SCENE

[CHICAGO/ O'HARE AIRPORT. WE HEAR THE FAMILIAR NOISES OF AN AIRPORT - THE WHINE OF PLANE ENGINES SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE, THE LOW RUMBLE OF AN AIRPLANE TAKING OFF, PAGING ANNOUNCEMENTS, PEOPLE MOVING TO AND FRO, ETC. WHIT AND CONNIE HAVE COME OFF THE SHUTTLE PLANE FROM ODYSSEY AND ARE MAKING THEIR WAY TO BAGGAGE CLAIM.]

WHIT:

The baggage claim is over this way, Connie.

CONNIE:

(DISTRACTED BY LOOKING AROUND) Oh -uh, yeah.

WHIT:

Are you all right? You're not sick from the flight, are you? The turbulence is always bad coming into Chicago.

CONNIE:

No ... I'm just looking at the size of this airport. I've been to the one in Los Angeles, but this -

WHIT:

O'Hare is one of the biggest airports in the world.

CONNIE:

I can believe it.

WHIT:

All the biggest airlines fly here. The terminal covers miles. It's
so big, baggage claim is in a different time zone.

CONNIE:

(BEAT) You're kidding.
WHIT:

(CHUCKLES) I'm kidding.

CONNIE:

It's just so enormous.

WHIT:

Wait'll you see the Sears Tower.

CONNIE:

Thanks for asking me to come with you, Whit. I've always wanted to see Chicago from somewhere other than a bus window.

WHIT:

Eugene came with me on one of these trips, it seemed only fair that you should come on one, too. (BEAT) At least, that's what you kept telling me.

CONNIE:

Well . . . (DEFENSIVELY) It's just that you keep having these meetings here about writing your encyclopedia and I . . . I thought it'd be interesting to see what happens, that's all.

WHIT:

(CHUCKLES) I'm not writing an encyclopedia. I'm just one of a number of people who compile the information.
And you also happen to be the man who owns the company that publishes it.
WHIT:

(GENTLY CHANGING THE SUBJECT)
Well . . . I'll try to make the trip as exciting for you as I can-

SECURITY GUARD:
Excuse me, sir.

WHIT:
Yes, Officer?

SECURITY GUARD:
Step over to this table, please.

WHIT:
Huh?

SECURITY GUARD:
This way.

CONNIE:
Whit?

WHIT:
What's going on?

SECURITY GUARD:
Random security check. May I ask you what's in that bag you're carrying?

WHIT:
It's my lap top computer. I write on it when I travel.
SECURITY GUARD:

Uh huh. Would you place it on the table and open it up, please?
CONNIE:

(CONCERNED) Whit, what's -- ?

WHIT:

Just relax, Connie . . . (PUTS LAP TOP ON TABLE AND OPENS ZIPPER ON LAP TOP CASE) Of course, Officer. There.

SECURITY GUARD:

Is it battery-operated?

WHIT:

It has both AC and DC.

SECURITY GUARD:

Would you turn it on so I can see something on the screen, please?

WHIT:

Sure . . .

[WHIT TURNS ON THE COMPUTER, AND WE HEAR THE WHIR OF THE MOTOR AND RESPECTIVE BEEPS.]

CONNIE:

What are you checking for -- bombs? Drugs? Bootleg tapes of 'The Praise Kids In Concert'?

WHIT:

Connie.

SECURITY GUARD:

This is your lap top? No one asked you to carry it for them?
WHIT:

That's correct. I've had it by my side since leaving my house in Odyssey this morning.

SECURITY GUARD:

All right, you can close it up now.

[WHIT DOES WITH ALL THE CORRESPONDING SNAPS AND ZIPS.]

SECURITY GUARD:

(WRITING) I'm going to give you pass so you won't be stopped again . . . (TEARS IT OFF A PAD) There you go. I'm sorry for the inconvenience.

WHIT:

That's quite all right.

CONNIE:

Don't you want to look in my purse, too?

SECURITY GUARD:

No, ma'am. What we're looking for is too big to fit in your purse.

WHIT:

What are you looking for, Officer?

SECURITY GUARD:

As I said, sir, it's just a random security check.

WHIT:
(KNOWINGLY) On in-coming passengers? I don't think so . . .
. What's really going on here?

(A BEAT)
SECURITY GUARD:

(HESITANT) I probably shouldn't--
(BEAT) Ah -- you'll hear it on the news anyway. We're searching for a stolen computer -- one that looks exactly like yours.

CONNIE:

All this hassle for a computer? What was it made of -- gold?

SECURITY GUARD:

Uh -- I really can't say anything more. If you'll excuse me . . .

[HE WALKS OFF.]

CONNIE:

Do things like this always happen to you when you come on these trips?

WHIT:

(BEMUSED) No, this is the first time . . .

CONNIE:

Oh, great! Make me feel welcome, why don'tcha . . .

[WHIT CHUCKLES, AS THE:]
[MUSIC: BRIDGES LIGHTLY TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

SCENE
[BAGGAGE CLAIM. WHIT AND CONNIE ARE GETTING THE LAST OF THE LUGGAGE. CONNIE'S IS COMING AROUND ON THE CONVEYOR BELT.]

CONNIE:
Here it comes, Whit. That's my suitcase -- the one with the wheels.
WHIT:

Step aside and I'll grab it.

CONNIE:

There it is. Don't miss it.

WHIT:

(GROANING AS HE YANKS THE OVERSIZED SUITCASE FROM THE BELT AND SETS IT DOWN) Oooff. What did you pack in here? We're only staying a couple of days.

CONNIE:

I just brought a few things.

WHIT:

A few? Thank goodness this thing is on rollers -- it weighs like you stuffed everything you own in it!

CONNIE:

Not everything . . . (BEAT) I didn't bring my stereo . . .

WHIT:

Good thinking.

CONNIE:

What now?

WHIT:

We go out front and find the van to our Hotel.
CONNIE:

The hotel sends a van for us?
WHIT:

It's the world-famous Excelsior Hotel. Service is their first priority -- or whatever the ads say. They have a shuttle every fifteen minutes. Come on.

[THEY BEGIN TO WALK TO THE EXIT, PASSING THROUGH TO THE OUTSIDE -- WHERE THE AMBIANCE IS NOW FULL OF CARS AND STREET NOISE.]

WHIT:

(BEAT, PERPLEXED) This is really something.

CONNIE:

What?

WHIT:

All the police. Whatever was on that stolen computer must've been pretty important. (BEAT) There's our shuttle, Connie. Let's hurry. (CALLS OUT AS THEY RUSH FOR IT) Hold that van! Oh -- we're going to miss it.

[THE VAN BEGINS TO PULL AWAY.]

CONNIE:

(WHISTLES THROUGH HER TEETH AND SCREAMS LOUDLY) Hey! Wait for us!

[THE VAN SCREECHES TO A HALT.]

WHIT:

(BEMUSED) I knew I brought you along for a good reason . . .
[MUSIC BRIDGES US TO THE NEXT SCENE.]
SCENE

[WE'RE IN THE VAN TO THE HOTEL. THE HUM OF THE MOTOR IS DISTINCT. THE DRIVER IS TALKING PLEASANTLY. THERE IS A THIRD PASSENGER. A YOUNG MAN, VERY INNER-CITY IN EXPRESSION, WHO IS VERY NERVOUS.]

DRIVER:

Are all three of you going to the Excelsior?

WHIT:

We are.

CONNIE:

All three? There's only two of -- (BEAT, SEES THE THIRD PASSENGER IN THE BACK) Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see you hiding back there.

YOUNG MAN:

Hiding? Who's hiding?

CONNIE:

(UNEASY CHUCKLE) I was just kidding. Did you just come in to Chicago?

YOUNG MAN:

(NOT WANTING TO TALK) Something like that.

DRIVER:

I guess you missed your flight after all, huh, kid? You going back to the Excelsior?

YOUNG MAN:

CONNIE:

This is my first time.
YOUNG MAN:

(RUDELY) I'm thrilled for you. (LOOKS AWAY) Do you mind? I'm not big on small talk.

CONNIE:

Well, excuse me. (UNDER HER BREATH) I was just trying to be friendly. Nice town.

WHIT:

Driver, do you know anything about why they have all the police at the airport?

DRIVER:

Just heard about it on the news. Turns out a courier for the Department of Defense had his car broken into last night. Whoever did it swiped some money, papers and one of those lap top computer thingamajigs. Guess it had a bunch of top secrets on it.

WHIT:

Department of Defense, huh?

DRIVER:

Yeah. Courier stopped to go to the can, and what-do-you-know? He gets his car broke into. Anyway, the police are at the airports and stations trying to snag whoever in case they try to get outta town. Sounds like a lost cause to me. Probably some kid looking to steal the car stereo. I'll bet he's scared out of his--
YOUNG MAN:

Does the conversation come with the cost of the shuttle or what?
DRIVER:

The man asked me a question.

YOUNG MAN:

Pull over, will ya?

DRIVER:

What?

YOUNG MAN:

I changed my mind. I don't wanna go back to the hotel. Just pull over and get my stuff out of the back!

DRIVER:

All right, all right . . .


WHIT:

Uh, I'm sorry if we were talking too much.

CONNIE:

Yeah, we were just trying to make conversation.

YOUNG MAN:

Nothin' personal. I just want out, that's all . . . 'scuse me . . .

[THE YOUNG MAN SLIDES THE VAN DOOR OPEN, GETS OUT AND SLAMS IT SHUT.]
CONNIE:

Whoa . . . what's his problem?
WHIT:

No telling. He seemed awfully nervous.

CONNIE:

Yeah . . . y'know, I think he really was hiding back there . . .

WHIT:

(THINKING) Yeah . . . (SHRUGS IT OFF) Well, you meet all types at the airport.

[THE DRIVER GETS BACK INTO THE VAN AND STARTS DRIVING OFF.]

DRIVER:

Sorry 'bout that. Strange kid.

WHIT:

Did you bring him from the hotel?

DRIVER:

Sort of. He met me out front. But when we got to the airport, he didn't get out. Kinda slumped in the seat and watched as we drove 'round. Pretty suspicious.

WHIT:

Didn't he have a flight to catch?

DRIVER:

I don't think he knew what he was doing. Like I said: strange kid. Only had the two shoulderbags, too. I was half-tempted to get a cop but, hey, I got a schedule to
keep.  Guess we'll never know, huh?

WHIT:

I guess not.
SCENE
[THE EXCELSIOR HOTEL, IN WHIT'S ROOM. HE'S FINISHING UP A PHONE CONVERSATION.]

WHIT:

(ON THE PHONE) That's right, Bill -- I'm in room 512, and Connie is next door in 514 . . . No, we're gonna do some sightseeing today and then I'll come in tomorrow morning for the meetings . . . Right . . . Yes, I remember about the trip to Latin America. I can make time for it as soon as I'm needed to . . . Okay . . . See you tomorrow. No, no -- the agenda today is to relax . . . Uh huh. Bye.

[HE HANGS UP THE PHONE. CONNIE IS SUDDENLY BANGING ON THE DOOR.]

CONNIE:

(FROM BEHIND THE DOOR) Whit! Whit!

WHIT:

Good grief! What's wrong, Connie?

[WHIT OPENS THE DOOR.]

CONNIE:

(RUSHING IN) Turn on your TV -- quick!!

WHIT:
(CROSSES OVER AND TURNS IT ON)
All right, all right -- but, why?
What's so--?

CONNIE:

(EXCITED) The news! Look! Maybe
they'll show another picture!
[OUR PERSPECTIVE IS WITH WHIT AND CONNIE WATCHING TV.]

TV REPORTER:

(FROM THE TV) . . . police say their informant has indicated that the break-in of the unmarked Department of Defense car was intended as a petty theft and that suspect Greg Kelly had no idea of what he was stealing. (Kelly, 18, has been convicted of petty theft on two previous occasions.)

CONNIE:

There he is! See the picture?

WHIT:

I see, I see.

TV REPORTER:

Authorities are asking Greg Kelly, or anyone who has seen him, to call one of the numbers on the screen immediately. Because of the top secret nature of the missing laptop computer, authorities fear Kelly's life may be in danger. (Turning to other news, the Secretary of State announced today that a new plan for peace initiatives in the Middle East have taken steps forward as leaders of the Arab, Israeli and Palestinian factions agreed to meet for a summit in Bahrain.)

CONNIE:

That was him, right? I'm not seeing things.
WHIT:

No, you're not. Greg Kelly was the young man in the van . . .
[MUSIC: BRIDGE TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

SCENE
[THE YOUNG MAN IN THE VAN. HE IS IN A FUNCTIONAL, WAREHOUSE-TYPE OFFICE, SITTING IN A CHAIR. HE IS NERVOUS, FAR MORE NERVOUS THAN BEFORE. SO NERVOUS, HIS VOICE IS SWEATING. HE IS UNDER PRESSURE. AN UNKNOWN PERSON IS INTERROGATING HIM.]

YOUNG MAN:

Don't just sit there -- say something!

[THERE'S A PAUSE, AND WE HEAR A CAT MEOW.]

BLACKGAARD:

Cats are amazing creatures, aren't they, Gregory? So sleek and gentle, and yet when they're angry . . .

[THE CAT HISSES AND SPITS. WE HEAR THE CAT MEOW AND PURR PERIODICALLY THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE SCENE.]

YOUNG MAN:

(VERY NERVOUS) L-look, you know me. I'm no spy. The car had a nice looking radio. That's what you pay me to do, right? Snatch radios and junk . . . Well, the other thing also looked good so I grabbed it, too. I didn't know it was some kinda top secret military gizmo until I turned it on.

BLACKGAARD:

It's a lap top computer, Gregory, not a gizmo . . . Why didn't you come to me right away?

YOUNG MAN:
It was a normal heist. I was gonna meet you tonight as usual.
BLACKGAARD:

You went to the airport.

YOUNG MAN:

I got scared! I didn't know what to do!

BLACKGAARD:

You went to the airport, Gregory. You were going to leave . . . weren't you?

YOUNG MAN:

(SCARED) I - I . . . (GIVING UP)
I was scared . . .

BLACKGAARD:

Of me? But, why? I've always taken good care of you, haven't I?

YOUNG MAN:

Yeah, but . . . this was something different. I mean, it's hot . . . I've got friends in Cincinnati. I thought I could lay low for awhile.

BLACKGAARD:

And you weren't trying to sneak out of town to sell the computer to someone else?

YOUNG MAN:

No! No! I don't know people like that. Man, right now, I wish I never touched the thing. The
police are swarming all over the place.

BLACKGAARD:

Did anyone see you at the airport?
YOUNG MAN:

I never got out of the hotel van.

BLACKGAARD:

Which hotel?

YOUNG MAN:

I dunno . . . Excalibur or Excelsior -- one of those "ex's."

BLACKGAARD:

So, the driver saw you.

YOUNG MAN:

Yeah, I guess. Him and two other people -- an old man and a girl. But I got out before the van got to the hotel and came straight here . . . I'm telling you, I'm scared!

BLACKGAARD:

No need to be, Gregory. I'll take care of you. Just like always. Your little "find" could serve me very, very well. And you know how I reward those who serve me well . . .

[A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.]

BLACKGAARD:

Come in.

[PINKY ENTERS WITH THE LAP TOP AND DROPS IT ON THE TABLE. BY THE WAY, HIS VOICE SHOULD SOUND UNLIKE SOMEONE CALLED "PINKY" -- GRAVELLY AND THREATENING -- WITH AN ACCENT LIKE ARNOLD SCHWARTZENEGGER.]
BLACKGAARD:

Ah, Pinky. Is it the right machine?
Pinky:

(SHOULD SOUND LIKE ARNOLD SCHWARTZENEGGER) No. It's just a regular lap top.

Young Man:

(PANICKED) But . . . it's the one I got out of the car! I swear!

Blackgaard:

Are you sure it's the wrong one, Pinky?

Pinky:

Yes. The owner's name is engraved on the bottom. I've checked through all the files on the hard disk. Boring. Academic material. No military secrets.

[A DEADLY PAUSE.]

Blackgaard:

Gregory?

Young Man:

I don't know what happened! That's it, I tell you! That's the one I got! And this morning it had all kinds of military technical junk on it! You've gotta believe me!!

Blackgaard:

You wouldn't be foolish enough to try and double-cross me, would you?
YOUNG MAN:

No! No! Never! Really! Please

.
BLACKGAARD:

(CALMING HIM) All right, all right . . . Calm down . . . I believe you . . . (A BEAT) Pinky, I think Gregory needs some fresh air and food. Are you hungry, Gregory?

YOUNG MAN:

Yeah, kinda . . .

BLACKGAARD:

Arrange for something to eat.

PINKY:

(CONFUSED) Eat?

BLACKGAARD:

Yes . . . take care of Gregory, all right?

[A BEAT]

PINKY:

Sure . . . Come on, Gregory.

YOUNG MAN:

(GETS UP TO LEAVE; PANICKED AGAIN) Wait a minute -- you can help me get outta Chicago, right? I can't afford to get caught. Not again.

BLACKGAARD:

Trust me. The police will never find you.

YOUNG MAN:
(RELIEVED) Thanks. You won't regret this. I mean it.
BLACKGAARD:

(SINCERELY) I know . . . I know . . .

[THE DOOR CLOSES. BLACKGAARD PONDS THE COMPUTER.]

BLACKGAARD:

(A SIGH) Bunglers . . . I'm surrounded by bunglers! (THE CAT MEOWS) Oh, Sasha . . . It was all going to be so easy, wasn't it? Disguise Pinky as the courier, have him pick up the computer and bring it directly back here . . . only, he makes a pit stop and Kelly steals the computer from him! And then he grabs the wrong one out of a hotel van! . . . Sounds like a Marx Brothers movie -- if I believe Kelly actually made an honest mistake . . . (A BEAT) He doesn't have the brains for anything else . . . But the chances of there being two identical computers in the back of the same hotel van are . . . (ANOTHER SIGH) Still . . . (LIFTS UP THE LAP TOP) Let's see who's name is on the bottom of this one. A little chat with him might -- (READING, BEGINS TO LAUGH) "Property of John A. Whittaker, Whit's End, Odyssey." (ANOTHER LAUGH) It truly is a small world . . .

[HIS LAUGH GROWS IN INTENSITY -- LOUD AND ROBUST -- ECHOING INTO THE COMMERCIAL BREAK.]

CHRIS:

Uh oh, who is this stranger and why does his laugh sound so
familiar? We'll find out when our Adventure continues, right after this.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]
SCENE
[A DETECTIVE’S CUBICLE AT THE POLICE STATION. TYPING, RINGING PHONES, TALKING, ARGUING -- THE NOISES ONE WOULD EXPECT TO HEAR IN SUCH A BUSY PLACE. WHIT AND CONNIE ARE SITTING. WAITING.]

CONNIE:

How much longer do you think we'll have to wait?

WHIT:

I don't know. I'm sure the police are doing their best.

CONNIE:

Do you think we'll still have time to see the Sears Tower before it closes?

WHIT:

We'll try.

[THE DOOR OPENS AND SPECIAL AGENT FRANK PHILLIPS ENTERS. HE'S A ROOKIE-TYPE, STAR-STRUCK WITH HIS POSITION BUT LACKING THE ABILITY TO DO IT WITH ANY DEGREE OF FINESSE.]

AGENT PHILLIPS:

I'm terribly sorry about the wait, Mr. Whittaker, Miss Kendall. I'm Special Agent Frank Phillips from an investigative unit in the Department of Defense.

WHIT:

So they've pulled in the special branch for this.

AGENT PHILLIPS:
This is very serious, Mr. Whittaker. That computer has to be found. Now, I've been reading over the statements and description of Greg Kelly you gave Detective Baker a few minutes ago.
CONNIE:

(LOW) A few hours, you mean.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Yes, well, as I said: I'm sorry for the wait. Normally you would've been out of here by now, but your position, Mr. Whittaker, required an additional security check.

CONNIE:

You had to double-check Whit? Why?

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Mr. Whittaker knows the answer to that, I think.

WHIT:

Remember Applesauce, Connie?

CONNIE:

The computer program? How could I forget it?! It made Whit's End go crazy!! (DAWNS ON HER) You made that for the Department of Defense?!

WHIT:

(SHRUGS) Among others . . .

AGENT PHILLIPS:

She knows about Applesauce?

WHIT:
Nothing that would breach security.

CONNIE:

But, you destroyed Applesauce!
WHIT:

It's not the only program I've worked on, Connie.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Once an agent, always an agent, eh, Whittaker?

CONNIE:

(STUNNED) An agent?!

WHIT:

(QUICKLY) That was a very, very long time ago -- Uh, can we get on with this, please? I don't think you've kept us here because you want to review my past.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

You're right. You're still here because now that I know who you really are, I'd like to establish your connection with all this.

WHIT:

There is no connection beyond what I've already told you.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Come now. A government computer gets stolen and I'm supposed to believe that you -- a man who spends a lot of time working on government computer projects -- just "happened" to be in the same van with the suspected thief?

WHIT:
It may sound odd, but that's what happened.
AGENT PHILLIPS:

(SKEPTICAL) Uh-huh . . . Who are you working for, Mr. Whittaker?

WHIT:

I'm not working for anyone, Mr. Phillips, and I don't believe you have security clearance to ask me these questions.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

I'm cleared to ask whatever I need to ask to find this computer before it falls into the wrong hands -- if it hasn't already.

WHIT:

And I assure you that the account of what we've done and who we've seen since arriving in Chicago is the truth. That's as much as I can do to help you find that computer.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(PAUSE) All right . . . But I will be in touch again.

WHIT:

I look forward to it. Can we go now?

AGENT PHILLIPS:

Of course. I don't want to hold up your visit to the Sears Tower. Have a nice day.

[MUSIC: BRIDGES TO THE NEXT SCENE]
SCENE
[THE FRONT OF THE HOTEL. THE POLICE HAVE JUST Dropped WHIT AND CONNIE OFF. STREET NOISES.]

WHIT:

Thanks for the lift, Officer.

OFFICER:

(CALLING FROM INSIDE THE CAR) No problem.

WHIT Closes the door and steps back from the curb as the police car pulls away.

CONNIE:

I'm gonna tell you right up front that I don't like that Agent Phillips. He's too nosy.

WHIT:

He's just doing his job.

CONNIE:

Maybe, but there was a point there where it almost sounded like he thought you stole that computer!

WHIT:

I'm sure he considers that a distinct possibility.

CONNIE:

What?! But, why?!

WHIT:

When you're dealing with the kind of information that's on that
computer, Connie, you have to suspect everyone -- especially people who may have had access to that information.
CONNIE:

(GRUDGINGLY)  Well, I guess that's true . . . (A BEAT)  But, now that he . . . well . . .

WHIT:

"Knows who I am?"

CONNIE:

Yeah!

WHIT:

Believe me, Connie, that's not as big of a deal as you think it is.

CONNIE:

Yeah, well, it's not everyday you find out your boss is a Special Agent!

WHIT:

Was -- and it was a long time ago -- and I don't wanna talk about it!

CONNIE:

But--

[THEY'RE AT THE DOOR.]

DOORMAN:

May I get the door for you, ma'am?

CONNIE:

(NICER TONE) Oh -- uh, thank you.
WHIT:

Thanks . . .

[THEY ENTER THE HOTEL LOBBY. APPROPRIATE AMBIENT CHANGES.]
WHIT:

(LOWER) I mean it, Connie.

CONNIE:

Okay, okay -- we won't talk about it . . . But do you think Phillips trusts you now?

WHIT:

No. I'm sure he doesn't.

CONNIE:

Why not?

WHIT:

Didn't you wonder how he knew we wanted to see the Sears Tower today?

CONNIE:

I figured we said something about it.

WHIT:

We did. Before he came in.

CONNIE:

You mean --

WHIT:

The office was bugged. They were listening in on our conversation while we were waiting. That's how they work.

CONNIE:
Oh brother. This is starting to give me the creeps.
WHIT:

Don't let it spook you. As far as I'm concerned, we've done our duty and should get on with our sight-seeing--

[HOTEL MANAGER VICTOR HERMAN INTERCEPTS THEM.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

Pardon me. You're John Whittaker and Connie Kendall, correct?

WHIT:

That's right.

HOTEL MANAGER:

I'm Victor Herman, the manager of this hotel. Would you be so kind as to come to my office? It's rather an emergency.

CONNIE:

An emergency?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Yes. Please follow me.

[MUSIC: STINGER BRIDGE TO THE NEXT SCENE.]

SCENE

[MINUTES LATER, IN THE HOTEL MANAGER'S OFFICE. THE DOOR OPENS AND THEY ALL ENTER.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

(ENTERING) In the twenty-five years that I've been working for the Excelsior, we've only had this sort of thing happen three times.
WHIT:

What sort of thing?
HOTEL MANAGER:

(CLOSES THE DOOR; LOWERS HIS VOICE; NERVOUS) An attempted break-in.

CONNIE:

Break-in!

HOTEL MANAGER:

Not your room, Miss Kendall -- Mr. Whittaker's.

CONNIE:

Whit!

WHIT:

You said an "attempted" break-in?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Yes. It happened about an hour ago. Thelma, one of our cleaning staff, came upon the culprits just as they tried to break into your room.

WHIT:

Culprits -- there was more than one?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Two very sharply dressed, professional men. They ran when Thelma screamed. We didn't catch them, unfortunately . . . I put your things in the hotel safe, just in case.
WHIT:

I see. Mind if I have a look?
HOTEL MANAGER:

No, of course not! (STARTS OFF)
It's right over here--

CONNIE:

(STARTING OFF) I'm going up to check my stuff.

HOTEL MANAGER:

(COMING BACK ON) Uh, I'm positive they didn't touch your room, Miss Kendall. Our hotel detectives have already been in.

CONNIE:

I still wanna check it. Whit?

WHIT:

I think you should. But, Mr. Herman, would you please have one of your people let her in the room?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Certainly. I'll ring the boy on your floor . . . (PICKS UP THE PHONE; UNDER THE NEXT FEW LINES) (Yes, this is Mr. Herman. One of our guests will be coming up momentarily. Would you meet her at the elevator and let her into her room, please . . . thank you.) (HANGS UP)

CONNIE:

(TO WHIT) I don't need anybody to let me in, Whit.
WHIT:

I know, but I don't want you walking in toe room by yourself.
CONNIE:

(SIGHS) This is unbelievable!

WHIT:

Life in the big city, kiddo.

CONNIE:

Then I'm glad I live in Odyssey!

WHIT:

(CHUCKLES)

HOTEL MANAGER:

(HANGS UP THE PHONE) The boy on that floor will meet you at the elevator, Miss. Kendall.

CONNIE:

Thanks. (SHE STARTS OFF)

WHIT:

I'll be up in a few minutes, Connie.

CONNIE:

Okay, Whit. (OPENS THE DOOR; GOING OFF) They better not've touched my hair dryer . . .

[SHE CLOSES THE DOOR, LEAVING WHIT WITH THE HOTEL MANAGER.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

If you'll have a seat while I open the safe?

WHIT:
(SITTING) Of course . . .
HOTEL MANAGER:

(DIALING THE COMBINATION; NERVEOUSLY) I just want you to know how very sorry we are for the whole incident, Mr. Whittaker. As I said, this has rarely happened. We would be honored if you would have dinner here tonight at our expense.

WHIT:

Thank you, but that won't be necessary . . . (THINKING) I just can't imagine what I would have that anybody would want to steal . . .

HOTEL MANAGER:

(FINISHING) Ah -- here we are . . . (OPENS THE SAFE) I believe you'll find everything in order -- your suitcase and your computer.

WHIT:

(IT HITS HIM) Computer . . . ?

[MUSIC: A SUSPENSE THEME STARTS UNDER, LOW.]

HOTEL MANAGER:

Yes. I have a lap top of my own -- that's how I knew what it was . . . although my carry bag is not as nice as this one . . .

WHIT:

(TO HIMSELF) Is it possible . . . ?

HOTEL MANAGER:
Something wrong?

WHIT:

Perhaps . . . I need to look my computer. May I use your desk?
HOTEL MANAGER:

Of course.

WHIT:

Thank you. (HE UNZIPS THE CASE, TAKES OUT THE COMPUTER, AND EXAMINES IT) Mm-hm -- my identification plate is gone.

HOTEL MANAGER:

This is the computer we brought down from your room, Mr. Whittaker, I assure you!

WHIT:

I have no doubt of that, Mr. Herman . . . could you leave me alone for just a moment, please?

HOTEL MANAGER:

(HIS NERVES AREN'T USED TO THIS) Well, yes, of course, anything you like . . .

[THE HOTEL MANAGER EXITS]

WHIT:

(LIFTS THE SCREEN AND TURNS THE COMPUTER ON) The only way to be sure is to check the programs . . . (HE TYPES IN A FEW COMMANDS. THERE IS A BEEP.) I don't believe it . . . (READS THE SCREEN) "This computer and its contents are the property of the United States Department of Defense . . ." The stolen computer. (A BEAT, HE MUSES) Now, the question is: did those men put it in my room or
. . . (REALIZING AS HE SPEAKS) was it . . . accidentally switched in the hotel van!

[Dramatic music takes us to the next scene.]
SCENE
[THE ELEVATOR. CONNIE IS RIDING UP TO HER ROOM.]

CONNIE:

(TO HERSELF) This is unbelievable . . . First we get stopped at the airport, then we spend all morning at the police station, and now somebody tries to break into our rooms . . . (A SIGH) What next?

THE BELL DINGS AS THE ELEVATOR STOPS AND THE DOORS OPEN.

PINKY:

(SUDDENLY) Are you Miss Kendall?

CONNIE:

Yeah-- (ALARMED) You're not the bellboy-- (HE GRABS HER) Hey- mmfff!

HE CLAMPS HIS HAND OVER HER MOUTH, AS THE:

[MUSIC: STINGS BACK TO WHIT PICKING UP THE PHONE, PUNCHES BUTTON.]

VOICE:

(FILTERED) Hotel operator.

WHIT:

Hello? Get me the police.

VOICE:

Right away, sir.

HOTEL MANAGER:

(COMING IN) Mr. Whittaker? Is everything all right?
WHIT:

No. (HE TURNS OFF THE COMPUTER AND PUTS IT BACK IN THE BACK AS HE SPEAKS) Will you please put this back in the safe and keep it there for me?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Of course.

WHIT:

And I'm the only one who has access to it, right?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Absolutely -- except for myself, of course.

WHIT:

Under any circumstances?

HOTEL MANAGER:

Sir, we treat our hotel safe like a Swiss bank.

WHIT:

Good enough.

POLICE VOICE:

(FILTERED) Chicago Police.

WHIT:

(INTO PHONE) Yes, Special Agent Frank Phillips, please.

HOTEL MANAGER:
(NERVOUSLY) "Special Agent?"
You're not calling the police, Mr. Whittaker?!
WHIT:

Don't worry, Mr. Herbert. We won't cause a scene.

HOTEL MANAGER:

(AGHAST) A scene!

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Agent Phillips.

WHIT:

(INTO THE PHONE) John Whittaker here. You were right and you were wrong.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) What are you talking about?

WHIT:

I wasn't involved in this case before, but I am now.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Oh?

WHIT:

Yes. I have the computer you're looking for. It must've been accidentally switched by the driver when Greg Kelly got out.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Where are you?

WHIT:
The hotel -- the manager's office.
AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) Where's the computer?

WHIT:

The hotel safe.

AGENT PHILLIPS:

(FILTERED) All right, don't move, Whittaker! Stay right where you are. And don't take your eyes off that safe. I'll be right there. And, for heaven's sake, don't talk to anyone. Don't even open the door! You could be in great danger!

WHIT:

Danger. (BEAT, ALARMED) Connie!

[MUSIC: STING TO THE NEXT SCENE]

SCENE

[CONNIE IS WITH PINKY ON A SERVICE ELEVATOR.]

CONNIE:

I take it you don't work for the hotel . . .

PINKY:

(GRUNTS)

CONNIE:

You didn't have to drag me to a different elevator, you know. The one I came up in also goes down.

PINKY:
Too many people.
CONNIE:

Uh huh . . . (A BEAT) Just out of curiosity: where does this elevator take us to?

PINKY:

Parking garage.

CONNIE:

Oh . . .

PINKY:

Relax. Everything will be all right. No one wants to hurt you.

[WE HEAR THE TELL-TALE `DING' OF THE ELEVATOR BELL AND THE DOORS OPEN.]

CONNIE:

Yeah? Well, you better watch it, bub, because I know John Avery Whittaker--

BLACKGAARD:

What a coincidence -- so do I . . .

CONNIE:

Huh? Who said that?

BLACKGAARD:

(STEPS IN FRONT OF ELEVATOR) I did.

CONNIE:

(GASPS)
BLACKGAARD:

(WARMLY) Hello, Miss Kendall.
CONNIE:

(STUNNED)  Y-you?!

BLACKGAARD:

(WITH A SMILE)  Yes -- Dr. Regis Blackgaard, at your service . . .

[MUSIC: RISES UP DRAMATICALLY AND TAKES US TO . . .

. . . THE END OF PART ONE.]