

**CSI: CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION**  
"Holes In Your Story"

By  
The Derrick Brothers

The Derrick Brothers  
[www.shadowboxercinema.com](http://www.shadowboxercinema.com)  
(310) 866-0222  
(310) 424-8552

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. LAS VEGAS SKYLINE - NEAR DAWN

CAMERA CHASES down the Strip just as the horizon swallows the sun. CAMERA ABRUPTLY VEERS OFF TO an acutely janky part of this vibrant metropolis - the part City Hall would like to take a wrecking ball to - and SETTLES ON a run-down, ratty office building.

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/HALL - CONTINUOUS

At the end of the hall, a nosey LANDLORD, mid 40s who is a little bit of a dandy, stands at an office unit where an unseen tenant hands him an envelope.

LANDLORD

Thank you. Next time, please don't be late... again.

The Landlord juggles a stack of papers, as he stuffs the tenant's envelope inside his jacket. As soon as the door closes, the Landlord impudently sneers.

The Landlord scuttles down the hall, knocks on another office door, gets no response and posts a "3-Day Pay or Quit" notice. He moves to the next office, raps on the frosted glass door...

No response. The Landlord presses his ear to the glass. MUSIC faintly emanates from inside the office.

LANDLORD (cont'd)

Hello? Mr. Mullins? Are you in there?

No answer. Impatient, the Landlord raps again. In this weakening light a SILHOUETTE can barely be seen through the frosted glass.

LANDLORD (cont'd)

Mr. Mullins, I know that you're in there. And that you can hear me. Do be so kind and open up.

A silent beat.

LANDLORD (cont'd)

Your grace period is up.

Still no answer. The Landlord snippily pulls out his passkey.

LANDLORD (cont'd)  
 (unlocks and opens door)  
 Mr. Mullins, we're going to have to  
 have a talk. This is strike three of  
 the chances I can give you.

Landlord steps inside. Tears form in his eyes and drip as if they were burned by pepper spray. He drops everything, violently dry-heaves until he vomits, then collapses at what he sees...

INSIDE THE OFFICE is a MAN (KEVIN MULLINS), mid 20s slumped in his chair, which is pushed back against the far wall. A computer tax program on, easy-listening music trickling out of the cheap desk radio; everything's normal except for Mullins's throat -- a huge chunk has been blown all over the wall! The graffiti is gruesome.

CUT TO:

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/HALL - DAYBREAK

The LVPD is making its presence known. A Homicide Detective interviews the near-hysterical Landlord.

**GRISSOM** and **SARA**, with field kits, and **NICK** with a camera stride down the hall.

**BRASS** intercepts them:

GRISSOM  
 Care to fill us in on the who's who  
 candidate?

BRASS  
 Victim's name is Kevin Mullins, did  
 tax work. From the looks of things, he  
 was new to the game.

SARA  
 And he's already made enemies?

BRASS  
 Somebody was out to do him harm.

GRISSOM  
 What do you have?

BRASS

Gunshot wound to the throat. And judging by the stench, I'd say it's been seven to ten days.

GRISSOM

The Coroner will narrow that for us.

The CSI Team enters the office...

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/MULLINS'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

This low-rent accountant's office is lined with books and tax code manuals. Grissom and Nick survey the scene. Nick immediately starts taking pictures, Grissom and Sara SNAP ON their gloves and go to work.

Grissom circles the body.

BRASS

Best guess is a hunting rifle, probably a .30-06 or 7.62.

Grissom nods, taking in the theory as he pauses at the neck wound; examining the ferocity of the damage. Directly above the body is Mullins's framed UNLV diploma, class of 2004.

Sara runs her gloved-finger across the surface of the desk - it's dusty. She notices a picture next to the computer; it's of Mullins at his college graduation with his proud family. Happier times, to say the least.

SARA

A rifle is a little impersonal, don't you think?

GRISSOM

If we assume this was a crime of passion.

Nick snaps photos of Mullins's dead husk from various angles. Grissom is drawn to the blood spray on the wall and window.

NICK

I'll be sure to ask the shooter, "why not a .45?" when we catch him.

Grissom kneels over the excised flesh and blood on the floor to the victim's left. He stands up, steps back, looks at Mullins's position against the wall.

GRISSOM

The angle of the wound and the arterial spray indicate the shooter stood to the side, any opinion on why the shooter didn't stand in front of the victim?

SARA

The victim didn't want to face the killer head on and turned away at the last minute?

Grissom begins to circle back around the desk, then stops...

NICK

The killer was circling the victim and pulled the trigger --

Grissom silences him with a gesture, curious at something he sees. Nick and Sara look at Grissom, then they follow his eye-line to the book rack against the wall.

Grissom steps forward, removes a book from a half-empty shelf. Giving him a better look at...

-- a bullet hole, which has punched through this wall from the office next door. [NOTE: The book rests only a scant few millimeters from the hole.]

GRISSOM

What do you know about exit trajectories through drywall?

Grissom cuts his trademark quixotic look at Nick and Sara, then heads out into...

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/HALL - DAY

Grissom zeroes in on the just-now, calming-down Landlord.

GRISSOM

Excuse me, do you have the skeleton key to the office next door?

LANDLORD

(produces the keys)  
This one right here. Why?

Grissom snatches the keys from the Landlord, gives him the "gimmie a minute" gesture, does a swift about-face and makes a beeline to the adjacent office.

Hand-painted letters have started peeling from the frosted glass - "West nvesti atio s." Grissom unlocks the door and steps inside...

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS - CONTINUOUS

The place looks like it has been shook. Grissom, Nick and Sara crowd in the doorway, their practiced eyes scan over the room. This maelstrom of papers, clippings, files and bric-a-brac is overwhelming at first glance. Grissom, Nick and Sara share a look... "through the looking glass."

GRISSOM

This routine murder if there is such  
an animal, has just become more  
sinister.

SMASH CUT TO:

CREDITS ROLL.

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. 7-ELEVEN - DAYBREAK

Tell-tale POLICE TAPE cordons off the area behind the store by the dumpster. Uniformed officers hold back onlookers and a plain clothes Homicide Detective questions the late 20s, pock-faced store CLERK.

A CSI Tahoe pulls up, **WARRICK** and **CATHERINE** step out with their field kits. **O'RILEY** sees them coming and approaches.

O'RILEY

Weren't you two working last night's shift?

CATHERINE

You caught us at the transition.  
What's up?

O'RILEY

Dead hooker. The store clerk was taking out the garbage, found the body in the dumpster.

Catherine and Warrick stop when they see the body: upside-down, feet sticking out of the dumpster.

O'RILEY (cont'd)

Paramedics already pronounced, but they barely needed to handle the body to do so.

Warrick and Catherine slide on their gloves.

WARRICK

Was there a security video?

O'RILEY

I'll find out.

He heads off. Warrick's eyes crackle with excitement. This is what he lives for. Warrick takes out his camera, heads toward the dumpster. Catherine canvasses the surrounding area.

Catherine notices that the bricks at the building's corner have been scraped by something burgundy, a streak remains. She kneels down and eyes it.

CATHERINE

...Fresh car paint? Killer drove off  
in an obvious panic.

Warrick photographs the victim. Leans inside the dumpster for a better angle - the hooker's face is a mottled mess of blood soaked hair.

WARRICK

Found her purse.

He reaches in the dumpster for it. Looks inside.

WARRICK (cont'd)

No money. Robbery gone bad?

Catherine comes over.

CATHERINE

Can't rule anything out, yet.

Catherine's flashlight beam scans the dumpster's surfaces. Moves to the side. On the ground she finds a gaudily painted "fake" fingernail. Her tweezers grab it. She notices what might be flesh at the tip. She bags it and continues looking.

Sticking to the side of the dumpster is a condom... used. She inwardly grimaces, as she bags the moist latex.

CATHERINE (cont'd)

Got a used condom.

WARRICK

Better you than me.

Warrick seals the purse in an evidence bag.

WARRICK (cont'd)

So we have an unsatisfied John who  
wants his money back and asks a little  
harshly?

CATHERINE

I didn't know there was a return  
policy in the flesh trade.

WARRICK

Must be something new.

Off Catherine...

CUT TO:

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS - DAY

Grissom, Nick and Sara sift through the office, searching for any type of clue.

WHIP PAN TO Sara, who finds a LONG STRAND OF RED HAIR on the overturned chair. She uses evidence tape to collect it.

SARA

Does there always have to be a woman involved with private detectives?

NICK

Oh come on, it wouldn't be the same without a femme fatale.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

No, no, no. This one was a model tenant. He never had disruptive clients or --

Grissom turns to the snooping Landlord.

GRISSOM

Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to leave. This is still a crime scene.

LANDLORD

Okay, but, but, be mindful and try not to damage anything that the security deposit --

Landlord leaves when Grissom gives him the "with all due respect, save it!" face. Grissom meticulously wades through the wastepaper basket, amongst the papers are a few stiff ashes and the partial remains of a 35MM CAMERA NEGATIVE. Grissom holds it up to the light...

**CSI CLOSE UP - BURNED AND SCORCHED FILM NEGATIVE**

**The heat from the fire has removed a few layers of emulsion, and the remaining image is murky.**

RETURN TO SCENE

SARA

You find something?

GRISSOM

A photo negative... partial face and a body. I'll work this up when we get back, see if I can get us a viable print.

SARA  
Blackmail evidence?

GRISSOM  
Considering where we are, would you  
burn camera film and throw it in the  
trash, if it wasn't?

Sara nods in agreement. Grissom studies the negative for a second before bagging it. He continues the search, but there is nothing else salvageable in the ashes.

Nick, on all fours, shines a light into the crevice under a stand-alone bookshelf. The light reflects off something... it's a SHELL CASING.

NICK  
(reaches for the shell)  
Look at this. It's a 9mm.

Nick stands up and Grissom approaches.

NICK (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
West was careless. You don't leave  
evidence from a planned hit like this.

GRISSOM  
Assuming it was West. And just how  
would he do it...

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

**EXT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS (VERSION #1)**

A nondescript MAN points a 9mm pistol at the wall. Slowly waving the gun back and forth, like he's range-finding. He abruptly stops, aims, fires!

GRISSOM (V.O.)  
West would had to have known that  
Mullins was in his office...

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

**INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/MULLINS'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER**

Mullins diligently works at his desk. The bullet slices through the cheap drywall and rakes through Mullins's neck - sending his head back and to the left.

GRISSOM (V.O.)  
... and that he was in that precise  
position, when he fired the gun.

                                  WHITE FLASH TO:

CSI SHOT - INSIDE WALL BETWEEN OFFICES

The bullet pierces through drywall - its trajectory is  
altered just slightly as it comes out.

                  SARA (V.O.)  
Not to mention the fact that the  
bullet's vector would change just  
enough as it went through the wall.

                                  WHITE FLASH TO:

RETURN TO SCENE

Nick smiles sheepishly, can't win 'em all.

                  GRISSOM  
And a small bullet like a 9mm would  
have lost its stability and tumbled as  
it came out the wall.

                  NICK  
Which is why the damage to Mullins is  
so extensive.

                  GRISSOM  
Precisely. I'm thinking it was a  
stray. Explains the second bullet  
hole.

                  SARA  
There was a second?

Grissom points to a hole in the back edge of a filing cabinet  
that is against the wall shared with Mullins's office.

Before Nick and Sara can say anything, Brass returns.

                  BRASS  
I've got the skinny on this West  
person. First name's Culver. LVPD has  
a file on him, mostly bunco and con  
jobs - multiple arrests, but no  
indictments. Registered gun-owner --

NICK  
What kind?

BRASS  
A .38 Smith.

The fact that his clue is incongruent slightly rankles Nick.

BRASS (cont'd)  
(back to his notes)  
And if he left town, he didn't take  
his car.

GRISSOM  
How do you know that?

BRASS  
(smiling)  
There's a car registered in his name  
sitting in the police impound.

Off Grissom...

CUT TO:

INT. CORONER'S LAB/CORRIDOR - DAY

Catherine and Warrick walk down the hall toward the Autopsy Room.

CATHERINE  
This is exactly why some girls need  
pimps. You never know when a John is  
going to get out of line.

WARRICK  
(sensing a personal  
experience)  
You ever have to have a bouncer rough  
someone up who got out of line?

CATHERINE  
There are unwritten rules for every  
level of interaction. If you break  
them, then you pay the price.

WARRICK  
But when is the price too high?

Catherine doesn't have an answer for him, as they push through the doors into...

INT. CORONER'S LAB/AUTOPSY ROOM - DAY

Catherine and Warrick enter. **DR. ROBBINS** is there to greet them. The body of CHRIS BUTLER, in his late 20s, is on the table in front of them. If the scarring and tissue damage to his face weren't so pronounced, he would be a very "pretty" man. A shroud covers his body up to the neck.

DR. ROBBINS

So this guy --

CATHERINE

Guy? Wait a minute, we're handling the hooker who came in this morning.

DR. ROBBINS

The hooker in question is a man.

Catherine and Warrick are a little shaken.

DR. ROBBINS (cont'd)

(removes the shroud)

He had breast implants, and from the looks of things estrogen injections, too.

CATHERINE

Will you look at that. Modern medicine never fails to amaze.

DR. ROBBINS

Contusions and lacerations around the eye-sockets. The mandible is cracked and the zygomatic arch is shattered. Not to mention the cranium, it's fractured in several places along the lateral parietal lobe - here, here and here.

He indicates wounds on the side of Butler's head.

CATHERINE

Did he put up a fight?

DR. ROBBINS

His right knuckles were slightly abraded, so yes.

WARRICK

What are your best guesses on the murder weapon?

DR. ROBBINS

A car door maybe. Here on the other side of the cranium are puncture marks.

Robbins tilts the head back and forth to show the parallel wounds.

DR. ROBBINS (V.O.) (cont'd)

Their lateral positioning matches the impact points on the opposite side. Probably the car door's locking mechanism.

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

**CSI SHOT - X-RAY SHOT OF A SKULL**

A car door opens, the hooker's head is positioned inside the door and BASHED repeatedly, cracking one side and puncturing the other.

WARRICK (V.O.)

The perp couldn't decide if he wanted her, I mean him, in or out, huh?

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

RETURN TO SCENE

CATHERINE

And that was the cause of death?

DR. ROBBINS

Surprisingly no. The human head can take tremendous punishment before death results. The neck and spinal column are a different story. Several vertebrae are splintered.

WARRICK

(to Catherine)

The John must have thought he was Stone Cold Steve Austin and suplexed the hooker into the dumpster after he got done using the door on her.

Catherine shudders at the thought.

DR. ROBBINS

Dumpster... that would explain the smell.

WARRICK

A pimp couldn't have saved her, I mean  
him, from this.

Catherine notices that two fingernails are missing on  
Butler's right hand. Sees *glue residue* on the nail surface,  
remembers the evidence she bagged at the crime scene.

CATHERINE

...Press-On nails.

WARRICK

The devil is in the details.

Off Catherine...

CUT TO:

EXT. LAS VEGAS POLICE IMPOUND YARD - DAY

Grissom, Sara and Brass follow OFFICER MERKELSON, who carries  
a tool kit, through the gates and down the rows and rows and  
rows of cars. Every so often Merkelson checks the map on his  
clipboard, verifying their position.

SARA

Do people realize the amount of  
frustration they'll have to go through  
if their car is brought here?

BRASS

Pay your tickets. Or else.

MERKELSON

We're looking for a white Caddy LS,  
it should be the third car in on  
the next row.

GRISSOM

How long has the car been impounded?

MERKELSON

(checks files)

Says here five days. It was towed in  
from a no-parking zone on Oasis Court  
with four tickets on it.

SARA

That's nowhere near West's office.

GRISSOM

If a murder rap was hanging over his  
head, he'd just as soon leave it.

The group reaches a late 90s model Cadillac LS.

MERKELSON  
(matching the plate)  
Here we are.

Grissom and Sara start their inspection, peering inside the dirty windows. The backseat is filled with personal effects, food wrappers and other junk.

SARA  
Glad to see he's consistent with his cleanliness.

BRASS  
(to Merkelson)  
Have there been any calls about this car?

MERKELSON  
Nothing's written down, which is normal. Unless an owner raises a stink and arranges an appointment; we don't keep a phone sheet.

Grissom moves toward the trunk area. Once back there, he quizzically cocks his head, deeply inhales through his nose. He bends closer to the trunk and sniffs again.

GRISSOM  
(to Merkelson)  
Slim Jim.

BRASS  
(to Merkelson)  
We already have probable cause.

Merkelson hands Sara the slim Jim, she pops the door, pulls the trunk lever. Grissom lifts the trunk lid and... WHAM! An incredibly rancid stench wafts out. Grissom ducks back.

INSIDE THE CAR TRUNK lies CULVER WEST, a short (maybe 5'2"), dark skinned man in his mid 30s. He's been dead for about a week, being locked up in this intense heat has accelerated the decomposition process. Grissom's eyes zero in on the crusted bullet wound on West's side, just under the arm.

Off Brass and Sara's wry look...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. CORONER'S LAB/AUTOPSY ROOM #2 - DAY

It's black... except for the UV-light that Grissom holds over West's diminutive, damaged, decaying body, as he inspects it for wounds hidden from the naked eye.

Grissom doesn't find any, so he cuts the UV-light and turns on the lab's overhead. He reaches for a needle-nose clamp and scalpel, then goes to work probing the gunshot wound in West's chest.

WHIP PAN TO Grissom, he removes a flattened 9mm slug from West's chest cavity. Drops it in a Petri dish for comparison with the bullet retrieved from Mullins's wall.

As he's looking over the body, Grissom pauses... something catches his eye. He leans in close to West's gritting, clenched-teeth mouth. What's in there? Behind the canines...?

WHIP PAN TO Grissom, having pried West's bear-trap jaws open, he carefully removes a decent section of skin from inside West's mouth. He reaches for a magnifying glass, holds the section of skin under it for an intimate look. It's Caucasian skin, obviously not West's.

NICK (O.S.)  
What's that?

GRISSOM  
Epidermis.

Nick approaches. Checks the skin chunk against West.

NICK  
(unsure)  
It's not his though? Was he a  
cannibal?

GRISSOM  
West must have taken a bite out of his  
assailant.

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

## INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS

West has his mouth clamped against an Unseen Assailant, they are wrestling and grappling on the floor. There's a gunshot flash and West chomps down hard, then reels back in agony.

GRISSOM (V.O.)

He was fighting for his life. The only kind of fight where biting is routine. When he got shot, his jaws seized up.

WHITE FLASH TO:

RETURN TO SCENE

GRISSOM

McGruff the Crime Dog he isn't, but it narrows down the suspects. This kind of lacerating trauma to the skin takes a few weeks to heal.

NICK

Which is right within our window of when West was killed.

GRISSOM

Contact the ERs, see if anything remotely similar turns up. It'll take a little while to run the DNA on this to see if it matches with the hair Sara found.

Nick jogs out.

INT. CSI BUILDING - GARAGE - DAY

West's Lincoln is in the garage. Sara, in latex gloves, methodically searches through all the junk, trash, clothing and stray paper scraps.

In a Carl's Jr. bag at the top of the wrappers, Sara finds a receipt from "Chesterfield Photographic Lab". It's dated a week ago.

SARA

...Custom photos...

Sara stares off, pensive.

INT. CSI BUILDING - AUDIO/VIDEO LAB - DAY

Warrick and Catherine huddle around the VIDEO TECH, who is hunched over a computer screen. On the display is the B&W footage from the 7-Eleven's security tape, it's fast-forwarding.

VIDEO TECH  
I ran through the tape, twice, and this fella is the only one that looks even remotely sketchy.

CATHERINE  
In what way?

VIDEO TECH  
You'll see.

The Video Tech stops the video, plays it back at normal speed.

CLOSE ON THE DISPLAY SCREEN - SECURITY CAM VIEW OF 7-ELEVEN

The Clerk sits behind the register rifling those scratch-off lottery tickets. By the magazine rack is a man (HOWARD FELSON) in his early 30s, dressed in dark clothing and with a baseball hat pulled low over his face. He reads a magazine.

VIDEO TECH (cont'd)  
You said time of death was somewhere around three or four in the morning. This is the only fella to come in or out, until the store clerk leaves and comes back to call 9-1-1 at six.

The Store Clerk pantomimes to Felson. Felson approaches the counter, then looks off, dumps the magazine on the counter and strides out the door.

After a moment, a dark colored Nissan Maxima PEELS out of the parking lot.

WARRICK  
You call that sketchy?

VIDEO TECH  
Well... He was the only person on the tape during the time of death.

Warrick knows that the Video Tech is reaching.

WARRICK  
What about that car? Can you get a reading off the plate?

VIDEO TECH

In that light? Hold your breath.

The Video Tech uses a jog-shuttle dial to back up the video and the magnify feature to read the Maxima's license plate. He's a pro and he doesn't mind letting you know it.

VIDEO TECH (cont'd)

Nevada, looks like a 3-GWV.

WARRICK

Nice.

CATHERINE

We'll call DMV for possible matches on the model and make. Thanks.

VIDEO TECH

Any time.

Catherine and Warrick exit.

CUT TO:

INT. CSI BUILDING - IMAGING LAB - DAY

At a computer terminal, Grissom places the partially burned 35mm photo negative into a state-of-the-art optical scanner, then initiates the scan.

The monitor shows the negative image. Grissom manipulates the preferences on the imaging software and the negative converts to a "positive" - a little muddy and murky from fire damage, but it's a start.

Grissom rapidly tweaks the settings and... the photo begins to take shape.

The enlarged and cleaned up image shows part of a woman's head, her naked torso and the front of another woman's face kissing the First just below the neck.

Grissom prints off a hard copy of the image. Sara enters.

SARA

I didn't know lesbian porn was your thing.

GRISSOM

Observing two women go at it provides a certain level of titillation for most men, not for me.

Sara has to wonder about Grissom's pat, almost by rote answer.

SARA

West visited a custom photo lab, had a couple rolls of film transferred to CD-ROM and had prints made.

GRISSOM

CD-ROM?

SARA

If it is blackmail material, he might have wanted additional assurance.

GRISSOM

That's possible, but considering the subject matter and the format the photos were saved on, they have other uses.

SARA

And what might those be?

GRISSOM

Unsuspecting individuals who take private personal photos, often forget that someone is seeing the prints before they do. It's not unheard of for lab jockeys to collect and trade x-rated photos over the Internet.

SARA

So you think this lab has copies of West's pictures?

GRISSOM

CD-ROM files are stored on a hard-disk before they're burned to the CD; what's to stop the tech from making copies before dumping the files?

Sara doesn't have an answer. Grissom knows it and gives her the wink that says he knows it. He grabs the photo print and motions her to follow him.

CUT TO:

EXT. FELSON HOUSE - DAY

A burgundy Nissan Maxima is parked in the driveway.

CLOSE ON THE FENDER - a ragged scrape mars the spit-shined finish.

Warrick and Catherine exit a CSI Tahoe parked at the curb and approach the house. Warrick reads the plates:

WARRICK

That's Howard Felson's car.

Catherine's practiced eyes catch the scraped fender.

CATHERINE

Will you look at this...

Catherine kneels down and inspects the scrape, she remembers the burgundy paint on the wall at the 7-Eleven.

CATHERINE (cont'd)

What are the odds that Trace can't match this to the paint flakes I found at the scene.

She tweezes a sliver of paint from the fender, bags it.

They approach the house and ring the doorbell. HOWARD FELSON 32, thin, clean cut opens the door. He doesn't look like a killer, but neither do you.

HOWARD FELSON

Can I help you?

CATHERINE

Howard Felson?

HOWARD FELSON

And you are?

WARRICK

We're from the Las Vegas Crime Lab.

HOWARD FELSON

Yes?

CATHERINE

Do you happen to know a Chris Butler?

HOWARD FELSON

(relieved)

Never heard of him.

WARRICK

He was a transvestite hooker that was found dead early this morning in a dumpster behind the 7-Eleven on Tomahawk and Jacob's Gulch.

The mention of the words "transvestite hooker" appropriately twist Felson's face. However, he subtly reacts to the location. Felson throws a conspiratorial over-the-shoulder glance toward his living room, then leads Warrick and Catherine out toward the driveway.

HOWARD FELSON

(confidential whisper)

First of all, two things. I have absolutely no idea what the hell you are talking about, so secondly why are you here?!

CATHERINE

Care to tell us where you were last night between three and four?

Howard doesn't quite know how to phrase this.

HOWARD FELSON

I was out partying, okay? I was out with my friend. We're having some drinks and you know... Things got a little wild...

WARRICK

Does your friend have a name?

HOWARD FELSON

Yeah. Bennie Hester.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Bennie!

Howard recoils. Now you know why he led Catherine and Warrick outside to talk. The trio spins to see the arrestingly beautiful LORETTA FELSON 29, storming over. A domineering woman that you already hate.

LORETTA FELSON

You told me you were at the casino filling in for Adam on the graveyard shift!

Howard stands mouth agape, as he figures out how to maneuver.

LORETTA FELSON (cont'd)

You're so pitiful.

HOWARD FELSON  
 (to Catherine & Warrick)  
 Hang on okay?  
 (to Loretta)  
 He -- You see what happened was --

Loretta doesn't want to hear it. The exaggerated, disgusted look on her face lets you know how much she enjoys torturing Howard.

WARRICK  
 Mr. Felson, why don't you come take a ride with us?

Warrick escorts Howard Felson to the Tahoe. Off Loretta...

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - DAY

Catherine steps out of a waiting room. Loretta remains in that room, fuming.

CATHERINE  
 I'll be right back. Can I get you anything?

LORETTA FELSON  
 (snide)  
 No, thank you.

Catherine crosses the hall and enters...

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Warrick sits at the table across from Howard. Howard is very uncomfortable with the situation. Catherine remains standing by the door. A Uniformed Officer is posted by the door.

WARRICK  
 (in midstream)  
 ... Come on now Howie, we can place you at the scene --

HOWARD FELSON  
 Me? Just me? Bennie was there with me!  
 Not that I'm ratting, because we *both* did something with the WOMAN, but -- look, nothing happened. At least not while we were there.

Warrick regards him with a doubtful look.

HOWARD FELSON (cont'd)  
You don't believe me.

WARRICK  
No, because you lied earlier.

HOWARD FELSON  
Yeah, but not to you!

Warrick is amused that Howard thinks there is a difference.

CATHERINE  
If you lied to your wife, I'm inclined  
to believe you'd have no qualms about  
lying to us.

Howard squirms under the accusation.

WARRICK  
We know why you lied to your wife.

Howard reels back, a little stymied.

CATHERINE  
Mr. Felson, I just got finished  
talking with your wife. Quite an  
interesting woman.

HOWARD FELSON  
(sarcastic)  
Yes, I know. At least she can confirm  
that I like women.

CATHERINE  
Well, see that's the thing. She told  
me that you two haven't had sex in the  
last six months. That you don't touch  
her anymore --

HOWARD FELSON  
What does that have to do with this?!  
-- I can explain that.

WARRICK  
I hope so.

CATHERINE  
She seems to think that you might be  
"in the closet."

Howard is stung by his wife's seeming betrayal.

HOWARD FELSON

It's complicated... that woman. You wouldn't understand.

WARRICK

I think you'd better try making us, because we found a used condom at the scene, and if your DNA matches it won't be pretty.

Howard takes a moment, gathers himself.

HOWARD FELSON

You've seen my wife, she's very beautiful. Almost to a fault, and yet she chased me. She asked me to marry her. Whoa! Who's gonna say "no" to that? What am I an idiot? For the first year it was great, then she started to be such a ball-buster.

WARRICK

Marrying for looks is a failed math equation. It hasn't worked yet and it never will.

HOWARD FELSON

She started mocking me for not being able to keep up with her financially and... in bed. She's an animal! A machine! It drove me insane, to the point of -- I never hit her.

CATHERINE

She never said you did.

Howard washes his hand over his face, before reluctantly continuing:

HOWARD FELSON

It's like she killed something inside of me. Pulled a plug. Poisoned my psyche...

(painful whisper)

I couldn't get it up.

Catherine passes a slight glance at Warrick, he catches it and wipes the emerging smile from his lips.

CATHERINE

Mr. Felson, you haven't said anything to let us remove you as a suspect for the murder.

Warrick makes toward the exit, determined to break the case.

HOWARD FELSON

A couple of months ago Bennie, my high school buddy, came back from the service. We started hanging out a lot. It pissed Loretta off, and I kinda liked that. She told me I had to stop seeing him. Who is she to tell me how to live my life!?

CATHERINE

She's your wife.

HOWARD FELSON

Right, I didn't want to make her mad. So I snuck around. Bennie's my boy, we were on the track & field team together. He got me my... he got me laid the first time.

WARRICK

(impatient)

About last night.

HOWARD FELSON

Bennie got a promotion. We went out to celebrate. I hadn't had sex since last Christmas, and I wanted, needed, to get off... anonymously.

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

**EXT. 7-ELEVEN - NIGHT (HOWARD'S VERSION)**

Felson's Nissan is parked behind the store by the dumpster. In the pools of light created by the street lamp, we can barely see Howard in the backseat of his car. Chris Butler, in immaculate drag, is in the car with him. His own mother wouldn't recognize him. In the HEAVY shadows, Butler performs oral sex on Howard who kicks back a bottle of vodka.

HOWARD FELSON (V.O.)

We had a lot to drink. That's the only way I could get up... the nerve.

After a moment, Howard shudders like a fish out of water.

Howard steps out of the car. Howard tosses his condom toward the dumpster. And then exchanges places with BENNIE HESTER, a tall, wide, goofy-looking man, who stands off to the side. Bennie gets in the car. Howard ducks around the corner.

HOWARD FELSON (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 After I had my fun. I switched with  
 Bennie. I'm not into watching, so I  
 went around front into the store to  
 look at some magazines.

INT. 7-ELEVEN - NIGHT

Howard stands by the magazine rack. The Store Clerk motions to Felson that he has to buy it, if he wants to look through it. Felson approaches the counter, then looks off, dumps the magazine on the counter and strides out the door.

Howard jumps in the Nissan (Bennie drives), it SCREECHES off.

WHITE FLASH TO:

RETURN TO SCENE

HOWARD FELSON  
 That's it from start to finish.  
 (beat)  
 I needed to see if I could still...  
 you know, get the old mojo working  
 again.

CATHERINE  
 (understanding)  
 And you obviously didn't want it to  
 get back to your wife.

Howard feels like she's seeing it his way.

HOWARD FELSON  
 Exactly! What would Loretta think if  
 she knew I got it up for some skank  
 but not her? I couldn't say I was  
 sorry enough!

Warrick is not convinced.

WARRICK  
 You do know that as it stands, Bennie  
 Hester is your only chance to avoid  
 seeing the inside of a five-by-ten.

Howard swallows deeply...

CUT TO:

EXT. CHESTERFIELD PHOTO LAB - DAY

A CSI Tahoe is parked in front of this boutique store front.

INT. CHESTERFIELD PHOTO LAB - DAY

The small, high-end shop obviously doesn't get many casual customers. Grissom and Sara stand at the counter. On the other side is ROGER CHESTERFIELD; he's a little stunned.

CHESTERFIELD  
Dead? Culver West is dead?

GRISSOM  
Yes.

CHESTERFIELD  
He was just in last week.

SARA  
We know. What kind of work did you do for him?

CHESTERFIELD  
Your typical stuff, blow-ups from contact sheets, regular 8x10's.

GRISSOM  
Why did he frequent you, if it was routine work? Why not the supermarket or one hour photo at the mall?

CHESTERFIELD  
I specialize in black & white. It takes the big guys days, if they do it at all; only takes me about half an hour. Plus Culver needed 'em specifically cropped.

GRISSOM  
Do you recognize this photo enlargement?

Grissom produces the blow-up of the two women that he made. Chesterfield glances at it way too briefly, he tenses up.

CHESTERFIELD  
You do know what kind of business he was mixed up in?

GRISSOM  
Why don't you tell us?

Chesterfield lowers his voice and steps a little closer.

CHESTERFIELD

He did divorce work, a lot of nasty divorce work. Took photos of men cheating on their wives, women cheating on their husbands, men with other men. It was sticky pages, if you know what I mean.

SARA

We know exactly what you mean. Did you always put West's photos on CD?

CHESTERFIELD

No, not recently...

Grissom shoots a glance to Sara saying "a-ha." Chesterfield senses something's amiss.

GRISSOM

If in the past you did, did you retain the files on your computer?

CHESTERFIELD

(hesitant)

I'm not going to get in trouble for this am I? It's not like it's a crime.

GRISSOM

Then you won't mind taking us on a trip through your hard drive.

Off Chesterfield...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. CSI BUILDING - COMPUTER RECORDS (DAY #2) - DAY

Sara feeds a CD-ROM into a computer. Double-clicks her way through the directory to a folder labeled "C.West Images", and calls up a photograph - it's the complete snapshot of the partially burned 35mm negative Grissom found; one extremely PRETTY WOMAN with brownish hair and a refined aura about her. The other is a RAVEN-HAIR BEAUTY with an earthy, carnal air.

Sara selects the two faces, copies them and uploads the images into an FBI Crime Database. Click-starts and leans back in her chair.

Nick approaches with coffee and bagels, sits next to Sara.

NICK

Anything good?

SARA

This isn't Michael Crichton. Even if we had Cray Supercomputers like the FBI does when they run these biometric checks at the Superbowl, it still has to match at least 24 points on the human face in the FBI Crime Database before hitting paydirt.

NICK

(engrossed by the photo)

And there's only half a face.

Nick's sly ogling of the naked females in the photo makes Sara a little uncomfortable. She closes the original window.

SARA

It's enough.

NICK

You ever think that this is wrong?

SARA

In what way? How else do we catch the bad guys?

NICK

I mean the invasion of privacy, the government's ability to track you almost no matter what.

SARA

The only people in the FBI database are criminals. Of course I want the government to keep tabs on them.

NICK

The FBI keeps track of more than just criminals, and that's what is potentially scary about biometrics.

SARA

I've got nothing to worry about, do you?

Nick is reluctant to answer, does he have something to hide? Before he can speak the computer BEEPS, it's got a match.

SARA (cont'd)

Good thing the government kept track of this person. Who do we have here?

Sara mans the computer keyboard and calls up the rap sheet on the match. It's of the raven-haired woman - LESLIE SMALLS. Nick reads from the FBI file on the screen:

NICK

Leslie Smalls... from Los Angeles, arrested and convicted twice for fraud in LA... arrested for extortion in Phoenix, no conviction.

SARA

Blackmail wouldn't be too much of a stretch, now would it?

NICK

If her prints check out against any of the ones we found in West's office, we're golden. Print the file off and I'll run it by Brass.

Sara starts the print-out.

BRASS (O.S.)

Run what by me?

Nick and Sara turn to see Brass standing behind them.

SARA

A warrant for Leslie Smalls, suspect in the Culver West case.

She hands him the file. He scans over it.

NICK

We have another possible, but we haven't got a match on her yet. Probably won't because she might be Smalls's mark.

He hands Brass the photo. Brass takes a look at the photo, his jaw drops...

BRASS

(low)

Veronika?

Nick and Sara are perplexed, Brass knows this woman?

Off Brass...

CUT TO:

INT. CSI BUILDING - GRISSOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Grissom sits behind his desk, pensive. Brass stands steadfast in the center of the room.

GRISSOM

I understand your concern, but I don't need to remind you that there's been two murders.

BRASS

This could blow up in your face, if you're not careful.

GRISSOM

You can trust me to be as delicate as I can. But Edmund Tuskes' status in Las Vegas is not going to prevent me, or anyone at CSI, from doing our jobs.

BRASS

You don't know Edmund or Veronika. You've heard of him, I'm sure. He's a high powered lobbyist with a lot of political puppets.

Grissom doesn't need or appreciate the lecture.

BRASS (cont'd)

He worships Veronika. Even though she's at least twenty years his junior, it's not just the rich old-guy-wanting-the-young-wife syndrome.

(MORE)

BRASS (cont'd)

He can and will do any and everything to protect her. Believe me.

GRISSOM

That will not affect how I perform. If she's responsible, then the seeds of crime bear bitter fruit.

BRASS

And if she's not, you piss her off and Edmund gets wind of it... Just use kid gloves on this one, okay?

GRISSOM

Like walking on broken glass.

That's the best assurance Brass is going to get, he leaves. Bumps into Sara and Nick on his way out.

NICK

Ready to infiltrate the land of the rich and scandalous?

GRISSOM

Only Sara and I are going.

NICK

What? Why?

GRISSOM

Considering the circumstance, it's best to be less threatening.

Deep down Nick is flattered that his physical appearance is intimidating.

CUT TO:

INT. CSI BUILDING - DNA LAB - DAY

Warrick and Catherine enter. **DAVID PHILLIPS** slouches in a chair, munching on a bag of chips. He extends the bag to Catherine and Warrick.

DAVID

Chip?

WARRICK

Are you giving me the whole bag?  
'Cause I couldn't unless I was going to eat the whole bag. That excessive compulsive thing.

CATHERINE

What did the DNA test tell you?

DAVID

The semen in the condom is inconsistent with the residual semen and pubic hair found in and around the victim's mouth.

(aside, to Warrick)

You'd know, wouldn't you?

WARRICK

I'd definitely know.

Catherine is amused by the macho display.

CATHERINE

Even after a half-a-dozen tequila shots?

Warrick and David ponder the question for an incredibly fast second, shudder and respond simultaneously:

WARRICK & DAVID

Yes!

Catherine isn't totally convinced.

CATHERINE

You obviously haven't been on the other side of this equation, where a falling-down drunk man - who hasn't had sex in six months - will hit on almost anything with a pulse.

(beat)

What about the Press-On nail?

David picks up a clip board containing his notes, hands it to Catherine.

DAVID

The skin cells I retrieved from underneath the snapped-off Press-Ons don't match with the organics found on the victim or with Felson.

WARRICK

Which means that someone else was with Felson and Butler.

CATHERINE

It only tells us that another man was with Butler that night;

(MORE)

CATHERINE (cont'd)  
 the killing could have taken place  
 with the next man Butler saw.

DAVID  
 (mock-serious)  
 If I knew my hooker was a man, I might  
 be in a killing mood.

Catherine's cellphone RINGS.

CATHERINE  
 This is Willows...Okay, what's the  
 address?

She scribbles down an address.

CATHERINE (cont'd)  
 Always a pleasure, David.  
 (to Warrick)  
 That was O'Riley, he's got a lead on  
 this Bennie Hester.

Finally concrete news, Warrick is pumped.

WARRICK  
 Let's boogie.  
 (To David)  
 Later, my man.

Warrick and Catherine hurry out.

CUT TO:

INT. PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY - DAY

The lunch whistle blows, muffling the voice on the P.A.  
 system that rants about the college basketball and an  
 upcoming prize fight betting pools. An OFFICE MANAGER leads  
 Warrick and Catherine past a packaging plant room into a  
 smaller office to a cubicle.

At the cubicle, BENNIE HESTER, Louisiana country accent,  
 looks up and pleasantly smiles at Warrick, who flashes his  
 badge. Catherine gives the Manager a "that will be all" gaze.

WARRICK  
 Bennie Hester.

BENNIE HESTER  
 Yes?

WARRICK

We're from the Las Vegas Crime Lab,  
we'd like a word.

BENNIE HESTER

(sensing the onlookers)  
Mind if we talk somewhere a little  
more quieter?

A curious co-worker who is leaning over to eavesdrop goes  
back to work.

INT. PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY/BACK STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Bennie stands between Catherine and Warrick. Catherine  
notices a fresh scratch on Bennie's face.

BENNIE HESTER

Sure I know Howard, he's my best  
friend. We used to be like two dogs on  
the porch until... his lady. Let's  
just say she had a little talk with  
me, and I don't come 'round no more  
out of respect.

CATHERINE

When is the last time Howard and you  
were together?

BENNIE HESTER

Last night. A lot of foolishness was  
going on. He was belly achin' the  
whole time pissin' me off, hemmin' and  
hawin': "What if Loretta calls my job?  
What if she smells my breath? She's  
gonna catch me!" Then he got brave at  
the bottom of a bottle of some of that  
good Smirnoff, and said he wanted a  
hoe. That tore it for me, I was fixin'  
to go! "Carry me home first" is what I  
said.

WARRICK

Then what?

BENNIE HESTER

I don't know what he did after that. A  
lot of foolishness was goin' on.

WARRICK

Can you be a little more clear?

BENNIE HESTER

He took me home. Told him to e-mail me if Loretta got to givin' him a hard time. He never did.

CATHERINE

Is it common practice for the two of you to be involved with hookers?

BENNIE HESTER

Look at me? Does the spider have a hard time catchin' flies? I told him he was on his own.

(pause)

His lady is one fierce little ol' wildcat. I don't see why he wanted all that beautiful trouble up in his house in the first place. Like I said, foolishness.

CATHERINE

How did you get that cut on your face?

BENNIE HESTER

Shaving. I keep picking at the scab. Kinda makes me look tough, huh?

Benny thinks he's funny. Catherine doesn't.

EXT. TUSKES ESTATE - DAY

A CSI Tahoe pulls to a stop in front an immaculately manicured lawn. In the distance is a stately mansion. You wouldn't be surprised if Charles Foster Kane came to the door.

Grissom and Sara stare out at the mansion.

GRISSOM

Tread softly every step of the way.

SARA

Otherwise we're collecting unemployment?

GRISSOM

Something like that.

Grissom plows forward and steers the Tahoe up the driveway.

## INT. TUSKES ESTATE/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

The MAID exits frame. Grissom and Sara stand in this excessively decorated marble foyer. It's the kind of spread where Gianni Versace would feel at home. Grissom holds a manila envelope.

SARA

And I thought the Bellagio was excessive.

GRISSOM

Never assume that money can account for taste.

EDMUND TUSKES, mid 50s, bronzed-skin with the impenetrable visage of a shrewd businessman and dressed in pitch-perfect tailored clothing with a silk ascot around his neck, enters from a side door that leads out to a patio. He talks on a cellphone. Notices Grissom and Sara.

EDMUND

May I help you?

GRISSOM

Mr. Tuskes? My name is Gil Grissom and this is Sara Sidle, we're Crime Scene Investigators. We're here to speak with your wife.

EDMUND

(into cellphone)

No, you listen to me. Get Dr. Anat on the phone. Now.

(to Grissom)

Veronika? I'm hesitant to believe she's involved in anything that would alert the police's attention.

SARA

It involves her acquaintance with a Leslie Smalls.

EDMUND

Ah yes, Leslie; a little minx in her own right. I haven't seen her in several weeks, but I'm sure Veronika can answer your questions. Here she comes now.

(into cellphone, deliberate)

Dr. Anat. Thank you.

Down the hall, VERONIKA TUSKES, early 30s with deep red hair, strides toward them in all her graceful beauty.

In this environment - and clothed - Veronika presents an aura of glacial, near regal control.

VERONIKA  
(kissing Edmund)  
Hello, lover.

EDMUND  
Veronika, Mr. Grissom and Ms. Sidle are from the police. They want to speak with you about Leslie.

VERONIKA  
Nothing terrible has happened to her, has it?

GRISSOM  
Not as far as we can tell, but we are hoping you can shed light on a few lingering questions we have.

EDMUND  
(into cellphone)  
Hello, Branko. It's Eddy Tuskes.  
(holds hand over phone)  
I'll join you when I'm finished.

Edmund walks off, continuing his call.

VERONIKA  
Will you please step this way.

Veronika leads Grissom and Sara into...

INT. TUSKES ESTATE/LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The lush and rich room is overstuffed. Once Grissom and Sara are inside, Veronika closes the door.

VERONIKA  
Now, how exactly can I help you?

GRISSOM  
We're investigating the murder of a private detective, his name was Culver West.

Veronika shows no hint of acknowledgment.

VERONIKA  
I'm sorry, but I'm not sure who that is.

Grissom opens his envelop.

GRISSOM

We found this photo in Mr. West's  
personal effects.

Grissom hands Veronika the lurid photo. She looks at it, stares at it, absorbs every grain of the image as she begins to boil. Her eyes never come off the photo as Grissom speaks.

GRISSOM (cont'd)

It came to our attention that the  
woman with you - that is you, isn't  
it?

Veronika cuts Grissom with her eyes.

GRISSOM (cont'd)

The woman, Leslie Smalls, is a small-  
time criminal who has been involved in  
several blackmail schemes throughout  
the Southwest. She's wanted in four  
states and --

Veronika finally looks up at Grissom, her pained visage stops him. She crumples the photo very slowly.

VERONIKA

(sharp)

Is that bitch dead, too?!

SARA

We don't know that yet. But we have  
the best people on the case.

VERONIKA

This was supposed to be quick and  
simple, a done deal with no strings  
attached. No photos, no money drops -  
nothing.

GRISSOM

What can you tell us about your  
relationship with Ms. Smalls and Mr.  
West?

Veronika raises an eyebrow.

VERONIKA

As you can very well assume, they were  
blackmailing me. I met Leslie about  
six months ago, she was just a  
dalliance - one of many.

(MORE)

VERONIKA (cont'd)

But there was something about her, I can't describe. I had to be with her.

SARA

You are married to the Edmund Tuskes, right?

VERONIKA

Yes, and?

SARA

I just... I mean... Aren't you --

VERONIKA

Haven't you played offense and defense, Ms. Sidle? I love Eddy, he brings me great joy. I couldn't ask for a better human being to spend my life with.

GRISSOM

What she's getting at, Mrs. Tuskes, is-

VERONIKA

I know what she's getting at. The heart can blind you to what is actually going on, if you aren't careful. When the pictures first came, I did everything I could think of to handle it, to make it go away. But then I said enough is enough, and I had one of Eddy's people find Leslie. Then I followed her to that private dick West's office.

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

**EXT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS - DUSK  
(VERONIKA'S VERSION)**

West's Lincoln LS sits near the rear of an alley-driveway. Inside are West and LESLIE SMALLS. West hands her a thick envelope. Leslie gets out of the car and walks down the alley, where a taxi waits. She gets in and is off.

VERONIKA (O.S.)

I saw that she was part of it.

Across the street is a BMW, inside: Veronika... livid.

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS - DUSK

Culver sits at his desk, finishing up some personal business. The door flies open. Veronika stands in the threshold.

VERONIKA (O.S.)

At least he gave me the courtesy of not pretending that he didn't know why I was there.

Veronika and West argue and scream.

VERONIKA (O.S.) (cont'd)

I politely told him that his little scheme was over. I said, "If you want to embarrass me then go right ahead." I wasn't going to live under his pitiful little thumb.

WHIP PAN TO Veronika writing out a check for \$150,000.

VERONIKA (V.O.) (cont'd)

I made him a wild offer. He accepted.

West holds a Zippo to the 35mm negatives, when they're mostly burned he dumps them in the trash. Stamps the flames out.

VERONIKA (V.O.) (cont'd)

Our business was concluded and I walked away.

WHITE FLASH TO:

RETURN TO SCENE

Veronika takes a cultured sip of the brandy she poured.

VERONIKA

Never to see or hear from him again.

SARA

And that was it? You didn't physically threaten him? Nobody was with you?

VERONIKA

No. Mr. West seemed very amenable to the deal we struck.

GRISSOM

You don't own a gun, do you?

VERONIKA

Yes, but I don't see what that has to do with anything.

GRISSOM

Mr. West was shot to death. I want to believe you, but to do so we have to rule out that your gun was not the one used in the shooting.

VERONIKA

Oh, then let me get it now.

Veronika goes to the desk, opens a drawer and hands Grissom a box. He opens it. Inside is a stainless steel SigSauer 9mm.

SARA

Nine millimeter.

Off Veronika's unsuspecting face...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. CSI BUILDING - FIRING RANGE - DAY

Nick fires off a few rounds from Veronika's SigSauer 9mm into a water-filled collection vat.

WHIP PAN TO Sara hunched over a stereoscopic microscope.

INSERT - MAGNIFIED VIEW of two bullets, comparing striations; they line up exactly.

RESUME

SARA

Veronika Tuskes's gun was used to kill West. The slugs are a perfect match.

NICK

You're kidding? Why would she just give us the gun?

SARA

I don't know, she probably thinks Daddy Warbucks's bank account and connections can get her out of almost any situation.

NICK

(triumphant)

Not this time. Let's go show this to Grissom and get that arrest warrant. Brass is going to go through the roof.

Sara and Nick exit.

CUT TO:

INT. CSI BUILDING - AUDIO/VIDEO LAB - DAY

A Video Tech sits in front of his monitors. Catherine and Warrick flank him.

VIDEO TECH

I've washed the footage through a couple of different filters. It bothered me that this Felson fella reacted so suddenly.

WARRICK

Fear and guilt don't hit you like a bolt of lightning. His reaction doesn't make a lot of sense.

VIDEO TECH

This is what I came up with...

The Video Tech rolls the footage - it's been treated and is extraordinarily contrasty, even for messy B&W surveillance footage. The moment before Felson reacts and exits approaches...

VIDEO TECH (cont'd)

Here it is, watch the store windows.

We can faintly see high-beam lights flashing through the store windows. Felson notices, exits in a hurry.

CATHERINE

Somebody flashed their brights?

VIDEO TECH

Looks that way to me.

WARRICK

Is that enough to tell us that someone else - namely Hester - was in the car?

VIDEO TECH

Oh there was someone else in the car alright, watch this.

The Video Tech calls up the same footage, but it's been normalized and excessively magnified.

VIDEO TECH (cont'd)

Here's the car pulling out into the street. Driver is wearing a light colored shirt.

In the fuzzy, pixilated footage we can see that the driver is dressed in white. Felson was wearing all dark colors.

WARRICK

Felson doesn't strike me as a quick change artist, and for what reason?

CATHERINE

He didn't have one. Hester said he was with Felson, so we would automatically find his organics throughout the car, but now...

WARRICK

Now we bring in him and put him in the tanning booth.

Warrick and Catherine exit. The Video Tech smiles triumphantly.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Catherine and Warrick sit across from Hester. An OFFICER is posted.

CATHERINE

We know you were driving the car.

BENNIE HESTER

No.

CATHERINE

And the DNA specialist found your bodily fluids in the hooker's saliva.

BENNIE HESTER

Yeah, RIGHT!

WARRICK

And we know that your shaving cut is really a scratch from the hooker's nails.

BENNIE HESTER

That's from shaving! You want to see my Gillette Mach3?! I didn't kill that man --!

Catherine pauses and slowly turns to Warrick, like Bennie isn't there. Warrick spits out a "tsk-tsk-tsk" smile.

CATHERINE

I'm sorry, did you say "man"?

WARRICK

I didn't say "man," did you?

Catherine and Warrick tilt their heads toward Bennie. Bennie's face shows that he can taste the bullshit --

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

EXT. 7-ELEVEN - NIGHT (BENNIE'S VERSION)

Felson's car is parked behind the store. In back is Bennie and Butler (in drag). Under the cover of near impenetrable darkness, she/he orally copulates Bennie.

WARRICK (V.O.)

You were getting yours, maybe the best  
you ever had...

WHITE FLASH TO:

INT. FELSON'S MAXIMA - CONTINUOUS

Bennie has a rapturous look on his face, his wandering hands ravish Butler. He suddenly stops (felt something he shouldn't have) and a disgusted look explodes over his face.

WARRICK (V.O.)

... until something tipped you off to  
the fact she was playing "To Wong Fu."

Bennie viciously and mercilessly punches Butler in the face. Butler fights back - rakes her fingers at Bennie's face, but Bennie's haymakers and hooks gets the best of her. Bennie yanks the dazed drag queen out of the car, kicks her in the gut for good measure. Bennie slams the car door into Butler's head a few times.

WARRICK (V.O.) (cont'd)

You were going to town alright.

WHITE FLASH TO:

EXT. 7-ELEVEN - NIGHT

Bennie hefts up the sagging Butler and suplexes him head-first into the dumpster.

WARRICK (V.O.)

For the coup de grace, your inner UFC  
fighter came out. No way that you knew  
you crushed her vertebrae in the  
process.

WHITE FLASH TO:

RETURN TO SCENE

Bennie, silent, hangs his head down, until Warrick finishes speaking.

WARRICK

Then you made your getaway. Only you didn't breathe a word of it to Howa--

BENNIE HESTER

(sharp, cutting his off)

It was funny to that SICK FREAK! It ain't right... BUTLER!

(shrieks the name, pauses)

As a kid, Chris was like an older brother to me. I was THE MAN in high school, because I was cool with Chris Butler! I got beer and weed from him, I got choice chicks just 'cause I was down!

(more angry by the second)

But when I got back in town, I heard a sick rumor! I had to find out!

Bennie cracks! He UP-ENDS the desk. The Officer and Warrick move to restrain him! Catherine steps back.

BENNIE HESTER (cont'd)

(raging, spitting)

And if it was true!? Then I had to destroy it! Destroy it! DESTROY IT!

Warrick and the Officer corral Bennie. It takes all their effort to pin this wild ox to the floor.

INT. CSI BUILDING - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

Grissom strides through the doors.

EDMUND (O.S.)

Excuse me, Agent Grissom?

Grissom turns around to face Edmund Tuskes. He has obviously be waiting here for awhile.

GRISSOM

Mr. Tuskes.

EDMUND

Veronika said your that you were informing her on the whereabouts of her missing friend, Ms. Smalls.

GRISSOM

In a roundabout way, yes.

EDMUND

And I noticed that you left with my present to her, the SigSauer.

GRISSOM

Mr. Tuskes, your wife has some serious questions to answer. And not to my satisfaction, but to the D.A.'s.

Edmund studies Grissom...

EDMUND

Do you know what it means to protect the one you love, Mr. Grissom?

GRISSOM

I'm not sure I know what you mean.

EDMUND

When you love someone like Veronika you have to allow her... her eccentricities; but you also can't allow those eccentricities to bring harm to the one you love or to yourself.

GRISSOM

D.H. Lawrence once said, "Trust the tale, not the teller." Veronika's tale is incongruent with the evidence that we've found. The evidence tells a tale that I can trust -- without a doubt.

EDMUND

You think her "story," as you in law enforcement are so fond of saying, has holes in it?

GRISSOM

Hole is the wrong word. Chunks is more appropriate. A chunk of flesh confirmed by a routine ER blood test.

Grissom pats Edmund on the shoulder, close to the neck. Edmund winces, then removes Grissom's hand.

EDMUND

First degree murder is quite difficult to prove, Mr. Grissom.

GRISSOM

True, but when we throw in the manslaughter charge arising from the death of Kevin Mullins, the odds move in favor of the state.

EDMUND

Who?

GRISSOM

An innocent hard-working man who took a bullet that was meant for West, a bullet that was carelessly overlooked in an arrogant attempt to resolve a problem.

Edmund inhales deeply and steps back.

**WHITE FLASH TO:**

**INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/HALLWAY - DUSK (EDMUND'S VERSION)**

Veronika marches with determination and caution toward West's office. She pauses for a "do-or-die" beat out front, then forcefully pushes open the door and strides inside.

EDMUND (V.O.)

Veronika did go down to Culver West's office. I knew something was amiss once that lying whore Leslie Smalls stopped showing up. Even though Veronika never spoke of it, their relationship was no secret to me.

From inside West Investigation's Veronika closes the door... but not completely.

EDMUND (V.O.) (cont'd)

My man Jones told me about Veronika's request to find Leslie and this West person. I was concerned, so I did what any caring husband would do.

**INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS - CONTINUOUS**

Veronika and West argue and scream. (NOTE: This is the same as before, but from Edmund's hidden POV outside the office in the hallway looking through the slit in the door.)

EDMUND (V.O.)

Veronika's attitude, her anger and diction wasn't something I had seen before. It was justified after hearing the extent of what the vile West had done and planned on doing.

WHIP PAN TO Veronika writing out a check for \$150,000 and derisively tosses it in his face.

EDMUND (V.O.) (cont'd)

Veronika handled herself admirably, made her demands and got what she wanted.

West holds a Zippo lighter to the 35mm negatives. When they are mostly burned, he dumps them in the trash. Stamps the flames out.

EDMUND (V.O.) (cont'd)

She thought she had washed her hands of the situation.

Veronika turns to leave.

WHITE FLASH TO:

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/HALL - CONTINUOUS

Edmund quickly tip-toes down the hall and ducks into the exit stairs. Veronika emerges from West's office, heads down the hall toward the main exit and disappears down the stairs.

EDMUND (V.O.)

Or so it seemed. Unfortunately, I've dealt with Mr. West's ilk before. His breed of vermin is never satisfied...

WHITE FLASH TO:

INT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING/WEST INVESTIGATIONS - CONTINUOUS

West sits smiling ruefully in his chair back to the door, holding up a pristine strip of 35mm negative.

Edmund sneaks in. Locks the door. West turns around. A little stunned to see Edmund screwing a silencer on to Veronika's 9mm.

EDMUND (V.O.)

...and cannot be brushed aside with something as base as money, as Veronika wished. I made it clear that there wasn't going to be a next time.

West stands up trying to placate and cajole Edmund - who isn't having it. Edmund aims the gun. Begins to pull the trigger back. West, agile as he is, jukes to the right, then left and out of the way, before Edmund fires the gun.

The FIRST bullet passes cleanly through the wall (hitting Kevin Mullins in the office next door), but West is already moving, leaping into Edmund...

They crash to the floor, and the second bullet discharges next to the file cabinet. They wrestle... West, like the no-holds-barred street thug that he is, plants his dirty mouth on Edmund's neck! Edmund writhes in pain... raises the gun -- FIRES! West reels back and takes a plug out of Edmund. His blood stains West's foul rictus of a mouth.

WHITE FLASH TO:

EXT. RATTY OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

With extreme caution, Edmund drags West's small, limp body to his Lincoln. Opens the trunk, stuffs the little jerk inside.

EDMUND (V.O.)

I've disposed off my share of low-life trash in my time. This was unplanned; it just worked its way out as the night wore on.

WHITE FLASH TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Edmund parks West's Lincoln in a tow-away zone, wipes down the immediate surfaces, gets out and inconspicuously as possible heads down the street. Takes out his cellphone, places a call.

EDMUND (V.O.)

And then it was done.

WHITE FLASH TO:

RETURN TO SCENE

Grissom stares at Edmund - stark and emotionless.

EDMUND

Veronika had nothing to worry about.  
For all she knew, her handling of the  
situation was enough.

Edmund slowly removes his ascot, revealing the semi-healed  
teeth mauling on the side of his neck.

GRISSOM

All this leaves me with one more  
question.

EDMUND

(anticipating)

Why?

(Grissom nods)

I was recently diagnosed with  
inoperable pancreatic cancer. My time  
on Earth is short, I want each and  
every moment with Veronika to be as  
tension free as possible.

GRISSOM

And your trial?

EDMUND

I won't live long enough for one to  
start. My attorneys will tie it up in  
pretrial motions long enough for me to  
say, "goodbye."

With that Edmund turns, heads toward the exit. Grissom stares  
after him, should he even begin to waste the tax-payers money  
with this case? After a decisive beat:

GRISSOM

Mr. Tuskes?

Edmund stops, turns.

GRISSOM (cont'd)

You may be saying goodbye to me, but  
be ready to say hello to the D.A.

Edmund responds with a steely "bring it on" gaze. They both  
turn at the same time and exit.

INT. CSI BUILDING - GRISSOM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Grissom fills out paper work. There's a KNOCK at his door.

                  GRISSOM  
                  (doesn't look up)  
                  Come in.

Sara and Nick enter.

                  NICK  
                  So... Brass gave us the skinny. How do  
                  you account for that, professor?

                  GRISSOM  
                  Marcel Proust.

                  NICK  
                  Who?

                  GRISSOM  
                  French novelist from the early part of  
                  last century, he wrote a novel - some  
                  say the last great novel - called In  
                  Search of Lost Time. Sexual jealousy  
                  is it's main theme.

                  SARA  
                  I don't buy Tuskes being jealous of  
                  his wife's relationship with the  
                  Smalls woman?

                  GRISSOM  
                  In the novel, the narrator's wife -  
                  Albertine - was involved in numerous  
                  extramarital lesbian affairs.  
                  Albertine imagined that she succeeded  
                  in keeping the narrator ignorant of  
                  them, but that wasn't the case. He  
                  knew, but he never let on.

                  SARA  
                  And all this means?

                  GRISSOM  
                  That Tuskes, as we know, was aware of  
                  what Veronika was up to. Also that she  
                  might have known that he knew, and  
                  they both relished their false secret.

                  SARA  
                  Tuskes could have handled the  
                  situation with West without resorting  
                  to murder.

GRISSOM

True.

NICK

(getting it)

But he obviously didn't want anyone else to even know that they had this double-blind secret. When the secret could have been exposed in such a cheap manner, the pleasure of the secret wouldn't be the same for him anymore.

GRISSOM

More or less.

SARA

(frustrated at it all)

When did it become so complicated with men?

GRISSOM

About the same time it became complicated with women.

Sara walks out. Nick and Grissom stare at each other, tacitly understanding her frustration and their mutual culpability.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END