

SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

REEL LIFE

(aka TO PROTECT AND SERVE)

by

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"REEL LIFE"

FADE IN:

CLOSE-UP: DESK DRAWER

Hands yank open drawers in the dark. Searching brusquely through the desk. Restless. Anxious. Papers fly. Pills and change scatter. A stray condom slides by...

Finally, the hands stop. They come to rest on a gun. Not a nickel-plated pop-gun revolver. No, this is a sleek, black 9mm Beretta. Way expensive. Way cool.

The hands release the clip. It's full. Cool brass bullets softly reflect the moonlight. As the hands slide in the clip, with a loud CLACK, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. RICK'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING SHOT

The HOLLYWOOD sign glows faintly in the background. CAMERA CRANES down elegantly to the entrance. We descend...

INSIDE THE RESTAURANT

A posh Hollywood eatery. Dimly lit. Lots of hustle and bustle. LOUD CHATTER. Designer suits. People wandering from table to table. Grown men hugging. Stars walking by. Reel Life.

We enter through the door, picking up a conversation.

GUY (O.S.)

Yeah, Buddy's doing great. I'll tell him he owes you a call. See you Derek.

(pause)

Where was I?

JACK(O.S.)

Shelly Winters.

CAMERA weaves through the restaurant. Searches for the right table. Offers us a glimpse of all the Tinseltown types. Passes a HEAVY WOMAN with too much make-up. Amidst her CACKLES, the conversation continues off-screen.

GUY (O.S.)

Right. Shelly Winters. Buddy actually asks her to do a reading for the part. Shelly Winters. She probably hasn't had to read in over 15 years. But Buddy -- he can convince a tick it needs fleas.

JACK (O.S.)
That's why the man is my God.

MOE (O.S.)
Who's Shelly Winters?

MANNY (O.S.)
You know, the actress. Older...

CAMERA continues to search for these guys. Follows a well-dressed OLD MAN to his table. He sits next to a GIRL..and I do mean girl..dressed in something way too tight. She snuggles up next to him.

GUY (O.S.)
So Shelly comes in and just sits there.
Buddy's working it, sweet talking her.
But she doesn't say a word. Finally she reaches down into her bag....

We move on. Follow a busboy towards the back. He goes through the kitchen. The double doors swing shut on us. CAMERA pauses as they swing back and forth, back and forth...

A second later, we hear a SCREAM, then a CRASH. The TINKLE of broken glass and china. Through the swinging doors a RAT emerges. We follow the RAT as it scampers past the bar. Past the giant potted palms. And out to...

A LONE TABLE IN THE BACK

four Twenty-something MBA-types are huddled together. Young, virile men reeking of ambition. Seated out of the main landing strip for the major Hollywood players. On the outside looking in...Hollywood Assistants.

Holding the center of attention is the storyteller, GUY. The best-dressed man at the table. And the most admired.

The others -- call them MANNY, MOE, and JACK -- look identical: Crisp white shirts, double breasted suits, paisley ties.

Guy lights up a cigarette. Continues...

GUY
..and she pulls out an Oscar. An honest-to-God Academy Award.

MANNY
No way.

GUY

But that still doesn't shut Buddy up. So she pulls out another Oscar. Then another. And another. Dead silence.

A WAITRESS brings Jack a piece of cheesecake.

GUY

Finally, she looks up at Buddy and says, 'You know, some people think I can act.'

The table bursts into LAUGHTER. Moe just looks confused.

GUY

This, from the man they're about to make President of Mega-Pictures. This town...

MOE

I still can't picture her. Who is Shelly Winters?

The table is silent. The other guys think. Manny sits up.

MANNY

Wait. I got it. She's that actress that does the Polydenture commercials.

JACK

Right. Right. And she's married to that guy who's, like, twenty years younger than her. Always pushing her around in a wheelchair.

GUY

Stop. Stop it. That's Martha Raye you idiots. Jesus, I'm dining with film illiterates. Shelly Winters -- you know. WINCHESTER '73, A PLACE IN THE SUN, A PATCH OF BLUE, LOLITA....

No recognition at all from the table. Guy thinks.

GUY

THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE?

The table emits an 'Aaah' of recognition. Guy shakes his head in disbelief. Manny smacks Moe.

MOE

Sorry I asked. I was curious. I apologize.

GUY

Don't worry about it Moe. You don't have to apologize. Listen. Never apologize. It's a sign of weakness.

A toilet FLUSHES in the background. Guy turns, annoyed.

GUY

Why must we always sit in the back?

JACK

Are you kidding? Everyone comes by this table. It's the only way to the john.

On cue, FOSTER KANE, a 30ish director-type, steps out of the bathroom. Looks lost among the Hollywood types. Jack reacts.

JACK

Holy shit! Guy, that's Foster Kane. Introduce us, huh. The man is my God.

Guy grumbles. But agrees. Waves Foster over.

FOSTER

Guy, they let you out of the salt mines?

GUY

Only to keep an eye on you. Foster, like you to meet the boys.

'Hello's' all around. Foster turns to Guy.

FOSTER

How's Buddy?

GUY

He's great. Doing great.

FOSTER

I called the other day. I haven't heard back though.

GUY

Yeah? I'll tell him he owes you a call.

GIRL 1 (O.S.)

Foster, honey? Come on. Let's go.

Foster looks over to where GIRL 1 -- a gorgeous, curvy blonde (What else, right?) -- calls out to him. Foster excuses himself. Exits.

The boys are impressed. Could probably knock them over with their own flop sweat. Guy sits back down. Calm, cool.

4

MOE

Who was that again?

Manny smacks Moe again.

MANNY

Only the youngest, hottest most sought-after director in town...

JACK

...and Buddy's got him for his next movie.

MOE

Yeah? What's that?

Dead silence. Another smack from Manny.

MANNY

Only the youngest, hottest project in town...

JACK

...the one that made Buddy President of Mega-Pictures. And our boy here is the one who found it. Right, Guy?

(Guy shrugs)

Man, I can hardly wait till it's my day.

(another bite of cheesecake)

Jesus, this tastes like shit. Anyone want it?

GUY

Oh, there's a great question. If it tastes like shit, why would we want it?

MOE

I'll take it.

The rest of the table pauses. Looks at Moe. Looks at each other. Then in unison...

GUY , MANNY , JACK

AGENT!!!!

LAUGHS all around. Manny waves his hands for attention.

MANNY

Boys, Boys. Check out who just walked in.

We look over to the front and see the back of a tall, silver-haired gentleman with an impeccable suit.

(5)

JACK

Holy shit. It's Cyrus Miles. Hey Guy, introduce us, huh? The man is my god.

GUY

Right. Introduce a table of assistants to the chairman of Mega-Pictures. Oh yeah. That would be a good career move.

(tries to change the subject)

Moe, how's the cheesecake?

MOE

(finishing off a big bite)

Jack's right. Tastes like shit.

JACK

Come on Guy. You're the one assistant who can bring meaning to all of our piddly assistant lives. Introduce us?

GUY

watches CYRUS circulate through the restaurant. Slow motion. Coming towards the back. Near their table. Manny, Moe, and Jack look on eagerly. Guy gets ready to stand...

A loud BEEP BEEP BEEP stops him. Guy reaches down to his belt and pulls off his BEEPER. Looks at it. Rolls his eyes.

GUY

Gentleman, if you'll excuse me.

MANNY

Buddy's beeping you now??!!

Guy shrugs, 'What can you do'. Leaves the table. As soon as he is out of earshot, Jack turns to Manny and Moe.

JACK

What are you doing? You're embarrassing me here! He's the prodigal son of Mega-Pictures. Buddy Ackerman's boy. He's our ticket in. Don't blow it with your stupid questions.

TRACKING WITH GUY AS HE WALKS TOWARDS THE PHONES

He is stopped at each table by various Hollywood types -- Armani suits, gorgeous women -- for platitudes that all start with 'How is Buddy?' and end with 'Tell Buddy I said Hello,' or 'He owes me a call' Guy eventually reaches...

(6)

INT. RESTAURANT LOBBY - PHONE BOOTHS

Guy slides in between two attractive model-types. Eye candy.
He dials, waits. A FEMALE VOICE answers.

DAWN (O.S.)

Yeah, what!

GUY

Dawn? It's Guy.

DAWN (O.S.)

Oh. Hi.

GUY

Hi.

(pregnant pause)

About the other day, I'm sorry. I...

DAWN (O.S.)

Don't apologize. It's a sign of...

GUY

Yeah. I know, I know. But I want to.

Guy's beeper goes off again. BEEP BEEP BEEP.

DAWN (O.S.)

Sounds like you're being summoned.

GUY

Forget Buddy. Is it all right if I come over? We can talk.

DAWN (O.S.)

I can't. I'm busy. Tomorrow okay?

GUY

(disappointed)

Oh. Hmmm. All right.

DAWN (O.S.)

What is it?

GUY

Nothing. I wanted to tell you something.
But I guess it can wait till I see you.

DAWN (O.S.)

Okay. Call me in the morning?

GUY
All right. Dawn?

DAWN (O.S.)
Yeah?

GUY
I really...
(struggles; finally)
...I am sorry.

Guy hangs up. GROANS. Mouths the words "I love you" silently. Bangs the phone against his forehead. Mutters to himself. "Stupid, Stupid, Stupid".

Pumps more change into the phone. Dials another number. Twirls his beeper round and round. Holsters it onto his belt like an old-fashioned gunslinger. A MALE VOICE answers.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Yeah? What.

GUY
You beeped?

BUDDY (O.S.)
Ten minutes ago. What took you so long?

GUY
I had to get to a phone. And I..

BUDDY (O.S.)
Whatever. Anyways. Is it done?

GUY
Yes. Returned every call and left word.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Good. Some asshole complained to Cyrus. I can't afford to have that. Not when I'm this close. You're suppose to keep up on the calls. Help me. Don't hurt me.

Guy YAWNS. He's heard this lecture before.

GUY
Yeah, sure. Whatever.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Christ. You're not even listening, are you? I'll tell you, Guy. I don't think this is working anymore. Maybe it's time we reconsider our relationship.

GUY
(straightens up)
Reconsider? What does that mean?

BUDDY (O.S.)
We'll talk about it in the morning.

GUY
No, wait. Reconsider? What are you
talking about? You're gonna can me? Let
me go?

A loud BEEP. The unmistakable intrusion of call waiting.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Hold on. I've got another call

The phone CLICKS a couple of times. Then Buddy's voice comes
on the line.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Hello? Hello?

GUY
It's still me. Look, we couldn't return
a lot of calls because you've been away.
It won't happen again.

The phone BEEPS again. Cuts Guy off.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Hold on. Hold on. Fuckin' phones. Call
waiting, call conferencing...Got to be a
rocket scientist to make this thing work.

Guy leans against the phone booth. Rubs his eyes. Tired.

A second later, he stands. Starts to speak, but then stops.
Quickly covers the phone's mouthpiece. He listens...
A frown forms on his face. Quickly darkens into a glare.

Hangs up. Steadies himself for a second. Breathing hard.

Guy looks around. Rushes into the men's room.

INT. MEN'S ROOM

Guy looks into the mirror. Paces. Really really pissed-off
about something. Mutters to himself. Actually starts yelling
to himself.

GUY

God Damn it. I don't believe this. This isn't happening. This can't be happening. It's not right.

Just then, a MAN IN A FRINGE JACKET walks in. Sees Guy and his face lights up.

FRINGE JACKET

Hey, Guy? Guy, how are you? Johnny Bonds. Remember, I was in to see Buddy last week? How is he?

GUY

He's great. He's fuckin' fantastic. Excuse me.

Guy rushes out. Fringe Jacket yells after him.

FRINGE JACKET

Hey, tell Buddy he owes me a call.

EXT. RESTAURANT

GUY pays the valet and screeches out and around the corner.

INSIDE THE CAR

Guy grips, squeezes the steering wheel. Tense. Ready to explode. Mutters to himself. SCREECHES around another corner.

EXT. INTERSECTION - BEVERLY & LA CIENEGA

Red light.

GUY'S BEAT-UP CAR stops behind a COUPLE IN A CONVERTIBLE.

INSIDE

Guy whips off his tie. Anxiously waits for the left-turn light to change. But it's taking forever. Guy tries to keep it under control.

Watches as THE CONVERTIBLE COUPLE KISS. Then the beeper goes off. BEEP BEEP BEEP. Finally...

GUY

Fuck! Fuck! FUCK! FUCK!!!!!!

Guy blows up. Throws a violent temper tantrum in the car. Punching, kicking, screaming. Cassettes go flying by. His rear view mirror gets knocked off. Fury unleashed.

10
EXT. INTERSECTION

The light changes to green and the convertible moves off. But Guy's car remains parked. Rocking with rage. Cars behind him start HONKING.

INSIDE THE CAR

Guy continues to flip out. Finally stops. Out of breath. Suit disheveled. Hair a mess. Peels out into the night as...

THE LIGHT

changes to red.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUDDY ACKERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Nestled in the Hollywood Hills. Big giant house on stilts surrounded with ceiling-high picture windows.

Guy's car pulls up. He gets out, a man on a mission. Walks up to the door.

Lifts up a flowerpot and picks up a key. Punches a security access code. Red light changes to green. Guy turns the lock and enters.

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM

The bedroom is a study in opulent self-worship. Mirrors as big as the picture windows. And everything a testimonial to the life of Buddy Ackerman. Movie posters. Big ones in foreign languages.

Signed photos of celebrities cover a wall. Their arms around Buddy with corny sentiments like, "To my best Buddy" or "Thanks for putting me in an 'action Buddy' picture".

BUDDY ACKERMAN, slick, smooth and with good looks that can only come from living well. Looking way too sharp for just lounging around the house. Everything about him reads high maintenance. Everything about him also reads self-confident, assured...king of the hill.

Buddy is on the phone leaving a message for Guy.

BUDDY

Guy, tomorrow morning, call the phone company. Cancel the call waiting crap and get two...no, four lines put in at the house.

(11)

Buddy hangs up. Checks his watch. Flips through TV channels. Stops. Sees something that sparks his interest. Picks up the phone. Hits a Speed Dial button.

BUDDY

After you fix the phones, research who directed the Slam and Jam music video.

(studies the TV)

It's got cheerleaders in some tight purple skirts. Find out who his agent is and what he's doing now.

(hangs up; watches; dials)

And track down the redhead. Leather miniskirt and hi-tops. Set up a meeting.

Buddy hangs up. Starts flipping through channels when...

GUY (O.S.)

The video was directed by a she. Tammy Janawa. And you're too late. She's already committed to a Universal picture.

BUDDY

What the hell?

Buddy turns to the dark hallway. Sees the RED GLOW of a burning cigarette. SMOKE drifts up into the light, and from out of the shadows...

GUY

steps out. Leans against the doorway. Stamps out his cigarette on the floor.

GUY

As for the redhead, don't you think she's just a little young? Even for you?

Buddy gets to his feet. First, startled. Then, annoyed. Points to the cigarette stub.

BUDDY

What are you doing?! What are you doing here!

(Guy doesn't move)

Jesus. You scared the living shit out of me! Your lucky I didn't shoot you.

GUY

With what? This?

Guy holds up the sleek, black 9mm Beretta. Buddy's tone changes. He backs down a bit, but just an iota. After all, he's still Buddy Ackerman.

BUDDY

Great, my gun. Hand it over.

GUY

Sit down.

BUDDY

What? Come on. Enough. Give me the gun.

GUY

Sit.

BUDDY

Have you gone completely insane? Give.
Me. The Gun. Now.

Guy advances towards Buddy. In one swift motion, Guy chambers a round with a loud CLACK and extends his arm. Gun pointed directly in Buddy's face.

GUY

Sit. The Fuck. Down. Now.

Buddy sits. Changes strategies. Tries to play nice.

BUDDY

Okay, I know things have been kind of crazy in the office. But there's no need for this. Now, why don't you put the gun down and let's talk. We're both rational adults here.

GUY

Bullshit. You are a fucking child.

BUDDY

(flaring)

All right. Forget it. I gave you a chance. It's late, and I've had enough of this bullshit. I'm calling the cops, and you are going to jail. End of story. Have a nice life.

Buddy picks up the phone. Dials. Guy cocks the gun, and in a sweeping motion, swings his arm around and FIRES.

THE PHONE

EXPLODES into a million pieces. In slow motion too. A shower of plastic shards flying into space.

Buddy jumps back. Drops the phone receiver. Now beginning to get just a little nervous.

BUDDY

What do you want?

Guy grabs Buddy with one hand. Cocks the gun with the other. Draws Buddy close. Face to face. Eye to eye. Nose to gun barrel.

GUY

I want you to think and remember.
Remember every insult, every offense,
every thing you've ever taken away from
me. And think to yourself...it's payback
time.

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPERIMPOSE CARD - "DAY ONE"

EXT. MEGA-PICTURES STUDIOS - EARLY MORNING

Guy's beat-up car drives in through the grand entrance gates and parks. He's the first one there.

INT. GUY'S CAR

Guy pulls up to a spot. Takes a look around at...

MEGA-PICTURE STUDIOS

Big Iron Gates. Giant Movie Murals. Larger than life.
Everything about the place reads 'Yes, dreams do come true.'

GUY

breaks out into a grin. Slowly lets loose a chuckle. And then can't help himself. Breaks into a CRY of victory.

GUY

YEEEE-HAAAA!!!! YES!! YES YES YES!!!

Guy stops. Calms himself. Checks his appearance in the rear view mirror. His tie, his teeth...

IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR

We see a black SAAB convertible pull up behind Guy. Idles there. And then starts HONKING and HONKING.

GUY

looks back. Gets out of his car. Wears an ill-fitting suit, single-breasted and un-chic. Boring tie, done up in an enormous Windsor knot. Very uncool. Very unimpressive.

147.
Guy bounces over to the Saab. Comes face to face with DAWN LOCKARD. Late 20's blonde ambition. And armed with the looks and attitude to back it up.

GUY

Hi! How are you?

DAWN

Fuck you. You're in my parking spot.
Move it.

Guy steps back. Looks around.

HIGH ANGLE OF THE PARKING LOT

Dawn and Guy are the only two there.

GUY

Okay.

Guy walks back to his car. Not wanting to make waves.

AFTER THE CARS DO A QUICK SWITCH

Guy pursues Dawn as she walks quickly towards an adjacent building on the lot. Tries to make light, entertaining banter...a pick-up.

GUY

I'm sorry about that. I didn't realize that was your parking spot.

DAWN

I slaved three miserable years to get that spot. I earned it. It's mine.

GUY

And it's a great spot. A magnificent spot. Hell, I'd kill for a spot like that. By the way, my name's Guy. And I do know that I am going to love working here.

Dawn stops. Pulls down her sunglasses. Looks Guy over. His shitty suit, boring tie. Finally...

DAWN

First day on the job, huh?

(slight chuckle)

Piece of advice. Lose the smile. It makes you look like a shmuck.

15
Dawn walks away. Guy watches her go. Still smiling.

GUY
She likes me.

SMASH CUT TO:

C.U. PHONE

As it RINGS and RINGS and RINGS....

INT. MEGA PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES - DAY

A BLIZZARD of paper, a loud JUMBLE of voices barking, RAT-A-TAT-TAT of typewriters clicking away. Welcome to the War Zone.

GUY

waits nervously beside an empty desk. A fresh face full of anxiety, anticipation and innocent ambition.

The phone continues to RING and RING. Guy looks around. Looks at the phone. Should he answer it? Shouldn't he? Finally decides to pick it up.

GUY
Buddy Ackerman's office.

DIAL TONE. Too late. A hand grips him from behind.

REX (O.S.)
Ready to go to work I see.

Guy turns. Comes face to face with REX COBB, late 20s. Attitude and clothes reads confidence and charm.

The phone RINGS again. Several lines at once. Rex grabs it.

REX
Buddy Ackerman's office. No Derek, he isn't here right now....No, I did not say he isn't in yet. I said he's not here right now..at this moment in time. Yeah, gonna miss you too Derek.

(phone rings again)
Buddy Ackerman's office. Yes, I know the meeting has started, ma'am. I'll send him down as soon as he gets here.

(hangs up, grabs another line)
Bud..Oh, hey Mona. How are you gorgeous? Yeah, you and Buddy are on for tonight. Get your cute little butt over to his place by midnight.

(MORE)

REX (cont'd)
(another line)
Hey Dawn! Been a while. All right.
Pitch or personal? Pitch, huh? Next
Wednesday, ok? All right, say 10:30.

Guy stands there bewildered, because all of this has been executed in a matter of mere seconds. And he's still waiting to see if Rex comes up for air.

Rex sets the phone down. It rings again. Rex ignores it. Motions for Guy to follow.

REX
Come on, farm boy. Let's do it.

DOWN THE HALL

Guy and Rex pass a handful of other assistants at work. All of them busy.

Rex gives Guy the run-down on the job.

REX
So I don't know what you've heard about this job, but it's going to be a lot of work for shit wages.
(corrects himself)
A lot of shit work for shit wages.
Picking up dry-cleaning. Gassing up his car. Getting coffee. Getting lunch.
Getting him laid. And he can be...well, difficult at times.

INT. COPY ROOM/PANTRY

Rex leads Guy into the copy room. Grabs a couple packets of coffee from a cabinet as he leads us through exposition hell.

REX
After all, Buddy is the Senior Executive Vice-President of Production for Mega-Pictures. Only two people bigger than that. Stella Smiley, President of Worldwide Production...for now. She doesn't like us. But that's okay, because above her is Cyrus Miles. Studio Chairman and Grand Poo-Bah. We call him God.
(pause)
And he does like us.

Points to the copy machine. Cutting-edge technology. Looks like the bridge of the Starship Enterprise. Intimidating.

REX

That thing is going to be the second most important thing in your life. Pity the day it breaks down on you.

Rex exits. Guy scurries behind.

INT. HALLWAY

CLOSE-UP on a coffee maker on a table. Coffee drips onto the warmer. SIZZLES. A nearly empty coffee-pot is picked up. CAMERA PANS UP with it to pick up on...

REX AND GUY

as they reach the coffee pot. Rex picks up an empty wrapper. Looks at it with disgust.

REX

Decaf!? What's the point?

Rex dumps out the pot of coffee. Prepares a new one. Continues his lecture to Guy.

REX

Now, if you do this job well, put in your year, then wealth and opportunity are yours. All of Buddy's assistants have gone on to bigger and better things. One is running the Sony channel. Another has produced all the Macaulay Culkin action pictures. It's a good lineage. A legacy.

GUY

And where are you going?

REX

(beaming)

Vice-President of Production at Paramount. Like I said. It's a good lineage.

Rex sits down back at his desk. The phone RINGS and RINGS. Rex leans back and answers as Guy jots down some notes.

Rex hangs up. Points to the phone. Almost reverently.

REX

And this. This is the most important thing in your life. Works very simply.

(picks up the receiver)

Steady green light, the line is active. If it's off, it's dead. If it's flashing

(MORE)

REX (cont'd)
red, someone's holding. Flashing green?
Incoming.

Guy repeats it to himself. Jots it down. Rex smiles.

REX
You're gonna do all right, farm boy.

GUY
Actually, I grew up in New York.

Rex gives him a blank look. Guy continues...

GUY
But someday, I hope to move out to a
farm. Well, a ranch, really. In Montana.
Someplace where you can just get away
from it all. How about you?

Rex doesn't answer. Sees something that causes him to sit-up.
He grabs the phone and gets busy, because...

DOWN THE HALL

BUDDY ACKERMAN comes walking...no, gliding down the hallway.
As if on greased tracks. In a beautifully tailored double-
breasted with a stylishly loud tie. Followed by an army of
wannabe look-alikes currying favor and kissing ass.

Buddy approaches. Ignores Rex. Heads directly to Guy.

BUDDY
Guy, so glad to see you here. I cannot
tell you how grateful I am that you could
start right away.
(motions to Rex)
It'll be nice to finally get some real
help. And get rid of this mongoloid so
he'll stop screwing me up and fuck the
competition for a change. Our gain is
their loss, huh?

Buddy CHUCKLES. Extends his hand for a shake. Guy, still
holding the pad, fumbles to get a hand free. Rex turns to
Buddy, holding the phone.

REX
Sound stage on 1. Stella's on 2. And
your mom is on 3.

BUDDY
I'll take 1. Tell Stella to hold. You
take Mom. And when you're done with her,
(MORE)

BUDDY (cont'd)
West Lobby. Tube dress. Stiletto heels.
Fetch.

Rex nods. Hops on the line. Buddy turns to Guy.

BUDDY
Come with me. You're in for a treat.

Rex nods, turns back to the phone. Guy follows Buddy into...

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE

Minimalist furniture. Simple. Efficient. Cold. Power interior decorating. A copy of Machiavelli's THE PRINCE decorates Buddy's desk.

Buddy strides over to the phone. Punches through the lines like a pro. Doesn't even set down his briefcase.

BUDDY
Yo, Rob. That mix is still way too low. You have got to bring up the explosions. It's got to be loud loud loud! The audience should feel their balls tremble. Their ears should bleed.

(listens)
So? I don't care if God told you to keep it down, much less Stella. What do you mean can't be done? Que pasa, this 'Can't be done?'

(pause)
All right. Fine. Just shut up for a second. Shut up Rob. Listen. All right, let's try something easier. Repeat this. "Would you like that in a pump or a loafer?" Come on. Say it. "Would you like that in a pump or a loafer?"

(pause)
Okay, good. Now, memorize it, because as of tomorrow, the only job you're gonna be able to get is selling shoes!!

Buddy slams the phone down. Guy stands in awe. Buddy chuckles. Takes a seat. Swivels in his chair. Counts down silently.

Guy shifts uncomfortably. Tries to say something.

GUY
Umm, I can't tell you how happy I am to...

Buddy holds up his hand. Cuts Guy off.

The phone RINGS. A pause. Then REX enters.

REX

Rob's calling again. On line 1.

Buddy grins. Flashes Guy a 'Just watch' look.

BUDDY

Uh-huh. Yes, Rob. Well, I'm glad you see it my way now. Hey, we all have our misunderstandings. Just get it done.

Buddy stands up. Turns to Rex.

BUDDY

Where's Stella? And what's my schedule?

REX

She hung up. Wants you down in the staff meeting. Now.

BUDDY

They start yet?

REX

No. They've been waiting for you. About fifteen minutes already.

BUDDY

Good. Let me tell you something, Guy. And learn from this. If they can't start a meeting without you...well, that's a meeting worth going to. And that's the only kind of meeting you should ever concern yourselves with.

(hands Rex his briefcase)

File this. What else?

REX

Her name is Mitzi.

BUDDY

Great. Let's do it.

Rex exits. Reappears with MITZI, swimsuit calendar material. Dressed in a black tube dress with stiletto heels. Wow.

Buddy leaps...no, oozes into action.

BUDDY

Mitzi? Buddy Ackerman, Senior Executive Vice-President of Production. Listen, I'm on my way to a meeting, but if you could bear waiting just 10 minutes, I would love for us to sit and chat.

Mitzi looks around apprehensively. Looks at Buddy. Buddy shows off his pearly whites. Mitzi nods, 'okay'.

BUDDY

Great. You need anything, just ask these two boys here.

(to Rex)

Keep her happy. Now, what do I need for this meeting?

REX

Budget and schedule.

BUDDY

Well, where are they? And where's my coffee?

REX

File's on my desk. I'll get it. Guy...coffee?

INT. HALLWAY

Guy pours a cup of coffee. Looks at the cream and sugar. Doesn't know what to do. Grabs a handful of both. Brings it to Buddy.

GUY

Cream? Sugar?

BUDDY

Sweet and Low.

Guy heads back to the coffeepot. There's no Sweet & Low. Runs to the copy room.

INT. COPY ROOM/PANTRY

Guy walks in. Opens the drawers. Then hears a bellow from down the hallway.

BUDDY O.S.

I'M LATE FOR A MEETING HERE PEOPLE! COME ON LET'S GO! GO! GO! GO!

Guy tears through the drawers. Finds a box of Equal. Triumphant, Guy runs out.

INT. HALLWAY

Guy comes racing down to where Rex stands next to an agitated Buddy. Offers the Equal packets.

Buddy stares at them with disinterest. Doesn't move an inch.

BUDDY.

What is this?

GUY

Sweet and Low. Right?

Rex cringes. Shakes his head.

Buddy sets down his folder. Picks up the Equal.

BUDDY

No. This is not Sweet and Low. This is Equal. Blue packet. Sweet and Low is pink. See? Equal, blue. Sweet and Low, pink. Not the same thing, is it?

(tosses the Equal aside)

This shit will kill you.

GUY

But Sweet and Low contains...

Rex cringes. Buddy cuts Guy off. Nice at first.

BUDDY

What Sweet and Low contains is not our concern here. I don't care if it has fucking fairy dust in it.

(grows hostile)

What I am concerned with is DETAIL. I asked for Sweet and Low and you bring me back Equal. That isn't what I wanted. That isn't what I needed. And that isn't going to work around here.

GUY

It's just that I thought...

Buddy raises a hand. Guy stops.

BUDDY

You thought?! Do me a favor. Shut up. Listen. Learn.

(pauses)

I know that this is your first day and you're not familiar with the way things work around here, so I will tell you.

(sweetly)

You have no brain. No judgement calls are necessary. What you think -- means nothing. What you feel -- means nothing. You are here for me. You are here to protect my interests and serve my needs.

(grows stern)

(MORE)

BUDDY (cont'd)

So when I ask for a packet of Sweet and Low, that's what I want. And it is your responsibility to see that I get what I want. Am I clear?

GUY

(barely audible)

Yes sir.

Buddy smiles, then pats Guy warmly on the back. Grabs him tightly. Whispers into Guy's ear. Cool and seductive.

BUDDY

Good. Now, I don't mean to be cruel here. I'm just trying to help. You do this job right, you listen, you learn. Then you're gonna be able to do anything in this town. You can have whatever you want. All right?

Guy nods. Buddy pats him encouragingly.

BUDDY

Good. I mean, take a look at Rex here. V.P. at Paramount. Ha!

(picks up coffee and folder)

Rex. What a name. Belongs to a mutt. I mean, if I can get dog-boy here a job, well then....you'll do just fine.

Buddy heads down the hall. Rex and Guy are silent, holding their breath, until Buddy rounds the corner.

They exhale. Dismayed, Guy slumps into a chair. The phone RINGS. Rex ignores it. Opens his desk. Pulls out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter.

GUY

I fucked up. I'm dead. It's over.

REX

Relax. He does that a lot. Tomorrow, he'll ask you for an Equal. You can't win. It's a lose-lose situation.

GUY

Does it still happen to you?

REX

Daily.

(laughs; then serious)

Actually, hourly.

Guy tries to LAUGH. Comes out as a discouraged SIGH.

REX

Look, everyday is something completely different. Nothing is ever the same. What he wants, what he needs can change in a second. The trick is to have everything ready. Anticipate.

(thinks, then)

Next time, bring back an Equal and a Sweet and Low. Remember, protect his interests. Serve his needs. Come on, say it with me.

REX AND GUY

Protect his interests. Serve his needs.

Rex smiles -- Guy's converted. Guy puts his head in his hands. Bewildered.

GUY

That's crazy. You can't run a business that way.

REX

Uh-uh. First mistake. This is not a business. No rules here. Save that candy-striped crap for the Wall Street wimps. This is show business. Punching below the belt isn't only all right. It's rewarded. And everything can change in a New York second. So in this. This business of show. To get ahead, to get what you want, you gotta ask yourself...

(pulls a cigarette)

What are you gonna do? What is it that will make them sit up and take notice of you?

Guy thinks. Analyzes. Finally...

GUY

Work really really really hard?

Rex looks at Guy as if he just grew two extra arms and started slapping himself silly. Pats Guy gently.

REX

Don't worry, farm-boy. You'll learn.

Rex lights up a cigarette. Takes a long drag. Holds the pack out for Guy. Guy refuses.

GUY
Thanks. I don't smoke

REX
(laughs, exhaling smoke)
Won't last.
(holds up the cigarette)
This, and that pot of coffee are going to
be your best friends for the next year.
Get to know them. Now roll up your
sleeves. We got work to do.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY ACKERMAN'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Lit only by outside moonlight. Drapes are open, affording us a luxurious view of the twinkling city lights below.

GUY

stands looking out the window. Staring. Thinking.
Takes a long drag on his cigarette. Holds it in front of him.
CHUCKLES. Walks over to Buddy, seated in a chair.

Guy SNAPS on a lamp. Harsh, glaring light. Right in Buddy's face. Buddy squints.

BUDDY
What do you want?

Guy doesn't answer. Takes off his jacket. Rolls up his sleeves. Picks up a phone and yanks out a long piece of wire.

Wraps the phone wire around Buddy. Gives it a firm pull that forces Buddy to sit up.

BUDDY
You are in big trouble. Start making funeral arrangements, because you are dead in this town. I am...

GUY
Apologize.

BUDDY
What?

Guy steps around and grabs Buddy tightly by his hair...

BUDDY

Ow. Ow. Not the hair. Not the hair.

...and lays into Buddy with a full right cross. Buddy's head snaps back with the punch. He starts to CURSE.

GUY

I want you to apologize.

BUDDY

Fuck you!

Guy shrugs. Lays into Buddy with a left hook. Buddy struggles. SCREAMS. But he ain't going anywhere.

Guy starts HUMMING "HAIL TO THE CHIEF". Punctuates the song with right jabs. An uppercut. Then a flurry of combinations. Couldn't be having more fun.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S KITCHEN

Guy opens the freezer. Fills a bowl with ice. Sets it on the counter. Gingerly puts his hands in the bowl.

Winces, surprised - this wasn't suppose to be painful for him. Guy inspects his knuckles. Flexes his hand. Ouch.

INT. BUDDY'S LIVING ROOM

Buddy is breathing heavily. Head down. Looks up when Guy enters. Scared. Face puffy and red. Flinches.

GUY

Relax. I'm done with the boxing lesson.

BUDDY

Get the fuck away from me, you sorry bastard!

GUY

Calm down. I'm not going to...

Buddy SCREAMS. Guy lifts up his arm and backhands Buddy. Buddy's head snaps back. Shuts up. Guy rubs his hand.

GUY

I told you. Cool it. I'm not going to hit you. It's too hard on the hands.

BUDDY

I am going to fuckin' bury you.

Guy doesn't answer. Walks over to the coffee table. Fishes out a cigarette. Sits down.

BUDDY

Come on, what do you want? An apology?

(still no answer)

Oh, give me a break. This isn't happening. This is too stupid to be happening. Look, you got your rocks off, so untie me and get the fuck out of my house. Oh, and you're fired.

Guy steps up. Picks up the Beretta. Points it at Buddy. Buddy goes into panic mode. SCREAMS.

BUDDY

Okay, okay. You're not fired! You're not fired!

Guy watches all of this amused. Takes a drag on his cigarette. Then walks up to Buddy. Backhands the pistol sharply against Buddy's face with a loud CRACK!

Buddy's head snaps back sharply with a CRY OF PAIN. He brings his head up, spitting blood.

BUDDY

Fuck.

GUY

Are you finished?

Buddy just spits blood into Guy's face. Snarling.

BUDDY

I'm going to get you. You hear me! You are going to pay for this!

GUY

Wrong. You are going to pay. In the name of every poor slob who had to take shit from arrogant jerk-offs like you, you are going to pay.

BUDDY

Oh give me a break. We've got the fucking caped crusader here. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!!!

Guy shrugs...Oh yeah? Thinks a moment, then walks around the room. A calculated and calm machine of destruction. Knocks down valuables with a CRASH. Porcelain. Glass.

Walks down a row of autographed pictures. SMASHES them all with the butt of his gun. Down the row. One-two-three.

Comes back in front of Buddy. Pirouettes for show, then sits down. Crosses his legs. Takes another drag off his cigarette. Blows smoke into Buddy's face. Smiles.

BUDDY

Are we done now? You satisfied yet?

GUY

Not quite.

BUDDY

Great. So now what?

GUY

(checks his watch)

We wait. And you suffer.

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPERIMPOSE CARD - "WEEK ONE"

EXT. MEGA PICTURES PARKING LOT

Guy pulls things out of his car. A load of dry cleaning, shoes, etc..His suit is still a mess. But his tie selection has improved. Snazzy design in a nice, tight knot.

GUY

Dry cleaning. Shoes shined. And...

(grabs a bag with his mouth)

bagels. Buddy's bagels.

Hands full, Guy scurries across the lot, checking off a list.

A BLACK BMW enters the lot. Completely accessorized. Car phone. Tinted windows. Blonde in the passenger seat.

Guy can't help but notice. Whistles admiringly. So impressed that he doesn't notice he's stepping right into the way of...

DAWN'S BLACK SAAB

Dawn SCREECHES to a stop just inches before Guy. Guy jumps back. Dawn shoots him a glare. Drives around him.

GUY

watches her pull into her spot. Heads towards the door.

GUY

She likes me. I know she likes me.

CUT TO:

C.U. PHONE

As it RINGS and RINGS and RINGS...

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES - DAY

As before, chaos and bedlam. VOICES clamor to be heard.

At his desk, Guy fields five phone lines as best he can. Papers are strewn all around him. They bury everything on his desk. It doesn't look like it's been a good week.

GUY

(answering phone, flustered)

Buddy Ackerman's office. Uh-huh. I'm not really sure. Can you hold?

(picks up another line)

Buddy Ackerman's office. Umm, no. I couldn't say. I'll ask.

(another line)

Hank? Please. Can you get it delivered by the end of the day? I really appreciate it. I owe you, man.

(and another line)

Buddy Ackerman's...

INT. BUDDY'S CAR

Buddy drives to BOOMING RAP MUSIC. Yells into the phone.

BUDDY

Pick up the phone. Pick up pick up pick up. It is in your job description.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICE

GUY

Sorry. Phones are going crazy here.

INT. BUDDY'S CAR

BUDDY

I don't care. If I get that answering machine one more time, I draw blood. All right. Today's schedule. Do it.

GUY (O.S.)
You have a pitch at 10:30...

BUDDY
No. No pitches before 11:00. Christ, how many times have I told...

GUY (O.S.)
...with a Dawn Lockard.

Buddy stops. Smiles.

BUDDY
Oh. Okay. Let her know I'll be little late. Get me Stella and patch her through to me. Word on the street is Cyrus is about to make a change. And I want to make sure that it's not me.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Guy hangs up with a sigh. Continues to struggle with the RINGING phones. Head down. Concentrating.

DAWN (O.S.)
Hi, Dawn Lockard to see Buddy. I'm a producer on the lot, and...

Guy looks up. Sees Dawn. Clutching a RED-COVERED SCRIPT. Dawn reacts -- oh no. Guy grins. Hangs up the phone.

GUY
Dawn Lockard? Great to have a name for the face. Have a seat. Buddy's running a little late.

The phone RINGS. Guy excuses himself.

GUY
Buddy Ackerman's. Okay, I'll tell him.
grabs another line
Buddy Acker..Yeah. Stella's office just called. She's unreachable until Monday.

INT. BUDDY'S CAR

Buddy turns into a driveway.

BUDDY
What do you mean unreachable?

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICE

GUY
She's..she's in Colorado white-water
rafting with Tom Cruise.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Yeah. So. Track her down. Find out
where she's staying.

GUY
But she's rafting.

INT. BUDDY'S CAR.

Buddy pulls up to a spot and parks. Effortlessly picks up the
car phone. Goes mobile with it.

BUDDY
Yeah? I don't see the problem.

GUY (O.S.)
She's unreachable. She's on a raft. On a
river. With no phone.

TRACKING WITH BUDDY

As he walks across the parking lot and enters a building.
Cellular phone still in hand.

BUDDY
They have forest rangers, don't they?

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Guy stops. Has no response for this. We can hear Buddy
FAINTLY YELLING from the phone. Guy pulls back the handset a
bit. Dawn raises an eyebrow.

DAWN
He in one of his moods?

GUY
(genuinely surprised)
He has other moods?

BACK TO BUDDY

As he steps into an elevator. Closes it before anyone else
can get in. Still yelling into the phone.

BUDDY

Shut up. Listen. Learn. There is no such word as 'unreachable' for this office. Find her. Get her. I want to talk to her by lunch. No one got to the top with 'unreachable'.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Buddy's YELLING still filters from the phone. But Guy's attention is focused on Dawn. He's smitten.

DAWN

Listen, I didn't mean anything by the parking spot thing. Had I known you worked for Buddy, I certainly...

GUY

Oh, don't worry about it.

DAWN

You probably get enough shit from Buddy. Certainly don't need any from me.

GUY

Naw. I can handle Buddy.

GUY'S P.O.V.

of Dawn's beaming smile is interrupted as a figure steps into frame. Cropped between the waist and knees.

Guy looks up slowly to see...

BUDDY

towers over him. Very very angry. Cellular still in hand.

Guy jumps out of his chair to attention.

BUDDY

No one is ever 'unreachable'.
'Unreachable' may work for other hacks out there, but not here. Come with me.
(to Dawn)

Dawn. Excuse me. I just need to yell at my mongoloid brain-dead assistant for a second.

Guy disappears into Buddy's office. Dawn stands there. Hears SCREAMING coming from Buddy's office.

Moments later, Guy appears sheepishly. Buddy follows.

BUDDY

Dawn, gorgeous. It's been too long. Get your cute little butt in here.

(to Guy)

Guy, hold all my calls.

Dawn enters. She looks back towards Guy. They make eye contact briefly before the office door closes.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY

Guy exits the men's room. Stops by the coffee-maker.

BACK AT HIS DESK

Armed with a fresh cup of coffee, Guy leans back in his chair. Hits 'PLAY' on the answering machine.

BUDDY (O.S.)

(phone message #1)

Hello, Guy. Hello? Where are you?

(message #2)

Where the hell are you. God Damn it.

(message #3)

WHERE ARE YOU! WHY AREN'T YOU AT YOUR POST! YOU DESERTED YOUR POST!

Guy sits up. Worried. Jumps to his feet when the office door opens. Buddy and Dawn exit. Buddy tosses Dawn's Red-covered Script onto Guy's desk.

BUDDY

Sorry, I just don't think this pony will win, place, or show. Even the title -- "REAL LIFE"? A real Pass.

DAWN

But you need a film like this. It targets the primary movie crowd, the 18-25'ers. This could be an important movie about their generation. You can't keep dissin' what they want to see...

Buddy LAUGHS amused. Turns to Guy.

BUDDY

How about that, Guy? You feel dissed?

GUY

Yeah. Disillusioned, dismayed, disappointed...

Dawn looks over at Guy. Thankful. Buddy is still unconvinced.

BUDDY

And it's too dark, depressing and dull.
It's not what people want to see.

DAWN

And that pumped-up over-adrenalized
muscle-brained male macho bullshit is?

BUDDY

Excuse me, my male macho shit just broke
\$180 mil. The last 'important' film we
made? Peaked at \$18. One before that
didn't even break double digits.

Dawn gives Buddy an icy stare. Buddy takes Dawn and hugs her.

BUDDY

Dawn, forget about this artsy lost
generation crap. You've been away from me
too long. Come back to my team...
(whispers seductively)
...and we can make some real movies.

DAWN

I don't do that shit anymore. Forget it.
I'll go directly to Stella with this.
After all, she is President of Production.

Buddy lets go of Dawn. Bristles. Does not take kindly to the
threat. Looks ready to lash out.

BUDDY

For now...
(turns to Guy)
Who called?

GUY

Cyrus.

BUDDY

And you didn't put him through?

GUY

I'm sorry. You said hold all calls.

BUDDY

Fine. Who else?

GUY

Derek, Mitzi, Michelle, Stella returned...

Stella?? BUDDY

Buddy blinks his eyes in disbelief. Guy falters...

GUY
You said hold all calls. I didn't know that...

BUDDY
You didn't know? You didn't know!!?
Then what good are you, boy? Do you have any brains? Do you want to keep this job? Shut up. Listen. Learn.

Buddy continues his TIRADE. SCREAMING. SPITTING. Everyone in the hall stops. Looking to see what the commotion is. Suddenly, the whole office gets very QUIET.

Guy looks away. Embarrassed. Feels everyone's stare on him.

BUDDY
Fuck your disappointment. Fuck your disillusionment, and Fuck you. Fuck you, you can't do anything right. Fuck you, you are worthless. Fuck...

DAWN
Well, this is turning into an intelligent conversation.

Buddy turns. Ready to attack Dawn too.

BUDDY
Loud and nasty. That's the only way it sticks, Dawn.

DAWN
You did say, "Hold all my calls".
(coily)
And I certainly hope you wouldn't let anyone cut into our time together.

Buddy manages a stiff grin. Turns back to Guy. Harshly.

BUDDY
Find Cyrus. Find Stella. Get them on the phone. If they aren't on the line when I get back, you'd better not be here either.
(turns to Dawn, sweetly)
I'll get back to you about this. Let's get together soon.

Buddy disappears down the hall. Everyone goes back to work.
Degraded, Guy buries himself in paper. Jots down a bunch of notes. Reaches for the phone.

DAWN'S HAND

stops him. A firm caress.

DAWN

As I was saying, the misunderstanding.
Let me make it up to you. How about lunch?

GUY

No. I...

DAWN

Come on. I'll buy. What do you say?

GUY

I'd love to, but...

Dawn quiets Guy. Leans in. Tone shifts from sweet to stony.

DAWN

Look, I'll be blunt. As much as I hate it, I need Buddy. I need my calls to find their way onto his phone sheet. I need my scripts to go home with him on weekends. I need you on my side.

(Guy tries to interrupt;

Dawn stops him)

You have the upper hand here. Enjoy it. See, I don't want to risk getting sent to terminal hold over a parking spot. So I'll say it again.

(sweetly)

Let's have lunch.

GUY

I'm not allowed to take lunch. Buddy doesn't believe in it.

Dawn pauses. Steps back. Regroups.

DAWN

Dinner then.

GUY

And I'm usually here pretty late.

DAWN
Fine. Drinks it is. Here's my card. Call
me when you're done tonight.

GUY
Tonight?

DAWN
That's all right with you, isn't it?
Guy stops. Bewildered. Catatonic. Stammers out...

GUY
Stop me if I'm about to self-destruct
here. But surely a woman of power who's
as attractive and well, as ...
(searches for the right
words)
..as pleasant-natured as you must be
booked for tonight.

DAWN
I am now.
Dawn saunters down the hall. Turns around.

DAWN
Piece of advice. You should talk to him
about the yelling. Makes you look like a
shmuck.

Guy sits back and smiles. For the first time all week.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE - DUSK

Guy KNOCKS. Then enters cautiously. Buddy stares out the
window. Plays with a paddleball. BAP..BAP..BAP..

GUY
Um..Buddy.

Buddy doesn't respond. Doesn't turn to face Guy. Continues
with the paddle. BAP..BAP..BAP..

Guy swallows. Scared. Continues..

GUY
Buddy? I wanted to talk to you...

Buddy turns suddenly. Only then can we see the SLIM PHONE
HEADSET he's got on. He cuts Guy off harshly. Continues.

BUDDY

(on phone)

Yeah, some tip. You ought to be shot for scaring me like that. The change Cyrus wants? Turns out his teenage grandson was whining about how today's films are all made for adults. How there's nothing for him and his friends. So the old man wants us to find the next hottest, hippest thing. Something for 'the kids.' You got anything? Great. Send it to me.

(pulls off the headset;
turns to Guy)

What?

GUY

About today, with the phone calls. I...

BUDDY

No apology necessary. Everyone's allowed at least one mistake. You've used up yours. Let's not dwell on it.

Guy stops. Takes a deep breath.

GUY

Well, that's just it, sir.

(with conviction)

I don't think I made a mistake. And I would appreciate it if you didn't yell at me in front of the entire office.

The paddle-ball stops. Buddy turns. Silhouetted against a red sunset sky. Menacing. Guy takes a step back.

BUDDY

What?

GUY

The, uh.. yelling.

BUDDY

You disapprove? I'm sorry.

(with concern)

Did I...did I hurt your feelings?

GUY

No, that's not it. I..I just don't think it's necessary. The yelling.

Buddy smiles with care and compassion. Moves to his desk.

BUDDY

Well, I'm glad you brought this up.

GUY

You are?

BUDDY

Yes. An office can't run if the lines of communication aren't open. So let's make a couple of things clear.

Buddy motions for Guy to sit. Presses a button on his desk.

THE DOOR

SLAMS shut. Guy looks towards it - he's trapped. Buddy starts nicely at first...

BUDDY

First of all. What did I tell you the first day? Your thoughts mean nothing. You are nothing. And yet you have the nerve to tell me...

GUY

No, I...

BUDDY

Please. Shut up. At least allow me the courtesy of finishing what I have to say. Please. That's the very least you can do after I've had to endure your insults.

GUY

If this is a bad time...

Guy tries to leave. But Buddy POUNDS on his desk.

BUDDY

Who do you think you are? You shot-faced little punk! Let me make this simple for you. Okay? Try to stay with me now.

(pause)

You are nothing. If you were in my toilet bowl, I wouldn't bother flushing it. You're not worthy to pick the lint off my toes. See this?

(picks up a clipboard)

This is more important to the office than you. And yet do you hear any complaints when I do this?

Buddy hurls the clipboard across the office. Whizzes by Guy's head. Dents the wall with a loud CRACK.

Guy backs up in his chair. Getting just a little nervous..

Buddy picks up a handful of pens.

BUDDY

These pens? More important than you.
These paper clips. More important!

Buddy throws the pens and clips at Guy with disgust. Stands. Looms over Guy.

BUDDY

You miserable little cry-baby. You don't like it here? Leave. There are thousands of people who would kill for your spot, who would kill for the opportunity to be here. This is the fast track to the top, boy, and I don't see you breakin' any speed records.

Buddy reaches over. Starts punctuating his speech with little slaps to Guy's face.

BUDDY

Why can't you show a little backbone?
Huh? Huh? If you can't do this job, get the hell out of here. If you can't take the heat, go build igloos.

Buddy moves behind the desk. Starts pelting Guy with any object he has. Guy stands up, tries to exit.

BUDDY

I could spit and hit someone who could do this job better than you. I am sick and tired of running a charity ward here. And I am sick and tired of your whining. You gotta be more thick-skinned, son. I gotta be a man to do this job.

Guy finally reaches the door. Runs out.

Buddy throws one last object at the closing door. CHUCKLES.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Guy holds Buddy's door closed. CAMERA pushes in for a C.U. of fear and confusion. We hear the paddle-ball start again. BAP..BAP..BAP...

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S RESTAURANT

Dawn leads a dejected Guy to the bar. They sit.

GUY

"Talk to him about the yelling. Makes you look like a shmuck" Thanks for the tip. Thanks a lot.

DAWN

Hey, you gotta give action to get action. Put it behind you, tough guy. What do you want to drink?

GUY

Uh, white wine.

Dawn looks over. Shakes her head. Lights up a cigarette.

DAWN

(to bartender)

Dewars. Double. Plenty of ice.

(looks Guy up and down)

So, Guy, what's your story? Wall-street fallout victim? Uncle Bob's in the business? Or are you just a pure red-blooded American boy out for quick cash, quick cars, and an easy lay?

Guy pauses. Not amused by having to take shit from her too. Doesn't know what to say. Finally...

GUY

You hate me, don't you? You really hate me.

DAWN

No, I'm just feeling extra charitable today.

Dawn takes a drag off her cigarette, a gulp of her drink. Pauses a beat. Then coolly exhales a plume of smoke. CRUNCHES an ice cube. Guy backs up a bit.

DAWN

So talk. Amuse me. What's your story?

GUY

Recent film school graduate with disappointed middle class parents who had hoped their son would be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. Not a writer.

DAWN

Writer? Why then, pray tell, are you fetching coffee for Buddy Ackerman?

GUY

Buddy's one of the top studio executives around. I could learn a lot from him.

Dawn shoots him a cold 'give-me-a-break you've-got-to-be-kidding' stare. CRUNCHES another ice cube vigorously.

GUY

Fine. They say you're only as good as your contacts in this business. I figure if I do this job well...

DAWN

Oh, you're substituting talent with liberal amounts of ass-kissing.

Dawn CRUNCHES another cube. Guy looks over. Gets up.

GUY

Okay. I think I've had enough character assassination for one day. Thanks for the drink. I really appreciate you taking the time...

DAWN

Sit.

Guy doesn't comply. He starts to leave, but Dawn reaches out and grabs his arm. Forcefully.

DAWN

Sit. If this time can be spent convincing you to do anything else with your life, to get out while you're still whole, then it's time well spent. Why do you want this?

GUY

I don't know. It just seemed like the right thing to do.

DAWN

Bullshit. Come on, what is it? Is it the money? There are easier ways to get rich. Glamour? Wears thin after you realize you can't eat it. Girls. Here. I'll float you a bill and give you a number to call. 'Fess up. Why the movies?

Guy looks at Dawn. Thinks for a minute. Not sure whether to trust her. Starts. Then stops. Finally, he blurts out...

GUY

Memories.

DAWN

Memories?

GUY

All my favorite memories have been of movies. You know, a lot of people remember their past in terms of presidencies. Or girlfriends. Current events. But I measure my life by current releases. First car. Summer of '88 - INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE. First job - weekend that VIGILANTE VENGEANCE opened. Fine Buddy Ackerman film.

Dawn smiles. Perks up a bit. Slows down on the ice crunching.

DAWN

Uh-huh. How about your first kiss?

GUY

7th grade spring formal. Spring of '79. "FISH THAT SAVED PITTSBURGH"

DAWN

What was her name?

GUY

I don't remember. But Gabe Kaplan's hair in that movie. Out of control. Only white man I know with an Afro.

Dawn LAUGHS. Guy gets reflective.

GUY

And I remember all those times when things just weren't going well. Failed a test. Mom was real sick. You know, life sucked. I could just disappear into a theater for a couple hours and forget about everything. And I always felt that if I could be a part of that. Just help people escape for even a minute. Well, that would be something. I could..I don't know, I could...

DAWN
...be somebody.

Guy smiles. Looks over at Dawn. Softly. Tender.

GUY
Yeah.

Dawn melts. Totally taken by this. Smiles for the first time all evening.

Guy thinks about what he just said. Spits with distaste..

GUY
Yech! Where did that come from? You were right. Cash, cars, and chicks. That's me. Lots of chicks. Fast, beautiful...

DAWN
...and pleasant natured?

Guy leans back. Blinks a couple times.

GUY
Wow. An indecent proposal.

Dawn stubs out her cigarette. Back to being a hard-ass.

DAWN
Get over yourself. Piece of advice. If you want to make it, you don't have room for a personal life, much less a relationship. This is already going to take up time and energy you don't have.

GUY
Right. No relationships.

DAWN
Absolutely. No. Relationships.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

The front door SLAMS open. Dawn and Guy stumble in. Entwined and entangled. Lips smashed together, groping at each other. Hungry. Desperate. They stumble across the living room.

Entertainment magazines and trades lie scattered among socks and microwave dinner boxes. A dusty computer sits alone. Film school sticker plastered on the side reads 'REALITY ENDS HERE'. The place is a mess.

But it's obvious that these two don't care.

The phone RINGS and RINGS. They ignore it. The answering machine picks up.

BUDDY (O.S.)
(from answering machine)
Guy, it's Buddy. Call me. Right away.

Guy looks towards the phone. But Dawn pulls him back firmly. They disappear into the bedroom. Licking and biting...

The phone RINGS again. Answering machine picks up.

C.U. ANSWERING MACHINE

BUDDY (O.S.)
(from answering machine)
Guy, listen. Sorry I blew up. But I'm just trying to prep you for what's out there. You have so much to learn. And I like you. I really do. I want to see all my boys do well. I'm expecting great things from you. Great things.

In the background, the MOANS and 'OH-MY-GOD's of passionate lovemaking punctuate Buddy's speech.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Anyways what I'm about to ask of you is very important. Highest level of confidentiality. I think you're ready for this, so don't let me down. On your way to work tomorrow, go to 9380 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 420 and pick up a package for me. Highly confidential.

(in a hushed whisper)
It's a 'prescription' of a sensitive nature. So I don't think I need to stress just how important follow-through is on this. It's a top priority. Don't fail me.

CUT TO:

INT. MEGA-PICTURES OFFICES - LATE AFTERNOON

Guy works behind a cluttered desk, phone cradled over shoulder.

GUY
Yeah. Me. A college graduate turned pick-up man.

DAWN (O.S.)

'Because a mind is a terrible thing to waste', huh? Welcome to the real world. See you tonight?

GUY

Yeah, I can't wait...

BUDDY

comes up from behind. Before Guy can react, Buddy grabs the phone, slams it down. Terminates Guy's conversation.

BUDDY

You're happy. I hate that. Get me packed up. Now. I need to get to services.

Guy follows Buddy. Pad and pen in hand. Obedient.

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE

Buddy sorts out what he needs. Guy packs his briefcase.

GUY

Services? Who died?

BUDDY

No one...yet. It's Yom Kippur.

GUY

Didn't know Ackerman was a Jewish name.

BUDDY

Jewish enough. Especially when the big players are involved. And I need to atone for my sins anyways.

(beat)

Marie call?

GUY

Yeah. She'll be at your place. Midnight.

BUDDY

Good. Good.

Buddy stops sorting. Searches for something. Guy meekly clears his throat. Takes a chance...

GUY

Buddy? I was thinking..about Dawn's project.

BUDDY

Yeah, she's a cute one, isn't she?

GUY

Yes, but her project. REAL LIFE could have potential. It's young, smart. Could be exactly what Cyrus wants. You could get someone big to direct. Like...Penny Marshall.

BUDDY

No way. Shut up. Listen. Learn. Avoid women directors. They get that once-a-month thing. Sends them into huge mood swings. And you need a stable environment on the set. Next.

GUY

Robert Altman? Altman could do it.

Buddy chortles. Still looking around his desk for something.

BUDDY

(makes a buzzer noise)

Altman! That hack! Couldn't direct his way out of a paper bag. Please. You want to talk big directors? Think Spielberg. Think Attenborough. Think Lean.

GUY

Lean's dead.

BUDDY

No. Just unavailable.

(gives up searching)

Did you get the stuff?

GUY

Yeah. In your desk drawer.

BUDDY

pats Guy like a good dog

Thanks. Good work.

Buddy pulls a brown bag out of his desk. Rips it open...

Pulls out a box of ROGAINE HAIR TREATMENT. Tosses it to Guy.

BUDDY

File this.

GUY

Rogaine? But you're not losing your hair.

BUDDY

Exactly. Remember... Anticipate.

Buddy heads into the bathroom. Turns on the water. Yells to Guy. Guy starts putting folders in Buddy's briefcase.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Shut up. Listen. Learn. Dawn's project is a cause. Not a movie. Christ, even the title. "REAL LIFE" People don't want to see that. Much less pay to see that. We are in the business of developing dreams. Not damning them.
(sighs)

Besides, Cyrus has found the next hot young thing. Foster Kane. Some hotshot 20-something director. Film was #1 at the box-office last weekend. And Stella's got him. Stella! We're fucked.

GUY

Yeah, but you got that NEWSWEEK article.

Buddy sticks his head out. Covered in a silly shower cap.

BUDDY

What Newsweek article?

GUY

The article on 'VIOLENCE IN MOVIES'?
Crowns you the 'King of Wham-Bam Thank
You Maam Action'. Not Stella.

BUDDY

Really??? Give it to me!!

Guy hands the magazine to Buddy. Buddy reads.
First excited and happy. Changes to offended and pissed.

BUDDY

In-fuckin-credible! Where do they get these lies? Listen to this. I'm a "blight on society". Typical female crap. This has got Stella's signature all over it. Fine. She wants a war? I'll give her one.

Buddy rushes back into the bathroom.

BUDDY (O.S.)
You have any plans tonight?

GUY
Well, I'm having ...

BUDDY (O.S.)
Cancel them.

Buddy comes out of the bathroom. Sharp. Perfectly groomed.

BUDDY
You want to try to make Dawn's project fly? All right. Put it together. Let's see what you can do with it.

GUY
(grins ear to ear)
Okay.

BUDDY
But in the meantime, find a script for this kid, this Foster Kane. Something we control. We'll see how long he stays Stella's boy.

Guy dutifully jots this down.

BUDDY
And we need to bury this article. This kid reads I'm a "blight on society"? Forget it. Forget Dawn's project. Forget my expense account. Forget it. You need to get every copy in town and destroy it.

GUY
Every copy?

BUDDY
Yeah. Every copy. Find it, bury it.

GUY
Bury it? But...but it's Newsweek.
(Buddy doesn't respond)
It's pretty well-read. There are a lot of copies out there.

BUDDY
I don't care. Figure it out. Do it.

Buddy grabs his stuff. Exits.

CUT TO:

56
EXT. NEWS STAND ON ROBERTSON - LATE EVENING.

Guy has an armful of Newsweeks. Pays the guy. Walks back to his car.

INSIDE THE CAR

stacked ceiling high are Newsweeks. Everywhere. Front seat. Back seat. Glove compartment.

GUY

gets in. Has no room for the stack he's carrying...except his lap. Places it there. Starts his car.

CUT TO:

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT - LATE EVENING

Guy flopped out on the couch. Asleep. TV is tuned to American Movie Classics. An old B&W is playing on a rinky-dink 9-inch.

Phone RINGS. Guy GROANS. Doesn't lift a finger to answer it. Too tired to move. The answering machine picks up.

MOM (O.S.)

(on machine)

Guy, it's Mom.

Guy reaches across and picks up the phone. (NOTE: The answering machine stays on during the whole conversation, allowing us to eavesdrop. Pretty sneaky, huh?)

GUY

Hi ma.

MOM (O.S.)

Oh, you're home. How's work?

GUY

It's okay, Ma.

Guy picks up a copy of Newsweek.

GUY

Hey, I'm going to send you the latest issue of Newsweek. There's an article about my boss in there.

MOM (O.S.)

Don't bother. Your dad subscribes.

Oh.

GUY

Guy tosses the magazine aside.

MOM (O.S.)

You sound tired. Are you eating right?

GUY

Yes, ma.

MOM (O.S.)

How about the job? Is it getting better?

Guy pauses. Thinking about the question....

START MONTAGE SEQUENCE (Note: Phone conversation with Mom should be at forefront of the sound mix. Montage scenes should play softly in the background.)

INT. MEGA-PICTURES OFFICE

C.U. of Dawn's RED-COVERED script. Camera follows it up to...

GUY starts to tear it apart. Jumps to attention when Buddy appears..

Buddy sees the mess on Guy's desk. Gets angry. Gets right into Guy's face. Screaming. Showers him with spit. Guy reaches up to wipe his face.

This only pisses Buddy off even more. He slaps Guy's hand down and starts yelling more. Veins pop out of his neck. Emphasizes his point by grabbing a pair of scissors and cutting off Guy's necktie. Tosses it in the trash.

MOM (O.S.)

Guy?

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

GUY

It's not about getting better or getting worse, Ma.

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE

Guy sits across the desk from Buddy. Answers the phone. Buddy motions for him to be quiet. Guy tries talking softly on the phone.

GUY (V.O.)
It's about surviving.

Buddy is still unhappy with Guy's volume level. SNAPS for silence. Guy hunches over the phone, trying to be as quiet as possible. Still not enough,

Buddy starts throwing things at Guy. Heavy objects. Guy throws up his arms in defense.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

Guy is sitting at his desk, working. Alone. Late at night. Studies Dawn's script. Then types away at his computer.

THE PHONE RINGS. Guy, surprised, answers. Immediately pulls the receiver back. Obviously, it's Buddy.

GUY (V.O.)
Things are rough now...

INT. COPY ROOM

Guy makes several copies of REAL LIFE. Complete with shiny brand new GREEN COVER. Talks to another assistant as he does.

Buddy passes by the copy room.

Reappears a moment later. Grabs Guy by his ear. Leads him out.

GUY (V.O.)
There's a lot of physical work...

EXT. ROGAINE CLINIC

Guy walks out. Prescriptions in hand. A couple of cute girls drive by. They look at Guy. Look at the big ROGAINE sign with the before and after pictures in the window. And then burst into hysterical GIGGLES.

Guy is embarrassed. Runs his hands through his hair.

GUY (V.O.)
Lot of important things to take care of...

EXT. MEGA-PICTURES PARKING LOT

Guy comes tearing out of the building. New minted green-covered REAL LIFE in hand. Chases down Buddy's car. Leaps over a hedge. Gets clipped by a car, but keeps going. Horns HONK.

Catches up with Buddy's car. But Buddy doesn't stop. Only slows down.

GUY (V.O.)
...you know. A lot of running around.

Guy jogs alongside the car, explaining the contents of the script and folder. Buddy grabs it. SCREECHES off. Guy stops, bending over to catch his breath.

Heads back into the building among the applause of several security guards.

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

MOM (O.S.)
If you don't like it, Uncle Charlie said he's looking for help at the brokerage. The pay is real good. You want me to talk to him?

GUY
Ma, no. I don't want to trade stocks. I want to make movies.

Another voice comes on the line.

DAD (O.S.)
Hello? Who is this?

MOM (O.S.)
It's Guy, Jonathan.

GUY
Hey Dad.

DAD (O.S.)
Oh. You get a real job yet? You know, your Uncle Charlie said he needs someone.

GUY
Dad, I got a job.

DAD (O.S.)
Job? You call that a job? You're just a whippin' boy for...

MOM (O.S.)
Jonathan, don't...

DAD (O.S.)
No, Martha. He's wasting his time on a stupid dream. On these stupid movies. When he could be doing something productive. The sooner he forgets about all of this, the better off he'll be.

54
Guy explodes.

GUY

Why will I be better off? What's wrong with going after what I want? At least I'm trying. What did you do that's so much better?

DAD (O.S.)

What I did was spend the better part of my life working. Working to make sure my family had something to eat. To make sure my son had the best education. All so he could make something out of himself.

Dad hangs up. Guy GROANS.

GUY

Moocommmmm....

MOM (O.S.)

Don't worry about your father. He just had a bad day at work.

GUY

Mom, I am going to make something out of myself..I'm going to have a real life.

MOM (O.S.)

Well, your Dad has a point. Movies don't pay the bills. How are you going to feed a wife and kids?

GUY

What wife? What kids? I'm 24 years old!

MOM (O.S.)

It's never too late to start thinking about your future.

Guy rubs his eyes. Very tired. Stares at the TV.
Watches a mobster get rubbed out in a RAIL OF TOMATO-GUN FIRE.

GUY

Relax. Ma. It's only been one week on the job. Besides...

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

Sports highlights on a big projection T.V. Baseball clips.

Guy steps into frame with a Louisville Slugger. Makes sure he has the label side up. Takes a couple of check swings...

GUY (V.O.)
Things will get better.

..and brings the bat down hard on Buddy's People Choice Award. It SHATTERS. Joins the wreckage of other smashed trophies. Guy moves on to the next one as Buddy HOWLS in agony.

GUY (V.O.)
They say if you work hard now...

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

More sports highlights play in the background T.V. An Announcer CALLS THE PITCH.

Guy stands across the room from Buddy. Selects from a pile of various objects. Vases, phones...sharpened pencils.

Assumes a pitcher stance and throws them at Buddy. Hard.

Buddy cowers. Tries to avoid being hit. Unsuccessfully.

GUY (V.O.)
..then you're rewarded later. You're given bigger responsibilities. More things to do.

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

We're now watching the Frugal Gourmet.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal an assortment of condiments lined up on a table.

Guy grabs some salt. Pours a bunch into his hands. Rubs it into Buddy's open, bleeding wounds.

Buddy SCREAMS. Guy appraises his reaction. Sets the salt down on one side of the table.

GUY (V.O.)
You get to have some fun.

Guy picks up some lemon juice. Splatters that into Buddy's face. Buddy winces, but doesn't scream.

Disappointed, Guy sets the lemon juice aside.

GUY (V.O.)
You gotta give action to get action.

Guy picks up a bottle of gourmet LOUISIANA CAJUN FIERY CHILI RED HOT SAUCE. Takes a whiff. Pulls back. Eyes water. Dips a finger into it. Tries it. Smacks his lips. Big grin.

GUY (V.O.)
Because the whole business is very big on
payback

Guy approaches Buddy. Bottle in hand. CAMERA goes to BLACK.
END MONTAGE

SOUND CUTS BACK IN WITH BUDDY SCREAMING, TWISTING IN AGONY.

Guy steps back. Delighted. Buddy in tears.

GUY
(laughs)
This is so cool! I saw this in a movie
once. Come to think of it...I believe it
was one of yours. And they called the
violence gratuitous. How dare they.

BUDDY
WHAT DO YOU WANT!!! You sick, twisted
fuck. Why are you doing this?

Guy shrugs. Toys around with the condiments. Picks up
another bottle. Buddy pleads.

BUDDY
This isn't going to fix things. It's not
going to help any of your problems.
It's...it's unproductive!

GUY
Yeah, I know. But it makes me feel so
much better.

Guy moves in...

CUT TO:

C.U. STEREO

An impressive console. CD slides into place. LED lights
bounce to the beat of a big band Sinatra tune.

INT. BUDDY'S LIVING ROOM

Guy futzes with the stereo. Looks at a wall of CD's in awe.
Flips through them. Pulls a couple out.

GUY
I'll admit. I love this stereo. You
know, for a guy your age, I thought you'd
have more Barry Manilow. Streisand

(MORE)

57
GUY (cont'd)
collection's solid, but what's with the
Metallica? Do you really listen to this?

Buddy doesn't answer. Guy shrugs.

GUY
No, huh? Cool. Then you don't mind if I
take it.

Guy pockets the CD. Turns on the radio. Futzes around with
the stations. Dials KJOY - 99.9, E-Z listening all the time.

GUY
Want to make sure the mood is right. Why
isn't this station already programmed in?
Thought for sure this is what loosens up
the chicks.

(walks over to Buddy)
Let me ask you, what is the best 'getting
laid' music? I'm finding The Carpenters
just don't cut it anymore. Puts them
right to sleep. I mean, suppose someone
were to come over tonight, you know...

Buddy still doesn't answer. Lips sealed tight in a frown.

GUY
Sorry, I'm boring you aren't I? What was
it you said about me once? Personality
of a roof shingle. That was pretty
funny. Well then, don't want to bore
you. What do you say? Back to work.

Guy rubs his hands in delight. Heads into the kitchen.

Buddy listens to Guy search the kitchen. Struggles harder.

GUY (O.S.)
Come on, there's got to be one in here.
Every kitchen drawer has one.

(a drawer CRASHES)
It's funny. I've only dreamt of doing
this. All those late nights in the
office. Weekends. I amused myself playing
out all these great torture scenarios.
Thought about it again and again...

There's a CRASH of another drawer being emptied out. Then a
CRY of triumph. Guy comes back in. Hands behind his back.

GUY
You can't imagine how much I've come up
with.

Playful, Guy starts walking around Buddy. Buddy tries to keep an eye on him. Scared. His mind racing furiously with all the possibilities - what kitchen utensil could he possibly have?

BUDDY

Look, whatever you're thinking of doing.
Please. Don't.

Guy gets right in front of Buddy's face, grinning. With a dramatic flair, pulls out from behind his back...

AN ENVELOPE.

Buddy flinches. Sees the envelope. And relaxes. Relieved.

Guy sees this and smiles even wider. Starts straightening the envelope, SNAPPING it loudly against his hand.

GUY

Paper cuts can be a bitch. Occupational hazard, I guess. But I bet it's been a while since you've gotten one. Now me...

Guy fans his right hand in front of Buddy's face.

4 out of 5 fingers have BAND-AIDS wrapped around them. One finger with two band-aids. One around the finger-tip. And a Tiny Toons band-aid wrapped around the knuckle.

GUY

...I'm getting used to them.

Guy steps behind Buddy. Grabs his head and runs the razor edge of the envelope against Buddy's face. Draws blood.

Buddy struggles, but to no avail. Guy continues to cut.

GUY

I'll tell you though...

Buddy lets out a MUFFLED CRY of pain. Guy laughs appreciatively.

GUY

(coos)

I know. I know. Stings, doesn't it?
Like I said, you get used to them, but
the ones I could never handle.....

(taps Buddy's mouth)

Say 'Ahhhh' Come on..

59
Buddy doesn't cooperate. Clamps his mouth shut. Guy pries open his mouth. Buddy bites down on his fingers.

GUY
SHIT! Fuckin' A!

Guy backhands Buddy. Pulls his fingers away.

Steps in front of Buddy. Sets the envelope down. Pries open Buddy's mouth with both hands. Grabs Buddy's tongue.

GUY
No no. Don't bite. You're only gonna hurt yourself.
(picks up the envelope;
contemplates it)
I'll tell you, forget about the shitty mint flavor on these things.
(straightens out the flap)
The real pain in the ass is when you get those paper cuts on your tongue.

BUDDY'S EYES widen in terror. Starts to really struggle.

Guy steps in front. Music SWELLS....

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPERIMPOSE CARD - "MONTH ONE"

EXT. MEGA-PICTURES PARKING LOT

Guy wears a great-looking suit. Supervises as JACK pulls the dry cleaning, shoes, bagels, etc. out of his car.

Dawn pulls up next to Guy. Leans out the window for a kiss.

DAWN
Leave word. Again.

GUY
Don't worry. He's looking at the project.
I promise. I'm going to get this for you.

Dawn shoots him her trademark 'give-me-a-break' look. Pops a cigarette in her mouth. But Guy yanks it out.

DAWN
Fuck you. I need that.

GUY
Why do you smoke so much? They're bad for you. And they taste like shit.

DAWN
Exactly. Puts you in a killing mood --
mean and bitchy. They're great for work.
You should try it sometime.

Guy pockets the cigarette. Jack interrupts.

JACK
These loafers going upstairs too?

GUY
Yeah. They are.
(to Dawn; one final kiss)
Well, it's off to the glamour mines.

CUT TO:

C.U. PHONE

It RINGS. Just once.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Guy answers the phone with pleasant efficiency. Confident.
Cool. Bold. In control.

GUY
(answering phone)
Buddy Ackerman's office. No, Mr.
Blossom, he's not here right now. I will
have him call...No sir, I'm sure he
doesn't want to spoil your appetite.
Fine. I will have him call after lunch.

Guy grabs another line. Continues juggling calls. He's got it
down. A ninja phone-master. Flies through five more calls
before hanging up for a breath of air. Looks up.

BUDDY

passes him and enters his office. Guy follows. Pad and pen in
hand. Obedient.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE

C.U. as a GREEN-COVERED script is thrown onto Buddy's desk.

GUY sits attentively in front of Buddy's desk. Buddy paces.
Gesturing enthusiastically with his hands.

BUDDY

This could be the biggest picture of the year. Young, hip, smart...
(grandly)

"REAL LIFE". Directed by Foster Kane. I like it. It smells of money.

Guy nods excitedly. Beams triumphantly.

BUDDY

I'll admit. You may not be a complete idiot after all. Your ideas here aren't half-bad. But I hate the title. Hate the ending. Too depressing. Come out to the house this weekend and we'll figure something out. I'll leave the key out.

Guy jots this down. Buddy throws him a beeper.

BUDDY

And start wearing this. You have to be reachable at anytime. You and I need to work as one on this. Think we can be ready for Cyrus by next week?

GUY

Cyrus? Next week? Shouldn't we wait for Stella to get back?

BUDDY

Fuck her. Listen, if we take it to Stella, she'll just take credit for all of your work. All of our work. It's kill or have your contract terminated early. We need to go directly to the top. We need to go to Cyrus.

GUY

But Dawn's bringing this project to Stella. Remember? You passed.

This stops Buddy cold. He thinks. Steps out from behind his desk. Takes a seat in front of Guy.

BUDDY

You like Dawn, don't you? Consummate the relationship yet?

Guy stammers. Uncomfortable with this line of questioning.

BUDDY

Shut up and listen. Women? They respond to only one thing, Guy. Success. This is

(MORE)

BUDDY (cont'd)
not just me talking. This is a scientific fact. It is primitive instinct to choose a mate who can best provide for a woman's needs. A woman's wants. Now, no offense. But you are only an assistant. Sure, you're my assistant. But nonetheless. An assistant. Dawn is a producer. Her car phone bills are more than your rent. Just how long do you think you're going to last, huh?

Guy silences. Frowns. Buddy leans in.

BUDDY
But I like you, Guy. I want to see you do well. So I am going to help. I'm going to give you a chance to play hero. You get to be her white knight in shining armor.

Guy sits up. Attentive. Buddy leans in further.

BUDDY
You. You have to convince Dawn to bring the project back to me. Not to Stella. To me. All right? Okay?

Guy looks at Buddy. Eye to eye. Slowly nods. Buddy breaks into a grin. CLAPS his hands with excitement.

BUDDY
You do this, and we are going to run this place. Both of us.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS

Guy is at the wheel of Buddy's car. Top down. Sunglasses on. Hair blowing in the wind. Stereo BLARING a pop ditty. So this is what life at the top is like.

Guy dials a number into the car phone.

GUY
Dawn! It's me. Talking to you mobile! Yeah, I've got Buddy's car. Taking it in for a tune-up. But listen, I'm on my way over. I've got great news!

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Washers and dryers WHIR and HUM lazily in stark surroundings. Tacky wallpaper and bright orange vinyl seats. Completely unglamorous. Real life.

Guy sits perched atop a washing machine. Dawn angrily loads laundry into a machine.

GUY

...and we go with it to Cyrus next week!
Buddy said that I was indispensable.
(admires his beeper)
Even gave me a beeper. I think he
respects me. He really respects me.

DAWN

Grow up. He's just got you on a shorter
leash, that's all.

Dawn slams the lid down on the machine.

DAWN

Let me guess. He gave you that 'team'
horseshit. Win one 'for us.' 'You and
me'. So what is it that 'we' have to do?

GUY

Not much. Just find a new ending. New
title.

Dawn stops. Angry. Shocked. Guy rationalizes. Regurgitates
Buddy-speak.

GUY

It's a crappy ending, Dawn. People don't
want to see that. The good guys can't
lose. The boy needs to get the girl. I
know it's your movie, I'm sorry we have
to make these changes...

DAWN

Stop. Piece of advice. Never apologize.
It's a sign of weakness.

Guy doesn't know what to say. Shuts up.

DAWN

Don't tell me what needs to be done. I
know the drill. The compromises. The
politicking...

64
Dawn lifts up a white shirt with a big brown stain down the side. Starts to treat it.

DAWN
The spilling of coffee on ourselves in the race to kiss-ass.

GUY
Actually, Buddy did that. Wanted to make a point. He hates cold coffee. Never, ever let his coffee get cold.

Dawn tosses the shirt in. Lifts up another white shirt. Big yellow circular stain.

DAWN
And this?

GUY
Bagel stain.

DAWN
Bagel stain?

GUY
(matter-of-factly)
There was too much cream cheese on his bagel, so Buddy went ballistic with it. Never, ever put too much cream cheese on his bagel.

DAWN
Oh yeah. He really respects you.

Dawn lifts up another white shirt. Semi-torn. And a multitude of various stains on it. She just looks at Guy.

GUY
Don't ask.

Dawn goes to work vigorously on the shirt. Angry.

DAWN
I don't like this, Guy. I think I'll wait to hear from Stella.

GUY
But Buddy wants to do this now. And if this picture is big, then we can start our own company. Do our own films. Move to Montana. We can do whatever we want.
(pause)
We just have to deal with Buddy on this one.

DAWN

I'd rather kiss a scorpion.

GUY

You do hate me. You really hate me.

Dawn looks over at Guy. Sympathetic. She gives in.

DAWN

Fine, Guy. Run with the project. But know this. I've seen what Buddy can do. You can't get into bed with him without getting fucked. He plays a zero-sum game. That's his drill. Nobody wins unless somebody loses.

GUY

Well, just as long as I don't lose you.

Dawn softens. Pats Guy gently on the hand.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

CAMERA MOVES ALONG THE FLOOR. Follows a WIND-UP TOY RAT as it moves through the wreckage. Broken glass, broken pictures. Condiment bottles, a bloody envelope, etc..

We hear the SNIP SNIP SNIP of scissors. Buddy WHIMPERS

GUY (O.S.)

Loss. They say that real pain, real suffering, comes from loss. Loss of family. Loss of love..

CAMERA follows WIND-UP RAT as it struggles over a large chunk of glass. CAMERA stops on Guy and Buddy's feet. Toe to toe. Wing-tips to Fuzzy slippers.

GUY (O.S.)

Loss of the things that matter most.

Again, the scissors SNIP SNIP. Buddy YELPS in pain.

GUY (O.S.)

Hold still. You're only going to make it worse.

A RAZOR drops on the floor. Tufts of hair float down into frame. Guy's feet move out of frame....

...and come down with a SHARP CRASH on the WIND-UP RAT.

GUY

stands up. Blows on the scissors. Walks behind Buddy. SNIP
SNIP. More hair floats away.

GUY

Forget about all the other shit we've
been doing tonight. We gotta start
thinking big. Grand. Abbo-dante.

(stops; looks around)

Don't go anywhere. Be right back.

Guy runs out of the living room. Re-appears with a large,
framed mirror. Excited.

GUY

Yup, things only get better from here.

(leans the mirror up)

So, what do you think?

BUDDY

studies himself in the mirror. Face is bloody. Bruised. Left
cheek swelling. Head is a rash of stubble and bloody cuts with
a few patches of hair. He looks terrible.

Buddy does not react. Hangs his head. Silent.

Guy looks into the mirror. Looks at Buddy.

GUY

That's it? Come on. Look at yourself.
Your face! Your precious hair! No way
Rogaine is helping you out of this one.
You are fuuuuucked-up!

Guy motions enthusiastically to the mirror. Buddy refuses to
look up. No reaction.

Disappointed. Guy SIGHS. Drops the mirror with a loud CRASH.
Buddy's head snaps up.

Guy brushes hair off his clothes.

GUY

You want to go back to the hot sauce?
Fine by me.

Buddy smiles. Amused. Starts to CHUCKLE.

BUDDY
Seven years.

GUY
What? What did you say?

BUDDY
The mirror. Seven years bad luck.

Guy looks down at the mirror. Shattered. Buddy LAUGHS.
Actually CACKLES with glee. Pisses Guy off.

GUY
Shut up.
(Buddy still laughs)
I said, shut up!!!

Buddy continues to laugh. Guy whips out the gun and FIRES a warning shot over Buddy's head.

Hits the lamp, and being the only light source on....

Everything goes DARK. Silence.

Then Buddy starts to LAUGH again. Mocking....

BUDDY
Brilliant. Fucking brilliant.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE

Buddy sits behind his desk, reading a set of notes. Guy stands in front of him. Beaming with pride.

BUDDY
Genius. Sheer fuckin' genius. This is great work, Guy.

GUY
Thank you. You said you needed an ending.

BUDDY
Yeah, well it's brilliant. And to set it in a laundromat. Perfect. It's real. It's believable.

GUY
And there's nothing more romantic than a woman scrubbing your underwear.

BUDDY
It's good. No. It's great.

GUY
Thank you. Thank you very much.

Buddy stands. Straightens his tie and grabs his coat.

BUDDY
I'm going to show Cyrus these notes.
He's gonna love it. We have a go movie.
He's gonna green-light this right away.
Say good-bye to Stella and hello Buddy.

GUY
(gulps)
You're gonna show Cyrus?
(grabs the notes)
Let me just clean this up a bit. There
are some spelling errors that..

Buddy snatches the notes out of Guy's hands. Pats him warmly
on the shoulder.

BUDDY
Minor details. Don't worry. He's going
to be too excited to worry about
spelling. Good work. Guy.

Buddy puts on his coat.

BUDDY
I'm not going to forget this. And I'm
going to tell Cyrus about you. Get ready
to meet the chairman of the board. kid.
You made it. You earned it.

Buddy pats Guy warmly. Heads out, but stops suddenly.

BUDDY
Shit. I left my belt at Marnie's last
night. Can't see Cyrus like this.

He looks at Guy's belt. Without a word, Guy quickly hands over
his belt. Buddy exits. Guy follows, holding his pants up.

CUT TO:

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

The phone RINGS. Guy answers.

GUY

Buddy Ackerman's office. Hey, Dawn!
Listen. Buddy loved the notes. He's
talking to Cyrus right now. Yeah! Cyrus!

BUDDY, CYRUS, AND FOSTER KANE

appear around the corner. Walking down the hallway.

GUY

Oh my God. Here they come now. Break
out the champagne. We did it!

Guy hangs up. Stands at attention. Presentable. Well, as
presentable as one can be holding up his own pants.

Buddy and Cyrus pass by. Cyrus with his arm over Buddy.
Foster follows quietly.

CYRUS

That's a perfect ending! A stroke of
genius.

BUDDY

It was nothing really. It just came to
me. It seemed so obvious. There's
nothing more romantic than a woman
scrubbing a guy's underwear.

CYRUS

You sure the kids will respond to this?

BUDDY

Absolutely. It speaks to their
generation. A generation that's been
dissed. Disillusioned, disappointed and
dismayed. Right, Foster?

Foster nods. Jots down the line.

FOSTER

That sums it up perfectly.

CYRUS

Good. Can never tell with these kids
nowadays.

The three enter Buddy's office. They don't even notice Guy.

Guy's smile quickly fades. Stands there. Disappointed.

The group reappears. Cyrus points to the notes.

CYRUS
But you got to fix these spelling errors.
It's unprofessional.

BUDDY
I know. You're right. I had Guy type it
up, and I should have checked it. But I
was just too excited to wait. Can you
blame me?

CYRUS
(chuckles)
I admire that enthusiasm. This is a
great project. And I'm not going to
forget who brought it to me. You keep
this up Buddy, I'm going to have to make
you President of Production.

BUDDY
Me? No, I'm just want to hit a home run
for the team.

Foster grabs Buddy's hand. Shakes it. Sincere.

FOSTER
Thanks for giving me the chance to work
on this. It's a great project. And I
won't forget who brought it to me.

Buddy throws Guy the notes. Mouths, "Fix it". Disappears
down the hallway with Cyrus. All laughs and smiles.

Guy watches them go. Bitterness building...

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP: COMPUTER SCREEN

Loud TAPS punctuate the slow crawl of the BLINKING CURSOR as
it moves across a document.

The phone RINGS. And RINGS.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Guy sits there, smoking. Complete disinterest and boredom.
One finger clicks away at the computer. He ignores the phone.

But he can't ignore...

BUDDY (O.S.)
(yelling)
What are you doing!!

GUY
Your notes!

BUDDY (O.S.)
Do them later. Right now we need to
return phone calls. Get in here!

Guy stubs out his cigarette. Picks up his pad..

BUDDY (O.S.)
Come on! Hurry up! Get in here!

Guy stands up. Index finger extended out like a gun, Guy stabs
at the computer switch slowly and deliberately. The COMPUTER
SCREEN cuts out to black.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S LIVING ROOM

Guy enters from the kitchen. Munches on a box of cereal.

GUY
What are you yelling about?

BUDDY
If we're done here, I'd like to visit the
men's room.
(Guy doesn't respond)
Do you mind? I gotta piss.

GUY
Really? How interesting. Tell you what..

Guy looks around. Reaches down for a pair of scissors. SNIPS
SNIPS them for effect. Devilish grin.

GUY
We could install a catheter. One more way
to make the office run efficiently. But
first, I'm gonna get something to drink.

CUT TO:

INT. COPY ROOM/PANTRY

Guy pours a cup of coffee into a mug: Has something like "LOVE
& RAINBOWS ARE FOREVER" written on the side. Takes a packet of
Sweet & Low. Dumps it into the coffee. Stirs.

72
Pauses a moment. Looks around. Spits quickly into the mug a couple times. Stirs it casually.

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Yet another day at the office. Buddy is on the phone. Sips coffee out of his "LOVE & RAINBOWS" MUG as he flips through a book. Something like ATTILA THE HUN'S LEADERSHIP SECRETS.

Guy SIGHS. Gets up and heads for the door. Almost reaches it. But stops when a flying book SLAMS against the wall.

BUDDY
(covers the phone)
Where are you going?

GUY
Bathroom. I need to...

BUDDY
No. Forget about what you need and focus on what I need. And I need you here. Get me on another phone call.
(turns back to the phone)
Hello. Shut up. Listen. Close the deal with this kid. I don't care what Stella told you. I'm telling you. Close it.

Guy trudges back to the phone. Starts dialing.

GUY
Hi, Buddy Ackerman calling.

MINUTES LATER

Guy taps his feet nervously, on the phone. Buddy plays with a desk toy. Some annoying perpetual motion thing.

GUY
All right. Leave word please.

CLOSE-UP ON THE PHONE LIST

Several check marks. Guy checks off the last name on the page. Flips the sheets over.

CAMERA SCANS DOWN THE WHOLE PAGE OF NAMES

Intimidating. Goes on forever.

GUY
Buddy Ackerman calling.

GUY'S FOOT

taps really nervously. Beads of sweat form on Guy's brow.

BUDDY

yawns. Flips through a Vogue magazine.

GUY
(growing hostile)
I'll hold. Fine. Just get him.

GUY'S WHOLE LEG

now shakes uncontrollably. BANGS UP against the desk.
Guy twitches. Eyes pleading, he looks to Buddy.

The phone RINGS. Guy quickly switches calls. Turns to Buddy.

GUY
Stella calling on line 2.

Finally. A call that Buddy will take. Relief at last. Guy
heads for the door. But is stopped by...

BUDDY
Don't want her. Keep going.

Guy frowns. Mouths in disbelief "Don't want her?" Painfully,
Guy returns to the seat and mans the phone.

Buddy pours himself a big, tall glass of water...

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Guy EXPLODES out of Buddy's office. Takes off down the hall.

C.U. BATHROOM DOOR

Guy tries it. Locked. Curses to himself.
Waits...Waits. Whimpers...Curses...Takes off again...

AT THE OTHER END OF THE HALL

Guy comes sliding around the corner. Runs into...

INT. LADIES ROOM

Guy rushes in. Fumbles frantically with his belt. His zipper.
His boxer shorts. Finally reaches a stall. And with a YELL.....

INT. LADIES ROOM

Takes a really really long whizz.....

75
INT. LADIES ROOM

Guy's expression changes from pain to relief. Guy bangs his head against the wall. Satisfaction. Ecstasy.

Zips up. Washes his hands. FLUSHES.

GUY
(sotto)
Fuckin' coffee.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S LIVING ROOM

Buddy squirms and sweats. Uncomfortable. Sound of RUSHING WATER from the kitchen. A toilet FLUSHES somewhere in the house. Then FLUSHES again. And again.

Buddy pauses. Listens in disbelief. He frantically struggles. The chair lifts up on its legs. Buddy tries to stand. No success. He rocks the chair.

Gets up halfway. Then loses his balance. Buddy and chair come crashing down. Buddy lies sideways, cursing.

Finally, resigns. Relaxes. And urinates.

A pool of piss forms around him, creeps towards Buddy's head. Buddy clenches his teeth, SNARLS. Ready to fight back. A toilet FLUSHES...bleeds into...

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM

HANDS PULL DOWN PAPER TOWELS. Loud SNAP.

Guy washes up. Checks his hair. Straightens his tie. Exits.

INT. RICK'S RESTAURANT

CAMERA FOLLOWS Guy as he moves through the restaurant. Shaking hands. A couple of hugs. A young man on the rise...

Finds his table and sits across from JACK. Looks almost like Guy did his first day. Geek suit and haircut.

JACK
Boy, you really can work a room.

GUY
Sorry about that. Just needed to do a
quick lap around the place.

WAITRESS sets down two cups of coffee and the check in front
of Guy. Jack grabs for the check. Comes up empty. Guy pulls
out his wallet.

JACK
Please. Let me.

GUY
I can't let you do that. It's your first
week. You're a virgin. Besides, I'll
find some way to work this into Buddy's
expenses.

JACK
Really? You can do that?

GUY
Poor child, you have so much to learn...
Guy trails off. Stands. Sees someone....

MICHELLE

Super-model babe. Tall, yet curvaceous. Mane of perfectly
coiffed brown curls. Slinky dress. Double-Wow.

GUY
Michelle?

Michelle turns. Sees Guy. Lights up. Squeals..

MICHELLE
Guy??

GUY
(squealing back)
Michelle!

They hug. Michelle plants a juicy one on his cheek. Jack
looks on with awe and envy.

GUY
(mock scolding)
Does Buddy know you're here?

MICHELLE
No, but we'll just add this to our closet
of secrets. Gotta go. Love ya.

GUY

Love you.

Guy sits down. Jack's jaw is still open.

JACK

What...who was...

GUY

One of Buddy's. It's a shame she's only in light rotation.

Guy reaches for the cream. Pours it in his coffee. Reaches for the sugar tray. Pulls out an Equal. Snaps it.

GUY

I'll tell you. When I started working for Buddy, everyone said one of the perks would be sloppy seconds. At first, I thought that was disgusting. But now. Almost wish I didn't have a girlfriend.

(sighs)

Hard to believe Buddy was married once. But you see why that didn't last.

Guy looks over to Michelle. She's swarmed by an army of men.

JACK

Yeah. But I heard Buddy was seeing some D-girl. Denise, Diane, Dana...

GUY

(thinks; frowns)

No. I don't think so.

JACK

(eyes following Michelle)

Well, you would know.

Guy throws the Equal packet at Jack. Gets his attention.

GUY

See any Sweet & Low over at that table behind you?

Jack looks. Comes up empty.

JACK

No, only Equal. You want some?

GUY

Naw. Forget it.
(gulps his coffee)

(MORE)

78

GUY (cont'd)
Come on, let's get out of here.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

Buddy sits upright, wet around the edges.

Guy cleans him up as best he can. Towels on the floor around him. Guy chuckles sympathetically.

GUY

If your friends could see you now, huh?
Don't worry. This happened to me once
too. When I was 7. 1975. Summer of JAWS.
It was at this piano recital, and I was
halfway through this Chopin prelude -
real bitch to play, when it occurs to me.

(pause)

I really really need to take a pee. But
I'd never been able to make it through
this damn piece without screwing up. And
it was going so beautifully. Almost like
it was playing itself. So I made a
choice. I kept playing and playing...

Guy throws down the towel. Straightens out one of Buddy's few
patches of hair.

GUY

I was concentrating so hard, I didn't
even realize I'd wet my pants. I got up,
took a bow. With a big wet spot on my
pants. It was, without question, the
most embarrassing moment of my life.

(looks at Buddy)

But then again, I wasn't lying in it.

GUNFIRE ERUPTS off-screen. Guy looks over to the TV. Some
really shitty exploitation movie is on.

GUY

I have to admit. I love that TV. It's
so big.

(turns back to Buddy)

You see what I'm saying, don't you?

BUDDY

You want the TV?

Guy shakes his head. Gets up.

GUY

No. No. Get it? Sometimes, you can get so determined to make something work, you don't notice what it costs. I wonder, how many people have you fucked over? Ruined? And for what? This?

Guy motions to the TV. Stereo GUNSHOTS erupt on cue. A woman SCREAMS.

GUY

Someday, and I doubt this will ever happen, but someday, I hope you have kids you need to protect from this trash.

BUDDY

Protect from what? It's only violence. It's only sex.

Guy looks at him with disgust.

GUY

Only violence? Only sex? These are not just some spices you just pick up at the neighborhood 7-11.

(mutters)

It figures your wife left you...

Buddy SILENCES. Visibly upset.

Guy picks up on this immediately. Turns. Smiles. Eyes dancing with mischief. Gets up enthusiastically.

GUY

Hey. All this time I've worked for you, and I still don't know a thing about the ex-Mrs. A.

Guy searches around the wreckage for pictures. Unsuccessssful.

GUY

It figures. Not one family portrait here. It's so...so you. She beautiful?

BUDDY

Yes.

GUY

You love her?

BUDDY

Yes.

GUY

Yeah? Great. That's great.

(pauses; checks his watch)

Love to meet her. She coming home soon?

No answer. Buddy winces. Looks away.

Guy savors the moment. Then twists the knife in...

GUY

Oh, wait. That's right. I forgot.

(dripping with contempt)

She left you.

Again, the inevitable question...

BUDDY

What do you want?

GUY

I want you to tell me a story. Tell me about a young Buddy in love. Crazy about a woman who didn't want him.

(gets in Buddy's face)

Was it a painful separation? It must have been really horrible to have turned you into such a monster. What happened, Buddy? Huh? Caught her in the passionate throes of a secret lover? Did she take you for everything you had? How about...

BUDDY

She died.

Guy stops. Surprised.

GUY

That's it? That's all? Booring. Hell, it's almost convenient. Tell me, how many times have you used that as a pick-up?

Oh, my wife died. Please come home with me. Hold me. Love me. Fuck me.

(pause)

Boo-hoo. I should have known. You're just a natural born asshole. You...

BUDDY

Christmas eve. She was driving to the mall. I was supposed to go with her. We needed to start our Christmas shopping. But it was suppose to be simple. Just our parents. That would be it. We even agreed not to give each other gifts. Money was tight, shopping was a hassle...

Guy YAWNS. Buddy ignores him. Continues.

BUDDY

There was a car that had broken down, so she pulled over to help. I always told Mallory she was such a busybody. She called it being nice.

(smiles at the memory)

She got out and I don't know. She asked if they were all right or something stupid. Anyways, it was a scam. Bunch of punk kids stealing cars. They shot her.

Guy stops fidgeting. Buddy has his complete attention now.

BUDDY

I was stuck in the office. Wrapping Christmas gifts for my boss. A lot of gifts. It was a good year for us. FISTED FURY had been huge. COP-KILLER opened big. I was there until 3 A.M. All the time, I'm wrapping. I'm thinking. Oh boy, she is going to be pissed. I am a dead man.

(pause; then matter-of-fact)

Anyway, I got home, got the message. Went downtown to identify her body.

GUY

(quietly)

I'm sorry.

BUDDY

Her family was devastated. They never said it, but I knew what they were thinking. It was my fault. Right? I mean, who spends Christmas Eve in the office? Wrapping gifts...

(pauses; then, as an
afterthought)

It was a whole week into the new year before I found it. These stupid wind-up toys and this note. 'In the constant rat-race of life, don't ever forget to unwind. Merry Christmas. Love always'....

Silence. Guy looks down at the wreckage. Oops.

BUDDY

(shrugs)

She was never good at writing notes.

Guy walks away. Uncomfortable. Ashamed.

Buddy STAMPS his feet. Takes the offensive.

BUDDY

Get back here! We're gonna finish this!

GUY

Look, I didn't know...

BUDDY

Oooh. Something Guy didn't know.
Imagine that. Boy genius here didn't
know something.

Guy flares...

GUY

But that's no excuse for your behavior.

BUDDY

You think you know it all, don't you?
You're 24. You're a baby. You don't
know shit.

GUY

Hey, I know what's right, what's fair....

BUDDY

Ha! Believe me, son. That is all going
to change real soon.

Buddy motions to all the wreckage with his head.

BUDDY

I can appreciate this. I was young once
too. Hated authority. Hated all of my
bosses. Thought they were idiots. Hell,
I've always said if you're not a rebel by
the age of 20, you got no heart.

(pauses)

But if you haven't turned Establishment
by 30, you got no brain. Because there
are no storybook romances. No fairy tale
endings. So before you run out and change
the world, ask yourself...

Buddy GLARES at Guy. Eyes seeing right through him.

BUDDY

What do you really want?

CUT TO:

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

CAMERA moves through the apartment. Past stacks and stacks of papers, scripts, and magazines that obscure the film school sticker. Now merely reads 'REALITY...'

Guy nestles next to Dawn on the couch. Both read scripts. Guy puts his script down. Sits up. Inspired.

GUY

Wyoming.

DAWN

What? You reading a Western there?

GUY

Forget Montana. Think Wyoming.
Definitely Wyoming.

Guy gets up. Passionate. Inspired.

GUY

I want to move to Wyoming.

DAWN

I thought you wanted to make movies.
Wyoming is a place where you go to
retire, ski or ride horses.

GUY

But REAL LIFE is set up. It got the green-
light. We can get away from all this crap
now. Wyoming's pure. Clean. Just come
into town when we need to.

DAWN

We?

GUY

You want to come, don't you?

DAWN

(non-committal)

Uh-huh.

Guy takes Dawn's hands. Looks into her eyes.

GUY

I could write. There'd be no more sucking-
up to egotistical idiots. No politicking.

DAWN

Uh-huh

Guy leans in...

GUY

No more shitty scripts to read.

DAWN

Uh-huh

Closer...

GUY

And no more Buddy Ackermans.

Guy leans in even more. The two are basically nose-to-nose now. Almost embracing.

DAWN

(softly)

Harrison Ford has a ranch in Wyoming,
doesn't he? I like Harrison Ford

Dawn closes her eyes. Guy moves in for a nice, long, deep kiss. Pushes her down on the couch. Guy reaches down...

Guy's beeper goes off. BEEP BEEP. They ignore it. Dawn wraps her arms around Guy.

THE PHONE RINGS.

Dawn tightens her clench around Guy. Kisses him harder. They ignore the RINGING.

Finally, the answering machine picks up. And it's...

BUDDY (O.S.)

Guy. Pick up Pick up Pick up. I know
you're there. Hello?...

Guy jumps up. Grabs the phone. Dawn lies on the couch. Stunned. Tries to figure out what just happened.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD.

Buddy's cruising in a convertible. Beautiful day. Wind blowing through the hair, arm resting on the door. He's a commercial for good living and the spoils of the rich.

Buddy yells loudly into the car phone over BOOMING RAP MUSIC.

BUDDY
Hey. How you doing?

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

GUY
Pretty good. I'm here with...

EXT. SUNSET BLVD.

Buddy cuts him off. He's not really interested.

BUDDY
Great. That's great. Let's do it.
Script status?

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

GUY
New draft's in. Notes by Monday.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD.

BUDDY
Good. And the deal?

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

GUY
Closed and signed Friday night.
(pause)
Taken care of. Finished. Uh-huh. No,
no new hair products this week.

Guy grins. Cocky. Fields all of Buddy's questions with confidence. He's got everything covered...

EXT. SUNSET BLVD.

BUDDY
All right. Give me Mindy's number.

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

...except that. Guy's face drops. Oops. Cringes.

GUY
Uh, I don't have it on me. It's at the office.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD.

BUDDY

Can't you do anything right?! You know I was seeing her tonight. What have I told you? Your head's gotta be a rolodex, or your ass is gonna be on the line.

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

Guy winces, then frowns. A child being chastized. Dawn watches. Worried.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Now get both of them down to the office and get me the number.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD.

BUDDY

Listen, this is for your own good. It's the only way you're going to learn. Call me back with the number.

Buddy hangs up.

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

Guy hangs up. Dawn motions for Guy to come over. Pats the couch...Ready to pick up where they left off.

GUY

(reluctantly)

I have to go to the office.

DAWN

Again? You were there this morning.

GUY

It's only for a little bit. I just need to get a phone number.

DAWN

For what. For one of Buddy's bims?

Guy doesn't answer. Starts to get his things. Dawn pouts.

DAWN

What happened to no more sucking-up, huh? What happened to writing? What happened to Wyoming?

GUY
You understand. I have to do this.

DAWN
No you don't. You've played the
doddering house-boy long enough now.

GUY
(lamely; not believing it
himself.)
But I gave him a commitment.

Dawn lets out a big laugh. Shakes her head.

DAWN
And you think that means anything? Buddy
Ackerman knows only one note on the
musical scale. Mi Mi Mi.

Guy doesn't respond. Dawn packs up her things.

GUY
You don't have to go. I'll be back.

DAWN
And be your lady in waiting? No thanks.
It's not a role I do well.

GUY
Look, it's only a quick trip down to the
office. Do you want me to jeopardize a
whole year of work, your project...

DAWN
If your job is everything to you, I can
accept that. But if it isn't, the next
time Buddy calls, you should try saying
this. 'I don't care'. Go ahead. Try it.
It's like a breath of fresh air. 'I
don't care.'

Dawn take a deep breath. Exhales. Waits for Guy to do the
same. Nothing.

DAWN
Can't do it, can you? Wyoming, my ass.
(laughs)
When you figure out what it is you really
want, Guy, let me know.

Dawn shakes her head. Gets her jacket. Guy watches in
silence. Finally blurts out...

GUY
You.

DAWN
What?

GUY
You, all right. I want you! You're the only thing I care about.

DAWN
(unconvinced)
Right. Don't give me that. That's a Buddy Ackerman pick-up line.

Guy grabs her. Angry. Passion bordering violence.

GUY
Don't dismiss me like that. Shut up. Listen. You're the only thing in my miserable, shitty little existence I have to look forward to. You're the only real thing I have left.

DAWN
Then say it. 'I don't care'.

Guy can't do it. Dawn pulls away. Continues out the door. Guy watches her go. Sullen. Snaps.

GUY
So that's it, huh? Your project's set up. You don't need me anymore. But that's okay. You got something. And I got laid. Gotta give action to get action, right?

Dawn turns. Hurt. And angry.

DAWN
Yeah, that's it. That's it exactly. Congratulations, Guy. You've just graduated. Good luck. I hope you make a killing in this business.

Dawn exits. Guy stands in the doorway. Very alone.

EXT. STREET

Dawn walks out of Guy's apartment. Gets into her car.

89
INT. DAWN'S CAR

Dawn stares out towards Guy's apartment. Upset. Wants to go back, but fights the urge. Stubborn to make a point. Finally..

Picks up her car phone. Hits button marked 'GUY' on her Speed-Dial. Slumps when she gets a BUSY SIGNAL. Sound bleeds into..

INT. GUY'S APARTMENT

Guy is also on the phone. With the same BUSY SIGNAL. Hangs up. Dials again. BUSY again. Frustrated, he throws the phone across the room.

CUT TO:

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Dimly lit. Deserted. Guy sits at his desk, on the phone. Spins the rolodex round and round. Yanks out MINDY'S number.

Guy hangs up the phone, annoyed. Wanders into Buddy's office.

GUY

(sotto)

I don't care. Don't care.

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE

Guy walks behind the desk. Fiddles with some of the desk toys. Carefully replaces them back in their spot.

Sits down in the big leather chair. Swivels around in it. Slides around the office with it. Goes through the desk drawers. Finds a box of cigars. Pops one in his mouth.

GUY

(in a bad Jack Nicholson)

Shut up. Listen. Learn. Always wear colorful underwear. Because you never know when you're gonna be caught with your pants down.

Continues to search the desk. Pulls out a file marked BUMBOS. Opens it up. Eyes light up. Impressed and interested. Guy kicks his feet up. Flips through headshots...actually, bodyshots. 8x10's of women with big hair, big breasts, and tiny bikinis.

Suddenly, Guy sits up. Disturbed. In his hands...

DAWN'S BUSINESS CARD

Home phone number scrawled on the back.

Guy frowns. Not sure what to think. Sits up. Attacks the desk. Suspicious. Finds only...

WEDDING PICTURES OF YOUNG BUDDY

Worn around the edges. A happy Buddy with an equally happy beautiful blonde. Kodak moments of true love.

Guy moves on. In the back of the drawer, finds a...

SLEEK, BLACK 9mm BERRETTA

Cool. Holds it in his hands. Guy toys with it. Experimenting with all the buttons and latches.

Points the gun around the office. Squints an eye.

P.O.V. BEHIND THE GUN

Pans around the office. Stops occasionally to pick out a target. A toy. A poster. Gun continues to pan across from LIGHT...

....into SHADOW. Stops. RACK FOCUS to image of Buddy, tied up. Bloody. Battered.

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

Guy sits across the room. Squints. Aims. And FIRES.

C.U. GUY'S BEEPER

Rests on the floor. GUNSHOT kicks up around it. Guy FIRES again. Sends the beeper skittering across the room.

Guy FIRES again...a regular Sundance kid. FIRES again and again. Until the beeper comes to rest at Buddy's feet. JERKS, BUZZES a couple times before dying.

GUY

raises the gun. Levels it at Buddy. Pulls the trigger and..

CLICK. Empty. Buddy flinches. Guy laughs.

GUY

Scared you, didn't I. Bet you pissed in your pants.

(pauses)

Oh wait. You did that already.

91
Guy laughs. Buddy's not amused.

BUDDY
(softly; tired)
What do you want?

GUY
I told you.

Guy pulls out a fresh clip. SLAPS it in. Chambers a round.
Points it at Buddy. Buddy remains calm.

BUDDY
Yeah, you gave me all that self-righteous
bullshit. Great. Save the whales. Save
the ozone layer. But what do you really
want? You want money? Fine. Get my
checkbook.

Guy clucks, scolding. FIRES a round.

GUY
Buddy, you haven't been listening.

BUDDY
Oh yes I have. You want fancy cars?
Done. Fancy girls? Done. You want to be
an executive? Done.

Guy lowers the gun. Listens. Buddy moves in for the kill.

BUDDY
Think about it. You can make any movie
you want. You can have the brass ring.
Just put a lid on the bullshit you've
been feeding me and let's get down to
business. Enough foreplay. Let's fuck.

Guy is silent. Almost convinced. Buddy presses.

BUDDY
You want me to lay it out for you? Fine.
You're no better than anyone else.
You're no stronger. Same weaknesses.
Same fears. Desires. You want success.
You want fame and fortune.
(pauses)
You want to be somebody.

Guy looks up. Thinking. But Buddy loses his patience.

BUDDY

Oh, please. Stop being a hypocrite and
'fess up. What do you want!!!

Guy snaps. FIRES. Shards of glass kick up behind Buddy.

GUY

I told you. I want justice...

FIRES another round.

GUY

...I want retribution...

FIRES another round.

GUY

...I want PAYBACK!

FIRES and FIRES and FIRES. A whirlwind of destruction
explodes behind Buddy. One of the ceiling-high picture
windows comes CRASHING DOWN.

Finally stops. A couple pieces of glass TINKLE down. A soft
evening breeze blows in.

Buddy STAMPS his foot down.

BUDDY

Fuck that bullshit! Spare me the X
generation uber-angst. What do you want?
Huh? Come on. What's in it for Guy?

Guy walks up to Buddy. Puts the gun right in his face. Up
against his nose. Buddy snarls.

BUDDY

Fine. You going to shoot me now? Do it.
Put me out of my misery and put an end to
your whining, you fuck.

GUY

That's the problem with you. You think
you're so keyed in to everyone's
feelings. You think you're a people
person...But YOU DON'T LISTEN! YOU DON'T
LISTEN!!!!!!!

BUDDY

Rot in hell...

Guy YELLS. Grabs Buddy's head with one hand. Pushes it down.
Places the gun barrel alongside Buddy's ear. FIRES.

93
LOUDEST GUNSHOT We've ever heard. A ROARING EXPLOSION. SCREAM
OF PAIN. ECHOES for a second. Then we...

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPERIMPOSE CARD - "YEAR ONE"

EXT. MEGA-PICTURES PARKING LOT

Guy pulls up. The first one on the lot. Looks over at Dawn's
parking spot. Empty.

CUT TO:

C.U. PHONE

A phone RINGS and RINGS and RINGS...

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Guy sits at his desk, sipping a cup of coffee. Really sharp
suit. Attitude reads arrogant and angry. The phone RINGS and
RINGS. The answering machine picks up.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Guy, it's Buddy. Pick up. Pick up.
Come on, where are you? We have a
shitload of phone calls to return.

Guy looks over. Pauses, unconcerned. Then goes back to his
coffee. The phone RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

CUT TO.

C.U. PHONE

gets picked-up.

INT. BUDDY'S OFFICE

Guy is on the phone across from Buddy, who is pissed-off about
something. Guy paces. Speaks harshly into the phone.

GUY

Hank, what happened to that delivery?

BUDDY

Why didn't it get there? God Damn It!
You should be on this instead of
gossiping in the fuckin' copy room.

94
Guy puts a finger in his ear so he can hear. This only pisses Buddy off more. He looks around his desk.

GUY

Uh-huh. But that isn't what I asked for.
No, stop. I don't care.

Buddy picks up a book. Hurls it at Guy. Guy turns and paces the other direction. Book misses.

GUY

Just listen and learn. All right.

Buddy picks up a clipboard. Sends it spinning at Guy's head. Guy, without even looking, nimbly dodges it. The clipboard hits the wall with a loud CRACK.

Guy launches into a speech, punctuating with dramatic gestures...All the time, ducking and leaping over objects that Buddy starts throwing across the office.

GUY

What we need to be concerned with here is
DETAIL. 2:30 is not the same as 2:00, is
it? Hello? Stop it, stop. I know you
tried to deliver it at 1. And I'm sorry
everyone was out to lunch. But that's not
what I asked for. That does me no good. I
now have a crazed executive throwing
paperweights at me because of you.

On cue, Buddy heaves a heavy crystal paperweight. Barely even looking up, Guy catches it mid-air. Calmly replaces it back on the desk.

GUY

Do me a favor. Shut up. Listen. Learn.
I asked for 2. I expect 2. I want 2. So
the next time I ask for something to be
delivered by 2, get it there!

As Guy continues, Buddy calms. Listens to Guy's speech. Impressed. Like a proud father. Guy hangs up. Reports..

GUY

Cyrus's birthday gift is on it's way.

The phone RINGS. Guy answers effortlessly. Turns to Buddy.

GUY

Cyrus on 1.

95
BUDDY

snaps to attention. All smiles now. Picks up with Cyrus.
Gushing schmooze.

GUY

gets up to leave. But Buddy motions for him to stay.

BUDDY

(on phone)

Yes sir. Project looks great. How great?
A hundred million bucks great. Hey, you
asked for it. I got it.

As Buddy drones on, Guy goes back to doodling on his pad.
Puts the finishing touches on..

A SKETCH

of Buddy as the devil. Horns, hoofs...the works. Lifts up
the pad, and we see other SKETCHES scattered in the margins.
Buddy being hung. Buddy in a guillotine, head rolling away.

The phone RINGS. Guy stops drawing. Looks down.

THE PHONE

starts to blink green. Incoming call. Guy picks up.

GUY

(in a whisper)

Buddy Ackerman's office. Sure, can you
hold on a minute? He's on with Cyrus.

Guy puts the call on hold.

THE PHONE

blinks red on one line. The other steady green. Active.

GUY

looks over to Buddy, still talking. Watches the phone.
Bored. Waiting patiently to tell Buddy about his next call.

THE PHONE

Active line goes dead. Guy turns to Buddy. Tells him...

GUY

Morrow on 2....

But Buddy is still talking.

BUDDY

Yes, Cyrus. You'll get those notes by tonight. Guy is working on them. Yeah, he's doing a great job. Kid is fan-fuckin-tastic. Phenomenal. The best.

Buddy continues to talk it up about Guy. Guy looks down at the phone again.

THE PHONE

has only one line on hold. Red. Blinking..Blinking... All other lines are dead.

Buddy is talking to no one.

GUY

sits there. First confusion. Then disbelief. Buddy hangs up the phone. Turns to Guy...

BUDDY

See, I take care of you, don't I? Huh? Listen to me..nobody else..me. I am looking out for your best interests. Now, who's holding?

GUY

Moral on line 2.

BUDDY

Who?

GUY

(correcting himself)

Morrow. Mor-row

Guy storms out. Buddy goes back to work, happy & carefree.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Guy comes out of Buddy's office, still in shock.

He drops his pad. Runs his hands through his hair. Shakes his head. Plops down in his chair to a TIGHT CLOSE-UP.

GUY

(to himself)

I don't believe this. Unbelievable. I mean, do I look that stupid? Do I look that dumb?

97
REMAINING IN CLOSE-UP

Guy reaches out. Pulls Buddy towards him. CAMERA pulls-back to reveal we are now in...

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

Guy continues his speech. With passion and anger. BLOOD trickles out of Buddy's ear.

A STRONG BREEZE begins to blow through the shattered front window. Whips up around the two.

GUY

Did you think that you could pull that on me? Me?

BUDDY

I did speak to Cyrus about you...

GUY

BULLSHIT! You took credit for everything I did.

BUDDY

I spoke to him. He knows...

Guy is too angry to listen. He yells above Buddy. The two screaming at each other to be heard.

GUY

You lied to me! You handed me that sanctimonious...

BUDDY

...who you are. I never lied...

GUY

...bullshit like you do with everyone...

BUDDY

I TOLD YOU WHAT YOU WANTED TO HEAR!

Guy shuts up. Buddy continues. Cold stare. No pity.

BUDDY

I told you what you wanted to hear! I told you what you needed to hear.

GUY

I didn't need anymore....

BUDDY
 Yes you did. You were getting
 complacent. Ungrateful. Complete and
 total job burn-out.
 (off Guy's reaction)
 Oh, don't think I didn't notice.

CUT TO:

INT. MEGA-PICTURES EXECUTIVE OFFICE.

Guy sips coffee while the phone RINGS and RINGS and RINGS.
 Finishes up his cup. Goes to the coffee-maker. Empty.

BUDDY (V.O.)
 You just didn't give a shit anymore.
 Dragging your feet everywhere.

Guy saunters down the hallway. Phone still RINGS...

INT. COPY ROOM/PANTRY

Guy greets another assistant. They laugh. Joke.

IN THE HALLWAY

Buddy passes by the copy room. Hears something. Stops.

BUDDY (V.O.)
 Telling everyone that you were doing my
 job. That you were running the show.
 That I was just some puppet.

IN THE COPY ROOM

Guy mimics some of Buddy's gestures. Other assistant laughs.

OUTSIDE

Buddy seethes.

BUDDY (V.O.)
 That if I didn't talk to Cyrus about
 making you a junior executive by the end
 of the month, that you were gonna walk.
 You could get a job anywhere else. And
 without you, I was nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S LIVING ROOM

Guy is across the room, looking away from Buddy. Embarrassed. Humiliated. Because Buddy is right.

Buddy smiles. Now has the upper hand.

BUDDY

So don't come preaching to me with your ideas of what's fair. You're not a martyr. You're no hero. You're just a fuckin' hypocrite. You're like any other punk kid out there looking for a way in. Any way in. And you need me.

Guy tries to rally another attack. Stands up, indignant.

GUY

That doesn't give you the right to..to abuse people. To belittle them. To steal their girlfriends.

BUDDY

What?

GUY

What gives you the right, huh? To treat people like shit. What?

BUDDY

BECAUSE I EARNED IT! What? You think someone just handed me this job?

(pause)

I've run phone calls. Juggled the bimbos. Put up with the tyrants, the yellers, the screamers. I've done things you can't even imagine in that small mind of yours. I paid my dues.

GUY

What? And I haven't? I spent a year...

BUDDY

AND I SPENT TEN! It's my turn to be selfish, god damn it! It's my turn.

Guy sits down. Exhausted. Out of arguments. Buddy shakes his head in disbelief.

BUDDY

What? One year in the fucking industry and you deserve to be on top?

GUY

I can do the job better than you! I know the scripts, the production. I...

BUDDY

(sympathetic)

Look. You're bright. You have talent. But that ain't worth more than a box of soiled Pampers if you don't have character. You gotta suffer first. You got to be a lot tougher if you're gonna play in this man's game. I'll be honest...

(motions to his bonds)

This is the single most impressive thing you've done all year.

GUY

Don't you start preaching to me. I worked a year for you. That is more suffering than any man should see in a lifetime.

BUDDY

Ha! I hate to be the one to break this to you, but...it doesn't get any better than this.

Guy gets up. Turns away. He doesn't want to listen to this.

Buddy glares. Gets angry.

BUDDY

See, that's the problem with your fucking MTV microwave-dinner generation. You all want it now. All wrapped up nice and neat in a tidy little package. But you aren't willing to wait for it. To work for it. You expect it because you want it. Well, it doesn't work like that. You have to earn it. You have to take it. Make it yours.

(pauses)

But you need to decide what it is that you really want.

GUY

I want you to stop calling me in the middle of the night! I want you to stop sending me to the office on weekends to pick up your stinkin' sunglasses! I WANT MY LIFE BACK!

Buddy chortles. Yells back.

BUDDY

What life!? What life?! I gave you life. Before me, you had nothing. You were nothing. You were an inkspot. And now, you're playing in the majors. Tell me the truth. I bet all your film school friends think you're hot shit. Bet they line right up to kiss your ass. Bet you love it.

(pause; calmly)

I made you. You will always be Guy from Buddy Ackerman's office. You want to go back to your shitty little existence. No one's stopping you. Go ahead Leave.

Guy has no response. Sits there. Buddy's right.

BUDDY

But if you're going to play in this man's game, the you'd better get smart and leave that self-righteous Dudley damn Do-right crap for the simple folk. Because out here, it's kill your parents, fuck your friends, and have a nice day.

(pause)

Bad things happen to good people all the time. Your parents didn't love you. The devil made me do it. I don't care what excuse you choose. Just do it so we can get to what really counts.

GUY

It's that simple, huh? That makes everything all right? That's a load of crap!!!

BUDDY

That's the way it goes!! Those are the rules. I don't make them. I play by them. Your job is unfair to you? Grow up. Way it goes. People use you? Life is unfair -- way it goes. Girlfriend doesn't love you? Tough shit -- way it goes. Your wife gets shot and raped? And...and they leave their unfinished beers. Their stinkin' Bud longnecks...

Buddy chokes. Almost...just almost loses it. But he recovers. Turns icy and cold. Stares Guy down.

BUDDY
So be it. Way it goes.

SILENCE between the two. Guy lowers the gun.

BUDDY
So, now you want to tell me what you
want? What happened to you this evening?
What is this really about?

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT - LATE

Guy is on the phone. Same suit we saw him in at the beginning of the movie. Last one in the office. Checking names off a phone list as quickly as possible.

GUY
Buddy Ackerman leaving word.
(dials the next number)
Buddy Ackerman. Leaving word.
(and another; Guy sits up)
Buddy Ackerman. Leaving...Hello? Just
caught you? Great. Hold on. Let me patch
you through to the car.

Guy puts the phone down. Checks his fingernails. Then...

GUY
Sorry. I can't get to him. He must be
going through a tunnel. Yes, a tunnel. In
L.A. Leave word please.

Guy hangs up. Very tired.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES OUTER OFFICE - LATE EVENING

Most of the lights are out. Guy shuffles down the hallway, tired. His head still tilted in a phone-cradle position. Straightens himself out with a loud, painful CRACK.

Presses 'Down' on the elevator button. Leans against the wall. Exhales. Mouthing 'I don't care' over and over.

INT. ELEVATOR

Guy steps in. Doors are about to close when a hand reaches in between to stop them. Guy presses the DOOR OPEN button.

VOICE (O.S.)
Thank you.

And in walks CYRUS MILES. Tall, dignified. Guy immediately stands at attention. The doors close.

Guy steals a glance over every now and then, but keeps his eyes down. Quiet. Respectful. The two ride together in silence. Cyrus looks over.

CYRUS
Rough day at the office, huh?

GUY
Umm, yes sir.

CYRUS
Don't worry. It'll pay off.

The two continue to ride down. Guy searches for something to say. Anything.

The doors open. Guy waits for Cyrus to exit. But Cyrus motions for Guy to move ahead.

CYRUS
Please.

GUY
Thank you.

The two walk together towards the exit. Cyrus turns to Guy.

CYRUS
You have a wife?

GUY
No, sir.

CYRUS
Girlfriend, then. You must have a girl.

Dismayed, Guy shakes his head no. Cyrus frowns. Thinks.

CYRUS
Someone you love, then. You must have at least that.

Guy thinks a moment.

GUY
Yeah. You could say that.

CYRUS

(breathes a sigh of relief;
mutter)

Good. Can never tell with you kids
nowadays.

(smiles)

Anyways, piece of advice. Go and get
yourself a good meal. Then go and see
this girl. Tell her your hopes. Your
dreams. Tell her you love her. Trust
me, does a world of wonders.

Guy brightens up. Likes the idea a lot.

GUY

I'll definitely do that.

There's a moment of silence. Then...

CYRUS

It is a girl, isn't it?

GUY

Yes sir.

CYRUS

Good. Can never tell with you kids...

They reach the exit doors. Guy holds it open for Cyrus.

GUY

You have a good evening, sir.

CYRUS

You too. Keep up the good work Guy.

Guy stops, amazed. Encouraged. The chairman of the Mega-Pictures Studios just addressed him by his first name! Guy watches as Cyrus disappears into the night. Relives the moment. Allows himself a little victory YELP before exiting.

BUDDY (V.O.)

This can't be about Cyrus.

CUT TO:

INT. RICK'S RESTAURANT

BUDDY (V.O.)

And this can't be about a stupid little
phone call...

We're back at the beginning of the movie. Guy is at the phone -
bank. Stuck in a long waiting line. CAMERA PANS across the
bank of phones. Past a man on a cellular...

CUT TO:

INT. DAWN'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Dawn sits alone in the kitchen. Pink terry-cloth robe. Open
quart of Ben & Jerry's. And a box of Malomars.

The phone RINGS. Dawn stares. Hesitates, but picks it up.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Dawn? Hey, it's Buddy. I'm looking for
Guy. You see him?

DAWN

No. No, I haven't seen him in a while.

INT. BUDDY'S BEDROOM

BUDDY

Really? Say, what are you doing tonight?
Want to come over?

INT. DAWN'S KITCHEN

She digs out a giant scoop of mint chocolate chip.

DAWN

You're not really looking for Guy, are
you Buddy?

BUDDY (O.S.)

Oops. You caught me. So, what do you say?

DAWN

I'd say I'm really busy. Sorry.

BUDDY (O.S.)

Hey. You're forgetting what I taught
you. Never apologize...

DAWN

..it's a sign of weakness. Right.

BUDDY (O.S.)

You know, I can still remember the days
when you would have scurried over like an
eager beaver.

DAWN

Those days are long gone. You know that
Buddy. I'm not like that anymore.

BUDDY (O.S.)

And that's why your career has been on
stall for the past year. Remember, got
to give action to get action.

DAWN

Never forgot it. Good bye Buddy.

BUDDY (O.S.)

It's Guy, isn't it? What? Can't see the
boss because you're screwing the
assistant?

DAWN

(droll and sarcastic)

Sure Buddy. That's it exactly.

INT. BUDDY'S BEDROOM

Buddy smiles. Mischief in his eyes.

BUDDY

Fine. He's no longer my assistant.

INT. DAWN'S KITCHEN

Dawn stops mid-scoop.

DAWN

What?

BUDDY (O.S.)

You heard me? He's history. He's gone.
There. Any problems with coming over now?

DAWN

Buddy, leave Guy out of it. He is not the
problem.

INT. BUDDY'S BEDROOM

BUDDY

Maybe he is. Maybe he isn't. But
there's really only one way to find out,
isn't there?

INT. DAWN'S KITCHEN

Dawn slams down the receiver. Angry. Stares at the phone.

DAWN

(sotto)

Men. Crazy. All of them.

The phone RINGS. Dawn grabs it angrily.

DAWN

Yeah. What!

(calms)

Oh. Hi.

INT. RICK'S RESTAURANT

We pick up on the conversation where...

GUY

All right if I come over? Oh. Hmm. All right.

(beat)

Nothing. I wanted to tell you something. But I guess it can wait till I see you.

Guy slumps against the booth, disappointed. Listens.

GUY

All right. Dawn, I really..I am sorry.

Guy bangs the phone over his head. Curses his cowardice. One of the models walks away. As she WIPES FRAME, we...

CUT TO:

INT. DAWN'S KITCHEN

Dawn hangs up the phone. Struggles with a decision. Takes one more scoop of ice-cream. Then puts it away.

Picks up the phone and dials.

CUT TO:

C.U. GUY ON THE PHONE

Now talking to Buddy.

GUY

You're gonna can me? Let me go?

BUDDY (O.S.)
Hold on. I've got another call.
(pause)
Hello? Hello?

GUY
It's still me. Look, we couldn't return
a lot of calls because you've been away.
It won't happen again.

BUDDY (O.S.)
Hold on. Hold on. Fuckin' phones. Call
waiting, call conferencing...Got to be a
rocket scientist to make this thing work.

Guy leans against the wall. A CLICK is heard. Then...

BUDDY (O.S.)
Hello?

DAWN (O.S.)
Hi. It's Dawn. Fine. You got me. You win.
Guy jerks straight up. Covers the mouthpiece. Listens
intently. A dark cloud forming...

DAWN (O.S.)
Midnight, right?

BUDDY (O.S.)
Yeah, just like old times.

DAWN (O.S.)
You wish. Do I need to bring anything?

BUDDY (O.S.)
Just your cute little butt. I'll leave
the key out for you.

Guy is stunned. Starts hyperventilating Slams down the
receiver. Pissed. Heads for the door.

INT. DAWN'S KITCHEN

She's still on the phone.

DAWN
...and you're going to promote him.
Those are the terms. Guy's earned it.

BUDDY (O.S.)
He's still a bit soft. But fine. You have
my word.

CUT TO:

INT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

Guy sits, turned away from Buddy. Scared to meet his stare.
Buddy just smiles knowingly

BUDDY
So we're left with just one thing. The
only thing I know that drives men to
hurt. To want. This is about a girl
isn't it Guy? This is about Dawn.
(laughs appreciatively)
All this over a chick? You fool!

Guy jumps to his feet. Gun leveled.

GUY
You...you shut up.

Buddy smiles. He's totally pegged Guy and he knows it.
Shakes his head. Moves in for the kill.

BUDDY
Guy, you disappoint me. You got to start
thinking with your head and not your hips.

GUY
I gave you everything. But you weren't
satisfied. You had to have her too.

Buddy CHORTLES.

BUDDY
Some gift. She's not that good.

Guy levels the gun at Buddy. Buddy doesn't flinch. Just
glares right back.

BUDDY
Come on. Grow up. You know as well as I
do that the bed is the best friend an
ambitious girl can have. Be a man. If
you're going to lose it every time some
bim decides to climb the social ladder,
you aren't going to make it.
(pauses, eyes never leaving
Guy)
Isn't that right, Dawn?

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL

Dawn as she walks in from the shadows behind Buddy. Shocked
at what she sees. Guy with a gun. A bloody Buddy. Wreckage
everywhere.

110
She hugs herself. Chilled. The wind begins to blow stronger...

Guy steps forward. Hurt. His worst fears come true.

BUDDY

Dawn, honey. So glad you showed up on time, darling, because...

(sing-song; in his best Desi Arnaz)

You got some 'splaining to do..

DAWN

What's going on Buddy? Guy, what are you doing here?

BUDDY

Now, don't you think that's a question you should be answering?

Dawn thinks a moment. Realizes. Shocked.

DAWN

Oh my God. Guy. It's not what you think.

BUDDY

Really. Now, tell us, what are we suppose to think? A young, eager d-girl comes up to the house of a top executive for a midnight rendezvous. She's right, Guy. It's not what you think. I can assure you...

(beat)

She's definitely not selling Girl Scout cookies.

DAWN

My God. What's happened?

BUDDY

Oh, stop. Stop with the stupid questions. What do you think happened? He's taken me hostage. Beaten me. Tortured me.

(pause; smiles)

And I think you're next, dear.

Dawn looks up at Guy. Finds herself facing a gun barrel.

DAWN
(soothing)
Guy, let's be reasonable. Put the gun down. Let's talk about this.

BUDDY
Talk? What do you think we've been doing all night? Dear, I don't think you fully appreciate the situation. After you get past 'Oops, he caught us' and realize that we are both fucked, let me know, huh?

DAWN
Shut up. I've got nothing to do with you.

BUDDY
Aw, I'm hurt. What happened to standing by your man, Dawn. Oh that's right...You don't stand by your men. You stand on them as you climb up to get to the next one's bed.

Dawn turns and BACKHANDS Buddy in the face with a punch that would do George Foreman proud. Buddy's grins. Licks his lips.

DAWN
You're an asshole.

BUDDY
Let me tell you a little something about Dawn. She used to be quite the little fuck towel, Guy. Fresh film school grad who fucked her way to a top assistant desk. Fucked her way to junior executive. Then fucked her way to V.P.
(beat)
It was quite a rise.

Dawn tries to protest, but Buddy SHOUTS her down.

BUDDY
But she stopped all that the day she finally got her producer deal. Been three years now. Trying to make 'important' films. Redeeming films. See, she started to worry about words like honor. Respect. Dignity. Words that a one-time two-bit tramp could never afford.

DAWN
Don't you judge me. Don't you dare judge me. You've already ruined my life. I'm not going to let you ruin his.

BUDDY

Fine, then go ahead. You tell him. Why are you here? Why are you here?

Dawn and Buddy continue to bicker. It's like a third-grade schoolyard fight. They are stopped by a GUNSHOT.

GUY

holds the smoking gun level.

GUY

Shut up! Both of you, shut up!

DAWN

Guy, stop! You're acting like a child. You're no better than he is.

GUY

Me? What about you? How long have you been...been...

(spits it out)

...fucking him!

BUDDY

A couple years now. Real good years.

Guy moves the gun back over to Buddy. Buddy shuts up.

DAWN

I know how this looks. But believe me. It's not what you think. I came here for you. For us.

GUY

You're here! For us?!!!

DAWN

Buddy's going to promote you. The movie is getting made...

Guy lowers the gun. Dawn kisses Guy gently on the cheek. Buddy sulks in the background. Disappointed.

DAWN

Everything you wanted. Everything you hoped for. It's happening. This is it. Your dream.

GUY

No. No it isn't. This is not the way it was supposed to work out. This is not what I wanted. I wanted this for you.

(MORE)

GUY (cont'd)

(pause)

I wanted this for us.

Guy trails off. Dawn is shattered. They stand there in silence. Buddy frowns.

BUDDY

Wait a second. You two love each other?
And that's the only reason that both of
you put up with my shit?

(pause)

Jesus, that's pathetic. That is the most
pathetic thing I've ever heard.

Guy marches over to Buddy. Ready to blow his brains out.

GUY

I told you to SHUT UP!!!

Dawn tugs at Guy. Throws herself between Buddy and Guy.

DAWN

No, Guy. This isn't the answer. Don't you
see. This is what he wants. Put the gun
down.

GUY

No way. He has to pay.

DAWN

Guy, don't! It isn't worth it.

BUDDY

Let him do it. Come on, Guy. You know
what you have to do. You have no choice.

DAWN

Don't, Guy. Don't you dare. Don't throw
away everything you've worked for.
Everything we've worked for.

BUDDY

Go on, boy. Take it. You know what you
have to do. It's yours and you know you
want it.

DAWN

We can fix it now, but if you don't put
the gun down...

BUDDY

If you don't take it, I got no sympathy
for you. You want to do it. You have to
do it.

DAWN
..we'll lose it all.

BUDDY
Do it.

DAWN
The whole year. It'll be for nothing.

BUDDY
Do it.

Guy trembles with indecision. Gun shaking. He looks at Dawn.
Then at Buddy.

Buddy turns to Dawn. Kicks her out of the way.

BUDDY
Why don't you stay out of this?

DAWN
What? I'm trying to save your life!

BUDDY
And I'm trying to give Guy his. Listen,
baby. He can't fuck his way through the
ranks nearly as well as you can. He's
gotta fight and kick and scratch his way
there. He doesn't have a choice. You have
nothing to contribute to this. Stay out!

Dawn stands there in disbelief. Speechless. Changes her mind.

DAWN
Go ahead and shoot, Guy.

Guy calms. Levels the gun at Buddy. Buddy smiles.

Dawn slowly sits down. Suddenly very tired. She rubs her
eyes. SIGHS.

DAWN
Stupid dumb male macho bullshit. Some
things never change.

BUDDY
Yabba-dabba-doo! All right, Guy. Let's
finish it. Give it to me. Show me what
you're made of, boy. Show me what you've
learned.

DAWN

(sotto)

I should have known better. Men. Crazy.
All of them.

BUDDY

Don't let me down, son. You have to do
this. This is the only way you can hope
to survive. Because life is not a movie.
Everyone lies. Good guys lose. And love
does not conquer all.

(leans in)

So, let's do this thing. Finish it off.

GUY

looks nervous, but determined. Knows what he has to do.
Closes his eyes. Cocks the gun. Deep breath. Swallows.

DAWN

(sotto)

I don't care. I don't care.

GUY

(quietly; almost to himself)

I'm sorry.

BUDDY

(yelling)

DO IT! COME ON! DO IT NOW!

Guy FIRES. Once. Then twice. Dawn SCREAMS.

CUT TO BLACK!

EXT. WYOMING LANDSCAPE - DAY

Brilliant sunset. Purple mountain majesties. God's country.

C.U. GUY

As he admires the scenery.

CAMERA PANS across the majestic landscapes. Stops when...

A Phone RINGS. And RINGS. And RINGS.

A car horn BLARES. And BLARES.

CAMERA PULLS BACK SHARPLY to reveal that we've been looking at

A GIANT MARLBORO BILLBOARD ON SUNSET BLVD.

C.U. TRAFFIC LIGHT

Solid Green.

INT. GUY'S CAR

Guy stares wistfully at the billboard from a new black BMW.

VOICE (O.S.)

Light's green, asshole.

Guy snaps out of his daze. Looks around. His car phone continues to RING. Guy makes a left. Grabs the phone as he descends into the city below.

CUT TO BLACK:

SUPERIMPOSE CARD - "day one"

EXT. MEGA-PICTURES PARKING LOT

Guy's car drives in through the grand entrance gates. First one there. He rolls in. Parks in Dawn's spot.

INT. MEGA-PICTURES OUTER OFFICES - EARLY MORNING

A green EXIT sign FLICKERS in the deserted hallway, then BURNS OUT. The door opens. Guy steps in. Dressed for success. Pauses. Looks both ways for any sign of life. A new day.

INT. HALLWAY

Guy comes walking...no, gliding down the hallway. But before he reaches his usual desk he makes a sharp right. Enters...

INT. GUY'S NEW OFFICE

Fairly small, but it's all his. Soft, hazy morning light streams in through the blinds. Backlights Guy so he seems to glow. Angelic. It's nice. Peaceful.

Guy sets his briefcase down. Office is cramped with flowers and balloons that read CONGRATULATIONS. Guy pulls out a note from one of the flower arrangements.

JACK

KNOCKS. Pokes his head in. Greets Guy warmly.

JACK

Hey, hey. Look who's the new big man on campus!

GUY

Jack! Come on in. Sit down.

Jack steps in apprehensively. Whistles admiringly. Sits.

JACK

What? You got to be the youngest exec they've ever had. Guess it pays to know the new President of Production.

GUY

Yeah, well...

JACK

Hey, you deserve it, man. After you saved Buddy from that crazy chick.

GUY

It was nothing.

JACK

Nothing! Shit. This jilted lover holds Buddy hostage. Beats him. Tortures him. And then you come riding in, save the day. Above and beyond the call of duty.

GUY

I was just delivering some scripts. Happened to be there.

JACK

You pulled the trigger on her, man. You were a hero. You deserve this.

(leans in)

So, you must have gotten other offers, right? They must have been sweet.

GUY

Yeah, but Buddy made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

JACK

That juicy, huh? Hey, do you think you could put a good word in for me? I mean, my year's almost done here.

Guy leans back. Lights a cigarette. CAMERA BEGINS PUSHING IN for a C.U.

GUY

Let me tell you something, Jack. Everyone will want to give you the same advice. Tell you that you have to pay

(MORE)

GUY (cont'd)
your dues. Ask you to do them a favor.
Do this 'for us'.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUDDY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Wind HOWLS. Palm trees buckle under the gale. Storm clouds moving in. A tempest. RED LIGHTS from an ambulance and police cars spin around and around.

CAMERA MOVES IN ON

Guy stands near a police car, tightly clutching the collar of his jacket against the wind.

INT. GUY'S OFFICE

CAMERA keeps pushing in on Guy. Moves over Jack's shoulder.

GUY
They all want you to play by the rules.
Their rules. Leave that candy-striped
crap for the Wall Street wimps.

EXT. BUDDY'S HOUSE

Guy answers some questions for the police. Over the cop's shoulder...

GUY (V.O.)
Because this town's a jungle. This is
your inner city. Your mean streets.

...two attendants wheel out a BLACK BODY BAG. They load it onto the back of an ambulance. CAMERA pushes in on Guy.

GUY (V.O.)
And the only interests you need to
protect are yours. The only needs you
have to serve are yours. What they will
not give to you have to take.

INT. GUY'S OFFICE

FULL C.U. of GUY.

GUY
So the only question you need to answer
is... and think hard about this...
(stubs out his cigarette)
What do you want?

Guy looks up. Exhales smoke. Studies himself in the mirror. After a moment, finally notices...

BUDDY

stands, framed in Guy's doorway. Sharply dressed with cane and a bald pate. And a smirk of victory in his eye. CAMERA pushes in from a low angle until he fills the frame. Imposing.

CAMERA ON GUY

pulls back sharply. Back...back..back...until Guy is merely a speck of dust we see over Buddy's shoulder.

Buddy doesn't say a word. Merely limps away.

Guy gets up. Picks up a pen and pad. Follows Buddy.

Jack says something, but we can't hear him because the...

The PHONE RINGS. The MUSIC SWELLS.

OUT IN THE HALLWAY

IN DREAMY SLOW MOTION

The floor is slowly coming alive with activity and craziness. The coffee-maker SIZZLES. Executives, now also with bald pate, greet talent with hugs and kisses. A FRESH-FACED ASSISTANT runs up and down the halls with papers flying.

In the background, a teenage RED-HEAD IN A LEATHER MINISKIRT AND HI-TOPS asks someone for directions. Starts to walk down the hall towards us.

C.U. on GUY

as he stands there. Taking it all in. Awash in regret.

JACK (O.S.)
So how about it Guy?

Guy snaps out of it. Turns to face Jack.

JACK
Let's grab dinner tonight.

GUY
Love to, but I got to work late. I have to...
(pause)
...wrap some Christmas gifts.

Guy stops at his assistant's desk. Picks up a bottle of Rogaine. Frowns. Then attacks.

GUY

Listen. You can't just leave this stuff lying around. Are you crazy? Help me, don't hurt me. Get me some coffee. With Sweet and Low.

The ASSISTANT scurries off. Guy watches him go.

Then heads towards Buddy's office. Pad and pen in hand. Obedient.

And the phone RINGS. And RINGS....

FADE TO BLACK: