Halt and Catch Fire

Pilot

"Morning in America"

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AMC
Gran Via

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Halt and Catch Fire (HCF):

A machine command from the early days of computing. If accessed, it would cause a computer to cease all meaningful operations and destroy itself.

To literally "Halt and Catch Fire."

TEASER

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

WE JOIN A MAN'S GLEAMING BLACK WINGTIPS

Walking at a swift clip, toes glancing against the bottom of the frame as they move forward in sharp rhythm.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL -- CONTINUOUS

A PROFESSOR (58) stands in front of a large class of about 75 students. They're in bland, conservative 80s dress--youthful, but not exactly social. Seems these kids don't get out much.

PROFESSOR
Today's discussion is postponed, as we have a very special guest.

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

TRACKING ON A PERFECT BLACK BRIEFCASE

Suspended by the tight grip of a man's hand. White shirt cuff exposed a flawless quarter inch from a black suit sleeve.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)
Our speaker has spent the last several years at IBM as a top member of their executive sales force. He was also a special consultant on Project Chess, IBM's phenomenally successful personal computer program.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL -- CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON the professor, at the front of the class --

PROFESSOR
In just under a year, he's been instrumental in making the IBM PC <u>the</u> industry standard for corporate America, allowing it to take a huge bite out of Apple, Tandy, and Commodore...

INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

A HAND REACHES THE DOOR KNOB, and as it does, shirt and suit sleeves inch back, revealing a SILVER ROLEX SUBMARINER. The hand pauses at the knob, the wrist cants toward us --

Second hand of the watch face fluidly glides closer to 12...

PROFESSOR (V.O.)
Please welcome...

The hand TURNS THE KNOB --

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL -- CONTINUOUS

PROFESSOR (O.S.)
Mr. Joseph MacMillan.

ENTER JOE MACMILLAN (34). A man these black suits were made for. He's got the jawline, executive hair paired with a youthful face and pale eyes full of razor-sharp energy.

Even as he walks into the room amidst half-hearted applause, we sense that this man exudes money and success.

He places his briefcase down and immediately locks into seemingly every face of the class.

MACMILLAN
Let me start off with a question. How many of you desire to be professional computer engineers?

ANGLE ON THE CLASS -- A strong showing of about 50 hands --

THE CLASSROOM DOOR OPENS -- CAMERON HOWE (21) walks in, could give a shit about being late -- Ice blonde hair cut short, big black-rimmed glasses, exposed collar bone and shoulder from a t-shirt -- Totally different from everyone in here --

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Glad you could join us.

She shoots him a 'fuck you' look -- doesn't even really hear him over the BLACK FLAG blasting from her headphones. MacMillan coolly watches her, can't help but be intrigued.

EVERYONE STARES as she makes her way to the empty back row. We can tell as she begins to feel the eyes on her, even as she does her best to hide it.

ANGLE ON MacMillan, who waits for her to sit down.

ANGLE ON Cameron dropping into a seat, secretly eager to diffuse into the crowd. As she looks again at MacMillan, she clocks that this guy is hot--at least something different.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
Now I'm going to list off several categories.
(MORE)

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
When you hear a category that you don't have hands-on experience in, put your hand down.
(pause)
Electrical engineering. Software design. Hardware-software integration. Circuit design. Microprocessing.

Already, half the class has their hands down.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
Firmware design. Very Large Scale Integration. Operating systems.

Down to about eight people now.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
FPGA configuration. Hardware description languages. Personal computer design.

Three people have their hands raised. One is Cameron.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
Reverse engineering.

Cameron's hand goes down, as does another, leaving only one smiling, cocky male student.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
Okay, let's go back one.

Both hands go up again and the cocky kid loses his grin. MacMillan points to a FAT BALDING GUY first.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
Tell me one thing that will be true about computers 10 years from now.

FAT BALDING GUY
(mouth-breathing)
Computers will exist as ocular headsets that plug into the back of our cerebral cortexes--

MACMILLAN
Okay, thanks.
(pointing to Cameron)
You. Late arrival.

CAMERON
(effortless)
Computers will likely be connected together across one network with a standard protocol, modulating and demodulating data over an electrical system--

MACMILLAN
Like phone lines.

CAMERON
Obviously phone lines.

MACMILLAN
Can you see me after class, Miss. uh...?

CAMERON
Cameron Howe. Yes.

CUT TO:

INT. PINBALL ARCADE -- LATER

A hallmark of the early 80's coin-op craze, hazy from smoke. The crowd at this arcade is a bit older, college drinkers.

ANGLE ON Cameron and MacMillan, who have stationed themselves before a Frogger cabinet, EIGHT TEQUILA SHOTS lined up behind the controls, glasses resting against the plastic screen.

ANGLE ON MacMillan. She's trying to get him to squirm but all he does is loosen his tie, take his suit coat off. Roll up his sleeves.

MACMILLAN
I'm great at this game.

CAMERON
But there are rules. Every time you lose a frog...
(holding out a glass)
You take a shot.

MACMILLAN
I can handle that.

She goes for the joystick, but he stops her.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
We should do one to kick us off.

They both down a shot. He never takes his eyes off her.

LATER: She plays intently while he interviews her.

CAMERON
If I had my choice I'd say personal computing, software, video games--

MACMILLAN
There are a lot of companies that already do those things.

CAMERON
Not like I would.

ANGLE ON the screen as she jumps too soon and her frog gets killed against a car: POW.

CAMERON (CONT'D)
(turning to him)
Look, this entire industry is built on people ripping each other off. SEC rips off CP/M, Microsoft rips off SEC, IBM rips off everybody.

She downs her shot hard.

MACMILLAN
Some might call that innovation.

CAMERON
Innovation's a dirty word.

He grins, continuing to evaluate her.

MACMILLAN
What about school?

CAMERON
Everything is so totally ten years ago that no one who matters pays attention to anything we do.

MACMILLAN
I'm paying attention.

CAMERON
Yeah, but do you matter?

MACMILLAN
So drop out.

CAMERON
(oddly dutiful)
No. I should finish.

MACMILLAN
But what if I made it so you could start doing all those things you mentioned right now, instead of in a year?

CAMERON
(not buying it)
I, uh, don't think I'm ready for the IBM dress code.

MacMillan downs a shot. Looks her in the eyes.

MACMILLAN
I don't work for IBM.

Her eyes narrow, watching him. She's not sure what to think, or who this guy is at all, but she's growing more interested by the second.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Filthy. Scattered laundry, posters for The Clash, Talking Heads, the Minutemen. Computer parts literally everywhere.

MACMILLAN AND CAMERON STUMBLE IN, already tearing at each other, kissing forcefully. She pushes him off, sizing him up for a moment as he stands there in front of her.

MACMILLAN'S POV of her place: A glowing monitor left on, screen full of commands. Keyboards hooked together with skunk works wiring. Exposed disk drives. Modified CPU boxes.

He again focuses on her. Another beat between them. Then she walks over, kisses him again. Almost forcing herself on him.

He kisses her back, more passionately, letting himself go...

He moves to get her shirt off, but she seizes his hands almost instinctively, as if that's too far. He backs off...

MACMILLAN
I'm sorry...

CAMERON
Shut up.

SHE RIPS HIS SHIRT OPEN, runs a hand along his side...

STOPS. Pulls away. Looks at him. His chest.

Intense jigsaw scarring along his torso, abdomen. Fresh and raised, like someone recently tore him in half at the center, then haphazardly sewed him back up with cheap fence wire.

She runs her hand slowly across the network of stitching. They make eye contact. She's blown away. He's vulnerable.

She kisses him even harder.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMERON'S BEDROOM -- DAWN

ANGLE ON MacMillan. In Cameron's bed, asleep.

ANGLE ON Cameron passed out next to him.

ANGLE ON her alarm clock on the floor, a red LED read-out turns to **6:00...** A barely audible ELECTRIC HUM... A tape-deck connected with spliced cabling CLICKS ON, starts rolling...

RAPID GUITAR CRUNCH AND DRUMS fills the room. Deafening.

MacMillan STARTS awake, sits up, has trouble figuring out where he is at first. He sees Cameron, and as the night comes back to him he closes his eyes in disappointment...

He quickly stands and gets dressed amidst the INSANELY LOUD MUSIC, having trouble not knocking over the clutter in her tiny apartment as he puts on his wingtips.

She blinks awake, sits up. Sees him. As soon as she does, she reaches for the nearest shirt and pulls it on, covering herself instantly. Then she turns OFF the tape deck.

CAMERON
Hate to cut it short, but I gotta grab a terminal at the lab before they fill up.
(no answer from him)
Where are *you* going?

MACMILLAN
This wasn't part of the plan.

CAMERON
(incredulous)
Plan?

She gets out of bed as MacMillan throws his suit coat on.

MACMILLAN
This was a mistake.

The condescension lands on her, and her face turns dark:

CAMERON
(sarcastic, venomous)
Whoa, you mean *we're not in love?!*

She turns the music back on, BLASTING IT. Ignoring him.

He moves to the door but then turns, looks at her, his face pushing back regret. He lingers...

She grabs her bulky tape deck and HEAVES IT AT HIM, ripping cords from the wall, SILENCING THE MUSIC --

MacMillan DUCKS AWAY just in time -- It SMASHES to pieces against the door a half-second after it closes--

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. DALLAS COUNTY LOCK-UP -- LATER

A heavy metal door swings open with a BUZZ.

DALLAS DEPUTY
Gordon Clark.

THE DALLAS DEPUTY waits, then leads a man out of the holding area, tight grip on his arm. Ragged hair, big glasses, thick unkempt mustache. This is GORDON CLARK (31).

REVEAL DONNA CLARK (30), facing him, arms crossed. She's got the pretty face of a high school sweetheart, but the grim frown of someone who's put up with a lot of shit.

CUT TO:

INT. DONNA'S STATION WAGON -- LATER

Classic late 70s station wagon--faux wood paneling and analog dashboard. Donna drives in silence, Clark next to her.

ANGLE ON their two daughters belted in the backseat, HALEY (4) and JOANIE (6), spitting images of their mother, blonde hair and all. They're in pajamas, out cold.

The tension is thick inside the car, and it soon becomes apparent that Clark is still drunk:

CLARK
Look.
(pause)
I had one too many. It got away from me.
(pause)
'kay?
(long pause)
I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

Donna says absolutely nothing. She just continues to stare at the road ahead of her.

CLARK (CONT'D)
You didn't have to bring the kids.

DONNA
I think I did.

More driving in silence.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Do you still have a job?

CLARK
Course I do. Course. Company doesn't know.
(pause)
They don't give a shit about me anyway.

ANGLE ON Gordon's POV out the window. Crummy streets in a bad part of town. A GIANT NEON COWBOY--"BIG TEX"--outside an old liquor store, silently "waving" with its cheap blinking arm.

CLARK (CONT'D)
'member at the demo when we went to turn it on and it wouldn't turn on? 'member?

DONNA
Gordon.

CLARK
It's like 1979 was good but then 1980 came and it was like, whoa. What happened? You know?

DONNA
What I know is that you need to be at work in four hours. Four.

He lingers darkly, looks to her.

CLARK
And your dad said 'I can't lend you any more.' He wasn't being mean, he was just in his kitchen looking at me and I said...
(shrugging, reenacting)
'Okay, Gary.'

Haley begins to stir in the back seat--Gordon has gotten a bit too loud. Donna clocks this, glares at her husband.

DONNA
(heated, low)
You're drunk. So the best thing you can do right now is <u>shut up</u>.

Gordon stares at her, lost. He looks back out his window at the blinking lights of the Metroplex's flat expanse. Seemingly limitless but offering no solace.

CUT TO:

INT. SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -- DAY

The room where your dad's boss held court. Enviously big. Credenzas with framed family pictures (wife, two young boys) shadowed behind prominently displayed sales awards.

ANGLE ON JOHN BOSWORTH (54), an eagle resting in permanent judgment, comfortably in power behind his desk. When he speaks, it's equal parts brass tacks and Texas drawl.

BOSWORTH
I know what IBM is.
(pause)
I also know what IBM ain't. And anything that ain't IBM is cheaper, better, and faster. That's what this company lives by.

ANGLE ON MacMillan, seated, looking his suited and shaved best, in the midst of being interviewed.

MACMILLAN
Well, John, that's what General Electric thought. And RCA. And UNIVAC--

BOSWORTH
And Burroughs, and NCR, and Honeywell and Control Data, and blah, blah, blah. I know all the companies that IBM chased out of business. Cardiff Giant is not one of them, and it won't be.

MACMILLAN
You sound pretty sure about that.

BOSWORTH
Look at you; same suit, different tie. Dallas is pretty far from Armonk, New York, son, and that's no accident.

MACMILLAN
Couldn't agree with you more.
(pause)
But maybe I'm a guy who's done doing business like that. Maybe I see Cardiff Giant as a mid-major ready to make the jump, and myself as the heavy hitter you need to legitimize your sales force, this company, this region.

A stalemate pause between the two men for a moment.

BOSWORTH
I'll be honest with you, Joe. At the end of the day, I just need someone who can come in here and blow the balls off the numbers.
(pause)
An' I will tell you this is systems software, straight up. No application, no 'next-gen' PC garbage. It ain't sexy, but it sure as hell makes us some serious money.

MACMILLAN
Then I'm your guy.

BOSWORTH
...I don't know if I see it. You got East Coast corporate written all over you. An' I don't like East Coast corporate.
(pause)
Hell, hotshot, you didn't even bring in a resume.

MacMillan reaches in his leather briefcase, pulls out a single sheet of paper. Slides it over to Bosworth.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
(reading)
What am I looking at here?

MACMILLAN
My W2. Box One is my reported income at IBM last year.
(pause)
It's also what two hundred percent of quota looks like.

Bosworth sees the number. He weighs the document in his hand, considering it.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
I'll break numbers. I always do.

BOSWORTH
Yeah, yeah, and I've got an in-ground swimming pool.

Bosworth stands, as does MacMillan.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
You answer to Al and Al answers to me. And I'm the SVP of Sales so you're dogshit until you close a deal. Understand?

MACMILLAN
I do.

BOSWORTH
Good. We're married. You may now go make your numbers.

They shake hands, purely professional. A battle of direct and challenging eye contact.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - MAIN BULLPEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Fluorescent lights, cubicles, retro colors. Just like the Post in All the President's Men, The Daily Planet in Donner's Superman. Computers intermingle with Rolodexes.

At first glance, the people here could be professionals in any city circa '82--nothing screams "TEXAS" too boldly in the office--but it can be felt as a subtle undercurrent.

ANGLE ON MacMillan as he steps out of John Bosworth's office, begins to head down the corridor. He eyes...

GORDON CLARK at the break counter. Wrinkled shirt, bad tie, polyester pants. Badly hung over and pouring WAY too much sugar into his coffee.

Clark looks up, makes eye contact with his polar opposite...

Joe never slows down, continues on his way out of the office.

CUT TO:

INT. MACMILLAN'S CONDO -- LATE NIGHT

Sleek, all-business housing of the new Reagan era. This unit is sprawling, but has hardly any furniture. A brand new tube TV on the floor has Johnny Carson on mute. The freshly-opened Magnavox box open right next to it.

In fact, much of what's in here is newly purchased--unopened appliances on the kitchen counter, department store bags full of clothes. Only one or two small boxes appear to have been moved from somewhere else.

ANGLE ON MacMillan--in suit pants and a white undershirt--sitting in a leather chair under a single expensive overhead lamp, silently reading a dossier labeled “CARDIFF GIANT 1981 EARNINGS REPORT: Q1-Q4.”

Next to him on a small end table, more portfolios and breakdowns of his new employer. MacMillan reads through it all, gripping a highlighter in his teeth.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK’S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON Donna as she enters, tired and dressed from a day of work. She’s still carrying her briefcase as she harriedly fills pots with water, broth, spices, lights stove burners, pulls out ingredients from the fridge, where...

CLARK STANDS INERT, beverage can in hand. Dress shirt untucked, tie loose, barefoot in his pants. He stares off into nothing. Brooding and utterly useless.

Donna glances to the can in his hand, then to him...

CLARK
Soda. Diet. Jeez...

JOANIE AND HALEY run through the kitchen SCREAMING. Clark doesn’t react; it’s as if he doesn’t see them.

DONNA
Girls! Girls! Other room, please.

Donna manages to toss her briefcase onto the kitchen table, then goes to a SPEAK & SPELL TOY on the counter...

Flips the toy over, opens a drawer and roots around inside.

DONNA (CONT’D)
Joanie’s Speak & Spell won’t turn on.

He only SLURPS his soda. Donna finds four new “C” batteries in the drawer, then pops off the back slot of the toy. She ditches the old batteries and places the new ones inside.

She flips it over, turns it on. Nothing. She sighs heavily.

OPENS THE SAME DRAWER, pulls out a very small screwdriver--an engineer’s version of a scalpel. Fluid, careful movements, she’s good at this and knows the machine.

She pulls the back off, exposing the toy’s wiry innards.

BUT THEN THE LARGE POT ON THE STOVE BOILS OVER... Donna abandons the toy and checks on their dinner.

DONNA (CONT'D)
(re: Speak & Spell)
Can you see what's wrong with that?

CLARK
They make those where you work, not where I do.

DONNA
(sharply)
Okay, Gordon, then could you maybe get me the salt from the cabinet? Maybe just reach into the cabinet about seven inches from your head and take out the salt and put it in my hand so I can finish cooking this? Do you think you could AT LEAST GET ME THE SALT, or is that too much to ask?

She stares exasperated daggers into him. He remains blank, but after a moment, he reaches into the cabinet behind him, takes out the salt shaker, and hands it to her.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Thank you SO much.

She angrily SHOVES the toy down the counter away from her, then continues to work on dinner.

A moment, then Clark picks up the toy, stares at it as if it's some strange, unknown object.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK'S GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Clark opens a small tool kit, each utensil precise in design. The tools seem neglected, forgotten.

His back is to the garage wall shelving, on which we see:

Landscaping tools and power drills mixed in with an incredible array of circuit boards, monitors, monstrosities of electronics. Apple II's, Atari 2600's, Altairs, TI-99's in various states of functionality, assembly.

All of it covered in dust. This stuff hasn't been touched in a long time.

The gear remains invisible to Clark as he sleepwalks back to the door and turns out the light.

CUT TO:

INT. MACMILLAN'S CONDO -- CONTINUOUS

MacMillan sets down the Cardiff profiles, picks up a typed organizational chart of the company's personnel.

The name 'John Bosworth' can be recognized at the top of the sales department. Above him another name, 'Nathan Cardiff.'

But MacMillan traces down the ranks, moving from the sales department over to 'ENGINEERING.'

There, he finds one name inconspicuously listed among several in the department.

MacMillan carefully highlights the name in yellow.

The name is 'Gordon Clark.'

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT./INT. CLARK'S CAR -- MORNING

A corroded 1978 Honda Civic with blue California plates putters down a main road into Dallas, crossing the flat marshlands of the Trinity River into the cement of the city.

IN THE CAR, Clark sits barely awake at the wheel, windows open. MORNING AM RADIO warbles as Clark reaches into the passenger seat for a donut resting on a greasy napkin.

The car is a cluttered mess--Radio Shack receipts, fast food garbage, a sun-faded paperback copy of *The Thorn Birds.*

Clark stops at a light, bites into his donut, gets a bit of frosting in his mustache. Through his windshield he sees...

DALLAS CITY CENTER, scaffolding of new-money skyscrapers rising up amidst it--a modern day boomtown. A smell catches Gordon wrong and he looks left...

A RANCH FIELD JUST OUTSIDE HIS WINDOW... Bonafide longhorn steers eat grass behind an old fence.

The source of the smell is cow shit.

Disgusted, Clark manually rolls up his window, tosses his donut back in the passenger seat.

The light turns green just as a BLACK PORSCHE 944 ROARS AHEAD, pulling in front of the pack quickly, racing off.

CLARK
(glowering)
Asshole.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARDIFF GIANT PARKING LOT -- LATER

Clark rolls along the aisle of the open lot, about to pull into his space but STOPS SUDDENLY, his brakes letting out a tiny SQUEAK. His space is taken. By a black Porsche 944.

ANGLE ON MacMillan pulling his briefcase from the back hatch and closing it.

Clark manually rolls down his window with great vigor:

CLARK
Hey.

MacMillan turns around.

CLARK (CONT'D)
(pointing)
A-16?

MacMillan glances to the concrete below his bumper, the spot stenciled white with "A-16." Looks back to Clark.

CLARK (CONT'D)
That's me. That's my spot.

Clark pulls a plastic parking pass from his rearview mirror labeled "A-16," holds it up for MacMillan to see.

MacMillan only shrugs innocently.

ANGLE ON Clark, fuming. We stay with him as he SPEEDS AWAY...

EXT. BACK OF THE LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

Clark throws his car into an empty row, a good hundred yards back from the front of the building.

He gets out, slings a beat-up satchel over his arm, grabs his donut (still only one bite out of it), but drops it onto the pavement... it sadly rolls away like a little sugary wheel...

He chases after it, scowling and upset... picks it up but sees it's filthy. He tosses it back down as he storms off...

CUT TO:

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - MAIN BULLPEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Clark makes his way down the hallway and heads into...

HIS CUBICLE, where he tosses down his bag and drops himself into his chair. Exhales with frustration.

A KNOCK draws his attention up...

MACMILLAN
Gordon Clark.

MACMILLAN stands there above him on the other side of the cubicle wall. Clark's face betrays an angry amazement:

CLARK
Yes??

MACMILLAN
You're my SE for this sales call.

CLARK
Oh. Fantastic.

MACMILLAN
We can take my car. It's closer.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- LATER

ANGLE ON Clark, pissed off and distant. He checks his wrist watch, already itching to go.

ANGLE ON MacMillan sitting next to him at one end of the table, locked in.

ANGLE ON the other end of the table. A VP at the head flanked by four of his top DIRECTORS and MANAGERS.

MACMILLAN
The truth is, our systems software suite is outperforming nearly every top seller on the market.

DIRECTOR 1
What about IBM?

MACMILLAN
IBM is IBM. But we're neck and neck. And we're cheaper.

DIRECTOR 2
Technically. The difference in cost is negligible. It seems you guys at Cardiff think you've built a pretty fancy race car that deserves an outrageous price tag.

MANAGER 1
And we get no Big Blue guarantee.

MACMILLAN
I don't think there is such a thing.

DIRECTOR 2
Well, they had me fooled.

The execs chuckle. MacMillan conspicuously does not.

MACMILLAN
The world is changing, gentlemen. Right now it's as if there are two realities, one laid on top of the other. The old and the new. The old is fading away, like a black and white photograph.
(MORE)

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
(pause)
It’s morning in America. But if we refuse to wake up, we’re never gonna see it.

MacMillan lowers his voice now, causing the execs to lean forward almost imperceptibly. Even Clark is listening now.

MACMILLAN (CONT’D)
You’re not paying for a brand. You’re paying for ‘brand new.’ We don’t just get you up to speed. We don’t just get you ‘efficient.’ We take you into tomorrow.
(long pause)
So. Are we ready to do business?

A long silence. The managers and directors turn to look at the VP, who has said nothing up until this point. The silence goes on for some time. A stand-off.

Clark’s adrenaline is going--are we really closing?

CLARK
There’s also free install of any updates to the product--

MACMILLAN
Gordon, please.

As he says it, MacMillan never takes his eyes off the VP.

Waiting. Then:

VP
I’ll think about it.

MacMillan’s face remains blank. His eyes blink a few times, trying to process. Not the answer he was expecting at all.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARDIFF GIANT PARKING LOT -- LATER

Clark gets out of the car, as does MacMillan, suit coat off, eyes hidden behind Serengeti sunglasses. They walk toward the office as the overhead sun beats down on them hard.

CLARK
It’s better than a flat-out ‘no.’

MacMillan violently loosens his tie. We can see sweat already soaking his dress shirt. Clark senses his frustration...

CLARK (CONT'D)
Heat's a killer down here.

MacMillan says nothing. Just continues to walk.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Look, Applied Data hasn't bought jack-all from anyone in years.

MACMILLAN
You did a solid job explaining the software.

MacMillan spins on him. Clark stops, caught off-guard.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
But I need you to do me one favor.

CLARK
Okay.

MACMILLAN
Next time I move to close. This is what you do.

CLARK
(eager for a pro tip)
Okay, what?

MACMILLAN
You **SHUT. THE FUCK. UP.**

It echoes out over the entire parking lot. Clark stands there, stunned, speechless.

MacMillan walks off, leaving Clark alone in the lot.

CUT TO:

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - CLARK'S CUBE -- THE NEXT MORNING

CLOSE ON Clark at his desk. He's in a new dress shirt and tie but doesn't look any better than yesterday. He sits sunken in his chair, pushed away from his desk a bit as he spies on the larger bullpen...

CLARK'S POV: Several cubes away, MacMillan, in yet another great suit, sits on the edge of a pretty YOUNG ADMIN's desk, chatting her up and flashing a trademark grin.

TWO OTHER ADMINS stand near him--one on either side. MacMillan somehow manages to flirt with all of them simultaneously.

ANGLE ON Clark. Quietly hating him.

MACMILLAN begins to look over and Clark quickly turns back to his desk, rolls behind his cube wall, hoping Joe didn't see his disgust or jealousy.

A few moments pass. Clark returns to work.

MACMILLAN suddenly appears over the divider.

MACMILLAN
Hey.

Clark doesn't look up, still embarrassed and pissed from their parking lot encounter.

MacMillan tosses a magazine down onto Clark's desk. Clark glances to it. Stops working.

CLOSE ON the cover: A well-worn back-issue of *Byte Magazine*, dated February 1979.

CLARK
(already defeated)
What is this--

MACMILLAN
Page 31.

CLARK
Hey, if you think it's funny to--

MACMILLAN
Page 31.

Clark sighs, opens the magazine to a dog-eared article:

THE FUTURE OF OPEN ARCHITECTURE

CLOSE ON the byline: "By Gordon Clark."

Clark stares at the pages, reticent to relive them.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
Pretty wild stuff.

Clark tosses the article down.

CLARK
Look, I'm not in the mood. Why don't you go... blow dry your hair some more, or... something.

MACMILLAN
Don’t you realize what you wrote?

Clark doesn’t have an answer for him. MacMillan leans in.

MACMILLAN (CONT’D)
You wrote a treasure map.

Clark stares at him. Unsure of what MacMillan is getting at.

MACMILLAN (CONT’D)
(pointing to magazine)
If you see him around, I want to meet that guy. I have a project I want to discuss with him.

Then MacMillan walks away. Clark stands up from his cube, suspicious.

CLARK
Hey, what is this?

MacMillan comes back to him.

MACMILLAN
‘This is something that could change the game as we know it.’
(pause)
You know who said that?

Clark searches for an answer --

MACMILLAN (CONT’D)
You did. Page 34. Closing paragraph.

And he walks away. Clark’s brow furrows. He looks down to the magazine, flips through pages of the issue in his hands.

Looking for himself.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. CLARK'S GARAGE -- EVENING

ANGLE ON Donna, sitting with her older daughter Joanie on her lap. On a fold-out card tables lies Joanie's Speak & Spell toy, almost totally dismantled.

When Joanie speaks, it's seemingly with a tinge of Clark's dreary hopelessness:

JOANIE
Is it broken forever now?

DONNA
Don't worry, I'm gonna put it back together. Just like new. But, I wanted to show you how it works.

Joanie seems less excited, more forlorn.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Okay, so here are the batteries, that's your *power source*... And on the circuit board you've got a ROM chip. This is the brain that remembers all the words. 128 kilobits worth. That's a lot of words!

CLARK ENTERS from the house door but Donna doesn't notice him. He continues to watch the interaction...

DONNA (CONT'D)
...and this is your logic here... and this is the speech synthesizer chip, which they made where Mommy works.

Clark takes a few steps forward, hands in his pockets. Donna notices him and he barely manages a tired smile. She smiles back at him...

The house PHONE RINGS. Clark doesn't move to get it. The phone RINGS again. Donna looks to the kitchen door, then to Clark. The third RING:

DONNA (CONT'D)
(typical frustration)
I'll get it.

She puts Joanie down, then heads into the kitchen.

For the moment, Clark is left alone with his daughter. She has her head in her arms, staring at her dissected toy.

Donna leans out of the doorway, cupping the receiver.

DONNA (CONT'D)
It's somebody named Joe MacMillan.

Clark turns back with wincing resistance, shakes his head--

DONNA (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Sorry, we're headed out the door to a movie, can he call you back?

JOANIE
What does the chip do?

CLARK
Hm? Oh, uh... The chip makes it talk. Just like you and me.

DONNA ENTERS from the door but Clark doesn't notice her. She's touched by Clark's way with his daughter, despite everything, and chooses not to disturb them for a moment.

JOANIE
Can you make it talk?

CLARK
(sitting with her)
You make it talk, here.

He hands her the keyboard portion of the Speak & Spell. She presses the 'On' button and the device's FAMILIAR CHIRPS echo loudly through stereo speakers in the garage.

SPEAK N' SPELL
Now. Spell. Courage.

Joanie carefully taps the keys, looking to Clark for assurance on some of the harder letters.

The anxious coincidence of the word is not lost on Gordon.

SPEAK N' SPELL (CONT'D)
C. O. U. R. A. G. E.
(she presses 'Enter')
Correct.

DONNA
Joanie, why don't you go get ready for the movie.

Clark kisses Joanie on the head and she darts away.

DONNA (CONT'D)
He wanted to know if you'd thought about what he said.

Clark gives a sound of acknowledgement, scratches thoughtlessly at the card table surface with his finger.

CLARK
Remember that article I wrote a while back? In *Byte*?

DONNA
...sure.

CLARK
This guy Joe has some ideas about it, I guess.

We can see her face reflexively grow more wary, more concerned. She tries to push it back before he sees it.

DONNA
What kind of ideas?

CLARK
I don't know.
(standing)
Who cares.

He leaves her alone in the garage. The worry in her face has not subsided.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVIE THEATER -- LATER

The lights are up at the movie's end, CLOSING SCORE playing over the end credits of E.T.

CLARK AND HIS FAMILY slowly walk out with the rest of the audience. His daughters are overjoyed.

ANGLE ON Joe MacMillan in his shirt and tie, Members Only jacket, sitting in the back row with a bag of popcorn.

Clark stops unexpectedly. MacMillan stands, offers his hand to Donna.

MACMILLAN
Hi, Joe MacMillan. We spoke on the phone earlier.

DONNA
(suspicious)
Oh, right...

CLARK
Did you follow me here?

MACMILLAN
Your husband is the best SE I've worked with at Cardiff Giant.
(smiling big)
Now, granted, I've only been there a week, but...

He doesn't get much of a read on Donna, turns his attention to Haley, the youngest daughter, as he crouches down:

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
I don't know about you but I was a little scared at the end of the movie. Were you scared?

Haley, shyly clings to her mother's leg, shakes her head no.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
You weren't? Wow, you're pretty brave...
(standing, to Donna)
Do you mind if I borrow Gordon for one second?

DONNA
Maybe this isn't the best time--

CLARK
Donna, it's fine.

Donna and Clark share a look. Then she ushers the children out of the theater. MacMillan stares at him.

MACMILLAN
Reverse engineer an IBM PC with me.

CLARK
What would be the point of--

MACMILLAN
Because I want to build a machine that's better than everything before it. The machine that nobody else has the balls to build.

Clark is taken aback.

CLARK
Wow...
(studying him)
Wow. You're serious.

Then Clark laughs--a cynical, amused laugh.

CLARK (CONT'D)
That's a terrible idea.

MACMILLAN
Why?

CLARK
For such a multitude of reasons, I can't even begin to...
(pause)
Because you'd be playing catch-up from the moment you started. Apple and IBM have got the market sewn up, plus you got Commodore, Tandy, Texas Instruments. At this point, anybody else who takes a shot would be dead way before they hit the shelves. You missed it.
(pause)
We all did.

MACMILLAN
That's why we do it as Cardiff Giant. Scale up instantly.

CLARK
You're out of your mind. Buzzards like Bosworth and Cardiff would never--

MACMILLAN
So we force their hand.

MacMillan's eyes are intense--a starving wolf out for blood.

It unnerves Clark a bit.

CLARK
Look, thanks but no thanks. I've been down this road--

MACMILLAN
I know you have. And I know you got burned. But that's not going to happen this time.

CLARK
Oh yeah? Why not?

MACMILLAN
Because now you've got me.

The men eye each other for a moment.

JOANIE (O.S.)
Dad?

CLARK'S POV: Ahead of MacMillan, Donna anxiously waits just outside in the lobby, their two daughters in tow. He turns back to MacMillan.

CLARK
You have a family, Joe?

MacMillan meets his eyes, but won't--or can't--answer him.

CLARK (CONT'D)
That's what I thought.
(pause)
Thanks, but no thanks.

And Clark walks out of the theater. MacMillan's jaw tenses.

CUT TO:

INT. MACMILLAN'S CONDO -- LATER

MacMillan arrives home, dismayed and upset. The place is still mostly unpacked. Transient and impermanent. It all looks alien to him and his grim disgust registers.

He goes to one of only two moving boxes in the entire room, opens it up. Pulls out a baseball bat worn at the grip. A metal mounting plate is attached to the back of it--the bat is meant for display.

Joe looks at the engraved inscription on the plate:

Swing for the Fences, Son.

MACMILLAN KICKS THE PLATE OFF THE BAT WITH A SNAP.

He's silhouetted against his condo's panoramic view of cosmopolitan flatlands.

MacMillan reaches back into the moving box. Pulls out a baseball. Examines it for a moment. Then he tosses it up...

SWINGS THE BAT AND CONNECTS

Sending a line drive into the wall opposite him with a CRACK. The ball dents the dry wall, then rolls back across the floor to MacMillan's feet.

Joe picks the ball up off the floor again, tosses it...

SWINGS THE BAT AND SMASHES THE BALL THROUGH A LAMP

Destroying the shade, blowing the bulb apart as the base falls off another moving box.

MacMillan, sweating, breathing heavily, picks the ball up...

SWINGS THE BAT, SENDS THE BALL OUT THROUGH HIS BALCONY WINDOW

With an EXPLOSION of glass.

Cool air flutters over him as he gazes out onto the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM -- SAME

ANGLE ON Clark, lying awake in bed as Donna sleeps next to him. He sits up, turns and looks at her for a moment. His face registers a quiet loving concern.

Then he carefully gets out, making sure not to disturb her.

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Clark makes his way into the dark kitchen. Opens the fridge, the ghostly white light illuminating his lost face. He takes nothing from inside and finally closes it again.

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Clark stands still in the kitchen, at loose ends.

Then he walks to the door leading to the garage.

His hand hesitates on the handle for a moment.

But then he opens it.

He turns on the garage lights, and they silhouette him against the darkness of the house.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. MACMILLAN'S PORSCHE -- MORNING

For the first time MacMillan looks a little unkempt, unshaven. As if he's been up all night. He's driving very fast, BOTTOMS OUT his car as he pulls into Cardiff Giant...

EXT. CARDIFF GIANT PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

MacMillan arrives at his spot... but finds it filled.

Clark's Honda Civic rests comfortably in A-16.

ANGLE ON MacMillan as he clock this, intrigued.

CUT TO:

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - MACMILLAN'S OFFICE -- LATER

MacMillan sits at his desk in an office that hasn't even been set up yet.

GORDON CLARK ENTERS wearing beat up Ray-Ban Wayfarers, carrying a large box adorned with the IBM logo. He sets it down on MacMillan's desk.

CLARK
(taking glasses off)
Do you know how much one of these things costs?
(pause)
Donna took the kids to her brother's for the three-day weekend. I faked a fever. So...

MacMillan stands. Opens the box, revealing a brand new IBM PC. A small smile appears on his face.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Let's turn this thing inside out.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. CLARK'S GARAGE -- NIGHT

MacMillan and Clark, still in their work clothes, stand over the IBM PC, removed from its packaging and vulnerable under the light. MacMillan works a screwdriver on it...

SLIDES OFF THE METAL BOX, REVEALING ITS INSIDES

Clark easily slips into 'inside-baseball' computer-speak, as comfortable to him as a favorite old jacket --

CLARK
A personal computer--like any computer, really--is just a nothing box full of electronic switches; hardware. The IBM, Apple II, the Altair, it's all the same junk.

MACMILLAN
Get to the good part.

BEGIN MONTAGE -- REVERSE ENGINEERING

Clark and MacMillan slave over the machine, pulling it apart, examining it...

-- Clark carefully unscrews circuit boards and slides them out of the PC, laying them next to each other.

CLARK
Anyone can buy all this stuff off the shelf right now. That's how IBM built this thing so fast. It's called open architecture. They basically don't own *anything* inside the machine.

MACMILLAN
I said the good part, not the part I already know.

-- Back on the guys, a quick beat between them...

CLARK
Well, if you're so smart, tell me, what connects the hardware to the software?

MacMillan holds up the MOTHER BOARD -- green (or brown) circuitry board with a thick black chip soldered to it --

MacMillan points to the chip casually.

MACMILLAN
The chip.
(extends hand)
Screwdriver. I'll crack it off.

CLARK
You're gonna remove the chip with a screwdriver?

MacMillan gives an impatient look -- 'Yes?'

CLARK (CONT'D)
You out of your mind?
(pause)
I need to *desolder* it from the mother board. Unless you want to just piss away the twenty-five hundred bucks I spent on the computer.
(rooting through gear)
We need a hot air tool...

-- Clark carefully melts the solder around the chip prongs... the smoke rises up into the harsh overhead work light...

CLARK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The ROM BIOS is the only part of the whole machine IBM actually designed. It is the brain. It is the magic. Bad news is, they copyrighted it and own how it works. Good news is, there's a way around that. Sort of.

MACMILLAN (V.O.)
Reverse engineering.

-- MacMillan and Clark, late into the night. Clark has the exposed chip hooked up to a TEST BOARD.

CLARK
Let's set up the monitor.

MacMillan looks at a row of SEVEN MONITORS on the floor, lined up like bowling shoes.

MACMILLAN
Which one you want?

-- They now have the monitor hooked up on the table. MacMillan is on his knees, plugs it into the wall socket. The MONITOR BLOWS -- A QUICK FIRE FLASH INSIDE IT --

-- MacMillan and Clark sit in defeat, the garage pitch black.

-- Clark works in the background as MacMillan watches the sunrise through the tinted garage door windows.

-- Dozens of hours later. Clark documents with pencil on paper everything he does. Downing retro cans of Coke, several empty ones lying near him and on the floor.

MacMillan, dress shirt a wrinkled mess and stubble forming on his face, transfers the notes into a typed version, his fingers flying across a keyboard. He notices something.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
This is too fast.

MacMillan rises, checks Clark's notes over his shoulder.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
That's too fast.

CLARK
I need to see the parameters--

MACMILLAN
You're over-clocking the chip.

CLARK
I'm *not over-clocking it*--

MACMILLAN
Well if you want to melt it to the table like a piece of milk chocolate, fine by me, but I'm not buying another one of these things.

CLARK
You didn't buy it, *I did*.

-- Later. A pillow on the garage floor, but no one laying on it. MacMillan prints pages out on Cardiff Giant letterhead. Heavy bags under his eyes.

LATER, MacMillan orders the pages. It's the BOOT CODE -- a string of characters, binary. Frankly, it all looks the same. MacMillan loses his place, can't figure out the page order.

MACMILLAN (V.O.)
How long do you think this'll take?

-- Empty pizza boxes. More empty Coke cans and a few dirty coffee mugs. The garage is a lived-in wreck. MacMillan nods off as Clark works late into the night.

CLARK (V.O.)
I have no idea.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CLARK'S GARAGE -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON MacMillan with his head resting on a work table amidst scattered circuit boards, screwdrivers. Asleep.

CLARK (O.S.)
That's it.

A heavy binder lands next to MacMillan's head with a SMACK, jarring him awake. He rubs his eyes, takes the binder, begins to flip through it. He looks over to...

CLARK, very sleep-deprived. Standing nearby, heavy-eyed but focused. MacMillan flips through the binder as he stands.

CLARK (CONT'D)
The entire layout of the IBM PC ROM BIOS chip. The system map, everything.

MACMILLAN
Now we make our own chip.
(looking up at him)
I told you. A treasure map.

The gravity of what he's just done hits Clark.

CLARK
Maybe, uh... this is pretty, uh...

MACMILLAN
(grabs Clark's shoulders)
This DEFINITELY calls for a toast.

MacMillan grins big. Clark sees Joe's elation and also breaks out in a grin. THEN THE GARAGE DOOR OPENS. Donna's home.

CLARK
Shit.

Donna can't pull the car inside because of their makeshift workshop. She gets out, walking towards them...

DONNA
Gordon, what is this?

CLARK
Thought you were gone until Monday...

DONNA
It *is* Monday.
(pause)
Haley's sick. I figured she caught whatever you had...
(pause)
...but looking at you now, I can tell that you're not sick at all. Are you?

She spots the IBM PC in pieces all over the garage and its empty brand new box on the floor. She goes to it, stunned.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Tell me you didn't buy this. Please.

Clark's face fills with shame.

MACMILLAN
Maybe I can help explain--

DONNA
I need to speak with my husband.

MacMillan hesitates, conflicted. Part of him is sure he can smooth this over.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Privately.

MacMillan slinks away out of the garage as Donna watches him go, keeping her guard up. Then she comes back to Clark.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Why would you lie to me?

CLARK
(avoiding her eyes)
I don't know...

DONNA
Gordon.

He finally looks at her.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Don't you realize what you have?

CLARK
(snapping)
<u>It isn't enough.</u>

She regards him. Hurt. Nods, keeping her strength.

DONNA
Okay. Well. It's always been enough for me.
(pause)
Then again, I never had the burden of believing I was some misunderstood genius.

She walks back to the car. Turns it off. Joanie gets out of the passenger seat and runs past Clark into the house, happy and oblivious.

He continues to watch as Donna reaches into the back seat and picks up Haley. Donna carefully carries the sick child on her shoulder as she walks slowly past her husband into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - OUTSIDE SVP'S OFFICE -- DAY

ANGLE ON Bosworth's native Texan admin MAYLENE (41), on the phone at her desk. She seems a bit taken aback.

MAYLENE
(accent, into phone)
...yes, I'll tell him.

She puts the call on HOLD, hesitates a moment.

ANGLE ON Bosworth as he steps out of his office, closes the door, headed home for the day.

MAYLENE (CONT'D)
John--

BOSWORTH
(continues walking)
Nope.

She stands, mindful of several nearby employees with ears.

MAYLENE
(discreet)
John, I'm sorry, but I think you'll want to take this.

He turns around, unamused.

BOSWORTH
Maylene. Day's over an' dinner's cookin'. I'll get 'em in the morning.

He starts to go again. She loses regard for those around her.

MAYLENE
It’s IBM.

Bosworth stops in his tracks.

ANGLE ON other Cardiff admins, low-rung SEs, sales guys nearby who also stop when they hear those three letters. A hush falls upon this part of the bullpen as people look up towards Bosworth, Maylene.

Without a word, Bosworth turns on his heels, walks back into his office, and closes the door behind him.

INT. SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT’S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

John Bosworth reaches his desk just as his phone RINGS from the line transfer. He braces himself, answers it.

BOSWORTH
(into phone)
This is Bosworth.

INTERCUT -- JOHN BOSWORTH / DALE BARNES PHONE CONVERSATION

INT. DALE BARNES’ OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON DALE BARNES (39). Smarmy gym-and-suntan disciple with a conservative Patrick Bateman haircut.

BARNES
John. It’s Dale Barnes. Senior Vice President of Sales, North America.

BOSWORTH
All right.
(pause)
What can I do for you, Dale?

Bosworth waits as Barnes lets his own voice hang in the air.

BARNES
Heard you got one of my boys down there.

BOSWORTH
Oh. Yes, we do. MacMillan. Interesting fellow.

BARNES
Well. I guess I can say it’s good to know he’s alive.

BOSWORTH
What’s that?

BARNES
Well... Joe walked out the front door of our offices last August.

BOSWORTH
And?

BARNES
And he never came back.

A beat. Bosworth brow furrows in confusion.

BOSWORTH
You lost me, Dale.

BARNES
No one has seen or heard from Joe MacMillan in more than a year.
(pause)
We even filed police reports. Up until we caught wind he was working for you, we believed the worst, but... here we are.

BOSWORTH
(confused)
...Here we are.

BARNES
He’s damaged goods, John. Wish I could’ve warned you, but now it might be too late.

BOSWORTH
How so?

BARNES
I’m here with Rebecca Taylor, our senior legal council.

REBECCA TAYLOR (48) a shrewd bitch in a business suit, shoulder pads and all, steps closer to Barnes’ desk.

TAYLOR
Hi, John. We’ve got a problem.

On Bosworth’s face...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Bosworth is now up out of his desk, pacing. Fuming.

ANGLE ON NATHAN CARDIFF (60), seated in a chair near the window, worn cowboy hat on the skill. He puts his snakeskin boots up on John's desk, whistling "Red River Valley."

In one hand, he holds small piece of raw wood a few inches in length, absentmindedly twirling it in his fingers.

BOSWORTH
I'm sorry we had to pull you away from the ranch, Nathan.

CARDIFF
Don't mind. I wanna meet the two boys who put my company in the ground.

The door opens. MacMillan walks in fairly grim, followed by a trepidatious and slow-moving Gordon Clark.

BOSWORTH
You two sit down.

MacMillan and Clark obey.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
This is Nathan Cardiff. He owns the company you destroyed.

Clark starts to rise. Cardiff fixes his weathered eyes on the younger man, forcing him back into the chair without a word.

Cardiff pulls out a hickory-handled pocket knife. Folds out the old blade with a thumb. Carves into the wood in his hand, letting shavings carelessly fall to the corporate carpet.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
We just had a two and a half hour jaw with IBM's legal team, including your old boss Dale Barnes.

Clark can't help but watch Nathan whittle. MacMillan glances at the blade but turns away. Steels himself.

MACMILLAN
(deadpan)
Oh yeah? How's he doing?

BOSWORTH
He's doing pretty splendid, given the fact that Big Blue is gonna liquidate this place to the tune of *several dozen million dollars* in legal damages because two retards in our employ decided to *rip off* their flagship product.

CLARK
That wasn't the idea. We did it on our own and--

BOSWORTH
On your own? Like whatever Silicon Valley rat hole you crawled from, right, Gordon?
(pause)
Turns out, doesn't matter. And trust me, we tried to throw you to the *wolves.* But since MacMillan here worked for IBM, and you two were ours at the time of your little project, the project is ours now, for better or worse.

The wood SNAPS in Cardiff's hand, drawing their attention.

CARDIFF
Worse, in this case.

BOSWORTH
Barnes and this woman Taylor are headed down here tomorrow.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
So did you just not understand when I said we do *systems software* and don't TOUCH PC's?

CLARK
How the hell did IBM find out?

MACMILLAN
I told them.

Silence. All eyes on MacMillan now. Clark can't believe it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARDIFF GIANT PARKING LOT -- LATER

MacMillan walks to his car, putting on his sunglasses. Clark follows, almost chasing after him.

CLARK
Hey. Hey! HEY!

MacMillan turns around.

CLARK (CONT'D)
So that's how you force their hand? Call IBM?

MACMILLAN
Just let everybody cool off.

Clark DECKS HIM across the face without a word. The punch is awkward and unpracticed, but it still manages to knock MacMillan's sunglasses to the concrete.

CLARK
This is exactly what Donna...

He trails off, shaking his head. Despite the violence, MacMillan remains calm as he retrieves his sunglasses.

MACMILLAN
What did you think was going to happen, Gordon?
(pause)
I told you, I need the full backing of a major company that can scale up *instantly*. Be a real *competitor.*
(pause)
When we were working in that garage. Like you used to work, I mean *really* work. Tell me that didn't feel good.

Clark gives him one last look, then walks away. MacMillan watches him go and in this private moment we can see the gears turning as he tries to stay on top of all this.

CUT TO:

INT. HONKY TONK BAR -- LATER

An honest to God COWBOY drops in a quarter, makes his punch button selections on a jukebox. Two seconds pass until the machine lets loose with HAGGARD & WILLIE'S "REASONS TO QUIT."

ANGLE ON CLARK at the end of the bar, sticking out like a sore thumb. A mug of beer gets placed in front of him. He stares at it, can't even decide whether to drink or not.

MACMILLAN ENTERS, bruising welt already forming near his eye. Patrons stare--city stranger in a country bar. Clark realizes for the first time how everyone in here must see him.

MACMILLAN
Let me guess.

Clark turns back to the beer. Too tired to continue fighting.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
Can't go home.

CLARK
Because you cost me my job.

MACMILLAN
(sitting next to him)
No, Gordon. You cracked open an IBM PC and wrote down how it works. Remember? *You* cost you your job.

Clark looks to him, angry, but also helpless.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
That is, if you walk away now.
(pause)
You'll lose your job. I'll lose mine. Cardiff goes on the block. Everybody goes home.

CLARK
Because of you.

MacMillan shrugs.

MACMILLAN
It's the only way to get what we want.

CLARK
There is no 'we.'

MACMILLAN
There is now.

CLARK
(shaking his head)
Where the hell did you come from...

MacMillan takes Clark's beer away from him, drinks from it.

MACMILLAN
Look around you. This is the end of the line, Gordon. Do either of us belong in here? You're not the only one dying for a way back.
(off Gordon's look)
I was at COMDEX two years ago.
(MORE)

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
On the expo floor. Had heard about you, along with a few hundred others. Saw your product demo.

Unexpected. Clark turns to him.

CLARK
So you saw me blow it?

MACMILLAN
No. I saw a man get robbed. Been thinking about it ever since.
(pause)
And I've realized... Here's a guy who *knows* he should have a million bucks in his pocket. Who believes he *deserves* what others have.
(pause)
And no matter how many gifted geniuses walk in that door... this guy will kill 'em. Ground them into nothing.
(pause)
Because he lost once already. And he'll do anything to make sure he doesn't lose again.

A moment. Clark takes the beer from MacMillan. Drinks.

CLARK
She won't stay this time. And if she goes...
(pause)
I just need her.

MACMILLAN
She'll stay. As long as you play it right.

ANGLE ON Clark, taking in his words...

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Clark stands in the middle of his living room. The house is empty. Silent. No one else home yet. Evening sun still shines gold through the curtains of the windows.

He notices HALEY AND JOANIE'S TOYS on the floor. Scuffed up, played with. Innocent and unknowing of his problems.

He sees a STACK OF DONNA'S WORK on the coffee table. A messy clutter of Texas Instruments notebooks and folders, data read-outs and metrics.

He walks out of the room.

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Gordon flips on the light, stares into the mirror. Looks at himself, a tired mess of stress and defeat.

He leans in, examines his face closely. Runs his hand over his unkempt mustache.

He turns on the sink. Swings the mirror open, pulls a razor, shaving cream out of the medicine cabinet.

QUICK SHOTS: CLARK SHAVES OFF HIS MUSTACHE

Rinses off. His face immediately fresher. His youth, hidden until now, returns somewhat, as well as a bit of masculinity.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Donna walks in exhausted from work, Joanie and Haley trotting past her inside. But Donna stops dead in her tracks...

ANGLE ON Clark at the stove, back to her, cooking dinner.

CLARK
Figured you needed a break.

He looks up, manages a quick assuring look in her direction. She sees his clean-shaven face, lets out a tiny gasp.

DONNA
What'd you...

But he only smiles. After a moment, she smiles back.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK'S HOUSE - KITCHN -- LATER

The modest dinner has been eaten and the girls have been excused from the table. Donna and Clark remain.

CLARK
I've been awful.

She says nothing.

CLARK (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. There's no excuse.

The tightness in her face fades.

DONNA
I know you think you need this. And whatever it is... I'm pretty sure I can't stop you.

CLARK
I don't want you to feel like you have to.
(pause)
I know we're still crawling out of debt from the last time. I know there's a lot more to consider now. But Donna. This might be the last time for me to get in the door.

She nods, genuine.

DONNA
I know.
(pause)
But you can understand. Right? I just want you to understand.

CLARK
I do.

A quiet moment between the two of them.

DONNA
So what happens now?

CLARK
...I don't know, honestly. MacMillan's in the driver's seat. But when this shakes out... I think I need to be on his side.

DONNA
I think the only person on MacMillan's side is MacMillan.

He considers it.

CLARK
You might be right. But all the same. I want to do this.

A beat.

DONNA
Okay, Gordon.
(pause)
But here's the deal. You want to partner with Joe MacMillan?
(pause)
You partner with me. In this family.

Clark's face is sincere.

CLARK
Deal.

Clark reaches across the table, grasps her hand. She takes his, squeezes it. They look at each other. A moment of understanding between them.

After a beat, she lets his hand go.

Her tenderness fades.

DONNA
But this has got to work. Because if it doesn't...
(pause)
I don't know if we can come back from it.

On Clark's face, realizing how serious she is.

He nods to her, sealing the promise.

Then Donna stands. Leaves the room.

Clark sits alone at the table.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM -- MORNING

Office bathroom at Cardiff.

ANGLE ON Clark standing there, looking at himself in the mirror. Clean-shaven. There's an evenness to him. No quiver.

MacMillan enters, sees him. Reacts to his absent facial hair.

MACMILLAN
Looks better without it.
(pause)
How'd it go last night?

No answer from Clark.

MACMILLAN (CONT'D)
So once we're inside, all you need to do is--

CLARK
(calm)
Shut up, Joe.

Clark turns to him, holds eye contact, then walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Bosworth, Cardiff. MacMillan, Clark sit in their respective chairs. Everyone's blood is up.

They're joined by lawyer BARRY SHIELDS (50) — good suit, if a bit small. The man himself is small, balding, worried. He carries Clark and MacMillan's report.

CARDIFF
Why can't we just fire these pecker heads?

SHIELDS
Because then we're gonna lose this lawsuit. If you fire them and shelve their work, we're essentially admitting guilt.
(pause)
We do that, we tell IBM 'You're right, we're wrong.'

BOSWORTH
So what's the *solution*, Barry?

Barry takes off his glasses, rubs the bridge of his nose.

SHIELDS
We legitimize the project. We go the other way. We say that Cardiff Giant, as a company, was pursuing PC development all along.

CARDIFF
I sure as hell don't see how that fixes anything--

SHIELDS
We take Clark's findings on the BIOS chip.
(MORE)

SHIELDS (CONT'D)
We tell an engineer to build something that operates and performs in the exact same way. We don't tell them *how* to do it, and we certainly don't tell them we learned how by pulling apart an IBM machine and looking inside with a flashlight, but--

BOSWORTH
I don't think we have one engineer capable of building a BIOS from scratch other than
(pointing to Clark)
Sonny Bono over here.

SHIELDS
We can't use him. Or any other engineer we currently employ.

BOSWORTH
So we have to hire.

SHIELDS
Yes. Someone who knows nothing about us or IBM, and has never seen the contents of this binder.
(points to Clark)
Essentially all the law stipulates is that he can't be hands-on in the actual chip creation.

BOSWORTH
And we can't fire them.

SHIELDS
No. At least not right now.

BOSWORTH
We get out of this by actually building a PC clone.

SHIELDS
As Cardiff Giant.

CARDIFF
So we basically have to open a whole new line of business.

SHIELDS
To legally be in the clear, yes.

BOSWORTH
This is your brilliant idea to save our hides?

SHIELDS
No, actually... it was MacMillan's.

Again, all eyes on Joe MacMillan. Calmly sitting there.

BOSWORTH
You son of a bitch.
(pause)
Why didn't you say anything yesterday--

MACMILLAN
I needed you to exhaust your options. So you would take this one seriously.

CARDIFF
(becoming livid)
You know how many futures you're toyin' with, son?

MACMILLAN
You said it yourself. This is a systems software company. But before that, what was it?

Cardiff hits him with a West Texas stare, stares <u>into</u> him.

CARDIFF
Missile guidance systems for the army.

MACMILLAN
And before that?

Another hard stare from Cardiff.

CARDIFF
Shortwave radios. Manufactured out of Longview. My daddy ran the factory floor himself.

MACMILLAN
And who took Cardiff into mainframes? Into computers?

A tense beat.

BOSWORTH
I did.

On MacMillan, who clearly knew that answer.

MACMILLAN
Selling systems software, I probably would've made you a couple hundred thousand dollars this year.
(pause)
I just made you several million.

Bosworth appears as if he's about to bite through his own teeth. Deathly silence in the room. Cardiff stands.

CARDIFF
I don't know 'bout you boys... but this is best sales pitch I ever heard.
(to MacMillan)
I admire your tenacity, son.
(sober)
Now don't screw it up. Because in Texas, you put a man's livelihood on the line and don't come through...
(pause)
You won't be gettin' any new job, 'cause ain't nobody gonna able to find where you buried.

MacMillan stands.

MACMILLAN
I need to oversee it.

BOSWORTH
Excuse me?

MACMILLAN
VP-level. If you want this to succeed, then I'm in charge. It was my idea to--

CLARK
Our idea.

Everyone looks to Clark. He stands.

CLARK (CONT'D)
Our idea.

BOSWORTH
What are you saying, Gordon?

CLARK
I'm saying... sir...
(pause)
I'm saying you get both of us. We both run this. I may not be allowed to build the chip itself, but I should be involved in every other decision if we have any hope of making something worth anything.

BOSWORTH
And you're qualified how?

CLARK
Because he can't do what I do.
(pause)
Nobody can. I cracked that ROM BIOS chip like it was the morning crossword.

Bosworth looks to MacMillan, who seems caught off guard.

BOSWORTH
So where are we gonna find this new engineer?

SHIELDS
We needed one yesterday, because IBM legal is here first thing tomorrow.

MACMILLAN
I need time to vet a new candidate.

SHIELDS
We don't have time. Did you think IBM legal was just going to sit on their asses?

We see that MacMillan is starting to sweat it. For the first time, he doesn't have a ready answer.

BOSWORTH
(to MacMillan)
Who do you have right now?

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. ACADEMIC CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Two aging FACULTY MEMBERS and a severe COLLEGE DEAN sit on one side of a long table. The set-up of an inquisition.

ANGLE ON Cameron as she sits in the lone chair facing the academic committee. Defiant.

The dean tosses a SMALL DEVICE onto the table. A numeric keypad attached to a phone speaker with a cheap wire.

COLLEGE DEAN
Wanna tell us what this is?

CAMERON
Do you really not know?
(off their looks)
It's a blue box.

COLLEGE DEAN
Excuse me?

CAMERON
Blue box. Generates 2600 hertz. Fools the system. Free long distance.

MALE FACULTY MEMBER
We know you made this. And you were selling them to students.

She can't argue with this.

CAMERON
Look, I'm the best student you have in the department, and one of *three* women.

MALE FACULTY MEMBER
Straight A's in five 400-level courses--

FEMALE FACULTY MEMBER
But you're failing the rest of your curriculum. Squandering your university experience. It's not just about you and your major, it's about fully integrating into a social community.

MALE FACULTY MEMBER
(trying to be helpful)
Perhaps if you were a little less...
(pause)
I don't know, you could join a sorority.

Cameron coolly eyes them with a stone expression.

CAMERON
It was a research project. For class. The students who had them were just... beta testing.

COLLEGE DEAN
That's all for now, Miss Howe. You'll be informed of our decision.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CONFERENCE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Cameron pushes through the doors. As soon as they close, she spins onto the wall, leans back up against it. Hangs her head as we see a wash of fatigue and worry.

She glances up, sees...

MACMILLAN AND CLARK. Waiting for her outside. She tenses--no one should see her like this, *especially* him.

MACMILLAN
Can we talk?

She lets out a gallows laugh as she looks away from him. But as she comes back to his eyes, the humor fades from her face.

Then she storms off.

Clark turns to MacMillan, still reeling from her appearance.

CLARK
You gotta be kidding me.

CUT TO:

INT. TEX-MEX RESTAURANT -- MOMENTS LATER

A fairly empty authentic Mexican eatery, replete with festive-colored table cloths and paintings of desert landscapes.

At a table, it seems MacMillan and Cameron have engaged in a kind of silent stand-off and tension runs high.

The only thing that can be heard is MARIACHI MUSIC from restaurant speakers, and Gordon Clark occasionally BITING INTO TORTILLA CHIPS, unable to resist the house salsa.

CAMERON
(to Clark)
You know I fucked him, right?

Clark COUGHS horribly on a bad mix of chip and spice. He downs some ice water.

CLARK
Unbelievable--

MACMILLAN
Let's be adult about this.

CAMERON
You love to talk down to me, don't you?

CLARK
(to MacMillan)
Look, there are a thousand other engineers we can get, preferably ones you haven't bedded down.

CAMERON
(to Clark)
Who are you again?

CLARK
I'm the guy who figured out the boot code in four days.

MACMILLAN
(to Cameron)
You heard him. A thousand other engineers.

CAMERON
Then where are they?

CLARK
Palo Alto. I can make one phone call and hire someone who'll at least be old enough to drive.

CAMERON
(watching Joe)
No. You need me for some reason. Otherwise you wouldn't be here.

MacMillan eyes her.

MACMILLAN
What do you want?

CAMERON
For you to go dangle your little ‘opportunity’ in someone else’s face.

MACMILLAN
Then why are you still sitting here?

CAMERON
I wanted to see what I was so wrong about the first time.

MACMILLAN
I regret that happened.

CAMERON
I’m sorry you feel bad for hurting my feelings, but don’t worry. You didn’t.

MACMILLAN
I regret it because it disrupted what I’m trying to do.

His tone surprises her. Clark, too.

MACMILLAN (CONT’D)
It wasn’t personal. I was scouting you. Scouting you for this. Exact. Moment.

Now she’s pissed. She stands, throws her rocks margarita in MacMillan’s face. He jolts for a second, but remains calm.

She starts to storm out...

MACMILLAN (CONT’D)
Then by all means, step back into the past. Have fun learning about transistors and vacuum tubes.

She stops. But doesn’t turn around. Boiling.

MACMILLAN (CONT’D)
Nobody who matters pays attention. Right?
(pause)
So give me a reason to stop.

She finally turns back to him, prideful and angry.

CAMERON
Stop selling me. I don't need this place. Just like I don't need you.
(pause)
You think I don't see it? This takes off, I write my own ticket. Whatever career I want. But if it goes wrong, I'm a college drop-out repairing VCRs for 5.25 an hour. So forgive me for weighing my options.

MACMILLAN
See, now you're thinking like a professional.

On Cameron's face. Conflicted.

CAMERON
How much money would you give me?

MACMILLAN
Junior SE? No experience? Twenty grand.

CAMERON
...Double it.

CLARK
My wife makes 15 at TI.

CAMERON
Then I feel sorry for her.
(turning to MacMillan)
Well? What's it gonna be, Joe?

She stares at him. He stares back, doesn't flinch. Almost enjoys the challenge.

MACMILLAN
You tell me.

CUT TO:

INT. GREYHOUND BUS -- DAY

Cameron sleeps in a seat, clutching a duffel bag in her arms. No one around her. The bus STOPS, jarring her awake.

CAMERON'S POV: She sees the DALLAS SKYLINE through the windows. Skyscrapers. Business. Opportunity.

Her face betrays a flash of excitement. But then the bravado melts away, revealing the face of a very scared kid.

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - MAIN BULLPEN -- LATER

ANGLE ON Cameron stepping out of the elevator in neon tights, pink Converse below an ill-fitting skirt--perhaps the only one she owns. A calculated provocativeness to her clothes, but she's also clearly mustered a "professional" effort.

CAMERON'S POV: PHONES RINGING, people quickly moving through cubicles, talking over each other. This is the real thing, and she couldn't feel more out of place.

The RECEPTIONIST eyes her -- other passing women take notice. Again Cameron feels the stares of others. She becomes self-conscious, pulling at her skirt to try and get it lower.

MACMILLAN steps into the hallway. He's been expecting her.

MACMILLAN
Glad you could join us.

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - HALLWAY -- LATER

ANGLE ON MacMillan and Clark, standing outside a glass-walled conference room, looking in. Both appear concerned; Clark more than MacMillan.

CLARK
This is a train wreck waiting to happen.

MACMILLAN
Take her under your wing.

CLARK
She doesn't seem easily taken under wings.

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Barry Shields sits across from Cameron Howe, questioning her.

She sees MacMillan and Clark watching her out of the corner of her eye.

BOSWORTH stands off to the side, watching and listening. He shoots MacMillan and Clark a quick look that says 'I can't believe you've brought this human being into my company.'

SHIELDS
I need your answers to be honest, as they're being recorded for legal record. If you answer falsely, you risk perjuring yourself. Do you understand?

CAMERON
Yep.

SHIELDS
Please say ‘yes’ or ‘I do.’

CAMERON
Yes. I do.

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Clark turns and looks at MacMillan.

CLARK
Besides. I still don’t know what she’s capable of.
(pause)
If anything.

Clark walks away. MacMillan turns back to the interview.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

On Shields --

SHIELDS
Prior to today, have you ever attempted to disassemble, deconstruct, or decompile in any way, shape, or form any equipment or products manufactured or licensed by International Business Machines, or as they are more commonly known, IBM?

CAMERON
No. I have not.

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - CLARK’S OFFICE -- LATER

Empty. Brand new. Clark takes it in.

He moves to the whiteboard, uncaps a marker, starts writing...

MONTAGE -- CLARK WORKS / CAMERON INTERVIEWS

-- The interview continues.

SHIELDS
Have you ever attempted to reverse engineer any IBM equipment or products?

CAMERON
No. I have not.

-- Clark, writing -- “CHIEF COMPETITORS” and under that a long list of familiar companies: **IBM, Apple, Xerox, Texas Instruments, Tandy, Commodore, Atari, Hewlett Packard**

-- Shields and Cameron.

SHIELDS
Have you ever attempted to reverse engineer any microchips, micro-code, or other computer hardware while under the employ of a business or corporation?

CAMERON
No. I have not.

-- Clark has FILLED THE ENTIRE BOARD with competitors...

-- DONNA, in the garage, walking up to Clark and MacMillan’s disemboweled IBM PC. She stares at it, worry on her face...

CUT TO:

INT. CARDIFF GIANT OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM -- LATER

ANGLE ON MacMillan, Clark, Cameron. All sitting next to each other on one side of the table.

ANGLE ON Bosworth standing on the other side, facing them.

BOSWORTH
Welcome to the tiniest, leakiest lifeboat you ever tried to paddle to shore in.

Clark drums his fingers on the wood of the table, hiding his nerves. Cameron sits defiantly, a cover for her own insecurities.

MacMillan remains confident. This is what he wanted. Sort of.

BOSWORTH (CONT’D)
I had some numbers run and the PC business will cost us upwards of a couple million just to get in the door. So in order to reach that perfect world where we actually start *sellin’* these things instead of runnin’ from the boogie man, there will be some rules.

ANGLE ON Cameron. Listening.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
One. No bullshit. If I smell any. Hell comes hot and fast.

CAMERON
What constitutes bullsh--

BOSWORTH
Whatever I goddamn say.

ANGLE ON Clark.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
Two. You can forget nine to five. Hours are now from when this meeting is over until when you die.

ANGLE ON MacMillan.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D))
Three. I know I can't fire any of you--*yet*--but that also means you can't leave. So if I need to stomp your head into the ground just to feel better about my morning shave, you're gonna have to deal with it.

A beat as the three of them take it in. Then:

CAMERON
So who's my boss, or whatever?

CLARK
Me.

MACMILLAN
Me.

Both men share glances, egos already bumping into each other.

Cameron rolls her eyes --

MAYLENE ENTERS, interrupting them:

MAYLENE
IBM is here.

This silences everyone.

THROUGH THE GLASS OF THE WALL -- Dale Barnes leads a cadre of at least eight crisp dark blue suits into the front of the office. They're book-ended by legal council Rebecca Taylor. All of them sharp, professional, intimidating.

REVERSE ON MacMillan, Clark, and Cameron seeing the truth. They're the complete underdog opposite of this powerful organization in every way.

BOSWORTH
(watching IBM)
Keep your stories straight. Because we'll be reciting them all day.

Clark leaves, followed by Cameron. MacMillan starts to head out but Bosworth stops him short of the door.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
One more thing.

MacMillan looks to his boss.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
According to IBM, you've been on the side of a milk carton for a year.
(pause)
I hired you. I didn't check your references. So whatever this is, now I'm on the hook for it.
(pause)
That means it stays between you and I. Understand?

MacMillan says nothing. Then surrenders a small nod.

BOSWORTH (CONT'D)
But I'm gonna root through your closets. I will pull every loose thread. And there *will* be a reckoning.

Bosworth leaves him.

MacMillan gazes through the glass wall.

Watching the seemingly endless stream of blue suits march in front of him just on the other side.

ANGLE ON Joe's eyes. Pupils darting back and forth rapidly.

Processing every single detail. Remaining in control...

...or possibly beginning to overheat.

CUT TO BLACK.

END SHOW