

The Bachelor Party

FADE IN.

EXTERIOR. STUYVESANT TOWN HOUSING PROJECT -- DAY.

Under the credits, the CAMERA PANS slowly across the project, capturing the sober monotony, the endless straight apartment houses. Seven o'clock in the morning.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM

The bedroom of a two-and-a-half-room apartment in the housing project. It is early morning, but the shades are drawn and the room is dark. CAMERA moves slowly across the room, over the large double bed on which Charlie and Helen Samson, a young couple in their late twenties, are sleeping. They are sleeping more or less on their sides, facing away from each other. One of Helen's pajama-clad legs projects from under the light covers. We close in on Charlie's sleeping face.

The alarm clock at a distant end of the room suddenly bursts into a soft relentless buzz. Charlie's eyes open. There is a muffled movement at his side, and Helen gets up on one elbow. Then she sits up, rises, and pads barefooted -- a rather pretty girl in rumpled pajamas -- to the alarm clock and turns it off. Charlie's head turns on the pillow so that he can watch her. She pads back to the bed now and stands at the foot, looking down at her husband. She produces a smile, then turns and shuffles into the bathroom where she turns on the wall switch. A shaft of light now pours into the bedroom.

Charlie sits up in bed. His shoes and socks are on the floor by his feet. He reaches down and starts to put them on. Suddenly, from the recesses of the bathroom, Helen's rather vague soprano lifts into the first lines of a popular song. Then it stops as abruptly as it began. Charlie's head slowly turns to look at the bathroom, back again to the business of putting on his socks. His face is expressionless, but there is no mistaking the sodden distaste he has for the world today.

He just sits on the bed, a young man of twenty-nine, clad only in his pajama trousers, one sock dangling from his hand, his head hanging, his shoulders slumped. Behind him, the sudden noise of rushing tap water, then off. Then his wife comes back into the bedroom. She is carrying a bath towel with which she is drying her face. Finished, she drops the towel on the bed and begins to dress. A moment later, she pads around the corner of the bed to Charlie's front. She is still barefooted and wears her pajama top, but she has exchanged the trousers for a half-slip. Charlie hasn't moved a muscle since the effort required to lift one sock from the floor.

HELEN

You think it's too early to call
my mother?

CHARLIE

I don't know.

Charlie shrugs without looking up. Helen goes out of the bedroom, into the little square of foyer where there is a telephone table with a telephone on it. She dials, waits. In the bedroom, Charlie rubs his eyes with two fingers.

HELEN

(on phone)

Hello, Ma, did I wake you up? This
is Helen.... Well, I'll be going to
work, and I wanted to get ahold of
you before I left. I called you last
night. Where were you and Pop anyway?
I kept calling you every half hour
up till one o'clock.... Oh, yeah? Did
you have a nice time? ...

CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES IN FOR CLOSEUP
of Charlie in bedroom.

HELEN'S VOICE

Well, listen, Ma, I got something to
tell you. I'm pregnant.... Yeah,
pregnant.... Of course I'm sure.
I've got the report back from the

laboratory.... No, you wouldn't know him, Doctor Axelrod.... Second month. He says I can expect the baby in February.... Well, Grandma, act a little excited, will you? ... You bet I'm excited....

CLOSEUP OF CHARLIE

He is not excited. If anything he is miserable. His bowed head rises slowly. The eyes open. He stares abstractedly ahead for a moment. Then he sighs a profound sigh of resignation. Then his eyes close again, and his head slowly sinks back to its previous abjection.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. THE KITCHEN -- HALF HOUR LATER

Helen, dressed in skirt and blouse now, is preparing two cups of instant coffee, pouring hot water from the saucepan into the two cups. The toaster is ticking. A packaged loaf of white bread is open on the cupboard shelf. Finished with pouring the water, Helen sets the saucepan back on the stove and comes out into the dining area. The dinette table is covered from end to end by open textbooks, several very large accounting worksheets on which are scrawled meticulous numbers, a ruler, several pencils and a pen, an ash tray glutted with cigarettes, a cup and saucer.

HELEN

(calling to the bedroom)

Do you need any of this or can I take them off the table?

Charlie appears in the bedroom doorway, dressed and washed now, a neat, clean young man in a white shirt and neatly knotted tie.

CHARLIE

I'll clean that up in a minute.

He disappears back into the bedroom. Helen picks up the ash tray and the cup and saucer.

HELEN

How late were you up last night?

CHARLIE'S VOICE

About two.

INTERIOR. THE BEDROOM

Charlie standing by the window, is picking up his keys, a few dollar bills, a comb, etc., from a chair and putting them into his trouser pockets. The blinds of the bedroom window have been opened, and the high August sun streams in, whitening Charlie's face. After he has pocketed his odds and ends, he moves to the chest of drawers on which, among all sorts of other things, there are several textbooks and an opened notebook. He stands a moment looking down into the open notebook, his lips moving ever so little, as he commits some of his notes to memory. He turns a page of the notebook back to check something and then goes back to the previous page. Now he opens one of the smaller drawers in the chest of drawers. The drawer contains wisps of his wife's stockings and other feminine things. He finds a small roll of bills and takes one of them, putting the bill in his pocket and closing the dresser drawer.

CHARLIE

I'm taking five bucks from your drawer.

He pauses now to affix a less frowning expression onto his face and goes out into the little foyer and into the dining area.

INTERIOR. THE DINING AREA

Helen is seated at the dinette table, sipping coffee and reading yesterday's newspaper. There are two cups of coffee on the table.

CHARLIE

A guy in my office is getting married, and I got clipped four bucks for his wedding present.

He begins assembling the mass of papers and textbooks on the table.

HELEN

Who's getting married?

CHARLIE

Arnold. I told you about him. The guy with the sick mother.

HELEN

Oh, yeah.

CHARLIE

(trying to decide
whether he needs a
certain worksheet)

The rest of the guys are giving him a bachelor party tonight.

HELEN

Do you want to go, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I got class tonight.

HELEN

What have you got -- cost accounting?

CHARLIE

Yes.

HELEN

I think you ought to take off a night. You ought to go, have a little fun for yourself. I think you need that. You go to work all day, you go to school all night. You can miss one night, Charlie.

CHARLIE

No, these bachelor parties get kind of wild sometimes. The whole philosophy is: it's the groom's last night of freedom. So it gets kind of wild sometimes.

HELEN

That's a good philosophy to start a marriage with.

CHARLIE

Well, a bunch of guys get together,
they like to tear up the town a
little.

He has assembled his notes and notebooks and texts in a pile
on the table, ready to take with him. He sits down and
begins sipping his coffee. Helen looks back to her newspaper,
frowning a little, then looks up at Charlie again.

HELEN

I think you oughta go, Charlie. I
know you're upset about the baby.

CHARLIE

I'm not upset about the baby.

HELEN

Come on, Charlie. I know how you
feel. Listen, you don't have to
pretend you're excited about the
baby. We weren't exactly planning
on a baby right now ...

CHARLIE

I'm not upset about the baby.

HELEN

It's a shock. I had some bad days
before I told you. I said: "Oh, boy,
that's all we need. A baby." Then I
said to myself: "If I'm having a
baby, I'm having a baby. That's all
there is to it." And I like the idea.
We're going to have a family,
Charlie. I like the idea.

CHARLIE

Well, give me a couple of days to
get used to the idea. I'll be all
right.

HELEN

I know you will, Charlie. That's why

I think you ought to go to this bachelor party tonight.

CHARLIE
(bursting out)

I don't want to go to this bachelor party.

He looks down at his coffee, embarrassed at the outburst.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry I yelled.

HELEN
Don't be silly.

CHARLIE
I better get going. Kenny's probably waiting for me now. I'm sorry I yelled like that.

HELEN
What are you sorry about? Don't I yell at you all the time?

WE STAY ON HELEN, as she reads her newspaper, but there is a faint frown on her face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. LOCAL PLATFORM EASTSIDE IRT SUBWAY
An express train hurtles southward. We see it flashing by through the concrete pillars of the subway.

DISSOLVE TO:

IRT EXPRESS HURTLING SOUTHWARD
Charlie and another young man, named Kenneth, are seated in a crowded subway car. People are standing tightly in the aisles. Kenneth is an amiable young man of thirty-odd. He has his jacket off and his tie loosened as a concession to the August heat. Charlie is neatly and coolly dressed. He has two notebooks and a battered text in his lap. He is reading the text. Two young white-collar workers on their

way to work. They ride along silently for a moment. Kenneth is rather stealthily concerned with a full-busted young woman who is standing directly in front of him, holding on to a strap. It is summertime, and the girls all wear light summer frocks. There is a feeling of wistful sensuality to the scene.

KENNETH

You going to Arnold's bachelor party?

CHARLIE

I don't think so, Kennie.

KENNETH

What?

CHARLIE

I got two classes tonight.

KENNETH

Yeah, I was going to go, but I think I better not, because my kid, the young one, the girl, she's been acting up again lately. She's got some kind of allergy, the doctors don't know what.

CHARLIE

These bachelor parties get kind of wild sometimes. Eddie Watkins is making all the arrangements. He's probably got us lined up with a bunch of chorus girls.

KENNETH

Yeah, do you think so?

CHARLIE

You know Eddie.

KENNETH

Yeah, boy, he really lives it up, don't he? Did you see that blonde who picked him up for lunch last week? Boy, sometimes I wish I was a

bachelor. Well, you know what I mean. I never seem to get out of the house any more, you know what I mean? About once a week, I go to the movies. We never even see the whole picture. My wife starts worrying about the kids. My youngest kid, the girl, she's got some kind of rash. We don't know what it is. I never seem to see anybody any more. Do you know how long it is since I've seen Willie Duff? I haven't seen Willie in about six months. My wife can't stand his wife. You ever seen her, Willie's wife?

CHARLIE

No, I didn't know Willie too well.

KENNETH

Boy, wait'll you have kids, boy. You'll never get out of the house.

CHARLIE

Helen's pregnant now.

KENNETH

No kidding.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

KENNETH

Oh, that's wonderful, Charlie, that's wonderful!

The two young husbands look down again at their hands and ride along silently. Kenneth sneaks a quick look up at the girl standing in front of him, and then lets his attention drift down the length of the car.

KENNETH

Hey, there's a guy down there, trying to pick up a girl down there.

He is referring to a Young Fellow who elbowed his way down through the crowded aisle but who stopped abruptly when he noticed an attractive girl, seated about three seats down from Kenneth. The Girl is reading a newspaper. The Young Fellow stares at her. The Girl, aware of this sudden attention, looks briefly up from her newspaper. The Young Fellow smiles pleasantly. The Girl, with a show of annoyance, looks back to her newspaper.

KENNETH

Were you with us about eight years ago when I picked up that chick in front of the bus stop in Paterson, New Jersey?

CHARLIE

When was this?

KENNETH

Yeah, you were there. You were with that girl from Brooklyn. We just came from Palisades Amusement Park, and we were driving Frankie Klein's girl home, and the car broke down right in the middle of Route One.

CHARLIE

(beginning to laugh)

Oh, yeah.

KENNETH

(laughing)

And Frankie opened up the hood and the water cap blew right up in the air.

CHARLIE

And the cop came over ...

KENNETH

That's right, the cop. He thought Frankie shot off a gun....

They are both laughing audibly now at the memory.

KENNETH

He was going to pull us all in. Oh, man!

CHARLIE

Frankie, he was funny.

KENNETH

Oh, that was a lot of fun, those days.

CHARLIE

Yeah, they were.

The little spasm of laughter is over. A sort of ruefulness settles down on the two young husbands. Kenneth looks lazily down the aisle to see how the Young Fellow is making out with The Girl. He seems to be making out all right. They are looking steadily at each other now. Kenneth turns back to Charlie.

KENNETH

Hey, this guy's making out all right. She's giving him the eye now.

Charlie leans forward to see this progress.

KENNETH

(looking out the window at the passing local station)

Where are we now, Prince Street? I bet you he picks her up before we hit Chambers Street.

Somehow this has a sobering effect on the two young husbands. Again they sit silently as the train buckets along.

CHARLIE

Boy, I'm bushed today. I was up till two o'clock last night on this thing here. I'm getting to be a nervous wreck. I snarled at Helen this morning. I think this whole night school business is getting me down.

KENNETH

I don't see how you do it.

CHARLIE

Neither do I. I thought I was through with it. The plan was for me to quit work and go to college full time and cram through in a year or so. But now we got this kid coming, and Helen's going to have to quit her job, and that sets me back where I started from. Another five years of this, summers included.

KENNETH

I couldn't do it, man, I'll tell you that. I wish I could, but I couldn't.

CHARLIE

Oh, what am I griping about? This is the life I picked out for myself. But it's a grind, boy, I tell you.

They sit silently again. The train hurtles along and then suddenly slows as it approaches a stop. There is a rustle of movement among the passengers in the subway car. A few people start edging toward the doors. The Girl reading the newspaper now folds her newspaper and stands almost directly in the Young Fellow's face. They regard each other.

YOUNG FELLOW

(to the girl)

Excuse me, can you tell me how to get to the Nassau Street exit?

GIRL

Well ... well, at the top of the stairs, you'll see all the signs.

YOUNG FELLOW

Are you getting off here?

GIRL

Yes.

YOUNG FELLOW

Well, I'll follow you then. That'll be easier, if you don't mind.

GIRL

No, not at all.

They start to crowd down the aisle. The train is chugging into the Chambers Street station, and we can see the yellowed lights of the platform and the quick blur of faces. The two young husbands, who had been following the byplay between The Girl and the Young Fellow, now watch them slowly exit. There is an expression of poignant wistfulness on both their faces.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. THE OFFICE

We look down on the bookkeeping department of a life insurance company in downtown Manhattan area around Pine Street. It is a fairly large room, large enough to hold eleven desks. But you get the feeling that this is one of the smaller offices on the floor. You get the feeling that this company occupies three or four floors of this building. Despite the size of the office, it has a cluttered look. Each desk has piles of paper on it, and all the impedimenta of the bookkeeper -- the pens and pencils, the adding machine, the telephone. Some of the desks have typewriters. Along the walls there are rows of filing cabinets and wall bins stocked with large worksheets and thick ledgers. At the far end of the room, there is a row of windows, but it is still necessary to keep the overhead fluorescent lights on all day. They are on now. There are two middle-aged women standing, murmuring to each other, and a rather heavy-set balding man in his late forties, sitting at a desk in his shirt sleeves, already hard at work, although it is still ten minutes shy of eight-thirty.

Kenneth and Charlie enter. Ad lib hellos between them and the two middle-aged women. Charlie moves to the coat rack to hang up his jacket, drops off his books on his desk, starts for the coat rack. Behind Charlie, we see Kenneth, carrying his jacket, moving to his desk, up where the middle-aged man

is working.

KENNETH

Hiya, Walter.

CHARLIE

Hiya, Walter.

Walter, the middle-aged man, nods his good mornings.

KENNETH

(poking in his desk
drawer; amiably)

Walter, what time do you come in in
the mornings? You're making us all
look lousy, you know that? I get
the feeling sometimes, you stay here
overnight.

Walter merely nods, doesn't bother to look up from the work. Kenneth finds a stick of gum in his drawer, unwraps it. Two more women, gray-haired and bespectacled, come into the office. There is an ad lib mumble of hellos in background. Charlie hangs up his jacket on the coat rack.

CHARLIE

Arnold in yet?

WALTER

He starts his vacation today. He's
getting married Sunday, you know.

CLOSEUP of Charlie looking out the window into the bright August morning. His face is just a little ruffled by a frown, and there is a kind of pain in his eyes. Behind him, Walter and Kenneth.

WALTER

(a nervous, anxious man)

Well, the doctor was over last night.
Brought over the X rays; brought
over the allergy tests. Brought over
a bill for sixty-eight dollars. I
said to him: "Doctor, you're a young
man, professional, highly educated,

four years of college, two years of premedical training, several years of interning, of residency. If you're so smart, how can you charge me sixty-eight dollars? One thing they apparently didn't teach you in medical school. You can't get blood from a stone."

KENNETH

So what's wrong with you, Walter?

WALTER

What's wrong? I have to go to Arizona, that's what's wrong. I have asthma. When I was a kid, they called it hay fever, and you carried a bag around your neck. Asafetida. Now, they call it asthma, and you have to go to Arizona. I said to him: "Doctor, you're a professional man, four years of college, premedical school, Bellevue, several diplomas. Answer me a question. Who's going to pay for Arizona?" I said to him: "Doctor," I said, "perhaps you have the illusion I am the Aga Khan. I have a bearing about me, perhaps, that misleads you to believe I have blood ties with the Whitneys and the Rockefellers. This isn't true." Arizona. Did you ever hear of such nonsense?

KENNETH

How serious is it, Walter?

WALTER

Serious. Nothing serious. I have hay fever, I sneeze a couple of times. The idiot told my wife I have to go to Arizona, and she wouldn't leave me alone all night. She's already packing the bags. I said: "For heaven's sakes, you listen to

doctors, we'll all be dead." My son, Harold, believe me, he's going to be a doctor. That's some racket, boy. Sixty-eight dollars.

CLOSEUP of Charlie, still at the window, when a bell suddenly clangs, indicating the start of the workday. The sudden jangle makes him start, and he closes his eyes briefly against the noise. Walter, in background, who had risen and was bent over Kenneth's desk, darts nervously back to his own desk.

WALTER

You better get to work. Hey, Charlie, that was the bell. I think Flaherty is here this morning. We'll all be fired today. I have a feeling.

He hunches over his ledgers again, his anxious, harried face drawn into intense wrinkles of concentration. Several other women have come into the office by now, and there is a general movement to the desks. There is the click of a typewriter, and Walter runs his fingers glibly over the adding machine on his desk. The day has started.

After a moment, Charlie turns from the window and comes back to his desk, sinks down onto his chair.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. THE OFFICE -- TWENTY MINUTES LATER

We look down on the bookkeeping department. All the desks are occupied but two. There are six women and our three men. The office is silent with industry, everybody's head bent over his desk. There is the occasional punctuation of an adding machine or a typewriter or a phone ringing.

Our three men are bent over their tally sheets, worksheets, and ledgers, occasionally reaching up to quickly tabulate something on the adding machine. After a moment, Walter says:

WALTER

(without looking
up from his work)

You fellows going to Arnold's party tonight?

KENNETH

(without looking up)

No, I'm not going, are you?

WALTER

No. Eddie already hooked me for four bucks for Arnold's present. This dinner is going to cost another couple of good dollars.

CHARLIE

It looks like nobody's going to Arnold's bachelor party.

WALTER

You ain't going?

CHARLIE

No, I'm not going.

WALTER

Eddie's going to be mad.

CHARLIE

I told Eddie last week I couldn't make it. I've got school. Eddie's a bachelor. It's all right for him to go rooting around town, picking up girls.

WALTER

Yeah, you get married you give that kind of thing up.

KENNETH

Yeah, Charlie says Eddie has a whole bunch of chorus girls lined up for us tonight.

Walter's head comes up for the first time.

WALTER

No kidding.

CHARLIE

I didn't say that. I just said that if I knew Eddie, we'd probably wind up with some of his crazy girl friends.

Walter looks back down to his work again.

KENNETH

I don't know where he gets all these girls. He's a screwy looking jerk.

WALTER

Did you see that blonde who was up here looking for him last week?

KENNETH

Yeah. He told me she was a television actress. I think I saw her once on "Studio One." She was in a coal mine with some stir-crazy coalminer who was trying to strangle her with a necktie.

WALTER

I'd like to strangle her with a necktie.

KENNETH

Now, Walter, an old married man like you, with asthma and everything.

Walter looks up suddenly from his work, a strange sting of pain crossing his face.

WALTER

I get real jealous of Eddie sometimes. He's as free as a bird. Did you see that convertible he's got?

KENNETH

Yeah, he really banged it up I hear.

WALTER

You ought to see the old heap I've got. He walks out of here on payday, he can spend the whole works on having himself a good time. I walk out of here, and I got three kids and a wife, all of them with their palms out. I lost two bucks playing poker at my house last week. It was an economic catastrophe. My wife didn't sleep all night.

CHARLIE

He's late again.

WALTER

He'll be twenty minutes late again. If Flaherty walked in now, he'd fire him. If that ever happened to me, I think I'd kill myself. What does Eddie care? So he scrambles around for another job. Flaherty told me last week I had too many days off. I told him I was sick in bed. What do you want me to do?

He turns back again to his work, his face creased with anxiety. The three men work silently for a moment. Then the office door opens, and a man of about thirty-five, a little stout, but rather casual in his dress, wearing steel-rimmed glasses, enters. This is Eddie Watkins, the office bachelor. He seems to have had very little sleep the night before. His eyes, behind the wire-rimmed glasses, are heavy-lidded. A cigarette dangles listlessly, from his mouth. There is something of the bacchanalian libertine about Eddie. There is a perfunctory exchange of hellos and good mornings, establishing that this is Eddie. He shuffles with ineffable weariness to his desk.

WALTER

Hi, Eddie, you're early today, only twenty minutes late, what happened?

EDDIE

(muttering through
reluctant lips)

Flaherty come in yet?

KENNETH

No.

Eddie sits down at his desk, pulls his cigarette automatically for a moment. Then he reaches over to a pile of telephone directories on the floor beside his desk, pulls up the Manhattan one, flips through the pages, finding the number he wants. He picks up the phone.

EDDIE

Mary, give me an outside line....

(he pauses, checks
the number in the
phone book again,
dials, waits)

Hello, is this Leathercraft on
Madison Avenue? ... This is Mr.
Watkins. I was in about a week ago.
I ordered a military set and a
wallet. They were supposed to be
ready yesterday.... Yes, please,
would you? ...

(he is searching
his pockets while
he waits, finds a
piece of paper,
pulls it out)

Yeah, a military set and a wallet....

WALTER

Is that what we bought poor Arnold?

EDDIE

(on phone)

That's right. The following
inscriptions should be on them:

(reads from the paper)

On the military set: "To Arnold:
Best wishes on your marriage from
Alice, Charlie, Eddie, Evelyn,
Jeanette with two t's, Kenneth,
Lucy, Mary, Olga, Walter, and
Flaherty." Now on the wallet ...

Yeah, what? Yeah, that's right -- Flaherty. Now, on the wallet, the following inscription: "To my Best Friend Arnold from his Best Man Eddie." ... No, to my best friend Arnold. ... That's right. "From his best man Eddie" ... Now, can I come in at lunch and pick them up? ...

A young woman comes into the office, goes to Walter's desk and drops some papers before him.

WALTER

What's this, Jeanette?

GIRL

It's from finance, don't ask me.

This is the girl in the office who goes to the water cooler three times a morning and all the men covertly watch her. She is cute, but attractive more by comparison to the other women in the office. Nevertheless, all the men, including Eddie and Charlie, let their eyes cautiously watch her as she leaves, her sheath dress tight on her hips.

Eddie, who has hung up, now rubs his eyes with two fingers to clear his head and picks up the phone again.

EDDIE

(on phone)

Mary, give me the Hotel Westmore.
Circle 7-0598.

CHARLIE

(hands Kennie paper)

This isn't for me -- it's for you.

EDDIE

(to the others)

Now who owes me on the presents?
Charlie, you owe me?

CHARLIE

I gave you four bucks yesterday....

KENNETH

I owe you, Eddie. I'll pay you tomorrow, payday.

EDDIE

(on phone)

Miss Frances Kelley, please. I think it's room 417....

The three heads around him look slowly up from their respective work, naked interest manifest on their faces.

EDDIE

(calling to one of the women in the office)

Hey, Evelyn, you owe me four bucks.

EVELYN

(calling back)

All right. I know.

EDDIE

(on phone)

Hello, Frances, this is Eddie.... All right, wait a minute. Give me a chance to explain.... I know I woke you up.... All right, let me tell you. You know I'm supposed to be the best man at this fellow Arnold's wedding. So I called him up last night because I didn't know whether I was supposed to wear tuxedo or tails. Well, he didn't know either, so he said: "Come on over to my girl's house with me tonight. They're making all the arrangements for the wedding now." So I called you and left a message at the desk saying I couldn't get over till about ten o'clock.... All right! That's what I'm going to explain! ... Thank you.

(holds receiver against his chest and looks at his

colleagues with
air of a man being
tried just a little
too much. Returns
receiver to his ear,
listens for a moment)

All right, so I had to go over to Arnold's girl's house with Arnold last night. Well, there was about thirty people there, and, man, you never saw such a crazy mess. There was this little bald-headed guy there. He's the bride's uncle. He's come all the way down from Boston with his whole family to go to the wedding. The only trouble was, he wasn't invited. Well, this crazy uncle, he grabs ahold of me, he starts shaking me by the lapels. So I said: "What do you want from me? I ain't the groom! I'm just trying to find out whether I'm supposed to wear tuxedo or tails."

(apparently this got
a laugh. Eddie breaks
into a smile)

Funny, huh? ... Look, Frances. I have to go to work now. I'm calling you from the office. How about letting me make this up to you? I'll take you out to dinner Saturday night.... I can't make it tonight. The bachelor party's tonight.... All right, Saturday night.... It's a date.... S'help me.... I swear, right on time. Eight-thirty, okay? ... Okay, we'll have a ball. Goodbye, go back to sleep.

He hangs up. The three married men look down again to their ledgers and tap away again on their adding machines. Eddie sits slumped in his seat for a moment.

EDDIE

What did I just tell that girl,
Saturday night?

KENNETH

Yeah.

EDDIE

(picks up phone)

Mary, give me Columbus 5-1098....
What do you mean personal calls!
These are business calls! Well, stop
listening to other people's
conversations.... What have you got,
stock in the company? Columbus
5-1098.

(waits)

KENNETH

Listen, Eddie, I don't think I can
go tonight. My father-in-law's in
from Akron, Ohio, and----

EDDIE

(all sweetness)

Hello, who is this, Mrs. Stebbins?
... This is Eddie, Mrs. Stebbins. I
wonder if I can talk to Muriel....
Could I speak to her? ... Thank
you....

The three married men each look up slowly again, naked envy
on each face.

EDDIE

(on phone)

Muriel, baby, listen, sweetie, I
can't make it Saturday night.... I'm
all loused up with this wedding I'm
supposed to be the best man at....
We have to rehearse the ceremony.
You'd think they were getting
married on television.... Yes,
sweetie, why don't I call you Monday.
Maybe, we'll work out something
before you go back to California....

All right, sweetie, good-bye.

He hangs up, sits a moment, then finally removes the cigarette from his mouth, crushes it in his ash tray, and turns to the others.

EDDIE

Well, what do you say? I'm going to call Louie and make a reservation for a table for tonight. Who's coming and who isn't? Walter, you're coming, right? It won't cost you more than three-fifty for the whole meal. What do you say, Walter? You only live once.

WALTER

(strangely sad)

That's right. You only live once.

EDDIE

Well, yes or no?

WALTER

All right, I'll come.

EDDIE

Kennie?

KENNETH

Yeah, I'll get out of the house for a change.

EDDIE

How about you, Charlie?

Charlie is frowning down at a sheaf of adding machine totals in front of him.

CHARLIE

I don't think so, Eddie.

KENNETH

Ah, come on, Charlie, you got to bust loose every now and then. We'll have a couple of drinks.

EDDIE

(picks up phone)

Mary, give me an outside line and
don't give me no trouble....
Chickering 4-5099.

WALTER

Come on, Charlie, it's a short life,
believe me.

Move in for CLOSEUP of Charlie, frowning. Over this, Eddie's
voice.

EDDIE'S VOICE

Hello, hello, Louie? Is this Louie?
... Louie, this is Eddie Watkins.
I'd like to reserve a table for
four for tonight.... For four ...

CHARLIE

Hey, Eddie ...

EDDIE'S VOICE

What?

CHARLIE

Count me in.

He immediately bends back to his work, takes his pencil up
again. CAMERA PULLS QUICKLY UP AND AWAY until we have an
ANGLE SHOT looking down at their desks in various positions
of work.

EDDIE

(on phone)

Louie, make that five.... Five guys
... Yeah, a bachelor party ...

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXTERIOR. DOWNTOWN NEW YORK CITY -- NIGHT

FADE IN with a big loud blare on Eighth Street in Greenwich Village on a warm August night. Packed sidewalks, jammed traffic, taxis, trucks, buses, honking of horns, etc. Man-we're-going-to-have-a-ball type feeling.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. STREET -- NIGHT

Thirteenth Street off Sixth Avenue not so blary and lit up as the main drags, but traffic is heavy, and there are lots of people on the sidewalks. There are a number of restaurants dotting the street with their little striped awnings and modest neons. If we are on our toes, we notice one neon that reads: "LOUIE'S."

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. LOUIE'S RESTAURANT

The entire interior isn't too much to show, really. It's a small restaurant, but it is packed. Waiters scurry here and there. People jammer and jab. Hustle and bustle. In background, we can pick out our bachelor party, five men now, clustered around a table, yakking it up.

WIDE SHOT of our bachelor party, showing all five. They all seem to be in the best of spirits. The new member of the cast is Arnold, the groom, a towheaded, pleasant-looking young man of thirty, shy to the point of being noticeable. Of all the men at the party, he is the quietest. He sits, a smile nailed onto his face, turning his head from one friend to another as they talk, enjoying the rare privilege of being liked. The dinner is over. During the ensuing scene, a bus boy continues to remove the used dishes. Several large bottles of beer and two fifths of Scotch are on the table. There is a welter of variously assorted glasses. Eddie, Walter, and Kenneth are smoking cigars, Charlie a cigarette. The Groom is not smoking. We have cut into the scene during a jumble of conversation. Walter is talking to Charlie, whose head is bent toward the older man. Kenneth is trying to tell the Groom a joke, but the Groom's attention is being distracted by Eddie, who is leaning across the table trying to get Charlie's attention. Ad libs.

KENNETH

(finishing story)

Three hundred pounds! Isn't she kind of fat? No, man, tall! Hey, waiter! Waiter!

EDDIE

Hey, Charlie ...

WALTER

(to Charlie)

... so we were stationed right outside Paris, about eight miles, a town called Chatou ...

EDDIE

... hey, Charlie ...

WALTER

(to Charlie)

... so the first night, a whole bunch of us swiped a jeep out of the motor court. We had a feller there who was a tech sergeant in the motor court. Oh, what a character he was! He used to get loaded every night on that vanilla extract.

EDDIE

Hey, Charlie ...

CHARLIE

What do you want, Eddie?

EDDIE

Hey, Charlie, did I ever tell you about the time I was stationed at Buckley Field in Denver, and I picked up this girl in Lakeside Amusement Park?

WALTER

Hey, Eddie, listen to this story I'm telling Charlie. Hey, Arnold, I'm telling Charlie about the time

me and that crazy tech sergeant
from the motor court got loaded on
vanilla extract and went to Paris
... Hey, Kenneth ...

KENNETH

When do the Giants come back from
their road trip, does anybody know?

EDDIE

Hey, let's give out the presents now.

WALTER

Hey, Kenneth, listen to this story.
I was stationed outside of Paris,
about eight miles ...

CHARLIE

What?

KENNETH

Oh, that Paris! I was there for two
days! Clubs! You had to beat the
women off with clubs! ...

CHARLIE

(to people at
another table)

What ...? Oh, it's a bachelor party
-- this guy's getting married.

EDDIE

Listen, I want to give the
presents ...

WALTER

Well, let me tell you what
happened ...

EDDIE

Hey, you know what was a great town
for women, Hamburg!

KENNETH

Hamburg! Clubs! Clubs! You had to
beat them off with clubs! Hey,

waiter -- who's our waiter?

CHARLIE

Hey, Arnold, enjoying yourself?

EDDIE

The first night I was in Hamburg,
two Frauleins come walking right in
the barracks. So I said to the
lieutenant ...

Walter, who is pretty lit, suddenly stands and bangs the
table mightily with his fist.

WALTER

(bellowing out)

The best fighting outfit in the
whole fighting army was the fighting
Hundred and Fourth Infantry Division,
General Terry Allen commanding!

This brings the jumbled conversation to a halt. Walter
surveys the other four, looking for possible challenges,
then sits heavily down.

EDDIE

(standing)

Well, now that we got that settled....

CHARLIE

I'm with you, Walter.

ARNOLD

We believe you, Walter.

EDDIE

I'd like to make a little speech to
our guest of honor and mutual friend,
Arnold Craig. Arnold, a bunch of us
down the office, the girls too, all
chipped in, and we got you a couple
of small gifts....

Eddie crosses to extra chair, picks up wrapped gifts, crosses
back to his place.

WALTER

(whispering to Kenneth)

These are the gag gifts.

EDDIE

Let's see, what's this one? Oh, yeah.
Arnold, we figured Louise might be
very sleepy on your wedding night,
so we thought you might want
something to keep you warm.

Walter leans forward to see what the tissue-wrapped parcel
Arnold is now unwrapping is.

WALTER

What is it? What is it?

Arnold holds a hot-water bottle aloft. Walter is seized with
a paroxysm of laughter at this immensely Rabelaisian gift.

WALTER

It's a hot-water bottle!

KENNETH

Okay, Walter, okay.

WALTER

Hey, did you see that? Hey, he bought
him a hot-water bottle for his
wedding night. Hey, that's funny ...

CHARLIE

Hey, Eddie, you should have bought
him an ice pack for after tonight.

EDDIE

(holding a
second parcel)

Walter, take it easy.... Now, this
one, Arnold, this one is something
to keep you busy on cold winter
nights.

WALTER

(crosses to Arnold;

to the others)
This ought to be good.

EDDIE
Look at Walter.

Walter has come around behind Arnold's chair and can hardly wait to see what the next joke is.

WALTER
Hey, these are funny. Who bought these? You buy these, Eddie? These are funny. You got a good sense of humor.

Arnold unwraps the parcel, holds out a miniature baby bottle. This is too much for Walter; how funny can you get? He clutches his sides.

WALTER
Hey, did you guys see that? Hey, did you guys see that?

CHARLIE
Come on, Walter, sit down.

Charlie and Kenneth are smiling appreciatively. Walter crosses with bottle, sits, starts pouring whisky into baby bottle.

WALTER
Eddie got a good sense of humor, you know?

KENNETH
(to Charlie)
Boy, old Walter is crocked.

ARNOLD
(smiling, rising
halfway in his chair)
Listen, I want to thank you. Really. I really want to thank you fellows.

EDDIE
We haven't got to the serious

presents yet, Arnold.

A hush falls over the assembled guests. Arnold composes his face into a solemn expression and looks down at the cluttered table.

EDDIE

(solemnly)

Well, in all seriousness, Arnold, seriously, I don't know why you picked me to be your best man, but I am deeply honored. I guess it's because we're both Dodger fans, and I'm going to miss you at next Tuesday's night game when the Pittsburgh Pirates invade Ebbets Field. We always had a lot of fun together, and, seriously, Arnold, in all seriousness, good luck on your wedding, but see if you can't get out of the house occasionally, see a night game or even a Sunday doubleheader with your old buddy, Eddie.

This touching address has brought a note of sadness to the gathering. Indeed, there are tears in Walter's and Arnold's eyes.

EDDIE

(handing Arnold
two neatly wrapped
packages)

Well, anyway, in all seriousness, here are a couple of presents from all of us in the office and good luck.

Arnold takes the presents, stands, head bowed. Eddie sits and all faces turn to Arnold.

ARNOLD

Well, I just want to thank you fellows. I don't know what to say. I just want to thank you.

KENNETH

Open the presents, Arnold.

ARNOLD

I will. I just want to say, Eddie, that when the Pirates invade Ebbets Field next Tuesday night, I'm going to be sitting right there in Section 37 there right with you.

EDDIE

You'll be on your honeymoon next Tuesday, Arnold.

This interesting information gives Arnold pause.

ARNOLD

Gee, that's right.

CHARLIE

(smiling)

Arnold, you're getting married Sunday, did you forget?

WALTER

Look at him blush.

ARNOLD

(frowning fuzzily)

No, I didn't forget. It's just that ... Gee, that's right. Sunday. What's today, Thursday?

KENNETH and EDDIE

All day!

ARNOLD

Boy, it's here, isn't it? I guess I've been running around so much the last couple of weeks, I guess the wedding snuck up on me.

KENNETH

I think Arnold's having a little buck fever. Does anyone know what

our waiter looks like?

EDDIE

(to Kenneth)

You know who didn't want to chip in for Arnold's presents? ...

CHARLIE

Arnold'll be all right. Have a drink, Arnold.

WALTER

I had my basic training in Camp Croft, South Carolina, near Spartanburg.

EDDIE

I was at Maxwell Field, what a desert.

CHARLIE

Walter, what ever happened when you and that tech sergeant from the motor pool got loaded on vanilla extract?

WALTER

What tech sergeant?

CHARLIE

Walter, you're crocked.

(to Arnold)

Open up the presents -- see what you got.

KENNETH

Hey, are you our waiter? Bring us some ice. I got him -- I got our waiter!

ARNOLD

It was sure nice of you fellows.

The voices have risen again into the jumbled high spirits that opened the scene.

EDDIE

Hey, man, we're having a ball!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. EIGHTH STREET -- NIGHT

We look down on Eighth Street in Greenwich Village. It is eight thirty at night. It is a fairly active and well-lit street, bright with neons and movie marquees and lit-up shops. Our five carousers are marching down the sidewalk, that is four of them are on the sidewalk. Walter can't quite decide whether he wants to walk on the sidewalk or in the street. He keeps hopping in and out between the parked cars, running to catch up when he falls behind. They are all feeling pretty good. Arnold is singing in a wavering baritone:

ARNOLD

De-Witt C-l-i-n-t-o-n
Boom!
Clinton!
Oh, Cli-inton!
Ever to theeeee!

CLOSER SHOT of the five carousers.

ARNOLD

(singing)

Fairest of high schools ...

EDDIE

How did he ever get on this alma
mater kick?

ARNOLD

(singing)

... Give her three times three
Oh, fellows ...
Rah! Rah! Rah!

ANOTHER SHOT of the five carousers, Walter whistling at two passing girls.

ARNOLD

Long may we cherish thee
Faithful we'll be.

Clinton, oh, Clinton
For you and me ...
Da-da-da-da-da ...
Crash through that line of blue
And send the backs around the end.

EDDIE

There he goes with those fullbacks
again.

ARNOLD

Rah! Rah! Rah!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. GREENWICH AVENUE AND TENTH STREET -- NIGHT

GROUP SHOT of our five carousers paused on the curb, waiting for the lights to change in their favor. Greenwich Avenue traffic is pretty heavy, going in both directions. The five men are kind of strung out along the curb with Charlie being the last in line. Standing beside him, also waiting for the light to change, is a good-looking, well-dressed, chic young woman of twenty-four or five.

KENNETH

Where we going? Eddie's place to
see movies?

ARNOLD

What movies?

EDDIE

Boy, just wait till you see these
movies! Hey, Charlie, hey Charlie ...

CHARLIE

What?

EDDIE

(indicating the
young woman)

Who's your beautiful friend, Charlie?

Charlie turns and regards the pretty young woman.

CHARLIE

(to the girl)

Excuse me. My friend down there
wants to know who you are.

The young woman, who for our own mysterious purposes we shall refer to as The Existentialist, regards the five reasonably tight young men all staring at her. Kenneth has already begun to giggle.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

(with a Mona Lisa smile)

Where are you all from, out-of-town?

CHARLIE

Indiana.

(turning to
the others)

Isn't that right, fellers? We're
from Indiana, right?

EDDIE

Indiana! Indiana, man!

Kenneth and Arnold, to whom this incident is already unbearably funny, have turned away and are clutching their sides, trying to suppress a fit of giggles.

CHARLIE

(to The Existentialist)

We're from the Hoosier State, ma'am...

WALTER

Terre Haute! We're from Terre Haute!

CHARLIE

(to The Existentialist)

We're from Terre Haute, and we've
come to the big city looking for a
good time, and we just don't know
what to do with ourselves, ma'am.

EDDIE

(to Walter)

Look at that Charlie operate.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

Must be a convention in town.

CHARLIE

We've just come off the ranch there, honey, and we're just raring. Is that right, men? Are we raring?

EDDIE

We're raring, boy, we're raring!

KENNETH

(beside himself
with laughter)

Hey, Charlie, cut it out, will you?

The lights change and The Existentialist starts off across Greenwich Avenue to the west side of the street. The five carousers follow right along after her. That is, Charlie dogs along behind The Existentialist as they cross the street. Walter and Eddie are close behind him, listening to Charlie's pitch. Kenneth and Arnold, embarrassed and giggling, stagger along behind.

CHARLIE

(chugging along behind
The Existentialist)

We're down here in Greenwich Village looking for some wild bohemians. Do you happen to know any wild bohemians?

THE EXISTENTIALIST

All right, fellows, enough's enough, huh?

She steps up to the sidewalk on the west side of Greenwich Avenue and hurries along down Tenth Street to a little house about four doors down, the five carousers on her heels like a pack of puppies.

CHARLIE

(hurrying along after
The Existentialist)

I'm something of a poet myself,
ma'am. Many's the long night in the
bunkhouse where I sat by myself and
wrote by the flickering light of a
kerosene lamp. Could I read you some
of my poems, ma'am? I know they
ain't much, but they're from the
heart, ma'am.

The Existentialist pauses in her hurried walk down Tenth
Street to examine Charlie with some interest.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

You have a sense of humor, don't you?

EDDIE

(to Charlie)

You're going great, man, don't stop
now.

The Existentialist goes up the two little steps to the front
door of the house and rings the bell.

EDDIE

(to The Existentialist)

Where are you going, honey?

The Existentialist waits composed and patient for someone to
answer her ring. Charlie has wandered back to Arnold and
Kenneth, and the three of them are now suffused with
laughter. Kenneth has been laughing so much, tears are
coming out of his eyes. He walks around in little circles
clutching his sides. Several passersby hurry by, noting the
strange little group on the sidewalk.

EDDIE

(to The Existentialist)

What's going on in there, honey?

THE EXISTENTIALIST

(patiently bored)

There's a party going on. I'm not sure
I'm invited myself, so I can't really
invite you.

EDDIE

Sure you can.

The door opens and a woman in a tea gown stands there looking at The Existentialist and then at the five men on the sidewalk. Behind her, there is evidence of a party going on.

THE HOSTESS

How nice to see you, darling. Who are your friends?

THE EXISTENTIALIST

I haven't the vaguest idea. I was ambushed crossing Greenwich Avenue by a tribe of the Terre Haute Kiwanis.

THE HOSTESS

(she waves a vague hand in a sort of shooing motion at the five men on the sidewalk)

Go away, you men. Go back to the Biltmore Hotel and put on your red caps.

EDDIE

I always thought you city people were more hospitable to us poor farm boys.

The other four carousers are laughing too much to even talk. Charlie has ambled up to The Existentialist, who is peering over her hostess into the room behind her.

CHARLIE

(to The Existentialist, smiling amiably)

I'm sorry, miss. A friend of ours is getting married here, and we're just horsing around.

The Existentialist looks into the young man's smiling,

rather winning face.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

Why don't you come back after you
get rid of your friends.

EDDIE

He'll be back!

She turns abruptly and disappears past the hostess into the
room.

EDDIE

(to Charlie)

Man, she likes you, man!

THE HOSTESS

Now, you boys go away.

She backs into her house and closes the door. Eddie starts
up the steps to the door. The other four just roar with
laughter, clutch their sides, and giggle and snort.

EDDIE

Well, what do you say, men, are we
going to this party, or aren't we?

CHARLIE

(laughing)

Come on, Eddie. I thought you had
some movies you want to show us.

EDDIE

What do you want to see movies for?
You got the real thing right here.

CHARLIE

(laughing)

Eddie, we're married men here.

EDDIE

Come on, let's crash this party.
I've been to these Greenwich Village
parties. Man, they're wild.

KENNETH

Come on, Eddie, let's go up to your place, see these movies.

EDDIE
(coming reluctantly
back to the others,
says to Charlie)

Man, you were going strong with that girl. You could have scored. She's just waiting for you. Go in after her.

KENNETH
Come on, Eddie. Let's go see the movies.

EDDIE
(to the others)
All right, I live about three blocks down. You guys want to see movies, all right, let's go see movies.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. THE BACHELOR'S APARTMENT
Eddie is scowling over a home-style movie projector, muttering over the intricacies of fitting a reel into the ratchets. Arnold has suddenly become voluble and is gabbing away at him. CAMERA DOLLIES AROUND THEM during the scene so that we can see into the living room of the apartment, appointed in simple but neat masculine taste, where the other three men move in and out of view. Right now, we are concerned only with Arnold and Eddie.

ARNOLD
... we're moving in with her mother and father. I don't know if that's such a good idea. What do you think? We haven't got an apartment yet, and we figure we'll live a year with her folks, save on the rent, see?

Kenneth comes back from the kitchen with three open bottles of beer.

KENNETH

Anybody want a bottle of beer?

ARNOLD

(to Eddie)

She's a widow, and that bothers me a little. I don't know why. She's two years older than me. I don't know if you know that. Her husband got killed in Korea. She's a cousin of mine, you know.

KENNETH

(moving into
the living room)

Who wants a bottle of beer?

CHARLIE

I'll take a bottle.

WALTER

Yeah, give me one.

ARNOLD

A third cousin, something like that. It's not good for cousins to marry, is it? What do you think of her? I know she's not terribly pretty, but I mean ...

EDDIE

(muttering imprecations
at the projector)

Arnold, leave me alone a minute, will you?

ARNOLD

Sure.

(turns to the others in
living room, plants a
huge smile on his face)

Well, I'm getting married Sunday.

KENNETH

Having fun, Walter?

WALTER

Fun. A bunch of grown men sitting around waiting to look at college boy pictures.

ARNOLD

I swear, I never thought two months ago I was ever going to get married. I still don't know how it happened....

EDDIE

Hey, somebody turn off the lights.

Walter is promptly up to turn off the lights.

CHARLIE

Hey, you know, you've got a nice place here.

The room is abruptly flooded in darkness. A beam of light shoots out from the projector. It seems pointed at the window. Arnold stands up directly in the shaft of light.

ARNOLD

I was just taking her out. I didn't know it was so serious.

EDDIE

Arnold, get out of the way, will you?

ARNOLD

Oh, sure.

Arnold moves a step, still in the shaft of light, his shadow huge on the wall. Eddie, muttering, jockeys the projector around trying to focus it on the screen. The square of light and some flickering images wander up and down a wall.

ARNOLD

... We're sitting in the car, so she says: "Well, Arnold, we've been going together six months now. I think it's time we decided whether

we were being serious."

WALTER

Hey, Eddie, you got it on the window.

ARNOLD

I didn't know it was so serious. I didn't even know we were going together. I just took her out every now and then.

CHARLIE

Arnold, you're funny.

EDDIE

Turn on the lights again, will you, Walter.

WALTER

What's the matter?

EDDIE

I forgot to loop it over this loop thing.

Walter crosses to light switch. The room is flooded in light again.

CHARLIE

Oh, for crying out loud.

ARNOLD

(small panic)

I can't even remember what she looks like! I just saw her this afternoon!

KENNETH

Arnold, have a bottle of beer. It's not so terrible.

ARNOLD

Boy, I tell you. It's for the rest of your life when you get married. This is a big decision to make.

WALTER

Does anybody seriously want to see
these movies?

Eddie is furiously winding and unwinding spools. CAMERA HAS
DOLLIED AROUND so that we are looking back up the living
room toward the projector and the men.

ARNOLD

I could be making a serious mistake.

EDDIE

Arnold, you're in the way again.
Come on now. All right, put off the
lights.

The room is flooded in darkness again. Walter hurries to a
chair. The square of light is reasonably focused, just an
edge trailing off onto the drapes of the window. Numbers
flicker quickly on on the screen. The rest of the scene we
see looking into the whitened faces of the five men at their
various posts. Arnold crosses, stands back of Walter.

KENNETH

Here we go.

EDDIE

Hey, Arnold, if this is the one I
think it is, there's one part here I
want you to see.

WALTER

(a picture of determined
boredom, but putting on
his glasses)

This is for kids.

CHARLIE

Says he -- putting on his glasses.

KENNETH

"The Baseball Game." That's a nice
title, don't you think?

EDDIE

This is the one, Arnold. There's a
guy in here who looks just like

Arnold.

KENNETH

Hey, she's not bad. Usually, the girls in these things look like dinosaurs.

WALTER

(his eyes glued
to the screen)

A bunch of grown men ...

He breaks off as apparently some interesting action has started on screen. An involuntary grunt of acknowledgment escapes him.

EDDIE

I got these pictures off my dentist.
I don't know where he got them.
There you are, Arnold, that's you.

CHARLIE

Yeah, it does look like Arnold.

EDDIE

Doesn't that look like Arnold?

KENNETH

Who's looking at the guy?

CHARLIE

Arnold, you've got a great career
ahead of you.

KENNETH

That girl looks like the girl
Charlie picked up just before.

EDDIE

Probably is.

WALTER

That fellow there is not a bad actor.

CHARLIE

Actor. You could play that part

pretty easy yourself.

KENNETH

I think the Daily News gave this one four stars.

EDDIE

I'd like to see this in Three-D.

The side comments drift off for a moment, and a sort of frozen attention settles on the white faces. Each face is sort of set in a mold of determined disinterest, but the eyes are all watching.

WALTER

Well, I'll just watch one of them.
Then, I think I'll just go home.

He wets his lips, lifts the bottle of beer to his mouth and takes a swallow. His eyes never leave the screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. KITCHEN CHARLIE AND HELEN'S APARTMENT
Helen standing in front of the laundry part of the sink, doing her private laundry. She has on a house smock and her sleeves are rolled up. The doorbell rings. Helen takes a towel off the doorknob behind her and, wiping her hands, comes down across the dining area to the front door. She opens the door to admit a young woman, about eight years older than Helen.

HELEN

Hiya, Julie. I was beginning to think you weren't coming.

JULIE

(coming in)

I was at my mother's house. Did they call you? They said they were going to call you.

HELEN

Yeah, your mother was very sweet.

JULIE

You should have seen my father. I said, "Pa, you have another grandchild coming." So he said, "Who?" So I said, "Charlie." So he said, "That little Helen?" So I said, "If it isn't that little Helen, Charlie better leave town." So out came the beer. Well, they've been after Charlie to have a baby for a long time now. I said, "Pa, leave him alone. Let him get established before he saddles himself with a baby." Anyway, I want you to know joy reigns supreme in your in-laws' house.

(she moves into
the kitchen)

How's Charlie taking it?

HELEN

(following her
into the kitchen)

Listen, let me make you a cup of tea or something.

JULIE

No, no, I've been drinking beer for the last two hours, celebrating your baby.

HELEN

Soda, anything like that?

JULIE

No, honey, you go on with your wash. Is that what you're doing?

(she sits)

When I had my first baby, Mike was ashamed to be seen on the streets with me. Well, listen, he was interning at the time. We needed a baby like a hole in the head. That's why he's a general practitioner now, because of that baby. He was

studying to be a surgeon. He absolutely refused to admit I was pregnant. Even in my ninth month, and I was as big as a house. He used to walk ten paces in front of me in the street like he didn't know who that woman with the belly was. Where is Charlie anyway?

HELEN

I told you he--

JULIE

Oh, yeah. I wouldn't let my Mike go on a bachelor party.

HELEN

(turning back
to her wash)

What are they going to do, get a little drunk?

JULIE

Are you kidding? What do you think these bachelor parties are for, bachelors? This is for the married men. It's a good excuse to get drunk and find some girls.

HELEN

Can you picture Charlie getting drunk and picking up a girl? Charlie's old sobersides. You should have seen what I went through to get him to make a pass at me. He's so sweet. Nobody knows how really sweet he is, he's so quiet all the time. My brother died in September, he used to stay up with me till three, four o'clock every night. I used to cry all night, and he used to sit on the bed and talk with me. I used to look at him talking there, and I used to think: "What would I do without this sweet

man here? I'd go crazy." You know, you like to be a little cynical sometimes, Julie.

JULIE

Wait'll you've been married eleven years.

HELEN

You like to talk about all the affairs everybody's husband is having. Do you know actually one woman whose husband is actually playing around?

An abrupt, sad expression, tinged with pain, has come over Julie's face. She looks down at the table.

JULIE

Wait'll you've been married eleven years.

Helen, aware that she has perhaps touched on a sensitive subject, frowns and turns back to her washing. A quick, thick silence dips into the room.

JULIE

(looking down)

Wait'll Charlie gets to be forty-two. My Mike's having an affair right now with one of his patients right now. We don't talk about it -- don't you, either, not even to Charlie. But Mike knows I know about it. I even know the patient. A married woman with a hyperthyroid problem. My Mike's a good doctor with a pretty good practice. The kids are crazy about him. But every now and then he has to go out and get involved with a woman.

She looks down at her hands in her lap.

JULIE

Listen, I will take a cup of tea if you've got one.

She stands, opens the pantry, looks around among the cans and packages for a box of tea bags.

HELEN

(quite shocked)

You're kidding, aren't you?

JULIE

(finds the box
of tea bags)

Would I kid about something like that?

She puts the box of tea bags on the workshelf, unhooks a saucepan hanging over the stove, turns to the sink and fills it with water. Helen regards her, not quite knowing what to say. Julie sets the saucepan going on the stove, stares at it.

JULIE

I don't know why I told you. Don't tell anybody, not even Charlie. I don't want the family to know. But this woman isn't the first one. I know that much. About three years ago, the doorbell rings. I open the door. There's a man there. He says: "Tell your husband to stay away from my sister." How would you like to open the door and have somebody say that to you? I cried for two weeks. I don't know what to do about it, Helen. Should I bring it out in the open with Mike or should I just keep my mouth shut like the other time? Because he's not going to leave me. Even if he doesn't care about me, he has his kids to think about. We married too young. That was our big mistake. We married too young.

Her face, her whole body suddenly tightens to forestall any

possibility of breaking into tears, and she sits down abruptly on the kitchen stool, her eyes clenched tight and her face rigidly impassive. Helen remains nervously silent.

JULIE

(her voice rising just a little from the suppressed emotion within her)

We should have waited till he finished his internship. What kind of married life is that? Twenty-two dollars a month he was earning. Every other day, he had to sleep in the hospital. The first two years of our marriage, we didn't even see each other. And then I'm pregnant. He had to quit, what do you think? He wanted to be a surgeon, he wound up being a G.P. From that day he hated me. I had two other children by him, but he hated me. He told me in just so many words. Why do you think I kept telling you, Helen, why do you think I kept telling you: "Don't have a baby till Charlie finds himself."

(suddenly cries out)

It hurts! Even after eleven years, it hurts!

She stands abruptly and moves quickly past Helen out the kitchen doorway into the dark living room, leaving Helen standing troubled, concerned, in the kitchen. After a moment, Helen moves to the kitchen doorway and a step out into the dining area. She looks through the dark living room to the gray silhouette of Julie standing by the living room window, her form lightly outlined by a tracing of moonlight.

HELEN

Are you all right, Julie?

JULIE

(muttering)

I'm all right. I'm all right.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. BACHELOR'S APARTMENT (45 MINUTES LATER)

We are looking back up the living room as we were at the close of the last scene in this apartment. The room is absolutely dark now, but a light pours in from the foyer. In this shaft of light, we can see Eddie moving from behind the projector to the wall switch and turning on the lights. The room is abruptly bright with light, and our five men squint against the sudden glare. They have all changed their positions and taken off their jackets and loosened their ties. They are lolling about. CAMERA LOOKS DOWN TO THE FLOOR to take particular note of eight empty beer bottles, an opened fifth of bourbon, ash trays, crumpled packs of cigarettes, a cup and saucer, somebody's shoes, somebody's jacket that has fallen off the back of a chair. Over this we hear Walter's voice:

WALTER

Is that the last one?

EDDIE

Yeah.

A thick silence fills the room. There is a kind of sodden feeling to this scene. After a long moment, Walter's voice again:

WALTER

Ah, you've seen one, you've seen them all.

KENNETH

Yeah, they're all alike.

CHARLIE

I don't know -- I think the first one was all right.

WALTER

Yeah, I was so bored by the rest of them. I nearly fell asleep during the last one.

KENNETH

You in the habit of sleeping with
your eyes open?

We look down on the room now, at all five of the men, Eddie
rewinding the last reel, the little motor of the projector
humming. The others loll about, their legs dangling over the
armrests of the soft chairs and sofas. There is a heavy,
dense mood that no one seems willing to break.

CHARLIE

What time's it about, anybody know?

ARNOLD

(glancing at his watch)

I got a quarter to nine.

EDDIE

No, it's later than that, about a
quarter after.

Again the silence falls upon the five men. Only the humming
little motor interrupts the thick silence. Nobody moves.

WALTER

(after a moment)

Ah, you see one, you've seen them
all.

Again the silence. Charlie stretches over for his bottle of
beer on the floor beside his chair. He pours what's left of
the bottle into the glass standing beside it. Otherwise
nobody moves.

WALTER

(after a moment)

So that's the last one you've got to
show us, Eddie?

EDDIE

Yeah. You want to run them backwards?

KENNETH

I wonder where they get the girls to
make these movies?

WALTER

Might as well go home, I guess.

KENNETH

Yeah.

The idea doesn't seem to propel anybody to any decisive movement. Walter shifts his position on the sofa, stretches out his legs, regards his shoes with a sudden sadness.

WALTER

(after a moment)

Life is short.

This gives everybody something to think about for a moment.

EDDIE

(hunched over
the projector,
dismantling it)

You guys feel like going down to
have a drink for Arnold?

This brings a reaction. Walter stands.

WALTER

Yeah! What do you say? One last
drink for Arnold!

CHARLIE

Okay with me.

Suddenly life is back in the room, the men ad-lib: "Where's my coat?" "Let's get out of here," etc.

KENNETH

(unwinding himself
from his slouched
position on a chair)

You can say what you want to about
these pictures -- they're really
pretty bad -- but they get you.

ARNOLD

Don't you think we ought to clean up

the place?

EDDIE

No, I got a woman comes in.

WALTER

(grabbing up
his jacket)

I almost fell asleep during the
last one.

(he looks at
the others)

Well, what do you say, huh? Let's
go! One last drink!

Ad libs on exit.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. LIVING ROOM CHARLIE AND HELEN'S APARTMENT
Helen and Julie. A corner lamp in the living room is lit,
lending a soft but not too effective light to the room. The
two young women are on the couch. Helen sits curled at one
end, head down listening to Julie, who has been talking and
probably crying a little since we last saw them forty-five
minutes ago. Julie is seated with her legs stretched out in
front of her, her head resting back on the back of the couch.
She is talking more freely and easily now, the first hard
outburst over with.

JULIE

... He's a boy, my Mike. Till the
day he dies, he'll never be more
than fifteen. Perpetual adolescence,
that's the curse of the professional
man. He spends his whole youth trying
to be a doctor, a lawyer, an
accountant. Then he spends the rest
of his life looking for the fun he
should have had when he was a boy.

HELEN

Oh, I know. Charlie and I hardly
even see each other.

JULIE

It's very hard on the wife, Helen. These are the years when you should be building your marriage. Instead, you grow away from each other. I've seen it happen with my friends. In the end, they have nice homes in New Rochelle, and a maid, and their maids are happier than they are. But sometimes it does work. It can be done, Helen. Encourage Charlie to stay with his school because...

HELEN

Oh, I will, Julie ...

JULIE

... he's an ambitious boy ...

HELEN

... oh, it's not just he's ambitious ...

JULIE

... and if he doesn't fulfill himself, he'll resent you and your baby the rest of his life.

HELEN

Oh, I don't want him to quit. He loves accounting, Julie. I see him sometimes, sitting over his homework. He's got his ledgers out, and he's adding up columns of figures as long as his arm. And he's chuckling. You'd think he was reading the comics. He has a book there, Business Law. How he can read it I don't know. But I'll be watching television or something, and he'll come over, and he'll start telling me about some fine legal point. I don't know what he's talking about, but it's enough for me to see how

excited it makes him. He loves it, Julie. You can't take something like that away from him. It's just -- it's just I feel we're not really close any more. I mean, he comes home from school, lots of times I'm asleep already. And, when I do see him, he seems all involved with himself. He looks at me sometimes as if I were a stranger to him, and I feel sometimes I am. I'm afraid of that, Julie.

JULIE

Then get rid of the baby.

It is said simply, inevitably, even innocently. It brings only a frown to Helen's face and a short silence.

JULIE

If I had it to do again, believe me, that's what I would do.

HELEN

(slowly becoming aware
of the depth of what
they are talking about)

You don't mean that, Julie.

JULIE

Yes, I do. My children are the only things in my life now, but I would rather have a husband.

HELEN

I wouldn't even think about it.

JULIE

That's what I said, too.

HELEN

Let's not even think about it. If I even mentioned it, he'd -- he'd hit me, I think.

JULIE

All right.

Now, the thick, tense silence falls between them. They both occupy themselves with their own troubled thoughts.

HELEN

I want this baby, Julie. I've wanted this baby for a long time. It's the only thing I've ever asked of Charlie. If I mentioned that to him -- I don't know what he'd do.

Again, they sink into silence. Then in the thick silence, the telephone rings. The two young women are so deep within their thoughts that neither of them moves. It rings again, and Helen slides off the couch and goes to the phone. It rings again. She picks it up.

HELEN

(on phone)

Hello.... Hello, Charlie, where are you calling from? ... You sound like you're having a nice time.... Oh, you're having a ball, huh? ... Well, what time do you think you'll be coming home?

INTERIOR. PHONE BOOTH IN EIGHTH STREET BAR

Charlie in the phone booth, smiling broadly. He seems in wonderful spirits. Through the glass of the phone booth we can see part of the bar and some of the barflies.

CHARLIE

(on phone)

Well, that's what I wanted to call you about, honey. I think a couple of the guys are cutting out now. I think Kennie's going home. But I was wondering if you wanted me home for any special reason.

INTERIOR. THE FOYER

HELEN

(on phone)
Just a minute, Charlie....

She rises, goes to kitchen door, still holding the phone.

HELEN
(to Julie)
Excuse me a minute, Julie. It's
Charlie....

She goes into the kitchen. A little embarrassed, she closes
the kitchen door.

INTERIOR. THE KITCHEN

HELEN
(on phone)
Charlie? ...
(sits)
Charlie, come on home now.... No, I
feel all right. I just miss you.
Julie's here, and we were talking
about you, and I just miss you....
Ah, come on....
(frowns a little)
Well, no, if you're having such a
good time, stay out and enjoy
yourself.... No, Charlie, I don't
want you to come home if you're
having a good time.... I'm not
lonely. Julie's here. We're talking.
I was washing some things.... I
know, that's what I told you this
morning. You've finally got a night
off for yourself. I don't want you
to feel guilty about it....
Charlie, do you love me? ... You
sound angry.... No, come home any
time you want....
(she wets her
lips nervously)
Charlie ...
(she lets her head
sink down onto the
palm of her free hand)

Charlie, there's no girls at this party, are there? ... I'm not checking up on you, Charlie. I just miss you, that's all.... All right, Charlie, please, I don't want to argue with you. Julie's in the living room. ... All right, have a good time, stay out as long as you want.... All right, Charlie, good-bye.

She slowly hangs up the receiver, sits slumped and abject.

INTERIOR. PHONE BOOTH IN EIGHTH STREET BAR

Charlie in booth. The broad grin has disappeared from his face. As seen through the closed glass doors of the booth, he is a very sullen and despondent young man. He stands now, pushes the doors open, and comes out. CAMERA PULLS BACK so that we can see the whole area of the bar near the phone booths. Next to the phone booth are two doors marked GUYS and DOLLS. Kenneth is coming in from the deeper recesses of the bar where the other members of the bachelor party are grouped in a booth. He is headed for the door marked GUYS. Charlie regards Kenneth bleakly as he approaches.

CHARLIE

The party breaking up?

KENNETH

(pushing into
the men's room)

I don't know. I'm going home. You going home?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I think so.

He pushes into the men's room after Kenneth.

INTERIOR. THE MEN'S ROOM

A small, white-tiled, yet somehow not too clean, men's room, two-urinal size. There is one washbowl with a small mirror over it, and two water closets with doors, separated from each other by a steel partition. Charlie perches on the edge

of the washbowl; he apparently came in just to talk. Kenneth moves off camera for more practical use of the room. CAMERA stays on Charlie who seems depressed, pensive, sad. Stay on him for a long moment. Then ...

CHARLIE

(frowning)

You love your wife, Kennie?

KENNETH'S VOICE

(off)

Well, I've been married six years. I've got two kids that keep me awake all night long. Every Sunday, we go out driving in Long Island looking for a house that's going to take one, probably two mortgages. I better love my wife.

Kenneth appears now, edges Charlie away from the wash basin, so he can wash his hands.

CHARLIE

I don't feel like going home. Are you going? Hang around, Kennie. It's only about nine thirty, ten.

KENNETH

It's after ten. It's about ten after ten.

Kenneth rips off a paper towel. The only noise for a moment is the soft crumpling of paper as Kenneth dries his hands.

KENNETH

The party's getting a little wild in there anyway. Eddie and Walter got poor Arnold nailed in there, they're trying to talk him into getting a girl. This party's going to wind up in a joint, let me tell you. This is a good time to blow.

CHARLIE

(frowning)

Yeah.... I should have gone to class tonight. I'm paying twenty bucks a credit. The least I can do is go to class.

He breaks off abruptly, turning away with a sudden frown.

CHARLIE

I take one night off, I can't even enjoy myself. Did you know Eddie went back to Europe?

KENNETH

No, I didn't know that.

CHARLIE

He was telling me he lived in Paris for three months. I'd like to do that!

He ambles around the men's room, studying himself with unseeing eyes in the little mirror, poking the trash can into which Kenneth is now dropping his wadded paper towel. He suddenly turns to Kenneth, stares at him. Kenneth looks at him in mirror.

KENNETH

What's the matter?

CHARLIE

I'm going to quit. What am I killing myself for?

KENNETH

Quit what?

CHARLIE

Quit night school. Tonight was the first laughs I've had in years. I can't remember the last time I had so much fun. Look what I'm missing. I'm making a pretty good living. I can support a wife and baby on what I make. I'm going to quit! I mean it. I'm going to quit. Boy, what a

time to have a baby.

KENNETH

You don't have to quit school because you're having a baby, Charlie. There are lots of guys go to night school with two, three kids.

CHARLIE

You ought to meet some of these guys. They're just grinding their lives away. It's an obsession with some of these guys. I mean, what's the point? So I'll go five more years to night school. So I'll get my degree. So I'll get a job as a junior accountant for three years at seventy-five bucks a week. I'm making better than that now. And then it just starts. The CPA exams. By the time I'm fifty, I can start living. At this point, I get a heart attack and an ulcer, and they bury me in the ground, and they say: "That was Charlie Samson, the man who didn't see a movie in fifty years." Why go through all that? I'll quit. I feel so mad right now, you better keep an eye on me, Kennie, because I'm going to wind up punching somebody.

The door opens. Man enters to clean a spot off his tie.

KENNETH

Come on, let's go home.

CHARLIE

What do I want to go home for?

KENNETH

You're in a lousy mood.

The man, finished with his tie, exits.

KENNETH

(after a moment)

Charlie, go home. I can see you're going to get fried tonight and wind up picking up a tramp and you're going to wake up in the morning feeling like two-bits.

CHARLIE

It'd be a profit.

KENNETH

Charlie, about five years ago, I went without a job for seven months. Alice was carrying our first baby. We were living on money I borrowed from my brother. I don't know if you remember me in those days, but it was rough. I used to go out every night, put a load on, and make a pass at any girl who looked at me. And I mean any. Big, tall, short, fat, anything. Well, one night I picked up some tomato somewheres, and we were sitting in a bar or somewheres, and I kept calling her Alice all night. So she says to me: "My name ain't Alice. Who's Alice?" So I said: "Alice is my wife," and I got up and I went home.

Charlie waits a moment for Kenneth to continue, but apparently this is all Kenneth has to offer at the moment.

CHARLIE

What does that mean?

KENNETH

I don't know. I had a point when I started telling that story.

CHARLIE

I'm not looking for another woman.

KENNETH

Yes, you are, Charlie. You may not know it, but you are. So go on home, Charlie, before you get any drunker than you are. Charlie, you start messing with other women, something goes. It'll kill your marriage. It'll kill your wife. It'll just kill her. What my wife went through -- well, I don't even want to remember it. It's never the same with your wife again, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I'm not looking for any woman.

KENNETH

I think what I was trying to say was you stick with your night school. Some guys have to make peace with themselves that they're never going to amount to too much. A guy like me. Once I made that peace with myself, I found out it doesn't really matter what you amount to. I got a nice wife and two children I complain about all the time, but if anything ever happened to either one of them, I think I'd die. But you don't have to make that kind of peace, and you'd be crazy to settle for less than what you want. You want something, Charlie. I think that's wonderful.

(Charlie's eyes go
toward Kenneth)

You're a little drunk now, and you're fed up to the teeth. Everybody gets fed up, Charlie. You stick with it. You're going to be all right.

CHARLIE

(touched)

You're a nice guy, Kennie.

KENNETH

Sure. You're a nice guy too.

The door to the men's room opens, and a Young Man comes in, looks around quickly at Kenneth and Charlie -- bumps into Kennie.

YOUNG MAN

Watch it -- will you, Mac?

Charlie regards this statement a moment. Then advances to the Young Man.

CHARLIE

Wait a minute.... What are you, a wise guy?

He is all set to bust the Young Man one in the nose, but Kenneth takes him by the arm.

KENNETH

Come on, Charlie, let's go home.

Charlie allows himself to be led to the door.

CHARLIE

I'm just about drunk enough right now to bust somebody right in the nose.

Kenneth reaches for the knob of the door, opens it, and the two men go out. They find themselves in the crowded, noisy bar. A jagged kind of intensity to the atmosphere as if some of the men at the bar might be gangsters. Booths filled with men and women and some mixed-up types. Kenneth and Charlie make their way through the bodies down to one of the booths where Eddie and Arnold are sitting and Walter is standing, heavily drunk. Eddie is expostulating to Walter:

EDDIE

(to Walter)

... Come on, will you? Look Walter, it's just the shank of the evening! What's so special in your home? You got a floor show every night? Who

are you married to, Jayne Mansfield?
Come on, it's not even half past
ten!

Walter sits heavily down.

KENNETH

(smiling amiably)

We got to get up tomorrow, go to
work, Eddie.

EDDIE

We're just starting! We got to get
Arnold a girl yet!

ARNOLD

Eddie, please ...

EDDIE

That's the whole point to a bachelor
party! You got to get the guy a girl!

ARNOLD

Look, fellows, it's been a nice
clean party ...

KENNETH

Well, Arnold, since I'm not going to
see you again before the wedding,
congratulations and best wishes in
the coming future to both you and
the bride.

ARNOLD

Thanks a lot, Kennie....

Eddie turns to Charlie, who is still glowering.

EDDIE

You're not going, are you, Charlie?
We're just starting! We got to get
Arnold a girl yet!

ARNOLD

(to Kenneth)

I want to thank you for the

presents, Kennie....

CHARLIE

...No, I'll stick around another hour or so....

EDDIE

... That's my boy....

ARNOLD

(to Kenneth, who is
looking at Charlie)

... Honestly, I never expected any presents....

KENNETH

(to Charlie)

... Aren't you coming home? ...

CHARLIE

... What for? Sit around talking to my sister Julie? ...

ARNOLD

(standing)

... I want to thank all you fellows ...

EDDIE

All right, stop thanking them, Arnold. They just gave you a party, they didn't elect you President.

ARNOLD

... This has been one of the nicest nights of my life....

CHARLIE

Let's go someplace ... let's go to a nightclub.

EDDIE

That's great with me.

CHARLIE

Come on, Ken.

ARNOLD

Thanks a lot.

KENNETH

... Well, listen, fellows, I'm cutting out.... Good night, Walter, Eddie.

(to Charlie)

... You coming, Charlie? ...

CHARLIE

... No, I'll kill another hour....
Come on, Kennie....

KENNETH

No, you go ahead. I'll see you in the morning, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Okay, I'll see you.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. THIRD STREET

The little stretch of strip-joints on Third Street. Bright little cluster of honky-tonks.

EXTERIOR. THIRD STREET

Our bachelor party, now down to four carousers, ambles along the rather filled sidewalk, looking at the cardboard cutouts of the strippers in the windows of the night clubs.

The four men pause before one of the strip-joints, examining the cardboard cutout and billboard which promises first-rate entertainment inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. THIRD STREET NIGHT CLUB

We look down on the whole night club, showing the dark, dingy, crowded, smallness of it. There is a strip going on. It doesn't look very interesting.

Our four men are huddled over a very small table in one of those Third Street clip-joints. It is a dark little hovel, but a blue stage light drifts across the table, vaguely illuminating our four celebrators. Behind them, a strip tease is in progress. Every now and then, an almost stout woman in her forties, garish in the blue spotlight, dressed in a white satin ill-fitting gown, moves in and out of our view. Half the tables and wall booths are occupied. There is a horseshoe bar off in the recesses of the club. A three-piece band is playing spiritlessly.

Walter is gone, deep in some painful, drunken world of his own. Charlie rubs his eyes as if to keep his senses awake. Arnold, who is soggy, is leaning toward Eddie, who alone of the four men is giving any attention to the show.

ARNOLD

So what do you think of my girl, Eddie? You met her. Be honest with me. Tell me the truth. I had the feeling you didn't like her.

EDDIE

Come on, come on, Arnold. What do you want from me.

Arnold turns to Charlie.

ARNOLD

Listen, Charlie, I'd like to ask you a little advice. I mean, you're a married man. This girl, I'm supposed to marry, she's all right, but I'm not really attracted to her, you know what I mean? That's important, isn't it? I kissed her a couple of times, but I ... I don't know why I'm getting married, Charlie.

CHARLIE

What did you say, Arnold?

ARNOLD

I said, I don't know why I'm getting married. I did pretty good for

thirty-two years without getting married. I get along fine at home. My mother's a good cook. I have a nice life. What do I want to break it all up for?

CHARLIE

Well, Arnold, everybody feels that way before they get married.

ARNOLD

Yeah? Did I ever show you a picture of my girl?

CHARLIE

No, you didn't, Arnold.

ARNOLD

Do you want to see a picture?

CHARLIE

Sure.

Arnold clumsily hauls out his wallet and extracts a picture. He gives it to Charlie who twists at an angle in order to get some light on it.

ARNOLD

I want you to give me your honest impression, Charlie. She isn't much, is she?

CHARLIE

I can't see much in this light, but she looks like a nice pretty girl.

ARNOLD

Well, I wouldn't say that. We were matched up, you know. The families kind of agreed on it. I was brought over to her by my mother and father. That's how I met her. She's some kind of tenth cousin. She's all right. She's quiet. I kissed her a couple of times. She just sat there

and I kissed her. I think she expected more. She even asked me that. She said to me: "Are you afraid of me?" I really don't go out with women much. You know. Don't tell nobody this, Charlie, but you aren't going to believe this, but I never ... I mean, you wouldn't believe that a guy of my age, I never ... Don't tell anybody I ever told you this, but I never-- I mean, Charlie, she's a widow. She's been married already -- she's going to expect a lot -- and I never ----
What do you think I ought to do?

CHARLIE

What do you mean, Arnold?

ARNOLD

I mean, you think I ought to marry her?

CHARLIE

Well, Arnold, even if I knew the girl, I wouldn't answer that question. I may not like her, but she may be fine for you.

ARNOLD

Because I'm thinking of calling the whole thing off.

CHARLIE

It's kind of late for that, isn't it?

ARNOLD

I'm scared stiff, Charlie.

CHARLIE

What are you scared about?

ARNOLD

I'm not much of a talker, and she's

one of those quiet ones. What are you supposed to do with your wife? I mean, most of the time.

CHARLIE

(has to think)

Most of the time, Arnold, you don't even see her. You're away working. You come home, she fixes you supper. Then one of you washes the dishes. Then if you're not tired, you can go to the movies or visit somebody. Or you watch teevee.

ARNOLD

I do that now with my mother.

This gives Charlie pause.

CHARLIE

(scowling)

I don't know what there is to marriage. I suppose it's to have kids.

ARNOLD

So what do you think I ought to do? You think I ought to go through with this marriage?

CHARLIE

(angry)

Arnold, I can't answer that!

He stands abruptly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. STREET -- NIGHT

Our four amble along Washington Square North, headed west. In the background, the high apartment houses. It is about midnight now, and there are a number of people around, and there are lots of lights in the windows. There is still the feeling of life. However, some of the wind has gone out of our bachelor party since we last saw them carousing on

Lexington Avenue. Now, of course, there are only four of them, and there is somewhat a feeling of straggling about them.

EXTERIOR. STREET -- NIGHT

The four men straggle along Tenth Street east of Seventh Avenue. This is a dark little street. Off at the intersection, you can see Seventh Avenue and an occasional car moving downtown, but West Tenth Street right now seems an empty, sleeping street of dark and old little apartment houses. The houses sometimes have little stoops. On one of the stoops, there is a woman sitting. She is in her thirties, not attractive nor unattractive. She wears a light summer frock, and she has one shoe off, and she is toying with the idea of pushing the other one off too. As the four men approach her, she looks up, half quizzically, half questioningly. The four men note her in passing and seem to continue on, but then come to a dragging halt about ten paces down.

CLOSE GROUP SHOT OF THE FOUR MEN.

EDDIE

I think we've got one for you,
Arnold.

ARNOLD

One what?

Eddie looks back to the woman on the stoop. They all turn to look. Actually, Charlie has ambled a few paces even further down and doesn't know quite why they've stopped. They look at the woman; the woman looks at them a little warily. Rest of the scene from her point of view.

ARNOLD

Ah, come on, Eddie.

EDDIE

She ain't bad.

CHARLIE

(calling from a
few paces down)

What's the matter?

EDDIE

We've got a live one.

ARNOLD

(starting to walk)

Come on, let's go.

EDDIE

Arnold, for Pete's sake.

CHARLIE

Ah, leave him alone! He doesn't want to.

EDDIE

Come on. We've been walking around all night here -- are you a man, or ain't you?

Arnold frowns.

ARNOLD

All right, all right.

With a scowl, he assumes the responsibility of being a man. The four men, Charlie bringing up the rear, move down toward The Woman, who now looks down at her feet and begins wiggling her bare foot back into the unused shoe.

THE WOMAN

(not looking up)

I don't know who you fellows think I am, but you fellows have the wrong idea about me.

EDDIE

Yeah, I know. Arnold, see that bar down the corner. That's where we'll be.

THE WOMAN

I'm afraid you fellows have the wrong idea about me.

ARNOLD

She says we have the wrong idea.

CHARLIE

Ah, leave him alone.

THE WOMAN

You fellows are working under a misconception.

Eddie and Walter have already started down the street to the bar.

EDDIE

We'll be in the bar, Arnold.

CHARLIE

You all right, Arnold?

ARNOLD

Yeah, I'm all right, it's just ...

THE WOMAN

Look, I'm just sitting here, fellows. Did I say anything? I was just sitting here.

ARNOLD

You want to come with me, Charlie?

CHARLIE

No, Arnold.

Charlie scowls at the suggestion, but there is something pleading in Arnold's face.

CHARLIE

You want me to? All right. I'll go up with you.

EDDIE

(from halfway down
the street)

Where you going, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I'll go up with him. Moral support.

EDDIE

What the---- we'll all go with you.

Charlie waves him away.

EDDIE

(walks back to fellows)

We'll be down at the bar.

Charlie nods. Arnold looks briefly at The Woman and then away again.

She turns and goes up the steps into the building, her leather heels clicking on the stone steps. Arnold, head down, and Charlie, a little sheepishly, follow her.

INTERIOR. THE HOUSE

A dark, ill-lit hallway. A flight of stairs going up, wooden railings, worn carpeting. The Woman starts up the stairs, the two men following her.

THE WOMAN

(as she goes)

Ssshhh....

Arnold, wetting his lips, nods. The Woman reaches the first landing.

INTERIOR. LANDING

The Woman has come around to one of the three doors on the landing and is inserting a key into a lock. Arnold and Charlie appear now at the head of the stairway. The Woman goes into her room, leaving the door open. A moment later, a shaft of light streams out into the landing. For a moment, nothing happens. Then Arnold and Charlie amble slowly down the landing to the open doorway and shaft of light.

CHARLIE

Hey, Arnold, you don't have to go through with this.

ARNOLD

I think I should.

CHARLIE

I'll wait out here for you, okay?

Arnold nods and goes into the room. He closes the door. Charlie takes out a cigarette and lights it and inhales deeply. He feels a little sordid. There is the sound of steps, muffled by the carpeting, coming down the stairs. A man appears coming down from the floor above. He gives Charlie a quick look and continues on down the landing to the stairs and down again. Charlie scowls at the floor. He smokes his cigarette.

INTERIOR. THE WOMAN'S ROOM

It is a furnished room for which the woman pays eleven dollars a week. It is not particularly unkempt or tarty. There is a print slipcover on the soft chair and flowers on an end table. There is a studio couch with a neat spread and throw pillows on it. The Woman stands expressionlessly in front of the old chest of drawers. She has kicked off one shoe and she is now kicking off the other. She starts to say something:

THE WOMAN

Listen, I don't want you to think I don't have a job. I got a job. I work.

She stops abruptly as Arnold, who is sitting, eyes averted, on a straight-back wooden chair, suddenly stands up and moves toward the door.

THE WOMAN

What's the matter?

Arnold's lips open to form words, but nothing comes out, and he clamps his mouth tight and just stands, miserable and wretched. His hand makes a nervous, spasmodic, involuntary gesture, and he quickly clenches his fist. Beads of sweat are on his forehead.

THE WOMAN

Are you afraid of me?

Arnold's head has started to shake nervously, and he opens the door and steps out into the landing. The Woman, beginning to get angry, follows him.

INTERIOR. LANDING

Charlie looks up at the opening of the door and Arnold's entrance. The Woman stands in the doorway. Arnold moves quickly past Charlie about halfway down the landing, white-faced and trembling.

THE WOMAN

(getting a
little shrill)

What's the matter? Hey. Hey, you.
Hey, you, what's the matter?

CHARLIE

Let's go.

(to The Woman)

What's the trouble?

THE WOMAN

I don't know. Ask him. What's the
matter? Hey, you. You, what's the
matter?

CHARLIE

Go back inside.... All right, all
right.

THE WOMAN

How about that, huh?

She turns angrily, goes back into her room (ad libbing as she crosses) and slams the door. Charlie moves down the landing to Arnold, who looks at him wide-eyed, almost in terror.

CHARLIE

What happened, Arnold?

ARNOLD

I don't know. I'm just scared.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I don't blame you, I'd be
scared too like this. I don't know
why we dragged you up here in the
first place. It's a barbaric custom.

Come on.

He has taken Arnold's arm and would lead him down the stairs, but Arnold pauses again at the first step.

ARNOLD

Don't tell Eddie.

CHARLIE

No I won't, Arnold.

ARNOLD

Why don't we just sit here for ten minutes or so?

Charlie frowns, then shrugs.

CHARLIE

All right, Arnold.

They both sit slowly on the steps. Arnold is still trembling from the whole terrifying experience.

ARNOLD

Don't ever tell anybody.

CHARLIE

It's nothing to be ashamed of.

ARNOLD

Please, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I won't tell anybody.

A man's voice suddenly calls down from an upper floor.

MAN'S VOICE

Anything wrong down there?

CHARLIE

(calling back)

No. No. Nothing wrong.

Charlie sits. CAMERA MOVES UP CLOSER to both men. The whole experience has depressed Charlie, and it shows on his face.

CAMERA PULLS SLOWLY BACK so that we get the small, sordid feeling of the two men, somewhat tight, sitting on a dirty ill-lit staircase outside a whore's bedroom.

INTERIOR. CORNER BAR

Neighborhood bar with about ten people in it. Eddie and Walter are two of them. Eddie is playing on one of those bowling machines. He seems surly, ill-tempered, restless.

EDDIE

Hey Walter -- you know what we ought to do, don't you? We ought to go to that party. Remember that girl Charlie picked up on Tenth Street?

Walter, who is so drunk he is sober, looks up at Eddie with blurred eyes.

WALTER

I'm going to die, do you know that?

EDDIE

Not tonight, Walter. Tonight you're going to live. Ah, these things are fixed.

(crosses to bar)

I'm down to my last buck. Got any money on you?

He turns as the door to the bar opens and Charlie and Arnold come in.

EDDIE

(to Charlie)

Hey!

(to Arnold)

How'd it go, lover?

(Arnold smiles a mysterious smile, pregnant with sensual meaning)

Hey, Charlie, let's go to this party. It's only twelve o'clock. Oh, these

parties are mad, man. All the women wear pajamas, and all the men wear beards. Everybody sits on the floor. Arnold, you got any money? I spent my last buck on those drinks. How about you, Charlie?

ARNOLD

(assessing his assets)

I got a little over a buck.

EDDIE

What are we, all out? So let's go to this party then.

(punches Charlie's arm)

Hey, Charlie, come on.

CHARLIE

(himself sullen and angry)

Cut it out.

EDDIE

You can have that girl you picked up on Tenth Street. Come on.... All right, you married men want to be so married that's all right with me.

But I'd like to see some women tonight.

(punching Charlie's arm with more hostility than he knows)

Come on.

CHARLIE

Lay off.

EDDIE

I'd like to see some women tonight, you know. Do you mind?

CHARLIE

Cut it out, Eddie. You keep punching me, I swear I'm going to belt you one.

EDDIE

What's the matter with you?

Charlie is off his seat and ready to belt Eddie one right on the spot. There is abruptly the imminent reality of a fist fight. The two men are just sullen enough. Arnold hurriedly intercedes.

ARNOLD

All right, all right, fellows.

EDDIE

Look, don't get so tough with me, Charlie.

ARNOLD

All right, all right, come on.

CHARLIE

(angry)

I don't want to see any other women!

EDDIE

(just as angry)

All right! Go on home! Who's holding you?! You want to call it a night? Because I'm tired of grousing from one bar to another. You guys go home, and I'll go about my merry way. All right? And don't get so tough with me.

CHARLIE

Well, don't poke me.

ARNOLD

(turning Charlie
back to his seat)

Come on, let's go ... gee ...

For a moment, the sudden, thick hostility fills the silence in the room. Nobody says anything. Walter is soddenly preoccupied with his own thoughts. Arnold is shaken from his recent experience with The Woman and from the flaring of tempers. Charlie just sits bleakly examining a book of

matches he is toying with, trying to bring his temper down. After a moment, he mutters:

CHARLIE

(mutters)

You mess around with other women, it kills your wife and it kills your marriage.

Eddie suddenly, sulkily strides for the door of the bar.

EDDIE

All right, you guys go home, and I'll go on my merry way.

(gets to the door,
pauses, then turns,
his sudden hot temper
gone as quickly as
it had come)

Hey, you guys, you guys want to go to a nutty night club, look at the nuts? There's a nutty night club over on Second Avenue. You know what we can do? Charlie, you live in Stuyvesant Town, don't you?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

EDDIE

You know what we can do? We'll take the crosstown. We'll go over to Charlie's house, he'll get some money, and we'll go to this nutty night club. It's right down on Second Avenue. You got any money home, Charlie?

CHARLIE

What do you say, Arnold? You want to go?

Arnold shrugs. Eddie has started for the door already. Charlie wearily gets off his stool, starts to follow Eddie out. Walter takes his arm.

EDDIE

Charlie, get Walter.

CHARLIE

Come on, Walter....

CLOSEUP of Walter

WALTER

I'm going to die, you know what I mean?

The sad little party files wearily out of the bar, Arnold pausing at the bar to pay for the drinks.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. FOURTEENTH STREET CROSSTOWN SUBWAY

LONG SHOT looking down through the length of one almost empty car, through the open door at the end of the car, down into the next almost empty car. Just a few people riding the subway at this hour, half past eleven on a week-day. But down in the second car, we can see our four cavaliers. Eddie, Arnold, and Charlie are sitting. Our attention is most caught by Walter, who is heavily drunk and weaves and lurches up and down the central aisle of the car. We cannot hear if he is saying anything.

CLOSE SHOT Walter weaving up and down the aisle of the car. He stumbles on the toes of a man in a windbreaker, sitting in the car.

WALTER

(mumbling)

Excuse me ... excuse me ...

(turns his blurred attention to Charlie, who, alone of the three, seems painfully interested in what Walter is talking about)

So what'll I do? I mean, he says,

I'm going to die. I mean, the man's a specialist. He says: "Go to Arizona, go to Colorado," he says. "You got to get out of New York or you're going to die." He tells my wife, the stupid idiot. My wife cried all night. I'm going to die, you know that? You understand that? I'm going to die? You know what an asthma attack is like? Your heart starts beating like a drum! I passed out the last time!

CHARLIE

(deeply compassionate)

Walter, why don't you just quit the job and pack your bags and get out of here?

Walter stands in front of Charlie, his lips moving, but no words coming out for a moment. There are tears in his eyes, and all the pain and anguish of the man's forty-eight years are clear on his face.

WALTER

(getting the words out)

I can't quit. Don't you understand? You don't understand. I can't quit! I got a fourteen-year-old girl, I don't know what time she comes in at night any more. She's so wild, these kids. I got a nineteen-year-old boy in college; he's going to be a doctor if I have to die. He's not going to quit school. You hear me! I worked hard to put that kid in school! I don't care if I die! I don't care! What am I going to do in Arizona? Who wants me? Who's going to give me a job? What kind of a job am I going to get? I'm forty-eight years old. They don't want no forty-eight-year-old bookkeeper. They got machines from

IBM. You ever been up on the ninth floor? You ever see all those IBM machines? What am I going to do out in Arizona? You look in the Help Wanted lately? You see any jobs listed for Bookkeeper, Male? What are you talking about? Do you know what you're talking about?

Charlie reaches up to steady Walter, who has worked himself up into a lurching fury.

CHARLIE

Easy, Walter.

WALTER

(flinging Charlie's
hand aside)

Take your hand off me. You don't know nothing! You're just a kid! You don't know! I've seen death, kid. I've seen it, boy. I know what it looks like.

(he staggers away a
few paces down the
aisle, stumbles over
the man's toe again)

Excuse me.... Forty-eight years old and so what? What does it mean? What happened? What have I got? What did I make? Who needs me? So this is it. A man's life, nothing. Worry about being sick, worry about making money, worry about your wife, worry about your kids, and you're on your way to the grave from the day you're born. The days drag on, and the years fly by, and so what?

(cries out to
the whole world)

What is it all about? Will you tell me?

The train is slowing up for a station now.

WALTER

Life is nothing! It's a gag! It's a joke! It's a mortgage! It's a bankrupt! It's a lot of noise over nothing! Sound and fury! Isn't that what the man said? What do you think, I never read a book? I read a book! Don't worry! I was a bright kid! Everybody thought I was going to be the first Catholic to be President! Where did it all go?!

He turns to look at the station they are edging into, the yellow lights, the dark shadows, the few blurred faces. His face is wet with the tiny rivulets left by tears.

WALTER

(mumbling)

Where did it all go?

The train stops, the green doors slide open.

EDDIE

(looking out,
in a low voice)

Where are we, Third Avenue?

ARNOLD

(low voice)

Where are we getting off? Next stop?

CHARLIE

(low voice)

Yeah.

A few people come into the car. Walter stands, shoulders hunched and sagging, in front of the open doors.

WALTER

(muttering)

I'm going home.

CHARLIE

(looking up)

What did you say, Walter?

WALTER

I'm going home.

Walter steps out onto the platform. Just in time, because the doors are beginning to slide closed again.

CHARLIE

(standing)

Walter, where are you going? Come here ...

On the platform, Walter has started to weave slowly up the platform toward the stairway.

EDDIE

(standing)

What, did Walter get out?

CHARLIE

(calling through
the open window)

Walter, stay there, we'll come back on the next train. Stay there.

But Walter has already reached the stairway and, clinging to the handrail, has started slowly climbing the steps. The train starts slowly up. Arnold has stood now too. He is pretty soggy himself.

ARNOLD

Poor Walter, huh?

CHARLIE

(bellowing through
the window)

Walter! ...

EDDIE

(standing)

He'll be all right, Charlie. God protects drunks and fools.

The train is sweeping by the stairway now. Charlie bellows out:

CHARLIE

Walter! Grab a cab if you're going home!

The train has swept by, and in a moment they have been plunged into the tunnel of the subway, the bleak dirty white walls, and the small yellow lights flashing by. Charlie sits down, somehow greatly shaken and disturbed.

EDDIE

(sits)

Poor Walter, I didn't know he was so sick. I thought there was something wrong with him, though. He's been out so much.

ARNOLD

(sitting drunkenly down)

I didn't know he was so sick.

CLOSE IN on Charlie.

CHARLIE

That's me in fifteen years.

CLOSEUP of Charlie. Hold for a moment.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. FOURTEENTH STREET AND FIRST AVENUE

We look down at the subway kiosk as our sad little party of three comes up the stairs to the sidewalk. It is midnight, and the street is occasionally patrolled by a taxicab. The sidewalks are pretty empty, just a few people walking. Perhaps a drugstore is still open, and its lonely lit store front catches the eye.

Our three men stand at the head of the stairs at the subway kiosk, drained, tired, a little despondent. Charlie looks up at the dim silhouettes of the endless apartment houses of Stuyvesant Town.

CHARLIE

That's where I live.

EDDIE

Which one?

CHARLIE

In the back there. You can't see it
from here.

LONG SHOT of Stuyvesant Town as seen from their point of
view. PAN SLOWLY ACROSS, capturing the silent monotony of
the dark buildings. Only a few of the windows are still lit.

EDDIE

It looks like a state hospital.

CHARLIE

It looks like a prison.

EDDIE

Yeah, it does look a little like a
prison.

The three men just stand, worn out, tired.

CHARLIE

(suddenly)

I'm going home.

He starts to walk to the buildings, across the little street
that separates the corner of Fourteenth Street and First
Avenue from the parallel corner of the housing project.

EDDIE

(calling after him)

Hey, Charlie ...

Charlie turns.

EDDIE

Hey, Charlie! What about the money?
Have you got ten bucks?

CHARLIE

(after a moment)

All right, if you want to walk me to
the house, I'll get you ten bucks.

Eddie has to take a moment to consider this. Then he shuffles across the little street toward Charlie. Charlie doesn't quite wait for him to catch up when he turns and leads the way between two cars and up the sidewalk toward the promenade that leads to the heart of the project. Arnold, after a moment, follows Eddie. The three men disappear single-file into the darkness of Stuyvesant Town.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. LANDING OUTSIDE CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

We are looking at the twin elevator doors. The light of an elevator climbs into the little square window of one of the elevator doors. The door opens, and Charlie, Eddie, and Arnold shuffle out into the landing. They are all a little soggy.

CHARLIE

(mutters)

I'll be right out.

He moves around the turn of the wall, fishes in his pocket for the key to his apartment. He finds it, brings it out, opens the door carefully, goes into his apartment.

INTERIOR. CHARLIE AND HELEN'S APARTMENT

Charlie comes in. The dining area is lit, and there is the lamp lit in the living room. As Charlie moves to the living room, we can see that Helen is seated on the couch, watching television. The gray-white light of the television set drifts out into the room. Helen is in her pajamas and she has washed for bed; her face is devoid of make-up. She is half-watching television; the rest of her attention is devoted to cutting her fingernails and other aspects of manicure. She looks up as Charlie comes into the living room, smiles.

HELEN

Hiya, have a nice time?

Charlie shrugs. He is depressed and can't conceal it.

CHARLIE

I'm taking ten bucks. A couple of

the guys are waiting outside. I promised them I'd loan them ten bucks.

HELEN

Sure.

He stands by the couch now, without interest, automatically watching the television set.

CHARLIE

(looking at the set)

Tomorrow's payday. I'll get it back tomorrow.

HELEN

It's in the drawer.

A kind of ennui has engulfed him. He stands, watching the television set out of which is now pouring the end of an animated cartoon commercial. Then the familiar tinkling music sets in, the inscription, "The Late Show" appears on the screen, and the announcer's voice informs us that we are now going back to the late show, starring Rex Harrison in "Strictly Dishonorable." The whole thing brings a wince of pain to Charlie's face, and he turns and moves wearily through the little foyer into the darkened bedroom. Enough light flows in from the other rooms to show Charlie going to the drawer in the chest of drawers and taking out a ten-dollar bill. He returns the other bills, closes the drawer and just stands there, suddenly so weak and exhausted that he has to steady himself with one hand on the chest of drawers.

Back in the living room, Helen still sits, a slight frown now indicating she is sensitive to the deeply depressed mood her husband is in. She continues with her nails for a moment. Then, wondering what is keeping her husband, she stands and goes to the bedroom doorway and looks in.

INTERIOR. THE BEDROOM

Charlie is seated on the bed, hunched, in deep depression. He is holding the ten-dollar bill. His eyes are open, but there is a feeling of hurt and pain on his face. Helen moves quietly into the bedroom and sits down on the bed beside him.

HELEN

What's the matter, Charlie?

He shrugs, even smiles briefly.

CHARLIE

I don't know.

She puts out her hand as if to take his head and press it against her, but he takes her in his arms almost desperately, and they lie back on the bed, clutching each other, their faces pressed against each other, seeking some kind of strength just from the sheer physical closeness of each other.

HELEN

It's not so bad, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I know. I know.

They lie quietly, even stiffly, holding each other.

CHARLIE

(eyes wide open
but unseeing)

I don't know what's the matter with me, I keep getting so depressed. I'm going to quit night school, Helen. My nerves are shot.

He releases himself from his wife's embrace and sits up.

CHARLIE

Those guys are waiting outside. I better give them their money.

He stands and starts out the bedroom.

HELEN

Charlie ... Maybe I shouldn't have the baby?

CHARLIE

What do you mean? ...

She doesn't answer. She doesn't have to. They both know what she means.

CHARLIE

Isn't that dangerous? ... Well, I don't know ... maybe ... Well, you brought it up.

HELEN

(shocked -- after
a moment)

You really don't want this baby....

She turns away on the bed to hide the sudden flush of tears.

HELEN

You're my husband, Charlie. This is your baby too. That doesn't mean anything to you. For the first time in our marriage I feel I can't depend on you, Charlie -- I'm not important to you.

(she has to stop
because she can no
longer trust her
voice. After a
moment she continues)

I could make my life sound hard, too, Charlie. I work all day, I rush home, I make you dinner. I sit home alone four nights a week, I'm even alone when you're here because when do I see you? But it was easy for me because I loved you. Do you think I care whether you're an accountant or a ditch digger, or even out of work? All I ever wanted was you. And this baby because it's you, too.

She closes her eyes again to hide the warm flow of tears in her eyes and stops talking rather than cry. Charlie sits, unmoved and wretched, his shoulders hunched, his head slumped forward. After a moment, he turns and reaches forward, quite frightened, to touch her arm.

HELEN

(dully)

Leave me alone, Charlie.

He stands and goes to the bedroom window and looks out. Helen turns on her side so that her back is to him. At the sound of her moving, Charlie turns his head, but sensing the rejection in her back, he turns back and looks out the window again. The silence is thick between them.

CHARLIE

(looking out
the window)

I decided I'd quit school and ...

HELEN

I don't care ...

CHARLIE

I decided I'd quit school and come home in the evenings like everybody else and live a normal life.

HELEN

(staring at the
wall ahead of her)

I don't care what you do, Charlie.

He stands another moment.

CHARLIE

I don't care what I do either.

Helen neither moves nor makes a response. Charlie goes on into the living room and shuffles to the front door, his long body heavy with pain and guilt and dense, unknown terrors. He opens the door and goes out onto the landing.

INTERIOR. LANDING

Eddie and Arnold, looking up as the door opens and Charlie comes out.

EDDIE

What took you so long? What did you do, blow open the safe?

CHARLIE
(giving Eddie the
ten-dollar bill)

Here.

EDDIE
(taking it)
I'll give it to you tomorrow. I'll
see you in the morning, Charlie.

CHARLIE
I'll see you.

Eddie takes Arnold's arm and guides him back around the turn of the wall to the elevators. Charlie follows a few paces behind. Eddie pushes both elevator buttons. Charlie nods, looks down at the tiling at his feet, fairly sick within himself, oppressed and guilty. The light in the elevator window shows, and Eddie opens the door.

CHARLIE
Wait a minute. I'll go with you.

EDDIE
Let's go to that party -- we'll
have a ball!

Charlie shuffles the few paces forward and follows Eddie and Arnold into the elevator. The door closes, and, a moment later, the light of the elevator cage disappears downward.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. GREENWICH VILLAGE DUPLEX APARTMENT

This is one of those duplex apartments on West Tenth Street which consists of one huge living room that is two stories high and you need a little rolling stepladder to reach the books on the upper shelves of the built-in bookcases. There is a little wrought-iron stairway that leads to the second floor, which consists of two tiny little bedrooms.

Apartments like these, as is the case in this one, are usually lived in by two girls, one of whom is a secretary in an advertising agency and the other a model for a garment

manufacturing firm. Both girls are in their early thirties and are milling about somewhere in the mass of people in the living room, carrying drinks, laughing up a storm, pausing at the little knots of discussion groups with an apt phrase. They rather think of themselves as Madame de Staëls with their own salon of bright young people, for most of the men and women at the party are in some way connected with the arts, probably in an avant garde way. It is a little difficult to tell this by looking at them because avant garde artists have become obsessed with dressing like businessmen, but if you can hear the talk as we can, you get the point fast enough. We pick up phrases like: "I really find it difficult to think of Tennessee Williams as a serious artist," or "My teacher thinks all tenors are frogs except Gigli," or "I don't see how you can say that; his designs fairly throb with sex." There are, as Eddie predicted, a number of people sitting on the floor, mostly girls, circled in the swirl of their Ann Fogarty dresses, and there is one obvious ballerina, with her black hair pulled tightly back into a severe pony tail, using the wrought-iron railing that separates the dropped living room from the small entrance foyer to demonstrate something about positions at the dancing bar. There is someone at the piano banging away, shouting his songs, but he is completely inaudible five feet away. A few people lean over the piano, apparently exhilarated by the songs. Thin blankets of smoke wreath their way up to the two-story-high ceiling. We catch some more phrases: "I thought Truman Capote was supposed to be here." -- "Truman's in Russia, I think." -- "Good heavens, what can the Russians want with Truman Capote?" -- "Oh, I never read anything published in this country." "Oh, I mean, the paper-bound Paris edition." In short, this is a real chi-chi wingding where all the furniture is too low, and the hostess is very proud of the fact that her end table is made out of an orange crate.

Somewhere, through the jumble of the party, we can hear the doorbell chime. A young woman, at one of the little knots of people, perks her ears and says:

HOSTESS

I'm sure that's the police again.

She's very proud of this. She turns and weaves her way

through the crowded room, carrying her drink. She goes up the step to the entrance foyer, turns to her left, picks her way over two middle-aged men who are both throwing a pitch at a fairly tight girl of eighteen, past the kitchen, which is a bedlam of ice cubes and kitchen towels and which is occupied at the moment by two intense women in their late thirties wrapped in deep discussion, up past two young men who have no immediate use for girls, to the front door of the apartment. She opens the door.

GROUP SHOT of Eddie, Arnold, and Charlie from the Hostess's point of view. Not exactly a heartening sight to most hostesses, three fairly loaded young men with their collars unbuttoned and their ties limp and dangling.

HOSTESS

(beaming)

Are you coming to complain about the noise?

EDDIE

Do we look like complainers?

HOSTESS

I don't know who you are, but come in, come in. I don't know half the people who are here tonight.

They enter a little warily and ill-at-ease, peering into the jammed room.

HOSTESS

The police have been here twice. The first fellow was just adorable. We gave him a drink, and he's upstairs in a bedroom now, for all I know.

EDDIE

Is that right?

HOSTESS

If you want something to drink, you'll just have to go into the kitchen and get it yourself. The place is just mad. Do you write,

paint or sing?

Eddie spreads his arms in all-inclusive expansiveness.

EDDIE

Everything.

But the hostess has already bent to chat with two women, one old, one young, sitting on the floor. Our three cavaliers look at each other and then look out over the wild, jumbled room.

CHARLIE

Boy, do you get invited to a party like this or do you get committed?

A passing young man who overhears this, pokes his head into the group and says to Charlie with a flashing smile:

YOUNG CHAP

I heard that. It's awfully funny.

Charlie regards the smiling young chap.

EDDIE

Beat it.

The chap's smile flashes off and he scurries away. Eddie rubs his palms and surveys the women in the crowded room with a measuring eye.

EDDIE

This is going to be like shooting ducks. Pick out your duck, men.

Wetting his lips, he starts out for some girl he has decided on across the room.

INTERIOR. GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT -- HALF HOUR LATER

HIGH SHOT showing progress of party, still crowded, still high. If we look sharp we can see Charlie seated on the floor in the rear of the shot, his back against the wall.

CLOSER SHOT of Charlie sitting morosely, back against the wall, regarding his drink with sodden eyes. The chatter of

the party, an occasional shrill laugh.

FULL SHOT of Eddie coming out of the kitchen, carrying two drinks. He picks his way through the people to the living room with the general intention of getting to the arrangement of divans around the coffee table, when he spots Charlie and moves across to him.

EDDIE

Hey, what's the matter, Charlie?
(squats down
beside Charlie)

CHARLIE

(without looking up)
Let's get out of here, Eddie.

EDDIE

The last time I saw you, you was
with that girl you picked up. What
happened?

CHARLIE

She's over there talking to that
old guy with the glasses.

Their point of view, The Existentialist on steps with
landlord.

CHARLIE

I didn't like her. She's one of
these real Greenwich Village phonies.
If I added up all the guys she told
me about, she must have had her
first boy friend when she was two
years old. Where are you going,
Eddie. Stick around a minute.

EDDIE

(who has stood)
I'm with that one over there -- not
bad, huh? I think she's a Communist.
I think she's trying to talk me into
joining the Party.

CHARLIE

How are you making out?

EDDIE

Not so hot. I may have to join.

CHARLIE

Hang around. Let's talk a bit.

EDDIE

I better get back. She's liable to recruit somebody else.

CHARLIE

Where's Arnold?

EDDIE

He's in the kitchen. I think he's out cold. I'll see you.

Charlie nods as Eddie moves off. He returns his morose attention back to his glass of liquor. Then his eyes close, and his face, though impassive, shows pain. After a moment, he opens his eyes and slowly clambers to his feet and makes his way, a little unsteadily, through the living room in the direction of the kitchen. In the background we can hear the piano and somebody singing indistinguishable lyrics. Charlie gets to the kitchen door and looks in. Arnold is at the tiny kitchen table, head on the table, out cold. The kitchen is in a state of havoc.

CHARLIE

Hey Arnold-- You okay, Arnold?

Arnold makes no answer. Charlie regards his prostrated friend expressionlessly for a moment. Then turns and shuffles aimlessly back to the group around the piano in the living room. He looks over to the stairway again. The Existentialist is alone now, The Landlord having gone for the moment. She is looking at Charlie, and he drops his eyes. He turns away from the piano and moves out a few steps into the middle of the living room. He moves to the stairway. The Existentialist looks up at him as he approaches, Charlie kind of nods to her, and, for a moment, she just sits and he just stands. Then ...

THE EXISTENTIALIST

That old man I was talking to before? That's my landlord. About ten thirty last night, someone began pounding on my door. So I got up and opened the door, and there was this white-haired man with a pince-nez standing there. I said: "What do you want?" So he said: "I'm the landlord, and I want the rent." Well, I just looked at him because the landlord I knew was a Hungarian man named Frank, who was crazy about me, and the issue of rent never came up, you see. Well, it turned out that this man with the pince-nez had just bought the building the day before and he kept grabbing my arm and saying he wanted the rent. Well, then I got the point, of course. Well, meanwhile, a boy named Bob I knew had come over. He's engaged to a Javanese girl with wonderful planes in her face who lives at the International House. But he's crazy about me and he drops in about twice a week. Well, meanwhile, my new landlord was grabbing my arm and kept quoting poetry to me which he was trying to pass off as his own. He was an absolute fraud. He scotched the whole thing from Baudelaire. "Tu mettrais." You know that one. Well, he kept screaming about the rent -- I didn't like him, you know -- and I called this boy named George who used to live in Poughkeepsie when I was going to Vassar, and he's crazy about me. He lives in St. Luke's place now, but he goes to Poughkeepsie every Wednesday to see his mother, he's got an Oedipus, so that was out. Well, my new landlord

kept telling me how much he was in love with me. I said: "How existentialist can you get? You just met me five minutes ago." He was absolutely crazy about me.

Charlie has been sort of half-listening to all this. His attention, if any at all, has been vaguely given to the girl's bare arms, the lines of her body.

CHARLIE

(resigned)

You have an apartment around here somewheres?

(looks up to
second floor)

What's up there? What kind of rooms are up there?

THE EXISTENTIALIST

So, I finally got to sleep around six thirty....

Charlie bends down to her, takes her arm.

CHARLIE

Come on, let's go.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

(wrenching her
arm away)

No! Oh, stop trying to be so primitive.

Charlie straightens with an irritated sigh.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

I find you very unpleasant.

He stands, she sits in sullen silence.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

There's nothing upstairs.

(suddenly rises,
mumbles)

Oh, I don't care.

She starts up the stairs, Charlie following close behind her. They pick their way past the other people sitting on the stairs to the second-floor landing. They walk in hostile silence down the landing to the bedroom door, which she opens.

INTERIOR. THE BEDROOM

It is a tiny bedroom. The bed is covered with purses and summer stoles and other guest things. An uncovered, improvised closet, really a rack of hanging dresses and things, gives the room an overburdened look. Charlie comes into the room after her, closes the door, looks for the latch. She pushes some of the things on the bed aside and sits down and waits while Charlie latches the door, a matter of turning a bent nail into locking position. She begins to prattle again.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

So I finally got to sleep around six thirty this morning. At nine thirty, someone began pounding on my door again. I got out of bed and opened the door, and there was my landlord with the pince-nez wearing a blue silk kimono. "Oh, for heaven's sakes," I said, "what do you want now?" He said: "I'm the landlord, and I want the rent." I said: "You're an old man, go to sleep." Then the phone rang. It was a boy named Andrew I know who teaches physics at Columbia University, and he's insanely jealous. He's married and has four children, but he keeps badgering me to run away with him to Nicaragua, throw up his professorship and all that. Well, my landlord began shouting some garbled Baudelaire at the top of his lungs, and a little Verlaine, and a little Huysmans. He apparently has some kind of fetish about French decadents. And naturally, Andrew heard him, and he

got furious, and he said: "Who's that I hear?" I said, "That's the landlord." He said: "What does he want?" I said: "He wants the rent." Well, at this point, I felt like chucking the whole business and going back to Bessemer City and going to work in my father's hardware store.

Charlie has stood a moment, listening to this bizarre story. Then he has busied himself cleaning a place beside The Existentialist on the bed. He brings an end to the rococo narration by putting his arms around The Existentialist and in a moment, she responds hungrily.

CLOSEUP of Charlie and The Existentialist in a desperate embrace.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

(muttering)

Just say you love me.

CHARLIE

What?

THE EXISTENTIALIST

Just say you love me. You don't have to mean it.

He tries to kiss her again, himself charged high at the moment, but she turns her face away from him. The dialogue is intense, whispered, hungry.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

No, don't. ...

CHARLIE

What's the matter?

THE EXISTENTIALIST

Say you love me....

CHARLIE

Come on.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

Say you love me....

CHARLIE

Come on....

THE EXISTENTIALIST

No ...

CHARLIE

I love you! I love you!

THE EXISTENTIALIST

(content)

Look, maybe we ought to go someplace else? I'm having a very tricky thing going with my landlord and I don't want him to see us leaving together. So you know what you do? There's a bar down the street. You go out the door and turn to your right. You know the one I mean?

CHARLIE

Yes, I know.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

Well, you go there and I'll be there as fast as I can. Now, wait for me now, because I can't stand being alone at night. You'll like me. I'm supposed to be very amusing. All right?

She turns abruptly and goes out the door. He stands for a moment and then follows. He stands on the upper landing, watching her pick her way down the stairs into the living room.

She looks quickly around the room, apparently finds whom she is looking for, and moves quickly to a little group of men, one of whom is about sixty years old with a thin elegance and a cruel face, the landlord. He has several young men around him, all rather frail, Ivy-Leagueish. She joins the group, to the distaste of the young men, and is immediately

voluble and gesticulatory. After a moment, Charlie lets his eyes wander over the room, apparently sees Eddie.

CHARLIE

(calling down)

Hey, Eddie ...

Apparently, Eddie doesn't hear him. Charlie frowns and begins making his own way down the stairs to the living room.

INTERIOR. LIVING ROOM -- GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT

Charlie moves down the stairs into the living room proper. He makes his way to Eddie, who is still sitting in the back of the room, throwing an intense pitch at his girl, talking quickly, smiling, gesturing.

CHARLIE

(muttering)

Eddie, I'm cutting out.

EDDIE

(standing, low voice)

Wait a minute, I'll go with you.

CHARLIE

I don't want to take you away from your girl, Eddie.

EDDIE

Aah, this one lives out in Long Island with her mother. What kind of Communist is that? It'll take me a half hour on the subway there and a half hour back.

CHARLIE

(shrugs)

Where's Arnold? Still in the kitchen?

EDDIE

I guess so.

(to the girl)

I'll see you, next time I get to Long Island.

He starts off after Charlie who is already wandering through

the living room in the general direction of the kitchen, looking about for Arnold. They pass The Existentialist en route. She is saying: "... this boy named Charlie, I never saw him before in my life, has been clutching at me all evening. He's absolutely insane about me." Charlie leans into the kitchen where Arnold is awake now, seated at the small kitchen table, staring gauntly, unseeingly at his fingers on the white porcelain-topped table. There are two men, one middle-aged, one young, having a whispered chat over the sink.

EDDIE

(over Charlie's
shoulder)

Hey, Arnold, come on.

Arnold stands obediently, almost dumbly. He squeezes around the table, his face soddenly expressionless, to join Eddie and Charlie in the kitchen doorway. Eddie is saying to Charlie:

EDDIE

Well, it wasn't a bad party. We
killed a couple of hours anyway.

The three men push their way past three women in their thirties, who are standing in the little hallway before the front door, in earnest brow-furrowed conversation with each other. Charlie opens the door, and the three morose carousers go out into the dark street.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. GREENWICH VILLAGE APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The three carousers come out into the street. The door closes behind them. The night air is hot and muggy. They walk down the street toward the corner where only the light of the corner bar gives any indication of life. There is a newspaper on the sidewalk which Eddie bends down to pick up, and the three men straggle to a halt. Eddie opens the paper to the sports pages and starts to read by the light of the street lamp. Arnold moves a step to the lamp and leans against it. Charlie stands in the middle of the sidewalk, a melancholy, pondering young man. The evening seems to have

come to a dead halt. After a moment, Eddie starts walking again, reading the paper as he does. The others slowly gather themselves and follow him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. THE CORNER BAR

A wall clock reading twenty-five minutes to three. CAMERA PANS DOWN the wall. We are in the bar on the corner of Tenth and Sixth, almost entirely empty except for Charlie, Eddie, Arnold, and the bartender. The three carousers are leaning wearily on the bar over their beers; the only other person in the bar is a worn, battered old veteran of the streets, a woman in her forties, bespectacled, who is perched on a bar stool at the far end of the bar, gloomily reading a newspaper. CAMERA MOVES DOWN and IN on Charlie, Eddie, and Arnold.

EDDIE

... I mean, you can't compare the two. This kid the Yankees have in centerfield. Are you trying to tell me he's a natural .368 hitter? What's he normally hit, .310, .315? Musial led the National League in hitting six times. He's only having a fair year, this year -- and he's still hitting .320. Musial is an all-time great!

CHARLIE

Yeah. I guess so.

ARNOLD

(stiff with liquor)

Eddie -- Eddie. So what do you think, Eddie? You think I ought to go through with this marriage?

EDDIE

I don't know about you, Arnold, but if it was me, boy, I'd be in China by now.

(back to Charlie)

Who have the Yankees got on first?
Skowron. Boy, how they touted
Skowron. All right, he's having a
lucky year.

CHARLIE

Yeah....

EDDIE

(continuing)

... Well, I mean, is there any
argument? Hodges is the best first
baseman in both leagues....

ARNOLD

So, Eddie, what do you think? You
think I ought to marry her, go to
China, or what?

EDDIE

Arnold, if it bothers you so much,
call her up and tell her to forget
the whole deal.

(back to Charlie)

All right Hodges is having a bad
year -- but how about last year? He
hit over .300. He only hit thirty-
five homers and he drove in over a
hundred runs----

ARNOLD

So, Eddie...

EDDIE

Arnold! Get rid of her! You're
driving me crazy!

Arnold lowers his head, and he rises, loses his precarious
balance and moves backward a few lurching steps.

EDDIE

(continuing)

All right, who's on second? We got
Charlie Neal or Gilliam, for that
matter, and this isn't even counting

Jackie Robinson, head and shoulders, even with a trick knee, the best second baseman in both leagues if they'd let him play there. We got three guys, for Pete's sake, who can outplay anybody the Yankees put on second.

Arnold weaves slowly up the bar to the two phone booths at the far end of the counter. Then walks out of shot.

EDDIE

(continuing)

Ever see Charlie Neal go to his right? That Yankee guy, what's his name -- he can't go to his right. And don't forget Neal gets a lot of bases on balls, and once he's on the bases, man, it unnerves the pitcher ...

The bartender decides to take issue.

BARTENDER

What's Brooklyn going to do for pitching?

EDDIE

Never heard of Newcombe? Never heard of Erskine?

BARTENDER

What have you got to compare with Ford, Kucks, McDermott, Turley---

EDDIE

McDermott -- McDermott hasn't pitched a full game since last year.

BARTENDER

The best relief pitcher in both leagues.

EDDIE

What's the matter with Eddie Roebuck?

BARTENDER

How do you compare Eddie Roebuck
with McDermott?

EDDIE

What are you, a Yankee fan?

BARTENDER

Yeah.

EDDIE

Well, drop dead.

(turns angrily
back to Charlie)

A Yankee fan.

There is a sudden bellow off.

ARNOLD'S VOICE

Hey!

Eddie and Charlie slowly turn to look in Arnold's direction.
CAMERA PANS to see Arnold from their point of view, a
wavering, drunken young man standing in front of the phone
booths.

ARNOLD

I did it.

EDDIE

You did what?

Arnold staggers a few paces into the center of the empty bar.

ARNOLD

I just woke her up! I called her! I
said: "I'm not going to marry you.
What do I want to marry you for? I'm
having a ball. What am I going to
marry you for?"

EDDIE

What is he talking about?

Then, suddenly, effortlessly, Arnold sinks down onto the
floor -- out cold. For a moment, Eddie and Charlie regard
the prostrate form.

BARTENDER

Boy, he's gone.

Eddie and Charlie move to Arnold, lying curled stiffly on the floor.

CHARLIE

I think he's just called his girl,
broke his engagement.

EDDIE

Is that what he was yelling about?

CHARLIE

(trying to raise
Arnold's head)

Wake up, kid. Help me get him up,
Eddie.

EDDIE

You think he did it because I was
needling him there before? I was
just needling him.

The two men contrive to lift Arnold and get him onto a stool.

BARTENDER

You better get him out of here
because I'm closing up now.

CHARLIE

We better get him home.

EDDIE

Ah, let's not break it up yet. I
thought you were waiting for this
girl.

CHARLIE

It's three o'clock in the morning,
for Pete's sake.

BARTENDER

Take him out in the air. He'll be
all right.

CHARLIE

What a bachelor party. We start out celebrating the guy's wedding; we wind up breaking his engagement.

(moves to bar)

What do we owe you here?

(he puts some change
on the counter)

Eddie, pay it, will you? I gave you the ten bucks.

EDDIE

(following him
to the bar)

What do you want to go home for?

CHARLIE

It's going to take us an hour to get him home. He lives in Queens somewheres. By the time I get back to Fourteenth Street, it'll be daybreak. What are you going to do, stay up all night? Don't you want to go home sometimes?

EDDIE

What am I going to do home? I read all the papers.

CHARLIE

(crosses to Arnold)

Well, go to sleep then.

EDDIE

Ah, don't go home, Charlie. I feel like doing something.

Charlie turns to him, a cold fury in him.

CHARLIE

What? Stand around this bar and argue about the Yankees and the Dodgers? Wind up with some miserable, lonely girl who begs you to say, "I

love you"? Go home, Eddie. Go to bed.
You got to go home sometimes. I'll
take Arnold home. Come on, Arnold,
kid. I'm going to take you home.

Arnold manages, with Charlie's arm, to get out of the booth and stand. Charlie's firm arm holds him, and they start for the exit. Eddie watches the two figures making their way down the length of the bar to the door. They exit. The door shuts behind them. For a moment, Eddie regards the closed door. Then he shuffles to the bar, back to his schooner of beer and looks at it without taking it up. He is profoundly weary. His shoulders slump, his face sags. He runs his hand down his face and shakes his head as if to clear it. He turns and looks down to the other end of the bar where the Bar Hag sits engrossed in her newspaper. He watches her for a moment.

EDDIE

(spiritlessly)

Hey, honey, what are you, a Yankee
fan or a Dodger fan?

The Bar Hag slowly turns to regard him over the rim of her glasses.

BAR HAG

Hiya.

Bleakly, Eddie shuffles slowly down the long length of the bar to where the battered old woman sits.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. THE BAR -- NIGHT

HIGH ANGLE SHOT looking down on the sidewalk immediately outside the bar Arnold and Charlie have just come out of. There is a house with a small stoop, and Arnold is standing slumped by the stoop, holding himself up by the iron railing. He is being sick, quietly retching. Charlie is standing a few paces away from him in the middle of the sidewalk, a deeply unhappy figure in his own right. From our angle, we may or may not be able to tell that Charlie is crying.

CLOSE SHOT of Charlie standing in the middle of the sidewalk of Sixth Avenue and Tenth Street, the whole dark world around him, silent and empty. He is crying quietly, unashamedly, his shoulders shaking ever so little. Behind him, Arnold is bent over the railing of the stoop, weak and spent.

ANOTHER SHOT of the two men. Charlie stops crying, sighs, and starts toward Arnold.

CHARLIE

(gently)

Are you all right, Arnold?

Arnold nods weakly. Charlie gets out a handkerchief and gives it to Arnold who begins to weakly clean his chin and spots on his suit.

CHARLIE

Would you like to go back in and sit down?

Arnold shakes his head weakly "no."

CHARLIE

What subway do you take, Arnold, the BMT? Can you make it?

Arnold nods weakly. Charlie puts his arm supportively around his friend's back, but Arnold makes no move yet, being thoroughly drained.

CHARLIE

Come on, Arnold, I'll take you home.

There is a clicking of high heels on concrete pavement, and Charlie looks up. The Existentialist has just come out of the party several houses down and has come up a few steps and is standing watching them. She has her bag and her light summer stole. She nods to Charlie, sort of smiles, moves a few steps closer to them.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

Is he all right?

CHARLIE

(nods)

Yeah, he's all right. Look, I've got to take my friend home...

The two men start slowly down the street to the corner. Arnold leaning heavily on his friend. The Existentialist stands, watching them a moment.

THE EXISTENTIALIST

(calling lightly)

Are you coming back? Where does he live? How long will you be?

REVERSE SHOT Charlie and Arnold just about getting to the corner. Charlie hasn't heard her.

FULL SHOT of The Existentialist watching them disappear around the corner. Then she turns, and, wetting her lips, she hurries back to the house where the party is.

INTERIOR. BMT SUBWAY -- HURTLING NORTHWARD

Half past three, and the car is absolutely empty except for Charlie and Arnold. Arnold is sprawled across the straw seat, one leg buckled beneath him, the other on the floor. He is sleeping heavily. Charlie sits expressionlessly, obviously involved in deep introspection. The car buckets along into the night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. QUEENS APARTMENT HOUSE

Arnold and Charlie coming up to a landing. It is the third floor; we can see enough of the corridor to see two apartment doors, lettered "3D" and "3C." A small overhead bulb provides a thin sketchy light. Charlie and Arnold shuffle down the landing to apartment 3D. They pause outside the door. The scene is played in low mutters and whispers.

ARNOLD

Well, thanks a lot, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You all right?

ARNOLD

Yeah, I'm all right. I'm a little groggy, but I'm awake anyway. You don't want to come in, do you?

CHARLIE

No, I don't think so.

ARNOLD

I think my father and mother are up. I hear voices. My girl must have called them because they wouldn't be up at this hour.

CHARLIE

Well, you just go in and explain to them that you were drunk, and you're sorry, and you'll call your girl the first thing in the morning because she must really be upset about this.

ARNOLD

(who has been
listening at
his door)

I think she's here.

CHARLIE

Who?

ARNOLD

My girl. I think I hear her voice in there.

CHARLIE

Well, be nice to her, Arnold. Remember, you woke her up in the middle of the night and probably scared her to death.

ARNOLD

What'll I say to her, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I don't know, Arnold. What do you feel like saying to her? Do you

really love this girl? Do you want to marry her? Are you marrying this girl because your family wants you to marry her, or why?

ARNOLD

I think I like her, Charlie. It's just that I'm afraid I won't make a good husband.

CHARLIE

Well, tell her what you told me, Arnold. Tell her you're scared, and that you don't think you'll make a good husband. If she's a halfway decent girl, she'll try to understand how you feel, and, if she loves you, she's going to make it her job to make you happy. That's what love is, Arnold, when you have somebody else in the world you want to be happy. My wife, Arnold, I don't know what I'd do without her. Arnold, I've got a tough grind ahead of me. Work all day, I'll go to night school at night. But my wife knows that I need this to be happy, and she does everything she knows to help me. And we've got a baby coming. But if you love that baby and you love your wife, then it's easy. Everything seems so easy to me now -- I don't know why I even thought of quitting.

(tears have welled
in his eyes, and he
hurriedly puts his
hand to his face
shading his reddening
eyes)

Arnold, I want my wife so much right now. I want her to be happy. I want to just go home and hold her and tell her how much she means to me. I mean, even Walter, he's going to die, but

don't you think he'll be in tomorrow morning, same old Walter, jokes and laughs? He's got somebody to live for. He's even got somebody to die for. I mean, how rich can a man be? And poor Eddie -- I used to be so jealous of him. I used to think he was so free. Free from what? From loving a woman, from really wanting a woman. Arnold, what I'm trying to tell you is life is nothing if you don't love somebody but life is wonderful if you do love somebody. Arnold, I want my wife so much right now ...

Arnold is a little embarrassed by his friend's display of emotion and, frankly, hasn't understood a word Charlie was talking about.

ARNOLD

I'm going to tell her about that woman tonight and everything. I'll tell her about that woman.

CHARLIE

Arnold, I want to get home so much to my wife right now I'm going to bust.

ARNOLD

I'll see you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Good-bye, Arnold, have a nice honeymoon. I'll see you when you get back.

ARNOLD

I'll see you, Charlie.

But he is talking to an empty staircase. Charlie has plunged down into the darkness of the floor below. Arnold turns and sighs and shuffles back to the door of his apartment. He rings the bell lightly, takes a deep breath. A moment, and

the door opens. A girl of about thirty-five, bespectacled, rather plain, with a sensitive face, stands in the doorway. Arnold stands, his head down in shame.

ARNOLD

Hello, Louise. I'm very sorry,
honest.

LOUISE

Sure, Arnold, I know.

She looks anxiously over Arnold's shoulder to see if anyone else is there. Arnold lumbers past her into the apartment. Voices, both male and female, pop out at him. "What's the matter with you, are you crazy?" "What's the matter with you?" "For heaven's sakes, where have you been?" ... The door closes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR. STUYVESANT TOWN HOUSING PROJECT

LONG SHOT looking down the wide courtyard of Stuyvesant Town, its endless little pathways winding from the various apartment house doors to the central pathway which leads to a stairway to the street. It is half past five in the morning. The sky is gray and desolate. The courtyard and any other street we see is absolutely empty. THE CAMERA PANS OVER this empty expanse to the stairway where Charlie appears now, coming quickly up the steps. He moves down the central sidewalk, a little faster than he would usually walk; you have the feeling he is exerting an effort to keep from running. CAMERA PANS with him as he hurries to one of the winding side lanes leading to a particular apartment house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR. CHARLIE AND HELEN'S APARTMENT

MEDIUM SHOT looking from the foyer of the apartment across the dining area to the front door. The apartment is dark. The door opens and Charlie comes in. He closes the door quietly after himself and moves a few steps into the apartment. He stops when he sees Helen seated on the couch,

wearing a kimono over her pajamas. She stands; she has been crying.

CHARLIE

I love you, Helen.

She moves slowly to him and puts her head on his chest and cries quietly. He holds her tightly.

HELEN

(crying softly)

I love you so much, Charlie. I love you so much....

CHARLIE

I love you....

HELEN

I love you, Charlie, I love you, Charlie. I love you, Charlie ...

CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY UP AND AWAY from the young couple, holding each other closely and tightly, murmuring to each other in the dark living room of a two-and-a-half-room apartment in a housing project.

FADE OUT

Screenplay by Paddy Chayefsky

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