

THE EDGE

"Pilot"

by

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TEASER

EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

The lights of the Manhattan skyline glitter.

HOWARD (V.O.)
You are the future.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE

A yellow cab glides over the Brooklyn bridge.

HOWARD (V.O.)
You've been selected. You've been
vetted. You've been brought here
to do a specific job.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN - BROWNSTONE APARTMENT - LATER

The cab pulls up to a refurbished brownstone in the bright, Bohemian neighborhood of Williamsburg. It looks like the building of a socialist poet living on a trust fund.

HOWARD (V.O.)
You've been brought here to make
lots and lots of money. You will
make money out of nothing.

A MAN (JEFF CROSS), early 30s, gets out, stops at the driver's window, peels off bills for the CABBIE, and trudges up the steps.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeff comes through the front door of his apartment, very precise. He appears to be one efficient son of a bitch: extracting the keys from the lock without so much as a jangle; padding softly through a dark room.

The only light in the room comes from the television set and it casts a glow in the living room, near the couch.

Jeff's body blocks the light and he briefly leans over. Could be picking something up. Could be doing anything.

HOWARD (V.O.)

You will dictate the front pages of the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post and CNN.

Jeff waits a beat, turns off the television, and then he makes his way to the bathroom.

CUT TO:

BATHROOM

Jeff stands before the mirror, still shrouded in darkness.

HOWARD (V.O.)

You will be investment bankers at Edgerton Partners and I can think of no higher calling.

He flips on the light.

Jeff sees himself in the mirror. His tall frame, dark hair, good looks. His hair matted with sweat.

HOWARD (V.O.)

You are refined and sophisticated and smart and empowered and you will literally take over the world before your fortieth birthday.

His eyes go lower and there is blood everywhere. On his hands, his jacket, and his stark white shirt.

He turns on the water and scrubs off rust-colored pools from his hands and forearms.

He pulls off his jacket and a snappy, navy-striped tie.

After a moment, Jeff looks into the mirror for a long time.

HOWARD (V.O.)

Welcome to the club.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

TITLE:

"18 hours earlier"

EXT. EDGERTON PARTNERS - DAY

Wall Street is bracketed by the Hudson River on one end and the Trinity Church cemetery on the other - a canyon of metal and glass and yellow cabs and steaming pot holes and serious-looking millionaires in wing tips.

HOWARD (V.O.)

Of course, not everyone can belong
to this particular club...

At the center of it all is Edgerton Partners, sole owner and occupant of an entire 49-story building - a tube of black modernism and shimmering glass, soaring toward the sky.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - SAME TIME

Inside a state-of-the-art auditorium on the 30th floor of Wall Street's hottest firm, one hundred TRAINEES are seated in plush, stadium seats.

Jeff is right smack in the middle of the group, looking sharp. His perfectly groomed hair and pristine suit stand in stark contrast to the image from the opener.

HOWARD (V.O.)

...Three thousand business school
graduates applied to work here this
year. Fifty were chosen. You.
The class of 2012.

Every eye in the place is glued to owner of the booming voice: HOWARD KADLEC, 48. He carries himself like a president or a king; he's a powerful man who is very aware of his place in the pecking order. Tall, barrel-chested, greying at the temples, Howard's suit is worth more than most of the trainees' bank accounts.

He smiles confidently.

HOWARD

Now it's time for an Edgerton
Partners tradition.

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I'd like for one of you to give me
a proper introduction.

Howard points at a WINSTON, 30, a sloppy, sweating trainee.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

You. Introduce me to the group.

Winston looks around, hoping and praying that Howard meant
someone else.

WINSTON

Ummm...

HOWARD

Have fun selling FHA loans in Ohio.
(looking one seat over)
You.

A perfectly polished debutante, MARY, 26, confidently sits
forward. She's attractive and is usually the most educated
and brilliant person in any setting ... just not this one.

MARY

You are the most successful bond
trader in the history of mankind,
sir. You created--

HOWARD

(indicating the trainees)
Tell them, not me.

MARY

Right.
(to the group)
Well, uh...

Howard shakes his head, points at KEVIN O'CONNELL, 28, seated
two rows in front of Jeff.

HOWARD

You look like you might not be
retarded. Go.

Kevin is fit and a decent-looking guy, but fairly
nondescript. It is evident that his brain is his best
attribute and he's ready to put that on full display.

He rises slowly from his seat, turns, and speaks in a loud
voice to the rest of the trainees.

KEVIN

I want everyone in this room to
think about what we desire most.
(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Power. Respect. And yeah ...
money. I'm talking fuck-you money.
We have the chance at all of that
and screw what they say about
investment bankers on MSNBC.

(confident pause)

We owe that chance to the man
standing before you. He took Wall
Street trading from the Wild West
of the 80s, through the paternalism
of the 90s, and out of the burning
ashes of Lehman and Bear Stearns
... and he took Edgerton Partners
to the top in the process. He's
state college educated and Upper
East Side affiliated. He's the man
we all want to be and he's also the
man who makes it possible to want
that. So put your hands together
for the Chairman of Edgerton
Partners ... Mister Howard Kadlec.

Loud APPLAUSE as Howard beams from the podium.

HOWARD

(to Kevin)

Thank you, son. Well said, well
said. Your name?

KEVIN

O'Connell, sir. Kevin O'Connell.

HOWARD

(to all)

An impressive presentation from
Mister O'Connell. This is where
I'm obligated to make a self-
deprecating remark, but I won't do
it. Do you know why?

(not waiting at all)

Because I deserve all of the praise
that O'Connell just lavished on me.
I am smart. I am driven. I make
money fall from the heavens like
manna in the desert. I have turned
this firm into a bigger power
broker than Congress. So yes, I am
fairly important. Why should I
pretend otherwise? False humility
is for losers. Restraint is for
losers. Timidity is for losers.
The meek don't inherit the earth
... we do.

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

(beat)

Who has questions?

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The trainees spill into a wide hallway filled with expensive art, twisting inner-office staircases, and lush carpet.

Jeff starts to walk toward Howard.

JEFF

Mr. Kadlec!

He tries to push past the surge of bodies, but stops short when he sees the absolutely stunning SARAH CORRINGTON, 37, coming around the corner, carrying a portfolio.

This about Sarah: she has dark hair and deep brown eyes and her mouth has a way of turning up ever so slightly when she smiles. Her power suit accentuates an impressive figure.

The upturned smile disappears when she sees Howard coming toward her. He whispers in her ear and puts a hand low on her hip - "overly familiar" barely does it justice.

She rolls her eyes and dismisses Howard, heading for the training room - but before catching Jeff staring at her.

He blushes and wheels away.

INT. BATHROOM - SECONDS LATER

Jeff enters the bathroom and stands in front of a sink, washing his hands - almost the exact same motion as the opener (minus the blood, of course). He wears a different tie - a hideous yellow monstrosity - and almost seems to debate taking it off. Alas, he can't. Something sentimental there.

He lets out a breath.

TWO ASSHOLE TRAINEES - TRENT COLEMAN and BRANDON MOSS - look over at Jeff at the same time.

TRENT

Saw you trying to bend Kadlec's ear before. Nice try, chief. Kadlec doesn't talk to trainees. Ever.

Jeff just shrugs, betrays nothing. Trent's just another country club blue blood with a square jaw and perfectly parted hair. Jeff's seen a few of those in his day.

A RETCHING from one of the stalls. Then a FLUSH.

Brandon jumps in - he looks pretty much exactly like Trent.

BRANDON

At least you're not puking your
guts out like that guy.
(waving at the smell)
My advice? Stay away from whoever
is in that stall.

JEFF

A real band of brothers we've got
here, huh?

Another RETCHING sound.

TRENT

(making a face)
Hey, if you are into charity work,
go clean up after a tornado.

Half amused, half horrified, Jeff mutters to himself as Trent and Brandon barrel out of the bathroom.

Another FLUSH.

Out of the stall stumbles poor WINSTON. This kid is just a little too fat, a little too flushed ... we're pretty sure he's not going to make it as an investment banker.

Winston walks up to the sink, avoiding eye contact.

Jeff looks around, considering his options. It would be so easy to just drift out, avoid connecting with this pariah...

JEFF

You okay, bud?

WINSTON

I'm already on the shit list. You
probably shouldn't even be talking
to me right now.

Jeff leans back against the counter, considers Winston.

JEFF

You know, someone once said that Wall Street is nothing more than a road with a river at one end and a graveyard at the other.

Winston stares at him, then, finally...

WINSTON

A graveyard? That's supposed to make me feel better?

JEFF

(laughing)

My name's Jeff Cross, by the way. Let's get back in there.

INT. AUDITORIUM - MUCH LATER

The auditorium is hot and stuffy, so there are more than a few dazed and bored expressions.

One person who isn't the least bit bored is Jeff - he's riveted to the current speaker. And when we follow his gaze, we can see why...

It's Sarah Corrington and she looks even better standing in front of a large group, talking shop.

SARAH

...when Congress handed down the Volker rule last year, it shut down prop desks throughout the investment industry...

Jeff leans over, whispers to a confused Winston.

JEFF

Proprietary trading desk. Where the firm makes trades with internal funds rather than "flow," which is an investment with client money.

Winston looks relieved, nods his thanks.

SARAH

...fortunately, thanks to Howard Kadlec's relationships on the Hill, we've been able to carve out exceptions and firing on all cylinders. We make long-term plays and we follow cash reserve rules and we kick ass doing it.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Don't let your mother or Glenn Beck or your old college roommate with the Che Guevara poster make you feel like you are doing anything wrong. You're not.

Sarah looks down at her itinerary and then back up. She seems to be catching Jeff's eye during her lecture.

Jeff glances behind him and to the side, assuming it has to be someone else. Kind of hoping it's not.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Now, I want to talk a little bit about the firm's structure. But first, a quick bit of business.

(consulting a list)

Before the end of the day, I would like to see Melissa Arnold, Trent Coleman, Jeff Cross, and Pete Calder. If you could just swing by my office at a time that is...

Jeff looks up, surprised.

Sarah continues to give instructions, but Jeff's attention is on Trent and Brandon talking in front of him.

BRANDON

Looks like you're headed for the junior varsity squad, Trent.

Trent's shoulders sag.

Frowning, Jeff turns his attention back to Sarah.

SARAH

...there are fifty managing directors here and we control your world, folks. You will either end up in another city, on my floor in flow trading, or up on forty-nine in prop, with Howard.

Once again, Sarah seems to catch Jeff's eye.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Now let's set you up with your gear and start your group tours.

CUT TO:

INT. EDGERTON PARTNERS

The trainees are in groups of 10, taking a tour of the firm, and Jeff ambles along behind Kevin, Winston, Mary, and other NAMELESS TRAINEES, many of whom sneak peaks at their new firm-issued Blackberries.

They are on the 48th floor, home to the flow traders. A LOUDSPEAKER booms out chatter from the trading floor on 49.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

These bids aren't going to place themselves, ladies. It's not a non-profit, people. Attach a client. Go, go, go.

Jeff isn't the only trainee to look at the loudspeaker with concern. The TOUR GUIDE shrugs.

TOUR GUIDE

You'll get used to that.

TRAINEES

(chorus, mumbling)

Big brother ... eye in the sky ...

WINSTON

It would suck to hear that all day.

The tour continues down a hallway full of offices, conference rooms, and break areas.

Inside the various rooms are gleaming monitors, wireless printing stations, and Bloomberg terminals, all humming away.

Jeff is trying to stay interested in what the guide is saying, but his attention is still on the loudspeaker.

LOUDSPEAKER (O.S.)

Doesn't anyone with a half a brain down there want to make some money?

Jeff turns to Kevin, who stands nearby, taking notes.

JEFF

Lord help me if I'm on this floor.

KEVIN

Yeah, I'm gunning for 49 too.

Taking another glance at Kevin, Jeff connects the dots and recognizes him from earlier.

JEFF

Nice introduction, by the way.

KEVIN

Hey, I figure you gotta get ahead early and then hang on for dear life at The Edge. At least, if you want to get paid a premium for what we can do.

JEFF

Which is what? Making intros?

KEVIN

No. Absolutely nothing.

Both guys laugh as Jeff extends his hand.

JEFF

Jeff Cross.

KEVIN

Kevin O'Connell.

(beat)

Hey, you are one of the four names that Corrington read off earlier.

JEFF

Yeah. Not sure what to make of it.

KEVIN

She's a powerful managing director and she wants to meet. That's huge. Plus, she's super hot.

JEFF

Yeah, but she's away from all the action.

Kevin stops, speaks conspiratorially.

KEVIN

Listen, every managing director is hunting for the best trainees to add to their teams. If she wants you working for her, others will see that and suddenly want you to work for them.

(off Jeff)

Think of it this way: you know how some ugly guys always score hot women?

(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

It's not because they're inherently desirable, it's because they got one gorgeous chick to date them and it made every other woman think, "wow, if he's with her, that guy has something going for him."

JEFF

I thought this was high finance, not politics...
(musing)
And you think she wants me working for her, huh?

KEVIN

Well, I saw her staring at you during her presentation, so perhaps it could be better said that she wants you working "under her."

JEFF

You sound pretty enamored yourself.

KEVIN

Nah, I've got my eye on that hot trainee. Mary?

JEFF

Oh right. Nice.

KEVIN

Yup. Taking her to lunch over at Ulysses today. You should join us.

JEFF

I don't want to crash your date.

KEVIN

Unfortunately, that fat kid Winston is going to be there anyway. They are joined at the hip after they both screwed up this morning. Misery loves company, I suppose.
(beat)
Oh, look here.

They arrive at Sarah's office. The door is cracked open.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You should go in there now.

JEFF

(blushing just a bit)
During the tour?

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

She said to come by before the end of the day, so I think I should probably--

KEVIN

Politics, man. Get in there before Melissa Arnold, Trent Coleman, and Pete Calder beat you to it.

Kevin winks at Jeff, who takes a deep breath, nods back and heads for the door.

SARAH'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jeff raps on the door, cautious.

SARAH

Come on in.

JEFF

You wanted to see me, Miss Corrington? I'm Jeff Cross, one of the new trainees.

SARAH

Call me Sarah. What are you doing here during the tour?

JEFF

I...

SARAH

I'm kidding. That tour is a waste of time. I think you'll be able to find the bathroom.

She grabs her purse and moves past Jeff toward the door.

JEFF

I can make an appointment with your secretary and come back later...

SARAH

Let's go, Jeff. You just landed yourself a lunch meeting.

Jeff just stands there, flustered as Sarah leans back in.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Nice tie, by the way.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. SHO SHAUN HERGATT RESTAURANT - DAY

Perched blocks from Wall Street, the famous power lunch spot is buzzing with activity; BANKERS with cell phones pressed to ears mill around outside, waiting for a table.

INT. SHO SHAUN HERGATT - SAME TIME

SHO Shaun Hergatt is a restaurant designed to look like the elite dining establishments of the 80s. Excess and class and pre-recession feel good vibes.

Sarah and Jeff sit at a table near the kitchen. White linen table cloth, contrasting walls of slatted wood and deep red paint, low-slung leather chairs, expensive bottled water astride wine glasses.

SARAH

In a year I'll be next to the bar.

Jeff looks up from a plate of barley risotto.

JEFF

Sorry?

Sarah nods toward the front of the dark, atmospheric dining room.

SARAH

They seat you here based on pecking order. He who trades the most gets the best table.

JEFF

Miss Corrington--

SARAH

Sarah. Seriously.

JEFF

Okay. Sarah. Why did you invite me to lunch today?

SARAH

(coyly)

It was lunchtime and my other plans cancelled.

JEFF

Fair enough. I guess the bigger question is why did you invite me to your office in the first place?

Sarah measures the moment. As she decides what to say, Howard Kadlec glides into the room and takes his seat ... right up front.

Jeff sneaks a peek at the legendary trader, but while every other eye in the place is glued to Howard, Jeff's gaze returns right back to the beauty before him.

SARAH

Jeff, I called you and a handful of others to my office so I could give you the quick pitch on flow trading. We need someone in our group who can think outside the box and reach for more than just their balls when solving a problem.

(beat)

Plus, I'll be saving you a life of misery one floor up.

JEFF

Okay...

SARAH

When you are at The Edge, what you see is not what you get. You are going to step on to the 49th floor today and feel the power of the world's economy spinning on a hundred terminals and ringing through a thousand phones. It's going to be like standing in front of a jet engine.

(beat)

And you're going to be impressed.

JEFF

Sounds loud.

She cracks a smile.

JEFF (CONT'D)

So when do those other three trainees get their lunch dates?

SARAH

They don't. And who said anything about a date?

Jeff reddens slightly.

At that moment, a WAITER picks up an empty plate from the table and starts to cross the room.

We follow the waiter to...

THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE

Howard leans back under the soft light from a hanging boxed lantern fixture as a WAITER pours from a bottle of red wine into two large glasses.

Howard's lunch companion, DONALD, 35, wears a cheap suit and a nervous expression. He's definitely not a banker type.

HOWARD

Donald, my friend, here's a rule of thumb: never drink an Italian wine. Or a California, God forbid. No, stick to the French. They've done it longest and they do it best.

Donald leans in.

DONALD

Listen, Howard, people are starting to ask questions.

Howard's good nature evaporates. His eyes narrow.

HOWARD

Keep your voice down and your back straight. Panic does not behoove a junior member of Congress.
(staring Donald down)
Donald, we've done it how many times already? Six?

Donald takes a big swig of wine. It's practically a gulp and Howard makes a face at the spectacle.

DONALD

Yeah, but KBR? I mean, did we learn nothing from the Bush era?

HOWARD

It doesn't matter who puts the money in, only where it goes. Where it goes is to investment portfolios that fund U.S. companies who then bring critical infrastructure to Afghanistan.

DONALD

Yeah, but the company that does
that is KBR.

Howard shrugs and smirks as if to say: yeah, and what a neat
trick that is, huh?

DONALD (CONT'D)

And you get rich in the process.

HOWARD

Well, I have to take my usual fee,
of course. To do otherwise would
raise suspicion.

Donald takes another long chug. The man's nerves are shot.

Howard's look says: they don't make United States Congressmen
from Western Colorado like they used to.

CUT TO:

INT. EDGERTON PARTNERS - TRADING FLOOR - SAME TIME

Back at The Edge, the prop desks on 49 are humming.

The trading floor is 100 yards long and filled with terminals
and desks arranged in a U-shape. Every seat is filled by a
SCREAMING human being: MANAGING DIRECTORS, TRADERS, ANALYSTS,
ERRAND BOYS.

Most traders work two phones at once.

The loudspeaker BLARES.

Large Bloomberg monitors feature constantly flashing numbers
and words.

A group of trainees that includes Trent Coleman and Brandon
Moss (the douche bags from the bathroom) takes in the
madness. Trent and Brandon look cocky as hell, playing Brick
Breaker on their BlackBerries.

CHATTER comes from all directions:

TRADERS

(chorus)

...just sold 35 million bonds ...
they got their boxing gloves on
today ... buy 'em at six-plus ...

(MORE)

TRADERS (CONT'D)

not putting up three and half basis
points for a long two twenty five
... cut the guy's nuts off then!
... bid and put 'em in the box...

The bull pacing the center of the ring is ARNOLD BALL, 40, shaved head, built like a fire hydrant. Ball is one of the most notorious and feared traders on Wall Street and a raging a-hole to boot.

BALL

Does anyone in this room have the faintest clue how to work a damn telephone? I wanted Rick Thomas on the line ten minutes ago! What good is having an executive in your back pocket if you can't get 'em on the phone?

An ERRAND BOY scrambles over.

ERRAND BOY

I've got Thomas.

Ball snatches up a phone and barks into it, spit flying out as he does so - hitting Trent right in the face. The cocky trainee shrinks back, wiping his fake.

BALL

Rick, what the hell is going on over there?

(listening)

You promised me Alcoa was good for eighty million on this trade. There's no way we can push through a naked prop trade at two hundred without an institutional name on the papers. "Meeting client need" is what keeps us exempt on the short-term trades.

(beat)

God damn it, Rick! If you want Phillips Steel to own Atlas instead of you guys, then be my guest!

Ball slams down the phone, fuming and wheels around to a suddenly silent room.

Brandon is practically cowering in the corner as he slips his BlackBerry into his pocket.

BALL (CONT'D)

I don't need to stress the importance of this deal.

(MORE)

BALL (CONT'D)

If it collapses, everyone who works
on 49 can kiss their bonus goodbye.
(pointing at the trainees)
These starry-eyed Pollyannas could
do a better job than you morons.
Now ... GET BACK TO WORK!!!!.

Everyone springs back into action, save the shell-shocked
trainees, as the CHATTER resumes:

TRADERS

(chorus)

...someone put through a W-1 ...
what are you hearing on the ten-
years ... I need five by five
updates on the Treasury auction ...
can you get me up to four ticks on
that? ... Cut his nuts off, I said!

BACK TO:

INT. SHO SHAUN HERGATT - BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE - SAME TIME

Donald is practically pulling his hair out at this point.

DONALD

You're telling me you don't have
second thoughts about all this?
That you don't lose sleep?

HOWARD

Over what?

DONALD

Over what?
(whispering)
-- over the fact that someone from
the House Committee on Foreign
Affairs is working hand-in-hand
with the managing director of the
richest investment bank in the
United States to put down roads and
power lines and aqueducts that have
the net impact of bringing heroin
straight back to this country.

Howard glances around, but no one is listening. They have
plenty of room. One of the perks of having the best table in
the place.

HOWARD

It's coming here either way.

DONALD

Some of it, sure, but look at the volume. We're creating a mess that someone is going to have to clean up at some point.

HOWARD

You know Donald, I'm reminded of the whole eggs and omelets argument here.

Donald starts to protest again, but Howard cuts him off.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I'm so sick and tired about people worrying about tomorrow, like today is all one big chapter from Utopia. The aim is not to harvest poppy plants in Kabul. The aim is to provide a service that people will pay for. The world needs infrastructure, Congressman. Urbanization is occurring worldwide and we will grow by a billion people over the next twenty years. To put it another way: there is a city the size of Beijing being built every other month. Do we have the infrastructure to support that? No, we do not.

(hammering it home)

Why start in Afghanistan? Because last time I checked, there weren't tens of thousands of U.S. troops in India or Ghana. Donald, you represent a district that wants to bring its sons and daughters home from a ten-year war. The least you can do is give your soldiers some goddamn roads to drive on.

There is a long pause. What a speech!

HOWARD (CONT'D)

And the heroin is coming here either way.

EXT. ULYSSES FOLK HOUSE - FINANCIAL DISTRICT - SAME TIME

Establishing. The Financial District hot spot, with its white brick facade and blue "Ulysses" flag flying above the front door, is open for business.

INT. ULYSSES - SAME TIME

Mary, Kevin, and Winston sit at a bar top, eating sliders and drinking iced tea.

KEVIN
(kidding around)
We should order a beer, huh, Mary?

Winston, oblivious to Kevin's aims, turns to Kevin.

WINSTON
Are you joking me? It's our first
day at Edgerton Partners!
(beat)
And we haven't even met Ball yet.

They all look a little worried as Kevin turns serious.

KEVIN
I was kidding. Obviously.

Mary looks at him and then laughs.

MARY
I'll drink a beer. Hell, I plan to
drink a lot of beers here.

KEVIN
Sure, provided they ever actually
let us out of the office.

WINSTON
Did you know there's a whole floor
full of "nap rooms"? With showers
and cots and everything! We're
never going home again!

Mary laughs again. She may have been cut down to size in the training room, but she can drink, talk shit, and party with the best of them.

She hails the BARTENDER.

MARY
Pour me the best thing on tap.

The bartender slides over a pint and Mary chugs as Kevin and Winston raise their eyebrows to each other.

INT. SHO SHAUN HERGATT - SARAH'S TABLE

Both Jeff and Sarah have had a few glasses of wine and the conversation is a little more familiar than one would expect between a powerful managing director and a first-day trainee.

JEFF

So work on 48, huh? You make it feel like a very easy choice.

(beat, blushing)

Your sales pitch, I mean.

SARAH

(enjoying the flattery)

Investing for clients instead of for the firm is what the industry was founded on. Plus, it makes you versatile. A year with me, you'll be able to handle any position you might find yourself in.

Jeff waits a beat. Is Sarah hitting on him? She's too polished and demure to reveal too much, but it sure as hell feels that way.

JEFF

(after a long pause)

When I applied to college, I only sent applications to two schools: the University of Michigan upon my dad's request and Princeton because that was where I wanted to go. When the acceptance letter from Michigan came, my dad insisted I commit that very day. I asked him to give me two weeks. If the big envelope from Princeton didn't come, I'd be a Wolverine and never look back. Exactly fourteen days later, a letter from Princeton arrived.

Sarah spins her water glass around a few times.

SARAH

Jeff, we've got more in common than you might think. You studied art history and worked in a museum before getting your law degree. Wanna guess my major?

JEFF

Econ?

SARAH

Nope, I was a Comparative Lit major, then an English teacher, and then I got my PhD. I've risen to the top because I know how to think. People like us are a dying breed and if we don't keep the pool stocked, the department that I've built from scratch is going to be overrun by the Arnold Balls of the world. Guys who fire every nuke they have and hope the world is still standing when they're done.

Jeff doesn't know what to say.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Think about coming on board, Jeff. You're needed.

(beat)

Besides, skiing in Vermont isn't skiing in Zurich, but it's still pretty good. You know what I mean?

He looks into her dark brown eyes. They hold for just a second too long.

JEFF

Can I have 'til the end of the day?

SARAH

Yes, but there's a client I need to meet tomorrow and I'd love to have you join me. It's a big meeting - a big opportunity.

(looks a question)

Find me tonight and let me know either way?

JEFF

Either way.

As they get up from their table, Jeff's gaze never wanders from Sarah as she prowls through the restaurant and so he doesn't notice Howard Kadlec noticing him ... from the table at the front of the room.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. EDGERTON PARTNERS - TRADING FLOOR - AFTERNOON

A large group of trainees wander onto the trading floor.

Things are even crazier than they were an hour prior - stumbling onto the runway at LaGuardia would be less jolting.

A large blackboard has been rolled in and sits near the door.

Kevin leans in toward Jeff.

KEVIN

How was lunch? You in?

Jeff is trying to shake off the effects of the wine and the flirtation with a powerful managing director.

JEFF

It was fine.

(focusing)

Hey, what's the deal with that blackboard?

KEVIN

That thing has been here since 1985. Tomorrow morning we all find out our assignments and they go on that board. Every person here wants to be up on forty-nine, in the thick of it. Ten prop trading spots open - one prized position in Kadlec's group. The big leagues. Where you have access to everything. Twenty of us will be placing client trades on forty-eight. Worst case scenario, you are sent off to Atlanta to work with Municipal loans.

(looking up)

Uh, oh. Ball Buster, incoming.

The sweaty, seething Arnold Ball storms over.

BALL

(screaming)

What do you losers want? We're busy in here! We're having a day for the ages and we can't deal with a bunch of pimply trainees.

A harried-looking TRADER zips in behind Ball, who is already charging away to take a call.

TRADER

Duck and cover, folks. We've got a four-alarm fire in progress. Alcoa bailed on the Atlas buy.

Blank stares.

TRADER (CONT'D)

The aluminum LBO ... ? Atlas has a big "for sale" sign on the front lawn and we're trying to buy it.

(disgusted)

Oh, never mind. I don't know why we hire you silver spoon MBAs.

Finally, Jeff speaks up.

JEFF

Well, all I know is that we're supposed to be here for training. We need to know what is going on.

TRADER

Then find a good place to hide.

The trainees scatter as Ball storms back over.

BALL

(muttering to himself)

They send me trainees on today of all days. Son of a...

(towards the group)

Who here knows what an FRN is?

Winston closes his eyes, praying not to get called on.

Ball calls on Mary instead.

BALL (CONT'D)

Banker Barbie.

Jeff grimaces for Mary, who wobbles ever so slightly, quite possible a tad bit drunk.

MARY

Uh, pardon?

Ball smiles wickedly at the word choice.

Trent and Brandon, confidence restored, SNICKER audibly.

BALL

A Barbie and a blue blood, huh?
What have ya got?

MARY

I was top of my class at Wharton.

BALL

Wrong answer!

(beat)

Does it look like we care about
class rank here? Nothing moves but
the money, sweetie pie. We trade
in one currency and it's not what
grade you got on your Operations
final. No, we scratch out our wins
on the back of the almighty dollar.

(beat)

Now, as for you how you managed to
find your way to this trading floor
despite the fact that you don't
know that FRN stands for--

Jeff stands up, squares off with Ball.

JEFF

Floating Rate Note.

Ball spins around.

BALL

Who are you?

JEFF

Jeff Cross.

(not waiting)

A Floating Rate Note has a variable
coupon linked to a specific
reference rate of interest, usually
foreign, such as FIBOR, Helibor,
what have you. I assume you are
trading three month USD PIBOR point
twenty six percent. But in
fairness, I didn't read the Journal
closely this morning. I only
skimmed it.

Ball stomps over to where Jeff stands; looks him in the eye.

BALL

Well congrats, pretty boy. You win
the prize.

(noticing Kevin)

You two: special assignment.

Kevin looks eager. Whether he is eager to impress Mary or please Ball is a little unclear. Maybe both.

Jeff, not so much.

JEFF

If it's all the same, I'd rather stay and soak up as much information as I can.

BALL

Oh, no, I insist. You are clearly very bright and talented and I have an assignment I've been holding to the side for just such a trainee.

KEVIN

Thank you for including me.

BALL

(laughing)

Oh, you're welcome! You've probably heard about our little problem, no? Alcoa is giving us a real reach-around, which means we either need to find a new bottom third of our CDO or we need to find a client willing to buy another of the world's ten largest aluminum manufacturing companies on short notice. I'm looking behind door number one. That means Paris and that means PIBOR and that means we've got a fight on our hands. And with a fight comes an appetite.

KEVIN

For destruction, I love it.

BALL

No gomer, for food. We have an appetite for food. Wiping the floor with Rick Thomas is enough to make a man hungry.

He hands them a list, scribbled on a piece of paper.

BALL (CONT'D)

I need every item on this list within the hour or you'll never walk into this room again.

Jeff and Kevin both turn, shoulders sagging.

BALL (CONT'D)
Oh, and one other thing.

He walks over to Jeff with a pair of scissors.

BALL (CONT'D)
That's the ugliest goddamn tie I've
ever seen.

In one quick motion, he snips the tie just below the knot,
sending the yellow abomination floating to the ground.

Trent, Brandon, and the other trainees - save for Winston and
Mary - laugh their asses off.

EXT. THE BROWNING SCHOOL - SAME TIME

Howard eases out of a Maybach on the Upper East Side and
crosses Park Avenue toward a tall, stacked brick building
that reads "The Browning School" on the outside.

At that moment, another car - a Rolls - cruises into the
parking lot. Out steps the most regal creature you will ever
see: LAURA KADLEC, 47.

This about Laura Kadlec: even though we're meeting her on
page 28, she's a show stopper. Tall, dark complexion,
piercing blue eyes, black hair with subtle hints of grey, a
wardrobe that looks handpicked by Donatella Versace herself.
Laura is the daughter of a former U.S. President - modern day
American royalty.

Oh, and she's a total bitch.

Howard waits for her at the door, holds it open, nods.

HOWARD
Laura.

She just glides past. (For those scoring at home, that's two
women that Howard has once screwed and now won't even talk to
him. Spoiler alert: that love triangle is the reason why.)

INT. THE BROWNING SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Seated inside a dark, wood-paneled office, the school's
HEADMASTER is talking directly to Howard.

HEADMASTER
As you are probably noticing at
home, your son Julian is exhibiting
some very disturbing behavior--

LAURA

(scoffing)

It's a little hard to notice your son's behavior when you never actually see him.

(to the headmaster)

You might want to direct your comments to me.

The headmaster shrugs, gets back to business.

HEADMASTER

Well then, Mrs. Kadlec, I have to tell you--

Howard ignores him, glares at Laura.

HOWARD

Someone has to pay for this fancy Browning education, to say nothing of the condo, the vacation home, the cars...

LAURA

Oh here we go.

HEADMASTER

Mister and Misses Kadlec!
(shocking even himself)
I am trying to tell you that your son has a serious drug problem.

LAURA

(in total denial)

That's impossible.

You can hear a pin drop.

HOWARD

A drug problem?

HEADMASTER

Yes, a drug problem. He's exhibiting a lot of the signs: irritability, mood swings, nodding off, restless beha--

LAURA

I've never heard anything so repulsive in my entire life.

Howard turns to Laura, assertive, the two of them seemingly reunited for this tiny moment in time. He turns back to the headmaster.

HOWARD

Now you listen and you listen good.
Nobody threatens my family. To
call my son a junkie...

Howard is fuming, nearly on his feet.

HEADMASTER

I never said he was a junkie,
Mister Kadlec. Heroin is being
used for recreational purposes by
high school students these days.

HOWARD

You made him sound like some dope
fiend from West Baltimore.

The headmaster sticks to his guns.

HEADMASTER

Maybe he needs more support from
the two of you.

Howard stands up, smirks, as Laura just sits there, a vacant
look on her face.

HOWARD

The tuition checks just stopped
rolling in, pal. Same with the
donations. My son is now a member
of the junior class at Nightingale.

(turning back)

You think you're so important,
don't you? What, because you're a
headmaster at a snotty private
school? Your a bit player. The
world doesn't revolve around you.

HEADMASTER

And nor does it revolve around you,
Mister Kadlec.

Howard smiles and swings the office door open, but not before
getting in some parting words.

HOWARD

Actually, yes it does.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE - LATER

Jeff and Kevin venture further and further from Wall Street as Jeff looks up and down from a map on his phone, while Kevin takes furtive glances over his shoulder.

JEFF

Where is this place...

KEVIN

I don't know what makes these specific hot dogs so magical that he had to send us to the Lower East Side. There are tenements down here, for God's sakes! Tenements!

Jeff sighs, puts away his phone.

JEFF

I think we passed it.

KEVIN

Atlanta, here we come.

They check their watches and pick up the pace.

BACK TO:

INT. TRADING FLOOR - SAME TIME

Arnold Ball looks up at a clock and then back at the phone.

BALL

Come on, ring...

As he waits, an ANALYST comes over with a piece of paper.

Ball rips it away and starts reading.

His expression changes to one of disbelief as he drops the phone and heads for the elevator.

TRADER

Arnold?

BALL

We didn't get Alcoa back.

TRADER

And the new piece from Paris?

BALL

The high-yield stuff is too flammable. Anything more stable is too expensive. We're screwed.

The elevator opens up and Arnold steps in.

TRADER

So where are you going?

BALL

To look behind door number two.

The doors snap shut.

BACK TO:

INT. DASH DOGS - LATER

The shop is as steamy as the water used to boil the hot dogs.

A rough-looking UKRAINIAN stands behind the counter, tongs wielded like a weapon.

UKRAINIAN

What you want?

Jeff starts to read from the list, moving a little too slow for Kevin's liking. We're seeing Kevin the Bulldog emerging here, right before our very eyes.

JEFF

Alright my good man, we're gonna need three Dash Dogs. Sorry, make that two of those. One Double Child ... I can't read this ... wait, Double Chili--

KEVIN

(revved up)
Just give us a dozen Dash Dogs.

JEFF

(small smile)
Wow, bold move.

KEVIN

Arnold Ball doesn't eat, he inhales. Those pigs aren't going to notice what's on their hot dog. The clock is one thing these guys will notice.

JEFF

In that case...

(to the Ukrainian)

...hold the ketchup on those.

Jeff smiles off Kevin's questioning look.

JEFF (CONT'D)

A hot dog should never be eaten
with ketchup. Gotta have some
principals around here.

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE

Arnold Ball is practically begging Sarah to bail him out.

BALL

I don't have to tell you what
happens if we get caught making
this acquisition with only Edgerton
money. Congress is going to shit a
brick. The firm will look bad.

SARAH

No, your group will look bad,
Arnold. Not quite the same thing.

BALL

Oh, and I bet you'd love that.

SARAH

You're a great gambler, Arnold.
Another well-placed bet.

Arnold's face turns red.

BALL

So you're not going to help me out?

SARAH

(matching his fury)

This isn't "helping you out." This
is getting on the phone with my
most important client - the one I'm
meeting with tomorrow to keep them
going over to Goldman - and
tricking them into acquiring a
steel company that has been in the
red for twelve straight quarters.

BALL

Aluminum.

SARAH

What?

BALL

It's an aluminum company.

He paces, angry, but after a beat, Arnold's face changes: he calms down and becomes serene. He's made a decision.

He steps further into the office and settles into one of Sarah's plush chairs.

BALL (CONT'D)

I'll blow the whistle on Howard.

Sarah sets down her pen. Arnold's tone of voice tells her he's not posturing and he's not just throwing darts.

BALL (CONT'D)

(plowing ahead)

I know a lot about a lot, Sarah.
Defense contractor investments.
Low-interest Afghan debt that makes
no sense unless you're looking at
some scum bag drug lord from
Kandahar lining everyone's pockets.
The meetings with all the
congressmen, including the new low
man in foreign. I mean--

SARAH

(lacking conviction)

Sounds like you've got a nice
thriller novel on your hands.

BALL

Save it, Corrington. I can make a
call to my old college roommate
over at the SEC and he will--

BANG. Sarah slams down her pen.

SARAH

Call him then. You'll never do it,
because you care more about your
own gain than you do about "doing
the right thing."

BALL

Don't be so sure about that, Sarah. Sleeping your way up the ladder with Howard Kadlec probably made you a bit biased, but I built the proprietary trading desk here. He took what was mine.

Sarah is reeling.

SARAH

You know about...

BALL

Yes I do, Sarah.

(beat)

And unless you want everyone else to know about it, you'll convince your favorite client that they are just dying to own an aluminum manufacturer.

CUT TO:

INT. ORIGINAL RAY'S PIZZA - LATER

Kevin can taste success now. He's right in a PIZZA COOK'S face, demanding faster work.

His approach, his vocabulary - Kevin already sounds like a young Arnold Ball.

KEVIN

Just heat it up!

PIZZA COOK

I have to make sure it is warmed all the way through. These slices have been sitting out for hours.

KEVIN

I don't care! You think traders are even going to taste this crap? Just throw it in a box. Don't make me go next door.

EXT. WALL STREET - LATER

Arms full of hot dogs, pizza, and beer, Kevin and Jeff sprint down the street.

KEVIN

We can make it!

JEFF

Then let's pick up the pace.

They run faster, laughing. They are finding their way, developing a friendship ... it's coming together.

INT. EDGERTON PARTNERS - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin and Jeff wait impatiently for the elevator until Kevin heads for the stairs.

JEFF

You're going up forty nine flights?
Are you insane?

Kevin shoves open the stairwell.

KEVIN

Jeff, chance favors the bold.
Everyone's more or less going to
have to run up 49 flights of stairs
at some point. I'm gone, pal.

And just like that, he is indeed gone.

Not 10 seconds later, the elevator door pings open and Jeff is face to face with the man, the myth, the legend ... Howard Kadlec.

Howard stares him down for what feels like an eternity.

Jeff, remembering what Trent and Brandon said earlier about Howard never speaking to a trainee, puts his head down and starts to step past when...

HOWARD

I saw you at lunch with Sarah
Corrington today.

Jeff walks it back a step, looks up.

Howard seems perturbed, but also intrigued.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

There for over two hours. Not
exactly a power lunch.

JEFF

Yes, I'm sorry about that, sir.
Next time I'll keep it quick.

Howard continues to eye him, like a predator in the wild.

HOWARD

No, don't apologize. You must have made quite an impression on her.

JEFF

Yes, I suppose so. I'm Jeff Cross, by the way, sir.

(looking down)

I'd shake your hand, but I'm holding these dozen hot dogs.

Shifting gears, Howard's mood lightens.

HOWARD

Yes, why are you holding those dozen hot dogs?

JEFF

I "won" an assignment from--

HOWARD

Ah, Arnold Ball. Wow, you must have really pissed him off. That must also explain why you don't have a tie.

Jeff's face drops, but not for long.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I like you, Jeff Cross. Why don't you bring those dozen hot dogs and come for a ride with me.

JEFF

I'm really supposed to deliver them to Arnold and I've only got--

HOWARD

Come take a ride, Jeff. But first...

Howard turns to a BANKER walking past.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Nice tie, where'd you get it?

BANKER

Uh, Barney's.

HOWARD

And you paid, what, eighty bucks?
(off the banker's nod)

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Well, then a grand ought to cover
it. Hand it over.

He stuff a wad of bills in the banker's shirt pocket,
procures the tie, and tosses it to Jeff.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Let's go.

INT. TRADING FLOOR

All of the energy has been drained out of the trading floor.
The markets have closed and the deal is in Sarah's hands now.

BANG!

The stairwell door swings open and Kevin charges in with
boxes of pizza and a case of beer.

KEVIN

Made it! A minute to spare.

(to Arnold)

Did I pass the test? Did I win?

Arnold takes the pizzas and throws them directly into the
trash. He snaps off a beer, pops it, and takes a long drink.

BALL

Nobody on this floor won anything
today, sport, except for the chance
to boss the 48th floor around a
little bit. Rough day though.
Rough day.

KEVIN

Wow, sorry to hear that. Listen
though, and I hate to even ask, but
since I did make it on time and
all...

Ball frowns, looks like he's about to start yelling, but
instead just gives up and let's out a sigh.

BALL

You okay with going by Pizza Boy
from now until the end of time?

KEVIN

Sure. I've never liked Kevin
anyway. Pretty ordinary name, if
you think about. My mom--

BALL

Jesus. Just shut up already.

Arnold stomps across the room, grabs a piece of chalk, and writes "Pizza Boy" next to "49" on the board.

BALL (CONT'D)

Your lucky day and all that.
Welcome to the inferno, kiddo.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. TOWNCAR - EVENING

Howard takes a big bite out of a hot dog, savors it.

HOWARD

This a fine hot dog, Jeff.

Jeff - looking sharp in his new navy-striped tie - has no idea how to respond.

JEFF

You're welcome?

HOWARD

So what were you and Sarah talking about at lunch anyway, Jeff? She giving you the hard sell on client services?

For the first time, Jeff starts to look a little wary. Howard is really obsessed with this lunch meeting.

JEFF

Sort of. She was more or less telling me to play it safe. She made some good points, you know, about some of the risk in trying to follow new SEC regulation...

He trails off, worried. Did he go too far?

Howard wolfs down the last bite, briskly wipes his hands together to get rid of the crumbs.

HOWARD

You study any history in school?

JEFF

Art history. Baroque period, to be specific.

HOWARD

Eh. Well, that's a forgivable sin. Do you remember Hoover's 1928 presidential campaign slogan?

(off Jeff)

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

"A chicken in every pot." It was the depression, so sure, it was tactical, but the man was just trying to reinforce a piece of the American dream, which is that our people don't go hungry.

Jeff just sits there.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

That's me, Jeff. That's what we do on Wall Street. The chicken became a house and then a company and then the NASDAQ. Anyone with the brains to figure out the bet and the balls to lay it down can own the world. That is the new American Dream and I am its purveyor.

(sly grin)

Which is why we're on our way to meet the mayor.

JEFF

We're meeting the mayor?

HOWARD

I told you it would be worth getting in the car.

(beat)

And that you'd need a tie.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUDSON RIVER - NIGHT

The lights of Manhattan are lit up like a Christmas tree in the background as a massive, gorgeous yacht trolls along New York Harbor with the Statue of Liberty looming overhead.

CUT TO:

INT. YACHT - SAME TIME

Kevin, Winston, Mary and other trainees throw back drinks, dance to a live band, and carry on like kings of the city. This is the booze cruise to end all booze cruises.

Winston smokes a cigar and Mary hits the bottle in classic wild party girl fashion. It's pretty clear that she's going to be a lot of fun.

MARY

Hey, whatever happened to Jeff Cross? I never thanked him for bailing me out in front of Arnold Ball. That was impressive.

Uh oh, Kevin's got a jealous side. His face clouds over a bit, but then he lets it go.

WINSTON

Yeah, he seems like a good dude.

KEVIN

Last I saw him, Jeff was getting in good with Sarah Corrington.

Mary arches her eyes.

MARY

She's hot.

KEVIN

For a banker, sure.
(realizing his mistake)
I mean, you know, which makes it even more rare that there are two extremely attractive female bankers at our firm...

MARY

(finally warming to him)
Nice recovery.

A brief, awkward silence is broken by Winston.

WINSTON

Hey, Mary, did you hear that Kevin's already on the board for the forty-ninth floor?

MARY

I thought that names weren't going up until tomorrow?

KEVIN

Let's just say that my timing wound up being very good. The downside is that I'm apparently going by the name "Pizza Boy" from now on.
(more serious)
(MORE)

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Winston, as long as you don't get shipped off to Ohio like Kadlec threatened this morning, I think there's a good chance you'll be on forty-eight. You too, Mary.

MARY

Well then, it looks like we have ourselves a little Gang of New York.

KEVIN

A band of brothers. With a sister thrown in for good measure.

WINSTON

What about Jeff?

KEVIN

(looking around)
Jeff's the mystery man right about now, it would appear.

CUT TO:

YACHT - TOP DECK

On the top deck, Ball, Sarah, and other managing directors watch the trainees carefully. Decisions are being made.

Sarah consults a list, acts casual.

SARAH

Where's Jeff Cross?

BALL

Who?

SARAH

JD from Stanford. Art history major at Princeton. The kind of fresh blood we need.

BALL

(grunting)
Guy seems like a wimp.

SARAH

I heard differently.

A few other managing directors CHUCKLE, but quickly shut up when Ball stares daggers at them. People scatter, leaving Ball and Sarah alone.

BALL

Listen, I'm not going to say anything. Okay?

SARAH

About what?

BALL

(disbelief)

About what...

(serious)

Sarah, you and Howard slept together for three years. He was already married to the daughter of a former president at the time. And after he screwed your brains out - literally, given the things you've chosen to overlook since then - Howard Kadlec went about putting himself and this firm in a tight spot. God knows what sort of deals he's made.

SARAH

You don't sound like someone who isn't going to say anything.

Arnold looks her in the eye.

BALL

I love this firm. It's one of the only things I've ever loved and it's certainly the only thing that's ever loved me back. You think I would try to bring Edgerton Partners down?

(beat)

But here's something you might want to pass along to your former favorite prop trader. I'm not letting him bring it down either.

SARAH

Arnold? Go to hell.

BALL

Ladies first, Sarah.

Arnold strolls off, rattling his glass at a waiter.

BALL (O.C.) (CONT'D)

(in background)

Hey, numbnuts. Get me another Dewar's on the rocks.

Sarah sighs and keeps looking for her lunch date. She caves in and pecks out a quick MMS text message on her Blackberry.

ANGLE ON:

The phone screen reads "Tomorrow's meeting is critical. Have you made a decision?"

She hits send.

BACK TO:

INT. TOWNCAR - SAME TIME

The doors to the car swing open as Howard and Jeff climb in - Howard casually, Jeff bounding in full of energy.

JEFF

Holy smokes, Howard. That was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The mayor just begged you to save that housing project. And you can do it! How are you going to bundle it? Foreign debt? Part of an LBO?

Jeff's face says it all: he might have had Wall Street pegged wrong. Men like Howard Kadlec are agents of social enterprise! They don't just make piles of money, they make change happen. Jeff is thrilled to be part of it.

Then...

HOWARD

Nah, I'm not going to do it.

He picks a piece of lint off of his suit.

Jeff's excitement fades.

JEFF

Why not? It's so perfect--

HOWARD

No money in it, Jeff. I mean, what's the point?

JEFF

But the mayor...

HOWARD

He owes me a thousand favors. I don't have to worry about him.
(checking his watch)

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

In fact, he owes me a thousand and one favors, because he just made me late for dinner with my wife.

Howard leans forward, toward the DRIVER (EDWARD). He seems legitimately excited to be reconnecting with Laura.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Can you take me home real quick, Edward? I need to freshen up.

He looks at Jeff, almost an afterthought.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I'll have Edward drop me off and then he'll get you back downtown.

And that's that. Jeff's 15 minutes of fame with Howard Kadlec are coming to an end. He sits back in his seat, taking it all in.

The American Dream plays across Jeff's features: the \$300,000 car, the uniform driver, the \$10,000 suit, the lights of the city, the spiraling new Frank Gehry New York building ahead in the distance ... it can all be his if he plays his cards right ... if that's what he wants.

CUT TO:

INT. ULYSSES - SAME TIME

Kevin, Winston, and Mary are back at Ulysses, getting completely wasted, celebrating their new friendship and future careers. This is clearly going to be the hot spot for our erstwhile Masters of the Universe.

CUT TO:

INT. SOHO LOFT CONDO - SAME TIME

Sarah returns home to a beautiful, but empty condo. A pile of mail sits on a table, unopened. Boxes are only half unpacked throughout the condo. She opens her refrigerator to grab a bottle of wine and it is basically empty. The collective image makes it clear: Sarah has traded her life for her high-powered career.

She pours a glass of wine, eases into an oversized armchair and looks out at the city and the river beyond.

After a long moment, she unlocks her cell and checks her MMS message screen ... nothing.

BACK TO:

INT. HOWARD'S PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

740 Park Avenue is home to the richest and most powerful of Manhattan's wealthy elite ... including Howard Kadlec.

The elevator opens directly into a massive foyer as he steps out, untying his tie as he walks in.

HOWARD

Laura?

(sighing, to himself)

This is going to be a goddamn
bloodbath...

Dress shoes clattering on Italian marble, Howard speaks loudly in the cavernous condo.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

Julian, you around?

(just in case)

I need to talk to you about your
new school.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD'S PENTHOUSE - STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Howard climbs winding, circular stairs toward the second story of his penthouse.

MUSIC plays from behind a closed door down the hall.

HOWARD

Ah, yes, the isolation of the
American teenager.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD'S PENTHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A KNOCK on the bedroom door goes unanswered.

HOWARD (O.S.)

Julian?

Inside the bedroom, JULIAN, 17, an attractive, athletic kid with tanned skin, lies on the floor, nearly dead - overdosed from free-base heroin. His deep blue eyes are vacant and white vomit bubbles out of his mouth.

Above Julian, the tar-like substance sizzles on a piece of tin foil. A lighter sits nearby. Straws are spilled all over the floor.

The door swings open and Howard's eyes harden, glaze over.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
(hissing)
Goddamn it, Julian!

He sprints over, shakes his son, checks his pulse. Faint.

Howard tries to perform some sort of bastardized version of CPR. This charismatic, charming, ultra-confident man of action has been reduced to stiff, clumsy rescue efforts.

HOWARD (CONT'D)
Oh shit ... oh god.

At that moment, the toilet in Julian's bathroom FLUSHES.

Howard's eyes focus on the closed bathroom door. He takes in more of the room now - the tin foil and straws; a gun at the foot of the bed; a ratty backpack.

The door swings open and out steps MALCOLM, 23, wiry, high as a kite.

MALCOLM
Yo, Julian. I told you that free-basing would blow your mind.

THWACK! Malcolm is silenced by the sickening sound of flesh hitting flesh and bone hitting bone.

Howard drops him with one punch and then dives to the floor to keep raining blows.

THWACK. THWACK. THWACK, THWACK, THWACK.

Howard pulverizes Malcolm; kicking him in the ribs, punching him in the face.

HOWARD
You son of a bitch.

THWACK.

Suddenly, a COUGH.

Howard looks over and sees his son coming to, which snaps him out of it.

He sits very still, looking in disbelief at the two nearly dead kids in his son's bedroom.

In the silence, his phone RINGS loudly. He looks at the display screen to see "20 minutes late" under the name "Laura."

He's gotta move fast.

BACK TO:

EXT. ULYSSES - MOMENTS LATER

Jeff gets out of the town car and smooths out what is still a pretty impeccable suit.

He strides to the front door of Ulysses, where he shows his ID to a BOUNCER and cranes his neck to look inside.

From Jeff's vantage point we see:

Kevin holding court, no doubt talking about the minutia of his beloved investment banking.

Winston, swaying slightly from side to side, a dumb smile plastered on his face - one of relief, for making it through the first day.

Mary's laugh lighting up the room and what looks like a dozen of trainees surrounding them, forging bonds.

As the bouncer gives back the ID and Jeff starts to move inside, a hand is suddenly on his shoulder, pulling him back.

JEFF

What the--

Looking back in surprise, Jeff sees Edward, the driver, looking grim and holding up a cell phone.

EDWARD

Mister Kadlec needs you.

Jeff takes on last look - almost one of longing - at his new friends inside the bar ... and then follows Edward back to the car.

CUT TO:

INT. JULIAN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jeff steps into the bedroom and takes in the carnage. A nearly comatose teenager, the gun, the drugs, the sight of a legendary Wall Street trader standing over a crack dealer.

Malcolm is in bad shape as Jeff walks over.

MALCOLM

(to Jeff)

Yo man, help me, man.

HOWARD

(to Malcolm)

Shut up.

He turns to Jeff.

HOWARD (CONT'D)

I need you to take care of this.

JEFF

Howard, what ... what just happened up there? Is that your son?

Howard hands over several items.

HOWARD

Jeff, here is my parking pass, the keys to the forty-seventh floor conference rooms, ten thousand dollars, and two phone numbers.

JEFF

Howard...

Howard puts his arm around the new trainee.

HOWARD

Jeff, listen to me.

(gathering his thoughts)

Listen. My wife is going to be here in less than five minutes. If she walks through that door, it's all over. My life, my career ... Edgerton Partners' reign on Wall Street. All of it.

JEFF

Shouldn't we call the cops?

HOWARD

Son, you are going to be part of writing a new kind of history.

(MORE)

HOWARD (CONT'D)

We are going to change the world together, starting with the mayor's housing project.

JEFF

I actually haven't been assigned yet, so...

Jeff realizes what has happened.

HOWARD

Take care of this and you will preserve the most exclusive group on Wall Street, Jeff. Not only that, but you will become its newest member. Welcome to the club.

INT. EDGERTON PARTNERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Jeff is in yet another swanky Edgerton Partners conference room ... except that this one is a M.A.S.H. unit.

The large, oak conference table is covered in bed sheets and acts as an operating table: at one end, a young SURGEON in medical scrubs repairs Malcolm's right orbital socket, and on the other end, a middle-aged DOCTOR in a suit and tie checks Julian's vitals.

A heart monitor BEEPS as it measures Julian's heart rate.

Jeff walks over to the surgeon.

JEFF

(hushed)
How's it look?

SURGEON

He's not going to lose the eye, but there will be some vision problems. He really should be monitored overnight--

JEFF

Just get him patched up and then I'll worry about his lodging.

The surgeon just sighs, puts his mask back on, and goes to work as Jeff wanders down to the doctor.

DOCTOR
(looking up)
You can tell Howard that his son's
going to be fine.

Jeff stares down at Julian and we can see from his expression
that he's going to look out for this misguided kid.

JEFF
(back to the doctor)
Howard appreciates you doing this.

DOCTOR
Listen, the guy's made me a lot of
dough. But thanks for helping me
grease the skids with my partner in
crime over there.
(nodding at the surgeon)
He's fresh out of med school and
needs the money.

JEFF
Do you trust him?

The doctor starts to answer when suddenly, Jeff sees
something out in the hallway.

He rushes to the window and sees a SHADOW racing away,
through a door, and down the stairwell.

Someone has seen him.

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE

The yellow cab glides over the Brooklyn bridge. It's the same cab - same shot - from the opener.

CUT TO:

INT. CAB - SAME TIME

Jeff sits in the back of the cab; blood all over him. It's clear from this angle. He taps his hand against his knee, trying to stop it from shaking.

He checks his watch, grimaces.

EXT. JEFF'S APARTMENT - LATER

The cab pulls up to the brownstone. As Jeff wrenches open the door, the cabbie takes a long look in the rearview mirror, arches his eyebrows.

CABBIE

Long day?

Jeff exits and comes around to the driver's window.

JEFF

I think I just sold my soul twice
in one day.

CABBIE

Well, I hope it went for enough to
cover the fare. Twenty bucks, pal.

Jeff can't help but chuckle. Money makes the world go round.

He peels off the bills and heads up the steps.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jeff comes through the front door of his apartment. He walks carefully and takes extra time to pull the keys out of the lock without letting them jangle.

This time, we realize he's not just an incredibly smooth operator - he's trying to be quiet.

Still pretty much pitch black; just that soft glow of the television set. Just enough light to reveal...

HEIDI PIERCE, 26. She's sound asleep on the couch. Unconventionally - but undeniably - attractive. Bohemian. Still dressed.

Two cold plates full of roasted chicken and vegetables sit on the coffee table. A little envelope with his name on it. An empty tie box on the floor (now we know where the snipped yellow tie came from). And...

...wait for it...

...a diamond engagement ring, turned a few degrees from center on her finger, glinting in the moonlight that pours through the window.

Heidi STIRS.

HEIDI
(still half asleep)
Baby? What time is it?

As he looks from Heidi to the empty tie box to the navy-striped tie that he's now wearing, the whole day washes across Jeff's face - the stress, the guilt, the fear of what he's just gotten himself into. He swallows, leans in and kisses her on the forehead.

JEFF
(whispering)
Shhh ... don't get up.

He watches as she falls back asleep, then turns back to the television, which plays silent footage of RACHEL MADDOW offering an on air op-ed. The words "Getting Out of Afghanistan" flash across the screen.

Jeff, unaware of what any of it means, clicks off the television and makes his way to the bathroom.

CUT TO:

BATHROOM

Jeff, in the bathroom, flips on the light.

He looks at the blood, then at his reflection. One more glance at the tie, at the blood, at everything.

Off comes the jacket.

Off comes the tie.

He turns on the water and starts to scrub.

He slings water from his hands, dries them.

Jeff sets a towel down and unbuttons his shirt, and just like that, everything changes:

Strapped across Jeff's chest, with surgical tape and gauze, is a thin black wire running to a battery on his hip.

He looks into the mirror, at his own face, and then down to the wire.

JEFF
(into device)
You get all that?

FADE TO BLACK.

END TAG