

BILLIONS

Pilot

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OPEN ON:

INT. HAMPTON'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON: BOBBY AXELROD, early 40s, casually dressed, intensity and intelligence in his eyes.

He is in a vacant house. Not just a house, a palace. The waves can be heard through open French doors crashing on the nearby beach.

He walks around the incredible, uninhabited home alone.

--A massive cook's kitchen, fit for banquets, with double ranges and triple fridges.

--Great Rooms, cavernous and sprawling.

--Dining room, a castle-like hall.

He runs his hands over fine woodwork, marble. He sees the views. He feels the hardware.

EXT. BEACH, REAR OF HOUSE - SAME

He exits the house and walks the beach, his feet seeming to float on the fluffy white sand.

He could be trespassing or it could be he's in a dream..

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - SAME

He appears from around the side of the house.

He's not in a dream. This is his life. Axelrod--more commonly known as "Axe,"--is principal of his own hedge fund AXE CAPITAL. He crosses to a waiting Maybach, CHAUFFEUR inside.

MIKE 'WAGS' WAGNER leans against the car. Wags is a bit taller, a bit more stylishly dressed and more Patrician in manner.

A smiley real estate agent, FERN, waits there expectantly.

FERN

I told you it was special.

A beat. We see a look in Axe's flinty eyes, and it's hard to determine if it's humor or contempt.

AXE

Was I first.

NOTE: whenever Axe asks a question, he conveys the idea that he already knows the answer. It's a tactic. And also: most of the time, he does.

FERN

I won't lie.

AXE

An exception to the breed.

FERN

Barton Oakleigh was first. But only because he'd been courting the owner for ten years.

AXE

That's a bullshit thing. Bart Oakleigh's too cheap to spend this kind of money. Stewart Norton knew I wanted his house. If he'd have come to me, I'd have paid his price same day. These fucking old-line WASPS...

He turns to Wags.

AXE

No offense, Wags.

WAGS

None taken. I work for a living.

AXE

One of the few. Most of you lockjaw bastards never bother to learn how. Just drive around in rusting Volvos without air-conditioning hoping someone else'll pick up the dinner check. Until they have to start selling things so their grandchildren can not work too.

He turns back to Fern.

AXE

The ask.

FERN

Eighty-three million.

AXE

And he went to Bart Oakleigh to get it. He should've come to me first.

WAGS

Chopper's waiting. We're gonna be late--

AXE

How am I late when it's my fucking chopper.

Fern gathers herself.

FERN

(gestures to Wags)

As I was telling your COO, I believe they'd accept a preemptive offer of eighty million--all cash--to stop showing it.

AXE

Uh huh. I'm sure he would.

They turn to get in the car. Axe looks back to Fern.

AXE

I'll take a seventy-two hour exclusive window. Show it to anyone else, I never think about it again. Prick should've shown me first.

As they get in the car.

WAGS

You really considering it? A buy like this will make a lot of noise.

AXE

Sometimes I like noise.

INT. A ROOM - SAME

ANGLE ON: STILLETTO HEELED KNEE-HIGH BLACK SUEDE BOOTS step into frame next to the naked torso of a MAN. A moan.

On his back on a tile floor the MAN, 40s, good looking, ball gag in his mouth, hands bound, WRITHES in pleasure and pain.

A tall blonde DOMINATRIX stands over him with a cigarette in a long ivory holder. We don't see her face.

DOMINATRIX  
You're in need of correction,  
aren't you?

MAN  
(slurred)  
Yes.

She leans down and loosens the gag.

DOMINATRIX  
I might leave marks.

MAN  
Not a great idea.

DOMINATRIX  
That's not a 'no.'

We still don't see her face as she draws on the cigarette,  
gets it glowing, then stubs it out on his bare chest.

DOMINATRIX  
That's gotta burn. I better fix it.

Her knees bend slightly, then we hear the sounds of her URINE  
splashing down on him.

EXT. US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - LATER

The imposing marble columns of justice.

SUPERTITLE: US ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

INT. US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - SAME

Government functional. ASST. U.S. ATTORNEYS in offices,  
ASSISTANTS and PARALEGALS, reflecting the diversity of New  
York, at desks in front.

As Assistant US Attorney BRYAN CONNERTY moves through the  
office, the energy moves with him. Connerty is American born  
of Irish stock, blue collar, smart, but thinks he owes all  
his success to his ability to outwork the world.

He enters BARRY SACHER'S office. Sacher, back to the door, on  
his head set, is twenty-four, slick, looks like his parents  
paid for law school. Connerty stands and listens.

SACHER (INTO HEADSET)  
Yeah, yeah, I love Lebron. Happy to  
take the tickets.

Connerty leans in, CLICKS Sacher's phone off. Sacher spins.

SACHER

Bryan!

Connerty sits on the corner of Sacher's desk.

SACHER

Guy from law school. I insisted on paying face value. No gift.

CONNERTY

Face value for a game against the Heat? Even if you're paying, you're getting hooked up. You're lucky it was me who heard and not Chuck. Walk with me.

Sacher stands and they begin moving down the hall.

CONNERTY

Believe me, whoever gave you those tickets is gonna be dining out on the fact a US Attorney is sitting in his seats. Next thing you know, the story'll be the entire office is having orgies in the executive suites at Barclays Center.

SACHER

I get it.

They nod at passing CO-WORKERS.

CONNERTY

You think you get it. Guys who sit in Chuck's chair can become Mayor. Governor. Beyond. This needs to be a fuck-up-free zone.

Connerty puts a hand on Sacher's shoulder.

CONNERTY

And you know what? Even if you were chasing ambulances at Jacoby & Meyers, I'd tell you to turn down the tickets. Ask me why.

SACHER

Why?

CONNERTY

Because you're too young to be taking favors.

(MORE)

CONNERTY (CONT'D)

Ages twenty-two to forty are the favor DOING years. You want to collect IOUs until your pockets are bulging. That's how you build a career.

Sacher absorbs it. Then rebounds.

SACHER

Guess the trip to the south of France the guy was dangling is off the table.

Connerty gives him half a look as they pass an assistant, KIM, 40s, professional and enter...

INT. U.S. ATTORNEY CHUCK RHODES' OFFICE - SAME

CHUCK RHODES, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, sits behind a big desk in a power suit. We RECOGNIZE him as THE MAN who was getting PISSED on by the dominatrix.

Chuck's office is Government-plush. Big windows looking out over downtown New York, plaques, awards and a seal on the wall, a standing American Flag, as well as a triangular-folded one in a frame from Ground Zero.

SACHER

Boss.

CHUCK

Boys, what's on deck--

The intercom buzzes.

KIM (V.O.)

Stan Spyros from the SEC.

CHUCK

Call back--

KIM (V.O.)

Is here.

Chuck stands as STAN SPYROS enters. Dark eyed and cadaverous, he has a green file folder bearing the SEC crest in hand. No one is happy to see each other.

KIM

I'm sorry, Chuck, he wouldn't--

CHUCK

It's fine, Kim.

She leaves.

CHUCK

What's the occasion? We're not interviewing right now.

SPYROS

(no laugh)

Funny. Can we speak privately?

CHUCK

This is private.

SPYROS

Okay. Here.

He extends the FOLDER. Chuck takes it, trades a look with Connerty, starts flipping through it.

CONNERTY

This what got your panties all sticky?

SPYROS

Drenched. Suspect trading pattern on Pepsum Pharmaceuticals...

CONNERTY

And?

SPYROS

One of my grunts riding the MIDAS spotted a days-long buy spike....

CUT TO SHOTS OF GRUNTS at the SEC, combing computer programs, REACTING as they discover something BIG.

SPYROS

Look at this.

SPYROS takes the folder from Chuck and starts spreading out pieces of paper with lots of rows of data.

SPYROS

You can all study the charts, or I can give you the answers to the test: these three small firms all knew exactly when to buy and when to sell the stock.

CONNERTY

They had inside information. You must get pings like that every day.



SPYROS

We do.

CHUCK

Then why are you here?

SPYROS

Because all three firms have links  
to Bobby Axelrod.

A BEAT. This is a big deal. Chuck's eyes flare at the name,  
he looks like he wants blood, but he plays it cool.

CHUCK

Don't get out over your skis,  
Spyros. We'll review it and decide  
if there's an action we're going to  
take. You'll hear from us.

This isn't remotely satisfactory to Spyros. He grabs the  
folder, pulls out THREE 8" x 10" PHOTOS.

INSERT PHOTOS.

SPYROS

Dan Margolis, Century Capital.  
Larry Bosco, Old Oaks Investments.  
Peter Derek, Tamarac Financial.  
This is big. It's criminal. And I  
want to be part of treeing Bobby  
Axelrod--

CHUCK

Guys, what do we have going,  
currently?

A look at a big white board with the headings:

Terrorism and International Narcotics, Securities and  
Commodities Fraud Task Force, Complex Frauds, Public  
Corruption, Organized Crime.

CONNERTY

Two interstate counterfeiting  
cases, we have the Russians from  
New Jersey laundering all their  
gambling money in massage joints in  
Manhattan and the Bronx.

SACHER

The gun trafficking thing ready to go to trial, the narcotic trafficking case in front of the jury, the bootlegged credit card number ring financed by--

SPYROS

I get it, you guys are rock stars, but--

CONNERTY

We get it--you want to be one too.

SPYROS

So that's it?

CHUCK

Unless you want a bottle of water when you leave.

Sacher stifles a laugh. Spyros stares daggers.

INT. AXE CAPITAL - DAY

The place is large, in a suburban office park, but the interior space has been re-made, modernized.

There are beautiful YOUNG WOMEN at a reception area, rows of desks with computers and Bloomborgs, and suspended above the main floor, like the bridge of the Starship Enterprise, are the glassed in Executive Offices.

Bobby Axelrod, dressed in a suit, a half dozen ENVELOPES in his hand, moves from the Exec level, down a staircase, and through the offices. His face is set in determination when--

A portfolio manager, MATT DANZIG, late 30s and analyst BEN KIM, 22, Korean, both in fleece and Khakis, flank Axe.

DANZIG

Bobby, we are ready to roll on something sweet. I think you'll want to piggyback--

AXE

What do you got?

DANZIG

SolarCap getting bought by Electric Sun. Price is forty-one. Stock is trading at thirty-five.

(MORE)

DANZIG (CONT'D)

We're looking at a seventeen percent bump in two weeks when the deal closes. Annualized, that's four hundred forty-two percent. We want to size- up by two million shares.

AXE

Sounds about right.

Axe starts moving on.

DANZIG

(excited)

Great. Scott Kazawitz's name is being floated as the new chairman.

Now Axe stops, turns.

AXE

Kazawitz?

DANZIG

Yeah.

AXE

Who said this deal is gonna close?

DANZIG

Ken said it would this morning.

KEN

Me? Everyone's saying it.

Axe looks at Ken as if seeing him for the first time.

AXE

(to Danzig)

Who is this.

DANZIG

My new analyst.

AXE

If we hired you, you must be a genius. Yale?

KEN

Stanford. Then Wharton.

AXE

Okay, Stanford-Wharton. ElectricSun is owned by Kazawitz.

(MORE)

AXE (CONT'D)

He also owns 19.3 percent of SolarCap backdoored through his stake in Southern Wind. Did you see that block trade last Thursday coming out of Merrill?

DANZIG

Yeah. That was Fortress cashing out their shorts before the merger.

A beat. Axe just looks at him.

DANZIG

Wasn't it?...

Axe closes the distance between them.

AXE

Trade was at 12:52, when everyone was at lunch. Which tells me they wanted it to be missed. You guys caught it, which is something, I guess. But you're looking at it backward. ElectricSun's offer was just a ploy to temporarily prop up SolarCap. Typical Kazawitz play to bail on a loser. He's an animal. I'm thinking the block trade was Kazawitz getting out of SouthernWind, getting out of SolarCap. Probably paid \$19 mill to Merrill to let him hide through those swaps. Kazawitz rode the story, and now he's out. Which means you need to be out. In fact, short. It'll slide to thirty-two and change after word breaks.

Axe turns to leave.

DANZIG

Wow. That's a good catch, Axe.

AXE

My cholesterol's high enough. Don't butter my ass, Danzig. Just get smarter.

Then he turns to Ken.

AXE

Your read was right with the information you had. You're new.

(MORE)

AXE (CONT'D)  
 You'll figure it out. Or you'll be gone.

Axe moves on, leaving them staring after him.

KEN  
 Jesus Christ.

DANZIG  
 Yeah. And he went to Hofstra.

Axe moves on.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, AXE CAPITAL - SAME

A GROUP of about forty people are gathered--several 18 YEAR OLD BOYS and GIRLS, spiffed up in blazers and dresses, along with their MOTHERS, some GRANDPARENTS, some younger siblings.

Coffee and refreshments. One beautiful, fresh faced woman in her mid-thirties, and dressed impeccably, trades pleasantries with some of the mothers. She is LARA AXELROD.

LARA  
 He'll be here in a minute, he's just grabbing the checks...It never does get easier, but moments like this show that some good can come from even the worst of times.

The Mothers nod.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - SAME

Axe steadies himself against the sink. Pale, he stares at himself in the mirror, then leans over and starts splashing water in his face.

He comes up, face wet, bracing himself. Pulls some typewritten pages out of his jacket pocket. Looks them over.

AXE (PRE-LAP)  
 I loved and remember each and every one of your fathers...

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, AXE CAPITAL - A BIT LATER

Axe is at a lectern, microphone in hand, in front of the assembled who look at him with near adoration.

AXE

...So I'm proud of all of you, who are ready to head off to school in the fall. Twenty-six of ours put through college by the memorial foundation so far. Eighteen graduates. One a doctor, two lawyers. And this year's group. Let's bring them up and give them a round of applause for their achievement.

Axe checks the first envelope.

AXE

Jeremy Aquilino. Off to Duke. Ah, Jeremy--I worked shoulder to shoulder selling long bonds with Jeremy's father Freddie. He'd be so proud of you today. First year's tuition and board.

A beaming Jeremy, along with his MOM, steps up to Axe, takes an envelope. They embrace. She tries to snap a picture.

AXE

No pictures, please.

JEREMY

Come on, Bobby, one. For my dorm room.

AXE

Don't post it anywhere. This is just for us.

The Mom snaps the pic.

AXE

That's what this is all about, not only how our firm survived 9/11, but how we've flourished.

Some applause. One widow, JUNE, sips wine.

JUNE

(low)

Some are flourishing more than others.

The room goes quiet. Then gasps of offense and 'shhs'. But Axe has heard her. It's a knife to the gut.

AXE

No, no, it's okay, June. I...  
uh...I'd feel the same way. I get  
it. You gotta be thinking: "Why was  
he spared? Why's my husband gone?"  
For months after the planes hit,  
all I could do was ask myself why.  
Why was I the only surviving  
partner? Why wasn't I there? Could  
I have done something...

Axe is haunted by the memory.

AXE

Why was I the one out of the office  
on meetings that day?

Axe struggles with it for a moment.

AXE

We'll never know. So I made up my  
own why: because of you. This. We  
were a small firm back then--a  
hundred people, a few hundred  
million under management, but we  
were always a family, and even  
though our family got cut in half  
by those sonofabitches that day,  
we've gotten stronger by tenfold  
since then. A hundredfold.

Nods in the crowd. Axe re-finds his footing.

AXE

Which was why, even when our  
financial security, our very  
survival, was in doubt in the dark  
days after, I pledged the firm's  
remaining assets to support the  
families of those we'd lost and to  
send every child--living or yet to  
be born--to college and grad school  
after that if they so chose.

A VOICE

You put it all on your back, Bobby!

Affirmative yells. Axe looks to Lara, she gives him an  
encouraging smile.

AXE

Am I the greatest guy in the world?  
Hell, no.

(MORE)

AXE (CONT'D)

I just did what I could, what I knew the partners and friends I'd lost would have done. What your husband would have done, June. I tried my best because I knew they would've done it for me. You know I'm sorry, and that I miss Rake every day. As my beautiful wife, Lara, misses her heroic brother Dean.

June dissolves into tears at this. Lara goes to her, embraces her, hands off the glass of wine.

AXE

But we fight on. It's what we do.

Lara looks over her shoulder as she leads June out, gives Axe a nod of encouragement and he puts a smile on.

AXE

Mary-Elizabeth Price. Heading to College of Charleston...

More applause as it continues, and we HEAR...

CHUCK (PRE-LAP)

Bobby Axelrod is Mike Tyson in his prime...

INT. FRAUNCES TAVERN - LATER

Chuck and Connerty have a corner table, the SEC file next to their burgers, in the old pub where WALL STREETERS and COURTS' PERSONNEL converge for lunch.

CHUCK

And you do not want Mike Tyson in his prime. Remember what happened to the guys who fought him then?

CONNERTY

They got their faces pushed in. But eventually he got beat. Buster Douglas knocked him on his ass. Ketchup.

Chuck slides over the Heinz.

CHUCK

Eventually is the key word. Shit, Spyros is setting us up.

(MORE)



CHUCK (CONT'D)

We lose in the criminal action,  
Spyros and the SEC can still get  
him civilly. We win, Spyros wins.  
We lose, Spyros wins.

CONNERTY

Let's not lose. Ketchup's empty.

CHUCK

Axe is a folk-hero in this town.  
Guy gave the New York City Fire  
Department Foundation \$100 million--  
last year. Police gave him a plaque  
at Ground Zero with his name on it.

CONNERTY

Spitzer's name was on all the  
highway signs too. Signs come down.  
I say we dirty him up. Show  
everyone he's not Robin Hood.

Chuck gets a kick out of this.

CHUCK

That's why I love ya. That's why I  
hired ya. We'll get the prick, the  
moment he's gettable. But right  
now, Axe's game is too tight. The  
whole thing, too fraught.

CONNERTY

What about the home front, for you--  
would that be fraught?

Chuck's eyes are as flat as his tone.

CHUCK

No.

Chuck starts eating. After a moment, Connerty does too.

EXT. AXE CAPITAL - SAME

Lara walks June out toward the parking lot.

JUNE

I'm sorry, I don't know what...

LARA

It's a tough day for everyone.

JUNE

I just...I just had to sell the beach house, which was Dave's favorite--

LARA

I'm sure that's why it upset you. I'll drive you home in your car, Andy will follow us. Keys.

June hands over her keys as they reach her car. Lara signals her DRIVER.

LARA

Me, I never saw a beach house in person until I started dating Bobby. In Inwood, in my house--our only house--we were two or three to a bedroom. Big Irish family, five sibs. Close though. Firemen, cops, nurses. When I first moved into Greenwich, this world, I missed all that. I saw how everyone looked at me. I had my frosted hair, but not the Warren-Tricomi kind. Like out of a box. And I cursed more than you all do in public.

JUNE

I never judged--

LARA

Course not. So I got my act together. And I'm comfortable in this life. But certain things you learn in Inwood, they never leave you. Like the idea that if someone has a problem with you, and they come to you in person, you do what you can to take care of it. But if they take that beef public...Ground just falls out from beneath that person where I'm from. Find yourself all alone.

ON: June. She understands.

JUNE

Are you...threatening me?

LARA

(almost laughing it off)  
Yeah. Yep. I am. It's how I grew up. Now get in the car.

INT. DINING ROOM, AXE CAPITAL - LATER

A high-end commissary. Axe, back in casual clothes, is at a prime table with Wags and two early 30s portfolio managers-- MITCH "THE POUCH" PROBERT and "DOLLAR" BILL STEARN.

THE POUCH

We've got to be long Premiere Automotive. We should increase our position, I think.

AXE

You think?

WAGS

We think you have female genitalia, but we still let you use the Men's room.

THE POUCH

Aluminum wheels for cars and light duty trucks have totally replaced steel, and the numbers out of the factory tell me Premiere is producing the shit out of them.

AXE

Dollar Bill, what does the cheapest man in America think.

DOLLAR BILL

Numbers out of the factory tell me they over-produced this quarter. They're stuck with merch they can't move and stock's gonna dip. Short.

AXE

What's your level of certainty on that.

This is a VERY SPECIFIC question with a VERY SPECIFIC meaning.

CUT TO:

INT. A BOWLING ALLEY - FLASHBACK

Dollar Bill sits at the score table as GENE, a blue collar guy bowls a strike, retrieves his ball. They're talking but we don't hear it. Laughing.

Finished, Gene goes to put his ball in his bag, discovers three ten thousand dollar BRICKS OF CASH

INT. WAREHOUSE LOADING BAY, NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Signage announces the warehouse is PREMIERE AUTOMOTIVE.

Gene uses a key to remove a padlock and throws open the loading bay door.

ON: The massive bay--stuffed with BOXES OF MERCHANDISE.

INT. DINING ROOM, AXE CAPITAL - PRESENT

ON: Dollar Bill.

DOLLAR BILL

I'm not uncertain.

Wags leans forward a bit. Axe NODS, then they both stand, leave the table and exit the dining room.

THE POUCH

Why didn't you tell me you were certain?

DOLLAR BILL

You didn't ask...

EXT. US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - LATER

Chuck and Connerty are heading into the building when Sacher, leaving, spots them.

SACHER

Hey, you know the Norton place out in East Hampton, on Lilly Pond, on the water?

CONNERTY

Why the fuck would we?

SACHER

Not you. Chuck. His father's house is three streets over so--

CHUCK

Yeah. I know the house. What?

SACHER

I just heard Bobby Axelrod is trying to buy it.

CONNERTY

Bull-fucking-shit.

SACHER

Court clerk's cousin works for the realtor and mentioned it.

CHUCK

How much?

SACHER

Eighty-three million--

CHUCK

Nope. Not now. Not in this climate, where he'd end up on the front page for that kind of move. Bobby Axelrod's too smart for that.

Sacher shrugs, heads out as they continue in.

CONNERTY

Maybe it is time for Buster Douglas to show up.

AXE (PRE-LAP)

Danny fucking Margolis...

INT. AXE'S OFFICE - DAY

DAN MARGOLIS, early 30s, dark circles under his eyes, stands there in a zip up hoodie. Axe sits back, feet up on his desk.

MARGOLIS

Hey, Bobby.

AXE

What brings you back. Last time I saw you at Art Basel you said you were happy as a clam in shit at Century.

MARGOLIS

I am, I was. You know how it is. Things are good there. I like Jerry. But I miss the family. You know I got my start here and how much that matters.

AXE

Well you had to go it on your own, with a bigger chunk of the pie.

MARGOLIS

Yeah, true. Place looks great, by the way. Is that one of Jeff's?

Margolis indicates a Koons behind Axe.

CLOSE ON: AXE'S EYES, studying Margolis closely.

AXE'S POV: CAMERA TILTS from Margolis' unblinking eyes, down to his racing PULSE, visible above his collar.

AXE

Yep.

MARGOLIS

Nice. Anyway, I've got some real good ideas, I'd love to share 'em with you.

AXE

I'd love to hear 'em. Come to the next dinner. We've got a group going to bang some steaks next month.

MARGOLIS

Oh. Okay. Yeah, I was just hoping to--

AXE

No, I know what you were hoping. Door's always open

MARGOLIS

Cool, Bobby. Thanks. I will. And take care.

Margolis exits. Axe watches through the glass wall as he walks down the steps.

Then Axe gets up and opens a small wall safe. He takes something out and exits his office through another door.

EXT. ROOF - SAME

Axe emerges onto the roof of the sprawling four story office park building and watches as Margolis drives out of the park.

Then Axe crosses to the other side of the roof, that overlooks the Greenwich side of the Sound.

He pulls out what he took from the safe: a Motorola Micro-Tac, circa 1994. It looks about as relevant as a Model T.

AXE (INTO PHONE)

Hall. I need to see you...

EXT. ABANDONED OFFICE - SAME

Folding chairs and card tables, with FBI AGENTS, a TECH GUY, Connerty sitting there as Dan Margolis walks into the room.

MARGOLIS

Did you hear it okay?

Margolis unclips a pen from his shirt pocket under his hoodie and puts it and a Blackberry on the table.

CONNERTY

Yeah, we heard you get jack-shit clear as a bell.

DANZIG'S VOICE (PRE-LAP)

...I just lost my mojo somewhere along the line.

INT. SHRINK'S OFFICE - DAY

Big windows, water view, nice rug, high-end furnishings. Pictures of a couple KIDS on her desk.

Matt Danzig, the young Portfolio Manager, sits there somewhat miserably.

DANZIG

It's fucking gone. And you're Mrs. Mojo, so I booked the appointment...

WENDY

That's Dr. Mojo.

He sits across from WENDY RHODES, a psychiatrist.

She has a tablet and stylus in her hands and radiates high intellect, is highly focused and even under the professional demeanor, highly attractive.

DANZIG

Right. I hear it happens to guys my age, facing down forty. Maybe I'm depressed. Maybe I should try some Prozac, Effexor--something.

WENDY

Uh huh. We'll get to that. First, I want you to know that even though I work here, you have full doctor-patient confidentiality.

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

Unless you plan to kill somebody,  
you can say what you want in here  
and by law I can't tell  
anyone...(he nods) Now. Have you  
been eating, sleeping, exercising?

DANZIG

Yeah, more or less. Maybe not so  
much with the sleeping.

WENDY

And things with your wife?

DANZIG

Okay. Mostly.

WENDY

Sex?

DANZIG

Normal. I've been married ten  
years, so...

WENDY

So down to just once a day.

They trade smiles.

WENDY

So it's really just the book.

DANZIG

I'm down four percent. Year to  
date. I'm down. I'm fucked.

She puts down the tablet, leans forward.

WENDY

You don't need meds. You're just  
listening to the wrong voice...

Danzig perks up at this.

WENDY

You're all tuned in to the one  
yelling at you over the loudspeaker  
that you're fucking stupid and  
you're not gonna hit your numbers.  
You're ignoring the quiet one  
inside telling you where the Alpha  
is. That's the voice that got you  
here. And it's the one that's still  
talking if you're willing to  
listen...



Danzig is nodding now.

WENDY

What's that voice telling you?

DANZIG

That even though I stiffed a few,  
that I'm...pretty damn good.

WENDY

Uh uh. What'd you take down last  
year?

DANZIG

Seven point two million.

The number itself seems to pump him up.

WENDY

So what's it saying?

DANZIG

That I'm awesome.

WENDY

There you go. And what does it have  
to say back to that loud critical  
voice?

DANZIG

It's saying Fuck You.

WENDY

Good. Now we can pick through your  
childhood, beat by beat, to find  
out why you feel you don't deserve  
to make your bonus. Or, you can  
listen to the right voice. I want  
you to go back to your Bloomberg  
and cut bait on your losers--you  
know the ones. The ones you've been  
defending, hoping they will come  
around but you secretly know never  
will. And I want you to just  
commit, that you are in it for the  
long haul. That you will succeed.  
And once you do that, the new  
ideas, the winners, will present  
themselves. Because you are a  
winner.

She's got him totally tuned in now.

WENDY

You're playing for the Yankees here. And there's a reason for that. Did the Yankees make a mistake signing you? No, they did not. The Yankees don't make mistakes. So get out there and do what needs to be done...

Danzig's fists are clenched, he's on the edge of his seat, ready to rock.

WENDY

We have to stop here.

Danzig pops up out of his chair and goes for a High-Five, which Wendy meets.

DANZIG

Dr. Fucking Mojo.

He exits. She trails after him to the door and we see that hers isn't a free-standing practice, but is actually housed inside...

INT. AXE CAPITAL - LATER

Where she's the on-staff performance coach. The pretty young RECEPTIONISTS across the way smile as she ushers in her next polo-shirt wearing PATIENT.

INT. LIBRARY, US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - LATER

Chuck enters. It's an imposing setting for a meeting. Law books, case studies, hundred year old leather chairs.

Two men await him. They stand as he enters. One, SKIP WOLKOWSKA is mid-50s, a little sheepish despite a ten-thousand dollar suit and haircut to match. The other is his short, bald ATTORNEY.

Then a third man, OLDER, facing the other way, stands.

Chuck's eyes immediately go to the Older Man, who is late 60s and hasn't had a sheepish moment in his life.

OLDER MAN

Thank you for agreeing to see us.

CHUCK

What the fuck are you doing here, dad, trying to get me disbarred?

The Older Man, CHARLES RHODES SR., does not look cowed.

SENIOR

Christ. You're more dramatic than your mother.

Some men would be cut by this. Chuck laughs. Chuck Senior does too.

The Attorney does not.

ATTORNEY

We are not breaking any rules or regulations. Mr. Rhodes is not being compensated to appear with us.

CHUCK

I know how careful he is. And why you brought him. But believe me, it's already backfired.

SENIOR

Hear us out, Chuck. Skip knows he did wrong.

CHUCK

Now that he's been convicted he knows. But when he had chance to settle--

SENIOR

That's the past. Right now, we're trying to set up a situation that will allow Skip to demonstrate his reformation, and for him to contribute to society--

CHUCK

By what? Let me guess: my office allowing him to keep some 'small' portion of his ill-gotten gains? Five million?

ATTORNEY

We were going to ask for ten--

SENIOR

Which represents a fraction of the--

Chuck glances to Wolkowska.

CHUCK

Uh huh. And that way, without having to worry about supporting yourself upon leaving prison, you could get right to doing charitable works and warning your buddies about the pitfalls of being a bad actor.

SENIOR

(a meeting of the minds)  
Exactly.

CHUCK

That sounds reasonable. It's the type of deal that's been made in this library countless times...

Wolkowska gets hopeful, trades a look with Senior.

CHUCK

By my predecessors. But not by me.

Chuck turns to Wolkowska.

CHUCK

You thought bringing my father would afford you some kind of courtesy--

WOLKOWSKA

Not at all. No-

CHUCK

But you miscalculated. Badly. Instead of using my father, you should've emulated him and built your fortune without fucking up. You didn't. So your cronies are going to see that they better not trade on inside information or abuse their positions or they'll end up like you. Broke. Humiliated. Which is why you'll be closer to ten cents than ten million when I'm done with you.

Wolkowska begins to cry.

WOLKOWSKA

I'm not prepared for this. I can't. Please, sir.

ATTORNEY

This was to be about leniency. Have some mercy.

When Chuck answers, he looks directly at Charles Senior.

CHUCK

My father always taught me that 'mercy' was a word pussies used when they couldn't take the pain.

Wolkowska absorbs it. Senior shakes his head.

SENIOR

Maybe I taught you too well.

CHUCK

I love you, dad, but if you walk into my office and try to use your influence again, you'll walk out of here in handcuffs.

Then Chuck turns to Wolkowska and softens his tone.

CHUCK

Mr. Wolkowska, I've known many men in your position. And I can tell that you have the strength to get through it and come out the other side a better man. I wish you well. You can see yourselves out.

EXT. AXELROD ESTATE - SAME

Massive. Classic. From the outside, Axe's home is elegant, despite the fact that it's bigger than some small towns.

INT. AXELROD HOME - SAME

The place goes on forever, but there are warm, understated, classic design elements throughout.

In a place of honor is a framed photo. A FIREFIGHTER, DEAN BENJAMIN, in his dress uniform with the dates 5/3/1975-9/11/2001 on a brass plaque at the bottom.

FOLLOW an out of control GERMAN SHEPHERD as he careens around corners until he arrives, panting, in the...

INT. AXELROD HOME, KITCHEN - SAME

The Axelrod's chef, RYAN, holding a serving dish piled high with chicken cutlets and roast corn sticks out a leg, stopping the dog.

A HOUSEKEEPER grabs hold of the dog's collar and struggles to get it out of the room.

There are several dining rooms, but Axe, Lara and their boys DEAN, 10 and GORDIE, 8 eat around the kitchen counter.

As Ryan puts down the serving tray, Axe notices the dog's struggle.

AXE

Ah, let him free. It's ok. Let him go free.

The Housekeeper does and the dog goes a little crazy. Axe laughs. As do Lara and the kids.

AXE

Live-wire, that one.

LARA

Terrible.

The dog runs over to a corner of the kitchen.

LARA

He chewed up the D'Angelo custom sofa. Gotta calm him down.

DEAN

Send him to obedience school.

LARA

He's going to the vet to get fixed.

Axe winces. The boys get it. Giggle.

LARA

Guys--what do you say to Chef Ryan?

KIDS

(rote)  
Thank you.

LARA

Okay. Dig in.

All three Axelrod men grab biscuits, as they are also being served the cutlets by Ryan.

And then the dog sprints to the breakfast nook across the kitchen and SPRAYS the furniture and floor.

The Housekeeper scrambles over.

AXE

See that, boys. He's marking his territory.

LARA

He's peeing on the furniture.

AXE

Yeah but he's showing Ryan who's boss. That's why it's called a pissing contest when two men try and stake out their turf.

LARA

Yeah, well, I don't like it when men do it either.

Axe takes a bite of corn, looks at the dog, now barking up a storm as he's dragged from the room, tosses him a biscuit.

AXE

Poor guy. Okay! Dean. You ready? Two presidents after Monroe?

DEAN

Jackson. Andrew Jackson.

Axe turns to Gordie.

AXE

Where was he from?

GORDIE

Let's talk Yankees.

His older brother laughs.

DEAN

'Cause you don't know. Don't switch the subject.

Axe watches, smiling.

GORDIE

I do know.

DEAN

Prove it.

GORDIE  
Seattle?

Dean laughs harder.

DEAN  
There was no Seattle back then.  
Idiot!

Gordie hangs his head.

DEAN  
I knew you didn't know it.

GORDIE  
I bet I'd get it on the next guess.

DEAN  
I bet you don't.

GORDIE  
How much?

DEAN  
Ten pushups.

GORDIE  
Deal.

They shake. Gordie's manner changes.

GORDIE  
Border areas near The Carolinas.

Lara and Axe crack up.

AXE  
You can't fall for that every time,  
Dean. See, he knows his customer  
and sets you up. He's willing to  
look foolish in the short term to  
win long term. You gotta remember  
that.

Dean nods.

AXE  
And Gordie, don't sucker your  
brother.

Axe gives Gordie a proud wink, Gordie smiles wide.

AXE  
Pay the bet.



Dean drops and begins doing pushups. They all count 'em out.

FAMILY

7-8-9...

Axe and Lara smile at each other, lost in the site of their kids having so much fun.

INT. CHUCK'S OFFICE - SAME

Chuck stands behind his desk. Connerty sits across from him.

CHUCK

Bring me inside your thinking. You know you have latitude, but freelancing something like that--

CONNERTY

We said Buster Douglas, so I threw a haymaker.

CHUCK

Danny Margolis is your Haymaker? I'd like to see your jab.

CONNERTY

What'd we lose?

CHUCK

Maybe nothing. Maybe we woke Axe up. Ahh, don't sweat it. Could've worked. And if it did, I'd have been carrying you off the field on my shoulders.

CONNERTY

Then let me take another shot. Let me go after Margolis' boss, or Peter Derek to flip and prove a nexus. Then we might could have a case.

CHUCK

And if someone confessed, we'd know who shot Kennedy.

CONNERTY

So you're gonna let that Greek get him?

CHUCK

He's not getting him. That's the whole point.

CONNERTY

But if we worked together, with the  
SEC--

CHUCK

Nobody's getting him. Now.

Beat.

CONNERTY

Yeah, if Axe bought that house,  
though, they'd all be screaming for  
it. There wouldn't be any waiting.

CHUCK

If he bought it...

CONNERTY

But like you said, he's too smart  
for that.

EXT. RHODES HOUSE - LATER

Chuck walks up the steps of his Brooklyn Heights brownstone.

INT. RHODES HOUSE - SAME

Chuck enters. The place is warm, family, well decorated but  
low key. Could own it or it could be a rental.

His family is in the kitchen--KEVIN, nine years old, and EVA,  
six, are at the island eating and watching a video on iPads.

CHUCK

Hey guys.

KIDS

Daddy!

They actually look up from the video, he gives them kisses.

CHUCK

What'd you do in school today?

KEVIN, EVA

Nothing. Boring...

REVEAL Chuck's wife is WENDY RHODES, the AXE CAPITAL  
PSYCHIATRIST. She's at the dining table with a glass of wine  
and her laptop. He crosses to her.

CHUCK  
Hey, babe.

WENDY  
Hi, honey...

She finishes typing something, closes the laptop as he comes around and they kiss. He sits across from her.

CHUCK  
What are you working on?

WENDY  
Just session notes.

CHUCK  
Wall to wall Oedipal complexes  
making 'em all go limp?

WENDY  
You have an amazing understanding  
of people.

CHUCK  
What are we drinking?

WENDY  
The usual. How's crime fighting?

CHUCK  
The usual...

He grabs her glass, sips the wine. And then, casually...

CHUCK  
You good with your situation? I  
know you said you might've been  
feeling bored a while back.

WENDY  
That's not exactly what I said.

CHUCK  
You said you weren't sure if you  
were still growing there.

WENDY  
What's this about?

CHUCK  
I was talking to the Head Counsel  
of GE and they're looking for a new  
Head of HR. I could put in the word  
if you wanted.

WENDY

Is there something...Is there some reason I can't stay at my job?

CHUCK

What do you mean? Heard about an opportunity, so I presented it.

She doesn't buy it.

WENDY

Don't you get enough of moving the pieces around the board at work?

CHUCK

You don't want to hear about possible situations, fine.

She looks at him.

WENDY

Are you prosecuting someone at my firm, what's going on Chuck?

CHUCK

First of all, no. Second, you know we don't discuss that.

WENDY

Why don't you quit your goddamn job?

He glances towards the kids in the kitchen, they don't react.

CHUCK

Easy. I'm the U.S. Attorney, Wendy--

WENDY

So? I've been working there since before we were married and long before you were in office.

CHUCK

Look. Not that we're there, but one thing we did always discuss is that a day might come when there was a conflict.

WENDY

That was before I was making three times what you make. And before you started making Chuck Senior plays like this--

CHUCK

Leave him out of it. And whoever makes more--is that what we're teaching the kids?

WENDY

Are we teaching them that daddy's job is always more important than mommy's?

CHUCK

I work for the public good.

WENDY

You work for the good of Chuck Rhodes. Sometimes maybe they intersect.

CHUCK

Turn off your fucking shrink switch once in a while.

She's about to take the bait, settles.

WENDY

Look, let's take this down a notch.

CHUCK

Yeah.

WENDY

I just don't know where this is all coming from. And you know I don't like to be manipulated--

CHUCK

I--

WENDY

Not that that's what you were doing, but I felt that way.

ON: Chuck. Guilty but hiding it.

WENDY

And of course your job's important. You're a superhero. You know I'm super proud of you. But my thing matters to me too.

CHUCK

Of course. You're killing it.

A smile of detente between them.

WENDY

Piccata's warming in the oven if  
you want it.

Chuck sits there tapping his finger on the table for a  
moment, then stands.

CHUCK

Come on, kids, bath time.

He gets up and heads toward them. Wendy watches him go.

CHUCK (PRE-LAP)

...Anytime you can disrupt a  
criminal enterprise, it's a good  
result.

INT. PRESS BRIEFING ROOM, DAY

A press conference is underway. Chuck is at a podium with a  
poster board on an easel behind him. Connerty and others from  
the office stand by.

CHUCK

That's what happened here. Over  
forty kilos of cocaine and a dozen  
weapons seized. Three-quarters of a  
million off the streets.

The poster: LATIN KINGS, NAMES OF MEMBERS. Next to each,  
there are charges like TRAFFICKING, WIRE FRAUD, ILLEGAL  
TRANSPORT OF GUNS, in the "PLEA" column is the word "GUILTY."

CHUCK

All defendants took guilty pleas  
and are also off the streets.

TRACY CARILLO, PR for the US Attorney's office steps up.

CARILLO

Ok. We've only got time for one.

JOURNALISTS raise their hands, shout questions.

CARILLO

Jessica?

The other reporters groan.

JESSICA

Should we expect follow-on arrests?

CHUCK

Unless all the drug dealers close  
up shop and open up Pinkberries.

The room LAUGHS.

CHUCK

We expect several related arrests.

A young, aggressive financial reporter, MICHAEL DIMONDA, with  
a bit of a swagger screams out.

DIMONDA

You're proud about small time  
convictions, of small time players--  
uneducated minorities with limited  
options. What about the hundreds of  
millions--billions--in fraudulent  
gains in the financial sector? Why  
aren't you prosecuting the  
investment banks and hedge funds  
for insider trading? You're  
bragging about netting minnows, but  
you won't touch a firm like Axe  
Capital.

There's an awkward silence in the room.

CHUCK

My office is soft on financial  
crime? As I said when I was  
appointed: growing up, I saw first  
hand the corrosive power big  
business can have. And I am  
determined to check it. Take Skip  
Wolkowska. He has many influential  
friends. But their entreaties on  
his behalf were not entertained. As  
your own paper reported after the  
details at his leniency conference  
somehow leaked out. Mr. Wolkowska  
will serve his full sentence,  
effective immediately. That's all  
the time that I have, thank you.

Chuck walks off and speaks to TRACY CARILLO, the office's PR  
person.

CHUCK

Who let the fucking Journal in with  
the blind-siding questions?

As she opens her mouth to answer, Chuck moves on. Connerty  
follows him into an anteroom and Chuck turns.

CHUCK

That guy you know over at Skadden  
on Axe's team...

CONNERTY

Bruce Doppelt. We went to law  
school together.

CHUCK

Yeah. Get with him and wrap your  
arms around this thing before it  
goes thermal.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Chuck enters, nods to a DOORMAN, who knows him and gets in  
the elevator.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - SAME

The elevator opens directly into a lavish but tasteful  
apartment. The ELEVATOR MAN holds the door as Chuck exits.

Chuck walks through a foyer into a living room.

CHUCK

Mom.

ELLEN RHODES, late 60s but looks younger, dressed in  
understated Upper East Side style offers a cheek for a kiss.

ELLEN

Hello, dear. I hear you've been  
busy. He's in the den.

INT. DEN - SAME

Its a clubby room. Chuck finds Chuck Sr. in a leather chair.

CHUCK

What the hell was that stunt?

SENIOR

Skip Wolkowska's an old friend. He  
asked for help and I didn't want to  
refuse. Couldn't. But I was ninety  
percent sure you'd react the way  
you did. A win any way you look at  
it.



CHUCK  
How's that a win?

SENIOR  
I knew Skip's lawyer would tell the story and it'd end up in the news. If you treat me that way, they'll all fear you. I saw that press conference, you need this right now. To be seen as tough on Wall Street.

CHUCK  
Some audible to call.

SENIOR  
Move on.

Senior gestures to his computer.

SENIOR  
You didn't smile enough during the presser. You let them get to you.

CHUCK  
You're right.

SENIOR  
I didn't like that question about Axe Capital. What prodded it?

CHUCK  
SEC wants me to move on Axe.

SENIOR  
If you move on him, and take that risk, you have to get the reward. Let the SEC mop up, collect their fines, but they can't be seen as leading it.

CHUCK  
I know.

SENIOR  
He's popular. Don't forget the first few Gotti prosecutions. A lot of people have Axelrod's back in this city. He's made them a lot of money. You know the line: if you're going to strike at the king...

Chuck nods.

CHUCK

The king is house shopping right now. Prime beach front, Lilly Pond Lane. Hasn't even come to market yet.

SENIOR

That may not work out so well for him.

CHUCK

I passed word he shouldn't buy it.

An admiring look from Senior.

SENIOR

Smart. Maybe I could have a friend make a bid. Roger could always use a new house. And I know Denny Dantone is actively looking...

CHUCK

Right. I've got to get back.

INT. CHUCK'S OFFICE - LATER

Chuck sits, alone, on his couch. His eyes are closed. His breath coming deep and slow.

Next to him, his smart phone is running a Meditation Timer.

After ten more seconds, it bings, softly, three times. Chuck slowly opens his eyes, rubs his hands on his face. As he walks to his desk, he swings open his door, calls out.

CHUCK

Need Spyros at the SEC.

By the time Chuck gets to his desk, Spyros is on.

CHUCK (INTO PHONE)

I was going to tell you to forget chess and stick to checkers. But I don't even think you have the moves to win at that.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SPYROS OFFICE - SAME

SPYROS

Do the people you work with pretend they're impressed when you speak in riddles like some kung fu instructor from the movies?

CHUCK

Then let me be direct. I know you sent that reporter in to ask about Axe Capital.

SPYROS

Why would I do that? We're on the same side.

CHUCK

No. You're a glorified bean counter. But you're not gonna stunt your way into my job.

SPYROS

You're going to have to do it. Soon enough. Eventually, even if you don't hear the hue and cry from the streets, Washington's going to. And then you'll have to move. Besides it's the right thing to do.

CHUCK

You wouldn't know the right thing if it kneeled down and blew you. You make your cases, I'll make mine. And if you pull any shit like that again, I'll loose hell on you.

Chuck hangs up.

INT. SPARKS - SAME

Connerty and BRUCE DOPPELT--DOPP knocking on 300 lbs with a spray tan and a yarmulka, in mid conversation over lunch in the busy room. The WAITER delivers steaks and sides.

DOPP

Expense account is a beautiful thing.

CONNERTY

Making partner is a beautiful thing.

Dopp doesn't bother closing the mouth when he talks

DOPP

I had to pay in six hundred thousand for my equity share. I went into hock for that.

CONNERTY

Don't poor mouth yourself. A million a year. Fordham Law schlub makes good.

DOPP

(fork waving)

You do the math: Taxes. My million turns into five hundred and change before we even start. A hundred grand a year on the mortgage and maintenance for the apartment, ninety grand for Jesse and Will to go to Dalton. Summer camp. Alana gets pregnant again, I'm working at a car wash on weekends.

CONNERTY

Get a sheet without a hole.

Dopp lets out a laugh.

DOPP

Have some potatoes. Come on, you're the one who's looking good. No overhead. And when you finally sell out and play for the defense, you're gonna get an extra hundred grand for every year you did this cry-me-a-river public sector shit. What are you at?

CONNERTY

One sixty-five.

DOPP

And when you get out of there, you're starting at one-four. Easy. If you nail some headline cases, more like one-seven.

CONNERTY

I'm staying.

DOPP

No you're not.

CONNERTY

Speaking of headlines, is this shit we're hearing about the Hamptons house real? 'Cause that's a headline you don't want.

DOPP

Since when's a rich guy buying a house illegal?

CONNERTY

Are you a child?

DOPP

If there was any doubt we'd tie him to his chair. World's full of haters, but Bobby runs a clean shop.

CONNERTY

So he just keeps a top defense firm on retainer at eight hundred an hour because he loves lawyers.

DOPP

Must be. And we're a thousand an hour. There's nothing there.

CONNERTY

Like Warren Buffet says: if you put a police car on anyone's tail for five hundred miles, he's going to get a ticket. Tell him not to buy that house.

INT. AXE CAPITAL, BOBBY'S OFFICE - LATER

Wendy Rhodes knocks and is waved in by Axe, who sits at his desk inhaling a chili cheeseburger.

AXE

Come in. Sit.

She does, throwing her legs over the arm of the chair. Their rapport is intimate, comfortable, though not romantic.

AXE

(re: his burger)

Bite.

WENDY

No thanks. If I were your GP, I'd say put that right in the trash.

AXE

That's why I don't let him hang around here. Glad you came in, I was gonna come see you.

WENDY

About?

AXE

A purchase I'm considering.

WENDY

An impulse purchase?

AXE

Naturally.

WENDY

Sizable?

He nods.

WENDY

I'm guessing it's something you may not even particularly need.

AXE

People are saying that if I do, it'll unleash the hounds. Which makes me want it even more.

WENDY

This is good. Back when we started you wouldn't have been able to recognize the motivation until long after you'd bought it.

AXE

Well back when we started I was just rich, not super rich. Being a billionaire--I never get to talk about this with anyone, 'cause who's gonna give a shit--but being a billionaire, when you walk into a room, it's like being a woman with a perfect set of tits. Or great legs. Or eyes like yours. You know exactly what everyone's looking at. And exactly what they want. You know what that's like.

A moment of vibe between them.

WENDY

Okay, player. Identifying the fact that buying can be a surrogate for power, and outside authority isn't something you do well--That's progress. You've come a long way since we started.

AXE

I guess, considering that when we started I was staggering around crying, along with half the company, because the other half had been killed.

WENDY

But knowing isn't enough. You've got to exercise control. Don't get into a bitch fight over nothing. Don't buy it.

The door to Axe's office swings open. Matt Danzig is standing there. Nods to Wendy who nods back.

DANZIG

You nailed SolarCap. Deal crumbled and it's at thirty-one nineteen.

AXE

Nice.

DANZIG

You said thirty-two-ish. But I saw it was going even further. So I waited.

AXE

Whoa, living dangerously. Alright, good job. You made us another eighteen million.

Danzig and Wendy share a glance.

DANZIG

Yeah. Thanks.

Danzig closes the door. Axe turns back to Wendy.

AXE

We got sidetracked. You came to see me.

She hesitates. He figures it out.

AXE

You're thinking about leaving.

WENDY

Well, it's crossed my mind.

CLOSE ON: Axe. The look in his eyes changes to one of feral self preservation. But in a fraction of a second a sympathetic expression takes its place.

AXE

Is this about your comp?

WENDY

No. You've always made that clear. I'm better paid than anyone in my med school class except the guy who invented the synthetic bladder.

AXE

I'll short his company, give some speeches, chop him down to size.

She laughs.

WENDY

It's not about comp, but it is about value--mine. And growth. As in whether I'm still growing here. I love this place, but I do miss seeing other sorts of patients--at risk adolescents, women in crisis. Using those other muscles.

AXE

I need you. But I'd never stop you. Is this something you want right now. Where's this coming from.

He stares at her with intensity.

WENDY

It's...been on my mind.

He leans back. He's gotten some kind of answer from her.

AXE

Your value to the firm is absolute. You just saved me from making a huge mistake for dick measuring purposes. So let's do this: cut your hours, see other patients outside. But stay on here.



Touched by his words, she smiles, nods, then stands.

WENDY

Thanks.

Wendy gets up and leaves. He looks after her.

EXT. HORSE FARM, NORTH SALEM, NY - NIGHT

Deserted except for Axe's Bentley and a Range Rover.

INT. HORSE STABLE - SAME

No horses. Swept out. Axe stands, coat wrapped tight, with HALL, 40, black suit, black tie, black eyes, no smile.

HALL

I checked with my sources in Washington, at the SEC and US Attorney's office. At this moment, there's no case file, but Dan Margolis was pinched. He was released on his lawyer's recognizance. Arraignment is currently on hold.

AXE

Which tells you what.

HALL

That he's cooperating. How the hell did you know?

AXE

He was making too much eye contact, barely blinked, and his pulse was hammering like he was running a marathon. Suddenly I felt like I did fourth quarter of 2007 when the housing bubble was gonna burst and only me and five other guys knew it. So I called you.

HALL

You were smart to stay quiet.

Axe says nothing.

HALL

Look, the SEC isn't the thing. Fines are part of life. The attack to worry about is the U.S.

(MORE)

HALL (CONT'D)

Attorney's. Here's what you're going to do. One: that reporter from the Journal--the one who asked about you--he needs to be handled. I could do it, but then he's out of the game, no value added. Better if you make him your best friend.

Axe nods.

HALL

And two: remember, you don't have to outrun the grizzly bear, you just have to outrun the guy you're camping with.

Axe knows what he's saying.

AXE

You want me to do that.

Hall hands his smart phone to Axe.

HALL

Look there. Memorize it.

Axe does, wipes screen and hands phone back.

AXE

Ah. I like that guy.

HALL

It's either him or you.

Axe picks up a WHITE CANVAS BAG at his feet, puts it down by Hall's as payment, then glances around the stable.

AXE

This is the McDarvish place.

HALL

Yeah. He and the family are in Geneva until pardon time, at the end of the president's term. I'm the only one with use of it.

Hall heads for the door.

AXE

Hall.

Hall turns back.

AXE

(raw)

Wendy Rhodes tried to quit today.  
We've been fighting back to back in  
the trenches for thirteen years.  
But today, she tried to quit.

Hall takes it in.

HALL

You still trust her?

AXE

I want to.

Hall turns and goes.

INT. EDITOR'S OFFICE, WALL STREET JOURNAL - DAY

Mike Dimonda sits across from his editor DAN IMPOCO, rolled up shirtsleeves, tortoise shell frames. Dimonda is on SPEAKERPHONE, Impoco stays silent.

DIMONDA

I need some ammo going into this meeting.

SPYROS (V.O. PHONE)

Look. I can't be near any of this.

DIMONDA

Just like you couldn't be near the press conference after feeding me that question. Don't worry, this is just between the two of us.

Dimonda looks across to Impoco, who nods 'of course.'

DIMONDA

Just tell me this: What would you want to know from Axe?

SPYROS (V.O. PHONE)

Find out who he trusts.

Spyros clicks off.

DIMONDA

He's such a dick.

IMPOCO

Got an angle of attack on this?

DIMONDA

Do you?

IMPOCO

He wants to know who Axe's capos are.

Dimonda thinks.

DIMONDA

You want to know who a Don really talks to, figure out who he eats with.

IMPOCO

Axe has that famous morning meeting.

DIMONDA

Yep. Invite only. No one knows who's in it. That'd be useful for us and for Spyros.

IMPOCO

Fuck Spyros. You've gotten what you need from him.

Dimonda stands.

IMPOCO

Don't follow the puck; go where the puck is going to be. Spyros is a bullshit government source. He will always be a source. He needs you. He will *always* need you. You, however, need Bobby.

DIMONDA

Ok. I'm going.

Over Dimonda's departing back.

IMPOCO

Make sure you pay for lunch. I don't want some Columbia Journalism School asshole claiming Bobby bought you off.

INT. BRONX RESTAURANT - DAY

A six-table eatery. The place is empty--it's been bought out by Axe who is in back with Dimonda.

DIMONDA

I grew up three miles from here and I've never been inside. Don't you need to own a table or something?

AXE

Yeah. We're off the record. If you fuck me I never talk to you again.

DIMONDA

Got it.

AXE

Good. If you ever want to come here, just call me. Now why is my name coming out of your mouth at a press conference.

DIMONDA

Hey, it was before you asked me to lunch.

Axe laughs.

AXE

Go 'head.

DIMONDA

Help me understand your firm better. There's not a lot out there on you besides the Forbes list, the art and the 9/11 stuff. I've always wanted to ask you about the stories, that you put all the kids of the victims at your firm through college--you still do that?

Axe contains the emotions this raises.

AXE

That's not why we're here.

Food arrives, wine.

DIMONDA

Ok. New topic. Give me a little bit of a day in the life. That morning meeting of yours is famous. Tell me--

AXE

Ahh...

DIMONDA

Then give me some insight into how you process information--

AXE

The press acts like information's a dirty word. Everyone has the same information. We're just better at analyzing it.

Axe leans back.

AXE

You really from near here?

A beat at the gear change. Dimonda drops the 'reporter' pose.

DIMONDA

Grand Concourse. Then Yonkers.

AXE

Me too. Well, Larchmont. But it wasn't nice back then.

DIMONDA

Westchester used to be a place you could really get your ass kicked.

They let it hang there for a second and then both crack up.

AXE

You're a good kid for a fucking hack.

DIMONDA

And you're a good guy for a bankster.

Axe wrestles with something.

AXE

Okay. Fuck it, I wasn't gonna give this, but you're here for a story. And now I like you...Steven Mandel.

DIMONDA

Piedmont Capital.

AXE

Yeah. That swap deal he did on Canadian Pacific...The timing is very curious.

DIMONDA  
What kind of swap?

AXE  
I'm not gonna write the article for you. Do an autopsy on the deal, you'll find yourself a Pulitzer in the carcass.

Axe looks at his watch, writes on a cloth napkin.

AXE  
My cell number. Only call after the market closes. Don't leave voicemail, don't email.

DIMONDA  
Understood.

AXE  
You got the check, right? Five hundred cash.

Dimonda blanches.

DIMONDA  
I don't have that much on me. Is there an ATM--

AXE  
Just fucking with you. It's taken care of.

Axe gets up and heads for the door.

INT. INVESTIGATORS' OFFICE, U.S. ATTORNEY'S - DAY

Chuck enters a file-stuffed, computer heavy, windowless space separated off from the main bullpen. Two serious men, McCALL and SCHMIDT, with a law enforcement vibe are at work.

CHUCK  
I need to find a woman who used to be named Maria Slovas. She's definitely using Slovas anymore. Maybe not even Maria.

McCall nods.

MCCALL  
What case number is it attached to?

CHUCK

No case number. I just need it. Off the books.

McCall nods and Chuck leaves.

INT. NY TIMES BUILDING, AUDITORIUM - DAY

The Dealbook conference--TITANS OF BUSINESS address an audience of PROFESSIONALS. FIND Connerty, Sacher, a few OTHERS from Chuck's office.

Up on stage, PETER LATTMAN from the Times interviews Chuck Rhodes.

LATTMAN

As we wrap up our discussion on prosecuting Wall Street, is there any final message you want to deliver?

CHUCK

Fly right and put me out of a job so I can go work on my golf game. Or learn to be a pilot. I've got a lot on my list.

LATTMAN

Chuck Rhodes everybody. Thank you.

Applause as they leave the stage.

EXT. NY TIMES BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Chuck exits, flanked by Connerty and the Others. Axe's Bentley pulls up. Wags gets out of the front, Axe the back. A second car pulls up carrying other members of Axe's team.

The entourages stare at each other. It's not the Jets and the Sharks. But it's not that far off.

CONNERTY

Watch out, he may buy the building.

WAGS

It's a B+ building. He doesn't consider anything other than triple A.

CONNERTY

Yet he hired you--



Chuck steps in front of Connerty.

CHUCK

Easy.

Turns to face Axe. No one else can hear. This isn't performance. This is personal.

CHUCK

Don't end up on the front pages because of some beach house.

AXE

Good advice. I'll probably pass on it.

Axe makes like he's gonna go, then...

AXE

It's so nice though, you know? Feels like you're part of the beach and ocean. And that air out there...Shit you know about it. Your daddy's got a little place out there. He must let you use a bedroom some weekends if you say "please".

CHUCK

Walk away.

AXE

I should. Then again, what's the point of having fuck you money if you never say fuck you.

Chuck gets even closer.

CHUCK

You're a smart man, so you know when I bring an action, it's not some county or even state--it's the United States versus. Don't give me a reason.

AXE

Oh, I know who brings an action. And I know how your boss in D.C. feels about his record too. You can't afford a mark in the Loss column.

Chuck almost smiles.

CHUCK

There's a saying in baseball:  
'Towns fire managers. Owners just  
give them the bad news.' You're the  
only guy running the big money that  
they cheer for. Because you play  
that 9/11 shit for all it's worth.

AXE

Fuck yourself. I've never put out a  
single press release, given one  
interview. I lost every one of my  
friends that day.

CHUCK

You've managed to make some new  
ones since. Like I said: they may  
be cheering now, but believe me,  
they are dying to boo.

The men wheel in opposite directions and are soon absorbed  
into their contingents.

INT. SPYROS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Spyros and an UNDERLING are adding pieces to a board  
dedicated to the Axe Capital case when an ASSISTANT pops in.

ASSISTANT

Woman on two. Wouldn't give a name.  
Says she knows you.

Spyros shrugs, hardly takes his eyes off the board, picks up.

SPYROS

Spyros.

FEMALE VOICE

Hello, Stan. This is Maria Slovas.

All the color drains from Spyros' face.

FEMALE VOICE

You keep annoying the wrong person,  
things might get annoying for you.

INTERCUT: To MARIA SLOVAS, pretty, late 30s, upset but  
containing it.

Pull back to see she is sitting in CHUCK'S OFFICE. She nods  
to him and hangs up.

The phone goes silent. Spyros slumps back into his desk chair. After a long moment catching his breath, he speaks.

SPYROS  
 (to Underling)  
 I think...we're good...Let's knock  
 off. We're done here.

INT. AXELROD HOUSE - SAME

Axe moves through the kitchen, pulling a piece of crust off a loaf of bread, taking a bite. His phone rings.

WAGS (O.S.)  
 Denny Dantone's coming in with an offer on the Lilly Pond Lane house. Fifty-five million. Prepared to close in a week, I hear.

AXE (INTO PHONE)  
 How the fuck did he see it.

WAGS (O.S.)  
 He didn't. He knows the house. Been to parties there.

AXE (INTO PHONE)  
 Sonofabitch.

He hangs up. Then he notices the dog laying down on a dog bed, quite docile now. He tosses a piece of bread crust. The dog doesn't move.

The side door opens, and Lara enters, carrying some bags. She kisses Axe hello.

AXE  
 What the hell's wrong with Elmo?

LARA  
 He went to the vet and got fixed. Remember?

Axe stares at the dog. Once WILD and FULL OF LIFE, he is TAMED, BROKEN almost, by the emasculation.

CLOSE ON: AXE. The situation, the indignity of it, plays on his face. He comes to a decision.

He walks out of the kitchen and takes out his cell phone and places a call.

AXE

The house. I want it. Offer sixty-three million cash. Take it or leave it on the call. Wire goes out first thing. Yeah. Sixty-three. I don't want 'im to feel good about it...

As he hangs up, a slight satisfied smile comes to Axe's face.

INT. RHODES' BEDROOM - DAWN

Chuck, asleep next to Wendy, is awakened by his buzzing cell phone. He answers, moving out of the bedroom.

CHUCK

Yeah?

DIMONDA (V.O. PHONE)

Mr. Rhodes, Mike Dimonda here, sorry to wake you.

CHUCK

I was up.

DIMONDA (V.O. PHONE)

I'm calling for comment.

CHUCK

On?

DIMONDA (V.O. PHONE)

On Skip Wolkowska's suicide.

ON: Chuck's face, stunned. He didn't see it coming.

CHUCK

(flat)

No comment.

He hangs up. Exhales. Walks through the kitchen, hits the coffee maker.

INT. RHODES' KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Chuck sits with his coffee, reading the Times, Journal and...

ON: The Post front page. A photo of the Lilly Pond Lane house and an inset pic of Bobby Axelrod. Headline: "BEACH BUM!"

ON: Chuck, now churning with anger and the coming fight.

INT. NICE HOUSE, WESTCHESTER - NIGHT

PETER DEREK, mid 30s hedge funder at Atlantic Capital whom we recognize from the SEC file, readies his YOUNG KIDS for bed.

There is LOUD BANGING at the door.

VOICE (O.S.)

This is the F.B.I. Open up, we have  
a warrant!

The door FLIES OPEN and Peter's WIFE is knocked aside at AGENTS in windbreakers flood in. She cries, the kids SCREAM.

The LEAD AGENT starts to cuff Peter.

LEAD AGENT

Peter Derek, you're under arrest  
for insider trading, securities  
fraud, obstruction of justice...

Before he can continue Peter FAINTS dead away to the ground. The Agents rouse him, hoist him up and start taking him away.

The wife runs up to the Lead Agent and presses an INHALER into his hand as Peter is taken out.

WIFE

He needs this.

INT./EXT. FBI VEHICLE - SAME

Outside the house, Peter is stuffed into an SUV. He's whimpering a little.

Then the other door opens and Chuck slides in next to him.

PETER

Oh, shit.

CHUCK

I couldn't have said it better.

PETER

Shit.

CHUCK

Good. You know who I am. I haven't  
been at an arrest in the field in a  
decade. I don't do this.

PETER

I want my lawyer.

CHUCK

We're alone in this car. Nobody heard you say that. Which is in your best interest. Because when I get out, we will call your lawyer. And then the chance to make a deal and save your sorry ass will be gone.

Peter tries to regain his composure.

PETER

What kind of deal?

CHUCK

The kind where you stay out of jail. And Bobby Axelrod goes in.

Peter doesn't say anything.

CHUCK

Prison for a guy like you, it's not what you're picturing. Not some country club. I have wide discretion in where you go. What happens to you until your arraignment too. And when that arraignment happens. Cooperate, and you'll be sleeping at home. Don't, and it's Rikers...

Peter nods his understanding. Sniffles. Chuck hands him a pocket square.

Peter wipes himself up. Turns to Chuck.

PETER

Go fuck yourself.

Chuck absorbs it. Nods. Gets out of the car. Speaks to the AGENT waiting next to it.

CHUCK

Process him.

EXT. BEACH - SAME

Black waves crash on the sand in the dark night. Pan to...

EXT. HAMPTON'S HOUSE - SAME

The house, now Axe's, is empty, but beautifully illuminated. We see Axe, Lara, and kids through the window, celebrating the new purchase.

Axe's cell phone rings. He answers it.

INT. RHODES HOUSE - LATER

Chuck enters. It's late. Wendy is in the den, laptop in front of her.

CLOSE ON: Chuck's face, filled within the knowledge that he has just engaged the battle, putting it all--home, family, career--at risk.

And then he masks it, sits down next to her.

CHUCK

You waited up.

WENDY

And made sure the kids were asleep.  
I wanted to see you.

She shuts her laptop. Chuck runs his fingers through her hair.

CHUCK

Me too.

They begin to kiss. She grabs a handful of his hair. YANKS IT.

CHUCK

That hurts.

WENDY

I'll bet it does.

The kissing becomes more intense. His hands go down her body, past her thighs until they cross her knee and reach the STILETTO BLACK SUEDE KNEE HIGH BOOTS.

FADE OUT.