

LACKEY DRAFT

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TEASER

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE FOYER - DAWN

SUPER: JULY 1975

Thin and stoic-faced, ADAM PAYNE, (40s), tightens his tie before a hall mirror. He studies his reflection. Behind him hangs a wall clock. It's 6:00 AM.

KNOCK. EUGENE KERN, (50s), too gleeful, waves from a front window. He peers at the blandly respectable space and its matching owner.

EUGENE
(muffled, outside)
Payne residence?

Adam doesn't move. Eugene waves again.

EUGENE (CONT'D)
Eugene Kern. Tristate Financial
Resolutions!

Adam steps closer to the mirror and robotically straightens his pressed suit, executing the motions of a normal day.

EUGENE (CONT'D)
I have a notification of
outstanding debt pursuant to
documented unpaid charges for
Elizabeth Payne?

Sighing, Adam shuffles over to open his front door.

ADAM
That's a mouthful.

EUGENE
Hi. My agency requested a statement
from Mrs. Payne as well.

ADAM
My mother-in-law takes her ashes to
the dog park. They'll be back at 3.

EUGENE
Mm. Unfortunately, a number of
payments defaulted on what she
listed as your joint accounts.
Would you mind if I have a quick
look? I need to verify I was here.

He nods behind Adam. Adam lunges aside with faux politesse. Eugene enters, sweeps a glance around, pulls out a notebook.

ADAM

Huh. I guess she was too busy overdosing in our joint bathtub to remind me.

Eugene strides further inside.

EUGENE

I can tell you right now. All together, you're looking at 95,000 on three credit lines. You have back rent, utilities-

He flips through his notes. Adam takes a vigorous breathe, willing himself into a state of calm.

ADAM

Wait! Just can you...or you seriously think this looks like a 95,000 dollar rental? It was an all cash offer.

His hand balls a fist but his expression remains blasé. Eugene notices and gently seats himself on a side armchair.

EUGENE

Your bulk expenditures are on a Long Island condo. 935 Bricknell Avenue, Oyster Bay? Unit 327?

ADAM

Can't be. That can't...that's beyond comical! You know, I've spent last twenty years pissing in used coffee mugs to say I don't live in a rental.

Eugene flips his page and smiles politely at Adam.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Or whatever. You clearly have an agenda to run through.

EUGENE

So everything added hikes your total a little over 97. Give or take incidentals-

ADAM

I disagree with what incidentals are.

(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)

And you should remind your agency. Add the three zero tag line! Let's be clear, 'cause it's not a small chunk of change. I owe 97,000 pre-tax. Are we ballpark now?

EUGENE

Correct. Then utilities and late fees, actually put you in the 98,500 range. Plus presale value of any physical assets. That Bachelet oil looks pretty new...

He rises and examines a painting by the door.

EUGENE (CONT'D)

We offer same day assessments free of charge-

ADAM

It was a client gift!

He stuffs down a grimace through pursed lips.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Please, if you could maybe go, I don't know, can you smile somewhere else for a few? I'll have to order a copy of my tax returns from the past quarter.

EUGENE

Understood. If you'd like, I can stop back in, forgive me, you said 3?

He glances at the clock. Adam shrinks to the corner of the room leaving the doorway wide open.

ADAM

Oh, that's generous. But I won't have a fist full of dollars to just hand you in nine hours.

EUGENE

Look, Adam? The office can't keep sending collection notices to your Bricknell property.

Adam shakes his head and smiles to himself.

ADAM

Of course we're on a first name basis! And you were right.

(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)

Best place to reach me is
apparently my dead wife's secret
tax haven. Forget the three phone
lines and home address!

EUGENE

I should mention, we recommend a
strict in-person disclosure policy.

He makes a point of studying the signature on the painting.

ADAM

Gee. That really makes me think me
think twice about perjury.

EUGENE

Well, we wouldn't move forward with
any legal action unless-

ADAM

Obviously.

Eugene steps backwards over the threshold.

EUGENE

Someone from my desk will call you
at 3. Have a nice day, Adam!

ADAM

So you have my number now.

EUGENE

We do.

ADAM

Perfect.

He SLAMS the door. Alone, he retightens his tie and
approaches the front window.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Mr. Payne! God damn it!

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. STEAKHOUSE LOUNGE - NIGHT

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 1975

Two men negotiate over a flambéed flan at a steakhouse center table. The space screams old money, older clientele. In B.G. meat carcasses dangle from the ceiling.

Adam stiffly leans away from aging despot CARL DICKERSON, (80s), in rumpled linen. All eyes in the room revolve around Carl.

CARL

Glad my judge kissup won you a full year! Bankruptcy court in the winter's suicide.

ADAM

I know, thank you, I'm indebted for life. Jesus, not to pun...

He holds a finger gun to his temple. Carl laughs.

CARL

Hey! Here's to your last labor. Enjoy the meal ticket.

ADAM

I'm out of practice...and really, I don't know if I can afford joy yet. It's apparently worth 20,000. Even with inflation.

CARL

So don't get too far ahead of yourself. We're still in my office. How's project apparatchik?

He carves a flan hunk with a dirty fork. Adam looks away as Carl's mouth leaks flan down his double chin.

ADAM

I had a few thoughts yesterday.

He searches for space to plant his fork. No luck.

ADAM (CONT'D)

You may like this idea. I could talk to, remember Hughie Babbit? He spearheaded the Texaco mergers?

(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)

He's cornering non-profits now.
He'd probably take a one off, maybe
as a favor.

Carl forks another bite. Adam eyes a bottle in the table ice bucket. He tests the bottle weight, SIGHS at its emptiness.

CARL

Eh. Sounds wishy-washy.

He waves his fork in the air. Food particles shower Adam's immaculate lapel. Adam flinches but plays naive.

ADAM

He told me, corporate analysts
never fully defect from the swamp-

CARL

Some do. They start non-profiting
on crack. Next thing? They're
swimming the Persian Gulf. To save
fucking dolphins! That's why. You
gotta source ladder lackeys!

Adam glances at Carl's full wine glass. Carl takes a protracted, almost sensual sip.

CARL (CONT'D)

IBM, GM still make 'em. No?

He smirks until his dentures quiver. Adam adjusts his stained jacket to distract from the visual. Beat.

CARL (CONT'D)

I don't like it when you're too
quiet.

ADAM

I was trying to picture a ladder
lackey other than myself...

CARL

If I said "Rip out your left ball.
Try hawking it on the One Liberty
doorstep as MoMa crap table art. At
the fixed commission rate? Earn a
hundred noes and I'll find you a
gig mow first floor at Price
Waterhouse!" Find the sharpest shit
who takes that deal.

He chugs more wine while Adam mulls the scenario.

ADAM

Okay, so if we were to pose
consensual neutering for-

He pauses as a waiter appears with a crème brûlée. A couple at a far table watches. Carl nods at the waiter. The waiter places the dish before Carl. Carl slips him a bill.

CARL

Half?

Adam steals a glance back at the now irate couple.

ADAM

I'm good. Usually I only get the
flank salad, so-

CARL

They skimp on cheap cuts here.

He sucks his fork, then CRACKS it on the crème brûlée shell.

CARL (CONT'D)

(between bites)

And my boys have done morning
daiquiris with Hughie. He's a
reverse-lackey. Guess what that's
slang for?

ADAM

I have no idea. I think he's going
through a lot since his dad's
embezzlement-

Carl CLANGS his fork on the table. Adam bristles.

CARL

Overprivileged, fuckup liability!
He grew up around money. He's dead
weight. I want wholesome, desperate
Jimmy Stewart!

He grins. Pinkish sludge drips from his dentures. Adam GULPS.

CARL (CONT'D)

Have one?

ADAM

Oh, no, Jimmy Stewart just reminded
me of...

CARL

Anything. With a pulse. Stupid is
fine for an entry-level.

ADAM

You know, Sam's probably too well trained to take a blind handout. Even for a decent job.

CARL

What. Like you?

He extends a skeletal hand. A medical ID bracelet dangles from his wrist. Adam folds his clean napkin into a tight cube to evade answering.

CARL (CONT'D)

Pay you what I used to pay my ex-wives. And you're still cheaper than Jeanine. That should cover any asset seizure. You can even keep my lawyers overtime!

He flings his used napkin on the table. Adam closes his eyes.

CARL (CONT'D)

Up to you. He riles the debt necrophiles. Gets them a little gun shy about backing out of our deal. I can consolidate them with that accident firm in Hoboken we just swiped. That's what I want.

Adam shakes his head and looks down. Carl laughs.

CARL (CONT'D)

And I'll make you a personal wager for an extra hundred. Bet I could bring your boy to smoke whatever Ellsberg left at the Pentagon. For a head kiss.

ADAM

I-

Suddenly, in the B.G. the MAN from the couple abandons his huffy date. Carl lowers his hand to hide the bracelet.

CARL

(whispering, sing-song)
Poor bitch. Lackey's coming home!

On cue, the man wanders to Carl's side. Adam glances around for an exit.

MAN

Sir, uh...excuse me, but I had to ask. Are you, uhm, are you Carl Dickerson?

Carl scans him up and down.

CARL

Sure. You look like Jerry Faillon's Harvard JD-MBA.

MAN

Uhm, yeah...yes. Will Anderson. It's a pleasure...

CARL

Absolutely.

Cherubic WILLIAM "WILL" ANDERSON, (20s), beams and stoops to shake Carl's hand. Adam mouths BE BACK at Carl with a nod to a COAT CHECK sign. Carl winks at him over Will's bent shoulders.

EXT. STEAKHOUSE FRONT, NYC - MINUTES LATER

Adam waves off Carl's chauffeured Cadillac. Beat. He waits for the tail lights to fade, lights a cigarette, and EXHALES.

A scene in the front window catches his attention. Inside: Will shimmies on his coat while his date argues at him. She stomps off. Adam locks eyes with Will.

Will, unperturbed, steps outside to join Adam.

WILL

Hey.

Adam remains focused on the window.

ADAM

Is that one a runner?

WILL

My sister's talking to her.

He sheepishly takes out a cigarette. Adam offers him a light.

WILL (CONT'D)

Thanks.

The two puff for a beat.

WILL (CONT'D)

I uh, hope this isn't too forward. I happened to overhear. Do you by any chance know Carl's personelle manager?

ADAM

Jim Fox had that title when I was strategy associate. But that was...over ten years ago now. Carl's an old friend, he's just looking for a referral...

WILL

Oh, nice. And uh, may I ask...where are you-

ADAM

Strategic Operations Manager. At Johnson-Eames LLC?

WILL

Wow...

He stops short and nods to hide his confusion.

ADAM

Yeah, we're a private data brokerage for electronic sales out in Bayside. It's a small family office. There's not a ton of external onboarding.

WILL

No, that uh...that makes sense. But uhm, you think you could try to slip...like I heard Jerry's gonna take a quick call with the FTC next Friday. That's why I came here...

Adam teeters on the curb. Will backs to the door. Adam freezes and trains on him a practiced, empty smile.

ADAM

Is that a fact? Or are you saying happy hour Hail Marys with the other interns under the bar table.

Will palms the door, hesitant but not ready to walk yet.

WILL

Can I maybe check back in a week? See if any of the Hail Marys worked?

Adam pulls a mini notepad/pen from his jacket. He writes his contact info on a page, RIPS it, and holds it out to Will.

ADAM

Tell the front desk Adam Payne
connected you. Carl's...he's crude.
Just laugh at his one-liners.

Will plods over to accept Adam's offer like an eager puppy.
He folds the paper in half.

WILL

Thanks...thank you, really. I
appreciate it. William Anderson.

They shake hands. Will's date appears at the door. Adam cocks
his cigarette at her. Will takes the hint and heads inside.

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Adam swivels on an expensive desk chair in an otherwise
suburban home office. Over his head hangs a valedictorian
Columbia English degree for ELIZABETH LENIHAN.

Adam speaks into a desk phone (on speaker).

ADAM

I saw his resume, he's coming off
of the corporate honeymoon-

CARL (V.O.)

It's the Ivy bootlicker phase!

Adam glances at his Berkley Psychology degree tucked behind
his bookshelf. Phone between his feet, he grabs a business
magazine from his desk. On the cover: Top 50 in Personelle
Leadership.

CARL (V.O.)

Always said. World ends the day
Payne's got no comment for me!

ADAM

Look, I feel...
(flips magazine pages)
I know he's good enough at talking
people down. He's your classic
nice, decent, hard-work-

CARL (V.O.)

He's a spiritual, do-gooder?

ADAM
Not in a soft-

CARL
They're all fucking pathological!

Adam flips to the LIST, scans names. On top: JEANINE STRAUSS.

CARL (CONT'D)
Nice is worse than stupid-

Adam frowns and DROPS the magazine under his desk.

ADAM
What about the legal kid, Anderson?
I doubt he wants to temp at a
Jersey City Lemon firm. Give him a
chance to break out-

CARL (V.O.)
Nah! Let's run the original, Sal? I
got you a Saturday enchanted
evening!

ADAM
What're you talking about?

He folds over to grab the magazine, spies a sticky note pinned to a bottom desk drawer. On note: Schedule exercise, LOVE Beth. He GAGS to himself.

CARL (V.O.)
I'm setting a 7:30 at the
Ambassador for you two!

ADAM
All right, okay, I can make the
reservation.

CARL
I wasn't prepaying this time.

Adam fumes on his knees. Carl CHIRPS like a cricket.

ADAM
You sound more like a cat...and I
was under the impression this was
just a see how it goes-

CARL (V.O.)
Whatever you want to call it.
You're sounding like the shy cunt,
now! How much you need to spread?

Adam pops upright and whispers aggressively.

ADAM

Stop! My neighbors have kids...and
I'm not gambling with anyone's
sanity!

CARL (V.O.)

'Cause Sally's a nutbag?

ADAM

Sam! I have no idea where his
head's at. We haven't spoken
since...he knew Beth-

CARL (V.O.)

Aw, now you're making him forbidden
fruit. I'll dock you 10k. That's
your penance. Better?

ADAM

No! I'd like to keep the initial
deal, is that what you wanted out
of me?

CARL (V.O.)

Yup. There's my lackey!

Adam STOMPS on the magazine with his shoe. Beat.

ADAM

How would you broach it with him.

CARL (V.O.)

Let me give you some advice.

ADAM

All right?

CARL (V.O.)

Fuck! You need the welfare check
now? That's what you say to him!

INT/EXT. TRAIN CAR/HOBOKEN - SUNSET (TRACKING)

CARL (V.O.)

Told you. You catch more cock with
brotherly love.

SAMUEL "SAM" MILLER, (40s), fresh-faced in a pale blue suit
stands in a window.

He bobs, toylike, as the train RATTLES past skyscrapers. A
harsh sunset spotlights him. He gazes down as if he could
willingly face-plant on the tracks.

ADAM (CONT'D)

And it doesn't help when the dads
hire a shrink to threaten with the
"Mommy wants you taken out back
since you don't work on Wall
Street" line.

He punctuates his words with his used knife, imitating Carl.
It's Sam's turn to ignore the gesture.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I heard these big firms have
managers to central cast all the
way up. Even mid-levelers need
solid veneers.

Sam makes a point of frowning, lips pursed.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Nothing personal.

SAM

I still disagree with your
underlying values.

ADAM

Really! No one from Chicago
business was a character actor in
training?

He SCRAPES a dollop of marinara from his plate.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Remember Hugh used to say that
about the Boston shits? They were
always playing boss? Of course they
end up covering midwest dairy ops!

Sam shrugs. His eyes glaze over.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Hughie Babbit!

SAM

Sorry, I feel defensive about my
old tribe, that's all. I've lost
tolerance for the kind of
nihilistic machinations we
leveraged over each other-

ADAM

Wait. Wait, wait. Are analysts the
new hare krishnas?

Sam rumples his hair as if to blue-collar himself.

SAM

Maybe I want to have faith in the school system. Now that I'm lecturing business students on how not to be psychopaths? What else can I do?

ADAM

Since when do you believe in unicorns, rainbows! Prosperity and a farm plot for all who play nice! Those are called European delusions. They assassinated Trotsky and...

He trails off and studies Sam with growing concern.

SAM

Look where being the ultimate cynic landed me! I wasn't immune to being tossed off the top shelf.

ADAM

Come on! Being objective's not being cynical. The smart, try hards give up in undergrad. Right after they flop at hiring cocktails. They get a taste of what makes a good candidate.

SAM

And what is your magic formula for being a hireable prospect?

ADAM

I mean, you can't succeed in any industry if you don't give off...it's a kind of intentional, pretty-faced silence, right? I don't know...

Sam faces Adam with bloodshot eyes.

SAM

You're kidding.

ADAM

I'm serious! I'll go out on this hill. The ability to have a decent career isn't a two minute schtick any boy can pick up at toastmasters.

SAM

So what about the averagely attractive, averagely capable who show up every day and grind at respectable dead ends? Do we not have decent careers?

Adam glances around, conscious of Sam's raised voice. He contorts his legs under the table. The Pabst can RATTLES. Sam steadies it before a fall. Pabst spills on his white cuffs.

ADAM

Damn it. I owe you a last cheap shot.

SAM

I'm drinking less. But you can give me a professional cynic's assessment. Where do guys like me fall in your human ratings system?

ADAM

Well...you pass, with your values. And I'll say you look better than average invoking them.

Sam rolls his sleeves, suddenly energized.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Take it.

SAM

I'm trying.

ADAM`

And can we at least agree? No sane kid over 22 gets to five figures and goes, Dear Lord, should I be doing more for it?

SAM

I think I've been brutally critical of the monetary worth put on my limited skillset.

ADAM

Yeah, okay, but one sincere masochist doesn't change stats. Ninety-seven percent of those who make it big seat-warm for the family firm at some point.

SAM

I believe that. I stick shifted my dad's meat truck to Delaware when I was fourteen.

ADAM

In your little boat shoes?

Sam pours the last Pabst dregs into the nearest glass.

SAM

Cheltenham Meat wasn't the right culture fit for me.

Adam paws the glass to his side of the table and raises it.

ADAM

That's honest. Santé?

Sam doesn't budge. Adam lowers his voice to a whisper.

ADAM (CONT'D)

From yours truly?

Sam slowly lifts another empty glass.

SAM

Why not.

INT. PATH STATION, NYC - NIGHT

Sam mopes out the grim station window.

Sam's POV: Imposing, metallic buildings.

He checks his watch and heads to a clear-walled phone booth.

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Adam thumbs a giant rolodex. RING. He picks up a desk phone.

ADAM

Always nice seeing you. By the way, I don't know if you had time to think about...

INTERCUT between Sam/Adam

SAM

I did. And I meant to tell you. I have two more free months.

ADAM

That's how long your rent's paid?

SAM

No! And my ethical allocations seminar opens on November something...I need to check.

He presses forehead to booth wall like a caged animal. His tired eyes absorb the late night crowd passing him by.

ADAM

Take the job or don't, but get off the pillar! I saw it tonight in your eyes. You're a miserable, bored hermit!

Sam grinds a fist into the side of his head.

SAM

I wasn't exactly thrilled having to justify why a secretary is less productive than some moron's brother-

ADAM

That's a fairytale dump truck you can drive past Delaware! Every partner east of Dover got faxed the hit list, okay? I know why you're on the moral crusade.

He glances at a calendar with a star on December 1st. His eyes rove to an open desk planner dated November 29th.

SAM

If you heard I was being cut, why not mention it?

ADAM

Weren't you campaigning for regional VP? What would sinking your bid do for me!

SAM

You only act for a return on investment?

Adam bites down on his lips.

SAM (CONT'D)

I didn't mean to go there. I know you need the money more than I do.

He grimaces as the station fills up. A drunk KNOCKS on the booth and jeers at him. He holds up his middle finger.

ADAM

Still alive?

SAM

Being pressured out. As usual. But, you know, I would only jump back in the pool for...I have this dream of trying an actual, tangible job-job for a few months? I even thought about growing hemp alternatives for...I bet you can make clothes. I want to work with my hands!

ADAM

Well, would you paint ceiling trim? Eileen'll tip you to skip a shirt.

SAM

Is that...wait, that's your mother-in-law, no?

Adam laughs and pulls a notes sheet/pen from his drawer. On the top: Lackey Draft. Underneath is a blank page.

ADAM

Humor me. Then decide where your salted earth, high ground is, okay? I can bug Hugh if you're completely out.

A SIGH of consent from Sam on Adam's line.

ADAM (CONT'D)

So this job-job's with the largest North American end-of-life debt consolidator.

SAM

Ugh! Because Gerald Ford is turning us into a nation of grave robbing, bottom feeder-

ADAM

God! Think your Nixon donations aren't showing in a background check? Sammy! Come on!

Silence on Sam's end. Adam doodles a crazy spiral on his pad.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Look. Their entry manager salary is 10% above national average. You wouldn't be threatening a poverty case.

SAM

It's the principle! How do you rationalize making good money off of someone else's nightmare?

ADAM

That's perfect. Carl wants to pay just shy of nothing. Any gain for you would only be on growth potential. As long as you're willing to stay with the sector.

SAM

And what is it...mostly funeral insurers? Collections for whatever's left after social security fails?

ADAM

Oh! All of the above, I assume.

A WHOOSH echoes in the station. Sam takes the beat to mull, then yells over the noise.

SAM

What are they looking for!

INT/EXT. TRAIN CAR/HOBOKEN - NIGHT

Sam lingers in a graffitied train window. An OPERATOR announces his departure.

FEMALE OPERATOR

Doors closing! Please watch your step!

DING. Sam drops his head as the train jostles into motion.

EXT. HOBOKEN TRAIN TRACKS - MINUTES LATER

Artificial city lights cast a shadow over Sam's blurry, trapped figure in the train window.

END ACT I

ACT II

INT. TRAIN CAR/UPPER EAST SIDE - NIGHT (TRACKING)

Adam replaces Sam in the tinted window of an empty train car. He watches people on the platforms flash by him, rushing in the opposite direction of the train.

INT. EILEEN'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Adam slumps at one end of a chesterfield, diagonal from DR. EILEEN LENIHAN, (70s), a chain-smoking beatnik dowager. She reclines on Herman Miller task chair. A Yorkie snores at her feet. On the gold coffee table is Beth's ash box.

EILEEN

Where is the dissonance coming from, now?

ADAM

Hopefully, not my mother.

Eileen gamely fires back.

EILEEN

And remind me. Your father's deceased?

ADAM

Divorced. Or that's what he tells women in Palm Beach. But it's mostly...

(noting Eileen's disapproval)

entirely me. I just assumed I'd be happy with this last pay out. I feel empty.

EILEEN

You're afraid of moving on? Not having something to complain about other than my daughter? You can always leave her here.

She taps the ash box affectionately.

ADAM

Not afraid. At the same time, I wonder, am I unconscious-

EILEEN

Sub!

ADAM

Subconsciously agreeing with Carl?
I have no-

EILEEN

No, you do. You can tell yourself.
Spell it out.

She bends over to pet the Yorkie.

ADAM

Okay, well, you're either a
feckless creep no one remembers to
fire or a smarmy suckup who's never
making CEO? And the only way to
escape that either-or is to damn
civilized society? Cocoon yourself
in some intellectual, delusion
bubble? That's where Sam's headed.
Maybe that's where I'm going too-

EILEEN

You don't have to worry about over-
intellectualizing.

Adam pouts. Eileen tucks a judgmental hand under her chin.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

If I may, not as a Primal
therapist, but...most people don't
have that choice.

Adam mumbles to himself. Eileen points her glasses at him.

ADAM

I'm aware I can't gripe about my
tragic shift on the product line-

EILEEN

That's pathetic! Everyone is
depressed! Everyone wants to kick
around like a fetus. Call it the
paradox of getting old.

Adam hugs a throw pillow to his chest. Eileen shakes her
glasses at him with a pitying eye-roll.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Only effort buys play. As adults,
we accept that reality.

(MORE)

EILEEN (CONT'D)

Why question the happiness utility
of working our trade. Whatever it
is?

She leans back in her lux surroundings and sighs effortfully.

ADAM

I never said I wanted twenty-four
hour happiness. That's the biggest
sham since Ponzi...

He stops short. Eileen wipes her glasses on her sleeve.

EILEEN

Hmm?

Adam shrugs, then withers under her gaze. His head droops.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

You keep looking down for a
justification.

ADAM

I'm just holding my place.
Emotionally.

EILEEN

What if you tried looking up? Is
that too sentimental for you?

ADAM

Or I'd drown?

EILEEN

(nodding)

What's up to you?

ADAM

For a while, it was...

He timidly pulls the ash box closer to his side of the table.
Eileen sits up and meets his gaze. The Yorkie stirs, baring
her teeth at Adam.

EILEEN

Tod'll pick her up tomorrow. I want
her to see the flowers I ordered.

ADAM

Okay.

He twists to face the door behind him. Eileen COUGHS.

EILEEN

You do what he wants. Get the check cashed. I can take care of her.

Adam guiltily turns back and cups the box in a gentle palm.

ADAM

I got her...I'm almost done.

EILEEN

Good.

She nods Adam off, then picks up the growling Yorkie. Adam slowly backs away, ash box in tow.

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE BATHROOM - MID-NIGHT

Adam sprays a spotless sink with cleanser. A landline cord built into the rococo vanity is slung over the adjacent carpeted toilet lid. The phone dangles like a pendulum.

ADAM

...their trustee board thinks the middle tier is bloated. The last thing they need is a lower floor walk out.

SAM (V.O.)

Why wouldn't they cull their internal data and quietly cut the actual slackers. Most of them are sitting on the board.

ADAM

No! The board is all retired, independent investors. They just want an outside opinion to come in, make a whoop of potentially clearing chafe from the mid-ranks. It's a scare and run tactic-

SAM

But that was never my job! I never dictated firing. Last night, I said I would design a restructure-

ADAM

You don't have to. It's a fake coup...hang on.

He grabs a sponge from a medicine cabinet and manically scrubs an invisible stain near the sink drain.

SAM (V.O.)

They can seem noble by tossing
scapegoats from the middle out? How
is that not a deflection of ethical
accountability?

ADAM

Well, sure, you wouldn't be playing
robin hood, hash dealer in Levis.
You-

BUZZ. Adam doubles over the sink. The phone sways ominously.
He silently mouths FUCK at the drain.

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE BATHROOM - LATER

In semi-darkness, Adam unwraps a bodega bag at the vanity. He
takes out Beth's ash box and a pepper shaker. He lifts the
box lid, studies the contents.

ADAM

God...

A shadow rolls past the open toilet lid. He impulsively dumps
the ashes down the toilet and FLUSHES.

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE BEDROOM - LATER

Adam smokes at a woman's vanity while he pours perfume in the
ash box, now filled with pepper. He sniffs, stubs his
cigarette inside, closes the lid.

He glances a bin under the vanity. A a wad of notes from Beth
and a card for a DIVORCE ATTORNEY are crumpled at the bottom.

ADAM

(to ash box)

You could've trusted me! One more
day, Beth! One more...I was working
for you!

He rips open a drawer. Inside: a broken transistor and a
jewelry case (initialed ELP). He stuffs the shaker in the
case and tosses it in the bin. A wedding band falls out.

INT. SAM'S STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam pads around a colorful, cozy studio in nothing but a
towel. He hangs his suit in a closet on one end. The other
end is packed with a woman's coat, purse, negligee.

The nightstand phone RINGS. BEEP. An OLD MAN with a wheezy Philly accent leaves a voicemail.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

My cousin used to teach Sunday school before he shot up that arcade in Pittsburgh! You go back to working Sammy! You were doing good-

Sam unplugs the phone and closes his eyes.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAWN

Sam (professorial, in a tweedy suit) enters with an envelope for ROBERT MILLER. He opens the envelope, peeks at a blank check. The OLD WOMAN at the front counter studies him.

OLD WOMAN

Haven't seen you in a while.

She hands Sam a pen. He fills out the check but hesitates before the dollar amount. Beat. He scribbles a thousand.

SAM

I moved, so. Happened to be in town, so...

He slips the check in the envelope and licks it shut.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'd like a stamp, please.

He hands the woman a bill. She takes it in exchange for a full sheet of stamps.

OLD WOMAN

There you go. That should get your family to next month.

She CLUCKS her tongue disapprovingly. Before Sam can ask for change, she pushes a cane through a side door and disappears.

INT/EXT. NYC STREET PAYPHONE BANK - LATER

Sam huddles in the corner, a cigarette between his lips.

SAM

(Into phone, indignant)
I said I sent it...why does it matter how I paid!

He glances around the phone bank, down the empty city block. In the far distance, a shadowy Adam waves at him.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - LATER

SUPER: NOVEMBER 30

Adam trails a manic Sam as he mows his way past throngs of grad students outside of NYU.

SAM

From a logistics standpoint, why not shutter the entire office? That would reduce expenditures and then they could refold public-facing exec roles-

ADAM

Whoah! You're like a MENSA windup ducky when you get invested.

Sam stops short. Adam shoots him a questioning look.

SAM

I'm no longer willing to take that badge of honor. Rubber ducks are mindless efficiency tools...you deploy them to float with the current.

ADAM

Right...

SAM

I'm saying, essentially they're a parable for fascistic management-

ADAM

That's stretching the compliment.

SAM

I thought my next act would be less blind following the pecking order.

ADAM

Okay. You know what else I think are mindless efficiency tools?

SAM

Rubber dicks?

ADAM

Oh, oof! Where'd the George Carlin bit come from? That was good!

SAM

You weren't...laughing at me?

ADAM

I would've gone lower brow.
(elbows Sam)
How about dirty, depraved analysts?

SAM

I've moved on! I don't ever want to serve as the gulag executioner.

He squints at a small student group holding anti-OPEC, anti-government signs on the park lawn. Adam follows his gaze.

ADAM

Do they even drive their own cars?

SAM

Hey, at least they have a sense of direction.

He shakes his head but moves closer to the protest.

ADAM

They'll probably grab snacks at Le Cirque. Plan what suede jacket to buy at Bergdorfs for the AP mugshots. In case you wanted to enlist...

SAM

I draw my line at going to jail.

Adam pulls a folded paper from his jacket.

ADAM

You can't only mythologize values. There's no being a part-time tankie!

SAM

Is preaching to the youth not walking the walk enough?

ADAM

You're still blowing warm air for 30 grand a year? More?

Sam shrugs and tugs his chin hair for a beat.

SAM

It's less than you think. I'm not a 5th Avenue pedigree like you. There's no status quo for me to defend. As long as I can keep hot water on, send my dad's home a check...

Adam tucks his paper in Sam's breast pocket and taps it.

ADAM

I put the internal personelle contact on the top bullet.

Sam mulls the paper and wanders to a park bench.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Jeanine'll try to out talk you, get her Manchurian in. You can tell her. Desperate loser Payne really needs a win this year.

Sam frowns at his reflection in the bench slats. Adam joins him.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Only if you're interested. I have a JD-MBA next in line.

SAM

I'll do my best to namedrop you.

ADAM

Smart kid, Miller!

SAM

I see...am I not a leader-worthy, then?

ADAM

I take it back. You're a raving, dipshit moron! With cruddy teeth!

Sam cracks a smile. Adam drops an arm on Sam's shoulder.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sam lays out a fresh beige suit and briefcase across his bed. He reaches into a nightstand drawer.

Inside: a picture of himself and an older man, designer sunglasses, a small wooden cross. He places the sunglasses and cross in his briefcase.

Beat. The beside phone light blinks. Sam presses the answering machine button.

HUGH (V.O.)
 Samuel. Hugh here. Congrats! I
 heard you're working for Dickerson.
 I know you've been looking for a
 long-

BEEP. Sam lays back on the bed and GROANS.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sam squeezes in a cramped bathroom. He tugs his growing beard in the chipped mirror. A fistful of matted hair falls in the sink basin.

He glances at a cup with a razor on the side, then turns the HOT tap. A single droplet leaks out.

INT/EXT. SEDAN CAB, NJ BEACH TOWN - AFTERNOON (TRACKING)

Sam (clean shaven, beige suit) rolls his window. He opens his briefcase, unfurls his sunglasses. The DRIVER meets his eye in the rearview.

DRIVER (O.S.)
 Sir? Twenty minute ETA.

SAM
 Thank you.

He pulls on his shades.

Sam's POV: his world view fades, colors mute. A working-class, puritan town materializes. Rusty cars line sandy roads outside clapboard buildings.

INT/EXT. SEDAN/BUILDING LOT - MINUTES LATER (TRACKING)

The sedan swings to a flat stucco L off the main drag. The driver enters the surrounding lot. Sam rolls his window and holds out a dollar.

DRIVER
 No valet, sir.

Sam shrinks back and awkwardly hands him the dollar. The driver takes the tip and stalls in a spot besides a grabber blue Mustang parked under a sign for SETTLEMENT DEP.

INT. RECEPTION LOBBY - LATER

Sam rechecks his briefcase while he waits in a chintz armchair across from a homey reception desk.

A SECRETARY, (60s), waddles in from an unseen door. She chews gum and carries a mug with a mortician's union logo.

Sam SNAPS his briefcase. The secretary ignores him and settles behind her desk. Sam wavers for a beat.

SAM

Hi. I have meeting with the settlement-

SECRETARY

Take a minute, hun?

She picks up the desk phone, dials. Sam paces. The secretary smacks her lips and MM-HMMS on the line.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Send him in?

She beckons Sam by sloshing her mug. Droplets splatter her desk. She licks her acrylic nails and scrubs the stains.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Second floor. Room 7. He's waiting for you.

Sam eyes a door behind her. She points at the wall over his head.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Gotta do the outside stairs. Just watch those heels. We've been getting shore guls dropping up here.

Sam gathers his briefcase and peers out the door at a rotting staircase snaked around the building's side gutter.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

You need anything...you dial 4 and ask for Shelly!

He glances down at his polished heels.

SAM

Thank you.

END ACT II

ACT III

INT. ADAM'S WORK OFFICE - AT THE SAME TIME

Adam picks apart Beth's broken transistor with pink tweezers at a cluttered desk. Facing him by a bookcase is foppish man child HUGH BABBIT, (40s), in corduroy. Hugh skims a copy of *The New Republic*.

ADAM

I mean, Sammy's moralizing. But he's not clinically, like Father Yod off the deep end, is he? I just thought the job would be a good fit for him.

HUGH

You missed his threatening to jump the Chrysler after we tightened up Exon. It was the punniest violin dirge. Not that we haven't all considered...

He lowers the magazine to make a pushing motion. Adam frowns.

HUGH (CONT'D)

He's aware what your stakes are?

Adam looks up from the transistor and drops his voice.

ADAM

He knows. I wouldn't be referring to Carl as a friend if I wasn't still 20,000 in the hole. And that's not even covering legal fees!

Hugh rolls the magazine and uses it to gesticulate.

HUGH

Always trust a carpetbagger who made Black Thursday cash. Ask my parents where the money went!

ADAM

Oh, I'm not afraid of Carl. He gave me this psychotic rant about fried sphincters and Pentagon threats? I figure queue the dementia smear campaign when I have to go on offense. I'm insured.

He yanks out a tightly coiled wire with the tweezers. It flies over the desk and rolls on the carpet. Hugh ducks.

HUGH

Man! Boy, oh boy! I pray I've stayed in your good graces.

He stops the wire with his velvet loafers.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Are you tapping this place?

ADAM

Come on! And...why good graces?

HUGH

It's fine. You're the last honest pessimist among us. I would reserve judgment on all parties. Pull my likable fool card.

ADAM

That's beyond my capacity right now.

Hugh straightens the wire and hands it to Adam.

HUGH

Here. This may be therapeutic. Yesterday, Carl's doorman told my housekeeper he's dying of cirrosis...origin of the new bracelet. You saw. It's not Cartier.

ADAM

Wait...you mean soon?

He places the wire in a lower desk drawer. KNOCK, KNOCK.

HUGH

Bastard!

Adam holds up his empty hands with a sly grin.

HUGH (CONT'D)

That's it. You're poking the gods of decency!

(shaking the magazine)

Taking this, by the way. I'd pay you but...ask Carl.

ADAM

All yours. Beth thought it would help me look smarter!

HUGH

Didn't work, huh?

ADAM

Not on her.

He glares at the transistor, then chucks it in a desk drawer.

INT. SECOND FLOOR/SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Sam KNOCKS on the door for Room 7: SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENT. Beat. He KNOCKS again. Behind the door a MAN screams.

MAN (O.S.)

Don't have Shelly call maintenance!
Naw! Does she wanna smell the
fucking rat pellets down here?
Pardon my uppity turn of phrase!

A phone SLAMS. BANG. The door CREAKS open on rusty hinges. Stubby MATTHEW "MATT" GLUBB, (60s), a straight shooter GI, hops on one foot.

MATT

What can I do you for, sir?

He wields a box cutter clipped to a Korean War Vets keychain, barely chest level with Sam.

INT. ROOM 7 - LATER

Sam shadows Matt as he empties metal office cabinets, drawers and tosses supplies into cardboard boxes.

MATT

I gotta stop sounding like my grand-son when the tang nipple runs dry? Watch my fucking mouth? All anyone does here is bull and shit themselves talking!

SAM

MATT (CONT'D)

They get paid to make stump speeches!

SAM

Believe me, I've heard worse...and I fully appreciate how truly, disgustingly undemocratic the corporate tightening agenda can get-

MATT

Christ! You're a mouth-breather, too?

He pauses packing and sizes up Sam's fear. Sam flinches. Matt eases into his moth-eaten desk chair.

MATT (CONT'D)

Am I the scummiest thing you've had to wipe with your ascot this year?

Sam stumbles over boxes to perch on a broken stool. He attempts a sympathetic smile.

SAM

No, really, I don't fire anyone. It's not even in my purview, and in terms of interviews, not by a long shot. In fact, the absolute worst were the D.C. lobbyists.

MATT

(under breathe)
Who woulda guessed.

SAM

Right? See I once had to evaluate sales numbers for this big shot Lockheed contractor? If you can imagine, he swung a driver through my legs.

MATT

He at least nick you?

SAM

Actually, he missed, hit his own head, forgot he missed, then had the gal to bribe me with black market heroine!

He forces a laugh. Matt doesn't reciprocate.

MATT

Still puts my box cutter to shame.

Sam side eyes a fire alarm by the door. Matt SNORTS at him.

SAM

I always like to check. Sometimes, security bugs in case they want to get involved but I doubt they would need that level for this...

He stops short at Matt's pokerface. Beat. Matt sneers back.

MATT

You can call me a banjo mountain hick! I see the damn wheels spinning!

He digs in a box labeled: WIRES and pulls out a tiny microphone with two taped wires hanging off the handle.

MATT (CONT'D)

We had a strike flyer mailed in last Friday. One of the desk girls sent the message. We've been passing around the "whose getting tarred and fired" potato all week.

SAM

(to himself)

She shouldn't have been that transparent. In a cleaner run office...

MATT

Doesn't matter. I said I'm not waiting for the board to pump in chloroform and pummel me! I'm leaving.

He SLAPS the metal desk with the microphone. Sam winces.

SAM

That's definitely...that's an option. But, then again, it may be better to face the metaphoric pummeling. I promise. The board owes you legally mandated coverage depending-

MATT

Huh, so now you're a lawyer on the side?

He KICKS the bottom desk drawers. Sam cowers.

SAM

Matthew? Do you prefer Matt?

Matt crosses his arms. Sam bends forward to lean on the desk.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll be very frank with you. I only agreed to a one-off here as a protest against my, ugh, this sounds so convoluted, but my former colleague. We're barely acquaintances. But he's obsessed with this...it's a truly bizarre idea that we were somehow bosom buddies since his wife-

MATT

She's not screwing either of you!

SAM

Not me, I've been seeing, or well, someone else. And they seem... seemed, I should say. They were happy. Because she's dead now, but...no, not because. She accidentally...

Matt breaks into a giggle fit. Sam rambles on.

SAM (CONT'D)

I thought I would show him up by not taking whatever trap he was baiting me into.

MATT

And that's we've been dancing around for two fucking hours? This is your therapy? You need me to weep for you?

SAM

No, no I apologize if that was how I've been coming across. I should have started with...I sincerely thought I could help you-

MATT

Then wipe the bird crap off your feet!

He flicks open the box cutter and uses it to lob a scrap paper off his desk at Sam's face.

MATT (CONT'D)

Go on! I won't touch.

Sam slowly bends over to wipe his heels with the scrap. Matt crumbles behind his desk.

SAM

You only...you stand to gain.
Really! You can counter. This was a
socially hostile environment! You
could even negotiate...

MATT

No shit, you wanna help me, now?!
You wanna help me? Then don't let
me go. Don't pummel me!

He SLAMS his fist on the desk and holds the box cutter to his wrist. Suddenly, TAP. BEEP. BEEP. Matt jumps back and tiptoes to check the door security alarm. Sam scrambles up from his knees. Matt flicks off the light switch.

FADE TO BLACK

MATT

Get down! Idiot! Behind the
desk! Someone's coming-

SAM

Sorry! Sorry!

BOOM.

INT. ROOM 7, SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENT - LATER

A cleaner pushing a vacuum surveys the half-packed room. He peers behind the desk. Underneath is Adam's paper (given to Will) stabbed with Matt's boxcutter.

END ACT III

ACT IV

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - AFTERNOON

Hugh and Adam amble through a fenced-in park. Hugh eats a croissant from a bag and flings his crumbs at passersby.

HUGH

We're experimenting with an open concept floor plan. Would be smoother if the girls weren't so monogamous. But you learn, bachelors are third class in the humanitarian gynarchy. It's all Amazons up there.

He nods at a pink brick high rise.

ADAM

Would you ever go back home?

HUGH

Talking about Boston? Not when my family's around! I'm laying low.

ADAM

Right...

HUGH

You know, I was miffed you threw Sammy a decent rope. Then my pastor had to remind me, I'm climbing faster out here. They voted me CFO for the K-Nine Fund last week. It's double the bonus I got at Bain!

ADAM

So, but...what do you fund, doggy day care?

HUGH

Emotional awareness training for kids age K to nine! Sometimes animals. We get an interesting mix.

ADAM

I guess this isn't your disaffected protest gig, then?

HUGH

You've been out of the game too long!

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)
 We're not all unstable hypocrites.
 I can say unequivocally. Samuel
 Miller is his own unique brand of
 toady in denial.

Adam crosses his arms. Hugh smirks.

HUGH (CONT'D)
 Why do you think his self-sabotage
 never kicked in? We had to fire
 him! Put out of his pretend misery.

Suddenly, a glamorous middle-aged woman in a peasant dress waves from the front window of Hugh's building. Hugh points at Adam.

HUGH (CONT'D)
 There's a Hearst of our generation
 under the sackcloth.

ADAM
 I'm not ready to liberate the
 Symbionese yet.

Hugh nudges Adam towards the window. Adam checks his watch.

ADAM (CONT'D)
 I have to clock back in and
 actually...I should call Sam.

HUGH
 Try. He's not returning my
 congrats.

ADAM
 He saw through that BS.

HUGH
 Nah. I bet he wants his spot back.
 He's ashamed to admit. He's no
 purer than us bourgeoisie
 sycophants!

He playfully elbows Adam.

INT/EXT. NYC SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT (TRACKING)

Adam stands in the window (trapped like Sam) as the train barrels downtown through a dark tunnel.

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Adam sits before an untouched takeout bag and a stack of mail at a four seat dining table. His eyes fixate on a counter TV.

ON TV: Breaking news broadcast. Polished anchor KAREN CHIANG, (50s), is behind the desk.

KAREN

I'm Karen Chiang for MXP-NYC affiliate. Tonight we continue with an update on the break-in at the Triage Collections Office off of County Route 16 in Margate, New Jersey. Police have just spoken with the only eye witness, secretary, Shelly Dechert. Ms. Dechert described the masked intruder as a white male in his late twenties wearing a blue suit.

B-roll flashes on screen: Triage Collections Office fenced with crime tape. A lower third banner: Breaking: Manhunt Continues for Masked Intruder at Margate Office.

KAREN (V.O.)

Now, state officials say they are still searching for two missing potential victims who disappeared from the floor where the intruder was last captured on CCTV footage. Settlements adjuster Matthew Glubb and visiting analyst Samuel-

CLICK. The broadcast fades to black.

INT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE KITCHEN - SAME TIME

SPLAT. Adam crushes the torn takeout bag in his fist. At his feet, the TV remote lays in a spaghetti puddle.

Adam throws the crushed bag at the wall and angrily riffles through the mail. A RENTAL INSURANCE flyer addressed to ELIZABETH PAYNE grabs his attention.

EXT. UPSTATE SPA HOTEL PATIO/LAWN - EARLY MORNING

In the B.G. looms a spa resort framed by mountains. Carl rests in a wheel chair at a tea table on a sprawling lawn.

He's joined by JEANINE STRAUSS, (70s but spry), a no nonsense prima donna in a floral shift. She cuts a shortbread cookie with a fork and knife.

JEANINE

They were like divorced monks. Even his bonus wasn't turning anything on. I have stats for what he makes. He wanted out of the office. Kids, probably. She wanted to suffer. Writing her arty, overpriced plays.

CARL

Gauche, Jeanie, even for you!

JEANINE

Of all people! I can say it. Beth was a bit odd. Maybe even a bra-burner. She sold poems to *Ms*. But I know her mother. From jazzercise.

CARL

Adam's an odd boy, too.

JEANINE

Odd is every other man in midtown! That's how they convince you to give them your retirement. They must be smart. To get away with perversion?

CARL

So? He's from the West Side now! You're talking a totally different arena!

JEANINE

Mm. Still don't buy it. He's not sharp enough to kill anyone...directly.

CARL

You think he pushed her to it?

JEANINE

No! He was nothing to her! She used up all her hate. On herself.

She shrugs coyly and takes a sip from her teacup.

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Anyways. I saw the headline fiasco. You paid him to shakedown that loudmouth commie. What's the name.

(MORE)

JEANINE (CONT'D)

Glubb? And I can't understand. He stopped for the secretary? She looked nothing like Beth!

Carl rests a hand on his stomach near his liver.

CARL

You...you're wrong! Not...not right!

JEANINE

I wouldn't have roped him in! He's too mealy. I can hear him.

(mimicking Adam)

"Would you mind and please refrain from griping? Especially about your lack of company benefits? Thanks!"

Carl foams at the mouth.

CARL

Not him...I set up the analyst to take the...ugh...I like...

His hands flail in the air as his eyes roll back. Jeanine watches him with zero affect.

CARL (CONT'D)

Gah...call...! I...water, wat...

Jeanine gently flicks her teacup off the table. It SHATTERS at her feet. Beat. Carl twitches and WHIMPERS in his chair.

JEANINE

Hello? Can we get some help here?

She smiles at Carl as a nervous waiter scurries over with a paper napkin.

EXT. UPSTATE SPA POOLSIDE - AFTERNOON

Will walks arm-in-arm with his original date, waspy CHARLOTTE HERRON, (20s), across the lawn towards series of cabanas surrounding an artificial lake.

Carl (still sickly), waves from his chair by the water's edge. Will waves back.

CHARLOTTE

We have to see him on a Sunday? Is he now your Pope?

WILL

My father said he wants him at the reception. It's only for the photos and the toast.

CHARLOTTE

Is Carl buying my three carats?

Will kisses her cheek. She brushes him away.

WILL

This is the last time. He promised he's setting us up while he's recovering. I get this job and-

CHARLOTTE

What kind of job? You haven't passed the bar!

WILL

It's uh...he's promoting me. To associate litigations researcher? We can extend the Tehran booking for a week once I sign off on the new hours.

CHARLOTTE

I'll remember to thank him!

WILL

Maybe you could even send a quick letter when you get back to the office? I bought you that Lacroix stationary? Remember? I put it in the left drawer-

Charlotte drops his arm. He takes hers again.

WILL (CONT'D)

Ten minutes...we'll go. We can look at those fountain pens at Bonwit.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - AT THE SAME TIME

Adam strides down a tacky, faux marble hallway. His hands robotically sort letters from TRISTATE FINANCIAL. A signature for ADAM PAYNE JR. (Beth's handwriting) catches his eye.

He passes doors marked 323, 325, and around a corner to 327. An EVICTION NOTICE is taped to the door. He glares at a ruffled entry mat, then hunches to peer in the peephole.

INT. APARTMENT 327 - AT THE SAME TIME

The studio is beige-walled, empty. Adam yells into the void.

ADAM (V.O.)
Hello? Beth? Beth! Beth! Open up!

He shoves the letters through the mail slot.

INT. BECKY'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - AT THE SAME TIME

Adam BANGS his fist on the door until the notice drops. He angrily TEARS it apart with his feet, then backs away from the peephole.

ADAM
Fuck, Beth! You were loved!

He grabs the mat, hugs it to his face, and sobs.

ADAM (CONT'D)
I tried.

He lowers the mat to inhale. Something catches his eye in the mat's place. A small gun glints under the sunlight streaming from the peephole.

EXT. ADAM'S TOWNHOUSE FRONT STEP - MIDNIGHT

Sam (giant bruise on his forehead) POUNDS on Adam's door. Adam appears in a bathrobe at the window. He glances across the street. A grabber blue Mustang sits a few feet from a lamppost.

Sam's POV: Adam shifts to the side of the window and carefully pulls out Beth's gun from his robe pocket.

END