



Robert Towne

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2 Chinatown

# **Chinatown**

**Robert Towne**



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## ■ Chinatown



**Produced by Robert Evans**  
**Directed by Roman Polanski**

### **1 Full-Screen Photograph**

Grainy but unmistakably a man and woman making love. Photograph shakes. SOUND of a man MOANING in anguish. The photograph is dropped, REVEALING another, more compromising one. Then another, and another. More moans.

CURLY'S VOICE  
(crying out)

Oh, no.

### **2 Int. Gittes' Office**

CURLY drops the photos on Gittes' desk. Curly towers over GITTES and sweats heavily through his workman's clothes, his breathing progressively more labored. A drop plunks on Gittes' shiny desktop.

Gittes notes it. A fan whirs overhead. Gittes glances up at it. He looks cool and brisk in a white linen suit despite the heat. Never taking his eyes off Curly, he lights a cigarette using a lighter with a "nail" on his desk.

Curly, with another anguished sob, turns and rams his fist into the wall, kicking the wastebasket as he does. He starts to sob again, slides along the wall where his fist has left a noticeable dent and its impact has sent the signed photos of several movie stars askew.

Curly slides on into the blinds and sinks to his knees. He is weeping heavily now, and is in such pain that he actually bites into the blinds.

Gittes doesn't move from his chair.

GITTES  
All right, enough is enough—you can't eat the venetian blinds, Curly. I just had 'em installed on Wednesday.

Curly responds slowly, rising to his feet, crying. Gittes reaches into his desk and pulls out a shot glass, quickly selects a cheaper bottle of bourbon from several fifths of more expensive whiskeys.

**3 Gittes pours a large shot. He shoves the glass across his desk toward Curly.**

GITTES

—Down the hatch.

Curly stares dumbly at it. Then picks it up and drains it. He sinks back into the chair opposite Gittes, begins to cry quietly.

CURLY

*(drinking, relaxing a little)*

She's just no good.

GITTES

What can I tell you, kid? You're right. When you're right, you're right, and you're right.

CURLY

—Ain't worth thinking about.

Gittes leaves the bottle with Curly.

GITTES

You're absolutely right, I wouldn't give her another thought.

CURLY

*(pouring himself)*

You know, you're *okay*, Mr. Gittes. I know it's your job, but you're okay.

GITTES

*(settling back, breathing a little easier)*

Thanks, Curly. Call me Jake.

CURLY

Thanks. You know something, Jake?

GITTES

What's that, Curly?

CURLY

I think I'll kill her.

**4 Int. Duffy & Walsh's Office**

noticeably less plush than Gittes'. A well-groomed, dark-haired WOMAN sits nervously between their two desks, fiddling with the veil on her pill-box hat.

WOMAN

—I was hoping Mr. Gittes could see to this personally—

WALSH

*(almost with the manner of someone comforting the bereaved)*

—If you'll allow us to complete our preliminary questioning, by then he'll be free.

There is the SOUND of ANOTHER MOAN coming from Gittes' office—something made of glass shatters. The Woman grows more edgy.

**5 Int. Gittes' Office—Gittes & Curly**

Gittes and Curly stand in front of the desk, Gittes staring contemptuously at the heavy-breathing hulk towering over him. Gittes takes a handkerchief and wipes away the plunk of perspiration on his desk.

CURLY

*(crying)*

They don't kill a guy for that.

GITTES

Oh they don't?

CURLY

Not for your wife. That's the unwritten law.

**6 Gittes pounds the photos on the desk, shouting:**

GITTES

I'll tell you the unwritten law, you dumb son of a bitch, you gotta be rich to kill somebody, anybody and get away with it. You think you got that kind of dough, you think you got that kind of class?

Curly shrinks back a little.



CURLY

... No ...

GITTES

You bet your ass you don't. You can't even pay me off.

This seems to upset Curly even more.

CURLY

I'll pay the rest next trip—we only caught sixty ton of skipjack around San Benedict. We hit a chubasco, they don't pay you for skipjack the way they do for tuna or albacore—

GITTES

*(easing him out of his office)*

Forget it. I only mention it to illustrate a point. ...

## 7 Int. Office Reception

He's now walking him past SOPHIE, who pointedly averts her gaze. He opens the door where on the pebbled glass can be read: J. J. GITTES AND ASSOCIATES—DISCREET INVESTIGATION.

GITTES

I don't want your last dime.

He throws an arm around Curly and flashes a dazzling smile.

GITTES

*(continuing)*

What kind of a guy do you think I am?

CURLY

Thanks, Mr. Gittes.

GITTES

Call me Jake. Careful driving home, Curly.

He shuts the door on him and the smile disappears.

8 He shakes his head, starting to swear under his breath.

SOPHIE

—A Mrs. Mulwray is waiting for you, with Mr. Walsh and Mr. Duffy.

Gittes nods, walks on in.

9 Int. Duffy and Walsh's Office

Walsh rises when Gittes enters.

WALSH

Mrs. Mulwray, may I present Mr. Gittes?

Gittes walks over to her and again flashes a warm, sympathetic smile.

GITTES

How do you do, Mrs. Mulwray?

MRS. MULWRAY

Mr. Gittes . . .

GITTES

Now, Mrs. Mulwray, what seems to be the problem?

She holds her breath. The revelation isn't easy for her.

MRS. MULWRAY

My husband, I believe, is seeing another woman.

Gittes looks mildly shocked. He turns for confirmation to his two partners.

GITTES

(gravely)

No, really?

MRS. MULWRAY

I'm afraid so.

GITTES

I am sorry.

10 Gittes pulls up a chair, sitting next to Mrs. Mulwray—between Duffy and Walsh. Duffy cracks his gum.

Gittes gives him an irritated glance. Duffy stops chewing.

MRS. MULWRAY

Can't we talk about this alone, Mr. Gittes?

GITTES

I'm afraid not, Mrs. Mulwray. These men are my operatives and at some point they're going to assist me. I can't do everything myself.

MRS. MULWRAY

Of course not.

GITTES

Now—what makes you certain he is involved with someone?

Mrs. Mulwray hesitates. She seems uncommonly nervous at the question.

MRS. MULWRAY

—a wife can tell.

Gittes sighs.

GITTES

Mrs. Mulwray, do you love your husband?

MRS. MULWRAY

(shocked)

... Yes of course.

GITTES

(deliberately)

Then go home and forget about it.

MRS. MULWRAY

—but ...

GITTES

(staring intently at her)

I'm sure he loves you too. You know the expression "Let sleeping dogs lie"? You're better off not knowing.

MRS. MULWRAY

*(with some real anxiety)*

But I have to know!

Her intensity is genuine. Gittes looks to his two partners.

GITTES

All right, what's your husband's first name?

MRS. MULWRAY

Hollis. Hollis Mulwray.

GITTES

*(visibly surprised)*

Water and Power?

Mrs. Mulwray nods, almost shyly. Gittes is now casually but carefully checking out the detailing of Mrs. Mulwray's dress—her handbag, shoes, etc.

MRS. MULWRAY

—he's the Chief Engineer.

DUFFY

*(a little eagerly)*

—Chief Engineer?

**11 Gittes' glance tells Duffy that Gittes wants to do the questioning. Mrs. Mulwray nods.**

GITTES

*(confidentially)*

This type of investigation can be hard on your pocketbook, Mrs. Mulwray. It takes time.

MRS. MULWRAY

Money doesn't matter to me, Mr. Gittes.

Gittes sighs.

GITTES

Very well. We'll see what we can do.

**12 Ext. City Hall—Morning**

already shimmering with heat.

A drunk blows his nose with his fingers into the fountain at the foot of the steps.

Gittes, impeccably dressed, passes the drunk on the way up the stairs.

**13 Int. Council Chambers**

Former Mayor SAM BAGBY is speaking. Behind him is a huge map, with overleafs and bold lettering: PROPOSED ALTO VALLEJO DAM AND RESERVOIR

Some of the councilmen are reading funny papers and gossip columns while Bagby is speaking.

BAGBY

—Gentlemen, today you can walk out that door, turn right, hop on a streetcar and in twenty-five minutes end up smack in the Pacific Ocean. Now you can swim in it, you can fish in it, you can sail in it—but you can't drink it, you can't water your lawns with it, you can't irrigate an orange grove with it. Remember—we live next door to the ocean, but we also live on the edge of the desert. Los Angeles is a desert community. Beneath this building, beneath every street, there's a desert. Without water the dust will rise up and cover us as though we'd never existed!

*(pausing, letting the implication sink in)*

**14 Close—Gittes**

sitting next to some grubby farmers, bored. He yawns—edges away from one of the dirtier farmers.

BAGBY (O.S.)

*(continuing)*

The Alto Vallejo can save us from that, and I respectfully suggest that eight and a half million dollars is a fair price to pay to keep the desert from our streets—and not on top of them.

**15 Audience—Council Chambers**

An amalgam of farmers, businessmen, and city employees have been listening with keen interest. A couple of the farmers applaud. Somebody shushes them.

**16 Council Committee**

in a whispered conference.

COUNCILMAN

*(acknowledging Bagby)*

—Mayor Bagby . . . let's hear from the departments again—I suppose we better take Water and Power first. Mr. Mulwray.

**17 Reaction—Glittes**

looking up with interest from his racing form.

**18 Mulwray**

walks to the huge map with overleafs. He is a slender man in his sixties who wears glasses and moves with surprising fluidity. He turns to a smaller, younger man, and nods. The man turns the overleaf on the map.

MULWRAY

In case you've forgotten, gentlemen, over five hundred lives were lost when the Van der Lip Dam gave way—core samples have shown that beneath this bedrock is shale similar to the permeable shale in the Van der Lip disaster. It couldn't withstand that kind of pressure there.

*(referring to a new overleaf)*

Now you propose yet another dirt-banked terminus dam with slopes of two and one half to one, one hundred twelve feet high, and a twelve-thousand-acre water surface. Well, it won't hold. I won't build it. It's that simple—I am not making that kind of mistake twice. Thank you, gentlemen.

Mulwray leaves the overleaf board and sits down. Suddenly there are some whoops and hollers from the rear of the chambers, and a red-faced

FARMER drives in several scrawny, bleating sheep. Naturally, they cause a commotion.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

*(shouting to farmer)*

What in the hell do you think you're doing?

*(as the sheep bleat down the aisles toward the Council)*

Get those goddam things out of here!

FARMER

*(right back)*

Tell me where to take them! You don't have an answer for that so quick, do you?

**19 Bailiffs and sergeants-at-arms respond to the imprecations of the Council and attempt to capture the sheep and the farmers, having to restrain one who looks like he's going to bodily attack Mulwray.**

FARMER

*(through above, to Mulwray)*

—You steal the water from the valley, ruin the grazing, starve my livestock—who's paying you to do that, Mr. Mulwray, that's what I want to know!

## **20 & 21 Omitted**

## **22 L.A. Riverbed—Long Shot**

It's virtually empty. Sun blazes off its ugly concrete banks. Where the banks are earthen, they are parched and choked with weeds.

After a moment Mulwray's car pulls INTO VIEW on a flood-control road about fifteen feet above the riverbed. Mulwray gets out of the car. He looks around.

## **23 With Gittes**

holding a pair of binoculars, downstream and just above the flood-control road—using some dried mustard weeds for cover. He watches while Mulwray makes his way down to the center of the riverbed.

There Mulwray stops, turns slowly, appears to be looking at the bottom of the riverbed, or—at nothing at all.

**24 Gittes**

trains the binoculars on him. Sun glints off Mulwray's glasses.

**25 Below Gittes**

There's the SOUND of something like champagne corks popping. Then a small Mexican boy atop a swayback horse rides into the river and into Gittes' view.

**26 Mulwray**

himself stops, stands still when he hears the sound. Power lines and the sun are overhead, the trickle of brackish water at his feet.

He moves swiftly downstream in the direction of the sound, toward Gittes.

**27 Gittes**

moves a little farther back as Mulwray rounds the bend in the river and comes face-to-face with the Mexican boy on the muddy banks. Mulwray says something to the boy.

The boy doesn't answer at first. Mulwray points to the ground. The boy gestures. Mulwray frowns. He kneels down in the mud and stares at it. He seems to be concentrating on it.

**28 After a moment he rises, thanks the boy, and heads swiftly back upstream—scrambling up the bank to his car.**

There he reaches through the window and pulls out a roll of blueprints or something like them—he spreads them on the hood of his car and begins to scribble some notes, looking downstream from time to time.

The power lines overhead HUM.

He stops, listens to them—then rolls up the plans and gets back in the car. He drives off.

**29 Gittes**

hurries to get back to his car. He gets in and gets right back out. The steamy leather burns him. He takes a towel from the backseat and carefully places it on the front one. He gets in and takes off.



**30 Omitted****31 Point Fermin Park—Dusk**

Streetlights go on.

**32 Mulway**

pulls up, parks. Hurries out of the car, across the park lawn, and into the shade of some trees and buildings.

**33 Gittes**

pulls up, moves across the park at a different angle, but in the direction Mulway had gone. He makes it through the trees in time to see Mulway scramble adroitly down the side of the cliff to the beach below. He seems in a hurry. Gittes moves after him—having a little more difficulty negotiating the climb than Mulway did.

**34 Down on the Beach**

Gittes looks to his right—where the bay is a long, clear crescent. He looks to his left—there's a promontory of sorts. It's apparent Mulway has gone that way. Gittes hesitates, then moves in that direction—but climbs along the promontory in order to be above Mulway.

**35 At the Outfall**

Gittes spots Mulway just below him, kicking at the sand.

Mulway picks up a starfish. Brushes sand off it. Looks absently up toward Gittes.

**36 Gittes**

backs away, sits near the outfall, yawns.

**37 Beacon Light at Point Fermin**

flashing in the dust.

**38 Close—Gittes**

sitting, suddenly starts. He swears softly—he's in a puddle of water, and the seat of his trousers is wet.