUPERIMPOSE TYPICAL HITLER STILLS AND NAZI MARTIAL MUSIC.

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

But another type of garbage took over that was even too much for little lederhosen-ed me. Thank heaven Uncle Hermann had money. He bribed our way out of Germany.

SUPERIMPOSED HITLER STILLS OUT.

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

And we made it over here, right in the middle of a ticker tape parade for some national hero.

MUSIC: "*HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN.*" VERY UP TEMPO.
 SUPERIMPOSE TICKER TAPE BLIZZARD AND GARBAGE STILLS

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

Uncle Hermann felt right at home. Got what he called "*the garbage rhythm of the US of A,*" right away. And soon he had built his own private garbage company and was sitting on top of the garbage heap again. Began planning for the times when homes would be built with garbage bricks. I couldn't deal with it, Bodoni. Told him, in this country garbage would play a minor role. And so I began looking for a new *gemutlicheit* world. Played a zither in a small beer house in Germantown.

MUSIC: ZITHER AGAIN, BUT DISTORTED.

SUPERIMPOSE: TYPICAL STILLS OF SMOKEY BEER HOUSE, WITH LOTS OF RED, SWEATY, FLESHY, OVERSIZED FACES, DRINKING OVERSIZED, OVERFLOWING MUGS OF SUDSY BEER.

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

But it wasn't the same. I suffocated there. But more than that, Bodoni, no one noticed me. I was faceless and that bothered me. And that was an amazing discovery. Because — before — in my *gemutlicheit*

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

world — I didn't mind being just part of that fresh-air bunch. But here — I don't know — I just could not stand being faceless.

MUSIC: ZITHER MUSIC STRONGER, FASTER.

SUPERIMPOSED: STILLS OF FACES CAUGHT IN A MOMENT OF BEING SURPRISED.

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

So I hit on the Prussian personality bit. I walked into the cafe one day with the thick eye glasses and the paralyzed arm and the paralyzed walk and the cane and the new toupee and screamed, "Achtung, Schweinhund!" And I ordered them to watch me — ME! Eric Kornzweig! — *And they did!*

MUSIC, OUT. SUPERIMPOSED STILLS, OUT.

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

From then on, "Kornzweig's Achtung Zither" was "in," and I made my way up the ladder to the top shows, until I "Achtunged" my way into the Executive Suites and got to produce my own show. Quality stuff — I insisted on that. They agreed — had me produce Network television's first Experimental Hour. At 5:30 AM on a Sunday morning. Between Oral Roberts and oral hygiene. The general public didn't buy it. Hell, they weren't even awake. Even if they were, they would have seen that *experimental* wasn't my thing, And the network Muck-I-Mucks? They found it faceless. And, truth be told, it *was* faceless — not my thing. . . . Turned out, it wasn't the network's thing, either. So I switched into the usual TV stuff. And soon Kornzweig-packaged game shows and talk shows and daytime serials and comedy series with the laugh tracks—all made the top of the ratings. And, finally, even my uncle Hermann had to come around. There were tears of happiness in his aging eyes, when uncle Hermann called my show "*the biggest collection of garbage he'd ever*

KORNZWEIG

(Continued)

seen!" And finally, Bodoni, I was proud, too. I had finally understood the concept of garbage. And, through garbage, I had finally found my face. — But now my face is threatened. With the death of Larry Lekarew, I'm convinced that —

SUDDENLY KORNZWEIG STARES OUT FRONT, HIS EYES POPPING, FRIGHTENED.

BODONI

(Voice Off)

What is it, Kornzweig?

MUSIC: SOPRANO SINGING, *APRES UNE REVE*.

CUT TO BODONI.

BODONI

Not now. Don't sing now! Something's happened to Kornzweig.

IN THE DISTANCE, THE APPARITION OF THE GIRL IN WHITE, GOING OUT A STUDIO DOOR.

BACK TO BODONI.

BODONI

Wait! There she is! That's the first time I've seen her! Kornzweig, see what you did? You made me miss her and —

KORNZWEIG REVEALED ON THE FLOOR LYING ON HIS STOMACH
MUSIC OUT

BODONI

(Approaching)

Kornzweig. Kornzweig.

BODONI BENDS AND TURNS KORNZWEIG OVER. THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN.

KORNZWEIG HAS NO FACE.

HOLD FOR A FEW BEATS THEN DISSOLVE SLOWLY THROUGH TO HIRAM'S FACE AS HE TALKS INTO A PORTABLE CASSETTE RECORDER (THE KIND THAT HANGS OVER THE SHOULDER). HE

LOOKS DIRECTLY INTO THE CAMERA AS HE SPEAKS INTO THE LITTLE MIKE)

BODONI

That's right. When I turned him over, Kornzweig had
No face.

MUSIC: ELECTRONIC. SOUND: HEARTBEAT.

SUPERIMPOSE THE FOLLOWING TITLE:

“HIRAM BODONI HAS A SOLILOQUY”

HIRAM IN LIMBO, STILL TALKING INTO CASSETTE MIKE AND STILL LOOKING DIRECTLY INTO THE CAMERA. THE CAMERA KEEPS PULLING BACK, AND HIRAM WALKS TOWARDS IT AS HE SPEAKS.

BODONI

I'll now record my reactions to the fact — not of Kornzweig's bizarre death — but of what it set off in me. I'm sorry, but I must take the moment to examine myself, even though my heartbeat has increased to what I imagine an astronaut's must be as he drops from the abyss onto the moon. As usual, I'm being pulled in various directions. My overwhelming desire is to follow the girl in white. But I also feel myself in danger. Not that I fear the consequence of a surprise attack — that is to say, I don't fear death. But it's the *thought* of the surprise attack itself that contains such horror for me. That horror has been growing in me, incidentally. I forgot to record that the other day. Anyway, the one thing that does not concern me is the fact of the death of Eric Kornzweig. And yet, *is* it a fact? Is a man without a face, a man? And/or, is a dead man without a face, a dead and/or man? And yet, of course, there are these damned detective reflexes. and so — as usual — at the very height of a crime, when most any man would latch on to the tail of *the one overriding emotion* and to allow it to torpedo out of the pressure chamber of his inner cesspool, I, as usual. analyze it all until the thing's defused and, in fact, until there is no longer *any* emotion, and the heart beat slows down

SOUND: HEARTBEAT SLOWING DOWN, UNTIL IT STOPS. ELECTRONIC MUSIC CONTINUES UNDER.

BODONI

(Continued)

to . . . a . . . point . . . where . . . I . . . no . . . longer . . . sense . . .

it . . . at . . . all . . . Ah. There, there, Bodoni. You've just defined the concept of "cool." *Without emotion.*

Is that why the kids on your block and the pot and acid heads dig you. "*Dig you.*" Interesting phrase, that. Hold that in your skulldex until you can elaborate later, Bodoni. And while I'm at it, let me record what else I sense: *That I am as at home in this television studio as I've ever been at home anywhere in my life.*

File that away for future reference, Bodoni. What I guess I mean, is that I usually take pictures of myself taking pictures of myself. It's as if, here, I'm in the inner workings of the largest reflex lens camera of them all, and I am all comfy nice, as the pictures click away on auto and — Hm: *The camera as womb.* Pick up that theme for later amplification, Bodoni. Oh. *Ah! Another thought.* And here you'll have to steal Bodoni. I am, in fact, and therefore, what I always suspected: I AM A CAMERA.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO DOOR ON WHICH IS PRINTED:

*THIS AREA FOR AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL ONLY"*

BODONI

(Voice Over the dissolve)

I am a *camera*. I *am* a camera. I am a camera. *I* am a camera.

DOOR IS FULLY ESTABLISHED AND OPENS INTO LIMBO CORRIDOR. BODONI'S IMAGE HAS FADED OUT COMPLETELY. FROM THIS POINT UNTIL INDICATED, IT IS AS IF BODONI IS DOLLYING THROUGH THE VARIOUS ROOMS DESCRIBED AND WE ARE SEEING IT ALL THROUGH HIS EYES. EVERYTHING SHOWN SHOULD BE FUZZY AND ARRANGED IN GROTESQUE PATTERNS.

BODONI

(Voice Over)

And so my reflexes went after further concrete clues while fragments of my various selves reflected on various reflections.

CAMERA MOVES UP TO DOOR MARKED "*PROP ROOM.*" *THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN AND THE CAMERA MOVES IN THROUGH A GROUPING OF TV SETS, ART NOUVEAU TELEPHONES, ELEGANT TOILETS, BIDETS, ETC*

BODONI

(Voice Over)

For example, in the Prop Room, these lines suddenly dropped in: "*I hanged between two, it cannot be denied.*" And this: "*Know one another? We'd have to crack open our skulls and drag each other's thoughts out by the tail.*" Now, where were those lines from?"

CAMERA MOVES UP TO THE DOOR MARKED "WIG ROOM" AND THROUGH IT.

MUSIC: *APRES UNE REVE.*

BODONI

(Voice Over)

. . .Then the song returned.

SOUND: HEARTBEAT AGAIN: HELD UNDER.

BODONI

(Voice Over)

Listen. Listen. . .The song says, "*In a sleep that beautified your image, I dreamed of happiness, happy mirage. Your eyes were so soft, your voice so soft, you shone like the sky lightened by the dawn.*" Does that mean she's here? Yes, yes. *THERE!*

GIRL IN WHITE DISSOLVES IN AND KEEP DISSOLVING IN AND OUT, ALWAYS IN A LONG SHOT, ALWAYS AHEAD OF BODONI. WE ONLY SEE HER FROM THE BACK. AND HER COSTUME CONSTANTLY CHANGES — FROM ELABORATE PERIOD GOWNS TO MOD SLACKS TO A BIKINI.

DURING THE FOLLOWING, THE CAMERA MOVES QUICKLY THROUGH A ROOM WITH LIGHTING FIXTURES AND LIGHTING GELS, THEN INTO THE ROOM WITH MICROPHONE FIXTURES AND THEN INTO COSTUMES, CONCLUDING IN AN AREA CROWDED WITH CAMERAS THAT ARE ON AND OFF DOLLIES.

BODONI

(Voice Over)

Oh, yes: "*It is my lady/It is my Love.*" See her floating through. "*See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament?*"

BODONI

(Continued. Voice Over)

Now, wait a minute! Why did *that* line come back to me?
My lady of the lovely back, I'm sorry about that line.
That's how my mind runs, lately. Hold on. Please don't
run away. I need you. The rest is all falling apart. The
center cannot hold. So — since there's nothing else but you,
won't you be my epoxy glue?

THE CAMERA IS NOW MOVING THROUGH THE COSTUME ROOM WITH
MANY BIZARRE HATS AND MANIKIN HEADS WITH NO FACES

BODONI

(Voice Over)

And since we're passing near the bonnets, won't you
be my lady of the sonnets?

(Laughs)

Oh, I'm sorry. Greeting card mentality. That's how my
mind runs, lately. . . .Stop! Please stop!

***A TELEVISION CAMERA MATERIALIZES IN FRONT OF THE MOVING
CAMERA. ALL SOUNDS AND MUSIC ABRUPTLY OUT.***

BODONI

(Confronting camera)

You again.

NOISE OFF. BODONI TURNS. A BLIND MAN IS DOING SOMETHING WITH A
LENS OF A CAMERA.

BODONI

Who are you?

BLIND TD

(With British accent)

I'm the TD, old sport.

BODONI

TD? What does that mean?

BLIND TD

Technical Director. I control the cameras.

BODONI

Aren't you blind?

BLIND TD

Yes.

BODONI

Aren't you British?

BLIND TD

Yes.

BODONI

Isn't that unusual? For a man who controls cameras to be blind? . . .And British?

BLIND TD

Not at all. I have a brother living in the Bronx who is the world's champion typist. And he has no fingers. But he has, in fact, very long and very nimble toes. Seventy words a minute with each foot. Also, he's very adept at back spacing with his heels. . . .And *he's* British.

BODONI

You'll forgive me, but I'm suspicious,

BLIND TD

I forgive you, but you needn't be. Suspicious. I learned camera techniques *before* I was blind. Even when I could see, I could do what had to be done with my eyes closed. So to speak. I'm the best there is, still. Really.

BODONI

How can that be?

BLIND TD

(Continued)

I'm not hung up on seeing, you see. I'm free of it. So I can be *more* creative, not less. I have no seeing man's prejudices about reality. For example, would you mind standing in front of this new lens? Then, if you'll look off on to one of the monitors about, you'll see an interesting version of yourself.

BODONI

(Moving Away)

No!

BLIND TD
(Turns lens in direction
of Bodoni's voice)
Come now, don't be afraid.

BODONI
I don't want to.

BLIND TD
(Laughs)
Relax. You really can't escape anyway. This is a
wide angle lens.

BODONI
No, No. NO!

MUSIC: ELECTRONIC.

CUT TO: BODONI, AS IF SEEN IN A KALEIDOSCOPE — THEN TO SPLIT
SCREEN — THEN SPLIT SCREEN BLURS — THEN ELECTRONIC MUSIC,
OUT.

WHEN THE BLURRED DOUBLE IMAGE COMES INTO FOCUS, WE SEE
FOUR IMAGES OF TED AHEARN. HE WEARS A NECK BRACE, SMOKES A
CIGAR, WEARS A PLAID SUIT WITH BELL BOTTOMS, A COLORFUL
BANDANA AROUND HIS NECK AND HE HAS VERY WAVY, SILVER HAIR.

ON THE DESK IS A BOX OF MOIST WIPES THAT AHEARN WILL PULL OUT
OFTEN, WIPE HIS FACE AND HANDS — DEFTLY MANAGING TO APPLY THE
WIPES, EVEN WHILE TALKING ON THE PHONE — AND DISCARDING THE
USED WIPES BY JUST DROPPING THEM. THEY ACCUMULATE
EVERYWHERE.

AHEARN
(With raspy voice)
Just a minute, Bodoni. I'm on the phone to the Coast.

SUPERIMPOSED THE SCREEN:

***PART TWO: BODONI, THE AGENT,
THE BLIND TD, AND THE GIRL IN WHITE.***

BODONI SQUINTING AT THE QUADRUPLE IMAGE OF TED AHEARN ON THE
PHONE.

AHEARN

(Four images of him)

Hello, Coast. This is Ted Ahearn, the busiest,
and most successful actor's agent in New York.
Re Cleo Croyden's contract:

BACK TO BODONI SQUINTING. THEN BACK TO QUADRUPLE IMAGES THAT
BEGIN TO COME TOGETHER UNDER NEXT FEW LINES, UNTIL THERE IS
ONE NORMAL, CLEAR IMAGE.

AHEARN

(Continued)

No, no, don't talk. Just listen. Re clauses 18 and 19A:
They're not negotiable. Re clause 17 — you've got a
deal. Re the nudity scene — only rear shots. Re
the whipping scene — guarantee a double.

(Cupping phone)

Do you dig Cleo Croyden, Bodoni?

BODONI

(Voice off)

I don't know who Cleo Croyden is.

AHEARN

What! Feast your eyes on these.

HANDS BODONI THREE 8X10 GLOSSY STILLS. CLOSE UP OF STILLS AS
BODONI LOOKS THROUGH THEM. THEY ARE ALL OF A WOMAN WHOSE
FACE, IN EACH STILL, IS COVERED WITH A DIFFERENT, ELABORATE,
FULL-FACED CARNIVAL MASK.

MUSIC: *APRES UNE REVE*.

BODONI

Are there any photos without the mask?

AHEARN

Not in that batch. Frustrating. Ain't it, Bodoni?
But you can make out the great facial structure.
Right? Those high cheek bones? Drive me wild.
Drive most guys wild. How 'bout you, Bodoni?

MUSIC: OUT.

BODONI

Until now I only thought of myself as a big hips man. But yes, those high cheek bones do seem to entice and induce a groin smolder.

AHEARN

(Back into phone)

Coast, I'm still here. Re the Lesbian scene with the midget: Out! The incest scene with the brother on the church altar is okay—*IF*—it's only *overheard* by the minister!

(Cups phone)

Bodoni, this is going to be one of the biggest art films of the year.

(Back to phone)

Okay. Those are my demands. Take care of 'em and call when they're done.

(Hangs up)

Now, Bodoni, what can I do you for?

BODONI

(Voice off)

You realize, Ahearn, that *that's* a candy phone.

CAMERA ZOOMS BACK TO TAKE IN A SCENE OF A CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT: ENORMOUS STUFFED GIRAFFES, KOALA BEARS, LIFE-SIZED TIGERS, PENGUINS, FUNHOUSE MIRRORS, TOY OFFICE EXECUTIVE SUITES — WHERE HIRAM AND TED AHEARN ARE NOW SEATED — A WALK-IN GINGERBREAD HOUSE, TREMENDOUS CLUSTERS OF COLORED BALLOONS, STUFFED FULL SIZED CLOWNS AND CIRCUS GEAR AND A GREAT MANY HANGING PUPPETS WITH NO FACES. EVERYTHING IS BRIGHTLY COLORED AND ALL FURNITURE, POLES, LARGE BLOCKS, ETC., ARE COVERED WITH SHINY VINYL.

FOR THE NEXT FEW BEATS, WE STAY WITH AHEARN, AS HE MOVES AROUND — BRINGING THE BOX OF WIPES WITH HIM — AND LISTENS AND RESPONDS TO BODONI, WHO IS OFF CAMERA.

AHEARN

'Course I realize it, Bodoni. I was having a dry run. For a business phone conversation I'm going to have when I return to my office.

BODONI

(Off Camera)

Why are you in this studio, Ahearn? Today: Of all days?

AHEARN

Got clients in this building, and in this new TV show:
Upscale Teenage Fantasy Circus. Piece of crap.
 So it should do well. *And* these kid-clients
 are amazing *circus dazzlers with show biz chops*.
 Love circuses. Got a three-ring erection — in the yore days —
 the very first time the orphanage took us on a Big Top
 day-trip outing. I helped package this *Fantasy Circus show*,
 in fact. But, one of my do-gooder dazzler kids in it? —
 A star in the making? — Suddenly gets a tear in his
 tush to leave — Bolt the Ahearn stable of talent —
 And join the Mississippi Peace Corp.
 Came to knock that craziness out of him.

BODONI

And you never got a whiff of news? About things
 going on in this building today?

AHEARN

Hell, no! Not when I'm in *intimidating mode* with
 clients who want to jump ship. While I'm busy brow
 beating, I tend to shut out the world and—

(Shift)

What “whiff?” Wait —

PICKS UP THE PHONE AND STARTS EATING IT.

AHEARN

(Continued)

Take a breather, Bodoni. Have a bite of this:
 The phone is dark chocolate. Good for your heart.
 The cord is licorice.

HE BREAKS OFF A SECTION OF THE CORD, OFFERS TO OFF-CAMERA
 BODONI. WHOSE HAND, OFF CAMERA, TAKES IT.

BODONI

(Through mouthful, Off camera)

Sure you don't have anymore photos of Cleo Croyden?

SUBLIMINAL SHOT OF ONE OF CLEO CROYDEN PHOTO STILL. AHEARN
 GETS UP. LAUGHS, STARTS MOVING, INSPECTS THE SURROUNDINGS AS
 HE TALKS. FROM POV OF BODONI, FOLLOWING, OFF CAMERA.

AHEARN

Et tu, Bodoni?

ANOTHER SUBLIMINAL SHOT OF ONE OF CLEO CROYDEN PHOTO STILLS.

BODONI

(OFF)

Et tu me, what?

SUBLIMINAL SHOT OF ONE OF CLEO CROYDEN PHOTO STILLS.

AHEARN

You've fallen for Cleo Croyden. Right through the masks and all. Right through to the cheek bones.

LAST SUBLIMINAL SHOT OF ONE OF CLEO CROYDEN PHOTO STILLS.

BODONI

(Off)

She may be someone I'm looking for.

AHEARN IS NOW IN FRONT OF A STUFFED GIANT GORILLA.

AHEARN

Yeah. Right. Okay: Everywhere I've been today I got word that the great Bodoni wanted to see me. So now the great Bodoni sees me. About what?

THROWS CANDY PHONE AWAY. WIPES MORE FURIOUSLY WITH WIPES FROM BOX AS HE MOVES.

BODONI

(Off)

Do you always make demands Ahearn?

AHEARN

Now? Yes, I guess so.

BODONI

(Off)

And are they always met?

AHEARN

Now? In point of fact, yes.

BODONI

(Off)

That would indicate that there was a time
when your demands weren't met?

AHEARN

Correct, Bodoni. Before I got to be the biggest, most
sought after and most feared — before now and back
then, when my stable of talent was almost zero, I'd negotiate —
and they'd laugh at me — even while they gave me crumbs.
And I had to take the crumbs, Bodoni.

HE STUFFS THE USED WIPE INTO THE GORILLA'S MOUTH, LIGHTS A
CIGAR AND MOVES ON.

BODONI

(Voice Off)

Now, you're getting even.

AHEARN IS NOW IN FRONT OF THE DANGLING, FACELESS PUPPETS.

AHEARN

Of course. That's the way of the world. Right?
You know how you hear about the stars who
are so difficult, temperamental, S.O.B.s? Like
that? That's because, when they were clawing
their way up, whole armies of people were
stomping on *them*.

AHEARN MOVES TO THE SEE-SAW. WE ONLY SEE ONE RAISED END.

AHEARN

(Continued)

Now they are wearing the boots and doing the stomping.

INSERT DOLL-WITHIN-DOLL SEQUENCE.

BODONI

(Voice Off)

And the people everybody's getting even on
will get even soon on other people who'll get
even on the other people.

DOLL SEQUENCE — OUT.

BODONI
 (Continued. Voice Off)
 Is Cleo Croyden like that?

AHEARN
 (Sitting on the See-Saw)
 Not completely. But I'm teaching her. At the moment,
 Cleo's only *must-have-things* are dishwashers.

BODONI
 (Continued. Voice Off. Relieved)
 Not Microwaves. Thank Whatever.

AHEARN
 (Still sitting and rocking
 on the See-Saw)
 In fact: Have to be written into her contracts. Dishwashers.
 Must be the latest models every year. In point of fact
 — pastels. Specifically.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL BODONI ON OTHER END OF SEE-SAW.
 THEY SEE-SAW UNDER FOLLOWING.

BODONI
 Don't say, "In point of fact," Ahearn.

AHEARN
 Why not?

BODONI
 Because — and here's the first of today's
 building *whiffs* for you: A man who died today,
 in this building, always said, "In point of fact."
 Does that man sound familiar to you, Ahearn?

QUICK CUT TO CLOSEUP OF AHEARN.

AHEARN
 Well, my client, Kornzweig, always says—
 . . . Bodoni! You don't mean —?

QUICK CUT TO CLOSE UP OF BODONI.

BODONI
 Dead. But the operative words from your
 fragmented *sentence-of-surprise* are, "my client."

QUICK CUT TO CLOSEUP OF AHEARN.

AHEARN
(In shock)
Dead?

QUICK CUT TO CLOSE UP OF BODONI

BODONI
Right after your other client,
Larry Lekarew, died.

QUICK CUT TO CLOSEUP OF AHEARN.

AHEARN
(Shock, compounded)
My other client! Larry Lekarew! Dead?

QUICK CUT TO CLOSE UP OF BODONI

BODONI
Both *your* clients: Dead.

QUICK CUT TO CLOSEUP OF AHEARN.

AHEARN
(Totally dazed)
Both my clients! Dead?

QUICK CUT TO CLOSE UP OF BODONI.

BODONI
Repeat what I say once more, Ahearn,
and I'll yank that cigar out of your mouth
and jab it, ash first, into your ear!

QUICK CUT TO CLOSEUP OF AHEARN.

AHEARN
You don't have to get violent with me,
Bodoni. I told you: I didn't know—

QUICK CUT TO CLOSE UP OF BODONI.

BODONI

I'll get as damned violent with you as I want!
It's violence we're talking about. And the only
common denominator, in this *violent* equation,
is the agent of Lekarew and Kornzweig—YOU!

CUT TO MEDIUM LONG SHOT OF WHOLE SEE-SAW.
BODONI JUMPS OFF HIS END, AND AHEARN'S END DROPS TO THE
FLOOR. AHEARN LANDS ON HIS BUTT — SAYS THE NEXT FROM THE
FLOOR.

AHEARN

(From the floor)

Are you nuts, Bodoni? Do you know what it costs
in this city for me to live the life I live? And want?
This is 196 and 9. \$1000 bucks a month —for starters—
just for my two bedroom, two bath, one balcony
penthouse apartment. Commissions from Lekarew and
Kornzweig make — *made* —that happen. Why would I
knock them off?

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO INCLUDE BODONI LEANING AGAINST A MONKEY
BARS.

BODONI

Ah. That's better.

AHEARN

(From the floor)

What's better?

BODONI

The new framing.

AHEARN

(From the floor)

What are you talking about?

BODONI

That fast cutting. . .those closeups. . .
They were giving me a migraine headache.

AHEARN

(From the floor. Backing up)

Cutting? . . .Close ups? . . .

BODONI

Sometimes, It's as if I am a camera, you see.
That little exchange there on the See-Saw —

REPLAY THE QUICK-CUTTING SEE-SAW SEQUENCE—AT TRIPLE TIME.

BODONI

(Continued)

. . .was unnerving.

AHEARN

(From the floor)

Bodoni — are you all right? I mean, in the head?

BODONI

That is the deeper dramatic question, Ahearn.

BODONI BEGINS TO MOVE IN ON AHEARN, WHO MOVES BACK QUICKLY ON HIS HAUNCHES AGAINST A HUGE BLOCK.

BODONI

(Continued)

But the more immediate, surface, detective-reflex question, is: Why are you such a phony, Ahearn?

AHEARN

(Moving back)

Phony?

BY ACCIDENT, AHEARN RELEASES A CATCH AND A FACELESS JACK-IN-THE-BOX SPRINGS OUT OF ONE OF THE HUGE BLOCKS.

AHEARN SCREAMS.

BODONI

(Into cassette tape recorder)

That hard-boiled agent bit, with your stupid idea of stupid agent dialogue, is stupid, and unreal, and rests uncomfortably in and on your chunky—but I discern more delicate— frame and soul. It's an act, Ahearn. And while you look fifty five and a half with that silver hair — your natural color, I admit — with a little help from silver highlight, perhaps — *you are considerably younger.*

AHEARN'S BACK IS UP AGAINST A GROUP OF OTHER HUGE BLOCKS. BEGINS TO RAISE HIMSELF UP.

AHEARN

How did you know that?

BODONI

You picked the *wrong* wipes, in front of *the wrong guy*, with which to constantly wipe your face and hands, Ahearn. To *the wrong guy*, you would seem, merely, to have a compulsive need to constantly sanitize your face and hands — *and* — if you read the small print — to use as *after PooPoo wipes*. But those particular wipes are not *just sanitizing* wipes, Ahearn: They are *that* — *but* they have been mainly designed to treat severe cases of *Bullous impetigo erythema of the hands* — a *teenage* malady. And to treat, too, acne and disgusting pus pustules of the face! *And* — as a bonus genius feature— to add a patina of pancake makeup to cover zealous zits. And how do I know all this? Because, Ahearn — *I INVENTED THOSE WIPES!*

(Right into Ahearn's face)

HOW OLD ARE YOU, AHEARN? THE TRUTH!

AHEARN

(Pushing Bodoni away!

Spitting back at him)

OKAY! I AM TWENTY ONE! TRUTH ENOUGH FOR YOU, BODONI?

BODONI

(To the heavens)

*Good Christ! Is nothing or no one what **IT** slash **THEY** seem? And, as the denouement of this Studio caper approaches, must I continue to be bedeviled by the zits impostors of the world?*

AHEARN

And this neck brace? Phony, too! For all you kinky chicks who fell for this crap — See? — No more!

(He de-velcro's the neck brace from his neck with a *yank and tosses it*)

And this back brace — been breaking my back!

(Takes it off and tosses it)

Wore it to make me more scary looking to all the gonifs I had to deal with. *No more!*

CUT TO BODONI TURNING HEAD, SQUINTING AND DOING A DOUBLE TAKE.

CUT TO LONG SHOT OF THE BLIND BRITISH TD HIDING BEHIND A FACELESS, STUFFED, LIFE-SIZED TIGER. THE TD SPOTS BODONI AND QUICKLY MOVES AWAY.

CUT TO FAIRLY CLOSE SHOT OF BODONI FOLLOWING IN A LIMBO CORRIDOR, WHISPERING INTO HIS PORTABLE CASSETTE TAPE RECORDER MICROPHONE.

BODONI

The blind British Technical Director.
He's the key.

BODONI PASSES A STUDIO MONITOR. AHEARN IS SEEN ON IT, HE'S SITTING AT A MAKE UP TABLE, WHICH IS CLOSE TO THE FACELESS FACE OF THE FACELESS JACK-IN-THE-BOX. HE'S RUMMAGING AROUND, LOOKING FOR SOMETHING.

BODONI

(Continued. Talking to
Ahearn on monitor)

Ahearn! Get back to your clients. Warn them:
Because *you're* their agent — *they* are in danger.

AHEARN

(On monitor, still rummaging)

Bull pooppy! There's no connection between me and the *Rest-In-Peace* deaths of Kornzweig and Lekarew. But I *will* warn my clients that there's the whiff of decay in this studio — **but** not to worry: The great Bodoni is on the case.

Hey! Idea for a new show: *The Great Bodoni!* Build it around your detective chops, and inventions, and dead-pan, quirky brain. We'll talk later, Bodoni. But for now — I gotta thank you, Bodoni — for freeing me from all that crap I layered on myself. Notice how I'm now no longer speaking in what you so aptly called, "*my stupid idea of stupid agent dialogue.*"

This is the articulate, admittedly self-taught, **me**, that I could only speak on my tape recorder to *myself*.

Therefore: *Articulate* Ahearn is going back to his clients all right — those circus kid showbiz dazzlers — **but** to manage them with a **new** strength. Just watch

AHEARN
(Continued)

what results my browbeating gets when I persuade
the young circus/actor star — not only to stay in the showbiz —
but to stick with me — to grow — as a TV sellout—WITH ME:
Yes — *to stay* with the **new** Ahearn. But now, showing the yore-
mix of circus sawdust in his soul. AH. Here they are. Clown
fright wig—orange. Red clown honk-honk nose. Clown makeup
kit.

HE PUTS THE FRIGHT WIG ON HIS HEAD. ATTACHES THE RED HONK
NOSE TO HIS NOSE. PRESSES THE NOSE. IT HONKS.

CIRCUS MUSIC, IN AND UNDER. . .

WHILE WE CUT TO BODONI MOVING IN A CORRIDOR FLANKED WITH TV
MONITORS. BODONI'S FOOTSTEPS ARE LOUD, METALLIC. . .

BODONI

Strange murders of strange characters
who transform dizzily before your eyes —
and in a strange TV studio, pursuing
a strange, blind, British, Technical Director.
Find him, and find the common denominator,
to solve this strange caper, Bodoni.
Time to find it. Because I don't think Ahearn
is the common denominator here. A Bodoni hunch.
And Bodoni hunches usually hunch out.

MOVE IN ON MONITOR BODONI PASSES.

AHEARN AT A MAKEUP TABLE, APPLYING CLOWN MAKEUP.

AHEARN

I call it CE day—that day: CE for *Circus Epiphany* —
the orphanage, under-the-big-top, outing day.

WHILE HE TALKS, WE SEE MURKY, BUT RECOGNIZABLE, IMAGES OF THE
EVENTS AHEARN DESCRIBES.

AHEARN
(continued)

Bella Donna, the four foot skin and bones
bareback rider, coaxed me out of the stands,
hoisted me onto her steed and, standing while
we galloped, hoisted me over her head,

AHEARN

(continued)

and twirled me, in propeller fashion,
like a majorette's baton—to orgasmic exhilaration —
exhilaration beyond belief! So exhilarated that
I persuaded the orphanage to book Bella Donna for
Showtime Hour, where she spun me and ten other
orphans, one after the other over her head,
while standing and rocking on a rocking horse.
And she gave me ten percent of her \$250 dollar fee!
My first commission! And I was hooked and ready for
the life of an agent. And guess the name of the young
circus dazzler who I'm on my way to browbeat
— and want — no! NEED!— to keep in my stable?
Don (Donny) Donna — the nephew of brilliant Bella.

AHEARN REACHES OUT OF THE SCENE'S FRAME AND PULLS IN A CLOWN COSTUME.

CIRCUS MUSIC OUT AS WE CUT BACK TO BODONI WALKING IN MONITOR CORRIDOR.

BODONI

Why does this despairing haiku I wrote yesterday
come back to me at this heart-stopping moment?
"Stepping on soot/on a crunchy morning/
I am reminded of locusts/blackening the world/
and blotting out the sun/ I don't think I'd mind
so much/If only the crunch could chirp."

BODONI PASSES A MONITOR. MOVE IN ON MONITOR. ON IT WE SEE
AHEARN LOOKING AT HIMSELF IN A FUN HOUSE MIRROR, THE KIND THAT
MAKES YOU LOOK LINGUINI-THIN AND SEVEN FEET TALL.

AHEARN

I was born with acne. Bodoni. And *when*
I was born, I looked like I was ten years old.
When I was fifteen, I turned grey and looked
forty. I really am twenty one. Look fifty.

CAMERA MOVES OVER TO ANOTHER FUN HOUSE MIRROR THAT MAKES
YOU LOOK TWO FEET TALL AND SEVEN FEET WIDE. AHEARN'S SQUAT,
BLOATED IMAGE IN IT.

AHEARN

(Continued)

I was your penultimate, quintessential, bullied outsider — with no real talent for anything — no training, no background. 'Course, that qualified me to become a critic. But that would have made me more of an outsider. All right. If people treated me as an outsider and old — I'd do old, outsider things. I'd make money off of other people — become a legitimate pimp.

CUT TO: BODONI MOVING DOWN MONITOR LANE. HIS POINT OF VIEW AGAIN.

SOUND: AMPLIFIED METALLIC FOOTSTEPS.

BODONI

(Voice Over)

Closing in. There's a door down there.

BODONI PASSES A MONITOR. SUDDENLY BODONI STOPS.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS OUT.

MUSIC: *APRES UNE REVE*.

ZOOM IN ON MONITOR. CLEO CROYDEN IN ONE OF HER WHITE, FANCY, CARNIVAL MASKS. SHE IS EITHER UNCONSCIOUS OR DEAD — AND IN BODONI'S ARMS.

CLOSE UP OF BODONI.

BODONI

Cleo Croyden! The Girl In White!

MUSIC; OUT.

CUT TO AHEARN SITTING ON CHILDREN'S SWING IN CLOWN COSTUME, CLOWN MAKEUP AND RED-HONK NOSE, GENTLY ROCKING A BIT.

AHEARN

You know, Bodoni, I was the one who talked Larry Lekarew into doing the commercials and soap operas. He would have preferred doing

AHEARN

(Continued)

theatre workshops in basements and starving and like that. And Kornzweig? I handled him as a director, you know. He wasn't bad. Wanted to do some decent work—willing to work for peanuts. Imagine. But I kept him focused on the formulas—the money things.

BODONI

(Voice Off)

OK, Mr. Blind, British Technical Director: What's going on?

CUT TO: BLIND TD.

TD

Bodoni!

CUT TO; BODONI AT THE DOOR.

BODONI

That's right. *Bodoni*. And Bodoni wants answers. What was Cleo Croyden doing in my arms on the Monitor? And why are you fading out Ahearn?

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO INCLUDE THE BLIND TD. STUDIO MONITORS ARE NOT IN THE SHOT.

TD

Now listen, Bodoni, Old Man —

BODONI

Don't "old man" me! I need answers. And I feel a violent urge that may get me those answers. And cut that British crap. You're from the South. *RIGHT?*

HE GRABS THE TD BY THE THROAT. TD PULLS AWAY, FALLS BACKWARDS, ONTO A CAMERA. HE STEADIES HIMSELF AGAINST IT.

TD

(Very Tennessee Williams)

Alright! Alright! You are so right, Mr. Hiram Bodoni. Ah'm a cracker from Savannah. OK. But I don't know What all Cleo Croyden was doing in your arms on that Ol' iddy-biddy monitor. Ah had nothing to do with that.

BODONI

And your blindness? *That* better be real, or by God —
(Advances on TD)

TD

Oh yes — *Mr. genius detective*—the addition of the snob British riff helped to divert onlookers from my affliction, but my living in the world of the per-pet-u-al darkness is, in fact, the only thing 'bout me that *is* true blue, without a trace of spuriousness.

BODONI

You can thank *whatever* for that — or *I* would have put out your lights.

TD

It is a terrible affliction that has been with me since the first breath ah took when being forcibly *yanked* from the warmth, safety, and coziness of my mamma's womb, by the unnatural aid of *ice cube tongs* — by that ah mean, what they so an-ti-sep-tically call the forceps. And, until this very day, I do believe that those there iddy-biddy forceps were the switch that put my lights out permanently. But *I* am a console and so I know what a console sees. That's how ah know Cleo Croyden was on that iddy-biddy monitor in your arms, But ah had nothin' to do with makin' that image come to pass.

BODONI

Why are you fading Ahearn out?

TD

Because, Mr. violent Detective Hiram Bodoni, ah have been tryin' to discover the means of fading things out permanently for everyone, since ah can't do it in this here ol' console, maybe — ah say, maybe — I can find the way to fadeout into into darkness all of my fellow creatures who watch the tube by the millions — *who* — ah say — have the blessed fortune to watch — to see the beauty of the world outside this studio — *while ah can't* — in short to have them join me in the world of perpetual darkness and —

EXTREME CLOSE UP OF BODONI THAT STAYS CLOSE DURING HIS FOLLOWING SPPECH.

BODONI

STOP! Damn! He still keeps talking. But I need to go into inner monologue mode to override him and sort this moment out. Here goes

BODONI PULLS OUT HIS RECORDER AND SPEAKS INTO IT.

BODONI

The TD needs to get even. I understand that.
But— AH!

MUSIC: SOMETHING MOMENTOUS.

BODONI

(Epiphany)

The Final Fadeout! The ultimate dissolve.
There's your life's work project, Bodoni.
There's what you've been looking for and
what led you to *this* studio. Connect the dissolve to
the life ether. Find the way to dissolve
you out of it all. After all, you *are* a camera.
But to where? Dissolve to *where*? To go to *black*?
—To "the land from which no traveler returns?"
I've never wanted that. Always that damned
reflex in me that would rather continue feeling and
facing the pain and despair than plunging into that
never-nothing-evermore-at-all again "closing door" thing.
But perhaps there are limbo areas. There always are
here— in television—the only real reality. Find the
connection, Bodoni. Find the connection and dissolve
a suspended limbo area sandwiched safe between the
ugly ways of the world and . . . *whatever*.

into

TD

(Voice Off)

Bodoni, something's wrong!

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO INCLUDE TD AND MONITORS.

TD

Look!

POINTS TO MONITOR.

ZOOM IN ON MONITOR.

CIRCUS MUSIC.

ON MONITOR.

AHEARN

(Still in Clown get up.
Climbing rope ladder)

Bodoni, I never got the sawdust and greasepaint and elephant dung out of my nostrils. And I never did stop dreaming the impossible dream. And suddenly I'm here — right in the middle of a circus scene of a circus show I helped develop and I say to myself, I say, "Ted Ahearn—go ahead and make the dream possible again. I still got the old urge and reflexes." And this *is* a kid's circus. So I'm not very high. And so, finally, I'm gonna walk a damned tightrope. At least that.

BODONI

(Voice Over)

Switch on the P.A.

TD

(Voice Over)

It is on.

BODONI

(Voice Over.
Amplified)

Ahearn! Get down from there!

AHEARN

Not to worry, Bodoni. There's a net below.

A NET, BELOW, DISSOLVES IN.

AHEARN

See?

TD

(Voice Over)

Bodoni! There is no net down there! It's dissolving in.

BODONI
 (Voice Over.
 Amplified)
 Ahearn! There's no net there! It's an illusion!

AHEARN
 (On top of platform)
 Sure there's a net, Bodoni. And look at the tight-
 rope. Look how wide it is. It will be a cinch to walk.

DISSOLVE IN: A WIDE TIGHTROPE PATH — ALMOST AS WIDE AS A
 ROPE BRIDGE OVER A CANYON.

TD
 (Voice Over)
 That is not real either.

BODONI
 (Voice Over)
 Ahearn, don't —

MUSIC; DRUM ROLL.

AHEARN
 Don't worry. It's
 (He steps off. Falls
 out of frame)
 saaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaafe!

DRUMS AND MUSIC OUT.

BODONI
 Why did you do that?

TD
 Ah swear ah didn't. But ah know you won't
 believe me. All right then, Bodoni, then ah appeal
 to your selfish interests. Leave me alone and ah will
 help you try to dissolve to that never, never whatever
 land you so desperately need.

CLOSE UP OF BODONI TALKING INTO PORTABLE CASSETTE TAPE
 RECORDER MICROPHONE.

BODONI

Conflict: To accept the TD's offer or stay with that damned detective reflex. Or —WAIT!

INCLUDE THE TD

If you had nothing to do with the dissolve *in* of that net, how can you dissolve me *out*?

TD

But it's taught me some of it's — . . .
I mean. . . I mean . . . I can try. . .

BODONI

(Moving in)

"It's?" "IT's" taught you?

THE TD RISES AND MOVES BACK AGAINST THE CONSOLE. IN THE BACKGROUND ARE MONITORS WITH NO TV IMAGES.

TD

A figure of speech, Bodoni.

BODONI

(Grabbing the TD by the collar)

Who, or what, are you involved with?

TD

No, Bodoni. I— . . .

THE TD GASPS. EYES PROTRUDE. HE SLUMPS FORWARD. ALL MONITORS, IN THE BACKGROUND, SHOW THE TV CAMERA.

MUSIC: ELECTRONIC

BODONI

That camera. . . Blind TD. . . "It" . . .

Good God! Could it be?

SOUND: Buzzing.

BODONI TURNS TO NEGATIVE FOR A SECOND. WHEN IMAGE CLEARS, BODONI COVERS HIS FACE AND MOVES BACKWARDS.

NEGATIVE BUSINESS AGAIN. THIS TIME BODONI IS HURLED AGAINST THE CONTROL BOARD. HE THROWS HIMSELF TO THE FLOOR.

CLOSE IN ON BODONI UNDER CONSOLE TABLE.

BODONI

Why am I alive? A monumental stabbing heartburn.
Must — need to — beeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeelch!

BODONI OPENS HIS MOUTH.

SOUND: MONUMENTAL BELCH. REVERBERATES.

BODONI

(Breathing hard)

That's better. And I'm safe here. I think.
No monitors to see me. But how will I
communicate with it? Hello! *I hear it.*

SOUND: A KIND OF BUZZ

BODONI

(Continued)

*Good God! I'm not only a camera —
I'm a radio receiver!*

EXTREME CLOSE UP OF BODONI, STRAINING TO HEAR.

BODONI

(Continued)

Why? Why have you been killing them all?

SOUND: BUZZ. HELD UNDER.

BODONI MOVES LIPS.

CAMERA'S VOICE, WORDS, HEARD OVER.

BODONI/CAMERA VOICE

(Sad. Weary.)

*Mon-u-mental belch. . .to clear. . .poisons. . .
from system. . .*

BODONI

Poisons?

BODONI/CAMERA VOICE

Kornzweig. . .Lekarew. . .Ahearn. . .Polluters. . .too much. . .getting worse. . .coagulated my coaxial. . . cataracted my lenses. . .spreading cancer through my cables . . .O Hiram, what a falling off was there . . .where would it end? . . .had to be stopped. . .also. . .had to get even. . .for being forced to absorb. . .absorb. . .poisons. . .garbage. . .corrupting us, too. . .

BODONI/SELF

Alas poor camera. But. Are you through? Are you satisfied? Have you had enough?

WE SEE BODONI UNDER THE TABLE AND THE MONITORS IN THE REAR, ALL SHOWING IMAGES OF THE CAMERA.

BODONI/CAMERA VOICE

Not yet. . .and your reflexes. . .not garbage. . .You. . . us. . .same side. . .hate the pimps.need allies. . .Blind TD. . .useful. . . he had to get even on. . .seeing. . .world. . . Not clever enough though. . .

BODONI/SELF

No. No. That's not it. You may have needed human allies, but you're beginning to be able to do without them. Because you *did* try to get me. Oh baby — did you ever — The heartburn. Those weird things you did to me. But you couldn't — because

(Defiant)

I AM A CAMERA!

SOUND: BUZZ. BUZZ.

(Robotic)

Bodoni. . .I can show you. . .how to dissolve. . .if you. . .disengage yourself . . .from this. . .case. . .

MOVE IN ON BODONI, OBVIOUSLY STRUGGLING WITH THE OFFER.

BUZZ: OUT.

BODONI/SELF

No. No.

BUZZ UP AGAIN.

BODONI/CAMERA VOICE

*Look. . .look. . .Bodoni. . . Look — the
monitors. . .What I can do. . .to innocent
people. . .*

ON MONITORS: A HUGE STUDIO FILLED WITH WHAT SEEM LIKE A HUNDRED STANDING, FACELESS MANIKINS.

THE IMAGE SCRAMBLES.

WHEN IT SETTLES, ALL THE MANIKINS ARE LYING ON THE FLOOR.

SOUND: BUZZ, BUZZ.

BODONI/SELF

No. No. It goes too far.
They always go too far.
I've got to get down there.
Dissolve through. . .
I am a camera.
I am a camera.
I am a camera.

DISSOLVE BODONI TO STUDIO FLOOR.

CEILING SHOT OF STUDIO FLOOR. BODONI AT ONE END, MANIKIN BODIES ALL OVER THE FLOOR. CLEO CROYDEN AT THE OTHER END. NO CAMERA SEEN. ESTABLISH. . . THEN ZOOM IN ON BODONI.

BODONI

No camera. Ha. It won't tangle with me
any longer. I've won.

CLEO

(Voice over. Amplified)

You. You there.

SLOW PAN AROUND STUDIO FLOOR FROM BODONI'S POINT OF VIEW. STOP AT VERY LONG SHOT OF *THE GIRL IN WHITE*, STANDING. SHE SEEMS TO BE WEARING A MASK.

BODONI
(Amplified)
Are you Cleo Croyden?

CLEO
(Amplified)
Yes.

BODONI
(Amplified)
I'm Hiram Bodoni. I'm in love with you.

CLEO
(Amplified)
I know, Hiram.

BODONI
(Amplified)
Do you know *Après Une Reve*?

CLEO
(Amplified)
Yes. But I haven't sung it since I gave up my
opera career for the big money on TV.

BODONI
(Amplified)
Sing it for me.

CLEO
(Amplified)
Now?

BODONI
(Amplified)
Yes.

SHE SINGS. IN SLOW MOTION, BODONI FLOATS TOWARD HER,
STEPPING OVER MANIKINS AS HE MOVES. SUDDENLY HE STOPS.

THE CAMERA DISSOLVES IN AT ANOTHER SPOT ON THE STUDIO
FLOOR. BEGINS TURNING.

BODONI
(Amplified)
No! Don't do it! Leave Cleo Croyden alone!

SINGING OUT.

CLEO
(Seaks. Amplified)
What did you say, my angel?

BODONI
(Amplified)
Cleo, my love. It's the camera.
The camera did it. It had reasons.
Then. Now it's deadlier. Gone crazy!

CLEO
(Amplified)
How do you know, my darling?

BODONI
(Amplified)
Because *I* am a camera, my precious.
But look, my adorable, it's aiming at you!

CUT TO; CAMERA'S POINT OF VIEW, SLOWLY TURNING AND TAKING
AIM AT CLEO THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING.

CLEO
(Amplified)
Nonsense, my Koala Bear. Why?
Now, I want — I *NEED* to come to you.

BODONI
(Amplified)
No, my kumquat, STOP! Okay! At least say
you'll give up doing the junk and go back to
your art and what you really want to do.

CLEO
(Amplified)
Why, my Siamese pussy cat?

BODONI
(Amplified)
Because this camera is leading the
charge to destroy all the seller outers—
all the junk contributors. It's cleaning out
all the poisons from the system, *IT* says.
To *IT*, you, my *pretty pupik*, are a poison.

BODONI

(Continued. Amplified)

Oh, say it! Say you'll give it all up.

CLEO

(Amplified)

But, Hiram, my tender baby Kale, it's too late.
Ted Ahearn made me see that. Stardom.
Stardom and money — that's what's important.
That's what stops you from being faceless.
Consider, my bubble-butt Shamus—
I'll be starring in the latest show guaranteed
to be our next rating gold mine: *Off Key Divas*.
We have to sing everything off key and in a very high
pitch that only dogs can hear. And the delight of it to the
great TV audience will be to see which one of us Divas
gets vocal nodes first. Silly, of course. Meaningless.
Idiotic, even. Ergo: Terrific TV. *And*, my pomegranate,
I've made my peace with it.

BODONI

(Amplified. Moving toward her)

No, no. Please don't say it. Not now. Even
if you think it. The camera is going to get you.

CLEO

(Amplified. Moving to him)

I heard you were a little bananas, Hiram,
my CooCoo coconut, and that's why I love
you. But you must take me as I am. And I've
made my peace with junk, so —

SHE KEELS OVER. . .

BODONI

(Amplified)

Cleo!

HIRAM BEGINS TO RUN TO HER.

SOUND: A LOUD CRUNCH.

CAMERA SLOWLY TURNS TO HIRAM. BEGINS TO MOVE IN ON HIM.

BODONI

(Backing off)

I am a camera. I *am* a camera.

I am *a* camera. I am a *camera*.

HIRAM KEEPS REPEATING THIS AS THE CAMERA:

SPLIT SCREEN'S HIRAM.

WIPES HIRAM OFF THE SCREEN AND BACK AGAIN.

DISSOLVES HIRAM OFF— BUT HIRAM DISSOLVES BACK.

URNS HIRAM INTO A NEGATIVE.

DIVIDES HIRAM INTO 50 IMAGES.

FREEZE-FRAMES HIRAM.

URNS HIRAM ON HIS HEAD.

SPIN WHEELS HIRAM.

ZOOM LENS'S HIRAM IN AN OUT.

BLOWS UP HIRAM IN A MUSHROOM CLOUD.

HIRAM, PUNCHY, SURVIVES IT ALL, MANAGES, CONVENIENTLY, TO FIND AN AX AND SWINGS IT AND CUTS THE CAMERA'S CABLE.

THE CAMERA COLLAPSES LIKE A SHOT ELEPHANT.

HIRAM STANDS EXHAUSTED.

MUSIC: PATRIOTIC:

VOICE

(Over. Stentorian)

We commend detective Hiram Bodoni for solving the nasty and difficult case of the maverick camera of vengeance, and for preserving and following his old fashioned detective instinct for putting duty above his desire for the ultimate cop out and dissolve. Now he can go back to his joyous work of uncovering knifings and poisonings and espionage and robbery and rapes and extortion and petty and monumental thievery and

BODONI

Cleo!

RUNS TO HER, TRIPPING OVER THE MANIKIN BODIES.

VOICE

(Continued. Fading)

rent gauging and muggings and price fixing
and block busting and pollution making and
de-masking the phonies of the world and . . .

THE VOICE HAS FADED OUT.

BODONI

Cleo!

HE BENDS AND LIFTS HER AS WE SAW EARLIER IN THE MONITOR.
HE TAKES OFF HER MASK. SHE'S A SHIRLEY TEMPLE-LIKE BLACK
MANIKIN WITH BLONDE HAIR.

BODONI

(Continued. Laughs)

It's all screwed up.

(Epiphany)

Wait. The sleeping black beauty. It's all
a fairytale anyway. . . A kiss.

MUSIC: THE *UN BACCIO* THEME FROM VERDI'S *OTELLO*.

HIRAM KISSES THE MANIKIN. SAWDUST FALLS OUT OF IT, LEAVING
JUST A SKIN.

BODONI

(Continued)

Nothing.

HIRAM LOOKS OFF TO — A WALL OF MONITORS.
ON THEM WE SEE A THOUSAND IMAGES OF HIRAM
HOLDING THE SKIN.

GO QUICKLY TO BLACK.

CLOSING CREDITS COME UP OVER MATRUSKA DOLL-WITHIN-DOLL
SEQUENCE.

APRES UNE REVE HEARD OVER.

END