

A FOOL'S ERRAND

written by

Dan Grubb

MARK (V.O.)

I've always wanted to be somebody.

SFX: Sentimental music plays, a la "If I Were Your Woman" by Gladys Knight and the Pips.

FADE IN:

INT. BANK CALL CENTER - DAY

Crane shot: A broad, elevated view inside an enormous, fluorescent-lit warehouse-turned-office with hundreds of gray desks in an open-plan layout. Keyboards tap and voices hum. Push in slowly as the voiceover continues.

MARK (V.O.)

Anybody. Not even somebody important. I don't want to be the president or buy my own island. I don't want to write the Great American Novel or cure cancer. I just want to go to bed feeling like I didn't waste my day. My year. My life. Because there's got to be more to life than this.

We reach MARK'S DESK. Mark, 30-35, is the kind of slacker who winds up being the unlikely hero in these kinds of movies. He slouches in his chair with stubble on his face and hair that's too much of a disaster to be fashionably messy. His shirt has become partway untucked out of his khakis.

SFX: Music fades out.

SFX: Fade up MARK's phone ringing.

Mark sits, staring at his wall, ignoring the phone. Among other sad items, his cubicle displays a 6th place trophy from a company event and a photo of him with some coworkers in which he is the only one not smiling enthusiastically.

PAULA, Mark's supervisor, 50 and hanging on to her blazer and skirt from 1997, walks up and plants herself behind Mark's chair. She stands there for a moment, taking in the disappointment that is Mark. The phone is still ringing.

PAULA
Hey, Lomack? Can--

MARK
I'm on break.

Mark continues to stare at his wall. The phone stops ringing.

PAULA
I think we--

MARK
(holds up a finger)
Six more minutes.

PAULA
Mark, I'd like to speak with you
in my office.

MARK
See you in six.

Paula shakes her head and leaves.

MARK (V.O.)
I guess it's always been like
this.

INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY - DAY [FLASHBACK]

10-YEAR-OLD MARK stands with a few other kids in front of the entire school.

MARK (V.O.)
My whole life, I've been waiting
for my big moment. I thought if I
just stuck it out long enough, it
would just happen, from out of
nowhere.

A JUDGE approaches with a blue "first place" RIBBON. Mark's face lights up until the judge passes him and gives the RIBBON to the kid next to him. Mark slumps in disappointment.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - AFTERNOON [FLASHBACK]

TEENAGED MARK is in the outfield in the big game against his school's rival. A college scout is in the stands looking for talent. The scoreboard shows it's the top of the ninth and if they get this out, Mark's team wins.

MARK (V.O.)

I'd be a hopeless underdog without a chance, and then everything would slow down and the music would fade in...

A pop fly heads towards him. Mark tries to get under it. While the camera is centered on Mark from above, a bigger, more athletic outfielder swoops in and makes the game-winning catch. The crowd roars. A shot from the side reveals that he was, in fact, nowhere close to the ball.

INT. CHURCH - DAY [FLASHBACK]

25-year-old Mark is attending a wedding. He looks forlornly at the BRIDE, wishing he was her groom.

MARK (V.O.)

...and there it would be: my moment.

BRIDE

I can't! I'm sorry, I can't do it!

The bride starts down the aisle, running directly at Mark. Shocked, he stands up and spreads his arms. She runs right by him and embraces the guy behind him. They run down the aisle and leave the church to start their wonderful life together. Mark awkwardly puts his arms back down and returns to his seat.

INT. BANK CALL CENTER - MARK'S DESK - DAY

Return to Mark sitting at his desk.

MARK (V.O.)

It'll happen one day.

Mark gets up to see Paula.

PAULA'S OFFICE

Mark enters the office. Paula looks up from some paperwork.

PAULA
Ah, Lomack. You made it.

Mark sits in a chair at Paula's desk.

MARK
I aim to please.

PAULA
Uh huh. Well, that's kind of why I asked you to see me. Your metrics are way down. Your recent feedback shows that you've been [reading from her notes] "disinterested, aloof, off in your own world"... Does that sound like a fair portrayal?

MARK
(thinking about something else)
...Hmm?

PAULA
Listen. You seem like a bright guy, but that's not enough to be successful. If you want to make it at First Financial, it takes...

Paula continues speaking but her voice fades out so all we hear is Mark's V.O.

MARK (V.O.)
The same old speech. Not a team player. Wasted potential. Lost in my own--

PAULA
(suddenly audible again)
Lomack! You're doing it right now, aren't you?

MARK

Pardon?

PAULA

You know what? You're a waste of my time. Get out. You're fired.

Mark sighs. He stands and starts to leave, then turns back.

MARK

Should I put in time for a full day? 'Cause--

PAULA

GET OUT!

Mark exits.

SFX: Funkadelic's "Can You Get to That" begins.

BANK CALL CENTER

Wide shot. Mark storms to the exit, grabbing his man purse on the way.

MARK (V.O.)

I'd show her. I'd show them all.
I'm gonna be somebody. You'll see.

Mark reaches the door right on the downbeat after the drum intro: ba, ba, ba-bada-bum boom.

INT./EXT. MARK'S CAR - DAY

Mark drives home as the opening credits roll. Take your time, like they did in detective movies from the 60s/70s. Lots of credits bunched up together. The song is about 2 1/2 minutes. He lives in a small-to-medium city -- old but not historical, industrial but with signs of gentrification. He drives through okay and shady neighborhoods, waving to someone here or there. As the song and credits end, Mark reaches his apartment building and goes inside.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mark is watching TV on the couch. A bedroom door opens and his slovenly, overweight roommate, JARED, 35, comes out with his boyfriend, KURT, 30. Jared wears sweatpants and a stained t-shirt. Kurt wears jeans, steel-toed boots, and a black t-shirt with an eagle and an American flag on it.

JARED

So we're on for tomorrow?

KURT

Demo derby? Hell yeah.

JARED

'kay. Love ya.

KURT

You too.

They kiss and Kurt leaves. Jared grabs some cheese puffs and plops down next to Mark on the couch.

JARED

Ahhhh. Hey, Mark.

MARK

Hey, Jared.

JARED

How was work?

MARK

I got fired.

JARED

Oh, no! I'm sorry. What'd you get fired for?

MARK

Something about paying attention. I dunno, whatever.

JARED

Man, that sucks.

MARK

Eh, what are you gonna do? It's not like I wanted to answer phones for the rest of my life. I'd much rather...I dunno.

JARED

(thinks for a second, then claps)
Hey! It's solution time. I'll grab some beer, we'll get drunk, and then we'll think of a solution!

Shot of the coffee table as empty BEER CANS appear two by two to show the passage of time.

LATER

Mark and Jared are drunk on the couch. The TV is on and the news is playing in the background.

JARED

What are you talking about, man?
You ARE somebody.

MARK

No, I'm really not. You know, when you're a kid you have all these dreams and aspirations? Then you grow up and you get a job that'll carry you through until you get your break. And then that job becomes your security and the dream becomes a bigger pain in the ass to make happen. You get an apartment, furniture, a girlfriend...or, well, lover.

JARED

Thank you.

MARK

But it adds up to this whole life. And if you chase your dream, you have to give up your life and start over. I think I've hit a point where I can't start over.

JARED

Mark, we've been friends for a long time. And I want you to take what I'm about to say as the sincere feelings of a true friend.

MARK

Okay.

JARED

You are so full of shit! Are you kidding? You lost your awful bank call center job that you hated, and that's somehow a bad thing? Did you want to talk to angry customers on the phone all day? Did that sound secure and great?

MARK

Whatever. It's a job. Everyone hates their job.

JARED

I don't hate my job. In fact, I think my job is pretty rewarding.

MARK

Fine, everyone who doesn't give little kids tours of the American Candy Museum hates their job.

JARED

The point is, that soul-devouring tumor that was your job isn't your job anymore. So now you can think big and do something that you actually want to do.

MARK

But what do I want to do?

JARED

How should I know? What did you want to do when you were a kid?

MARK

I dunno. I just figured it would fall into place one day. Like I'd get some kind of inspiration. A sign or something.

NEWS ANCHOR (filter)

We have some breaking news for you. Alleged mob boss Bruno La Porta was found dead earlier this evening. The notorious gangster had been the subject of countless criminal investigations, but law enforcement could never find sufficient evidence to indict him. It appears La Porta died after being crushed by a septic tank. Police say they have ruled out foul play.

MARK

Wow, did you hear that?

JARED

Yeah. What a way to go. Crushed by a box of turds.

MARK

These mob guys are sick. That's all you hear about lately is gangs and their fucked up murders. Did you hear about the dude they filled with shredded up cash that he stole from them? They choked him with it rather than take it back.

JARED

(wincing)

Oof.

MARK

This crazy gang warfare needs to stop. Why can't they do something about it?

JARED

That's how the system works, man. The cops are on the take. You heard what they said. No foul play? Yeah, right.

MARK

Well, someone's got to do something. I don't want to have to worry about getting crushed by a drive-by septic tank.

JARED

What are they gonna do? Take down the mob?

SFX: The sentimental music starts playing.

MARK

(inspired)

Why not? If you get enough people together, you could do it.

JARED

Get enough people? What people? What, are you gonna put up flyers? Put an ad on Craig's List for mob busters?

MARK

We could go around, talk to whoever they...you know...oppress or whatever. Get them onboard! We could do that.

JARED

Yeah, except they have guns and like murdering people. No one's gonna stand up to that.

MARK

Yeah, you've got a point. But what about evidence? If we got enough evidence, we could take it to the D.A. or the news or something!

JARED

I mean, yeah, I guess that would work. But what evidence?

MARK

(thinks a moment)

What about bank records? They always bust gangs on tax evasion and financial stuff. I bet I could find something in the system at work.

JARED

Work? Woah, hold on. Work? You don't work. You got fired, remember? They won't let you search for mob records.

MARK

Not if they see me. But I know a back way in.

JARED

This is stupid. You're gonna get caught for trespassing. And what if you do get in? Can you even log into the system?

Mark stands up.

MARK

Hey, don't worry about it. I can do this.

(puts a hand on his stomach)

Woah. Hang on.

Mark runs to the bathroom.

SFX: The sentimental music fades out quickly. We hear Mark vomiting off-screen.

Jared is visibly grossed out. Mark re-enters.

MARK

Okay, now I can do this.

INT. BANK CALL CENTER - PAULA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Mark is sitting in front of the desk. A SECURITY GUARD stands behind him. Paula, dressed in pajamas and a robe, slams the door and sits on the desk in front of Mark.

PAULA

I can't believe you did this! You seriously thought you could sneak in here, sign in with your old password, and steal company-owned data?

MARK

I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know how I got here.

PAULA

You don't know how you got here.

MARK

I don't even know where I am. What is this place? I don't remember anything. Have I been sleepwalking?

PAULA

So you don't remember entering the building, waving to a camera, saying hi to the guard on duty downstairs, and entering your ID number to unlock the doors before logging into your old terminal and searching the client database?

As Paula says each of these, cut to shots of each thing happening from the security cameras' perspectives. Then cut back to her office.

MARK

Must be a frame up. I have no idea.

PAULA

Exactly how stupid are you?

MARK

Are you accusing me of something,
ma'am?

PAULA

Get out!

MARK leaves the office, slamming the door.

SFX: "Can You Get to That?" starts again.

BANK CALL CENTER

Shot from same wide angle as before. Mark runs down the aisle of the call center. He knocks stuff off a desk and starts to wrestle a giant FERN by the exit doors, yelling the whole way. He is then tackled by SECURITY GUARDS.

SFX: The music stops abruptly as Mark is tackled.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mark sits back in a chair, bandaged. Jared and Kurt are on the couch. They sit thinking for a few seconds.

JARED

OH! Oh, dude! Way better idea!
I...duh! You get a private eye
license and an office. Then you
can gather evidence legally! You
can advertise and everything. Then
you can do your mob thing and
people bring their cases to you!

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

A DOOR has "Mark Lomack, Private Investigator" painted on it.

SUPER: One week later

MARK'S OFFICE

Mark sits at his desk, playing with an old 1970s electronic FOOTBALL GAME, the kind where the inch-tall players vibrate

their way across the field. There is a small TELEVISION on the guest chair in front of the desk that's playing an old film noir. Mark is paying slightly more attention to the movie than the game.

MOVIE DETECTIVE

I've had just about enough of this monkey show.

MARK

I've had just about enough of this monkey show.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

MARK

Just a minute!

MOVIE DETECTIVE

Just a minute.

Mark switches the TELEVISION and GAME off, but the GAME remains on. He tries the switch a few times. It's still on. He tries to put the game in a drawer, but it's too big.

MARK

I'm coming!

Mark drops the game on the floor. It buzzes loudly. There's another KNOCK at the door.

MARK

I'm just putting this file away!
Hang on!

Mark picks the game up, still buzzing. The vibration makes it slip from his grasp. He catches it, but kicks over a wastepaper basket.

HALLWAY

An exotic woman, ROSA, late 30s, waits in a designer dress. Her large hat covers most of her face. We hear faint sounds of buzzing and slamming. She puts her ear to the door, listens for a second, and leans back again. She raises her fist to knock again when Mark opens the door.

MARK

Sorry, I was on the phone. Very important call. What can I...?

SFX: The sentimental music fades in.

Rosa looks up, revealing her beautiful face. Close up of Mark, awestruck.

SFX: The music stops.

With the music stopping, cut to a full shot of them standing at the doorway for a few seconds. Mark hums the song quietly.

ROSA

Mr. Lomack? Mr. Lomack?

MARK

Hm? Yeah...yes. Won't you come in?

MARK'S OFFICE

The office is a disaster. A wire leads from a wall socket into the closet. The closet door is buzzing very loudly.

ROSA

Is everything all right?

MARK

(indicating the mess)

Oh, this? It's just temporary. I'm renting the space out to a local theater. They're doing, uh, "Platoon".

As he says this, Mark walks to the desk, stops, and notices the buzzing sound.

MARK

Summer stock, you know. Come, sit down, please.

Mark elbows the CLOSET DOOR and the buzzing stops. He goes to the desk and he and Rosa sit.

ROSA

I see.

MARK

But enough about my charity work.
Let's talk about yours. What can I
do for you?

ROSA

Mr. Lomack, I've come to you
because I'm in serious physical
danger.

MARK

Ma'am, in my business, all danger
is serious physical. Now, what's
the problem?

Mark picks up a legal pad and a pen and starts taking
notes.

ROSA

It's my brother. He's going to
kill me, I know it.

MARK

All right. Now, before we get any
further I'm going to need your
name and next of kin, so I know
where to send the bill in case you
die.

ROSA

My name is Rosa La Porta. My
husband was Bruno La Porta. I'm
sure you heard of his death.

MARK

Really? The mob boss who was
crushed by a septic tank? That was
your husband? Well, my
condolences. That was a terrible
accident. But what a strange
coincidence, because--

ROSA

(dramatically)

That was no accident, Mr. Lomack.
That was my brother, Frankie. He's
a very dangerous man.

(calmly)

Frankie is my next of kin,
incidentally.

Mark jots this down.

ROSA

(dramatically again)

He wants to take over the Giordano
family, so he's going to kill all
the heads one by one. He's already
gotten Bruno. Now he's going to
kill my uncle Leo and the de Luca
brothers...and me!

MARK

I don't understand. Why would he
kill you?

ROSA

I got Bruno's seat when he died.
So I am a target, too.

MARK

But then wouldn't the other seats
be inherited by someone when the
other heads die?

ROSA

No. The seats have to stay in the
family. The de Lucas aren't
related by blood and Leo doesn't
have any other relatives. Only
Frankie and I would be left.

MARK

Wait.

Rosa

Yes!

MARK

So your brother is--

ROSA

Ye-e-es! He is Francesco Giordano, chief enforcer of the Giordano syndicate. My name is Rosa Maria Angelina Giordano La Porta. I gave my seat to Bruno when we got married. I never wanted it anyway. It was a sweet sixteen present. I wanted horse riding lessons, they gave me mob control. I was glad to give it to Bruno. He loved it. He liked the cruelty. He used to write cell phone contracts. But now he's dead, and I've got my seat back and it's going to get me killed, too.

MARK

Jeez, this is complicated.

ROSA

Mafiosi have been around for centuries, Mr. Lomack. We've had time to figure these things out.

MARK

Can't you just quit?

ROSA

Unfortunately, no. Once you're in, you're in for life. They're very strict about that. You see, years ago we had a slow spell, so they changed the bylaws to keep people involved and encourage more murder. It's like the ante in poker.

MARK

Have you tried the feds? This is more their territory. They could offer protection, too.

ROSA

It wouldn't work. Frankie has agents on the payroll to keep him informed of their investigations. Police, too. Even the established private eyes are on the take. You're my only hope, Mr. Lomack.

MARK

Okay, Ms. La Porta, I'll take your case. I'll need a hundred dollars a day plus expenses.

ROSA

That's all? I'm surprised you'd risk your life for so little.

MARK

I've got to work cheap to keep up with that discount investigation megastore across town. No middleman, my ass. Now, what can you tell me about your brother?

Rosa hands Mark a business card.

ROSA

He has a business at the docks that he uses as a front. He and his men work there at night.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT

Mark and Jared are crouched down behind a TRUCK, watching forklifts take supplies into a WAREHOUSE.

MARK (V.O.)

Rosa told me about Frankie's smuggling operation. He ran it out of a warehouse by the river. I wasn't--

JARED

I still don't see why you brought me here.

MARK

Shh! Hang on!

MARK (V.O.)

I wasn't sure what I would find there, but I knew it was my first stop. I brought Jared in case I needed backup.

JARED

What kind of backup am I? I don't even have a gun or anything.

MARK

No, but we do have an important advantage: the element of surprise.

Cut to a shot from behind them that pulls back to reveal two large THUGS, LARRY and HERMAN, aiming their guns at Mark and Jared. Larry cocks his gun. Mark and Jared look back.

MARK

Ah, shit.

WAREHOUSE ENTRANCE

The thugs hold Mark and Jared by the arm and lead them into the warehouse, where FRANKIE is looking over some papers with a third THUG, BRAD. Frankie, 40, has a tailored suit and slicked back hair that he thinks makes him look tough, but it doesn't work. Brad is in his late 40s, thickly built, and balding. There are hundreds of wooden CRATES as well as three CARS and two SEMIS.

LARRY

Mr. Giordano, we found these guys trying to spy on us.

FRANKIE

I see. Thanks, Larry, Herman.

Frankie nods at Larry and Herman. They release Mark and Jared and holster their GUNS. Frankie starts walking, waving for the others to follow.

FRANKIE

So, you're interested in our little operation, are you? Would you like the full fifty cent tour? You might as well get a good look since you won't be leaving. This is our smuggling business. Our product is cheaper to make than heroin and more expensive per ounce than caviar. Crime does pay, my friends.

JARED

What is it you're smuggling?

FRANKIE

Spoons.

MARK

Spoons?

FRANKIE

(diabolically)

Yes. Spoons.

MARK

(nodding)

What does that mean?

FRANKIE

Little commemorative spoons. Countries, presidents, landmarks, that sort of thing. You know?

JARED

Oh, yeah, yeah. The little ones. Huh. Spoons.

FRANKIE

You seem to be taking my revelation rather calmly.

MARK

Well, you know, I've never heard of an illegal spoon operation, so I'm not exactly sure how to react.

JARED

Yeah, I mean, how is it smuggling?
Commemorative spoons are legal.

FRANKIE

Yes, but not...forged anTIQUE
commemorative spoons!

Mark lunges at Frankie, but Herman grabs him.

MARK

You bastard! The antique ones are
the best!

FRANKIE

Ha ha ha, yes they are. And soon
my spoons will be in every pawn
shop and antique store in the
country. Brad, take them to the
smelter.

MARK

You'll never get away with this!

Frankie exits as Brad draws his GUN and starts pushing Mark
and Jared towards the smelting area.

JARED

Yeah! And also, I'm just his
roommate! I don't really have
anything to do with this! So you
should probably just let me go!
(looks at Larry)
Hi, how ya doin'? Is that the exit
over there?

Jared starts to leaves, but Larry grabs him and gut-punches
him.

SFX: Funk music like a 70s cop show begins with BANG! POW!
ZAP! style horn hits coinciding with the violence.

Jared leans against some CRATES, trying not to puke. Larry
and Herman attack Mark. Brad just stands there.

Mark backs up, looking for some sort of advantage. He sees an open crate of SPOONS and grabs a handful. He holds one like a throwing knife for a second, then just throws them all at once at Larry and Herman and runs off-screen.

Mark slides across a CAR HOOD, but doesn't make it all the way across and has to scoot the last several inches. Herman catches up to him. Mark grabs Herman by the hair and tries to slam his face into the car hood, but Herman resists and remains upright.

Herman punches Mark. Mark falls towards Jared, who is now kneeling on the ground, moaning. Mark rouses Jared and then runs off. Larry follows Mark. Herman approaches Jared. Brad still stands to the side doing nothing.

Jared tips over a CRATE OF SPOONS. They spill towards Herman, covering the ground around his feet. Herman swings his arms wildly like he's slipping on ice, then realizes he can walk just fine and advances towards Jared.

Mark hides between the cab and trailer of a SEMI. When Larry comes along, he jumps off the SEMI and onto Larry's back. He bounces off Larry's back and falls to the floor.

While Mark is on the floor, Brad aims a silenced pistol at Larry and shoots, hitting him in the shoulder. Larry grabs the wounded shoulder and leans forward, toward the back of the semi. Mark gets up and, seeing his opportunity, opens the semi DOOR quickly, slamming Larry in the face. Larry falls to the floor, unconscious.

Jared falls onto some TRASH CANS. He picks up a LID and hits Herman in the face with it. Herman remains standing but looks shocked and offended. Herman charges at Jared, but Mark tackles him from the side, knocking him into a stack of EMPTY CRATES that fall over.

Jared runs up to them and hits Herman repeatedly on the head with the LID until he is beaten unconscious. They approach Brad, who waves his hands in a "no, don't hurt me" manner.

BRAD

No, no, hold on. You don't understand. I'm--

Mark and Jared simultaneously punch him in the head. Brad falls to the floor, unconscious. Mark and Jared kick him a few times, then flee the scene.

INT. MARK'S OFFICE - DAY

Mark sets his coffee down on his desk. He holds a NEWSPAPER with the headline: "Local Idiots Assault Mob Witness". The subhead reads: "FBI Investigation Set Back Two Years". Below is a picture of Brad with a black eye.

SFX: The fight music ends with a long horn gliss down.

MARK

Shit!

There is a KNOCK at the door. Mark cracks the door open, peeks outside, and then opens it wide to reveal Rosa.

ROSA

You've a brave man, Mr. Lomack.

MARK

Well, don't tell the whole building or they'll ask me to kill all their spiders. Come on in.

They enter the office. Mark motions for Rosa to sit down and they both take their seats.

ROSA

I can't stay long. I just wanted to let you know that Frankie is very upset about his men. If I were you, I'd get out of town.

MARK

If you were me, you'd pee standing up, but I don't plan on doing that right now, either. You hired me to protect you from your brother, and I desperately need your money, so I'm here to stay. Now is there any other information you know of that would help me do that?

ROSA

Well, I didn't want to bring it up, but there is one man who could help.

MARK

Great! Who is he?

ROSA

(hesitantly)

Donovan Unger.

MARK

Donovan Unger, the private eye?

ROSA

...Yes.

MARK

(rising from his chair)

He knows your case?

ROSA

(getting upset)

Yes!

MARK

(enraged)

You're seeing another private eye?
When were you planning on telling me?

ROSA

(starting to cry)

It's not what you think!

MARK

(slams his hand on the desk)

The hell it isn't!

ROSA

You don't understand. I hired Donovan before I ever met you. But he's off the case. He was a drunk! A loose cannon. He means nothing to me anymore!

MARK

(calming down)

Well...I'll talk to him, but it makes me sick. What kind of information does he have?

ROSA

I don't know. He never gave it to me after I refused to keep paying him. He billed me seven hundred dollars for whiskey, saying it enhanced the deduction cortex of the brain.

MARK

I see. Okay, I'll go talk to him.

SFX: Melodramatic noir music begins.

Rosa stands up and approaches Mark.

ROSA

Oh, Mr. Lomack. You'll be careful, won't you? I'd hate for anything to happen to you.

Rosa throws her arms around Mark. He grabs her by the shoulders to look her in the eye.

MARK

Don't worry, babycakes. It'll take more than a drunk dick to stop me.

ROSA

Oh, Mr. Lomack.

MARK

Please, call me Mr. Darling.

Rosa draws in close to Mark.

ROSA

Oh, Mr. Darling!

MARK

Oh, honey tits!

ROSA
Beaver face!

MARK
Angel pants!

They kiss passionately, and then pause for a few seconds, looking at each other.

ROSA
Well, I've got to go. Thank you,
Mr. Darling.

SFX: A noir saxophone transition plays as she leaves.

INT. ANOTHER OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Mark approaches the door to DONOVAN UNGER'S OFFICE. The door is painted gray.

MARK (V.O.)
I went over to Donovan Unger's
office to find out what he knew,
even though it made me sick. Wait,
did I already say that?

DONOVAN UNGER'S OFFICE

Everything in the office, including DONOVAN and his secretary, ALICE, is in black and white. The effect is done with paint, costumes, and make-up, not CGI. Mark is still in color. Alice is in her early 30s and wears a white blouse and a black skirt. She obviously bleaches her hair. Donovan, 45, has a fedora on his desk and wears what we assume is a brown suit, though it's just gray to us.

Donovan and Alice sit at their respective desks. His is cluttered and hers is nice and tidy. There are about 30 empty and almost empty whiskey bottles scattered around the office.

Mark storms in. He is the only color in the grayscale office. A 50s-style TELEPHONE rings. Donovan bangs one side of the TELEPHONE to flip it up and answers as Alice greets Mark.

ALICE
May I help you?

MARK
(to Donovan)
Unger! Unger!

ALICE
Sir? Mr. Unger is busy right now.
May I help you?

MARK
(angrily)
I'm Mark Lomack. I need to speak
with Mr. Unger. It's about a
client who is apparently mutual.

ALICE
Okay. If you'll have a seat and
calm down, Mr. Unger will be right
with you.

MARK
I don't want to calm down! What I
want--

Alice stands up.

ALICE
Mr. Lomack, I'm not interested in
what you want. I'm telling you to
sit down.

Mark deflates and obediently takes a seat.

DONOVAN
(to phone)
Yes, I've got the papers right
here... Don't worry. They won't
get their filthy Nazi paws on
them... I know. I miss him, too...
Well, we'll always have Montego...

A SHOOTER barges in with a snub-nosed REVOLVER in his hand.
He is also in black and white. His suit is too wide in the
shoulders for his thin frame.

SHOOTER

Unger!

The shooter shoots Donovan in the stomach. Alice screams. Donovan grabs his GUN and squeezes off a shot as he collapses behind the DESK.

The shooter ducks behind an OFFICE CHAIR and fires again. Alice pulls a GUN from her garter and fires, hitting the shooter in the arm. Wounded, the shooter escapes. Alice runs to Donovan.

ALICE

Donovan! Oh, Donovan!

Alice tries to give Donovan a drink from one of the many nearby whiskey bottles, but he coughs it up.

ALICE

Donovan! You need to live! It's your baby!

Donovan dies. Alice wails, cradling his body. Mark stands up and slowly makes his way out the door.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mark enters. Jared and Kurt are on the couch wearing futuristic clothes and goggles.

MARK

What are you doing?

KURT

Traveling through time.

MARK

But you're just sitting there.

JARED

Yeah, we're on regular speed. But watch. I'll set it to fast forward.

Jared adjusts his WATCH. Nothing happens.

MARK

You're still just sitting there.

JARED

That's what you think.

MARK

Can you come back to this
dimension for a minute?

Jared adjusts his watch. Jared and Kurt take their goggles
off.

MARK

This case is driving me crazy. I
mean, we're botching FBI
operations, people are dying, and
I'm no closer to protecting Rosa
from her brother.

JARED

So what do you do? And does it
involve me getting punched again?

MARK

No, you've done enough. I've got
to finish this myself.

KURT

Um, no you don't. We could--

JARED

(to Kurt)

SHHH!

(to Mark)

Go on. You were saying?

MARK

There's got to be a way to get the
information to protect Rosa and
put Frankie away without getting
hurt.

KURT

Maybe you could invite him over to
talk about it.

JARED

Maybe you could quit this whole stupid private eye fantasy.

MARK

Yeah! Invite him over. Talk about it. He's a professional. He doesn't want any trouble.

JARED

Yes. He does. That's precisely what he wants.

MARK

This is a great idea. I'll call him up now.

JARED

You idiots are gonna get us all killed.

Jared exits. Mark gets his PHONE and finds the BUSINESS CARD for Frankie's front company. Mark dials the number and waits as it goes to voicemail.

MARK

(into phone)

Hi, Frankie. Mark Lomack. We met last night at the docks. I was the guy you were going to kill. Anywho, I'd love to follow up with you and get some information about the company. No big deal, just two guys talking. Come by my office and we'll work it out. See ya.

Mark hangs up. He pauses for a beat and thinks about what he's just done, then bolts up and yells at Kurt.

MARK

What the hell is wrong with me?! Why would I invite him to my office?! I'm gonna die!

KURT

What if you don't show up?

MARK

Good. Yes. I won't show up. Then he won't be able to kill me.

KURT

Oh, but won't that make him mad? He might burn the building down or something.

MARK

Right. Okay, think. Psychopath. Dangerous psychopath. Lunatic. Violent, angry, unstable lunatic who wants me dead. I'm not feeling very optimistic.

KURT

What if you show up but shoot him when he comes? It'd be self-defense, basically.

MARK

Hmm. Shoot him. He's dead. I'm alive. The world's better off. Rosa's safe. I don't bring down the mob, but I do live. Okay. Uh-huh. This is sounding okay. Where do I get a gun?

KURT

Take one of mine. I've got a bunch.

MARK

Wow, thanks! Maybe I won't die a horrible, gruesome death at the hands of a torturing mad-- Again, I'm struggling with the optimism here.

INT. MARK'S OFFICE - DAY

Mark waits in the office nervously. He sits at the desk with the GUN drawn. There's a KNOCK at the door. Mark points the GUN at the door. It shakes in his hand.

MARK
Is that Frankie?

BRAD (O.S.)
No.

Mark, relieved, crosses the room and cracks the door open.

BRAD (O.S.)
I'm with the FBI.

Mark slams the DOOR and locks it. Startled, he backs toward the WINDOW.

MARK
UM! This is a recording! No one is
here right now! You'd better come
back in a month or two!

HALLWAY

Outside Mark's door, we see that the FBI agent is Brad, the thug from the docks that didn't fight back. Brad tries to kick in the DOOR, but his foot crashes through the thin particleboard. As he speaks, he wiggles his FOOT, struggling to get it out again.

BRAD
You impeded a federal
investigation, Lomack! Ow! We
spent two years on that sting!

MARK'S OFFICE

Mark opens the WINDOW. Brad gets his FOOT free of the DOOR and sticks his GUN through the hole. Brad fires several shots, one of which hits Mark in the ARM. Mark drops his GUN to grab his injured arm as he climbs out onto the FIRE ESCAPE.

Brad reaches through the hole and opens the DOOR. He enters the office. He runs to the WINDOW, climbs out, and follows Mark down the FIRE ESCAPE to the street.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS

The camera follows Mark and Brad down the FIRE ESCAPE as, in unison, they quickly tip-toe down the steps and race across the horizontals for a few steps before tip-toeing down the next staircase. This cycle happens three times.

ALLEY

Mark reaches the ground and Brad jumps on him from the fire escape. They grapple and Mark manages to make Brad drop his GUN. Brad gets on top of Mark. Mark uses his feet to push Brad off of him. Mark runs through the alley and onto the street while Brad grabs the GUN and chases him.

STREET

Reaching the street, Mark grabs the handle on the back of a slow-moving GARBAGE TRUCK and climbs onto the step as it picks up speed. Brad fires again, but misses. He tries to fire again but he's out of ammo. He holsters the GUN.

BRAD

Damn!

Mark gives the obligatory "sucks for you!" shrug as the TRUCK drives up the street. At the end of the block, the TRUCK stops at a red light. Brad runs towards it. Mark makes an "oh shit" face, jumps off the TRUCK, and runs up the cross-street to his CAR.

Mark reaches his CAR, parked around the corner from his office building. He enters it, starts the engine, and drives off just before Brad reaches him.

BRAD

I'll get you, Lomack! You bastard!

INT. MARK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Mark is driving. He calls Rosa and gets her voicemail.

ROSA (filter)

(very dramatically)

I'm sorry. I'm not available.

Please leave a message.

The outgoing message beeps.

MARK

Rosa? It's me. Listen, strudel
thighs. I'm sorry but I can't work
on your case anymore.

INT. ROSA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rosa is listening to her voicemail.

MARK (filter)

This whole mess is just too big
for me. Also, it turns out getting
shot really hurts. Good luck
avoiding death and all that. And
sweetie? Thanks for all the money.

The message ends. Rosa picks up the PHONE and makes a call.

ROSA

It's me. He's off the case.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Brad is on his cell phone with Rosa as he walks back to his
car.

BRAD

Do you still want me to go after
him?

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION

ROSA

Yes. And darling?

BRAD

Yes, my love?

ROSA

Make him suffer.

BRAD

Two years of work down the drain?
My best grayscale hitman shot?
You're damn right he'll suffer.

Rosa sighs and rolls her eyes, immediately exasperated with Brad's complaining.

BRAD

That idiot was supposed to take notes saying you wanted nothing to do with the syndicate and then get killed so the cops won't suspect you when you take control.

ROSA

Thank you, darling. I'm aware of my actions and motivations.

BRAD

Well, anyway, all I'm saying is don't worry. He'll suffer all right.

They laugh maniacally.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - DAY

MARK

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAUGH!!!!

JARED

Okay. Okay. Let's not panic. In addition to the mob psycho trying to kill you, now there's an FBI agent trying to kill you. This isn't the end of the world.

MARK

HOW is this NOT the end of the world? I'm going to die! He's going to find me, kill me, eat me, poop me out, and jump up and down on me.

JARED

Calm down. I think there's only one thing to do: run away. Just pack a bag and leave.

MARK

Leave and go where? Do what? I don't have the money to go start a new life.

JARED

Can't you get some? Do you have any savings? Or relatives you could borrow from?

MARK

Well...I didn't want to mention it, but I do have one other option. But it's completely illegal.

JARED

Go on.

MARK

When I was at the call center, I figured out how to tap into a pretty big account. Like, a really big account.

JARED

Woah! How'd you manage that?

MARK

It was tricky.

INT. BANK CALL CENTER - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Mark is on the phone at his desk. He copies the account info from his screen onto a piece of paper.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - DAY

JARED

Wow! How much is there?

MARK

Eleven million dollars, give or take a few thousand.

JARED

Eleven--? Why did you have a job? Why would you keep working at that dump when you could steal some rich asshole's fortune?

MARK

It's an emergency plan. It's too risky to just take it and retire. I'd have to disappear.

JARED

So disappear! This is a great idea! Can you get away with it?

MARK

I think so. I could be on a plane to anywhere this afternoon. But you can't just carry a bag of money through airport security.

JARED

So get a cashier's check. Or traveler's checks. Or fucking deposit it into your bank account! Use Bitcoin, PayPal, some of those prepaid debit cards! Who gives a shit?! Get it and go!

SFX: The sentimental music starts.

MARK

It'd mean goodbye forever.

JARED

Mark, I want you to listen to me. It doesn't mean anything except you get to live. It's really easy to keep in touch or make up fake names to recognize each other or get disposable phones. Don't worry about it. Look up how to get a fake ID. Then get one and act like that's your name. Set up a new email and close your bank account. It's easy. It's so easy.

MARK

Huh. I guess you're right. So this isn't nearly as dramatic as I thought it would be.

SFX: Music stops abruptly.

JARED

Yeah. Dude, don't sweat it. We'll talk tomorrow after you get settled in. On your new phone under your new name, right?

MARK

Right. Hey, are you gonna be okay?

JARED

I'll be fine. If they show up, I'll tell them you left and I don't know anything about it. If they start trouble, Kurt has like a zillion guns and a bunch of weird army gear. He's a freak.

MARK

Huh. Um, okay. Well, goodbye, I guess.

Mark spreads his arms for a hug. Jared looks at him like he's an idiot, then shakes his head and gives him a hug.

JARED

All right, go on, ya dummy.

INT. BANK - DAY

Mark is next in line for the TELLER.

TELLER

Have a nice day. Next!

MARK

Hello, I'd like to withdrawal eleven million dollars from my credit line. I've got the account number here.

TELLER

And do you have an ID?

MARK

No, but my date of birth is April 16, 1969, my mother's maiden name is Fitzhugh, and my high school mascot was the Cigar Store Indian Statues.

TELLER

Well, that is good enough for us.

MARK

Oh, and can I get three thousand of that in cash and the rest in a cashier's check?

TELLER

Absolutely. A good customer experience is priority one in the banking industry.

The teller gets a small box with pre-filled CASHIER'S CHECKS and finds one for \$10,997,000.

TELLER

Ah, here we are. Ten million, nine hundred ninety-seven thousand dollars. And three thousand in cash.

She gathers three thousand in hundred dollar bills, stamps the check, and hands it all to Mark.

TELLER

There you go. And we appreciate your business, Mrs. Rutledge.

MARK

Wow, that was easy!

TELLER

Hmm?

MARK

Hmm? Oh, I said, "Thanks for this money, which is clearly mine." Ta-ta.

Mark exits the bank with a caricature of a woman's walk.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Mark holds up the cashier's check.

MARK

What can I buy with this?

The JEWELER kisses Mark and leads him to the special collection. He shows Mark a spectacular watch.

JEWELER

These pieces are available for one and a quarter million dollars.

MARK

Great! I'll take...eight. And some cheap stuff, too.

The jeweler faints.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Mark enters the airport and checks the departure schedule. He is carrying a small box from the jeweler's shop.

MARK (V.O.)

I needed to lay low somewhere while I figured out my next move. Someplace where I had no connections.

Tight shot of info on the departure schedule for a flight to Little Rock, Arkansas that leaves in 9 minutes. Mark walks to the TICKET COUNTER and gets out his WALLET. He pulls hundred dollar bills halfway out.

MARK

One for Little Rock, business class.

A few minutes later, Mark is walking to his gate. Brad stops him with his GUN drawn.

BRAD

Not so fast, Lomack. Your flight's been canceled.

Frankie arrives, pointing a GUN at Brad.

FRANKIE

Drop it, Brad, or your destination will be six feet underground. I know about your plans.

Rosa arrives, pointing a GUN at Frankie.

ROSA

You pull that trigger, Frankie, and I'll make sure you fit in the overhead compartment!

Alice enters (still in black and white) wearing two bandoliers of HAND GRENADES across her chest and carrying an enormous MACHINE GUN with a long bullet chain coming out of it.

ALICE

Well, someone's gonna die, because Donovan is dead and I'm out of a job! Do you know how hard it is to find work when you're grayscale?

MARK

Isn't this an airport? Where the hell is security?

Alice shoots and the others retaliate. Mark manages to flee to safety while hundreds of gunshots are fired.

Mark quickly reaches the gate. The GATE AGENT doesn't seem to notice the gunfire and explosions in the background as she checks him in. Brad, Frankie, Rosa, and Alice replace CLIP after CLIP as they try to kill each other. TSA officers carrying MACHINE GUNS race past Mark towards the chaos.

Brad escapes the fight and sees Mark checking in. Close up on his face, then cut to Mark checking in, then back to Brad.

INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Mark finds his seat and plops down next to LEONARD, an eccentric in his 50s. Leonard is thin and wears glasses and a worn suit. His hair is short on the sides and wild on top. Leonard notices that Mark is shaken and out of breath.

LEONARD

You look like you've had a day,
friend.

MARK

You could say that. Someone's
trying to kill me and I barely
escaped with my life.

LEONARD

I've had a few bad days myself.
That's why I'm going to Arkansas.
I'm meeting some potential
investors down there. Gonna get my
startup going!

MARK

Uh-huh.

LEONARD

Ye-e-es, I'm an idea man, and
ideas can happen anywhere, so if
I'm in a jam, I can just pick
myself up and move.

MARK

That's great. Super.

LEONARD

The name's Graham, Leonard Graham.

Leonard extends a hand. Mark absentmindedly shakes it.

MARK

Mark.

LEONARD

D'ya wanna know what kind of startup I'm pitching, Mark?

MARK

Not really. Hey, did you hear the explosions earlier? Are they gonna make an announcement or something?

LEONARD

Picture this. You know those little zeros and ones in digital coding? They run everything, right?

MARK

Right...

LEONARD

So what if you turn those zeroes and ones into ones and twos? Everything goes up!

MARK

You don't know the first thing about programming, do you?

LEONARD

Okay, okay. Forget the twos. You know the stock market? Did you know most trading is done by computers? Thousands of transactions every second.

MARK

Really? That's crazy.

LEONARD

Right? So, here's the idea. We create a virus and upload it into some key terminals. The virus spreads through the stock market and boom, it bottoms out.

MARK

Then what?

LEONARD

What do you mean?

MARK

What do you do after you crash the stock market and destroy the economy?

LEONARD

Hmm. Alright. You've heard of economic bubbles?

MARK

Bubbles, right. Like the, uh, housing bubble. The dot com bubble.

LEONARD

Right. So if you figure out the next bubble, you can rise with it and then manipulate it when it's at its peak.

MARK

So what's the next bubble?

LEONARD

Population.

MARK

Pardon?

LEONARD

In the next few decades, the world population is predicted to level off somewhere between 9 and 11 billion.

MARK

So?

LEONARD

SO??? We tap into that and we're made, baby!

MARK

How do you tap into the global population rate?

LEONARD

Well, you... You, uh... Okay, scratch that.

MARK

Have you ever followed a thought to its conclusion?

LEONARD

Oh, har dee har. Fine. I didn't want to share my best one with you anyway.

MARK

Which one's the best? Online key chains? Or, uh, electric tongs? Hahaha.

LEONARD

It's about energy.

MARK

Energy?

LEONARD

That's right. Energy.

MARK

Let me guess. Are you going to make a solar-powered phone? Or start a social media site about coal? Or, oh, I know! You're going to invent little energy capsules that fit inside flashlights and remote controls and use letters for their sizes like D and C and AA! What a novel invention!

LEONARD

Forget it. You don't want to hear it.

MARK

You're right. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got an important nap to take.

LEONARD

Fine. You take a nap and I'll bring down the energy industry, making billions in the process.

Mark pauses a beat.

MARK

Okay. I'll admit, I'm intrigued. How will you bring down the energy industry and make billions?

LEONARD

Personal energy supplies.

MARK

What is that? Like generators?

LEONARD

Generators aren't personal. You have to fill them up with fuel. You're still tied to the market!

Leonard pauses. He stares at Mark.

MARK

Ugh. Fine. "So how do you make personal energy supplies?"

LEONARD

You know how you can charge a headlight on a bike with friction from the wheel?

MARK

I believe I've seen that Simpsons episode, yes.

SFX: In the background, we hear the crew giving pre-flight instructions.

LEONARD

You take that same concept, hook it up to a pair of shoes instead of a bike, and wire it up to a battery to store it. You create and store energy by just walking around!

MARK

That can't possibly work. How much energy does that make?

LEONARD

As much as you want - if you're willing to walk for it. Here...

Leonard pulls out a pad of paper and a marker. He draws while he talks.

LEONARD

You see, the resistance in the shoe, which we can augment with an added component, is converted here into electricity, which is simple enough to send via these wires up to this central storage battery the user wears in a backpack-style harness.

MARK

Hmm, okay.

LEONARD

When you get home, you plug the battery into a central hub unit to power the house while you strap on the other battery and charge it as you go about your day. No oil, no coal, no panels, no nothing. Complete independence.

MARK

I can't believe I'm saying this, but that makes sense.

LEONARD

And it's easy to start up. You wouldn't believe.

Out the window, we see that the plane is starting down the runway and taking off.

MARK

Okay, I'll bite. How much would it cost to start up?

LEONARD

Oh, I figure about eleven million dollars.

MARK

What an amazing coincidence! I just happened to come into precisely that amount. We should work together.

LEONARD

Fantastic.

MARK

But first, I'm exhausted. Wake me up when we get there and let's grab some coffee or something.

Mark seems relaxed and optimistic for the first time. As he dozes off, three TERRORISTS quietly race up the aisle to the front of the cabin.

The terrorists are three men: CONNOR, TYLER, and MASON. They wear the white collarless shirt and taqiyah typical of the Muslim world as well as worn jeans and flip-flops. When they reach the front of the cabin, they wave guns around and shout to get the attention of the plane.

MASON

Everybody listen and we can take care of this quickly! We don't want to hurt anyone!

The passengers panic except Mark, who sleeps through the entire scene.

MASON

Hey, hey! Settle down! We said we don't want to hurt anyone. We just got on the wrong plane.

The passengers calm down.

PASSENGER

Where's the bomb?

CONNOR

What? No, there's no bomb. Here's the deal. It's a little embarrassing. You see, we thought we were buying tickets to Montana.

TYLER

We want to start a ranch!

CONNOR

Right. Thanks, Tyler. But I guess the ticket agent misunderstood and gave us tickets to Arkansas.

MASON

Ha ha, I bet that's happened to a lot of you.

The passengers shake their heads and mumble to each other, clearly never having experienced this.

TYLER

Well, you can understand our situation, anyway. So what--

The PILOT enters from the cabin. He's mellow and laid back and doesn't want any trouble.

PILOT

Hey, hey, what's all the commotion? I'm trying to fly this thing! Aw, jeez, are you trying to hijack this plane? I hate that airport! Everybody brings in guns!

MASON

We don't want to hijack it per se. We boarded the wrong flight and were hoping you could drop us off in Montana. You're right, by the way; that airport really is terrible.

PILOT

sigh I dunno, that's kind of a pain in the aft. Sorry, a little pilot humor there. Ok, let's hear your spiel.

The terrorists shrug, confused.

PILOT

Your story, fellas. Why should I reroute a plane to Montana, wasting a lot of fuel and ruining these nice people's plans?

The terrorists all talk at the same time as they explain their situation.

SFX: The sentimental music fades in.

CONNOR

You see, we've been urbanized and reliant on others our whole lives. We want to feel the dirt under our fingernails and grow our own food. We want to build our own home and set our own destiny. And Montana still has enough undeveloped land that we think we could start our new life there.

MASON

At the heart, it's about independence. We want to buy some land, build a home, and make our own way in the world without having our lives dictated to us by a boss or polite society. Just a man and his abilities.

TYLER

We want to fulfill the American Dream. To start from nothing and raise yourself up by your bootstraps. They're out of bootstraps in the city, heh, so we want to go somewhere remote and really do it ourselves the way people used to.

PILOT

Okay, okay. I think I get the picture.

SFX: Music fades out quickly.

The pilot picks up the INTERCOM and speaks into it.

PILOT

Hey, everyone, these guys are trying to start a ranch and kickstart their American Dream of self-reliance and independence. Whaddya say, is it okay if we swing by Montana and drop them off?

PASSENGERS

Yeah/Sure/Why not?/etc.

The terrorists jokingly wave their weapons around and do a "just kidding" gesture. Everyone has a good laugh.

PILOT

Hey, you guys are terroriffic!

The passengers all laugh.

EXT. RUNWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

The PLANE sits on the runway. The side of the plane says Escape Your Past Airways. The terrorists have just gotten off and are walking towards the terminal. Brad climbs out of the landing gear and boards the PLANE.

PILOT (O.S.)

Okay, folks, our entrepreneurial pals have disembarked, so we'll be on our way in just a few minutes.

INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Brad enters towards the front of the plane. Mark is awake now and sees him. He taps Leonard on the shoulder, and points at Brad.

MARK

(whispered)

That's the guy! He's trying to kill me.

LEONARD

(whispered)

We've gotta get out of here. C'mon, quick!

Leonard grabs his CARRY-ON BAG and they run to the back of the plane. They open the EMERGENCY EXIT and go down the inflatable SLIDE as the other passengers panic over the apparent emergency.

EXT. RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mark and Leonard run away from the PLANE as Brad starts down the SLIDE.

Cut to the terrorists carjacking a LUGGAGE CART. They're pointing their guns at the DRIVER.

TYLER

Out of the cart! Move! This cart is being confiscated in the name of agrarian nostalgia!

The driver raises his arms and scoots out of the CART. The terrorists start to climb in when Mark pushes them out of the way. Mark and Leonard get in the CART and drive away. Seconds later, Brad runs by, chasing after them.

Cut to Mark and Leonard in the CART. They reach the terminal and head inside. Brad is not very far behind them.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Mark and Leonard run into the terminal. Brad follows behind shortly. The three men run through the departure wing. They reach a moving sidewalk, get on it, and stop. All three are standing in place on the moving sidewalk, Brad about 20 feet behind the other two. Mark looks behind him and sees Brad.

MARK

C'mon, c'mon.

Mark and Leonard reach the end of the moving sidewalk and start running again. Brad does the same. Mark tries to knock over a large plant to block Brad's way, but it's too heavy and he gives up. The chase continues. They go into a gift shop.

AIRPORT GIFT SHOP

Mark and Leonard pick up knick-knacks off the shelves and throw them at Brad: snow globes, hats, books, etc. Mark picks up a copy of "Pity the Slug" by Dan Grubb and starts to throw it. He looks at it and speaks to the camera with a thumbs up.

MARK

Hey, that's a good one!

Mark throws the book at Brad. Leonard pulls at Mark and they leave the gift shop.

AIRPORT TERMINAL

Mark and Leonard duck into the ladies' room. Brad sees them and follows them in.

LADIES' ROOM

Brad enters the room. He doesn't see anybody. He checks under the stalls. One stall has a set of women's legs and one stall has two sets of legs in trousers that match those worn by Mark and Leonard. He kicks open that stall DOOR to find two TSA AGENTS -- one male, one female -- making out. The male TSA agent sees Brad and punches him in the mouth, knocking him backwards.

MALE TSA AGENT

Pervert!

The TSA agents leave the stall and punch and kick Brad until he loses consciousness, then exit the restroom. The SUPPLIES CLOSET DOOR opens slowly and Mark and Leonard peek out. They see Brad lying unconscious on the floor and make a hasty exit.

Another stall opens and a woman peeks out and sees Brad on the floor. She lets out a small yell and slams the door shut and locks it.

EXT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

There is a line of TAXIS in front of the terminal. Mark and Leonard exit the terminal, get into a TAXI, and drive off.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a hotel. People are still out, cars still parked, restaurants still open.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Mark is flipping through the channels on the TV while Leonard unpacks his carry-on bag. Among other things he pulls out a LAPTOP and a NOTEBOOK full of scribbled ideas. He sets the NOTEBOOK down next to Mark's JEWELRY BOX, opens his LAPTOP and does some work.

MARK

I don't like it. We're just sitting here. We should be moving, going somewhere new.

LEONARD

Where should we go? Back to the airport to go to a new city? A bus station? Another hotel? We need to plan our next move. That's better done here in a calm environment than out there running around and looking over our shoulders.

MARK

But what if he finds me?

LEONARD

What's he gonna do, break down every hotel door in town? We got away. He was unconscious. He has no way of knowing where we are. Tomorrow we can go somewhere and continue work on the wearable battery. Tonight we need to rest and regroup.

MARK

All right, but I'm gonna at least go grab some food. I need to be somewhere normal to clear my head.

Mark heads for the door.

LEONARD

Hey, how much cash do you have on you?

MARK

I dunno, two thousand?

LEONARD

Why don't you leave it here and just take enough for dinner? That's a lot to walk around with.

MARK

True.

Mark opens the JEWELRY BOX and puts a small pile of hundred dollar bills on top of the watches and rings that are in there.

MARK

See ya.

Mark leaves. Leonard picks up the phone.

LEONARD

Hello, room service?

HOTEL LOBBY

Mark comes out of the stairwell and heads for the exit. He doesn't notice that at the front desk, Brad is talking to the HOTEL CLERK. Brad holds up a photo of Mark and his FBI badge.

BRAD

Sir, I'm looking for a person of interest. Have you seen this man?

CLERK

Yes sir, he checked in a little while ago.

BRAD

Would you mind telling me what room he's in?

CLERK

I don't know if I can do that.

BRAD

Sir, it's a national security, manhunt kind of thing. What room?

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY

Brad walks down the hall and finds Mark and Leonard's room. He knocks on the door.

HOTEL ROOM

Leonard gets off the bed and heads to the door.

LEONARD

Is that room service?

BRAD (O.S.)

Sure is.

Leonard opens the door. Brad shoves his way in and throws Leonard into the bathroom. He searches for Mark, keeping an eye on Leonard so he won't get away.

BRAD

Where's your friend? Where's Lomack?

LEONARD

I dunno. He left.

BRAD

Well, I guess I'm just gonna have to jog your memory.

Brad approaches Leonard. Leonard puts his hands up.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Mark is sitting at the bar. The bartender - a charming, attractive woman in tight jeans and a tank top named VICTORIA - brings him his beer.

VICTORIA

You're new in town, aren't you? Passing through or sticking around?

MARK

I dunno. I'm kind of at a crossroads.

VICTORIA

Well, you probably don't wanna stick around here. There's nothing to do, nowhere to go. Everyone just picks their bar and waits there until it's time to die.

MARK

Hmm. Yeah.

Mark takes a sip of his beer. He looks around at the others in the bar. They're all middle-aged or older and most are drunk.

VICTORIA

Are you here alone?

MARK

No, I'm travelling with a friend.
A business partner, I guess.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brad and Leonard are kneeling down next to the filled BATHTUB. Brad is holding Leonard's head under the water. After a few seconds, he lets go and Leonard sits up.

BRAD

Are you gonna tell me now?

LEONARD

(gasping)

I think it started with my mother.
She was a strict woman, but fair.

Brad plunges Leonard's head back into the water. He thrashes around for a few seconds. Brad pulls him back out.

LEONARD

(gasping)

You know, studies show torture
actually decreases the
effectiveness of information gath-

Brad plunges Leonard's head back into the water. There's a knock at the door.

WAITER (O.S.)

Room service!

Brad lets go of Leonard. Leonard sits up and falls back onto the floor.

BRAD

Make a sound and you're dead.

Brad opens the door.

BRAD

Oh, great! Thanks.

The WAITER starts to bring the cart in. Brad pushes against it.

BRAD

Oh, that's okay. I'll take it.

WAITER

That's fine. I just need your signature.

The waiter presents a bill and pen. Brad scribbles a signature and returns it. The waiter sees the water dripping off Brad's soaking wet arm, under which is a holstered PISTOL. Leonard coughs in the bathroom. The waiter's eyes meet Brad's.

BRAD

Something wrong?

The waiter laughs nervously.

WAITER

Nope. Everything looks fine to me.

Brad takes the tray of food from the cart and places it on one of the beds.

BRAD

Thanks a lot.

WAITER

Thank you, sir. Have a good night.

Brad closes the door. He looks at Leonard in the bathroom, drenched and just getting his breath back.

BRAD

Let's try something else. You're going to give me your phone and get on the bed. Make yourself comfortable. Find a good show. I'm going to sit over here and wait for Lomack to get back. If you move, I'll kill you.

Leonard does as he's told. Brad starts to tie Leonard up with bed sheets and raises a WASHCLOTH to his mouth.

LEONARD

What if I need to use the
bathroom?

BRAD

It's a hotel. They're used to
getting fluids out of sheets.

Brad stuffs the WASHCLOTH in Leonard's mouth.

INT. BAR - LATER

Mark is talking to Victoria. He's had a few and slurs.

MARK

Is there a Mr. Victoria?

VICTORIA

There would have been.

VICTORIA looks down.

VICTORIA

Henry. But, uh, he went out one
night and never came back.

MARK

Oh, no. He left you?

VICTORIA

No, he went missing. I don't know
what happened to him. We'd talked
about marriage a few times and I
think he was going to ask me. But
then he just disappeared.

MARK

Oh my god. That's terrible.

VICTORIA

You remind me of him a little.
Same build, same hair. You sound
like him. I don't usually chat so
much at work, but there's just
something about you that
feels...different...

Mark and Victoria gaze at each other.

SFX: The background noise and southern rock from the jukebox fades out and the sentimental music fades in.

Mark and Victoria inch closer to each other. As they're about to kiss, the door slams open. HENRY enters the bar. He is bigger than MARK and has a different build, skin color, hairstyle, and voice. He looks and sounds nothing like Mark.

HENRY

Victoria! I'm back!

VICTORIA

Henry! Oh my god! I thought you were dead!

SFX: Abrupt shift back to the bar noise and jukebox southern rock.

Victoria rushes over to Henry. They embrace and kiss as long-lost lovers do. Mark bangs his head on the bar several times. He looks over at Victoria and Henry, then takes his beer and heads for the back of the bar.

Mark is stopped by an old timer, HAROLD, 70. His clothes are a little shabby. His stubble is unkempt, but not horrid. He's out of shape, but not fat. He slouches. His voice sounds like he's given up, but he has an air of confidence about him.

HAROLD

Sorry about your luck, buddy.

MARK

It's okay. That always happens. I think my life is gonna get better, but I end up in the same old barrel of crap.

HAROLD

Hey, at least you've got a barrel. Have a seat.

Mark sits across from Harold.

MARK

I guess that's one way to look at it.

HAROLD

That's what I do. I find a better way to look at things. I hate my job and I can't maintain a relationship, but it pays the bills and I keep myself busy.

MARK

It sounds like you settled.

HAROLD

That's exactly what I did. You should try it.

MARK

But I don't want to settle. I want to do something with my life. That's why I'm out here. I'm working on an invention.

HAROLD

Oh, I see. So this invention is your lifelong dream?

MARK

Not exactly. I met a guy on the plane who told me about it.

HAROLD

Oh, so it's his lifelong dream and you're helping him fulfill it?

MARK

Not really. He had a few other ideas that he seemed pretty into.

HAROLD

Mm-hmm. I think we're not so different after all. Chasing someone else's semi-dream, doing what we're supposed to do. You're settling. And that's okay.

MARK

Really? But people hate settling.

HAROLD

They say that, but in the end everybody settles. It's not so bad. Yeah, my apartment has mold and my kids don't want to talk to me. So what? I don't have any regrets. You gotta appreciate the little things, like how a tooth stops hurting after it falls out. Or how you get to sleep in after you're laid off. Look on the bright side of things. It'll keep you happy.

MARK

Happy?

HAROLD

Well, content. And that's about the same thing.

Mark looks at Harold with an expression like "Yeah, maybe this guy has a point".

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Mark walks towards the hotel and talks to himself. He's not staggering drunk, but he's definitely had a few.

MARK

Leonard, I'm gonna settle. You do the thing and I'm gonna take the money and settle. House. Pool. Trips. Sounds pretty good. I got the money. I did it. I can do anything. Open a restaurant. Write a book. Start a business. God, those sound boring.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mark unlocks the door and opens it. He speaks as he enters the room.

MARK

Leonard, we gotta talk.

Mark sees the situation and starts to leave.

MARK

Box!

Mark reaches for the JEWELRY BOX. Brad shoots at Mark and misses. Mark runs out the door, leaving the BOX behind. Brad glances towards where Mark was reaching, then runs for the door. Leonard manages to stick a leg out to block Brad and buy Mark some time. Brad shakes him off and runs out the door.

HOTEL HALLWAY

Brad looks down the hallway. It's empty. He runs to the stairwell and enters.

STAIRWELL

Brad looks up and down the stairwell, but there's no sign of Mark. He knows he's lost him and heads back to the room.

HOTEL ROOM

Brad returns to the room. He picks up the JEWELRY BOX to see what was so important for Mark to risk his life over. When he sees the watches and rings, he grins. Brad pockets the watches and rings and drops the box on the floor as he walks out of the room.

HOTEL HALLWAY

Brad walks down the hall and enters the stairwell. After he's gone, the SUPPLIES CLOSET DOOR opens and Mark pokes his head out. He leaves the closet and tip-toes up the hall to his room's open door. He peeks in the door and sees Leonard tied up on the bed, facing away from him, not moving. He puts his hand over his mouth for a second, looking sad and terrified. He looks down and sees the empty BOX on the floor. He runs away as quietly as he can.

HOTEL ROOM

We hear Mark's footsteps as he runs away. Leonard's body is still as he tries to spit the WASHCLOTH out of his mouth. He gets frustrated and shakes his body violently.

EXT. CITY STREETS - LATE AT NIGHT

Mark is walking down the street. He keeps looking around to see if Brad is following him.

SFX: A roll of thunder.

It starts to rain. Mark pulls his jacket collar up and keeps walking. A few shots of him walking in the rain, looking for somewhere to hole up for the night. He passes a CHURCH. The PRIEST, 60, is huddled on the stoop, smoking and trying to not to get wet. He sees Mark walking slowly and distractedly.

PRIEST
Sir, are you okay?

MARK
Me?

PRIEST
Yeah. Are you okay? Do you know where you're going?

MARK
Not really, no.

The priest stubs out his cigarette and flicks it away.

PRIEST
You'd best come in, then. Come on.

Mark follows him inside.

INT. CHURCH

The priest leads Mark to a BENCH in the church lobby. They both sit.

PRIEST
Do you want to tell me what's going on?

MARK

I, uh, I guess. I just got here from out of town. I can't really go back. I lost my money and I'll be killed if I go back to my hotel room. And my partner is dead. And I don't have a job. Or a plan. And I don't know what to do.

PRIEST

Now, now. It's okay. You can stay here for the night. I know a place where you can find some work in the morning. After that, you can figure out what to do.

MARK

Thanks.

The priest shows Mark to a room with a few cots set up. Two are unoccupied. Mark lies down on one and goes to sleep almost immediately.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

The priest and Mark are in the priest's car. The storm has passed and it's a sunny morning. The priest drops Mark off at a hardware store. Mark gets out and talks to the priest through the open car window.

MARK

So I just stand over there with those guys?

PRIEST

Yep. They come here every morning. There's always something that needs doing. It's manual labor. Have you done work like that?

MARK

A little, yeah.

PRIEST

You might want to say that you've done a lot.

MARK

Right. Hey, thanks for everything. I thought you guys were all molesters and fire and brimstone fanatic types. But you're okay.

PRIEST

Uh, thanks.

MARK

You know, I think my luck's gonna turn around. It's always darkest before dawn, right?

PRIEST

That's wonderful. Now I need to--

MARK

I feel refreshed. Like anything's possible.

PRIEST

I'm glad. I really need to go, so I'll see you around.

MARK

Yes, the sky's the limit. I can--

PRIEST

Great! Goodbye! Jesus!

The priest speeds away. Mark walks over to the DAY LABORERS, a group of Latino men standing outside the hardware store. He waves to them, but they don't respond. After a few seconds, a white guy with a pathetic attempt at a moustache, TRAVIS, approaches him.

TRAVIS

Hey, freeloader!

Mark looks around. He points at himself inquisitively.

TRAVIS

Yeah, you, job stealer! Why don't you back where you came from?

MARK

Where, Ohio?

TRAVIS

I can't underSTAND you, ese! *No hablo burrito por favor, amigo!*

MARK

But I'm speaking English.

TRAVIS

What? Taco grande? No, I don't want your taco grande! Go back to Algeria!

MARK

I'm not speaking Spanish. Also, uh, I think Algeria is in Africa.

TRAVIS

Ooooh! Ching chong chang ching chong!

MARK

Is that supposed to be Chinese? Is this your first day of being an asshole?

An unmarked VAN pulls up quickly. A MAN in a jumpsuit with a logo on the left breast steps out.

MAN

Alright, I need six guys.

A few laborers step forward. The man approaches Travis as he continues to complain.

TRAVIS

Yeah, six guys to mooch offa me and my taxes! 'Cause I'm a 'Merican! We fight for freedom here! These colors do not run!

The man punches Travis in the face, knocking him out. Nearby, Brad walks up the street, looking for Mark. Mark sees Brad coming and volunteers for work.

MAN

Okay, so...you, you. You, you.
You, annnnd...you.

The man points at Mark. The selected laborers walk to the van, where a SECOND MAN in a matching jumpsuit puts backwards SKI MASKS over their heads and shoves them inside. Brad witnesses this from nearby. The van drives off.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

The van drives along in the middle of nowhere. They pass the three terrorists, who are hitchhiking.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Mark and the other laborers eat lunch at a table with the two MEN. They still have the MASKS on, but the bottoms are lifted up enough to uncover their mouths.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - EVENING

The van continues driving.

EXT. SECRET LAIR - NIGHT

The van pulls up near a CAVE ENTRANCE in the mountains. Mark and the laborers are helped out of the van and led inside.

INT. SECRET LAIR - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The laborers are each taken to separate cells.

MARK'S CELL

A GUARD stands behind Mark. He sits Mark down on a chair and removes his MASK. The guard takes a couple of steps back, but is still very imposing. An HR recruiter, TRICIA, sits across from Mark. Tricia is a woman in her late 30s, a little on the plump side, and superficially friendly and upbeat. She wears a jumpsuit identical to the men in the van.

TRICIA

Hello. My name is Tricia and I'm your recruiter. How are we today?

MARK

A little confused. Where am I?

TRICIA

Mm-hmm. And what sort of manual labor experience do you have?

MARK

Um, I've helped friends move before. And I, uh-- Say, can I make a quick phone call? I told my roommate I'd--

TRICIA

I'm afraid not. You'll find our security policies are quite strict.

MARK

I'll find...? I thought I was just getting a job. Can you tell me what's going on?

TRICIA

All in due time. Now, do you have any experience working in a secure environment? Say a military base or a government office?

MARK

A bank call center, that's all. Is that a machine gun?

Mark points to the heavily armed guard.

TRICIA

Yes, you'll find most of the staff here are armed at all times.

MARK

Is this some sort of security gig? Or military?

TRICIA

Not exactly.

INT. SECRET LAIR - DAY

SUPER: Six months later

MONTAGE

Mark narrates over light, peppy music like Muzak or "Mr. Sandman".

Unless otherwise noted, everyone in the lair wears matching jumpsuits at all times. Each kind of worker wears a different color jumpsuit.

Mark serves food in the cafeteria.

MARK (V.O.)

If you asked me a year ago, "How would you like to perform unskilled labor for a dangerous quasi-legal organization hidden inside a mountain?"...

Mark drives a forklift.

MARK (V.O.)

I would have probably said no and told my friends about the weirdo who offered me a job for insane people.

Mark cleans a bathroom.

MARK (V.O.)

But now that I'm here, I have to admit, it's not bad.

All the WORKERS are lined up in rows in a giant room for their regular morning exercise session. They do jumping jacks.

MARK (V.O.)

They say exercise is good for the mind.

Mark goes down a hallway emptying TRASH CANS into a big cart.

MARK (V.O.)
And they're right! All that time
wasting away at my desk...

The rows of exercising workers practice karate.

MARK (V.O.)
really took a toll on my mind, my
mood, everything.

Mark uses aircraft marshaling wands to guide a 50-foot missile into a silo.

MARK (V.O.)
I felt great moving around,
meeting new people...

The rows of exercising workers do ballet steps.

MARK (V.O.)
and seeing the results of my work.

Mark puts a lid on a BARREL with several different hazard stickers on it and bangs the lid shut with a mallet.

MARK (V.O.)
It was like going to camp or
joining the army.

The rows of exercising workers swing dance.

MARK (V.O.)
Your day was planned out for you
and they had everything you needed
there, so you never had to leave.

Mark dances on a STRIPPER POLE in front of a few others at the lair's bar. He dismounts and they applaud.

MARK (V.O.)
We didn't have TV or the internet
or any access to the outside
world, but we didn't need it.

Two teams of workers play volleyball in a sand pit. Mark is one of the players. They wear tank tops and short shorts bearing the same logo as the jumpsuits. Mark sets up the ball and a TEAMMATE spikes it for a point. Mark and the teammate high five and slap each other on the butt.

MARK (V.O.)

We had our work and we had each other. I had never been happier.

Mark wears a GAS MASK while handling toxic substances in a lab. Through a window he sees what is clearly the woman in charge, followed by her loyal group of hangers-on. They walk quickly down a hallway and disappear from Mark's sight. Mark takes off his GAS MASK and we see his curious face as he wonders who they are. After a beat, he coughs violently and puts the MASK back on.

MARK (V.O.)

I guess it never occurred to me that I had no idea who ran the place.

Mark sits at a table loading ammunition into clips. Two armed GUARDS in black jumpsuits walk up behind him. One nudges him with the barrel of his machine gun. Mark gets up and they lead him away.

MARK (V.O.)

So imagine my surprise when I was told the head of the entire organization wanted to meet with me personally! I was really going places.

INT. DR. MORBID'S OFFICE

The office is tastefully enormous, decorated with accessories one might find in the Batcave: the skeleton of a giant prehistoric bird, a 10' tall antique commemorative spoon, a man sealed in a soundproof glass box, etc. Behind a desk there is an oversized desk chair with its back turned to the room and a glass wall overlooking the hangar-sized main work area of the lair.

Mark is led in at gunpoint by the two guards. They walk him to a chair in front of the desk and motion for him to sit down. Mark sits and DR. MORBID immediately begins speaking.

MORBID

Good morning, Mark. It's so nice to finally meet you. I do try to get to know all my employees.

The chair spins around to reveal Dr. Linda Morbosa, aka Dr. Morbid, the woman Mark saw earlier with her entourage. She is about 60 and has aged gracefully. Her hair is gray and short. She wears a cream suit. She's every bit the ideal executive: she's sophisticated, she delights in her work, she's keenly aware of her environment, and she's probably calculating a few other things at the same time she's speaking with Mark.

MORBID

Well, the ones that last long enough, anyway. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Doctor Linda Morbosa, but most people know me as...Dr. Morbid! Mwa ha haaaaa!

Morbid pauses for a reaction. Mark just sits there.

MORBID

Really? Nothing? Dr. Morbid?

Mark shrugs.

MORBID

I've got to get a better publicist. Neil, will you make a note to fire Ned Ureejuns? Anyway. You've proven yourself to be a valuable worker. We like that around here. Keep it up and you'll go far. Not like him.

Morbid gestures towards the MAN in the glass box. He bangs on the wall.

MORBID

A little bit about me: I had a typical suburban upbringing. My parents were kind and caring. They put me through college and told me to follow my dreams. I got my EMBA from the University of Chicago. As a graduation present to myself, I assembled a team of mercenaries and stole most of the Ancient Egyptian exhibit from the Field Museum. Art is nice, but I prefer the gravity that one gets from a 4,000-year-old sarcophagus.

She gestures towards a corner of the office where a pharaoh's sarcophagus stands.

MORBID

Well, once I got a taste of the criminal mastermind lifestyle, I was hooked. I've built this organization from the ground up. We've stolen nuclear weapons, vandalized natural wonders, and eroded the world's economic productivity so civilization will collapse in approximately seven years. Social media? That was me.

MARK

Wow. You're good.

MORBID

Thanks! I appreciate your appreciation. Ha HAH!

MARK

Wait, so you're like a supervillain.

MORBID

No, I'm not LIKE a supervillain, my boy. I AM one. Please try to speak precisely. It's more becoming.

MARK

I don't know if I can keep working for you. It seems kind of wrong.

MORBID

Mark, you have the chance to be part of something big. We've got a lot of balls in the air right now, and I need a new senior supervisor to keep one of my projects on track. I've noticed your work on the floor and would like to offer you the job. What do you say?

MARK

You...you like my work? And want to promote me? I've never been offered a promotion before.

MORBID

Your old bosses clearly don't know a good thing when they see it.

MARK

And compliments. Those are new. But it's just, well, you're evil...ish.

MORBID

Oh, now Mark. I'm not evil. I'm the president of a Fortune 200 corporation slash micro-nation. I've got to do what's best for the company. And if that means wiggling around a regulation here and there, so be it. Did I mention I'll kill you if you refuse my offer?

MARK

Good point. Where do I sign?

MORBID

Marvelous! Let's get you out of that jumpsuit and into something more...executive.

INT. EXECUTIVE WING OF MORBID'S LAIR

Morbid leads Mark through the hallways of executive offices. They are followed by her gaggle of assistants. Mark is wearing a new jumpsuit designed to look like a dark gray suit, complete with a pink tie and pocket square printed on it along with the logo.

MORBID

You'll be leading Project Sisyphus. We're developing a wearable battery that is charged by the wearer's movement. The obvious applications are for charging smartphones and handheld game systems, but we'd like to eventually get into electric cars, handheld kitchen appliances, et cetera. Totally revolutionary, right? I bet you've never heard of an idea like that!

MARK

Uh, nope. Sure haven't.

MORBID

It's not the greatest idea, but some mafia jackass moved in on my forged antique commemorative spoon operation. The project is currently Harry Balzac's responsibility, but he has proven himself unable to manage his workload.

They stop at BALZAC'S OFFICE. BALZAC is sitting at his desk and wears a jumpsuit identical to Mark's. He looks up as Morbid arrives.

MORBID

Harry? You're fired.

Morbid presses a button on her phone and Balzac bursts into flames. Morbid and her assistants walk away. Mark lingers for a second, staring at Balzac, then runs to catch up as Balzac burns and dies screaming.

MORBID

I run a tight ship, Mark. And-- Ha ha. "Fired." I didn't even mean to do that. Oh, that's good. Wendell, write that one down. "Fired." Hah! I run a tight ship, Mark. Harry's load will be given to other managers and we'll start you off with just Sisyphus.

They arrive at another office. An elderly man, OFFERMAN, stands next to the desk.

MORBID

Here's your new office. Your assistant, Jack Offerman, will attend to your needs. Oh, and one more thing. Now that you're upstairs, you'll need a new, sexy name. Think of something clever, something naughty. Have fun with it! And please, no Dicks or Johnsons. Come on, "Balzac"? Really? Thank God he's dead. Ha ha-a-a! Toodle-oo, Mark! I'm taking Mitch Enary, Terrance Umclozoff, and Aaron AdultprogrammingaftertenPM to pick out some egg-shaped furniture for the silver lounge by the shark tank!

Morbid exits with her assistants. Mark takes the room in as he sits down at the desk. He immediately jumps up out of the chair and checks it for traps.

OFFERMAN

I wouldn't worry about it, sir. Dr. Morbid is tough but fair.

Mark relaxes a little and sits back down in the chair.

MARK

So what do I...do now? I've never managed before.

OFFERMAN

Mostly, you try to think of solutions to your project's issues. If a vendor is always delayed, get a new one. If the detonators aren't activating correctly, kill an engineer or two to inspire the rest to figure it out. You know, manager stuff.

MARK

I guess you've been here a while. Is it always this exciting?

OFFERMAN

Not usually. Sure, we have a high turnover rate, but it's not that much worse than other corporations. Mostly we just get our work done and let Dr. Morbid worry about the big things.

MARK

Hmm, sounds like most of my old jobs. Keep your head down and let the bosses make the decisions.

OFFERMAN

Hey, look on the bright side. If the shit hits the fan, you'll have plausible deniability. You're just following orders.

MARK

Isn't that what the Nazis said?

OFFERMAN

Yeah, but we didn't really mean it.

Mark gets up and walks to his window overlooking the main room of the lair. He looks out the window and thinks.

SFX: The sentimental music fades in.

MARK

You know, Jack, I think this is a good change. Sure I'm working for the forces of evil, but if I didn't, someone else would. And if she keeps killing people around here, I'm bound to be promoted as long as I stay on her good side. I think I've finally found the ticket to a good life. For the first time, things are genuinely looking up for me.

The ceiling of the lair explodes. COMMANDOS rappel down from the holes in the ceiling, firing at the workers and the offices on the way down.

MAIN FLOOR

There is chaos on the floor. Workers are running for their lives, screaming. The commandos reach the floor. They are led by Brad.

BRAD

All right, Alpha team, take the north wing! Bravo, take the east! Gamma, secure this area! Delta, come with me. We're going upstairs.

Brad points at the shattered windows of the upstairs offices.

MARK'S OFFICE

Through the window, Mark sees Brad down on the main floor. Brad is pointing at Mark.

Mark panics. He turns around and sees that Offerman has been killed. He runs around the office, looking in drawers and shelves for a weapon. He tries a button on his desk and a panel opens in the wall that contains GRENADES and a MACHINE GUN. Mark grabs the GUN and a GRENADE. He reconsiders and puts the GRENADE back.

Mark looks for a place to hide and settles on crouching behind his desk. He points the GUN at the door and waits. A GRAPPLING HOOK shoots through the broken window behind him and hits Mark on the side of the head before it latches onto the front of the desk. Mark falls to the floor as Brad climbs the rope through the window. He sees Mark and is so excited to find him that he looks rabid. Mark starts to raise up off the floor.

BRAD

I found you. It took months of planning and millions of dollars to organize the operation. I had to convince three levels of supervisors that it was worth it to catch your idiot boss. But I found you.

MARK

Now, wait. I'm sure we can come to some--

Brad shoots Mark four times in the torso. Mark falls back down, dying.

Cut to Mark's point of view. Brad is laughing. Two AGENTS bring in Dr. Morbid in handcuffs.

FBI AGENT

Sir, we've got her.

BRAD

What? Oh, right. Good! We finally got you Ms. Morbid.

MORBID

DOCTOR Morbid!

BRAD

Ha ha, okay. Whatever.

Fade to white.

EXT. HEAVEN - DAY

Fade in on Mark standing in line to get into Heaven. He's wearing a white robe. It looks just like in stories: on top of a cloud, other souls in white robes stand in line and wait for their turn to see ST. PETER. St. Peter has a halo and a white beard. He stands with an enormous WHITE LEDGER in front of the Pearly Gates.

Mark taps the shoulder of the soul in front of him.

MARK

Excuse me. Is this... Are we, you know, dead?

SOUL

I think so, yeah. Last thing I remember, I was in a hospital bed. Now I'm here.

MARK

But things were finally looking up! God dammit!

ST. PETER

All right, who said that? Who blasphemed in this holiest of places?

Everyone in line points at Mark.

ST. PETER

Right.

St. Peter storms over to Mark.

ST. PETER

You pompous twit, what's the matter with you? Why do you find it necessary to take my lord's name in vain?

MARK

I'm sorry, sir. It's just...

ST. PETER

It's just what?

MARK

It's just that things were finally starting to happen to me. Good things. My whole life I just wanted happiness, and it was finally coming my way.

St. Peter softens and puts his hand on Mark's shoulder.

ST. PETER

Look, I've seen an awful lot of people walk through these gates. I can tell you the ones who looked the happiest were the ones that didn't wait for good things to happen to them. They made them happen. No one gets anywhere by wishing.

Mark looks confused and a little ashamed.

ST. PETER

Maybe I was a little harsh. Let's take a look at your record.

St. Peter sticks out his arm and his big WHITE LEDGER appears in his hand. He reads it for a second, then scowls.

ST. PETER

You broke into your old office, derailed a federal investigation, stole a widow's fortune, and worked for an international criminal mastermind?

St. Peter signals to an ANGEL by the gates.

MARK

Well, you see, what happened was--

The angel presses a button and the cloud opens up under Mark. Mark falls.

ST. PETER

(looking down into hole)
Wow, what an asshole.

The angel and other souls nod in agreement.

EXT. HELL - DAY

Mark falls an immeasurable distance and lands in an office chair in a cubicle. Cut to a wider shot of a few cubicles in what is clearly Hell. The cubicles are sitting out on the rocky ground near flowing magma. In the background we see rising flames and lakes of fire scattered throughout the landscape.

A DEMON walks up to Mark. He is a classic monstrous demon with horns and a pointed tail, but he is dressed in slacks and a button-down shirt with a clip-on tie. His voice is gravelly, but perky.

DEMON

Well, hello. You must be Mark.
Welcome to Hell. You'll be
receiving complaints here on
extension 29746 for the next, oh,
eternity.

As he says "eternity", flames dramatically shoot up nearby.

DEMON

Ha ha, we like to kid around down
here. We're a little cuckoo like
that. But seriously, you'll be
here forever. Here's some
paperwork for you to fill out when
you get a chance. An-n-n-nd,
you're on!

A red light turns on next to Mark and his phone starts ringing. The camera zooms out slowly, revealing the vastness of Hell, similar to the final shots of "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "Citizen Kane".

SFX: Dramatic orchestral music builds during the zoom out. It reaches a climax and ends as we go to black.

BLACK OUT

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The cleaning woman, MARIA, knocks and enters the room.

MARIA

Room service. Anyone-- Ah!

She sees Leonard tied up on the bed. She frees him and gets him a cup of water. His pants are soiled on the front and back.

LEONARD

Thank you. Thank you, miss.

Leonard kisses her on the cheek. They both get suddenly nervous and excited. They start passionately kissing.

CREDITS

During the credits, we see the following stills:

- Leonard and Maria on a date
- Leonard proposing
- Their wedding
- Maria yelling while giving birth while Leonard holds her hand
- Leonard and Maria arguing at home
- Maria catching Leonard with another woman
- Maria firing a shotgun at Leonard, mid-blast
- Leonard immediately afterwards, his hands held up, flashing an apologetic smile at Maria while the other woman escapes
- Leonard and Maria making out seconds later next to a gaping hole in the wall through which we see the woman running down the street