

INT. BALLROOM - BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - NIGHT

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE as 500 white men cheer for their superhero, MICHAEL MILKEN, who stands on stage holding a mike beneath a CEILING-HIGH LIVE VIDEO PROJECTION of *himself*--on stage holding a mike. He is short, toupeed, nasal-voiced, uncomfortable in the spotlight and yet loving it, all of which the fevered crowd goes NUTS for as he waves, gives thumbs up and waits for them to settle.

MILKEN

Because that is what I'm talking about!

(more cheers, he calms them)

Enough of corporate big wigs making all the dough! We deserve a little dough for ourselves, and better yet, we deserve a lotta goddam dough!

TITLE: "MICHAEL MILKEN'S PREDATORS BALL, 1987, BEVERLY HILLS"

MILKEN

(quieting the crowd)

High yield securities, gentlemen. That's the name of the game here. That's how we save corporate America from becoming a self-serving *oligarchy*. And if we work together we are a force to be reckoned with. The combined buying power in this room right now? A *TRILLION DOLLARS!*

Again the crowd erupts as Milken smiles, messianic--

MILKEN (CONT'D)

That is how the weak become strong and the strong become weak. No prey too large, no predator too inconsequential!

(more cheers--)

Thank you, bless you--and now let us party like it's 19-frickin'-99!

--as the Prince song explodes and the men go wild...

INT. CORRIDOR - BEVERLY HILLS HILTON - SAME

Milken steps from the ballroom and is greeted by his entourage, including his PA who steps forward holding a huge, 1980's cell phone.

PA

Sir, Reginald Lewis returning your call.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Milken glances at his watch and decides to take it--

MILKEN
(into the phone, big and broad)
Just the man I've been wanting to talk
to! I read the article: Mazel Tov!

CUT TO:

REGINALD LEWIS, 44, brash, fierce, funny, a force of nature.
He's sitting in a leather recliner at his East Hampton
mansion smoking a Cuban cigar and luxuriating in this call.

(Cut back & forth as Milken walks and talks--)

REG
You read the *Times* article?

MILKEN
I did, and that's why I called, Reg,
'cause I just wanna know just *one* thing:
How the *hell-on-earth* did you do that? A
90-to-1 turnaround on a *home sewing*
company? What are you Doug frickin'
Henning--I wanna know how you did it!

REG
You shoulda' backed me when you had the
chance.

MILKEN
I thought I was doing you a favor with
the bluff!--

REG
You were, it's what brought Bear Stearns
around.

MILKEN
Good--so are you gonna tell me?

REG
You wanna know how I did it?

MILKEN
I wanna know how you did it.

REG
Well then you gotta go back to the night
I met my wife. 'Cause the fact is, it's
all about her.

Off Milken, unsure he's ready for this...as we CUT TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

FLASHBACK to 21 years earlier. A young Reg sits with his best pal RICARDO OLIVAREZ and two beautiful Filipino women, LOIDA and IMELDA. For Reg and Loida, it's a blind date and thus a bit awkward.

TITLE: "NEW YORK CITY, 1968"

RICARDO

So yeah, Reg works with me at Paul Weiss,
he's actually on the fast track for
partner--you know how they love their
Harvard Law guys--and I just thought you
two would really hit it off--
(looking at Reg and Loida)
And of course Imelda told me how great
her sister was.

Loida smiles shyly; Reg tries to fill the silence.

REG

So where are you guys living?

IMELDA

At the Aberdeen Hotel.

LOIDA

With our mother.

REG

Your mother's here?

IMELDA

She came from the Philippines to stay
with us while I finish my masters.

REG

That must be a lotta fun.

IMELDA

(missing the sarcasm)
My mother wants Loida to marry an
American to get her green card.

--as everyone looks at Reg.

LOIDA

I will only marry the man I love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
(charming)
I feel exactly the same way; except
about women.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - SAME

The two couples stand, unsure how to end the evening.

RICARDO
So...I'm thinking maybe Imelda and I will
take a little Manhattan stroll.

REG
Gotcha'. Well in that case, why don't I
just walk Loida back to her hotel?
("innocent")
Although we're not far from my place if
you wanna see those paintings I was
talking about earlier.

LOIDA
Umm. OK. Yes. That would be nice.

REG
Tremendous--great! We'll see you guys
later!

--as he holds out his arm for Loida--and they stroll away,
leaving Ricardo and Imelda standing there.

INT. REG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sinatra's *Strangers In The Night* plays on Reg's tiny
turntable as he and Loida stand before pretty much the only
nice thing in Reg's tiny, overstuffed apartment: a Helge
Strufe watercolor.

REG
I got it during a summer in Paris while I
was at Harvard Law. The colors staggered
me and I've been in love with Strufe ever
since.

Loida nods as Reg pulls a bottle of champagne from his mini-
fridge and pours two glasses. It's all going a bit quick.

REG (CONT'D)
(handing her a glass)
So how do you like America?

LOIDA
It's very...fast-moving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

Indeed--

--and then, with great self-assurance, Reg smoothly moves in for a kiss. Loida goes with it for several moments, but then Reg literally lifts her up and begins carrying her toward his tiny bedroom. She starts screaming and banging her fists against his back--

LOIDA

GET OFF ME YOU MONSTER, HOW DARE YOU??!
LET ME DOWN!!!

Reg lets her go as she squirms away, still yelling as she storms out the door--

EXT. WEST VILLAGE STREET - SAME

Loida bursts from the building and runs into the street with her hand up for a cab. Reg follows, pleading innocent--

REG

I just thought you might want a break
from your Mom's hotel!

--Loida steps way out into the street to ensure that a coming cab stops to avoid hitting her. It does and she climbs in--

REG (CONT'D)

Don't be mad, it's 1968!--*Women's Lib!*

--but the cab is gone.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - PAUL, WEISS LAW FIRM - DAY

Reg arrives at his windowless office and sees an "Aberdeen Hotel" envelope on his desk. He opens and reads as we hear--

LOIDA (O.S.)

"Reginald, I never want to see you again.
I will only have intimate relations with
the man who will be my husband. I will
always remember you with fond memories.
Loida."

A KNOCK on Reg's door; he looks up to see Ricardo.

RICARDO

What the hell did you do last night?

REG

I was trying to show her some New York
hospitality.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICARDO

She says you tried to "make love" to her.
(Reg can't help but smile)
You're gonna mess things up for me with
her sister, man.

REG

(re: the letter)
C'mon, she wrote me a letter saying
she'll always have fond memories!
(Ricardo scans the letter)
Can you get her on the phone?

RICARDO

Why?

REG

'Cause I think I can fix this but there's
no way she'll take my call.

Reg has handed him the phone and is already dialing the
number off the envelope.

RICARDO

What do I say?

REG

Just get her on and pass it over.

RICARDO

(into phone, with skepticism)
Hi, Magdalena Nicolas please.
(he waits, shaking his head)
...Hi, Mrs. Nicolas, this is Ricardo
Olivarez, the friend of your daughter
Imelda? But I was actually wondering if
I could talk to *Loida*?

Silence a moment...then he quickly hands the phone to Reg,
who clears his throat, straightens his tie and puts on his
best "gentleman lawyer" voice.

REG

Hello?...*Heeey*, *Loida*, it's Reg Lewis. I
just want to say I'm sorry if I was, ah,
abrupt last night; and if I *was*, I will
honestly do *anything* to make it up to
you.

--off Reg, his face slowly spreading into a wide smile.

INT. REG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Reg in a chef's hat with a Philippine cookbook in one hand and a spatula in the other as Miles Davis cranks on his turntable. After a moment the buzzer rings. He lowers the music, answers--and finds Loida and her *Mom*, MAGDALENA, a very serious 65 year-old Filipino woman.

REG

Oh--Jesus--

(but then adjusting on the fly)

Welcome, ladies! Come on in!

They enter as he dashes to cut the music. Loida seems embarrassed.

LOIDA

My mother would like to ask questions.

REG

Great--OK--shoot!

Magdalena turns to him with great severity.

MAGDALENA

Are you American?

REG

Yes ma'am.

MAGDALENA

Did you really go to Harvard?

REG

Indeed I did, ma'am. I have a copy of my degree in the--

MAGDALENA

What are you making for dinner?

REG

Longannisa. It's Philippine sausage.

MAGDALENA

I know what longannisa is.

REG

Good. Isn't it good?

MAGDALENA

Are you a homosexual?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
(off Loida's embarrassed look)
No, ma'am.

LOIDA
OK, Mother, you can go now.

As Loida ushers her out, she turns back--

MAGDALENA
I will be watching you from far away.

REG
I can already feel your eyes doing that.

MAGDALENA
(and then, re: Loida)
Good luck with *her*. She's tough.

INT. REG'S APARTMENT - LATER

Reg and Loida eat at a candlelit table. Music plays softly.

LOIDA
If you got my letter, why did you call?

REG
Because you said you'll always remember
me with "fond memories," so I wanted to
actually *give* you some before you go back
to the Philippines.

LOIDA
(a shy smile...then)
This is very good Philippine sausage.

REG
Thank you. Normally I'd make a joke
here, but I won't.

LOIDA
Thank you.
(pause)
So maybe you should tell me what kind of
girls you *usually* date?

Reg is momentarily caught off-guard as we--

QUICK-FLASHBACK TO REG, AGE 17, in bed with a 25 year-old
woman in her East Baltimore apartment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They are **SUDDENLY INTERRUPTED** by the sound of the front door opening--causing the woman to leap out of bed while madly gesturing for Reg to flee through the window--which he does in his boxers and nothing else--just as the woman's HUSBAND bursts in the room. But Reg is out the fire escape and away--

RETURN TO PRESENT--as Reg searches for words:

REG

Umm--well, I like *respectable* girls. How 'bout you?

QUICK-FLASH of Loida, age 16, leading an anti-USA rally in the Philippines against the visit of L.B.J. Young Loida is at the front of the crowd yelling at the top of her lungs: **"NO MORE AMERICAN IMPERIALISM!"** **RETURN TO PRESENT:**

LOIDA

...I like Filipino boys.
(off his look)
But I'm also open-minded.
(he smiles...)
And what are your goals in life?

REG

My *goals*? That's easier: I'm gonna be partner at my firm, I'm gonna buy a 1962 Hillman Minx convertible, which is the car I had in college but had to sell when they revoked my football scholarship--which I will *never* forgive them for--and then--and I'm just being honest with you here--I'm gonna make a *lotta lotta* money.

Pause as she takes all this in. Then:

LOIDA

Why?

REG

Why which part?

LOIDA

Why the "lotta lotta money"?

REG

Because the money in this country is *everyone's*. Which is something my grandfather taught me early: It don't just belong to the whitey white hairs. It belongs to *everyone*. And the fact is--I'm a part of *everyone*.
(pause; more demure)
What about you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LOIDA

Well, I speak French, Spanish and Tagalog, and I plan to use those skills to help people with their legal troubles, especially immigrants and the poor.

Reg regards her: Who *is* this woman? And yet he's intrigued.

REG

How good's your French?

LOIDA

How good is *yours*?

REG

(showing off, but sucking)
Bonjour, je m'appele Reg.

LOIDA

(a small smile...)
It's clearly much better than mine.
(politely changing the subject)
And what about marriage? Is that something that you-?

REG

No. Nope. Sorry--not the marrying type.
Too much else I gotta do. No kids; no marriage.

She looks at him, appreciating his bravado but perhaps realizing that it's just that. Meanwhile *he* regards her back-falling in love with her beauty, honesty and intelligence.

INT. LEMAZE CLASS - MANHATTAN - DAY

TITLE: "ONE YEAR LATER"

Reg helps Loida, 8 months pregnant, through her breathing exercises. They both wear wedding bands. Reg is dutiful and thoroughly into it, despite himself.

INT. LEMAZE CLASS - MANHATTAN - LATER

At a break, Reg sits alone, not sure what he's gotten himself into; across the room Loida finishes talking to a woman in an I.N.S. sweatshirt, and makes her way over.

REG

Who's that you were talking to?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA

She works for the Immigration and Naturalization Service. I told her I passed the State Bar and she said they're hiring. She gave me her card.

REG

Listen to me, baby: I work at one of the best firms in the city and I want you to enjoy this baby *while* it's still a baby. I'm gonna be partner any day, so don't worry: *We'll be fine.*

She smiles--appreciating his chivalry.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - PAUL, WEISS LAW FIRM - DAY

Reg sits before three older, white male partners at the firm.

REG

What're you talkin' about I'm not on partner track?

PARTNER #1

You've been here a year, Reg, you've been evaluated, we've tracked your hours, and I'm sorry to say it's not gonna happen.

REG

That's ridiculous, I'm a good lawyer--

PARTNER #2

You're a fine lawyer, but you're not a *great* one. We'd be happy to recommend you for a professorship at a university, which is a very respectable way to go. But as for partner, it's a no.

REG

I have been busting my butt here to be in a *courtroom*, not a classroom, Jim--

PARTNER #1

Reg. I'm sorry.

REG

(pause; then standing)
I'll tell you what, I know a firm where I can be partner my first goddam day!

PARTNER #1

Is that right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
Yes it is, and I'll tell you what else:
You ain't gonna be invited to the party,
Jim. It's gonna be a *big* goddam party--
and you will not be there! Trust me!

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

TITLE: "3 MONTHS LATER"

Reg and CHARLES CLARKSON, a white, wry, 30-something nebishy guy from Brooklyn, finish hanging, on an office suite door, a plaque that says: "LEWIS & CLARKSON." They shake as the IMAGE FREEZES---as we then hear:

REG (O.S.)
Charles, I just put in ten-thousand of my
very own dollars into this week's payroll
and I am *not* gonna sit here and listen to
you say it's OK to not be actively
recruiting more clients!

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

Reg's ragtag, overflowing office as he takes out his frustrations on the ever-beleaguered Charles--

REG
You do *not* build a law firm by sitting
around waiting for clients to walk
through the door!

CHARLES
I'm not saying we shouldn't recruit, Reg,
I'm just wondering out loud if we should
target our recruiting so that we--

REG
We are targeting it!--Black-owned firms,
Jews from your neighborhood, and anyone
else who needs me to kick some legal ass
on their behalf!

CHARLES
I understand.

REG
Good--now go "wonder aloud" in your own
office please.

Off Charles, somehow able to tolerate Reg's abuse.

INT. REG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Reg and Loida and their newborn infant try to make do in his still messy and tiny apartment. Reg is carrying a reading lamp from the bedroom to the living room.

REG
(plugging it in)
We have to buy another lamp.

LOIDA
But first we need more diapers.

REG
...Did we bounce a rent check today?

LOIDA
Yes, you hadn't told me the account was that low.

REG
You *knew* it was low, Loida--

LOIDA
Not *that* low.
(pause, cradling the baby)
Is it still too soon to discuss me getting a job?

REG
...Yes.

LOIDA
It would help, Reg. A lot.
(no answer)
We're 40-thousand dollars in debt to the hospital.

REG
I know that. I'm waiting for Leslie to grow up so she can help pay it back.

LOIDA
It's not her fault--

REG
I'm not the one who had difficulty being born!
(off Loida's look; lighter)
Why on earth insurance companies don't pay for something like that is beyond me. I mean, what if it had been worse and she *hadn't* turned out...beautifully.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA

I know, which is why if I had a job--

REG

Fine--get a job! But something's gotta change on *my* end too.

LOIDA

Like what?

REG

I dunno. But I gotta find a way to make more money.

INT. BASEMENT STORAGE ROOM - REG'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Reg in a 5x5 wire cubicle in the dank basement of his building, rummaging through dusty cardboard file boxes. Finally he finds an old term paper and quickly plucks it out. There is a handwritten "A" at the top.

QUICK-FLASHBACK to Reg, 24, in the front row of a huge auditorium as an ancient Harvard Law professor drones on--

LAW PROFESSOR

Mergers and acquisitions, gentlemen; and lady. For those of you who will enter corporate law, this will be your bread and butter, for America has always been about *takeover*; and for takeover to happen you need *lawyers*--who charge exorbitant fees for their services. But to *do* this you will need to understand *how and why* these takeovers occur.

Off Reg--absorbing every word, as we--

RETURN TO PRESENT: Reg in the basement--devouring his old term paper.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

Clarkson listens to another Reg diatribe--

REG

So here's the deal: I'm tired of handling *other* people's money. This firm could do that 'til the cows come home but it wouldn't make us *rich*. It would make us *fine*--but I don't wanna be fine, Charles, I wanna be rich. You wanna know why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLES

I'd love to.

REG

Because my grandfather taught me that the money in this country is *everyone's*--

CHARLES

You already told me this story--

REG

I know but I didn't tell you *how*. I was 16, working at the country club where my granddaddy was maitre'd his whole life--

INT. EXCLUSIVE COUNTRY CLUB - NIGHT

TITLE: "SUBURBAN COUNTRY CLUB, BALTIMORE, 1956"

FLASHBACK to a 16-year-old Reg hustling his butt off for a "refined" crowd white women ending their bridge-tournament. The party's HOSTESS signals for Reg to come to her. When he does, she holds out some folded money for him to take.

HOSTESS

Here. For all your very hard work.

REG

(accepting with a polite smile)
Thank you, ma'am.

As Reg heads for the kitchen, he peers down at the cash: \$2.

INT. KITCHEN - COUNTRY CLUB - SAME

Reg enters the kitchen where his grandfather, SAM COOPER, sips a late-night cup of coffee. Reg is irate--

REG

I hate this place and everybody in it!
(ripping the money in half and
throwing it to the floor)
I work 7 hours for a 2 dollar tip?!
Unacceptable! They ain't never gonna pay
me 'cause it's their money and they don't
want us havin' a penny!

SAM COOPER

Pick that up, boy.

Reg looks at him...and picks it up the four ripped pieces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM COOPER (CONT'D)

Give it here.

Reg does so. During the following, Sam tapes the dollar bills back together.

SAM COOPER (CONT'D)

Now you listen to me: I didn't fight for this country for you to think that way.

(holding up a bill)

What do you see on this money?

REG

A buncha' white guys.

SAM COOPER

What's next to that white guy right there?

REG

...Some scales.

SAM COOPER

That's right: Scales of *justice*; which come from Egypt; which ain't so white a country. Same for that pyramid right there: Egypt; i.e. *Africa*. And it's a *flat-top* pyramid, which the Mayans and Aztecs also built. And the Chinese.

None of those cultures were white, Reg.

We **QUICK-FLASH** to C.U.'s of these images as he speaks--

SAM COOPER (CONT'D)(O.S.)

Now look at that eagle there. A bird that was here before a single white man stepped foot on this soil. What's it got in its claws?--*Arrows*--a Native American weapon. And in the *other* claw?--an olive branch--*Mediterranean*. Five different cultures right there. And that--

(placing the dollar back in

Reg's hand)

--*is* why I fought for this country. The cultures of the world *right there on that dollar*. And that's why it's not theirs. It's *everyone's*, and you can have as *much* of it as you're willin' to work for.

Sam puts the second of the two dollars in his own pocket.

REG

...You're taking my other dollar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM COOPER

It ain't yours anymore, you threw it on the ground. But from here on, anytime you think you *can't* have their money, take that out and remind yourself you *can*.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - SAME

RETURN TO PRESENT as Reg points Charles' attention to a taped-together dollar in a frame on his wall.

REG

And that's why I'm changing things around here: I want more of their money. 'Cause it happens to be *mine* too.

CHARLES

And what exactly *are* you changing?

REG

No more representing the buyer. I wanna be the buyer. I've already targeted two companies: Parks Sausage outta Baltimore--
(handing Charles a prospectus)
Black owned, its founder ready to retire--
(another prospectus)
And a lawn furniture company in California called Almet. Low tech, high cash flow, good management--total winner.

CHARLES

And you wanna *buy* one these?

REG

Yes, Charles, I wanna buy one. What--you think I can't buy a company?

CHARLES

I'm sure you can, but can you *own* one? I mean, do you really know how to run a *sausage company*?

REG

I happen to be very good at making Philippine sausage.

CHARLES

Umm, OK. How about lawn furniture?

REG

...I'll figure it out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIEDRE (O.S.)
(via intercom)
Mr. Lewis, your 11 o'clock is here.

REG
Send him in!
(to Charles)
This guy runs a drug clinic in Harlem and
needs a lawyer. All fine and good, but
not my destiny, Charles. *Not my destiny.*

--as DIEDRE, Reg's secretary, knocks and enters followed by
SAMUEL PEABODY, a shy, rumped WASP of a man in his 60's.
Reg stands to greet him as Charles and Diedre leave.

REG (CONT'D)
Mr. Peabody?--Reg Lewis, have a seat.

PEABODY
Thank you for meeting me.

REG
My pleasure. So--you run a drug clinic
in Harlem?

PEABODY
A drug *rehab* clinic.

REG
Right--that's a better idea. And so you
want a black lawyer?

PEABODY
Well, I guess I thought it might be help.

REG
It will. Plus I'm good. I'm suing the
I.N.S. as we speak. Goddam Immigration
and Naturalization Service discriminated
against my wife 'cause she's Filipino.
Can you believe that?

PEABODY
Yes, I can, actually.

REG
(a smile...)
So you're a "do-gooder," huh?

PEABODY
I suppose. My mother spent a night in
jail with Dr. King in '63; in Florida.
So I guess there's a family tradition.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Reg gives him a long, hard look...and decides he likes him.

REG

Well I'd be happy to help you out.

--AS WE CUT BACK TO THE MILKEN PHONE CALL:

INT. LUXURY SUITE - BEVERLY HILLS HILTON - NIGHT

Milken has Reg on speaker phone and is looking a little worn down by the monologue he's on the other end of. His assistant pours him a scotch--

MILKEN

OK, Reg, you're veering off-story here. I'm interested in how you pulled off the McCall deal, not your pro-bono work for white guys helping black drug addicts.

CUT BACK to Reg, still in his Hamptons mansion--

REG

Correction--not pro-bono, the man was a *Peabody*, he could afford to pay, and believe me, I still needed the cash.

MILKEN

Fine--

REG

Point is, it's all important, so stick with me.

Milken's assistant hands him the cut-out NY Times article, HIGH-LIGHTING a sentence that reads: "Mr. Lewis, who has found himself abundant with cash, is looking for acquisitions." Milken reads it, covers the phone and speaks to the assistant--

MILKEN

Tell people I'll be down in a bit, I still gotta get to the "abundant with cash" part--

REG

Now where was I? Oh yeah--the *failures*:

INT. PARKS SAUSAGE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Reg, dressed to the nines, sits with the black owners of Parks Sausage. As we hear him continue to tell the story, we see his body language change accordingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG (V.O.)

I courted *both* those companies for over a year. I was down in Baltimore 7 times, tellin' 'em how I grew up there, showing 'em my old Colts jersey, charming the *hell* outta them! Finally I go down there with a gold-plated briefcase full of a one million *cash* down payment--and they tell me they're *selling to someone else*. I couldn't believe my ears. *Unacceptable!*

QUICK-FLASH on Reg dining with a white couple (Charles and Sue Cammer) in a fancy restaurant.

REG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And don't get me started on Almet. I sent flowers to the owner's wife for her goddam birthday! I had Chemical goddam bank wire in 5 million on a 7 million purchase, I show up for the closing with the rest and, and...oh Lord have mercy.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - ALMET HQ - DAY

A large room with a dozen suits, including Reg, Charles, Reg's lawyer TOM LAMIA, BILL CAMMER, Cammer's lawyers, local Chemical bank representatives, Almet execs... But this is primarily a showdown between Reg and Cammer, white, 60's.

TITLE: "ALMET HEADQUARTERS, VERNON, CALIFORNIA, 1980"

TOM

The subordinated debt will come with warrants to own 40 per cent of the company, with the additional 60 per cent of the company belonging to Mr. Lewis.

(shuffling papers)

Mr. Cammer's shares of Almet will transfer to Mr. Lewis at the time of the funds transfer, at which point Mr. Cammer's employer contract--

(holding up the contract)

--will kick in, making him chief operating officer but no longer part owner. Are we clear thus far?

Bill Cammer, cigarette in hand and sweat visible on his brow--

BILL CAMMER

Umm, yeah, I got a little something I need to, ah, to bring up.

(beat--everyone waiting)

I'm not gonna sign that contract.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stunned silence in the room; Reg waiting...

BILL CAMMER (CONT'D)
I've been thinking about it, talking to my upper level managers, and quite frankly feeling more and more uncomfortable with some of the lengths to which Mr. Lewis has been going. Lengths that I actually think equate to a form of, of under-the-table payments.

REG
(incredulous smile)
What the hell're you talking about, Bill?

BILL CAMMER
I don't think you're the right guy to own this company, Reg. Comes down to that.

TOM
Excuse me, but you've already signed the intent to sell--

BILL CAMMER
I'm not gonna sign that employer contract, and so I'm not gonna sign the contract of sale.

REG
Did you just say I've been paying you "*under the table*"?

BILL CAMMER
You offered to get my son a job in New York, you sent me a case of very expensive wine, you wanna hire me for, quite frankly, more than I'm worth, and you sent my wife flowers--and all of it's making me feel...uncomfortable.

REG
Please tell me this is a joke, Bill.

BILL CAMMER
It's not a joke.

CHARLES
(to Cammer's lawyers)
He can't do this, you realize that, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILL CAMMER

I still own the majority of this company
and I can do whatever I want.

CHARLES

You cannot bring people to the table
having signed an intent-to-sell and then
"change your mind" because someone sent
your wife flowers--

BILL CAMMER

It's more than just that, like I said
I've been talking to my managers and
they're not comfortable with Mr. Lewis'
experience in running this type of
company.

REG

You'll be the one running it, Bill!--
That's why I'm paying all that money to
keep you on!

BILL CAMMER

(still to Charles)

Mr. Lewis has failed to demonstrate a
knowledge and mastery of the leisure
furniture business--

REG

Why do you keep calling me, Mr. Lewis,
Bill?! We've been talking for a year!

BILL CAMMER

(still to Charles)

And without that knowledge, I'm not--

REG

Talk to me, Bill!--why do you keep
talking to *him*?!

TOM

This is a blatant breach of the agreed-
upon-

REG

TALK TO ME, BILL!

BILL CAMMER

I *am* talking to you, Reg, and I'm
changing my mind and so that's what I'm
doing!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The room is eerily silent. Stunned faces, including Bill's, who doesn't seem to believe he actually just did this.

TOM

(standing)

Well if that's the case, you should expect to be sued.

REG

(standing)

It's goddam unacceptable, Bill. I work on this for 12 months and then you insult me to my face by implying that I--

BILL CAMMER

I'm allowed to change my mind--

REG

And I'm allowed to sue you from the goddam top to the goddam bottom--

BILL CAMMER

Go 'head and try--

REG

I won't just try, I'll sue you everyday for the rest of my life, then I'll start comin' at you at you from the bottom of my goddam grave, Bill!

No response but for an icily defiant stare from Cammer. And then suddenly Reg juts up and goes after him with everything he's got, ready to tear him apart. Lamia and Charles attempt to hold him back but Reg is too much---he's almost at Cammer's throat and it's only the combined effort of the entire team of lawyers that finally manages to restrain him.

INT. WALKWAY - JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Reg, Clarkson and Lamia having just disembarked from their red-eye home. No one talks, Reg is near-catatonic. He half-gestures that he's going to the men's room.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - JFK

Reg washes his hands, splashes water on his face, looks at himself....and then collapses onto the floor.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NEW YORK - DAY

Reg lies asleep in a bed; Loida by his side. After several moments, he awakes. She gently touches his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

Hey.

LOIDA

Hi, my love.

REG

What happened?

LOIDA

You passed out in the airport men's room.

REG

...Sounds like a Merle Haggard song.

LOIDA

You've been working too hard, Reg. You need to...not do that.

REG

You heard what happened out there?

(she nods)

I don't know what they want from me.

LOIDA

They want your blood.

(touching the scar on his head

from where he fell)

And they got some.

(gentle)

You need to take a break.

REG

We can't afford it.

LOIDA

We can. We won the INS suit. The job, plus a year back-pay. I start on Monday.

Off Reg--finally, maybe, able to relax.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - BEVERLY HILLS HILTON - NIGHT

RETURN TO THE PHONE CALL--Milken on a headset phone finishing up at a urinal as his assistants wait patiently by the door.

MILKEN

How much time did you take off?

Reg in his Hamptons mansion fixing himself a jelly sandwich--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
Five years. Still ran the law firm but
no more takeover attempts.

MILKEN
Raised your daughter?

REG
Raised my daughter, eventually had
another, got the law firm on its feet, no
more hassle.

MILKEN
And then what?

REG
And then it was a nice spring day.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CHELSEA - NEW YORK - DAY

A nice spring day as Reg helps his 6 year-old daughter Leslie
learn to ride a bike.

TITLE: "SPRING - NEW YORK - 1985"

Reg is enjoying the day, his daughter, life. And then Leslie
loses her balance and falls off the bike. Reg crouches next
to her, near panic--

REG
Leslie, my little baby, you OK?

Leslie looks at him, struggling to hold back tears. She nods
bravely and starts to get up--

REG (CONT'D)
You don't have to get up, stay down if
you want, we'll take a break, no problem--

LESLIE
I wanna keep going.

REG
You don't have to, Leslie--

LESLIE
I wanna.

And with that she determinately stands, picks up the bike and
gets back on. Without waiting for Reg's help, she pushes
forward and starts wobble-peddling away, somehow managing to
keep her balance...as Reg watches with enormous pride--and
admiration.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He then sees Loida emerge from the front door of their newly purchased brownstone. He shouts to her--

REG
THIS GIRL'S A CHAMP, LOIDA! REFUSES TO
GIVE UP 'TIL SHE FIGURES IT ALL OUT!

LOIDA
Is she OK?

REG
She musta' fallen 10 times but keeps
gettin' right back up.

LOIDA
Lewis's don't quit. For better or worse.
(and then)
Ricardo Olivarez is on the phone.

Reg looks up, pleasantly surprised to hear that name.

REG
Ricardo? What the hell's *he* callin' for?

INT. REG'S BROWNSTONE - CHELSEA - SAME

Reg in his home office on the phone. (We cut back and forth with his old friend Ricardo, who is by a pool in California.)

REG
How're you doin', buddy? Been awhile!

RICARDO
All good, all good, how's the family?

REG
Couldn't be better.

RICARDO
I still can't believe you married Loida
after you tried to "make love" to her on
your first date; and meanwhile *I* never
saw Imelda again.

REG
Certain things are meant to be, man.

RICARDO
Listen--I know you're not in the buyout
game anymore, but I got an opportunity
you might wanna look at.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

It's no longer my thing, Ricardo--

RICARDO

I know, I know, but *this*--this is so bad
it's good. The *ultimate* takeover target.

Off Reg--looking through his office window to the sidewalk outside, where Leslie stubbornly continues to fall and ride, fall and ride--as we hear:

RICARDO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's The McCall Pattern Company.

As Ricardo continues speaking, we see the FOLLOWING IMAGES:

--Reg on a treadmill reading prospectuses.

RICARDO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They do home sewing patterns so
housewives can duplicate the stuff that
they can't afford to buy in stores.

--Reg entering his law office at 6 a.m. with cups of coffee.

RICARDO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Their plant's in Kansas but the sellers
are Playtex up in Connecticut.

--Reg at a fancy dinner with a pompous white power broker.

RICARDO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

All I'm saying is, you might wanna take a
look.

--Reg reading in bed next to an already sleeping Loida.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

Reg stands behind his desk addressing Charles and two new employees, KEVIN WRIGHT, 25, black; and LAURIE NELSON, 32, white and Jewish.

REG

Kevin, Laurie--welcome to the team. In
addition to your legal duties, you'll
also be helping in my quest to buy The
McCall Pattern Company.

CHARLES

(raising his hand)

Excuse me, but are you "thinking" about a
bid or are you already in process?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

In process.

CHARLES

And you're sure that's a great idea?

REG

What wouldn't be great about it?

CHARLES

Uh, it's a *home sewing* company?

REG

Elucidate.

CHARLES

I can't name one person who still sews
their own clothes. I mean--

(looking to Laurie and Kevin)

--do you guys know people who sew?

KEVIN

I once sewed a hole in my *jeans*. It was
like a tiny little--

LAURIE

No--I never sew. *Ever*.

CHARLES

I'm just saying, it's like with the lawn
chair company, shouldn't one make sure
one fully understands the business one's
taking on *before* one takes it on?

REG

(strong)

Lots of people sew, Charles.

CHARLES

Like who?

REG

My mother?!

CHARLES

Maybe your mother sewed back in the
fifties, but does she sew *now*?

REG

Don't talk about my mother, Charles.

CHARLES

OK, Reg--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REG

Listen to me: We are making a bid on
this company come hell or high water!
It's a *good* company, I want the company,
so get on the goddam bus!

(to Kevin and Laurie)

Are you two on the bus?

Off Kevin and Laurie, nodding from intimidation.

INT. DINING ROOM - REG'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Reg has laid out another one of his candlelit dinners for
Loida, who sits as he brings out a sizzling dish.

REG

Braised lamb shank. With new baby
potatoes. I think you'll love it.

LOIDA

Thank you, Reg, it's looks gorgeous.

He sits, pours wine...

LOIDA (CONT'D)

Are you planning on telling me why you're
doing this?

REG

I'm doing it because I love you.

(she waits for more...)

Well, I *did* also want to raise with you
the topic of, of a potential *business*
opportunity that I've stumbled across.

LOIDA

Is that why Ricardo called?

REG

Yes.

LOIDA

Hmm hmm. So what is it?

REG

(with great enthusiasm)

A *home sewing pattern company!*

(she remains expressionless)

Listen--the firm is doing well, you have
a great job, I'm very relaxed--look at me--
I'm relaxed! Don't you think it's time
I took another shot? As you said,
Lewis's don't quit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA

I'm not so sure it's a good idea.

REG

I'll take it easy, I won't stress--

LOIDA

It's not that, I just don't want you getting burned again. I don't want your firm going bankrupt, I don't want our entire savings going into *down-payments*--

REG

I'll be more ready this time, no stone unturned. It's a once-in-a-lifetime shot.

LOIDA

(pause)

I would like to just suggest, Reg, that *if* you do this...you use more guile.

REG

Guile?

LOIDA

Guile.

(pause)

It seems clear to me that, five years ago, they weren't comfortable selling their lawn chair company to a black man.

REG

Wait a minute, the sausage company was *black-owned* and they *still* didn't sell--

LOIDA

Yes, they were black and they *still* didn't sell to a black man. So what I'm suggesting *this* time is--lead from behind. Catch them a off-guard...and maybe you'll have more success.

Off Reg--taking this in.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

Reg stands with charts and graphs before a conference table around which are Charles, Kevin and Laurie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

As Charles knows, this law firm has made its bread and butter representing black-owned companies, but every now and then we've encountered a *white*-owned company seeking access to minority programs by fronting a black man as their CEO. A despicable and hypocritical practice.

(turning to a chalkboard)

But when you flip the tables, I somehow find it not so offensive.

(diagramming the plan)

We will be a *black*-owned finance group bidding on McCall--fronting *white* investors.

Silence in the room a moment, then Charles raises his hand.

CHARLES

You mean you're gonna find some white schmuck to mollify the sellers?

REG

Not just *some* white schmuck--

He nods to the door--and Sam Peabody walks in.

REG (CONT'D)

--a very *pedigreed* white schmuck--who also happens to be a good friend.

All turn to Sam, who smiles a little--as MUSIC KICKS IN:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

--Reg and Peabody entering a towering, glass office building.

--Reg and Peabody waiting in the BEAR STEARNS reception area.

--Reg in the Bear Stearns bathroom looking in the mirror and wondering if he can pull it off.

--Reg and Peabody *still waiting* at Bear Stearns.

--Reg sitting by "subserviently" as Peabody struggles to make his case to Bear Stearns executives.

--Reg late-night in his office tirelessly working the phones.

--Reg at a restaurant pitching a wealthy white investment banker--who starts shaking his head as Reg talks.

--Reg arriving at LAX and met by his old friend Ricardo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

--Reg arriving *back* at JFK, looking exhausted.

--Reg berating Charles, Kevin and Laurie to work even harder.

--Reg at night on a subway, barely awake, studying a dossier.

INT. RESTAURANT/LOUNGE - HARVARD CLUB - DAY

Reg sits opposite NILES MCLAUGHLIN, 50's, blue blazer, gray hair, an attitude of superiority: The epitome of WASP.

REG

Look, Mr., McLaughlin--

NILES

Call me Niles, after all, we're both Harvard men, are we not?

REG

Great--Niles--my hope is for your group to come in for a *quarter* of the bid, thus giving us credibility with Bear Stearns so that *they* step up with the rest.

NILES

(patronizing smile)

Reg, I'd *like* to help you, I really would.

REG

OK--

NILES

But I'm not coming in for 5 million.

REG

Is it a question of liquid--?

NILES

No. Certainly not. It's just...

REG

It's what?

NILES

I don't believe in the company. And don't take that personally, but--*home sewing?* I mean---c'mon.

(and then, semi-genuine)

That said, I'll try and think of other ways to help you.

Reg is, for once, too tired to be anything but speechless.

INT. REG'S HOME OFFICE - CHELSEA - NIGHT

Reg, on the phone, late-night, at the end of his rope.

REG

Listen, Ricardo, bottom line is that Bear Stearns still hasn't come through and I'm starting to wanna kill someone. I can't get any other investors, meaning it's still you and Peabody as my front-men but I got no *beef*. I need *ideas*. ...Hmm
hmm...hmm hmm...*Michael Milken?*

INT. "PARTY ROOM" - BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - NIGHT

RETURN TO THE PHONE CALL. Milken is now at an after-party surrounded by associates getting lap dances. (Cut back & forth with Reg in his Hamptons mansion.)

MILKEN

Ah hah! I *knew* I played a part somewhere in this.

REG

You saved my life.

MILKEN

All I did was offer a bluff.

REG

You got 'em to take me seriously, which no one was doin'. It was also my first time in Beverly Hills.

INT. MILKEN'S OFFICE - DREXEL - DAY

TITLE: "BEVERLY HILLS, 1985"

Reg, in shades, walking along Wilshire Boulevard in all its sun-soaked glamour and insanity. He arrives at a building and regards the enormous sign: *DREXEL BURNHAM LAMBERT*.

INT. DREXEL OFFICES - SAME

An assistant leads Reg toward Milken's office through the buzzing Drexel trading floor. Reg takes it all in like a boy at a candy shop. Milken--41, all short swagger and big smiles--has come to the door of his lavish corner office to greet him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILKEN

Reginald Lewis?--Michael Milken, pleasure to meet you, a friend of Ricardo's is a friend of mine. Come on in.

INT. MILKEN'S OFFICE - DREXEL - SAME

Milken at his famous X-shaped desk, before which Reg sits listening patiently.

MILKEN

Reg?--Reginald?--Reg?--I never sleep more than 4 hours a night. Would I *like* to?--Sure. Would I like to be a professional clown?--Yes I actually would but I also wouldn't make the kind of money I make and quite frankly I wouldn't derive---form of the word derivitive--I wouldn't *derive* the same electric *pulse* I do from arriving here each morning at 4 a.m.

Milken pretends to pull a rose from Reg's ear.

MILKEN (CONT'D)

Look what I found! I can still be an *amateur* clown--point is, I can imagine you're a hard worker too; Ricardo thinks the world of you and you wouldn't have come all the way out here if you didn't take this game *unbelievably* seriously.

REG

Thank you, Mr. Milken.

MILKEN

You need to call me Mike.

REG

No problem, Mike.

MILKEN

Tell me what those little schmucks at Bear Stearns are doing for you.

REG

Well they're not doing much. I need a 20 million dollar loan on top of a million capital, and they're not coming through.

MILKEN

Well that's not a nothing loan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

I know how to turn this company around.

MILKEN

Home sewing?

REG

Their numbers are solid: Annual sales of 12 million, profit at a million, 3-plus in cash on the end-of-the-year sheet.

Milken reviews a dossier that Reg has brought along...

MILKEN

I'm not gonna back you on this, Reg.

(off Reg's look)

But I'll offer to. Tell 'em Drexel's prepared to put up 21 million if *they* don't spring by the end of the month.

REG

...Really?

MILKEN

I hate Bear Stearns, hate 'em with a passion. Should we go to lunch?

INT. VERY HIGH END RESTAURANT - BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

Milken and Reg eat \$30 salads as Milken keeps talking.

MILKEN

The point is--

(leaning in, lowering voice)

I am dedicated to helping traditionally marginalized people such as yourself, and do you wanna know why? Because it is my mission--a word I don't use lightly--it is my *mission* to find and grant access to people who have never *had* access. There are very few financial institutions that decide who *can* and *can't* have access, and as *head* of one of those institutions, I want you to know that I am *dedicated* to making it happen for people such as yourself. And it's not because you're black, Reg, it's because you're *disenfranchised*--and guess what?--I don't like disenfranchisement.

(going big again)

I wanna give it to the *small* guys, Reg! The medium-sized companies who deserve the capital to go for something *huge*.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILKEN (CONT'D)

Because capital is not a scarce resource.
It's out there and it shouldn't be
exclusive. You play football as a kid?

REG

I did.

MILKEN

Not me, I was a cheerleader, but I can
still make an analogy, which is that if
you have two stellar quarterbacks, either
of whom could be your starter, what do
you think you should do?

REG

Ah--play each for one half?

MILKEN

WRONG--you lend one to the CFL for half a
season, you help that team win a bunch of
games, you make everyone *around* him that
much better, and then come playoff time,
who knows, maybe that CFL team sends back
the QB *plus* an improved lineman or 2 who
very much might come in handy. Right?
It's about putting *in* to get more *out*.

REG

(a smile, not disagreeing)
I hear you, Michael.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - DAY

Reg and Milken ready to part ways beneath the radiant LA sun.

MILKEN

I'm glad you came out, I like your style.

REG

I like yours too.

MILKEN

Keep me posted on the schmucks at Bear
Stearns.

REG

I will.

MILKEN

You like LA?

REG

No. I'm from Baltimore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILKEN

Baltimore's a shithole, Reg.

REG

Yeah, but it's *my* shithole.

Milken smiles, genuinely taken by Reg. He extends his hand.

MILKEN

I wanna work with you someday. I think you know what you're doing a helluva lot more than *most* people doing this.

REG

I'd be lucky to be on your team.

MILKEN

Don't gimme that false humility B.S., you wouldn't be "on my team" for all the tea in China. You're more likely to *buy* China yourself and flip it for a 10 to-one profit.

REG

(not disagreeing)

I *do* see some room for improvement over there.

They continue shaking, appreciating each other's candor.

MILKEN

All right, Reg. Have a good flight back.

INT. CORRIDOR - JFK - DAY

Reg returns to New York with a bounce in his step, barking into a giant 1980's cell phone.

REG

Listen to me close 'cause I'm only gonna say it once more: Milken personally reviewed the prospectus and is ready with a 21 million pledge because he feels that McCall is--and I'm quoting him--"a no-brainer investment." Now he understands that I approached you all first and wants to respect that 'cause he respects Bear Stearns, but his generosity and integrity is only gonna last so long.

(Reg listens...and then)

Good, call me back when you decide.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He shuts off the phone and continues walking--silently pumping his fist into the air.

EXT. INTERSTATE 95 - CONENCTICUT - DAY

BIRD'S EYE of a long, black limousine making its way north.

INT. LIMOUSINE - SAME

Reg inside with Charles and Tom Lamia, his lawyer. Reg is visibly nervous.

REG

So remember, Tom, you're here as my *associate*, not my lawyer.

TOM

You've told me that ten times.

REG

We refer to our clients as "the private investment group," but if pressed, their names are Peabody and Olivarez.

CHARLES

And they each put up ten grand for a 21 million dollar company--

REG

We do not say that!--

CHARLES

I'm kidding--

REG

We do not provide financial breakdowns--

TOM

Nor the fact that you used your house as collateral for a half-million dollar loan.

REG

Especially not that. I'm a humble lawyer working on behalf of very wealthy clients.

CHARLES

And why *isn't* Peabody coming?

REG

He gets too nervous; you shoulda' seen him at Bear Stearns. He was *shaking*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM

Look, all they'll wanna see today is the Bear Stearns loan guarantee.

REG

(holding up his briefcase)

Thank you Mr. Milken. If those schmucks hadn't come through I don't know what I woulda' done. But now---we're golden.

Clarkson and Tom nod their heads and smile; kind of.

EXT. PLAYTEX WORLD HEADQUARTERS, STAMFORD, CT. - SAME

--the limo pulls up to the door of the huge, shiny glass building of PLAYTEX INTERNATIONAL, where two doormen step forward to open the limo doors. Reg steps out, filling his lungs with air, jutting forth his chest, ready for battle.

INT. SMALL CONFERENCE ROOM - PLAYTEX HQ - DAY

Reg, Tom and Charles sit across from a formidable corporate line-up of no less than FIVE Playtex execs who aren't taking Reg's motley crew very seriously. Paperwork covers the table.

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

(as he studies a document)

So what you're telling me is that your buyers are staking only one million of the 21 million asking price?

REG

That's correct, but as you can see, Bear Stearns is fully backing the loan--

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

I know that part.

REG

And as you can see, McCall is in solid financial shape, with three million cash on the end-of-the-year--

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

We know that; we own the company.

REG

Right. So it's really just a matter of--

PLAYTEX EXEC #2

I don't think your group's in a position to do this, Mr. Lewis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

Well we are. *They* are, without question--

PLAYTEX EXEC #2

They're over-leveraged. Plain and simple. It's too big a loan.

TOM

(stepping in with "calm")
Sir, with all due respect, the investment group is an experienced, hands-on--

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

Who *is* the investment group, Mr. Lewis?

REG

I'm sorry?

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

Who are they? *Who* are the buyers you're representing?

REG

Is that relevant to the bid?

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

You're damn right it's relevant.

REG

We have a 20 million dollar loan pledge from one of the most respected investment firms in the *country*, so I don't think you can question the integrity or credibility of the buyers in question.

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

Well I can, and I am. They're too leveraged.

Reg tries very hard not to blow a gasket. He looks at Tom and Charles, who silently caution him to keep his cool.

REG

We have a 20 million dollar loan pledge.

PLAYTEX EXEC #3

We understand that, Reginald, but you're not the *only* bidders in the game, and we have to know that the group we're selling to has a certain quality of financial durability.

This "other bidders" info is news to Reg; he absorbs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLES

Who are your other bidders?

PLAYTEX EXEC #3

CitiCorp, for one; not that we're obliged to disclose that information. There's also a group headed by Niles McLaughlin.

REG

Niles McLaughlin?

(the Playtex exec nods)

The *Harvard* guy?

PLAYTEX EXEC #3

(to the other execs)

Did he go to Harvard?

Reg is apoplectic but trying to breathe...*breathe*... Then:

REG

Listen to me---this is the best bid you're gonna entertain. We understand this company from A-to-Z. We *appreciate* the home sewing pattern business, we have *studied* it, we know where it's *been*, we know we're it's *going*, and you are *not* gonna find a more passionate, committed and *thorough* group than the, the very fine men that I am hereby representing.

The execs take in this overtly-passionate plea. Beat.

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

We'll call you when we've evaluated all the bids. Thanks for coming up today.

Off Reg--the wind *totally* gone from his sail.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Reg, Charles and Tom ride home from Stamford. There is not a single sound inside the car. Reg stares out the window as though he could stab the world to death with his eyes.

INT. LOBBY - HARVARD CLUB - DAY

Reg strides in on a mission, nodding hello to the check-in person and heading for the restaurant/lounge area.

INT. RESTAURANT/LOUNGE - HARVARD CLUB - SAME

Reg "stealthily" enters and signals to ARCHIE, a black, grey-haired waiter.

CUT TO MOMENTS LATER--

--as we see Reg exiting the men's room wearing *Archie's waiter uniform*. He grabs a tray, two glasses and a pitcher of water, and stakes out his prey:

Reg's POV on *Niles McLaughlin*, eating lunch at a table with an attractive YOUNGER WOMAN.

Reg approaches the table and starts to pour waters. Niles, of course, doesn't pay an iota of attention to who's pouring--until Reg purposely *SPILLS THE ENTIRE PITCHER INTO HIS LAP*.

NILES

Ahhh--Jesus!!--WHAT THE HELL!!

REG

(robotic)

Oh dear. I am so sorry.

NILES

(still not realizing it's Reg)

*WHO TAUGHT YOU HOW TO POUR?! I'M SOAKED!
MY CROTCH IS SOAKED!!!*

REG

Here. Do let me help you change.

Reg literally takes Niles by the arm and starts to lift him up. It's only now that Niles looks at him and, kind of, recognizes him.

NILES

Who are--Where's Archie? Wait--are you--?

REG

Hi, Niles. Reg Lewis. Can I help you change your pants?

Niles now lets himself be "guided" by Reg away from the table. As they leave, Reg throws a smile at Niles' date--

REG (CONT'D)

He'll be back soon.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - HARVARD CLUB - SAME

Reg is ripping Niles a new one:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

I come to you, hat in hand, Niles, and ask you--some would even say *invite* you--to partake in my investment group, and next thing I know you're submitting your own bid. It's unacceptable for every reason in the book starting with the fact that we're both "Harvard men" and *ending* with the fact that you sat right there in that dining room and made fun of me for bidding on a *home sewing pattern company*! It's UNACCEPTABLE, *TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE!*

NILES

Reg--please--listen to me, you're getting this wrong. I put in a *lower* bid so as to make *your* bid look better. It was my way of *helping*, Reg. I bid low to make you look good. So that they'd take it.

REG

...You bid low on purpose?

(Niles nods)

So then why...why are they still not taking mine?

NILES

I dunno. Because they're jerks? I mean--it's a business full of jerks, Reg.

REG

Right. You shoulda...*told* me, Niles.

NILES

I meant to. It got away. Kinda like the water pitcher.

They both look at Niles' soaked crotch. Reg is totally embarrassed...

REG

Let me find you some dry pants.

NILES

That would be nice.

EXT. REG'S BROWNSTONE - CHELSEA - NIGHT

Reg climbs his stairs, more tired than we've seen him.

INT. FRONT HALL - REG'S BROWNSTONE - CHELSEA - SAME

Reg enters--only to find Loida there, a somber expression on her face. He immediately senses something's wrong.

REG

What is it?

LOIDA

Your grandfather died.

Off Reg--

EXT. STREETS OF EAST BALTIMORE - DAY

Reg's slightly worn Lincoln rolls through the very modest black middle class neighborhood he grew up in. As it passes, we see Reg looking out the window, taking it all in.

EXT. ROW HOUSE - WEST BALTIMORE - SAME

As Reg climbs the small front stoop, the door opens and his mother, CAROLYN FUGETT, looks at him--and smiles. They hug.

INT. CAROLYN FUGETT'S HOUSE - SAME

Reg sits with Carolyn, 70's, a strong, opinionated woman who adores Reg but isn't afraid to put him in his place.

CAROLYN FUGETT

He went peaceful. Which is good.

REG

I'm sorry I wasn't here.

CAROLYN FUGETT

Not your fault. How's my granddaughter?

REG

She's great.

(pause)

There's another one on the way, Mom.

CAROLYN FUGETT

...Are you serious?

(Reg nods)

When were you gonna tell me?!

REG

We wanted to give it a little more time,
but...this seems like the perfect time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLYN FUGETT
(moved, touching his knee)
That's good, Reginald. That's how it
should be. How far along?

REG
Not even 6 weeks.

CAROLYN FUGETT
Good. *Good.*
(she smiles, near tears; then)
How's all your work?

REG
It's all right.
(and then)
I've been trying to buy a sewing pattern
company. McCall? But I'm starting to
think it's...not meant to be. People
telling me it's a dead business, no one
thinking I can do it. I dunno.

She looks at him without expression, taking this in....then:

CAROLYN FUGETT
Follow me.

INT. SPARE BEDROOM - CAROLYN'S HOUSE - SAME

Carolyn and Reg enter Reg's old bedroom, which has been
converted to nothing other than a *communal sewing room*. Six
Singer sewing machines are arranged in a neat circle, various
half-sewn garments by the side of each. They stand.

CAROLYN
Who's the President of the United states?

REG
Why're you asking me that?

CAROLYN
Answer me who's the president.

REG
Ronald Reagan, Mom.

CAROLYN
Ronald Reagan. And are we or are we not
in a recession under Mr. Reagan?

REG
We are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAROLYN

And wouldn't that mean more women are probably *working* rather than staying home?

(Reg nods)

And do you think working women in Ronald Reagan's recession can afford to buy their work clothes from Neiman Marcus?

REG

No ma'am.

CAROLYN

Or are you thinkin' they go to work naked?

(he shakes his head)

So where do you think they get their clothes?

REG

From you?

CAROLYN

(she hands him a pile of magazines)

From home sewing catalogues. Simplicity, Butterick, Vogue, *McCall*.

(Reg flips through the pattern samples)

Every Tuesday and Friday, me and five other women come in here to sew 'cause we get hired out by working women who want a Coco Chanel dress but can't afford to buy it at Saks Fifth Avenue. And that happens all over this neighborhood and and it's happening all over this *country*. And *that*--Reginald--is your market.

Reg looks up at her, starting to understand.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Buy that company. But make it better, 'cause the *McCall* patterns stink.

REG

Why?

CAROLYN

'Cause they ain't as sexy as *Vogue*.

(and then)

Buy that company, Reg. And make it *good*.

INT. ATTIC - CAROLYN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Reg, late-night, with a beer, in his mother's small, cluttered, dusty, attic. He's going through an old trunk of his grandfather's, pulling out memorabilia, photos, keepsakes...and then something that makes him stop: A faded, ripped-in-half dollar bill that's been carefully taped together. Reg holds it up...fighting tears.

EXT. CEMETERY - BALTIMORE - DAY

A gloriously sunny day as Reg stands with his mother and many other relatives, including UNCLE JAMES, 50's, his mother's much-younger brother who was like an older brother to Reg growing up. They watch solemnly as dirt is thrown on his grandfather's casket. Reg is humbled and moved, and we perhaps see here, for the first time, just how much family and "legacy" matter to him.

EXT. PARKING AREA - CEMETERY - LATER

Reg, standing by his car, says goodbye to Uncle James.

REG

It was good to see you, man.

UNCLE JAMES

You too, Reg. Be good up there and don't forget all us little folks down here.

REG

Never gonna happen, James.

UNCLE JAMES

Best not, 'cause you still owe me for saving your ass that time.

REG

You talkin' about--?

--as we **FLASHBACK** to the scene of Reg fleeing down the fire escape after bedding the hot older woman when he was 17, picking it up as Reg jumps from the metal ladder to the alley below, and takes off running.

But as he turns a corner his path is SUDDENLY BLOCKED by a huge '57 Chevy, out of which jump TWO IMPOSING DUDES WITH PIPES IN THEIR HANDS--one of whom is the woman's husband who caught them. Reg looks around, trapped, realizing he's gonna get beat....until SUDDENLY ANOTHER CAR ARRIVES BEHIND THE CHEVY--and a younger UNCLE JAMES steps out holding a Colt Cobra pistol, which he calmly points at the two dudes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

UNCLE JAMES
Pipes down, gentleman. That's my nephew
and he's gonna walk away now.

Quite disappointed, the two dudes lower their pipes, as Reg smiles thankfully to Uncle James, who signals for him to get in the car. Reg steps past the bad guys and into James car...

AS WE RETURN TO PRESENT--at the cemetery:

UNCLE JAMES (CONT'D)
That's *exactly* what I'm talking about.

Reg breaks into a huge smile, as he and James shake hands--

REG
I'll *always* owe you, James. Ain't no way
around it.

They hug...and Reg steps into his car.

INT. KITCHEN - REG'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Loida doing late-night work at the kitchen counter with a cup of tea. She looks up as she hears the front door open.

LOIDA
Reg?!

REG (O.S.)
Hey!

She smiles, and a moment later he walks in, home from the funeral, tired but glad to be with her again. She stands and goes to him, giving him a long, caring hug.

LOIDA
How was it?

REG
It was nice.

LOIDA
I'm sorry I wasn't there.

REG
It's fine. How was the trial?

LOIDA
It went fine.

The step back from the hug. They are still truly in love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA (CONT'D)

How's your mother?

REG

She's good. Unshakable in her opinions about everything, but good.

LOIDA

Like son like mother.

They share a smile....and then:

REG

I don't think it's gonna happen with McCall, Loida. It's been a month since the meeting and there's been nothing. And I don't even think it's a matter of entertaining other bids, because as far as I can tell there are no other bids. And it's not the color of my skin 'cause as far as *they* know, I'm only the lawyer. I think what's going on is that...it's just not meant to be. I'm a lawyer, I'm "lucky" to be a lawyer, and that's the way it's gonna be.

LOIDA

There's nothing wrong with being a lawyer.

REG

No. For you it's important, meaningful. But for me it's just not...*fun*.

Silence a moment...and then:

LOIDA

Is your portable phone working?

REG

It ran out of batteries in Delaware.

LOIDA

(a nod...then, handing him a piece of paper)
It's too bad, because someone was trying to reach you.

REG

(looking at the paper)
...Playtex?
(looking up at her)
Did they say why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LOIDA

They want to sell you the McCall company.

As MUSIC KICKS IN--

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

Reg coaches Samuel Peabody, who is *very* nervous.

REG

It'll be a walk in the park, Sam, you don't need to worry.

PEABODY

How many people will be there?

REG

At the closing? 12; maybe 14.

PEABODY

And they're all gonna think I'm the buyer?

REG

Most of them--until the moment they realize you're just an investor--

PEABODY

And that *you're* the buyer?

REG

Yes--but by that time I'll be the *owner*, so it'll be a moot goddam point.

PEABODY

Why isn't the *other* fake guy here?

REG

Ricardo? Couldn't afford to fly him from LA. It's fine, you're a Peabody, they love that shit.

Off Peabody, not looking very "fine."

AS MUSIC CONTINUES over the FOLLOWING SHOTS--giving them the feel of a Super Bowl pre-game:

--Reg, Kevin, Laurie and Charles copying and collating HUGE BUNCHES OF DOCUMENTS in their ragtag little conference room.

--Reg and his lawyer Tom Lamia going over every single document late into the night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--The formidable Playtex executives in Stamford preparing for the closing with their high-end lawyers and numerous staff and industrial-sized copy machines and executive dining room.

--Reg and Peabody at the gym on side-by-side treadmills, Reg attempting to get Peabody into mental and physical shape.

--The MCCALL TEAM--i.e. the buyees--as they make their own preparations in their Park Avenue offices. And these guys, who we'll come to know, are no small force, their suits *almost* as expensive as the Playtex guys.

--Reg at Brooks Brothers being fitted his own very expensive suit, (even pricier than the ones he usually wears).

--The Playtex team and the McCall team shaking hands and joining forces in the sprawling conference room up in Stamford---an army of rich, imperious white men gathering to configure large and unstoppable financial transactions--INTO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Reg, Charles, Tom and a increasingly freaked-out Peabody, making their way to Stamford in the limo, which this time feels small and insignificant compared to the Goliath they are fast-approaching.

INT. THE BIG ASS CONFERENCE ROOM - PLAYTEX HQ - DAY

Whereas the conference room last time was small and high-end, *this* conference room is HUGE and high-end, and this time Reg is not the sole black person present: Three black in-house waiters wearing white jackets with *PLAYTEX* stenciled on the back, serve coffee and muffins to the *twenty-five* white men (plus Reg) gathered around the immense table. Reg and his team are at one end looking quite puny--except for Peabody, who is uncharacteristically wearing a 3-piece suit and attempting to hold himself with great gravitas.

PLAYTEX LAWYER

So gentlemen, I'd like to state the deal terms for the record as well as to give everyone the opportunity for last minute corrections or alterations?

The room quiets down.

PLAYTEX LAWYER (CONT'D)

I assume most of us have met but I'll just introduce the principles real quick: Timothy Jenkins and Ross Dellincourt from Playtex--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGLE on the Playtex executives--

PLAYTEX LAWYER (CONT'D)

Earle Angstadt and Bob Herman from McCall-

ANGLE on EARLE ANGSTADT and BOB HERMAN, 62 and 55, a gentle soul and a dick, respectively--

PLAYTEX LAWYER (CONT'D)

And from the TLC Group, we have, umm--

REG

Well you guys know me, I'm Reginald Lewis, and who we have here is Mr. Samuel Peabody.

Peabody nods nervously, and then kinda waves hello.

PLAYTEX LAWYER

Good! OK then--so going over the terms nominally agreed to by all sides, we are looking at a 22.5 million dollar purchase by TLC, with 20 million in a secured and deposited loan from Banker's Trust guaranteed by Bear Stearns, plus a note for 2.5 million in equity from the buyer, which includes Mr. Angstadt's and Mr. Herman's personal investments, all contingent on McCall having 1.85 million cash on its balance sheet by noon today.

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

Can you hang on a sec', Jim, we have ah--
(as he quickly confers with the
two other Playtex execs...)
Yeah--we need to address something on the terms. We're actually looking at an asking price of 24.5, not 22.5.

Silence in the room, and then even his own lawyer says--

PLAYTEX LAWYER

I'm sorry? Can you--what was that?

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

The price is 24.5, not 22.

REG

No it's not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

Yes, Reg. If you recall our phone conversation last Tuesday, we stated that if Mr. Peabody expected the 22.5 figure, TLC would have to agree to Playtex retaining a 7.5 per cent stake in the new company. You never responded to that so the price is now 24.5 million.

REG

Excuse me but that was *talked* about but never confirmed, you never made that a make-or-break scenario--

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

We most certainly did, Reg--

REG

You most certainly did not, which I know because I called my associate Mr. Lamia--
(turning to Tom)
--*immediately* upon getting off the phone with you and stated that you'd *threatened* such a condition but that I doubted you would have the balls to follow through.

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

Well we are following through--

TOM

I can't believe you guys are pulling this at this hour--

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

It was clearly stated--

REG

It was NOT clearly stated--

TOM

Reg, stay calm--

REG

(losing it)
I will not stay calm--this is an unacceptable last minute ploy to paint us into a corner!--

TOM

Reg--

--and Reg, unlike the last closing he was at, somehow stops himself from exploding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

As Tom and Charles now take up the argument with the Playtex executives, Reg breathes deep, turning to Peabody and whispering into his ear.

REG

Walk away.

Peabody, unsure if he means literally or figuratively, whispers back.

PEABODY

As in--like--?

REG

Yes--stand up and walk away. Leave the room.

With hesitation at first--and then with great bravado--Peabody clears his throat, stands and forthrightly leaves the conference room. Everyone stops and watches him go.

REG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, gentlemen, but Mr. Peabody refuses to continue under these conditions. He doesn't like being hoodwinked, sandbagged and screwed.

Silence in the room as everyone now stares at the Playtex executives. They confer amongst themselves.... Then:

PLAYTEX EXEC #2

Playtex needs to retain a six per cent stake in the new company.

REG

Five, as discussed in every meeting up to this moment.

PLAYTEX EXEC #2

Five point five.

REG

Five.

The Playtex executives again huddle...

PLAYTEX EXEC #2

Five per cent stake, with a final selling price of 23.5 Million.

Reg very calmly stands and turns to his "team."

REG

Charles, Tom, shall we go?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Tom and Charles nod and stand. All three head for the door.

PLAYTEX EXEC #1
You're being silly, Reg, you knew all
along we weren't comfortable with the
five per cent stake at 22-5.

REG
Have a nice day, everyone.

As Reg, Charles and Tom leave the room.

INT. HALLWAY - PLAYTEX HQ - CONTINUOUS

Reg, Tom and Charles now find Peabody, standing alone, at a
complete loss as to what he's supposed to be doing.

PEABODY
Did we win?

REG
No.

PEABODY
Are we gonna?

REG
(with a glance toward the
conference room)
Not looking good. Let's walk.

CHARLES
Give 'em a six per cent stake, Reg, this
isn't worth it.

REG
I've been screwed too long. We're
walking.

And with that he leads his team out.

EXT. PLAYTEX WORLD HEADQUARTERS, STAMFORD, CT. - DAY

Reg and his team await their limo outside the entrance of
Playtex. The mood is glum, with everyone furtively stealing
glances back toward the building to see if the Playtex guys
come rushing out with a change of heart. But they're not.

CHARLES
Well I'll say this much: My wife will
never again buy another Playtex tampon as
long as she lives. They are *dead* to us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEABODY

Did I not walk out of the room with enough implied threat? 'Cause I thought about adding more swagger but I didn't wanna push it.

CHARLES

You were fine, Sam.

REG

I'm honestly gonna kill someone. And it could pretty much be anyone. Could be all the men up there in that room right now, or an innocent random nobody who happens to cross my path at any given time.

TOM

If it's not meant to be then it's not meant to be, Reg. You can't force these things.

REG

You think I should've caved?

TOM

No--but if it's not meant to be then you gotta just accept.

As their limo pulls up from the garage--

REG

What is that, new-age advice? 'Cause I don't do new-age, Tom.

TOM

It's not new-age, it's just--

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)

Excuse me!

They all turn to see one of the front desk security guards calling to them from the entrance way.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

Your presence is being requested inside!

Off the three of them---slow smiles spreading wide...

INT. THE BIG ASS CONFERENCE ROOM - PLAYTEX HQ - DAY

Silence as the 25 men all work intensely, signing documents, shuffling folders, stapling papers...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Finally the Playtex Lawyer looks up, holding the "official" final paperwork and a shiny gold pen.

PLAYTEX LAWYER

So I believe all we need now, Mr. Peabody, is your official John Hancock on the master here, at which point we will be unequivocally closed--and Mr. Angstadt and Mr. Herman will be official employees of--and minority owners in--the newly-minted *TLC McCall*.

ANGLE on Angstadt and Herman, smiling with nervous but optimistic approval at their new boss, Peabody. The lawyer now stands and brings the official papers to Peabody. Peabody places the papers on the desk...and then slowly, and this time with an *intense and elegiac* gravitas--slides the papers over to Reg for *him* to sign.

REG

Thank you, Sam.

(to the Playtex execs)

--and thank you, gentlemen, for agreeing to the terms we had already agreed to--

(to Angstadt and Herman)

--and thank you, gentlemen, for your small but appreciated investment into TLC McCall, as well as for the trust in me that that implies. I assure you *all* that I will handle this company with the utmost care and interest in its future and prolonged success.

And with that he majestically signs the papers--as *everyone* in the room (save for Charles, Peabody and Tom)--watch him with completely dropped jaws. Silence...and then:

PLAYTEX EXEC #1

Excuse me, but I was under the impression that Mr. Peabody was the buyer.

REG

That's incorrect. His title is lead investor. But he's not the buyer.

BOB HERMAN

You mean to say *you're* the buyer?

REG

That's correct, Bob. And I'd just like to say that I'm glad you're on the team.

Herman stares at him with a genuine degree of disdain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REG (CONT'D)

And of course, you too, Earle.

(genuine)

I look forward to learning the business
under your wise and experienced tutelage.

Earle looks at him...and can't help but smile in admiration
of Reg's ballsiness.

INT. THE BIG ASS CONFERENCE ROOM - PLAYTEX HQ - LATER

As the meeting breaks up and people shake hands, Bob Herman--
who it seems was *born* a prick--approaches Peabody.

BOB HERMAN

I hope you're proud of yourself. Not
only is what you just did disingenuous,
it's morally bankrupt, possibly illegal,
and damaging to the lives of hundreds of
McCall workers.

PEABODY

Why--because they all have to work for a
black man now?

Herman, unable answer, shakes his head, before feebly adding:

BOB HERMAN

Your mother would be ashamed of you.

PEABODY

(stronger than we've seen him)
My mother was in jail with Dr. King, so
I'm pretty sure she'd be goddam proud.
(to his team)
Let's go, guys.

Reg, happy for an instant *not* to be the boss, nods and
follows Peabody out the door, with Tom and Charles in tow.

INT. RESTAURANT/LOUNGE - HARVARD CLUB - NIGHT

Reg, Charles, Tom, Peabody, Laurie, Kevin and Loida celebrate
with champagne and cigars.

CHARLES

I would just like to say that I am
excited, honored and totally freaked out
to be a part of this beautiful and insane
extravaganza.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Helping my boss buy *sewing* companies is definitely *not* what I thought I'd be doing when I applied to Brooklyn Law oh so many years ago, but I gotta say it's kinda funkadelic.

Everyone toasts and drinks. Reg stands.

REG

Thank you all. You guys have worked hard and I'll definitely make it worthwhile in your end-of-the-year bonuses. Kinda.

(they all laugh)

We crossed a big hurdle today; a *big* one. And it feels good. And I just wanna say that none of it would be possible, not even *remotely*, without the love, strength, constancy and *power* of my gorgeous goddam wife.

(glass raised)

TO LOIDA!

Off everyone cheering and drinking--

EXT. 43RD STREET - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Reg and Loida stroll down the block arm in arm.

LOIDA

Are you excited?

REG

A lot. Which isn't to say it's gonna be easy. This guy Bob Herman, the number two at McCall, I think he officially became an unhappy camper today.

LOIDA

But the number one guy likes you?

REG

Earle?--Yeah, he seems OK. It's Bob who's gonna give me a hard time.

LOIDA

Why? It's not like you won't work hard.

REG

I don't think he liked my use of *guile*. Some folks just want other folks to stay in their place. It's like in college when they invited all us black kids to Harvard so we could "look but not touch."

INT. HARVARD LECTURE HALL - DAY

FLASHBACK to Reg at age 21 as part of a Harvard Law summer "intern" program for about 60 black under-grads. A stodgy white LAW SCHOOL DEAN walks them through the routine--

LAW SCHOOL DEAN

You are here because you have expressed an interest in law school, which is a noble aspiration. But let me make clear on this very first day that you are here to *visit*, not stay. Your summer at Harvard is a chance to learn what you can before going *back* to your schools and, if you *still* desire, beginning the application process to *other* law schools. You are being provided with a *taste* of law school life; it is *not--in ANY way--* an invitation to apply to Harvard Law.

Off the young Reg---clearly with other plans.

EXT. 43RD STREET - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Return to present--Reg and Loida still strolling.

LOIDA

So how are you going to deal with him?
Now that you no longer need guile.

REG

With the *opposite* of guile. I'm gonna learn every facet of this business til my goddam expertise is undeniable. At which point Bob Herman will hail me as king.

Loida smiles---as Reg juts his hand in the air to hail a cab.

MUSIC PLAYS over the following series of shots:

--Reg and his mother Carolyn being greeted by white men at the KANSAS CITY AIRPORT.

--Reg and his mom stepping out of a limo at the McCall sewing pattern plant in Manhattan, Kansas.

--Reg and his mom touring the plant, Reg asking a million questions.

--Reg cracking up the assembly line workers with his jokes.

--Reg and his mom eating lunch with plant-workers as he outlines his vision for the company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--Reg and the workers listening intently as *Carolyn* gives a lecture as to why women sew and what they really want...

INT. ENTRANCE - MCCALL PLANT - DUSK

Reg and Carolyn walk back toward their waiting limo at the end of a long day visiting the plant.

REG

That was great, Mom. Especially what you said at lunch about how most women in this country wanna feel like they're wearing real designs from real designers.

CAROLYN

It's not only that, they wanna feel like they're in *conversation* with their designers. I mean none of 'em will ever get near the person who designs their clothes. They can't afford the boutique stores and most can't even afford *Macy's*, so the more a company like yours can create *some* sorta connection to the people *providing* the fashion, the more you're gonna win 'em over.

REG

Well how am I supposed to do that?

CAROLYN

(thinking...then)

Bring 'em together. Throw a fashion show. Make it fancy, invite the designers, invite the women who read the catalogues, let 'em all rub shoulders, take pictures, make people feel like they're *part of the conversation*.

Off Reg---taking this in.

INT. MCCALL BOARD ROOM - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Reg presides over his first executive meeting as Chairman of TLC McCall. Seated around the table are 10 white men, including--on each side of him--Bob Herman and Earle Angstadt. But next to Earle are three EMPTY CHAIRS.

REG

Welcome, gentlemen, I'd like to start off by saying how happy I am to be here today.

(silence...Reg forges on with cheeriness)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG (CONT'D)

As many of you know, I arrived back this morning from my first visit to the McCall plant out in Kansas, and I have to say it was a spectacular time--meeting folks, seeing how things work out there, gettin' to understand the nuts an' bolts of this fascinating and exciting business I'm just at the beginning of my adventure of.

More stony silence, despite Reg's upbeat efforts.

REG (CONT'D)

(re: the empty chairs)

Also as you may know, three of our top VP's, Stan Carmel, Michael Winthrop and Gene Fogel have decided to, ah, to move on from McCall, and we of course wish them a happy and positive experience in their new, ah, their new *journey*.

(unable to restrain)

Guess they weren't too sure they wanted to work for a guy named Reg.

This gets a small smile from Earle, but no one else.

REG (CONT'D)

And of course, a special thanks to Earle, who has kindly stayed on to help guide me through my early tenure here.

(to Earle directly)

I know you could've happily just retired and gotten in a lot more golf, so I appreciate your sticking around for me.

Earle nods genuinely.

REG (CONT'D)

OK then! I wanna just run by some of the new and exciting ideas I have that will hopefully propel McCall out of 4th place among home sewing companies and straight up to number one!

As Reg continues to speak, we see these ideas in action--starting with assembly line workers at the Kansas plant:

REG (O.S.) (CONT'D)

First off I wanna take more advantage of the plant in Kansas by transforming it from a 12-hour-a-day operation to 24 straight, re-tooling it so that we're able to use it each night to print--and don't think I'm crazy--*greeting cards*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As the assembly-line workers now hold up hot-off-the-press GREETING CARDS.

REG (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Second, I want McCall to infiltrate the Chinese market.

Middle-class Chinese women trying on fancy dresses.

REG (O.S.) (CONT'D)
'Cause there's no reason that a nice Chinese working woman shouldn't be allowed to wear some Yves St. Laurent to her little Chinese job each day.

C.U.'s of McCall catalogues with dresses worn by *stick figures* on the covers:

REG (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Thirdly, no more goddam stick figures on our catalogue covers! I want famous women looking hot, rich and voluptuous.

C.U.'s on the same covers with Brooke Shields, Dihanne Carroll, Rachel Williams.

REG (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And lastly--McCall's gonna throw an annual *fashion show* to unveil our designers' patterns. We'll be the first pattern company ever to do this; we'll get celebrity models up there displaying our new "Working Women" line; we'll invite the *designers*, we'll give away tickets to everyday, underpaid, overworked women so they can get their pictures taken with the models and celebrities and designers, we'll have lights, cameras, champagne, food! No more giving women stick figures to copy on their sewing machine, we're gonna provide 'em with a living, breathing, *sexy and attainable* reality---one that they can wear to work!

C.U. on Reg--hyped up and psyched. But then he looks around--and finds the same, unexcitable white faces staring back at him, not sure what they're in for.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - MCCALL - NIGHT

Reg in his new, barely furnished office, going over papers. After a moment Earle Angstadt knocks and enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARLE

You got a minute?

REG

Sure thing.

EARLE

Nice presentation.

REG

Did I overdo it?

EARLE

Naw, this place *needs* some shaking up.

REG

I meant what I said: Thanks for staying on.

EARLE

It'll be a fun ride.

(pause)

Can I offer my first piece of advice?

REG

Sure.

EARLE

Well like I said, the place needs shaking up. We're fourth out of the four big pattern companies. But I do worry about...those empty chairs in there tonight. As much as I'm mad at those guys for jumping ship, they were good executives and they're gonna be missed.

REG

So what're you saying?

EARLE

(reluctant to voice it)

Well; during the 8 years Playtex owned this company, we saw their execs...maybe 3 times. Which allowed folks to sort of do their job without worrying too much.

REG

You're saying I'm gonna "worry" people?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EARLE

I'm saying that the more you can
gradually assert your influence, as
opposed to suddenly and seismically, the
more luck I think you'll have in getting
them to do what you want. It's fine to
carry a big stick...but maybe walk soft
with it for the first little bit?

Off Reg--appreciating the advice.

EXT. REG'S BROWNSTONE - CHELSEA - NIGHT

Reg tiredly steps out of a cab, late night, and heads inside.

INT. REG AND LOIDA'S BEDROOM - REG'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Reg tip toes in, finally loosens his tie, leans over and
gently kisses the sleeping Loida, then sits on the edge of
the bed...and wearily rests his head in his hands.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - NIGHT

Reg stands behind the desk in his law office going over
papers. Charles knocks and enters.

CHARLES

You gonna go home?

REG

I gotta head over to McCall.

CHARLES

(off watch)

It's 10 o'clock.

REG

I know, and why aren't you still working?

CHARLES

(a self-evident look)

I *am* still working.

REG

You look like you're ready to go home.

CHARLES

I *am* ready to go home.

REG

So then you're not still working.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLES
(incredulous)
I worked until 10 o'clock at night!

REG
Good, because the only way this firm
stays alive while I'm trying to run
McCall during off-goddam hours, is if you
and everybody else here works double-time
to keep the place afloat.

CHARLES
Kevin and Laurie have been working until
9 each night.

REG
They should work 'til ten.

CHARLES
They're not the ones trying to run two
businesses, Reg.

REG
Why're you giving me a hard time?

CHARLES
I'm *not* giving you a hard time, I just
came to say goodnight!

REG
Good!--Good night!

CHARLES
Good night!!

Charles leaves. Reg looks back at the paperwork before him.
Then he packs it into his briefcase and grabs his coat.

EXT. MCCALL HEADQUARTERS - PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

Reg steps from a cab and heads inside the office high rise.

INT. - LOBBY - MCCALL HEADQUARTERS- SAME

Reg approaches the night desk security guard, who doesn't
recognize him.

OVERNIGHT SECURITY GUARD
Where're you headed, sir?

REG
McCall, 17th floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OVERNIGHT SECURITY GUARD
(skeptical)
At this time of night?

REG
(too tired to argue)
Yeah.

OVERNIGHT SECURITY GUARD
Who're you there to see?

REG
(no longer too tired)
I own the entire goddam company, son, so
you can stop asking me questions now.

--as Reg simply keeps walking to the elevators without
awaiting a response.

INT. CORRIDOR - MCCALL OFFICES - NYC - NIGHT

Reg makes his way toward his office, passing dark office
after dark office; the place is empty. He arrives at his
corner office and turns on the light.

INT. BATHROOM - MCCALL OFFICES - NYC - SAME

Reg washes his hands, glances in the mirror, throws water
onto his face.

INT. CORRIDOR - MCCALL OFFICES - NYC - SAME

As Reg emerges from the bathroom he is TOTALLY STARTLED to
find someone standing there in the corridor: Bob Herman, the
number two guy, standing "casually" with hands in pockets.

REG
Jesus---Bob---I didn't know you were
still here.

BOB HERMAN
Yep. I'm still here.

REG
Working late?

BOB HERMAN
Hmm hmm.

Reg looks at him; Herman just stands there, unwavering,
obviously not interested in small talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

Is there something I can do for you, Bob?

BOB HERMAN

(blunt as hell)

I don't like the way you took over this company. It broached, if not crossed over, the line of fraud.

(Reg just looks at him)

I thus find you to be an unethical man.

(a stare-down)

I also find it rather insulting to have to take orders from a man who still, by day, runs a rather ramshackle, not-particularly-successful law practice.

(Reg starts to smile)

I advise you to wipe that smile off.

(Reg does; barely)

I have put 15 years of my life into this company, and if you so much as lose us a single dollar, or degrade the quality of our product, or start trying to cater to minorities rather than the mainstream, I will personally do everything I can to bring you down, beginning with a full-throttle investigation as to how you deceived both the sellers and shareholders of this company into thinking they were selling and buying into an ownership plan that was, in fact, the exact opposite of what it appeared. And trust me, Reg, I will do that.

(near whisper)

I am watching every move you make.

Before Reg can respond, Herman walks off down the hall. Reg watches him, calculating a response...then:

REG

WATCH ME ALL YOU WANT, BOB! ALL THE WAY
TO THE GODDAM BANK!

But Bob keeps walking.

INT. PARK AVENUE ARMORY - NIGHT

THE FASHION SHOW: Reg has put on an *extravaganza*, indeed replete with a red carpet, runway models, famous celebrities, top name designers, live dancers, klieg lights, spotlights, 50-foot-long buffets with roasted duck and truffle egg pasta and chocolate fountains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A live ROCK BAND plays loud as middle-class housewives and working woman dressed to the nines do in fact get to mingle with Shari Belafonte and Lawrence Taylor and Jesse Jackson and David Dinkins. The runway snakes through the crowd as the models strut and the dancers work from pedestals and it seems that every notable New Yorker is there---smack in the middle of which, with champagne flute and perfect tuxedo, is Reg, greeting the famous and not-so-famous, laughing, introducing Loida and Earle and Charles and Dinkins....

It is clear that Reg has pulled this off beyond anyone's dreams or expectations, possibly even his own.

INT. PARK AVENUE ARMORY - LATER

CUT TO someone tapping the mike--as the crowd quiets and gives its attention to the front of the event hall, where Bob Herman stands on a stage behind a podium:

BOB HERMAN

Ladies and gentlemen, if I can just have your attention---

(as the crowd quiets)

Thank you. I would just like to say, on behalf of the management of the McCall Pattern Company, how grateful we are that you all turned out tonight for what has indeed been an absolutely lovely event, and one which, as I think is now obvious, has never before been thrown by a home pattern company. I mean it's just been a fabulous, entertaining and very fun night and we thank you all for being a part of it. I'd also like to briefly thank Mary Bigelow, Judd Michelson and, of course, our leader and president, Earle Angstadt, for the work and vision they displayed in making tonight a reality. Have a great night everyone--and *THANK YOU!*

The crowd cheers enthusiastically.

INT. PARK AVENUE ARMORY - LATER

The crowd now mostly gone as the catering staff folds tables. Reg and Loida are readying to leave, but Reg steps way and approaches Bob Herman, who is talking with 2 others.

REG

Bob, mind if we have a quick word?

Looking slightly annoyed, Bob excuses himself from the others and steps aside with Reg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BOB HERMAN

What's up?

REG

You didn't think to mention my name
during your speech?

BOB HERMAN

What do you mean?

REG

What do I mean? I mean you thanked the
people who put this together but failed
to mention the owner of the goddam
company, not to mention the guy whose
idea and vision it actually *was*?

BOB HERMAN

You're not the face of the company, Reg,
people wouldn't have known who I was
talking about.

REG

(in Bob's face)

Look at the spread sheets for my first
two quarters, Bob--come to my office and
look at the numbers and *tell* me I haven't
already dramatically improved this
company, and *then* go ask yourself if
people wouldn't've "figured out" who the
hell you were goddam talking about.

BOB HERMAN

(back at him just as strong)

I suggest you remove yourself from my
face, Reg. If you want credit you
shouldn't have hid behind a white buyer.
As far as *I'm* concerned, I work for Earle
Angstadt, and if you don't like that I am
happy to go to court to determine whether
your so-called ownership is legally
viable given the highly duplicitous
manner in which it was attained.

(leaning in for emphasis)

In short--leave me the fuck alone.

Bob turns to leave, as Reg again considers yelling after him,
but then checks himself, as there are too many people still
around. A moment later he is joined by Loida, who has
witnessed the confrontation from afar.

LOIDA

Was that as bad as it looked?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REG

I swear to God I'm gonna squash that guy.

LOIDA

Let it go, Reg. The only thing you can do is what you said last time: Make the company so good that everyone in the world knows it was you.

Off Reg--a slow, determined nod...

--as MUSIC KICKS IN over the FOLLOWING IMAGES:

--Reg nodding hello to the night security guard as he heads in for his "night shift" at McCall.

--Reg at the Kansas plant inspecting the shiny and colorful greeting cards as they come off the assembly line at dawn.

--Reg and Earle Angstadt at a "working dinner" as Reg lays out new ideas and strategies.

--Reg nodding goodbye to the *morning* security guard as he leaves McCall following an all-nighter. And as he heads out the door, Bob Herman walks *in*. They *don't* nod in passing.

--Reg at a McCall execs meeting standing before a graph that clearly shows an UPWARD spike in McCall's market share.

--Reg at a business meeting in *China*, charming the hell out of his Chinese counterparts as they all eat lo mein.

--Bob Herman delivering a speech beneath a banner reading "ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN PATTERN COMPANIES."

--Reg at his law firm desk, early morning, going over cover photo choices for the next McCall catalogue.

--Reg and Earle in Earle's office, as Earle shows him the most recent quarter's earnings. They look up at each other...smile...and hug.

INT. KITCHEN - REG'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Reg and Loida share a late-night dinner at the end of a work day for each.

TITLE: "OCTOBER, 1986"

REG

(pause; then)

I wanna buy a house in the Hamptons.
A big house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA

...Why?

REG

Because I can.

LOIDA

I'm happy with renting.

REG

I'm not. I wanna *own*.

LOIDA

You wanna "*own*" a house?

REG

I wanna own a *mansion*, Loida. On the water. With tennis courts and bowling.

LOIDA

You just bought a very expensive Jaguar.

REG

Yeah--and now I wanna drive my Jaguar to my mansion in the Hamptons.

LOIDA

Are you sure we can--?

REG

Yes I'm sure. McCall has doubled its net profit in the year-and-a-half since I took over. It was 6 million *before* I got there, we're gonna do 14 this year. *I can afford a mansion.*

LOIDA

...You don't seem very happy about that.

REG

(mad)

I *am* happy. I'm goddam delighted.

LOIDA

You should be.

(beat; she knows him too well)

What is it, Reg?

REG

...It's not enough.

LOIDA

Which part?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

REG

Having to do it from the passenger seat.
As long as Bob Herman's there I'll never
get the credit.

LOIDA

...So you want the *glory*?
(Reg nods, hesitant to admit)
And you think no one's paying attention?

REG

It's not the attention, it's the *facts*.
The facts state clearly that I've turned
this thing around; we are the *number one*
pattern company in America--but who cares
because nobody pays attention to the
pattern company business!

LOIDA

...So it *is* the attention.

REG

(a small smile)
It's the *attention* to the *facts*.

LOIDA

And you think buying a mansion will
achieve that?

REG

What else are mansions for?

EXT. WATERFRONT MANSION IN THE HAMPTONS - DAY

LONG SHOT of a glorious, windswept, 10-acre spread on some of
the most sought-after real estate in America. CAMERA PUSHES
IN on Leslie, now almost 10, and her little sister CHRISTINA,
who toddles across the lawn after her. Camera then finds
Loida and Reg, arm in arm, taking in the magnificence of the
estate. He turns to her.

REG

What do you think---should we do it?

LOIDA

Are you *sure* we can--?

REG

We're fine. And if things go bad, we'll
sell.

LOIDA

The house?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

I was actually talking about the company.

She smiles; then looks around the grounds---*loving* it.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - DAY

Earle Angstadt and Reg eat hot dogs on a bench on the strip of green that runs down the middle of Park Ave.

EARLE

Good dogs.

REG

Indeed.

EARLE

(beat; ...then)

Reg, I think I'm gonna retire.

(pause)

I'll give it to the end of the year, at which point it'll have been two years since you asked me to stay on. And by God you've done well. You doubled my investment, the company's in the best shape of its life and I'll retire a happy man. I really can't thank you enough.

(pause)

So I'm glad you let me buy you this hot dog.

REG

...Nothing I can say to make you stay?

(Earle gently shakes his head)

I understand.

EARLE

Can I give one, *last*, piece of advice?

(Reg nods)

You might wanna think about selling. Actually, I imagine you already have, given the turnaround you orchestrated. But it's a seller's market out there, and truth be told, I feel compelled to strongly recommend Bob to take over as president, given his longevity, and I know that you two aren't the fastest of friends. And I think if you fire him, it could cause...problems.

(pause)

Have you thought about selling?

(...Reg nods)

You were always smarter than me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EARLE (CONT'D)

(Reg smiles)

Anyway, for what it's worth, I give you
my blessing, if that's what you decide.

Reg looks at him with genuine appreciation. They shake.

INT. LAVISH CONFERENCE ROOM - HIGH END LAW FIRM - DAY

This is Tom Lamia's law firm, where he has set up a bank of
10 phones, each one manned by a lawyer, to receive incoming
calls for the auction of McCall. Tom and Reg survey the
scene--glancing at the clock, which read 8:58 a.m.

TITLE: 'JANUARY 28th, 1987"

TOM

Bidding opens in two minutes.

REG

What if they don't call?

TOM

Who?

REG

Anyone. Buyers. What if no one wants to
buy the goddam company, Tom?

TOM

That's ridiculous, you know for a fact
that there's real interest out there.

REG

"Real"? I thought the Easter Bunny was
real, too, Tom, for a helluva lotta
years. And then one day *reality* hit.

TOM

Don't worry, people will call.

REG

Have you ever been part of an auction
where they didn't? Where a company goes
on the block and know one *gives* a fart?

(Tom just looks at him)

Tell me that hasn't happened, Tom.

TOM

It hasn't happened.

REG

You're lying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM
It's very rare.

REG
But it happens---you're telling me it happens.

TOM
(ignoring)
20 seconds 'til nine.

REG
We announced this sale two months ago, Tom, we musta' sent out three hundred prospectuses---and the reason we went to auction is 'cause no good offers came through. Why should that change now?

TOM
Because we're starting low. That's why auctions are good: You hook 'em by starting low, then they drive each other high.

Reg shakes his head dubiously. Tom watches the clock.

TOM (CONT'D)
3-2-1---

Four phones ring at the exact same time. Tom turns to Reg... who finally lets himself smile.

INT. LAVISH CONFERENCE ROOM - HIGH END LAW FIRM - LATER

Tom and Reg are now mid-stride in trying to bring this sale home, with three potential buyers on three different phone lines in a bidding war. Tom shouts to the phone guys--

TOM
I want him up at 87, Jerry!

PHONE GUY #1
(into phone)
Price right now is 87 million, sir--

TOM
(to phone guy #2)
Maxel's at 87, Ben, drive 'em up!--

PHONE GUY #2
We have the Maxel Corporation bidding 87 million--

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHONE GUY #2 (CONT'D)

(to Tom and Reg)
He's up to 88!

REG

(worried Tom didn't hear that)
Bingham's up to 88, Tom!!!

TOM

(to phone guy #3)
We have a bid of 88, Larry, drive him up!

PHONE GUY #3

New asking price is 88, sir---
(to Tom with glee)
89 over here!!

Reg, beside himself with joy, starts jumping up and down...

INT. RESTAURANT/LOUNGE - HARVARD CLUB - NIGHT

Reg, Tom, Loida, Charles, Peabody, Kevin and Laurie mid-celebration--

REG

Archie, we need more caviar, we need more champagne, we need more whatever that pink stuff is, we need more bourbon for Charles, we need more olives--the ones with the jalapenos!--
(to others)
What else do we need?

LOIDA

A pinot grigio--

REG

A pinot grigio for the most beautiful woman in the world! Make it a double and bring it in a champagne flute!
(to Loida, kissing her)
I love you so much, baby. We did it, we finally goddam did it! Tom, how the hell did that happen?!

TOM

I've never seen anything like it--

REG

We sold that goddam thing for *90 million dollars*, Tom!!

TOM

You sold it, Reg, I'm just your lawyer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
(to Peabody)
Sam---you ever made back an investment
like that?

PEABODY
Never even come close--

REG
You put in 10 thousand two years ago,
you're walking out today with 900
thousand.

PEABODY
Well you put in *nothing*, Reg, and now
you're walking out with 75 million.

REG
That's right, I guess that's true.
(looking around...simple)
I guess that's goddam true.

INT. BEDROOM - REG'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

Reg stirs awake. The sun is shining through his window. He slowly remembers who he is, how much he's worth and how good it feels to sleep in. Loida's already up, and the unread *New York Times* is neatly folded on her side of the bed. Reg opens it to the business page...and finds a p.7 article entitled: "90-1 RETURN FOR INVESTOR"--with a small picture of Reg--(it's the same article we saw Milken holding earlier).

Off Reg: It's not page one, but it still feels mighty good.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

Reg sits back with both feet on his desk, eyes closed, puffing on a large Cuban cigar. He is in bliss. After a moment Charles knocks and enters.

CHARLES
Hey, Reg, you read today's *Journal* yet?

Charles places down a copy of *The Wall Street Journal*. But Reg, eyes still closed, gently shakes his head.

REG
It doesn't matter anymore.

CHARLES
Yeah well you might wanna read this one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
(eyes still closed)
Why?

CHARLES
Bob Herman's on the front page, above the fold, saying that the sale of McCall happened *in spite of* your ownership, and that the majority of changes the company made in the last two years are because of he and Earle Angstadt.

Beat. Reg opens his eyes. The fire rising in them is slow but steady--with perhaps no intention of ever abating...

REG
On the cover of *The Wall Street Journal*?

CHARLES
On the cover of *The Wall Street Journal*.

INT. QUIET RESTAURANT - THE HAMPTONS - NIGHT

Reg and Loida have a romantic dinner--except for Reg's rage.

REG
I mean it's unbelievable! I work my *ass* off for that company for 2 and a half years and he goes and pisses on me in the *Wall Street goddam Journal*?--A paper that every respectable human being in the financial world looks at over breakfast each day!

LOIDA
I understand, Reg, it's humiliating, and maddening, but you *have* to try and look at it another way--

REG
There *is* no other way!

LOIDA
There is. You have your adoring wife; you have your beautiful children. You have *75 million dollars*. Think about where you came from; about what you have the chance to do now--to raise your children, contribute to charities, to love your wife...You have to be *thankful*.

Off Reg, hearing her words--but questionable as to if he's *listening* to them. AS THE CAMERA SLOWLY PUSHES IN...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILKEN (O.S.)
And so that's when I called you.

REG (O.S.)
And that's when I called you back.

INT. POOLSIDE - BEVERLY HILLS HILTON - EARLY DAWN

WE HAVE NOW CAUGHT UP TO THE PRESENT: Milken on the phone, speaking to Reg, who's at his mansion in the Hamptons.

TITLE: "DREXEL BOND CONFERENCE, BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL, 1987"

TITLE #2: "AKA MICHAEL MILKEN'S PREDATORS' BALL"

MILKEN
Look, Reg, I've been listening to you for over an hour and I'm glad you brought that up about Bob Herman, 'cause I sure as shit didn't wanna.

REG
It's *UNACCEPTABLE!*--

MILKEN
I agree--

REG
What does a guy have to do, Mike? I make 75 million outta nothing and get treated like I'm crap! The only reason the *Times* ran that article--on page 8--is 'cause I was black, but then Herman starts saying a black man shouldn't get the credit--and boom--page one of the *Journal*! Whatever just happened to, "A smart business guy made a good deal and it's newsworthy"?

Milken covers the phone and signals to his lackeys:

MILKEN
Start sending the fax. To his Hamptons number.

(back into phone)
Listen to me, Reg: Those of us who *need* to--know what you did. There aren't a lotta human beings who can flip a company like that, especially a *sewing* company, because everyone and their Mom--except apparently for *your* Mom--knows that the sewing business is dead.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILKEN (CONT'D)

What I'm trying to say is that you possess a rare and treasured ability, which is exactly why I called you and which is exactly why I wanna know if you're near your fax machine right now.

REG

My fax machine?

MILKEN

Yeah--your *fax* machine.

REG

Why?

MILKEN

Because I wanna fax you my tax returns.

REG

Why?

MILKEN

Because 75 million dollars is a fine chunk of change, Reg, but these days it's *not* that newsworthy. It *is* a page 8 story. My hunch is that it's time for you to make some page one money. And to show you how much I mean when I say that, I would like to fax you my tax returns from last year.

Back in the Hamptons, Reg walks into his office--where a number of pages are already spewing forth from a fax machine.

MILKEN (CONT'D)

Are they comin' through yet?

REG

Yeah.

MILKEN

Good. Take a look at my gross earnings in line number one.

Reg looks at the line in question: His mouth drops ever so slightly.

MILKEN (CONT'D)

Now *that's* what I'm talking about. *That's* real money. And I think it's time you earn some.

As we FLASH TO an early-morning airplane taking off from JFK--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MILKEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I want you to fly out here first thing in the morning, Reg, catch the last day of my high-yield bond conference. We'll have some drinks, bounce some ideas and figure out something for us to work on.

--and now see REG showing up at the Predator's Ball, briefcase in hand, suit over his shoulders in a Brooks Brothers hanging bag. He takes one look at the mass of rich white men partying their ass off in the Beverly Hills Hilton Ballroom--and slowly lets himself smile...AS MUSIC KICKS IN and we see:

--Reg dancing with three incredibly hot women as strobe lights blink him in and out of reality.

--Reg and 5 drunk rich white guys downing shots of tequila.

--Reg and 5 women and 3 guys dancing on the hotel rooftop.

--Reg and his 8 new friends eating late-night double-cheesburgers...

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

--as MUSIC FADES and we land in a bar with Milken and Reg, still drinking, late-night music playing, rich white guys around them still partying hard into the dawn.

MILKEN

You having a good time?

REG

I like it.

MILKEN

I'm glad you came. *This--*

(gesturing to the others)

--*is* what it is. Some of these guys have what it takes, most don't. *You--*you have it. No one here can do what you just did, and the fact that "Bob Herman" or whoever has to publicly *defame* you by taking credit is only indicative of how brilliant you actually are.

(leaning in)

I didn't fax you my returns to make myself feel good, Reg; I did it 'cause I want you to make that kinda money too, and to make it in a way where *nobody but* you can take credit for it. Where it's *undeniable* that you're the man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILKEN (CONT'D)

Because when you show up in a private jet that says who you are on its tail wing, and you step out onto its stairs--the world *will* understand, without dispute, just exactly who you are.

Reg smiles, digging Milken's semi-drunken passion.

REG

I'm with you, Mike.

MILKEN

They'll be a prospectus in your hotel room tomorrow for Beatrice International. Give it a look on the plane ride home. If you like it, I'll back you on it. For as much as you need.

(raising his glass)

Cheers?

REG

Cheers.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BEVERLY HILLS HILTON - DAY

Reg stirs awake around noon. He gets up--and sees a large white envelope that's been slid under his door with large, magic-markered words: **"REAL MONEY INSIDE."**

INT. FIRST CLASS CABIN - AIRPLANE - DAY

Reg, a touch bleary-eyed, reads the prospectus on the plane home, blariness gradually giving way to wide-eyed passion.

INT. REG'S BROWNSTONE - CHELSEA - NIGHT

Reg arrives home that night. As he enters, Loida is there, looking very worried. Reg immediately picks up on it--

REG

What's wrong?

Loida hands him an already-opened envelope. Reg takes out the letter and reads. C.U. on the letter's most prominent words: **"DEATH TO RICH BLACK MEN!"** Reg looks up at Loida, who is now near tears. He embraces her...

INT. KITCHEN - REG'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

Reg and Loida get Leslie and Christina ready for school.

LESLIE

Will you be tucking us in tonight Daddy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
Absolutely.

LESLIE
You haven't done that in a long time.

REG
I know, and I will tonight, I promise.

CHRISTINA
(toddler-like)
I love you, Daddy.

REG
I love you too. All 3 of you. Like
crazy.

As the girls devour their cereal, Loida lowers her voice.

LOIDA
Will you stay with me today? I don't
want to be alone here.

REG
Nothing's gonna happen, Loida. It was
just a crazy letter from a lonely person.

LOIDA
Still, can't you stay? It's not like you
have to be at the office. Charles can
take care of--

REG
I have to see someone. For a meeting.

LOIDA
Who?

REG
...It's just a business thing. A meet
and greet. I'll come back right after.

Off Loida, not loving this, and not fully trusting him.

EXT. 57TH STREET - MANHATTAN - DAY

Reg walks along past Burberry's and other high-end boutiques--
pausing before an austere, magnanimous, truly *aristocratic*
office building. This is as fancy as it gets. He heads in.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - KOHLBERG, KRAVIS, ROBERTS - DAY

Reg speaks to the RECEPTIONIST.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

Hi, Reginald Lewis here to see Henry Kravis.

RECEPTIONIST

I'll tell him you're here.

Reg sits. He waits. He looks for a magazine but this place is too fancy to have magazines. People who come here being so important they don't ever wait. *Ever.* FADE TO

Reg---time having passed--still waiting. FADE TO:

More time. More waiting. Reg getting severely pissed....

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

(after forever)

Mr. Kravis is ready now.

INT. OFFICE OF HENRY KRAVIS - DAY

If the building's facade was fancy and ornate, the inner office is elegant, regal, untouchable. A BUTLER stands by as HENRY KRAVIS, 60's, immeasurably arrogant, stands to "welcome" Reg.

HENRY KRAVIS

Have a seat. Paul, see if he wants a...

PAUL THE BUTLER

May I bring you a soda water with lime?

REG

Ah, sure, that'd be great.

Paul leaves; Kravis sits. He hasn't even shaken Reg's hand.

HENRY KRAVIS

So this meeting was set up by--?

REG

Jerry Dixon from Beagle and Brown. He and I used to do business together at--

HENRY KRAVIS

Right. He's a prick but he's good. So why are you visiting today?

REG

Oh--I was under the impression that Jerry had filled you in--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY KRAVIS

He said something about you being interested in Beatrice but I figured I misheard him.

REG

Why?

HENRY KRAVIS

Because the prospective buyers for Beatrice are 50-thousand person transnational conglomerates who tend to contact me through law firms that are the biggest and most powerful in the world; whereas you, if I understand, are a lawyer with a 6 person firm who likes to dabble in the buying of *sewing* companies.

REG

(a forced smile)

True--and I just sold one at a 90-1 return that netted 75 million for myself.

HENRY KRAVIS

(pause)

I buy art for 75 million.

Reg stares at him without blinking. Kravis stares back.

REG

What's the asking price on Beatrice?

HENRY KRAVIS

One billion.

Reg knew this, and so he still doesn't blink. But Kravis seizes the moment.

HENRY KRAVIS (CONT'D)

You seem like a nice guy but I don't think you understand: This isn't a cute little deal you can pull off on your downtime after work. Beatrice International Food Distribution is the 8th largest company in the world. They feed 33 per cent of the human beings on this planet. The purchasing of a company like that is not something that someone like you, pardon the expression, can naively waltz in here and rather moronically say, "Oh, I'd like to throw my hat in the ring too." It *does not work that way.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY KRAVIS (CONT'D)

So you are wasting my time, Mr. Lewis,
and I ask that you not do so again.

(calling off)

Paul--cancel the seltzer, Mr. Lewis has
to go!

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - DAY

Reg walks, ranting into his old school cell phone with HEAT--

REG

I want this little bastard, Mike, I want
him so bad I can *taste* him--

CUT BACK & FORTH with Milken on the phone in his LA office--

MILKEN

He's just the broker, Reg, it's not his
actual company--

REG

I don't care, I wanna see his face when I
sign the final paper. You still willing
to back me?

MILKEN

Of course, but you need to take a day to
think about it.

REG

Why?

MILKEN

Because to get in the game the way you
want, you'll have to put down a non-
refundable deposit.

REG

Why--what does that get me?!

MILKEN

It jumps you to the front of the line.
Kravis *has* honor your bid and play it
through, but if you can't close, *he* keeps
the deposit.

REG

...And you'll fund the rest?

MILKEN

If you say the word, Reg, you will have
from me, in your hand, a personal
guarantee letter for 925 million dollars.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MILKEN (CONT'D)

You hand that to him, along with the deposit, and he'll be compelled to entertain your bid.

REG

Wait--how much is the non-refundable deposit?

MILKEN

8 per cent of the cost. In other words:
75 million dollars.

Off Reg--standing in the middle of Manhattan, dumbstruck.

INT. DINING ROOM - REG'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Reg has *once again* made Loida a romantic dinner for two. He's wearing a chef's hat and pulling out all the stops: The good silver, French champagne, caviar... And Loida just sits--vaguely bemused and highly suspicious.

When everything's finally ready, he sits across from her, a big, shit-eating grin on his face. She waits.

REG

So.

LOIDA

So. What can I do for you?

REG

Oh. Well. Now that you ask.

CUT TO:

SAME---moments later:

LOIDA

What?

REG

You're taking it the wrong way--

LOIDA

Are you out of your mind, Reginald? Have you literally lost...lost your *brain*?

REG

Baby, this is a chance for me to achieve everything I *wasn't* able to at McCall. I buy this company and I become one of the most powerful businessmen in the *world*--the *whole* world--as opposed to just some rich *black* guy. It's about--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA

*STOP!! I DON'T CARE! I DON'T WANT TO
HEAR IT!*

(pause; she's never lost it
like this; and then)

You are the only person in the world who
isn't happy with 75 million dollars! I
have stood by you for 11 years while you
chased your dreams, I have supported us
in the tough times, I have raised our
daughters, I have slept alone a thousand
nights, and finally we make it and now
you want to gamble it all for the sake of
your *pride!*?--

REG

Loida--

LOIDA

NO! I can not do this anymore, Reg!

(she stands, throwing aside her
napkin)

McCall made you miserable. You've been
mad, bitter and resentful for 3 years--3
years during which your daughters
wondered who their father actually was!
And now you want to start that all again?
What makes you think it'll be different?!
What makes you think it won't just be
WORSE? Because it will! Because you
will *never* be happy, and that means *I*
will never be happy, and *I don't want*
that and neither do our daughters! So I
am going to say goodbye!

And with that she stands and leaves the room.

REG

Loida--

But she's gone.

INT. FRONT HALL - REG'S BROWNSTONE - CHELSEA - NIGHT

Reg watches helplessly as Loida, bags packed, prepares to
leave with Leslie and Christina. Reg, nearly trance-like,
murmurs to an already-determined Loida.

REG

You don't have to do this--

LOIDA

It's done. Girls, say goodbye to Daddy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LESLIE

Why do we have to go?

LOIDA

Because he needs time on his own.

CHRISTINA

How much time, Mommy?

LOIDA

A lot. C'mon--let's go.

And with that she ushers them out the front door as Reg watches helplessly.

INT. RESTAURANT/LOUNGE - HARVARD CLUB - NIGHT

Reg sits alone at the site of his great celebrations, but this time he's drinking red wine and watching a group of rich white guys laughing and drinking across the room...

FLASHBACK TO REG AT HIS HARVARD LAW SUMMER INTERNSHIP--

INT. CAMBRIDGE DINER - DAY

TITLE: "CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 1965"

Reg, age 21, in a suit and tie, sitting with the Harvard Law dean seen in the earlier flashback, as well as with a stodgy admissions person. Reg is on fire--calmly but forcefully making his case:

REG

Now of course I realize that the program was started to give minority students a mere *taste* of law school life, but what has become abundantly clear to me is that a full-time association between myself and Harvard Law can be mutually beneficial in ways none of us might have foreseen. For *me*, of course, being here will be the first step in achieving my goals of success, wealth and unassailable power--*that's* a given. But for *you*--I'd like to lay out three irrefutable reasons as to why you should admit me: One, you *will* not find a more determined, committed, hard-working student than myself.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG (CONT'D)

I come from the streets of Baltimore, which has bequeathed to me an innate drive to succeed beyond the dreams of the majority of "well-off" students who dominate the landscape of this fair and tree-lined campus.

(sliding them some papers)

Two--a quick look at my under-grad transcript will reveal a sharp, constant and undeniably *upward* grade trend that indicates an on-the-fly adaptability and eagerness to learn, master and conquer the necessary skills for success. Three--given my first 6 weeks in the *summer* program, in addition to perfect grades and requisite demeanor, there is ironclad and ubiquitous evidence as to my ability to "fit in *with*," contribute *to*, and--if I may--*charm-the hell-out-of* the faculty and my fellow students, including a large number of the young *female* visiting-coeds who, believe it or not, have not historically been exposed to "the other" in their short but otherwise educationally robust lives.

(he finally sits back)

Thus I find it to be in *all* our best interests for you to accept me, effective immediately, as a full-time Harvard Law student. Thank you. I rest.

Off the Harvard men---speechless.

INT. RESTAURANT/LOUNGE - HARVARD CLUB - NIGHT

RETURN TO PRESENT as Reg emerges from his reverie. Beat. He slowly and deliberately dials his cell phone....

REG

Milken, it's Lewis, leaving you a message around 10 pm east coast time.

(a breath; then)

I'm in.

He clicks off, breathes again, and glances around the late-night quiet of the club. Silence. He dials another number.

REG (CONT'D)

Charles, it's Reg--you awake?...Sorry. Listen--be at the office at 5 tomorrow morning; we're going for something big.

--as a low, driving, force-gathering music creeps in...

EXT. 57TH STREET - MANHATTAN - DAY

Busy midday-midtown rush: Cars, busses, pedestrians...and then, as though emerging from the horizon, THREE BRINKS ARMORED TRUCKS making their way toward us--slow, methodical, undeniable. When they finally pull to a stop, CAMERA REVEALS they've stopped in front of that most aristocratic building on the block: The offices of *Kohlberg, Kravis, Roberts*.

INT. OFFICE OF HENRY KRAVIS - SAME

Kravis--ever the biggest dick on the block--sits behind his desk discoursing into a speaker phone like he owns the entire world--(which he kinda does):

HENRY KRAVIS

Listen, Harry, what I want is a perfection of articulation that transcends the language barrier, am I--is that "comprehensive" enough for you? I want you to somehow "convey" to our little Asian friends that the transaction will fall apart, i.e. the foundations upon which it is *literally* standing will *crumble* like a very old birthday cake, if they are unwilling or unable to leverage their already substantial holdings into something I can take home to my mother.

As he listens, his PERSONAL ASSISTANT knocks and enters, looking anxious; he waves her away but she gestures that it's an emergency--

HENRY KRAVIS (CONT'D)

(still into phone)

Yes--but the fact is, they *don't* have that kind of capital, and thus it's--

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Sir--*there are people here to see you.*

HENRY KRAVIS

For God's sake, Doris, tell them to wait--

--but it's too late, as 3 BRINKS ARMORED DELIVERY MEN wearing 50's ERA BALTIMORE COLTS JERSEYS--flow through the door wheeling stand-up trolleys each piled high with steel crates.

HENRY KRAVIS (CONT'D)

What the hell's going on, Doris?

BRINKS GUY

Delivery from Mr. Reginald Lewis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

--as the other two start unloading the crates.

HENRY KRAVIS

What?

BRINKS GUY

Cash deposit for his bid to buy Beatrice International.

(handing Kravis a cardboard envelope)

--as well as a certified letter of backing from Drexel Burnham Lambert, signed personally by the head of the high-yield bond department Mr. Michael Milken.

HENRY KRAVIS

(bewildered for maybe the first time ever)

How much money is this?

BRINKS GUY

75 million cash. Mr. Lewis expects to hear from you later this afternoon.

The men have finished unloading the crates: 20 in all. The Brinks guy opens the lid of one so as to verify its contents.

BRINKS GUY (CONT'D)

You can count it, sir, but it might take a while.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

(stunned)

75 million?

BRINKS GUY

75 million.

And with that, the Brinks guys march out.

EXT. WATERFRONT MANSION IN THE HAMPTONS - DAY

LONG SHOT of the mansion that now belongs to Reg.

INT. REG'S MANSION - HAMPTONS - DAY

Reg in his mansion office working the phones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

What I want is a prospectus on every company owned by Beatrice International, with full financial breakdowns, earnings prognoses, up-to-date balance sheets and--very important--personal character descriptions of each of the top five executives. We're talking about 64 companies under the Beatrice umbrella, Charles, and I want that same level of detail for every single one of 'em. And take Kevin and Laurie off anything else they're doing to help you

(listening)

It doesn't matter, Charles!...WELL THEN TELL HER SHE CAN DIVORCE YOU BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT'S TAKING PRECEDENCE IN YOUR LIFE FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS!! AND YOU KNOW WHAT?--TELL KEVIN AND LAURIE THE SAME THING: NO SOCIAL LIVES WHILE YOU'RE WORKING THIS JOB--NO DATES, MARRIAGES, KIDS, RESTAURANTS, GOING TO THE GODDAM GYM--NADA! YOUR LIVES FROM HERE ON ARE 24-7 BEATRICE AND IF YOU DON'T LIKE THAT YOU CAN GO WORK FOR GODDAM LEGAL AID!

(and then)

I'll be back in the office tomorrow.

Make sure this is happening

He hangs up. He is in way over his head but won't ever admit it. He looks around--utterly alone in a very large mansion and it's not a great feeling. He glances at his watch, then turns on the news so as not to hear himself think.

NEWS ANCHOR

It started in Hong Kong this morning, spread to Europe, and by the close of trading in New York today, it was being called Black Monday, the steepest single-day decline in the stock market since the crash of 1929.

ANGLE on the TV showing frenzied Wall Street traders.

NEWS ANCHOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The Dow Jones industrial dropped by 508 points for a 22 and a half per cent decline. Australia, Britain, Spain, Canada--all suffered devastating losses. Economists are saying that America will be feeling the effects of today's events for years to come.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Off Reg--catatonic.

INT. KITCHEN - HAMPTONS MANSION - DUSK

Reg eats a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in total silence. There is nothing to say. The phone rings. He answers--

REG

Hello?...Hey, Tom, thanks for calling--so what are my options? Can I get back the deposit?...But the universe is completely reversed from 24 hours ago, I had no way of knowing---...I understand, but---... I understand.....*GOD DAMN IT!!!*....Fine.

He hangs up; he knew that was coming, but... He looks around. He wants some chips but can't find any. He stands, considering what to do, the weight of everything slowly sinking in....

EXT. WATERFRONT MANSION IN THE HAMPTONS - NIGHT

LONG SHOT of the house with only two lights on. Stillness. And then.....A DEAFENING EXPLOSION as the house splinters into a fiery ball of a thousand pieces. We watch it burn.

EXT. WATERFRONT MANSION IN THE HAMPTONS - DAY

The next day, the remains of the house are still smoking, as DOZENS OF FIREFIGHTERS and COPS work the area, having taped off the grounds surrounding the smoldering remnants.

LONG SHOT of a car racing up the driveway. When it screeches to a halt, Loida jumps out, followed by Leslie and Christina.

LOIDA

REG?!

(turning to a cop)

Where is he?!

The cops gestures to the side of the house where we now find ...Reg talking to an arson inspector. Loida and the kids race over. When he sees them coming, he is near tears.

LOIDA (CONT'D)

Are you OK?!

REG

(hugging her and the kids)

I'm OK, I'm OK.

LOIDA

What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

We don't know yet. Could've been a gas leak, could've been...somethin' else.

She looks at him, knowing full-well what this implies.

LOIDA

(and then, with some accusation)

Where were you? When they called me they still didn't know where you were.

REG

...I was out buying chips at the deli.

CHRISTINA

You shouldn't eat so many chips, Daddy.

REG

I know. But today I'm glad I do.

LOIDA

(re: arson inspector)

Are they investigating?

REG

He doesn't think it's arson.

LOIDA

But does he know who you are, and about the death threats?

REG

...He doesn't seem to care.

Loida looks at her husband, who clearly hasn't slept, who's covered in soot, who for over two hours she feared was dead.

LOIDA

Girls, go wait in the car.

LESLIE

Why, Mom?

LOIDA

Please. Just go over there and wait.

The girls obediently step away. Loida waits until they're out of ear shot...and then she quietly breaks down.

REG

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LOIDA

I thought you were dead.

REG

And what--now you're sad I'm *not*?

LOIDA

No... I don't know why you're doing this, Reg. I don't...*understand* it. You want all this wealth, and you're willing to lose your family over it, and you're willing to be by yourself in a mansion, and you're willing to have people burn that mansion down...but I don't understand what you're gonna *get*. From all this. From all *this*.

She gestures around at the smoking embers. She is less mad and accusatory than profoundly confused and bewildered, for she truly no longer knows the man who she once married.

Reg takes a moment to take this in, his reaction a mix of anger, passion, tenderness and heart.

REG

(starting with anger)

What I'm gonna *get*, Loida...is I'm gonna get mad; I'm gonna *rip* somebody, 'cause I'm sick to hell of always having to justify and prove and wait my turn and *get in line*.

(calmer)

But then I'm gonna get *wise*. I'm gonna take a step back and look at how they play the game, and I'm gonna learn the game better than them, and then I'm gonna *win* the goddam game.

(and then)

And after that, I'm gonna be nice. I'm gonna give back, I'm gonna make things happen that wouldn't otherwise happen, I'm gonna be a big, happy, goddam *teddy bear*.

(pause)

It *used* to be about money, Loida; but it's not anymore. The reason I'm doin' all *this*--...is no longer about *me*. It's about *them*--

(pointing to their daughters)

It's about them, and *their* daughters, and their daughters' daughters and sons and cousins and nephews.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

REG (CONT'D)

I'm doing it so that *they* all know that it *can* - be - *DONE*. So that they know skin will never stand in their way, and boundaries are there to be crossed, and people should be allowed to follow all their dreams.

(and then tender)

It's about doing something bigger than myself, Loida. Because you're probably right: I lost my soul when I sold McCall. I got rich and I lost my soul. And now I'm trying to buy it back. I want people to say, for a whole long time after I'm dead, I want 'em to say, "There was a man who played by *his* rules, not theirs. Who didn't let the powers-that-be stand in his way; who didn't bump his head on a ceiling--glass or stone; a man who listened to the voices of his parents and uncles and grandparents and aunts; and added his own voice to that sound, so that those who come *after* might keep on going....when everyone else says *stop*."

It's now Loida's turn to absorb *his* words...and we're not sure which way she's gonna go, for indeed the smoke is still rising from the rubble of her marriage. And then...

LOIDA

Thank you. That makes me understand.

(pause)

And now I want to say *this*: I will support you. But if you succeed, I'm not staying here.

REG

Staying where?

LOIDA

America. If you buy this company, *this* kind of thing--

(pointing to the rubble)

--isn't going to stop. It's Beatrice *International*, Reg. So if you buy it... we're moving to Paris.

Off Reg--a stern face...slowly spreading into a smile.

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - DAY

A BLACK TOWN CAR cruises through southern Manhattan.

INT. BLACK TOWN CAR - SAME

Reg, back in the game, takes in the views from his backseat window, speaking on his car phone to UNCLE JAMES, who we cut back and forth with in Baltimore, where he's talking to Reg from a phone at the warehouse he's manager of.

REG

I'm hiring private arson investigators to look into possible causes; right now the local police think it was a gas leak.

UNCLE JAMES

You want me to come up there and be your bodyguard, 'cause God knows your Ma's worried sick down here.

REG

I'm fine and I don't need no bodyguard. They wanna come after me, let 'em come, I got the *power of self-will*, James. *I got the power right here!*

UNCLE JAMES

I'm sure you do, you're the 75 million-dollar man.

REG

That's right--

UNCLE JAMES

So then what's this crap about you gamblin' it all for a billion?

REG

It's just something I gotta do.

UNCLE JAMES

And have you got the best way to do it?

REG

What do you mean?

UNCLE JAMES

Remember how I told you to sell off that Hillman you had in college?

REG

Yeah?

UNCLE JAMES

You were gonna sell it whole and I told you a better way?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

UNCLE JAMES (CONT'D)

'You hadn't thought it out and that extra money got you through the next two semesters, am I right?

REG

Yeah but what about it?

UNCLE JAMES

I'm just *saying*, make sure you think it out first. Stock market just crashed, man, people are scared, you might need a back-up plan.

REG

I hear you, James, but this is a little different than selling off the Hillman. I'm playing with the big boys now.

UNCLE JAMES

I know--and the big boys are the first to screw you in the caboose. So all I'm saying is have a backup. The pieces are worth more than the whole. Right? You hadn't thought of that at the time. Pieces worth more than the whole.

REG

(a smile as he shakes his head)
Awright, James. I'll keep it in mind.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

Reg--for once calm--speaks to Kevin, Laurie, Charles and several more recently-hired staff members.

REG

I'm sorry if I've been...harsh with you all in the last several days. Weeks. Months.

CHARLES

Keep going.

REG

Years. I wanna take this opportunity to say that I deeply appreciate all that you do for me. I really do. I mean it.

CHARLES

Are you just saying that?

REG

No--I mean it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLES

But do you *really* mean it?

REG

I do--but that's enough now, Charles.

CHARLES

You got it.

REG

(clearing his throat)

I need this deal to close. We *all* need it. And so I'm gonna need your help.

Reg's assistant DEIRDRE knocks on the door--

DIEDRE

Sorry to interrupt, Reg, but Mike Milken's on the phone; he says it's important.

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON -SAME

Reg shuts the door and picks up the phone.

REG

Hi, Mike, what's up?

Cut back and forth with Milken in his L.A. office--

MILKEN

We have an issue, Reg. The market crash has--as you know--devastated everything; scorched earth across every major financial capitol around the world.

REG

Cut to the chase.

MILKEN

I can only back you for 500 million. You're gonna have to go solo for the other 415.

REG

(absorbing...)

Thank you for telling me.

MILKEN

Don't be mad, you can still make this happen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

How?

MILKEN

(for once not knowing)

We'll find another firm to fill the gap.

REG

It's not gonna work; Kravis will squash every deal. He wants me to fail.

MILKEN

You never know, Reg--

REG

I gotta go.

MILKEN

But what're you gonna do?

REG

I'll figure something out.

He hangs up--standing alone--with *no idea* what to do.

INT. AUTO PARTS SHOP - SOUTHERN VIRGINIA - DAY

FLASHBACK TO REG--age 20, persuading a REDNECK AUTO MECHANIC to see the world *his* way.

REG

Here's what I'm offering sir: I have a 1962 Hillman Minx convertible sitting out there and I would like to *sell you the carburetor*.

REDNECK AUTO MECHANIC

You wanna sell me the *carburetor*?

REG

I wanna sell you the carburetor. I'm also willing to sell you the headlights, bumpers and steering wheel.

REDNECK AUTO MECHANIC

Why're selling just *those* things?

REG

'Cause I already sold the wheels, brakes and suspension to Jimmy's on 4th street.

REDNECK AUTO MECHANIC

...So why not just sell the whole thing?

INT. REG'S OFFICE - LEWIS & CLARKSON - DAY

RETURN TO PRESENT--as Reg snaps out of it--calling off:

REG
DIERDRE--IN HERE PRONTO! WE'RE GONNA
CHARTER ME A PLANE!!

AS MUSIC KICKS IN OVER THE FOLLOWING SHOTS:

--Reg stepping off a chartered corporate jet in Dublin and being greeted by Irish businessmen.

--Reg at an Irish chocolate factory, shaking hands with the factory workers and tasting the chocolate.

--Reg getting back on the corporate jet.

--Reg getting off the corporate jet in Madrid.

--Reg being given a tour by Spanish businessmen through a potato chip factory in Madrid--tasting the chips and pronouncing them "MUY BUENO!"

--Reg at a late-night meeting in a Spanish hotel lobby, negotiating hard with the Spanish businessmen.

--Reg getting back on the corporate jet.

--Reg greeted by Belgian businessmen who immediately give him free soft drink samples as they all laugh and shake hands.

--Reg at the soft drink bottling factory animatedly negotiating as the Belgian guys smile and nod.

--Reg asleep in the corporate jet as it flies above the clouds and the MUSIC FADES OUT.

EX. PARISIAN OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Reg, totally jet-lagged, sits at a bustling cafe with 3 very French Frenchmen who barely speak English.

REG
So--thank you very much--*merci!*--for the
great tour. Je parle un peu de Francais
parce que j'etais ici pour trois mois
quand j'etais un etudiant en, ah, "1967."

The Frenchmen listen...and decide they'd rather continue the conversation in *their* bad English rather than *his* sucky French. Their accents are as thick as butter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #1

We are glad 'zat we were able to show you
our, *comment ça se dit?*--"grocery store."

REG

Yes--and I can now see why your grocery
store chain is the largest in France!

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #1

We are very proud.

REG

You should be.

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #2

What?

REG

I said you *should* be!

(the guy nods blankly)

So can we talk about the idea I brought
up in the car?

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #1

I do not zink it ees going to work.

REG

Well that's what I wanna discuss; you
see it seems to be working for the 3
other companies to whom I've brought it
up so far, so my hope is that--

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #2

We do not have, *comment vous dites?*--
faith, that our government will make pozz-
eeble for you such a thing, in a
financial sense way for you. And thus
eet ees not in *our* interest ei'zer, Mr.
Lewis.

REG

(speaking rapidly)

Well that's what I can help you with.

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #2

What?

REG

I said, maybe I can *help* you understand.

Looking a bit confused, the two businessmen confer in rapid
French with a third, more silent partner, who somberly shakes
his head. The first guy turns back to Reg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #1
I do not zink we want to do this.

REG
(frustrated)
But you're not letting me *explain*! If
you would just--

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #1
Mr. Lewis. We look forward to working
wiz' Beatrice under your ownership.

REG
You don't understand, I *need* this to
happen, guys. There will *be* no ownership
under me if you don't--

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #1
(standing)
Thank you, sir. We will let you go to
bed now. You look tired.

He puts down money as all three of the Frenchmen stand,
holding their hands out dutifully for Reg to shake.

EXT. PARISIAN STREET - MONTMARTRE - NIGHT

Reg, too jet lagged to sleep, wanders the streets of
Monmartre in a daze. A young, WEST AFRICAN MAN stops.

WEST AFRICAN MAN
Eh--t'es perdu?

REG
I'm sorry, what? Comment?

WEST AFRICAN MAN
(a look)
T'es anglais?

REG
Non. American.

WEST AFRICAN MAN
Ah--Americain!
(testing his own English)
Hoow are youu?

REG
I'm good. Thanks.

WEST AFRICAN MAN
Do you need any-zing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG
No, I'm good, thanks.

Reg keeps walking but the man walks beside him, smiling, nodding his head.

WEST AFRICAN MAN
Life in America--it ees good?

REG
Yeah, it's good. It's fine.

WEST AFRICAN MAN
Why?

REG
(stops, a moment--then)
'Cause anything can happen.

The man smiles broadly, holding up his hand for a very non-white-American handshake.

WEST AFRICAN MAN
Yes--anything can happen! 'Zat is great, man, 'zat is great!

Reg soul-shakes the guy's hand, then watches as he takes off down the street. Reg allows himself a smile...and walks on.

INT. 23RD FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - DAY

TITLE: "THE BEATRICE CLOSING, NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 30, 1987"

In the very same prestigious firm where Reg was once so unceremoniously let go, there are now 3 floors consumed with this one single, very complicated deal. On this, the 23rd floor, we find Reg, Charles, Kevin, Laurie and Tom Lamia conferring, as various lawyers scurry to and fro around them.

REG
I'm tellin' you right now, this thing's not gonna work if we don't nail the final piece with the French.

TOM
And *what's* gotta happen for that to happen?

REG
They have to know that the French Finance Ministry won't double-tax the deal, it's as simple as that.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG (CONT'D)

They want it to go through but they're worried that since I outbid one of the big French companies for Beatrice, that the government's gonna scuttle it.

TOM

And you can't just tell 'em you're "sure" the French won't do that?

REG

I have but they don't believe me!
(off watch)
We have 45 minutes 'til the deadline.

CHARLES

Is the French CEO still here?

REG

He's up on 24.

INT. SPARE OFFICE - 24TH FLOOR, PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg, Charles and Tom confront the grave, non-English-speaking French Businessman we saw in Paris, who's already heatedly saying "no" to a feckless American INTERPRETER.

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #3

Mais je peux *pas*!--*Je peux pas!* S'il nous le vend, il devra payer des impots en france et aux U.S., c'est sur!

INTERPRETER

He says the government will, umm, will like tax Mr. Lewis twice and that the deal will, in that case, you know, ah--

TOM

Tell him Reg has received a guarantee from the Finance Ministry that they're granting him an exception.

In horribly halting French, the interpreter explains this to the obstinate French businessman, who--still listening--already begins to shake his head vehemently.

REG

Why is he shaking his head--Why are you shaking your head, Jacques?

FRENCH BUSINESSMAN #3

Parce que c'est pas possible, c'est claire--ca va pas marcher, "Reg."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTERPRETER

He says it's not gonna work, "Reg."

REG

This is goddam unacceptable! Make this work, Tom! You gotta make it work!

INT. CORRIDOR 24TH FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg storms down the hall, nearly assaulting a passing lawyer--

REG

Which room is Henry Kravis in?

LAWYER

Conference room 3, two floors down. He's talking with Mr. Milken.

Off Reg--taking a deep breath and heading for the elevator.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM #3 - 22ND FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg enters to where Kravis and Milken are talking. The room has been lined with sandwiches, a hot buffet and full bar.

REG

(turning on the confidence)

Mike--I didn't realize you were already in town!

MILKEN

(standing to shake hands)

Landed an hour ago.

REG

Henry, how are you today?

HENRY KRAVIS

I think the question is more, "How are you?"

REG

Couldn't be better.

HENRY KRAVIS

How close are we to making this happen, Reg? 'Cause if I'm not mistaken, you got about 35 minutes to come up with the cash.

(an imperious smile)

Especially now that your friend Mike here didn't provide quite as much backing as you'd expected.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

Don't worry so much, Henry, I may be a
"small-time player"---but I'm *crafty*.

HENRY KRAVIS

...I'm sure you are.

REG

(with his charming smile)
Now let me ask you--how rigid is this
deadline thing?

HENRY KRAVIS

(dead cold serious)
It's rigid like a 75 million dollar piece
of gold, Reg.

MILKEN

(pause)
Reg, should you and I...should we talk?

INT. BATHROOM - PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg watches as Milken checks to make sure no one's in the
stalls, before turning to Reg in a near whisper.

MILKEN

I don't understand what you're doing. Is
this all a bluff? Because you got over
200 lawyers working on this thing and I
don't have *any* idea how you're planning
to pull it off.

REG

That's 'cause I stopped confiding in you.

MILKEN

Fine, I get that--but can you tell me
now, because I'm still your theoretical
partner on this thing.

REG

...When I was in college, Mike, I had a
1962 Hillman Minx convertible. *Gorgeous*
car--bought it for 600 bucks after
busting my butt at the countrry club where
my granddaddy was maitire'd his entire
life.

MILKEN

Not the time for memory lane, Reg.
How're you getting the 415 million?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

(pause; then calmly continuing)
It was a great car. But when they *robbed* me of my football scholarship--Did I ever tell you I was a great high school QB?

MILKEN

Reg--

REG

I was. 3 year starter at Dunbar High in Baltimore. We were a *powerhouse*.

QUICK-FLASHBACK of an audacious 15 year-old Reg spouting forth in the huddle of his Dunbar High School team.

REG (CONT'D)

We are going to win this goddam game if I have to score every goddam point myself! Now you guys may have played more, you may outweigh me, I may be outweighed by every goddam player on the field right now, but I have speed, accuracy, agility and an *astounding* vertical--so we're gonna score on this play mostly due to my athleticism, OK? Strong left, Power-I, QB sweep on one, ready--*break!*

RETURN TO PRESENT--in the bathroom:

MILKEN

What does that have to do with the car?

REG

Nothing.

MILKEN

And what's the car have to do with the 415 million?

REG

That's what I'm getting to, Mike.

FLASHBACK to Reg in the REDNECK AUTO MECHANIC:

REDNECK AUTO MECHANIC

...So why not just sell the whole thing?

REG

'Cause pieces are worth more than the whole.

Off the Redneck mechanic just looking at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RETURN TO PRESENT---as Milken just looks at him.

MILKEN

I don't understand what that means.

REG

I'm selling off 4 pieces of Beatrice so
as to meet the asking price, Mike.

Milken absorbs this....evaluating, processing...and then:

MILKEN

That's fucking brilliant.

REG

Thank you.

MILKEN

Is it working?

REG

...Not yet.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM #1 - 23RD FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - LATER

Tom, Charles, Kevin and Laurie wait nervously. Tom glances
at the clock--

TOM

Where's Reg?

KEVIN

I'll go find him.

TOM

I've got the French Finance minister
calling in 5 and we need Verlongue in
here, but the two *cannot* speak directly
'cause it'll violate every ethics law in
their country. Thus it's an off-the-
record approval that has to be indirectly
conveyed, meaning we need a 3rd party
translator who can actually *speak* French--
and we have 15 minutes 'til deadline.

Kevin nods and leaves--

INT. KITCHEN AREA - 23RD FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg pours himself a cup of coffee; he is thinking hard but
close to giving up. After a moment, Loida walks in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA

Hey.

He turns, surprised to find her.

REG

What are you doing here?

LOIDA

(genuine)

I wanted to be here when you close.

REG

...I don't think it's gonna happen.

LOIDA

Why not?

(he is too bummed to answer)

Reg?

Finally he looks up...with an idea.

INT. SPARE OFFICE - 24TH FLOOR, PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg, Charles, Tom, Kevin and Laurie all stand watching as Loida listens to someone on the phone. The French Businessman--Verlongue--watches intently as well.

LOIDA

(in perfect, flowing, fluent French)

Oui oui, je comprends ce que vous dites, Monsieur le Ministre, et je voudrais l'expliquer a Monsieur Verlongue, parce qu'il faut qu'il sache a quel point c'est serieux.

(nodding...then repeating)

Oui, exceptionnelement, juste cette fois-ci, le gouvernement français va accepter les conditions de l'aquisition, plus precisement, l'aquisition ne sera pas imposable...oui absolument. Est ce que vous pouvez attendre un instant, Monsieur le Ministre?...Merci.

She cups her hand over the receiver and addresses the French Business Man--as Reggie watches her with INTENSE LOVE.

LOIDA (CONT'D)

Monsieur le Ministre m'assure que la transaction ne sera pas sujet aux impots français.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOIDA (CONT'D)

Monsieur Lewis peut donc acheter la
compagnie sans sanction--du tout. C'est
une promesse.

Loida looks at the French Business Man---as does everyone
else in the room. Pause as he considers the situation with
great, French, furrowed-brow depth. And then, slowly, and
definitively, he nods in the *affirmative*.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM #3 - 22ND FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - LATER

Kravis, Milken, Tom, Charles, Loida and about 30 other
lawyers, bankers and subsidiary company representatives are
crammed into the room as the formal paper signing finally
takes place. Kravis sits like a fat, contented pig,
practically glowing with pleasure in Reg's impending failure
to meet the price. Milken watches closely, hoping--but
unsure--that Reg can pull this off. As Tom Lamia calls for
order in the room, Kravis jumps in--

HENRY KRAVIS

Let's just make this very simple, Tom: I
need to see some significant paperwork
from Mr. Lewis' side of the table, 'cause
this deal is dead if he can't document
the certificates of incorporation,
employment agreements, state taxing
authorizations, and, most obviously, the
cash.

TOM

That's what we're working on, Mr. Kravis.
It's coming up from the 22nd floor any
second.

HENRY KRAVIS

(turning to Milken)

If it weren't for Lewis' 75 million,
Mike, this would be starting to piss me
off as a monumental waste of time.

MILKEN

Let's see what he comes up with.

TOM

So as we wait, let me just walk you
through what we have so far: Over here--
(gesturing to various document
piles spread on the table)
--is the 500 million in high yields bonds
being provided by Mr. Milken; over there
the paperwork for the 75 million cash,
which has of course already been...
delivered.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM (CONT'D)

(re: yet another pile)

Over here are the acquisition papers for the individual Beatrice companies, each to be separately co-signed and authorized--

--as Reg strides in, followed by Kevin and Laurie each carrying huge piles of documents.

REG (O.S.)

And here are balance sheets, proof of sale documents, certificates of cash transfers and a just-cut check for 415 million dollars---available for deposit on the opening of business Thursday, meeting the three-day leeway as signed-off-on in the intent-to-buy agreement.

Kravis stares at him, stunned...

HENRY KRAVIS

(to his lawyer)

Where's the cash coming from, Jerry?

Kravis' lawyer stands to examine the documents that Kevin and Laurie are placing down.

REG

I divested Beatrice of 4 of its 64 companies, Henry. McGillin Chocolate for 40 million; Esquivilez Snacks for 95; the Masson Bottling Company of Belgium for 120, and to my great Parisian friend here Paul Verlongue--

He points to the French Businessman, who is also in the room and stands with a broad yet "humbled" smile--

REG (CONT'D)

--I sold the French grocery chain "*Franprix!*" for the reasonable and just price of 160 million dollars. Reps from each company are here to submit their funding for approval.

Kevin and Laurie slide over 4 large stacks of paperwork.

REG (CONT'D)

So yes--I have the cash *in hand*, in full, right now. Meaning you and I are done dealing with each other.

(and then)

Pieces worth more than the whole, Henry. So I sold a couple pieces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Kravis looks around, wanting someone to say it ain't so; but every one in the room, from Milken to Kravis' own lawyers, knows that Reg has won. Reg leans over the table and signs three documents.

REG (CONT'D)

Those are the ones you needed to witness.
The rest I already did. I don't feel
like being in the same room with you, so
I'm gonna leave now.

And with that. Reg nods, turns, and leaves.

C.U. on Kravis' face---which Reg no longer even needs to see.

INT. CORRIDOR - 22ND FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg walks alone, straight-faced, trying to keep it together.

INT. KITCHEN AREA - 22RD FLOOR - PAUL, WEISS - SAME

Reg turns into the small kitchen, leans over--and quietly closes his eyes---overwhelmed with joy. After several moments, Loida enters, She holds him in a tight embrace.

REG

Did we close yet?

LOIDA

Yes. Kravis signed. And then Tom
announced it.
(hushed)
You're closed.

Reg and Loida remain in a silent, tight embrace...

FADE TO:

SHOT of a CHALLENGER CORPORATE JET landing on a runway in Paris at night. As it comes to a stop, we see that written on its tail wing is the design logo: **TLC--THE LEWIS COMPANY.**

When it is stopped, its door pops open, the stairs automatically descend...and REG STEPS OUT into the crisp French evening.

EXT. STREETS OF PARIS - NIGHT

A limousine rolls through the gorgeous Parisian night.

INT. LIMOUSINE - STREETS OF PARIS - SAME

Reg, Loida, Leslie and Christina in the back seat as the radio plays news.

FRENCH RADIO REPORTER

(in French w/subtitles)

In the largest off-shore leveraged buyout in American history, Mr. Reginald Lewis, CEO of TLC Holdings, will now take over Beatrice International, which employs five-thousand workers in 31 countries...

REG

(to Loida)

Are they saying what I think they're saying?

LOIDA

Yes. They're saying that you, Reginald Lewis, own a billion dollar company, and that *You. Are. The. MAN.*

He kisses her, completely in love.

REG

We own it, baby. We own it. And we're runnin' it outta Paris.

--as they cruise past Notre Dame and the girls ooh and aah.

EXT. LUXURIOUS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Long shot of an elegant, art deco, 100 year-old building.

INT. REG AND LOIDA'S APARTMENT - PARIS - SAME

Reg wakes Leslie and Christina the next morning. They are happy just to be in the presence of their Dad.

REG

OK you two, time to wake up. We gotta start gettin' ready for the party tonight.

LESLIE

Are we really in Paris, Dad?

REG

We really are. Look out the window.

ANGLE OUT THE WINDOW--with its view of the Eiffel Tower.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LESLIE

I can't believe it!

CHRISTINA

I think I saw the hunchback of Notre Dame last night when we drove by it.

REG

It's true, he might still be up there.

LESLIE

Are you happy, Dad? That everything's going well?

REG

Yeah, I am. I'm happy it's going well.

CHRISTINA

Is it 'cause you own a billion-dollar company?

REG

(a smile)

...No. I'm happy because when I achieve something that I really wanted to achieve, be it buying a company or having the two most beautiful daughters on earth, I feel like I'm not just achieving it for myself, but that I'm doing it on behalf of this big...this big 'ole *chorus*, like a *singing* chorus, that's standing right behind me; like a bunch of wise, hard-working, expert back-up singers. And when I turn around and look at 'em, I start to *recognize* them--

--as he speaks, we CUT TO REG, on a vast, rolling field, turning around to see the people behind him, who include his mother Carolyn, his Uncle James, his grandfather Sam Cooper-- and dozens and dozens of other relatives...

REG (CONT'D)

--and in recognizing *them*...I recognize myself. And I know who I am.

RETURN TO PRESENT, with Reg and his daughters.

REG (CONT'D)

And so that's why I'm happy. Because I know I'm not alone. And that I won't ever be alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LESLIE

OK, Dad, you don't have to be so melodramatic. Can we get ready for the party now?

REG

...Sure.

INT. REG AND LOIDA'S APARTMENT - PARIS - NIGHT

The party--over a hundred people celebrate Reg's purchase of Beatrice. French waiters scurry about with trays of champagne and caviar, serving the presidents of all the sub-companies that Reg now owns, not to mention foreign dignitaries, American diplomats, French celebrities and anyone else who's in the who's who of European culture.

Also there are Reg's Mom Carolyn, his Uncle James--who's dancing with a hot Parisian chick--and a dozen other relatives from Baltimore. We also glimpse Kevin, Tom, Laurie and Charles--who's dancing with *three* hot Parisian chicks.

Reg is in top form and a white tux, meeting and greeting and sought after by all. And yet amid the frenzy he suddenly realizes that the one person he cares about most isn't there. He looks around, then fights his way through the crowd.

EXT. BALCONY - REG AND LOIDA'S APARTMENT - PARIS - SAME

Reg makes his way out to the balcony, with its breathtaking view of the Paris night. He looks around--and suddenly smiles as he looks down below:

Reg's POV on the street below, where Loida, in her elegant full-length dress gown, lies seductively across the hood of a *1962 Hillman Linx convertible*.

REG

WHAT???!!!

EXT. CURB SIDE - REG AND LOIDA'S APARTMENT - PARIS - SAME

Reg bursts forth from the lobby to where Loida smilingly stands to kiss him.

REG

(still shocked)

Loida--this is a 1962 Hillman Linx convertible!

LOIDA

I know that, Reg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REG

How did you--? Did you know that was the car that--

LOIDA

That you had in college but had to sell in order to pay for tuition after they robbed you of your football scholarship which you will never forgive them for?

REG

Yeah.

LOIDA

Yes, Reg. You told me that on our very first date. Actually I take that back-- our *second* date. On the *first* one you tried to make love to me.

REG

I'm sorry about that. I really am.

LOIDA

I forgave you a long time ago.

(he smiles; she hands him car keys)

Here. I want you to *enjoy* this car. After all...why should *white* guys have all the fun?

He accepts the keys, and kisses her with great love...AS CAMERA SLOWLY BEGINS TO RECEDE, UP AND AWAY, INTO THE PARIS NIGHT SO THAT THE CITY UNFOLDS BELOW...

--as we read the following:

--Reginald Lewis died in 1993, at the age of 50, of a brain tumor. His personal net worth was \$400 million. His memorial service included words of condolence from Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, Colin Powell, Bill Cosby and Arthur Ashe. Kathleen Battle sang *Amazing Grace*.

--Reg's legacy endures through the institutions dedicated to his honor, including:

THE REGINALD F. LEWIS HARVARD LAW INTERNATIONAL CENTER;

THE REGINALD F. LEWIS MUSEUM OF MARYLAND AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE;

THE REGINALD F. LEWIS HIGH SCHOOL IN BALTIMORE;

THE REGINALD F. LEWIS COLLEGE IN SORSOGON CITY, PHILIPPINES;

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE VIRGINIA STATE REGINALD F. LEWIS BUSINESS SCHOOL.

--The Reginald Lewis Foundation gives away tens of thousands of dollars every year to educational and cultural causes.

--Loida Lewis is currently the CEO of Beatrice International.

--Leslie Lewis is an international journalist.

--Christina Lewis is a professional actor.

--Michael Milken spent 22 months years in federal prison on charges of violating U.S. Securities laws. He currently runs The Milken Institute, as well as the Milken Family Foundation, a leading philanthropic organization.

THE END