

The Arcane Caller

By

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INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

The officers of Manhattan's 19th precinct are alive with the bustle of a busy work day, talking about this and that.

However the sound of them is tuned out as we focus on ROY WILLIAMS, 24, sitting silently at a computer - someone was having an IT problem, and Roy was there to fix it. He tunes out the noise around him as he works, being snapped out of it by OFFICER SMITH, whose computer he's working at.

SMITH

Williams? Hey! Williams! You there?

ROY

(Startled)

Uh- yeah, sorry.

SMITH

Got any idea what's wrong with this thing?

ROY

...Yes! Yes, I- I know what's happening here, you've just got a bit of clutter on your hard drive that's slowing it down. I'm just gonna sync it up to our servers, should only take a minute or two.

SMITH

Alright, well hurry it up- I got work to get to.

Smith leaves Roy alone as he ticks away, working with intense focus on the computer. He's slowing down when he's again distracted by the sound of a door being kicked open, hailing the entrance of ace detective BRANT FINNIGAN.

BRANT

Everybody gather 'round, gather 'round to witness the ever growing list of drug runners brought down by yours truly, the greatest detective in the NYPD!

As Brant talks, four other officers walk behind him, each leading a handcuffed criminal. As they're put into the holding cells SERGEANT GREAVES speaks up from across the room.

(CONTINUED)

GREAVES

Excellent work, Finnigan.

BRANT

Thank you Sarge, but don't thank me. Thank the criminals that are so good at getting caught. By me.

Roy shakes his head at Brant's overly showy entrance as Finnigan makes way towards his desk, to be met by his partner SHIRLEY QUEEN.

SHIRLEY

Hey, don't take this too seriously Brant, your ego doesn't need the boost.

BRANT

Oh I know, that thing was the size of a planet already.

SHIRLEY

Acknowledging you have a problem doesn't make it better.

BRANT

Now who said my ego was a problem?

SMITH

Where'd you find these guys?

BRANT

Hanging around in Harlem. Douchebag A was making a handoff to Douchebag B, Douchebags C and D on lookout. But get this- they're dealers for "Los Nuevos Reyes".

At the mention of the gang name, Roy perks his head up, looking over at the perps. Frowning his brow, he opens up some files on the computer he's at.

SHIRLEY

Oh, so this is like- actually something, not just a couple of kids.

BRANT

Yeap- these guys are gonna help me bring down the whole ring. Not that I need help, but not everything can be solved by my sheer talent.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Yeah, yeah, have fun basking in
your spotlight.

BRANT

I intend to.

Roy, finding the file he's looking for, looks over the case Brant's been gathering until he notices something that stops him. He reads it, looking back at Brant and then the perps, a look of determination in his eye.

SMITH

Williams! Hey! You done yet?

ROY

Hm- oh, yeah.

He closes all the files he was looking at.

ROY (cont'd)

Yeah, you're all set.

Roy gets up and walks towards the room's exit. Brant notices him and starts to wave him over.

BRANT

Mm- Hey! I.T.! C'mere.

Roy, confused, walks over to Brant's desk.

BRANT (cont'd)

Hey, man. It's Roy, right?

Roy nods.

BRANT (cont'd)

Roy- I just wanna say, I heard
about you and your... *history* with
the force.

Roy takes a deep breath, shocked and embarrassed.

BRANT (cont'd)

(Trying to seem nice, but with
a hint of a snide undertone)
Look, failing out of the academy...
not a big deal. We lose like a
quarter of every class. So don't
think... you know, nobody cares
about that anyway. Okay pal?

He looks at Roy with a "warm" smile, prompting a quick nod and half grin. He pats Roy on the arm, who briskly walks out of the room.

INT. I.T. OFFICE- DAY

Roy enters the offices of the I.T. department, where his coworker JON MITCHELL is sitting at his desk. Jon is 29, but his work ethic is that of a 10 year old, as evidenced by him playing on his phone rather than working. Roy walks past Jon in a huff, prompting him to look up.

JON

Whoa, what's up your butt?

ROY

Nothing. I'm fine.

He says this while pacing back and forth in front of his desk.

JON

Don't look fine.

ROY

Jon! I'm okay. Alright.

JON

Alright, geez.

Roy finally sits down, hesitating a moment before waking up his computer and bringing up the files he was looking at earlier. He plugs in a flash drive, downloading the files he was looking at earlier.

INT. I.T. OFFICE- NIGHT CONT.

Finally reaching the end of his shift, Roy gathers his thing and grabs the flash drive he was using earlier. Jon is gearing up to leave as well.

JON

Hey, did you sort out all those case files we got last week?

Roy nods briskly.

JON (cont'd)

Aright dude. See you tomorrow.

Roy nods again and leaves.

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT- NIGHT

The door to a small one bedroom apartment opens and Roy steps in. The walls are mostly bare, but he has shelves full of movies and books- almost all famous detective stories. The lights flicker occasionally, in the same state of mild disrepair that the rest of the place is in.

Roy doesn't stop, dropping his backpack and grabbing his laptop from a table. He stuffs it into a computer bag, slinging it over his shoulder and heading towards his desk. He opens a drawer that is full of cheap burner cell phones, grabs one, and walks out the door again.

INTERCUT EXT. RAIL YARD/ INT. POLICE STATION- NIGHT

A rail yard on the outskirts of the city along the water sits quiet and deserted for the night. The sound of a bicycle grows louder until Roy arrives, moving swiftly from the ride to a jog as his bike falls to the ground.

Roy finds somewhere to sit down and opens up his laptop while he fishes in his pockets for the flash drive he had earlier. He brings up the same files from the office and pulls out the burner phone, placing a call on it.

Sitting at her desk, Shirley is doing some paperwork when her desk phone rings. She checks the number and sees it's an unknown caller. She answers.

SHIRLEY

Officer Shirley Queen, NYPD.

ROY

Hello- I'd like to report an anonymous tip.

SHIRLEY

(Smiling)

Ah- and is that the voice I think it is?

ROY

I think so.

SHIRLEY

Well well well, good to hear from you again, stranger. Cutting your calls a bit late are we? I was just about to head home.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

I got held up- but I wanted to talk to you today.

SHIRLEY

Just missed the sound of my voice, eh?

ROY

Well, that and I didn't want some innocent men to go to jail.

SHIRLEY

Whoa, that's-

ROY

Well- not innocent, just less guilty than you might think.

SHIRLEY

Whoever you are, you better have something strong to back up that claim.

ROY

I heard through the grapevine that you brought in a couple of drug dealers today.

SHIRLEY

You hear fast.

ROY

People tell me that a lot. Anyways, I- I thought you might have arrested them under suspicion that they're working for "Los Nuevos Reyes".

SHIRLEY

Are you suggesting they're not?

ROY

I'm *telling* you they're not.

SHIRLEY

And how'd you reach that conclusion? These guys were in gang territory, dealing their biggest export.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

Because Los Nuevos Reyes highly value 'pure blood'- they won't let anyone join who's not Hispanic.

SHIRLEY

Yeah- two of the guys we brought in are. Hernandez and Ricardo.

ROY

Not Hispanic enough. Hernandez's mom is from Puerto Rico, which Nuevos Reyes thinks is a traitor to Mexico. Made a whole display of it a couple years ago. And Ricardo- he's straight up white. Dad's on record, John Coulter. Took his mom's name though, Mariana Ricardo. Probably some rebellion against deep rooted daddy issues. If I were to guess, I'd say these guys are just small time dealers who were in the wrong place at the wrong time and your guy mistook them for something more than they are.

SHIRLEY

(Beat)

Wow. That's-

She pauses, unsure how to finish her sentence.

ROY

That's what?

SHIRLEY

Thorough. Most likely accurate.

ROY

You say that like it's a bad thing.

SHIRLEY

Well, it's certainly not great for detectives to get their cases corrected by someone who won't even give us a name.

ROY

Do you want to know my name?

SHIRLEY

If I knew your name, I'd have to take you in for questioning every time you called.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

(Beat)

Do you want to know my name?

Shirley's breath catches as she ponders the wake that learning his name would cause.

SHIRLEY

No.

ROY

Good.

SHIRLEY

Hey, don't make me change my mind out of spite.

ROY

It's been nice talking to you, Officer Queen.

SHIRLEY

Oh, call me Shirley.

Roy half smiles as she says this.

ROY

(Beat)

Nice talking to you, Shirley.

He hangs up the phone, staring at it with a smile for a moment before throwing it into the river, waiting while it sinks. He then grabs his bag and slings it over his shoulder as he re-mounts his bike and leaves.

INTERCUT INT. I.T. OFFICE, DAY / INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Roy sits at his desk, reading Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None" as Jon sits parallel to him taking a nap.

Roy yawns and looks over at his computer, which has security footage of the station on it- Brant is working at his desk, but Shirley is nowhere to be seen. Roy looks back to his book, then darts back to the screen when he sees Shirley entering.

SHIRLEY

And there it is- finally done cleaning up after your screw ups.

BRANT

What d'ya want? Anyone else would have made the exact same mistake.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Yeah, but they didn't.

BRANT

Oh, yeah, enjoy this. You know, it's a shame we don't all have our own phone sex hotline that can solve our cases for us.

SHIRLEY

Don't get mad just because he's clearly better at this than you are.

Roy smiles at his computer.

BRANT

Oh yeah, totally. He's sooo much better than me. There's nothing suspicious at all about a guy who solves crimes over the phone and won't even tell you his name.

SHIRLEY

I figure he's doing, like a Batman thing- (gasp)! What if it's Bill Gates?

The other officers laugh along with her as Brant grimaces.

SMITH

A couple of us got a pool going on who he is- Hutchins has billionaire.

SHIRLEY

Oh yeah? What've you got?

SMITH

I think it's just Finnigan messing with you.

BRANT

Yeah, right. I solve my own cases, like a real detective.

SHIRLEY

Whoa, what's that supposed to mean?

BRANT

(Flustered)

Er- not you, I meant- him!

He gestures towards her phone.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT (cont'd)

Look, just- try to remember that whoever this guy is, he's not a cop. Just some weirdo with too much time on his hands.

At his desk, Roy shakes his head, a smirk on his face. He leans back to return to his book when the door to his office opens. SERGEANT GREAVES enters, prompting Roy to hurriedly close his security cam window and Jon to sit up, dazed and confused.

GREAVES

Williams. Mitchell.

ROY

Sir.

JON

S-sir.

GREAVES

Williams- have you got a minute? We've got a presentation for the floor, I need you to set up a projector.

ROY

Of course, right away Sarge.

GREAVES

Thank you.

He leaves. Roy exhales, letting his nerves rest.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

In the main office, Shirley and Brant work at their desks. Roy fiddles with a few wires attached to a projector as Sergeant Greaves stands watching him. Roy seems uncomfortable, but works diligently. He gives Greaves a thumbs up, and Greaves clears his throat.

GREAVES

Attention everyone. Eyes on me.

Shirley, Brant, and the rest of the officers stop what they're doing to pay attention to Greaves.

GREAVES (cont'd)

It has come to the captain's attention that we may have a special case on our hands.

(CONTINUED)

He flashes up pictures of two murder victims.

GREAVES (cont'd)

This is Carol DiAngelo and Alan Braddock. These two were found about a week apart in completely different parts of the city. No relation between them whatsoever. But autopsy revealed this.

He nods towards Roy, who moves to the next slide that shows a matching design carved into both of their bodies.

GREAVES (cont'd)

As you can see, this symbol was carved into both of their bodies. It's too complex to be a coincidence, so we've had to rule that these bodies must be connected.

BRANT

Oh, please say what I think you're about to say.

SHIRLEY

Brant!

BRANT

I'm sorry, I know, but it sounds like you're about to say-

GREAVES

It's possible it's a serial killer.

BRANT

Oh, YES!

SHIRLEY

BRANT!

BRANT

Oh come on, you can't pretend this isn't the coolest thing to ever happen to this precinct! Haven't you ever wanted to be the super cop that catches a serial killer?

SHIRLEY

I'd rather there wasn't a serial killer.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT

Well- yeah, but we're past that point now, aren't we?

GREAVES

Everybody. I want you all on alert. We don't know if this is the work of a serial killer, but until we know who it is, you are all to treat it as top priority. Dismissed.

The officers move about as Roy gets to work disassembling the projector.

SHIRLEY

At least try to take this seriously.

BRANT

Hey, I take it very seriously, thank you very much. All the more reason for me to take this sicko down.

SHIRLEY

I thought your reason was just 'it's cool'

BRANT

I don't see why I can't have two reasons to catch a serial killer.

Shirley shakes her head.

BRANT (cont'd)

Although who am I kidding, your little boyfriend'll probably call up tonight with the guy's name and address.

Roy looks up at the mention of his alter ego.

SHIRLEY

He's not my boyfriend.

BRANT

Shirley and What'shisname, sitting in a tree, k-

SHIRLEY

Look, if you're worried about him solving the case before you then maybe just be better at your job.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT

Maybe you just be better at-shutting up.

SHIRLEY

You know, your wit is what I like most about you.

BRANT

(Chuckling)

Alright, alright.

Roy chuckles softly to himself, finally gathering the equipment he'd set up and wheeling it back to his office. The door shuts behind him.

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT- NIGHT

At home, Roy sits in front of his computer. The case file on the serial killer sits open on his monitor. He looks over every detail, trying to find something to latch on to. A glance at his clock reveals that it is 1:33 in the morning. He gives up, walking over to his tv.

Roy looks over his shelf, which holds exclusively detective stories. He picks up a dvd of Murder She Wrote, before sitting down on his couch and dozing off.

A dream sequence begins in which we see Roy in the police academy, trying and failing to complete the physical tasks required of him- mostly a wall climb. He takes a final fall, causing him to plummet into the earth beneath him.

He is then falling in a massive darkened chamber, hitting the ground with a deafening thud. Aching on the floor, he looks up to see a figure in front of him. He reaches to it for help, and it turns around revealing Shirley's visage. She looks down at him.

SHIRLEY

(Confused and disgusted)

Who are you?

Writhing in pain, he reaches out to her, but she dissolves. He grimaces as a ringing sound starts growing louder in the background. Roy seems to grow smaller in comparison to the room he's in as we hear Brant's voice from the shadows.

BRANT

(V.O.)

It's okay, Roy...

(CONTINUED)

Brant appears in front of Roy, with shadows darkening his face into a grotesque mask. He puts a hand on Roy's shoulder, who looks at Brant in pain.

BRANT (cont'd)
Nobody cares.

Roy grimaces again as the ringing in the background grows ever louder. It reaches its peak as Roy jolts awake. He realizes that his phone's ringing, and hurries to answer it.

ROY
Hu-hello?

He pauses, listening to whoever's on the other line.

ROY (cont'd)
This is him. (pause) Oh- oh no, I'm sorry- no, that company's out of business... I can recommend another P.I. if you like, or... I'd just say, yeah, just go to the police. Okay, yeah, best of luck. Bye.

He hangs up, and lingers with melancholy. He looks at his clock and sees it's now half past 5. He sighs, getting up and smoothing out his clothes.

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT- DAY

A quick montage shows Roy getting showered and making coffee. He sits back at his computer. On his desk sits a business card that he picks up- it reads "Roy Williams, Private Investigator" along with a phone number. He smiles, remembering a time gone by.

Roy then somewhat eagerly pulls up a file on his computer named 'cold cases'. He pores over one for a while before sitting back, satisfied with himself. Roy grabs a burner phone from his desk, slings his bag over his shoulder, and heads out the door.

INTERCUT EXT. CITY STREETS, DAY/ INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Walking along the sidewalk Roy puts in a number in his burner phone, to be answered by Shirley.

SHIRLEY
Officer Shirley Queen, NYPD.

ROY
It's me, Shirley.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Oh, hey! I was wondering if I'd hear from you soon.

ROY

Well, someone's gotta keep your numbers up.

SHIRLEY

Oh har har, very funny.

ROY

Thanks. I try.

SHIRLEY

So what've you got? Let's hear the deets.

ROY

Uhm- okay, I've got a few cases here from a couple years ago-

SHIRLEY

Oh.

ROY

(concerned)

Hm? Something wrong?

SHIRLEY

No- It's- I just thought... never mind.

ROY

You thought I'd caught your serial killer.

SHIRLEY

How do you know about that?

ROY

Do we need to talk about this every time I call? I'm good at what I do.

SHIRLEY

That's a suspicious answer.

ROY

Well, I've got a couple secrets that I'd rather keep.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

I guess I can understand that.
Alright, stranger. What've you got
for me?

ROY

Okay- first off, robbery on 71st
and 3rd, you never-

Roy is drowned out by a passing truck that serves as an
invisible wipe.

ROY (cont'd)

...and, that's it.

SHIRLEY

Wow, four solves in one day. That's
gotta be a record.

ROY

Well, it'd be better if I'd solved
them back when they happened.

SHIRLEY

You're too hard on yourself. I
guarantee you've got the highest
solve rate of any civilian in
history.

ROY

I'm pretty sure that record was at
one.

SHIRLEY

Well you've topped that easy!

ROY

(Chuckling)

I'll talk to you later, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Wait-

Roy stops halfway to hanging up, and also stutters in his
steps.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

Why do you do this?

ROY

What?

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

I just- I've been thinking about this whole- setup we've got. And I wanna know- why do you do all this? And why call *me*? Why not someone else?

Roy hesitates before responding.

ROY

I like you. You're a good cop. If anyone gets credit for my solves... I want it to be someone who deserves it.

SHIRLEY

Thank you.

ROY

You're welcome.

Roy hangs up the phone, standing still on the sidewalk. He tosses his burner phone into a trash can and continues his walk, reaching the police station.

INT. POLICE STATION, DAY/ I.T. OFFICE- DAY

Walking inside, Roy takes a glance at Shirley's desk. She's smiling. He heads down the hall to his office.

Roy sits down at his desk and boots up his computer. He looks over at Jon, sees he's asleep, then opens up a folder that asks him for an administrative password. He types one in, opening a window identifying him as Captain Conrad.

A series of files open up, detailing the cases that have come through that day. Roy scrolls through lazily until he sees one that makes him sit up. We hear SMITH's voice in V.O.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY CONT.

Shirley and Brant are working at their desks as Smith addresses the room.

SMITH

Hey! Everybody listen to this. We've got another body with the- serial killer mark thing.

BRANT

The plot thickens.

Shirley throws a notepad at him.

(CONTINUED)

SMITH

Edward Fincher, 35. Found him in an alleyway on the edge of the upper east side. Symbol is carved into his neck.

SHIRLEY

Oof.

BRANT

Man, Shirley- your guy oughta get on this quick. Not a minute to lose.

SHIRLEY

Hey, I don't see you catching him.

BRANT

Oh, gee, you're right. If only I did something like, I dunno, found our mysterious symbol.

He holds up an open book, on a page that features the symbol that's carved into every victim.

BRANT (cont'd)

Oh, wait, I did do that. Guess I'll just keep being the greatest detective to ever live.

SMITH

So what is it?

BRANT

It's Roman. Symbol of Pluto, god of the Underworld. Our guy's probably got an 'angel of death' sort of vibe going on.

SHIRLEY

Okay, but how does that help us?

BRANT

Hm?

SHIRLEY

I'm not trying to knock you, but... that doesn't really get us anywhere.

BRANT

Well, I'd like to see someone else come up with something better.

INT. I.T. OFFICE- DAY CONT.

Roy sits at his desk, staring at the file on the new victim. He looks it over, bringing up the other two victims' files. His eyes widen, and he rushes to a bookshelf he's got in his office. He grabs one, then grabs a burner phone from his desk and walks out his office door. Jon sleeps through it.

INTERCUT EXT. CITY STREETS, DAY/ INT. POLICE STATION- DAY CONT.

He walks inconspicuously out the door of the precinct, waiting until he's about a block away to start jogging, almost in a sprint.

When he comes to a stop, he looks back to see how far he's come before pulling out his burner phone. He calls Shirley.

Shirley's phone rings and Brant scoffs.

BRANT

I swear if that's your tipoff guy
I'm gonna quit.

SHIRLEY

As if you could live without this
job.

She answers the phone.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

Officer Shirley Que-

ROY

(Exhausted)
It's The ABC Murders.

SHIRLEY

What?

ROY

Shirley, it's me. It's the ABC
Murders.

SHIRLEY

What are you talking about?

As she says this, Brant gets her attention and gestures towards her phone as to ask 'Is it him?' She waves him away, which he takes as a yes. He walks over to her and stands next to her, leaning his head in to hear the voice on the phone too.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

Your serial killer. I know how he's choosing his victims.

SHIRLEY

You what? How?

ROY

It's their initials. Alan Braddock, Carol DiAngelo, Edward Fincher- A.B., C.D., E.F. Their initials are spelling out the alphabet- it's right out of an Agatha Christie book, the ABC Murders.

As he says this he flips through the book he grabbed from his shelf- it is The ABC Murders.

SHIRLEY

The ABC Murders? (To Brant) Google that. ABC Murders.

ROY

No, look- you don't need to know what happens in the book. They're not going to use anything else.

She gestures towards Brant to hold on.

SHIRLEY

What- you lost me.

ROY

It...

Roy pauses to think for a moment.

ROY (cont'd)

Someone who had a genuine target wouldn't do this. This is meticulous, not to mention coincidental. They're not just trying to kill someone. They just wanted a pattern that could be seen.

SHIRLEY

So he wanted us to chase him?

ROY

That, or he wants to make you look bad.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

What, like he's above the law?

ROY

Yeah. Like- like he wants to beat you. He wants to win the duel between him and the cops.

SHIRLEY

Like a challenge.

Roy looks down at the book in his hand.

ROY

Or like a game.

SHIRLEY

That explains the book- getting his ideas from Agatha Christie would guarantee a good mystery. So how do you figure we catch him?

ROY

I don't-

BRANT

Hold on- hold on.

Brant grabs the phone out of Shirley's hand.

BRANT (cont'd)

Hi. This is Brant Finnigan of the NYPD. Who am I talking to?

Roy stays silent.

BRANT (cont'd)

Hmph. Figures. Well, let me answer that question for you. You're a stranger. Just some guy that calls us up to share the intimate details of various crimes around New York. But where do you get your information? We don't know. How are you connected to this? We don't know. And now, not only do you know that a serial killer is on the loose, not only do you know the names of all of his victims, not only are you getting this information at the same rate as we are- but you know his methods. His motives. His mindset. And now

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRANT (cont'd)

you're trying to tell us what we need to know? How to do our jobs? I want to know why the hell we should trust you.

Roy sits in a stunned silence.

BRANT (cont'd)

Hm. Only talk to your pal Shirley, huh? That's alright, I'll give you back to her. I gotta get back to catching this son of a bitch- and I just found my number one suspect.

He drops the phone onto Shirley's desk and walks away. She picks it up.

SHIRLEY

Hello? You there?

ROY

...I'll talk to you later, Shirley.

He hangs up, dropping his phone to the ground. He starts breathing heavily, just short of hyperventilating. He rubs his eyes and starts to walk.

INT. I.T. OFFICE- DAY

Roy enters, walking shakily, like a gust of wind would knock him over. Jon doesn't notice, still asleep. Roy sits down at his desk, holding a moment before putting his head in his hands, trying to ease his stress. He holds this position until Jon's desk phone rings. When Jon continues to sleep through it, Roy walks over and picks up the phone for him.

ROY

I.T.

HUTCHINS

Hi, this is Officer Hutchins- I'm having a bit of trouble here, and-

ROY

Have you tried turning it off and back on again?

HUTCHINS

Well, I- I did something, but I'm not really sure what happened. I just- something's not right, and I don't- I don't know how to-

(CONTINUED)

ROY
I'll be right there to help,
Officer.

Roy hangs up, heading towards Hutchins.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Roy enters, casting a wary glance around for Brant. He spots him in the Captain's office, talking passionately about something. Roy turns his attention to Shirley, who sits at her computer with a concerned expression on her face.

Roy turns away, heading towards Hutchins. He approaches the pudgy officer whose desk is hardly visible under the garbage collected on top of it.

ROY
Officer Hutchins?

HUTCHINS
Ah! Great. So, look- it's just not
working.

The monitor is indeed blank. He hits the keyboard, moves the mouse around, and slaps the monitor on the side, to no effect.

ROY
Alright, let me see what I can do.

He tries the power button, which does nothing. He looks behind the monitor, shifting some of the trash that fills the desk and spotting among the rubbish- Hutchins' badge. He freezes when he sees it, before looking back to the monitor. Roy sees that it's simply not plugged in, and fixes that. He presses the power button and the monitor turns on.

HUTCHINS
Ah, great! Thank you so much.

Roy half smiles at him, turning and hurrying out of the room. Hutchins goes back to work, happily.

INT. POLICE STATION- NIGHT

Shirley, Brant, Smith, and Hutchins work at their desks. Smith glances at a clock and sees how late it is.

SMITH
Alright, shift's up. I'll see you
all tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

HUTCHINS

Night.

Smith leaves, and Shirley gets up to go home too. She gathers her things and goes to walk out when Brant stops her.

BRANT

Shirley- wait.

She turns, upset with him.

BRANT (cont'd)

I'm- sorry about how I was acting earlier. I admit, I got a bit worked up.

SHIRLEY

No, it's alright. You're just doing your job.

BRANT

It's not that I don't trust your judgement, I do. It's just- you trust too easily sometimes.

She looks at him with reawakened anger, making him quickly backtrack.

BRANT (cont'd)

I didn't mean it like that, it- look, I just don't want you to have your... good nature taken advantage of by some nut.

SHIRLEY

You may not think that he's trustworthy, but I do. So I need you to just trust *me*.

BRANT

I do trust you. But I'm still gonna keep my eye on him.

SHIRLEY

You never change, do you?

BRANT

I prefer to phrase it as 'sticking to my values'.

She smirks, and he smiles.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

I'll see you tomorrow, Brant.

She walks out the door, leaving Brant standing in the office. His attention is caught by Hutchins looking around his desk.

HUTCHINS

You know, I can't seem to find my badge.

BRANT

Probably forgot it at home, like you did a week ago.

HUTCHINS

Ooh- I hope not. Captain really got on my case for that one.

BRANT

Eh, I see no need to tell him. I'm sure it'll turn up eventually- I mean, how far could it have gone?

INT. I.T. OFFICE- NIGHT

Roy sits at his desk, staring at Hutchins' badge in his hand. Jon is getting ready to leave, but Roy stops him.

ROY

Jon?

JON

Hm?

ROY

Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do- something big?

JON

Uh, I guess. Why?

ROY

It's- a Facebook quiz I'm taking, and I want to get a second thought.

JON

On what?

ROY

Well, say you get accused of this big thing. Does that then excuse

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROY (cont'd)
you to do something bad, but small-
as long as it's to clear your name?

JON
Hm... I guess so. I mean, as long
as no one gets hurt, it's all for
the greater good, right?

ROY
That's what I was thinking. Thanks.

JON
No problem.

Jon shrugs and walks away. Roy stares at the badge for another minute before nodding to himself. He leaves.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS- DAY

Roy knocks on an apartment building door. It's answered by an OLD LADY. Roy holds up the badge

ROY
NYPD. I'd like to take a look at
Edward Fincher's apartment.

OLD LADY
Again? I thought all you were done.

ROY
Well, we just want to be extra
careful.

OLD LADY
Yeh, yeh.

ROY
Thank you.

INT. FINCHER'S APARTMENT- DAY

The old lady lets Roy in, leaving behind him. He looks around, not taking any notes. After a while, Roy spots a bookshelf in the corner of the room. He looks it up and down, stopping when he notices a copy of "The ABC Murders".

He takes it off the shelf, opening it to a bookmark on a page with a slip of paper taped to it. He looks at the paper on which is a map of Manhattan, with a red circle drawn around a street corner. Roy takes a picture of it with his phone.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS- DAY

Roy walks up the street, looking from the photo on his phone to the street signs. He reaches a point where he stops, looking around for anything new. He looks and sees that he's standing in front of an alleyway, leading him to put his phone away and walk down it. Roy recoils, being hit by a wall of stench, but he covers his mouth and continues.

As Roy continues, he spots a shoe sticking out of a pile of garbage. He moves away the trash revealing a dead man's body. He turns to the street.

ROY
Somebody call 911! Call the police!
There's a dead body in here!

He sees a woman on the street start dialing, and turns back to the body. He looks it over and spots on its arm the serial killer's symbol. He then reaches for the man's pocket.

ROY (cont'd)
G.H.... G.H....

He pulls out the man's wallet, ripping out his I.D. and seeing his name is Stanley Barton. Roy takes a moment to think, eventually pocketing the I.D. and returning the wallet to the man's pocket. He returns to the street where a small crowd has amassed. The woman who called the police speaks.

WOMAN
What's going on? Who is it?

ROY
I don't know. Stay back, everyone,
the police'll need to get through.

The people murmur amongst themselves, mostly about who or what killed the man, as Roy silently sneaks away.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Shirley enters, as the other officers are hard at work. A board stands in the room with a pushpin marking the locations at which all of the victims were found.

SHIRLEY
All right everyone, since we don't
have an I.D. it'll take about an
hour before we find out if this new
victim matches the pattern of the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
others. In the meantime, look for something else- families, friends, anything they've got in common.

BRANT
You're wasting your time.

SHIRLEY
Oh are we? How do you figure?

BRANT
Because if this new victim matched the pattern, there'd be no reason to keep that from us. The only reason for this mystery is to stall for time before we learn that the rules have changed.

SHIRLEY
Changed to what?

BRANT
Do I really have to solve everything around here?

He looks around for a moment, as everyone watches him.

BRANT (cont'd)
Alright. I guess if I just HAVE to spell this one out for you people. On which victim did the pattern change? Anyone? Come on, what number victim changed things?

SMITH
Four.

BRANT
Thank you!

SMITH
Ass.

BRANT
The fourth victim changed the pattern. And what exactly does four sides make?

As he talks, he grabs a roll of string from his desk.

BRANT (cont'd)
A square. Maybe a rectangle.
Sometimes a trapezoid. And
sometimes...

Walking up to the board with all the victims locations, he wraps string around the pins, crossing them together into an X shape.

BRANT (cont'd)
A cross.

He looks at the point where the two lines he made intersect.

BRANT (cont'd)
East fifty second and Madison.
Someone google that- what's on east
fifty second and Madison?

HUTCHINS
Place called- Green's Hotel.

BRANT
(Emphasis on each word)
Green's hotel. G. H.
(To Shirley)
Queen. You coming with me?

SHIRLEY
Reluctantly.

Brant starts walking to the door, as Shirley follows, annoyed. They walk out the door.

SMITH
Man, he's a showboat, but you gotta
give it to him- Brant's quick. Who
else here coulda cracked that so
fast?

EXT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

ROY stands outside the Hotel, looking in with determination. He enters.

INT. GREEN'S HOTEL LOBBY- DAY

Roy approaches the bellhop desk, ringing for service. The CLERK approaches.

CLERK
Yes sir, can I help you?

Roy pulls out his stolen badge.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

Hi, I'm officer John Smith of the NYPD. I have reason to believe that this building is being used as a hiding place for an escaped convict.

CLERK

Oh my goodness! Is there anything I can do to help you?

ROY

Yes, I'd like to take a look at your guest list- anyone who checked in in the last few days.

CLERK

Of course!

He grabs a book, flipping a page before handing it to Roy.

CLERK (cont'd)

This and the next page should be anyone who's checked in since yesterday.

Roy nods, turning his attention to the book. He looks over the pages, scanning for anything that could tip him off.

ROY

I.J.... I.J....

He freezes. He drags a finger to the name John Moriarty. After taking a moment to consider this new direction the case is taking, he checks the room number.

ROY (cont'd)

I need the key to room 506.

INT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

Roy exits the elevator, looking at the doors as he makes his way to room 506.

EXT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

A police squad car pulls up to the hotel. BRANT and SHIRLEY step out of it.

INT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

Roy sees up the hall room 506.

EXT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

Brant and Shirley enter the hotel.

BRANT

Be on guard. We don't know what
we're walking into.

INT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

Roy opens the door, making his way into room 506. He sees a
pristine hotel room with a duffel bag on the bed.

INT. GREEN'S HOTEL LOBBY- DAY

Brant and Shirley walk up to the front desk. The CLERK
starts moving when he sees them.

CLERK

Ah! Hello officers, here is the key
to room 506.

Brant takes the key, confused.

BRANT

506? Why would we want this?

The Clerk looks confused and almost scared.

CLERK

That's the room your associate
wanted to see. The officer who got
here just before you.

Brant and Shirley look at each other, concern and grit in
their eyes. They both move toward the stairwell, Brant
drawing his gun.

INT. ROOM 506- DAY

Roy moves toward the bed, creeping closer to the duffel bag.
Despite having no idea what it contains, he walks like he's
in a mine field.

INT. STAIRWELL- DAY

Brant and Shirley burst into the stairwell, just short of sprinting up the flights.

INT. ROOM 506- DAY

Roy unzips the duffel bag, revealing inside it several pounds of C4. He sees wires in it, but no sign of a timer or other detonator. He takes a shallow, shaky breath, and pulls out a burner phone from his pocket.

INT. STAIRWELL- DAY

As Shirley and Brant are moving up the stairs when her phone rings. She looks at the caller ID.

SHIRLEY
Unknown caller.

BRANT
Put him on speaker.

She answers the phone on speaker.

ROY
You have to evacuate Green's Hotel.
Now.

SHIRLEY
What?

ROY
Green's Hotel. It's on 52nd and
Madison-

SHIRLEY
We know, we're already here.

ROY
Oh, god- Get out now!

BRANT
Why?

ROY
There's a bomb.

Brant and Shirley exchange a look, stunned.

ROY (cont'd)
C4. A lot of it. More than enough
to decimate the building.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Brant. We need to act on this.

BRANT

It's a diversion. Even if it's true, it's a plot for him to get away.

SHIRLEY

Even if it is, we can't ignore a threat!

BRANT

Well, luckily there's two of us.

Brant turns and continues up the stairs.

ROY

Brant, wait!

Shirley hangs up the phone, running down the stairs.

INT. ROOM 506- DAY

Roy panics, looking around the room. He gets an idea, and runs out to the hallway.

INT. GREEN'S HOTEL 5TH FLOOR- DAY

After looking around for a moment he runs to a nearby fire alarm and pulls it. People start to evacuate their rooms slowly but surely.

Brant reaches the floor and bursts through the door, being met by a crowd of shambling people. He puts away his gun and pulls out his badge, holding it above his head.

BRANT

NYPD! Outta my way!

Roy moves through the crowd, making his way towards a room from which tenants are still leaving. As the last person exits, Roy catches the closing door with his foot and slips into the room. He opens the window on the far side, leaning out it to see a fire escape on the window next to it.

Brant shifts through the crowd, reaching room 506 and opening the door. He looks around the room and in the bathroom, scanning for any people. He hesitantly steps toward the duffel bag and peers inside, seeing the C4 for himself.

EXT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

Roy steps halfway out the window frame with extreme caution, hanging on to the sill to avoid falling. He reaches for the fire escape with his foot, but can't quite reach. Shakily, he steps his other foot outside, now standing entirely out the window, perched on the window sill. He takes a deep breath, and makes the minor leap to the fire escape. He grabs on for dear life, clutching the rungs close to him.

INT. GREEN'S HOTEL 5TH FLOOR- DAY

Brant exits room 506, looking around for a sign of someone he wouldn't recognize. Begrudgingly, he gives up, instead helping shuffle the last few tenants to the stairwell.

EXT. GREEN'S HOTEL- DAY

Roy climbs onto the floor of the fire escape, sighing in relief. He makes his way down the stairs, eventually reaching the ladder that goes down to a foot or two above the ground.

He starts to climb down it, but as soon as his full weight is on it starts to creak. He holds still, hoping the problem will fix itself, but the brittle metal of the ladder snaps, sending Roy falling a few feet to the ground as the ladder clatters beside him.

As Roy writhes on the ground in pain, the noise of the ladder hitting the floor reaches Shirley, who's standing on the street with the crowd of the hotel's tenants. She looks down the alleyway and spots Roy. She hurries to help him up, but upon seeing her his eyes widen in fear.

SHIRLEY

Oh my gosh, hey, are you alright?

ROY

(Speaking in a gruff voice)

Uh, yeah- yeah, I'm fine.

SHIRLEY

Here, let me help you up.

She looks over the broken fire escape.

Man, these fire escapes aren't really the safest, huh?

ROY

I- I guess not.

He tries desperately to avoid her getting a good look at his face.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Here, come on- all the tenants are gathered out on the street...

She takes a closer look at his face.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

Do I know you from somewhere?

ROY

Uh- don't think so.

SHIRLEY

Are you sure? Cause I swear I've seen your face a thousand times.

ROY

New York's a big place. Maybe we bumped into each other.

SHIRLEY

Hm. Well come over here, we've got EMT's- just to make sure. nothing got broken too badly in your fall.

She starts walking him towards the street. He resists, but moves slowly.

ROY

Oh, no, I'm not-

Roy cuts himself off as he sees Brant step into the street in front of the alleyway. Seeing Roy with Shirley, Brant seems to recognize him. Roy notices this, and grimaces.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Sitting alone at Brant's desk, Roy's eyes dart back and forth as he takes in his situation. He looks up to see Brant talking to the Captain in his office- Roy can't hear what they say, but he can see that neither looks happy.

Brant finally exits the office, putting on a fake smile when he sees Roy watching him. He walks to his desk.

BRANT

Well well, Roy Williams. How you been? How's my favorite I.T. guy?

ROY

Fine.

Brant hesitates before his next sentence, watching Roy's eyes.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT

So, this' pretty crazy, all this stuff going on at Green's huh? Anyone tell you, there was a bomb in one of the rooms.

Roy poorly feigns surprise.

BRANT (cont'd)

Duffel bag, full of C4, just sitting on the bed. I swear, it was like, this big. Lucky the bomb squad got to it and defused the thing- wouldn't want to see *that* go off.

ROY

Me neither.

BRANT

I bet, I bet. But I gotta say, this whole thing seems pretty weird- I mean, we follow a tip to find a serial killer- instead, we bump into someone we work with! What, uh- what were you doing there, pal?

Roy knew this question was coming, but is still caught off guard. He looks past Brant as his mind races.

ROY

Um- well, I...

He freezes, as a solution finally clicks.

ROY (cont'd)

I got a phone call. Some unknown number, and the guy- on the other end, he said he was working with you guys on an important case. Said he was undercover. He asked me to go to Green's hotel- as a guest of Mr. Moriarty. When I got to the room, the door wasn't locked and- I saw the bomb on the bed, so I pulled the fire alarm and ran.

BRANT

Huh. You seemed surprised when I told you there was a bomb.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

I was just nervous. I wasn't sure whether it had eventually detonated, and I thought you meant it had.

BRANT

Ah. Makes sense- a bomb blowing up part of New York would surprise me too. But then- what made you take the fire escape out of there?

ROY

Erm- panic. I just kind of freaked out, and ran to the nearest open door and out the window. I mean, that's what you're supposed to do in these kind of things, right?

BRANT

Well, fire escapes are mostly just for fires. Or escaping the building unseen.

He laughs with Roy, but Roy just sort of awkwardly chuckles.

BRANT (cont'd)

Alright, I think that pretty much clears everything up. Let me just check with my higher ups.

He gets up and walks away from the desk. Roy sighs quietly in relief. Brant walks out of sight behind a wall, where Shirley rests.

SHIRLEY

So? Get what you were looking for?

BRANT

No. He said he wasn't staying there.

SHIRLEY

Yeah. We knew that.

BRANT

But he didn't know that we knew. Could've caught him in a lie.

SHIRLEY

Or, he might just be telling the truth.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT

Or he might not be.

SHIRLEY

Go easy on the guy. He wasn't cut out for the academy, so something like this probably shook the hell out of him.

BRANT

I knew I shouldn't have told you about that. You're pitying him!

SHIRLEY

I am not!

BRANT

Oh, no? You sure he's not too shaken up? Maybe we oughta get him a glass of milk and a warm blanket to calm down.

SHIRLEY

Look, the evidence is you have is circumstantial, and he *did* try to get everyone out of the building. Top that with him training to be a cop, I don't think he's guilty.

BRANT

Being in the academy doesn't absolve someone of guilt.

SHIRLEY

And being near a crime scene doesn't condemn them.

BRANT

...Alright. I'll let him go. But first- we're gonna make absolutely sure he's clean.

SHIRLEY

Whatever helps you sleep at night.

Brant walks towards his desk again. Roy looks up when he sees Brant coming.

BRANT

So- you're pretty good, but unfortunately we're gonna have to do one last test before we let you go.

Roy nods, looking calm on the surface but hiding a nervous flutter.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM- DAY

Roy sits hooked up to a polygraph machine attended by a strange spindly man. Brant stands in the room uneasy, hiding his determination to catch Roy.

ATTENDANT

All right, these are just some control questions- what's your name?

ROY

Roy Williams.

ATTENDANT

How old are you?

ROY

24.

ATTENDANT

Alright. (To Brant) You may begin.

BRANT

Okay. Roy. Why were you at Green's hotel?

Roy pauses for a moment as he formulates an answer.

ROY

I was looking into a lead on the behalf of a mysterious benefactor to the NYPD.

Brant looks to the attendant. The man nods.

BRANT

Why did you pull the fire alarm?

ROY

I wanted to get everyone out of the building in case the bomb went off.

Brant looks over. The attendant nods again.

BRANT

Who did you talk to on the phone?

(CONTINUED)

ROY
I don't know. I wasn't given a name.

This time Roy glances over with Brant. The attendant hesitates, then nods.

BRANT
What did he sound like?

ROY
Uh- I don't know, it was a brief conversation. Adult male, averagely deep voice. Sounded like he was from New York.

BRANT
Did you recognize it?

ROY
I'm sorry?

BRANT
Did you recognize the voice?

ROY
No.

BRANT
Are you sure?

As he's asking these rapid questions, Brant starts leaning closer to Roy, his hands spread on the table.

ROY
Yes.

BRANT
You have NO idea who it was?

ROY
None.

BRANT
You're positive?

ROY
I am.

He says this with grit, tired of this line of questioning. Brant eases back, standing up and walking over to the polygraph attendant. They talk too quietly for Roy to hear, but their body language conveys the attendant confirming that Roy didn't lie.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT

Alright.

He says this with distaste, but snaps back to his usual energetic self fast.

BRANT (cont'd)

Okay! Then I think we're all done here! Sorry to have taken up your time.

ROY

It was my pleasure.

BRANT

Ha! I'm sure, I'm sure. Well, you're free to go whenever, I'm just gonna head back to my desk. Alright?

He doesn't wait for Roy to answer as he turns and walks out of the room. He passes Shirley, who he angrily shakes his head at and walks past. Roy exits the room behind him, and Shirley walks up to Roy.

SHIRLEY

Hey! Roy, right?

Roy nods.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

I'm Shirley.

He smiles.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

So how you feeling? That was a rough fall earlier.

ROY

I'm fine. No big deal.

SHIRLEY

Alright, that's good to hear. Lotta crazy stuff happening around here, don't need anyone getting hurt off-duty.

ROY

Mm.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Hey- is it true, that you talked to him? The mysterious caller?

ROY

Yeah.

SHIRLEY

What'd he say?

ROY

What do you mean?

SHIRLEY

Well, like, what did he talk about? Any people, or anything about himself...

ROY

No, just- just the hotel room and... all that.

SHIRLEY

Awh.

ROY

Why?

SHIRLEY

I dunno, I just- I can never get a read on that guy. He's just so distant- never says anything about himself. I'd love to meet him in person- see what he's really like, you know?

ROY

You'd probably be disappointed.

SHIRLEY

What do you mean?

ROY

Right now you seem to hold him in a favorable light, but that's because you have no point of reference for him outside of his voice. So you've got an idealized portrayal of a detective- someone who stops crime, and the rest is filled in with what you want him to be. If you ever met him that ideal would be shattered.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Maybe, but it's better to know who someone really is than to hold on desperately to some fantasy.

ROY

I guess. Doesn't make it any less depressing when a dream dies, though.

Shirley looks off, a sense of melancholy surrounding her. Roy notices this, and immediately regrets what he's said.

ROY (cont'd)

I'll talk to you later, Shirley.

He walks back through the main offices and stops at Hutchins' desk.

ROY (cont'd)

Officer Hutchins, I spotted this by the doorway- it's yours, right?

He hands over Hutchins' badge.

HUTCHINS

Oh- yeah! Wow, that's a relief!
Thanks!

ROY

No problem.

Hutchins clips his badge onto his belt, and Roy walks back to his office. He goes to open the door, but instead walks out of the precinct.

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT- NIGHT

Roy enters his apartment, exhausted. He sits down at his table, rubbing his face and searching for something important to do. He sighs, slapping the table and walking over to his bookshelf.

He grabs his copy of The ABC Murders, then adds to it with some of his detective stories- And Then There Were None, Hound of the Baskervilles, and others. He sets a stack down on the table, cracking one open and starting to read.

We then see him in the middle of a dream, in which Roy is standing in a dark void. He looks around and sees nobody until Brant appears behind him.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT

I'm onto you.

Roy whirls around, startled.

BRANT (cont'd)

I can see through your lies. I know you've got something to hide, and sooner or later you're gonna slip and fall.

ROY

I'm not a killer, Brant.

BRANT

That's up to the jury to decide.

He walks off into the shadows, vanishing. Shirley appears behind Roy.

SHIRLEY

You lied to me.

ROY

Shirley-

SHIRLEY

Why did you lie? To all of us?

ROY

It's not that simple-

SHIRLEY

You've been sneaking around under our noses.

ROY

It's interfering in police investigations, I could've gone to jail-

SHIRLEY

So were your phone calls.

ROY

I know they were! I just- couldn't help it-

SHIRLEY

I thought we could've been friends.

(CONTINUED)

ROY
We... we can...

SHIRLEY
Not anymore.

She walks away too. Roy tries to follow her, but she disappears before him.

ROY
Shirley, I-

He's cut off by a mirror image of himself stepping out of the shadows.

MIRROR ROY
What are you doing?

ROY
I'm trying to help people.

MIRROR ROY
You're helping yourself.

ROY
I- I solve crimes-

MIRROR ROY
You solve crimes because you're obsessed with detectives, not to help the victims.

ROY
That's...

MIRROR ROY
You don't care about anyone else. You do it all for yourself. It's a game. And you know what that makes you sound like.

ROY
No, I-

MIRROR ROY
It makes you sound like me.

As he says this, the copy of Roy warps, the shadows in its face stretching into a monstrous visage as its shoulders start smoking. Spots on the chest catch fire, stretching into the serial killer's signature symbol, glowing in orange embers.

(CONTINUED)

ROY
I'm nothing like you.

MIRROR ROY
Aren't you? Trapped in your room,
away from the world- spending all
your time thinking about robberies,
and murders, arson, battery-

ROY
I-

MIRROR ROY
You know that's not normal.
Borderline sociopathic. Just a
symptom of the cascading traumas
that you know are leading you down
a dark, deep, terrifying path.
Because when it comes down to it
you're afraid to ask yourself- what
is it that separates you... from
me?

He disappears silently, as Roy sits horrified. Without any warning, he awakes, opening his eyes and laying motionless.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Roy enters the office with a yawn, drudging towards the IT office. He freezes, however, when he sees Brant sitting on his desk. Brant is fiddling with one of Roy's desk toys until he spots Roy entering.

BRANT
Hey! There he is! How you feeling,
pal?

Roy shrugs.

ROY
Fine.

BRANT
Oof, I feel that. All this serial
killer stuff, lotta concern going
round. Just wanna stop this sicko
before he hurts anyone else, you
know?

Brant's tone seems casual and friendly, but Roy can't help but feel accused.

(CONTINUED)

ROY
Yeah, definitely.

BRANT
Speaking of all that, I talked to the sergeant- after that mystery guy called you, we started thinking why you? There are plenty of people in the precinct, so what makes you the first choice for investigation?

ROY
I dunno.

BRANT
Well, we figure it's something he knows about you that we don't. Something that connects you to all this. Maybe the killer is your long lost brother or something. So we want you up with us, to help out the investigation.

ROY
You want me to... work the case with you?

BRANT
Sort of, yeah! Should be exciting.

ROY
Isn't that... against the rules or something?

BRANT
Well, technically, but sarge said he'd look the other way on this one. Pretty cool, huh?

Brant smiles widely. Roy returns a half grin, trying to hide his confusion.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY(CONT)

Brant and Roy walk into the main offices. Shirley, Smith, Hutchins and Greaves are standing at their desks with a board of evidence standing by them.

BRANT
Now, I'll warn you, some of the stuff we've got is pretty gruesome. So if you need to take a minute you can-

(CONTINUED)

GREAVES

Ah, the guest of honor has arrived.

SHIRLEY

How you feeling, Roy?

ROY

Fine.

GREAVES

Enough pleasantries. We've got another body.

He grabs a file from the desk behind him.

GREAVES (cont'd)

John Douglas, 43.

Roy takes particular note of the name, trying to recognize it.

GREAVES

Found in his apartment on 9th- however, none of his neighbors heard a gunshot, meaning he was killed somewhere else and moved.

BRANT

Gunshot?

Brant takes the folder from Greaves. He opens it, revealing photos of the crime scene.

GREAVES

He was shot in the head- got blown clean off.

SHIRLEY

Jesus.

BRANT

Not enough of him on the floor, he was definitely killed somewhere else. But this-

He flips to the next picture in the album which shows a string of seemingly random numbers painted on the wall.

BRANT (cont'd)

What- what is this?

(CONTINUED)

GREAVES

We don't know. Some kind of code,
but no one can figure out what
kind.

ROY

(To Himself)

Douglas...

SHIRLEY

Maybe they translate into letters?
A is one, B is two, so on?

GREAVES

Someone tried that. Still
gibberish.

BRANT

Hm. I'm stumped. Any ideas, Roy?

All of them turn to look at Roy. He takes another moment to
think, before having an epiphany.

ROY

Valley of Fear.

The cops look at each other, waiting for him to continue.

ROY (cont'd)

This is from The Valley of Fear.
Sherlock Holmes.

GREAVES

Another book?

SMITH

What is this guy, Encyclopedia
Brown?

HUTCHINS

What does that even mean?

SMITH

I dunno. Books.

ROY

Valley of Fear begins with a man
named John Douglas who was shot in
the face in his home with a
shotgun.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Wow. So this guy went pretty literal with this one.

BRANT

Does that give any clue as to what the numbers are, though?

ROY

...At the beginning of the book, someone sends Holmes a book cipher.

HUTCHINS

Book cipher? What does that mean?

BRANT

It's an outdated form of code. The numbers correspond to a word, then a line, then a page. Once you find the corresponding book, you find the message.

SMITH

So what's the book?

SHIRLEY

Willing to bet it's Valley of Fear.

GREAVES

Good work, Williams. Brant, you seemed to understand these?

BRANT

Yes, sir.

GREAVES

Great. Get to work on deciphering this. The rest of you, dismissed.

Smith and Hutchins sit down at their desks as Brant takes the file and starts looking through it. Shirley walks up to Roy.

SHIRLEY

Man, lucky we've got you here. Rest of us probably would have never gotten that.

BRANT

Yeah, lucky.

He says this with a hint of sarcasm.

(CONTINUED)

BRANT (cont'd)
Anyone know where I can get a copy
of Valley of Fear?

ROY
I've got one next to my desk.

BRANT
Wow.

He looks at Shirley.

BRANT (cont'd)
Lucky.

Brant leaves towards Roy's office.

SHIRLEY
Seriously though- what do you think
the deal is with this guy and these
books?

ROY
Dunno. I figure he just thinks it's
fun- like he's playing a part in a
mystery novel.

SHIRLEY
But doesn't that mean we catch him
in the end?

ROY
Not necessarily. Even in Valley of
Fear- Moriarty gets away.

SHIRLEY
Then I guess we'll just have to do
better than Sherlock Holmes, eh?

ROY
Gee, is that all?

Shirley and Roy chuckle as they both walk back to their desks. Roy passes Brant, who nods to him, showing that he's got Valley of Fear. Roy heads to his office.

INT. I.T. OFFICE- DAY CONT.

Roy sits down at his desk, content for a moment. He then gets an idea and opens his computer. He brings up the case file on John Douglas and finds the photo of the book cipher.

(CONTINUED)

Roy turns to his desk side bookshelf, again taking his copy of The ABC Murders. He starts decoding the message using the book as a cipher, writing them down on a piece of paper. The first couple words seem to make no sense, but he keeps going.

As he reaches the end of the code, he finally sees a message starting to take shape. The words "aware house on south street and John" spell themselves out. Roy grins, happy that his hunch has achieved results. He keeps going with renewed vigor.

Working on the last line, he finds the words "Go Detective". He seems puzzled, but continues. The next word is "Will", puzzling him more. He then reads "I" "Am" and "So"- he stops writing the last word halfway through in shock, as it now reads "Detective Williams". Roy recoils from the desk in fear. It is then that Shirley enters.

SHIRLEY

Hey, just wanted to say thanks again for the tip. Finnigan decoded the message- it's a little wonky, but we think it's leading us to an apartment building. Heading out now.

Roy is hardly listening as his mind races. He tries to respond.

ROY

Yeah, okay. No prob. Good Luck.

SHIRLEY

Thanks. Later.

She leaves, and Roy again turns to his transcription of the code. He shakily picks it up, stuffing it in his pocket and heading out the door.

EXT. WAREHOUSE- DAY

Roy steps out of a cab onto the dirty grounds of an old warehouse. He hesitates, taking in the ominous presence of the building before shakily heading inside.

INT. WAREHOUSE, DAY (CONT'D)

He enters, making his way past heaps of junk. He freezes when he sees blood and chunks of skull on the ground with a sawed off shotgun. He looks away, spotting something on the wall that catches his eye.

(CONTINUED)

As Roy looks up, he recoils in horror as he reads a message written in blood all across the warehouse wall. "I know who you are, Mister Mystery".

Roy stumbles backwards, catching himself on a bench. He starts hyperventilating, pulling out his phone. He dials.

OPERATOR

NYPD 19th precinct, how can I help you?

ROY

I need to get in contact with officers Queen and Finnigan. Tell them there's been a murder at a warehouse on South and John street.

Roy hangs up, still panicking. He rockets up, reaching into his pocket and pulling out the paper he wrote the book cipher on. He rips off the last words about "detective Williams", walking out the door and throwing that part in the river.

INT. WAREHOUSE- DAY

Roy sits outside the warehouse with Brant and Shirley, as cops move in and out of the warehouse behind them.

BRANT

Well, at least we know what happened to the rest of Mr. Douglas.

SHIRLEY

No kidding. Our killer really wanted to drive this message home.

BRANT

Yeah, your secret admirer's sure got some trouble on his hands. Ain't that right, Roy?

ROY

Yeah.

BRANT

Well, it's a good thing you were able to decipher a message meant to only be decipherable by our prime suspect.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

Yeah.

BRANT

I wonder what kind of other information you alone could bring us. Sure is lucky you're so connected to this case.

SHIRLEY

It IS lucky- since the address we pulled turned out to be a dead lead. At least with this we're still moving forward.

ROY

Yeah- look, I'm gonna go home- is that alright? This- this all really shook me up.

SHIRLEY

Yeah, that's totally fine. We'll fudge a statement from you for the report.

BRANT

(muttering)

Yeah, why not. Just make a mockery of our jobs, nothin' wrong with that.

Roy walks away, huddled over.

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT- NIGHT

Roy enters his apartment, looking over his shoulder as he closes the door behind him. He locks the door and slides in his chain bolt before heading in. He looks out the window, scanning for anything unusual- he closes the blinds as he leaves.

Roy sits at his table, looking back and forth fear. He almost tries to hide under the table, before realizing how dumb that would be. He rests his head in his hands, exhausted but too scared to sleep.

He sighs, walking over to his couch and starts looking through his DVDs. He looks at a season of Sherlock and Murder she Wrote, but puts them both back. He then picks up a dvd unseen to the audience and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

We then see Roy sitting on the couch, movie in progress. The screen displays two men standing in front of an active crime scene. The police lead a man in handcuffs into their car, and one of the men in the foreground turns to the other.

MAN #1

Gosh, Detective, that sure was a close one. I didn't think you were going to make it out of there!

MAN #2

Oh, come on now. I've fought chihuahuas more intimidating than that guy.

MAN #1

Detective, weren't you scared at all? He had a gun to your head! You could've been killed at any moment! If I were you, I'd retire after something like that.

MAN #2

Ha! Constable, if I turned and ran at everyone who threatened my life, I would've been out of a job while I was still in the academy.

MAN #1

Well, you're a braver man than I, detective.

MAN #2

No, it's not about being brave. It's about knowing that there's more important things than my safety.

MAN #1

Sir?

MAN #2

How many more victims do you think this lunatic could've taken? How many more people could have died, had I not been here tonight? Sure, I was in danger- but if I wasn't, someone else would have been. And if I did nothing to stop that, then their blood's on my hands. So I'll gladly put myself in danger- so that others aren't.

(CONTINUED)

Roy takes a moment to think, as the words clearly struck a chord with him. He looks up with determination.

MAN #1

Well, what now, detective?

MAN #2

Now, we get back to work.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Roy walks up to Shirley as she works at her desk.

ROY

Morning Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Hey, you're here early. I'm only in cause I have to be.

ROY

I had a rough night sleeping.

SHIRLEY

Oh, that thing yesterday really got to you, huh?

ROY

Well, I didn't love it.

SHIRLEY

Yeah. Adjusting to that stuff is rough for everyone- I'm still not fully comfortable with it.

ROY

Mm. Hey, have you got a couple minutes?

SHIRLEY

Sure. Why?

ROY

I was wondering if I could take a look around the place you and Brant went to yesterday. Maybe there's something small hidden out there.

Shirley stands up, preparing to leave.

SHIRLEY

If you want. We didn't really comb the place, so it's possible

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
something slipped through the
cracks, but I can't imagine
anything much being there.

ROY
Maybe just to have something to
search, take my mind off yesterday.

SHIRLEY
I get that. I'll pull my car
around, you wait out front.

ROY
Sure.

Roy and Shirley split off as he heads towards the front of the building. Roy makes his way through the station but he bumps into a man wearing a brown suit as he passes.

ROY (cont'd)
Oh, sorry.

The Man waves him off, not stopping long enough for Roy to see his face. Roy keeps moving out the door. Shirley pulls up in front of the station, and Roy gets in the car with her.

INT. SHIRLEY'S CAR- DAY

Shirley and Roy drive through the streets of Manhattan. The radio plays softly.

SHIRLEY
So what exactly are you looking for
here?

ROY
Something. Anything.

SHIRLEY
I know how you feel. I've been
hoping we'd get some big break in
this case. I mean, right now we
don't have anything on the guy,
we're just following him around.

ROY
Yeah- just waiting for him to trip,
I guess.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Although I tell ya, it sure is lucky. we stumbled onto you for this one.

ROY

...What do you mean?

SHIRLEY

Well, we find a serial killer that takes all his stuff from classic mystery books, it's a good thing we've got someone on our side who knows them all by heart. Else we'd be doomed.

ROY

Oh. Well, I'm glad to help.

SHIRLEY

What is it with you and these books anyway? Why do you know so much about em?

ROY

Um- well, my Grandma used to read them with me as a kid. We'd always try to figure out who did it before the end. I think that's what made me want to become a detective.

SHIRLEY

You were gonna be a detective? Why didn't you enroll in the academy?

ROY

I did.

SHIRLEY

Oh. If you don't mind my asking, what happened?

ROY

Well- I didn't do to well with all the.. active cop stuff. Communication, physicals. I aced the written tests.

SHIRLEY

So you just need to work out a bit?

(CONTINUED)

ROY

I guess. I don't know that it's really that simple, though...

SHIRLEY

It sounds like it's that simple.

ROY

...What about you? Why are you a cop?

SHIRLEY

I've always liked helping people. My parents got divorced when I was little, and I remember the officers who would sit and play with me while they were going through all the paperwork at the station. They made me smile when I didn't want to, and I wanted to be able to do the same for other people.

ROY

Huh.

SHIRLEY

Yeah- not the most inspired origin story, but it's the one I got.

ROY

It's nice.

SHIRLEY

Have you ever thought of reenlisting? Or do you just want to stick with I.T.?

ROY

I've considered it. But I can't see myself doing any better a second time around.

SHIRLEY

Maybe you just need some assistance.

ROY

Maybe.

SHIRLEY

I mean we've seen you can handle detective work. You're practically another cop on this case.

ROY
I don't think your partner would agree with that.

SHIRLEY
Oh, Brant's just a brat, don't mind him. You know, when we first got paired together Brant and I hated each other.

ROY
Really?

SHIRLEY
Yeah, he'd just gotten transferred away from a partner who to this day is one of his best friends, so he saw me as an 'unfitting replacement'. And me, I thought he was a loud, arrogant, narcissistic prick. So basically, the same as he is now.

Roy laughs.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
But within a couple of week we grew on each other, and now he's family.

ROY
That's nice.

SHIRLEY
You got any family, Roy?

ROY
Um- not really. My parents live upstate, no brothers or sisters.

SHIRLEY
Well, what about friends? Any old buddies from college, or?

ROY
...Nope.

SHIRLEY
...Oh. Well, if you ever want someone to get a drink with I'm a room over.

Roy looks over and smiles. He looks back out the window and they drive in silence for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY (cont'd)

Hey, Roy?

ROY

Hm?

SHIRLEY

Off the record here... if you knew anything we don't about this case... you'd tell us right?

Roy pauses, startled.

ROY

If I knew anything you needed to know, I would.

Shirley thinks for a moment, then looks over at Roy. He doesn't meet her gaze. They drive the rest of the way to the apartment in silence.

INT. CIVILIAN APARTMENT- DAY

Shirley stands by the door as Roy looks around the small apartment. There are no signs of anything illegal happening there.

ROY

Did you guys find anything of note here, or?

SHIRLEY

No, not really. Hell, we're not even sure if it's actually connected to the case. Far as we know, your warehouse was the intended target.

ROY

I wouldn't put it past this guy to leave two clues at once. Holmes always had to remember every clue, 'cause sometimes an item from the beginning was vital to solving the case at the end.

SHIRLEY

Well, maybe you'll catch something we couldn't.

ROY

...What's the address again?

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY
223 Ludlow street.

ROY
Hmm.

SHIRLEY
What, you hoping it'd be a
reference?

ROY
Kind of.

SHIRLEY
Well, maybe there's something else.
Think about all the books you know-
anything here?

ROY
I've been trying that- nothing's
coming to mind.

SHIRLEY
Well, what are your favorites?

ROY
Em. You know, there's the
classics... Murder on the Orient
Express, And Then there were None,
Hound of the Baskervilles... I
always liked Thirteen for Dinner...
The Man in the Brown Suit-

As he says this, Roy's eyes grow wide. He flashes back to the station when he bumped into a man wearing a brown suit. He realizes now that the man had a tattoo on his neck of the killer's symbol.

ROY (cont'd)
We have to get back to the station.
NOW!

He bolts out of the room, as Shirley rushes after him.

INT. SHIRLEY'S CAR- DAY

Siren placed on top of the car, Shirley and Roy rush through traffic, going through red lights and weaving around cars in a frantic rush.

SHIRLEY
What do you mean, you saw him?

(CONTINUED)

ROY
In the station. I saw the killer.

SHIRLEY
How do you know it was him?

ROY
Because he'd want me to know.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Roy bursts in the door of the precinct, looking frantically around for anyone wearing brown. Brant and the rest of the cops look at him confused.

ROY
Has anyone seen a man wearing a brown suit?

BRANT
What?

ROY
There was a man in a brown suit in here earlier.

SMITH
I saw him- he was looking around records, I think.

Roy starts away, but Smith stops him.

SMITH (cont'd)
Wait- I think you just missed him. I think he headed out the door, like, a minute ago.

Roy bolts towards the door, heading out into the streets.

EXT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Roy stops on the sidewalk, looking around desperately for a sign of the man in the brown suit. He freezes, shocked, when he spots a man wearing a brown suit stepping onto a bus.

ROY
HEY!

He sprints towards the bus, but it takes off before he's even close. He keeps running, still slightly catching up as it accelerates.

(CONTINUED)

ROY (cont'd)

STOP!

He gets close enough that he can see in the last row of windows, but he's clearly at the extent of his ability. He sees the man in the suit sitting in the last seat.

ROY (cont'd)

Hey!

The man turns around slowly, letting Roy finally get a full view of his face. Roy, stunned, slows even more than his wildly depleted stamina was making him. The man moves a hand to his head and makes a 'see you later' motion to Roy before disappearing from his view completely as the bus drives into the distance. Roy comes to a stunned stop on the sidewalk.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

Roy enters, out of breath and defeated. Shirley walks up to him.

SHIRLEY

Apparently a lot happened in the time it took to park.

ROY

He got away. He was right in front of me, and he got away.

SHIRLEY

Well, at least you're not the rest of these guys that just let him walk past them.

BRANT

Hey, we don't even know who that was supposed to be.

SHIRLEY

That was our serial killer.

BRANT

What? How do you know?

ROY

A tattoo on his neck of the symbol.

Brant takes a moment to think after Roy says this.

BRANT

(To Shirley)

Did you see it?

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

Well, no- Roy didn't even realize until we were at the apartment.

BRANT

Apartment? What apartment?

ROY

I wanted to take a look at the place you guys found with the book cipher.

BRANT

Huh. Anything new?

SHIRLEY

We left before we really looked around.

BRANT

Alright. Well I'm gonna look through records. Smith says he was around there, maybe he took something.

Brant leaves.

ROY

I was right there, and he got away.

Roy starts to walk back to his office, dejected. Shirley follows.

SHIRLEY

Everyone loses a perp at some point. You're not even a cop, no one could expect you to be completely on top of this.

ROY

He could.

Roy pauses at the door to his office.

ROY (cont'd)

That's the problem- he knew I wouldn't catch him. I don't know how, but he knew exactly how long I'd be away. I don't know if he's in my head, or if he's... maybe he's just lucky. Whatever it is, he's always a step ahead... it sucks.

He walks into the office, and Shirley walks away

INT. I.T. OFFICE- DAY

Roy sits down at his desk, thinking about what his next step should be. He stares at nothing as the noise of Jon clicking his computer's mouse fills the room. Roy rubs his eyes.

JON

Oh by the way, there's a note for you.

ROY

...What?

Jon holds up a letter.

JON

You got a message. Some guy left this letter for you.

ROY

...Was he wearing a brown suit?

JON

I dunno. Maybe?

Roy cautiously makes his way over and takes the envelope that Jon holds in his hand. It has 'Roy' scrawled on the front in a scratchy script.

He cautiously opens the letter, and begins to read. Specific words jump out at him; Close call, raise the stakes, and 5 more victims pop up.

JON (cont'd)

Anything good?

ROY

It's a note from a serial killer threatening to kill 5 more people by the end of tomorrow.

JON

Ooh. So, not good.

ROY

No, it's not. It's terrifying, and worse- it's incomplete.

JON

...whut?

(CONTINUED)

ROY

The envelope's addressed to me, but he left it with you. He's way too secretive to risk you reading it, so the actual message is hidden. Maybe in some form of code.

Jon thinks for a moment.

JON

You ever see National Treasure?

Roy looks up, interest piqued.

JON (cont'd)

They- there's this secret message- or maybe it's a map- and it's on the declaration of independence, and they have to squirt lemon juice on the paper, and it- the map shows up. So maybe this is like that.

ROY

It's possible. But unlikely. It's probably much simpler- like...

Roy grabs a lamp on Jon's desk and turns it on. He holds the note up to it, revealing a hidden message.

ROY (cont'd)

There it is.

JON

Dude, you're just like Nicholas cage...

Roy takes a moment to acknowledge the comment, before bringing the note closer to read what it says.

INSERT:

It's time to meet. Schubert Theater, 10:00

Come alone.

Roy thinks for a moment before stuffing the note into his pocket.

JON (cont'd)

Anything cool?

(CONTINUED)

ROY
No. Came up empty.

JON
Aw. Man.

Jon goes back to his computer, and Roy goes back to his desk.

INT. I.T. OFFICE- NIGHT

Roy sits at his desk, trying to focus on anything. He keeps glancing at his desk clock, which reads 9:48. He finally taps his desk and stands up. He grabs a burner phone and heads to the door.

INT. POLICE STATION- NIGHT

As Roy walks out the door, Brant notices him leaving. Brant seems suspicious, but goes back to his work soon.

INT. SCHUBERT THEATER- NIGHT

Roy steps cautiously into the empty theater. The sound of the heavy door echoes through the room. He steps forward to the stage and sees someone in a chair in the front row.

He edges around to in front of them when he sees that it's a young man tied and gagged, unconscious. He starts towards them to help, when he hears a gun cock.

BRANT
Freeze!

Roy looks up and sees Brant, gun drawn and aimed at him.

ROY
Brant, I don't know what you think you're doing, but this guy needs help.

BRANT
Yeah, which is why you're gonna get away from him and put your hands on your head.

ROY
Brant, now is not the time for-

BRANT
I've been on your tail since the hotel, but I've only now got you on something concrete.

(CONTINUED)

ROY
Listen to me!-

BRANT
You know, Shirley really *trusted* you. This is gonna break her heart, but I guess you wouldn't care about that.

ROY
Dammit, Finnigan, I'm innocent!

BRANT
Yeah, that's what they all say.

O.S.
He's right, you know.

Suddenly, a gunshot rings out, and Brant falls to the floor, clutching his side. Behind him stands a man wearing a brown suit holding a handgun.

MAN IN SUIT
We *do* all say that.

ROY
BRANT!

He dashes towards Brant, but the man in the suit shakes the gun at him. Roy backs up as the man draws closer to Brant.

MAN IN SUIT
Gotta say, I appreciate the perfect setup for a dramatic entrance. Although- Roy. I *did* say come alone.

He leans over to Brant's ear and fires the gun right next to it, causing Brant to cover his ears in pain.

MAN IN SUIT (cont'd)
I *do* hate eavesdroppers.

ROY
So it's you? You're our serial killer?

MAN IN SUIT
Name's Steven Norton. At your service.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

Why are you doing this? What's your game?

NORTON

Oh, come on Roy. We know each other better than that. My "game" is you.

ROY

What?

NORTON

You know, I grew up reading those old detective stories, just like you. I loved 'em- meticulous, perfectly laid plans being foiled by some sleuth who didn't know when to quit. And I don't know about you, but when I grew up I was so... *disappointed* in the police we got. I stole a transmitter a couple years back, and it was all just so *boring*. People doing their jobs, no real conflict or moral quandary. Just... paperwork, and parking tickets. I was exhausted. I even tried orchestrating a couple small crimes back then- nothing to this scale, an arson here, burglary there- but they just got it wrong or gave up. But *then*... then you came along.

Roy sits in stunned silence.

NORTON (cont'd)

I started hearing chatter about some... mysterious stranger, who would call in and solve the unsolvable cases, like a modern day Sherlock Holmes. The beat cops wouldn't shut up about him, and I gotta say- I loved it. You were what I was waiting for! Someone with something to hide, or something to prove- you had depth, and intrigue. You proved that the fantastical detective I was looking for *did* exist- but you were unchallenged. You needed a push to reach greatness- you needed a Moriarty.

(CONTINUED)

ROY
You're insane.

NORTON
But so are you! That's what's so perfect about it! We're two peas in a demented, twisted pod.

As Norton talks, Roy subtly reaches into his pocket and dials Shirley's number.

NORTON (cont'd)
So I made us into a story for the ages, the greatest game of cat and mouse in history! And once I started, it grew more poetically perfect than I could've dreamt! I mean, the whole book thing- at first, I thought that was just going to be for my benefit, but you caught on in a flash! At times, I didn't know whether I was tricking you, or you were tricking me! Well, that's not true, I was definitely tricking you but you did good too!

ROY
How did you know I was following you?

NORTON
Oh, that was easy. Develop a fake identity, fudge some janitorial experience, bam, I've got a job in the station.

ROY
You worked in the precinct?

NORTON
Yeah. For a *while*. Just shows how unappreciated custodial staff is, huh? You never even saw my face.

ROY
How'd you know which one I was in?

NORTON
Oh come on. With your little crush on Officer Queen, how could I *not* know?

ROY
Not a crush.

NORTON
Yeah, yeah, whatever Mr.
"Well-adjusted".

ROY
Okay, stop acting like we're
friends. You're a monster.

NORTON
Oh yeah, sure, like you're some
hero. Roy Williams, the savior of
New York! The sneaky, underhanded
hero, who is willing to steal case
files, impersonate a police
officer, or even withhold evidence
to solve his cases. Hell, you even
pulled a fire alarm when there was
no fire. But that's all fine, cause
you're one of the good guys, right?

He pauses for emphasis.

NORTON (cont'd)
Like it or not, you're no cop. And
you definitely don't have any
backup coming, so you can hang up
on Detective Queen.

Roy looks at him in shock.

NORTON (cont'd)
Gimme some credit, I wouldn't have
gotten this far if I couldn't see
that coming. Cell service is
blocked to the building.

Roy sighs in defeat.

NORTON (cont'd)
Don't worry, you're not going to
die here. This isn't the end of
your story.

ROY
...Then why do all this? Why this
meeting?

NORTON
First of all, it's literary
dynamite. And second, because I
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NORTON (cont'd)
want to make a deal. I want you...
to confess.

ROY
You want me to confess to your
crimes?

NORTON
No, not mine. Yours. All those
things I just said- Impersonating
an officer, stealing police files,
withholding evidence- I want you to
confess to being Shirley's secret
caller. It's not serial killer bad,
but it's enough to throw you in the
slammer.

ROY
...Why?

NORTON
Couple reasons. One, it's just for
the thrill of victory. I want to
beat you. Two, Having you in jail
for a bit will give me time to
craft a new angle for the next
phase of killings. The book stuff's
getting a bit stale. And three, I
want your friends at the station to
feel the sting of betrayal. I want
them to know how you lied to them.
I think it'd be funny.

ROY
And if I refuse?

NORTON
(Sarcastic)
Oh gee, you're right, what leverage
do I have? It's not like I have you
and two hostages at gunpoint?

ROY
Shirley'll catch you.

NORTON
She'll try. But her new friend's a
crook and her partner might die,
she's got bigger worries.

ROY

You-

NORTON

Stop. I'm tired of this negotiation. You're going to do what I say, because that's what happens now. Now is when you lose. And maybe later on you'll beat me, but I'm holding all the cards here. I can take this story in whatever direction I feel like. Maybe I'll kill Brant, maybe I'll kill the hostage. Hell, maybe I'll kill Shirley, just to shake it up.

Roy gets visibly angry at this notion.

NORTON (cont'd)

Or maybe I'll kill you. Maybe it's time for a rewrite, and the hero's tragic fall at the hands of a superior enemy.

As he says this, he freezes, chuckling to himself.

NORTON (cont'd)

I am superior, aren't I? I can't believe I didn't notice it before. You're just as disappointing as all the rest of the garbage cops in this city. Sure, you kept up for a while, but really you fall short of my standards. And how could you not? Look at you. Pathetic. You're a loser. A washed up wannabe cop withering away in a dark apartment, just waiting to drop off the face of the Earth. And what would change if you did? If I struck you down right now- would anyone even care?

Suddenly, a click sounds from behind Norton as Shirley steps into place behind him, gun to his head.

SHIRLEY

I know I'd have a couple words to say.

The building swarms with police, tackling Norton to the ground, untying his hostage and getting Brant medical attention.

(CONTINUED)

ROY
Shirley- how-

SHIRLEY
Brant called me from the car. He said he was following you, and to bring backup if he didn't call in 25 minutes. I got backup immediately, assuming he would do something brash and stupid.

ROY
Boy is that lucky.

NORTON
I'll say.

SHIRLEY
(To Norton)
You better watch it, bub. I've got half a mind to repay you for what you did to my partner.

NORTON
If I could be so lucky.

SHIRLEY
Alright guys, get this guy to the station. And don't be shy about roughing him up on the way there.

A pair of guards lift Norton up by the armpits.

NORTON
Promise you guys'll visit?

No-one responds as Norton is dragged away.

SHIRLEY
Wow. So it's actually over. You alright?

ROY
...I think so.

They stand in silence, taking in the situation.

INT. POLICE STATION- DAY

The people of the station stand around, eagerly awaiting something. Roy and Shirley talk at her desk- Roy seems significantly more comfortable talking to her than usual. The door to the office opens, and all eyes turn to it as Sergeant Greaves enters.

GREAVES

Alright everyone, give a warm
welcome back to Detective Brant
Finnigan!

Brant follows him in the door as the people of the station applaud him. He gets a few calls of 'welcome back hero' from around the room, amidst other things.

BRANT

Hey now, thanks a ton everyone.
Now, I know you all want to worship
me as the genius who
single-handedly brought down a
serial killer...

A round of chuckles go through the office.

BRANT (cont'd)

But I have to share credit, cause I
couldn't have done it without the
help of my amazing partner and...
(to Roy)
What are you? Sidekick?

ROY

Not the word I would use.

BRANT

My trusty sidekick. As well as,
with any luck, the newest detective
for New York's number one precinct!

The crowd cheers in shared spirit, as they disperse to smaller conversations. Brant, Roy, and Shirley all walk together.

SHIRLEY

Speaking of newest detective,
you're still welcome to join us at
tonight's training study.

BRANT

You teaching Roy to do a pull-up
isn't exactly my idea of a
thrilling night.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY

You're right, who would ever want to show support for a friend's endeavors?

BRANT

I dunno, I got a lot of grand entrances to make. A lot of people are glad to see me back on my feet.

ROY

Don't worry about it, Brant. We wouldn't want to keep you from your adoring fans.

BRANT

As well you shouldn't.

Brant chuckles as Shirley and Roy start to walk away.

BRANT (cont'd)

Oh, Roy? Could I talk to you for a second?

Shirley looks between them, then walks away. Roy steps close to Brant.

BRANT (cont'd)

Hey, I never really got a chance in the hospital to apologize to you. For how I acted.

ROY

Oh- Brant, it's-

BRANT

No, look... I was angry, and jealous, and frustrated that the guy was evading us, so I didn't really think past my first theory, and I almost got both of us killed. I'm sorry about that.

ROY

You were doing your job, Brant. You don't have to apologize for being suspicious of a suspect.

BRANT

Yeah, well I want to, so take it.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

Alright, you win. I'll talk to you later.

BRANT

Yeah, see ya.

Roy walks away, rejoining Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Well, you ready to head out then?

ROY

Actually, I have an errand to run... I'll meet you at your place, okay?

SHIRLEY

Okay.

She splits off, and Roy heads out the door. He hails a cab, and drives away.

INT. PRISON- DAY

Roy enters the prison visiting rooms, in which rest a row of booths separated by glass. On the other side of one of the booths is Norton. Roy sits down and picks up a phone.

NORTON

I wondered how long it would be before you visited.

ROY

What if I didn't?

NORTON

I knew you'd visit. Because I would have visited.

ROY

Brant just got out of the hospital.

NORTON

Well, I'm flattered. I always appreciate a visit from a fan.

ROY

I hoped you were rotting.

NORTON

Aww... come on, now. That's just hurtful.

(CONTINUED)

ROY

How do you still have this...
psychotic cheerfulness? You're
going to die in this prison.

Norton scoffs.

NORTON

You really think that's how this is
gonna end? I'm gonna live out my
time, serenely accepting my new
lifestyle. Maybe I'll take up
gardening! Ha, ha, ha. No. No, you
and I have more stories together.
We're gonna do this for the rest of
our lives.

ROY

...You're delusional.

NORTON

Maybe. But you'll learn more about
that once I'm outta here.

ROY

Whatever you say.

Roy hangs up the phone and walks out of the room. Norton
smiles and watches him leave.

INT. SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT- DAY

After hearing a knock on the door, Shirley opens it to let
Roy in.

SHIRLEY

Hey! Errands go okay?

ROY

Yup. I grabbed us something to
drink.

He holds up a six-pack of beer.

SHIRLEY

Wow, because nothing helps you
study like being drunk off your
ass.

ROY

Hey, I was already good at the
thinking stuff. I don't need the
brain cells.

(CONTINUED)

SHIRLEY
Flawless logic.

ROY
Right? I'm guaranteed to make the
force with this strategy.

SHIRLEY
Ooh, I might have to stop you
there. If you're a real cop, who's
gonna keep my phone line busy?

Roy laughs, but slowly stops. Shirley senses his slight
discomfort, and covers.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
I mean, not to suggest that you're
the one who was calling me. It was
a total stranger. He'll just happen
to chill out right around the time
you graduate.

She winks at him and walks into the kitchen. He chuckles.
Roy sits down at her dining table and a knock comes at the
door.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
Who's that?

Shirley walks over and opens the door.

SHIRLEY (cont'd)
Ho! What happened to grand
entrances?

Brant walks in the door, carrying a pizza.

BRANT
Hey, this *is* a grand entrance. I
don't lie.

Brant puts the pizza down on the table, and he, Roy, and
Shirley all grab a slice.

SHIRLEY
You know, if you entered more rooms
holding pizza you'd be more
tolerable.

BRANT
Oh please, you love me.

SHIRLEY

Eh, take it or leave it.

The three of them chuckle as they eat and talk. Their words
fade out as we

FADE TO BLACK

END.