

THE SHAFT

A Film Noir

Written by

Dennis J Manning

"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 off 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, and 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 is 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.

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. TED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted stands at the glass, looking out to the secretary pool.
SUE passes through frame.

TED
Pretty, isn't she?

BOB
Didn't notice.

A beat. Ted smiles. He noticed that Bob noticed.

Bob sits without being asked. Power shift logged.

TED
Why York?

BOB
Ambition rewarded.

A long look. No smile.

TED
You got the stomach?
(No one gets to the top
with clean hands.)
Bob holds. No blink.

FLASH - MICKEY (V.O.)
Take the stairs.

Back.

BOB
I do.

Ted studies him, already setting the next trap.

TED
And Sue?

BOB
Asset.

Ted's grin says: You looked. Good.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MR. WINTERS sits with his team. Bob and Ted enter.

As Bob goes to sit—

TED
Bob — coffee?

Bob stiffens — a flash of insult — then smooths it over. He exits.

Returns with Sue, who carries the tray. The men ignore her. She pours in silence.

WINTERS
Why should I keep York in the game?

Ted stumbles. Bob cuts in.

BOB
We don't chase the market.
We set it.

WINTERS
And you can deliver that?

BOB
Yes.

The room shifts. Ted watches. A silent checkmate.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - LATER

Door closes soft behind them. The city hums.

TED
How do you hold heat?

BOB
I cook.

Ted steps closer. No desk between them now.

TED
And if the building catches?

BOB
I pick who walks out.

A beat. Ted likes the cruelty. Then—

TED
How's Harrisburg?

INT. FLASHBACK - MICKEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

HARD CUT:

CLOSE ON:

Bob's head, lowered. Mickey's hand grips the back of his neck — not comforting, not violent, but claiming. A flickering red neon light pulses through half-drawn blinds. A record plays — slowed-down jazz crackling from a dusty speaker.

MICKEY
You wanna climb to the top?

Bob doesn't move. Sweat beads on his temple. A gun rests between them on the table — cold, obvious.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
(smiling, razor-thin)
You gotta be willing to take the stairs.

He leans in. Lips almost to Bob's ear.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
Every. Fucking. Step.

HARD CUT BACK - INT. TED'S OFFICE

Bob doesn't blink. Not a twitch.

But the memory burns beneath the surface.

Ted keeps talking. Bob is somewhere else.

HARD CUT:

INT. TED'S OFFICE

Back. Bob doesn't move.

TED
And what makes you think you're qualified?

BOB
I buried the last man who stood
over me.

Dead air. Ted tastes it.

BOB (CONT'D)
(almost a dare)
Let's see how far I can fall.

TED
Let's see how far you go.

Bob exits into the hallway.

Ted closes the office door behind him - soft. But final.

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!

(MORE)

TED (CONT'D)
(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 drifter 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:

NT. 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

Typewriters clack. Perfume lingers. Women whisper. Bob
strides through it all. He owns the hallway.

Inside his new office — no windows, no view, but he doesn't
care. He drops his bag. Papers scatter.

The door creaks. SUE enters, arms full of files. She pauses —
clocking his energy. Controlled. Dangerous.

SUE
Settling in, are we?

BOB
What can I say?
The typewriters sing. The carbon's
intoxicating. And then... (beat) You
walk in.

SUE
(challenging)
Flattery, Mr. Chamberland?

BOB
Call me Bob.

SUE
Well then, Bob —
Let's not start a scandal before
lunch.

BOB
Too late. The moment you walked in,
I knew I'd be in trouble.

Sue smirks. Doesn't blink. Bob steps just a little closer.
Not enough to touch. Just enough to shift the air.

BOB (CONT'D)
You keep the whole place alert,
don't you?

SUE
Just doing my job.
(pauses, then dry)
And keeping my Timex locked up
tight.

She turns to go.

BOB
One of these days, you'll meet me
on the fire escape.
Not for scandal. Just... a smoke.

Sue laughs – one note. More like a warning shot.

SUE
Keep dreaming, Bob.

She exits. Bob watches her go. Smile forming. The game? On.

INT. HALLWAY - YORK ENTERPRISES - DAY

Bob and Sue walk side by side. Rhythm synced.

BOB
Before you show me around –
Sue Spencer. That your full name?

SUE
That's the one I answer to.

BOB
I like the sound of it. Has a ring.

SUE
Careful, Bob. Mr. York's got rules.

BOB
So do I.

They reach the elevator. Sue presses UP.

Doors open. They step inside. Enclosed. Still. Electric.

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 begins to rise. She exhales, shifting her weight, trying to seem casual.

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. Plays along. But doesn't move.

Suddenly – the elevator JOLTS.

It STOPS. Emergency lights flicker on. A low mechanical groan. They're locked in.

SUE (CONT'D)
My God. My God. I knew this would happen.

Bob steps in – closer now. Gentle. Disarming.

BOB
Shhh. I got you.
I won't let go.

Silence. Just breath. Heavy. Too loud in the quiet. Bob leans in. Kisses her.

She doesn't pull away. She calms. She leans.

The elevator goes BLACK. Bob MOANS against her lips.

Then — another JOLT. Lights flash back on.

The elevator resumes its climb.

BOB (CONT'D)
But outside of work...?
That's another thing, isn't it?

He lets it sit.

Sue doesn't respond. Not exactly.

But she doesn't pull back either.

The elevator DINGS. Doors slide open.

She steps out.

Bob waits just a second too long before following.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They step out. Bob slows. Sue mirrors him.

BOB
You know, I don't know this town.
Don't know where to go.
(pause)
Think you could show me?

Sue eases — a small smile.

SUE
Well, Mr. Chamberland...

BOB
(smiling)
Bob.
(beat, quieter)
Say it.

Sue shakes her head. But she says it.

SUE

Bob.

Bob grins. Slow. Like he just won something.

BOB

There. Not so hard.

They walk again. The hallway quiet. The city murmurs beyond the glass.

BOB (CONT'D)

Midtown?

SUE

Seventeenth floor.

BOB

Nice view?

She glances at him. He lets it hang. Then—

BOB (CONT'D)

You live alone?

A pause. Measured. She nods.

SUE

Yes.

BOB

Maybe we skip the rules and call it coffee.

SUE

We can't date here.

BOB

No labels. Just coffee.

A long silence. He doesn't fill it. That's the move.

SUE

This is fast.

BOB

So's life.

(then—gently)

Tonight?

She watches him. Debating. Then—

SUE
There's a place on 48th. Five-
thirty.

BOB
I'll be there.

He doesn't grin this time. He seals it. Like a promise.

INT. BOB'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Bob and Sue stand close—too close for office hours. She leans over the desk, hands brushing as they skim a document.

A silence. Soft. Electric.

THEN—THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

JANE YORK enters like a bullet in pearls. Perfectly styled. Confident. Born to own the room. Everyone else just borrows it.

SUE straightens. BOB doesn't move. Not yet.

JANE
Well, well. Looks like we found the
right man.

She extends her hand. No hesitation. No warmth. It's not a greeting. It's a command.

Bob takes it. Half-beat late.

BOB
Ms. York?

JANE
The Jane York.

She releases his hand — slow, deliberate. Watching him.

JANE (CONT'D)
Daughter of the owner. Sister to
Ted.

I let him run the numbers. I do... other things.

Bob raises an eyebrow. Jane smiles — like she already owns him.

JANE (CONT'D)
I expect remarkable things from
you, Mr. Chamberland.

BOB
Bob.
(softening)
You can call me Bob.

JANE
(smiling, faint)
I see. Well then, Bob... Nice to
meet you.

She exits – but her presence lingers. Bob watches the door.
Like she's still in the room.

Beat. Longer beat.

SUE
So... Bob.

Bob blinks. Caught. Turning. Sue's watching him. Closely.

SUE (CONT'D)
You seem rather taken with Miss
Jane York.

Bob exhales – smirk returning. Reclaiming his ground.

BOB
She's... fascinating.

SUE
(deadpan)
Fascinating. That's one word for
it.

BOB
Come now. I'm just a man who
appreciates beauty.
(locks eyes)
Just like I see in you.

Sue holds the moment. Not won. Not lost. Bob leans back
against the desk. Cocky. Composed.

BOB (CONT'D)
So – drinks and dinner tonight?
Then I can call you "Sue."

SUE
(smirking)
And I can call you the man my
mother warned me about.

BOB
Guilty.

A pause. Then - she switches gears.

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

BOB
Lamb's my favorite.

They share a low laugh. Bob steps closer.

BOB (CONT'D)
My, Sue.
(She feels it.)
My secret.
(He leans in. Closer.)
Our secret.

Sue swallows. Doesn't move. Bob reaches behind her...

CLICK.

He shuts the door with his foot.

Silence. A breath. Then he kisses her.

The door clicks shut.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted stands at his window. Cold skyline. Cold posture. Pam
enters briskly, file in hand. Measured. Sharp. Unapologetic.

PAM
Line one, Mr. York. They've been
waiting.

Ted doesn't move.

PAM (CONT'D)
Mr. York.

Still nothing.

PAM (CONT'D)
Are we in deep thought today, sir?
Or just shallow ignorance with a
view?

Ted finally turns. Slowly. Eyes glinting.

TED
Woman, your gift for dramatic
framing remains... unmatched.

PAM
Oh, I do what I can.

Keeps the men nervous and the women entertained.

TED
And what does it do for me?

PAM
Makes you look smarter.

Which, let's be honest – you need the help.

Ted smirks. He likes it.

TED
You're determined to be difficult.

PAM
No, sir. I'm determined to be
correct.

The difficulty's just a perk.

He sighs. Steps toward the desk.

TED
Remind me why I keep you.

PAM
Because no one else in this
building will hand you your own
ego... gift-wrapped.

Ted raises an eyebrow. Then—shrugs.

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

Pam turns, heading out. Stops just before the door. Tosses it
over her shoulder.

PAM
And puddles, sir—puddles are quiet.
Doesn't make 'em deep.

She exits.

Ted chuckles. Just a flicker.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The phone dials. Cigarette burns. Ted's silhouette leans into the smoke.

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

A pause. He listens. Eyes flick to the file. December 9,
1952. He underlines it once.

TED (CONT'D)
And the reason for his departure?

Click. Click. The pen stutters once.

TED (CONT'D)
New opportunities.

Another pause. Ted's eyes narrow. A small curl of his lip.

TED (CONT'D)
And his manager—Mickey Wilson.
Is he available?

Beat.

TED (CONT'D)
Oh... murdered?

He leans back. Exhales. No surprise. Just satisfaction.

TED (CONT'D)
December 8th.

He lets it sit. A coil tightening. Then, without warning—his
voice softens.

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

A laugh crackles faintly from the other end. Ted's grin is
razor-thin.

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

Another laugh. Ted plays it light.

TED (CONT'D)
Mm. You hear that all the time?

His tone flatlines. Pen clicks shut. Smile gone.

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

He hangs up. Silence returns. The cigarette is a nub. The office is dim. The smirk returns. Slower now. More dangerous.

TED (CONT'D)
There's something about that man...

He twirls the pen. Lets the name soak.

TED (CONT'D)
Something off. Something...
electric.

A whisper now. Remembered. Like an incantation.

TED (CONT'D)
Big day.
Take charge.

Ted exhales, stands. Window shadows stretch across his face.
He smiles.

A hunter's smile.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

SUPER: APRIL 5, 1953 - THREE MONTHS LATER

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - MORNING

Pristine. Too clean. 17 glows beside the elevator.

A faint, warbled bar of "No Need to Waltz" drifts in—as if from another apartment, another life—then fades.

SUE stands at the elevator. Three months pregnant. Perfectly put together. She checks her watch; foot taps once. She's in control. Mostly.

She holds MICKEY'S NOTEBOOK. Flicks pages: names, numbers, fragments.

She stops on a page: BIG DAY! TAKE CHARGE!

The same warped bar of "No Need to Waltz" creeps back-thinner, off-key-then vanishes.

SUE

Bob! We're going to be late!

BOB rushes in, chewing a bagel, briefcase under one arm, hat in the other-slick as ever.

BOB

We've got time.

Sue closes the notebook-tight.

SUE

After this baby... I want the three of us steady.

(beat)

Who's Mickey?

A micro-freeze in Bob. Then the smile returns; he bats it away.

BOB

Dead I moved on-

("remembers" her question)

-we moved on. Why?

Sue raises the notebook.

SUE

Because he didn't.

She taps BIG DAY! TAKE CHARGE!

Bob's eyes land on it like it's a loaded gun.

BOB

Motivational fellow.

SUE

What kind of work?

BOB
He was in collections and he had a
laundry business.

A beat. Sue doesn't buy it.

DING. The elevator "arrives."

The doors slide—revealing pure black. No car. No sound. Just
a cold updraft.

SUE's eyes widen— BOB is stepping back—into nothing.

SUE
Bob!

She grabs him, yanks him forward. His hat slips—tips—drops
into the dark.

INT. THE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS (IMPRESSION)

A void that inhales. The hat falls until it's simply gone.

BACK TO HALLWAY

Bob's mask trembles—then smooths.

BOB
Could've been killed.
(beat)
My hat.

Sue's shaking. Not from fear—from recognition.

SUE
If you fell... where would that leave
me?

She can't say more. She doesn't need to.

The doors close on the emptiness. Bob presses the button
again.

DING. This time, the elevator arrives properly. Doors open on
a bright, waiting car.

Bob, back to silk.

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

She stares at the open doors.

SUE

No.

I'm not getting in that thing.

Bob's chuckle is gentle, practiced. He steps inside alone.
Presses the button.

THE DOORS CLOSE.

Silence.

Sue looks down at Mickey's notebook. Then at the seams of the door. She doesn't move.

A bare whisper of "No Need to Waltz" brushes the air, then disappears.

CUT.

INT. APARTMENT LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

The elevator dings. Bob steps out, smug, smooth. He checks his watch - all charm.

THE STAIRWELL BURSTS OPEN.

Sue storms out - flushed, furious. She locks eyes with him.

BOB

Took you long enough.

SUE

(cutting)

You could've died.

(beat, raw)

Then where would I be?

Bob's grin softens. But only for a moment.

BOB

You live in fear.

(quoting)

"There are always people so afraid
of rocking the boat...
they forget to row."

Sue freezes. Something clicks.

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

Bob sighs. Takes the notebook from her hand — gently. Too gently.

BOB
Mickey was a friend.
From Harrisburg.

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

BOB
That's because I have you.
(whispers)
You're all I need.

She stares at him. Wants to believe it.

SUE
Smoothie.
I would die without you.

A flicker on Bob's face. Something remembered. Then—gone.

BOB
Well you won't have to die. You
have me. I would never give you
the shaft.
(pause)

I've got to get a new hat. Dinner
meeting tonight.

SUE
What? You never said that.
Tonight's our three-month
anniversary. I took out the lamb.

BOB
Make it. I'll have it when I get
home.

SUE
When will that be?

BOB
Late.

SUE
Then what's the point?

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

He ushers her toward the door – firm, too fast. But then –
Sue stops. Just shy of the exit. Something catches.

A faint song plays overhead – soft, nostalgic. [The original
Dennis Manning song, "No Need to Waltz" – slowed down,
instrumental.

BOB (CONT'D)
What's that song?

SUE
(flat, not looking at him)
I don't have time for music.

Bob exhales. Steps back. Presses the elevator button.

THE DOORS DING. OPEN.

He steps in. Turns to face her.

BOB
Okay, Sue. See you later.

The doors close.

HOLD ON SUE

She doesn't move. Her breath shallow. Her fingers tighten
around her purse strap.

She turns – walks calmly to the building phone. Pulls a
folded number from her wallet.

She dials.

SPLIT SCREEN: SUE / HERSHEY SWITCHBOARD

OPERATOR
Hershey Chocolates. How may I
direct your call?

Sue smooths her dress. Composes her voice.

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

A pause. Just a flicker. The slightest hesitation.

Sue hears it.

And she knows.

FADE OUT.

CUT TO:

INT. SPLIT SCREEN — JANE'S APARTMENT / BOB'S APARTMENT —
 MORNING

8:15 AM.

Two worlds.

Jane's apartment: Lavish. Stylized. Soft light. She lounges
 in silk, styled like Jackie O, flipping a magazine. The phone
 rings.

She waits. Smirks. Then picks up—like it's an audition she's
 already won.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

JANE
 Helloooo.

BOB (AGITATED)
 Jane, baby! I thought you weren't
 gonna pick up. I'm dying here
 without you.

JANE (BREEZY)
 Oh Bob, don't be so dramatic.
 You're late. A girl shouldn't be
 kept waiting. This girl? She has
 options.

BOB
 Options?! I'd kill anyone who came
 near you. You're mine.

JANE (DRY, AMUSED)
Well then, remind me—what's her
name again?
Shirley? Sally? So... plain.

BOB
Her name is Sue. But this isn't
about her—

JANE
Oh no, no. Let's not mention the
woman having your baby.
Or the one you live with. Certainly
not the one who wears your
ring—wait... oh, right. She
doesn't.

BOB
Jane, don't do this. I'm gonna fix
it. All of it.

JANE
You keep saying that.
"Jane, I love you. Jane, you're the
one. Jane, I dream about you..." And
yet—here I sit. Alone. In pearls.

BOB
Just give me time.

JANE
You have until tonight.
(beat)
Do they know at the office?

BOB
No! Of course not.

JANE
Good. I won't be "that woman," Bob.
I don't do scandal. Let's leave
that to Elizabeth Taylor — she's
already on husband number two.

BOB
Sue's not my wife.

JANE
She's still pregnant.

BOB
I know. I know. Baby, I know.

JANE
Don't "baby" me, Bob.

BOB
Then let me see you. Please.

JANE
Of course you want to.
But here's the real question:
(beat) Does Baby want to see you?

BOB
You're driving me crazy.

JANE
That's foreplay, darling.
(beat)
Are we still on for tonight?

BOB
Quick drink at Delmonico's. Then
back to yours.

JANE
Not quick. I want more.
(pause and reflection)
Why does she get all the memories..
and I just get moments? I want to
dance.

BOB
Then we'll dance all night. I'll
give you the moon and stars.

JANE
Lovely. But she still has to go.

BOB
It's handled.

JANE
Handled.
(chuckles)
Let's put a ring on that word,
shall we?

BOB
Tonight—I'll tell you everything.

JANE (SHARPER)
Don't keep things from me.
I'll know. I always know. And I can
help you, Bob. But I won't clean up
after you.

BOB
I love you, Jane.

JANE
Of course you do. Everybody does.

A beat. That wasn't enough.

BOB
And?

JANE (TILTS HEAD)
And what?
(soft, slow)
What are you waiting for?

BOB
Jane... do you love me?

A pause. A flicker. Then—flatline.

JANE
Sure.

BOB (FROWNS)
That... didn't sound convincing.

JANE (LIKE SHE'S PATTING A CHILD)
I'm fond of you.

Silence. Bob's hand tightens around the phone.

JANE (CONT'D)
I'll see you tonight at
Delmonico's.

And I want dancing. And time. Because Jane has choices.

(beat) Bye now, Bob.

CLICK.

BOB stands there. Holding the phone.

JANE smiles to herself. Pleased. In control.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jane stands by the window, backlit by Manhattan. She's still in her post-call glow. Cigarette smoke curls in the air. She sips something in crystal.

Ted enters. Sharp suit. Sharper judgment.

TED
Does Father even know?
(beat)
Jane, stay in your class – or rise
above it. Bob? Bob is... pedestrian.

Jane doesn't turn. Just exhales.

JANE
I manage my affairs, Ted. I am
fond of Bob.

TED
"Fond"? You can be fond of a stray.
Bob smells like a lie. Like
Harrisburg.

Jane turns now – slowly. A smile with claws.

JANE
You and your smells.
You sniffed out my last fiancé,
remember? The one with the yacht
and the Xanax habit?

TED
And I was right. And You cascade
through your fiancés like
appointments in your planner.
(beat – colder)
Bob's hiding something. I can taste
it.

Jane walks over. Wraps him in a hug. Her voice velvet.

JANE
You don't like him because you
can't control him.

TED
No. I don't like him because he's
sloppy.
(beat – darker now))
He'll hang himself. All we have to
do is watch.

The room dims slightly. Jane breaks the hug. Sips her drink.

JANE

He will be in the headline, I can feel it.

FADE OUT.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISES - SECRETARY POOL - DAY

Clock: 10:00 A.M. Typewriters hum. Phones whisper. SUE and PAM sit at adjacent desks. Their conversation is low - but charged.

PAM

(cool, measured)

You need to see this for what it is, Sue. Hitching your wagon to Bob's shooting star? Have you thought about where that actually lands?

SUE

(defensive)

What do you mean? Bob's 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 future.

SUE

That's not fair. He just has a lot on his plate.

PAM

Overflowing, I'm sure - with ambition, excuses... maybe just a healthy scoop of vanish-and-deflect.

SUE

You're being cynical. Bob loves me.

PAM

(mock-sincere)

Of course. Nothing says "I love you" like skipping responsibility.

SUE

You don't understand. Bob's different when we're alone.

PAM

Mm. Prince Charming behind closed doors – but I've seen that play. Forgive me if I'm not convinced by the lead actor.

SUE

(snapping)

Fine, Pam. You win.

PAM

(softer, but firm)

This isn't about winning. I'm trying to protect you. There's something off. Bob's hiding something.

SUE

(glancing around, urgent whisper)

Keep it down. No one knows. Everything is fine.

PAM

Exactly. No one knows. But soon—
(she flicks her eyes to Sue's stomach)
Everyone will.

SUE

(quiet, defensive)

He said he'd make it right. I believe him.
This morning, guess what happened.

PAM

(dry)

He bought you a ring?

SUE

No! The elevator—
It opened. He stepped back. There was no floor. Just... a shaft. I pulled him out. His hat fell. He could've died.

PAM

(quiet, sharp)

And it didn't shake him? Didn't faze him?

SUE
 Bob doesn't dwell. He moves
 forward.
 But— I found Mickey's notebook.

Pam takes the notebook and flips through it.

PAM
 And this Mickey...?

SUE
 (firm, almost to herself)
 Mickey was just a friend.

Pam doesn't buy it. Neither does Sue. Sue take the notebook
 back.

PAM
 (unblinking)
 And only his hat fell down the
 shaft?

SUE
 Pam!

PAM
 (flat, brutal)
 Three months ago, Bob didn't exist.
 Now he's in your apartment,
 managing your career, and putting a
 child in your belly. What do you
 actually know about him? Where he
 was last year? What he's running
 from?

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

PAM
 (eyes sharp)
 We had a troubled past too.
 Remember?

A beat. Chilling.

FLASH —

A YOUNG GIRL (12).

A MAN'S SHADOW looms.

A DOOR CRACKED OPEN.

A WHISPER: "Don't tell your mother."

BACK TO PRESENT

—

Sue freezes. Eyes forward. Breathing tight.

SUE

(clipped)

Don't. I told you—never bring that
up again. Let's focus on the
future.

PAM

(cool, decisive)

Then start with a ring.

(beat)

Or get an exit plan.

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 clack. Pam and Sue at their desks.

TED enters. Entitled. Inevitable.

TED

Miss Spencer.

PAM & SUE (SIMULTANEOUS)

Yes?

TED

The prettier one.

Sue stands. Calm. Deadpan.

SUE

Sue Spencer.

TED

Alliterative. How precious.

He gestures. Sue grabs her pad and follows him into—

INT. TED'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Door clicks. Ted strolls behind his desk, loosening his tie. Sue stands, pen ready.

TED
This office needs more life. Maybe
a touch of Chanel?

SUE
Yardley. Chanel's above my pay
grade.

TED
Not for long.

He circles her slowly - like a man inspecting property. Then:

TED (CONT'D)
Tell me, PS. What do the girls talk
about?

SUE
Picture shows. Husbands. South
Pacific. You.

TED
Do they? Flattering. Do they know
you're pregnant?

Sue tenses. The line lands like a slap.

SUE
Excuse me?

TED
Don't play coy. I smell it. Not
perfume - something richer.
Something... fatal.

Sue says nothing.

TED (CONT'D)
Who's the father? No - let me
guess. The one who thinks he's a
rising star.

Sue stiffens.

SUE
Mr. York - this is inappropriate.

TED
(taking a step closer)
So's desire.

He touches her chin. Soft. Quick. Then kisses her. Just once.

She doesn't react. Frozen. Calculating.

He steps back, smiling like a man who's claimed something.

TED (CONT'D)
There. Now we understand each
other.

Sue picks up her pencil. Snaps the tip clean off.

SUE
The letter?

Ted chuckles. Sits. Victorious.

TED
That's my girl.

SUE
Ted, one question? What does P.S.
stand for?

TED
Pretty Spencer.

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

EXT. 5TH AVENUE - DAY

BOB glides down the bustling sidewalk. Crisp suit. Eyes
sharp. Purpose in every step. The city hums around him.

A GRIMY MAN steps out of a corner, blocking his path.

JACK PARKER
Well I'll be damned...
Bobby-boy from Harrisburg.

BOB
(pause)
You've got the wrong guy.

JACK
Oh, I got the right one.
Mickey says hello. From the grave.

Bob stops. His jaw clenches. His eyes don't blink.

JACK (CONT'D)
I could sing like a robin to the
coppers. Or better yet – your new
boss.

(leans in, rotting grin)
Let's call it... a Friday
arrangement.
You pay. I don't chirp.

BOB
(soft, lethal)
You think I climbed this high...
to tiptoe around shadows?

JACK
No, Bobby.
You climbed because of it.

Bob doesn't flinch. He steps in. Grabs Jack by the collar –

EXT. YANKS HIM INTO THE ALLEY.

The city doesn't even notice.

JACK
You always were good with your
hands–

SNAP.

Bob strikes. A savage right hook to the jaw. Jack crashes
into the alley wall.

Bob follows. Fast. Precise. Wraps one arm around Jack's neck.
The other bracing his head.

BOB
Guess that Robin won't be singing
his tune.

CRACK.

Jack goes limp.

A pause. Bob breathes. Not panicked. Centered.

He lowers the body to the ground.

Reaches down.

Takes Jack's wallet.

His watch.

His ring.

Bob pockets them with ritual calm.

Then — adjusts his tie. Fixes his cuffs.

BOB (V.O.)

Big day.

Take charge.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISES — OFFICE FLOOR — DAY

The camera glides like a predator.

Bob — crisp suit, folder under arm — moves with surgical focus. Predator. Or prey?

Bob stands in Ted's office. Adjusts his jacket. Fingers brush the ring in his pocket. A flicker of that alley kill flashes, The SNAP. The fall. The silence.

He is the monster in the house. He puts the ring from Jack on his pinky. Perfect fit.

He knocks.

TED (O.S.)

Come in.

INT. TED'S OFFICE — CONTINUOUS

SUE is already there — Face calm. Knuckles white around her notepad.

BOB

Ted. Winters campaign.

(to Sue, clipped)

Miss Spencer?

SUE

Mr. York requested dictation.

TED

(stepping between them)

She's full of surprises.

Not the kind I expected. Might need... tutoring.

Sue stiffens. Bob's jaw ticks. He clocks it now.

BOB
I'll handle her... training.

Sue escapes. Ted watches Bob watching her go. A cruel grin.

TED
So, Bobby.
Back from the shadows?

BOB
Shadows are just light with
secrets. I've been right here.

TED
(sly)
We're the same, you and I.
Except I know when to blink.

BOB
I don't blink, Ted. I burn.

FLASH: THE ALLEY.

The snap. The fall. The silence.

INT. TED'S OFFICE

Back to Bob. He turns the ring on his pinky.

Perfect fit.

The monster is home.

TED
Ambition's a beast. Always hungry.

BOB
I bring the knife. I don't beg for
scraps.

TED
You'll bleed for this climb.

BOB
Then hand me the crown when I get
there.

TED
You think you're clever?

BOB
I think you're bored.
And I think I'm not.

Ted claps. Slow. Dead-eyed.

He pulls a crisp \$100 bill from his wallet.

TED
Buy something. A meal. A girl above
your station.
(beat)
If you waste it on a waitress, I'll
take it back—with interest.

Bob reaches.

Ted doesn't let go.

TED (CONT'D)
I see everything. Even the girls
you don't bring to work.

A breath.

Then Ted leans in.

Hard. Dominant. Long enough to sting.

Bob doesn't flinch. His body does not move. But something
inside him shifts.

Ted pulls back. Smug. Reading the wrong reaction.

TED (CONT'D)
Oh, I see... you liked that.

If I liked it, I knew you would.

He slides the bill into Bob's breast pocket. Fingers
lingering.

TED (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Desires are desires.
Don't overthink it.
(leans back)
Dinner with me tomorrow. Bring a
change of clothes. It's overnight.

BOB beat. He doesn't blink.

Doesn't recoil. Instead—he holds Ted's gaze.

Then — slowly — Bob brings his fingers to his lips.

He tastes the kiss. Let's that smirk curl. Predatory. Not aroused. Studying. Calculating.

Then — in one clean move — he wipes it off with the length of his forearm. Slow. Icy. Surgical.

BOB
(low. lethal.)
You're not my first kiss, Ted.
Sure as hell won't be my last.
(beat — colder now. Eyes
like knives.)
But you? Might want to savor it.

Ted freezes. Just for a second. Then covers it with a chuckle — but the damage is done.

TED
Harrisburg. I called a friend
there. Cop. Said he knew a
name—Mickey.

FLASH CUT — IN BOB'S MIND

Mickey's bloody smirk

Neon sign glitching

"Big Day! Take Charge!"

Ceiling fan spins

GUNSHOTS (2)

INT. TED'S OFFICE — BACK TO SCENE

Bob's back. Unblinking.

BOB
Curiosity leads down dark paths.
(beat)
Be sure you brought a flashlight.

Ted steps closer. Breath near Bob's cheek.

TED
You belong to me now.

A long silence. Bob turns.

Walks out. Doesn't look back.

INT. YORK ENTERPRISES - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

BOB steps out, the office door clicking closed behind him. He doesn't flinch. Doesn't look back. He walks. Smooth. Measured. Then—he stops.

A MIRROR on the wall.

Simple. Industrial. Functional. But it catches him — half-shadow, half-light.

He stares at himself. A beat. Another. Too long for vanity. Too quiet for comfort.

Then — slowly — he adjusts his tie. One fluid motion. Precise. Controlled.

He doesn't look proud. He doesn't look shaken. He looks inevitable.

Bob smirks. Just slightly. Then—he wipes his mouth. Back of his hand. Cold. Surgical.

BOB (V.O.)
Big Day. Take Charge.
(beat)
Let the wolf out.

He walks away.

The mirror holds his reflection for one last frame, and then he's gone.

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

Typewriters clack. Phones ring. Sue and Pam sit close — voices low.

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

PAM
What now?

SUE
(imitating Ted)
"P.S. — Pretty Spencer."
As if I should thank him for the privilege of existing.

PAM
(chuckling)
Well, that's almost poetic.

SUE
Oh, it gets better. He kissed me.

PAM
(chokes)
He what?

SUE
Right in his office. Said -
(mimicking)
"Wasn't that good? I liked it, so I
know you did too."

PAM
(dry)
You should be so lucky.

Sue wipes her mouth with the back of her hand. Disgusted.

SUE
I can still smell him.
Some foul mix of French cologne and
cheap musk.

They stop. Bob enters.

He's changed. Sharper. Colder. Dangerous.

SUE (CONT'D)
You look... different.

BOB
Do I?

BOB (CONT'D)
Miss Spencer.

PAM & SUE
Yes?

BOB
(clarifying)
Miss Sue Spencer.

PAM
(mocking)
Ohhh. This Spencer.

BOB
(to Pam, flat)
Take a powder.

PAM
(smiling, rising slowly)
Ooooh, Take a powder, he says.
Real gentleman now, aren't we?

She struts off - heels clicking - Then, just as she rounds the corner-

PAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(calling back)
Take a powder...
(laughing)
I'll powder my nose, sweetheart!

Her laughter echoes - longer than it should. Not cruel - just piercing.

Bob winces. Something about the sound needles him. He refocuses. But the tension hangs.

TICK. TICK. TICK.

The office clock starts ticking louder.

Sue doesn't look up. She just files her nails - slow and methodical - like she's sharpening a weapon.

Bob clenches his jaw. This isn't his office anymore.

This isn't his moment.

Sue takes out an Emory board and casually files her nails.

SUE
Why is Ted York writing to Hershey
Chocolates about you?

BOB
Just a reference.

SUE
Three months in? You don't get
references three months in.
You get investigated.

Bob shrugs. Too casual. She watches him.

SUE (CONT'D)
What happened in Harrisburg?

BOB
(flat)
Dead end. Moved on.

SUE
Mmm.
Sure.

SFX. Magnify the sound of the nail filing.

She files her nails again. The sound grates. Bob's jaw twitches.

BOB
Watch your tone.

SUE
Get used to it.

BOB
What did Ted say?
About me?

SUE
(sweetly detached)
He said I had potential.

BOB
And?

SUE
Then he kissed me.

Beat.

BOB
(low)
Ted York kissed you.

SUE
Mmm-hmm.
Said if he liked it, I did too.

BOB
And you let him?

Sue drops the nail file. Stares.

SUE
Oh, so it's my fault now?

BOB
I see how you are.

SUE
And I see what you're becoming.
(then, low)
We're having this baby.
You will support us. Understand?

Bob exhales. Angry. Trapped. Sue presses.

SUE (CONT'D)
He gave me a nickname, you know.
"P.S."

BOB
What the hell does that mean?

SUE
"Pretty Spencer."
Isn't that sweet?

Bob starts pacing.

SUE (CONT'D)
Did Ted give you a nickname?
(a beat)
Did he kiss you, too?

BOB stops. Frozen.

FLASH CUT - INT. TED'S OFFICE - EARLIER

Ted's hand gripping Bob's chin. The kiss - forceful, deliberate. Bob's eyes wide open. Not resisting. Not welcoming. Just calculating.

Ted pulls back. Smug. Bob's jaw clenches. The \$100 bill shoved into his pocket. "Desires are desires."

FLASH CUT ENDS.

BACK TO SCENE -
SECRETARY POOL

Bob blinks. Once. Hard.

SUE is still staring. Waiting.

SUE
(quietly)
Yeah. I thought so.

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. And
then he kissed me.

BOB
Just stay away from him.

Bob stares, silent. The office clock ticking loudly.

The intercom buzzes.

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

Sue doesn't hesitate. Straightens her blouse. Picks up her
pad.

SUE
(tossing it off)
He likes when I'm prompt.

She walks. Bob watches her go.

Clock ticking. Somewhere - a phone rings. A typewriter snaps.

SFX the clock ticking.

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.

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 doesn't dial yet. She stares at the phone. Touches the receiver like it might burn her.

Then—click. She lifts it.

SUE
Operator? Get me Hershey
Chocolates. Pennsylvania. Human
Resources.
 (beat — then softer,
 deadlier)
It's about a man named Mickey
Wilson.

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.

INTERCUT SEQUENCE — NIGHT FALLS, HEARTS BREAK

SUE (O.S.)
(mocking)
P.S. God, I hate Ted York.

Exits.

SLOW DISSOLVE — MUSIC BEGINS: "No Need to Waltz" (Torch Singer Version) Low. Smoky. Melancholy.

EXT. CITY STREETS — NIGHT — FLASH CUTS

- SUE'S HEELS — clicking sharp against rain-slick pavement. - RAINDROPS strike her coat. - NEON of Delmonico's reflected in a puddle — her foot SPLASHES through. - A BUS roars past — red and gold streaks. - SUE'S BREATH in the cold. - CLOSE ON: the \$100 bill, clenched tight in her fist.

INT. DELMONICO'S — NIGHT

The torch singer glides into the second verse. The restaurant glows gold. Candlelight. Laughter. Lust.

"No need to waltz"

EXT. SIDE STREET — SAME TIME

BOB strides with purpose.

A FIGURE stumbles into frame — CALL GIRL. Bruised. 8 months pregnant. Torn coat.

CALL GIRL
I saw you, Bobby. I saw what you
did.

FLASH CUT — HER POV THROUGH A WINDOW:

The grainy, flickering lens of a dirty tenement window. Inside: MICKEY — hand on Bob's neck, forcing him to his knees. The red neon outside bleeds through the blinds. Bob's face is contorted. Shamed. Controlled. Mickey's voice echoes — low, intimate, chilling:

MICKY (V.O.)
 You want power?
 You'll kneel for it first.

BACK TO:

CALL GIRL (NOW TREMBLING)
 I saw you.
 You kneeled for him.
 You killed him.

BOB
 God, will Harrisburg not die?

CALL GIRL
 I want money. I want my life back.
 You owe me.

BOB (LOW, FLAT)
 Twice in one day.
 That's a record.

CRACK.

Bob strikes. Quick. Precision.

She crumples. He follows. Grabs her — SNAP.

She drops.

He kneels. Takes her purse, her ring. Pockets the money.
 Takes her license. Tosses the purse. Looks at the belly.
 Just... stares.

Then—

BOB
 I don't pay for mistakes.
 Not anymore.

He drags her behind a dumpster. Adjusts his tie. Walks.

INT. SHOP WINDOW — SUE'S REFLECTION

DISTORTED by rain.

She stops. Stares at herself.

EXT. SIDE STREET — MOMENTS EARLIER

BOB in shadow, brushing past a dumpster.

CLOSE-UP: His sleeve—streaked with something dark. He adjusts his collar. Fixes his cuffs. Slides a ring onto his pinky.

BOB (V.O.)

Big Day.
Take Charge.

He steps into Delmonico's, off-screen.

Pushes open the door.

FLASH CUT:

Sue reaches Delmonico's.

SUE — PUSHES OPEN THE DOOR TO DELMONICO'S

Torchlight spills over her. Music swells —

"No Need To Waltz"

INT. DELMONICO'S RESTAURANT

Jane — Hair perfect. Dress sculpted. That Jackie Kennedy's poise with Bacall's blade.

She slides into the booth like royalty. She doesn't greet. She assesses.

JANE

(taking her time)
You clean up nice.

BOB

So do you.
(pauses, smirks)
But I prefer you when you're dangerous.

JANE

Oh, darling — I'm always dangerous.
(leans in, voice low)
The question is... are you?

Bob smiles. But behind it, the monster flickers. Jane sees it. She likes it.

WAITER

Your drink, sir?

BOB
Whiskey. Neat.

WAITER
And for the lady?

JANE
Martini. Two olives.
(eyes on Bob)
Always two. One for the secret I
keep.

BOB
Should I be worried?

JANE
Only if you lie to me tonight. But
I suspect that you will lie to me.

Bob Takes an olive and eats it, leaving one.

BOB
No secrets left.

They sit. Silent beat. Jazz plays softly. The power shifts,
then settles. They're equals. At least for now.

BOB (CONT'D)
Why me, Jane?

JANE
Because you're trouble. And I'm
bored.
(beat)
You remind me of something I lost a
long time ago. Something reckless.
Something lethal.

BOB
You think I'm dangerous?

She sips her martini. Bob watches her. A war of appetite and
suspicion. Then—

JANE
So. Tell me about Harrisburg.

A beat.

BOB
(under his breath)
Everyone asking about Harrisburg,
Jesus.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)
(sigh)
Dead end.

JANE
Then tell me what you want.

They kiss. Sue sees the kiss.

SUE freezes.

SUE'S POV:

Bob and Jane — laughing, whispering, wine glasses raised.
The music wraps around her like a velvet noose.

SUE
(whisper)
Oh my God.

FLASH CUTS — ROMANTIC SURRENDER

— His hand on her waist. — Her fingers on his jaw. — A turn.
A twirl. — One kiss. Another. Another. — Bob — grinning.

SUE freezes. A hurricane behind her eyes.

A HOST appears. Hands her the bag.

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

SUE — CLOSE-UP

Shock. Hurt. Realization. Her grip tightens on the bag. A
tear escapes — she wipes it before it falls.

FLASH CUTS — BOB THE MONSTER

CALL GIRL (DESPERATE, SHAKING)
I saw you, Bobby.

BACK TO:

— BOB smiling at Jane.

JANE (O.S.)
Bob... you're shaking. What's wrong?

BOB (O.S.)
(smirking)
Nothing, baby.
Just feelin' alive.

AT THE TABLE - DELMONICO'S

The WAITER places the check. Bob and Jane playfully argue over who pays.

BOB
Let me take care of this. You're
the future of New York society,
after all.

JANE
(flashing a smile)
And you, darling? You're the next
scandal... gift-wrapped in charm.

Bob reaches for his wallet - something slips.

THE CALL GIRL'S LICENSE Flutters to the floor. Name. Photo.
BLOOD-SMEARED EDGE.

Bob smoothly retrieves it.

Jane catches it. Just a glimpse. Enough. She says nothing.
Just... watches.

JANE (CONT'D)
(playful)
Oops. Dropped something?

Bob pockets it. Smiles, trying to wave it off.

BOB
Old receipt. I meant to get the
check.

Jane takes the check. Pays it.

JANE
Of course you did.

Her smile stays... but her eyes?

SUE TURNS. WALKS OUT.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Sue's face — pale. Tight. She walks. Heels echo. The rain doesn't touch her now.

Streetlights buzz. The city hums. It doesn't matter.

CLOSE ON: HER LIPS.

SUE (V.O.)
(cracked whisper)
Bob and Jane York. Jane York and
Bob.
When did this happen?
Where was I?
How didn't I see it?
Second time this week?
God, what a fool I am.

Thunder cracks. Rain.

SUE (V.O.)
(sharper now, steel
rising)
I have no time for waltzing.
But Bob does.
(beat)
Did we look like that... just three
months ago?

Theme ends. Silence.

INT. BROKEN HEART BAR - NIGHT

A neon blur of pink and blue washes over Sue's face.

She sits. Still. Alone. One elbow on the bar.

The BARTENDER drops off a ginger ale without asking.

Sue's fingers trace the rim of the glass. Not drinking. Just thinking.

Across the bar—a MAN IN A FEDORA leans over.

FEDORA GUY
Smile like that doesn't belong in a
place like this.

Sue doesn't flinch. She lifts her glass in mock salute.

SUE
I've got no time for waltzing. But
he does.

She stands. Drops a quarter on the bar.

No drama. No glance back.

Just heels... clicking toward revenge.

INT. SUE & BOB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The clock ticks.

10:52 PM.

A steady, unforgiving rhythm. Like a bomb under the
floorboards.

The table is set. Silverware aligned. Candles burn low. The
lamb – perfectly cooked – sits untouched. Cooling. Forgotten.

SUE stands at the window, hands gripping the sink. Staring
into the night. Not crying. Not blinking. Not breaking. Yet.

The door unlocks. Bob enters.

He hesitates. The air is thick. Sue doesn't turn.

BOB
Sue—

SUE
(soft. eerie. doesn't
move)
You're late.

Bob steps toward her – then veers off. Removes his coat.
Sits. Lights a cigarette.

BOB
Had a meeting. You know how it is.

SUE
Liar.
There's no need to waltz around it,
Bob. I saw you. With her. Dancing
like your promises to me were just
whispers in the wind. You were
waltzing with Jane York.

A long silence.

Bob stands. Steps forward. Sue steps back.

BOB
Look, I—

SUE
I cooked the lamb.

She gestures. The table — a shrine to something lost.

BOB
It looks—

SUE
Don't.

Silence. Clock ticks. Tick. Tick.
Sue picks up the carving knife.
Slices the lamb. Plating it like a
ritual. She slides the dish toward
him.

SUE (CONT'D)
Eat.

Bob doesn't move.

SUE (CONT'D)
Eat.

Bob sits and digs in like a wolf. Talks as he eats.

BOB
Sue, I'm working my ass off for us.
You're not seeing the bigger
picture. That dance? It was one
step toward something better—for
us.

SUE
Our future?
Or your future, Bob?

She circles him now, eyes hard.

SUE (CONT'D)
You'd trade our baby for a bottle
of Burgundy and a dance in gold
light. I'm not one of your
fantasies. Maybe I never was.

BOB
You need to see—

SUE
 (sniffing suddenly)
 What is that smell?

BOB
 Oh... there was a table next to
 ours—someone's
 perfume—intoxicating.

SUE
 Liar.

She cuts into the lamb again, harder this time.
 I saw you.
 Have your lamb. Get your fill. Then
 go to bed.
 We are having a baby, Bob.
 (beat) Wise. Up.

A tense beat. Then—Bob picks up the fork. Takes a bite.
 Chews. Swallows.

SUE (CONT'D)
 (whispers, almost to
 herself)
 Second time this week.

BOB
 (stops mid-bite, eyes
 narrow)
 What?

SUE
 (smiling, sweet and slow)
 Nothing. Go ahead. Finish.

She turns. Walks to the bedroom.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN

An hour later.

Bob sits at the table. The lamb is gone. Half a bottle of
 whiskey remains.

The city glows in the glass behind him — fractured. Like him.

He touches the window. His reflection stares back.

BOB
 (whispers)
 Is this who I am now?
 (MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)
(Silence.)
A siren screams in the distance.

Then fades.

Bob tightens. Shakes it off. Hardens.

Drains the glass. Slams it down.

Straightens his tie in the reflection. What looks back?

A man. No hesitation. No guilt. Only appetite.

INT. BOB'S BEDROOM

Bob slides into bed. Sue's back is to him. Motionless. But very much awake.

Bob falls fast asleep.

DREAM MONTAGE — BOB'S HEAD

— Bob and Jane WALTZ at Delmonico's. — Kissing. — Laughing. — Undressing. — Her fingers run down his spine. — Her moan lingers.

BOB
(murmuring aloud, in
sleep)
Big day. Take charge.

Sue's eyes open.

Wide. Awake. Still.

Like she's made of stone.

Darkness holds them both.

INT. SUE & BOB'S APARTMENT — EARLY MORNING

The bedroom is quiet. A sliver of grey light peeks through the blinds.

BOB sleeps like the dead — one arm over his eyes, shirt half-unbuttoned, the whiskey still working its poison.

SUE sits at the kitchen table, sipping lukewarm coffee.

She stares at the remains of the night — the lamb bones. The blood-tinged carving knife still on the plate.

She breathes.

Stands.

Moves.

She walks to the coat rack.

Bob's overcoat still hangs there.

She pulls it down. Begins folding it neatly.

Something falls.

CLINK.

A RING hits the floor.

A WOMAN'S RING.

Cheap. Tarnished. Bent slightly.

Not hers.

SUE freezes.

Then picks it up.

Turns it in her fingers. A long pause.

She looks over at Bob. Still asleep.

Murmuring something in his dream. Indecipherable.

She goes to his suit pants.

Checks the pockets. One by one.

Out slips a DRIVER'S LICENSE.

The photo: the CALL GIRL.

Smiling. Alive.

The name: Nancy Keller.

DOB: 12-15-32.

Address: Harrisburg, PA.

Sue doesn't react.

She slides the ring into her pocket.

She smooths the license flat on the table.

Then she pulls out Mickey's Notebook from the side drawer.

Closes the notebook.

Locks the latch.

She places it gently under the cushion of the couch.

Then she stands. Looks at Bob, still asleep.

Her voice, quiet. Just for her.

SUE

You don't get to dance anymore,
Bob. Not without a witness.

She walks offscreen.

A beat of silence.

Then — from the couch — the notebook cover creaks ever so slightly as the cushion settles back into place.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

SUPER: APRIL 6, 1953 - THE MORNING AFTER

Soft light spills through sheer curtains.

JANE sits at her vanity, brushing her hair. Calm. Radiant. Dangerous. She hums "No Need to Waltz." A smirk plays on her lips.

JANE

(singing softly)
No need to waltz...
(chuckles)
Last night was... delicious.

TED leans in the doorway. Watching. Dry.

TED

Delicious, huh?
Careful—some dishes are already
served.

Jane meets his gaze in the mirror. Unbothered.

JANE
Oh, Ted. Since when are you the
moral compass?

TED
Not moral. Just... observant.

He enters, slow.

TED (CONT'D)
You know he has Sue. And a baby.

A flicker in Jane's eyes. She masks it. Stands. Passes close.

JANE
Crowded tables offer the most
interesting choices.
And I intend to be the one he can't
resist.

TED
You're playing a dangerous game.

JANE
Aren't we all?

Beat. Ted eyes her. Then pivots.

TED
I'm heading to Newburgh tonight.
New facility. Fresh files.

JANE
(firm)
Let Bob be. I don't care what came
before me.
He's going places, and I'll be
there—front page, center fold.

TED
(smiling darkly)
Right beside him.

He exits. Jane stands in the soft light, her reflection still
humming.

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

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lavish. Lit like a perfume ad. Jane lounges in silk, slow-dialing. A cigarette smolders — untouched, burning down like time itself.

INT. SUE & BOB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The phone RINGS. Sue answers.

SUE
Hello?

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

Jane hears a woman's voice. Her smile vanishes. SLAM. Dial tone.

INT. SUE & BOB'S APARTMENT

Sue frowns.

SUE
Strange.

BOB enters with bags. Too brisk.

BOB
Who was it?

SUE
Hung up.
(beat)
Sounded... female.

BOB
Wrong number.

He straightens his tie. Too casual. The phone rings again.

Sue reaches for it—

BOB (CONT'D)
(snarling)
I got it.

He SNATCHES the receiver.

BOB (CONT'D)
(sharp)
Hello?

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

Jane's voice, slow honey.

JANE
Bob. It's me.

INT. SUE & BOB'S APARTMENT

Sue watches Bob. He stiffens.

BOB
(stalling)
Who is this?

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT

A flicker of confusion.

JANE
It's Jane.

INT. SUE & BOB'S APARTMENT

Bob slams the phone down. Too fast. Too loud. A beat.
Silence.

SUE
Who was that?

BOB
Wrong number.

SUE
That wasn't a prank.
(beat)
You know who I spoke to this week?

Bob freezes mid-move.

BOB
Sue—

SUE
I called Hershey.
Asked for Mickey Wilson.

CRASH. Bob SMASHES a coffee cup off the counter.

Not an accident. Not clumsy. Deliberate.

SPLIT SCREEN - JANE & SUE

Jane sits up. Uneasy now.

Bob locks eyes with Sue. Mask cracking.

BOB
(low, venomous)
You what?

SUE
Why does that scare you, Bob?

BOB
(low, dangerous)
You don't go digging.

SUE
You buried something. Is it Mickey?
Or Jane? Or maybe both?
(beat, cold and final)
And all while I'm standing here—
Pregnant with your baby. Watching
you lie.

BOB
(sharp, brutal)
Enough.

SUE
What is it with Mickey?

BOB
(dark)
Stay. Out. Of it.

Sue steps closer, steady.

SUE
Too late.

SPLIT SCREEN - FINAL FRAME

- Jane's crushed cigarette. - Sue's steel gaze.

- Bob caught between past and present.

A monster cornered.

INT. TED'S OFFICE - DAY

Ted looks up from a report as Bob enters.

TED
I read your work. Ungrounded... but
bold. I like bold.

BOB
Flexibility, Ted. It's all about
knowing when to make your move.

TED
(chuckling)
Ah, yes. Flexibility.
Perhaps a more... intimate setting
could foster this partnership.
Tonight. Just the two of us. I have
much to show you.

BOB
(confident)
It's all about who you're in bed
with—metaphorically speaking.

TED
(smiling)
What I want, I take.
And my desires? They become your
desires.

BOB
(stepping closer, low)
So... my ideas become your ideas.

TED
Exactly.

BOB
And your desires...
become mine.

A beat. Then Bob leans in and kisses Ted. Firm. Dominant. A
wolf in control.

He steps back, lightly pats Ted's cheek.

BOB (CONT'D)
Be ready for tonight. I'll show
you the ropes.

Bob exits.

Ted watches him go, lips parted. A flicker of awe... and danger.

INT. SECRETARY POOL - DAY

SUPER: APRIL 6, 10:00 A.M.

Sue and Pam laugh at their desks, mid-conversation - loud, alive, and clearly not working.

BOB
(approaching, sharp)
Miss Spencer.

The women ignore him. He tightens.

BOB (CONT'D)
(firmer)
Miss Spencer!

SUE & PAM
(in unison)
Yes?

BOB
What?

PAM
You'll have to be more specific.
We're both Miss Spencer. Not
married. Obviously.

BOB
You know who I mean.

PAM
(playfully dumb)
I don't. You might have to dumb it
down. Or should I go take a powder?

BOB
(flat)
Yes. Miss Pam Spencer. Take a
powder. And bring coffee.

PAM
(syrupy)
Before or after I powder?

BOB
Before. Black.

PAM
(smirking as she leaves)
Black coffee, then a powder. Got
it.

Bob turns to Sue, who hides a smile.

BOB
Ted wants you. Now. What's he
saying these days?

SUE
We started drafting a letter to
Human Resources. Then he kissed me.

BOB
Let's not start that again.

Pam returns, hands Bob the coffee.

PAM
Black. No cream, no class.

She winks at Sue and exits. Bob sips, annoyed.

BOB
Just... find out what Ted's up to.

SUE
(turning serious)
He wants to go to Harrisburg. Road
trip. Sounds fun?

BOB
(flat)
People are dead.

SUE
You never talk about it. You just
say you moved on. New chapter,
right?

BOB
(nods, brushing her off)
Exactly.

SUE
Then I'll take a page from you.
Well from Mickey, I read it in his
notebook.
(smiles)
Big Day. Take Charge. That's my new
motto.

Bob freezes. His wolf mask flickers.

BOB
(flat, dark)
Yeah. Everyone's saying that
lately.

Sue sips her coffee, oblivious.

SUE
Might put it on a sign. Or a baby
blanket.

BOB
(smiling, but it doesn't
reach his eyes)
Be careful what you embroider,
sweetheart.

SUE
Yes Boss! Big Day! Take Charge!

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

SFX. Loud clock ticking on the wall.

INT. JANE'S APARTMENT - DAY

SUPER: APRIL 6 - 1:00 PM

Jane lounges in silk on her sofa, flipping through Ladies'
Home Journal. Sunlight warms the room. FLASH MONTAGE: Bob &
Jane - laughter, walks, bedsheets, stolen kisses. A knock
breaks the spell. Then another. She sighs, rising.

JANE
Yes, yes, I'm coming.

She opens the door- Bob storms in. Disheveled. Pacing.
Unhinged.

JANE (CONT'D)
Bob. Slumming in daylight?
Shouldn't you be fetching coffee
for my brother?

BOB
Jane. I need to know-do you love
me?

JANE
(casual)
Was that the fire? I thought you
came to drop off dry cleaning.

BOB
I'm serious. Do you?

Jane sits, amused.

JANE

Bob, darling, what's eating you?

BOB

Everyone wants a piece of me.
Except you. You never ask. That's
why I'm here.

JANE

You're shaking. Did you quit?

BOB

No. Ted's "mentoring" me. Late
nights. Private trips. He's
everywhere.

(beat)

So just tell me... do you love me?

JANE

Bob, this isn't church. You're not
proposing.

BOB

I'm serious, Jane.

JANE

(pauses, then—playful)

I'm fond of you.

BOB

Fond?

JANE

Relax. It's just a word.

(beat)

Actually... this morning, over tea, I
said it out loud. "I love Bob."
Just like that. Like math.
The sky is blue. Two plus two is
four. I love Bob.

BOB

So... you do.

JANE

(smirking)

Of course I do. Why all the drama?

Bob grabs her. Kisses her. Hard. She smiles, pushes him
toward the door.

JANE (CONT'D)
Now go. Ted's waiting. Do what he
says. Let him show you the ropes.

BOB
The ropes?

JANE
Yes Bob, the ropes. Give him what
he needs.

Bob stops. Eyes narrowing. Something dark flickers.

BOB
Everyone wants something.

JANE
Then give it to them. And come back
to me when you're done.

She kisses him again. Playful. Dangerous.

JANE (CONT'D)
Will I see you tonight?

BOB
No. Ted's taking me somewhere.

JANE
(sly)
Oh, Ted'll break you in proper. Be
flexible.

Bob leaves.

Jane returns to her magazine, then stops. A smirk forms.

JANE (CONT'D)
(whispering to herself)
I do love Bob.
Ted will teach him.
Then Bob will belong to me.

INT. OFFICE - SECRETARY POOL - DAY

SUPER: APRIL 6, 3:00PM

Pam types. Calm. Precise.

Bob takes control, wound tight.

BOB
Miss Spencer. A word.

PAM
(looks up, dry)
What is it, Mr. Chamberland? Want
me to take a powder?

BOB
It's your tone.

PAM
Oh? The powder tone?

BOB
That sass. The little digs. I'm
tired of it. Out with it—whatever
point you've been dying to make.

PAM
This about Sue.

BOB
What about her?

Pam stands. Inches from Bob. He doesn't move back.

PAM
You begged her. Promised her the
world. Seduced her with your big-
city dreams. But you're just
Harrisburg trash, Bob. Just like
the rest of us.

BOB
Careful.

PAM
Or what? Gonna knock me up too?

Bob's jaw clenches.

BOB
You shut your mouth.

PAM
You should've fallen down that
shaft. Sue saved you. Mistake. I
told her—make you pay.

Bob's eyes narrow.

PAM (CONT'D)
You think Jane York's gonna save
you? Wake up. She'll destroy you
for sport.

Bob SLAPS her.

She doesn't flinch. She looks him dead in the eye.

PAM (CONT'D)
Our father used to hit me. Hard. I
never cried. He hit me again. Still
nothing.
(beat)
One July, he went after Sue. She
was fourteen. I was sixteen.
I grabbed a knife.
(cold, matter-of-fact)
He died on that floor.

FLASH CUT -
BLACK & WHITE:

A man collapsing. Blood. Sue screaming. Pam with the knife.
Stone-cold.

BACK TO SCENE -
COLOR.

PAM (CONT'D)
So go ahead, Bob. Hit me again.
There's always another knife.

Bob steps back.

PAM (CONT'D)
Stay in your lane. You're barnyard,
not boardroom. You don't get the
table. You never will.

BOB
You don't know a thing about me.

PAM
I know enough. You'll marry Sue.
Make it right.

BOB
Or what?

PAM
I've taken down one man. I won't
lose sleep over two.

Bob leans in, Pam doesn't flinch.

BOB
Fix your tone.

Pam pushes him back with one finger on his chest.

PAM
Sure. You marry her, I'll sing like
an angel.

Bob breathes. Regains control.

BOB
Miss Spencer... take a powder.

PAM
(smiling)
Yes, Boss.
(exits, laughing)
"I'll take a powder." In soprano,
baritone, hell-I'll even tap-dance
it for you.

She's gone.

Bob stands alone, rattled.

He transforms in front of the camera. Like the BEAST is out
for good.

BOB
(gruff)
Big Day.
Take Charge.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 6, 9:00 PM

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT - BLACK & WHITE

Rain pelts the windshield like bullets. Wipers struggle. The
neon motel sign flickers—"VACANCY"—faded red against the
storm.

INT. BOB'S CAR - NIGHT

Bob grips the wheel like he's strangling it. His jaw tight.
Eyes forward. He doesn't blink. Doesn't breathe.

In the passenger seat—Ted. Smiling. Smug. Buzzed from wine or power or both.

They sit in silence.

Then—

Ted opens the door. Steps into the rain. Retrieves the room key from the office.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Ted returns to the car.

TED

Room 6.

He tosses the key through the open window.

Bob catches it. Without looking.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

One overhead bulb. A sink dripping. The air hums with bad decisions.

Ted drops his wet coat. Bob closes the door. Locks it.

TED

Well, Bobby boy. You've got my full attention.

BOB

Good.

He removes his jacket.

Slow. Controlled.

The beast is out.

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.

Ted closes the door with a deliberate click. Shrugs off his coat, draping it over the chair. His eyes never leave Bob.

TED

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)

You have secrets, Bob

Bob holds the stare. A flicker of something behind his eyes.

BOB

(low)

You have desires, Ted. And so do I.

Bob doesn't blink. He down the whiskey. 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.

Bob shoves him back. Breathless. Ted grins.

He glances at the single bed. Then at Bob. Bob raises an eyebrow.

BOB (CONT'D)

(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. Question is, how long will you last?

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

(the big bad wolf)

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. He puts it in his back pocket.

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 - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 6, 3:00 AM

The ticking of a wall clock. Rain tapping the window like it knows what's coming.

The door bursts open. BOB enters. Wet. Shirt clinging. Eyes wild. No tie. No excuses.

SUE rushes in from the kitchen.

SUE

Bob! Where have you been? I've been up all night.

BOB

Why?

SUE

I had a dream. I was choking. I couldn't breathe. I felt like I was falling—

BOB

Can you breathe now?

SUE

Yes.

BOB

Then we're fine.

(beat)

You're lucky then.

SUE

Bob—what's going on?

He starts grabbing clothes. A bag. Packing hard and fast.

SUE (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

BOB

Corner office, Sue. Promotions. Big things. Everything's changing.

SUE
What are you talking about?

BOB
You wouldn't understand.

SUE
Try me. I'm carrying your child.

BOB
(scoffs)
Are you sure it's mine?

SUE
What the hell kind of question is that?

BOB
You were easy.
(he snaps his fingers)
One, two, three—on your back.

SUE
(enraged)
Stop it!

BOB
You're a cheap, whiny little secretary from a cheap, middle-class family.
You. Your sister.
All that fake polish on lousy lipstick dreams— thinking it makes you better than the rest of us.

SUE
Don't you dare talk about my family.
You're a monster.

BOB
Oh, I'm the monster?
(scoffs — steps closer, the heat rising)
She stabbed your father to death. Sixteen years old. Knife in the back.
And you still think I'm the problem?
(beat — twisted breath, pain barely masked)
You think you're better than me?
(shakes his head, voice dropping like a blade)
(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)
You're not. You never were.
(steps into the light - a
whisper now, dead
serious)
You wanna see the monster?
(points to himself - calm,
lethal)
Look right here.

SUE
In six months, you'll have a son.
You should pray he doesn't turn out
like you.

BOB
(snarling, wounded pride
flaring)
Pray? Jesus.
(laughs, bitter)
You said you were a virgin.
Another lie?

SUE
I never lied to you, Bob.

He zips the bag. Sling it over his shoulder.

SUE (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

BOB
Somewhere I don't hear you
breathing down my neck.

SUE
Bob, please. Don't do this.

He storms into the hallway.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The elevator button DINGS.

Bob presses it. Eyes forward.

SUE
Bob-please. Just talk to me.

She steps in front of him, blocking the elevator.

SUE (CONT'D)
Don't walk out. I need you.

Our baby needs you.

BOB
I'm not your damn savior.

SUE
You're running from this.

You're afraid.

BOB
You're always clinging to me.

SUE
Because you keep running.

BOB
Let go of me, Sue.

SUE
No. I'm not letting you leave
until—

DING.

The elevator doors slide open.

REVEAL: NO ELEVATOR.

Just an empty black shaft.

Sue doesn't see it.

BOB
Let go.

SUE
This is your baby, Bob.

BOB
(snarling)
You're dead weight.

SUE
Don't say that—

BOB SHOVES HER.

SLOW MOTION.

Sue stumbles backward—arms reaching—

She FALLS.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

Sue's body vanishes into the black.

But just before—

SUE LOOKS UP.

BOB LOOKS DOWN.

Their eyes lock. One breathless second.

She knows. He watches.

And then—she's gone.

BLACK.

SILENCE.

WHOMP.

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.

FRONT PAGE NEWS: Bob The Monster In The House!

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.

I waited for you at the bottom of the shaft.

I saw you look down at me.

And then you just left me there.

(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)
You could've had everything.
You just never knew what
'everything' was.

Lights dim. She vanishes. He stays.

BOB
Sue, don't leave me! Sue!

But she's gone.

Jane clutches her purse, her voice cold.

JANE
You wanted to be a king, Bob. But
kings don't beg. And they don't
burn their empires to the ground
for a woman they never deserved.
(beat. softer))
I didn't almost love you. I loved
the man I thought you were. He's
not in this room.
May God have mercy on whatever's
left.

BOB
Jane, please...

She walks out. Bob's left alone with Pam.

PAM
You wanted headlines, Bob?
(beat)
I'll be front row at your
execution.
Clapping. Smiling.
(leans in)
It's going to be... electrifying.
(beat - shrugs)
Too bad I can't push you down an
empty shaft myself. I already put
one man down.
(locks eyes)
Shame I couldn't make it two.

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"

HARD CUT TO
BLACK:

TED (CONT'D)
I remember. (PAUSE)
BIG DAY! TAKE CHARGE!

The Theme song plays "No Need To Waltz" smoothie and jazzy.

BLACK & WHITE MONTAGE

-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.

INT. EXECUTION ROOM - NIGHT

BOB sits alone. The empty chair waits.

A faint hum.

He stares at it - hollow, amused, unafraid.

Then - he smiles.

Not because he's brave.

Because he finally understands what falling really means.

BLACK.

Queue end title and credit

CREDITS BEGIN.

The names roll over stark B&W stills from the film:

Sue on the bench

Ted with his martini

Jane walking away from the jailhouse

Pam lighting a cigarette outside the courthouse

Bob... staring straight at us. Empty.

FINAL TITLE
CARD:

THE SHAFT

Written & Directed by Dennis J. Manning Original Song: "No
Need to Waltz" Performed by:

BOB
(V.O., just above a
whisper):)
You don't rise in this town.
You survive... or you sink.