

THROUGH THE SMOKESCREEN

Written by

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DRAFT  
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DARKNESS

A small blue and orange flame slowly grinds along a matchbook runway, then erupts in a violent, phosphorous cacophony of sparks...

FADE IN:

1 INT. REGAN DETECTIVE AGENCY - NIGHT

1

GLORIOUS BLACK AND WHITE

The sparks illuminate a dingy office thick with noir smoke. RICHARD REGAN (late 30's - Dick to those in the know) sits at his desk slowly smoking himself to death. He wears the typical grey suit, fedora and knowing grin while taking swigs of paint thinner from the morning bottle.

REGAN (V.O.)

It was a slow day at the Regan detective agency so I played a few games of Jenga with the butts in the ashtray to keep my mind limber... That's how it was in the city of angels. Too fast for an honest man and too slow to drag race topless down Sunset at rush hour... unless you had work done... The city of contradictions. The city where they'll fine you if you don't have a tofu option on the menu at a steak house. The city where homeless orientals starve across the street from all-you-can-eat Asian-fusion buffets, a city where Chloe Barnes walked into my life...

CHLOE BARNES walks in, late twenties, dripping with the limits of your imagination. Her flowing dress shines white, pure as your wedding should have been.

REGAN (V.O.)

...like an angel... from page six of Victoria's Secret spring catalog... I was bewitched by her... everything... She was so pure. So innocent. So perfect... I knew there was hope for this sad and beautiful world from the very first word she spoke.

CHLOE

Dick?

Regan coughs up smoke.

REGAN (V.O.)

Well maybe not the very first word.

CHLOE

Dick Regan, private eye?

REGAN

Private Investigator... Like  
Magnum...

CHLOE

Chloe. Barnes, like where they milk  
cows on beds of golden straw....  
Mind?

Chloe pulls out a smoke. Regan strikes a match and makes her  
day.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

It's a dirty habit. I agree. Picked  
it up doing volunteer work for the  
poor children in Winston Salem. My  
father was making a documentary on  
the kids who hand roll them...  
He'll kill me if he ever finds out  
I got hooked.

Chloe produces a white handkerchief from her purse. Dick  
tries to cut her off at the pass, offers his own grey  
version, but she's already dabbing her eyes.

REGAN

Why don't you tell me about it  
Sugar?

CHLOE

My father is Ben Barnes...

REGAN

Ben Barnes?

CHLOE

Yes, Ben Barnes, the  
documentarian...

REGAN

Thank god. For a second there I thought you were gonna say Ben Barnes who makes all those movies about how bad everything is.

CHLOE

My father's films are, well, how shall we say, controversial.

REGAN

What kind of flicks does he make?

CHLOE

Documentaries... But never mind that now, he's disappeared...

REGAN

Please tell me he's not working on a David Copperfield flick...

Chloe sits on Regan's desk and leans deep to ash as her low cut dress betrays her innocence. Regan tries, but can't look away...

REGAN (CONT'D)

Doesn't he know collecting trash is a dirty business?

CHLOE

He's been dodging bullets to find the truth for years... Looks like this time he found what they don't want found.

REGAN

What did he found?

CHLOE

I don't know. But it has something to do with this.

Chloe pulls out an empty pack of smokes. SMOKING WILL KILL YOU is circled in red Sharpie along with the hand printed words: THROUGH THE SMOKESCREEN.

Regan examines the clue.

REGAN

Where did you find this?

CHLOE

It's his handwriting. It was in my mailbox...

REGAN (V.O.)

Male Box.

Regan coughs smoke again.

CHLOE

My father told me he was getting  
strange calls. Threatening calls...  
Ever since he started working on  
his film about big tobacco.

REGAN

Why not go to the police?

CHLOE

They don't have time for daughters  
in the city of angels... They'll  
say he ran off with a girlfriend,  
or is tied up shooting a new  
film...

She leans. The blouse opens lower... Like Regan's mouth.

REGAN (V.O.)

Marlowe would advised me against  
it...

Regan lights another.

REGAN

I get two fifty a day, plus  
expenses.

2

INT. BEN BARNES' OFFICE - DAY

2

Beams of sunlight pour through the Venetian blinds, casting  
shadows on an editing suite.

REGAN (V.O.)

I never had much luck finding  
missing persons. Seems like you can  
never find a missing body, because  
as soon as you find the body it  
isn't missing anymore.

Regan pokes around the room and takes note of a framed  
picture about a premier for one of Ben's documentaries.

Further sleuthing reveals a DSLR camera with the media door  
open.

REGAN

Looks like someone else beat us to  
the punch.

Regan points out the empty slot in the camera, then motions  
to the computer.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Maybe it's on this thing.

Regan fumbles with the computer but can't make sense of it.  
Chloe moves in, rests her hand on his and eases the mouse.

CHLOE

May I?

Regan lock's eyes with her, entranced.

REGAN

Show me what you're made of Sugar.

Regan takes a step back, lights a cigarette and admires her  
computer skills in action.

Chloe scrolls the timeline playing a series of clips:

1. SECTION FROM AN ANTI-SMOKING AD.
2. MEN LOADING "BS CIGARETTES" INTO A TRUCK.
3. A FAT COLONEL SANDERS TYPE WITH AN EYE PATCH PUSHES A  
DOCUMENTARIAN AND HIS CAMERA OUT OF HIS FACE.
4. A SCIENTIST IN A LAB COAT AND STUPID BEAVER USHANKA, LOADS  
A REVOLVER WITH TWO BULLETS, THEN SPINS THE CHAMBER, MOVING  
THE GUN TO HIS HEAD.

RUSSIAN SCIENTIST

(bad Russian accent)

One third of smokers die of cancer.  
Like playing favorite Russian  
national pastime, with two bullets  
instead of one...

A revolver FIRES off screen.

5. SENATOR FRANKLIN JEFFERSON COLTON ADDRESSES THE CAMERA IN FRONT OF A BLUE WASHINGTON CURTAIN.

COLTON

And I am grateful for my friends at the Anti-Smoking Society for repeatedly reminding us of the horrors of smoking. As a Senator, I am thankful to be in a position to help educate consumers and protect them against the dangers of smoking.

Regan rummages through a trash can. He searches through several scraps of paper when something catches his eye: A CIGARETTE BUTT.

He uses one of the papers to scoop up the butt and examines it. He sniffs it, tastes it, then folds it up in the paper and places it in his pocket.

REGAN

Whoever beat us here was about as careful as Mary and Joseph...

She stares at him.

REGAN (CONT'D)

I bet if we find that footage we'll find your father...

CHLOE

You think my father is... can you find the footage?

REGAN

For you Sugar, I'll find it... What do you say we pay a visit to the Anti-Smoking Society and see if they have any idea's about your father.

CHLOE

The last person he interviewed was that Senator in the video, what's his name... Colton? That's our next step.

3

EXT. LA BREA TAR PITS - DAY

3

Regan and Chloe poke around the tar-pits, passing a mastodon who tries to pull his buddy from the sticky mess.

REGAN (V.O.)

Franklin Jefferson Colton. A senator. A man of the people. A man who built a reputation fighting for working schmucks like me... A man I might vote for, if I voted. If there was anything worth voting for since they repealed the Volstead act...

Regan watches as Colton charismatically does his shaking hands routine.

COLTON

The tar that forms in your lungs from smoking tobacco is no different from the tar that forms in the La Brea tar pits. Smokers, like the animals trapped in these pits, are doomed to a drawn out and painful end.

Regan moves uncomfortably close to Colton.

REGAN

Senator, a moment for the cause?

Colton cracks a primary smile but doesn't bite.

REGAN (CONT'D)

About campaign finance.

Colton nods to Regan, then delivers his best pre-Marilyn JFK.

COLTON

These are extraordinary times... Times when we can restore honesty and end this foolish tobacco hypocrisy... It is heartening to know that we are ready to do our duty and beat smoking by the end of the decade... Thank you for braving the elements tonight.

Colton expertly navigates the crowd of supporters as he walks to Regan and Chloe.

COLTON (CONT'D)

(to Regan)

Thank you for coming out today to help get the anti-smoking message out.

Regan lights up.



CHLOE

Senator, you know my father, Ben Barnes.

COLTON

You must be Chloe. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. How is your father? It was such a delight to work with him. He does such great work for the cause.

CHLOE

My father's missing.

COLTON

Oh my goodness, I'm sorry to hear that... When did you last hear from him?

REGAN

He interviewed you for his film last Friday didn't he? Did he say anything about leaving town?

COLTON

Not that I can recall... I didn't catch your name.

REGAN

Regan... P.I.

COLTON

Private Investigator?

REGAN

And voter.

CHLOE

Please Senator. My father's been missing for days.

COLTON

Your father was a crusader on a valuable mission, and more importantly, he was a good friend... I'll go to the Chief of Police with this, personally... If you hear anything, let me know.

4

INT. REGAN'S CAR - AFTERNOON [VIA BAD REAR PROJECTION]

4

MONTAGE: Regan and Chloe dangle smokes out the window as they make their way to the valley.

REGAN (V.O.)

After speaking with the fancy Senator in his perfectly pressed pants I was completely obsessed with ASS... the Anti-Smoking Society. Chloe assured me several times that ASS was a one-way street to nowhere but I'd always been curious... so, out of options, I figured we needed to head to the valley to visit the tobacco grower from the flick...

The scenery projection abruptly becomes rural.

REGAN (V.O.)

Chloe didn't talk much on the ride. I usually appreciate a dame who knows how to shut it, but I found myself wanting nothing more than to listen to her talk... even if it was as small as thanking me for taking on the case.

CHLOE

(as if answering him)

I want to thank you for taking on the case.

Regan reacts. He knows it's odd that Chloe responds to his V.O.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

(teared)

This, this whole thing is... just...

Regan pulls out a cigarette, gently places it in her mouth and stares into her eyes as he lights it.

REGAN

Don't worry about it Sugar... We'll find your father.

CHLOE

Dick, I've never met a man like you. A real man. A man my father would approve of... The kind of man a girl, like me... you know, could... I want a man I can trust. A man I can finally open myself up to... Maybe even settle down with someday...

REGAN (V.O.)

Maybe even settle down with  
someday... Chloe made me believe  
that maybe, deep down, there was a  
little color left in this rotten  
world of greys...

FLASH: THREE FRAMES OF COLOR

REGAN (V.O.)

That maybe this city wasn't so bad  
if an innocent flower like Chloe  
could grow, never plucked... That  
maybe the water in my old rusty  
can...

5 EXT. TOBACCO FARM - AFTERNOON 5

Chloe and Regan sneak up to a creepy old fence surrounding an  
even creepier old, decrepid house.

The gate is locked so Regan picks it.

6 EXT. TOBACCO FARM - INSIDE GATE - CONTINUOUS 6

Two gruff FARM HANDS dig a hole in the earthen floor next to  
several burlap bags marked: BS FARMS - SEED TOBACCO XL420.

The farmers notice Regan and Chloe and stop digging.

JESUP

Hey Maynard, looks like we got  
company.

CHLOE

Sorry, I think we have the wrong  
tobacco field.

Chloe turns to go but is scared by a THIRD FARM HAND lurking  
in the corner, who grabs her and drags into the corner.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Unhand me!

Regan calmly lights a smoke and makes sure his hat is on  
tight (he smokes and never loses his hat throughout the  
scene).

REGAN

Let the dame go.

JESUP  
What's it to yeah city boy.

CHLOE  
Help me Dick!

REGAN  
Don't worry Sugar, there's only  
three of them.

JESUP  
We gunna give you a beatin', farm  
style.

Jesup and Maynard move to Regan while their friend (let's call him ANDY) steps forward.

When the thugs get to ass beating distance Regan grabs his own cock like an 80's rap video...

REGAN  
Take a look at this rooster...

Jesup glances at Regan's rooster, then Regan punts Jesup's nuts to the loony bin.

Maynard charges, but Regan easily lays him out with a punch to the kisser.

REGAN (CONT'D)  
So much for farm rules...

Andy pushes Chloe into the corner, then moves toward Regan as Maynard and Jesup, crumpled on the ground, struggle to stand. All three move to Regan as...

A GUNSHOT rings out, which stops everyone dead in their tracks.

SYDNEY BROWNSTREET (50's - Colonel Sanders Mustache, skin extra crispy, eye patch) emerges from the shadows with a shotgun in hand as a pigeon with several holes in it falls to the ground.

BROWNSTREET  
What's the meaning of this?

Brownstreet's glance straightens out the thugs as Regan lights and smokes two cigarettes at the same time.

REGAN (V.O.)  
I coulda' kept whipping those good-  
old-boys six ways to Sunday...  
(MORE)

REGAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 but when it comes to lead  
 sandwiches I prefer mine  
 unleaded... and with extra  
 scotch... and a lettuce wrap.

BROWNSTREET  
 (to Regan)  
 What the hell are you doing on my  
 land?

REGAN  
 Aside from smoking?

Regan offers one of his smokes when Brownstreet lowers his  
 shotgun... to Regan's cock.

REGAN (CONT'D)  
 I'm a private dick on a case.

BROWNSTREET  
 What's your name dick?

REGAN  
 Dick.

BROWNSTREET  
 What did you call me?

REGAN  
 Dick.

Brownstreet cocks...

REGAN (CONT'D)  
 Dick. Dick Regan. I'm Dick Regan.

JESUP  
 (licking)  
 Dick, dick, dick, dick, dick.

BROWNSTREET  
 What are you doing on my land Dick?

REGAN  
 Working a case... The name Ben  
 Barnes mean anything to you? Any  
 reason you might want him to  
 disappear? He was filming here,  
 right?

Brownstreet cocks his gun.

## BROWNSTREET

He came poking 'round with his camera and I'm gonna tell you what I told him. You come poking your little pecker 'round here again I'll shoot it off and feed it to Jesup here... He sure likes the white meat.

## MAYNARD

What about the biscuits boss?

JESUP licks his lips. Farm style.

7 INT. REGAN'S CAR - NIGHT [VIA BAD REAR PROJECTION] 7

Regan and Chloe drive under the neon lights of the city of lost angels.

## REGAN (V.O.)

I heard him, loud and clear... The tussle at the barn stung a little, but the threat from Colonel Sander's boyfriend got me thinking about the important stuff...

Regan pulls a cigarette box from his coat. Empty. He throws it out the window as Chloe moves in with her soft, everything...

## CHLOE

Here, take my box.

Regan coughs smoke as Chloe pulls her own smokes from her purse. She leans against Regan and eases her box into his coat pocket as she shares her smoke.

## REGAN

Sugar, you make me feel... Sweet.

## CHLOE

Dick, you make me feel...

They move to each other. Lips about to touch... Eyes about to fuck. When... Regan pulls away...

## REGAN

I won't let anything happen to Ben Barnes' little girl... Not on my watch.

Regan checks the time on his wristwatch.

REGAN (CONT'D)  
I'll take you to a place where  
you'll be safe.

EXT. APPLEBEES ON SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Tight on the family friendly neon sign. Establishing.

8 INT. APPLEBEE'S ON SUNSET - NIGHT

8

Regan sips a stupid drink with an umbrella and mock smokes an unlit cigarette, ashing into a nonexistent ashtray.

REGAN (V.O.)  
I needed a drink like the Pope  
needs donations so I stopped in the  
first place that poured anything  
stronger than communion...

Regan slams the drink.

REGAN  
I was ready to drink the umbrella  
when it hit me like Mike Tyson's  
mother...

Regan unwraps the cigarette butt he found at Ben's office when something on the paper catches his eye.

REGAN (V.O.)  
It was an order for BS FARMS - SEED  
TOBACCO XL420. Was it a clue that  
Ben Barnes found for his film or  
did someone else leave it there?  
And if someone left it why would  
they be so careless? And if they  
were so careless why did I care so  
much? There was only one way to  
find out so I decided to go back to  
Barnes' office and take another  
look.

9 INT. BEN BARNES' OFFICE - NIGHT

9

Regan looks around the office, carefully examining things as he goes.

REGAN (V.O.)

The apple-tini was starting to un-ferment in my liver so I decided to see if old man Barnes kept anything decent in the icebox.

Regan walks to the fridge and opens it up. It's empty except for several cans of film and a burlap bag marked just like the ones at the farm: BS FARMS - SEED TOBACCO XL420.

Regan picks up the bag and looks inside revealing: BEN BARNES' SEVERED HEAD.

Regan jumps in shock and SCREAMS like a school girl just after midnight at her senior prom. He drops the bag as the head thuds out and rolls across the floor.

REGAN (V.O.)

I didn't scream or anything... but that doesn't mean I was looking forward to telling Chloe I found her father.

10 EXT. CHLOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 10

Regan knocks on the door to Chloe's apartment holding the burlap sack containing the head of Ben Barnes.

No answer so he picks the lock.

REGAN (V.O.)

I planned to call the police on the way over but forgot I hadn't owned a cell phone since the angry birds case, plus Ben Barnes' head wasn't wearing a seatbelt and I couldn't risk another ticket... I knew Chloe would be destroyed by the news, but I had to break it to her in person.

Regan, burlap sack in hand, explores Chloe's apartment walking through the:

11 KITCHEN 11

12 LIVING ROOM 12

And finally to the...



13 BATHROOM

13

Revealing: Chloe, in bra and panties, brushing her hair.

CHLOE

Oh my God, Dick, you startled me.

She tries to cover herself with her hands.

REGAN

Sorry to startle you Sugar.

Regan tries to look away but can't.

CHLOE

Can you hand me my best robe over there?

REGAN

(mumbles)  
Breast robe?

REGAN (V.O.)

I wanted to do anything but hand her that robe.

CHLOE

It's right there next to the toothpaste tube.

REGAN

(mumbles)  
Next to the boob paste boob?

Regan fumbles around for the robe without taking his eyes off Chloe.

REGAN (V.O.)

I wanted to do everything to her at that moment. Everything plus things that hadn't been thought of yet... Things that I saw on the Discovery Channel After Dark...

CHLOE

What's in the bag?

Regan knocks over several bottles of beauty products before successfully reaching the robe and handing it to her.

Chloe slips on the robe and smiles at the burlap sack.

Regan hides the burlap sack over his shoulder ala Santa Clause and walks back to the living room while adjusting his pants that are slightly out of whack due to his overly merry jingles.

14 LIVING ROOM

14

REGAN  
 (to Ben's head)  
 I didn't try anything...

Regan puts the bag on the counter while he fixes a couple of drinks as if they were actually broken.

REGAN (V.O.)  
 I didn't know the easy way to tell  
 Chloe about her father because  
 there isn't an easy way to tell  
 someone you love you just found her  
 father's severed head in a  
 refrigerator and now it's sitting  
 in a burlap bag on her kitchen  
 counter.

Chloe walks in.

REGAN (V.O.)  
 So I decided to show her.

REGAN  
 I'm sorry Sugar.

CHLOE  
 You bought me a gift?

Regan hands her the bag. Chloe peeks in and immediately smacks Regan, then hugs him and breaks down in tears all at once.

REGAN (V.O.)  
 I think she took it okay.

Chloe breaks away and smashes everything she can reach.

Regan lets her release, but saves the bottle of bourbon.

He pours himself another and smokes a couple at the same time as Chloe rages.

MONTAGE: CHLOE AND REGAN DRINKING THE PAIN AWAY

REGAN (V.O.)

I told her that since I found her father I was officially off the case and it was up to the police to find out who did him in, but frankly it was simply too dangerous for either of us now.

Regan dials from the house phone.

REGAN

(phone)

Senator, Regan here... Heads up... I know where Ben Barnes is, part of him anyway... Yeah... Chloe's apartment. Yeah... Sure... Okay, not going anywhere. I'll put it on ice...

15 INT. CHLOE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

15

Regan, passed out on the couch, rests his head on an empty bottle when RAPPING on the front door sends him vertical. He rubs his head.

REGAN

Chloe?

REGAN (V.O.)

I hadn't had a headache like that since they stopped making Zima...

REGAN

Just a damn minute.

Regan looks through the peephole when the door bursts open and hits him in the head.

Three MASKED THUGS storm in (are they the same guys from teh tobacco farm?).

THUG ONE clocks Regan in the kisser as THUG TWO & THUG THREE haul ass to the other room.

Regan and Thug One fight as Two and Three drag Chloe out bound and gagged in her bathrobe. In her struggle she knocks her father's head to the floor.

THUG ONE  
 (bad German accent)  
 Find the footage or we'll kill the  
 girl.

THUG TWO  
 (worse German accent)  
 But not before we pluck her  
 flowers.

THUG THREE pulls a fast right and sends Regan to the floor.  
 He lands face to face with Ben Barnes.

The thugs drag Chloe out kicking and screaming.

REGAN (V.O.)  
 I thought I could handle it but  
 they'd been way *ahead* every step of  
 the way and now instead of Chloe's  
 hand in marriage I had her father's  
 head in a burlap sack...

Regan pours the last of the happiness into his glass and  
 cheers Ben Barnes.

REGAN  
 Here's looking at you dad...

He downs it in a gulp and slams his glass back on the  
 counter, accidentally hitting the remote.

Believe it or not the TV springs to life and God help us it's  
 the anti-smoking ad from Ben's video. Regan tries to drink  
 the ice cubes as if they might have some booze left in them  
 and in the process jostles the remote so Chloe's DVR pauses  
 on a CLOSE UP of a cigarette.

REGAN (CONT'D)  
 Wait just a minute here.

But it's not just any cigarette and Regan realizes it. There  
 is a small logo on the filter that says: BS TOBACCO. Then in  
 big red letters a title comes on the screen: SMOKING WILL  
 KILL YOU, just like on Ben Barnes' cigarette package Chloe  
 found in the open.

REGAN (V.O.)  
 In that flash frame it all started  
 to come together... SMOKING WILL  
 KILL YOU... And who knows more  
 about that than ASS, the Anti-  
 Smoking Society.  
 (MORE)

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

Not only were they part of Ben Barnes' film but they also produced the anti-smoking ad that featured a cigarette from a company that doesn't produce cigarettes yet. Something smelled fishy in Denmark and I was pretty sure it was ASS...

16 INT. DRIVING - NIGHT [VIA EVEN WORSE REAR PROJECTION] 16

Regan drives while smoking three or four at a time. The car billows with smoke.

REGAN (V.O.)

I got the call from the kidnappers to hightail it to the warehouse with the footage if I ever wanted to eat Lingonberry Pancakes with Chloe again... Since I didn't even have the footage I decided to haul ass to ASS and see what I could find face to face.

FLASH: ASS OFFICE

Regan searches a file in an office at ASS. He finds something we can't see and has an "ah-ha" moment Oprah would bill for.

REGAN (V.O.)

That lead me to Ben Barnes's film vault at an old theater in Chinatown.

FLASH: CHINATOWN FILM VAULT

Regan searches film cans in an old film vault. Signs encourage us not to smoke around the flammable nitrate prints, yet Regan puffs like a dragon. He opens one labeled: THROUGH THE SMOKESCREEN and pulls out a memory card.

REGAN (V.O.)

Luckily old Barnes was smart enough to hide the footage before they tied his necktie a little too tight... Since I had no immediate plans for the big sleep I decided to mail the footage to my most trusted associate.

FLASH: MEMORY CARD

The memory card is placed in an envelop addressed to: DICK REGAN, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR.

17 INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

17

Regan walks into a dark room carrying the film canisters.

REGAN

Chloe?

A single overhead lamp illuminates a tearful Chloe, who wears a white, ilfitting wedding dress and is tied to a chair. Jesup, in a filthy tuxedo (bow tie, suspenders, but no shirt), stands over Chloe holding a knife and foaming at the mouth.

CHLOE

Help me!

Regan just about drops one of the cans as another light comes on exposing Brownstreet.

BROWNSTREET

No funny business or Jesup here will give the future Mrs. Regan a bachelorette party they'll still be talking about in season six, ya hear me boy?

REGAN

Let her go.

Brownstreet laughs manically as more moody overhead lights click on one by one. Maynard, also dressed as a demented groomsman, stands guard in the corner.

BROWNSTREET

Give me the footage.

REGAN

Give me the girl.

BROWNSTREET

Search him boys.

Maynard and Jesup search Regan but come up with nothing.

Brownstreet cuts Chloe loose and pushes her to the middle of the room.

Regan kicks one of the film canisters to Brownstreet.

Jesup grabs the canister and examines the film.

JESUP

Do we have one of them projectors  
boss? Its HOWARD THE DUCK!

BROWNSTREET

You manure-eating double crosser.

Regan opens the other canister, pulls out a revolver and aims  
it at Brownstreet.

The farmers tighten their gun-sights on Regan.

REGAN

Give it up.

BROWNSTREET

You'll never make it out alive.

REGAN

Your nicotine addled clowns might  
hit me, but I'm definitely gonna  
fry your extra crispy ass back to  
Kentucky.

Chloe climbs to her feet and slowly crawls to Regan.

BROWNSTREET

Give. Me. The. Footage.

REGAN

I just don't get it... The law  
required that you fund ASS and  
their anti-smoking efforts. But ASS  
needs smokers to keep buying  
cigarettes so they continue to get  
their funding.

BROWNSTREET

GIVE ME THE DAMNED FOOTAGE!

REGAN

But why kill Ben Barnes?

BROWNSTREET

Barnes would give them a reason to  
think...

JESUP

Taxpayers don't like thinkin' much.

BROWNSTREET

Jesup here's a real thinker, plus he's real committed and has a problem quittin' somethin' he's started...

REGAN

I know he's been committed...

BROWNSTREET

No matter what Jesup done, Barnes just wouldn't give up that there footage...

Jesup licks the barrel of his gun.

Chloe locks on Jesup, points at him...

CHLOE

He's the one who killed my father.

She turns to Regan.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Give me your revolver. It's time for justice.

FLASH: THREE FRAMES OF COLOR

Regan gives Chloe his gun. She aims at Jesup, clocks the hammer... then abruptly turns and sinks the barrel into Regan's temple.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Where's the footage?

The cigarette falls out of Regan's mouth at 120FPS...

REGAN

Chloe?

CHLOE

Just business sailor.

REGAN

And Barnes?

CHLOE

Never met him... Well, actually, I never met all of him.

COLTON (O.C.)

What's going on here?



Senator Colton emerges from the darkness.

Dick gets back up on his feet.

REGAN

Senator...

Colton walks to the middle of the room, then lights two cigarettes, seductively placing one into Chloe's mouth.

CHLOE

Thank you baby.

Chloe kisses Colton while they both smoke.

REGAN

You guys are all in bed together...

COLTON

Didn't you know, Chloe heads up  
ASS... Now, where are we?

BROWNSTREET

Mister Regan about to grab us that  
footage.

COLTON

I knew a man like you, a private  
eye, would be able to find the  
footage quicker than any of my  
public people, restricted by all  
that messy red tape.

REGAN

Why are you trying to dupe the  
American people?

COLTON

In a single word? A lot more  
votes... For decades we subsidized  
the tobacco growers and the health  
lobby --

REGAN

You even created ASS as a way to  
conceal your involvement, and you  
just kept funding each side back  
and forth --

COLTON

And at the end of the day, I get  
the votes.

REGAN

And the tax payers get the bill...

Cigarette smoke fills the room. Through the shadows Regan sees Colton as the grand puppeteer, pulling the strings as he rants on...

COLTON

Think anybody actually reads the legislation? No. This whole thing is too convoluted for the experts, let alone soccer moms. If the taxpayers actually learned what we pass, the conflicting policies we promote, they would have acted long ago.

REGAN

But Ben Barnes came along...

COLTON

And now you can either give me the footage or die... Chloe, Brownstreet.

Guns are cocked and pointed once again at Regan's.

REGAN

(quick)

A last request? One final smoke?

Chloe eases up to Regan like a cat in heat.

CHLOE

It doesn't have to be like this Richard.

She puts her hand in Regan's pocket, makes sure to brush up against his crotch as she pulls out his box of smokes.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Last chance. My box for the footage? Even Steven...

Chloe lights a cigarette and slips it in Regan's mouth. It lingers for a long beat.

REGAN

You know, smoking really is a dirty habit.

Regan pulls the cigarette from his mouth, flicks it at the film nitrates! BOOM. FLASH. No-budget explosions. Roger Corman, no, Ed Wood bad.

Chloe jumps in surprise and drops Regan's revolver. Smoke rises, BULLETS fly in confusion.

Regan crawls around on the ground, finding his revolver and FIRING all around.

The smoke clears but Colton and Brownstreet are gone.

18

INT. REGAN DETECTIVE AGENCY - MORNING

18

The morning sun peaks through the blinds as Regan smokes at his desk. On a camera screen he skims through the missing photos: Chloe, Colton and Brownstreet twisted in bed together.

Regan PULLS the memory card from the camera, slips it in an envelope addressed to: THE TIMES.

REGAN (V.O.)

That's how it was in those days. In the City of Angels. The City of Contradictions where hypocrites ruled and the honest man couldn't even find a place to park... from nine to twelve every other Thursday... unless he drove a street sweeper... I still think about Chloe from time to time. Maybe there was some good in her beyond all the smoke... Maybe I'll even look her up when she gets out, or then again maybe I'd rather spend the rest of my days trapped in an Applebees where the only drink I can get comes with a plastic umbrella spiked to a ghost pepper before I would kiss those poison lips again... then again, maybe it was simply time for a snack...

The doorbell RINGS as Regan snuffs out his smoke and the sexiest pizza delivery woman imaginable struts in. She carries a triple extra large pizza with 14 different cheeses and a blood pressure cuff.

SUPER: DICK REGAN WILL RETURN NEXT WEEK IN "DIARY OF A GOVERNMENT CHEESE MONGER..."

FADE TO: BLACK