

The Chosen

By

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FADE IN:

INT. A MENTAL INSTITUTION - NIGHT

A patient, BUCK HARROW, sits alone watching television in a common area. Buck is sedated. He wears a blue hospital gown. He is drooling.

Pictures of the Vietnam War flash on the television screen.

He snaps out of his sedation. He is transfixed by the images.

A NURSE joins him.

NURSE

Mr. Harrow.

(waving her hand in front of him)

Mr. Harrow.

(beat)

Mr. Harrow are you actually watching the television? It's time for your medication.

BUCK

(waving her off)

Shhh!

TELEVISION

By the end of World War Two French efforts to preserve influence in Indochina waned considerably. Vietnam had been considered the jewel of the French empire - A colony that played a vital role against the Axis powers. By 1961 The United States, in attempt to halt the spread of Communism, committed nearly 850 troops, hoping to control an escalating conflict and to remove Ho Chi Minh from power. What resulted is considered the bloodiest thirty-year conflict ever to besiege a once-peaceful country.

NURSE

Mr. Harrow!

BUCK

(concentrating)

Shhhh!

NURSE

(O.S.)

Fine, but after the show is over, you go on and get your medication.

Buck is hypnotized.

CUT TO:

EXT. A HOUSE IN A NEW JERSEY SUBURB, SUMMER - DAY

The house is unoccupied. A "For Sale" sign stands on the front lawn, which is burnt and infertile. The house is run-down and barren.

Day time turns into night and then into day again.

A car pulls up to the house.

Buck and CINDY HARROW and a REAL ESTATE AGENT get out of the car.

AGENT

I've got to hand it to you Mr. Harrow, you really know how to pick 'em. I've been saving this place. It's one of the best bargains I know of. It's the bottom of the line, but if you're looking to turn a property around, this one is definitely a real find. I've been keeping this one a secret. You definitely do know the business.

INT. THE HOUSE

They enter the house and take a tour of it.

The living room is barren, old, and disheveled. The fixtures are worn and cracked. The atmosphere is dusty.

In other rooms the wallpaper is peeling. Paint is chipped and cracking.

AGENT

It's not much. It could certainly use a renovation. It needs some fixing up, but it should make a fine little investment.

BUCK

(looking around)

Not bad.

(to Cindy)

Honey, look. Even a backyard.

CINDY

Not much of one.

(to the Agent)

Who owns this house?

AGENT

Well, right now it's owned by the bank. The last family couldn't pay the bills.

BUCK

It's a foreclosure, honey. It happens to everybody.

AGENT

The bank repossessed when the economy wasn't so hot.

CINDY

When did they repossess?

AGENT

A few years ago.

She goes down a narrow hallway into the bedroom.

CINDY

(sweeping away cobwebs)

How long ago is a few?

AGENT

I don't recollect. It couldn't have been too long ago, though. From what I hear, the last family that moved out couldn't afford it. The bank's looking to get rid of it.

Buck enters another room at the opposite end of the hallway.

BUCK

This would make a good study. And an upstairs for the children.

INT. UPSTAIRS

The upstairs rooms are equally unkempt, dusty, and disheveled.

AGENT

It's for next to nothing.

BUCK

This place is real find for the asking price.

CINDY

Oh, I don't know.

BUCK

You don't know? Honey, we've looked at a dozen properties this week. This is the best one by far.

CINDY

I just think it's a little too rundown.

BUCK

(sighs)

(to the Agent)

Can you give us a minute?

AGENT

Sure. I'll be down in the living room. Why don't you two think it over.

BUCK

Well, I know I've found the right place, but you apparently haven't.

CINDY

Sweetie, this place is a dump. I know what you want to do with it, but the other places were much nicer, don't you think?

BUCK

And they're also more expensive. Economize, honey, economize. We can't go around spending money anymore. Not with the way things are.

CINDY

But those other places weren't that expensive. We could afford them.

(beat)

Hate to break the news to ya, but this is not the right place.

BUCK

(looking out the window)

They were too expensive. This place is a bargain, and it's good to raise a family in. With a little work and the money we save, we can turn this property around.

CINDY

(putting her hand on his shoulder)

But sweetie, this will be our home. It's too run down. I don't think -

BUCK

(turning around)

I know it's rundown. It's rundown because the owners didn't keep it up. But we can turn it around, the both of us, and make it a great home for our family. We'll show the children humble values, Cindy. It's got that old quality feel to it. You don't see many houses like this put on the market. Let's make something out of it. Houses like this don't come around very often. And the neighborhood's nice, safe, secure. Property taxes are low, and property values are on the rise. It's a buyer's market right now.

CINDY

I don't think so.

BUCK

Honey, you have to trust me on this one. Those other properties have the same basic structure as this one. The roofs look the same, the walls look the same - it's basically the same thing, only a little less pricey. Can't you see yourself here? I know I can.

CINDY

It does need a lot of work.

BUCK

It definitely needs some work. A few touch-ups here and there, and this place will be as good as new.

CINDY

Let's not rush into it.

BUCK

You should know more than anyone that I never rush into things. It always has to be what you want, Cindy. I get a little tired of that.

(pause)

CINDY

Honey, let's not fight about it, okay. If you really want the house that badly, I guess we could get it, but it'll need a lot of work.

BUCK

(putting his hands around her face)

Yes, we'll put a lot of work into it. You're just gonna have to wait to see what I have planned for it. I already know where I'm putting the television. With you here during the day, you can get a lot of work done during the week. I can help out during the weekends.

CINDY

(sighs)

I guess I could decorate a little bit. Maybe put up some new wallpaper.

BUCK

We've got to think with our pocketbooks for now. This neighborhood is up and coming. It's a great place to raise a family.

CINDY

I guess we can make something out of it.

(sarcastically)

God, this place is a real gem.

BUCK

(kissing her)

I knew you'd see things my way. I wouldn't steer you wrong. You're the only family I have. I wouldn't do anything to jeopardize that. You'll see. It'll be a wonderful place for our children. You'll see.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HOUSE - DAY

Day moves into night. Night moves into day.

INT. THE KITCHEN, A FEW DAYS LATER - EARLY MORNING

Cindy is unpacking. She tries to open the window above the sink, but it won't stay open.

She unpacks the silverware. She opens the silverware drawer. There's a large, gleaming knife inside. She tests its sharpness.

The telephone rings. She cuts her finger on the knife. She hurries to the sink and drains the blood in the basin. She gets the telephone.

CINDY  
(on the phone)  
Hello? . . . Hello?

She hears static on the other end. She hangs up the phone.

CINDY  
Damn it!

She returns to the sink. She stares at the blood-stained knife. The knife commands all of her attention.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN - MORNING

Buck and Cindy are at the breakfast table. Buck is dressed in a cheap-looking shirt and tie. Cardboard boxes surround the table.

BUCK  
Wait 'till I tell the guys at work about this place. I'll be the envy of the office.

Cindy starts laughing.

BUCK  
What's so funny?

CINDY  
You are joking, right?

BUCK  
No, I'm not joking. Why shouldn't I tell people at work that we bought a new house? Not bad for a couple week's work.

CINDY  
Honey, I hate to break the news to you, but this place isn't worth bragging about.

BUCK  
Yet. Not a place worth bragging about yet. I see great things happening with this place. Great place to raise kids. A great neighborhood. We're paying peanuts in taxes.

CINDY

We don't even have power yet. Sorry to burst your bubble, but this place isn't worth bragging about.

(laughs)

Not by a long shot.

(laughing)

The kids will probably be poisoned by the chemicals floating in the reservoir.

BUCK

Well, I guess we'll have to work a little harder to bring it up to your standards.

CINDY

(laughing)

This place? We might as well take a bulldozer to it, because this place will never meet my standards. It may be worth more if we demolish it. Think of the new people it'll bring into the neighborhood. We can actually charge people to watch the demolition. There'll be a big demand for it. But before we demolish it, it would help if we had hot water. I wouldn't want to look unshowered before we leave this town for another one - maybe the ghetto. That's probably the next step on the road to poverty. I never knew it was part of the American dream.

BUCK

That's it, honey, laugh all you want, 'cause you'll be the only one laughing when we turn this property around.

CINDY

(laughing)

We couldn't turn this property around if it had a steering wheel.

BUCK

Thanks for your support. That's just what I needed before I go to work.

CINDY

Oh, honey, will you lighten up. I'm just joking around.

BUCK

Yeah, I guess everything is a joke to you lately.

CINDY

Got to admit, this place sure is funny. God forbid we have to dress the same way as this house looks. You're already one step ahead of me, honey.

(laughs)

You've already blended into your environment.

BUCK

Not everything's a joke, ya know.

Cindy continues laughing.

BUCK

And I suppose our marriage is a joke too. My parents dying in a plane crash, that's a joke too.

CINDY

(sighs)

Honey, I'm sorry, okay? I've got the giggles this morning. I didn't mean to poke fun at our new home, no matter how much of a dump it is.

(laughs)

They might as well relocate the town landfill to this spot, if they haven't done so already. If the town even has a landfill.

BUCK

(getting up)

Well, I'm not laughing at your jokes.

CINDY

Honey, I'm just fooling around. Don't take it so seriously.

BUCK

I won't. Don't worry. But it would help if you trusted my leadership for a change. Y'know, before we moved out I was the leader of this marriage, remember? What I did made our lives what it was, remember that?

CINDY

Buck, I'm not attempting a marital coup, okay. You're still in charge.

(laughs)

You lead me where no one dares to follow.

BUCK

I don't find that very amusing.

CINDY

C'mon, honey. I'm just kidding around.

BUCK

Well I'm not kidding around, damn it!

CINDY

(seriously)

Okay.

BUCK

Just because we live here doesn't mean that we go changing overnight. If you think you can run this marriage better than I can, then you go right ahead.

CINDY

Listen, Buck, I'm sorry, okay? I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

BUCK

Feelings? Who gives a shit about feelings. The point of the matter is that I am still man of this house. It may not be pretty. It may be a pile of shit, but I still am the man of the house.

CINDY

Fine, Buck. I'm sorry.

BUCK

And don't even fake it. I know you're faking it, just like you fake everything. You can't fool me.

CINDY

I said I'm sorry. What else do you want from me?

BUCK

How about a little respect. Let's start with that the next time you go laughing about this house. And when I get home tonight, I want dinner ready and waiting. No excuses. You do your job. I'll do mine.

CUT TO:

INT. AN OFFICE IN NEW YORK CITY - LATE AFTERNOON

EDDIE DeGAMMA knocks on an office door. The nameplate on the door reads 'Buck Harrow.' He knocks several times. There is no answer at the door. He opens it.

Buck is sitting at his desk and working on his computer. Papers are strewn all around.

EDDIE

Did anyone ever tell you you work too much.

BUCK

It's been said. . . What can I do for ya, Eddie.

EDDIE

Let's get a drink.

BUCK

I'm in the middle of something right now.

EDDIE

One drink's not gonna kill ya.

BUCK

Eddie, you know I don't drink on the job.

EDDIE

You don't drink when you're not on the job either.

(beat)

C'mon, one drink. You can have a soda.

BUCK

Eddie, I have work to do. It's gonna be a late night.

EDDIE

(taunting)

You're gonna die an angry old man.

(Pause)

BUCK

(sigh)

Okay, just give me a minute.

He cleans up his desk.

BUCK

I'm having a soda, Eddie. That's it.

INT. A NEW YORK CITY BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

A soft piano music floats throughout the bar area. Buck is drinking a soda. Eddie is drinking an alcoholic beverage.

EDDIE

It's good that you don't drink anymore, Buck. You were a real wreck, not to bring up old times or anything. You were the hot shot. We all fall from grace. Even myself.

(beat)

Listen, you're too wrapped up in the past. So what if you got a little ahead of yourself? Everyone gets ahead of themselves. It must have been nice up there with the rich and famous, eh?

BUCK

I don't care to discuss it. Besides, that's all over with now.

EDDIE

You were really flying high.

BUCK

(firmly)

I said I don't care to discuss it.

EDDIE

Alright, if you don't care to discuss it, we don't have to.

(beat)

Anyway, congrats on your new house. The wife must really like it.

BUCK

(laughs to himself)

It's a dump.

EDDIE

What?

BUCK

It's a dump, Eddie.

EDDIE

Not for long. Not with the old man getting laid nowadays.

BUCK

Y'know, I've never seen him in a good mood. I've been in this business for thirteen years, and I've never seen a man so fed up. Since the first day I stepped into his office.

EDDIE

That's because that's the last you saw of him. You haven't dealt with him for a while. But I deal with him every day.

BUCK

If you can stomach him, go right ahead.

EDDIE

You'll have to do the same pretty soon.

BUCK

(beat)

What?

EDDIE

You heard me. He didn't send you to Jersey for nothing, ya know.

BUCK

He sent me to Jersey, because I fucked up. And now I'm pushing these shit lower end deals.

EDDIE

The old man sent you to Jersey, because he wants you to do something for him.

BUCK

I think you've had a little too much to drink, Eddie.

EDDIE

Seriously. He's planning on putting us together for a property in Newark.

BUCK

Newark?

EDDIE

Yeah, Newark.

(beat)

What? Jersey too lower class for you?

BUCK

No, not at all. I'm just surprised. Why the change? He hates me after the spill I took.

EDDIE

He doesn't hate you. *And* I put in a good word. He agreed to let us run things in Newark. But if you're too bent on licking your wounds, maybe it's not such a good idea.

BUCK

No, it's not a bad idea. Not a bad idea at all.

(beat)

Eddie, I want to get back in there, but I just don't want it to be like last time. The women, the booze, the wild things that I did.

EDDIE

Like showing up drunk at nine ayem. I think you've learned your lesson.

(beat)

We'll see what the old man says. For right now, I wouldn't say anything to the wife. I don't want to get your hopes up. Play it cool in front of the old man too. Let me do all the talking.

BUCK

You mean we're meeting with him?

EDDIE

Only if you want to.

BUCK

I think I'll have that second drink.  
(to the waitress (O.S.))

Yeah, get me a scotch and water.

(to Eddie)

It's good to get back on track. I'm sick of fucking economizing. I'm ready to work on something with a pulse.

EDDIE

Play it cool, Buck. Play it cool for now. We don't want you overworked before we get to work, know what I mean?

BUCK

Yeah, you're right. I'm running out of patience, though. I've done everything the company has ever asked of me. I just slipped up, that's all.

EDDIE

Just play it cool. Relax. Enjoy the moment. You just gotta ease up a bit, start enjoying life for a change. Life is too short to be working so hard.

BUCK

You'll get no argument from me.

INT. THE KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Cindy is busy painting the window sills and unpacking. Her finger is bandaged.

The phone rings again. She drops her brush and races to the phone.

CINDY

Hello? . . . Hello? Who's there?

There is static on the other end.

She slams down the receiver. She notices that the phone doesn't have a chord running into the jack at the base of the wall.

CINDY

That's it!

With a hammer she pries the phone loose. She breaks the phone apart in the process. She finds another jack behind the phone. The phone has been plugged in all along.

CINDY

Damn this place.

INT. THE BAR - EVENING

Buck is sipping scotch and water. Eddie lights up a cigar. Both are tipsy.

BUCK

I'll play it cool. Don't worry.

EDDIE

It's a little too early to be celebrating.

BUCK

Please. Let me enjoy this drink for once in my life.

EDDIE

I hope you're careful about it this time.  
Wouldn't want to pull you out of the gutter  
again.

BUCK

A lot's changed since then. Besides, what's a  
couple of drinks. I never drink before twelve.

EDDIE

The wife got you on the ropes, eh? Bought a new  
house last week? You deserve to let off a little  
steam. Everyone does once in a while.

BUCK

It certainly has been interesting. A lot of  
changes.

EDDIE

(closer to Buck's ear)

I don't know how you do it. I know if I had a  
wife that laughs at me all the time, I'd get sick  
of her real fast. I mean just last night I made  
it with two women at the same time. I had both  
of them on me the whole night. Doesn't it feel  
good, to be inside of a woman - that combination  
of moist warmth and friction. There's nothing  
like unconditional sex from two blondes at once.  
There's nothing like their salty sweetness when  
you lick them all over. Once you go down on 'em  
and lap at that sweetness. It sure beats the  
taste of this cigar, the taste of this liquor.  
If they made a Popsicle out of 'em, I'd be  
licking all day long. All day long.

BUCK

(beat)

I have a beautiful wife at home. She can be a  
bitch sometimes, but she's my wife.

EDDIE

She sure is.

BUCK

Besides, I don't play with fire anymore. I've  
learned my lesson. I play it straight. It's  
done wonders for our marriage. Really it has.  
There's nothing like coming home to home-cooked  
meal and a good woman.

EDDIE

Hey, you don't have to convince me.

BUCK

There's nothing like settling down, getting married for the first time. It does wonders.

EDDIE

Okay. I believe you.

BUCK

There's nothing like a good marriage.  
(raising his glass)

A toast. To the wives.

They clink glasses. Buck downs his drink.

CUT TO:

INT. THE DINING AREA OF THE HOUSE - LATE EVENING

Buck and Cindy pass a plate between them. They eat by candlelight. Cindy still wears the bandage.

CINDY

So you didn't tell me about your day, honey.

BUCK

It was fine. Same old, same old. Can you pass the pasta, please.

(beat)

How's everything with the house? We only have partial power?

CINDY

The appliances work, but the lights are out. Most of the sockets don't work either. And there's something funny going on with that phone. There's something not right with the water, either. My God, this place is something else. One minute we're living in luxury, the next we're out in the boonies. We should be thankful that they're not any roaches or rats to eat us alive. Did you see what I did to the phone? I had to pull the thing out of the wall.

BUCK

(putting down his silverware)

Is that all you can do is complain? I bought this place with our hard earned money. Doesn't that mean anything to you.

CINDY

Buck, I'm not complaining. I'm just telling you how my day was.

BUCK

Wait a minute. Just stop for a minute. Once again the focus is on yourself. You're not concerned about my needs or the pressure that I'm under. I come home after a hard day, and you criticize. That's what you do, you criticize me every chance you get.

CINDY

Buck, I -

BUCK

I come home after a hard day at work, a very hard day, nothing but staring into a damned computer screen all day long, and all you can talk about is how bad this is, how bad that is. There's not enough hot water, or there's no electricity. All you can do is complain.

CINDY

I'm sorry. I didn't know you had such a bad day.

BUCK

Having a bad day is not the point. The point is that you know how I messed up the uptown deal, and you keep reminding me of it by complaining about this house. This house may not be, right now, up to your standards, but it will be, this I guarantee. You never appreciate how hard I work. Now if you don't mind, I'm going to bed.  
(throwing down his napkin).

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy makes sure Buck is sleeping. She walks to the kitchen and picks up the phone, which is now on the kitchen table. The phone works. She dials.

CINDY

(whispering)  
(on the phone)

Hello, psychic hotline? This is Cindy Harrow  
. . . fine thank you, yes. . . yes, please. . .  
hello, how are you. Oh, I'm so glad that I  
called. . . yes, I have been a bit nervous  
lately. . . yes, it's my husband, he's acting a  
little strangely. . . no, it's definitely not  
another woman, it's something different. He's

been taking things too seriously. I know I shouldn't be worrying about him, but since we moved from our old house, he's been really uptight. . . I don't think it's another woman. It's this place. There's something not right with this place. . . it is something with work too. Anyway I've got to go. If he finds out I'm spending money, he'll kill me. . . No, we haven't made love in ages. There's something not right with him. Ever since we moved in he's been argumentative and bitter. I don't know what's going on. Anyway, I have to go. . . I said I have to go. Just log my call.

She hangs up. She walks back to the bedroom via the hallway.

INT. THE BEDROOM

Buck is not in his bed. He is standing near the door in the darkness. He corners her and moves her towards the bed.

BUCK

Who were you talking to?

CINDY

Buck, hi. Can't sleep?

BUCK

I said, who were you talking to?

CINDY

No one. Just a friend.

BUCK

I thought you said the phone was out.

CINDY

It was. The phone company just turned it on.

BUCK

I think it's time we get to bed and stop running up the phone bill.

CINDY

I was just thinking the same thing.

(yawns)

I'm so tired from unpacking.

BUCK

Take off your clothes.

CINDY

What?

BUCK

You heard me. Take off your clothes.

Cindy disrobes.

BUCK

Now get on the bed.

Cindy gets on the bed. They have heated sex on the bed.

BUCK

(while having sex)

Didn't I tell you to stop calling those 900 numbers?

Buck treats her roughly. The bandage on Cindy's finger breaks. Blood smears over Buck's backside. Buck tightens his grip around her neck.

CINDY

Stop it.

(beat)

Stop it, you're hurting me.

(beat)

Buck, stop it.

Buck orgasms.

CINDY

(beat)

Get off of me!

She slaps him and breaks free.

CINDY

What's gotten into you?! You almost choked me to death!

BUCK

(panting)

I'm just trying to fuck my own wife for a change. It was feeling really good. Maybe we should try it more often.

CINDY

(angrily)

Fuck your own wife? Is that all you want to do, fuck your own wife? Jesus, Buck, we've had our down times, but I don't like this. Not one bit.

Buck moves closer to her.

BUCK

Oh, so it's what you don't like. It doesn't matter that you haven't put out in six months. Have you ever thought about what that may be like for me? While you sit around stuffing yourself and talking about our marital problems with an anonymous bimbo, guess who's got to crunch numbers on a property in Nevada. Guess who has to battle the computer to make the numbers align in the right way? It shouldn't matter that I haven't had a decent bit of sex in the last six months, now should it? And finally, I actually have an orgasm, and you're all bent out of shape.

CINDY

I didn't know you were having problems at work. You should have told me.

BUCK

It would help if you'd give me a little more attention from now on. A little more consideration. A little more help.

CINDY

Buck, would you please relax.

BUCK

I just was relaxed. Past tense. I just want to be treated with a little more consideration.

(beat)

And you don't really give a shit about what happened at work today, do ya?

CINDY

Of course I care, Buck. It's nothing to get so upset about.

BUCK

Wait a second. You actually care how my day was? Or is this just one of your jokes?

CINDY

No, it's not a joke.

BUCK

Coming down from the high life, eh Cindy?

CINDY

It's just the change, Buck. That's all. It's just a change. We don't have our old friends anymore. We don't have our old house. It's a new place, that's why you're so uptight. I am trying to help.

BUCK

Well I don't need your help.

CINDY

But you just told me that you did.

BUCK

No, I want your consideration. I'm a man fucking his wife in his own home under his own roof, and most married couples don't consider that to be a violation or an injustice in most fifty states, especially this one. Now let's look at this from another point of view, an honest and fresh point of view which never crosses your mind. It would be a considerate gesture for you to fuck your husband for a change. I want you to help yourself be considerate to my feelings. There's a difference. But that can't happen, can it?

CINDY

And what you just did. You call that considerate?

BUCK

Yes. When a husband fucks his wife you better damn well believe it's considerate.

CINDY

If that's the way you feel about it, then you sleep in the living room tonight.

BUCK

Fine. I'll do just that. I'd find more consideration from my dick between the pillows of the couch. Goodnight.

He leaves the bedroom, slamming the door. Cindy lets him go, pondering the change in him.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE ELEVATOR - DAY

EDDIE

Now remember, Buck, let me do all the talking.

BUCK

What are you going to say?

EDDIE

That you've done a good job on the Nevada property.

BUCK

That's it?

EDDIE

We have to see what he brings up. He already made the decision to buy in Newark. He just wants to go over the details. That's where you come in.

BUCK

What details? There are no details to go over. It's a goddamned apartment building. I've done hundreds of 'em. Either he wants me, or he doesn't.

EDDIE

Settle down, Buck. You know you ought to take it more easy. Just let me do the talking, no matter what.

INT. AN OFFICE - DAY

Eddie and Buck approach a luxurious reception area. JULIE, an executive assistant, sits at the desk.

EDDIE

(flirtatious)

Hello, Julie.

JULIE

(smiling)

Hello, Eddie.

EDDIE

Is he ready to see us?

JULIE

He's always ready to see you, Eddie.

EDDIE  
(leaning over)  
Y'know, you smell lovely today. What's that  
scent you're wearing?

JULIE  
Wouldn't you like to know.

EDDIE  
I think I already do know. Meet my friend, Buck.

JULIE  
(shaking hands)  
I know Buck.

BUCK  
Nice to see you again, Julie. It's been a while.

JULIE  
Yes, it has been quite a while. I hope we see  
you around a little more often.

EDDIE  
Oh, you'll be seeing him around.

JULIE  
I'd like that quite a bit.  
(beat)  
Why don't you gentlemen go on in. He's waiting  
to see you both.

BUCK  
(to Eddie)  
That's something new.

EDDIE  
Now remember, Buck, let me do the talking.

INT. A LARGE CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY

The office has a desk and a comfortable arrangement of lush sofas and chairs. Artwork adorns the walls. A bar area is shelved with liquor. An OLD MAN is on the phone. He waves them in. Buck and Eddie take a seat in front of his desk.

OLD MAN  
(on the phone)  
I don't think Angela knows what she's doing. We  
talked to the bank so many times already  
. . . No, I don't care what happens to it, and I  
really don't care what happens to her either. . .

Listen, I've got to go. Business to attend to.  
I'll phone you later.

(to Eddie)

Well, Edward, you're looking good today. I wish  
I could say the same about your friend.

EDDIE

Thank you, sir. You remember Buck, don't ya?

OLD MAN

(thinking)

Hmmm. Yes, he does look familiar. This is the  
guy you want on the Newark deal?

EDDIE

He's good with numbers. I can provide the  
muscle, he can provide the strategy. We're both  
doing well on our properties.

OLD MAN

Oh, yes. I do recall young Buck.

(to Buck)

You cost me quite a bit of money. Apparently you  
were sleeping with the head of the tenants  
association for one of our uptown properties, is  
that right?

EDDIE

Sir, that was a very long time ago. Buck's  
changed. He's been working really hard on the  
Nevada deal. He's practically turned around a  
couple of houses upstate. He's been in the  
trenches.

OLD MAN

So what.

EDDIE

Well, sir, I just think he'd be perfect for this  
deal. He knows how to bargain with the banks.  
He's a top-rate manager.

OLD MAN

The last time I saw him he was a drunk  
megalomaniac riding high on my money. Why should  
I trust him with my property in Newark?

EDDIE

Sir, if I may be so bold, I can provide the  
muscle in Newark. I can make sure the rents are  
collected. But this guy can do the numbers and  
make the payments directly to First National.

OLD MAN

He's always been so liberal-minded. It makes me sick just to be around him. He squanders his money, and that's a risk we can't afford right now. Of course I remember Buck, but I'm not so sure I want to remember him.

EDDIE

Sir, I need him on my team. I guarantee he'll be on his toes. You can count on that.

OLD MAN

And you're willing to take full responsibility for any losses? What if he turns to drink again? What if he places a decimal point out of order, which he was so prone to doing? I get into trouble when I trust the weak and unfit. You shouldn't trust 'em either, Edward.

Buck is about to say something in his own defense, but Eddie puts his hand on his arm, preventing him.

EDDIE

Sir, there's no one else I'd trust to run this apartment. We need him on this deal. There's no one better right now. Stanwick is in Texas, and Peck is in California. I have no one left. While Buck is a liability, and he's not exactly the brightest guy on the block either, I'm sure he can handle this deal.

OLD MAN

He's too much of a risk.

EDDIE

Let me work on him, sir. I'm a good influence. And if anything goes wrong, you can fire him.

OLD MAN

Oh yeah?

EDDIE

Yeah.

OLD MAN

(beat)

Fine. Take him with you to Newark, but I swear if he gets out of line, I'll fire the both of you. I don't want any fuck-ups on this deal.

EDDIE

You made another great decision, sir.

OLD MAN

I hope so.

(to Buck)

And you, you little liberal shit, if you don't perform for me and wreck this deal, I'll see to it you never work in real estate again.

Buck mumbles something.

OLD MAN

What was that, boy? Speak up.

EDDIE

He said thank you, sir.

OLD MAN

I hope he did. Now both of you, get lost. I've got work to do.

EDDIE

Thank you, sir. You won't regret your decision.

INT. OLD MAN'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

EDDIE

(patting him on the back)

See. I told you to leave everything to me.

JULIE

Oh boys. I hope to see you at the party next week. You especially, Buck.

EDDIE

The guy's already busy, but we'll see if Bucky here can make it.

INT. A COMMUTER TRAIN CAR, NEW JERSEY - LATE AFTERNOON

Buck and Eddie drink beer.

EDDIE

I don't know about the Old Man, but Julie took a liking to you.

BUCK

She probably likes anyone who passes by. I'm sure I'm not the first.

EDDIE

You like her, don't ya? You think she's hot. I can tell.

BUCK

Please, Eddie. I have a wife at home.

EDDIE

Hey, that hasn't stopped me. There's nothing like a wife to get on your nerves. At least my wife, she knows I screw around here and there, but she's okay with it. She doesn't mind it.

(beat)

Don't sweat it. At least you still have good taste.

BUCK

That's the kind of thing my wife would mind.

EDDIE

Well, maybe you have to straighten her out. I straightened my wife out. I was supposed to be home by dinnertime last week. Instead I went out with Julie.

BUCK

(surprised)

You went out with Julie?

EDDIE

(laughs)

What are you in grade school? Yeah, I've seen Julie before.

BUCK

But you're married.

EDDIE

So? I may be married, but I see whomever I want. Julie is a mighty fine girl. Mighty fine indeed. You want to know something?

(whispering)

She gives the best head I've ever had in my entire life. She wears this real glossy, scarlet lipstick when I take her out. And then in the limo, just when the driver puts up the glass, she goes down on me and gives me the greatest, spit-shining blow job I've ever had in my entire life, her head bobbing and weaving on my lap. And you know what else about her? Not only does she give the greatest blow job in the world, but she also swallows. She does all the work, and she likes

doing it. And then after she's done, she pretends like the whole thing never happened. She doesn't tell a soul. Man oh man. Have you ever met a woman like that?

BUCK

(taking a gulp of his beer)

Nope. I've never met a woman like that.

EDDIE

Things have a funny way of changing when you get to that level. Funny thing is - you are at that level again, at least if you don't fuck up the game plan.

BUCK

And what game plan is that?

EDDIE

If you don't know what it is by now, you're already one step behind. Or is that the way it has always been for you, Buck? Always one, step, behind?

BUCK

You seem to know a lot about me, Eddie.

EDDIE

I know how you hate it when you're taken out of the game for reasons beyond your control. Frustrating, isn't it?

BUCK

You can say that. But this time things are going to be different. I guarantee it.

EDDIE

I hope so.

BUCK

I guarantee things will be different, and when I guarantee something, that means I work my fingers to the bone making good on it. That's the only thing I know.

EDDIE

We'll see about that. Remember: we have to work smarter, not necessarily harder.

CUT TO:

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET, NEW JERSEY - NIGHT

Buck walks home from the train station. He enters a liquor store on the corner of the street. From the shelves he selects a bottle of whiskey. THE OWNER of the store is at the counter.

OWNER

(suspicious)

I see you're taking home some of my best whiskey.

BUCK

Yep.

OWNER

I've never seen you in here before. New to town?

BUCK

You can say that. I just moved here.

OWNER

Did you now?

(looking him over)

You look mighty familiar. Don't I know you from someplace?

BUCK

I don't think so.

OWNER

(holding the whiskey bottle)

Wait a minute.

(beat)

I never forget a face, and in my old age I'm still pretty sharp. I'm sure I've seen you someplace before.

BUCK

(upbeat)

I know I've never seen you.

OWNER

That may be, but didn't you live in this town before?

BUCK

That's impossible. You're mistaken. I just moved here.

OWNER

That old place on Sycamore?

BUCK

That's right.

OWNER

It's funny, because I'm sure I've seen you before. Just can't place where.

BUCK

(firmly)

I said you must be mistaken. I've never seen you, and you've never seen me.

OWNER

I never forget a face, but if you insist, that'll be \$25.50.

Buck lays his money down and leaves.

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy is in bed. She's half asleep. She feels for Buck on the other side of the bed. Buck is not there.

CINDY

Buck?

Her alarm clock reads three-thirty ayem.

She puts on her bathrobe and journeys to the study. The house is in darkness with the exception of a faint light emanating from the study. The door is slightly ajar.

She hears panting. She cracks open the door. She sees Buck at his desk with a half-drained bottle of whiskey on top of it. He's leaning back on his chair. His pants are down to his ankles.

She closes the door and retreats towards the bedroom. On her way back, she discovers a little boy perched at the foot of the stairs. She hears noises from the second floor.

CINDY

Hello. My name is Cindy. What's yours?

The boy is silent. He guides her to the second floor.

CINDY

(following)

Little boy, where are you taking me?

INT. UPSTAIRS

A door is open to one of the three rooms. The boy points to the door nearest to the stairs. Cindy opens the door. An older boy, dressed in a military uniform, is sleeping on a cot. Blood-stained bandages are wrapped around his head. He is asleep.

The boy points to the second door. She opens it. The walls are smeared with blood. On the floor a mutilated body leans against the wall. She moves in closer. The body opens its eyes.

INT. THE BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Cindy awakes with a start. The clock reads ten ayem. She immediately goes to the kitchen. She dials the telephone.

CINDY

(on the phone)

Hello, psychic hotline, this is Cindy Harrow. . .

No, I won't hold. I need to talk to someone immediately. . . I am calm, now please get someone . . . Thank you. . .

Hello, this is Cindy. I don't know what's happening to me. I had a dream, a terrible dream. . . I am calm! . . . In the dream I was dead. I was killed by somebody. . .

I know it was only a dream, but it was so real, so very real. . . Things are happening. My life is changing. I'm changing, but I can't describe it. I must be going crazy. . . No, I won't call back. I need immediate attention. . .

No, I will not see a doctor. Doctor's don't know shit! . . . Fine. Fine. I'll call back later.

She hangs up the phone. She hears knocking at the front door.

INT. FRONT DOOR

In the blaring sunshine a young African-American, WILBUR ROBINSON, stands on the doorstep holding an apple pie.

CINDY

(sighs)

Thank God. A visitor.

(smiling)

Hi there, can I help you?

WILBUR

Good afternoon, ma'am. I'm Wilbur Robinson. I'm your neighbor from across the street.

She sees his house in the distance.

WILBUR

I came by to introduce myself. I bought you an apple pie.

CINDY

I'm a little busy right now. Maybe we can make it for another time?

WILBUR

It will only take a few minutes. I did bring you an apple pie.

INT. THE KITCHEN

Wilbur and Cindy sit across from each other. The apple pie sits between them.

WILBUR

(timidly)

I never thought anyone would ever buy this place. I thought hell would freeze over before anyone bought this place.

CINDY

(laughs)

No one on the entire planet would want to buy this place. At least not until we bought it. It's definitely one of your stranger places, that's for sure.

WILBUR

Well, I guess all I can do is congratulate you.

CINDY

Congratulate us? There must be a reason why this place hasn't been bought for so long.

WILBUR

I really wouldn't know.

CINDY

Wouldn't know, huh?

WILBUR

No. Not much happens around here.

CINDY

For a young man like yourself? I find that hard to believe.

WILBUR

Sorry to disagree with you, ma'am, but around here people generally keep to themselves.

CINDY

But you're so young. Not that young, but you're, I mean, you're a pretty handsome guy, if you don't mind my saying. You look like you read a lot of books.

WILBUR

I read from time to time.

CINDY

So what's there to do around here for fun? Any restaurants or movie theaters? Any nightlife, or anything to do around here?

WILBUR

I really wouldn't know.

CINDY

What exactly do you do, Wilbur? It's okay if I call you Wilbur, because that is your name - Wilbur?

WILBUR

Yes, that is what I've been named.

CINDY

Do you have any family living with you, or friends living nearby?

WILBUR

Not really, no.

CINDY

So you've got that big 'ol house, about the size of ours, and you live at home all alone?

WILBUR

That's right.

CINDY

I don't know, Wilbur, help me here. Something doesn't connect. You live alone, and you don't have any family or friends in the neighborhood?

WILBUR

Like I said, people around here tend to keep to themselves.

CINDY

But isn't it slightly unusual for someone your age, with your education, to be living alone in a town where married couples and retirees live? Shouldn't you be chasing girls at a single bar or something?

WILBUR

Perhaps, ma'am, but I generally keep to myself.

Her chair makes a screech. Wilbur trembles.

CINDY

You're afraid? Wilbur, there's nothing to be afraid of. C'mon, I'm your neighbor. I'm just trying to make conversation, being friendly that's all.

(beat)

You don't get out that much, do you?

(beat)

They always say to watch out for those shy ones.

WILBUR

I used to be a lawyer in New York, but that was several years ago.

CINDY

See, that wasn't so hard. And what happened? I hope I'm not getting too personal here.

WILBUR

I left.

CINDY

(laughs)

Okay. I guess I'll have to trust my own instincts on that one and think you left for a good reason.

(beat)

Well, that's a start, I guess. I've got to level with you Wilbur, I'm just plum confused about this place. We just got the power turned on last week. I get these phone calls with nothing but static on the line. The ceiling is about to cave in, the hot water heater is pumping out lukewarm water. This place just kind of baffles me.

WILBUR  
(seriously)

Sometimes confusion can be resourceful. We sometimes have to see the confusion through, because even though the signs may be garbled, there's always a very clear message being conveyed.

CINDY  
(laughs)

Oh, well that's certainly a mouthful. Can you help me translate that?

WILBUR  
(seriously)

Sometimes you have to trust your instincts - what comes naturally to you. My job as a lawyer, well, that didn't come too naturally, and no matter how outlandish my natural abilities seemed, no matter how garbled the signs, I still believed in what came to me naturally. Sometimes there's a price to pay. You should trust your instincts is what I'm trying to tell you.

CINDY

So does that mean there's a good diner around here or maybe an ice cream truck that comes through town or -

(beat)

Would you like to have some of your pie, Wilbur, it looks really good?

WILBUR

I made it for you.

CINDY

Yes. Yes you did.

(beat)

Y'know, you definitely need to get out more. It must be pretty lonely in that house of yours.

WILBUR

What's happening in my life is not as important as what's happening in yours.

CINDY

I'm not sure I'm following you.

The front door opens. Buck enters the kitchen. He carries a briefcase. He is breathing heavily.

CINDY

(surprised)

Honey, you're home!

BUCK

Yeah, I forgot something in the study.

(pecks her on the cheek)

Didn't know you were having company today, dearest.

CINDY

Buck, this is Wilbur Robinson. He's our neighbor from across the street. Wilbur, this is my husband, Buck.

BUCK

(to Cindy)

Going back and forth can be such a pain in the ass. Honey, why don't you get me something to drink.

CINDY

Drink? But you don't drink.

BUCK

Honey, you know I don't drink. How about some orange juice?

CINDY

Sure.

She goes to the fridge.

WILBUR

(to Buck)

I was just congratulating your wife on the new place.

BUCK

It certainly is one of a kind, judging from what the neighborhood is coming to.

(beat)

I plan to keep it that way.

WILBUR

The neighborhood has always been one of a kind, with the exception of a few bad apples who try to reverse whatever we've built. I hope you and your wife can make this place grow, considering it's such an old house.

BUCK

Anything is possible, just so long as no one interferes, Mr.?

CINDY

(handing the glass to Buck)

Here ya go.

WILBUR

Robinson. Wilbur Robinson.

BUCK

Was just leaving, weren't you?

WILBUR

Yes, I do have some work to attend to.

CINDY

Oh, leaving so soon? But Buck, you just got here.

WILBUR

(to Cindy)

I'll be across the street, should you be needing anything.

BUCK

We'll certainly keep that in mind.

INT. THE KITCHEN

Buck puts his arm around his wife. They walk towards the bedroom.

BUCK

Honey, what did I tell you about letting strangers into our home?

CINDY

You didn't say anything about letting strangers into our home.

BUCK

Honey. Sweetie Pie. We can't let everyone who lives in the neighborhood come into our home. There is, after all, a lot of crime out there, not in the places we used to live, but where we live today. I've been around this neighborhood, and some of it is not too pretty. Not as pretty as our old neighborhood.

CINDY

But he's just our neighbor.

BUCK

I understand that you feel a certain affection, a certain affinity with the meek and the impoverished. We all tend to feel that way about people who generally can't help themselves, but it's important that we stay away from this element. It is, after all, a poor and depressed neighborhood, and crime is on the rise around here. Best to keep to ourselves for the time being. Don't ya think?

CINDY

(confusedly)

Okay. I never knew you felt that way.

BUCK

It's about us, honey. It's about what we want - to raise a family, to have our kids grow up in a nice, clean, safe, and stable environment. Do we have an understanding?

CINDY

Yes. I won't let any strangers in here.

BUCK

(rubbing her nose with his)

That's what Daddy likes to hear.

Buck leaves.

CINDY

(calling from the kitchen)

Oh, Buck, you forgot your - Hmmm, stuff from the study.

CUT TO:

INT. AN AUTOMOBILE, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY - AFTERNOON

Buck and Eddie drive down a pockmarked avenue. They are in the urban ghetto. Corner bodegas and fast-food fried chicken restaurants line the avenue. Eddie is eating fast food at the steering wheel. Scenes of the urban landscape reflect off the windshield.

Eddie throws a fast food wrapper out of the window.

EDDIE

God, will you look at this place.

(beat)

(to Buck)

Did you check around for the contractor you know?

BUCK

I checked at home, but I couldn't find his number. He's a good person to know.

EDDIE

That's because all his work is done under the table, right?

(beat)

I don't see what's so wrong with that, Buck. That's why we're gonna use him to turn this property around.

BUCK

We have to report any work done.

EDDIE

How well do you know this contractor?

BUCK

I've used him before.

EDDIE

Well how about we use him again, but this time you get him to hike up the cost on the bill.

(looking out of the window)

My, my, my. This place should be gentrified.

A small family crosses the street at the tail end of a red light.

EDDIE

Will you look at this shit.

(beeping the horn)

Hey, will you get the fuck out of the road!

(He speeds off)

Fucking turds.

(beat)

As I was saying, maybe your friend can be creative with the cost of it.

BUCK

And who's pocketing the difference?

EDDIE

Y'know, I went and saw Julie when you were back with the wife.

BUCK

Julie? What did you see her for?

EDDIE

She's got the eye for you, Buck. You better be careful around her. The question is though - can you afford a woman like Julie, or do we report the price of renovation to the Old Man.

BUCK

I see your point.

They park in front of a rundown four-story apartment building. Eddie opens the glove compartment and takes out a handgun. He checks to make sure its loaded. He offers the gun to Buck.

EDDIE

What's wrong? Never used a gun before?

(beat)

Here, take it.

(sighs)

Listen, Buck, we're not collecting for the Girl Scouts. We're collecting from people who don't want to pay for anything. If the government doesn't pay for it, they go out and sell dope to the kids in the neighborhood. These aren't angels we're dealing with. Some of them may even be criminals, just released from Rahway. We may not even come out alive. I'll be damned if I go in there without protection, especially with the load we're bringing out.

BUCK

Jesus, Eddie, can't they just send it in? Do we really need to take a loaded weapon in there?

EDDIE

We're not taking a loaded weapon in there. We're taking two loaded weapons in there.

Eddie reveals another weapon inside his jacket.

EDDIE

I don't have to hold your hand on this one, do I? You take the basement. They're pussycats in the basement. I'll take upstairs. Now let's do this job right.

BUCK

We could hurt somebody.

EDDIE

Yeah, and somebody could hurt us. You haven't been around here yet. I have. Take the gun.

EXT. THE STEPS OF THE NEWARK APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

A group of men loiter the front steps. Buck and Eddie maneuver around them.

EDDIE

(to the men)

You guys better have your fuckin' rent today.

INT. THE LOBBY

EDDIE

(pointing)

You go down there, the basement apartments. The damn elevators better work.

With the handgun, Buck descends a dimly-lit staircase.

EDDIE

Oh, and Buck - make sure your gun's cocked.

BUCK

I don't think that's necessary.

Eddie pulls the gun from him, cocks the chamber, and returns it to him.

EDDIE

If you get scared, shoot. Shoot at anything that moves. Cops don't come around these parts anyway. You've got nothing to worry about.

INT. THE BASEMENT

Apartments are on either side of the basement hallway. His gun hand is shaking. He feels for a light switch and turns it on.

A barking pit bull races towards him. The pit bull's collar is tethered to a long chain. The dog snaps inches away from his face.

Buck falls to the floor and slides backwards. He points the gun at the dog, but he doesn't fire.

An OLD WOMAN enters the hallway from one the apartments. She is an African-American and walks with a cane.

OLD WOMAN  
(to the pit bull)  
Settle down, Blood, settle down.  
(beat)  
That's a good dog.

She feeds the dog a piece of meat.

OLD WOMAN  
(to Buck)  
Well, don't just lie there. Come on in.

Buck sidesteps the dog, who is suddenly tame.

INT. OLD WOMAN'S APARTMENT

The apartment is neatly made with a sofa, chairs, and a small television set. The television flashes old footage of soldiers in uniform jumping out of a helicopter.

OLD WOMAN  
Would you like some tea? The water is on.

BUCK  
(fascinated with the television)  
Tea would be fine.

OLD WOMAN  
Allow me to introduce myself. I'm the old woman who lives here. You'll have to excuse Blood, my dog. He doesn't like strangers much, especially when they're carrying a loaded weapon.

BUCK  
How did you know it was loaded?

OLD WOMAN  
You can say that I sense these things.

She hands Buck a cup of tea.

OLD WOMAN  
(watching television)  
A horrible war that was. I'd just assume leave  
the television off.

She turns the television off.

BUCK  
If you don't mind, I'm here to collect the rent.

OLD WOMAN  
I know what you're here for. And I know who you  
are. There are a lot of people who know who you  
are. You're kind of in the wrong place at the  
wrong time.

BUCK  
What are you talking about? You don't know me.  
No one knows me here.

OLD WOMAN  
There's a lot you don't know about yourself,  
Buck. Frankly, I've never seen a man so  
confused, so worn down. You're flirting with a  
bad element, if you want my honest opinion.

BUCK  
What are you talking about? You don't know me.  
This is my first time here.

OLD WOMAN  
Oh, I beg to differ.

BUCK  
(sipping his tea)  
Oh, yeah? Well, I guess we're operating on a  
different set of beliefs. I'm not flirting with  
anything, and you can stop pretending like you  
know me.

He puts down the tea and readies his gun.

BUCK  
Now give me the rent before I blow your fucking  
head off.

BUCK sees blurry.

OLD WOMAN

Oh, you'll get the rent all right. But what I'm wondering, and I'm sure you're wondering too, will it make things better if I pull the trigger? Or will it make things worse. If I were you, I'd put down that gun, not for my wellbeing, but for yours.

Buck lowers his gun.

OLD WOMAN

That's better. Why don't you finish your tea. I made it especially for you.

The blur of Buck's vision intensifies.

BUCK

Who the hell are you? What is this place?  
(rubbing his eyes)  
What the hell am I doing here?

OLD WOMAN

(soothing)

You're in a room drinking tea. You're here to collect the rent that I owe. Blood, my dog, is outside standing watch. You've entered a safe place, Buck. While we're here, while we're talking, no one can harm you.

BUCK

(delirious)

Who are you? Why is this happening to me?

OLD WOMAN

Nothing is happening to you. Not yet.

BUCK

And you can prevent what's going to happen to me?

OLD WOMAN

I can't prevent anything. But you can.

BUCK

Will you stop talking like that, or I swear I'll blow your mother fucking head off right here, right now. Enough of this voodoo shit.

OLD WOMAN

If only you could see yourself now. A once decent man who has overcome so much hardship. And now a man with a gun about to kill somebody.

BUCK

I'm not about to kill anyone. Now shut up before I blow your head off.

OLD WOMAN

All right, you want me to talk straight, I'll talk straight.

(beat)

Buck, you're losing your mind, and when you get to this stage you are vulnerable, shall we say. Vulnerable to those who want to get their way with you.

BUCK

I'm not losing my mind. You're avoiding the issue. Now give me the fucking rent, please.

She goes to a cookie jar by the television.

OLD WOMAN

And when you start to lose your mind, you can do one of two things: give in to it, or fight those negative impulses with every thing you've got.

(beat)

There are people after you, Buck. Very sick and twisted people that are after you. It's your job to hold it together for as long as you can. Let's call this a warning, albeit a temporary one.

BUCK

(laughing and seeing blurry)

A warning? I have a gun, and you're warning me? You put something in my tea, is that it? You put something in my fucking drink, didn't you?

OLD WOMAN

Strange isn't it? How you sit there and laugh, sit there and can't see straight when I all I gave you is a tea bag and some water.

Buck regains his vision.

BUCK

You mean there's nothing in this tea?

She hands over the rent money.

OLD WOMAN

No. There's nothing in your tea.

BUCK

It better all be there.

OLD WOMAN

Oh, it's all there, and at the same time, I hope you appreciate our conversation, because after today I'll have to search for another dog.

(O.S.) The pit bull barks wildly outside the door.

EDDIE

(O.S.)

Shut up, you dumb mutt!

(O.S.) Eddie fights the dog.

EDDIE

(O.S.)

I said shut the hell up!

(O.S.) Eddie pistol-whips the dog.

He barges into the apartment. Blood is on his hands.

He wipes his hands on the sofa.

EDDIE

(to Buck)

Did you get the rent?

BUCK

Yeah, I got it.

EDDIE

C'mon, let's get out of here. I can't stand the stench.

(to the Old Woman)

Sorry about the dog.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM OF THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Cindy is in bed. She is dreaming.

A LITTLE BOY appears. He tugs on her blanket. She wakes up.

CINDY

Oh, little boy, it's three in the morning.  
What's the matter now?

The Little Boy offers his hand. Cindy follows him. They approach the stairwell.

CINDY

No. I don't want to go with you if you show me horrible things.

The Little Boy is sad. He starts crying.

CINDY

Oh, alright. There's no need to be scared. But just one more time, okay? I have to get some sleep too.

She follows the boy upstairs. They enter the room closest to the stairs, previously the room of the young man in uniform.

INT. THE SOLDIER'S ROOM

The room she enters has since turned into a long, white-walled hallway. The boy leaves her at the entrance. The door shuts behind her. She tries to open it, but it is locked.

CINDY

(knocking)

Little Boy, open the door. Open this door right now.

She sees a brighter light at the end of the hallway.

The sound of a helicopter intensifies as she walks towards the light.

Empty hospital beds are on either side of the hallway.

Perspiring, she comes to a bed with the same young man in military uniform. He appears dead. His eyes are closed. He receives nourishment from a drip bottle.

Cindy shakes him once, then twice. His eyes suddenly open. He strangles her.

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy wakes up in her bed coughing. The clock reads two ayem.

(O.S.) The distant sound of a helicopter. The sound intensifies as she walks down the hallway towards the study.

INT. THE STUDY

The television is on. The screen flashes pictures of wartime conflict. Buck is at his desk. She reaches out to him.

TELEVISION

It was the will of the American people to contain Asian Communism that prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to bombard North Vietnam in 1965. The conflict involved 500,000 U.S. troops. By 1975, after the fall of Saigon, 200,000 U.S. troops had been wounded with 58,000 killed or missing in action.

Cindy barely touches him. Buck turns around. He wears a thin beard and looks haggard.

BUCK

What do you think you're doing?

CINDY

I was just wondering what you were doing.

BUCK

(getting up)

What does it look like I'm doing?

CINDY

I don't know. I guess watching the television.

BUCK

Watching the television? That's all you think I do all day? Get drunk and watch the television? I do have a job. I do work at a high paying job, you realize that?

CINDY

I do. I realize that.

BUCK

I don't think you do. Do you know how hard I work to provide for this family? How every morning I have to take a packed train into work and deal with my boss. Are you really that aware of how hard I work to put food on the table, to pay the mortgage for this fucking shithole, huh?

CINDY

Buck, I -

BUCK

Shut up, and get out.

Buck slams the door, shutting Cindy out of the room.

INT. THE STUDY

Buck sits on a loveseat in front of the television. The soldier, who in Cindy's dream strangled her, sits next to Buck with his legs crossed.

Buck returns his stare, as he is now a young boy.

SOLDIER

You're not supposed to be in here. You know that.

YOUNG BUCK

This is my house too. I can be in here if I want to.

SOLDIER

Not if you want a beating from Dad.

YOUNG BUCK

No one's gonna beat me. Mommy said so.

SOLDIER

Mom's not one to talk. Dad beats her up every chance he gets.

YOUNG BUCK

I'll never be like him. Never in a million years. I hate him. I hate his guts. Why does he have to treat Mom that way?

SOLDIER

Because you're mother pisses him off with the things she does. Now when I go off to the war, you'll be the man of the house. You'll be the one in charge from now on. You'll be in charge of Mom.

YOUNG BUCK

Why are you going off to the War? Nobody likes that war.

SOLDIER

Dad is making me go. He says it'll make a man out of me. He's right. I have to defend my country against those commie bastards. You'll have to go too. Dad's gonna make you go.

YOUNG BUCK

I'm not going. I don't have to do what Dad says.

SOLDIER

Yes you do. We both have to do what Dad says.

YOUNG BUCK

Or else what?

SOLDIER

Or else he'll give you a beating. A good, hard beating.

YOUNG BUCK

I don't care.

SOLDIER

I wouldn't say that if I were you. A young boy like yourself shouldn't say things like that. He is our father after all. You never listen to him. Either does Mom. That's why he gets so angry.

(O.S.) A door slams. Someone enters the house.

SOLDIER

If he finds you in here, you're in a lot of trouble.

Buck hears footsteps coming towards the door. The Soldier disappears. A SHADOW looms over Young Buck.

SHADOW

Didn't I tell you never to come in here?

YOUNG BUCK

This is my house too.

SHADOW

You're house too, eh? Come here. I'll show you whose house it is.

The Shadow of a man, whose face cannot be seen, slips his belt loose from his trousers.

INT. THE HALLWAY

Sounds of a child being beaten reverberates through the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE, NEW YORK CITY, - AFTERNOON

Eddie knocks on Buck's office door. He doesn't answer. Eddie opens the door.

Buck is asleep at his desk.

EDDIE

Whoa, Buck! Buck, wake up! This is not your bedroom.

BUCK

(groggy)

Yeah, I'm awake. What is it?

EDDIE

You get a good night's sleep, or what?

BUCK

I slept fine. What can I help you with, Eddie?

EDDIE

We have a slight problem.

BUCK

I can't handle another problem right now. I'm already busy writing the proposal.

EDDIE

I made the deposit. Turns out we're short about a thousand dollars.

BUCK

We did collect all of the rent, didn't we?

EDDIE

I thought we did too, but after going over the receipts, you missed two of the basement apartments.

BUCK

Shit. Not now, Eddie. I can't handle this right now.

EDDIE

The bank's slapping us with a late charge. The money's already with the contractor.

BUCK

Well that's just fucking great. What the hell are we supposed to do now? We have to go back there and get those fucking rents.

EDDIE

Buck, it's way too late for that. Once you're late, you're late. They don't give a shit that we got it in late. What do they care, right?

BUCK

Shit!

EDDIE

I hate to tell ya this, but we have to tell the Old Man. Unless you have enough to cover half of it.

BUCK

I don't have that kind of money.

(beat)

I can't lose this job. I can't let that happen. And now we have to march into that old bastard's office and tell him that we just got fined for shit we were supposed to take care of two days ago? I don't think so. That's not gonna happen.

EDDIE

Just settle down, okay? This is no time to pull out our hair over this. Let's just go get a drink and talk things over. That's the best we can do right now.

BUCK

(sighs)

Why not? Might as well. I could use a couple anyway.

Buck grabs his jacket.

INT. THE BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Buck is drinking scotch. Eddie is drinking beer. Buck is a little drunk.

BUCK

So we're screwed, is that it? We're pretty much screwed. We might as well tell him tonight.

EDDIE

Let me do the talking, but we don't need to tell him tonight. We'll tell him tomorrow night. I've got to think up something good.

BUCK

There's no explanation that could satisfy that man. The explanation may make sense. It may not make any sense. Regardless, I think we're both screwed. And for me, well, it looks like I should start clearing out my desk. I'm sick of real estate anyway. Too many assholes in this business.

EDDIE

C'mon, let's not think about it.

BUCK

The guy hates me. He never liked me.

EDDIE

Don't get so down on yourself. Things are looking up already. Look over there.

Julie walks into the bar. She is alone. She takes off her coat, revealing a stunning evening dress.

EDDIE

She doesn't come in here too often. Hmmm, she's looking good.

BUCK

Yeah, she always looking good. What can a man do?

EDDIE

Why don't you say hello. She's always liked you.

BUCK

Right now I'm too depressed to move.

EDDIE

Bucky, don't worry about the Old Man. I'll handle everything. It's not such a big deal. Y'know, you should be enjoying life a little more. You take things too seriously. You worry too damn much. Settle back. Relax. I'm good with the Old Man.

BUCK

What's there to enjoy?

EDDIE

Take me last night. I picked up a beautiful long-legged stripper from a club downtown. She called herself Raven. Can you believe that? A

chick who calls herself Raven? Anyway, we went back to my hotel room. We were fucking all night long, when she suddenly says to me: 'put your hands around my throat.' I didn't fight it, because I'm fucking her really hard. So I did, and while she's beneath me, she says: 'now squeeze harder.' I said 'no,' but she keeps on wanting it. It turned her on. So here I am, going in and out of her up to the hilt, and I'm strangling her at the same time. Chicks like that ya know. But with the wife you got, well, you wouldn't know what it's like, would ya?

BUCK  
(beat)

No. I wouldn't know what it's like. My wife and I don't have a sex. It's platonic. We love each other on another level.

EDDIE

Julie looks mighty good tonight, though. She's always liked you, Buck. Why don't you go up and say hello. A woman like that doesn't stay alone for long.

Buck swallows what's left of his drink. He goes up to the bar and orders another.

Julie pulls out a cigarette and holds it to her lips. Buck lights it.

JULIE

Thank you.

BUCK

Don't mention it

JULIE

It's getting late, Buck. Shouldn't you be running home.

BUCK

I go wherever I want, and I do whatever I please.

JULIE  
(smiling)

That's a pretty strong statement for a man who works down on the third floor.

BUCK

Oh, I'm going places, Julie. That's something I've known all along.

JULIE

And where's that, Buck? Back to New Jersey?  
Back to your ball and chain?

Buck slips his wedding ring into his jacket pocket.

BUCK

What ball and chain are you referring to?

JULIE

I guess things aren't going too well at home for  
you to be out this late.

BUCK

You can say that.

JULIE

Y'know, we're all counting on you for this Newark  
deal. What's it like to be on the inside of it?

BUCK

It feels pretty good, considering all the energy  
I'm putting into it.

JULIE

You just might be able to afford me, Buck.  
That's if you don't spend it in two places at  
once.

BUCK

I'm working on it. Believe me, I'm working on  
it.

JULIE

I hope so, because I hate coming in second place.  
I've seen a lot of hot shots come and go. But  
when I want something, I make sure I keep it.  
And if you're taking me home tonight, you better  
be sure you're priorities are straight.

BUCK

My priorities have been straight for a very long  
time. You're the one who'll keep them straight.

JULIE

I've always loved hard jobs. It's got to be hard  
for me to like it so much.

BUCK

Oh, you'll like it. And I can certainly afford  
it.

JULIE  
I'd like to discuss this more in depth.

BUCK  
Your place sounds fine.

JULIE  
You read my mind.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM - MORNING

Cindy stumbles out of bed. She's sick and feverish.

INT. THE BATHROOM

She throws up in the bathroom toilet.

INT. THE KITCHEN

CINDY  
(on the phone)  
Hello, this is Cindy Harrow calling. . . I'm just not feeling too well, actually not feeling well at all. I'm wondering if you can squeeze me in today. . . No, I can't see you next month, I have to see you today. I'm feeling really sick, and I'm not sure what it is. . . I can't wait that long. Surely you have a cancellation somewhere. . . . Oh, okay, four-thirty will be fine. Thank you so much, because I'm just not feeling well, you understand.

INT. A DOCTOR'S OFFICE.

Cindy sits on a hospital table. A DOCTOR brings in results of her test.

CINDY  
Well?

DOCTOR  
Mrs. Harrow, our preliminary reports show that there's nothing wrong with you.

CINDY

That's a mistake. There must be something wrong with me. I've been nauseous all morning, and I haven't been feeling well for the last week, ever since we moved in to our new home, and I've been having these strange dreams at night, and my head feels like its about to cave in, and -

DOCTOR

Mrs. Harrow -

CINDY

- and I see things in the dark, all of these weird visions, and I think my house may be haunted. My husband is never home. It's getting ridiculous -

DOCTOR

Mrs. Harrow, there is nothing wrong with you.  
(beat)

You're pregnant.

CINDY

Pregnant?

DOCTOR

Yes, you're testing positive. You're pregnant.

(Pause)

CINDY

Oh.

DOCTOR

Let me be the first to congratulate you.

CINDY

(smiling)

I had no idea.

(beat)

Really, I had no idea. I guess I'll go home and tell my husband. He's working really hard these days. I can't believe it.

INT. THE KITCHEN - EVENING

Cindy puts up wallpaper. A severe thunderstorm outside can be heard from within. A tree limb bangs against a window pane. The household is in disarray.

She gets an acute pain in her stomach.

The power goes out. She searches for a flashlight. She finds it in one of the drawers. She turns it on. In the spotlight she discovers the Little Boy standing near her.

CINDY

Awww, not now.

The boy motions for her to follow him.

CINDY

No. I'm not going with you anymore. You show me horrible things. You don't talk to me. You don't say anything. Why should I follow you when you don't say anything? I feel like I'm going nuts in this house, that's what it feels like. You better start talking, or else I'm not going with you anymore.

The Little Boy starts to cry.

CINDY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

The Little Boy steps away, trying to get her to follow him.

CINDY

Oh, alright, just don't cry, okay? But this is the last time, you hear me? This is the last time. You can't expect me to go wherever you go. You're hurting my feelings by showing me those terrible things.

She pulls out the knife from the drawer. She follows the boy.

INT. THE HALLWAY

The boy has disappeared.

She faces the study. She puts her ear to the door. She hears the faint sound of the television. She opens the door.

INT. THE STUDY

The study is dark, except for the glow of the television screen. It flashes pictures of the Vietnam War. She tries to turn off the television, but it won't turn off. The power is then restored to the home. The reflection on the screen shows a body dangling behind her. She turns around. The body of an old man hangs from a noose.

She screams and runs from the room.

INT. THE KITCHEN

CINDY

(on the phone)

Hello, Police? This is Cindy Harrow on 324 Sycamore Drive. There's a dead body in the house. Please come quickly. Yes, a dead body! Come now!

She hangs up the phone and runs out of the house into the rain.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN, A THUNDERSTORM

A squad car arrives. She approaches an OFFICER.

CINDY

(to the officer)

It's in there. In the study.

OFFICER

Show me the way, ma'am.

INT. THE HOUSE

Cindy shows the Officer to the study.

CINDY

(whispering)

It's in there.

The Officer opens the door to the study. The television is off. There is no body in the room.

CINDY

It was hanging right there, and the television. It showed pictures of some war. I'm sure of it. You've got to believe me.

OFFICER

Ma'am, there's no dead body in here.

CINDY

There was. I'm telling you there was. I saw it with my own eyes.

OFFICER

(to his radio)

315 to base.

RADIO

Go ahead 315.

OFFICER

There's nothing here. Just a false alarm. Over.

RADIO

Check 315. Return to base. Over.

CINDY

Please. There are strange things going on in this house. I saw a dead body. You have to believe me.

OFFICER

Ma'am, there's no dead body in this house.

CINDY

Check upstairs. Yes, check upstairs. There's something going on upstairs. Please don't leave. Just check upstairs.

Cindy follows the Officer as they climb the stairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS

They open the doors one at a time, but there's nothing but the emptiness of the rooms.

She chases the Officer downstairs.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS

CINDY

Please don't go. I'm telling you, there is something in these rooms.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN, A THUNDERSTORM.

Cindy follows him to the squad car.

CINDY

I'm telling you there's something not right with this place.

OFFICER  
(from the cruiser)  
Ma'am, I suggest you get some help for your  
mental problems.

The car pulls away. In the distance Cindy sees the figure of Wilbur Robinson watching the scene.

CUT TO:

INT. JULIE'S APARTMENT, NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Buck and Julie kiss. They are barely in the apartment when they disrobe.

JULIE  
(whispering hotly)  
I know you want me, Buck.

BUCK  
Yes, I want you. I want you bad. I've always  
wanted you.

INT. JULIE'S BEDROOM

Julie takes out a small case from her bedside drawer. It is cocaine. She snorts it. She offers some to Buck. Buck hesitates.

JULIE  
C'mon, Buck. It'll make you fuck like you  
wouldn't believe.

She pours the white powder on her body. Buck snorts the cocaine. They fall into bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILBUR ROBINSON'S FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Cindy knocks on the door. She knocks softly at first, but she keeps knocking. Wilbur answers the door.

WILBUR  
Can I help you?

CINDY  
Wilbur, hi. May I come in?

WILBUR  
(reluctantly)  
I'm a little busy right now.

CINDY

I can't concentrate. Please, Wilbur. I just want to talk with somebody.

WILBUR

I don't think I'm the right person to talk to. Maybe there's somebody else -

CINDY

My husband is never home, and I don't know anybody around here. Please, Wilbur, it's important. Please let me in. I won't pry, just let me in.

Wilbur opens the door.

INT. WILBUR ROBINSON'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Wilbur's home is neatly made but sparse and blank. There are no wall hangings or bookshelves.

They sit across from each other at a table in the living room. Wilbur brings her a cup of tea.

CINDY

Thank you, Wilbur. I know it's early, but I can't sleep, especially in that house.

WILBUR

What's the matter with the house? It looks like a fine house.

CINDY

Looks can be deceiving.

WILBUR

Maybe it's something you should talk over with your husband.

CINDY

My husband is never home. He's been working long hours, all hours. And besides, he wouldn't believe me if I told him.

WILBUR

Told him what?

CINDY

That there are strange things happening in that house.

(beat)

Ahhh, what's the point. No one'll believe me anyway. I'm just glad to be away from it for a little while at least. It just comes one after the other.

(beat)

What about you, Wilbur? Have you seen anything weird happening with the house, over the years?

WILBUR

I don't know. I tend to keep to myself. Nothing much happens around here. It stays quiet most of the time.

CINDY

Yeah, but it's me too. I'm starting to keep to myself too, and I'm usually very social. There's no one to talk to, no one to converse with. No one ever walks along the street. It's just so isolating.

(beat)

Why do I get the feeling that there's a lot more you're not telling me about the house we just bought.

WILBUR

Why's that?

CINDY

I can sense it. I've been sensing quite a bit lately for no known reason. It's either something wrong with me, or what I'm seeing in the house is valid. There's stuff that's so horrifying I can't even sleep at night. My husband would never believe me if I told him.

(beat)

But you, Wilbur - why do I get the feeling that you would believe me?

WILBUR

I keep to myself most of the time.

CINDY

Yes, we've already established that. See no evil, hear no evil, is that it?

WILBUR

There are some things, some people, who champion the good. And those that do, those that truly believe in the good never turn a blind eye to evil. They fight it wherever and whenever it shows up.

CINDY

There you go again.

WILBUR

There I go again what?

CINDY

You're speaking like you know something that I don't.

WILBUR

I'm sorry. I don't mean to sound that way.

CINDY

So what are you telling me? That you know something about the place? Is that it? You were the one who came over with an apple pie, telling me to trust my own instincts. You weren't exactly pleased to come over either, almost like you forced yourself to.

WILBUR

So what if I forced myself?

CINDY

So what if you forced yourself? I'm telling you that I've been seeing strange things in that house, things that would scare anyone to death, and all you can say is 'so what' to that?

WILBUR

I'm not saying 'so what' to what you're seeing.

CINDY

Then what did you mean by coming over when you really didn't want to? That I should trust my own instincts?

(beat)

Tell me, damn it.

WILBUR

I don't know what you're talking about.

CINDY

Then why do I have this feeling, this belief, that you know exactly what I'm talking about?

WILBUR

Cindy, there are some things that are better left quiet until we can find a way to keep you and your family safe.

CINDY  
My family? Who said anything about my family?

(pause)

WILBUR  
(sighs)  
Have you told your husband yet?

CINDY  
Told him what?

WILBUR  
Have you told him about the pregnancy?

CINDY  
No. I haven't told him.

WILBUR  
Sometimes it's better to keep silent about things  
until the moment we need to reveal them.

CINDY  
How did you know I was pregnant?  
(beat)

Tell me!

WILBUR  
There are some things that you're unable to  
understand at this time.

CINDY  
Well then make me understand. Please, make me  
understand them. I've never done anything to  
anybody.

(crying)  
I've never done anything to deserve this. Please  
help me. I'm begging you. I don't want to see  
those scary things. I just want a normal life.  
And now I'm pregnant, and my marriage is falling  
apart, and nobody's telling me anything.

WILBUR  
Cindy. Cindy, please.

CINDY  
I can't. I don't know what's happening to me.

WILBUR  
You have to be strong, especially now. Drink  
your tea.

CINDY

(taking a sip)

And what about my husband? I have to tell him. He is, after all, my husband, the father of this child, and no matter how he's been acting lately, I do love my husband. We moved here after we couldn't afford our last house. We moved here to have a family, you know.

WILBUR

When was the last time you saw him?

CINDY

(regaining her composure)

He's been working really odd hours. Sometimes when I reach across for him, he's not there. At other times, when he's home, he wants to be left alone in that damned study of his.

WILBUR

You can't tell him about the baby.

CINDY

But you're not telling me why. I have to tell him. He's always wanted a family. How can I not tell him? This is what he's always wanted.

WILBUR

Please, Cindy. Now is not the right time. You must not let him know you're pregnant.

CINDY

(pacing)

This is crazy. This is just too unreal for me. I don't even know why I bothered coming over here in the first place. Am I going nuts, is that it? Because I can't explain what's happening to me.

WILBUR

(tenderly)

Cindy, there's a lot about ourselves that we don't know. There's a lot about our potential, our own abilities that we have no idea about. We have no idea that we have them. We have no idea what they can accomplish.

CINDY

I never chose this. I never wanted this to happen.

WILBUR

I know you didn't. I never wanted it to happen either, but sometimes we don't have a choice in the matter. Sometimes we are the ones who are chosen.

(beat)

Don't tell your husband. Not now. It's not safe.

CINDY

This is ridiculous. Look at ourselves. We're not children anymore, believing in daydreams and fantasies. Believing in things that aren't real.

WILBUR

We're not talking daydreams. What's happening is very real. And contrary to your opinion of me, I don't have all the answers. In fact, you know more than I do.

CINDY

Bullshit. There's something you're not telling me.

WILBUR

I'm telling you all that I know. I'm a terrible liar. I don't know what's happening to you or to me, but experience tells me that what you're experiencing is valid. I'm sorry, but it is. Trust it, Cindy. You have to trust your own mind, the way it works, before you can find answers to difficult questions.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OFFICE, NEW YORK CITY - AFTERNOON

Eddie knocks on Buck's door. He opens it. Buck is asleep at his desk.

EDDIE

Buck. Hey, Buck!

BUCK

(startled)

Whoa. Wha?

EDDIE

Hey, this isn't a good time to be sleeping, man.

Eddie steps inside. He closes the door. Buck takes a cigarette out, opens the window, and lights up.

EDDIE

Is everything alright?

BUCK

(sniffs)

Yeah, everything's fine.

EDDIE

God, Buck, you're all strung out. Everything going okay?

BUCK

(arranging papers on his desk)

Yeah, yeah. Just finishing up some work.

EDDIE

I hope so, because we're due in the Old Man's office in about two minutes.

BUCK

Today?

EDDIE

Yeah, today. You must have had a pretty late night last night.

BUCK

(sniffs)

Last night?

EDDIE

Yeah, last night.

Buck gets on his tie and jacket.

BUCK

I remember it.

EDDIE

Well, how'd it go? Did you nail her or what?

BUCK

Eddie.

EDDIE

Don't 'Eddie' me. You must be having the time of your life.

BUCK

(sniffs)

I have a wife, remember?

EDDIE

Oh so what. Who really gives a shit about your wife. I have a wife too. Doesn't stop me.

(beat)

So are you ready, or what?

BUCK

Ready as I'll ever be.

INT. OLD MAN'S OFFICE, RECEPTION AREA

A new receptionist, CLARA, sits in Julie's place.

EDDIE

Clara, you are looking lovely today. Where's Julie?

CLARA

She took a personal day. She had a late night last night.

EDDIE

Oh I see. Well, she has found a lovely replacement.

CLARA

(smiles)

Oh, Eddie. He's expecting you guys.

EDDIE

Hmmm. Such a lovely girl. Thank you lovely.

CLARA

Don't mention it.

INT. OLD MAN'S OFFICE

OLD MAN

Ah, look what came crawling back from Newark. Finally decide to make it?

EDDIE

Sorry, sir. Buck was running a few numbers through the computer, weren't ya Buck?

BUCK

Yes. I was just going over the cost estimates for the property, and I do believe we've created more equity by going with -

OLD MAN

Shut up.

(beat)

I got a call from our friends at First National today. Guess who's decided to slap us with a late charge?

BUCK

Sir, I -

OLD MAN

I said shut up!

(beat)

Edward, can you please explain to me why the bank slapped us with a late charge. We've always been so good in getting our payments in on time - rates that we've taken years to negotiate. Wouldn't you say that such a rash action by our friends at First National is highly unusual?

EDDIE

Well, sir, the rents from the tenants.

OLD MAN

What about them?

EDDIE

Well, our collection abilities weren't up to snuff. We tried collecting all of the rents, but we missed a few apartments.

BUCK

Sir, I have a way -

OLD MAN

I said shut up!

BUCK

(mumbling)

- out of this.

EDDIE

We didn't collect all the rent the last time we were there.

OLD MAN

Why the hell not? And who's responsible for that?

(beat)

Well? Who the hell is responsible?!

EDDIE

We both are, sir.

OLD MAN

Don't give me that horseshit. I already know it was Buck. Yes, Buck didn't have the balls to collect the rent in his share of apartments. Is that right?

EDDIE

Sir, if I may add that those tenants, they were really rough on Buck.

OLD MAN

Oh?

EDDIE

They're tenants, sir. They're generally ugly, unruly, broke, and drugged up most of the time. They sit on our properties and infest them with their little claws and antennae, always nibbling at any piece of cheese we throw at them. They're like their ancestors, y'know, like roaches. They feed on all our hard work. When you raise the rent, they get loud and violent. And unfortunately for us, the laws in Newark stabilize their rent. They're almost like little maggots infesting on our infrastructure. They know how to get into the cracks where they breed and multiply, taking handouts from the government, while we, the ones who actually put in the hard work to keep what we already own, get eaten alive.

OLD MAN

Well said, Edward. But why do the receipts show most of the rents were collected by you, and the ones collected by your dipshit partner didn't get collected?

EDDIE

That's what I'm trying to explain. Those tenants, half of them are criminals. Half of them are involved with neighborhood gangs. They sacrifice live animals in those basement apartments with that witchcraft, voodoo, Howdy-Doo, whatever they have going on in there. They're like rats down there.

OLD MAN

And you're telling me that Buck is above all that, so he couldn't do an adequate job?

EDDIE

Buck just needs time to adapt to what we're doing.

OLD MAN

I think Buck's a weak little shit, that's what I think. He's a yellow-bellied coward. A skirt could beat him in a scrap.

(beat)

I'm quickly losing patience with him. It may be time to cut him loose.

EDDIE

Sir, if I may, I need him. He's the only one who can make a good enough presentation to the buyer. He may be a whimp. He may even have balls the size of gumdrops, but he's damn good with the managerial stuff.

OLD MAN

Edward, you go back in there and get my rent. And I want this little dickhead to do all the work himself, you got that? I want proof of it too.

EDDIE

I'm telling you, sir. Right after this we're driving to Newark and getting the money from those welfare bastards, and Buck here will be leading the way.

OLD MAN

I like the way you think, Edward. You're a chip off the ol' block.

(beat)

Listen, I'm having a little party at the club next week. The buyer, Lonnie Larson, an old friend of mine, he'll be there. I want you there, Edward. Put on your best suit.

EDDIE

Sir, if I may, we need Buck there.

OLD MAN

What are you his butt-buddy, Edward?! Is that what you're trying to tell me?! Has he been making passes at you? Because if he is, I swear it he'll be out on his ass.

Buck lunges forward, but Eddie places a hand on his arm.

EDDIE

I just think it's important that he be there, that's all. Larson's gonna want some numbers, not just idle chit-chat about trends and where the market may or may not go.

(pause)

OLD MAN

(sighs)

Fine, bring him with you, but I swear, if this faggot gets out of line with his drunken behavior, I'll throw him out myself.

INT. RECEPTION AREA

Buck storms out.

EDDIE

(chasing)

Buck! Hey, Buck, c'mon! He only means well. What are you getting so pissed off for? He was only trying to make a point. Don't get so bent out of shape.

INT. IN FRONT OF BUCK'S OFFICE

Buck enters his office and slams the door. Eddie is on the outside.

Eddie hears furniture and glass breaking. Eddie pretends nothing is happening as an office worker passes by.

EDDIE

Buck, y'know breaking things isn't gonna help matters any. The Old Man's gonna get even more pissed off. That's an expensive computer on your desk.

The breaking of furniture stops.

EDDIE

Buck, open the door. Now's not the time to lock yourself in. We still have rent to collect.

(beat)

Buck, will you please open the door. You've really got to learn how to channel your anger.

(beat)

Buck, we're getting late. Aren't you seeing Julie tonight? You're never gonna make it if you lock yourself in there.

(beat)

Buck!

Buck opens the door and quickly closes it behind him.

BUCK

Are you ready?

EDDIE

Ready when you are.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. THE CAR, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY - AFTERNOON

Eddie and Buck drive along a Newark avenue.

EDDIE

Y'know, I hate to say it, but you've got to learn how to channel your anger. Having a temper tantrum is one thing, but having it in your office, Bucky, that's misdirected anger. The people you should be pissed off at are those fucking maggots down in the basement. They suckered you out of your rent, you know that, don't ya?

Buck takes out a vial of cocaine and snorts it.

EDDIE

The Old Man - and I don't mean to sound funny - but the Old Man, he kind of likes you. Those things he said, it's tough love, that's what that was.

(beat)

God, will you look at this. I feel like we're in cannibal-land out here.

(beat)

Anyway, Buck the real people you should be aiming your anger towards are the tenants down in the basement, if you want my honest opinion. They're the ones who screwed you over, because you weren't aggressive enough. They're like cavemen, Buck. They don't give a shit about you, and you shouldn't give a shit about them. That's just the way it works.

EXT. THE APARTMENT BUILDING

Eddie parks the car.

INT. THE CAR

EDDIE

You're not gonna let a bunch of pygmies take what you rightfully earned, are ya? See, you have a right to be mad, but there's no use getting angry at the Old Man, or the way this system works. You were here to do a job, and that's to collect the rent. That's your number one priority right now. Everything else, you just got to let it go. Focus, Buck, focus. You've got to have that tunnel vision if you want to go places in this business.

Eddie opens the glove compartment. He puts on black gloves. He pulls out the automatic weapon. He attaches a silencer.

EDDIE

You've always been a low-key kind of guy, Buck. Now's the time to be aggressive. It's kill or be killed, that's just part of the territory. When you go back into that Old Man's office, you'll have something to be proud of. The Old Man is gonna love you for it. Go in there and do the job once and do the job right.

Eddie cocks the gun.

Buck snorts more cocaine. He puts on black gloves. He takes the gun and gets out of the car.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING

He breaks the glass of the door and opens it from the inside.

INT. THE BASEMENT

He breaks into the first apartment. No one's there. He moves down the hallway. He breaks into the second apartment. No one is there either. Finally he approaches the third apartment.

He breaks in the door. The Old Woman is standing over her kitchen stove.

OLD WOMAN

I've been expecting you. Why don't you have a seat.

BUCK

(moving close and taking aim at her head)  
Give me the fucking rent, and I mean all of it,  
in cash, or else I'm going to blow your fucking  
brains all over the floor.

OLD WOMAN

Now Buck, why don't we talk this over. Like two  
rational adults.

BUCK

I've done enough talking for one day, and if you  
don't fork over the cash, the same rent money  
that you neglected to give me, I'm gonna pump  
three bullets into your head, you got that?

OLD WOMAN

Anger can be a very dangerous thing, Buck. Just  
calm down. Everything will be okay if you just  
put down the gun and be patient.

BUCK

Stop sweet-talking, fart bag. If I don't get the  
rest of your rent from you and your primitive  
fucking neighbors, I'm gonna take this gun, jam  
it in your mouth, and give you a fucking brain  
piercing.

OLD WOMAN

You're gonna regret it, Buck. You know that.

BUCK

Oh, no. I've always wanted to blow people away  
for a living, but this time, when I fill you up  
with lead, it's gonna feel real satisfying.

OLD WOMAN

Okay. Okay. I'm getting it. It's in the cookie  
jar. Just take it easy. Easy does it.

Buck has his gun to her head. He pushes her towards the cookie jar.  
The Old Woman pulls out a wad of cash.

BUCK

Now where's the rest of it?

OLD WOMAN

You're not well. Look at yourself. Take an honest look at yourself. This is not you. This is not how you want to live your life, is it?

BUCK

Shut up!

OLD WOMAN

Those same forces are after you, Buck. You've got to listen to me. Killing me won't do any good. Look around you. Look at what they're doing to you.

BUCK

I know you have more than this. Where's the money, bitch. Where the fuck is my money.

OLD WOMAN

Okay, I'm getting it. It's in the cabinet.

They move to the cabinet above the stove.

OLD WOMAN

Please, Buck. You have no idea what you're dealing with. Deep down, you're a good person, I can see that. You're not going to win this way. They've gotten a hold of your mind, can't you see that? They want you dead. They want all of us dead!

BUCK

Shut up, you old bitch!

She takes out an extra wad of cash from the cabinet.

OLD WOMAN

There. Take it. You got what you want, now go!

BUCK

You know, I did get what I want, but I'm gonna kill you anyway.

He fires the gun.

INT. WILBUR ROBINSON'S LIVING ROOM

Wilbur falls to the floor in pain.

INT. BUCK AND CINDY'S KITCHEN

Cindy holds her stomach, as she falls to the floor in pain.

INT. OLD WOMAN'S APARTMENT

The Old Woman falls to the floor, dead.

EXT. THE FRONT OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING

Buck races to the car.

EDDIE

Did you get it? Show it to me.

Buck shows him the wad of cash.

BUCK

Punch it.

Eddie floors the accelerator. They peel away from the apartment building, hollering at the top of their lungs.

INT. THE CAR

EDDIE

Yeah, Buck, yeah! Don't it feel good!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Buck walks home from the train station. He enters the liquor store on the corner of the block.

INT. THE LIQUOR STORE

He pulls a bottle of whiskey from the shelves. He approaches the counter. The Owner looks at him suspiciously. He hesitates before ringing up the purchase.

BUCK

Y'know what? How come every single time I walk in here, you look at me as though you know something about me that I don't know. Why is it that every time I get a bottle of the same damn liquor I've been buying for the last three weeks, you look at me as though you've seen a fucking ghost? Don't you think that when a customer comes in and buys the same exact bottle he's always purchased for the past couple of weeks that he should be treated with the utmost respect, not looked upon as some sort of stranger that comes waltzing in from out of town, someone who's a vagrant, someone who's so low class that

he deserves to be looked upon that way? See, you are a very special part of our community. Oh yes, your little store of easy pleasure and sin plays a vital role in the town's way of life. When someone, not only someone, but an upstanding member of the taxpaying community walks in looking for a smooth, intoxicating bottle of Tennessee's finest whiskey, walks in and selects only the finest booze, so he can go home and masturbate for the rest of the evening, the store owner, which just happens to be you, is supposed to greet the customer, smile, and put his fat geriatric fingers on his little keypad and ring the customer up. The main point of this little exercise is to send the customer away with a bottle of good liquor, and to make sure the customer is satisfied. Is that so difficult for an old cardiac-arrest windbag to figure out? I just want to know: how difficult can it really be, to simply punch up the fucking register and please the customer, who wants nothing more than to get drunk and whack off, how much is that to ask? What does this say about our town when an old ugly man like yourself, who does nothing but encourage criminal behavior, who does nothing but serve spirits to this ugly, rundown, primitive, knuckle-headed populace, say about our town?

(beat)

What I suggest you do each and every time I walk in here is put your digits of your fat fucking hand on the register and punch up my bottle of whiskey, before I take a meat slicer and slice your fucking head with it.

The man rings up the purchase.

BUCK

And you should always, always give me a fucking receipt.

When he gets the receipt, he crumples it up.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy is dreaming.

INT. A HOSPITAL CLINIC

Within the dream, she is being wheeled on a hospital gurney towards a room in a clinic. Buck stands above her, moving with the gurney. He is dressed in an operating gown.

BUCK

Don't worry, honey. I'll be right by your side.  
Everything will be just fine.

CINDY

(moaning)

No. No.

BUCK

Shhh. There, there. The doctor is the best in  
his field. Trust me. I'd never let anything  
happen to you. Just close your eyes.

She is wheeled into an operating room. A doctor holds a needle beside her. The doctor is the Old Man from Buck's office. He tests the needle.

OLD MAN

Don't worry. This won't hurt a bit. Just count  
back from ten.

The Old Man sinks the needle into her arm.

CINDY

(moaning)

No.

INT. THE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cindy wakes up from her dream. She's perspiring and short of breath. She calms herself down. She hears the faint sound of the television. She follows the sound from the hallway to the study.

INT. THE STUDY

Buck is sitting on the loveseat watching television. A bottle of whiskey sits on his desk. He flips through channels. He's hypnotized by what he's watching.

He watches a popular PSYCHOLOGIST on a talk show.

PSYCHOLOGIST  
(on the television)

Sometimes we get so angry and frustrated. It happens all the time. The best way to deal with it is to let it all out. Some people punch a punching bag. Others I know take a piece of ground beef, put it on a table, and pound at it. But the worst thing you can possibly do is keep it all locked within you. Anger needs to be expressed. It needs to be shared with someone you love.

He changes channels. He watches a news story. White brick packages are laid out on a table.

REPORTER  
(V.O.)

The Coast Guard off New Jersey seized 20 pounds of cocaine originating in Miami. The cocaine has an estimated street value of 42 million dollars. The drug bust was one of the largest on record this year. Coast Guard officials arrested seven in connection with the drug smuggling operation, said to be one of the largest drug rings in the Northern Hemisphere.

ANCHOR  
(on the television, to his co-anchor)  
That's a lot of nose candy, ain't it Cindy?

He changes channels. An old black and white movie. A man on screen is murdering a woman.

He changes channels. He watches a talk-show HOST in front of a studio audience.

HOST  
(on the television)

It is said to be one of the most growing problems in our society today: husbands who want to murder their wives.

CINDY  
Buck? Buck, are you awake?

BUCK  
(sighs)

CINDY

Buck, we have to talk.

BUCK

Not now, honey, I'm busy in here.

CINDY

Buck, we need to talk now. It's important.

BUCK

Can't you see that I'm doing something right now?

CINDY

Please, Buck. This can't wait.

BUCK

(sighs angrily)

Right now? You mean, we can't talk when it's light out, when most couples talk things over? You want to talk right now and interrupt my concentration?

CINDY

It's important.

BUCK

(getting up, moving towards her)

Important. So you're saying that what I'm doing isn't important, is that what I'm hearing.

CINDY

No, Buck. I didn't mean it like that.

INT. THE HALLWAY

BUCK

Do you know what you're doing right now?

CINDY

Buck, I -

BUCK

You do know what you're doing right now, don't cha? You're violating my personal space, that's what you're doing. You see this room right now? This is my personal space. When I'm in here, inside this personal space, I don't like to be bothered. I concentrate in my personal space, and when you are inside my personal space, you are violating my personal space. You are either on the inside or on the? On the?

CINDY

Buck -

BUCK

Outside of my personal space. You're either in it or out of it. There's no river in between. There's no bridge that brings you over. There's no ferry service. And when you're inside, emoting like the fragile lamb that you are, you are interrupting what I'm trying to do, which is to feel at peace, feel at ease, in my goddamned personal space.

CINDY  
(loudly)

Buck!

(sighs)

Buck, I'm pregnant.

BUCK  
(beat)

Well, that certainly is news. Couldn't you have told me a little earlier?

CINDY

I tried, but you're never home. I had no way of telling you.

BUCK

Did it ever occur to you that maybe we can't afford to have a child right now?

CINDY

But I thought that's what you wanted.

BUCK

Have you ever once thought about using contraception, because right now we can't afford a baby, sweetheart. It's just not the right time.

CINDY

It isn't?

BUCK

No. We can't afford to have a baby. Whether we like it or not, this is not a fairy tale where everything works out. This is not fantasy land where we can have a baby, spit one out one after the other - putt, putt, putt - as though we were the wealthiest people on the block.

CINDY

I didn't know -

BUCK

You always fuck things up, Cindy. You always place your needs ahead of my needs, and now you come up with this shit news that you're having a baby.

He backs her up against the bedroom door.

CINDY

Well what do you suggest we do?

BUCK

I suggest we think up some alternatives.

CINDY

We can give the baby up for adoption. That's a good alternative.

BUCK

That's not what I had in mind, honey.

CINDY

What did you have in mind?

BUCK

Oh, I think you know what I have in mind.

CINDY

Why don't we sleep on it, okay? You can go back to your personal space. I'm very tired. I have to go to bed now.

BUCK

You do that.

She slides into the bedroom, closing the door.

INT. THE STUDY - NIGHT

Buck returns to the study. He sits and watches more television. He flips channels. He comes upon a channel flashing pictures of the Vietnam War.

TELEVISION

By now, the war was draining America's overall military force. President Johnson's generals pressed him to call up his reserves and make a small conflict a much bigger war. Johnson requested another 200,000 troops to invade North

Vietnam. Johnson believed the North Vietnamese still planned a major assault at Khesanh, where the Marines, surrounded and outnumbered, endured heavy artillery fire as they waited for the North Vietnamese to invade. Over 1,000 Allied troops were killed at Khesanh.

Buck is a young child watching television. A WOMAN enters the room whose face cannot be seen.

WOMAN

Buck, you've been watching television long enough. You still have to go to the store.

YOUNG BUCK

Not yet, Mom.

WOMAN

You're father will be home soon. You know how he hates it when dinner isn't ready on time.

YOUNG BUCK

In a minute, Mom.

WOMAN

Buck, will you turn off the television!

(beat)

Please, Buck, turn off the television. What happened, happened.

(comforting him)

Oh, my sweet child. I know you're hurting. Your brother, he died for a very good reason.

YOUNG BUCK

Mom?

WOMAN

Yes, sweetie.

YOUNG BUCK

Why did Dad send him off to the war?

WOMAN

Your Dad wanted him to serve and fight for our country. That's why he sent him.

YOUNG BUCK

Mom?

WOMAN

Yes, Buck.

YOUNG BUCK

I'm scared of Daddy.

WOMAN

Scared? Why are you scared, darling? There's nothing to be scared about.

YOUNG BUCK

The way he yells at you. The way he -

(beat)

The way he hits you.

WOMAN

Darling, you're father is going through a rough time right now, that's all. He's working very hard is all it is. I know he hasn't been in a good mood lately, but he's working really hard, and he's not getting paid all that well. He doesn't mean the things he does. Your father, he loves us. He loves you. He loved your brother.

(beat)

Come on, Buck, go to the store quickly before your Dad gets home.

(beat)

Please, Buck, stop watching TV. Listen to your mother for change.

(beat)

Please, Buck, will you go to the store before I raise my voice!

(O.S.) The outside door slams. The Woman leaves. Buck hears the MAN who just came in and his mother talking.

MAN

(O.S.)

Well, where's my dinner?

WOMAN

(O.S.)

It's going to be a little late, dear.

MAN

(O.S.)

Late! Didn't I say to always have dinner waiting when I get home? Didn't I?!

WOMAN

(O.S.)

It's just a little late. It'll be ready soon. Don't worry.

MAN  
(O.S.)

How many times have I told you to have dinner ready and waiting when I get home, huh?

WOMAN  
(O.S.)

Please, dear, don't get upset. Don't be mad at me, please!

MAN  
(O.S.)

Upset?! Upset?! I'll show you upset. I want dinner ready and waiting when I get home!

WOMAN  
(O.S.)  
(crying)

Please don't be mad at me. I'll cook dinner.

MAN  
(O.S.)  
(yelling)

Ready and waiting! Ready and waiting!

(O.S.) The husband beats his wife.

Buck continues to watch the television. He is hypnotized by it as the domestic abuse spirals out of control.

CUT TO:

INT. AN FINANCIAL SERVICES OFFICE - MORNING

Buck sees a Financial ADVISOR in his office. The Advisor is dressed in business attire. A computer sits on the Advisor's desk. Buck is jovial and hyperactive.

ADVISOR  
(shaking hands)

Hello, Mr. Harrow. Please come in. Have a seat. Can I get you anything - juice or coffee or -

BUCK  
(sniffs)

No thank you, no thank you. I'm here on business. It's strictly business.

ADVISOR  
You look well. How's Cindy doing these days?

BUCK

Oh, she's well as well can be. Thank you for seeing me on such short notice.

ADVISOR

Not a problem. How can I help you?

BUCK

Well, I was in the area, you know, making the rounds, shall we say, and I just wanted to know how our account is doing.

ADVISOR

(looking into the computer)

Let's see here.

(beat)

Well, the market, as you must know, isn't exactly doing too well, but her investments are doing so-so. She hasn't lost anything, but you guys did withdraw from the account for a down payment on a new home. This was a couple months ago. Considering the withdrawals you've made, the account is still healthy.

BUCK

(laughing)

And here we are in summer.

ADVISOR

Yes, we certainly are. But the account, as far as percentages go, is pretty much at the same level as it was in April.

BUCK

I see, well, you certainly are doing your job well.

ADVISOR

Thank you. We try our best.

BUCK

I like to see good hard work done well.

ADVISOR

Thank you for the compliment.

BUCK

I'm here, because I have some unfortunate news.

(beat)

We have to close the account.

ADVISOR

Close the account?

BUCK

Yes. My wife, my better half, is having a baby soon, and we will be having to, unfortunately, close the account. Babies are expensive, you know. Can't have any more than 2.3.

(laughs)

ADVISOR

Yes, well, I guess congratulations are in order, Mr. Harrow.

BUCK

Yep. My own little bundle of pride and joy.

ADVISOR

Again, Mr. Harrow, I congratulate you and Cindy both, but we can't just close the account.

BUCK

What?

ADVISOR

We can't just close the account.

BUCK

Why not? It's a joint account, isn't it?

ADVISOR

No. Actually it has always been a trust account in your wife's name.

BUCK

But I thought we had a joint account.

ADVISOR

Your wife set this up as a trust account in case something happened to you. Of course, I don't know why she was under the impression that something terrible would happen to you, but it is a trust account in your wife's name.

BUCK

(laughing)

Silly me.

ADVISOR

Mr. Harrow, we can make it a joint account, but your wife will have to consent to it. Until then, the funds remain in trust until either your wife submits something from your lawyer, or -  
(beat)

BUCK

Or what?

ADVISOR

She expires.

BUCK

Expires?

ADVISOR

Yes. After her death, should you be living, only then can you yourself close the account, but that's only after her death, once the funds have been transferred in your name.

BUCK

I see.

(laughs)

I think I understand it a little better than I did before.

ADVISOR

I'm sorry to bring up such a dreadful topic on such a lovely day.

BUCK

Oh, these are the realities, unfortunately. But so are taxes, right?

ADVISOR

(laughing)

Yes.

BUCK

(laughing)

You know how much I hate that.

ADVISOR

Yes.

BUCK

Now is there a way I can take out a loan against these funds, seeing that my precious wife has saved so much over the years?

ADVISOR

You can take out on margin, sure, but you'll have to pay the interest every month from your account. Or you can send it in, either or. But for that we need consent from your wife.

BUCK

(laughing)

I guess I'll be better off when she's dead.

ADVISOR

(laughing)

Believe me, Mr. Harrow, I've heard that more than once from my clients. You'd be surprised. But seriously, we don't need formal consent for that. Just a letter from your wife.

BUCK

A letter?

ADVISOR

Yes. A signed letter will do. You can even fax it to us. Taking out on margin is actually quite common when you need a little extra cash.

BUCK

I guess that's the answer to my problems.

(laughing)

But not all of them.

ADVISOR

Yes, well, when your wife dies I'm sure we'll be seeing more of you.

BUCK

(laughing)

Why don't we just kill the bitch.

ADVISOR

(uncomfortable)

Well, I've got some work to do.

BUCK

Work on the account, I hope.

ADVISOR

Yes, lots of work, lots of work.

BUCK  
I'll be back before you know it.

CUT TO:

INT. A LUXURY CLOTHING SALON, NEW YORK CITY - LATE MORNING

The clothing salon is empty except for a WOMAN. She is dressed appropriately for the lavish setting. Buck is wearing the same clothes he had on a few days earlier. He is unshaven and unkempt, still strung out.

The woman looks him over. She continues her work.

On the counter sits a bell. Buck rings the bell loudly.

The disgruntled woman looks at him. Buck rings the bell again. The woman finally attends to him.

WOMAN #1  
Can I help you?

BUCK  
Yes, you can. I was just passing by, and I heard on the television that your store does celebrity makeovers for an exclusive list of clients.

WOMAN #1  
We do do makeovers for a select number of clients, yes.

BUCK  
You do accept credit cards, don't you?

WOMAN #1  
Yes, but we only do makeovers for those who, well, speaking frankly, those who can afford to have them done.

BUCK  
You mean like celebrities, the rich and famous, that sort of thing?

WOMAN #1  
Yes.

BUCK  
Well guess who just became a celebrity this morning?

INT. A HAIRDRESSER'S WORKSTATION

Buck lies back into the sink. An attractive WOMAN washes his hair.

WOMAN #2

Mr. Harrow, may I tell you something.

BUCK

You may.

WOMAN #2

You have such wonderful hair. It's strong, assured, and so sexy.

BUCK

I've always had strong hair. There are a lot of things about me that are strong, assured, and sexy. There's a lot about me I'd like to show you.

WOMAN #2

After your rubdown, I'd love to take a look.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILBUR ROBINSON'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Cindy knocks at his door.

CINDY

Wilbur? Are you in? It's Cindy

WILBUR

(through the screen)

I'm busy right now.

CINDY

Doing what?

WILBUR

Cindy, I'm busy right now.

CINDY

Will you let me in Wilbur, my God.

WILBUR

I'm fixing lunch right now.

CINDY

Well do you mind if I joined you?

WILBUR

Yes, I do mind.

CINDY

I just want to talk to you. That's it.  
(beat)

Please let me in. I just want to talk to you.

INT. WILBUR'S LIVING ROOM

Wilbur prepares lunch for them both.

CINDY

I told Buck.

WILBUR

(bringing out sandwiches)

You told him about what?

CINDY

I told him about the baby.

WILBUR

(sighs)

I told you not to tell him. Didn't I tell you  
not to tell him?

CINDY

How was I supposed to know? Tell me, Wilbur,  
because you haven't told me anything.

WILBUR

What did he say?

CINDY

What difference does it make?

WILBUR

(firmly)

What did he say? What did he tell you?

CINDY

He wants me to have an abortion, but why tell you  
something you already know.

WILBUR

I'm sorry, Cindy.

CINDY

About what?

WILBUR

I'm sorry your husband feels that way. Did he tell you why he feels that way?

CINDY

I don't know, Wilbur. Don't you already know why he said that? Don't you already know what's happening to us, why I never see him, why he's been so distant and cold lately? Don't you have all the answers? Isn't there some reason why you're not telling me the things that I need to know? What if I knew a lot about you, huh, Wilbur?

WILBUR

There's nothing to know about.

CINDY

What happened to you, Wilbur? It's like you're living but you're already dead.

WILBUR

I don't know what you're talking about.

CINDY

I mean what do you do all day, Wilbur? Sit at home and stare at the walls? Is that what you've made out of your life. Afraid to go outside. A hermit? Is that you're contribution to this world?

WILBUR

Cindy, you're being irrational.

CINDY

Irrational, is that what you call it?

WILBUR

Yes.

CINDY

Well I guess that makes two of us. But it's not like you to reveal anything. It's not like you to reveal something that can actually help. Call me irrational, but look at this place. Don't look at my life, because I'm watching you for a change. No one ever comes around here. No one ever comes knocking at your door. This place is like a morgue. Hell, you're life must be pretty easy when you're such a hermit that you don't have to shower every day, don't have a phone, don't say hello to anybody, just so afraid and

alone that you can't even walk out of your own house. How long has it been? Tell me, Wilbur?

WILBUR

Stop it.

CINDY

(Getting up)

Tell me - how long have you lived in isolation, away from people, afraid of people, afraid of what they'll do to you if you get involved, because isn't that what you fear the most: getting involved with people, interacting with people, afraid they may hurt you.

WILBUR

Stop it, I said.

CINDY

What's left to deny when all you have is yourself and your damned turkey sandwiches at one o'clock every weekday, two o'clock on weekends, because that's what it's come down to - no reason left to keep going, is that it? Just pacing at home in the middle of the day, praying for someone to enter your bleak world and lighten it up, praying so damn hard that it occupies everything you do, every waking moment filled with ideas of what you could have been, what you could have done, when you can hardly muster the courage to walk outside your own front door.

WILBUR

Stop it!

CINDY

No, I won't stop. How does it feel have loneliness as a bedfellow, talking to the walls, no one to talk to, feeding off yourself, shutting yourself in, creating a prison out of something meant to be free, no love in your life, just a string of days woven together, no company, imagining women instead of talking to them.

WILBUR

I told you, I don't know anything!

CINDY

Tell me, damn it. Tell me what's happening. Tell me why you wake up in the middle of the night when I'm the one who's fucking dreaming. Tell me why my husband wants to abort my own

child, or do I have to tell you why you wake up in the middle of the night, why you hear the voices of your own mother calling out to you, screaming from the bottom of her soul, calling for you to get off your lonely ass and struggle just like everyone else, deal with your stupid little problems instead of running away from them. Tell me, damn it, because if this keeps up we'll be slowly dying instead of living. Life may have betrayed you, but you can't go on living this way. I'm asking for your help. Don't be afraid of me. Don't be as cruel to me as you are to yourself. Tell me, damn you, because we're both becoming hermits. We're both becoming lonely and insular. And if this keeps up, we'll be slowly dying instead of living. Please, Wilbur. For once in your life.

(Pause)

WILBUR

(trembling)

That's certainly quite a talent you have.

CINDY

(crying)

I know. Why is this happening to me?

WILBUR

What you have is what you have, and nobody can do much about it, except for -  
(beat)

CINDY

Except for whom?

WILBUR

My mother was found murdered yesterday morning. She was in her apartment when someone broke in and shot her to death.

CINDY

Oh, no. Oh, no. I'm sorry, Wilbur. I knew there was something wrong, but I had no idea.

WILBUR

It's gotten bad. Really bad. Seeing that you already know of your talent, it's time you start taking some action.

CINDY

I couldn't have prevented it.

WILBUR

No, you couldn't have. But you can prevent the death of one very important person who may in fact be what we've all been waiting for. Finally, there will be someone who truly understands our own kind.

CINDY

What? What are you saying? What are you talking about?

WILBUR

It's destiny, that's all it is. It's an important child. Your child, the child in your womb will restore order out of chaos. He'll bring light to an otherwise dark and traumatizing world. Think of the possibilities. Think about the many desperate men and women he'll save. Think about how he'll make the madness stop, this cycle of violence, this isolation killing us slowly. He'll have the power to see what we see, to calm the raging battle between the two extremes of thought, between good and evil, between the imaginary and the real.

CINDY

(exasperated)

Stop talking like that.

WILBUR

Stop kidding yourself that you're not a part of this. Stop believing that you're so helpless, that what you're seeing isn't real. Confront the danger, Cindy. Don't let your son wind up like me - a man who runs away. A man who's so angry, bitter, and alone that he can't even leave his own house. A man who keeps to himself, because he's so scared of his instincts. It starts with you. I'm sorry, but no matter how unreal this seems, you know you can't deny that you have something. That your child has something. That there are those who will do anything to make sure the child remains unborn.

CINDY

What?

WILBUR

I'm so sorry, Cindy. I'm sorry that your marriage is falling apart, but it has to be this way. They've already gotten to your husband.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OLD MAN'S PRIVATE CLUB, NEW YORK CITY - EVENING

An elegant party atmosphere. The club is opulent and spacious.

Buck is completely made over. He is dressed in the latest fashion of the day. His hair is styled. His outfit is brand new.

He greets Eddie and his wife, SANDRA.

EDDIE

(shaking his hand)

Hey, Bucky-boy! Wow! You look great. This is my wife, Sandra.

BUCK

(kissing her hand)

It's a pleasure to meet you.

SANDRA

Hmmm, I like him already.

EDDIE

Hey, where's your better half?

BUCK

I'm meeting Julie here.

EDDIE

That a boy, Buck. I always knew you and Julie had eyes for each other.

(aside to Buck)

It's good that you can afford her.

(winks)

They climb a set of stairs. They arrive at a larger room with party-goers.

EDDIE

Larson should be here. We've got to put on a good show. Hope you'll be able to sweet-talk him with those numbers.

BUCK

(shadow boxing)

Let me at 'em.

EDDIE

Alright, Buck!

(to Sandra)

Baby, Buck's been ready for this party all his life. He's ready to close the deal, eh Buck?

BUCK

I was born ready.

(beat)

I'll catch up to you guys a little later.

INT. THE RESTROOM

Buck walks into a large restroom. He makes sure no one is inside.

He takes out a vial of cocaine and snorts. He looks himself over in the mirror.

BUCK

(to himself)

Go and get 'em Bucky-boy. You are the man. You  
- are - the man.

INT. THE PARTY AREA

He returns to the party. He sees Julie in the distance. She's hanging on the shoulder of the Old Man.

She looks at him and slides her hand along her thigh.

After smiling politely, she whispers something into the Old Man's ear. She leaves him and moves towards Buck.

Buck hugs her seductively, sliding his hands all over her body.

JULIE

So you're glad to see me.

BUCK

Yeah. I'm really glad to see you. I've got something to show you.

JULIE

I can't, Buck. I'm with my boss for the evening.

BUCK

He can take care of himself.

JULIE

He can afford me. That's why I'm with him.

BUCK  
But I have a big surprise for you.

JULIE  
How big is it?

BUCK  
Oh, it's really big.

INT. THE RESTROOM

Buck and Julie go into one of the bathroom stalls. They both snort cocaine. Buck then has sex with Julie in the stall. He is wired, and he's having sex wildly.

JULIE  
That's it, come to Momma. Hmmm, that's it.

INT. THE HOUSE, NEW JERSEY - EVENING

Cindy is sitting at home, sipping tea. She feels a pain in her stomach.

INT. THE PARTY AREA

Buck and Julie return to the party. Julie straightens out her dress. Eddie speaks with the Old Man and another gentleman, LONNIE LARSON, in their circle. Eddie calls to Buck.

EDDIE  
Cm'here, Buck, I have someone for you to meet.  
(beat)  
Buck, this is Lonnie Larson, the man who's about to purchase the best property in Newark.

OLD MAN  
(to Lonnie)  
Yes, Buck's one of our finest men. He really made a crappy building one of the best apartment buildings on the Jersey market.

INT. WILBUR ROBINSON'S HOUSE, NEW JERSEY - EVENING

Wilbur is thinking hard and sweating profusely.

INT. THE PARTY AREA

Buck looks at the Old Man. He sees flashes of the man hanging by a noose in his study.

EDDIE

Hey, Buck, everything okay, buddy?

INT. WILBUR ROBINSON'S HOUSE, NEW JERSEY

Wilbur is possessed. He is sweating hard.

INT. THE HOUSE, NEW JERSEY

Cindy is on the couch, feeling pain in her stomach.

INT. THE PARTY AREA

Buck looks at Eddie. He sees flashes of the soldier in uniform on the loveseat in the study.

OLD MAN

(smiling)

He's not only a valued member of our team, but he's also a valued member of our family.

(beat)

C'mon, Lonnie, there's someone I want you to meet.

The Old Man gives an angry look to Eddie.

Buck is alone with Eddie.

EDDIE

Buck, is everything okay? You look like something shocked you.

BUCK

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. I just need a drink, that's all.

INT. THE BAR AREA

They go up to a bar area. Buck orders a drink from one of the barmaids. The BARMAID serves him a drink. Buck puts a dollar into the tip bin. He turns around and sips his drink.

EDDIE

Buck, maybe you ought to take it easy. The night is young.

Buck turns back to the barmaid. The barmaid is now the same Old Woman that he murdered in the Newark apartment.

Buck spits out his drink.

BARMAID  
Sir, is everything alright?

EDDIE  
(to the barmaid)  
Yeah, he'll be fine. He's okay. He just needs  
to freshen up a bit, right Buck?

Eddie ushers him towards the restroom.

BUCK  
I just saw her. Eddie, I just saw her.

EDDIE  
(smiling to the partygoers around him)  
I know, Buck. It's nothing. Let's just go to  
the bathroom, throw some cold water on your face,  
okay? No harm being done here, okay.

INT. WILBUR ROBINSON'S HOUSE, NEW JERSEY

Wilbur collapses to the ground.

INT. THE HOUSE, NEW JERSEY

Cindy breathes a sigh of relief, as the pain in her stomach has gone.  
She senses something in the study in the area.

INT. THE STUDY

She turns on the computer sitting on Buck's desk. She searches for a  
pen and a piece of paper in the drawer.

She finds a bag of cocaine and also the knife that she cut her finger  
on.

She logs onto the Internet.

INT. THE BATHROOM, NEW YORK CITY

Buck splashes cold water on his face. Eddie is with him. After he  
dries himself off, he snorts more cocaine.

EDDIE  
I don't know about you, Buck. One minute you're  
the life of the party. The next minute you're a  
basket case in front of Larson.

BUCK  
I'm fine. It was just something I drank, that's  
all.

EDDIE

Everything going all right at home?

BUCK

Home? What about home?

EDDIE

I don't know, Buck. It seems like your subconscious is trying to tell you something.

BUCK

No one's trying to tell me anything. Larson's signing the deal tonight, isn't he?

EDDIE

Larson may not sign, and the Old Man, after I spoke with him, he's once again doubting your abilities.

BUCK

What? After all the work we've done? Has he lost his mind?

EDDIE

No, Buck. The Old Man hasn't lost his mind, but from what I hear, he's very concerned that you won't be able to follow through. This me and you partner thing - he's worried that you don't have what it takes to be the star member of the family, if you know what I mean.

BUCK

(beat)

I've done everything in my power. What the hell else am I supposed to do?

EDDIE

He thinks your heart's not in it. I mean, he did let you have Julie. He's the one who put nice clothes on your back, fed you, and he was the one who suggested we work as a team. Frankly, I'd hate to see it end.

BUCK

Nothing ends! Nothing ends until I say it ends!

EDDIE

Bucky, you're taking out all that anger on the wrong people. The Old Man, he thinks that you're devoting way too much time to your personal life, and quite frankly, we've known this all along.

(sighs)

But if you want to keep on playing these games, go right ahead. Personally, I like the new Buck, and deep down you know you like him too.

BUCK

So what are you trying to say, Eddie.

EDDIE

You're about to be canned is what I'm trying to say - cut off, disowned, however you want to put it. You're devoting way too much time to that wife of yours, and Buck, and I have news for ya - you're wife isn't exactly the purest little heart in town either.

BUCK

What about my wife?

EDDIE

Your wife, she's quite a card.

(beat)

Y'know I was by the house today while you were out shopping for your new threads.

BUCK

Yeah, and?

EDDIE

I saw your wife, Buck.

BUCK

Tell me you didn't sleep with her. Tell me you didn't sleep with my fucking wife!

EDDIE

No. I wouldn't do that to ya. But I tell ya, if my wife was doing the same thing your wife's doing-

(sighs)

BUCK

But she doesn't know anybody in town. I'm the only person she knows.

EDDIE

You sure about that?

(Pause)

Buck looks very angry.

EDDIE

I don't envy you, but apparently someone else does. They're like roaches, Buck.

BUCK

That fucking bitch.

EDDIE

You see, Buck, you're about to get disowned, and someone's already taken your wife. And about getting disowned, hey, in my opinion you've done a good job of it. You have sacrificed your time, your energy, every waking hour has been sacrificed for the good of the team, and now your wife is taking it all away. She's taking you away from us. That's what she's doing, Buck. I mean, she's making a fool out of you. Word's out. A lot of people are laughing at you.

BUCK

Laughing at me?

EDDIE

Yeah. I try to defend you, but it's getting tougher.

Buck snorts more cocaine.

BUCK

Who else knows about this?

(beat)

Who else?!

EDDIE

I wouldn't go talking to anybody about your wife's escapades, but I will have to explain a few things to the Old Man if you're not able to take care of this one yourself.

BUCK

I never liked that bitch. It's time for a divorce anyway.

EDDIE

I think you have to go a bit farther than that, Buck. A divorce will leave you without a pot to piss in, and you'd never be able to afford Julie. You'd get bucked back down to your old shit-paying gigs, doing deals in Timbuktu for Chrissakes.

BUCK

I've come so fucking far.

EDDIE

Personally, I would have done it a long time ago.  
(beat)

Imagine it, Buck - a nigger going in and out of your own wife? Just going in and out of her, in your own bed, sucking on your wife's tits, eating her snatch the whole night through. Is there any limit to what she'll do? She is making a fool out of you. But you're no fool, are ya Buck? You do have balls enough to deal with your wife, don't ya? Or would you rather spend the rest of your life with a view from the bottom of the pile, taking shit, never getting close enough to smell it ever again?

CUT TO:

INT. THE STUDY, NEW JERSEY - NIGHT

Cindy sits in front of Buck's computer screen. There is a thunderstorm outside. She does research on the house on Sycamore Drive.

At first she gets no results. Then she tries again. She inputs her husband's name into the search engine.

She retrieves one result - An article from 1973.

She opens the file. The article explains how a man in the house killed his wife and then hung himself.

She blows up the picture in the article. The picture shows Young Buck taken into protective custody.

CINDY

Oh no. No!

She hears the door open. Then footsteps. She grabs the knife.

Wilbur Robinson enters the room. Cindy drops the knife and runs to him.

CINDY

(embracing him)

Oh, Wilbur, I'm so scared. I'm so scared.

WILBUR  
(tenderly)

Shh, there, there. Nobody's gonna hurt you. No one will ever hurt you.

CINDY  
I see it now. It's repeating. The whole thing is repeating itself, and I'm so scared.

WILBUR  
Shhh, it will be all right. No one will hurt you. Not on my watch. I've been a stubborn fool not to realize it sooner.

CINDY  
We have to get out of here.

WILBUR  
Yes. I have a place in Newark where we can stay until things blow over. It's not the nicest place in the world, but you and the baby, you'll be safe there.

(beat)  
Go on, pack your stuff. The sooner we're out of here the better.

CINDY  
I'll get my bag.

WILBUR  
Run along now. Hurry up now. We don't have much time.

INT. THE BEDROOM

Cindy pulls out a suitcase from under the bed. She takes out her clothes and throws it into the suitcase.

She hears the door slam.

CINDY  
Damn it, Wilbur, don't go anywhere, I'll be right there!

She turns around. The Little Boy is standing there.

CINDY  
(sighs)  
Oh, not now. I can't follow you now. I'm in the middle of packing. I'm leaving this place.

The boy starts crying and points to the hallway.

CINDY

I can't play anymore. I can't follow you. Can't you understand?

The boy still cries and points.

CINDY

(to herself)

Trust my instincts, eh? Oh, all right.

INT. THE HALLWAY

The boy has disappeared. She sees a light emanating from the study. She overhears a busy signal from the phone in the kitchen. She opens the door to the study.

INT. THE STUDY

Wilbur's body is on the floor. A pool of blood gathers at his head. His throat has been cut. Cocaine has been spread out over the desk.

CINDY

(crying)

Oh no! Oh no! Wilbur, what have they done to you? My dear Wilbur. What happened?

She flees from the room. Buck is behind her holding the knife. He has blood all over him.

Cindy screams. She punches him and knocks him down. She runs into the kitchen.

INT. THE KITCHEN

Buck follows her there. She tries to open the front door.

BUCK

Honey, what's the matter?

(beat)

Just wait. I can explain everything.

CINDY

Stay away from me!

Buck slams the door shut. She runs from him and moves into the interior of the house. Buck walks towards her.

INT. HALLWAY

BUCK

Cindy, there was a strange man in our home. He attacked me. I saw him. I thought he was a burglar, and he attacked me. What else was I supposed to do?

CINDY

You're lying! You're lying!

BUCK

Cindy, now calm down. I'm your husband. This is Buck you're talking to. Stop acting like I'm the one who's a stranger in this house.

CINDY

Stand right there, or I'll scream.

BUCK

Scream? Honey, why would you scream at your husband? The one who has taken care of you all these years?

CINDY

(crying)

Stop right there. Please, stop right there.

BUCK

I wouldn't do anything to hurt you. There was a strange black man in our home. I got scared, so I had to defend myself. This neighborhood isn't safe. It's not like it used to be. I wouldn't let a stranger take away the jewel of my heart now would I? It was a misunderstanding. You have to believe me. How could you not believe your own husband?

CINDY

Don't come any closer. I'm warning you.

Buck corners her. He hugs and holds her.

She slaps at him, but he holds her still.

She ends up hugging him and crying.

BUCK

Honey, that's no way to behave towards your husband. He's just come home after a long day's work. All I wanted was to come home and have a nice, quiet dinner with my wife. Instead I find

an angry-looking man in my study. He even brought cocaine, so high and strung out he was. I would never hurt you, sweetums. On the contrary, I'm the one who protected you against this madman in our house.

CINDY

I know you would never hurt me.

BUCK

No, I would never hurt you.

CINDY

I know, Buck, I know.

BUCK

I would never do anything to hurt you.

He licks her face and makes sexual overtures.

CINDY

No, Buck would never do anything to hurt his little sweetie pie.

BUCK

Yeah, that's it, sweetie.

CINDY

I love my husband. I love him in so many ways.

BUCK

That's it, honey. Talk to me. What was it like fucking a black man in our own home?

CINDY

Oh it was good, nice and hard. We did it all night long.

BUCK

Did you like it? Did he fill you in ways I couldn't?

CINDY

Only you could fill me that way, Buck. No other man can compare.

BUCK

When he came into you, did you call his name? Did you like it, huh?

Buck rips open his pants.

BUCK

What did it feel like to have him inside of you, huh?

CINDY

You want to know how it felt. Do ya?

BUCK

Yeah, show me how it felt.

CINDY

It felt like -

Cindy knees him in the crotch. She picks up the knife.

Buck chases her down the hallway. Cindy runs upstairs. Buck follows her, recovering from the blow.

He gets halfway up the stairs, but then falls back.

BUCK

Cindy! Oh, Cindy, this is your husband speaking.

(beat)

Cindy, you can't get very far from your Daddy, you know that don't cha?

(beat)

Cindy! You must respond to the sound of my voice. Cindy!

He then slowly moves up the stairs.

BUCK

(madly)

Not paternal enough for ya, huh? It's not nice to kick your husband in the balls! Well, you know what I'm gonna do to you tonight, Cindy. Cindy! I have sounded the mating call, because you know what I'm gonna do to you tonight? I'm gonna rape you, honey. I'm gonna full, flat-on-my-face rape you like the old style rapists did, and then I'm gonna kill you. Do you know why, honey, sweetie pie - because you never put out. You give it out one year, and you take it away the next. It's like a claw chomping - chomp, chomp, chomp. It's open, then it's closed. It's open, now it's fucking closed again. Well, I think I'll go do the fucking yard now, maybe take out the trash, but God forbid I fuck my own goddamned wife for a change, in my own goddamned home, under the privacy of my own goddamned roof. But you want that equality, don't cha? Is that what you want? Well how about fucking your own

husband for a change. Is that enough fucking equality for ya? Huh?

INT. UPSTAIRS

Buck faces three doors.

BUCK

It looks like sweetie pie wants to play 'Let's Make a Deal.' And the prize? Well, Johnny, The prize is my mutilated wife. Let's see what's behind door number one!

He breaks down the first door. The room is empty.

BUCK

Well, Bucky didn't win that round, but did he win this one?

He breaks down the second door. The room is empty.

BUCK

Well now, who can be behind door number three? Is it a pig from a farm in the middle of Nebraska? Or will it be high-speed Internet so the fucking hard-working husband can get some work done in his personal space for a change?! Or will it be his wife with her legs spread wide open so his own husband can get a little piece of ass before he takes her body and cuts it to pieces. Well, we're about to find out.

He knocks on the door.

BUCK

Knock-knock. Anybody home? It's your husband, ready to fuck you senseless!

He breaks down the door.

Cindy holds the knife. Buck attacks. She slashes him with the knife. She kicks him in the crotch.

She flees the room. Buck, on the floor, grabs her by the leg and trips her.

She lunges for the stairs, but Buck holds on to her foot. She lets her shoe go. She stabs his back. She tumbles down the stairs and keeps running to the kitchen.

Buck chases her.

Cindy hits the wall. The knife drops.

Buck picks up the knife and chases her onto the front lawn.

EXT. THE FRONT LAWN OF THE HOUSE, A THUNDERSTORM - NIGHT

She runs in the direction of the police cars.

Buck is out on the lawn with the knife. The Police Officer shoots him in the arm, then the leg.

Buck falls to the ground, stabbing his knife into the damp earth.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CALM AND SERENE BEACH, A FEW YEARS LATER - AFTERNOON

The sun is shining. The sea is a crystal blue.

Cindy walks with a small child. The small child is the same Little Boy that once guided her.

They sit a few yards from the water. Cindy pulls out an apple from a basket. She eats.

LITTLE BOY

Mom?

CINDY

Yes, sweetie?

LITTLE BOY

Why do I have to be a doctor?

CINDY

(sighs)

Son, it's not what I want. It's ultimately what you want. All I can do is try to steer you in the right direction, and sometimes Mommy gets emotional about it, but yeah, Mommy does want you to be a doctor.

LITTLE BOY

Why is my name Wilbur? Everyone makes fun of me in school.

CINDY

(smiling)

Honey, a man named Wilbur -

(brushing back his hair)

A man named Wilbur helped save your life, that's why.

LITTLE BOY

But why do you want me to be a psych -, a psych -

CINDY

(giggling)

A psychiatrist, honey. A psychiatrist.

LITTLE BOY

Yeah.

CINDY

Well, it all started out when a young boy, a young boy who looked just like you, helped save your Mommy's life.

LITTLE BOY

Did a psychiatrist save your life, Mommy?

CINDY

Noooo. A psychiatrist didn't save my life, but a man named Wilbur did, and so did a young, talented, gifted young boy.

(beat)

Now stop asking questions or I'm gonna get out the tickle monster.

LITTLE BOY

(laughing)

Not the tickle monster.

CINDY

Yes, the tickle monster. Grrrr.

They run on the beach. The day is a perfect blue.

CUT TO:

INT. A MENTAL INSTITUTION - NIGHT

Buck is in the common area watching the television. The Nurse is there with him.

NURSE

Mr. Harrow, I told you for the last time. Go and get your medications.

He goes to the dispensary. Julie dispenses his medication.

JULIE

Late again, Mr. Harrow. You've always been so out of sync. These meds are too expensive to miss.

Buck swallows his medications and returns to the common area. He sits in the same place.

Eddie sits next to him on one side. The Old Man sits on the other.

EDDIE

Buck, y'know, we still have a job to do. The job's not done yet, Buck. You have a long way to go.

OLD MAN

Shut up, Edward. He'll never understand it.

EDDIE

(to Buck)

Buck, it's your son. He's causing all sorts of problems.

(beat)

I mean, your wife is with him right now on a beach somewhere, skipping stones on a fucking beach, while you're in here rotting away like it's your own fault. It's not your fault, Buck. It's that rotten son of yours and that bitch wife.

OLD MAN

Oh, Edward, don't you get it. The man's a pussy. He'll always be a pussy.

EDDIE

(to Buck)

Now I've got a strategy, Buck, but you're gonna have to follow through on it.

OLD MAN

No good pussy.

BUCK

(hanging his head)

(sighs)

I'm so depressed.

The CREDITS roll.

FADE OUT.