

THE SUPER

by Sam Simon

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK - DAY

ROLL CREDITS over as we see LOUIE KRITSKI JR. emerge from a building on Madison Avenue with a sign on it saying Kritski Management. Kritski is a hyperactive spritzer, nervous, quick, jumpy; everything he does seems speeded-up.

Parked in front of the building in a No Parking space is a RED CORVETTE. Louie gets into it, starts the car, pulls into traffic and starts zipping uptown in Manhattan. Maybe an aerial shot, maybe not, as we see the Corvette change lanes, jump lights, and just barely miss pedestrians as it travels uptown, past the cushy streets of midtown Manhattan -- past stores like the Caviarateria, past double-parked limousines, past plantings of tulips, past Fred Leighton's antique jewelry store and Giorgio Armani, etc. -- to Harlem --

AND CONTINUE ON THE RED CORVETTE IN HARLEM

As it continues to zip around corners through this predominantly Black section of New York City. Maybe things like:

A) Graffiti. Graffiti everywhere: on the buildings, on the posters, on the vans, on the street.

B) Playground basketball. Style is just as important as winning, and professional players sometimes have trouble holding their own.

C) Shopping on 116th Street, Spanish Harlem's busiest location, with outdoor Spanish markets full of banana stalks and plantains.

D) A drug deal casually going down on Eighth Avenue between a young white Wall Street type and a black dealer. Some cops watch but don't do anything.

E) Three-card monte players on 135th Street, surrounded by small crowds of onlookers.

F) Shopping on 125th Street. Bargain stores on the street with guards sitting on top of ladders and holding clubs to guard against shoplifters at the outdoor bins. The Apollo Theater, as well as boarded-up bars and nightclubs, neon pianos in the window, the Lumumba Social Club, etc.

G) Young boys practicing Break-dancing, choreographing their routines as a ghetto blaster booms out music. Nearby, girls practice double-Dutch jumprope with incredible speed, precision and creativity.

H) An old man scaling fish on the sidewalk beside a poster advertising the next day's Mystic Knights of the Sea picnic.

I) Stoops of various apartment buildings. Social gathering spots. Above the stoops we see the fire escapes of Harlem, crowded with plants, stuffed animals, artistic sculptures made of soda cans, mops, pails, milk containers, basins, broken toys, bedsprings -- these are the extra closets of the community.

J) Assorted automobiles on the same block. They range from flashy Cadillacs to junkheaps up on blocks.

K) A Soul food restaurant. A sign in the window says they accept food stamps.

We END TITLES over:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A building on 151st Street. This is a run-down crummy neighborhood, so it's an impressive feat that this building is noticeably crummier and more run-down than its neighbors.

There's graffiti all over it. The front door has no lock. Two of the first-floor windows are boarded over. The place hasn't been painted in years. But once -- once upon a time -- this was a nice building.

The Red Corvette pulls up in front of it.

INT. CORVETTE - DAY

Louie turns off the ignition. Then he removes the radio and tape deck, the phone, the tachometer, and the anti-radar device. He takes a sign from the glove compartment which reads:

Radio
Tape
Phone
Tac
Radar

THEY ALREADY TOOK IT!!!

He hangs the sign on the dashboard. He gives a little flick to a blue plastic New York Mets hat that hangs from the rear-view mirror. Then, holding the equipment, he gets out of the car, zaps the remote control for the car alarm, zaps the remote control for the alarm for the car alarm, and zaps a third car alarm. These alarms all make a slightly different beep sound on the alarm music scale, and these are sounds we want to hear now and then throughout the next sequence (and maybe echoed melodically in the soundtrack).

Louie starts toward the building, and as he does, MARLON GREEN comes out of the building. Marlon is black and in his late twenties. He's wearing cut-off blue jeans, a tank top and Nike Air Jordan hightop basketball shoes. He's holding a 10-speed bicycle with only a back wheel. He spots Louie and immediately takes off running down the street in the opposite direction.

LOUIE

(shouting after him)

Listen to me, Marlon, I get the rent today or everything in your apartment goes out the window, everything, including all those stolen bicycles, you hear me? --

Louie goes up the stoop into the building.

INT. BUILDING - DAY

Louie goes through the door, which has a hole where the lock should be. It's dark in the vestibule. Many of the tiles on the floor are cracked or missing. The walls are stained from leaky plumbing. Behind the stairs is a little one-room office that's a wiremesh cage and Louie takes out a jingling bunch of keys and unlocks one padlock and then another and then another. He throws his car equipment into the cage and locks one lock and then another and then another.

Then he gleefully rubs his hands together and starts up the stairs to:

INT. BUILDING - THIRD FLOOR

Waiting for him on the third-floor landing are a black family -- TYRONE WILLIAMS, his pregnant wife ANNETTE, and their two crying children PLATINUM and CHUTNEY. They are surrounded with dilapidated suitcases tied together with rope.

LOUIE

I'm here, I'm here, knock it off, I'm here already, what is with this kid? Shut up, kid, this is a quiet building --

From the street we hear the sound of a woman screaming, and a car backfiring -- well, maybe it's a car backfiring. The children cry even louder as Louie fumbles with his keyring --

TYRONE

Shhhh, Platinum, Chutney, it's okay, it's going to be okay --

LOUIE

What kinds of names are these, where do you get these names? Chutney is not a name, it's a condiment --

(continued)

Louie opens the door right next to the apartment the Williamses thought they were moving into. They turn toward it --

LOUIE
(continued, handing him the keys)
Rent's due in my box downstairs on the first --

TYRONE
Mr. Kritski, I did not rent this apartment. I rented the apartment next to it --

LOUIE
No, not this exact apartment, but what's the difference?

TYRONE
(looking around)
The other apartment was bigger... and it had more windows ... and a bathtub ...

LOUIE
Windows? You want windows?
(he's outraged)
Are you crazy? Burglars come in the windows! You got a wife, you got kids, you do not want windows, windows are an invitation, Mr. Williams, forget them, you look out a window in this neighborhood, people use you for target practice --

We see the apartment's dirty, curling paint.

TYRONE
And you said you would paint my apartment --

LOUIE
No. I said I'd paint the apartment next door. And I did, too.

CUT TO:

A HAND STAMPING A DOCUMENT

And as it comes up from the document we see A COMPLAINT FORM at the Department of Rent Stabilization against Louis Kritski Jr. of Kritski Management for failure to provide services on commencement of lease.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING - NIGHT

THE RED CORVETTE PULLS UP IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING AGAIN AND WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THE ALARM BEEPS AND

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING - NIGHT

This is the apartment of a 40-year-old black woman, ELEANOR HIGGENBOTHAM. Eleven-year-old TITO HIGGENBOTHAM is studying by candlelight at a dining table. A few other candles provide the only other light in the room.

Louie is there with a toolbox. He's in the midst of an argument with Eleanor.

LOUIE

I can't help it if workmen don't show up. Nobody wants to come to this neighborhood, it's not my fault. You want your electricity fixed, move. Check into the Plaza.

ELEANOR

Mr. Kritski, look at my boy. How's he supposed to do his schoolwork like that?

LOUIE

Lincoln did.

AND CUT TO:

ANOTHER DOCUMENT BEING STAMPED

This one's about no electricity in the building.

CUT TO:

The screech of tires as the Corvette comes around the corner and we see a tight shot of the car-alarm zapper and hear those three alarm sounds.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING - DAY

A freezing cold day. We're in the apartment of EMMETT GOODE and CLARENCE STUBBS, both black men in their sixties who are roommates. The two men are freezing to death in coats and blankets. We see a fish tank, frozen solid, with frozen solid fish in it. Louie is talking to Goode and Stubbs.

LOUIE

Look, this is March. I don't want to get into this now, but it happens to be ecologically sound not to use heat this time of year, it's bad for the ozone layer --
(continued)

Louie goes out into the hallway, where there are several other tenants in overcoats waiting, along with a white woman in her late thirties whose name is NAOMI BENSINGER. She's dark and attractive, although not necessarily conventionally. Louie sees her.

LOUIE

(continued, to tenants)
And meanwhile, get a jacket.

NAOMI

Mr. Kritski, I am Naomi Bensinger, I'm the City Council member for this district --

Louie starts downstairs.

LOUIE

White women can't stay away from me, I don't know what it is, they must know --

NAOMI

(shouting after him)
Mr. Kritski, this is unconscionable --

CUT TO:

ANOTHER COMPLAINT being stamped, this one for heating violations.

EXT. LOUIE'S BUILDING - A DIFFERENT DAY

A DOZEN BUILDING TENANTS are standing in the vestibule as the MAILMAN puts the mail into their mailboxes. These are welfare checks, and everyone is standing there to get their checks so they don't get stolen.

We hear the cheerful sound of Louie's alarm beeper, followed by Louie himself.

LOUIE

We all get paid today, the Welfare Department pays you, you pay me, everybody's happy.
(MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 (like an emcee in a
 nightclub)
 Is everybody happy?

Louie stops at his mailbox and unlocks it.

At that moment the door to the building opens from inside and we see Marlon Green, in his cutoffs and tank top.

LOUIE
 Marlon!

Marlon bolts through the crowd straight out the door.

EXT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

As Louie opens the door, sticks his head out.

LOUIE
 (shouting after him)
 Marlon, you pay your rent on time
 this month or I'm having you
 evicted --

INT. BUILDING VESTIBULE - CONTINUOUS

Barely missing a beat, Louie goes back to removing the mail from his mailbox. There are a dozen envelopes from the New York City Department of Housing. All the tenants look at him as he sorts through them, tosses them into an old garbage can, shrugs. COLEMAN HOOKS, a black, former Vietnam veteran who wears rimless glasses, stops him.

COLEMAN
 You're not supposed to throw those
 away, those are violations, you're
 supposed to respond to them --

LOUIE
 These are not my violations,
 they're your violations. You know
 why? Because you put gates on
 your windows, which no one can
 open in case of a fire, and why
 are you putting these gates on
 your windows, who are you
 protecting yourself against? I'm
 not burglarizing you. You wanna
 know who's burglarizing you? Your
 own grandchildren, that's who,
 that's who's stealing things, you
 think I don't know what's going
 on? 4F is stealing from 6F. 2C
 is stealing from 4G.

(MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 (pointing to one of the
 tenants)
 Your radio is upstairs in 5H and
 your hifi --
 (pointing to another)
 is downstairs in 2B. You're
 burglarizing each other's
 grandmothers. You think I don't
 know where you got that video
 camera? Where'd you get that
 video camera? Tell me. Come on.

He's talking to one of the tenants, DAVIS GORDON, a 20-year-old black kid in a baseball hat, black jacket and scarf (he's a Spike Lee clone) who's taking pictures of all this with a JVC Camcorder.

DAVIS
 NYU Film School.

Louie laughs wildly.

AND NOW JUST THE SOUND OF THE DOCUMENT BEING STAMPED AND THE
 SOUND OF THE CAR ALARM BEING TURNED ON AS WE:

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Louie is sitting in his cubicle in the offices of Kritski Properties talking to a SECRETARY who apparently has a phone call for him from one of his tenants.

LOUIE
 Tell them I have chicken pox.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - ANOTHER DAY

Same situation.

LOUIE
 Tell him I'm indisposed.

CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - ANOTHER DAY

Same situation.

LOUIE
 Tell them my grandmother died.

He cracks himself up.

INT. BUILDING - ANOTHER DAY

Louie standing out in the hallway with LINDA and PEDRO DIAZ, Hispanic tenants who are apparently complaining about the hinge on their door.

LOUIE

Of course this happens. Whadda you expect? All day long, whadda you do? You go in and out, in and out. Let me explain this to you, you're supposed to go in, you're supposed to stay in, you're not supposed to go in and out, in and out. I watch you. I know what you do all day long. You need milk, you go out, you buy one milk. Then you need eggs. You go out. You buy eggs two at a time. Twelve at a time is how you're supposed to buy eggs. A dozen. You ever hear of this word -- a dozen? Why don't you do this? Why don't you keep things in the refrigerator?

PEDRO

(in a Hispanic accent)
It's broken, Mr. Kritski.

LOUIE

(smacking himself in the head)
It worked before you broke it.

The Diazes look at him uncomprehendingly. Louie takes out his Sharper Image pocket translator and types into it.

LOUIE

It ... worked ... before ... you
... broke ... it.

POCKET TRANSLATOR

(in Spanish)
It worked before you broke it.

LOUIE

(referring to the pocket translator)
Isn't that great!

AND ANOTHER CUT/DOCUMENT BEING STAMPED/CAR ALARM OR MAYBE ANOTHER SHOT OF LOUIE DRIVING UP, MIX THESE UP HOWEVER IT WORKS AND THEN CUT TO:

INT. LOUIE'S BUILDING - DAY

The apartment of LEOTHA TURNER, a big black woman in her fifties. She is having Louie examine the inside of the cabinet beneath her kitchen sink.

LEOTHA

You know what kind of droppings those are?

LOUIE

Moose droppings.

LEOTHA

Those are rat droppings, Kritski.

LOUIE

Really? You're good at this.

LEOTHA

You going to call an exterminator?

LOUIE

This neighborhood's crawling with rats. Even if I could get rid of them, they'd be back in a week.

LEOTHA

You just gonna sit by and watch rats take over your building?

LOUIE

Hundreds of millions of years ago those little rodents ruled the world. Now I ask you, who's taking over who?

AND ANOTHER CUT/ALARM/DOCUMENT/CORVETTE/ETC. TO:

INT. STAIRWELL OF BUILDING - DAY

Louie is talking to Coleman Hooks, the Vietnam vet. They are discussing a step on the staircase.

COLEMAN

I'm not going to judge you, or argue with you. I honestly want nothing more than to better understand you. Why do you refuse to perform even the most routine maintenance on your own building?

LOUIE

What you're asking for is a lesson in economics.

COLEMAN

All right...

LOUIE

Fine. Let's examine the case of this perfectly good, albeit slightly loose step. What possible incentive do I have to fix it? Would I find a little extra something kicked in with everyone's rent next month if I did? No. Would I lose money if I didn't fix it? No. As a matter of fact, thanks to rent control, I might make money. Because if someone moved out because of this step, I could raise the rent on their apartment.

COLEMAN

Uh huh ...

LOUIE

So we're left with the ridiculous proposition that I might feel better about myself if I fixed it. I don't think I need to elaborate on that.

COLEMAN

No.

LOUIE

When you choose to live here you choose to live with some of the minor drawbacks of living in a seventy-year-old building in one of the shittiest neighborhoods in America. Minor drawbacks such as this loose step. A seventy-year-old step is entitled to be slightly loose. But is it a hazard? No! It's a perfectly good slightly loose step! I walk up and down this step all the time!

(continued)

To demonstrate, Louie starts going up and down on the step, up and down, up and down, faster and faster.

LOUIE

(continued)

See? There's nothing wrong with this step! Nothing!

The riser and step CRUMBLE, sending Louie tumbling down the flight of stairs.

LOUIE

A-a-a-agh!

He lands on the landing, unhurt but mortified.

COLEMAN

I was buying the argument, Louie.
I swear I was. But it kind of
petered out there at the end.

Coleman turns and goes upstairs.

EXT. LOUIE'S BUILDING - DAY

Limping slightly, Louie emerges from the building carrying his car radio, etc. He checks his mailbox. There are a half-dozen more letters from the New York City Housing Division. Once again, Louie tosses them unopened into a trash can and disarms his Corvette's burglar alarm with three BEEPS, gets in and drives off.

EXT. LOUIE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

This is the home of IRENE and LOUIS (BIG LOU) KRITSKI SR. in Great Neck. It looks like Tara. Louie's Corvette is parked in the driveway. So is his Dad's Cadillac.

INT. LOUIE'S PARENTS' HOME - NIGHT

Louie's parents have a lot of money, and while their taste is not impeccable, the house has obviously been decorated professionally.

Louie and BIG LOU are seated at the dining room table. IRENE is serving them a guylas made with sausage and sauerkraut.

IRENE

(to Louie)

Here you go, darling. Your favorite.

LOUIE

Mmmmm. I thought this was for special occasions.

IRENE

Well, I'm sorry to say that it's reached the point that just having you over for dinner is a special occasion.

Big Lou digs into his guylas.

LOUIE

What are you talking about?
Because of last week? Last week
was the first Friday night dinner
I've missed in the past five
years.

IRENE

No, honey. It was your third.
(heading back to kitchen)
But really, go ahead, enjoy your
food. Don't wait for me.

She exits.

BIG LOU

(mouth full)
Did we ever wait for her?

LOUIE

(shouting)
Mom, I told you. My girlfriend's
sister was getting married. I had
to go to that.

IRENE (O.S.)

(shouting)
I only hope no one got any ideas.

BIG LOU

(shouting)
He's not going to marry the
girlfriend.

IRENE (O.S.)

(shouting)
From your lips...

BIG LOU

(to Louie)
Your mother. I keep telling her.
Just because you're banging some
teenager who believes in rocks --

LOUIE

Crystals --

BIG LOU

-- doesn't mean you're going to
marry her.

Louie continues eating.

BIG LOU

... I'm right, aren't I?

LOUIE
 (more concerned with his
 food)

Yeah.

BIG LOU
 (raising his voice again)
 Then say something. Don't leave
 me hanging like that. Jesus.

IRENE
 (shouting)
 It's a beautiful thing to see us
 all sitting at the table again
 like a family.

EXT. LOUIE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Big Lou has walked Louie to his car.

BIG LOU
 Stop it. You got nothing to worry
 about.

LOUIE
 No, wait. I'm talking about a lot
 of violations. Not just from the
 Buildings Department either. From
 Housing Maintenance, Community
 Renewal --

BIG LOU
 Listen to me. You know how many
 violations get filed a year in
 this city? Two million. You know
 how many clerks they have to
 process them? Three. Nothing
 happens. I know this. You think
 I don't get complaints in the
 other buildings?

LOUIE
 Not this many.

BIG LOU
 I keep telling you, you learn to
 run this building, you can run any
 building. You run this building,
 I'll give you the Park Avenue
 building, I'll give you 57th
 Street. But don't kid yourself,
 they bust your nuts wherever you
 are. I had to put in cuts in the
 curb for the wheelchairs, you know
 this? So what happens? It killed
 (MORE)

BIG LOU (CONT'D)
 six blind people. Six blind people didn't know there was no curb, they go right into the street, into the trucks, bam, they're dead, their canes are broken into toothpicks. So now I got the blind people picketing my office, they want me to put back the curb.

(continued)

Louie nods disconsolately.

BIG LOU
 (continued)

Son, please. The reason you and I own and operate buildings in New York City is that it's the biggest, steaming, out-of-control pisspot in the history of man. It's a city where drug pushers can open up shops with window displays and there are so many murders every day that the Post gets to pick which one will make the most disgusting headline. Nobody gives a shit about a few whiney kookaboos.

Big Lou gives Louie a paternal pat on the back.

LOUIE
 I love you.

BIG LOU
 I love you.

They hug each other.

Louie gets into his Corvette.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

JUDGE BERNARD SMITH, a black man in his fifties, pounds his gavel.

JUDGE SMITH
 The State of New York finds the defendant, Louis Kritski, guilty on all counts of violations of Sections 1606, 1408 --

There are cheers and applause from many of Louie's TENANTS who are attending the trial. Louie himself reacts with total nonchalance. He turns and looks at his Big Lou, who shrugs - - he's equally nonchalant.

Louie's attorney -- RON NESSIM -- a balding contemporary of Louie's, appears disappointed at the verdict.

JUDGE SMITH
 (pounding gavel)
 Order, please. Sections 1606,
 1408, 1409, 10-402 B,C,F and G of
 the Municipal Health and Safety
 Code. I'm going to release you on
 your own recognizance until a week
 from today. At that time you will
 report to this court for
 sentencing. Court is adjourned.

Everyone starts to file out of the courtroom. Louie and Ron remain seated.

RON
 Gee, I'm sorry.

LOUIE
 You're sorry?
 (he turns to his father)
 He's sorry. Isn't that great?
 He's sorry.

BIG LOU
 (to Ron)
 Dickhead.
 (to Louie)
 Don't worry about it, I'll take
 care of this.

Coleman and the tenants are passing by, on their way to congratulate their attorney, who happens to be Naomi Bensinger, the City Councilwoman we saw in the freezing cold apartment. The tenants shake her hand, embrace her as she stuffs the court papers into her briefcase (which is quite messy) and fumbles with her glasses. She looks over at Louie for a moment, and as their eyes meet, he PUCKERS HIS LIPS AND MAKES KISSING NOISES at her. She shakes her head disbelieving, turns and starts to walk out of the courtroom.

LOUIE
 (punching Ron in the arm)
 She's nuts about me. Look at the way she walks away from me. It's like every inch of her wants to be with me. I'm what she needs. This courtroom stuff is bullshit.

RON
 I don't like her.

LOUIE

I don't blame you. For the past week she's made you look like a baboon.

(then)

Do you think I'm going to jail?

RON

I don't know. It's possible, but a lot of other things are possible, too.

LOUIE

Like what? What do you think I'll get?

RON

I can't give you an answer. I'm not the Judge.

Ron gets up and starts out. Louie follows.

LOUIE

Do you think I think you're the judge? You're my lawyer, and ever since this thing began I've asked you about a million times what kind of sentence you think I'll get and you always say, "Now's not the time to worry about that." So I didn't worry. I know you. I know you 20 years. You're my best friend. Last year you're the lawyer for some mob gibone who killed his own son and buried him in the entry ramp to the 59th Street Bridge, him you get off, me you get convicted. So at the very least, I would like your opinion about what's going to happen to me.

Louie and Ron have made their way to the courtroom corridor, where Big Lou is waiting for them.

About 50 feet away, down the hall, a TV News crew is shooting an interview with Naomi Bensinger, who is talking about her campaign against slumlords. Perhaps she's saying that she intends to ask for a jail sentence for Louie.

BIG LOU

Don't worry, Son. We're going to appeal. We're going to get a new trial. A white judge. And most important --

(MORE)

BIG LOU (CONT'D)
 (indicating Ron)
 we're going to drop him like a hot
 turd.

RON
 You're certainly welcome to
 appeal, but that's a decision to
 make after sentencing. As I've
 told you, Louie might get a slap
 on the wrist, a suspended
 sentence.

Louie looks startled -- mostly by the fact that Ron has
 actually said something concrete. The three of them start
 down the hall on their way out of the courthouse.

BIG LOU
 Really? You think that's what
 he'll get?

RON
 I didn't say that.

LOUIE
 Oh no, of course not. God forbid.
 (almost shouting)
 Say something!

BIG LOU
 What do you think he'll get?

LOUIE
 Forget it, Dad.

RON
 I'd only be guessing.

BIG LOU
 So? Take a guess.

RON
 It's pointless.

They leave the courthouse through the revolving door and we
 follow them to:

EXT. CENTRE STREET - CONTINUOUS

LOUIE
 Take his word for it, it's
 pointless --

BIG LOU
 You must have some idea.

RON
No, I --

LOUIE
How about the chair? You think
I'll get the chair?

RON
No.

LOUIE
(slaps Ron on the back far
too hard)
Great! Great!

BIG LOU
Forgive me for not being relieved,
but he's been wrong about
everything else so far. Let's go.

INT. LOUIE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

LOUIE, BIG LOU, IRENE and HEATHER, a girl barely out of her
teens with long straight blonde hair she constantly flips
back and forth as she talks are eating at the dining room
table.

IRENE
(to Louie)
Please, darling, eat something.

LOUIE
I'm not hungry. There's something
about knowing that in a few days
I'm going to be gang-raped in my
cell that spoils my appetite.

HEATHER
You think they'll really do that?

LOUIE
They gang-rape everyone, Heather,
it's like the Welcome Wagon.

HEATHER
Bummer.

BIG LOU
Enough gang-rape talk. You're not
going to jail.

LOUIE
Says who?

IRENE

Says your father. You remember him. He's the one who talked you into taking over that building, and taught you how to run it, and told you that you could ignore all those citations, and that no court on earth would ever convict you. Now he says you won't go to jail. Feel better?

BIG LOU

You think I don't feel bad about this? I feel terrible. That's why I'm paying for his lawyer. I'll pay any fine he gets. I'll pay for the best lawyer in the world if he appeals.

IRENE

Will you pay someone to go to prison for him?

HEATHER

Can you do that?

LOUIE

No.

BIG LOU

(to Irene)

Whose side are you on anyway?

IRENE

How many sides are there?

BIG LOU

There are two sides. On one side is your husband, your only child, and right. On the other side is an idiot judge, a sex-starved lawyeress, and some good-for-nothing bongoes --

IRENE

And me.

BIG LOU

This is pointless. Believe me, you have no idea what you're talking about.

IRENE

I know what no heat is, and no hot water, and cockroaches and rats and broken windows and toilets that back up filth all over someone's apartment.

BIG LOU
Gang-raping and toilets backing up
filth.

(pushing away plate)
Nice. Are you enjoying your
dinner, Heather?

HEATHER
No. But it's not because
everything isn't delicious, Mrs.
Kritski. It's because of all the
screaming.

IRENE
And I also know that people
deserve better than that and that
I was ashamed reading about the
two of you and watching that nice
lady in court Miss Bensinger call
you one of the five worst human
beings in the city of New York.
Your food is getting cold.

She exits, then comes back in.

IRENE
(continued)
Her you should be dating. Miss
Bensinger. Then you wouldn't be
in this pickle. Nothing personal,
Heather.

Irene exits again.

BIG LOU
(to Louie)
This whole thing is going to be a
strain on our relationship.

LOUIE
Gee, I wish I'd known.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

We're in Louie's bedroom.

We HEAR WAVES CRASHING on the beach. Louie and Heather are
in bed. Heather is fast asleep. Louie's eyes are wide open,
he's clearly been tossing and turning all night. When the
digital display on his proton clock radio hits 6:45 a.m., the
subtle chirping alarm sounds. Louie shuts off the alarm.

He gets out of bed and crosses in his boxer shorts to the
source of the surf noises, and SOUND-X ENVIRONMENTAL SOUND
MACHINE. He shuts that off too, and we hear the sound of New
York traffic suddenly. Louie exits into the bathroom.

INT. LOUIE'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

This is the living room of a young man dedicated to creature comforts and consumerism. The furniture is big and comfortable. He's got a JVC component television, state-of-the art VCR and stereo system.

Now in running shorts and socks. Louie enters and goes to an AMF Benchmark electronic rowing machine (or stationery bicycle, take your pick) and begins to row (or bike). There's a remote control for the television set and he clicks it on while doing his exercises. What he sees, immediately, is:

A PRISON MOVIE. Like Brute Force with Burt Lancaster. A riot is beginning and everyone is starting to bang their cups on the cafeteria tables.

Louie clicks the channel changer. It changes to:

ANOTHER PRISON MOVIE. Like White Heat with Jimmy Cagney. Jimmy Cagney is being totally maniacal.

Louie clicks the channel changer. It changes to:

ANOTHER PRISON MOVIE. And continue clicking, through Papillon, Straight Time, Mrs. Soffel, Brubaker, with a fast bit of every single cliché of prison films -- food riots, sadistic wardens, solitary confinement, unbearable noise, etc.

Finally Louie clicks the channel changer one last time to:

GERALDO RIVERA. Louie breathes a sign of relief. It's only Geraldo.

GERALDO

Today on Geraldo: Battered
Inmates.

INT. LOUIE'S BEDROOM

Louie, fully dressed, finishes tying the knot on his tie. Heather is still in bed, half asleep.

LOUIE

I've got to go. Lock up when you
go home.

HEATHER

(not looking up)
Okay.

LOUIE

Want to wish me luck?

HEATHER

What?

LOUIE

Do you want to wish me luck?

HEATHER

...Oh. Today's your sentencing.

LOUIE

Aw. You remembered.

HEATHER

I'm sorry. It's early. Louie, I want you to take this with you.

She gets her satchel, which is next to the bed, and takes out a bag with some crystals in it. She solemnly presses one of them into Louie's hand.

LOUIE

I can't accept this. It must be worthy at least fifty cents.

HEATHER

Call me, okay?

LOUIE

Sure.

INT. COURTROOM -DAY

Louie, Big Lou, Ron and the peanut gallery of Louie's tenants are there.

Naomi Bensinger is addressing Judge Smith. As she does, Louie provides side comments to Ron.

NAOMI

Louis Kritski is being sentenced for his violations on the one building he actually owns --
(continued)

LOUIE

(to Ron)
She can't even look at me for fear of being overcome with lust --

NAOMI

(continued)
-- but may I remind you that unless an act of God occurs and his father is struck with the divine inspiration to cut him out of his will, Mr. Kritski will inherit a sizeable real estate empire --
(continued)

She looks over at him. We see Louie looking back, a flirtatious smile on his face --

LOUIE

(sotto voce, to Ron)
An hour with me would change her
life, and she knows it --
(he gives her a stupid wink)

NAOMI

(continuing, although
momentarily flustered)
If we give him the maximum
sentence, perhaps young Mr.
Kritski will learn a lesson his
father apparently failed to teach
him --
(continued)

LOUIE

(sotto voce, to Ron)
She's got eyes in the back of her
head and she can't take them off
me --

NAOMI

(continued)
-- that he cannot exploit the
people who live in his buildings,
he cannot continue to treat them
as indifferently as he treats the
insects and vermin that populate
his building. As Justice William
Douglas wrote,
(continued)

She looks through the messy stack of papers on the table in front of her, trying to put her hands on the quote from Justice Douglas.

NAOMI

(continued)
Where is it?
(continued)

LOUIE

Look how rattled she is just being
in the room with me --

NAOMI

(continued)
-- Here it is. "Miserable and
disreputable housing conditions
may do more than spread disease
and crime and immorality. They
(MORE)

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 may also suffocate the spirit by
 reducing the people who live there
 to the status of cattle. The
 misery of housing may despoil a
 community as an open sewer may
 ruin a river." Thank you, Your
 Honor.

She sits down.

JUDGE
 (to Ron)
 Counsel?

RON
 Your Honor, although my client has
 been found guilty of some
 violations, when one looks at the
 larger picture and the actual
 number of apartments involved, Mr.
 Kritski is in fact in substantial
 compliance of code. I also would
 like to stress that any time Mr.
 Kritski spends in prison is time
 lost in his quest to bring his
 building into complete compliance.
 Thank you.

He sits down.

LOUIE
 (whispering to Ron)
 That's it?

RON
 Yeah.

LOUIE
 She talks for like an hour and
 that's all I get? I don't believe
 it. You couldn't even find a
 quote about Mercy? There's got to
 be fifty million of them. Good
 work. Wonderful job. Thanks.

Judge Smith pounds his gavel and holds up some photographs.

JUDGE
 Throughout this trial the defense
 has attempted to portray Mr.
 Kritski's code violations as
 minor, but when I look at these
 photographs I don't see anything
 minor -- I see gross negligence
 (MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

and decay and threats to life. Mr. Kritski's disregard for the law is perhaps only exceeded by his obvious and total disregard for basic human notions of decency. Accordingly, I intend to impose sentence at this time.

RON

(aside to Louie)
Doesn't look good.

Louie glowers at Ron for this unnecessary understatement.

JUDGE

That sentence will be one year of incarceration in the County jail.

The tenants cheer. Louie buries his head in his hands.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Order. But I'm going to offer you an alternative. Unlike you, I am concerned about your tenants and their children. The threat of jail hasn't moved you to bring your building into compliance, but perhaps some empathy for your victims will. Therefore I am going to offer you the option of serving your sentence under house arrest in one of your own apartments.

Everyone, especially Louie, is surprised by this option.

LOUIE

Really.

JUDGE SMITH

(continuing)

You would remain under probation to this court and, while serving your year as the -- uh -- sort of live-in superintendent of the building, you will be expected to bring the building up to code. There will be periodic inspections throughout the year, and if at any time I feel you are not behaving in good faith, I will send you to jail. According to the probation report I ordered, Apartment 5C is vacant. If you choose this option, that will be your new address. Do you understand your options?

As Louie and Ron confer, one of Louie's tenants Emmett Goode turns to his roommate Clarence Stubbs.

GOODE
(to Stubbs)
I'd take jail.

STUBBS
(to Goode, agreeing)
Depends which jail.

RON
We understand the options, Your Honor.

JUDGE
Would you like a few moments to choose which option you will exercise?

Louie shakes his head vehemently to Ron.

RON
My client has elected to serve the sentence in his building under the terms outlined by the court.

The courtroom is BUZZING over this development. Another tenant, MANFORD GILLIAM, a black preacher/Bible salesman in his seventies, stands up. He's sitting next to another of Louie's tenants, Leotha Turner.

GILLIAM
Who so diggeth a pit will fall therein. And he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

LEOTHA TURNER
Shut up and sit down.

RON
Your Honor, would the court allow execution of sentence to begin tomorrow? Mr. Kritski needs some time to gather some personal items, pack.

JUDGE
All right. Mr. Kritski, if that building isn't up to code in a year, you go to jail. If you slip up once in the next year, you go to jail. Court is adjourned.

LOUIE
 (doesn't know what to think
 or say; then, finally:)
 This is great!

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Louie is on the phone. Big Lou and Ron standing nearby.

RON
 I can't believe you're this upset.

BIG LOU
 I've owned buildings in Harlem
 since before he was born. I know
 the black people. They place a
 completely different value on
 human life than we do. They kill
 people to rob a dollar or get even
 for the slightest insult. They
 kill people for fun. Until very
 recently, they killed people to
 eat them. There's no way my son
 lasts a year in that jungle.

Louie gets off the phone and crosses to the group, passing
 Davis Gordon, his young tenant with the Camcorder who takes
 Louie's picture as he passes. Louie in fact mugs a big smile
 and wave for Davis as he sings --

LOUIE
 (singing, cheerfully)
 "Drop me off in Harlem,
 Any place in Harlem,
 There's someone waiting there who
 makes
 It seem like heaven up in Harlem.
 I don't want your Dixie,
 You can keep your -- "

BIG LOU
 Will you stop acting like a moron.

Naomi Bensinger enters the hallway. She's coming past them
 on her way out of the courthouse.

LOUIE
 I just made a reservation at
 Elio's. I'm buying you all
 dinner. It's a victory party.
 Tonight. Eight o'clock.
 (notices Naomi)
 Miss Bensinger, sweetheart, dinner
 at eight, you can order anything
 on the menu, no looking at the
 prices like you have to do with
 those civil service guys, oh,
 (MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)

she's not responding, and I know why, those civil service guys don't pay for dinner, do they, you split the check, well that's all over now, sweetheart, no Dutch treat with Kritski, you can have anything you want. Anything. You can have the lobster --

(shouting after her)

Eight o'clock. Elio's.

(turning back to Big Lou and Ron, with his thumb and index finger together)

I'm this close.

EXT. ELIO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An Italian restaurant on Second Avenue with windows in front. Louie, Big Lou, Irene, Heather and Ron are having dinner at the table near the window.

INT. ELIO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Louie has a wine list. Heather is pointing to a selection. A waiter named MARCELLO is waiting for their order.

HEATHER

A bottle of that.

LOUIE

Heather, I don't know who taught you how to select wine, but many connoisseurs consider just picking the most expensive one on the list to be the easy way out.

HEATHER

It's not the most expensive and that's not the reason I want it. I want it because it has flowers on the bottle.

Louie nods his okay to the waiter.

MARCELLO

Right away.

He goes to get it.

LOUIE

You know, Ron, now that the trial's over, there's something I've really been wanting to ask you. Did you ever actually pass

(MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 the bar? I've been in your
 office. I don't remember seeing a
 diploma. Don't get me wrong. I'm
 sure you had some legal training.
 A semester or two.

BIG LOU
 I've got to hand it to you, son.
 If I was in your shoes, I couldn't
 be clowning around like this.

LOUIE
 What would you be doing?

BIG LOU
 Exactly what I am doing. I'm
 going to hire a top lawyer and
 appeal. I already made an
 appointment with Jack Griffith.

LOUIE
 I'm okay with this.

RON
 You've got nothing to lose, Louie.
 Jack Griffith's the best there is.
 And you might get your conviction
 thrown out.

LOUIE
 You think so?

BIG LOU
 Louie, please. Save your
 questions for an attorney who
 knows his ass from a hot rock.

MARCELLO
 Are you ready to hear tonight's
 specials?

LOUIE
 Shoot.

MARCELLO
 In addition to the menu, tonight
 we have as appetizer, calamari
 salad, sliced finocchio with
 mushrooms and shaved parmesan, a
 combination of fresh mushrooms
 from Italy sauteed in garlic and
 oil, the tuna carpaccio, avocado
 stuffed with shrimp --

Marcello continues reciting the night's specials, when
 suddenly:

A HUGE LIGHT GOES ON OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT AND WE SEE:

A TELEVISION NEWS CREW IS STANDING ON THE STREET OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT AND HAS JUST TURNED ON ITS LIGHTS.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

LANA LEWIS, a reporter for Channel 6, is broadcasting live from Second Avenue to a small mobile crew.

LANA LEWIS

They say that Nero fiddled while Rome burned, but Nero had nothing on Louis Kritski, the slumlord who just hours before beginning to serve a one-year jail term in his own hellhole of a building, is at this very moment dining in one of New York's poshest restaurants. We're here with Naomi Bensinger, the City Councilwoman who tried and convicted Kritski and in a moment --

Naomi walks into the restaurant as the broadcast continues.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

MARCELLO

For the special pasta tonight we have fusilli, with a sauce of fresh tomato and arugola --
(continued)

Marcello continues, absolutely undeterred, through the pasta specials, as Naomi comes into the restaurant and confronts Louie at the table.

LOUIE

(to Ron, on seeing Naomi)
I'm telling you, she can't stay away from me --

RON

Miss Bensinger, you have no right to hound this man --

MARCELLO

(as he continues)
Or if you prefer, we can do the risotto with clams --
(continued)

NAOMI

Counselor, may I remind you that Mr. Kritski was given the night to pack --

IRENE
Excuse me, are you in any way
related to Dr. Morris Bensinger?

NAOMI
(to Irene)
Yes.
(continuing)
But you aren't packing.
(continued)

IRENE
How?

MARCELLO
Or, if you prefer, we have
polenta, with Fontina cheese and
mushrooms --

NAOMI
He's my uncle.
(continuing, to Louie)
You aren't at home packing up all
your expensive possessions
purchased through the collected
cold misery of your victims.
(continued)

IRENE
He was my obstetrician --

NAOMI
(continued)
I know, Mrs. Kritski...
(continued)

IRENE
(overlapping)
If it wasn't for him, my Louie
would be just a mote in someone's
eye. Are you single?

MARCELLO
(continued)
And for the main course, tonight's
chicken is cooked with Balsamic
vinegar and pancetta --
(continued)

NAOMI
(continued)
No indeed. You are whooping it up
at a fancy restaurant.
(answering Irene's question)
Yes.

IRENE
I knew it!

LOUIE
I would hardly call this whooping
it up.

At this moment another WAITER POPS the cork off the champagne Louie ordered. The champagne bubbles over.

WAITER
Champagne?

EXT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

LANA LEWIS
It's too early to know whether the
condemned man will eat the
proverbial hearty meal, but we can
see already that he's starting
with champagne --

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

As Louie waves the waiter and the champagne off. Heather looks stricken as the champagne disappears into the restaurant.

NAOMI
My guess is that Judge Smith will
be very disappointed when I tell
him that you were out celebrating
tonight.

BIG LOU
My son was going to move tomorrow
morning.

NAOMI
He may even throw you in jail.

IRENE
(sotto voce, pointing to
Louie)
He's single too. This girl he's
with is nothing. When she was
born, he was already losing his
hair.

BIG LOU
Let's get out of here.

RON
I think that would be prudent.

MARCELLO

(continued)

And the veal chop is roasted with
rosemary and oregano and served on
a bed of escarole --

(continued)

RON

It might also be a good idea if
you moved in tonight.

LOUIE

How am I supposed do that? --

BIG LOU

He'll move in tonight.

Louie slaps some cash on the table as Marcello continues to
recite the main course specials.

They stand to go.

MARCELLO

For the fish, we have a bluefish
with capers, grilled swordfish
with peppers --

And he continues as the table empties and goes out the door
of the restaurant.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

A small crowd of curious locals has now assembled around the
TV crew.

LANA LEWIS

(into mike, addressing video
camera)

And here he is now, an urban
vampire having had his last meal
before moving into the slum he
owns.

(to Louie)

How do you feel about living in
the same filth and degradation as
your tenants?

LOUIE

No comment...No comment.

LANA LEWIS

How do you feel about living in a
stinking open sewer of a building?

LOUIE

No comment.

Louie gets into his Corvette and drives off.

LANA

(undaunted, into camera)
It's been said that a criminal
always returns to the scene of his
crime, and Louis Kritski is about
to do just that, as he drives off
in his expensive sports car to the
dungeonlike squalor of --

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Big Lou is helping Louie pack. Louie is in the bathroom.

LOUIE (O.S.)

I think we can fit in a stereo,
too.

BIG LOU

You're taking the TV and the
stereo?

LOUIE (O.S.)

Not the big one. A portable.

Louie enters from the bathroom carrying a DIMPLEX HEATED
TOWEL RACK and The Sharper Image catalogue. He throws the
catalogue into a suitcase.

BIG LOU

What the hell is that?

LOUIE

It warms my towels.

BIG LOU

Son. Do me a favor. I'm almost
certain that a person who can't
make do without his towel warmer
is a dead man in Harlem. So
please. Pretend like this is a
joke. Go back in the bathroom and
put that ridiculous thing away.
Please.

They start out the apartment door carrying Louie's things and
we follow them to:

INT. LOUIE'S HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

LOUIE

You're really overreacting, Dad.
Look at my tenants. I've got
women, old women, old men --

The elevator door opens and they get in.

BIG LOU

You've got that big guy you said was a Green Beret. Those guys are trained to kill you twenty-five different ways with every part of their body.

The elevator door closes on them.

INT. LOBBY OF LOUIE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

As the elevator door opens on the two of them.

BIG LOU

Plus I don't think there's a black woman in Harlem under eighty that couldn't take you.

EXT. VARIOUS NEW YORK STREETS - NIGHT

Some rock and roll song gets us uptown here, maybe a version of the song Louie was singing in the courtroom corridor, "Drop me off in Harlem." Louie in his Corvette drives toward Harlem followed by Big Lou in the Cadillac. Louie has stacked his stereo equipment on the passenger seat of his car.

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - NIGHT

Louie drives along, looking at the late-night Harlem street life. He starts to feel increasingly uneasy and vulnerable.

Stopped at an intersection, he takes off his jacket and drapes it over the stereo, hiding it.

EXT. LOUIE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Music continues.

Louie and Big Lou have parked their cars next to each other and each of them activates his car alarms -- so there are at least six beeps instead of the usual three. Big Lou also has a car alarm that speaks. Big Lou is next to his car, trying to assemble the suitcases and bags.

CAR ALARM

"You are standing too close to the car. You are standing too close to the car."

BIG LOU

(to his car alarm)

Schmuck, its me. I'm moving as fast as I can.

The two of them start walking towards the building carrying as much as they possibly can to eliminate as many trips back and forth to the cars as possible. Louie has got the stereo.

The streets are not very crowded this late at night, but the people who are out -- MEN coming home after the bars close, some JUNKIES, some DRUNKS hanging out -- are unsavory.

It's also very dark.

No one actually approaches or talks to Louie and Big Lou, but everyone notices and stares at them.

LOUIE

I've never been here this late at night. It's -- God, it's --

BIG LOU

It's terrifying. You don't have to be ashamed to say it. All you see are their eyes and teeth. The glint of a blade now and then.

They enter Louie's building.

INT. HALLWAY INSIDE FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

There is no lock on the front door. They enter.

Music continues as they go up the stairs.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Out of breath, they reach the top of the stairs and Apartment 5C.

LOUIE

There it is.

BIG LOU

Well, at least they didn't nail a cat to your door. A lot of them still believe in voodoo, you know.

Louie unlocks the four locks on the door.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is inadequately lit by some exposed lightbulbs in fixtures without globes, but we can make out some of its features.

It is painted a horrible pea-green that Louie undoubtedly picked up at a surplus sale. The floor is a hodgepodge of painted, warped and unfinished hardwood. Windows are cracked. A security screen on the window leading to the fire escape is bent and rusty. A pile of mattresses, scavenged from other apartments, is mildewing in a corner.

Louie locks them into the apartment. Then he rushes to the window and pulls down the shades which are old and have holes in them. A blinking neon light across the street blinks through the holes.

Louie and Big Lou stand and take in the squalor for a while.

LOUIE

You don't want to spend the night
by any chance, do you?
(indicating the awful pile of
mattresses)
You can have the bed.

BIG LOU

I understand you're afraid, son,
and, I swear, if that judge had
ordered me to stay with you, I
would do it, but I'll tell you
what. You don't have to walk me
back to my car.

LOUIE

Of course I will.

BIG LOU

No. You'd have to walk back here
alone.

LOUIE

Oh...you're right. I didn't think
of that.

BIG LOU

Figures. For a second there I
thought I had raised a pretty
swell kid.

LOUIE

I will if you want me to.

BIG LOU

Forget it, I'll be fine.

LOUIE

Come on.

Louie starts toward the door. Big Lou stops him.

BIG LOU

I'm serious. Forget it.

LOUIE

Okay, but when you make it to your
car, honk your horn for me, okay?

BIG LOU
 "Honk your horn." That's
 beautiful, son. I'm getting a
 little teary I'm so touched.

LOUIE
 Dad --

BIG LOU
 I swear. I'll be fine.

Louie unlocks the door. Big Lou starts out.

LOUIE
 You've got an appointment with
 Griffith tomorrow?

BIG LOU
 Don't worry. I'll get you out of
 this.

Big Lou exits and starts down the stairs.

Louie locks the four deadbolts and then fastens the final
 security device, a long iron bar that jams between the floor
 and the door.

The HONKING comes so quickly it catches Louie by surprise.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's an hour or so later. Louie has made a bed for himself
 by spreading his sleeping bag and pillow out on top of the
 mattresses.

Louie finishes brushing his teeth and washing his face.
 Maybe he's wearing pajamas. He turns out the light. He gets
 into his sleeping bag. Pulls up the covers.

Hold on Louie, as we hear, from outside, the noises of the
 night -- a scream, a gunshot, a bottle hitting the street.

LOUIE
 (to himself)
 My life's taken a strange turn.

He closes his eyes.

As the neon light blinks through the holes in the shades --

POSSIBLE FADE OUT.

FADE IN ON:

MORNING IN HARLEM

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

As sunlight comes streaming in through the cracks and holes in the shades in Louie's apartment, but we're not as interested in the light as we are in the NOISE:

Car alarms, police sirens, fire engine sirens, Spanish radio stations blasting from ghetto-blasters, gunshots, screeching tires, "Stop him!", "Help!", your basic drunk crazy person talking to himself, the crash of two cars colliding, the beeping noise of a sanitation truck, the noise of the sanitation workers emptying garbage cans into the truck, the grinding noise of the truck, and then, as the truck backs up, beeping all the while, the sound of a sanitation worker giving directions to the truck driver ("Mombakmombak-mombakmombak") and the crash that inevitably follows.

And as we hear these noises we see Louie, eyes wide open, in his sleeping bag.

CUT TO:

INT. WIREMESH CAGE IN FIRST FLOOR OF BUILDING - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Louie is on the phone.

LOUIE

Heather, it's me.... Louie. Yes, I know what time it is, that's why I'm calling, I can't sleep there's so much noise here, I need you to go by my place and bring me the sound of the ocean --

INT. LOUIE'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Louie turns on the hot water for a shower. A small trickle of water DRIBBLES out of the showerhead. He turns both handles to full throttle and watches for the dribble to increase. It doesn't.

Louie twists the showerhead, jiggles it, and almost instantly, the rusted, corroded showerhead, together with the connecting piece of pipe, breaks off in his hand.

Water sprays with great force in all directions out of the small bit of pipe left in the wall.

LOUIE

Goddamn ...

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

As Louie comes out onto the street. His red Corvette is still there, but its hubcaps are gone.

Goode and Stubbs are sitting on the stoop. Leotha Turner is chatting with them through her barred window which faces the street.

LOUIE

Shit.

STUBBS

What's the matter?

GOODE

Something's the matter.

LOUIE

My hubcaps are gone.

GOODE

You sure you had hubcaps?

STUBBS

I don't remember hubcaps.

LOUIE

Yes. I'm positive. Damn!

GOODE

You think somebody stole them?

STUBBS

Maybe somebody stole them.

LOUIE

Is that supposed to be helpful? Do you think I'm puzzled about this? Do you think I'm having trouble piecing together what could have possibly happened to my hubcaps?! Of course they were stolen!

(beat)

Why didn't the alarm go off?

LEOTHA

Oh it went off.

LOUIE

You heard it.

LEOTHA

Yeah, it woke me up.

LOUIE

You heard it and you didn't do anything? I can't believe it. I can't believe you heard it and you didn't do anything.

LEOTHA

Kritski, I think you have a funny idea about how important it is to me that you get to drive around in a fancy red sports car with hubcaps.

Louie, furious, starts walking down the street toward a small superette. Everyone on the street watching him.

INT. HARLEM SUPERETTE - DAY

As is fairly typical for small stores in Harlem, no customers can touch anything until it is paid for because the merchandise is displayed on shelves behind floor-to-ceiling plexiglass walls. Customers direct a storekeeper on the inside of the plexiglass partition to pick out their order and pay him through a slot in some bulletproof glass protecting the cash register. They then receive their goods and change.

Louie enters the store and goes up to the partition. A BLACK STOREKEEPER behind it.

LOUIE

Can I have some milk?

The storekeeper gets it and sets it down by the register. Louie presses his face up against the glass to see the date on it.

STOREKEEPER

Anything else?

LOUIE

What's the date on that?

The storekeeper turns the milk so Louie can see it.

LOUIE

Got anything fresher?

The storekeeper shakes his head no.

LOUIE

Am I supposed to drink it all by tomorrow?

STOREKEEPER

Do you want it?

LOUIE

Yeah. Fine. Some peanut butter too.

The storekeeper gets a jar of peanut butter.

LOUIE
You have any crunchy?

STOREKEEPER
One kind only.

LOUIE
How come you've got twenty-five
different kinds of pork rinds and
only one kind of peanut butter?

STOREKEEPER
Because we don't get a lot of
fussy little white pricks in here.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Louie, carrying his groceries, comes back down the street as he sees his tenant Marlon Green walking down the street in his customary cut-offs, tank top and Nike Air Jordan hightop basketball shoes.

Marlon sees Louie and does a quick about-face, but he's too late. Louie has spotted him.

LOUIE
Hey! Hey, Marlon! Where the fuck
is your rent?

Marlon continues walking away from Louie and the building at a brisk pace.

LOUIE
Marlon! I know you hear me!

Marlon doesn't stop.

LOUIE
I'll catch up with you sooner or
later!

Marlon gives up. He stops, turns around and starts to look around, acting as if he isn't quite sure who or where the voice was coming from.

MARLON
Louie? Louie? Is that you?
(pretending to spot him for
the first time)
It is! How're ya doing, Louie?
You look great.
(crossing to him)
The Uptown life agrees with you.

LOUIE
You're late on your rent, Marlon.

MARLON

I knew it. I could tell by the tone of your voice you were upset with me about something.

LOUIE

You have til the end of the week. You don't pay, I lock you out of your apartment and dump everything you own on the street.

MARLON

No problem, man. The end of the week.

Louie starts into the building.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR OF BUILDING - DAY

As Louie comes up the stairs with his groceries.

Tito Higgenbotham, the 11-year-old boy who was studying by candlelight is reading a book by the window in the hallway.

Louie gets his keys out of his pocket and unlocks his door. He goes inside, leaving the door open behind him.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Louie is putting the groceries into the refrigerator. Tito comes inside.

TITO

Hi.

LOUIE

What do you want, Tito?

TITO

(looking around)
Nothing.

LOUIE

Shouldn't you be in school?

TITO

It's Saturday.

LOUIE

Then shouldn't you be out playing basketball or breakdancing or something?

TITO

Nice stereo.

LOUIE
 (instantly suspicious)
 It's a piece of junk. A cheap
 piece of junk. It looks cool, I
 know, but --

TITO
 I'm not thinking about taking your
 stereo.

LOUIE
 Did I say you were? Why would you
 take a cheap piece of crap like
 this anyway? It doesn't even
 work.

TITO
 I know.

LOUIE
 What do you mean, you know?

TITO
 I know it doesn't work.

LOUIE
 How do you know? Were you in here
 while I was out? Did you break my
 stereo?
 (he takes the plug and starts
 to plug it in)
 If this is broken, I'm going to
 break every bone in your body --

TITO
 I didn't say it was broken, I was
 trying to say it doesn't work --

As Louie plugs it into the wall there's an explosion and the
 stereo sputters, sparks and smokes as it short-circuits.

TITO
 -- because you never repaired the
 electrical fixtures in this
 apartment.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Louie comes out on the stoop to wait for Heather. Goode
 and Stubbs and Gilliam the Bible salesman are there, killing
 time. Leatha Turner looking out her window.

Down the street, Marlon has put a piece of cardboard over a
 trash can. He's artfully practicing THREE CARD MONTE, the
 common New York street hustle in which a dealer shuffles and
 throws face down three cards -- two black tens and a red
 queen. A bettor tries to pick the queen.

Louie stands on the stoop while carrying on the conversation with Gilliam that follows, but he's really watching Marlon practicing, seemingly unnoticed by Marlon.

GILLIAM

I prayed for you last night,
Louis.

LOUIE

What did you pray? That I'd buy a
Bible from you?

GILLIAM

I wouldn't even sell you a Bible.
You know why? Because it would
sit unopened gathering dust, while
Satan prepares your fearful reward
in everlasting Hell.

LOUIE

Leave me alone.

GILLIAM

You don't want me to leave you
alone.

LOUIE

Yes I do.

GILLIAM

No. Satan wants me to leave you
alone.

As Louie walks down the stoop and over to Marlon. We now see, behind him, that his Corvette is now missing its tires, but Louie hasn't seen this.

LOUIE

We both want you to leave me
alone.

(as he starts toward Marlon)

LEOTHA

(to Gilliam)

All three of us want you to leave
him alone.

LOUIE

(to Marlon)

You play Monte?

MARLON

What? Oh, Louie. How long have
you been watching me fumble with
these cards? I'm embarrassed.

As this scene continues, we occasionally see Louie's Corvette in the distance, and every time we see it there's less and less of it -- the doors disappear, the hood, the seats, the dashboard, etc.

LOUIE

You look pretty good to me. Your grandfather probably taught it to you when you were little. Mine taught me pinochle, yours taught you Three Card Monte.

MARLON

I see what you're up to. You're trying to flatter me, get my confidence up, entice me into playing for money before I'm ready for it. You're a rascal, Louie.

LOUIE

You saw right through me.

MARLON

(shuffling)

But there's no reason we can't play a few rounds just for fun. The object is to find the queen.

He throws the cards. ROGER, a black man in his forties, was passing by. He stops to watch.

LOUIE

No thanks.

MARLON

(to Roger)

Isn't that terrible? The man won't play for love of the game. It has to be for money. This is what ruined the Olympics.

ROGER

(pointing to a card)

That's the queen.

MARLON

Minimum bet is twenty dollars.

Roger takes out twenty dollars.

Marlon takes out a big wad of bills and turns over a card that wasn't selected. It's the queen.

ROGER

Damn.

Marlon takes Roger's money. Louie has watched this and has seen Marlon's wad of bills.

LOUIE
 (to Marlon)
 Looks like you've got a lot of
 money there for a guy who hasn't
 paid his rent.

Marlon turns his back on Roger and the cards to talk to Louie.

MARLON
 Louie, you gave me til Friday to
 pay, and besides, I'm short, so if
 you don't mind --

While Marlon has his back turned, Roger reaches over and bends the corner of the queen. This was all seen by Louie.

ROGER
 Aren't you going to give me the
 chance to get my money back?

MARLON
 No. The minimum bet is now fifty.

ROGER
 Fine with me.

Marlon shuffles and tosses the cards. Louie sees that the queen is the card face down with the bend in the corner.

LOUIE
 Marlon, I think you should --

MARLON
 (irritated)
 What? What now? You think I
 should what?

Louie decides not to tell him about the bent card.

LOUIE
 I think you should let me get in
 on this.

MARLON
 I take the biggest bet. That's
 the rules.

LOUIE
 I'll bet sixty.

ROGER
 Seventy-five.

LOUIE
 A hundred.

ROGER
Hundred twenty-five.

LOUIE
Two hundred.

Roger walks away.

MARLON
Two hundred dollars. Let's see
the money. Let's see it.

LOUIE
You know I'm good for it.

MARLON
Let's see it.
(Louie puts it down)
Amazing. The exact amount of my
rent.

Louie smugly turns the dog-eared card over. It's not the queen. It's a black ten, because the whole thing was a standard set-up and while shuffling the cards Marlon deftly removed the dog-ear from the queen and put one on a black ten. Louie loses. Marlon puts the money into his pocket.

LOUIE
Now you've got the money for the
rent, why don't you just give it
to me --

MARLON
Rent's not due til the end of the
week.

Marlon starts to fold up his monte set-up. Louie is trying to figure out what happened, but the HOOTS and CATCALLS of SIX BURLY BLACK MEN on the stoop across the street from his building get his attention.

MAN ON STOOP #1
(calling)
Oooh, baby. Nice butt!

Louie turns and sees Heather getting out of a yellow cab. (He's actually been outside waiting for her.) He starts down the street. More HOOTING, CATCALLS, and KISSY NOISES as Heather emerges from the cab, holding the Sound-X Environmental Machine and her handbag.

The cab screeches away as fast as it can, leaving Heather standing across the street from Louie.

In a split-second, a black kid races down the street and snatches the Sound-X Environmental Machine out of her hands. A split-second later, another black kid races from the opposite direction, and takes her purse.

HEATHER

Louie!

She rushes across the street into Louie's arms.

LOUIE

It's okay, I can get another sound of the ocean, I'll just call the 800 number --

HEATHER

Everything I owned was in that purse. My aura was in that purse --

Louie holds her and as he does, he sees, over her shoulder, his Corvette -- or what is left of it: the blue plastic New York Mets hat that was hanging from the rearview mirror.

LOUIE

God damn it! God damn fucking shit damn shit damn it.

GILLIAM

Uh-uh-uh. Anger is the foothold of the devil.

GOODE/STUBBS

Amen.

LEOTHA

Hush up, you windbag.

INT. WIREMESH CAGE - DAY

Louie is on the phone. Heather is waiting in the hallway while he makes the phone call. She has drawn a pentagram and is praying for the return of her crystals by repeating a chant. Chant tk.

LOUIE

(into phone)
But I already told all of this to the police ...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. INSURANCE COMPANY - DAY

MARV RISKIND, a claims adjuster at his desk in his little office cubicle at this huge insurance company, is on the phone with Louie.

RISKIND
 (into phone)
 Please, Mr. Kritski. I can't
 process this claim unless you give
 me this information.

LOUIE
 All right. All right. It was
 parked in front of 526 W. 151st
 St. That's near Amsterdam.

RISKIND
 Why was it parked there?

LOUIE
 Because I live here. Now when do
 I get a --

RISKIND
 That's not the home address listed
 on your policy.

LOUIE
 So?

RISKIND
 If you're living on 151st Street,
 you're living in a Level Nine risk
 sector. The address you gave when
 you purchased your policy is only
 in a Level Five risk sector.

LOUIE
 Why did I get a queasy feeling
 when you said that?

RISKIND
 It must be because you're twenty-
 nine thousand dollar car is gone
 and you probably won't see a dime
 of insurance.

INT. BUILDING STAIRWELL - DAY

As Louie and Heather climb the stairs. Louie is behind
 Heather and as he goes up the stairs he's looking at her
 beautiful legs.

LOUIE
 This is not my day. So far this
 is not my day. But it's not over.
 And it's looking up. It's
 definitely looking up.

HEATHER
 What is the smell in this
 building? It smells like ...

LOUIE

Piss.

HEATHER

Yes. It smells like piss. What is it?

LOUIE

Piss. Drunks come in and piss in the hallway.

HEATHER

You let them do this?

LOUIE

It's not like they ask me first...

As they enter:

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Heather is horrified.

Louie walks right over to the kitchen and gets a bottle of cheap wine (NIGHT TRAIN EXPRESS).

HEATHER

Do I seem different to you?

LOUIE

Not at all.

HEATHER

My powers are totally diminished.

LOUIE

Take it from me, your powers are exactly the same as they were. You want some wine?

HEATHER

(stunned)

I don't know. I guess so.

LOUIE

You want to use glasses or should we just pass it around in a paper bag?

HEATHER

What is that on the label? I don't want to drink anything with a runaway freight train on the label.

LOUIE

Come on. I know this stuff gets you drunk. I've stepped over many people clutching bottles of it.

Louie raises his glass to her and takes a sip.

She doesn't touch hers.

LOUIE

What's the matter?

HEATHER

Nothing. I'm sorry.

He wraps his arms around her.

LOUIE

That's good. Because I'm really glad you came.

He attempts a kiss. She squirms away.

HEATHER

Stop it, Louie.

LOUIE

What did I do wrong?

HEATHER

Well... I know you probably want to make love, but the idea of doing it here is sickening to me.

Louie puts his arms around her again.

LOUIE

I'm imprisoned here. This is my conjugal visit.

She pushes him away.

HEATHER

I mean it, Louie. Stop it.

LOUIE

Look, my dad's seeing a lawyer Monday about getting me out pending an appeal. But meanwhile I'm stuck here. You knew the place was a dump.

HEATHER

(angrily)
So what? What do you want me to do?

(MORE)

HEATHER (CONT'D)

(pointing to bed)

Do you want me to lay there and spread my legs and try to keep from throwing up for as long as it takes you to get your rocks off?

LOUIE

(tentatively)

Are you seriously offering to do that?

HEATHER

No.

LOUIE

Win some, lose some.

HEATHER

I want to go home. Call me a cab.

LOUIE

Those guys on the stoop are gonna have a field day with this.

EXT. STOOP - DAY

As Louie comes out the building door with Heather, the SIX BLACK MEN across the street starting hooting at Louie: "The four-minute man," "Hope you got a cut-rate price," "Speedy Gonzales," etc.

A gypsy cab pulls up. It's an old Chevrolet painted with camouflage paint. On the side is a sign reading: Beirut Taxi. In front is an Arab cab driver wearing a flak vest, and next to him is another Arab riding shotgun.

Louie opens the cab door for Heather and she gets in. The cab speeds off, leaving him on the street. More hooting and catcalls as Louie starts back into his building.

Standing there is the young filmmaker Davis Gordon with his videocamera.

LOUIE

Hold the camera straight, it's going to be lopsided, everything is lopsided with you, your hat is lopsided, your scarf is lopsided, they don't take it in the Venice Film Festival if it's lopsided. Didn't they tell you this at NYU?

Coleman is standing there, watching along with everyone else.

COLEMAN

How you doing, neighbor?

LOUIE

Don't get excited, Coleman, I'm going to be outta here before you know it --

EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE - DAY

The movie version of Manhattan, skyscrapers, Central Park in the distance, the sunlight glittering off the spire of the Chrysler Building.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

This is the well-appointed office of JACK GRIFFITH, a successful criminal attorney, through whose windows we can see the skyline in the preceding shot.

Griffith is a rugged-looking man in his fifties, with the slightly too-good looks of a Greg Bautzer or Bert Fields. He's the kind of lawyer who might have had a face-lift. His office, with its spectacular view, is decorated with is decorated in a Western style with sumptuous red leather furniture, Remington bronzes and Russell paintings.

Big Lou Kritski is seated across from Griffith.

BIG LOU

Look, I know you guys like to hem and haw about your clients' chances and it's going to be hard to get a straight answer to what I'm about to ask --

GRIFFITH

I'm virtually certain we can overturn your son's conviction.

BIG LOU

I like your style, Griffith.

GRIFFITH

It's a simple matter of finding a legal error in the trial, and my experience leads me to believe we'll be able to pick and choose from the ones we like best.

BIG LOU

Very good.

The private line on Griffith's desk rings. Griffith looks at it, picks it up.

GRIFFITH

Hello...

(it's a woman; he lowers his voice to an absurdly low seductive level)

I know. I know. I know. I know. I know. I know. Bye.

(hangs up)

Then we'll go ahead and order ourselves a transcript of the trial. It'll take a few weeks to prepare our opening brief. In the meantime we'll file a notice of appeal.

BIG LOU

While we're waiting, can we get Louie home?

GRIFFITH

I would think so. There are plenty of precedents for letting him out pending an appeal. The Ladero Brothers from Colombia, they were in for multiple homicide. Harry Edwards, you saw in the papers, he killed the four cops. Medina Medura, the Filipino nurse who gave lethal injections to 32 of her patients. I'll set up a hearing this week.

BIG LOU

Great. Great. I don't mind telling you, after what we've been through, this is like a dream.

GRIFFITH

I hope it still seems that way after we discuss my fees. My time is six hundred dollars an hour.
(continued)

This is considerably more than Big Lou expected.

GRIFFITH

(continued)

And I'm sure you understand that, in my specialty of law, I'm forced to insist on an advance payment. Thirty thousand dollars will do just fine to get us started.

BIG LOU

What do you mean, to get us started?

GRIFFITH

I mean I may need additional funds
in the future.

BIG LOU

No, no. I speak English. I was
wondering about when and how much.

GRIFFITH

Mr. Kritski, it's my sincere wish
that everything falls into place
and you're all paid up through our
farewell handshake on the
courthouse steps.

BIG LOU

Listen, if I am, I'll give you a
farewell kiss on the courthouse
steps. I'll suck your dick. But
realistically, how far will this
thirty grand take me?

GRIFFITH

That's a fair question. I'll give
you the best answer I can. I've
found that thirty thousand dollars
usually lasts until the time I ask
you for more money.

He chuckles at his own joke. Big Lou joins in, bitterly.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Louie is on his mattresses reading a Sharper Image catalogue. He has made the most perfunctory changes in his apartment -- Door Store-type purchases, like a couple of director's chairs, a white cube for the TV. Also he has apparently done something about the electrical system in the apartment, because he has a couple of lamps on and the radio (or stereo) (or television) is working. There's also a telephone.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

BIG LOU (O.S.)

Louie. Open up.

LOUIE

One second.

He unlocks all the locks. Irene and Big Lou are outside. Irene is carrying a full grocery bag from Balducci's. Big Lou has a bag from Bloomingdale's.

LOUIE
Two months of my life? You know
what I could do in that two
months? I could discover a cure
for Alzheimers, which I'm going to
need, since I'm starting to forget
my former life --

IRENE
(overlapping)
Fine, as long as you forget the
girlfriend.

She starts to unpack the bags --

LOUIE
-- For example, remind me. Who am
I and how did I get here?

BIG LOU
He's depressed.

IRENE
Of course he's depressed. You
would be depressed too if your
father ruined your life.

BIG LOU
My father ruined my life and I'm
not depressed.

IRENE
(to Louie)
I brought you some of that nice
rice pudding you like. With
raisins.

BIG LOU
Everybody's father ruins their
life. It's what they call the
food chain.

EXT. HARLEM STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Louie has walked Big Lou and Irene to their car. (Do they
have a limo for this trip?)

IRENE
You be sure to eat breakfast, it's
the most important meal of the day
--

LOUIE
(dully)
Breakfast --

IRENE

If you don't feel like eating, at least have a half a grapefruit --

LOUIE

Half a grapefruit. I'll eat it on my throw pillows --

She kisses Louie goodbye and gets in the car. Big Lou shuts the car door and indicates that Louie should follow him out of earshot.

LOUIE

What?

BIG LOU

(low)

This lawyer we hired is costing a fortune. For a retainer, you know what I had to give him? Fifty thousand.

LOUIE

So get someone cheaper.

BIG LOU

Stop it. He's the best. But we're spending enough money on him, I just want to make sure you don't go crazy making repairs on the building.

LOUIE

What do you mean by go crazy?

BIG LOU

Making any repairs whatsoever.

LOUIE

Yeah, well, I had to rewire the building, I couldn't even plug in my toaster oven, never mind my alarm system.

BIG LOU

You had to rewire your apartment, I don't see why you had to rewire the whole building.

LOUIE

Because what if my alarm system doesn't function because something blows out in the rest of the building, that's why.

(beat)

Shouldn't I be thinking about fixing the boiler if I'm going to be stuck here when it's cold? --

BIG LOU

Don't touch the boiler. You'll be out of here by Thanksgiving.

LOUIE

That's what Lyndon Johnson said about Vietnam --

BIG LOU

Son, let us review Kritski's Laws. Kritski's First Law. What are the three things you look for when you're shopping for a piece of real estate?

LOUIE

Death, divorce and destitution.

BIG LOU

Excellent. Kritski's Second Law. What do you do once you own a piece of real estate?

LOUIE

Nothing.

BIG LOU

Do the words "fix things up" come up anywhere in Kritski's Laws?

LOUIE

The judge is going to throw me in jail if it doesn't look like I'm fixing things up.

BIG LOU

Is that what you're worried about?

LOUIE

Yes.

BIG LOU

Don't worry about it. I'll take care of this.

Big Lou pats Louie on the face.

BIG LOU

Feel better?

LOUIE

(no)
Sure, Dad.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Louie finishes brushing his teeth and, ready for bed, goes to the keyboard of the security system's bedroom command station. We HEAR a SERIES of BEEPS as he enters the combination that arms the system. Then, as Louie gets into bed, we HEAR:

ELECTRONIC VOICE
 (from command station)
 ZONE ONE: SECURE. ZONE TWO:
 SECURE. ZONE THREE: SECURE.
 PERIMETER SYSTEM ON. ZONE FOUR:
 SECURE. ZONE FIVE: SECURE. ZONE
 SIX: SECURE. INTERIOR SYSTEM ON.
 INTRUDER ALERT ON. NIGHT MODE ON.
 CONTINUOUS STATE CIRCUIT ANALYZER
 ON. GOOD NIGHT.

LOUIE
 Good night.

Louie turns out the lights, gets into bed. Hold on him.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - HOURS LATER

Louie is asleep in bed. We hear a RUSTLING SCRATCHING NOISE. Suddenly FLOODLIGHTS start FLASHING. SIRENS start BLARING.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
 (from command station)
 INTRUDER ALERT. CHECK ZONE 3.
 INTRUDER ALERT. CHECK ZONE 3 --

Louie awakens. Confused, he looks around and spots the intruder, a fat-tailed rat as big as a cat.

LOUIE
 Jesus!

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Louie is showing the EXTERMINATOR a crack in the baseboard of his apartment.

EXTERMINATOR
 The whole building's probably
 infested.

LOUIE
 Is there anything we can do to
 just keep them out of here?

EXTERMINATOR
 You could try training them.

LOUIE

Do the whole building.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A MR. DEATH EXTERMINATOR TRUCK is parked in front of the building.

A car comes down the street. It's a 10-year-old GM car with a dent in the side. On the top is a billboard that says: Re-elect Naomi Bensinger for City Council. The car has a speaker on top and blasting out of it is a message from Naomi to her constituents. (Exactly dialogue tk)

Naomi, who's driving the car, gets out in front of the building.

She's carrying her briefcase, stuffed full of papers.

Louie is coming down the street.

LOUIE

What are you doing here? Don't tell me, I know --

NAOMI

I came to congratulate you on the job you're doing --

Overlap throughout:

LOUIE

You couldn't stay away. Like a moth to a flame --

NAOMI

(she is determined not to acknowledge his flirtation)
Another person in your position might just sit out his appeal --

LOUIE

Like swallows to Capistrano --

NAOMI

-- but I understand you've brought the electrical system up to code -

LOUIE

Like a paperclip to a magnet --

NAOMI

-- and now, I see an exterminator. I am encouraged, Mr. Kritski --
(fishing through her unbelievably disorganized briefcase)

LOUIE
So am I, Miss Bensinger --

NAOMI
-- but I'm sure you know that this
is only the beginning of what has
to be done.

LOUIE
Only the beginning. I couldn't
have said it better myself.

NAOMI
(she's not going to react to
this if it kills her)
Somewhere in here is a list of
some of the other code violations
the judge expects you to correct.
Where is it?
(continued)

She fishes through her pockets, producing a lipstick, several pens, some clippings from the newspaper, before finally finding the piece of paper she was looking for. Louie is giving her a goofy stare.

NAOMI
(continued)
Here it is.

She hands it to Louie.

LOUIE
Has anyone ever told you how
attractive you are?

NAOMI
(finally she snaps; angrily:)
Yes. Of course they have. I'm 37
years old. You think I've lived
this long and no one's ever told
me how attractive I am?

LOUIE
I'm like a terrier. Rejection
means nothing to me. When I grab
hold of your ankle, you
practically have to cut your leg
off to get rid of me.

NAOMI

(recovering her dignity)
If you'll call my office and let us know your timetable for the repairs, some of the tenants would like to know. Everyone is concerned about the boiler, and a lock on the front door.

(beat)

Lock.

(realizing something)

Damn.

LOUIE

What is it?

NAOMI

I locked my keys in my car. I am always doing this. I...am...such ...a...mess.

LOUIE

It's a perfect opportunity for you to come up to my apartment. You can wait for the locksmith up there. We'll think of something to do. I'm a great lover. Dominating, yet somehow tender, ruthless, yet somehow sensitive...

NAOMI

What am I going to do?

LOUIE

Perhaps I could put this in another language.

(he takes out his pocket translator)

Would ... you ... like ... to ... sleep ... with ... me?

(beat)

What language did you take in college?

NAOMI

(distractedly)

French.

LOUIE

I bet you're sorry. I bet you wish you'd taken Spanish.

Louie punches the pocket translator.

POCKET TRANSLATOR

Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?

NAOMI
 (paying no attention to him,
 shouting to the street in
 general)
 Can anyone help me get into my
 car?

Within seconds, four black men turn up, each holding a long
 skinny shank that opens cars doors.

One of them slides his shank down between the window and
 doorframe of the passenger door, jiggles it to unlock the
 doorlock, and holds the door open for Naomi.

NAOMI
 Thanks. I appreciate it.
 (back to Louie)
 Mr. Kritski --

LOUIE
 Miss Bensinger. The name just
 rolls right off your tongue.

NAOMI
 I want to see some real work begin
 on this building. I want to see
 an agenda, I want to see a
 construction crew, I want to see
 something far beyond the bandaids
 you are currently applying to this
 open sore. And if I do not, you
 will find yourself in prison. Is
 that clear?

At that moment, an old van with a sign saying Bucharest
 Construction pulls up in front of the building, and A
 CONSTRUCTION CREW of FIVE Rumanians gets out of it, all of
 them carrying toolboxes. One of them is wearing a "Free
 Ceaucesceau" T-shirt. The FOREMAN has a work order.

LOUIE
 I'm sorry. I refuse to even
 dignify that with a response.

Louie crosses to the FOREMAN, who's holding a piece of paper
 in his hand.

LOUIE
 Hi.

FOREMAN
 (in a Rumanian accent)
 You are Louie Kritski?

LOUIE
 Yes I am.
 (MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)
 (loudly, for Naomi's sake)
 And we're going to be making
 extensive improvements in the
 building, so why don't you come
 with me and take a look.

They start toward the building, Louie followed by this ragtag
 group of men carrying toolboxes.

NAOMI
 I'll be back, Mr. Kritski.

LOUIE
 Ciao, bellissima.

Naomi gets into her car and starts it. The sound system
 comes on again.

SOUND SYSTEM
 This is your City Council
 representative Naomi Bensinger,
 etc.
 (more message tk)

As she drives off, Louie walks the crew into the building.
 They're carrying ladders, buckets, hammers, etc.

INT. BUILDING VESTIBULE - DAY

The work crew looks around in horror. "Ich," "Ecch,"
 "Ptooi," etc.

LOUIE
 There's a lot to do here. A lot.
 Which one of you is the plumber?

FOREMAN
 He's the plumber.

PLUMBER
 I was already the plumber. I hate
 being the plumber.

LOUIE
 Because the hot water is a real
 problem, there's no pressure at
 all --

FOREMAN
 Your father already tells us, we
 know what we have to do.

LOUIE
 Great. Great. So what are you
 starting with?

FOREMAN

Coffee break. First we coffee
break. Then we do. Don't worry.
You have things to do, go do.

EXT. A&P MARKET - ESTABLISHING - DAY

As Louie comes down the street, in a good mood.
Zippededodah, zippedeay, my oh my what a wonderful day.

INT. A&P MARKET - DAY

Louie is the only white person in the market.

He passes the freezer case, he stops, realizing he glimpses
something special out of the corner of his eye.

LOUIE

Dove Bars! I don't believe it!

Delighted, he begins to load his basket with them. Two black
uniformed A&P WORKERS are putting price tags on nearby items.

LOUIE

(continued, to the A&P
workers)

I'd have come here weeks ago if
I'd known you had Dove Bars!

He's taken all seven boxes. He tears open a box and starts
to eat a Dove Bar.

LOUIE

(continued)

Thank you, God. At last a reason
to live!

He wheels away his cart, scarfing down the ice cream bar.
When he's gone:

A&P WORKER

(to the other one)

I should try one of those things.

INT. A&P MARKET, CHECKOUT STAND

The CASHIER is ringing up Louie's purchases. Louie notices
that Tito Higgenbotham is bagging his groceries. (Tito is
the kid Louie implied was going to take his stereo.)

LOUIE

You work here?

TITO

No. I'm stealing your groceries.

(MORE)

TITO (CONT'D)
 (holding up empty Dove Bar
 box)
 This one's empty.

LOUIE
 That's okay. I ate 'em.

CASHIER
 All four of them?

LOUIE
 Yeah. You want to make something
 of it?

The Cashier is a black man about twice Louie's size. He just shakes his head in wonderment and rings up the sale.

TITO
 Want me to carry these back for
 you?

Louie picks up the bags, testing to see how heavy they are. They're heavy.

LOUIE
 Sure.

Tito takes two full grocery bags and follows Louie out of the market.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Louie and Tito are walking back to the apartment. Tito is carrying the groceries. Louie is eating another Dove Bar.

LOUIE
 How much do they pay you there?

TITO
 Nothing.

LOUIE
 What?

TITO
 They don't pay me anything.

LOUIE
 Seriously?

TITO
 That's right.

LOUIE
 Great job.

TITO
I get tips.

LOUIE
Oh. I guess that's okay.

TITO
Okay? I had to beat out seventy
other kids for this job.

They walk by a black man in his late twenties, EDDIE. Eddie is obviously stoned and is in the middle of selling drugs to another black guy.

EDDIE
Hey, Tito. How's it going?

TITO
(flatly)
Hey.

Louie and Tito keep walking.

LOUIE
Who's that? Your dealer?

TITO
My father.

LOUIE
No.

TITO
Yeah.

LOUIE
He seemed like a nice guy.

TITO
Let's drop it, okay?

LOUIE
Okay.

They continue walking until Louie's curiosity gets the better of him.

LOUIE
I guess your mother likes younger
men.

TITO
My mother?

LOUIE
Yeah. The woman you live with,
remember?

TITO
That's my grandmother. I don't
know where my mother is.

LOUIE
I'm on a roll.

They go up the stairs to the building and enter.

INT. BUILDING - DAY

As Tito enters, Louie notices the work crew. Four of them are sitting at the table in the wiremesh cage, surrounded by their tools, playing a card game called Klabiash. The fifth has a metal tape measure.

LOUIE
What are you doing?

FOREMAN
I can't do. I can't do until he
finishes.
(indicating the fifth
workman)

LOUIE
What's he doing?

FOREMAN
(aggressively, as if anyone
can tell)
He measures.

LOUIE
Oh. Okay. Look, that woman you
saw before is coming back, I don't
know when, tomorrow, the next day,
she's from the court, you've gotta
fix, you can't just measure.
Otherwise --
(he makes a gesture of his
throat being slit)
I go to jail. And you don't get
paid.

FOREMAN
Your father pays us.
(he looks at his cards and
happily throws them on the
table)
Klabiash!

The other workmen throw down their cards and swear in various Slavic languages.

Louie shakes his head and follows Tito upstairs.

INT. LOUIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

As Tito puts the groceries down in the kitchen.

Louie gives him a five dollar bill.

TITO

Thank you.

It's a perfectly good thank you, but Louie expected more gratitude.

LOUIE

That's a five dollar bill.

TITO

Thank you, massa.

LOUIE

Fuck you.

TITO

Fuck you.

Tito goes out the door leaving Louie alone.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's late. Louie is lonely and sulking. He's drinking a Corona beer from the bottle and staring at the television.

Louie sighs, picks up the phone and dials.

INT. HEATHER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Heather has just entered. She's dressed up and looks like she's in a bad mood. She shuts the door behind her and kicks off her high heels. The phone rings. She answers it.

HEATHER

Hello.

And cut back and forth:

LOUIE

(into phone)

Heather! It's you! You're home!
Thank God. I was sure you'd be at
some party, but you're not. You're
home.

HEATHER

Is this Louie?

LOUIE

Yes. Yes, it's Louie, Heather.
I'm sorry. I should have
identified myself. It's just that
your voice was the first friendly
--

HEATHER

(coldly)
What do you want?

LOUIE

I want you to hop in a cab and
come over.

HEATHER

Are you crazy? It's one in the
morning --

LOUIE

Heather, please! Okay. Okay.
(not moving or getting down
on his knees)
I'm down on my knees, begging you
to come over. On my knees,
Heather. Please... It's much
nicer here now. I have throw
pillows.

HEATHER

You have throw pillows?

LOUIE

Yes.

HEATHER

I still don't want to come.

LOUIE

All right. Okay. Heather, I have
a confession to make. I wasn't
down on my knees before...
(drops to his knees)
But now I am. May God strike me
dead, I am now on my knees begging
you to come over.

HEATHER

It doesn't matter. I thought you
were on your knees the first time.

LOUIE

Heather, there's an old Tammy Wynette song probably written before you were born. It's called "Stand by Your Man." And it goes a little something like this ..

(he starts to sing it and sings the first three lines through Heather's next speech)

"Stand by your man/ and tell the world about it/ keep giving all the love you can"

HEATHER

(overlapping)

Louie, I'm really tired. I've been out since seven o'clock. I just walked in the door and my feet are killing me from all the dancing.

LOUIE

(plaintively finishing the first verse)

"Stand by your man."

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Louie awakens to the NOISE of hammers, buzzsaws, drills, sanders and the earshattering noise of a Rumanian radio station. His face brightens.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Louie coming down the stairs.

The vestibule is a beehive of noise -- although not precisely of activity. The workmen are banging and sawing and drilling and sanding, but nothing is really getting done. Their activities are concentrated on pieces of loose pieces of wood and pipe. Meanwhile, the noise of Rumanian folk music is blasting out of an enormous short-wave Hallicrafter boom box. The man with the hammer is actually hammering nails into the wood in time with the music, and at one point he gets so carried away that he hammers the wall of the vestibule, dislodging a large piece of plaster which he ignores. From time to time, the music stops for a short speech in Rumanian -- and when it does, all work ceases while the workmen listen to it. When the news is good, they all clap each other on the back, hug, kiss, and dance around as the folk music begins again. When the news is bad, they throw down their tools, kick the wall, growl and spit on the floor.

Louie watches for a few moments.

A door opens on the ground floor and Marlon, in a T-shirt, cut-off jeans and his Air Jordans, starts out of his apartment, carrying a basketball. He sees Louie, starts to go back into his apartment.

LOUIE

Hey! I wanna talk to you.

MARLON

Wha? What? I can't hear you.

He makes a move to go back in the apartment, but Louie makes a grab at him.

EXT. LOUIE'S BUILDING - DAY

As Louie pushes Marlon and his basketball out the door and onto the stoop.

LOUIE

Where've you been, Marlon?

MARLON

There's that tone. I hear that tone again. What have I done now?

LOUIE

You are once again late on the rent.

MARLON

And I have it. I have it right here.

(he takes out two \$100 bills, hands them to Louie; they can still hear the Rumanian music through the door)

Man, this noise is bad. This is terrible. I'm getting out of here.

LOUIE

I wish I could. I'm not allowed to leave the building except for food and emergencies.

MARLON

(referring to the noise)
This is an emergency. Come on, we'll shoot some hoops. It's only down the block.

LOUIE

Hoops?

MARLON

Hoops is what black people call basketball.

LOUIE
I know what it is. You mean play
for money?

MARLON
Money? What is it with you? For
fun. For exercise.

LOUIE
I'm not supposed to. But I guess
I could sneak away for a few
minutes.

MARLON
I'll wait here while you go
change. You've been lying around
this building too much.
(pinching his love handles)
You're starting to look like the
Sta-Puft Marshmallow Man.
(he cracks himself up)

LOUIE
(swatting away Marlon's hand)
Hey! You know, you think we're a
lot closer than we really are....
You'll wait here?

Marlon nods. Louie opens the door to go inside to change.
The music blasts out and for a split second we see the five
workmen dancing a folk dance. (See the opening of The Lady
Vanishes for a perfect example.)

WIPE TO:

EXT. LOUIE'S BUILDING

Minutes later. Louie emerges in an expensive Descente tank
top and matching shorts. The ensemble is dominated by bold
green and blue diagonal stripes. There is a wide band of
green see-through mesh above the waist. Louie is also
wearing low white socks and New Balance running shoes. This
is not what you wear in a Harlem pick-up game.

LOUIE
(off Marlon's look)
What's the matter?

MARLON
Nothing.

EXT. RUCKER PLAYGROUND - DAY

This court is the Mecca of playground hoops. A three-on-
three all-black halfcourt game is in progress. A tall,
muscular black player, MILKMAN, is waiting for a game.

Marlon and Louie walk up onto the court. Marlon and Milkman know each other and say hello. These three form a team and start to shoot around on the unused end of the court.

MARLON

(to the game in progress)
Winners.

(to Milkman)

Milkman, this is Louie. Louie,
this is the Milkman.

LOUIE

Why do they call you that?

MILKMAN

I killed a milkman.

On this, Louie puts up a shot that completely misses the hoop and backboard.

MARLON

(to Louie)

We're gonna be playing halfcourt
three-on-three. Winners outs.
You've got to take it around after
--

LOUIE

I know how to play basketball.

MARLON

Don't be so touchy. If you need
some help on De --

LOUIE

I'm not gonna need help, okay?
You're not going to be humiliated,
okay? I can take care of myself,
thank you very much.

At this moment, Louie turns to look at the game in progress. One of the players, RUDY, has eluded one defender with a spin move and another with a through-the-legs dribble. He takes off at the free throw line and, in midair, cradles the ball between his forearm and palm, does a 360 degree turn and bangs the ball down through the hoop with his free fist. Then he lands.

LOUIE

Holy God.

RUDY

Game.

MILKMAN
 (to Louie)
 That's Rudy. You wanna guard
 Rudy?

The three losing players leave the court. This leaves Rudy and his two teammates, D.C. and a guy who's wearing an old Stanford Robber Baron T-shirt, call him STANFORD, to play Louie, Marlon and Milkman.

RUDY
 (to Marlon)
 Who brought the lawyer?

CUT TO:

FIRST BASKETBALL GAME

This game is every white man's fantasy of what it would be like to play basketball with five huge talented black players -- a fantasy where cunning and the ability to squeeze into small places triumphs over size and brute force, a fantasy where a plugging, competent, two-hand set shot player with a lot of junk triumphs over flash and speed and form. Louie can hardly contain his own excitement as he plays -- and plays well. When the game ends:

LOUIE
 Game! Game! We won! We won!
 The Kritz is back!

Louie gives High Fives to his teammates, he practically gives a High Five to himself.

RUDY
 That wasn't game.

LOUIE
 Was too.

RUDY
 Was not.

LOUIE
 Am I the only one who cares more
 about winning than looking good?

STANFORD
 Yeah.

MILKMAN
 And with good reason.

STANFORD
 That was game.

LOUIE
See?

STANFORD
They killed us. Jesus.

RUDY
What about another?

LOUIE
Sure. Another. Great.

D.C.
What about another for money?

MARLON
No man. We're not here to make money, we're just having fun.

RUDY
It's fun to play for money.

LOUIE
Just a friendly bet, Marlon. Come on.
(sotto voce to Marlon)
We killed them.

MARLON
Excuse me, but I don't have any money, I just paid the man the rent. You don't have my rent money with you, do you? Do you?

Actually, Louie does.

D.C.
How much we talking about?

MARLON
Two hundred. But we don't want to bet that much, do we?

And for a moment we want to see the slightest glimmer of confusion cross Louie's face.

LOUIE
I don't know. Sure. Two hundred.

CUT TO:

SECOND BASKETBALL GAME

And this game is a white man's nightmare of what it would be like to play basketball with five huge, talented black players -- or, to be more accurate, three huge talented black players, because in this game Marlon and Milkman have suddenly lost their gift for the game (this whole thing has

been set up by Marlon and his friends to get Marlon's rent money back) and the other team has made a miraculous recovery from its previous hapless performance. Rudy, D.C. and Stanford play tremendous, dominating ball, while Louie is repeatedly humiliated -- knocked to the ground at one point, knocked in the butt at another, and finally, at the end of the game, limping, sore, dazed and staggering to stay in the game.

RUDY

Game.

LOUIE

(groggily)

Game.

Louie's head clears as he sees Rudy, D.C. and Stanford waiting for the money.

He reaches into the little pocket in his shorts and takes out two hundred dollar bills. He hands them to Rudy.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Louie and Marlon walk back toward the building. Louie is limping and clearly in pain. Marlon is carrying the basketball.

Naomi Bensinger has been waiting there, unnoticed.

NAOMI

Mr. Kritski, where have you been?

Louie turns his neck, which hurts.

LOUIE

Ow.

As Louie tries to get the crick out of his neck:

NAOMI

The terms of your probation only allow you to leave to get help repairing your building, for medical emergencies --

LOUIE

I'm having a medical emergency --

NAOMI

-- and to get food. I'm afraid you are in violation --

MARLON

You think we were out playing basketball, right?

NAOMI
I certainly do.

MARLON
We weren't. I took Kritski to see this friend of mine about fixing up the building and they had a talk about it. What was it you were talking about?

LOUIE
We were talking about...
(he's looking straight at the broken front door)
fixing the front door --

MARLON
Right. And this guy who's going to fix the front door returned this basketball he borrowed from me.

Naomi looks at him, disbelieving.

MARLON
I'll swear to it. And I live here. I'm one of his helpless victims.

Marlon walks away. Louie is relieved but also surprised by how Marlon helped him out.

Marlon crosses the street, where Rudy's waiting. Rudy hands him the two hundred-dollar bills, and an unbelievably elaborate high five.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

As Louie opens the door to the building, indicating the work crew. They are banging, sawing, sanding and drilling. Paint and plaster is being mixed.

LOUIE
Voila!

As Naomi looks at this work crew, which is giving the performance of its life.

LOUIE
Busy as bees.

He closes the front door, looks at her proudly.

Naomi is actually impressed and for a moment her expression softens.

NAOMI

This is very gratifying, Mr. Kritski. I would never have believed it.

LOUIE

And that's not all, Miss Bensinger. I am now prepared to show you my agenda.

NAOMI

I beg your pardon --

LOUIE

My agenda. You said you wanted to see my agenda.

NAOMI

Of course. Where is it?

LOUIE

(pointing to his fly)
In here.

NAOMI

Mr. Kritski, this has got to stop. Right now. Right this minute. Does your mother know you talk to women this way? What would your mother say if she knew you were talking this way to me? I mean, to anyone, but to me, a close relative of Dr. Morris Bensinger, who, if it was not for him, you would not even exist.

(really furious now)

I keep trying to figure this out. Once you were a baby, probably a perfectly nice little baby, and your mother loved you.

LOUIE

My mother still loves me.

NAOMI

Look, I am not interested in getting into an argument with you about your mother.

(fishing through her
briefcase, which as usual is
completely disorganized)

I brought you some paint samples for the hallway, and a catalogue

(MORE)

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 of light fixtures. And look at
 this, Mr. Kritski --
 (she points to some old
 globes on the balustrade)
 Under this paint, these are brass.
 Do you realize that? Do you
 realize how beautiful this could
 be if you cleaned it up? Whoever
 built this building could have put
 in cheaper fixtures, but he
 didn't, he put in brass fixtures
 because he knew the people who
 were going to live here would feel
 better --

LOUIE
 (interrupting her)
 I got you a present.

Louie reaches into his pocket and takes out a small box
 wrapped as a present. He offers it to her.

NAOMI
 Don't tell me. It's a condom.

LOUIE
 No it is not a condom. It's a
 doohickey you attach to your car
 keys, and when you turn off the
 ignition it speaks to you and
 reminds you to remove your keys
 from your car. It's in English,
 although it comes in several other
 languages, including Serbo-
 Croatian.

A beat.

NAOMI
 Thank you. That's very nice of
 you.
 (a beat)
 Thank you.

A silence.

Awkward.

LOUIE
 I'm sorry I spoke to you that way.

NAOMI
 Good.
 (a beat)
 Well.

She waves and goes out down the stoop.

As Naomi goes down the steps to the street.

LOUIE
 (shouting after her)
 Women who are with me even once
 never get over it!

Naomi gets into her car and drives off. As she does, her political message comes in, this time in Spanish. She speaks Spanish horribly.

SOUND SYSTEM
 Esta Naomi Bensinger --
 (rest of message tk)

INT. BUILDING - DAY

As Louie comes into the building. He's in a wonderful mood. Perhaps he's singing LaBomba.

As he comes in the door, all five Rumanian workmen are peeking out. Everything has come to a stop.

FOREMAN
 She is gone?

LOUIE
 (referring to his flirtation)
 But she's coming back.
 (he punches the Foreman in
 the arm)

FOREMAN
 She comes back soon?

All of them are frowning.

LOUIE
 Maybe not til next week. But it's
 inevitable.

FOREMAN
 Good. Not til next week.

All the workmen start to pick up their stuff and head out the door.

LOUIE
 Where are you going?

FOREMAN
 We got another job.

LOUIE

Wait a minute, you didn't finish my job. You gotta finish my job.

FOREMAN

We got emergency.

They all start talking in Rumanian and go out the door.

Louie follows them.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Louie follows them into the street, trying to pull on their tool boxes.

LOUIE

You can't leave me, you just got started, she found you gratifying, she said so, I promised her I'd fix the front door --

FOREMAN

(getting into the van)
Call a locksmith --

LOUIE

Come back. Come back.

As they drive off, leaving Louie on the street.

He turns around.

There's Marlon.

LOUIE

They left.

MARLON

They weren't here to begin with.

LOUIE

What do you mean? What are you talking about?

MARLON

How long have you been in this business? That wasn't a real work crew. They're like actors. All the slumlords use them. You didn't have workmen, you had the Rumanian Secret Police. Three months ago they were tearing people's fingernails out.

Hold on Louie.

He starts toward the building.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Louie is on the telephone.

LOUIE
I gotta talk to him.

CUT TO:

INT. BIG LOU'S OFFICE - DAY

A large, expensively furnished office with a large bust of Big Lou in the corner.

BIG LOU
(to his intercom)
Tell him I'm indisposed.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

As Louie hangs up his phone. Hold on him.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BIG LOU'S OFFICE - DAY

As Big Lou starts to open his mail. There's an envelope with the letterhead Griffith, Beck & Beck, Attorneys. He tears it open. On the top of a thick pile of papers is a STATEMENT on office stationery which reads: "For Services Rendered - \$47,508, Less deposit - \$30,000, Balance now due - \$17,508.

Big Lou is astounded.

INT. CARNEGIE DELI - DAY

Big Lou is with a cousin of his, FRANKIE. Frankie is in his sixties and he's mopping up some gravy from his empty plate with a piece of bread. Big Lou has a corned beef sandwich in front of him, but just a couple of bites are missing from it.

WAITRESS
How's everything?

BIG LOU
(indicating sandwich)
You can take this.

FRANKIE
You're finished? You've taken
maybe two bites.

BIG LOU
I'm not hungry.

The Waitress takes the plate.

FRANKIE
What's the matter with you?
Something's bothering you.

BIG LOU
No...no...

FRANKIE
Lou, I'm getting tired of asking.
What is it?

BIG LOU
(sighs)
Frankie, it's my kid. You've
heard about it.

FRANKIE
Sure. I thought you were
appealing.

BIG LOU
We are. But it's taking longer
than I thought. And we haven't
even been to court yet, and I'm
into this hotshot lawyer for more
than seventy-five thousand dollars
already. Not that I care about
the money, you know me, but I
don't know if Louie will get off.
In the meantime, you wouldn't
believe how he has to live. Irene
is driving me crazy. The whole
thing is taking a toll on me,
Frankie. But I shouldn't be
burdening you with this...

FRANKIE
Well...

BIG LOU
Well what? What were you going to
say?

FRANKIE
Well...you know a few years ago I
had a brush with the law myself.

BIG LOU
You? What are you talking about?

FRANKIE

A factory of mine here in the city burned down. The fire department thought it didn't look like an accident. Mostly because it wasn't --

BIG LOU

You -- ?

FRANKIE

(shrugs)

Fortunately my wife's brother knew this judge. It wasn't cheap but we got things smoothed over.

BIG LOU

Not cheap?

FRANKIE

Fifty grand.

BIG LOU

And you think maybe I could ...

FRANKIE

Maybe.

BIG LOU

Frankie, what can I say? Thank you. I had no idea this little lunch might end up saving my life. But I think I better talk to my kid about this first. Is that okay?

FRANKIE

Sure. Anything I can do to help.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Big Lou is sitting in Louie's apartment (which is now marginally nicer than the last time). Louie is eating a takeout meal of barbecued ribs, red rice and mustard greens.

BIG LOU

I had lunch with your Uncle Frankie today. Remember him?

LOUIE

The arsonist?

BIG LOU

The what? What are you talking about? Who told you he was an arsonist?

LOUIE

You.

BIG LOU

Oh. Yeah, him. Although I never heard him admit it before. Did I ever tell you how he got off?

LOUIE

He bribed somebody.

BIG LOU

Yeah. A judge. Fifty thousand bucks. Can you believe it?

LOUIE

Yes.

BIG LOU

Do you want to do it?

LOUIE

What? No. Absolutely not.

BIG LOU

My treat.

LOUIE

No. It's a worse crime than I've been convicted of already. Besides, what about my appeal?

BIG LOU

I just got a bill from Griffith. We're into that guy for almost ninety grand. And who knows what'll happen when we get to court? This way we know you'll get off.

LOUIE

There's no such thing as a sure thing.

BIG LOU

Who says?

LOUIE

It's a saying.

BIG LOU

So? Who said it? What makes you think it's true?

LOUIE

Things wouldn't become sayings if there wasn't truth in them.

BIG LOU

Some mo-mo says something. Some other half-wit passes it along. A hundred years later you invoke it to make a crucial decision. Wait. Let's make up a new saying.... "Wise men bribe judges." Does that help?

LOUIE

I've got another idea. I know this is going to sound like blasphemy, but what if we brought the building up to code?

Big Lou stares at Louie.

BIG LOU

You've been brainwashed. It's like what happened to Patty Hearst. You're a captive. You're identifying with this house full of Tootsie Rolls. Playing basketball with them.

(gesturing to Louie's food)
God knows what you're eating there.

LOUIE

Dad, listen to me. All the money you're spending on lawyers, and this bribe, why not just spend it on repairs? Why not get a real work crew in here? --

BIG LOU

-- And don't forget the money for the deprogrammer we're going to have to hire. And what makes you think it's going to cost fifty grand to fix this place up? You already spent a small fortune on a front door lock --

LOUIE

I think fixing this place up is the sure thing.

BIG LOU

Then let me explain to you why it's not. You fix this place up on Monday, by Friday it's right back the way it started. You fix the plumbing, they put chicken bones down the toilets. You put

(MORE)

BIG LOU (CONT'D)
 in heat, they piss in the hot air ducts. They steal the copper pipes right out of the walls and use them to buy dope. I used to clean out toilets, you can't believe what I used to find in them. One day I found a whole turkey dinner.

(a long, dramatic beat)
 You fix so much as a fucking toilet, I'll disown you. Fix a toilet you're out of the will. That's Kritski's Third Law. You hear me?

LOUIE

Yeah.

And hold on Louie as his father starts toward the door.

Big Lou opens the door.

The ALARM GOES ON. Sirens. Floodlights.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
 INTRUDER ALERT. CHECK ZONE 1.
 INTRUDER ALERT. CHECK ZONE 1.

BIG LOU
 How the fuck do I get out of this place?

Louie rushes to the alarm system and presses the code that causes the alarm to stop.

Then he opens the door for his father.

LOUIE
 You walk out. That's how you get out.

He closes the door and leans against it, exhausted.

The electronic voice begins.

ELECTRONIC VOICE
 ZONE ONE: SECURE. ZONE TWO:
 SECURE...

And as it continues,

POSSIBLE FADE OUT.

FADE IN ON:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Music here.

A cold day. The wind is blowing as we see a slightly LOPSIDED TIGHT SHOT of Louie as he walks back from the grocery store. He's not happy.

LOUIE

(to the camera)

Are you happy? Are you getting enough pictures of me? Why don't you do something meaningful? Why don't you go assault someone for the price of a pair of sneakers?

And now we see:

A wide shot of Louie being photographed by our young filmmaker, Davis Gordon, as Louie walks past Stubbs and Goode and Gilliam, who are sitting in three chairs against a wall, very much like the three men in Do The Right Thing.

GILLIAM

You look troubled, Louis.

GOODE

Are you troubled?

STUBBS

Yes indeed.

LOUIE

Don't bother me. I'm not in a buying mood.

As Louie goes down the street:

GILLIAM

(shouting after him)

And I'm not a salesman. The Bible sells itself. If you don't want one, I can't talk you into it. When you do want one, I won't be able to talk you out of it. And you will want one, someday, Louis, and then you can come to me. Anytime day or night. If I'm not home, just slip a check for nineteen ninety-five under my door.

As Louie reaches the building, Leatha Turner sticks her head out her window.

LEOTHA
 (shouting down at Gilliam)
 Give it a rest --

INT. BUILDING - DAY

As Louie wearily climbs the stairs, we hear a FIGHT going on just above him in Tito's apartment between Tito's grandmother Eleanor and his father Eddie.

ELEANOR'S VOICE
 ...so take it and get out!

EDDIE'S VOICE
 That's a lie! I bought the bike!

ELEANOR'S VOICE
 If you did, it wasn't at any store.

TITO'S VOICE
 Grandma, please --

ELEANOR'S VOICE
 Tito, you stay out of this --

As Louie comes up to the landing they live on, Tito's runs out of his grandmother's apartment and up the stairs, apparently to the roof of the building.

Louie comes past the apartment as Eleanor is shoving Eddie out of it, along with a bicycle.

ELEANOR
 Anything he needs, I can take care of --

As Louie continues up the stairs, he hears the door to the roof open and shut.

Hold on Louie. He considers, then follows Tito upstairs.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF LOUIE'S BUILDING - DUSK

Tito is sitting on a crate, sullenly looking at the street below. Louie steps out and goes to him.

LOUIE
 Hi.

TITO
 Go away, Kritski.

LOUIE
 In a minute. I want to talk to you.

(MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)

(sits down next to him)

Tito, by the time I was your age, I'd had three bikes, including a Sting Ray. I had my own television. I had my own little fort in our backyard. Which had a pool. Which had a slide going into it.

(continued)

Tito is looking at Louie with great disdain.

LOUIE

(continued)

What are you looking at me like that for?

TITO

I've got a feeling you're gonna say you weren't happy.

LOUIE

I was deliriously happy, you little smartass. But I was also learning something. Because my dad was paying for all those things by running buildings like this the way I do now, I was learning that life could be great if I grew up to be like him. Well, I did and my life's a mess. Does your father make all his money doing what I saw him do the other day?

TITO

Yeah. Well, no, he sells heroin and coke and other stuff, too.

LOUIE

Okay. Then listen to me. If your grandmother let you keep that bike, she'd be teaching you that, if you really want something, it doesn't matter how you pay for it. When you're much older and you've made something of yourself, you'll realize she did you a favor. What do you want to be when you grow up?

TITO

A slumlord.

LOUIE

Fuck you.

TITO

Fuck you.

LOUIE

You're right. I'm a schmuck. I'm
a total schmuck.

He turns, goes into the building.

Hold on Tito, alone on the roof.

INT. OUTSIDE LOUIE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

As Louie fumbles with the lock, we suddenly see a shadow
behind him. Louie whirls around, terrified. He screams.

It's only Marlon.

LOUIE

Whaddayou trying to do!? Jesus,
Marlon, what happened to you?

MARLON

My bookmaker lacks your compassion
when it comes to not paying money
I owe him.

We see now that one of Marlon's eyes is swollen shut. His
nose and mouth are bleeding.

Louie helps him into the room, leads him over to the chair.
He goes into the kitchen for some ice.

LOUIE

I knew I should have brought my
battery-operated icepack.
(he brings Marlon ice)
Should we call a doctor?

MARLON

I'll be okay. I'll be recovering
nicely by the time they kill me
tomorrow.

LOUIE

Maybe you should get out of town.

MARLON

Skip town? I can't leave New
York. This is my town. I
couldn't exist anywhere else.

LOUIE
Don't be melodramatic, Marlon,
you're not exactly Woody Allen --

MARLON
I have to come up with a grand by
tomorrow night.

LOUIE
Oh, right. Money. That's why
you're here.

MARLON
I swear to you, Louie. I don't
want your money. But you can help
me --

INT. MARLON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A pigsty.

Marlon has set a piece of cardboard over a wastebasket. He is demonstrating Three Card Monte to Louie.

Louie points to one of the three face-down cards. Marlon turns it over. It's the red queen.

MARLON
Right.

Marlon shuffles and throws the cards. Louie points at one.

LOUIE
There.

MARLON
(looks)
Right.

Marlon shuffles and throws again, this time so slowly it's impossible not to follow. Louie points at a card.

MARLON
You're sure.

LOUIE
Yeah, positive.

Marlon turns over the card. It's one of the two black tens. He then turns over the queen. Louie is surprised.

MARLON
(continuing)
You see, the time before, when you
picked the queen, it wasn't really
the queen. It was a ten.

Marlon turns a ten face down, then demonstrates lifting it by the corner and looking at the face so that no one else can see what card it is.

MARLON

(continuing)

But you never actually saw the card. You didn't even notice that I didn't turn it over like I usually do. The next hand is when we score. I'll throw them easy. Anyone can follow the card, but it's really a ten.

LOUIE

Okay. But -- and I haven't agreed to this -- I mean, I'm not supposed to leave the neighborhood --

MARLON

That's okay, man --

LOUIE

How do I know when to start raising the bets?

MARLON

When we get a live one.

LOUIE

How will I know when we've got a live one?

MARLON

I'll give you a signal. I'll say, "We've got a live one."
(off Louie's look)
What's wrong? Too complicated?

EXT. LOUIE'S BUILDING - DAY

Louie, in a suit and tie, walks toward the bus stop. (Music here, continuing from the music we heard as Louie was walking along being photographed by Davis.)

EXT. 151ST AND BROADWAY - DAY

As Louie boards a bus heading downtown.

INT. BROADWAY BUS - DAY

Headed downtown. Louie is the only white on the crowded bus.

INT. BUS - DAY

A MATCHING SHOT. There are now very few blacks on the crowded bus. The bus comes to a halt and Louie gets up to exit.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Louie gets off the bus and begins to look for Marlon.

The streets are crowded with tourists, street performers, T-shirt salesmen, vendors, chess players, another Monte game, etc.

But before too long, Louie hears Marlon's voice coming from within a crowd of people.

MARLON'S VOICE

Watch the red, not the black.
 Watch the red, not the black.
 This one here, sir? You're sure,
 now? Let's see your money...
 Thank you very much, sir.

(NOTE: Marlon will adlib colorful pattern throughout the game play.)

Louie pushes his way into the center of the crowd. Marlon, wearing sunglasses to cover his black eye, is shuffling and throwing the cards on a piece of cardboard set on top of a trash can.

Marlon sees Louie, looks up and smiles. A TOURIST puts a twenty on one of the face-down cards. Marlon turns over a ten and collects the money. He shows the crowd where the queen was.

Louie is standing next to a pair of big, white GUYS IN POLYESTER SUITS. The bigger, tougher-looking of the two turns to the other.

POLYESTER #1

(to his friend)

Told you.

Marlon shuffles and throws the cards again.

POLYESTER #1

(to his friend)

It's in the middle.

The tourist bets another twenty on the card on the left and loses. Marlon shows the queen. It's in the center of the three cards. He shuffles, continuing to keep up his patter.

POLYESTER #1
 (to his friend)
 Shit, this guy's no good.

Marlon throws the cards, as Polyester #1 steps closer, taking out his money. He has a big wad.

Polyester #1 puts twenty on the card on the right. Marlon turns it over. It's the queen. Polyester #1 wins.

MARLON
 Smallest bet is now fifty.

POLYESTER #1
 I'm in for fifty.

MARLON
 Mr. Polyester's in for fifty.
 We've got a live one.

Louie winces. In all the world, Polyester #1 is the person he'd least like to be the live one.

Marlon throws the cards. Polyester #1 puts fifty dollars on the card on the left. Louie puts a hundred dollar bill on the same card.

LOUIE
 I bet a hundred.

MARLON
 I only take the biggest bet.

Marlon pushes aside Polyester #1's fifty.

POLYESTER #1
 What? What kind of shit is --

Marlon lifts the corner (not showing the face) of the card. He frowns and quickly pays off Louie.

POLYESTER #1
 Fuck.
 (to Louie, angrily)
 That was my card.

Louie shrugs. Marlon throws the cards.

MARLON
 Hundred dollars is the smallest
 bet. Hundred or nothing.

Polyester #1 has easily followed the "queen" and immediately bets the hundred on the middle card.

(NOTE: The following should occur as rapidly as possible.)

POLYESTER #1
That one's the queen.

Louie takes a deep breath and puts down two hundred.

LOUIE
Two hundred.

MARLON
Highest bet wins.

POLYESTER #1
Wait! I've got five hundred.
(to Louie)
Do you have five hundred, asshole?

The crowd reacts. POLYESTER #1 holds his money out. Louie is scared. He looks at Marlon, who gives him the most encouraging possible look under the circumstances.

LOUIE
(gulps)
Seven.

The crowd reacts.

MARLON
(hurrying things up)
Can you beat seven? Come on. A
chance to beat seven. Mr.
Polyester, you in or out?

POLYESTER #1'S FRIEND
Jesus, that's a lot of --

POLYESTER #1
That's the card! I know it!
(to Marlon)
Nine.

The crowd buzzes. Polyester #1 starts to put out his money.

MARLON
(to Louie)
How much you got? How much you
got there?

Things are going too fast for Louie.

LOUIE
A thousand.

POLYESTER #1
(to his friend)
Gimme some money. Gimme two
hundred.

Polyester #1's friend does. Polyester #1 grabs it and throws it together with his. At the instant he and Louie both have their hands on their sizeable wagers sitting on the cardboard table:

MARLON

Now!

ROGER'S VOICE

Police! Slide!

There is confusion.

MARLON

I'll take 'em both! Both bets are good!

With one hand, Marlon flips over the card. It's a losing ten. With the other hand he snatches both bets, at the same time kicking over the trash can in the path of Louie and Polyester #1. As the crowd scatters, Marlon runs away from Louie.

Confused, Louie looks in the opposite direction. He recognizes Roger, who is also running away, as Marlon's friend who cheated him in the earlier bent-card scam.

There are no police anywhere.

LOUIE

Damn. Goddamn shit fuck shit fuck damn.

Louie is hopping mad. He is actually hopping up and down.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Louie is walking dejectedly toward the subway. He spots Marlon, across the street.

LOUIE

Marlon! I'm going to kill you!

Marlon starts to run.

Louie crosses Broadway, dodging cars like a slalom skier, and starts running after Marlon.

And follow them:

Down 44th Street maybe, as they run past well-dressed office workers, delivery men, etc.

And maybe through one of the parking lots that run from 44th through 43rd,

And maybe into Bryant Park, past the dozens of dope dealers, musicians, jugglers --

Marlon leaps over a chess game and doesn't quite make the jump. He falls. The chess game is scattered.

And in that moment, Louie catches up with and jumps on top of Marlon.

Louie is in a rage. He's screaming at Marlon. He's absolutely furious. He's homicidal.

LOUIE

What the fuck is with you, Marlon?
I can't fucking believe you.
Gimme back my money! You owe me
that money! Give it back to me!
(as Marlon fumbles for the
money)

VOICE

Break it up, break it up.

And Louie is suddenly lifted off of Louie by TWO POLICEMEN. One of the cops pins Marlon to the ground and puts a gun to his head.

Overlapping:

COP

(to Marlon)
Don't move.

COP

(to Louie)
What's going on here?

LOUIE

Nothing. Nothing. Nothing's
going on.

COP

Doesn't look like nothing --

LOUIE

Nothing. We were just having an
argument. We're friends.

COP

(disbelieving)
You two are friends?

LOUIE

Okay, we're acquaintances, but we
were just having a friendly
argument.

COP
About what?

LOUIE
About ... a chess game. Over the
chess game. That's all it was.

We see Marlon now, still on the ground with the gun to his
head.

COP #2
You know how to play chess?

LOUIE
I'm learning how to play chess.

The cop loosens his grip and starts to put his gun away.
Marlon starts to get up.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Louie and Marlon riding home together.

(Or walking home together in the cold late afternoon if you
have an outdoor location)

LOUIE
(beside himself)
What is with you? You got a good
head. You're not a stupid guy.
You ever hear the expression, "A
straight line is the shortest
distance between two points"? No.
You never heard that expression.
Everything with you is a three-
cushion shot. You're just like my
father. Everything has to be the
hard way, nothing's ever easy.
Why don't you ever do anything the
easy way? Why didn't you just
ask me for the fucking money? I
would have loaned it to you.

MARLON
Bullshit.

LOUIE
You're right.

A beat. The train comes to a stop.

The two of them get off the train.

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - DAY

As they get off the train. A blast of cold air hits them.

MARLON

I'm a hustler. I'm just making a buck any way I can. I'm not ashamed of it. We're both hustlers. All you care about is money and it's all I care about. Admit it, you'd sell your grandmother for five bucks.

Louie pulls his jacket up around his neck against the cold.

And hold on the two of them, going down the steps to the street.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Louie is asleep in bed. It's freezing cold. Louie is bundled up in sweatshirts, sweaters and his robe. His breath is fogging up. His clock-radio reads 4:32 a.m. A loud pounding on the door.

LOUIE

(waking up)
Huh? What? Oh.

Louie gets out of bed. More pounding.

LOUIE

God ... it's freezing.

Louie wraps a blanket around himself and starts toward the door.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOUIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's crammed with freezing tenants, including Goode, Stubbs, Gilliam, Leatha, Eleanor, Coleman, take your pick. Their breath is fogging up.

COLEMAN

It's Coleman, open up.

Louie opens the door, looks at them.

LOUIE

What is this about?

COLEMAN

It's about the heat, what do you think? It's freezing and there's no heat!

LOUIE

I'm cold too, you know.

Everyone ad libs unsympathetic remarks: "So what?" "Who cares?"

LOUIE

Okay, I'm sorry. But there's no reason to get hysterical. We have a problem, but I'll take care of it, okay? I'll call the heating people and we'll have it fixed.

Louie accepting responsibility for something and resolving to act on it? The crowd is stunned into silence as Louie pushes his way through them towards the boiler room downstairs.

INT. BOILER ROOM - DAY

TWO REPAIRMEN are looking at the large cast-iron boiler, which is rusty and covered with soot.

Louie and Tito are sitting on the steps. Both of them bundled up.

REPAIRMAN #1

You need a new boiler, which is two to three weeks minimum.

LOUIE

Two to three weeks? It's freezing out.

REPAIRMAN #1

Yeah, well don't tell me it's news to you this thing doesn't work. I don't even want to think about the last time you changed the gaskets
--

LOUIE

Don't hock me, okay? Okay. Get me the new boiler. In the meantime --

Louie's thinking. He doesn't know what to do.

TITO

What are you going to do, Kritski?

LOUIE

I don't know. I mean ... the easiest thing to do ... if it was just me ...

TITO

What?

Hold on Louie.

INT. THE SHARPER IMAGE - DAY

A nattily-dressed black SALESMAN is demonstrating a portable space heater for Louie. Louie is sooty and grimy.

LOUIE
I'll take forty-seven of them.

SALESMAN
Forty-seven?

LOUIE
If you can deliver them today.

SALESMAN
That shouldn't be a problem, Mr. Kritski.

Louie hands his American Express card to the salesman, who goes to write up the order.

HEATHER'S VOICE
Louie?

Louie turns and is surprised to see Heather, who has been there shopping. Heather is appalled at Louie's appearance.

LOUIE
Well, well. Hello, Heather.
Trying to recapture old times, I see. I must confess this strikes me as a bit pathetic.

A tall, blonde, muscular, gorgeous guy, SVEN, puts his arm around Heather.

SVEN
(slight Teutonic accent)
Heather? Who is this?

HEATHER
Sven, this is Louie. Louie, Sven.

Louie and Sven shake hands. Louie makes a "You and him?" gesture to Heather. She nods.

LOUIE
Look, Sven, we're both adults.
There's no reason this has to be awkward between us.

SVEN
I suppose that's true. So how do you know Heather?

LOUIE
Louie Kritski.

SVEN
Oh. I'm sorry. Sven Hess.

LOUIE
(to Heather)
You've never even mentioned me?

HEATHER
Sure I have. Sven, this is the
guy that hooked up my VCR.

SVEN
Ah, yes! You did a fine job.

HEATHER
Well, I'm afraid we have to run
along.

SVEN
Nice meeting you.

They walk off. Louie looks after them.

SALESMAN
If you'll just sign here --

Louie comes back into focus, starts to sign the bill.

INT. BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON

Louie is standing in/near the wire mesh cage in the entrance
to the building, handing out space heaters to his tenants.

NAOMI'S VOICE
Hi.

LOUIE
Hi.

NAOMI
The boiler broke.

LOUIE
(half-heartedly, almost for
old times' sake)
Yeah. I don't suppose you want to
come up to my apartment and keep
me warm.

NAOMI
You don't suppose right. But I
did want to say that I think it's
nice you went and bought all these
space heaters -- understanding of
(MORE)

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 course that it wouldn't have been
 necessary at all if you hadn't run
 the building into the ground in
 the first place. I mean, I hope
 you don't think you deserve a
 medal for this --

LOUIE
 (heatedly)
 No I do not think I deserve a
 medal, but it would be nice if
 just once you could just
 acknowledge that I'm not a total
 prick --

NAOMI
 (also heatedly)
 I did acknowledge it. I said it
 was nice, okay?

LOUIE
 Okay.

A beat. They look at each other for a moment. There's just
 the slightest hint that things are changing with the two of
 them. Just a hint.

BIG LOU
 What the fuck is going on here?

Big Lou has just come in the front door and he sees Louie
 surrounded by space heaters.

LOUIE
 The boiler broke.

BIG LOU
 (indicating the heaters)
 Who paid for these?

LOUIE
 I did.

BIG LOU
 You did. Why? What are you
 doing? They're going to eat you
 alive --

LOUIE
 Dad, you remember Miss Bensinger -
 -

BIG LOU

You know what's going to happen to these? They'll sell them in the morning. Did you take a count? What kind of fancy shit is this? Next week you can go back to the store and buy them all talking bathroom scales.

LOUIE

Stop --

BIG LOU

Also they got telephones that float in the swimming pool, they got electric shredders --

LOUIE

Listen to me! Listen! This is my building, okay? I run this building. I live here, I'm stuck here, I'm freezing to death here, I'm in jail here, and I want heaters and I'm getting heaters --

BIG LOU

So get yourself a heater. Get a jacket. Louie, I told you a thousand times, this is a slum. You can't change a slum. The people are a slum. The building's a slum. If you don't understand this, you can't ever run another building in my operation. You think you got tenants in this building? Wrong. You got terrorists. Never give in to terrorists. It's war, it's war out there. Owning a building is a war.

(to Naomi, who has been watching, horrified)
What are you looking at?

NAOMI

Nothing. I was just waiting for a quiet moment to say goodbye --

BIG LOU

Goodbye, okay? Goodbye. This was all probably your idea --

LOUIE

Her idea was that I should fix the boiler in the first place, which would have been a lot cheaper and easier --

As Naomi goes out the door.

BIG LOU
 (referring to the space
 heaters)
 Tomorrow they'll be frying eggs on
 them.

Louie looks at his father, goes into the wire mesh cage, sits
 down.

After a second, his father comes in, sits down next to him on
 a crate.

Hold on the two of them side by side, the wire mesh shadow on
 their faces.

BIG LOU
 You know what they say?

LOUIE
 "Wise men bribe judges."

BIG LOU
 No. I'm not referring to that
 particular "what they say." I'm
 referring to another "what they
 say." When worse comes to worse,
 pffft.
 (he makes the motion of
 striking a match)

LOUIE
 What are you saying?

BIG LOU
 I'm saying, When worse comes to
 worse, pffft.
 (he makes the match-striking
 motion again)

LOUIE
 (horrified)
 You're saying we should torch the
 building?

BIG LOU
 (cheerfully)
 Just the roof.

LOUIE
 (still horrified)
 Just the roof?

BIG LOU

Then we'll get a vacate order for the building -- it'll be uninhabitable -- and you won't have to live here any more. It's the easiest thing to do. I don't know why I didn't think of it in the first place. Much cheaper than bribing the judge, we get the insurance, and you're out of here.

Hold on Louie, thinking about this.

BIG LOU

(continuing)

Fire goes up, so no one would get hurt.

(beat)

If you care about that sort of thing.

LOUIE

And everyone in the building would have to find someplace else to live.

BIG LOU

In the short term, it would be financially hurtful.

LOUIE

For them.

BIG LOU

For us.

A long beat.

LOUIE

Who could we get to do it?

BIG LOU

Anyone you want.

Hold on them for a moment.

And then

CUT TO:

INT. MARLON'S DOOR - NIGHT

Marlon is standing in his doorway, talking to Louie.

LOUIE

I got a little financial proposition for you.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Marlon is looking around the roof as Big Lou and Louie watch.

BIG LOU

(to Louie)

You trust this guy? I don't want some amateur who rolls some gasoline under the door and lights a match.

LOUIE

Marlon, he doesn't want some amateur who rolls some gasoline under the door and lights a match.

MARLON

No problem, boss. We make a small firebomb, we put a timer on it, it's what you white people call state-of-the-art --

BIG LOU

(to Louie)

These guys will do anything for a buck.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Louie and Marlon walking down the street together. (Music here. Ticking clock music.) They go into an electronics store.

INT. ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

As Louie and Marlon picking out a device with a clock on it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Louie and Marlon on their way to a construction equipment warehouse.

INT. CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT WAREHOUSE - DAY

As they buy a detonator.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

As Marlon walks out with a two-gallon container that says Gasoline on it.

EXT. ROOF - LATE AFTERNOON

Pretty much as we last saw it, only there's a timing device attached to a detonator and Marlon has set the gasoline container in plain view somewhere.

INT. LOUIE'S APARTMENT - DUSK

Louie on the phone.

LOUIE

Dad, it's me.... We got a problem here.... Marlon's upset, he doesn't think we're paying him enough ...

INT. BIG LOU'S OFFICE - DUSK

BIG LOU

I knew it. I knew we should have hired Frankie's guy. I'll be right there --

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - DUSK

As Big Lou drives his Cadillac out of a garage and burns rubber as it turns uptown.

EXT. UPTOWN - DUSK/NIGHT

As the Cadillac speeds uptown, swerving to avoid pedestrians, etc.

EXT. 151ST STREET - NIGHT

As Big Lou pulls up in front of the building, parks in a No Parking space, jumps out of the car, locks all the car alarms.

INT. BUILDING - NIGHT

Big Lou runs up the stairs.

Out of breath, Big Lou finishes climbing the steps to the top floor. He opens the door to the roof and goes onto:

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Marlon is standing there. He is ankle-deep in a pile of rags and newspapers. The floor around him is wet, apparently with gasoline.

Marlon reaches down and from the rags removes a black plastic device with a gauge and exposed batteries.

BIG LOU

You listen to me, you little fuck,
I paid you good money to torch
this building, we agreed on the
price, don't you try to screw me
out of any more money, you're
making top dollar for this.

MARLON

No problem, boss. We're all set
to go.

BIG LOU

(confused)

I thought there was a problem.

MARLON

Absolutely not.

BIG LOU

Oh.

(a beat as he looks around,
still puzzled)

Where's Louie?

MARLON

Let's go. Let's burn the fucker
down.

BIG LOU

He said there was a problem.

MARLON

There's no problem.

BIG LOU

So when do we do it?

MARLON

The detonator's set for --
(he looks at the timer)
8:05.

BIG LOU

What time is it now?

MARLON

8:04.

(beat)

Catch!

Marlon throws the detonator at Big Lou.

Instinctively, Big Lou catches it. Looks at it. Realizes
it's about to go off.

He throws it back at Marlon, who catches it and throws it back to him.

Big Lou throws it back to Marlon.

Marlon throws it back to Big Lou.

Big Lou throws it back to Marlon.

LOUIE'S VOICE

Dad --

Big Lou whirls to see Louie.

BIG LOU

Louie -- this thing's about to go off --

Marlon throws the device to Louie, who catches it.

BIG LOU

Get rid of it! Throw it back to him!

LOUIE

Dad, this thing is a radio.

BIG LOU

Huh?

Louie shows it to Big Lou. It's a simple radio with a clock in it. In the dim light it passed as a timing device.

BIG LOU

Where's the detonator?

LOUIE

There is no detonator.

BIG LOU

How are we supposed to burn the building down without a detonator?

LOUIE

We're not going to burn the building down.

BIG LOU

What's going on?

Davis Gordon, the young filmmaker, steps out from behind a structure on the roof, holding his camcorder. He takes a cassette of film out of the camera, tosses it to Louie.

LOUIE
You got what we need?

DAVIS
I got it all.

LOUIE
I hope you shot it right side up -
-

DAVIS
Take a look at it --

From the shadows of the roof, Davis produces a TV and VCR which are plugged in.

Louie puts the tape Davis just tossed him into the VCR, fast forwards it to the right point.

On the TV we can see BIG LOU saying, "You listen to me, you little fuck, I paid you good money to torch this building, we agreed on the price, don't you try to screw me out of any more money, you're making top dollar for this."

LOUIE
Nice, Davis. I knew you could shoot a movie if you put your mind to it.

(to his father)
I'm going to fix up this building. I'm going to bring it up to code. You got any problem with this, I'm going to turn this tape over to the police and send you to jail for attempted arson.

BIG LOU
You would do this to me?

LOUIE
And I want you to fix up your other buildings too. I want everything brought up to code. I want the boilers humming.

BIG LOU
You would send me to jail?

LOUIE
And I want the brass polished, there are brass fixtures in this building, do you realize that?
(MORE)

LOUIE (CONT'D)

There are brass fixtures because the guy who built this building spent a little extra because he knew it would make the people who lived here feel good --

BIG LOU

You would send your own father to jail?

LOUIE

Yes.

BIG LOU

I can't believe it. Wait til I tell your mother. I can't believe it...

(continued)

A tear falls down Big Lou's face.

He rushes to Louie and embraces him, kisses him on both cheeks. Tears roll down Big Lou's face.

BIG LOU

(continued)

Finally, the son I hoped for!
Finally a person I can turn a business over to! Finally someone who can follow in my footsteps! A man who would send his own father to jail!

(through tears)

A landlord!

Hold on Big Lou, joyful through his tears.

Marlon and Davis and Tito watch incredulously.

And now hold on Louie, eyes wide open, in his father's embrace.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING - DAY

The building as we originally saw it. Covered with graffiti and dirt, not painted since God knows when, and hold on the building for a PROCESS SHOT in which:

The graffiti disappear.

The building is suddenly newly-painted.

There's a new door with a lock.

The boarded windows are replaced with new windows.

The horrible gates on the windows are replaced with painted wrought iron.

There are flowers growing in pots on the fire escapes.

And the brass fixtures sparkle in the sun.

A limousine pulls up in front of the building.

Louie comes out of the building, dressed for an evening out.

Behind him are several of the building's tenants -- Stubbs, Goode, Gilliam, Leotha, Tito, Eleanor, Coleman and Marlon -- also all dressed up.

They all pile into the limousine, like clowns at the circus, an amazing number of people manage to get into this car before it pulls away --

CUT TO:

EXT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - DUSK

As the limousine pulls up and disgorges its passengers, we see on the sidewalk, a REPORTER from Entertainment Tonight.

TV REPORTER

We're here in front of Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art where the Young Filmmaker Awards are being given out, and I have here with me New York's newest media star Davis Gordon, first-prize winner of this prestigious award.

(continued)

We see Davis, in a suit jacket, but still wearing his hat and scarf, standing next to the reporter.

TV REPORTER

(continued)

Mr. Gordon is being honored for his short film about his landlord, which is called --

AND CUT TO:

A SCREEN THAT SAYS: KRITSKI.

A FILM BY DAVIS GORDON.

And now we want to see virtually the entire movie (2-3 minutes long) that Davis Gordon has made, a funky, spirited short that begins with a montage of lopsided shots of Louie

(singing his song about Harlem, getting out of his Corvette, swearing wildly when it's stolen, shouting insults at Davis, etc.) as a rap song called "Kritski" begins, and we cut from the montage to the people performing the rap song -- Goode, Stubbs and Gilliam, sitting in chairs against the wall.

The song, which someone like Roy Blount should write, should be a funny piece of doggerel about Kritski's experiences, and the experiences of the people in the building, and when the song ends, Gilliam begins to speak:

GILLIAM

Love your enemies. Pray for those
who persecute you. In that way
you will be acting as true sons of
your Father in heaven.

(continued)

And now we go back to more shots of Louie -- glimpses of him cleaning the tiles inside the building, supervising the painters and carpenters, polishing the brass, and finally teaching Tito to ride a new bicycle, as Gilliam continues:

GILLIAM

(continued, voiceover)

For he gives his sunlight to the
evil and the good, and sends rain
on the evil and the unjust too.
If you love only those who love
you, what good is that? Even
scoundrels do that much. If you
are friendly only to your friends,
how are you different from anyone
else? Even the heathen do that.
But you are to be perfect, even as
your Father in heaven is perfect.

Goode and Stubbs ad lib agreement, voiceover: "Yeah, maybe you're right." "I guess you got a point." "Thank you, Manford." And now, in the film, we see Gilliam.

GILLIAM

That, of course, was the Sermon on
the Mount from the Book of
Matthew. Not the King James
version, but one of twenty great
passages from the New Testament
translated into contemporary idiom
especially for this edition.
Nineteen ninety-five, or, for a
limited time only, two for thirty-
six dollars.

LEOTHA
How many times do I have to tell
you, button it up.

AND AS THE FILM ENDS

And we hear APPLAUSE

WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

As the audience applauds the end of Davis Gordon's film. Davis stands, and as the applause swells, he beckons toward Louie, suggesting he rise --

Louie is sitting with Naomi. He looks around. Then he stands and looks around and as he starts to wave,

FREEZE FRAME ON HIM

AND FADE OUT.