

American Bullshit

By

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9/2/10

The following is a true story based on a whole lot of
bullshit...

EXT. STREET - OUTSKIRTS OF ATLANTIC CITY - NIGHT

HIGH ANGLE OVER a dark street lined with industrial buildings and warehouses. Behind the street, The Jersey Turnpike --- we can see billboards advertising Atlantic City.

A SILVER CADILLAC DEVILLE appears, rolls down the street, turns into the lot of the "Allied Amusements" warehouse and HONKS.

SUPER: "December 29, 1979 - Atlantic City"

INT. CADILLAC DEVILLE - CONTINUOUS

MEL WEINBERG in the back seat stuffed in between TWO LARGE GINZO BONEBREAKERS. Immaculately dressed in a Pierre Cardin suit and overcoat, Mel's wearing a pair of gold Cazal eyeglasses with just enough tint to hide the fear in his eyes.

SONNY BLITZ, a nattily dressed wiseguy, is behind the wheel. Riding shotgun is the Capo of this crew, **DOMINICK CASALE**, a stalwart man with the jovial facade of a grandfather.

We see FIVE MOB GOONS emerge from the warehouse and approach. Blitz gets out, confers with the lead soldier and nods to the Bonebreaker on Mel's left who then opens the door and exits.

Looking to Dom, Mel makes a silent appeal to him with his eyes but is ignored --- so he gets out.

EXT. PARKING LOT - ALLIED AMUSEMENTS - CONTINUOUS

Blitz flashes Mel a vicious grin as the Goons take custody of him and escort him towards the warehouse.

INT. ALLIED AMUSEMENTS - SECONDS LATER

MOVING with Mel as the Goons manhandle him through the dark warehouse filled with slot machines and arcade games --- down a flight of stairs --- through a door and into...

INT. RUMPUS ROOM - ALLIED AMUSEMENTS - CONTINUOUS

A formica wood-paneled rumpus room. Mel is ushered over to a card table seated at which is a little switchblade of a man, **NICKY SCARFO**. He's reading the Wall Street Journal and marking his stock picks with a mechanical pencil.

On the table: a plate of Italian cheese, a bottle of Barolo, glasses and the Milton Bradley Game of Operation ready to play.

SCARFO

You know who I am?

Mel nods. Gesturing him to take a seat, Scarfo pours a glass of wine and slides it towards him. Mel declines.

SCARFO (CONT'D)

Well then try some of this Belicino ---

MEL

How about you just tell me what I'm doing here, Scarfo?

SCARFO

Come on Mel, I insist. Try the goat cheese. It's world famous...

(slides plate towards Mel)

Comes from my family's farm in Sicily's Belice Valley...

Feigning disgust, Mel slides the plate back.

SCARFO (CONT'D)

What's the problem?

MEL

I know a guy, a fuckin' cheesemonger --- he told me all about the goat cheese from that part of Sicily. He says he won't touch it. Says it's tainted...

SCARFO

Fuck do you mean it's tainted?

MEL

Tainted with that, uh, that animal disease, you know --- Anthrax...

SCARFO

What!?

MEL

Yeah. The cheesemonger says they got serious anthrax problems in that area of Sicily, like an epidemic, cause all the farmers there --- after they assfuck their goats they all assfuck each other. It's like a vicious circle.

Scarfo flashes a lethal grin and eats a piece of cheese.

SCARFO

You like to play games Mel?

From the darkened, far corner of the room a lighter is ignited and a cigarette lit --- in the brief illumination Mel catches a glimpse of the dim outline of a **SHADOW MAN** seated in a chair.

SCARFO (CONT'D)

Friend of mine down in Florida -- you know the guy you're into some business with -- he calls me the other day, says that you like to play games.

This revelation hits Mel like a fucking sledgehammer --- and the fear that was contained begins to seep out.

MEL

Bullshit --- why would the guy in Florida say that you?

SCARFO

Cause he knows that I'm an avid gamesman myself and he thought that I'd enjoy playing with you. Monopoly, Clue, Parcheesi, Chutes and fucking
(MORE)

SCARFO (CONT'D)
 Ladders --- I love 'em all --- but
 the game I love the most is this one
 right here, Operation. (Beat) So
 whaddya say Mel, wanna play?

MEL
 I don't think so...

SCARFO
 Mel, what do I do for a living?

MEL
 --- You paint houses.

SCARFO
 That's right ---
 (slides him 'Doctor' cards)
 Now pick a fuckin' card.

Mel hesitantly picks the card: 'WISHBONE, \$300.'

SCARFO (CONT'D)
 Tough break. Wishbone's a bitch.

On edge, Mel takes the tweezers connected to the wire and plucks
 the Wishbone out without touching the metal.

SCARFO (CONT'D)
 Bravo ---

Scarfo picks his own card, 'CHARLIE HORSE' and then masterfully
 plucks the piece from the gameboard. He gestures to Mel who
 picks another card: 'WRITER'S CRAMP, \$200' with an illustration
 of a pencil in someone's arm.

SCARFO (CONT'D)
 Lucky prick, that's a fuckin' gimme.

Struggling for the pencil, Mel's finger twitches, he hits the
 metal -- the patient's nose FLASHES RED as the BUZZER SOUNDS.

And like a COBRA STRIKING --- Scarfo PINS Mel's left arm to the
 table and PILEDIVES his metal pencil through Mel's WRIST like
 an icepick. Mel screams in agony as blood SPURTS from the wound.
 Scarfo's Goons hold Mel down, keeping his arm pinned.

MEL
 WHADDYA DOING?!

SCARFO
 Whaddya mean? We're playing the game.

MEL
 You don't need to tune me up. Whatever
 you want --- we can talk ---

SCARFO
 My friend in Florida, he's through
 talking Mel. He never got the Arab's
 money ---

MEL
 (screaming at SHADOW MAN)
 There was nothing I could do ----

SCARFO
 Who you talking to, Mel? There's nobody
 there. It's just you and me.

Mel SCREAMS as Scarfo GRINDS the pencil into the wound.

MEL
 Whaddya want?!

SCARFO
 Whaddya think I want? The truth.

MEL
 The truth? (Beat) The truth...

CLOSE ON MEL'S FACE AS SCARFO PUNCHES HIM IN THE SKULL:

MEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (calm, meditative)
 The truth is bullshit.

MATCH CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE TERRORIZED FACE OF MEL'S FATHER, NATHAN WEINBERG:

Nathan screaming a millisecond before a thick pane of clear
 glass is savagely smashed and broken over his face ---

MEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I learned this lesson at a very early
 age from the most honest man I ever
 knew, my father Nathan...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. GLASS INSTALLATION SHOP - BRONX - DAY

SUPER: "1954 - Bronx, New York"

A warehouse filled with panes of glass, glazier's tools, etc.
 Nathan is splayed out on the floor; helpless to stop LUCKY
 BARRETTI from stomping his ass out.

MEL (V.O.)
 Nate had a successful glass business
 in the Bronx --- that is until Lucky
 Barretti decided to start a local
 glaziers union --- and then everything
 just went to shit...

BARRETTI
 Smatter with you Weinberg?
 (stomps him in the balls)
 Why won't you just fall in line like
 everyone else!?

CAMERA CONTINUES PULL BACK through warehouse as Barretti's crew
 of FIVE UNION GOONS destroy everything in sight.

MEL (V.O.)

My father wouldn't get in line cause even though joining the union would've insured his business, Barretti was gonna take a piece of every dollar he clocked --- making it so that the only way he could earn for himself would be to cheat his customers --- which is something Nathan Weinberg would never do...

THE CAMERA FINALLY PULLS BACK INTO:

INT. TRUCK - GLASS INSTALLATION SHOP - CONTINUOUS

An ELEVEN YEAR OLD MELVIN WEINBERG hides behind the steering wheel and cries -- watching the violence in helpless terror.

MEL (V.O.)

And so they tuned his ass up --- wrecked his shop --- tried to knock him outta of the box...

INT. WEINBERG APARTMENT - KITCHEN - BRONX - NIGHT

Mel is seated at the kitchen table, a birthday cake in front of him, his face cast aglow by the twelve candles. He's flanked by his SISTER and MOTHER, everyone singing "Happy Birthday".

Mel blows out the candles and with excited anticipation looks across the table with at his battered and bandaged father.

NATHAN

Mel, I know I promised you a bike for your birthday but business is ---
(starts to choke up)
I'm sorry Mel ---

The heartbroken expression on Mel's face is too much for his father who breaks down and starts to cry.

MEL (V.O.)

It was a terrifying thing for me to see my father like that. But more than fear, there was the anger. I mean just look at this poor schmuck. Here he is on verge of losing his livelihood, security for his family, the respect of his son ---

INT. WEINBERG APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

It's late, all the lights are out and everyone is asleep.

MEL (V.O.)

...And for what?

We see Mel slink out of the shadows and sneak out the front door, fully dressed to brave the cold winter night.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - BRONX - MINUTES LATER

A winter-swept street lined with row houses... We see Mel approach the rear cab of his father's work-truck.

MEL (V.O.)
What's the point of having integrity?

CLOSE ON TRUCK: Mel unlocks a storage chest, takes two boxes of bolts and stuffs them into a shoulder-slung bag.

MEL V.O. (CONT'D)
Integrity ain't gonna get you what
you want outta this world.

EXT. CLASSIC NEW YORK CITY STOREFRONT WINDOW - BRONX - LATER

CLOSE ON an old school store front window: MANNY'S MEATS.

MEL (V.O.)
Why pledge allegiance to the truth?

Mel's reflection suddenly appears in the glass. Only a few feet away from the window we can see that Mel has a slingshot in his hand. He loads it with a bolt, takes aim and fires --- the huge glass window SHATTERS with a terrible violence...

MEL V.O. (CONT'D)
The truth can't save you...

EXT. WEBB AVE. - BRONX - SECONDS LATER

HIGH ANGLE OVER Webb Avenue as Mel rolls down the street; using his slingshot and bolts to break every window in sight.

MEL (V.O.)
That night, I musta broke every window
in my neighborhood. I broke so many
fuckin' windows they had to import
glass in from Jersey to replace them
all... And I kept on breaking glass
until business got better --- and I
got my bike... Fuck the square life.
Fuck integrity. Fuck the truth. (beat)
The truth is bullshit.

CUT TO BLACK:

Over the blackness we HEAR the shrill DESCENDING WHISTLES AND EXPLOSIONS of 4th of July fireworks going off...

ROLE TITLE: Big, bullshit letters... "AMERICAN BULLSHIT"

INT. JFK AIRPORT - EASTERN AIRLINES CONCOURSE - MORNING

FOLLOWING CLOSELY BEHIND THE BALL-CRUSHINGLY RAPTUROUS FIGURE OF A WOMAN tightly wrapped in a chic Chanel skirt-suit --- striding down the middle of the bustling flight concourse.

SUPERIMPOSE OVER ASS: "September, 1978 --- New York City"

REVERSE ANGLE: In her late twenties, **MAXINE GARDNER** is a ravenous beauty whose scorching blue eyes give her a visceral, blow-torch appeal. Ann Margaret meets Dorothy Parker.

Max approaches the gate of an arriving flight as PASSENGERS flow into the terminal. **HAROLD PIEDMONT**, a craggy blue-blood steps off the jetway, sees the orchid broach pinned to Max's lapel and greets her with an unctuous grin.

PIEDMONT
Ms. Gardner --- ?

MAX
(finishing school accent)
Please Harold, it's Max... So good to
finally meet you in person ---
(taking him by the arm)
Now come along, the car is waiting...

EXT./INT. LIMO - A LITTLE LATER

Stretch limo making its way into the city. Piedmont and Max are seated directly across from each other.

PIEDMONT
I must confess, I'm not comfortable
dealing with loan brokers like
yourself. I've heard stories, unseemly
stories about the kind of capital you
people represent ---

MAX
Please, Harold, there's really no
need to be so vituperative. The shop
we're meeting with only deals with
the most reputable lenders ---

Piedmont looks out the window as they pass a gas station and sees a long line of cars waiting to fill up... Someone has spray-painted the words: "FUCK OPEC" over the station's sign.

PIEDMONT
That god damn peanut farmer in the
White House is running this economy
into the void! Stagflation, inflation ---
credit markets are all locked up ---
(eyes return to Max)
I mean when institutional bankers
like Chase Manhattan won't lend to a
Piedmont, you know this country's in
serious trouble.

MAX
(clever grin)
And yet despite all of this I'm still
confident that your luck is about to
change.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER - MID TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER THAT MORNING

Max and Piedmont enter a stunning, Fifth Ave. skyscraper.

INT. 10TH FLOOR - SKYSCRAPER - MINUTES LATER

Max and Piedmont approach a door: "LONDON INVESTORS - New York, London, Zurich". We MOVE with them as they enter...

INT. LONDON INVESTORS - SKYSCRAPER - CONTINUOUS

...The sumptuously appointed reception area of a very smart looking establishment that exudes an air of success and reputability. Max can see that Piedmont is impressed.

INT. MEL'S OFFICE - LONDON INVESTORS - SECONDS LATER

The RECEPTIONIST ushers Piedmont and Max into a handsomely decorated office whose walls are gilded with fine art, pictures of Mel Weinberg with prominent luminaries and awards from various civic and business organizations.

Clad in a beautiful bankers suit, Mel greets Piedmont with an earnest smile and handshake.

MEL

Mel Weinberg...

Mel then gives Max a cordial peck on the cheek.

MEL (CONT'D)

Hi ya Max... How are things?

MAX

Lovely --- and you?

MEL

Capital.

Mel directs Max and Piedmont to sit --- and as she moves to the couch Mel tilts his head slightly to the right and admires the swing of Max's ass. He then sits across from Piedmont.

MEL (CONT'D)

Not to be rude but I've got a back to back day as I'm sure you do as well --- so if we could just cap to the climax ---

MAX

Well have you looked at the setup?

MEL

Yeah, fantastic deal. Top shelf property. Perfect location for a shopping center ---

(takes out cigarette)

Now, I don't know what Max has told you about London Investors so let me just give you the quick of it ---

(lights up, takes a drag)

I work very closely with a consortium of off shore banks that are expanding their loan portfolios. On their end I help them find worthy deals that the mainline lenders have missed. On your end I help you put a loan package together and hand-hold the deal through the process --- using all my weight to get the loan approved ---

PIEDMONT

Can you guarantee an approval?

MEL

Of course not. That being said you should know I never take on deals I can't close.

PIEDMONT

How much is all this going to cost me?

MEL

Six points on the backend, after you get yours. Only thing I ask is that you cover my costs with processing your package, which in your case will be about twenty-five thousand ---

PIEDMONT

If you don't get me the financing do I get the twenty-five thousand back?

Mel flashes Max a "the fuck's wrong with this guy?" look.

MEL

No. The twenty five is non-refundable, just like my time...

With an anxious sigh Piedmont gives Mel a desperate glare.

PIEDMONT

I just need to know that you can get me the money ---

MEL

Look, I'm not Willy Loman. I'm not here to sell you --- that being said---
(leans forward earnestly)

You should know that I believe in cash and happy endings. I mean when a businessman needs money, he needs money --- not an aspirin and a fuckin' prayer. That's how I make my living ---
(gets up from chair)

Anyway, think it over. I hope we can do some business together. If not, best of luck down the block.

Piedmont and Max stand, Mel ushers them towards the door. Mel gives Max a peck on the cheek and then shakes Piedmont's hand.

EXT. SKYSCRAPER - MID TOWN MANHATTAN - LATER THAT DAY

We see Mel behind the wheel of a forest green, Lincoln Mark-V as it exits the garage and heads down the street.

EXT. STREETS - MANHATTAN - CONTINUOUS

VARIOUS ANGLES of Mel driving --- sultry late afternoon. We see him pull up to the valet of the PIERRE HOTEL and exit...

INT. SUITE - PIERRE HOTEL - MINUTE LATER

Mel enters the elegant residential suite. Late afternoon sunlight is flooding in through the huge window which overlooks the park. There is a Shirley Temple waiting for him on the bar. He grabs it, sits on the couch and sips as he gazes out.

The room darkens as the sun sets behind the skyline of buildings across the park --- and Mel suddenly sees the reflection of a

woman in the window's glass. The woman is standing in the doorway of the bathroom behind him.

MEL

What's up, pussycat. Is he hooked?

MAX

Heavy as lead.

Walking towards Mel, the woman reveals herself to be Max. She hands Mel a check from 'Harold Piedmont' made out to London Investors for '\$25,000.' --- And gives him a sensual kiss.

Pulling up an armchair, Max positions it directly in front of Mel and sits down provocatively, her skirt hiked up to her panties. Kicking off her heels, she perches her feet on Mel's knees and lazily spreads her legs wide open.

MAX (CONT'D)

(foxy grin)

I also got him to front me three points on that Bank of Sark CD I've been holding.

MEL

What is it with you Max? Always wanting. I mean we talked about this. You never send a guy to the river ---

MAX

Oh please. Don't show me the moves if you don't want me to make them.

MEL

I just want you to make them smartly ---

MAX

Life is short and so is money ---

Max reclines into the chair; totally relaxed, completely uninhibited. Then beckons Mel with a pleasure seeking grin.

MAX (CONT'D)

So why not go out on a limb? I mean ---
(slides hand over crotch)
...Isn't that where the fruit is?

Mel moves in but Max shoves him back with her feet.

MAX (CONT'D)

(off Mel's look)

You know, it occurred to me earlier today --- that once I walk into your office I'm just a spectator...

MEL

Whaddya mean?

OVER THE SHOULDER of Max; Keeping Mel pinned back with one leg, she slides her underwear off the other.

MAX

I always have to just sit there with
my mouth shut and watch you get
yourself off as you close the deal.

(begins playing with herself)

Well, now it's your turn to watch me --

Max's legs contort, feet bend and flex. Her body slowly twists
and turns like a corkscrew as she gets herself off.

Mel's grin swells into a stupefied, life affirming smile.

EXT./INT. STELLA'S SUPPER CLUB - FIFTY SEVENTH STREET - LATER

A fully packed and incredibly noisy but chic restaurant filled
with a mixture of wiseguys, hustlers and celebs. Like the Copa
but without the shows. Clearly the place to be seen.

ANGLE CLOSE on two hustlers standing at the end of the bar; SY
LENTZ (very gay) and RONNY DAMONE.

RONNY

Get out. Guy was chief of staff to
Nixon. Fuckin NATO Supreme Commander.

SY

And men of his stature can't be
faggots? Cause I'm telling you, they
can, they are and thank God for it.

Mel carrying an attaché, approaches and greets them with a nod.

MEL

Fellas... what's up?

RONNY

Sy says that Al Haig's a shitstabber.

SY

Oh, Haig doesn't engage in sodomy.
No, he's strictly into helmeting ---

MEL

The fuck is helmeting?

SY

He gets off from having bald men try
to stick their heads up his ass.

Mel laughs --- Ronny is horrified.

RONNY

That's the worst thing I ever heard ---

MEL

(rubs Ronny's head)

Don't knock it till you try it, Ron.

(to Sy)

You got anything tasty for me?

SY

Setups on the packages we're bringing
in through Artie Kessler in Pittsburgh ---

Sy hands Mel some files which he puts into his attache.

MEL

Just keep feeding me the action fellas ---
and spread the word, cause I'm hungry.

SONNY BLITZ suddenly rolls up next to Mel.

SONNY

Well, if it ain't the golden Hebe.

MEL

So Sonny --- I guess that makes you
the nickel plated ginzo?

SONNY

Don't get smart with me jagoff ---

MEL

Zip your fly, Sonny ---

Sonny looks like he's about to stab Mel but is stopped by the sight of his boss, **DOMINICK CASALE**. Blitz quickly backs down.

DOM

Hey, there he is --- how are ya Mel ---

Taking Mel by the arm, Dom ushers him towards the back door.

MEL

What is it with your fucking crew ---
always breaking my balls ---

DOM

Whaddya expect? You're a compulsive
earner -- Ya make 'em look bad.

EXT. PARKING LOT - ALLEY - BACK OF STELLA'S - MINUTE LATER

Dom and Mel lean up against Dom's Cadillac.

DOM

Anything you need me to take care of?
Problems, beefs, whatever ---

MEL

Nothing ---

Mel takes a cash stuffed envelope out of his attaché, hands it to Dom.

MEL (CONT'D)

July.

DOM

(smiles, impressed)
Heavy.

MEL

These things come in streaks. And
it's been seven come eleven for me
lately.

DOM

Luck is the residue of design, Mel.

(lights a cigarette)

While everyone else is out there scrambling for the big score --- you --- you figured out that the real money's in small scores at a high volume. You took the front end scam off the street, opened up a front office where your marks are delivered to you by your own network of feeders --- you're like the McDonald's of con merchants. A real innovator ---

MEL

Thanks Dom ---

DOM

I just don't get how you keep it all going. Thirty-forty marks a week, none of them is getting their loan and no one's making a beef?

MEL

Almost all of these assholes applying for a loan cook the numbers on their financial statements --- gives me the perfect blow off: "Hey douchebag, you didn't get the loan cause your financials are bullshit".

DOM

But what if they're legit?

MEL

Keep the fees low and for most people, it ain't worth the time or headache to go to court or the cops ---
(smiles at Dom)

But on the rare occasion that I have a problem, I always got you ---

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - LONG ISLAND, NY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Driving down an upper-middle class street of ranch houses, Mel pulls into his driveway, parks next to a station wagon. We can see the name WEINBERG on the mailbox.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - LONG ISLAND, NY - MINUTES LATER

The house is in the midst of a REMODEL. Walking into his home, Mel navigates his way through a maze of construction materials and into the living room where he finds his wife, **ESTELLE WEINBERG**, asleep on the couch in front of the TV. Clad in a lightweight nightgown, Estelle is a petite and attractive woman in her late thirties.

Mel turns the TV off and scoops her up in his arms and WE MOVE with them as he carries her to the bedroom.

ESTELLE

(sleepy, eyes closed)

Long day at the office ---?

MEL
Braindead. Been locked in a room
crunching numbers with my accountants
since this afternoon.

ESTELLE
Sorry.

MEL
Hey, nobody ever said a life in finance
was gonna be exciting.

ESTELLE
(tired smile)
But it beats installing glass...

MEL
(affectionately)
Yeah...

INT. BEDROOM - MEL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He gently lays her down on the bed...

ESTELLE
Dinner's in the fridge and please
look over the bid for the pool ---

MEL
Go back to sleep, we'll talk in the
morning.

INT. KITCHEN - MEL'S HOUSE - MINUTE LATER

Mel opens the fridge, sees the sandwich and a child-scrawled
note: "YANKEES 8 - OREOS 5. YOU OWE ME FIVE BUCKS, WILLIE".

Smiling at the note, Mel grabs the sandwich and is about to sit
when the backdoor suddenly opens --- and in shuffles little
WILLIE WEINBERG, age 12. Willie's wearing nothing but boxers.

Mel lights up like a pinball machine when he sees his son ---
his eyes filled with pure adoration and joy.

MEL
Hey boychick --

WILLIE
(groggy)
I'm sleeping in the hammock. Too hot
to be inside. Mom says it's okay.

MEL
Okay.

WILLIE
I gotta pee.

Willie sleepily marches over to the bathroom off the kitchen.
Mel watches him lift up the seat and pull down his boxers.

MEL
How was camp today?

WILLIE

Don't talk to me. You know I can't go
if you talk to me.

Mel shuts his mouth and smiles inwardly. Willie finally pees,
flushes, washes his hands --- and shuffles out.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

You get my note?

MEL

Yeah. I got your note. What happened?

WILLIE

Top of the eighth, Reggie Jackson
took it downtown off a high and hard
one.

Willie holds out his hand with a grin which Mel returns as he
hands him the cash.

MEL

Willie-boy, if you were purple then
purple would be my favorite color.

WILLIE

Likewise, Pop.

EXT. FIFTH AVE. - MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY

REVERSE TRACK ON **JIMMY BOYLE** as he strides up Fifth Ave. clad
in a suit and tie, carrying a briefcase. In his early thirties,
Boyle has hard boiled good looks of a book-smart boxer and exudes
the edgy, alluring intensity of a man on the make.

An ATTRACTIVE WOMAN in front of him suddenly gets her high heel
caught in a ventilation grill. Boyle smoothly swoops in to help
her, effortlessly pulls the heel out and then flashes the woman
a self-assured smile --- before moving on and entering the
skyscraper Mel's office is in.

INT. LONDON INVESTORS - SKYSCRAPER - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Boyle is waiting in the reception area. The Cute Receptionist
gets up from her desk and nods to Boyle.

BOYLE

Do you mind if I use your phone for a
second?

The Receptionist turns her phone around --- Boyle dials and
then flashes the Receptionist a flirtatious smile which she
can't help but return.

BOYLE (PHONE) (CONT'D)

It's me. Let her call in five.

Hanging up, Boyle FOLLOWS the Receptionist through a door and
into Mel's office and closes the door behind him...

INT. MEL'S OFFICE - LONDON INVESTORS - SKYSCRAPER

Mel gives Boyle a hearty handshake.

BOYLE
James Boyle ---

MEL
(gesturing Boyle to sit)
Mel Weinberg...

Boyle takes a seat and Mel sits across from him.

MEL (CONT'D)
So who are you coming to me through?

BOYLE
Maxine Gardner ---

Boyle hands Mel Max's business card and surveys the office.

MEL
Funny, Max never mentioned your name ---

BOYLE
I didn't see the point in giving her
a fee for just walking me in ---

MEL
The point is that I know her and I
don't know you.

BOYLE
I'm strapped for cash, Mel ---

Mel eyes Boyle with a subtle wariness, sizing him up.

MEL
Well as Max might of mentioned I have
a strong relationship with a consortium
of offshore banks that are expanding
their loan portfolios ---

BOYLE
(interrupting)
How do I know your banks are real?

MEL
Real? These are all legally chartered,
reputable, second tier lenders.

BOYLE
Just because they're chartered doesn't
mean they have money. For all I know
your bank is just some guy in the
Bahamas with nothing more than a phone,
Telex, and a box of stationary.

Mel leans back and tenses up --- upset by Boyle's comment.

BOYLE (CONT'D)
I don't mean to be rude. It's just
that I know people who've been burned
by scam artists posing as money brokers ---
guys who take front end fees by
promising loans from banks that don't
exist...

MEL

If you have questions about my lenders
I can get you financials, counter
party references, whatever --- and if
you have concerns about me --- take a
look around, does it look like I'm
some five and dime hustler dealing
out of my hat?

BOYLE

(looks around)
No, I've got to hand it to you, Mel.
This really is an unbelievably
convincing setup. It's the detail
work, the little things --
(gesturing)
Like the picture of you with Spiro
Agnew. That's what pulls it all
together. Makes everything feel so
legit --- and safe.
(locking eyes with Mel)
You've got a real gift.

Mel sits back. An uneasy silence as they stare each other down.

MEL

Who you with?

The phone on the table next to Mel suddenly RINGS. Mel doesn't
pick it up, just sits there glaring at Boyle.

BOYLE

You're going to want to take that
call.

MEL (INTO PHONE)

(finally picks up phone)
Yeah, okay put her through... What's
up, Max? --- When?
(gives Boyle a glare)
No, don't say anything. I'll take
care of it. Where have they got you? ---
Alright, just sit tight...

Mel hangs up the phone, lights a cigarette, takes a drag.

BOYLE

Special Agent Jimmy Boyle --- FBI ---

MEL

So what's on your warrant for me?

BOYLE

Bank fraud, wire fraud, securities
fraud, criminal conspiracy. (Beat)
But whether or not I execute it, that
all depends.

MEL

Yeah okay, whatever, kid --- you mind
if I call my lawyer now?

BOYLE
 Sure, but how about you let me buy
 you a drink first?
 (off Mel's silence)
 C'mon Mel. You lawyer up then I have
 to arrest you. Why not at least hear
 me out? I know a place right around
 the corner.

EXT. STREET - MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - A LITTLE LATER

MOVING with Mel and Boyle as they stroll down Fifth Avenue.
 Boyle takes off his tie and unbuttons his shirt.

BOYLE
 This goddamn heat is oppressive ---

MEL
 So then why the fuck are we out here?

BOYLE
 Cause I wanted you to feel it.

MEL
 (annoyed)
 Jesus... Whaddya wanna talk to me
 about, Boyle?

BOYLE
 Love.

MEL
 Love?

BOYLE
 Yeah, right, love. (Beat) You see the
 bitch of it for me is that you do it
 all so smart. I mean trying to build
 up enough evidence to make a case on
 you, it's like trying to pick up
 Mercury with a fork. But then I
 realized ---
 (little smile at Mel)
 Who needs evidence when you've got
 love?

MEL
 What is this? Do you wanna to fuck me
 or arrest me?

BOYLE
 I've been watching you for the past
 few months --- Your wife Estelle,
 your son Willie --- I know that your
 family has no idea who and what you
 really are. They think you're a
 completely legit guy --- A loyal
 husband --- Adoring father --- Pillar
 of the community, right?

They hit 42nd Street and Boyle steers Mel to the right, towards
 Bryant Park.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

I don't know how you do it, Mel. I mean the energy it must take to sustain the lie. Day in, day out. (beat) And it tells me things --- like how much you want to protect them --- how much you care about what they think --- how much you love them ---

They roll up to a hot dog stand on the outskirts of the park.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

You want anything?

MEL

Lemme have a Tab.

BOYLE

(to vendor)

Gimme a Tab and a Yoohoo.

The hot dog vendor pulls out the drinks out from the cooler, gives them to Boyle, who pays and then hands Mel his soda. Moving to a bench in the park, Boyle and Mel sit.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

And then there's Maxine Gardner.

(taking a swig of Yoohoo)

When I watch you two together you know what I see? I see a man that's head over heels. And who could blame you? She's a phenomenal woman.

Reaching into his pocket, Boyle pulls out and hands Mel a Justice Department indictment summary that, point by point, lays out their case against Max.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

Unfortunately she's greedy --- and not as careful as you are.

As he reviews the document, we can see Mel's cool facade begin to melt into one of restrained anxiety.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

Now you might be able to beat your rap down to a banker's bit, maybe even probation -- but as you can see our case against Max is a lock.

(takes summary from Mel)

She's going away, Mel, and I mean for at least a nickel --- and there's no fix Dominic Casale can put in that's gonna make this go away.

MEL

(after long hard beat)

Whaddya want?

BOYLE

Five high-line white collar busts ---

MEL

You talking confidential informant?

BOYLE

No, you'd be a cooperating witness, that way I could use you at the trials. Broad strokes; you close up your shop, you and Max plead out on all counts --- we'll get the judge to suspend the execution of the sentence --- and after you help me close five cases you and Max can skate on probation.

MEL

(dubious)

Just like that?

BOYLE

Yeah, right, just like that.

(off Mel's doubt)

Come on Mel, what's the alternative? Max is being a stand up girl right now but what do you think's going to happen after she's done a year at Attica? What do you think's going to happen to your wife when my agents slap her with a warrant, toss your house, ask her all kinds of questions and show her pictures --- of you and Max sucking face all over the city. And what about your son, Mel? What happens when he reads about you in the papers and learns that his father's nothing but a crook?

(finishes Yoo-hoo, burps)

You don't take the deal, you lose everything that you love the most.

MEL

(after a long hard beat)

I gotta think about it.

BOYLE

I'll give you until noon tomorrow.

Mel just sits there stewing in the nightmare. Boyle gets up and hands Mel his card.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

You call me and let me know if you're going to fuck or fight.

Mel gives Boyle a nod and watches him leave.

EXT. MET CORRECTIONAL CENTER - DOWNTOWN - WAITING AREA - LATER

Mel sits impatiently on a bench in the bustling waiting room of the city's federal remand center. He has a pink BAKERY BOX from Moishe's 2nd Ave. bake shop on his lap.

We HEAR the electric buzz of the door being unlocked ---

Max is escorted out by a FAT BAIL BONDSMAN. She looks like hell.

Mel and Max lock eyes --- both relieved to see each other. Mel approaches and can see that she's shaken up. Max sees the bakery box in Mel's hand and her face brightens up slightly.

MAX
Chocolate rugelach from Moishe's?

MEL
Your favorite.

Deeply touched by the gesture, Max throws her arms around Mel and gives him a soulful and tender hug.

MEL (CONT'D)
You okay?

MAX
I am now.

EXT. MEL'S LINCOLN - A LITTLE LATER

We are gazing through the Lincoln's windshield at Mel and Max. Mel's driving and Max is riding shotgun, eating the rugelach.

MAX
You should reach out to Dom ---

MEL
I can't. I get this anywhere near Dom and suddenly this thing has predicates --- FEDS will try to fold it into a RICO statute ---

MAX
Then call Bernie Meyerson, you always said he's the best defense in town ---

MEL
Whaddya think Bernie's gonna do except take his fee? He can't fix this ---

MAX
How do we know until we talk to him?

MEL
Cause that snot-nosed little feeb showed me their summary against you -- it's open and shut. Tapes of you closing over the phone. Signed letters of commitment that you sent through the mail. Your prints on The Sark paper. I mean I couldn't believe it ---
(disappointed look at Max)
And the worst part about it is that you knew better. I taught you better...

MAX
What do you want me to say? You're right? I'm sorry? We all know better despite doing worse.

MEL
Don't get all fucking abstract on me. I'm talking here and now ---

MAX

So am I. This is my calamity, I'll deal with the consequences ---

MEL

Can you deal with doing five years in shit city?! (Beat) One week inside you'll be ready to talk ---

An enraged Max PUNCHES Mel in the mouth hard enough to draw blood. Mel slams on the brakes and the car screeches to a halt.

MEL (CONT'D)

The fuck is wrong with you?!

Max gets out of the car and starts marching up Broadway barefoot. As she walks away Mel dabs his lip, looks at the blood on his fingers and then gazes out at Max --- tilting his head slightly to the right to admire the swing of her ass.

He pulls the car over, gets out. We see him catch up to her.

EXT. WEST BROADWAY - TRIBECA - CONTINUOUS

Mel tries to grab her but she swats his hand away.

MEL

I didn't mean how that sounded ---

MAX

Yes you did. You're so fucking scared that I'd rat you out you'd become a rat yourself just to stop me ---

MEL

That's how it works with the Feds. They come after the things you care about the most and turn 'em on you ---

MAX

Which is why you can't take this deal, Mel. You can't trust them.

MEL

So what am I supposed to do Max? Just let these fucks put you away? Let them out me to my family?

MAX

Taking this deal won't stop that -- it just postpones the inevitable. Once you make your cases for them it's all gonna come out at the trials!

MEL

No, not everything. Not you and me. And this will buy me some space between now and then.

MAX

The only thing this is gonna buy you is more trouble.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)
 (locking eyes with Mel)
 Tell Estelle the truth, tell the Feebs
 to fuck off --- let's go to court and
 fight this thing together.

Mel's silent, overwhelmed by the terrible choice he's gotta
 make...

MEL
 I don't know...

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - LONG ISLAND, NY - LATER THAT MORNING

Mel pulls in his driveway, parks and gets out of the car sporting
 a fat lip --- looking totally strung out.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Estelle is in the kitchen's laundry alcove loading the washer.
 Willie's at the table, eating cereal and watching cartoons.

Mel moves to the kitchen cabinet, grabs a bottle of J&B and a
 glass --- and then sits.

WILLIE
 Hey Pop.

MEL
 Hey ---

ESTELLE
 What're you doing home? I thought you
 were staying in the city ---

No response. Estelle comes out, sees the sorry state of Mel and
 the booze. Tensing up with concern, she turns the tv off. Mel
 shoots the glass of whiskey, then looks up at Estelle.

ESTELLE (CONT'D)
 What is it? What's wrong?

The weight in his eyes makes it clear that Mel's on the verge
 of confessing everything to her --- but then he pulls back...

MEL
 I'm shutting down London Investors.

ESTELLE
 What?! Why!?

MEL
 Financing I was counting on pulled
 out at the last minute and some very
 big deals fell through. The only way
 I can avoid a Chapter 11 is to fold
 the company up.

ESTELLE
 Jesus, Mel --- I mean --- four years
 you spend building a business and
 it's over in one day?

Mel says nothing and has another drink.

ESTELLE (CONT'D)

What about the vacation to the Bahamas?
What about the remodel?

MEL

We're gonna have to tighten our belts.
Put everything on hold for a little
while ---

ESTELLE

On hold?! Mel, look around --- how
can we live like this?

MEL

I'm sorry, Estelle. I just need a
little time to figure things out.

Beyond upset, Estelle blows out of the kitchen. Not wanting to look vulnerable in front Willie, Mel puts on a brave face and gesture's Willie to come over to him. Mel then reassuringly puts his hands on his son's shoulders and locks eyes with him.

MEL (CONT'D)

Everything's gonna be all right. I
promise --- okay?

WILLIE

Sure pop ---

MEL

Go get dressed.

Willie exits kitchen. Mel takes Boyle's business card out and stares at it for a long beat. He then finishes his drink gets up, moves to the kitchen's phone and dials.

MEL (CONT'D)

Okay Boyle ---- let's fuck.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - THE BRONX - DAY

A light drizzle falls over an overcast expanse of tombstones and trees. In the distance we see Mel's Lincoln cut along a road towards the center of the screen and park.

SUPER: "November, 1978"

CLOSE ON THE GRAVESTONE OF NATHAN WEINBERG: Standing solemnly at the tombstone of his father, Mel notices that his father's grave is dirty with grime and leaves -- but the grave next to it is immaculate. Mel then sees that there's a small "Perpetual Care" plaque affixed to the bottom of the clean gravestone.

JUMP CUT TO:

SECONDS LATER - ANGLE CLOSE ON OPENED TRUNK OF MEL'S CAR:
Reaching into a tool box, Mel pulls out a flat-head screwdriver, hammer and tube of super glue.

JUMP CUT TO:

MINUTE LATER - ANGLE ON GRAVE NEXT TO MEL'S FATHER: Mel uses the screwdriver and hammer to chisel off the Perpetual Care plaque. He then squeezes out the entire tube of super-glue on the back of the plaque and affixes it to his father's stone.

MEL

From me to you Pop...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(grating New England accent)

Put it back ---

Spinning around, Mel sees a STIFF: clad in a raincoat, suit and tie; marching towards him. In his late forties, the Stiff has a face like a foot --- and exudes the tight-ass, awkward energy of a man who is so painfully ill at ease with himself he makes everyone around him uncomfortable.

STIFF

I saw what you did. Now put it back.

MEL

Put what back? I don't know what you're talking about.

STIFF

Empty your pockets.

MEL

Fuck you, jaggoff ---

The Stiff suddenly makes an aggressive move to reach for one of Mel's pockets --- and Mel SHOVES him back so hard the Stiff slips on the slick grass and falls on his ass.

BOYLE (O.S.)

(hollering)

What the hell is this?

Both men look and see Boyle getting out his Crown Vic and storm towards them. The Stiff scrambles to his feet, embarrassed.

Boyle is being followed by two men: **SPECIAL AGENT BURT GROSSWALD** and **SPECIAL AGENT ALVIN ACKERMAN**.

STIFF

I observed the 2-0-9 as he removed a perpetual care marker from this grave and put it on that grave and when I ordered him to put it back he denied everything and assaulted me.

MEL

Assaulted you? This asshole tried to stick his hands in my pockets and ---

BOYLE

I don't want to hear it, Weinberg...

(gets into Mel's face)

If an FBI agent tells you to do something, anything --- tells you to pour gasoline on your cock and balls, light them on fire so he can warm his

(MORE)

BOYLE (CONT'D)
hands around it --- you do it, or you
are done.

MEL
This hump is with you?

BOYLE
(gesturing to Stiff)
That's Special Agent Bob Polk.
(to Grosswald)
Special Agent Brut Grosswald...
(to Ackerman)
And Special Agent Alvin Ackerman ---

MEL
(chuckling to Ackerman)
Holy shit! I don't believe it! A
fuckin' Jew in the Bureau!?
(smiles, offering hand)
Hey, mishpokheh --- mazel tov, babe ---

ACKERMAN
I'm not Jewish...

MEL
(chuckles)
Yeah, sure you're not...

BOYLE
These agents along with myself will
be handling you.

MEL
Terrific --- so what now?

BOYLE
Tony Denato.

MEL
Tony the Nutcracker --- ?

BOYLE
(nods)
He's one of the city's biggest
butterfly dealers --- stolen,
counterfeit securities, funny paper ---

MEL
Fuck that. The deal was for me to
help you make cases against con
merchants like me --- not a mobbed up
maniac like Denato.

GROSSWALD
Maniac!? Guy's a lawyer for chrissake.

MEL
Yeah, he's a lawyer who worked his
way through law school by doing hits
for the Bino's. Got his nickname by
puttin' guy's balls in a nutcracker
and squeezing them till they popped ---

BOYLE

This is the target Mel --- and you're going to deliver him ---

MEL

You won't put me on salary --- how do you expect me to deliver anything when I gotta put food on the table?

ACKERMAN

You must've made three million last year. Where'd it all go?

MEL

My overhead was murder ---

BOYLE

Bullshit.

MEL

I wanna get paid.

BOYLE

Until you produce Denato we've got nothing to talk about.

(starts back to his car)

Thanksgiving's in a couple of weeks --- I want to hear some ideas for an approach the following Monday.

Mel stands there with a "fuck me" expression on his face. As Ackerman and Grosswald follow Boyle back to the car. After a beat, Mel sees that Polk is staring at him.

MEL

What the fuck's with you?

POLK

The marker --- put it back.

Mel just walks off.

EXT. CHELSEA HOTEL - MANHATTAN - LATE THAT AFTERNOON

The venerable old hotel for artists and stoners of the day...

INT. ROOM - CHELSEA HOTEL - A LITTLE LATER

The worn, bohemian charm Chelsea is a stark contrast to the elegance of the Pierre...

Mel's fully dressed and lies on the bed, smoking a cigarette --- clearly strung out with high anxiety.

In the full-sized mirror affixed to the opened bathroom door we can see the reflection of Max soaking naked in the tub, smoking a joint.

MAX

(lamenting)

I miss the Pierre. I miss the days that I could just reach under my bed and pull out forty thousand dollars in cash.

MEL

For chrissake, it's been a coupla months and you're talking like it was ten years ago.

MAX

Well it feels like it was.
(beat, takes a long drag)
I've got no action, can't make any moves --- running out of cash. I don't know what to do with myself...

MEL

(snaps)
Spare me, Max. I got bigger problems to deal with right now than your inertia.

In the mirror, we see Max get up out of the tub --- and without toweling herself off, she slinks out of the bathroom towards Mel. Her eyes filled with sexy resolve, she straddles him.

MEL (CONT'D)

Hey -- you're all wet!

MAX

(grabbing Mel's dick)
I know ---

MEL

(shoves Max off)
What the fuck are you doing?

The pain and humiliation of Mel's rejection cuts across Max's face --- the intensity of its sting shocks her. Not wanting Mel to see her vulnerability, she storms into the bathroom --- slamming the door shut behind her.

Mel shuts his eyes with dread --- gets up and walks over to the door only to find that it's locked.

MEL (CONT'D)

Come on Max --- Open the door ---

MAX (O.S.)

Fuck off, Mel ---

MEL

I'm sorry, okay? It's just I'm tense ---

MAX (O.S.)

Yeah, I know. Which is why I was trying to help you, shitbag ---

MEL

If you really wanna help, then help me figure out this Denato thing.

MAX (O.S.)

Help you help the Feds? I think not.

MEL

Hey, you're the one that got me into this fix.

MAX (O.S.)
I told you not to take the deal. I
knew that they'd screw you ---

MEL
(locking eyes with himself
in the mirror)
No matter what happens in life there's
always some asshole who knew it would ---

MAX (O.S.)
Whatever, Mel. If you had any balls
or brains you'd stop wasting your
time thinking of ways to help them
and start thinking of ways to help
yourself! Now leave!

Mel grabs his jacket and leaves.

EXT. CHELSEA BAR - A LITTLE LATER

Gazing through the window of a local pub, we see Mel sitting at
the bar next to a COUPLE OF BARFLIES.

MIKE WALLACE (V.O.)
Tonight on 60 minutes, the shadowy
world of Arab oil and the fabulous
wealth it's creating in the Middle
East ---

INT. CHELSEA BAR - CONTINUOUS

Mel nurses his drink, lost in his thoughts while kind of watching
the TV behind the bar at the same time.

ON THE TV Mike Wallace presents a 60 MINUTES intro to a segment
about the Arab sheiks that control OPEC. IMAGES ARE INTERCUT OF
white-robed Arabs, Rolls Royces, gas fields in Saudi Arabia and
gas lines in the United States, etc...

MIKE WALLACE (ONSCREEN)
--- From their extravagant homes,
their opulent yachts, their incredible
lifestyles... all of it powered by
the world's most valuable commodity,
Petroleum. Are the men that control
OPEC getting filthy rich at the expense
of the rest of the world? Tonight on
60 Minutes!

The show cuts to a commercial and Mel sits up as if stung by an
inspired notion. His wheels begin to turn...

BARFLY ONE
Fucking Arabs keep getting richer and
I gotta wait forty five minutes just
to fill up my goddamn tank!?

BARFLY TWO
They got all the money in the world,
whadda they need more for?

The exchange between the Barflies triggers something in Mel and we suddenly see his face light up with an inward smile as his inspired notion blooms into an ingenious scheme.

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
 You had such a good thing going with
 London. It's a fuckin' shame ---

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

MOVING ACROSS MEL'S DESK which is covered with a mosaic of library books, note-filled legal pads, Xerox'd news stories, magazine articles, etc. --- and all of it about Middle East oil, OPEC, the men who control it, etc.

MEL (INTO SPEAKERPHONE)
 Hey, when God closes one door, he
 opens a window ---

The phone on the desk is hooked to a SPEAKER-PHONE.

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
 What's up?

MEL
 I'm into some new deals with an Arab
 sheik ---

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
 An Arab sheik!?

MEL
 Yeah, from the Emirates ---

CAMERA PANS UP to reveal Mel seated at his desk, glancing at a volume of "THE MIDDLE EAST ECONOMIC DIGEST" as he chats. Unbeknownst to him ESTELLE is standing in the door behind Mel --- listening to him talk...

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
 Come on Mel, you being serious?

MEL
 Serious as prick cancer ---

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
 Anything for me?

MEL
 You gotta line on any paper? CD's,
 securities, b-bonds, notes, whatever ---

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
 Maybe. Why?

MEL
 The Sheik can't earn interest on the
 money he's got in his country's banks
 cause of the Arab laws against usury ---
 and he's scared that the shitstorm
 they got in Iran is coming his way.
 He wants to get all his cash out now,
 before it's too late.

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
But how does funny paper help him do
that?

MEL
If the sheik signs over a million
dollar CD to his bank --- they'll
allow him to withdraw the cash
equivalent --- ya see, cause as far
as the bank's concerned, the sheik's
money isn't really leaving their
vaults. Get it?

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
Yeah, yeah. How much you lookin for?

MEL
As much as you can get your hands on.

MAN'S VOICE (OVER SPEAKERPHONE)
Yeah, okay --- lemme get back at you ---

MEL
You do that Mick, and spread the word
cause I'm hungry.

EXT./INT. MEL'S MARK V - STEINWAY ST - ASTORIA - DAY

Mel slowly cruising down Steinway Street in the Little Egypt section of Astoria, Queens. Mel scans both sides of this small neighborhood thoroughfare lined with Arab shops and restaurants --- clearly looking for something.

EXT. BASIR'S TOBACCO SHOP - STEINWAY STREET - CONTINUOUS

The TOBACCO SHOP PROPRIETOR, a stately looking EGYPTIAN in his sixties, plays backgammon on a card table with ANOTHER EGYPTIAN MAN. They're surrounded by their FIVE RESPECTIVE SONS. Everyone speaking Arabic.

We see Mel's LINCOLN roll down the street. Mel locks eyes on the men, quickly sizes them up, pulls over and parks. The chatter goes quiet as the wary-eyed Egyptians watch Mel get out of his car and approach.

MEL
Salam wa aleikum, fellas.

PROPRIETOR
Aleikum ah salam. Can I help you?

MEL
Well, if you're interested in making
a few shekels, then yeah...

EXT. STELLA'S SUPPER CLUB - NIGHT

A BLACK ROLLS ROYCE PHANTOM pulls up in front of Stella's. A CHAUFFEUR gets out and opens the door.

Donning his best suit, Mel steps out and stands aside as the Tobacco Shop Proprietor exits the car wearing a beautiful white thobe and kingly headdress. He is quickly followed by his entourage of three sons who are also clad in Arab garb.

INT. STELLA'S SUPPER CLUB - LITTLE LATER

Mel and the Egyptians are seated at the best table in the house --- a private corner booth at the far end of the room.

It's obvious that everyone is checking them out. Mel occasionally waves or nods to people he knows -- carefully and respectfully keeping everyone at bay and away from his "Sheik".

CLOSE ON TABLE; The Proprietor's sons are chatting in Arabic and having a good time but all in deference to their father who sits back with a reserved and regal posture.

Son #2 accidentally spills some red sauce on his robe...

MEL

(screaming whisper)
Hey, shmuck, careful will ya. Costume shop's gonna jam me on the dry cleaning ---

Mel is abruptly interrupted by the sight of BOYLE walking into Stella's. He approaches the booth and sits down next to Mel, leans in close. The two men talk in hushed but angry tones.

MEL (CONT'D)

The fuck you doing here?!!!

BOYLE

Let me ask you a question Mel --- do I look like some bog-trotting, shanty asswipe from Hackensack?

MEL

What?

Boyle suddenly and stealthily gives Mel a quick but savage sucker punch in the groin. Mel does his best to maintain his composure but is obviously in pain ---

Tobacco Shop Proprietor is alarmed and confused...

BOYLE

Answer the question Mel. Do I look like some bog-trotting, shanty asswipe from Hackensack?

MEL

What the hell are you talking about!?

Boyle gives Mel another even harder lightening fast dick-punch. He keels forward and Boyle, like a concerned friend, pats him on the back as if he's having digestion trouble.

BOYLE

I'm talking about it hasn't even been two weeks since we started up and you're already back into business for yourself!?

(off look on Mel's face)

Yeah, I know about you and the Arab. Everyone knows. It's all over the street!

The freaked out Tobacco Shop Proprietor starts to get up to leave but Mel forces him to sit back down.

MEL
The fuck you going?

PROPRIETOR
I do not want a problem ---

MEL
Then sit your ass down and keep your
mouth shut ---

BOYLE
What the hell are you into here?

MEL
How do you think this works Boyle?
You think I just call up a wiseguy
like Denato and say let's make a deal?
No. You gotta put out the honey-pot
and let the flies come to you ---
(smiling nod to Proprietor)
...And what better honey-pot is there
than an oil-rich Sheik? You got some
jacked paintings? Yeah, sure, the
Sheik's a fuckin' art lover! Stolen
securities, bullshit CD's? Just what
the camel-jockey ordered! You see
where this is going? The Sheik can be
all things to all hustlers --- a scam
for all seasons...

BOYLE
(incredulous)
The bullshit with you is so constant,
it gets to be a kind of a truth.

MEL
Whatever Boyle, I been lining things
up. Just say the word and I can deliver
twelve buy-busts for you by the end
of the day --- all cock solid cases.

Reeling, Boyle shakes his head in furious disbelief.

BOYLE
Are you out of you're fucking mind!?
Everything you do, EVERYTHING has to
be authorized before you do it ---

MEL
You said you wanted five cases, I got
you twelve.

BOYLE
This isn't the Mel Weinberg show. You
don't decide what cases we run with.
I do.

MEL
Don't get badge heavy with me. I
produced.

BOYLE
Produced what? I said I wanted Denato ---

MEL
 (gesturing to the bar)
 And there he is, sitting pretty on
 three hundred mil in bullshit CD's ---

Following Mel's line of sight to the bar Boyle sees **TONY DENATO**,
 a hefty, hatchet-faced fuck with a wandering left eye.

BOYLE
 You're approaching him here, now?

MEL
 I was until you walked in ---

BOYLE
 Well then I'm going with you.

MEL
 C'mon, Boyle, that's retarded. Guy's
 gonna take one look at your choirboy
 face and know ---

BOYLE
 Know what? He knows only what you
 tell him, fuckstick ---
 (off Mel's look)
 Look, Weinberg, this isn't the first
 time I've been under. I know how to
 handle my shit ---

MEL
 Here's how you handle your shit, Boyle.
 You say nothing, follow my lead and
 let me do all the talking. But if you
 gotta speak only three things should
 be coming out of your mouth: yes, no,
 or none of your fuckin' business.

Mel takes out a pair of sunglasses and puts them on Boyle.

MEL (CONT'D)
 And leave these on no matter what.
 (to Proprietor)
 I'll be back, just keep doin' what
 you're doin'.

Mel and Boyle get up and WE MOVE WITH THEM as they cut across
 the restaurant to the bar --- near but not next to Denato...

MEL (CONT'D)
 (shouts to BARTENDER)
 Pack of Pall Malls ---

After a few beats Denato cuts over and nudges up to Mel.

DENATO
 Mel ---

MEL
 Hey --- Tony D --- how are you?

DENATO
 Yeah, okay ---
 (MORE)

DENATO (CONT'D)
 (gesturing to table)
 So do I get to meet the Arab?

MEL
 No Tony --- the Sheik doesn't wanna
 talk to anyone --- that's what he's
 paying me for ---

DENATO
 (turns to eyefuck Boyle)
 You never said anything about bringing
 company ---

MEL
 Yeah, well, this is, uh, James Hoyle,
 a special advisor to the sheik ---

Denato gives Boyle the once over while hustling his balls ---
 and then throws Mel a suspicious glare.

MEL (CONT'D)
 Hey, you don't like it? I can take
 the Sheik's money down the block. But
 this guy's gotta have eyes on
 everything I do.

DENATO
 Why?

MEL
 Whaddya mean why? Fucking Arabs don't
 trust Jews.

DENATO
 Well I guess that's one thing the
 Sheik and I have in common ---
 (turns back to Boyle)
 Too bright in here for your, Mr. Hoyle?

BOYLE
 None of your fucking business.

Mel cringes --- but Denato chuckles.

EXT. PARKING LOT IN BACK OF STELLAS - MINUTE LATER

We MOVE with Mel and Boyle as they emerge from Stella's back
 door and follow Denato through the maze of cars parked in the
 alley. They approach Denato's brown Seville --- when suddenly ---

A savage, rabid-eyed, scar-ravaged **PITBULL** hurls itself up
 against the Caddie's backseat window, in full-attack mode. Scares
 the shit out Mel and Boyle --- but Denato doesn't flinch.

DENATO
 My pride and joy. Fifteen bouts and
 still undefeated ---

There's a blood-like substance dripping from the dog's mouth
 and he stains the window with it as he tries to bite his way
 through the glass.

MEL

What is that shit --- blood!?

DENATO

Uh uuh. It's my own little cocktail of hot sauce, gravy and gunpowder. Helps maintain his heightened sense of rage ---

(gesturing to dog)

Those steel trap jaws of his can deliver over two thousand pounds of pressure per square inch and once he locks them into some flesh, there's only one way to unlock them...

(motions with index finger)

You gotta stick your finger all the way up his ass and press on his prostate.

(eye-fucking Mel)

You ever stick your finger up a rabid Pit Bull's ass?

MEL

Uh... No. Tony I haven't.

DENATO

Neither have I.

Denato opens his trunk, pulls out a pair of plastic gloves and hands them to Mel who puts them on. Unlocking a steel briefcase, Denato takes out a CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT FROM THE BANK OF SCOTLAND. The CD is sealed in a clear plastic sleeve --- he hands it to Mel who takes the CD out of its sleeve and carefully inspects every aspect of it. He's impressed.

MEL

(hands CD back)

Beautiful, Tony --- really.

DENATO

I got one hundred security backed units at a half a mil a pop --- all vouchable through Bobbie Allenwood's new shop in the Bahama's ---

(grins with pride)

Stuff is so clean you'll have at least a six month lead before anyone figures they're bullshit ---

MEL

Whaddy want?

DENATO

Nine and a half on the dollar, cash.

MEL

I'll give you four million --- for all of it. When can you deliver them?

DENATO

(in a state of shock&awe)

Uh, couple of weeks ---

MEL

Call me when they're ready and we'll
arrange the meet...

Mel and Boyle begin to head back when Denato hurriedly closes
everything up in his trunk and scurries after them.

DENATO

Hey, Mel --- Mel --- lemme ask you --
if the Arab's really got that kind of
money, where's he gonna put it all
once he gets it out of the desert?

MEL

Someplace where it can earn for him ---

DENATO

Atlantic City, Mel... You know they
just legalized gambling there ---

MEL

Yeah --- I spent my birthday losing
my ass at the tables at Resorts...

DENATO

You along with every other hump in
the tri-state area. Resorts is
projecting their first year drop to
be over two hundred mil. That's more
than any joint's ever made anywhere
in the history of the world.

MEL

That'll change once some other joints
open up ---

DENATO

No, you see as things stand there
aren't going to be any other casinos
opening up.

MEL

How is that possible?

DENATO

Jersey gaming laws require a joint be
approved twice by the Casino Control
Commission --- the first license before
they start construction and only after
they're done, a permanent license to
operate. So here you've got the banks
being asked to invest 80 mil in
construction without knowing if the
casino's gonna' get their permanent
license --- and that's all she wrote.
No one's willing to put up the money
cause of the risk of a default if the
permanent license is denied.

BOYLE

What about the Teamsters?

Mel and Denato turn to Boyle, both surprised by his sudden leap
into the discussion.

DENATO

Uh uuh. Department of Labor stripped the trustees of their control over the pension --- (beat) Everyone's scrambling to find a white knight and they're willing to do whatever it takes to hire his money. You could whack up the interest rates, take a stake in the joint, a piece of the skim, whatever ---

BOYLE

Interesting...

MEL

(glaring at Boyle)
No. It isn't --- cause the Sheik ain't a schmuck and there's no way he's gonna risk his cash without the guarantee of the permanent license ---

DENATO

And what I'm telling you is that I can get him that guarantee ---

MEL

Bullshit ---

Boyle takes off his sunglasses, his eyes wide with excitement as he tries to read Denato.

BOYLE

How?

DENATO

I gotta guy who owns three of the key votes on the Casino Control Commission.

MEL

Look, we're getting way ahead of ourselves. We came here for the paper --- I don't have the authority to get into anything like Atlantic City ---

BOYLE

But I do.

Mel flashes Boyle a "what the fuck are you doing" look --- which Boyle ignores.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

(to Denato)
Who's your guy?

DENATO

Kiss my sweaty wop ass, that's my guy.

BOYLE

I won't take this to the Sheik without a name...

Denato stares at Boyle for a beat, hustles his balls and winces.

DENATO
Errichetti. Mayor Angelo Errichetti.

INT. HALLWAY - FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - MANHATTAN - EARLY EVENING

Boyle waits on a bench across the hall from a closed courtroom door. The door suddenly opens and Boyle stands as people start to roll out --- among them, **ASSISTANT US ATTORNEY JOSEPH "TOOCH" TUCCIO**. Head of the Organized Crime Strike Force for NYC's Southern District, Tuccio is a bald and stocky man in his late thirties.

Surprised to see Boyle --- the two men approach each other when suddenly a DEFENSE ATTORNEY gets to Tuccio first.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY
Joe, can't we work something out?---

TUCCIO
(Jersey accent)
Sure. Your client either testifies, or he's on the bus to Marion where he'll be spending his days eating the crust out of his cellmate's shithole.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY
C'mon, my guy's just an accountant ---

TUCCIO
So what? I'll ask for the max, get it, eat a ham sandwich and then come back and do the same thing to the next asshole I catch washing cash for the Colombos --- and it won't mean a goddamn thing to me cause I've got more important stuff to do with my time, like getting my hair cut.

On that note, Tuccio walks over to Boyle who's smiling.

BOYLE
Nice.

TUCCIO
It's seven-thirty on a Friday night. Don't you have a life, Boyle? A girlfriend? Something?

BOYLE
I don't want the load right now. How are things with you?

TUCCIO
Just a never-ending river of crap ---

BOYLE
(points just below eye)
Know what these are? The world's smallest fucking tears weeping for you. Thirty five and already head of an Organized Crime Strike Force for Justice --- everyone should have your problems.

Tuccio gives Boyle and smiling nod. MOVING with the two men as they walk...

TUCCIO
What're you doing here?

BOYLE
Angelo Errichetti, the Mayor of Camden ---

TUCCIO
What about him?

BOYLE
You tell me.

TUCCIO
Errichetti's about as heavy as they
come in Jersey ---

BOYLE
Guy's the fucking mayor of Camden ---
how much weight can he possibly carry?

TUCCIO
Factor in that he's also the most
powerful senator in the state
legislature and the backroom boss of
the Jersey Democratic machine... And
I'd say a lot...

BOYLE
What about Errichetti's connections
in Atlantic City?

TUCCIO
He's Resorts International's velvet
steamroller --- one of the key
legislators that got the gambling
referendum passed in Jersey ---

BOYLE
You think he helped Resorts get their
casino license?

TUCCIO
Somebody did.

BOYLE
Why do you say that?

TUCCIO
Everyone knows Resorts was started by
Meyer Lansky's group --- shit, as we
speak the Bahamian government is trying
to expropriate Resorts' Paradise Island
Hotel for everything from money-
laundering to rigging games. And yet
in spite of all of the overwhelming
evidence against them, Resorts not
only gets a casino license, they get
it before anyone --- ?

Tuccio can see Boyle's wheels turning...

BOYLE

Got any old Jersey buddies that can give us the inside and out on Errichetti?

TUCCIO

Sure, I know a guy in the A.G.'s office --- but what's going on Jimmy? What are you into?

BOYLE

(flips Tuccio a quarter)
Give him a call -- find out what you can -- and then I'll buy you that ham sandwich and tell you all about it.

INT. SEAFOOD RESTAURANT - LONG ISLAND - DAY

MEL

(restrained rage)
You guys are un-fucking-believable!

CLOSE ON MEL at a table in an upscale restaurant, eating shrimp cocktail as he talks. Also present are Boyle, Tuccio, Grosswald, Ackerman and Polk, but they aren't eating.

MEL (CONT'D)

I put myself out on the line, spend my own money setting up a scam that gets you Denato --- and now you wanna piss it all away!?

BOYLE

We're not pissin' it away, we're just doubling down on Denato for Errichetti ---

MEL

Well then Denato should count as one of my busts. What's right is right, Boyle.

Boyle looks to Tuccio who nods --- then Boyle nods to Mel.

MEL (CONT'D)

(gesturing to Tuccio)
Who the fuck are you again?

TUCCIO

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Tuccio --- I run the Organized Crime Strike Force, Southern District.

BOYLE

Just think of him as my lawyer ---

This discussion is interrupted by a ruckus at the next table where a DOUCHEBAG BERATES HIS WIFE. This continues throughout the scene. They are all annoyed, but do nothing.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

I want Errichetti, Mel ---

MEL

Yeah? I wanna tit-bang Racquel Welch while eatin a Porterhouse steak -- still don't mean it's ever gonna happen.

A WAITER arrives with Mel's main course and puts the dish in front of him --- it's a lobster missing its right claw.

MEL (CONT'D)

Hey, what happened to the other claw?

WAITER

Maybe he lost it in a fight with another lobster...

MEL

(hands waiter the plate)
Well then bring me the fucking winner.

TUCCIO

Denato said he'd set up the Errichetti meeting ---

MEL

We're supposed to give the guy four mil for his paper end of next week. He ain't gonna set up anything till he sees his.

GROSSWALD

C'mon, we all know you could stall him ---

MEL

Even if I could, still wouldn't matter.

BOYLE

Why not?

MEL

Cause Errichetti's been playing his game and winning since you were shittin' yellow.

(off Boyle's look)
First thing he's gonna do is check you out. Whaddya think's gonna happen when it comes back that James Hoyle don't exist?

ACKERMAN

I could call Bill Tager in Undercover Safeguards. See if he can rush a full package job for us. Backstopped bonafides, creds...the works.

MEL

You guys just don't get it? Only way to bag an elephant like Errichetti is to give him the big show ---

GROSSWALD

For those of us that don't speak fucking mutt, you wanna translate?

MEL

A con's nothing more than a big Broadway show. I'm talking about living theater with sets and props, costumes, actors, special effects. I mean Boyle, you saw it for yourself when you came to my shop.

POLK

It didn't take a Broadway show to nail you, just some good old hard work.

MEL

Polk, better to keep your mouth shut and just look stupid than open it and remove all doubt.

POLK

Hey, up yours mister ---

Mel just laughs and shake his head...

BOYLE

Will you stop with him and stay on point.

MEL

If you get the meet with Errichetti, where are you gonna have it?

ACKERMAN

What difference does it make?

MEL

You're supposed to be repping a billionaire Sheik. Errichetti's gonna expect the Presidential Suite at the Ritz or a swank office. He's gonna wanna experience the Sheik's wealth and through it the magnitude of his own impending good fortune --- and for that you need a stage.

BOYLE

Say we could figure something out ---

MEL

Fine. Now where are you gonna get the money to convince him?

TUCCIO

The bribe money won't be a problem ---

MEL

I'm not talking about the bribe money, I talking about the convincer.

(off everyone's cluelessness)

For Errichetti to be convinced that the Sheik's real enough to bankroll casino construction you gotta show him that the Arab's sittin on hundreds of millions in cash. Actual cash.

BOYLE

Couldn't we mock-up some bank account statements ---?

MEL

Fuckin' account statements? Whaddya in the second grade? Before he ever agrees to get in a room you gotta assume Errichetti's gonna call the bank, verify the Sheik's deposits.

ACKERMAN

(after a beat)

Good friend of mine from college is now the Senior VP at Chase Manhattan ---

BOYLE

Can you trust him?

Ackerman nods. The men exchange a look of resolve and then turn to Mel for a sign of encouragement -- but get none.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

Come on Mel, this can work...

The wife of the Douchebag at the table next to them succumbs to her husband's abuse and begins to cry hysterically --- just as the waiter delivers Mel's lobster.

Overloaded by the insanity, Mel looks over to the crying wife, looks at the lobster, looks up at the agents -- disgusted.

MEL

All my life I been lookin' over my shoulder worried about the Feds, and for what? If I knew how fuckin' stupid you guys really were I woulda stole the world.

And with that, Mel stands up and as he does, he accidentally-on-purpose KNOCKS HIS DRINK, spilling it on the Douchebag.

DOUCHEBAG

WHAT THE HELL!!----

MEL

Oh, I am so sorry. Total accident. I feel terrible. Listen, I'll tell ya what, let me buy lunch --

(Mel cuts Douche off)

No, I insist --- I'm taking care of everything. What's your name?

DOUCHEBAG

Ted.

MEL

Okay, Ted, I'm gonna talk to the maitre'd. So when you see me point you out to him just wave your hand so he knows who I'm paying for. Ok?

DOUCHEBAG

Yeah okay sure, thanks.

We MOVE with Mel and the others as they cut to the front of the restaurant. Mel quickly flashes a look at the MAITRE'D's nametag as he approaches ---

MEL

Hey Michael, you see that guy sitting there --- my good friend Ted?
(points to Douche)
Ted lost a little bet so he's picking up my tab for lunch today, okay?

When Mel and the Maitre'D look at the Douche, he waves back at them --- smiling and nodding his head.

MAITRE'D

No problem.

Mel gives the Maitre'D a smile and exits. Boyle and Tuccio standing in the doorway, having witnessed the whole thing.

BOYLE

Hey, you can't do that ---

MEL

No, you can't do that. And that's why this will never work.

Mel blows past them and heads for his car...

EXT. PARKING LOT - SEAFOOD RESTAURANT - LONG ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

We MOVE with Boyle and Tuccio as they head for theirs...

TUCCIO

He's got a point, Jimmy --- Bureau's experimented with this kind of thing before, it's always ended in disaster.

Boyle stops and squares off with Tuccio.

BOYLE

I'm well aware of the risks on this one. But I mean, you yourself said that Errichetti's corrupt as fuck --- a king's man to Resorts and the Lansky group --- and we both know that the families are moving into Atlantic City. This could be our backdoor into all of it.

TUCCIO

Maybe --- but that's swinging for the bleachers --- and right now, you've got Tony Denato set up for a buy bust that'll put him away for a dime. Make you look like a superstar. You really want to risk all that for the "what-if" of Errichetti?

BOYLE

You don't think I can handle it.

TUCCIO

It's not that ---

BOYLE

(angry)
Then why are you coming at me like
this?!

TUCCIO

Because I'm your friend. (beat) There
are consequences to taking a shot at
a heavy like Errichetti and missing.
Now me, I'm not afraid to do it. I'm
a lawyer. I've got options beyond my
tour at Justice --- But the Bureau is
your life Jimmy ---

BOYLE

So what?

TUCCIO

So you're thirty years old and already
on your way. In ten years you have a
good shot of becoming a big swinging
Bureau dick ---
(nods to Grosswald by car)
Now you see Grosswald over there?
He's the same age as you --- and in
ten years he's got a chance to be
forty.

(locks eyes with Boyle)
I don't want you to end up being the
guy with a great future behind him.

EXT. PLAZA HOTEL - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

We gaze across 5th Ave., at the elegant Plaza Hotel.

SUPER: "March 10th, 1979"

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The small hotel room has been converted into the operation's
makeshift command center.

Ackerman and Grosswald are quietly conferring in the corner.
Behind them, Tuccio and an FBI TECHIE are at a table on top of
which are two TV monitors connected to two video recorders.

ON EACH OF THE MONITORS: A crude, low resolution, black & white
image being telecast via a pinhole camera secretly placed in
the suite adjoining this hotel room. We can see Boyle, Polk and
a few FBI TECHIES moving about.

TUCCIO

(anxious, to Techie)
Can you brighten up this image so we
can use these tapes at the trials?
(looks back to Grosswald)
What's the ETA on Errichetti?

GROSSWALD

Thirty-forty minutes...

Tuccio puts on headphones connected to monitors, nudges Techie.

TUCCIO
I can't hear anything...

Techie adjusts volume and we suddenly HEAR Mel's voice over the headphones.

MEL (HEADPHONES)
--- Fuckin' joke! I ask for champagne
and caviar and you gimmee chopped-
liver, Shlitz, and the shittiest suite
in the joint.

INT. SUITE - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The living room area of this shoe-box suite is so small and awkwardly shaped it's laughable.

MEL
Best thing I can say about you guys
is that you're cheap ---

Mel suddenly catches sight of something --- grabs a small stack of paper off the desk and angrily holds it up.

MEL (CONT'D)
What the fuck is this!?

POLK
It's the sheik's stationary...

MEL
You think a billionaire Sheik is gonna
have his stationary printed on Xerox
paper?! Shit no! Egyptian cotton! Two
pound, four ply, Ivory Monarch.
Embossed, motherfucker!

BOYLE
Will you calm down? It's nothing ---

MEL
No, it's everything Boyle. Get it
through your thick fucking skulls ---
It's all in the details!

Mel drops the stack of paper on the desk and STORMS out of the room. Boyle flashes Polk a look...

BOYLE
Lose the paper.

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - A LITTLE LATER

Everyone in a pregame huddle.

TUCCIO
Alright, Mel, the rules of entrapment ---

MEL
(rolling his eyes)
Jesus, how many times you gonna break
my balls about this?

BOYLE

Just shut up and give it to him will you?

MEL

(annoyed, reciting by rote)
It's okay to put out the honey pot by telling Errichetti we're gonna pay him off for certain favors. But I can't induce him to commit specific illegal acts. The flies gotta come to the honey pot outta their own volition.

TUCCIO

Exactly --- without a clean admission, we've got nothing. So before any money gets handed to Denato, Errichetti needs to make it clear that he's the one ultimately getting the payoff in exchange for the casino license...

POLK

Uh --- the payoff isn't being made directly to Errichetti?

MEL

Lemme explain Bob, cause it's obvious that you're dumber than a box of fuckin' hair --- Denato's the Mayor's bagman, his insulation ---
(off Polk's cluelessness)
If we try to give the money directly to the Errichetti we'll blow the whole show.

Suddenly, we HEAR an AGENT over a WALKIE-TALKIE ---

FBI AGENT (OVER WALKIE TALKIE)

Control, the package is in the lobby.

The room EXPLODES with FRANTIC ACTIVITY, everyone rushing into position. Tuccio hustles Boyle, Polk and Mel to the door.

INT. SUITE - PLAZA HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

Mel is anxiously pacing --- Boyle and Polk are sitting on a couch together.

There is a KNOCK at the door and everyone stiffens up as Mel answers it revealing: Tony Denato and **MAYOR ANGELO ERRICHETTI**. With his handsome, Sinatra-esque appeal, Errichetti exudes the kind of raw, unapologetic bravado and power reserved exclusively for a backroom boss.

MEL

(shakes with Denato)
Tony --- how are ya?
(shakes with Errichetti)
Pleasure to finally meet you in person, Mr. Mayor --- Mel Weinberg.

ERRICHETTI

It's Angie, Mel --- please.

Mel ushers the men into the room, and by the look on their faces it becomes very clear to everyone that they are not only unimpressed by the chickenshit set up, but put off by it.

Boyle and Polk approach --- greeting Denato and the Mayor with smiles and handshakes.

DENATO

And this is James Hoyle, special advisor to the Sheik.

ERICHETTI

James, beltway buddies of mine speak very highly of you. West Point into Military Intelligence --- then DIA. Impressive resume for such a young man.

BOYLE

Thank you, Sir ---

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Everyone crowded around the monitors --- headphones on.

BOYLE (ON MONITOR)

(gesturing to Polk)
And this is Bob Dolk, President of Abdul Enterprises, the Sheik's investment company.

ERRICHETTI (ON MONITOR)

Bob, I understand you're an alum of HBS?

ON MONITORS: Polk hesitates, unsure of what he's talking about.

TUCCIO

(under breath)
Harvard Business School. Harvard Business School...

ERRICHETTI (ON MONITOR)

(off Polk's silence)
Harvard Business School.

POLK (ON MONITOR)

Oh, yes. Of course. Class of 63.

INT. SUITE - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

As the men take their seats, Polk retrieves an ATTACHE CASE and gracelessly places it on the coffee table in front of Errichetti --- and then sits himself. Mel restraining his irritation at Polk.

Mel can see Errichetti's not sure what to make of any of it, his face a mixture of bewilderment and discomfort.

MEL

So I assume Tony's explained what the Sheik's intentions are here.

ERRICHETTI

He has, Mel. And let me just say that I welcome and appreciate the Sheik's interest in Atlantic City; which I believe is one of the greatest investment opportunities in the world today. (Beat) Wanna know why?
(off Mel's nod)

Cause life for Americans is always becoming, never being. Al Einstein said that, he was a fucking genius. And because it's only a short piece from Philly, New York, Boston, Baltimore --- AC gives more gamblers a chance to become somebody than any other place on Earth.

BOYLE

The Sheik couldn't agree with you more, and is eager to get involved.

MEL

Provided that he can overcome certain obstacles ---

ERRICHETTI

If the Sheik does the right thing, there won't be any obstacles, only opportunities...

MEL

(gesturing to attache)
He's ready and willing to put his consideration for you on the table, Angie. But we'd like to know how it's gonna work for him ---

DENATO

Fellas, we've discussed this in detail---

POLK

(stiffly interrupting)
Mr. Denato, if you please, we've only discussed this with you. Now we have a hundred thousand dollars for Mayor Errichetti and we need to hear from the Mayor exactly how he intends to guarantee us the casino licenses ---

DENATO

No, you please. I thought ya did hear. And if you didn't, ya should have, cause we've been over it enough times ---

In a calming gesture, the Mayor puts his hand on Denato.

ERRICHETTI

Look, Bob, first rule in politics is never make a promise you can't keep. Now I've been in public office for over thirty years because I always abided by that rule --- and I give
(MORE)

ERRICHETTI (CONT'D)
 you my word --- the Sheik will get
 everything that he needs in Atlantic
 City. Alright?

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Everyone's eyes glued to the TV MONITORS --- when suddenly Polk,
 for no apparent rhyme or reason, stands up...

TUCCIO
 The hell is he doing?!

INT. SUITE - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Polk awkwardly grabs the attache case, leans forward --- but
 instead of handing it to Denato, he attempts to hand it directly
 to Errichetti --- who sits there motionless, refusing to even
 acknowledge the existence of the case.

DENATO
 (tries to take case)
 That's supposed to go to me.

... But Polk won't let him have it --- and once again attempts
 to hand it to Errichetti, who is visibly put off.

MEL
 Bob, whaddya doing? Give Tony the
 case.

POLK
 But this money's for the Mayor.

DENATO
 (still grabbing for case)
 I'll make sure it gets to the right
 place.

Refusing to relinquish the money to Denato, Polk jerks the case
 back towards himself at which point Errichetti's had enough.
 Disturbed and pissed, he stands up, grabs his coat.

ERRICHETTI
 I thought everyone here had an
 understanding. Clearly you don't.

And with that, Errichetti walks out of the room...

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Everyone frozen in horror. Tuccio has his hands on his head ---
 if he had any hair, he'd be pulling it out right now.

TUCCIO
 This is not happening.

DENATO (ON MONITOR)
 What the hell is wrong with you people?
 We had an agreement---

MEL (ON MONITOR)
 (getting up)
 Lemmee go talk to Angie --- I'll fix
 everything. Sit tight.

ON MONITORS: Mel rushes out of the room.

DENATO (ON MONITOR)
 (to Polk)
 This how they teach you to do deals
 at Harvard?

EXT. ENTRANCE - PLAZA HOTEL - MINUTE LATER

Mel exits the hotel and catches up to Errichetti who is about
 to hail a cab.

MEL
 Hey, Angie --- I'm sorry about how
 that went down. It was a total
 misunderstanding ---

ERRICHETTI
 Misunderstanding? I can't afford to
 do business with people that don't
 know how to do business.

MEL
 Yeah, yeah, I know. But you gotta
 realize Dolk and Hoyle, these guys
 are squares, alright? Barefoot pilgrims ---
 and Dolk was just following orders
 from up on high.

ERRICHETTI
 The Sheik told him to do that?

MEL
 Yeah. Ragheads don't like to deal
 with middlemen. Everything's direct.

ERRICHETTI
 Well we're not in the Middle East ---

MEL
 Angie, don't be a shmuck. I know you
 called Chase about the Sheik's
 deposits. So you know the Arab's got
 over four hundred million friends in
 the bank there. You really wanna turn
 your back on that kind of money?
 (off Errichetti's silence)
 Look, I'm not supposed to tell you
 this, okay? But the Sheik's got big
 plans for Atlantic City. Much bigger
 than simply financing one joint.

ERRICHETTI
 Whaddya mean?

MEL

He wants to own the entire town: buy all the choice casino sites and then offer would-be owners prepackaged deals at whacked up prices. Everything wrapped up in a bow: the land, the financing, and the gambling licenses.

Mel sees Errichetti's hardened face soften with greed --- and moves in close for the kill.

MEL (CONT'D)

All the deals would flow through you and you'd get a piece, a serious piece, at both ends.

(locks eyes)

But first we gotta grease you, and then your casino commissioners, directly. No middle men, no bullshit. It's the Arab way, Angie.

ERRICHETTI

(after a beat)

What about Denato?

MEL

Up to you. He's your guy, comes out of your pocket ---- or not.

Errichetti stands in silence, not sure what he's going to do.

INT. SUITE - PLAZA HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

Denato, Polk and Boyle sit in an uneasy silence. Mel enters the Study and breaks the anxious trance.

MEL

Tony, I tried talking to him. He wouldn't listen. Maybe you can get him back in the room?

DENATO

Where is he?

MEL

I think he caught a cab to Penn Station ---

DENATO

Jesus Christ.

(getting up, gesturing)

Gimme the case, I'll see what I can do.

MEL

Get him back in here, lemme make sure everything's okay, and the case is yours. You got my word on that.

Denato storms out of the room, slamming the door behind him. Collapsing into a chair, Boyle deflates in "fuck me" defeat.

MEL (CONT'D)

I swear to God Polk, if it was raining pussy you'd get hit by a cock...

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

MEL (ON MONITOR)
 --- I mean, if you knew nine more
 things, you'd be a fuckin' idiot ---

BOYLE (ON MONITOR)
 Shut up, Mel ---

Tuccio angrily TURNS OFF the volume on the monitors.

TUCCIO
 Fucking disaster. Unmitigated disaster ---

INT. SUITE - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

MEL
 --- You're a double threat --- can't
 hold your tongue or your booze ---

POLK
 You don't know what you're talking
 about Mister!

MEL
 Oh no? You think eating onions is
 enough to cover that stink coming
 outta your mouth ---?

Polk finally snaps with anger and lunges for Mel --- but Boyle
 is already there to stop him.

POLK
 I'm sorry Jimmy--- I didn't --- we
 didn't have the admission ---

MEL
 We had a deal! Had you just stuck to
 it and given the case to Denato, I
 woulda gotten you the admission ---

BOYLE
 Will you back off?

MEL
 He has no business being on stage
 with us and you know it. I want him
 out ---

BOYLE
 Out of what?! Our hand's been played,
 we blew it. It's over.

MEL
 I'm glad you feel that way Boyle ---

Mel lights a cigarette, takes a drag and flashes Boyle a grin ---

MEL (CONT'D)
 Cause as soon as you can accept the
 possibility of losing philosophically,
 you automatically improve your chances
 of winning.

Boyle looks at Mel quizzically. Suddenly there is a KNOCK at the door. Boyle seizes up.

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

A dejected Tuccio quietly confers with Ackerman and Grosswald. Grosswald looks over at the monitors and sees Errichetti walking back into the room.

GROSSWALD
(SCREAMING WHISPER)
Look --- Errichetti's back ---!!!!

Everyone RECOILS back into action --- rushing over, putting headphones on --- as Errichetti marches back into the room, takes the attache case and sits down with a broad smile.

ERRICHETTI (OVER HEADPHONES)
Bob, James... Mel's explained everything to me. So I'm gonna tell you in no uncertain terms, here, now --- I'm in.

INT. SUITE - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

ERRICHETTI
I'll deliver the casino commissioners, the licenses, zoning variances, union concessions --- everything the Sheik needs will be his cause I'm gonna be his fucking rabbi. I tell you --- without any bit of imagination or whatever have you --- Atlantic city; the fucking town is ours.

MEL
So what's the next step?

ERRICHETTI
(getting up to leave)
Just sit tight --- I'll have things rolling in a week.

An amazed Boyle flashes Mel a subtle grin --- his eyes filled with rekindled excitement and deep gratitude.

INT. ROOM - COMMAND POST - PLAZA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Everyone staring at the screen with dumbstruck smiles --- like they just witnessed some incredible magic trick.

ACKERMAN
Have we given this op a name yet?

TUCCIO
Yeah. ABSCAM.

INT. NYC METROPOLITAN MUSEUM - KING TUT EXHIBITION - DAY

LONG SHOT OF AN EGYPTIAN PHARAOH'S TOMB: This massive museum gallery has been done up like a set from Cleopatra --- the artifacts from King Tut's tomb on display. A river of museum PATRONS flow down the gallery's concourse towards us --- everyone stopping to look at the treasures.

Although we can't see them yet... the VOICES OF MEL AND MAX can be HEARD over the din of the crowd.

MAX (O.S.)
You're really sick, you know that?

MEL (O.S.)
Sick how?

MAX (O.S.)
Doesn't really matter if you're hustling for yourself or the Feds, does it? You just love the action like a junkie loves his dope.

MEL (O.S.)
Hey, if I've got action, it's like anything's possible.

We suddenly see Mel and Max emerge from the crowd --- they stroll down the gallery and peruse the artifacts...

MAX
Just because they're forcing you to play doesn't mean you have to win.

MEL
Only the existentially terrified play to break even, Max --- and besides --- I'm telling you, this thing was like "Springtime for Hitler." It shouldn't have worked but it did.
(chuckling)
When he took the cash and declared, even I couldn't believe it.

MAX
Oh no?

MEL
To hook a smartly like Errichetti with the play we made --- ?
(chuckling)
Boyle went crazy. Thinks I'm Harry-fucking-Houdini. Kid was so happy he takes me out for a porterhouse at Peter Luger's, everything on him. You believe that?

MAX
(stops to confront Mel)
So that's why you never showed up last night? Because you were bouncing with your new playmate?

MEL
Guy invited me out to dinner... what was I supposed to do?

MAX
Tell him to fuck off and die! This is the prick that ruined our lives!

MEL
The kid's just doin' his job. It's
not personal.

MAX
Yes it is. It couldn't be more
personal.

Max resumes her stride, her face filled with anger... Mel gently
grabs her by the arm and stops her.

MEL
What is it with you? You've been acting
crazy for the last few months and
it's just getting worse.

MAX
I don't want to do this here.

MEL
You don't wanna do what?
(off her silence)
Come on Max. Talk to me.

Mel sees that Max's eyes are filled with an intense fear.

MEL (CONT'D)
What is it?

MAX
(after a beat, looks away)
I need some space --- away from you.

Mel is caught completely off guard by this revelation and it
takes a few beats for it to fully register...

MEL
So I'm out here on the wire doin'
what I'm doin' cause of you ---

MAX
(angrily interrupting)
Oh don't even go there Mel! You're
doing this for yourself!

And with that, Max storms off and out of the gallery.

EXT. FRONT STEPS - METROPOLITAN ART MUSEUM - MINUTE LATER

Max emerges onto the museum steps. Mel chases her down.

MEL
Max, please. You're the only person I
can be myself with --- the only one I
can talk to without having to think
about what I'm gonna say first ---

MAX
You can pay a shrink fifty bucks an
hour to do that...

MEL
Come on. You know what I mean.

MAX

No, I don't.

(locks eyes with Mel)

What are we without the scam? What am I to you? A great fuck? A shoulder to cry on? (beat) Seriously Mel, what am I to you?

We can see the intense fear in Max's eyes spread to Mel's.

MEL

(flustered)

I don't know. I mean, what am I to you?

MAX

I asked you first.

Tears well up in Max's eyes as she waits for Mel to answer. But he can't.

Leaving Mel on the steps, Max gets into a cab and disappears.

EXT. HILTON HOTEL - JFK AIRPORT - NIGHT

Gazing at a massive hotel located next to the airport.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

...As Vice Chair of the Casino Commission, I have tremendous sway over every aspect of the licensing process ---

INT. SUITE - HILTON HOTEL - JFK AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Boyle, Polk, Mel, Errichetti --- and **KENNETH MACDONALD**, VICE CHAIR OF N.J. CASINO COMMISSION --- sit around a coffee table...

ERRICHETTI

And he's here to help us...

MEL

We're glad to hear that ---

BOYLE

(Hands bag of cash to Macdonald)

The Sheik appreciates people that can help.

MACDONALD

I'll talk to two of my fellow commissioners. You'll be able to make the same arrangement with them --- which gives you all the votes you need.

ERRICHETTI

And the first package I'd like us to bring to the Sheik is a deal to buy and revamp the old Shelburne Hotel ---

(MORE)

ERRICHETTI (CONT'D)
 (hands Mel pictures and
 setup of property)
 We can turn it into the swankiest
 joint in A.C. and do it for half the
 cost than anyone else.

MEL
 How?

ERRICHETTI
 I've given Harrison Rand a piece of
 the action to fix things...

Boyle and Mel flash each other a quick look of astonishment...

BOYLE
 Do you mean Senator Harrison Rand?

Errichetti nods. Boyle and Mel's astonishment quickly shifts to
 restrained excitement...

ERRICHETTI
 Harry's gonna push some buttons and
 get a declaratory ruling that'll allow
 us to renovate the property instead
 of tearing it down and starting over.
 That'll save forty mil right off the
 top.

MEL
 No shit?

MATCH CUT TO:

CLOSE ON TV PLAYING SURVEILLANCE VIDEO FROM SUITE:

The timecode on the tape: "May 18, 1979."

ERRICHETTI (ON MONITOR)
 Yeah. Harry can do things for us in
 Trenton and D.C. --- he's lifestyle.
 He's beautiful. He's with us, okay? ---
 and he's easy to handle.

BOYLE (ON MONITOR)
 What do you mean by that?

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - FBI HQ - WASHINGTON, D.C. - DAY

Boyle and Tuccio are seated at a conference table watching the
 TV Monitor with **LAWRENCE HOUSEMAN, THE DIRECTOR OF THE FBI.**

SUPER: "May 23, 1979 - FBI Headquarters, Washington D.C."

ERRICHETTI (ON MONITOR)
 Guy's a lush and a whoremaster. Harry'd
 fuck a snake if you held its head for
 him. He's good people ---

HOUSEMAN
 (disgusted)
 Just turn it off. I've read the
 transcripts ---

Tuccio STOPS the tape. An uneasy silence overtakes the table. We can see that Tuccio and Boyle are both very nervous in the presence of Houseman and look a little out of their depth.

Houseman LIGHTS a cigarette, takes an anxious drag.

HOUSEMAN (CONT'D)
 Errichetti's claims about Rand...?

BOYLE
 Yes sir. We think they're credible. There's too much money at stake for him to lie to us.

HOUSEMAN
 You know Rand's not only the fourth-ranking Democrat in the Senate, he's the co-chair of CJS Appropriations...
 (off their blank looks)
 That's the Subcommittee that controls our budget.

TUCCIO
 If Rand's involved in influence peddling, it's a federal crime---

HOUSEMAN
 I'm well aware.. But I also have to be mindful that Congress is a vengeful institution and will see this investigation as an attack.

BOYLE
 This isn't the first time we've targeted political corruption.

HOUSEMAN
 It's the first time we've used such a radical approach...
 (gets up and paces)
 You're talking about pushing the envelope of inducement with the man that controls our purse strings --- and the guy who you've positioned to run point is a criminal whose stock and trade is bullshit!

BOYLE
 All due respect, but Mr. Weinberg's gift for bullshit is precisely why we've been so successful.

HOUSEMAN
 Are you telling me that you actually trust Weinberg?

BOYLE
 I'm telling you that I can control him.

Staring Boyle down, Houseman lets that hang in the air for a few beats. He then takes a seat at his desk and reviews a file.

HOUSEMAN

So Rand has agreed to take a payoff?

BOYLE

That's what we've been told --- but the caveat is that the Senator won't take until he meets the sheik face to face.

TUCCIO

We found an agent out of the Chicago office of Saudi descent who we think can play the part.

HOUSEMAN

When and where will the meet take place?

TUCCIO

Well, what's being discussed isn't exactly a meeting, sir. (beat) Mayor Errichetti wants to throw a coming-out party for the sheik in Atlantic City.

HOUSEMAN

(incredulous)
A coming out party?

BOYLE

Along with the Senator, all the key players would be there; casino owners, union leaders, politicians, organized crime elements ---

TUCCIO

It could be an intelligence jackpot for us ---

Houseman leans back in his chair, anxiously runs his hands through his hair.

HOUSEMAN

What kind of resources would you need?

BOYLE

We'd need you to designate Abscam a "Bureau Special".

HOUSEMAN

(after a considered beat)
You'll coordinate *everything* through my office --- and I want to see all of your intel as it becomes available ---
(looks at Tuccio)
But I trust you'll be circumspect about what it is you're showing me. Are we clear?

TUCCIO

Yes sir.

HOUSEMAN

Fine. Now go to work.

Tuccio and Boyle stand up to leave.

BOYLE

Sir, there is one more thing. Mayor Errichetti has requested that the sheik deposit two million dollars in an account at his friend's bank ---

TUCCIO

It would be a personal favor to the Mayor. If do this, the bank will give him a sweetheart loan on a house he wants to buy in Boca Raton, Florida.

HOUSEMAN

Is this an ask or a demand?

BOYLE

It's an ask. But we think the gesture could buy us a tremendous amount of goodwill and credibility.

HOUSEMAN

Table it until after the party. I want to see what the Mayor does for us before we do for him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MEL'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

It's pouring rain outside. The house is still completely unfinished. Birthday decorations in the living room.

Mel's drinking a beer and setting up a brand new Atari 2600 videogame system. We can see that he's put on about fifteen pounds --- and the accumulated stress of the past few months --- it's all in his face.

Hearing a car pull into the driveway, Mel rushes to turn the TV and game on. Estelle, Willie and his TWO BEST FRIENDS come in through the front door.

Mel smiles with anticipation as Willie, his friends and Estelle enter the room. They're all surprised to see him. Willie flips out over the Atari.

WILLIE

Aww man, no way! I thought my present was the Knicks game?

MEL

Yeah well, that too. Happy Birthday boychick.

WILLIE

(giving Mel a big hug)
Thanks Pop.

Estelle glares at Mel. The tension between them is heavy.

INT. KITCHEN - MEL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Estelle's making sandwiches. Mel comes in, opens the fridge, grabs another beer.

ESTELLE

I wish you wouldn't drink in front of his friends.

MEL

Come on, you don't think they've seen their fathers drink a beer?

Mel cracks open the beer, takes a sip.

ESTELLE

I thought we didn't have money for extras --- like videogames.

MEL

We don't. But it's his birthday---

ESTELLE

Some birthday --- we can't even have a proper party for our son --- because I'm too embarrassed for his friends' parents to see how we're living --- like a bunch of shlumps ---

MEL

You really wanna start?

The phone on the kitchen counter starts to RING. She answers.

ESTELLE (INTO PHONE)

Hello? Yeah, just a moment---

Estelle hands the phone to Mel.

MEL (INTO PHONE)

Yeah ---

(suddenly tenses up)

Tony? --- Yeah --- Why you calling me at home? --- Whaddya talking about? --- I can't, it's my kid's birthday --- Why can't this wait until tomorrow? --- Tony, you need to calm down.

We hear Denato SCREAMING over the phone line and see Mel's face tighten with fear.

MEL (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

No --- I'll meet you someplace halfway --- there's a bowling joint outside Freeport, Victory Lanes, right off the 27 --- 5:30 --- Tony, you're laying this on me at the last minute. I don't know if I can get Hoyle there, he's a busy guy ---

Mel hangs up the phone, a worried look on his face. He looks over to Estelle, who has heard everything and is furious.

ESTELLE

I don't believe you ---

MEL

You really think I'd be doing this if it wasn't that important?

ESTELLE

More important than your son? Your family?

MEL

I gotta serious problem. I gotta meet this guy ---

ESTELLE

What problem?! What guy? What are you doing, Mel?

MEL

Oh, so now you suddenly care?

ESTELLE

I've always cared ---

MEL

Don't hand me that. My comin' and goin' never bothered you before --- as long as the money was rollin' in --- but now that times are a little rough you wanna know everything!?

Mel moves towards the door to exit the kitchen --- but Estelle steps in front of him, preventing him from leaving.

ESTELLE

I just wanna know when it's gonna get better, Mel. When can we finish the house?

(locks eyes with Mel)

When are things gonna be like they were?

MEL

Estelle, please --- it's all gonna be okay --- but you just gotta trust me ---

ESTELLE

Trust you? Ever since you closed London Investors, it's like you aren't even you anymore.

MEL

You're being crazy.

ESTELLE

You don't think I hear you in your office lying to those people you talk to on the phone? Talking about the sheik's private jets --- going to Geneva, London? It's all lies. You're not in business with some zillionaire Arab Sheik.

MEL

You don't know what you're talking about ---

ESTELLE

I don't? Well then how come we're living like we're on the edge? I mean where's all the Sheik's hundreds of millions?

MEL

It's locked up in the banks in his country! I'm helpin' him get it---

ESTELLE

(cuts him off, gesturing)
Just stop.

There's a devastating silence between them.

ESTELLE (CONT'D)

Look, Mel, what you and I got, I know it's not some big love affair --- It's a respect for each other --- that's what's made our marriage work for the past fifteen years.
(tears in her eyes)
But you can't have respect without trust.

We can see Mel wants to confess but just can't do it.

MEL

Everything that I am doing right now, I am doing for our family.

ESTELLE

How am I supposed to know that when I've got no idea what you're doing?

MEL

It's complicated.

ESTELLE

Then explain it to me. Give me something.

MEL

(angry frustration)
I can't. Not right now.

Estelle stands aside to allow Mel to walk out of the room.

EXT. VICTORY LANES BOWLING ALLEY - LONG ISLAND - LATER

HIGH ANGLE OVER a bowling alley situated along a two-lane highway. It's still raining. We see Mel pull into the lot, park, get out of the car and enter the bowling alley.

Moments later, a brown Cadillac El Dorado rolls into the parking lot and parks next to Mel's car.

INT. CADILLAC EL DORADO - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

We can see that Polk is strung out with anxiety. Reaching into his glovebox, he grabs a small bottle of whiskey and takes a few big swigs. Polk then pulls an onion out of a brown bag, bites into it, and chews.

INT. BAR - VICTORY LANES BOWLING ALLEY - MINUTE LATER

An empty shot-to-shit bar overlooking the vacant lanes. Mel takes a seat across from Denato at a table in the back. Both men glare at each other unhappily.

DENATO

Is Hoyle coming?

MEL

He's in DC on business but Dolk should be here. And I can tell you right now he's not happy about the shit you're pulling.

DENATO

The shit that I'm pulling?! First you fucks blow me off on my CDs... Now I find out your dealing directly with Errichetti, cutting me out of the thing that I set up --- and I'm the asshole?

MEL

No one's cutting you out of anything, Tony. You just gotta understand that---

DENATO

No, you gotta understand, Weinberg...

Denato leans back to hustle his balls and reveals a belly-holstered REVOLVER.

DENATO (CONT'D)

... That I am a guy best left unfucked with.

MEL

Jesus. No one's gonna fuck with you. Now put that away will ya?

They see Polk enter the far side of the lounge and approach. Denato puts the gun in his jacket pocket.

POLK

Gentlemen ---

(takes off raincoat)

I'll be right back, I just need to use the john.

Hanging his coat on the chair, Polk heads for the bathroom.

MEL

Look, Tony, we're all businessmen here. We're gonna get this thing straightened out ---

Polk's coat suddenly slides off the chair and DROPS to the ground.

MEL (CONT'D)

...But you gotta gear down. I mean Dolk's a civilian, a square---

CLOSE ON DENATO: he leans down under the table, out of Mel's line of sight and grabs the tail of the coat --- roughly picking it up --- causing a WALLET to fall out of a pocket.

MEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 You try to put the fear on him and
 flash your piece? He'll flip out --

Mel sees Denato rise back up and lock eyes with him --- a homicidal expression on his face.

DENATO
 You know I know where you hang your
 hat, right Mel? Where your wife and
 kid sleep?

MEL
 What the fuck Tony? Why would you say
 something like that?

Denato answers his question by holding up an opened wallet and revealing --- POLK'S FBI BADGE AND ID --- his other hand is on the gun inside his pocket and he's pointing it at Mel.

DENATO
 Get up. We're leaving.

Mel's initial shock and horror are quickly overpowered by an all-consuming rage -- he suddenly erupts to his feet but instead of heading for the exit, he marches towards the bathroom.

DENATO (CONT'D)
 Mel ---??! --- Mel!!!

INT. BATHROOM - VICTORY LANES BOWLING ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON POLK: at a urinal stall in the midst of flushing --- when Mel suddenly and savagely smashes his face first into the steel piping above the urinal.

Blood spurts out of Polk's nose as he drops to the floor in a shellshocked daze. Mel continues his brutal beat down as he viciously stomps Polk in the stomach and solar plexus.

Denato enters and is stunned, confused and alarmed to find Mel whaling on the bloodied, semi-conscious FBI agent...

DENATO
 The fuck you doing!?

MEL
 The fuck does it look like?
 (stomps Polk)
 Whatever he's got, it's shit without
 his testimony. Now gimme your piece.

DENATO
 You can't whack a fucking feeb! Not
 while I'm around!

MEL
 Help me or not Tony --- I'm gonna
 tell everyone that you did.

Mel drops down to his knees, gets Polk in a strangle-hold and begins choking him out. In a panic, Denato rushes over, grabs Mel from behind and pulls him off Polk ---

Using Denato's momentum, Mel drives the bastard backwards, hammers him into the sink counter --- then grabs Denato's ankles and sweeps him off his feet --- Denato's head smacking the counter-top as he and Mel fall to the floor.

Mel flips over and tries to pin Denato down while reaching for his pocketed gun. Denato counters the attack by grabbing Mel's balls and squeezing --- Mel screams --- looks over to Polk who is coming to ---

MEL (CONT'D)

Bob --- he's gotta gun...

Denato's eyes go wide with shock and fury as he suddenly realizes that Mel's attack on Polk was bullshit.

Polk moves to help --- and Mel uses the distraction to grab the gun out of Denato's pocket...

Denato smacks the gun out of Mel's hand --- the revolver slides across the bathroom floor --- out of reach of everyone.

As Polk goes for the gun, Denato brutally hammers his elbow into Mel's esophagus ---

Sputtering off of Denato, Mel struggles to breathe --- Denato scrambles to his feet and BOLTS out of bathroom --- just as Polk grabs hold of the gun ---

MEL (CONT'D)

(wheezes to Polk)

He's got your badge---

Polk explodes out of the bathroom in pursuit of Denato.

EXT. PARKING LOT - VICTORY LANES BOWLING ALLEY - SECONDS LATER

Polk blows out the backdoor, sees Denato making a mad dash for his black Seville --- about sixty yards ahead of Polk -- and is almost there ---

Polk points the gun at Denato's back and screams ---

POLK

STOP!!

Ignoring the warning, Polk watches as Denato reaches his car and is about to grab the door ---

Polk squeezes off two quick shots --- BAM --- BAM --- the bullets whizzing by Denato --- too close for comfort --- he FREEZES, puts his hands up in a surrendering gesture.

POLK (CONT'D)

(screams)

Get on your knees! Lock your hands behind your head!

Denato drops to his knees and locks his hands behind his head.

As Polk begins to carefully approach Denato, Mel suddenly comes barreling out of the bowling alley's back door.

Looking ahead, he sees Polk slowly moving in on Denato --- and out of the corner of Mel's eye, he also sees Grosswald and Ackerman rushing towards them from a cover car parked across the highway, their guns in hand.

MOVING WITH POLK: He's drawing closer to Denato --- when suddenly Denato reaches for the handle of the Seville's back door --- OPENS IT ---

DENATO'S PITBULL EXPLODES OUT OF THE CAR like a bullet from a gun --- and makes a rabid blitz straight for Polk ---

Completely unprepared, Polk is only able to squeeze off one SHOT at the charging dog --- which misses --- before the beast pitches into him --- RAMMING Polk to the ground with so much force it causes him to drop the gun. The pit begins to viciously maul him ---

Jumping into the Seville, Denato starts the engine and kicks up a shitstorm of mud as he spins his car around and heads for the highway.

Mel, Grosswald and Ackerman rush to help Polk ---

INT. DENATO'S SEVILLE - CONTINUOUS

Denato peels out of the parking lot and just before hitting the highway, takes a quick glance into his rear-view mirror.

He sees his pit bull going berserk on Polk ---

Denato cuts a grin of pride --- just as ---

THE THUNDERING BLAST of an approaching truck's airhorn overtakes the moment ---

Looking out his driver's side window with horror, Denato sees a KENWORTH SEMI BARRELING TOWARDS HIM FULL BORE --- and that's all she wrote --- there's no time for Denato to do anything but close his eyes before THE CATAclysmic IMPACT...

EXT. PARKING LOT - VICTORY LANES BOWLING ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

As Mel, Grosswald and Ackerman continue to rush towards Polk ---

Behind them we see the Kenworth RAM INTO DENATO'S SEVILLE WITH DEVASTATING VIOLENCE ---

Polk's screams of agony overtaken by the sounds of SCREECHING BRAKES --- EXPLODING GLASS --- CRUMPING, SHEARING METAL ---

All three men stop to look as the semi wades deep into the driver's side of the Seville, finally flipping it over on its roof and sending it sliding down the rain-slicked highway... until both vehicles finally come to a stop --- at which point ---

Polk's SCREAMS regain their attention and the men resume their dash towards him...

ANGLE CLOSE ON POLK: He and the pit bull are wildly thrashing about in the mud --- Polk punching and clawing the pit bull

which has its jaws locked deep into his left thigh --- blood gushing out ---

Grosswald and Ackerman are the first to arrive on the scene, quickly followed by Mel.

POLK

GET IT OFF ME!

Grosswald tries to get a clean shot on the dog and is about to take it --- but Ackerman suddenly stops him ---

ACKERMAN

A forty-five slug will go right through the dog and into Bob.

GROSSWALD

What do we do?

MEL

You gotta stick your finger up its ass, press on its prostate.

GROSSWALD

WHAT!?

MEL

Only way to get it to unlock its jaws!
Stick your finger up its ass---

Overwhelmed by the suggestion, the agents hesitate --- and so Mel acts. Jumping down on top of Polk and the dog, he cringes with disgust as he JAMS his finger up the pit bull's ass and presses as hard as he can.

The pit bull's eyes go wide with alarm, the abrupt anal intrusion causing the dog to release its grip on Polk's thigh---

As Polk rolls out of the way, the pit bull lashes back and moves to attack Mel --- but is stopped dead in its tracks by a BULLET from Grosswald's gun ---

A quick beat of silence and inaction as the dust settles.

Ackerman takes his belt off, and tightens it around Polk's thigh, using it as a tourniquet.

ACKERMAN

Just hang tight, Bob. Help's on the way.

Mel gets up and heads for Denato's car. Grosswald follows.

ANGLE ON HIGHWAY CRASH SITE: The shaken TRUCK DRIVER is approaching the Seville. Mel and Grosswald overtake him.

GROSSWALD

(to Trucker)

Just sit down on the side of the road till the paramedics get here.

ANGLE CLOSE ON THE DECIMATED SEVILLE: Mel and Grosswald lean down, look inside, and see Denato's crumpled, mutilated body lying there motionless. Grosswald reaches in, pulls Denato through the shattered window, then checks for a pulse.

Seeing the grim expression on Grosswald's face, Mel knows that Denato is dead. He shuts his eyes in dread and shakes his head.

GROSSWALD (CONT'D)

What the fuck happened in there?

Mel reaches into Denato's pocket, pulls out POLK'S FBI BADGE and hands it to Grosswald.

Covered in a cold sweat and green with nausea, Mel gets up, staggers towards his car.

GROSSWALD (CONT'D)

Mel, where you going!?

Mel doesn't answer, just gets into his car and peels away.

EXT. CHELSEA HOTEL - MANHATTAN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Gazing down the street, we see Mel walk down the block and enter the Chelsea.

INT. LOBBY - CHELSEA HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Mel holds his jacket closed, hiding his bloodstained shirt. High anxiety in his eyes, like he's on the verge of a breakdown.

He approaches the FRONT DESK MANAGER.

MEL

Can you ring Room 708 --- Miss Gardner?

The Desk Manager, clearly put off by the state Mel's in, gives him a suspicious glare and then looks at his guest log.

MANAGER

I'm sorry but Miss Gardner is no longer staying with us.

This revelation hits Mel like a sledgehammer to the gut.

MEL

Whaddya mean she's not here?! When did she check out?

MANAGER

I'm sorry sir, but we're not allowed to divulge that information.

Mel angrily pulls out a C-Note, and slips it to the Manager.

MEL

When?

MANAGER

Five weeks ago.

MEL

Did she leave a forwarding address?

MANAGER

(after checking)
No, she did not.

Mel staggers away from the desk in shell-shocked despair.

EXT. BURNSIDE BATHHOUSE - LONG ISLAND - LATER THAT NIGHT

Boyle pulls in behind a GREY CROWN VIC which is parked behind Mel's Lincoln. Getting out, Boyle walks over to the Vic inside of which are TWO FBI AGENTS.

BOYLE

How long has he been in there?

DRIVER AGENT

Bout an hour ---

INT. STEAMBATH - BURNSIDE BATHHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Clad in a towel, Mel sits hunched forward on a bench --- sweating it out in the Russian Banya style steambath.

Boyle enters, also wearing a towel. He spots Mel through the wet haze and takes a seat next to him.

BOYLE

You okay?

Mel looks up at Boyle before returning to his hunched position.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

Look, before we get into everything,
I just want to say ---

(locks eyes with Mel)

What you did, for Polk, the operation ---
you really showed us something and I
just ---

(offers his hand, sincere)

Thanks Mel... Really...

Mel doesn't shake. Turning on the cold water tap next to him, he fills a bucket and dunks the water over himself.

MEL

I did what I did for me and my family ---
end of story.

BOYLE

Really? What'd you pulling the pit
off Polk have to do with your family?
(off Mel's silence)

Look man, what went down tonight was
completely fucked up --- should've
never happened ---

MEL

Tonight was pre-ordained! How many
times did I tell you about Polk?

BOYLE

And I'm taking him out of the game,
effective immediately---

MEL

Point is, he shouldn't have been
playing in the first place and you
fucking knew it ---

BOYLE

Polk's got almost twenty years on the job and I'm supposed to back you against him!?

MEL

Spare me this bound by allegiance crap cause I'm out here in the real world. This is life and death and you guys could fuck up a cup of coffee.
(dunks himself with another water bucket)

Freak accident --- fuckin' Mack truck, that's all that stopped things from going from bad to worse. (beat) What happens the next time?

BOYLE

We've been doing the best we can with what we've got, but that's all going to change now.

MEL

How?

BOYLE

Let's get dressed --- I want to show you something ---

EXT. VESCO TOWNHOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Boyle parks across the street from an elegant, four story townhouse located on 69th between Fifth Ave. and Madison.

The two men exit the car. Mel follows Boyle to the townhouse's front door.

MEL

What is this place?

BOYLE

(unlocking front door)
Used to belong to Robert Vesco ---
Bureau seized all his assets when he fled the country ---

INT. VESCO TOWNHOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Although the place is dormant, both men are wowed by the size and grandeur of the sumptuously decorated townhouse...

MEL

What are we doing here?

BOYLE

This is our new home, the Sheik's new home ---
(off Mel's stunned glare)
We hit the majors, Mel. ABSCAM has been made a "BUREAU SPECIAL."

MEL

That supposed to mean something to me?

BOYLE

It means anything we want, we get.
This op is now a top priority. Fucking
Director himself is overseeing.

Boyle takes out an envelope, hands it to Mel. Mel opens it and
pulls out a CHECK for \$5,000.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

Your monthly salary ---

At first Mel is stunned --- but then he just shakes his head
with dismay.

BOYLE (CONT'D)

Hey, don't tell me it's not enough
cause that's more than twice what I
get paid...

MEL

You just don't get it, do you? The
money ain't the issue.

BOYLE

Then what?

MEL

(after a beat)
I been a con merchant for over two
decades --- tonight was the closest
I've ever come to gettin' clipped.
First time I ever saw a guy get killed.
Thirteen years of marriage and never
once has Estelle ever suspected that
I was into anything shady --- not
until I started up with you. I mean
here I am working with the good guys
and now she thinks I'm up to no good.
And then Max ---
(heavy beat)
Max broke things off ---

BOYLE

(interrupting)
You and Max split up?

MEL

She skipped town without even letting
me know where she was going...

BOYLE

Why didn't you say something?

MEL

Cause fuck you. That's why. You could
give a shit about the problems I got.

BOYLE

That's not true ---

MEL

So you're my new best friend, is that
it, Boyle? My Compadre? I don't even
know who you are!

BOYLE

And what do you want to know? That I come from a family of drunks? That my hobbies are beating off, Tegestology and taking long walks on the fucking beach? That I got nobody and nothing except for the job?

An awkward beat between the men...

MEL

What the hell is Tegestology?

BOYLE

Coasters. I collect beer coasters.

MEL

(amusingly disturbed)
You're right Boyle, the less I know about you the better ---

BOYLE

Will you stop breaking my balls!? This thing is turning into the Bureau's biggest investigation but I can't do it without you...

MEL

Bet that must drive you fuckin' crazy.

BOYLE

You have no idea.

MEL

Look, I appreciate you coming through on the case-dough but ---

BOYLE

(cutting Mel off)
But what? Come on man --- what do I need to do to make things right?

Mel flashes Boyle a pregnant look.

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - LONG ISLAND, NY - DAY

A BLACK LIMO, pulls up to Mel's house. A CHAUFFEUR gets out and opens the door for Boyle who is clad in a sport coat and slacks.

As Boyle approaches the front door, it opens and Willie is the first to come out dressed in a sport coat and slacks.

BOYLE

(shakes hands)
I'm Jimmy.

WILLIE

Willie Weinberg.
(noticing the limo)
Wow. Is that your car?

MEL
 (stepping out the door)
 No, it's the sheik's limo. But Mr.
 Hoyle here gets to use it.

WILLIE
 Cool! Never been in a sheik's limo
 before.

MEL
 Why don't you go check it out...
 Willie runs over and disappears into the limo.

MEL (CONT'D)
 Glad you could make it, Jimmy.
 Estelle steps out the front door looking prettier than we've
 ever seen her and greets Boyle with a warm smile.

BOYLE
 Hello --- I'm James Hoyle ---

ESTELLE
 (eagerly shaking hands)
 Estelle. It's really such a pleasure
 to finally meet you in person ---

MEL
 Yeah, Estelle was beginning to think
 you didn't exist.

ESTELLE
 (embarrassed smile)
 Stop it.

An awkward beat, Boyle clearly uncomfortable with the charade.

MEL
 (heads towards limo)
 Come on, we're gonna be late ---

ESTELLE
 (following with Boyle)
 Do you enjoy horse racing? Mel's just
 crazy about the ponies. Never missed
 opening day at Belmont since I've
 known him.

EXT. BELMONT RACETRACK - DAY

VARIOUS ANGLES of opening day at Belmont Racetrack --- THE
 RINGING OF THE OPENING BELL! Horses ERUPTING from the gates ---
 Hooves MASHING through dirt --- scrambling and fighting for
 position on the one-mile oval ---

INT. BELMONT ROOM - BELMONT RACETRACK - CONTINUOUS

An elegant, members only club/bar/restaurant --- with huge glass
 windows which overlook the finish line.

Mel and Willie are standing at the window, watching the horses
 roll into the final stretch. Behind them, Estelle and Boyle are
 seated at a table watching father and son as their horse comes

in --- and they both go CRAZY --- we can see this pure joy on Mel's face to be with his son ---

An ebullient Mel and Willie come back to the table.

MEL
Can my boy pick 'em or can my boy
pick 'em?

WILLIE
How much did we win?

MEL
Well, he was a false favorite at 6-1,
and we bet a hundred bucks... So how
you gonna figure that out, champ?

Willie trying to figure it out the math on a napkin---

WILLIE
Six hundred bucks!

MEL
You wanna collect? Or you wanna lay?

WILLIE
I roll with you Pop.

MEL
(smiling wink at Estelle)
We'll be back in a little while.

Boyle and Estelle watch them walk towards the betting windows.

BOYLE
It's nice to see this side of your
husband.

ESTELLE
(nods)
This is the side I married.

BOYLE
He really seems like a wonderful
father.

ESTELLE
He is, when he's around ---
(pointed at Boyle)
Which hasn't been much lately ---

BOYLE
Yes, well I'm sorry about that ---
Mel's been working very hard ---

ESTELLE
Doing what, exactly?

BOYLE
Uh --- Mel helps us find worthy
business opportunities to invest in.
He's a tremendous asset to our
organization ---

(MORE)

BOYLE (CONT'D)
 (locks eyes with Estelle)
 I'm sure you'd be very proud of the
 work he's doing.

INT. CASHIER'S WINDOW - BELMONT RACETRACK - MINUTES LATER

Mel's waiting in line at the cashier's window with Willie.

MEL
 (showing the racing form)
 These are my picks for the fifth---
 Whaddya think?

WILLIE
 I like Daddy Longlegs.

MEL
 He's a roughy! Look at the stats on
 him.

WILLIE
 Yeah, but his name is cool.

Mel laughs when suddenly a HAND comes down on Mel's shoulder.
 Mel spins around and sees DOMINIC CASELE and SONNY BLITZ.

DOM
 Hey, there he is --- openin' day at
 Belmont --- I knew you were gonna be
 here --- How are ya, Mel?

MEL
 Okay, Dom ---

DOM
 Okay's okay. You're a tough man to
 get a hold of Mel. I been reachin'
 out, left a few messages.

MEL
 Yeah, and I ---

DOM
 When I call, it's for a reason. We
 need to talk.

MEL
 Look, Dom, I got my kid and the wife
 with me. It's almost post time. How
 bout I come down tomorrow.

DOM
 No, now.
 (grabbing Mel by the arm)
 This won't take long. Bring the kid.

INT. PADDOCK - HORSE STAGING AREA - MINUTES LATER

A wide green open lawn area where the horses are saddled and
 kept before post time.

As Dom paces in front of Mel --- Mel watches anxiously as Sonny
 Blitz chaperone's Willie amongst the jockeys and horses.

DOM

Haven't seen you in a long time, Mel.
Never call back let alone call ---
stopped kickin' up.

MEL

I thought you understood. I mean I
shut down London cause the heat was
all over me. Last thing I wanted to
do was get any of it near you. So I
stayed away, been laying low.

DOM

So this thing you got going with the
Arab. You call that layin' low?

MEL

No, no, Dom. You got it all wrong.

DOM

Do I? Cause I'll tell you, Mel -- few
months back when I heard about you
showin' up at Stella's with this
fuckin' sheik, whoever -- I thought
for sure you were runnin' a ringer on
a new scam. I didn't know what, but
somethin' ---

MEL

It's not like that ---

DOM

So you're going on record with me,
this deal with the Arab is legit?

MEL

Due respect, but what does any of it
gotta do with you?

DOM

I'll tell you what. I gotta call from
somebody -- IN MY FUCKIN' LIFE -- I
never thought I'd hear from. Okay?
Never wanted to hear from. And this
somebody was askin' me 'bout you,
Mel.

MEL

Who?

DOM

Far as you're concerned, might as
well be Satan himself! Might as well
be fuckin' God Almighty! That's who
and how heavy -- and He wants to know
if this deal with the Arab is for
real.

MEL

Dom---

DOM
 (cuts him off)
 Before you open your mouth I want you to listen. If you are into somethin' you shouldn't be, workin' one of your "specials". This is your one fuckin' chance to get out clean. Just tell me and that'll be that.

The gravity of the situation weighs on Mel as he gazes out and sees Sonny Blitz with his son. After a long beat..

MEL
 No misunderstanding Dom. I mean, we're buying, not selling ---

DOM
 So you're goin' on record with me?

MEL
 Yeah, the Sheik is for real.

DOM
 Okay, Mel. Well, then there are some friends of ours that wanna have a sit down with him when he comes in for the Atlantic City party next month.

MEL
 What friends?

DOM
 The guy that called me about you --- is the guy that runs the table --- in Vegas, in A.C. --- everywhere...

The realization of who Dom is talking about seizes Mel like a vice.

MEL
The Little Man?

DOM
 (nodding)
 Lansky's sending his heir apparent, Arthur Zelnick to sit down with the Sheik ---

MEL
 I don't know if he'll deal directly with these guys ---

DOM
 Well then you need to explain how things work to him Mel. If the Sheik wants to play in A.C., he's gotta meet with Zelnick and they gotta come to an understanding.
 (WHISTLES at Blitz, waves him over)
 You hear what I'm saying?

MEL
 Yeah.

DOM
They'll be in touch.

Dom leaves and Blitz joins him. Willie comes over to his father and can see that he's shaken.

WILLIE
Who were those guys Pop?

MEL
Nothing, nobodies. But let's keep
this between us.

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - LONG ISLAND, NY - LATER THAT NIGHT

The limo is in front of Mel's house. Everyone's out of the car. Willie shakes hands with Boyle and heads for the house.

BOYLE
Estelle, it was a pleasure meeting
you. Thanks for a wonderful afternoon.

ESTELLE
I'm so glad you could join us --- and
I hope we can do this again soon.

Estelle gives Jimmy a hug and kiss and then trails after Willie, letting him into the house. Then Boyle angrily snaps on Mel.

BOYLE
Can't believe I let you drag me into
your bullshit. One of the worst things
I've ever done --- like I wanna go
home and take a shower. You have a
beautiful family --- you have to tell
them Mel...

MEL
I am.

BOYLE
When?

MEL
Tonight, right now --- cause I'm done
Boyle.

BOYLE
Done with what?

MEL
You, the operation, this whole thing ---
I am out.

Boyle eyes Mel for a beat, and sees that he's dead serious --- and suddenly his indignation shifts to alarm.

BOYLE
Is this cause of what I just said?

MEL
Dominic Casale cornered me at the
track today --- this is cause of what
HE said ---

EXT. FBI HEADQUARTERS - WASHINGTON DC - DAY

Hard rain is falling over the DC and the FBI building.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - FBI HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Boyle, Mel and Tuccio sit silently at the table, waiting... Mel looks about as comfortable as a priest in a pussyhouse.

On the wall behind Boyle and Tuccio is a large FBI insignia under which are the words: "FIDELITY, BRAVERY, AND INTEGRITY."

The door suddenly swings open and in marches FBI Director Houseman --- all business, no time to waste. Both Boyle and Tuccio stand, Mel does not.

HOUSEMAN

Good morning gentlemen ---

Waving the men to sit, Houseman takes a seat next to Mel.

HOUSEMAN (CONT'D)

I have to be on the Hill in thirty so let's get to it, shall we?

MEL

Absolutely --- no. Fuck no.

HOUSEMAN

Excuse me?

MEL

The answer is no --- as in I am done.

HOUSEMAN

Mister Weinberg, I understand that you have some trepidation in continuing this operation but the work you've been doing is important --- and given these latest developments it's become even more vital ---

MEL

Hey, you wanna continue, I'm all for it -- so long as it ain't with me.

HOUSEMAN

ABSCAM doesn't work without you, Mel --- and with it we have a rare opportunity to make a lasting impact on organized crime and political corruption. Surely this must mean something to you.

Mel gives Houseman a "not really" shrug.

HOUSEMAN (CONT'D)

What if we were to offer you a fifteen thousand dollar bonus for every case you make from here on out --- plus an additional one hundred thousand once the trials are done ---

MEL

There's no amount of money you can pay me to line up against an emperor like Meyer Lansky or his people --- you're talkin' suicide.

HOUSEMAN

The Bureau can protect you and your family ---

MEL

Yeah, okay --- I'll pass.

Houseman leans back in his chair and eyes Mel like a butcher sizing up a piece of uncut meat.

HOUSEMAN

Your plea agreement specifies five cases. You've only made four.

MEL

You're right --- and if you wanna send me to shit city, so be it --- I'll do the three years.

HOUSEMAN

Three years? Well, when all is said and done I think it's going to be considerably longer than that Mel ---

Boyle and Tuccio flash each other a look, troubled by this turn.

MEL

Whaddya talkin' about? --- My sentence stipulation was signed off on by a Federal Judge. It's permanent.

HOUSEMAN

It's permanent, for now.

MEL

Yeah, okay, you wanna try to fuck with my deal? Fine. I'll see you in court.

HOUSEMAN

I have no intention of "fucking" with your deal", but what I am going to do is out you to every 2-0-9 on the East coast, and make sure the street knows that you've been cooperating with the Bureau on several high profile O.C. ops. Then I'm going to contact the editor of every major paper in the country --- and have them run a story about you on the front page of their business section which will describe in detail your criminal exploits and accomplices --- like Miss Gardner --- and urge anyone that's been defrauded by one of your scams to contact the Justice Department ---

(MORE)

HOUSEMAN (CONT'D)

(leans forward)
 Given your talent I have no doubt the
 phones will be ringing off the hook.
 One month and we'll have enough cases
 and evidence to put you and your
 confederates away for life ---
 (hardcore)
 Although I doubt Dominic Casale will
 ever let you get to trial.

Tuccio and Boyle are stunned and appalled by Houseman's tactics.

BOYLE

Sir, please, is this really necessary?

HOUSEMAN

(snaps at Boyle)
 Yes it is Agent Boyle, but you most
 definitely are not.

Mel chortles cynically and gestures to the words on the wall ---

MEL

Fidelity, bravery, integrity, huh?
 Buncha bullshit ---

HOUSEMAN

It's up to you --- either continue
 with ABSCAM and play to the best of
 your ability or don't and suffer the
 consequences ---

MEL

I don't know what makes you such a
 hateful fuck, Larry --- but whatever
 it is, it really works...

HOUSEMAN

I understand this is difficult, Mel ---
 and I don't blame you for being upset ---
 but when it comes to protecting the
 foundations of our democracy ---
 (dry, almost empathetic
 smile)
 ...Sometimes you need to take it in
 the ass for the team.

And with that Houseman gets up and exits --- leaving Mel sitting
 there looking like he's on the edge of a full-on meltdown.

TUCCIO

Mel ---

MEL

(muttering to himself)
 I gotta get outta here ---

Mel gets up and starts staggering towards the door. Boyle jumps
 out of his chair and cuts Mel off.

MEL (CONT'D)

Outta my fuckin' way or I'll lay you
 out right here and now!

BOYLE

Mel, you gotta believe that Joe and I had no idea this was coming.

MEL

The fuck's the difference? It came.

Mel tries to get past Boyle and Boyle pushes him back.

MEL (CONT'D)

(desperate)

Boyle, please, I gotta get outta here.

BOYLE

Where you gonna go?

MEL

Anywhere. Somewhere. Just away from you douchebags.

BOYLE

(after a heavy beat)

Max is at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

MEL

What---? How do you know?

BOYLE

I made some calls. Reached out to a few people.

MEL

You did that for me?

BOYLE

Yeah. (beat) Take the rest of the week but you got to be back on Monday.

Mel doesn't say anything, just blows out the door.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - EARLY MORNING

We see a cab pull up to the front of the big pink hotel. A VALET opens the door and Mel gets out.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR HALLWAY - BH HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

As Mel strolls down the hall, looking for the right room number, he approaches a housekeeping CART, sees a KEY RING hanging from a hook and deftly SWIPES it.

Finally finding the room, Mel UNLOCKS the door and WE MOVE WITH HIM as he enters...

INT. HOTEL SUITE - BH HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Mel steps into the dimly lit living room area of the suite. A few shafts of early morning sunlight illuminate this disaster area strewn with the rubble of an all night party. Champagne bottles, dirty dishes, cigarette butts, a mirror dusted with blow on the coffee table.

Looking round, Mel suddenly becomes aware of the sickening, gargly SNORE OF A MAN EMANATING FROM THE BEDROOM.

WE MOVE WITH HIM as he follows the snore into...

THE BEDROOM: Where Mel is stupefied and disgusted by the grisly sight of MAX in bed with **WAYNE NEWTON**.

Both are splayed on either side of the bed, crashed out cold and completely naked. And let me just say this before we continue... Wayne Newton has the most disgusting bitch-titted body you've ever seen in your life. Just fucking revolting.

Gazing at Max for a few beats, the party fatigue and depression is evident on her face.

Mel walks over to Newton and nudges him to wake up, but gets no response. So Mel SMACKS him on the cheek. Guy still won't wake up --- but the smack rouses Max, who leans up and is shocked and mortified to find Mel there.

MEL

Hiya, pussycat.

MAX

This isn't what it looks like.

MEL

(bittersweet chuckle)
It never is for us, is it Max?

MAX

What are you doing here?

MEL

Well, I've been thinkin'. Thinkin' bout that question you asked me before you left ---

MAX

Mel ---

MEL

(cuts her off)
You're my anchor. And I didn't know it till you were gone but without you --- I'm adrift.

MAX

This is insane, you're insane --- I mean I appreciate you telling me, but ---

MEL

But what? Look at yourself, you're just as lost without me as I am without you.

MAX

I'm fine ---

MEL

Come on Max. There's one mark you can never beat --- that's the mark inside.

Mel can see Max's facade begin to break...

MEL (CONT'D)

You were right about the Feebs ---
about everything ---

MAX

(bittersweet)
Well, no matter what happens in life
there's always some asshole who knew
it would --- huh Mel?

MEL

I need you Max. (beat) And I need
your help.

MAX

With what?

MEL

(sly grin, raised eyebrow)
Gettin' back to my roots. (beat) Come
back to New York with me.

A beat as Mel and Max stare at each other, silently trying to
find reconciliation in each other's eyes --- when suddenly ---

Newton, with a SICKENING SNARL, inexplicably convulses back
into consciousness and recoils into an upright position ---
terrified and confused to see Mel standing in front of him.

MEL (CONT'D)

Wayne fuckin' Newton. Man I just gotta
say. You seriously have the most
disgusting body I have ever seen.

WAYNE NEWTON

Who are you?

MEL

Your arch-fuckin'-enemy.
(turning to Max)
So whaddya say, pussycat? You hooked?

MAX

(ebullient smile)
Heavy as lead.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY AIRPORT - ATLANTIC CITY, NJ - DAY

A stately, black Mercedes limo with diplomatic flags waits on
the tarmac --- parked in the middle of a Presidential-looking
motorcade complete with police escort.

SUPER: "July 8, 1979 - Atlantic City"

Mel, Boyle, Errichetti and four FBI Agents posing as the Sheik's
personal BODYGUARDS stand outside the limo watching as a LEAR
JET lands and begin to taxi towards them...

ERRICHETTI

The two mil I been asking you to
deposit in the Boardwalk Bank, have
you cleared it with the Sheik yet?

BOYLE

We're working on it, Angie.

ERRICHETTI

You keep tellin' me that but nothin's happening. I mean what's at issue? All I'm talkin' about is just parking some money in an account.

BOYLE

Dolk was the issue but now that he's been transferred to the London, things are gonna be different.

ERRICHETTI

Well thank God for that. It's not that I'm trying to be pushy --- but for me to do certain things for you ---

MEL

We're gonna get the two mil for you, Angie. You can bank on that.

ERRICHETTI

Good... So, uh, what --- how do I address him? Your eminence?

BOYLE

They call him Shake, we call him Sheik.

MEL

Sheik --- call him Sheik ---

ERRICHETTI

I'm gonna say my friend, Hello my friend...

The Jet pulls up to the motorcade, kills its engines, opens its door and the stairs drop out. Boyle and Mel enter the jet.

INT. LEAR JET - CONTINUOUS

They find the FBI Agent who is playing the part of the Sheik --- **SPECIAL AGENT SAM SHADDABI**, a 30-something Arab whose proud bearing gives him a noble appeal. Shaddabi is wearing a regal-looking keffiyeh headdress and white thobe.

(For the purpose of clarity, Agent Shaddabi will be referred to in the script as "FBI SHEIK") Agent Ackerman and three other FBI Agents are also on the plane.

BOYLE

(shakes with Fbi Sheik)
Sam, Jimmy Boyle. It's good to meet you in person. You look terrific.
(gesturing to Mel)
This is Mel Weinberg, our 2-0-9..

The two men acknowledge each other with a nod but don't shake.

ACKERMAN

Any word on the meeting with Lansky's guy Zelnick?

MEL

It's gonna go down sometime tonight or tomorrow but we're still waiting on specifics. One of their people is supposed to reach out to us...

ACKERMAN

What about Senator Rand?

MEL

Errichetti's saying he'll be there...

BOYLE

(to FBI Sheik)

Ackerman get you all up to speed?

FBI SHEIK

(Chicago accent)

Yeah, I've been fully briefed.

MEL

Well your role is real simple. Act stupid like you understand English but can't speak it. Say as little as possible and follow my lead.

FBI SHEIK

(insulted, to Boyle)

Are you running this operation or is he?

BOYLE

Forget about it. He doesn't mean to be an asshole, he was just born that way, okay?

(off FBI sheik's nod)

Alright, it's showtime --- once we step out that door, so --- anything you'd like to go over?

FBI SHEIK

Yeah, I'd just like to say that I think the name and premise of your operation is fucking offensive, plays into the worst kind of stereotype ---

MEL

Hey--- stereotype wouldn't be a stereotype unless it was true.

FBI SHEIK

Yeah? So how would you feel about an FBI op called JEWSCAM where Ackerman posed as a greedy, conniving Israeli?

ACKERMAN

(pissed)

My father was Jewish but my mother was not. WHICH MEANS I AM NOT JEWISH!

MEL

He's right --- technically speaking.

BOYLE

Will you both shut the fuck up!?
 (turns to Fbi Sheik)
 Look, Sam, I see your point but if
 this was a problem, you should've
 told us before now ---

FBI SHEIK

You don't have to worry about me,
 okay? I'll do the job --- but I just
 wanted you to know that I'm not happy
 about it ---

MEL

Join the club.

EXT. TARMAC - ATLANTIC CITY AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Errichetti excitedly watches as the Fbi Sheik and his entourage of Feds posing as bodyguards and advisors approach. He greets the FBI Sheik with a retarded bow as if he were a king.

ERRICHETTI

Sheik, my friend. It is such an
 superior honor and what have you. On
 behalf of all Americans and the great
 Garden state of New Jersey, I welcome
 you to Atlantic City, my friend.

Slipping into character, the Fbi Sheik puts his hand over his heart and speaks broken English with a thick Arab accent.

FBI SHEIK

Salam wa aleikum, my friend. Yes.
 Yes. Thank you. Please.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF ATLANTIC CITY - A LITTLE LATER

VARIOUS ANGLES of the Sheik's motorcade making its way into the ghetto shithole that is Atlantic City. An absurd contrast between the procession's pomp and circumstance and the dire poverty that surrounds it --- Burned out, boarded up buildings. Vacant lots. Trash-littered streets. Impoverished residents.

EXT. RESORTS CASINO & HOTEL - ATLANTIC CITY - A LITTLE LATER

The entrance to the hotel has been roped off like a movie premiere in anticipation of the sheik's arrival. A High School MARCHING BAND plays "Hail to the Chief." Local newspaper PHOTOGRAPHERS and TV CREWS. Big-titted SHOWGIRLS dressed as glittery peacocks...etc...

And at the center of it all, a reception line consisting of ATLANTIC CITY'S MAYOR, the PRESIDENT OF RESORTS INTERNATIONAL, other prominent LOCAL POLITICIANS.

The motorcade rolls up. The limo stops in front of the welcome party, the door is opened and out steps the Sheik followed by Errichetti.

INT. LIMO - RESORTS CASINO - CONTINUOUS

Boyle exits the limo but Mel holds back a beat.

Reaching into his pocket, Mel pulls out a prescription bottle of DEXEDRINE amphetamines, pops it open, shakes out five --- and swallows them dry before getting out of the car.

THE FIRST GROOVY OPENING NOTES of Eddie Fisher singing the classic "I'm a Born World Shaker" can be heard as we watch Mel follow the Sheik, Boyle, and Errichetti down the reception line.

INT. PARTY - HOTEL SUITE - RESORTS CASINO - LATER THAT NIGHT

A swank, 4,000 square foot suite on the top floor of Resorts with massive windows that overlook the boardwalk and water.

The place has been fully tricked-out for the occasion and is packed with a motley assortment of politicians, movers and shakers, hookers and the biggest players in the casino business. Everyone either talking shop or rocking out to EDDIE FISHER on a small stage erected in the back of the room.

ANGLE ON ERRICHETTI AND MEL: Watching the action from the corner. Errichetti is clearly a little shitfaced.

MEL

This is fantastic, Angie. The party, the spread --- everything...

ERRICHETTI

(wistfully joyous)
Mel, I'm fifty years old, seen a lotta things, dreamed a lotta things; but this is the most un-fuckin-believable thing I've ever been into my whole life --- and it just keeps coming up ---
(puts his arm around Mel)
You and me are gonna do beautiful things together---

MEL

How bout a toast to the guy that brought us together?

They raise their glasses of champagne together.

ERRICHETTI

Hey-- to Tony Denato. May the poor bastard rest in peace.

Just then, a scantily clad COCKTAIL WAITRESS struts on by. Errichetti reaches out and PINCHES her on the ass. She angrily WHIPS around and confronts Errichetti.

WAITRESS

Did you do that?

ERRICHETTI

Hey, I love you baby. I write you poems; Roses are red. Violets are blue. I like spaghetti. Let's fuck.

The shocked and offended waitress storms off, leaving Mel and Errichetti LAUGHING hysterically.

ANGLE ON: THE BAND ONSTAGE SUDDENLY SHIFTS INTO a tamped-down royal fanfare and drumroll...

EDDIE FISHER

Ladies and gentlemen... Coming in all
the way from the Emirates, may I lay
onto you, a great man and humanitarian ---
I feel humbled in his presence ---
Tonight's guest of honor, Sheik Kambir
Abdul Rahman!

A portable spotlight swings from the stage to the FBI Sheik and his procession who enter the party. Everyone CLAPS as the FBI Sheik moves through the crowd, waving as if he were a rock star.

RAPID FIRE FLASH-CUT MONTAGE OF SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS: grip and grin snapshots of the FBI Sheik with: TEAMSTER BOSS, N.J. ASSEMBLYMEN, MAYOR OF UNION CITY, PRESIDENT OF CAESAR'S WORLD, PENTHOUSE'S BOB GUCCIONE. Each photo is labeled with the names of the subjects.

DEN - LATER: this small, intimate den is brightly lit compared to the dim nightclub atmosphere of the party. Although the den is connected to the main room, it has been roped off.

Errichetti, the FBI Sheik, Mel and Boyle are all seated on couches. They are talking to BUCKY ROACH, MANAGER OF THE TROPICANA IN VEGAS.

ROACH

I've been runnin the Tropicana for
ten years so I know whereof I speak ---
and I never lie to my friends. You
bring me and my crew in to run your
new joint at the Shelburne --- we
break bread? You'll never have a
problem. If you're a point holder ---
you're golden...

FBI SHEIK (MONITORS)

Point holder? Yes. Please what does
it mean?

ROACH (MONITORS)

Every casino has one hundred *secret*
ownership points, each of which
represent a percentage of the skim ---

CAMERA PANS FROM THE SHEIK TOWARDS THE WALL BEHIND MEL AND THEN ZOOMS IN ON THE WALL...

SURVEILLANCE CLOSET - CONTINUOUS: The utility closet abutting the den has been converted into a makeshift observation post. Three monitors observe three different angles: one of the main room and two others dedicated to the den/meeting room. The tiny closet has been heavily soundproofed and as a result, is like a sweatbox.

Grosswald and the FBI TECHIE watching the meeting on the MONITORS. They're in t-shirts and shorts --- wearing headphones.

MEL (MONITORS)

If you're the majority point holder
of a joint, your name won't appear
anywhere, but you are an owner ---

ROACH (MONITORS)

That's right... And my boys and me,
we got our systems down to a science.
We can clip the drop seven ways from
Sunday. You come to me and say you
need five, six hundred thousand taken
off? It'll be there. Cash. Tax free ---

GROSSWALD

(cracks an excited smile)
Fuck, this is great shit ---

PARTY - LATER: In another part of the room, Errichetti introducing the FBI Sheik to Eddie Fisher.

ERRICHETTI

Sheik, this is a very famous
entertainer. Sold millions of records.
Had his own TV show. Mr. Eddie Fisher.

FISHER

An honor to meet you, sir ---

Mel quickly jumps in to shake Fisher's hand himself.

MEL

Hey Eddie, Mel Weinberg. I just had
to shake the hand that got to play
with Liz Taylor's pussy.

Everyone except for Fisher starts to LAUGH. Even the Sheik.

RAPID FIRE FLASH-CUT MONTAGE OF SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS: grip and grin snapshots of FBI Sheik with: A.C. COUNCILMEN, PRESIDENT OF BALLY'S, MAYOR OF NEWARK, N.J. STATE SENATORS, PLAYBOY'S HUGH HEFNER.

DEN - LATER: Mel and Errichetti sit with the senior U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY, HARRISON RAND.

MEL (CONT'D)

--- The Sheik's really been looking
forward to this sit down with you
Senator Rand ---

SENATOR RAND

As have I, Mel ---

MEL

He's not gonna say much. He's ashamed
of his English but he understands
everything ---

ERRICHETTI

And it's important you understand
what he wants to hear from you ---

SENATOR RAND

About the Shelburne deal?

SURVEILLANCE CLOSET - CONTINUOUS: Grosswald and FBI Techie intently watching the meeting on the monitors...

MEL (MONITORS)
 No. Don't go into specifics about the casino. All you have to do is tell him how powerful you are ---

ERRICHETTI (MONITORS)
 In no uncertain terms, Harry ---

MEL (MONITORS)
 Fourth ranking Democrat in the Senate, ear of the President, Chairman of whatever committee, who you know --- mention names --- what you can do ---

ERRICHETTI (MONITORS)
 Come on as strong as possible. You won't offend him, it's the Arab way ---

DEN - CONTINUOUS:

MEL
 Right, without you there is no casino. Explain to him that because you gotta stake in the deal you're gonna use all your power and influence to get him everything he needs: declaratory ruling to renovate instead of build, special tax incentives ---

ERRICHETTI
 Whatever he needs. You are the fuckin' man...

SENATOR RAND
 I understand --- not a problem...

Boyle escorts the FBI Sheik into the den and all three men stand-- we can see that Boyle is carrying a BRIEFCASE filled with cash.

ERRICHETTI
 Sheik, my friend. I would like to introduce you to the senior U.S. Senator from New Jersey -- Harrison Rand.

SENATOR RAND
 It's a pleasure to meet you.

FBI SHEIK
 (shaking hands with Rand)
 Yes. You are welcome.

HIGH ANGLE OVER HOTEL SUITE - PARTY - LATER: We see Mel, Errichetti, Boyle, the FBI Sheik and Rand emerge from the Den --- everyone smiling. RAND IS HOLDING THE BRIEFCASE OF CASH.

They all shake hands and Rand leaves. Errichetti walks the Sheik over to another group of people and begins introductions.

ANGLE CLOSE ON Boyle and Mel as they get a drink at the bar.

BOYLE
 It shouldn't be this easy.

MEL
It isn't that it's that easy, it's
that we're that good ---

Mel and Boyle are suddenly approached by **HOWARD CRIDEN**. At age fifty-six, Criden is a swollen seer of a man who wears thick rimmed glasses with coke-bottle lenses --- and carefully examines everything he touches: plates, handshakes, doorknobs, everything.

CRIDEN
Good evening, I'm Howard Criden. I
believe you've been expecting me.
(off their blank looks)
I'm Mr. Zelnick's attorney.

Mel and Boyle stiffen up and shake hands with him.

MEL
Is Mr. Zelnick here?

CRIDEN
No. If you could please get the Sheik
there's a helicopter waiting for us
on the roof.

Both Mel and Boyle are shocked by this revelation.

BOYLE
No one ever told us that we were going
to be leaving the premises.

CRIDEN
I'm telling you now.

BOYLE
Well I'm telling you, there's no way
the Sheik's gonna get on a chopper
and fly off for points unknown ---

MEL
Sheik's a paranoid guy. He don't like
surprises and he don't like powerplays ---

CRIDEN
These steps were taken to ensure your
employer's safety, not imperil it.

BOYLE
And we're supposed to just take your
word for that?

CRIDEN
Not my word. Mr. Zelnick's.
(glances at his watch)
You have twenty minutes before I take
off.

Criden smiles and leaves. Boyle and Mel exchange an extremely anxious look.

EXT./INT. HELICOPTER - OFF THE COAST OF ATLANTIC CITY - LATER

A helicopter flying over the ocean.

Criden, Mel, Boyle, the FBI Sheik and TWO FBI AGENTS POSING AS BODYGUARDS are seated in the back of the copter. They gaze out the window and they see the dimly lit outline of a LARGE 150FT YACHT anchored about a mile off the Atlantic City coast.

There's a ring of bright lights illuminating a landing pad situated on the yacht's stern deck. The men exchange a tense look as the helicopter begins its descent...

EXT. YACHT - OFF THE COAST OF ATLANTIC CITY - CONTINUOUS

The moment the helicopter touches down and kills its engine the landing pad lights are turned off. While TWO DECKHANDS quickly lock down the copter's skids to the pad --- a THIRD HAND opens the door for the FBI Sheik and his entourage --- and ushers them toward **ARTHUR ZELNICK**.

Zelnick's a power-player whose causal elegance masks the cold intensity of his bottom-line demeanor. With a practiced refinement, Zelnick greets the approaching FBI Sheik by touching the tips of his right fingers to his forehead while bowing the head slightly. The FBI Sheik responds with the same gesture.

ZELNICK

Shake Kambir Abdul Rahman --- Ahlan wa-sahlan.

FBI SHEIK

Ahlan Beek.

ZELNICK

Esmee Arthur Zelnick. Motasharefon.

FBI SHEIK

Anta lateef.

The two men finally stop shaking hands and Zelnick immediately places the palm of his right hand over his chest.

ZELNICK

Kaifa haloka?

FBI SHEIK

Al hamdu lillah, bi khair. Wa ant?

ZELNICK

Ana bekhair, shokran.

The FBI Sheik is startled and a little freaked by Zelnick's fluency. Mel and Boyle are gravely concerned.

FBI SHEIK

You speak Arabic very well Assayed Zelnick.

Zelnick thanks the Sheik with a nod --- gently takes him by the arm and ushers him along the starboard deck.

We MOVE WITH Criden, Boyle and Mel as they follow ---

ZELNICK

I understand that you're from the United Arab Emirates?

FBI SHEIK

Yes.

ZELNICK

Which Emirate?

FBI SHEIK

Why should you ask?

ZELNICK

I'd like to get to know you better ---
especially in lieu of the fact that
none of my contacts at the State
Department have any record of a Shake
Kambir Abdul Rahman from the UAE...

The atmosphere suddenly goes from tense to severe. Boyle and
Mel flash each other an 'oh fuck' look: is the jig up?

FBI SHEIK

I'm not surprised. The American
intelligence apparatus in my part of
the world is pathetic at best ---

ZELNICK

Well then please enlighten me ---

MEL

The Sheik didn't come here to be
interrogated ---

Zelnick stops and gives Mel a vicious glare.

ZELNICK

Was I talking to you, Mr. Weinberg?
(off Mel's silence)
When I want your opinion, I'll ask
for it ---

The FBI Sheik gives Mel a patronizing, diminutive hand-gesture
to stand down.

FBI SHEIK

I hardly call asking someone where
they're from an interrogation.
(turns back to Zelnick)
My blood, the blood of my father's
runs from the Bani Bakhit tribal region
of Ras al-Khaimah ---

ZELNICK

Ras al-Khaimah --- that sits in the
East, yes? Along the Gulf of Oman?

The FBI Sheik stops and glares at Zelnick who stands steadfast.

FBI SHEIK

Laa. It is in the North, and sits
along the Persian Gulf. But then you
know this ---

ZELNICK

Forgive me Shake, I hope you understand
a man in my position cannot be too
careful ---

FBI SHEIK

Yes -- but for the sake of our
discussion things would go much
smoother if you could dispense with
the, how do you say..? Bullshit ---

INT. LIVING ROOM - ZELNICK'S YACHT - A LITTLE LATER

A sprawling and elegant living room with windows overlooking
the water. The Sheik, Mel and Boyle sit across a large coffee
table from Zelnick and Criden. The table is covered with a
traditional Arab feast: kabasa, flat breads, fruits, etc...

Mel, the FBI Sheik and Boyle notice that in the far corner of
the room, there is a SHADOW MAN sitting in a chair, watching
from the dark.

ZELNICK

Shake, as I'm sure you are aware, the
casino business is controlled by a
consortium of hidden interests ---

(off Sheik's nod)

Well, I help oversee the organization
which manages this consortium, as
well as almost every other aspect of
our industry. We're the ones that
make sure that nobody cheats or steals.
We keep track of everyone's secret
points. We handle the weekly skim
from each casino and distribute it to
the point holders. We take care of
the credit, set the odds, operate the
cages and the pits, run the unions,
political protection --- everything.
Hal tafham?

FBI SHEIK

Afham.

ZELNICK

Good --- because Atlantic City is the
product of a considerable investment
of time and money by the group I
represent --- and we have no objection
to you profiting from the fruits of
our labor so long as you're willing
to do it our way ---

FBI SHEIK

Please explain ---

ZELNICK

If you want to become a casino owner,
and member of our group --- you must
first become a U.S. citizen.

FBI SHEIK

And why must I do this?

CRIDEN

The Gas crisis has created an enormous amount of anti-Arab sentiment. As soon as you apply for a license, they'll legislate against it.

ZELNICK

But, if you're a U.S. citizen, it gives us the political cover we need.

We suddenly hear the METALLIC SNAP of a Zippo lighter being opened and ignited as the Shadow Man lights a cigarette.

BOYLE

(interrupting)

Excuse me...

(gesturing to Shadow Man)

Who's that person?

ZELNICK

Nobody you need to concern yourself with.

(back to Sheik)

Mister Criden will handle everything through our friends in Congress, who will introduce a private bill providing you and your family political asylum.

CRIDEN

The process will be no different than it's been for you in Atlantic City with the local and state officials. Do the right thing with the right people, there won't be any problems.

FBI SHEIK

And in exchange for your political contacts and influence --- what is it that I must do for you?

ZELNICK

We'd like you to assume twenty one million in Teamster mortgages on various resort properties in Atlantic City, the Poconos and Miami.

FBI SHEIK

I'm confused. I came here to discuss projects in Atlantic City -- not Miami or this other place he speaks of.

ZELNICK

Shake, what you need to understand is that New Jersey is only the beginning of our plans. Statistics show that the vast majority of gamblers reside on the east coast... and so we are in the process of taking the Atlantic City model and transplanting it along the entire Eastern seaboard; the Poconos. Miami. New Orleans. Savannah. We're currently backing campaigns for
(MORE)

ZELNICK (CONT'D)
 legalized gambling referendums in six
 different states, acquiring all the
 political support we need --- tying
 up all the best properties in the
 areas we're looking to exploit ---

FBI SHEIK
 (cutting him off)
 This is all very interesting. But
 again, I am here to discuss
 opportunities in Atlantic City.

Mel can see that Zelnick is put off by the FBI Sheik's
 close-mindedness.

ZELNICK
 (sternly)
 Doing things our way means investing
 in our whole vision. Not part of it.

FBI SHEIK
 Be that as it may, I would rather
 start with Atlantic City and see how
 things progress.

ZELNICK
 (irritated and suspicious)
 Why is it you're so fixated on Atlantic
 City when there's so much more money
 to be made elsewhere?

Mel flashes the FBI Sheik a glare, trying to signal him to just
 play along with Zelnick --- but the FBI Sheik doesn't get it.

FBI SHEIK
 Because I only invest in what is. Not
 what might be ---

MEL
 (cutting in)
 Money is like manure, Sheik. If you
 spread it around, it can do a lot of
 good. Make things grow. But if you
 pile it all up in one place and let
 it sit there stagnant, it won't do
 anything but smell like shit.
 (gesturing to Zelnick)
 All Mr. Zelnick here is saying is
 that the smart move is to spread it
 around --- and I couldn't agree with
 him more.

FBI SHEIK
 Ah yes, I see. Thank you for that Mel ---
 once again your eloquence illuminates
 the path of my understanding...

ZELNICK
 Shake, I know you are new to this
 country and my business. But please
 believe me when I tell you that my
 (MORE)

ZELNICK (CONT'D)
 organization is perhaps the most
 trustworthy and dependable operating
 in the world today. We always honor
 our agreements and we always make
 money for our partners --- and you
 can be sure that this is true because
 if it weren't --- I'd be dead.

FBI SHEIK
 (nodding)
 Ana fahim ---

ZELNICK
 Good. Then should you decide to move
 forward with us, we cannot formally
 engage until your citizenship has
 been secured --- but I'd like you to
 pledge the twenty-one million in an
 escrow account as a sign of good faith ---

FBI SHEIK
 And if I don't agree to these terms?

ZELNICK
 You can either be at the table, or
 you can be on the menu. The choice is
 yours.

WE HEAR CLAPPING AND CHEERING AS WE CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT COMMAND CENTER - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - NEXT DAY

The small group of FEDS making up the ABSCAM team clap and cheer ---
 giving Mel, Boyle, and the FBI Sheik pats on the back as they
 walk into a large basement which has been converted into the
 investigation's off-site Command Center.

Beers are passed out as everyone celebrates the success of the
 Atlantic City party. A jubilant Grosswald throws his hands around
 both Boyle and Mel --- giving them a simultaneous bear hug.

GROSSWALD
 Holy shit!!! You guys did it! I mean
 you really did it!!!

Boyle and Grosswald start to laugh with excited glee.

ACKERMAN
 (raising his beer to toast)
 Everyone shut up! I want to say
 something.
 (the room quiets down)
 From the very beginning I was convinced
 that this whole op was going to be a
 goddamn train wreck. Boyle, I thought
 you were crazy. And Mel, I knew you
 were nothing but full of shit. I
 remember telling Grosswald that this
 was going to be the end of our careers --

GROSSWALD

(laughing)
He did --- he did.

ACKERMAN

Now here we are, the day after what has got to be one of the most insane episodes in FBI history --- but also one of the most successful. Last night was a smash hit in every way. And I just gotta say ---
(holding up his beer)
You guys made a believer out of me!

Everyone joins in TOASTING and CHEERING Mel, Boyle, and the FBI Sheik --- but the good vibes are quickly extinguished when...

Tuccio STORMS into the room and angrily SLAMS THE DOOR, glaring at Mel like he wants to eat him. Unfazed, Mel begins to take a sip from his beer. Before it reaches his lips Tuccio ANGRILY SMACKS IT out of his hands.

MEL

The fuck's with you?

TUCCIO

Like you don't know.

MEL

Whaddya talking about?

BOYLE

What's up, Joe?

Tuccio hands Boyle a HIGHLIGHTED transcript.

TUCCIO

It's from last night. Mel's little pep talk with the Senator. Read the highlights.

As Boyle reads, his face contorts into a mixture of rage and anxiety...

MEL

What the hell is everyone's problem?

BOYLE

(looks up at Mel, explodes)
You! You're the fucking problem! How many times have we been over the rules of entrapment?! Chapter and verse--- how many times?! And then you go and fucking do this?!
(reading from transcript)
"Explain to him that because you gotta stake in the deal you're gonna use all your power and influence to get him everything he needs"!!??

Boyle angrily HURLS the transcript at Mel.

MEL

What?! I was just trying to make sure you guys got what you needed.

TUCCIO

You were coaching him, putting words into his mouth ---

MEL

I didn't force the Senator to take the money or say what he said!

BOYLE

(picking up transcript)
What's the potential impact of this?

TUCCIO

There's nothing potential about it. The impact is actual, systemic and toxic. Mel's pep talk not only undermines the case against Rand, it cripples virtually every case connected to this operation because every single defense attorney will use this transcript as evidence that Mel did the same with their clients.

A heavy silence overtakes the room.

BOYLE

It's bad. But it's not fatal. We can fix this. We just need another meeting where we can get a clean, unsolicited admission from Senator Rand.

TUCCIO

(after a thoughtful beat)
It doesn't solve the problem, but it might minimize it to an acceptable level ---

MEL

And how we supposed to get another meeting when the guy already took?

BOYLE

You fucked this up, Mel. You're going to figure it out.

TUCCIO

Houseman's office has been calling all morning. He wants the transcripts.

BOYLE

The Director sees this --- and that's it! We're over.

TUCCIO

(after a long, hard beat)
Look, Houseman isn't asking for the warm-up with Rand. He's asking for the transcript from the actual game ---
(hard look at Boyle)
So let's give it to him.

ACKERMAN

Wait a minute. Are you suggesting we bury Mel's pep talk?

TUCCIO

No. I'm suggesting that we show it to Houseman after we get a clean admission from the Senator.

ACKERMAN

I don't know if I'm comfortable with that. You're talking about knowingly withholding vital information from the Director of the FBI.

BOYLE

Come on, Al. There's too much at stake here to let this stop us from serving the greater good.

Ackerman stands there with everyone in the room staring at him waiting for him to protest --- but he doesn't.

TUCCIO

(looking at everyone)
If anyone else here has a problem, speak now or forever hold your shit.

No one says anything. After a beat, Mel speaks up.

MEL

What about Zelnick? He's expecting an answer from the Sheik.

TUCCIO

Reach out tomorrow and let Criden know the Sheik wants to move forward --- and get him to start setting meetings with their politicians ---

MEL

How you gonna do that without puttin' up the twenty one mil Zelnick's askin' for?

TUCCIO

Cause we're gonna stall him for as long as we can --- and see how deep we can get before he calls our bluff.

EXT. LEXINGTON AVE. - MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - EARLY EVENING

Mel cuts across early morning traffic on Lex Ave. He's carrying another one of those pink BAKERY BOX'S from Moishe's. We see him enter a low rent, run-down office building.

INT. SEVENTH FLOOR - LEX AVE. OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Mel exits the elevator and we MOVE WITH HIM as he walks down the hallway. He reaches a nondescript office door and we FOLLOW HIM as he enters.

INT. OFFICE - SEVENTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Mel enters a small, cluttered temporary office. Reclining behind a desk in the middle of the room sits Max. She's on the phone, but gives Mel a huge smile when she sees him.

Mel catches a few fleeting glimpses of the walls which are covered with an array of info --- as he comes over to the desk, puts the bakery box in front of Max and gives her a quick but sensuous kiss on the lips.

MAX (INTO PHONE)

Yeah, Teddy, do what you have to do,
but just make sure the trucks are
there on time ---

As Maxine wraps up her call, Mel reaches into his pocket and takes out his bottle of DEXEDRINE, pops out a couple of pills, swallows. Max hangs up and rises to embrace and kiss Mel.

MAX (CONT'D)

Thanks for the rugelach --- but you
really shouldn't be here.

The phone starts ringing again.

MEL

Need to answer that? ---

MAX

I'll let the service get it. How did
everything go?

MEL

So far so good. How's everything goin'
with you?

MAX

It'd be going a lot better if I had a
hard date.

MEL

I'm workin' on it, pussycat. I'm
workin' on it.

Max reaches into Mel's pocket and pulls out the bottle of Dexedrine and holds it up.

MAX

Since when did you start using speed?

MEL

You know how many plates I'm spinning
right now. I let any of them drop and
we're fucked to forevermore.

MAX

You need to take better care of
yourself. I mean you look really strung
out.

MEL
 Hey, strung out comes with the
 territory.
 (gives her a tender grin)
 But it's nice to know you give a shit.

EXT. VESCO TOWNHOUSE - MANHATTAN - DAY

Late afternoon sunlight washing over the elegant townhouse.

BOYLE V.O.
 Uh, you ready --- are we taping?

ACKERMAN (OVER WALKIE-TALKIE)
 Yeah, wait, okay --- go ahead Jimmy...

INT. STUDY - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Boyle sits behind a desk situated in an elegant mahogany paneled study. In front of him are ten packets of cash. Looking directly into a hidden camera, Boyle speaks stiffly, self consciously.

BOYLE
 (clears his throat)
 This is Special Agent James Boyle.
 Federal Bureau of Investigation. The
 date is August 19th, 1979. Time,
 5:16PM. Location, a townhouse in New
 York City. In a short while, I am
 expecting a meeting with attorney
 Howard Criden and U.S. Congressman,
 "Ozzie" Myers. Also participating in
 this meeting will be Mel Weinberg.
 (indicating to cash)
 I have in front of me fifty thousand
 dollars in five packets of one hundred
 dollar bills.
 (puts cash in desk drawer)
 I am now placing the money in this
 drawer where it will remain until it
 is given to Representative Meyers.

ACKERMAN (OVER WALKIE-TALKIE)
 Okay --- we got it ---

MEL (O.S.)
 You sound like the spawn of
 Frankenstein and fuckin' Howard Cosell.
 Loosen up, will ya?

We hear a big brassy, bombastic orchestra begin to play Franz
 Von Suppe's "Bellman March" --- as the...

THE BULLSHIT MONTAGE BEGINS: Music playing over montage.

CLOSE ON TYPEWRITER: We can see the TABLE OF CONTENTS of a top-
 secret FBI memo being typed out... The memo is entitled:
 "OPERATION ABSCAM: SPECIAL REPORT TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE FEDERAL
 BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION..."

SURVEILLANCE VIDEO FROM TOWNHOUSE STUDY: Timecode: "August 19,
 1979." Present in the video are Boyle, Weinberg, Criden and
 U.S. CONGRESSMAN MICHAEL "OZZIE" MYERS.

MEYERS

Lemme tell you what you're getting for what you're giving --- I control the whole bloc of Congressman from Philly and will make sure they all back an asylum bill for the Sheik. With me in his corner, his chances are a 100% ---

BOYLE

I'm really glad to hear that, Congressman, because this is a lot of money ---

Boyle takes out the fifty thousand in packets of cash and hands them to Meyers with an envelope.

MYERS

You're going about this the right way... Money talks and bullshit walks and it's the same way down in D.C.

BOYLE

(nods, smiles)
Spend it well.

Myers tries to stuff the cash into the envelope. It won't fit.

MYERS

I'm gonna need a bigger envelope.

CLOSE ON TYPEWRITER: The table of contents of the top-secret memo continues to be typed out. We see a list of names --- U.S. Congressman Michael "Ozzie" Meyers, 1st District, (D-PA.) --- U.S. Congressman Raymond Lederer, 3rd District (D-PA.) ---

SURVEILLANCE VIDEO FROM TOWNHOUSE: Timecode: September 7, 1979. We see Criden introducing **U.S. CONGRESSMAN RICHARD KELLY** to Boyle and Mel.

CRIDEN (ON MONITOR)

This is Richard Kelly. Representative from the 5th District in Florida ---

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL BASEMENT COMMAND CENTER: Tuccio, Ackerman, Boyle sitting around a table in the command center watching the Kelly video over beers and burgers.

We can see Mel in the background, talking on the phone. After hanging up, Mel pops a few Dexedrine and then approaches.

TUCCIO

So what did Angie say?

MEL

He just having trouble understanding why we need another meeting with Rand.

TUCCIO

Well then give him some of your bullshit and make him understand!

MEL

(savagely barking back)
 Hey, I'm dancin' as fast I can
 motherfucker --- but Errichetti said
 he won't do shit unless we make good
 on our word and deposit that two mil
 in his friend's bank.

BOYLE

So if Houseman green-lights this and
 we make the deposit --- Angie will
 set up the meet?

MEL

Yeah. No question.

BOYLE

(off Tuccio's reticence)
 There's zero risk for us, Joe ---
 it's our account. Money's just gonna
 be sitting there, earning interest.

TUCCIO

I'll ask, but it's Houseman's call.

CLOSE ON TYPEWRITER: The name currently being typed out --- **U.S. Congressman John Wilson Jenrette, Jr., 6th District (D-S.C.)**

INT. BASEMENT COMMAND CENTER - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - DAY: Tuccio, Ackerman and Grosswald are crowded around the TV MONITORS watching the meeting between Boyle, Mel, Criden and **U.S. CONGRESSMAN JOHN W. JENRETTE JR.** Timecode: "November 11, 1979."

CONGRESSMAN JENRETTE

...If you invest in my district it
 will give me the cover I need with my
 people --- explains why I'm helping
 Sheik Kaboom or Sheik Kabaam ---

BOYLE

So you'd rather us commit to invest
 in your district than take the cash?

CONGRESSMAN JENRETTE

You kidding? I got larceny in my blood.

Tuccio and the rest are all shocked and disgusted as they watch Jenrette scoop the packets of cash off the desk and stuff them in his jacket and pant pockets.

SURVEILLANCE VIDEO FROM TOWNHOUSE: Timecode: November 20th, 1979. Criden introducing **U.S. CONGRESSMAN FRANK THOMPSON** to Boyle and Mel.

CRIDEN

Representative Frank Thompson from
 New Jersey's 4th District ---

CLOSE ON TYPEWRITER: The list of names on the memo's table of contents continues grow. The name currently being typed is: **U.S. Congressman John M. Murphy, 16th district, (D-N.Y.)** ---

INT - HOTEL SUITE - JFK AIRPORT HILTON - DAY: Boyle, Mel and Criden sit in the living room of the suite. Boyle's on the phone.

CRIDEN (CONT'D)

It's already the end of November ---
Zelnick wants to know when he can
expect the money from the Sheik ---

Mel doesn't answer. He looks to Boyle.

BOYLE

Uh, soon --- very soon ---

CRIDEN

Jimmy, we've been following through
on our end. He wants a hard date ---

BOYLE

How about the end of December --- the
latest.

CRIDEN

Why don't we just say, December 29th.

MEL

Why the 29th?

CRIDEN

It's Zelnick's birthday.

Boyle gives Criden a nod. We can see the high impact of this
hard date agreement on Mel's face.

There's a knock at the door. Mel gets up, answers it and ushers
CONGRESSMAN JOHN MURPHY into the suite.

As Mel and Congressman Murphy shake hands in the background, we
see Criden take out a list of typed names and hand it to Boyle.

CRIDEN (CONT'D)

Here's what I'm trying to line up
over the next month.

Putting the list in his pocket, Boyle and Criden rise to greet
the Congressman as he approaches.

INT. BASEMENT COMMAND CENTER - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - DAY:

Mel, Boyle, Tuccio, Ackerman and Grosswald.

BOYLE

(reads from Criden's list)
John Murtha, Co-chair of the House
Ethics Committee. Pete Rodino, Chairman
of the House Judiciary Committee.
Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neil ---

GROSSWALD

Tip O'Neil?!

BOYLE

Yup. But I saved the best for last.
(beat) The President's Chief of Staff,
Hamilton Jordan...

TUCCIO

Get the fuck out!

(MORE)

TUCCIO (CONT'D)
 (takes list and reads)
 How deep does this thing go?

MEL
 Greed's a bottomless pit. Always has
 been.

Boyle, Tuccio and Grosswald are definitely thunderstruck ---
 but the expression on Ackerman's face is one of abject fear.

CLOSE ON TYPEWRITER: The TABLE OF CONTENTS of the Memo being
 completed --- The Memo being SEALED into a TOP-SECRET FOLDER ---

INT - DIRECTOR HOUSEMAN'S OFFICE - FBI HQ - WASHINGTON: FBI
 Director Houseman sits behind his desk, reading from the open
 ABSCAM SPECIAL REPORT. He has a profoundly disturbed look on
 his face as he reads the list of potential new targets.

HOUSEMAN
 (muttering, horrified)
 Jesus Christ.

Houseman pulls out a cigarette and lights it, takes a deep and
 anxious drag. Cringing with fear and dismay as if he'd just
 been punched in the face by some unseen hand, Houseman gazes
 out his window at the illuminated dome of the Capitol Building.

END MUSIC AND BULLSHIT MONTAGE.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOARDWALK - ATLANTIC CITY - MORNING

SUPER: "December 27, 1979 - Atlantic City"

An epic shot of the morning sun rising over the ramshackle
 majesty of the Atlantic City boardwalk.

EXT./INT. LIMO - STREET - ATLANTIC CITY - CONTINUOUS

Grosswald's behind the wheel --- looking at the addresses on
 buildings as he passes them. Boyle and Mel are in the backseat.

MEL
 (to Boyle)
 Zelnick's having Criden call me every
 day now ---

GROSSWALD
 (hollers back at Mel)
 The bank's address --- ?

MEL
 (looks at a piece of paper)
 Fifty-six twenty-four --- Supposed to
 be on a corner.

EXT. BOARDWALK BANK - ATLANTIC CITY - A LITTLE LATER

Situated on the corner of St. James and Broadway, the Boardwalk
 Bank is just your average local bank. We see the limo pull up
 to the front of the bank. Mel and Boyle exit the car. Boyle has
 a large suitcase handcuffed to his wrist.

MEL
 ...I don't know what to tell him any
 more --- I got no stalls left to give
 these guys. And even if I did, they
 ain't hearin' em ---

BOYLE
 Who are we meeting with?

MEL
 (looking at paper)
 Marvin Donaldson, bank's President.

BOYLE
 And he knows we're coming?

MEL
 Yeah, yeah, Angie set it all up ---

WE MOVE WITH BOYLE AND MEL as they enter...

INT. BOARDWALK BANK - ATLANTIC CITY - CONTINUOUS

The inside of the bank is just as bland as the outside. Phones are ringing. Customers lined up at the teller windows. Your typical Wednesday morning. Mel and Boyle speak in hushed tones.

BOYLE
 I get that Zelnick's on a short fuse ---

MEL
 Short fuse? That was yesterday. Today
 they're ready to blow ---

Boyle looks over to an ACCOUNT MANAGER at his desk.

BOYLE
 Where's Marvin Donaldson's office?

The account manager points to a back corner office and we continue to MOVE WITH MEL AND BOYLE as they make their way towards Donaldson's office. A SECRETARY sits at her desk next to the door.

MEL
 Zelnick's deadline is only a few days
 away. You gotta bring down the curtain
 on this show!

BOYLE
 And we will.

MEL
 When?

BOYLE
 (to secretary)
 Please tell Mr. Donaldson that James
 Hoyle and Mel Weinberg from Abdul
 Enterprises are here to see him.

SECRETARY
 Of course. Just one moment.

She disappears into the office.

MEL

When, Boyle?

BOYLE

As soon as we get our meeting with Rand, we're done. It's over. Tooch will move on the indictments the next day.

The Secretary comes back out, followed by **MARVIN DONALDSON**: a fat, bald, forty-something man in a Brooks Brothers suit. Donaldson greets them both with a hearty smile and handshake.

DONALDSON

Gentlemen, Marvin Donaldson. A real pleasure to meet you both.

(ushering them inside)

Please come in.

INT. DONALDSON'S OFFICE - BOARDWALK BANK - A LITTLE LATER

Donaldson's secretary sits at a conference table, watching as the last packet of hundred dollar bills is processed through a CASH COUNTING MACHINE. The two million in cash sits next to the machine in a neat stack.

Behind her, we see Donaldson at his desk with Boyle, walking him through a series of SIGNATURES.

DONALDSON

James, if I could just have three more signatures --- right here, here, and here --- and date the last one ---

Boyle signs the last documents. The Secretary nods at Donaldson, affirming that all the money is there.

DONALDSON (CONT'D)

Please take it to the vault.

As the Secretary leaves the office with the money, Donaldson gathers up all the documents.

DONALDSON (CONT'D)

I'm just going to make copies of these. I'll be right back.

Donaldson quickly exits the office.

MEL

Jimmy, I vouched for you guys. I went on record with Dom who went on record with Lansky. Now you know what that means. If we don't end this before the 29th, I'm a dead man on the street.

BOYLE

(locks eyes with Mel)

Mel, mark my words: I'm not going to let anything happen to you or your family.

MEL

Mark 'em yourself --- cause the only thing that'll protect me is if arrests are made and indictments handed down.

Donaldson returns to the office and hands the documents over.

DONALDSON

Here are your copies of the account documentation --- Your receipt for your deposit --- Temporary checks if you wish to draw on the account ---

BOYLE

We're not going to be drawing on this account.

DONALDSON

Well, in any case, you'll be receiving a checkbook by the end of next week.

BOYLE

So that's it?

DONALDSON

(broad smile)

That's it. I'd like to thank you both, and the Sheik, for doing business with us here at Boardwalk Bank. And as a token of our appreciation, I'd like to present you with this gift.

Donaldson hands Boyle a box. Boyle opens it and sees a cheap, gold-plated PEN and a MECHANICAL PENCIL with the bank's name engraved on the side of them. Mel LAUGHS.

MEL

We just deposited two mil in cash and this is what we get?

BOYLE

I'd rather have the toaster.

Boyle gives the pen set back to Donaldson.

EXT. BOARDWALK BANK - ATLANTIC CITY - MINUTE LATER

They exit the bank and walk towards the limo.

BOYLE

So when are you going to tell Estelle?

MEL

I dunno. I gotta find the right moment.

BOYLE

Along with the bad, you've done some good Mel. When this breaks it's going to change things for the better. And you can be proud of that.

MEL

Proud of what? Whaddya think it is we've done, Boyle?

BOYLE

We've rooted out organized crime and political corruption at the highest levels ---

MEL

(shaking his head)
We've been shoveling smoke --- nothing's gonna change. Not really.

BOYLE

How can you say that?

MEL

Not believing in bullshit is like not believing in gravity --- it's part of who we are in this country --- and it'll always be there --- cause Americans, they don't want the bad truth. They want the good lie.

EXT. ALIBI CLUB - WASHINGTON, DC - LATE AFTERNOON

A light snow falls over a townhouse that is home to the most exclusive and oldest social club for Washington's power elite. Behind the townhouse looms the illuminated dome of the Capitol Building.

We see a CAB pull up in front of the club and Tuccio gets out and enters the club.

INT. LIBRARY - ALIBI CLUB - WASHINGTON, DC - CONTINUOUS

We follow Tuccio into a large and handsome panelled library. Small groups of men have quiet conversations throughout.

Stopping for a beat to look around, Tuccio sees FBI Director Houseman in the far corner of the room seated in front of a crackling fireplace. Someone is sitting in the chair opposite the Director, but Tuccio can't see who it is.

Houseman waves Tuccio over and we move with him as he approaches.

HOUSEMAN

Joseph. I appreciate you coming on such short notice. But I'm afraid this face to face simply couldn't wait.

TUCCIO

Of course sir -- What's the problem?

Houseman pulls out a transcript and holds it out to Tuccio.

HOUSEMAN

Mr. Weinberg's pep-talk with Senator Rand ----

This revelation drops on Tuccio like a fucking bomb.

HOUSEMAN (CONT'D)

I know you had your reasons for withholding this from me --- but now
(MORE)

HOUSEMAN (CONT'D)
that I've been made aware, I've got
to do something about it.

TUCCIO
How'd you get it?

ACKERMAN (O.S.)
I gave it to him, Joe.

We PAN WITH TUCCIO as he whips around and is shocked to discover that the person seated across from Houseman is Agent Alvin Ackerman.

Rage welling up in Tuccio like lava...

HOUSEMAN
Don't hold it against him. Agent
Ackerman was simply responding to the
unfortunate circumstances created by
an out of control informant, an over-
ambitious U.S. attorney and an
inexperienced supervising agent.

INT. MEL'S BEDROOM - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Mel's lying on the bed, watching television --- a segment on the Presidential campaign trail and the run-up to the election dovetails into a segment about President Carter attending new years eve fund raiser celebration in New York.

He glances at his watch: 1:30 AM. Turning off the TV, Mel gets out of bed and pops a few Dexedrine. He then opens the door, and peers out into the hallway.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

WE MOVE WITH MEL as he slips through the darkened hallway --- approaching the upstairs den where he hears a group of men KIBITZING and LAUGHING.

Stealing a peek into the room, Mel can see that Boyle, Grosswald and three other agents are having a late-night poker game. Mel tiptoes past them without anyone noticing and disappears down the back stairs to the kitchen.

INT. BASEMENT COMMAND CENTER - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - A MINUTE LATER

Closing the basement door behind him, Mel creeps down the steps, moves to a huge steel shelf in the back of the room lined with rows and rows of labeled and dated videotapes. He scans the tapes until he finds the one he's looking for --- "CONGRESSMAN MYERS -- August 19, 1979" --- pulls it ---

Moving to two half-inch video recorders connected to each other, Mel puts the labeled tape into one machine, a blank tape into the other, and begins DUPING the Myers tape.

Mel then cuts across the room to a portable refrigerator, reaches around to its back, and unhooks a hidden key ring. He uses one of the keys to open up a locked filing cabinet.

Mel rifles through the files until he finds the one he's looking for --- "OPERATION ABSCAM: SPECIAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL..."

INT. SECOND FLOOR DEN - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Your typical ballbreaking banter and bullshit. Tuccio suddenly APPEARS at the door, looking fucked up and far from home.

TUCCIO
(to Boyle)
I need to talk to you.

INT. BASEMENT COMMAND CENTER - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Mel is XEROXING off the report when he hears the muffled sound of men ARGUING in the townhouse's study right above him.

Curious, Mel stops Xeroxing, moves to the video monitors, flips them on and sees the crude, hidden camera images of Boyle and Tuccio having it out in the study. Mel puts on the headphones.

BOYLE
How could Ackerman do this to us!?

TUCCIO
He pussied out --- couldn't handle it. So he decided to save himself.

BOYLE (ON MONITOR)
So that's it? Houseman won't even approve another meeting with Senator Rand?

TUCCIO (ON MONITOR)
You're not hearing me, Jimmy. Houseman's going to pull the plug on the whole thing -- and he's positioning us to take the fall.

BOYLE (ON MONITOR)
And so Errichetti, casino commissioners, six Congressmen, the fuckin' Senator --- Zelnick and Lansky?

TUCCIO (ON MONITOR)
They're going to dump it all.

INT. STUDY - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Boyle rubs his head and paces, trying to get a grip on it all.

BOYLE
And this is all because of what? --- Mel's pep-talk with Rand?

TUCCIO
It's not just that. Everything about this operation scares Houseman ---

BOYLE
Oh, but he's not scared about the fact that Atlantic City's corrupt to
(MORE)

BOYLE (CONT'D)
 the core --- or alarmed that U.S.
 Congressmen and Senators can be so
 easily bought off?! He's not shitting
 his pants over how many politicians
 Zelnick and Lansky might have locked
 up in their pocket and why?

TUCCIO
 He's playing politics Jimmy. It's an
 election year ---

BOYLE
 (thundering)
 Bullshit! This has nothing to do with
 politics and everything to do with
 the worst kind of cowardice ---
 cowardice in the face of absolute
 guilt.

Tuccio stands there in devastated silence.

BOYLE (CONT'D)
 What about Mel? Without the arrests
 and indictments he's out there naked
 on the street.

TUCCIO
 As far as Houseman's concerned, Mel's
 a fucking Dixie Cup, a throwaway.

BOYLE
 We can't just leave him out there.

TUCCIO
 Jimmy, we're going to have enough
 trouble covering our own asses.

BOYLE
 (after a long beat)
 I don't know if I can swallow it.

TUCCIO
 You've got no other choice.

BOYLE
 I can pick up a whistle and start to
 blow --- To the Times, the Post ---

TUCCIO
 Houseman will crucify you and he'll
 force me to help him.

BOYLE
 Then fuck him and fuck you.

TUCCIO
 Jimmy --- you of all people know if
 there's one thing the Bureau's good
 at, I mean really good at, it's
 character assassination.

Moving to one of the armchairs in front of the massive Mahogany partner's desk, Boyle grabs the top of the chair and leans down as if he's overwhelmed with nausea.

TUCCIO (CONT'D)

It'd be like running into a machine gun.

We see and HEAR Boyle's GRIP TIGHTEN INTENSELY ON THE WOOD. And then in a sudden and visceral EXPLOSION OF TOWERING FRUSTRATION AND RAGE, he swings the chair above his head and begins SMASHING IT against the partners desk.

INT. BASEMENT COMMAND CENTER - VESCO TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mel is mesmerized by the sight of Boyle wielding the chair like a battlehammer --- using all of his strength to try to DESTROY the desk, but the only thing he ends up destroying is the chair.

Mel TURNS THE TV OFF...

EXT. MEL'S STREET - LONG ISLAND - DAY

Mel pulls into the driveway of his house, gets out of his car carrying a briefcase.

SUPER: "December 29, 1979"

INT. LIVING ROOM - MEL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mel walks in and finds Willie on the floor playing video games.

MEL

How you doing boychick?

WILLIE

(preoccupied with videogame)
Hey Pop.

MEL

Where's Mom?

WILLIE

I think she's in the bedroom.

INT. OFFICE - MEL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Mel places his briefcase on his desk, removes the duped tapes and the copy of "OPERATION ABSCAM: SPECIAL REPORT."

He then unlocks a filing cabinet and pulls out a LARGE PARCEL BANKER'S BOX. Inside the box are even more duped videotapes, audiotapes, and documents that Mel has apparently accumulated over the course of the investigation.

Mel puts the videotapes into the box and then places the SPECIAL REPORT on top of everything, as if it's to be read first.

Grabbing some packaging tape out of his desk, he seals the box, then applies a ADDRESS STICKER to it. Typed on that sticker: **"CONFIDENTIAL; LESLIE MAITLAND, NEW YORK TIMES..."**

Before leaving his office, Mel shakes out a HANDFUL OF DEXEDRINE and washes them down with a swig of whiskey.

INT. BEDROOM - MEL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Estelle's on the bed, reading People Magazine. Mel walks in.

MEL

Hey --

ESTELLE

I didn't know you were here---

MEL

Yeah, I'm in and out. I just came home to change for an important meeting... But I'll be back in a few hours...

ESTELLE

Okay.

MEL

Any chance you and I could go out to dinner tonight, alone?

Estelle can see the tension in Mel's face.

ESTELLE

What's wrong?

MEL

Nothing. I just wanna talk. Get some things off my chest.

ESTELLE

I'll see if I can get the sitter.

EXT. MEL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Mel comes out dressed in his best suit and coat. He has the ABSCAM BANKER'S BOX in his arms. He locks the box in the trunk of his car and walks towards the driver's side door...

A silver Cadillac Deville suddenly pulls up in front of his driveway and stops.

Sonny Blitz is the first to get out of the car. He throws Mel a vicious smile as Dominic Casele emerges from the Caddie along with two of his Bonebreakers.

MEL

Hey--- Dom --- Whaddya doing here?

DOM

(heavy)
What I'm told.

EXT. MEL'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

FROM DOWN THE STREET we see Mel get into the back seat of the Deville, Bonebreakers on either side of him. The car peels away from the curb and disappears around a corner.

EXT. ALLIED AMUSEMENTS - OUTSKIRTS OF ATLANTIC CITY - LATER

The same dark and dingy street of industrial warehouses we began the film with.

MEL (V.O.)
Whaddya want?!

SCARFO (V.O.)
Whaddya think I want? The truth.

THE CAMERA SLOWLY ZOOMS ON the Allied Amusement's warehouse ---
as we pick up the scene where we last left it...

MEL (V.O.)
The truth? (Beat) The truth... The
truth is bullshit!!

INT. RUMPUS ROOM - ALLIED AMUSEMENTS - CONTINUOUS

Scarfo's SAVAGE SKULL PUNCH sends Mel hurling to the floor.

SCARFO
The truth's bullshit? You're bullshit!
(STOMPS Mel in the guts)
Commitments were made based on the
deal with the Arab. Financial
commitments --- that the man in Florida
is now on the hook for.

Scarfo takes out a GUN, crouches down to Mel, and puts the muzzle
on his left KNEE ---

SCARFO (CONT'D)
What kind of game is the sheik playing,
Mel? Why didn't he get the money up?

MEL
Because there is no sheik ---

Without missing a beat, Scarfo PULLS THE TRIGGER --- AND BOOOOM ---
BLOWS MEL'S KNEE TO SHIT --- Mel SHRIEKS --- the mind-numbing
agony overloads his circuits and he begins to go into shock.

SCARFO
I don't want him tapping out.

Two Goons peel Mel off the floor, sit him in the chair and hold
him up. The third Goon takes out a glass pellet of smelling
salts, snaps it open and waves it under Mel's nose. Mel takes
one whiff and RECOILS back into consciousness.

SCARFO (CONT'D)
It's gonna be like this all night ---
piece by piece. Until you gimme a
straight answer.

Scarfo puts the muzzle of his gun to Mel's other kneecap.

SCARFO (CONT'D)
The truth, Mel.

Mel HYPERVENTILATING his way through the pain...

MEL
I'm tryin' to tell you. The sheik ---
everyone surrounding him --- they're
all Feebs.

SCARFO
 (pulls gun hammer back)
 Keep fucking with me ---

MEL
 I swear on the soul of my son, the
 whole thing's an FBI sting operation.

SCARFO
 I don't believe it. No way the Feebs
 coulda pulled something like this
 off.

MEL
 No, not unless they had someone show
 them how ---

SCARFO
 You crazy rat motherfucker.
 (puts gun to Mel's mouth)
 You shoulda walked away when Dom gave
 you the chance.

MEL
 You're right ---
 (tears welling up)
 But the Feds have got nothing on
 Zelnick or any of his key people,
 except for Criden and the politicians ---
 and they ain't gonna move against
 them either.

SCARFO
 You're full of shit, Weinberg. That
 don't even make any sense.

MEL
 It's politics. Sense don't enter into
 the equation.

Mel leans forward as if he were about to throw up ---

SHADOW MAN (O.S.)
 (gruff Yiddish accent)
 How do I know you're telling us the
 truth?

MEL
 (cackles)
 That's all I got left ---

The Shadow Man suddenly emerges from the darkness. We can only
 see him from behind as he walks up to Mel and examines his face.

SHADOW MAN
 Know what, Mel? I believe you.

Mel starts to LAUGH deliriously. Feverish with pain from his
 knee and arm, he suddenly seizes up and grabs his LEFT CHEST as
 if he were just stabbed there with an icepick -- and then
 COLLAPSES TO THE FLOOR -- overwhelmed by the onset of a massive
 HEART ATTACK.

SCARFO
The fuck is this..?

GOON
Look's like he's having a heart attack.

SCARFO
You gotta be shittin me.

MEL'S POV: Looking at the Shadow Man's shoes...

SCARFO (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Whaddy wanna do?

SHADOW MAN (O.S.)
Take care of him.

Darkness overtakes Mel's vision as we...

FADE TO BLACK:

CLOSE ON BLACK TELEVISION SCREEN:

The TV is SWITCHED ON. A stupid 70's commercial plays, before the channel is switched to the CBS Evening News. DAN RATHER BREAKS THE ABSCAM STORY ---

CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS BACK TO REVEAL:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - ATLANTIC CITY HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Seated in the room are Boyle, Estelle and Willie. Boyle's jacket is off and the FBI BADGE clipped to his belt is in plain view. Although they're all watching the TV, the tension between Estelle and Boyle is so extreme you can cut it with your finger.

A DOCTOR suddenly appears. Everyone gets up.

DOCTOR
Agent Boyle --- He'd like to speak
with you first.

Boyle follows Doctor to an ICU ROOM being guarded by two COPS.

INT. ICU ROOM - ATLANTIC CITY HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Boyle finds Mel in bed, his leg in a cast, elevated by a sling. His wrist is bandaged. There's a gruesome STITCH WOUND running vertically through the center of his chest from open heart surgery. He's hooked up to all manner of monitoring machines.

MEL
What happened? These stiffs won't
tell me anything.

BOYLE
You were dumped at Emergency in
critical condition. They had to crack
you open --- do a bypass.

MEL
How long I been out?

BOYLE
 Been touch and go for the last five
 days.
 (moving close to the bed)
 Mel, who tuned you up?

MEL
 I tuned myself up ---

BOYLE
 That's not good enough.

MEL
 (hard look)
 It's all your ever going to get.

BOYLE
 (after a heavy beat)
 This was all my fault... I broke my
 promise --- I'm sorry ---

MEL
 I know --- and I'll get over it as
 long as my family is okay ---

BOYLE
 Everyone's fine. Estelle and Willie
 are right outside... Maxine wanted to
 come, but...

MEL
 What does Estelle know?

BOYLE
 That I'm an FBI agent --- that you
 were working for us, not some Sheik ---
 and now that the story's leaked to
 the press, she knows why ---

MEL
 Somebody leaked the story --- ?

BOYLE
 Yeah it's all over the news. CBS even
 got videos of the some of the payoffs.
 Washington's going batshit --- like
 it was fucking Watergate --- they all
 think you did it...

MEL
 Yeah, well they're only half wrong. I
 was gonna do it but got picked up
 before I could finish the job ---
 (with a raised eyebrow)
 Had to of been someone else ---

BOYLE
 (blowing off Mel's look)
 Well in any case it all worked out.
 Arrests have been made, indictments
 are in the works, grand juries should
 be convening in a couple of weeks.

Mel grins, closes his eyes with relief.

MEL
Blowing the whistle took a lot of
left tit Jimmy --
(opens his eyes and locks
with Boyle's)
I'm proud of you ---

BOYLE
What makes you so sure I'm the one
that did it?

MEL
Cause you're the only bog-trotting,
shanty asswipe I know that's noble
enough to run into a machine gun.

Boyle's smile is his silent admission --- which Mel acknowledges
with a grateful nod. After the shared moment...

BOYLE
You ready for Estelle and Willie?

MEL
The fuck am I going to tell them?

BOYLE
That's the good thing about the truth,
Mel. You don't have to think about
it. It just is.

The expression on Mel's face goes fragile with fear.

MEL
I don't want to lose them, Jimmy.

BOYLE
If you don't do this, you will.

Mel shuts his eyes in dread and nods. Boyle disappears. A few
seconds later, Estelle and Willie come into the room. Estelle
is overwhelmed by a storm of conflicting emotion ---

Willie sees the state his father is in and starts to cry. Mel
reaches out for him, takes his hand, pulls him in close and
tenderly consoles him.

MEL
It's okay boychick, I'm okay. But I
gotta tell you something ---

WILLIE
What?

Mel gently lifts up Willie's chin to look him in the eye.

MEL
This is the hardest thing I've ever
had to say cause it's gonna be the
hardest thing you've ever had to hear ---
but you need to know that I -- me --
your father ---

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

(deep breath)

All that I have, all that I know, I stole. (Beat) If I saw you holding a cigarette a certain way, and I liked it, I'd steal it. I'm not a businessman, never have been. I'm a bullshit artist, a hustler, a thief --- and that's the truth of me. It's all a lie, my whole life --- everything --- Except for you, Willie.

(choking up)

There's nothing truer in this world than my love for you. You're the only honest thing I've ever done.

Mel breaks down and starts to CRY. Willie hugs his father. Mel looks over at Estelle --- they exchange a soulful, heartbreaking glance before she leaves the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT - MANHATTAN - LATE AFTERNOON

It's a cold and windy day in New York.

SUPER: "Three Months Later"

INT. TUCCIO'S OFFICE - JUSTICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The floor of Tuccio's office is awash in a ocean of stacks of files --- the walls are covered by charts, time-lines, etc... -- everything pertaining to the upcoming ABSCAM trials.

Boyle, Tuccio and Mel are seated around a small table covered with transcripts. Although not fully recovered, Mel looks well on his way -- in a wheel chair, leg still in a cast.

TUCCIO

Look Mel, the defense is going to try to nail us on this, so when they ask you if Boyle specifically authorized you to make the approach on Tony Denato at Stella's --- you need to answer in the affirmative.

MEL

(chuckling)

In the affirmative... So you want me to bullshit.

TUCCIO

No. We don't lie. We never lie. We just put our own interpretation on the truth.

MEL

I like that, that's good. I shoulda used that line with Estelle.

BOYLE

How's she doing?

MEL

Okay --- Considering --- I dunno, I think somehow everything finally coming out, it freed her up.

TUCCIO

And you're sure she's going to wait until after the trials to serve you with the divorce papers?

MEL

Yeah--- I gave her everything anyway.

Suddenly, the door to the office BURSTS OPEN and in storms FBI Director Houseman looking like a man out for blood. Boyle and Tuccio are surprised and disturbed to see him in this state.

Houseman's holding a FILE in his hand --- focusing all of his barely controlled fury on Mel. Tuccio opens his mouth to say something, but is immediately silenced by Houseman's stone cold, "shut the fuck up" glare.

HOUSEMAN

Where's the money, Mel?

MEL

Money?

(he looks around the table)

What money?

HOUSEMAN

The two million.

MEL

Two million?

HOUSEMAN

The two million dollars that I authorized --- that you were supposed to have deposited in the Boardwalk Bank --- where is it?

MEL

Whaddya mean where is it? It's in a bank account ---

HOUSEMAN

No, Mel, I don't think so ---

BOYLE

(interrupting)

Sir, excuse me, but I personally deposited the money in the bank.

HOUSEMAN

WHAT BANK! THERE IS NO FUCKING BANK!!!

Boyle and Tuccio are freaked and totally confused.

BOYLE

I don't understand ---

Houseman angrily throws a paper-clipped stack of PHOTOS at Boyle.

HOUSEMAN

Those were taken early this morning when agents from the Atlantic City office went to close the Abscam account.

ANGLE CLOSE ON A SERIES OF PHOTOS as Tuccio and Boyle flip through them. The snapshots reveal that where there was once the Boardwalk Bank, there is now just an EMPTY, UNOCCUPIED SHELL OF A BUILDING.

Boyle and Tuccio are mortified and speechless.

BOYLE

Did you do this?

HOUSEMAN

Of course he did! That's who he is! That's what he does!

MEL

Look, I wanna be very clear right now. I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

(raised eyebrow)

But let's just say for argument's sake --- hypothetically speaking --- that I did take your fuckin' money. (Beat) Whaddya you gonna do about it?

HOUSEMAN

I'm going to prosecute you to the fullest extent of the law!

MEL

You're only a few weeks out from the start of the trials. Seven Congressmen. One Senator. Biggest case in FBI history --- and you wanna go after your linchpin witness? Hey, I'm not a lawyer but wouldn't doing that play right into the defense's strategy? Undermine every case you got?

(lights cigarette)

Think about it Larry. I'm your Golden Hebe. Without my credibility everything falls apart. So I dunno, maybe the smartly move here is to just pretend like this never happened? ---

Mel slides the photos towards Houseman.

MEL (CONT'D)

Cause if you fuck me, you fuck yourself --- hypothetically speaking.

Houseman stands there palpitating with rage, the desperation of his predicament like a scar disfiguring his face.

HOUSEMAN

I wish the heart attack killed you.

MEL

I understand that this is difficult,
and I don't blame you for being upset.
But it's like you said, Larry, when
it comes to protecting the foundations
of our democracy...

(cuts a grin)

Sometimes you need to take it in the
ass for the team.

INT. BATHROOM - MARRIOT HOTEL - MANHATTAN - DAY

Mel's cast is off and he's completely recovered. He stands in
front of a mirror in the bathroom --- adjusts his tie and primps
himself like an actor about to go on stage.

Max appears in the mirror in an open robe, nothing under it.
She comes up behind Mel and gives him a hug.

MAX

It's gonna be a helluva show.

MEL

Yeah.

She hands Mel a small, thin BOX which has been wrapped.

MEL (CONT'D)

What's this?

MAX

It's that thing you wanted me to wrap
for Jimmy.

MEL

Oh right, thanks.

(smiles, gesturing to box)
Hey -- This was a beautiful touch to
the play, Max. One of those genius
little details I never woulda come up
with on my own.

MAX

It wasn't that big of a deal.

MEL

No, I was there --- It was a moment.

(locks eyes in mirror)

I couldn't have pulled this off without
you.

Mel turns around to face Max --- locks eyes with her.

MEL (CONT'D)

I love you Max.

A vulnerable, soul-stirring expression cracks across Max's face ---
and she gives Mel a deep, sensuous kiss.

We suddenly hear a BANGING on the door.

GROSSWALD (O.S.)

Come on, Mel! We're gonna be late.

Giving Max a final kiss, Mel begins to head out of the bathroom --- but is stopped by her voice...

MAX

I love you too.

They exchange a terrified smile before Mel is out the door.

EXT. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - MANHATTAN - DAY

The courtroom steps are a MEDIA CIRCUS --- Reporters, TV Crews, Photographers all covering the first ABSCAM trial.

A BLUE VAN pulls up. The doors open. Grosswald, Polk, and Boyle all get out and form a human SHIELD around Mel. Mel uses a cane to walk as they cut their way through the ocean of flashbulbs, microphones and insanity.

INT. HALLWAY - FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - MANHATTAN - A LITTLE LATER

As Mel is ushered down the hall he suddenly catches sight of Estelle, Willie and FRANK, Estelle's boyfriend, waiting by the door to the witness chamber. Mel and Willie see each other and huge smiles crack across both their faces...

MEL

Hey boychick, glad you made it ---

WILLIE

Me too Pop ---

MEL

So Grosswald here has got some prime seats for you --- you're gonna be sitting with all the FBI agents ---

WILLIE

Cool ---

MEL

Why don't you go with him now --- I'll catch up with you later...

Grosswald ushers Willie down the hall and into the courtroom --- leaving Mel standing there with Estelle, Boyle and Frank... After an awkward beat, Mel looks to Frank and Boyle.

MEL (CONT'D)

Could you guys give us a second?

Boyle and Frank step away giving them some privacy. Mel takes a beat to admire Estelle --- she looks fabulous, better than we've ever seen her --- as though she's bloomed.

MEL (CONT'D)

You look fantastic. Really ---

ESTELLE

Thanks, I feel good ---

MEL

You know I really appreciate you bringing Willie down here --- so he can see me like this ---

ESTELLE

He's your son ---

Mel nods... and then gestures to Frank...

MEL

So how are you and Frank doing?

ESTELLE

Things are good --- this is better
for me --- you know?

MEL

I'm happy for you ---

ESTELLE

You'll drop Willie off at school
tomorrow morning?

MEL

Yeah.

ESTELLE

Break a leg up there...

With that, Estelle walks to Frank and they exit the courthouse together. Boyle comes over and gives Mel an anxious look...

BOYLE

You ready?

MEL

Yeah.

Mel hands Boyle the gift box.

BOYLE

What's this?

MEL

A little souvenir. Nothing fancy. But
I thought you'd appreciate it.

Mel gives Boyle a smile and wink and disappears into the Witness Chamber, the Bailiff closing the door behind him.

INT. COURTROOM - FEDERAL COURTHOUSE - MANHATTAN - LATER

The gallery's packed. Tension is thick. Congressman Ozzie Myers and his Defense Team quietly confer on one side of the aisle. Tuccio and his Staff are in a pregame huddle.

ANGLE CLOSE ON BOYLE, who's sitting in the last aisle opening the gift. First he takes off the bow, then tears the paper, revealing a VELVET PEN BOX --- when suddenly ---

A solemn looking JUDGE appears behind the high bench.

COURT BAILIFF

All rise! This court is now in session,
the Honorable Judge Henry Pratt
residing.

The court settles down, everyone takes their seat.

JUDGE
 (to bailiff)
 Bring in the jury.

The jury files in and takes their seats.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
 Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.
 Mr. Tuccio, do the people wish to
 call their next witness?

TUCCIO
 Yes, your Honor. The people call Melvin
 Weinberg.

As the Bailiff leads Mel into the courtroom and ushers him
 towards the witness stand, Boyle OPENS THE BOX in his hands.

Revealing; a cheap, gold-plated PEN and MECHANICAL PENCIL with
"BOARDWALK BANK" engraved onto the sides.

Boyle rubs his head --- like he doesn't want to smile --- he
 doesn't want to laugh --- but he can't help it. He looks up at
 Mel, shaking his head in reluctant awe and affection ---

ANGLE CLOSE ON MEL standing in the witness stand.

BAILIFF
 Raise your right hand.
 (Mel raises right hand)
 Do you swear to tell the truth, nothing
 but the truth, so help you God?

Mel turns, looks straight into the camera and cuts a razor-thin,
 almost imperceptible smile --- like a knife gleaming briefly
 from concealment.

WE CUT TO BLACK.

AMERICAN BULLSHIT

The ABSCAM operation ultimately resulted in an unprecedented number of arrests, but it was the indictment and conviction of six U.S. Congressmen and one U.S. Senator that came to define its legacy as one of the biggest political scandals in American history.

In almost every case the accused claimed they were entrapped by the FBI and used the tape of Mel's "pep talk" with the Senator to support this allegation. Nevertheless, the defense was not able to overcome the power of the video evidence of the defendants taking bribe money.

ABSCAM marred the public's trust of Congress and its effect on the Democratic Party was especially severe. The scandal was one of the key factors that helped deliver the 1980 Presidential election to Ronald Reagan, which launched a quarter-century long period of Republican rule in America.

ABSCAM's impact on organized crime was no less significant in that it helped undermine the Mafia's master plan to expand and control the gambling industry. After the scandal broke every single ballot measure to legalize gambling was defeated by the voters -- six different campaigns in six different states.

As a result, the mob lost hundreds of millions of dollars and the secret point holders were eventually forced to sell their interests in Atlantic City casinos to the same conglomerates who muscled them out of Las Vegas.

Today Mel Weinberg and Maxine Gardner reside in Florida.