

RED BUICK ON VIA VENETO

**A Screenplay by
DOC COMPARATO**

(SAMPLE)

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RED BUICK ON VIA VENETO

1. INT. GARAGE (ROME, 1958)-DAY

Open in the eye of a 12-year-old boy.

Silence.

A garage with some elegant cars of the period, but not people.

Then the boy continues polishing one of the cars with a rag.

Suddenly he stops working, leaves his rag and approaches a gleaming red BUICK. All at once, the boy's expression turns. Cautiously, and at some distance, he circles the car, taking in all the details of the coachwork: the headlamps, the grille, and the ornament. As he continues, he finds the door on the driver's side ajar. Then the boy is shocked to discover the corpse of a man sprawled across the ground in a pool of blood, his legs still inside the car.

The eyes of the corpse remain open; seem to stare at the boy. The boy stops; his expression frozen in shock. OFF, he hears the sound of A DOOR SLAMING. Startled, he turns to see that it is only the garage door swinging open and shut in a light breeze.

FALCONE (OFF)

Once upon a time there was dead body.
It was Rome, 1958. A new mystery
dawned on paradise. A wave of
excitement that gripped the city... Who
killed Carlo? And why?

Once again the boy turns to gaze at the dead man and stares, powerless.

FALCONE (OFF)

It might seem as though I'm describing
a dream, but I'm not. It is an attempt in
vain. Because nothing beats the feeling
of dreaming or kill... My next book will
be about a real crime.

We see several angles of the corpse.

CUT TO:

2. INSERT NEWS PHOTO OF THE CORPSE.

The image of the corpse becomes a black-and-white news photo below front-page headline: DEATH OF A GIGOLO with the photo caption: CARLO FASSARI businessman, age 29, murdered in this new Buick in the pre-dawn hours of Thursday Nov.26.1958.

FALCONE (OFF)

It's all true. It made the front page of the papers. The paparazzi went wild. Do you know what paparazzi are? Italian shutterbugs of the press. (Pause) They went for it like flies.

CUT TO:

3. INDETERMINATE LOCATION/ALTERING LIGHT AND SHADOW (1958)

A military officer is profiled in full dress uniform: ANTONIO. His stolid expression belies a deep sense of humiliation A SECOND OFFICER approaches.

FALCONE (OFF)

Meanwhile a young Navy Lieutenant took the rap for the killing. He was even convicted. But eventually was sprung on a pardon. His name is Antonio Delle Rocca.

The second officer draws ever nearer to Antonio. In SLOW MOTION he begins to strip Antonio of his rank and decorations.

FALCONE (OFF)

Of course even though he was convicted, nobody ever really proved anything. A lot of questions were still floating around: What was the real motive? Cherchez la femme. Perhaps...

CUT TO:

4. EXT. STREET (ROME, 1958)- NIGHT

A beautiful young woman, Laura Petruvia, walks surrounded by a horde of photographers.

FACONE (OFF)

Among the many speculations at the time, one of them ended up a little at odds with the official version of the story (A BEAT) Laura Petruvia: young, beautiful, Involved with the dead man, Carlo. And the girlfriend of Antonio, the accused killer.

CUT TO:

5. EXT. VIA VENETO (ROME, 1958)- NIGHT

A flash from one of the scenes where we see Patrizia: talking with friends on Via Veneto.

FALCONE (OFF)

The story also involved another young lady: Patrizia Donai, a rich who used to frequent the hangouts on the Via Veneto. She had a lot of contact with Carlo around the time of the killing...

CUT TO:

6. INT. GARAGE (ROME 1958)-DAY

Cops and reporters are now surrounding the Buick. The camera picks out the boy who observes the scene from a bit farther off. He stands beside his mother, a modest lady who has her arms around her son's shoulders as she answers the questions from the cops and reporters. Still in shock, the boy answers no one; his mother tries to respond, but only with great difficulty is she able to speak. Extremely agitated, she whispers questions to her son. News photographer's camera with flash.

FALCONE (OFF)

The concierge and her son were lost.
They were feeling the sensation of the
absurdity... And fear.

RON (OFF)

Mr. Falcone...

Freeze-frame depicting the corpse in the car, the boy, his mother
and the rest.

CUT TO:

7. INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE NEW YORK (1989)- DAY

Open with the eye of Felipe Falcone, a forty-year-old writer whom
we find crouched in a fetal position on the sofa of plush publisher's
office in Manhattan.

Bookshelves line the office from floor to ceiling on three sides.

Through the window, that faces the street we see that it is raining.

Falcone has been recounting his story to RON, an administrative
assistant of 30 who works for the publisher.

Falcone lost in thought

Silence.

FALCONE (TIMIDLY)

How do you like it so far?

RON

I... I really wouldn't know about that sort
of thing. Mr. Falcone. I'm not writer.

FALCONE

It might seem...like the type of story
you've heard before. But what interests
me is the punishment angle... Not just
judicial punishment. But real
punishment... Not idea of vengeance...
Punishment...

Ron clears his throat.

RON

I hate to interrupt, Mr. Falcone, but we really should go. They're waiting.

Silence.

FALCONE

Uh-huh... The check. And what about my check?

RON

Please, Mr Falcone. We went over all of this with Mr. Hanson

Falcone looks at Ron with apprehension

RON (YIELDING)

Ok...

Ron opens his briefcase, fishes for the check, and hands it to Falcone.

RON

It's quite a substantial advance, I assure you... Are you sure don't want to have another look at the contract?

Falcone hardly notices the check, but simply holds on to it.
Silence.

RON

Are you ok? May I get you something to drink?

Falcone glances nervously toward the big window facing the street.

FALCONE

Sorry Ron. I can't go down there.

Ron looks astonished.

RON

You're kidding, right?

FALCONE

No. I just can't. Please, try to understand.
I'm going to panic I know it.

RON

And what about Mr. Hanson? You
agreed!

In a sudden burst, Falcone knocks over a lamp with the broad
sweep of his hand.

FALCONE

I'm afraid, don't you see? I'm scared!

Silence.

FALCONE

Do you know what means to be scared?

Ron stares, looking rather scared himself. He glances at the
broken lamp. There is blood in his hand.

RON

Ok, Mr Falcone. Don't go away. Just stay
from here. I'll be back in a minute.

Extremely worried Ron runs out.

CUT TO:

8. INT. RECEPTION AREA OF PUBLISHER'S OFFICE (MANHATTAN, 1989) -DAY

On his way out Ron passes the desk of the secretary.
She seems to be fielding a dozen phone calls at once, but puts all
calls on hold and calls after Ron.

SECRETARY

That woman was here again. I managed
to get rid for her, but he knows Falcone
is in here... What do I do if she comes
back?

RON

Look, whatever you do, make sure
doesn't go anywhere.

He runs out.

CUT TO:

9. EXT. STREET HOTEL (MANHATTAN, 1989)- DAY

Trying in vain to shelter himself from the downpour, Ron hurries across the street past the TV vans and heavy traffic and rushes into the hotel.

CUT TO:

10. INT. HOTEL LOBBY ADJOINING CONFERENCE ROOM (MANHATTAN, 1989) -DAY

Soaked with rain and still struggling with her umbrella, JENNIFER, an obsessive graduate student of contemporary literature is desperately trying to get past a security guard to again entrance to the conference room where a small army of reporters, photographers and camera men are milling about.

JENNIFER (FORCING A SMILE)

It's really quite all right, sir. You see I'm
writing a thesis on Mr. Falcone...

GUARD

Can't let you in without a press pass,
sweetheart.

JENNIFER (FISHING FOR ID)

Well journalists and scholars. It's
practically the same thing...

As she speaks Ron flashes his ID and rushes inside.

JENNIFER

Look! (To RON) Ron! Ron! I know him!

She looks at the guard.

JENNIFER

I'm sure if you 'd just tell Ron. I'm here, he'll tell you it's all right.

GUARD

I don't know any Ron.

CUT TO:

11. INT. CONFERENCE ROOM (MANHATTAN, 1989) - DAY

In preparation for the Falcone's appearance, Hansen, an impeccably groomed publisher, is basking in the glow of press attention. He ascends the dais, and blows into microphone before speaking.

HANSEN

May I have your attention, please? As we are all aware, this occasion will mark the very first public appearance of Mr. Falcone. Who has resided at an undisclosed location ever since the publication of "An Adagio for Scorpions" four years ago. May I remind you that Mr. Falcone is an extremely, uh... shy individual, and therefore I would ask you all to please leave him some breathing room, and to observe a minimum standard of... uh decorum.

As she speaks, Ron downs a whisky, which he snatches from the buffet, smiles obsequiously at the couple of dignitaries, and makes his way through the crush of reporters to strain for a chance to have a word with HANSEN.

REPORTER

How come Falcone is so mysterious?

HANSEN

I would say that Mr. Falcone believes that a writer ought to write what he has to say.

2nd REPORTER

A critic said that he is just a pen name for that other guy, that literary legend who never shows his face around, what's his name? Salinger. Any truth in that?

HANSEN (SMUGLY)

In a minute you'll be able to judge that for yourself.

A few of the reporters groan audibly.

3rd REPORTER

C'mon Mr. Hansen! Everybody knows your form would have gone under if weren't for that one book.

HANSEN

Look, here. It was my understanding that you came here to question to Mr. Falcone. Not me.

4th REPORTER

Well where is he? Who does he think he is, Greta Garbo?

Laughter, Hansen covers the mike with his palm and turns to Ron.

HANSEN (UNDER HIS
BREATH)
Son of bitch!

HANSEN (TO RON)

Where the hell is he?

CUT TO:

12. INT. RECEPTION AREA OF PUBLISHER'S OFFICE (MANHATTAN 1989) - DAY

Still frantic with all the incoming calls, the secretary suddenly freezes, shocked by what she sees. Falcone has emerged from the office. He is bleeding profusely from his right hand.

FALCONE

I was trying to clean up the lamp... I...

Drops of blood drip onto the light carpet.

CUT TO:

13. INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM (MANHATTAN, 1989) - DAY

Ron finishes giving Hansen the bad news, where upon Hansen turns to the reporters, forcing a bread smile.

At the instant he catches sight of Jennifer still arguing with the security guard at the entrance. There is a flash of recognition between Jennifer and Hansen. Suddenly Hansen seems to have an idea. Once again he sizes the mike.

HANSEN

Ladies and gentlemen I regret to say that for security reasons, it is not advisable that Mr. Falcone join us at the present time.

The reporters practically boo him off the details.

HANSEN

I would remind you that are a very serious matter. Mr. Falcone has been threatened by crazed student who has been seen here only few moments ago...

We catch a glimpse of Jennifer's expression as she still blocked by the security guard.

JENNIFER (UNDER HER
BREATH)

That son of the bitch! He's using me!
On this way out Ron stops in his tracks.

RON
Look! There she is!

The guard stares open-mouthed as the whole room turn to look at her.

JENNIFER (OUTRAGED)
This is insane! I never threatened anybody! I'm just writing a thesis! You can't get away with this!

As she struggles to make herself heard, a couple of security guards seize her and begin to throw her out.

JENNIFER
Hey! Get your hands off me! What I am I going to do? Hit him with my umbrella? I said get your hands off me! Don't you see what he's doing? It's a lie! He made this all up! It's smokescreen, can't you see?

The guard only restrain her further.

JENNIFER
Help! I'll scream! Help!

Reporters and photographers converge around her.
Tumult.
The security guard continues to drag her out.

CUT TO:

14. EXT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE STREET (MANHATTAN, 1989)- DAY

Falcone crosses the street, his hand bandaged with handkerchief. Just then he is startled by the commotion of security guard who toss out first Jennifer, then her umbrella.

Thoroughly humiliated, Jennifer regains her feet, and looks up to find that Falcone (whom she does not recognise) has politely picked up her umbrella, which he offers to her, extending his bandaged hand. As she notices the bloodstained handkerchief there is an exchange of glances between them.

JENNIFER
(ACCEPTING THE UMBRELLA)
Thank you.

She continues to tidy herself up, but gradually breaks down and cries. By the time she dries her tears, Falcone has disappeared down the rainy street.

Close with a SOUND OF AN ARIA from VERDI (SOUND BRIDGE to following scene).

CUT TO:

15. INT. FIRST CLASS CABIN OF AIRCRAFT (1989) - NIGHT

Overly sound of Verdi aria to which Falcone listens on headphones as he reads from some official-looking documents before him. But for the beam from Falcone's reading lamp and stewardess that makes her rounds, the cabin is dim and subdued.

FALCONE (OFF)
The people vs. Antonio Della Rocca, 15
January 1959: First witness...

WOMAN'S VOICE (OFF)
Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole
truth, and nothing but the truth?

CUT TO:

16. EXT CAFÉ ON VIA VENETO (ROME, 1958) - NIGHT

A subtitle appears on the screen: **20 DAYS BEFORE THE CRIME.** Amid an air of gaiety and excitement, Laura is sipping a coloured drink with a couple of girlfriends at the sidewalk café. As usual for weekend evening, the streets are crowded with smartly dressed girls and young men who make passes at them from gleaming sports cars.

LAURA (OFF)

I do... In fact, I'm sure it's her.

Laura glances indifferently in the direction of a WOMAN whose presence practically creates a riot. Wearing dark glasses and a silk kerchief over her head, the woman holds a tiny poodle close to her breast as if to ward off the wave of celebrity-watchers and paparazzi that engulfs her as she emerges from her chauffeur-driven car and disappears into a restaurant.

LAURA'S FRIEND (GASPING)

Did you see her dress?

LAURA (INDIFFERENT)

What do I care about Maria Calla's dress?

Have you seen him?

SECOND FRIEND

God, Laura! You sure are strange tonight.

LAURA

I asked a question!

LAURA'S FRIEND

No I haven't seen him... (Hesitates) But I heard he was going to Open Gate.

Laura immediately departs.

2nd FRIEND

Laura! Please! Stay here...

CUT TO:

17. INT. "OPEN GATE" (A FASHIONABLE NIGHTCLUB, ROME, 1958)-NIGHT

The club is crowded with Roman society drinking and talking animatedly despite a beautiful SINGER in a long gown doing a suggestive number and backed up by a troupe of scantily-clad precision DANCERS.

The camera quickly picks out Lt. Antonio Della Rocca, in uniform and seated at a table with his mother PINA, an attractive woman past 40 who looks around vaguely distracted.

Feeling a bit out of place in a nightclub, Antonio nevertheless cannot help but stare at the dancers. But the instant he sees that his mother has noticed, he looks down, somewhat embarrassed, and tries to think of something to say.

ANTONIO

Ma, I didn't know you liked to go to this kind of place.

PINA

You think I like this kind of place? I only came here to meet Graziella. She must have told me 5 times: "Giuseppina, please! Be on time. I'll be there at sharp, Giuseppina..." Well. Here it is 10:30 and where is she?

ANTONIO

I don't know, Ma I'm sure...

PINA

Perhaps if I had some notice that you were coming, I might have time to arrange something more to your liking.

ANTONIO

But Ma, I wrote you that I was coming. I swear I did.

PINA

There's no need to swear. How long do you plan to be in town?

ANTONIO

A month, I guess.

PINA

A month!

ANTONIO
(MISINTERPRETING HER SHOCK AS
ELATION)
Well almost, isn't it great? You know, Ma,
you sure look pretty tonight.

She takes a swig from her drink.

PINA
Don't be silly.

Still looking for someone, she glances nervously around the room.

ANTONIO
Are you ok, Ma?

Before Pina can answer, Laura (who also appears to be looking for someone) brushes past their table, inadvertently spilling Antonio's drink.

PINA
God how clumsy!

LAURA (DISTRACTED)
Sorry.

ANTONIO
(MOPPING THE SPILL FROM HIS
UNIFORM)
Please! It's nothing at all.

As the vocal number continues on stage, Antonio follows Laura with his gaze. Antonio's POV: Laura has found a man drinking alone at the bar. Carlo. Although at first it is impossible for Antonio to hear what she is saying, Laura is gesticulating wildly.

LAURA
Then there were others weren't there?

Why you're nothing but a gigolo!

Antonio's POV: Utterly indifferent to her protests, Carlo casually pushes her away, causing her to lose her balance and fall. At this Antonio jumps up and rushes to the bar.

PINA (INDIGNANT)

Antonio! You're in uniform!

Once at the bar, Antonio gently helps Laura to her feet. She glances at Carlo who ignores her.

ANTONIO (TO CARLO)

That wasn't very polite.

CARLO (INDIFERENT)

I wouldn't bother about it if I were you. It was an accident.

ANTONIO

Because she's hurt! Can't you see?

CARLO

I said keep your nose out of it.

ANTONIO

(ADVANCING MENACINGLY)

Why you dirty...

The music stops.

As Carlo turns to face him, several waiters hold Antonio just as he tries to lunge at Carlo.

LAURA (TO CARLO)

You bastard!

CARLO

She's out of her mind. I've never seen her before in my life.

LAURA (DESPERATELY)

Carlo! Please!

CARLO (TO WAITERS)

I think she's had one too many. Better see that she gets home before she starts to get on my nerves. I told you I've never seen her before in my life.

LAURA

Never seen me before! That's a lie!
(Hysterically) We were lovers!

ANTONIO (TO LAURA)

Better take it easy.

CARLO (TO WAITERS)

Maybe you ought to throw out the both of them. She's hysterical.

ANTONIO (MENEINGLY)

Now you are!

LAURA (TO CARLO)

This means we're through!

The waiters begin to push Antonio and Laura toward the door.

ANTONIO (TO WAITERS)

Hey! Who do you think you are?

CUT TO:

18. EXT. "OPEN GATE" (ROME, 1958) - NIGHT

Once out the door, Laura pauses to rub her ankle. Antonio straightens his uniform and adjusts his hairpiece. Just then a couple of drunks pass by.

FIRST DRUNK

Capitano!

SECOND DRUNK

Why don't you kiss her, already?

They continue on their way, laughing.

ANTONIO

This certainly is embarrassing.

LAURA (IGNORING HIM)

He's not going to get away with this time.

ANTONIO

You haven't told me your name.

LAURA (BEDRAGGLED)

What difference does it make?

She sees that he looks crushed.

LAURA

I'm sorry... You've been very kind. My name is Laura.

ANTONIO (TIMIDLY)

Antonio.

LAURA

What?

ANTONIO

Antonio. My name is Antonio... Oh my God!

LAURA

What is it?

ANTONIO

I forgot all about my mother!

CUT TO:

19.INT. AIRCRAFT - NIGHT

Falcone nods politely, takes a drink from the stewardess and begins reading from a second pile of transcripts as drinks immediately starts to go to his head.

PATRIZIA (OFF)

Well for one thing he was a lot more fun than anybody else around, that's for sure. I guess that's what made him... Well, you know...

CUT TO:

20. INT. COURTROOM (1959) - DAY

Stunningly beautiful in her austere tailleur, Patrizia continues her testimony as the whole court looks on with eager anticipation.

PATRIZIA (CONTINUING)

Different. We had so much fun that night. I remember cause it was my birthday. Somebody had given me a pair of roller skates...

CUT TO:

21. EXT. VIA VENETO (1958) - NIGHT

A legend appears on the screen: 18 DAYS BEFORE THE CRIME. Looking especially beautiful, Patrizia giggles as she plays blind man's buff on roller skates drawing cheers from passers-by. Gradually she begins to lose her balance and still laughing, hurtles down the sidewalk and into the street.

Just when it seems that she might possibly continue into the path of an incoming car, suddenly she comes to an abort halt, caught by a man who takes her in his arms and kisses her full on the mouth: Carlo. Startled, she takes off the blindfold.

CARLO (INDICATING THE SKATES)

If you're in the mood to go a little faster, I've got a better set of the wheels than those.

PATRIZIA (PLAYFULLY)

You do not.

CARLO (JERKING HIS HEAD IN THE DIRECTION OF THE BUICK)

Sure I do. Brand new.

PATRIZIA (SLY)
Who'd you borrow it from?

Just then. Patrizia hears her name being called, and sees that her friends are about to catch up with her.

PATRIZIA (MISCHIEVOUSLY)
Can I drive?

CARLO (INDICATING THE
SKATES)
With those? What about your party?

Patrizia's friends breathless. They are a second too late to catch her as she jumps behind the wheel of the Buick and turns on the engine.

PATRIZIA (TO CARLO)
Come on! I'll show you something you'll like.

To the chagrin of her friends, and the applause and raised glasses of the audience of café patrons, she zooms off with Carlo at her side.

CUT TO:

22. EXT FONTANA DI TREVI (1958) - NIGHT

A movie set on location. As technicians pause breathless, a BLONDE MOVIE STAR with enormous breasts steps into the field of light that illuminates the fountain. She dresses her low-cut dress, take it out and strides naked into the water just as the red Buick arrives with its headlamps off.

CARLO (VISIBLE IMPRESSED)
Look. She's already naked.

PATRIZIA
I told you I'd show you something you'd like.

Transfixed, they watch progress of the shoot until a CARABINIERE taps Carlo on the shoulder.

CARABINIERE

Good Evening. Do you have permission to be here? Are you with the production "La Dolce Vita"?

CARLO (STARTLED)

Of course.

CARABINIERE

May I see it, please?

CARLO (TO PATRIZIA)

Show him the movie production authorization.

As Patrizia pretends to hunt in the glove compartment. Carlo whispers something in her ear that makes her eyes light up. Suddenly she kisses him, turns on the engine and forgetting herself, switches on the headlights inadvertently disrupting the shooting. The carabineer BLOWS his WHILSTLE, but before anyone has time protest, she backs the car away and races off.

CUT TO:

23. INT. GARAGE OF CARLO'S BUILDING

The Buick bounces into the garage and brakes. Patrizia shuts off the engine but leaves the headlights and RADIO ON. Giggling, she gets out of the car, and makes Carlo chase her for a moment, whereupon he catches her and they begin to waltz as she continues to laugh, slipping and sliding on the skates.

CARLO (IRONICALLY)

You wouldn't be laughing if your Daddy saw you now.

PATRIZIA (WITH A MOCK FROWN)

What about Daddy?

They begin to kiss each other passionately. Unable to wait Carlo undoes her blouse and had her skirts up no time. They are about to make love against the hood of the car when suddenly, they are startled to hear someone approaching: Laura. Before they can react, Laura strides across the floor, whereupon she confronts Carlo and spits in his face.

PATRIZIA

You certainly have a way with the girls.

CARLO

(MOPPING HIS FACE WITH A
HANDERCHIEF)

Not you again. Look! Do I have to spell it
out for you? Get lost! Beat it!

When Laura suddenly bursts into tears, Patrizia cannot contain her laughter. Carlo is laughing too, by the time Laura flees the garage.

CUT TO:

**24. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CARLO'S BUILDING (ROME, 1958)
- NIGHT**

Distraught, Laura crosses the street and stumbles into GINO, Patrizia's old brother.

LAURA (DRAWING A BREATH)

Oh! You scared me.

GINO (STUTTERING)

Sh-sh-she's in there, isn't she? With
Carlo!

LAURA

Who?

GINO

My sister: Patrizia!

Disoriented, Laura looks away.

LAURA
I don't know your sister.

Gino stands transfixed as Laura disappears into the darkness.

CUT TO:

25. INT. GARAGE (ROME, 1958) - NIGHT

Inside the garage Gino's FOOTSTEPS ECHO in the darkness. As he scans the garage, he is startled by the SOUND of a CARDOOR CLOSING. Alone, Carlo looks the door of the Buick and makes enter the building.

GINO
W-w-where is she?

CARLO (INDEFERENT)
If you mean your sister, I haven't seen her since I gave her a lift to the Trevi Fountain Crazy about movies, isn't she? I don't go to movies much myself.

GINO
If you touch her...

CARLO
You'll what?

GINO
You stay away!

CARLO (WITH A SMIRK)
Sure pal. Anything else I can do for you?

GINO
Don't ever c-c-cross me.

Gino turns on his heels and goes out.

CARLO (UNDER HIS BREATH)
Ok-k-kay...

Just Carlo is startled by the SOUND of a ROLLERSKATE as it travels across the concrete floor, emerges from the shadows and rolls to a halt at his feet. He looks up to find Patrizia leaning with her back and the sole of one stockinged foot against a pillar, holding a handkerchief to her mouth to stifle her giggles.

CUT TO:

26. INT. AIRPORT (ROME, 1989)-DAY

At the gate, ALESSANDRO, an ebullient literary agent is eagerly scanning the passengers arriving from New York. He bears a conspicuous placard with Falcone's name on it.

ALESSANDRO
Mr. Falcone! Mr. Falcone!

Alessandro seems on the verge of giving up when he hears a voice behind him.

FALCONE
Keep your voice down and come with me... And get rid of that sign.

ALESSANDRO (TIMIDLY)
Who are you?

FALCONE
Guess.

CUT TO:

27. EXT. VIA VENETO (ROME, 1989)-DAY

On foot, Alessandro and Falcone turn on to Via Veneto from a side street.

ALESSANDRO
But this is Via Veneto! We are on Via Veneto at this moment!

Falcone takes in the scene: mostly people, tourist and Arabic-speaking immigrants

ALESSANDRO

I don't know why people want to see Via Veneto. Always because of this film of Fellini. A great friend of mine, Fellini. And a great artist.

They sit down at one of the tables lining the street; Alessandro snaps his fingers for the waiter who shrugs and attends a couple of tourists.

ALESSANDRO

The local people don't come to Via Veneto anymore. Only the rich tourists.

Just then a WHORE who has seen better days lowers her copy of L'Unita, the newspaper she is reading over the morning coffee she enjoys every afternoon, and greets Alessandro.

WHORE

Ciao Alessa!

ALESSANDRO

Sta zita! Non vedi che sto laborà qui?

Falcone remain expressionless.

ALESSANDRO (TO FALCONE)

Anyway I have for you the documents you wanted.

He withdraws then from a briefcase and passes then to Falcone.

ALESSANDRO

The dossiers. Here is a schedule of the meetings. It would have been difficult to arrange all this. (Proudly) For some people. (To waiter) Garçon! Due Campari Soda. You received the legal papers I send?

FALCONE

Yeah, eventually. Thanks.

ALESSANDRO

I have for you the perfect hotel. You are going to like it.

FALCONE (INDULGENTLY)

Look Alessandro, let's get one thing straight. I'll catch a cab. I'll pick the hotel.

ALESSANDRO

Mr. Falcone. I know you don't like people I read in the newspapers where the whole world comes to see you at the press conference in New York. And you disappear. I respect this.

ALESSANDRO

Did you see journalists and paparazzi at the airport? But you must know that no matter which hotel you choose, in 24 hours they will discover.

FALCONE (SMILING)

Where is this hotel you're got picked out?

CUT TO:

28. INT. HOTEL ROOM (ROME, 1989) - EVENING

In a robe after a shower, Falcone glances at some of the photos from the documents of Alessandro had given him, which are now spread across the bed amid some tourist maps and Italian magazines.

Suddenly, the phone rings.

Unnerved, Falcone lets it ring for a moment before answering. Finally he picks up the phone but does not say anything until he hears a voice that allows him to know first who is on the line.

There is a TV in the background.

VOICE ON PHONE (OFF)

Buona serce. Signor Falcone?

FALCONE

Uh-huh.

VOICE ON PHONE (OFF)

There is a call for you, sir.

FALCONE

I thought I told you no calls.

VOICE ON PHONE (OFF)

But is long distance from America.
Urgent, Mr Hanson...

Falcone glances at the TV, which is showing an old-style trailer for an upcoming presentation of the third Man.

FALCONE

Tell him I was here but I left...For
Vienna. Yeah tell him that. Vienna.

As a trailer continues, it absorbs Falcone's attention until he is entirely distracted from the phone call, and lowers the receiver.

VOICE ON PHONE (OFF)

Signor Falcone? Signore?

Now Falcone is thoroughly transfixed by the scenes from **The third Man** unfolding before his eyes. We see the trailer, a quick montage of suspenseful moments.

VOICE ON TV (OFF)

A special presentation from the classic
story by Graham Green... A writer finds
himself in the grip of destiny as he
arrives in a war-torn foreign capital...

CUT TO:

29. EXT. STREETS OF ROME (1989) - DAY

OVERPLAY SOUND OF A TV ANNOUNCER from previous scene as Falcone races across Tiber Bridge in a rented car. As he does so, we catch a glimpse of the structure from the fascist period that encloses a classical tomb (at Piazza Augusto Imperatore) and finally a panorama of the city.

VOICE ON TV (CONTINUING OFF)

Only to find himself trapped in a web of mystery and deceit! See what astonishing revelation awaits him in this classical feature...

CUT TO:

30. EXT. APPIA ANTICA (1989) - DAY

Having continued on the Appian Way, Falcone pauses before the gates of a Baroque villa. He checks the number on the gate against an address he has in his notes, and turns in.

CUT TO:

31. EXT. INT. VILLA (1989) - DAY

As a servant opens the door, Laura (age 52) appears like a burst of light on the landing of the marble staircase. She is wearing a long, flowing, and white dress of no clearly discernible style or period. At her feet are at least a dozen little puppies that seem to follow her everywhere.

CUT TO:

32. INT. LAURA'S STUDY - DAY

A servant departs, having shown Falcone to Laura's study. He does not waste any time before scrutinising her bookshelves, which are loaded with romance fiction with titles like "Fires of Passion" and "Darkness of Love". He is glancing through one of the books when a voice makes him realize that Laura has entered the room (this time without her puppies). It's 52 she is greying but still quite beautiful. Her outwardly calling and reasoned demeanour contrasts quite sharply with the woman we knew as a youth.

LAURA

As you can see, Mr Falcone, I enjoy reading romance novels. Light stuff, really.

FALCONE (AFTER PAUSE)

Nothing wrong with that.

LAURA

Of course, but as a writer I imagine your tastes must be rather more sophisticated.

FALCONE

Not necessarily...

LAURA

Won't you sit down?

She also take a seat, and crosses her legs in a way that reveals a bit more of them than a lady of her generation might ordinarily consider appropriate. Falcone notices that they don't seem to have suffered much for the passage on time. And she notices that he notices (Although he cannot tell whether he has seen them by accident or design part).

She sifts her weight a bit to cover them slightly that of course only draws more attention to them.

LAURA

Where shall we begin?

FALCONE

Well, to tell you the truth, I was a little surprised to hear that you were so willing to co-operate.

LAURA

Oh?

FALCONE

Yes. When I first had the idea for a book based on the murder it occurred to me that it would be great to be able actually to interview everybody who was in some way connected... Whoever was still alive? But then I thought, why should anyone talk to me about it? And I assumed it would be impossible.

Laura lights a cigarette.

FALCONE

Instead what happens? You're extremely cordial. You receive me into your home. You're willing to talk.

She rises.

LAURA

Well it seems that things are not as you expected.

FALCONE

At least so far.

LAURA

I suppose there are times when we surprise even ourselves. Ten years ago I wouldn't have avoided people... Eventually many children learned the story: when my youngest was 15. Then I thought I've committed no crime. My only sin was to fall in love with Antonio while I was still in love with Carlo. But I was only 20. Who doesn't do silly things at that age?

CUT TO:

33. INT. ANTONIO'S APARTMENT (1958) - NIGHT

Subtitle: 15 DAYS BEFORE THE CRIME.

A typical apartment of Parioli in the 1950's. Antonio and Laura (age 20 once again) enter through the front door. Inside, a RADIO is PLAYING a RELIGIOUS PROGRAM.

ANTONIO (SHOWING HER)

Please.

Timidly, Laura enters the apartment. She hears the radio and looks inquisitively at Antonio.

ANTONIO

On that's my mother. She loves listening to Vatican radio whenever my father's away. He's been in Salerno for almost a month now. With the Ministry of Transport... You don't mind, do you?

LAURA

(TAKING A SEAT ON THE SOFA)
What?

ANTONIO

The radio.

LAURA (AWKWARDLY)

Well, no.

ANTONIO

I knew you wouldn't.

Laura forces a smile but when Antonio leans over to kiss her, she draws back.

ANTONIO

What's wrong?

LAURA

Nothing

ANTONIO

You don't...

LAURA

It's not that. I just think... Well shouldn't we take some time to get to know each other?

ANTONIO

Any time at all is an eternity for me, Laura. I love you. I want you to marry me.

LAURA

You are so romantic!

ANTONIO

I love you. It's as though I were struck by lightning!

Laura gives him a peck on the cheek.

ANTONIO

Now that you're here, I never want to lose you.

LAURA (AFTER PAUSE)

You make me scared.

ANTONIO

How come?

LAURA

Well, because I'm just not sure I'm in love with you. After all we only know each other five days.

ANTONIO

Look, I want you to forget Carlo. Forget about the whole world. I'll make you happy, Laura. Really I will!

LAURA

But it isn't that.

ANTONIO

What then?

Suddenly, Pina appears. She is dressed entirely in black and wears oversized silver cross around her neck.

PINA
Antonio!

Antonio stands.

ANTONIO
Mamma... (To LAURA) This is my
mamma, Laura.

PINA (STIFFLY)
How do you do?

ANTONIO
And this is Laura.

LAURA
How are you?

PINA
You look rather familiar. Haven't we
met?

LAURA
Could be.

PINA
Your girlfriend, Antonio?

ANTONIO
Well, yeah...

PINA
Lover?

ANTONIO (EMBARRASSED)
Come on, Ma! What kind of talk is that?

PINA
Well is she?

ANTONIO
Well if you put it that way, she is. We're
going out together.

PINA (TO LAURA)

Are your parents aware that you're here
in my house?

ANTONIO

Ma! Laura's 20 years old.

PINA

Well, I'm 50. And I've lived long enough
to know how young people ought to
behave.

CUT TO:

34. INT. LAURA'S STUDY (ROME, 1989) - DAY

It is later at the same scene where previously we had seen Laura
and Falcone. She is now pouring coffee from a silver service.

LAURA

There was something odd about
Antonio's family to be sure... Sugar?

FALCONE

Two, please.

She adds sugar and passes him a spoon.

LAURA

Antonio seemed very much like a little
boy to me then. In this mother's
presence, he just seemed to go to
pieces...

FALCONE

What about the mother?

LAURA

I just want to know one thing: you've
seen her photograph. Do I seem as old
now as she was then?

FALCONE

Let's see. You said that were in love with Antonio.

LAURA

That's the point. I wasn't. He was the one. He was in love with me, which is quite a different matter. I wanted to love him, you know. I did my best. But I was still taken with Carlo.

CUT TO:

35. EXT. DESERTED STREET (ROME 1958) - DAY

POV of WAGNER (25 years old) thorough the viewfinder of camera as snaps pictures of Carlo posing with this red Buick. The car is beautiful.

It's the CAMERA CLIKS; we hear the rest of Falcone's conversation with Laura.

FALCONE (OFF)

I guess you must have taken his death kind of hard.

LAURA (OFF)

Rather hard indeed, yes. I was mad with grief. And I came to hate Antonio.

FALCONE (OFF)

At the time, I was convinced... Now I'm not so certain.

CUT TO:

36. INT. LAURA'S STUDY (ROME, 1989) - DAY

LAURA (CONTINUING)

You see Carlo as a man; Antonio, a boy. And I was a silly fool.

She lights a cigarette.

LAURA

You must understand that women practically swooned with the merest glance from Carlo. It was something demonic I suppose you could say. It should have caused repulsion or fear. Instead it was... Seductive.

CUT TO:

37. INT. "OPEN GATE" (ROME, 1958) - NIGHT

It is very late at the club. The music is over, and a few stragglers remain. Among them we find Carlo. He is drinking alone.

Subtitle: 10 DAYS BEFORE THE CRIME.

LAURA

Carlo.

CARLO (SURPRISED)

Well if it isn't the little cutie-pie!

LAURA

Don't call me that.

CARLO (WITH A LAUGH)

How about the drink?

She reaches the bar.

LAURA

Just one.

CARLO (TO BARMAN)

Hello! An Aversa with ice.

LAURA

You seem pretty happy-go-lucky. Guess without me, there's a big weight off your shoulders.

CARLO

How could that be? You were always a lightweight... And so cute.

LAURA

Don't give me that.

CARLO

Look that's the way the cookie crumbles. Things change. I'm just not the kind of guy for weddings and kids, and that kind of stuff. You know what I mean?

LAURA

I miss you.

CARLO (SARCASTICALLY)

Why don't you try that one on your new boyfriend? He might go for it.

LAURA

He's not my boyfriend.

The bartender serves her drink.

CARLO

You get a load of my new car when you come in here? It's right outside. It's American. A Buick. And it's all mine. The most beautiful car in the world: the design, colour and power... It's Heaven!

LAURA

Where'd you come up with that kind of cash?

CARLO

I've still got 30 days to pay up.

LAURA

What money?

CARLO

It's a secret.

LAURA (AFTER PAUSE)

You're nothing but a cheap crook.

CARLO

I love it when you talk dirty to me. Say, I hear you boyfriend's some scrapper. Word is he'd like to take a poke at me.

Laura stares at her glass.

LAURA

You just played with me. You used me and now you think you can ditch me. Just like that. But I can't just turn it on and off. There's no use kidding myself. I'm still crazy about you...

Suddenly she notices that Carlo has slipped away and that she has been left talking to herself.

LAURA (THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH)

You won't get away with it this time...

CUT TO:

38. INT. ANTONIO'S APT (ROME 1958) - DAY

Laura is standing in the centre of a room as Pina confronts her.

PINA

My I ask what gives you the right to come barging into my home?

LAURA

Sorry. I'm a little nervous, I guess. I was hoping to see Antonio.

PINA

He's out

LAURA

I don't mind waiting.

PINA (LIVID)

Just a moment here, young lady! Just who do you do think you are? My son isn't anybody's fool. He happens to have a very promising future in the Navy.

LAURA

If you don't mind I'd prefer to discuss it with him.

PINA

He's fed up with you and your two-faced lies! So why don't you get out? You think he doesn't know that you're two-timing him with that hooligan?

Visibly agitated, Laura turns to leave when she notices an older man in a dark suit standing in the doorway adjoining the hall: Senator Matelli.

He coughs and Pina turns.

PINA

Oh! Comendatore! Did we awaken you?
This is Laura, Antonio's friend (To Laura)
Senator Matelli, an old family friend.

The senator nods. As he does so, Laura notices a white rose on this lapel.

There is also a bouquet of roses on the table. This association does not escape her notice.

CUT TO:

39. INT LAURA'S STUDY (ROME, 1989) - DAY

We resume the scene with Laura and Falcone.

LAURA

You see in Antonio's home, there was a obscure family problem. Carlo had a way of finding out things that might come in handy in a pinch, so to speaks. So I suppose he knew about it; I just couldn't imagine what it could be.

FALCONE

Did you still love Antonio?

LAURA

I suppose Antonio was all I had, wasn't he?

Lost in thought Laura approaches the bookshelf.

LAURA

Inconsequential love stories... And so I become the motive for the killing. Jealously. That's what drove Antonio to murder. It used to be that men would kill for woman. Nowadays they just kill the woman.

FALCONE

But Antonio didn't kill Carlo.

LAURA (PUZZLED)

What make you so sure, Mr. Falcone?

CUT TO:

40. INT. ALESSANDRO'S OFFICE (ROME, 1989) - DAY

Alessandro is eating a big plate of spaghetti with tomato sauce and a napkin hanging around his neck when suddenly he is quite, taken aback to find a beautiful woman dressed in an elegant tailleur, standing before him.

We are surprised to recognize her as Jennifer who has deliberately put on her best appearance for effect. The effect is clearly not lost on Alessandro who, at first, is dazzled.

JENNIFER (HANDING HIM A CARD)

Mr. Pedone. So kind of you to see me. Consance Foxen of Hanson, Weicker and Fleer. Mr. Hanson suggested that I see you regarding a very urgent matter.

ALESSANDRO (GUSHING)

Of course Miss... Call me Alessandro.

JENNIFER

Foxen. You see Mr. Pedone It's regarding Mr. Falcone. It seems that he left N.Y. without signing an original triplicate or IRS 943-50 with automatic standard deductions for convertible debentures on short-term advances of options on disappearing deductibles for the second quarter of fiscal year 88-89. And I'm afraid that if that document is not signed and submitted by the third of this month, very grave penalties might result. So if you'll just be so kind as to tell me the name of the hotel where he's staying.

ALESSANDRO (SOLICITOUSLY)

Miss uh...

JENNIFER

Foxen.

ALESSANDRO

Perhaps if you would give me this...

JENNIFER

IRS 943-50 with...

ALESSANDRO

Yes if you'd just give it to me I could see that Mr. Faclone...

JENNIFER

Oh I'm afraid that's quite impossible, you see. Mr. Hansen was very specific in these instructions. He said that I mustn't let the document out of my sight for a moment.

He hunts in a Rodalex file for the number of Falcone's hotel. As he does so, he catches sight of the issue of the international Herald Tribune, which has reprinted in the New York Times article on Falcone's aborted press conference. Staring him in the face is a photo of Jennifer. He points a finger at her.

ALESSANDRO

You!

JENNIFER

What?

ALESSANDRO

You have a sister, perhaps?

JENNIFER

I'm afraid not. Why do you ask?

ALESSANDRO (DRAWING TO NEAR HER)

Once, I have seen girls with an extraordinary resemblance to you. I'm married of course but even so, we make love.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't see...

ALESSANDRO

Oh no? Let me explain to you: I will be very pleased to give you the address you decide if only would do one small thing for me.

JENNIFER

What's that?

ALESSANDRO

Take off your clothes...

JENNIFER

Are you kidding me? I'm going to call Mr. Hansen.

ALESSANDRO

Then do it now! Here is the phone! Phone! Phone! You think you can make a fool of me? I know, who you are! You want to destroy my business? So many years to have a contract with Hansen, and you come here you destroy my agency! My literary agency! Out of here! Get out!

CUT TO:

41. INT. ALESSANDRO'S OFFICE BUILDING (ROME, 1989) - DAY

Open in an immense and cavernous hall.

The sound of Jennifer's footsteps echo against the marble as she mutters to herself in a huff.

Suddenly, one of her night kneels gets caught in a joint between 2 slabs of the marble floor, causing her to stumble and drop her case.

To her surprise, the case opens and the contents go flying, only adding to her consternation.

Cursing under her breath, she stoops to gather the papers, whereupon she notices a fire alarm box with a glass panel.

After a cursory glance over her shoulder, she breaks the glass and sounds the alarm.

The sound is deafening.

JENNIFER

Fire! Fire! Fire!

CUT TO:

42. INT. ALESSANDRO'S OFFICE (ROME, 1989) - DAY

With the deafening sound of the FIRE ALARM RINGING, Alessandro's office is sheer chaos as everyone runs for the stairways and windows. In the confusion, Jennifer appears, quickly finds the name of Falcone's hotel still showing on the Rodelex file where Alessandro had left it. She snatches the little card and makes off the SIRENS begin to SOUND IN DISTANCE.

CUT TO: