

Blues for Johnny Raven The Ambience Man

An Audio Noir

By Thomas E. Fuller

In order of appearance:

- Johnny Raven
- Gloria Kinsolving
- Off-Mike Voice 1 (V-1)
- Off-Mike Voice 2 (V-2)
- Also-Heard Voice (V-3)
- Chelsea
- Benny the Gospel (Benny)
- Prowse
- Lorenzo Gold
- Coat-Check Man (Coat Man)

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE**

RAVEN Ever notice sounds? I mean really notice them? I do. I don't have any choice, not since I fell into the Loop. And what's the Loop? It's a world, a world of sounds and narration, of incidental music and special effects. The Loop is ambiance, implication, and the subtle – and not-so-subtle – manipulations of the Off-Mike People. But people are the same on or off the Loop, a distressing fact that always seems to add up to – Blues for Johnny Raven.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE**

NARRATOR Blues for Johnny Raven. Adventures On the Loop. Tonight's episode, 'The Ambiance Man.'

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE**

SFX: **RAIN AND STREET NOISES, UNDER FOR –**

RAVEN The two things I'll always associate with Gloria Kinsolving are rain and saxophone music. Rain because it was November and no matter what side of the Loop you're on, it rains in November. And saxophone music because, well, I guess because there's always saxophone music. It's the theme.

SFX: **BOTTLE UNSCREWED AND DRINK POURED**

RAVEN The name's Raven, Johnny Raven, and I was just sitting in my office in the Hanna Building, listening to the traffic and the rain. And drinking. Bourbon, if I remember correctly. The window was open and the sounds flooded in.

SFX: **RAIN AND STREET NOISES, UNDER FOR --**

RAVEN There was going to be trouble. I could tell because the ambiance was heavy that night, not just the usual establishing noise that pops up to set the scene and then fades, but layer after layer of sounds, rich and thick. When The ambiance gets that deep, it's time for an episode. Damn.

SFX: **DRINKING AND POURING. CHAIR CREAKING**

RAVEN So I was just sitting there, drinking and listening and waiting. Waiting for the Plot. I knew it would be there soon.

SFX: **THUNDER ADDED TO RAIN AND STREET NOISES**

RAVEN I mean, it had gone to so much trouble already.

SFX: **PHONE RINGS AND IS ANSWERED**

RAVEN Raven Detective Agency, Raven here.

GLORIA (TELEPHONE EFFECT) Mr. Raven? Mr. Johnny Raven?

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) It was a girl's voice, a clear full voice with just a hint of line static. Yeah, this was it, this was the Plot. Damn. (Regular)Yeah, this is Johnny Raven. What can I do for you?

GLORIA I want to come up to your office.

RAVEN It's a free country and a public building, miss. It's also just a tad past office hours.

GLORIA I'll be there in five minutes, Mr. Raven.

RAVEN How about some information first –

SFX: **PHONE CLICK, DIAL TONE, UNDER FOR –**

RAVEN --like a maybe your name. Right.

SFX: **PHONE HANGS UP. DIAL TONE OUT**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Oh, she was prime. Like I said, full voice with line static instead of just me talking into the air. Good establishing touches. Yeah, it was she all right. The plot was on its, er, her way up.

SFX: **DRINK BEING POURED**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) So while I waited, I had another drink and enjoyed the smooth uncomplicated sound of it. I had a sick feeling it was the last uncomplicated thing I was going to be dealing with for a while.

SFX: **HIGH HEELS ON MARBLE**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) And then there they were, stiletto heels in the hall, a nice distinctive sound.

SFX: **DOOR OPENING**

MUSIC CUE

GLORIA Mr. Raven?

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Oh, she was good, she was really good. Even had her own secondary theme. And just enough ambiance to let you know she was there without being a regular.

(Regular) Yeah, I'm Mr. Raven, but my friends call me Johnny. Come to think of it, even people who aren't my friends call me Johnny.

GLORIA I'm Gloria Kinsolving.

RAVEN I'm sure you are.

GLORIA What?

RAVEN Forget it, it wasn't that funny. What can I do for you, Miss Kinsolving?

GLORIA I – I have a problem and I hear that you're good with problems, Mr. Raven, that you have a rather, uh, unique perspective. If you know what I mean.

RAVEN Yeah, I know what you mean --if what you mean is do I do ambiance work. I'm not particularly proud of it but a guy's gotta eat and, like you said, I've got a unique perspective. So, at the risk of repeating myself, what can I do for you, Miss Kinsolving?

GLORIA I need protection, Mr. Raven. I think, no, I know someone is trying to kill me.

RAVEN I'd call that a problem.

SFX: **DRINK BEING POURED**

RAVEN Drink?

GLORIA No, thank you. Perhaps I should just tell you everything from the beginning?

RAVEN Perhaps you should.

GLORIA Do you mind if I smoke?

RAVEN Not at all.

SFX: **MATCH BEING STRUCK. CIGARETTE BEING LIT**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Nice bit with the cigarette, a simple but elegant way of further separating herself from the city's ambiance --and from mine. Yeah, the kid was a real pro, all right.

GLORIA I shouldn't smoke, it's bad for my voice. I'm a singer at the After Hours

Club – you ever hear of it, Mr. Raven?

RAVEN Oh, yeah, I've heard of it.

GLORIA (EXHALES SMOKE) Lots of folks have. I've just started to make a name for myself – it's my voice, you see. I've got this nice voice.

RAVEN I noticed.

GLORIA It's my ticket out of the background. Don't let people tell you ambiance comes easier for singers, Mr. Raven, it doesn't. The competition is rough. But i was doing all right, i was doing okay. Then it started to happen. Things started to go wrong, real wrong.

RAVEN Define wrong, Miss Kinsolving.

GLORIA First it was just minor things, voice skips, bad fades, too much background noise, like that. Then I got hit with feedback. Not once but twice. Real strong. And last night I found this in my dressing room.

SFX: **PAPER BEING UNFOLDED**

GLORIA Read it, Mr. Raven.

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Seemed like a reasonable request, so like a sap i did.

GOLD (ECHO EFFECT) Two strikes are a warning. Three strikes and you're out. Permanently.

RAVEN Lovely people you hang around with, Miss Kinsolving.

GLORIA I'm scared, Mr.Raven, really scared. Will you help me?

RAVEN That's my job --when i'm lucky.

GLORIA I don't have a lot but it's yours if you'll help me. (HUSKY LOW VOICE) i'll give you everything i have if you'll help me.

MUSIC CUE: **GLORIA'S THEME**

SFX: **SILKY RUBBING NOISES. CHAIR SQUEAKING**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Little Gloria wasn't quite telling the truth. She had a lot and she was really pouring it on. The room was thick with ambiance --heavy, purring, girl-type ambiance. She didn't need any off--mike help, she was doing just fine on her own.

(Regular voice) I'm sure we can come to some kind of arrangement, Miss

Kinsolving. I'll take your case.

GLORIA I can't tell you what this means to me, Mr. Raven.

RAVEN I can make an educated guess. I'll ask around, check out some contacts, see what I can find out on the street.

SFX: **CHAIR SQUEAKING. HIGH HEELS**

GLORIA You can reach me at the After Hours Club, Mr. Raven.

RAVEN I'll do that, Miss Kinsolving.

GLORIA There, there is just one other thing, just for my own information, you understand.

RAVEN Yes?

GLORIA I asked around before I came here, asked lots of people and they all said that you were the man to see, that you were 'special.' Nothing personal, Mr. Raven, but what's so special about you?

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Ah, the Question. Sooner or later they all ask the Question.

(Regular voice) Let's run a little experiment, my dear Miss Kinsolving. I want you to listen, listen real hard. You do that for me, Miss Kinsolving?

GLORIA Uh, sure.

RAVEN Fine. (DEEP BREATH, INTO ECHO EFFECT) She was a tall girl with the kind of lush body that belonged under a spotlight. Her hair was a thick red mane that cascaded off her shoulders and down her back. She had green eyes, the kind that make emeralds look washed out.

(Regular voice) You get all that, Miss Kinsolving?

GLORIA Sure, I got it. It was Exposition, flattering Exposition but...

RAVEN But nobody listens to Exposition, we all block it out or we'd never hear anything else. Now, I made you strain your pretty little ears so you could answer two questions. Ready? Here they come. The first question is: Was my description correct?

GLORIA I'd like to think so.

RAVEN The second question is: Was it correct because that's the way you are or was it correct because that's the way I described you?

GLORIA W-what?

RAVEN I could just as easily have said you were a short, fat, middle-aged woman with a wall eye who just happened to have a really great voice. What would you have been then, hmm?

GLORIA You're scaring me, Mr. Raven.

RAVEN Didn't mean to.

GLORIA That's silly talk. You can't change Exposition, it's all on the Loop. Everything and everyone is on the Loop.

SFX: **HEELS, DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES**

RAVEN Yeah, doll, everything and everyone is on the Loop. Except me.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE**

VOICE-1 (V-1) (Very faint) Saxophone up, nice, real nice. Establish and start to fade.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE UNDER FOR --**

V-1 (Very faint) Roll tape for street noises, roll tape for rain.

SFX: **AS EACH SPECIFIC SOUND EFFECT IS MENTIONED, IT COMES UP**

VOICE-2 (V-2) (Very faint) Cue voice talent.

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) A poorly executed bridge took me further into the Episode. Too much saxophone and way too much Off-Mike leakage. Maybe they were pressed for time or just being sloppy. Or maybe the Writer just didn't want to be bothered with it. Who knows? People don't like to think about Off--Mike, it makes them nervous --like Exposition. Better to just ignore it and hope that it goes away. Sometimes it even works. But I was on the right track, I was sure of it. No hard information yet of course but both Foley and Tape were in good form so I was heading in the right direction.

SFX: **STREET, RAIN AND FOOTSTEPS UP AND UNDER FOR --**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) It was still raining as i walked up peachtree but i like the rain. Rain gives depth arid anything that gives depth is good. Depth creates ambiance and ambiance is important on the loop. Pause, re-wind, correct. Ambiance is everything on the loop.

SFX: **STREET, RAIN AND FOOTSTEPS UP AND UNDER FOR --**

VOICE-3 (V-3) (ALL THE SAME ACTOR WITH MINOR VARIATIONS.)

V-3 Naw, i ain't heerd nothin' about no threats t' no singer...

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) I tried some of my usual sources and options and kept hitting background in a big way.

V-3 hello, Johnny, nope, can't say as how I have. . .

RAVEN Nothing.

V-3 Sings over at the after hours? Not myusual cup of tea. Try Mild Mike at the newsstand.

RAVEN No supporting or secondaries, nothing but also-heards they weren't going to make it easy for me. So i just kept walking, listening for the ambiance.

V-3 gee, Mr.Raven, wish i could help ya...

RAVEN I hate the loop.

V-2 (VERY FAINT) Cue up bar. Roll tape.

SFX: **UP-SCALE BAR NOISE OFF-MIKE**

V-1 (VERY FAINT) Nice.

V-2 (VERY FAINT) Thanks. Picked it up at that new place in Sandy Springs.

SFX: **BAR UP AND THEN UNDER FOR --**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Ifinally ran into heavy soundscaping at the Knickerbocker. Funny thing about the Knickerbocker. Off theloop it was a nice downtown bar --that closed. On the loop, it was a real going concern. I think the writer used to hang out there – it was the kind of place writers would --and the whole thing is some kind of homage. In this episode, the knickerbocker had two solid advantages in the information game --it was right around the corner from the After Hours Club and it was the semi-permanent home of Benny the Gospel.

CHELSEA Evenin', Mr. Raven. What ya for t'night?

RAVEN It's a bourbon kinda night, Chelsea, a bourbon kinda night.

SFX: **ICE IN A GLASS, BOURBON BEING POURED**

CHELSEA Bourbon on th' rocks, light on th' rocks. Here ya go.

RAVEN Thank you. Benny in?

CHELSEA Usual table. Said I was t' keep an eye open fer ya, said he was expectin' ya.

RAVEN Then I better not disappoint the boy. Thanks, Chelsea.

CHELSEA Any time, Mr. Raven, any time.

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Always spend some time with the Also-Heards, spread the ambiance around --you never know when you're going to need some payback. Besides, Chelsea was working hard at getting out of the Background. Doing a decent job, too. Folks tend to remember girls with thick Southern accents called Chelsea. So I drifted though the crowd at the Knickerbocker, heading for the table way over in the corner. And Benny the Gospel.

BENNY (LOW RASPY VOICE) Hello, Johnny, long time, long time.

RAVEN Hello, Benny. (ECHO EFFECT) Benny the Gospel. As in gospel truth. Benny had ambiance but he'd gotten it the hard way, sticking it together bit by lousy bit. He'd slipped out of the background a while back, with his raspy voice, his colossal fund of knowledge, and the intriguing idiosyncrasy that he was never seen outside of the Knickerbocker. Ever. It must be working because he's almost a regular now. If anyone knew anything about Gloria Kinsolving and her little problem, it would be Benny the Gospel.

BENNY Business been good, Johnny, huh? Been good?

RAVEN Can't complain. Things seem to be going okay here, too.

BENNY Yeah, going good. Lots of ambiance going tonight. You can taste it. Lots of depth. Understand you need some information, Johnny.

RAVEN I'm doing some leg work for a singer name of Gloria Kinsolving and I'm not having a lot of luck. Been trotting around all night and all I've got to show for it is a lot of bad bridges, sloppy segues, and worse saxophone music. If I didn't know better, I'd say the ambiance was being stacked against me.

BENNY Could be, could be.

RAVEN You got anything for me, Benny?

BENNY Got a name to go with your client, got a name. Can't spring for much else.

RAVEN Give me a name and I'll do my own springing.

BENNY (Whisper) Lorenzo Gold.

RAVEN Lorenzo Gold.

BENNY You know the name, Johnny? You know it?

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Oh, I knew the name all right. Lorenzo Gold, the Ambiance Man, one of the most dangerous people On the Loop. Lorenzo Gold was one of those smooth operators who dealt in bottled dreams – he was an ambiance dealer, the biggest. Gold didn't just push a little extra background noise or a distinctive voice to give you that needed edge. Lorenzo Gold dealt in full-scale ambiance, the kind of stuff that took your average looper like Benny or Chelsea years to build. Gold could take you from Background Voice to Supporting or Regular or even Featured. For a price.

BENNY Tough luck, Johnny, he's a mean one, a mean one.

RAVEN Then the word is he's the one threatening my client?

BENNY Word is he wants her, wants her bad, wants her bad. She must be really something, really something.

RAVEN Oh, she's that all right, she's already done a couple of things very few others could do.

BENNY Like what, like what?

RAVEN One, she fooled me into thinking she didn't know who was after her. And two, she seems to have turned down Lorenzo Gold.

BENNY Not a bright move, Johnny, not a bright move.

RAVEN Yeah. You don't turn down the Lorenzo Golds in this world, even if you are a singer with a nice distinctive voice. So, what she won't sell Gold, she'll give me just for protection.

BENNY Seems like it, sure seems like it.

RAVEN So, how do I go about finding Lorenzo Gold?

BENNY (Laughing) That's funny, Johnny, that's really funny!

RAVEN Humor is part of my charm. Spin me the rest.

BENNY Lorenzo Gold isn't the kind of person you find Johnny, he's the kind of person who finds you.

RAVEN Lovely.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) I wanted to pursue this line of questioning but then the damn sax came up strong and I walked the bridge out of there, leaving Benny the Gospel and the Knickerbocker's nice warm soundscaping far behind me. Double damn.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE UNDER FOR --**

SFX: **THUNDER, STEADY RAIN AND WET FOOTSTEPS**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) The bridge dumped me out into the middle of a downpour at two o'clock in the morning. As I splashed through the rain, creating ambiance with every soggy step, I tried to piece together just what the hell was going on. Why hadn't Gloria told me Lorenzo Gold was the man threatening her? Was she afraid that would scare me off? Or did she have some other reason? And why weren't there any real clues? All I had so far was Benny the Gospel doing his audio ex machina number. Something was very wrong and all I really knew was that it was going to get worse. And it did.

SFX: **LARGE CAR COMING CLOSER. SOUND OF CAR HITTING LARGE PUDDLE OF WATER, SPLASH**

RAVEN Aw, Hell!

RAVEN (QUIETLY) Aw, Hell.

SFX: **CAR DOOR OPENING. FOOTSTEPS THROUGH WATER.**

PROWSE (DEEP, RUMBLING VOICE) You a man called Raven?

RAVEN Would it do any good if I said I wasn't? (ECHO EFFECT) He was huge, a solid dark mass in the rain. Wonderful. Just wonderful.

PROWSE Mr. Gold would like to speak to you.

RAVEN And I'd like to speak to Mr. Gold. Isn't it amazing how things work out?

PROWSE (Voice moving slightly away) Yeah, amazing.

SFX: **FOOTSTEPS IN THE RAIN, CAR ENGINE LOUDER**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) He slipped behind me and I was stuck between him and the deep, throaty purr of the town car. It was good solid stereo work, I was definitely dealing with professionals. Lucky me.

SFX: **CAR DOOR OPENING**

GOLD (Peter Lorre-type voice) Mr. Raven?

RAVEN Yeah, I'm Johnny Raven.

GOLD My name is Lorenzo Gold, Mr. Raven. I understand you're looking for me.

RAVEN That's very impressive, Mr. Gold. Even I didn't know that until about five minutes ago.

GOLD I like impressing people, it's rather enjoyable in a petty sort of way. I'm sure you appreciate petty pleasures, Mr. Raven, since you are a rather petty person.

RAVEN Thank you.

GOLD I'm a very busy man, Mr. Raven but occasionally I like to take time out to deliver messages. I have one for you. Or rather my associate, Mr. Prowse, has one for you. Mr. Prowse?

SFX: **FIST SLAMMING INTO A BODY**

RAVEN Geez!

PROWSE You do not know anyone named Gloria Kinsolving.

SFX: **FIST SLAMMING INTO A BODY**

RAVE Nooooo!

PROWSE You do not know anyone named Lorenzo Gold.

SFX: **FIST SLAMMING INTO A BODY**

RAVEN Ugh!

PROWSE You do not know anything about anything, Mr. Raven.

SFX: **FIST SLAMMING INTO A BODY IN TIME TO NEXT SPEECH**

PROWSE You do not... know anything... at all... Mr. Raven.

SFX: **BODY FLYING INTO A LARGE NUMBER OF GARBAGE CANS**

GOLD (Distant) Very good, Prowse, very nicely put.

PROWSE Thank you, Mr. Gold.

SFX: **CAR DOOR CLOSING, CAR DRIVING OFF**

SFX: **GARBAGE CAN LIDS FALLING**

SFX: **BODY STIRRING**

RAVEN Damn... Oh, goddamn... That hurts, Lord but that hurts.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE**

RAVEN You couldn't have been a couple of lousy seconds earlier, could you, you no-talent creep! (ECHO EFFECT) Strangely enough, yelling at the sax didn't make me feel one damn bit better. And neither did the Off-Mike leakage as I faded back into my office,

V-1 (Very faint) You call those fight effects? What the hell was that!

V-2 (Very faint) That was the damn BBC sound effect library.

V-1 (Very faint) I don't care if it was goddamn Orson Welles! That isn't what I wrote!

V-2 (Very faint) Listen, you pathetic hack, you think you can do one damn bit better you grab a recorder and you –

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE UNDER FOR –**

SFX: **RAIN AND TRAFFIC NOISES, UNDER FOR –**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Lousy bastards. Inept bridges and weak plots aren't enough, they've got to get hot because I still have all my ribs. Lousy Off-Mike bastards.

SFX: **BOTTLE BEING OPENED AND DRINK POURED**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) I sat there in the comfortable ambiance of my office, drinking like a landlocked fish and trying to think. There had been something really wrong about that last scene, Other than me being stomped into the ground and thrown out with the rest of the garbage. It was the ambiance, something had been out of whack with the ambiance.

PROWSE (ECHO EFFECT) Mr. Gold would like to speak to you.

GOLD (ECHO EFFECT) I like impressing people, it's rather enjoyable in a petty sort of way.

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Yeah, it was the ambiance, there was something wrong with the goddamned ambiance. It was coming from all the wrong places. That was when part of the puzzle fell into place. Now if I could just piece together the rest of it.

SFX: **PHONE RINGS SEVERAL TIMES AND IS ANSWERED**

RAVEN Raven Detective Agency. Raven here.

GLORIA (PHONE EFFECT) Mr. Raven? Mr. Raven, is that you?

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) It was Gloria Kinsolving. She of the husky voice.
(Regular)Yeah, Miss Kinsolving, it's me. Or what's left of me.

GLORIA Oh, thankgod! I'm scared, Mr.Raven, I'm really scared! Someone just tried to kill me.

RAVEN You, too?

GLORIA I was just walking down the street when this huge black town car came barreling up on the curb! It just missed me! You've got to come over here, Johnny, you've got to help me! I'm so scared!

RAVEN Yeah, yeah, all right, calm down, Gloria, calm down. Where are you now?

GLORIA I'm --I'm at the After Hours Club, I'm afraid to leave. You're coming aren't you, Johnny? Please say you're coming!

RAVEN I'm coming. You just try and calm down and wait for me, you hear? Wait for me.

GLORIA I'll wait for you, Johnny, I'll do anything you say! Just get over here, please! And bring your gun, you've got to protect me! Please, Johnny, please!

RAVEN I'm on my way, Gloria.

SFX: **PHONE HANGING UP**

MUSIC CUE: **GLORIA'S THEME UNDER –**

RAVEN Johnny? My, my... We have changed our tune, haven't we? A little abrupt, even for the Loop. A little too abrupt.

SFX: **BOTTLE OPEN AND POUR**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) I just sat there, listening to her sub-theme fade. Nice and simple - didn't really suit her at all. Why wasn't I rushing over to the After Hours Club to save the fair damsel? That's what heroes do and I was the hero --wasn't I? Or had I been cast in a different part altogether?

SFX: **DRINKING, GLASS BACK ON DESK**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) A puzzle, just pieces of a puzzle, and while I sat there

puzzling, some more fell into place.

SFX: **PHONE BEING DIALED**

RAVEN Hello. Cleveland bureau of records? Great. I need to check the ownership of a business in downtown. The After Hours Club on Superior. Yeah, I'll wait.

SFX: **DRINKING, GLASS BACK ON DESK**

RAVEN Yeah, I'm still here --you got the information? Really? Thanks, thanks a lot.

SFX: **PHONE BEING HUNG UP**

RAVEN Well, that makes it all just as clear as mud.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE, UNDER FOR --**

SFX: **RAIN AND TRAFFIC, UNDER FOR --**

GLORIA (ECHO EFFECT) I don't have a lot but it's yours if you'll help me.

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) I took the bridge and found myself following a rather nasty echo effect...

PROWSE (ECHO EFFECT) You don't know anyone named Gloria Kinsolving.

RAVEN ...one of those strong blends of past dialogue that is supposed to show everyone I know what the hell I'm doing.

GOLD (ECHO EFFECT) I'm sure you appreciate petty pleasures, Mr. Raven, since you are a rather petty person.

RAVEN Unfortunately, I didn't know what the hell I was doing...

PROWSE (ECHO EFFECT) You don't know anyone named Lorenzo Gold.

RAVEN ...all I had was an almost-completed puzzle with too many pieces missing.

GLORIA (ECHO EFFECT) Help me, Johnny, help me! Bring your gun, you've got to protect me! Please, Johnny, please!

RAVEN And there was only one place left to find the answers.

ROWSE (ECHO EFFECT) You don't know anything at all, Mr.Raven.

GLORIA (SINGING) I SIT ALL NIGHT BY THE TELEPHONE, JUST WAITING FOR A RING. I WALK ALL DAY IN THE PARK ALONE, EVEN THE BIRDS

WILL NOT SING. THUNDER AND RAIN SOFTEN THE NOISE OF PAVEMENT UNDER MY SHOES. BOOST ALL THE PAIN, MUTE ALL MY JOYS, I HEAR ONLY THE SOUNDS THAT I CHOOSE. KNOWING I'LL NEVER HEAR THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE AGAIN. I'LL NEVER HEAR THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE...AGAIN.

SFX:

VERY RITZY NIGHTCLUB

COAT MAN Take your coat, sir?

RAVEN No, thanks, I'm waiting for someone.

COAT MAN As you wish, sir.

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) the After Hours Club was so rich in ambiance you could rub it in your face. The transition had been dramatic, one minute rain and traffic, next minute the elite at play. The off-mike crowd must have been trying to make up for that rushed search sequence. Either that or the writer was still raising holy hell over the fight and they were trying to get him off their backs. (beat) holy hell. What an interesting concept.

GLORIA (Distant) Johnny! Johnny!

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) Her voice cut through the Background like a razor through silk. Oh, she was good, she was very good.

GLORIA Oh, Johnny, i was so worried! I was afraid he might have found out about you, done something to you! Then I would have been alone! I was so scared!

RAVEN I know you were, doll.

GLORIA I've got everything, Johnny. I got the license number for the car, you can track him down, take care of him! Then we'll be safe, Johnny, both of us will be safe!

RAVEN Yeah,safe. Just one little thing to do first.

GLORIA What's that?

RAVEN Iwant to talk to the owner.

GLORIA The owner?

RAVEN Of course, Icould just talk to you, doll. You do own forty percent of this glitter palace, don't you?

GLORIA You're talking crazy, Johnny, I don't own any of the After Hours Club! I'm

just a singer.

RAVEN Oh? Then it must be some other Gloria Angelica Kinsolving. Doesn't make any difference, we're still going to see the man with the other sixty percent.

GLORIA Let, let go of my arm, Johnny, you're hurting me.

RAVEN Let's go see the man, doll, let's you and me go see him. Let's go see Mr. Lorenzo Gold.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE UNDER FOR --**

RAVEN (ECHO EFFECT) The cut was abrupt, she didn't even have time to protest. Just a couple of notes from my old friend the saxophone and there we were, in the private office of Lorenzo Gold and his taciturn bodyguard, the man known only as Prowse.

GOLD (BAD PETER LORRE) You don't listen very well, do you, Mr.Raven? You don't listen very well at all.

GLORIA Let go of me, you bastard! You're crazy, you're going to get us both killed!

RAVEN Shut up, doll. You're leaking ambiance all over the place, losing it by the second. I'd hold on to it if I were you. I've got a feeling you're going to need all the depth you can get your hands on.

GOLD I suggest you let the young lady go, Mr. Raven. I don't think she's going to do you a lot of good.

RAVEN You're right, Gold, she isn't going to do me any good at all. But I'm rather hoping this will.

SFX: **GUN BEING COCKED**

RAVEN That's right, everyone just stand there. Especially you, Prowse.

GOLD You're a dead man.

RAVEN One of us is.

GOLD What do you want, Mr.Raven?

RAVEN I want the ambiance man.

GLORIA You idiot, you're going to ruin everything!

GOLD I'm right here, Mr.Raven.

RAVEN Uh-uh, not you, smiley. I want the real mccooy, the boss, the man who controls the black market ambiance trade in this town! That's not you, Gold, you've got about as much depth as a slow cat on a fast highway.

GLORIA Who the hell do you think you're talking to! He's Lorenzo Gold!

RAVEN He may be Lorenzo Gold, but he sure as hell isn't the ambiance man. I want the boss or we all just stand here till morning!

GOLD Why you nasty little son of a --

PROWSE It's all right, Lorenzo.

GLORIA What--?

GOLD I can take care of this, Mr.Prowse! I can fix it so no one ever hears of this two-bit gumshoe again!

PROWSE I said it's all right, Lorenzo, I'll take care of it.

GLORIA What's going on here!

PROWSE I believe Mr.Raven is going to answer that question for us, aren't you, Mr.Raven?

RAVEN I'm going to take a real good shot at it. It's a story really, a story I just finished piecing together. There was this girl, you see, a girl on her way up on the loop. Only problem was, she didn't think she was on her way fast enough. She wanted that extra little boost you got with bootleg ambiance. So she set her little self up with the man she thought could get it for her. The notorious Mr.Lorenzo Gold. Mr. Gold fell for her like a loud ton. Gave her gifts, like part ownership in a very fancy club. Only problem was that the girl didn't want to settle for a measly forty percent, she wanted it all. Sweet girl, don't you thank?

GLORIA You cheap crazy bastard!

RAVEN But how to get rid of the ambiance man? A tall order but the little girl had a plan. She found herself a private dick and set him up with a song about how someone was trying to kill her. Then she went to Gold with a story about someone following her. Me, I was the patsy who was supposed to take out the problem and if the problem took me out instead, well, there were always more where I came from. Like my story so far, gentlemen?

GOLD You lying little tramp! You cheap lying little --

PROWSE Calm yourself, Lorenzo, everyone makes mistakes. I seem to have made one myself. What went wrong with her plan, Mr.Raven and --incidentally

--with mine?

RAVEN She's a smart girl, except --like a lot of smart people --she assumes everyone else is stupid. She knew I'd find out about Gold, and she made sure that Gold found out about me. That's why lended up in a back alley snuggling up to garbage cans. She didn't know that I'd do something simple like check the ownership of the After Hours Club. I had most of the pieces then and played a hunch for the rest. The pieces that didn't fit were you guys.

PROWSE Ah.

RAVEN It was the thing in the alley. If she hadn't set that up then it just might have worked. But there was something real wrong with that whole scenario.

PROWSE Such as?

RAVEN Such as why a man with all the ambiance in the loop was so damn two-dimensional mono, and a man who shouldn't have been more than a walking sound cue had it all. Little Gloria here blew it. She set up the wrong man. Me, I notice things like that. It's a gift I have.

PROWSE Not all gifts are good ones, Mr. Raven.

GLORIA Surely you don't believe --

PROWSE Shut up, Miss Kinsolving. I'm afraid I do believe him.

GOLD Let me kill her, Boss, Let take her out! She played me for a damn fool!

PROWSE I don't think so.

GOLD Boss?

PROWSE No, as satisfying as that would be to both of us, I really don't think so. It would be a loose end and there are too many loose ends around here already. Get out, Miss Kinsolving.

GLORIA What?

PROWSE I said get out, Miss Kinsolving.

GLORIA Oh, no, you don't. You can't just order me out of here like I was some Looper nobody. I know what's going on, I know what's --

PROWSE Perhaps I didn't make myself clear. When I said "get out." I didn't just mean out of this room. I meant out of this club, out of this town. Out.

GLORIA But --

PROWSE Lose yourself, Miss Kinsolving. Find yourself another Track far, far away from here and bury yourself in it, bury yourself deep. Because if I ever hear your voice again, you won't be Featured, you won't be Supporting, you won't be Background. Miss Kinsolving, you won't even be Static. Have I made myself clear now?

GLORIA P -perfectly,

PROWSE Excellent. Lorenzo, please escort Miss Kinsolving out of the building. We don't want any unsightly scenes.

GOLD My pleasure, Mr. Prowse!

PROWSE And Lorenzo, when I said we didn't want any unsightly scenes, that's exactly what I meant. Just escort her out.

GOLD Yes, Mr. Prowse. Come on, you.

SFX: **FOOTSTEPS. DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES**

PROWSE Poor Lorenzo. I think it might be time for another front man. (Sighs.)

SFX: **CHAIR CREAKING**

PROWSE And that just leaves you, Mr. Raven. Whatever are we to do about you?

RAVEN Good question. But first, I have one of my own.

PROWSE I didn't think I had any secrets left.

RAVEN It's a simple one. Just one word, in fact. Why?

PROWSE Why what, Mr. Raven?

RAVEN Why all of this, Mr. Prowse – or whatever the hell your name is? Why Gold? Why the charade?

PROWSE Mr. Raven, there are only two things that matter on the Loop and, unfortunately, they are mutually exclusive. If you have one, you can't have the other. Those two things are ambiance and anonymity. I wanted them both.

RAVEN Doesn't everybody?

PROWSE No, if most people had the option, they would choose ambiance. Ambiance is power, Mr. Raven, it is the little distinctions that lift you out of the

Background and give you depth. The more ambiance you have, the more depth you have --and the more substantial you become. But there's a problem with ambiance, to get it you have to give up the God-given privacy that is the legacy of everyone On the Loop.

RAVEN I don't think I follow you.

PROWSE You see, the more depth you achieve, the more likely you are to come to the attention of the Off-Mike People, the more likely you are to become a Major Character. Things happen to Major Characters, Mr. Raven, constantly and consistently. Oh, I suppose it's better than just lurking around in the background, saying the occasional hello or such but still what kind of life is that? What kind of choice is that? I wanted both.

RAVEN So you created Lorenzo Gold.

PROWSE I created Lorenzo Gold. And Adrian Bradbury. And Owen Lackmann. And Katherine Monaco. All of the major ambiance dealers this town has ever known. We were all quite happy with the bargain --Gold and the others got to play Big Shot and I got to pretend that I was just another voice.

RAVEN What happened to your other puppets?

PROWSE Oh, they died. The temptation to take them out is too great for your average small-time ambiance pusher. Sometimes I'd make a deal with the killers, sometimes I'd just kill them and promote someone else.

RAVEN Smooth, Prowse, real smooth.

PROWSE Well, it was until an overly-ambitious girl and a lucky private eye messed the whole thing up. Which brings us back to my question, Mr. Raven.

SFX: **CHAIR CREAKING**

PROWSE (Very dangerously) Whatever are we to do about you?

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE, UNDER FOR –**

SFX: **RAIN AND STREET NOISES, UNDER FOR –**

RAVEN So we made a deal. Yeah, I know, guys like me aren't supposed to make deals with guys like Prowse. I'm a Good Guy and he's a Bad Guy, right? So sue me.

SFX: **BOTTLE OPENED AND POURED**

RAVEN Prowse could have wiped me out all by himself. The man was gigantic. So I swapped him a secret for a secret and now we're even. Nobody gets to

know that he's the Ambiance Man and nobody gets to know that I'm from Off the Loop. I couldn't tell him how or why I'd dropped in for the simple reason that I don't know. But here I am, trapped on the Loop, trapped in a world of audio, of sounds and music and other assorted crap. That's why I can read the ambiance so well, why I'm so good at my job. And why I'm still alive.

SFX: **NEWSPAPER BEING RUSTLED**

RAVEN I'll say this for him, he does like things neat. On the front page of the Plain Dealer is a story about how notorious ambiance dealer Lorenzo Gold has been reported missing. Police suspect foul play. Buried way in the back is a similar story about an obscure little club singer named Gloria Something-or-Other. Police suspect absolutely nothing.

SFX: **PAPER DOWN. ANOTHER DRINK BEING POURED**

RAVEN There's a new Ambiance Man now, a fat German by the name of Ludwig Cartel. He's been moving pretty fast, taking over the old Gold organization. He's keeping a lot of the boys on the payroll, though. Or at least one. A quiet, rumbly body guard by the name of Prowse.

SFX: **LOUD DRINKING NOISE**

RAVEN Cue the goddamn saxophone.

V-1 (Very faint) Cue music, roll tape.

MUSIC CUE: **SAXOPHONE UP, THEN DOWN AND OUT**

END