

MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN

Written for the Screen by

Edward Norton

From the Novel by Jonathan Lethem

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OVER BLACK

LIONEL (V.O.)
*Frank always used to say: "Tell
your story walking, pal..."*

INT/EXT LIONEL CAR - HARLEM ST - DAY

A beat up '54 Dodge sits on a cold Harlem street. Two guys
in the front.

LIONEL (V.O.) CONT
*He was more philosophical than your
average gumshoe, but he liked to do
his talking on the move so...
Here's how it all went down.*

Close on the TWO GUYS: LIONEL ESSROG and GILBERT CONEY.
CONEY is a big lug in a porkpie hat. LIONEL medium build,
wiry. Both late 30's. They don't look like P.I.'s but
that's what they are.

Lionel sits shotgun. He's a hypnotizing array of Tourettic
twitches and tics.

LIONEL (V.O.)
*I got something wrong with my head,
that's the first thing to know*

LIONEL
(yelps)
IF!

LIONEL (V.O.)
*It's like having glass in the
brain. I can't stop picking things
apart, twisting em around, words
and sounds especially. It's like an
itch that has to be scratched.*

C.U. A LOOSE THREAD...hanging off the sleeve of a sweater.
An arm and a wrist resting on a seated knee. The knee
starts to jiggle and then...FINGERS pluck at the thread,
try to snap it off then smooth it down.

CONEY
Quit pullin' at it. You're gonna
make a fuckin' mess outta things.

LIONEL
*I got threads in my heads! I got
threads in my HEADS! I GOT THREADS
IN MY HEADS, MAN!*

This is LIONEL. Words are the fuel for the boiling pressure-cooker of his obsessive-compulsive brain. CONEY ignores the outburst, used to it. He stuffs little White Castles in his mouth and watches Lionel, deadpan. Lionel's head twitches.

LIONEL (V.O.)

And I twitch a lot. It's hard to miss. Makes me look like a goddam spastic but if I try to hold it back it just makes it worse.

He's pulling it out further, more thread unravelling. A disaster...Lionel's pulled a foot of thread off his cuff before Coney reaches for his pocketknife...

CONEY

Like I said, a fucking mess.

(cuts it off)

Jesus, freakshow. Ruin another sweater.

LIONEL (V.O.)

Fucking mess is right. The nuns said my soul wasn't at peace with God and I should do penance. Frank said anyone teaching God's love while they hit you with a stick should be ignored on every subject.

Lionel's eyes are down the street, watchful and sharp. Black kids playing football in the cold.

LIONEL's POV: way off down the block a figure approaching.

Lionel: sharpens up. A flicker of a grin.

LIONEL (V.O.)

Frank Minna. If you had to pick just one guy to be on your side, he's the one you'd want. It's Minna's game. We're all just in the lineup.

TAP TAP TAP... at the window. A trim black trench-coat. A smiling face under a cool hat, upturned collar against the cold. Now that's what a P.I. looks like and this one is:

FRANK MINNA. Lionel rolls the window down.

MINNA

Boys.

CONEY

Boss.

LIONEL
Heya, Frank. *FRANKLY FRANKADY*
FRANKO!

Lionel reaches out and taps Minna twice on the shoulder. An affectionate compulsion. Frank doesn't even notice it anymore. He lights a cigarette.

MINNA
Okay listen...here's the shot...
I'll be third floor. Lionel go to
the payphone on the corner in 20
minutes. When they come.. probably
three or four of em...when they
come, you call me here...
(hands him a number)
I'll buzz em in. Coney waits on
the door, I buzz him in and he
stays right inside. Lionel's
listening sharp on the line. If
you hear me say "Then we have a
problem" hustle over, Coney lets
you in, two of you come upstairs
and back me up quick, okay?

CONEY
What's going down here, Frank?

MINNA
(pause)
I gotta keep this one under my
hat, boys.

LIONEL
Fat cats in HATS!

MINNA
Them's the ones, pal. Let's catch
a big score and get outta this
game, get fat ourselves.

He winks at Lionel. Lionel notices a little sweat on Minna's brow despite the cold.

CONEY
Boss, we're not carrying.

MINNA
What?

CONEY
A piece. I don't have a piece.

MINNA

A *piece*? Say 'gun', Gilbert.

CONEY

I got no gun.

MINNA

That's what I count on. That's how I sleep at night, you with no gun. I've got a gun. You just show up. I wouldn't want you chuckleheads coming up a stairway for me with a hairpin. With a harmonica.

LIONEL

Hairy chin. Harmony harp. Don't wind me up.

MINNA

(smiling at Lionel)
With an unlit cigar. With a fucking chicken wing. Right, Brooklyn?

LIONEL

Chicky wing ding!
(grins)
Quit winding me up! You'll throw me off. Just give us the rest of it.

MINNA

Right. Now, if I say "Lemme use the can." it means we're coming out. Get Gil, get in the car and get ready to follow. And stay tight, I might need to give someone the slip, got it?

LIONEL

'Problem'- up the stairs, 'use the can'- start the car. Got it. *Get, gotten, got, GOTCHA!*

MINNA

Lionel's got it. Just follow his lead.

CONEY

(protesting)
You gotta be kidding me...

MINNA

Coney what did I say when I came into the office last Tuesday?

CONEY

Huh?

MINNA

Lionel?

LIONEL

(rapid fire)

Took your coat off, put your hat on the 3rd hook, said "I just stood next to a girl on the ferry and the smile she gave me will get me through this winter" Threw Danny your notebook. "How's a guy supposed to keep a marriage together when 22 is on the menu?"

MINNA

(nods) Like I said, Lionel's on point.

And he heads across the street

LIONEL

Sit on it, Bailey! IF!

INT/EXT SAME CAR - 20 MINUTES LATER

Coney is reading the paper, Lionel is locked on the street and the door. Lionel is carefully folding a stick of gum exactly in half before putting it in his mouth.

LIONEL (V.O.)

Fucking Bailey. Bailey is what my head calls me. It calls me out if I try to resist it. There's things that calm it down: gum, weed, sometimes something stronger if I'm in bad shape. But if I try to put a lid on it it gets worse. If I get nervous it gets worse. If I get excited it gets worse. It's the argument I can't win.

The kids playing thump a football against Coney's door.

CONEY

Hey, watch it! (grumbling) Another Minna Classic. Freezin' our asses off, don't even know the score.

LIONEL

What you got big plans this weekend, Coney? *Coney Island! Coney Island hot dogs! Get your Coney Island hot dogs right here!!*

CONEY

Alright, Freakshow, just a little quieter please...

Lionel looks at his watch. Second hand hits the 12 and he hits Coney in the arm.

LIONEL (cont'd)

We're on. Get ready.

Lionel hops out of the car and heads for a payphone.

INT. HARLEM APT/EXT HARLEM ST/PAYPHONE (INTERCUT) - DAY

C.U.: A PHONE, ringing on top of a dresser...

MINNA'S HAND reaches in and picks it up and off the screen.

MINNA

Yeah.

LIONEL

Hey, boss.
(muted)
Boss, bossy, BITCH!

MINNA

You keeping it together, Brooklyn?

LIONEL

Yeah...it's under control. I got my gum. I got ya covered.

MINNA

I know it. Okay, like we said, stay tuned in, pal. I'm might need that head of yours later.

LIONEL SEES: TWO BIG BLACK CARS PULL UP DOWN THE STREET

Two men get out of each and converge on the sidewalk in front of the building. One of them is A GIANT MAN IN A DARK COAT...easily 7'0".

LIONEL

Hey. I think your friends are here.

In the apartment A DOOR BUZZER SOUNDS.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

(reacting to the GIANT)

Jesus look at the size of that guy. They got serious muscle with em...Everything cool, Boss?

MINNA

Cool as can be. Just a little chat.

CLOSE ON: THE DRESSER as Minna opens the top drawer and puts the phone down inside with the receiver still off the cradle. LEAVES THE DRAWER OPEN A CRACK so Lionel can listen in...

ON LIONEL: Looking over to...THE DOOR. The four guys get buzzed in.

LIONEL (V.O.)

'Here Lies Frank Minna. Cool as can be.' They'll carve that on his fucking tombstone. I don't know if it was growing up in Greenpoint or fighting the Japanese, but he was cool under pressure in a way you can't teach.

LIONEL leans out and waves to CONEY who hustles out of the car and to the door, buzzes, enters, gives thumbs up.

LIONEL (V.O.)

I was just happy to have job on his team. And if there's one thing my pain in the ass brain does know how to do...it's listen and remember things.

Lionel folds up a handkerchief and rubber bands it to the phone mouthpiece. He closes his eyes to focus and listen.

(We see the meeting in the apartment AS IMAGINED BY LIONEL, and the action on the street around him and over all this there's NO SOUND but what Lionel hears through that phone receiver in the dresser.)

Muffled and broken, HE HEARS: FOOTSTEPS and a DOOR OPEN

MINNA (cont'd)
Gentlemen...thanks for coming.

CU -- Ice dropping in a glass just above the phone.

MINNA (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Drink?

LOU
When I want a drink I'll find a
bar and a blonde, now explain this
crap.

SOUND -- a FILE SLAPPING DOWN ON A TABLE

LIONEL'S POV: Kids playing on the street.

MINNA
Well, which part didn't you
understand?

LOU
How about the part where you got
the idea to go poke around after
some colored broad for starters.

CU: Lionel mouths 'colored broad' silently to himself then--

LIONEL
(into his sleeve)
Cold wig on a rod !

MINNA
She works for the committee.

LOU
She's a fucking secretary. We told
you to dig on Horowitz...find
something we can shut them down
with.

CU: Lionel mouths "Horowitz"

MINNA
There's nothing there. Unless
you're dumb enough to try to wave
that old Red flag of yours one
more time.
(silence)
Yeah, right.
(MORE)

MINNA (CONT'D)

So, if you want to know what's going in that report, that 'colored broad' is doing most of the legwork on Hamilton for 'em. And what *she's* sniffing around I'm sure is of concern to you gentlemen, so I put some time into that too.

CU: Lionel mouths 'Hamilton report'

LIEBERMAN

You looked in some funny places.

MINNA

What can I tell ya? I'm a snoop, that's what I do. It's called being *thorough*, Lou.

LOU

It's called wasting our time. This is fucking Chinese.

MINNA

If you need a road map to wipe your ass I can't help you, Lou. These gentlemen understand it or they wouldn't be here.

LIEBERMAN

(quiet - the leader)

Walk us through it, Mr. Minna, just to be sure we're very clear.

MINNA

(picks up something)

It's right here in ink, Mo---

A COP CAR POPS ITS SIREN TO CLEAR THE KIDS AND THEN SIRENS OUT ONTO THE AVENUE.

LIONEL, clutches the phone to his chest, desperate to muffle the sound.

An agonizing 10 seconds lost.

Exasperated, LIONEL finally gets back on...

MINNA (CONT'D) (cont'd) (CONT'D)

...anybody like to offer a different interpretation?

A long silence.

LIEBERMAN

None of this can be proved.

MINNA

That signature is the real deal.

LIEBERMAN

If you knew the man, you'd know why that seems highly implausible to me.

MINNA

I checked it against others. It's his John Hancock. And the paper trail backs it up. Lay that on top of the rest of what I've included here and I think we can all agree you're sitting on a powder keg.

LIEBERMAN

And you think Horowitz knows all of this?

MINNA

Nope. Or you'd already be eating shit. It've been in the paper the next day.

LIEBERMAN

The girl: she married, got family?

MINNA

It's all in my file...her mother's dead. No brother or sisters.

LIEBERMAN

What about her father?

MINNA

(laughs)

Lou you're Mr Straight Talk. Why don't you go ask him and see what he says.

LOU

You think this is funny?

MINNA

No, Lou, just ironic. There's a difference. Look it up. Father's a busted up vet. He runs a jazz club up here. Drinks too much.

A pause.

LIEBERMAN

Mr Minna, I'll assume you're aware of what occurs a week from Thursday?

MINNA

I am.

LIEBERMAN

So then you understand our firm determination to keep such information out of the hands of our detractors?

MINNA

Sure. Nature of the game.

LIEBERMAN

These are all photos. May I hope you're in possession of the originals?

MINNA

I am.

LIEBERMAN

Excellent. We'll need to get those from you.

MINNA

I figured as much. I thought we might talk about terms.

LIEBERMAN

Terms?

MINNA

I think it's fair to say that the initiative involved in securing these...assets...goes a good bit beyond the original scope of work in our arrangement.

LOU

...the fuck are you talkin'?

MINNA

I'm thinking a bonus...for taking a wild card off the table before it got in the game.

LIEBERMAN

I see. And what do you have in mind?

A small sound -- a piece of paper being unfolded?

Lionel can't hear...he's nervous.

LIONEL'S POV: Cop car way down the street; a BLACK GUY (BILLY ROSE) walking by lights a smoke, looks across the street and moves on; Coney in the door

LOU

Have you lost your mind?

MINNA

Let's not kid each other fellas.
You got the biggest gravy train
this century pulling out. I'm
asking for a seat in the rear
here.

LIEBERMAN

That's quite impossible.

MINNA

I'd double this at any paper in
town.

There is a sudden deadly silence. Lionel senses it.

LOU

I'm gonna pretend you didn't say
what you just said and we're gonna-

MINNA

Just an observation. I'm here in
good faith. Just assessing the
value...

LOU

You can forget it--

MINNA

Jeez Lou, what's your beef with a
guy getting paid for good work? I
mean you get paid for doing
nothing as far as I can--- UHHNH!

A THUD. LIONEL FREEZES.

DEEP VOICE (GIANT)

Watch it.

LOU

Are you fuckin' packin'!?

MINNA

(winded)

Jesus, take it easy...Had it since the war. Remember that thing some of us fought in?

A SCUFFLE

LIEBERMAN

Enough! Lou...a word...

It goes quiet...whispered conference that Lionel strains to hear.

MINNA

Oh come on fellas, don't get in a twist, it's just busi...

LIEBERMAN

(evenly)

Mr. Minna, we do appreciate the service you've rendered. These gentlemen will take you to get the originals and if all is in order we'll arrange an appropriate resolution for you.

MINNA

(accommodating)

Sure, of course...like I said, good faith. Just *lemme use the can* first...

LIONEL hears the signal and goes into high gear. He hangs up the phone and turns to exit, then turns back and hangs it up again, then dashes out...

EXT HARLEM STREET / INT LIONEL CAR - DAY

...and runs across street, signaling at CONEY in the door, who sees him coming, gets the message and hustles out and over to...

THE CAR... They both tumble in.

LIONEL

PURPLE HITTER!!

CONEY

What?

LIONEL

They hit him! It sounded like they hit him!

CONEY

For chrissake, freakshow! What are we doing here?

He starts to get out but Lionel stops him.

LIONEL

No. He said "lemme use the can"
We're supposed to follow him. *CAN
THE MAN!*

They look across to...THE DOORWAY

MINNA and the FOUR MEN come out. THE GIANT and MINNA move a step or two off while a SMALLER MAN (LOU) confers briefly with the other two, whose faces are obscured.

LOU nods and they all split. The TWO MEN, still not clearly seen, turn and hurry off the opposite direction into a waiting car.

The GIANT and LOU move Minna toward the front car. Minna looks okay...is he holding his side a little? He's definitely being escorted to the car. He moves as if to turn toward them but THE GIANT takes him by the elbow and herds him forward. MINNA shakes off the guy's hand.

ON LIONEL AND CONEY

CONEY

I don't like it...

LIONEL

Me neither, let's go.

They pile out of the car, Gil has to wait as the SECOND BLACK CAR goes by, losing a step on...

LIONEL, moving up the sidewalk fast, now directly across the street as Frank gets pushed into the back seat of the FIRST BLACK CAR

C.U. - LIONEL staring across at...FRANK, who sees him and stares back. Is he nodding? Does he want help? What is that look on his face? Hard to tell...he could be shaking his head to back off...And then the other guy gets in, blocking him, the car pulls out and he's gone...

LIONEL AND CONEY scramble into the car, Gil at the wheel. He revs it, clips the fender of the car parked in front of them.

CONEY
This fucking guy!

LIONEL
EAT ME MISTER DICKEY-WEED!

That gets even Coney to look over for a second as they squeal out into...

EXT HARLEM SIDE STREET / INT LIONEL CAR - CONTINUOUS - DAY

WIDE as the car blasts recklessly down the block

Inside the car: with Lionel and Coney as they race, trying to catch up. Lionel now highly agitated, looking to spot the other car, looks left up the Avenue

LIONEL
LEFT! LEFT! Lefty Louie Lick Me!

Coney rips the wheel...

EXT HARLEM AVE INTERSECTION / INT CAR - CONTINUOUS - DAY

WIDE: their car fishtails, screeching onto the northbound avenue...the BLACK CAR visible up the block now.

INSIDE: cars whipping by as Coney weaves to get up alongside, Lionel looks past Coney out the driver's side window

LIONEL
Slow down...slow down.

And suddenly they are easing directly alongside the other car

LIONEL / CONEY POV: FRANK sitting between the men, GLANCES OVER

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
LOOK OUT!!

CONEY snaps forward and SLAMS ON THE BRAKES, THROWING LIONEL INTO THE DASH as the other car whips ahead and ...

WIDE: Their car skids to a stop an inch from the bumper of a cab stopped at a light. MINNA'S CAR is forced to a stop too at the red light, cars crossing in front

INSIDE: LIONEL rips open the door...

EXT HARLEM AVENUE - STOPLIGHT

Lionel runs past the car in front of them and cuts across in front of it, RIGHT INTO THE PATH OF AN ONCOMING CAR THAT SLAMS ON ITS BRAKES, ALMOST BOUNCING HIM OFF ITS HOOD, but he never stops, cutting up the lane toward...THE BLACK CAR.

But just as LIONEL gets within a few strides of it...

THE LIGHT GOES GREEN AND THE BLACK CAR SURGES FORWARD

He curses even as the CAR THAT ALMOST HIT HIM BLARES AT HIM, forcing past...but HERE'S CONEY PULLING UP. LIONEL RIPS OPEN THE DOOR AND WE SMASH CUT TO:

EXT AVENUE LEADING TO BRIDGE / INT LIONEL'S CAR - DAY

Racing up the avenue in the left lane, they can't see the BLACK CAR anywhere up ahead.

LIONEL
We lost him!

Hidden beyond a TRUCK in the right lane up ahead, THE BLACK CAR suddenly appears, making a HARD RIGHT and racing off UNDER the structure of a massive bridge... CONEY almost blasts past, but rips the turn from the middle lane, forcing another car to brake, horn blaring. And now they can see the car up ahead, whipping under the bridge toward a dark turn ahead...

CONEY
Where's he going?

LIONEL
The ramp... he's going to Queens.
QueenieConeyQueenieConeyQueenie!

They follow fast and rip down into the dark...

EXT. ON RAMP TO THE TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Lionel and Coney's car careens up the curve of an on-ramp

EXT. TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE TOLL BOOTHS - CONTINUOUS

...cars backed up in three open lanes and they roll to a stop.

Lionel again rips open his door as they stop, standing up next to the car in time to see...two lanes over to the right, THE BLACK CAR BREAKS RIGHT OUT OF THE LANES and heads for an empty lane marked 'AUTHORIZED VEHICLES ONLY', as a TOLL OFFICER STEPS INTO THAT BOOTH.

The driver of the BLACK CAR flashes something at the guard and THE CAR IS WAVED THROUGH.

LIONEL
Son of a bitch!

He goes back inside but they're boxed in and being channeled into a booth. LIONEL hits CONEY in the arm.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
QUACKER! QUOTER! QUARTER!

CONEY
What?!

LIONEL
We need a quarter! Get a fuckin' quarter out!

They scramble for the toll. Coney finds one and practically throws it at the guy, barreling through the booth.

EXT. TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE / INT. LIONEL'S CAR - DAY

AERIAL VIEW: Their car blasts around slower moving cars on the bridge, revealing THE EAST RIVER AND THE NEW YORK SKYLINE with the late afternoon sun in our eyes.

LIONEL'S EYES: Frantically searching, desperate...

Lionel is tapping Coney's shoulder manically.

LIONEL
Don't lose em! Jesus, Coney, come on!

CONEY
What can I do?! Guy had a fucking pass!

POV: the BLACK CAR far ahead now, exiting onto an off-ramp.

HORNS GOING OFF EVERYWHERE as they weave and force their way through cars, putting Lionel's TICS AND SHOUTS into overdrive.

LIONEL
HORNY HORN! HONK ME, BAILEY!

EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREETS - QUEENS - LATE AFTERNOON

Bridge looming above, the car barrels straight at us down a side street

LIONEL'S EYES FIND -- TIRE MARKS, turning LEFT.

LIONEL
There, go left! *LEFTY LOOSY*
LIONEL!

THE CAR rips a left turn onto wider industrial avenue. The streets are pretty desolate over here...a lot of warehouses

THEIR CAR MOVES DOWN THE STREET, LIONEL LOOKING RIGHT, CONEY LEFT...

CONEY
They gotta be somewhere.

LIONEL
I'd say they're *somewhere*, Gil,
yes! Where?

POV: Industrial warehouses, side-streets WHIPPING BY
...and as they cross one, all in a flash, LIONEL SEES --

EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREETS / INT CAR - QUEENS

LIONEL POV: FRANK. RUNNING TOWARD THEM...hand outstretched...

BEHIND HIM -- THE GIANT, out of the car, AIMING A GUN--
THEY WHIP PAST this view and hear: BANG! BANG! Gunshots

LIONEL
GO BACK!!

CONEY JAMS ON THE BRAKES. REVERSES, GRINDS GEARS...

The street comes back into view... As they turn into it they see...

THE GIANT, striding toward a pile of trash, raising a .45 in his GLOVED HAND, pointing down. He looks up as CONEY squeals to a stop 20 yards away.

LIONEL jerks open the door and shouts...

THE GIANT whips the gun up and pops off a SHOT and LIONEL DUCKS AS IT THUNKS INTO THE EDGE OF HIS DOOR.

ANGLE ON: TWO WORKERS poking their heads around the corner and seeing what's going on. One bolts

LOU
(seeing this - to GIANT)
C'MON!!

The GIANT DROPS THE GUN ON THE STREET, jumps into the BLACK CAR, tires squealing as it races off and disappears around a corner...

LIONEL pops up and scans the alley...

POV: A PILE OF TRASH with a LEG sticking out

LIONEL
FRANK!

He dashes around the nose of the car and over to find...

MINNA: SHOT THROUGH THE BACK AND THE GUT, BLEEDING ON THE GROUND, FACE ASHEN, HAT FALLEN OFF...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Jesus, Frank.

MINNA
Wanna help me outta here please?

Lionel tries to prop him up. Coney pulls the car up, looking out his window

CONEY
Oh, shit...

LIONEL
Help me.

Coney piles out and opens the rear door. Lionel lifts Frank under the arms, Coney his legs but he drops one of his feet

MINNA
AAH! Jesus Coney, you lug wrench!

Lionel climbs in, pulling Minna across the back seat

MINNA (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Don't leave my hat!

CONEY
Frank, forget--

MINNA
JUST GET MY HAT YOU BIG OAF!! Get
my gun too!

Coney turns back and grabs the HAT, throws it into the car, slams the rear door and jumps into the driver seat, leaving the door open. He rolls forward, scooping up Frank's GUN on the move, slams the door and GUNS IT.

INT. LIONEL CAR / EXT QUEENS STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

Blasting down the streets

LIONEL
Head for the hospital. *Hospitable*
HERPETOLOGIST!

CONEY
I don't know around here!

MINNA
Mercy Hospital! Straight up
McGuinness, you cabbageheads!

Frank is bleeding into his shirt but seems reasonably okay. Lionel *BARKS* three times loudly. Minna smiles.

MINNA (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Easy, pal...Hey, take my wallet
and watch and leave em in the car.
Don't want em stolen at the
hospital.

CONEY
Fuck happened, Frank?

MINNA
Took em on a goose chase and tried
to slip em...

LIONEL
We shoulda jumped in sooner, I
thought you were signaling...

MINNA
Nah, not your fault...almost made
it. Forgot they had my gun.

(MORE)

MINNA (CONT'D)

Rookie move.

(laughs, rueful)

Got through Guadalcanal without a scratch and I get shot with my own gun in Queens.

CONEY

You gonna be okay?

MINNA

Yeah, yeah. Clipped me in the side. Gotta get a new belt but they didn't hit nothing important.

Minna winks at Lionel and smiles again.

LIONEL

Who? Who were they?

Minna shakes his head.

MINNA

Don't worry about it. Talk to me, Brooklyn. I need a joke. You got one you been saving?

LIONEL

Huh? Okay. Guy walks into a bar...

MINNA

(laughs and winces)

Bar joke. All the best ones, right?

LIONEL

Guy walks into a bar with an octopus. Says to the bartender "I'll bet a hundred this octopus can play any instrument in the joint."

MINNA

Funny already. An octopus. Already in the black here.

LIONEL

REACTOPUS! Bartender points to a piano. Guy puts the octopus up on the stool-- *PIANOPUS!* Octopus plays a few scales and then lays out a little etude...

MINNA

Getting fancy, huh? Showin' off a little?

THE CAR SLAMS OVER A BUMP! MINNA cries out. LIONEL is desperate.

LIONEL

EAT ME BAILEY! Bartender pulls out a guitar. Octopus tunes the E string, closes its eyes and whips out a sweet little fandango--

MINNA

He's milking it.

LIONEL

FANDAFAG!-- Guys says, "Pay up." Bartender say, "Hang on." Rummages around and finds an old set of bagpipes. Plops em on the bar. Guy brings the octopus over--
OCTAPIPES! FUUU---

MINNA

(smiles)

Don't blow the punch, Lionel.

LIONEL

Octopus looks em over. Squints at em, takes another look. Bartender says, "Pay up! He can't play it!" And the Octopus says, "Play it? If I can figure out how to get its pajamas off I'm gonna fuck it!"
FUCK ME IN TRUCK, BAILEY!

Minna smiles but his eyes are closed. He coughs with a gurgling sound. Coney looks at Lionel, worried.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

WATCH OUT!

ACROSS CONEY: as he blows through a light and out his window a DELIVERY TRUCK HURTLES INTO THE INTERSECTION DIRECTLY AT THEM. HE SWERVES VIOLENTLY.

WIDE ON THE INTERSECTION: the SKIDDING TRUCK, HORN BLARING, MISSES THE REAR BUMPER OF THEIR FISH-TAILING CAR BY AN INCH

MINNA

(weak)

Jesus, what are we doing?

CONEY

Almost there...

LIONEL

Hang on, Boss. Tell us who did it.

MINNA

Shouldn'ta messed with em.
Stupid.

CONEY

They plugged you and left you in
the goddam garbage, Frank! Now who
was it?

MINNA

I'll tell ya later. Just drive,
meatloaf!

LIONEL

MEAT MONGER! LOAF-A-LOPE!

MINNA

A whole fuckin' herd of em.

INT. LIONEL CAR / EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - DUSK

The ambulance ramp has a "DO NOT ENTER" sign but THE CAR
PLOWS PAST and races up to a screeching stop by the ER
doors An ORDERLY bursts out the ER doors as Coney jumps
from the driver seat and throws open the back door

ORDERLY

Get this car out of here!

CONEY

We're an ambulance today, pal.

The orderly sees the mess that is Frank and blanches.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Minna on a gurney, a Nurse and two orderlies racing it down
a hall with LIONEL hanging by Frank's side. He holds
Minna's hand and taps his shoulder compulsively as they
enter the...

INT. SURGERY ROOM

The doctors swarm. A nurse pulls his hat from his head and
throws it aside. Minna reaches for it...agitated.

MINNA

No...

They start cutting away his shirt. Lionel has to look away from it and into Minna's face.

NURSE

Sir...

LIONEL

Boss, who was in that room?

MINNA

Ah shit, Brooklyn, she's in trouble now.

LIONEL

Who, Frank? What went down in there?!

MINNA

(shakes his head)

Played outta my league...shoulda kept it...

He reaches for his head, getting manic.

He coughs up blood. They're putting something in his arm.

LIONEL

Blood Bag, Bailey!

NURSE

Sir, you can't be in here!

Minna grabs Lionel's arm.

MINNA

(really spacey now)

Hey, Brooklyn...

LIONEL

I'm here, Frank.

MINNA

You're no freak. Okay?

LIONEL

Okay. Who did it, Frank?

Minna's eyes are scared now. He's trying to say something.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

You were working for those guys?

Minna shakes his head. Tries to whisper something.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
(leaning down)
What? What Frank?

MINNA
(barely audible)
Formosa...

LIONEL
Formosa? What is that?

MINNA
(mouthing)
For..mos..

Minna's head goes back. A DOCTOR reacts and moves in, shoving Lionel out of the way.

DOCTOR
Move!

NURSE
Sir!!

She pushes Lionel back and away. He goes and picks FRANK'S HAT up off the floor and backs out the SWINGING DOORS.

LIONEL'S FACE: Peering through the glass.

POV: a circle of white around the table with Minna's black wingtips sticking out. A Doctor's shoulders going up and down, and then...

SLOW MOTION: the shoulders stop and sag. A head shakes. The doctor turns toward the door pulling his mask down.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Doors open: the doctor comes into the hall. Lionel stands, holding Frank's hat and twitching violently.

LIONEL
Guy walks into a bar...

DOCTOR
Are you his friend?

Lionel taps him on the shoulder, nodding.

LIONEL
Guy walks into a bar...

DOCTOR
He didn't make it.

LIONEL
Oh no... A guy walks--

DOCTOR
--I'm very sorry--

LIONEL
--into a bar! *SO SORRY, BAILEY!*

LIONEL pushes past the doctor like a drowning man. He's out of control. He needs air.

CONEY sees him coming and knows. He bows his head and tries to slow Lionel down but Lionel blows past...

EXT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - MAGIC HOUR

Lionel explodes out of the building in despair. He looks up at the sky, clutching Frank's hat, ticc-ing and shouting.

FROM ABOVE: Coney walks out and stands with his hand on Lionel's shoulder...and we CUT TO:

EXT. THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE & NEW YORK SKYLINE - NIGHT

MAIN TITLE: MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN

INT. THE L&L AGENCY OFFICE - NIGHT

A low-rent office. A few desks in an open room; chairs on rollers; filing cabinets. One door with frosted glass leads to Minna's office. Another to a darkroom.

LIONEL sits slumped in a chair, his bloody coat, Frank's hat and other stuff on the desk in front of him.

Coney leans against the wall smoking a cigarette.

TONY VERMONTE and DANNY FANTL sit on desks. TONY is slick. A clothes horse, impatient to get to something better: the leader of these four. DANNY's early 40's, skinny and a little haunted...but solid, wise. A listener.

TONY
...the fuck you let him get in
that car for, Freakshow?

LIONEL

He gave us the cue to follow. We made a move to get in...but he signaled me off...I think...

TONY

You think? You said they roughed him up in the room though.

LIONEL

I'm not sure. They mighta. Anyway he said "use the can" after that. *Can the loose man.*

TONY

So he's takin' em to something they want and they off him? It doesn't track.

LIONEL

I told you he tried to give em the slip...I don't know, it happened fast and we didn't see it.

TONY

How the fuck'd you drop so far off him?

LIONEL

(exploding)

I told you three times, Tony... We lost him at the bridge, they had some fucking badge! The fuck were we supposed to do?!

CONEY

Freakshow's right. It was a mess.

DANNY

So who were they?

CONEY

He wouldn't say. Even in the car after.

TONY

(pissed)

Right. That's great, Frank.

He throws a pen at Frank's door and turns away exasperated.

A long glum silence.

DANNY
We gotta tell Julia.

Coney flicks a tiny look to Tony. Lionel sees it.

TONY
I told her already.

DANNY
When?

TONY
She called looking for Frank.

LIONEL
Timbuktuk-it. How'd she take it?

TONY
How'd you think she took it, Freak-
-

Lionel kicks a chair at him hard.

LIONEL
Don't say it again, I ain't in the mood!

TONY
Alright take it easy...I'm just saying...you know how she can be.

Silence.

DANNY
Someone should take her his things.

An awkward pause. Nobody wants it.

LIONEL
I'll do it.

He stands and reaches for his coat but realizes it's covered in blood, his sweater too. Danny hops up, reaches into Minna's office door and grabs Frank's old NAVY PEA COAT. He hands it to Lionel, who balks but Danny pushes it on him

DANNY
Go on, take it. You can't go walk around like that.
(as Lionel shrugs it on)
You sure you wanna do this?

LIONEL

I was with him. Maybe she'll want to know what happened at the end.

He heads for the door.

TONY

He say anything about her?

LIONEL

No.

TONY

Then help him out one last time and lie a little.

INT. FRANK & JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

LIONEL comes in through the foyer of a brownstone to the first floor apartment.

The door opens on JULIA, Frank's wife. Early forties, blonde. Still really good-looking. But hard...out for herself mostly.

She has a look on her face like she's expecting someone and when she sees Lionel, it falls a little.

JULIA

Oh...Lionel.

LIONEL

(awkward)
Hi Julia...

JULIA

Don't bother. The hospital already called.

A strange little lie...

LIONEL

No...I brought you Frank's things.

JULIA

Oh. I thought you were gonna break the news to me again.

He enters and puts the clothes on the table. She goes to light a cigarette.

LIONEL

Julia, I'm really...

JULIA

Yeah, nice twist huh? Didn't see that one coming, I gotta say.

LIONEL

Twisty twinky. Sorry.

Lionel is trying hard not to twitch around her but the effort almost makes it worse. Lionel clearly makes her a little uncomfortable.

JULIA

Look, I just wanna be alone, okay?

LIONEL

Sure.

He flips Frank's hat onto the side table and dumps out of it: a watch, a matchbook, some change, an address book, Frank's wallet...

JULIA

Gimme the watch I guess. I don't want all the rest of that stuff.

He hands it to her...

LIONEL

I'm gonna keep his gun, if that's okay with you.

(she nods)

You want his hat?

JULIA

What for? Is there money in that wallet?

Lionel takes the money out of the wallet to hand to her

JULIA (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Jesus, it has blood on it, for chrissakes! I don't wanna see that. Ain't you got any sense?

Emotion is rising in her...Lionel scoops up the cash and gun with the loose stuff and pockets what he can. He pauses on one item: Frank's wedding ring. She takes it and turns it over and this actually gets her to tear up a little. She sits on the couch.

JULIA (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Ah jeez...Was somebody with him anyway? When he...?

LIONEL

I was.

JULIA

That's good. He really liked you,
you know?

LIONEL

Yeah. (beat) He was talking about
you...wanted me to tell you he...

JULIA

(bitter)
Yeah, don't bullshit me. Goddam
it, I'm pissed at him!

LIONEL

Don't be.

JULIA

(snaps)
Well I am!

He lets out a yelp and she stares at him. She's seen it plenty of times but it's still weird to her. He picks up Frank's hat and turns to go then pauses...

LIONEL

Julia...Frank say anything to you
about what he was working on?

JULIA

He never told me what he was mixed
up in. You got no idea who did it?

LIONEL

(shakes his head)
But if I figure it out, I'm gonna
make 'em regret it. I promise you
that.

JULIA

Don't promise me. It makes no
difference to me one way or the
other.

EXT. FRANK & JULIA'S APARTMENT / STREET - NIGHT

Lionel comes down their stoop and walks up the cold dark street. A sad figure. His twitching is becoming pronounced.

EXT. ESTABLISHING - LIONEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

INT. LIONEL'S BUILDING - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Lionel mounts the stairs, tired, and turns on the landing. He stops and sits down, almost out of sight behind the bannister but we can see him put his head down and weep.

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lionel enters takes off his coat and hat. He hangs Minna's hat up next to his on the wall... His weeping has turned into twitches and small shouts that seem to be building...

A MIRROR reflects his bed. In it we see him sit only partly visible on the edge of the bed, get something out of a drawer (a small pipe) and then a match flares and we see him inhaling something. He sets it down and takes a photo off the side table

PHOTO: Much younger and cooler looking Frank Minna with his arm around a young Lionel, skinny...both smiling.

ON LIONEL: eyes glazing, he smiles a little and lets himself fall back onto the bed...

INT. LIONEL'S DREAM/SWIMMING POOL

As he hits the sheets they ripple TURNING INTO AMBER COLORED WATER. Lionel sinks slowly, happily, eyes open

We see him sinking fully clothed in a limitless pool of water with amber light dancing around him and as he sinks...

...a SHADOWY FIGURE swims past on the surface above him.

CLOSE ON LIONEL'S EYES: disturbed

LIONEL'S POV: from down below looking up through the water, dancing with amber light, A MAN SWIMS HARD ON THE SURFACE, PASSING OVER HIM.

INT. INDOOR POOL - EARLY MORNING

A HUGE PUBLIC INDOOR POOL of the kind they don't build anymore. Stained glass, beautiful tile, etc.

It's early morning, dawn light cracking in, and the steam and the light dance on the water. A LONE FIGURE swims powerful laps. Back and forth without pause. A YOUNG AIDE in a suit sits on a bench in the shadows with a valise full of papers in his lap waiting.

Finally the swimmer climbs straight up out of the water, his back to us. He's powerfully built. A BLACK POOL ATTENDANT emerges out of the shadows to put a robe around him and the YOUNG AIDE in the suit hurries to catch up as THE MAN exits.

EXT. PUBLIC ATHLETIC CLUB - MORNING

A SMALL FLAG with an unfamiliar insignia decorates one corner of a BIG BLACK CAR's hood. THE LICENSE PLATE reads "BA 1".

WIDE: by the doors of the MEN's side of the public bathhouse. About a dozen people wait in the cold and spitting RAIN to be let in to swim. The doors burst open and an umbrella is thrown up by the DRIVER for THE MAN, shielding his face from view as he descends the stairs.

MAN (MOSES RANDOLPH)

Let em in, Charlie.

With his entourage, he heads down the steps to the car in the pre-dawn grey. His aide takes the umbrella and hands over the valise as the MAN climbs in and the car pulls away, leaving him standing in the rain.

INT. CITY HALL ROTUNDA - MORNING

Huge marble rotunda, set up for A SEATED CROWD.

A VOICE BOOMS OVER A MIC. THE END OF A SPEECH

VOICE (MAYOR)

...limited only by our own vision,
our own audacity, we will build
the legacy of our time. A legacy
for future generations to look
upon and say "Here was Boldness.
Here is the greatest of what Man
can create."

Newly elected, this is the end of THE NEW MAYOR'S inaugural address. The crowd APPLAUDS.

OVER THE SHOULDER of someone standing off to the side, by a column.

It's THE MAN FROM THE POOL, but we still can't see his face as he stares at the ceiling, impatient. A glimpse of a strong jaw, as others applaud he looks at his watch.

INT. GRAND MARBLE HALL - ROTUNDA - A MOMENT LATER

MAYOR ON THE DAIS, swearing in his Appointees handing the rolled appointment papers and shaking hands, watched by...

THREE REFORM ADVOCATES (Two men and a woman (GABBY HOROWITZ), among the seated guests. One nudges the others as THE MAYOR gets handed the rolled appointment forms for the next appointee.

THE MAYOR looks up as THE MAN steps in front of him, face unseen to us. THE MAYOR hitches for a second, and then fixes a politic smile on his face.

MAYOR
Ah, Mo...splendid!

THE MAN raises his right hand.

MAYOR (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Do you solemnly swear to serve the people of New York and uphold the integrity of the office of Commissioner of the City's Parks?

THE MAN (MOSES RANDOLPH)
I do.

The Mayor smiles and hands him the paper.

MAYOR
Do you solemnly swear to serve the people of New York and uphold the integrity of the office of Commissioner of Building and Construction?

THE MAN (MOSES RANDOLPH)
I do.

The Mayor hands him the paper and starts the applause.

THE MAN stands still, waiting.

MAYOR
Good to have you aboard, Mo. Keep up the good work.

He puts out his hand but...

THE MAN STORMS OFF.

The Mayor beckons to the next appointee and cuts his eyes to THE TRIO IN THE SECOND ROW, watching the moment avidly.

One raises a small smile and gives an impressed nod to the Mayor

WOMAN REFORMER (GABBY HOROWITZ)
I'll be damned, he did it.

REFORMER #2
I told you. He's no pushover this one.

THE WOMAN'S EYES GO TO: The mysterious man disappearing down a hall.

WOMAN REFORMER (GABBY HOROWITZ)
\$10 it won't last past noon.

They shake as THE MAYOR POSES FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS and FLASHES takes us to:

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE/HALLWAY/OTHER OFFICE

ON THE MAYOR: laughing and celebrating with his men when...

THE SOUND OF DOORS BURSTING OPEN makes them turn. THE MAYOR'S FACE FLUSHES as THE MAN steps in on him.

THE MAN (MOSES RANDOLPH)
What is this shit? What about City Planning?!

MAYOR
(stammers)
Sorry, what's all this now, Mo?

THE MAN (MOSES RANDOLPH)
Don't play games with me, you mutt! I get City Planning or I quit the other two. Right now. The reporters are still here.

MAYOR
(nervous, bluffing)
Easy now, it's nothing to get hot about. Probably just an oversight. They didn't give me the blank. Give us a day to get settled in and I'll see to it.

But THE MAN has already turned and charged out.

MAYOR'S POV: the powerful figure strides out through the open double doors to the clerk's desk in the hall where, without hesitation he swipes a form from a terrified clerk, bends to write on it hastily...

The MAYOR looks at his men. 'What do I do?' but THE MAN IS CHARGING BACK ACROSS THE HALL STRAIGHT AT US

Powerful strides bring him into full view for the first time as he bears down; tall and strong, jaw thrust out, flashing eyes and big hawkish nose, coming like a juggernaut until

HE'S RIGHT ON US, SLAPPING THE FORM DOWN, FURIOUS

THE MAN (MOSES RANDOLPH)
NOW SIGN IT!

THIS IS MOSES RANDOLPH.

THE MAYOR: stares for a beat...then pulls the form toward him and, on his first day in office, he does as he's told.

RANDOLPH
Right! Bunch of fucking amateurs.

He snatches up the form and leaves.

Awkward silence.

MAYOR
Close that damn door and keep it closed!

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A RADIO PLAYS.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
...new life in talks between the City and Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley who wants a site and financing for a new stadium to keep the boys in Brooklyn...

LIONEL shuts it off. Coat on. Goes to take his cap.

TWO HATS on the wall. He stares a beat, then takes...

MINNA'S HAT. He holds it a moment. He puts it on his head to check the size. Pretty good fit. He checks it in the mirror, straightens the brim and goes.

(for the rest of the story Lionel wears Minna's hat)

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - SAME MORNING

A bundle of World Telegram Suns slaps down and has the cord cut off.

"MEET THE NEW BOSS: Mayor's Full Inaugural "

LIONEL walks past and down the block, nursing a coffee, past boys hawking papers...

PAPERBOY

Dodgers can stay if City will give
em a Yard!

He passes volunteers for the Committee Against Discrimination in Housing tacking flyers up to a telephone pole.

INT. THE L&L OFFICE - MORNING

Lionel enters to find...

THE OFFICE HAS BEEN TRASHED, turned upside down.

The other guys are already there and Julia is sitting in a chair, crying a little, shaken. Tony's comforting her.

JULIA

...asking all kinds a
questions...I told em "Christ he's
dead, what are you gonna arrest
him?"

CONEY

(to Lionel)
..the fuck you been? Called you
all morning.

LIONEL

What the hell happened?

CONEY

Danny had a early run out to
Belmont. Came in and found it like
this.

DANNY

(lower)
Cops were at Frank's place too...
going through everything.

JULIA

...assholes. Picking in my underwear drawer and grinning at me.

TONY

We're gonna find out who did this and get to the bottom of it, right boys?

JULIA

I don't even wanna know. Always with his cryptic shit, telling me he was into something big this time...gonna change our situation. Gets himself whacked and leaves me \$4000 in a savings and loan, a drafty shack in Lookout Point and this...thriving operation. Ace moves, Frank...

She weeps a little more...for Frank or for herself? Tony pats her back as Danny shoots Lionel a look. She gets herself together.

JULIA (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Look I know the car service was mostly for the books but he never talked about how he ran the snoop work and I ain't interested. So I'm putting Tony in charge. He'll handle the business of it and keep me in the loop.

(pause)

I know you all go way back with him, longer than me, but that's just the way it is for now I guess.

TONY

Sure, doll. It's the right thing.

CONEY AND DANNY

'Course. Sure.

Lionel nods.

TONY

You want me to take you home?

She looks at him a beat, considering, then gets up...

JULIA

No thanks. I'm gonna go stay with my sister for a while...think about my future. But call me...you know.. with an update?

Tony goes to open the door. She shakes hands with Coney and Danny, who kisses her on the cheek. Lionel rises and goes to shake her hand but he has to tap her shoulder twice. She reacts, annoyed.

JULIA (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Can't you ever cut that out?! For once!

LIONEL

Sorry...

Tony rolls his eyes and leads her out the door.

CONEY

Jesus, Freakshow.

LIONEL

(embarrassed)
Touch it, Bailey!

Danny and Lionel start picking up papers and files.

DANNY

Assholes even pulled the tank off the john.

Tony enters.

TONY

Alright, forget that, do it later. Right now, just the four of us: Does anybody know what Frank was into on this?

Nobody.

CONEY

He just told us to meet him for a sit. He didn't even make like it was a big thing.

LIONEL

He was nervous though.

TONY

Nervous how?

CONEY

He wasn't nervous.

LIONEL

Were you on that line, dumbshit?
I'm telling you he was nervous.
Nervous Nellie! I could hear it.
He was making some kind of a play.
There's something big going down a
week from Thursday and whatever he
found they weren't happy about it.

CONEY

Obviously. They whacked him for
it.

LIONEL

CRACK WACKER! I don't think they
meant to...I think when they shot
him the they messed up and now
they're stuck looking for whatever
he found.

TONY

Some fuckin' riddle. Jesus H.
(weighing it)
I'm gonna say this: I loved the
guy. When we were in that fucking
hell hole he saw something in us
and threw us a line...taught us
how to operate. But he never cut
us in all the way. He played his
own games and I'm not gonna stick
my nose around his dead cards and
risk ending up on a slab for it.
(beat)
I say we got bills to pay and we
better get at it.

Coney and Danny nod.

LIONEL

You owe him more'n that, T.

TONY

Yeah? Well you figure out what the
fuck it was all about, let us
know. Meantime, I'm finishing up
on the rabbi's wife. She's banging
a butcher who ain't kosher so I
think he's really gonna give her
the boot this time and that's
gonna be the last of that ride.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

I want Gil sitting on the
Gunderson fraud thing...

LIONEL

I'm on Gunderson.

TONY

I want Gil on it...When we bust
him the insurance company might
want us in there to show the
pictures to his lawyer and I wanna
make a good impression and Frank
ain't here to cover for you.

LIONEL

Fraud fag!

TONY

Like I said. Gil, you're on it.
Danny'll back me on nights and
Lionel you pick up the car slack
for him until something else comes
in.

Lionel stares at Tony. So this is how it's going to be.

TONY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

It's cold. There'll be a lot of
calls and we need that business.
Now let's clean up!

Lionel shrugs, his mind still on Minna.

INT. THE L&L OFFICE (1 HOUR LATER) - DAY

FINGERS PULLING THE THREAD

LIONEL sits by the window, holding Minna's hat, staring out
at the street. He has fixed up the office --
immaculate...compulsively ordered.

LIONEL (V.O.)

*Tony and Coney and Danny and me.
Before we were Minna's men we were
all just dead end kids at the
Catholic orphanage.*

His eyes go to...

"FRANK MINNA: HEAD INVESTIGATOR" stenciled on the frosted
glass door

LIONEL
Invest-ahead.

RING! Phone.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
 L&L.
 (beat)
 We have cars available, where
 would you... Chevy, ma'm. Yes
 ma'm, this year's model...

LIONEL (V.O.)
*I was worse in there. Total
 freakshow. Nobody knew what to do
 with me. The nuns thought they
 could beat it out of me. One in
 particular. Until Tony grabbed the
 paddle out of her hand and told
 her if she hit me again he'd give
 it to her twice as hard. Coney
 and Danny were standing behind him
 and she knew they weren't
 bluffing. After that, I was in
 their crew.*

Hangs up. He writes down words, mind turning

NOTES: colored girl, committee, Horowitz, report, Hamilton,
 signature, father club, one week.

RING!

LIONEL (cont'd)
 L&L Agency.

VOICE
 Tony Vermonte in?

LIONEL
 He's out on a case, how can I help
 you?

VOICE
 Who am I speaking to?

Feels it coming and puts the phone on his chest.

LIONEL
ASSROG!
 (back in the phone)
 Lionel Essrog, associate invest--

The phone clicks and goes dead. He stares at it a beat and hangs it up slowly. Looks back at the notes.

He writes: FORMOSA
 Then: FORMOSAS
 Then: FOR MOSA
 Then: FORM OSA
 Then: FORMO SA

LIONEL (CONT'D)
 (frustrated)
FORM MY ASS, BAILEY!

He pops fresh gum, jumps up and goes into...

INT. L&L OFFICE - FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Pictures of Frank and the guys. Licenses. Frank's BLACK TRENCH-COAT. He puts on the coat and MINNA'S HAT, sits in Frank's chair and stares.

LIONEL (V.O.)
Frank was just from the neighborhood. He was smart. Everybody knew he was going places. Everybody liked him. He was friends with one of the priests and heard I had a thing for remembering numbers and words. He had uses for that. He was the one who taught me how to use my head, get it under control, make it work for me. He took all us is under his wing eventually. Gave us a place in this shitty world.

He starts rubbing his temples and things SLOW DOWN...

EXT. HARLEM SIDE STREET / QUEENS STREET- DAY (FLASHBACKS)

FRANK'S FACE LOOKING AT HIM AS THE CAR DOOR CLOSES

FRANK REACHING OUT TO THEM AS THEY WHIP BY...

BANG!

INT. L&L OFFICE - FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
 Lionel?

LIONEL
(popping up)
IF!

DANNY
Jesus Christ...through the glass.
Thought I was seeing a ghost. What
are you doing?

LIONEL
Spinning. You back already?

DANNY
Nah, a round trip. Gotta go back
in a bit.

Lionel nods, staring into space.

DANNY (cont'd) (CONT'D)
You alright?

LIONEL
(tortured)
I shoulda never let him get in
that car. I think I blew it,
Danny.

DANNY
I had a Sergeant during the
Bulge...He told me "Sometimes you
do everything you're supposed to
and it still goes to shit." It
ain't on you, bud.

LIONEL
Yeah. Thanks, D.

DANNY
Any calls?

LIONEL
What? Oh yeah...shit. What time is
it? Gotta pickup at 2:30.

CLOCK: 2:15 He jumps up and takes Minna's coat and hat
off, grabs the pea coat and heads to the door.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
IF! Hey. You ever hear Frank say
anything about "Formosa"?

DANNY
What like the Jap island?
(thinks)
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Nope. He was wounded and out before that.

Lionel shrugs and starts out again.

DANNY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

You know there's that joint Formosa in mid-town. I tried to take Linda there to hear Chet Baker once.

EXT. FORMOSA LOUNGE (MID-TOWN STREET) - DAY

His car slides up on a club marquee. "THE FORMOSA".

LIONEL (V.O.)

Frank didn't have to cover for me, he just never put me out into situations that were going to punch my buttons. Talking to people, getting information out of em, that's the bread and butter of the trade but never my strong suit...

INT. FORMOSA LOUNGE - DAY

50's supper club. Classy. Lionel comes in and looks around. It's afternoon empty. Latin guys setting the floor tables.

There's a HOSTESS cleaning up candles from tables

LIONEL (V.O.)

...especially if a girl shows up in the mix. And in this line of work, they usually do.

BARTENDER comes over as Lionel eases onto a stool.

BARTENDER

Music's at seven.

LIONEL

Can I get an early one? Whiskey ginger.

Bartender nods. Lionel pulls a bill and a matchbook out of his pocket, puts them on the bar. Takes Minna's detective license out of his coat.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Say pal, you in here regular?

BARTENDER
Most of my life.

LIONEL
You know a guy named Minna? Frank.
That's him.

The bartender looks a beat. Shakes his head

BARTENDER
Everybody looks like everybody to
me. But I don't think so. She's
good with faces.

The HOSTESS slides up, overhearing, and indicates to let
her see the photo. Studies it then shakes her head but
takes in Lionel: kinda cute. She smiles, flirts.

HOSTESS
Nice face.

LIONEL
(nervous)
Nice yourself.

HOSTESS
Got a light?

Lionel opens the matchbook. Lights one and starts to hold
it for her as she leans -- then blows it out.

HOSTESS (CONT'D)
Ooh. You a tease?

He lights another one, blows it out as she leans again. Her
eyebrows raise...

LIONEL
Sorry...

Fast now, lights a third, trying to keep it together.
Compulsively blows it out.

HOSTESS
(rolls her eyes)
Jeez, forget I asked.

And she's gone. Lionel doesn't even sigh. This is his
isolation and he's used to it. The bartender is laughing
though...

BARTENDER
You got something against blondes?

LIONEL

Nah, it's...it has to sound right
or I can't stop doing it.

He lights two more matches and on the last one he's good.

BARTENDER

Must be inconvenient.

LIONEL

Buddy, you don't know the half of
it.

Starts to pocket the matches and change...

BARTENDER

That uptown shit's the real deal,
huh? You get up there much?

Lionel stops -- no idea what he's talking about. The guy
points at the matchbook

BARTENDER (cont'd) (CONT'D)

King Rooster.

Lionel turns the matchbook over. A ROOSTER WITH A CROWN ON
A RED BACKGROUND.

LIONEL -- staring. Where'd he get this? Opens it.

"B.A. - 2:30" written in a familiar hand. Realizes...It was
in Minna's pants.

LIONEL

I don't know it.

BARTENDER

Jazz joint in Harlem. Lucky's is a
good time too but the all the guys
playing Hard are at the Rooster.

LIONEL -- "a jazz club in Harlem". He's moving.

INT. LIONEL'S CAR #2 / EXT. HARLEM SIDE STREET - DAY

He drives along the block where Minna's mysterious meeting
took place.

EXT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - DAY

A RED NEON SIGN WITH THE CROWNED ROOSTER ON IT. Lionel
pulls up.

INT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - DAY

A small dark Harlem joint. Bar, tables and a little space for the band in a paneled corner that's hardly even a stage.

Black bartender setting up. THREE BLACK GUYS at a back table talking low. One with his back to the bar.

LIONEL enters and quick looks check him out. One guy, 50's very dark black skin, looks at Lionel in the mirror long and hard, watchful.

BARTENDER
We ain't open yet.

LIONEL
Can I get an early one? I'm
freezing here. Whiskey neat.

He slaps a bill up. The bartender'll take that.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
(fishing)
Say, you the manager?

BARTENDER
I look like the manager?

LIONEL
Who's playing tonight?

BARTENDER
(at the THREE GUYS)
Hey, Billy...

The DARK-SKINNED GUY with his back to the bar looks over. Lionel meets eyes with him in the mirror behind the bar.

BARTENDER (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Who's on tonight?

BILLY
Mr Big Shot.

His eyes locked on Lionel, he puts a cigarette in his mouth with his left hand and then using the same hand to snap open a lighter and light it...highlighting that his RIGHT ARM HANGS LIMP AND USELESS. Lionel still staring. Does he know that face?

BARTENDER
I hope they don't think they
drinking free.
(MORE)

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
(to Lionel re poster)
You caught this cat? I seen cool.
This brother rewriting cool.

He tries to make it seem like a sneeze. He's getting excited and that winds up his tics. He's got to get out.

LIONEL (cont'd)
Catch him another time. *If!*

BARTENDER
Don't wait long. Them French girls keep loving him up he's gonna move over there for good, you know what I'm saying?

LIONEL
French Kissing Cats! Thanks pal.

Lionel's out the door and we CUT TO:

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A RECORD SPINNING, a standard playing, sad but soothing.

Camera pans over to find LIONEL in a chair by the radiator with a joint. His head is moving as though he can't get a kink out of his neck. Or can't shake his brain.

LIONEL (V.O.)
*On my average day the weed will
handle my twitching and shouting
but it makes my thinking fuzzy.*

A CAT, comes over and climbs up in his lap. He pets her and this contact seems to calm him as he looks out the window at the lights on the street.

LIONEL (V.O.)
*In my dreams I'm calm and clear
like I was when I was a kid. Even
after my head started messing with
me, my mother could settle it down.
She'd sing soft songs and stroke
the back of my neck and it would
leave me for a while. We'd lie on
the bed and talk about all of the
places we were gonna go.*

The sad trumpet carries us over into....

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - MORNING

It's cold and clear. Lionel's got a coffee. People are hustling for the subway.

Lionel comes past a telephone pole close to camera, flicks his eyes at the flyers on it and EXITS...

PIECES OF PAPER posted to the pole rustle in the cold...

...and Lionel comes back into frame, looking closer at one of the flyers, reading:

SAVE OUR NEIGHBORHOODS!

SAVE FT. GREENE!

COME TO A PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED

HAMILTON HOUSING PLAN

Sponsored by:

Committee against Racial Discrimination in Housing

HAMILTON. COMMITTEE. Lionel takes it down and continues on to:

INT. L&L OFFICE/ EXT. COFFEE SHOP PAYPHONE - MORNING

Lionel enters Danny's reading the paper. Tony's on the phone, pissed...

TONY

Well, Christ, Coney, did you get the shot or not?...doing what?...Getting the paper ain't worth shit! The fuck does that have to do with his back?... Bending over, my ass, we gotta have him lifting the lawnmower out the car or playing tennis or spinning around the room with some broad sittin' up on his tentpole and his arms out wide. I don't care so long as it involves his back!...I know he's fakin' all the time, that's why he's won three claims! Wait him out or set him up!... I know it's cold, that's why they call it winter!

He hangs up. Sees Lionel looking at him. That was his case.

TONY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

I'm giving him the rest of the week.

DANNY

(not looking up)

If the guy lifted a cow into a truck, Coney'd still miss the shot. He still can't remember to wind the film. Thinks it's a Tommy-gun. I tell him 'click-advance-click-advance"...

TONY

Can it. I'm giving it a week.

Lionel goes to hang up his coat.

Phone rings. Tony grabs it...

TONY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Gimme a break, will ya Gil-- wha? Excuse me, yeah, L&L...

LIONEL

(to Danny)

We got pickups?

DANNY

Nobody ever needs a ride on Tuesday, you notice that? Never. Why is that?

TONY

...speaking...

(beat - his eyes flick to the guys)

Yeah fine...

(writing)

...yeah I got it.

He hangs up and puts the number in his pocket.

DANNY

Job?

TONY

Nah. For me.

DANNY

Don't go getting mysterious on us, T. You ain't no Minna.

TONY

Yet! I gotta get a prescription for my mother, clambrain. You need all the details? I'm going for coffee, you want?

DANNY
Cream and sugar.

Tony makes a pansy flick with his wrist, throws on his scarf and hustles out.

LIONEL
Hey, D... You up for something?

DANNY
Like what?

LIONEL
Sit on a joint for me.

DANNY
For you?

Lionel tosses him the matchbook.

LIONEL
Club up in Harlem. I think Frank was there that day or the day before...it was in his pants, almost full. *Fullsie Pants!*

DANNY
(skeptical)
Maybe he stopped in for a book of matches.

LIONEL glances out the window as they talk and sees...

TONY, across the street outside the coffee shop stopping at the payphone.

LIONEL
In the room he was talking about a girl, a colored chick. Something she knew had em pretty unhappy, wondering who else knew. Frank said her father is a busted up vet who runs a club...this joint is three blocks from that meet.

DANNY
You went there?

LIONEL
(nods)
Manager is a guy named Billy with a bum arm.

LIONEL POV: Tony pulls the number he wrote down and dials.

DANNY

So what am I supposed to do?

LIONEL

Get in there see if you can get her name out of him. Do your liquor board bit. *Lick Broader!*

DANNY

(laughs at that one)

Yeah, that's what she said. That's it, get her name?

LIONEL'S POV: Tony is talking to someone and making notes.

LIONEL

Well if you got nothing better to do... sit on it a while, see if she shows.

DANNY

If a colored chick shows up to a jazz joint? Lemme make a prediction...

LIONEL

No, I'm working another angle. We'll pin her down.

LIONEL'S POV: Tony on his way back.

DANNY

Okay but tell me something... What are we doing this for?

LIONEL

Cause he'd a done it for us.

DANNY

Right. It's fuckin' cold for a sit.

LIONEL

Take the Bel Air, heater'll roast you like a brisket. *Bet on the bris!*

DANNY

You're a rabbi too now, huh?

LIONEL

You don't want me handling your bris, believe me.

They both laugh.

INT. LIONEL'S CAR - DAY

He drifts through Brooklyn.

EXT. HOUSING COMMITTEE OFFICE - DAY

Lionel crosses the street heading for a nondescript office building. Checks the address and enters.

INT. HOUSING COMMITTEE OFFICE - A HALLWAY - DAY

Lionel finds a door with just a number on it. Checks his info again, takes out a piece of gum, folds it exactly in half and pops it in his mouth and then enters into...

INT. HOUSING COMMITTEE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

An open space with desks pushed up against one another. Low budget informality. A few private offices with doors at the far end and right in front by the door...

Lionel enters and goes to close the door but has to re-open it and close it twice more to make it sound right. He's good at stakeouts, not at this part. HIS EYES flick around...

People busy at work on phones, typing, filling out forms, conferring with each other. A few middle-aged Jewish men and women, and, Lionel immediately notices, FOUR YOUNG BLACK WOMEN, working in different parts of the room: one typing, one walking papers back to one of the offices...

One at a reception desk, looking up at Lionel.

LIONEL
(pretends it's a sneeze)
If!

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)
Bless you.

LIONEL
Thank you.

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)
Can I help you?

LIONEL

Yes, I'm here to see Mildred?

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)

Mildred? There's nobody by that name here.

LIONEL

I think it was Mildred...

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)

Myrna...?

She points at an older Jewish lady.

LIONEL

My myna bird, Myrna!

(covers)

No I believe she was a colored girl.

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)

Josephine or Laura?

She points at each as she says their names and Lionel makes note of their faces.

LIONEL

No I'm sure it was Mildred. She spoke to me on the phone about my application. What's your name?

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)

Betty. What sort of application.

LIONEL

My vendor's license.

Blank stare

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Is this not the licensing office?

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)

It's the Committee on Racial Discrimination in Housing.

LIONEL

Then you can't very well help me sell hot dogs can you!

(laughs too loud)

I'm sorry to have bothered you.

He tips his hat and starts to head out the door. On a hunch turns back and takes a flyer...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Is Mr. Horowitz in by any chance?

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)
You mean Mrs. Horowitz?

LIONEL
Either one'll do.

RECEPTIONIST (BETTY)
(really confused now)
She's in the back...oh there she
is...

They look and see Gabby Horowitz, director of the Committee, just stepping from her office with LAURA, one of the black girls. They see Betty pointing and look up.

Lionel waves and points as though to say "I'll see you outside" and quickly exits...

Gabby and LAURA look at each other. Who the hell was that?

INT. LIONEL'S CAR/EXT. HOUSING COMMITTEE OFFICE - DAY

A CAMERA LENS REFLECTING THE OLD INDUSTRIAL BUILDING

Lionel sits in the car across the street and checks the focus. PLUCKS AT HIS CUFF. Looks through the lens and perks up

THROUGH THE CAMERA we see... LAURA emerge, STRIKINGLY PRETTY with LIGHT BROWN SKIN; CLICK. CLICK.

LIONEL KEEPS WATCHING, muttering to himself.

LIONEL
*Horse-a-whip, Whore-a-witch,
Horowitz.*

He watches her walk away the flicks back to the door

A BUNCH OF PEOPLE FROM THE OFFICE, including Horowitz and THE OTHER THREE BLACK GIRLS.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. He's popping off shots of them all expertly, like a marksman. This he's good at.

She steps to the curb and hails a CAB. LIONEL starts his car. Mission accomplished.

INT. L & L OFFICE - DARKROOM - NIGHT

WHITE PAPER, SWISHING IN LIQUID

A picture emerges... the girl named LAURA. Very beautiful.

Lionel pulls it out of the tray and stares at it, then lets it dry with the others already printed.

TONY (O.S.)
Holy shit, what happened?!

Lionel rushes out into...

INT. L & L OFFICE - NIGHT

DANNY stands slumped against the door frame with TONY rushing to support him.

DANNY HAS BEEN BEATEN UP. He is very shaken, out of breath.

Tony moves Danny to a chair and loosens his tie.

Danny motions that he needs a drink and CONEY quickly pours him a shot from a bottle in a desk.

Danny downs it with a shaky hand.

CONEY
Who was it, D?

DANNY
Couple of em. One was a giant.

TONY
A what?

DANNY
A fuckin' giant, I'm telling you.
Biggest guy I ever saw.

Coney and Lionel look at each other, knowing.

DANNY (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Worked me over good. Smashed up
the camera.

LIONEL
They say anything?

DANNY

Yeah, "Stay outta Minna's garbage.
Tell your crew the same." Had a
big nasty knife on my throat for
that part.

That sits like a bomb for a second. Tony's jaw tenses.

CONEY

Son of a...

Danny reaches into his pocket...

DANNY

(to LIONEL)

Didn't get this though...assholes.

Tosses Lionel a ROLL OF FILM.

TONY

...the fuck is that? What are you
two into?

Danny looks at Lionel...and we CUT TO:

INT. L & L OFFICE - HALF HOUR LATER

Danny is cleaned up a little, butterfly bandage over his
swelling shiner, holding ice to his lip.

The RED LIGHT of the dark room goes out. Lionel emerges
with some still wet photos: Danny's roll...

He hustles to Danny takes three of his own photos, one of
each of the young black women, and lays them out on a desk
to compare with Danny's.

Danny looks over his shoulder, can't help being curious.

Lionel starts to flip through them....

DANNY'S PHOTOS:

- The outside of the King Rooster club
- The guy, BILLY, emerging from the club
- A man in a hat, face unseen, asking Billy for a light
- Over the man's shoulder on Billy looking away

DANNY

Forget all that, she didn't show
up until later...tail end of the
roll.

He grabs a few photos off the stack and moves them to the back...

- A black woman entering the club but too much from the back

Danny flips that one back...

DANNY (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Here...they came out together.

- BILLY and the girl named LAURA from the office talking
- LAURA kissing BILLY on the cheek as they part

LIONEL compares these to his own and quickly finds the match.

LIONEL
Match me, Bailey! That's it. She's
the one. Her name was Laura.

DANNY
Laura Rose then maybe. That's
Billy Rose. If he's her father...

CONEY
How the hell you know that?

LIONEL
(ignores him)
You tailed her?

DANNY
Didn't have to...she lives right
next to the club on the corner.
They musta made me earlier. Soon
as I got out the car to follow her
they were on me...

He stops. It really shook him up.

Lionel is excited though. Tony's paying attention.

LIONEL
I'm telling you this is the
colored broad Frank was tailing.

TONY
Okay, I'm with you but it's still
pretty thin.

CONEY
Skeletal.

LIONEL

We only just started!

They look at each other for a beat. Tony seems to be calculating something. His attitude has changed.

TONY

Whatever they want so bad's gotta be worth something, right? I'll tell you what, Freakshow, me and Gil'll stay on the money work, keep us floating...you and Danny keep sniffing it and we'll see where we get.

LIONEL

I ain't looking to make a deal with these fucks but yeah, okay.

CONEY

Whatever. Hell yeah, I hope those mugs poke around again. I'll have something for em.

Danny stares at the floor.

TONY

Whaddya say, D?

DANNY

Fellas, I loved the guy but...I mean I'll handle the cars, hustle some domestic shit, you know, but I got Linda and...

He can't say more, doesn't have to.

LIONEL

Sure, Danny. Right thing.

TONY

No doubt. Get on home, get a steak on that eye.

CONEY

C'mon, I'll give you a lift.

They leave. Tony and Lionel measure each other.

TONY

Look all I'm saying...maybe we can get something outta it, for Julia maybe...

LIONEL

For Julia? She can go twist.

TONY

Okay whatever. But don't go holding out on shit with me though. We work together, okay Lionel? I'll take anything we can scratch up to Mr. Capodanno and see what those boys know. We pin it on someone, we'll square accounts. My word on it.

Lionel looks at him and nods, then gets up.

TONY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

You wanna get a beer?

LIONEL

Nah, I'm going home. I'll see ya later.

Tony taps him on the shoulder in Lionel's rhythm, teasing.

TONY

C'mon...let's get a beer.

Lionel laughs at their old gag but shakes his head.

TONY (CONT'D)

Okay but don't stay up too late, Kemosabe.

He exits. Lionel stares at the photo of Laura and as we push in on her image we CUT TO:

EXT. LAURA'S BUILDING - MORNING

A passerby crosses the street in the cold passing through a small PARK where we find: LIONEL, sipping coffee, twitching a little and mumbling to himself. He seems happier when he's alone, less anxious about his tics. Almost seems to enjoy turning words over...

LIONEL

Laura Rose. Rose is a rose is a rose... *Larosa!*

And then he sees...LAURA comes out of her building, and he's out and moving to follow her...

She walks along in the cold, LIONEL sliding into view behind her as she makes her way to...

EXT. SUBWAY ENTRANCE - MORNING

Laura heads down the steps...Lionel follows.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MORNING

Laura boards the train and moves toward an empty seat only to have a WHITE GUY move his bag onto the seat and stare at her as the train begins to move. She stares at the man with no expression and he back at her, daring her. She turns her back to him leans against a pole, facing directly at LIONEL, which makes him feel a tic coming that he comically struggles to suppress. She takes a book from her bag, some sort of textbook and begins to read, studying and with this he turns away to release a tic and shout. A WOMAN WITH A SMALL GIRL reacts to this and moves the child away from him.

This makes Laura look up over her book for a moment, just as he turns back around and they meet each others gaze for just a second. She is composed and lovely.

EXT. FORT GREENE ROW-HOUSE STREET - DAY

Laura walks down a block with Lionel tailing behind.

The neighborhood is edgy, run down, with many boarded up row houses, uncollected trash and abandoned furnishings.

LAURA goes up a stoop and rings a bell. A BLACK LADY answers, wary. Laura talks for a moment and removes some papers from her bag, handing them to the woman. The woman glances at them, nods and closes the door.

ANOTHER DOOR. She buzzes.

A FACE IN THE SECOND FLOOR WINDOW... a wave.

ANOTHER BLACK LADY smiles and hands Laura a sheaf of the same forms and they talk. Lionel can see that the woman is indignant and that Laura is TAKING NOTES.

ANOTHER DOOR...this building so bombed out it looks abandoned but AN OLD BLACK MAN WRAPPED IN A BLANKET OPENS and this time Laura goes inside.

Lionel glimpses her in the window of the first floor.

LIONEL turns around for a closer look at a row-house behind him, its front door and second story windows boarded up. He looks up AT THE FRONT DOOR

A SIGN: **CONDEMNED: PROPERTY OF: BELMONT DEVELOPERS...**

A SOUND SURPRISES HIM and he jumps. To his surprise a WOMAN WITH TWO KIDS COME OUT from the garden level door under the stoop. He thought it was abandoned but clearly there are people squatting here. The WOMAN eyes him fearfully and hustles her kids away.

EXT. INWOOD RESIDENTIAL SERVICES - DAY

TIGHT ON: A PUDDLE OF WATER. Stark trees, fire escapes & sky reflected in it as LAURA steps across it, rippling the surface and we tilt up to find LIONEL tailing her.

He watches as she heads for a nondescript storefront/office: **Inwood Residential Services**. She goes to the door and tries it but it's locked. She turns and faces the street, clearly exasperated as a CAR pulls up and GABBY gets out of the driver side. She and Laura confer and Laura moves to get in the car.

LIONEL spots a cab and hails it but hustles over to the storefront for a quick look at the sign on the door:

"INWOOD: Your Happy Home is Our Business!". HOURS: 9-5

Lionel looks at his watch: 3:21 Should be open. But he hustles to his cab.

INT. CAB / EXT. ROADSIDE/OVERPASS - LATE AFTERNOON

The cab pulls over on the shoulder, a distance from the other car which is pulled up under an overpass, with hazard lights on.

Lionel's POV: the women getting out.

LIONEL
Get out and pop your hood and
check the oil.

CABBIE
Buddy, come on...

LIONEL
Keep the meter going.

He lifts his binoculars as the cabbie grudgingly complies.

Lionel's POV: Gabby shading her eyes, looking up at...

LAURA, who has climbed up the slope to the overpass above and is lowering a tape measure.

We PAN DOWN with the tape measure to Gabby, who records the height of the overpass.

ON LIONEL: no idea what they're doing. SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TOWN HALL BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

FACES IN A BUZZING SEATED CROWD as we tilt up to see GABBY & LAURA, hustling down the center aisle of a packed auditorium to where their staff members hold seats near a standing mic.

A group of men at two long tables on stage with mics. Among the men, THE MAYOR and LIEBERMAN.

LIONEL enters in the back and takes in the scene. He notes a guy in the back rows with 'PRESS' cards in his hat band and slides into a seat behind him. Lionel leans over his shoulder and takes out his notebook to play at being a fellow reporter

LIONEL

This ain't my beat. What's the story?

REPORTER(JACOB GLEASON)

Stories of injustice and despair, nodding heads and assurances, back to business as usual. The American Way. Although this one could make it interesting.

He indicates GABBY down the aisle conferring with Laura. He sees Gabby catch sight of: a TALL THIN MAN entering and taking his seat. Slightly frayed but hawk-like eyes focused intently on the proceedings. He nods at Gabby. Lionel deftly slips one of the reporter's cards from his hatband and pockets it with practiced ease.

A man onstage kicks things off. WILLIAM LIEBERMAN, one of Moses Randolph's sub-bosses.

LIEBERMAN

We'll commence this public comment. State your name, address and affiliation please. I'm William Lieberman, Mayor's Commission on Slum Clearance, resident of E.65th St, Manhattan

LADY AT MICROPHONE

Cindy Fleming, homemaker,
Yonkers...but formerly East
Tremont. My family was forced to
move when they seized our building
for the Bronx Expressway, and I
want people to know that--

He cuts her off and speaks to Gabby.

LIEBERMAN

Mrs. Horowitz, you may not hijack
these proceedings to air out old
complaints against...

GABBY

(rapidly, following rule)
Gabby Horowitz-Committee on Racial
Discrimination in Housing- 552
Clinton Ave, *BROOKLYN*. I thought
this was a community hearing?

LIEBERMAN

On housing not highways...

Lionel focuses on him... his VOICE familiar...

GABBY

You're making the same promises to
Ft Greene that you made in
Tremont, where your so-called
'relocation services' vanished
into thin air and left families
like the Flemings utterly adrift.
People have a right to know what
they're in for!

Lionel watches LAURA, slipping Gabby notes.

LIEBERMAN

We are totally committed to the
welfare of families displaced by
necessary community improvement
programs. The past has been
instructive and our new
contractors will ensure ALL find
adequate homes...

As she speaks MOSES RANDOLPH enters late from the side,
tuning in and already impatient. Gabby notes his arrival.

GABBY

This isn't Long Island you know...
It's not just a blank canvas you
can paint on anywhere you like.
There are people here, established
communities.

Randolph shoots an impatient look at the Mayor as he
SITS...The Mayor snaps up obediently...

MAYOR

I hope you all know my name. I'm
the Mayor, newly residing at
Gracie Mansion, Manhattan.

(a few laughs)

Mrs Horowitz, thank you for work
and your passion. Surely we can
all agree that even in a City as
great as ours we have slums. And
that a slum is not something to
romanticize or preserve. You tear
it down and improve quality of--

GABBY

A neighborhood is not a slum
because poor people and minorities
live there, Mr. Mayor. East
Tremont wasn't a slum, Third
Avenue wasn't a slum and Fort
Greene is not a slum either, these
are working class communities.

(to Randolph)

Your developers are making it a
slum!

This brings Randolph lunging forward.

RANDOLPH

That is unsubstantiated,
unmitigated bunk!

Laura hands her reams of paper which she holds aloft...

GABBY

We have it on paper, we have
twenty people here tonight and
scores behind them who can testify
to a scandalous fraud under
way...which way would you like it
first?

Randolph slaps the table with his flat palm violently,
rising out of his chair and overlapping her.

RANDOLPH

We are embarking on the most ambitious slum clearance program in American history Mrs. Horowitz and you are gumming it up with your molasses! A Niagara of molasses!

Suddenly a voice in the audience shouts:

VOICE (PAUL)
MAKE HIM SAY HIS NAME!

Heads turn. Lionel turns. Concern on Gabby's face.

ANGLE ON: THE TALL THIN MAN, still seated.

MAN (PAUL)
Name and place of residence, like everyone else!

A smattering of applause. The energy is winding Lionel up, his arm and head jerk spasmodically.

RANDOLPH stares out seeking the source of the voice, eyes narrowing, glaring. He crosses his arms defiantly. He looks at the Mayor: "Handle it."

The MAYOR rises.

MAYOR
Now see here, we all know perfectly well who this is... Mo Randolph is one our greatest public servants. He's a living legend.

MAN (PAUL)
Name and residence like *everybody else!*

The audience cheers, really behind it now. Some start to call out "Make him say it! Make him say it!" Gabby smiles discreetly. Lionel yelps-

LIONEL
Every Chevy shelf!

Randolph glares at the Mayor who is starting to sweat.

MAYOR

(trying to stay light)

He's led the Parks Department for over 30 years...he's Commissioner of Construction, well, he's got too many jobs to name!

(knowing laughter)

And he lives right across the street from me on East 88th, now let's stick to--

Cat calls... a few yells...many people rising to their feet

The MAN rises to his feet now, raging..

MAN (PAUL)

Make him say it!!

MAYOR

See here now, if we can't keep this civil we'll have to ask you to...

MAN (PAUL)

SAY IT!

The crowd chants "Say it!" This is too much for Lionel...

Lieberman nods to some plainclothes SECURITY MEN along the sides of the room who quickly descend on the MAN. And now the crowd is on its feet indignant. As they sweep behind LIONEL with the MAN (Paul) it's too much him and he leaps up shrieking

LIONEL

Two fucking pigs in a blanket!

So they grab him too and hustle him out with the MAN (Paul)

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Say it, Hammy Ham House Heads!!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN HALL MEETING/BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

Lionel and the MAN shrug off the final SHOVEDS of the cops and stand looking at each other in the street.

THE MAN is neatly dressed but his clothes are visibly worn and shabby. Gaunt and graying, he could be taken for a bum but his eyes are fierce and sharp, hawkish. We will come to know him as Paul.

He regards Lionel with curiosity...

PAUL

'Hammy Ham House Head', huh?
That's good. I'll have to remember
that one.

LIONEL

(still ticcing)
IF! Sorry... *IF!*

PAUL

Yeah, that's the rub in life
alright... 'if'... 'if only'...

He shakes his head and starts to walk away muttering to himself unintelligibly. Lionel stuffs gum, getting under control, calls out

LIONEL

Hey, hold on... tell me something.
That guy Lieberman, he's in charge
of this Hamilton deal?

PAUL

In charge? No, he's not in
charge...More in charge than that
guy calling himself Mayor but...
(laughs, turns away)
They all work formosa...

CU: Lionel's face as he barely hears that last word.

He runs after Paul and grabs him by the arm...

PAUL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Hey...!

LIONEL

You said "Formosa"...what's that?

PAUL

What? Let me go! You nuts?!

LIONEL

You said "They're all working
Formosa." What's that mean?

PAUL

What's 'Formosa'? Let go of me.
(realizing)
"For Moses." Jesus. I said they're
working for Moses. Moses Randolph.

Lionel realizes: that's what Frank said to him as he lay dying -- "For Moses"...

LIONEL

Mo Randolph? That guy who came in?

PAUL

Yeah... 'He who will not speak his name like one of the rabble'. What do you care?

Lionel quickly pulls out the reporter's card.

LIONEL

Jacob Gleason, the Post. Let me buy you a cup of coffee.

PAUL

I'm hungry. You can buy me dinner.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Paul digs in like a guy who eats too rarely. Lionel pops gum and nurses a tea...

Paul talks like a firehose...disgorging so much information, even as he chews, that it's hard to keep up with the thread. Huge pent up frustration venting in urgent torrents with hardly a pause between thoughts...

PAUL

(appalled)

The Mayor?! That clown is so green he doesn't even know what he doesn't know yet. He'll be out the door before he even realizes that every person he turns to for advice is on Randolph's payroll.

LIONEL

I thought he was Commissioner of Parks?

PAUL

He is.

LIONEL

But they called him Construction Commissioner.

PAUL

He's that too now. They never even *had* that position until the Feds decided to get in the housing game. It had no defined powers so he defined 'em and the Feds approved and now how much control of that money has the City got? Zero. He's got it all. You know what 'eminent domain' means? If he says it's a slum, it goes. He used to have to fight to put his highways and parks where he wanted, now he can go anywhere, tear anything down. He can condemn a whole section of the city, evict everyone who lives there and put up what he wants. And he'll go at it with an axe.

LIONEL

SMACKS AXE. He'll piss too many people off. He'll be the most hated man in NY.

PAUL

No, they love him! That's what makes me so... He flies above it. They *revere* him.

LIONEL

Why?

PAUL

Because he built the parks! As long as you're the guy who brings people parks, you walk with the angels, you can't lose. The day Rockaway Beach opened, Moses Randolph became a folk hero in this town. But people don't realize how much he hates them. "The Hero of the Public Who Hates People". There's your headline. And you know who he hates especially? (mouths 'Negroes') He's going to seize every neighborhood in this city that's not white and turn it over to his hand-picked private Developers.

LIONEL

So he's getting rich. Paid off.

PAUL

Nah, he doesn't want money...he wants control and he brokers money to get it and guard it. Some men aren't satisfied unless they have filet mignon. Moses would be happy with a pastrami sandwich and power.

(to a waitress)

Can I get a piece of cheesecake? And warm it up. Yeah, I want it warm!

(leans in)

Half the city is getting a ride on one of his horses. \$3.5 billion since the war! He cuts people in on one piece of it or another but he's the broker of all of it.

(almost to himself,
muted)

Bridge and Tunnel and now Title 1 ...for chrissake, he controls every fuckin' construction job in the city.

LIONEL

But you said they just created the position...so how...?

PAUL

Oh, christ...Construction-Parks-Slums...he's got 14 appointments! That's all just ink on a glass door, none of it matters, it's all the BA.

LIONEL

BA?

This actually stops Paul and makes him narrow his eyes.

PAUL

The Borough Authority, jeezus. Where do you come from, Iowa? Call yourself a reporter...on what, the Arts beat? You read Emerson?

LIONEL

(shakes no)
Should I?

PAUL

Yes, you fucking should! Emerson
said "an institution is the
lengthened shadow of one man"...

EXT. BOROUGH AUTHORITY HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Headlights of the waiting CAR light up the front of the massive stone face and steps of the edifice where Moses works.

PAUL (O.S.)

This town is run by the Borough
Authority and the Borough
Authority *is* Moses Randolph.

As the tall shadowy figure descends the stairs toward the cars his SHADOW THROWS HIGH OVER THE FACE OF THE BUILDING.

INT. ENTRANCE LOBBY OF NY PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Lionel walks through the grand marble lobby.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - GRAND READING ROOM - DAY

Lionel walks into the huge room carrying a few huge bound volumes of newspapers and sits at a table

C.U. - Articles on Moses Randolph. One after another announcing his accomplishments "West River Park Opens", "Hudson Highway", "A Grand New Beach for Gotham", "Bronx Expressway to Liberate Manhattan from Traffic Snarl".

And effusions of Randolph: "Servant of the People"; "A Reformer becomes a Builder: 'to build is to dream' says Moses Randolph"

PICTURES: the Triborough Bridge under construction. Moses smiling and shaking hands with one Mayor after another: LaGuardia; O'Dwyer; Impellitieri; the new Mayor...

Lionel stops on one: "The Men of the B.A." - a photo shows Randolph seated and smiling broadly, surrounded by men in Suits. Their names captioned: William Lieberman, George Spaulding, Tom Brooks...

LIONEL FOCUSES ON: **William Lieberman**. He was the man in the apartment with Minna. The one in charge...

LIONEL
 (whispered)
 Lieberman. *Leering man.*

CLOSE ON: another article...**"The Private Life of a Public Man...many of his closest colleagues were surprised to learn he has a brother."**

PICTURE: a YOUNGER MOSES RANDOLPH and A MAN WHO LOOKS VERY FAMILIAR...both in black tie attire and smiling...Randolph leans affectionately on his brother's shoulder

CAPTION: "Moses Randolph and Paul Randolph: 1927"

LIONEL'S FACE: recognizing Paul Randolph as the man he bought dinner for.

LIONEL (V.O.)
That quack in the diner with pork chop and peas in his beard was one of the most talented engineers of his generation. Ivy League. Big awards. Walking right next to his brother toward being someone important. Then sometime right after the Crash, just nothing. Like he got erased.

He takes out his pen-knife and quietly cuts out this photo and pockets it.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - READING ROOM - LATER

LIONEL (V.O.)
Maybe bad luck. Maybe booze. There was all kinds of casualties in those days.

TIME CUT: Lionel is handing the box of papers back to a clerk when he sees the clerk's paper lying open and a small HEADLINE:

"BUILDER'S ASSOC TO HONOR Moses Randolph...Plaza Hotel"

EXT. THE PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

INT. PLAZA HOTEL - CONCOURSE OUTSIDE BALLROOM/BALLROOM

Black tie crowd. Working class, union bosses, wives...but dressed up and slicked for their one big night.

Martini glasses and cigarettes. Union security at the doors to the Banquet with pins on their lapels.

LIONEL steps out of elevators behind a few late arrivals who hustle in. Inside beyond the check in table the vast floor of banquet tables and stage can be seen. Not in a tux and with no invite he clearly can't go in the normal way.

A BELL, signals the start of the program and people flow back in.

Lionel moves across to another door...more to the side, and slides up to the UNION SECURITY APE. He pulls the edge of an envelope from inside his jacket...

LIONEL

Gotta get this to Bill Lieberman.

The pea-brain UNION APE knows that name well enough to have to think...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

He's gonna want to see this before Randolph sits back down with him...

Too many big names to risk it. The guy waves him in and we begin to hear...

SPEAKER

Ladies and gentlemen, settle please and give me your serious attention. Our celebration is made special by tonight's Guest of Honor...

INT. PLAZA HOTEL - BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS

SPEAKER (CONT'D)

...A Brother to our Trade who would rightly be hailed this country's Master Builder. Or...the 'Great Dirt Mover', as he likes to be called!

LIONEL: slides into a back corner, waiters flowing in and out past him. He looks left and spots...

JACOB GLEASON, the reporter from the public hearing, in a tux. He sees Lionel and thumbs his nose in solidarity. Lionel slides up next to him. Gleason nods, impressed Lionel got in without a tux.

LIONEL
Gleason, right?

GLEASON
Don't let em see you take out a notebook. Tonight is: 'Press: fuggedaboutit'.

SPEAKER (CONT'D)
We'd have to look to the Caesars and Pharaohs to find men with a scale of vision to compare with his and yet none of it bears his name, so fully does he forbear the credit, allowing the people to say "we built this ourselves." A great man, a man of history, serving the people of this City for over 25 years...Moses Randolph!

A ERUPTION OF APPLAUSE: As Randolph takes the stage. He tries to speak and they won't let him. Shouting as though for a general after a triumph...

LIONEL
You'd think Patton showed up.

GLEASON
He pays one and half times union rate as *base* on all his jobs. They'd pave over their mothers for him.

Lionel's eyes cast around...spotting faces: Lieberman and the others from the papers.

POV: in the shadows against a column...Paul. Clutching a large, full envelope. Staring, inscrutable. He snags two rolls from a passing tray, munches one and stuffs the other into his suit pocket.

Randolph begins speaking...

RANDOLPH
Tonight, over 300 years since the founding of this great city, we recommit ourselves to the ancient truth...that it is not knowledge but Action...Enterprise...which is the engine and objective of life. Clever men come and go but for every dozen men with a bright idea there is at most one who can execute them.

(MORE)

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)

I look around this room and I
don't see a lot of Bright Boys or
Goodie Goodie progressives with
their paralyzing ideals!

(huge laughter)

I see men of my tribe. Men who
know how to Get Things Done! The
Doers who make this country great.
And an honor by you is all the
affirmation or payment I'll ever
seek. I thank you and celebrate
you.

Wild applause...the crowd comes to its feet again.

LIONEL watches: Randolph descends the stage. He's mobbed by
the bosses high and low...all pressing up to pay respects.
Eventually Moses has to break away.

Lionel's eyes flick to: Paul...realizing that Randolph
will not be exiting past him, moves urgently to cross the
room toward him. His envelope under his arm, hunting for a
line to cut Randolph off before he leaves. But the crowd
surges and Paul is blocked.

RANDOLPH spots Paul though. They LOCK EYES for just a
second...Randolph frowns, surprised. But something in
Paul's face makes him pause...something both insistent and
pleading. He sees what Paul is holding and his eyes narrow,
weighing. A small nod...a crack opens that Paul sees and
almost palpably steps toward...But Randolph's face seems to
say 'Not here.' LIEBERMAN whispers something to him and
with a final look at Paul he turns and is led out the side
exit.

Paul's jaw clenches but his eyes are alight and he hustles
for an exit...and LIONEL FOLLOWS...

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE AVENUE - NIGHT

LIONEL follows Paul and then peeks around a corner to find
Paul pacing in the dark along a nice apartment building,
near the edge of the light from the canopied doorway. He's
waiting, not hiding.

THE BIG BLACK CAR pulls up...Paul straightens his hat and
smooths his jacket as.....RANDOLPH GETS OUT.

Paul steps out of the dark, blocking the path to the
doorway. RANDOLPH stops and they stand facing each other in
a BEAM OF LIGHT FROM THE DOORWAY.

Lionel leans around the corner to listen and we can see it playing out behind Lionel like a shadow play that we hear bits of.

RANDOLPH

You finished it.

PAUL

Best work I've ever done. A total modernization of the state's electrical grid. And it's a scale only you can get done.

Randolph weighs this. Takes it and moves inside.

RANDOLPH

Clean yourself up for Chrissake...

PAUL

With what!?

RANDOLPH

Not fucking word out of you about any of that! Bring that up to me ever again I'll close you out...

PAUL

Close me out?! I'm so far out I'm doing piece work for kids fresh out of school!

RANDOLPH

Whip up a crowd against me like that ever again and I'll take your big idea and throw it on the scrap heap! That what you want?

PAUL

(desperate)
No! NO!! Alright, I'm sorry. None of that matters. Just...read it please.

RANDOLPH

(beat)
I'll read it.

He turns and goes inside. Paul stands, staring into the light after his brother, his thin coat blowing around him but his head up high. For a moment he seems straightened up by hope. Then he turns and walks into the dark.

LIONEL (V.O.)

*What makes a person go against
their own brother? All my life I
never had family so I never could
understand people who did and let
it get ugly.*

Lionel watches a beat...then turns away into dark.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - MORNING

LIONEL hustling through the crowd in the cold.

LIONEL (V.O.)

*My crazy brain was telling me to
pull on that thread, but whatever
Frank found, he found it following
the girl. So I just kept chasing
his footsteps.*

INT. LIONEL'S CAR #2/EXT. FORT GREENE STREET/BROWNSTONES

Lionel drives down a street looking for an address. Even more desolate and run down than the first place he followed Laura, a once happy lower-middle class neighborhood of brownstones, now ravaged, boarded up windows everywhere. A tense atmosphere...

Suddenly he spots LAURA coming down a stoop with a young BLACK MAN. He is talking fast, ANGRY. Lionel parks and watches in the rear view mirror as they go up into another dilapidated brownstone.

Lionel gets out and approaches the stoop. Spies that the ground floor door under the stoop is swinging open. Knocks, waits, looks around...and enters into...

INT. DILAPIDATED BROWNSTONE - DAY

Darker inside...gloomy. He can hear voices upstairs. Daylight cutting through in hard shafts. We can see that this was a nice middle class home, but it looks like it's been strip-mined. An empty space where the fridge should be, fixtures ripped away, nice walls cut open to remove sections of copper pipe, now dripping.

INT. DILAPIDATED BROWNSTONE - BATHROOM - DAY

Lionel pokes into a bathroom and clicks the light on...it still works, dimly sputtering. Nice tiles broken to get at pipes, sink fixtures gone.

He looks at himself in the mirror, watching impassively as his own head TWITCHES and SPASMS mildly.

LIONEL
(to himself)
Keep it together, freakshow.

He reaches for the vanity mirror and opens it to see what's inside only to find...

POV: he's looking clear into the next room. The wall behind the mirror has been opened and pipes stripped out. Then...

A BLACK GUY STEPS INTO THE FRAME OUT OF NOWHERE, looking at Lionel who jolts and with a yelp steps back into...

The ANGRY GUY LAURA was with, now blocking the door.

ANGRY GUY
Looking for somethin'?

LIONEL
Scared the hell...**HELP, BAILEY!**

They look round for who he's calling out to...

ANGRY GUY
You think you can just walk into people's homes?

LIONEL
Looking for a friend. Didn't look like anyone lived down here...

ANGRY GUY
Oh, someone live here. My momma live here. Least she tryin' to. Who you with? I hope you with Belmont.

Sounds like an angle, so Lionel nods.

LIONEL
Yeah...course. Belmont. Who else, right?

He looks back to the other guy...and the FIST IS ALREADY
CRASHING INTO HIS FACE

BLACK OUT.

INT. DILAPIDATED BROWNSTONE - PARLOR ROOM

Muted sounds of argument and feet. The sharp sound of
heels.

FADE UP SLOWLY...

WOOZY POV: Faces out of focus.

LAURA

How hard did you hit him?

ANGRY GUY

I barely tapped him. Fool slipped
and hit his own head!

Lionel sits up a little and focuses, his nose slightly
bloody

LIONEL

IF!!

LAURA

'If' what? I'll tell you what
'if', you better explain who you
are *if* you want to walk out of--

(pauses)

Have I seen you before?

LIONEL

(nods - seizing the
angle)

My name's Jake Gleason. I'm a
reporter. I saw you at the
Hamilton housing hearing. I called
the committee. Came out here
looking for you.

She glares at the YOUNG MAN. He looks chagrined.

ANGRY GUY

He the one said he's with them
racketeering sons a bitches!
They stole her damn fridge *and* her
copper pipe! What you expect?!

EXT. FORT GREENE STREET/INT. MYSTERY CAR - LATER

Lionel has tissue up his nose as they walk.

LAURA

First they put up a notice says the house will be condemned. It's not true but that scares out about half and they sell for cheap. Then they come in and take the nice old family homes and chop em into 4 and rent em up. Folks who don't leave they harass... turn the heat off, come in to do repairs and steal copper pipe instead. They re-possessed all the refrigerators, even if people bought them themselves, then resold them out of shopfronts next neighborhood over. City sold em property worth \$15 million for \$500,000 to take the 'risk' of having to build the Federal projects. They haven't even submitted plans...just milked it until it really is a slum.

LIONEL

Slammer for Slum Lords, Bailey!

LAURA

(bristling)

Oh what, you another one that thinks we're just 'agitating'... making it up like some Negro propaganda conspiracy...

LIONEL

(stopping her)

No, no. Look I got a condition, I say funny things sometimes but I'm not trying to be funny, okay? I'm listening. Where's everybody go?

LAURA

Mostly just disappear. Fade away. Go into real slums or other neighborhoods. Some are renting a room in a house they used to own. 200,000 in 2 years just from this part of Brooklyn. Mostly Negro. Latino.

LIONEL

But Horowitz said they did it in Tremont too.

LAURA

Yeah they did it to a few Jews too but not systematic like this. You know how many parks have been built in this city since he's been Commissioner? 255. How many of those in Harlem you think? 1. You build a new beach for the 'people', but the ones with no cars, the poor ones, the black and brown ones?...how are they going get to the parks and beaches? Public bus. Guess how high they just built the overpasses on the new parkway? One foot too low for a bus to clear.

Lionel gives an incredulous look...

LAURA (CONT'D)

Look forget whether it's discrimination...the Federal government and the City are being scammed! There's supposed to be relocation services, company's got a \$2 million dollar contract to handle it but nobody even answers the phone. Call the city, they say these folks are on the list for the new public housing. But then it never gets built.

They have come to Lionel's car. He stops.

LIONEL

You know more'n any secretary I ever met.

LAURA

(indignant)

Secretary? Who told you that? I've got a law degree you know? I'll pass the Bar first time I sit too.

He's staring at her now...she's beautiful to him. She catches it and blushes...then sharpens her look, suspicious.

LAURA (cont'd) (CONT'D)
How are you gonna write about it
all when you don't even take a
note?

LIONEL
"2 million for relocation; bridges
a foot too low for buses; 1 out of
255 parks; \$15 mil for \$500k;
200,000 people in Ft Greene
alone". I never forget anything,
believe me. Not a single word.

She nods, impressed. He's strange but he really looks at
her and listens. He can't help it and has to tap her twice
on the shoulder.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Sorry...I really can't help it.

LAURA
(softens)
It's okay. Just write about it,
okay? What happens to poor people
in this city wasn't news yesterday
and it won't be tomorrow. But
you'd think somebody'd care what
happens to Brooklyn. It's only the
biggest city on Earth.

She sighs and looks away.

LIONEL
Where do you live?

LAURA
Harlem.

LIONEL
I can give you a ride. Trains'll
be mobbed.

That surprises her but she looks at him and then nods.

POV: SOMEBODY IN A CAR WATCHES THEM GET IN AND STARTS HIS
ENGINE ALONG WITH THEM.

INT. LIONEL'S CAR #2 - LATE AFTERNOON INTO NIGHT

She puts on the radio and finds a Jazz station as...

MONTAGE: Lionel drives them through the city

They don't say much of anything at all but some faster 'bop' on the radio activates his tics which he tries to hide which only makes it worse.

LIONEL

*Bebop, Bailey in the Metropolitan
BOpera House! Shit. Sorry.*

LAURA

Don't be sorry, it's kinda funny.

LIONEL

Yeah. Hang around a little longer.

She can see that it weighs on him. Notices the twitching now

LAURA

What is all that anyway?

LIONEL

I don't know. It's like a piece of my head split off and got a life of its own but then decided to keep joyriding me for kicks. *Kicks and ticks! Licks and ticks!* Sorry. It's like living with a fucking anarchist. But the flip side is its gotta have everything in its right place, everything has to sound just right or it'll tie me into knots until I fix it. Like I'm talking to you but that piece of my head? It's worrying that the bills in my wallet aren't all facing the same direction. It's not fair.

LAURA

Hey, I guess we all got our daily battles, right?

This makes him stop and take her in, remembers what she must deal with.

LIONEL

*Yeah, fair enough. Kiss her face
all night, Bailey!*

He's mortified by that one but she laughs hard...

LIONEL (CONT'D)

I really am sorry, I don't mean nothing by it

LAURA

It's alright. Really it's alright

She changes the music to a cool ballad and they drive on, crossing the bridge into Manhattan and on up to Harlem as night falls.

EXT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB/INT. MYSTERY CAR - NIGHT

POV: Someone in a car is watching them park

INT. LIONEL'S CAR/EXT. KING ROOSTER - CONTINUOUS

The exterior of the little club is hopping. People hustling inside, some folks having a smoke. A cool little kid in a full suit and hat on the sidewalk acting like a doorman waves at Laura through the window. Laura points to the building next to the club

LAURA

This is me.

LIONEL

That must keep you up nights.

LAURA

My father owns this place. I grew up falling asleep in the back of clubs.

LIONEL

Pretty hopping on a Monday night.

LAURA

Yeah, hottest band in the world, all week. I gotta check on one or two things, but...look, are you really interested...in what I was telling you?

LIONEL

I came looking for you didn't I?

LAURA

If you want to come in I can give you a lot more.

He looks at the club: it's exactly the kind of scene that spells disaster for him usually. She smiles

LAURA (cont'd) (CONT'D)
You can't exactly disturb the
peace in a small club with a hot
band.

She indicates 'C'mon'. He gives in and they get out into..

INT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

This place is for real. No mid-town mainstream joint. A lot of energy...buzz of anticipation over who's playing...a few white Beat kids from Columbia trying to blend in...

Almost immediately it starts to infect Lionel. His head jerks and he pops gum right away...Laura points him at a table against the wall and boots two young cats out of it with one look. She heads for the end of the bar and the cash register, bringing the BARTENDER to her with a look. She clearly has the run of the place...

As Lionel sits he takes it all in...sees eyes on him. Cocks Minna's hat back and watches as a WHITE KID comes up nervously to the TRUMPET PLAYER having a drink before his band's set with his FRENCH GIRLFRIEND and his Piano player.

BEATNIK
Excuse me, sir...?

The TRUMPET PLAYER and his friend flick a look up.

BEATNIK (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Sorry...I'm a trumpet player too
and I really admire your
tremolo...I just wondered how you
developed that?

TRUMPET
Suckin' off little white boys like
you. Get the fuck outta here...

The TRUMPET PLAYER turns back to his laughing friend, shaking his head.

LIONEL
SO WHAT, Whitey White Suck Stick!

This makes the TRUMPET PLAYER turn in surprise laughing...

TRUMPET
Whitey White Suck stick! 'So what'
is right...

LIONEL'S POV: Laura drilling the BARTENDER over something to do with the register count. He's giving her back talk and she's not having it. She SLAPS THE BAR HARD TWICE, shutting him up and dresses him down. The TRUMPET PLAYER laughs at this and wags his finger at the bartender then takes the stage.

TRUMPET (CONT'D)

How y'all doing tonight? It's good to be home. We been traveling the world, learning new languages. With new language comes new ideas. We gonna try a few of them on y'all tonight. So strap in.

Lionel gets up and moves to the end of the bar to get a drink, watching her and meeting her eye...she starts walking toward him and SMILES and it makes things slow down for a second...and then right as she takes the stool next to him...the MUSIC kicks in...

A HARD FAST SNARE RIFF: and then it's ON.

It hits Lionel like a shot and he WHOOPS loud...but so does half the joint...and for once he doesn't seem so weird.

Laura laughs and we JUMP CUT INTO:

INT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

A SEQUENCE: Lionel is getting drunk and starting to get totally flipped out on the HARD JAZZ, ticcing and shouting with abandon, self-consciousness gone because it seems to egg on the band...

BILLY ROSE: in the door. A young dude leaning in to whisper to him but Billy's eyes are LOCKED ON--

LIONEL and LAURA, leaning together drinking and laughing.

BILLY whispering back to the guy and indicating...

Suddenly the guy is at Laura's elbow pulling on her and whispering. Lionel is too into the music to notice...he's on his feet and jerking spasmodically...but LAURA is having none of it. She knows this guy and is telling him to beat it.

SONG ENDS to clapping and shouts. LIONEL hooting and whistling. THE TRUMPET PLAYER is picking up the vibe off Laura and intervenes on the mic....

TRUMPET

Uh oh, there's my favorite baby
girl, looking pretty as a Rose...

Everybody looks over and this makes the GUY back off Laura,
who shakes his hand off her arm hard.

BILLY, his eyes fierce on Lionel and jaw tight.

LAURA GRABS a clueless LIONEL and pulls him on the floor to
dance...TRUMPET PLAYER gets her cue...

TRUMPET (cont'd) (CONT'D)

This one's for you Laura...

He slides into the SLOW SAD THEME WE HEARD AFTER MINNA
DIED...and Laura steps up to Lionel, other couples standing
with them. LIONEL is immediately uncomfortable with being
up in front of people in the suddenly intimate and quiet
moment. He starts to twitch and whispers to her urgently

LIONEL

This isn't a good idea. I don't
think I can do this.

LAURA's focus comes back to him and she realizes he's in
real distress. She smiles as if to say 'It's okay' but his
twitches and suppresses a shout. She instinctively touches
the back of his neck sympathetically. To his surprise, her
touch settles him, he breathes easier and dances with her,
holding still...

BILLY whispers urgently, angry to two more YOUNG CATS who
nod.

They dance slow until the song ends...it can't last
forever.

The crowd claps as Lionel stares at her not wanting to let
go but she's seeing something over his shoulder and she
touches his face a second and then, annoyed, breaks away...

TRUMPET

Don't get too cozy. That was your
last break.

He snaps and the band counts off into the hot chaotic "Jump
Monk".

INT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB

LIONEL SPINS and gets SWEPT INTO THE MUSIC AGAIN

JUMP CUT: LIONEL HAS LOST HIS JACKET, HIS TIE IS LOOSE AND HE'S IN A FRENZY. SCATTING AND BOPPING WITH THE BAND, DRUNK and HAPPY. THE PLAYERS ARE DOING A CALL AND RESPONSE WITH HIS CRAZY TOURETTIC SHOUTS...

...AND THEN SUDDENLY SOMEONE HAS HIM BY THE COLLAR. HE TURNS TO LOOK FOR LAURA BUT SHE'S GONE and he is being BUM RUSHED OUT THE BACK AND INTO...

EXT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

...where he gets THROWN DOWN HARD. THREE YOUNG GUYS looming over him. One gives him a good kick to the ribs.

LIONEL'S on the ground looking up, woozy and short of breath.

BILLY'S THERE...looking down on him. Billy grabs him up by the collar, USING ONLY HIS LEFT ARM...THE RIGHT HANGING LIMP.

BILLY

You think I don't know who you work for, cracker?

LIONEL

You got it wrong--*Scaredy Cat!*
Cracker Jack! Blackie Black!

This pisses Billy off even more...He hauls Lionel up harder with his one powerful arm.

BILLY

I made it through Iwo Jima,
motherfucker! You think your boss
scares me? You tell him I see any
you suits round her again I'll
kill you one at a time, then I'll
mail what he's lookin' for to the
Post for free!

His guys start pulling him off...freaked out a bit.

POV: from down the alley around the edge of a corner, someone is watching Billy and his boys over Lionel...and listening...

LIONEL'S POV: drunk and blurry, BILLY leaning over

BILLY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

YOU HEAR ME! I'M GONNA MAIL IT TO
THE POST!!

LIONEL'S POV: on his back looking up at fire escape...voices "C'mon Billy...". His gaze falls sideways into the alley where, blurry, a silhouetted figure seems to be watching. In the backlight the edge of a scarf blows, then is gone.

EXT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - BACK ALLEY - LATER

SOUND OF FEET, shuffling. A match...someone snorts and spits.

LIONEL'S POV: fading in...woozy....the TRUMPET PLAYER sitting over him, smoking...something in his hand.

LIONEL
Help...Hep! Hep!

TRUMPET
(laughs)
You was pretty hep in there my man.

Lionel is out of control...can't stop jerking, agonizing.

C.U.- In the Trumpet Player's hand is a pipe...he was prepping a smoke of something...something more than weed.

Lionel fixates on it...reaching for it...

TRUMPET (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Your head need fixin'?

Lionel nods. Trumpet hands it to him and lights a match. He leans in, inhales and The FLAME BLOOMS IN LIONEL'S FACE and as a TRUMPET STARTS UP, everything GOES GOLDEN and we FADE INTO....

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - LIONEL'S DREAM

THE GEOMETRIC PATTERNS OF THE WIRES AND TOWERS ABOVE...

A FIGURE, walking away into the backlit arch of the bridge...he turns...it's MINNA.

MINNA
(cryptic)
Remember what I said.

A final wistful sad smile and then the sun rises behind him turning him into a dark silhouette that resolves into...

INT. TRUMPET PLAYER'S APARTMENT - HARLEM - MORNING

SUNLIGHT BEHIND A SMOOTH HEAD. A trumpet playing soft...noodling around a melody.

LIONEL'S EYES blinking at...Minna!? He wakes up...and sits up and the MUSIC STOPS. He looks over at...

THE TRUMPET PLAYER...sitting in the window sill by the fire escape, watching him and smoking a joint. After a beat...

LIONEL

Shit...sorry. I don't even know what happened.

TRUMPET

You had a good time, that's what happened. We had a party. Different mix of people than the usual. The 'etrange melange' she calls it.

Lionel's eyes flick to the kitchen where the French girlfriend is making coffee.

TRUMPET (CONT'D)

Figured you could use a little rest so we let you be.

LIONEL

I remember that guy's footprint on my ribs. Thanks for bailing me out of there.

TRUMPET

Sarge is a good man...but you gotta watch it round a man's family...you know?

LIONEL

Sarge?

TRUMPET

Billy.

LIONEL

Why you call him 'Sarge'?

TRUMPET

How you think his arm got so fucked up? Colored Marine unit. Carrying ammo 'til he picked up a gun and helped stop some Jap suicide attack. Got hit though.

(MORE)

TRUMPET (CONT'D)

Damn shame too cause he could really play. Trombone. Jammed with us at Minton's a lot in '40. Came back from the war sour as hell. I told him switch to trumpet...said I'd get him a left-hander made. Said he lost his mojo. Got himself a club.

Lionel's head is clearing...he's remembering and wants to know things...

LIONEL

You ever meet his wife?

TRUMPET

Nah, Sarge never married.

LIONEL

Laura's mother...?

TRUMPET

I don't know about any of that. It was always just him and Laura, she was just a little thing hanging out in the kitchen and reading while we played.

(beat - regards him)

You play?

LIONEL

Music? No.

TRUMPET

I'm not to keen on people being vocal while we playing, but you were scattin on the line. I could hear it.

LIONEL

(twitches bad)

On the line, Lionel! Lionel's on the line! Shit. I'm sorry about that. I have something wrong with my head. The music really set it off. I'm sorry.

TRUMPET

Don't be sorry. You got a head just like mine. Always boiling over, turning things around. That's music...runs you more'n you run it when it gets up in you.

(MORE)

TRUMPET (CONT'D)

Some people call it a gift but
it's a brain affliction just the
same.

LIONEL

Yeah, but I just twitch and shout.
At least you got a horn to push it
through, make it sound pretty.

TRUMPET

Yeah but there's a lotta other
hours in the day though, you know
what I'm sayin'? Too many!

He tokes. Lionel nods and they let that understanding sit
between them. Lionel stands and scribbles a number on a
matchbook.

LIONEL

Thanks for helping me out. You
ever need a ride anywhere or help
with anything, give me a call.

TRUMPET PLAYER takes it and nods as Lionel exits.

EXT. HOUSING COMMITTEE OFFICE - DAY

Lionel is heading across the street to the steps when he
sees...Gabby Horowitz...coming down them.

He stops...

LIONEL

Mrs. Horowitz...?

She looks up...he extends his hand.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Jacob Gleason, reporter with the
Post...

She looks at him quizzically

GABBY

I know Jake Gleason, you're not...

Caught, he switches it up mid-sentence...

LIONEL

Sorry, Jake, *brought* me to the
Hamilton Housing hearing.
(extends a hand)

(MORE)

LIONEL (CONT'D)

I'm a new writer for the Times and
I'm very interested in this story.

She shakes his hand...not totally convinced yet.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

I met your secr-- your *aide*, Laura
Rose. *Rose is a rose!* She gave me
a very illuminating tour of what's
going on in Ft. Greene. I wanted
to follow up with her...

This piques Gabby's interest...

GABBY

Really. I thought being the press
office for the Borough Authority
was more the business of the Times
than exposing them. Seeing as
your publisher is an investor in
the bank that gets to float the
Authority's bonds at preferred
rates.

Lionel is flummoxed. Smiles big...

LIONEL

I'm not saying I can get it A-1
but if I don't do the legwork, I
can't try can I?

This seems to impress her enough...

GABBY

Well, someone's going to win a
Pulitzer off Title 1, so maybe
it'll be you.

LIONEL

IF!

GABBY

Yes, it's a big 'if'. Laura's gone
ahead to the protest, you can come
with me if you want.

She looks at him and as they walk to the curb we CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY

ON THE CURB: GABBY'S CAR pulls up to where Laura and
another staff member stand waiting. Gabby jumps out and
Laura grabs her hand

GABBY

I brought the New York Times!

But they leave Lionel behind and we rush with them across and through the center of the Arch, revealing REFORMER #2 speaking to the crowd of a large protest. Hundreds have gathered: placards, real citizens of every stripe out in force, energized and angry. The Reformer is warming up the crowd for Gabby.

REFORMER #2

I want you to give it up for our next speaker. She wears granny glasses but don't be fooled! She is a PIT BULL for the people! And she taught me more about fighting the good fight than anyone. Let's not mince words because the moment we are living in calls for naming things as they are! This is not a program of slum removal, it is a program of Negro removal! Now let's hear from Gabby Horowitz!

The crowd takes up a chant: 'Relocate Randolph!'

CLOSE ON: Lionel sliding into a spot at the back of the crowd. He scans the scene...

LIONEL POV: Laura handing Gabby notes as she gets ready; some men around the edges who seem to be photographing the crowd; and Paul: standing back in the fringes, clapping as Gabby steps up to the podium to cheers

GABBY

What is a City? Is it a place where people slave for the Lords of steel and concrete? A corral for the Druids of Finance to fleece mankind in? NO! The City *is its people*, it is its *Communities*! The City is built to serve US!

Lionel's gaze shifts past her to: THE BIG BLACK BA-1 CAR: sliding innocuously in to park on the curb beyond the trees.

GABBY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Who's going to stand up for the City?!

(crowd roars "We Are!")

(MORE)

GABBY (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Who's going to remind the
politicians and the power brokers
and the profiteers that the City
belongs to the PEOPLE who live in
it?!

The CROWD ROARS...and we CUT TO:

INT. MOSES'S BLACK CAR/EXT. WASHINGTON SQ PARK - SAME

Lieberman and Moses Randolph sit in the back seat, watching
as they talk...

LIEBERMAN
We may have an issue with our
friend from Brooklyn.

RANDOLPH
How so?

LIEBERMAN
He's not here for this meshugas,
he's not that brave...but he still
might not go along with the vote.
Says his constituency is up in
arms...

RANDOLPH
We made him Borough President, we
put him on the Board of Estimate.
We're his constituency. Don't tell
me he won't go along...

He pulls a file out of the valise the Aide gave him and
hands it over to Lieberman, casually as a man hands over a
Kleenex.

RANDOLPH (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Show him that the day before the
vote. He'll go along. He's a
louse.

Sound of the CROWD, ROARING...

RANDOLPH (cont'd) (CONT'D)
(smiling at it)
I've never seen so much horseshit
in my life.

The he starts to really laugh...

RANDOLPH POV: from inside the car we can see that the crowd has hoisted an effigy of a man with a sign saying "Moses Randolph" hung on its neck and they are setting it to flame.

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)
Let's go have lunch.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - LATER

The protest is over, Lionel pushes through crowd by the marble arch...

LAURA (O.S.)
Jake! Hey Jake!!

She enters chasing him and grabs his arm...he turns

LIONEL
Ah the disappearing lady...

LAURA
I'm so sorry...I own you an explanation..

LIONEL
Nah, you don't owe me nothing. I'm used to it.

LAURA
No I want to explain.

From O.S., Gabby yells for her

LIONEL
You gotta go.

LAURA
I'll be up at the club tonight later. Meet me there.

LIONEL
I'll see if I can

LAURA
Come.

Gabby calls again and she hustles off, Lionel watches her a beat. Then catches sight of someone and rushes out after...

PAUL: shambling away, pulling up his thin coat against the cold. Lionel hustles up from behind to catch up with him.

Paul perceives him and, after a moment of fear, realizes who it is... (as before Paul's speech is like a fire-hose, a manic blitz of information)

PAUL

The reporter who never reports...

LIONEL

I'm still putting the pieces together.

PAUL

You need me to write it for you? Jeez you're not too ambitious are you? Okay here's your next headline: "New Expressway Will be the World's Biggest Parking Lot."

LIONEL

Why?

PAUL

Because cars are a cancer and roads make them metastasize not shrink. We need trains but he's killing the trains.

LIONEL

Why?

PAUL

Always with the 'why?' Because he doesn't control the revenue from trains, he controls the tolls on bridges and roads. Borough Authority. You know what an Authority is? Neither did anybody else. He invented it. A 4th branch of government...a shadow branch... with independent revenue that is the only reliable financing for public works, all controlled by him meaning he controls *everything* and yet nobody ever voted for him and they can't vote him out.

LIONEL

What could stop him?

PAUL

Almost nothing. And he's more dangerous now than ever.

LIONEL

Why now?

PAUL

Because the Board of Estimate votes on his highway and slum clearance plans *this week!* So he's breaking out all his dirt on people.

Bullying everyone into submission.

(stops and turns)

He is the most powerful person in the history of this City! He is a autocratic Caesar. And *nobody* realizes it. They're all walking around calm as Hindu cows, thinking they live in a *Democracy* so what could go wrong?. Now are you going to write it or what?!

LIONEL

If you've got the goods why don't you take him down?

PAUL

(snapping)

'Cause it can't be me!

LIONEL

Cause you're his brother?

This is the first thing that stops Paul's torrent and makes him look stricken and vulnerable...

PAUL

'Cause I've still got dreams. That's why. Dreams I'm *this* close to realizing. *My* contribution to society...*my legacy!* I won't risk it.

(whispering - paranoid)

Okay here, look at Belmont Developers and Inwood Residential.

LIONEL

What's that?

PAUL

(sharp-resentful)

Christ, I'm giving you the goods! A map to the scoop of the decade...Do your own damn job! Do the *job!* I got enough problems...

And with that he's leaving...waving off Lionel and muttering to himself...and we CUT TO:

INT. THE NEW YORK HALL OF RECORDS - CLERK'S DESK - LATER
SAME DAY

A CLERK leads Lionel to an open table where he puts down a big metal file of records...Lionel moves to slide it toward a chair but the Clerk stops him.

CLERK

Oh sorry, I'll need your name and social security number.

LIONEL

I'm not checking it out, I'm gonna look at it right here...

CLERK

Sure, yeah...but, um...see... parties wishing to review incorporation materials of city contractors have to register with Construction Commissioner's office.

LIONEL

That can't be legal. *Eagle!*
Beagle! Bagel!

CLERK

Not really a *law*, more of a rule, Mr....

Lionel hands over the NY POST PRESS PASS of Jake Gleason.

LIONEL

Gleason.

INT. THE NEW YORK HALL OF RECORDS - LATER

Lionel sits at the table with the documents, poring through them.

CLOSE ON: documents of incorporation for "Belmont Developers", "Inwood Residential Services"...applications for City contracts...

Details captured as Lionel writes in his notebook: the companies were incorporated in 1952; prior contracts with city - NONE; references of note - NONE;

Then he sees: Officers: WILLIAM LIEBERMAN, GEORGE SPAULDING, TOM BROOKS. Both companies...SAME NAMES, SAME PARTNERS

He double checks it in disbelief:

LIONEL
(getting worked up)
IF! IF!

He tries to muffle it but he looks up and the CLERK is scowling at him and we CUT TO:

EXT. INWOOD RESIDENTIAL SERVICES - NIGHT

The early evening dark of winter. LIONEL hustles to the door.

INT. INWOOD RESIDENTIAL SERVICES - CONTINUOUS

A tiny single room with a single reception desk. Absurdly spare. A LONE SECRETARY who looks up from a book.

SECRETARY
May I help you?

LIONEL
You have the applications for relocation?

SECRETARY
Yeah, just there!

She points at a huge stack on the counter to his left.

LIONEL
And I can mail those in?

SECRETARY
In person applications only, just there.

She points again at an even bigger pile...two or three boxes of completed forms against a wall.

LIONEL
So they have you running this whole operation all by yourself, do they?

She smiles flirtatiously and drops her book revealing a tight pink sweater and Vargas girl rack...

LIONEL (CONT'D)

PINK TITS! (sighs) You have a good evening.

He leaves. Disappointed she watches him go.

EXT. INWOOD RESIDENTIAL SERVICES - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Lionel watches as... THE SECRETARY opens the door, braces it open, hauls out a box, closes the door and locks it. She then hefts the box, walks over to a bunch of trash cans and lifts the metal lid and tips the box in. She dusts her hands and walks off for the night.

LIONEL HUSTLES ACROSS THE STREET, straight to the cans.

He opens the lid and the clang of it echoes in the dark. He reaches in and pulls up...a handful of the forms. He seizes a few to hold up into the light and examine when the SCRAPE OF A SHOE IN GRAVEL makes him turn into...

The FLASH of movement of an ARM....THONK.

LIONEL'S POV: the world spins upward as he goes down and we can hear him groan...backlit by the street lamp, figure in a hat leans down...LOU bending over him, the leather sap still in his hand.

LOU

People's trash remains private property until its collected. Anybody ever tell you that?

Behind the smaller man...THE GIANT STEPS INTO VIEW, looming almost out of frame...

LOU (cont'd) (CONT'D)

I think we've seen each other before, ain't we?
(to the Giant)
Ain't we?

The GIANT NODS. Sounds: a match. Flames whoosh OS, lighting LOU's face, as the Giant burns the evidence.

LOU (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Keep sticking your nose in people's trash and we'll be seeing each other again.

They step out of frame and the streetlight FLARES in our eyes and we hear their footsteps start away when...

LIONEL (O.S.)
Giant Faggot Munchkin Meat!

The footsteps stop and start back...

LIONEL (O.S.) (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Goddam it...

LOU leans in again...closer

LOU
Jeez, I was told to go easy and I
did. But now you made me go and
do *this*.

HIS FOOT rises up and comes down into our face with a nasty
CRACKING THUD.

BLACK. And then we FADE UP INTO:

INT. THE L&L OFFICE - NIGHT

LIONEL is holding an ice bag against the back of his head
and has a bruise starting to color under one eye. He's
going over it all with TONY...CONEY and DANNY listen and
try to follow.

LIONEL
They're not even pretending,
they're just collecting the checks
and then throwing these people's
lives in the trash. These guys
make Tammany look like AA ball,
I'm telling you.

CONEY
We coulda used youse in Korea,
Lionel...

LIONEL
Why's that?

CONEY
Cause ya talk Chinese better'n
half the chinks in the city...

LIONEL
*Chinky, Chunky Chowder! Go to
hell, Coney. Lunk-a-loaf, Beef
Brain!*

Coney laughs and looks at Tony like "Am I right?" But Tony
is not paying attention to Lionel's tics for once...

TONY

Go get him an aspirin, Gil...

(to Lionel)

Coney folds a straight if the cards aren't all the same color. Don't pay no attention to him. Look, people cut deals with the pols for contracts, what else is new? Kicking up the chain, it's the nature of things...

LIONEL

They're not making deals with politicians, they're making deals with themselves! They own the companies they're giving contracts to! It ain't kickbacks, it's Grand Larceny... *Land a Farce on me! Don't fart on my land, Man!*

He's really wound up, twitching bad.

TONY

Calm down...

(to Danny)

You got any weed? Give 'im a smoke.

Danny pulls a joint out and starts it up hands it to Lionel who goes ahead and takes a deep pull.

LIONEL

Minna said this was the biggest gravy train of the century and it all goes down in two days.

DANNY

Okay...so it's big stuff but how was Frank mixed up in it?

LIONEL

Every one of the officers of the Borough Authority is gonna make millions on this deal. But none of it ties to him.

TONY

To Frank?

LIONEL

To Randolph!

TONY
(incredulous)
The Parks Commissioner?

LIONEL
It's all about him. The girl has the line on the scam, she's been digging into those companies for Horowitz. I think she found something that ties Randolph right to the money. Frank was following her and he figured it out and he took it in to Lieberman and his goons and showed em he had a signature. I'm telling you, Frank had something that nails Randolph.

The guys look unsure.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
C'mon! Where did we lose em? On the Borough Bridge, for chrissake! They had a pass! Those guys were BA! The Borough Authority killed Frank!

Worked up and exhausted, he sucks hard on the joint. Tony is listening very attentively to him...

TONY
Alright...alright, calm down. Fuckin' Lionel...I think you're on the sniff. I do. But what's the angle on the guy at the club? Her father. What was Frank doing talking to him?

LIONEL
I got no idea...part makes no sense to me. But he knows something.

Tony nods.

TONY
Go home. Let me do some calling around.

Lionel looks at him...confused...getting high...

LIONEL
Who you gonna call?

TONY

Will you just trust me and let me
run with it?

Lionel doesn't know what that means but he's too stoned now
to sort it. He nods.

INT. LIONEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lionel enters, stoned and sore.

LIONEL (V.O.)

*Frank was the only person I knew
who thought the way we won the war
was gonna cause us problems. He
said after the Crash we were
digging ourselves out by taking
care of each other. But now that
we'd seen what we could do with our
brute strength, there was no going
back. He said 'From here on out,
the game's gonna be about Power,
from top to bottom.'*

TIGHT ON: Minna's hat, as he hangs it on the wall next to
his own

He flops on the bed and the cat appears and he strokes it.
He has just closed his eyes when the RINGING PHONE JOLTS
HIM LIKE A SHOCK. He answers it...

LIONEL

Yeah...

BILLY'S VOICE

I know who you are.

LIONEL

Who's this?

BILLY'S VOICE (cont'd)

You're one of Minna's boys...

LIONEL

Who's Minna?

BILLY'S VOICE

Don't bullshit me, motherfucker.
You gave your number to the man
with the horn. You know who this
is now?

LIONEL

Yeah. Okay. So what?

BILLY'S VOICE

Sorry for roughing you up. Thought you was one of them BA goons. Where's the envelope?

LIONEL

I don't know.

(beat)

What's in it?

BILLY'S VOICE

Hold on...

Sounds of Billy doing something....

BILLY'S VOICE (cont'd) (CONT'D)

We can't talk about it like this. It ain't safe. Meet me up at the club. Park up the block and come in the back, I'll let you in there.

LIONEL

What, now?

BILLY'S VOICE

Yeah now!

CLICK. Lionel looks at the phone a beat. Then he sits up and goes to a desk drawer and opens it and pulls out MINNA'S AUTOMATIC PISTOL. He drops the mag out and checks it and shoves it back in and on the SNAP we...CUT TO:

EXT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Lionel pauses at the opening of the alley, checks around him when...BANG!...a muffled report snaps his head around. Was that a shot? Hard to tell where it came from.

Lionel walks cautiously down the alley, past trash cans where Billy yelled at him, reaching the back door of the club. He prods the door open slowly with his foot.

LIONEL

(calls quietly)

Billy?

SOUNDS OF VOICES CURSING SOFTLY, FEET MOVING. He cautiously enters the back door...

INT. THE KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Over Lionel's shoulder as he works his way into the club by the back hall and emerges into the back of the stage revealing...

THE FIGURE OF BILLY SITTING IN A CHAIR ON THE BANDSTAND, the light from the street silhouetting him

LIONEL

Billy...? You hear that?

LIONEL STOPS COLD...BILLY is holding a gun down by his side with SMOKE STILL CURLING FROM THE BARREL. He seems to be staring forward toward the front where the door is creaking open as though someone has left fast...but something is odd...

And then as Lionel comes around him he can see...

BILLY ROSE IS DEAD IN THE CHAIR...blood running down his white shirt from a gunshot wound through the chest and a belt tied around his chest to hold himself up. A suicide?

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Ah shit...

Then he stops cold, hairs on his neck rising...THE GUN IS HANGING IN BILLY'S USELESS RIGHT HAND.

LIONEL RIPS HIS GUN OUT, SPINS TOWARD THE FRONT.

SOUND OF A CAR STARTING ON THE STREET. He hustles to the front cubicle and bursts out onto...

EXT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

LIONEL BURSTS ONTO THE STREET in time to see...a BLACK CAR turning the corner, smooth and quiet...spooky...and gone.

EXT. KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT - A BIT LATER

Cop cars...patrolmen guarding the door. A DETECTIVE is interviewing Lionel...not your average 3rd Class Dick...this guy has rank...

DETECTIVE

(spinning it already)

So he told you to come and then bumped himself so you could find him before staff came in probably.

LIONEL

(exasperated)

I already told you, I didn't just find him...I heard it happen. He didn't shoot himself...*SHOOT MY SHIT, BAILEY!*... Somebody shot him and set it up to look like he punched out. I heard 'em leave.

DETECTIVE

Uh huh. Powder burn on his shirt. Point blank. Neighbors telling us he had money problems...Seems pretty straightforward, friend.

LIONEL

The gun's in his *right* hand.

DETECTIVE

So.

LIONEL

He's got a dead right arm, ace. War wound. He can't lift a Zippo with it let alone a .38. You wanna show me how he shot himself in the heart with his left hand and then handed it off to his right before he punched out?

DETECTIVE

Guy went out in his own joint, center stage with the lights and all. Gotta give him credit. I respect his style.

THE BODY IS BEING BROUGHT OUT ON A STRETCHER.

Lionel glances at the COP, something not right...

LIONEL

They usually put Division dicks on dawn patrol in Harlem?

DETECTIVE

Oh, we go wherever we're needed. We done?

He winks as over his shoulder LIONEL sees...

LAURA RUNNING DOWN THE SIDEWALK.

HE SPRINTS TOWARD HER TO STOP HER...

LAURA

Oh no...Oh NOOOOO!

She pushes past him to Billy's body, distraught.

WIDE: the sad tableau of her bent over BILLY'S BODY with Lionel hanging behind...and music floats in as we CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S HALLWAY / APARTMENT DOOR - NIGHT

He escorts her up the stairs of the tenement apartment to her door. She inserts the key but stops with her hand on it. Her head falls and she starts weeping. He reaches down gently and pulls her hand off the key, turns it himself and opens the door.

She stands in the doorway with tears falling silently down her face.

LAURA

I can't think of the last time I saw him smile...But...why would he do that...to himself...?

Her voice breaks...he lifts her face up...

LIONEL

He didn't. Someone wanted it to look that way.

She shakes her head...

LAURA

Man was angry as long as I can remember. But nobody hated him like that...nobody.

He reflexively touches her shoulder three times in a row. She accepts it...too upset to care.

LAURA (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Who would do such a thing?

LIONEL

Same people did it to a friend of mine.

She looks up, confused...but too sad to try to understand.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

You got somebody you can call?

She shakes her head and weeps...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
You're all alone?

LAURA
You got no idea...

She weeps. He kisses her forehead but pulls back, awkward.

LAURA (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Could you...stay with me a while?

LIONEL
You want me to?

She nods and we...FADE TO:

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

WIDE ON THE ROOM: In the spill of morning light, Laura is asleep on her side on the bed, facing us, with Lionel's coat draped over her. Lionel has fallen asleep in his clothes, beside her, awkwardly against the headboard.

TWO SHOT ON THE BED: as Laura wakes with a sharp inhale and turns over staring at the ceiling, processing that it's all real, numb. Realizing Lionel is still there, she sits up slightly next to him...Her movement brings him awake and he's immediately uncomfortable about having fallen asleep next to her.

LIONEL
IF! Ah, sorry... I don't know what happened...didn't mean to fall asleep. Sorry.

LAURA
It's okay...I appreciate you staying.

LIONEL
Listen, I know how you're feeling, I really do. Pretty soon you're gonna hear his voice in your head telling you to pull yourself together and get moving. And when you do, you'll feel him smiling again.

This triggers her and she weeps. He sits with it until she recovers.

LAURA
Why you being so nice to me?

LIONEL

Cause I think you're a good person.
You actually care about what
happens to other people. And you
try to make a difference. That's a
good way to be.

LAURA

You're sweet.

She takes his hand, winds her fingers into his.

LIONEL

Well, that isn't how most people
describe me when they meet me, but
I'm glad if you think so. *IF!*

LAURA

(smiles)

Anybody ever told you you talk in
your sleep?

LIONEL

I never slept with anybody.

LAURA

You never slept with anybody?

LIONEL

I been with girls...just, not the
kind that stay to sleep.

She's touched by the loneliness in this

LAURA

Who's Frank?

His expression changes...a little suspicious

LIONEL

What?

LAURA

You said that name in your sleep.
You seemed...upset. (realizes)
Was he your friend who got...?

Lionel nods...She looks at him, searching...

LIONEL

I worked with him...I worked for
him. I knew him since I was 12.
I was at that Catholic Home for
Boys on DeKalb.

(MORE)

LIONEL (CONT'D)

They threw me in there when I was
6, after my mother died. Frank
kinda..took me under his wing.

She absorbs this...

LIONEL (CONT'D) (cont'd)

He never called me by my name. He
called me "Brooklyn". He'd say
'Look at you, Motherless Brooklyn.
Got no one looking out for you.'

LAURA

We all need someone looking out
for us.

She kisses him softly, lingering a second. She rolls off
the bed and out of frame...He watches her go, affected by
her.

ANGLE ON: a PHOTO IN A FRAME on the shelf near the bed...A
BEAUTIFUL YOUNG BLACK WOMAN in a 20's-style dress, smiling.
Her skin very dark, eyes white and shining...happy. Holding
a LITTLE BABY, wrapped up.

LIONEL

That your mother?
(off her nod)
She was beautiful.

LAURA

She died a long time ago. I don't
remember her. I guess we both got
nobody now.

He studies her...

LIONEL

Listen...I gotta ask you... Are
you holding something out?

LAURA

What?

LIONEL

On Hamilton...you and Horowitz.
These BA goons are scared of
something big. Something that ties
all this fraud you been digging
around right to the top man. Do
you know what it is?

She sits up...brain spinning

LAURA

No...I mean, somebody's getting rich but...no...

LIONEL

If you're holding some card and you're waiting to play it to block that vote, you're playing a dangerous game. They already killed Frank and your father for it...

LAURA

What's Billy got to do with it?

LIONEL

Billy knew something about it. He and my friend together...

LAURA

(totally perplexed)

That's not possible...he doesn't even...he didn't even know what I'm working on. I got an uncle knows Gabby that got me that job.

(beat)

You're not a reporter are you?

LIONEL

(shakes his head)

No, and my name's not Jake, it's Lionel...look...Frank was an investigator. They hired him to keep tabs on your committee. He was following you. I started poking around it to figure out who did to him, now...I've just got glass in my brain. I don't even know what I'm after.

She seems thrown.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for lying to ya but believe me, you gotta take this seriously. Can you stay around here today?

LAURA

Gabby's expecting me. We're preparing her testimony before the vote...it's important but...

(flustered)

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

I need to make arrangements, a funeral...

LIONEL

All that can wait cause if I'm right the Coroner's office won't release the body to you yet. Get one of the guys from the club to take you down there. Then stay around people you know until I come and get you, alright?

She nods, fearful.

THE SIZZLE AND POP OF AN EDGY RIFF COMES UP AND WE CUT TO:

EXT. LAURA'S BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER - MORNING

Lionel exits her building and immediately LARGE MEN ARE ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM, plucking the GUN from his holster before he can even make a move, MOVING HIM TOWARD A CAR. NOT COPS...but they have that familiar PIN on their lapels...and, like MINNA on the day he was killed, Lionel is pushed INTO A BLACK CAR AND AWAY IT GOES...as we CUT TO:

EXT. BOROUGH AUTHORITY HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

LIONEL is escorted in.

INT BOROUGH AUTHORITY HEADQUARTERS - WAITING ROOM - CONT

Lionel stands in the antechamber of an office off a grand lobby...every detail says that this is the SEAT of POWER.

The two MUSCLES IN SUITS stand totally silent blocking the exit. Not threatening...just there. Impassive.

THE INNER DOOR OPENS REVEALING: William Lieberman.

He looks at Lionel with the cold scrutiny of a practiced strategist, sizing him up. Then he nods and opens the door wider nodding Lionel into...

INT. MOSES RANDOLPH'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Big. A commanding view of the East River on both sides, flowing around the island on which they sit, under the Triborough Bridge which can be seen looming above as well. The office of a kingpin...

In the center is a massive table with a model of the whole of New York's FIVE BOROUGHs...the pieces all movable. Bridges and elevated highways and huge apartment towers all placed...infrastructure that will not exist for more than a decade...a glimpse of New York City in the future...

...and on the other end of the room, waiting by his desk with his arms crossed is Moses Randolph.

He looks up as Lionel enters, gestures that he come join him by the MODEL OF THE CITY.

Without a word, Lieberman slides to a chair on the periphery and lights a cigarette, which he smokes through the scene, languid and cool.

RANDOLPH stands regarding Lionel who nervously hides his small tics in fake adjustments of his neck such...

RANDOLPH
You know who I am?

LIONEL
I been asking around about that
but everybody seems to have a
different answer.

RANDOLPH laughs loud and sharp.

RANDOLPH
Ha! Spoken like a true snoop!

His loud laugh makes Lionel 'YELP' involuntarily but he hides it as a sneeze.

Now Randolph is smiling big and we see what a magnetic presence he can have. An Emperor in a good mood...

LIONEL
What's your take on it?

RANDOLPH
(beat)
Easy. I'm a builder.

Lionel looks at the enormous model of the City...

LIONEL
I can see that...

Randolph references Manhattan island...

RANDOLPH

When I was a boy you know how many bridges there were on and off Manhattan Island? Two. A shitty old train trestle here and...

(he puts a finger on..)

The Brooklyn Bridge. And when you walked across that you were stepping in horse dung most of the way. You mostly scuttled into New York off a dock...like a rat. I built that...

(indicating bridges roads and parks)

and that...and that and that...and now you vault over rivers on the spans and parkways of Olympus.

LIONEL

They're nice bridges, I'll give you that.

Randolph turns to him with a smile.

RANDOLPH

Thank you. And I want you to give me something else...if you find it. Have you found it?

There's no smile in this. Lionel answers with a question.

LIONEL

What's in it?

RANDOLPH

Slander. Falsehood. Forgery, most likely.

LIONEL

Then you got nothing to worry about, the law's on your side.

RANDOLPH

Very little that I have achieved in my life has relied on legality. I don't intend to lean on that slender branch now when things matter most.

LIONEL

You're above the law?

RANDOLPH

No, no...I'm ahead of it.

LIONEL

What's the difference?

Randolph looks at his vision of the City...

RANDOLPH

Law's just a rule book we make for the world we find ourselves in. You rebuild a city, you have to push ahead into a new world that most people can't even envision yet... then the law follows along and adapts to what you've done.

LIONEL

Who you rebuilding it for?

RANDOLPH

(obviously)

The future. The people to come.

(gestures)

In 50, 100 years, what do you think will matter out of what we do now? What do you think will help people make the world of science fiction real? The laws from today?! Or roads and bridges and tunnels for commerce to move swiftly on, parks and beaches to let people escape the rat race and inspire the mind, palaces of culture where hellish slums used to be...

LIONEL

Sounds great unless you're a person who's in the way now.

Randolph laughs and points at the City map...

RANDOLPH

Central Park: Greatest urban park in the world. They started building it when there wasn't even a city past 57th St. They kicked out farmers and tenant squatters, sheep herders out of muddy fields and filth. They moved some trees. And people protested the loss of goddam 'countryside'. But if one man hadn't been able to SEE AHEAD to what we'd need, this city'd be unlivable today, wouldn't it? Yes it would.

(MORE)

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)

People don't even know Fred
Olmsted's name but they should
thank him every day. I do.

(with teeth)

The important thing in life is to
Get Things Done. Those who can,
build. Those who can't,
criticize. But I won't obstruct
the great work of the world
because some *chipmunks* start
screeching about having to
relocate their *nuts*.

Those words are more than Lionel's head can take..

LIONEL

Screech-a-munk-nut-chip!

His arm SNAPS out twice with this exclamation...

Lieberman pauses mid-smoke...his eyes widening...

Randolph stares at Lionel, measuring this... He seems to
grasp that this is an affliction...not an offense. He puts
a hand on Lionel's shoulder with fatherly aspect, towering
over him...pulling him into this vision...

RANDOLPH

Talent and brains get rewarded in
this building, Lionel. Work with
us on this and I'll see to it
personally that your gifts are
appreciated.

He exhales smoke.

RANDOLPH (cont'd) (CONT'D)

(without turning)

But that's the offer today. Let us
know where you stand by tonight.

He turns and walks to the window. Meeting over.

INT BA HEADQUARTERS - WAITING ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Lieberman escorts Lionel out to his two 'body men' and
nods. They hand him back FRANK'S GUN. As Lionel holsters
it.

Lieberman regards Lionel curiously...

LIEBERMAN

It's funny...We read it wrong.

LIONEL

How's that?

LIEBERMAN

We didn't make you for the Ace in
Minna's deck.

He nods at the two BIG MEN and turns away.

Lionel processes that as THE BIG DOOR CLOSSES and we CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK SKYLINE

Seen from across the river...an impossible dark maze.

INT. THE L&L OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Lionel storms in and DANNY looks up as he goes over to his desk.

DANNY

You good?

LIONEL

No. *Loosey Goose Thready Head*
Fucks!!

DANNY

Jesus, calm down...what's up?

Lionel is spreading out everything...

CLOSE ON: his notes, the words "Formosa", "Signature", the newspaper PHOTO of Moses and Paul Randolph, King Rooster matchbook; the PHOTOS of LAURA and BILLY...

Lionel fixates on it all, muttering to himself, trying to see what he's been missing...

LIONEL

There's a loose thread, Danny.
It's making my brain hurt...I
can't...

He picks up the photos of Laura and Billy, scanning them each again...there are only 4 or 5...

He looks up suddenly...to DANNY...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Where's the rest?

DANNY

Huh?

LIONEL

SHUTTER BUG SHIT! You said you took a whole roll...where's the rest?

DANNY

In the darkroom...That's all the ones of her. Everything else was before she showed...

LIONEL is moving...pushing into the photo room...

DANNY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

I checked em good. You saw some of 'em...There's nothing. Her old man came out for a smoke was all... Lionel, jeez...

Danny comes after him but Lionel is back out the door, almost hitting Danny with it in his charge to the desk...A SMALL STACK OF PHOTOS IN HIS HAND. He drops them on the desk and starts to scan them.

PHOTOS: The King Rooster; some guys going in; BILLY walking toward the club; Billy entering; emerging again...

DANNY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

See then he comes out for a smoke...gave a bum some money...

PHOTOS: a blurry one of a FIGURE IN A HAT walking up to Billy

DANNY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

I was just getting my focus set up...

PHOTO: focus sharp now...Billy talking to someone, he looks nervous...

LIONEL'S FACE: as he flips to the next photo and FREEZES, EYES GOING WIDE...

PHOTOS: BILLY IS TALKING TO Paul RANDOLPH...Paul is obviously saying something angry to Billy and Billy looks scared. LAST FRAMES...Billy gives Paul a few bucks and Paul SHUFFLES OFF.

LIONEL

DAMMIT!!

PHOTOS IN HAND, LIONEL IS CHARGING FOR THE DOOR, shoving pictures and clippings in his pockets...Reaching for car keys...

DANNY

You said to ID the girl!!!

LIONEL

Where are the cars?!

DANNY

Coney and Tony got em both...

But Lionel is out the door...

DANNY (CONT'D)

What'd I miss?!

INT. HOUSING COMMITTEE OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Lionel is hustling Laura out into the reception area, looking for a private place to talk...a few of the staff glance over as he pulls her urgently by the arm...his face is grim and angry. She looks flustered...

LAURA

Where are we goin---

He pulls her into...

INT. HOUSING COMMITTEE OFFICE - MEN'S BATHROOM

He pulls her in, locks the door and shoves the PHOTO in her face.

LIONEL

Who is that? With your father?

LAURA

Where did you--?

LIONEL

Answer the question. Do you know who that is?

LAURA

(soft)

Paul. Paul Morris.

LIONEL

Paul 'Morris'? Is that the 'uncle' who got you this job?

She shakes her head but clearly he's hit the mark...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Don't shine me! You think I don't
know who that is?

Her face registers shock...how could he know...she
stammers.. They start overlapping, not hearing each
other...

LAURA
My father...

LIONEL
Your father and your 'Uncle Paul'
are into this together..

LAURA
No...

LIONEL
Yes, goddam it. Are you in it
too...?

LAURA
No...that's not my father with my
uncle Paul... It's my Uncle Billy
with my *father...Paul*.

He stares at her in shock.

LAURA (cont'd) (CONT'D)
You remember that picture of my
mother? Now look at Billy. Now
look at me.
(Re: her light skin)
You see? Rest of the world might
look past me without seeing, but I
don't. They never said so, but it
doesn't take much to put it
together. Why else he take such
an interest in me? Take care of me
when Billy was in the war? Pay for
law school when he's got nothing?

LIONEL
He's using you. He's using you to
get back at his brother.

LAURA
I don't think he's got family.

Lionel pulls the old newspaper clip...hands it to her.

LIONEL

His name's not Morris...it's
Randolph. Moses Randolph is his
brother. He's using you to
blackmail him...

She stares at the photo, blinking...

LAURA

That's not...

LIONEL

Stay here until I come to find
you.

He's heading out the door and has to push past Gabby and
some others gathering in concern...

LAURA

That's not possible...!

INT. PAUL RANDOLPH'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Paul is answering the door...his flophouse studio is a
spare freezing single room, but neatly ordered.

LIONEL BURSTS IN...He sticks the photo in Paul's FACE. Paul
grabs it and his color drains...

LIONEL

You know what that tells me? You
and Billy set this up with Minna
to try to blackmail Moses...

PAUL

Hang on--

LIONEL

(a torrent of accusation)
It's you who found whatever
they're scared of. You've finally
got something bad enough to sink
your brother so you gave it to
Minna to put it in play cause you
thought if you hid behind Frank
you could do the damage and still
get your engineering plan picked.
And you made it look like it came
from Laura so you could hide
behind her too! But people are
getting killed if you didn't
notice!

(MORE)

LIONEL (CONT'D)

She's your own daughter and her
life's at stake now because of--

PAUL SHOVES HIM UP AGAINST THE WALL IN A RAGE

PAUL

You don't know what the fuck
you're talking about!! You know
how many times I could have sunk
him?! He sunk me! HE SUNK ME!!

LIONEL

SINK A SONG OF SUNK MEN!!!

Paul falls off him in despair...

PAUL

'Hide behind her'? I gave up
everything for her...everything I
could have accomplished...my whole
goddam life...

He breaks down weeping with the frustration of years...

LIONEL

Is that what it was about between
you and him? You were with her
mother and he hates colored--

PAUL

I will NOT discuss such things
with you! I knew you weren't a
reporter. Load 'a shit. You're
Minna's guy.

(beat)

I'm sorry for you but it was NOT
me. Frank put it all together...he
and Billy thought they could get
something out of it. Foolish
greed. I tried to stop them. I
told them it would put her at
risk. All of them...now look.
Frank gets killed, Billy panics
and calls me...*that's your
picture!*

Paul looks up, suddenly very concerned...

PAUL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

You're into something you don't
understand. If you just stand up
to him on principles, like I did,
he'll ruin you for spite.

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
 But if you threaten his work, he
 will destroy you. Destroy. End.
 (grave)
 Find Minna's file.

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. A TAXI CAB - AFTERNOON

JAZZ on the radio... discordant, harsh...

Lionel sits in the back, head spinning...LOW WINTER SUN
 flaring in his eyes...He tips FRANK'S HAT forward to shield
 them and leans back...

LIONEL
Frank Frankady Franko! What's it
 about, Frank?

SOUND goes MUFFLED an EERIE...sounds of music over horns

FLASHBACK TO AN IMAGE: MINNA in the DREAM ON THE BRIDGE,
 TAPPING his forehead and mouthing words we can't hear but
 might make out or remember ("kept it under my hat.") And
 this throws Lionel's mind to...

ANOTHER IMAGE: Lionel's POV from the car in the first
 scene, *sound coming in now* like a dream...MINNA LEANING IN
 THE WINDOW GRINNING

MINNA
 I gotta keep this one under my
 hat, boys.

MINNA WINKS and....

LIONEL'S EYES POP OPEN IN THE CAB...

LIONEL
IF!

Not breathing, he tips MINNA'S HAT back and slowly pulls it
 off his head...staring at it...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Frankady Frankly Franko Frank...

He puts his fingers inside the HAT'S INNER BAND and slowly
 runs them from front to the back where they STOP...FEELING
 SOMETHING...AND THEN HE PULLS OUT A FOLDED PIECE OF
 PAPER...WRAPPED AROUND...A KEY.

SHAKING, HIS FINGERS START TO UNFOLD THE PAPER...

LIONEL'S FACE AS HE READS IT....

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Take me to Penn Station...

INT. PENN STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

The OLD PENN STATION...the now-destroyed masterpiece of vaulted iron...the grandest terminal ever built...

LIONEL moves through the drifting crowd and beams of low yellow winter sunset, heading toward...

A bank of LUGGAGE LOCKERS... He searches for a number, finds it and INSERTS THE KEY... THE DOOR OPENS.

He reaches inside and pulls out...MINNA'S ENVELOPE.

He sits on a bench and opens it

TIGHT ON: The items spilling out...documents and a woman's watch.

LIONEL FLIPS THROUGH THEM, STUDYING...

TIGHT ON DETAILS: numerous HOTEL REGISTRY CARDS with the name "Moses Randolph" on them and his signature; Employment records for the same hotel for a "Bella Rose"; a fine watch inscribed "To Bella"; and last...

A BIRTH CERTIFICATE...of LAURA ROSE. 1927.

The mother's name is listed "Bella Rose" and signed.

The witness is "Billy Rose", signed.

The father's name: "Moses Randolph"...and it's signed.

Lionel flips to the hotel registries. The signature is the same...

LIONEL'S FACE: registering the impossible.

CU: under all the 'evidence', a folded document with note written on it -- "For Lionel, if you find this... F"

ON LIONEL: as he unfolds it and reads, puzzled at first, then he reacts, containing emotion

LIONEL
(whispered)
Ah Frank...*Frank Frankady Franko.*

He folds that document and puts it in his coat pocket, puts all the rest back in the envelope, puts it back in the locker, locks it up, looks around and exits....and we hold on that door and it's nondescript number...then turn to see Lionel blending into the crowd and we...

RISE HIGH OVER THE GRANDEUR OF THE TERMINAL WITH THE SECRET LOCKED UP IN A SMALL CORNER AND THE WORLD GOING BY. And then we CUT TO:

EXT. PAUL'S BUILDING - MAGIC HOUR

SOMEONE'S POV: watching Lionel enter Paul's building...

SOUND OF A BUZZER takes us into...

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - SAME

The door has been left open and LIONEL enters to find PAUL sitting at his humble table by the street windows, still glowing in the fading light. PAUL looks up.

PAUL
You found it.

LIONEL
(nods)
There's only one way I can make sense of it.

Paul waits for it...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
He didn't sign her birth certificate. You did.

He sits. Paul sighs...a secret held for so long...ready to confess. He puts his face in his hands.

PAUL
Yes. I signed it.
(looks up)
Billy brought her to our family's home. Our servants tried to send them away and Billy started yelling. We were at dinner with our mother, for godsake. I followed Mo to the door. He scorned them, refused to acknowledge, but I saw the truth in her face. And his. The way he looked at her.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Even 6 months gone, she was beautiful. He sent them away with threats. But I followed them. I got them to take some money...later got a doctor.

LIONEL

You confronted him about it.

PAUL

I begged him. I invoked every principle and value we had been raised to champion. I was...in anguish. You can't understand...Our whole young life, he was my hero. We wrote our Creed. We were going to fix the world together... but to *serve people*, you have to *love people*. Mo tried but he was so brilliant that he resented lesser minds and he became hard. Obsessed with winning and addicted to power. Totally contemptuous of...ideals.
(real hate)

This phony 'man of the people'... The Jews call a man who's not what he seems to be an '*apicoris*'. That's a dangerous thing, when people aren't seen for what they really are...a very dangerous thing.

(to himself)

...or a sad thing, right?

LIONEL

Apicorpricot! Apple core it!

PAUL

Right.

LIONEL

Nobody else knows who she is?

PAUL

Not even Horowitz.

LIONEL

Why?

PAUL

She'd have used it. And used it to good effect.

(beat)

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

But it would devastate Laura.
Totally. Satisfaction won't
unburden a tortured heart...so I
can hold it...and so can
you...please.

Lionel pulls the key from his pocket and holds it up before placing it in Paul's hand.

LIONEL

It's in a Penn Station locker. If
anything happens to me, mail it to
Jacob Gleason at the Post.

PAUL

The Post is a rag...

LIONEL

Yeah but the Times is in
Randolph's pocket too. I gotta go
get her out of town until after
that vote.

EXT. PAUL'S BUILDING/STREET - NIGHT

Lionel exits and turns the corner under the Elevated track

POV: SOMEONE CLOSING ON HIM FAST FROM BEHIND...hand
reaching out to grab him.

LIONEL spins fast...fist up to see: TONY

TONY

Heya, Lionel.

LIONEL

What are you doing here, Tony?

TONY

Watching your back. Whaddya say we
get a drink?

INT. BROOKLYN BAR - NIGHT

An old school bar. Lionel and Tony sit at a small table.

LIONEL

How long you been following me?

TONY

I wasn't. They put me on his
building. I saw you come along.

LIONEL

'They'?

TONY

Let's don't bullshit each other,
you been talking to em too.

LIONEL

Not working for em. Were you
following me when Billy said he'd
mail it? You tell em that? They
killed him and he didn't even have
it. But why try to figure any of
it out? You're just moving up,
right?

He's agitated, twitching. A waitress comes up...

TONY

Seven and Seven. Have a drink,
Lionel.

LIONEL

Hot water. Tea bag on the side.
Sugar and Milk on the side. Very
hot. *HOT SUGAR TITS MILKY TEA*
FACE!

The waitress reacts...

TONY

Don't pay him no mind, doll.
There's something wrong with his
head.

She shrugs...goes off...

LIONEL

There's nothing wrong with my
head.

TONY

Coulda fooled me.

LIONEL

How long you been fucking Julia?
(no response)
After all he did for you? You
can't find someone else to bang?

Tony doesn't flinch at that...

TONY

Everybody's got a find their own way in the world, Lionel. You think I was going to hang in Frank's shadow all my life? Okay for you, not for me. Not for her.

The waitress brings the drinks.

WAITRESS

Careful...

She departs again.

TONY

(re: the tea)

C'mon, let's have a real drink, Lionel. What's the big fuckin' deal? We help em get what they want and get on a new ride. An easier ride for once. After all the shit we had to survive just to grow up? We're due an easy gig. You especially. C'mon I know you got a talent and I'll make sure there's a place for you. Be real partners.

Lionel pulls the mug over toward him and starts dipping the tea bag slowly up and down in it.

LIONEL

I'll think about it after tomorrow. I got something I gotta go take care--

TONY

Don't go up to Harlem tonight, Freakshow.

Lionel freezes...staring...

TONY (cont'd) (CONT'D)

See I ain't quite as far outta the loop as you think.

(beat)

We're closing it up tonight.

LIONEL

(desperate)

No. No, I found it. I've got what they want. Tony, call em off.

TONY

It's the last loose end and it's
outta my hands anyway. Now let's
just have a drink--

AND LIONEL FLINGS THE BOILING WATER RIGHT IN HIS FACE.

TONY SHOUTS, GRABBING HIS FACE AND LIONEL IS EXPLODING OUT
OF THE SEAT AND HEADING FOR THE DOOR BUT TONY LUNGES,
KNOCKING OVER THEIR TABLE, SEIZING HIM IN A WRESTLERS
TACKLE, SPINNING HIM AROUND AND SLAMMING HIM TO THE FLOOR,
CRASHING ON TOP OF HIM AND IMMEDIATELY SEIZING HIS THROAT
IN A MURDEROUS CHOKE

LIONEL TRIES DESPERATELY TO BREAK HIS HANDS AWAY, THEN GOES
FOR THE GUN STRAPPED TO HIM BUT TONY SLAMS HIS KNEE INTO
LIONEL'S CHEST, BLOCKING HIM...LIONEL IS GETTING DESPERATE,

CLOSE ON: HIS HAND SEARCHING FOR ANYTHING, FINDING THE
HEAVY GLASS SUGAR SHAKER ROLLING ON THE GROUND. AND HE
BRINGS THE HEAVY GLASS SHAKER UP AGAINST TONY'S
TEMPLE...HARD...WITH A NASTY CRUNCH.

TONY GOES OVER AND OFF HIM WITH A GRUNT, STUNNED, LIONEL
SCRAMBLES TO HIS KNEES AND HITS HIM AGAIN ABOVE THE EYE.
AND TONY IS OUT FOR THE COUNT.

That's all the opening Lionel needs. He is up, choking, out
the door and into:

EXT. STREET BY BAR - NIGHT

LIONEL IS SPRINTING, BREATH EXPLODING IN THE COLD AIR.
Turning a corner and stopping at...A PAYPHONE.

Dialing fast...

LIONEL
Laura Rose please...What?
Where'd she go? when? WHEN?!

BETTY'S VOICE (O.S.)
I'm sorry she's gone for the
day. Oh, I think she went
home. Who is th--? About 15 *
minutes ago. Who--

He hangs up and he's off...and we start CUTTING BETWEEN:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

LAURA boards the train. She is fighting back tears.

INT. TAXI CAB - SAME MOMENT

Lionel leans forward to the cabbie...

LIONEL
149th and St Nicholas. Harlem.
Floor it, I got money!

INT. SUBWAY CAR/TAXI CAB (INTERCUTTING) - NIGHT

Laura moves from one car to another and a MAN seems to be following her.

THE CAB, racing uptown, beating a yellow light going red...

IN THE TRAIN: an announcement that the train will go no further due to a breakdown. Laura groans and prepares to get out with other passengers

LIONEL coming out of his skin in the back.

EXT. HARLEM STREET - NIGHT

Laura walking in the cold, farther from home than normal

EXT./INT. TAXI CAB - CONTINUOUS

Lionel looking out the window: The KING ROOSTER and LAURA'S BUILDING coming into view

POV: Laura a few steps from her corner

He cranks the window down and SCREAMS HER NAME, but as he does a LARGE TRUCK passes drowning him out. It clears and she's rounding the corner, unaware. He's not going to catch her...He hurls money at the cabbie and leaps out practically still rolling.

EXT. STREET / KING ROOSTER JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

He immediately looks up at: LAURA'S APT WINDOW. A light in the window SUDDENLY GOES OUT. SOMEONE IS WAITING IN HER APARTMENT and Lionel explodes across the street.

HIGH-TEMPO MUSIC SNAPS IN...COMING FROM THE CLUB.

He hits the sidewalk, past the ROOSTER. The TRUMPET PLAYER looks up from his cigarette at Lionel flying by.

EXT. LAURA'S APARTMENT BUILDING / SIDE STREET - NIGHT

A car is parked in the shadows across the street.

Over the shoulder of the driver we see LIONEL BURST AROUND THE CORNER...the DRIVER (LOU) reacts in shock

LOU
Son of a bitch!

He piles out of the car, moving into the street as Lionel enters the vestibule and desperately HITS EVERY BUZZER.

Someone buzzes him in and as he pushes frantically in and closes the door, he sees something in the reflection and looks back to see

LOU: EMERGING FROM SHADOW INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET.

They lock eyes for a split second before Lionel SLAMS THE DOOR and sprints for the stairs.

INT. STAIRWELL OF LAURA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lionel taking the stairs three at a time, not daring to yell to her but PULLING FRANK'S GUN AS HE RUNS.

INT. LAURA'S HALLWAY/APARTMENT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

ON LAURA: reaching her landing and moving to her apartment at the end of the hall to put her key in the lock when the sound of feet coming fast makes her pause and turn...

...AND THERE IS LIONEL ALMOST ON HER, EYES WIDE, GUN OUT

She OPENS HER MOUTH TO EXCLAIM...BUT HE'S ON HER, CLAMPING HIS HAND OVER HER MOUTH AND SILENCING HER WITH A GESTURE. HE LOOKS TOWARD HER DOOR...HER EYES GO THERE, NOW TERRIFIED...

...Her hand is still on the key in the lock...gently he puts his hand over hers and carefully, eases her shaking hand off the key

THE DOOR JERKS OPEN and THE GIANT LOOMS OVER THEM.

LAURA SCREAMS and LIONEL SHOVES HER BACK AND DUCKS, BARELY EVADING THE SWIPE OF A KNIFE THAT SPEARS MINNA'S HAT OFF HIS HEAD AND STICKS INTO THE WOODEN DOOR FRAME

LIONEL TRIES TO RAISE FRANK'S .45 BUT THE GIANT'S HUGE HAND TOMAHAWKS DOWN, HITTING LIONEL'S GUN HAND

BOOM! THE .45 FIRES STRAIGHT DOWN INTO THE GIANT'S RIGHT FOOT. HE GRUNTS AND DROPS, SMASHING THE GUN OUT OF LIONEL'S HAND AND TO THE FLOOR AND KNOCKING LIONEL DOWN TOO.

AS LIONEL CRABS BACK, THE GIANT LIFTS FRANK'S GUN AND AIMS POINT BLANK AT LIONEL. LIONEL FLINCHES AND LAURA SCREAMS AS

CLICK. THE GUN JAMS. LIONEL IS UP AND MOVING AS THE GIANT TRIES TO WORK THE SLIDE AND FIRE. CLICK. LAURA IS HEADING FOR THE STAIRS BUT LIONEL GRABS HER AND SHOVES HER TOWARD THE END OF THE HALL AS THE GIANT TRIES AGAIN. CLICK.

THE GIANT TOSSES THE JAMMED GUN ASIDE AND RISES PAINFULLY, HIS FOOT BLEEDING HEAVILY. HE YANKS HIS KNIFE FROM THE DOORFRAME AND STARTS TO LIMP TOWARD THEM

LIONEL IS HURLING OPEN THE WINDOW AT THE END OF THE HALL

Laura scrambles out the window onto the fire escape with Lionel right behind her...ONE LAST LOOK AT the GIANT STRIDING TOWARD THEM FASTER.

EXT. LAURA'S BUILDING - FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

HOT, FAST MUSIC coming from THE ROOSTER nearby...They are 4 STORIES UP on a 5 story building and the FIRE ESCAPE is old and rickety...

Laura goes left fast, putting her hand on the railing only to have it BREAK COMPLETELY AWAY FROM THE BRICK WALL, ALMOST SENDING HER INTO SPACE. SHE SCREAMS AS LIONEL GRABS HER ARM AND PRACTICALLY THROWS HER UP THE LADDER. JUST AS HE STARTS TO CLIMB BEHIND HER--

SMASH! THE WHOLE WINDOW FRAME EXPLODES IN GLASS AND SPLINTERS AS THE GIANT COMES STRAIGHT THROUGH IT LIKE IT WAS PAPER...

LAURA'S SCREAM CUTS THROUGH THE DARK...and the MUSIC JAM STOPS SUDDENLY.

Lionel desperately climbs but he's running into Laura and then A HUGE HAND HAS HIM BY THE ANKLE...HE GRABS THE RAILINGS AND HAULS HIS WHOLE BODY UP AGAINST THE IMMOVABLE WEIGHT...it's just enough to stretch the Giant's arm enough that he can't swing his KNIFE HAND up as high...

LIONEL'S ELBOWS are locked around posts of the railing, trying to resist...being pulled down...but it's too much and HE'S SLIPPING...he DROPS TWO STEPS FAST, CLAWING TO GET A NEW GRIP...but the KNIFE IS MOVING IN when...

CRASH! Something HITS the Giant RIGHT IN THE FOREHEAD, OPENING A CUT LIKE A BOXER, AS LIONEL TWISTS AWAY...

THE GIANT looks up at...LAURA ON THE PLATFORM ABOVE, HOLDING A SECOND FLOWER POT WHICH SHE THROWS DOWN HARD.

THE GIANT THROWS UP HIS KNIFE HAND TO BLOCK IT BUT THE IMPACT KNOCKS THE KNIFE OUT OF HIS HAND AND AS HIS MOVEMENT STANDS HIM UP A LITTLE TOO STRAIGHT ON THE LADDER...

LIONEL PUTS A FOOT AGAINST THE MAN'S CHEST AND KICKS HARD.

THE GIANT LURCHES BACK...ARMS PINWHEELING, TIPPING BACK AND CRASHING INTO THE BROKEN RAILING WHICH FLIES OFF THE WALL, PITCHING HIM OUT INTO OPEN SPACE. BUT HIS FLAILING HAND MANAGES TO GRAB THE SILL OF A WINDOW.

LAURA: RUNS ACROSS THE PLATFORM ABOVE LIONEL TO THE FAR RAIL AND LOOKS DOWN. FOR A FROZEN SECOND SHE AND THE GIANT LOOK RIGHT AT EACH OTHER...AND THEN HE SILENTLY FALLS, a horrible drop...CRASHING ON HIS BACK ONTO A LOW DIVIDING WALL IN THE ALLEY WITH A SICKENING CRACK.

LIONEL appears next to her. He looks down at the broken body, unmoving. Laura is SHAKING HARD. He grabs her shoulders and finds her eyes.

LIONEL

There's another one downstairs.
Come on...

And he starts up the final ladder to the roof...

EXT. LAURA'S BUILDING - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

LIONEL bursts onto the roof and shouts into the dark...

LIONEL

She doesn't know! SHE DOESN'T
KNOW!

Voices of concern shouting from other apartments can be heard as Lionel turns back to help a shaking Laura onto the roof.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)

It's okay...we're okay. But we
gotta move.

She nods and they start toward the ROOFTOP DOOR to a STAIRWELL...they are half way across when OUT OF THE SHADOW STEPS...

LOU...cold and precise, he LIFTS A SILENCED REVOLVER.

Lionel steps in front of Laura...

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Tell him she doesn't know. I have
what they want. Tell him...

LOU
That offer expired.
(laughs)
And they said you were smart...

He pulls the hammer back and levels it...

LIONEL: something behind Lou catching his eye...

CLANG! LOU DROPS LIKE A LOG, revealing...

THE TRUMPETER...WIELDING HIS HORN LIKE AN BASEBALL
BAT...THE INSTRUMENT BADLY BENT from the impact with Lou's
head...

The SAX PLAYER and BILLY'S FRIEND from the club step out
behind him.

TRUMPETER
Motherfucker, smoked my best horn.

INT. TRUMPET MAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

LAURA is on a sofa, staring into nothing...The MUSICIANS
are posted up by the windows and doors...

Lionel is on a phone...

LIONEL
I want to see him alone. Yeah,
right now.
(writes something down)
Try anything funny and tomorrow
will be the worst day you've had
in a long time.

He hangs up...looks at Laura. She looks shell-shocked.

He looks at THE TRUMPETER who nods at him. Under control.
LIONEL takes THE FOLDED DOCUMENT that MINNA LEFT HIM WITH
THE FILE out of his coat pocket...shows the TRUMPETER
something on it.

LIONEL (cont'd) (CONT'D)
You know where this is? Can you
take her there?

TRUMPET
I always like a night drive.

LIONEL

(to Laura)

Go with them. You'll be safe at
this place tonight.

LAURA

What don't I know?

He stops and looks at her.

LIONEL (V.O.)

*It wasn't the story she wanted to
hear. And no good would come from
telling it, so I wanted to say 'It
doesn't matter. It's got nothing to
do with you.' But there's no upside
in lying to a woman who's smarter
than you, so I told her the
truth...*

We see him telling her the dark truth and her head drops
and we CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC ATHLETIC CLUB - POOL - NIGHT

We've been here before...the HUGE PRIVATE POOL with its
canopy of glass...but now more dimly lit inside and steamy

LIONEL (V.O.)

*Frank told me once if you're up
against someone bigger than you,
someone you can't beat toe to toe:
make em think you respect their
size and cut a deal that lets you
walk out in one piece. Then figure
out a way to stick it to em later
without leaving your prints on the
knife. Even walking in there I
wasn't sure exactly how to play
it. I just hoped in all the steam
he wouldn't see me sweating.*

Lionel is admitted through a door He moves to a bench and
sits to wait as A FIGURE SWIMS IN THE DARK, churning the
water with powerful strokes.

MOSES RANDOLPH: swimming powerfully from the far end toward
him. He exits the pool, puts on a robe and stands over
Lionel, IMPOSING and FIERCE. LIONEL is ticcing badly...not
able to control his nerves. He YELPS TWICE...almost a
BARK...then..

LIONEL

*Who's the fucking Boss now,
Bailey! Who's the boss!*

RANDOLPH regards him cooly...interested.

RANDOLPH

So what is it with you?

LIONEL

I got somethin' wrong with my
head. Didn't your goons fill you
in yet?

RANDOLPH

I don't care about your fucking
affliction. I mean what's your
angle in this? What do you want
for that file?

LIONEL

I want to hear your version of it.

RANDOLPH

Why?

LIONEL

Let's just say an unfinished
puzzle makes my head hurt, more'n
most people.

Randolph turns this over...assessing it.

RANDOLPH

I smooth it all out for your pain
in the ass brain...we putting this
to bed tonight?

LIONEL

It's you best shot.

Randolph SITS DOWN NEXT TO HIM

RANDOLPH (cont'd)

I was young. I was the Get Things
Done man for the greatest governor
in the history of this state.

(remembering)

We had a party, it was the good
years, before the Crash. The
Tammany parties were like nothing
before or since. We had a whole
fucking hotel. I saw her there,
working.

(MORE)

RANDOLPH (cont'd)

She was...I'd never felt...lust...
like that. Like a fist in my
crotch. You know 25 years later
when I think of her it still makes
my blood move.

(beat)

I followed her into a service
hall, she knew I had. She looked
back at me and then went into a
supply room.

(beat)

I went in there and I took her
against the spare towels.

LIONEL

You raped her?

RANDOLPH

I moved on her that first time.
But I treated her well...gave her
things. I saw to it that the Party
used that hotel a lot for a few
years.

(beat)

She could have disappeared any
time. Stopped working there. But
she didn't. She was shy but she
knew how things worked and she was
always grateful.

(scoffs)

Rape. Do you have the first
inkling of what power is? Power
is feeling...*knowing*...that you
can do anything you want to and
there's not a fucking person who
can stop you. And if somebody else
has a dumb idea that you don't
like, that's the *end* of that idea,
or the end of that person if you
want.

(low, dangerous)

And if I can build highways when
the rest of the country is *broke*,
I'll punch through any
neighborhood I damn well want to.
And if some Negro slum is where I
want to put my Federal project, or
an off ramp for my bridge then all
the goodie goodies in the world
can shriek and moan as loud as
they want. And if some *chump*
thinks he can blackjack me by
threatening to move our baseball
team?

(MORE)

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)

Then buddy the Dodgers can take it on the arches to the fucking coast and I'll get a new team that plays ball with ME, in MY stadium.

(turns to Lionel)

And if I want to fuck a colored girl in a hotel room now and then because I'm feeling like a wrecking ball then, pal, I'm gonna do it. And if you think I'm gonna let some little chip who never should have been born, or your small time boss or my brother and his ideals and his *forgeries in my name* slow down what I'm GETTING DONE in this city, you gotta lot to learn about how power works. Cause all those people are invisible...they don't even exist.

LIONEL

See if you feel that way tomorrow when they blow up your big vote.

RANDOLPH

She know?

Lionel's look says no. Randolph calculates...

RANDOLPH (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Interesting. So it's you and Paul. I know what *he* wants. If he had any balls he'd have used this before to box me in and *take* it from me. I'd have respected that actually, but he thinks the way you do things matters. It's why he'll never be anybody. You an idealist too? You gonna trade me that file to save the block you grew up on? Make me draw my lines somewhere else for some committee of childless women, howling about their negro adoptees? Or you just another blackmailing gumshoe who wants to *transact with me*? *Name it!*

LIONEL

Name it! CLAIM it! Shame it!

(beat - calms)

That blackmailing gumshoe was my friend and that girl is the only reason you're still breathing.

(MORE)

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Do what you want to the city.
Build your pyramids on the Nile.
But you leave her alone. Anything
happens to her, it gets mailed.

Randolph narrows his eyes...reading into this,
countering...

RANDOLPH

Make no mistake, you or Paul
messes with what I intend to get
done and I'll make her life even
worse than I made his. You tell
him I said that.

LIONEL

I guess we've got a deal. So I'll
give you one for free.

(turns)

You man Lieberman is gonna cause
you problems.

RANDOLPH

How so?

LIONEL

He owns a piece of half the
companies doing contracts with
slum clearance. And I'm guessing
he hasn't told you about that. So
when you 'handle' him...tell him
it was me that told you and that
that's for Frank.

RANDOLPH

(actually surprised)

Son of a bitch. You come off
weird, but you're smart. You
should've taken my offer. You
could've made em all get on their
knees and apologize.

(beat)

Although if she's anything like
her mother, I can understand the
pull.

On that Lionel stands and turns to go. Randolph looks up

RANDOLPH (cont'd) (CONT'D)

Oh, and tell my brother... I read
his masterwork. It's as brilliant
as everyone says.

(MORE)

RANDOLPH (cont'd) (CONT'D)
Nobody else could have done it and
it's good for absolutely everyone,
including me. There's not one
reason to deny it. Tell him I'll
send him my thoughts in the
morning.

Lionel nods, and walks away into the steam. Randolph looks
down on the bench to see: Lionel has left MINNA'S HAT
BEHIND. He stares off...

RANDOLPH (CONT'D)
SON OF A BITCH!

The echoes and we CUT TO:

EXT. DAWN ON THE CITY / LIONEL DRIVING - MONTAGE

Images of the city interspersed with Lionel driving,
getting somewhere beyond it all. Long Island.

EXT. PAUL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

Paul can be seen in the entryway, pulling his mail out of
the box with some urgency...expectant. He sifts it, his
focus is on one envelope that has arrived.

He comes out into the cold stares at the envelope a beat
then looks up into the morning sun, takes a breath and
opens it...reads the letter...

CU: Personal stationary with 'MR' at the top and one large
hand-written word: 'DENIED.'

WIDE ON: Paul's sad figure, shoulders sagging

The letter falls out of his hand and blows away in the cold
wind.

As he turns and shambles away down the street, disappearing
into shadow...

We are back with LIONEL IN THE CAR, CROSSING BRIDGES, FAR OUT
OF THE CITY NOW

LIONEL (V.O.)
*Growing up, I always thought Frank
was a hero but he was no crusader
in the end. He was just a gumshoe
trying to make a buck like everyone
else. But he didn't have to go to
that war.*

(MORE)

LIONEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He was old enough to have skipped it and he went anyway because he actually thought this country was worth fighting for. I never had anything I cared about enough to look past my own problems. But Laura did. There was a story she wanted told and I figured it was time to get off my ass and pick a side.

INT. NY POST NEWSROOM - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

JAKE GLEASON, the Reporter, sits at his desk with his feet up reviewing his notes. A NEWSBOY blows past the desk dropping an envelope on it

NEWSBOY
Gleason...for you

GLEASON sits forward and picks it up, eyes scanning

AUDIO FLASHBACK: we hear Lionel and Gleason from when they first met...LIONEL: "Hey pal, what's the story here?"
GLEASON: "Stories of injustice and despair...the American Way."

And we see, CU: on the envelope is written

"STORIES OF INJUSTICE AND DESPAIR" OR...A BETTER STORY FOR A REAL REPORTER. LET'S MAKE THINGS INTERESTING....A FRIEND"

GLEASON'S brow furrows, remembering...curious. He opens the envelope and reacts at

LIONEL HAS RETURNED HIS PRESS CARD, CLIPPED TO A NOTE

"THANKS FOR THE LOAN. PAY YOU BACK WITH A PULITZER"

Now GLEASON is really intrigued and, as the music rises, he looks at the document and we see that LIONEL HAS STOLEN THE DOCUMENTS FROM THE HALL OF RECORDS THAT SHOW THAT EXPOSE LIEBERMAN AND THE BA OFFICERS...LIEBERMAN'S NAME IS CIRCLED

ON GLEASON'S FACE, as his jaw drops in shock. As what he's got washes over him, a smile breaks across his face and he starts laughing with delight and we CUT TO:

EXT. A BEACH HOUSE - MORNING

Lionel's car pulls up on the edge of a sand-swept road and he gets out and sees.

LAURA sitting wrapped in blankets on the porch of a weathered little house.

He stops at the bottom step and stands facing her.

LIONEL

You crazy? It's freezing out.

He sits next to her...She is shaken. A tear falls on her face.

LAURA

What is this place?

LIONEL

It was Frank's.

(beat)

Looks like it's mine now.

She reacts. He pulls out the document Frank left him, which we realize now must be a will or a title deed. She looks at it, then up at him tenderly

LAURA

Still looking out for you after all.

(beat)

Funny how things turn out.

He nods and stares outward at something...puzzling at a memory.

LIONEL

"Brooklyn's big, but there's things even bigger."

LAURA

What's that?

LIONEL

I think it's something Frank said to me but I can't remember when.

LAURA

Maybe this is what he meant.

AND WE CUT BEHIND THEM and see the enormous COLD, BLUE OCEAN, WAVES POUNDING ONTO MILES OF FROZEN EMPTY WHITE SAND.

LIONEL

If! IF!

She puts her hand gently on his back and he settles. She leans into him, he closes his eyes and sighs and, AS THEIR LONELY SONG SWELLS UP, we....CUT TO BLACK.