

sapience dirge  
by  
Matthew S. Martin

Based on,  
Motel Chronicles Short  
7/23/80  
Homestead Valley, Ca.  
By  
Sam Shepard

Current Revisions by  
(Matthew S. Martin, 5/01/04)

1

BLACK SCREEN

1

Something is scraping and shuffling. Aluminum and rubber against pavement.

Shuffle... Shuffle...

Scrape...

Shuffle... Shuffle...

Scrape...

Together in an rhythm they create the "song".

FADE IN:

2

TITLE CARD

2

(White letters. Black background. The "song" continues.)

"...never did far away charge so close "

-CESAR VALLEJO

CUT TO:

3

EXT. STREET - EARLY AM

3

TIGHT SHOT OF THE LEGS OF AN ALUMINIUM LAWN CHAIR

The chair is in the middle of neighborhood street. The camera looks through the legs down the road. The cheap metal scrapes across the pavement. We see that these legs are an instrument in the "song".

Shuffle... Shuffle...

Scrape...

Shuffle... Shuffle...

Scrape...

WIDE SHOT OF NEIGHBORHOOD

The "song" **plays** on. Houses pass through the frame. The neighborhood is silent. The houses are not disturbed. Except for one. A light glows through it's blinds.

\*

CUT TO:

4 INT. HOME - THAT MOMENT

4

TIGHT SHOT OF BLINDS

A hand slowly pries open one of the slats. A face enters the frame in profile. Only the eyes can be seen. They look out into the neighborhood. This is our narrator. His voice has a slow, southern drawl that is thin and twisted.

\*  
\*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

There are people in this town that are trying to pass their death on to other people.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

5

There are three people shuffling down the street. Two are women (late 20's - early 30's) dressed in dirty, white nurses uniforms. The third is a man (late 20's) dressed in a ripped blue tuxedo outfit. All three are pushing/pulling an cheap, aluminum, lawn chair down the street. Metal and rubber against pavement. The "song" continues.

SHUFFLE... SHUFFLE...

SCRAPE...

SHUFFLE... SHUFFLE...

SCRAPE...

We see that these are the musicians.

\*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

All night long I listen and watch from this window. I've only seen 'em from an distance.

\*

They stop under the lamp.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Always at this same street corner they stop.

Nurse # 1 stares at a street lamp.

INSERT - TIGHT SHOT OF LAMP - NURSE'S POV

The electric hum of the lamp shifts to a sizzle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE - LAMP'S POV (48fps)

The face of Nurse #1 is being washed out by the light. She raises her hand to shield her eyes. Tuxedo Man & Nurse # 2 are to busy arguing and looking over their shoulders to notice.

FADE TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

6 INT. HOME - THAT MOMENT 6

MEDIUM SHOT OF EYES IN PROFILE

Our narrator's eyes **squint and give a slight** twitch. \*

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Not so strange it seems to me,  
after watching 'em for so long. \*  
Sometimes I wonder if anyone else  
is lookin'? **Just like me, starin'** \*  
**out into the world and watchin' 'em** \*  
**out there.** \*

CUT TO:

7 EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER 7

The group continues to argue. The chair is being pushed between them, like a game of Hot Potato.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Huddled in their frantic group.  
Arguing in whispers. Trying to hide  
their faces.

The group resumes their shuffle down the street. The "song" returns.

Shuffle... Shuffle...

Scrape...

Shuffle... Shuffle...

Scrape...

TIGHT SHOT OF THEIR FEET SHUFFLING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All three are wearing Velcro strapped shoes, with thick, dirty rubber soles.

\*

NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
Sneaking around the neighborhood in  
their **cheap, little** tennis shoes.

\*

CUT TO:

8 INT. HOME - THAT MOMENT

8

TIGHT SHOT OF NARRATOR'S EYES IN PROFILE

His watching continues in silence.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
I know who they are, but I'll never  
reveal their names.

CUT TO:

9 EXT. STREET - MOMENT LATER (48FPS)

9

TIGHT SHOT OF THEIR HANDS PUSHING THE CHAIR AWAY, GRABBING  
IT. THE CHAIR ALWAYS STAYING IN THE CENTER OF THE THREE.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
That goddamn'd chair is the center  
of their argument. The source of  
all their terror.

\*

CUT TO:

10 EXT - TRIO'S HOUSE - MORNING - FLASHBACK

10

The chair sits all alone in the front yard.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Tale around town is, that fucking  
thing suddenly appeared one morning  
in their front yard.

TIGHT SHOT OF FRONT WINDOW

An slat in the blind is raised. A set of eyes pokes through.

NURSE #1  
Oh my god.

The slat is quickly dropped. It opens again. A different set  
of eyes poke through.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NURSE #2

What the hell is that doing there?

The slat is dropped. The slat raises. A third set of eyes  
peeks out.

TUXEDO MAN

I don't know.

NURSE #1 (O.C.)

Why did you put it there?

TUXEDO MAN

I don't... No, I didn't put it  
there. I'm not the one that's  
insane.

\*

The slat is closed.

WIDE SHOT OF TRIO'S HOUSE

The front door opens. The trio sheepishly walk out the front  
door. The chair stares them down. They huddle together. They  
approach the chair. They circle it and stare down.

ANGLE CHAIR'S POV

Their 3 faces stare down. Tux Man is 12 o'clock high. Nurses  
#1 & #2 are at 5 and 8 o'clock low.

TUXEDO MAN (CONT'D)

We shouldn't touch it anymore than  
we have to.

NURSE #1

We have to get rid of it.

NURSE #2

We can burn it.

TUXEDO MAN

No. That won't work.

NURSE #2

Why not?

TUXEDO MAN

Look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Nurse #2 leans towards the camera. Her eyes squint. Her lips move silently as she reads.

CUT TO:

11 INSERT - CHAIR'S WARNING TAG 11

It is homemade and written in an sloppy hand. It reads:

WARNING - EXPOSING THIS PRODUCT TO EXTREME HEAT OR FLAME CAN CAUSE VIOLENT INJURY OR DEATH. \*

CUT TO:

TIGHT SHOT/ 360° PAN OF FACES NODDING IN AGREEMENT

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They all agreed it was an omen.  
A sure sign of their imminent  
death.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - FLASHBACK 12

The chair now sits in the front yard of someone else's house. The trio scramble away in different directions.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Now they believe that by leaving  
the chair in someone else's front  
yard their death can be averted.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. TRIO HOUSE - MORNING - FLASHBACK 13

The house is locked up tight. Nice and quiet. The camera pans down. The chair sits quietly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But each morning the chair is back  
in their own front yard.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. HOUSE - MORNING - PRESENT 14

The trio stop and stare. They whisper into each other's ear. They nod in agreement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Now they're gonna leave that damned  
thing in my yard.

\*  
\*

The trio drag the chair into the grass

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Hell, they seem so terrified of  
getting caught. I couldn't stand to  
stop 'em.

\*  
\*

The trio find the right spot for the chair. They pause for a  
moment and break for the road.

CUT TO:

15 INT. HOME - THAT MOMENT 15

EXTREME TIGHT SHOT OF EYES

As the eyes look on, the fleeing of the trio is heard.  
Without the chair the "song" begins to fade and change. The  
camera pans to the Narrator's ear. It fills the frame. The  
new sound of the fleeing trio intensifies.

\*  
\*

CUT TO:

16 EXT. - STREET - THAT MOMENT (48FPS) 16

MEDIUM SHOT OF TUXEDO MAN RUNNING TOWARDS THE CAMERA AT FULL  
SPEED

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I can hear 'em running.

\*

JUMP CUT TO:

17 EXT. - STREET - THAT MOMENT (48FPS) 17

MEDIUM SHOT OF NURSE #1 RUNNING TOWARDS THE CAMERA AT FULL  
SPEED

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Running for blocks, at top speed.

JUMP CUT TO:

18 EXT. - STREET - THAT MOMENT (48FPS) 18

MEDIUM SHOT OF NURSE #2 RUNNING TOWARDS THE CAMERA AT FULL  
SPEED

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As though that chair might get up  
and chase 'em.

\*  
\*

CUT TO:

19 EXT. HOME - DAY - LATER

19

The chair sits in the narrator's yard. This shot is the same as the flashback of the Trio's house.

TIGHT SHOT OF BLINDS

His eyes peer through.

WIDE SHOT OF HOUSE

The Narrator walks out. We see that he is in late 20's. His dress is casual bordering on sloppy. He has a face that has not slept or seen daylight in days. He heads out the front door towards the chair. He grabs it and throws it into the street. He turns to go back inside. The camera follows just over his right shoulder. A tumbling sound is heard off screen. The narrator stops. He turns around slowly and stares into the camera.

\*

ANGLE NARRATOR'S POV

The chair is back in his yard. He grabs the chair and walks back out to the road and places the chair in the median. Looking around he finds a large concrete slab and places it on the legs of the chair. Satisfied, he runs for the safety of his house.

CUT TO:

20 INT. HOME - DAY - LATER

20

The narrator sits in his living and stairs out the window.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Now I'm gonna just sit here and  
watch.

The camera begins to dolly in on his eyes

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

All day and night if I have to.  
I've to be sure it stays. Right  
there where it belongs. Car lights  
and the breeze will hit it.

\*  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:                   NARRATOR (CONT'D)  
                  But, I'll make sure it doesn't  
                  move. Not one inch.

By this point the camera is again tight on his eyes. They close. He is asleep, finally.

BEAT

His eyes jump open with a panic. He sprints to the window. His eyes stare through the blinds/into the camera. \*

BEAT

His thin lips crack a slight smile.

CUT TO:

21           BLACK SCREEN

21

THE END.

(MORE)