

The Porch Room presents

Spike Train

A Screenplay

By

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THE
PORCH
ROOM

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**THE
PORCH
ROOM**

INT. STONE-WALLED ROOM - NO DEFINITE TIME

A naked DEAD MAN, wrists tied, dangling from the ceiling.

A few feet away, AGENT, clean-cut, young-faced, stares defiantly at the body. Bleary-eyed, tense, disturbed.

Behind him, a MAN IN A DARK SUIT waits patiently.

AGENT

Do we have any leads? Anything?

SUIT

No.

(beat)

OK. There's a shot in the dark. I could call Washington. They've got those guys in the basement.

AGENT

Ah God. The ones who read minds?

SUIT

They've solved fifteen murders, including two serial killers. But if you don't think it's worth it...

A short silence.

AGENT

Pack up the body. Tell them we'll be there in two hours.

INT. BASEMENT LAB - TWO HOURS LATER

A labyrinth of tall steel shelves, stuffed with wires, computer parts, and discarded technology.

THREE MEN with white coats and wild, unkempt hair play poker around a small table. Electrodes stick to their temples. Wires run from their heads to laptop computers.

JACK HIGH

Ready to play, gentlemen?

PAIR OF THREES

You got nothing. Jack high.

ACES OVER SEVENS

I concur. I see Jack, eight -

PAIR OF THREES

Five, ten, deuce.

JACK HIGH
You're right. It's a flush.

PAIR OF THREES grins at JACK HIGH, showing off a cascade of numbers on his laptop. ACES OVER SEVENS frowns perpetually.

PAIR OF THREES
You're lying, baby.

JACK HIGH
Put up or shut up. I know you've got a lousy pair of threes. And he's face cards over sevens.

PAIR OF THREES
Aces over sevens. Don't get lazy.

ACES OVER SEVENS
I'm not revealing anything until we start the bid.

AGENT (O.S.)
Excuse me?

Agent walks into the light. A LAB TECH follows him, wheeling a gurney. A white sheet covers a human-sized lump.

PAIR OF THREES
Oh, yeah, they said you was coming.

AGENT
I'm Agent-

JACK HIGH
Uh! Um-

Jack High indicates a sign on the wall. Large block letters read: BEYOND THIS POINT - NO NAMES.

PAIR OF THREES
I been working with them two years now and I don't even know their names. Ain't that right, smiley?

He jabs Aces Over Sevens on the arm, who recoils.

AGENT
All right. I need information out of this man.

Agent whips away the sheet. It is the dead man.

The three technicians rip the electrodes off their heads and whisk the gurney into the center of the room.

JACK HIGH
I'll run control from my station.

Aces Over Sevens pours a bottle of thick, honey-colored liquid over the dead man's forehead, and Pair of Threes attaches electrodes and wires.

Agent follows Jack High into an adjacent room.

JACK HIGH'S STATION

is little more than a closet with a computer, microphone, and TV monitor. On the monitor, the other two men prep the body.

JACK HIGH
(into the microphone)
We're ready in here.

ACES OVER SEVENS (O.S.)
There's no information about the victim. What are we looking for?

AGENT
This case is highly classified.
Can I...ask him a few questions?

PAIR OF THREES (O.S.)
What does this look like, a goddamn Ouija board?

ACES OVER SEVENS (O.S.)
We stimulate the subject's neurons electrically and search for recurrent network patterns. Or a single neural path, a spike train.

PAIR OF THREES (O.S.)
He's ready. Juice him up.

IN THE LAB

Aces Over Sevens flips a circuit breaker. The dead man's eyelids flutter rapidly. The laptops flood with numbers.

ACES OVER SEVENS
I've got a possible map. Active hippocampus. He's full of fresh, highly intense memories.

PAIR OF THREES
Guy was tortured to death. This is a mess. Hey, little help here?

IN JACK HIGH'S STATION

Jack High wheels on Agent.

JACK HIGH
Agent, his neural paths are
deteriorating. Give us anything.

AGENT
Like what?

JACK HIGH
Numbers and colors are easiest,
letters and words are harder. What
piece of information would help you
crack this case? Maybe an intense
thought from the moment he died.

Agent thinks quickly.

AGENT
Look for a series of three letters
followed by at most four numbers.

JACK HIGH
You hear that, gentlemen?

IN THE LAB

Pair of Threes studies his computer, shaking his head.

PAIR OF THREES
Isolating letters is gonna take too-

ACES OVER SEVENS
Wait. Wait. Look at the third
octant. We've got two competing
language centers.

PAIR OF THREES
Son of a bitch was bilingual.

IN JACK'S STATION

Jack High types furiously at his keyboard.

JACK HIGH
I see it! The other alphabet is
Cyrillic or Arabic. I'm filtering
it. Somebody find the sequence.

PAIR OF THREES (O.S.)
I got it! Roman letters. P, H, L-

JACK HIGH
 One-five-seven-three-got it! P-H-L
 one-five-seven-three!

Agent is already dialing his cell phone.

AGENT
 We got it. Flight to Philadelphia,
 fifteen seventy three. Stop the
 flight. Good. Detain the
 passengers. You're looking for two
 Middle-Eastern men. They will
 likely be carrying liquid
 explosives. I'll be there soon.

He shuts the phone. Jack High's victory smile fades.

IN THE LAB

Aces Over Sevens continues to map the brain.

ACES OVER SEVENS
 We're losing cohesion. Clouds. He
 was thinking about clouds.

Agent strides in and motions to the lab tech. The tech tears
 the body free of the electrodes and rolls it out of the room.

PAIR OF THREES
 This ain't no serial killer victim.
 He was interrogated.

Jack High bursts into the room from his station.

JACK HIGH
 Stop! Who is this man? How did he
 die? Did your people do this?

But Agent walks steadily out of the room, never looking back,
 leaving the three men stunned in his wake.

FLASHBACK - STONE-WALLED ROOM

Agent looks up into the dead man's face one last time. He
 swallows, and the emotion dies on his face.

He walks out into a bright office corridor. A sign reads:

PRISONER DETENTION CELL 47
 BEYOND THIS POINT - NO NAMES.

FADE TO BLACK.