

THE SHAFT

A Film Noir

Written by

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"Big Day! Take Charge!"

FADE IN:

INT. MICKEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSED: HARRISBURG, PA - DECEMBER 8,
1952

The world is black and white, dreamlike yet menacing.

A single overhead bulb swings, casting shifting shadows that stretch and recoil against the walls like unseen specters.

The distant wail of a siren snakes through a half-open window. A fine mist of rain taps against the glass. The soft hum of a neon sign flickers, bathing the room in rhythmic flashes of red—like a heartbeat pulsing through the dark.

BOB (V.O.)

How far would you go to take charge
of your life—if it meant losing
your soul?

BOB CHAMBERLAND—mid-30s, lean but powerful, a wolf in a sharp suit. Piercing eyes, a five o'clock shadow. A man who came from nowhere and will claw his way to somewhere. His reflection stares back at him from the murky window—a ghost of himself, distorted by the rain.

BOB (V.O.)

Everyone wants a piece of me.
That's the cost of ambition.

Across from him—MICKEY, built like a street brawler, a thug with a silver tongue and a grip like iron. Mickey leans back, rolling a toothpick between his lips, watching Bob like a cat watches a mouse who thinks it's a lion. The flickering neon outside throws jagged streaks of color across his face, a devil's grin carved in light and shadow.

Beside them—A CALL GIRL, beautiful but shallow, all curves and calculation. She plays her role well: present, but uninvolved. A shadow in silk. She watches Mickey's hands—not out of love, but for the cash they hold. She wants her cut. They all do.

Mickey scribbles something in a small notebook, tucks it into his pocket, then peels off two crisp \$100 bills. The sound of the paper crackling is deafening in the hush of the room.

MICKEY

You done well, Bob. Here you go.
More where that came from.

Bob takes the cash, weighing it in his palm. The ink is fresh. It smells like promise and danger. Like ownership.

BOB

Nice score, Mick. Teach me the ropes.

Bob pulls the Call Girl in, murmuring into her ear as he kisses her neck.

BOB

Baby, we're gonna be rich. You gonna be my girl?

Mickey watches, amused, his fingers drumming against the table, another agenda flickering behind his hooded eyes. The hum of the neon sign outside matches his rhythm.

CALL GIRL

I ain't your only girl, Bob. You got others.

MICKEY

Bob, pour us a drink.

Bob, lips still pressed against the Call Girl's neck, waves Mickey off.

BOB

Yeah, yeah, Mick. Hold on.

MICKEY

Bob, that drink.

Bob kisses the call girl and gives a look like "stay right here." He winks. Brushes a hand lightly against her breast, then gives a low moan. As he heads to the other room, he calls out, full of desire and cocky ease:

BOB

Drinks coming right up.

HARD CUT

INT. BOB IN THE OTHER ROOM - NIGHT

The sound of ice clinking, a bottle pouring. Bob takes a personal shot, savoring it.

He hums 'I Get Ideas'-low, smooth, dripping with heat.

HARD CUT

INT. ROOM WITH MICKEY - NIGHT

Mickey peels of a \$5. The Call Girl hesitates. She knows what it means. She takes the money. Mickey opens the door. Gestures. She steps out.

Door closes. Lock clicks.

HARD CUT

INT. BOB IN THE OTHER ROOM - NIGHT

Bob, still humming. He smirks to himself. He's got the world at his fingertips. He talks in a low voice to himself.

BOB

Mickey thought loyalty was a two-way street. But he forgot—every road's got a dead end.

HARD CUT

INT. ROOM WITH MICKEY - NIGHT

The neon sign flickers once—just as the door seals shut.

BOB REENTERS

Bob steps back into the room, carrying three drinks. The glasses clink softly, the only sound left.

Bob stops. His brow furrows. He scans the room. Something feels... off.

BOB

Mick, where's the dame?

MICKEY

She had other plans.

Bob hands Mickey a glass. He hesitates. Looks around. The vibe has shifted.

But he shakes it off, splits the third drink between them. They toast. A quiet collision of crystal.

MICKEY & BOB

Cheers.

Mickey sips. Smirks. Watches Bob.

Then—without warning—Mickey leans in and kisses Bob. Slow. Deliberate. Bob stiffens. A flicker of something dark flashes across his face. A beat. He pulls back, masking his reaction behind a cocky smile.

BOB
Whoa, Mick. Slow down. What the hell was that?

Mickey shrugs, easy. Downs the rest of his drink. His eyes never leave Bob.

MICKEY
Ah, Bob. Nothin'.

A long silence. Bob shifts. Mickey moves closer. Bob backs up. The dresser presses against his spine. Nowhere left to go.

Mickey's forehead presses against Bob's. His breath smells of bourbon and power.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
(low, smoky)
You wanna climb to the top? You gotta be willing to take the stairs.

Mickey's hand drifts to Bob's jaw. His thumb slowly brushes Bob's lips. Their eyes locked on each other. Bob's pulse thrums like a war drum.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
You wanna get somewhere? Then go somewhere.

The neon sign sputters violently. A last warning.

WE NEVER SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. QUICK SHARP FLASHES:

-Mickey's hand on the back of Bob's head.

-Slow-motion laughter echoes—Mickey, taunting: "You wanna climb to the top... take the stairs."

-Mickey from behind.

-A hard shove—Bob's breath catches.

-Mickey's voice, distorted, drowning out: "Big Day! Take Charge!"

-Bob gulps.

-The neon sign flickers violently.

-The camera swirls up to the ceiling fan.

-Suffocating silence.

BANG. BANG.

Mickey jerks back—eyes wide. A stain of red blooms across his chest. He stumbles. Hits the dresser. Bob underneath.

Bob shoves Mickey off, fast. Mickey crashes in the other direction—his head slamming against the coffee table. A sickening crack. Blood pooling from his temple, from his chest.

Bob watches him crumple, breathing heavy, his suit speckled with blood. Mickey chokes on a laugh, blood bubbling at his lips.

MICKEY

You'll never escape who you are.
I'll see you in hell.

The neon sign dies out completely. A pool of blood slithers across the floor, reaching Bob's shoes. He doesn't move. He just stares.

INT. THE SCENE GOES TO BLACK & WHITE

Then—mechanically, he wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. He looks around and then growls.

BOB

Big Day! Take Charge!

He down a shot of booze.

Bob turns, his reflection staring back at him in the rain-streaked window. Only now, he doesn't recognize the man looking back. Maybe because what's left of him is already gone.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: THE SHAFT.

FADE IN:

CLOSE-UP: A POOL OF BLOOD SEEPING INTO THE
CRACKS OF THE FLOOR.

This is in Black & White and then goes to COLOR as the blood
moves across the floor.

-The neon sign outside flickers once... then dies.

HARD CUT-TRAIN
WHEELS SLAM ONTO
THE TRACK. STEAM
HISSES.

-The sound of the train leaving the Harrisburg station
becomes a low, thunderous roar.

-Bob sits alone in a compartment, staring out the window. His
suit still smells like whiskey and gunpowder.

-Reflection in the glass-Harrisburg fading behind him. He
looks at himself-but only sees Mickey's smirk.

-CLOSE-UP: Bob flicks open Mickey's notebook. Scribbled
words. Numbers. Names. A new world inside.

-JAZZ MUSIC kicks in-a slow, sultry brass number, building
like the city ahead.

-Steam rises from the tracks-swirling, shifting-turning into
the exhaust from a BLACK CADILLAC.

BANG-A CHAMPAGNE CORK POPS.

HARD CUT-A
MANHATTAN CLUB.

-Smoke. Women in diamonds. The city breathing fast.

MATCH CUT:

The bubbles in a champagne flute swirl-flashing back to the
blood in the carpet.

MATCH CUT:

A woman's lipstick stain on a cigarette-flashing back to Bob
wiping his mouth in Harrisburg.

MATCH CUT:

The glow of a neon sign outside a New York club-flashing back
to the dying neon in Mickey's room.

-Bob steps off the train. The camera follows his shoes—Harrisburg mud still on them.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - MORNING

Bob exits his building and steps into the bustling streets of New York. Commuters rush by, taxis honk, and the city buzzes with life. Bob pauses for a moment, taking it all in, then walks purposefully toward his destination.

He picks up a copy of the "York Enterprise" from a newsstand, scanning the headlines as he walks.

INT. TED'S CAR AS HE IS DRIVEN TO WORK.

Downtown swirls by. Ted looks and the driver in the rearview mirror. They lock eyes.

TED'S DREAM - BLACK & WHITE,

Surreal Ted isn't just drifting—he's trapped inside it.

-A sound—a whispered "Mr. York." Soft. Intimate.

-Ted turns. The room is empty. No doors.

-A man in a mask stands behind him. Waiting.

-The whisper again—"Mr. York."

-The masked man moves closer. Ted's breath is shallow. He doesn't back away. A hand reaches up.

-Peels away the mask—the Driver. The kiss—slow. Deliberate. Not forced. The Driver pulls away. Leans in close. Whispers something.

FLASH CUT—TED JOLTS AWAKE.

THE REALITY CHECK - TED & THE DRIVER

The car has stopped. The Driver's voice pulls Ted back.

DRIVER

Mr. York.

Ted blinks. The moment lingers.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Mr. York.

Ted snaps back. But there's a flicker of something raw in his eyes.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Mr. York.

TED

Yes, yes, I heard you each of the three times.

Ted steps out, composes himself. He locks eyes with the Driver. The power dynamic shifts. But who's in control?

Bob Watches -

BOB'S POV:

The Driver opens the door—smooth, controlled. Ted hesitates. Just a second. Bob catches it. The locked gaze. The tension. The silence. Bob tilts his head. Smirks.

BOB

That's interesting.

ON SCREEN: YORK ENTERPRISES.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The lobby is sleek, cold, impersonal. Power hums beneath the surface. Ted York strides in, not acknowledging the doorman. He doesn't need to. His presence is enough.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISE - SECRETARY POOL - CONTINUOUS

Pam Spencer, 30, sharp as a blade, but hidden in plain sight. She hands Ted a job application as he passes. He takes it. He nods with disdain. He continues walking. His head high.

PAM

Uppity man. I can't stand him.

Ted smirks to himself but doesn't turn around. He heard her.

TED

Chatter. That's all you women do—chatter.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sue Spencer, 27, warm but underestimated, steps in with Bob. Bob doesn't fidget—he takes everything in. He's already watching, already learning.

SUE

Mr. York, this is Mr. Chamberland.
He's here for the interview—

Ted doesn't look up. Still flipping through the application.

TED

You're still here? I heard you. I'm
not deaf.

Sue flushes, glances at Bob. Bob doesn't react. Sue leaves. Ted finally waves Bob in. The door closes behind them.

INT. INSIDE TED'S OFFICE

The office is a kingdom. A view of New York, towering over it.

Ted finally meets Bob's gaze.

TED

Pretty, isn't she?

BOB

Didn't notice.

TED

Oh, I saw you looking. I see
everything.

Ted walks around Bob, slow, controlled. Studying.

TED (CONT'D)

Yes. I do see everything.

Bob doesn't flinch.

BOB

Pardon me?

TED

No need for a response. No question
was asked.

Bob sits. Doesn't wait to be invited. Ted leans back. The power shift has already begun.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - THE INTERVIEW THAT ISN'T AN INTERVIEW

TED
So, Bob, what brings you to York
Enterprises?

BOB
I'm looking for a place where
ambition isn't just
appreciated—it's rewarded.

Ted tilts his head, interested.

TED
Competitive edge, so you say? You
want to climb the ladder?

INT. FLASHBACK - MICKEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

HARD CUT.

-Sharp. Mickey's hand on the back of Bob's head.

-His voice—low, smoky, pressing into Bob's skull.

MICKEY
You wanna climb to the top?
(beat, sinister smirk)
You gotta be willing to take the
stairs.

HARD CUT BACK -
INT. TED'S
OFFICE

Bob gives nothing away. Not a blink, not a twitch.

Ted leans in, enjoying the sound of his own wisdom.

TED
Then understand this—nobody makes
it to the top with clean hands.
(smirks)
You've got the stomach for that,
don't you?

Bob meets his gaze. Calm. Controlled.

BOB
Exactly.

TED
I have a problem that needs your
attention. Are you in?

BOB
Depends.

TED
On what?

BOB
How deep the problem runs... and if I
can dig my way back out.

Ted chuckles. He likes this answer.

TED
Oh, I'm sure you will. Just trust
your instincts.

Bob leans forward slightly, enough to make Ted notice.

BOB
I'm the right person to push the
envelope further.

Ted smiles. A genuine smile. He's intrigued.

TED
I like that.

Ted pauses. Studies Bob again. The next test is coming.

TED (CONT'D)
And what do you think of our dear
Sue? Quite the asset, Bob, isn't
she?

Bob knows what this is. A trap.

BOB
Ah, Sue. Yes, she seems like a fine
addition to the team.

Ted smirks. Bob played it safe.

TED
Sue's quite fetching, don't you
think?

Bob tilts his head. A smirk, barely there.

BOB

I must admit, Ted, my focus tends to stay more on professional qualifications than personal appearances.

Ted raises an eyebrow. Impressed.

TED

Touché, Bob. Well played. You know, you need to keep them sharp, on their toes. Let them know who's in charge. Can you do that?

INT. HARRISBURG - NIGHT FLASHBACK

On screen in Bob's head a murky recall from another time.

-Mickey's bloody smirk.

-The flickering neon. Mickey's voice—low, smug.

MICKEY (V.O.)

You ever let a man put you on your heels, Bobby? That's the moment you lose."

HARD CUT BACK -
INT. TED'S
OFFICE

Bob blinks. Ted is watching him, curious.

Bob remains silent, processing Ted's approach and expectations.

TED

Bob, did you hear my question?

Bob leans back, regaining control.

BOB

Sorry, I heard you, Ted. Just making sure you knew the answer before I gave it to you.

TED

NEVER apologize. Own your actions or your actions will own you.

BOB

Yes, sir.

Ted nods, satisfied with Bob's recovery, and leans back in his chair, a slight smirk playing at the corners of his mouth.

TED

I like your attitude but I don't believe in what men say, I see what they do. Why don't you join me in our meeting with an investor. You can learn how things go around here and I can see how you work.

BOB

Would love that.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The conference room is sleek and modern with a large oval table at the center. Large windows offer a view of the bustling city below. Ted and Bob walk in together, the tension between them palpable but contained.

The room is already occupied by MR. WINTERS, an investor in his 50s, along with his team. Ted greets them with a smile, Mr. Winter's gives a polite response. Bob notices this instantly.

TED

Mr. Winters, good to see you.
Please, let's take a seat and get started.

Ted and Mr. Winters take their seats at the heads of the table. As Bob is about to sit, Ted catches him off guard.

As Bob moves to sit, Ted strikes.

TED (CONT'D)

Bob, could you grab us some coffee before we start?

A beat. Bob's jaw tightens, but just for a breath. He masks it instantly.

BOB

Of course, Ted.

Bob leaves the room to get coffee.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The meeting begins with pleasantries, but the atmosphere quickly shifts as Mr. Winters voices his concerns.

Bob re-enters with Sue and she has the coffee. Bob takes a seat. Sue pours coffee around the room. The men ignore her.

MR. WINTERS

I'll be frank, Ted. With the rise of new competitors, I'm reconsidering our investment. Advertising is everything. So what will you do differently to make us stand out?

TED

I understand your concerns, but I assure you—

MR. WINTERS

(cutting Ted off)

No, Ted, I've heard these words before. I don't believe a man's words, I must see him in action. We need something concrete, something that sets York apart from the rest.

As Ted struggles to formulate a response, Bob interjects, his voice calm and confident.

As Ted fumbles for an answer, Bob strikes.

BOB

If I may, Mr. Winters.

Instant silence. All eyes on him. Bob leans forward slightly—just enough to command attention.

BOB (CONT'D)

While it's true that the market is becoming increasingly competitive, what York Enterprises offers is not just a service—it's the future.

Winters tilts his head. Intrigued.

MR. WINTERS

(skeptical)

And you believe you can deliver?

BOB

I don't believe, sir. I know.

The room shifts. The investors lean in. Ted stiffens. Bob lets the moment breathe.

BOB (CONT'D)
 We're not just playing the
 game—we're ahead of it.

Mr. Winters listens, his interest piqued. Bob's confidence and clear vision starkly contrast with Ted's earlier desperation.

Muted conversations as Bob talks, Mr. Winters nods, Ted is politely detached.

INT: CONTINUOUS YORK ENTERPRISE - CONFERENCE A
 FEW MINUTES LATER ROOM - DAY

MR. WINTERS
 (nodding, impressed)
 That's more like it. I'll be
 looking forward to seeing results
 soon, Bob. Keep us in the loop.

Bob nods, acknowledging the responsibility now placed on him. Ted, who has been silently observing, offers a tight smile, recognizing Bob's crucial role in salvaging the meeting.

TED
 Absolutely, Mr. Winters. I will
 ensure you're updated every step of
 the way.

Ted looks towards Bob is one of grudging respect mixed with wariness.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ted leans against his desk, watching Bob. Bob is relaxed, but alert. He's waiting for Ted's next move.

TED
 Let's skip the pleasantries, Bob.
 How do you handle the heat when it
 gets too close?

BOB
 Heat's just part of the kitchen,
 Ted. I don't flinch—I cook.

TED
 That's clever. But when the fire
 spreads, how far would you go to
 keep the whole house from burning?

BOB
 As far as it takes.

Ted chuckles. That's the answer he wanted.

TED

Ambition's a dangerous game. It cuts deep if you're not careful.

BOB

I don't handle ambition with care, Ted. I use it. Like a blade.

Ted pauses, tilts his head. Bob has game. But so does Ted.

TED

And if I start digging? You sure I won't find anything sharp pointed back at me?

Bob smirks. He knows the game now.

BOB

Dig all you want. The dirt's clean. But be sure you're ready for what you might uncover.

Here's where Ted makes his move. Ted pushes off the desk, steps closer.

TED

Alright. Let's talk vision. If York Enterprises was yours to steer, where would you take it?

Bob leans forward slightly, matching his energy.

BOB

Straight to the top. Cut the dead weight, sharpen our edge, and make York the name people can't get out of their mouths.

TED

You've got teeth, Bob. But in this city, ambition eats the careless alive.

BOB

Good thing I'm not careless. I don't just play the game, Ted. I rewrite the rules.

TED

Careful, Bob. Some rules bite back.

Bob smirks.

BOB
If they bite, I'll bite harder.

TED
Oh, Bob. You're sharp, I'll give
you that. But tell me
something—how's Harrisburg?

HARD CUT -
LIGHTNING
FLASHBACK

Mickey's bloody smirk. Neon sign flickering. The feel of the
gun in Bob's hand. Mickey's voice, distorted, like an echo in
Bob's head: "You'll never escape who you are."

HARD CUT BACK -
INT. TED'S
OFFICE

Bob doesn't blink. His face is calm. His heartbeat isn't.

BOB
Wouldn't know, Ted. I only look
forward.

A beat. Bob doesn't blink, but his pulse just spiked. Ted
just checked him. Hard. Bob smiles slowly, like he didn't
feel the hit. But he did.

TED
Hmm. Smart man. Let's see how far
you can go.

Bob, goes to the hallway. Ted closes his office door for
privacy.

INT. SECRETARY POOL - OUTSIDE TED'S OFFICE - DAY

SPLIT SCREEN:

INSIDE TED'S OFFICE: TED LEANS BACK, PHONE TO
HIS EAR.

OUTSIDE: BOB AND SUE STAND IN THE SECRETARY
POOL.

The hum of typewriters in the background.

TED
(into the phone, casual
but firm)
Hello, Sister.

OUTSIDE:

Sue offers Bob a polite, unreadable smile.

SUE
Coffee, Mr. Chamberland?

INSIDE:

TED
(low, into the phone)
You must come down.

OUTSIDE:

Bob tilts his head slightly, considering Sue.

BOB (SMOOTH, TEASING)
Is that the only thing you're
offering?

INSIDE:

TED
(soft chuckle, still on
the phone)
Our new man, Bob. Yes, quite
interesting.

INT. SECRETARY POOL - CONTINUOUS

Bob holds Sue's gaze a second longer, sensing something behind the professionalism.

BOB
You keep this place running like
clockwork.

Sue shrugs, unimpressed.

SUE
Thanks. But don't get too
comfortable. Ted's not the kind to
hand out gold stars.

BOB (GRINS, EASY)
I'm not the kind to need one.

A brief beat—Sue clocks that answer. Then—her phone rings.
The moment is gone.

SUE
Yes, sir. Okay, sir.

She hangs up, her demeanor shifting back to professional.

SUE (CONT'D)
Ted wants you in Human Resources.

She gestures down the hall. Bob glances at the direction, then back at her.

He doesn't move right away. He just lets the moment hang. Then—he walks, controlled, confident.

INT. BOB'S BEDROOM - NIGHT DREAM

BLACK & WHITE.

Bob tosses, turns. His brow glistens with sweat. His breath shallow, uneasy.

HARD CUT - DREAM
SEQUENCE

INT. A SURREAL, DARK ROOM - DREAM

-The same room where Mickey died.

-The air is thick, suffocating. Every footstep, every breath, every distant drip drip drip of water—amplified, distorted.

-A lamp flickers violently. The buzz is deafening. The shadows stretch unnaturally.

-Then—Mickey's voice. Low. Laced with smoke.

MICKEY (V.O.)
Bob...
(beat)
You can't hide forever.

-Bob spins around. Nothing.

FLASH CUT—MICKEY'S HAND GRIPPING BOB'S HAIR.

Bob is on his knees. Mickey above him, cigar between his lips.

MICKEY
Big Day! Take Charge!

BOB PULLS THE GUN. FIRES. BANG.

Mickey staggers—blood blooming across his chest.

HARD CUT—LOOP
REPEATS.

Bob is back on his knees. The cigar smoke is thick, choking.

—Mickey's hand. His grip tightening.

MICKEY (LAUGHING, UNSHAKEN) (CONT'D)
Big Day! Take Charge!

Bob screams. Pulls the gun. Shoots again.

FLASH CUT—BUT IT DOESN'T WORK.

Mickey takes a step forward. Blood seeps through his shirt—but he's smiling. Unstoppable. Bob staggers backwards, his back hits the dresser. Panting, shaking his head, frantic.

BOB
No. No, you bastard. I killed you.
Stay dead. Stay DEAD!

Mickey tilts his head, amused. He's closer now. Too close.

MICKEY
(soft and gentle)
You think it ends here? You think
you're done with me?

MICKEY GRABS BOB'S COLLAR—RIPS HIM UPWARD—AND THEN—

BOB IS FALLING.

EXT. ENDLESS SHAFT - DREAM

Bob tumbles. The walls are lined with neon signs flickering—

—"BIG DAY! TAKE CHARGE!"

—"YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE."

—"SEE YOU SOON, PAL."

—Mickey's laughter echoes from everywhere.

-Bob tries to scream, but no sound comes out.

HARD CUT-BOB
JOLTS AWAKE.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted sits across from Bob, smiling like a man who already won. Bob stands, hands behind his back like a "Military At-Ease." Ted speaks lightly, like he is talking down to a child.

TED

Now Robert—wait, no, I'll stick with Bob. I prefer Bob better. Bob Better! Better Bob!

(grinning, rolling the words like he enjoys the taste of them)

I love alliteration. It's like a good waltz—moves so easily.

Bob doesn't blink. He waits.

BOB

Yes, sir.

Ted looks for an expression from Bob. None is given.

TED

You do know what "alliteration" is, don't you, Bob?

BOB

Of course.

Ted leans in, the challenge is on.

TED

Excellent. Use it in a sentence then.

Bob doesn't break eye contact. The playful challenge just became a duel.

BOB

(slight pause)

The big bad bear bored the baby bunnies by the bushes.

Ted tilts his head, intrigued. A slow nod.

TED (AMUSED)
Well done. "The Big Bad Bear
Bored..." Clever, aren't we, Bob?

Bob smirks, the first real flicker of something dangerous. He leans in to Ted. Talking slow and dark.

BOB
I am a quick study. And I have one
more for you: The Big Bad Wolf beat
down the Big Bad Bear before he was
barely aware.

Ted stills for just half a beat. Then smiles.

TED
"The Big Bad Wolf," you say? Beat
down the Bear, you say.
(a slow, knowing nod)
Interesting.

THE HARRISBURG PROBE

Ted glances at Bob's file, flipping a page like it's just an afterthought.

TED
So, I see your last supervisor at
Hershey was... what is this? The
chocolate place?

Bob doesn't flinch.

BOB
Yes, sir. Hershey Chocolates.

Ted grins, circling behind Bob, a hand landing on his shoulder. Bob doesn't move.

TED
From the looks of you, I can see
you didn't eat many chocolates.

BOB
No, sir. I work to stay in shape.
It's important to look good.

Ted lets the moment breathe. Then flips another page.

TED
Exactly. Now... tell me about your
supervisor there—Mr. Mickey Wilson.

Bob doesn't blink. He knew this was coming.

TED (CONT'D)
I don't see a phone number for him.

Bob delivers the next line like it's a cigarette drag.

BOB
He died. Suddenly.

A flicker in Ted's expression. He leans in. Ted savors these words.

TED
Oh, I do love details. Tell me what happened.

Bob pauses. Lets the silence stretch. Then, with a casual shrug:

BOB
Ah, Mickey Wilson took an early retirement. Poor bastard didn't get to spend his money.

Ted's eyes narrow slightly.

TED
Early retirement, you say?

Bob gives the ghost of a smirk. The game is shifting. Ted leans in further. Bob speaks cool like a steel blade.

BOB
Mickey never saw this guy come outta nowhere. I got knocked down too.
(beat, like he's pulling Ted in closer—)
The guy shot Mickey right there. I think Mickey underestimated him. Didn't see it coming.

Ted is hooked. He doesn't even realize he's holding his breath.

TED
Shot the man... right in front of you? How thrilling!

Bob leans back, crossing his legs, voice slow, deliberate.

BOB
You know what that guy said before
he pulled the trigger?

Ted leans forward. Practically vibrating.

TED
What?

Bob holds his gaze. Slow chilling and the hint of a smile. He speaks low.

BOB
Big Day! Take Charge!

The air in the room turns electric. Ted doesn't breathe. Bob leans in slightly.

BOB (CONT'D)
Big Day! Take Charge. Big Day! Take
Charge.

Ted exhales. Amused. Excited. But... uneasy.

TED
Big day, you say? Take charge, you
say? Interesting.

Ted leans back, then tilts his head. The charm disappears.

TED (CONT'D)
You know, Bob, I was thinking about
Harrisburg today. Funny little
town.

BOB
(suspicious but playing
along)
Yeah? You thinking of moving there?

TED
Nah. Just reminiscing. Some real
interesting characters come out of
there.

Bob knows. Ted knows. And now, the game is ON. Bob meets Ted's gaze. A smirk plays at the corner of his lips. Ted hits the intercom. The moment shatters.

TED (CONT'D)
Miss Spencer, get me the number for
Officer Joe Swatski, Harrisburg
Police Department.

Bob watches Ted carefully. A smirk still lingering. Ted hangs up. Looks at Bob. Lets the silence stretch.

TED (CONT'D)
I will find out. I find out
everything.

Bob leans in just slightly. A whisper of a smile.

BOB (COOL, MEASURED)
Here's the thing, Ted. A dead man
tells no tales.

Ted's eyes flicker. Bob doesn't move.

TED
Right. Seems like there's more to
this tale.

Bob smirks—wider now. This is a game. And he likes it.

TED (CONT'D)
Rules, Bob. Rules. You keep your
eyes up the ladder, not down the
skirts.

Bob holds his gaze, unreadable.

TED (CONT'D)
You don't drink with them. You
don't sleep with them. You don't
entangle yourself with the
secretarial pool.

Bob's gaze shifts—slightly. Ted catches it, smirks.

TED (CONT'D)
You? You belong in the Corner
Office. That's where the real game
is played.

Bob processes this. The words settle. Then, Ted continues to talk and it fades to a muffled voice in the background. Bob drifts...

CUT TO INT. BOB'S DAYDREAM - THE CORNER OFFICE

FLASH VISION:

-Bob in Ted's office. The desk is his. The skyline belongs to him.

-His hands rest on the polished wood like a king on a throne.

-He swirls a glass of whiskey, tilting it toward the city like a toast.

-A shadow of a figure at the door—waiting to enter.

TED'S VOICE FADES IN OVER THE DREAM.

TED (V.O.)
 ...Keep those girls on their
 tasks... If you agree, we have a
 deal.

Bob smiles, slow, certain. He closes his eyes—he can taste it.

HARD CUT

INT. TED'S OFFICE

Ted's voice now back to clarity, Bob has no sign that he drifted to the "corner office."

TED
 ...and that's how it's done.

Bob extends a hand.

BOB (COOL, UNSHAKEN)
 I'll keep that in mind.

Ted studies him. The deal is struck.

TED
 Now get on with your day. I want
 reports of your progress.

Ted watches as Bob exits, shutting the door behind him.

INT. OUTSIDE TED'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Bob adjusts his tie. Steps forward. No hesitation. Then under his breath he says -

BOB
 Ted... just wait and see what I'll do
 to you.

Beat. Then—

BOB (CONT'D)
 Big Day! Take Charge.

FADE OUT.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Bob moves down the hallway, mind racing, grin widening. The city is his. The job is his. The future is his.

Then—he collides with someone. Hard.

SUE

Oh, my lands, you almost ran me
down.

Startled, steadying herself against the wall. Bob pulls back, eyes flicking over her—assessing, adjusting.

BOB

Sue, isn't it? I was thinking too
much, didn't see you. You alright?

SUE

Yes, fine. But I did hear you back
there—"Big Day! Take Charge!"

Bob grins, sharper now. A moment. The world hums around them, but inside this bubble—it's just them. Sue holds his gaze just a second too long. Then—keeps walking. Bob watches her go, tucking that moment away.

INT. BOB'S OFFICE - LATER

Bob strides through the secretary pool. Typewriters clack. Perfume lingers. Women whisper and work, their glances flicking toward him.

Bob bursts into his office—no windows, no view, but it's his. He tosses his bag down, papers scatter. He barely notices. Then—the door opens.

Sue enters, arms full of files. She pauses, clocking Bob's energy—charged, almost electric.

SUE

I see someone's settling in just
fine.

Bob leans back against the desk, grinning.

BOB (LOW, TEASING)
 What can I say? I love the symphony
 of typewriters. The faint perfume
 of carbon paper. And of course...
 (beat, letting it sit)
 ...a chance encounter with a charming
 secretary.

Sue arches a brow. Playing along but not falling for
 it...yet.

SUE
 Flattery, Mr. Chamberland?

BOB
 Bob. Call me Bob.

SUE
 (mocking playfully)
 Well, Bob, don't think you can
 sweet-talk your way into the
 secretarial pool just yet.

Bob pushes off the desk, stepping just a little closer. Not
 enough to threaten. Just enough to shift the air.

BOB
 Oh, I assure you, Sue—my intentions
 are strictly professional.

Though... the thought of a little
 office scandal? That has a certain...
 appeal.

SUE
 Scandalous? My, my, aren't we
 getting ahead of ourselves?
 (beat, then sharper—)
 Let's at least get to a coffee
 break before you start writing our
 tabloid headlines.

Bob smirks, sensing her rhythm now.

BOB
 Fair enough. But mark my words,
 Sue—by that coffee break?
 (beat, lower)
 You'll be asking me out for a smoke
 on the fire escape.

Sue laughs—one note, quick. Amused. But not convinced.

SUE

We'll see about that, Bob. Until then—I keep my wits about me, and my Timex locked up tight.

Sue walks away. Smirking. Bob watches her go. And just like that the game has begun.

INT. HALLWAY - YORK ENTERPRISES - DAY

Bob and Sue walk side by side, casual.

BOB

Before you show me around, can we talk for a moment? Tell me your full name.

Sue glances at him, curious but guarded.

SUE

Sue Spencer.

BOB

Sue Spencer. You know, Ms. Sue Spencer, you're a pretty one.

SUE

Oh, Mr. Chamberland! You know Mr. York's rules. We can't date.

They reach the elevator. Sue presses UP.

An office girl passes by.

OFFICE GIRL

See you for drinks later?

Sue is distracted.

SUE

Oh yes, I'll be there.

They step inside. The doors shut. A tiny, enclosed world.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Sue presses "Floor 23." The elevator jerks, then starts to rise. She exhales, shifting her weight.

SUE

Oh, I hate elevators.

Bob steps a little closer. Not too close. Just enough for her to feel it.

BOB

Like I said—you are pretty, Ms. Spencer. May I call you Sue?

SUE

Oh, I don't know if we should be on a first-name basis at work.

Bob nods, playing along.

BOB

But outside of work...? That's another thing, isn't it?

Bob waits. Lets it sit. Sue pauses. It's subtle—but she likes the game. The elevator dings. The doors slide open.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They step out. Bob slows. Sue does too.

BOB

(like an afterthought)
You know, I need someone to show me around. New in town, don't know where to go. Could you be that person?

Sue relaxes. Smiles.

SUE

Well, Mr. Chamberland..

BOB

(smooth like whiskey)
Bob.
(beat, softer, coaxing—)
Say it.

Sue shakes her head, laughing despite herself.

SUE

(sighs)
Bob.

Bob grins, slow, victorious.

BOB

There, see how easy that was?

They keep walking. The city hums outside. The tension is soft but electric.

BOB (CONT'D)
Where do you live?

SUE
Midtown. 17th floor.

Bob smirks.

BOB (KNOWING, AMUSED)
Great view, I bet.
(beat, then—)
You live alone?

The pause is a little longer this time. Bob notices.

SUE (NODDING)
Yes.

Bob lets that hang. Not pushing.

BOB
Maybe we could grab a coffee
sometime.

SUE
We can't date here at the office.

BOB
(smiles)
Right. No dating at the office.
So let's not label it. Let's just
see where things go.

Silence. The world narrows. Sue is excited and nervous.

SUE
This is all so fast.

BOB
Just a coffee, Sue. No pressure.
(beat, softer—)
Tonight?

Sue hesitates. Bob lets her. She's already there. Then—she nods.

SUE
Okay. Let's meet at the coffee shop
on 48th Street. 5:30.

Bob grins, slow, measured. Locking this in. He grins.

INT. BOB'S OFFICE - A MOMENT LATER

Bob and Sue stand close—closer than colleagues should. Sue leans over his desk, their hands brushing as they murmur over a document. A beat. A charged silence.

Then—THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

JANE YORK enters like she owns the place. Because she does. Dripping in confidence. Perfectly styled. Pearls, gloves, the works. A presence that turns heads before she even speaks.

Sue straightens. Bob doesn't move—yet.

JANE

Well, my, my. Looks like we found
the right man.

She extends her hand—no hesitation. It's not a greeting. It's a command. Bob takes her hand.

BOB

(a half-beat late)
Ms. York?

Jane correcting him, with a flick of amusement.

JANE

THE Jane York.

She lets go—slowly, deliberately. Watching him. Jane continuing, breezy but razor-sharp.

JANE (CONT'D)

Daughter of the owner. Sister to
Ted. I let him have the business. I
do... other things.

Bob raises an eyebrow. Jane smirks.

JANE (CONT'D)

Very nice. I expect remarkable
things from you, Mr. Chamberland.

BOB

Bob. You can call me Bob.

Jane smiles. Just a flicker. Like she's already won something. She turns to leave. Then she speaks effortlessly:

JANE

I see. Well then, Bob... Nice to meet you.

Bob watches her exit like she's still in the room. A beat. A longer beat. Then—Sue clears her thought to gain Bob's attention.

SUE

So... Bob.

Bob blinks, breaking from Jane's spell. He turns. Sue is watching him. Closely.

SUE (CONT'D)

You seem quite taken with Miss Jane York.

Bob exhales, a smirk creeping back in. Now deflecting and recovering quickly and smoothly.

BOB

Ah, Miss York. She's a fascinating woman, isn't she?

SUE

(deadpan, eyebrow raised)
Fascinating? That's one word for it.

Bob grins, but Sue isn't laughing yet.

SUE (CONT'D)

You looked like you were ready to write her a sonnet.

Bob tilts his head. Then—steps closer. Teasing voice.

BOB

Now, now, Sue. Let's not exaggerate.

(beat)

I'm just a man who knows how to appreciate beauty when he sees it.

(eyes locked, the pivot begins)

Just like I see in you.

Sue pauses. Just for a second. Bob leans against the desk, casual, cocky, controlled.

BOB (CONT'D)

So... drinks and dinner tonight? Then I can call you, "Sue."

SUE
 (Mocking and easy laugh)
 And I can call you "*the man my
 mother warned me about.*"

Bob growls. A shift. A moment. And then—Sue changes the tone.

SUE (CONT'D)
 I took out a leg of lamb this
 morning. How's that for your
 appetite?

BOB
 Lamb? My favorite.

They share a laugh. Then, Bob steps forward. He lowers his
 voice. He locks in the deal.

BOB (CONT'D)
 My, Sue.
 (beat—she feels this one.)
 My secret.

He's closer now. Inches. He whispers.

BOB (CONT'D)
 Our secret.

Sue swallows. Breath catches. She doesn't move away. Bob
 reaches behind her. Pushes the office door closed with his
 foot. A second. A charged silence. Then—He kisses her.

The door clicks shut.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted stands at his desk, staring out at the city—lost in
 thought. Pam enters briskly, a file in hand. Patient, but
 clipped.

PAM
 Mr. York, your call is waiting on
 line one.

No response. Ted doesn't move. Doesn't blink.

PAM (CONT'D)
 Mr. York.

TED
 Yes, woman I heard you.

PAM
 (deadpan)
 Mr. York—are we in deep thought or
 just shallow ignorance? Because I
 do like to keep track.

Ted finally turns, slow, deliberate.

TED
 Your ability to turn a simple phone
 call into an existential crisis is...
 astonishing.

PAM
 It's a gift, sir. One I've
 perfected in my many years as the
 unsung hero of this company.

Ted smirks, eyes flicking over her. Amused.

TED
 And I suppose that makes me... the
 villain?

PAM
 Oh, I wouldn't go that far.
 (beat, then with a smirk—)

Ted exhales, slow. Then—mock frustration, shaking his head.

TED
 Chatter, chatter, chatter. That's
 all you women seem to do!

She exits—but just before she's out of earshot—

PAM
 Uppity man. Deep thought? A
 puddle's deeper than his thoughts...

Ted SMILES. Just a flicker. He likes her bite.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ted exhales, shifts gears. He picks up the phone—voice smooth
 as a silk noose.

TED
 Hello, I'm calling about a former
 employee—Robert Chamberland.

His eyes flick to his notepad. Bob's file sits open. A
 cigarette burns in an ashtray nearby.

A pause. Ted listens. Humming. Noodling the information.

TED (CONT'D)
Ah. December 9, 1952, you say? And
why did he leave?

He picks up a pen. Clicks it once. He repeats slowly.

TED (CONT'D)
New opportunities.

Another pause. Ted's smirk flickers—just slightly.

TED (CONT'D)
And his manager—Mickey Wilson? Can
I speak with him?

Beat. The answer comes. Ted stops writing. Faux sympathy

TED (CONT'D)
Oh... murdered, you say?

A beat. Ted slowly, lazily, leans back in his chair. Playing dumb.

TED (CONT'D)
December 8th, 1952. The day before
Bob left.

Silence. Ted listens. Makes a note. A small, slow smirk creeps in. Then, just like that—Ted changes the tone. Warm.

TED (CONT'D)
Well, my dear, I do love your
little kisses.

A beat. A small laugh from the other end. Ted leans forward, all charm. Warm laugh.

TED (CONT'D)
Not your kisses, of course. Your
Hershey Kisses.

The laugh on the other end grows. Ted smirks.

TED (CONT'D)
Oh, you hear that all the time?

A final pause. Then—Ted clicks the pen shut.

TED (GRINNING) (CONT'D)
Thank you for your time.

He hangs up. And just like that—the warmth vanishes. Ted exhales. His fingers drum the desk. The information sinks in.

Ted leans back, staring out the window, rolling it over in his mind.

TED (CONT'D)

There's something about that man... something off. Something I also find very exciting. What was that phrase?

His fingers tighten around his pen. A slow grin spreads. He remembers. He murmurs, testing out the phrase.

TED (CONT'D)

Big Day. Take Charge.

He chuckles, shaking his head. A dangerous grin. Ted exhales, stands. The office light dims, shadowed and mysterious.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - MORNING

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 5, 1953 - THREE MONTHS LATER.

The hallway is quiet, pristine. The number 17 sits next to the elevator, marking the floor.

Sue stands near the elevator—three months pregnant. Dressed sharply. Hair perfect. Checking her watch. Tapping her foot. A woman who has to be in control... but something isn't right.

She holds Mickey's notebook. Sue flips through the pages. Names. Numbers. Scrawled notes. Her brow furrows. She glances up—then calls out, sharper than usual.

SUE

Bob! We're gonna be late!

BOB RUSHES INTO FRAME—

Bagel in one hand. Briefcase in the other. Trying to put on his hat while still chewing.

BOB

(always smooth)

Yes, yes, I'm coming! We have time!

Sue isn't laughing. She closes the notebook. Tightly.

SUE
 After this baby, I want so much for
 the three of us...
 (beat)
 Who's Mickey?

Bob freezes. Then—he smirks. Recovers. Rolls his eyes, like she just asked about a bad debt.

BOB
 (playing dumb)
 Sue, don't worry. I'm moving up. I
 mean *we're moving up*. Wait... what
 did you say?

Sue doesn't buy it. She holds up the notebook.

SUE
 Oh, you are a smoothie. That's what
 all the girls say.
 (flips a page, tapping
 it—)
 Mickey. His name is here.

Bob goes still. He eyes the notebook like a loaded gun.

BOB
 (casual)
 Really? All the girls?
 (grins, deflecting—) Which ones?
 Sandra? Emily? Rose?
 (beat—then—leaning in, softer—)
 Where did you find that,
 sweetheart?

She flips through the pages.

SUE
 Oh, this is interesting—"Big Day!
 Take Charge!" That's funny. You
 always say that too.

Bob freezes for just a moment, then shrugs, smiles.

BOB
 Mickey was a motivational guy.

FLASHBACK - INT. MICKEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The neon sign flickers. The air is thick with smoke. Mickey leans in close, his forehead pressed against Bob's.

MICKEY
 (low, smoky and grinning)
 You wanna get to the top? You gotta
 take the stairs.

A slow inhale. Bob's fists clench.

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT.

SUE
 Oh? What kind of work did you two
 do together?

BOB
 (too fast, too defensive)
 Nothing worth remembering.

Sue raises an eyebrow, not quite believing him.

ANGLE ON: BEHIND HIM—THE ELEVATOR DOORS
 SILENTLY OPEN.

Sue's expression shifts from suspicion to horror.

HER EYES WIDEN— BOB IS STEPPING BACKWARD—INTO
 NOTHING. SUE SCREAMS!

SUE
 BOB!!

Sue GRABS HIM—YANKS HIM FORWARD—JUST IN TIME.

INT. THE SHAFT. AN OPEN, GAPING VOID.

Bob's hat tumbles down. Gone. Beat of silence. Then—Bob
 exhales.

INT. BACK IN THE HALLWAY, CONTINUOUS.

Bob is shaken but hides it with a casual laugh.

BOB
 I could have been killed!
 My hat.

Sue is shaking. Not from fear— from realization. Breathless,
 she whispers

SUE
 If you fell... where would I be?
 (beat, low, gutted—)
 How would I manage?

Bob blinks. He wasn't expecting that reaction. He swallows.

THE ELEVATOR DOORS CLOSE.

Bob hesitates—then presses the button again. DING. This time, the elevator arrives properly. The doors open. It's waiting. Bob back to smooth.

BOB
See? All fixed.
(beat—soft, coaxing—)
Come on, Sue.

She just stares at the open doors.

SUE
No. I will not get in that thing.

Bob chuckles. Shakes his head. He steps inside anyway. Presses the button.

THE DOORS CLOSE.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER 🕒

The elevator doors slide open. Bob steps out. Smug. Relaxed. Checking his watch.

THEN—THE STAIRWELL BURSTS OPEN.

Sue STORMS OUT—winded, furious. She locks eyes with him. Marches over. Bob grins, teasing.

BOB
Took you long enough.

Sue stops short. Her face is different now.

SUE (LOW, WARNING)
Bob. You could have died. Then
where would I be?

Bob's grin flickers.

BOB
Sue. You live in fear.
(beat—quoting, grandly—)
"There are always a lot of people
so afraid of rocking the boat... that
they stop rowing."

Sue stiffens.

SUE
(deadpan)
Bob. We are middle class.
(beat, darker-)
And who the hell is Mickey?

Bob sighs. Takes the notebook from her hand.

BOB
Mickey was a friend. From
Harrisburg.

Sue watches him. Hard.

SUE
You never talk about Harrisburg.
You never talk about anything
before here.

Bob exhales. Smiles. Tilts her chin up.

BOB
Sue, baby.
(beat-whispering-)
You are all I need.

Sue stares at him. Wants to believe him.

SUE
(softly)
Smoothie. I would die without you.

Bob's face shifts. A flicker of something. A memory.

BOB
Ok I will see you at the office. I
have to get another hat, I have a
dinner meeting tonight.

SUE
What? You never said that.
Another night away? This is our 3
month anniversary. I took out the
lamb.

BOB
Well make it! I'll have it when I
get home.

SUE
When will you be home?

BOB
Late.

SUE
When then what's the point?

BOB
The point is, you need to get to
work and I need to get a hat!

Bob ushers Sue to the door. Quick. Too quick. She scurries—heels clicking—then suddenly, She STOPS. A hesitation. A thought.

SUE
(desperate)
Bob. (beat—low, raw—) When are we
going to get married?

Bob doesn't flinch. Doesn't even pause. He steps back, presses the elevator button.

THE DOORS DING. OPEN.

Casually he turns in the elevator to face Sue. He smiles.

BOB
Okay, Sue. See you later.

Sue stands there. The door shuts between them. But she's not moving yet. A beat. Then—her brows knit. Her fingers tighten around her purse strap.

SHE EXHALES.

She turns—walks toward the building phone in the lobby. She pulls out a number from her purse. She picks it up. Dials.

SPLIT SCREEN - SUE ON THE PHONE IN THE LOBBY / HERSHEY
CHOCOLATES SWITCHBOARD

Sue stands still. Phone to her ear. The building hums around her, but she doesn't hear it. This is the moment.

The line clicks. A voice, chipper, routine.

OPERATOR
Hershey Chocolates, how may I
direct your call?

Sue swallows. Smooths her dress. She makes her voice light, casual.

SUE
 Yes, hello. (beat—then, softer—)
 I'm calling about a man named
 Mickey Wilson.

The OPERATOR hesitates. Just for a FRACTION of a second. Sue
 HEARS IT. The weight of that name.

HOLD. FADE OUT.

CUT TO:

INT. SPLIT SCREEN JANE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - BOB'S
 APARTMENT SAME TIME

Clock shows 8:15 AM.

The setting is lavish, contrasting sharply with Bob's modest
 apartment. JANE, styled like Jackie Kennedy, lounges on an
 elegant sofa, leisurely flipping through a society magazine. The
 phone begins to ring. She glances at it, smirks, and
 deliberately waits before answering.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

BOB
 (agitated)
 Come on!

He checks his watch. The phone rings again.

JANE
 (coolly, as she picks up)
 Hellooooo.

BOB
 Jane, baby, where were you? I thought
 you weren't going to pick up! I am
 dying here without you, baby.

JANE
 Bob, don't be so dramatic. I am right
 here. You are late in calling. A girl
 should not be kept waiting. This girl
 has choices.

BOB
 Choices! Who? I would kill anyone that
 came close to you. You are mine, baby.

JANE
 Oh Bob, such a tease. Remember, you
 are taken?

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

Your girl, Shirley, Sally, what's her name. So cute. So plain. So common.

BOB

Jane, her name is Sue, but let's not bring her up. This is about us.

JANE

Oh yes, Sue. Ok, I won't bring up that she is having your baby. That you are living with her. No, no, I won't mention that at all. And, like I said, a girl does have choices.

BOB

Jane, you are killing me here. Come on, don't do that. I am gonna take care of that. All of that.

JANE

Really, Bob? Really? When? All I hear is, "Jane, I love. Jane, you are the one. Jane, I can't live without you. Jane, I dream about you." Well, what about all of that, love? Hmm?

BOB

I will wrap it up. I just need time.

JANE

Ok, I'll give you some time. But I will not wait too long. Do they know about you two at the office?

BOB

No, no! Nobody knows anything.

JANE

I don't want to be known as *that* woman, that stole a man away from his pregnant wife.

BOB

Girlfriend. She is not my wife.

JANE

Well either way, she is still pregnant. You are still with her. I am here alone. And I am left waiting.

BOB

Baby, Baby, I know.

JANE

Don't 'Baby, Baby' me, Bob.

BOB

Jane, I got to see you.

JANE

Of course, you do. There is just one question?

BOB

Anything, Baby, just ask me.

JANE

The question is, 'Does Baby want to see you?'

BOB

You are driving me crazy. Come on. Are we still on for dinner later?

JANE

I want a lot more than dinner from you, Mister.

BOB

OK, a quick drink at Delmonico's and then back to your place.

JANE

I want you longer. Why do I get moments and she gets all the memories? I want some memories with you. Can we dance tonight?

BOB

Baby, I will give you the moon and the stars, and we will dance the night away!

JANE

Wonderful. But she must go. I will not be included in some scandal. Look at Elizabeth Taylor, already married twice.

Pause.

JANE (CONT'D)

When?

BOB

When, what?

JANE

My ring! A girl needs to feel like she is the one. While a walk in the park is nice, it is not a date unless the man pays.

BOB

So, 7 pm?

JANE

Yes, yes. I look forward to this.

BOB

That's my girl.

JANE

But I am not your ONLY girl, remember?

BOB

I have that planned.

JANE

Really? Oh, I must hear that plan!

BOB

Tonight, I'll tell you everything.

JANE

Don't keep things from me. I will know if you do. I can help you advance and remember that I will not be involved in a scandal!

BOB

I... I love you, Jane.

Jane smirks. Lounging. Unbothered.

JANE

Of course, you do. Everybody does.

Bob grips the phone tighter. That wasn't enough. For the first time—his confidence wavers.

BOB

And?

A BEAT. Jane waits. A long second.

Then—she tilts her head like she's considering it.

JANE
 And... what, Bob?
 (soft-mocking, slow-)
 What are you waiting for?

BOB
 (desperate)
 Jane... do you love me too?

Jane PAUSES. A flicker of something crosses her face.
 Then-it's gone. She SMILES. Like she's speaking to a child.

JANE
 Sure.

Bob stiffens. His stomach drops. That wasn't real. That was a pat on the head.

BOB
 That... didn't sound convincing.

JANE
 Well, I am fond of you.

Silence. Bob grips the phone. His knuckles go white.

JANE (CONT'D)
 (almost dismissive)
 I will see you tonight at
 DELMONICO'S for dinner. And I want
 dancing. And more of your time.
 Remember, Jane has choices. Bye
 now, Bob.

CLICK. Bob stands there. Phone still in hand.

Jane hangs up the phone and smiles to herself, content in her control and the intrigue of their complicated relationship.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jane stands by a large window, lost in thought, gazing out at the cityscape. Ted enters, his expression one of disapproval and concern.

TED
 (directly, without preamble)
 Does Father even know about this?
 Jane, stay in your class or go higher.
 Bob is so, what is the word?
 "Pedestrian?"

Jane doesn't turn from the window.

JANE

I handle my affairs, Ted. Father will be fond of him, just like I am

TED

"Fond?" You can be fond of a puppy. Something about Bob I just do not like. There's some, smell about him. Like he's hiding something. Harrisburg.

Jane now gives Ted a warm hug as she speaks.

JANE

(teasing)

You and your smells! Bob isn't hiding anything. Ted, Bob is a man that lives for today and the future. What's going on in Harrisburg?

TED

I will find out about his shady past. He will hang himself. This is his job to lose.

The conversation ends as the room dims slightly.

NT. YORK ENTERPRISES - SECRETARY POOL - DAY

Clock reads 10:00 AM.

The office hums with typewriters and hushed conversations. SUE and PAM sit at adjacent desks, their conversation low but charged.

PAM

(cool, measured)

You need to see the reality of your situation, Sue. Hitching your wagon to Bob's shooting star—have you thought about where that actually leads?

SUE

(bristling, defensive)

What do you mean, Pam? Bob is a wonderful man.

PAM

Oh, absolutely. Every girl dreams of settling down with a man who can't commit to dinner plans, let alone a lifetime together.

SUE

That's not fair, Pam. Bob just has a lot on his plate right now.

PAM

(raising an eyebrow)
Yes, I'm sure his plate is overflowing—with ambition, responsibility... or just a healthy serving of avoidance and excuses.

SUE

(scoffing)
You're being cynical. Bob loves me.

PAM

(mock-thoughtful)
Ah yes, nothing says I love you like a man who won't take responsibility.

SUE

You just don't understand, Pam. Bob is different when we're alone.

PAM

Yes, I'm sure he's a regular Prince Charming when the curtains are drawn and the audience is out of sight. But forgive me if I'm not convinced by his performance.

SUE

(snapping)
Fine, Pam. You win.

PAM

(softening, but firm)
I'm not trying to win. I'm trying to protect you. Bob needs to make this right. There's something off about him. Some secret.

SUE

(glancing around, urgent whisper)
Shh. No one knows. Keep it down. Everything is fine.

PAM

That's exactly my point. No one knows. But soon— (a flick of her eyes to Sue's abdomen) everyone will. You two got together fast. Suspiciously fast.

SUE

(defensive, but faltering)
Bob said he'd make this right. I believe him. You won't believe what happened this morning—

PAM

(dryly hopeful)
He got you a ring?

SUE

(frustrated)
No, Pam! I almost lost him. The elevator doors opened, and he stepped back— (beat, the words catching in her throat) There was no elevator. Just an empty shaft. I pulled him back. His hat fell in. He could have been killed.

PAM

(leaning in, quiet, but sharp)
Sue, you're telling me Bob had a close call with death this morning, and it didn't shake him? Didn't even faze him?

SUE

(pauses, something flickering in her eyes)
Bob... he doesn't dwell on things. He moves forward. But I found Mickey's notebook.

PAM

And this Mickey...?

Sue grips her desk a little tighter, her fingers brushing the notebook in her drawer.

SUE

(firm, but maybe to convince herself)
Mickey was just a friend.

Pam doesn't buy it. Neither does Sue.

PAM
 (leaning in, unblinking)
 And just the hat fell down the
 shaft?

SUE
 Pam!

PAM
 (matter-of-fact,
 unrelenting)
 Three months ago, you didn't know
 Bob. Now he's in your apartment,
 he's your manager, and you're
 having his baby. What do you
 actually know about him? Where he
 was last year? What he's running
 from?

SUE
 (whispered, firm)
 Pam. Bob is private. He told me he
 had a troubled past.

PAM
 (eyes hard, voice quiet
 but lethal)
 We had a troubled past too.
 Remember?

A chill hangs between them.

SUE
 (clipped, warning)
 Pam. Don't. I told you—never bring
 that up again.

PAM
 (beat, softer but no less
 firm)
 Sometimes you need reminding. I
 saved you, Sue.

SUE
 (voice trembling, but
 resolute)
 Yes, Pam. You saved me. Now stop
 digging in the past. Let's focus on
 the future.

PAM
 (cool, decisive)
 Then start with a ring.

Sue swallows hard, looking away. Pam watches her, knowing she's planted the seed. The tension lingers, thick as cigarette smoke.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISES - SECRETARY POOL - DAY

Typewriters clacking. Pam and Sue sit at their desks, mid-conversation, when Ted enters all authority and no grace.

TED
Miss Spencer.

SUE & PAM (SIMULTANEOUS)
Yes?

Ted stops short, his brow furrowing.

TED
(gesturing vaguely at Pam,
then locking onto Sue)
The prettier one. What's your name
again?

SUE
Sue Spencer.

TED
(smirking)
Alliterative. How charming. Clever
parents.

SUE
(matching his flat tone)
I'm sure they'd be pleased by your
approval.

Ted turns to Pam.

TED
And you?

PAM
(deadpan, without looking
up)
The other Miss Spencer.

TED
Well, let's not waste time, Pretty
Spencer. Get your pad.

Sue exhales slowly, grabs a steno pad and follows Ted into his office.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The door clicks shut behind them. Ted moves behind his impeccably ordered desk, loosening his tie just slightly—like a man who enjoys comfort but demands control. Ted settles in and is smug. Sue Stands

TED

This office—it could use a little more... life, don't you think?

SUE

Deadlines. Meetings. The coffee machine that never quits. Your exceptional leadership. What more could we need?

Ted grins, enjoying the sarcasm.

TED

Now I am not every going to remember your name. So I will call you "P.S." That stands for "Pretty Spencer.

Ted looks off, pleased with himself. Sue rolls her eyes.

TED (CONT'D)

I see everything. Your potential, PS, is expanding. By the day.

Sue doesn't flinch, but her grip on the pencil tightens.

SUE

(firmly)

Mr. York, my potential, as you call it, is none of your concern. Shall we begin the letter?

Ted savors the moment, letting the silence stretch before picking up a cigar cutter from his desk—clicking it open, shut, open, shut.

TED (FINALLY)

Yes, yes. Let's get down to business. Hershey Chocolates. Human Resources Department.

Sue jots it down. Ted less concerned about the letter and more fascinated by Sue.

TED (CONT'D)

Tell me, PS. Who are you dating these days?

Sue looks up sharply.

SUE
Mr. York-

TED
(cutting her off)
No need for formalities. Call me
Ted.

SUE
(controlled)
Yes, Ted. What should the letter
say?

Sue sits.

INT. FLASH CUT TO SUE ON THE PHONE CALLING
ABOUT MICKEY

IN the distant background Ted is talking, enjoying the sound
of his voice. Sue drifts to this brief flashback.

SUE
Yes, hello. (beat-then, softer-)
I'm calling about a man named
Mickey Wilson.

The OPERATOR hesitates. Just for a FRACTION of a second. Sue
HEARS IT. The weight of that name.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TED
In a moment. First-do tell. What do
the girls chatter about?

Sue pauses, treading carefully.

SUE
Their husbands. Their boyfriends.
Their dreams. The latest picture
show. They love the music from
South Pacific.

TED
(mock surprise, smirking)
Do they now? Perhaps we should go
sometime.

Ted sniffs. He sniffs again. Sue is not sure what he is
doing.

TED (CONT'D)
That scent, I just realized what it
is...

SUE
(trying to keep the
conversation light)
I am wearing Yardley.

TED
"Yardley!" Oh no, such a common scent.
No, that's not what I mean...

Sue attempts to lighten the mood, misunderstanding his
implication.

SUE
Well, I can't afford Chanel.

TED
Oh, PS, I will get you Chanel! That's
not what I mean.

Ted sniffs again, think and then smiles.

TED (CONT'D)
The scent... it's deceit, passion,
lies. I love it! You wicked little PS.
Wrapping some poor man around your
little finger.

Sue, now visibly upset, tries to maintain her composure.

SUE
Ted, I don't want you to talk to me
that way.

TED
PS! Please drop the formalities.
You are pregnant. I can see that. I
can smell it on you. That
smoldering passion. Wicked, wicked
woman. How will you survive?

Sue forces a smile, shifts in her chair. Ted stands, and
speaks matter-of-factly.

TED (CONT'D)
But right now, PS, I am going to
kiss you.

SUE
What?

Ted moves fast—grabs her chin, tilts her face up, and plants a firm, uninvited kiss.

Sue doesn't slap him. Doesn't pull away violently. She does nothing. A frozen moment—because what choice does she have?

Ted pulls back, savoring his victory, straightening his tie.

TED

There. That was nice, wasn't it? I know you liked it—because I liked it.

Sue swallows down her disgust, forces her expression blank.

SUE

The letter, Mr. York.

Ted chuckles, amused at her attempt at control. He returns back to his chair behind the desk.

TED

That's my girl.

Sue drops her gaze, pencil pressing into the page until the tip snaps.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISES - OFFICE FLOOR - DAY

The camera glides through the busy office, catching Bob as he briskly moves toward Ted's office, a folder gripped tightly under his arm. His movements are precise, his focus unshaken. A man with a plan.

He knocks once.

TED

Come in.

INT. TED'S OFFICE CONTINUOUS

Bob steps inside. Sue is already there. Something in the air is off. Bob hands the folder to Ted.

BOB

Ted, here's the ad campaign for the Winters account. Miss Spencer, why are you not back at your station?

SUE

Mr. York needed me to take a letter.

Ted leans stand and moves, smirking, then turns just enough to subtly block Sue's exit. Ted mocks easily.

TED

Oh, Bob, leave her be. She's got... other skills I'm exploring right now. But her steno skills? Not what I expected. Might need some private tutoring.

Sue tightens her grip on the notepad. Bob doesn't miss it this time.

BOB

I'll see to it personally that she sharpens her dictation skills.

Sue escapes. Ted watches Bob watching her leave. Then Ted grins.

TED

So, Bob. Finally decided to crawl out from whatever rock you've been hiding under?

BOB

Ted you wound me. Come on, we're two sides of the same coin. Except my side's just a little more polished.

Ted laughs, playing along.

TED

Polished or not, it still buys the same brand of trouble.

BOB

(low and dangerous)
Ready to dance with the devil?

TED

(mocking)
Only if I lead. And Bob—remember—I always lead.

BOB

Ted, I'm dancing circles around you already.

Ted chuckles—but his eyes flicker.

THE GAME BECOMES A WAR

Ted speaks and loves the sound of his voice. Bob razor, respectfully sharp.

TED

You know, ambition? It's a hungry beast. Always looking for its next meal.

BOB

Then I'd rather dine at the table than wait for scraps.

TED

You remind me of myself. Hungry. Eyes fixed on the prize.
(beat, then softer-cutting)
But the hunt? It can cost more than you're willing to pay.

BOB

Success isn't handed out. It's seized. And I'll pay any price to take it.

A charged beat. Ted studies him, then...

TED

Be careful what you wish for. Because you just might get it.

BOB

(grins)
That's the plan.

TED

Oh God, Bob, I am bored with you. These dramatic inflections. Perhaps you should try the theatre?

Ted claps lightly. The sound is slow, deliberate.

He reaches into his wallet. Pulls out a crisp \$100 bill.

TED (CONT'D)

Take this. Take a lady to dinner. But not just any lady. Someone above your class.

Bob reaches for the bill. Ted doesn't let go.

TED (CONT'D)

If I find out you wasted it on some cheap little thing, you'll pay it back. With interest. I see what goes on in my business.

Bob holds his ground. No blink. No flinch. A still moment. Then—Ted moves.

THE KISS. THE SHIFT.

Ted leans in. Ted kisses him. Long. Hard. Calculated. Power. Control. A game within a game. Ted pulls back. Smug. Superior. Untouchable. Bob doesn't flinch. Ted studies Bob. He see the bulge in Bob's pants. Smoldering desire is steaming from Bob.

TED

Oh, I see you liked that? I did.
So, if I liked it—then I knew you would.

Ted shoves the bill into Bob's front pocket, lingering just long enough. Ted speaks cool and distant.

TED (CONT'D)

Don't overthink it, Bob. Desires are desires.

(leans back, grinning)

And tonight, you should desire something expensive. Tomorrow, dinner with me. WE will be looking at a new opportunity. Bring a change of clothes. This is an overnight trip.

Ted thinks he has won. Bob adjusts his jacket. Straightens. His eyes are flat, unreadable.

BOB

(smooth)

Of course, Ted. Your desires are paramount.

Ted nods, already moving on.

TED

I was thinking of Harrisburg. Thought I might take a drive there. You'll come with me. Show me the landscape. We will go after the weekend.

Bob pauses. Not long. But long enough. Not a hint of concern.

BOB
You really want to go to
Harrisburg?

TED (SMIRKING)
Yes. Called an old Army buddy of
mine. He's on the police force
there.
(beat, lets that sit)
Said he had some news about Mickey.

INT. CUT TO QUICK FLASH WITH MICKEY

In Bob's mind, quick recall.

-A hard shove—Bob's breath catches.

-Mickey's voice, distorted, drowning out: "Big Day! Take
Charge!"

-Bob gulps.

-The neon sign flickers violently.

-The camera swirls up to the ceiling fan.

-Suffocating silence.

BANG. BANG.

INT. TED'S OFFICE CONTINUOUS

Bob returns from the flashback. He exhales and talks low and
deliberate. A WARNING SHOT.

BOB
Curiosity has a way of leading us
down paths we may not want to
travel.

Ted leans in, grinning like a wolf.

TED
Don't try to outplay me. You belong
to me now.

A long, heavy silence. Bob turns, walks out. Never looking
back. Ted watches him go. His smirk stays—but his eyes
darken.

BOB IN THE HALLWAY.

Adjusting his tie. Straightening his lapel.

And then—he wipes his mouth. Slow. Precise. With the back of his hand. The moment lingers.

BOB smirks.

BOB (V.O.)
Big Day. Take Charge.

CUT TO:

INT. YORK ENTERPRISES - SECRETARY POOL - 2:00 PM

The office hums. Sue and Pam are hunched together, speaking in hushed tones.

SUE
(fuming)
Oh, the arrogance of that man.
Smug. Do you know what he called
me? Do you know?

PAM
What now?

SUE
(mocking Ted's voice)
"PS." Pretty Spencer. Oh, PS, just
not too bright, are we? But you do
have your looks. I'm sure you've
caught the eye of many men. Haven't
you, PS?"

PAM
Well. That's almost poetic.

Sue grits her teeth.

SUE
And then he kissed me!

PAM
(chokes on air)
Ted kissed you?

SUE
(Imitating Ted)
"Wasn't that good? I know you liked
that because I liked it. Right,
PS?"

Pam sits back, folds her arms. A smirk creeps in.

PAM
Well, aren't you lucky? You should
gain his affections.

Sue drags a hand down her face, wiping her mouth as if she
can still taste him.

SUE
Pam! No! God, I can still smell
him. Some awful French cologne-like
rotting flowers and cheap musk.

Pam starts to quip but stops cold. Bob enters.

BOB ENTERS - A NEW MAN

Bob walks in, sharper than ever. The hesitation? Gone.
Whatever part of him that doubted is dead now.

Sue notices—something's different.

SUE
You look... different today, Bob.

BOB
Do I?

He keeps moving. Commanding. Detached.

BOB (CONT'D)
Miss Spencer.

PAM & SUE (SIMULTANEOUSLY, DEADPAN)
Yes?

BOB
(clarifying)
Miss Sue Spencer.

PAM
(Mocking)
Oh, you mean this Miss Spencer.

BOB
(Flat tone to Pam)
You. Take a powder.

She saunters off, tossing a final jab over her shoulder.
Laughing.

PAM
 "Take a powder!"

Sue leans against her desk, slowly filing her nails—not looking at Bob.

THE SEED OF DOUBT - SUE PRESSES BOB

SUE
 (casual filing her nails)
 Why is Ted York writing to Hershey
 Chocolates about you?

Bob doesn't flinch.

BOB
 A reference.

SUE
 A reference? Three months after
 you're hired? Liar.

Bob shrugs, casual—but it's forced.

BOB
 He's thorough. Likes his paperwork.

SUE (DIGGING, WATCHING HIM NOW)
 And what happened in Harrisburg?
 You never talk about it.

Bob buttons up.

BOB
 (flat, absolute)
 Dead end. Moved on. End of story.

Sue keeps filing her nails, watching him from beneath her lashes.

SUE
 Mmm. Sure.

Bob stiffens slightly. He doesn't like her tone.

BOB (LOW, WARNING)
 I don't think I like your tone.

Sue doesn't stop filing her nails.

SUE
 Get used to it.

Bob exhales sharply, dragging a hand through his hair.
Exhales. Then pressing for information.

BOB
What happened with Ted? What did he
say about Harrisburg?

Sue finally stops filing her nails. Crosses her arms.

SUE
(detached)
Nothing much. He reviewed my
performance. Said I had a lot of
potential.

BOB
And?

Sue shrugs, like it's nothing.

SUE
Then he kissed me.

Bob stares, unreadable.

BOB
(low, clipped)
Ted York kissed you.

SUE
(slow and matter-of-fact)
Mmm-hmm. Right there in his office.
Said, "I liked it, so I'm sure you
did too."

BOB
And you let him?

Sue gives him a slow, incredulous look.

SUE
Oh. So it's my fault now?

Bob studies her, coldly assessing.

BOB
(biting)
I see how you are.

Sue leans in, quiet, deadly.

SUE
You are weak, Bob. You better wise
up and stop dreaming.

(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)
We are having this baby. You will support us. Understood?

Bob nods—reluctantly. But his irritation is palpable. Sue picks up the nail file again—filing. Filing.

SUE (CONT'D)
Ted gave me a nickname. He and I are on a first-name basis.

Bob sharpens, eyes narrowing.

BOB
What?

Sue smirks, enjoying this now.

SUE
Hmm. Now, did he kiss me before or after the nickname? I'm a little fuzzy on those details.

Bob stiffens.

BOB
How did all of this happen?

Sue pauses dramatically.

SUE
Oh, it happened about twenty minutes ago. That's how it happened.

Bob's face tightens.

SUE (CONT'D)
Did Ted give you a nickname?

A pause. Sue watches as something flashes in Bob's eyes.

SUE (CONT'D)
Did Ted... kiss you? The things women have to put up with from men. There should be a law about harassments.

Bob's jaw ticks. A beat.

BOB
Would you stop filing your damn nails?

Sue doesn't stop.

SUE
I'm just a helpless girl, Bob. A
"PS." That's what Ted calls me. And
then he kissed me.

BOB
What the hell does that stand for?

Sue smiles, slow and knowing.

SUE
"Pretty Spencer."

Bob yanks his coat off the chair, pissed now.

BOB
Just stay away from him.

SUE
Bob, honey. Ted is your boss.

Bob stares, silent. The office clock ticking loudly.

The intercom buzzes.

INTERCOM VOICE
Miss Sue Spencer, please report to
Mr. York.

Sue pauses. A flicker of something—then she squares her
shoulders. She doesn't hesitate. She goes.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISES - TED'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Ted stands at his window, hands clasped behind his back,
gazing over the city like a king surveying his domain. He
owns this moment. The door creaks open.

SUE ENTERS. Posture: professional. Eyes: cautious.

SUE
Yes, Mr. York? What can I do for
you? Another letter you need me to
take?

Ted smirks, turns—but doesn't face her yet.

TED (DISMISSIVE, BORED ALREADY)
No, no. I've seen your steno
skills—about as refined as that
other Spencer's wit.

Sue tightens slightly but says nothing.

TED (CONT'D)
(cool, direct)
I need you to run an errand for me
later.

Sue folds her hands in front of her.

SUE
Well, Mr. York, I'd love to, but-

TED
No buts, no ifs. None of that.

Sue straightens.

SUE
Mr. York, I finish work at-

TED
Oh, the overtime? Fine. Approved.
Congratulations, PS, you're moving
up in the world.

Sue grits her teeth, but remains poised.

SUE
What is the errand?

Ted wanders to his desk-leisurely, in control. Picks up a crisp \$100 bill. Casual. Arrogant. Holding the \$100 bill like it is a prized possession. Sue is unimpressed.

TED
I have a late night ahead. Business
trip tomorrow. Long, exhausting. So
I ordered myself a little meal from
Delmonico's. Steak. Medium-rare.
Burgundy on the side. You'll pick
it up.

Sue stares, blank. Sue keeps her expression neutral. Doesn't take the bait.

SUE (FLAT, UNINTERESTED)
7:15. Delmonico's.

Ted waits-watching her. He wants reaction. Some sign of fluster. He gets none. Sue extends her hand.

A beat. Ted lets the \$100 slip between his fingers. Sue takes it without even looking at it. Ted leans forward slightly, voice dropping to a slow purr.

TED (LOW, DELIBERATE)
That's all for now. But later?
We'll talk again.

Sue nods curtly. Turns. Walks. No hesitation. Ted calls out.
Sue stops and turns.

TED (CONT'D)
Oh I do hear they have a marvelous
torch singer there and people dance
the night away.

Sue has not expression. Ted watches her go. A slow,
entertained smile creeping in. He's intrigued now.

CUT TO: SUE AT HER DESK - THE COUNTERMOVE

Sue sits at her desk. The office hums low, mostly quiet. A
copier whirs in the distance.

Sue picks up the phone. Dials.

SUE
Operator? I need the number for
Hershey Chocolates in Hershey, PA.
Human Resources department.

A beat. She grabs a pen, jots the number down.

OPERATOR
(faintly over the
receiver)
That's 717-246-2652.

CLICK. Sue hangs up. Stares at the number. A long pause.
Then, she exhales.

SUE
Let's see what Mickey Wilson has to
say about Bob.

She taps the phone once. Twice. Thinking. Sue stands. Smooths
her dress. Picks up Ted's \$100 bill.

SUE (CONT'D)
(mocking)
P.S. God, I hate that man.

She exits.

SLOW DISSOLVE. THEME SONG QUEUES.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

FLASH CUTS:

- Sue's heels clicking sharp against the wet pavement.
- Raindrops hitting her coat, shoulders tense.
- The neon of Delmonico's reflected in a puddle—her foot SPLASHES through.
- Her breath, visible in the cold air.
- The CITY HUM around her, but she's only hearing her own heartbeat.

CUT TO:

INT. DELMONICO'S - NIGHT

The music swells. The original torch song "No Need to Waltz" oozes from the faded LOUNGE SINGER. Her voice low, smoky, wrapped in melancholy.

The restaurant is bathed in gold. Soft candlelight, polished silverware, murmured laughter.

CUT TO:

SUE - WALKING FASTER

- ANKLES, HEELS - SHARP, DETERMINED.
- HER HAND clutching the \$100 bill tightly.
- SUE'S REFLECTION in a shop window—DISTORTED by the rain.

CUT BACK TO:

BOB & JANE AT THEIR TABLE

CLOSE-UP: Bob's hand brushes Jane's. Fingers intertwine.

Jane throws her head back in laughter.

Bob leans in, whispers something.

Jane smirks—teasing, testing.

FLASH CUT:

Sue reaches Delmonico's.

INT. DELMONICO'S - THE DOOR OPENS.

The moment she steps inside, the music swallows her whole.
JAZZ. ROMANCE. The scent of wine, perfume, money.

SUE'S EYES FIND THEM IMMEDIATELY.

Bob STANDS. Extends his hand. Jane ACCEPTS. Laughing,
glowing. They step onto the small dance floor.

CLOSE-UPS. INTIMACY. UNAPOLOGETIC.

- Bob's palm pressing against the small of Jane's back.
- Jane's fingers lightly tracing Bob's jaw.
- The twirl—her dress catching the light.
- The way their faces linger too close—before lips meet.
- The slow, stolen kiss. Another. Then another.

SUE FREEZES.

Her stomach plummets. Her breath catches. Eyes unblinking.

THE HOST APPEARS.

He hands the carry-out bag to Sue and smiles.

HOST

They make a lovely couple. Second
time here this week.

SUE CLOSE-UP.

Her face: Shock. Hurt. Realization. Her grip on the bag
tightens. A tear escapes. She wipes it away before it's fully
formed.

THE ROOM SPINS AROUND HER. THE TORCH SINGER
SWELLS

FLASH CUTS:

- Bob whispering in Jane's ear.

- Jane tilting her head back, laughing.
- Another twirl, another kiss.

SUE TURNS. WALKS OUT.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

- Her face is tight.
- Steps quickening.
- The city feels LOUDER. Cars honking. Streetlights buzzing.
- The rain still falls, but she doesn't notice.

CLOSE-UP - HER LIPS MOVE.

SUE
 (V.O.) (voice cracking,
 whispering to herself)
 Bob and Jane York. Jane York and
 Bob. When did all this happen?
 Where was I? How did I not see
 this? Second time this week?
 God, what a fool I am.

Thunder cracks. Rain

SUE (CONT'D)
 (V.O.) (colder now, steel
 settling in her spine)
 I have no time for waltzing.
 But Bob does. Did we look like that
 just three months ago?

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Sue walks briskly, purposefully, the city buzzing around her. Her heels click against the pavement in rhythm with her thoughts. A neon sign flickers ahead—THE BROKEN HEART BAR. A cheap dive, a place where people go to forget.

She stops. Considers. Then steps inside.

INT. THE BROKEN HEART BAR - NIGHT

Dimly lit, the air thick with cigarette smoke. A jukebox hums in the corner, some old torch song playing softly.

Sue slides onto a barstool. She smooths her dress, regaining her composure.

BARTENDER
(without looking up)
What'll it be?

SUE
(calm, measured—holding it together)
Ginger ale.

The bartender raises an eyebrow, but nods, grabbing a glass. Across the bar, a MAN IN A FEDORA watches her.

FEDORA GUY
(smirking, sliding over)
Now, what's a dame like you doing in a place like this?

Sue exhales softly, amused but unimpressed. She lifts her glass, takes a sip, then sets it down deliberately.

SUE
(without looking at him, voice even)
I have no time for waltzing.

She stands. She puts a Quarter on the bar. Adjusts her coat. Leaves without another word.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

She walks. Slower this time. More composed. Stronger.

She glances at a shop window and sees her reflection staring back. She touches her stomach, just for a moment.

Then her face hardens. She keeps walking.

INT. SUE & BOB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The clock on the wall ticks. Steady. Unforgiving. 10:52 PM.

The apartment is dimly lit. The table is set. Plates, silverware. The lamb—perfectly cooked—sits untouched, cooling. The candle burned halfway down.

Sue stands at the sink, staring out the small kitchen window. Her hands grip the edge of the counter. She's not crying. Not yet.

The door unlocks. Opens. Bob enters. He pauses. Feels the weight of the air. Sue doesn't turn.

BOB

Sue—

SUE

(soft, eerie calm—still
facing the window)

You're late.

Bob goes to give her a kiss, she turns away. Bob takes off his hat and coat and sits at the table. He talks casual.

BOB

Had a meeting. You know how it is.

SUE

Liar. There's no need to waltz around this topic, Bob. I saw you, with her, dancing as if your promises to me were just... whispers in the wind. I saw you, Bob. Waltzing with Jane York.

A long beat. Bob steps toward her. Sue steps back.

BOB

Look, I—

She gestures to the table. The perfectly set dinner, untouched.

SUE

I cooked the lamb.

BOB

It looks—

SUE

Don't.

Silence. The clock ticks.

Sue walks past him, picks up a serving knife from the table. She carves the lamb, slow, deliberate. Places a perfect slice onto a plate. Slides it toward him.

SUE (CONT'D)

Eat.

Bob watches her. Doesn't move.

SUE (CONT'D)

Eat.

BOB

Sue, I'm working my ass off for us. Sue, you're not looking at the bigger picture. That dance was a step towards something greater for us, for our future.

SUE

Our future? Or your future, Bob? It seems like you would trade our happiness for a dance with temptation. I am not one of your dreams, Bob. Maybe I used to be for you, some fantasy of a perfect life, the perfect wife.

BOB

You need to see/

SUE

What is that smell?

BOB

Oh, there was a table right next to me, and a woman had on this intoxicating perfume. Just wonderful.

SUE

Liar. Remember Bob, I saw you waltzing with Jane York. Have your lamb. Get your fill. Then get to bed. We are having a baby. Wise up, Bob.

A beat. A long, tense, suffocating beat.

Bob picks up the fork. Takes a bite. Chews. Swallows.

SUE (WHISPERS, ALMOST TO HERSELF) (CONT'D)
2nd time this week.

Bob stops mid-bite. Looks up.

BOB

What?

Sue smiles. A slow, knowing smile. And now, Bob feels it. The ground beneath him is shifting. She goes to the bedroom.

BOB (CONT'D)
(whispering to himself)
Time for dreams. Tomorrow will be my
day. Big day! Take charge!

INT. BOB'S APARTMENT AN HOUR LATER

Bob sits alone at the table, a half-empty bottle of whiskey beside him. He stares into his drink, swirling the amber liquid slowly. His jaw clenches.

The city skyline reflects in the glass window. A distorted, fragmented version of his face stares back.

Bob touches the glass, pressing his fingers to his own reflection.

BOB
(whispering)
"Is this who I am now?"

Silence. The weight of his actions sits heavy in the air.

A flicker of something—regret? Uncertainty? He exhales, gripping the glass tighter.

A distant siren wails outside. The sound fades. Bob's shoulders tense—like he's reconsidering everything.

Then he shakes it off. His fingers curl into a fist. The doubt fades, replaced by something colder. Harder.

He throws back the rest of his drink and slams the glass down, the sound shattering the silence.

Bob straightens his tie in the reflection. The man staring back at him isn't hesitant anymore.

A beat. Then Bob turns away, stepping into the darkness.

INT: BOB'S DREAM

Bob get's into bed. Sue has her back to him, she doesn't stir, although she is wide awake. Bob falls fast asleep.

In Bob's head we see Bob and Jane waltzing at Delmonico's and kissing then in bed making love at Jane's apartment.

Bob's strong back pulsing on top of Jane, she moans and smiles.

BOB
 (murmurs in his dream out
 loud)
 Big Day! Take Charge!

Sue's eyes stare darkly into the night.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

SUPERIMPOSED: APRIL 6, 1953 - THE MORNING AFTER

Soft light spills through the sheer curtains. JANE sits at her vanity, brushing her hair, a knowing smirk on her lips. The mirror reflects her—serene, glowing, dangerous.

She hums last night's torch song, the memory of the night before still dancing in her mind.

JANE
 (singing softly, teasing
 herself)
 "No need to waltz..." (chuckles)
 Last night was... delicious. Bob
 certainly knows how to serve up a
 tempting dish.

The camera pans—TED stands in the doorway, leaning casually, watching.

TED
 (dryly)
 Delicious, huh? Just remember—some
 dishes are better admired from a
 distance. Especially the ones
 already served.

Jane catches his reflection in the mirror, smirks.

JANE
 Oh, Ted. Since when did you become
 such a moral compass?

She sets down the brush, turns to face him, her expression unreadable.

TED
 Not my style. But even I know
 sampling can turn into something...
 messy.

Jane stretches, unhurried, her voice silky.

JANE
(playful)
Commitments are just temporary
arrangements. Besides, Bob's
hungry—and I have an appetite too.

TED
Funny. That hunger of his—pretty
sure it comes with a side of Sue.
And a baby.

A flicker in Jane's eyes—but she doesn't break. Instead, she
stands, walks past him slowly, letting the moment breathe.

JANE
(quiet and dangerous)
Crowded tables offer the most
interesting choices, Ted. And I
intend to be the one he can't
resist.

TED
You're playing a dangerous game,
Jane.

Jane laughs easy and gives Ted a warm hug.

JANE
You worry too much, darling. Maybe
you should find someone like Bob
to... occupy you.

TED
A *man* like Bob?

JANE
(teasing)
Oh, brother, you know what I mean.
A *woman* who makes you feel alive.
You work too much.

Ted lets that hang—then shifts gears.

TED
I'll be out tonight. Taking a drive
to Newburgh. Looking at a new
facility.

JANE
Newburgh? Should I be worried?

TED
(grinning)
Should Bob be?

Silence. A charged pause.

JANE

Ted. Let Bob be. I don't care what he did before me. He's going places. He will be famous. Front page news! I can feel it. And I plan to be right beside him when he gets there.

Ted chuckles, walking toward the door.

TED

(to himself)

Right. And I'll be right beside him... too.

He gives her one last look, then exits.

Jane watches him leave, thoughtful—then picks up the phone, her smile returning.

INT. SUE AND BOB'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Muted tones. Light filters in, but the space feels tight, restless. Sue straightens up, distracted, her hands moving mechanically. Bob, in the background, hurriedly packs an overnight bag, shoving a suit into a garment bag, his movements sharp, clipped.

SPLIT SCREEN - INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Lavish, glowing. Soft music hums from a record player. Jane lounges in silk, dialing the phone with slow, deliberate fingers. A cigarette smolders in an ashtray—untouched, burning down like time itself.

BACK TO: INT. SUE AND BOB'S APARTMENT

The phone rings.

SUE

Hello? Hello?

BACK TO: INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

Jane hears Sue's voice— not Bob's. Her smile vanishes. Her breath catches.

She SLAMS the receiver down.

BACK TO: INT. SUE AND BOB'S APARTMENT

Silence.

SUE
Strange.

Bob enters, bags in hand. Briskly speaking and moving.

BOB
Who was that?

SUE
No idea. They just hung up.

Dismissive. He straightens his tie in the mirror.

BOB
Prank call.

Sue watches him, unconvinced.

THE PHONE RINGS AGAIN.

Sue stops Bob from answering, hand on his chest. She is a bit irritated.

SUE
Hello? Hello?

BACK TO: INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

Jane grips the receiver again. Her lips part—but she hesitates.

SLAMS the phone down again.

BACK TO: INT. SUE AND BOB'S APARTMENT

Click. Silence.

Sue hangs up slower this time, turning back to Bob. Casual. Knowing.

SUE
Odd. The caller hung up again.

Bob snaps his suitcase shut and is getting ready to leave.

BOB
Wrong number.

SUE
Or maybe the right number...

Bob's jaw tightens.

SPLIT SCREEN - JANE & BOB/SUE IN FULL CONTRAST

JANE leans back, dreamy, exhaling a slow drag from her cigarette. She dials once more--this time, she won't hang up first.

BOB & SUE on the edge of a storm. The air crackles. Sue crosses her arms--waiting.

The phone RINGS AGAIN.

Bob SNATCHES the receiver before Sue can move.

BOB
(sharply)
Hello. Who is this?

BACK TO: INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

Jane smirks, her voice syrupy smooth.

JANE
Bob, it's Jane. Your Baby.

BACK TO: INT. SUE AND BOB'S APARTMENT

Sue watches Bob like a hawk. She sees the shift in his eyes. The flicker of panic he tries to bury.

Bob grips the phone tighter.

BOB
I SAID, WHO IS THIS?

BACK TO: INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

Jane's smile falters.

JANE (CONFUSED)
Bob... It's me.

BACK TO: INT. SUE AND BOB'S APARTMENT

Bob's face tightens. Sue catches the crack in his mask.

BOB
(low, cutting her off)
Hello? Answer. Is anyone there?

He SLAMS the phone down.

Jane, on the other end, stunned, listens to the dead line.

Sue & Bob - tension tightens like a vice. Sue steps closer, voice deceptively soft.

SUE
Who was that?

BOB
Prank.

Sue doesn't blink.

SUE
That wasn't a prank, Bob.

Beat.

SUE (CONT'D)
You know who I spoke to today?

Bob's stomach drops.

BOB
(dismissive)
Sue, I don't have time-

SUE
I called Hershey.

Bob freezes.

SPLIT SCREEN JANE & SUE - POWER SHIFT

Jane on the bed, staring at the phone, lips parted in realization.

Sue eyes locked on Bob, watching him unravel.

JANE
(whispering, almost to herself)
Bob, baby, what's wrong?

SUE
I asked for Mickey Wilson.

BOB EXPLODES.

BOB
You WHAT?!

Sue blinks, stunned by the reaction.

SUE
(slow)
Why does that upset you, Bob?

Bob reels himself in, breath coming fast.

BOB
(pacing, voice dropping but lethal)
You don't go digging.

Sue stands her ground.

SUE
I wasn't digging, Bob. Just asking.
What is it with Mickey? Why all
the drama? You sure I won't find
something?

Bob's hands clench.

BOB
Stay. Out. Of it.

Sue smiles. Just a little.

SPLIT SCREEN - FINAL CUT

JANE - Crushed cigarette. A flicker of doubt.

BOB & SUE - Unspoken war. A battle line drawn.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted is seated at his desk, engrossed in reading a report. He writes notes in the margins, nodding appreciatively at the content.

CUT TO:

The office door opens, and Bob enters. Ted looks up, a hint of a smile playing on his lips.

TED
(closing the report)
Bob, good morning. I did not think I
would say this, but, nice work.

BOB
You read it?

TED
Yes. Your ideas are a bit ungrounded,
but I like your take on the ad
campaign. Just a few improvements
needed.

BOB
Improvements require flexibility. I'm
flexible. The key is knowing when to
make your move.

TED
Ah, flexibility. A valuable trait. I
was thinking, perhaps a more...
intimate setting could foster our...
partnership. Tonight will be just the
two of us, to... explore our
potential. I have much to teach you.

Ted's eyes briefly assess Bob, contemplating the professional
journey ahead.

TED (CONT'D)
You will learn from me, Bob. You will
thank me for all I am about to show
you. Are you ready?

BOB
(confidently)
An interesting proposal. It's all
about who you're in bed with,
metaphorically speaking. Let's just
say, I'm open to exploring new
avenues.

Ted rises, stepping closer to Bob with a calculated grin.

TED
I explore everything within my reach.
What I want, I have. We will go all
in, and you will thank me.

Ted's tone shifts back to a business-like indifference.

TED (CONT'D)
My desires will be your desires. It really is that simple.

BOB
(leaning in, matching Ted's intensity)
So, my ideas become your ideas.

TED
Simple, isn't it?

BOB
Your desires become... my desires.

Ted nods, appreciating Bob's assertiveness.

BOB (CONT'D)
Boss, I'll take care of you.

Bob gives a full on hard passionate kiss to Ted. Bob then steps back and lightly pats Ted's cheek. Bob smiles like a hungry Wolf. Bob gives a low growl.

BOB (CONT'D)
Grrr...That was good, wasn't it, Teddy? I liked it, so I am sure you liked it too. Right, *Teddy*?

TED
Yes, yes. More of that to come, later.

Bob nods, a smirk on his face, and exits the office. Ted watches him leave, a contemplative smile on his face.

INT. OFFICE - SECRETARY POOL - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED: APRIL 6, 10:00 AM

Sue and Pam at their secretary stations, engaged in a lively, dramatic conversation. They pause to laugh heartily.

CUT TO:

Bob enters the scene, his face clouded with irritation as he watches Sue and Pam. He approaches with a sense of authority misplaced in his casual demeanor.

BOB
Miss Spencer.

The two women continue to laugh, ignoring him. BOB's irritation mounts, and he raises his voice, cutting through their laughter.

BOB (CONT'D)
Miss Spencer!

SUE & PAM
(in unison, turning toward
him)
Yes?

BOB
What?

PAM
Which "Miss Spencer" do you want? We
are both "Spencer's" Not married,
either.

BOB
Oh, you know what I mean.

PAM
(playfully ignorant)
I am not sure what you mean. You may
have to "dumb it down for me." Or
should I go "take a powder"?

BOB's face tightens with annoyance.

BOB
Yes, Miss Spencer. Miss Pam Spencer.
Take a powder. And get me a coffee.

PAM
(sweet, innocent and
arrogant)
A coffee? Should I get that before or
after my powder?

BOB
(irritably)
Before! Now!

PAM
Well, no need to shout. How do you
like it?

BOB
Black.

PAM
FINE. Black coffee then a powder.

Pam echoes as she leaves, "Black coffee then a powder."

Bob turns to Sue, who is trying to hide a smile.

BOB

Ted needs you right now. What is he saying these days?

SUE

Well, we started to draft a letter to the Human Resource Department and then he kissed and—

Pam returns with the coffee, interrupts, Bob takes it.

BOB

Let's not go through that again. But find out what he is up to.

SUE

(suddenly serious)

Bob, what are you up to? What happened in Harrisburg? You never talk about it.

BOB

People are dead.

SUE

What people? What did you do?

BOB

(trying to brush it off)

No, I didn't mean specific people, just, you know I moved on. New chapter.

SUE

BIG DAY! TAKE CHARGE! I think this is my new phrase!

Bob returns in his WOLF Energy.

BOB

What did you say?

SUE

That has stayed with me since you called that out in your dream. I like it. Big Day! Take Charge!

BOB

Your new phrase. Really. Seems like everyone is making this their new phrase.

SUE

I love it! So powerful. Big Day! Take Charge!

BOB

Get moving, Ted wants you.

SUE

Yes Boss! Big Day! Take Charge!

Sue promptly exits. Bob watches her leave, his expression a mixture of contemplation and concern.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED: APRIL 6, 1:00PM

Jane lounging elegantly on a plush sofa, flipping through a Ladies' Home Journal. Light streams through large windows, bathing the room in a warm glow.

FLASHBACK in JANE'S mind of past moments with BOB: In Bed, Walk in the park, Dinners, laughing, kissing. All montage. The knock is heard faintly. On the 3rd knock the dream-state stops.

JANE

1 PM. Who could that be? I am not meeting Mitzi and Clara until tomorrow.

More hurried knock follows. Jane sets down her magazine with a playful roll of her eyes and heads to the door.

JANE (CONT'D)

Yes, coming.

She opens the door, and her expression transforms into one of delighted surprise when she sees Bob standing there. Bob bursts into the apartment and starts pacing. He has an energy mix of the wolf and caged tiger.

JANE (CONT'D)

Bob, darling, I didn't expect to see you here. Slumming around my neighborhood? Are you lost, my darling?

BOB

Jane, I must know. I got to know before I go any further. There are consequences.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

There are always consequences when you do something. So, do you?

JANE

And here I was, thinking you were here to drop off my dry cleaning. Bob, shouldn't you be at work?

BOB

Jane, Baby, tell me!

Jane, looking puzzled by his urgency, sits back down.

JANE

Bob, relax. What is it? What's the fire? Bob, did you quit? You're shaking. What's going on?

BOB

Quit? No. Bob is rising. Ted's got me running around like a damn errand boy. So, do you, Jane? Do you?

JANE

Bob, slow down, you are making me tired looking at you pace so, like a tiger in a cage. You look mad! Something is eating at you, now tell, Jane what she can do to help, my love.

BOB

You don't know what it takes, Jane. To get ahead in this world. Jane, everyone, every single person wants something from me. Pulling at me. Taking pieces of me, except you.

JANE

Bob, so much drama. It's like we are at a matinee! Macbeth in the afternoon! Then tell me. What are you doing, Bob? What's the cost this time?

BOB

Jane, please don't make fun of me. There's no cost. Just the usual crap. Deals, egos, late nights.

JANE

Now come sit. Tell Jane, what is troubling you so? What is this an episode of "You Bet Your Life?" What is the burning question?

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)

Don't lie to me, I can tell you are hiding something.

BOB

You think it's easy, don't you? Sitting here, judging me from your safe little world. Jane, do you love me? Rich or poor, sickness and health, do you love me?

JANE

Oh, Bob, what brought all this on? Why talk of love? We have each other. What a marvelous time we had last night.

BOB

Jane, stop. Stop please and tell me? Do you love me? Do you want me? In this world you either win, or you get left behind.

JANE

(pauses, searching for the right word)

"Complicated." You make it sound so "final." So "absolute." Really, Bob, you should get back to work. You don't want my brother to be upset.

BOB

Ted has more than his eyes on me.

JANE

Ted is wonderful. Now there is a man who knows what he wants, and he takes it. He gets it. Ted makes things happen. You can learn from him.

BOB

Oh, I am learning a lot from Ted. Believe me.

JANE

Good. Be more like Ted and less a dreamer. Dreams are nice but dreams don't pay the bills or keep Jane in fine clothes.

BOB

Oh, Jane, I am going to give you everything. So just tell me, Jane, do you love me?

JANE

(stops to ponder, then
smiles reassuringly)

Well, now that I think about it, and I had not really stopped to think about it, you see I was reading the Ladies Home Journal and... I stopped to think how fond I am of you, Bob.

BOB

(desperate)

FOND? FOND?

JANE

(laughing, playful)

And then I thought about Marilyn Monroe in "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes." Have you seen that picture? Do you think I should go blonde?

BOB

Jane!

JANE

And then I thought how much fun that movie was. My GOD, that woman has everyone wrapped around her finger. I bet she is going to be a legend one day. Imagine Marilyn as the FIRST LADY! What class she has. I just love Marilyn.

BOB

Jane! The answer!

JANE

And then I thought, "I have been so fond of Bob, and then out of nowhere I said to myself this morning while having my tea, I said aloud, "I love Bob." I just said it aloud like a known fact. "The sky is blue. $1 + 1 = 2$. I love Bob."

BOB

So, you do love me!

JANE

Well, Bob, I have already established that. Now really, what is all the fuss?

Bob kisses Jane. She laughs and gently pushes him toward the door.

JANE (CONT'D)

Bob, now relax. It's just after 1 PM.
You have work to do. So go now, get
back to work and do whatever Ted wants
you to do.

BOB

Do anything Ted wants?

JANE

Yes, Bob. Ted is passionate about his
work. Ted knows what he desires and
goes after it. Whatever Ted wants from
you, do it! Move up! Figure out what
he wants and give it to him. What is
troubling you?

BOB

Nothing. Ted said he will teach me a
few things.

JANE

Good! So, learn! Be available to Ted,
whenever he needs you. Be flexible.
AND be available for me!

BOB

Everyone wants a piece of me.

Jane kisses Bob and playfully pushes him out the door.

JANE

Now go, my love. Back to work. Will I
see you tonight?

BOB

(heading out)

No, I have something for work to do.

JANE

Oh, that Ted is going to break you in.
It may be hard. Ted can be demanding.
Whatever Ted wants from you, do it.
Follow his lead. Let Ted teach you!
Bye love! Now go.

Bob leaves. Jane sits back down and picks up the "LADIES HOME
JOURNAL" again, not reading so much as passing the time. She
pauses, smiles, and lets out a little laugh.

JANE (CONT'D)

(whispering to herself)

I do love Bob! I do! Ted will show him
how business works! I love BOB!

INT. OFFICE - SECRETARY POOL - DAY

SUPERIMPOSED: APRIL 6, 3:00PM

Pam is typing diligently at her desk. The ambient office noise fades as Bob rushes in, disrupting the calm. The camera follows Bob as he approaches Pam, his expression tense and his movements quick.

BOB
Miss Spencer, a word with you.

PAM
(looking up, playful yet sharp)
Yes, Mr. Chamberland. What is it that you need? Should I go take a powder?

A power-play between Bob and Pam.

BOB
That is what I am talking about.

PAM
About me taking a powder?

BOB
(frustrated)
That's it. It's your tone that I don't like.

Pam lowers her voice mockingly, then shifts to a Marilyn Monroe impression, teasingly to Bob.

PAM
(sarcastic innocent)
About me taking a powder.

Pam laughs, but Bob is not amused.

BOB
(annoyed)
Stop it. You have this tone. I hear it when you speak to me. I don't like it.

PAM
Mr. Chamberland, I am not sure what you mean?

BOB
You know exactly what I mean. It is degrading. You make fun of me in front of the other girls. You have a sass to you. Like you are smarter than me.

PAM
Why, Mr. Chamberland, I would in no
such way ever imply—

BOB
(cutting her off)
Stop it, Miss Spencer. Now.

Pam salutes mockingly.

PAM
Yes, sir.

BOB
See, that is what I am talking about.
You want to prove something. There is
some point you are always trying to
make. So, out with it.

PAM
Out with it?

BOB
Yes, here and now, let's get it over
with. What is it that you want to say?

PAM
Does my job hinge on this?

BOB
Miss Spencer, your work is superior.
It is your attitude that needs help.

PAM
So out with it?

BOB
For the love of God. Yes. Why do you
needle me all the time? Always little
digs. I am tired of it all. And this
will stop, this tone of yours, will
end now. So, what is on your mind?

PAM
(suddenly serious)
Sue.

BOB
Sue? What does she have to do with
this?

PAM

You think I don't know. I know everything. And there are parts to your story that don't add up.

BOB

I am not sure what you think you know.

PAM

I know you seduced her. You begged her to be with you. A young man on the rise. A man from nowhere. You think Harrisburg, PA gives you power. Did you go to Hershey Park? What a sad man you are. You come from the same stock as me. You are from nowhere. You are easy on the eyes and oh yes, you are a "smoothie." There is something about you that I don't know, and I will find out. I don't like you, Bob.

BOB

Be careful, Miss Spencer.

PAM

Or what? Are you going to get me pregnant, too?

Bob shoots Pam a fiery look.

BOB

You just shut your mouth and watch your tone.

PAM

Leave me hanging? Empty promises? That's what you give Sue. You should have fallen down that shaft. Big Day! Take Charge! Maybe that is my new phrase.

BOB

(dumbfounded)

What did you say?

PAM

That shaft. Sue told me all about it. How the door opened, you stepped in. Sue screamed. She grabbed you. Saved you. Sue is always, "saving" people. Damn her, she should have let you fall down that shaft. I have told her to leave you. Then I told her to make you pay. Pay for what you did to her. Pay.

(MORE)

PAM (CONT'D)
 Pay and pay. Oh and Miss Jane York.
 Wake up, Bob. Who are you kidding? Out
 of your league. You are gonna be
 middle-class your whole, sad, dismal
 life.

Bob slaps Pam. She does not budge. She looks coldly at Bob.

PAM (CONT'D)
 Our father had a temper. Used to beat
 us. I would take a slap and not cry.
 He would hit me again. I wouldn't cry.

The shot of Pam goes BLACK & WHITE AS PAM SAYS.

INT: MONTAGE OF THE STORY AS PAM SPEAKS

PAM
 Then one day, one hot, July day, he
 went after Sue. She was fourteen. I
 was sixteen. She was always the pretty
 one. He used to say, "Pam you are as
 ugly as that whore of a mother you
 have." He went after Sue. I went for
 the knife. Guess who was dead on the
 floor? Sue screamed. I put that man
 down.

FLASHBACK ENDS. Back to COLOR

PAM (CONT'D)
 So, Mr. Chamberland. You want to hit
 me again. I dare you. I DARE YOU.
 There could be a knife in your back
 quicker than you can say, "Bob's your
 uncle."

Pam glares at Bob. BOB is motionless. His hand is trembling.

PAM (CONT'D)
 Stay in your lane. You are a pig in
 the barn yard. You cannot sit at the
 master's Table. It won't work.

BOB
 You don't know what you are talking
 about.

PAM
 You are going to marry Sue. Make it
 quick.

BOB
 Or what? Are you threatening me?

Pam laughs dryly

PAM

Bob, I have put one man down, I can go for two, no problem. Knife in the back, remember? You better watch your back.

BOB

Your tone better change.

PAM

Sure, Bob. You marry Sue, make this all right as rain, and my tone will be nothing short of angels singing.

BOB gains composure.

BOB

Miss Spencer. GO TAKE A POWDER.

PAM

Yes, Boss. I'll go take a powder

She exits and laughs repeating that line "I'll go take a powder" in different voice tones as she exits. Laughing all the way.

BOB

(gruffly)

Big Day! Take Charge!

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 6, 9:00 PM

It's raining. Black and white. Bob's hands grip the steering wheel like a vice. The cheap neon glow of the motel sign flickers in the rain-slicked windshield.

Ted steps out first, retrieving the key. His silhouette cuts through the downpour. He returns, tossing the key to Bob.

Bob catches it without looking.

BOB

(Cool, controlled)

Ted, give me 5 minutes.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - COLOR FADES BACK IN

Dim lighting. The air is thick with something unspoken. Bob flicks on the radio—a slow, sultry jazz tune.

Bob moves like a man who's done this before—loosens his tie, unbuttons the top two. A flask appears from his coat. He pours two whiskeys into cheap, mismatched glasses.

The door creaks open. Ted steps inside. He watches Bob. Calculating.

FLASH CUT: Close up on Bob light a cigarette, the sound of the match.

FLASH CUT: Ted's eyes.

FLASH CUT: Bob's mouth as he drinks.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TED
(smirking)
I like a man who knows when to wait.

BOB
(exhales smoke, smirks back)
Patience is a virtue. You must think I'm a saint.

Ted closes the door with a deliberate click. Shrugs off his coat, draping it over the chair. His eyes never leave Bob.

TED
Saint Bob. Has a ring to it. Tell me, Saint Bob—do you know why you're here?

Bob chuckles, low and dark. He takes a sip, then offers Ted the second glass.

BOB
You tell me.

Ted takes the glass, but doesn't drink. Just swirls it, watching Bob over the rim.

TED
Because I let you be here.

Ted sets the glass down, untouched. He steps closer. Bob doesn't move—not back, not forward.

TED (CONT'D)
A man with too many secrets, Bob... he starts to look over his shoulder a lot. Tell me—what's behind you?

Bob holds the stare. A flicker of something behind his eyes.

BOB (LOW, QUIET, DANGEROUS)
You tell me, Teddy.

Ted studies him. He sees the cracks. He reaches up, trails a finger along Bob's collar.

TED (A WHISPER, TOO CLOSE NOW)
Careful. You don't want me looking
too hard.

Bob doesn't blink. He down the whiskey and tosses the glass on the floor. The shattering sound is fuel to the fire. Then—without hesitation—he grabs Ted by the tie, yanks him in.

Bob's mouth crashes against Ted's. Hard. Rough. A challenge.

Ted doesn't pull back. Ted moans against the kiss.

TED (CONT'D)
Now that's more like it.

Bob shoves him back. Breathless. Ted grins.

He glances at the single bed. Then at Bob. Bob raises an eyebrow.

BOB
(laughing lightly)
Oh, we'll work that out.

TED
I'm a light sleeper.

BOB
Well, then I'll try not to wake
you. Trust me, we won't be sleeping
much.

Bob toasts, drinks. The tension shifts. Ted sets his glass down.

TED
Bob, we must trust each other. You
need to be open. You must play the
game.

Something flickers behind Bob's eyes. The WOLF returns.

BOB
Ted, I can play the game. What do
you have in mind?

TED

I don't know how to dumb it down
for you any further.

Bob sips the whiskey. He circle Ted like a wolf. He inhales deep. Bob puts his forehead on Ted's forehead and exhales slowly.

BOB

(husky, low, seductive)

Try.

Ted matches his intensity.

TED

I like a man who doesn't go down
easy—as long as he does go down in
the end.

Bob lets that sit. Then—he makes his move. Bob eases Ted to sit in the chair. Bob straddles Ted. Takes the tie off his own neck—smooth, slow, calculated.

BOB (SEDUCTIVE, QUIET)

Teddy... do you trust me?

Ted nods. Slightly thrown by the shift.

TED

Sure, Bob. I trust you to do what's
in your mind to do.

Bob loops his tie over Ted's eyes— a blindfold. He undoes Ted's tie and rips his shirt open. Buttons pop. His breathing quickens.

TED (CONT'D)

Now we're getting somewhere.

Bob gets up.

BOB

Stay.

He refills the drink. His fingers brush the edge of his bag. A glint of rope.

His voice drops to a whisper. Under his breath

BOB (CONT'D)

Big Day. Take Charge.

Bob downs a gulp of whiskey. Takes off his shirt. He straddles Ted again on the chair. Ted runs his hands over Bob's sculpted chest and arms.

Bob guides Ted's hand down.

BOB (CONT'D)
You feel that, Teddy? That's what you want, isn't it?

Ted moans. Bob biting each word out. Low at first then escalating.

BOB (CONT'D)
Did I tell you what I want?

Ted grins—but doesn't see the rope coming. Bob gets up and goes behind Ted.

BOB (LOW GROWL) (CONT'D)
Stop digging into my past.

Ted tenses. The rope is tightening around Ted's neck.

BOB (CONT'D)
Stop asking about Mickey Wilson.

Ted struggles. Bob overpowers him. Bob a wild animal.

BOB (CONT'D)
You wanted control, Teddy? You think you make the rules? You're just another Mickey Wilson. You want favors. You want power.
(A deadly pause. Bob pulls tighter.)
(voice shaking with exhilaration)
I killed Mickey. And now, Ted, I'm gonna kill you.

Ted kicks wildly. Bob tightens. Tighter.

TED CHOKES. His body jerks—then goes limp. Bob tingling. Ecstatic.

BOB (CONT'D)
Big Day. Take Charge.

The color fades back to B&W. Bob stands over Ted's lifeless body, panting, exhilarated. Bob downs another whiskey. Growls.

BOB (CONT'D)
Big Day. Take Charge.

CUT TO: OUTSIDE -
RAIN POURING.

Bob drags Ted's body to the trunk. His face—pure control.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - RAIN-SOAKED NIGHT

The neon sign flickers. Bob, bare-chested, cigarette dangling from his lips, drags Ted's lifeless body toward the trunk.

The rain beats down. The red motel light warps Bob's reflection in the slick pavement.

BOB
(V.O.) (calm, almost
hypnotic)
How far would you go to take charge
of your life... even if it meant
losing your soul?

Beat, cigarette ember flares in the dark. Bob slams the trunk hard.

A quick cigarette drag. Then he flicks it—SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT DRIVE

The car glides through the wet streets, headlights cutting through the rain. Bob's hands grip the wheel, knuckles white.

The streetlights flicker over his face as he drives. His eyes dead. Expression unreadable.

In the rearview mirror—A FLASH.

TED'S FACE. DEAD. A sickening gurgle of breath.

Bob doesn't react. He just drives.

BOB
(V.O.)
Turns out—you can climb all the way
to the top... and still fall right
back to the bottom.

The neon signs outside blur.

His hands tighten around the wheel. He can still feel the rope.

Another FLASH—TED'S HAND, TWITCHING IN THE TRUNK.

Bob blinks. Gone. Just rain on the windshield now.

BOB (CONT'D)
(V.O.) (a whisper, to
himself)
Big Day. Take Charge.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - 3 AM

The lobby is silent. An old wall clock reads 3:00 AM.

Bob steps inside, soaked. His dress shirt clings to him, unbuttoned, revealing his chest. His tie is gone.

He presses the elevator button.

The ding sounds like a gunshot.

QUICK FLASH - BOB SHOOTS MICKEY

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY CONTINUOUS

The doors open—BLACKNESS.

Bob hesitates. For just a split second. The empty shaft from before lingers in his mind. He steps inside.

INT. ELEVATOR - 3 AM

The elevator hums softly. Bob leans back against the wall. Closes his eyes.

The dingy yellow light flickers.

BOB'S REFLECTION IN THE METAL WALLS SHIFTS. His own face morphs into Ted's—lifeless, eyes staring back.

Bob keeps his cool. The elevator jerks. Stops. For one awful second—silence. Then—it resumes.

INT. APARTMENT - 3 AM

The door creaks open. Sue paces anxiously in the apartment.

Bob starts packing a suitcase as the conversation is happening.

SUE

Bob! Oh, I've been up all night.

BOB

Why would you be up? I told you I would be out.

SUE

I know, but I had this feeling that something wasn't right. I had this dream. I felt like I was choking. I couldn't breath.

BOB

Big day. Take charge.

SUE

Bob. BOB! Are you listening to me?

BOB

I have big plans.

SUE

What are you talking about? Are you listening to me?

BOB

(lost in thought)

Take Charge! You are always going on about something.

SUE

Bob! My dream. What do you think about it?

BOB

Your dream? Well, you can breathe now, right?

SUE

Yes.

BOB

Well, then you're fine.

SUE

Why don't you care for me anymore? I noticed more and more that you care less and less.

BOB

Big plans!

SUE
What are you saying? You keep saying
"Big Plans!"

Bob suddenly starts packing erratically, grabbing clothes and personal items.

SUE (CONT'D)
Bob, what is it that you are trying to do?

Bob continues to pack, struggling comically with the suitcase. Sue laughs, amused by his antics.

SUE (CONT'D)
Bob, what are you doing?

BOB
I am going.

SUE
Where are you going at this hour?

BOB
Why are you always on me? Can't you just be independent?

Sue becomes serious and confronts Bob.

SUE
Coming at you? Bob, I am pregnant! I have your child.

BOB
(derisive)
Yea, are you sure it's mine?

SUE
How could you? Who else would it be?

Bob snaps his fingers after "You were easy"

BOB
You were easy. 1, 2, 3 on your back.

SUE
(angry)
Stop it. Stop it, Bob.

BOB
You're a cheap, lousy whore from a cheap, middle-class family.

SUE

Don't talk about my family like that.
Don't.

BOB

Cheap. Middle-class. I want more. You
and your sister, cheap, low class
dames.

SUE

Well in 6-months you'll have more!

BOB

I AM going to move up. CORNER OFFICE
BOB here.

SUE

We are having a boy. I just feel it.

BOB

(skeptical)

Have you been pregnant before? You
told me you were a virgin. Another
lie.

SUE

Lies? I have never told you lies. What
lies?

BOB

Oh, never mind. Always at me. Always.

Bob storms out of the apartment, heading for the elevator. Sue follows him, pleading.

SUE

Bob, what are you doing? Where are you
going? You're running away from
responsibility, Bob.

Bob ignores her and pushes the elevator button. Sue tries to stop him. Sue gets in front of Bob, her back to the elevator as she faces him.

SUE (CONT'D)

Bob, stop. This is foolishness. Bob, I
need you. Bob our baby needs you.

BOB

Stop clinging to me. Always at me.

The elevator doors open to reveal an empty shaft. Unaware of this, Sue continues to plead with Bob.

SUE

Bob, you are in this with me whether
you like it or not. You better wake
up.

In a fit of rage, Bob pushes Sue into the shaft.

SLOW-MOTION and repeat the " PUSH" a few times.

BLACK SCREEN. There's a sudden, jarring WHOMP as she falls.
The elevator door closes.

INT. HALLWAY

BOB stands motionless, then he turns around.

BOB

Big Day! Take Charge!

BOB (CONT'D)

(V.O.) (low, resigned,
empty)

They say when you fall... you never
hit the ground in your dreams.

FLASH CUT: COPS BURST INTO THE APARTMENT. Bob-expressionless.
Hands raised. No fight left.

FLASH CUT: THE COURTROOM. The judge's gavel SLAMS.

JUDGE

Robert Chamberland... you have been
found guilty of murder in the first
degree.

FLASH CUT: THE JURY-MOUTHS MOVING, but all we hear is a
muffled loop.

JURY FOREMAN

(silent, distorted)

Guilty... guilty... guilty..

FLASH CUT: BOB LED AWAY IN CUFFS. The world flashes with
camera bulbs.

REPORTERS SCREAM.

"KILLER!" "MONSTER!" "NO REMORSE!"

FLASH CUT: A CELL DOOR SLAMMING.

INT. JAIL CELL - 3 MONTHS LATER

CLOSE ON: Bob. Face hollow. Eyes dead.

He leans back against the wall, staring at nothing.

BOB
 (V.O.) (low, slow, flat)
 Turns out... you do hit the ground.
 (beat)
 And it feels just like this.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

BOB sits in the dim light of his cell, his eyes hollow, his body worn down from the weight of everything.

From the darkness— Sue steps forward. But she's not really there. Only Bob can see her. And she's still in black & white.

SUE
 (soft, almost kind)
 Bob...

BOB
 Sue...?

SUE
 I deserved better.

BOB & SUE
 (together, eerie)
 I deserved better.

Bob grips the sides of his cot, shaking his head.

BOB
 This... this wasn't supposed to happen.

Ted emerges next, also in black & white.

TED
 (smirking)
 Oh, Bob. It happened.

PAM & JANE ENTER.

But unlike Ted & Sue, they're in full color. They CAN'T see Ted or Sue. They only see Bob breaking down, talking to the walls.

BOB
Teddy, get out of my head.

TED
Boring Bob is gonna hang. Boring
Bob is gonna swing.
You better tell them how you lied
to everyone.

BOB
I did NOT lie.

SUE
You did.

TED
Oh, Bob—you did.

PAM
Jesus, Bob. Who the hell are you
talking to?

Bob turns to Jane, desperate.

BOB
Jane, you believe me, right?

JANE
Bob... tell me it's not true. Tell me
you didn't kill Ted.

BOB
Jane, you have to understand—it was
all for us. For the future. For
power. For position.

Jane stiffens. Something in her cracks.

JANE
For us? There is no us, Bob. There
never was.

Bob recoils like he's been punched.

SUE
(softly)
Love isn't built on the ruins of
others' lives, Bob.

BOB
Sue, please...

JANE

You devoured everything in your path.

And now there's nothing left of you.

PAM

You're a monster.

BOB

I had no choice!

TED

(chuckles, sips martini)
Oh Bob, Bob, Bob... there's always a choice.

JANE

And you made the wrong one.

Bob looks around—Sue's gone.

SUE

(whisper, fading)
I forgive you... but I won't be back.

A bright light appears. Sue walks toward it.

BOB

Sue, don't leave me! Sue!

But she's gone.

Jane clutches her purse, her voice cold.

JANE

Bob, I won't see you again. I'm sorry that I ever met you. I could've helped you. I wanted to help you.

BOB

Jane, please...

JANE

May God have mercy on your soul.

She walks out. Bob's left alone with Pam.

PAM

You wanted headlines, Bob?
I'll be front row at your execution. It's going to be electrifying.

Pam leaves. Bob collapses onto his cot. Broken. Silence.

TED STEPS OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

Ted has a martini in his hand. He sips and eats the olives as he talks.

TED

Bored. Bob, you're boring the life out of me. And I am dead!

BOB

How the Hell did you get a Martini?

TED

I just thought about it and poof! A Martini.

Bob shudders.

TED (CONT'D)

Let's get a plan together, shall we? You're guilty. No point dwelling. Own it.

BOB

Ted, shut up.

TED

Mickey said he can't wait to see you again. He said, "if you want to get to the top you gotta take the stairs."

BOB

This isn't happening.

TED

So, final meal? Oh, get oysters! Yes—oysters would be divine!

BOB

Ted. Stop.

Ted acts this next line out to demonstrate.

TED

And when they walk you down that hall, you walk like a king. Wave to the press. Smile.

BOB

Please... stop.

TED
Oh, Bob. What was it you said that
night?

BOB
What...?

TED
After you strangled me.

Bob stares at him, trembling. Gives a "I don't remember look"

TED (CONT'D)
I remember. (PAUSE)
BIG DAY! TAKE CHARGE!

BLACK & WHITE MONTAGE

The Theme song plays "No Need To Waltz" smoothie and jazzy.

-Bob shoots Mickey Wilson.

-Bob strangles Ted.

-Bob pushes Sue down the shaft.

-Bob pays off thugs.

-Bob dumps a body into the river.

-Bob shoves Ted's corpse into the car.

MONTAGE ENDS. BACK TO COLOR.

FLASHES of payoffs, killings, call girls, booze, Bob with
men, Bob with women. Hershey Chocolate Factory.

BOB starts mumbling to himself, over and over-

BOB
(whispering, broken)
Big day... Take charge... Big day... Take
charge...

TED grins.

Then- Ted steps back into the shadows.

His laughter echoes.

FADE TO FINAL IMAGE.

BOB staring at the empty execution chair.

A hint of a grin forming.

THE END