

PEACHES AND CREAM

Written by

Neeraj Katyal

Atit Shah
Create Entertainment
320 W. 37th St., Suite 10B
New York, NY 10018
atit@createentertainment.com

INT. BRIGHT WATER - DAY

A hospice facility.

Sterile. Antiseptic. Crisp white sheets and cold square tile.

RESIDENTS, in varying stages of decline. Some faces bear the hallmark of near death, while others appear warm and engaged.

A dying man's only friend, BILLY PEACHES (25) works the room.

SELDEN "CREAMY" LARUE (70) watches TV. He also watches Billy.

INT. SMALL APT - NIGHT

Cream packs up his studio. Adjusts framed photos of his wife.

INT. SMALLER APT - NIGHT

Billy, in his studio. He builds a model car. He has more than one.

A hamster wheel and water dish (no cage) are set up in the corner.

A mouse appears on cue. Gets on the wheel, runs. Gets off, drinks.

Billy watches. He looks to his cat, who offers nothing but a yawn.

INT. BRIGHT WATER - DAY

Cream watches ESPN with a Resident.

ANCHOR

This is the type of game your bubble teams like St. John's can ill-afford to lose down the stretch here.

CREAM

Oh, stop it. At least the Redmen are back to being a relevant squad again.

RESIDENT

It's not the Redmen anymore. It's the Red Storm. Calling them the Redmen is offensive for Native American Indians.

CREAM

... Didn't you die yesterday?

RESIDENT

No.

CREAM

Well it's never too late to start.

INT. OFFICE - LATER

New to Bright Water, Cream consults with a DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

In the world of palliative care, it's expected that Death with Dignity will elicit questions. But it's exhausting. To the point where I wish I could die.

(beat)

That's just unprofessional. I'm sorry.

CREAM

Don't be. A gallows humor is welcome. And never more appropriate than when the executioner is playing your song.

DOCTOR

I appreciate that... You were saying?

CREAM

Two months ago, Sloan-Kettering told me I had two months to live. Now, my due date if you will, is this Monday. It's also the 50th anniversary of my wife's passing. I feel great, but...

(beat)

Doc, I'd like to tap out on the same day she did... That way, when people stumble upon our matching headstones, they'll say "Look: He died the same day as she did, only 50 years later. He must have died of a broken heart.

DOCTOR

That's very sweet.

CREAM

I think so... And if you're serious about Death with Dignity -- not the theory, but the practice, I've been reading a great deal about that pill.

(beat)

They're calling it the Peaceful Pill.

INT. REC ROOM - DAY

A roll of the dice. Cream plays Monopoly with Billy and a NURSE.

Cream rolls a two: Community Chest. Nurse reads the yellow card.

NURSE

You have won second prize in a beauty contest. Collect ten dollars.

Cream, not amused. Collects his ten.

Billy rolls, lands on Chance.

NURSE

Go to jail. Go directly to jail.
Do not pass Go, do not collect \$200.

Billy purses his lips. Nurse rolls, engages Cream.

NURSE

I'm Ellen. This is Billy Peaches.

CREAM

Hello. Selden LaRue. People call me
"Creamy." My friends call me "Cream."

NURSE

Peaches and Cream. That's cute.

Cream, not amused.

CREAM

Are you a nurse, Miss?

NURSE

I'm still in school... I'm studying
nursing; this is my field placement.
Less than a week and I'm outta here.

CREAM

That makes two of us.

Nurse is needed elsewhere. Billy and Cream, now alone.

CREAM

I understand you're a man who knows
how to get things.

BILLY

What do you need? Cigarettes?

CREAM

Ever hear of the Peaceful Pill?

(beat)

The Death with Dignity drug. Assisted
suicide, euthanasia? Dying hippies in
Portland are taking it, and I want in.

BILLY

Oh, I know what it is. I volunteer a
lot here, and it's a hot-button issue.
But it's illegal, it's beyond illegal,
and it's also obscure. Also...morally.

CREAM

Well... If anything crazy happens in
the next couple days, do let us know.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Credits roll. Cantankerous Cream sits on one of the rust-covered benches that line Saint Vartan Park on 36th and 2nd in Manhattan.

This is not the New York of endless possibilities, \$1800/sq. foot apartments or Derek Jeter's intangibles. It's the New York that's unforgiving and unrelenting, devoid of green grass and decent men.

Cream scatters bird seed all around. Pigeons feed, strut and shit.

CREAM (V.O.)

If there's one thing that irritates me more than all the other things that irritate me, it's people who begin too many of their sentences with "I." I this, I that. There's just too much of Me-Me-Me, I-I-I, so much so, that the only compelling response is "Sit down, hush up, then earn your sense of entitlement like the rest of us." Seems that, quite literally... I'm sick of this town.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM (FLASHFORWARD)

Cream's monologue, delivered to one of New York's FINEST.

CREAM

I was born here, I was raised here, and relatively soon I imagine, I'm going to die here. It's fitting, as the only thing that seems to thrive, flourish or bloom in this city is the utter selfishness and self-absorption of the populace at large.

EXT. CHURCH STEPS - DAY

Billy quietly considers the sleeping HOMELESS around him.

EXT. THE FIVE BOROUGHS - DAY

Cream's words, powered by a colorful/provocative MONTAGE.

CREAM (V.O.)

I'm tired of you Protect and Serve hypocrites falsifying evidence and firing indiscriminately at the poor, and I'm tired of the poor falsifying welfare and firing indiscriminately at each other. Do not even get me started on the demon spawn of New Canaan and Jericho, Rumson and Rye:

(MORE)

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

The nouveau riche spilling forth from Metro North and Metro Transit and the Long Island Railroad, flooding our streets with their upper-middle class privilege and misplaced ambition. And my, what Godforsaken streets they are: Our cup runneth over with piss, spit, shit and Freon, not to mention the gridlock and potholes, chicken bones and cigarette butts, Save the Rainforest and Save the Children and Save the Whales and Fuck Darfur. To Hell with Darfur. These fickle, NYU piss-slits had me losing sleep over Tibet, but then they up and traded in that cause for a newer model. "Cream, pay no mind to that Chinese fella, there's rape and genocide and little black babies in Darfur that need your help." Fact is, too many white, black and Chinese babies need our help here in this country, and while it is sad, I have not the tears nor temperament to concern myself with whether people are living or dying in Africa. Again, this shit city itself is overflowing with just that: Shit. Mouse shit and rat shit and roach shit and human feces, plus the pigeon and dog shit that got me in this here shit with you right now... It's horseshit.

FINEST

Well I feel the same way. Mainly what you said about, y'know, not caring if Darfur moolies live or die in Africa.

CREAM

Sure. But that's more about you being a hateful/heartless pig than anything else... You see, Jesus Christ and the rest of us are still trying to figure out whether we care about cops living or dying. I ain't speaking for Christ, but I myself am leaning towards "not."

EXT. CHURCH STEPS - DAY

Billy checks his modest watch. Since Cream's V.O./Montage perhaps ended with shots of rats and roaches, people and pigeons -- along with their attendant pieces of shit -- it's fitting that a police horse appears in Billy's line of sight. No one else notices as it nonchalantly drops a load of aforementioned horseshit on the road.

With that, Billy ascends the steps, zig-zagging past the homeless.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOX - DAY

Inside, Billy signs the cross. Begins manipulating a paper clip.

BILLY

Forgive and bless me Father, for I have sinned. I confess to Almighty God, and to you Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, deed, and omission through my fault.

(beat)

It has been one week since my last confession, and I accuse myself of having committed during that time, the following sins: I lie, I cheat, I also steal... But it's the guilt that's gonna nail me to that cross.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Billy reaches a donation box that's centered along the back wall, then quietly takes a moment to pick the lock with his paper clip.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Billy walks down the steps. Playing Robin Hood, he slides money under the cardboard bed of each member of the Sleeping Homeless.

When he reaches the bottom, he puts what remains into an envelope.

Then, after considering, Billy doubles back and enters the church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Billy returns the money via the slot. As he's about to once again leave, he hears wood creak. Closes his eyes. Knows he's been seen.

PRIEST

You've been hitting up churches all over town.

Billy turns around.

PRIEST

That's what you do. It's your M.O.

(beat)

Ted Cooper speaks highly of you. Says you don't like to go more than a week without stopping in for confession. Billy, I do know Trinity and Grace have storied histories that we can't compete with. Regardless, I do hope you plan on visiting us again.

Billy looks back at the donation box, then back at the Priest.

BILLY
I've been planning it for weeks.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Billy leaves. Across the street, a YOUNG KID on a bike glides by.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Billy eats lunch atop a hill. Again, the Young Kid is in pursuit. But this time he stops. Sets down his bike and heads up to Billy. Upon arriving at the top of the hill, he's a bit short of breath. The Young Kid shoots Billy, just above the clavicle. All's quiet.

EXT. BATTERY PARK - NEXT DAY

Billy's sling-loaded arm, covered by a coat. He scans the horizon. Billy spies VERNON SUGGS (40), south of Pier A. He starts to walk. Later, the pair stare at the American Merchant Mariners' Memorial.

VERNON
It was made by this artist Marisol Escobar. She was from Ecuador, and moved to the Village in the 1950's.

BILLY
What is it? It's amazing.

VERNON
During World War II, a German U-boat sank this vessel. And as our sailors drowned...the Nazis took photographs.

The sailors cry for help as they try to pull a man from the water.

BILLY
Look how his arm disappears when the water level rises... Whenever I hear people say, "Oh, New York is a great place to visit, but I wouldn't wanna live there," I want to say, "No, New York is a great place to live, but I wouldn't wanna visit." When visiting, you never get to see stuff like this.

The pair bask in the cold sun, appreciating a rare, placid moment.

BILLY
You outsourced it to a stick-up kid.

VERNON

Jojo Rice is throwing games for money.
(beat)
I think your crew is orchestrating it.

BILLY

I wish you coulda seen the kid's face.
He was terrified.

VERNON

That boy has a job. I have my job,
you have your job, and he has his.

BILLY

I had nothing to do with anyone on St.
John's shaving points. None of us did.

VERNON

Alice? Margo? Tipping pitches? I am
not blind to what you're capable of.

BILLY

Capable and culpable are two very
different things. We didn't do it.

VERNON

12 of my bookies took losses, Billy.
A cool million across five boroughs.

BILLY

Are you gonna try again?
(beat)
No. Cuz with me alive...my crew can
scam the money you think we owe you.

The silence confirms. The pair gaze at the Statue of Liberty.

BILLY

We can't hustle a million dollars.

VERNON

Sure you can. You got money out all
over town: You owe people money and
people owe you. Collect those debts.
(beat)
Same here: I got 2-3 million coming
to me. But I owe double that. I owe
Lorenzo Shields that money becuz of
you. If I don't pay him in two days...

BILLY

My team, the five of us together did
about \$500,000 last year. You expect
us to carry twice that? In two days?

VERNON
 (eyeing the memorial)
 Know what Marisol Escobar would say?
 You're a con artist... Make some art.

Vernon produces a gun. Calmly aims it at Billy, who looks down.

VERNON
 One million, two days. No more lies.

Billy's face rises up to meet the barrel.

BILLY
 Vernon...if lies were being told, you
 wouldn't even be suspicious. Whenever
 I do lie, you don't have the faintest
 idea. That's what makes me good at it.

The gun remains aimed at his head, but a stoic Billy walks away.

INT. SODA FOUNTAIN - DAY

Billy and his crew discuss murder & money over ice cream sundaes.

The crew includes ALICE ELLISON (21), SCOOTER ALLAN HAWKINS (22),
 JULIEN CARLUCCI (23), MARGO VAN SLYKE (24), + Billy Peaches (25).

ALICE
 And if we don't pay, who gets killed?

BILLY
 I mean... You do, Alice.

Silence, as the magnitude of the situation sinks in.

BILLY
 I'm joking. He actually wants Scooter.

SCOOTER
 Unbelievable.

BILLY
 I was surprised too.

SCOOTER
 The black guy always gets killed.
 Everybody knows that; it's tired.
 (beat)
 What am I gonna do? My entire life
 is a cliché and now this.

CARLUCCI
 Why did Vernon wanna pop you in the
 first place? Wouldn't he want a cut?

BILLY

If he thought I'd keep fixing games,
he probably just wanted to stop the
bleeding.

MARGO

So what do we do? We can't kill him.

BILLY

We're gonna come up with a Plan A and
a Plan B. We're gonna pool our savings
and spend money to make money... Alice
and Margo -- if they cash out -- they
can get 100 thousand from the Yankees.

MARGO

What-now?

BILLY

Carlucci's gonna stockpile contraband.
It could be fireworks, shark fin soup,
rhino horns or turtle beak, but we're
gonna need some Appetizers. Though if
we're talking animals, maybe for Plan
A we get an animal. There has to be a
collector with a million dollars in a
briefcase, just waiting for an exotic
...parrot to show on the black market.

ALICE

I don't know. The first rule of the
long con? Do not work with children
and do not work with animals. If we
go that route...let's go Dan Dougan.

BILLY

Perfect. Dan Dougan can be our Plan
A, and we'll figure out Plan B.

EXT. SOUTH STREET SEAPORT - DAY

The five sit on the outdoor, balcony decks. Ships pass.

BILLY

Now, in terms of pooling our money,
I've got about forty thousand cash.

ALICE

I have 25.

CARLUCCI

Same. Maybe a little less.

SCOOTER
Same. Maybe a little more.

MARGO
I only have ten.

ALICE
Margo.

MARGO
What? I dress better than you.

BILLY
That's 125 total. We need more.

CARLUCCI
I had a job I was gonna cancel. Cheating husband, showing wife the evidence. I'll keep the appointment, ask wife for money.

BILLY
... I'm gonna bring in Selden LaRue.

CARLUCCI
Now? He probably won't die in two days, but we might. Let's bring him on board slowly like the others.

BILLY
I'm not gonna tell him the stakes, I just think he's our best chance at a million dollar score. If we're gonna get our money from Dan Dougan, we'll need an older presence... LaRue is in pain: He wants to die/We want to live.
(beat)
It's a match made in Heaven.

EXT. CHINATOWN RESTAURANT - DAY

A sign on the window (in Mandarin) reads -- "Free Shark Fin Soup!"
An accompanying picture features a shark's fin and a bowl of soup.
Carlucci hands a roll of tape back to the OWNER. They shake hands.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A MONTAGE. HELPERS post signs for free fireworks, cigars, liquor.
These are the "appetizers" that Billy said Carlucci would gather.

INT. BRIGHT WATER - DAY

Cream fills a cup with bird seeds. Over at a row of computers... Billy researches *The New York Times*. The actual article: 1/5/06. Headline: Hidden Cost of Shark Fin Soup - Its Source May Vanish. Billy keeps a watchful eye as Cream trudges out of the building.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Cream scatters bird seed all around. Pigeons feed, strut and shit. Seeing the pigeons, a puppy pulls on its leash. The OWNER, pissed. The puppy stops to poo. Finished, they move on without picking up. Next, the puppy darts towards the pigeons, who fly off in a storm, while the Owner, she faceplants. Cream and the pup exchange looks. Livid, the Owner picks herself up. Directs her rage towards Cream.

DOG OWNER

What the hell is your problem?

CREAM

Problem? Forgive me if I'm speaking out of turn, Miss, but I'm not sure whether I'm the one with the problem.

DOG OWNER

Oh, please... What's with old people and pigeons, anyway? You that lonely and desperate for companionship?

CREAM

Sometimes. Though, I think if things ever got too lonely or too desperate, I would just...perhaps I'd get a dog.

DOG OWNER

Well for your information, it's not even my dog. I'm a cat person.

CREAM

Good. I see several of them in your future.

DOG OWNER

That's great... That's just great.

CREAM

And for your information, the reason I feed these birds is becuz this way, they build their nests here in Murray Hill, instead of the more prestigious Sutton Place to the North or Gramercy to the South. See...a bunch of us old people decided that if you're foolish enough to live by the Midtown Tunnel, if you're foolish enough to make your home in the tailpipe of a Cadillac... well you probably deserve to get shit on for the duration of your lease.

The Owner, dumbfounded.

DOG OWNER

I'm gonna choose to ignore you. I do know that your wife died the way she died. And everyone knows you're just a bitter, ugly old man because of it.

She moves on. Cream rises, ambles over to the large pile of poo. Gazes at it, offering it its due consideration, then walks away. He doubles back, regards it once again, then looks at the Owner.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tracking Cream, Billy sees a TUNNEL COP heading to a checkpoint.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Owner's back is turned. Cream picks up the still-fresh poo with his bare hand, then heaves it like G. Hill to C. Laettner.

The Owner nonchalantly turns to face us/Cream, and just as she does, the healthy mass of shit lands smack-dab on her forehead.

She screams. Cop perks up. Cream is more surprised than anyone.

TUNNEL COP

Whaddaya crazy? What's your problem?

CREAM

I know you're fresh on the case here Officer, but at the risk of sounding like a broken record, well...I don't think I'm the one with the problem.

TUNNEL COP

Wiseguy, huh? Look at me when I talk.

CREAM

Why? Are you watching this? That girl right there, the one in the blue coat? She's got dog shit running all up and down her face. Do you not see it?

The Owner continues to rant n' rave. Upon hearing her, A SECOND COP from the checkpoint starts up the incline towards the scene.

TUNNEL COP

Turn around; hands behind your back.

CREAM

You're kidding; we've only just met. At least buy me dinner first.

TUNNEL COP

Turn around.

CREAM

Son... When you were a baby in your mother getting born, I was a Marine in Vietnam getting killed.

(leaning in)

I'm an Officer, Lieutenant. When you address an Officer, show some respect.

Still leaning in, Cream open-palm smacks the Cop's opposing ear.

In turn, given the dog poo on his ear, the Cop jabs Cream in the stomach. Cream gasps, doubles over, then strikes back with force.

The Cop radios for backup then drops Cream, hard. Digs in a knee.

Billy rushes into the fold. Tries to separate the two parties.

The Second Cop sees the mess, abandons his questioning of the Owner, then similarly rushes towards the scene. Tackles Billy.

Sirens blare on a black Impala: the backup that was radioed for.

Out step two DETECTIVES in suits. The Cops ease up, apply cuffs.

INT. IMPALA - DAY

Billy and Cream in the back seat, being driven down 2nd Avenue.

BILLY

Do you recognize me?

(beat)

Monopoly. I work at Bright Water.

CREAM
The Peaceful Pill... What happened to
your arm?

BILLY
I hurt it playing football.

CREAM
We're gonna be okay. Don't be afraid.

BILLY
(to the front)
Can I get a little help here, Barna?

A ring of keys hits Billy in the chest. Color Cream confused.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Billy, Cream, and the Detectives enter the station for processing.

The Detectives casually escort Cream to a DESK JOCKEY for booking, while we follow Billy as he strolls down the hall and into a room.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

An enormous screen is turned off. No one's around. Billy grabs a remote, sits in the back. Turns on the TV and watches the static.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Cream is venting to "Finest," the cop from his opening monologue.

CREAM
-- plus the pigeon and dog shit
that got me in this here shit with
you right now... It's horseshit.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - DAY

OFFICERS erupt in laughter. They relax as if watching an NFL game.

They continue to egg Cream on via the big screen, a hidden camera broadcasting a crisp, clear, color feed. Billy, however, hangs on Cream's every word. He is intrigued and focused. No laughs at all.

OFFICER 1
Oh, I like this guy. I like this guy.

OFFICER 2
Billy, how do you know him again?

Officer 2 turns and looks to Billy's seat, but our boy is gone.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Billy stands at the intake window. A DESK JOCKEY takes his order.

BILLY

The guy I came in with must've signed some sorta something-or-other for his personal effects, right? Can you make me a photocopy of that? His signature?

DESK JOCKEY

That's illegal, Billy.

BILLY

It's illegal. So, it's breaking the law and abusing public trust? Isn't that like a double major around here?

She offers a disapproving glare. Hands over Cream's file.

DESK JOCKEY

What happened to your arm?

BILLY

I hurt it playing hockey.

Billy studies. We see Cream's loop-de-loop -- Selden LaRue.

JOCKEY

You're gonna recruit a crotchety old man because he doesn't cross his I's and dot his T's?

BILLY

Y'know Stanford-Binet? The IQ tests? Alfred Binet cut his teeth performing handwriting analysis on little kids, then used it to predict their future behavior with unprecedented accuracy. He later found that he could use it to predict future behavior from any age.

JOCKEY

You don't need to be living this life, Billy. Why don't you join the Academy?

BILLY

I can't stand guns... Or white people.

Billy's white, she's not, so his deadpan draws another glare.

INT. ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Alice studies big box televisions of varying size. There are several of them, each of which are tuned to baseball. Vernon mentioned, "Alice? Margo? Tipping pitches?" He was referring to their ability to read a pitcher's next pitch based on the involuntary movements they make. Detecting these "tells" are usually the province of bench coaches, but ordinary citizens with keen eyes can get paid well for recognizing them. As it stands, Alice & Margo, on Billy's advice, will soon cash out.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Billy sits by an exit, waiting for Cream, who approaches him.

CREAM

I'm Selden. My friends call me Cream.

BILLY

I remember. With all due respect, Sir, I'd prefer to call you Mr. LaRue. And given what I know, you don't have any friends.

CREAM

They said I'm in the clear. That true?

Billy nods at Cream's hand. Cream sees his fingers: Ink-stained.

BILLY

They got what they want from you.
(beat)
Now it's my turn.

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

Cream waits on Billy to finish saying grace.

CREAM

Never seen anyone pray in a fast-food joint before. In Times Square no less.

BILLY

I'm not a Jesus Freak or anything, I just have a relationship with Christ.

CREAM

I have a relationship with Christ as well. It's just not always a good one.

BILLY

It makes people uncomfortable. Sorry.

CREAM

Don't be. The desk with the built-in handcuffs? That made me uncomfortable.

BILLY

Sure. Though objectively speaking, those desks are fascinating to look at if you can remove yourself from the unfortunate reality of your person being chained to one.

CREAM

... Who are you?

Billy looks out the window and down into the mess of Times Square. Zeroes in on a FLIM-FLAMMER running game on unsuspecting TOURISTS.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The pair watch the Flim-Flammer and his game of Three Card Monte.

CREAM

I want peanuts... I asked a question.

BILLY

Whaddaya wanna know? My name's Billy, I was born in Suffolk County in 1990.

CREAM

No you weren't.

BILLY

Okay, I guess I wasn't.

CREAM

No one is born in 1990. My prostate was taken out in 1990... Continue.

BILLY

I grew up a ward of the state at The Children's Village up in Dobbs Ferry. I never bounced in-and-out of foster homes, no one ever hit me, and in no way am I scarred from the experience.

(beat)

Check out the guy in green: He's the Dip. Pick-pocket. As the saying goes, "Even if ya don't play ball, the Dip will make ya pay for the pleasure of watching." Now, the girl is the Hook.

CREAM

She draws in the men.

BILLY

She draws in the women. The money is what draws in the men. Women for the most part are gonna avoid a bunch of random hojos standing around a milk crate waving five dollar bills.

SHOTS of Three-Card Monte chicanery: The Lug, The Lead & The Ash.

CREAM

So you're a street rat. You pull card hustles on tourists and the cops look the other way cuz you give them a cut?

BILLY

(texting)

Go up and tap my man's shoulder.

INT. TAXI - DAY

DIOP MOR, a Senegalese cabbie. Eyes his phone as it lights on up.

INT. TAXI - DAY

FAROOQ SUHAIL gets a text as well. He takes off to pick up Billy.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A sheepish Cream, about to tap the Flim-Flammer's shoulder. Yet before he can, the Flammer slaps a wad of bills in Cream's palm.

Cream ambles back to Billy just as Diop/Farooq pull up for them.

BILLY

We didn't just cross paths by chance. I need someone like you... And don't tell me you're too old for this shit.

CREAM

Oh, no. I don't think I'm old enough.
(beat)
Kid, I got Stage IV leukemia. What makes you think I'd wanna help you?

BILLY

Why not? You have Stage IV leukemia.

CREAM

So how would I possibly be of use?

BILLY

You have Stage IV leukemia... You're like a wounded animal. It only helps.

Billy approaches the waiting cab. Opens the door, turns to Cream.

BILLY

Also, given what I did know and now know, everything points towards you coming aboard. Tonight and tomorrow.

CREAM

Get me that pill. The Peaceful Pill.

BILLY

Not really the Christian thing to do. If you wanna fly to Austria or South Korea for experimental, non-FDA shit, I'll give ya the money. Just help me.

CREAM

You get that pill, and I'll help you.

BILLY

We can help each other; just get in.
(beat)
There are people I want you to meet.

INT. YVES SAINT LAURENT - DAY

The most unassuming girl on Manhattan Isle (or so she would have us believe) Margo Van Slyke is unsteady and uncomfortable as she hunts and gathers at the YSL flagship. The floor MANAGER appears.

MANAGER

May I be of any assistance, Miss?

MARGO

Oh. I'm sorry; thank you so much. I thought you were gonna escort me out.

MANAGER

Not at all. How may I help?

MARGO

Um, I wanted to buy a business suit, but my mom has to see me in it. The no returns policy is pretty clear, but I read that sometimes you bend it for important people. Obviously I'm not important, but I promise not to wear it once for an interview or date or whatever, cuz aside from the fact that it'll be a freezing-cold-day-in-hell before I ever land another date or interview, if I do return it I'll return it today.

Margo's planned bumbling hits its mark. Manager stops a RUNNER.

MANAGER

This one needs a suit. Loan her what she needs, not wants. 34-26-36.

Runner takes the order, jets.

MARGO

Um, I have a twenty-five inch waist.

Manager, perfect posture and pedigree, holds on Margo forever.

MARGO

I have a twenty-six inch waist?

Manager closes her eyes, nods discreetly. Then...

MANAGER

I service any number of thorny and demanding women on this floor, yet saw from across the room that there was something...different about you.

(beat)

Your honesty is entirely refreshing.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Through a jeweler's loupe, Scooter eyes a sparkling gemstone.

SCOOTER

Wait; what's it called? Moissanite?

JEWELER

Moissanite. Silicon Carbide, genius.

SCOOTER

Oh, Silicon Carbide. Of course. What could I have possibly been thinking?

Scooter returns the loupe to his JEWELER friend.

SCOOTER

Let's say it were a diamond... What kinda Cut would we be talking about?

JEWELER

Closer to Premium than Ideal.

SCOOTER

What about Color?

JEWELER

Color, I'm telling you -- If you get the GIA Board o' Gobs in here with a 10x loupe, they'll tell you flat-out it is colorless, or nearly colorless.

Scooter, not convinced.

JEWELER

No woman can ever distinguish between Moissanite and a diamond... Elizabeth Taylor couldn't. If you and I cannot, if Liz Taylor in huh prime could not, no-other-woman-can.

SCOOTER

So how much for the one I just saw?

JEWELER

For you, Scooter? Six hundred dollars.

SCOOTER

How 'bout some schmuck off the street?

JEWELER

(not missing a beat)
Six hundred dollars.

SCOOTER

... Six hundred dollars.

JEWELER

Quality begets quality, my friend.

SCOOTER

Six hundred dollars. For Moissanite.

JEWELER

Fake, but I don't sell shit-rocks.

SCOOTER

... Six hundred dollars.

JEWELER

Six hundred dollars.

Scooter's face betrays nothing.

SCOOTER

I need twenty. Just like that one.

INT. ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Seattle vs. Texas. A beat, and something catches Alice's eye.

She rewinds a Ranger pitcher mid-windup, over and over again.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

On top of a high-rise, Carlucci is accompanied by a glum WOMAN.

Carlucci raises his binoculars, then peers into the belly of a similar residential building. The Woman's HUSBAND waits, alone.

CARLUCCI

Your husband is alone. I don't see...her.

(beat)

Mrs. Wilson... I've been working for you a long time. You've been really generous.

WOMAN

How much and why?

CARLUCCI

25,000. I'd tell you "why," but I don't wanna be another man who's lying to you.

Woman takes his binoculars. Looks into the building, exhales.

WOMAN

The first breath of adultery is the freest. After it, constraints aping marriage develop.

CARLUCCI

Mailer?

WOMAN

Updike.

CARLUCCI

I'm sorry to have brought you up here. I needed you to have a visual confirm, and the pair do often...come together.

WOMAN

How much do I owe you?

CARLUCCI

I charge for work... This isn't work, this is fun for me. This is Saturday.

Woman smiles. Opens her handbag.

WOMAN

Twenty-five thousand. Cash or check?

INT. MARGO'S ROOM - DAY

Now home, Margo irons the YSL suit she scammed. Spots a price tag. She grabs a pair scissors to cut it off, then thinks better of it.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Billy and Cream in the cab, driven downtown by Farooq.

CREAM

I don't wanna play cards in the cold.

BILLY

That's not what we do. That's just a revenue stream that flows into a big river which will one day be an ocean. It's also the short con. We need you for the long con. To get a large sum of money. See, you and I got tangled up in blue in the middle of the 17th Precinct, where I have relationships.

CREAM

You work with cops?

BILLY

They look out for me cuz in 10 years, I'll have my hands in deeper pockets -- Valuable pockets for me, valuable information for them... So if we con someone, they let it slide, cuz they know the guy ultimately deserved it.

CREAM

Why?

Billy sees Farooq smiling in the rear-view.

BILLY

Farooq, tell him why.

FAROOQ

Because you can't con an honest man.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Outside the cab, Billy delivers parting instructions to Farooq.

BILLY

Get word out on that shark fin soup.

CREAM

You mentioned something about all signs pointing to me helping with this little ...racket of yours.

BILLY

Right. Well to answer you honestly,
I hafta admit why I volunteered at
Bright Water in the first place.

INT. BRIGHT WATER (INTERCUT) - DAY

Billy making his rounds. Smiling and palling around.

BILLY

I care about people, and I care about
Christ, but I don't care about either
nearly as much as I care about myself.

CREAM

You con old folks out of their money.

BILLY

No. But people coming to the end, they
have short memories. And a grandkid who
stopped visiting gets passed over in
favor of the nurse who actually cared.
Or in my case, Little Orphan Billy.

CREAM

So you what, cased me?

BILLY

I mean... I'm not sure if anybody's
been cased since Nancy Drew and *The
Password to Larkspur Lane*. But yeah.

CREAM

... There is where you live?

BILLY

This is where I live. So here it is:
Your intake file says you have no
spouse and no next of kin. Prior to
your diagnosis from Sloan-Kettering,
you had no emergency contact number,
no visiting nurse and no primary care
physician. You also have no money.

CREAM

No shit.

BILLY (V.O.)

There's a keystroke logger installed
on all of the Bright Water computers.
Don't hit me, but I read your email,
which is why I mentioned before how
you don't have any friends. Granted,
it hardly comes as a surprise given
your sunny-disposition-don't-hit-me.

EXT./INT. HOME BASE - DAY

They enter. A small vestibule, dirty. An elevator button, pressed.
The INTERCUTTING of Billy peeping Cream at Bright Water continues.

BILLY (V.O.)

I know you were USMC in Vietnam, and I know you read about veteran affairs: Denied benefits. My friend Alice, her dad developed lung cancer after doing work at Ground Zero. He was hung out by the Giuliani/Bloomberg/Bush/Obama quartet, heretofore known as The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Basically, Alice's dad gave New York a piece of his heart, and so, in a show of good faith, New York stole a piece of his lung. So Alice is angry at the world in the same way you are, and she has nothing to lose, the same way you do.

CREAM

Heretofore known as The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse... You don't really know what "heretofore" means, do you?

BILLY

I don't, but that's okay, too... It sounds very Old English and refined.

CREAM

It's Middle English... Continue.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Elevator doors open. The pair shuffle in.

BILLY

What my friends and I know we have in smarts, we know we lack in experience.

CREAM

Gravitas. I would lend you gravitas.

BILLY

You would. The fact that I was already coming to ask for your help, then saw you hit a cop, the fact that I saw you give a lot of lip under questioning...

CREAM

Well let's say you can't get my pill. I need it for the day after tomorrow, but if you can't get it, I have some time still... So what's in it for me?

BILLY

Money. More than you'll ever need. And family... More than you'll ever want.

(beat)

You've spent most of your life living in Section 8 housing. You help me out the next two days, I'll make sure you don't spend the rest at Bright Water.

CREAM

You shit. Who do you think you are?

BILLY

No one. I guess I'm just another human being who doesn't wanna spend the rest of his life in Section 8 housing.

CREAM

I'm sorry. I didn't...

BILLY

It's okay. You can't control the life you were born with. You can only work to improve it.

The elevator opens smack in the middle of a large loft.

INT. LOFT - DAY

No Eames furniture/No fancy trappings. But for a kid...

CREAM

Section 8 sure has come a long way.

BILLY

This is more of a work/live type deal. I got my own shit-box tenement studio.

CREAM

How much does this go for?

BILLY

Ten thousand a month split five ways.

Billy heads to a wall unit. Cream follows.

CREAM

Split five ways. There's five of you?

BILLY

Four others. Margo, Scooter, Carlucci and Alice.

CREAM

And where are they? Out stealing chocolate from a toddler?

BILLY

They're actually behind this wall unit planning the job of our lives. You see that bust of Stalin? If you place your palm on Joey's head for at least five seconds, the wall unit moves away and they'll all be sitting right there.

CREAM

It moves?

BILLY

HiddenPassageWay.com. Impulse buy.

Cream puts his palm on JoJo head for five long seconds. As advertised, the unit shifts, and we see four gawking faces. No one (on either side) says anything. Finally...

CARLUCCI

We asked for a blonde and a redhead.

MARGO

You must be Mr. LaRue. I'm Margo.

CREAM

Please; call me Creamy. Or just Cream.

MARGO

Oh. It's like...Peaches and Cream.

CREAM

The rest of you are quiet. Bonnie, Clyde, Jesse and James, I presume?

ALICE

I'm Alice. I'm originally from Ohio.

CARLUCCI

Julien Carlucci. Echo Lake, Colorado.

SCOOTER

Scooter Allan Hawkins. Jasper, Texas.

CARLUCCI

And don't believe the hype. Scooter and I are the brains of this outfit.

CREAM

Yeah? How did you two meet, the gym?

Scooter and Carlucci, gorgeous and well put together, chuckle.

MARGO

Billy tells us you're a baseball fan. We have a few contacts in that arena.

CREAM

My wife, she was the biggest Dodgers fan there ever was. In fact, she was born about ten minutes before Mickey Owen dropped a 3rd strike that would have tied a Series against the Yanks.

(beat)

Her father, the bastard never forgave her for taking him away from the game in the hospital waiting room. He said Mickey never would've muffed that 3rd strike if not for her being born.

(beat)

So whaddaya got for me?

BILLY

We have Plan A, but what about Plan B?

MARGO

Social Security.

SCOOTER

Disability.

CARLUCCI

Medicare.

ALICE

Medicaid.

CREAM

I'm too old to be conning old people. It's far too obvious and telegraphed.

BILLY

... Vernon said something that stuck. He said, "You're a con artist. Make some art..." Maybe that's our Plan B.

From a folder, Alice produces a headshot.

ALICE

Shah Rafa Khan. He's always on the lookout for black market paintings.

SCOOTER

Legit ones, too. An article I just saw mentioned a Christie's auction. It's today. Khan's art dealer says he's bidding on a \$50,000 painting.

ALICE

Notable cuz for Khan, that's cheap. I say we blow him away and spin it.

She tapes Khan's headshot to a blackboard, next to a shot of Dan Dougan. Under Plan A: Shah Rafa Khan -- Under Plan B: Dan Dougan.

CARLUCCI

We'll need more than the 125 we've got on hand. Margo's having lunch with the Yankees... When are Billy and Cream gonna meet with Dan Dougan?

CREAM

Dan Dougan -- The real estate mogul? You wanna get money from Dan Dougan? If that's the master plan, good luck.

BILLY

We don't need luck... We have you.

INT. DOUGAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A bottle of Macallan, and a bottle of Hershey's chocolate syrup.

DAN DOUGAN (70) hosts Billy and Cream in his Fortune 100 office.

DAN DOUGAN

Billy Peaches. I've been angling for a meeting with you for two years now.

The silky Macallan (18) is poured over ice in a high ball glass.

In a similar glass, the Hershey's syrup is also poured over ice.

DAN DOUGAN

You must get this all the time... Why do people call you Billy Peaches? Is it because you can't grow a beard?

BILLY

I mean... I used to have a crew cut.

Dan Dougan brings the drinks to Billy and Cream, who are sitting.

Naturally, the Macallan is for Billy, the Hershey's is for Cream.

CREAM

Say, ya got any peanuts back there, Dougan? I'm dying for some peanuts.

(beat)

I am literally dying for some peanuts.

BILLY

Mr. Dougan, I know there's been an open assignment for a million bucks. I also know it's about your divorce.

CREAM

Barbara Dougan?

DAN DOUGAN

My ex-wife, yes. Barbara Dougan.

CREAM

The Mouth from the South?

DAN DOUGAN

That's Ted Turner. But yes, she's from the South, so that name's --

CREAM

-- The Queen of Mean.

BILLY

You're thinking of Leona Helmsley.

CREAM

... Slumlord Millionaire?

DAN DOUGAN

That's the one... Our divorce nearly destroyed me. Lost half my net worth, plus several houses and hotels. Most crippling, emotionally, I lost Pearl.

Dan Dougan looks to a painting of his ex-dog, PEARL DOUGAN (8).

DAN DOUGAN

The divorce laws in this country are draconian. Women are bleeding us dry.

CREAM

No-no. The divorce laws are the only laws that protect women and look out for their interests. Women put their lives on hold for marriage. And when divorce hits, they're left with gaps in their résumé and total child care.

DAN DOUGAN

We'll agree to disagree; I am biased.

Dougan reveals himself as a man in black, deserving of their con.

DAN DOUGAN

Bring me my dog back, Billy Peaches. You bring Pearl back, and a million dollars, it's yours for the keeping.

(beat)

What happened to your arm?

Billy looks at 70-year-old Cream, and back at 70-year-old Dougan.

BILLY

I hurt it playing shuffleboard.

EXT. HOTEL PLAZA ATHENEE - DAY

Margo walks in her Take No Prisoners (and/or Shit) YSL suit.

MARGO

You are a woman amongst boys, Margo.

(beat)

You need to eat these two for lunch.

She passes signage -- Please turn off your phone. Thank you.

Checks her phone: An empty screen. She turns it on: Welcome.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - DAY

Margo is now eating with two SUITS -- Front office executives of the New York Yankees. Margo's plate is filled: Premium steak and trimmings. Suit plates are sparse -- French, demure and measured.

MARGO

James knows -- I grew up in baseball hotbeds: Macon Georgia then Northern Florida... And Alice's dad's a JUCO coaching legend.

(warmly)

I used to play in junior high, but I think that, like any girl, you worry that athletic prowess'll compromise your femininity in the eyes of boys. As much as I'd like to blame it on the Invisible Hand of the Patriarchy, I should have known better... Anyway. I played second base and like I said, grew up in Jacksonville, so I fancied myself a baby Luis Castillo.

SUIT #2

No pop, bad knees. Castillo was awful.

MARGO

You're awful. Castillo has a ring he earned against this team. He managed to foul away eight pitches before he created Steve Bartman and ended Mark Prior in the span of what, 3 minutes?

SUIT 1

Margo... Don't be so dramatic.

SUIT 2

Excuse me. Ballplayers are my trade. Evaluating and critiquing is my job.

MARGO

You're a scout, Al. Judge not lest ye.

SUIT #2

I'm an advanced scout. Know your role.

MARGO

Oh, you're an "advanced" scout.

SUIT #2

For the New York Yankees. And half the guys in here would trade their job for mine in a New York Minute.

MARGO

Maybe. But I'm gonna stick to my guns on this one. No grown man should have the word "scout" in his job title. "Advanced" scout just makes it sound like the hapless, middle-child waystation between "Cub" and "Eagle."

SUIT #1

Margo... Where is this coming from?

MARGO

I heard from someone who heard from someone who heard from someone, that someone in the front office had made comments about Alice's body.

SUIT #1

Who told you that?

MARGO

No one.

INT. ALICE'S ROOM (INTERCUT) - DAY

Alice unlocks a drawer: tons of cell phones. She dials one.

MARGO (V.O.)

The reason why every single culture throughout human history has valued sport is because it's the only true measure of human achievement. It's not at all subjective, like whether Jack got into Yale cuz he's a legacy, or Jill got a raise becuz she's cute, whether that orange lipstick from Clinique is too kitschy, or yellow shutters are too fey to pass muster with your father-in-law. Sport isn't subjective, it's objective. It's about statistics, percentages and absolutes: based in and beholden to.

INT. GYM (INTERCUT) - DAY

A BALLPLAYER, lifting. His phone lights up, silently rings.

MARGO (V.O.)

Luis Castillo's from an impoverished slum in the DR, yes, but now he pays a boatload o' money in federal, state, and yes, city taxes. His contribution alone pays the salary of every rookie cop and fireman on the street, and he pretty much sweeps our streets, plows our snow, and provides sustainable drinking water for your children. We may collectively pay his salary, but he single-handedly pays ours. In sum --

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Margo's phone vibrates. In the middle of her last sentence, she answers/puts the phone to her ear... But it's not Alice calling.

EXT. DOUGAN BLDG (INTERUT) - DAY

Billy, standing outside with Cream, waits for Margo to finish.

MARGO (CONT'D)

Luis Castillo isn't some insufferable writer or landscape architect, he's a one-man stimulus package. Now, I know you appreciate that, because we would not be meeting unless the brain trust signed off on me getting thousands of dollars here today. Lots of thousands.

Billy holds a Christie's catalog. Eyes a painting. Says to Margo:

BILLY (O.S.)

Christie's. 4 o'clock. Black Rain.

Margo holds on the Suits.

MARGO

I'm sorry; I can't talk right now.
(beat)
I'm eating my lunch.

INT. ALICE'S ROOM - DAY

Now it's Alice, on the phone she dialed.

INT. BATTING CAGE (INTERCUT) - DAY

A baseball PLAYER on the phone. An "Iron Mike" deals heat.

ALICE

Do you know what your numbers looked like against Scott Feldman last year?

PLAYER

I was like, 4 for 13 with two knocks.

ALICE

It was a rhetorical question... How did you even know that?

PLAYER

I mean... I'm the one who did it.

ALICE

He's tipping his sinker. It's only spring training, so it's not why I'm calling. As soon as we hang up, text the following number and type, Scott Feldman, Sinker, Compliments of Alice.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Margo pays for the Suits. She tips \$110 on a \$90 bill.

SUIT 1

Margo -- What's the name you've got on your credit card? It's obviously not your real name, but...

MARGO

Oh, I've got a rotating cast.

She pulls out her wallet and flips credit cards across the table.

MARGO

They're all rappers right now. Like this one, Andrea Young, is based on Dr. Dre's real name, which is Andre Young. I just stick an "A" onto the end, and Andre becomes Andrea. Snoop Dogg's actual name is Calvin Broadus, so if you stick an "A" at the end, Calvin becomes Calvina.

SUIT 1

(reading an Amex)

Dana Owens. So if you take off the "A," who does that make Dan Owens?

MARGO

No, that actually is Dana Owens. Dana Owens is Queen Latifah. Newark -- Wut.
(beat)
Anyway. Brass tacks.

SUIT 1

We can't give you a hundred thousand.

MARGO

You can and you will.

SUIT 1

We can... We won't.

MARGO

And we won't spend the best years of our lives watching sports. It's time we get on another team's payroll, or, have you pay us to more or less quit.

(beat)

It's a time suck. We could be making money so many other ways. Yeah, this is legal, other stuff may be illegal, but honestly? We're too old for this.

SUIT 1

You're twenty-four.

MARGO

And Alice is 21. And tomorrow she'll be 26, next month she'll be 31, and next year she'll be 43, only to find that all the decent guys are dating --

SUIT 2

-- 21-year-olds.

MARGO

Advanced scout, indeed. Look...if Boston wants give Alice and me 200 grand to hire us exclusively, we're asking you to pay us 100 to say no.

SUIT #1

Margo, you are a brilliant young woman with a bright future once you grow out o'this Spy vs Spy phase, but a hundred thousand for you and Alice not to work is not happening. Not now and not ever.

MARGO

Oh, spare me the fire-and-brimstone, moral-ethical-dilemma, cuz we're not talking about widgets, Randy. And if you can pay Cuban defectors a hundred million dollars for their ability to hit a rock with a stick, you can pay Alice and me 100 grand not to carry the nuclear football up to Boston.

SUIT 1

You have nothing in place with Boston. Don't overplay your hand.

MARGO

There're 29 other franchises in Major League Baseball... Turn on your phone.
(then)
You'll see 29 text messages. One from a player on every one of the 29 teams. We help them the same way we help you.

He toggles through: "Scott Feldman/Sinker/Compliments of Alice."

SUIT 1

I don't even have 29. I have 30.

MARGO

The last one is from your wife; she's bored... She wants to know if she can re-arrange the living room furniture that doesn't need re-arranging. And she's not asking you, she's telling.

SUIT 1

I'm not married.

MARGO

No. You're not... Don't be fooled by my face -- I may look like a million bucks, but unlike the other brats in this town, my friends and I don't have trust funds, we have shit. It's why we do what we do.

INT. HOTEL/EXT. STREET - DAY

Margo walks the lobby, exits the hotel. She then reaches behind her neck for the price tag she almost snipped off while ironing.

The tag reads \$660. Margo rips it off, and w/ a flourish, tosses it aside, where it flutters end-over-end toward the street below.

INT. BAR - DAY

Scooter at a bar. An attractive BARTENDER pours him a drink.

SCOOTER
When do you get off?
(beat)
Your shift. When's your shift over?

BARTENDER
I have a boyfriend.

SCOOTER
That's okay... So do I.

Scooter winks at a GRIFTER friend. Returns to Bartender.

SCOOTER
I have this flyer I was hoping you'd put up. My sister lost her engagement ring, and this was the last place she had it.

He hands her the flyer.

BARTENDER
Ten thousand bucks. That is a reward.

SCOOTER
My sister's pretty devastated. It's a pricey ring, but no one will get more than eight for it second-hand, so she figures that by offering ten, whoever finds it will just turn it in.

Bartender is engrossed. Scooter steals maraschino cherries.

EXT. BAR - DAY

Now outside, Scooter offers a pouch to his Grifter friend, who was also inside the bar. Grifter examines the Moissanite rings.

SCOOTER
Each of those ass pellets costs \$200.

INT. BAR (FLASHFORWARD) - NIGHT

SCOOTER
They're perfect for pulling off The Glim-Dropper...

The Grifter and his GIRLFRIEND, in the bar. Girlfriend "finds" a Moissanite ring, squeals with glee. Bartender sees, moves to get the reward flyer. Takes it down, into an office. Gets copy paper.

Uses scissors to cut white rectangles. Tapes them on the flyer, and 10K reward becomes 1K. She changes the phone number to her own, too. Photocopies the doctored flyer. Goes to the register.

Takes out a fistful of cash (1K), heads to Grifter, Girlfriend.

SCOOTER

It's a fair trade. Now whaddaya got?

GRIFTER

I gotcha the Skylight ballroom at the Puck Building. Tomorrow night. Prolly my finest work, as you're bumping the bar mitzvah to end all mitzvahs... As for the appetizers...no fireworks and no Birkin bags, but yes, Cuban cigars.

SCOOTER

What about shark fin soup?

GRIFTER

It comes in at the fish market. Hunts Point in the Bronx. I got zero access. And I couldn't get that Peaceful Pill.

The Grifter produces a square pill box. Uncaps it: a tiny pill.

GRIFTER

I couldn't get that, but did get this.

SCOOTER

What is it?

GRIFTER

... Super Cyanide.

Bartender turns around, so Scooter steals a maraschino cherry.

INT. CARLUCCI'S ROOM - DAY

Shirtless and sexy post-coitus, Carlucci lies on his side and holds a phone to his ear. As it rings, he traces a line along the curves and angles of a sleeping YOUNG WOMAN'S back. Until:

HOSTESS (O.S.)

Sullivan Street...

CARLUCCI

Hi, my name's Julien Carlucci. I --

HOSTESS

-- And my name's Melissa Haney.

CARLUCCI

Oh. Nice to meet you, Melissa. Guess that saves me the trouble of getting all passive-aggressive at the end of the call with the whole And-Who-Am-I-Speaking-With?

HOSTESS

I hate that.

CARLUCCI

Oh, it's the worst. So, basically, my girlfriend and I nabbed a reservation later and I actually *plan to propose*. Thing is, we're quite young-looking, so I'm guessing we'll be assigned a less-than-desirable table.

HOSTESS

Oh, no. Sullivan does not discriminate based on physical appearance.

CARLUCCI

Right. See...I was hoping that you do.

He hangs up. An arm appears from behind his waist then burrows itself in his pants. Seems there's a SECOND GIRL in Carlucci's his bed, shielded by his positioning. He collapses on his back.

The girl, in turn, mounts him. Before it gets hot, we PG-13 it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Billy and Cream walk, re-cap the meeting with Dougan.

BILLY

How are you feeling? You wanna rest?

CREAM

No, I feel great. A million dollars? Why didn't you say so to begin with?

Cabbie Diop Mor pulls up. Cream, confused about the connection.

BILLY

We scratch their backs a lot. And we don't treat them like rats on wheels. I'd buy my own car, but I don't have a license and no one's gonna lend me theirs to practice with. I love cars.

CREAM

I'll find you a car to practice with.

Out of the cab steps Scooter. Joins Billy and Cream.

SCOOTER

I'm making great progress. Check this out: We have the Puck Building booked for tomorrow. It's ours if we need it.

BILLY

So then Plan B -- Shah Raza Khan and black market art or whatever, that's coming together. Plan A, Dan Dougan can't grant us access to Barbara's apartment. We need some in.

SCOOTER

Well... She has a full staff, she doesn't maintain much of a social calendar, so access will be tough. But...I know doormen... You ready? Barbara Dougan sees a matchmaker.

BILLY

A matchmaker? Like matchmaker-matchmaker-make-me-a-match? That kinda matchmaker?

Scooter surreptitiously hands the Cyanide pill box over to Billy.

CREAM

You're gonna go on a date with Barbara Dougan, hotshot?

Billy and Scooter eye Cream: Barbara's next date. Cream realizes their intentions, so he hurries away. The boys scamper after him.

EXT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Billy/Scooter approach a shower set-up. Billy pulls the curtain.

CREAM

I'm not going out on a date with Dan Dougan's wife!

SCOOTER

Don't act so put upon by the idea! She's out of your league, and any third party would agree with that!

INT. CARLUCCI'S ROOM - DAY

Finished with the Hostess call, Carlucci dials Alice.

INT. ALICE'S ROOM (INTERCUT) - DAY

Alice measures red laser pointers. Cradles her phone.

ALICE

Hey, what are you doing?

CARLUCCI

Just a quick siesta before the storm.
You wanna grab dinner?

ALICE

I'm starving and you're paying. Where?

CARLUCCI

Sullivan Street. The file you have on
Shah Rafa Khan says he's dying to eat
there cuz they don't care about money.
Someone who they like has to like you.

ALICE

You need a reservation and they don't
give 'em out unless you're Condé Nast
post-McKinsey or some other such shit.

(beat)

You already got one. How?

CARLUCCI

Like two or three mirrors and a whole
lotta smoke... But no; no reservation,
which is why I need you to come along.

ALICE

A'right; well when do you wanna go?

CARLUCCI

Now.

ALICE

Now-now, or now-later?

CARLUCCI

... Now.

Alice opens her door into a mirror image of Carlucci opening his.

ALICE

... Do you have a girl in your room?

(beat)

We all might get killed in the next
week, and right after we break camp
ya got some art school chippie over?

CARLUCCI

Living each day like it's my last?

Alice peeks inside. Sees the two girls sleeping.

ALICE

Oh, wow... Can I borrow one later?

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Billy and Cream negotiate.

CREAM

I'm objecting to this Dougan nonsense on the surface, but it's more about my wife... I don't date.

Billy places the Cyanide pill box on the lunch counter.

CREAM

You got it from your friend just now.
(eyeing it)
It's fake. I can tell that it's fake.

BILLY

I can tell that it's real. For the same reason you can tell it's fake.

CREAM

It's trash.

BILLY

It's treasure... Look how small it is.
(beat)
That's a pill that's supposed to kill you. If you're gonna cheat someone on some death pill, you'll use a Tylenol or something with a decent size to it. But this pill is tiny. That scares me more. It tells me it's real, becuz no one would ever think to pass this off.

Cream inspects the pill box. Pockets it.

BILLY

Don't take it before tomorrow night.

CREAM

I toldja, my wife died the day after tomorrow. That's my time. No earlier.
(beat)
And besides. I'm having too much fun.

BILLY

... Maybe you won't take it at all.

CREAM

Relax. I'm not having *that* much fun.

A moment ago, we saw Cream pocket the pill box. He digs for it, comes up empty. Billy pick-pocketed him. Shows Cream he has it.

INT. BANK - DAY

Margo sits at the desk of a BANKER.

MARGO

Reason I'm opening the account is that I'm headed to an art auction. They need proof of funds before I can bid. Then they wire the money out of your account, the next day.

BANKER

And how much will you be depositing?

MARGO

201,418 dollars. And eleven cents.

BANKER

You're a baby. Are you serious?

Margo dumps the cash on the desk.

MARGO

Serious as cancer. Here's 50K more. It shoulda been a hundred, but hey.

Margo adds 50K from the Yankees. Banker, stunned.

MARGO

I'm a nanny. I'm an au pair for this family of six on the Upper West Side. And I've been at it say, seven years?

BANKER

They pay you in cash.

MARGO

They tip pretty well, too.
(beat)
Especially the father.

Banker smiles, fills forms.

MARGO

Oh, I'm sorry...

She places something on the table.

MARGO

I stole your pen.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Carlucci and Alice make their way to Sullivan Street.

CARLUCCI

When we arrive, a hostess station is right there. But the ladies' room is behind it, back and to the left.

ALICE

Like Oswald to Kennedy.

CARLUCCI

Now, as soon as we reach the hostess, excuse yourself to the bathroom. The key is, you have to head back and to the left before the hostess tells you.

ALICE

So it shows that we're regulars.

CARLUCCI

Otherwise she'll be more inclined to turn us away after seeing we have no reservation. Marriage proposal aside, if you're in the bathroom, it allows her to bat eyes and revisit whatever moment we shared on the phone.

(beat)

If Shah Rafa Khan likes this place, the place is gonna have to like us.

INT. SULLIVAN STREET - DAY

Carlucci and Alice at the HOSTESS stand. Alice backpedals.

ALICE

I'm gonna wash up in the powder room.

HOSTESS

Oh, the bathroom is --

ALICE

-- Back and to the left.

CARLUCCI

Hey. So, I was the guy --

HOSTESS

-- The young-looking one who's gonna propose, right? She's quite stunning.

CARLUCCI

Oh. Thanks... I made her myself.

HOSTESS

Right. So I looked in the logbook and couldn't find the reservation. But, I did tell the Maître d' about your proposal, and he did his thing.

CARLUCCI

Wow. Thank you.

HOSTESS

Don't thank me, thank him... And by "thank" I mean "tip."

CARLUCCI

Tips, Melissa... Tips are reserved for shoe shiners and prostitutes. So unless he can lick the finish off of my knob -- or at least offer it a spirited polish -- compensation will not be forthcoming.

Hostess, not sure whether to laugh or be offended. Then...

HOSTESS

How do you know my name?

INT. CHRISTIE'S - DAY

Margo and Scooter sit at a desk: Paperwork in order to bid on the relatively cheap painting that Shah Rafa Khan's looking to bid on.

SCOOTER

How come the Yanks only gave you 50?

MARGO

We had leverage, but only so much. I had to rely on an earnest defense of Luis Castillo, plus some indignation over Alice. They talk about her body so Billy said to bring that up. They didn't overreact and like, fork over a hundred like we thought they would.

(beat)

I hate Luis Castillo. He's the worst.

A financial CONTROLLER enters with photocopies and sits down.

CONTROLLER

Okay, so for proof of funds, you are entering in a Chase personal savings account for \$251,418. You're bidding Lot 7 -- Black Rain by Guan Xuezhong.

SCOOTER

Sick. Do we get paddles?

CONTROLLER

Yes, Sir. If you win, the purchase price will be subtracted from your account tomorrow afternoon and the item will be available for pick-up.

INT. BIDDING HALL - DAY

Mid-day/Sparsely populated. Margo and Scooter sit at the back.

Scooter compares a shot from the article he referenced to its live subject -- Shah Rafa Khan's art dealer, ADAM KALLER (50).

An AUCTIONEER and his schpiel. Bidding is at 50K. Paddles fly.

MARGO

Why aren't we at Sotheby's?

SCOOTER

Because we're at Christie's.

Kaller and a PATRON bid. 5K increments.

MARGO

We should be at Sotheby's.

SCOOTER

This is the one Shah Rafa Khan wants. We're getting his attention. Besides: Auction houses are like Democrats and Republicans -- They're the same thing.

MARGO

That's not true. Someone says, "I'm going to Christie's," they're going to see an Irish girl in Queens. But "I'm going to Sotheby's," it's more of a Picasso and pocket watches vibe. Marie Antoinette brooches. That sort.

SCOOTER

Y'know what Picasso's full name was?
(beat)

Ready? Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno...María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Ruiz...y Picasso.

(on Margo's look)

True story.

AUCTIONEER

64 thousand, yes-good. Now at 66.

Margo raises her paddle.

MARGO

Two-hundred fifty thousand dollars.

The sparse crowd, taken aback.

AUCTIONEER

Going once, Going twice... Sold to the Young Miss for two-hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Kaller, miffed. The Patron, confused.

SCOOTER

You just spent all our money.

MARGO

We blew him away, now let's spin it.

(beat)

Right? It's money spent on you only.

Scooter sighs, calls back to Margo's lament that opened the scene.

SCOOTER

We should be at Sotheby's.

INT. SULLIVAN STREET - DAY

Alice and Carlucci are now dining at one Sullivan's prime tables.

ALICE

This place thinks it's better than me.

CARLUCCI

I noticed you said "powder room" back there instead of just "bathroom."

ALICE

You like that, right? Straight out of a Jane Austen novel. When not fielding correspondence from gentlemen callers, I may quite often be found taking tea with George Knightley in the parlor.

Alice retrieves her handbag/wallet. Slides \$500 across the table.

After Carlucci pockets the cash, the pair lock eyes in a staring contest of sorts. A moment, and a tear wells up in the corner of Alice's eye. The same w/ Carlucci, as they're both crying on cue.

CARLUCCI

You look nice, by the way... How's the coast?

ALICE

It's clear... You look nice, too.

Carlucci puts his face to the table just as Alice casually flings her wine glass over his bowed head. It travels end-over-end until it shatters on the wall behind him. Startled DINERS turn and look.

Alice stands up in a mock huff and hurries out of the restaurant. After a bit, Carlucci gets up and makes his way out of the place. Stops at the Hostess desk. Places the five hundreds on the table.

CARLUCCI

One is for the bill...one is for the tip. For the Maître d', as suggested.
(beat)
Three are for you. I am so, so sorry.

HOSTESS

Are you okay?

CARLUCCI

I don't know... I'm kind of in shock.
(beat)
Ask me again when I see you tomorrow.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Billy and Cream scan the office directory: PERFECT MATCH.

INT. CHRISTIE'S - DAY

Margo and Scooter, met by Khan's art dealer: Adam Kaller.

KALLER

How do you do? I don't recognize you.
I'm Adam Kaller -- I'm an art dealer.

MARGO

Your reputation precedes you.

KALLER

Thank you.

SCOOTER

(eyeing Margo)
It wasn't a compliment.

KALLER

That's clever. Listen, I don't think I'm telling tales out of school when I say that you wildly overbid inside.

MARGO

I read the story. Mr. Khan wanted it.

KALLER

There's a sentimental attachment.

MARGO

You just weren't expecting to pay sentimental prices.

KALLER

When Shah Rafa Khan sets limits on a painting, "Spare no expense" means I have the green light to spend triple. When you offered 250 I was paralyzed.
(beat)
I'm sorry; who do you work for again?

Margo hands him a card -- The Dougan Hotel.

MARGO

My family would like to meet Mr. Khan. And perhaps he would like to meet our family's newest member. Tomorrow at 9.

KALLER

... He's out of the country this week.

MARGO

Is that what his office told you?
(smiling)
Shah Rafa Khan's on the 8th hole at Shinnecock. Doing what he does best.

KALLER

Gambling his money away.

MARGO

So I've heard. Mr. Kaller, my name is Radha Byagari. And this is my brother.

SCOOTER

No pun intended. Max Byagari, Sir.
(beat)
Welcome to the family.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Post-Sullivan Street, Carlucci sits in a Farooq driven cab. Alice pulls up next to him at a light in a Diop driven cab. Carlucci smiles. Alice smiles. He unlocks, but Alice flies.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Margo and Scooter walk with pace.

SCOOTER

Why are you so nice to us, but then when we work a job, you're abrasive to the Mark. Is it really necessary?

MARGO

Kinda. If I'm all sweet to some art dealer who we're about to do a deal with? A shady deal with? He's gonna be looking out for the Trojan Horse.

SCOOTER

I see. When an amateur rips someone off, they always do it with a smile.

MARGO

Yeah. They kill people with kindness.

They stop upon spotting a pair of HENCHPERSONS.

SCOOTER

Let's hope so.

INT. PERFECT MATCH - DAY

Billy and Cream consult with a MATCHMAKER.

CREAM

I want someone nice. No Sour Susans.

MATCHMAKER

You want someone nice. Got it. But you don't get to pick your partner, Mr. LaRue. I'm a matchmaker, right?

CREAM

... Do you know what a "Yenta" is?

BILLY

O-kay. Listen Cream, it's like they do in India with arranged marriages.

CREAM

Who said bunk about marriage? At 10 grand a date, I want some free milk.

(beat)

Low-fat.

Cream howls with laughter, aims for a high-five w/ Billy, who is not amused. Cream's empty high-five morphs to a lonely hand clap.

MATCHMAKER

Mr. LaRue, you catch more flies with honey than you do vinegar. Why would I set you up with someone nice, when your behavior is bordering upon rude?

CREAM

I'll handle the choosing. Or no dice.

BILLY

Ma'am, perhaps I can pick someone?

MATCHMAKER

I'm sorry. My rates are high but my results are unparalleled. Now, your boss is being rude...yet he's still expecting to be set up with someone nice? Life is short. It's too short to be alone, too short to die alone.

CREAM

Don't you tell me about life. And don't you dare tell me about death.

MATCHMAKER

Do you have a wife, Mr. LaRue?

(beat)

Do you have children?

A hurt and defeated Cream hangs his head.

MATCHMAKER

You're not nearly as tough as you think. But it's hardly your fault, as ya didn't ask to be born a man.

(beat)

Life is very short. If you want to live it to the fullest...follow me.

CREAM

Where?

MATCHMAKER

To the screening room.

(to Billy)

Hey, what happened to your arm?

BILLY

I hurt it playing basketball.

MATCHMAKER

You're a hard case, Cream. There is only one woman I'll set you up with. She's also a hard case. Tough woman.

(beat)

Her name is Barbara.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Back with Margo and Scooter. They converge with the Henchpersons.

RUSSIAN WOMAN

I have seen your mother. Visit her.

MARGO

I don't have a mother.

RUSSIAN WOMAN

She misses you.

UKRAINIAN MAN

How are you, young man?

SCOOTER

Do whatever you want to the girl, but don't touch me.

UKRAINIAN MAN

Get in the van.

SCOOTER

That was funny. You're supposed to acknowledge that it was funny. God, what happened to the old days when they would send Italians? You Slavic motherfuckers are a humorless people.

RUSSIAN WOMAN

And you young black men. Always so...

She looks at Margo, shifting her focus away from Scooter.

SCOOTER

Always so...

RUSSIAN WOMAN

Miss. Get in the van.

SCOOTER

Always so... So what?

RUSSIAN WOMAN

Young black men. Always so...black.

Margo and Scooter, in wide-eyed disbelief.

MARGO

Oh, no she didn't.

SCOOTER

Wow. Just... Wow.

RUSSIAN WOMAN

(shows Margo a gun)

Get in. Trust me. We go to the salon.

MARGO

We better be going to the salon. I'm about to break a nail in this piece.

SCOOTER

Margo, be serious.

MARGO

(unscrewing)

I am being serious. Now stand back:
You're about to see a white woman take
off her earrings.

Russian Woman grabs Margo's arm to drag her to their van already.

Margo reacts with force, grabbing the Russian's hair and pulling her head into a headlock of sorts. The Russian has a small knife.

Cuts Margo, who is too shocked to scream. Scooter spots the blood, which immediately begins to flow. She'll need a few stitches, but a few stitches means a scary amount of blood. Scooter defends his friend, pouncing on the far stronger Russian Woman. Unfortunately:

The Ukrainian Man wallops Scooter in the face. Down goes Frazier.

Pedestrians notice, but mind their own business. Keep walking by.

Ukrainian Man scrapes up Scooter. Calmly steers him, curb to van.

Russian Woman does the same with Margo. As Russian Woman arrives at the sliding door, Ukrainian Man, having loaded Scooter, helps.

Just as she's about to step in... Margo palms the back of Russian Woman's head, and SLAMS it forward into the passenger side window.

It CRASHES. Ukrainian Man forcefully pushes Margo up into the van.

MARGO

Get your hand, off of me.

He slides the door shut, but as it closes, Margo grabs his wrist and pulls it towards her. The panel CLOSES on his offending hand.

Ukrainian Man REACTS. Margo may go down, but not without a fight.

INT. LOFT - DAY

Alice & Carlucci employ a band saw. Large picture frames abound.

INT. BANK - DAY

Margo, once again at the desk of the Banker. She deposited over \$250,000 for the Black Rain painting earlier, money that was to be siphoned out when picking up the painting tomorrow afternoon.

Only now, Margo's joined by Ukrainian Man. The van sits outside.

BANKER

You want to take out the \$250,000 you
just deposited? Mind if I inquire why?

Margo eyes Scooter. Russian Woman has a gun on him.

UKRAINIAN MAN

I will tell you why. The young woman and her friends, they owe \$1,000,000. In cree-menal world, when your group owe money, they have target on their back. Other criminal, knows they are gathering their whole money together.

BANKER

And the first guy to find them, they can relieve Margo of her money, yeah?

Ukrainian smiles. Margo drips blood on the floor.

BANKER

Man, you really had me going for a second. Sorry to pry, Margo, but I have to ask. So, you guys are what, Silicon Alley angels? 250K is like pocket change for all you VC types.

Banker laughs. Gives Ukrainian Man the money, who then secures it.

Then, just as Margo did earlier, he places a pen on Banker's desk.

UKRAINIAN MAN

I am sorry... I stole your pen.

BANKER

Oh, my stuff gets stolen every day. Occupational hazard.

MARGO

Don't I know it.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Billy, Cream, Matchmaker.

CREAM

Do you have any peanuts, Miss?

BILLY

Will you stop it with the peanuts? Unreal. I can't take you anywhere.

The show begins. Elaborate personal ad. Decent production values.

Draped flat on an esthetician's table is MS. BARBARA DOUGAN (70).

An angled foundation brush -- squirrel hair, not badger -- sweeps and dusts, back and forth, to and fro. A transformation commences.

REGINA

Look what God gave you. Look closer.
(beat)
Your name is Barbara Dougan.

Barbara replies to REGINA EWING with a rapid-fire Southern accent.

BARBARA

Mah name is Barbara Dougan. And look
what God gave me.

The filmed personal is a MONTAGE that reflects her affirmations.

BARBARA

(rapid-fire)

I am a direct descendant of Mr.
Button Gwinnett, the fourth Governor
of Geo'gia and the second man to sign
the Declaration of Independence...
Of course, Uncle Button challenged
Lachlan McIntosh to a duel nine months
later and died o' gangrene after being
shot in the uppa thigh by Lachlan, but
that is neither here nor there. In the
right here and the right now, I've all
a woman could ever ask for: I own four
houses and nine hotels. I have 600,000
stocksha'es of Anheuser-Busch, 500,000
shares from R.J. Reynolds, and 400,000
shares of the Smith and Wesson Holding
Co'poration. So, as a matter o' course,
I envision a homevisit from the Bureau
of Alcohol Tabbaca & Firearms, sho'tly.

In this Montage, we have so far seen 1) The real-life sketch of
Button Gwinnett being gunned down by Lachlan McIntosh, preceded
by Button's John Hancock on the DOI. 2) Babs running her hotels.

3) Barbara, sipping beer from a tiny straw out of an over-sized
glass stein. (Anheuser-Busch) 4) Firing guns (Smith and Wesson)
down at the shooting range. (The paper target explodes in three
places: the target man's head, then his heart, then his groin.)

Regina hugs Barbara from behind as they stare into a mirror.

BARBARA

Look what God gave me -- I have all a
woman could evah ask for, all a woman
could evah need... yet nothing that I
want... And I have all a woman could
evah want... yet nothing that I need.

REGINA

What else could you possibly want?

BARBARA

(fast)

Come on now, Regina; why are we here? Every night I do my bird-watching in Central Park. If not for you, I'd do it alone. So I need a man. A good man. All a woman needs from life is a good dog and a good man. Already have the forme', so now I need the latte'. And do not dare tell me that I'm too picky or that I should settle as some so'ta general consequence of mah age, cuz I like all kinds of menfolk.

A final MONTAGE that offers rapid-fire shots of various NYC MEN.

BARBARA

I like sho't men and tall men, rich men and poor men, men who are bald, and men who have itta-bitta-tiny tufts of hair eme'ging from places where hair ain't had no rightful business since the time of Australopithecus and the Pleistocene Epoch, Regina. I like men who are ambitious and animated, brainy and brash, cunning and clevah, damaged and depressed, ene'getic and effe'vescent, fea'less and friendly, gentle and gifted, *helpful, helpless, impe'fect and impossible*. I like men who are jaded and jealous, knowing and kind, lazy and lucky, maddening and mysterious, naughty and nice, obedient and obse'vant, polite and protective, quiet and qui'ky, rebellious and romantic, sad and sweet, thick and thin, unique and unusual, *venomous, vulgah, wicked and wet*.

REGINA

Mhm. You forget X-Y-and-Z, Shortstop?

BARBARA

I said I like all kinds of menfolk. You say X-Y-Z, I say White-Black-n-Chinese. And I will speak of furthe' truths in no sho't order, repeating for you and for Jesus, that while I'm a sovereign and successful woman, there are only two things I want outta life: A good man and a good dog -- I'd prefer the dog, but I'll settle for the man.

Billy, aghast. Matchmaker, used to his reaction.

CREAM

I dunno. I thought she was...nice.

INT. LOFT - DAY

Margo bleeds. All watch as Alice works on her.

CARLUCCI

(to Alice)

You need hydrogen peroxide.

ALICE

Plus safety scissors and gauze,
right? Wrong. All I need is vodka,
duct tape and an eyebrow pencil.

CREAM

I don't understand what happened.

MARGO

I told you; I fell.

CREAM

On what, a slaughterhouse? She needs
to get to a hospital.

BILLY

No, we have a doctor we go to. He's
the one who got the bullet outta my
arm when I got popped the other day.

Everyone looks at Cream.

BILLY

What I meant to say...

INT. LOFT - DAY

The crew, once again gathered in the HiddenPassageWay.com room.

The blackboard: Plan A (Dan Dougan) -- Plan B (Shah Rafa Khan).

CARLUCCI

We have no money. We had 200 grand
between the five of us, plus fifty
from the Yankees. Now it's flushed.

CREAM

When you told me about the painting,
you said bidding starts at 50 grand.
Why did you end up spending so much?

ALICE

To blow him away and spin it. Blowing
him away on the price, it establishes
our legitimacy. But now we can't spin.

CREAM

I don't know what that means.

BILLY

Spin it into something better. And then, spin something better into a million dollars... What about your mother, Margo? Maybe she hid money?

MARGO

I don't have a mother.

BILLY

Untrue. Scoter doesn't have a mother.
(beat)
Alice doesn't have a mother. Carlucci doesn't have a father. I don't have a mother or father... You have a mother.

MARGO

We don't talk and she's broke, anyway.
(back to Plan B)
Look, I told the art dealer that we'd show Khan the painting tomorrow night. They took the bait and want a meeting tonight. OK, we won't have Black Rain to show, but now we're on their radar.

BILLY

Sure, fine; let's keep pursuing both. Cuz Cream can't get set up on a date with Barbara Dougan on short notice. Yet we did discover she's in Central Park every night to go bird-watching.

Wheels stop turning, gears stop grinding.

CARLUCCI

... Who goes bird-watching at night?

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DUSK

Barbara Dougan and her friend Regina Ewing walk through the park. Billy and Cream watch from a distance. Billy thumbs a bird guide.

CREAM

Put that book aside... We're here to pick up girls. See the ball, hit the ball. The heart has no user's manual.

BILLY

Look, I need to relay you a few things. Via earpiece. You gotta impress her with bird shit.

CREAM

That already got me in trouble today.

Billy goes to put the earpiece in Cream. Gets smacked in the head.

LATER

Barbara and Regina watch a bird.

BARBARA

I don't know, Regina. It could be anything. A type of wren, pe'haps?

CREAM

Probably a fringe-backed fire-eye.

Barbara and Regina see Cream standing on the path.

Billy watches from a distance, feeding Cream info.

BARBARA

Come again?

CREAM

A fringe-backed fire-eye. *Pyrglena Atra*, from southern coastal Brazil. Looks like someone smuggled him in.

REGINA

My baby had a python he ordered from South America. Damn thing got so big we flushed him in the toilet. And so now when I walk past sewers, I gotta do a li'l double-dutch skip so -- Ow!

Babs pinches her, a cue to shut up before she scares Cream away.

BARBARA

You were saying how... You think it's an introduced species?

CREAM

I think so. Actually, it could be --

Billy feeds Cream a second name.

BILLY

-- An ash-breasted tit-tyrant.

CREAM

(to Billy/Barbara)
I'm not saying that.

BARBARA

No, please do. By all means.

CREAM

... Well, in my opinion, I think he might be an ass-breasted tit-tyrant.

BILLY

Ash-breasted! Ash-breasted, Cream!
Anairetes Alpinus!

CREAM

El penis?

BILLY

From the high Andes of Bolivia!

BARBARA

Are birds your game, Mister?

CREAM

Try not to laugh. I'm a dying breed.

BARBARA

Oh, no. Not at all. Truth is, I like to go bird-watching as much as I can. Given that, I'll hafta disagree with you on the possible *Alpinus* up there.

CREAM

I was just about to say... It could in fact be a Junin flightless grebe.

BARBARA

A flightless grebe? That's splendid.

REGINA

(beat)

If he flightless, what's his foolish ass doing up in the damn tree? -- Ow!

INT. ALICE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Margo helps Alice get ready for the meeting with Shah Rafa Khan.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Billy has now joined Cream, Barbara and Regina.

BARBARA

It's quite commendable for you to be involved in the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program, Mr. Cream.

(to Billy)

Barbara Dougan. Pleased to meet you.

BILLY

Billy Peaches, Ma'am.

BARBARA
Oh. It's like...Peaches and Cream.

CREAM
Except that it's not.

REGINA
Where'd you get a name like that?

BILLY
Vietnam. Total war hero, this guy.

BARBARA
There are no heroes in war, Bill.

CREAM
War promotes the health of a nation.
It's like a wildfire: While it does
destroy and decimate, it ultimately
proves beneficial for the ecosystem.

BARBARA
M-hm. So says the man named "Creamy."

CREAM
You have a problem with my service,
now you got a problem with my name?

BARBARA
No grown man should be willingly
referred to as "Creamy" unless he's
either a professional golfer or gay.
Unfortunately for me, you appear to
be neither of the two -- Let's walk.

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Alice sees SHAH RAFA KHAN mingling. The group hides, watches.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Cream and Barbara walk. Billy and Regina trail safely behind.

BARBARA
You know who I am, correct?
(on Cream's nod)
And you know what they say about me?

CREAM
They call you...Slumlord Millionaire.

REGINA
(to Billy)
They say she put the "Ho" in Hotel.

CREAM
 (to Barbara)
 So do you have any kids?

BARBARA
 Ha! No. Thank God, no. Yourself?

CREAM
 I was going to have a boy. But he and my wife...they died during childbirth.

BARBARA
 ... Okay, well that's a conversation killer if I evah heard one. There is no good follow-up to that one, Cream.

Cream motions to speak, but Barbara cuts him off.

BARBARA
 "I got two scoops of banana ice cream with chocolate sprinkles, but then we hit a bump and I dropped one scoop on the ground." "Really? That's terrible. Now wouldja like to see some pictures of my fallen angel? I've wallet-sized."

CREAM
 I'm sorry; I just...

BARBARA
 What I look like, some so'ta...vehsel for your pain? Suck it up and save it for Dr. Freud.

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Alice and Shah Rafa Khan. Behind a sculpture, the gang watches on.

ALICE
 Mr. Khan? My name's Radha Byagari.
 (handshake)
 Guan Xuezhong sends his regards.

Behind the sculpture, Carlucci re-explains to Billy-Scooter-Margo.

CARLUCCI
 Shah Rafa Khan is filth. His résumé reads like a greatest hits album of working over the common man: Fannie Mae, Enron, Countrywide. He's a big spender on luxury goods and a bigger bullshit artist than every one of us.

KHAN
 I like... Expressionism. And Fauvism.

Alice, eyeing the fine, eligible bachelors in fine, Italian suits.

ALICE

Yeah, I'm not really into art. Family business aside, I'm just here for the ass. This place is like the New York Yacht Club without yachts.

KHAN

(beat, smiling)

I am trying to figure out who you are.

ALICE

I'm trying to figure out who I am too.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Billy, Cream, Barbara and Regina, eating.

CREAM

What do you do for fun, Barbara?

BARBARA

The things I do for fun are hardly...

Cream motions, encouraging her to continue.

BARBARA

Well you know mah game is houses and hotels. Whether I acquired them from mah husband or not is irrelevant, as I built the houses. I ran the hotels.

She looks at cream, her eyes narrowing.

BARBARA

I have been known in ce'tain ci'cles to engage in some rather lengthy and lively games...of Monopoly.

INT. SHAM APT. - NIGHT

Alice/Shah Rafa Khan, in a high-end, Raffaello Follieri-style apt.

Giving him a tour, she brings him to a darkened room. Pitch black, save red lasers. Alice turns on the light, revealing works of art.

KHAN

What does your family do?

ALICE

My parents'll buy a 20 million dollar stolen painting for two million, then sell it for four. My brothers and the sister your dealer met, we're getting older, so our parents are letting --

KHAN

-- I don't buy stolen art.

ALICE

Well we sell stolen art. As such, we have a pretty solid idea who buys it.

(beat)

To put it another way... Did you come here to sleep with me, Mr. Khan?

KHAN

Of course not... I could be with so many young women. You are too young.

ALICE

I am young. I'm 21. And the only thing more suspicious than being alone with a 21-year-old girl and having something happen, is being alone with a 21-year-old girl, and having nothing happen.

KHAN

(beat, smiling)

What would you like to sell me?

ALICE

We know you have a personal interest in Black Rain: Your ex-wife's husband owns all of Guan Xuezhong's paintings.

KHAN

All except your family's.

ALICE

We also know ya like Norman Rockwell.

(on his smile)

Meet my brothers. Tomorrow afternoon. Sullivan Street.

KHAN

I have been trying to get the table there for one year now. At Sullivan Street, they have to know you. They have to like you... No one likes me.

ALICE

I like you.

KHAN

Yes?

ALICE

Yes... And Mr. Sullivan likes me.

INT. BRIGHT WATER - NIGHT

A Scottish Terrier. It's not Pearl, but a Monopoly game piece.

Residents, those in varying stages in decline, crane their necks in order to watch Barbara play Monopoly with Cream, Billy, Nurse.

CREAM
Baltic Avenue. Hit me.

BARBARA
Sure you wanna do that, Chief?

CREAM
It's a low-risk investment.

BARBARA
It's a low-rewa'd investment.

CREAM
You build your houses and hotels in real life, Dougan. This world's mine.

BARBARA
Fai' enough, but you're falling into a trap: Baltic and Mediterranean are like the low-income housing projects of Monopoly.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Cream walks Barbara home.

BARBARA
The company I keep, we host a number of benefits. But you don't meet many folks who volunteer. Get their hands dirty. You and Billy are good people.

CREAM
We could be better.

BARBARA
It's hard meeting new people in this town... Monopoly enthusiasts to boot.

CREAM
Ha. I actually play every afternoon with Bill and his friends. Fun kids.

BARBARA
... Look, Cream, I'm not some so'ta loony board game obsessive, but why don't you all come over tomorrow if you regula'ly get together? I don't have children. I'd like some around.

CREAM

Okay then. Sounds like a plan.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOX - NIGHT

Billy signs the cross.

PRIEST

In Nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus
Sancti.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Billy and the Priest sit on opposite sides of the latter's desk.

PRIEST

... You're not old enough to grasp
the changes the city has undergone.

BILLY

Times Square is Disneyland, SoHo is
the Mall of America, what's left of
the Village may as well be Westport.
I've heard it all, I've read it all.

PRIEST

The reputation we have as being these
hardened New Yorkers, it's a thing of
the past. There's a tendency to look
down on the Bridge and Tunnel crowd --

BILLY

-- And thank God for that.

PRIEST

Well, I don't know. See, in the 50's
and 60's, the Italians and Irish and
other groups who began rising in the
ranks, they moved to Long Island and
Jersey and elsewhere in the Tri-State
area. They were the tough New Yorkers
that gave New York its reputation.

BILLY

I don't really buy into this notion
that New York being a safe place is
such a bad thing. I like bankers. I
like lawyers. Artists are obnoxious.
I like that my female friends, they
can walk through Times Square...and
not get groped or assaulted.

PRIEST

I don't disagree with you. But what I'm trying to say, is that it's not the rough and tumble town it was at one time. At some point, life might catch up to you in that regard. The cops can't protect you indefinitely.

Billy's phone vibrates. He checks a countdown: 23h, 59m, 57s.

PRIEST

As evidenced by your situation. And the people who do what you do, even kids your age, they do what they do with computers. With numbers, Billy.

(beat)

You're 25 years old, and a dinosaur.

BILLY

Yeah, well... I'm not trying to rip off old ladies' bags... Not looting 401(k)'s from behind a monitor like some common coward. I use my laptop to read about sports like a fucking normal human being.

PRIEST

That's fair. You're certainly not stealing handbags from old ladies.

(beat)

Instead, you're literally robbing them of their best friends.

EXT. BOAT BASIN - NIGHT

Billy/Cream/Carlucci wrap Day 1, prep Day 2. Uneasy lies the head.

CREAM

Now Plan A, Dan Dougan and Barbara Dougan and puppy Pearl, it's set up. Plan B...Alice meet that Khan fella?

CARLUCCI

She did. Plan B is full steam ahead, even if we have no painting to show. We don't have the shark soup either, but Alice has a lead: Some kid in a college class she takes.

CREAM

What's with the shark fin soup?

BILLY

It's what we call an appetizer. I'll explain in more detail after you die.

CREAM

Speaking of which... How do you see this all ending?

BILLY

I mentioned how if you wanted to fly overseas for experimental treatments, I'd pay for it. Beyond that, there's the Mayo Clinic... We can get you in.

CREAM

I have Stage IV; there's nothing to be done. And the Mayo Clinic? C'mon.

BILLY

I told you; we have a doctor we go to. When ya lose your license to practice, ya think ya just stop practicing? Nah, ya go underground and fix up bad guys. Some folks'll get your kid a job at Golden Slacks. Our guy can get your favorite uncle into the Mayo Clinic.

(beat)

And there's always prayer. And faith.

CREAM

You don't practice what you preach.

BILLY

I'm not a kid who can do anything he wants if he just sets his mind to it, this is me fulfilling my destiny like the other crooks and schnooks in town. Ask Margo: My mother was a prostitute and my father was a cop. Their quid-pro-quo has resulted in the shit we are right now swimming in. Yeah, no one wants to hear about Christ, but some people need a North Star, okay?

The threesome stare at the lights, out across the Hudson River.

BILLY

You're right; I don't practice what I preach... I would like an honest life.

He's not alone. Carlucci quietly adds to the general sentiment.

CARLUCCI

Y'know how people who are married, they talk about how they're bored, and how they crave some adventure?

(beat)

Well I wanna get married... All I want outta life is to get married.

INT. CREAM'S APT - NIGHT

Billy tucks Cream into bed.

CREAM

I need my pain meds... And we never got those peanuts.

BILLY

Maybe you should spend the night at Bright Water... How are you feeling?

CREAM

I'm a little run down. Last week, I didn't think I'd be able to move my things to Bright Water. Today, it's like I can head up a moving company. And the day after tomorrow...that's the fiftieth anniversary of my wife, so...don't try to get me to hang on.

Billy sets the Super Cyanide on Cream's night-stand.

BILLY

You said you'd teach me how to drive.

CREAM

I said I'd find you a car to practice with... You'll hafta get someone else.

BILLY

People have recovered from Stage IV cancers before. And Sloan-Kettering is good, but they're not Mayo.

CREAM

I have cancer in my asshole, Dippy. Maybe we'll take ya on a road trip, maybe we'll fly to the Mayo Clinic.

BILLY

Hopefully while listening to Sinatra.

CREAM

Hopefully while listening to Sinatra.
(beat)
But probably not. Now get outta here.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Next morning. COMMUTERS begin their day. Let the River Run.

INT. WHOLE FOODS - DAY

Alice walks through. Nears the fish counter. WORKER smiles.

WORKER

Alice -- How ya doin', baby girl?

ALICE

Hi, Freddy. Your dad still works at
Hunts Point, right? The fish market?

(on his nod)

Can he get me into the loading zone?
I got an interview for the paper with
an illegal immigrant, but he's scared.

EXT. BAYVIEW - DAY

Margo's mom, NATASHA VAN SLYKE, looks up from the book she reads.
All around her are INMATES during rec hour, engaging one another.

They're out on the roof of the little-known Bayview Correctional.
Bayview is a women's prison in Manhattan proper -- 20th and 11th.

A GUARD approaches.

GUARD

There's someone here to see you.

INT. BAYVIEW - DAY

In the visiting room, Ms. Van Slyke speaks with Margo.

MARGO

I'm in a bad spot. I need some cash.
(beat)
You have any stashed away somewhere?

MS. VAN SLYKE

... You're exactly like me, Margo.

MARGO

I'm nothing like you.

MS. VAN SLYKE

You're exactly like me. The apple
doesn't fall far from the tree.

(beat)

I hear you're running game with Billy.
Get with him. He's a proper Christian.

MARGO

Billy's like my brother.

MS. VAN SLYKE

And I'm your mother. Jesus'll deliver
you what you're looking for. If money
is weighing on you, look to the Bible.

(beat)

Look unto the heavens and see. Behold
the clouds...that are higher than you.

MARGO

I'm not religious.

MS. VAN SLYKE

You're not a lot of things.

(beat)

Say something. Unless you only came down here to pout.

MARGO

Mom...the apple may not fall far from the tree? But sometimes it rolls away.

She takes off. As she reaches the exit...

MS. VAN SLYKE

Grand Central Station. Locker 27.

(beat)

The combination is your birthday.

INT. SULLIVAN STREET - DAY

Carlucci secures the Khan meeting.

CARLUCCI

I appreciate that you even accept my apology, Melissa. I know --

HOSTESS

-- Wait; you did that yesterday, too. How'd y'know my name? You never said.

CARLUCCI

You told me. On the phone, remember?

HOSTESS

Right; but how would you remember?

CARLUCCI

Why wouldn't I? It's your name; it's important to you. If you told me your name, the least I could do is respect the gesture by remembering it.

HOSTESS

Yeah, but you don't expect anyone to remember the most trivial details about random people they'll never see again... So, uh, what's your business kind sir?

CARLUCCI

Funny you ask. Remembering the most trivial details about random people I'll never see again? Well, that is exactly my business.

INT. MOTT CORNER DELI - DAY

Billy/Cream eat breakfast with Diop at a popular cabbie hangout.

EXT. FULTON FISH MARKET - DAY

Carlucci and a DOCK WORKER on the Bronx waterfront in Hunts Point.

Farooq sits in his cab. Watches. He drove Carlucci on Alice's tip.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Margo arrives at Locker #27. It's a digital combination: 04-11-88.

She pauses before opening it. When she finally does, she's thrown.

Sitting there, in the center of the locker, is a King James Bible.

Margo, none to pleased. She opens the Bible and flips through it, hoping to find some cash amidst the pages. Discovers an envelope.

Opens it. A religious card says something in Spanish. What the...

Margo flips the card: "Look unto the heavens and see. Behold the clouds which are higher than you." -- Job 35:5. Margo is chapped.

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Margo exits the station. Doesn't know what to do. COMMUTERS walk.

Pulls out the card, reads it again. "Look to the heavens and see."

She looks to the sky. A moment. She has an epiphany. Runs inside.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The Grifter, who got the Puck Building and Super Cyanide for Scooter in exchange for the Moissanite rings, walks jovially.

Stops in his tracks upon seeing Vernon Suggs, staring at him.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Margo opens the locker once again. Looks at the Bible and pauses.

Barely able to breathe, she slowly puts her hand on top of it...

Then raises it towards the roof of the locker. "Look to the heavens and see. Behold the clouds that are higher than you."

Margo feels around. With considerable effort, she detaches...

An accordion folder. Inside? Hundreds of thousands of dollars.

EXT. CHINATOWN RESTAURANT - DAY

A sign on the window (in Mandarin) reads -- "Free Shark Fin Soup!" An accompanying picture features a shark's fin and a bowl of soup. Carlucci hands a roll of tape back to the OWNER. They shake hands.

Now, it's Billy with the Owner. Billy scans a list of Asian names.

The Owner hands Billy a key.

INT. BANK - DAY

Margo, for the third (and final) time, sits with the Banker.

Initially she deposited \$250,000. Then she was relieved of it by Ukrainian Man. Now she deposits it so she can pay for Black Rain.

MARGO

Do you remember me? I'm the nanny.

BANKER

Best au pair on the Upper West Side.

MARGO

I have to make one more transaction.

BANKER

You don't quit, do ya? Lay it on me.

Stack by stack, Margo places 300K on the desk.

BANKER

What's going on here? I don't have a lot of nannies depositing 250K, then withdrawing it on the same day, then depositing... Is there even more now?

MARGO

It's a little over 300.

BANKER

You're a nanny. To kids? What is this?

Margo smiles sheepishly.

MARGO

Adventures in Babysitting.

INT. BAUMAN RARE BOOKS (54TH & MADISON) - DAY

Bauman Books more/less looks like Teddy Roosevelt's trophy room.

BAUMAN, white handling gloves, places a ball on a velvet swatch.

SCOOTER

How'd you get this in one day?

BAUMAN

I know a guy who knows a guy...
Who knows a guy who knows a girl.

SCOOTER

Nice. Now, it says 1941 World Series,
but is there any material difference
between this ball that was the first
pitch of Game 1, and say, the Mickey
Owen game?

BAUMAN

The Mickey Owen game. When he dropped
the last out? Sure. This ball's worth
maybe five hundred dollars...and that
one's baseball history. And priceless.

SCOOTER

But there's no difference? Like no
commemorative markings or whatever?

BAUMAN

Same ball, Scooter... Same ball.

INT. CHRISTIE'S - DAY

Margo established a bidding account/showed proof of funds earlier.
She now files paperwork w/ the Controller. And Black Rain is hers.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Alice, finished with school, walks back to the loft.

VERNON (O.C.)

Can I carry your books?

Alice turns, sees it's Vernon.

VERNON

We can talk now, or we can talk
tonight... At the Puck Building.

Alice stops walking.

VERNON

A little birdie told me. I'll have
to stop by. Check on my investment.

ALICE

The Ukrainian has 250,000. Margo gave
it for safe-keeping. Get it from him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Scooter closes in on the loft. Forms a triangle of sorts with Carlucci and Billy as the three converge from distinct points.

As they draw closer, Scooter produces the baseball he just bought, casually flips it to Carlucci, who nonchalantly flips it to Billy.

INT. SCOOTER'S ROOM - DAY

Scooter & Carlucci stare at the painting Scooter & Margo bought. Confused, as it's a white canvas with just 15 simple black dots.

SCOOTER

Two-hundred fifty grand. What a find.

CARLUCCI

It's sublime. Impediment and release.

Scooter sees a cup of pens on Carlucci's desk. Picks out a thin, black magic marker. Uncaps it. Considers it. He passes it on to Carlucci, who also considers it, then nonchalantly throws it at the canvas. It adds another black dot to the sea of white space.

INT. LOFT - DAY

Cream is briefed on Black Rain in the HiddenPassageWay.com room.

ALICE

What we initially realized was that we had to spend money to make money. So... We pooled our 200K in savings, plus 50K from the Yanks, and put it into that which you see right there.

Indicates the white canvas/black dot painting Scooter n' Carlucci defaced. It is now hanging from the wall. Cream crinkles his nose.

BILLY

It's a critique of China's industrial revolution. Black Rain, by Guan Xuezhong. Guan Xuezhong is a genius.

CREAM

Well of course he is. So what now?

MARGO

Well we bought it for \$250,000, we'll give it to Shah Rafa Khan for nothing, spinning nothing into a million bucks.

CARLUCCI

We told you how Shah Rafa Khan likes not only legitimate, pricey art like this, but also pricier, stolen art.

CREAM

I don't understand.

Eyes drift to a second painting, between a dartboard, arcade game.

ALICE

That's Lt. General Barton Yount. He's been Missing in Action since '92, and he's worth 10 million. Mainly cuz the signature on it reads Norman Rockwell.

CARLUCCI

It's a forgery. And a terrible one.

CREAM

You're gonna sell a phony Norman Rockwell for ten million dollars?

CARLUCCI

No. We're gonna sell a fake Norman Rockwell for one million dollars.

MARGO

And by "we," he means "you."

INT. RUSSIAN BATH - DAY

Vernon Suggs aims his gun at Ukrainian Man. Russian Woman, frozen.

VERNON

I was told you were holding it for me. If that's changed, lemme know --

UKRAINIAN MAN

You will shoot me? Italy has no power in New York. No more. A-freeka has no power. China no. Russia, Ukraine? All power. Control. You will not shoot me.

He's right. Vernon won't shoot him. Instead, Vernon immediately shifts the gun to Russian Woman and double-taps her in the head.

INT. BARBARA'S BLDG. - DAY

The gang enters to smiles from the white-glove DOORMEN.

INT. BARBARA'S APT. - DAY

The crew is introduced to Barbara, Regina and PENELOPE.

SCOOTER

Scooter Andrews. Great to meet you.

BARBARA

How do you do, Scooter?

CARLUCCI

You have an incredible home, Ma'am.

BARBARA

Oh, I don't know. It's growing on me.

(beat)

Money doesn't buy happiness, but it
sure as hell tries to.

LATER

Next to Barbara, Billy looks at old B & W photographs on the wall.

BARBARA

That's my father, Sam. He drove a --

BILLY

-- A 1953 Ford Sunliner Convertible.

Billy admires. Penélope, one of Barbara's staff members, asks...

PENELOPE

¿Quieres helado Señora?

BARBARA

Ice cream! I knew I forgot something.

CREAM

I could go for some ice cream.

REGINA

Look at that: Ice cream for Cream.

MARGO

Why do they call you Cream, anyway?

CREAM

Ask me again when you're 18.

MARGO

I'm 24.

CREAM

Ask me again when you're 40.

Everyone laughs.

SCOOTER

Ms. Dougan, may I use the bathroom?

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Scooter brought Carlucci. They debate.

CARLUCCI

Billy and I talked on the way over.
We're not sure if we wanna do this.

SCOOTER

Okay... Maybe we can talk about this
tomorrow. Y'know, if I'm still alive.

CARLUCCI

No, listen: Now that we have Black
Rain and got the Puck Building set
for tonight, and we have the shark
fin soup, the meeting with Khan is
gonna be easy. We can get the cash
selling Khan the fake Rockwell.

SCOOTER

Dude, it's Plan B for a reason. Those
are a lot of variables you're listing.

CARLUCCI

But we're con artists, not thieves.
There's honor in what we do. Can't
con an honest man, right? Khan and
Dan Dougan are dishonest...Barbara
has done nothing but be nice to us.

SCOOTER

We're taking Pearl. Now what do I do
if she attacks?

CARLUCCI

If she's in your face, don't panic.
Just punch her in the snout.

SCOOTER

(so mad he's calm)
That's what you do to a shark. You
punch a shark in the snout. A bear.

CARLUCCI

Punch him in the nose; I'm serious.

SCOOTER

I'm not punching a dog in the nose,
Carlucci -- I'm a young black male.

CARLUCCI

So?

SCOOTER

So Michael Vick ya short-sighted fuck.

CARLUCCI

Everyone makes mistakes, Scooter.

SCOOTER

You carry her out. I'm not running around New York with a stolen dog, a white dog, a white bitch no less, and I'm definitely not punching it.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Cream and Barbara carry grocery bags.

BARBARA

I have to be fo'thrigh, Cream. I was trying to impress you back there with how ethnically dive'se my friends are.

CREAM

I noticed. They adore you.

BARBARA

I speak Spanish and Creole you know. All afte'noon, I was patting myself on the back, thinking my home to be a post-racial Utopia of sorts. But then you show up with a black boy named Scooter -- I just can't win.

INT. PEARL'S ROOM - DAY

Pearl appears in front of Scooter: Tiny, cute, harmless.

INT. BARBARA'S APT. - DAY

Billy/Margo/Alice play board games with Regina/Penélope.

REGINA

Penélope, you fed the dogs, right?

PENELOPE

Yo cago en la leche de tu puta madre.

ALICE

... Dogs?

MARGO

Plural?

INT. PEARL'S ROOM - DAY

Scooter, visibly relieved at Pearl's size. Hears a sinister growl. He turns to his left, and a huge German Shepherd is two feet away. He turns to his right, and a big Rotweiller is also two feet away. They bark, so Scooter screams then runs away, smack into the door that is right behind him. He bounces off, falls. Knocked out cold.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Carlucci furiously rifles through condiments. Alice is confused.

CARLUCCI
Scooter's dead.

ALICE
What?! Is Vernon here?!

CARLUCCI
He might be unconscious. I need to find smelling salts to wake him up.

ALICE
Why would you wanna wake up Vernon?!
(beat, calm)
That's table salt, you idiot.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Back with Cream and Barbara.

BARBARA
I genuinely appreciate the children.

CREAM
Most young folk, they patronize and laugh at us. They see an old couple holding hands and say "Oh, how cute."

BARBARA
Things change so fast. I was reading a story in *The Times* about how there are only four phone booths remaining in Manhattan. Seems they've gone the way of the hand-written letter.

CREAM
Member when we were kids, people used to neck in phone booths? How whenever it rained...you'd always see a couple smooching in the booth?

BARBARA
Haven't thought about that in years. I never took part myself; I was too young. Ironically enough...I wanted to get older so I could try it, too.

After a moment, they look at one another.

CREAM
Could I be so bold as to... Would it be okay if I...maybe hailed us a cab?

BARBARA

We don't have any cash on us. After we paid for the ice cream, remember?

CREAM

... I have an idea.

INT. PEARL'S ROOM - DAY

Carlucci hovers over Scooter. He shakes salt onto Scooter's face. Scooter's eyes open/he immediately punches Carlucci on the snout.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Diop drives Cream and Barbara to 90th Street and West End Avenue.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Cream and Barbara approach the phone booth. Cream then hesitates.

CREAM

Hold on... Let me go in alone.

He goes in, picks up the receiver, and looks at Billy's cell.

Confused, he changes his mind, moves to hang up the receiver and use Billy's phone instead. Comically goes back and forth.

He calls Carlucci.

CARLUCCI (O.S.)

Cream?

CREAM

Don't do it, okay? Don't steal Pearl. We can wrangle the million from Khan.

INT. PEARL'S ROOM - DAY

Regina enters, sees Scooter and Carlucci bleeding. They freeze.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

Cream and Barbara are in the narrow booth. They kiss...

And we see a C.U. of the Cross around Barbara's neck...

The Cross around Billy's neck, and the Yin-Yang around Restaurant Owner's neck... The Crescent Moon round Farooq's neck... The Star of David around Jeweler's neck... Signifying that Cream will live.

INT. LOFT - DAY

Carlucci-Scooter-Margo-Billy. Tending to wounds. In strolls Cream.

MARGO
Where have you been?

A beat. Cream softly sings the Sinatra referenced earlier.

CREAM
Start spreading the news...

Finger-pointing begins.

CARLUCCI
Cream wanted to let Pearl go, too.

SCOOTER
So you listen to him? He's gonna die
anyway! I'm the one who's under fire!

BILLY
It was the right thing to do.

SCOOTER
No, fuck you, too, Billy! You hypocrite.
You talk about God like anyone actually
gives a shit, you lie and cheat and you
steal like the rest of us, and when I'm
in shit, you decide to finally find God?

Billy searches the floor for answers. None are forthcoming.

CARLUCCI
The plan went bad, anyway. Once Regina
walked in and saw us fumbling --

ALICE
-- Scooter's right. You two didn't think
ya needed to consult with the rest of us?

MARGO
Everyone calm down... What's next?

EXT. STREET - DUSK

The sun sets on Billy, Scooter and Carlucci as they walk.

EXT. SULLIVAN STREET - DAY

Our three boys peer into Sullivan Street. Hands cupped to glass.

CARLUCCI
That's Khan's art dealer, Adam Kaller.
Kaller's gonna authenticate the, uh...

BILLY
Authenticity.

CARLUCCI

He'll authenticate the authenticity of Black Rain by Guan Xuezhong... I just like saying Guan Xuezhong like I know what the fuck I'm talking about.

Kaller casually turns, facing them. Billy, Carlucci drop to the street, butts on the ground. Scooter stays cupped to the window.

SCOOTER

Where do we find these clowns?

INT. SULLIVAN STREET - NIGHT

Seated with the boys, Shah Rafa Khan berates an innocent WAITRESS.

KHAN

I've been wanting a table for months. You are racist because I'm Pakistani.

W/ 22 years of being Black under his Belt, Scooter rolls his eyes.

He, Billy and Carlucci now sit at a prime table opposite Khan and Adam Kaller. Kaller examines Black Rain, which Carlucci has given.

KHAN

Tell me what is special about this.

KALLER

It's a condemnation of the industrial revolution. It's called Black Rain by Guan Xuezhong, a Chinese national.

(beat)

Guan Xuezhong is a genius.

Billy eyes Carlucci, as this is what he took shit for earlier.

KALLER

But there's a dual meaning. Oh, wow.

(beat)

There are 16 black dots here. There are supposed to 15 dots: 1 for each of the 15 students that were burned alive in Tiananmen Square. See, Guan Xuezhong was there, so he might know the true number...but the government will kill anyone who publicizes true numbers. It must be a secret message.

Carlucci and Scooter grow wide-eyed, and exchange guilty looks.

He takes the marker from behind an ear, puts it in Scoot's lap.

KHAN

How much do you all want for it?

BILLY

Ten thousand.

KHAN

Excuse me?

KALLER

It's called key money. It's a show of good faith. You benefit, becuz if you decide not to buy tonight you go home with a steal. They benefit, becuz now they're in your good graces.

KHAN

But how can they sell it for only 10?

SCOOTER

Cuz we expect to make far more money selling a far more valuable painting.

BILLY

It's just the way it's done... It's probably for packaging and handling fees. I dunno; it's ice cream money.

KHAN

Ice cream money.

BILLY

I eat very rich ice cream. As do you.

SCOOTER

We know all about you... Your tastes.

KHAN

Yes? What do you know about me?

BILLY

We know you like Bengal tigers, Zuber wallpaper...Les Vues De L'Amérique Du Nord, specifically... You like linens from D. Porthault, untreated rubies...

CARLUCCI

We know you're just as comfortable in jeans and a t-shirt as you are at a charity ball in a little black dress.

All laugh except Khan, who produces 100K in cash. Counts off 10K.

KHAN

I like a great many things... And I like America. You are a stupid, fat culture with the stupid, fat people. I like your Coca-Cola, baseball and apple pie.

(MORE)

KHAN (CONT'D)

I also like *The Saturday Evening Post* and Mr. Norman Rockwell.

(beat)

But I love that you are giving me a chance to meet him.

Our boys, stone-faced. Not happy. Kaller breaks the tension.

KALLER

Is that a sling around your shoulder?

BILLY

Yeah.

KALLER

What happened?

BILLY

I got shot in the arm by a twelve-year-old Dominican.

INT. BRIGHT WATER - NIGHT

Fingers, fanned out on a table. They belong to Nurse Ellen.

Billy & Cream sit at the table while Residents mill around.

CREAM

I don't see anything wrong.

BILLY

She's on dish duty. They replaced all the soap with eco-soap, and it's been eating away at her nails. The keratin.

ELLEN

My nails are breaking off like no one else's business. And worse: Mr. Dill?
(leans in, whispers)
The sonavabitch collects my clippings.

CREAM

Would you like me to beat him up?

ELLEN

Brains over brawn, Cream. Grab me his dentures and I'll wear 'em as a tiara. We know Honest Abe's not stealing 'em. That aside, I've been bothering Billy about this designer nail hardener the salons are selling. It's way too much online, and even at the salons uptown by me, it's still too pricey. Billy's broke, you're broke, I'm broke, but I was hoping you'd have loan shark fr--

CREAM

-- Designer nail hardener. Duly noted.

Ellen smiles, then leaves to attend to some volunteer duties.

CREAM

So Ellen thinks you're broke. That's a little ironic... You like her, huh?

BILLY

Is it that obvious?

CREAM

Not at all. I just figure you like her cuz ya look at her with the same level of affection y'have when looking at me.

BILLY

... We met up with him. Six more hours.

CREAM

You're gonna sell a ten million dollar painting in six hours and I don't know my role yet?

BILLY

Relax. Just be cool and follow my lead.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Billy catches up with Ellen.

BILLY

I don't know if you'll be downtown tonight, but if you are, meet me on Mulberry and Hester at midnight.

ELLEN

What? Why?

BILLY

Just meet me on Mulberry and Hester.

ELLEN

If you're not there by 12:01, I'm out. I'm not waiting around like last time.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT

One by one, we have each of our kids getting dolled up and pretty. Cream, with an easel. In the corner of the canvas is an old photo of his late wife. He's made simple sketch of her, in no time flat.

EXT. PUCK BLDG (ROOF) - NIGHT

The calm before the storm. Cream and Scooter, with a rooftop view.

CREAM

What's the real story with Billy?

SCOOTER

He's like Lex Luthor with great hair.

Cream smiles.

SCOOTER

We change names every couple weeks. Today you got Julien Carlucci. Few weeks ago, he's some-other-someone. Margo was Monica Wilson. But Billy will be Billy Peaches indefinitely.

CREAM

Because he used to have a crew cut?

SCOOTER

What? No... It's nothing cool. It's just that, across town, when we all started running around together two years ago, people used to reference us as, "Billy and the Peaches." Cuz we're all so young. Now when people are talking about us, or wanna hire us for a job, it's gotten shortened to "Billy Peaches." It separates us and him from the other Billy's that are in the game. So "Billy Peaches" is really just short for "Billy and the Peaches."

High up above, the pair watch traffic lights and neon lights.

CREAM

How did you all even meet?

SCOOTER

Where do five con artists meet?

CREAM

Law school.

Scoter smiles. The subject passes. Until it's Cream who asks.

CREAM

Where do five con artists meet?

SCOOTER

... Church.

INT. PUCK BALLROOM - NIGHT

A large bowl of shark fin soup. It's wholly unremarkable, and Cream regards it as such. Billy looks on. The hall is hopping.

CREAM

Black Rain. How do y'know he'll buy?

BILLY

We've tried before and come up empty.
Wasted money on a dead fish.

CREAM

(eyeing his soup)
No pun intended.

BILLY

Before we met up at Sullivan, we said that bringing 100K would be mandatory if he were to have a chance at buying.

CREAM

He showed up with 100 grand in cash?

BILLY

It was a big step... Shah Rafa Khan coulda showed at Sullivan, promised he'll bring us a million dollars in a suitcase, then say, Oh, maybe the next time you guys have a show I'll buy something... We told his dealer that they'd have to bring a million. He balked...we settled at a hundred.

CREAM

Because someone who's not a serious buyer...not only won't they bring a million, they won't bring a hundred.

BILLY

You walk outta Chase or Shittybank with a five-inch stack of hundreds, you are going to spend it.

CREAM

... 100K is thicker than five inches.

BILLY

It's actually thinner. A single bill is .0043 inches, so a thousand hundreds is four-point-three inches.

CREAM

How do y'know the thickness of a bill?

BILLY
 I don't know; I just know... Prolly
 because I don't sit around watching
 movies all day.

EXT. PUCK BLDG - NIGHT

Shah Rafa Khan, Adam Kaller, in line for admittance to the party.
 Suit-clad SECURITY pat down elderly Asians. Hand phones to Margo.
 Carlucci guards the back entrance. Alice does the same at the
 service entrance. Scooter, on the roof, looks down at Shah RK.

SCOOTER
 (presses ear)
 Khan's up in five. We're out in ten.

EXT. PUCK BLDG - NIGHT

Alice, guarding the service entrance. Turns, and there is Vernon.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Shah Rafa Khan plus Adam Kaller, on their way up to the ballroom.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Billy works the room. Watches Shah Rafa Khan/Adam Kaller arrive.

He's then alarmed to see Vernon Suggs in the thick of the crowd.

Realizing that Vernon can scare off Khan and ruin the transaction,
 Billy's eyes meet Cream's. Cream waits at another end of the room.

Billy nods at Vernon. Cream comprehends/moves to run interference.

INT. PUCK LOUNGE - NIGHT

Cream has brought Vernon into a separate, plush-furnished lounge.

VERNON
 So you're the man who's gonna pay me?

CREAM
 Pretty sure that's what I just said.
 Are you deaf...or are you just dumb?

VERNON
 I'm not one to fight with, Grandpa.

Cream prepares Vernon a bowl of shark soup. Rifles through snacks.

CREAM
 They have everything but peanuts.

Cream brings Vernon the soup and sits across from him. A face-off.

VERNON

You got a name?

CREAM

... LaRue. Selden "Creamy" LaRue.

VERNON

Good to meet you, Creamy.

CREAM

Please. Call me Selden... How's the soup?

VERNON

It's good... Could use some salt.

Cream gets up, goes back to the prep area. Takes out the Cyanide. Crushes it up. Empties a salt packet. Replaces salt with Cyanide. Brings it back to Vernon. In slow-motion, Vernon dumps and mixes.

CREAM

So, you know what they say... It's a dog-eat-dog world... But how did you turn out to be such a piece?

(beat)

These kids have an excuse. No parents.

VERNON

I think these kids...are fixing games.

CREAM

Let me explain something to you: If Billy and the Peaches fixed ballgames for a major program like St. John's, anyone who knows 'em also knows they wouldn't be able to shut up about it for more than five minutes at a time.

VERNON

We all die. Some sooner, some later.

He slurps his Super Cyanide shark fin.

CREAM

How's the soup?

VERNON

My compliments to the chef.

CREAM

No one has to die before their time.

VERNON

Yeah, well...you know what they say.
(lifts spoon)
It's a shark-eat-shark world.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Billy approaches Shah Rafa Khan and Adam Kaller. Meets and greets.

KHAN

Looks like you have a great crowd.

BILLY

Totally. Our parents are going to be happy and let us fly solo more often if tonight goes off well. Anyway... Try the shark fin.

KALLER

Shark fin soup. I do wanna try that.
(beat)
It's illegal, right?

INT. VIEWING ROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Cream has joined Khan/Kaller. Detective 1, posing as security, compares Khan's license against a list. Cream turns to Kaller.

CREAM

I've never seen so many Chinese in one room... Am I allowed to call them that?

KALLER

I mean...they are Chinese. So...

Detective 1 addresses Kaller.

DIC 1

I'm sorry, Sir. You're not on my list.

KALLER

I was on the list downstairs.

DIC 1

And that's why you're upstairs. But it's also as far as you go.

KALLER

They even took my phone away.

KHAN

I'm not purchasing without him here. It's not an option. John will be --

DIC 1

Sir, John's father signs my checks.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy, Cream, Khan. Two Dics. Adam Kaller is gone, so Khan and Billy examine the Rockwell solo. Cream's into another painting.

BILLY

I'm so sorry that I wasted your time.
Maybe you can come back another time
when my parents are running the show.

KHAN

How can I be certain it is worth what
you say it is? It looks top-shop, but
there could be water damage, it... We
will only buy if I send Adam pictures.

BILLY

(to the cops/security)
Is that okay? You gonna tell my dad?

INT. STARBUCKS - NIGHT

Kaller sees Billy's text: a pic of the Rockwell. He dials.

KALLER

John...just got your text. Substantial
Rockwell you have there. So...question:
How do you have the Barton Yount, when
the missing Yount is a deal I brokered.
By brokered... I mean that I bought it,
stolen, when it initially went missing.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy listens to his mail. He can't acknowledge that he is, so he pretends to struggle with reception. Kills the signal with a plug.

BILLY

I can't get a signal. Maybe out here.

CREAM

(eyeing a TV)
How you all gonna beat Chris Christie?
That boy has Christ in his name twice.

LATER

Billy has left. This is Cream's time to ad-lib/rope in Khan.

CREAM

If you don't want it, I'll take it.

KHAN

You're buying that one?

CREAM

Course. The kid and his family... What they're able to do, nothing else makes me happy anymore. I get zero happiness from owning a pricey auto, for example. If they make six, all it means is that five jackasses in Libya have one. With these... With these, there is only one. Don't mind that I can never display it.
(beat)
Just as long as no one else can.

We only now see Cream's purchase: The easel sketch of his wife.

KHAN

It's beautiful. How much is it worth?

CREAM

... She's priceless.

EXT. PUCK BLDG (ROOF) - NIGHT

Scooter sees a fire truck approach. Presses his earpiece.

SCOOTER

You think Kaller called them in?

MARGO

No, police show up too. We shoulda had a body shadowing him next door.

The initial FIREMEN mill about the entrance. Right on cue, Kaller appears from next door. He speaks w/ them, then they all approach.

MARGO

Uh...he's using them to come upstairs.
(sees cop cars)
I gotta go. I think I'm going to jail.

SCOOTER

Okay, me too.

INT. VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Khan's 4.3 inch stack of hundreds, fed through a counting machine. As he watches money flip, Billy presses an index finger to an ear. He's been listening to Margo/Scooter. He turns to Cream and winks.

INT. STAIRWELL A - NIGHT

Scooter hurries down the stairs in an effort to exit the building.

INT. STAIRWELL B - NIGHT

Firemen, trailed by the Art Dealer, go up the opposite stairwell.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Alice, who was guarding the service entrance, walks with pace on the side of the building. Around the corner, Carlucci also walks, and the two meet up with perfect timing at the bldg corner point.

They cross the street, are met with a taxi grille -- It's Farooq.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Billy, Khan, surrounded by Asians. Billy clocks his watch: 11:50.

Khan is all smiles, with the Rockwell smartly wrapped up for him.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Dics 1 and 2 exit the stairwell door. Margo was waiting for them.

Now sandwiched between, she exits past Officers puttering around.

INT. PUCK LOUNGE - NIGHT

Cream takes off clothes, gloves, throws 'em in the lit fireplace.

Puts on a new pair of gloves then checks a dead Vernon's pockets.

Finds a napkin. Writing. Tight on: "Billy Peaches. Puck Building."

Throws it in the fire. Finds Vernon's phone. Throws that in, too.

He finds not one, not two, but two-and-a-half stacks of hundreds.

The \$250,000+ Vernon got from Ukrainian Man, UM stole from Margo.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Billy, Khan, Asians, notice Firemen, Cops fanning out. No panic, as the Firemen aren't moving w/ urgency. Billy spots Adam K. at the entrance, who in turn is scanning the crowd for Khan, Billy.

Billy slips away. Calmly, to the adjacent room. Khan and Adam K. catch eyes, and Shah Rafa Khan can discern that the deal is raw.

He pursues Billy, while Kaller leaves the room, cuts to adjacent space. Through plate glass he sees Billy at the back of the room, now futzing with a window. Knowing SRK will try to get him there, Kaller races to a stairwell/lower floor to trap Billy in-between.

Billy texts, then produces a glass cutter. Scores a large square.

He attaches suction cups and tries to pull the square out. No go.

Re-scores/pulls, re-scores/pulls, but with Khan closing in quick, he fucks all and throws a chair through the window. Cops perk up.

Billy climbs through. Khan follows. Dealer appears on the escape, makes his way up. But as they close in, Diop comes to the rescue, as Farooq did. Diop leaves the cab, sees that Khan & Kaller will soon trap Billy, so he approaches an industrial dump by the curb.

Exhorts Billy to jump. Billy jumps but overshoots, landing on the hood of the taxi. Bounces onto the street...losing the key he was given by Restaurant Owner. Diop scoops him up. Though hurt, Billy swipes a hand, grabs the key. Diop jets. Billy checks time: 12:01.

INT. HOME BASE - NIGHT

As they wait for the elevator, Alice extends a hand for a shake.

Carlucci takes Alice's wrist. Uses it to pull her in for a kiss.

CARLUCCI

Am I just gonna end up being another
meaningless notch on your bed?

Alice holds his stare.

ALICE

Nothing more.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Diop drops Billy off in Chinatown. Billy stumbles out of the car and looks to and fro for Ellen. It's 12:08. Finally, she appears.

ELLEN

You should never keep a pretty girl
waiting. Anyone ever teach you that?

BILLY

'Course. You see which way she went?

ELLEN

Har har. Now why am I in Chinatown
ten minutes past the witching hour?
(on his limp/cuts)
Are you alright?

Billy produces his key. Unlocks the store's gate. Ellen looks at the awning, but tis all Chinese characters. Billy lifts the gate.

Ellen's jaw drops a bit. Billy unlocks, enters. Lights go on and we see what Ellen sees: It's a bright, well-appointed nail salon.

INT. IRIS NAIL - NIGHT

Ellen's fingers are splayed out.

Billy paints with the designer nail hardener Ellen wanted.

ELLEN

Do you know how much this stuff costs?

BILLY

I don't worry about money too much.

ELLEN

Seriously... Tell me what happened.

BILLY

Nothing. I hailed the cab, but tripped stepping off the sidewalk and then did a face-plant. Hurt my lip, hurt my leg.

ELLEN

Billy, you're too innocent... You have to make something up. Say you got in a fight. Say you got hurt playing sports.

(beat)

Girls like an element of mystery.

BILLY

I like who I am... Parts, anyway.

Sitting Indian-style, Billy unravels and jumps off the counter.

Falls. Ellen sees him, sprawled out in a pile of spilled money.

EXT. NEW YORK - NIGHT/DAY

Night turns into day. Deliveries are made, streets are swept.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

Billy and Cream converge. Regard one another.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

CREAM

I wanna know how the sausage gets made.

BILLY

Well...there are a lot of moving parts.

INT. SULLIVAN STREET (FLASH PG. 82)

Over Billy revealing the depth of the con, we see it all play out.

BILLY (V.O.)

Let's start from the end: We met Khan at Sullivan Street. If you meet three kids at one of the world's best spots that you yourself can't-but-wanna-get into, it confers legitimacy.

(MORE)

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

Carlucci conned his way into getting a table in the first place. He called ahead, said he was proposing, knowing that when he showed up with no table, they weren't turning him away on the biggest night of his life. Then he has a fight with Alice, she leaves in a huff, and then he tipped 500 dollars. So showing up the next morning as the broken lover who tipped big, the Hostess was only too happy to give him a table when he mentioned having a meeting later on.

INT. SHAM APT. (FLASH PG. 62) - NIGHT

Alice and Khan. The dark room featuring the laser-secured artwork.

BILLY (V.O.)

Alice got a nice place from Dougan.

INT. ALICE'S ROOM (FLASH PG. 39) - DAY

Alice assesses red laser pointers. She measures the circumference.

INT. LOFT (FLASH PG. 52) - DAY

Home, Alice/Carlucci use a band saw. Large picture frames abound.

Carlucci sticks one of several laser pointers into a cylindrical slot he drilled through the frame. Alice removes a pointer, then wraps a slice of duct tape around the trigger button. Re-inserts.

BILLY (V.O.)

Once we showed The Mark these no-name paintings guarded by...lasers, he was sold. Everything to that point was so cloaked in legitimacy. We were vetted in his eyes by having Sullivan Street, having lasers, by having a nice place.

INT. PUCK BLDG (FLASH PG. 86) - DAY

BILLY

Most importantly, we had shark fin.

CREAM

Yes. What was that all about?

BILLY (V.O.)

Black Rain was simply us baiting him. To know that painting was legitimate, to see the lasers then go to a fancy place like The Puck Building on top of Sullivan...there was no way he was walking out of that place without the Rockwell. Plus, you were buying too. Safety in numbers. To walk in and see 300 Asians, he assumed they were all there for like Chinese Art Week, or whatever theme sale our parents had.

(beat)

Making the sale last night at Puck instead of the penthouse with Alice, it's significant. The spectacle was just that final layer of legitimacy. He musta thought it was Asian Night.

CREAM

Is that why they had to be Chinese?

BILLY

... They had to be Chinese. So Khan couldn't speak with them in English. So he couldn't discover that people weren't there for art, but for food.

EXT. RESTAURANT (FLASH PGS. 9/71) - DAY

A sign on the window (in Mandarin) reads -- "Free Shark Fin Soup!"

BILLY (V.O.)

Several Asian cultures love shark fin soup, right? Major delicacy. Weddings are often judged by the quality of fin they serve. We had a friend who owns a Chinese restaurant advertise the soup for free, and people poured in. Then he let 'em know it was a raffle where winners get invited to a party at The Puck Building. Where they'd get their free shark fin. Our owner friend then called up those who signed-up, but... but...he only invited people who spoke Chinese, and Chinese alone. No one who spoke Chinese and English could come. See, we couldn't have Khan or Kaller talk to someone, and figure out what people were really doing there... They were eating. No art, just eating.

EXT. STREET (FLASH PG. 9) - DAY

A MONTAGE. HELPERS post signs for free fireworks, cigars, liquor.

BILLY (V.O.)

Right now, all over town, there are Cubans smoking Cubans. Indians over in Flushing, they're eating something called paan. Illegal paan and illegal cigars. And none of the people who're partaking speak English. If we didn't get the soup? We were gonna do this at other locations. How? Cuz we used a city's best resource: its diversity. We had soup to entice Asians who don't speak English, we had cigars to bring in Cubans who don't speak English, and we had Dominican fireworks for my boys in the Heights. We had the appetizers.

(beat)

We needed the appetizers to draw the crowds. True diversity isn't a silly seminar about race, it's diversity of experience. Of opinion. Of mind-set, motivation and problem-solving. The most important part was giving him a free painting worth 300K, but really, it was the shark fin soup. It was us, as a group, getting bodies in a room.

CREAM

... I just feel bad for the sharks.

BILLY

Don't.

EXT. FISH MARKET (FLASH PG. 70) - DAY

Carlucci and the Dock Worker, on the waterfront in Hunts Point.

BILLY

The shark fin soup turned out to be fake. A dock worker conned Carlucci.

After Carlucci and Dock Worker make the money/soup hand-off, the Dock Worker walks away with a victorious little grin on his face.

CREAM

We got conned? That's perfect.

BILLY

Yeah, it kinda is.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - DAY

The pair get off the 4 train. Make their way to the stadium.

INT. EXECUTIVE SUITE - DAY

Now, they sit in a well-appointed office overlooking the diamond.

A honey-lit trophy case is unlocked. A hand appears. Removes one of several baseballs inside. It's Suit #1, the front office exec Margo negotiated with. He tosses a ball to Billy, who catches it.

SUIT

(to Cream)

So your wife was a big Dodgers fan?

CREAM

She was. But her pain -- my pain, it was more about her father blaming her for Mickey dropping that third strike.

SUIT

Yeah. The only thing I hate more than the media are the fans... Let him see the ball already, Billy.

CREAM

Oh, no. I refuse to even touch it. That ball never gave her a chance.

BILLY

Cream... I went through Hell for this.

Billy flips it back to the Suit, who locks it up in the case.

SUIT

So. You put the 50 under the mattress? You guys should maybe set up a Cayman account...graduate to the big leagues.

BILLY

Alice has a Swiss account; it's cool. You know that you can get a numbered Swiss account for 900 dollars online?

SUIT

Billy...I'm married. I make mid-seven figures a year... 'Course I know that.

BILLY

Right. So the reason I came by, other than to put a bow on things and shake hands... Margo said people are saying disparaging things about Alice's body.

SUIT

I don't know if I'd characterize them as "disparaging."

(beat)

It was in poor taste.

BILLY

I appreciate that... But I was just wondering if you could sorta...just ...maybe call her up and apologize?

SUIT

Why, did she say something?

BILLY

I mean... I'm saying something.

SUIT

(beat, smiling)

You're a good kid, Billy. And one day, you're gonna stop betting on black, and start betting on yourself.

BILLY

Whaddaya mean?

SUIT

One day you're gonna set aside some coin, or probably get a scholarship, and you're gonna go to college.

The Suit smiles. Looks at the Yankee memorabilia on the wall.

SUIT

You can't be a kid forever, Billy... If you ever get tired of fantasyland and you want a real job, let me know.

BILLY

That's funny you say that... I was about to say the same thing to you.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

Billy & Cream watch the Bronx roll by. Cream, a noticeable tear.

Billy, in turn, notices. After a moment...he takes Cream's hand.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Cream walks to his wife's headstone. Upon reaching, he sits down.

The stone reads: Eleanor May LaRue. Date of Birth, Date of Death.

Checks watch: Day, Date confirm that it's exactly 50 years later.

INT. EXECUTIVE SUITE (FLASHBACK) - DAY

We flash back to a moment ago and see what happened after Suit 1 flipped Billy the Mickey Owen ball. As Suit 1 and Cream converse:

Billy, his lap obscured by Suit 1's desk, places the ball in the crook behind his knee. Then, from his cargo pants, the ball that Scooter got from Bauman is produced. Seeing how it's a ball from the same World Series, it then passes the sniff test when Suit 1 casually examines it. Suit examines it after Billy flips it back.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

We're back with Cream, sitting in front of his wife's headstone. He produces the ball. Admires. Sets it at the base of the stone. Cream, through iron gates. The ball, in its final resting place.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Billy, where we initially met him, where he fights an unrelenting, internal battle between The Forces of Good and The Forces of Evil.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOX - DAY

Billy signs the cross. For the third and final time:

PRIEST

In Nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus
Sancti.

BILLY

Forgive me, Father. For I have sinned.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

An orientation folder -- "The Mayo Clinic. Rochester, Minnesota." Cream sits alone, ready to board a flight. Reads some pamphlets.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Earlier, Cream told Billy he'd, "... find [him] a car to practice with." It was followed by, "You'll hafta find someone else." Then, Billy would later ID Barbara's father's car: A 1953 Ford Sunliner.

A garage door opens, and that same Ford emerges from the darkness. Billy is driving. Barbara sits in the front seat, giving pointers. Cream has found him both the car and the someone to practice with: In the back sit Regina Ewing, Penélope, plus Barbara's three dogs.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Cream sits on the plane. First we reveal Cream, and now we reveal:

Alice and Carlucci to his right...Margo and Scooter to his left.
All smiling and cheery, excited for their first trip on a plane.
A FLIGHT ATTENDANT comes by with a cart, extends a bag to Cream.

ATTENDANT

Would you like some peanuts?

Timpani, followed by Trumpets. For the first time, Cream smiles.

FADE OUT.

SINATRA

Start spreading the news...

I'm leaving today...

THE END