

WHITE COLLAR WHITEWASH

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ACT ISCENE I

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - AROUND CHICAGO

The sun sets above the metropolitan skyline on another morning in the Windy City.

Pedestrians cross a busy intersection, on their way to another work day.

A pedestrian hails a taxi, as a cab pulls up and he enters in.

A hot dog vendor sets up his cart in preparation for another busy day.

At the Chicago Stock Exchange, investors and brokers prepare themselves for another day of business.

Black stretch limousines make their way to the sidewalks, as chauffeurs lead executives and other VIPS to their destinations.

The EL TRAIN ROARS along the tracks, taking commuters to their destinations.

END MONTAGE

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - LOBBY - MORNING

WAYNE MCLOUGHLIN, President and CEO of McLoughlin, calmly strides through the lobby on his way to work. He is soon accosted by his Secretary, WANDA EVANS.

WANDA

Good morning, Mr. McLoughlin.

WAYNE

Good morning, Wanda.

They both arrive at the elevator, as Wayne presses the up button and waits.

WANDA
(presents papers)
I have your itinerary.

WAYNE
Please dictate.

WANDA
Okay. This morning you have a
conference with General Motors and
Nabisco.

The ELEVATOR BELL SOUNDS and the door opens, as both Wanda
and Wayne board.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - ELEVATOR -
MORNING

In a crowded elevator, Wanda continues to read off Wayne's
schedule.

WANDA
You have an eleven o'clock meeting
with the employees and executives.
(one full beat)
You then have lunch with the head
of the CSE.

WAYNE
Where?

WANDA
The Rosebud Steakhouse.

WAYNE
Then what?

WANDA
You watch the daily stock exchange
on tv with your brother.

The ELEVATOR BELL SOUNDS, as they have arrived at their
floor. Both Wanda and Wayne debark and arrive at the main
office.

WANDA
(opens and holds door)
After you, Sir.

WAYNE
Thank you.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - RECEPTION
AREA - MORNING

Wayne and Wanda arrive at his office door.

WAYNE
Any calls?

WANDA
(reads from list)
Yes. Two telemarketers, your
mother, an executive from Alcoa,
Pepsico, and Yahoo.

WAYNE
Get me Alcoa's number. Pepsi and
mom can wait.

WANDA
(goes to open door)
Oh....yes.

WAYNE
Thank you, Wanda. I can manage.

WANDA
Will there be anything else, Mister
McLoughlin?

WAYNE
That is all. Thank you, Wanda.

Wayne opens the door and enters into his office.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - WAYNE'S
OFFICE - MORNING

Wayne walks toward his desk, when he discovers someone
standing behind his desk, staring out the window. It is
TIMOTHY MCLOUGHLIN, the CFO of McLoughlin and Wayne's
brother.

WAYNE (O.S.)
I believe you have an office of
your own, Tim?

TIM
(turns around)
Good morning, Wayne. Another
beautiful morning, eh?

WAYNE
Indeed.

TIM

(looks out window)
You know, I never realized what a great view of the city you had. Have you?

WAYNE

Not usually. I'm too busy continuing this empire.

TIM

That's a shame. This is the best view of the Sears Tower money can buy.

WAYNE

And it has. Wanda informed me that we have a meeting at eleven with the board.

TIM

Yes. We're basically discussing our quarterly profits, new proposals, and the future of the company.

WAYNE

How about beating that pesky and conniving Keller.

TIM

Here we go again.

WAYNE

(angry)
C'mon, Tim. For nearly a century Keller & Associates have been a proverbial thorn in my ass!
(one full beat)
Months after my great great grandfather first established this firm, the Kellers had to go and open their own.

TIM

What's business without a little competition?

WAYNE

Not when it lasts this long. I've made it my life's work to continue the prosperous tradition started by my forefathers and to eliminate Keller from business entirely.

TIM
Well, you have one of the two
accomplished.

WAYNE
Ah, Tim. That may change this year.
I spoke to one of my co-horts at
the Exchange, who tells me that
Keller's on the ropes.

TIM
Guess you should go for the
knockout.

WAYNE
Believe me, I will. OR my name
isn't Wayne Carlton...

CLOSEUP - WAYNE'S NAMEPLATE

Rests idly on his desk.

SEGUE TO

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - DEAN KELLER'S OFFICE -
MORNING

CLOSEUP - DEAN KELLER'S NAMEPLATE

Sits on his desk.

DEAN (O.S.)
McLoughlin. God damn McLoughlin.
All our lives we've attempted to
complete with him and his rival
company. And every time we've
fallen short.
(one full beat)
My forefathers established this
firm to ensure that the hard-
working people of Chicago and
America would be able to live
comfortably during or after their
lives.

Seated across from Dean is his CEO and partner in crime,
RONALD NEWMAN, who listens intently.

RONALD

Well, you've certainly gave
McLoughlin a run for his money.

DEAN

But we can do so much better.
Offering our clients better deals
and continuing to initiate new
opportunities for investment and
profit.

(beat)

When is our meeting?

RONALD

Eleven-thirty. Think your
grandson'll show?

DEAN

Of course he will He has been
nothing short of spectacular since
he's started. I just wish my son
would've followed in my footsteps.

(beat)

Oh, well. Can't have everything.

(looks at his watch)

Time is money. And we can't afford
to waste either.

FADE OUT.

SCENE II

FADE IN:

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - CONFERENCE
ROOM - MORNING

Wayne and Tim wait patiently in the conference room, as other
higher ups, including COO GREGORY HALLANDALE AND CFO MARTIN
DEMPSEY, anxiously wait to commence.

MARTIN

(looks testily at his
watch)

We were supposed to start ten
minutes ago, Wayne. Where is your
wonder boy grandson?

GREGORY

Yes Wayne, I must concur. Allan has
all of the data needed for the
presentation.

WAYNE

(calm)
Patience, gentlemen, patience. I'm
sure my grandson will arrive
shortly.

Wayne leans into Tim.

WAYNE

(angrily whispers in Tim's
ear; sotto voce)
Where the hell is he, Tim?

TIM

(whispers; sotto voce)
Maybe he got stuck in a teenager.

WAYNE

(angrily whispers; sotto
voce)
Have Wanda get him on the phone
ASAP!

INT. ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

BED

Covered in satin sheets, as a figure emerges from underneath.
ALLAN McLOUGHLIN, grandson and co-executive of McLoughlin,
rubs his eyes and head, when his CELL PHONE RINGS. Allan
slowly picks up.

ALLAN

(tiredly speaks into cell
phone)
Hello?

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - RECEPTION
AREA - MORNING

WAYNE

(angrily talks into
phone; sotto voce)
Where the hell are you? We have a
meeting in session!

ALLAN

(groggy)
Hey, Grandpa. Sorry, I had a really
sick binger last night.

WAYNE

(angrily; sotto voce)
I don't give a shit of your
foolish, late-night escapades. Get
your ass down here ASAFP!

ALLAN

(groggy)
I'll be there in ten.

Allan hangs up, as he takes a deep breath and EXHALES
AUDIBLY. Another figure emerges from underneath the sheets.
SARAH JENSEN, one of Allan's many one-night stands, awakes.

SARAH

Hey, baby. Had a great time last
night.
(kisses him on cheek)
Wanna do lunch today?

ALLAN

I'm sorry, hon. That was my
grandpa. I'm already late for work.
Just leave your number on the table
and I'll call you back.

SARAH

You promise?

ALLAN

(places his hand on his
heart)
I promise.

SARAH

(tender)
I love you, Allan.

ALLAN

I love you too, Megan.

SARAH

(slightly upset)
My name's Sarah.

ALLAN

(sheepish)
Oh, right.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

Everyone seated continues to wait for Allan's arrival, as they talk amongst themselves. Allan arrive into the office, briefcase in hand, as he starts the meeting.

ALLAN
(organizes papers)
Good morning, gentlemen. My apologies for my tardiness. I reviewed our quarterly reports, and I'm happy to say, we're in the black.

EVERYONE CLAPS, as they continue to listen to Allan.

ALLAN
After considerable review, we have not only increased our profits, but have also attracted several new and potential clients.

(beat)
Oil, health insurance, food processing, and textiles, we have been able to transact with companies who share in our vision of substantial growth, quality of service, and long-term investments and profit.

TIM
Where do you see the company this quarter?

ALLAN
(reviews papers)
That remains to be seen, Tim. Judging by our past quarter, it looks solid. However, many firms seem to be attracting our target clients.
(beat)
The competition is ever-increasing. Most notably, Keller.

WAYNE
(angrily bangs his fist on table)
I knew it! That bastard's been sneaking up on us. I don't know how, but I'll find out. I promise you that!

ALLAN

(calm)

Grandpa, please. There is no need to get worked up. After some thorough reading, I think we are missing some serious work in our research and development department.

TIM

(perplexed)

Meaning?

ALLAN

Meaning, that we need to spend and invest more in research and development.

WAYNE

(adamant)

Pshaw. We've managed just fine at our normal costs.

ALLAN

Which is why competitors are starting to attract newer clientele and progress with novel and persuasive offers.

(one full beat)

Bottom line. You gotta give something to get something.

The whole room remains silent, as Allan looks directly at Wayne.

WAYNE

(cranky)

Very well then. Tim, write Wanda a memo. I want to see an expenditure report for last quarter on my desk after lunch. ASAP.

TIM (O.S.)

Yes, Wayne.

WAYNE

(stern)

Take five, fellas.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - BOARD ROOM - MORNING

Dean, accompanied by Ronald and members of the board at Keller & Associates, enter and take a seat.

Seconds later, Dean's grandson, MAXIMILIAN, enters, briefcase in hand, as he approaches the podium in the conference room.

Dean smiles faintly and nods, as Max readies himself to address the company.

MAX

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for taking time from your very busy schedules to convene here today.

(beat)

Today, we will be reviewing our company's third quarter results, and our future undertakings.

(beat)

Before I begin, are there any questions anyone may have?

A member of the Board of Trustees, MICHAEL SHAUGHNESSY, raises his hand, as Max acknowledges him.

MAX

Yes, Mr. Shaughnessy.

MICHAEL

Yeah, Max. Can I have a scotch, neat?

EVERYONE in the room ROARS in LAUGHTER, as Max proceeds.

MAX

(calm)

Maybe after the meeting.

MICHAEL

(witty)

That's when we'll need it most.

SLIGHT LAUGHTER follows, then quickly dies down.

DEAN

This banter has been enjoyable. Now let's attend to the matter at hand. Max, please proceed.

MAX

Thank you, Grandpa. After thorough and careful review, it brings me immense pleasure to inform you that our quarterly profits increased by nearly sixty percent.

EVERYONE CLAPS in delight, as it quickly ceases, as Max continues.

MAX

We continue to attain success through our many manufacturing ventures, and despite the sluggish economy, have only slashed a little more than 2,100 jobs in a three year span.

RONALD

Compared to our competitors, that is strongly deemed a success.

MAX

Regarding our company share, the stock market could have been kinder. Our shares seem to remain stagnant.

DEAN

Meaning?

MAX

Meaning, investors seem to shy away from or are reluctant to invest in our company. Our traditional share holders have remained loyal, but we haven't garnered as many investors as we had hoped.

DEAN

(stern)

We must conduct in-depth research on investor demographics, preferences, and inclinations. STAT

MAX

Our foreign markets have witnessed phenomenal increases over the past year and a half. Asian and European investors have truly taken a liking to us.

DEAN

Splendid. Knew those trips overseas would pay off. We will schedule more. Even Down Under.

RONALD

What else do we have, Max?

MAX

Most of the major issues were covered. Just a few words of encouragement and then questions.

DEAN

Let's cut to the questions. What is the status of our competitors?

MAX

(reviews data)

Well, we are in the top ten percentile, which includes many of the country's finest and most successful organizations. Stateside, we are second to one...

DEAN

(livid; sotto voce)

McLoughlin.

MAX

(sheepish)

Yes, that's the one.

DEAN

Then we'll have to pull out all the stops. Men, we are going to invest a substantial amount of our funding to increase our opportunities, attract new clientele, and regain our stature as the top financial institution in all Illinois.

MICHAEL

(worried)

Mister Keller, don't you feel it would be in the best...

DEAN

(quickly interjects)

Michael, in order to make money, you must spend it. Quid pro quo, gentlemen. We will sow, we shall reap, and most importantly, we WILL triumph.

(one full beat; turns to Max)

Is there anything else, Max?

MAX

(subdued)

That's about it.

DEAN
 Very well then. Time is money, and
 we can't afford to squander any
 more of it. Meeting is adjourned.

FADE OUT.

SCENE III

FADE IN:

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - LOBBY -
 EARLY AFTERNOON

ELEVATOR DOOR

Opens, as Allan egresses and walks toward a nearby food
 stand, where he pours himself a cup of coffee, pays the
 vendor, and continues on his way. He is then met by his
 friends and co-workers, FRANK DILEON and AUGUST BANNISTER.

FRANK
 (embraces Allan)
 Allie baby, what's happening?

ALLAN
 Dodged a major bullet this morning,
 fellas.
 (greet August)
 Auggie, how's it going?

AUGUST
 Okay. Heard about that meeting.

ALLAN
 Yeah. Stood tall, faced the
 bigwigs, and delivered.

AUGUST
 Splendid.

FRANK
 Are you surprised, Auggie? This guy
 is Da Man!

ALLAN
 (witty)
 Now, Frankie. You'll make me blush.
 Whadya say we do lunch, boys?

FRANK
 Sounds great. Man, I'm starved. Had
 half a Heineken for breakfast.

Allan, August, and Frank depart to eat.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - MAX'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Max quietly sits, lunches, and works at his desk, in his vast office, surrounded by valuable family and historical heirlooms. Suddenly there is a KNOCK at the DOOR.

MAX

Come in.

The office door slowly opens, as Dean enters.

MAX

(slightly surprised)

Grandpa. Everything alright?

DEAN

(calm)

Yes, Max. I just came by to see how you were.

MARTIN

I'm fine. Just having some lunch and doing some work.

DEAN

Ever the multi-tasker. Is it any wonder why I brought you into the family business?

MAX

Because Dad went into pharmaceuticals?

DEAN

(chuckles softly)

Haha. Always thought your father would be the beneficiary of the empire. We've been family-owned and operated for almost one hundred and fifty years.

(one full beat)

And I'm so proud to know that you'll be carrying on the tradition.

MAX

Thank you, Grandpa.

DEAN

I'll never forget when you were just another child entering the world. While other kids were reading comic books, you read *The Wall Street Journal*.

(beat)

You've had it in you since infancy. If only all offspring possessed that quality.

Dean walks over to a framed photo on Max's office wall.

DEAN

(looks admiringly at photo)

Ah, yes. This is my favorite. This was the cornerstone that was laid, which was the ground work for this entire building.

MAX

If we keep it up, maybe we'll reach the sky.

DEAN

Or further. I want to defeat McLoughlin...

(one full beat; stern)

And I want to defeat him now. And you'll be the one.

Dean and Max stare at each other momentarily.

DEAN

So, are we on for dinner tonight with Natalie?

MAX

Yes. At seven?

DEAN

Eight sharp.

MAX

Okay.

Dean heads to the door, but not before turning to his grandson.

DEAN

Have a good day, Max. And try not to work too hard.

Dean winks and smiles faintly before exiting OUT OF VIEW from the office. Max remains at his desk, as he momentarily looks down, then returns to his work.

INT. LOCAL TGI FRIDAY'S RESTAURANT - CORNER BOOTH - AFTERNOON

Allan, August, and Frank enjoy their lunch and converse.

ALLAN

(eats a piece of sandwich;
mouth half full)

I don't think you'll find a better
pastrami sandwich.

FRANK

(eats a french fry)

How about we order a round of
Jameson?

AUGU

Don't be ridiculous. We're on lunch
break, not happy hour.

FRANK

Wet blanket.

AUGUST

So, Allan, tell us more about this
morning's meeting.

ALLAN

(slightly cross)

What else is there to tell? We
talked business, and my Grandpa
just want to make more money.

AUGUST

(slightly abased)

Please excuse my intrusion.

ALLAN

(apologetic)

Sorry, Auggie. Just had a hectic
morning. Hate meetings.

AUGUST

It's fine, Al. I was thinking maybe
I could join you for future morning
meetings?

ALLAN

(takes a sip of soda;
tentative)

(MORE)

ALLAN (cont'd)
 Oh, that'll be tough. Meetings are usually reserved for the higher ups. I'll talk to my grandpa.
 (looks at his watch)
 Oh, look at the time. Back to the grind, fellas.
 (motions to waiter)
 Can we have this to go, please.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - ALLAN'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Allan sits at his desk, carefully watching his computer monitor.

ALLAN'S POV

COMPUTER MONITOR

Displays photos of scantily-clad women in suggestive poses.

BACK TO SCENE

Allan continues to watch enthusiastically, when there is a KNOCK on his OFFICE DOOR.

ALLAN
 (vaults up from his desk
 and starts scrambling)
 Just a minute.

Allan attempts to click off the program on his monitor.

COMPUTER MONITOR

Displays an error message, reading "PROGRAM NOT RESPONDING".

ALLAN
 (sotto voce; frantically
 clicks mouse)
 Close, you automated sonuva bitch!!

The KNOCKING PERSISTS, as Allan powers off his machine and heads towards the door, and opens it. Wayne appears.

ALLAN
 (slightly surprised but
 composed)
 Grandpa. How are you?

WAYNE
 Well. Is everything okay? You took a while to answer the door.

ALLAN

Oh, yeah.
(rubs his eyes)
Eyes were a little sore from
staring at my monitor all
afternoon.

WAYNE

Oh. I have some Visine in my desk
if you'd like.

ALLAN

Thanks, Grandpa. Just have to get
away from my PC for a bit.

WAYNE

Allan, I was hoping to have a talk
with you.

ALLAN

(presents chair)
Of course, Grandpa. Please have a
seat.

Wayne sits in chair in front of Allan's desk, as Allan sits
down, and conversation ensues.

WAYNE

Allan, do you recall this morning's
meeting?

ALLAN

Yes, of course. Did you want to ask
me something?

WAYNE

Yes, Allan. I wanted to speak to
you about focus.

ALLAN

(slightly confounded)
Focus?

WAYNE

Yes, focus. I was given quite a
scare this morning, when I learned
that our quarterly profits rose
this quarter.

ALLAN

Frightened by an increase?

WAYNE

Yes, quite alarmed. Our profits rose, but not as they have in the past.

(beat)

This indicates that our competitors have attracted our potential and former clientele, and are continuing to gradually abdicate us from our lofty position as Chicago's top financial institution.

A moment of silence ensues, as Wayne looks sternly at Allan.

WAYNE

This is inexcusable and unacceptable. In order for any organization to operate efficiently and successfully, all facets and people must perform so accordingly.

(one full beat)

I refuse to play second fiddle to anyone, and refuse to relinquish and bequeath my empire to someone who does not possess the same vision, dedication, diligence, and passion to this corporation, its employees, and share holders, as I do.

Allan looks on timidly and carefully nods his head.

WAYNE

I haven't the faintest notion what you are partaking in outside these office doors, but I will not tolerate any of it entering in and imposing upon our professional objectives.

(one full beat)

From now on, I expect you to be prompt, punctual, and professional, as this new quarter and those to follow will truly forebode your fate. Am I perfectly clear?

ALLAN

Yes, Sir.

WAYNE

Very well then. We begin at nine sharp, tomorrow. Have a pleasant evening, champ.

Wayne heads towards the door, but not before turning to Allan.

WAYNE

Oh, and Allan, it's not Sir, it's Grandpa.

Wayne gently CLOSES the OFFICE DOOR behind him, as a visibly effected Allan places his head in his hands, and lets out an AUDIBLE SIGH.

FADE OUT.

SCENE IV

FADE IN

EXT. FRONT ROSEBUD STEAKHOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - EVENING

Pedestrians pass by the entry of the Rosebud.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSEBUD STEAKHOUSE - CORNER BOOTH - EVENING

Max, Dean, NATALIE CAMBRIDGE, Max's fiancée, and Max's colleagues, ERIC DREIFORT and CARLTON DAVENPORT, dine and make small talk.

DEAN

(mouth half full)

My, my. I almost forgot how incredible the steaks are here at the Rosebud.

CARLTON

Max was considering Morton's, but I said, why have the cow when you can have the milk AND the meat?

Everyone at the table cedes to LIGHT LAUGHTER.

ERIC

Went to the one on Chestnut Street. Service fit for a king. Burger King rather.

(looks proudly at Max)

(MORE)

ERIC (cont'd)
 However, in choosing a spouse, Max
 could not have chosen a finer
 woman.

Max looks tenderly and kisses Natalie.

CARLTON
 So, when are the official nuptials?

NATALIE
 We're aiming for Spring. Then take
 our honeymoon in the Summer.

DEAN
 Judging by Max's schedule, I'll be
 surprised if you'll get dinner and
 a night in.

MAX
 Believe me, marriage will be the
 ultimate alleviator.

NATALIE
 (quickly retorts)
 If we ever do.

The table ERUPTS into LAUGHTER, as Max continues.

MAX
 (sheepish)
 Goodness, didn't think it was that
 humorous.

CARLTON
 Max, please. Only an arctic penguin
 has colder feet than you.

DEAN
 Now, now. I am certain that Max has
 most of his priorities in order.
 (raises his glass)
 A toast, to the remainder of the
 year, filled with promise,
 prosperity, and victory at every
 turn.

Everyone follows suit, as they raise and CLICK their GLASSES.

EXT. FRONT FOREST ACRES CONDOMINIUM COMPLEX - NIGHT

Natalie and Max slowly amble to the entry door of Natalie's
 condominium complex.

NATALIE
Well, here we are.
(one full beat)
Thanks for dinner tonight.

MAX
My pleasure.

Max kisses Natalie's hand, as she smiles coyly.

NATALIE
You know, Carlton had some really
thought-provoking words tonight.

MAX
What do you mean?

NATALIE
Well, do you believe that we are
finally engaged after all this
time?

MAX
Nati, dear. We've been together for
eleven years, since junior high.

NATALIE
And in that time, I was courted by
several prominent and successful
men.

MAX
(a little upset)
And when was this? I mean I
never...

NATALIE
(calmly intervenes)
Relax, Max. I turned them all down
cold.

MAX
(breathes a sigh of
relief)
Ohh... Thank God.

NATALIE
However, it should certainly serve
as a wake-up call.

A moment of silence ensues, as Natalie and Max look at each other.

NATALIE

You know, I'm not like one of those hot stocks that you pay so much attention to...

(one full beat)

Once I'm off the market, I'm gone for good.

MAX

You're the one loss I can never get over.

NATALIE

So, maybe we can focus a little less on business and more on us.

MAX

Sounds like a fantastic plan.

NATALIE

Did you get my e-card?

MAX

No. I was so busy going over reports today.

NATALIE

(nods her head)

See what I mean?

MAX

Okay, okay. Will definitely check it out. Despite this, can I get a good-night kiss?

NATALIE

(hesitates)

Well....okay.

Natalie leans in and kisses Max tenderly.

NATALIE

(looks at her watch)

It's getting late. Have work tomorrow.

MAX

Same here. How about we grab some Chinese after work tomorrow?

NATALIE

Deal.

MAX
Have a great night, Nat.

NATALIE
You too.

Natalie and Max warmly embrace and kiss each other one last time, before Natalie goes to her car and drives off into the night.

INT. MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max is settled into his bed, carefully reading his laptop. He glances over near the foot of his bed.

MAX'S POV

MAX'S BRIEFCASE

Rests idly at the foot of the bed, with an important work report.

BACK TO SCENE

Max then looks at his laptop.

LAPTOP SCREEN

Displays "NATALIE HAS SENT YOU AN E-CARD".

Max vacillates, as he glances over at the briefcase, and then the e-mail. Max gives in, and clicks on the e-mail link from Natalie.

LAPTOP SCREEN

Starts to load the e-card, as a cartoon apple appears, and a song "THE APPLE OF MY EYE" begins playing.

MAX

Tenderly watches and listens to the e-card, as a smile begins to fissure from his lips.

INT. ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

FRONT DOOR

Remains still, when the CLICKING SOUND of KEYS EMERGES, as the door opens.

Allan, completely beat from another night on the town, enters, as he closes and locks the door behind him.

INT. ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Allan enters into his bedroom, as he looks over at his night stand and notices something. He curiously picks it up.

INSERT SHOT - SMALL NOTE

Reads "I HAD A GREAT TIME LAST NIGHT. CALL ME 958-1206 LOVE SARAH"

BACK TO SCENE

Allan looks pensively at the note, then crumples it up and throws it in a nearby wastebasket. Allan then plops down on his bed, takes an AUDIBLE SIGH, and clicks on a remote control, which powers off the bedroom lights, as everything FADES TO BLACK.

FADE OUT.

SCENE V

FADE IN:

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - MAX'S OFFICE - MORNING

Max diligently works at his desk, carefully organizing papers, when his OFFICE PHONE RINGS. Max picks up.

MAX
(speaks into receiver)
Hello? Grandpa. Yes, of course.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - DEAN KELLER'S OFFICE - MORNING

OFFICE DOOR

Remains still, as there is a KNOCK.

DEAN (O.S.)
Come in.

The office door opens, as Max appears.

MAX
Grandpa, you wanted to see me?

DEAN
Yes, Max. Please have a seat.

Max grabs a chair and gets settled.

DEAN

Max, moments ago, I received a phone call that practically made my day... and year.

MAX

Goodness, Grandpa, you don't excite easily. What is it?

DEAN

Tropicana called... and they are strongly considering investing a major share with us.

MAX

Grandpa, this is so thrilling.

DEAN

However, as with anything in life, there is a catch.

MAX

What is it?

DEAN

They want to be convinced.

MAX

(confounded)
Meaning?

DEAN

Meaning, they want us to personally meet with them.

MAX

Oh, okay. So when are they arriving?

DEAN

Well, that's just it.

MAX

(confused)
I don't follow.

DEAN

Max, I want you to go to Tampa to meet with Tropicana.

MAX

Grandpa, you know about me and Florida. Remember Busch Gardens, Disney World?

DEAN

Now, you know that parrot did not mean to bite you.

MAX

Grandpa
(shows mark on arm)
I'm marked for life!
(beat)
And don't get me started on when I heard Goofy swear!

DEAN

None of that matters now. Max, we need you to go to Florida. This will put us in splendid position. It will make McLoughlin shake.

A silence ensues, as Dean and Max look soberly at each other.

MAX

When do I leave?

DEAN

One week from tomorrow.

MAX

Grandpa, Natalie and I are supposed to leave to Bermuda!

DEAN

For Chrissakes, re-schedule!

MAX

We've had this planned for months.

DEAN

Then talk to her, damm it!

MAX

You know how women are.

DEAN

Of course I do. Don't you remember Grandma? We always talk.

MAX

Grandma's been dead for six years!

DEAN
Irrelevant!

MAX
Unlike you, I don't have that
convenience.

DEAN
No ifs, ands, or buts. Just yours
on a plane to Florida next week. Am
I clear?

MAX
Crystal.

DEAN
Excellent. Just like you, Max.
Always coming through. I'll have
Wanda book the flight and provide
you with the details.

MAX
Yes, Sir.

DEAN
Uh-uh. It's Grandpa
(one full beat)
Love you, Maxie.

Max stares blankly at Dean, as a small smile fissures from
his lips.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - AFTERNOON

Allan and August have lunch on the go, as they chat.

ALLAN
(takes a bite of his hot
dog; looks admiringly at
hot dog; mouth half full)
I don't care what they say...
Nothing beats a Chicago dog.

AUGUST
(takes a bite of sandwich)
I could make a case for this hoagie
too.
(beat)
Say, did you hear what Frank told
me?

ALLAN
No, what?

AUGUST

Supposedly, there's an opening at the executive offices. Some sort of assistant position.

ALLAN

Not that I heard of.

August stops walking, as he grabs Allan by the arm, and looks him square in the eye.

AUGUST

(sober)

Well, if there is, can you promise you'll put in a good word for me?

ALLAN

(sober)

Of course, Aug.

AUGUST

We've been best friends since college, and come up together through this company. I've waited and longed for an opportunity like this my entire life.

(one full beat)

And it means everything to me.

ALLAN

(serious)

Auggie, you have my word that if there is a position, you will be the first in line.

August looks soberly at Allan, and then smiles warmly.

AUGUST

You, Sir, are THE BEST!!

August puts his arm around Allan, as they both walk back to the office.

FADE OUT.

SCENE VI

FADE IN:

INT. MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Natalie and Max enjoy some Italian take out, as they start to converse.

NATALIE
So, how was work today?

MAX
(terse)
Fine.

Max continues to dine, as Natalie looks suspiciously at him.
Max notices.

MAX
(confounded)
What?

NATALIE
That's it? Would you care to
elaborate?

MAX
(takes a sip of soda)
Well, it was just a typical day at
work.

NATALIE
(curious; takes a sip of
wine)
Well, what do you mean by typical?
Tell me typical.

MAX
Nothing. Did a lot of paper work,
had a brief meeting with Marketing,
am going to Florida...

NATALIE
Oh, that's neat. I mean it sounds
like...
(hesitates)
Wait, what was that last one?

MAX
Had a brief meeting with Marketing?

NATALIE
No, the other one.

MAX
(sheepish)
Going to Florida?

NATALIE
Yeah, that one. Please explain.

MAX

Well, Grandpa called into his office and said Tropicana has an important offer for us. But they want to meet in person. In Florida.

NATALIE

And when will this meeting be taking place?

MAX

(sheepish)
Early next week...

NATALIE

You're kidding, right?

Natalie looks at Max, who gestures with a reluctant nod of his head.

NATALIE

(upset)
I cannot believe you, Maximillian Louis Keller!

MAX

Nat, believe me when I say I tried all I could to...

NATALIE

(angrily interjects)
Apparently not enough! We planned this trip months in advance, and made certain that nothing would take precedence.

MAX

Yes, dear. I know and...

NATALIE

(angrily interrupts)
Oh, no. Don't you dare call me honey, Max. You've done a lot during our time together, but this one takes the cake!

MAX

Natalie, please...

Natalie rises to her feet, as she takes her glass of wine and throws it on Max's shirt.

MAX
 Nat, this is good shirt!

Natalie takes off her engagement ring and tosses it aimlessly.

NATALIE
 (irate)
 Have fun in the Sunshine State,
 Maxie, cause we're through!!

MAX
 Natalie, wait!

Before Max can say another word, Natalie grabs her purse and coat, heads to the front door, exits, and SLAMS the DOOR behind her.

Max looks on in a moment of silence.

MAX
 (yells loudly)
 Shit!

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - ALLAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Allan is at his desk, reviewing some paper work, when his OFFICE PHONE RINGS. Allan picks up.

ALLAN
 (speaks into phone receiver)
 Hello, Allan speaking.
 (beat)
 Hi, Wanda. Yes, I'll be right over.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - WAYNE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Wayne sits at his desk, looking at his computer monitor, when there is a KNOCK at his OFFICE DOOR.

WAYNE
 Enter.

The office door opens, as Allan appears.

ALLAN
 Hi, Grandpa. You wanted to see me?

WAYNE
 Yes, Allan. Have a seat.

Allan settles in, as Wayne begins to converse.

WAYNE

Allan, I just received word from Tim that Shane O'Donnell has accepted a position with Nabisco, and will be leaving us at the end of the month.

ALLAN

My goodness, Grandpa. Shane's been here almost his whole professional career.

WAYNE

Yes, I know. Which makes finding a viable replacement, all the more challenging.

(beat)

We will have a going away luncheon some time next week.

ALLAN

Sounds wonderful. Just let me know the time, date, and place.

WAYNE

Of course. We will also be chipping in for a gift basket.

ALLAN

Count me in.

WAYNE

Very well, Allan. Thank you for your time.

Allan rises from his seat and is about to depart, when he hesitates and turns to his grandfather.

Wayne, carefully watching his computer monitor, notices and turns to Allan.

WAYNE

Yes, Allan?

ALLAN

(coy)

Well, Grandpa, I was thinking...

WAYNE

Yes, Allan. What about?

ALLAN

About a possible replacement for Shane. How about Auggie? I mean, August?

WAYNE

August Clemens? In Marketing and Research?

ALLAN

Yes. I mean, I know you're looking for experience, but August has been here for a while now, and with the right training, who knows?

WAYNE

I see.

ALLAN

(tender)

And Grandpa, it would really mean a lot to me.

Wayne looks pensively at Allan, and then replies.

WAYNE

(soft)

How can I say no to my grandson? Very well then.

(beat)

I'll have Wanda schedule an interview. But remember, there will be other applicants, and all requisite paper work must be submitted. Deal?

ALLAN

Deal.

WAYNE

Alright. Back to work.

ALLAN

Thanks, Grandpa.

Allan happily exits Wayne's office.

EXT. O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ARRIVAL GATE - AFTERNOON

A stretch limousine pulls up INTO VIEW and parks. The driver's seat door opens, as a chauffeur appears, heads towards the passenger side door, and opens it. Max appears, carry on bag in tow, and heads towards his flight.

MONTAGE - MAX IN O'HARE

Max despondently purchases a latte from an airport Starbucks.

Max joylessly waits on line to clear through customs.

Max pensively watches outside an airport window while waiting to board his flight.

Max slowly passes through the gate onto the plane.

END MONTAGE

INT. AIRPLANE - COACH CABIN - LATE AFTERNOON

Max arrives at his seat, as he places his carry on in the overhead compartment, and then sits uncomfortably in his seat.

MAX
 (mock complains; sotto
 voce)
 Nothing like coach.
 (sotto voce)
 How can this get any worse?

Just then, a short, stubby man arrives, as he sits next to Max. His name is ELMER KOCH. Elmer, who has a cold, begins to converse with Max.

ELMER
 (nasal)
 Boy, these coach seats get narrower
 each day, huh?

Max looks at Elmer and coyly nods.

ELMER
 (nasal)
 It's bad enough that I have a cold,
 the air conditioning will only help
 matters, I guess.

Elmer then lets out a LOUD SNEEZE, as he pulls out a handkerchief and blows his nose. Elmer then turns to Max.

ELMER
 (nasal; extends his hand)
 Pardon my rudeness. I'm Elmer Koch.

Max, hands at his side, looks reluctantly but warmly at Elmer.

MAX
(coy but warm)
Max Keller. Pleased to meet you.

ELMER
To tell you the truth, I shouldn't be traveling. I just got over a case of the flu. I utterly detest Florida, especially Tampa.
(beat)
I'm only going to visit my sister, Ethel, who broke her leg, in a wa...

Before Elmer can continue, he lets out another LOUD SNEEZE. He then blows his nose and continues.

ELMER
(nasal)
Water skiing accident. Can only imagine what all the humidity will do to my sinuses.
(beat)
Oh, well. At least I'll get to have some fresh grapefruit. Love oranges, but the citric acid repeats on me.

Max looks at Elmer and coyly nods.

ELMER
(nasal; warm)
I like you. You're a good listener and seem like a swell guy.

MAX
(coy)
Thanks. Ditto.

ELMER
(nasal; looks at his watch)
Well, almost time for take off. At least we'll get some complimentary pea...

Elmer then lets out another LOUD SNEEZE, and then blows his nose.

ELMER
(nasal)
Peanuts.

Max turns his head and looks crestfallen out his seat window.

INT. MOLLY DOYLE'S TAVERN - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

Allan sits alone at the bar, idly watching a ball game on the television. He takes a sip of his beer. Seconds later, a female figure pulls up and sits next to him. It's Natalie.

NATALIE
(looks at Allan)
Is this seat taken?

ALLAN
Not that I'm aware.

Natalie takes a seat next to Allan. She then spots the bartender and places her drink order.

NATALIE
(aloud)
A Manhattan, please.

ALLAN
(takes a sip of his beer)
Wow, quite a fancy beverage.

NATALIE
I need one after the week I've had.

ALLAN
Now, it can't be that bad...

NATALIE
Wanna bet?

ALLAN
Lay it on me.

NATALIE
Well, in a nutshell, my ex-fiancee
love his job more than he loves me.

ALLAN
Really?

NATALIE
(incredulous)
What does that mean?

ALLAN
It sounds like a typical
relationship predicament.
(beat)
Not that I'm demeaning it's
severity, of course.

NATALIE
And you wanna know the capper?

ALLAN
Let me hear it.

NATALIE
Right now I should be celebrating
my five-year anniversary and
engagement in Bermuda.
(beat)
But I'm stuck here, while my ex is
in Florida on business. How's that?

ALLAN
(takes a sip of his beer)
Ouch.

Carl, the Bartender, appears INTO VIEW, with Natalie's drink.

ALLAN
(motions to Carl)
Put it on my tab, Carl.

NATALIE
(embarrassed)
Oh no, please.

ALLAN
Relax. You've earned it.

NATALIE
Thanks.

ALLAN
(raises his glass)
A toast... To the throes of love.

Natalie raises her glass, as she toasts with Allan.

NATALIE
Amen to that, brother.
(beat)
So, what do you do for a living?

ALLAN
I'm in business.

NATALIE
Oh, God. Not you too?

ALLAN
Not to worry. I don't talk turkey
outside of the office.

NATALIE
(takes a sip of her drink)
Thank goodness. I swear, sometimes
the only sweet talk I hear involves
the current GDP.
(beat)
I can't even remember the last time
I went out to a bar like this.

ALLAN
(takes a sip of beer)
C'mon now. Don't be so hard on
yourself. Besides, someone like you
shouldn't be in a joint like this.

Carl looks crossly at Allan, who rapidly retorts.

ALLAN
No offense, Carl.

NATALIE
But it feels so liberating, so
refreshing, to be somewhere no one
expects me to be.

ALLAN
Well, wherever you go, I'm sure
satisfaction and joy will certainly
follow.

NATALIE
(touched)
Thank you. You know, I just want to
tell you how nice it's been to make
your acquaintance.

ALLAN
Thank you. Likewise.

NATALIE
I hope this is not too forward, but
can I have your number?

ALLAN
Yeah, sure.

Allan grabs a cocktail napkin from on the bar. Natalie rummages through her purse and finds a pen.

NATALIE
(hands pen to Allan)
Here you go.

ALLAN
(takes pen)
Thanks.
(writes)
Here are my home and cell numbers.
(hands napkin to Natalie)
Call me any time.

NATALIE
Want mine?

ALLAN
Absolutely.

Allan grabs another napkin and hands it to Natalie.

NATALIE
(writes)
Here are my home, cell, and office numbers.

ALLAN
Thanks. Listen, it's getting kinda late. Can I drive you home?

NATALIE
(pensive)
I don't usually take rides from strangers, but I'm going against my gut on this one.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - ESTABLISHING SHOT
- NIGHT

Allan's Mercedes pulls up INTO VIEW in front of Natalie's apartment complex, and comes to a halt.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLAN'S MERCEDES - FRONT SEAT - NIGHT

Allan and Natalie sit, as they start to converse.

NATALIE

Well, here we are.

ALLAN

Yup. Do you want me to walk you up?

NATALIE

I'll be fine. Thank you so much.

(one full beat)

I don't know what else to say other than thank you.

ALLAN

(confounded)

What for?

NATALIE

For showing me that not all businessmen are tightly-wound, well-dressed yuppies only interested in the bottom line.

ALLAN

Well, I'm glad you arrived at that conclusion. Don't worry. I'm sure everything will work out fine. You'll realize how important your fiancée is in your life...

(one full beat)

AND he'll also realize his blessings.

A moment of silence follows, as Allan and Natalie look tenderly at one another.

ALLAN

(looks at his watch)

Wow, check out the time. It's getting up there.

NATALIE

Yeah. Well, have a great night.

ALLAN

Thanks. You too. If you ever wanna talk again, please give me a ring.

NATALIE

Will do. Thanks.

Natalie exits Allan's car, gently closing the door behind her. Allan begins to drive away, as he waves goodbye.

Natalie returns the favor, waving and smiling, and enters her apartment.

Allan drives, as he does a happy fist pump.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE VII

FADE IN:

INT. GATOR GULCH INN - TAMPA - HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A room lies still in total darkness, when a CELL PHONE RINGS. A small night stand lamp comes on, as a roused Max answers.

MAX
 (tiredly speaks into phone
 receiver)
 Hello? Hi, Grandpa.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - DEAN KELLER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dean sits behind his desk, computer on, as he continues.

DEAN
 Just checking in on you to see if
 you're asleep.

MAX
 (tired)
 Well, I was.

DEAN
 I am quite concerned about
 tomorrow's meeting.

MAX
 (tired)
 Am sure everything will be fine.

DEAN
 Do you have the reports? The Power
 Point presentation?

MARTIN

(tired)

Check for both.

DEAN

Good. We need Tropicana. I want you on your A-game tomorrow.

MAX

(tired)

I understand. But in order to do well tomorrow, I'm going to need some sleep.

DEAN

Very well then. Get back to sleep and I want a call first thing after the meeting. Am I clear?

MAX

(tired)

Crystal.

DEAN

Have a good night, Max. And make me proud.

MAX

(tired)

You got it, Grandpa.

DEAN

Love you, pal.

MAX

(tired)

Ditto.

Max ends the call, powers off his cell phone, places it down on the night stand, and shuts the lamp, as everything FADES TO BLACK.

INT.LOCAL STARBUCKS - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - MORNING

A visibly-anxious August, two large lattes in hand, waits outside a Starbucks, when Allan appears INTO VIEW.

AUGUST

(relieved; slightly upset)

Where the hell have you been?

ALLAN
Sorry, Auggie. Had very important
phone call.

AUGUST
(hands latte to Allan)
A little caffeine to start your
day.

ALLAN
Much appreciated.

AUGUST
So, why'd you call me down here?

ALLAN
I have something I need to tell
you.

AUGUST
What about?

ALLAN
(sober)
I don't know how to say this...

AUGUST
(anxious)
What? You're not firing me, are
you?

Allan remains unresponsive, as he looks soberly at August,
then speaks.

ALLAN
(sober)
You have been selected to interview
with Wayne McLoughlin for the
Administrative Assistant position.

AUGUST
(incredulous)
You're kidding, right?

Allan looks at August, as a smile fissures from his lips. An
exultant August enfolds him in a bear hug.

AUGUST
(exultant)
Yes! I knew you'd come through, Al.
Oh, man. Thank you!

ALLAN
Just make sure you prepare. You
know my Grandpa.

AUGUST
Oh, I will alright. Yes!

ALLAN
Now, I've got more good news on my
front.

AUGUST
Please, do tell.

Allan and August enjoy their lattes, as they walk to work.

INT. LOCAL DINER - TAMPA - EARLY AFTERNOON

A subdued Max quietly reads the menu as a Waitress, CANDY
MONROE, appears.

CANDY
Good afternoon, my name's Candy,
and I'll be your waitress. Can I
start you out with a beverage?

MAX
(reads menu)
Yes. I'll have an iced tea, Splenda
on the side, with lemon.

CANDY
(writes down order)
Okay. One iced tea, Splenda on the
side with lemon.
(looks up)
And for your meal?

MAX
(peruses menu)
Well, would you recommend anything?
I'm here on business.

CANDY
(sarcastic)
Well, for any out-of-towner, I
would recommend the pot roast. It's
one of our specialties.

MARTIN
Oh, thank you. It sounds tasty, but
I try not to eat too much red meat.

CANDY
 (sighs audibly)
 Well then, can I interest you in a
 Greek salad, another of our
 specialties?

MAX
 No thanks. Have never been a fan of
 feta cheese.

CANDY
 (exasperated)
 Okay. If you'll look on the menu,
 we have a diet section.

MARTIN
 (looks at menu)
 Yes. Just looked at it earlier, and
 didn't find anything there either.

CANDY
 (exasperated)
 That's it. Listen, I dunno where
 you're from, but you're gettin' on
 my last nerve! When you've finally
 decided on what you want, just give
 a little whistle, okay?!

Max, slightly taken aback, sits silent and nods his head in a
 "yes" motion, as Candy storms off OUT OF VIEW.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - MORNING

Allan and August arrive into work, as they start to converse.

AUGUST
 You're kidding me? A beautiful,
 well-to-do girl actually had
 meaningful conversation with you?

ALLAN
 I can't believe it either, Aug. She
 seemed real sweet and candid.

AUGUST
 You gotta call her back.

ALLAN
 Definitely. Don't wanna seem to
 anxious, though.

AUGUST
 I hear that.

ALLAN

Alright, time to get started. Best of luck with the interview, and let me know if I can help.

AUGUST

Thanks, my man. Maybe we'll grab some beers after work?

ALLAN

I'm down. Don't forget to tell Frank.

AUGUST

Will do. See ya soon and thanks again.

ALLAN

Anytime.

August leaves OUT OF VIEW, as Allan encounters WALTER, a custodian and long-time friend.

ALLAN

(amiable)

What's the good word, Walt?

WALTER

Hi ya, Al.

ALLAN

We're goin out for some beers after work. You comin'?

WALTER

Count me in.

ALLAN

Sounds great.

(looks at floor)

Can see my reflection in these floors.

(pats Walter on back)

Super job, as always.

WALTER

Thanks, Al.

Allan exits OUT OF VIEW, as Walter finishes up his work on the lobby's floor. Suddenly, a passerby spills some coffee on a section of the floor and quickly ambles by.

An exasperated Walter looks incredulously at the passerby, lets out an AUDIBLE GROAN, and proceeds to clean up the spill.

INT. LOCAL DINER - TAMPA - AFTERNOON

A visibly subdued Max peruses the menu, as Candy appears INTO VIEW.

MAX
(slightly alarmed)
Oh, hi. Listen, I...

CANDY
(softly interjects)
Listen, I'm really sorry about before. It's been a long morning, I had a rough sleep, and I understand if you don't leave a tip...

MAX
(calmly intervenes)
Oh, please no. It's completely fine. My fiancée, I mean ex-fiancée, had me following a certain diet, and all, and....

CANDY
Ex-fiancée. Am sorry to hear that. You poor guy.

MAX
No, it's fine really. Am here on business on behalf of my Grandpa.

CANDY
Really? Where you from?

MAX
Chicago.

CANDY
The Windy City, eh?

MAX
Yup. To tell you the truth, this is my second time in Tampa, and not much has changed.

CANDY
What do ya mean by that?

MAX

Well, I've never liked it here. The humidity, the insects, it's boring. Nothing but palm trees and Busch Gardens.... and I hate that place.

CANDY

(defensive)

Geesh.... A little blunt, aren't we?

(beat)

What's so special about your town? The Sears Tower, and over a century of baseball futility.

MARTIN

Hey, don't hate on the Cubs. If it weren't for Bartman....

CANDY

(interrupts)

If it weren't for your that four-eyed wimp, we wouldn't have our second title in seven years... by the way, thank you.

(one full beat)

All kidding aside, what can I get you?

MAX

You know what? I'm going to get risky. A cheeseburger deluxe with fries.

CANDY

(a bit surprised)

Hey, now that's more like it. How would you like that burger hon?

MAX

Medium rare.

CANDY

(writes down order)

Okay, I've got a cheeseburger deluxe, medium rare, with french fries. Will that be all?

MAX

Yes, for now. Thank you.

CANDY

Be right back with your order.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Max is enjoying his cheeseburger, as Candy returns to check on him.

CANDY
Hey there, city slicker. Just wanted to see how everything is.

MAX
(with mouth full)
Fine, thank. Almost forgot the sweet taste of freedom.

CANDY
Yup. Nothing like a good ole fashioned burger.
(beat)
Can I get you something else?

MAX
As a matter of fact, yes. Do you make hot fudge sundaes?

CANDY
Sure do. You want the works?

MAX
Please.

CLOSE UP - HOT FUDGE SUNDAE

Is devoured, as a visibly content Max remains at his table.

Candy re-appears INTO VIEW

CANDY
Looks like that sundae didn't stand a chance. Can I get you anything else?

MAX
How about the check and your phone number?

CANDY
(taken aback)
I'll get your check. How's that?

A visibly subdued Max remains silent, as he awaits his tab. Candy re-appears.

CANDY
(hands Max the check)
Here you go. It was a pleasure
serving you.

Max remains silent, as he pulls out his wallet.

Moments later, Candy returns to Max's now empty-table. Candy
picks up the check.

INSERT SHOT

RESTAURANT CHECK

Contains Max's order, and payment in the form of a hundred-
dollar bill.

BACK TO SCENE

A puzzled Candy looks on.

EXT. LOCAL DINER - TAMPA- LATE AFTERNOON

Candy emerges and exits through the diner's front door, as
she pursues Max.

Max walks slowly back to his hotel, as he turns and notices
Candy.

CANDY
(a little out of breath)
Wait up there, mister money man.

MAX
Is there a problem I paid my tab.

CANDY
You sure did.
(pulls out and presents C-
note)
Then what the hell is this?

MAX
It's my payment for my lunch. The
remainder is your tip.

CANDY
(hands him the change;
strong)
Thanks, but not thanks. I don't
want your yuppie-yielded charity.

MAX
Please. I just don't want to argue.
It's just my way of saying "thank
you".

CANDY
For what?

MAX
For serving my food and talking to
me.

CANDY
(confused)
Talking to you?

MAX
Yes. I'm here, all by myself, with
no one around, going through a real
rough patch, pent up in a shitty
hotel room...

CANDY
(intervenes)
Okay, I get the picture.

MAX
I was hoping if you wanted to get
together for a drink? IF you want
to, of course.

CANDY
Well, I get off of work in about
half an hour.
(vacillates)
What the heck. Be ready and meet me
here in about forty minutes. Deal?

MAX
Deal.

CANDY
Can I keep the tip?

FADE OUT.

SCENE VIII

FADE IN:

INT. THE GULPING GATOR INN - ESTABLISHING SHOT - EARLY EVENING

Patrons stands outside The Gulping Gator, smoking and conversing.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GULPING GATOR INN - BAR - EARLY EVENING

Candy and Max find two seats, as they settle in. HARVEY COOPER, the Bartender, appears INTO VIEW

HARVEY

Good evening, folks. I'm Harvey,
and I'll be your bartender. What'll
it be?

(looks at Candy)

The usual, Candy?

CANDY

You know it, Harv.

HARVEY

(turns to Max)

And for you, Sir?

MAX

A ginger ale, please.

Harvey looks incredulously at Max, as Max quickly changes his order.

MAX

I mean, a beer. A Miller beer.

HARVEY

Okay, I have one margarita and one
Miller. Comin' right up.

Harvey departs OUT OF VIEW, as Candy and Max start to converse.

CANDY

Taking another risk, I see?

MAX

I beg your pardon?

CANDY

You ordered a beer.

MAX

Yeah. So?

CANDY

So, you originally ordered a soda.

MAX

Well, I figured, hey, I might as well enjoy it.

Candy does not respond, as Max looks at her.

MAX

What? Does it make me some type of rogue?

CANDY

Of course not.

(beat)

I'm just glad to see you being you.

MAX

What?

CANDY

Well, when I met you today, you were tighter than a fat man's undies.

(beat)

I guess you don't get out much, huh?

MAX

(cross)

Excuse me... I happen to make frequent rounds.

CANDY

Where there are probably few people, I bet.

MAX

What are you insinuating

CANDY

Nary a thing. I'm just making credible observations.

MAX

Credible observations? As if you're conducting some sort of psycho-analytic case study?

CANDY
Wrong again. This morning you said
you were here on behalf of your
grandfather, right?

MAX
Correct.

CANDY
Well, that means that your
grandfather is trying to live his
dreams and objectives through you,
and possibly vice-versa.

MAX
For your information, my
grandfather happens to be a very
well-to-do....

CANDY
(strongly interrupts)
Well-to-do, neer-do-well...
(beat)
Tell me how you felt when you first
took a bite of that cheeseburger
today.

MAX
Well...

CANDY
That round, warm, gooey disk of
meat and dairy represented more
than just lunch for you..
(beat)
It represented all of your supposed
desires. Something you've pined for
since you can remember, but
couldn't bring yourself to indulge
in.

MAX
Pardon me, Ms. Freud, but I prefer
you to stop this mumbo jumbo and
just enjoy our drinks...
(beat)
Speaking of our drinks, here they
are now.

Harvey appears INTO VIEW, as he places down both drinks.

HARVEY
 (places down drinks)
 One margarita, and one Miller.
 Enjoy, folks.

Harvey exits OUT OF VIEW, as Candy and Max continue.

CANDY
 (raises her glass)
 A toast, for no longer keeping up
 appearances.

Max raises his glass, as he and Candy CLICK GLASSES.

Max takes a sip of his beer, as Candy keenly observes.

CANDY
 How does it feel?

MAX
 (confounded)
 What?

CANDY
 (takes a sip of her drink)
 How does it feel to drink that
 beer?

MAX
 Feels okay.

CANDY
 That's what you're saying on the
 surface.
 (beat)
 How about viscerally? Those suds
 are touching your insides, and
 feels like the party's starting.

MAX
 (comes to)
 You're absolutely right.

CANDY
 (takes a sip of her drink)
 You felt the same about the sundae.
 (beat)
 Watching you scarf down that ice
 cream was like watching a kid in a
 candy store.
 (beat)
 Or in our case, an out-of-the-way
 greasy spoon.
 (MORE)

CANDY (cont'd)

(beat)

Lemme ask you something. How long have you worked in business? Would you have felt the same drinking ginger ale?

MAX

Basically, my whole life. Probably since I could walk.

CANDY

And what have you REALLY learned? Besides buy low, sell high?

Max hesitates, attempting to formulate an answer, but does not reply.

CANDY

Just as I thought. You may be rich financially, but you are as poor as the next average being.

MAX

You know, I am really not enjoying this at all...

CANDY

Then why are you still here? I mean, you have the option to get up and exit at any juncture.

(beat)

Still no response, eh? I can just see it in you. How about your dad? Does he work with you too?

MAX

No. He's in pharmaceuticals.

CANDY

I bet he and your gramps are on the out and out?

MAX

Yes.

CANDY

And why? Because your father refused to conform to a predictable and pedestrian existence. Even if it was at the cost of alienation from his father.

MAX

So?

CANDY

So, your father chose a career path that brought him personal AND professional satisfaction.

(beat)

A concept your grandfather and those before him could never comprehend nor adhere to.

MAX

(cross)

Now you listen....

CANDY

(interrupts)

No, you listen. You really don't wanna be here, do you? I mean, you did have a choice, am I right?

MAX

Honestly, no.

CANDY

That's what you told yourself, then. If you had the option now, would you be here?

MAX

No.

CANDY

Then you've finally done it.

MAX

Done what?

CANDY

You're finally being honest with others, and yourself.

(beat)

I've seen a lot of you business types, and you're all cut from the same cloth. A dime a dozen.

(beat)

You can rattle off statistics and corporate lingo with the utmost of ease, but when it comes to human relations, you crash harder than Enron stock.

A moment of silence ensues, as Max remains unresponsive.

CANDY
Finish up your drink. We're going
for a ride.

FADE OUT.

SCENE IX

FADE IN:

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - ALLAN'S
OFFICE - MORNING

Allan sits at his desk, carefully reading his computer
monitor, when his CELL PHONE RINGS. Allan checks his phone.

INSERT SHOT - CELL PHONE

Reads, "NATALIE"

BACK TO SCENE

Allan smiles, as he dials a number to his office phone.

ALLAN
(speaks into phone)
Wanda, please hold my calls.

WANDA (O.S.)
(over speaker phone)
Yes, Mr. McLoughlin.

Allan hangs up his office phone and then picks up his cell
phone.

ALLAN
(speaks into cell phone)
Hello? Hey!

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

EXT. STREET CORNER - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Natalie, coffee cup in hand, traverses downtown while on her
cell phone.

NATALIE
(speaks into cell phone)
Hello, there. How's everything?

ALLAN

Oh, you know. Same old, same old.

NATALIE

I hear you. Say, I'm on lunch right now. Thought you'd like to join.

ALLAN

Am sorry, Natalie. Today's been uber-busy. How about dinner?

NATALIE

Tonight?

ALLAN

How about tomorrow night? Eight sharp. Rosebud Steakhouse.

NATALIE

I'm a vegetarian.

ALLAN

No problem. I know the chefs personally. You'll have a salad as green as Anne's gables.

NATALIE

Splendid. So, it's a date?

ALLAN

Affirmative.

NATALIE

Great. See you then, Allan.

ALLAN

Okie-dokie.

Natalie hangs up the phone, as Allan follows.

NATALIE

(exultant)
Yes!

ALLAN

(exultant)
Yes!

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING AND FINANCIALS BUILDING - LOBBY

- LATE AFTERNOON

A beaming Allan makes his way out of work, when he is met by Wayne.

ALLAN
(slightly surprised)
Grandpa? Good to see you. I'm heading home now.

WAYNE
Yes, so I see. Where were you earlier? Wanda told me you weren't taking calls.

ALLAN
Oh, yeah. Something came up and I had to take care of it. Nothing serious.

WAYNE
Well, Tim and I were trying to inform you that the son of the CEO of Goodyear called, and is interested in our business.

ALLAN
Splendid.

WAYNE
However, he wants to meet with us. So, we've arranged for you to meet with him at basketball game. Bulls vs. Bucks. Court-side seats. The best in the house.
(beat)
You'll feel the players sweat on you.

ALLAN
When?

WAYNE
Tomorrow. Game starts at eight.

ALLAN
Sorry, Grandpa. No can do. Already have plans.

WAYNE
Allan, you can go drinking with your friends any time you want. This is a rare opportunity.

ALLAN

But I'm not going out with friends.
I just have other plans.

(beat)

Am sure you or Tim will have a
great time at the game.

(beat)

Excuse me, but I've gotta catch the
El. Took it to work this morning.

Allan exits, but not before hugging Wayne and patting Walter
on the back, who is working nearby.

Wayne watches incredulously as his grandson departs.

EXT. TAMPA HILTON - TAMPA - NIGHT

A taxi cab pulls up INTO VIEW, and comes to a halt. Candy and
Max step out, as they walk to the hotel room entrance.

MAX

Boy, that is a night I won't soon
forget.

CANDY

This day has contained a lot of
firsts for you.

MAX

Listen, I just want to say thank yo
so much... For everything.

CANDY

Didn't mean to be so blunt, but
sometimes the only way we can ever
learn is through harshness.

(beat)

When are you leaving?

MAX

Tomorrow afternoon.

CANDY

Okay. Hope you have a safe flight.

(pulls out a piece of
paper and starts to write
on it)

Here's my address, cell, and home
numbers, including my e-mail. If
you ever need anything or just want
to chat.

MAX
 (takes piece of paper)
 Thanks.

CANDY
 You're gonna be okay. Before you
 leave, do me one last thing...

MAX
 What?

CANDY
 Before you go to bed, take a look
 at yourself in a nearby mirror.
 Stare at your reflection for a few
 minutes, and ponder who it is you
 are, and what you want yourself to
 be.
 (one full beat)
 Once you are able to do this, you
 will be able to initiate your
 journey to self-discovery.
 (beat)
 Promise me you'll do it.

MAX
 (places his hand on his
 heart)
 You have my word.

CANDY
 Take care of yourself, Maxie.

Candy smiles faintly, as she heads back into the taxi, which
 then drives off OUT OF VIEW.

Max remains, as he watches the cab drive off and heads back
 inside the hotel.

INT. TAMPA HILTON - TAMPA - MAX'S HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM -
 LATE NIGHT

Max quietly and pensively stares at himself in the bathroom
 mirror. He remains still, as he carefully continues to look.
 Tears stream down his cheeks, as he gently wipes them away
 with his hand.

INT. ROSEBUD STEAKSHOUSE - CORNER TABLE - NIGHT

A Waiter, named PETER, appears INTO VIEW, tray in hand, as he
 places down the meals for both Allan and Natalie.

ALLAN
Thank you, Peter.

PETER
Is there anything else I can get
for you two?

ALLAN
That will be all, Peter. Thank you.

The Waiter exits OUT OF VIEW, as Allan and Natalie are left
to themselves.

ALLAN
(raises his glass)
A toast, to a lovely evening.

NATALIE
(raises her glass)
I'll drink to that.

Natalie and Allan CLICK their GLASSES and each take a sip of
their wine.

NATALIE
(looks in awe at salad)
Now, this is a salad!

ALLAN
What did I tell you?

NATALIE
I'm impressed. So, Allan, tell me a
little about yourself. Well, what I
don't already know.

ALLAN
Well, I work in the business sector
of Chicago at my grandpa's firm.
How about you?

NATALIE
Well, I work at my aunt's cosmetics
firm. I'm assistant head of
Marketing.

Silence follows, as Allan and Natalie look coyly at each
other.

NATALIE
So, you work for your grandfather?

ALLAN

Yes. Overall, it's okay. Though once that final whistle blows, I just wanna kick back.

NATALIE

My thoughts exactly. My ex-fiancee...

Before she can continue, Natalie halts, as she looks embarrassingly at Allan.

NATALIE

(sheepish)
Oh, sorry...

ALLAN

It's perfectly fine. You can speak about it if you'd like.

NATALIE

Well, I just don't want to appear rude.

ALLAN

Not at all.

NATALIE

Well, as you might have known, my ex and I were supposed to be in the Caribbean right now.

(beat)
But he had to cancel due to a required business trip.

ALLAN

Ouch. Sorry to hear that. Being involved with someone in the industry is never easy.

NATALIE

May I ask, do you have to travel much?

ALLAN

On occasion. Usually, it's local or in state, though.

NATALIE

You are so lucky. I swear, my ex's job always has him coming and going.

(MORE)

NATALIE (cont'd)
 (stops; sheepish)
 Oh, there I go again.

ALLAN
 It's fine, really.
 (beat)
 Actually, I'm interested in hearing
 about your ex's misgivings. This
 way I won't make the same mistakes.

Allan smiles gently at Natalie, who coyly ducks her head.

ALLAN
 You're a very incredible person,
 Natalie. Smart, sweet, successful.
 You deserve someone who will treat
 you with the respect and
 appreciation you deserve.

NATALIE
 And I hope that someone is you.

ALLAN
 Ditto.

Allan and Natalie look tenderly at each other, as they lock
 lips.

EXT. O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - ARRIVAL GATE - MORNING

A visibly exhausted Max makes his way to the arrival gate, as
 he is met by an awaiting chauffeur.

Max follows the chauffeur, as he enter into a stretch
 limousine. The chauffeur enters into the limousine and starts
 driving.

INT. STRETCH LIMOUSINE - BACKSEAT - EVENING

Max is met by a beaming Wayne, who wraps him in a bear hug.
 Tim gives a congratulatory hand shake.

WAYNE
 (elated)
 Bless you, Maxie. We've done it
 again!

TIM
 Tropicana now wants to invest more
 shares with us, and are even
 unveiling some new products, which
 they want us to partially
 advertise.

(MORE)

TIM (cont'd)
 (beat)
 Very good news indeed.

WAYNE
 (elated)
 Why don't we go out and celebrate?

MAX
 (tiredly objects)
 Thanks Grandpa, but maybe some
 other time. Had a long flight.

WAYNE
 Tim,, get Wanda on the phone. No
 calls for Max until late tomorrow.
 We need all the time for respite we
 can get. It's showtime, men!

The limousine drives off from the airport into the Chicago
 night.

FADE OUT.

SCENE X

FADE IN:

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIALS BUILDING - LOBBY -
 MORNING

Allan darts through the lobby, on his way to his office, when
 he is met by August.

AUGUST
 (calls out)
 Al, wait up!

ALLAN
 Aug, what's up, man? Am running
 late.

AUGUST
 Just wanted to let you know I have
 an interview. Found out this
 morning from Wanda.

ALLAN
 Congrats, Aug. Best of luck and
 don't forget to prepare.

AUGUST
 Thanks, man. Listen, maybe we can
 talk about the interview over
 lunch.

ALLAN

Sounds great, but no can do.
Already have plans.

AUGUST

We haven't seen each other in
almost a week.

ALLAN

Sorry, Aug. But it's been super
busy. Holidays are comin' up.

AUGUST

Frank said he'll be there too.

ALLAN

Sounds like fun. But I'll have to
pass. Thanks for the invite. Gotta
run.

Allan pats August on the shoulder, as he quickly makes his way out of the lobby. A visibly disappointed August looks on.

Before heading to his office, Allan encounters Walter, who is diligently sweeping the floor.

ALLAN

Hey, Walt. Hard at work, huh?
When's your vacation?

Walter smiles and nods his head, while he continues working away.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIALS BUILDING - JANITORS'
LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Walter is on his break, as he quietly sits by his locker and sips some coffee. He looks at his locker.

INSERT SHOT - WALTER'S LOCKER DOOR

Has the first-ever dollar bill Walter ever earned as an employee at McLoughlin, taped securely.

Underneath lies a picture of an island in the Caribbean, with white-sanded beaches and crystal-clear waters.

BACK TO SCENE

Walter looks, commiserating at his locker, and takes another sip of coffee.

Suddenly, there is an ANNOUNCEMENT over the P.A. SYSTEM.

MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR (V.O.)
 (over loud speaker)
 Will a custodian please report to
 the faculty cafeteria? There is a
 spill. I repeat, there is a spill.

After hearing the message, Walter lets out an AUDIBLE SIGH,
 as he slowly rises from his seat, closes his locker, and
 heads out to clean up the spill.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - RECEPTION
 AREA - MORNING

Allan arrives into his office, as he dials the number to his
 answering machine.

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)
 You have eighteen new voice
 messages.

Allan pushes a button on his phone.

WAYNE (V.O.)
 Al, it's Grandpa. Please give me a
 call.

Allan presses a button, as the next message plays.

AUGUST (V.O.)
 Al, it's August. Call me when you
 get a chance. Thanks, bye.

Allan presses the button, as the next message plays.

WAYNE (V.O.)
 Al, it's Grandpa. Please call me.

An exasperated Allan closes his voice mail program, as his
 OFFICE PHONE RINGS. Allan places the call on speaker.

ALLAN
 Hello, Allan speaking.

WANDA (V.O.)
 (from over phone speaker)
 Good morning, Allan. Your
 Grandfather would like to speak to
 you. STAT.

ALLAN
 Thank you, Wanda. Will be right
 over.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - WAYNE'S
OFFICE - MORNING

Wayne quietly sits at his desk, diligently filling out paper work, when there is a KNOCK at his OFFICE DOOR.

WAYNE
Please come in.

The office door opens, as Allan tentatively enters.

ALLAN
Grandpa, you wanted to see me?

WAYNE
Good morning, Allan. Please, have a seat.

Allan takes a seat, as Wayne looks pensively at him.

ALLAN
So, how was the game?

WAYNE
I did not attend. Fortunately, I was able to get Tim to go at the least minute. The Bulls won, Deng got a triple-double, and we now have Goodyear as a client. All in all, a good night to say the least.

ALLAN
Sounds great. Had a feeling everything would work out.

WAYNE
I am also immensely satisfied with the result, but am dissatisfied with your absence.
(one full beat)
May I remind you that even though you are my blood, you also work for me. Thus, I expect full cooperation and effort from you as I do all of my employees.

ALLAN
Yes, Grandpa. I would..

WAYNE

(intervenes)

I have presided over this family-owned and operated firm for nearly fifty years. If I am to bequeath it on to you, you must prove meritorious of such an inheritance.

(one full beat)

We have a meeting at three-thirty today. We will discuss our new client, as well as prepare for the holiday quarter. Don't be late.

(beat)

Is there anything you would like to add?

ALLAN

(sheepish)

No, I think that pretty much sums it up. I'll be heading to my office now.

WAYNE

Very well then. I'll see you at the meeting.

Allan rises from his chair, as he slowly exits Wayne's office. Before he exits, Wayne calls out to him.

WAYNE (O.S.)

Oh, and Allan....

Allan turns around to his Grandfather.

WAYNE

Love you, pal.

Wayne smiles faintly, as Allan reciprocates and exits the office.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - ALLAN'S OFFICE - NOON

A visibly effected Allan sits pensively at his desk, as he notices his cell phone.

INSERT SHOT - ALLAN'S CELL PHONE

Reads "NEW TEXT MESSAGE"

BACK TO SCENE

Allan checks the text message.

CLOSE UP - TEXT MESSAGE

Reads, "FROM NATALIE. GOT SOME GR8 NEWS. WANNA TALK OVER LUNCH?"

Allan looks momentarily at the text message, and proceeds to close his phone.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - BOARD ROOM - AFTERNOON

Many of Keller's top executives and employees are gathered as they discuss current and future matters.

RONALD

I firmly believe it is within our best interest to make certain that we adequately prepare for the holiday quarter.

An Executive, THOMAS FITZPATRICK, interjects.

THOMAS

I strongly disagree, Ronald. With the current economy, consumers will continue to be leery on where they choose to spend their income.

(beat)

Just preparing will be an utter waste of time and capital on our part.

DEAN

Both very valid points. Max, what do you believe we should do?

Max, sitting inattentively at his seat, comes to and replies to Wayne's query.

MAX

I beg your pardon?

DEAN

Well, for those of us paying attention, I was asking what course of action should we take in hopes of increasing our shareholders' profits, as well as our own.

MAX

(ruminates)

Oh, well.... I believe we should follow what we normally do....

(MORE)

MAX (cont'd)
I mean, if it ain't broke, why fix
it?

Everyone in the room exchanges puzzled glances, as Max looks on awkwardly.

DEAN
Okay, then. Would anyone else care
to elaborate?

The meeting has ended, as Dean and Ronald remain seated, as they speak to each in private.

DEAN
(upset; sotto voce)
If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
Can't remember the last time I head
that one.

RONALD
(sotto voce)
I still think we should conduct
research.

DEAN
(confounded; sotto voce)
I don't know, Ron. Ever since
returning from Tampa, he hasn't
been the same.

RONALD
(sotto voce)
Think the humidity might have
gotten to him?

DEAN
(sotto voce)
I don't know. But I won't risk our
firm's reputation and future on it.
We've got some delving to do.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - MAX'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Max sits pensively at his desk, head in hands, as he looks down.

MAX'S POV

PIECE OF PAPER

Containing Candy's contact information, lies on the desk.

BACK TO SCENE

Max continues to stare at the piece of paper, as he finally cracks, picks up his office phone, and dials Candy's number.

Max anxiously awaits , as the DIAL TONE RINGS. There is no reply, as Max despondently hangs up. Suddenly, there is a KNOCK at the DOOR. A startled Max comes to.

MAX
(slightly nervous)
Uh, yes. Just a minute.

Max frantically places the piece of paper in his desk drawer, and gathers himself.

MAX
Come in.

Dean enters the room, as he looks happily at Max.

DEAN
Hello, Max.

MARTIN
(slightly surprised)
Grandpa. Hi.

DEAN
Max, can I have a moment of your time?

MAX
Of course. Please, take a seat.

Dean gently settles into a chair.

DEAN
Max, how've you been?

MAX
Uh, fine. Yeah...fine.

DEAN
I couldn't help but notice a change in your behavior since returning from Florida.
(beat)
I hope your trip went well.

MAX

Oh, it was okay. You know how Florida is.... palm trees and the elderly.

DEAN

I see. Did you happen to come across anyone in Tampa? Someone who might have given you any kind of trouble?

MAX

(deadpan)

No.

DEAN

Very well. I know that losing Natalie was tremendous for you.

(beat)

Such a beautiful and talented young lady comes along once every so often.

MAX

Thank you.

DEAN

You have remained dedicated and diligent in light of such personal misfortune, and I can not thank you enough.

MAX

Of course.

DEAN

If you ever want to talk, please know that I am here. We have our busiest season upon us, and I need you to be at your best and brightest.

MAX

I promise you I'll be ripe for the tasks ahead.

DEAN

That's my boy. Just know where my office is, and don't be a stranger.

MAX

Thanks, Grandpa.

Dean exits OUT OF VIEW, closing the office door behind him.

Max lets out an AUDIBLE SIGH of relief, as he places his head on his desk.

INT.MCLOUGHLIN MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING -
WAYNE'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Wayne sits at his desk, diligently organizing papers, when there is a KNOCK at his OFFICE DOOR.

WAYNE

Enter.

The office door opens, as Allan pops his head in.

ALLAN

Hey, Grandpa. Was about to leave,
but just wanted to see if you
needed anything.

WAYNE

NOPE. All appears fine. Thank you
for checking in and have a good
night.

ALLAN

Good night, Grandpa.

Allan exits, closing the door behind him.

INT. TGI FRIDAY'S - CORNER BOOTH - NIGHT

Natalie sits pensively at her table, as Allan arrives INTO
VIEW, and sits down next to her.

ALLAN

(kisses Natalie)
Natalie, I am so sorry. It was so
hectic today.

NATALIE

That's okay. I got your text.

ALLAN

(looks at waiter)
One Heineken, please.

NATALIE

Same old, same old. We are getting
a new shipment of cosmetics from
Loreal. Personally, I would have
gone with Lancome.

(MORE)

NATALIE (cont'd)

(beat)

So, what do you feel like eating?

ALLAN

(quickly scans menu)

I dunno. Everything looks pretty appetizing

(looks at Natalie)

How about we split a plate of appetizers?

NATALIE

Sounds good to me. We should also get an order of the seafood sampler. It's amazing..

ALLAN

Sure.

Natalie motions to the Waitress, who brings Allan his beer, as she then takes the food order.

NATALIE

One seafood sampler, and two dishes of pasta marinara. Thank you.

The Waitress writes down the order, as she exits OUT OF VIEW.

ALLAN

(looks tenderly at Natalie)

Missed you so much today.

NATALIE

Same here.

They both kiss tenderly, as they start to converse.

NATALIE

Sounds like you had a rough one today.

ALLAN

You can say that again. I think the older my grandpa gets, the crabbier he becomes.

NATALIE

Speaking of your grandpa, when do I get to meet him?

ALLAN

(incredulous)

Are you serious? Never!

NATALIE

That's not really fair or honest, Allan. My ex-fiancee introduced me to his family the second week we dated.

ALLAN

Okay, okay. I promise to introduce you, but not right now. Maybe during the holidays.

NATALIE

We're going to definitely meet my family. They live in Shermer. Figured we'd meet over dinner or cocktails.

ALLAN

Sounds good.

NATALIE

What can we do this weekend? I was thinking maybe a movie?

ALLAN

I can go for a flick. Have anything in mind?

NATALIE

Not sure. I'll check online.

Allan and Natalie continue to converse, as the Waitress appears INTO VIEW with their food.

INT. MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Max sits quietly on his recliner, can of beer in hand, as he continues to look at the piece of paper with Candy's contacts.

Max continues to agonize, as he angrily tosses his beer across the room and lets out an AUDIBLE SCREAM.

MAX

(screams loudly)

Fuck!

Max walks over to his balcony, as he looks pensively over the Chicago skyline. Suddenly, there is a KNOCK at the DOOR.

Max quickly turns around and heads over to the door. Another KNOCK soon follows, as Max replies.

MAX
 (calls loud)
 Yes, who is it?

A VOICE EMERGES from behind the door.

VOICE (V.O.)
 (from behind door)
 Yes, this is Papa John's. I have
 two meat lover's pizzas for a Max
 Keller.

MAX
 (confounded)
 That's strange. I didn't order any
 pizzas.

Max opens the door, as Candy stands, smiling in the door way.

CANDY
 Always used the same trick on my ex-
 boyfriend. Still works like a
 charm.

MAX
 (shocked)
 What the hell are you doing here?!

CANDY
 (walks through front door)
 Well, hello to you too, dear.
 (looks around condo)
 This is pretty neat digs you got
 here. Mind if I hang around a bit?

MAX
 But, what, what....

CANDY
 (interjects)
 I decided to practice what I preach
 and took a flight out to Chicago.
 I'm staying with some relatives in
 Arlington Heights.

MAX
 So that explains it.

CANDY
 Explains what?

MAX
 Nevermind.

CANDY

Listen. I didn't come out here solely on a social visit. Like you, I'm trying to turn my life around.

(beat)

Unfortunately, in this day and age, it requires a little moolah. Let's make a deal...

(beat)

I help toughen you up, you help me with my financials.

Max looks reluctantly at Candy.

MAX

(uncertain)

I don't know. Maybe we can...

CANDY

(interrupts)

This is a one-time, limited opportunity. Are you in or out?

MAX

Okay, I'm in. However, there have to be some conditions.

CANDY

(looks suspiciously at Max)

Like what?

MAX

There can't be any outsiders. And we can't let my grandpa know. He'd kill me.

CANDY

Fine. I have some conditions as well. There are to be no personal relations. This is strictly business.

(beat)

Great. So it's settled. Now let's get down to business.

MONTAGE - TWO HAPPY COUPLES

Candy and Max are in Max's condo, diligently discussing details of their business.

Natalie and Allan enjoy lunch al fresco, as they talk amongst each other.

Candy and Max ride along Lake Michigan, on a rented boat, as they take in the gorgeous day.

It's Thanksgiving Day, as Allan is with Natalie and her family, as they enjoy Thanksgiving dinner.

At the Keller estate, Wayne, Max, and family bow their heads, as they say a Thanksgiving prayer. Upon the prayer's conclusion, everyone begins eating.

Max returns to his condo, Thanksgiving leftovers in tow, as he meets with Candy, who is lounging on the couch. Max sits with Candy, who starts to eat the leftovers.

Allan and Natalie peacefully ride their bikes along the banks of Lake Michigan.

Max and Candy take in a day at the Chicago Museum of Art.

In his luxury condo, Allan pensively looks over the Chicago skyline, as Natalie appears, as she enfolds Allan and joins him in viewing the skyline.

Max slowly ambles into the living room, as he notices Candy asleep on the living room sofa. Max quietly makes his way over to the sofa, as he covers Candy with a nearby blanket, turns off the television, and looks tenderly at her before departing OUT OF VIEW.

END MONTAGE

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

SCENE XI

FADE IN:

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - DEAN KELLER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Dean sits at his desk, as he pensively looks outside his office window at the Chicago skyline.

There is a KNOCK on his OFFICE DOOR, as Dean re-directs his attention.

DEAN

Come in.

The office door opens, as Ronald appears.

RONALD

Good morning, Dean. You're here early.

DEAN

Business never takes a holiday. Even during the holidays.

RONALD

Have you heard anything?

DEAN

Not yet. Am still checking the Dow, but nothing definite.

RONALD

Do you think we'll get more accounts before Christmas?

DEAN

(paces slowly around office)

I don't see why not. I haven't the slightest notice what Keller has planned, but am not going to wait to find out.

Seconds later, Dean turns to his computer.

CLOSE UP - COMPUTER SCREEN

Displays, "ONE NEW E-MAIL"

Dean quickly heads towards his computer and clicks on the e-mail. He momentarily read the e-mail, as his concerned mien immediately starts to beam.

RONALD

What is it, Dean?

DEAN

(subdued; excited)

Our expected profits have nearly doubled!

(bear hugs Ronald)

Ronnie, you sonuvabitch, what did I tell you?!

RONALD

This is incredible. I must send a congratulatory e-mail to all of the employees.

DEAN

(reluctant)

No, not yet. I don't want word getting out too soon. Especially with the likes of Keller.

RONALD

(confounded)

Dean, I don't understand your perpetual preoccupation with Keller.

DEAN

(intense)

And you don't understand, Ron. I want to completely obliterate McLoughlin and everyone who stands in our way. We can, and we will be the final financial war has concluded. That I promise you.

RONALD

(calm)

Alright then. I'm going to leave in a few minutes. Hope that's okay.

DEAN

(calm)

Very well. Enjoy the weekend and I'll see you Monday.

INT. MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

On a lazy Sunday afternoon, Candy sits on the sofa, watching the Bears. Max joins in seconds later, potato chip bag in hand.

MAX

(offer Candy chips)

Whose winning?

CANDY

(takes chips from Max)

Nothing-nothing.

MAX

Who ya rooting for?

Candy, dressed in a Bears down fleece, looks incredulously at Max and does not reply.

MAX
(eats chip; mouth half
full)
Never really followed football.

CANDY
Bet you know all the teams' salary
caps and shit, huh?

MAX
(slightly upset)
What's with the language? We really
have to have a talk about that.

Candy takes the remote, turns off the game, and hops off the couch.

CANDY
(quickly retorts)
You know, while we're on the
subject of talking, I have some
things I also need to get off my
chest...

MAX
(angrily intervenes)
Yeah? Like what?

CANDY
(snappish)
Well, for starters, I'm caved up in
this condo, 24/7, and I'm getting
antsy!

MAX
(strong)
Well, you're going to have to deal
with it. That was part of our
agreement!

CANDY
No, it wasn't. I agreed not to let
your grandpa know about our
partnership. Not being a pushover.

MAX
(strong)
Alright, what else have you got to
say?

CANDY
Would I be out of line to say you
look really sexy?

MAX
(slightly taken aback)
No.

CANDY
And that I want to kiss you, right
now?

MAX
Not at all.

Candy swoops in and starts to passionately kiss Max.

Max halts the kissing.

MAX
We're still not telling my grandpa
about us, right?

Candy nods her head "no", as she goes back to kissing Max.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - RECEPTION
AREA - MORNING

August waits patiently but anxiously before his interview.

Wanda sits at her desk, checking on some paperwork, when her
OFFICE PHONE RINGS. She picks up.

WANDA
(speaks into phone)
Good morning, McLoughlin Trading
and Financial, Wanda speaking, how
may I help you?
(beat)
Yes, I'll send him right in.

Wanda hangs up the phone, as she looks at August.

WANDA
August, Mister McLoughlin will see
you now.

August carefully rises from his seat, as he thanks Wanda and
heads towards Wayne's office door.

Someone is watching August.

MYSTERY POV

Allan quietly watches August enter Wayne's office.

INT.MCLOUGHLIN MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING -
WAYNE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Wayne is carefully watching his computer, when there is a
KNOCK on his OFFICE DOOR.

WAYNE

Enter.

The office door opens, as Allan appears.

WAYNE

Allan, thought you'd have left by
now.

ALLAN

Is this a bad time?

WAYNE

Not at all.

Allan gently makes his way into the office.

ALLAN

I just wanted to stop by before I
left to go Christmas shopping to
see you.

WAYNE

Okay. I'm basically fine right
here. Thanks for checking, though.

Wayne goes back to his paperwork, when he notices Allan is
still in his office.

WAYNE

Al, do you want to ask or tell me
something?

ALLAN

(sheepish)
Oh, no, no. Sorry.

WAYNE

I think I know what this is about.

A moment of silence follows, as Wayne looks soberly at
Allan.

WAYNE

Why don't you have a seat, Allan?

Allan makes his way towards Wayne's desk and settles in.

WAYNE

First off, I want to say what an honor and privilege it is to have August working for our firm.

(one full beat)

He's smart, responsible, polite, professional, diligent, and highly respected by everyone here. His interview was so stellar.

Allan smiles with pride, when Wayne continues.

WAYNE (O.S.)

However, he is not going to receive the position.

Allan's smile quickly fades to a grimace.

WAYNE

It is nothing personal, Allan, nor does it have to do with your August's performance.

ALLAN

(upset)

Then what is it, Grandpa?

WAYNE

Allan, this firm has not, nor will it ever, have someone of color, nor who is not of the name McLoughlin name, holding a position of great stature in this company.

(one full beat)

I'm sorry, Allan.

Allan looks intensely at Wayne, but says nothing.

WAYNE

Spend your money wisely.

Allan calmly exits Wayne's office.

INT ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A visibly angered Allan sits pensively on his living room sofa. Suddenly, the DOORBELL RINGS.

Allan remains on the sofa, as the DOORBELL RINGS again.

Allan does not budge, as the DOORBELL continues to RING PERPETUALLY.

Allan finally rises from the sofa and goes to the door. Natalie is at the door.

NATALIE
(concerned)
Geez. Guess you thought I was a Jehovah's witness.

ALLAN
(sullen)
Hey.

Allan nonchalantly kisses Natalie.

NATALIE
Well, nice to see you too.

Allan returns to the couch, as Natalie follows him, and sits next to him.

NATALIE
I really hope today was a bad day at work.

ALLAN
(terse)
Uh-huh.

NATALIE
You know you can talk to me.

Allan stays silent, then slowly turns his head to Natalie.

ALLAN
You know what? I've had it with holding back.
(beat)
Nat, you've been the one aspect of my life that has made me know the true sensation of positivity.
(beat)
In light of today, I have to start living my life the way I want to...

A moment of silence follows, as Allan goes over to the dining room hutch. He opens the door and pulls out a box.

Allan gets down on one knee, opens the box, which reveals a sparking diamond engagement ring. He gently removes it from the box, takes an astounded Natalie's finger, and places on the ring.

ALLAN

(soft)

There is very little in this world
of which I am certain. But one that
I am fully aware of is the fact
that I love you, Natalie.

NATALIE

(choked up)

Love you too, Allie.

ALLAN

Will you marry me?

NATALIE

(tears up)

Yes, I will.

ALLAN

I'm going to officially announce
our engagement at the office
Christmas party.

(beat)

And to tell you the truth, I'm
getting sick of business.

(beat)

I'm quitting my job, effective at
the New Year.

NATALIE

(objects)

Allan, you can't do that!

ALLAN

Yes, I can. All my job is about is
profit. I've had it up to here with
all the bullshit.

(beat)

I'll join you in cosmetics. A
salesman, representative, reduced
role, whatever. Just as long as I'm
with you.

Allan and Natalie look tenderly at each other, as they kiss tenderly.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XI

FADE IN:

INT MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - BEDROOM - MORNING

Max is asleep in bed, as he starts to toss and turn and then wakes up.

He slowly makes his way over to the living room.

INT MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Max slowly ambles into the living room.

MAX'S POV

CANDY

Happily decorates the Christmas tree in the living room, hanging tinsel on a branch.

BACK TO SCENE

Max looks on slightly surprised, as Candy makes her way over to him.

CANDY

(hugs and kisses Max)

Woke up a little early this morning and thought I'd start Christmas a little early.

MAX

Everything looks great. Fantastic job.

CANDY

Thanks. It was a tradition in our house to put the decorations up the day after Thanksgiving. My Mom and I.

MAX

Speaking of your Mom, what does she think?

CANDY

About what?

MAX

About us.

CANDY
My Mom passed on six years ago.

MAX
I'm sorry. Your dad?

CARLTON
Never knew him. My parents divorced
when I was four. We drifted apart.

MAX
Who'd you grow up with?

CANDY
Mainly my grandma. She's now in a
nursing home. I lived with my aunt
Louise through college and moved
out when I graduated.

MAX
Listen, about last night...

CANDY
(softly interjects)
Oh, yeah. Wanted to talk to you.
You certainly jingled my bells.

MAX
(laughs)
Oh, that's clever...
(turns serious)
However, I just wanted to make sure
we can maintain everything.

CANDY
Not to worry. Our secret is still
safe. I just hope nobody find out
the hard way.

INT MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - WAYNE'S
OFFICE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Dean sits pensively at his desk, as he looks at some reports.
Suddenly, there is a KNOCK at the DOOR.

DEAN
Enter.

The door opens, as Ronald appears.

DEAN
Ronald.

RONALD
Are you alright?

DEAN
I just got the information on the
current sales...

RONALD
And....

DEAN
They are thirty percent less than
expected.

RONALD
Dean, I'm sorry.

DEAN
I've been crunching numbers all
morning, and after reviewing
everything, there is grim news.

RONALD
Meaning what?

DEAN
Operating expenses, public and
company stock, everything is
effected.
(beat)
We may be left with no choice but
to cut jobs.

RONALD
You're not serious?

DEAN
I wish I weren't. This makes the
upcoming month the most important
our of our company's history.
(one full beat)
This will make or break us.

RONALD
Dean, I think you're going a bit
far...

DEAN
Ronald, my good man, business is
like war. Regardless of the
outcome, there will always be
casualties.

(MORE)

DEAN (cont'd)
(one full beat)
We must commence... and conquer.

INT MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Max sits by the fireplace, carefully working on his laptop, when Candy, box in hand, appears.

CANDY
(places down box)
Hey, there. I found this box in
your closet.

MAX
(carefully surveys the
box's content)
Oh...

CANDY
Is that a good "Oh"?

MAX
This stuff belongs to my ex.

CANDY
(sheepish)
Oh.

MAX
I haven't had the chance to return
it to her.

CANDY
Sorry for bringing back tough
memories.

MAX
No worries. I'll stop by her job
and return it.

CANDY
Kind of like a final release
ritual?

MAX
Sounds about right.
(beat)
After all, I found someone
priceless.

Max looks tenderly at Candy, who kneels down beside him.

CANDY
This is going to be a Christmas for
the ages.

MAX
You said it, doll.

Max and Candy look tenderly at each other and kiss.

EXT STREET CORNER - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - ESTABLISHING SHOT -
MORNING

The streets are decorated with Christmas all around.

CUT TO:

INT. HUGS, KISSES, AND TOUCH-UPS HEADQUARTERS - RECEPTION
AREA - MORNING

AMANDA FLEMING, a Secretary for HKT, sits at her desk,
texting on her cell phone.

Max appears INTO VIEW, as she re-directs her attention.

AMANDA
(surprised)
Maxie, honey, how are you?

Amanda rises from her desk and enfolds Max in a bear hug.

MAX
Hello, Amanda.

AMANDA
Haven't seen you in ages. You here
to see Natalie?

MAX
Actually, I'm here to return some
of her items. Here in this box.

AMANDA
How sweet. Nat's at lunch right
now. Do you want me to bring them
to her office

MAX
Please.

AMANDA
(takes box from Max)
I'll make sure to place it near her
desk.

(MORE)

AMANDA (cont'd)

(beat)

Please wait here.

Amanda exits OUT OF VIEW, as Max stands patiently and looks around aimlessly.

Suddenly, his focus shifts.

MAX'S POV

AMANDA'S MONITOR

Displays a Facebook Events Page.

BACK TO SCENE

Max carefully views the screen.

CLOSEUP - FACEBOOK PAGE

Displays, "NAT AND AL'S CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR!" with a picture of Natalie and Allan.

CLOSEUP - MAX'S FACE

Eyes go wide, as he looks angrily at the monitor.

Max quickly grabs a pen and paper off Amanda's desk and jots down the information for the event.

Suddenly, a VOICE EMERGES.

AMANDA (O.S.)

Sorry about the wait.

Max quickly slips the piece of paper into his coat pocket.

AMANDA

Well, I just wanted to say how great it is to see you, and hope you have a Happy Holiday.

MAX

Thank you, Amanda. Please have a great holiday.

AMANDA

Sorry things didn't work out between you two.

MAX

Thanks. I'm sure we'll both find somebody who'll suit us.

AMANDA

Can you try and hook me up with one
of your six-figure co-horts?

(beat)

It'd make my Christmas.

MAX

I'll put the word out. Have a great
Christmas, Amanda.

INT MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - BEDROOM - EVENING

Max looks in the mirror on the bureau, as he carefully primps
and preens.

He then takes a pen and paper and writes a short note and
places it on the dining room table.

Max then grabs his car keys, and departs, the FRONT DOOR
CLOSING behind him.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

The front door opens, as Candy, shopping bags in hand,
enters.

CANDY

(calls aloud)

I'm home. Got some Christmas
cookies, the ones with the
sprinkles.

(beat)

Max?

Candy places down her bags, as she looks around and notices a
small note on the dining room table.

INSERT SHOT - MEMO

Rests on table. Reads "WENT OUT. BE BACK SOON. LOVE, MAX."

Candy looks pensively at the note.

EXT ROSEBUD STEAKHOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

The Rosebud is rife with Christmas lights and decorations.

CUT TO:

INT ROSEBUD STEAKHOUSE - BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

Natalie and Allan are seated, at the head of the table, as they celebrate with friends and co-workers. Allan calls everyone to order.

ALLAN
(takes a fork and clicks a glass)
Okay, everyone. Can I have your attention, please?

The crowd falls silent, as Allan continues.

ALLAN
Before I begin, I just want to thank you all for coming here tonight.
(beat)
Christmas is in full swing, the year is coming to a close, and I believe we have so much to look forward to.

EVERYONE APPLAUDS accordingly, as Allan proceeds.

ALLAN
As I grow older, I never feel the need for material possessions.
(beat)
In trying to remain faithful to this trend, I have decided to give myself the best present of all.
(beat)
However, I will need the assistance of one Natalie Cambridge.
(looks around)
Nat, where are you?

Natalie coyly makes her way over to Allan and takes a seat next to him.

ALLAN
(looks tenderly at Natalie)
I have been so immensely blessed and fortunate in my life. However, there is a vast vacancy in my life, which I always believed would never be filled.
(one full beat)
Until now.

Natalie looks tenderly at Allan.

ALLAN

Natalie, since we've met, you have made me realize what truly matters in life, and the kind of man I want and hope to become....

Suddenly, the SOUND of CLAPPING EMERGES.

MAX (O.S.)

I had to see it with my own eyes.

Everyone directs their attention to a corner of the banquet room.

MAX

Drink in hand, stands calmly in the corridor adjacent to the banquet hall. He makes his way over.

NATALIE

(angrily)

What the fuck are you doing here?

MAX

Well, Natalie, I do happen to enjoy the porterhouse here. You should know that. I also came by to say hello.

NATALIE

I'd prefer more like goodbye.

MAX

I must say, I'm very happy to see you found someone.

(looks at Allan)

Although, I believe you've vastly lowered your standards.

ALLAN

Max, I think it's time.

MAX

(intervenes)

Oh, I think it's ideal timing, Allan.

(one full beat)

To tell you how much I pity your sorry ass.

(beat)

(MORE)

MAX (cont'd)

You've tried to compete with me all these years in college, business, and now you've claimed my sloppy seconds.

Allan looks incredulously at Max, and then turns to Natalie.

ALLAN

You mean to tell me you dated this prick, and never told me?

NATALIE

Allan, let me explain.

ALLAN

No need to.

(looks at Max)

Listen here, you sonuva bitch. I want you out of here by the time I count to ten...

MAX

Don't bother.

NATALIE

Max, I suggest you heed Allan's edict.

MAX

Oh yes, Nat. And I think you should heed mine. Think you're his one and only? This guy changes women like I change my socks. You'll just be another piece of his sexual misogynistic mosaic.

(one full beat; looks at Allan)

Believe it.

NATALIE

Max, I am getting management in here right now if you don't leave!

MAX

Very well then. I get the picture.

(turns to Allan)

Congrats and good luck, dickface. She's a handful.

(sticks up his middle finger)

Happy Holidays.

INT ROSEBUD STEAKHOUSE - WOMEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

A visibly distraught Natalie is at the bathroom sink, as she splashes water on her face. Natalie turns to get a paper towel, when she notices someone.

ALLAN

Stands a few feet away.

NATALIE

You're not supposed to be in here.
They'll see you.

ALLAN

I'm aware. I locked the door.

An awkward silence ensues.

NATALIE

My hand to God, I do not know how
he knew about the party.

ALLAN

Just like you didn't know about
dating that prick?

NATALIE

Allan, after hearing Max tonight, I
wan to make sure we can still be
together.

ALLAN

You can not imagine how much I
can't stand Max Keller.

NATALIE

Allan, it's over between Max and I.
You are the one I want to be with
forever. And that's the truth.

ALLAN

(looks at his watch)
We're expected at the company
Christmas party. I want to make the
announcement there.

NATALIE

I just want us to start the year
and our lives off right...
(one full beat)
And I want to spend them all with
you.

Allan and Natalie look tenderly at each other and kiss.
Suddenly, a LADY'S VOICE EMERGES.

LADY'S VOICE (O.S.)
(from behind bathroom
door)
Excuse me, but I really have to
pee.

ALLAN
(calls out; in Spanish
accent)
Housekeeping. Cleaning out crapper.
Please come back.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XII

FADE IN:

INT MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

FRONT DOOR

BURSTS OPEN, as a beaming Max enters. He is soon met by
Candy.

CANDY
Max, where the hell have you been?

MAX
Candy girl, it shouldn't matter a
lick...
(beat)
Cause I'm having the happ-happ-
happiest holiday known to man!!

CANDY
Are you on crack?

MARTIN
Far from it. Santa just came and
left me a shitload of presents.

CANDY
Do you realize we have your company
Christmas party in an hour?

MAX
Yup. And I can't wait to show those
corporate clowns what I plan on
doing.

CANDY

Max, calm down. You act as if the
Cubs won the Series.

MARTIN

Not exactly, but awfully damn
close. Get ready, baby, cause we're
brining in the holidays with a
bang!

INT MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - BANQUET ROOM -
NIGHT

The McLoughlin Christmas party is in full swing, as a pensive
Wayne on his cell phone, surveys the scene.

WAYNE

(talks into cell phone)

Yes, I'll be able to celebrate once
I see those reports.

(beat)

Speaking of my grandson, I've been
waiting a fortnight for him to...

Just before he can continue, Wayne notices someone.

ALLAN

With Natalie in tow, has arrived, as he shakes an associate's
hand.

WAYNE

Listen, I'll call you back. Thanks.

Allan and Natalie, beverages in hand, stand calmly in a
corner, surveying the scene. Wayne appears INTO VIEW.

WANDA

(warmly embraces Allan)

Allan, am so glad to see you could
make it.

(looks at Natalie)

And who is this lovely young lady?

ALLAN

Grandpa, this is my girlfriend,
Natalie.

WAYNE

Surely, you jest.

ALLAN

No.

NATALIE

(extends her hand)

It's an honor to meet you, Mr. McLoughlin. This is such a lovely fete.

WAYNE

Thank you. Please, there are hors d'oeuvres and entrees over at the other end. Enjoy!

ALLAN

Grandpa, have you seen Tim? I want to wish him a Merry Christmas.

WAYNE

He's in his offices, finishing up some work.

ALLAN

Sounds about right. C'mon, Nat. Let's get something to eat.

SAME - HOURS LATER

Tim finally appears, as he shakes some co-workers' hands and makes the rounds.

Allan and Natalie sit next to each other, idly nursing their drinks.

ALLAN

(sotto voce)

I'm making the announcement soon.

NATALIE

(sotto voce)

I have my doubts, Allan.

ALLAN

(sotto voce)

I have to take initiative. And it starts tonight.

INT KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - BOARD ROOM - NIGHT

Employees, young and old celebrate the spirit of Christmas, as they eat, drink, and take in some Christmas tunes.

DEAN

Stoically stands in corner, carefully surveying his surroundings.

MAX

With Candy in tow, arrives, as they scope out the party scene.

CANDY
(looks around)
So this is where you work?

MAX
In all its glory.

Candy and Max encounter Ronald, as he warmly greets them.

RONALD
(warmly shakes Max's hand)
Good evening, Max. Happy Holidays.

MAX
Thank you, Ronald.
(introduces Candy)
I'd like for you to meet a dear friend of mine, Candace.

CANDY
(warmly shakes Ronald's hand)
Pleasure meeting you. Merry Christmas.

RONALD
Thank you. Say, Max, have you seen your grandfather by chance?

Dean appears INTO VIEW.

RONALD
Oh, speak of the devil.

DEAN
Hello, everyone. Merry Christmas.

MAX
(warmly hugs Wayne)
Thank you, Grandpa.
(introduces Candy)
Grandpa, I'd like for you to meet a dear friend of mine, Candace.

DEAN
(genially shakes Candy's hand)

(MORE)

DEAN (cont'd)
The pleasure is mine. Merry
Christmas, Candace.

CANDY
Thank you for this lovely party

MAX
Grandpa, I have an important
announcement, and I would like to
make it tonight.

DEAN
Of course, Max. But it will have to
wait. Our official quarterly
reports are expected to arrive
within the hour. The results will
be made public tonight.

MAX
Sounds great.

Max turns to Candy, as a smile fissures from his lips.

Max suddenly turns his attention to Ronald, who appears in
pain.

MAX
Are you okay, Ronald?

RONALD
(grabs his head)
Yes. I've been fighting a headache
since this afternoon.

MAX
Can I get you anything?

RONALD
(presents pair of keys)
These are the keys to my office.
There's some aspirin in the upper
left-hand draw of my desk.

Max takes the keys, which are quickly nabbed by Dean.

DEAN
Please, allow me. Max, you have a
guest. Please enjoy the
festivities. I'll be right back.

Dean departs OUT OF VIEW, as Max and Candy show Ronald to an
available seat.

INT KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - RONALD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office door opens, as Dean enters. Dean approaches Ronald's desk, as he finds the bottle of aspirin. He is about to close the desk drawer, when he notices something.

Dean opens the drawer up further, as he takes out some papers.

CLOSE UP - PAPERS

Reveal carefully drawn-out data and statistics for McLoughlin.

Dean looks around to make sure no one is watching, as he continues to review the papers.

INT KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Dean calmly makes his way over to Ronald, with the aspirin and a cup of water.

RONALD

(takes aspirin and water)
Dean, there you are. Thought you forgot.... thanks so much.

Ronald ingests the aspirin and gulps the water.

RONALD

(relieved)
Man, that feels good. I hope I can shake this...

Before Ronald can continue, Dean angrily punches him in the face. Ronald falls hardly to the floor.

Dean then subdues Ronald, and begins choking him.

DEAN

(livid)
You turncoat sonuvabitch!

A throng crowds around, as they watch in disdain.

Max quickly enters INTO VIEW, as he intervenes.

MAX

Grandpa, what the hell are you doing?!

Ronald looks weakly at Dean, when he closes his eyes and becomes passive.

DEAN

(livid)

We've got a modern-day Benedict
Arnold on our hands. Call Security
STAT!

MAX

Security? Someone call an
ambulance!

EXT. FRONT LOCAL HOSPITAL - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

Ambulances sit parked outside the hospital.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL HOSPITAL - PATIENT'S ROOM - NIGHT

RONALD

Lies tranquil in his hospital bed, gently respiring. He
remains still, when he notices something.

RONALD'S POV

A dark figure is silhouetted in the darkness at the door.

RONALD

(curious)

Who's there? Reveal yourself now.

The figure emerges from the darkness, as it is Dean, who look
sternly at Ronald.

RONALD

Thought visiting hours would be
over by now.

DEAN

Not when you've donated enough
money to build a new hospital wing.

DEAN

What do you want?

DEAN

Just here to say goodbye.

RONALD

Are you the least bit concerned
about my condition?

DEAN

No. All these years, Ron. All these years of working, co-existing with one another.

(beat)

And you betrayed me, by teaming with my most bitter rival. Why, Ron?

RONALD

Well, Dean. It was many things, but most of all it was money.

(beat)

All these years of loyal service, and not once did I receive a raise. My pride would not let me ask for one.

DEAN

What would Mildred think if she was alive?

RONALD

She would think the same, as she always did of you. Avaricious, dishonest, and conniving. A typical Scrooge.

DEAN

I'm flattered. Just to let you know, your position has been relinquished, your desk items are now company property, and I will have you prosecuted the fullest extent of the law.

RONALD

Tis the season.

DEAN

Seeing as to how this is the final meeting between us, I want nothing to do with you or your family, who aren't even here for you.

RONALD

My kids took the first available flight from Florida. I'll tell them you said, "hi".

DEAN
 Don't bother. Feel better, rot in
 hell, and Happy Holidays, you
 prick!

Dean slowly exits the room. Ronald, head barely up, looks as
 Dean makes his way out, as tears begin to stream down his
 cheeks.

EXT. LOCAL HOSPITAL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Dean walks to his chauffeured car, when he encounters Max.

DEAN
 What are you doing here?

MARTIN
 I came to see Ronald. How is he?

DEAN
 Frankly, I have no concern.

MARTIN
 What in the hell were you thinking?
 You could have killed Ronald.

DEAN
 Should have while I had the chance.

MAX
 What is wrong with you? What has
 gotten into you?

DEAN
 In due time, my dear Max.

MARTIN
 But Grandpa, I had some major news.

Dean turns to Max.

DEAN
 If it's about that girl, you can
 forget it!
 (beat)
 She is beneath this family's
 lineage and standards.

MAX
 But Grandpa....

DEAN
 (sternly intervenes)
 End of discussion. You marry her,
 consider your job and inheritance
 terminated.

Dean enters his car, as the backseat door closes behind him,
 as the car pulls OUT OF VIEW.

A visibly disappointed Max looks on in silence.

INT MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - CONFERENCE
 ROOM - NIGHT

Allan and Natalie enter the company Christmas party. They
 take in the surroundings.

NATALIE
 (sotto voce; looks around
 in awe)
 My goodness, our Christmas party
 wasn't even half the size of this
 one!

ALLAN
 (sotto voce)
 Always a good time.

Allan looks around and suddenly spots someone.

WAYNE

Stands in a far away corner, idly chatting with a colleague.

Allan poises himself, as he turns to Natalie.

ALLAN
 Nat, I'll be right back. Enjoy some
 food.

Allan quickly kisses Natalie, as he makes his way over to
 Wayne.

WAYNE
 (notices and hugs Allan)
 Allan, there you are. Thought you
 were going to be the Grinch and not
 show.

ALLAN
 Sorry, Grandpa. Had a few things to
 take care of. We certainly outdid
 ourselves this holiday.

WAYNE

You can say that again. Did you try the prawns from Nova Scotia?

ALLAN

Wow. I'm definitely going to have some...

Allan is about to depart, but not until Wayne grabs his arm.

WAYNE

(intercedes)

Allan, why don't we make our speeches first?

ALLAN

Alright. Lead the way.

Wayne and Allan make their way to the dais.

Everyone at the party continue to celebrate and converse.

Wayne takes a fork and gently taps it against a glass, as it makes a CLICKING NOISE.

EVERYONE falls SILENT, as Wayne begins..

WAYNE

(speaks into microphone)

Good evening, everyone. I would like to thank you all for your attendance here tonight, and for all of your hard work and efforts throughout the entire year.

(beat)

I look forward to ringing in the New Year and may you all enjoy tonight and your holiday and now, I introduce my grandson, Allan.

Wayne sits down, as EVERYONE APPLAUDS.

Allan rises from his seat and makes his way to the podium.

ALLAN

Thank you for the intro, Grandpa, and for stealing my speech.

EVERYONE LAUGHS.

ALLAN

Don't know how I am going to follow that one. But I'll try.

(MORE)

ALLAN (cont'd)

(beat)

Good evening, everyone. Thank you so much for being here tonight. After careful research, I am pleased to report that our yearly and fourth quarter profits have increased significantly. And that is a direct result of the daily efforts of all of you here tonight.

EVERYONE APPLAUDS, as Allan continues.

ALLAN

On a more personal note, I have some very joyous news to report. I am pleased to inform you that I am engaged.

EVERYONE APPLAUDS

DEAN

Sits in his chair, astonished but composed.

ALLAN

I feel like the luckiest man on earth. Natalie, can you please stand up?

Natalie waves and smiles to the crowd, as APPLAUSE ensues.

Dean quickly intervenes.

DEAN

(speaks into microphone)
Uh, as you all may know, my grandson is simply kidding around.
(turns to Allan; stern)
Right, Allan?

Allan looks soberly at Dean, who in turn remains silent.

DEAN

Surely this must be a farce. There is no way you can wed. Not at this time.

ALLAN

Grandpa, I am serious. I'm getting married.

DEAN

Like hell you will. Your parents will not approve, and neither do I.

ALLAN
Grandpa, don't embarrass me or ruin
this moment for me!

DEAN
(cross)
You are embarrassing me, yourself,
and the entire company. Enough!

An awkward and uncomfortable silence follows, as everyone
looks on.

Allan looks sternly at Dean, as he turns to everyone.

ALLAN
(calm)
I can't begin to offer my apologies
to everyone here for my actions and
words tonight.
(beat)
Yet, I feel what's most important
in life is the truth. And the truth
has been covered up for far too
long.

A brief silence follows, as Allan composes himself and looks
directly at the audience.

ALLAN
Like the recent incident of how no
one of color can hold an executive
position in this company!
(looks at audience)
Aug, I am so very sorry for this
injustice. Please know it was my
grandpa's decision and not mine.

AUGUST

In the audience, looks stoically at Allan and nods his head.

ALLAN
(turns to Dean)
You may be rich in substance, but
you are the poorest man in soul I
have ever seen.
(one full beat)
I quit.

Allan slowly makes his way off the podium, as EVERYONE
COLLECTIVELY GASPS.

DEAN

Remains silent, seated, and composed.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

SCENE XIII

FADE IN:

INT MAX'S CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

FRONT DOOR

Begins to open, as Max appears INTO VIEW. He closes the door behind him.

CANDY

Sits silent, glass of whiskey in hand, as she looks soberly at Max. Max slowly approaches.

MAX

Sorry for the wait. Holiday traffic is brutal.

CANDY

How's your friend?

MAX

He's fine. Mainly resting.

CANDY

Why don't you sit down with me?

MAX

Okay.

Max settles in next to Candy. A brief silence ensues, as Candy speaks up.

CANDY

How's your grandpa?

MAX

He was at the hospital. Probably worried like everyone else.

CANDY

No. I mean, how is he about us?

Max does not respond, as Candy rapidly retorts.

CANDY

So?

Max looks squarely at Candy.

MARTIN

He doesn't want us together. If I marry you, he'll take away my job, inheritance, everything.

CANDY

So what do you choose?

Max looks at Candy.

MAX

(voice wavering)

This is the hardest decision I've ever had to make. You have changed my life and perspective like no one before or since.

(beat)

However, with change comes unpredictability. How I grew up, you never invest in a volatile market. I have a future to consider, and can't risk losing it all on utter infatuation.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Candy.

Candy remains still, as droplets start to form in her eyes, as he gulps down her drink and quickly rises.

CANDY

(emotional)

You son of a bitch. You fuckin green bloods are all the same. It's all about the bottom line.

(beat)

We've had some of the best time I've ever had, I helped you and the company, and now you're severing ties.

Candy tosses her GLASS against the wall, as it SHATTERS to pieces.

Max, slightly startled, remains seated..

Candy departs OUT OF VIEW, as she grabs her suitcase, and starts to gather her belongings. Candy then re-appears, suitcase in hand, as she heads to the door.

MAX
(rises from his seat)
Candy, wait...

CANDY
(angrily intervenes)
Sit the fuck down, Max. I told you
I'm leaving!

MAX
Where will you go?

CANDY
I've got an aunt in Arlington
Heights. She always said I have a
room if I need it. I'll bring some
gifts too.
(beat)
I'm goin' straight to the bank
tomorrow to claim all of my
earnings. It better all be there.
Don't bother looking me up. I'm
changing my cell, address, e-mail,
everything. Think I have enough
cash to start over.

MAX
Good for you.

CANDY
Fair enough. You use me, I use you.

MAX
I guess this is goodbye.

CANDY
You know, we could sue each other
for breach of contract.
(takes out and looks at
contract; rips it up)
Come to think of it, that would
make me just like you.
(beat)
Have a nice life counting your bank
vault. Because you'll always be as
empty as a robbed one.

Candy makes her way to the DOOR, opens it, and SLAMS it on her way out.

Max remains on the sofa, as he ruminates, then starts to cry.

INT ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

FRONT DOOR

Lies still, when it UNLOCKS, as Allan and Natalie appear, as the DOOR SLAMS behind them.

NATALIE

(incensed)

Okay, can you please explain to me what the hell you just did back there?!

ALLAN

Took a stand. For the first time in my life, I took a stand!

NATALIE

At what cost, Allan? Do you realize how pissed your grandpa must be?

ALLAN

To be honest, I couldn't give a squirt of piss!

(beat)

One of the best holidays I've ever had.

NATALIE

Allan, you need your job. How do you expect to live?

ALLAN

Nat, I know you're thinking about that right now, but you're not seeing the whole picture, here.

NATALIE

The only picture I see is you out on the street, sleeping near Lake Michigan.

ALLAN

Ain't gonna happen, ain't gonna happen, ain't gonna happen...

(beat)

(MORE)

ALLAN (cont'd)
I've got a trust fund that's been
building since the day I was born,
and we're gonna live off that.
Starting tonight.

Allan leans in and kisses Natalie, who kisses and then pushes
him away.

NATALIE
Allan, you're not being realistic.
We can't just sit around and live
off your savings. It isn't right.
What would my parents think?

ALLAN
Your parents don't have to
anything. I can take care of them
too.
(beat)
They'll love it. I'm rich and an
independent thinker.

NATALIE
All the more reason you'll fail. My
parents are too proud to take
handouts. I'm their only child.
They protect me like Fort Knox.

ALLAN
We can make this work. Trust me,
Natalie.

A moment of silence ensues, as Natalie looks at Allan.

ALLAN
So?

NATALIE
(a little emotional)
I'm sorry, Allan, but the future is
now and I have to consider yours...
and mine.
(one full beat)
I want you to ask for your job
back, or it's over.

ALLAN
Are you shittin' me?

NATALIE
No Allan, I am not shitting you.

ALLAN
 Wonder if you put up this kind of a
 fight with old Maxie?

NATALIE
 (soft)
 Al, please do not talk about...

ALLAN
 (intervenes)
 Oh, you must've gave him lots of
 good lays, hand jobs, maybe 69'd
 him for that purse of yours!

NATALIE
 (yells and slaps Allan's
 face)
 That is enough!!

Allan is taken aback by the SLAP, as he then retaliates by
 SLAPPING Natalie back.

Natalie, also taken aback, then proceeds to look at Allan.

NATALIE
 Well, I'm guessing I truly made a
 mistake by being with you.
 (beat)
 Now it's my turn to make a major
 life decision. Goodbye, Allan.

Natalie grabs her purse and makes her way to the DOOR, as it
 CLOSES behind her.

Allan looks on, silent and subdued.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XIV

FADE IN:

EXT. LOCAL CEMETERY - SNOWING LIGHTLY - AFTERNOON

It is two days before Christmas, as several pay their
 respects to Ronald, as they include Dean and Max.

PRIEST (O.S.)
 (speaking eulogy)
 One can only hope to live a life as
 rich and fulfilling as Ronald
 lived. May he rest in God's loving
 and eternal kingdom.

Ronald's casket is lowered into the ground, as everyone looks on somberly.

Dean carefully watches, as his attention is soon diverted.

WAYNE'S POV

TALL DARK FIGURE

Wearing sunglasses, stand and watches from afar, behind a tree. It is Wayne.

BACK TO SCENE

Dean continues to look suspiciously at the man, but continues to pay his respects to Ronald.

EXT. LOCAL CEMETERY - FAR END - LIGHTLY SNOWING - DAY

Wayne quietly walks, trying to make his way out of the cemetery.

He is almost there, when he encounters a stolid Dean.

A moment of silence ensues, as Wayne breaks the ice.

WAYNE

(stern)

Excuse me.

DEAN

I don't believe you were invited.

WAYNE

Just here to pay my respects to an esteemed friend.

DEAN

Thought you were going to get some more information.

WAYNE

I assure you my visit is strictly personal.

DEAN

Don't think I was born yesterday.

WAYNE

Dean, I assure you that I knew Ron personally...

DEAN

(sternly intervenes)

And you knew him quite well professionally. I found out about your secret methods, Wayne.

(one full beat)

And I intend to expose you and your firm. No questions asked, no prisoners taken, just our companies, one on one, and I will bury you. Do you understand? Bury you! Hope you have a plot ready.

WAYNE

Hope you do to.

Wayne calmly walks toward his waiting limo, as his chauffeur awaits. The chauffeur opens the door, as Wayne is about to enter, but not before turning and glancing at Dean.

DEAN

Stands composed and stolid, as he glares back.

The limo pulls and drives away OUT OF VIEW, as Dean remains standing.

MONTAGE - CHRISTMAS

The Kellers and the relatives are seated at their antique table i their grand dining room.

Max sits silent and subdued, as he eats his holiday dinner. His eyes meet with Dean. They lock eyes and quickly turn away.

Allan sits pensively by a grand and fully-lit Christmas tree, and raging fireplace, as he looks at the engagement ring he gave to Natalie. He watches it, as he starts to gently cry.

Wayne, a glass of scotch in hand, watches the snow fall from the window of his lush bedroom.

Dean sits cozily but weary at the fireplace in his den, as he reads over the documents between Ronald and McLoughlin. Dean carefully rises from his chair, as he heads over to the fireplace. Dean takes the papers and proceeds to toss them into the blazing hearth. Dean's eyes watch the papers burn, as the seering embers are reflective in his eyes.

END MONTAGE

EXT. LOCAL STREET CORNER - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - ESTABLISHING
SHOT - EARLY EVENING

Allan ruminates and ambles around the Chicago streets alone,
as heads to his penthouse.

CUT TO:

INT ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - CORRIDOR - EARLY EVENING

Allan finally arrives home, as he obtains his keys and goes
to open the door. A figure suddenly comes INTO VIEW, as Allan
quickly reacts.

ALLAN
(startled)
Holy crap!

Allan turns around and sees August, standing idly at his
door.

AUGUST
What's up, Al?

Allan looks wearily at August and does not respond.

AUGUST
So, that's how it is?

Allan does not respond, as he unlocks the door and enters. He
goes to close the door behind him, when August intervenes.

AUGUST
Aren't you gonna let me in?

ALLAN
Aug, I don't mean to be rude, but I
don't feel like seeing... or
talking to anyone.

AUGUST
I just want a few minutes of your
time.

ALLAN
How about after the New Year?

AUGUST
Al, stop being like this. Can I
please come in?

Allan hesitates for a moment, then finally relents. August
enters, as he closes the door behind him.

ALLAN
Want something to drink?

AUGUST
No, thanks. How've you been?

ALLAN
Okay, I guess. What do you care?

August takes a seat on the living room sofa.

AUGUST
Why wouldn't I care? You're my best friend. What's been up with you lately?

ALLAN
(yells crossly)
Maybe I don't feel like talking about it!

AUGUST
(yells in response)
Well I do!!

Allan, taken aback by August, remains silent.

AUGUST
You had the balls to stick up for me and the injustice you saw!
(beat)
You quit your job for me. I can never truly repay you for that.

A moment of silence follows, as Allan arrives at an epiphany.

ALLAN
(calm)
Yes, there is.

AUGUST
What is it?

Allan hesitates, as he has a pensive moment, as he then arrives at clarity.

AUGUST
Al, what is it? Name it.

ALLAN
Why didn't I think of it earlier?

AUGUST
Allie, what is it?

ALLAN
(excited)
Aug, get some coffee, cause we're
gonna be here all night!

INT KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - MAX'S OFFICE

Max is at his desk, carefully reviewing some paper work.
There is a KNOCK at the DOOR. Max looks up from his work.

MAX
Come in.

The office door opens, as Dean appears. Max remains seated
and silent.

DEAN
Good morning, Max.

Max silently nods, as a faint smile fissures from his lips.

DEAN
Max, I'd like to think that I don't
ask for too much in life.
(beat)
But something I will always want
and need is the love, respect, and
trust of my grandson.

Max looks solemnly at Dean, as he smiles.

DEAN
You are my blood, the life of this
company, and heir to this empire.
Nothing can or will change that.

Dean walks over to Max and extends his hand. Max remains
seated and stares somberly at Dean. Dean awaits Max's
reaction.

Max slowly rises from his desk, and shakes Dean's hand. Dean
then grabs Max and embraces him in a tight hug.

MAX

Shows weariness as he hugs Dean.

Dean releases, as he looks elated at Max.

DEAN

(excited)

We are going to close out the year
on the right note!

Dean pinches Max's cheek.

DEAN

We're spending New Year's at the
Northbrook estate. Clear your
schedule, cause everyone will be
there.

Dean gleefully exits, Max's office, as Max remains, standing
silently.

INT ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Allan, August, and Frank sit on the living room sofa,
placards, design boards, and laptop, as they are unleashing
their master plan.

ALLAN

This has been a week I wanna
forget. And it's all due to one
fuckin prick... Max Keller.

(beat)

He was my rival in college, my
enemy in business, and ruined my
engagement. I wanna put him
out...now.

AUGUST

Al, we can't murder Max. There will
be a full-on investigation.

FRANK

Yeah. I've got a wife and kids,
Allie. There's no way. There's no
way I'll sleep at night.

ALLAN

(objective)

No, no, no. We are NOT going to
kill anyone.

(beat)

We're going to hit Maxie where it
hurts most... his wallet.

(present and unravels map)

This, my good men, is a blueprint
to the Keler and Associates
building. All floors, rooms, and
exits.

AUGUST

Okay, so what are we going to do?

FRANK

Yeah, are we gonna vandalize, break some skulls, what?

ALLAN

None of that. We're gonna burn this fucker to the ground!!

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

A tall, dark figure stands underneath a lamp post, slowly puffing on a cigarette. It is WILLIE "THE WHIP" BOIARDO.

Another figure emerges INTO VIEW, as Max emerges from the darkness.

WILLIE

(exhales smoke)

Can I help you?

MARTIN

You can sure as hell try.

WILLIE

Whatcha lookin for?

MAX

Revenge.

INT. ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Allan, August, and Frank continue to discuss the plan.

AUGUST

(worried)

Allan, I don't like the sound of this. We're going to set a building on fire with people inside!

ALLAN

No, Aug. We're not gong to kill anyone. We are going to raze the building.

(beat)

And here's how we do it...

CUT TO:

INT. GIANCARLO'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT - LATE NIGHT

Willie escorts Max through Giancarlo's, as they arrive at a corner table.

Seated at the table is a head mafia capo, LOUIE "THE LEECH" LODIGIANI. Louie is surrounded by some of his entourage, and a few voluptuous sirens. He calmly puffs on a cigar, as a Waiter brings him a plate of antipasto.

LOUIE
Grazie, Antonio.

The Waiter exits OUT OF VIEW, as Willie and Max approach Louie's booth.

LOUIE
Willie, can't believe you snagged a client this late. Haven't lost your touch.

WILLIE
Thank you. I try.

LOUIE
(gives Max the once over)
And who do we have here?

MAX
(extends his hand)
Please to meet you, Sir.

LOUIE
(dryly laughs)
Sir. Sir? Marone, I feel like I'm in an elder's home, for Chrissakes.
(extends his hand)
The name's Louie "The Leech". This is my home away from home. It's out of the way, the food's great, and I know everyone who enters and leaves.

MAX
(shakes Louie's hand)
Pleased to meet you, Louie. Max Keller.

LOUIE
Keller? Keller? That name sounds familiar. What do you do, kid?

MAX
I'm in business.

LOUIE
It's ringing a bell. Ain't that a building downtown?

MARTIN
Yes, on Sixth Avenue.

LOUIE
Let's just say I knew your great-grandfather.
(offers plate)
Would you like some antipasto? A drink? Espresso? Demitasse?

MAX
No, thank you.

LOUIE
If I may ask, what brings you here?

MAX
(stern)
I'm out for revenge.

LOUIE
(taken aback)
Okay, okay. You're a live one. What are we talkin' about?

MAX
A proposition.

LOUIE
Okay.

MAX
I was hoping we could discuss it in private?

Louie nods in comprehension, and looks over at his crew and ladies.

LOUIE
Alright, everyone. You heard the man. Vamoose.

Everyone rises from the table and departs OUT OF VIEW.

LOUIE
Please, have a seat.

Max carefully makes his way over and sits next to Louie.

LOUIE
So, Maxie. Can I call you Maxie?

MAX
Of course.

LOUIE
Maxie, what exactly is it that you want from me?

MARTIN
I want you to do a job for me.

LOUIE
Against a fellow member? I mean, I just met you, and already you want somebody whacked....

MAX
(softly interrupts)
I'm sorry, but I didn't make myself clear. I want revenge on someone, or rather something.
(beat)
And I would like your help.

LOUIE
Okay. You don't seem like the kind who would do something, I mean...

MAX
(intervenes)
I don't think you understand. I want my pound of flesh.

LOUIE
What kind of job we talkin' about?

MAX
An inside job.

LOUIE
Are we taking anyone out?

MAX
No. We're blowin up a building.

LOUIE
Sounds pretty major. Which one?

MAX
McLoughlin Trading and Financial.

LOUIE
How do you plan the demolition?

MAX
That's where you come in

LOUIE
This sounds like a grand bragirole.
I expect to be fairly compensated.

Max pulls out a briefcase and opens it, as it reveals wads of cash.

MARTIN
That's where I come in.
(beat)
A cool million in cash. No
questions asked. No prisoners
taken. Cut and dry.

LOUIE
When are we doing this?

MAX
New Year's Day. As early as poss...

CUT TO:

INT ALLAN'S PENTHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

CLOSE UP - ALLAN'S MOUTH

ALLAN
Day. As early as possible.

AUGUST
What about security? Maintenance?

ALLAN
Gonna be a skeleton crew. Barely a
soul in the building.

AUGUST
How are we doing this?

ALLAN
Figuring we just gas the place.
Light a match... and the rest is
history.

AUGUST

How can we access the building?

ALLAN

Did some research. They do a maintenance check and clearance early in the morning. We'll slip into one of the bins outside.

FRANK

(upset)

Going into a dumpster? C'mon, Allie. There's gotta be a better way.

ALLAN

Frankie, it's the only way we can access the place without being seen.

AUGUST

What about the goods? How are we getting everything inside?

ALLAN

I've hired some illegals to bring them over in an unmarked van. We're going to disable security cameras. All equipment will be covered.

AUGUST

How will we shut down security?

ALLAN

Aug, believe me when I tell you that every detail has been considered and accounted for.

(beat)

Now I need you both to listen to me, loud and clear. Enjoy your New Year's, but know we've got a job to do.

INT GIANCARLO'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT - CORNER BOOTH - LATE NIGHT

LOUIE

Job is now confirmed. New Year's Day. Just before the clock strikes twelve.

(MORE)

LOUIE (cont'd)
 You'll be working with Gino and his
 crew. The best in the business.

MARTIN
 So, it's settled.

LOUIE
 (raises his glass)
 A toast. To a bright New Year.

MAX
 (raises his glass)
 And ultimate payback.

Louie and Max CLICK their GLASSES in unison.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XV

FADE IN:

INT. LOCAL MANSION - FOYER - NEW YEAR'S EVE - NIGHT

CLOSEUP - CHANDELIER

Luminesces overhead.

Throngs of elated party-goers drink, dance, mingle, and enjoy
 the evening, as they await the New Year's arrival.

August, beverage in hand, stands relaxed but vigilant in a
 far corner, surveying the gala scene. A SOUND BEEPING
 EMERGES, as August digs into his pocket, removes his cell
 phone, and looks at it.

CLOSEUP - CELL PHONE SCREEN

Displays a text message, which reads, "WHERE ARE YOU?"

August starts to type a reply text on his cell phone.

Moments later, Frank appears INTO VIEW, as he shakes August's
 hand.

FRANK
 Happy New Year, Auggie.

AUGUST
 Happy New Year, Frankie. You ready
 to do this?

FRANK

Yeah. But I'm gettin' antsy. All this booze and hot girls are tempting me.

AUGUST

Keep it in your cup AND pants, Frank. We've got business to take care of. Would just like to know where Al...

Before August can finish, Allan appears INTO VIEW.

AUGUST

(dryly)
Well, speak of the devil.

ALLAN

My ears were itchin'.

FRANK

May I suggest that we do this some other time, based on the copious amounts of booze and bodacious babes before us?

ALLAN

Sorry Frankie, but duty AND revenge beckons. You ready, fellas?

EXT. ABANDONED ALLEYWAY - LATE NIGHT

A vigilant but nervous Max stands waiting in the alley. A SQUEAK-LIKE NOISE EMERGES. Max looks down.

MAX'S POV

RAT

Rests itself on Max's shoe.

BACK TO SCENE

A startled Max quickly shoos away the rat with his foot.

MAX

(slightly alarmed; in a
whisper)
Where the hell are they?

Seconds later, a dark van, marked Adagio Brothers Bakery, pulls up INTO VIEW.

Max stands patiently, as the side door of the van slowly opens. A man appears. It is VITO MONTELEONE, a member of the crew. He approaches Max.

VITO
Good evening... or should I say
good morning? You Max?

Max remains still.

VITO
Not to worry, kid. I don't
bite...maybe shoot or stab.

Another figure emerges from the van, as he stands next to Vito. It is GINO, head of the mob crew.

GINO
Max Keller, I presume?

MAX
You presumed correctly.

GINO
(extends his hand)
Gino. I believe we have a job to
do.

Max nods.

GINO
Shall we get started?

EXT. OPEN ROAD - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

A dark van travels down a side road.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK VAN - FRONT SEAT - NIGHT

Allan and August are seated in the front seat, as they discuss strategy.

ALLAN
Found out this path from a friend
at Parks and Rec. We'll be there in
about ten minutes.

AUGUST
Do we have everything?

ALLAN
Frankie, how's it look back there?

Frank emerges from the back of the van.

FRANK
So far, so good. How about the barrels?

ALLAN
They should be in the basement. We'll check when we arrive.

AUGUST
Still don't have a good feeling about this.

ALLAN
C'mon, where's your New Year's spirit?

The car continues on its drive toward Keller and Associates.

INT. ADAGIO BAKERY VAN - BACKSEAT - NIGHT

Max sits pensively in the back of the van, as Gino and his crew discuss strategy.

GINO
So, we arrive at the gate and take it from there. Okay, Max?

Max stares inattentive, as Gino calls him to attention.

GINO (O.S.)
Max!

Max re-directs his focus.

GINO
You okay? Listen man, the time is almost near. You gotta be with us on this one.

MAX
Okay.

GINO
So, we have to penetrate the entrance in both the front and back. Then we go to work. Capeche?

The rest of the Gino's crew nods in agreement.

VITO
 (presents pastry to Max)
 Canoli? Napoleon? We try our best
 at keeping up appearances.

EXT. ABANDONED ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The dark van pulls up INTO VIEW and arrives at a stop. The head lights turn of, as the side doors open. The guys exit and close the door behind them.

ALLAN
 Okay, time to rock'n roll, fellas.

The guys pull ski masks over their faces, and depart towards the Keller building.

INT KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

A SECURITY GUARD sits behind a desk, as he plays computer solitaire.

The guys enter the building through the front, after Allan scans his card.

The Security Guard rises from desk.

KELLER SECURITY GUARD
 Hey, wait right there!

The guys halt, as the Security Guard pulls out his gun.

KELLER SECURITY GUARD
 (aims his gun)
 Hands up in the air, where I can
 see them.

The guys oblige and remain still.

KELLER SECURITY GUARD
 Who are you and why are you here?

A brief silence ensues, as Allan begins to speak.

ALLAN
 Well, you'd have to speak to our
 leader, who's right behind you.

The Security Guard turns around to look, and is immediately met with an array of electric bolts, as they shock and knock him out cold.

The Security Guard remains on the ground, as Allan, taser in hand, looms over him.

ALLAN
(looks admiringly at
taser)
Works every time.

Allan bends down and checks the Guard's vital signs.

ALLAN
He's alive. Just out cold. Aug, tie
him up and put him near the desk.
(takes gun)
I'll hold on to his gun.
(beat)
We're gonna start to shut down the
security cameras and sprinkler
system. Frankie, make sure the
entrance doors are locked and start
to bring up the goods.

Allan proceeds over to the Security desk, where he proceeds to shut down the cameras and alarms.

ALLAN
(touches switches and
buttons)
Just a little flick, and....we're
good. Security cameras are down.
Alarms are now shut down. How's it
going there, Aug.

AUGUST
(ties up Security Guard)
I've got his hands bound, just have
to do his feet.

ALLAN
Take one of his socks and put it in
his mouth.

AUGUST
(incredulous)
What?

ALLAN
Just do it, Auggie. We don't want
that pig squealing.

AUGUST
Fine.

Allan takes one final view of the security system, before monitoring to August.

ALLAN
Security's all down. Let's do the
sprinkler and then meet with Frank.

As they leave, August notices Allan's taser.

AUGUST
Where'd you get that thing?

ALLAN
Got it as a birthday gift last
year. Potent little fucker, ain't
it?

EXT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - PARKING LOT -
NIGHT

A LOT SECURITY GUARD sits in his booth, carefully perusing a
dirty magazine, when he notices something.

VAN

Slowly pulls up INTO VIEW

The Security Guard frantically puts away the magazine, and
prepares to perform his duty.

LOT SECURITY GUARD
Stop right there. The building is
currently closed. May I see some
id?

A front seat window rolls down, as Gino sticks his head out.

GINO
(genial)
Evening, Officer. We're here to
deliver some goods. As per our
truck.

LOT SECURITY GUARD
(checks his itinerary)
Sorry, but I don't see your name
listed here. Any...

Before the Security Guard can continue, he is hit in the neck
with a tranquilizer dart. He quickly succumbs to the ground,
as the van's side door opens, and the rest of Gino's crew
exits.

GINO
Pick him and tie him up, fellas.
We'll deliver him later.

MAX
(concerned)
Is he alright?

GINO
He'll be fine. Just taking a nice
New Year's siesta.
(beat)
Make sure you check for other
guards. They could've seen us on
camera.
(beat)
Carmine, you and Lucio go through
the front.
(beat)
Derek and Jimmy, you bring the
equipment through the back. Don't
go until we give you the signal
(beat)
Maxie, you come with JoJo and I.
Capeche everyone? Let's do this.

The crew starts to disperse, as they get to work.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Allan and August carefully wander through the dreary
basement, as Allan discovers something.

ALLAN
(exclaims)
Found it.

Allan carefully reviews the main water and sprinkler system.

ALLAN
Crowbar, please.

Allan carefully attempts to pry open the box containing the
sprinkler system's control panel.

ALLAN
(levers)
Come on you sonuva...

The BOX BREAKS OPEN, as Allan throws down the crowbar and
starts to shut down.

ALLAN
 (presses button)
 Eureka. Okay, we'll adjust, and
 then we will have them all....

CONTROL PANEL DISPLAY

Reads, "SPRINKLER SYSTEM NOW DISCONNECTED"

ALLAN
 Splendid.
 (turns to August)
 Let's get started, shall we?

Allan and August proceed to exit. As Allan approaches, a HAND appears INTO VIEW and touches Allan.

ALLAN
 (startled)
 Oh, fuck!!

Frank appears from out of the darkness, as Allan comes close to tasing him.

FRANK
 (alarmed)
 Whoa, Allie. Take it easy. It's
 just me!

ALLAN
 Frankie, you scared the crap outta
 me. I almost tased you!

FRANK
 Just wanted to see if you needed
 help.

ALLAN
 No. Let's go!

The guys exit the basement to start on the job.

EXT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - BACK DOOR -
 NIGHT

Some members of Gino's crew have crates on dollies, as they await to enter the building. The door opens, as Gino appears.

GINO
 Is that all of it?

LUCIO
 No. We have a few more in the van.

GINO
Bring 'em in ASAP.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - LOBBY -
NIGHT

Max carefully walks into the lobby, where he notices CARMINE, as member of the crew and Gino's son, at the Security Desk. A Security Guard lies unconscious on the floor, dart in neck. Suddenly, a VOICE EMERGES.

GINO (O.S.)
Ain't he something?

Max turns around to see Gino, also watching.

GINO
He's a computer whiz. He'll hack into those systems in seconds flat. He also did his first hit when he was sixteen.

Carmine turns to his dad, and gives him a thumbs-up and smile.

GINO
Love ya, pal.

CARMINE
Systems are now down.

The whole crew gathers around and talks strategy.

GINO
(pulls out a map)
Okay, here's the plan. We start from the top and work our way down. We take two men per floor. Lou, you got the goods?

LUCIO
(opens crate)
My friends, we'll be starting off the New Year with a bang.

The crates open, to reveal tons of dynamite.

GINO
Looks like the Fourth of July is coming early this year.
(beat)
Let's roll.

INT KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - NIGHT

BARRELS OF GASOLINE

All lined up

Allan, August, and Frank are set to go to work.

ALLAN

Gasoline, boys. Enough to set this entire shit hole ablaze. We'll go to each floor. Auggie and I will take one floor. Frank, you'll be okay by yourself?

FRANK

Shouldn't be a problem.

ALLAN

Once we finish dousing each floor, we start a fire and proceed to the next floor. Once we're done, we move out and let the fire roar. Comprende? Let's do this, boys.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Gino and Max diligently place dynamite all throughout the hallways and offices. They start to finish up. Gino guides Max over to a device in the middle of the hallway.

GINO

(displays device)

Get a gander at this, Maxie. An individual detonator. We're placing one on each floor. We have them programmed to go off the second they come in contact with heat.

(beat)

Once everything's set, Carm will set them off from his laptop. Full-proof plan.

MARTIN

I'm lovin' it. Let's keep it up.

Gino and Max continue their work.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - THIRD FLOOR - NIGHT

Allan and August continue dousing gasoline to all the rooms and corridors in the building.

ALLAN

Okay. Just two more floors to go
and then we start to torch.

AUGUST

Okay. How's Frankie?

ALLAN

He's on the top floor, going over
the finishing touches. Lemme call
him.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - TOP STORY - OFFICE -
NIGHT

Frank meticulously check an office, which is covered in
gasoline, when his CELL PHONE RINGS. Frank picks up.

FRANK

(speaks into phone)

Hello? Hey, Allie. Just about
finished up here. Yeah, will start
the second floor and then toss the
cocktails. Over and out...

Frank closes his cell phone and is about to exit, when his
foot gets caught in an electrical wire. He angrily pulls the
wire with his foot and departs.

CLOSEUP - ELECTRICAL WALL OUTLET

With wire still inserted, as the wire disengages itself from
the outlet.

A small spark flickers and quickly catches on to the gasoline-
soaked wall, as a fire begins to emerge.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - CORRIDOR -
LATE NIGHT

Lucio carefully checks on one of the floors, as he stands,
removes a cigarette from his shirt pocket, and puts it to his
lips.

LUCIO

Bout time I had one.

Lucio pulls out a zeppo lighter, lights his cigarette, and is
about to puff away, when his CELL PHONE RINGS. He picks up.

LUCIO
 (speaks into cell phone)
 Hello. Yeah, Gino. Checked all the
 floors up here. We're all set.
 (looks at cigarette)
 Nope. Ain't smokin' at all. Yeah,
 I'll meet ya on two. Bye.

Lucio hangs up his cell phone ,and he takes a quick drag of
 his cigarette, and tosses it and departs.

CIGARETTE - SLOW MOTION

Flies through the air and lands directly near the detonator.

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - NIGHT

Allan and August are checking the second to top floor, as
 they make small talk.

ALLAN
 Looks like everything is all set.
 Are the cocktails ready?

AUGUST
 (positions Malatov
 cocktail)
 Affirmative.

ALLAN
 Splendid. Now all we do is contact
 Frankie and...

Before Allan can finish, he starts to sniff around.

ALLAN
 What the hell is that smell?
 (turns to August)
 Aug, you smell that?

AUGUST
 (sniffs)
 Yeah. It smells like... smoke!

Allan and August turn around.

GUYS' POV

CORRIDOR AND ADJOINING ROOMS

All ablaze as the flames and smoke make their way towards the
 guys.

BACK TO SCENE

Allan and August are startled.

ALLAN
(nervous)
Auggie, what the hell is going on?!

AUGUST
(nervous)
I don't know, Al, but we better
bounce!

Allan and August make their way toward the elevator.

AUGUST
(loudly)
Al, never take an elevator during a
fire!

ALLAN
(loudly)
Do you expect us to go down all
those stairs?!

AUGUST
(loudly)
It's our only hope!

Allan and August quickly depart towards the stairs, narrowly avoiding flames and smoke.

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - 23RD FLOOR -
NIGHT

Gino, Max, and the rest of the crew are placing the finishing touches, as they make small talk.

GINO
(looks around)
Well, fellas, looks like we are all
set to...

Before Gino can finish, a BIG EXPLOSION EMERGES, as the above CEILING COLLAPSES, narrowly missing him.

GINO
(startled)
Whoa! What the fuck's up?!

Before Gino can finish, the detonator from down the corridor goes off, as all the DYNAMITE starts to EXPLODE.

GINO
 (nervous)
 What did you mooks do?!

LUCIO
 (yells)
 I dunno boss! Let's get outta here!

Everyone makes their way to the elevator, Max speaks up.

MAX
 (yells)
 No! Never take an elevator during a
 fire!

GINO
 (yells)
 Then what do we do?

MAX
 (yells)
 Take the emergency staircase! It's
 our only hope! Come on!

Everyone makes their way to the emergency staircase.

MONTAGE - STAIRCASE EXITS

Allan, August, and Frank run for their lives, as they are surrounded by a smoke-filled staircase.

Max and Gino's crew frantically make their way from the very top, as each floor is ablaze and combusting before them.

Allan, August, and Frank continue on their way, as a tuckered Frank hesitates. Allan and August allow Frank a moment, and then prop him up and continue.

Max and the crew continue, as they hesitate, when a DOOR BURSTS off its hinges and SLAMS into the staircase wall. The men circumvent the door and proceed.

Allan, August, and Frank all frantically continue, as Allan loses his footing and falls. August and Frank quickly help him back up and keep moving.

END MONTAGE

INT. MCLOUGHLIN TRADING & FINANCIAL BUILDING - LOBBY -
 NIGHT

An exhausted Max and the crew have finally arrived at the lobby, as they try to make their way out.

GINO
 (out of breath; touches
 emergency exit door)
 This door won't open! What'd we
 do?!

MAX
 (yells; out of breath)
 Go out the front exit. Now!

INT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - FRONT LOBBY - NIGHT

A hobbling Allan, August, and Frank finally arrive at the lobby, as they make quick talk.

AUGUST
 (out of breath; yells)
 Are you okay?

ALLAN
 (out of breath; yells)
 I twisted my ankle! Let's grab the
 guard and go!

EXIT MONTAGE - SLOW MOTION

Max and the crew make their way toward the exit, as flames and debris quickly and closely trail them.

Allan, August, and Frank, Security Guard in tow, head towards the exit, as they are trailed by raging flames and smoke.

The New Year's Eve Ball starts to drop, as the New Year's arriving.

END MONTAGE

NEW YEAR'S REVELERS
 (in unison)
 Five, four, three,two, one...

SPLIT SCREEN - BOTH PARTIES

Make it out of the buildings, just in time, as both EDIFICES
 EXPLODE AND IMplode.

PASTRY VAN

Containing Max and the crew, speeds away down a barren back street.

BLACK VAN

Roams through a back alley way onto a street corner away from harm.

SPLIT SCREEN - ALLAN & MAX

Watch their rival's building razed from the back seat of their vans.

ALLAN & MAX
(in unison)
I finally got you, you sonuvabitch.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XVII

FADE IN:

INT. MCLOUGHLIN ESTATE - LIVING QUARTERS - MIDNIGHT

Wayne, nursing a glass of scotch, rests serenely in his chair and listens to the radio, as Auld Lang Syne plays. Suddenly, there is an interruption.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin. The McLoughlin Building in downtown Chicago has been unexpectedly demolished...

While listening, Wayne's eyes go wide.

INT. KELLER MANOR - STUDY - MIDNIGHT

Dean pensively watches the scenery from his massive study window, cocktail in hand.

DEAN'S POV

ILLINOIS SKYLINE

Lies still, as it remains lit from the New Year festivities. A cloud of smoke emerges over one of section of the city.

BACK TO SCENE

Dean curiously fixes his gaze on smoke cloud. Suddenly, a PHONE RINGS. Dean calmly walks over and picks up.

DEAN
 (speaks into phone)
 Hello? Yes, speaking.

Dean listens to the other end of the phone, as his eyes widen.

DEAN
 Was anyone hurt or killed? Yes,
 I'll be there. Immediately. Get the
 limo.

Dean hangs up the phone, as he momentarily gathers himself, then angrily tosses his drink in the raging fireplace.

CLOSEUP - DEAN'S FACE

Looks lividly in the flaming embers.

EXT. LOCAL ROAD - ESTABLISHING SHOT - LATE NIGHT

The pastry van drive down the road.

CUT TO:

INT. PASTRY VAN - BACK SEAT - LATE NIGHT

The crew and Max, covered in soot, sit soberly, as they try to process what just happened.

GINO
 I've been a gangster almost all my
 life. I've said and done a lot of
 shit. That, my friends, is the
 scariest thing I've ever been
 through.
 (one full beat)
 Carm, cut down on your speed. Last
 thing we need is to get pulled
 over.

Lucio is checking the Security Guard, when he notices something.

LUCIO
 Yo, Gino...

GINO
 Yeah, Lu?

LUCIO
 You said this cop was shot with the
 dart in the neck?

GINO
Yeah. Why?

LUCIO
Don't look like he got it in the neck.

The crew and Max carefully survey the body, as the puncture wound is near the heart.

GINO
Shit. Looks like we got a stiff.

MAX
A stiff?

GINO
Just a casualty. Comes with the territory.

MAX
Wait. I thought we agreed. No killings.

GINO
Well, these don't always going according to plan.

MAX
I can't have this on my conscience.

GINO
On your conscience? You didn't do the killing, Maxie. Just drop it, okay?

MAX
(bold)
No, I will not drop it! We have to do something!

GINO
And we will. We'll chop him up.

MAX
(incredulous)
Chop him up? Are you insane?

GINO
(cross)
Listen, kid. I dunno who you think you're talkin' to. This is our life. Get used to it. Or get out.

MAX
 (strong)
 Let me out.

Gino and his crew look soberly at Max.

EXT.

LOCAL SUBURBAN STREET CORNER - LATE NIGHT

A dark van rides along the quiet empty suburban street. The van comes to a stop. A body flies out of the van and plops down on the front lawn. The van quickly departs down the street.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - LAKE SIDE - LATE NIGHT

The guys have parked their van by Lake Michigan, as they reflect on their job.

ALLAN
 (screams exultantly)
 Happy New Year!! Woo hoo hoo!

Allan dances tentatively, as August and Frank look on wearily.

ALLAN
 (yells exultantly)
 Finally, we're number one! Top of the heap, baby!

August and Frank look on, clearly not amused.

ALLAN
 (calm)
 You guys, what's the matter? This should be the greatest night of our lives.

August and Frank rise, as they start to speak.

AUGUST
 (angrily)
 Are you shittin' me? Do you realize we almost perished tonight?

FRANK
 I thought we were goners myself.

ALLAN

It don't matter. Fact is we did it... we fuckin did it. It's gonna be easy street!

AUGUST

I knew this was the wrong thing to do. It just doesn't feel right.

FRANK

I'm with Auggie, Al. We're prime suspects.

ALLAN

No way. You two better keep your fuckin traps shut! We're all in this in unison.

A moment of silence follows, as the guys look at each other.

AUGUST

What happened to you?

ALL

I got balls. And now our business is gonna boom. Thanks to us.

August looks disgustedly at Allan.

ALLAN

What is it, Aug? Speak your peace.

AUGUST

I quit. I'll find my own way home.

August starts to walk away, as Frank remains.

FRANK

I need a really stiff drink, Al.
Happy New Year.

Frank walks away, as Allan remains alone. Allan remains silent, as he looks pensively at the Chicago skyline over Lake Michigan.

EXT. MAX'S CONDOMINIUM BUILDING - LATE NIGHT

The pastry van pulls up INTO VIEW and comes to a stop. The side door opens, as Gino and Max exit.

GINO

Well, here we are.

Max remains silent.

GINO
Just remember... you came to us
first.

MAX
And I'm beginning to regret it.

GINO
Well, the job's done, that's all
that counts.

MAX
How do you sleep at night?

GINO
A short memory...and lots of
anisette.
(one full beat)
Do us both a favor and don't go to
the cops or feds. Cause if you
do...
(turns to corpse)
You'll end up like Mr. Guard.
Capeche?

Max nods in silent agreement.

GINO
(doffs his hat)
Happy New Year, Max.

Gino walks towards the van, as the van door closes behind him, as the VAN STARTS UP and drives away OUT OF VIEW. Max stands alone, as he pensively watches the city skyline.

GIANT SMOKE CLOUD

Billows and envelopes the metropolitan night sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NEW YEAR'S MORNING

Local fire and police crews surround the city streets, as they douse the flames and attempt to restore order.

TRAFFIC COP
(yells and motions)
Alright people, let's keep it
movin!

A stretch limousine pulls up and comes to a halt. A chauffeur exits the limo and opens the door, as Wayne steps out and surveys the scene in shock.

WAYNE
(yells angrily)
What in the hell is going on?!

The CHICAGO POLICE CHIEF, CHIEF MYRON JENSEN, approaches Wayne

CHIEF JENSEN
Excuse me, Sir. This is a
restricted area.

WAYNE
Excuse me, I own this building.
Wayne McLoughlin.

CHIEF JENSEN
Well, Mr. McLoughlin, I am going to
need your cooperation. Come with
me.

Wayne accompanies Chief Jensen, as he looks in horror at his former place of business.

WAYNE
(livid)
It's gone. All gone. Everything
I've built and worked for!

A skinny, glassed man, ERNEST BLADEM, approaches Wayne.

ERNEST
(hands Wayne papers)
Mr. McLoughlin, my name is Ernest
Bladem, an agent for the Internal
Revenue Service. We are auditing
you and your company, as unclaimed
tax papers were found in the rubble
of your building. We'll see you in
court.

Ernest walks away, as a unnerved Wayne continues to look in horror, as he is brought to his knees.

WAYNE
(screams)
Fuck!!!

EXT. KELLER & ASSOCIATES BUILDING - STREET CORNER - MORNING

A few blocks down, fire crews work tirelessly to douse out flames and secure the area.

A silver towncar pulls up INTO VIEW and arrives at a halt. A chauffeur steps out of the car and proceeds to open up the back seat door. Dean exits the vehicle and surveys the demolition scene.

Dean stands still, his face expressionless and deadpan. Dean continues to stand, when his legs fall out below him and he hits the ground. The chauffeur quickly comes to his aid and motions for an ambulance, as a crowd starts to gather around the two men.

SEGUE TO:

SUPERIMPOSITION - ONE WEEK LATER

FLAT SCREEN TELEVISION

Sits in electronics store, as it plays the local news, with a male newscaster, BRETT HOLLIDAY, and a female newscaster, MOLLY BEACON.

BRETT

One week after their demise, both McLoughlin and Keller show little to no signs of optimism. It is a still unknown as to who destroyed the buildings, as no evidence was found.

(beat)

On a brighter note, a popular Chicago mob affiliate was discovered and apprehended by police during a late-night raid on Wednesday.

TELEVISION

Shows Louie, Gino, and several crew members being escorted out by police.

BRETT (V.O.)

Louie Lodigiani and his son, Gino, and several members of were arrested and will be tried in court. Charges include murder, racketeering, fraud, and money laundering.

MOLLY

Am so glad to see justice finally served. And now to discuss the McLoughlin and Keller debacle and how it will affect investors and the local economy, we bring in our money man, Steve Gables. Good morning, Steve.

STEVE GABLES begins to report.

STEVE

Good morning, Molly. Unfortunately, there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel for either of these once esteemed institutions.

MONTAGE - EVERYONE NOW

August, in janitor's garb, gently swabs the floor, as he watches the news broadcast on the mounted tv.

Frank, now working in a warehouse, is on break, and watches the news footage from a small tv set in a far corner. He then returns to work.

Allan, unkempt, bearded, and lethargic, sits on the couch in his living room, surrounded by unpaid bills and eviction notices. A light starts to flickers, as the tv and everything FADES TO BLACK.

A door to a tiny apartment, opens, as Max has returned home. He places his bags on a wobbly table in a sparse kitchen. He then opens his refrigerator, which contains nothing but Ramen Noodles and baking soda. He places it down on the table, and stares pensively at it.

END MONTAGE

FLAT SCREEN TELEVISION

Returns to the newscast.

STEVE

In closing, I can say with utmost candor and confidence, that NO ONE has or will benefit from this grandest of financial follies...

CLOSEUP - COMPACT DISC

Entitled, "EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD" by Tears for Fears, becomes inserted into a car's CD player.

WALTER

The former janitor, wearing sunglasses and all new clothes, sits parked in a brand new Cadillac. He pulls out a his tape recorder and presses play.

ALLAN (V.O.)

All we have to do is blow up the Keller Building and our stock will sell high. Anyone who buys low and sells high will be set for life...

Walter stops the tape, removes it, and proceeds to throw it to the ground.

CLOSEUP - BACK TIRE OF CAR

Rolls back and forth, as it CRUSHES the TAPE into oblivion.

Walter pulls out a plane ticket to Bermuda, as he reads the ticket with glee. He STARTS the CAR and begins to drive off, when he takes the first dollar he ever earned and tosses it aside.

EXT. UNDERNEATH LOCAL BRIDGE - MORNING

A lonely and disheveled figure lays quietly on the hard ground under the bridge. The figure unfurls, to reveal Wayne, who is now homeless. Wayne gathers himself, when he notices something.

DOLLAR BILL

Falls and lays idle on the ground.

Wayne bolts over to the dollar bill, picks it up, and looks admiringly at it.

Suddenly, a VOICE EMERGES.

DEAN (O.S.)

(stern)

What do you think you're doing?

Wayne quickly turns around.

DEAN

Now also homeless, stands and stares intensely at Wayne.

WAYNE

Claiming what's rightfully mine.

DEAN
Always the crook and liar.

WAYNE
Pot, meet kettle
(one full beat)
You want it?... Come and get it.

Dean hesitates for a moment, and then concedes.

DEAN
(intense)
With pleasure...

Dean rushes toward Wayne, as the two start to wrestle for the
almighty dollar.

ZOOM OUT - CHICAGO AREA SKYLINE

FADE OUT.

THE END