

FADE IN:

1 INT. THE CHASEN'S DEN - DAY

The CAMERA is at floor level. A young man enters but we see only his shoes and the cuffs of his pants. We TRACK with him as he walks across the room and stops at a record player. Pause. We HEAR a record drop and begin playing a light classical melody. The SUPERIMPOSED TITLES BEGIN. After a moment the feet move off and we TRACK with them, past a low table, and around a couch to the window curtains. The feet pause there for a moment. A piece of heavy window cord drops INTO FRAME. We FOLLOW as it is dragged along to the low table. Then the feet move over to a large ornate desk. The cord is pulled up OUT OF FRAME. Pause. The feet walk over to a chair by the wall. It is picked up, carried to the center of the room, and carefully placed. Pause. The feet get up onto the chair and the CAMERA RISES to their level. They shuffle about for a moment. At an appropriate musical break the CREDITS STOP. Suddenly the feet knock over the chair and drop into space. They kick about for a bit, then go slack and still. The FINAL CREDITS are SUPERED OVER the suspended appendages while the music comes to a lilting conclusion. As we HEAR the record player turn itself off, the CAMERA BEGINS a half circle tour around the hanging feet and stops at the heels. Pause. Outside we HEAR a woman's footsteps approaching and we change focus as the door to the den opens. Through the blurred hanging feet we see a tall, middle-aged, fashionably dressed woman enter and we PAN with her as she walks to the desk. This is MRS. CHASEN. She seems rather tired and preoccupied as she begins to remove her long white gloves. Slowly the CAMERA BEGINS a vertical rise up the side of the hanging corpse until we are watching Mrs. Chasen over his left shoulder. The rope and his stretched neck frame the right side of the SCREEN. We hold. Mrs. Chasen puts down her gloves and looks up. (NOTE: THE ABOVE IS ALL ONE CONTINUOUS SHOT.)

CUT TO:

2 INT. DEN - DAY

CLOSEUP of Mrs. Chasen as she first sees the body. She is slightly startled.

3 INT. DEN - MRS. CHASEN'S POV - DAY

A long shot of the room where HAROLD, a young man of about twenty, hangs suspended from the ceiling with the curtain

rope tied about his grotesquely broken neck.

4 INT. DEN - MEDIUM SHOT - MRS. CHASEN - DAY

She stares at the body for several beats and then with weary exasperation sits down at the desk and dials the telephone. As she waits for an answer, she looks up at the hanging body.

MRS. CHASEN

I suppose you think this is very funny, Harold.

5 CLOSEUP HAROLD

The rope chokes his throat; his eyes bulge; his tongue hangs out.

6 MED. SHOT - MRS. CHASEN

Her party answers and she speaks into the phone.

MRS. CHASEN

Hello. Fay, darling. Be a dear and cancel my appointment with Rene this afternoon. Yes, I know he'll be furious, but I've had the most trying day, and with guests coming this evening... Would you? Oh, that's sweet. Tell him I promise to be in Tuesday... for a rinse. Thank you, Fay. You're a darling. Yes. Yes. Bye.

She replaces the receiver, stands up, takes her purse and gloves, and leaves the room, saying:

MRS. CHASEN

Dinner at eight, Harold...

At the door she stops and turns.

MRS. CHASEN

... And try to be a little more vivacious.

7 CLOSEUP HAROLD

Quick cut of his ashen face as we HEAR the door close.

8 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Chasen is seated at the head of the table entertaining eight to ten guests.

They are all in evening clothes and are laughing as Mrs. Chasen in a dress of white ostrich feathers continues a witty story.

MRS. CHASEN

Needless to say, the first time it happened I was absolutely abashed. I was so shook I needed three tranquilizers to calm me down. Well, you can imagine. Suicide notes all over the house - "Goodbye," "Farewell," "Arrivederci." Other children pretend to run away from home, but Harold - he's so dramatic.

Everyone laughs. The CAMERA BEGINS PULLING BACK and PANNING past the guests till we come to Harold sitting morosely at the other end of the table. He listlessly toys with his food as his mother continues.

MRS. CHASEN

Of course, Harold's father had a similar sense of the absurd. I remember once in Paris he stepped out for cigarettes and the next I hear he's arrested for floating nude down the Seine - experimenting in river currents with a pair of yellow rubber water wings. Well, that cost quite a little bit of "enfluence" and "d'argent" to hush up, I can tell you. Harold, dear, stop playing with your food. Don't you feel well?

HAROLD

(looks up and
pauses)

I have a sore throat.

MRS. CHASEN

Well, I want you to go to bed directly after dinner. You know

how susceptible you are to colds.
Harold has always been a delicate
child. Even as a baby he seemed
to be abnormally prone to illness
- Harold, dear, eat up your beets...

9 CLOSEUP - HAROLD

He begins eating as his mother goes on.

MRS. CHASEN (o.s.)

I remember when we were in Tokyo
I had to call my brother Victor
at the embassy for a doctor. He
was serving there as Army attaché...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

10 INT. MRS. CHASEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mrs. Chasen sitting before her vanity table, humming to herself as she readies herself for bed. She wears a night-gown, a cover for her hair, and she has just finished putting on several different face creams. She gets up, walks over to the bathroom, and opens the door. Blood is everywhere -- on the walls, the floor, the mirror - and in the tub is Harold, his throat slit and his wrists dripping blood onto the razor on the tile floor. The effect is one of instant shock. Mrs. Chasen screams and backs up in horror. Sobbing hysterically, she clutches her robe about her and rushes from the room crying.

MRS. CHASEN

Oh! No! Oh! No! I can't stand
it. My God! This is too much.
This is too much to bear!...

The CAMERA WATCHES Mrs. Chasen run off and then swings back to Harold in the tub.

11 CLOSEUP - HAROLD

We hold on his wretched face as his mother's hysterical cries are heard in the background. Harold moves his head and listens. He breaks into a sly, satisfied grin.

12 INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Harold is lying on a couch, perfectly relaxed. The PSYCHIATRIST, less so, is seated by him.

PSYCHIATRIST

Tell me, Harold, how many of these, eh, suicides have you performed?

HAROLD

(pause)

An accurate number would be difficult to gauge.

PSYCHIATRIST

And why is that?

HAROLD

Well, some worked out better than others - some had to be abandoned in the planning stages - do you include the first time? - then there's the question of maiming...

PSYCHIATRIST

Just give me a rough estimate.

HAROLD

Well, a rough estimate... I'd say fifteen.

PSYCHIATRIST

Fifteen.

HAROLD

A rough estimate.

PSYCHIATRIST

And were they all done for your mother's benefit?

HAROLD

(thoughtful pause)

I wouldn't say "benefit."

PSYCHIATRIST

No, I suppose not. How do you feel about your mother?

13 INSERT - STOCK

A giant steel ball on a demolition crane crashes into a brick wall collapsing it with much noise and dust.

DISSOLVE TO:

14 EXT. THE CHASEN POOLSIDE - DAY

Mrs. Chasen decked out in a fashionable black bikini, crazy glasses, and an enormous sun hat, walks down the garden steps to the pool. Over this and the end of the above we HEAR her voice.

MRS. CHASEN (v.o.)

Hello, Fay, darling. Be an absolute dear and cancel my appointment with Rene this afternoon. Oh, I know, but Wednesday morning would be so much more convenient. Oh, you are an angel. Yes. Yes. Bye.

Mrs. Chasen has now reached the poolside. As she walks around it we PAN with her and discover Harold, fully clothed, floating face downward on the still surface. Mrs. Chasen does not see him and walks into the pool house.

15 INT. POOL HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Chasen walks down the steps of the pool house and over to the bar. Behind the bar is an underwater viewing window into the pool. She stops and looks up through the window.

16 MRS. CHASEN'S POV

Through the window we see Harold, drowned and bug-eyed, floating on the surface.

17 MED. SHOT - MRS. CHASEN

Mrs. Chasen sighs, yanks a cord, and the venetian blinds come noisily down cutting off Harold from view.

18 INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Harold is lying on the couch.

HAROLD
(a reasoned
assessment)
I don't think I'm getting through
to Mother like I used to.

PSYCHIATRIST
Does that worry you?

HAROLD
(pause)
Yes. It does.

PSYCHIATRIST
Why?

HAROLD
I put a lot of effort into these
things.

PSYCHIATRIST
Ah, yes.

HAROLD
And a lot of time.

PSYCHIATRIST
I'm sure. But what else do you
do with your time? Do you go to
school?

HAROLD
No.

PSYCHIATRIST
What about the draft?

HAROLD
My mother spoke to my Uncle Victor.
He's in the Army and he fixed it up.

PSYCHIATRIST
Oh. Well, how do you spend your
day?

HAROLD
You mean when I'm not working on a...

PSYCHIATRIST
Yes. What kind of things do you do?

19 EXT. AUTOMOBILE JUNKYARD - DAY

Cranes, auto smashers, bulldozers, and mountains of rusting cars and other junk. Very noisy and very fast cut. A little essay on destructive machinery at work with Harold looking on in rapture.

20 INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

PSYCHIATRIST

I see. Junkyards. What is the fascination there?

HAROLD

I don't know.

PSYCHIATRIST

Is it the machines? The noise?
The people?

HAROLD

No. It's the junk. I like to look at junk.

PSYCHIATRIST

What else do you like?

Harold pauses.

21 INSERT - STOCK

A giant steel ball crashes into a building. We watch it fall noisily into dust and rubble.

22 INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

PSYCHIATRIST

That's very interesting, Harold,
and I think very illuminative.
There seems to be a definite pattern
emerging.

(taking copious notes)

Your fondness for useless machines
and demolitions seems indicative
of your present emotional state,
your self-destructive urges and
your alienation from the regular

social interaction. What do you think? And of course this pattern once isolated can be coped with. Recognize the problem and you are half way on the road to its solution. But tell me, what do you do for fun? What activity gives you a different sense of enjoyment than the others? What do you find fulfilling? What gives you that certain satisfaction?

HAROLD

I go to funerals.

23 EXT. CEMETERY - LONG SHOT - DAY

showing a small group of mourners around a grave. A nearby bench by a tree is empty. The coffin is slowly being lowered into the ground.

24 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

CLOSER SHOTS of the mourners sobbing and the priest praying. We come to Harold who has a look of gentle fascination. The service is concluding. Harold looks up across the grave. A hundred yards away on the cemetery bench sits an old woman eating a tangerine. This is MAUDE. Harold stares at her. She seems to be having some kind of happy picnic. She looks over towards him. He quickly returns his attention to the burial.

25 EXT. CHASEN HOME - DAY

Mrs. Chasen opens the front door and is saying farewell to two lady friends, the same kind of chic sophisticates as she is. Just then a hearse pulls into the driveway, passes them, and parks by the garage. The two women are somewhat stunned. Harold gets out of the hearse and goes into the backyard. The two women look to Mrs. Chasen for some explanation. Mrs. Chasen smiles lamely.

26 INT. CHASEN'S DEN - DAY

Mrs. Chasen is addressing a seated and mute Harold.

MRS. CHASEN

Why you purchased that monstrous

thing is totally beyond me. You can have any car you want - a Porsche, a Jaguar, a nice little MG roadster - but that ugly, black horror is an eyesore and an embarrassment. Really, Harold, you are no longer a child. It's time for you to settle down and stop flitting away your talents on these amateur theatrics - your little "divertissements" - no matter how psychologically purging they may be. I don't know what to do.

27 INSERT - CLOSEUP OF UNCLE VICTOR - LEFT PROFILE

UNCLE VICTOR

I'd put him in the Army, Helen.

28 INT. CHASEN'S DEN - DAY

Mrs. Chasen continues.

MRS. CHASEN

Go have a talk with your Uncle Victor. Perhaps he can fathom you. After all, he was General Bradley's right hand man.

29 INT. VICTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

UNCLE VICTOR, a bluff, hearty, totally military man, is a one star general with an amputated right arm. Harold sits before him.

UNCLE VICTOR

Harold, your mother has briefed me on your situation and there is no doubt in my mind of the requisite necessary action. If it was up to me I'd process your file and ship you off to boot camp tomorrow. Your mother, however, is adamant. She does not want you in the Army and insists on my holding on to your draft records. But what do you say, Harold?

(he begins a
selling job)

It's a great life. Action! Adventure!
Advising. See war - firsthand! Plenty
of slant-eyed girls. It will make a
man out of you, Harold. You'll travel
the world. Put on the uniform and
take on a man's job. Walk tall! -
with a glint in your eye, a spring
in your step, and the knowledge in
your heart that you are -

(he gestures to a
poster of bullet-
blazing Marines)

- working for peace, and - are
serving your country.

He stops before a poster of Nathan Hale with a noose about
his neck.

UNCLE VICTOR

(continuing)

Like Nathan Hale. That's what this
country needs - more Nathan Hales.

He pulls his lanyard, activating some weird mechanism which
snaps up his empty sleeve into a natty salute. A pause.
The sleeve smartly refolds and he turns to Harold.

UNCLE VICTOR

(softly)

And, Harold, I think I can see a
little Nathan Hale in you.

30 INT. CHASEN'S DEN - DAY

Mrs. Chasen is going out, but she comes in to talk to Harold.

MRS. CHASEN

I only have a few minutes, Harold,
but I do want to inform you of my
decision. There is no doubt that
it is time for you to settle down
and begin thinking about your
future. You have led a very
carefree, idle, happy life up to
the present - the life of a child.
But it is time now to put away
childish things and take on adult
responsibilities. We would all
like to sail through life with
no thought of tomorrow. But that
cannot be. We have our duty. Our

obligations. Our principles. In short, Harold, I think it is time you got married.

31 INT. CHURCH - DAY

PAN DOWN from the stained glass window of a church. The organ is playing softly. The PRIEST, a silver haired man rapidly approaching dotage, is in the pulpit.

PRIEST

And so dear brethren, let us pray to the Lord, King of Glory, that He may bless and deliver all souls of the faithful departed from the pains of hell and the bottomless pit, deliver them from the lion's mouth and the darkness therein, but rather bring them to the bliss of heaven, the holy light, and eternal rest.

During the above we PULL BACK to reveal an open coffin and a church spreckled with a few mourners in black. Conspicuous in an empty pew is Harold.

The priest goes to the altar and mumbles the dull ritual. The small congregation responds. Harold sits quietly enjoying it all.

VOICE (o.s.)

Psst!

Harold, startled, looks over to his left.

32 HAROLD'S POV

A pixiesque old woman, somewhat eccentrically dressed, is smiling at him. It is Maude again.

33 CLOSEUP HAROLD

Frowning slightly, Harold turns back front.

MAUDE

Psst.

Harold looks back.

34 HAROLD'S POV

Maude gives him a coquettish wink.

35 CLOSEUP HAROLD

Harold is slightly shocked. He returns his attention to the altar.

36 MED. SHOT - PRIEST

The priest moans on.

37 MED. SHOT - HAROLD

Harold sits attentively.

VOICE (o.s.)

Psst!

Harold, startled, looks over his right shoulder and sees Maude kneeling in the pew behind him. She speaks with a slight British/European accent.

MAUDE

Like some licorice?

She offers some.

HAROLD

Eh, no. Thank you.

MAUDE

You're welcome.
(gesturing to
the deceased)
Did you know him?

HAROLD

Eh, no.

MAUDE

Me neither. I heard he was eighty years old. I'll be eighty next week. A good time to move on, don't you think?

HAROLD

(trying to
ignore her)
I don't know.

MAUDE

I mean, seventy-five is too early,
but at eighty-five, well, you're
just marking time and you may as
well look over the horizon.

38 MED. SHOT - ALTAR

The priest finishes the prayers and exits. The casket is closed and the pallbearers take it out the side door. The few mourners follow.

Maude is now sitting next to Harold.

MAUDE

I'll never understand this mania
for black. I mean no one sends
black flowers, do they? Black
flowers are dead flowers and who
would send black flowers to a
funeral? It's change!
(fluttery laugh)
How absurd.

Her eye catches a dour portrait of the Blessed Virgin and Child on a pillar. With one swoop she takes a felt pen from Harold's breast pocket and draws on the painting a bright and cheery smile.

Harold is stunned.

MAUDE

There, that's better. They never
give the poor thing a chance to
laugh. Heaven knows she has a lot
to be happy about. In fact...
(she looks thought-
fully around the
church)
- they all have a lot to be happy
about. Excuse me.

40 INSERTS

The faces of four somber statue saints.

MAUDE (v.o.)

An unhappy saint is a contradiction
in terms.

41 INT. AT THE CHURCH DOOR

An anxious Harold stands while Maude puts the top back on
his pen. Maude smiles and gestures at a crucifix.

MAUDE

And why do they keep on about
that? You'd think no one ever
read the end of the story.

She exits grandly with Harold's pen. Harold follows.

42 INSERTS

FOUR QUICK CUTS of the saints' faces. They all have
delightfully ridiculous smiles drawn on their faces.

43 CLOSEUP - PRIEST

In the same rhythm we have a FIFTH CUT - the returning
priest who is dropped dead by what he sees.

44 EXT. CHURCH STEPS - DAY

MAUDE

It's a question of emphasis, you
might say. Accentuate the positive,
so to speak.

HAROLD

Eh, could I have my pen back now,
please?

MAUDE

Oh, of course. What is your name?

HAROLD

Harold Chasen.

MAUDE

How do you do? I am Dame Marjorie
Chardin, but you may call me Maude.

HAROLD

Nice to meet you.

MAUDE

Oh, thank you. I think we shall
be great friends, don't you?

Maude takes a great ring of keys from her purse, selects
one of them, and opens the door of the car at the curb.

MAUDE

Can I drop you anywhere, Harold?

HAROLD

(quickly)

No, thank you. I have my car.

MAUDE

Well then, I must be off.

(she gets in)

We shall have to meet again.

She revs up the motor and looks over at Harold.

MAUDE

Do you dance?

HAROLD

What?

MAUDE

Do you sing and dance?

HAROLD

Eh, no.

MAUDE

No.

(she smiles)

I thought not.

With a great screech of burning rubber Maude drives down
the street just as the priest comes up to Harold. They
both watch her squeal around the corner.

PRIEST

(totally mystified)

That woman... She took my car.