

Melville

By

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INT. FACTORY BUILDING BASEMENT - NIGHT

BILL, (early-40s, brutish oaf) pushes an unconscious OLD WOMAN (in a wheelchair) down a dark hallway. The Old Woman's mouth is TAPED SHUT. She's tied to the chair with ROPES.

They arrive at a tiny LIVING SPACE, next to an INCINERATOR. The space includes an old CARD TABLE, featuring a picture of an ELDERLY LADY on top. An antique MIRROR hangs on the wall.

The OLD WOMAN STIRS. Panics. Attempts to move, but can't.

BILL

Oh goody, goody, good, you're awake!

Bill grabs the picture of the 'Elderly Lady' from the table.

BILL

This is Nana. She's a grandma too.

Bill opens a DRAWER under the table. There's a dozen POLAROID pictures of OLD PEOPLE. And a pack of CARDS. He grabs them.

BILL

Do you play *Bridge*? Nana plays. Makes her happy. I wanted to play, but she said I was too dumb. I still tried to learn. But, then, then, one time, I was tryin' and spilt my milk on the table. That made Nana mad mad mad. So, she poked me with her smoke stick.

Bill rolls up his SLEEVES to reveal a dozen CIGAR burns.

BILL

I was dumb a lot.

Bill puts the cards down. Kneels in front of the Old Woman.

BILL

She died. Sad, right?

Bill goes to the incinerator, opens the door. Flames roar.

BILL

I once heard Nana's neighbor say he hoped '*That nasty bitch goes to hell*'.

Bill wheels the Old Lady toward the fire.

BILL

All nasty people go to hell, right?

The incinerator fire ROARS bigger and louder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL

Lots of fire where Nana's gone. But I worry she's lonely. 'Cos, see... she was only happy when she played Bridge with her friends. But, but I get scared that she has no friends... you know... (whispers) down there, right?

Bill opens the incinerator DOOR.

BILL

So, I'm a good boy. I send her friends to play Bridge with. Fun, right?

The Old Woman is terror-stricken. Squirms in her seat.

BILL

Wanna meet Nana and her friends?

Bill suddenly pauses. He can hear WHISTLING. It's a song: *"Somewhere over the Rainbow"*.

Bill hears FOOTSTEPS. A graceful MAN (his features hidden by SHADOWS) approaches. He wears a long OVERCOAT and a STETSON HAT. He also holds a BRIEFCASE. He's the one whistling.

Bill smiles lopsidedly... grotesquely.

BILL

Oh goody, goody, goody! More friends for Nana, right?

Then Bill sees the Shadow Man's face and that murderous smile of his transforms into fear. The Shadow Man moves closer...

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

LOUIS, (mid-30s, svelte and clever), sits-up in his BED. He breathes heavily, as sweat trickles down his chest.

SHADOW MAN (OS)

Bad dream?

Spooked. Louis attempts to switch on the LIGHT. It won't work. A FLAME from a MATCH illuminates the face of a MAN perched on an ARMCHAIR at the face of the bed.

The SHADOW MAN (mid-40s), is classically handsome, like Jimmy Stewart but with an smidge of menace. He wears '20s attire.

The 'Shadow Man' lights a PIPE, takes a long drag as the embers burn, his face aglow in an eerie orange-red hue.

LOUIS

What are you-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHADOW MAN

Shhh. I speak. You listen, Pally.

Shadow Man pulls a POCKET WATCH from his WAISTCOAT.

SHADOW MAN

At 1.33 A.M., Alex Cobb bought a one way ticket to the farm.

LOUIS

Al? What do you mean? How-

SHADOW MAN

Bum ticker. Al died; '*Eau naturelle*' as the Frogs'd say.

(Puffs from his Pipe)

I liked Al. Me and him were eggs 'n coffee. Smooth like *Fred* and *Ginger*.

LOUIS

How the hell do you know Al?

SHADOW MAN

We go back aways. You remember?

Louis looks at a PICTURE on the WALL. It's of him and Alex (mid-60s) holding FISHING RODS, smiling. Louis shakes his head, trying to locate a memory.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

LOUIS, (12-years old) stares a million miles away, in shock. Behind him police officers bustle around the LIVING ROOM.

ALEX COBB (the, mid-30, angular, intelligent and kind) wears a PEA-COAT and a FLAT CAP. He approaches Louis.

Cobb takes off his hat, puts it on the coffee table. He kneels in front of Louis. Louis looks up at him.

COBB

Hi Louis. I'm Special Agent Alex Cobb.

(sighs, bites his lip)

Look... I'm sorry for your loss. I-

LOUIS

Did you kill them?

Cobb shakes his head. Looks back inquisitively at Louis.

LOUIS

Then don't be sorry.

COBB

You up for some questions?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Will you catch 'em?

COBB
That's the plan.

LOUIS
Then what?

COBB
They'll be held to account.

LOUIS
Jail.

COBB
Justice and punishment.

LOUIS
Prison's too good for them.

COBB
(Pauses, smiles)
Hmm. My partner would agree.

LOUIS
Partner?

COBB
(Lowers his voice)
Yeah. We have an agreement of sorts; I
find the bad guys. He punishes them.

Cobb winks. Louis nods. Shivers.

COBB
'Attaboy.

Alex takes off his jacket and drapes it over Louis' shoulders. He smiles warmly, pats Louis on the back.

END FLASHBACK

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Louis is sitting up in bed. Vigilant. On edge.

LOUIS
Were... were you his 'partner'?

SHADOW MAN
We'll get there, Pally. First off,
tell me about the palooka who melted
down 24 Cotton Tops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOUIS
William Linus Carter?

SHADOW MAN
How'd Bill get the bulge on you?

LOUIS
Lack of threshold evidence.

SHADOW MAN
But you say?

LOUIS
Bill went to ground.

SHADOW MAN
Billy - the sad sap - isn't a one-of-a-kind. Nah-ah. Plenny sickos like him roam free. That's when I hold up my end of the agreement.

LOUIS
Punishment.

SHADOW MAN
Hmm, more like consequences, *Capiche?*

LOUIS
Yes. I mean, no. Not really.

SHADOW MAN
I've been around a few. So, I know lawman when I see one. And I reckon we could waltz a merry jig.

LOUIS
You... you want me to help you?

SHADOW MAN
There... now we're boppin'.

LOUIS
If I say no?

SHADOW MAN
The sickos roam free.

LOUIS
This... this isn't happening.

SHADOW MAN
Not yet. But, once you're ready to cut-a-rug, say my name.

LOUIS
Your name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Shadow Man's pipe blinks out. Everything's dark.

SHADOW MAN (OS)
Abysinnia, Kid.

The table LAMP turns on. The armchair's empty. But, a dissipating plume of SMOKE still hangs heavy in the air.

Louis reaches into his SIDE TABLE, pulls out a GUN. He heaves. Scared. Confused. Then- Louis' CELL PHONE RINGS - making Louis jump in fright... He answers the phone.

LOUIS
Taylor. Yes, Director? Heart attack?
Understood, sir.

Louis hangs up. Goes to his APARTMENT KITCHEN, grabs a GLASS of WATER. Looks at a clock in the kitchen: **2.35 A.M.**

Louis is distraught. He mutters to himself.

LOUIS
'Bum ticker'?

EXT. CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON

Louis, dressed in black, escorts ANNE (mid-60s, wears black) They stop in front of her CAR. Anne, softly touches Louis' shoulder. She wipes away tears with a tissue.

Louis smiles sympathetically back at her.

LOUIS
If you need anything Anne, call me.

Anne gathers herself. Remembering something.

ANNE
I, I uh, I have something for you.

Anne pulls a BOX out of her car, hands it to Louis. The box has a small label, with one word: MELVILLE.

ANNE
Alex wanted you to have these, in the event something...
(Tries to hold back tears)
Said you'd know what to do.

Louis hugs Anne. She sobs heavily into his chest. Then, Anne looks up at Louis. Anne smiles, kisses Louis' cheek.

ANNE
Be careful, Louis. Please.

Louis looks back at the box again... now, with dread.

INT. LOUIS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Louis sits at his kitchen counter going through the BOX, as he sips a BEER.

There's OLD HEAD-HOT PHOTOS on the counter, with STICKY NOTES on each one: BONNEY, EARP, NESS, PURVIS, MULLANY, LAMSPHERE.

Inside the BOX are FIFTY-or-so FILES, neatly organized. Half are RED, the other half BLUE. The ones in red are separated by a divider with a label that reads: '**CLOSED**'.

The blue files are under a label that reads: '**OPEN**'. He flicks through all of the BLUE FILES, dumbfounded.

LOUIS

Christ. What were you up to, Alex?

One of the blue file labels read: '**BILL**'. Louis frowns.

Louis notices a BLACK FILE pinned to the bottom of the box. Louis opens the file. Inside is an old PICTURE of a suburban rambler-style HOUSE. Louis' expression darkens.

LOUIS

'Abysinnia, kid'?

Louis squints his eyes, trying to remember something. Whatever it is, he can't find it. He sighs, frustrated.

INT. LOUIS CAR - EARLY MORNING

Louis is parked in front of a HOUSE, on a suburban street. The house is dark. Dead.

The CLOCK inside Louis' CAR flashes: "**3.25 A.M.**" He reaches over to the passenger seat, grabs the BLACK FILE.

He opens it to the RAMBLER-STYLE HOUSE picture. Holds it up - *juxtaposed with the house in front of his car* - they're IDENTICAL. Louis inhales slowly, closes his eyes.

The picture and the house start to merge together. The past, encroaching on the present.

EXT. RAMBLER-STYLE HOUSE - NIGHT

SUPER: **2002**

The Rambler-style HOUSE is aglow and cheery, but silent.

FOOTSTEPS interrupt the silence. The Shadow Man, saunters down the driveway, whistling, "*Somewhere Over the Rainbow.*"

INT. RAMBLER HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

The doorbell RINGS. ANDY (early-20s, scrawny and feral) answers the door. On the other side is the Shadow Man. Andy eyes him suspiciously.

SHADOW MAN
Evenin', Fella.

ANDY
Whaddya want?

SHADOW MAN
My *jalopy* broke down. Need a hitch.

ANDY
So?

SHADOW MAN
Could I use your *blower*?

Andy furtively scans the street behind Shadow Man.

ANDY
We're busy. Try the neighbors.

SHADOW MAN
No one home. Be a Pal, would ya?

A HAND appears on Andy's shoulder, edges him back slightly. It's CHRIS (early-20s, tall, athletic, cocky).

CHRIS
Is that the B-

Chris catches himself when he sees the Shadow Man, who smiles backs and dons his hat.

ANDY
He wants to use our '*blower*'?

Shadow Man nods. Chris evaluates him.

CHRIS
So, let him in.

ANDY
What about-

CHRIS
Let him in.

The Shadow Man grins back, winks at Chris.

SHADOW MAN
Much obliged.

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CONTINUED:

Chris and Andy follow the Shadow Man into the lounge. Both the boys are wearing FOOT COVERS.

SHADOW MAN
Moving day?

Andy and Chris look at their shoes.

CHRIS
Like to keep the carpet clean.

The Shadow Man nods. The boys stare back.

SHADOW MAN
Your *horn*?

Andy looks around. Sees the PHONE on top of the TV.

ANDY
TV.

SHADOW MAN
Swell. I'll drop a dime, and get outta your hair.

The Shadow Man turns to the phone.

Andy GRABS Chris by the arm, leads him into the KITCHEN. Chris GLARES at Andy, who timidly lets his arm go.

CHRIS
He talks funny. Like an old-

ANDY
Fuck you doin?

CHRIS
Four's the magic number, bro.

ANDY
Four'll be here soon, dude.

CHRIS
Been too long. You know the rules.

ANDY
Ok. Fine let's do him. But-

Chris holds a finger to his lips. Both glance over at a door in the kitchen. A LOUD BUMP breaks the silence.

CHRIS
Shit. Why is it some motherfuckers don't know they're dead?

Andy opens the door. STAIRS lead down to a BASEMENT. Andy

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

descends. The door closes. Chris smiles when the sound STOPS.
Chris turns and is surprised by the Shadow Man

SHADOW MAN
Help's coming.

CHRIS
Help?

SHADOW MAN
Tow truck, for my broken boiler.

CHRIS
Right. Yea.

Chris goes to the kitchen counter, stares out the window.

SHADOW MAN
I could cool me heels outside if
you're busy.

CHRIS
Nah, you're cool.

SHADOW MAN
That's mighty kind of you.

CHRIS
I'm generous like that.

The Shadow Man grins. A loud THUD from the basement. The
Shadow Man turns his attention to the basement door.

CHRIS
Rats.

SHADOW MAN
Vermin. Rub 'em out if I were you.

CHRIS
That's the plan.

SHADOW MAN
Generous, and a man of action. Your
parents must be very, very proud.

Chris frowns.

CHRIS
Yeah. I'm their pride and joy.

The Shadow Man stares impassively back at Chris. Another LOUD
SOUND from the basement. Chris bites his lip.

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CONTINUED:

SHADOW MAN
Sounds like the rats are winning.

CHRIS
One sec. Don't go anywhere.

SHADOW MAN
Wouldn't dream of it, Fella.

Chris opens the basement door, heads down.

INT. HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Chris descends into the basement. He hears whimpering.

CHRIS
Bro, quit fuckin' around.

The sound of a zipper. More tiny whimpers, followed by a LOUD THUD. The whimpers cease. Andy emerges from the shadows. Holds a BLOODIED CROW BAR.

ANDY
Bitch still had a little fight in her...
turns me on.
(Tosses away the Crowbar)
Ok. How you wanna play this?

Chris looks around. Notices a BASEBALL BAT against the wall.

CHRIS
Remember the Crenshaws?

ANDY
Hell yeah. The fuck-tard girl.

CHRIS
Takes a lickin'...

CHRIS/ANDY
...but keeps on tickin'.

They both chortle. Andy staggers around, as he mimics:

ANDY
'Da-da. Da-da. My heady hurty'.

CHRIS
Good times.

Both chuckle. Chris gives Andy the bat.

CHRIS
Batter's up.

They both smirk. Chris heads back up the stairs.

INT. HOUSE-KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The Shadow Man sits at a table. Back to the basement door. Chris emerges, leaves the door open.

SHADOW MAN
Everything ducky?

CHRIS
Yeah, cool. Hey, you a family man?

The Shadow Man nods, smiles.

SHADOW MAN
Me, the 'ol battle axe, and two 'lil
whipper-snappers.

CHRIS
Four. The perfect family.

SHADOW MAN
Like a Norman Rockwell painting.

Andy appears at the basement doorway, silently holds the baseball bat. He approaches the Shadow Man.

Chris' eye twitches. He snatches a PHONE from the WALL.

CHRIS
What's your number?

SHADOW MAN
My number?

CHRIS
I want your family to hear this.

Chris puts his ear to the receiver. Clicks the phone on-and-off a few times. He frowns. Phone drops from his hand. He's stuck in a trance.

SHADOW MAN
Lines are down.

CHRIS
What you say...?

Andy swings the bat down on the Shadow Man's head. The bat snaps in half. The Shadow Man faces Andy.

SHADOW MAN
Settle down, Slugger.

Andy stands still, like Chris. Both struggle to move.

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CONTINUED:

ANDY
I don't feel good.

Andy turns to his partner. Chris isn't home anymore. He drools spittle down his shirt.

SHADOW MAN
Strange, right? Like a dream, when you try to run, but your feet won't move.

ANDY
Who are you?

SHADOW MAN
I'm the end o' the line, Fellas.

The Shadow Man walks over to the lounge. Both Chris and Andy follow silently, as if pulled by an invisible thread.

The Shadow Man sits down on an ARMCHAIR. His Briefcase sits on the COFFEE TABLE. The TV is playing 'WHITE HEAT'.

CAGNEY (OS)
'Made it Ma! Top of the world!'

Shadow Man smiles, satisfactorily. Mutes the TV.

SHADOW MAN
Those were the days; Gangs, Girls, G-Men... business was-a-boomin'.

Shadow Man tips his hat.

SHADOW MAN
As you can see, I'm slow to evolve with the times. Up 'til the 20s, I was still dolled-up like a Cowboy.

Shadow Man notices that Chris's still comatose. Snaps his fingers. Chris stirs from his stupor.

SHADOW MAN
I digress. You see. I been at this gig for a spell. And you two pills take the biscuit and the gravy.

CHRIS
You don't know shit from fuck.

The Shadow Man laughs. Slaps his leg.

SHADOW MAN
Correct. I know nothing about the fourteen families of four you've visited, killed, and dismembered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANDY

Not true. Where's your, your-

CHRIS

Evidence?

SHADOW MAN

Sitting in front of me.

(A beat)

See, boys... No such thing as the
'perfect' murder. Killing has
consequences; some worldly, some
other... I'm the 'other'.

(Straightens his Tie)

The bad ones. The real bad ones, get
thrown on the bonfire. No fuss, no
muss. Capice?

Chris and Andy stare at each other. Chris recalls something.

CHRIS

*Jack the Ripper. Axeman of New
Orleans. The Zodiac Killer. They were
never caught... 'Cos...*

Chris's mouth drops. Dread and fear take over him.

SHADOW MAN

Bingo, Daddy-o!

The Shadow Man OPENS his briefcase. He pulls out a long ICE
PICK and a SCALPEL. Places them on the coffee table.

CHRIS

Ok. Ok. You made your point.

SHADOW MAN

Oh, Sonnyjim I just revved the engine.

The Shadow Man turns the briefcase around, so that the open
side faces the Boys. The Boys peer inside. A RUBY-CHROMA
glows outward and eerily lights their fearful faces.

Andy cries. Chris stares, in horror.

CHRIS

We'll stop. Promise. Please! PLEASE!

The Shadow Man picks up the SCALPEL.

SHADOW MAN

Which of you Broads wanna go first?

The Shadow Man leans closer to the boys. A small scream-

EXT. HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

LOUIS, (12) approaches the HOUSE. He hears SHRIEKS from inside. The door suddenly OPENS, the shrieks STOP.

Out steps the Shadow Man. He shoots Louis an avuncular grin and wink. Louis stands still, scared. Shadow Man frowns.

SHADOW MAN
Someone dealt you a bum hand, Kid.
Them the breaks, I s'pose.

LOUIS
What happened? Who-

SHADOW MAN
Call the coppers... Scram.

Louis glances at the briefcase the Shadow Man carries. For a second, he can hear MUFFLED SCREAMS. He notices a small speckle of blood drop from the case.

Louis turns and runs across the street to his NEIGHBORS.

SHADOW MAN
Abysinnia, Kid.

The Shadow Man saunters away into the shadows.

END FLASHBACK**INT. CAR, SUBURBAN STREET - EARLY MORNING**

Dawn breaks over the horizon. Louis slowly opens his eyes.

LOUIS
'Abysinnia, Kid.'
(Slowly)
Ah. Bee. Cee. En. Ya.
(Comprehension)
'I'll be seeing ya.'

INT. RAMBLER-STYLE HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

12 year-old Louis sits on the couch. Distraught. Cobb talks to one of the cops, a WOMAN, by the kitchen.

COBB
Kid says he saw a guy come out the house.

COP
Yeah. Child services think he's in shock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COBB

Yeah, probably just his imagination.

Cobb looks at Louis, staring at the TV. Louis looks over at Cobb's FLAT CAP on the table. Something catches his eye. He rotates the hat toward him, to look closer.

Inside the hat is a LABEL, with the SILHOUETTE OF A MAN in a long coat, top hat, and briefcase. It reads: "*Melville's of Chicago - Gentleman's Haberdashery*".

He glances up at the TV, as Judy Garland belts out: "*Somewhere over the Rainbow*." It feels familiar. Louis' eyes widen, as he murmurs...

LOUIS

Melville.

Cobb looks at Louis. He puffs at a PIPE. He winks at Louis.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CAR, SUBURBAN STREET - EARLY MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

Louis stares at himself in the rear-view MIRROR.

LOUIS

(Whisper)

Melville.

A silence fills the air. Until- A match IGNITES from the back seat of the car. MELVILLE, (the Shadow Man), lights his PIPE.

LOUIS

They said I made you up.

MELVILLE

When truth is scarier than fiction,
people make excuses. It's only human.

LOUIS

So either I'm crazy or you're real.

MELVILLE

And, if the juice's worth the squeeze?

Louis glances at the *BLACK* folder. He shuffles it to one side to reveal a *BLUE* folder underneath. The folder reads: "**BILL**".

Louis studies Melville in the rear view mirror.

LOUIS

Cobb used to say; "You only get the
pot of gold-"

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CONTINUED:

MELVILLE

"-if you're willing to find the end of the rainbow".

Melville winks back at Louis as he puffs out a smoke ring.

LOUIS

What about closure for the families?

MELVILLE

Hooey. No such thing. The universe don't give a hoot about closure. The real *problemo*, is evil this vile spreads like a virus. So, we castrate the sumbitch, before it sows it's wild oats. That's the job. *Capice?*

Louis stares at the house. He frowns.

LOUIS

You killed the killers that night.

MELVILLE

More like; painful perpetual punishment. Just wish I got their sooner, Kid.

Louis takes a moment to study Melville. Sizing him up.

LOUIS

Ok. So, how does it work?

MELVILLE

Two words: *Symbiotic Harmony*.

Louis nods, takes a deep breath and then starts the engine.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Louis' car pulls out from the curb.

MELVILLE (OS)

Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

The car rolls down the street toward the sunrise.

INT. FACTORY BUILDING BASEMENT - NIGHT

The Shadow Man walks toward Bill. His face, now alight. Bill's hands drop lifelessly to his side.

MELVILLE

You've been bad, Billy-Boy. And you know what happens to bad boys?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILLY

They get burned, right?

Melville smiles.

MELVILLE

From your lips, to God's oven.

Bill's lower lip quivers as Melville approaches.

Melville catches his reflection in the MIRROR hanging on the WALL. The reflection looking back in the mirror is LOUIS.

LOUIS/MELVILLE

(Sly smile)

Ready to waltz a merry jig?

The CLICK of a briefcase being opened. An eerie RUBY-CHROMA emerges like a mist to fill the room. Then A small SCREAM is immediately swallowed by the dark.

INT. FACTORY BASEMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Melville strolls down the hallway, as he pushes the Old Lady in the wheelchair away from the incinerator room.

He whistles: *'Somewhere over the Rainbow'*.

END