

Changing Lanes

by

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Revised

EXT. FDR DRIVE -- MORNING

Traffic stretches as far as the eye can see. It's raining on the East Side of Manhattan and nothing is moving.

HORNS BLARE. Commuters SCREAM PROFANITIES at one another.

INT. BMW 740IL -- MORNING

Windshield wipers beat a rhythm through dirty rain.

GAVIN VARICK is smoking. Thirties. Winter tan and a health club body. Expensive suit and tie.

Portrait of a young comer.

But look a little closer and you'll see the first flecks of gray in his hair. Lines around his mouth that don't come from laughing.

The car phone RINGS.

VARICK

Yeah...

A Honda cuts him off. Varick HITS THE BRAKES.

VARICK

Sonofa...(into phone) No, not you.

INTERCUT -- ARNELL, UPSHAW & DELANO -- MORNING

MICHELLE ORTIZ sits behind a desk in a posh law office. Lots of oak paneling and thick carpet.

She is stunning. Late twenties. Black hair and beautiful Puerto Rican features.

MICHELLE

I hate this.

VARICK

What time is the meeting?

MICHELLE

Eight-fifteen. Delano moved it up.

VARICK

Shit!

Checks his watch.

VARICK

I'm never going to make it. You've got to stall them.

MICHELLE

I'm his secretary, Gavin. How am I going to stall him?

VARICK

Do you love me?

MICHELLE

That's a stupid question...

VARICK

(insistent)

Do. you. love. me?

MICHELLE

(finally)

Yes.

VARICK

Then stall because if the meeting starts before I get there - you'll be loving me in Attica.

A calfskin BRIEFCASE is propped open on the passenger seat of Varick's car.

REVEAL a stack of legal files inside. Stamped across the top folder is "CONFIDENTIAL. DO NOT REMOVE FROM OFFICE."

INT. FORD TAURUS -- MORNING

JOHN CRAMER is in his early forties. Still handsome, but worn around the edges. Like a favorite photograph that's been handled too often.

His clothes aren't expensive, but he wears them with pride. Like he's the first generation of his family to wear a tie to work.

Sips coffee from a plastic cup and listens to the TRAFFIC REPORT:

TRAFFIC REPORTER

(radio filter)

Heavy rain continues for the third straight day. Anybody sees an old guy building an ark, let me know. Forty minute waits at all inbound tunnels.

(MORE)

TRAFFIC REPORTER (cont'd)
 Significant delays on the B, D, and F
 lines due to flooding on the tracks. And
 stay clear of the 59th Street Bridge. A
 multi-car accident has paralyzed the
 upper deck.

THE CAMERA TRACKS across the interior of the car.

TWO PHOTOGRAPHS are secured to the sun visor with a rubber
 band:

One is of TWO MOP-HEADED BOYS in Little League gear.

The other is a promotional flier from a real estate office.
 It shows a SMALL HOUSE. It isn't much. Semi-detached. Front
 yard too small to talk about.

TRAFFIC REPORTER
 (radio filter)
 The only good news is alternate side
 parking is suspended today for religious
 observances...

In the back seat is a GIFT-WRAPPED BOX and a PILE OF LEGAL
 PAPERS.

The Camera MOVES IN on the papers. RANDOM WORDS stand out
 from the mass of legalese.

Words like "Divorce." Phrases like "...motion to determine
 custody of children."

TRAFFIC REPORTER
 (radio filter)
 So, if you're stuck in traffic and the
 water is inching over the tops of your
 tires. Take a deep breath and remember...
 Today's Good Friday.

Cramer leans on his HORN.

CRAMER
 Move it!

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- MORNING

Across the roadway, Varick sees a sign that reads: BROOKLYN
 BRIDGE/FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - NEXT EXIT.

He's on the wrong side of the FDR. Four lanes of traffic
 between him and the exit.

VARICK
 Shit.

Dials another number on his car phone. Sees an opening in the next lane.

VARICK
(into phone)
Gavin Varick for Charles Levine.

Varick WHIPS his car one lane closer to the Exit. Cuts off a Toyota hatchback. The DRIVER leans on his HORN.

VARICK
Charlie? Gavin. What are we doing?
(listens) You know the price. Two percent
legal fees on a billion-six stock swap is
thirty-two million dollars...

Varick sees an opening in the next lane.

VARICK
Wrong sports analogy, Charlie. Think
boxing. This deal is the heavyweight
championship and when I win, I'm
retiring... Because boxing is a dirty
sport and I never wanted to fight for a
living.

Hits the accelerator.

INT. CRAMER'S CAR -- MORNING

Cramer passes underneath the BROOKLYN BRIDGE/FEDERAL
COURTHOUSE Sign. He's in the exit lane. Puts on his blinker.

One of Cramer's rear windows is slightly open. RAIN DROPS are
SPLATTERING the gift-wrapped box.

Cramer notices. The window is manual so he can't roll it up
from the front seat.

He reaches into the back seat for the gift, trying to keep
one eye on the road.

OVER CRAMER'S SHOULDER

Varick's BMW LURCHES closer. CUTTING OFF other drivers.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- MORNING

Heading for the Courthouse Exit. Completely engrossed in
negotiation.

VARICK
(into phone)
Forget it. You wouldn't understand...
Post merger you have sixty-three percent
of cable subscribers in the Tri-State
area. No way you past muster with
Justice. Unless you got an edge...

INT. CRAMER'S CAR -- MORNING

Cramer's still reaching for the gift. Sees the Exit coming
up. Doesn't see Varick coming into his lane...

VARICK (VO)
And Felix Delano's got more edge than
Gillette.

EXT. FDR DRIVE/COURTHOUSE EXIT -- MORNING

Varick's BMW swerves into Cramer's lane and PLOWS into the
front of his car. The Taurus SLEWS sideways and HITS the
guardrail.

Both cars JERK TO A HALT.

The DIN OF TRAFFIC fades away.

For one long second the two men stare at each other.
Digesting the one thing neither of them could afford to have
happen.

INT. CRAMER'S CAR -- MORNING

Cramer opens his mouth. His lips begin to form the first
profanity.

His airbag EXPLODES.

EXT. FDR DRIVE -- MORNING

As if on cue, every car on the FDR Drive HONKS their HORNS.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- MORNING

Varick snaps out of it. Phone still in his hand

VARICK
Holy shit! (into phone) Some asshole just
hit my car... No! Don't you dare hang up
until we lock this.

INT. CRAMER'S CAR -- MORNING

The airbag collapses. Cramer has A CUT across his forehead.

His coffee cup is in the back seat. The gift-wrapped box and pile of legal papers are drenched in java.

Moving slowly, he reaches into the glove compartment for his insurance card.

EXT. FDR DRIVE -- MORNING

Cramer stumbles out of his car. Looks at the crumbled front fender. His front tire is leaking air.

Varick gets out of his car. Still on the phone.

VARICK

(into phone)

Say it. Say "I'll be in your office at four-thirty."... Don't be late.

Clicks off the line. Tosses the phone back into his car.

CRAMER (OS)

Why did you pick today to drive like an asshole?

Varick turns his attention to John Cramer.

VARICK

You cut me off!

CRAMER

Cut you off? You came into my lane!

VARICK

My turn signal was on. I had plenty of room...

CRAMER

Obviously you didn't. Look at my car!

The front end is a write off. Tire completely flat by now..

VARICK

This is unbelievable...

He glances down at his BMW. The only damage is a dented fender and a broken turn signal.

CRAMER

Are you listening to me?

Varick turns back to Cramer. A HUNDRED ANGRY CAR HORNS in his ears. RAIN PELTING off his head.

CRAMER (cont'd)

I don't have time for this. I've got to
be somewhere and I can't be late. I just
can't...

Varick looks at his watch. An EIGHTEEN WHEELER roars past. It sounds like a CELL DOOR CLOSING.

He makes up his mind.

VARICK

Neither can I...

He moves to get back in his car. It takes Cramer a moment to comprehend that Varick is leaving.

CRAMER

Where the hell are you going?

Cramer's voice is drowned out by the sound of Varick's car door SLAMMING SHUT.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- MORNING

Cramer YANKS open the passenger door.

CRAMER

What do you think you're doing? I'm gonna
call a cop.

VARICK

Get out of my car!

CRAMER

I need your insurance company. Your
personal...

Cramer gestures with the hand holding his insurance card.

VARICK

GET OUT OF MY CAR!

Varick SNATCHES the card. TEARS it in two. The PIECES flutter to the floorboard.

Cramer's eyes bulge with anger. He starts to pull his fist back.

OFF-DUTY COP (OS)

Get off the Goddamn road!

An OFF-DUTY COP leans out the window of his car. Holding his badge. Pissed off about being stuck behind two civilians.

OFF-DUTY COP
(cont'd)

(to Cramer)
Can your car move?

CRAMER
He hit me. He's trying to leave the scene...

OFF-DUTY COP
CAN IT MOVE?

CRAMER
He hit me!

OFF-DUTY COP
Then get it off the road!

VARICK
Now, tell him to get out of my car.

OFF-DUTY COP
(to Varick)
Be glad I am late for the sergeants exam or I would arrest your ass for leaving the scene of an accident...

VARICK
Arrest me? I'm trying to move my car out...

Cramer looks down. Varick's briefcase has spilled legal files all over the front of Varick's car.

Varick and the Cop are ARGUING.

Rain is running down Cramer's face. Inside one of the files he catches a glimpse of letterhead. Names. Phone numbers.

Cramer grabs the file. Across the front is emblazoned "CONFIDENTIAL. DO NOT REMOVE FROM OFFICE."

Varick doesn't notice.

VARICK
(at the Cop)
Fuck you, too!

Varick slams his car into gear and PEELS OUT. Cuts onto the shoulder of the freeway and heads for the Courthouse Exit.

The Off-Duty Cop pulls away.

OFF DUTY COP
Get your car off the road, asshole!

Cramer is left standing in the rain.

A THOUSAND ANONYMOUS COMMUTERS speed past, BLANK FACES
staring at his plight.

No one stops to help.

BLARING CAR HORNS bleed into a PEEL OF THUNDER.

EXT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE -- DAY

Varick whips his car into a parking spot in front of the
Manhattan Federal Courthouse. The Gothic Art Deco of the
Administrative Building looms overhead.

Shielding his files from the rain, Varick jumps from his car
and runs toward the Courthouse entrance.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING LOBBY -- MORNING

DOZENS of PEOPLE huddle in the lobby. Waiting for their day
in court. Hiding from the rain.

Varick PLOWS through them like a Bronx express train. He is
followed by a CHORUS OF EPITHETS as he shoves his way onto an
elevator.

INT. BAR ASSOCIATION -- DAY

Varick emerges from the elevator before the doors are fully
open.

Michelle is waiting for him in the lobby.

VARICK
Where are they?

MICHELLE
Conference Room.

She's walking with him. Trying to repair the rain damage to
his appearance.

MICHELLE
I told them you had car trouble...
He's already gone.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

On one side of a long conference table is FELIX DELANO. Fifties. Brutally tailored.

He watches Varick's late arrival with ill-disguised anger.

On the other side of the table are THE ROCKWELLS.

Somewhere in the past, an ancestor made their family fortune with drive, ambition, and a pious belief in hard work.

The only thing they've inherited is the fortune.

Seated at the end of the table is ROBERT ARNELL, the silver-haired patriarch of Varick's law firm.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

I was under the impression this meeting started at eight-fifteen.

GEORGE ROCKWELL. Forty and pinched. The family spokesman.

DELANO

Mr. Varick had car trouble.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

Perhaps Mr. Varick would be on time if the next meeting was held in the District Attorney's office.

VARICK

I'm very sorry, Mr. Rockwell. But this entire misunderstanding can be cleared up very quickly.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

Stealing money from a probate account isn't misunderstanding. It's Grand Larceny.

ARNELL

Those are serious charges.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

If I couldn't substantiate them, you wouldn't be here.

DELANO

If you don't substantiate them, We'll sue you for slander. I have total confidence in Gavin...

VARICK

Thank you...

DELANO

(interrupting)

If I didn't, he would never have been given sole responsibility for your grandfather's estate. I never asked for any details of his trusteeship and neither did any other partner because our faith in Gavin is unquestioned... Go ahead, son.

There is a moment of admiration for the deft manner in which Delano has covered his ass.

Varick stares at Delano for a moment. Then he plunges ahead.

VARICK

If you take a look at these brokerage reports...

Varick passes his stack of files around the table.

VARICK

When your grandfather's estate was liquidated, the proceeds were invested in several mutual funds pending final disbursement to the heirs. What your auditor assumed were unauthorized withdrawals were actually transfers between those accounts. But, you'll see that as of five o'clock yesterday, the value of the estate had increased four point seven percent.

ARNELL

That's a pretty fair return.

George Rockwell is studying the brokerage report.

MINA ROCKWELL

But who authorized your firm to make any investment at all?

MINA ROCKWELL. George's sister. All sharp edges.

MINA ROCKWELL

Four percent return is fine. But you could just as easily have lost money. Money that was not yours to gamble with. How does the Bar Association view unauthorized trades?

ARNELL

This firm does not make "unauthorized trades."

Silence around the table.

Delano eyes Varick like a science experiment. Watching for any sign of weakness.

VARICK

The fact is, Ms. Rockwell, Arnell, Upshaw & Delano was authorized to make investments with your grandfather's account.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

Authorized by whom?

VARICK

When we were making arrangements for his estate, your grandfather signed a power of attorney vesting me with the authority to make such investments as I saw fit.

The Rockwells exchange glances.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

Why are we only hearing about this, now? I've had several conversations with this office and no one has mentioned anything about a power of attorney.

Silence.

ARNELL

Gavin?

VARICK

(slowly)

Perhaps they assumed your auditor would have provided you with a copy.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

I would like to see this document.

VARICK

Naturally. I took the liberty of bringing...

Varick rifles through his files.

Then he looks again.

And again.

Because the Power of Attorney isn't there. It hasn't been since John Cramer took it out of his car.

CUT TO

EXT. FDR DRIVE -- MORNING

John Cramer kneeling in the rain. Soaked to the skin. Trying to change his tire.

The tire iron slips in his hand. He cuts himself. Another irate commuter leans on his HORN.

IN THE FRONT SEAT

Varick's Power of Attorney.

"CONFIDENTIAL. DO NOT REMOVE FROM OFFICE" in big, red letters across the front.

CUT TO

INT. BAR ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE ROOM -- MORNING

No rest for the wicked. And no mercy.

Varick tries to force a smile onto his face. It melts like ice cream in July.

The Rockwells stare down the table like a firing squad.

VARICK

There must be some...

GEORGE ROCKWELL

Mistake? As in: It was here a minute ago. And the check is in the mail. And I won't...

ARNELL

Mr. Rockwell!

DELANO

This doesn't prove a thing. There's no connection between...

VARICK

(interrupting)

Wait!

He's stuck. And he knows it.

VARICK (cont'd)

Just. wait. for a second. I specifically instructed my secretary to include the power of attorney in my briefing materials. But I should have double-checked and I accept full responsibility for wasting your time.

No one has shot him down yet. He sees a little daylight and runs for it.

VARICK

Further, it was probably unprofessional of me not to keep you informed of the firm's...

Delano cocks a patrician eyebrow.

VARICK (cont'd)

...of my investment strategy for your grandfather's estate.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

Unprofessional?

VARICK

But the fact remains that your Grandfather's estate has increased in value. And I do have a power of attorney. And I will find it.

MINA ROCKWELL

When?

VARICK

By tomorrow morning.

ARNELL

You'll find it tonight.

Robert Arnell speaks with unquestioned authority. Even the Rockwells pay attention.

ARNELL (cont'd)

In forty years, no lawyer from this firm has ever been accused of financial wrongdoing. I want this business settled. I have every confidence Gavin will produce the Power of Attorney. And when he does, I will expect an apology, Mr. Rockwell. In writing.

George Rockwell shifts under Arnell's heavy gaze.

ARNELL (cont'd)

But in the unlikely event you don't have the Power of Attorney in your hand by seven o'clock tonight, I will personally accompany you to the District Attorney.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

I'm perfectly capable of going to the D.A. on my own.

ARNELL

You'll get in faster if I go with you. We play golf every Thursday.

Silence falls across the conference room.

GEORGE ROCKWELL

Fair enough.

Arnell rises as the Rockwells stand and file out the door.

When they're gone, he looks at Varick.

ARNELL

I meant what I said. I'll see you exonerated, tonight. Or I'll see you indicted.

He turns to Delano.

ARNELL

There are two things we do not tolerate at this firm: One is a dishonest lawyer. The other is a partner who covers his ass. If he's indicted... he won't be alone.

The two lawyers stare at one another.

ARNELL (cont'd)

Seven o'clock.

Delano's eyes follow Arnell out the door. As soon as the senior partner is gone, they fix on Gavin Varick like gunsights.

DELANO

You've got a problem.

VARICK

We've got a problem. I'm not the one who was using the Rockwell account as his private piggy bank.

DELANO

I'm not the one with his name on the probate documents.

His cufflinks gleam in the overhead light.

DELANO (cont'd)

Cynthia used to go on and on. Gavin is different. Gavin's honest. He doesn't want what you have. And yet here we are...

VARICK

I am nothing like you.

DELANO

No?

Delano stands.

DELANO (cont'd)

What'd Levine say?

VARICK

Two percent. That's thirty-two million dollars in billings for this law firm.

DELANO

Whoever lands the AGC account takes home a million dollar bonus. I'd hate to see you get... distracted by this Rockwell matter and lose that opportunity. But as I said, I have complete faith in you.

He walks to the door.

VARICK

Charlie Levine is a personal friend. We went to school together. Making me lead counselor is common sense.

Delano turns.

DELANO

Common sense has nothing to do with it... Son-in-law.

He's gone. Leaving Gavin Varick alone at an empty table.

EXT. FAMILY COURT -- MORNING

John Cramer navigates his wreck of a car into the parking lot. The front bumper drags on the ground.

FAMILY COURT is a post-modern fortress. Black and so inhospitable as to be almost comic.

INT. COURT HALLWAY -- DAY

Cramer comes running down the hallway with his legal papers under one arm and the gift-wrapped box under the other.

Soaking wet and spotted with grease from changing his tire.

STEPHEN (OS)

Hey, Dad.

Cramer turns. His face lights up.

Sitting on a hard wood bench are the two boys from the Little League photo: STEPHEN CRAMER, age 10, and ROBBY, age 6.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

You're really late. Mom already went in.

CRAMER

I know. Which one? This one?

He points toward the nearest courtroom. Stephen nods. Cramer starts to move towards the door.

ROBBY

What's in the box?

Robby points at the gift in Cramer's hand.

Cramer is torn between his need to get inside the courtroom and a father's natural excitement at giving his son a gift.

CRAMER

This box?

ROBBY

Yeah.

Swinging his legs in anticipation.

CRAMER

It's a present for the judge.

Robby's face drops.

ROBBY

It is?

STEPHEN
It's not for the Judge, stupid. It's for
you.

CRAMER
(sharply)
Hey. Don't call your brother stupid.

Cramer's face clouds over. He glances at the courtroom door.
Makes a decision.

Kneels down in front of his sons.

CRAMER (cont'd)
It's a tough time for all of us. You guys
need to help each other. And your Mom.

STEPHEN
Mom says we're moving to Oregon.

CRAMER
You're not moving to Oregon.

STEPHEN
But Mom said...

CRAMER
I bought a house.

The word hangs in the stale, courthouse air. Both boys stare
at their father.

ROBBY
For us to live in?

CRAMER
For you and your mother.

STEPHEN
You said that before. You said it a
million times. That's why Mom...

CRAMER
This time it's true.

The boys hear absolute certainty in their father's voice.

ROBBY
Are you going to live there with us?

Cramer stares at his youngest son.

CRAMER

No. But I'll be close. And what matters is we can still be a family. That's the most important thing in the whole world. Even if I don't live with you and Mom... We will still be a family.

He leaps to his feet.

CRAMER (cont'd)

I gotta get in there, guys.

Moves toward the door.

STEPHEN

Dad!

CRAMER

Yeah?

STEPHEN

Robby's present.

CRAMER

Oh...

Cramer backtracks and hands Robby the box. Quickly, he kisses each of them on the top of the head.

CRAMER (cont'd)

Happy Birthday, son.

For a brief moment, John Cramer forgets he is standing in the hallway of Family Court.

Then he remembers.

INT. FAMILY COURT -- MORNING

Cramer charges through the door.

The courtroom is empty except for JUDGE COSELL, VALERIE CRAMER and her LAWYER.

JUDGE COSELL

...denies the motion for joint custody and awards sole custody of the children to their mother. Counsel is instructed to file a visitation plan with the court within thirty days.

CRAMER

Wait!

The GAVEL COMES DOWN.

Valerie looks over her shoulder at her husband. She's pretty but tired-looking. Too thin for her age.

Her eyes widen when she notes his condition.

LAWYER

Your Honor, Ms. Cramer is moving to Oregon to begin a new job. Logistically, it will be impossible for weekly visitations with Mr. Cramer. We will request a semi-annual visitation.

JUDGE COSELL

So noted. File with the Court Clerk.

CRAMER

I'm sorry I'm late. I'd like to enter some papers into evidence...

JUDGE COSELL

You are Mr. Cramer?

Valerie looks away. Embarrassed.

CRAMER

Yes.

JUDGE COSELL

...your Honor.

CRAMER

What?

JUDGE COSELL

Yes, your Honor.

CRAMER

Yes, your Honor.

JUDGE COSELL

Where is your lawyer?

CRAMER

I'm representing myself... your Honor.

Valerie and her Lawyer start to leave.

JUDGE COSELL

You are aware that the man who represents himself...

CRAMER

...has a fool for a client. My lawyer wanted five thousand dollars to appear. I don't have five thousand dollars. I would've had to borrow it. And then I thought, if I have to borrow the money anyway... Wait!

Cramer steps in front of Valerie and her Lawyer as they try to walk past.

VALERIE

Get out of the way, John.

CRAMER

I need to talk to you.

LAWYER

John...

CRAMER

(to the Lawyer)

Don't call me John. Only my friends call me John.

JUDGE COSELL

Mr. Cramer...

CRAMER

(to Valerie)

I bought a house.

Valerie has been trying to edge past Cramer. She stops when she hears the word "house."

VALERIE

What?

CRAMER

I bought a house.

JUDGE COSELL

Mr. Cramer!

The Judge's voice ECHOES through the empty courtroom.

JUDGE COSELL

Would you approach the bench?

John Cramer looks at Valerie.

JUDGE COSELL

Approach the bench, please.

Cramer steps inside the swinging wooden gate and approaches the Judge's bench.

Judge Cosell speaks softly. His tone is almost gentle.

JUDGE COSELL

When you and your wife married, were you in love?

CRAMER

(confused)

What?

JUDGE COSELL

When you and your wife married. Before whatever problems brought you here. Were you in love?

Valerie's Lawyer takes her by the arm.

It almost looks as if she wants to stay, but Valerie allows herself to be guided towards the courtroom door.

Cramer doesn't notice.

JUDGE COSELL

I see twenty cases a day. Yelling. Shouting. Calling the other one obscene names. Don't do it. You'll still see your children.

CRAMER

How will I see them in Oregon?

JUDGE COSELL

Think back to the love you once shared and honor that memory by letting this go. Don't do anything that will...

The courtroom door SWINGS SHUT.

Cramer spins toward the sound and sees that Valerie and her Lawyer have left the courtroom.

His face twists with anger.

CRAMER

You... distracted.. me.

JUDGE COSELL

Mr. Cramer...

The rage climbs up the inside of Cramer's throat. He fights it. Struggles to keep it down.

CRAMER

I was trying to tell my wife that I bought her a house.

JUDGE COSELL

Mr. Cramer, the court has made it's decision.

CRAMER

A decision based on information that has changed. I can provide a house for my children to live it.

JUDGE COSELL

When did you purchase this home?

CRAMER

We're closing tonight. At six o'clock.

JUDGE COSELL

So you haven't bought it, yet?

CRAMER

I am buying it. They just have to approve my mortgage...

JUDGE COSELL

You don't have a mortgage yet?

CRAMER

I do have a mortgage. There were some questions. But I'm straightening that out...

JUDGE COSELL

Mr. Cramer. I've seen your financials. I'd be surprised if you could get a mortgage. And if you could get a mortgage, I question whether you could afford a house large enough...

CRAMER

(rising temper)

...for my family. I know what you're going to say. I've heard it before. I heard it from my lawyer. I heard it from the Goddamn social worker. I've heard it from my wife since the day I got out of the Corps, but it's a moot point because I'm buying a...

Several COURT OFFICERS enter the room.

JUDGE COSELL

(interrupting)

The court has made it's decision, Mr. Cramer. I congratulate you on the purchase of your new home. But if you felt so strongly...

CRAMER

It's not in the best neighborhood. And the roof leaks...

JUDGE COSELL

Mr. Cramer...

CRAMER

But I can fix the roof. And there's a yard...

JUDGE COSELL

(louder)

If you felt so strongly...

CRAMER

(over the Judge)

What matters is that it's a house. For my kids. For my wife. So we can remain a Goddamn family!

JUDGE COSELL

(exploding)

IF YOU FELT SO STRONGLY YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN HERE ON TIME!

A Court Officer appears on either side of John Cramer.

In the silence that follows, the Judge regains his composure and John Cramer realizes he has lost his children.

JUDGE COSELL

(cont'd)

You are late! You have no representation! Your motion for joint custody has already been denied. Your wife's attorney will notify you of the proposed visitation schedule. If you contest that schedule, there will be another hearing. In the meantime, I suggest you get yourself a lawyer, some therapy, and if there is another hearing... Be On Time.

The GAVEL ECHOES through the empty courtroom like a gunshot.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING LOBBY -- DAY

Gavin Varick steps off the elevator.

EXT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE COMPLEX -- DAY

Varick walks out of the courthouse into the rain. Crosses to his car.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- DAY

Varick slides behind the wheel. Michelle is in the passenger seat.

MICHELLE

Why are you doing this?

Varick turns to look at her.

Rain drips down his face. For a moment, he looks very young.

VARICK

My father used to have this thing, he called it the shaving test. He used to say "Whatever you do, if you can get up in the morning and face the guy who looks back at you while you're shaving, you'll make out alright." Well, I get up every morning, and I look at the guy in my mirror and I hate his guts. I don't like his job. I don't like the way he treats people. I don't like his wife...

MICHELLE

Is going to jail gonna make that guy go away?

VARICK

I never stole a dime.

MICHELLE

Delano did. And you're covering up for him. I've picked up enough law to know that makes you an accomplice after the fact.

VARICK

If I cover up for Delano, I get a chance to bring AGC in as a client. If I can bring AGC in as a client, my bonus will be seven figures. And that money will buy us our freedom.

MICHELLE

Listen to me...

She takes his face in her hands.

MICHELLE (cont'd)

I love you. I want us to be together.

VARICK

So do I.

MICHELLE

Then be with me. I grew up in a fifth floor tenement with hot and cold running roaches. I don't need a million dollars to be happy.

VARICK

And I grew up with elevated subway tracks outside my window. Every seven minutes another thousand assholes I didn't know were staring into my life. I'm never living like that again. I'm getting out, but on my terms.

Somewhere in the distance, a POLICE SIREN begins to WAIL.

Michelle looks out the window at the rain.

MICHELLE

What makes you think you can trust him?

VARICK

I trust Felix Delano as far as I can spit. If he told me tomorrow was Saturday I'd get a second opinion. But he needs me...

Varick reaches out and gently tips her face back towards him.

VARICK

We talked about it a thousand times. Maybe you stopped believing it was going to happen. But it's happening. We're leaving this place. Together. We're going someplace warm. We're gonna get you a coconut bra and I'll get a grass skirt and we'll teach the kids to hustle the tourists.

His voice is earnest. He believes it. And that makes her start to believe.

MICHELLE

(slowly)

These children... are their parents married?

He stares into her eyes. In the silence, by not turning away, he gives her the answer.

VARICK

I need one more day. I need to be the bad guy for one more day. And I need that power of attorney or I can bring home Jesus Christ on a silver platter and it won't keep me out of jail.

MICHELLE

Don't blaspheme.

She pauses. And then commits.

MICHELLE (cont'd)

Can't you make another copy?

VARICK

It has to be an original. It was nearly impossible to get his signature on a blank page in the first place.

MICHELLE

Where could you have lost it?

VARICK

I don't know. It was in the car. On the front seat with the rest...

He stops. It hits him.

VARICK

Holy shit.

EXT. FAMILY COURT -- DAY

John Cramer walks out of Family Court.

Inside, DOZENS OF PEOPLE stare out the windows at the rain. PEDESTRIANS rush past him, in and out of the building.

In the middle of the crowd, Cramer is utterly alone.

KOREAN

You want umbrella?

Cramer turns.

A KOREAN MAN is selling umbrellas. A cigarette hangs from his lip, miraculously staying lit in the deluge.

KOREAN
You want umbrella?

CRAMER
How much?

KOREAN
Three dollar.

Cramer digs into his pocket and comes up with the money. The Korean passes him a tiny red umbrella.

Cramer stares at the man's cigarette.

CRAMER
How do you keep that lit?

The Korean has already lost interest in Cramer.

KOREAN
Umbrella. Three Dollar....

Cramer opens the umbrella. It isn't big enough to cover him and his stack of files. He covers the files.

As he juggles the umbrella and the stack of papers he notices something.

The file on top of the stack says, "DO NOT REMOVE FROM OFFICE" in big, red letters across the front.

Cramer puts down the umbrella. Rain instantly begins PINGING off the folder. Shielding it with his hand, he opens the file.

Inside the folder is a SHEAF OF DOCUMENTS. One of them is a POWER OF ATTORNEY, but that means nothing to Cramer.

What does grab his attention is the COVER LETTER.

It is addressed to Gavin Varick, Esq., care of Arnell, Upshaw, and Delano.

It begins: "This letter is written confirmation of our meeting to discuss alleged financial improprieties..."

Then it goes: "Failure to appear for this meeting will result in the immediate filing of criminal charges against yourself and your firm..."

It lists the time and address of the meeting.

The time is now. The address is the Administrative Court Building.

Which is across the street from Family Court.

John Cramer raises his eyes toward the Gothic tower looming through the rain.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- DAY

Varick is animated. Practically vibrating in his seat.

VARICK

That asshole who hit me. He took it. He had to.

MICHELLE

Somebody hit your car?

VARICK

But how am I going to find him?

MICHELLE

Why would anyone steal a file? It isn't worth anything.

VARICK

What?

MICHELLE

Check the accident report. It'll have his address.

VARICK

There isn't any accident report. I gotta get back to the office.

Varick starts the car.

EXT. CENTRE STREET -- DAY

John Cramer strides across the street. Little red umbrella in one hand. Files under his arm.

As he steps onto the sidewalk, Varick's BMW turns onto the street behind him.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- DAY

The stoplight at the corner of Centre and White turns red. Varick stops.

EXT. CENTRE STREET -- DAY

Something makes John Cramer glance to his left. Maybe he catches the BMW in his peripheral vision. Maybe God is just fucking with him.

His eyes focus on Varick's car. He sees the broken turn signal. The dented fender.

His little red umbrella falls to the ground.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- DAY

Varick dials a number on the car phone.

SECRETARY
(phone filter)
Bastion Investigations.

VARICK
Jimmy Costanza.

EXT. CENTRE STREET -- DAY

Cramer gently places his stack of files on the pavement.

Next to a metal trash can.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- MORNING

Varick on the car phone. Costanza picks up.

COSTANZA
(phone filter)
Costanza.

VARICK
(into phone)
Jimmy, it's Gavin Varick. I need to find
a guy. Now. Today.

John Cramer APPEARS through the rear window.

He's running towards Varick's car. TRASH CAN hoisted over his head like St. George about to kick hell out of a dragon.

COSTANZA
(phone filter)
What's his name?

VARICK
I don't know.

COSTANZA
(phone filter)
You don't know?

VARICK
He was in a car accident on the FDR about
an hour ago. Near the Brooklyn Bridge.
Try every auto repair...

The TRASH CAN EXPLODES through Varick's rear window.

Michelle SCREAMS.

EXT. INTERSECTION OF CENTRE AND WHITE STREETS -- DAY

Cramer jumps around Varick's BMW like he's doing some kind of
Zuni war dance.

KICKS in a tail light.

CRAMER
Did you make it to your meeting, Big
Shot!?

DENTS a door.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- DAY

Varick shakes shards of glass out of his hair.

COSTANZA
(phone filter)
Gavin? What the hell was that? Gavin?

Michelle is stunned. Stares as Cramer KICKS in one of his
headlights.

Varick ignores the phone. LEAPS from the car.

EXT. CENTRE AND WHITE STREET -- DAY

Varick TACKLES Cramer. They roll across wet pavement.

VARICK
Where's my file?

EXT. CENTRE AND WHITE STREET -- DAY

Varick and Cramer are GRAPPLING on wet pavement. Varick is
younger. Better conditioned.

He rolls over Cramer and gets him in a full Nelson.

VARICK
You think I'm going to jail over this?
Gimme my file back!

Cramer's eyes dart about.

Michelle staggers from Varick's car. Her hair matted by the rain. Wet blouse sticking to her skin.

VARICK
Gimme my file!

Cramer sees POLICE and COURT OFFICERS begin to stream out of the courthouse. Moving toward the street.

Cramer JERKS his head backwards, catching Varick in the nose. Varick GASPS in pain and releases his hold.

Cramer springs to his feet. For one moment he stands over Varick.

CRAMER
Was it important? Was it more important
than my children?

Varick shakes his head, trying to clear the cobwebs. BLOOD RUNS from his nose.

CRAMER (cont'd)
This isn't the end! This is the
beginning!

Cramer starts RUNNING. He stops to gather up his files from the pavement.

Cramer disappears into a CROWD OF PEDESTRIANS as Michelle reaches Varick.

CUT TO BLACK

SERVICE MANAGER
(VO)
Two weeks.

EXT. BMW DEALERSHIP -- DAY

Varick stands next to the paunchy BMW SERVICE MANAGER. Bandage over the bridge of his nose.

SERVICE MANAGER
Don't have any rear windscreens in stock.
Might be sooner but I don't want to
promise anything. See, you got the '98...

The Manager DRONES ON but Varick isn't listening. He's staring at the shattered rear window of his car.

INT. VARICK'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Varick is removing his personal items from the car. Pulls a pair of Persol sunglasses from the glove box.

Looks down. Stops dead in his tracks.

ON THE FLOORBOARD

Two pieces of paper. Torn down the middle.

Varick reaches down and picks them up. Holds them up to the florescent light.

It's John Cramer's INSURANCE CARD.

INT. HERTZ RENT-A-CAR -- DAY

Rain PATTERS against the window as the RENTAL CLERK types Varick's request into the computer.

RENTAL CLERK

I'm sorry, sir, all I have is a midsize.

VARICK

(distracted)

Fine.

He's looking at Cramer's insurance card. The two pieces have been Scotch-taped together

RENTAL CLERK

Driver license and major credit card.

No answer.

RENTAL CLERK

Sir?

VARICK

Huh?

RENTAL CLERK

License and credit card.

Varick pulls out his wallet. Hands over his license and credit card. Sets his wallet on the counter.

Picks up Cramer's insurance card and looks around.

VARICK
You got a pay phone?

The Clerk gestures.

RENTAL CLERK
Outside.

EXT. HERTZ RENT-A-CAR -- DAY

Varick huddles against the phone. Drops a quarter and dials.

COSTANZA
(phone filter)
Costanza.

VARICK
(into phone)
I know who he is.

INTERCUT -- INT. BASTION INVESTIGATIONS -- DAY

JIMMY COSTANZA is a fat Greek in a cheap suit.

The walls of his office are covered with pictures of himself:
In a police uniform. With Mayor Giuliani. With Ernest
Borgnaine.

COSTANZA
Who? The guy from the accident?

VARICK
You still have juice at TRW?

COSTANZA
Caught a manager's wife banging a cable
installer. Didn't lose a dime in the
divorce and he still gets HBO for free.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

Cramer walks down a street slick with rain. Trying to shield
his stack of files from the downpour with little success.

Two blocks in the distance, a SUBWAY ENTRANCE shines like a
beacon.

VARICK (VO)
I want to pull the plug on this guy. If
he's got credit cards - I want them
cancelled. If he's got a car lease - I
want it revoked. Got a mortgage on his
house? I want it called.

COSTANZA (VO)
What did the guy do to you?

VARICK (VO)
Never mind that. Can you do it?

Pausing in a doorway, Cramer catches his own REFLECTION in the glass.

He notices dirt on his face from wrestling with Varick. Oil on his jacket from changing the tire. A tear in his sleeve.

Unconsciously, he straightens his tie.

COSTANZA (VO)
I don't know. I could probably do it...
but fucking with a guy's credit rating is
a federal beef.

VARICK (VO)
I know plenty of lawyers... (heavier) Who
give you plenty of business.

Staring at his reflection, Cramer notices a neon sign across the street. An upscale gin joint called ARLO'S.

COSTANZA (VO)
(folding)
Gimme his name...

INT. TRW CREDIT SERVICE -- DAY

HUNDREDS OF DATA ENTRY TECHNICIANS huddle over computer work stations.

The DATA MANAGER is a sallow-faced man with a bad complexion and a Salem 100 hanging from his lip.

He approaches a middle-aged BLACK WOMAN. She's listening to a Walkman and entering data into a computer.

MANAGER
Take a break, Hilda.

She looks at her watch as she removes the headset.

HILDA
Six minutes early, too. You getting soft
in your old age.

The Manager slides behind her computer as Hilda strolls away. He begins typing.

CLOSE ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

The screen reads CRAMER, JOHN ANTHONY and lists all of his credit accounts in a complicated jumble of code and symbols.

The screen BLINKS for a moment like a prize fighter just before he hits the canvas.

Then:

CITIBANK VISA 4128003349582999 CANCELLED

AMEX 9178392847592 JC CANCELLED

FORDMOTCREDIT RC 345 J/XZ 2239 CANCELLED

FIRSTAM MORTGAGE 082-34-2119 PENDING. REQUEST INFO...

In the blink of an electronic eye, John Cramer's world becomes a radically different place.

INT. ARLO'S -- DAY

John Cramer walks out of the rain.

It's the kind of place where middle-aged hustlers celebrate sales awards with their teen-age girlfriends. Silk flowers and lots of glass block.

CRAMER

Can I use your restroom?

The BARTENDER has hair like Valentino. He gives Cramer the once over.

BARTENDER

In the back.

INT. ARLO'S RESTROOM -- DAY

Pink hand towels and scallop shaped soap. Cramer does his best to repair the morning's damage.

He scrubs the sleeve of his jacket trying to get the oil out.

Washes his hands. Making sure to clean under his nails.

Finally, he combs his hair and straightens his tie in the bathroom mirror.

EXT. HERTZ RENT-A-CAR -- DAY

Varick is staring at Cramer's insurance card. Turns it over.

Cramer's personal information is listed on the back: Address.
Phone number.

Reaches into his pocket for a quarter. Fishes around. No more
change.

VARICK

Shit.

Reaches into his hip pocket but can't find his wallet. Turns
and looks inside the rental office.

His wallet sits on the counter in front of the Rental Clerk.

Varick thinks about it. Picks up the phone. Hits zero.

VARICK

Operator, I'd like to make a local call
and charge it to my home number. The
number is...

INT. CRAMER'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The PHONE IS RINGING. We TRACK through the apartment:

Unopened packing cartons. Piles of books. Everything in order
but nothing put away. The organized chaos of a man who does
not belong to the space.

An ANSWERING MACHINE picks up.

CRAMER'S VOICE

(answering machine)

This is John Cramer. Please leave a
message.

VARICK

(phone filter)

I just cancelled every credit card you
have. And your car lease. And that's just
for openers. I can pull your life down
around your ears unless I get what I
want. And what I want is my file back. 40
Broad Street. Suite 1470. Today. Don't
make me fuck you where you live.

Varick hangs up.

CAMERA PUSHES in on a CALLER I.D. BOX next to the phone.

Flashing Varick's home phone number.

INT. ARLO'S -- DAY

Two Advertising Executives at the end of the bar. SEAVERS and CARLYLE. On their second mid-morning bracer and feeling it.

Cramer slides onto a stool.

CRAMER

Coffee.

BARTENDER

It's gonna take a while.

CRAMER

How long does it take to make coffee?

BARTENDER

A while.

CRAMER

Just give me a Coke.

The Bartender pours.

CARLYLE (OS)

Six months.

SEAVERS

That long?

CARLYLE

Six months courting that account. Buying lunches. Buying dinners. And you know how they tell me I didn't get it? Message on my voice mail. Arrogant pricks.

SEAVERS

Who'd they go with?

CARLYLE

Guys who did the Tiger Woods spot for Nike.

SEAVERS

Which one? The one...

CARLYLE (OS)

The one where all the kids say, "I'm Tiger Woods." Little Indian kid. Little colored kid.

SEAVERS

Oh, yeah. "I'm Tiger Woods." That's good.

CARLYLE

(bitterly)

It's brilliant. Like Tiger Woods is a one man United Nations or something. You don't want to just buy the shoes, you want to elect the guy president.

SEEVERS

Canonize him.

CARLYLE

You want to be him. You really believe that the miserable reality of your life will melt away and you'll be transformed into a twenty-one-year-old phenom with sixty million dollars in endorsements and a Colgate smile. By a pair of shoes.

CRAMER

Bullshit.

The conversation stops. Seavers and Carlyle look down the bar at Cramer.

CARLYLE

Excuse me?

CRAMER

You guys salesman or something?

SEEVERS

We're in advertising.

CRAMER

Figures.

CARLYLE

What does that mean, "figures?"

CRAMER

Only somebody in advertising would be sitting in a bar, two hours before lunch, patting themselves on the back for a commercial that represents everything that's wrong with this country.

CARLYLE

First off, that isn't my commercial. Secondly, this isn't your conversation. And third...

Severs cuts him off. Vaguely interested.

SEEVERS

What does that commercial have to do with what's wrong with the country?

CRAMER

Nothing. Forget it.

Cramer stares into his Coke. Seavers turns to face him.

SEEVERS

No, seriously. What's wrong with the commercial?

Cramer looks up.

CRAMER

You know why Tiger Woods is such a great golfer?

From somewhere inside Cramer it all pours out.

CRAMER

His father played golf his whole life and never amounted to shit. He was the only black man on the course. People thought he was a caddy. Big, fat white men in mismatched socks would give him five bucks and tell him to run to the club house for cigarettes and beer.

The fury in Cramer's voice is almost hypnotic.

CRAMER

So, he obsesses over his kid. While the other little boys are playing hopscotch, Tiger is on the putting green. While the other kids are eating ice cream, Little Tiger's hitting long balls.

Cramer's words wash over the two Ad men like a torrent.

CRAMER

He kicked his little black ass until Tiger Woods became the greatest golf player who ever picked up a nine iron. Because of his father. Because of a father's determination that no fat man in mismatched socks would send his son to the club house for cigarettes and beer.

The back of Carlyle's neck begins to turn scarlet.

CRAMER (CONT'D)

Everything he has - the trophies, the money - is a gift from his father. You should make a commercial with his dad. With twenty dads. Middle-aged guys with prostate problems saying, "I'm Tiger's Father." But you won't. You'll sit in this bar two hours before noon and say, "Shit. That Tiger Woods sure does a mean shoe commercial."

CARLYLE

(exploding)

Hey, you crank! I give two shits about Tiger Wood's dad. I care about Tiger Woods. Because he's a star. That's what sells: a little magic in your kid's hum-drum life. And if I'm also trying to sell you a pair of sneakers - and that pair of sneakers makes your kid think he can be a star like Tiger Woods - then in this day and age I'm a Goddamn hero.

CRAMER

No. The guy working twelve hours a day so his kid can wear hundred-dollar sneakers is a hero. You're a pimp for a shoe company.

CARLYLE

You little bastard...

Carlyle bolts off his stool and moves toward Cramer. Seavers tries to restrain him.

SEAVERS

(to Cramer)

You better get out of here.

Cramer picks up his glass of watered down Coke.

CRAMER

Here's to your heroes.

And POURS it onto the floor.

EXT. ARLO'S -- DAY

Cramer steps outside. Stands in the rain for a moment. Breathes deeply.

Rain washes the anger from his face. The dull ache of losing his children returns.

He sees a pay phone across the street.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET -- DAY

Drops a quarter and dials Valerie's number. It RINGS.

VALERIE
(phone filter)
Hello?

Cramer says nothing.

INTERCUT -- INT. VALERIE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Valerie Cramer has a typical New York apartment kitchen: too much New York and too little kitchen.

VALERIE
Hello...

CRAMER
It's me.

Valerie SIGHS.

VALERIE
I asked you not to call here, John. Just once, couldn't you respect my wishes?

CRAMER
(quietly)
I just called... to say I'm sorry. For everything.

VALERIE
It's not... There's nothing to be sorry about. We just have to move on with our lives.

Her words fade away. Cramer listens to his wife breathe on the other end of the phone.

CRAMER
That's the story of our life, right? Me failing you and being sorry about it afterward.

VALERIE
You didn't fail me. Marriage isn't a test.

CRAMER

Sure it is... but that's not why I really called. You've heard enough apologies from me for one lifetime. This time I did something about it.

VALERIE

(cautiously)

What?

The slightest hint of a smile curls the edges of Cramer's mouth.

CRAMER

I bought you a house.

INT. ARLO'S -- DAY

Carlyle is mad. Moving towards the door.

SEAVERS

(calling after him)

Leave it alone. He's just some asshole.

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET -- DAY

Cramer on the phone.

VALERIE CRAMER

You didn't.

CRAMER

I sure as hell did. I've been promising you a house since the day we got married.

Across the street, Carlyle storms out of the bar. Sees Cramer on the pay phone.

CRAMER (cont'd)

Come and see it.

VALERIE

I don't think that's a good idea...

But she doesn't shoot him down outright and Cramer warms to the idea.

CRAMER

I know you think you're doing what's best. But this changes everything. You're not going to move to Oregon if you and the kids own a house in New York?

VALERIE
It's not that simple...

CRAMER
Please. Just come look at it.

His tone is naked. Honest. Two adults who used to be in love.

VALERIE
(weakening)
Well... maybe this afternoon...

CARLYLE (OS)
Hey, asshole!

As Cramer turns toward him, Carlyle HITS HIM with a cheap shot to the face.

CARLYLE
Next time you wanna give a sermon - go to church.

Carlyle is a big man. Medium successful. Medium successful spare tire around his waist.

He's spent a lot of time in bars with men who settle their quarrels with bouts of schoolyard shoving.

And in his experience, the occasional punch usually ends the fight. Especially when delivered unawares.

Today, Carlyle is wrong.

Cramer RIPS the PHONE RECEIVER off the pay phone and HITS CARLYLE in the face.

INT. VALERIE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

The line goes dead.

VALERIE
Hello?... John?

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET FROM ARLO'S -- DAY

A look of great surprise crosses Carlyle's face as BLOOD SPURTS into his cupped hands.

CARLYLE
You hit me...

Cramer HITS him again. And again. The phone makes a DULL SLAPPING SOUND as it impacts on Carlyle's skull.

CARLYLE (cont'd)
Stop! Stop it! Please...

The Ad man sinks to his knees. Holding his arms over his head.

BLOOD runs down his face and SPLATTERS onto the wet sidewalk.
The RAIN washes it away.

Cramer stands over Carlyle with the receiver in his hand.

CARLYLE (cont'd)
I'm sorry. I'm sorry...

Carlyle starts to BLUBBER.

CARLYLE (cont'd)
Please, Mister. I got kids...

Cramer stares down at the bloody receiver in his hand. His breathing slows. He pulls back from the brink.

CRAMER
So do I.

Cramer throws the phone into the gutter and walks away.

INT. VARICK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Varick is pulling files from his desk and transferring them into his brief case.

Hits the intercom button.

VARICK
(into intercom)
Diane, bring me everything on the AGC merger. I'll be working at home, this afternoon.

Michelle appears in the doorway. She eyes his open briefcase.

MICHELLE
What are you doing?

VARICK
I'm getting out of here for a while. I'm going to get a room at the Best Western. Work up the final proposal for AGC.

MICHELLE
What about...

Michelle falls silent as DIANE, Varick's secretary, walks through the door with an armload of files and drops them on Varick's desk.

VARICK

(to Diane)

I'm expecting a guy. He's dropping off a document. It's very important. Page me as soon as it gets here.

Varick stares at his secretary to emphasize his seriousness.

DIANE

Okay.

VARICK

(heavy)

Do not forget.

DIANE

I won't.

Michelle waits until Diane walks out.

MICHELLE (cont'd)

What about Delano?

Varick closes his briefcase and snaps the locks. Fixes Michelle with a steel gaze.

The kind of look that frightens her a little.

VARICK

I need you to do something for me.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION -- DAY

Cramer and a CROWD OF LATE COMMUTERS step into the rain.

INT. GAICON INSURANCE COMPANY -- DAY

John Cramer walks through a maze of anonymous cubicles. A HUNDRED DIFFERENT CONVERSATIONS are happening around him.

INT. CRAMER'S CUBICLE -- DAY

Cramer settles behind his desk. Picks up the phone and dials a number.

As he does, he notices FLECKS OF CARLYLE'S BLOOD on his hands. He stares at the TINY RED DROPS as his answering machine picks up.

INT. CRAMER'S APARTMENT -- DAY

THE PHONE RINGS. The answering machine CLICKS ON.

ANSWERING MACHINE

This is John Cramer. Please leave a message.

The tape REWINDS itself and starts to play.

INT. CRAMER'S CUBICLE -- DAY

Cramer listens. Still staring at the blood on his hands.

ANSWERING MACHINE

(phone filter)

You have five messages. Message one...

BEEP.

It's Val. I think we got cut off or something... Call me.

The machine BEEPS again.

ANSWERING MACHINE

(cont'd)

This is Citibank calling for John Cramer. Call us immediately regarding your Visa card. Do not use the card until you have spoken with an account representative.

BEEP.

John Cramer. Please call Ford Motor Credit immediately for important information regarding your lease agreement.

BEEP.

Mr. Cramer, this is Will Akins at the FirstAmerica mortgage department... Jeez, I really hate doing this... There's a problem with your application. I need to see you by six o'clock or we'll have to deny. That's... uh .. that's in person. Thanks.

BEEP.

Before he hears Gavin Varick's voice, Cramer can hear the RAIN BEATING on the telephone booth. The traffic HONKING in the background.

EXT. HERTZ RENT-A-CAR -- FLASHBACK

Gavin Varick huddles against the phone booth. Rain pelts down on him as he spews venom into the phone.

VARICK

(into phone)

I just cancelled every credit card you have...

INT. CRAMER'S CUBICLE -- DAY

WILLARD, a co-worker, leans into Cramer's cubicle.

WILLARD

Hey, John. Artie wants to see you.

Cramer hangs up the phone. His HAND SHAKES.

Like he's standing at the base of a mountain and just heard the first distant rumble of an avalanche.

Cramer realizes Willard is still standing at the mouth of his cubicle. Watching him with a strange look.

CRAMER

(straining)

Thanks.

INT. ARTIE CRENSHAW'S OFFICE -- DAY

ARTIE CRENSHAW has thinning hair. His gut hangs over his Sansabelt slacks. But he gives off an air of honest capability.

Cramer TAPS on the door.

ARTIE

Come in, John.

He does.

ARTIE (cont'd)

Close the door behind you.

Cramer pauses. Still reeling from his answering machine messages. Ready to explode. Or weep. Or both.

Artie notes the hesitation.

ARTIE (cont'd)

John?

Cramer closes the door.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Have a seat.

CRAMER
I'd rather stand.

ARTIE
Okay...

He begins the windup. Whatever is coming, it ain't good.

ARTIE (cont'd)
John...

CRAMER
Don't say it.

ARTIE
Don't say what?

CRAMER
Whatever it is that needs me to close the door and be sitting when you tell me. Just don't say it.

ARTIE
John, there's certain realities to the insurance business...

CRAMER
I know all about the realities of the insurance business. I am intimately familiar with the realities of the insurance business...

ARTIE
You're not making this easy.

CRAMER
Am I supposed to? I'm not carrying my weight? I'm letting the team down? What stupid analogy are you going to make before you cut me lose?

ARTIE
Nobody said anything about...

CRAMER
But that's where this is going, right? Listen to me. I can't...

(MORE)

CRAMER (cont'd)

What do you say when your whole life hangs in the balance? What stupid sports analogy applies? It's third and long? Ninth inning and a full count.

ARTIE

John, it's just a job. Your life doesn't hang in the balance.

CRAMER

But you see, it does. I need this job. I'm trying to buy a house. For my kids...

He stops.

ARTIE

(sympathetic)

I know you're having some personal problems.

Cramer LAUGHS. The understatement strikes him as outrageously funny.

CRAMER

Which personal problem are you referring to, Artie? The dissolution of my marriage? The fact that my soon-to-be ex-wife is taking my sons to Portland Fucking Oregon?

ARTIE

John...

CRAMER

Listen to me. I have given up hope of saving my marriage. I have given up hope of ever being anything more than an insurance salesman. But I need this job. I will do anything you ask. From this day forward, I will devote myself to insurance. But do not cut me loose. Just don't do it.

John Cramer's naked honesty is a terrifying and beautiful spectacle.

He plays his last card.

CRAMER (cont'd)

Artie, I saved your brother...

Artie Crenshaw stares at him, weighing something in his heart.

Something heavier than a mountain of twisted concrete.

ARTIE

You don't think I remember? There's an enormous pile of rubble on CNN that used to be a Marine barracks. I know my baby brother is in Beirut and I'm hoping that he isn't underneath. But somehow, I know he is. So I get down on my knees and pray to God Almighty that someone will get him out. And you did.

CRAMER

I'm sorry. I didn't want to...

ARTIE

It's okay.

Artie makes a decision.

ARTIE (cont'd)

The company can go fuck itself. You go back to work.

Cramer almost collapses with relief.

ARTIE (cont'd)

But John... get it together. Or next time it'll be both our asses.

CRAMER

Thank you.

He can't get it out. He can't articulate that much gratitude.

ARTIE

Just get it together.

INT. TAXI -- DAY

Cramer stares out the window as a SULLEN RUSSIAN IMMIGRANT drives him downtown.

WILL AKINS (VO)

(phone filter)

Hi, Will Akins.

CRAMER (VO)

This is John Cramer.

WILL AKINS (VO)

Oh... Listen, Mr. Cramer we've got a problem.

CRAMER (VO)

I know. I know that. How can we fix it?

WILL AKINS (VO)

I'm going to need you to come down to the branch at six o'clock. Mr. Gates, the loan manager, wants to speak to you personally. There's been some kind of problem with your credit file.

CRAMER (VO)

...I'll be there. Six o'clock.

Cramer looks down. The Power of Attorney is next to him on the seat.

INT. DELANO'S OFFICE -- DAY

Michelle walks through the door with a file folder under her arm. She looks nervous.

Delano's VOICE can be heard down the hall.

Michelle crosses to Delano's desk and opens the top drawer. Takes out a small RING OF KEYS on a sterling silver chain.

Glancing at the door, Michelle crosses to Delano's personal file cabinet.

The cabinet is locked. Michelle tries several keys on the ring before one fits.

Pulling open a drawer, Michelle begins flipping through the folders.

Delano's VOICE can be heard COMING CLOSER.

Finding the FILE she's looking for, Michelle slips it inside the file folder she brought with her. Closes the drawer and locks it.

She drops the key ring into Delano's desk and slides the drawer shut just as Delano comes through the door.

Delano looks at her.

DELANO

What's going on?

MICHELLE

(slowly)

The Prescott deposition...

DELANO
Yes?

MICHELLE
(trying to sound casual)
You forgot to sign it.

She crosses to Delano and presents him with the file folder under her arm. Delano flips it open.

The stolen file is hidden under the DOCUMENT Delano is signing. He jots his name without noticing.

DELANO
Where are you going, now?

MICHELLE
Lunch.

Michelle walks out, trying to hide her wobbly legs.

INT. ARNELL, UPSHAW AND DELANO -- DAY

Michelle grabs her coat. Slips the stolen file into her bag.

As she walks to the door, THE CAMERA HOLDS on DIANE'S EMPTY DESK.

INT. 40 BROAD STREET LOBBY -- DAY

Cramer stands at the lobby security desk. Confronted by a SECURITY GUARD with pig eyes and a matching disposition.

CRAMER
You don't understand. I have to deliver this personally.

SECURITY GUARD
I do understand. All deliveries must be left in the lobby.

CRAMER
This is personal.

SECURITY GUARD
A personal delivery.

Cramer struggles to control his temper.

CRAMER
Just pick up the Goddamn phone and call... please. Gavin Varick. It's very important.

INT. ELEVATOR -- DAY

The elevator is packed with the lunchtime exodus. Michelle is wedged in the back.

INT. ARNELL, UPSHAW AND DELANO -- DAY

The PHONE RINGS at Diane's empty desk. It keeps on RINGING.

INT. 40 BROAD STREET LOBBY -- DAY

The Guard hangs up. His pig lips twist into a smirk.

SECURITY GUARD

No answer.

Cramer grinds his teeth. Steals a glance at the elevator bank across the lobby.

The Security Guard stares at Cramer. Silently daring him to try. Aching to use his nightstick.

As Cramer considers making a dash for the elevator bank, one of the elevators opens and spills its contents into the Deco expanse of the lobby.

Michelle is carried along by the crowd, tugging on her coat.

She doesn't see John Cramer at the security desk. But he sees her. Watches her walk out into the rain.

He blinks.

Replaying something in his head:

EXT. CENTRE AND WHITE STREET -- FLASHBACK

Michelle staggers from Varick's car. Her hair matted by the rain. Wet blouse sticking to her skin.

EXT. 40 BROAD STREET -- DAY

Cramer rushes out the front door. Scanning the lunchtime crowd for Michelle.

Catches a glimpse of her down the block.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

Michelle walks down the rain-slicked sidewalk, completely unaware that John Cramer is behind her.

EXT. SEAPORT BEST WESTERN -- DAY

Eight blocks north of Wall Street, a few eighteenth-century buildings cluster in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Cobblestone streets. Briny drafts from the nearby Fish Market. A perfect spot for a rendezvous.

The yellow Best Western sign is the only thing that distinguishes the weathered brick building from its neighbors.

Michelle enters.

Cramer pulls up across the street. Not sure of what he's doing. Not sure of where Michelle's going.

But something tells him to keep watching.

INT. BEST WESTERN COCKTAIL LOUNGE -- DAY

Varick sits at a corner table in the bar. Papers and spread sheets cover the table top.

He looks up to see a nervous looking Michelle.

VARICK

Did you get it?

She nods.

VARICK (cont'd)

Come on. I got us a room.

He gathers up his papers.

EXT. SEAPORT BEST WESTERN -- DAY

Cramer at a pay phone down the street. He dials.

CRAMER

(into phone)

It's Cramer from sales. Could I speak to Customer Data?

INTERCUT -- GAICON CUSTOMER DATA DEPARTMENT -- DAY

DWAYNE ROBERTS picks up the phone. Plump and balding. He sits in a small room dominated by a computer work station and a POSTER for the New York Philharmonic.

CLASSICAL MUSIC plays from a shitty transistor radio.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

Data.

CRAMER

Hi, it's Cramer from sales. I need a risk profile on an applicant. It's kind of a rush job.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

How rushed?

CRAMER

Could you do it now?

Roberts looks at a clock on the wall. He's late for lunch.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

Is it important?

CRAMER

Life or death.

Roberts SIGHS.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

Name?

CRAMER

Last name Varick. V-A-R-I-C-K. First name Gavin.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

Social?

Cramer flips through the Power of Attorney file. Searching the various documents.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

(cont'd)

(impatient)

Social?

Cramer finds it.

CRAMER

088-11-9235.

Roberts types in the information. Waits while the computer processes the request.

CLOSE ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

NATIONAL INSURERS DATA BANK flashes from a baby blue background.

Roberts double clicks on an icon that reads CUSTOMER/CROSS REFERENCE

PASSWORD? blinks at him.

Roberts types in his code. Waits.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

Okay. What do you want?

Cramer SHIVERS in the rain. Tries to think. Not sure where he's going with this.

CRAMER

Marital status?

Roberts scrolls down the screen.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

Married. No children...

Something on the screen catches his eye.

ROBERT

No shit...

CRAMER

What?

DWAYNE ROBERTS

His wife's name is Cynthia Delano.

CRAMER

Who's that?

DWAYNE ROBERTS

I don't know if it's the same person, but Cynthia Delano is a patron of the Philharmonic. Big society type.

Cramer blinks.

EXT. FDR DRIVE -- FLASHBACK

Varick gets out of his car. Still on his cellular phone.

VARICK

Say it. Say "I'll be in your office at four-thirty."... Don't be late.

He clicks off the phone. Throws it back into his car.

END FLASHBACK -- RESUME INTERCUT

Cramer gets an idea.

CRAMER

How about cellular phones?

DWAYNE ROBERTS

What about them?

CRAMER

Does he have an account somewhere?

DWAYNE ROBERTS

This isn't going to have phone records.

CRAMER

But you'd have a record of his cellular contract. That's like a credit account, right?

Roberts is annoyed by the fact that Cramer is right. He scrolls down the screen.

DWAYNE ROBERTS

(cont'd)

He leases from AT&T Mobile Services. Is that it?

CRAMER

(quietly)

Yeah. That's it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

A musty little room done up in colonial style. Rain slides down multi-paned windows.

MICHELLE

We need to talk.

Varick takes the stolen file from her hand. Immediately begins reading.

MICHELLE (cont'd)

I'm not comfortable with stealing.

VARICK

Are you comfortable with me going to jail?

MICHELLE

What am I stealing, anyway?

VARICK

Delano's personal brokerage statement. It's going to show a series of deposits that coincide with withdrawals from the Rockwell account. And withdrawals just prior to the Rockwell audit.

MICHELLE

I don't like this. And I don't like your enthusiasm for it.

Varick looks up from the file. Realizes Michelle is serious. Conspicuously puts the file down.

VARICK

I have something for you.

He crosses the room and pulls the one thing from his briefcase guaranteed to end conversation:

A ring box.

He opens it. Inside is a COCKTAIL RING crusted with tiny diamonds and sapphires.

VARICK

(softly)

I thought the sapphires would match your eyes.

MICHELLE

You bought a...

VARICK

See if it fits.

He slides it onto the ring finger of her left hand.

MICHELLE

You didn't... Does this mean...

She can't say it. She is completely overcome with emotion.

VARICK

It means that after today, I will be with
the one person I truly love. It means
that someday soon...

She covers his mouth with hers and the conversation ends.

They fall onto the bed and make love.

EXT. SEAPORT BEST WESTERN -- DAY

Cramer on the pay phone. Drops another quarter.

OPERATOR

(phone filter)

AT&T Mobile. This is Karen.

CRAMER

Hi. I think my cellular phone has been
stolen. Is it possible you can tell me
the location the last call was placed
from?

Down the block, the Best Western sign leaks yellow into the
rainy afternoon.

INT. AT&T MOBILE SERVICES -- DAY

KAREN is a pretty brunette wearing a headset.

KAREN

One moment, Mr?...

CRAMER

(phone filter)

Varick.

EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER -- DAY

Mounted on the top of the tallest building in Manhattan is an
array of cellular transmitters.

By triangulating between these transmitters and ...

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE -- DAY

The transmitters here and ...

EXT. CENTER AND WHITE STREETS -- DAY

The transmitters mounted on surrounding buildings. It is
possible to find Gavin Varick's cellular phone...

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

Sitting on the nightstand next to the bed where he makes love to Michelle Ortiz.

The blinking green service light pulses hypnotically.

EXT. SEAPORT BEST WESTERN -- DAY

Cramer on the pay phone. Listening.

CRAMER

(into phone)

Really? I must've left it in the room.
False alarm. Thanks anyway...

Cramer hangs up.

He's soaking wet. And what he should do is go back to 40 Broad Street and give up the Power of Attorney.

But standing in the pouring rain, he loses sight of what he should do.

OFF DUTY COP (VO)

Get your car off the road, asshole!

JUDGE COSELL (VO)

You are late! You have no representation!
Your motion for joint custody has already
been denied.

WILL AKINS (VO)

(phone filter)

Mr. Cramer, this is Will Akins at the
FirstAmerica mortgage department...

John Cramer picks up the phone again.

INT. NEW YORK POST NEWS ROOM -- DAY

AN ASSISTANT answers the phone. Cute. Blond hair in a page boy cut.

ASSISTANT

(into phone)

Page Six. Can I help you?

She listens for a moment.

ASSISTANT

(cont'd)

Is this for real?

INT. DONNA JAMES' OFFICE -- DAY

Two open cans of Diet Coke on her desk and a pile of butts in the ash tray.

The Assistant sticks her head in the office.

ASSISTANT

How are we on philandering husbands?

DONNA JAMES, the New York Post "lifestyle columnist", is pounding away on her keyboard.

DONNA JAMES

Ours or other peoples'?

ASSISTANT

Other peoples'.

DONNA JAMES

Rock stars are good. Movie stars are better.

ASSISTANT

How about Wall Street big shots?

Donna stops typing.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Michelle sits on the side of the bed. Holds her new ring up to the light.

MICHELLE

(tentatively)

You going back to the office?

VARICK

I'm going to stay here and finish up.

MICHELLE

Isn't it dangerous to stay away? I mean, considering...

Varick shakes his head.

VARICK

I want to make Delano nervous. Might keep him honest.

He picks up his pager from the nightstand. Looks at it.

VARICK (cont'd)

Diane never paged me. As soon as you get back, call me on the mobile and let me know if that guy dropped off the power of attorney.

Michelle looks at him curiously.

MICHELLE

The guy from the accident?

VARICK

Yeah.

MICHELLE

I thought you didn't know where to find him.

Varick takes his time fixing his tie. Stalling. Finally looks at her.

VARICK (cont'd)

Come on. I'll walk you down.

EXT. SEAPORT BEST WESTERN -- DAY

Varick opens the door for Michelle. It's still raining. She pulls her jacket tighter and turns to face him.

MICHELLE

See you.

VARICK

Know what I'd like to do? Kiss you goodbye. Right in front of God and everybody...

The FLASHBULB goes off as he leans in toward her lips. The rain forms a strange filter. As if each drop were reflecting the flash individually.

The FLASH goes off again.

The PAPARAZZI has greasy, black hair poking out from under a yellow rain hat. He steps closer with each shot.

Michelle and Varick freeze like the proverbial deer. Taken completely unawares. The FLASH goes off again.

Varick recovers.

VARICK (cont'd)
Right now, I'll give you a thousand
dollars for those photos...

Varick walks toward the Paparazzi. With each step the
photographer steps backwards and takes another photo.

VARICK (cont'd)
A thousand dollars. Gimme that camera!

The Paparazzi breaks into a RUN. Varick right behind him

EXT. COBBLESTONE STREET -- DAY

The chase lasts for half a block. The Paparazzi reaches his
Honda Tercel and locks himself inside.

Varick tries to block the car from pulling into the street
but the photographer DRIVES OVER THE CURB and around him.

Varick stands in the rain and watches the Tercel's RED TAIL
LIGHTS disappear in the distance.

EXT. SEAPORT BEST WESTERN -- DAY

Varick reappears, soaked to the skin. Michelle hasn't moved
an inch. Rooted to the spot.

VARICK
Listen...

MICHELLE
Oh, my God.

VARICK
Calm down.

MICHELLE
I'm fired. That's it. No job. No health
insurance. I'm fired.

VARICK
You're not fired. I'll take care of this.

MICHELLE
You'll take care of this? Don't you think
you've got your hands full?

Varick grabs her. Roughly.

VARICK

Listen to me! You get it together and go back to the office and act like nothing happened. And you call me about the power of attorney. Understand?

He has her by both arms. He stares deeply into her eyes. And shows her a side of himself that is frightening to behold.

MICHELLE

Yes.

She starts walking toward the office. Her steps are a little uneasy.

Halfway down the block, Michelle turns and looks back.

Varick is already gone.

INT. CRAMER'S APARTMENT -- LATER

The PHONE RINGS.

Keys RATTLE in the door as Cramer struggles to get inside before he misses the call.

The door swings open as the answering machine PICKS UP.

ANSWERING MACHINE

(filter)

This is John Cramer. Please leave a message.

Cramer reaches the phone. Picks up.

CRAMER

(into phone)

Wait a minute...

He moves to shut the machine off.

VARICK

(phone filter)

All you had to do was give back the file.

Cramer freezes. Doesn't touch the answering machine. The tape keeps turning.

INTERCUT -- INT. MEN'S ROOM -- DAY

Varick is on his cellular phone. He's standing in a institutional-looking bathroom. Lots of off-white tiles.

VARICK

You could've fixed the credit thing in a few days. A week, tops. But you had to be a tough guy.

CRAMER

My childrens' custody hearing was this morning. You made me late. You know what that means?

VARICK

(interrupting)

I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN!

Silence.

VARICK (CONT'D)

You have until five o'clock to return my file. After five it loses all value to me. Because if I don't get that file by five o'clock, I'm going to prison and I promise you, my last act as a free man will be to make sure you never see your children again.

CRAMER

Listen to me...

VARICK

(interrupting)

No, you listen to me. You little nobody.

Varick spits the words into his phone. Choking on his own arrogant fury.

CRAMER

I read your letter. You've been stealing from you clients.

VARICK

I haven't been stealing from my clients, you idiot. My boss has. Whose daughter, my wife, I am leaving as soon as I make the million dollar bonus that will come to me when I fuck one of my best friends in the world by selling him thirty-two million dollars of influence I do not posses. Do you understand? You're nothing. You are a fucking ant swimming in an ocean of shit. And I am the tidal wave that will drown your ass if I don't get that file by five o'clock.

CRAMER

If you come near my children, I'll kill you! You hear me? I'll KILL YOU!

VARICK

I'm shaking all over. Five o'clock. Or I pull the plug on your miserable little life.

Varick DISCONNECTS and walks out of the bathroom.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES -- DAY

Varick steps into a reception area. The walls are decorated with CHILDRENS' DRAWINGS of dinosaurs and space men.

Varick pockets his cell phone. Smiles at MARCY, the pretty receptionist.

On the wall behind Marcy's head, the sign reads FAMILY COURT.

RECEPTIONIST

Judge Cosell will see you now, Gavin.

VARICK

Thanks, Marcy.

INT. CRAMER'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The veins in Cramer's neck bulge unnaturally. He moves toward the kitchen.

Behind him, the tape in his answering machine STOPS ROLLING. The machine shuts off with a mechanical CLICK.

The MESSAGE WAITING LIGHT blinks the number ONE.

TRACK OVER to the fireplace mantel.

The plaques are ornate, covered with gold seals and military insignia. The inscriptions begin: "For meritorious service beyond the call of duty..."

Between them rests a velvet field. Pinned to the field is a SILVER STAR.

TRACK ACROSS the room to an open cardboard box.

ANGLE ON THE OPEN BOX

Mementos. Cramer's dress uniform, carefully folded to reveal rows of service ribbons.

And a Government Model Colt .45.

INT. CRAMER'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Cramer finds a phone book.

Flipping through the pages, he comes to the Auto Repair section.

Scanning through the advertisements he finds only two licensed BMW service dealers.

One is on the Upper East Side.

The other ad reads "PROUDLY SERVING WALL STREET SINCE 1972."

INT. JUDGE COSELL'S CHAMBERS -- DAY

Varick sits across from Judge Cosell, the judge from the Cramers' custody hearing. A cigar SMOLDERS in a heavy crystal ashtray.

JUDGE COSELL

You can get those?

VARICK

Felix has a guy who brings them down from Canada.

JUDGE COSELL

They've got to be goddawful expensive.

VARICK

Perquisite of the job.

The Judge takes a puff on his cigar.

JUDGE COSELL

Must be nice.

Varick glances around the Cosell's chambers. Notes the municipal furnishings. The threadbare carpet.

VARICK

Ever consider returning to private practice?

Cosell considers Varick down the length of his cigar. Puffs.

JUDGE COSELL

Why do you ask?

VARICK

Felix has been looking at taking a new partner at the firm. He wants to devote more time to charity.

They both CHUCKLE at the suggestion. The Judge stops laughing first.

JUDGE COSELL

I thought you were next in line.

Varick is all modesty.

VARICK

I'm just the son-in-law. Felix likes his partners with a few wrinkles.

JUDGE COSELL

You don't mind?

VARICK

Not at all. I'll get my turn.

Another puff on the stogie.

JUDGE COSELL

I can't say that isn't tempting.

VARICK

Why don't you let me set up a lunch?

JUDGE COSELL

Maybe you should. That would only leave me with one question...

VARICK

What's that?

The kindly old country judge vanishes from Cosell's face. Replaced by something carnivorous.

Like a lawyer.

Which is what Judges are, after all.

JUDGE COSELL

What's in it for you?

Varick smiles.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES -- DAY

The intercom BUZZES. Marcy picks up.

JUDGE COSELL (VO)
(filter)
Bring in the Cramer file...

INT. BMW SERVICE OFFICE -- DAY

The Service Manager picks up the phone. Through a WIDE PICTURE WINDOW, we can see several BMW's in the garage.

SERVICE MANAGER
(annoyed)
Who are you holding for?

INTERCUT -- INT. CRAMER'S APT. -- DAY

CRAMER
The service manager.

SERVICE MANAGER
Speaking.

CRAMER
Hi, my name is Chad. I'm Gavin Varick's personal assistant. I'm calling to make sure you bill him personally for his car repairs and not the firm. They're sticklers for that kind of thing.

SERVICE MANAGER
The guy with the busted windscreen?

CRAMER
Exactly.

SERVICE MANAGER
I have no idea where the bill is going.

CRAMER
I know it's a pain but we need to verify the exact address so there's no confusion.

The Manager SIGHS. More rich assholes and their assistants.

SERVICE MANAGER
Hold on.

He pulls a pile of invoices across his desk and begins to leaf through them.

SERVICE MANAGER
(slightly
suspicious)
Who'd you say you were?

CRAMER
Mr. Varick's assistant. If it helps you
any, his home phone is...

Cramer turns the Caller I.D. Box towards him so he can read
it. Hits the recall button to show Varick's number.

CRAMER (cont'd)
...555-2626.

SERVICE MANAGER
(satisfied)
Okay. 250 Vesey Street. Battery Park
City.

Cramer writes down the address.

CRAMER
Thank you. You've been very helpful.

He hangs up.

EXT. 250 VESEY STREET -- DAY

Varick pulls his rental car into the underground parking
garage beneath his apartment building.

INT. DELANO APARTMENT -- DAY

Varick walks through the door carrying a stack of file
folders.

The apartment is a vast expanse of space, randomly dotted
with objets d'art. One entire wall is a picture window,
giving a panoramic view of the rain-soaked harbor.

Silhouetted against the grey light of the window is CYNTHIA
DELANO.

Speaking into a cordless phone, she is a beautiful woman. But
her face looks older than it should. She was born to age
gracefully. And is doing so too soon.

CYNTHIA
(into phone)
Gotta go. The man of the house just came
home...

She clicks off.

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
You're home early. Get fired?

She follows Gavin with her eyes as he crosses through the living room and disappears.

Gavin reappears without the stack of folders. She notes his dishevelled hair and rumpled suit.

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
You're all wet.

Varick strips off his coat.

VARICK
It's raining.

He strips off his shirt.

CYNTHIA
Doesn't Felix have a big thing today?
Shouldn't you be holding his coat or something?

Varick drops his pants. Dressed only in a pair of athletic briefs, he begins gathering his clothes from the living room floor.

VARICK
Felix has a big thing because I brought it to him.

CYNTHIA
(surprised)
You brought it to him?

Varick is gone before she can continue. Her words hang in the empty space like another piece of decor.

Something is different in her husband. And Cynthia Varick can feel it.

Gavin reappears in a terrycloth robe.

VARICK
I'm taking a shower. If the office calls, tell them I'm on my way back.

CYNTHIA
Since when do you bring in big deals?

VARICK

Maybe I'm becoming the success you always hoped I'd be.

CYNTHIA

I always hoped you'd be happy.

VARICK

And rich. You forgot the "and rich" part.

He turns and starts toward the next room.

CYNTHIA

Listen to the working class hero. Crying into his imported beer.

Varick stops.

VARICK

You know what your problem is? You think I'm Tarzan or something. The noble savage from the outer boro who sneaks into the Great White Hunter's camp and steals his daughter back to Brooklyn. But the reality is: you'd last about seven minutes on 86th Street until the B Train came rumbling by and all the coffee cups vibrated onto the kitchen floor.

Varick walks toward his wife. Cynthia Varick takes half a step backwards.

CYNTHIA

It's a little late to play the innocent led astray.

Varick is on top of her now. She backs up against the glass.

VARICK

Is it?

CYNTHIA

Take off the Rolex and ask me again.

VARICK

You sound disappointed.

He's standing very close to her now. She looks into his eyes.

CYNTHIA

I am.

VARICK
Are we being honest, now?

CYNTHIA
Looks that way.

VARICK
Why me?

The question comes from someplace in their past.

VARICK (cont'd)
You've got this mausoleum decorated
within an inch of its life. Everything
fits. Except me.

CYNTHIA
Dining hall of NYU Law School. First time
I saw you. The Harvard graduate next to
me said he was starving. But you were the
only one in the room who had ever been
hungry...

Silently, Varick accepts the compliment.

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
What about me?

She asks slowly. Afraid of the answer.

VARICK
Dining hall at NYU. I was working some
formal thing. You wore a white silk
dress. You had the palest skin I had ever
seen. I couldn't tell where the dress
ended and you began. And you made your
date take you home because you didn't
want me waiting on you.

CYNTHIA
(whispering)
You don't have to leave.

Gavin Varick looks into his wife's eyes. Across the distance
between hope and reality.

VARICK
(sadly)
Yeah. I do.

INT. HARDWARE STORE -- DAY

FYODER PETROVSKY is bent over a lathe making a set of keys. He looks up to see John Cramer standing at the counter.

PETROVSKY

(Russian accent)

Can I help you?

CRAMER

Do you make nametags?

EXT. HARDWARE STORE -- DAY

Cramer slides his tie from around his neck. Considers it for a moment before dropping it in a garbage can.

HOLD ON THE TIE as Cramer disappears down the street.

INT. 250 VESEY STREET PARKING GARAGE -- DAY

The ATTENDANT in the security booth is buried in the sports section of the Daily News.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)

I'm from Hertz. Here to check out a problem with a rental car. Renter's name is Gavin Varick.

The Attendant lowers the paper.

John Cramer is standing in the door. His jacket is folded over his arm and he wears a nametag pinned to his shirt that reads "VIC."

ATTENDANT

Since when do you guys make house calls?

CRAMER

He's a preferred customer.

The Attendant considers Cramer. Sees a respectable looking white man in a dress shirt and nametag.

ATTENDANT

Level B. Slot 40.

CRAMER

Thanks. You got a socket wrench?

The Attendant looks at him. Reaches into a drawer and produces the wrench. Hands it to Cramer.

ATTENDANT

Make sure I get that back.

Cramer heads down the ramp. The Attendant calls after him.

ATTENDANT

What happened to his Beamer?

INT. ELEVATOR -- DAY

Varick kneels down to tie his shoe as the elevator descends to the garage level.

He stands up as the door slides open.

INT. 250 VESEY PARKING GARAGE -- DAY

John Cramer SLAPS the hub cap of Varick's rental car back in place as the sound of a DOOR SLAMMING echoes through the parking garage.

FOOTSTEPS become audible. Heading his way.

With the FOOTSTEPS on top of him, Cramer ROLLS underneath the neighboring car.

Gavin Varick appears. Unlocks the rental car and climbs in.

Turns over the ignition and pulls away.

Cramer rolls out from under the neighboring car and watches Varick disappear up the ramp.

CLOSE IN on Varick's empty parking spot. A LUG NUT lays on the concrete floor.

INT. VARICK'S RENTAL CAR -- DAY

Varick pulls onto the street. The road is jammed with early afternoon traffic and his forward progress comes to a immediate stop.

Gavin curses and cuts the steering wheel hard.

INSIDE THE FRONT HUBCAP

All of the nuts have been removed from Varick's front wheel. Only the weight of the car keeps the tire from spinning off.

As Varick cranks the steering wheel to get into the next lane, the tire begins to work its way off the car.

INT. VARICK'S RENTAL CAR -- DAY

His cellular phone RINGS.

VARICK
(into phone)

Varick. Hiyah Charlie. What? That's a dirty lie. The Rockwells gave me a complete vote of confidence. Says who? Charlie... Charlie... think about it. How long you know me? Has there ever been even a whiff of... I completely understand your position, but it's just not true and frankly I'm offended you would even listen to that kind of shit. No, seriously, I thought we were friends. I'll see you at four-thirty. Fine. Five o'clock.

He clicks off. Two seconds later it RINGS AGAIN.

Varick stares at the phone for a moment before he picks up.

VARICK
(tentatively)
Hello?

INTERCUT -- ARNELL, UPSHAW & DELANO -- DAY

It's Michelle.

MICHELLE
(quietly)
Where are you?

VARICK
What? Speak up.

MICHELLE
I can't. There's a guy here from the District Attorney's Office.

The car in front of him slows. Varick doesn't notice. At the last moment, he SLAMS ON THE BRAKES, barely avoiding a collision.

INSIDE THE HUBCAP

The torque of slamming on the brakes loosens the wheel even further.

CONTINUE INTERCUT

VARICK
What's he saying?

Michelle leans over the phone. In the B.G. we can see a
THIRTYISH WASP in a gray suit talking to Diane.

MICHELLE
Nothing. That's the weird thing.
Supposedly, he's some friend of Diane's
from college. But he picks today to
visit?

VARICK
Don't do anything. Just ignore him.

MICHELLE
Should I try and talk to Diane?

VARICK
(angry)
Don't talk to anyone. You're a secretary.
Type something.

Michelle freezes. For the second time, she hears a side of
Varick she hoped didn't exist.

VARICK (cont'd)
What about Delano?

It takes Michelle a moment to answer.

MICHELLE
He asked where you were.

VARICK
I'm on my way back.

MICHELLE
You really should be here.

VARICK
I'm said, I'm. on. my. way.

Varick hangs up on her.

INT. ARNELL, UPSHAW, DELANO -- DAY

Delano sticks his head out his office door. Notes the Wasp
from the D.A.'s office talking to Diane.

Fixes a burning gaze on Michelle.

INT./EXT. VARICK'S RENTAL CAR -- DAY

Varick cuts off a STATION WAGON full of Hasidic Jews and TWO DELIVERY VANS but he makes it into the clear.

He accelerates. The SPEEDOMETER climbs toward fifty as Varick passes the Battery Tunnel and rounds the tip of Manhattan.

INSIDE THE HUBCAP

The tire has worked itself halfway off the car. With every turn of the steering wheel the tire gets millimeters closer to coming off.

INT./EXT. VARICK'S RENTAL CAR -- DAY

The BLARE OF A CAR HORN erupts behind him.

Varick turns his head to see one of the Delivery Vans he cut off pulling up in the next lane.

A very angry PUERTO RICAN DELIVERY MAN leans out the window and starts YELLING in Spanish.

VARICK

(to himself)

Jesus Christ, I don't have time for this!

The Van starts to edge into Varick's lane. Varick rolls down the window.

VARICK (cont'd)

(out the window)

All right. I'm sorry. I apologize.

Nothing. The Delivery Man continues his harangue in Espaniol.

The Van gets further into Varick's lane. Forcing him toward the guardrail.

VARICK (cont'd)

I said I'm sorry. Stop fucking around.

The Van is almost all the way into his lane.

The two vehicles are side by side, ROARING towards a line of cars waiting to exit onto the Brooklyn Bridge.

VARICK (cont'd)

(yelling)

Stop fucking around, you stupid greaseball!

The Delivery Man is halfway out his window. The bandana on his head MADLY WHIPPING in the wind.

He HURLS a half-empty beer can at Varick's car and yells the one universally understood English phrase...

DELIVERY MAN

Fuuuck Youuu!

VARICK

You spic motherfu...

The can of Bud HITS Varick's windshield at precisely the same moment his FRONT TIRE COMES OFF.

EXT. FDR DRIVE -- DAY

The metal rim of Varick's front axle HITS PAVEMENT as his front tire FLIES OFF the car and BOUNCES into the Southbound lanes of the FDR.

The Rental Car PIVOTS NINETY DEGREES at fifty miles per hour.

WHIPPING AROUND, the rear end of Varick's car SLAMS INTO the Delivery Van and TORQUES it into the opposite guardrail.

The Delivery Man, already half out the driver's window, is THROWN clear of the van and LANDS thirty feet down the road.

Varick's car continues to SPIN in a THREE HUNDRED SIXTY DEGREE ARC.

A late-model Lincoln Town Car SLAMS ON THE BRAKES to avoid hitting the overturned van and SLEWS SIDEWAYS. It is promptly BROADSIDED by THREE OTHER CARS.

MORE CARS CRASH INTO the growing pile of twisted metal until the Northbound FDR Drive is a solid mass of wrecked cars from guardrail to guardrail.

Varick's Car SLAMS into a lamp post and SNAPS IT OFF like a rotten pine. The airbags EXPLODE.

INT. VARICK'S RENTAL CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Both airbags deflate to reveal a stunned and bloody Gavin Varick.

Slowly, he unbuckles his seat belt. The driver door is jammed so he crawls across the front seat and rolls out the passenger side door.

EXT. FDR DRIVE -- DAY

Standing on unsteady legs, Varick surveys the carnage. A HORN PEELS from somewhere under the PILE OF CARS.

In the distance, the first SIREN becomes audible.

TAXI DRIVER (OS)
(heavy Indian accent)
Are you okay?

Varick turns toward the voice.

A SIKH TAXI DRIVER in full turban has stopped his cab on the Southbound side of the FDR. A GERMAN TOURIST COUPLE stares out of his backseat with concern.

TAXI DRIVER
(cont'd)
Mister. Are you okay?

Varick looks away without replying. Something up the highway catches his eye.

Across the guardrail, on the Southbound side of the FDR is a sign that reads: BROOKLYN BRIDGE/FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - NEXT EXIT.

He is less than a hundred yards from where he hit Cramer's car that morning.

He has come full circle.

Crawling back into the car, Varick gathers up his files.

With his belongings in his arms and BLOOD dripping from a NASTY CUT above his eye, Gavin Varick starts walking towards the off-ramp.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Cramer walks out of the rain.

In the corner, a TELEVISION silently plays the New York One news channel.

The WAITRESS is forty and blond. Used to be pretty.

CRAMER
Pay phone?

She jerks a thumb towards the back of the restaurant.

Cramer crosses to the pay phone. Drops a quarter and dials.

INTERCUT -- INT. VALERIE'S KITCHEN -- DAY

Valerie picks up.

VALERIE CRAMER

Hello?

CRAMER

(softly)

It's me.

VALERIE CRAMER

What happened to you? You just hung up on me.

CRAMER

I didn't hang up on you. It's... a long story.

VALERIE CRAMER

Are you alright?

CRAMER

I will be. You coming to the house?

There is a long pause.

VALERIE CRAMER

What's the address?

CRAMER

221 Ainsle. Between Lorimer and Union.

More silence.

VALERIE CRAMER

Alright. Give me a half hour. But John... don't get your hopes up.

She disconnects. Cramer starts to hang up.

CUSTOMER (OS)

Holy Shit. Look at that...

Something in the Man's voice makes Cramer turn around and look up at the television set.

ON THE TELEVISION

It's an overhead view of the FDR Drive from a helicopter:

WRECKED CARS. CASUALTIES being wheeled into ambulances. Red lights flashing from TWENTY EMERGENCY VEHICLES.

Someone TURNS THE SOUND ON.

NEWS ANCHOR

(television filter)

...amazingly there are no fatalities. But at least twelve people are on their way to area hospitals, including a vanload of senior citizens returning from Good Friday religious services. This Cab Driver saw it all...

They cut to footage of the Cab Driver who stopped to help Varick. A REPORTER thrusts a microphone in his face.

TAXI DRIVER

It was terrible. The front tire flew off the car and he crashed.

REPORTER

The tire came off before the accident?

TAXI DRIVER

Yes. Yes. It came over the guardrail and almost hit my cab. I stopped to ask the man if he was all right but he didn't answer...

REPORTER

What man?

TAXI DRIVER

The man whose tire came off. He looked very far away, you know, in the head...

REPORTER

The Driver of the car which initially crashed, apparently after losing a wheel, has not been located. Meanwhile, the police have launched an investigation into why the wheel came off in the first place. Back to you, Kelsey.

All the color drains from Cramer's face.

The television cuts to the NEWS ANCHOR, his face contorted with the appropriate simulation of concern.

The Anchorman's lips move but all Cramer can hear is the sound of SCREECHING TIRES and the SICKENING CRUNCH of a car IMPACTING against a lamp post.

EXT. DIVISION STREET -- DAY

Gavin Varick wanders down a side street. Hundred-year-old tenement buildings rise on either side of him.

The street is filled with BUSTLING CHINESE. They flow around Varick like a rock in a stream.

Varick's legs start to SHAKE. He drops to a seat on an impressive flight of steps.

Clutching the file folders to his chest, Varick absorbs his surroundings.

His eyes wander from building to building. From face to face.

TWO TEENAGE GIRLS walk by. Beautiful round faces and almond skin. GIGGLING in Cantonese about a handsome YOUNG MAN standing across the street.

Aware of their attention, he smokes his cigarette with exaggerated cool.

One of the Girls notices Varick. Seeing his condition, she grabs her friend's arm and hurries down the street.

The Young Man shoots Varick a dirty look for scaring off his admirers. Then, he notices the blood running down Varick's face.

He disappears inside a Chinese restaurant.

AN OLD MAN comes down the stairs behind Varick.

He begins to speak in harsh CHINESE DIALECT. Gesturing angrily with his hands, he makes it clear that he wants Varick off the stairs.

Varick turns and looks up.

He's sitting on the steps of a Catholic Church.

INT. ST. VINCENT'S CHURCH -- DAY

Varick steps into the vast darkness of the church.

The walls are lined with PLASTER SAINTS. Their life-like faces contorted with the agony of martyrdom.

A FEW PARISHIONERS are scattered about the pews but their presence only amplifies the emptiness of the huge church.

As his eyes adjust to the darkness, Varick realizes a PRIEST is on the alter. Saying Mass to an empty church.

Varick slumps into a pew close to the alter.

The few Parishioners are elderly Chinese. From their careful scrutiny of the Priest, it is obvious that they cannot understand his English.

Conditioned by universal Catholic ritual, they are waiting for the sign they can approach the alter for Communion.

The time comes for the Veneration of the Cross. The Priest has no ushers or altar boys to assist him. He hefts a large wooden cross and struggles down the alter steps.

The Priest is old. Tired face and a PERSISTENT COUGH.

He stands at the base of the alter, shaking under the weight of the cross. But the Chinese parishioners don't understand the ritual. They stare at the elderly Priest in confusion.

No one moves from their pew.

Varick looks around. The Priest is clearly in difficulty now. But pride and religious devotion prevent him from setting down the cross.

SWEAT trickles down his face.

The cross dips closer to the floor.

Varick stands.

Stepping out of his pew, he walks down the center aisle toward the Priest.

Dredging up memories from his childhood, Varick kneels in veneration before the cross and brushes his lips against the wood.

The Priest smiles in relief.

As he does, a DROP OF BLOOD from the cut on Varick's face SPLATTERS on the cross.

As Varick rises to his feet, an alter light splashes across his face and the Priest sees his condition.

Varick awkwardly wipes the blood from the cross with the sleeve of his jacket.

Then he reaches out to hold the cross.

After a moments consideration, the exhausted Priest permits Varick to take the burden from him.

As Varick hefts the cross, the Chinese Parishioners finally understand. Rising from their pews, they shuffle towards the alter and begin to kneel.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

John Cramer walks aimlessly down a city street. Lost in the late afternoon crowd.

A FIRE TRUCK and TWO AMBULANCES roar past him, SIRENS WAILING. Maybe they're headed for the FDR Drive. Maybe not.

Either way, Cramer looks like someone kicked his heart down his throat.

A few random DROPS OF RAIN are followed by a CLAP OF THUNDER. It starts to rain again.

Cramer reaches the corner. A KOREAN MAN stands in front of a subway entrance, selling umbrellas.

KOREAN MAN

Umbrella. Three dollar. Three dollar.

Umbrella..

Cramer stares at the Man, trying to remember why his pitch sounds familiar.

A TAXI pulls up to the corner and a COUPLE piles out. Ignoring the rain bouncing off his own head, the Man extends his umbrella to shield his Wife.

She's beautiful and clean. Blond hair and loving smile for her husband. They join hands and walk down the street, LAUGHING at the rain.

The Cab IDLES on the corner. Door still open. Almost beckoning.

John Cramer gets into the Cab.

INT. ST. VINCENT'S CHURCH -- DAY

Varick watches the final Parishioner shuffle out. A CLAP OF THUNDER echoes through the open door.

The Priest finishes putting away his paraphernalia. He sinks onto the alter steps and lights a cigarette.

A HOLLOW COUGH shakes his body. Recovering, he sees Varick watching him.

PRIEST
The ceremony is over.

VARICK
I heard. "The mass has ended, go in peace..."

PRIEST
Is there a problem?

VARICK
The "go in peace" part.

The Priest nods. Draws on his cigarette.

VARICK
I've done some... questionable things.

PRIEST
What kind of things?

VARICK
Nothing I want to talk about.

PRIEST
Then there's not much I can do for you.

The Priest stares at Varick through a curl of cigarette smoke.

PRIEST
What's your name, son?

VARICK
I'd rather not say.

PRIEST
You'd rather not say. You know what day it is?

VARICK
I don't...

PRIEST
It's Good Friday, son. This time, two thousand years ago, they were marching Christ to the cross.

VARICK
Stop calling me, son.

PRIEST

What do you think? That the shock of hearing your confession will cause this old heart to stop? I've heard confessions in this church for fifty years. Three times I've heard men confess murder. I've heard adultery and incest. Rape and robbery. Infanticide. Petty larceny...

The Priest dissolves in a COUGHING FIT.

VARICK

Have another cigarette.

The Priest mops his lips with a handkerchief.

PRIEST

(quietly)

How dare you come into this place - on this day - and have the arrogance to think your sins have some special gravity. Sin is uniquely common.

Varick stands. He towers over the elderly Priest.

VARICK

Well, I'm not. I didn't come here to be lectured. I came for some compassion. For a little - yes, Goddamn it - a little sanctuary. But I guess that was too much to ask.

PRIEST

You didn't come here for compassion.

VARICK

(louder)

What ever happened to the Lord helps those who help themselves? What happened to...

PRIEST

You came here to convince yourself that what you've done, or what you're going to do is somehow acceptable. Which shows that you still have a conscience...

VARICK

I'm a little old for Sunday school, Father. I was stupid to come in here.

PRIEST

But having a conscience isn't the same as using it.

Varick storms down the aisle towards the exit. He turns.

VARICK

(loud)

Thanks for the pep talk, coach. Here's a little something for your trouble.

Throws some money on the ground. Turns and moves toward the door.

The Priest watches him go with wizened eyes.

Varick stops at the door and turns back again.

VARICK (cont'd)

(yelling)

I don't even believe in God!

PRIEST

(quietly)

The question isn't whether you believe in God...

Varick storms out the door. Rainy, afternoon light lances through the darkness of the church.

PRIEST (cont'd)

...but whether God believes in you.

EXT. ST. VINCENT'S CHURCH -- DAY

The Old Chinese Man is washing the church steps with garden hose. He eyes Varick.

VARICK

The fuck are you looking at?

EXT. DIVISION STREET -- DAY

Stepping onto the sidewalk, Varick sees a Sedan De Ville with Taxi & Limousine plates pull up to the restaurant across the street.

A young CHINESE in a Tachini sweat suit slides out of the back. Permed hair and lightly tinted sunglasses.

The STAFF of the restaurant is lined up outside to greet him. They hustle him inside.

The DRIVER of the livery cab is a hard-faced Chinese peasant wearing black wrap-around sunglasses. A filterless Chinese cigarette hangs from his lip.

INT. SEDAN DE VILLE -- DAY

Varick slides into the back of the car.

The Driver swivels his head and stares at Varick from behind impenetrable shades.

Varick reaches over the seat. His hand is full of money.

VARICK
Just drive.

The Driver puts the car in gear without saying a word.

EXT. CRAMER HOME -- DAY

The taxi pulls up to a house on a quiet, residential street. It looks just like the picture in the real estate brochure.

Cramer steps out of the cab.

VALERIE CRAMER
(OS)
I didn't think you were coming.

Valerie is sitting on the stoop.

She and her husband stare at each other for a long time.

After long consideration, she motions him to join her.

INT. SEDAN DE VILLE -- DAY

Varick picks up the car phone. Swipes his credit card and dials a number.

VARICK
(into phone)
Let me talk to Felix.

INTERCUT -- FELIX DELANO'S OFFICE -- DAY

A grandstand view of the New York Stock Exchange Building through huge windows. Delano picks up the phone.

DELANO
Where the hell are you?

VARICK

That's no way to talk to your partner.

DELANO

Since when are we partners? And why is Dennis Cosell calling me about lunch?

VARICK

Since I got a copy of your private brokerage statement. The one that shows where the money went.

That brings Delano up short. He glances over at his private file cabinet.

DELANO

Are you blackmailing me?

VARICK

If I take a fall, I'm landing on you.

DELANO

You're finished.

VARICK

I'm just getting warmed up. Levine is my guy. If I bite the bullet, AGC goes away and so does two percent of a billion-six. That gives you thirty-two million and one reasons to back my play.

Felix Delano hates to be fucked. But more than that, he would hate to lose thirty-two million dollars. And go to jail.

DELANO

I'm listening.

VARICK

I don't have the power of attorney. If I can't get it, we've got to keep the Rockwells from going to the cops.

DELANO

How do we do that?

VARICK

The Rockwells are trust fund babies. Very little liquidity. I bet they'd love a chance to make some fast cash in the market. Say, on a billion dollar cable merger no one else knows about.

DELANO
Will they go for it?

VARICK
George Rockwell is the Judas Goat. The others will follow his lead. But he's got a mean streak. The key is to make him think we're doing him a favor. If he smells blood, he'll ream you just to see the look on your face.

Delano evaluates the odds. Makes his choice.

DELANO
(through gritted teeth)
Don't be late.

INT. SEDAN DE VILLE -- DAY

Varick hangs up.

The Driver is watching him in the rear view mirror. Varick picks up a file folder from the back seat.

It's the Cramer's CONFIDENTIAL FILE from Judge Cosell's office.

Varick opens it. Scans down the page.

VARICK
Let's go to school.

EXT. CRAMER HOME -- DAY

Michael and Valerie on the front steps.

CRAMER
It was good to see the kids.

VALERIE
They were glad to see you.

CRAMER
Did you look inside?

VALERIE CRAMER
The real estate guy was here when I arrived. It's beautiful.

CRAMER
It's not beautiful. But it's yours. Yours and the kids.

Valerie takes a deep breath.

VALERIE
Do you know why I'm moving to Oregon?

CRAMER
To get away from an annoying ex-husband?

Valerie smiles.

VALERIE
No... I thought long and hard about
moving. Boys need a father figure.
Someone who can knock some sense into
their heads.

Cramer looks down.

CRAMER
(softly)
You have a father figure in Oregon?

The question takes Valerie by surprise.

VALERIE
No, no. Nothing like that.

CRAMER
Then why move?

VALERIE
Because either you move forward or you
stand still. And if you stand still...

She hesitates.

CRAMER
Go on.

VALERIE
You rot.

CRAMER
Like me.

VALERIE
I watched you poison yourself with
bitterness because your life had shined
for one brilliant moment and you didn't
know what to do for an encore. And as
much as those boys need a father, they
also need a future.

(MORE)

VALERIE (cont'd)

I refuse to stay here and mourn what could have been. I have to move on with my life. With our lives.

A cool breeze RUSTLES through the leaves in the front yard. The rain has paused and the sound is clean.

John Cramer looks out at the street.

CRAMER

I will never forget the sound of that truck.

Valerie stares at her husband.

CRAMER (cont'd)

You know, the sentries had no bullets in their rifles? Seven thousand miles from home - in the middle of a civil war - and the guys on the perimeter had no ammunition because the State Department was afraid of an incident.

A CAR passes slowly down the street.

CRAMER (cont'd)

So when the truck rolled through the roadblock there was nothing they could do. The Sergeant of the Guard was a big, black Lance Corporal from Alabama. Played tackle for the Tide. He... threw himself in front of the truck. I guess he was trying to get at the driver. But it looked like he was trying to tackle it...

He pauses.

CRAMER (cont'd)

Truck rolled over him like he wasn't even there. I was on the other side of the perimeter. I remember running towards the barracks... and not making it in time.

VALERIE

If you hadn't organized the first excavations when you did, a lot more lives would have been lost. Somewhere out there those men have lives because of you. They have families.

CRAMER

Unless they're divorced.

Valerie tightens.

CRAMER (cont'd)
Sorry. Cheap shot.

VALERIE
It's okay.

CRAMER
It wasn't until I got out, that I started to feel the weight of what I had done. But with every job that didn't work out. With every missed promotion. As we went bad, I kept looking back... And more and more it became this defining moment that I couldn't live up to. That I could never match again. And it's only now, after everything, that I remember the only thing I thought of as they pinned that medal on my chest... was you.

A TEAR rolls across Valerie's cheek.

CRAMER (cont'd)
I've had kind of a weird day. And, uh, I've done some things...

VALERIE
You have to stop beating yourself over the head.

CRAMER
I'm not talking about us. This is... well, maybe it is the same thing. At any rate, sitting here with you, I think I'm just going to let everything go for a while. I don't think I'm going to ride this train to the end.

VALERIE
I don't understand.

CRAMER
I think I'm just going to declare myself the winner and walk away.

Valerie misunderstands. She thinks Michael is referring to their divorce. She takes his hand in her own.

VALERIE
Sounds like a plan.

EXT. P.S. 162 -- DAY

The Sedan de Ville pulls up in front of a red brick elementary school.

Varick slides out of the back seat. He's cleaned the blood off his face.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE -- DAY

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND sits behind an institutional desk. A professional-looking black woman in her fifties.

She holds Varick's business card in her hand.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND
That's a nasty cut you've got.

VARICK
It's one of the reasons Mrs. Cramer asked me to see you.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND
(astonished)
John Cramer did that to you?

VARICK
Divorce is an ugly thing. Uglier when children are involved.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND
I met Mr. Cramer several times on parent/teacher nights. He struck me as a little high strung. But I never saw any signs of abuse.

On the wall over Principal Sugland's shoulder is a CALENDER from the North Brooklyn Womyn's Collective. A bare-breasted woman molding wet clay on a potter's wheel.

Varick's eyes fix on the calender.

VARICK
For some men... It isn't just losing their marriage. It's losing control over their wives. The children are a symbol of that.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND
What is it you want us to do, Mr. Varick?

VARICK

Be aware of the situation. Mrs. Cramer is moving out of state. She has a very real fear that her husband will try and kidnap Robby and Stephen. Under no circumstances does she give permission for her husband to remove the children from school. If he attempts to do so, call the police.

Principal Sugland holds up Varick's card.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

May I keep this?

Varick slides it out of her hand.

VARICK

Unfortunately, it's the last one in my wallet. But I'll leave my number with your secretary. Feel free to contact me at any time.

Principal Sugland stands up. She's nearly as tall as Varick.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

I've never lost a child from this school. I don't intend to, now.

VARICK

Mrs. Cramer has complete faith in you. And so do I...

Varick extends his hand across the desk and smiles like the Prince of Darkness.

EXT. CRAMER HOME -- DAY

Cramer stands up. Helps Valerie to her feet. Keeps on holding her hand. She lets him.

CRAMER

I forgot how soft your skin is...

Valerie takes her hand back slowly. Almost reluctantly.

VALERIE

The real estate guy left the door open when I told him I was meeting you. I'll call you a taxi.

CRAMER

Are you... still gonna go?

VALERIE

I already told them I'd take the job.

CRAMER

Have dinner with me, first? Let me make one more desperate attempt to get you to stay?

VALERIE

(weakening)

I already bought the tickets.

CRAMER

We'll go to Mott Street. Get some soft shell crab and a really bad bottle of Cantonese Chardonnay...

His voice drifts off into the quiet of the residential street.

A SOFT BREEZE rustles through the tiny front yard.

VALERIE

Are you really buying this house?

Cramer answers her from his soul.

CRAMER

I swear to you, I won't disappoint you, again.

Valerie Cramer stares at her husband.

VALERIE CRAMER

(slowly)

Then you got yourself a date.

She goes inside to call him a taxi.

INT. SEDAN DE VILLE -- MINUTES LATER

Varick in the back seat. Consulting Judge Cosell's file he dials another number on the car phone.

INT. CRAMER'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The PHONE RINGS.

ANSWERING MACHINE

This is John Cramer. Please leave a message.

INT. SEDAN DE VILLE -- DAY

Varick hangs up. Thinks for a moment. Consults the Cramer file again.

INT. GAICON INSURANCE COMPANY -- DAY

Willard picks up the phone.

WILLARD
(into phone)
Gaicon.

He listens.

VALERIE
Sorry, he's out of the office. You want his pager number? Hold on and let me see if I can find it.

Willard sets the phone down and get up from his desk.

INT. SEDAN DE VILLE -- DAY

VARICK
Thank you. You've been very helpful.

Varick hangs up. Finishes jotting Cramer's pager number on the file folder.

INT. TAXI -- DAY

Cramer leans forward.

CRAMER
40 Broad Street. And step on it. I gotta be there by five.

He looks down at the Power of Attorney on the seat next to him.

His PAGER GOES OFF.

He unclips the beeper from his belt and looks at the message: 9-1-1 and a phone number.

As he's reading the number, the PAGER GOES OFF again. The screen flashes DUPLICATE. 9-1-1 and the same phone number.

VARICK
(to the Cabbie)
Pull over at the next pay phone.

EXT. PAY PHONE -- DAY

The taxi idles at the curb. Cramer dials the number.

MAN'S VOICE
(phone filter)
P.S. 162.

CRAMER
My name is John Cramer. Someone just
paged me from this number with a 9-1-1.

INTERCUT -- SEDAN DE VILLE -- DAY

REVEAL Varick's Chinese Driver speaking into the car phone.

DRIVER
(concerned)
Mr. Cramer, this is your children's
school. You must come immediately. Your
son has been involved in an accident.

Cramer's face goes white.

CRAMER
What? What kind of accident? What are you
talking about.

DRIVER
Please, Mr. Cramer, you must come
immediately. We cannot reach your wife
and we need your permission for medical
procedure...

CRAMER
(growing frantic)
Medical pro... What medical procedure?
What's wrong with my son?

INT. SEDAN DE VILLE -- DAY

The Driver disconnects. Hands the phone to Varick.

VARICK
40 Broad Street.

The Driver pockets a WAD OF CASH as the phone RINGS AGAIN.
Varick ignores it.

INT. TAXI -- DAY

Cramer is leaning over the CABBIE's shoulder.

CRAMER
Come on. Come on!

The cab pulls up in front of...

EXT. P.S. 162 -- DAY

Varick leaps from the cab before it even stops.

INT. P.S. 162 -- DAY

Cramer bursts into the Administrative Office. Blows past TWO SCHOOL SECURITY GUARDS at the door.

Charges up to the SCHOOL SECRETARY.

CRAMER
I'm John Cramer.

She stares at him with dim eyes. A petty bureaucrat.

SECRETARY
And?

CRAMER
Somebody just called me. They said my son was in an accident...

SECRETARY
Who called you?

Cramer looks at her. Feels the panic rising from his gut.

CRAMER
I don't know who called me. It was a man. He had an accent...

SECRETARY
What kind of accent?

CRAMER
(getting louder)
I don't know what kind of accent! It could've been a Martian accent for all I know. Where's my son?

The Two Security Guards edge a little closer.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND
(OS)
He's in class, Mr. Cramer. Where he belongs.

Principal Sugland is standing in the door to her office.
Cramer recognizes her.

CRAMER

(relieved)

Thank God. Can you tell me what's wrong
with my son?

Sugland looks at the Secretary.

SECRETARY

He says someone called him but he doesn't
know who. Someone with an accent.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

Called you and said what, Mr. Cramer?

Cramer is struggling to control his rising fury.

CRAMER

(louder)

Called me and said my son was in an
accident! Said you needed my permission
for a medical procedure...

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

(OS)

Why don't you calm down, John? You're not
doing yourself any good by barging in
like this.

The Security Guards are eyeing her, waiting for the signal to
jump Cramer.

Cramer catches her glancing behind him. Turns to see the
Guards edging closer.

CRAMER (cont'd)

What the hell is wrong with you people?

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

Your wife's lawyer was already here. We
know what you're trying to do.

CRAMER

My wife's law...

It takes Cramer about two seconds to figure out what lawyer
she's talking about.

He EXPLODES.

CRAMER (cont'd)
I WANT MY SONS! Right fucking now! You
bring them to the office or I'm going to
start kicking down doors...

Sugland turns to her Secretary.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND
Call 9-1-1.

CRAMER
(yelling)
9-1-1. Are you out of your mind?

He moves to grab the phone out of the Secretary's hand. The
Security Guards JUMP HIM.

Cramer PUNCHES one of the Security Guards in the face. The
other Guard SPRAYS Pepper Gas into Cramer's eyes.

All three men collapse onto the floor in a tangle of arms and
legs.

CRAMER (cont'd)
(choking on the gas)
WHERE'S MY SONS?

FADE TO BLACK

INT. 40 BROAD STREET -- EVENING

Gavin Varick crosses the lobby against CROWDS OF WORKERS on
their way home. A look of determination on his face.

INT. ARNELL, UPSHAW AND DELANO -- EVENING

Varick steps off the elevator. The office is mostly deserted.
Michelle sits at her desk. She looks up expectantly.

VARICK
(cold)
Come in to my office.

She watches him disappear into his office with a pained look
on her face.

INT. VARICK'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Varick sits at his desk, bathed in the crimson glow of
sunset. Preparing for his final gambit.

Michelle appears in the doorway.

VARICK

Rockwell will be here in a few minutes. I want you to make a copy of the AGC merger prospectus and leave it on a desk in the waiting room where he will see it.

Michelle stares at him.

MICHELLE

Why?

VARICK

I don't have time to explain. When he gets interested, find an excuse to leave the room. Give him a chance to read it.

MICHELLE

Those documents are confidential. It's a complete violation of trust...

VARICK

So is adultery.

Cut to the bone, Michelle stands in the doorway, hoping to see some flash of the man she loves.

She doesn't. He's gone. And so are her dreams.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- EVENING

Felix Delano and Robert Arnell sit on one side of the table. CHARLES LEVINE and a TEAM OF AGC LAWYERS sits on the other.

Levine is early thirties. Handsome. He looks at his watch.

LEVINE

Typical Gavin. Fashionably late.

LAWYER

Maybe he had car trouble.

DELANO

Would you like to begin?

LEVINE

I'd rather wait for Gavin if that's okay with you, Felix.

The rebuke is subtle but clear. Levine is good at this.

LEVINE (cont'd)

He's probably in the executive washroom, masturbating to Forbes Magazine.

VARICK (OS)
Actually, it was a Polaroid of your wife.

Varick strides through the oak doors. Radiating confidence.

LEVINE
I have a videotape of yours.

DELANO
Watch it.

LEVINE
(smiling)
Oops. Forgot you married the boss' daughter.

They shake hands. Varick sits next to Delano. Levine eyes the gash over Varick's eye.

LEVINE (cont'd)
What happened to you?

Varick smiles.

VARICK
Lost a head butting contest with a taxi.

One of the Lawyers doesn't get it.

LAWYER
Huh?

LEVINE
The cab stopped short. (to Varick) We make the associates take the subway. Only partners take cabs.

DELANO
Let's get down to business, shall we?

EXT. P.S. 162 -- EVENING

TWO POLICE CARS sit in front of the school with FLASHING LIGHTS.

INT. P.S. 162 -- EVENING

The Administrative Office is filled with POLICEMEN, SCHOOL SECURITY, and CONCERNED TEACHERS.

Cramer is handcuffed to a chair. His eyes are red from the Pepper Gas. Shot runs down his face. He's COUGHING.

Principal Sugland is talking to the PATROL SERGEANT.

VALERIE (OS)

What the hell is going on?

Valerie walks through the door. Totally shocked by the scene.

SERGEANT

Are you Mrs. Cramer?

VALERIE

Where are my children?

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

They're in the gym. They have no idea anything has happened.

Valerie sees Cramer.

VALERIE

What are you doing to him?

SERGEANT

Mrs. Cramer, your husband tried to kidnap your children from school.

VALERIE

He what?

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

Your lawyer alerted us that he might attempt something.

VALERIE

(surprised)

My lawyer? Why would my lawyer come here?

SERGEANT

Your husband came to the office claiming that one of your sons was in an accident.

PRINCIPAL SUGLAND

He was excited. He began using profanity. Finally, he assaulted two Security Guards.

SERGEANT

We're going to take him in and book him. You can come down to the Precinct later and file charges.

Valerie is staring at her husband. COUGHING. Half-blind.

VALERIE
I don't want to press charges.

The Sergeant and Principal Sugland exchange glances.

SERGEANT
Mrs. Cramer. If he had taken your children, you might never have seen them again.

VALERIE
I don't know what happened. But putting him in jail isn't going to make it better. We're moving across country in a few days... Just let him go.

SERGEANT
Mrs. Cramer, I can't say I...

VALERIE
(angry)
Let him go!

The Sergeant turns to a BEAT COP.

SERGEANT
Cut him loose.

They unlock Cramer's handcuffs and hoist him to his feet.
He's still disoriented.

He wipes his nose with his sleeve.

Valerie is standing in front of him. The last vestige of love or sympathy is gone from her face.

She looks impossibly sad. Disappointed. And betrayed.

VALERIE
I don't know what happened here. But this is the last straw. Don't call me. Don't write me. Don't come to the apartment. I'm taking the boys to a hotel until we move.

CRAMER
It didn't do anything. It was this guy. This lawyer. He's trying to frame me...

VALERIE
I don't know what you're talking about and I don't care. I just...

Tears well up in her eyes.

VALERIE (cont'd)

Sitting on the stoop with you, it was almost like I had my husband back. And everything we said...

She wipes away her tears. Resolve in her face.

VALERIE (cont'd)

At least, now I know the man I married is gone forever. You're sick. You have a disease. And I don't want you infecting our sons. Goodbye.

Cops and Security Guards form a cordon between Cramer and his ex-wife. Cramer watches her disappear behind a wall of blue.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- EVENING

Deep into negotiations. Levine and Varick have taken off their coats.

LAWYER

That's the kookiest thing I ever heard.

LEVINE

But it make sense.

VARICK

It does if you don't want your stock to tank pre-buyout. This is a straight swap. Any depression of your stock price jacks up your acquisition costs. Price drops too much and the deal goes south.

LEVINE

So do it off balance sheet.

VARICK

Issue a non-voting class of stock backed by a line of credit from a consortium of insurers.

Levine sits back. He's truly impressed.

LAWYER

But can you put together the insurers?

VARICK

For a one-point-five finders fee we can.

LEVINE
On top of the two percent legal billings?

VARICK
Absolutely.

Even Arnell's jaw drops.

LEVINE
You're out of your mind.

VARICK
And you're out of a deal. There's the door. Don't let it hit you in the ass...

A crucial moment. Everyone looks at Levine. It could go either way.

LEVINE
Talk to me about boilerplate.

The table erupts in a CACOPHONY of financial details.

EXT. CRAMER'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- EVENING

John Cramer climbs out of a POLICE CRUISER. It starts to rain.

INT. CRAMER'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

Cramer sits on his Salvation Army couch. Staring at his plaques on the mantel.

He has the .45 in one hand and the promotional brochure from the real estate office in the other.

He drops the magazine from his pistol. Moving with deliberation, Cramer gets up and crosses the room.

He digs through an open cardboard box until he finds what he's looking for. A BOX OF BULLETS.

He cracks the box open and SPILLS the bullets onto a small table. ONE BULLET rolls all the way across the table and comes to a rest next to...

The Answering Machine.

Cramer picks up a single bullet and slides it into the chamber. RACKS the SLIDE.

He returns to the couch and picks up the brochure.

CLICKS OFF THE SAFETY.

Then he stops.

A vaguely quizzical look on his face. Not burning curiosity. More like academic interest. Like he's trying to remember something.

He gets up again and crosses to the small table. Looks down at the answering machine.

The MESSAGE WAITING LIGHT blinks the number ONE.

Cramer pushes the play button. The TAPE REWINDS.

ANSWERING MACHINE

(filter)

You have one message. Message one...

BEEP.

CRAMER (VO)

(answering machine)

My childrens' custody hearing was this morning. You made me late. You know what that means?

VARICK

(filtered throughout)

I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN!... You have until five o'clock to return my file. After five it loses all value to me. Because if I don't get that file by five o'clock I'm going to prison and I promise you, my last act as a free man will be to make sure you never see your children again.

CRAMER

Listen to me...

VARICK

(interrupting)

No, you listen to me. You little nobody.

CRAMER

I read your letter. You've been stealing from you clients.

VARICK

I haven't been stealing from my clients, you idiot. My boss has.

(MORE)

VARICK (cont'd)
 Whose daughter, my wife, I am leaving as soon as I make the million dollar bonus that will come to me when I fuck one of my best friends in the world by selling him ~~thirty-two~~ million dollars of influence I do not posses...

Cramer hit the STOP button. REWINDS the tape. Hits PLAY again.

VARICK (cont'd)
 (answering machine)
 I haven't been stealing from my clients, you idiot. My boss has.

Hits STOP again. REWINDS. PLAYS.

VARICK (cont'd)
 (answering machine)
 ...My boss has.

Hits STOP.

Puts the .45 on the table.

INT. ARNELL, UPSHAW AND DELANO -- EVENING

Michelle looks up to meet the steely glare of George Rockwell. He sits in a chair across from her desk.

MICHELLE
 Can I get you something?

GEORGE ROCKWELL
 No. Thank you.

Michelle glances nervously at the conference room door.

Rockwell looks around the waiting room. The AGC PROSPECTUS sits on a desk across from his chair. He stares at it. Then looks away.

The PHONE RINGS. Michelle picks up.

MICHELLE
 (into phone)
 Felix Delano's office. May I help you?

CRAMER
 (phone filter)
 No. But I can help you.

Michelle freezes. Turns away from Rockwell.

MICHELLE
Who is this?

INTERCUT -- INT. CRAMER'S APT. -- EVENING

Cramer stands next to the answering machine.

CRAMER
You know who it is.

MICHELLE
What do you want?

CRAMER
You can't give me what I want. So, I'm
going to give you something.

MICHELLE
I don't know what you're...

CRAMER
I know about you and Varick. I was the
one who tipped off the papers.

Michelle stops cold. Looks up and realizes George Rockwell is
watching her.

CRAMER (cont'd)
Tomorrow morning it'll be all over the
tabloids.

MICHELLE
And I'll be out of a job. What'd I
ever...

CRAMER
Hang up the phone. Get your coat. And
walk away. Get another job. Meet a decent
guy. Marry him. Have his babies. And
never let him drift away from you. Hold
him close. Love him. It sounds so simple.
But it's really very hard. And it'll take
your whole life to get it done.

MICHELLE
But I...

CRAMER
You can't love a man who can't love.
Show's over. God was playing a joke on
all of us. This is the punchline. Put me
through to Varick's boss.

MICHELLE
I can't...

CRAMER
Put me through. And go away...

Michelle stares at the phone as if she could see Cramer's face. And the worst thing is, she knows he's right.

She reaches for the hold button with a trembling hand.

Across the room, Rockwell picks up the AGC file.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- EVENING

Levine leans across the table and shakes Varick's hand.

LEVINE
Congratulations. You got the account.

VARICK
Tell me something I don't know.

Delano sets a box of Cohibas on the table. Begins to pass them around.

DELANO
Shall we smoke on it.

LEVINE
What are we, Indians?

LAWYER
Aren't these illegal?

The INTERCOM BUZZES.

DELANO
What is it?

A pause.

MICHELLE (VO)
(intercom)
Call for Mr. Varick.

VARICK
Who is it?

LEVINE
It's probably Teddy calling to congratulate us on being so fucking smart.

ARNELL

We always take calls from the Chairman of AGC. Put it on speaker.

She does.

Over the speaker box comes the sound of Cramer's ANSWERING MACHINE TAPE.

CRAMER (VO)

(answering machine)

My childrens' custody hearing was this morning. You made me late. You know what that means?

VARICK

(filtered throughout)

I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN! You have until five o'clock to return my file. After five it loses all value to me. Because if I don't get that file by five o'clock I'm going to prison and I promise you, my last act as a free man will be to make sure you never see your children again.

With horror in his eyes, Varick LUNGES for the speaker box but A HAND locks on to his arm. Varick looks up.

The hand belongs to Robert Arnell.

CRAMER

Listen to me...

VARICK

No, you listen to me. You little nobody.

CRAMER

I read your letter. You've been stealing from your clients.

VARICK

I haven't been stealing from my clients, you idiot. My boss has. Whose daughter, my wife, I am leaving as soon as I make the million dollar bonus that will come to me when I fuck one of my best friends in the world by selling him thirty-two million dollars of influence I do not posses. Do you understand? You're nothing. You are a fucking ant swimming in an ocean of shit.

(MORE)

VARICK (cont'd)
And I am the tidal wave that will drown
your ass if I don't get that file by five
o'clock.

For one long moment, everyone around the table is stunned.

Like shark attack victims on a National Geographic Special,
their faces are frozen into masks of disbelief and sheer awe
at the extent of Varick's betrayal.

Delano. Levine. The AGC Lawyers. Everyone stares at the
speaker box.

There is a pause as the tape ends. Dead silence.

Punctured by the sound of the TAPE BEING REWOUND.

VARICK (cont'd)
(answering machine)
I haven't been stealing from my clients,
you idiot. My boss has...

REWINDS. PLAYS.

VARICK (cont'd)
(answering machine)
...the million dollar bonus that will
come to me when I fuck one of my best
friends in the world by selling him
thirty-two million dollars of influence I
do not posses...

Like dominos falling, the TABLE ERUPTS.

LEVINE
Off! Off! The whole thing is off!

LAWYER
Nothing was signed! Nothing was signed!

Delano must be PHYSICALLY RESTRAINED from attacking Varick.
His face is twisted in a paroxysm of fury. He can barely form
coherent words.

DELANO
You motherfucker. You... mother... You're
fired!

ARNELL
(to Delano)
You're not in a position to fire anyone!
Pack your fucking desk!

Levine grabs Varick's shirt.

LEVINE
Fuck me?! How 'bout FUCK YOU!

Varick JERKS himself free.

GEORGE ROCKWELL
What the hell is going on, here?

George Rockwell stands at the conference room door staring at the chaos. Holding the AGC file in his hand.

The TAPE REWINDS and continues to PLAY over the speaker.

CRAMER
(answering machine)
I read your letter. You've been stealing from your clients.

VARICK
(answering machine)
I haven't been stealing from my clients, you idiot. My boss has...

STOPS again. REWINDS. PLAYS.

VARICK
(answering machine)
...I haven't been stealing from my clients, you idiot. My boss has...

Rockwell EXPLODES in fury.

GEORGE ROCKWELL
I'm going to SUE THIS FIRM OUT OF EXISTENCE!

LEVINE
(to Rockwell)
Who the fuck are you? WHY DOES HE HAVE OUR FILE IN HIS HAND!?

GEORGE ROCKWELL
I'm going to sue you. And you. And you...

REWINDS. PLAYS.

VARICK (cont'd)
(answering machine)
...I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN!...

INT. ARNELL, UPSHAW AND DELANO -- EVENING

The UPROAR reverberates from inside the conference room.

TEARS COURSE down Michelle's face as she disappears behind closing elevator doors.

CAMERA TRACKS ACROSS the room to Michelle's desk.

Her cocktail ring sits on her desktop, gleaming in the overhead lights.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- NIGHT

Traffic stretches as far as the eye can see. It's raining in Downtown Manhattan and nothing is moving.

HORNS BLARE. Commuters SCREAM profanities at one another.

INT. VARICK'S RENTAL CAR -- NIGHT

Windshield wipers beat a rhythm through dirty rain.

Varick sits behind the wheel. Traffic grinds to a halt yet again.

He holds up Michelle's cocktail ring.

Somebody's HEADLIGHTS rake the car. The ring SPARKLES like a thousand tomorrows.

EXT. 250 VESEY STREET -- NIGHT

Varick leaves his rental car IDLING in the pickup zone.

INT. DELANO APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Varick steps through the door. The room is dark.

The only illumination is the harbor lights through the picture windows.

Cynthia Delano sits in the darkness. Holding a glass of wine.

An empty bottle rests on the window sill.

CYNTHIA

I'm filing for divorce, naturally.

VARICK

Naturally.

She takes a sip of wine.

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
I'd like you to ask you something. I
can't make you answer. But I would
appreciate it.

VARICK
What?

CYNTHIA
Did you ever love me?

It takes Varick a moment to answer.

VARICK
Yes.

CYNTHIA
I never loved you.

She says it like she's realizing the truth for the first
time.

The harbor lights reveal TEARS coursing down her face.

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
I loved the idea of you. But it's not the
same thing, is it?

VARICK
No. It's not.

INT. DELANO BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Varick is packing some clothes into an athletic bag.

The intercom BUZZES. He ignores it. It BUZZES AGAIN.

He hits the button.

VARICK
(into intercom)
Yes.

DOORMAN (VO)
(intercom)
Mr. Varick, they want you to move your
car from the loading zone, sir. And
there's a man here to see you.

VARICK
Who?

A momentary pause. The Doorman comes back on the intercom.

DOORMAN (VO)
He says he's in your carpool...

INT. STAIRWELL -- NIGHT

Gavin Varick sprints down flight after flight of stairs.
LEAPING from one landing to the next.

INT. 250 VESEY LOBBY -- NIGHT

Varick careens into the lobby. Suit pants and undershirt. The
crystal chandelier illuminates his fury.

VARICK
(screaming)
Where?

The DOORMAN points outside.

EXT. 250 VESEY STREET -- EVENING

It's pouring. Varick is instantly drenched. His undershirt
plastered to his body.

John Cramer steps out of the shadows.

Varick is about to throw himself onto Cramer when he sees the
gun.

CRAMER
My name is John Cramer.

VARICK
I don't give a shit...

CRAMER
I want you to know my name.

Cramer RACKS THE SLIDE.

CRAMER (cont'd)
Because one of us is going to die. And I
think it's important you know my name.

It dawns on Varick that Cramer might be about to shoot him.
He tries to restrain his fury.

VARICK
I know what your name is.

CRAMER

Do you? That's great. Do you know anything else about me? My kids' names? Where I work? My wife's name?

VARICK

I know everything about you.

CRAMER

Isn't that funny? I know a lot about you, too. I know your wife's name. I know she lives upstairs. I know your girlfriend's name...

His voice trails off. Varick's eyes never waver from the .45.

He tries to calculate his chances of making it inside the building.

CRAMER (cont'd)

We know so much about each other. And we'd never met until today. Haven't really met anyway. I wouldn't say we'd met. Would you?

VARICK

You ruined my life.

CRAMER

Seemed only fair. You ruined mine.

VARICK

Your life was already ruined.

CRAMER

Maybe... but it was MY LIFE!

VARICK

It wasn't personal. I didn't wake up today and say "Hey, lets fuck John Cramer." I had my own life. I had my own...

He can't hardly get it out.

VARICK (cont'd)

I had my own plans. I was going... I was... I guess it doesn't matter now.

CRAMER

That's it, exactly. It wasn't personal. That's what really got me. You didn't even care enough to hate me.

VARICK

I hate you, now.

The gun comes up.

CRAMER

I think we're a little past wisecracks.

VARICK

You gonna shoot me or what?

Cramer CLICKS OFF THE SAFETY.

CRAMER

I thought about coming here and killing you. I could still kill you. But I thought - and you're not going to understand this - I thought about my kids.

Varick edges toward the front door.

CRAMER (cont'd)

I thought about my kids' future. I can't give them anything else. But I can give them that.

VARICK

I don't know what you're talking about.

CRAMER

I know you don't.

Varick edges a little further toward the door.

CRAMER (cont'd)

When I talked to Michelle today...

That grabs Varick's attention.

CRAMER (cont'd)

I told her I was going to do her a favor. Now I'm going to do you one.

Varick is wavers between running for it and rushing Cramer.

CRAMER (cont'd)

We make a lot of decisions in our lives. A lot of choices. They're never black and white. I've never seen black and white. I've only seen shades of gray.

Cramer's eyes shine through the rain. Boring in on Varick.

CRAMER (cont'd)

Every man has a line he tells himself he won't cross. But every day, in every way, he makes these little compromises. He gets a little deeper into the gray. Until it isn't that he's crossed the line. It's that he can't even find it anymore.

Varick makes up his mind. He turns toward the door. His foot shifts. He starts to run.

Cramer puts the .45 to his own head.

CRAMER

I'm going to shoot myself in the head. If you stop me, I live. If you don't, I die. I can't make it any simpler than that.

Varick is completely caught off balance. He turns back toward Cramer.

VARICK

What are you doing?

CRAMER

I'm finding your line.

INT. 250 VESEY STREET -- NIGHT

The Doorman stares out the window at Varick and Cramer. Already terrified. Sees the gun.

Picks up the phone.

DOORMAN

(into phone)

Operator, gimme the police. Quick.

EXT. 250 VESEY STREET -- NIGHT

Cramer and Varick. Together in the rain. Just like they started.

CRAMER

I'm going to count to three.

VARICK

Are you kidding?

CRAMER

I'm a lot of things. Kidding is not one of them. One...

VARICK

You think I'm gonna stop you? You're out of your mind. Kill yourself.

CRAMER

Two.

VARICK

I hate you. I want you dead...

CRAMER

Three.

If a man is very lucky, he gets one defining moment. Life presents him with a chance to prove his worth. Regardless of what kind of life he's led until that point - or what kind of life he leads after - he will always be defined by that one, crystalline moment.

John Cramer had his moment in Beirut.

Gavin Varick has his now.

VARICK

Don't!

With all the speed of a high school track star Varick LEAPS toward Cramer.

Hands outstretched to knock the gun away.

Varick is very fast. And he's trying with all his might.

And he almost makes it.

The gun GOES OFF. John Cramer dies.

His body drops without a sound.

The POURING RAIN washes away his blood as fast as it spills.

Varick drops to his knees.

We CRANE UP as the first POLICE CAR SCREECHES to a stop. COPS pour into the rain with drawn guns.

The Doorman rushes outside.

Dozens of People surround him.

But Gavin Varick is completely alone.

THE END