The Money

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. MANHATTAN PUBLISHING - BOARDROOM - MORNING *

CLOSE ON - JAMES CASTMAN'S FACE

displaying, when beset as he is now, a mixture of distraction and contempt born from decades of unapologetic wielding of power. As the FRAME begins to WIDEN --

VOICE (O.C.)
You are an acquirer, Mister Castman. Your appetite is insatiable, and today your sights are set on the three magazines which are my family's journalistic treasures. *

CASTMAN
Yes Sir. *

VOICE (O.C.)
(sarcastically echoes Castman's "Sir")
Let me be clear Sir: I believe you are anathema to democracy -- a corrupter of journalism and manipulator of government; a vile egoist whose self-interest infects the ideology of every outlet in your empire. *

CASTMAN
(evenly)
I don't agree.

The FRAME has WIDENED to reveal Castman sitting in an oak-panelled boardroom. The large windows behind him face the New York City skyline. Castman is flanked by two deputies: to his left his son John Castman, thirty-two; to his right, Robert Harris, chief financial officer to MediaCorp, the parent company of James Castman's holdings. *

The man talking at Castman from in front of a wall-size rendering of the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis is Arthur Otto Goldcraft Jr. On Goldcraft's side of the table are five other Goldcraft family members whose bearings fall short of fully endorsing Arthur's invective fervor. These include Arthur's nephew Lucius, thirties, and Lucius' attractive sister Penelope, thirties.

In one of the chairs along the wall, among executives of lesser rank, sits Priya Lal, early thirties, educated at Oxford, beautiful, the Culture Editor of one of the magazines Castman intends to purchase --

GOLDCRAFT
These magazines are our legacy -- a part of our tradition. Today I at least among the members of my family stand up to your onslaught. Today I say "we're not for sale!"

CASTMAN
First, I have no intention of reinventing these magazines -- I'd mean to honor their traditions and values --

PRIYA
With respect Mister Castman, that is a representation you have made often before and invariably reneged upon.

Castman, leaning forward in his chair and lowering his glasses to get a look at Priya, seems surprised at her presence. Sunshine breaks through a crack in the battlements. There's an odd joviality in Castman's reply --

CASTMAN
Are you finished?

PRIYA
Yes, for the moment.

CASTMAN
(to Goldcraft)
We're prepared to offer on the open market one hundred dollars for Class-A voting shares -- almost double the price quoted on your company's stock this morning -- in hope of finding your family and officers speak with more than one voice.

During which Castman becomes aware of the urgent-seeming calculations being carried out by his financial officer Robert Harris --

GOLDCRAFT
And I hope my family and our officers have the backbone to restrict your holdings and protect the journalistic integrity of these publications.

CASTMAN
I guess we understand each other as well as we're going to. Let's see how the tender turns out.

As Castman and his group come to their feet and move toward the exit, Castman is visibly split between an attempt to gain Priya Lal's attention and to locate Harris and order him, for the financial officer's hearing alone --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
'My office.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MANHATTAN PUBLISHING - ELEVATOR - DAY

Castman is in company with John and flanked by security -- most prominently his chief security officer Sidney -- as they move down the hall --

CASTMAN
Limp-wrist agnostics haven't given a fuck about those magazines a day in their lives 'til I decide to buy them -- offer twice what they're worth and they throw it back in your face with a lecture on integrity.

JOHN
I'd thought ninety-two a share was your ceiling?

CASTMAN
I decided to shorten the game.

The elevator doors open --

INT. MANHATTAN PUBLISHING - BASEMENT CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The entourage moves quickly through a narrow underground passage with flickering fluorescent lights --

JOHN
She isn't shy, their Culture Editor.

CASTMAN
Gutsy play, speaking out against me from the cheap seats.

EXT. BUILDING TWO DOORS DOWN - CONTINUOUS

-- a HANDHELD CAMERA over Castman's shoulder follows Castman and John out the tunnel and into the daylight. As they're hurried toward the black Escalade awaiting them in the alley, a phalanx of PROTESTERS, some masked as Castman, suddenly clears the mouth of the alley and rushes them. A protester masked in Castman's visage hurls a balloon filled with ink in Castman's and his son John's direction --

PROTESTER
'You going to fuck the unions here Castman like everywheres else?

The protester is driven to the ground, the bodyguards raining blows on him. Sidney and the second set of bodyguards hurry Castman and John into the Escalade --

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDTOWN MANHATTAN - DAY

From HIGH AND WIDE we see NYPD officers and security guards corralling protestors away from Castman's convoy of Escalades which now enter the stream of traffic running through the valley of sunlit skyscrapers --

CUT TO:

INT. ESCALADE - CONTINUOUS

As Castman and John settle in the back seat, Castman removes the New York Herald from the seat-back compartment, briefly examines the tabloid. On looking up, he turns to John and indicates on the collar of his own shirt the place where on John's shirt a slight splatter of the protesters' ink can be seen. John's noticed the ink himself --

JOHN
Took one for the team.

CASTMAN
That's not a habit to get into.

CUT TO:

OPENING TITLES

FADE IN:

EXT./INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - DAY *

The camera's panning down takes in huge aluminum three- * dimensional letters which read "Media Corporation" and, * below, "New York Herald." The continued pan reaches the * point at the curb where the Escalade has pulled to a stop, * and from which the doorman escorts Castman and John into the * building. *

As they walk across the vast marble lobby and toward a * waiting private elevator we see flat-screens displaying the * current programming on Castman's various TV stations -- *

ANGLE - SCREEN

CHYRON: "MediaCorp SURPRISE -- BIDS $100 A SHARE FOR MANHATTAN PUBLISHING" *

CUT TO: *

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - EXECUTIVE WING - DAY

Castman and John exit the elevator into the executive wing of the MediaCorp building (this wing separate from the Herald news area). John, turning left, is met by his secretary * awaiting him with a white shirt, Castman is joined by <u>his</u> secretary Miss Schoellkopf, who accompanies him through the * hallway lined with imposing modern art --

MISS SCHOELLKOPF
Mister Harris is waiting; you have *
your Hong Kong call; and Greg is in *
your office.

CASTMAN
In what condition?

MISS SCHOELLKOPF
I would say a C-minus.

As Castman moves toward Harris, who's gotten to his feet --

CASTMAN
Next time I call an audible, try not to respond with a fit of panicky computation.

HARRIS
I was tabulating the overage.

CASTMAN
It gives the wrong impression.

HARRIS
You offered three hundred ‘thirty million above what we’d discussed with the bank.

CASTMAN
I know what I offered and why -- you’re here to get it done.

HARRIS
I’ll talk to them.

CASTMAN
If they balk we’ll approach Dubai.

Castman’s already moving --

FOLLOW - CASTMAN

toward his private office, communicating to his secretary what limit to impose on his meeting with his son -- *

CASTMAN (CONT’D)
Five minutes.

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - CASTMAN’S OFFICE - DAY

-- a complex of rooms including a small bedroom, dressing closet, bathroom and kitchenette -- with floor to ceiling windows looking down at Central Park to one side, and to the other the expanse of the Herald newsroom several floors below.

Castman’s addressed by his middle son Greg, who is high on cocaine and heroin and has commandeered his father’s wall-mounted touch-screen monitor to inscribe a stick-figure charting of his deteriorating financial condition over the past sixteen hours --

GREG
We’re both busy men Dad, so I’m going to be brief.
(MORE)

GREG (CONT'D)
(indicates)
This flow-chart traces my activities commencing nine PM last night: nine PM -- blitzed beyond recognition, I discover myself in a pool hall. Two AM, five hours later: despite a two hundred forty-two thousand dollar short-fall in my available funds, I've lost a quarter-million dollars shooting nine-ball.
(indicates a stick figure)
This figure represents Sergio, who okays my credit-line for the two hundred forty-two thousand. These little check-marks stand for fangs.... *

CASTMAN
You realize you've pissed yourself?

GREG
You're jumping ahead in the flow-chart.

CASTMAN
You might think of better ways to spend my money.

GREG
Not to mention my time.

CASTMAN
Some of which might be occupied making yourself presentable for the dedication ceremony at the Museum.

GREG
I will, that's maximum priority.

CASTMAN
Leave that parasite's address.

GREG
Sergio, I will. He was thinking of four as a deadline.

Greg moves to hug his father --

GREG (CONT'D)
Come on Pop -- like Italians!

Castman's first impulse is to flinch, then he permits himself to receive his son's embrace --

GREG (CONT'D)
Easy with each other -- I love that about us.

By the conclusion of which, something genuine appears to have * been transacted --

CASTMAN
For Christ's sake Gregory take care of yourself.

Greg's gone. Castman's using a remote to change the input of the touch-screen monitor brings up the televised array of a half-dozen Chinese executives who've been awaiting Castman's image --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
("Hello.")
Néih hóu.

LEAD EXECUTIVE
Good morning, Mister Castman.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - HERALD OFFICES - NEWS FLOOR - DAY

As, b.g., Castman's private elevator carrying Greg passes the news floor on its descent, we see Senior News Editor Erin Foley, late 30s, stylishly attractive, and the City Editor, Louis Russell, with reporter Gordon McCarren, late 30s, very bright, fifty sweaty pounds overweight, looking like he hasn't seen a bed or shower. McCarren has the floor --

MCCARREN
So Tuesdays, I gorge myself on porterhouse at Peter Luger's. And how I do after, in the private shame of my apartment I hold a late-night porterhouse-remnant-and-creamed-spinach festival while watching exercise infomercials.

Foley addresses McCarren's lack of concision --

FOLEY
Take your time Gordon.

MCCARREN
Last night I'm hit by a host of symptoms: wheezing, sweating, and the sensation of beef-fat rising in riot through my worn-out veins and arteries. I waddle to my Civic, white-knuckle it to Bellevue -- and as I'm arriving at the E.R. drop-off I see a black Escalade screech to a halt at the curb. The driver dumps out an unconscious teen, speeds off, and I -- the lone bystanding witness, having managed to inscribe in memory the plate number 6H42392 -- find my symptoms subside sufficient to try to do my job. The beaten-comatose waif I discover is the sixteen year-old daughter of a Staten Island cop. The Escalade's registered to -- wait for it -- Trevor "Trey" Archer, bon-vivant progeny of Wall Street's Arch-Fiend. A situation rife with criminal if admittedly-as-yet-unsubstantiated journalistic possibilities: drug overdose, sexual assault and battery ....

FOLEY
Gordon, you haven't had a by-line in six weeks, you come in here smelling like a jock-strap feeding me undigested bullshit --

MCCARREN
Let's forebear from imputations of incompetence either of us may subsequently regret.

Russell itemizes a few areas of reportage McCarren might usefully explore --

RUSSELL
'Contact with the girl's parents? Other family members? The Arch-Fiend's son?

MCCARREN
All constructive suggestions.

FOLEY
Get the fuck out of here McCarren and bring us back something we can print.

MCCARREN
'Postponing my five-mile run.

McCarren exits. Foley turns to Russell, addresses him in lowered, seemingly casual tones --

FOLEY
Mere coincidence? -- McCarren's tummy-ache brings him to that E.R. simultaneous with the Escalade's appearance?

Russell knows what Foley means to imply --

RUSSELL
As in: Gordon's maybe got that kid's phone up, or somebody working for Gordon does, is how he knows to show at the E.R..

FOLEY
In this electronic age in which we live in.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - CASTMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Castman is still on with the Chinese executives. Miss Schoellkopf quietly opens the door and signals that a greater priority awaits outside -- *

MISS SCHOELLKOPF *
(very low)
Lucius Goldcraft.

Castman nods --

CASTMAN
(to Executives)
Pardon me gentlemen. We'll resume in five minutes --

He turns off the television as Lucius Goldcraft, mid-thirties, Arthur Goldcraft's nephew and son of the late Goldcraft patriarch is shown in by Miss Schoellkopf. Lucius wears a three-piece Tom Ford suit along with his shit-eating grin -- *

LUCIUS
Mister Castman.

They shake hands --

CASTMAN
Lucius.

LUCIUS
I'll begin by thanking you for your generous offer to my family this morning.

CASTMAN
You're welcome. Are you going to accept?

Lucius likes the sound of his own voice --

LUCIUS
And let me be clear -- my uncle's performance did not speak for us younger Goldcrafts.

Castman waits for Lucius to address his earlier question -- *

LUCIUS (CONT'D) *
My support for the sale is * unqualified. My sister Penelope is concerned with my father's legacy -- *

CASTMAN
I had tremendous respect for your father.

This seems to lower Castman in Lucius' bitter estimation --

LUCIUS
Did you?
(a beat)
You know what he gave me every year * for my birthday? Subscriptions to * the goddamn magazines that robbed * me of a childhood.

CASTMAN
You can put some of the proceeds of the sale toward buying a tree-house * and a playsuit.

Lucius' provisional smile wants to discover some ironic camaraderie in Castman's reply; when he fails to find it --

LUCIUS
Just in any case to let you know I'm on board, and that I'll make a strong case with my sister.

CASTMAN
Fine then.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - CHESS CIRCLE - DAY

No less overweight than McCarren, the private investigator Mulvaney has been playing chess against himself. McCarren takes a seat across from him --

MCCARREN
So there's a degree of interest in that story.

MULVANEY
Don't low-ball me Gordito -- I gave you everything but Trey Archer's signed confession to drugging, raping, and beating that girl.

MCCARREN
I need a full-court press. Taps on the phone 'the girl who was attacked, her parents, the Archer family --

MULVANEY
Let's see, I wire a cop's phone; the phone of the richest man in Manhattan; and a girl who's just been raped -- not to mention maintaining the tap on the phone of the asshole rapist ....

MCCARREN
At triple your daily rate, while I do some clean reporting.

MULVANEY
Overreaching, Gordon, is why we wind up weighing what we do.

MCCARREN
I'm hanging by a thread from my job.

MULVANEY
Four times my rate.

They consider each other a beat, then McCarren holds out his fist --

MCCARREN
Thanks Mulvaney -- I need this one.

MULVANEY
Anything for a pal.

As they fist-bump over the chess board --

CUT TO:

INT. UPSCALE FRENCH RESTAURANT ALA “PER SE” - DAY

A tuxedoed maitre d' escorts Castman to the prized center table where Priya Lal in a Chanel business suit and Christian Louboutin heels awaits him. As Castman sits, a flurry of activity commences -- the pouring of water and Castman's preferred wine, the arrival of intricate and colorful amuse-bouche etc -- this process extending through the first lines of the scene --

PRIYA
Hello Mister Castman.

CASTMAN
(with a broad smile)
Chronically late. Are you hungry?

PRIYA
Quite. I’m glad you followed through with our meeting.

CASTMAN
Why wouldn’t I?

PRIYA
‘Low tolerance for dissent?

This seems privately to amuse Castman --

CASTMAN
I’m fond of this restaurant. You might think of trying the duck.

PRIYA
I don’t eat meat. Bloodthirsty though I may appear.

CASTMAN
Indeed.

PRIYA
I'm not unaware that when word circulates you've met with me -- undermining the impression of unity at our magazines Mister Goldcraft has wished to create -- it will be a symbolic victory for you which may have very practical consequences. Shall I tell why I'm complicit in your intentions?

CASTMAN
(amused)
Please.

PRIYA
(girds herself)
First, I believe you <u>will</u> succeed in your tender offer. And in the aftermath, I would hope to be advanced.

CASTMAN
How?

PRIYA
Control of editorial content and political endorsements.

CASTMAN
(wry)
In perpetuity?

PRIYA
For the next three years.

Castman considers her, then assumes a low tone with downcast eyes, as if he and Priya were acting out a drama presently calling for secrecy --

CASTMAN
<u>Two</u> years, and <u>I</u> keep control of endorsements.

She follows his example --

PRIYA
Done.

CASTMAN
<u>I</u> would also want us to leave in each other's company at the conclusion of our meal today.

She understands the effect Castman intends their appearing * together publicly to create -- *

PRIYA
With pleasure.

Off which -- *

CUT TO:

EXT. STATEN ISLAND - ALLEN HOME - DAY

McCarren waits outside the front door of a modest outer-borough home. After a flurry of impatient knocking, a girl's voice comes from the other side of the door --

KATIE (O.C.)
Who is it?

MCCARREN
My name's Gordon McCarren, I was hoping to speak to Mister or Mrs. Allen.

KATIE (O.C.)
They're not here.

MCCARREN
I'm a reporter for the Herald following up on an incident from the police blotter last night concerning Katie Allen. Is that who I'm speaking with?

KATIE (O.C.)
No. You should go away.

MCCARREN
Maybe you could deliver a message for me.

KATIE (O.C.)
I'm calling the police. My dad's a cop.

MCCARREN
I think something awful happened to Katie last night. And maybe she's afraid to talk about it.
(MORE)

MCCARREN (CONT'D)
There's a half-million people who read our paper and most of them are good people -- and if they heard Katie's story they'd want to help her find justice for what happened. I think Katie could be a hero, and she could help stop what happened to her from happening to someone else.

The door cracks open. McCarren can just make out Katie's bruised face on the other side of the chain. He produces a business card and offers it to her --

MCCARREN (CONT'D)
Look, I know from getting treated like dirt. That's why I do what I do -- so the bad guys get theirs.

Katie takes the card and studies it a beat --

KATIE
What if something else bad happened? -- before the getting beat up?

MCCARREN
If I know the story, I can help.

KATIE
Okay Gordon. I'm going to trust you.

The sound of the restraining chain being unlatched as prologue to the door's being opened --

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. UPSCALE FRENCH RESTAURANT A LA "PER SE" - DAY

Priya and Castman exit the restaurant. From across the street, several paparazzi snap pictures of them --

CASTMAN
Now the waters get a little deep.

He has his hand at her lower back ushering her toward the waiting towncar --

CUT TO:

INT. THREE DIAMONDS CLUB - POOL HALL - DAY

SIDNEY, 50s, pinstripe suit, carrying a briefcase, enters the bar. Empty save for the BARTENDER and a few scantily clad cocktail waitresses setting up for the night shift --

BARTENDER
Help you?

SIDNEY
Sergio around? -- in connection with Greg.

BARTENDER
Yeah, come on.

The bartender leads Sidney through the kitchen and into a back room where Sergio, 30s, a black man with long lashes and bulging muscles sits with his feet resting on his desk. Sergio comes to his feet --

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
(re Sidney)
He's here in connection with Greg.

SERGIO
(to Sidney)
Yes sir.

The Bartender's gone. Sidney places the briefcase on the desk --

SIDNEY
Trust me the count is good.

Sergio opens the briefcase, considers the contents --

SERGIO
I'm sure it's absolutely good.

SIDNEY
'You know whose son this kid is?

SERGIO
Yes I do.

SIDNEY
That's the last you give him action, understand?

SERGIO
All right, sure.

SIDNEY
'He gets fifty dollars credit in a five dollar game of nine-ball, I'm going to find you and kill you.

Sergio smiles broadly --

SERGIO
Heard and understood my friend.

Sidney is gone. Off Sergio, closing the briefcase --

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STANDARD HOTEL - ROOFTOP POOL

McCarren makes his way past models tanning and young investment-types ogling them. The host points him toward a cabana. McCarren hears noises from within --

MCCARREN
Gordon McCarren with the Herald, Trey. 'Think we could talk a second?

A beat, then Trey Archer, sunglassed, zips open the cabana --

TREY
Anything for the press.

-- revealing two young women, nude to the waist, arms casually crossed to conceal their breasts --

MCCARREN
I was hoping you could account for your whereabouts between midnight and five this morning.

TREY
Let's see, midnight and five ...

Trey gestures toward the two girls --

TREY (CONT'D)
... I was between Midnight and Five.
(indicates the girls in turn)
This is Midnight. And this is Five.

MCCARREN
Katie Allen told me a different story about where you were -- and my newspaper is prepared to run it. If you don't want your side printed that's up to you.

TREY
Hey Fatty -- Katie Allen's a slut using you to get my money. 'You print what she says -- I'll sue for libel. *

MCCARREN
I got eyewitnesses that put you with her last night.

TREY
You talked to the girl's father yet? He's got his facts straight. And you know what you got?
(makes a covert masturbatory gesture)
This. So fuck off.

Trey opens the cabana's curtain, signals a passing waiter --

TREY (CONT'D)
(re McCarren)
Diet Coke for the big man, to go.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTMAN OFFICES - DAY

Harris sits across from Castman --

HARRIS
The gap between their expectation for the bid and the offer you made took the bank I think somewhat aback.

Under which Castman's reached for the phone, sent a call --

CASTMAN
(sardonic)
And you made the case for us vigorously and with full conviction?

HARRIS
(nods)
They'll cover you up to ninety-two, but after that you're on your own.

CASTMAN
(into phone)
Your Royal Highness.

INTERCUT AS APPROPRIATE:

INT. KINGDOM HOLDINGS OFFICES - DUBAI - CONTINUOUS

A short moustachioed man wearing traditional Saudi headdress sits in a gold-plated office. A map of the world behind him with logos indicating his holdings on every continent --

SHEIKH
Ah Mister Castman. James. How's New York?

CASTMAN
Hot.

A strikingly beautiful attendant places a document in front of the Sheikh which he signs without reading --

SHEIKH
(laughs)
You don't know heat James.

CASTMAN
You've heard of my offer for these magazines? I'm having trouble with the bank over here.

SHEIKH
Ah yes. Your American banks have no money of their own -- they're afraid.

CASTMAN
I offered a hundred, they'll finance ninety-two a share -- I'm short three hundred thirty million.

SHEIKH
(chuckles)
Okay, James. You have it.

CASTMAN
Great relief -- many thanks.

SHEIKH
But not on the easy terms you're used to. If you take the money, I expect, let's say, a half-percent more of Media Corp.

CASTMAN
Do I offend you to say I believe that's too much?

SHEIKH
I would absolutely understand your saying so, even as I disagreed and held fast to my terms.

CASTMAN
So if I settle with the Goldcrafts at a hundred, for half of one percent I could have your three-hundred-thirty million to cover me. *

SHEIKH
Yes yes yes -- we make your company worth sixty-six billion. When are you coming to visit me? We must play golf.

CASTMAN
First I get this thing done -- then I come and we play.

SHEIKH
Goodbye my friend.

CASTMAN
Goodbye.

Castman hangs up the phone. The business transacted on the call has left Harris noticeably anxious --

HARRIS
Half of one percent for three hundred-thirty million if we settle at a hundred?

CASTMAN
Try not to say that like you're laying an egg.

CUT TO:

INT. THREE DIAMONDS CLUB - POOL HALL - DAY

The club's coming to life in the early evening, girls dancing, men playing pool at tables stacked with bills, as Greg enters and walks to Sergio at the bar, raises his arms --

GREG
Sergio, que pasa?

SERGIO
You're dead in here.

GREG
Whoa! Dead? 'Little extreme now, no?

SERGIO
Greg, you're a good guy --

Greg seems to be on his own wavelength --

GREG
Comprendo, I'm eighty-six'd for competitive pool -- but why is dead for pool synonymous with dead for narcotics? Where's justice in that or even logic?

As Sergio reaches under the counter -- *

SERGIO
(low-voiced)
'Couple grams of blow -- then I don't want you around here.

GREG *
One of my lifetime ambitions Sergio -- 'navigate among a thousand shrivelled twats in an unnaturally confined space. Game on, twats! Tonight, at the Museum, I check you off my Bucket List!

SERGIO
Shake hands with me you crazy fuck.

Sergio reaches out and shakes hands with Greg, accomplishing a transfer the proceeds of which Greg pockets --

SERGIO (CONT'D)
On me, now take off.

GREG
(flexes his muscles)
I tell you, I never feel as built-up as when I'm going to spend time with my dad. Under a microscope I appear a normal-sized human.

He realizes nobody is paying attention to him --

GREG (CONT'D)
Have a wonderful night gentlemen and for God's sake stay within your limits.

As Greg moves for the door --

CUT TO:

INT. CASTMAN'S OFFICE - WALK-IN CLOSET - DAY

John enters as Castman ties his bow tie in front of a mirror --

JOHN
Looking sharp.

CASTMAN
We're late.

JOHN
That shot of you and the editor -- it's making waves online.

CASTMAN
If the deal goes through, I gave her editorial control for two years.

John takes this in --

JOHN
Continuity in the transition -- 'that what you had in mind?

CASTMAN
You'll still be the publisher.

JOHN
Buying a magazine and foregoing control of its voice sort of cheapens the deal.

CASTMAN
(nods)
You'll have plenty to do on the business end -- those things have to start making money. Could you tie my goddamn bow tie? *

As John ties the tie for his father --

JOHN
It's a different arrangement from what we discussed.

CASTMAN
They always are.

JOHN
I'll find my way with it.

As John holds up his father's tuxedo jacket for Castman to put on --

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY

McCarren makes his way to the chess table where Mulvaney awaits him --

MCCARREN
Squadoosh Mulvaney -- it's that girl's word against the world's -- even her own old man. Stand back and let me jump!

MULVANEY
Don't.

Mulvaney slides a series of photographs across the table showing a bag being handed from an Archer employee to Officer Allen, Katie's father. Along with the photos, Mulvaney hands McCarren a thumb drive --

MULVANEY (CONT'D)
'Recording of one of Archer's people selling the girl's father on the story his daughter's a slut anyway and offering him a cash settlement, with photos of the bag drop.

MCCARREN
I knew it! I knew it! Did you ever have a sex act performed on you Mulvaney by another obese person?

MULVANEY
When worlds collide.

MCCARREN
You saved my ass and I thank you.

Mulvaney's gone. Off McCarren --

CUT TO:

END ACT I.

EXT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM - TWILIGHT

Castman waits at the base of a grand staircase leading into the museum as a stream of limos disgorge their formally attired passengers who make their way up the stairs under a banner reading: ELLEN CASTMAN WING OF MACEDONIAN ANTIQUITIES. * The limo for which Castman's been waiting arrives. Castman steps forward to open the door revealing his ninety-nine year-old mother, Ellen, whose careful exit he assists --

CASTMAN
Mother you look lovely.

She nods, taking her son's arm --

ELLEN
Someone should pave these streets.

CASTMAN
Ruth's outdone herself. She's so happy for you to see the exhibit.

ELLEN
I've come to be installed among the ancients.

CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - TWILIGHT

CLOSE ON an iPad showing the photograph of Priya and Castman --

TEDDY (O.C.)
I wonder what that photo cost Dad?

As the frame WIDENS OUT to establish Teddy, at twenty-three Castman's youngest son, and John in the back of their limousine --

JOHN
Seems like it cost me editorial control.

Teddy puts a mock-reassuring hand on John's shoulder --

TEDDY
Don't forget he rarely keeps his word.

As their limousine arrives at the museum --

CUT TO:

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM - NIGHT

In a square atrium in the Western Wing of the Metropolitan Museum, a group has convened in celebratory attire. Among glass cases of pottery, weaponry and jewelry and below imposing sculptures of fertility goddesses and warrior kings, the ladies and gentlemen of New York choose between water and wine, delivered on trays by the young and unobtrusive catering staff. There is a low hum of conversation, interrupted only by shrieks of feigned surprise and reunion --

ANGLE - CASTMAN

who glides smilingly towards his wife, RUTH, who is being complimented and entertained by a number of fashionable art-world types of varying age, ethnicity and sexuality. He interrupts their conversation, tapping RUTH on the shoulder --

CASTMAN
Ruth -- my bride, congratulations. You look like Nefertiti, Helen of Troy, Roxana -- bride of Alexander.

Ruth, smiling apologetically as she excuses herself from her companions to walk off a few paces with her husband, turning her back to the room --

RUTH
All of those women were black, James --

CASTMAN
Even Helen?

RUTH
-- and don't try to kiss up to me in front of these queens hoping I hadn't heard from John that you fed two hundred and fifty grand to your son Gregory's gambling habit this morning when I have told you explicitly and repeatedly that you are hurting him, not helping him James, by bailing him out.

CASTMAN
Would you have me let him wait for some thug to come pull his teeth out?

RUTH
Greg is thirty years old. He has a trust fund and a ludicrously generous salary. If he didn't think you would bail him out eternally, he wouldn't gamble his teeth so often. *

CASTMAN
The exhibit looks wonderful.

Ruth fixes a smile on her regal visage as she turns around and swans back towards the stylish mix of people celebrating the stunning gift she has made. Castman sees Lucius Goldcraft approaching --

LUCIUS
Good evening Mister Castman.

CASTMAN
Lucius, I didn't take you for a patron of the arts.

LUCIUS
We've hit a snag.

CASTMAN
What's that?

LUCIUS
In the aftermath of your well-publicized lunch with Miss Lal, my Uncle Arthur has fired her.

CASTMAN
Sorry to hear that.

LUCIUS
I and my sister Penelope held Miss Lal in high regard.

CASTMAN
As do I. So much so that I offered her the managing editor's position should that magazine change hands. *

LUCIUS
Penelope believes you compromised Miss Lal.

CASTMAN
Miss Lal is an adult. She arranges her own lunches.

LUCIUS
And a strong-willed sister is formidable. I'd think you'll need to increase your offer to make the prospect of the buy-out more palatable to Penelope -- perhaps a hundred ten dollars a share ....

CASTMAN
Strange -- considering in Miss Lal's dismissal the publication's * lost a valuable asset, I would * think a reduction of my offer might be more appropriate. *

Lucius blanches momentarily, then gathers himself --

LUCIUS
I believe we'd find that insulting.

CASTMAN
Lucius. I'm pulling your leg. I'll need to confer with my board before I'm able to revise the offer.

LUCIUS
James Castman confers?

CASTMAN
Oh endlessly. I'm sure you're aware how difficult and protracted collaborative negotiations can be.

LUCIUS
I see -- yes, all too well.

CASTMAN
Business can get like that. Excuse me, I've my mother to attend to.

ANGLE - TEDDY

and Katherine, late-30s, Castman's eldest child, in line at the bar --

KATHERINE
Incoming! Gun-toting bigot on your right flank.

TEDDY
How are you Mister Corbitt?

They find themselves cornered by Kurt Corbitt, CEO of MediaCorp's cable news channel, an idealogue of imposing size and girth --

CORBITT
Why in hell are two Castman children waiting in line for a drink when their old man's out-of-pocket for this entire kit-and-kaboodle?

TEDDY
America Mister Corbitt.

CORBITT
Not the one I grew up in, not when armed bands of dope-fiend Trotskyites assault job-creators like your dad and cry "brutality" when they defend themselves.

It's hard for Katherine to take him seriously --

KATHERINE
Yeah.

CORBITT
Who I felt bad for? -- the bodyguard just doing his job, up against, for all he knows, a domestic terrorist 'got some haji bomb-vest strapped under his t-shirt.

TEDDY
Anyway.

CORBITT
'Happen to see anything on that order? Weaponry of any type?

TEDDY
Actually I wasn't there this morning Mister Corbitt. I think you're looking for my brother John.

Corbitt considers Teddy --

CORBITT
Don't make the mistake of not taking me seriously Boy-o.

With a rugged pat on Teddy's back, Corbitt is gone. As if she were Corbitt too, Katherine punches her brother in the shoulder, man-to-man --

MUSEUM DIRECTOR (O.C.)
And now the couple who made this all possible -- James and Ruth Castman.

ANGLE - RUTH

as Castman escorts her to the podium --

CASTMAN
After bidding you welcome, let me hurry to say that I only signed a check -- the person responsible for all the hard work of establishing this exhibit was my extraordinary wife Ruth, to whose care I now entrust you.

Applause from the crowd as Ruth takes the podium --

RUTH
Tonight we appreciate our past -- a great civilization that shaped the world; a man who brought peoples of varying races and religions together in the vision of a unified humanity. On behalf of my husband James, our children and myself -- and honoring my husband's mother Ellen -- live into this shared history. Come to the present with fresh eyes. Welcome.

ANGLE - CASTMAN

amid the general applause, Castman sees George Archer, Trey's father, moving toward him with purpose and a tight smile --

ARCHER
James -- 'happy day for your family.

CASTMAN
Glad you could share it with us. I'd not've thought it to your taste.

ARCHER
Yes -- we're all abstract expressionist. I'd be grateful in any case to trouble you with something more business-related -- I hate to do it here but it's relatively urgent.

CASTMAN
Go ahead George.

ARCHER
My boy Trey's got one of your reporters sniffing around trying to make a story out of his love-life, which is admittedly unsavory: evidently last night there was some roughhouse between him and a town-girl. I'd hope you could let me know before anything might get published so I could try to talk you out of it.

CASTMAN
Well, Sir, that's not typically the way my papers operate.

ARCHER
Come on James, you know what it's like with boys like this: you've got to get them through the phase where their head's up their ass. God forbid Trey's still doing this shit when he's your Greg's age.

Castman takes this in --

CASTMAN
(evenly)
God forbid.

Archer's produced an envelope --

ARCHER
Just let me leave you with these statements from my son and the father of the girl in question -- they'll clear up any murky areas in your man's reporting.

CASTMAN
Let me impose on you George to take those over to the newspaper yourself.

ARCHER
Of course.

CASTMAN
And if you'll excuse me, I see Ruth needing to be rescued from a conversation with my Aunt.

ARCHER
I didn't mean to overstep, that crack about your boy.

CASTMAN
Sure.

ANGLE - RUTH

coming beside her seated mother-in-law --

ELLEN
Oh Ruth, what a success 'this exhibit, and how beautiful you look.

RUTH
We're so glad you could be here with us.

Ellen leans in and lowers her voice --

ELLEN
And I hope you gave James a thoroughgoing talking-to over the photo with that woman. *

RUTH
That's business. *

ELLEN
The more reason not to be photographed with his hand to the small of her back.

RUTH *
Try not to care too much Mother *
where James is putting his hands. *

Ruth leaves her with a politic smile --

ANGLE - CASTMAN

in a brief moment of respite. Corbitt's boisterous calling marks his approach --

CORBITT
Commander! *

Castman knows Corbitt's the only man who'd address him so --

CASTMAN
Your Holiness.

CORBITT
(salutes)
Alarums within -- Maxwell W. Reynolds is marshaling votes to withdraw the bid for the New York World -- I believe he's getting information from your financial advisor Harris.

CASTMAN
How many votes of the twelve can he swing? *

CORBITT
My count it's six to six.

CASTMAN
Assuming <u>your</u> vote supports <u>my</u> position.

CORBITT
Why <u>wouldn't</u> I stick with my Commander?

CASTMAN
Who knows, at the moment of decision, what seemingly mutinous course your conscience will dictate?

Corbitt studies him --

CORBITT
You’re a deep one.

CASTMAN
And you’re a good friend.

Castman’s gone --

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

John, tuxedoed, and Foley are awaiting McCarren, who walks in with a head of steam --

MCCARREN
It's snowballed and still snowballing and no sign the snowballing'll stop. Tales from the young adult underbelly -- drugs, rape, violence, wads of offered hush money --

JOHN
Let’s slow down a moment Gordon and address some basic questions of fact.

MCCARREN
Fire away.

JOHN
George Archer’s provided the paper statements from his boy and the girl’s cop-father attesting that she was habitually promiscuous.

McCarren knows that with an instant’s hesitation his entire cause may be lost --

MCCARREN
I’ve got the girl’s statement, A., B., George Archer’s boy’s a lying bag of bullshit and, C., the girl’s cop-father’s bought a bill of goods.

FOLEY
Which you substantiate <u>how</u>?

MCCARREN
You know I've got sources, and that you don't want to know who they are.

JOHN
No, Gordon, that's exactly what I'm going to have to ask you for.

McCarren feels the tide going against him --

MCCARREN
I thought this was still the Herald, where a story with sex, blood and a little class warfare can always find a happy home. I thought we spoke for the people of New York, not George-fucking-Archer.

FOLEY
We asked for your sources Gordon. If you won't provide them, you can't make the story stick.

MCCARREN
Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ!

McCarren's pulled his smartphone from his pocket, accesses an audio file and pushes the play button. The voice of a panicked Trey Archer is heard --

TREY
(from the recording)
I gave her three caps of G! She's going into fucking spasms! I don't know what to do --

VOICE
(from the recording)
Is she breathing?

TREY
(from the recording)
She's breathing, she's breathing. I'm taking her to the Emergency Room. Christ, I beat the shit out of her, I'm afraid she's going to die!

John presses the stop button on McCarren's smartphone -- his worst suspicions confirmed --

JOHN
Ah McCarren -- no tummy-ache, no chance encounter at the E.R. -- you just sat in your apartment bugging this asshole's telephone. *

McCarren looks away --

MCCARREN
A fella's got to eat. *

JOHN
Leave the recordings here and go home.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Past flat-screens displaying the current programming on Castman's various TV news stations, McCarren moves across the vast marble lobby, notes Castman enter, moving toward his waiting private elevator. As they pass --

MCCARREN
Hell of an operation you've got here Lucifer.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - JOHN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

As John and Foley scan the layouts of the next day's paper, Castman enters --

CASTMAN
You running anything about George Archer's boy for tomorrow?

JOHN
We were. We canned it.

John hands over McCarren's copy for the story --

JOHN (CONT'D)
Our reporter had the kid's phone tapped, and the moron played Erin and me the recording.

FOLEY
Which as it happens proves our guy's reporting --

Castman looks up from the page he's been scanning --

CASTMAN
Who beside the three of us knows what the reporter did?

JOHN
No one I'm aware of.

CASTMAN
You ever physically lay hands on the recorded conversation?

FOLEY
The reporter played it for us off his phone. We have a copy.

CASTMAN
Fire the reporter and draft an apology to our readers: "thorough internal investigations revealed a lone-wolf reporter employing illicit news-gathering techniques. The Herald has verified its reporting independent of this reporter's activities." Then go ahead and run the story. Give Miss Foley the byline. If it comes to cases we'll cite the girl as a source and George Archer.

JOHN
George Archer? -- really?

CASTMAN
Yeah, fuck that blowhard.

JOHN
How did George Archer incriminate his son?

CASTMAN
Personal communication -- he told me there was "rough-house" between his son and the girl.

JOHN
That's empty generalization: it doesn't come close to sourcing the story.

CASTMAN
You've got a recording which implicates Trey absolutely.
(MORE)

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
You know what happened. And you should know we're cowards if we let George Archer tell us what goes in our pages. I'm saying to print the story.

JOHN
And I'm saying I won't compromise us ethically and incur the legal risk we'd look at for doing it.

CASTMAN
You won't do it.

JOHN
I won't do it. *

Their eyes hold a beat. Castman turns to exit. Off his private paternal pride as he closes the door behind him --

ANGLE - JOHN

JOHN (CONT'D)
(to Foley)
Get this girl's father that recording. He needs to know his daughter was the victim and not what the Archers tried to make him believe she was.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART - MIDNIGHT

Greg and an alluring high-dollar Escort negotiate the stairs to the now dark and deserted Metropolitan Museum. A taxi waits on the street below --

ESCORT
You sure this is it?

Greg tries one of the front doors, finds it locked. He shouts down to the cab driver --

GREG
Closed, Juan Carlos!

He shepherds the escort down the stairs --

GREG (CONT'D)
I forewarned you of this likelihood. I told you this was a living possibility.

ESCORT
I could give less of a fuck.

GREG
You're about to discover Mindy, in the category "less-of-a-fuck," you are talking to a world cham-peen.

As they approach the cab --

GREG (CONT'D)
Juan Carlos! A mi casa!

CUT TO:

INT. CASTMAN HOME - NIGHT

Castman enters the darkened four-story upper east side apartment, hangs his jacket in a hall closet and moves toward the kitchen where a light can be seen --

ANGLE - KITCHEN

Ruth Castman, dressed for bed, kneels beside the arthritic family labrador to whom she administers medication with an oral syringe --

CASTMAN
Those the ying-yang drops?

RUTH
It's a steroid course, but I don't think it's doing shit.

Castman takes a TV remote off the counter-top, thinks better of turning on the news, puts the remote back down --

RUTH (CONT'D)
(re Willie)
Rosa said he didn't leave the kitchen all day.

CASTMAN
That's no good.

For a beat they both stare at the dog, who effortfully chokes back his medicine --

RUTH
Are you satisfied with your progress toward the purchase?

CASTMAN
It'll work out. I hate dealing with that posturing prick.

RUTH
You being seen with Goldcraft's Culture Editor -- does John understand that isn't personal?

CASTMAN
What would be personal about it?

RUTH
That it's not meant to deprecate his abilities.

CASTMAN
He's coming to understand -- at his own pace.

RUTH
He's within bounds to feel hurt.

CASTMAN
Quit it Ruthie. John's doing fine. He stood up to me just now and he was right.

Castman slumps down into a chair, flips the TV on and finds a news channel --

RUTH
I'm off to bed. Good night James.

CASTMAN
Sleep tight.

Ruth exits. Castman considers Willie the dog --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
Willie, there's a big world of trash to eat and curbs to piss on out there. You want to take a look? Now's the time boy -- right now, when you think you <u>can't</u> pull it off. I'll get the goddamn leash.

The dog doesn't move --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
All right Pal, tomorrow's another day.

Castman turns attention to the news --

FADE OUT:

END DAY ONE. END ACT II.

FADE IN:

EXT. ALLEN HOME - DAWN

In uniform, Katie's father Officer Allen leaves his house and walks to the car in his driveway on whose windshield he notes a manila envelope. As he collects the envelope and gets in --

CUT TO:

INT. HERALD - JOHN'S OFFICE - MORNING

McCarren enters --

JOHN
Gordon, we need to talk about the ethics of what you did.

MCCARREN
If it's true I may have operated in a grey area, since the story's been shit-canned the point is now moot.

JOHN
Whether we used it or not, your reporting violated the paper's standards. I'm going to have to let you go.

McCarren's hand is to his forehead --

MCCARREN
Of course -- punish the truth-tellers while the guilty go free.

JOHN
You'll get a handsome severance package -- tied to your signing a confidentiality agreement.

MCCARREN
Give it to me.

John hands over the document, which McCarren starts trying to read --

MCCARREN (CONT'D)
Somebody frame tomorrow's headline -- "Fat Fuck Fucked."

-- then signs it without finishing reading. FOLLOW McCarren as he walks out and down the hall to Foley's office --

INT. FOLEY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

McCarren looks in --

MCCARREN
Et tu Erin?

FOLEY
John speaks for the both of us.

MCCARREN
Meaning he plays trust-fund boy scout while you don't fucking speak at all.

FOLEY
Gordon, you're a talented guy and you've got a future ahead of you -- don't start acting stupid now.

MCCARREN
I'm going to give you a nice chapter in the memoirs, Foley.

McCarren's gone --

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - CASTMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Castman's preparing himself for the board meeting to come --

MISS SCHOELLKOPF *
(from intercom)
Mister Castman, Miss Lal is here.

CASTMAN
(loud, through the door)
Send her in.

The door opens and Priya Lal enters. Castman's risen, comes behind her to hold her chair --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
How are you? Please sit down.

PRIYA
Thank you.

Castman takes a seat next to her --

CASTMAN
I've been told that on finding out we had lunch together Mister Goldcraft fired you.

PRIYA
Yes.

CASTMAN
Did his decision strike you as a calm, confident, rational act?

PRIYA
It struck me as a bit of desperate vengeance.

CASTMAN
You know I'm optimistic about the ultimate outcome, but in the meantime you have a place to land here at the Herald or elsewhere at MediaCorp -- your choice.

PRIYA
That's very generous Mister Castman. Please consider that I accept.

CASTMAN
Now that we'll be working together I'd ask you to call me "James."

PRIYA
(smiles)
And I'll hope you'll call me Priya.

CASTMAN
And I'll hope Priya we'll soon feel comfortable enough with each other to get past these nervous formalities.

PRIYA
In our own good time.

CASTMAN
What a brave presumption.

Their eyes hold a beat --

PRIYA
In any case I oughtn’t detain you -- I know you’ve the meeting with your company’s board of directors.

CASTMAN
Thank you for coming by.

PRIYA
Thanks so much for hiring me.

Castman's shepherding her to the door, but reluctant for her to leave. She smiles, takes Castman’s hand between her own --

PRIYA (CONT’D)
We’re going to do just fine.

CUT TO:

INT. SPA AT THE PLAZA - DAY

Steam rises from a jacuzzi situated under a mosaic of Greek Gods. Ornate piles of folded towels and large jugs of spa water sit on either end of the jacuzzi. Ruth Castman sits in the bubbling jacuzzi. Katherine Castman enters post-massage, wearing a robe. The ATTENDANT helps her with her robe and hands her a glass of strawberry and kiwi infused water --

KATHERINE
'You remember Deborah Kirkland, she was at Exeter with me?

RUTH
Yes, vaguely.

KATHERINE
She went to Oxford with this Priya who was in the photo with dad. 'Says she's smart, driven, doesn't come from money, didn't date much, didn't party, leans right but not on social issues, spent a lot of time with the cricket club.

RUTH
That’s quite a dossier.

KATHERINE
Minus the cricket club, sound like someone we know?

RUTH
Your father's from Buffalo New York.

KATHERINE
True, not exactly the Third World.

RUTH
Shall we drop this Kate? I appreciate the concern, but I've no interest in the gossip anymore.

KATHERINE
Fair enough.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - BOARD ROOM - DAY

In the stately oak-panelled boardroom, a dozen enervated Mediacorp execs face each other in high-back leather chairs -- among them are Harris, Corbitt, Reynolds, John and James Castman. Video conference monitors show live feeds of the Sheikh and the Chinese contingent from their respective home-country offices. Castman accepts his trashing --

REYNOLDS
At a hundred dollars a share Mister Castman your offer for Manhattan Publishing is economically insupportable and insults the collaborative functioning of this board. MediaCorp's future seems grim indeed when we entertain motions to purchase conglomerates whose crown-jewels are cash-hemorrhaging magazines, and then look to untested, unskilled executives to turn them to profitability.

CLOSE ON John, to whom Reynolds obviously refers --

SHEIK
(on TV)
Mister Reynolds -- in making your case, I believe you do unnecessary abuse to Mister Castman and his son.

REYNOLDS
Due respect Your Royal Highness -- aren't you angling for the percentage you collect if you front the finishing money for the deal?

ANGLE - HARRIS

who has obviously leaked this information, averting his eyes from Castman's searching gaze --

CASTMAN
I'm sure no one intends to impugn His Royal Highness' integrity or my son John's competence -- if I were mistaken in either case I would take it as a personal insult. I'm going to call for yet another vote, asking that all in favor of Mister Reynolds' motion to withdraw our offer at one hundred dollars for Class-A voting shares, vote aye --

Corbitt's suddenly come to his feet, taking a deep breath and turning his palms outward as if in benediction --

CORBITT
Consistency and loyalty being qualities I value above all others, before we vote I want to give my reasons for what I'm about to do --
(an apologetic look toward Castman)
A House divided against itself is not a viable functioning entity. Accordingly, and with apologies to my friend of longstanding James Castman, I'm going to change my vote -- to support of the motion to withdraw --

ANGLE - JOHN

reacting with a startled bemusement --

REYNOLDS
Hear, hear! Hear, hear! All others in favor --

Castman takes in the display of six board members in addition to Corbitt hurriedly raising their hands --

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)
The motion to withdraw the offer of a hundred dollars a share is carried. The offer is accordingly withdrawn.

CASTMAN
I won't forget this.
(to Corbitt)
I will not forget it.

Castman looks in turn toward his son; John's expression seeks out his father's deeper intention; Castman's expression is poker-faced --

CUT TO:

INT. 42ND STREET POOL HALL - DAY

FOLLOW Teddy as he walks the maze of pool tables looking for his brother. He re-pockets his phone after trying and failing to reach Greg. His looks have yet to display frustration. He finds Greg at a back table, riding a high, two balls away from a win. Greg spots his brother --

GREG
Teddy -- watch your big brother make some money.

Greg leans to the table, sinks the two-ball shot. As Greg's opponent Morales and three or four other observers tap the bottoms of their pool cues on the floor in acknowledgement of the shot's excellence, and Greg collects the stakes which were at risk --

MORALES
Going again.

TEDDY
(to Greg) *
'Car waiting outside on the street for you Champ.

GREG
I don't think my opponent regards our mother's birthday dinner as grounds for a break in the action.

Teddy takes out a roll of bills, begins counting out hundreds on the green felt --

TEDDY
(to Morales)
What are you stuck?

GREG
What are you doing?

TEDDY
It's Mom's birthday Greg.
(to Morales)
You got a mom, right?

MORALES
What's that supposed to mean?

Greg responds to the incipient deterioration in the atmosphere by also beginning to count out hundred-dollar bills onto the green felt surface of the table --

GREG
Forty-four hundred Morales? 'Sta bien?

MORALES
Si si, OK.

Greg collects and hands back to Teddy the money Teddy had put on the table, addresses Morales and the observers --

GREG
Going to her birthday party. I'll tell her happy cumpleaños.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. TOWN CAR - DAY

Greg and Teddy in the backseat. Greg slumps, leans his head on his hand, stares out the window --

TEDDY
I fucked up on some kind of etiquette?

GREG
It's all right. You wouldn't have a Klonopin?

TEDDY
No.
(beat)
We don't have to stay long. It's her birthday -- give it a shot.

Greg considers his younger brother --

GREG
You're tall for a Saint Bernard.

TEDDY
Woof.

Off Greg patting Teddy's head --

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIACORP BUILDING - CASTMAN'S OFFICE - DUSK

Castman at his desk. Miss Schoellkopf comes on the intercom --

MISS SCHOELLKOPF
Arthur Goldcraft is here.

CASTMAN
Send him in. And send in John.

Arthur Goldcraft enters, takes a seat across from Castman --

GOLDCRAFT
My kingdom for a drink -- oh, but it seems you might already have that.

CASTMAN
How's scotch?

As John enters, Castman rises, walks to the crystal bar service and pours two scotches --

GOLDCRAFT
A poor palliative for a deeply disappointed man.

CASTMAN
What do you want?

GOLDCRAFT
Members of my family have become aware of your offer's being withdrawn.

CASTMAN
(nods)
The board felt I'd overreached.

GOLDCRAFT
A panic ensued -- a family vote was called and consummated during which I could do nothing but sit idly by as if watching a wildfire. So now, just as the Germans "considered" giving up Alsace-Lorraine in nineteen eighteen, do we verge on "considering" a diminished figure as the purchase price for our publications -- ninety-two dollars a share is what we understand the bank is willing to support ....

CASTMAN
Feed your dreams of ninety-two to the family spaniels Arthur -- the strike-price is sixty-eight.

Goldcraft studies him --

GOLDCRAFT
I'm authorized by the family to accept any offer I deem fair. And while I do not deem that figure fair --

CASTMAN
Sixty-five.

GOLDCRAFT
Excuse me?

CASTMAN
The strike-price, it's sixty-three.

GOLDCRAFT
Is this some type of sadistic game? -- because I am not a well man ....

CASTMAN
Sixty dollars.

GOLDCRAFT
Stop. I accept. I accept.

CASTMAN
'Anything else you wanted to discuss?

Goldcraft ponders, decides against speaking, simply shakes his head "no," finishes his drink and heads for the door --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
Cheer up Arthur. You've been martyred and oppressed by a Philistine: isn't this your idea of a perfect day?

Deciding he now has license to speak without its costing him money, Goldcraft looks to John --

GOLDCRAFT
You're going to be steward of a powerful voice in the democratic conversation. I hope you manage it responsibly.

Goldcraft's gone. John considers his father --

JOHN
Did you know sixty dollars was where you'd wind up?

CASTMAN
Ballpark. *

He puts a hand on John's shoulder -- *

CASTMAN (CONT'D) *
You took your licks in there. You * didn't flinch. *

Miss Schoellkopf signals on the intercom -- *

MISS SCHOELLKOPF *
Mister Corbitt wants ten seconds.

CASTMAN
Send him in.

Corbitt enters --

CORBITT
How'd I do as the treacherous * Roman?

CASTMAN
Four stars Kurt. *

Castman and John exit his office outside of which Harris * waits anxiously. He sees Castman and stands -- *

CASTMAN (CONT'D) *
Robert -- I'm late. We cant * discuss this now. *

HARRIS
I'm so sorry -- I just want you to know -- everything I did, I did for the right business reasons to protect you and I apologize if you see it in any other way.

CASTMAN
I know you did. And your apology's accepted.

Harris impulsively takes Castman's hand and shakes it fervently meanwhile looking to John --

HARRIS
He's a great man, a great great man.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTMAN OFFICES - HALLWAY

John and Castman --

JOHN
I was sure you were going to take at least three of his fingers.

Castman looks straight ahead --

CASTMAN
(flat-voiced)
One at a time.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STANDARD HOTEL - ROOFTOP POOL - DUSK

With vacant eyes and a steady, haunted stride Officer Allen makes his way to a group of people at the bar --

OFFICER ALLEN
(raised voice)
Anyone know Trey Archer? His car's parked downstairs.

One of them indicates Trey, at a stool down the bar among friends. Allen approaches --

OFFICER ALLEN (CONT'D)
You're Trey Archer?

TREY
(having overheard)
Yeah -- what happened to my car?

Drawing his service weapon as he moves toward Trey, Allen aims at Archer's head and fires. Trey's body falls from its stool to the floor. The rooftop is all shrieks and scrambling. Allen, silent and still, drops his weapon, staring at the empty stool which held Trey, offering no resistance as a group of uniformed Security Guards tackle and restrain him --

CUT TO:

INT. CASTMAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Formally dressed maids and servers busy with the last minute preparations for the evening meal cross unobtrusively behind the couch where Castman sits, alongside three of his restless Grandchildren -- aged somewhere between three and six -- watching an inane, loud and brightly colored children's show on the television. Castman addresses the children vaguely, collectively --

CASTMAN
(re characters on TV)
Why do they sing all the time?

GRANDSON
'Cause that's their job to do. *

CASTMAN
You like that? -- all the noise and the dancing just 'cause they saw a puppy or learned a new letter?

GRANDSON
Yeah.

CASTMAN
All right. They're already dressed like insane people -- they might as well sing like them too.

ANGLE - DINING ROOM

where Ruth and Katherine sit, sipping wine, at the elegantly set but as yet unpeopled dinner table --

RUTH
Your father's morose -- he's brought off his deal.

KATHERINE
'Only thing worse than business at dinner is no business at dinner.

RUTH
I'll be happy to have everyone here.

Guided by her minder-companion, Ellen's walked to a chair near Ruth and Katherine --

ELLEN
You look younger every year.

RUTH
Thank you Ellen. Big day for James -- you must be a proud mother.

ELLEN
I've seen a number of publications taken over in my lifetime. *

KATHERINE
These weren't just any publications, Nana -- Dad's had his eyes on them for years. * * *

ELLEN
The caboose for James' train set.

ANGLE - THE FRONT DOOR

As Teddy and Greg arrive, the dog Willie greets Greg with animation --

GREG
Hey Willie -- What's good, pooch?

Katherine's come to welcome her brothers --

KATHERINE
'Least this year you showed up with pants on.

GREG
Aren't we all but works in progress, oh Katherine Of The Sternest Mug Possible?

Castman and Ruth have joined them. Ruth and Greg hug --

GREG (CONT'D)
(to Ruth)
Happy Birthday mum.

RUTH
Look how happy Willie is to see you.

CASTMAN
(to Greg)
Glad you could make it.

Greg makes a beeline for Ellen --

ELLEN
Gregory -- I missed you yesterday at the Museum.

GREG
(kisses her cheek)
Some confusion about the time. *

ELLEN
I'm sure you were up to no good.

GREG
You know Nana, I'm arriving at the conclusion every single member of this family has a birthday every year.

ELLEN
Anyway I'm glad you're here tonight.

As Greg notices John's approach --

GREG
Excuse me just a second.

Greg heads for the bathroom. John has noted his brother's arrival but has more pressing business with his father --

JOHN
(to Castman)
We should talk in the study.

FOLLOW - CASTMAN AND JOHN

as they enter --

JOHN (CONT'D)
The Archer boy was just shot and killed.

The television's showing a news report whose lower third announces "Wall Street Tycoon's Son Murdered." The upper two-thirds of the screen show Trey Archer's sheet-covered body being wheeled on a gurney from the hotel lobby --

ANGLE - CASTMAN

his gaze going to where Greg, standing in the apartment hallway, entertains John's children with shows of manual dexterity. Castman looks back to John, indicates Archer's body being loaded onto the ambulance --

CASTMAN
(re the Archer story)
Are we on it?

JOHN
(nods)
Here's a mock-up --
(showing this on his laptop)
-- we'll be online in fifteen minutes.
(as Castman examines the mock-up)
The killer was the father of that girl Archer's son had drugged and assaulted. He's a cop --

CASTMAN
The father.

JOHN
(nods)
-- and I'm involved -- I sent him our reporter's tapes.

CASTMAN
Why?

JOHN
So he wouldn't think his daughter was a tramp like Archer and his kid had made the father believe -- I wanted him to know the truth.

CASTMAN
You were trying to give that girl justice and her father some peace of mind.

JOHN
Doesn't exactly let me off the hook.

CASTMAN
You want to be up there? -- you can find a reason every day.

The television shows George Archer, wearing sunglasses, a handkerchief to his mouth, swarmed by a group of reporters as he exits the Standard Hotel. Archer makes no effort to avoid the reporters --

ARCHER
(on television)
This is not over. This will not go unanswered.

He makes his way past the reporters -- *

CUT TO:

INT. GREAT NY NOODLETOWN - NIGHT *

The only non-Chinese patrons are McCarren and Mulvaney, who share a cramped corner table and multi-course feast. A television displays news of the Trey Archer shooting -- *

MCCARREN *
Trey Archer dead! We take you now live to the scene with the moron talking-haircuts from Channel Seven who lack any first fucking clue what really happened. *

MULVANEY *
That kid got his is what happened. *

MCCARREN *
And us Mulvaney? -- for speaking truth to power? 'Sumptuous helpings of shitburger. *

MULVANEY *
I'm going to need some guarantees Gordo, 'you getting busted by the bosses doesn't ricochet somehow back on me. *

McCarren leans in -- *

MCCARREN
Open your eyes Grasshopper. Look past the pawns -- the Treys and Katies -- to where the James Castmans and others of their ilk are buying and selling the truth that once belonged to the voiceless but not illiterate citizens of our nation. We -- you and I -- are going to get The Man In The Street His Due.

MULVANEY
Is this you grasping at thin straws with fat fingers?

MCCARREN
This is me instructing you to tap into the phones of the Castman family and get us some material to David-and-Goliath these hypocrite fucks.

Mulvaney's shrugging is vaguely in the affirmative --

MULVANEY
Let me try that duck sauce.

As McCarren slides over the tray of condiments --

CUT TO:

INT. CASTMAN HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Katherine and Teddy --

KATHERINE
(re Greg)
Where'd you find him?

TEDDY
Pool hall near Port Authority.

KATHERINE
What'd that trip cost you?

TEDDY
He's straight -- I didn't let him score.

KATHERINE
Nothing says “I Love You” like hiding in the bathroom on your Mother’s birthday.

INT. CASTMAN HOME - BATHROOM

Greg sits on the edge of the bathtub considering an array of sleeping medications he’s garnered from his mother’s medicine cabinet. Reacts to a knock on the bathroom door --

GREG
I’ll be down in a minute.

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY WITH:

INT. CASTMAN HOME - HALLWAY OUTSIDE BATHROOM

Castman outside the bathroom talks to Greg through the door --

CASTMAN
It occurs to me to wonder why you would be in this bathroom having had to walk past my bathroom to get here.

GREG
Just an act of whimsy.

CASTMAN
I guess I mean to ask if you’ve found your mother’s Ativan?

GREG
Yes Pop, even as Stanley found Livingstone I have found Mom’s Ativan and anticipate its imminent taking effect.

CASTMAN
Why don’t you do your anticipating in transit downstairs while you can still carry on some decent, lucid conversation with members of your family?

GREG
There’s the famous shame-lucidity parallel to consider.

CASTMAN
Do what you like then Gregory. Do whatever the hell you like.

His father goes downstairs leaving the hallway empty. Hold a beat on the bathroom door, then as the first wave of Ativan takes effect --

GREG (O.C.)
Ah, bingo.

CUT TO:

INT. CASTMAN HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT *

Around the table sit James, Ruth, John and John's wife, Katherine, her husband, Greg and Teddy and Ellen. At a smaller table to the side are seated Katherine's two children and two of John's three children (John's third and youngest child is seated on his father's lap). The meal is concluding; butlers and maids clear plates and fill champagne glasses for a final toast. Willie's bed has been dragged to a corner of the room where he shows a panting unaccustomed alertness. The servants all pause respectfully as Castman stands to offer a toast to his wife --

CASTMAN
Ruth -- we're the luckiest family in the world to have you. Happy Birthday.

As they clink glasses, Greg rises --

GREG
Thanks Father, and I'll toast next to fill in some details. Mother, you're a beautiful woman, who has raised many beautiful children and can be proud of many of them. You've lasted a long time living at this Castman pace -- new papers, new jobs, new unspeakable miseries and alienations -- and never once have you shrunk from it or run away or drowned in self-pity or done anything but face each day with courage and grace. Thanks for keeping us together and alive and from going bat-shit crazy for this long. Here's to the next sixty-five years. Na zdrowie.

Taken aback by the mixed and complicated message in Greg's toast, the Castmans more or less enthusiastically clink glasses --

CASTMAN
C'mon, c'mon, let's have a decent clink.

After the decent clink Castman's requfested, off Ruth, as she manages a contented if tentative smile -- *

CUT TO:

INT. MCCARREN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cramped and in disarray, littered with newspapers, take-out containers, a laptop on the coffee table. McCarren lies like some beached creature on the unsheeted mattress. A knock. McCarren struggles to his feet, walks to the door, peers out the peep-hole, which reveals nothing in the hallway --

MCCARREN
Who wants what?

From the other side of the door comes a voice not used to reading aloud --

VOICE (O.C.)
Mister McCarren -- I have a proposition you might find interesting, I was hoping for a moment of your time.

MCCARREN
I'm unemployed -- my consultancy rate is five hundred dollars an hour.

A beat, then McCarren's curiosity gets the best of his prudence and, without unlatching the chain, he opens the door a crack. The door is immediately kicked in and one of George Archer's thugs rushes McCarren and lands a series of blows to the reporter, who falls to the floor. The second thug kneels beside McCarren and, beginning to choke him, holds a smart phone to McCarren's ear --

ARCHER (O.C.)
I'll be brief and I recommend you do likewise. Did you record Trey Archer's phone conversations Saturday evening? *

MCCARREN
Yes. He can stop killing me now, I'll tell you everything.

ARCHER (O.C.)
I prefer we continue this way. Did you turn those recordings over to anyone?

MCCARREN
Yes I did.

ARCHER (O.C.)
Who?

MCCARREN
John Castman. I was working for him then and he told me I had to.

ARCHER (O.C.)
And he sent the tapes to that girl's father?

MCCARREN
Above my pay-grade.

ARCHER (O.C.)
Don't get cute with me -- they'll break your neck.

MCCARREN
If you want me to guess I'd say probably it was him 'got the tapes to the girl's father.

ARCHER (O.C.)
That's it?

MCCARREN
That's all I got.

ARCHER (O.C.)
Okay. That's good. I can work with that. * *

The thugs get to their feet and leave. Off McCarren, several of whose ribs have been broken, lying in the detritus of the room, making a place to lay his head --

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTMAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A doorman pulls the door open for Castman and the dog Willie, who exit the building and cross Fifth Avenue toward the park. A half-block up the street, Sidney gets out of his black Escalade and follows, watching over Castman from a discreet distance. As they make their way into the park, Castman's pleased by the enthusiasm in Willie's gait --

CASTMAN
Well Willie -- how 'bout the spring in your step? You got time left to you pal.

Castman considers the illuminated sphere of the streetlight at whose base Willie has decided to relieve himself, then takes out his cellphone and dials --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
Miss Schoellkopf, hello. I was thinking, perhaps some flowers this evening for Miss Lal.
(a beat, as he considers an appropriate salutation)
"Hope you enjoy your new office" -- no that's terrible.
(a beat)
"All good wishes," that's no good.
(a beat)
Say, "We're going to do just fine" -- which refers to a casual earlier remark.
(a beat, drained)
All right Miss Schoellkopf, good night.

Castman hangs up, looks to Willie --

CASTMAN (CONT'D)
Are you up to it Willie? Shall we take the long way home?

Off Willie's and Castman's setting out, Sidney maintaining his distant parallel course --

FADE OUT.