

Broken City

by

Brian Tucker

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE - NIGHT

DETECTIVE BILLY TAGGART. Handsome. Hideous. Thirty-four going on pure adrenaline. His eyes lucid with violence. AIMING HIS PISTOL at the quickly receding image of TWO INDISTINCT FIGURES racing off into the darkness.

BILLY breathing runaway train fast. He's frozen in a moment's paralysis. A life's paralysis. He's stuck between chasing after those indistinct figures and standing here. Taking it. SIRENS WAILING.

BILLY swallowing. Too late now. Holstering his pistol. Okay, Billy. Looking down now. The rain-slicked blacktop reflecting the streetlights. And there...

The DEAD BODY OF MIKEY TAVAREZ. Sixteen years old. A bullet hole in his head.

BILLY takes in the night. One of those perfect New York nights after the rain. WIGWAG LIGHTS APPROACHING -- illuminating...

The sign on the front lawn of the housing project across the street:

WELCOME TO BOLTON VILLAGE

EXT. FOLEY SQUARE COURTHOUSE - DAY

The steps to the courthouse, turgid with the people of the city. Threatening to blow any second. PROTESTERS -- MINISTERS -- REPORTERS -- CAMERAMEN -- COPS. The noise is deafening, almost symphonic...

INT. COURTROOM IN FOLEY SQUARE - DAY

BILLY at the defendant's desk. He's stoic in funereal black. JACOB CALDWELL is his lawyer. Flashing BILLY a cocksure smile. It's in the bag.

MIKEY TAVAREZ'S PARENTS in the first row of the gallery behind the prosecutor's desk. Proud people. BILLY swallowing at the sight of them.

INT. HOSTETLER'S OFFICE - DAY

MAYOR NICHOLAS HOSTETLER pouring himself four fingers of Suntory. He's fifty-one and in perfect shape. He's part Wall Street, part Bensonhurst. Reveling in good whisky, and the thrill of the fight...

HOSTETLER

They're hammering me over this no gun business, Fairbanks. How difficult is it to plant a goddamned gun?

CHIEF OF POLICE COLIN FAIRBANKS in an armchair across from the mayor's desk -- finding it hard to be amused. He's the same age as the mayor, as domineering a presence, but more judicious by a mile.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

(Cheshire grin)

Levity, Fairbanks. This isn't going past preliminary.

FAIRBANKS

Maybe we should hope it does -- sir. Ten thousand people on the courthouse steps. And there's only one word that's going to keep them from rioting.

HOSTETLER

Then you'd better tell your men to stand at the ready.

HOSTETLER chuckling.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

The good guys have won, Fairbanks. Have a drink.

FAIRBANKS

(what he came here for)

Now might not be the time to celebrate, sir.

HOSTETLER

You're right. Let's give it three minutes.

FAIRBANKS

A witness came forward this morning.

HOSTETLER'S grin vanishing...

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

A young man. He appears to be credible.

HOSTETLER

(hesitates)

We're two minutes from a decision.

FAIRBANKS

He came forward with a video tape. Sir.

HOSTETLER'S blood rate skyrocketing. Going catatonic.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

Maybe the prosecutor declines to retry.
But the media -- the people -- some
miracle keeps them from exploding today,
it's just a reprieve until the morning
news.

And now FAIRBANKS will have that drink. Marching to the
drinks cart. Four fingers of Scotch.

HOSTETLER

Where's the tape?

FAIRBANKS

My men are tracking down a copy.

HOSTETLER

A copy?

FAIRBANKS

The original is... being misplaced in
evidence.

FAIRBANKS hammering the Scotch.

HOSTETLER

You've seen it?

(FAIRBANKS' look tells it)

The witness. Who is he?

FAIRBANKS

He's a kid.

HOSTETLER

Is he legal? Is his mother legal?
Where's his family? Where's his old man?
Has he got a brother? They upstate?
Talk to him. Let's deal. What does he
want? What does he want, Fairbanks?

FAIRBANKS
He wants justice, sir.

HOSTETLER hammering his Scotch, and...

An AIDE entering.

AIDE
Pardon me, Mayor. The judge has
returned.

INT. COURTROOM IN FOLEY SQUARE - DAY

GAVEL SMACKING -- COURTROOM ERUPTING -- JEERS -- CATCALLS
-- COPS PUSHING BACK THE THRONG...

BILLY standing there relieved, but not overwhelmed with
relief. He's looking at...

MIKEY TAVAREZ'S PARENTS. Pride undiminished. Unchanged.
Except for that single tear slipping down the FATHER'S
cheek.

EXT. FOLEY SQUARE COURTHOUSE - DAY

COPS FORMING A HUMAN SHIELD AROUND BILLY -- marching him
like one of the Little Rock Nine through the mob --
REPORTERS shouting into microphones -- BOTTLES AND CANS
FLYING -- a Bach fugue of shouts and taunts, and...

The human shield cinching about BILLY. Movement stopping
as the crowd pushes back.

BILLY turning back. Time slowing around him as he
watches MIKEY TAVAREZ'S PARENTS struggling through the
melee at the top of the steps...

His heart pounding. His body breaking the human shield.
BILLY aiming up the stairs, fighting upstream against the
tide...

JACOB
(calling up the stairs)
Billy!

The throng closing in violently on BILLY. COPS racing to
retrieve him...

BILLY'S face to face with MIKEY TAVAREZ'S PARENTS...

HANDING MIKEY'S FATHER HIS BADGE, and...

MIKEY'S FATHER trembling. A staggering moment where even the crowd seems to lose its breath, and...

BILLY back in his shell. Moving downstream, keeping his head low, the way he will for the next eight years, as we...

DISSOLVE TO

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

TITLE CARD -- EIGHT YEARS LATER.

Faint candle light. Steam on the mirror. Two bodies soaking in the steaming water in the bathtub. BILLY, eight years older and all in one piece, with his arms draped around...

NATALIE BARROW. She's 32, an off-kilter kind of exquisite. They're four years in. Her sensitivity, his coarseness, shouldn't match, and perhaps they don't...

Whispering...

BILLY

It'd be like succumbing to the inevitable... you know...

NATALIE

How's that?

BILLY

You were always going to have to move out there anyway... Maybe we go voluntarily, before they drag you kicking and screaming...

NATALIE

Is that what you want?

BILLY

I was just thinking. I don't know.

NATALIE

It's worth discussing. Yeah...

BILLY

Thought maybe we could... maybe we could take the scenic route... maybe Mexico first, a few days...

NATALIE
Mexico...

BILLY
Get hitched...

NATALIE'S heart skipping a beat, breathing shallow.

NATALIE
There's no rush, baby... you know that,
don't you? I'm fine with what we are...

BILLY
Yeah. Of course. It's just... you
know... what are we?

Neither with a good enough answer.

NATALIE
Is everything okay?

BILLY
Yeah...

NATALIE
Are we okay?

BILLY
We're fine. I mean. We're fine, aren't
we?

NATALIE
I think so.

BILLY
Or maybe we could just get a bigger
place. You're always talking about
needing a work space.

NATALIE
There's nothing I need, baby...

BILLY
I don't know... I'm just anxious.

NATALIE
Don't be.

BILLY
It's all coming real fast, Nat...

NATALIE

Then it'll level off. There's a flurry
then it levels off. Back to normal.

NATALIE swallowing from the thought... normal... Jesus...

BILLY

Okay.

NATALIE sitting up, pulling the stop from the drain. The
water belching. Her expression changing.

NATALIE

What about this thing tomorrow? With
Henry?

BILLY

Jacob's gonna tell em about the letters
and the phone calls. It's a violation of
his parole. He's not getting out...

The water draining around them. NATALE getting cold.
BILLY kissing her shoulder.

BILLY (CONT'D)

You want to... you wanna fool around a
little...

NATALIE

(leaning back to kiss him)
Maybe in the morning, baby. I wanna go
to sleep clean...

NATALIE climbing out the tub dripping. Wrapping herself
up in a towel. Padding out and down the hall for the
bedroom.

BILLY lingering. Staring at the wall. Leaning his head
to the side. Blowing out the candle, and...

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - MORNING

Autumn. The morning rush hour. Taxis and busses
clogging the roads. PEDESTRIANS power-walking,
purposeful. Filing into skyscrapers and schools...

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - MORNING

The digital ticker at One North Times Square...

BOLTON VILLAGE SOLD FOR \$6 BILLION....

INT. 6 TRAIN - MORNING

Roaring into the station at Wall Street. The front pages of the Times, the Post and Daily News, the Journal, Financial Times, IBD, all with variations on the theme...

'CITY SELLS BOLTON VILLAGE'...

STRAPHANGERS filing out the train and up the stairs...

INT. NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE - MORNING

FLOOR TRADERS staring up at the ticker...

SOLSTEIN DONAGAN PURCHASES BOLTON VILLAGE
FOR 6 B US...

INT. KINGS COUNTY PAROLE HEARING - MORNING

HENRY LUDLOW -- decked out in orange NYC DOC getup -- is rejoicing over his early parole on an aggravated stalking wrap with his LAWYERS.

JACOB'S packing his briefcase at the prosecutor's table, turning back to...

BILLY -- clean shaven, in a good suit -- sitting in the makeshift gallery, trying hard to hold back his rage.

JACOB
I'm sorry Bill.

BILLY
(getting to his feet)
When's he out?

JACOB
Sunday.
(BILLY marching toward HENRY)
Bill...

BILLY AND HENRY face to face -- HENRY likes the numbers on his side.

HENRY
Billy. I just knew you'd be here.
You're so reliable, Billy. But you
should've brought Natalie. Oh, no
matter. I'm sure she had a good reason
for missing this...
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)
Hedda Gabler at the Public, Billy, I
nearly... well...
(in close, whispering)
... let's just say I became... excited...
when I heard the news... Looks like I'll
be out for opening night...

BILLY trying hard to check his violence.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(smiling euphoric)
Don't worry, Billy. I'm going to try
real hard to be a good boy.

BILLY
You keep that fucking smile on your face,
Henry, you might die trying. I'll see
you Sunday...

HENRY swallowing and BILLY marching for the door...

JACOB
Tell Natalie we tried, Bill.

BILLY
Yeah. Thanks.

TITLE CARD -- MONDAY.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - MORNING

The radio tuned to WQXR -- a Faure Impromptu and a cup of coffee. BILLY doing his best to shake that rage. Taking deep, controlled breaths...

EXT. FLATBUSH AVENUE - MORNING

The Saturn rolling along in a slow-moving parade of Manhattan-bound traffic...

EXT. OLD STREET IN VINEGAR HILL - MORNING

The Saturn riding the patchwork cobblestone road -- pulling into a tow zone spot across from a row of old flats.

BILLY climbing out the Saturn with briefcase and bag of coffee and bagel, clicking the car alarm, heading for...

INT. VINEGAR HILL FLAT - STAIRWELL - MORNING

The stats on the door read:

WILLIAM TAGGART AGENCY, LIC. AND BONDED

BILLY hears haggling on the other side of the door.
Putting on a good face, he enters...

INT. TAGGART AGENCY - RECEPTION - MORNING

An argument in progress. KATY BRADSHAW is twenty-six and gorgeous. Makes no sense that she'd be here, until we see that breathless look she shoots BILLY as he enters, and all is understood.

THE LANDLORD turning his fire on BILLY.

LANDLORD

Billy, it's November. You owe from
August.

BILLY

From August -- you're sure?

LANDLORD

Yeah. I'm sure.

BILLY

Okay. Well, that's my fault. I'm sorry
about that. Katy, can you write Mister
Hughes a check? August through November.

(KATY'S look)

Katy...

KATY snatching open the desk drawer and grabbing the
checkbook, filling it out... slowly...

BILLY (CONT'D)

(to LANDLORD)

You have coffee yet? You've gotta try a
cup of this coffee. It's single drip...
you know, means they brew it a cup at a
time. It's like the '66 Cutlass Supreme
of coffees. Here, that's yours...

LANDLORD

I don't want any coffee, Billy. I want
the rent.

BILLY

Well, Katy's working on it... what, do you need a slide rule, Katy? She went to Baruch. It's, you know...

KATY

I went to Hunter, asshole.

BILLY

So you're a Jets fan, right?

LANDLORD trying not to play along.

LANDLORD

Giants.

BILLY

That's right.

BILLY sliding a pair of GIANTS TICKETS from his jacket pocket, grabbing the check from KATY. Handing the tickets and check to THE LANDLORD.

BILLY (CONT'D)

August through November. Giants and Eagles. Sunday. End zone. And my sincerest apologies for making you wait. It won't happen again.

LANDLORD

(finally breaking)

Thanks, Bill.

BILLY

(walking him out)

I'll come to you next month. Take care.

(closing the door and turning to KATY)

Put a stop payment on it.

KATY

Jesus, Billy.

BILLY

Oh, you're disappointed? I just gave away my Giants tickets.

(heading for the office, handing off the bag)

I'll make some calls.

KATY

Yeah. Ask if anyone needs an assistant.

BILLY

A boss who brings bagels is a rare thing,
Katy. You keep that in mind.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - DAY

BILLY, phone sandwiched to his ear, on hold. Doing budget math on a legal pad. Crossing off the names of men on a separate sheet. The current name...

BILLY

Gary. Billy Taggart. Gary, I'm going over the books here and it looks like you still owe us for the September job...
(the excuse)

Huh...

(actually effective)

Well, I didn't know that, I'm sorry to hear that, Gary... All right, well, listen, you get better. We'll get this figured out some other time. Yeah. Take care...

Scratching Gary's name off the list. Dialing...

BILLY (CONT'D)

Marty Layman please. Yep.

Holding. Adding up his list of bills -- \$9500.

Scratching his head wondering where he's going to get \$9500.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Marty, it's Billy Taggart.

KATY (ON INTERCOM)

Billy, line one.

BILLY

Marty, I'm going over the books here and it looks like we've yet to collect payment from you. What's going on?

(the excuse)

Is that right?

KATY (ON INTERCOM)

Billy, line one.

BILLY

Well, sure it's a tough time, Marty. It's tough all around. But we did work for you...

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)
Okay, well, what about this, Marty?
(looking up at KATY in the
doorway...)
Let's do half.

KATY
The mayor on line one.

BILLY freezing, shooting her a look. KATY smiling back,
excited...

BILLY
Marty, I'll call you back.
(switching lines)
Mayor. It's Billy Taggart.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

An impromptu presser on the steps to City Hall. The wind
blowing lustily, making a mess of hair and neckties. A
hundred TAPE RECORDERS AND MICROPHONES pointed at...

ADAM VALLIANT. He's thirty-five, the Democratic
candidate for Mayor. Queens by way of Yale and the Upper
West Side -- call it trust fund guilt -- brushing aside
his wind-swept hair like Bobby Kennedy...

VALLIANT
... this is an egregious breach of trust
even by this mayor's standards...

Standing at his shoulder is ZACH ANDREWS, the nuts and
bolts component to the tag team. He could be a star if
he liked the light. But he's better here. Behind a
lesser but more natural talent.

VALLIANT (CONT'D)
... Bolton Village houses over five
thousand working families in this city...

BILLY scaling the steps out of earshot of the conference.
Shooting a look that way.

VALLIANT (CONT'D)
... to simply sell the lease to their
homes is not only immoral it is legally
questionable...

BILLY disappearing inside City Hall.

VALLIANT (CONT'D)

... that is why I, along with Councilman Andrews, have called for immediate hearings on the floor of the city council to put a stop to this deal, and to put a stop to this insider baseball, once and for all...

REPORTERS lobbing questions, as we hear...

HOSTETLER (VO)

David. David, listen to me. This is getting tiresome. You're boring me, David...

INT. HOSTETLER'S OFFICE - DAY

HOSTETLER swiveling behind his desk, juggling paperwork and a phone call. One eye on the bank of televisions flashing the local and business news, the other eye winking at BILLY as the RECEPTIONIST guides him in...

HOSTETLER

(on phone, continuous)

Actually, it's five thousand forty-eight, David. And do you know what this means for them? Better service. More attentive landlords. People who show up when the toilet's broken and the heat's fucked.

(listening)

Nobody's tearing anything down, David. They gave me a guarantee.

(smiling, signaling BILLY to take a seat)

Here's what I want you to do, David. I want you to get off that fat Sutton Place ass of yours and get down here to City Hall. Valliant's holding a press conference -- it's number three thousand in a series -- I want you to shove your tape recorder in that perfect face of his and ask him -- listen to me, David -- I want you to ask him what he would have done to address the deficit? We were three billion in the hole last night, David. And now we're up three. That's called arithmetic, and it's something even Adam Valliant should understand. You ask him that, David.

(MORE)

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

And when he flashes you that bullshit grin and stutters over convening some fucking panel I want you to tell him that you've been in this business long enough to know that that's code for 'I haven't got a goddamned clue.'

(listening, laughing)

On record, David. Let's see if you've got the balls to quote it. Send Molly my love.

(hanging up, getting to his feet)

Billy. You don't write, you don't call.

They're shaking hands and clasping elbows like old fraternity brothers.

BILLY

It's good to see you, Mayor.

HOSTETLER

You catch the press conference?

BILLY

Just a glimpse.

HOSTETLER

You remember when Norman Mailer ran for mayor, Billy? This is like that. Only less enjoyable.

(watching VALLIANT on the television)

It really is an insult having to run against this asshole.

BILLY

It's always an insult when you're losing, Mayor.

HOSTETLER

(grinning)

I forgot that about you, Billy. You always were more balls than tact. See how much you forgot about a man in eight years...

BILLY

I doubt you've forgotten a thing, Mayor.

HOSTETLER

You're right, of course. I still remember Johnny Ingroissano from the second grade taking my milk money.

(MORE)

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Now Johnny Ingroissano pisses without my permission he spends six months in Rikers... Scotch?

BILLY

I'm on the wagon.

HOSTETLER

(padding to the drinks cart)
Sure. I tried that once. Got pulled over for DUI.

HOSTETLER pouring himself four fingers of Laphroaig.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Johnny Ingroissano was my first enemy, Billy. I swore on a stack of holy bibles that I would fuck him. I ran for mayor to fuck him. And I fucked him well. I look at Adam Valliant -- he reminds me of Johnny Ingroissano.

(savoring his Scotch)

This does not bode well for Adam Valliant.

BILLY

I'll put some money on you.

HOSTETLER

Oh, don't bullshit me, Billy. You're all the right things except for that one little defect.

BILLY

What's that?

HOSTETLER

You're a Democrat.

BILLY laughing.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

When all this is done, Billy, I'm taking my guns and my dogs upstate and I'm shooting everything moving.

(mischievous)

You ever do any hunting, Billy?

BILLY

(not taking the bait)

No...

HOSTETLER

It's a therapy surpassed only by Papal indulgence and the blowjob. Maybe I'll have you up there with me. I'm sure you'd be a natural. You'd love the dogs. They're God's one perfect creation. Well... them and Scotch whisky. All the rest is shit...

Cueing BILLY to follow him to the sitting area. Time for business. HOSTETLER in his armchair, BILLY on the leather sofa...

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Women say men are dogs, Billy. Just goes to show women don't know shit. Their theory doesn't hold. They mean to suggest men are conniving, unreliable, disloyal, when dogs are anything but. And Billy, if men are dogs, what in God's name are women?

(affecting anger for BILLY'S sake)

Ever see a bitch in heat, Billy? She grinds her cunt on the carpet just to scratch the itch. If she can sneak out the backyard any male will do. Maybe women are the dogs, Billy. But no. The theory doesn't hold, does it? Because dogs are true.

(and here's the point)

You remember Justine, don't you?

BILLY

Only from the papers, TV. We never met.

HOSTETLER

I couldn't use you if you had.

Now we're talking...

BILLY

Use me for what?

HOSTETLER

I want you to find me the sonofabitch who's fucking my wife.

BILLY'S eyes wide...

BILLY

Why don't you just call the Post?

HOSTETLER

I did. She's smarter than they are. Or he is. He's a goddamned phantom.

BILLY

Or maybe he's a figment of your imagination.

HOSTETLER

He might be. I still want fucking pictures. I want him, Billy. I want to know who he is and where he was born. Where's he work, where's he work out? How much does he bench-press? I want to know how big his cock is, and how long he lasts, do they fuck in hotels or at his place, does he make her cum or does she fake it with him too, I want it all.

BILLY doing the math in his head.

BILLY

Give me a few weeks.

HOSTETLER

You've got until election day.

BILLY perking -- what the hell's this got to do with the election?

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

(lying through his teeth)

I'm cleaning house, Billy. No more distractions. I want this done by next Tuesday. Before actually.

BILLY

What if she doesn't see him before then?

HOSTETLER

You've clearly never witnessed a bitch in heat, Billy... she will...

(getting on with it)

Yes or no?

BILLY

Yes.

HOSTETLER

Good.

BILLY

Just as soon as you tell me what this's
got to do with Valliant.

HOSTETLER frozen a moment, smiling to cover it up...

HOSTETLER

Who said it's got anything to do with
him?

BILLY

You think she's sleeping with Adam
Valliant?

HOSTETLER

If I thought that, I'd be running
uncontested right now as a widower.

BILLY

Then what?

HOSTETLER

Then nothing. I just want a clean slate,
Billy. That's all.

BILLY knowing he's lying but needing the money...

BILLY

Twenty thousand.

HOSTETLER

Twelve.

BILLY

I'll take twelve now. And the other
eight I'll take Monday morning.

HOSTETLER

Tuesday no good?

BILLY

Tuesday's great for me. It might not be
so good for you.

HOSTETLER grinning, standing, extending his hand to
BILLY. Hands clasped. Eyes locked...

HOSTETLER

I'll messenger over a cashier's check
this afternoon. When can you start?

BILLY

When I get the cashier's check. It's a new policy.

(beat)

I'll need a copy of your wife's schedule.

HOSTETLER

Have Abby print one up for you on your way out.

BILLY grabbing his coat, starting off. Turning back, unable to let it go...

BILLY

What's this about, Mayor?

HOSTETLER

Stick with the adultery narrative, Billy. It's sexier.

BILLY heading for the door, when...

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Billy?

(BILLY turning back)

Welcome back.

INT. PUBLIC THEATER - DAY

NATALIE standing in street clothes down-center stage, marking for lights.

It's a tech walk-through. The theater is a jungle of cords and scaffolding. The DIRECTOR is at a makeshift table in the house whispering with his DESIGNERS...

DIRECTOR

(in microphone)

Okay, Natalie. Thanks. See you back in an hour.

NATALIE padding...

OFF STAGE

Pulling her cell phone from her pocket, dialing her voicemail, entering her pass code, listening... This crazy, secretive grin on her face as she listens, nervous, excited, looking over her shoulder.

NATALIE hanging up, breathless, guilty...

INT. COLUMBIA-PRESBYTERIAN - AFTERNOON

The Children's ward. REPORTERS and ADMINISTRATORS breathing down the necks of the CHILDREN, gazing up star-eyed at...

JUSTINE HOSTETLER, reading from 'Alice in Wonderland.' She's late 40s, an absolutely impeccable woman.

JUSTINE

(animated)

"Begin at the beginning," the king said, very gravely, "and go on till you come to the end. Then stop..."

TIMECUT

It's a half hour later. JUSTINE AND ZACH ANDREWS taking questions from REPORTERS, with...

BILLY blending into the pack, pretending he's one of them, holding out a tape recorder...

REPORTER #1

Mrs. Hostetler, who's the better candidate for the city's children -- your husband or Adam Valliant?

JUSTINE

I'm here to discuss children's preventative care not politics.

REPORTER #2

Councilman Andrews, you're Adam Valliant's campaign chairman. He's been a strong critic of the Mayor's record with children. Doesn't appearing here with the First Lady contradict that?

ANDREWS

The First Lady's efforts on behalf of the city's children are a model for all in public service. I'm proud to stand with her.

BILLY clocking that look JUSTINE flashes ANDREWS, a look of fierce admiration...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - AFTERNOON

Parked across from Columbia-Presbyterian. BILLY listening to QXR. Watching the sliding doors, as...

EXT. COLUMBIA-PRESBYTERIAN - AFTERNOON

JUSTINE waltzes with her DRIVER for a black Suburban. She's on her phone...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - AFTERNOON

BILLY pulling out the parking spot and taking up a loose tail on the Suburban. He's got his notepad out, scribbling on it:

BLACKBERRY... ONLY????

INT. A DOWNTOWN RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

One of those floaty SoHo spots that can't decide whether it wants to be French or Brazilian. MODEL WAITRESSES waltzing the hardwood like its the runway at Bryant Park.

JUSTINE lunching with a friend, FARAH...

JUSTINE
... madhouse. Fund-raisers four nights this week...

BILLY a few tables away, playing the lunching businessman, jotting notes on a legal pad, honing his hearing...

FARAH
... if he loses?

JUSTINE
He loses... it's over... I'm free...

JUSTINE'S eyes flashing wide. BILLY seeing what she sees...

A TABLOID REPORTER a few tables over, doing a piss poor job at being discreet -- pretending to strain reading the screen of his phone -- taking a photo of JUSTINE...

JUSTINE leaving her handbag on the table, walking for the bathroom. BILLY, knowing, looking at his watch...

MOMENTS LATER

No JUSTINE. FARAH signing the bill, marching out the restaurant.

BILLY waiting, padding across the dining room to the TABLOID REPORTER, who still doesn't realize he's been slipped.

BILLY

Nice work asshole. Next time bring a camera crew.

(his cell phone ringing as he pads for the door)

Yeah.

EXT. STREETS OF SOHO - AFTERNOON

KATY tailing JUSTINE AND FARAH, on her cell phone.

KATY

I've got her. She's south on Broadway.
Approaching Prince...

INTERCUT BILLY ON MERCER STREET/KATY ON PRINCE STREET...

KATY

West on Prince.

JUSTINE taking a phone call.

KATY (CONT'D)

(low, getting in closer)
Incoming call, Billy.

BILLY

Is it a Blackberry?

KATY

No, it's a flip phone. Standard.

BILLY

Get in closer, that might be him.

KATY turning it up a notch, narrowing the gap, listening.

JUSTINE

(on phone)

... I apologized for that...

BILLY

Get me a name, Katy. Get me a place.
Anything.

JUSTINE

... you're being unfair...

KATY

It's too loud...

BILLY

Katy, get me something...

JUSTINE stopping on a dime, pivoting back, the sixth sense of a lioness. KATY quicker, better, window shopping.

FARAH walking on, leaving JUSTINE to her phone call.

KATY making a decision, moving toward JUSTINE, getting ahead of her tail, and as she comes shoulder to shoulder with her...

JUSTINE

You're being unfair, Zach...

KATY marching on, nonchalantly stepping into a shop doorway to light a cigarette.

KATY

Zach, Billy.

BILLY rounding the corner, his eyes dilated big.

BILLY

Where is she?

KATY

South side of the street, outside the bookstore.

BILLY'S got her. He's buying a newspaper from the stand at the corner...

BILLY

Wait for my move.

JUSTINE walking past KATY.

JUSTINE

No, not tonight... there was someone at the restaurant... I'll call you...

JUSTINE hanging up and hurrying to rejoin FARAH, and...

BILLY hurrying across the street -- opening the newspaper -- covering his face with it -- nearing JUSTINE -- lowering the paper, and in one smooth motion -- SLIPPING HIS HAND INTO HER POCKET -- GRABBING THE CELL PHONE, and...

... continuing toward Broadway, stopping. Pulling up the last call on JUSTINE'S phone. Punching the number into his phone, and...

... without making eye contact, handing it off to KATY -- KATY breaking into a casual jog...

KATY
(calling out)
Ma'am... Ma'am...

JUSTINE spinning back on her heels with violence in her eyes.

KATY (CONT'D)
(handing her the phone)
You dropped this.

JUSTINE
(embarrassed)
Thank you.

INT. TAGGART AGENCY - RECEPTION - NIGHT

KATY working at the desk. BILLY coming out of his office.

BILLY
Anything on that number?

KATY
(proud of herself)
Perhaps. But first I need to know a few things. Namely, how much do you love me?

BILLY
Katy. Anything on that number?

KATY
Plenty.

BILLY
Like?

KATY

Like if Natalie ever, I don't know, got hit by a car and died I'd be the one, right?

BILLY

The one I suspected for the murder? Yes. Absolutely.

KATY

Billy, she's no good for you. And really, if you want to be honest, you're no good for her either. But me, I'm fucking easy, baby.

BILLY

Who's the number belong to, Katy?

KATY

Councilman -- Zachary -- Andrews.

BILLY grinning, jacked -- then checking himself, knowing better.

BILLY

It's not enough.

KATY

Oh, baby, it's plenty.

BILLY going for his coat.

BILLY

Quit calling me baby.

KATY

(laughing, loving it when he's embarrassed)

Relax, sport. You'll know when I'm seducing you.

Something changes in his look. Lust in his eyes...

BILLY

You wanna go grab a bite?

KATY

(after a beat)

Really?

BILLY

No. See you in the morning.

Last laugh kind of a guy, that BILLY. The door slamming behind him. KATY sulking.

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's the second floor of a brownstone, moonlight spilling in through the windows in the living room. Well decorated, peaceful. The assumption that the feng shui is the woman's touch would be wide by a mile. BILLY thrives on a balanced home. The kitchen's his sanctuary...

He's in jeans at the stove, sauteing barramundi filets, stirring couscous.

NATALIE keying her way in. Peeling off her things, padding over to BILLY. Wrapping him up from behind, stealing couscous as she kisses him...

NATALIE

Tasty...

(looking at the fish, fucking
with him)

Tilapia?

BILLY

(tilapia?)

Really?

NATALIE

It's a great fish.

BILLY

I'd sooner cook grilled cheese for dinner.

NATALIE

Grilled cheese, really?

BILLY

With Wonder Bread and Kraft singles...

NATALIE

I love Kraft singles.

BILLY

You love it... it's not even real cheese... it's cheese product...

NATALIE

Maybe we can have grilled cheese and tilapia.

BILLY

Yeah, fucking sandwiches. Why not?

NATALIE laughing. Kisses him.

NATALIE

Hey.

BILLY

Hey... Five minutes...

NATALIE padding down the hall for the bathroom, laughing.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Tilapia...

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

BILLY AND NATALIE eating at the dining table, white wine for her and seltzer for him.

BILLY

Premiere's in what, three days? You still don't have a dress?

NATALIE

No, I've got New York. New York's a go. LA, not so much.

BILLY

What do you need two dresses for?

NATALIE

You're kidding right?

BILLY

I'm wearing the same suit tomorrow.

NATALIE

It's... it's a bit different, baby.

BILLY

I don't... I don't really see how.

NATALIE

Take my word for it.

BILLY

(flashing her a smile)

Will I like this dress?

NATALIE
I think you'll approve.

BILLY
Will Ryan like this dress?

NATALIE
Be nice.

BILLY
Because I've seen the way he looks at
you, Nat, and I disapprove. He's a
decent enough guy. He's a halfway decent
actor, although I've gotta say I really
didn't care for him in that coach flick.
Every two scenes dude's sobbing. What
was that about?

NATALIE laughing over the rim of her glass of wine.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Even that -- I don't hold that against
him. But the looks. I've seen the
looks.

NATALIE
You've seen the looks?

BILLY
I've seen them.

NATALIE
I don't know, baby. I'm always on the
look for looks -- how come you've seen
them and I haven't seen them?

BILLY
Because you only see the best in people.
It's your fatal flaw.

NATALIE
Yeah? What's your fatal flaw?

BILLY
Not being able to see the best in people.

NATALIE
Not even me?

BILLY
You're the exception.

NATALIE

I'm an actress. Maybe I've got you fooled.

BILLY

I'm a detective. You couldn't if you tried.

A bit of silence, smiles to let the other know it's just silence, nothing more.

BILLY awash in a genuine admiration for his girl.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Long way from summer stock, huh? All this...

NATALIE

Long way. Yeah.

BILLY

Is he in town yet? We're supposed to do dinner, right?

NATALIE

Ryan? Uh, yeah, I think so... I'm not sure... I think so... I'll call and see... When do you want him over?

BILLY

I don't know -- I've got those lamb shanks in the freezer -- see if he can do tomorrow night...

NATALIE

I'll tell him to bring his appetite.

Dinner nearing an end, the implicit gag order on Henry about to lift. NATALIE'S ready, BILLY's killing time...

BILLY

How was rehearsal?

NATALIE

It was fine.

BILLY

That all? Fine?

NATALIE

I don't want to talk about rehearsal, Billy.

BILLY

What do you want to talk about?

NATALIE

You know what I want to talk about.

BILLY wondering if he should lie -- there's nothing in the world he suffers more than NATALIE'S disappointment. Swallowing, manning up...

BILLY

It went against us.

NATALIE trying to remain stoic, a sip of wine. Looking away, losing her battle for composure.

NATALIE

Fuck...

BILLY

Nat... hey...

NATALIE

I thought... because of the dinner and the... I thought maybe we were celebrating...

BILLY

Nat, look at me...

NATALIE swimming in anxiety.

BILLY (CONT'D)

... He's not coming near you. Nat? We've got the restraining order... I've still got a few favors I can call in... old friends with bleak futures and badges, Nat... he sneezes in your direction, he's going back in...

NATALIE

You weren't there...

BILLY

Nat, he's not coming near you.

NATALIE

You weren't there for the worst of it, Billy, the letters and the phone calls and showing up at rehearsals... shit...

(unraveling despite herself;

BILLY watching helplessly)

Why me... I didn't ask for this shit...

(MORE)

NATALIE (CONT'D)
why's he pick me? I don't want to go
back there, Billy. It's a real bad way
to live...

BILLY
I know.

NATALIE taking in deep breaths, trying to put herself
back together.

NATALIE
When does he get out?

BILLY
Sunday.

It's a perfect blow. NATALIE trembling, and pouring
wine. BILLY reaching for her hand, NATALIE recoiling
from his touch. The fear's already working.

BILLY with that look in his eyes. Standing. Marching
down the hall for the bedroom, and...

... returning a moment later carrying a lockbox. Setting
it on the counter, unlocking it -- REMOVING A SIG SAUER
P226, 9MM.

NATALIE tensing...

NATALIE
Billy...

BILLY releasing the magazine, popping the round in the
chamber -- CATCHES THE BULLET IN HIS PALM -- it's an
expert move, requires reflexes like a fucking lion --
cycling the slide -- smacking the magazine back in the
weld -- SNAP.

NATALIE jolting.

BILLY
You've got twenty rounds. He ever shows
up here, you empty em all in his fucking
head. Simple as that.

NATALIE
Simple as that, huh?

BILLY
Yeah. Because he's never going to show
up here.

NATALIE
And what about out there?

BILLY
Out there, he's my problem.

BILLY meaning it.

NATALIE believing it. Guzzling down wine. All that fear is simply redirected. BILLY -- not the gun, not the situation, him, the version of him she knows is always right beneath the surface-- scaring the shit out of her.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - MORNING

TITLE CARD -- TUESDAY.

BILLY parked across from Gracie Mansion, listening to NPR. Drinking single drip coffee. Struggling over the Times crossword. Eyes on the clock on the dash...

7:51 a.m. This show's running late. BILLY grabbing the copy of the first lady's schedule from his briefcase, scanning the top of the day Tuesday:

7:55 AM BREAKFAST
JEWISH CHILDREN'S MUSEUM
792 EASTERN PKWY
BROOKLYN

You sure as hell need more than four minutes to get to Crown Heights. BILLY'S wheels spinning, suspicion brewing, when...

EXT. GRACIE MANSION - MORNING

JUSTINE AND DRIVER filing out of Gracie Mansion and into the black Suburban. Rolling north...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - MORNING

BILLY watching the Suburban roll along East End for the corner at 89th, waiting as the Suburban turns left onto 89th, rolling out of his spot, picking up a smart tail...

EXT. 89TH STREET - MORNING

The Suburban slowing into a turn at...

EXT. YORK AVENUE - MORNING

BILLY'S Saturn two cars back from the Suburban...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - MORNING

BILLY with his coffee and his news, thinking she's running late, that's all, when...

EXT. FDR SOUTH - MORNING

The Suburban exiting onto 495.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - MORNING

BILLY'S eyes dilating. Setting the coffee in the cup-holder, turning down the radio. He knows three quicker ways to Crown Heights...

EXT. I-495 EAST - MORNING

The Suburban settling into a comfortable 75 per in the center lane.

BILLY'S Saturn lagging six cars back in the right lane...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - MORNING

The clock on the dash... 8:04 a.m. BILLY'S eyes narrowing, doing the math. Smiling. Turning on the radio, switching stations to QXR. Rossetti's Symphony in G Major. Nice music for a ride... where? Long Island? Gotta be...

BILLY clicking cruising control, sipping coffee, settling in for the ride.

INT. HOSTETLER'S OFFICE - MORNING

HOSTETLER in his armchair, facing off with SAM LANCASTER, an absolute bulldog of a man. He's sixty. He's the old neighborhood in a Brooks Brothers suit.

LANCASTER

How're you looking against the kid?

HOSTETLER

The numbers are holding steady.

LANCASTER

Steady? Steady's no good.

HOSTETLER

Steady's a prelude to a shift.

LANCASTER

In whose direction?

HOSTETLER

The incumbent's. Always the incumbent's, Sam.

(LANCASTER not so sure...)

It's like Emille Griffith and Benny Paret in '63. You remember?

LANCASTER

I remember.

HOSTETLER

The kid's Benny. I'm Griffith.

LANCASTER

You mean you're the fag?

HOSTETLER

I'm Griffith minus the fag angle. I'm sitting back. I'm taking it. I'm letting him think he's got it won. Then here comes the eleventh, Sam, you remember the eleventh...

LANCASTER

Yeah...

HOSTETLER

And I remember how much I hate. And it's not just hatred pointed at him, Sam, it's hatred at what he represents, hatred for who he is and where he's from, and what he's trying to take from me.

LANCASTER

Like Johnny Ingroissano.

HOSTETLER

But you can't hold that hate, Sam. You've got to let that hate out for air.

(MORE)

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

I get him into the corner and I take that hate for a walk -- all over his pretty fucking face. And I make sure he doesn't walk away from it.

There was a time when this brand of shit talk would have satisfied LANCASTER, but it's long since past. He's staring at HOSTETLER the way only a few dare to, with a whole lot of impatience and incredulity.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

(appeasing an equal)

We've got white papers dropping on the news desks of every paper and network in the city this morning.

LANCASTER

White papers?

HOSTETLER

Dirt.

LANCASTER

What's that, irony? Will it stick?

HOSTETLER

It won't stick. But it'll smudge. It'll get the undecideds thinking twice. Then at the debate on Saturday... I'll put him away.

LANCASTER seriously doubtful.

LANCASTER

It's too big, Nick.

HOSTETLER

I know the size, Sam.

LANCASTER

Option A -- you lose, the deal is dead... that crusading bastard will kill it sure as the sky is blue. Option B -- this indecent cunt wife of yours gets her missing piece... she leaks it because that's how much she hates you... the deal's dead and we're on our way upstate. Those are not options, Nick. There's only one option, and you have yet to assure me that it is even within the realm of possibility.

HOSTETLER

Sam.

LANCASTER

Lie to me. Bullshit me. Tell me it's all under control...

HOSTETLER

Sam, relax...

LANCASTER

... tell me I'm getting all worked up for nothing...

HOSTETLER

... You're getting all worked up for nothing.

LANCASTER

... Nicky, goddammit!

The difference between the two men couldn't be more striking. LANCASTER'S coming undone in front of us; HOSTETLER'S on the sixteenth with a five stroke lead and an Arnold Palmer...

LANCASTER (CONT'D)

What if she can put it together before Tuesday? Hell, even after Tuesday. That's dirt that sticks, Nicky... We still don't even know her source...

HOSTETLER

I've got one of my guys on it.

LANCASTER

Oh, well why didn't you say that? You've got one of your guys on it, of course. *One fucking guy?!*

HOSTETLER on his feet, finally and numbingly bored with all this puffery. Meeting adjourned.

HOSTETLER

You worry too much, Sam.

LANCASTER

I've got 350 million reasons to be worried, Nick.

HOSTETLER padding to the door, in case LANCASTER didn't get the hint.

HOSTETLER

You keep going at this rate, Sam, you'll drop dead of a heart attack. Then who's gonna tear those buildings down?

LANCASTER walking for the door, stepping over the threshold with a look the mayor's way. Turning back to say something, when...

The door slams.

EXT. THE STREETS OF MONTAUK - DAY

The Suburban cruising the standard thirty-five down Main Street. A half-minute lag between the truck and...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - DAY

The clock on the dash... 10:58 a.m. BILLY easier than we've seen him, like the ride did him a world of good...

His cell ringing...

BILLY

Yeah.

INT. LONG ISLAND RAILROAD TRAIN - DAY

KATY on her phone watching the Atlantic roll by outside her window.

ANDREWS a few rows up, feet up, out cold.

KATY

Did you know there were whole towns east of New York, Billy?

BILLY (VO)

I'd heard rumors.

KATY

Well, there's this thing called Long Island, and sure enough, Billy, it's surrounded by water. Not like Hudson River, East River, cesspool for dead bodies kinda water, but honest to God water. I'm staring out at like a shitload of it right now. And Billy...

BILLY (VO)

Yeah...

KATY

It's blue.

INTERCUT BILLY'S SATURN AND LONG ISLAND RR

BILLY smiling, knowing why he keeps her around.

BILLY

Where are you?

KATY

Conductor said the next stop's Hampton Bays.

BILLY

You're still about an hour away.

KATY

You're there?

BILLY

I'm getting there... well, hang on...

(slowing, watching the
Suburban up ahead turn onto
a side street)

... looks like I'm here...

KATY

(playful)

Oh, Billy, is it paradise?

BILLY

It's Montauk.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - DAY

BILLY hanging up.

EXT. ROAD NEAR THE OCEAN - DAY

Enough of a residential street to park on, though only barely. The Saturn's parked a few feet up from the corner at the side street where the Suburban turned off. And presently, down that side street which dead-ends into beach...

JUSTINE is filing out the Suburban and into the BEACH HOUSE, and...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - DAY

BILLY grabbing his camera, CLICKING AWAY -- then...

DUCKING in his seat, as...

EXT. ROAD NEAR THE OCEAN - DAY

The Suburban backing onto the road and disappearing back the way it came.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - DAY

BILLY waiting a moment before resurfacing. Stretching, reclining in his seat, doing what amounts to 95 percent of his job, waiting.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - DAY

It's ninety minutes later and BILLY'S snapping photos again. This time it's of...

EXT. BEACH HOUSE ON MONTAUK - DAY

ANDREWS paying his taxi -- CLICK -- marching to the doorway -- CLICK -- the door opening -- CLICK -- JUSTINE IN BATHROBE at the door -- CLICK -- JUSTINE AND ANDREWS cheek-kissing -- CLICK -- the door closing shut, and...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - DAY

The passenger side door opening. KATY sliding in.

KATY

Did I miss anything?

BILLY

You missed Justine Hostetler in her bathrobe.

KATY

Great. Let's go home.

BILLY

No... We need more...

KATY

Billy, what more? This is it. They're in there tearing each other's clothes off. It's happening. They're at it...
(duh)

... which is precisely what you want to see... two honks for trouble, got it...

BILLY climbing out the drivers side, and KATY sliding into his place.

EXT. ROAD NEAR THE OCEAN - DAY

BILLY at the trunk, pulling a parka down over his head, sliding on sneakers, heading as stealthily as he can manage under the wide open conditions for the beach house, as we hear...

MOANING, WHIMPERING...

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - DAY

Definitely not the inside of a beach house. Clothes strewn about the main room. A woman's handbag on the chaise, and we're...

Moving toward the bedroom...

EXT. BEACH HOUSE ON MONTAUK - DAY

BILLY skulking around the side of the house looking for an opened window. But these people don't drive all the way out to Montauk to get spied on through the opened windows. Nothing doing...

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - BEDROOM - DAY

TWO BODIES ENTANGLED in desperate, breathless sex. HER arms cinched around HIS back, as he thrusts inside her. Fingernails in his shoulder, legs wrapped around his back...

This is RYAN BLAKE. Thirty-four, flawless. His head moving aside TO REVEAL...

NATALIE. Kissing his neck, biting his ear, moaning with increasing volume and urgency, nearing climax...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - DAY

BILLY entering the passenger side.

BILLY

They've got it fool-proofed.

KATY

What do we do now?

BILLY

We wait.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - DAY

NATALIE is harried, hurrying back into her clothes. RYAN drinking whisky, admiring her.

RYAN

You know there's no one else, Nat...

(NATALIE paying no attention)

There hasn't been anyone else since
Toronto.

NATALIE

I'm not asking any questions, Ryan.

RYAN

No, of course not. Only... there's,
there's absolutely nothing I'd rather do
than answer your questions...

NATALIE pulling her shoes on.

RYAN (CONT'D)

There's also a few I'd like to ask.

NATALIE

Like?

RYAN

Like how come you give so little credence
to this?

NATALIE

I don't know what that means, Ryan.

RYAN

It means stay. Nat...

NATALIE zoning him out, zipping up.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Okay...

RYAN swallowing whisky to take the sting off her silence. NATALIE heading for the door. RYAN watching her go...

Fuck this. RYAN heading her off...

NATALIE

Baby, I gotta go. I gotta get back.

(RYAN grabbing hold of her)

Ryan, lunch was over five minutes ago...

(RYAN kissing her)

Baby...

(RYAN kissing her neck)

Let me go...

(RYAN pulling her pants down,
kissing)

Ryan. Stop it. Stop baby...

(fingers)

Shit...

RYAN spinning her around. NATALIE trembling, resisting, giving in, then...

NATALIE (CONT'D)

No. Stop. Stop.

NATALIE pushing him off. Pulling her pants up. RYAN desperate, not from that rejection, but the larger one.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

RYAN

No... it's... you're right...

NATALIE

Hey...

(kissing him)

I missed you.

RYAN

(all he needed to hear,
smiling)

What time's dinner?

NATALIE
Fuck you... It's at eight...

RYAN laughing. NATALIE out the door.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE ON MONTAUK - AFTERNOON

ANDREWS filing into the Suburban. The Suburban backing out the drive, and rolling out of view.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - AFTERNOON

BILLY lowering his camera, turning to KATY, perplexed.

BILLY
Just him?

KATY
Your call, boss. Do we wait?

BILLY
(looking back at the house)
No. No, we go home.

KATY quietly rejoicing. BILLY keying the ignition, pulling away from his spot, and...

INT. BEACH HOUSE ON MONTAUK - BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

Steam coating the mirror. JUSTINE padding into the bathroom, aiming for the sink...

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
You get him a taxi?

A MAN'S ARM DRAPED OVER THE SIDE OF THE TUB. Glass of whisky in hand...

JUSTINE
(undressing)
Kevin's driving him back to the train.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
It's not enough to go on.

JUSTINE
I know.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)
If I can get Todd to...

JUSTINE

I know, darling.

JUSTINE wiping away a swath of the steam on the mirror, studying her reflection. She's a few minutes from fifty and she's hiding. It's not exactly shame in her eyes, but it's not exactly pride. Taking in a deep breath, and...

The steam returning to the mirror, obscuring her reflection.

JUSTINE padding naked for the tub, and as we're about to get a look at the MAN...

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Laughter.

BILLY'S at the kitchen counter paper-plating slices of pizza. BILLY and RYAN laughing at NATALIE'S expense from an earlier joke.

NATALIE

Yes, I thought you could get them at the candy store. I came from a very moral home. We didn't use words like cocksucker.

The men laughing. NATALIE smiling, not comfortable enough to laugh. BILLY returning with the plates. Red wine for RYAN and NATALIE, seltzer for BILLY.

BILLY

It's not lamb shanks, you know, but, bon appetit.

RYAN

(taking a bite)

Jesus, that's good. Damn. Billy, I haven't had pizza this good since the mid nineties.

BILLY

This is the best place in Brooklyn this place. I get there right before closing, they've chucked all their pies. You beg, you cajole, you promise your firstborn. They make another pie. They have to. It's like some kinda Sicilian code, they can't refuse you.

RYAN

Wait... I know this place.

BILLY

You don't know this place. Nobody knows this place.

RYAN

No, Billy, I know this place.

BILLY

This isn't a franchise here, sport. I don't think Guido ever got around to the LA office.

RYAN

Don't let the movies fool you, Billy. I wasn't eating fucking caviar before the opening credits... I know this place.

BILLY

(playing along)

Yeah? Okay. Name it.

RYAN

It's, it's, hang on, it's off of Flatbush.

BILLY

Wow, that's good. So is half of Brooklyn.

RYAN

But way out there, like damn near Long Island out there. Out in Midwood...

(BILLY'S arrogance dimming)

Off of... uh... Nostrand.

(BILLY frowning)

There's that junction. It's Flatbush, and it's Nostrand, and what's it called, Glencoe. It's across the street from Brooklyn College... used to be next to a place called the Sugar Bowl... Vinny's!

BILLY'S impressed. NATALIE'S impressed.

BILLY

That's pretty good.

RYAN

What can I tell you, Billy? I'm a man of many talents.

BILLY laughing, liking this guy's chutzpah. Maybe he's got to recalculate RYAN. Wait a minute. No way...

BILLY
(knows)
You're playing me.

RYAN
What?

BILLY
You bullshit actors.

RYAN
Okay, so maybe I did undergrad at Brooklyn College.

Laughter.

BILLY
You dick.

RYAN
I lived on this shit for four years, Billy. It's like somebody feeding you your mother's casserole.

BILLY liking him more and more.

BILLY
That's good. You're good.

RYAN
Billy, it's what I do.

NATALIE finishing her wine off, this is getting to be a bit much.

NATALIE
(padding to the kitchen)
Anybody want seconds?

RYAN
Yeah, I'll take one, Nat... thanks...
(locking eyes on BILLY)
So, here's something I'd like to know, Billy... you know, since we're telling secrets... we've learned about Natalie's education in sexual colloquialisms...

BILLY
... great word. They teach you that at Brooklyn College?

RYAN

... and my poor educational background...
Here's what I'd like to know...

(NATALIE AND BILLY both
hoping he's not going there)

How is it a guy like you lands a girl
like Natalie?

There are no four words BILLY hates more...

BILLY

A guy like me?

RYAN

Sure. South Brooklyn. Cop turned
private eye. Don't imagine you were too
big on the theater.

BILLY

I grew up watching Good Times, does that
count?

RYAN

Not so much, no.

BILLY

I think Jimmy Walker would disagree.

RYAN

(laughing)

Because they're rare, right? The
Natalies of the world. How does anybody
land one, you know?

(half pleading, half
challenge)

How did you?

NATALIE pouring a refill of wine. God, don't let it go
down like this.

BILLY -- oblivious to the subtext -- shooting her a look,
as if asking her permission to tell the tale. NATALIE
forcing a smile of consent.

NATALIE handing RYAN seconds, returning to her seat.
Hiding behind her wine.

BILLY

It was a Friday. I know it was a Friday
because I was drinking like it was
Friday, but it might have been Tuesday.

NATALIE
It was Wednesday.

BILLY
I was at the Henry Street Ale House. You know. And I'd stepped out to get some air, and I hear these heels clacking on the sidewalk. Fast. And it's been awhile since the last time, and I make it up in my mind that whoever these heels belong to I'm going to give it the college try.

BILLY losing himself a moment admiring NATALIE. Losing himself to thoughts of that moment that saved his life.

BILLY (CONT'D)
She comes around the corner, and... she's too much.

NATALIE
I looked like a drowned rat. I was running. He heard my heels because I was running. Looking for a place to hide. This guy... I told you about him...

RYAN
The one...?

NATALIE
Yeah. It was a bad time. I was out of it, real far gone. And Billy likes to glorify it, but there was nothing romantic about it...

BILLY
She was exquisite.

NATALIE
And what does that say about you, that you thought I was exquisite?

It comes out harsher than she'd intended.

BILLY
Is that a trick question?

NATALIE
(sorry)
It's... no... keep going.

BILLY'S trying to figure out what's going on with NATALIE. He's smiling a nervous half-smile of confusion, trying to regain his thoughts.

BILLY

(beat)

So she's... where was I? ... yeah, she's looking inside the window to the bar, like she's trying to decide whether she wants to go in or not, and I'm staring at her, I can't help it. And I really don't know what that says about me, but I couldn't stop staring. And she looks over at me and says... 'People should really be careful how they look at other people.'

RYAN

Damn...

BILLY

Right? I was in love.

(the men laugh)

I told her she was in the wrong place if she didn't want to be looked at. But me, they didn't look at me. They didn't dare look at me.

(the memory of that time
coming back heavy)

I could barely look at me...

(looking at NATALIE as if to
ask: and how could you?)

I told her if she went in there with me not one soul would make the mistake of looking her way. She'd be safe from scrutiny...

NATALIE guzzling down wine, reliving that moment of original sin. She's completely cut off from these two men, stuck in her own shame and sadness.

BILLY (CONT'D)

And that's the how, you know. It's been four years and I've yet to figure out the why? Maybe I'm just a lucky stiff...

BILLY feeling it get too sentimental, and NATALIE getting uncomfortable.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(to RYAN)

But on to more pressing matters.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

Have you seen this flick? Do we have a hit on our hands?

RYAN

(to NATALIE)

You haven't seen it?

(off her no)

It's good. It's really good. And Miss Barrow here is going to get a nomination for it. She will blow you away, Billy. She's like that night. It's not easy to look, but you can't take your eyes off her...

BILLY staring at NATALIE with fierce admiration, and maybe a little insecurity, wondering what he did to deserve her, and what in the world he can do to keep her. So wrapped up in the sight of her, he doesn't notice...

RYAN looking at her the same way, as we hear...

BILLY (VO)

No, it's no problem, let me give you a lift. Where're you staying?

RYAN (VO)

I'm over at the Tribeca Grand... but I don't want to keep you from your evening. I've already stayed too late. I'll get a cab. Thank you guys...

... and the sound of running bath water.

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steam rising from the bathtub, coating the mirror.

NATALIE peeing and smoking a cigarette. Her face is a map of anguish.

A knock on the door.

BILLY (OS)

Nat...

NATALIE

Yeah. Hang on.

She's wiping and flushing, spraying air spray. Waving away the cigarette smell. Opening the door.

BILLY entering shirtless, two cups of tea in hand.

BILLY
I thought you quit.

NATALIE
(caught off guard and honest)
I'm trying.

BILLY and NATALIE undressing, climbing into the tub.

EXT. BOLTON VILLAGE - BUILDING 7 - DAY

TITLES READ -- WEDNESDAY.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS putting up a wire fence around Building 7 of Bolton Village...

Occasional RESIDENTS walking by knowing where this is heading.

INT. VALLIANT HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A downtown showroom converted into the headquarters for the 'Valliant for Mayor' campaign.

INT. VALLIANT'S OFFICE - DAY

VALLIANT AND ANDREWS looking at the morning papers, dejected, disgusted.

VALLIANT
He's picking away at me. This bastard is picking away at me, Zach. They might as well have ran this under a headline of 'Hey, Undecideds, Read This.'

ANDREWS
We knew it was coming.

VALLIANT
Did we know we'd have nothing to hit him back with?

ANDREWS
We're working on it.

VALLIANT
You and your secret cohorts.

ANDREWS
Yeah. My secret cohorts.

VALLIANT

This Bolton Village thing's got no traction. He's a goddamned conquering hero for reversing the budget. They'd like to see him privatize every project in the city.

ANDREWS

Privatizing and bulldozing are two different things.

VALLIANT

It's goddamned innuendo. There's no proof! I need proof. Where's the proof?!

ANDREWS

Adam... we're working on it.

INT. SOLSTEIN DONAGAN - DAY

One of those midtown palaces, twenty foot ceilings and marble everywhere. We're climbing a winding staircase...

INT. SOLSTEIN DONAGAN - SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Onto the second floor, MAIL BOY dropping envelopes off at reception. RECEPTIONIST looking at the room across the hall...

INT. SOLSTEIN DONAGAN - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

LANCASTER and his sons SAM JUNIOR and TODD in suits and ties, around the conference table with HARRIS SARGENT and a dozen JUNIOR EXECUTIVES.

SARGENT'S 45, all charm and sharp edges, Senior VP of Acquisitions, on track for COO by 47.

It's a contract signing, and everyone's smiling except for TODD.

LANCASTER

Mister Sargent, on behalf of my family and all the employees of Lancaster and Sons, I want to tell you how grateful I am for this opportunity. Thank you.

SARGENT

(playing along with the
bullshit)

Well, there's no one better at tearing
shit up than Lancaster and Sons.

Laughter all around.

LANCASTER

Hey. That should be our slogan. Can I
use that?

SARGENT

I'll have to talk to licensing.

More laughs, and SARGENT sliding one of two portfolios to
LANCASTER, keeping the second for himself.

SARGENT (CONT'D)

Let's make it official.

LANCASTER removing his special pen. SARGENT AND
LANCASTER scribbling their Hancocks there, there and
there.

One of the JUNIOR EXECUTIVES snapping a photo.
APPLAUSE...

SARGENT (CONT'D)

Bring out the Scotch.

Backslapping and handshaking. Scotch pouring into
tumblers. Glasses clinking.

TODD looking like he's just committed a mortal sin, as we
hear, the garbled voice (from the blurred face) of...

LANCASTER

Todd... Todd...

EXT. BOLTON VILLAGE - BUILDING 7 - DAY

The fence is up. A WORKER clamping an orange laminated
construction permit onto the webbing. It's 'Granted To':

LANCASTER & SONS.

INT. TAGGART AGENCY - RECEPTION - DAY

BILLY AND KATY flipping through the PHOTOS OF JUSTINE AND
ANDREWS. BILLY looking uneasy.

KATY
Billy, it's solid.

BILLY
Yeah. Yeah, it's solid.

KATY
Now go get the rest of our money.

INT. FOUR SEASONS BALLROOM - NIGHT

A shining sea of black ties and shimmering evening gowns flooding the ballroom. A NINE PIECE ORCHESTRA swinging Benny Goodman...

HOSTETLER holding court with a pack of kingmakers...

HOSTETLER
I'd be surprised if half of Bolton Village is there in a year's time.

GUEST
You're insinuating, Mayor.

HOSTETLER
Let's just say those good citizens in Brooklyn and Queens are going to wake one fine morning to a skyline across the East River. A new city's going up, boys. You think Adam Valliant's going to get you in on the ground floor?

JUSTINE chitchatting with a phalanx of golden girls...

JUSTINE
(playing the part)
We're doing everything we can to fight off this Valliant fellow. Your support matters so much to us.

BILLY watching her over the rim of a glass of seltzer from across the room, as...

FAIRBANKS (OS)
What's a bleeding heart like you doing in this lion's den?

BILLY turning back to FAIRBANKS, cautious smiles on either man's face.

BILLY
Chief.

FAIRBANKS
Long time, Billy.

BILLY
Yeah...

FAIRBANKS
Don't suppose you're here as a donor.

BILLY
I'm undecided.

FAIRBANKS
That's the one thing you've never been.
What's the job?

BILLY
Fellow suspects his wife of cheating.
Fellow hires me.

FAIRBANKS
(an imperceptible shift)
Why doesn't the fellow call The Post?

BILLY
He did. She's careful. She's smart.

FAIRBANKS
Not bad to look at either.

The men watching with admiration as JUSTINE works the crowd...

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)
What's the Mayor got planned for this fellow?

BILLY
You'd have to ask the Mayor.

FAIRBANKS
Well, I'm sure his intentions are noble.
He hired you after all. Let's not wait
eight years until the next time, Billy...

FAIRBANKS waltzing off into the fray, and...

TIMECUT

Later. BILLY drinking seltzer, bored and impatient,
resentful of all these stuffed suits and their trophy
wives, and...

JUSTINE (OS)

I know you.

BILLY turning to JUSTINE, masking his anxiety.

BILLY

No, I don't think that's possible.

JUSTINE

Sure. You're the detective who said sorry.

BILLY

I never said sorry.

JUSTINE

No. No one would've believed you if you had. What you did was more convincing... Was it real?

BILLY swallowing seltzer.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

This doesn't strike me as your type of party.

BILLY

You kidding? I love Benny Goodman.

JUSTINE

Don't we all. You've aged gracefully, if you don't mind my saying.

BILLY

Likewise.

JUSTINE

All of that, that was what, eight years ago? What have you been up to all this time?

BILLY

I've got a private practice in Brooklyn.

JUSTINE

Law?

BILLY

Detective.

JUSTINE
(knowing)
Sounds... interesting. Let's get you a drink.

BILLY studying her, trying to figure out her angle. And besides that, appreciating a beautiful woman.

BILLY
I don't drink.

JUSTINE
You used to. I can tell.

BILLY
How?

JUSTINE
By those three seconds you let pass before turning the drink down.
(snagging a champagne from a roving waiter)
How long has it been?

BILLY
Four years.

JUSTINE
Finally hit rock bottom?

BILLY
I met a woman.

JUSTINE
Then you do believe in love.

BILLY
I believe in loving the one you're with.

JUSTINE
What if the one you're with is Nicholas Hostetler?

BILLY
(okay, she knows, let's play)
You make it work.

JUSTINE
What are you? Stupid or Catholic?

BILLY
(smiling, charmed)
Both.

JUSTINE drinking her champagne nervously.

JUSTINE
Mister Taggart...

BILLY
You've got one hell of a memory.

JUSTINE
Yes.
(how do I do this?)
This isn't what you think it is.

BILLY
You mean it's not adultery?

JUSTINE
I mean the Mayor doesn't give a damn
about adultery. He cares about two
things. Himself, and his interests.

BILLY
You make a hell of a pair.

JUSTINE
Listen.

BILLY
No, you listen. I've always had a
difficult time sympathizing with rich
bitches playing the martyr. I don't like
martyrs. I don't like rich bitches.
Don't con me.

JUSTINE
Okay.

BILLY
Okay what?

JUSTINE
Okay, name your price.

BILLY
(hesitating)
Price for what?

JUSTINE
Whatever you're here to give the Mayor,
give it to me. Name your price.

BILLY off guard, not knowing how to play it.

BILLY

I've got a contract with the mayor.

JUSTINE

Break it.

BILLY

You don't break a contract with the mayor.

JUSTINE

You're treading on dangerous ground, Mister Taggart.

BILLY

Are you threatening me?

JUSTINE

No. I'm giving you a chance to walk away. If the last eight years of your life mean anything, if that woman who keeps you from drinking it all away means anything to you, Mister Taggart... if what you did on those courthouse steps was real... walk away.

(beat)

You're not investigating adultery, Mister Taggart. You're arranging an execution.

BILLY'S eyes dilating big.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Pillow talk, Mister Taggart. It's a capital crime among this lot.

Then...

HOSTETLER (OS)

I see you've met Billy.

JUSTINE biting back her rage at the sight of HOSTETLER.

JUSTINE

Yes. We've met.

HOSTETLER

Billy's been doing some work for me.

JUSTINE

He mentioned it.

HOSTETLER

Billy's the best. It's an art what he does. You're probably much humbler about it, Billy, but I really do think it's an art. To be able to suss out a person's bullshit and lies. To separate the facade from what lies beneath. To be able to look a man or a woman in the eyes and see him... her... for what she really is. A traitor. A whore. A goddamned liar.

JUSTINE

How about crooks? Can he spot crooks?

HOSTETLER

Billy could spot the devil at St. John the Divine's.

JUSTINE

Then perhaps after you're done with him, I'll see if he can't do some work for me.

HOSTETLER

Be careful there, sweetheart. You wouldn't want to make your boyfriend jealous.

JUSTINE

Oh, it's not that kind of work, Mayor. I'm covered on that end. I'm looking for a piece of paper. Eight and a half by eleven. You'd recognize it if you saw it, Mayor. It's got your signature on it...

HOSTETLER guzzling Scotch. BILLY just trying to get out of here.

JUSTINE with her palm on BILLY'S chest. He doesn't know it, but...

She's sliding a business card in his breast pocket.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

It was a pleasure to have met you, Mister Taggart. Perhaps we'll speak again.

JUSTINE gliding off once more into the breach.

HOSTETLER flashing that Cheshire grin, watching her go.

HOSTETLER

It was all the other men that made us hate each other, Billy. The ones she fucked. The ones I ruined.

(finishing his Scotch)

What have you got for me?

INT. FOUR SEASONS BAR - NIGHT

BILLY and HOSTETLER alone at a table, staring match.

BILLY

Tell me the truth. What is this about?

HOSTETLER

Give me the goddamned pictures, Billy.

BILLY clenching his jaw tight. This can get ugly or it can get done. Maybe he doesn't want to know anyway...

BILLY removing an envelope of photos from his inside pocket. Tossing them on the table.

HOSTETLER grabbing the envelope, hesitating. Opening it, going through the photos. If that's not real rage, he's a hell of an actor...

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Where is this?

BILLY

You didn't pay for that.

HOSTETLER

(soaking it in, genuinely surprised)

Women... When they're not busy fucking you they're busy fucking somebody else.

HOSTETLER chuckling, pocketing the envelopes.

BILLY

What happens to him?

HOSTETLER

Good work, Billy. I won't forget it.

HOSTETLER standing.

BILLY

What happens to him?

HOSTETLER marching back into the ball.

The WAITER stopping by the table, clearing the glasses. Setting an envelope of cash on the table. It's the back eight thousand.

BILLY looking like he's just killed a man.

EXT. 58TH STREET - NIGHT

BILLY walking to the Saturn. Fishing in his pockets for his phone, coming up with the business card Justine slid in his pocket. Reading it:

SOLSTEIN DONAGAN
HARRIS SARGENT
SR. VICE PRESIDENT, ACQUISITIONS

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - NIGHT

TITLES READ -- THURSDAY.

The lights snapping on. BILLY nudging the front door closed with his foot, hurrying into the living room. Turning on the television, flipping through channels, looking for E!

A huge grin on his face, and...

ON TELEVISION

NATALIE stunning on the red carpet, gabbing with an INTERVIEWER...

BILLY taking in a deep breath fueled by both excitement and fear. Stripping his tie off, unbuttoning his shirt, padding down the hall for the bedroom...

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

BILLY hurrying into his party threads. It's a good suit, no tie, a good look for him. Checking his watch.

His cell phone ringing. BILLY checking the number, answering reluctantly.

BILLY
Make it quick, Katy, I'm running out the door.

BILLY'S world crashing down around him, as...

EXT. BANK STREET CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

A FULL OUT CRIME SCENE. Yellow tape covering two-thirds of the block, wigwag lights flashing, floodlights illuminating the scene, TV vans...

REPORTERS doing standups, COPS AND DETECTIVES everywhere...

BILLY on a death march to the yellow tape. A YOUNG COP refusing him entry...

JANSEN (OS)

Billy Taggart. You haven't aged a fucking day.

BILLY nodding meekly at DETECTIVE TONY JANSEN, an old friend from the force.

BILLY

Jansen. Long time.

JANSEN

(bullshit cop banter)

Not long enough, you ask me...

(BILLY'S pained look)

You got a stake in this?

BILLY

I think I probably do... Help me out?

JANSEN shooting him a look, and...

INT. AVALON - NIGHT

AFTER PARTY. Dance floor teeming with bodies. Bass pounding. Bodies grinding. Sweat and champagne splashing...

NATALIE AND RYAN DANCING. It's hands off because there's paparazzi everywhere, but it's all the sexier for it. A straight up Animal Planet mating ritual dressed up in Gabana and Brioni...

EXT. BANK STREET CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

BILLY and JANSEN walking and talking, aiming for the far end of Bank Street where the body is...

JANSEN

We get the first call just after ten...
it's a report of gunshots... six more
calls inside a minute, all 211's... units
arrive four minutes later and spot the
Councilman... he's good and dead by
then...

BILLY

What's it look like?

JANSEN

So far so good on robbery... he didn't
have a wallet on him at the time...
although his apartment's right up here...
we're working on getting his landlord
down here to let us in, see if he left
the wallet up there... maybe he's out for
a stroll, heading to a bodega for
cigarettes, grabbed what cash he
needed...

BILLY

Any cash when you found him?

JANSEN

No... no keys, no cash, so like I say, so
far so good on robbery...

And they're coming to the body now...

JANSEN (CONT'D)

You eat yet?

BILLY

No... why?

JANSEN cueing a FORENSICS OFFICER to pull back the sheet,
and BILLY grimacing.

ANDREWS' head's been literally exploded. Blood and
brains splattered on the asphalt. His lifeless form
splayed out in a way that suggests sleep more than death.

BILLY'S thinking about those photos, he's thinking about
Justine and Valliant and Hostetler, his head's fucking
pounding, as...

JANSEN

Witness reports range from two to five
shots... we've found three shells so
far... still searching...

BILLY
(random this is not)
You're not really thinking robbery...

JANSEN
We're spinning robbery. Media's pushing robbery. It's a counterfactual robbery.
(beat)
Here...

JANSEN'S kneeling over an evidence marker, grabbing one of the spent shells with his pincers. The shell's mangled at the top...

JANSEN (CONT'D)
What's that look like to you?

BILLY
Looks like they shot him when he was down...

JANSEN
Robbers do that?

BILLY reeling, knowing this was a hit he helped arrange. He's trying to keep the lid on. Guilt and rage boiling over, and...

FAIRBANKS (OS)
Twice in as many days, Billy. To what do I owe the pleasure?

JANSEN and BILLY gazing upon the stoic face of FAIRBANKS.

BILLY too fucked up to lie.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)
Let's walk.

JANSEN watching them go.

EXT. AVALON - NIGHT

NATALIE sliding into the backseat of the car the studio people leased her for the night.

INT. FAIRBANKS' CRUISER - NIGHT

FAIRBANKS and BILLY inside FAIRBANKS' cruiser, watching the mayhem unfold surreally through the windshield.

FAIRBANKS

Is this Hostetler?

(off BILLY'S silence)

Is this what you gave him last night?

You gave him Andrews?

BILLY

I gave him pictures.

FAIRBANKS

Of who? Who were the pictures of, Billy?

BILLY

You know I can't tell you that.

FAIRBANKS

You had better tell me something. Start by explaining why you're at my crime scene.

BILLY

I was in the neighborhood.

FAIRBANKS

The city council president is dead, Billy! You think this is some bullshit nothing life on the Lower East Side, Billy, you can just spit on and walk away, forget it...

(BILLY biting down hard)

... this is an execution... it's assassination, Billy! Did you finger Andrews?!...

(BILLY fuming, silent)

Did you give him Andrews?!

BILLY

I gave him pictures!

FAIRBANKS

Get the fuck outta my car, Billy.

EXT. AVALON - NIGHT

RYAN gabbing with fans and paparazzi, signing autographs. His car pulling to the curb.

RYAN

(ducking into the car)

Have fun tonight guys. Go see the movie.

The car pulling off, and...

EXT. FAIRBANKS' CRUISER - NIGHT

BILLY exploding out of the passenger side. FAIRBANKS shooting out the drivers side after him. He's not finished. Marching for BILLY. BILLY turning back, manning up with him.

FAIRBANKS

Is this who you are, Billy? You're a button man?

BILLY

I'm a fucking shamus. I'm a private dick with two rooms in Brooklyn. I took a job, Chief. I did my job. I didn't ask questions. I gave him pictures. I walked away. You think I gave him up to get murdered, Chief, is that what you think?

FAIRBANKS

I think you're too goddamned smart to pretend you were giving him up for anything else. You knew.

BILLY

I did my job. This is what I do. It's what's left for me, Chief. I gave up the security and the future, and the pension, remember? This is what's left for me. It's how I afford the one bedroom in Park Slope and the Saturn and the actress fiancee... it's how I afford a normal life, Chief... it's how I afford not being a fucking button man... not being this city's worst enemy... I did not kill him... don't tell me I killed him...

(guilt bubbling over)

Fuck!

BILLY calling on every ounce of strength inside him to keep from exploding. This is what the last eight years come down to. If he snaps now it's for good.

He's breathing himself low.

FAIRBANKS

Billy. I'm taking him down. He sees election day, it'll be from the inside of a cage. You can either help me... or you can join him...

(softening)

(MORE)

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

Billy, I need you on my side on this one.
You get anything, you don't feel safe
coming to headquarters, I'm at the St.
Regis. I'll leave your name at the desk.

BILLY nodding distantly.

FAIRBANKS about to start off, when...

OFFICER

Chief Fairbanks. There's an issue, sir.

INT. ANDREWS' BANK STREET BUILDING - NIGHT

FAIRBANKS, BILLY and JANSEN marching up the stoop of the two-story walk-up. Manic purposefulness etched on their faces...

FAIRBANKS

(moving; to COP at the door)

Nobody gets in here!

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - NIGHT

RYAN keying his way into the suite. Switching on the light. Grinning ear to ear at the sight of -- NATALIE sitting cross-legged on the chaise. Lingerie and stilettos -- RYAN undressing as he marches to her.

INT. ANDREWS' BANK STREET APARTMENT - NIGHT

A bachelor pad. Good art on the walls, the furniture's just right, tension hanging like a goddamned thunder cloud, because...

VALLIANT'S ON THE SOFA -- yes, VALLIANT -- in jeans and t-shirt, dragging manically on a cigarette. A water glass full of Scotch on the coffee table in front of him. He's glassy-eyed and rocking back and forth.

FAIRBANKS and BILLY shooting each other looks, knowing impropriety when they see it. JANSEN realizing this is fucked up, but not realizing fully.

FAIRBANKS

Adam... Adam... I need to know what happened...

VALLIANT barely registering the voices, the faces, drinking Scotch like it's water.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

Adam, I need you to talk to me.

VALLIANT angling his head to him, hatred and confusion in his eyes.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

Tell me what happened, Adam.

VALLIANT shaking his head no, sneering, gone. FAIRBANKS, the whole world, can go to hell.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

Jansen, go downstairs.

JANSEN

Chief?

FAIRBANKS shooting him a look -- he'll not be repeating himself. JANSEN padding out, pulling the door shut behind him.

FAIRBANKS

Lock the door.

BILLY locking the door. He doesn't need any further instructions. He knows this terrain well. He's marching to the radio, turning it up full blast on some crazy free jazz. He's morphing before our very eyes into some kind of a monster.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

Adam, I need you to look at me. I need you to tell me exactly what happened.

VALLIANT

Fuck you...

BILLY lunging at him -- yanking him off the sofa -- hurling him across the room -- VALLIANT tumbling over the armchair, staggering -- BILLY yanking him up by his shirt and his hair, holding him steady for FAIRBANKS.

VALLIANT (CONT'D)

You gonna kill me too? You gonna fucking kill me too, huh?

FAIRBANKS

Adam, I need you to snap out of this and tell me what happened. Step by step, Adam. Who did you see? What did you hear? What did he go downstairs for? Who was he meeting? Adam?

VALLIANT

You're dirty. You're all dirty. You're all fucking crooks and liars...

FAIRBANKS

... Adam!

VALLIANT

... this is a sick fucking city... it's diseased... you're diseased... you're filthy...

FAIRBANKS backhanding him...

FAIRBANKS

Tell me what happened!

VALLIANT

(he's snapped, fucking gone)

All of you...dirty!

(spitting, fuming)

I know about all of you...

(FAIRBANKS backhanding him)

... he told me... he told me everything...

FAIRBANKS

... Tell me what happened!

VALLIANT

... I know everything...

FAIRBANKS

(grabbing VALLIANT'S face)

Adam, I need you here!

VALLIANT shaking his head, losing it, unraveling, trembling uncontrollably.

FAIRBANKS and BILLY lost, watching him. FAIRBANKS nodding for BILLY to take him down the hall.

BILLY marching VALLIANT for the...

BATHROOM

Cold water thundering into the tub. Filling up fast. VALLIANT on his knees sobbing, snot and tears.

BILLY rolling up his sleeves, stopping the water. Like a fucking master surgeon.

FAIRBANKS

Adam... please... I want to help you.
But I have to know what happened tonight.

VALLIANT'S trembling and sobbing.

BILLY waiting for his cue. FAIRBANKS nodding, and --
BILLY SHOVING VALLIANT'S HEAD UNDERWATER -- holding him
under for 1...2...3...4...5...

Yanking his head up. VALLIANT gasping, panting like a
dog, and -- BILLY shoving him back under -- 1...2...3...
4...5...6...7...8 -- VALLIANT struggling, writhing.

BILLY yanking him up. VALLIANT dry heaving and hacking.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

Adam? Adam, can you hear me? Adam tell
me if you can hear me.

VALLIANT going purple from coughing, and -- BILLY shoving
him back under -- BILLY'S eyes are fucking alive with
violence -- these are a bad man's eyes -- he's not
struggling to hold VALLIANT down, he's struggling to keep
that creature inside down.

VALLIANT'S fighting back now, kicking and clawing,
flailing, grasping for hand-holds, anything.

BILLY letting go. VALLIANT exploding up from his near
death. Rolling on the tile like a landed fish. Coughing
and convulsing.

FAIRBANKS kneeling beside him with a towel, wrapping him
up in it, cradling him.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

I need you to be here, Adam. I need you
to be here. I need you to tell me what
happened. Can you do that, Adam?

VALLIANT cured of his madness, trembling, ready to talk.

INT. ANDREWS' BANK STREET APARTMENT - NIGHT

VALLIANT'S on the couch with his glass of whisky. He's
got the towel draped around his shoulders. The radio's
off. FAIRBANKS and BILLY are listening.

VALLIANT

He said he was meeting Todd... he was sitting over there and he was going over poll numbers... and he looked up at the clock and he jumped up... he said he was late... he said he was meeting Todd tonight... that he thought Todd was ready to... ready to help us...

BILLY watching FAIRBANKS, wondering why he's not asking any questions.

VALLIANT (CONT'D)

It was maybe thirty seconds before I...
shit...

(weeping)

Jesus... I heard the shots...

(fighting the tears down,
guzzling whisky)

I knew it was him... I knew he was dead.

FAIRBANKS

Did you see anybody?

VALLIANT

No.

FAIRBANKS

Did you hear anything? Any voices?

VALLIANT

No... I don't know... I shut down... I had a moment where I was fucking lucid. I knew all the things I could not do. I could not go down there, I could not call the police, I could not let them get in here. I could not be seen here. All the things I couldn't do... what I couldn't do... what Adam Valliant could not do... I just let him lie there... I just let him lie out there... dying...

FAIRBANKS

Do you know what that means, Adam?

VALLIANT

It means I'm just like the rest of you.

FAIRBANKS

It means you've got the right instincts. It means you can handle this. Look at me, Councilman.

(MORE)

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)
(VALLIANT locking eyes with
him)

You are going to be the mayor of this city. You have got to be able to handle this. I want you to tell me you can handle this.

VALLIANT steeling himself, remarkably. And all of a sudden there are three equals in this room.

VALLIANT
I can handle it.

FAIRBANKS
We're gonna get you outta here. Billy's gonna drive you home. You get some sleep, and in the morning we go to work.

VALLIANT nodding, ready.

A knock at the door. The UNIFORMED COP from downstairs entering.

UNIFORMED COP
You asked to see me, Chief?

FAIRBANKS
Yes. Get undressed.

INT. ANDREWS' BANK STREET BUILDING - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The UNIFORMED COP is in plainclothes now, marching down the steps. FAIRBANKS, VALLIANT -- he's wearing the cop's uniform and hat -- and BILLY following in a tight pack.

FAIRBANKS
(calling back over his shoulder)
You walk him straight for your car, Billy, and drive fast. Adam, walk tall, keep your head down.

They're coming to the door, when...

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)
That sonofabitch...

EXT. BANK STREET CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

HOSTETLER'S IN PEDESTRIAN GEAR. Glad-handing the cops and paramedics, playing the part of the concerned mayor to a fucking T.

INT. ANDREWS' BANK STREET BUILDING - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

FAIRBANKS turning back to BILLY, who's seething with rage at the sight of HOSTETLER.

FAIRBANKS

You wait till I shake his hand then go.

EXT. BANK STREET CRIME SCENE - NIGHT

FAIRBANKS marching for HOSTETLER.

FAIRBANKS

Mayor.

HOSTETLER

It's a tragedy, Fairbanks.

The men shaking hands.

FAIRBANKS

Don't worry, sir. Whoever it was, we're gonna nail him.

VALLIANT and BILLY down the steps and onto the sidewalk. Making no eye contact as they move. Lights flashing and swirling all around them, as they...

Duck the caution tape at the end of the block, and muscle through the crowd of onlookers, aiming with a blind determination for...

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - NIGHT

BILLY and VALLIANT climbing into the Saturn. Doors slamming. BILLY keying the ignition. Peeling out.

EXT. 59TH STREET BRIDGE - NIGHT

The Saturn speeding across the bridge, the East River black and shimmering underneath. A parade of taxicab yellow streaming by.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

RYAN and NATALIE making love on the bed.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - NIGHT

Noiseless in the car. BILLY and VALLIANT peering with angry eyes straight ahead at the unfolding night.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET IN QUEENS - NIGHT

The Saturn pulling to a stop.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - NIGHT

BILLY putting the car in park. The men sitting there, neither able to make the next move.

VALLIANT

He was a better man than me. I tried to be as good a man as he was...

BILLY turning to VALLIANT, needing to know.

BILLY

You and Andrews... you were...

VALLIANT

There's this quote... I don't know where I remember it from... I just remember it... some book from college... and every time I saw him... it rose up in me like some kind of bile...

(beat)

'It's just not popular or safe to say I loved him...'

BILLY swallowing, knowing -- the door slamming shut, and VALLIANT walking to his front door -- Andrews wasn't sleeping with Justine.

BILLY fingered the wrong man. That look in his eyes is as heartbreakingly frightening as it is frightening, as we hear...

RYAN (VO)

Nat, stay...

NATALIE (VO)

I can't...

INT. BACKSEAT OF A TAXI - NIGHT

NATALIE alone in the backseat, her eyes on the lights of the Manhattan bridge outside her window. She's trying her damnedest to stave off breakdown.

RYAN (VO)
What are you running from?

NATALIE (VO)
I'm not running from anything. I'm running late. Ryan. Please. Just let's take what we've got... yeah?

NATALIE'S wiping away a tear, and...

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - NIGHT

NATALIE'S sliding on her heels, checking her phone for the time.

NATALIE
Fuck. Oh God. I gotta go. My... scarf... I had a scarf... have you seen it... Ryan, have you seen it?!

NATALIE searching frantically for a scarf that's not to be found. RYAN standing there helplessly, unable to help her or to keep her from going. NATALIE coming undone.

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Shit... Shit!
(turning to him, overcome)
I can't do this anymore... okay..?

RYAN
Nat...

NATALIE
No... this is... it's... fuck... where's my scarf... I can't do this, Ryan... No more... no more. It's done. I'm fucking losing my mind... fuck...

RYAN crossing to her, taking her in his arms. NATALIE trembling from frayed nerves in his embrace, then...

NATALIE hitting him, struggling against him -- his embrace growing tighter about her -- shoving him.

RYAN
I love you, Nat...

NATALIE
(struggling against him)
I've gotta go...

RYAN
... do you hear me? I love you.

NATALIE
(sobbing)
... I'm late...

RYAN
Natalie, I love you...

NATALIE
... I'm late, baby, let me go...

RYAN
Stay with me... I need you to stay with
me...

NATALIE
I can't... I'm late...

RYAN
Natalie, he'll destroy you. He's doing
it. He's destroying you...

NATALIE
Let me go... let me go... Ryan, get your
goddamned hands off me!

RYAN recoiling. NATALIE snatching up her handbag. She's
got her scarf. She's marching for the door and looking
back...

NATALIE (CONT'D)
Do not call me. Do not come to me. It
is done, Ryan. I can not belong to you.

The door slamming as she goes.

INT. BACKSEAT OF A TAXI - NIGHT

NATALIE sobbing into her palms as the taxi crosses over
the bridge into Brooklyn.

INT. BILLY'S PARK SLOPE APARTMENT - NIGHT

The lock snapping and the door creaking open. The green digital clock on the microwave showing: 5:43 a.m.

The lamp in the living room snapping on. NATALIE curled up in pajamas on the sofa.

BILLY staring back at her from the doorway. Both of them so far gone it's staggering.

NATALIE

You weren't there.

BILLY

I'm sorry, Nat. I'm so sorry.

BILLY standing there frozen for a moment. Then he's padding across the hardwood to her. Kneeling before her on the couch. Laying his head in her lap.

NATALIE steeling herself, making a heartbreakin decision. Acting. Running her hands through his hair. Soothing him, and...

TITLE CARD -- FRIDAY.

EXT. CITY HALL PARK - DAY

BILLY'S marching through the park on a fucking mission. He's on his phone, rattling off orders with a military precision.

BILLY

That house in Montauk, find out who the owner is... it wasn't Andrews. Pull up everything you can on a firm called Solstein Donagan, they just bought Bolton Village. Find out what involvement Andrews and Valliant had in it, find out what Hostetler got out of it... get me the names of everybody involved...

INT. TAGGART AGENCY - RECEPTION - DAY

KATY on the phone, taking notes at her desk.

BILLY (VO)
... realtors, politicians, community groups, bankers, I wanna know who was pushing the deal and who was pushing back.

KATY
You think this was about Bolton Village?

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

BILLY scaling the steps to City Hall.

BILLY (VO)
I'm about to find out.

KATY (VO)
Billy... Billy, be careful.

As we hear a dial tone, and...

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

BILLY passing through security, retrieving his wallet and keys from a gray basket, marching across the atrium.

EXT. CITY HALL - PRESS ROOM - DAY

A room full of REPORTERS.

HOSTETLER on the dais at the lectern with the city's seal behind him. FAIRBANKS standing in full uniform over his shoulder.

HOSTETLER
We have lost a hero today. A son. A brother. A good man. A true public servant. The murder of City Councilman Andrews is a tragedy, and yet the word rings so hollow. It doesn't do justice to what was lost, to the talents and determination, the soul of a man who lived for this city...

INT. WASHINGTON SQUARE DINER - DAY

DINERS staring up at the TV.

HOSTETLER ON TV...

HOSTETLER (VO/TV)

... it doesn't adequately describe the horrific nature of the crime, or the flagrant cowardice of the assailants...

INT. LANCASTER AND SONS - DAY

LANCASTER, SAM JR, and TODD going over blueprints of Bolton Village...

HOSTETLER (VO)

... Nor does it communicate the sense of purpose that now fills us. The absolute steadfast determination of the people of this city...

INT. PUBLIC THEATER - DAY

NATALIE onstage in the home of Hedda Gabler. She's in full costume, but the house is empty, acting up a storm...

HOSTETLER (VO)

... and the solemn vow of her mayor...

INT. VALLIANT'S OFFICE - DAY

VALLIANT at his desk, watching the conference on television, fighting down his hate...

HOSTETLER (VO)

... to find and punish the monsters responsible for this crime.

VALLIANT cutting off the TV, and...

INT. CITY HALL - PRESS ROOM - DAY

Absolute rapt attention and silence from the press pool.

HOSTETLER

To anyone with information about Councilman Andrews' death, I beg of you to come forward immediately. If you do not, you are complicit. You will be judged accordingly. And to the person or persons responsible for this crime, I urge you to turn yourselves in now.

(MORE)

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

For this I can assure you, there shall be no safe haven for you. You will be found. You will be tried. You will be made to account for your crimes. You will regret for whatever remains of your lives the day that you dared take from New York one of her noblest sons. I will not sleep until I have laid you low. That is my oath... May God bless New York City, and may he send our truest prayers to our friend, our servant, our guardian... Zachary Andrews...

Holding for the cameras, and...

INT. HOSTETLER'S OFFICE - DAY

HOSTETLER marching into the office in shirtsleeves, looking purposeful and not a little pleased with himself.

BILLY standing before his desk, staring daggers into him.

BILLY

Lie to me and tell me you didn't kill him.

HOSTETLER

(hesitating)

I don't have to lie to you, Billy...

BILLY

Under the circumstances, I'd say it's your safest bet.

HOSTETLER

... I'll do you one better.

HOSTETLER rounding to his desk. Pulling an envelope from a drawer, sliding it across the desk to BILLY.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

I take care of my friends, Billy.

BILLY

I'm not your friend.

HOSTETLER

I take care of my contractors.

BILLY'S hand balling involuntarily into a fist. A vein bulging in his neck.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Open it.

BILLY

You picked the wrong guy.

HOSTETLER

No, I picked the right guy, Billy. That I'm certain of. Open the envelope.

BILLY

I wanted you to see me before we got too far along. I wanted you to hear it from me. And I want you to understand me. I am going to destroy you. I am going to destroy you piece by piece until there is nothing more of you left. Then I'm going to feed you to your fucking dogs.

HOSTETLER pulling a cashier's check from the envelope.
Marching toward BILLY.

HOSTETLER

Three hundred fifty thousand.

BILLY'S eyes dilating big. HOSTETLER folding the check into quarters. Sliding the check into BILLY'S breast pocket...

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Not bad for a week's work.

BILLY'S blood pounding. Fast. Damn, he can use that money. He can walk away with that money...

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Now quit this goddamned charade. And get outta my office.

HOSTETLER, sure he's got him, just like he's gotten them all, turning back for his desk, when he hears...

BILLY tearing the check in two.

BILLY

New rule. You piss without permission, I am going to fuck you...

BILLY marching for the door.

HOSTETLER

I am the mayor of New York City, Billy.

BILLY
(not breaking stride)
You're Johnny Ingroissano.

BILLY storming out.

HOSTETLER feeling his hate rising.

EXT. SOLSTEIN DONAGAN - DAY

JANSEN'S waiting outside the building. BILLY approaching.

BILLY
Thanks for meeting me, Jansen.

JANSEN
Hey, what was all that shit last night?

BILLY
Give it a few days. I'll give you all the dirty details.

INT. SOLSTEIN DONAGAN - SECOND FLOOR/RECEPTION - DAY

BILLY and JANSEN padding across the marble to the RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST
Welcome to Solstein Donagan. How may I assist you?

JANSEN
(flashing his badge; this is why BILLY needed him here)
Detective Jansen, NYPD. Looking for Harris Sargent. Tell him it's urgent.

INT. SARGENT'S OFFICE - DAY

An ASSISTANT guiding BILLY and JANSEN into SARGENT'S breathtaking office. A panoramic view of the Hudson and the eastern bluffs of the coast of New Jersey.

SARGENT approaching with a smile.

SARGENT
Harris Sargent.

Shaking hands.

JANSEN

Tony Jansen, 6th Precinct. This is my
associate...

SARGENT

Billy Taggart. Sure.

BILLY

Do I know you?

SARGENT

No. I recognized you from the papers.
Some years ago... but I've a keen memory.
Shall we sit?

The men padding to the sitting area near the wall of
floor to ceiling windows, taking seats.

SARGENT (CONT'D)

How can I help you gentlemen?

JANSEN

You can tell us about Bolton Village.

SARGENT

And so I know, this is a police matter?

JANSEN

It's getting there.

SARGENT

I see. Well, Bolton Village is a campus
of 44 buildings, originally designed in
the late 40's as a haven for families of
men returning from the war. City-owned,
lightly subsidized, though by no means to
the extent of your standard housing
projects. Recently purchased by this
firm.

BILLY

How long had you been in negotiations
with the city?

SARGENT

Not a long time. The property was
formally, albeit quietly, placed on the
market around three months ago. We saw
it as an attractive acquisition. And we
went forward with an aggressive offer.

BILLY

Is that what you call paying two billion above market, aggressive?

SARGENT

I'm not sure I understand the question.

BILLY

The corporation council appraised Bolton Village at four billion last November. You paid six.

SARGENT

If four billion was their number they were in gross error. Our auditors set the value around 8.5. We feel we made out quite comfortably.

(beat)

Anything else?

BILLY

Since when is Solstein Donagan interested in residential real estate?

SARGENT

We aren't. We're commercial developers.

BILLY

(eyes wide, starting to understand)

You mean you're going to tear it down...

SARGENT

Those buildings are of little value to us, Mister Taggart. It's the land they're sitting on that we want.

EXT. STREET ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE - DAY

It's the same street where Mikey Tavarez was killed. JANSEN probably doesn't notice, but BILLY sure as hell does as they emerge from their respective cars. Flipping his coat collar up and keeping his head low. Crossing the street with JANSEN into...

EXT. BOLTON VILLAGE - DAY

KIDS are running around after each other, with their backpacks bouncing on their backs. TEEN BOYS making plays for TEEN GIRLS. YOUNG MOTHERS pushing carts of laundry and groceries.

JANSEN and BILLY walking, taking it all in, not knowing exactly what they're looking for.

JANSEN

You think these people know the party's about to be over?

BILLY

I don't think anybody knows.

JANSEN

I'm missing something, Taggart. Hostetler sales Bolton Village to Solstein Donagan. Solstein Donagan says they're gonna tear it down... I mean who could blame em... and okay so maybe it's not the right thing to do, it sucks, lotta families out on the street... but it aint illegal... and if it aint illegal it sure as hell don't warrant killing Andrews over. So help me out here, Taggart.

BILLY coming up with nothing. His eyes landing on something in the distance.

EXT. BOLTON VILLAGE - BUILDING 7 - DAY

BILLY and JANSEN approaching the fenced in complex.

JANSEN

Now we know Sargent aint a liar.

BILLY spotting the orange permit on the far side of the fence. Rounding the bend to it. Reading it.

JANSEN (CONT'D)

Lancaster and Sons... yeah... Sam Lancaster's outfit, out in Queens.

BILLY

What do you know about him?

JANSEN looking around him, taking in the scope of what he's looking at, 44 six-story buildings.

JANSEN

I know if he's tearing all this down, he's gonna be a rich man.

EXT. STREET ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE - DAY

BILLY and JANSEN walking back to their cars. BILLY stopping short. His pulse skyrocketing, and JANSEN seeing what he sees...

A MURAL OF MIKEY TAVAREZ painted on the facade of a bodega across the street. Rest In Peace.

JANSEN

You paid, Taggart. You paid plus some.

JANSEN crossing to his cruiser. BILLY trying to fight down the demons.

INT. TAGGART AGENCY - RECEPTION - NIGHT

BILLY taking off his coat and tie, settling in for an all-nighter.

KATY gathering her things to go.

KATY

I left everything on your desk. It doesn't amount to a whole lot, Billy. There wasn't an awful lot of talk about the Bolton Village sale, let alone protest. Solstein Donagan's got a pretty clean track record... I don't know... there just doesn't seem to be much.

BILLY

Okay. Get outta here. Have fun.

KATY

Fun? I'm going to Montauk.

(BILLY'S look)

Nobody'd give up anything on that beach house. I figure I'd make an appearance.

BILLY

Use your assets...

KATY

To know me is to love me, right?

Grabbing her coat, heading for the door.

KATY (CONT'D)

Hey. You all right?

BILLY
Give em hell.

KATY
I'll be back tomorrow... afternoonish...

Holding each other's gazes, a lot of unspoken and unspeakable things between them.

KATY (CONT'D)
Night, Billy.

KATY leaving. BILLY making coffee.

INT. BILLY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

BILLY going over papers at his desk. Grabbing a file labeled in KATY'S handwriting:

CITY CONTRACTS LAST EIGHT YEARS

BILLY scanning the names under the awardee column. Up and down the list, one every five or six contracts...

LANCASTER & SONS

BILLY'S stuck. He knows it's significant but can't figure how.

INT. TAGGART AGENCY - RECEPTION - NIGHT

BILLY grabbing his coat and heading for the door.

INT. VINEGAR HILL FLAT - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

BILLY on his phone.

BILLY
Hey... yeah, I'm on my way...
(smiling)
I love you too...

EXT. OLD STREET IN VINEGAR HILL - NIGHT

BILLY stepping out into the night. Pulling the door closed. Grabbing his keys, and...

WAP! -- HE'S BELTED ACROSS THE BACK OF THE NECK WITH A METAL PIPE -- DROPS HARD -- A HOOD YANKED DOWN HARD OVER HIS HEAD -- AND *BLACK*, as we hear...

The sound of lapping water, and...

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK - NIGHT

THE EAST RIVER. Black viscous waves, shimmering under a brilliant moonlight, moving slowly south. It's a still night. The pebble shore looks like the perfect place to sit and think, as we hear...

CRUNCH -- THWAP -- the monstrous sounds of fists pounding on flesh. Feet crunching pebbles and gravel. A man's grunts and whimpers.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

TWO MASKED MEN BEATING BILLY. We're under the Brooklyn Bridge. A perfect place to leave a man for dead. And that's exactly what this is.

The MASKED MEN stomp into BILLY with mindfuck brutality -- fists and boot heels -- metal pipe to ribs and thighs -- BILLY howling -- blood gushing, spraying, splashing...

MASKED MAN #1 doing most of the work, going for broke, and MASKED MAN #2 doing just enough to maintain credibility, and...

MASKED MAN #2 backpedaling, finally overwhelmed, aiming for the water, and...

Yanking his ski-mask off. VOMITING. Gagging. Swaying lightheaded. Dropping to his knees -- BILLY capsizing onto the pebbles behind him -- as we see...

The man's face. It's TODD LANCASTER.

MASKED MAN #1 racing to TODD.

MASKED MAN #1

Jesus... put your fucking mask on... come on!... come on, goddammit...

MASKED MAN #1 yanking TODD to his feet. Dragging him off. The men picking up speed. Running. Out of sight, and...

BILLY face down on the gravel. Clawing at the pebbles. His eyes lulling, swollen, bleeding, but terribly alive...

Dragging himself across the bed of rocks, fighting to stave off... BLACKOUT.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

NATALIE racing through the sterile maze of hallways of the ER. Panic-stricken and frayed. Lost.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

DOCTORS suction blood and liquid from BILLY'S mouth, and from the hideous open gashes of his face and torso.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

NATALIE frozen at the junction of two hallways. Shivering from that hospital cold.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL OPERATING THEATER - NIGHT

DOCTORS AND NURSES suturing and stitching BILLY'S wounds. Like Frankenstein piecing together his monster.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL ROOM 527 - NIGHT

BILLY hooked up to a respirator and IV's. His face is hideous, swollen, broken. This is a monster's face, the face he's tried to hide for eight years.

NATALIE tiptoeing into the room. The sight of BILLY sending her into a quiet seizure. Her arms locking and trembling outside her control.

NATALIE sliding down the wall onto the floor, holding herself to calm all that heave-ho rocking.

INT. SCHIMMEL CENTER - DAY

Lights dimming. MODERATOR appearing from stage left. Applause ringing out.

MODERATOR

Good day, New York. And welcome to the final debate between the 2008 mayoral candidates. It's my pleasure to introduce the challenger, City Councilman Adam Valliant. And please join me in welcoming the incumbent, Mayor Nicholas Hostetler.

VALLIANT and HOSTETLER striding onstage from opposite wings. Shaking hands down center. Flashbulbs popping.

TITLE CARDS -- SATURDAY.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL ROOM 527 - DAY

BILLY'S sleeping, the spring of the respirator rising and falling with his shallow breaths.

NATALIE'S watching him from the armchair near the window. Sunlight's spilling in, and she looks almost seraphic in her sadness.

INT. SCHIMMEL CENTER - DAY

VALLIANT'S mid-answer, he's sporting a newfound intensity. He wants to ruin HOSTETLER.

VALLIANT

... well, if you think we're doing good enough graduating only two thirds of our children from high school... good enough providing investment banks and private equity groups with tax relief when there's no relief in sight for the working class... good enough standing by and doing nothing as third and fourth generation New Yorkers are priced out of their neighborhoods... then another four years of Nicholas Hostetler is made to order.

(shooting him a look of controlled contempt, turning with warmth to the audience and cameras)

But if you think we can do better... in fact, must do better... if you think it's time for a mayor who sees this city as a whole and not just bits and pieces to be played against the other...

(MORE)

VALLIANT (CONT'D)
then it's time to send a message to men
like Nicholas Hostetler. It's time to
send him packing.

INT. SUFFOLK COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE - DAY

KATY sauntering to the counter, drop dead gorgeous.

KATY

Hi. I was wondering if you could help me
with something.

INT. SCHIMMEL CENTER - DAY

HOSTETLER

It is absolutely laughable that my
opponent would stand here and espouse
fiscal responsibility. My opponent's
never met a tax he didn't want to raise.
During our last debate when asked how he
would address the city's three billion
dollar deficit he without the slightest
hint of irony said he was going to raise
taxes. Now, whose taxes do you think he
was going to raise? Those investment
banks and private equity firms he loves
to rail against? I don't think so. He
was going to stuff that bill right in the
breast pocket of his beloved working
class. Well, New York, with friends like
that...

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL ROOM 527 - DAY

BILLY'S phone is ringing. NATALIE padding across the
room to the closet where his jacket's hanging, silencing
the phone.

INT. BACKSEAT OF A TAXI VAN - DAY

Montauk rolling by outside the windows. KATY on her
phone frantic, dialing again. BILLY'S voicemail...

INT. SCHIMMEL CENTER - AUDIENCE - DAY

FAIRBANKS sitting in the fifth row, watching with a
fierce interest.

INT. SCHIMMEL CENTER - DAY

It's a full-on slug match. HOSTETLER and VALLIANT going for each other's jugular. The AUDIENCE is spellbound.

VALLIANT

You had your chance, Mister Hostetler...
And when it came time to exercise your responsibility to the people of this city, what did you do? You sold their homes from under them.

HOSTETLER

What I did is brought this city out of debt...

VALLIANT

... You sold public housing to a Wall Street equity firm...

HOSTETLER

... To avoid what apparently in a Valliant administration would be an acceptable norm... breaking the backs of the middle class with burdensome tax hikes...

VALLIANT

You are distorting my words...

HOSTETLER

... and you are distorting the facts. We were in debt! Three billion in debt... due to the tax and spend policies of the city council under the leadership of men like you...

VALLIANT

... There were other options for moving us toward solvency...

HOSTETLER

Name one.

VALLIANT

New York, there are always other options.

HOSTETLER

Well, New York here is asking you to name one.

AUDIENCE laughing.

VALLIANT

I'm not going to engage in word games
with you, Nick.

HOSTETLER

Please, call me Mayor.

AUDIENCE eating it up.

VALLIANT

I will -- Mayor. For the next three
days.

AUDIENCE exploding in oohs and ahs. The din dying down.

MODERATOR

Might I get a word in, gentlemen?

(laughter from the house)

It won't take but a second.

VALLIANT

By all means, Peter. I'm sorry.

HOSTETLER

Apologies, Peter.

MODERATOR

I guess my question is the same as the
mayor's. It is after all a valid
question, Councilman. How, specifically,
would Mayor Valliant have moved the city
into fiscal solvency?

VALLIANT

You're right, Peter. It is a valid
question. And I'll tell you what I would
have done. I would have convened a panel
of respected...

HOSTETLER

(overlapping, taunting)

... a panel of respected economists...

VALLIANT

Excuse me...

HOSTETLER

... we know all about that panel, Mister
Valliant...

VALLIANT

... Mayor, I am speaking.

HOSTETLER

My apologies... I thought you were spouting off thirty year old liberal talking points...

(going in for the kill)

... New Yorkers don't want panels, son. They want solutions...

VALLIANT

You wait your turn, Mister Hostetler...

HOSTETLER

... and only one of us on this stage is in the business of providing solutions.

(turning from VALLIANT to the AUDIENCE, finishing him)

... the other is in the business of telling you how dire the situation is, and how little he can do about it. New York, you've never heard such an utterance from me. And you never will.

(looking directly into cameras)

And to the men and women of Bolton Village... who are understandably worrying over their futures in that great community... I say your homes will not be taken from you. Your rents will not rise beyond those rates at which they increased under city ownership. I will not allow you to fall by the wayside. That is my oath!

VALLIANT

I want to say something...

HOSTETLER

You've said enough, Mister Valliant. The city's not listening.

INT. SCHIMMEL CENTER - AUDIENCE - DAY

FAIRBANKS crestfallen, knowing that was the coup de grace, as -- several rows back -- JUSTINE suffering a similar knowledge.

INT. LONG ISLAND RAILROAD TRAIN - NIGHT

KATY'S got her forehead pressed up against the window. Cell phone in hand.

UNANSWERED RINGING...

EXT. RIKERS ISLAND - DAY

TITLE CARD -- SUNDAY.

The gates sliding open. HENRY stepping out, clearly afraid he's about to see BILLY. And when he doesn't, a sick little grin curling his mouth.

A cruiser approaching. For a moment HENRY smiles at the sight of it, thinking it's his ride. The smile vanishing because he's watching...

JANSEN'S bounding out his cruiser for HENRY.

JANSEN

You Henry Ludlow?

HENRY

Yes. I'm Henry Ludlow.

JANSEN

Detective Jansen. NYPD.

HENRY

Can I help you, Detective?

JANSEN

You can shut the fuck up and listen.

JANSEN pulling his phone from his pocket, dialing his voicemail, turning it on speakerphone as we hear...

BILLY (VO/PHONE)

(his voice is different;
weaker, but edgier too)

Here are the rules, Henry. You've got a grandmother on 92nd Street. She's not well. Go to her. Tend to her needs. Get acclimated to the neighborhood. Make it your home. Enjoy your freedom on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Step one foot below 59th Street or into the borough of Brooklyn and I will blow your fucking head off... I'm sorry I couldn't be there, Henry. But I look forward to seeing you real soon...

JANSEN closing his phone. HENRY shaking, going all twitchy-eyed from fear.

JANSEN

And if you do make the stupid goddamned decision to come south of 59th, Henry, do not come into the 6th precinct. I get called in on your murder, Henry, and I'll fucking kill you again.

(takes in a deep breath of that river air)

You take care, okay?

A Buick LeSabre pulling up.

JANSEN (CONT'D)

(padding for the cruiser)

And tell Grandma I hope she gets better...

HENRY'S GRANDMOTHER blowing her horn, waving.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL ROOM 527 - DAY

BILLY'S awake. NATALIE'S holding his hand. The scars and bruises, the taped up stitches, beginning to settle into what they'll be. The hideousness has waned some, and now he just looks dangerous.

NATALIE

The chief of police was here, Billy. Why was the chief of police here? What the hell is going on? What is this about?

BILLY

(can't fully open his jaw to speak)

Just a case. I pissed some people off.

NATALIE

They tried to kill you, Billy.

BILLY

No... if they... they'da done it.

NATALIE

Baby, you've gotta talk to me... you've gotta tell me what's going on here... because I'm in the dark, I don't even know where to start, I can't... talk to me...

BILLY

I don't want you to be afraid...

NATALIE

Billy...

BILLY

I'm done with it... they got their point across, Nat... I'm done with it...

NATALIE

Promise. Billy, promise me. You're done. Promise.

BILLY

Promise...

NATALIE overcome with relief, or is that dread? BILLY looking at the clock.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Don't you have... it's your dress rehearsal today, isn't it?

NATALIE

The understudy's up. I took the week off.

BILLY

No... Nat, I want you to go. I want you to go, please.

NATALIE

I'm staying, Billy.

BILLY

I'm no good at this, Nat. I don't know how to wallow. You keep sitting there and I don't think I'll be able to deal with it. Please...

NATALIE

No, Billy.

BILLY

I'm not going anywhere, Nat. Promise.

NATALIE wanting out just as much as he needs her out.

NATALIE

You want me to go?

BILLY

I want you to go. I want you to come back to me, but I want you to go.

NATALIE

(beat)

Okay.

(getting to her feet, kissing
him)

I love you.

BILLY

That's good... that's... that's perfect.

NATALIE gathering her things.

NATALIE

I'll be back tonight. Promise.

TIME CUT

It's a few minutes later. KATY standing in the doorway.

BILLY

Hey.

KATY

You got your ass handed to you, Billy.

BILLY laughing, hurting as he does.

KATY (CONT'D)

I saw Natalie in the hall. She's even
prettier when she's sad. I hate her.

BILLY

How was Montauk?

KATY

She says you're quitting.

BILLY

I'm getting old. Always thought about
law school...

KATY

What about me?

BILLY

Get a real job.

That's not what she's asking.

KATY

And that's what you want? That's your
final word? You're done with it?

BILLY

I got Natalie... I've gotta think about her... I can keep digging, I can dig for China and back, maybe find the truth, maybe not, keep pissing him off, keep taking the beatings... but what about her? I'm done with it, yeah...

KATY

(smiling, accepting it)

Okay.

BILLY

What did you find out about the beach house?

KATY

Doesn't matter.

BILLY

Katy.

KATY blowing him a kiss. It's real, it's as passionate a kiss as was never given. Mouthing "I love you, Billy."

BILLY losing his breath it's so real. KATY walking away, and it feels like forever.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL ROOM 527 - BATHROOM - NIGHT

BILLY taking a painful piss. Flushing, lowering his gown. Not wanting to, but needing to, he's looking at his reflection in the mirror. No reaction. Cold, distant.

BILLY running water over his face and taking the sting

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL ROOM 527 - NIGHT

BILLY padding out into the room. Seizing up. Eyes dilating huge at the sight of...

TODD standing near the curtained windows.

TODD

(BILLY'S wounds)

Jesus... Jesus, I'm so sorry.

BILLY

Who are you?

TODD
(BILLY'S wounds)
I'm *that* guy... one of em anyway.

BILLY'S eyes surging with violence. He's doing the math on how to take this guy down, when...

TODD (CONT'D)
I'm Sam Lancaster's son.

BILLY freezing.

BILLY
Todd?

TODD nodding.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Why'd you come after me?

TODD
He told us to.

BILLY
Who?

TODD
He said you were digging where you shouldn't be digging. It wasn't supposed to go this far... I'm sorry...

If we haven't noticed by now, we should... TODD'S holding a manila envelope.

BILLY
What do you want?

TODD
I could never turn my back on em before.
Even when Andrews and the others were asking. I just couldn't. He's my father, I couldn't sell out my father.
Even if he is a goddamned monster...
(not really talking to BILLY,
confessing)

Then they killed Andrews... in front of his home, they fucking killed him in front of his home, like he wasn't nothing more than a dog...

BILLY
Who killed him, Todd?

TODD

Shit...

BILLY

Todd...

TODD

(breathing heavy, looking for
a way out; no way out)

It was my brother.

BILLY

You're sure of this? He told you this?

TODD

I saw him. I was there. I'm the one
called the cops.

BILLY

Were you... was it like me... were you...

TODD

No. No. No, I was there to give him
this... I'd decided I was gonna do it. I
had to. I couldn't... I was down at the
corner waiting on him. I saw him coming
down the stairs. I was about to wave to
get his attention then I saw... I saw my
brother... getting outta his car... he
fucking shot him. Shot him in his head.
Shot him in his head...

(losing himself, sobbing)

I couldn't breathe. I couldn't move. I
just... I just... I don't know. I felt
myself dialing 911. I didn't even leave
my name... I wouldn't even leave my
name... I'm ashamed... I'm ashamed... I'm
ashamed of everything... Here...

(extending manila envelope to
BILLY)

Here, take it... just fucking take it!

BILLY moving gingerly toward TODD, taking the envelope.

TODD (CONT'D)

It's what they wanted. I couldn't do it
before. It never felt right. I wanted
Valliant to win, but I didn't feel good
about the mayor's wife and that other
fucking scumbag...

(BILLY'S eyes dilating big)
... What did they want it for? So she
could get a divorce? Fuck her.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

Fuck him. Fuck their house in Montauk...

(BILLY reeling)

Let em do their own fucking dirty work.

Not me. I'm not his goddamned whipping boy... but Andrews... he was a good man... he was a good man...

BILLY

(trembling with dread)

Whose... whose house in Montauk?

TODD

(sobering; full of hatred)

Fairbanks.

BILLY going lightheaded, struggling to keep himself standing.

TODD (CONT'D)

He wanted the contract so he could take down Hostetler. I couldn't give it to him... but you... you do what you think is right... it's there... it's all there...

BILLY

(don't leave me with this)

Todd...

TODD'S pacing for the door, one set of shackles broken, another set clamping down.

TODD

Do what you think is right...

The door slamming behind him, and...

BILLY red-eyed with fury and fear. The manila envelope weighing a ton in his hand, and...

BILLY opening the envelope, removing its contents...

It's a single, yellowed sheet, eight-and-a-half by eleven. Type-written. Old. Decades old. BILLY'S jaw quivering from what it contains.

It's a contract. Not one of those contracts on file at City Hall, the other kind, the kind that men enter into with one another and never let see the light of day. The usual items:

LANCASTER & SONS,

LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY,
(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

*PROPRIETOR(S) . . . SAMUEL LANCASTER, SR.
(OWNER, OPERATOR, 49%),*

BILLY losing his grip on the contract. The contract FLOATING to the ground at his feet, landing face up, and there it is, the final piece...

NICHOLAS HOSTETLER (OWNER, SILENT, 51%)

BILLY yanking the closet door off its hinges. Snatching his clothes down. Pulling his pants up. Breathing like a madman.

EXT. ST. REGIS - NIGHT

The Saturn screeching to a stop outside the hotel. BILLY barrelling out, tossing his keys to the VALET.

INT. ST. REGIS - BOTTEGA VENETA SUITE - NIGHT

Pounding on the door. JUSTINE taking in a deep breath, and opening it. BILLY breathing like a fucking bull, pushing past her.

BILLY

Get him out here. Get him out here right now.

JUSTINE

I think it's time you had a drink, Mister Taggart.

BILLY

Get him out here!

JUSTINE

I'm not giving him up, Billy... I can't...

BILLY

You did this. You. But somehow you're entitled to your affairs? You're entitled to your goddamn above the world getaways. The people down there don't get free passes to fuck up other people's lives. Down there they pay for their crimes.

JUSTINE

I did nothing wrong.

BILLY

You got a man killed.

JUSTINE

No, Billy, not me.

BILLY

You're nobody's fucking martyr. You're a selfish whore with a superiority complex. This begins and ends with you, Justine. No one else. Your boyfriend traded secrets. You put him in danger. You used Andrews. You got Andrews killed. You. You did this. So fuck your privacy. Get him out here before I start tearing the fucking doors down.

JUSTINE trembling, struggling to fight back tears. Tears rolling down her cheeks, and...

The bathroom door swinging open. FAIRBANKS marching out, shirtless, barefoot.

FAIRBANKS

Hold your fire, Billy. At least save it for me.

BILLY unable to do any more than nod; it's too big and too fucked up.

BILLY

You two deserve each other.

FAIRBANKS

Billy.

BILLY

I hope he blows your fucking head off.

BILLY marching for the door.

FAIRBANKS

We take care of our own, Billy.

BILLY

I am not one of you.

FAIRBANKS

You used to be.

The men staring each other down like heavyweights in their corners.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

You'd need a fucking army, Billy. You don't have an army. Make the right decision.

BILLY swallowing. Marching out. The door swinging closed behind him.

EXT. ST. REGIS - NIGHT

The VALET wheels the Saturn back around. BILLY'S rounding the front of the car, then...

An NYPD CRUISER pulling up.

BILLY locking eyes with the driver, nodding. Okay. Let's play. Sliding behind the wheel of the Saturn

EXT. PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

The Saturn speeding downtown.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - NIGHT

BILLY on his phone, frantic. The phone beeping low battery and dying.

EXT. PUBLIC THEATER - NIGHT

NATALIE exiting with her CAST MATES. Stopping short at the sight of BILLY.

NATALIE

Billy, what are you... why aren't you at the hospital?

BILLY

Look, we gotta... something came up... I need you to just trust me...

NATALIE

Billy, what's going on?

BILLY

I'll explain it... I just... you got your phone on you? My phone's dead. I need to...

NATALIE

Yeah, yeah...

(digging through her purse
for her phone)

Here...

BILLY taking the phone, dialing a number, as we hear...

RINGING.

KATY'S VOICEMAIL

Hey, you've reached Katy. I'm not
picking up. Do your worst...

And BILLY'S about to leave some frantic message but
can't, because he's hearing what we're hearing...

A PHONE RINGING.

Not outgoing ringing, but incoming, and nearby. Right
here. No, check that. Right there. Natalie's purse.
He's got her phone in his hand, but her bag is fucking
ringing, and...

All the wind seeping out of BILLY. Nearly sobbing.

NATALIE standing there paralyzed and mute.

NATALIE

I ended it... Billy...

BILLY handing her the phone. A painful smile etching
itself on his battered face.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Billy... please...

BILLY

It, uh, it might not be safe to go home
right now. Something came up.

BILLY backpedaling from her as if she poses some mortal
threat.

NATALIE

Billy...

BILLY climbing into the Saturn. Driving away slowly.
With his NYPD tail.

INT. KINKOS - NIGHT

BILLY'S at a self-service copier. It's spitting out copies of the Lancaster-Hostetler contract.

BILLY looking out the window as the copier works its way to a hundred. Strangely at peace.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - NIGHT

RYAN opening the door on NATALIE. She's standing there frozen, her shame final and complete. RYAN taking her in his arms.

INT. KINKOS - NIGHT

BILLY sealing the copies in manila envelopes. He's sitting at a computer. He's got five different screens going. He's copying down addresses onto his envelopes.

EXT. GRACIE MANSION - NIGHT

BILLY marching toward the mansion. Carrying a tape recorder. Clicking record. Sliding it in his inside pocket. A crumpled Kinkos copy in hand.

The COPS in the NYPD cruiser looking at each other like what the fuck is going on here?

BILLY leaning into the bell.

VOICE ON INTERCOM
May I help you?

BILLY
Tell the mayor it's Billy Taggart.

INT. GRACIE MANSION - HOSTETLER'S STUDY - NIGHT

A MAID guiding BILLY in. HOSTETLER at his desk fussing with a VCR remote. He's a man in complete control, heading for a third term, about to put his only remaining challenger out of his misery, and loving every second of it.

HOSTETLER
VCRs, Billy. Haven't used one in years.

Setting the remote down, turning to BILLY with a look of amusement and mischief.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Billy, I hate to tell you this... you look like shit.

BILLY

I got into a bit of a thing.

HOSTETLER

Well, I'm glad you made it out all right. They could've killed you, Billy.

BILLY

They had good hearts.

HOSTETLER

Suckers. You look like you could use a drink, Billy. Can I get you a glass of Scotch?

BILLY

Yeah. Yeah, I'll take a glass.

HOSTETLER

Atta boy, Billy. The wagon's for faggots and hypocrites. Men drink and account themselves. Neat?

BILLY nodding. HOSTETLER padding to the cart and pouring drinks. Taking them to BILLY.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

To your health, Billy.

BILLY downing his whisky in one breathless, desperate swallow. Closing his eyes, knowing there's no going back now.

HOSTETLER flashing that Cheshire grin, returning to his desk.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

For awhile there, Billy, I was undecided on the DVD player. But sure as time moves by I got with the tide. The future makes me horny, Billy. How did Fitzgerald say it... 'The orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us...'

(bubbling over with it)

(MORE)

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Aw, Billy, I look out that window and I see Gatsby's green light. I see the future. The city that will grow under our very feet, Billy. It's starting right now. There's no ribbon cutting ceremonies, no shovels and mounds of dirt and smile for the cameras, Billy, but the ground's been broken. A new city shall emerge. And men like you and me are required, to see it through to fruition. They're going to name towers after us, Billy. Highways, bridges, tunnels. They will bear the names of the men who bore the responsibility in seeing that they were ever constructed to begin with... Billy, tell true, don't it make you a little stiff?

HOSTETLER laughing, just shy of madness. BILLY reeks of danger, and the scent is wafting all the way over to HOSTETLER who's getting dizzy on it.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

This city owes us, Billy. It's time to call in some of those debts.

HOSTETLER guzzling Scotch.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about the thing... and the pipe... he went overboard... it won't happen again, Billy. Because I think you're ready now. I think you've finally come home. Isn't that so, Billy? You've come home, haven't you? Whaddaya say, Billy?

BILLY

You're tearing down Bolton Village to put up a skyline.

HOSTETLER

(blissful)

Chin-chin.

BILLY

You're turning the Lower East Side into Wall Street East.

HOSTETLER

Why not Midtown South, Billy? Let's think outside the box here.

BILLY

You pushed that phony appraisal at four billion for a year so you'd seem like a wizard when it sold for six.

HOSTETLER

Aw, Billy, I need you in my life.

BILLY

It was worth eight.

HOSTETLER

Compromise builds cities, Billy.
Convictions build cemeteries.

BILLY

You gave a no-bid contract to Lancaster and Sons worth 350 million dollars.

HOSTETLER

Demolition is a dirty job, Billy, but somebody's got to do it.

BILLY

You're silent majority owner of Lancaster and Sons.

That stops HOSTETLER cold. His expression's a mix of orgiastic excitement and fear.

HOSTETLER

What's that you got in your hand, Billy?

BILLY

Proof.

HOSTETLER plastering on that grin.

HOSTETLER

Your drink's half-empty, Billy. Let's freshen you up.

HOSTETLER marching with the bottle to BILLY. Filling his glass to the brim.

BILLY

That's why you killed Andrews... Justine made a mistake. She tried to leverage a divorce. Said she knew about Bolton Village, said she'd go public. You knew she couldn't prove it. You knew whoever she was sleeping with was the source... that's why you killed Andrews.

HOSTETLER

He was fucking my wife, Billy.

BILLY

Wrong. It wasn't him.

HOSTETLER'S eyes dilating fucking huge.

HOSTETLER

Say that again, Billy.

BILLY

Yeah. It was a shock to me too. You'll never fucking guess.

HOSTETLER

You're right. Because you're going to tell me.

BILLY

No, sport. That's not how this works. I got a hundred of these. All nicely folded in envelopes, stamped and labeled to a hundred news people. I've got the original nice and safe. And here's the play. You resign, you step down and I keep my mouth shut. Those envelopes never see the light of day. The Bolton Village deal is dead. You want to tear down a hundred other projects, fine. But Bolton Village stands. And you walk away. That's the deal. You've got until noon tomorrow to give me your answer.

BILLY starting for the door; shaken. Shaken down to his soul. This is what it feels like... being a good man.

HOSTETLER

Counter offer.

BILLY stopping, turning back.

BILLY

No need. I got nothing left. Nothing for you to buy, nothing for you to threaten.

HOSTETLER

I want the original. I want the man's name. You've got until noon tomorrow.

BILLY wanting to laugh in his face, but feeling like a man who's gone in with four kings and is about to be beaten by aces.

HOSTETLER sipping his Scotch. A portrait of righteous indignation.

BILLY scared shitless, waiting for it.

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

Why do you think I chose you, Billy? I chose you because I own you.

HOSTETLER clicking play on the remote, and he might as well be pulling the trigger the way BILLY jolts, and...

ON TELEVISION

A *TEENAGED PUERTO RICAN BOY*, mugging for the camera, and...

EXT. STREET ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE - NIGHT

We're looking...

THROUGH A CAMCORDER

at ALEX, who's mugging and waiting for his cue.

TEEN'S VOICE (OS)

... and action.

ALEX

Ay-yo! First off let me say welcome. Welcome to LES. I'll be your host for the evening.

TEEN'S VOICE (OS)

What's your name, fool?

ALEX

They call me Alex. You can call me El Guapo.

TEEN'S VOICE (VO)

Stupid.

ALEX

It's Friday night. We just cooling out. Me and my man David on the camcorder.

Camera spinning around on DAVID, beaming big and bright.

DAVID
Hello, America.

Back on ALEX.

ALEX
I got a pocket full of cash and we
looking to have a good time tonight. So
we gonna hit up the usual spots. Maybe
get into something unusual. Like a
pretty girl or two.

DAVID (OS)
Speaking of which...

Camera panning to a pair of TEENAGED PUERTO RICAN GIRLS.
Long hair, tight jeans.

ALEX
Watch me work.

ALEX darting across the street in pursuit of the GIRLS.
He's saying something to one of them. It's not working.
She's giving him the finger. They're marching off
yelling back at him.

The camera shaking with DAVID'S laughter. ALEX returning
dejected.

DAVID (OS)
Yo, what you say?

ALEX
Man, they was ugly anyway.

DAVID (OS)
Yo, check it...

Camera panning right, catching...

MIKEY TAVAREZ backpedaling frantically onto the street.

ALEX
Yo, that's Mikey.
(calling out)
Mikey, what up!

DAVID (OS)
Yo...

As we...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

We're on that street. This is that night. We're watching through our own eyes now, watching ALEX and DAVID standing on in silence, and down the street a ways...

MIKEY TAVAREZ looking for a way out, and...

BILLY approaching. Stone-faced and sinister.

MIKEY trembling.

MIKEY

Billy, yo, please man, I didn't do it. I swear I aint do it. Billy, man, I woulda never done that shit, man...I aint take that money, Billy...yo, I swear it, on my mama, Billy, come on, man...shit...Billy... dog, please... I aint take it...

BILLY casually pulling his gun.

MIKEY sweating Jesus Christ bullets.

MIKEY (CONT'D)

Come on, man. I aint do it. I swear.

BILLY

You disappoint me, Mikey.

MIKEY

Billy... Billy, come on...

BILLY

Look at me, Mikey. You fucked me. You fucked me, and now you're lying to me.

MIKEY

Billy, please, man.

BILLY

I'm gonna give you a chance to tell the truth. I'm gonna give you one chance. Okay, Mikey? Okay. Go. Tell me the truth.

MIKEY swallowing.

BILLY cocking his pistol.

MIKEY

Okay...okay...okay, Billy...I know who did it. All right? I can get it for you. I can go get it. Swear. I would need a, uh, just gimme a day. Not even a day. Just gimme a few hours. Billy, just gimme a few hours, just gimme a hour...

BILLY

Mikey, I need a name.

MIKEY trembling and sobbing. Struggling to catch his breath. Shooting "don't make me do it eyes" at BILLY.

BILLY flashing impatience, and...

MIKEY

Angel Ortiz.

BILLY nodding. And maybe it's all over. Maybe we believe that. Maybe even MIKEY believes that, when...

BILLY RAISING HIS PISTOL -- SLOW -- FINGER ON THE TRIGGER -- SQUEEZE -- BANG! -- BLOWING MIKEY'S HEAD OFF...

ALEX (OS)

Oh shit!

BILLY TAGGART. Handsome. Hideous. Thirty-four going on pure adrenaline. His eyes lucid with violence. AIMING HIS PISTOL at the quickly receding image of TWO INDISTINCT FIGURES racing off into the darkness.

BILLY breathing runaway train fast. He's frozen in a moment's paralysis. A life's paralysis. He's stuck between chasing after those indistinct figures and standing here. Taking it. SIRENS WAIL.

BILLY swallowing, and...

INT. GRACIE MANSION - HOSTETLER'S STUDY - NIGHT

HOSTETLER ejecting the tape, turning to BILLY.

BILLY'S a standing eight count.

HOSTETLER

That show you put on for the cameras, Billy, it was masterful. You duped them all. I dare say you duped yourself. Well, one of us knows better, Billy.

(MORE)

HOSTETLER (CONT'D)

One of us knows what kind of can't miss
TV this will make for... Let's see that
it stays in friendly hands, Billy.

(beat)

I want the original contract. I want the
man's name. Take some time to think it
over. I'll see you tomorrow for lunch.

HOSTETLER marching out the office. Leaving BILLY there
in final defeat.

INT. BILLY'S SATURN - NIGHT

BILLY'S parked on some dark street. He's drinking from a
bottle of whisky, and...

EXT. VALLIANT'S QUEENS HOME - NIGHT

VALLIANT opening his door, like someone's just rung the
bell. Looking down on the porch. Hunching to pick up --
BILLY'S TAPE RECORDER.

BILLY'S Saturn peeling out.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING ON 92ND STREET - NIGHT

The transformation is complete. BILLY'S jamming his
fingers into a pair of LEATHER GLOVES. Marching down the
hall. Outside apartment 5E, without breaking stride --
KICKING IN THE DOOR...

INT. APARTMENT 5E - NIGHT

HENRY jerking off to soft porn on the sofa -- bolting up
at the sight of BILLY -- darting for the bedroom -- BILLY
grabbing him, and...

BILLY

Put a fucking shirt on.

Hurling HENRY over the ottoman. HENRY crawling to his
feet -- grabbing a steak knife off the counter -- lunging
at BILLY with it -- BILLY catching his arm clean --
breaking HENRY'S grip on it -- breaking fingers -- HENRY
howling.

HENRY'S GRANDMOTER (OS)

(from the bedroom)

Henry? Henry, what's all that fuss?

BILLY'S eyes landing on the bedroom door, ready to do the grandmother too, when...

HENRY

No... no... I'll get a shirt...

INT. TRIBECA GRAND LOBBY - NIGHT

HENRY staring nervously at the DESK CLERK.

DESK CLERK

Welcome to the Tribeca Grand, sir. How can I help you?

HENRY

I'd like a room for the night.

DESK CLERK

Yes sir, I can help you with that. Have you stayed with us before?

INT. TRIBECA GRAND - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

BILLY keeping his head low, hidden behind his collar, so he won't be seen by cameras. He's holding a leather duffel bag. HENRY'S shaking like an epileptic.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND - ROOM 1912 - NIGHT

BILLY locking the door and drawing the shades. Turning the TV on. Loud. HENRY looking for ways out, considering the window.

BILLY

Sit down.

HENRY sitting down.

BILLY pulling a rope from his duffel bag. BILLY tying HENRY down. HENRY sobbing.

HENRY

I'll play by your rules...I swear...I swear...please...please don't kill me... I'll never step foot below 59th Street... please...

BILLY knotting the rope. Like HENRY'S not even there. BILLY pulling a bottle of vodka from his duffel bag. Pouring a glass.

BILLY
Open your mouth.

HENRY biting down hard, refusing. BILLY pulling a leather sap from his duffel bag -- BELTING HENRY across the back of the neck with it.

HENRY'S eyes bulging. His head swiveling.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Open your mouth.

And now HENRY will have that drink. Guzzling. BILLY pouring another. HENRY hammering it home. Too fast. He coughs.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Open. Drink.

HENRY can't, he's choking.

BILLY prying his mouth open, pouring the vodka down. Slamming his mouth shut. Hard. Teeth crunching. HENRY swallowing. Hard.

Opening his mouth -- a front tooth is gone. Blood's dripping.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Drink.

HENRY
Please... please... don't kill me...

BILLY yanking him back by the hair and prying open his mouth. Pouring the entire bottle down.

TIMECUT

It's a half hour later. HENRY is untied, lying unconscious on the carpet. BILLY'S arranged the room just so. Bottles of vodka scattered for effect.

BILLY taking his SIG SAUER P226 from his duffel bag. Grabbing HENRY'S right hand. Placing the pistol in HENRY'S hand, making sure the prints stick, and...

Snatching up his duffel bag, marching for the door, keeping his head low.

EXT. PAY PHONE ON 6TH AVENUE - NIGHT

BILLY feeding the phone quarters.

EXT. GRACIE MANSION - NIGHT

An absolute circus -- COP CARS AND NEWS VANS -- REPORTERS DOING STANDUPS -- FAIRBANKS bounding out of his cruiser, grabbing his phone.

FAIRBANKS

This is Fairbanks.

INTERCUT BILLY AT PAY PHONE AND FAIRBANKS

BILLY

It's me.

FAIRBANKS

Billy. Billy, where are you?

BILLY

I made my decision, Chief.

FAIRBANKS

I know, Billy. I'm here. Valliant called me. We're outside the mayor's right now, Billy.

(staggering silence)

Why don't you make your way up here, Billy? This is your collar...

BILLY

You owe me, Chief.

FAIRBANKS

I know, Billy.

BILLY

... Don't ask any questions...

FAIRBANKS

Billy?

BILLY

... Take it how you find it...

FAIRBANKS

What are you talking about, Billy?

BILLY
... your shooter's in room 1912.

FAIRBANKS
Billy. Billy, where are you? I'll send someone to get you. Don't do this, Billy. Get your ass up here. This is your collar.

BILLY
Room 1912.

FAIRBANKS
This is your redemption up here, Billy. I'm staring at it. Billy?!

BILLY
Room 1912.

DIAL TONE.

FAIRBANKS hanging up. OFFICER approaching.

OFFICER
We're ready, Chief.

INT. GRACIE MANSION - NIGHT

FAIRBANKS and an entire ARMY OF COPS marching through the mansion.

INT. GRACIE MANSION - HOSTETLER'S STUDY - NIGHT

HOSTETLER sitting at his desk. Sealing an envelope that looks like it's got a video inside it.

He's scribbling a name on it:

MAYOR VALLIANT

Rising as...

FAIRBANKS
(charging in)
Nicholas Hostetler, you are under arrest for the murder of Zachary Andrews. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in the court...

HOSTETLER

I know my rights, cocksucker.

FAIRBANKS signaling a COP to cuff HOSTETLER. Cuffs on, and that defiance hasn't faded yet.

FAIRBANKS taking hold of HOSTETLER, marching him for the door, and...

FAIRBANKS

It was me. I'm the guy fucking your wife.

HOSTETLER going momentarily wobbly kneed, it hits so hard.

JUSTINE in the doorway, with a smile for her man as he goes. No, not that one, the other one.

EXT. GRACIE MANSION - NIGHT

A BLINDING MURAL OF FLASHBULBS...

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - NIGHT

Shower water running.

The door to the suite cracking open. A sliver of light flashing, then fading. The door closing quietly shut.

Feet traipsing across the carpet.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

RYAN AND NATALIE MAKING LOVE IN THE SHOWER. This is passionate, desperate love-making, the love-making of two people who will never again commit such an act...

Moaning and whimpering, kissing, thrusting, and...

BILLY'S ARM CUTTING THROUGH THE STEAM -- A GLOVED FINGER ON THE TRIGGER OF A SIG SAUER P226 -- SQUEEZE -- A SEISMIC RUPTURE, as...

BANG! -- THE BULLET EXPLODING FROM THE BARREL -- INTO RYAN'S FOREHEAD -- AGAIN -- AGAIN...

And maybe BILLY empties the clip.

RYAN'S brains on the shower wall. RYAN capsizing. Gunsmoke slow dancing with steam.

NATALIE frozen in a catatonic shock. RYAN'S brains and blood dripping from her hair.

She's sliding down the wall. Shivering and dry heaving. Her eyes finally rising to meet BILLY'S.

You've never seen hate like that.

EXT. TRIBECA GRAND - NIGHT

The circus has moved downtown -- COP CARS AND NEWS VANS -- FAIRBANKS' cruiser pulling up to the caution tape.

JANSEN hurrying toward him.

JANSEN

Chief, we've got all exits blocked.
We're going room to room.

FAIRBANKS taking in a deep breath of the autumn air.

FAIRBANKS

Room 1912.

JANSEN

Chief?

FAIRBANKS

The shooter's in room 1912.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND - ROOM 1912 - NIGHT

HENRY vomiting into the toilet. Rinsing his mouth at the sink, and...

The door bursting open. A DOZEN COPS STORMING IN, GUNS DRAWN.

JANSEN

Down on the ground, asshole.

JANSEN recognizing HENRY, and knowing what this is. The realization taking his breath away.

HENRY pissing himself, dropping to his knees.

The Sig Sauer P226 on the carpet by the chair, shining up at the cops like justice.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - NIGHT

FAIRBANKS padding into the suite. PARAMEDICS wheeling RYAN'S BODY out the room.

NATALIE by the window, rocking back and forth. The sun coming up outside the windows.

INT. TRIBECA GRAND SUITE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

FAIRBANKS looking around the bathroom. The tub glistening. All that blood and brains washed away.

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

TITLE CARD -- MONDAY.

Autumn. The morning rush hour. Taxis and busses clogging the roads. PEDESTRIANS power-walking, purposeful. Filing into skyscrapers and schools...

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - MORNING

The digital ticker at One North Times Square...

NYC MAYOR HOSTETLER ARRESTED FOR
MURDER.....

ACTOR RYAN BLAKE SHOT TO DEATH IN NYC
HOTEL.....

INT. 6 TRAIN - MORNING

Roaring into the station at Wall Street. The front pages of the Times, the Post and Daily News, the Journal, Financial Times, IBD, all with variations on the theme...

'HOSTETLER ARRESTED'... 'RYAN BLAKE MURDERED'...

STRAPHANGERS filing out the train and up the stairs...

INT. HENRY STREET ALE HOUSE - DAY

BILLY drinking whisky at the bar. Watching the overhead television.

FAIRBANKS entering and padding over to him, taking the stool next to him.

FAIRBANKS

Tomorrow's the big day, Billy. Looks like our guy's a shoo-in...

BARTENDER

What can I get for you, officer?

FAIRBANKS

(BILLY'S drinks)

Two more pints of ale. And the bottle of whatever that is.

BARTENDER fetching drinks.

On the television, VALLIANT holding a press conference.

BARTENDER returning with drinks. FAIRBANKS pours two glasses of whisky.

Holding his drink aloft.

FAIRBANKS (CONT'D)

To Adam Valliant. A good man. And to all the terrible men who allow his fucking existence. Down the hatch, Billy. Down the hatch.

BILLY and FAIRBANKS hammering the whiskey, slamming their glasses down.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

Snow falling on the steps to City Hall, beautiful, white, purifying snow. Christmas lights and wreaths wrapped around the pillars.

INT. VALLIANT'S CITY HALL OFFICE - DAY

VALLIANT'S watching the tape, that tape. An AIDE standing over his shoulders in shocked disbelief. VALLIANT switching the television off.

AIDE

Hang him. Hang that sonofabitch. Adam, this is a gift. Hang him.

VALLIANT

Shelf it.

The AIDE swallowing.

AIDE

Adam, he murdered that boy in cold blood.

VALLIANT

I might need to use him. Shelf it.

VALLIANT padding to the mirror on the wall, studying his reflection

The RECEPTIONIST poking her head in.

RECEPTIONIST

Mayor, the men from Solstein Donagan are here.

VALLIANT fixing his tie, plastering on a Cheshire grin.

VALLIANT

Send them in.

As we fade to black and...

THE END