

By James Vanderbilt

Based on the books
"Zodiac" and "Zodiac Unmasked"
by Robert Graysmith

This really happened.

FADE IN ON:

AN AMERICAN FLAG

Fluttering in the breeze. It's twilight. The sun, giving way to a crisp Northern California summer evening.

SUPERIMPOSE - July 4th, 1969 - Summer of Love

FIREWORKS streak into the sky behind the flag. Kids in backyards, sending up bottle rockets. Burgers on grills. Welcome to Suburbia. The American Dream.

SUPERIMPOSE - Vallejo, California

EXT. BEECHWOOD AVENUE -- NIGHT

A bronze Corvaair rattles down the street. At the wheel is DARLENE FERRIN, 22, clad in a WHITE AND BLUE JUMPSUIT. Long fake eyelashes and braces, which make her look more like 17. She pulls up in front of a house. HONKS.

MIKE MAGEAU races out. Tall and skinny at 19. Face lit up with a textbook crush on Darlene.

INT. CORVAIR -- NIGHT

Mike gets in, breathless. Darlene puts the car in gear.

DARLENE

We have to get fireworks. I told Dean I'd invited some people over.

MIKE

How'd he take it?

DARLENE

He'd rather have me home with him than out running around with strange men.

Darlene giggles at this, Mike doesn't. Dean is Darlene's husband - therefore, Mike's competition. She lights up a cigarette, oblivious to Mike's longing stare. She takes a right. The car behind them does too.

MIKE

I like your jumpsuit.

DARLENE

I made it myself. This guy I know sent the fabric from Mexico.

MIKE

You're married. I don't think it's proper for guys to send you things-

DARLENE
You send me things.

MIKE
Yeah, but that's different-

DARLENE
Is it?

Mike squirms. Darlene just smiles. Keeps driving. She takes a left. The car behind them does too. Mike notices.

MIKE
I think someone's following us.

Darlene looks - A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS behind them. Normal.

DARLENE
You're being paranoid.

MIKE
He's been with us since my house.
Take a left up here.

DARLENE
That's not the way we have to go-
She stops, looking at him. He actually seems scared.

DARLENE (CONT'D)
He's just going to drive past.

She puts on her blinker. Coming up on Oakwood. Takes the left. The HEADLIGHTS DISAPPEAR. Darlene and Mike, both watching the rearview mirror. The HEADLIGHTS REAPPEAR. Reach the intersection... And TAKE THE LEFT too.

DARLENE (CONT'D)
It's a coincidence. He's just going
the same we are-

MIKE
Take another left.

She looks at him.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Head back towards my house like we
forgot something. If he's not
following us, there's no reason for
him to turn around, too.

No argument from Darlene. She puts on the blinker. Takes the left. They watch the rearview. Holding their breath. The headlights reach the intersection behind them...

And turn to FOLLOW THEM.

DARLENE
 (scared)
 It could still be a coincidence-

MIKE
 You know it's not-

Cut off as Darlene pulls a HARD RIGHT, no blinker this time.
 Behind them, the HEADLIGHTS FOLLOW. Taking the turn.

DARLENE
 Oh, shit, oh shit...

MIKE
 We can't panic, we just have to lose
 him-

DARLENE
 How?

MIKE
 Maybe get on a side street that you
 know really well-

DARLENE
 He's speeding up.

And he is. The headlights, GAINING...

DARLENE (CONT'D)
 What do we do?

MIKE
 Go straight, I need time to think-

DARLENE
 What's there to think about? What
 do we do?

The headlights, RIGHT BEHIND THEM. Riding their bumper.

MIKE
 Slow down.

DARLENE
 What?

MIKE
 But no brake lights. Take your foot
 off the gas and just coast.

Darlene's foot, coming off the gas. The speedometer needle,
 falling - 45, 44, 43...

DARLENE
 Tell me this is a joke...

The headlights, slowing with them. Staying on their bumper.
39, 38, 37...

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Tell me that's Dean in the other car
and you guys are just messing with
me...

34, 33, 32...

MIKE

Next left is a straight away - don't
signal, just take it and floor it.
Can you do that?

Darlene nods. Face tight. She can. Through the windshield,
we see the left, fifty yards up. She automatically moves to
signal and then remembers not to. Grips the wheel instead.

The turn, thirty yards up. The speedometer - 28, 27, 26...

MIKE (CONT'D)

(softly)
Accelerate into the turn...

In the rearview - the headlights, still right on them. Ten
yards till the left. Mike grips the door handle.

Three yards, two yards, one...

Darlene CRANKS the wheel left and POUNDS the GAS. Tires
SQUEALING around the curve as the Corvair SHOOTs FORWARDS,
Mike and Darlene pinned back into their seats...

Behind them - the headlights, trying to make the turn.
Heading for an embankment...

The Corvair FISHTAILING as it pulls onto Blue Rock Springs...

MIKE (CONT'D)

Don't take your foot off the gas!

Darlene struggles to maintain control of the wheel...

Behind them - the headlights, barely swerving past the
embankment...

Darlene, straightening out the car. The engine ROARS as she
runs the Corvair FLAT-OUT on the straight away...

The speedometer - 48, 49, 50...

Behind them - the headlights SKID onto Blue Rock Springs and
SPEED UP. All pretense dropped. Coming after the kids.

Mike, gazing at them through the back window.

MIKE (CONT'D)

He's still coming!

Darlene's foot to the floor, but the headlights are once again GAINING. Cutting the distance between them...

The Corvair's engine straining - 62, 63, 64...

CHOOM! The Corvair's interior LIGHTS UP as their pursuer SWITCHES TO HIGHBEAMS.

Darlene terrified. HONKING the horn, tears in her eyes.

DARLENE

GO AWAY!

The headlights don't go anywhere. Nearing the Corvair's rear bumper again. She holds the HORN DOWN. Weeping.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

PLEASE!

69, 70, 71...

Out of the corner of her eye - Darlene spies a RIGHT TURN. She cranks the wheel right into a PARKING LOT for the BLUE ROCK SPRINGS GOLF COURSE...

As the headlights shoot past, MISSING THE TURN...

The Corvair skidding into the lot, Darlene's foot flying to the BRAKES...

MIKE

Turn and go!

Darlene about to turn when...

NHAM! The Corvair HITS A LOG. Front wheels crunching over it, undercarriage slamming onto it. HUNG UP.

Panicked, Darlene stomps the accelerator. Wheels spinning.

The engine sputters...

DARLENE

No! NO!

The engine DIES.

Silence.

The lot, PITCH BLACK. The only light comes from the road.

THE HEADLIGHTS - Leisurely TURNING AROUND and COMING BACK towards the parking lot...

Darlene, desperately trying her key. Nothing.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Oh, Jesus...

The headlights enter the parking lot slowly. Swinging around. Coming to a halt eight feet behind the Corvair...

And then THE HEADLIGHTS GO OUT.

Darlene and Mike, plunged into DARKNESS. The other car sits behind them. Engine rumbling. Beige, possibly white. Looks like a '58 or '59 Falcon with old California plates.

A flicker of recognition in Darlene's eyes. Mike notices.

MIKE

(whispering)

Do you know who it is?

She doesn't respond. Can't take her eyes off the car. Just sitting there. The driver, making no move to get out...

MIKE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

We could run-

She puts her hand over his. Looks at him.

Don't move.

Darlene, Mike, and the other car sit there for what seems an eternity. And then...

The other car PULLS FORWARD. Headlights clicking BACK ON...

Passing the Corvair, HEADED FOR THE EXIT. Like a lion who's cornered it's prey and then decides it's not hungry. LEAVING.

They watch it go, finally disappearing over the horizon. Mike exhales for what seems like the first time in minutes.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Did you know who that was?

DARLENE

I- I didn't get a good look-

MIKE

Darlene.

She looks up at him.

DARLENE

I don't know.

Mike studies her face. Decides to let it go. For now.

MIKE

Try the engine again.

She does. It won't turn over.

DARLENE

I think it's dead. We're gonna be
so late...

And she begins LAUGHING. A release of all the tension.
Mike laughs with her.

MIKE

Your husband's gonna think the
worst...

That gets Darlene going even more. They sit there together,
laughing till tears run down their cheeks. Finally:

MIKE (CONT'D)

We should- I need to find a pay phone-

He stops short. Through the windshield...

HEADLIGHTS, COMING BACK over the horizon.

Darlene and Mike, frozen in fear. The headlights reach the
entrance to the parking lot. THEY TURN IN.

DARLENE

No, no, no...

Pulling to a stop behind the Corvair. In an off-line
position, sort of like a COP. Suddenly a SPOTLIGHT from
inside the other car hits the Corvair. Mike exhales.

MIKE

It's the cops.

The door opens and THE COP inside gets out.

MIKE (CONT'D)

We need our I.D.'s.

Darlene reaches for her purse. The Cop walks up to the car.
Flashlight outstretched, shining it in Mike and Darlene's
faces, practically blinding them. He reaches Mike's door.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Man, you've got no idea how much you
scared us...

He trails off. Noticing something odd.

The flashlight is taped to the BARREL OF A GUN.

This is no cop. A CLINK of metal as the gun taps the window
frame. Mike stares at it. Confused.

This will not be "stylized". This will not be "cool".

This is what real bullets from a real gun can do.

The man PULLS THE TRIGGER.

THE GUN ROARS.

Mike's BLOOD AND TEETH EXPLODE onto the dashboard.

The Man KEEPS SHOOTING. The gunshots are DEAFENING.

BULLETS PUNCH through flesh and bone. ARTERIAL BLOOD SPRAY GOOTS across the Corvair's interior, bathing it red.

Some shots rip straight through Mike and into Darlene.

Mike is shot once in the face, once in the neck, and once in the arm. Darlene is shot twice in the right arm, twice in the left arm, and three times in the back.

The Man fires NINE TIMES. Then he stops.

Silence, save for the GURGLING.

The Man turns away from the Corvair. No emotion. Walking back to his car. Satisfied. Opens the passenger door when...

A GROAN. The Man turns at this. Walks back to the Corvair.

Mike. Still alive. In agony.

The Man raises the gun again. FIRES TWO MORE SHOTS into Mike, propelling his body into the BACK SEAT. Then TWO MORE into Darlene for good measure.

The Man lowers the gun. Turns. Walks away.

FADE TO:

OVER BLACK:

WE HEAR - a coin clink in a pay phone. Three numbers dialed.

FEMALE OPERATOR (O.S.)
Vallejo Police Department.

A MAN (O.S.)
I want to a report a double murder.
If you go one mile east on Columbus
Parkway to the public park, you will
find kids in a brown car. They were
shot with a nine millimeter Luger.
I also killed those kids last year.
Goodbye.

CLICK. The line goes dead.

SMASH TO OUR TITLE SCREEN...

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO SKYLINE -- MORNING

We're SOARING OVER WATER towards the Bay City. Magnificent spires and bridges. Bustling to life with morning commuters.

It is the First Day of August.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- BATHROOM -- MORNING

ROBERT GRAYSMITH stands in his robe at his sink, brushing his teeth. Early 30's, dark hair and handsome. Next to him, his youngest child BRAD brushes his teeth as well. Mimicking his father's movements.

Graysmith does his top teeth - Brad does his. Graysmith does his bottom teeth - Brad does his. Graysmith smiles. Brad smiles. Graysmith scrubs his tongue - Brad scrubs his.

GRAYSMITH

And spit.

Graysmith spits. Brad does not.

BRAD

I swallowed it.

GRAYSMITH

Why?

BRAD

It was minty.

Graysmith laughs and scoops Brad up. Heading off to dress his son, humming. Brad attempts to hum, too.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

CAL, Graysmith's older son, watching the NEWS.

NEWSCASTER

...responsible for six rapes.
Arresting officer Inspector David
Toschi declined to comment.

ON TV - DAVE TOSCHI going up Police Headquarters steps waving off reporters. Tall and dark, with an omnipresent bow tie.

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)

Sources inside the Department peg
Toschi as a possible future candidate
for Chief.

(to co-anchor)

And how about that bow tie, Sally?

CO-ANCHOR

Can't beat it, Steve.

Graysmith bounds down the stairs holding Brad.

GRAYSMITH
What are you watching?

CAL
Rapists and murderers.

Graysmith frowns and shuts off the TV.

GRAYSMITH
Get your shoes on, we're late.

Brad, meanwhile, has found a word he likes:

BRAD
(giggling)
Rapists! Rapists!

GRAYSMITH
Do daddy a favor and don't yell that
while you're at preschool, okay?

BRAD
Rapists!

GRAYSMITH
Much better.

Cal finishes with his boots.

CAL
Are we gonna see Mom tonight?

GRAYSMITH
No, that's this weekend. Come on,
in the car...

Graysmith hustles his family out the door...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- MORNING

A grand old three story building on Fifth and Mission. Foot
traffic everywhere. The paper's logo above the entrance.

We follow a MAILMAN. Walking briskly towards the front
entrance, MAIL BAG slung over his shoulder. We move in CLOSE
on the bag and TRACK WITH IT as the Mailman enters

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- LOBBY -- MORNING

Vaulted ceilings. The mailman, crossing the marble floor,
headed for the OPEN ELEVATOR doors. Passing

GRAYSMITH - Standing by a COFFEE CART, purchasing his morning
java, chatting with the vendor. We drop the mailman and
stay with him, overhearing:

VENDOR

...liked this morning's cartoon...

Seeing the elevator doors begin to close, Graysmith hurries to catch it, but the DOORS CLOSE before he can reach it, and we PLUNGE BETWEEN THEM to resume following

THE MAILMAN - Standing in the ELEVATOR alone and we're close on the bag as it ASCENDS THREE STORIES, doors opening onto

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE THIRD FLOOR -- MORNING

Phones ring. Typewriters clack. Reporters hustle. The controlled chaos of a major paper's editorial offices.

The Mailman, exiting the elevator, taking a left into

INT. MAIL ROOM -- MORNING

Where he DUMPS his MAIL BAG onto a sorting desk.

We stay on the LETTER PILE as LUCY THE MAILROOM WORKER begins to sort through them. We follow ONE LETTER in particular. Lucy sorts it into a MAIL CART. Through the door, we see

GRAYSMITH - Grumpily emerging from the elevator and we leave the letter to PICK HIM UP AGAIN walking down the

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE HALLWAYS -- MORNING

As he balances coffee, a sketchbook, and the morning paper in his hands. Rounding a corner to see reporter PAUL AVERY, who plucks Graysmith's coffee and takes a swig.

AVERY

Doesn't it bother you that I earn the accolades of the entire city of San Francisco as a crack investigative journalist while you basically draw funny pictures for a living?

GRAYSMITH

Every night, before I go to sleep, I cry a little more.

As behind them

THE MAIL CART - Emerges from the Mail Room, pushed by LUCY, who begins distributing letters. Focusing in on that SPECIAL LETTER as it PASSES Graysmith and Avery who take a left into

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- MORNING

The cluttered office of an EDITORIAL CARTOONIST. Rough sketches everywhere. Almost as many books crowd shelves here as at home. Graysmith dumps his stuff on the desk.

AVERY
How are the kids?

GRAYSMITH
Dealing with it.

AVERY
She moved out yet?

Graysmith nods. Doesn't want to talk about it. Avery decides to keep things light. Glances at some of the sketches.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Nixon with a big nose. You truly are a master of political subtlety.

GRAYSMITH
That's what I've been saying for years. Finally, somebody gets me...

AVERY
(grinning)
Wanna grab lunch later?

GRAYSMITH
Sure.

Avery smiles and leaves and we follow him back out into the HALLWAYS where he heads back to his desk again passing

THE MAIL CART - Empty now except for that SPECIAL LETTER and we FOLLOW IT as Lucy wheels the cart towards a LARGE CLOSED DOOR marked EDITOR IN CHIEF and Lucy takes the letter and slips it through the slot and we FOLLOW IT INTO

INT. EDITOR IN CHIEF'S OFFICE -- MORNING

As it lands in the IN-BOX of Chronicle Publisher CHARLES DEYOUNG THEIRIOT. Glances up from his coffee, curious, he scoops it up, slices it open, and pulls out the first page.

Scanning down the chickenscraw words, his EYES GO WIDE...

CUT TO:

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- LATER

Graysmith looks up from his desk. Through the glass partition, he sees the entire EDITORIAL STAFF gathered in the CONFERENCE ROOM. Strange. Something's going on...

Graysmith rises, curious. Leaving his office, headed for

INT. EDITORIAL CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

The EDITORIAL STAFF of the Chronicle stands around a long mahogany conference table. Avery and sixteen others. At the head sits Theiriot, grave look on his face.

THEIRIOT

It arrived in the morning post.

The HANDWRITTEN LETTER, on the table on front of him.

THEIRIOT (CONT'D)

It's Avery's story if we run with it... You want to do the honors?

A strange silence. Avery slowly picks up the letter.

Unnoticed, Graysmith slips into the back of the room.

AVERY

(reading aloud)

Dear Editor. This is the murderer-

He stops. Shocked.

THEIRIOT

Yeah.

AVERY

(continuing to read)

This is the murderer of the two teenagers last Christmas at Lake Herman and the girl on the 4th of July near the golf course in Vallejo. To prove I killed them, I shall state some facts which only I and the police know.

He looks up at the others. Sees Graysmith, in the back. Face, white.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Christmas - Brand name of ammo Super X. Ten shots were fired. The boy was on his back with his feet to the car. The girl...

He pauses. This is hard to comprehend.

AVERY (CONT'D)

The girl was on her right side, feet to the west. July 4th - One girl was wearing patterned slacks...

FLASH CUT TO:

DARLENE - Lying behind the Corvair's wheel, covered in blood. We see the PATTERNED SLACKS among the DARK RED STAINS...

AVERY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The boy was also shot in the knee. Brand name of ammo was Western.

BACK TO SCENE - Graysmith swallows hard. Avery, continuing:

AVERY (CONT'D)

Here is part of a cipher. The other two parts of the cipher are being mailed to the editors of the Vallejo Times and S.F. Examiner.

NEXT PAGE - Full of strange symbols. A CODE.

EDITOR

You gotta be kidding...

AVERY

I want you to print this cipher on the front page of your paper. In this cipher is my identity. If you do not print this cipher by the afternoon of Fry. The 1st of August 69, I will go on a kill rampage Fry night. I will cruise around all weekend killing lone people in the night then move on to kill again until I...

He looks over at Theiriot.

THEIRIOT

(finishing the line)

"Until I end up with a dozen people over the weekend".

(pause)

It's unsigned except for a symbol.

Avery puts the letter down. Other editors move forward to examine it. Seeing the SYMBOL:



Lost among them, Graysmith picks up THE CODE.

THEIRIOT

I called Vallejo, they confirmed the murders did occur - a couple shot to death in December and another last month. The boy survived. The girl didn't.

Graysmith turns the cipher over in his hands. DOZENS OF WEIRD SYMBOLS litter the page in UNBROKEN BLOCK PARAGRAPHS...

AVERY

Not to be a nervous nelly, but today is August first. This guy wants the code in the afternoon addition.

GRAYSMITH

So we print it.

The entire room turns at this. Surprised that Graysmith's even there. Theiriot gives him a funny look.

THEIRIOT
Last time I checked, I was the publisher, Robert.

Another EDITOR steps forward.

EDITOR
We run this, we set a precedent - threaten to kill people and you can get the Chronicle to print whatever you want-

GRAYSMITH
And if the guy makes good and kills twelve people this weekend?

EDITOR
(to Theiriot)
Remind me again what the cartoonist is doing here?

An awkward beat. Everyone stares at Graysmith. Theiriot looks at him, apologetic. Showing him the door.

THEIRIOT
We'll let you know what we decide, Robert.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Graysmith stands by his overstuffed bookshelves, scanning his many volumes for something useful. Through the glass partition, we see the meeting conclude without him. The other men in the room file out. Avery walks over.

AVERY
They're gonna run it. And they're sending the code over to Naval Intelligence- What are you doing?

Graysmith has climbed onto his office chair. Now on tip-toes, trying to retrieve something from the top shelf.

GRAYSMITH
I think I have a book on serial killers somewhere-

Cut off as TEN BOOKS SHOWER DOWN on him. Avery watches, amused, as Graysmith tries to clean them up.

AVERY
Yeccccah.
(pause)
It could be a crank. Even if the details do match up, it could still-

GRAYSMITH

Paul, have you ever seen anything like that letter before?

A beat. They both know - it's not a crank.

AVERY

Look, if this guy is egotistical enough to write us, much less give us a code with his identity in it, he's gonna get caught. Shit, he wants to get caught-

GRAYSMITH

He's not gonna give his name.

AVERY

How do you know that?

Graysmith looks up at him.

GRAYSMITH

Would you?

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY -- AFTERNOON

Graysmith and his boys, loaded down with kids' books. The LIBRARIAN smiles as she checks them out. They're regulars.

LIBRARIAN

Did you find everything you needed, Mr. Graysmith?

BRAD

Lorax!

GRAYSMITH

We have the Lorax at home. Actually, Patty, do you have anything on...

(embarrassed)

Serial killers?

The Librarian, shocked. Whispering, huffy:

LIBRARIAN

I'm certain this institution doesn't carry anything of the sort.

Brad, meanwhile, finding another phrase he likes:

BRAD

Serial killer! Serial killer!

GRAYSMITH

Brad-

BRAD

Serial killer! Serial killer!

The Librarian, appalled. Brad, happily BEGINS TO SING:

BRAD (CONT'D)

Serial, serial, killer, killer!
Serial, serial, killer; killer!

Drawing stares from other PATRONS. The Librarian, desperate to get the out of there. She practically trips over her feet, running to the stacks:

LIBRARIAN

I'll- I'll check in back-

Brad, gleefully finishing up his NEW SONG:

BRAD

Serial killlllllllllllller! Serial
killlllllllllllller!

EXT. LIBRARY -- EVENING

Graysmith and the kids bound down the front steps, each carrying HUGE STACKS of SERIAL KILLER BOOKS.

GRAYSMITH

(to Brad)

Nice work.

Brad grins back, happily.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE -- EVENING

A desk and walls off the living room. Cluttered with overstuffed bookshelves and bulletin boards.

Graysmith clears a space and deposits the NEW BOOKS on the desk. Looks around at the OLD BULLETIN BOARDS - Most of them covered with reproductions of JAMES BOND NOVEL COVERS.

He sighs. Deciding. He takes one down. Clearing a space on the wall. Then begins taking the plastic wrap off a NEW BULLETIN BOARD...

Cal and Brad watch from the LIVING ROOM.

CAL

Uh-oh.

BRAD

What's uh-oh?

CAL

Dad bought a new bulletin board.

BRAD

(agreeing)

Uh-oh.

Graysmith takes out a COPY of the CIPHER. Tacks it to the center of the board. As we push in on the SYMBOLS...

NAVY PROJECT LEADER (V.O.)
All right, people, listen up...

INT. NAVAL BASE -- SAN DIEGO -- NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE - U.S. NAVAL INTELLIGENCE - CRYPTOGRAPHY

A group of TEN CRYPTOGRAPHERS seated around a table with the cipher. The PROJECT LEADER addresses them.

NAVY PROJECT LEADER
The cipher is broken into three sections - each one is eight lines with seventeen symbols each...

INT. GOVERNMENT BUILDING -- WASHINGTON D.C. -- NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE - U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE - CODE INTELL

A similar gathering of codebreakers.

D.O.D. PROJECT LEADER
Each chunk was sent to a different California newspaper, with no way to differentiate in what order they should appear in the overall cipher...

INT. FBI BUILDING -- SAN FRANCISCO -- NIGHT

Another gathering of codebreakers.

SUPERIMPOSE - FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

F.B.I. PROJECT LEADER
There are no breaks between the symbols denoting different words, no numbers or clues to demonstrate substitution keys...

INT. CIA BUILDING -- LANGLEY, VIRGINIA -- NIGHT

Row upon row of codebreakers, hard at work.

SUPERIMPOSE - CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY - DECRYPTION

CIA PROJECT LEADER
The symbols themselves are taken from no less than seven different sources - contained within the cipher are Greek Characters, Morse Code, Alphabet Letters, Navy Semaphore, Weather Symbols, Astrological Signs...

Striding past one HARRIED ANALYST who runs his fingers through his hair in frustration.

HARRIED ANALYST
Fucking thing's unbreakable...

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE -- SALINAS, CALIFORNIA -- MORNING

SUPERIMPOSE - RESIDENCE OF DONALD HARDEN - BREAKFAST NOOK

A married couple, DONALD and BETTYE HARDEN sit drinking orange juice and pursuing their morning papers. Donald examines the PRINTED CODE. He studies it. A beat.

DONALD
You see this code thing?

BETTYE
Uh-huh.

Another beat.

DONALD
Wanna take a crack at it?

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE -- MORNING

Graysmith, surrounded by books on SERIAL KILLERS. Pouring through, fascinated. Dark circles under his eyes. CAL comes bounding down the stairs. Stops when he sees his dad.

CAL
Were you up *all night*?

GRAYSMITH
These books are *amazing*. You know who the last guy to commit murders and then write the press about them was? Who actually taunted the public? They still don't know his real name, but they called him Jack the Ripper!

Cal takes this in.

CAL
I'm gonna get some Cheerios.

He heads to the kitchen. Graysmith goes back to reading. The phone rings. Graysmith answers. Before he can say hello:

AVERY (O.S.)
(on the phone)
They cracked the code.

Graysmith drops the book.

GRAYSMITH
FBI? Naval Intelligence?

AVERY (O.S.)

A history teacher and his wife in Salinas.

GRAYSMITH

You're kidding.

AVERY (O.S.)

Nope. You were right, by the way. He doesn't give his name.

GRAYSMITH

So what does it say?

A beat.

AVERY

You better come in.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Graysmith, reading the translation. His face white. Avery next to him. We PAN DOWN the words, TYPED in BLOCK LETTERS...

I LIKE KILLING PEOPLE
BECAUSE IT IS SO MUCH
FUN IT IS MORE FUN THAN
KILLING WILD GAME IN
THE FOREST BECAUSE
MAN IS THE MOST DANGEROUS
ANIMAL OF ALL TO KILL
SOMETHING GIVES ME THE MOST
THRILLING EXPERIENCE IT IS EVEN BETTER THAN GETTING
YOUR ROCKS OFF WITH A GIRL
THE BEST PART OF IT IS THAT
WHEN I DIE I WILL BE REBORN
IN PARADISE AND THEY HAVE
KILLED WILL BECOME MY SLAVES
I WILL NOT GIVE YOU MY NAME
BECAUSE YOU WILL TRY TO SLOI
DOWN OR ATOP MY COLLECTILOG OF
SLAVES FOR THE AFTERLIFE.

REBORIETMETHPITI

Silence. Graysmith, shaken. Avery too.

AVERY

Why the hell is he even writing us in the first place?

GRAYSMITH

Govindan believes that for some sociopaths, the revelation of the act is the completion of it.

AVERY

And Govindan is... Who?

GRAYSMITH
I read a couple books. What are those letters at the bottom?

AVERY
Leftovers. Maybe an anagram of his name?

Graysmith shakes his head.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Yeah, I don't think so either.
(reading)
Man is the most dangerous animal of all...

GRAYSMITH
It's like that short story. "The Most Dangerous Game."

AVERY
Don't know it.

GRAYSMITH
Psycho guy has his own island, hunts men for sport?
(off Avery's blank look)
Don't you ever read?

AVERY
Don't you ever not?

GRAYSMITH
The phrasing is pretty specific. I should get a copy of the story...

Avery stares at him. Realizing:

AVERY
You started a bulletin board, didn't you?

A beat.

GRAYSMITH
Maybe...

AVERY
Robert, you know how you get when you're into something. You obsess-

GRAYSMITH
I don't obsess, I just get interested-

AVERY

Like when you drove to Pomona at three in the morning because you heard there was a guy selling his fourth edition of Hound of the Baskervilles?

GRAYSMITH

Third edition and that wasn't obsessive, I just happen to be a fan of literature.

AVERY

At three in the morning?

GRAYSMITH

I couldn't sleep.

AVERY

I'm just saying, I have to be close to this because I'm covering the story. But if I wasn't? I'd get as far away from this case as I could.

From outside the office:

COPY BOY (O.S.)

We got another letter!

Graysmith and Avery exchange a look and sprint out the door...

INT. EDITORIAL CONFERENCE ROOM -- MORNING

The EDITORIAL STAFF huddled around the table, already going through the various pages. Graysmith and Avery push through the crowd. Bumping into Theiriot.

THEIRIOT

It's mostly more of the same - details about the murders.

AVERY

(reading)

He taped a flashlight to the barrel of his gun. That's how he could hit them in the dark...

The asshole Editor eyes Graysmith.

EDITOR

Robert, we talked about your presence here...

Graysmith ignores him. Staring down at the pages...

GRAYSMITH

He gave himself a name...

And we push in on the first line of the letter:

**DEAR EDITOR,
THIS IS THE ZODIAC SPEAKING...**

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PACIFIC UNION COLLEGE CAMPUS -- DAY

Rolling fields and brick buildings. Two COLLEGE KIDS walk hand in hand across the campus. Young. Pretty. Smitten. They are BRYAN HARTNELL and CECELIA SHEPARD.

SUPERIMPOSE - Napa County, California - September 27, 1969

BRYAN

So what do you want to do on our last day together, Miss Shepard?

CECELIA

Have fun. Let's go to San Francisco. Eat lots of take out and get drunk.

Bryan laughs. Turns and kisses her on the forehead.

BRYAN

Actually, I have a better idea. But you have to trust me.

It's clear she does. Smiling, gazing into his eyes...

EXT. FOREST ROAD -- AFTERNOON

Bryan's white VOLKSWAGEN KARMANN GHIA CONVERTIBLE speeds around a winding road carved out of the forest above LAKE BERRYESSA. The only car around for miles.

CECELIA

Where is everybody?

BRYAN

It's off season.

Cecelia gazes down at the huge placid Lake.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

There used to be a town down there. The county decided the land would work better as a lake, so they flooded it. There's an entire hidden city under the water.

Cecelia takes in the vista. Amazed.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

So - better than bad San Francisco take out?

EXT. LAKE BERRYESSA -- TWILIGHT

The sun, creeping down. The light's gone golden.

Bryan and Cecelia lie side by side on a PENINSULA that sticks three hundred yards out from the shore. Surrounded on three sides by water, it has a SMALL GROVE OF TREES and a picnic table at the end of it. No one else in sight.

You can see for miles in literally every direction.

Bryan on his back, facing away from the shore. Cecelia on her stomach facing toward it.

She SEES SOMETHING. A FIGURE, 250 yards away. In the brush. He seems to be looking at them.

CECELIA

Somebody else is here.

BRYAN

It's a public park.

CECELIA

I think he's watching us.

BRYAN

Well, we're very good looking.

Cecelia playfully swats him. He tickles her back. She laughs and rolls away from his hands. Looking back to the brush.

The figure, GONE.

CECELIA

Where'd he go?

BRYAN

Don't worry about it. Probably a park ranger.

CECELIA

He wasn't.

BRYAN

Then a hunter-

CECELIA

There.

Bryan rolls over to look with her. We see NOTHING.

BRYAN

Where?

CECELIA

He just stepped behind that tree.

She points. The large oak, only TWENTY FEET AWAY. Much closer than the figure was before.

CECELIA (CONT'D)

How'd he get so close without me seeing him?

Bryan opens his mouth to respond...

When a MAN IN BLACK steps out from behind the tree.

A BLACK HOOD hangs over The man's head like a four corner EXECUTIONER'S MASK. Slits cut for eyeholes and over them, sunglasses. The hood's front covers his chest like a bib with a CROSS STITCHED into it which QUARTERS A CIRCLE.

The SYMBOL OF THE ZODIAC.

Protruding from the man's jacket is some white hollow-core plastic CLOTHESLINE. A SHEATHED BAYONET hangs from his left side, at least a foot long. On his right hangs a LEATHER HOLSTER. Flap open. Empty.

Empty because the Man HOLDS A GUN in his hand.

Bryan and Cecelia, frozen in fear. Neither speaks.

A surreal amount of time passes as the Man walks over to them. Other than the gun, he makes no offensive moves. He reaches them. Stands over them. Gun pointed down. Then:

THE MAN

I want your money and your car keys.
I need the car to go to Mexico.

Bryan exhales in relief. Just a robbery.

BRYAN

I'm gonna get my keys and wallet out of my pocket, okay? Don't shoot.

THE MAN

I won't.

The Man seems very calm. Bryan reaches into his pocket and pulls out the keys. Hands them to the Man. Bryan pulls out his wallet. Checks it. No bills. Only some change.

BRYAN

I only have seventy-six cents.

THE MAN

Seventy-six cents... I'm flat broke.

But the Man takes it. Pockets it. AND HOLSTERS THE GUN. Bryan and Cecelia relax a little.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Don't get any ideas, don't try and grab the gun.

CECELIA

(eyeing Bryan)

We won't, right?

BRYAN

Right. Why Mexico?

THE MAN

I killed a man.

Cecelia blanches.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Prison guard. I was in prison in Deer Lodge, Montana. I had to kill a guard to escape.

BRYAN

What were you in for?

The Man eyes Bryan. Cecelia explaining:

CECELIA

He's a sociology major.

BRYAN

Listen, all I have is that change, but if you really need help, maybe there are other things we can do.

THE MAN

Time's too short. I'll just take the car. Thank you, though.

BRYAN

You're welcome.

THE MAN

Lie on your stomach. I'm going to have to tie you up.

BRYAN

Come on, man...

THE MAN

I have to so you don't follow me. Just do it, and then I'll go.

Bryan looks to Cecelia. She just wants this over. Bryan sighs and rolls onto his stomach. The Man takes a section of clothesline and tosses it to Cecelia.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Tie him. Feet to hands.

Cecelia does. Loosely. The Man stands watching, a short distance away. Bryan, to Cecelia as she works:

BRYAN
(whispering)
Get him closer, I think I can get
the gun.

She eyes the holstered weapon and shakes her head.

CECELIA
(whispering)
Just do what he says and he'll go.

Bryan doesn't like it, but he goes along. Cecelia finishes.

THE MAN
Now you.

Cecelia lies down on her stomach, too. The Man takes a second length of rope and HOG-TIES her as well. Feet to hands. TIGHT. She GRUNTS as the ropes tighten.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
Sorry. I'm getting nervous.

He finishes and stands. Goes back over to Bryan.

THE MAN (CONT'D)
She tied you loose, didn't she?
Just hang on...

He RETIES Bryan. As tight as Cecelia. Then stands. Looking down at the two hog-tied kids.

BRYAN
Now that this is over, can I ask you
something?

THE MAN
Sure.

BRYAN
Was the gun really loaded?

THE MAN
Why wouldn't it be loaded?

BRYAN
Sometimes in robberies...

He trails off as the Man takes out the gun and pops the clip. Showing Bryan the BULLETS.

THE MAN
Good thing you didn't try and grab
it, huh?

BRYAN

Yeah.

Silence. The Man's not leaving. Bryan figures out why.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

My car's up on the road. Just cut straight through there and you'll find it.

The Man nods slowly. Then leans down between Bryan and Cecelia. Almost apologetically:

THE MAN

I'm going to have to stab you people.

A shock goes through Bryan and Cecelia. The Man slowly draws the FOOT LONG BAYONET from the scabbard.

CECELIA

Please don't....

THE MAN

I have to.

CECELIA

Please-

THE MAN

Shhhh....

He shushes her. She begins to cry. Then he looks between them. As if choosing. Bryan swallows hard.

BRYAN

Do me first. I'm chicken. I couldn't stand to see her stabbed.

The Man moves towards Bryan.

THE MAN

I'll do just that.

He KNEELS on Bryan. Full weight on him. Knees in his back.

He RAISES the KNIFE...

And Dear God, we're actually going to have to watch this...

He PLUNGES THE KNIFE DEEP BETWEEN BRYAN'S SHOULDERS. Rips it out. Plunges it again. Rips it out. Plunges again...

Blood flowing. On Cecelia. Crimson flecks on her face. And she's SCREAMING...

Bryan's face, in a daze. Jarred forcibly every time the Man stabs down. Tearing through meat. Tearing through him. His glazed eyes find Cecelia's.

BRYAN

...don't... ...look...

But she can't stop looking. Or screaming.

The Man lurches off of Bryan. Finished. In a bacchanal daze, he turns with the bayonet and HACKS DOWN INTO CECELIA...

She tries to roll. He just keeps stabbing. Her side. Her chest. To the HILT. Steel rips flesh and cracks bones. The man's knuckles, covered with gore. Still she screams...

On Bryan's blood splashed face. Dazed eyes still locked with Cecelia's. In hell. Unable to help, only to watch. Her screaming, now CHOKED WITH LIQUID...

The man hits an artery in her chest. The BLOOD FOUNTAINS.

Bryan can't take it. He breaks her gaze. Leaving the Man to continue his work on Cecelia...

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST ROAD -- NIGHT

Later. Above the Lake. Bathed in red and blue police lights and cordoned off. We move through the CROWD OF COPS towards BRYAN'S VOLKSWAGEN. Scrawled in marker on the Driver's Door:



VALLEJO

12-20-68

7-4-69

SEPT 27-69-6:30

BY KNIFE

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON - Graysmith's fingers gripping a pencil. SKETCHING.

GRAYSMITH (O.S.)

Three dates on the car door - the two Vallejo killings and now the one in Napa. Why Napa?

Pulling back to reveal it's a sketch of ZODIAC IN COSTUME.

GRAYSMITH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 What's he doing out of Vallejo? Did he follow the victims? Admittedly, the lake is a perfect isolated location, but still...

AVERY (O.S.)
 What are you drawing?

By now we can tell we're in

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- MORNING

GRAYSMITH
 The kid who survived at the lake, Bryan Hartnell - this is what he said Zodiac was wearing.

Avery takes it. Creepy.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)
 And then there's the weapon change - guns at the Vallejo scenes, but now knife and rope. Serial killers don't usually change weapons...

Overhearing, THEIRIOT pokes his head into the office.

THEIRIOT
 Zodiac?

AVERY
 (re: Graysmith)
 He started a bulletin board.

THEIRIOT
 God help us all.

AVERY
 Did he tell you his "Most Dangerous Game" theory yet?

THEIRIOT
 No, but please, Robert, regale us.

But Graysmith isn't listening. Instead, he SNATCHES the DRAWING back from Avery. Studying it intently...

AVERY
 Are you okay?

Graysmith's EYES GO WIDE as it clicks...

GRAYSMITH
 Oh, my God...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY -- EVENING

At a table, Graysmith frantically pages through a FILM BOOK. Avery, across from him, confused. Looking around.

AVERY

We're at the library.

(pause)

Why are we at the library?

GRAYSMITH

Here.

He turns the book to Avery and stabs the page. Avery looks.

A black and white FILM STILL from an old movie - a man DRESSED IDENTICALLY AS THE ZODIAC. Avery looks back up, stunned.

AVERY

What is this?

GRAYSMITH

The evil character of Count Zarroff in the 1932 silent movie adaptation of "The Most Dangerous Game".

(pause)

Paul. He's hunting people.

Graysmith and Avery stare at each other as we PRELAP the opening of Creedence's *Bad Moon Rising*...

DISSOLVE TO:

TV NEWS

NAPA POLICE CHIEF

The following is an advisory for all Northern California residents...

"I see... A bad moon rising..."

EXT. VARIOUS FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS -- NIGHT

Once teeming with TEENAGERS, now DESERTED after sundown...

NAPA POLICE CHIEF

Please keep your children inside after dark...

"I see... Trouble... on the way..."

EXT. LOVERS LANES -- NIGHT

Also deserted. We see several CARS, driving off...

NAPA POLICE CHIEF (V.O.)

If any parents are concerned about
sons or daughters sneaking off to
lovers lanes...

"I see... earthquakes and lightning..."

INT. TEENAGER'S HOUSES -- NIGHT

NAPA POLICE CHIEF (V.O.)

We suggest you allow them to neck
inside your house...

A Teenage boy and girl frenching on the couch. An unhappy
dad watches from the doorway. Better this than dead...

"I see... bad times today..."

EXT. VALLEJO TOWN SQUARE -- NIGHT

Dozens of CANDLES and PICTURES of victims lay on a shrine.
The American Flag, still flying at half mast....

"Don't go round tonight..."

EXT. NAPA POLICE HEADQUARTERS -- NIGHT

ANGRY PICKETERS holding SIGNS with anti-police and Zodiac
messages. Shouting at the COPS.

"Cause it's bound to take your life..."

INT. YELLOW CAB -- NIGHT

THE CAB, pulling to a stop in a posh part of the city. The
sidewalks are deserted.

"...there's... A bad moon... On the rise."

As the Creedence Song concludes on the radio.

CAB DRIVER

That's six-fifty-

BOOM! The Cabbie's HEAD EXPLODES onto the windshield and
dashboard, showering it with gore. He slumps, obviously
dead. Shot by his PASSENGER, who we don't see.

Silence. As we begin to pull away from the BLOODY CAB...

SUPERIMPOSE - San Francisco - October 10, 1969

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- NIGHT

The upper hallway. Graysmith, walking past his sons' room.
Overhearing:

CAL (O.S.)

...Zodiac...

Graysmith stops. Eavesdropping.

BRAD (O.S.)

Is Daddy gonna catch him?

CAL (O.S.)

Of course not.

BRAD (O.S.)

Why?

CAL (O.S.)

Grow up, Brad. Dad's just a cartoonist.

Graysmith's face falls...

INT. BRAD AND CAL'S ROOM -- NIGHT

BRAD

Then who is gonna catch him?

CAL

The same people who always catch the bad guys.

BRAD

(hopeful)

The good guy?

Cal smiles at his younger brother.

CAL

Yeah. The good guy.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

A married couple, asleep. The PHONE RINGS. The man groggily reaches for it. Misses. Knocks over the bedside lamp. CRASH!

TOSCHI (O.S.)

Ah, crap...

Wife CAROL switches on her lamp. The man sits up and we get our first real look at INSPECTOR DAVE TOSCHI. Handsome, Italian-American. And a pretty decent good guy.

Bleary eyed, he answers the phone.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Whoever this is, you owe me one lamp.

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)

(on phone)

Yellow cab driver's been shot three blocks from the Presidio.

TOSCHI

I didn't do it. I've been with Carol all night, she can vouch.

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)

Pick me up in twenty.

TOSCHI

Let me just describe the lamp you're gonna buy for me. Mahogany base with a stained glass shade-

CLICK.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Hello?

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET CORNER -- NIGHT

A lone cop stands waiting. Plain clothes. Silver hair. Kind face. This is BILL ARMSTRONG. A CAR pulls up to the corner, driven by Toschi. Armstrong gets in.

INT. TOSCHI'S CAR (MOVING) -- NIGHT

TOSCHI

I was asleep.

ARMSTRONG

I called Operations, had them lock off the cab and get uniforms to secure the crowd.

TOSCHI

Seriously, dead asleep. My eyes were closed and everything.

ARMSTRONG

You ever try Japanese food?

(off Toschi's look)

I don't mean like sushi, I mean Japanese food.

TOSCHI

Like the non raw stuff?

ARMSTRONG

Yeah.

TOSCHI

No. You?

ARMSTRONG

No. Always wanted to, though.

TOSCHI

Then why don't you?

Armstrong stares back out the window.

ARMSTRONG

Guess I haven't gotten around to it.

EXT. WASHINGTON AND CHERRY -- NIGHT

CHOOM! Huge KLIEG LIGHTS snap on, illuminating the entire block. Uniforms work through the crowd, comparing faces to a physical description they've gotten. M.P.'s guard the scene, being heckled for Vietnam by onlookers.

Toschi pulls to a halt at the edge of this circus and gets out along with Armstrong. They take it all in. Toschi straightens his signature bow tie as A UNIFORM approaches.

UNIFORM

Looks like a botched cab robbery. We got foot patrols going through the park checking tree to tree and the dogs are on their way. Victim's name was Paul Lee Stine. Perp fired one shot, back of the head, grabbed the driver's wallet, and tore off a big chunk of his shirt to boot.

TOSCHI

He took the Driver's shirt?

UNIFORM

A piece of his shirt. Most of it's still on him.

TOSCHI

That's new.

ARMSTRONG

Witnesses?

UNIFORM

Not exactly. Two kids who called it in clocked the perp from that window.

He points to a TWO STORY HOUSE across the street.

UNIFORM (CONT'D)

Not a good view - dark jacket, crewcut hair, stocky, Caucasian.

TOSCHI

(to Armstrong)

You want the body or the scene?

ARMSTRONG

Scene.

TOSCHI

Right.

The partners split up. A well practiced ritual. Armstrong works the crowd, Toschi goes to the body. Reaching the cab where LAB TECHS are dusting down the car and photographing the DRIVER, who still lies in the bloody front seat.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Tell me a story, Bobby.

FINGERPRINT TECH

Perp wiped the cab pretty good.
We're gonna back check prints he
missed against the fare book.

(grinning)

New tie?

TOSCHI

I hate you.

Toschi flips open his notebook and begins to SKETCH the scene. He works quickly and methodically, only pausing to use a small TAPE MEASURE to gauge distances between the head and the dashboard, body and the door, etc. Armstrong walks up.

ARMSTRONG

Nothing from the crowd.

TOSCHI

Well, there's a surprise.
(to the Photographer)
Got enough?

The PHOTOGRAPHER nods.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Let's roll him.

He and Armstrong take hold of the body. As they hoist him:

ARMSTRONG

Having fun yet?

TOSCHI

I was asleep.

They roll the body out of the cab and onto the pavement. The crowd MURMURS at the sight of the corpse on the street. Toschi leans in to check the cab's floor. Discovering:

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

We got a casing. Single. Nine mil.

The Photographer leans in. Flashbulbs pop. Documenting the position of the shiny copper 9mm shell casing. Toschi measures it's position. Adds it to the sketch.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Tweezers?

A LAB TECH hands him tweezers. Toschi gingerly bags the casing. Then scans the car with the flashlight again. Stops. Seeing something.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

What's that?

Armstrong follows the beam - a BLOODY PALM SPLOTCH on the passenger divider between windows.

ARMSTRONG

Right hand?

Toschi nods slowly. Thinking it through.

TOSCHI

Driver's body was laid out wrong for that. He wouldn't have reached over that far.

They exchange a look. Only the Killer could have made that print. A beat. They both turn to the Fingerprint Tech...

TOSCHI AND ARMSTRONG

(in unison)

Bobby?

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- MAIL ROOM -- DAY

LUCY, a mail room worker. Putting letters through an ELECTRONIC SORTER. CLOSE on the RETURN ADDRESSES as they riffle past at high speed. The sorter finishes the batch. Stops at the last one.

A CROSSED CIRCLE in the return address corner.

Lucy stares at it. Knowing what it means. The address on the front in BLUE FELT PEN:

SF CHRONICLE, SAN FRAN, CALIF..

PLEASE RUSH TO EDITOR

PLEASE RUSH TO EDITOR.

She takes a letter opener and slices open the top...

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Graysmith, sketching. From down the hall comes Lucy's BLOOD CURDLING SCREAM!

THE MAN (V.O.)

This is the Zodiac speaking...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- DAY

Toschi and Armstrong push through the revolving doors into the newspaper's lobby...

THE MAN (V.O.)

I am the murderer of the taxi driver over by Washington Street and Maple Street last night...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE HALLWAYS -- DAY

Toschi and Armstrong stride down the corridor towards the conference room, past staring REPORTERS...

THE MAN (V.O.)

To prove this, here is a blood stained piece of his shirt...

CUT TO:

A 3 by 5 PIECE of grey and white SHIRT CLOTH, SOAKED IN BLOOD. Neatly torn, not cut. It sits on a table in

INT. EDITORIAL CONFERENCE ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Surrounded by Graysmith, Avery, Theiriot, and the Editorial staff. Next to it is the handwritten letter...

THE MAN (V.O.)

I am the same man who did in the people in the North Bay Area. The S.F. Police could have caught me last night if they had searched the park properly instead of holding road races. The car drivers should have just parked their cars and sat their quietly waiting for me to come out of cover.

The doors open and Toschi and Armstrong enter. Theiriot rises to his feet. Handshakes are exchanged.

THEIRIOT

Charles de Theiriot, publisher of the Chronicle.

TOSCHI

Dave Toschi, my partner Bill Armstrong. Where's the shirt?

Theiriot leads him over to the table. Toschi and Armstrong look at the bloodstained cloth. Then they share a look. Fuck. Avery notices.

AVERY
That's really it, isn't it?

TOSCHI
I understand he takes credit for the
Stine killing in the letter?

GRAYSMITH
It's worse than that.

The room turns to look at him. The asshole editor:

EDITOR
Robert...

Graysmith frowns. Heads for the door. Once again KICKED
OUT. When he's gone, Toschi turns back to Theiriot.

TOSCHI
What did he mean "worse"?

THEIRIOT
Read the last part.

Toschi stands over the letter and does just that.

TOSCHI
(reading)
School children make nice targets.
I think I shall wipe out a school
bus some morning. Just shoot out
the front tire and the pick off the
kiddies as they come bouncing out...
(pause)
Jesus Christ. Who handles buses-
Department of Transportation?

ARMSTRONG
School board, I think-

Toschi, heading for the door:

TOSCHI
We'll call from the car. Bag it,
let's go.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Graysmith sees the Detectives exit the Conference Room. He
snatches up several of his books and follows them. Toschi
and Armstrong in rapid conference as they walk:

TOSCHI
We need lab matches on blood and
fabric-

ARMSTRONG
What about handwriting?

TOSCHI
Yeah- yeah- Sherwood Morrill.

ARMSTRONG
Questioned Documents? That's in
Sacramento-

They reach the elevator. Toschi stabs the button impatiently.

TOSCHI
We need the best. I'm gonna call
Napa and Vallejo, pull all the other
letters and get them up to Sherwood-

ARMSTRONG
They're not gonna want to cooperate
with the big city boys-

TOSCHI
Tough-

GRAYSMITH
Excuse me, Inspector?

Toschi and Armstrong turn to see Graysmith. Nervously
fidgeting. Holding the books.

TOSCHI
You're the guy they kicked out.

GRAYSMITH
Robert Graysmith. I just- I had a
thought. About the code-

ARMSTRONG
Code was already broken.

GRAYSMITH
I know, I- I've been reading these-
(fumbling with them)
Books on- On ciphers- and I thought
if we could figure what book Zodiac
used to come up with the code, maybe
we could learn more about him-

ARMSTRONG
Or her.

GRAYSMITH
Well, yeah- but serial killers are
almost uniformly male.

Armstrong TAPS HIS BADGE. Annoyed.

ARMSTRONG
I know.

GRAYSMITH
I just- What if he sends another
cipher-

TOSCHI
(has had enough)
Look, Ronald-

GRAYSMITH
Robert.

TOSCHI
Robert, right. You're a reporter?

GRAYSMITH
Cartoonist.

Armstrong rolls his eyes.

TOSCHI
Robert, we appreciate that you're
trying to help, but we have a lot of
qualified people working on this-

The elevator DINGS open behind the cops. They step in.
Toschi gives Graysmith a kind smile..

TOSCHI (CONT'D)
Just let us handle it, okay?

The doors close between them.

INT. CLUTTERED OFFICE -- DAY

Bearclaw in mouth and phone to ear, MORRILL maneuvers past
gingerly balanced reams of files that populate the office.
The best handwriting man on the West Coast.

SUPERIMPOSE - Sherwood Morrill - Chief of Questioned Documents

TOSCHI (O.S.)
(through phone)
Three confirmed Zodiac letters, one
possible. We need handwriting
confirmation on the possible fast.
He's threatening to take out kids,
Sherwood.

MORRILL
I'll have something by tomorrow.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- EVENING

The third floor offices. The riot has gathered the entire
staff. We PAN across their faces as he speaks...

THEIRIOT

In cooperation with the police, we will run the Zodiac letter without including the threat on school children. We do not want to start a citywide panic so I'm asking all of you to keep this confidential.

...ending on Graysmith. His face, wracked with concern.

THEIRIOT (CONT'D)

Just go about your daily business...

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- NIGHT

Graysmith, wearing the same expression. Watching his KIDS from the living room door, horsing around on the couch. His DAILY BUSINESS. Their gales of laughter fill the room...

INT. OFFICE OF QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS -- NIGHT

Wearing magnifying glasses, Morrill studies Zodiac letters side by side. Tracing the pen strokes with his eyes. Similarities in lower case r's. Meticulous, slow work...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET -- MORNING

Graysmith stands on a corner with Cal, who's dressed for school. A little uncomfortable with his father's presence.

CAL

You don't have to wait with me.

GRAYSMITH

It's okay. I want to.

Cal rolls his eyes. *Whatever, Dad.* Graysmith peers down the street. A YELLOW SCHOOL BUS rounds the corner a few blocks down. Rumbling towards them. He exhales. Nervous.

Cal slings his backpack over his shoulder as the bus approaches. Graysmith watches his son. Preparing to get on. Preparing to become a possible Zodiac target.

The bus pulls to a stop. The Driver cranks open the door. A beat. Cal takes a step forward to get on...

Graysmith can't take it. STOPS HIM.

CAL

Dad?

Graysmith looks to the Driver. Apologetic.

GRAYSMITH

I'm gonna drive him myself today.

The Driver shrugs and puts the bus in gear. Graysmith leads a confused Cal back to the house to get the car...

INT. TOSCHI HOME -- MORNING

Toschi and wife Carol, having breakfast in silence. He looks harried. She notices. Concerned:

CAROL

Are you feeling all right?

Toschi doesn't respond. Lost in thought. The PHONE RINGS. Toschi practically bolts out of his chair to get it...

TOSCHI

Hello?

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)

(through phone)

Handwriting's a match.

CUT TO:

TELEVISION NEWS REPORT

ANCHORMAN

The Zodiac Killer has come to San Francisco.

Cut to SHOTS OF THE CITY - concerned citizens, crime photos of Stine's Cab, etc.

ANCHORMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Confirmation came early this morning that his latest taunting letter takes credit for the murder of San Francisco cab driver Paul Stine, who was shot once in the back of the head execution style several nights ago. If you think you know who the Zodiac is, you can call the newly formed tipline at 655-9801...

INT. S.F.P.D. BASEMENT -- ZODIAC TIPLINE -- MORNING

A lone COLLEGE INTERN mans a SWITCHBOARD - the Zodiac Tipline. Taking calls as fast as he can. Overwhelmed.

COLLEGE KID

I- uhhhh- I need some help down here!

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT --NIGHT

The place has become ZODIAC CENTRAL. Suspect pictures on every wall, timelines on chalk boards and stacks and stacks of hundreds of slips on desks. All ZODIAC TIPS. Armstrong, flipping through his stack:

ARMSTRONG

"A guy who lives down the street
from me is the Zodiac"...

(next one)

"A guy in my church is the Zodiac"...

(flipping faster)

Guy down the street, guy down the
street, guy in my AA Meeting, guy
down the street-

Interrupted by their CAPTAIN MARTIN LEE who strides out of
his office. Taking in the new Zodiac themed decor.

CAPTAIN LEE

Where's the name?

ARMSTRONG

The what?

CAPTAIN LEE

Our suspect, Inspector. Who is he?

Toschi taps a huge stack of files.

TOSCHI

We've got about three hundred of
them.

ARMSTRONG

With at least a hundred new ones
coming in a day-

CAPTAIN LEE

Northern California is in a full-on
state of panic and you have three
hundred suspects?

TOSCHI

Well, really only about ninety of
those are good suspects-

CAPTAIN LEE

I've detailed you eight detectives.
Get it done.

INT. COFFEE ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Toschi and Armstrong sit in silence on torn couches in the
cops' makeshift lounge. Tired. Dour. Alone.

TOSCHI

We're not gonna luck our way though
this one, are we?

Armstrong shakes his head. Sips his coffee.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

This guy's different. This guy's...

Armstrong is quiet for a long time. Then:

ARMSTRONG
It's a career killer, Dave.

Toschi looks up.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
All the attention, all the press?
We don't put this one down, it puts
us down, you hear what I'm saying?

Toschi nods, slowly.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
This one's all or nothing.

A SECRETARY pokes her head in, interrupting:

SECRETARY
Toschi, you got Paul Avery from the
Chronicle on line two.

Toschi grabs a phone and punches through the call.

TOSCHI
Paul?

INT. AVERY'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Avery, typing a Zodiac Article. Phone cradled on his
shoulder. INTERCUT:

AVERY
I need a quote for the article.

TOSCHI
We're "pursuing all leads."

AVERY
That'll really set the front page on
fire, thanks.

Toschi, about to hang up when

AVERY (CONT'D)
Hey, I heard you were accosted by
our cartoonist on the way out.

TOSCHI
Yeah, what's the deal with that guy?

AVERY
Robert?
(chuckling)
Robert is the original boy scout.

TOSCHI
What do you mean?

AVERY
Let me put it this way - I asked him
once why he became a cartoonist.
Know what he said? Because he wants
to change the world.
(smiles)
Doesn't drink, smoke, or curse, dotes
on his kids, gives to every charity
he can find.

TOSCHI
For a cartoonist, he was pretty
interested in the case.

AVERY
Robert doesn't get interested, he
gets swallowed whole. I'll tell you
something else, though...

He looks through the glass partition in his office to see
GRAYSMITH, working at his desk....

AVERY (CONT'D)
I've never seen him start anything
he didn't finish.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Many of the old book covers are gone, replaced by Zodiac
CASE EVIDENCE. Newspaper clippings of Avery's articles,
photos of the victims, and photocopies of the letters.
Graysmith, pouring over them when

CAL (O.S.)
You okay, Dad?

Graysmith looks up, startled, to see his oldest son at the
door. He gives his boy a reassuring smile.

GRAYSMITH
Of course.

CAL
You've been weird lately. With all
this Zodiac stuff.

GRAYSMITH
It's just a hobby.

CAL
(unsure)
Like the book collecting?

GRAYSMITH
Yeah. Like the book collecting.

Cal studies him. Not buying it. He turns to go.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Cal?

Cal turns back.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D) -

I'm gonna keep driving you and your brother to school for awhile, okay?

Cal shrugs. Another *Whatever, Dad*. He climbs the stairs to bed. Graysmith watches his son go. His whole world.

He turns back to his work. Re-examining the FIRST ZODIAC LETTER. Scanning until he reaches the line

4th July

1. Girl was wearing patterned slacks

He frowns. Rereads the line. CIRCLES it...

INT. AVERY'S OFFICE -- MORNING

GRAYSMITH (O.S.)

How did he know what she was wearing?

Avery looks up as Graysmith enters.

AVERY

What?

GRAYSMITH

Darlene Ferrin. Zodiac writes that she was wearing patterned slacks.

AVERY

And she was.

GRAYSMITH

He walks up to the car in total darkness, shoots them with a flashlight taped to his gun, walks away instantly - and he remembers her *pants*?

Avery sighs.

AVERY

I'm sure if it were something, Toschi would have picked up on it by now.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- MORNING

TOSCHI

How did Zodiac know what Darlene Ferrin was wearing?

Armstrong looks up from his coffee. Toschi, standing over him. Holding a report.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Mike Mageau's statement. Zodiac never lingered by the car. Never took stock of the scene.

ARMSTRONG

You think the key to the Zodiac case lies within a woman's pants.

(musing)

There's a joke in there somewhere...

TOSCHI

Get in touch with Vallejo, we need a complete work up on Darlene - who she knew, who knew her, friends, enemies, the whole shebang. Meantime, let's talk about the print in the cab...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY

Graysmith and Avery stroll down the street, eating hotdogs. Having the SAME DISCUSSION.

GRAYSMITH

The print Zodiac left in the cab - they run it through some sort of database?

AVERY

Combined database - local and federal. You ever been arrested, they have your print.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

ARMSTRONG

There's no match for the print in the database.

TOSCHI

This man has killed four people in cold blood. How is it possible for someone that psychotic to have never been fingerprinted before? Hell, how is it possible he left one in the first place?

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY

GRAYSMITH

Think about it. Four crime scenes - two in Vallejo, one at Berryessa, one here. No prints at the Vallejo scenes, no prints at Berryessa, and no prints on the letters. And every surviving Zodiac victim says the killer wore gloves...

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

TOSCHI

So how does our master criminal suddenly come to San Fran and leave a bloody latent for the world to see? I mean, he wiped down the fucking cab but managed to miss this one?

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY

GRAYSMITH

There's something else. First attack, David Farraday, Betty Lou Jensen. Both die, but from there on out, he only manages to kill the women.

AVERY

Not for lack of trying.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

TOSCHI

But that's not the point. Second attack, Mike Mageau lives, Darlene Ferrin dies. Third attack, Bryan Hartnell lives, Cecelia Shepard dies...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY

GRAYSMITH

He gets so caught up with the women, he forgets to finish off the men.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

TOSCHI

They were all couples, all in lovers lane type spots. And then there's the water thing...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY

GRAYSMITH

Geographically, every attack took place near either a physical body of water, or something with a water based name.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

TOSCHI

Lake Herman Road, Blue Rock Springs Road, and Lake Berryessa...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY

GRAYSMITH

A single male cab driver killed on the corner of Washington and Cherry streets doesn't fit the profile.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

Toschi sighs. Rubbing his temples.

ARMSTRONG

What the fuck is this guy doing in San Francisco, Dave?

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- DAY

Graysmith and Avery have reached the steps of the CHRONICLE.

GRAYSMITH

Maybe he's breaking the profile.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

Toschi shakes his head. Considering. From offscreen:

COP (O.S.)

You guys better get over here!

Toschi and Armstrong hurry into the COFFEE ROOM where they find a group of cops watching a PRESS CONFERENCE ON TV:

ATTORNEY GENERAL

(on television)

...in the interest of California families, I felt it was imperative you receive this information now - the Zodiac has threatened to "wipe out a school bus and pick off the kiddies as they come bouncing off".

Toschi CURSES loudly...

INT. S.F.P.D. BASEMENT -- ZODIAC TIPLINE -- DAY

As ALL FIFTY LIGHTS on the tipline switchboard GO RED, CLOGGED WITH CALLS. The College Kid, overwhelmed.

COLLEGE KID

Holy SHIT!

EXT. BUS GARAGE -- NIGHT

Toschi and Armstrong walk briskly from their car, passing ROWS OF SCHOOL BUSES on the way to a LARGE GARAGE. Toschi, looking grim. Wearing his game face.

ARMSTRONG

You don't have to do this-

TOSCHI

I want to.

ARMSTRONG

Before you go in, I talked to Vallejo - Darlene Ferrin was being followed.

Toschi stops in his tracks.

TOSCHI

What?

ARMSTRONG

Vallejo P.D. was already onto it.

TOSCHI

And they didn't tell us?

ARMSTRONG

Zodiac's their Holy Grail, Dave. They want to close it first. Anyway, this guy would come by where she waitressed, get into fights with her, that kind of thing. When she and her hubby moved into their new digs, they threw a painting party-

TOSCHI

What's a painting party?

ARMSTRONG

It's a party where people come over and help you paint. I talked to Darlene's sisters, Pam and Linda, apparently this guy showed up and Darlene was scared shitless of him. Stocky, balding, glasses-

TOSCHI

Our Zodiac description...

ARMSTRONG

Yeah.

TOSCHI

What's the name?

ARMSTRONG

Sisters can't remember. Said it was short - like a nickname or something.

TOSCHI

Rick? Jon? Sam?

ARMSTRONG

They don't know. Vallejo's on it.

TOSCHI

Fuck Vallejo, we gotta be on it-

ARMSTRONG

Darlene died in their jurisdiction, Dave. Gotta let them take lead.

TOSCHI

This is the guy, Bill.

ARMSTRONG

Maybe. But in the meantime, our job is the Stine murder.

(points to the garage)

And keeping those people alive.

INT. BUS GARAGE -- NIGHT

A collection of BUS DRIVERS sit in folding chairs. Smoking. Bleary eyed. Toschi sits in front. Looking just as bad.

TOSCHI

Your A Number One priority is the kids - you hear gunshots, you tell them to get down on the ground, below the windows. Lay on the horn and keep driving. This guy's a marksman, so he'd probably go for the tires first - if he manages to hit one, you drive on the fucking rims till you get to a well populated area, then duck and cover with the kids.

On the drivers. Shell shocked. Toschi rubs his brow.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Look, I know this is nuts. I know you didn't sign up for this. But we are doing everything we can-

WOMAN BUS DRIVER

Like what?

Toschi surprised by the interruption. Looks to see a large WOMAN BUS DRIVER in the second row.

WOMAN BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

Cops always sling that bullshit. I got three kids too scared of Zodiac to go near the windows in our house much less to school. So what are you doing for them?

A general MURMURING of support from the other drivers. Toschi, shocked into silence.

WOMAN BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

That's what I thought. C'mon, Sully.

The Woman and several others rise to leave in disgust. Toschi, watching them go. Paralyzed. Finally...

TOSCHI

I will find this man.

The Woman turns back to see Toschi stand up. Arms at his sides. Staring her in the eye. DEADLY SERIOUS.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

I will find this man and I will put him in jail. I will make this city safe again. I swear to God.

This has become more than a case to him. The Woman sees this in his eyes. She and the others retake their seats.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S CAR (MOVING) -- MORNING

Graysmith, driving the kids to school. Stonefaced. Cal, watching him from the back. Knowing now why his father was so insistent on driving them. No one speaks.

Both boys, scared.

As we hear a HELICOPTER SOAR overhead...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO SKYLINE -- MORNING

The POLICE HELICOPTER cuts through the sky. Tracking a SCHOOL BUS as it begins its morning route. A SNIPER sits by the chopper door, rifle at the ready.

CHOPPER PILOT (O.S.)

(filtered)

Principal is taking a left on Mission.
Situation is five by.

As the Bus takes a left, the chopper soars out of frame, following. Across the city we see DOZENS OF SIMILAR CHOPPERS, all tracking buses...

EXT. NAPA COUNTY -- MORNING

A SMALL PLANE zooms over WOODED MOUNTAINS. A SCHOOL BUS drives on the road carved out below. A similar situation.

SUPERIMPOSE - *Napa County, California*

INT. SCHOOL BUS (MOVING) -- MORNING

Elementary school kids horse around. Hair is pulled. Fart jokes are made. It's your typical dull roar of noise.

The DRIVER scans the empty road in front of him. Nervous.

A GIRL'S SCREAM from the back of the bus JOLTS him. He SWERVES, eyes flying to the huge rear view. She's smiling, screaming because a boy she likes gave her a noogie. The kids don't even notice the swerve. The Driver wipes his brow. Chuckles to himself. Takes a gulp of coffee.

And that's when it happens.

BOOM! An explosion that sounds like a SHOTGUN BLAST! Hot coffee splatters across the Driver's lap as the bus careens across the center lane! Struggling to maintain control:

BUS DRIVER

Get on the floor! Hug the floor!

Screaming and crying for real now, the kids hit the deck. Keeping his head below the dash, the Driver FLOORS IT. Just trying to make it to a populated area, he keys his radio...

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)

HE'S HERE!

EXT. TOWN SQUARE -- MORNING

Pedestrians look up as the School Bus SCREAMS around a corner, SPARKS SHOOTING from the rim scraping the concrete as MOLTEN CHUNKS of RUBBER fly off the ruined back tire!

The Driver SLAMS on the brakes, the Bus SKIDDING up onto a curb of the large grassy square. Children POUR screaming out of the bus, the Driver shouting as they run:

BUS DRIVER

Get to cover!

Pandemonium. The Pedestrians SCATTER, caught up in the panic. Several of the kids TRIP halfway across the grass. The Driver, ducking any potential sniper shots, goes back, scooping one up under each arm...

In under thirty seconds the TOWN SQUARE EMPTIES.

Silence.

INT. AVERY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Avery types up the headline - **CITY OF FEAR - WHERE WILL ZODIAC STRIKE NEXT?** Graysmith, reading over his shoulder

GRAYSMITH

"Bus Driver in Napa had a blow out, thought he was getting shot at--"

AVERY

But wasn't. Whole state's going nuts over this thing.

GRAYSMITH

I've been thinking, I should tell the cops about "The Most Dangerous Game"--

AVERY

They already put it together.
(off Graysmith's look)
They're cops, Robert, it's what they do. Do yourself a favor. Go back to collecting books.

INT. TOSCHI HOME -- EVENING

Toschi sits in his easy chair. Big band on the phonograph. Reading "The Most Dangerous Game". Carol walks past.

CAROL

Business or pleasure?

TOSCHI

Business.

He doesn't look up. She watches him.

CAROL

How's it going?

TOSCHI

Fine.

A beat.

CAROL

Why won't you talk to me about this case, David?

Before he can answer, the phone rings. He goes to it.

TOSCHI

Toschi.

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)

(through phone)
You better come in.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- NIGHT

As Toschi walks through the door:

ARMSTRONG

Andrew Walker. That's the name of the man who was following Darlene Ferrin.

TOSCHI

Holy shit, do they-

ARMSTRONG

They've got him. Have since last night. Tip came from Darlene's older sister, Pam.

TOSCHI

(realizing)

Andrew for Andy, Andy's a nickname, the other sister said-

ARMSTRONG

He's the one from the painting party.

TOSCHI

(elated)

And they got him.

ARMSTRONG

Dave-

TOSCHI

Are they testing handwriting and-

ARMSTRONG

They did it already. Handwriting and prints. No match.

Toschi blinks. Not comprehending.

TOSCHI

What? No, he's- the one who was following her-

ARMSTRONG

Yes, and his handwriting and fingerprints didn't match Zodiac. It's a dead end, Dave.

(softly)

He's not the guy.

Silence. Toschi looks up at him.

TOSCHI

You know what this means, don't you?

Armstrong shakes his head.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)
Someone else is gonna die.

EXT. HIGHWAY 132 -- NIGHT

Outside of Modesto. It's late. Almost no one on the road.
A lone duster of a SEDAN rattles down the highway.

SUPERIMPOSE - March 22, 1970

INT. SEDAN (MOVING) -- NIGHT

KATHLEEN JOHNS is at the wheel. Sweet face, 30's. Guzzling
coffee, trying to stay awake. Checks the rearview. Nobody.
Changes lanes.

As if from nowhere, HEADLIGHTS are suddenly behind her.

Deja vu for us, just strange for her. Kathleen signals.
Changing lanes so the HEADLIGHTS can pass.

They don't.

They pull up behind her. FLASHING, now. Kathleen frowns.
Keeps driving. The other driver becomes more insistent.
HONKING. Motioning for her to pull over.

Finally she does. Pulling to a halt on the SHOULDER of the
road. The other car pulls in behind her.

And as it does, we PAN DOWN to see...

Kathleen's SLEEPING BABY on the passenger seat next to her.

A MAN gets out of his car and walks up. WE DON'T SEE HIS
FACE. Kathleen, nervous. Thinking maybe this wasn't the
best idea. She reaches for her key to restart the car when:

THE MAN (O.S.)
(apologetic)
I hope I didn't scare you. Your
right wheel is loose.

Kathleen relaxes. Feeling dumb for being scared.

KATHLEEN
Really?

THE MAN (O.S.)
I didn't want you to wreck and get
stranded. I could tighten the lugs
for you.

KATHLEEN
Would you?

THE MAN (O.S.)
Can't be too careful out here.

He goes back to his car and retrieves a LUG WRENCH. Kneels down behind her back tire, out of sight.

He's down there a long time. Kathleen checks her rearview. Can't see him. Just as she's getting nervous again....

THE MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

All done.

She turns, he's STANDING by the passenger door.

THE MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Cute baby. Have a good night.

He walks away. Kathleen, breathes a huge sigh of relief.

She starts the car and puts it in drive...

She only gets fifty yards when her RIGHT WHEEL CRUNCHES OFF the axle in a SHOWER OF SPARKS! Kathleen fights for control, as the Sedan SWERVES all over the road. She wrenches the wheel right, finally managing to pilot it to the shoulder.

Silence. Kathleen sits there. Breathing hard.

THE MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

She JUMPS at his voice. He's right by the door again.

THE MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Must've been worse than I thought.
I could give you a lift to the service station.

KATHLEEN

I don't want to be a bother-

THE MAN (O.S.)

No bother. Come on.

He OPENS her door for her. Kathleen, deciding. She gathers up her baby and follows the man to his PARKED CAR.

INT. MAN'S CAR -- NIGHT

A complete mess. Trash and wrappers everywhere. Kathleen slides in the passenger seat. Putting her baby on her lap. The Man shifts into drive. They pull back onto the highway.

Riding in silence. Quite fast, too. Kathleen, uncomfortable.

KATHLEEN

So... do you always go around helping people on the road like this?

The Man, staring off at the passing woods.

THE MAN

When I get through with them, they
don't need help.

And they're SPEEDING UP. Doing near 70. The Man, CRANKING
DOWN his WINDOW. Howling air fills the car. Kathleen's
Baby WHINES at the cold.

KATHLEEN

Shhhhhh. It's okay. Mommy's here.

The Man looks over at her. Casually:

THE MAN

I'm going to throw your baby out the
window.

Kathleen's face turns to HORROR as we

CUT TO:

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Graysmith packs up his things when Avery enters. One look
at his face says it all. Graysmith stops what he's doing.

GRAYSMITH

Zodiac?

AVERY

A woman and her baby...

Graysmith can't form words. But we realize, the look on
Avery's face - it's not shock. It's amazement.

AVERY (CONT'D)

No, Robert, you don't understand.
They escaped.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Graysmith and Avery sit. Avery, recounting what he's heard.

AVERY

The guy turns to her and says "I'm
gonna throw your baby out the window".

GRAYSMITH

Jesus...

AVERY

She begs him not to. He tells her
she's gonna die. He's driving around
all these back roads, but he gets
lost. Stops the car to put in reverse
and she jumps, baby and all. Runs
like hell, gets away.

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)

Goes to the cops. They're about to show her mug shots when she sees the Zodiac composite on the wall, points at it and screams - "That's him".

GRAYSMITH

That's a hell of a story.

AVERY

You ain't lying.

He slugs back the rest of his drink. Graysmith sips his Shirley Temple and looks across the bar.

GRAYSMITH

Isn't that Toschi?

It is. He sits alone, nursing a Manhattan.

AVERY

He comes in here sometimes. Always alone. Always drinks Manhattans.

GRAYSMITH

How do you think he does it?

We MOVE IN on Toschi as Graysmith speaks.

GRAYSMITH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

For six months, you got the whole city scared. And they're all looking to you. To catch the guy. To take away the fear. How do you live with that?

Toschi pays for his drink. Orders another.

AVERY (O.S.)

What he needs is a break...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE ON - Multiple sheets of paper spread out across the conference table. Covered with Zodiac's familiar scrawl.

THEIRIOT (O.S.)

Two letters. Mailed a day apart, got here this morning. He's pissed.

SUPERIMPOSE - April 19, 1970

The Chronicle Staff, Graysmith, Toschi, Armstrong, Avery, and Theiriot and an ARMY OF COPS. Armstrong reaches down to extract a bloody piece of cloth from the pile.

ARMSTRONG

Stine's shirt.

TOSCHI
Couple more letters, we'll have the whole thing.

AVERY
The letter mentions Kathleen Johns, the woman who escaped.

Toschi sifts through the other pages to find a GREETING CARD with a SKELETON printed on it. Opening it. Reading:

TOSCHI
"This is the Zodiac Speaking. I thought you would need a good laugh before you hear the bad news"...

AVERY
That's encouraging.
(frowning)
One of the pages has a diagram on it...

We see - A CRUDELY SKETCHED DIAGRAM. Armstrong takes it from him. Studying it. His EYES GO WIDE...

ARMSTRONG
Dave. It's a bomb.

The ROOM ERUPTS. Cops and reporters pushing to get a look.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
He says instead of shooting, he's going to attach this to a school bus-
(to an underling)
Shit, we need to sweep the garages-

TOSCHI
Get dogs-

ARMSTRONG
Yeah, dogs for the sweep-

TOSCHI
He says he's not going to describe his murders anymore, he's just gonna keep doing them in silence-

We see the bottom of the letter:

*I hope you have fun trying
figure out who I killed*

◆ - 10 SFED - 0

ARMSTRONG
Ten? We only have four confirmed-

GRAYSMITH
 (can't hold it in)
 He's saying he's already killed six
 more people.

Silence, as people take this in. The asshole editor:

EDITOR
 And that would be Robert's cue...

Graysmith, used to it. Starts for the door. Toschi, looking
 through more of the pages. FINDING something...

TOSCHI
 Hang on!

Graysmith stops.

Toschi lifts up a piece of paper FILLED WITH CODE. A NEW
 ONE. Remembering what Graysmith said when they first met:

TOSCHI (CONT'D)
 He stays.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- AFTERNOON

Graysmith and Toschi sit in a booth. Drinking coffee.
 Graysmith, looking over a copy of the new cipher. Excited.

GRAYSMITH
 This new one's different. He's using
 a more complex system-

TOSCHI
 How'd you know he was gonna send
 another code?

Graysmith looks up.

GRAYSMITH
 I guessed.

TOSCHI
 You guessed?

GRAYSMITH
 You know Dr. D.C.B. Marsh? Head of
 the American Cryptogram Association?

Toschi stares at him. Deadpan:

TOSCHI
 Not personally, no.

GRAYSMITH
 Marsh said, with the first code,
 that Zodiac was obviously an expert
 (MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)
 in ciphers. Why did he say this?
 Because FBI, CIA, and Naval
 Intelligence all struck out -
 therefore, whoever stumped them had
 to be a genius with ciphers. Makes
 sense, right?

TOSCHI
 Right.

GRAYSMITH
 Wrong. Who actually cracked the
 code?

TOSCHI
 The history teacher-

GRAYSMITH
 And his wife, yeah. They're not
 experts, they're just a married couple
 from Salinas who like puzzles. So,
 I started thinking - if the people
 who cracked the code are just
 amateurs, then maybe the guy who
 wrote the code is too. Take a look
 at the first one.

Graysmith pulls a rumpled copy of the FIRST CIPHER from his
 pocket and spreads it out on the table.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)
 At first glance it's pretty complex,
 a fifty-five character cipher with
 no breaks in it-

TOSCHI
 You actually carry that around with
 you?

GRAYSMITH
 Yeah, why?

TOSCHI
 (smiling)
 No reason.

GRAYSMITH
 So what the Salinas couple did is
 start looking for patterns. Zodiac's
 a killer, therefore it makes sense
 that the word "kill" would come up a
 bunch of times. Factor in the
 frequency table-

TOSCHI
 The what?

GRAYSMITH

Frequency tables show the comparative frequencies of letters, groups of letters, and syllables. In English, it's like - the average amount of times somebody is likely to use the letter "E" in a in a sentence. So frequency tables tell us that a double "L" is the most common double consonant found in the English language - "Will", "Still", "Bill", "Chill", and of course "Kill", which the Hardens know Zodiac's gonna use at least once. So what do they do?

TOSCHI

Start looking for double symbols.

GRAYSMITH

Right. Which they find here, here, and here - each with the same two symbols preceding them. So now they've got a repeating four letter word ending with two identical symbols that they assume stand for "L"-

TOSCHI

(getting into it)

And since they believe the whole word is "Kill"-

GRAYSMITH

That gives them the symbols for "K" and "I". And they're on their way. See, even though Zodiac used fifty-five characters for the twenty-six letters in the alphabet, it's still just a substitution code, like the kind we all did as kids - A is 1, B is 2, and so on.

TOSCHI

Okay... so how does a guy go from A is 1 and B is 2 to this?

GRAYSMITH

The same way I did. He goes to the library.

Graysmith opens his briefcase and pulls out a STACK of LIBRARY BOOKS and puts them on the table. Pulls the first one.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

"The Codebreakers" by David Kahn. In the preface, Kahn presents a simple substitution alphabet.

(MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

8 of the 26 symbols he suggests were in the first Zodiac cipher. Zodiac must own a copy of this.

TOSCHI

What about the other symbols? The religious looking ones?

GRAYSMITH

I thought they looked religious too. Then I remembered hearing about a cipher used during the Middle Ages. I found it in here.

(pulls a second book)

"Codes and Ciphers" by John Laffin. Guess what the cipher was called.

TOSCHI

I'm all out of guesses-

GRAYSMITH

The Zodiac Alphabet.

A beat. Toschi stares at him. Takes the book. Looks at the page. The Zodiac Alphabet sits there, many of the symbols identical to the ones in the First Code. Toschi, floored.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Everything an amateur would need to create the First Code is in these books. If you can track the books...
(softly)

Maybe you can find the man.

A heavy silence. Toschi studies him.

TOSCHI

Why are you doing this?

GRAYSMITH

What do you mean?

TOSCHI

Looking for a serial killer is a little above and beyond cartooning.

GRAYSMITH

(isn't it obvious)

He's a bad man who needs to be stopped.

TOSCHI

Lot of people think that. They're not doing what you are.

Graysmith looks up at him.

GRAYSMITH

I'm not a lot of people.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- NIGHT

Toschi enters like a whirlwind, addressing the DETECTIVES:

TOSCHI

I need a list of every man, woman, and child who checked out any of these books from any library in San Francisco, Vallejo, or Napa in the last twenty years.

He slaps the list down on a table. One DETECTIVE scans it.

DETECTIVE

There must be twenty books here...

TOSCHI

Then you should start, shouldn't you? Get the list, cross it with our suspect file.

Armstrong enters at a near run:

ARMSTRONG

They're checking every bus before it rolls tomorrow morning. The letter mentions we won't know if he's already planted it-

TOSCHI

What was the phrasing on that again?

He digs a copy of the LATEST LETTER out of his pocket.

ARMSTRONG

You actually carry that around with you?

TOSCHI

(reading)

"What you do not know is whether the death machine is at the sight or whether it is being stored in my basement for further use"- We need to get on the phone with the building commission and get the architectural plans for every suspect's home-

ARMSTRONG

Dave-

TOSCHI

Not many people have basements in California.

ARMSTRONG

I know, and we're on it.

Toschi doesn't respond. Lost in thought...

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

What?

TOSCHI

This guy's a jack of all trades, right? Marksman with at least three different weapons, knife work, rope tying, codes, and now explosives.

(pause)

Bill, am I crazy or is this starting to sound like the U.S. Military?

EXT. S.F.P.D. HEADQUARTERS -- MORNING

The sun, rising over the building...

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- EVENING

Toschi, asleep at his desk. Jarred awake as the Detective drops a HUGE LIST onto it.

DETECTIVE

List of the people who checked out the books, crossreferenced with the suspect list. It narrows the pool down, but not by much.

Toschi, checking the list. Indexed by Library. He first turns to the PRESIDIO LIBRARY LIST. Almost the entire column of books have the word "MISSING" written by them.

TOSCHI

"Missing"?

DETECTIVE

That means the book was stolen. Happens more than you'd think.

TOSCHI

So almost every book on ciphers was stolen from the preeminent West Coast Naval Library?

DETECTIVE

And the Oakland Army Terminal Library. Weird, huh?

TOSCHI

(thinking)

He didn't want to leave a record of checking them out, so he stole them...

ARMSTRONG enters with a BROAD GRIN on his face:

ARMSTRONG

You want to talk military? Let's talk military!

He slams a PHOTO OF A BOOT PRINT down on Toschi's desk.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

They're called Wing Walkers. Manufactured by the Weinbrenner Shoe Company in Merrill, Wisconsin, over one million pairs produced as part of a government contract and 103,700 pairs were shipped to Air Force and Navy installations on the West Coast. Military issue boots worn by the Zodiac Killer at Lake Berryessa.

Toschi stares up at him. Furious.

TOSCHI

How did we miss this?

ARMSTRONG

More jurisdiction bullshit. I had to call Napa personally to get the photo-

TOSCHI

They didn't give it to us originally?

ARMSTRONG

Berryessa's their case-

TOSCHI

(losing it)

It's our case! Jesus Christ, we could've been onto the military connection months ago!

He CLEARS a stack of papers from his desk. Breathing hard. Drawing the stares of everyone else in The Squad Room. CAPTAIN LEE pokes his head out of his office.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

The biggest case in the history of this state gets fucked because three different P.D.'s couldn't cooperate on jurisdiction!

Silence.

CAPTAIN LEE

Go home, Dave.

TOSCHI

Cap-

CAPTAIN LEE

Home.

INT. TOSCHI'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Carol, asleep. Peaceful. Toschi stands over her.

TOSCHI

I don't know what I'm doing.

Carol wakes. Looks up at him.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

The longer I take to find him, the more people die. The letter says six more now. Up to ten.

CAROL

It's not your fault...

TOSCHI

Yeah, it is. Some girl could be out there right now, getting hacked to pieces by him. We might never know. And that's on me.

He slumps on the bed. Looking out the window.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

I'm a good cop, Carol. This is what I do. So why can't I fucking do it?

She takes his hand. He smiles through tears.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

You said you wanted to talk...

She embraces him. Holding him tight. Rocking him back and forth. Just trying to make it a little better.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME OFFICE -- MORNING

The home office has now become a HUB of ZODIAC INFORMATION. FIVE FULL BULLETIN BOARDS covered with photos of the victims, copies of the codes, etc. Stacks of books everywhere.

Graysmith, on the phone with Toschi. INTERCUT:

GRAYSMITH

Maybe he's doing it on purpose. Three different counties, three different police departments, everyone wants to win. What better way to screw up an investigation than to pit different departments against each other?

TOSCHI

Maybe.
(rubbing his forehead)
You married, Robert?

Graysmith frowns at the question.

GRAYSMITH
Divorced. With kids.

TOSCHI
Kids need a mother.

GRAYSMITH
Yeah, they've mentioned that once or
twice.

Toschi looks down the hall, watching his wife folding clothes.

TOSCHI
Life goes on, Robert.

Graysmith looks up at the PICTURES of the ZODIAC VICTIMS.

GRAYSMITH
Tell that to Darlene Ferrin.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY HALL STEPS -- MORNING

A PRESS CONFERENCE in full swing. A CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR
addresses the massed media. Flashbulbs pop. Cameras whir.

CANDIDATE
I believe some clues were overlooked
in the murder of Darlene Ferrin.

SUPERIMPOSE - October 28, 1970

CANDIDATE (CONT'D)
In the last year the authorities
have received no less than ten pieces
of correspondence from the Zodiac
Killer, and still are no closer as
to his identity...

PULL BACK to see this on a television in

INT. PAUL AVERY'S HOME -- MORNING

Avery getting ready for work, sorting through his BACK MAIL
by the door. On the phone with Graysmith.

AVERY
They're tearing your friend Toschi a
new one - indirectly of course.

IN GRAYSMITH'S HOUSE - on the phone as he tries to wrestle
son Brad into a jacket. INTERCUT:

GRAYSMITH

Dave's doing the best he can.

Avery opens one letter. Bill. Tosses it.

AVERY

Oh, it's Dave, now? You two gonna be picking out china patterns any time soon?

GRAYSMITH

Ha-ha. She does have a point, though.

Avery opens another letter. Greeting card.

AVERY

Which is?

GRAYSMITH

Darlene, Vallejo, the beginning. Go back to the beginning, find out why all this started.

Avery opens the card... And DROPS THE PHONE.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Graysmith hears the receiver CLATTER to the ground.

GRAYSMITH

Paul?

Nothing.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Paul?

CLICK. The line GOES DEAD.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO BROWNSTONE -- MORNING

Graysmith's car SCREECHES up to the curb. To his kids:

GRAYSMITH

Stay in the car!

Graysmith runs to the door. Rings the doorbell. Nothing. Pounding on the door:

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Paul! It's me! Paul, open-

The lock CLICKS. The door swings open to reveal Paul Avery. Sheet white. Shit scared.

AVERY

He wrote me. Not the Chronicle.

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)

Not the cops.
(holding up the card)
He wrote me.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- MORNING

Graysmith, Avery, Toschi, and Armstrong sit around a table. The GREETING CARD between them. A SKELETON graces the front. Avery, still shaken.

AVERY

I got my fingerprints on it. I mean-
I wouldn't want anyone to find my
prints and think I was the guy-

ARMSTRONG

(gently)
We can disqualify them when we analyze
it.

TOSCHI

Paul, you wrote the bulk of the Zodiac
articles. It's only natural for him
to try and communicate with you-

AVERY

Fuck "communicate" Read it.

Using tweezers, Toschi examines the card. The front reads:

FROM YOUR SECRET PAL.

Below that is a printed verse. Toschi reads aloud:

TOSCHI

*I feel it in my bones, you ache to
know my name, and so I'll clue you
in...*

He uses the tweezers to open the card. Finishing the rhyme:

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

*...But then why spoil our game!
Boo! Happy Halloween!*

Inside the card - another skeleton, pasted from a different card and many hand drawn sketches of EYES PEERING OUT. Below that, this message:

PEEK-A-BOO - YOU ARE DOOMED!

4-TEEN

GRAYSMITH

Fourteen. Is he saying he's killed
four more people?

Toschi looks sick at this. Avery lights a cigarette, shaking.

AVERY

No. He's saying he's killed three more and I'm supposed to be next.

(looking up)

I want a gun.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Graysmith sits back in his chair, READING ALOUD from the morning paper to Avery:

GRAYSMITH

"Chronicle Newsman Paul Avery is living dangerously. His investigative reporting into the activities of the Zodiac Killer have won him the accolade of a message from the Zodiac warning - "You are Doomed", as a result of which, several Chron Newsman are wearing lapel buttons reading I Am Not Paul Avery'."

Graysmith lowers the paper. Revealing HE IS WEARING ONE OF THE BUTTONS. Looks over to Avery, who WEARS ONE TOO.

AVERY

I thought it was a good move.

GRAYSMITH

Are you kidding? Sell 'em around the building, you could make a mint.

(pause)

Did you really get the gun?

Avery opens his jacket to show Graysmith the shoulder holster.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

He's not coming after you, Paul.

AVERY

You don't know that. And I'm not gonna sit around here and wait for him - I'm gonna help catch this bastard.

GRAYSMITH

How?

AVERY

Got about million tip letters since we published the threat on my life. I'm gonna run 'em down, one by one.
(picking up a letter)
I'm going down to Riverside tonight if you want to tag along - anonymous

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)
tip about an old murder there, might
be related to Zodiac.

GRAYSMITH
I can't.

AVERY
Why not?

GRAYSMITH
(sheepish)
I kind of have a date.

Avery blinks. Clearly this is news.

AVERY
Why, Robert Graysmith, there may be
hope for you yet.

EXT. AVERY'S BROWNSTONE -- EVENING

Kissing his wife goodbye, Avery trots down the steps and
gets into his car. Starts the engine and pulls away.

It's begun to rain.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS -- EVENING

Using a newspaper as a makeshift umbrella, Graysmith hurries
through the downpour to a RESTAURANT. Late for his date...

INT. TOSCHI'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

Big band plays on the phonograph. Rain licks the window
panes. Toschi sits, going through ARCHITECTURAL RECORDS
looking for basements. His face, a mask of concentration...

INT. ARMSTRONG'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Armstrong plays a game on the living room carpet with his
THREE YOUNG DAUGHTERS. Tiddlywinks.

They all look up at a CRACK of THUNDER...

INT. RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Graysmith enters, soaked. Late. Fumbles his way up to the
table where his date is on her second glass of wine.
Beautiful. Her name is MERYL.

GRAYSMITH
Meryl, I'm Robert. Sorry I'm late-

In attempting to shake her hand he knocks over a WATER GLASS.
Grabbing a napkin, he dabs up the spill.

MERYL

Are you all right?

GRAYSMITH

It's just been a day. Talking to the police, trying to crack a code-

MERYL

You're a detective?

GRAYSMITH

(absently; still cleaning)

Cartoonist.

EXT. INTERSTATE 5 -- NIGHT

Night has fallen. Avery pilots his car south through the deluge. Headed for Riverside...

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Graysmith and Meryl sit, having hors d'oeuvres. Meryl, a little weirded out, but still enjoying the date.

MERYL

It's funny - most men don't mention their obsession with serial killers until dessert.

GRAYSMITH

I like to get it out up front, see how it plays.

Meryl laughs.

MERYL

So your friend who got the anonymous letter- He's tracking a clue?

GRAYSMITH

About an old murder in Riverside. He's going down there to meet with the writer tonight-
(realizing)
Anonymous letter...

MERYL

That's what you said-

GRAYSMITH

What if it's a trap?

EXT. INTERSTATE 5 -- NIGHT

Avery takes the RIVERSIDE EXIT off the Freeway. Checking the address he's written on a piece of paper...

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET -- PAY PHONE -- NIGHT

Graysmith and Meryl, huddled half in and half out of a phone booth. Being soaked by the rain as Graysmith feeds coins into the phone. Shouting over the storm:

GRAYSMITH

I'm sorry, I just want to make sure my friend isn't hacked to pieces!

MERYL

Understandable!

Graysmith dials.

GRAYSMITH

This must be the worst date ever!

MERYL

You'd be surprised!

EXT. RIVERSIDE -- NIGHT

Avery pulls up to a SMALL HOUSE on a treelined street. All the lights are off. He double checks the address. This is it. He shuts off the engine and gets out of the car...

INT. TOSCHI'S HOME -- NIGHT

Toschi, on the phone with Graysmith.

TOSCHI

Where in Riverside?

GRAYSMITH (O.S.)

I don't know!

TOSCHI

I'm calling their Chief of Police.

He hangs up and dials...

EXT. RIVERSIDE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Avery reaches the front door. Rings the bell. Nothing. Goes to knock... And realizes the DOOR IS AJAR. A beat. He pushes on it. It CREAKS OPEN...

AVERY

Hello?

No response.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I got your letter?

Still nothing. The moment of truth. Avery STEPS INSIDE...

AVERY (CONT'D)

I'm Paul Avery-

VOICE (O.S.)

That's not what your button says...

Avery SPINS to see a FIGURE BEHIND HIM....

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- DAWN

Graysmith sits in his chair, phone by his side. Face haggard. He's been up all night. Waiting for the call. Across from him, Meryl is curled up on the couch, still in her dress. Been there the whole time. She blinks awake.

MERYL

Still no word?

GRAYSMITH

No. It's six. You don't have to stay-

MERYL

Are you kidding? This is the most exciting date I've ever had-

THE PHONE RINGS. Graysmith, snatching it up:

GRAYSMITH

Paul?

INTERCUT:

TOSCHI

No. But he's fine.

Graysmith exhales, relieved. Nods to Meryl.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

He's up in Sacramento with Sherwood Morrill, getting handwriting confirmation.

GRAYSMITH

Handwriting confirmation on what?

INT. RIVERSIDE POLICE DEPARTMENT -- LECTURE HALL -- DAY

A meeting of POLICE - all the cops from Riverside, Napa, Vallejo and San Francisco who are working the various murders. Toschi stands at the podium

TOSCHI

On an anonymous tip, reporter Paul Avery traveled to Riverside.

(MORE)

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

There he was given information by a man regarding the only unsolved homicide in Riverside's history.

A SLIDE is projected behind him of a PRETTY, YOUNG GIRL.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Cheri Jo Bates attended Riverside Community College and was murdered October 30th, 1966 - over two years before the first recorded Zodiac killing. She was studying at the Community College Library the night of her death. She left with an unidentified male at closing - 9 P.M. Her body was found the next morning in the library parking lot by a grounds crew. She sustained multiple stab wounds, including, but not limited to three across the jugular. A neighbor reported hearing an "awful scream" at 10:30 P.M. Sherwood?

Sherwood Morrill, the handwriting expert, takes the podium.

MORRILL

Soon after, a typewritten letter was received by Riverside P.D. from a man calling himself "Enterprise" In it, he described the murder in detail, referred to it as a "Game" and demanded that the letter be published - all patterns that emerged in the later Zodiac letters. No prints or fibers were found on the letter. However, the killer wrote again, nearly six months to the day of Ms. Bates' death. Slide?

A NEW SLIDE - A photo of a handscrawled note which reads:

**BATES HAD TO DIE
THERE WILL BE MORE
2**

This single SQUIGGLE adorns the bottom of the note.

MORRILL (CONT'D)

When police first examined the note, they believed the symbol on the bottom to be the number two, denoting that this was the second letter from the killer. We now believe that squiggle to be not a "2" but a "Z".

A beat as the others take this in.

MORRILL (CONT'D)

Even more interesting is a poem that
was found carved into a desk inside
the Riverside Library. Slide.

A NEW SLIDE - of the poem, carved into wood.

Sick of living/ unwilling to die
cut. Clean. If red/
clean. Blood spurting
dripping

Spilling;

All over her new
dress. Oh wall,
it was red
anyway.
Life draining into an
uncertain death. She won't
die.
This time. Someone ll find her
just wait till
next time.

Rh

MORRILL (CONT'D)

The handwriting on the desk matches
the "Bates Had To Die" letter. They
both match the confirmed Zodiac
letters received in the last year.
We believe Cheri Jo Bates was the
first official Zodiac victim.
Questions?

A flurry of hands shoot up. Toschi points to one.

COP

The library closed at 9 o'clock, but
the scream wasn't heard till 10:30?

TOSCHI

That's right.

COP

So either she came back to the closed
library and encountered the killer...

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Graysmith and Meryl. Date Three.

GRAYSMITH

...or she knew him.

MERYL

She knew him?

GRAYSMITH

What would she be doing talking to a complete stranger in the Parking Lot for that long? Cheri Jo Bates knew the Zodiac Killer personally.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- MORNING

Armstrong hangs up the phone. Turning to Toschi who's just walked in, carrying a book under his arm.

ARMSTRONG

Boot print found near Cheri Jo's body was military issue. It doesn't match the one at Lake Berryessa but it reinforces the military theory-

TOSCHI

You want to talk Lake Berryessa? The victim there, Cecelia Shepard? Guess where she went to college.

ARMSTRONG

No.....

TOSCHI

Yeah. Riverside. Cheri Jo knew Zodiac, but Cecelia knew Cheri Jo.

EXT. GRAYSMITH'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Graysmith, locking his door and walking Meryl towards his car. The beginning of Date Seven.

GRAYSMITH

Why doesn't Zodiac brag about it?

MERYL

How do you mean?

GRAYSMITH

In his letters. He talks about all his victims, but he never mentioned anyone in Riverside.

He opens the car door for her. Getting in:

MERYL

I'm sure the police can handle it.

Graysmith gives her a strange look, but lets it go.

GRAYSMITH

I talked to Dave the other day, you wouldn't believe how many people are coming forward with theories since the Riverside story broke...

INT. S.F.P.D. HEADQUARTERS -- INTERVIEW ROOM -- AFTERNOON

An exhausted Toschi sits across from RON and SHIELA STARR. The latest in a countless string of interviews.

RON

My brother Bob is the Zodiac killer.

TOSCHI

(rote)

And what makes you think this, Mr. Starr?

RON

He's very secretive. He's always working on things. Codes. Like the squiggles Zodiac sent the papers.

TOSCHI

Has he ever told you he's the Zodiac? Confessed?

Ron and Shiela exchange a glance.

SHIELA

No...

Toschi, closing the case file. Unconvinced.

TOSCHI

We'll look into him.

RON

Inspector, we drove all the way down here-

TOSCHI

And I appreciate it, but you have to understand, we get hundreds of tips like this every day-

RON

Of people turning in a family member?

TOSCHI

You're the fourth this week.

Ron doesn't know what to say. Toschi shows them the door, giving them the standard line:

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

If there's enough evidence for a warrant, we'll take handwriting and fingerprint samples to check against our exemplars. Thanks for coming down.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

Toschi enters and tosses the file back onto a HUGE STACK.

ARMSTRONG

Anything?

TOSCHI

Bupkiss. Another creepy brother.

ARMSTRONG

Got another stack of Riverside students if you want to go through them.

TOSCHI

Let's do it over lunch.

(to secretary)

Hey, Amber, call Vallejo, have someone follow up with the Starrs.

Armstrong turns in his chair.

ARMSTRONG

Did you say Starr?

TOSCHI

Yeah.

ARMSTRONG

What's his full name?

Toschi retrieves the file. Paging through it.

TOSCHI

"Robert Hall Starr".

Armstrong's out of his chair. Over to the file cabinet. Feverishly searching for a file. Finds it. Opens it.

ARMSTRONG

Couple months ago, I talked to a hunter named Ryan Cheney in Pomona. He said the same thing - a guy named Starr from Vallejo's the one. Starr had talked to him about the idea of hunting people for sport - and this is in '68, before the name Zodiac came up.

(MORE)

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

So Cheney asks how he'd get away with it, and Starr said it'd be easy...

(rereading the file)

"He'd write the police letters and he'd sign them Zodiac".

TOSCHI

Cheney told you this?

ARMSTRONG

Yeah, and my bullshit detector went off the charts - Cheney obviously had a grudge against this guy, and I figured he was just doing this to fuck with him. Plus this Starr guy had no connection to Riverside, so I didn't...

They stare at each other. Riverside. A beat. And then Toschi BOLTS for the door...

EXT. S.F.P.D. HEADQUARTERS -- AFTERNOON

Ron and Shiela Starr, crossing the street in the rain.

TOSCHI (O.S.)

Mr. Starr! Wait!

They turn to see Toschi sprinting out of the building, running towards them. Arriving, out of breath...

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Mr. Starr... Did your brother ever live in Riverside?

RON

He was a student there in 1965.
Why?

INT. CAPTAIN LEE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Lee looks up as Toschi steps in.

TOSCHI

We have a name.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- NIGHT

The name "STARR" emblazoned on the far wall. Below are photographs, employment records, school transcripts, timelines, and personal history. ALL THE DETECTIVES, working round the clock on this one guy. Working the phones, we hear the name "Starr" said in numerous conversations...

INT. GRAYSMITH BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Graysmith and Meryl in bed, kissing. The PHONE RINGS.

MERYL

Don't answer it.

(sees)

You're answering it...

GRAYSMITH

(into phone)

Hello? Okay, half an hour.

He hangs up. Rises from the bed. Meryl, not happy.

MERYL

Oh, no, no, no, mister, you are not leaving me on our first sleepover-

GRAYSMITH

Dave thinks they know who it is.

MERYL

You're seriously weighing sex with me versus talking about a serial killer?

GRAYSMITH

We were going to have sex?

MERYL

"Going to", yes.

GRAYSMITH

That complicates things.

MERYL

I should hope.

GRAYSMITH

I'll make it up to you- I'll take you out for a big steak- I mean, if you like steak- or chicken, chicken's good-

She stares at him.

MERYL

They get this guy and you'll be done, right?

GRAYSMITH

I promise.

Meryl sighs. Frustrated.

MERYL

Go.

GRAYSMITH

Okay. Going. Thank you. Sorry.

He goes, shutting the bedroom door. Meryl sighs. The door opens again. He sticks his head in.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

By the way, I think I'm falling in love with you.

Before she can respond, he ducks back into the hall, closing the door. Leaving Meryl with a BIG SMILE on her face...

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Toschi sits with Graysmith, who pages through the info on their suspect. About to run down a CHECK LIST.

GRAYSMITH

All right, let's play our game.
Physical description.

TOSCHI

Photos of Starr matches our composite sketch of Zodiac.

GRAYSMITH

Military bootprints.

TOSCHI

Starr was a Navy man, dishonorably discharged.

GRAYSMITH

Zodiac's marksmanship.

TOSCHI

Starr received very high shooting marks in the service, he is also an avid hunter.

GRAYSMITH

What about the ciphers?

TOSCHI

Code training in the Navy, plus his brother has seen him with ciphers in the past.

Graysmith stares at him. Toschi smiles.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Would you like to try for Double Jeopardy, where the scores can really add up?

GRAYSMITH

Connection to the Vallejo murders.

TOSCHI

Starr lives in Vallejo with his mother
in her basement.

GRAYSMITH

Connection to the Napa murder.

TOSCHI

On the day of the Berryessa murder,
Starr's sister in law saw a bloody
knife in his truck which he claimed
was used to kill chickens.

GRAYSMITH

Connection to the Riverside murder-

TOSCHI

Starr was a student in Riverside in
1965.

GRAYSMITH

Connection to the bus bomb threat.

TOSCHI

Starr worked as a janitor at an
elementary school which would give
him knowledge of specific bus routes.
He was fired for molestation charges,
which would give him motive for the
threat.

GRAYSMITH

But the bomb diagram itself-

TOSCHI

Could have been taken from a book or
from Starr's Navy training in
explosives. Now ask the big question.

Graysmith leans forward.

GRAYSMITH

The name "Zodiac"?

TOSCHI

Starr mentioned it a year and a half
before it appeared in a letter.

Silence. Graysmith stares at him.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Now all we need is the evidence...

INT. CAPTAIN LEE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Toschi and Armstrong pace nervously as Captain Lee looks
over the information they've compiled.

CAPTAIN LEE

At least three residences, where do you want to search?

TOSCHI

The trailer in Santa Rosa. If he took any trophies, that's where they'd be.

ARMSTRONG

This is it, Cap.

CAPTAIN LEE

How many suspects we got right now? I mean hard suspects that we're looking into?

Toschi and Armstrong exchange a look.

TOSCHI

Over a thousand.

CAPTAIN LEE

So why this guy?

ARMSTRONG

It all fits-

CAPTAIN LEE

(surprisingly hard)

No, it doesn't. No connection to the cabbie, no personal motive in any of the killings, no eyewitnesses. What you've got is a creepy guy with some tenuous geographical connections to the murder sites and the hearsay of an estranged brother and a pissed off buddy, all of whom waited years to come forward with details that conveniently match everything that's been printed in the newspapers.

Toschi and Armstrong, shocked into silence. Lee, softening.

CAPTAIN LEE (CONT'D)

Look, I want this to be the guy - but what if it's not? You two get tunnel vision on one suspect, you're fucked.

ARMSTRONG

Oh, bullshit-

CAPTAIN LEE

Not bullshit, Bill, you'll start to hope. And in our business, hope'll destroy you.

(MORE)

CAPTAIN LEE (CONT'D)

Pin all your theories on one guy,
and he turns out to be innocent?
I've seen cops lose it. And the
case never gets solved.

ARMSTRONG

Why not?

CAPTAIN LEE

Because to them, there's no hope of
solving it.

EXT. STARR'S TRAILER PARK -- DAY

Toschi and Armstrong pull their car to a halt. Getting out.
This is it. The partners walk in silence.

SUPERIMPOSE - June 4th, 1971

ARMSTRONG

I yelled at my wife last night. For
no reason. I was on the phone, she
wanted something - I snapped at her.
No biggie, but... I can't remember
the last time I yelled at my wife.

They reach the door of the trailer.

TOSCHI

You gonna be okay?

ARMSTRONG

He's the guy.

Toschi nods. Armstrong turns and KNOCKS on the DOOR...

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Graysmith, on the phone with Toschi. INTERCUT:

TOSCHI

The trailer was weird, Robert - frozen
squirrels in the freezer, dildos and
Vaseline under the bed. You know
what he said when we found those?
"I just like to mess around."

GRAYSMITH

Did you find anything else?

TOSCHI

Nothing named in the warrant, but we
took prints and handwriting. Made
him rewrite some of the letters. He
hated it. Argued for twenty minutes
before he'd do it.

(MORE)

TOSCHI (CONT'D)
 Sherwood's checking it right now.
 (lowers his voice)
 Robert, he was wearing this watch
 the whole time. He said his mother
 gave it to him for Christmas in '68.
 It was a fucking Zodiac Watch. I
 think we've got him.

INT. CAPTAIN LEE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Captain Lee leads Toschi and Armstrong in. Motions them to
 take a seat. They do. Looking up, expectantly.

CAPTAIN LEE
 Starr's fingerprints came back
 negative. No match to the cab.

ARMSTRONG
 That doesn't necessarily mean
 anything, we always thought the print
 was suspect-

Lee holds up his hand, silencing him.

CAPTAIN LEE
 Sherwood just called. Spent 24 hours
 analyzing Starr's handwriting against
 the Zodiac letters.
 (pause)
 It's not him.

A beat, as this sinks in.

CAPTAIN LEE (CONT'D)
 I'm putting you two back into
 rotation. You'll still run Zodiac,
 but I want you working regular murders
 too-

Toschi stands and leaves. SLAMMING THE DOOR as he goes.
 Lee rises and GOES AFTER HIM. Leaving Armstrong sitting
 there on the couch, equally devastated that they were wrong...

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- MORNING

Toschi, angrily RIPPING DOWN the name STARR and the
 photographs on the wall. Torn photos litter the floor.

CAPTAIN LEE (O.S.)
 Feel better?

Out of breath, Toschi turns to see his Captain.

CAPTAIN LEE (CONT'D)
 So you keep going.

TOSCHI
You think it's that easy?

CAPTAIN LEE
It has to be. Either that or quit.

TOSCHI
(fed up)
Fuck you, Marty-

CAPTAIN LEE
You want to let him go free? Let
him keep killing-

TOSCHI
You know I don't-

CAPTAIN LEE
Then you keep going.

Silence. Toschi just stares at the ruined wall. Softly:

TOSCHI
You know what the bitch of it is? I
can't tell if I wanted it to be Starr
so bad because I really thought it
was him, or because I just wanted
all of this to be over...

CAPTAIN LEE
(emphatic)
Because you thought it was him. And
I did too.

He goes over to the wall, and together he and Toschi begin
to place the ripped photos into the trash.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Late. Graysmith, on the phone. Meryl watches.

GRAYSMITH
(softly)
Right. Thanks.

He hangs up. Turns to her.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)
It wasn't him.

She doesn't know what to say. He rises, pulling on his robe.

MERYL
Where are you going?

GRAYSMITH
Back to work.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE -- NIGHT

Graysmith sits in his robe, sifting through his files. We pull back and away from him as the night stretches on...

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- MORNING

A Copy of the CHRONICLE on Armstrong's desk - **LATEST ZODIAC LETTER CLAIMS 37 VICTIMS**

Armstrong stares at it. His eyes caught on the "37"

TOSCHI

We got a call. Car jumped a curb,
took out a girl on Van Ness.

Armstrong looks up to see Toschi pulling on his coat. Mechanically, he goes to get his own.

EXT. VAN NESS BLVD. -- MORNING

A SMALL CROWD has gathered by the taped off Police Scene. A BODY sprawled on the pavement. Toschi and Armstrong approach.

TOSCHI

Victim or the scene?

ARMSTRONG

(wooden)
Scene.

Toschi nods and goes to the Victim. Pulls out his notebook and tape measure. Goes through the ritual. Sketching. Taking measurements. Armstrong stares at the body.

A girl. Young. Pretty. Her brains on the sidewalk.

A soft breeze blows. Armstrong closes his eyes. Feels it on his face. He opens them again. Looks down the street.

A small JAPANESE RESTAURANT on the corner.

Armstrong smiles. Leaves the scene. Walking towards it.

INT. JAPANESE RESTAURANT -- MORNING

The bells by the door jingle as Toschi enters. Sees Armstrong sitting at a table, being given miso soup by the waiter.

TOSCHI

What are you doing?

Armstrong looks up.

ARMSTRONG

Trying Japanese Food.

He takes a sip of the soup and smiles. It's good.

TOSCHI

We got a body out there.

Armstrong doesn't respond. Takes some more soup. Toschi walks over to him.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

You feeling okay?

ARMSTRONG

Gonna put in my transfer request this afternoon. I was thinking of Bunco-

TOSCHI

What are you talking about?

ARMSTRONG

I don't sleep. Do you?

Toschi takes this in. Sits. Armstrong sips more soup.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Three years on Zodiac, and what do we have? *Nothing.*

TOSCHI

We have leads. We have a profile-

ARMSTRONG

And thousands of names that fit it. Zodiac's a mirage, Dave. Every time we think we get close, he evaporates.

TOSCHI

He's out there. He's real.

ARMSTRONG

(softly)

I know. But I can't live like this anymore.

TOSCHI

Live like what?

ARMSTRONG

Live like I'm gonna start living again once this is over.

TOSCHI

We'll get him-

ARMSTRONG

But what if we don't? Are you gonna be able to live with that? *No.*

TOSCHI

That's not true-

ARMSTRONG

Yes, it is. "I will find this man". All or nothing, remember? Those are the stakes of the game. That's what we've invested. We don't take this guy down, for the rest of our lives - the failure.

Toschi looks down. Knowing he's right.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I got a wife and three daughters. I can't look at them without seeing blood.

(pause)

I'm never standing over a dead body again.

Toschi doesn't know how to respond. Finally:

TOSCHI

I can't do this without you.

Armstrong looks at his friend, kindly.

ARMSTRONG

I'm not saying the game's unwinnable. I just can't play anymore.

The Waiter arrives with a platter of food. Armstrong smiles.

ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I ordered some non-raw stuff.

And we PULL BACK from our two partners, sharing a last lunch together. The end of an era...

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Graysmith and Toschi wait in line for a MOVIE.

TOSCHI

Everything's a dead end. Starr, Riverside, the military... Soon as we get someone we like, something disqualifies him. And now, with Bill gone-

GRAYSMITH

I asked Meryl to marry me.

Toschi, blindsided. He blinks.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

The kids love her-

TOSCHI

Do you love her?

GRAYSMITH

More than anything.

(off Toschi's smile)

No cigars yet, she said she'd think it over. In the meantime I just have to- I gotta relax. You gotta relax. Tonight is about relaxing.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Graysmith and Toschi sit in the dark while *Dirty Harry* unspools on the screen in front of them.

MOVIE POLICE CAPTAIN (O.S.)

He calls himself the Scorpio Killer. From what we understand, he's planning on targeting a school bus full of children.

CLINT EASTWOOD (O.S.)

That's not gonna happen.

THE AUDIENCE around Graysmith and Toschi burst into APPLAUSE.

ON SCREEN - The final scene. Clint has cornered the SCORPIO KILLER. Holding his Magnum .44 on him.

CLINT EASTWOOD (CONT'D)

...maybe I fired five bullets, maybe I fired six. In all the confusion, I lost count. So the only question is, do you feel lucky? Do you? Punk?

A beat. Apparently the Scorpio Killer feels lucky and goes for his gun. Clint blows his head off.

People cheer again. Graysmith and Toschi exchange a look...

And then BURST OUT HYSTERICALLY LAUGHING. At the absurdity of it all. They get some looks, but that only makes them laugh harder. They can't stop. Doubled over. Tears run down their faces. A release of all the built up tension...

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE -- LATER

Graysmith, feverishly working on the 1969 CODE. Meryl comes to the door in her bathrobe. Watching him.

MERYL

When did you get in?

GRAYSMITH

(not looking up)
Couple hours ago.

MERYL

Was the movie good?

GRAYSMITH

Fine. I should've gotten this code by now-

MERYL

When are you gonna be done with this?

Graysmith looks up at her.

GRAYSMITH

What?

MERYL

- What's it going to take for you to be finished with Zodiac?

On Graysmith, surprised.

MERYL (CONT'D)

It was okay when we were dating. But we're talking about a lot more than dating, now, aren't we?

He considers, slowly:

GRAYSMITH

I want to know who he is.

(pause)

I want to stand there and look him in the eye and know it's him.

MERYL

I can't wait for that to happen.

He stares at her.

MERYL (CONT'D)

I want a life with you. And I will marry you. But not if I have to compete with a phantom. You have to choose, Robert. Him or me.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S BEDROOM -- LATER

Meryl slumbers soundly. Graysmith watches her from the door. Considering it. Turns and walk back downstairs...

INT. GRAYSMITH LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

He reaches the bottom of the stairs. Looks to the open door of his Zodiac Office. Papers, charts, codes, everywhere. His life for years.

He walks towards it. Reaches the threshold...

And then CLOSES THE DOOR. LOCKING IT with a key.

Turning his back on the Zodiac, he climbs the stairs, ascending back to the bedroom and his wife-to-be.

And we begin our

TIME PASSING MONTAGE

A series of dissolving images as the YEARS ROLL BY...

DISSOLVE TO:

A WEDDING - Graysmith and Meryl. The kids as dual ring bearers...

DISSOLVE TO:

THE TIP LINE - Staffed by FORTY PEOPLE...

DISSOLVE TO:

GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE - Still locked. The unsolved 1969 CODE, beginning to crease at the edges with age...

DISSOLVE TO:

THE TIP LINE - Only TWENTY PEOPLE now...

DISSOLVE TO:

TOSCHI - Sitting in his easy chair. Big band on the phonograph. A little gray coming into his temples...

DISSOLVE TO:

A HOSPITAL - Meryl giving birth to Graysmith's third child MARGOT...

DISSOLVE TO:

GRAYSMITH'S HOME OFFICE - Dust cakes the desk. The papers and photos, all creased. Forgotten. We hear the Graysmith Family through the locked door PLAYING IN THE OTHER ROOM...

DISSOLVE TO:

THE TIP LINE - Now only the COLLEGE KID is left. Years older. Staring down at the switchboard that no longer lights up.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- AVERY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Boxes on the desk. The place, cleaned out. Avery pulls a bottle of scotch from the last drawer and puts it on top of the last box. Finished.

Looks around the place, his home for so many years. Sighs. Picks up the box, and walks out, shutting the light.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE HALLWAYS -- NIGHT

Avery carries the boxes to the elevator.

GRAYSMITH (O.S.)

All done?

Avery turns to see his friend.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Came down to see you off.
Sacramento'll be good for you.

AVERY

Yeah.

(pause)

I just couldn't do it anymore. All that Zodiac craziness... At least you got out. Got yourself a life and a wife and another rugrat.

Graysmith smiles. The elevator dings open and Avery steps in. Giving Graysmith a smile back and some parting words:

AVERY (CONT'D)

Don't fuck it up.

The doors close between them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO -- MORNING

Soaring over the SKYLINE again. Establishing A NEW ERA...

SUPERIMPOSE - April 24, 1978

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Tonight we examine "A Cold Case", possibly the most famous in history - The Zodiac Killer. Four years have passed since he was last heard from.

TELEVISION NEWSCAST - File footage of previous Zodiac Letters.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Shortly after a connection was established between an unsolved 1966 murder in Riverside and the Cipher Slayer, Zodiac's letters became more infrequent, and finally nil. Many believe he is dead. But Inspector David Toschi has a different ideas.

File footage of TOSCHI.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Toschi, currently making headlines as the next possible Chief of Police, is the only San Francisco detective still working a case that at one time commanded the attention of hundreds of policemen and women. Now it's down to just one man. And the killer, still at large, who haunts him.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- EVENING

Considerably more feminine now that Meryl's moved in. Graysmith, Meryl, and the kids set the table for dinner. Cal, a teenager, Brad getting close to it.

CAL

You're telling me you never got a C- in your entire life?

GRAYSMITH

This is Math, Cal. You want to go through life not being able to add?

CAL

Yeah, Dad? I kinda nailed down the whole "adding thing" in second grade. My C was on a test about co-tangent equations.

A beat. Graysmith looks over to his wife.

GRAYSMITH

What in the hell are co-tangent equations?

Meryl laughs. The kids do too. One big happy family.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

You see Dave on the news the other day? They really did a hatchet job.

MERYL

(scoffing)

Haunted.

GRAYSMITH

Hey, am I haunted?

MERYL

I don't know. Maybe a little touched...

Graysmith gets a sly grin.

GRAYSMITH

I'll show you touched...

He maneuvers around the table, trying to kiss her. She shrieks with laughter, trying to fend him off. Cal stands there, disgusted at the sight of true love.

EXT. JACK IN THE BOX RESTAURANT -- DAY

Toschi stands with his NEW YOUNG PARTNER. Talking to a group of BIKERS. Hair a little grayer, but the same bow-tie and notebook. Flipped open, taking notes.

TOSCHI

And which one of you witnessed the shooting?

(off their silence)

Please guys, one at a time.

POLICE RADIO (O.S.)

Twenty-two call in, IMMEDIATELY.
Land line only.

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

Toschi's secretary picks up. Next to her, excited reporter DUFFY JENNINGS bounces on the balls of his feet. INTERCUT:

TOSCHI

It's me, what's up?

SECRETARY

I've got Jennings from the Chron-

Jennings snatches the phone out of her hand. Manic.

JENNINGS

Parker spotted it this morning and brought it to me since I took over for Paul Avery, you gotta come in now and see it-

TOSCHI

See what?

JENNINGS

A new Zodiac letter. And it mentions you.

Toschi reels. Looking like he's been slapped in the face...

TOSCHI

You've got it with you-

JENNINGS

Yeah-

TOSCHI

Don't move.

He hangs up. Turns to his partner.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

We're gonna have to run some red lights.

EXT. STREETS -- DAY

Toschi's car SCREAMS through intersections, SIREN BLARING. Running every red light in sight, tearing to HEADQUARTERS...

INT. S.F.P.D. HOMICIDE UNIT -- DAY

Toschi enters at a sprint, scanning the room for...

JENNINGS

Here!

Toschi goes to him. The LETTER on the desk. He scans down it. As he reads he pulls a pack of cigarettes off the desk. Takes one and lights it. Drags deeply, reading.

SECRETARY

Dave?

TOSCHI

(reading)

Yeah?

SECRETARY

You quit smoking three years ago.

TOSCHI

Right.

He stubs the smoke out, not taking his eyes off the letter...

INT. U.S. POSTAL CRIME LAB -- DAY

SUPERIMPOSE - U.S. Postal Service Crime Lab - San Bruno

JOHN SHIMODA, handwriting expert. On the phone with Toschi.

TOSCHI (O.S.)

I've got a possible Zodiac letter,
How much longer you gonna be there?

SHIMODA

Only till 4:30-

TOSCHI (O.S.)

Give me twenty minutes.

SHIMODA

(frowning)

Dave, you can't get to San Bruno in
twenty-

But Toschi's already hung up.

EXT. STREETS -- DAY

Toschi SCREAMS through another red light, siren wailing...

INT. U.S. POSTAL CRIME LAB -- DAY

Shimoda places THE LETTER beneath a NEON LIGHT with TWEEZERS. Comparing it to previous Zodiac letters. Behind him, Toschi paces nervously. Shimoda finally looks up. Takes a breath.

SHIMODA

I'd say it's genuine.

TOSCHI

You're sure?

SHIMODA

It's sure enough his writing.
He's back.

And we PUSH IN ON THE LETTER under the light which reads:

Dear Editor

This is the Zodiac speaking I
am back with you. Tell Barb case
I am here, I have always been here.

That city pig toschi is good. But
I am smarter and better he
will get tired then leave me
alone. I am waiting for a good
movie about me. Who will play
me.

I am now in control of all things.

Yours truly:

⊕ - guess
S.F.P.D. - 0

Toschi's eyes, flitting over the "city pig toschi" line...

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- NIGHT

Graysmith, watching TV:

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

....the first new letter from the
Zodiac Killer in fifty-one months-

CLICK. Graysmith looks up to see Meryl has SHUT OFF the TV.

MERYL

It's time for dinner.
(off Graysmith's look)
Fine...

CLICK. The TV, BACK ON:

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

-but tonight, controversy. As Channel Six learns that not only might the new letter be a forgery, but it may have been written by the very man charged to hunt the Killer - Inspector David Toschi.

INT. TOSCHI'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A hard rain falls. The doorbell rings. Carol emerges from the kitchen to answer it. Graysmith. She smiles, kindly. Motioning for him to enter.

CAROL

David? Look who's here.

Toschi looks up from his easy chair. Three day stubble. A half drunk Manhattan on the side table. Graysmith approaches, awkward. Carrying a bunch of records under his arm.

GRAYSMITH

I brought you some records. Big band stuff-

Toschi motions for him to sit, then slumps. A man defeated. Graysmith takes a seat. Not wanting to speak first. Finally:

TOSCHI

Couple years ago. There was this fictional column, "Tales of the City"? The author used me as a character in one. Tough cop named Toschi, figures out his boss is a bad guy. I got a kick out of it. Wrote him a couple letters, signed a different name. Kind of like writing fan mail to myself...

He chuckles. Takes a pull on his drink.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

The guy who wrote the column says the letters I didn't sign and the new Zodiac letter are "similar in tone". Because I was mentioned. Because he wanted press. Because...

He trails off.

GRAYSMITH

Nobody thinks you forged that letter -

TOSCHI

That's not what the news says.

GRAYSMITH
Nobody that matters-

TOSCHI
Fuck matters, Robert, it's over.
Twenty five years as a cop and they're
transferring me.
(spitting it out)
Pawn shop detail.

GRAYSMITH
Jesus...

TOSCHI
They'll never let me be murder police
after this. Never let me near
something that matters. Never again.
(leaning in close)
Zodiac wrote that letter. He's still
out there. Because we weren't good
enough. I wasn't good enough. And
I'm never gonna get another shot.

Graysmith, speechless. Toschi takes another drink. Grimaces.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)
All or nothing. Bill knew. Got out
while he could still live with it.
Now...
(pause)
They're never gonna catch him now.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Late. Thunder outside. Rain still falls. Graysmith lies
next to a slumbering Meryl. Unable to sleep. Finally he
gets up. Sits on the edge of the bed. Thinking.

Armstrong. Avery. And now Toschi.

All gone.

All victims.

Graysmith rises. The decision made. Pulls on a robe...

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- OFFICE -- NIGHT

Tumblers fall into place. The doors, UNLOCKING. They open
with a creak. Graysmith stands over his desk, filled with
OLD ZODIAC MATERIAL. A thin layer of DUST, coating it.

Untouched for years.

He sits. Blowing the dust away. Picks up the file nearest
him and begins sifting through it...

And we watch as Robert Graysmith comes back onto the case.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- DAY

Theiriot pokes his head out into a hallway.

THEIRIOT

Graysmith!

INT. THEIRIOT'S OFFICE -- DAY

Graysmith stands before the publisher.

THEIRIOT

You want to tell me why a rival newspaper is reporting that you're investigating the Zodiac?

GRAYSMITH

It's on my own time, Charles-

From down the hall:

REPORTER (O.S.)

Graysmith, there's a Sherwood Morrill for you on line two!

Theiriot raises an eyebrow - "Who?"

GRAYSMITH

He's... kinda the Zodiac handwriting expert.

THEIRIOT

"On your own time"?

Graysmith backs out of the office.

GRAYSMITH

I- I should really take this...

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE -- GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Graysmith runs in and picks up the phone. INTERCUT:

GRAYSMITH

Mr. Morrill, thanks for calling me back so quick-

MORRILL

Dave Toschi speaks very highly of you. Goddamn shame what they did to him, I told S.F.P.D. I'd never do work on the Zodiac for them again.

GRAYSMITH

I completely understand.
(deep breath)

How about doing some for me?

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- NIGHT

Graysmith plays with Margot on the floor. Meryl walks by.

GRAYSMITH

I'm going up to Sacramento tomorrow
to meet Sherwood Morrill.

Meryl stops. Staring at him.

MERYL

What are you doing, Robert?

A tense silence. Before he can answer, the PHONE RINGS.
Graysmith rises and picks it up.

GRAYSMITH

Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. Graysmith? The Robert Graysmith
mentioned in the paper today?

GRAYSMITH

Yes-

VOICE (O.S.)

I can tell you who the Zodiac is.

A beat.

GRAYSMITH

Who is this-

VOICE (O.S.)

The Zodiac Killer is so full of
movies, he has records of his
activities on film. I have a friend
who's a ham radio operator and he
used to talk to the Killer at night.
I tried to tell the police but they
didn't follow through on it. Are
you ready for the important part,
Mr. Graysmith?

GRAYSMITH

Yes.

VOICE (O.S.)

There is a man you need to find.
His name is Marvin Bernell, B-E-R...

Graysmith scrambles for a pen. Writing it on his hand.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...N-E-L-L. Bernell. He is not the
Zodiac, but he is a friend.

(MORE)

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 He doesn't know his friend is the
 killer. He is storing some old film
 canisters for his friend. In these
 canisters is all the evidence you'll
 need.

Graysmith's face, white. Meryl looks at him strangely.

GRAYSMITH
 What's his name?

VOICE (O.S.)
 You have quite enough all ready to
 get started-

GRAYSMITH
 Please.

Silence.

VOICE (O.S.)
 The Zodiac's name is Don Andrews.

CLICK. The man has hung up.

EXT. INTERSTATE -- DAY

Graysmith, driving up to Sacramento...

MORRILL (O.S.)
 Handwriting is everything.

EXT. MORRILL'S HOUSE -- BACKYARD -- DAY

Graysmith walks with Morrill through his SMALL GARDEN. Every
 so often, the handwriting expert stops to check a flower.

MORRILL
 Most people don't get that. They
 get fixated on the other evidence -
 fingerprints, shell casings; can a
 shell casing tell you the mental
 state of your suspect? Can a
 fingerprint give you the key to
 motive?

He stops by a rosebush. Checking for bugs.

MORRILL (CONT'D)
 Zodiac used a mix of cursive and
 printing. Most of us do. We choose
 at some point in our lives, how we
 will physically construct each letter.
 Take a capital "Y".

(MORE)

MORRILL (CONT'D)

Some of us use one continuous stroke, starting at the top left, veering down, and coming up to complete the right side without lifting our pen from the page. Others execute the "Y" in two moves - hard stroke down for the bottom, lift the pen, and then a small "v" on top for completion. Once we lock this into our brains, our handwriting may change over the years, but the moves themselves we use will invariably remain unaltered. Do you understand?

GRAYSMITH

Yes.

MORRILL

Except Zodiac's doesn't. Specifically with his "k". In his first letters, k's were executed with two strokes. In later letters, he did them with three.

GRAYSMITH

Why?

MORRILL

We don't know.

They move onto some lilacs.

MORRILL (CONT'D)

Now we come to content. As a sexual sadist, Zodiac takes great pleasure in not only the act itself but reliving the act. Most likely he masturbated while he wrote the letters. His rambling style and frequent misspellings would support this. Except I do not believe for one minute that a man this smart cannot spell. Further, his printing is unerringly consistent; always tidy, small lettering. Even with slight variations such as the "k", he is, if nothing else, precise - note the mistake in the 1969 cipher.

GRAYSMITH

Mistake?

MORRILL

You've seen it. You just didn't realize it.

Graysmith pulls a COPY OF THE CODE from his back pocket.
Off Morrill's look, defensive:

GRAYSMITH

Yes, I carry it around with me.

MORRILL

Here, on the sixth line. He's
scratched out one symbol and lettered
in another above it.

Graysmith looks. It's true.

MORRILL (CONT'D)

Whole obvious words are misspelled
in the letters...

GRAYSMITH

But he corrects a misspelling in the
code. So the content is crazed and
the misspellings calculated, while
the execution is precise? .

MORRILL

Always. Which does not make any
sense whatsoever.

(re: the lilacs)

I gotta spray these.

Graysmith follows Morrill to his garage to get the sprayer.

GRAYSMITH

How many suspects were cleared through
handwriting?

MORRILL

All of them. Also, the palm print
in Stine's cab. No match was ever
found.

GRAYSMITH

Is there any way someone could beat
a handwriting test?

Morrill, considering.

MORRILL

It's extremely unlikely.

GRAYSMITH

But there is a way?

MORRILL

I'm sorry. Whoever the Zodiac is,
he's not someone we cleared.

Morrill walks back to the lilacs. Graysmith follows.

MORRILL (CONT'D)

There is one thing that might help. About a month ago, a man named Wallace Penny showed up on my doorstep, very distraught. He said he knew Toschi hadn't written the latest letter and he knew who did. He gave me a name, I wrote it down inside. Don something-

Graysmith stops in his tracks.

GRAYSMITH

Andrews.

MORRILL

What?

GRAYSMITH

Don Andrews.

(realizing)

The same man who talked to you called me...

MORRILL

That was it. The reason I remember is after the man left, I went back through my files to check the name.

GRAYSMITH

And?

MORRILL

I never cleared a "Don Andrews" for handwriting.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- EVENING

Graysmith sits across from a weathered Toschi.

TOSCHI

The palm print in the cab didn't match. Andrews was cleared.

GRAYSMITH

No handwriting?

TOSCHI

There was a huge hand written sign in the window of his house, looked nothing like the letters.

GRAYSMITH

What if he didn't write the sign?

TOSCHI

Robert...

GRAYSMITH

Andrews was in the Navy, Dave. It's confirmed he received code training.

Toschi takes this in.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

A month before the first Zodiac letter, Andrews made friends with a man named Marvin Bernell. He worked as projectionist at Bernell's silent film theater and collected silent films himself. How much do you want to bet one of those is "The Most Dangerous Game?"

TOSCHI

That's thin...

GRAYSMITH

Then try this - Penny says Bernell is storing a film canister for Andrews and he believes that Andrews not only took trophies like Stine's shirt, but also filmed the crimes.

(leaning forward)

Remember the first letter? The mention of Darlene's "patterned slacks" and how we could never figure it out?

TOSCHI

You think Zodiac has a visual record of the murders.

GRAYSMITH

Andrews. He watches the film after, sees the slacks, puts it in the letter to prove it was him.

TOSCHI

(allowing)

It's possible...

GRAYSMITH

So follow the pattern. He makes sure to note something about Darlene. Why? Because in the beginning for Zodiac it was all about Darlene. First letter he wrote us was after he killed her. Not Cheri Jo, not Betty Lou, not David Farraday, but Darlene Ferrin. See, at first I thought Zodiac never mentioned Riverside because he didn't want us to know about it. But I was missing the point.

TOSCHI

Meaning...

GRAYSMITH

If Zodiac was killing people as far back as 1966, why did he wait till '69 to write us? What was it about Darlene that made her special? How was she different from the other victims?

Silence. Toschi puts down his coffee.

TOSCHI

She was being followed.

GRAYSMITH

What?

TOSCHI

A weirdo who came to the diner a lot and a painting party at Darlene's house. Darlene's sister Pam identified the guy as an Andy Walker. He was cleared on handwriting.

GRAYSMITH

But Andrews wasn't.

TOSCHI

But the man at the painting party wasn't Andrews.

GRAYSMITH

You're sure? You talked to Pam yourself?

TOSCHI

No, but-

GRAYSMITH

Call her. Or the other sister, Linda-

TOSCHI

Nobody can find Linda and I'm not calling Pam-

GRAYSMITH

Why not? If we can establish a connection between Andrews and Darlene we can-

TOSCHI

We can what? I'm off the case and you were never on it.

(MORE)

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

You've got a suspect off a phone call - no ties to the victims, no physical evidence, and most importantly no handwriting samples. And you can't get a sample without a warrant, which you can't get either because you're not a cop.

Graysmith stares at him. A little hurt.

GRAYSMITH

I'll get the handwriting. I'll find Linda.

TOSCHI

How?

Graysmith doesn't respond. Toschi sighs.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)

Paul once told me he never saw you start anything you didn't finish. Remember what happened to Paul?

GRAYSMITH

What does that have to do with-

TOSCHI

He became a drunk, lost his family, and moved to Sacramento. Because of this.

GRAYSMITH

(evenly)

What's your point?

TOSCHI

You have a choice here, Robert. Bill and Paul and I didn't, but you do. So I'm asking - Are you sure you want to do this?

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- DAY

Sketch pads cast aside. Graysmith, on the phone with WALLACE PENNY, the VOICE from the earlier anonymous call.

PENNY (O.S.)

I can get you Andrews' handwriting.

GRAYSMITH

You can?

PENNY (O.S.)

Don used to do hand lettered movie posters for Bernell's theater. I'll send one down.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- NIGHT

Graysmith, now on the phone in his home office.

GRAYSMITH

(into phone)

Yes, I'm trying to get in touch with
Linda?

He listens as the person on the other end of the line speaks.
Meryl walks in. Graysmith holds up his hand - "hang on".

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Do you have a forwarding address?

He copies it down as Meryl stews. Then hangs up.

MERYL

Dinner's been on the table for ten
minutes.

GRAYSMITH

Start without me-

MERYL

We did.

She's pissed. But Graysmith doesn't even notice - he's
looking past her, at something in the hallway.

GRAYSMITH

Did that package come today?

Before she can answer, he's on his feet. Goes and gets the
package. Rips it open - its the HAND DRAWN MOVIE POSTER.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

I've gotta go to Sacramento.

MERYL

Now?

But he's already halfway out the door without a kiss.

GRAYSMITH

Don't wait up.

INT. MORRILL HOME -- NIGHT

Morrill in his bathrobe, stands over a table. Magnifying
glass in hand. Examining the movie poster. Behind him,
Graysmith waits, holding his breath. Finally:

MORRILL

I need more samples.

Graysmith, tortured:

GRAYSMITH

But is it-

MORRILL

Close? Yes. About as close as I've ever seen. And that's why I need more. We have to tread very lightly here, Mr. Graysmith. We are talking about putting this man in as the Zodiac Killer.

GRAYSMITH

I'll get more. I'll find Bernell.

He starts for the door.

MORRILL

Mr. Graysmith?

Graysmith turns.

MORRILL (CONT'D)

Most of the writing matches the exemplar. In a way, though, it's the part that doesn't match that scares me the most.

GRAYSMITH

How do you mean?

MORRILL

The only letter on this poster that absolutely, positively does not match, is the letter "k".

EXT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- NIGHT

2 A.M.. Graysmith pulls in, returning from Sacramento.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Graysmith climbs into bed. Meryl, asleep. Just as he closes his eyes, the PHONE RINGS. Graysmith picks it up.

GRAYSMITH

Hello?

No response.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Hello? Is anyone...

He trails off. Listening. Someone is on the other end. Just BREATHING.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

(softly)

It's you, isn't it?

CLICK. The line goes dead. Graysmith slowly hangs up the phone. Turns to see MERYL - awake. Staring at him. Scared.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- OFFICE -- NIGHT

Later. Graysmith sits at his desk. Kicked out. Trying to get comfortable. Catch some sleep. But he can't. The faces of the victims on the BULLETIN BOARD stare back at him.

Below each face is written the date of their attack.

Cheri Jo Bates - OCTOBER 30. Betty Jensen - SEPTEMBER 20.
Darlene Ferrin - JULY 5. Cecelia Shepard - SEPTEMBER 27.
Paul Stine - OCTOBER 11. Kathleen Johns - MARCH 22.

Graysmith shifts in the chair. Staring back at the pictures. His eyes drift over to his wall calendar.

It's December. Written below one of the dates, in cheap calendar printing, are the words - WINTER SOLSTICE

Graysmith sits up. Something eating at him.

He pulls the calendar down off the wall. Flips back to September. Finds more words - AUTUMNAL EQUINOX

Graysmith tears a piece of paper off his pad and feverishly BEGINS TO SKETCH...

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Graysmith and Toschi, in their usual places.

GRAYSMITH

Think of a calendar year like a clockface.

He pulls out a piece of paper and draws a LARGE CIRCLE.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

There are four major astronomical events each year - the Winter and Summer Solstices, and the Vernal and Autumnal Equinoxes. Basically, these four moments cut the year into quarters - December, March, July, and September.

He writes each of these in - WINTER at the 12 position, AUTUMN at the 3, SUMMER at the 6, and VERNAL at the 9.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Now we plot the attacks. Betty Lou Jensen, December 20th - one day before the Winter Solstice.

He makes an X mark up at the 12.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Darlene Ferrin, July 5th, near Summer Solstice, that year the very day of Aphelion - when the Earth is farthest from the sun.

He makes an X mark by the 6.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Cecelia Shepard, September 27, nearest full moon to the Autumnal Equinox.

He makes an X mark by the 3.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

And Kathleen Johns, March 22nd, two days after the Vernal Equinox.

He makes a final X by the 9. Toschi, getting it:

TOSCHI

He was killing by lunar cycles...

GRAYSMITH

Yeah, but that's not my point.

TOSCHI

Then what is?

GRAYSMITH

This.

Graysmith takes his pen and CONNECTS THE X'S. One VERTICAL LINE through the circle, one HORIZONTAL. Toschi stares.

The diagram forms a PERFECT ZODIAC SYMBOL.

CUT TO:

PAGES OF AN ASTROLOGY BOOK - Being flipped through.

GRAYSMITH (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Lunar cycles, lunar cycles...

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY -- DAY

Graysmith flips through pages and mutters to himself as he stands in line for the information desk behind a WOMAN.

WOMAN

(to Librarian)

Can you tell me where to find the new Jackie Collins?

The Librarian smiles way too cheerily.

LIBRARIAN

Second floor, it's a sizzler. Next?

GRAYSMITH
 Can you tell me where I could find a
 list of every unsolved murder in
 California since 1965?.

The Librarian's smile fades. The others in line look suitably shocked.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- DAY

Graysmith enters to find Meryl waiting for him. Upset.

MERYL
 You were supposed to pick up the
 boys from soccer.

GRAYSMITH
 I forgot-

MERYL
 You haven't spent any time with them
 in months. And work called, said
 you missed another deadline. Robert,
 you have a problem-

GRAYSMITH
 No, you have a problem with what I'm
 doing, and I don't understand why-

MERYL
 Who called our house the other night?

Silence.

GRAYSMITH
 I'll spend more time with the kids.
 I promise.

INT. GRAYSMITH KITCHEN -- AFTERNOON

Margot sits in a highchair. Graysmith makes her a sandwich. Teenage Brad and Cal sit at the table, cross referencing dates from BOOKS. Cal is on the MISSING/MURDERED LIST and Brad has the ASTROLOGICAL CHARTS.

CAL
 What about September 26, 1970?

BRAD
 I'm checking... What is it?

CAL
 Lake Tahoe nurse goes missing.

Brad finds the date on the chart.

BRAD

Uhhh, one day before the Vernal
Equinox. Dad?

GRAYSMITH

Mark it.

Brad turns to a LARGE BOARD and marks the nurse's name, date
of disappearance, and celestial significance of the date.

CAL

Got another on June 19, 1971...
that's gotta be close to Summer
Solstice.

Brad flips through charts to check. Graysmith delivers Margot
her sandwich. Margot looks up, smiles at him, and then:

MARGOT

How come you and Mommy don't sleep
in the same bed now?

This stops Graysmith cold. The boys exchange an awkward
look. Before anyone can speak, the PHONE RINGS. Grateful
for the distraction, Graysmith picks up.

GRAYSMITH

Hello?

TOSCHI (O.S.)

Robert, it's Dave. You called?

GRAYSMITH

We've been doing research, cross
referencing lunar cycles with the
Zodiac's timeline - more often than
not each cycle since '69 corresponds
with a letter, an attack, or get
this - an unsolved homicide. I mean,
Zodiac claimed 37, right? I think
he killed more and that he's still
doing it-

TOSCHI (O.S.)

Who do you have working with you?

Graysmith glances at his sons.

GRAYSMITH

Some colleagues.

TOSCHI (O.S.)

With all this work, I'm surprised
you haven't cracked the 1969 code
yet.

OFF Graysmith's face...

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Graysmith, stacks of books on ciphers strewn all around. Crumpled up papers everywhere - failed attempts. He's SCRIBBLING FURIOUSLY on a legal pad...

INT. TOSCHI'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Toschi, roused by a RINGING PHONE. He answers it, groggily:

TOSCHI

Hello?

GRAYSMITH (O.S.)

I cracked the 1969 code.

A beat as Toschi absorbs this.

TOSCHI

Robert. I was kidding.

EXT. PRESS CONFERENCE -- DAY

SUPERIMPOSE - August 8, 1979

ON VIDEO: Graysmith stands awkwardly at a podium as flashbulbs pop. A NEWSCASTER OVER THIS:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

In the decade since the Zodiac Killer's second cipher was received, every federal agency has taken a crack at decoding it - CIA, FBI, Naval Intelligence. But today, the SFPD announced to the world that where those agencies had failed, a cartoonist has succeeded.

Graysmith, cowed by all the attention at the Conference. Reporters, SHOUTING QUESTIONS:

REPORTER

How'd you do it?

GRAYSMITH

(meek)

Ummm... I got a lot of books from the library-

Drowned out by MORE QUESTIONS...

INT. S.F.P.D. PAWN SHOP DETAIL -- DAY

A shitty office in the basement. Toschi's new digs. He sits with Graysmith, the translated code in front of them.

TOSCHI

It's near gibberish.

GRAYSMITH

So are the other letters. It mentions you again.

We focus in on the line - **HELL SLASH TOSCHI THE PIG STALLS**

TOSCHI

I'm touched.

GRAYSMITH

I found a book. "As Above, So Below" by Alan Oken. Every symbol used in both ciphers is in there. It was Zodiac's master text for both ciphers. Guess what the book was about?

TOSCHI

Astrology.

Graysmith nods.

GRAYSMITH

The answer's always been there, Dave. The Zodiac symbol itself. The lunar cycles, the star charts - Andrews was working off more of a pattern than we ever dreamed of.

TOSCHI

How's it going with finding Bernell?

GRAYSMITH

I'm going up to see him tomorrow. But Linda Ferrin's in the wind.
(pause)

If you could just call Pam for me-

TOSCHI

I told you I'll listen, but I'm not getting involved again. You're gonna have to find her yourself.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Graysmith pours through various PHONE BOOKS. Trying to find names. His finger scanning down a list in the F's...

MERYL (O.S.)

Why'd you do it?

He turns, startled.

MERYL (CONT'D)

You went on TV. You put your face and your name out there for that psycho to see-

GRAYSMITH
You're being paranoid-

MERYL
I'm being paranoid? Who's been
calling our house, Robert? At least
once a week and you never let me
answer-

GRAYSMITH
Meryl-

MERYL
You're locked away in here all day
and night, looking at star charts
and code books and photos of dead
people that have nothing to do with
our life-

GRAYSMITH
I have to do this, Meryl.

MERYL
Why?
(no response)
Look at me, Robert. Why?

He can't look at her. She softens. Realizing.

MERYL (CONT'D)
You can't even answer that, can you?
Always the boy scout. The do-gooder.
It's why I fell in love...

He looks up at her. Surprised.

MERYL (CONT'D)
But Margot is three years old and
she needs a father, not a boy scout.
(crying)
Brad and Cal need you too...

Graysmith sees the tears. He can't help it. He goes to
her. Holding her in his arms as she weeps...

MERYL (CONT'D)
I need you...

GRAYSMITH
I know...

MERYL
You promised... You chose...

GRAYSMITH
I'm so sorry...

MERYL

Then stop...

He holds her closer than ever. Crying too...

GRAYSMITH

I can't...

Meryl steps back like she's been slapped. In shock.

MERYL

You can't? You think there's - what?
Some nobility to this?

GRAYSMITH

Meryl-

MERYL

No, this is some great crusade you're on while your children grow up without you and I lie alone in that bed every fucking night? Nobility in throwing away your family and your wife and your career and every goddamn thing we ever worked for-

GRAYSMITH

(can't take it)

Stop-

MERYL

Tell me why, Robert! WHY? We have a LIFE-

GRAYSMITH

(exploding)

But they don't! THEY DON'T!

He rips a picture of Cecelia Shepard off the wall, thrusting it towards her.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

This is Cecelia-

She turns away from the photo, but he GRABS HER and shoves it in her face.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

No, you look at her! She had a father just like Margot, she was pretty and young and innocent too, and you know what he did to her?

MERYL

Don't-

GRAYSMITH

He hogtied her, hands to feet, stomach
in the sand, his knees on her back.
And then he took out a knife, a foot
long knife.

He holds his hands apart to demonstrate the length.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

And with all his weight and all his
strength, he put it into her. Over
and over and over again, in her back,
in her side, in her stomach, in her
chest to the hilt, he tore this ninety
five pound girl to pieces-

MERYL

Please, stop-

GRAYSMITH

Stabbed her twenty four times,
literally ripping her apart in front
of her boyfriend's eyes, and when he
was gone, her boyfriend tried to
untie her by gnawing at the ropes,
but she was bleeding so much that
his mouth kept filling up with her
blood-

Meryl sobs in agony...

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

So he had to keep spitting it out to
keep chewing-

MERYL

Oh, God please-

GRAYSMITH

-to save her, but he couldn't save
her, Meryl, nobody could save her,
and she was young and sweet and
nineteen and Margot and I HAVE TO
FUCKING DO THIS!

He finishes, slamming his fist into the wall. Voice hoarse
from screaming. Meryl stares at him, truly terrified of her
husband for the first time. She runs from the room.

Upstairs, the children, crying. We hear Meryl rush up the
stairs to console them.

Graysmith collapses in his chair. His family, upstairs.
His research, in front of him. Another choice.

As we PUSH IN on the circled name and address of M. BERNELL...

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

The same address as in the phone book. Rain falls. Graysmith hurries through it, headed for the theater door.

INT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Lights down, only a quarter full. The show's already in progress - a sci-fi 3-D double feature.

Graysmith makes his way down the aisle, popcorn and soda in hand. Careful not to disturb anyone. Taking in the old theater's decor as he goes, the walls... The floor...

The CEILING...

Graysmith's popcorn HITS THE FLOOR. His soda smashes down next to it. His feet, rooted to the ground.

GRAYSMITH

Oh, my God...

He stands in the center of the row, stock still, blocking people's view. Staring STRAIGHT UP. Beautifully painted across the theater's ceiling...

THE SIGN OF THE ZODIAC

INT. MORRILL HOME -- NIGHT

Sherwood Morrill, in his pj's. On the phone.

MORRILL

You're kidding.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- NIGHT

Graysmith at a pay phone. INTERCUT:

GRAYSMITH

Bernell invited me to his house to talk. I'm going right now.

MORRILL

Alone?

GRAYSMITH

Yeah. Why?

MORRILL

Mr. Graysmith, think about this. If Andrews is the Zodiac, and Bernell is his best friend, and there is a gigantic Zodiac mural painted on the ceiling of this movie theater...

(MORE)

MORRILL (CONT'D)

(pause)

It hasn't occurred to you that going to this man's house alone at night might be spectacularly dangerous?

A beat, as Graysmith takes this in. Interrupted by a CAR HORN. It's BERNELL who's pulled up to the curb.

Gesturing for Graysmith to get in his car and follow...

EXT. BERNELL'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Graysmith follows the wild white haired BERNELL through the front door of his house and into a cluttered living room.

GRAYSMITH

Thank you for having me over-

CLICK. Bernell LOCKS THE DOOR from the inside WITH A KEY. An eerie moment. Bernell smiles.

BERNELL

Not at all.

Bernell takes a seat in an easy chair. Graysmith clears some magazines off the couch and sits across from him.

GRAYSMITH

I wanted to ask you about a particular film you may have run. "The Most Dangerous Game".

BERNELL

Classic. RKO, 1932. Leslie Banks. We've run it many times.

GRAYSMITH

How about in 1969?

BERNELL

I'd have to check my records. Why?

GRAYSMITH

You're familiar with the Zodiac Killer?

Bernell's face darkens.

BERNELL

This is about Don Andrews, isn't it?

GRAYSMITH

He used to work for you?

BERNELL

For a time. I don't have any occasion to correspond with him these days.

GRAYSMITH

There's a connection between one of the Zodiac attacks and the film-

BERNELL

You mean the symbol.

An awkward beat.

GRAYSMITH

I didn't know about the ceiling until tonight.

BERNELL

Not the ceiling. I mean the film leader. The Zodiac symbol on film.

It's clear Graysmith doesn't follow. Bernell reaches into one of his many stacks and pulls out a coil of FILM LEADER.

BERNELL (CONT'D)

Here. On the countdown. It's trimmed off each reel before they're shown, but it always arrives with it. First time I saw it in the papers, I immediately thought of this.

Graysmith looks - behind the numbers in each frame is a STANDARD ACADEMY LEADER COUNTDOWN, which looks EXACTLY LIKE A ZODIAC SIGN. Graysmith, mind racing...

GRAYSMITH

We got a tip that Don left a film canister with you. Something he told you never to open.

BERNELL

A "tip" about a "mysterious film canister"?

GRAYSMITH

Is it true?

Silence. Bernell stares at him. Finally:

BERNELL

Yes.

GRAYSMITH

Have you opened it?

BERNELL

No.

GRAYSMITH

May I see it?

Bernell shakes his head.

BERNELL

Don took it back in 1972.

Graysmith's face falls.

BERNELL (CONT'D)

And this "tip" is how you got it in your head that Don's the Zodiac?

GRAYSMITH

That and the hand drawn movie posters.

BERNELL

Excuse me?

Graysmith fumbles out the folded poster.

GRAYSMITH

The handwriting on the movie posters Don did for you. It's the closest we've ever come to a match-

BERNELL

Don didn't do any movie posters for me.

GRAYSMITH

What? No, he did this one-

BERNELL

Mr. Graysmith, I do all the movie posters personally.

(pause)

That's my handwriting.

An awful moment. Graysmith looks to the locked door. Bernell stares at him. Hard.

Graysmith puts on a brave face and rises.

GRAYSMITH

I won't take any more of your time-

BERNELL

Not at all. Before you go, I should check on when we played that movie.

GRAYSMITH

I don't want to trouble you-

BERNELL

No trouble.

(motioning)

The records are just down in the basement.

A beat. Graysmith, echoing Toschi:

GRAYSMITH

Not many people have basements in California.

BERNELL

(smiling)

I do.

INT. BERNELL'S BASEMENT -- NIGHT

The door CREAKS OPEN. Bernell and Graysmith stand at the top of a rickety wooden staircase. We hear WATER DRIPPING somewhere down in the darkness. Bernell flicks a switch, a naked bulb snaps on somewhere below. Very little light.

Graysmith really doesn't want to be here. Bernell leads him down the stairs, hand on his back as they walk.

BERNELL

The very detailed posters I kept, but the one-off cheapos like that one there I just threw into the back alley... Here we go.

They finally stop by an overstuffed bookshelf. Bernell pulls one handbound volume from it and begins flipping through the pages. Graysmith looks around, nervous.

The bulb above them flickers. Bernell absently reaches up and tweaks it with a finger - the light goes constant again.

Above Graysmith's head, the ceiling boards CREAK. As though someone was WALKING AROUND UPSTAIRS.

GRAYSMITH

You live alone?

Bernell nods absently, still searching the book.

BERNELL

Here it is. "The Most Dangerous Game" - ran it May 1969. That would have been about six weeks before the first Zodiac letter, correct?

Graysmith, still looking up at the ceiling.

GRAYSMITH

Yeah...

BERNELL

You believe he saw the film at our theater and was inspired?

More FOOTSTEP CREAKS from above. Graysmith looks at Bernell.

GRAYSMITH

You're sure no one else is in the house?

BERNELL

Would you like to go and check?

GRAYSMITH

That's quite all right. Thanks for everything.

Graysmith turns and heads for the stairs. Forcing himself to walk, not run. He climbs them, getting into...

INT. BERNELL'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Graysmith emerges from the cellar. Looking around. No one. He hurries to the door, grasps the knob and...

LOCKED. From the inside. Graysmith looks for the bolt. There is none. No way to unlock it. He's TRAPPED.

The floorboards creak behind him and he SPINS TO SEE...

BERNELL. Standing in the cellar doorway. Slowly walking towards him. Menacing. Reaching into his pocket...

...and pulling out the KEY.

He steps past Graysmith and unlocks the door for him.

BERNELL

Have a good night.

INT. TOSCHI HOME -- NIGHT

3 A.M. Graysmith, crazed, guzzling coffee, and talking a mile a minute to his bathrobed friend.

GRAYSMITH

Maybe there are two of them. Andrews did the killing, Bernell wrote the letters- I was scared out of my mind, I think Andrews was in the house-

TOSCHI

Are you okay?

Graysmith waves the question off with his hand.

GRAYSMITH

You're right - the painting party's the key. I gotta find Linda. If she tells me Don Andrews was the man at the painting party instead of Walker, then-

TOSCHI
Robert, I'm asking - are you okay?
With everything?

GRAYSMITH
Why wouldn't I be okay?

Toschi stares at him. Delicately.

TOSCHI
When's the last time you were home?

GRAYSMITH
Yesterday morning, I think. Anyway,
if Linda places Andrews at the party
then we'll know he's the Zodiac-

TOSCHI
Robert.

Graysmith stops. The look on Toschi's face - guilt.

TOSCHI (CONT'D)
You need to go home.

INT. GRAYSMITH HOME -- DAWN

The sunrise, through the windows. Graysmith steps inside.

Half the furniture is gone.

Packing crates and tape in the corner. The living room looks bare. Graysmith takes it in. Turns and walks upstairs.

INT. GRAYSMITH BEDROOM -- MORNING

The bed is stripped. Meryl's closet, empty.

All trace of her and the kids, gone.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

The same one Toschi used to go to. Graysmith wanders up to the bar. Takes Toschi's stool. Looks to the bartender.

GRAYSMITH
Lemme try a Manhattan.

The bartender pours it. Pull back from Graysmith. On Toschi's stool. Drinking Toschi's drink. Alone.

INT. S.F.P.D. PAWN SHOP DETAIL -- NEXT MORNING

Toschi, working when

GRAYSMITH (O.S.)
Call Pam.

Toschi looks up. Graysmith, unsteady in the doorway.
Unshaven. Blood shot eyes. Hasn't slept. Still drunk.

TOSCHI

You're drunk.

GRAYSMITH

Call Pam and double check on Andy
Walker. Find Linda-

TOSCHI

Your family's gone and you want me
to make phone calls?

GRAYSMITH

I need help-

TOSCHI

I don't think finding Linda's the
kind of help you need-

GRAYSMITH

I don't have anything else!

Various cops look over at the drunken shout. Toschi stares
at his friend. Reduced to this.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Any more. I don't. This really-
(softly)
This is all I got.

INT. TOSCHI'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Toschi sits on the bed with Carol. Pensive.

CAROL

You're out.

TOSCHI

I know.

CAROL

You should stay out.

TOSCHI

I know...
(looking up at her)
But he's my friend.

CUT TO:

Toschi's hand, DIALING A PHONE...

INT. VALLEJO -- SMALL HOUSE -- NIGHT

PAM FERRIN, Darlene's sister. Answering her phone. INTERCUT:

PAM

Hello?

TOSCHI

Dave Toschi, ma'am, sorry to bother you so late.

PAM

You're that cop, right? The one who wrote the fake letter?

TOSCHI

I just need to ask you one thing. You told the police Andy Walker was at Darlene's painting party?

PAM

Jeez, that was so long ago... Yeah, it could've been Andy.

Toschi sits up.

TOSCHI

Could have been?

PAM

Yeah, I couldn't remember and they asked me if it was Andy and I said it definitely could've been. Listen, I gotta go-

TOSCHI

One more thing - can you tell me where to find your sister Linda?

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

Toschi sits with Graysmith, who looks worse than ever. He slides a slip of paper over to him.

TOSCHI

Linda got married, changed her name. Works in Vallejo. This address.

Graysmith takes the paper. Looks up at his friend.

GRAYSMITH

(softly)

Thank you...

EXT. VALLEJO -- AFTERNOON

Kids ride bikes down the street.

INT. HOUSE OF PANCAKES -- AFTERNOON

LINDA FERRIN works the counter, freshening someone's coffee. Another WAITRESS walks up.

WAITRESS

Hey, Lin, some weird guy's here to see you.

She jerks her finger towards GRAYSMITH, waiting outside.

EXT. HOUSE OF PANCAKES -- AFTERNOON

Graysmith with Linda. He looks terrible. Linda, wary.

LINDA

You're not a cop.

GRAYSMITH

Journalist. I just have one or two questions, then I'll leave you alone.

Linda regards him. Lighting up a smoke.

LINDA

You okay, mister?

GRAYSMITH

Fine.

LINDA

You don't look fine-

GRAYSMITH

I know.

She stares at him. He attempts a smile. Sadness creeps through.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Tell me about the painting party.

LINDA

Told the cops about it forever ago. Darlene always had lots of admirers, even though she was married. Guys just liked her, is all. This one guy was weird, though. He used to send her gifts from Mexico. Fabrics and such. I don't know why she was friends with him. They used to get into screaming fights. He'd come visit her at work and yell at her. She once told me he'd killed somebody.

A chill goes up Graysmith's spine.

GRAYSMITH

Really?

LINDA

Yup. Maybe when he was in the service.

GRAYSMITH

The Navy?

LINDA

I think so.

GRAYSMITH

Was he into movies?

LINDA

Probably. I only met him a few times. He wasn't into people, I can tell you that. The painting party Darlene threw, people were supposed to show up, have beers, help paint. This fella shows up in a suit. Not exactly the right outfit. He just sat alone in a chair, didn't talk to anyone. Creeped me out. Darlene told me not to go near him. She was scared like I'd never seen. Couple weeks later, she was dead.

She takes a long shaky drag on her cigarette.

GRAYSMITH

Do you remember his name?

LINDA

Sorta. It was short. Like a nickname. Rob or Stan or-

GRAYSMITH

Don?

She looks at him strangely. A long beat. Then:

LINDA

No. No, I don't think so.

GRAYSMITH

Think *hard*, Linda.

LINDA

I am thinking hard-

He grasps her arm. Manic.

GRAYSMITH

Don. Don Andrews. That was the name, wasn't it-

LINDA

No-

GRAYSMITH

Yes-

LINDA

Get off me!

She pushes him away. He stumbles back, tripping over the curb and falling into MURKY RAINWATER in the GUTTER.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, mister, it wasn't Don!

A beat. Graysmith, coming to his senses. Literally lying in the gutter. Covered in grime. Wife gone. Life ruined.

And all he's got left is another dead end.

He picks himself up, slowly. Holding up his hands.

GRAYSMITH

I'm sorry. I'll go.

He turns and walks away. She watches him go. Broken. Done.

She blinks as it comes to her:

LINDA

It was Bob.

Graysmith STOPS IN HIS TRACKS.

GRAYSMITH

Bob?

LINDA

Yeah...

He turns back to her. Mind reeling.

GRAYSMITH

Bob Starr?

LINDA

(nodding)

Yeah, yeah that sounds right...

GRAYSMITH

He sent her- you said he sent her fabric?

LINDA

She liked to sew. She made clothes out of them.

As it hits Graysmith like a ton of bricks...

GRAYSMITH

Oh, my God...

LINDA

What?

GRAYSMITH
Patterned slacks...

He takes off at a SPRINT...

INT. PHONE BOOTH -- DAY

Graysmith, into the phone.

GRAYSMITH
He sent her the fabric himself.
That's how he knew about the patterned
slacks!

TOSCHI
Robert-

GRAYSMITH
When did you search Bob Starr's
trailer?

INTERCUT:

TOSCHI
Mid '71, June-

GRAYSMITH -
March was the last Zodiac letter in
'71, right?

TOSCHI
Yeah...

GRAYSMITH
And when was the next time he wrote?

TOSCHI
Not till '74-

Toschi stops. Realizing. Graysmith fills it in:

GRAYSMITH
Because he got scared. He thought
you were onto him. Because you
searched his trailer.

A beat, as Toschi takes this in.

TOSCHI
You think it's Starr.

GRAYSMITH
He was the one at the painting party,
the one who sent her the fabric, the
one who was obsessed. He was in
Riverside for Cheri Jo Bates, he was
there in the beginning.

TOSCHI
The handwriting didn't match-

GRAYSMITH
He beat the test.

TOSCHI
How?

GRAYSMITH
I don't know, this theory's about ninety seconds old. The only question is why were there no more letters from '74 to '78-

TOSCHI
(remembering)
He was in a mental hospital.

GRAYSMITH
Starr?

TOSCHI
Yeah. He wrote me when he got out. "Sorry I wasn't your man, is there anything I can do to help".

GRAYSMITH
Have any of the other major suspects ever written you after they were cleared?

Toschi, thinking.

TOSCHI
No...

GRAYSMITH
That's one guy out of twenty five hundred. And I bet he didn't write it by hand.

TOSCHI
Typewriter.

GRAYSMITH
Dave, this is important. Did Starr get out of the hospital before or after the '78 Zodiac letter? Because if he was still in the hospital, than all of this is just coinc-

TOSCHI
He was out. Three months before. Moved back home with Mom. Last I heard, he was working at an Ace Hardware.

EXT. ACE HARDWARE -- PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Outside the store where Starr works. A hard rain falls. Graysmith sits in his CAR. Engine running. Staring through the windshield wipers as they sluice back and forth.

Inside the store - the FIGURE of a MAN at the register. His back to us. Graysmith's been watching him for hours.

On the seat next to him - Zodiac files. Notes. HANDWRITING COMPARISONS. And Graysmith can make none of them fit.

GRAYSMITH

How the hell did you do it, Bob?

On the dashboard - a PICTURE of GRAYSMITH'S KIDS. Happier times. All gone now. Traded for a stranger in a hardware store. Graysmith's eyes, never leaving the man inside.

EXT. MORRILL'S BACKYARD -- AFTERNOON

Graysmith follows Morrill around as he spritzes his roses.

GRAYSMITH

Maybe Starr disguised his writing-

MORRILL

You can't disguise your writing enough to remove tell tale patterns.

GRAYSMITH

Maybe he wrote with his other hand-

MORRILL

Dave took samples from both hands.

GRAYSMITH

There had to have been a way-

MORRILL

There isn't. Toschi and Armstrong sat and watched him write out everything they told him to. At no time were the samples out of anyone's view, at no time could they have been lost, or switched, or mixed up with someone else's-

GRAYSMITH

Sherwood-

MORRILL

(curtly)

I analyzed Robert Starr's true handwriting and I am telling you that it in no way matched the consistent tell tale patterns found in the writing of the Zodiac letters.

A tense silence. The wind blows through the trees.

GRAYSMITH

I didn't mean any disrespect.

Morrill turns back to his flowers.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Can I tell you a story? About Starr? He spent three years at Atescedero for child molestation. The irony is, he actually used to work there counseling children. In that three year period, not a single Zodiac letter was received.

Morrill looks up at this.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

That's not the story. It's standard procedure to administer a rorshach test to all incoming patients, and Starr was no exception. The psychologist administering the test was told ahead of time that Starr had once been considered a prime Zodiac candidate, and advised to look specifically for answers that began with letter "Z". The psychologist thought this was silly - subjects almost never respond with words that begin with "Z" as the object of the test is to say the first word that pops into your head. So Starr comes in for the test. The psychologist shows him the first inkblot. Without missing a beat, Starr says it looks like a "Zygomatic Arch."

Morrill has long stopped spraying his flowers. Staring at Graysmith.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Do you know what a Zygomatic Arch is, Sherwood? It's a nerve in the base of your neck. It also happens to be the exact point of entry of the bullet Zodiac fired into Paul Stine's skull.

On Morrill: Doesn't know what to say.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

I know the test's unbeatable. But this guy beat it. And I'm gonna figure out how.

INT. GRAYSMITH'S HOME -- NIGHT

Lightning flashes. Rain pounds the roof.

The contents of Graysmith's ZODIAC INVESTIGATION have spilled out of his office and now COVER THE EMPTY LIVING ROOM as well. Tacked up on every wall, papers all over the floor. Books on handwriting everywhere. It's overwhelming.

Graysmith sits in the middle of it all, on the floor. Scribbling on pads, running handwriting and forgery tests. Hasn't eaten or slept for days. MUMBLING to himself.

A man truly obsessed.

The phone rings. Graysmith picks up.

GRAYSMITH

Hello?

The BREATHING again. Slow and steady as ever.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

I'm coming for you.

He SLAMS the phone down. Goes back to the book. Accidentally knocking over his coffee, dumping it all over the pages.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Goddammit!

Graysmith HEAVES the java soaked book across the room. It lands on the floor next to a pair of FEMALE FEET.

Pan up to reveal MERYL, standing in the open doorway.

MERYL

You didn't return my calls.

Graysmith, stunned to see her.

GRAYSMITH

I've been busy.

MERYL

(looking around)

I can see.

They stare at each other. Two people who no longer know how to act around one another.

MERYL (CONT'D)

I called the Chronicle. They told me you'd taken an indefinite leave of absence.

GRAYSMITH

I'm not a cartoonist anymore.

MERYL

Why not?

GRAYSMITH

Can I have the book back?

She walks over and hands it to him.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

(mumbling)

Bernell has the handwriting but Starr did the killings, they didn't know each other, he beat it somehow...

It takes him a second to realize he's speaking aloud. Looking up at her. Like a child. Eyes wet with tears:

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Nothing makes sense anymore.

She looks around the room at the mountain of papers.

MERYL

Did it ever?

GRAYSMITH

Yeah. It did.

It's clear he's talking about her. Meryl shifts, uncomfortable. She takes a packet from her purse and hands it to him. More papers. DIVORCE PAPERS.

MERYL

You'll put the house up for sale?

He just stares at them, numb. Nods.

MERYL (CONT'D)

The kids miss you.

GRAYSMITH

I...

(looking around)

I don't want them to see me like this.

MERYL

They need a father.

Graysmith nods, absently. Mind wandering back to the case...

MERYL (CONT'D)

Look at me, Robert. It's bad enough I lost you to this, but I will not let you lose them. Whatever you have to do to get right, you do.

(pause)

Finish it.

Silence. Meryl turns and walks out.

More rain and thunder outside. Graysmith sits there. Alone. Looking out the MOUNTAINS OF PAPERS.

Years of his life, gone.

He slowly starts collecting them. Cleaning up.

He stacks the books neatly in a corner. Then rises to take the copies of the ZODIAC LETTERS down from the walls. Takes the first down, then the second, about to take the third...

He STOPS.

Staring down at them. Light shines through them, illuminating the first letter under the second. The letter "C" is in both, almost on top of one another. They look extremely similar. Graysmith moves the papers so that they line up...

They're IDENTICAL.

Exactly. Down to the length of the pen strokes. Graysmith finds a "T" in both and lines those up. Also identical.

Graysmith turns and begins tearing through another stack of papers. Digging out the sample of BERNELL'S MOVIE POSTER. Checking the C and the T...

A smile over taking his face...

Shouting, overjoyed...

GRAYSMITH

He threw them out!

INT. TOSCHI'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

We hear a POUNDING on the apartment door downstairs. Then a DOORBELL. Then, shouting:

GRAYSMITH (O.S.)

Dave! Dave!

Carol rolls over, recognizing Graysmith's voice.

CAROL

Oh, good Christ...

Toschi goes to the window and opens it. Looking down to

THE STREET BELOW

Graysmith stands in the rain, soaked. Clutching the papers in his hands, wearing the biggest smile of all time.

GRAYSMITH

He beat the test before he took it!

TOSCHI

What?

GRAYSMITH

Starr beat the test before he took it! It was never his handwriting in the first place! He took it from the posters!

He laughs joyously, tilting his face up to feel the rain.

TOSCHI

How?

GRAYSMITH

Bernell said he threw the posters out! Starr went to see the Most Dangerous Game in '69! He found the old posters and used the handwriting as a key! He traced the Zodiac letters off of them!

He cackles and begins dancing around in the rain in celebration. Above, Toschi BEGINS LAUGHING TOO.

We begin to PULL UP as the lights all around begin to go on. Variations of "shut up" are shouted.

But in the middle of it all are Graysmith and Toschi, soaked by the rain, both WHOOPING to the high heavens for joy.

And again, neither can stop laughing.

INT. APARTMENT -- MORNING

Graysmith awakens in his NEW APARTMENT to a RINGING PHONE.

GRAYSMITH

(answering)

Hello?

TOSCHI (O.S.)

They took the files.

INT. S.F.P.D. HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDORS -- DAY

Graysmith and Toschi, walking and talking.

TOSCHI

Department of Justice is officially taking over the case. Everything Bill and I ever put together, they just carted out of here.

GRAYSMITH

Can they do that?

TOSCHI

They are doing it.

GRAYSMITH

What about Starr?

TOSCHI

They told me they are going to
"explore all avenues and suspects".

(sarcastic)

I'm sure we can expect an arrest
within decades.

GRAYSMITH

Get me in to see them.

TOSCHI

It's gonna be tough-

Graysmith stops him.

GRAYSMITH

I have to finish it.

EXT. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE BUILDING -- DAY

Textbook federal building. Tall and imposing.

AGENT JOHNSON (V.O.)

Please be seated.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Graysmith settles into his chair opposite a PANEL of SEVEN AGENTS. The lead one, JOHNSON, runs the meeting.

AGENT JOHNSON

Mr. Graysmith, thank you for coming.
These are the agents who will be
running the Zodiac investigation. I
understand you have some... concerns
you'd like to raise with us?

The other agents exchange looks. Who does this Graysmith guy think he is?

GRAYSMITH

I just want to say my piece, then
I'll leave you alone.

AGENT JOHNSON

From what we've come to understand,
you have a history of *not* leaving
things alone.

Laughter all around. Graysmith smiles in acknowledgement.
Knowing he's being ridiculed.

GRAYSMITH

Fair enough. You mind if I stand?
I think better when I'm standing.

Agent Johnson motions for him to do so. Graysmith rises.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

I'm not in law enforcement. I've had no formal investigative training. Like a friend of mine once said, I "drew funny pictures for a living". So what the hell am I doing here standing in front of you, right?

More chuckles from the Agents.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

A lot of words have been used to describe the Zodiac. Phantom. Mirage. Ghost. I am here because I believe he is none of these things. The truth is, the Zodiac is a fifty year old man, working in Vallejo at a hardware store. His name is Robert Hall Starr.

Graysmith begins pacing as he talks.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

When the first Zodiac letter was received in 1968, it contained a cipher that promised when translated to name the killer. When the translation was complete a grouping of leftover letters was found at the bottom.

He produces a paper with the letters on them:

EBEORIEBETHHPITI

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Most people assumed this was some sort of word jumble - the letters, when unscrambled, would give us a clue about the killer - "Robert Heaphill", "Van M. Blackman", "I Am O. Riet". The problem is that none of these people exist. If anything it's typical Zodiac. A mystery with no solution. A dead end at the end of a dead end-

AGENT JOHNSON

It certainly does not spell "Robert Hall Starr".

GRAYSMITH

No. But let's talk about Starr. Born in Honolulu, December 18, 1933 into a Naval family that moved around a lot. They settled in Vallejo where Starr attended high school. His favorite short story was "The Most Dangerous Game" and he was known for trapping and torturing small animals. During this time, he became intensely jealous of a classmate named Robert Emmett. They had words. After graduation Emmet was swept up in the counterculture movement and became a hippie. He later moved to Germany-

AGENT JOHNSON

Mr. Graysmith, are we nearing a point here?

GRAYSMITH

The point is, Starr hated Robert Emmet-

AGENT JOHNSON

Did Starr kill him?

GRAYSMITH

No-

AGENT JOHNSON

Hurt or threaten him in anyway?

GRAYSMITH

No, but-

AGENT JOHNSON

Then I fail to see why a suspect's childhood rival has any bearing on the deaths of up to fifty people.

Silence. Graysmith, quietly:

GRAYSMITH

I forgot to tell you the most interesting solution to the word jumble.

Graysmith turns the jumble paper over. Printed on the back:

ROBERT EMMET THE HIPPIE

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

At the time the letter was received, Starr's "childhood rival" Robert Emmett was a hippie living in Germany.

(MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

(pause)

If this is just a coincidence, it's the first of many.

Johnson, chastened. The Agents stare at the paper. Listening, now.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Like his father, Starr did a stint in the Navy. During this time, he received code training and lessons in marksmanship. He was discharged less than honorably after a fight he got into with a civilian that one source has identified as Bryan Hartnell, later a Zodiac victim at Lake Berryessa. Following his discharge, Starr began teaching, working both with children and mental patients at the Atescedero Hospital for the Criminally Insane, located just north of Riverside Community College. In 1966, a woman named Cheri Jo Bates was found murdered in the parking lot of the Riverside College Library. Her father and the police were taunted by letters that used similar phrasing to the Zodiac letters. Because of the timing of the killing, the police came to the conclusion that Cheri Jo must have known her attacker. This would become a pattern in Zodiac killings. Starr has been confirmed by several sources to have been in Riverside at the time - one of only a few major Zodiac suspects to be placed there.

The Agents, writing. Taking notes now.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

On December 18 of 1968, Starr received two birthday gifts from his mother - a Zodiac watch and a ring with the letter "Z" emblazoned on it, identical to one worn by the Count Zaroff character in the 1932 silent film adaptation of "The Most Dangerous Game". Two days later, the first official Zodiac murders were committed in Starr's hometown of Vallejo on Lake Herman Road - a lover's lane. David Farraday and Betty Lou Jensen were shot to death while running from their car.

Graysmith hands out CRIME SCENE PHOTOS.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Betty Lou was shot five times, a moving target with a tight grouping of entrance wounds, an impossible feat for someone who was not an excellent marksman. By this time Starr had become an avid hunter and it has been confirmed that he owned a .22, the same caliber of weapon that killed David and Betty Lou. The biggest mystery, though, was not how a man could pull off such precise marksmanship, but how he could do it total darkness, as it was pitch black at the scene at the time.

More scribbling from the Agents.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Twelve days after the murder, Starr had a conversation with one of his hunting friends, Ryan Cheney. The short story of "The Most Dangerous Game" came up and Starr asked Cheney if he had ever considered hunting people. Starr said if he ever did, he would kill couples on lover's lanes in the dark, by using a weapon with a flashlight taped to the barrel so he could sight his targets at night. He also told Cheney he would get women on the freeway to stop by indicating they had some problems with their tires, and then loosen their lug nuts so the tire would fall off and he could take them captive - a method later used on Zodiac survivor Kathleen Johns. Starr then theorized a third form of attack to be carried out on school children - he would shoot them as they came off a bus.

The scribbling has gone quiet now. The Agents, staring.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

When Cheney asked Starr how anyone could get away with this, Starr said he would disguise his handwriting and write the police letters to confuse and taunt them, naming himself "The Zodiac" and using the symbol from the watch his mother gave him. He showed Cheney the watch and the ring.

(MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

(pause)

This conversation occurred in January of 1969, eight months before the first Zodiac letters arrived and the killer gave himself the name.

Silence. The Agents, stunned.

AGENT JOHNSON

And this- this is confirmed?

GRAYSMITH

Mr. Cheney has taken a polygraph test and passed it.

None of the Agents know what to say.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

But between the conversation with Mr. Cheney and the first Zodiac letter came the July 4th murder of another Vallejo native, Darlene Ferrin. Which brings us to the geography of Vallejo.

Graysmith puts a MAP OF VALLEJO on an easel. Pointing to various locations as he continues:

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Starr's mother's house, his main residence, is here. Less than half a block away is this International House of Pancakes where Darlene Ferrin worked. Cheney confirms that Starr ate there regularly and once pointed out Darlene to him saying that "he thought he had a shot with that waitress." Later, after Darlene got married, she acquired a job at Terry's Restaurant, here. Starr became a regular there as well. Several patrons at Terry's have confirmed a man named "Bob" would sit at the counter and flirt with Darlene. This same man showed up at Darlene's house in a full suit for the painting party - which is located here, six blocks from Starr's house and on the same block as the Vallejo Police Station. This "Bob" had been sending Darlene gifts for months, including a ream of fabric that Darlene sewed into the outfit she was wearing on the night she died.

(MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

This is the same outfit that Zodiac was able to describe in great detail in his first letter, even though the killer did not spend nearly enough time by the car to memorize what Darlene was wearing according to surviving victim Mike Mageau.

Graysmith holds up YEARBOOK PHOTOS of Darlene and Betty Lou.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

At the time of their murders, Betty Lou Jensen and Darlene Ferrin looked almost identical. One theory is that Starr mistook Betty Lou for Darlene in December and killed her. Another is that Betty Lou was a dry run for Darlene. In either case, nearly identical crimes - both couples in cars in Vallejo killed at lover's lanes not fifteen minutes from one another. Then, on July 31st, Zodiac wrote us.

Graysmith holds up copies of the letters.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

He took credit for the two Vallejo attacks and detailed his methods, which were identical to the ones Starr described to Cheney in January. He included the cipher which contained the name of Starr's high school rival Robert Emmett. And he promised he'd kill again. Six weeks later he did.

More crime scene photos - this time, Lake Berryessa.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

September 27, 1969, Bryan Hartnell and Cecelia Shepard at Lake Berryessa. Cecelia was a former student of Riverside Community, the same college that Cheri Jo Bates was murdered at. Several people confirmed the two had known each other. Footprints found at the scene were traced to a type of boot called Wing Walkers, which are only sold at military instillations and cannot be purchased without a military I.D. - Starr had one. The bootprints were measured at size 10 and a half. Starr's shoe size is 10 and a half.

(MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

On the day of the attack, Bryan Hartnell was driving a white convertible Volkswagen Karmann Ghia. Several years ago, Starr purchased an identical white convertible Volkswagen Karmann Ghia.

Graysmith produces a sketch of ZODIAC'S EXECUTIONER COSTUME.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Hartnell survived the attack, and described this outfit as what Zodiac was wearing - it's identical to the costume worn by the character of Count Zaroff in "The Most Dangerous Game", right down to the "Z" ring that Starr's mother gave him for his birthday. The last time this film played in the Bay Area before the murders was in May 1969 in a theater with a giant Zodiac symbol adorning it's ceiling. This theater advertised with hand drawn posters which almost perfectly match the handwriting style of the Zodiac letters.

He passes the Agents a poster.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

I believe Starr, an admittedly avid fan of the story, attended the film and took some of the discarded posters. He then used an enlarger to trace his letters off the poster to disguise his handwriting. It has already been confirmed that an enlarger was used in the manufacture of the ciphers - it stands to reason that it could have been used to disguise the Zodiac handwriting as well - which Starr claimed to Cheney that he would do. It's important to note that several of Starr's friends have confirmed he owns an enlarger.

Graysmith pauses take a drink of water. Then continues.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Up till Berryessa, we've been able to place Starr at every murder scene - one in Riverside, two in Vallejo. But this could still be a coincidence, right? Riverside and Vallejo are both small cities with thousands of people in them. One man among thousands doesn't prove anything.

(MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

On that day at Berryessa, however, there were only twelve people surrounding the twenty five mile man made lake.

He shows the Agent's a photo of Starr.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

When questioned by police, Starr told them he had been planning on going up to Berryessa on the day of the murder but then changed his mind. However, five of the twelve people there have identified him from this photograph as being there that day.

(pause)

Let me say that again - five separate eyewitnesses put Robert Starr at a murder site only accessible to twelve people in the world. And when he returned to Vallejo later that day, Starr's sister-in-law remembers seeing a bloody knife sitting on the passenger seat in his car. When she questioned him about it, Starr replied that he had "used it to kill some chickens". Hartnell's words to Zodiac when he asked which of the two teenagers he should stab first? "Do me first. I'm chicken."

Graysmith walk back to the table and picks up another crime scene photo. This one is of a cab. Paul Stine.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Exactly two weeks later, cab driver Paul Stine was shot to death by the Zodiac in San Francisco. This incident has always been the most baffling to detectives as on the surface it seems to break the profile - while the attack occurred in a car it did not involve a woman or take place in a secluded location. For Zodiac, it made no sense. For Starr, it made perfect sense. According to a friend of Starr's named Ralph Spinelli, Starr bragged to him following Berryessa that he was in fact that Zodiac Killer, and that to prove it, he was going to, and I quote - "go to San Francisco and kill a cabbie."

AGENT JOHNSON

Spinelli said this on the record?

GRAYSMITH

Yes. Now - it's been established that Zodiac shot Stine, wiped down the cab, and then was spotted by two children in the house across the street. The composite sketch done of him bears an incredible resemblance to Starr, but it still doesn't physically place Starr at the murder scene as he was with all the others. When police arrived, they let loose several K-9 units who tracked Zodiac's path following the shooting - directly into the Presidio Naval Park where the dogs lost the scent. People have speculated for years that Zodiac took this route because of his knowledge of the area from his Navy days, however an examination of apartment records in the area have recently revealed this fact - At the time of the Stine murder, an apartment was being rented on the other side of the park by a man who put this name on the lease.

He hands the Agents apartment records. Pointing to one name.
ROBERT E. STARR

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

If you draw a line between the murder site and this apartment, it follows almost exactly the escape route Zodiac took through the park.

Graysmith lets this sink in for a moment.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Now, if all this is true, why is Starr still walking around free? Two reasons. Handwriting and fingerprints. They never matched. Handwriting we've already discussed. Let's talk fingerprints.

He passes out blown up copies of two prints.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

For years, law enforcement officials have cleared Zodiac suspects using a bloody print from Paul Stine's cab. It is considered gospel that only the killer could have left this print. Sounds logical, right? Wrong. Take a look at this photo.

He shows them a PHOTO of the crime scene. Cops everywhere, Stine already on the sidewalk, onlookers next to the cab.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Look at the police barrier, right next to the cab, whose windows are open. Any one of these onlookers could have reached in for a souvenir and left their print there. It's important to note that the rest of the cab was wiped down by Zodiac, yet this one print was left in plain view.

He walks back to the desk as the Agents examine the photo.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Not only does this print not match Starr, it does not match any of the other twenty-five hundred Zodiac suspects that four separate police departments have questioned over a period of more than fifteen years. Nor does it match any criminal in the United States Police or FBI fingerprint database. The odds that a sexual sadist serial killer was never arrested and fingerprinted on even a misdemeanor charge in his entire life are beyond astronomical, they are ludicrous. The only conclusion available is that these are not the prints of the Zodiac Killer.

Graysmith walks back to the desk and holds up a sheaf of letters.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Over the next year and a half, Zodiac wrote almost a letter a month. In these he threatened school children, just as Starr told Cheney he would. He mentioned Kathleen Johns, a woman who was almost abducted in the same manner Starr told Cheney he would. He threatened bombings - Starr had training and knowledge of explosives. And then the letters suddenly stopped. Why? Because in June of 1971, Inspectors Toschi and Armstrong searched Starr's trailer in Santa Rosa. Before they questioned Starr? Almost a letter a month. After? Silence.

Holding up more letters.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Until 1974. Starr feels safe.
(MORE)

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

No arrest. Zodiac writes again. Three letters over the summer. But then they stop again for three years. Again, why? Because Starr is arrested at the end of the summer on child molestation charges and sent to Atascadero. His sentence? Three years.

(pause)

Starr is paroled in late 1977. He immediately writes Toschi as himself, the only suspect out of twenty-five hundred to do this. Months later Zodiac writes again, breaking his silence. He claims that he is now in control of all things. And this is the last we have heard of him.

Silence. Graysmith exhales.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Robert Starr still lives with his mother in Vallejo, down in a basement like the one Zodiac described. He works at a hardware store. And every one I know whose life has touched his has been destroyed. Not just the victims, but the investigators as well. Bill Armstrong ended up quitting the force. Paul Avery left the Chronicle and his health has been going south ever since Zodiac threatened him. Dave Toschi, a man who was going to be Chief of Police, had his entire career obliterated in a day. All of them good men who just wanted to catch a killer.

(pause)

All of them victims.

Silence.

AGENT JOHNSON

What about you?

Graysmith looks at the floor. Considering it. Slowly:

GRAYSMITH

I have lost my job, my house, and my wife. I have lost everything, and I am still convinced I have done right - because this man did wrong. I have spent over a decade looking for him. The mirage. The phantom. The ghost...

Graysmith looks up at the panel.

GRAYSMITH (CONT'D)

Robert Starr was everywhere I looked.

INT. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE -- CORRIDORS -- DAY

Graysmith walks through the hall towards the front entrance.

AGENT JOHNSON (O.S.)

Mr. Graysmith!

Graysmith turns to see Agent Johnson running to catch up.

AGENT JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(out of breath)

That... that was amazing... We were wondering if maybe you could stay for a couple hours, discuss your theories in more detail?

Tempting offer...

A beat. And then Graysmith hands Johnson the files.

GRAYSMITH

Sorry. I gotta go pick up my kids.

Graysmith turns and walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN AMERICAN FLAG

Fluttering in the breeze. It's twilight. The sun, giving way to a crisp Northern California summer evening.

SUPERIMPOSE - July 4th, 1984

The flag flies above a PARKING LOT. We're in

EXT. VALLEJO -- BLUE ROCK SPRINGS -- EVENING

Where Darlene Ferrin died. Fifteen years later.

Graysmith sits on the hood of his car, sipping a beer. His grown children BRAD and CAL, next to him. There is an ease between them now. Truly father and sons.

GRAYSMITH

This is where it began for me...
Right here.

CAL

How's the book coming?

GRAYSMITH

Almost done.

He drains the beer. Brad sees this.

BRAD
Are you finished?

Graysmith, realizing the words have more than one meaning.

GRAYSMITH
There's just one more thing I have
to do.

EXT. ACE HARDWARE -- EVENING

As the streetlights of Vallejo click on, Graysmith pulls his car into the parking lot of the HARDWARE STORE.

Parks. Gets out. Leaving his kids. Walks to the door.

INT. ACE HARDWARE -- EVENING

Graysmith walks through the aisles. Looking for someone. Finally spots him. A HEAVY BALD CLERK. Stocking merchandise. Graysmith walks up to him. The clerk flashes a smile.

The clerk's nameplate reads "BOB". He wears a "Z" ring on his finger. A Zodiac Watch on his wrist.

Meet ROBERT HALL STARR.

They stand three feet apart. Graysmith stares at him. Looking him in the eye. Searching...

Starr's smile fades. Realizing why Graysmith's there. What he's thinking. He frowns. His face transforms. And at once we can see how terrifying this man really could be.

They hold each other's gaze for what seems like forever...

And Starr finally looks away.

Graysmith blinks. Once. Getting what he came here for.

Knowing for sure.

Graysmith turns and walks out of the store.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- SUNSET

The sky, a beautiful burnt orange. Graysmith walks back to his car and gets in. As he puts it in gear and pulls out into the street, we BEGIN TO PULL UP AND BACK...

The following words appear onscreen:

In 1986, Robert Graysmith published "Zodiac" in an attempt to share all information discovered by the San Francisco, Sapa, Vallejo, and Riverside Police Departments during the course of the Zodiac investigation.

It is still considered the definitive work on the case.

These words fade. Replaced by:

In 1991, surviving victim Mike Mageau was shown a photo line up of Zodiac suspects. He immediately pointed out Robert Hall Starr and declared "That's him! That's the man who shot me!"

Starr's basement was subsequently searched by police. In it were found bomb diagrams, explosive devices, and codebooks.

These words fade. Replaced by:

Starr suffered a fatal heart attack in 1993. At that time, police were building a case against him as the Zodiac.

No arrest was ever made.

The Zodiac case remains officially open to this day.

These words fade. Replaced by:

The anonymous phone calls Robert Graysmith was receiving abruptly ceased in 1993.

Not a single one has occurred since Starr's death.

These words fade. Replaced by:

Today Robert Graysmith lives in San Francisco and enjoys a healthy relationship with all three of his children.

Many people believe the attention generated by his work is what finally forced the Zodiac to stop killing.

By now we can see all of

EXT. VALLEJO -- NIGHT

The entire cityscape, laid out below us. The American Dream. Twinkling in the Northern California twilight. OVER THIS:

"There is no evil in human affairs that has not some good mingled with it."

-FRANCESCO GUICCIARDINI

In the distance, Graysmith's car. A speck. Driving away.

Finished.

ROLL CREDITS

FADE OUT