

THE KEY OPERATOR



Genre: Mystery (film noir)

Tagline: Copying isn't stealing - it's murder

Logline: It's 1961, and when a bookkeeper is caught using the new office machine to help out his girlfriend, his unscrupulous boss puts the squeeze on him to take part in extortion against the company owner, leading to betrayal and murder.

Synopsis: (with script page reference)

- 1 We begin in downtown Manhattan, early morning, in the office tower canyons around the Empire State Building.
- 2 In old noir style, a narrator announces it's July 1961, guides us to a particular building, and up an elevator to the sixth floor.
- 3 From a p.o.v. touring Wilty and Associates Engineers, on the 6th floor, the narrator tells us about the company, and how its bid on the Mercury spacecraft contract will make or break the firm.
- In the office are workmen installing a new copier from a big crate. There's also a cheerful teenage boy, SAMMY GRUEN, 16, mopping, and a man at a desk, typing: CHARLES DECKARD, 27, auditor, and narrator.
- 5 Charles notices three women arrive at the reception desk, being greeted by Sammy. Charles listens in as ELEANOR, 28, and LOUISE, 27, give a tour to new employee, ANNE SMITHEE, 23, mail clerk.
- 8 Charles is assigned to set up Anne with a payroll profile. He quickly learns that Anne is quite liberated, and that she and Charles are instantly challenged by and attracted to each other.
- 9 She learns that Sammy was born prematurely and is slightly disabled, but that he is the boss's son and has the job of Receptionist.
- 10 Then BILL PROCTOR, 45, Charles' boss, calls him in for a meeting. Inside, we learn Proctor is smart and ambitious, but delegates lots of work to Charles, who eagerly takes on the extra workload.
- 11 Later, as Charles leaves for the day, we see Proctor watching Charles as he locks his desk and hides his key under his blotter.
- 12 The next day, the machine that was installed, a new photocopier, is demonstrated by MRS. LILLIAN WADSWORTH, 55, the dour Admin Manager.
- 13 Wadsworth gives a demo of the features to everyone in the office. She outlines the auditing methodology, and announces that she is the "Key Operator" for maintenance and oversight of the machine.
- Even the boss, RANDALL GRUEN, 55, Sammy's dad, and other managers MAXWELL and BRINKLEY, both 65, wish Wadsworth weren't so severe.

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