

MAD MEN

"Walking Distance"

by
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NOTE: This story takes place immediately following the final episode of Season Three, in which Don Draper's wife informed him of her decision to divorce him and Draper's agency was sold to McCann-Erickson, precipitating Don and his co-workers' bold move to form their own start-up agency operating out of a hotel room.

HISTORICAL NOTE: The manner in which Rod Serling speaks differs from his on-screen vocabulary, notably in terms of profanity. This is derived from never-broadcast candid recordings of Serling.

A NOTE AS TO LOGISTICS: Various locales in this story have been chosen for period verisimilitude (Tavern on the Green, the Ritz Carlton, Cedar Tavern). Naturally, in the case of a real shoot, these could be adjusted to more generic settings to accommodate budget requirements.

MAD MEN

"Walking Distance"

EXT. NEW YORK RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

A SCREAM in the night.

ECHOING off the brownstones to silence.

No one stirs. Snow glints in the moonlight.

INT. PEGGY OLSON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She sleeps, unaware.

INT. DON DRAPER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dark, two figures screwing hot and heavy, woman on top. They finish, panting.

WOMAN

God, you're fantastic.

DON runs a hand through his tousled hair, expressionless.

DON

Your money's on the table.

She drops the act, climbs out of bed.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Room 435, the ad hoc office of the new Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce. Morning, and BERT COOPER, JOAN HARRIS, LANE PRYCE and Peggy are busy at work. ROGER STERLING bustles in, wearing an overcoat.

ROGER

Jesus, it's the end of March and still winter. I feel like I've been cold forever.

He moves to peer out the window.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I don't even have the blues, I have the grays. Gray sky, gray buildings, pavements.

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)
If it stormed, I could at least
play at being a good sport.

COOPER
You're in a cheery mood.

PETE CAMPBELL enters holding a copy of Variety.

PETE
Morning all, I bring glad tidings.

ROGER
And here's the Hallmark Christmas
card. It's March already!

PETE
You know how we've been looking to
stick it to McCann-Erickson and put
ourselves on the map?

LANE
I believe absconding with thirty-
two million dollars worth of their
clients was a respectable opening
salvo.

PETE
We've hit them in the pocket book.
Now let's go for the throat.
(waves paper, tantalizing)
Variety, the weekly edition.

ROGER
I'm more of a Wall Street Journal,
New Yorker man.

LANE
They have a word for that.

ROGER
Intellectual? Prosperous?

LANE
Provincial.

PETE
There's this thing called the West
Coast, it's on the other side of
the country.

ROGER
Is there a point here?

PETE
 (tosses Variety)
 Twilight Zone's been cancelled.

ROGER
 You're kidding!
 (beat)
 So?

COOPER
 (getting it)
 That was McCann's show. Johnson
 and Johnson, Kimberly Clark,
 General Foods.

PETE
 (nods)
 Rod Serling's in town to meet with
 Tom Moore at ABC, see if they'll
 pick up the show.

LANE
 (thinking)
 Serling's under contract to McCann
 for all their commercials. But
 with TWILIGHT ZONE gone there might
 be opportunity...

PETE
 His agent's Alden Schwimmer.

COOPER
 It's a fair bet he won't be open to
 considering us against a powerhouse
 like McCann.

PEGGY
 I don't understand, why is Rod
 Serling important?

LANE
 He's a rara avis, my dear. Univers-
 ally liked, trusted, lauded wher-
 ever he goes --

PETE
 He's like Walter Cronkite -- only
 Cronkite isn't hawking Chester-
 fields.

COOPER
 We could plug him into anywhere we
 need a touch of class. Underarm
 deodorant, mosquito repellent...

EXT. PIERRE HOTEL - DAY

Don's heading for the entrance. SUZANNE FARRELL rushes up to him.

SUZANNE

Don.

DON

Shouldn't you be at school?

SUZANNE

Mrs. Tarcher is covering for me. You haven't taken my calls, answered my letters. I had to come.

DON

Suzanne --

SUZANNE

Don... everyone's heard. We know you're getting a divorce.

Don's eyes evade.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

I see your wife, she brings Bobby and Sally to school. She smiles at me, everything seems the same, but...

Her eyes glisten with tears.

SUZANNE (CONT'D)

I can't sleep, I worry all the time, that maybe this was my fault, maybe I--

DON

It had nothing to do with you. She didn't find out... about us.

SUZANNE

(perplexed)

Then what...?

DON

I'm freezing out here.

He turns toward the building. She grabs his wrist.

SUZANNE

Don. I still want you. Want us.

He brings his eyes back to her, with no warmth.

DON
I don't live there anymore... It's
not convenient.

SUZANNE
Convenient?

DON
I've got work to do.

He enters the building, leaving her standing in the snow.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL - DAY

Cooper, Roger, Pete and Peggy continuing to strategize.

ROGER
We go to Alden, we'll be shot out
of the water.

COOPER
But Rod's here in Manhattan, and if
someone happens to bump into the
man himself at the--?

PETE
(checking Variety)
Ritz Carlton.

COOPER
Ritz Carlton, and romances him just
right...

PETE
So who's got the vibrating fingers?

COOPER
I'm not the jet-setting type.

ROGER
Rod's a man of the people...

PETE
So that rules you out.

LANE
(to Pete)
And somehow, I doubt you'd have the
proper finesse.

PEGGY
 (eager)
 I could do it.

PETE
 Please. He's used to starlets.

COOPER
 (to Lane)
 And being British, you have a four-
 iron stuck up your keister.

LANE
 We need a master of charm to
 beguile him. A snake hypnotizing a
 rabbit.

Don enters, late as usual. All eye him knowingly.

DON
 What'd I miss?

ROGER
 Rod Serling, the Twilight Zone guy?
 He's doing a brief swim off our
 shores -- and guess who just got
 elected to reel him in.

DON
 Twilight Zone? I've never watched
 it.

PETE
 That's a propitious beginning...

COOPER
 You should bone up.

DON
 It's not exactly like you can watch
 a TV show any time you want.

PEGGY
 There's one on tonight at ten.
 CBS.

DON
 I know the network.

PETE
 I've got a friend at Viacom.
 (off Don's confusion)
 The syndication arm of CBS.

COOPER

At least until the courts force them to divest.

PETE

Maybe he can send some sixteen-millimeter prints.

ROGER

Get on it.

INT. MID-PRICE HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Lunch time, post-coital with Duck. Peggy looks distant. Duck's breathing hard, sated.

DUCK

I think I saw the Virgin Mary on that one...

She climbs out of bed, pulling on clothes.

PEGGY

Let's do something.

DUCK

I thought we just did.

PEGGY

No, I mean tonight.

She grabs the New York Times off the dresser, scans the events section.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

The New York Woodwind Quintet's performing... Judy Collins' at the Town Hall... John Vaccaro's reciting at the Poet's Theatre...

Duck starts dressing.

DUCK

(dismissively)

Entertainments... As you get older, you find repetition doesn't add luster. It just becomes a bore.

PEGGY

(off the bed)

Then why do this over and over?

DUCK
It reminds me I'm alive.

PEGGY
You need to be reminded?

DUCK
(off the Times)
I don't see why you'd want to do
any of that.

She scrutinizes him.

PEGGY
I don't see why you wouldn't.

Dressed, she opens the door and exits.

INT. DON DRAPER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Don sits smoking and drinking in his T-shirt in darkness in front of the TV, watching a scene from the Twilight Zone episode "The Bewitchin' Pool."

Onscreen, a bitchy MOTHER and FATHER face JEB and SPORT, their son and daughter, beside their expensive swimming pool.

MOTHER (ON TV)
Children, your father and I are
going to divorce.

Don sits up, surprised. Generally this is a subject not talked about on television, taboo.

MOTHER (ON TV) (CONT'D)
Now, if you don't know what that
means, well it means that he's
going to live in one place and I'm
going to live in another -- just as
far away as we can get.

FATHER (ON TV)
And what we want to know from you
kids is do you want to live with me
or do you want to live with her?

SPORT
We don't have to stay with neither
one o' ya! C'mon, Jeb!

The kids dive into the pool -- and disappear. Their parents are frantic. WHIP PAN on the TV to ROD SERLING.

SERLING (ON TV)

A swimming pool not unlike any other pool, a structure built of tile and cement and money... But to Jeb and Sport Sharewood, this pool holds mysteries not dreamed of by the building contractor...

Don takes a drag on the cigarette, a red point in the darkness.

This is all hitting too close to home. He rises, reaches for his shirt.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Dimly lit. Don sits at one end of the bar, drinking alone. At the other end sits AGNES, past her prime but well assembled. Don glances her way.

AGNES

It's dark in here or you wouldn't even be weighing the possibility. I'm too old for you. Hell, I'm too old for myself.

She studies him.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Divorced, huh? And newly-minted.

DON

How'd you know?

AGNES

You're playing with your ring finger and there's no ring... Slide on over. We can at least have a conversation.

He joins her, extends a hand.

DON

Don Draper.

AGNES

Agnes Wainwright. How long?

DON

Let's just say I'm still licking my wounds.

AGNES

Helpful hint: when picking up women don't refer to your ex as a bitch, it's a real turn-off.

DON

I'll keep that in mind.

AGNES

Kids?

DON

Three.

AGNES

So she gets the house in Connecticut and the offspring, while you pay through the nose and live in a fourth-floor walk-up.

DON

Something like that.

AGNES

Let me guess -- you thought you'd feel liberated, like the Goodyear blimp released from its tether. Instead you just feel marooned.

Don looks away, doesn't want to discuss it.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Come on, we're never going to see each other again, think how liberating that is... You ever lived in the city before?

DON

Not for a long time... and it's different now. Sordid and shabby and sad.

AGNES

You talking about New York or your life?

DON

I take it you're on the other side of the equation.

AGNES

I got the furs and jewels and the house that echoes.

(leans in close)

(MORE)

AGNES (CONT'D)

Here's the thing about this whole ghastly experience -- there's no more "they'll do it," nothing on automatic, you have to be mindful of everything. The laundry, the food, the kids -- you got visitation?

DON

Weekends.

AGNES

(nods)

Have to book time to see them, figure out what to do with them when they're there... But worst of all is the time by yourself...

She's looking beyond him, to a place dark and private and all her own.

AGNES (CONT'D)

You don't want to see anyone, do anything. You're a walking mass of scar tissue... The nights are endless, and you try to fill the silence but it won't fill. What's inside you is bigger than what's outside... and it's empty.

She comes around, covers with a laugh.

AGNES (CONT'D)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph -- make some friends, join a bowling league, rise up and brush off the ashes.

Don takes a swig of his drink, recovers a bit of his bravado.

DON

What makes you think any of that is me?

AGNES

It's Friday night... and here you are.

EXT. BETTY DRAPER'S HOUSE - DAY

Weekend morning. Don emerges from his Cadillac, walks to the front door. Before he gets there Betty opens it, revealing herself and BOBBY, who's bundled up and ready to go.

DON
Where's Sally?

BETTY
(to Bobby)
Stay here.

She takes Don aside.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Whenever they're with either of us lately they're clumped together like Siamese twins. I thought maybe if you took Bobby for the day and I took Sally, they'd feel --

DON
Valued.

BETTY
Yes.

DON
(nods)
How you doing, Bets?

BETTY
Good.
(not wanting to say more)
So. I'll take Sally to the beauty parlor and you can have some time in the city man-to-man. Then you can have them both next weekend.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Don walking along as Bobby chatters.

BOBBY
Mommy and Henry are gonna send us to summer camp in the summer and we got to meet the counselors and they asked us if we had nicknames and I said, "Everybody calls me Chip."

DON
Nobody calls you Chip.

BOBBY
I know, but I've always wanted them to. Did you ever go to camp, Dad?

DON
No.

BOBBY
Did you have a nickname as a kid?

Don weighs it, then:

DON
No.

INT. SODA FOUNTAIN - DAY

Bobby slurps on a root beer float. Don joins him with a paper.

DON
Here we go, let's see what's playing... The Incredible Mister Limpet... Flipper... Alakazam the Great...

BOBBY
They all sound great!

DON
Jesus.
(decides, rising)
Let's see something we'll both enjoy.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Don and Bobby watching Dr. Strangelove, Don engaged, munching popcorn, Bobby bored out of his mind.

DR. STRANGELOVE
(onscreen)
Mein Fuhrer, I can walk!

INT. TAVERN ON THE GREEN - NIGHT

An early dinner. Peggy sits eating with her mother, KATHERINE OLSON.

PEGGY
So, did you like it?

KATHERINE OLSON
She was a tramp.

PEGGY

Ma, you're talking about Fanny Brice.

KATHERINE OLSON

The way she chased after that gambler, they think that's appropriate to put in a Broadway musical? And it wasn't funny enough to call it Funny Girl.

PEGGY

How's your chicken?

KATHERINE OLSON

I've had better.

PEGGY

I'm glad you could come into the city.

KATHERINE OLSON

You know, you're inviting disaster living the way you do.

PEGGY

Could we not have this conversation?

KATHERINE OLSON

You see that article in the Times the other day about that girl who got murdered, Kitty Genovese?

PEGGY

I saw it, Ma.

KATHERINE OLSON

You think the world is an amusement park, a band concert. People make safe choices because they're safe.

PEGGY

They make fearful choices because they're afraid.

KATHERINE OLSON

Kitty Genovese was stabbed and clubbed to death while 38 people did nothin', that's the city for you.

PEGGY

She wasn't clubbed.

KATHERINE OLSON

That's a fine distinction you're making there.

PEGGY

And besides it was Queens.

KATHERINE OLSON

You think Greenwich Village is any different? God watches us, he punishes us for our sins.

PEGGY

What if there's no God, Ma, what if there's no one watching, keeping score? What if we live and die and that's it, and all that matters is what we do with our time right here, right now?

KATHERINE OLSON

Terrible things happen to good people, Margaret, to innocents. You gotta watch yourself every minute. Look at Timmy.

Peggy's appalled. They never talk about her dead brother.

PEGGY

He was eight years old, watching the sunset. You're saying what, that God sent a drunk in an Oldsmobile flipping end over end to crush the life out of him?

KATHERINE OLSON

(in tears)

I'm saying he was distracted by pleasure!

Peggy rises, throws money down.

PEGGY

I'll walk you to your train.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Don and Bobby emerge.

DON

Well, that certainly delivered on your entertainment dollar.

BOBBY
 (unenthusiastic)
 Uh-huh.

Don reacts as he spies across the street

A MAN

emerging from a cab, lighting one cigarette off the end of another, tightly wound, serious suit, intense eyes.

This is ROD SERLING. He enters the Ritz Carlton.

DON

digs in a pocket and hails a cab. He presses some bills into Bobby's hand, as the cab pulls up.

DON
 Take this home and wait for your
 mother and Sally.

Bobby's thrown, but Don heads off. An afterthought:

DON (CONT'D)
 And don't cook anything or operate
 machinery till they get home!

INT. RITZ CARLTON BAR - DAY

Rod at the bar, the bartender just sliding him his drink.
 Don settles on the stool next to him.

DON
 Let me get that, Mr. Serling.

SERLING
 What say I buy you one instead, in
 case I don't like what you're
 selling?

DON
 (to bartender)
 Seven and seven.

The bartender pours. Don lights a cigarette.

DON (CONT'D)
 What's to say I'm not just a fan?

SERLING

Credit me with some intelligence.

Don extends a hand.

DON

Don Draper of Sterling Cooper
Draper Pryce. My last firm was
just bought by McCann-Erickson.

SERLING

And I was hoping you were a life
insurance salesman. You know, it's
funny -- I was just asking myself
how this day could possibly get
worse.

DON

I take it things didn't go well
with ABC.

SERLING

(eyes him)

A man who does his research.

(swigs his drink)

Tom Moore wanted to do something
with vampires and witches and
werewolves, a real crapfest... I
just finished telling the press
about it in no uncertain terms.

DON

You think that was judicious?

SERLING

You mean in the fact that there are
only three networks and if I piss
off just three guys I'm out of a
career?

DON

More or less.

SERLING

I've won six Emmys, more than any
other writer in this benighted
medium. Know what that buys me?
The right to be shit on by a higher
class of executive.

Serling signals the bartender for another drink.

SERLING (CONT'D)

Did you say Sterling was one of your partners? You know, most folks call me Rod Sterling. Nobody ever gets Chayefsky wrong.

Serling lights a cigarette, contemplates the smoke.

SERLING (CONT'D)

Once upon a time, we thought we could create the equivalent of the Broadway stage, live, in every living room in America... Instead, they drove a stake through its heart and put on the Beverly Hillbillies...

(takes a drag)

In a year or two, NBC will go full color on all its shows, then the rest will follow. Why? Because color's a pretty bauble. It's easier for it to be meaningless without anyone noticing.

DON

For a millionaire TV star, you're a pretty glum guy.

SERLING

Lemme tell ya something -- when you're on top of the heap there's only one direction left.

Don stubs out his smoke, rising.

DON

Let me stake you to a dinner. A t-bone's not going to cost you your soul. No hard sell, I promise.

SERLING

(considers)

You're on, but I'll hold you to it.

He gets off his stool. Don's surprised to see that Serling's only five five.

SERLING (CONT'D)

I know, I look taller on television. And better looking. I should hire you to be me in real life.

Don grins.

INT. RITZ CARLTON RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Don and Serling over dinner. They're a number of drinks further along. Rod chain smokes.

SERLING

I turned forty a few months back, contacted my old paratroop division, arranged to jump out of a C-124... I thought I'd be reasserting my manhood. Instead it just played out like a publicity stunt.

DON

What was your division?

SERLING

Eleventh Airborne.

DON

(off himself)
First Infantry, Korea.

SERLING

The Big Red One... I hear those winters were pretty fierce, like what we get up north in Ithaca. Wind chill of sixty below, with the wind off the lake.

DON

Only my neighbors weren't going to Cornell, they were out to kill me.

SERLING

Sounds like Hollywood. You got kids, Don?

DON

Two boys and a girl. You?

SERLING

Girls, Jody and Nan. They're back in Pacific Palisades with Carol, my wife... The sun's shining there, there's no such thing as winter.

TWO GIGGLY YOUNG GIRLS come up, holding pieces of paper.

FIRST GIRL

Mr. Serling, would you mind--?

SERLING
 (signing)
 Not at all.

SECOND GIRL
 You're our favorite science fiction
 writer!

They depart. Serling shakes his head.

SERLING
 Science fiction... I wanted to
 write about Negro lynchings,
 crooked politicians... but the
 censors, those pricks...
 (raises a toast)
 So I made my characters robots and
 two-headed aliens and skunked 'em!

DON
 For someone who didn't want to
 write science fiction, you've
 certainly written a shitload.

SERLING
 Ask me about the future, go ahead,
 ask me.

Don waves -- be my guest.

SERLING (CONT'D)
 You'll carry your phone in your
 pocket, take meetings by TV screen,
 and the only time you'll fly is
 when you want to bang a
 stewardess...
 (eyes Don meaningfully)
 But you'll still wake up every day
 of your life with a gut ache. The
 human condition will never
 change... just the toys.

They let the dust settle.

DON
 You're not going to do the vampire
 show --

SERLING
 Hell, no.

DON
 So what else you got?

SERLING

I'm chewing on a notion about this liberal cowboy who rides the West helping people.

DON

A loner.

SERLING

That's a catchy title.

DON

Won't last a season, and when it's gone no one will remember it.

SERLING

Now you're in the predicting business.

DON

I know what people like.

SERLING

You want to con them because you're afraid of talking to them.

Serling finishes his drink, signals the waiter for another.

SERLING (CONT'D)

I can't wait all night for the shoe to drop. Tell me what you came to tell me.

DON

It's nothing you don't know. You're a great writer but you're an equally great personality. That makes you valuable.

SERLING

Selling toilet paper.

DON

Or Cadillacs or all-electric homes, for that matter.

SERLING

How valuable?

DON

Like you said, more Emmys than any other writer, and so far what have you hawked? Cigarettes, after-shave, men's socks...

(MORE)

DON (CONT'D)

I could make you the most successful spokesman in the history of America. You could earn more in an afternoon than a year of writing Playhouse 90.

SERLING

Playhouse 90's over.

DON

So is Twilight Zone... but you're not.

SERLING

I'm under contract to McCann.

DON

Were under contract... until your show ended.

Serling chews on that.

SERLING

Don, I'm gonna tell you something even they don't know yet -- I'm through with commercials, kaput... Last year, I'm at the Emmys, up for best series. I'd won two years running. They had this big screen showing the broadcast... Suddenly there I am forty feet tall, blowing the suds off a head of Schlitz.

DON

Let me guess, you didn't win.

SERLING

There are only two kinds of class - first class and no class. You think I'll ever live that down? It'll be on my tombstone -- "humiliated himself with beer commercial."

Rod downs his drink, lights a new cigarette with the stub of the old one.

SERLING (CONT'D)

I'm used up, burnt out. I smoke four packs a day, drink more than is good for me and don't have a fucking clue what I'm doing.

He rises and shakes Don's hand.

SERLING (CONT'D)

You're a good man for a commercial
whore, Don... Sorry I couldn't make
your night.

EXT. RITZ CARLTON - NIGHT

Serling and Don emerge. The doorman hails Serling a cab.

DON

Heading home?

SERLING

(shakes his head)

We have a boat house on Cayuga
Lake. I'm thinking of going there,
maybe I'll recharge.

Serling tips the doorman and climbs in. As it drives off, he
calls back airily.

SERLING (CONT'D)

Or just blow my brains out!

And he's gone. Don stands in the icy wind.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL - STERLING COOPER DRAPER PRYCE - DAY

Morning, a hive of activity, Roger, Pete, Peggy, Lane, Joan.
Don enters.

ROGER

How'd it go with Serling?

DON

Got him in my sights but didn't bag
him.

ROGER

That's too bad.

Don notices a stack of big film cans.

DON

What are those?

PEGGY

Prints of Twilight Zone. Viacom
shipped them over.

DON

Great, I'll use them as paper-weights... On another front, I just got a confidential lead that NBC's going full-color on all its shows by '66.

LANE

To sell more of its parent company's color TV consoles.

ROGER

And you can be certain RCA will spend a fortune promoting that...

DON

Anyway, we could position Admiral to benefit from the slipstream.

LANE

You're suggesting we divert the lion's share of their budget toward color televisions.

PETE

We'll still hit the problem we always hit -- how do you sell color TVs in a commercial people are watching in black and white?

Peggy's been listening, thoughtful.

PEGGY

They're not watching in black and white, only the TV is.

PETE

I'd call that a pointless distinction.

DON

(to Peggy)

What are you thinking?

She steps to the center of the group.

PEGGY

We see a family on a picnic. Mom, dad, two kids, surrounded by flowers... and the announcer says, "There's more to life than black and white."

PETE

But they're seeing it in black and white!

PEGGY

In their minds they're seeing it in color...

DON

And realize what they're missing.

LANE

Brilliant, simply brilliant.

DON

(to Peggy)

Get to work on it.

She nods, moves off.

INT. GIMBELS - FURNITURE DEPARTMENT - DAY

A SALESMAN is showing Don a selection of children's bunk beds.

DON

It's for a boy and girl. Is there a lot of assembly required?

SALESMAN

We can provide that, for a nominal fee.

Betty storms up to him.

BETTY

Don, I need a word with you.

DON

Usually, a conversation begins with hello.

(to Salesman)

Excuse me.

He takes Betty aside, down an aisle.

DON (CONT'D)

How'd you find me?

BETTY

I stopped by your office, Pete told me...

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

I can't believe you just put Bobby in a cab because it was inconvenient for you to have him with you.

DON

He told you that?

BETTY

He didn't have to, I know how you operate. Our children aren't ornaments you can discard on a whim, Don.

DON

Don't lecture me.

BETTY

You treated me as expendable -- I won't have you doing that to them.

DON

You came all way into the city to tell me this?

BETTY

Henry's having some suits fitted. We're meeting for dinner.

DON

How nice for him.

BETTY

I've decided to keep the children with me this weekend.

DON

You've decided.

BETTY

Henry's invited us all on a getaway to the Rockefeller estate outside Tarrytown... This will give you time to think about what you're doing. About who you're choosing to be.

DON

Bets, let's talk about this over lunch.

BETTY

We don't have lunch anymore. Goodbye, Don.

She departs.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL - STERLING COOPER DRAPER PRYCE - DAY

Don enters, Pete spies him.

PETE
Wife find you?

DON
Ex-wife... And next time she comes
sniffing round I'd appreciate your
not sharing my whereabouts.

PETE
Hell Don, I knew you were buying
bunk beds, not going hot and heavy
with Jayne Mansfield and Mamie Van
Doren.

But Don's not listening. Instead he's looking out the window
at the snow... and all that gray.

PETE (CONT'D)
It's not exactly life and death.

DON
What...?

PETE
I said it's--

DON
I heard what you said.
(turns back to him)
Tell Joan to cancel my meetings...
There's somewhere I need to be.

INT. DON'S CAR - DRIVING - DUSK

Don's heading upstate, over a snowy landscape. He rolls down
the window and lets the cold air play over him.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL - STERLING COOPER DRAPER PRYCE - DUSK

Lane sees Joan at the door, the rest of the staff seemingly
gone.

LANE
Goodnight, Joan... Give my best to
that captain of yours.

She exits. Lane hears a sound in the other room, sees Peggy's still working.

LANE (CONT'D)
 Good lord, Miss Olson, do you know
 what time it's gotten to be?

PEGGY
 I was trying to get that Admiral
 wording just right.

LANE
 You really must develop a more
 lackadaisical work ethic...

A KNOCK at the front door. He goes to answer it -- it's REBECCA PRYCE, his wife.

LANE (CONT'D)
 Why Rebecca, my dear... I took you
 for room service.

He waves her in.

LANE (CONT'D)
 I thought you'd be primping for the
 gala tonight.

REBECCA
 I was having High Tea in the
 Rotunda and sat thinking the
 longest time... Lane, I came to
 tell you I'm not going.

LANE
 It's half-six. You waited until
 less than two hours before the
 event to inform me?

REBECCA
 To make endless small talk, peer at
 a panoply of garish, vulgar art, to
 what purpose? I just can't.

LANE
 You're turning into quite the
 hermit, my dear. And not on a
 mountaintop but in the most
 exciting city in the world.

REBECCA
 Spare me your advert hyperbole.

LANE
It's not hyperbole!

In the other room, Peggy looks up at the sound. Lane lowers his voice.

LANE (CONT'D)
This is Rome at the height of its glory, England when the sun never set on the Empire. It's here, now, and you are squandering it!

She shakes her head. He speaks more gently.

LANE (CONT'D)
They always say British food is terrible, but it's not. You just have to be able to discriminate between the good and the bad.

He comes up close.

LANE (CONT'D)
You're at a feast... and you're not picking up the fork.

CLOSE ON PEGGY

She hears the front door CLOSE, looks up expecting to see them both gone. But Lane stands alone.

ON LANE

Peggy approaches him with sympathy.

PEGGY
Is there anything you'd like?

He looks at her, considering.

EXT. CAYUGA LAKE - NIGHT

Don walks through the moonlight over snowy terrain toward the lighted window of the lake house.

He draws up to the window and looks in to see...

INT. SERLING'S CAYUGA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Rod Serling grimly holding an M-1 rifle.

EXT. SERLING'S CAYUGA LAKE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Don reacts in surprise, then BANGS on the window.

INT. SERLING'S CAYUGA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Serling jumps, startled, spins around.

SERLING
Jesus Christ!

He peers through the window, spies Don. Gestures him around to the door. Don enters.

SERLING (CONT'D)
You're lucky I didn't shoot you.
What the hell are you doing here?

DON
(off M-1)
What are you doing with that?

Serling eyes it.

SERLING
I was cleaning it, if you must know. Taking a stroll down memory lane. You didn't think--?
(gets it)
I'm desperate, but not that desperate.

DON
You sure about that...?

Serling doesn't respond. Instead, he gestures Don to the bar. Don pours. Serling settles into a rocker, cradling the gun.

SERLING
I made my living with this for three years... Signed up right out of high school. They put me in an airplane and dropped me into a jungle.

Don hands Serling a drink, sips his own.

SERLING (CONT'D)
I take it you just happened to be in the neighborhood.

DON
Change of plans. I decided to pay
a call.

SERLING
And see if my moral code had
slipped in the interim?

DON
If you like.

SERLING
How'd you find me?

DON
Rustic driving a snow plow... I was
surprised he told me.

SERLING
They're not exactly over-awed by me
out here... When Hemingway died,
one old codger said, "Shame about
that Hemingway feller dying... Make
it easier for you, though."

Don smiles tightly. Serling studies him.

SERLING (CONT'D)
You didn't come here to convince me
to sell cat food, did you?

DON
No.

SERLING
(nods)
It's like toddlers across a room
recognizing each other... Lost
souls.

They sip their drinks in silence.

INT. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM - NIGHT

A mixture of folks dressed to the nines and the bohemian art
crowd. Lane is in tux, Peggy nicely-but-modestly turned out.
They study a Francis Bacon canvas entitled "Lying Figure with
Hypodermic Syringe."

LANE
My wife thinks they're grotesque.

PEGGY

I like them. They're truthful.

They move on.

LANE

When I was a lad I was quite enamored of the Impressionists. There was an old potting shed in an abandoned field. I set up something of an impromptu studio and started painting.

PEGGY

How were you?

LANE

Very much the novice, but I flatter myself I had a knack. Soon enough though my father found out and put paid to that. Told me I'd have to go into business, didn't want me ending up like Van Gogh.

PEGGY

Epileptic and a suicide.

LANE

Mm. And so I went into advertising. It was as near as I could get to fine art and still be appropriate.

PEGGY

Where's your father now?

LANE

Oh, dead, quite dead.

PEGGY

And you're here.

Lane nods, appreciative. A waiter comes by with a tray. They select canapes.

LANE

We haven't had much opportunity to talk in the office, Miss Olson --

PEGGY

Peggy.

LANE

But I wanted to say I've always admired you. You seem so... American. Open to new things, new experiences, excited by the possibility of the unknown.

PEGGY

I'm sorry, but because you're British I can't tell. Is this a pass?

LANE

(charmed)

No... but I would like to be friends.

INT. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM - LATER

A reception line for FRANCIS BACON. Lane approaches with Peggy.

LANE

A pleasure, Mr. Bacon. I'm Lane Pryce.

FRANCIS BACON

Another native son, thank God. I so long to hear English spoken.

LANE

I wanted to introduce you to Miss Peggy Olson. She's quite a devotee of the arts.

FRANCIS BACON

And scandalized by my canvases, no doubt.

PEGGY

Not at all. They're beautiful.

Bacon lets out a laugh.

FRANCIS BACON

Tell that to the New York Times!

EXT. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM - NIGHT

Peggy and Lane emerge, other attendees departing.

LANE
Shall I call you a cab?

PEGGY
The subway's close, I can walk.

LANE
Well...

She kisses him on the cheek.

PEGGY
Thanks for thinking of me.

Francis Bacon emerges with several others.

FRANCIS BACON
We're heading to the Cedar, would you care to accompany us?

LANE
I really must beg off...

PEGGY
I'd love to.

FRANCIS BACON
Splendid.

They bustle off as Lane hails a cab.

INT. SERLING'S CAYUGA HOME - OFFICE - NIGHT

Serling flicks on the light, leads Don in. TV set, desk, books, guttering fire in the fireplace.

DON
So this is where you make the magic.

SERLING
Not much magic lately.

Don spies the Dictaphone.

DON
We use these in the office.

SERLING
I talk my scripts into them. I haven't used a typewriter since before Requiem.

DON
No kidding.

SERLING
When it stinks it sounds like a
roomful of Rod Serlings gassing
with each other.

Serling runs a hand over the TV set.

SERLING (CONT'D)
When I was born in '24 we barely
had radio...

DON
My folks didn't even have
electricity.

SERLING
I've plied my trade off this box
for fifteen years. You can see the
truth in it... or lose yourself.

Serling shivers.

SERLING (CONT'D)
It's cold as a witch's tit in here.
Stoke that fire, will you?

Don throws a log on the fire.

SERLING (CONT'D)
So how about you tell me why you're
really here.

DON
I don't know... I thought maybe I
could find some answers.

SERLING
All I've got is questions, my
friend, and not even good ones.

DON
Maybe I'll settle for that.

SERLING
You could be nestled with the wife
and kiddies, not freezing your ass
off with some little Jew.

DON
I'm getting a divorce.

SERLING

Oh. Sorry to hear that.

DON

Nobody says it but everyone thinks it -- what's wrong with you where you weren't able to hold your family together?

He gazes out the window at the chill night.

DON (CONT'D)

You're like a shell-shocked trooper stumbling over a battlefield... trying to fathom what shattered you.

Serling puts a hand on his shoulder.

SERLING

You could've been a writer, Don.

DON

I've heard tell you need a soul for that.

SERLING

Not where I come from.

Serling looks out past Don toward the lake.

SERLING (CONT'D)

Dawn's coming on... You fancy a spin on the lake?

DON

We'll freeze our asses off.

SERLING

Show what you're made of, soldier.

INT. CEDAR TAVERN - NIGHT

The place is jam-packed with artists and their hangers-on, full of smoke and booze and loud opinions.

Peggy sits at a table with Francis Bacon, ROBERT MANGOLD, FRANK STELLA and JASPER JOHNS. Her eyes glitter with the excitement of being there.

JASPER JOHNS

... She's restoring this Giotto,
goes into the other room to take a
call, when she hears this CRASH!
Rushes back to find an empty panel,
everything else having slid to the
floor.

ROBERT MANGOLD

Which is precisely why I endeavor
to put the least possible on a
canvas.

JASPER JOHNS

Now that's a legacy to leave the
ages.

ROBERT MANGOLD

Oh, shut up.

The others laugh. Bacon turns his attention to Peggy.

FRANCIS BACON

And what precisely is it that you
do, my dear -- romance novelist,
fan dancer?

PEGGY

I'm a copywriter at an ad agency.

FRANK STELLA

Oh, God! Lying to people as to
which waffle mix will improve their
love life!

PEGGY

Not at all. I think you can
succeed by being honest with
people.

FRANCIS BACON

You are a babe in the woods... and
there are wolves.

PEGGY

We're not as different as you
think.

FRANCIS BACON

(genuinely interested)
How do you mean?

PEGGY

The way I look at it you either lie to your audience or you tell them the truth. It's the same in art. You can rely on a gimmick or try to say something.

JASPER JOHNS

What if you've got nothing to say?

PEGGY

Then you need to look more deeply.

They nod, impressed.

EXT. CAYUGA LAKE - SERLING'S BOAT - DAWN

Serling at the wheel of the Carolyn II, Don beside him, both bundled against the cold.

SERLING

This reminds me of where I'm from, Binghamton... cold and clear, no artifice... You from someplace like this, Don?

DON

Not that different... Less water, more dust.

SERLING

You don't talk much about yourself. You camouflage, duck and hide... You're fast on your feet, so most folks don't catch it.

DON

And what do you see?

SERLING

You have a wound, Don, and it's not any damn divorce. I think you came here because it'll break you in two if you don't tell someone.

Don weighs it, taking it in, then finally...

DON

It started in Korea...

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAWN

Peggy walks alone, having just come from the Cedar Tavern.

Passing an alley, a FIGURE darts out, clamps a hand over her mouth, drags her struggling back into

THE ALLEY

He shoves her hard against the wall. She fights back hard. He beats her savagely, blow after blow.

She crumples, GASPING. Looks up, sees him at last.

He's thin and wild-eyed, no telling what he's going to do. Suddenly, a SIREN approaching.

Her attacker's alarmed. Peggy's eyes dart to the alley mouth.

HER POV - STREET

A moment, then a FIRE TRUCK goes WAILING past.

BACK TO SCENE

Peggy looks back to her attacker. He's gone, along with her fallen purse. We hear his ECHOING FOOTSTEPS running off.

CLOSE ON PEGGY

Hurt and bloody, drawing ragged breaths -- but she doesn't scream.

EXT. CAYUGA LAKE - SERLING'S BOAT - DAWN

The boat sits motionless in the middle of the lake, motor stilled. Serling's listening raptly to Don.

SERLING
That's some story.

DON
Tell me about it.

SERLING
Sounds like a Studio One Reggie
Rose did a few years back...
(MORE)

SERLING (CONT'D)

Two soldiers in Korea, their identities get mixed up. The one who survives hates his life, so he decides to step into the dead guy's shoes.

DON

You're shitting me. How'd it turn out?

SERLING

The other guy's family comes to love and accept him...

Don looks out at the water, grim.

DON

That's make-believe.

SERLING

Just a different ending.

Don turns back to Rod, angry now.

DON

What about your ending, Rod? And don't bullshit me you came up here for some constitutional -- I saw you with that M-1.

SERLING

I was just cleaning --

DON

Goddammit, I told you my secret -- you tell me yours!

Serling hesitates, then...

SERLING

I'm over, Don. I come up here, I'm like a spectre. I don't even bother to go back to Binghamton any more because everyone I loved there is dead... All my best friends are ghosts.

Serling looks at the sky like slate.

SERLING (CONT'D)

You think you're the only one with a war story? Battle of Luzon, I'm on point.

(MORE)

SERLING (CONT'D)

Jungle's so thick a machete's about as much use as a featherduster... Then right in front of me, out of nowhere like a jack-in-the-box, this Jap soldier, rifle aimed at me, close as you are...

(looks back at Don)

And in that moment I know for a certainty I am dead, because there is not a damn thing I can do about it.

DON

What happened?

SERLING

G.I. I didn't know was behind me shot him over my shoulder... But I've thought about that every night of my life. Maybe I really died there. Maybe all of this has been a dream that's ending at last.

DON

That's a Twilight Zone episode.

SERLING

If it is, there's no show left to write it for.

(off Don's look)

What?

DON

I used to think as life went on your options got bigger... Lately it's just felt like a fist getting tight.

SERLING

(nods)

That yarn of yours... who knows about it?

DON

Someone at work found out, tried blackmail. Boss didn't care, but my wife...

He makes a sweeping gesture, indicating she left him.

SERLING

So you were exposed but never chose to share it.

DON
Only with you.

SERLING
Strangers don't count.

Don nods, thoughtful.

DON
You ever think of letting your
family in on things?

SERLING
It's my job to protect them... not
chill their lives like a wraith.

Serling FIRES UP the engine.

SERLING (CONT'D)
Time we were heading back.

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL - EXAMINATION ROOM - MORNING

Peggy's in a hospital gown, looks like she's been in a car wreck. Joan hovers nearby, as does a YOUNG COP who's been taking the report.

JOAN
Do you want me to call your mother?

PEGGY
No.

The DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR
Miss... Olson?

She struggles to rise, he waves her off.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
That's all right. X-rays show
nothing broken, but we'd like to
keep you here overnight to be safe.

PEGGY
I'd prefer to go home, thank you.

DOCTOR
As you wish.

JOAN
I'll get you a cab, honey.

PEGGY
You'll be late to work as it is.

COP
I'll make sure she gets home okay.

Joan looks to Peggy for confirmation, then nods.

PEGGY
Thanks for coming, Joannie.

Joan kisses Peggy.

JOAN
Anytime, sweetie.

Joan exits.

COP
(to Doctor)
She good to roll?
(Doc nods; to Peggy)
C'mon, I'll run the siren for you.

They walk down

A HALLWAY

Peggy's hurting, but determined to make it home.

PEGGY
You've been so kind to me.

COP
We're not all slabs o' beef,
contrary to popular opinion.

PEGGY
What's your name?

COP
Mike Wakowski... You go walking
down dark alleys again, you might
consider carrying a cleaver.

PEGGY
(considers)
Do you know anywhere I might take a
self-defense course?

COP
I could show you a thing or two,
when you heal up.

PEGGY
I'd like that.

COP
You were lucky tonight.

PEGGY
I'm a lucky person.

They exit into the morning light.

EXT. CAYUGA LAKE - SERLING'S BOAT - MORNING

Drawing near the shore, Serling at the wheel, shielding his eyes to peer at the horizon.

SERLING
Sun's up, but the sky's so gray you
can't see it...

DON
There's a middle ground between
light and shadow...

SERLING
Never quote a writer to himself.

DON
Then let's just say there's more to
life than black and white.

SERLING
How's that?

DON
It's a line for a color TV
commercial a girl in my office came
up with.

SERLING
Bit obvious.

DON
Doesn't make it any less true.

SERLING
Your point being?

DON
There's shades of gray. You
haven't been seeing them.

He moves to face Serling.

DON (CONT'D)

Maybe your glory days are over, maybe you're not the white knight of dramatic fiction, maybe there's no more medals in store. But you're still the guy who looked down that barrel at Luzon, with no illusions left... and stood his ground.

SERLING

You trying to save my life or get my business?

DON

Both.

(beat)

What if you stopped trying to be who you used to be or think you're supposed to be... and be who you are.

SERLING

Go on.

DON

I want to propose a compromise. You don't appear on-camera when it's a commercial product like Excedrin, it's just your voice. You're only visible when it's a charity you believe in.

SERLING

Bullshit, they'll still know it's me.

DON

Of course they will, but you'll have drawn a line. Doesn't matter if that line matters to anyone else. It's yours.

Serling considers it.

SERLING

So how exactly do you see this?

DON

We pay you higher rates than the competition, you're exclusive to us for a trial period to see if it works... We'll hammer all this out with your people.

SERLING

Assuming I tell them I'm open to it.

DON

Assuming that, yes.

They near the shore.

DON (CONT'D)

We're living on borrowed time, the both of us... Maybe it's time we started being grateful for that.

A ray of sunlight crosses the deck, warming them. Serling looks at the sky.

SERLING

Sun's breaking through...

Don nods, as the boat slips into its mooring, and home.

INT. PEGGY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The phone's RINGING as Peggy unlocks the door and rushes in as best she can, given her injuries.

She grabs it up, certain who it is, who it has to be.

PEGGY

Hello, Ma... Sorry, I went to bed early and turned off the ringer.

Through broken, swollen lips, she struggles to speak normally.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

No Ma, nothing special, except -- I went to an art opening...

And in that battered, bruised face, her eyes come alive.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

And I met someone nice.

INT. PIERRE HOTEL - STERLING COOPER DRAPER PRYCE - DAY

The room's dark. Don's screening a sixteen-millimeter print of the Twilight Zone episode "Walking Distance," the climactic scene showing Martin Sloane (played by Gig Young) at night by the carousel.

MARTIN SLOANE (ON TV)

There won't be any more merry-go-rounds, no more cotton candy, no more band concerts... I only wanted to tell you that this is the wonderful time. Now. Here. That's all, Martin, that's all I wanted to tell you. God help me, that's all I wanted to tell you...

Don switches it off, thoughtful.

The front door opens and Lane steps in, sees Don.

LANE

Back from parts unknown, and here to stay awhile?

DON

I signed Serling.

LANE

Bravo, Donald.

Don pulls the blinds, the light of a new day washing over him.

DON

My name's Dick Whitman.

EXT. BOBBY'S SCHOOL - SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Recess. Carrying something wrapped in brown paper, Don approaches the fence, peers through it, spies Bobby on the schoolyard merry-go-round.

DON

Hey there, champ.

BOBBY

Daddy!

He comes running and stops, separated by the fence.

DON

How was your weekend?

BOBBY

The house was big... I kept getting lost.

DON

Here, I got you something. Catch.

He tosses the package over the fence.

Bobby unwraps it. It's a boy's jacket, with "Chip" embroidered on the breast. Bobby's in awe.

DON (CONT'D)
You be anyone you want.

He eyes his son through the fence as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW