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G-Man Blues

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G-Man Blues

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Lee Michael Cohn

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The Thesis of Lee Michael Cohn is approved:

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Committee Co-Chairperson

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Committee Co-Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

FADE IN:

INT. ROOM – NIGHT

An old closed-top phonograph, plays “Grinnin’ In Your Face” A a dark and spare blues tune by Son House. On top of the phonograph rests a leather shoulder holster containing a .38, its strap falling over the front of the record player. The record finished, the arm lifts and moves back, and the record starts playing again. A MAN’S HAND grabs the holster, takes the needle off the record.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET – NIGHT

New York City. Spring, 1966. BARRY SILVER (35, rough-featured but handsome, with piercing, intelligent blue eyes) locks his car, a big white Chevy convertible, and walks down a crowded street in Greenwich Village, filled with Friday night revelers.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Barry crosses the street passes a club: “Gertie’s Folk City.” He turns down a side street and enters an alley, passing a couple of middle-aged NYPD COPS idling against a wall, watching the crowd. The cops glance at him and follow.

EXT. ALLEY/“GERTIE’S” BACK DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Barry walks down the alley, glances over his shoulder and sees:  
The cops slowly following him at a discreet distance.  
Barry knocks on a door.  
It opens a crack, and a pair of dark eyes peer out.

BARRY

I’m Barry. I’m here to see Mario.

RODNEY

Oh, right, you the Jew lawyer.

The door opens, revealing the rest of the huge African-American dude.

INT. VESTIBULE – CONTINUOUS

Rodney escorts Barry into a narrow, darkened vestibule, then down a set of stairs.

INT. CLUB BASEMENT PRIVATE ROOM – CONTINUOUS

A small, dark private club room. A small bar, a few tables, a couple of beat up couches. The street-level windows are high on the walls. A pile of white powder on the coffee table. A slumming RICH COUPLE, a black DRAG QUEEN and two HOOKERS sit around, high. An OLD BLACK MAN sits quietly in a corner. "Spoonful" by Willie Dixon play on the stereo.

RODNEY  
Have a seat.

Rodney exits. Barry sits on the couch next to the Drag Queen, who sidles up next to him.

DRAG QUEEN  
Hello handsome. What brings you to the bowels of the demimonde this evening?

BARRY  
No offense, gorgeous, but I go the other way.

Barry smiles at the Rich Woman, who takes a snort then smiles back.

RICH WOMAN  
My husband and I love to party in threes. Right honey?

The Rich Man has his eyes closed, swaying to the music.

RICH MAN  
Not now. I'm communing with Robert Johnson.

BARRY  
No you're not.

RICH MAN  
(opens his eyes)  
What?

BARRY  
That's Willie Dixon, not Robert Johnson.

RICH MAN  
I think you're mistaken. I know my blues, friend.

BARRY

Anyone can't tell the difference between Willie Dixon and Robert Johnson don't know shit about the blues.

The Drag Queen laughs.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Just sayin'.

INT. CLUB BASEMENT PRIVATE ROOM – LATER

Barry sits on the couch, growing a bit impatient.

Rodney re-enters with MARIO ANTONELLI, 50, the club owner. He goes right over to Barry.

MARIO

You Marty's guy?

(off Barry's nod)

I seen you before. You been in the club?

BARRY

(shrugs)

Once or twice.

MARIO

You got something for me?

Barry produces an envelope from his inside jacket pocket, opens it, revealing a thick wad of cash. Mario nods to Rodney, who opens a guitar case and produces 6 five-kilo bags of heroin wrapped in tin foil. Barry inspects one of the kilos, nods "yes" to Mario. Mario gestures "gimme" to Barry.

Barry stands, pulls his badge and gun.

BARRY

Federal Agent! You're all under arrest!

MARIO

YOU TAKE THAT BADGE AND SHOVE IT UP YOUR ASS!

BARRY

(offended)

Hey!

Rodney makes a move. Barry hits him hard on the head with the butt of his gun. Blood gushes as he goes down. Barry, fires a shot at the ceiling. Everyone screams and cowers.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
GET IN HERE!

DRAG QUEEN (O.C.)  
I'm not going back to fucking jail!

She jumps on Barry's back. Barry manages to grab a chair and heave it through one of the windows.

BARRY  
(yelling up to the window)  
GET IN HERE!

Barry spins around and smashes the Drag Queen against the door, knocking it open. Barry staggers into the hallway, the Drag Queen still on his back. The Rich Man and Woman rush into the hallway and try to squeeze by. Barry trips the woman and grabs the man by his ponytail, all the while being clawed at by the Drag Queen.

Barry throws the Rich Man back into the room just as Mario comes out to join the fray. They slam into each other and go down like bowling pins. Barry then turns around and backs up hard against the wall. The Drag Queen hits her head on the wall and fall to the floor.

INT. CLUB BASEMENT PRIVATE ROOM – CONTINUOUS

As Barry heads back into the club room, Rodney appears out of nowhere and tackles him. The two wrestle on the floor, but Barry finally manages to choke him unconscious. Barry retrieves his weapon, and sees:  
The Old Man inching towards the door.

Barry trains the gun on the Old Man.

BARRY  
Stay still or I'll shoot you.

The Old Man stops dead and puts his hands in the air.

BARRY (CONT'D)



Sit on the couch and don't move.

The Old Man sits gingerly on the couch, his hands still in the air.

Barry stares for at the Old Man for a moment.

BARRY (CONT'D)

You Johnny Lee Redmond?

OLD MAN (JOHNNY LEE)

That I am.

Barry lowers the gun.

BARRY

Sir, I am a huge fucking fan.

OLD MAN

Thank you kindly.

INT. CLUB BASEMENT PRIVATE ROOM – LATER

Two other plainclothes FEDERAL AGENTS (GEORGE, a live-wire and ED , cool and composed, 30s) question the now-cuffed and subdued group. Barry sits with Johnny Lee, away from the rest.

BARRY

(to Johnny Lee)

It true you and B.B. King were gonna do a record together?

JOHNNY LEE

Yeah, but B.B. never showed.

BARRY

Why not?

JOHNNY LEE

Tol' me later, he took up with some rich white girl, ass like a ripe Georgia peach, tits that belonged in a museum. Some days, you know, pussy come first.

BARRY

(laughs; then)

So what are you doin' here?

JOHNNY LEE

Question is, what are you doin' here?

BARRY

Workin'.

JOHNNY LEE

Yeah, but what are you doing here? You understand?

BARRY

No. What do you mean?

JOHNNY LEE

Nothin'. I'm just talkin'.

Johnny Lee coughs spasmodically a few times, then takes a few deep breaths.

BARRY

You alright?

JOHNNY LEE

I'm a lil sick, you understand?

BARRY

(low)

You holding?

Johnny Lee glances at the other agents, smiles slightly at Barry.

BARRY (CONT'D)

(slightly loud)

Alright Mr. Redmond, thanks for you help. You're free to go.

JOHNNY LEE

Thank you, sir. You have a good night now.

Johnny Lee rises.

GEORGE

Hang on there, grandpa.

BARRY

He's clean. He's playin' upstairs, just came down between sets. Wrong place, wrong time.

JOHNNY LEE

Y'all have a good evening. I've certainly enjoyed the show.

Johnny Lee exits, tipping his porkpie hat to Barry.

The two cops (MAHONEY and SLATER) seen earlier in the alley saunter into the room accompanied by a plainclothes detective (DETECTIVE BENJAMIN).

BARRY

And in they ride, the cavalry to the rescue.

George wheels on the cops.

GEORGE

You assholes got somethin' to say?

MAHONEY

We went for coffee.

SLATER

We were out there for like an hour. We were gone like three minutes.

GEORGE

Oh that explains it.

(to Benjamin )

This how you run an operation, you shining example of New York's finest?

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

(to George, but glaring hard at the two cops)

Yeah, we seem to have had a slight breakdown in communication. I promise you, it will be dealt with.

ED

Leave it, Georgie. What are you gonna do?

(to cops)

Get em outta here.

George gives the cops one last glare as they herd everyone out.

GEORGE

(to Barry)

Hey, you know that old man?

BARRY

Nah. Just didn't wanna waste our time with an old junkie. I'll see you later.

GEORGE

Where you goin'?

BARRY

I got a thing.

As he passes Benjamin:

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

(sotto)

I owe you one, Silver.

BARRY

(sotto)

You bet your ass you do.

GEORGE

Barry...

BARRY

I told you, I got a thing.

Barry goes.

GEORGE

(to Ed)

He's a got a thing.

ED

Lucky him.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - LATER

A mixed-race crowd fills the smoky jazz club. The empty stage is set up for a rock band.

Barry enters and makes his way to the bar. He is warmly greeted by a cluster of African-American men. TERENCE, late 40s, portly and outgoing, slings an arm around Barry.

TERENCE

Where you been?

BARRY

Workin' my ass off. Tax season, everyone waits 'till the last minute.

TERENCE

Funny thing, every year, I just forget to file. But Uncle Sam got nothin' on me. Another black man, JOE 40s, slim and stylish, pipes in:

JOE

That's cause you get paid in cash, nigger. You ain't slick.

The men laugh. Barry takes out a small pad and pen. Another black man, RAY, bald, muscular, twirling a drumstick, leans in to Barry.

RAY

Who you writin' for tonight?

BARRY

Saturday Review. They pay crap, but I write what I want, and they publish the whole thing.

RAY

My sister works at the Voice. Get me some of your stuff, I'll give it to her, you never know.

BARRY

That'd be great.

The lights dim. A group of silhouetted MUSICIANS take the darkened stage.

An ANNOUNCER'S VOICE BOOMS:

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

Ladies and gentlemen, our last act of the evening, all the way from Naperville, Illinois, let's give it up for Brenda Hamilton!

Polite applause. The light come up on the stage revealing a group of awkward-looking, straggly white kids in their early 20s. Fronting the band is BRENDA HAMILTON, a knockout in her mid 20s. She's light-skinned African American, the product of a black mother and white father. She's a bit drunk, but defiant and cocky.

Men in the audience hoot and cat-call.

HECKLER

Hey girl! Whatcha doin' with them skinny white boys? Come on down here, lemme show you what I got.

BRENDA

What you got, I'd need a flashlight and a thimble to find.

(counting off)

One, two, a-one two three...

They launch into a rockin' version of "Sweet Home Chicago." The kids can really play, and Brenda crushes the vocals. She sounds like a cross between Janis Joplin and Aretha Franklin -- soul and torch channeled through rock n' roll. She's also quite the performer: her moves are sexy and slinky, but it's completely pure and unforced, almost as if she's dancing for herself, not the crowd.

The song finishes, and the crowd jumps to it's feet.

Barry stares with his mouth open.

JOE

Got damn.

Barry nods.

BARRY

Who is she?

JOE

My next wife, I can tell you that.

TERENCE

What about your current wife, nigger?

JOE

She done just hit her expiration date. But I'll always remember the good times.

BARRY

'scuse me.

Barry moves off to find Brenda.

TERENCE

(to Joe)

Too late, brother. White boy done got the jump on you.

JOE

Story of a black man's life, ain't it?

INT. JAZZ CLUB – LATER

As Barry heads for the door, two beefy Italian guys, RAY and TONY ORSINO, call out from a table:

RAY

Hey, Agent Silver, my man!

Barry quickly comes over and sits.

BARRY

Ease up on the formalities, fellas. I'm off the clock.

TONY

What you doin' here? You like this nigger music?

BARRY

I do, matter of fact.

TONY

It's not for me. I mean, I like the Motown shit, but gimme Dean-o or Frank any day.

BARRY

So what are you doing here?

RAY

That's our band.

BARRY

What do you mean?

RAY

I mean we're in the entertainment business now. Artist management. Straight up legit.

BARRY

How'd that happen?

TONY

Some moolan-yan outta Chicago owed us money, we took them in lieu of payment.

RAY  
Which said gentleman did not have.

TONY  
(of Ray)  
Well, fuckin' Stravinsky over here, Mr. Music Lover, made the deal.

RAY  
The fuck do you know?  
(to Barry)  
They're good, right?

BARRY  
They're real good.

RAY  
You think we can make some money?

BARRY  
(shrugs)  
They're talented, I'll give you that. And that girl's somethin' else.

TONY  
Some fuckin' pair on her, eh?

RAY  
We're tryin' t'get 'em a deal. But I gotta tell ya -- fuckin' record business? Dirtiest fuckin' business we ever seen. Merdoso!

TONY  
Hey Agent, Barry, lemme ask you...

BARRY  
What?

TONY  
That thing, y'know, our guy from Arthur Avenue...

BARRY  
Can't help you, boys. That case is locked up and out the door.



TONY

But...

BARRY

No, we understand, no problem. If, you know, down the line...

Brenda comes back to the table, loaded.

RAY

That was good, up there.

BRENDA

Yeah, when do we get paid?

RAY

Listen, we may not know music, but the one thing we do know is gettin' paid.  
So don't worry.

BRENDA

Right. So when do we get paid?

(notices Barry looking at her)

Can I help you?

BARRY

Yeah, my name's Barry. I write for the Voice.

Barry gives the brothers a swift glance that says "shut the fuck up."

BRENDA

(unimpressed)

So?

BARRY

I just wanted to say, you were great.

BRENDA

Thanks.

BARRY

I'd love to do a profile on you and the band. Maybe we can talk over coffee?

BRENDA

Forget it. I don't do Jews.

TONY

Hey, with the mouth! You know who this is? This is...

Barry kicks Tony under the table.

BARRY

Well, you change your mind, you let me know.

(rises)

I'm sure you were first in your class in charm school.

(to Orsinos)

Later, boys. Keep it clean.

Barry goes. Brenda drains her drink.

BRENDA

(to Orsinos)

I'm outta here. Spot me a twenty, wouldja?

Tony peels of a bill and hands it to her.

TONY

You're worse than my fuckin' girlfriend and my wife put together.

BRENDA

Get me a real gig. No more of this dog and pony shit. I'm better than this.

She goes, leaving the Orsino brothers shaking their heads.

INT. BARRY'S HOUSE/KIDS' BEDROOM - MORNING WEE HOURS

Two cute kids, four year-old ETTA and seven year-old ELI are fast asleep. ELI is stirred awake by a faint sound, like marbles rolling around in a drawer. He gets out of bed.

INT. BARRY & NADINE'S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Barry is emptying his .38 into the top drawer of a highboy dresser, still wearing his shoulder holster. His wife NADINE, a pretty, petite redhead, sleeps. Eli enters, rubbing his eyes. Seeing him, Barry lights up.

ELI

Hi daddy.

BARRY

How's it goin', Ace?

ELI

Good. Did you catch bad guys tonight?

BARRY

Yep. A whole bunch.

Nadine wakes up.

NADINE

Jesus, why'd you wake him up? Took me over an hour to get him to sleep.

BARRY

(to Eli)

C'mon, Ace. Back to bed.

He lifts the sleepy boy into his arms.

INT. BARRY'S APARTMENT/CHILD'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Barry tucks Eli in.

ELI

Were they mean to you?

BARRY

A little. But daddy's okay. Go to sleep now.

ELI

'K.

Barry kisses him on the forehead. Eli is out.

INT. BARRY & NADINE'S BEDROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Barry gets into bed, snuggles up against a sleepy Nadine.

BARRY

George's wife called, told me what happened. Fucking N-Y-P-D. You okay?

BARRY (CONT'D)

Yeah. Strong like bull.

Barry caresses her.

NADINE  
How was the club?

BARRY  
Good. This one girl could really sing.

NADINE  
Uh huh. Glad yo had a good time. Me? I was here all night, bathing the kids, doin' their homework...

BARRY  
We need the money.

NADINE  
Right. We need the money.

BARRY  
C'mon babe...

He puts his hand on her breast. She pushes it away.

NADINE  
I'm exhausted, in case you didn't notice.

Barry lies back for a moment, then get out of bed.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The lights flip on to reveal: Barry's man-cave. A small desk, a manual typewriter, bookcases with records and books. A poster of Robert Johnson. Barry puts a record on the same phonograph from the opening image: Johnson's "Kindhearted Woman." Barry opens the bottom drawer of his desk, produces a bottle of scotch and a glass, pours and drinks.

EXT. NYC STREET – DAY

A light snow falls. Barry pulls his dusty Chevy up to the valet parking area of the Pallek Communications building, an imposing black monolith in midtown Manhattan. A well-dressed VALET comes around, opens the door, Barry gets out.

INT. PALLEK BUILDING MAIN LOBBY – DAY

Barry enters the elaborate lobby: high glass ceilings, fountains, waterfalls, etc. He signs in at the security desk then takes in the opulence as he heads to the elevator.

INT. PALLEK BUILDING/LEGEND RECORDS RECEPTION – LATER

Barry waits in the even more opulent reception area, flipping through a music magazine. A FEMALE INTERN, early 20s, cute, appears with a rolling cart filled with beverages. She smiles. Barry selects a Dr. Brown's cream soda.

ADAMSON (O.C.)

Cream soda. A fellow son of Brooklyn.

BARRY

Almost as good as an egg cream.

ADAMSON

Nothing's as good as an egg cream. Not even sex.

Barry rises as JOE ADAMSON comes over, hand extended. Adamson is in his early 40s, a music mogul, charming, glib, expensively dressed in a stylish suit.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

Barry. Joe Adamson. Great to meet you. Sorry for the delay. You try getting Alan Klein off the phone when he wants a deal. C'mon in.

INT. ADAMSON'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

They enter Adamson's huge, ridiculously resplendent office: gold records on the walls, expensive art and furniture.

ADAMSON

I'm a huge fan of your column in the Voice. Your piece on the passing of Son House was beautiful.

BARRY

Thank you.

Adamson gestures "sit." Barry sits on a couch. Adamson goes to the bar and takes out two tall glasses, chocolate syrup, seltzer and milk. He sets about mixing them together.

ADAMSON

Let me ask you: why all this interest in traditional blues all of a sudden?

BARRY

Because most pop music is mindless soul-numbing crap, and people want to connect to something real.

ADAMSON

Maybe. But some of us have gotten very rich off of that mind-numbing crap.

BARRY

I'm sure that's true. But it's still crap.

Adamson smiles; he likes Barry's candor. He finishes mixing the drinks, hands Barry a glass.

ADAMSON

My Pop taught me two things: one, whatever you do in life, call your own shots, and two, how to make a perfect egg cream. Cheers.

BARRY

Cheers.

(sips)

Wow, that's great.

ADAMSON

What'd I tell you?

(takes a gulp; then)

The old movie moguls? The trucks backed up to the studio gates every Friday, and they had to have a picture to throw in there. We only remember the great ones, but most of them were shit. So they'd make fifty bad movies a year, and if once in a while a Citizen Kane or a Gone With The Wind made it onto the truck, great, they could feel like artists for a day or two. Then back to Bedtime for Bonzo. The music biz is the same -- for every one Rolling Stones you gotta sign ten Herman's fuckin' Hermits.

BARRY

I don't agree. Great music can be both artistic and commercial, but you gotta educate the public.

ADAMSON

Let me ask you: your article, "the new face of the blues", you don't think these English kids are just a fad?

Adamson's intercom BUZZES. He answers.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

Hold my calls, Alana.

(to Barry)

Sorry. Go ahead.

BARRY

Take Clapton: he took Muddy's Chicago style and...

INT. ADAMSON'S OFFICE – EVENING

Still at it, Barry and Adamson eat take out Chinese food.

ADAMSON

(casually)

So how'd you like to come work for me?

Barry laughs.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

I'm serious.

BARRY

I'm flattered, but I can't.

ADAMSON

Why not?

BARRY

I already have a job.

ADAMSON

You said the writing was just part-time.

BARRY

It is.

ADAMSON

So what else do you do?

BARRY

(small pause)

I work for the government.

ADAMSON  
Doing what?

BARRY  
I'm a Treasury agent.

ADAMSON  
Oh. So what do you do, exactly? Guard treasure?

BARRY  
No. We, well, let me put it this way: we used to be called the Federal Bureau of  
Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs.

ADAMSON  
Ohhhhh.

BARRY  
So, I don't exactly fit in here.

ADAMSON  
Would you like to?  
(before Barry can answer)  
How much you make a year there?

BARRY  
'bout twelve thousand.

ADAMSON  
I'll start you at sixteen.

BARRY  
Just like that?

ADAMSON  
Poof. Just like that.

A KNOCK.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)  
Come in.

Enter, ALANA, Adamson's gorgeous and smart assistant.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)



Alana, say hello to Barry. He's maybe going working here.

ALANA

Hello Barry who's maybe going to work here.

(to Adamson)

Sorry to interrupt, but we, I mean, you have a dinner at six.

ADAMSON

We'll be done in ten.

ALANA

You got five.

(to Barry)

Nice to meet you. Love your stuff.

BARRY

Thanks.

She goes.

BARRY (CONT'D)

(joking)

Do I get one of those?

ADAMSON

(serious)

You want one?

(rising)

Take a week, come back, whatever you decide, it's been fun. Oh, here. On the house.

Adamson gives Barry a large stack of LPs.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

I warn you, it's mostly crap, but who knows, maybe you can do better.

EXT. VALET PARKING – EVENING

Holding the records, Barry waits for his car.

The Chevy pulls up. The Valet gets out, opens the driver's side door.

Barry takes a last look at:

The magnificent Pallek building, lights twinkling in the windows against the last of the evening sunlight.

He gets in the car and drives off.

INT. HARBIN INN CHINESE RESTAURANT – NIGHT

Barry, Nadine and the kids eat Chinese food in a crowded Chinese restaurant. Barry is cutting up Etta's food. Everyone is in a good mood.

BARRY  
How's the food?

NADINE  
Great. I've missed this place, but, you know.

BARRY  
I know.

She dishes some sweet and sour pork onto his plate.

ETTA  
More noodles, daddy.

NADINE  
Please.

ETTA  
Please.

Barry puts some noodles on Etta's plate.

BARRY  
So...I had an interesting meeting today.

NADINE  
With who?

BARRY  
You heard of David Adamson?

NADINE  
Sounds familiar.

BARRY

He runs Legend Records.

NADINE

What'd you meet with him for? A case?

ETTA

(gleefully)

Noodles!

BARRY

No, he's been reading my stuff so he wanted to meet me.

NADINE

Why?

BARRY

I wanted to write some liner notes, you know, make a little extra cash, but he uh, he offered me a job.

NADINE

Doing what?

BARRY

"A and R."

NADINE

What's that?

BARRY

I'm not sure, but it has to do with finding new talent.

NADINE

What'd you tell him?

BARRY

"No."

NADINE

Good.

BARRY

He told me to think it over and get back to him.

NADINE  
Why?

BARRY  
'cause I'm sort of thinking it over.

NADINE  
(to Eli)  
Not with your fingers, honey.  
(to Barry)  
That's crazy. You're gonna throw away your career, your pension, to what, find the next Beatles or something? That really gonna happen?

BARRY  
He offered me sixteen thousand to start.  
Nadine is taken aback at this.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
We could get a bigger place, go on vacation...eat out more.

ETTA  
Noodles!

NADINE  
(small pause; then gently)  
Baby. It's not for you.

BARRY  
Why?

NADINE  
Because your time's gonna come, you'll run a division or something one day, everyone says you're the smartest guy they got.

BARRY  
Everyone being George.

NADINE  
Not just George. Everyone. But this other thing? It don't work out, you, we, we got "stugatz."

BARRY  
That's true.

NADINE

Sixteen thousand, don't get me wrong, that tempting, but you'd be throwing away 12 years busting your ass. Is it worth it?

BARRY

That's a good question.

They eat in silence.

INT. NYC TREASURY DEPARTMENT OFFICE – DAY

An open floor with clusters of desks and private offices in the corners. Ed naps at an adjacent desk. Barry throw a paper airplane that hits Ed in the head. Ed doesn't stir as it lands in a pile of other paper airplanes. Another paper plane hits Ed from another direction. He stays dead asleep.

Barry and a group of agents all stifle giggles.

The corner office door opens and HANK DAEHLER, late 40s, the Agent-in-Charge emerges. He is a Southern gentleman and speaks with a cultured drawl.

DAEHLER

Barry, c'mon in here for a moment?

BARRY

Sure.

Barry and George exchange a quick glance.

INT. DAEHLER'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Barry enters to find Daehler and US Attorney SAM MILLER, early 30s, sharp and aggressive.

DAEHLER

Barry, this is A.D.A. Miller. He's working the Club case. I believe he could use your help.

BARRY

Whatever you need.

MILLER

I appreciate that, Agent Silver. It's about your informant.

BARRY  
What about him?

MILLER  
To make the case, we need him to testify in open court.

BARRY  
No way.

MILLER  
Agent Silver...

BARRY  
No fucking way.

MILLER  
And why not?

BARRY  
Because he'll be dead in forty-eight hours, that's why.

MILLER  
You familiar with the term "obstruction of justice"?

BARRY  
You familiar with the term, "kiss my ass"?

MILLER  
You watch your mouth.

BARRY  
Top a' that, you think I'm gonna fuck my credibility just to make your life easier?

MILLER  
We've been building this case against the Gambino family for over a year. We can drive a stake right through their heart, but I need your guy.

BARRY  
I'm not signing the his death warrant, so I guess we're done.

Barry exits.

MILLER

Touchy son of bitch, isn't he?

INT. NYC TREASURY DEPARTMENT OFFICE – DAY

At their adjacent desks, Barry and George do paperwork. A PROCESS SERVER enter.

PROCESS SERVER

I'm looking for Agent Barry Silver.

BARRY

Right here.

PROCESS SERVER

Sign, please.

Barry signs the clipboard. The Process Server hands him an envelope, exits.

BARRY

From the D.A.

GEORGE

Ooh. Maybe you're invited to his birthday party.

Barry opens it, reads, laughs mirthlessly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What?

Barry hands the document to George, who scans it.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Is he fucking kidding me?

BARRY

Unless it's April Fool's, I don't think so.

Daehler emerges from his office, crosses by Barry's desk. Barry glares hard, Daehler avoids eye contact.

BARRY (CONT'D)

(to Daehler)

You got something to say?

DAEHLER

Yeah. Go home. Leave your gun.

Daehler exits. Barry rises.

BARRY

I'll talk to you later.

George nods. Barry goes. George grimaces.

INT. BARRY'S HOUSE/KITCHEN – NIGHT

Barry and Nadine sit at the table in the small kitchen.

NADINE

So what can you do?

BARRY

Nothing. The ADA's not budging. And Daehler could give a rat's ass.

NADINE

But you could...

BARRY

No.

NADINE

Don't give me "no." You could...

BARRY

Forget it, Nadine. It's murder, I put him in open court. N'if that's the only way to cure the warrant, fine, fuck 'em, I'll do the time.

NADINE

Look, I understand, your integrity 'n all, but if it's a choice between some wiseguy and your family?

BARRY

I'm not doin' it, so just leave it alone.

NADINE

What is wrong with you? Huh?



Barry rises.

BARRY  
I have to pack.

NADINE  
Wait wait wait, sit down, I'm sorry.

BARRY  
You have to drive me in the morning.

NADINE  
I said I was sorry, okay?

BARRY  
Good for you.

Barry goes. Nadine goes over to the phone, dials.

NADINE  
(on phone)  
Hey Georgie...no, you talk to me right now, I don't care if you're...okay...no, I won't...okay.

She hangs up.

INT. BARRY'S HOUSE/BASEMENT

Barry in his mancave, listening to Robert Johnson's "Love in Vain." He takes out his wallet and finds:

Adamson's business card.

He stares at it.

EXT. RIKER'S ISLAND PRISON/PROCESSING – DAY

Holding hands, Barry and Nadine sit together, watched by a GUARD.  
A second GUARD enters.

GUARD #2  
Agent Silver, follow me.

Fighting back tears, Nadine hugs Barry.

NADINE  
Don't worry.

BARRY  
Don't you worry.

NADINE  
It's gonna be okay. I love you.

BARRY  
Yeah, you too.

Barry rises, exits with the Guard.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

Guard #2 walks Barry to a cell, unlocks it. Barry enters. Guard #2 locks the door goes. Barry lies down on the cot.

BARRY  
(softly singing)  
"Well, it's hard to tell, it's hard to tell...when all your love's in vain, all your love's in vain."  
(spoken)  
Ain't that the truth.

PRISONER (O.S.)  
Not bad for a white boy.

EXT. DOWNTOWN FEDERAL BUILDING – EVENING

Miller exits the building, heads down the street. Out of nowhere George and Ed appear on either side of him.

GEORGE  
We're buying you a drink.

MILLER  
Do I know you?

GEORGE  
I'm the Easter Bunny and this is Senor Sock.

ED

Hola.

MILLER  
Look...

GEORGE  
No you look.

George opens his jacket for a moment so Miller can glimpse his shoulder holster. As they come up on an Irish Bar, Ed and George pull Miller inside.

INT. IRISH BAR – EVENING

Ed and Miller sit in a corner booth in the crowded bar. Miller glares as Ed smiles back benignly.

MILLER  
You think I'm afraid of you?

GEORGE  
I think it's your first big case, so you're acting like a idiot. S'ok. We're here to help.

George comes over to the table bearing shots and beers. He sets them down in front of Ed, Miller and himself, sits. He and Ed raise their glass, clink, drink. Miller then downs his shot.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
It's like this: our business turns on trust. Gets out a guy can't protect his source, no one will talk to him.

MILLER  
He wants to protect some mobbed up piece of shit, that's his lookout. Law says it's obstruction of justice. Read the writ.

George leans in.

GEORGE  
It will take me all of five minutes to fuck up your case.

MILLER  
Oh yeah?

GEORGE

Ed?

ED

Evidence bags disappear. Fires happen, documents get burned. Witnesses skip town. What can you do?

MILLER

How 'bout I report this conversation?

GEORGE

The one where you offered us a bribe to flip Agent Silver for you?

MILLER

What?

GEORGE

That was the same night A.D.A Miller beat up a hooker, right Georgie?

MILLER

That, are you, that never happened!

ED

The night is young.

GEORGE

You put one of the best there is, my friend, motherfucker, in fucking Riker's and you think we're gonna let it pass?

MILLER

Far's I'm concerned, he wears a jumpsuit till he gets some sense. Beyond that, I don't care if you're sucking each other's cock.

George's eyes flash. Ed jumps in calmly.

ED

Georgie.

(to Miller)

Even if you make the case, George is right: not an agent in town will ever lift a finger to help you.

MILLER

Yes they will. 'cause I'm the office, pal. Or they go down, just like your friend. Now...

Ed gently places a restraining hand on Miller's chest.

ED  
(to George)  
So?

GEORGE  
Plan B?

ED  
Plan B.

INT. WALK-IN FREEZER - NIGHT  
Miller pounds on the door.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN – NIGHT

George and Ed lean against the freezer door in an empty semi-darkened kitchen.  
They eat plates of pasta.

GEORGE  
How's yours?

Ed kisses his fingers as if to say "superb."

INT. CAR – DAY

Nadine drives. Barry in the passenger seat.

NADINE  
How was the food?

BARRY  
Better than yours.

She whacks him. They laugh then go quiet.

NADINE  
After this, I suppose you want out more than ever.

Barry shrugs.

INT. PARKING LOT – NIGHT

The stairwell door opens, Miller emerges, crosses the lot. He stops short at the sight of:

Barry leaning against a car.

MILLER  
That's my car.

BARRY  
I know. Don't forget, registration expires on Tuesday. Your other car, too.

MILLER  
What do you want?

Barry extends his hand.

BARRY  
Whattaya say we call it square?

MILLER  
How 'bout you kiss my shiny white ass?

BARRY  
Easy, junior.

MILLER  
We'll see who's "junior" when the only government job you'll get is cleaning the shitters in my office.

BARRY  
You got a lot to learn, kid.

MILLER  
One way or another, there's gonna be a quid pro quo. You and your knucklehead buddies. Bet on it.

BARRY  
That a threat?

MILLER  
Only 'til it happens. Then it's a fact. Now get your kike ass off my car.

Barry smiles, calmly rises, and clocks Miller square in the face.

He goes, leaving Miller to pick himself up off the floor.

EXT. BACKYARD – DAY

A BBQ in progress in a large, working class Long Island backyard. Present are various law enforcement types and their families.

Barry, Nadine and the kids appear from the narrow pathway along the side of the house.

Sitting at a table beer in hand, George sees them, stands:

GEORGE

There he is! My man!

George goes over, gives Barry a hug. Other agents migrate over, give Barry a hug, a slap on the back: “Good job”, “Good for you, man”, etc.

EXT. BACKYARD – LATER

An older agent (RICHARD, 60) mans the grill, surrounded by guys including Barry and George, the center of attention.

GEORGE

So you and college boy kiss and make up?

BARRY

I think we have an understanding.

GEORGE

That’s good.

(swigs beer; nods at Richard)

Thirty two fuckin’ years, can you imagine?

BARRY

You plan to stay that long?

GEORGE

(shrugs)

Beats workin’.

(to older man)

So Richie, what are you gonna do with yourself all day?

RICHARD

In the short term, drink and fuck. But don't tell my wife.

Everyone laughs.

EXT. BACKYARD – LATER

George, Barry, Nadine and the kids eat at a table under a big umbrella.

Something catches Nadine's eye.

BARRY

What?

Nadine nods towards the BBQ:

Daehler is clearly congratulating Richard.

NADINE

He's got some nerve, comin' here.

She rises. Barry gently grabs her arm.

BARRY

C'mon, babe. This is a no-combat zone.

NADINE

Mr. Dickless Wonder over there.

ELI

That's a funny name.

BARRY

Just eat your burger. Okay?

Nadine glares at Daehler for one more moment, then grudgingly sits and drains her beer.

Daehler's body language says "Excuse me" and he then heads over to Barry's table.

DAEHLER

Hello Barry. Nadine.

(to Etta)

What's your name, sweetheart?



ETTA  
Etta.

DAEHLER  
Well, Etta, you're just about the cutest thing I've ever seen.  
(to Eli)  
And what's your name, son?

ELI  
Eli. Are you Mr. Dickless Wonder?

George laughs hard, choking a bit on his beer.

DAEHLER  
(smiling)  
No, son. But I've been called worse.  
(to Barry)  
Can we have a word in private?

NADINE  
Can I ask you a question?

DAEHLER  
Of course.

NADINE  
Just how long were you gonna let my husband rot in jail?

DAEHLER  
It was a bad situation, Mrs. Silver. But my hands were tied.

NADINE  
Oh yeah? What about your tongue?

BARRY  
Honey.

DAEHLER  
They had the cards, Nadine.  
(quick glance at George)  
But something tells me it won't happen again.

George sips his beer with exaggerated innocence.

NADINE  
How old are you?

DAEHLER  
Well, that's a slightly personal question, but I'm fifty two years of age.

NADINE  
Here's hopin' it's never too late to grow a pair.

BARRY  
Honey!  
(to Daehler)  
I'm sorry, she's been under a lot of...

DAEHLER  
No need to apologize. Now then, I'll just say my piece and get along. The good news is, I referred you for a teaching job at the Academy in D.C. More money, high profile cases, a real step up.

BARRY  
And what's the bad news?

DAEHLER  
The bad news is, I'm gonna have to slap your wrist a little over this little incident.

BARRY  
What do you mean?

DAEHLER  
Temporary re-assignment. We'll discuss it on Monday.  
(to Nadine)  
Enjoy the rest of the party.

ELI  
Bye, Mr. Wonder Dick.

DAEHLER  
Bye, son.

Daehler goes. A pause as everyone digests this. Nadine bursts out laughing.

EXT. BACKYARD - EARLY EVENING

Barry cradling a sleeping Etta, Nadine and Eli make their way towards the gate.  
Barry stops and takes a last look at the backyard:

The group seems like one big family, camaraderie and warmth everywhere.

Barry smiles.

INT. EVIDENCE CAGE – NIGHT

Barry, wearing a white shirt and tie, waits while George fills out a form.

BARRY  
You believe this shit?

GEORGE  
Any idea when you're gettin' sprung?

BARRY  
(shrugs)  
Who the hell knows.

George nods, finishes the form. Barry takes it, gives one of the carbons to George, then retrieves several large glassine bags and puts them in a box.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
Okay, you're good.

GEORGE  
Thanks. Hang in there.

BARRY  
So what you got going?

GEORGE  
Ah not much, the Arthur Avenue thing.

BARRY  
When?

GEORGE  
Tonight. You wanna ride along? For shits and giggles?  
(off Barry's look)  
Yeah, I know. Hang in there, baby.

George goes. The phone rings. Barry stares at it.

BARRY  
Fuck this.

He grabs his jacket, kills the lights, goes, as the phone continues to ring.

INT. EVIDENCE CAGE – NIGHT

Barry sits alone. The lights go off.

BARRY  
(in the dark)  
Hey! Do you mind? I'm in here! Hello?

Stumbling around in the dark is heard. CRASH.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
(in the dark)  
Fuck!

INT. LEGEND RECORDS – DAY

The elevator opens, Barry exits and goes up to the desk. RITA, the cute, trendy receptionist smiles at him.

BARRY  
Hi, I'm...

RITA  
(the royal treatment)  
Go right in, Mr. Silver. No need to knock.

INT. ADAMSON'S OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Barry enters to find Adamson at his desk, feet up listening to some light weight pop music.

ADAMSON  
I know, it's awful. But the teenyboppers'll go nuts for these faggot-looking guys. Sit, sit.

He turns down the music.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

So, nu?

BARRY

I um, I just wanted to come in person and say thanks again for the offer, but...

He stops himself.

ADAMSON

But?

Barry shrugs, not knowing what to say.

Adamson regards Barry for a moment.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

If you didn't want the job, all you had to do was make a phone call. But you came down here. Why?

BARRY

I missed your egg creams.

ADAMSON

Please, when it comes to bullshit, I'm the fastest gun in the west. So what's it gonna be, boychick? Cops and robbers, or music?

Struggling, Barry says nothing.

INT. BARRY'S KITCHEN – NIGHT

Barry and Nadine at the kitchen

NADINE

WHAT!?

BARRY

I can't spend one more night in that goddamn cage.

NADINE

And why is that, babe?

BARRY

Because I'm bored out of my mind, that's why.

NADINE

So you'd rather be out with the guys, right?

BARRY

Yeah, but...

NADINE

So don't make a stupid decision because you're upset. You'll be out of there soon.

BARRY

Why is it stupid?

NADINE

Jesus! What's wrong with you? Because you're throwing away everything you've worked for to go do something you know nothing about!

BARRY

I know about music.

NADINE

And you think that's enough?

BARRY

What if I'm a success? Ever think of that?

NADINE

You're a success already.

BARRY

I sit in a cage and put stuff in baggies all day.

NADINE

It's temporary!

BARRY

I don't care!

Pause. Nadine tries another approach.

NADINE

The music business is fulla drugs, right? Right?

BARRY

(grudging)

I guess.

NADINE

So what are you gonna do? Look away every second of every day? You think you can live with that?

BARRY

They're just stoners. Kids smoking a little weed. That's all.

NADINE

You sure about that?

BARRY

What is the harm in trying? I can always go back to the bureau. Or the cops. I need to do this.

NADINE

That's it, then. Nothing more to talk about.

BARRY

Honey. Think about it. It could be an amazing life.

NADINE

I'm fine with the one I got. Too bad you're not.

(beat)

I don't like this, but I know you. Your mind's made up. Thanks for the pointless conversation.

She goes.

INT. LEGEND RECORDS A & R FLOOR – DAY

Accompanied by Adamson's secretary Alana, Barry, holding a cardboard box, walks down a long hall full of offices and interior cubicles. As he passes each cubicle, people turn away, or whisper. Barry is uncomfortable. Alana stops at the floor's reception desk. RITA, (early 30s, hip) mans the switchboard.

ALANA

Rita, this is Barry Silver, our new Director of A and R. Barry, meet Rita, the brains of the operation.

Still holding the box, Barry awkwardly tries to shake hands.

BARRY

Hey, nice to meet...

Rita holds a set of keys at arm's length without looking at Barry.

RITA

(curt, to Alana)

He's in Jerry's old office, end of the hall.

(on switchboard)

Legend records, how may I direct your call? One moment, please.

Alana takes the keys.

ALANA

(to Barry)

This way.

BARRY

(under his breath)

My new best friend.

As he passes an office with an open door, he hears B.B. King's "The Thrill is Gone." He pauses by the door for a moment. A long-haired executive (TOM) sees Barry.

TOM

Can I help you?

BARRY

Just thought I'd introduce myself to a fellow B.B. fan. I'm...

TOM

I know who you are, man.

(rises)

I'm in a meeting, catch you later.

The Executive closes the door and turns up the music. Barry turns to Alana.

BARRY

People usually have meetings with themselves around here?

ALANA

All the time. C'mon.

INTERIOR SMALL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER



A cramped office, barely big enough for the desk and filing cabinet. The door opens, Barry and Alana enter.

ALANA  
Home sweet home.

BARRY  
No place to go but up.

He sets his box down on the desk.

ALANA  
Listen: word sort of leaked out on you.

BARRY  
But I told Joe not to...

ALANA  
People were going find out eventually. Better to get it out in the open, right up front.

BARRY  
Right.

ALANA  
Don't worry. You'll be fine. You have a staff meeting at ten in the main conference room. Every Monday, don't miss it, don't be late.

BARRY  
What's on the agenda today?

ALANA  
We're still looking for a female cross-over artist. Like Colonel Tom said, "Give me a white boy who can sing like a black man, and I'll show you a million dollars." We need a girl version of Elvis.

BARRY  
I see.

ALANA  
We looked at this one chick, Janis something, great singer, but a mess; showed up so drunk she passed out in Joe's office. Anyway, call if you need anything.

BARRY

Sure. Hey, what happened to Jerry?

ALANA

Got fired.

BARRY

Why?

ALANA

To make room for you.

BARRY

Oh.

She goes. Barry squeezes behind the desk, sits. He opens the blinds and looks out the window:

Another building blocks the sunlight. In a window directly across from Barry's, a naked PLUMP WOMAN smokes a cigarette. She winks, waves to Barry. Barry smiles wanly, waves back, then closes the blinds. He sits alone in the cramped office, a bit bewildered.

Barry hangs up the phone.

INT. LEGEND RECORDS A&R FLOOR – DAY

Barry walks by the reception area, pushes the elevator button. Two TECHNICIANS are repairing the switchboard, which is open with wires hanging out all over the place.

BARRY

I'll be at a meeting.

(joking)

I was gonna say, "hold my calls", but it looks like you don't have to worry about that.

RITA

(cold)

Enjoy your meeting Mr. Silver.

The elevator "dings", opens. Barry gets in. Everyone moves aside, giving him a wide berth. The doors close.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM – DAY

Adamson sits at the head of a large table, surrounded by the “A&R” and marketing staff. He tries repeatedly to light his cigarette with a very expensive gold lighter.

The A&R guys are younger, hipper-looking, the marketing guys middle aged. Alana sits to Adamson’s left. Barry is at the far end of the table, slumped down in his chair. A reel-to-reel plays a female trio singing a painfully lily-white version of Stevie Wonder’s “Uptight.” Next to the tape player is a poster of three pretty blondes a la’ the Andrews or Boswell sisters. The tune finishes, Tom turns off the tape recorder, looking very self-satisfied.

MITCH, a balding, paunchy middle-age marketing guy pipes up.

MITCH

I like ‘em. They’re cute a button. Get ‘em on Ed Sullivan, Bandstand, I can sell ‘em in a heartbeat.

TOM

My plan is an r n’ b record, covers of what’s on the charts right now. “When a man loves a woman...”

EXECUTIVE #2

“You Keep Me Hangin’ On”...

MARKETING GUY #2

“Ain’t to proud to beg”...

TOM

Maybe throw a little Patsy Cline in there.

MITCH

I’d change their look a little though, maybe put ‘em in some mini-skirts or something.

TOM

Whoa, that’s not a marketing decision, Mitch.

(cutting Mitch off)

But you’re onto something. Wholesome, but with a sexy zing thrown in.

There is a general murmur of agreement.

Barry says nothing.

ADAMSON  
What do you think, Barry?

All eyes on Barry.

BARRY  
Patsy Cline is country.

TOM  
So?

BARRY  
So if you want to make an r&b record, you can't have country on there.

TOM  
No, you don't get it. I'm talkin' we do an r&b version of "Crazy" or "Walkin' After Midnight."

BARRY  
If you say so.

ADAMSON  
You don't like that idea.

BARRY  
No.

ADAMSON  
Why not?

BARRY  
Because they can't sing it.

TOM  
Oh really.

BARRY  
Pat Boone did this years ago, don't you remember? All those vanilla versions of Little Richard and Chuck Berry. God, it was awful.

ADAMSON  
Made a boatload of money, though.

BARRY

Why not do a straight country album with them? It's a much better fit.

TOM

Because we're doing a soul album, that's why.

BARRY

Yeah, but you need soul for that.

TOM

Maybe you should wait until you have seven gold records and nine million in sales before you start telling me what is and isn't good music, buddy.

BARRY

It's just my opinion. Take it for what it's worth.

TOM

I tell you what it's worth: jack shit.

(to Adamson)

Who is this guy? Wait, never mind, don't answer, we all know who he is. Mr. Secret Agent Man over here.

Tom "assumes the position," his palms flat on the conference table, legs spread wide.

TOM (CONT'D)

(to Barry)

You wanna pat me down, see if I'm holdin'? That give you a thrill?

Tom wiggles his ass for emphasis.

BARRY

That's not my thing. But I can introduce you to some guys who play on your team, if you like.

A few people giggle.

ADAMSON

Tom, please sit down and stop acting like an ass.

Tom goes back to his chair.

TOM

(sotto; to Barry)

I get more poontang in a week than you've got in your whole life. Believe it, man.

BARRY

What a romantic. No wonder the chicks dig you.

ADAMSON

(to all)

So. We have two issues on the table: one, what to do with... with...who are these girls again?

TOM

"The Whites Doves of Soul."

(small pause)

I came up with that.

ADAMSON

Barry's right. These girls couldn't sing soul if they got a blood transfusion from Ray Charles.

TOM

Joe...

ADAMSON

Change the name, take 'em to Nashville and make a country record. Even if they never break big they'll sell down south.

TOM

But...

ADAMSON

(to all)

We still need a cross-over chick. By now someone should have found a viable artist.

(small pause)

Perhaps I ought to try some different ears, make room for some fresh perspectives. Food for thought, no?

(silence)

Have a nice day, everyone.

Everyone rises, heads for the door.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

How you settling in?

BARRY  
Fine.

ADAMSON  
You need to learn how to lie with greater conviction, boychick.

BARRY  
I'll work on that.

ADAMSON  
Good. Now bring me something. Sooner the better. Vershteh?

BARRY  
Sure. No egg cream today?

ADAMSON  
First one's free, the rest you gotta earn. Honeymoon's over.

Barry nods, goes. Adamson tries once again to light his cigarette, gives up.

INT. BARRY'S OFFICE - DAY

Barry listens to a demo tape of Brenda Hamilton singing a bluesy rock original composition. The INTERCOM buzzes.

BARRY  
Yes?

RITA (O.S.)  
Two gentlemen here to see you. Tony and...

BARRY  
Send them in, thank you.

The Orsino brothers enter. Barry turns off the reel-to-reel.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
Hey guys. Have a seat.

They squeeze into the two chairs opposite Barry's desk.

TONY  
Nice you got the big office.

BARRY

Yeah, lap of luxury. Where's Brenda?

RAY

Home.

BARRY

Where's that?

RAY

Chicago, somewheres.

BARRY

For how long?

RAY

Who the fuck knows? She hates New York, her dad' sick, she says she's had enough.

TONY

(to Ray)

I told you she was a mistake. But do you ever fuckin' listen?

RAY

(ignoring Tony, to Barry)

You wanna give her a deal?

BARRY

I can't promise anything. But I'd like to try.

TONY

Good luck. Bitch don't even pick up the phone. You wanna talk to her, you're gonna have t'go visit her on the farm.

Ray laughs.

BARRY

Gimme the address.

RAY

Hey, be my guest. Gimme a pen.

Barry hands over a pen and a white notepad.



RAY (CONT'D)

(of pad)

Hey, look at that, got your name on, and everything.  
He consults his little black book, writes down address.

BARRY

I'll let you know what happens.

RAY

Alright. And we got some other artists now, you might wanna give a listen.

TONY

Turns out we kinda love this shit, even though they're all fuckin' crazy, these musicians.

BARRY

I'll let you know what happens, thanks for comin' in.

The brothers rise, go to the door.

TONY

Hey Bare, about the Arthur Avenue thing...

BARRY

Thanks for comin' in.

They go.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR/RURAL ROAD - AFTERNOON

Barry drives a car and pulls up at a rural four-way crossroads. He consults a map, then turns left.

EXT. HAMILTON FARM - EARLY EVENING

The rental car pulls up to a small farm: a corn field, a meadow with cows grazing, etc.

Barry gets out and goes to the door.

EXT. FARMHOUSE PORCH – CONTINUOUS

Barry knocks on the door. Brenda opens it, regards Barry with a smirk.

BRENDA

You actually showed up.

BARRY

I actually did.

(small pause)

You going to invite me in? Or does your no-Jew policy extend to your home as well?

Brenda opens the door. Barry enters.

INT. HAMILTON HOME/LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Barry enters, following Brenda. The home is tidy and modest. An upright piano sits in the corner of the room.

BRENDA

I know you've come a long way, but like I told you on the phone, I'm not real interested in pursuing music right now.

BARRY

Why?

BRENDA

Cause my daddy's not well and I'm tired of all the bullshit.

BARRY

I don't bullshit.

BRENDA

Listen, no offense, but anyone who ever offered me anything in the music biz was either lookin' for a piece of my ass or a piece of my soul, neither of which I'm willing to part with.

BARRY

You can keep your soul and your ass. I'm only interested in your talent.

BRENDA

Why? What's wrong with my ass? Huh? You sayin' you don't like my ass? You have the nerve to come into a woman's home and insult her ass?

Barry is momentarily taken aback...then realizes he's been had. He smiles "You got me."

For the first time, Brenda laughs -- a husky guttural laugh.

A MALE VOICE (CHARLES) from the other room:

CHARLES (O.S.)

What're you laughin' at?

BRENDA

(calling to him)

Nothing, daddy.

CHARLES (O.S.)

The record man here?

(calling)

Yes, daddy.

Enter CHARLES HAMILTON, an African-American man in his early 70s. He's a bit frail and slow-moving, but it's clear from his sinewy build that he was once a physically powerful man. Barry rises, extends his hand.

BARRY

Barry Silver.

Charles shakes Barry's hand.

CHARLES

Charles Hamilton. Call me Charlie. Siddown, record man.

Brenda goes to help Charlie into a chair. He gently waves her off, indicating he can manage by himself. Charlie indicates "sit" to Barry, who does so.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(to Brenda)

I think we gonna be here a while, so get us all some beers, honey.

BRENDA

Sure, daddy.

She kisses him on the cheek; her manner with her father is solicitous and gentle, completely different from how she deals with the world. She goes to the kitchen.

CHARLES

This may sound a mite crude, but I don't want to see my baby girl get fucked, Biblically or otherwise. You understand?

BARRY

I do.

CHARLES  
So you say. We'll see.

A photo catches Barry's attention.

BARRY  
(of photo)  
That Son House?

CHARLES  
Yep. Me n' Son toured together, back in the old days.

BARRY  
(of photo)  
May I?

CHARLES  
Be my guest.

Barry picks up a photo on the mantle above the fireplace:

A younger version of Charles with his arm around blues legend Son House.  
They are both in the throes of laughter.

BARRY  
Looks like you were havin' some good time.

CHARLES  
There's a story behind that photo.

BARRY  
Really. I'd love to hear it.

CHARLES  
Well, we were playin' a juke joint in Natchez. After the show...

INT. HAMILTON HOME/LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Charles is at the piano, playing an old blues tune. Rain softly beats down on the roof and windows.

CHARLES

Pete Ammonds, Pete Johnson, Meade Lux Lewis, I seen 'em all when I was on the road.

BARRY

Who was the best blues piano player you ever saw?

CHARLES

Best I ever saw? Me.

(laughs, then)

But I got off the road before my time, you might say.

BARRY

Why?

CHARLES

Why? 'Cause I met her momma, that's why. An' the South weren't no place for a black man and a white woman.

BRENDA

Don't kid yourself. Chicago wasn't much better.

CHARLES

Waaal, you know, we did the best we could. Gentleman farmer ain't a bad life, 'specially since I could spend every night with yo momma. Beat the road any day.

Barry points to a photo on the top of the piano of a very pretty Caucasian woman with lush, brunette hair.

BARRY

That her?

CHARLES

Yep. Some beauty, huh? Make your eyes roll right back in ya' head.

Charles starts another tune.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(to Barry)

You know this one?

BARRY

Forty-Four Blues, Roosevelt Sykes.

Charles nods, keeps playing.

CHARLES  
Very good.  
(to Brenda)  
C'mon, girl.

Brenda sings "44 Blues" as Charles plays:

BRENDA  
*"I wore my 44 so long it made my shoulder sore  
I wore my 44 so long it made my shoulder sore  
Well I'm wondring everybody where did my baby go  
Take this weapon as a gift son  
May it serve you all your life  
You know my blood is running cold  
And my trigger finger is turning white  
Cold as ice..."*

Charles stops playing.

CHARLES  
That there's my girl's notion of a love song.

BRENDA  
(shrugging)  
I hate that whiny chick shit.

CHARLES  
(to Barry)  
She never got over thinkin' I wanted a boy.

Charles rises.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
I'm goin' to bed. G'nite record man. You do right by my baby, now.

BARRY  
Believe me, I'm tryin' G'nite sir.

Charles kisses Brenda on the cheek.

CHARLES  
Nite, honey.

BRENDA  
'nite daddy.

Charles goes. There's an awkward pause.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
Well uh, we never did talk business, did we?

BARRY  
S'ok. I had a great time. Your dad's some player.

BRENDA  
Shit, you should've seen him before the arthritis set in. Guy was a monster.

BARRY  
I have no doubt.  
(small pause)  
Can I ask you something?

BRENDA  
If you must.

BARRY  
Do you want to be a singer? Is that what you love?

BRENDA  
Yes, it's what I love, but...I don't know.

BARRY  
You're a knockout, kid. You'd be crazy not to try.

BRENDA  
Really, Mr. Record Man? You gonna make me a star?

BARRY  
You let me, I'll try. But it's more up to you than me.

Brenda considers this for a moment.

BRENDA  
Maybe in a year, my dad gets better. For now I gotta stay here.

BARRY

That's not why you came home.

BRENDA

The hell you say.

BARRY

I know you love your dad. But it's not the only reason.

BRENDA

So you got me all figured out, huh?

BARRY

No all. But enough.

BRENDA

That right.

BARRY

I spent most of my life around people who are scared of one thing or another. I don't know what it is, but you're scared of something.

Brenda eyes Barry, weighing whether or not to open up. Barry rises and puts on his coat.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Thanks for the hospitality. I really enjoyed myself.

BRENDA

Wait.

(small pause)

I didn't ask for Tony and Ray. You understand? I want no part of that world.

BARRY

How much time left on your contract?

BRENDA

Few months.

BARRY

Call me when it's up. I'll take care of the rest.

BRENDA

How?



BARRY

Don't worry about it. But listen: if they're gone and you're still afraid? That's a whole 'nother tune, ain't it? G'nite.

Barry goes.

Brenda sits at the piano, plays a delicate little blues run.

CLOSE ON:

Brenda. She softly sings Bessie Smith's "I Need a Little Sugar In My Bowl".

BRENDA

(singing)

*"Tired of bein' lonely, tired of bein' blue, I wished I had some good man, to tell my troubles to..."*

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO – NIGHT

Brenda and Johnny Lee in a recording booth, wearing cans, singing the same song.

BRENDA

(singing)

*"Seem like the whole world's wrong, since my man's been gone, I need a little sugar in my bowl..."*

The backing track kicks in: the song is now a hot blues-rocker.

Brenda and Johnny Lee trade riffs, then finish with a nice harmony on the final lines.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH – CONTINUOUS

Instant hooting applause from the crowded control room: the ENGINEER, ASSISTANT, Barry, Adamson, Alana, Brenda's band. Barry is producing the session.

Seen behind the glass barrier Brenda gives Johnny Lee a big hug.

Barry speaks into the console mic.

BARRY

That was perfect, guys. Go to dinner. Be back in an hour.

BRENDA

Who's buyin'?

Barry looks over at Joe, who nods "yes."

BARRY

We are.

BRENDA

Fuckin' A right you are.

(to band)

C'mon boys. Momma wants some spareribs.

In the background, everyone in the studio disburses. Johnny Lee moves a little unsteadily.

Barry notices.

ADAMSON

(to Barry)

What can I say? It sounds great.

BARRY

I do.

ADAMSON

You're finishing up today, right?

BARRY

Yeah Joe, about that, I was gonna ask for another couple days.

ADAMSON

You're already over budget.

BARRY

I know, but Brenda wrote this killer tune, I want it on the record.

ADAMSON

Studio's booked solid as of tomorrow.

BARRY

But...

ADAMSON

I do it for you, I have to do it for everyone, and before you know it my studio costs are double and the place turns into a fucking hotel.

BARRY

One more day. That's all. We can get the vocals down tonight...

ADAMSON

How many tracks you need for a complete record?

BARRY

We have enough for the record, but this is the single, I'm telling you.

ADAMSON

You got tonight. Get it in the can, it goes on the record. If not, then not. Period.

BARRY

Then we'll have to record it live.

ADAMSON

Then record it live. That is all.

ALANA

Almighty God has spoken.

ADAMSON

(to Barry)

Took her three years, but she finally figured it out. You got til eight-am.

G'night, boychick.

(an afterthought)

By the way: is Brenda black or white?

BARRY

Little of both.

ADAMSON

Huh. We may have to choose one way or another on that.

They file out.

Barry exhales.

INT. STUDIO BATHROOM - NIGHT

Barry enters, heads towards a urinal when he hears VOMITING and COUGHING from behind a stall.

BARRY

You OK in there?

Johnny Lee answers from behind a stall.

JOHNNY LEE (O.S.)

Yeah, be right out.

More vomiting.

Barry opens the stall: Johnny Lee is sprawled out on the floor, hanging on the toilet. Barry helps Johnny Lee up, flips down the toilet, helps him sit.

JOHNNY LEE (CONT'D)

Musta' ate some beans, been too long in the pot.

(silence)

I'm sick.

BARRY

So I see.

JOHNNY LEE

Called ever'body I know, streets are dry. And I'm too old to go cold turkey.

BARRY

What do you want me to do?

JOHNNY LEE

Find me something. Lil taste, I'll be fine.

BARRY

I can't do that Johnny. You know what I was.

JOHNNY LEE

Why you think I'm askin' you?

BARRY

Look, I know a doctor, he can give you someth...

JOHNNY LEE

You wanna finish your record? Go find me a nickel bag, ain't no big...

Johnny Lee convulses, dry heaves, then composes himself, breathing heavily.

JOHNNY LEE (CONT'D)

I don't get straight, this ain't even close to how bad it gets. Now please.

Barry looks at Johnny Lee, wracked with pain.

INT. STUDIO GREEN ROOM – NIGHT

In the dimly lit lounge, Johnny Lee lies on the couch, eyes closed. Barry enters, locks the door, sits beside Johnny.

BARRY

Johnny?

JOHNNY LEE

That you, doctor?

BARRY

Yeah, c'mon.

Barry helps Johnny Lee to a sitting position. Barry produces a very small glassine bag, sets it down next to Johnny. With unsteady hands, Johnny picks up the bag, but his hands are shaking so badly, he drops it.

JOHNNY LEE

You gonna have to cook it.

BARRY

No.

JOHNNY LEE

C'mon now...

BARRY

No fucking way.

Johnny extends his arms to display his shaky hands.

BARRY (CONT'D)

I'm not doin' it. Get someone else.

JOHNNY LEE

Just put it in the goddamn spoon, and we finish the record. Y'all need to finish the record, right? What do you care, some old nigger need a pop? I ain't nothin' to you, anyway.

BARRY

Fuck you. Do it yourself, you ungrateful son of a bitch.

Barry rises, heads for the door.

JOHNNY LEE

Wait wait wait. Wait just a second, now.

Small pause.

JOHNNY LEE (CONT'D)

I like you, Barry. You the only white boy since Alan Lomax ever gave a good got-damn about the music. So I'm askin' you. Please.

The doorknob jiggles. A KNOCK at the door.

BARRY

Give us a minute.

ENGINEER (O.S.)

Barry?

BARRY

Yeah.

ENGINEER (O.S.)

We're ready. You seen Johnny Lee?

BARRY

Yeah, he's in here, he was takin' a nap. Be there in five.

ENGINEER (O.S.)

Okay.

BARRY

(small pause; exhales)

You got your works?

JOHNNY LEE

(points to guitar case)

In there.

INT. STUDIO GREEN ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Using a plastic lighter, Barry cooks heroin on a bent tablespoon.

JOHNNY LEE

That's good, that's good. Set it down. Careful, now.

Barry sets the spoon down on the table. He picks up the syringe and draws the dope into the cylinder as Johnny Lee, his arm tied off with a piece of rubber tubing, flexes his fist to plump the vein. Barry proffers the syringe to him. Johnny Lee extends his arm.

BARRY

No. I can't.

JOHNNY LEE

C'mon now. Won't take but a second.

BARRY

Johnny, I can't do it. I can't cross that line. I can't.

JOHNNY LEE

Alright then.

With an unsteady hand, Johnny Lee takes the syringe and tries to line up the needle with his vein. He plunges it in, but the needle enters at a bad angle. Johnny Lee YELPS LOUDLY in pain, the needle stuck in his arm.

Urgent KNOCKING at the door.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

You OK in there?

BARRY

Yeah, Johnny stubbed his toe, we'll be right there.

Johnny Lee YELPS again. He starts flailing wildly, the needle flopping around, still in his arm. Barry quickly subdues him, rights the needle...

And empties the syringe into Johnny Lee's arm.

Johnny Lee relaxes.

Barry removes the needle from Johnny Lee's arm.

JOHNNY LEE

See now? Was that so hard?

He laughs.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO CONTROL BOOTH - LATE NIGHT

Barry and the engineers listen to the playback of Brenda's tune, a soulful, bluesy rocker in the vein of Janis Joplin's "Piece of My Heart."

In the studio, Brenda, the band and Johnny Lee, sitting on a stool with his guitar also listen.

The song ends.

BARRY

(into mic)

Hey Johnny, you got one more solo in you? We need one...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO – CONTINUOUS

JOHNNY LEE

Right before the last chorus, you got any sense. Yeah, let's do it.

BARRY

(into mic)

The rest of you, go home. We're done.

BRENDA

Nah, we're here 'til the bitter end. But no reason we can't party.

She produces a bottle of Jameson's Irish Whiskey, takes a slug, passes it to Johnny Lee. He takes a swig, passes it to the DRUMMER, and so on.

BARRY

(to engineer)

Que it up.

(to Johnny Lee, on mic)



Ready?

JOHNNY LEE  
Count it off, son.

BARRY  
(on mic)  
A-five, six, seven, eight...

Barry gestures to the Engineer.

The playback kicks in. Johnny plays a run...then grows woozy...and collapses.  
The BASS PLAYER reacts and catches Johnny Lee before he hits the deck.

Everyone surrounds him.

Barry bursts into the studio.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
Someone call nine-one-one! Now!

Barry pushes his way to Johnny Lee, kneels by him. He's fading fast, but seems to be in no pain.

JOHNNY LEE  
You need another take?

BARRY  
No. That was perfect.

JOHNNY LEE  
Wasn't your fault, man. You understand? Wasn't your fault.

Johnny Lee's eyes close. He's gone.

Brenda bursts into tears. Everyone else is motionless, stunned, silent.

EXT. RECORDING STUDIO - WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING

In downtown New York City, dawn is just breaking, early morning sunlight reflecting off the East River.

Two EMT TECHS load a stretcher with a sheet covering Johnny Lee's body into the ambulance, Barry and Brenda hovering close. EMT TECH #2 closes up the

doors, goes around to the driver's seat and fires up the engine during the following.

EMT TECH #1  
(to Barry)  
Sign here, please.

Barry does so.

EMT TECH #1 (CONT'D)  
Shame, ain't it? I got all this guy's records, played the grooves off 'em.  
Fuckin' sad he's just another nigger junkie.  
(to Brenda)  
No offense.

Brenda just shakes her head wearily, too tired to fight back.

EMT Tech #2 gets in the rig.

Brenda and Barry watch it drive off. Brenda turns to Barry.

BRENDA  
What did he mean, "It's not your fault"?

BARRY  
Beats me. Go home, get some sleep.

BRENDA  
Yeah.  
(small pause)  
I don't feel like bein' alone right now.

Brenda and Barry eye each other. They know a decision is about to be made.

BARRY  
(softly)  
I have to say good night. You understand?

Brenda nods.

BRENDA  
Nah. I can walk. See you later.

Barry watches her go.

INT. BARRY'S OFFICE – DAY

Barry finishes up an interview with NYPD Detective Benjamin, the detective from the opening bust. Benjamin flips through his notes.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

Okay. I think I got everything I need.

BARRY

Good.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

But they're gonna ask about your prints on the old man's works.

BARRY

Okay.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

Just so it's straight in the report: he was on the nod when you walked in...

BARRY

I locked the door while I helped him get himself together. I was putting his works away when he jammed his foot, so I put the shit down.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

You weren't in the room when he cooked up and did his hit?

BARRY

(small pause)

No.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

And you had no knowledge that he had drugs in his possession?

BARRY

No.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN

That's it, then. You're good.

BARRY

That a turn of phrase, or an actual fact?

Benjamin smiles, rises, goes to door.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN  
Shitty fuckin' business, this music thing, huh?

BARRY  
Good and bad, like anything else. I think I asked you a question.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN  
I can see why you like it, the broads and that. But all the rest? I don't know how you stand it.

BARRY  
Same question I got asked every day back on the job.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN  
But on the job, you didn't need a scorecard, keep track of who had your back.

BARRY  
You got mine now?

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN  
Do you need me to?

BARRY  
I don't want this stink on me.

DETECTIVE BENJAMIN  
Then yeah. I do. I owed you one. Consider us square. G'nite.

The Detective exits.

Barry sits, stares out the window. The naked fat woman appears, gives him a wink, then makes a "Come over" gesture. Barry gestures "no thanks" and closes the blinds.

INT. LEGEND RECORDS RECEPTION AREA – NIGHT

Barry flips through some mail in the darkened reception area. The elevator DINGS. George emerges.

GEORGE  
Hey.

BARRY

Hey.

GEORGE

I talked to Benjamin. Nobody's gonna jam you up. Guy overdosed, end of story. You're clean.

BARRY

Thing is Georgie...I scored for him. He was so shaky, he couldn't get the needle in right, so I ended up putting the junk in his veins. I fuckin' murdered the guy.

GEORGE

Hey. Stop with that. You didn't do shit. That never happened.

BARRY

I know it didn't. But it did. And I have to live with it.

GEORGE

Then live with it. How many times did we score for some smackhead, get him to flip? It's the cost of doing business.

BARRY

Whole point of this job was to get away from all that shit, you know?

GEORGE

What can you do? But listen: end of the day, Johnny Lee died at his own hand. Not yours.

(small pause)

C'mon. I'll buy you a soda pop.

George leads Barry to the elevator. They hit the button, door opens. Barry hits the corridor lights. They enter the elevator. Elevator door closes.

The empty reception area is lit by a few blinking lights on the switchboard.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL – NIGHT

A huge banner reads "9th Annual Grammy Awards". Limos, searchlight, all the glitz and glam circa 1967.

A limo pulls up and a formally dressed Barry and Nadine emerge. Nadine looks gorgeous but she's a little overwhelmed. Barry takes her by the hand, gives her a peck on the cheek. She smiles, visibly relaxes. They head inside.

INT. BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL BALLROOM – NIGHT

Barry and Nadine sit behind Adamson and his thin, attractive wife BETH ANN. Some of the other Legend Records execs also occupy Barry's row. Nadine is genuinely enjoying herself.

ON STAGE:

Sam & Dave finish up a rendition of "Soul Man."

The crowd gives it up.

Sam and Dave head to the Presenter's Podium.

SAM

We're here to present the award for best new artist.

ADAMSON

(turns around, to Barry)

Finally, a category fucking Sinatra can't win.

DAVE

Well, they really asked just me, but I let ol' Sam help me out.

They laugh, but it's forced, their legendary enmity momentarily rearing its ugly head.

SAM

The nominees are:

DAVE

The Doors.

SAM

The Grassroots.

DAVE

Brenda Hamilton.

SAM

And Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels.

Dave hold up the envelope.

DAVE  
And the winner is...  
(to Sam)  
You wanna read it?

SAM  
Yeah, man. Give it here.

Dave holds out the envelope. As Sam reaches for it, Dave snatches it away, opens it.

DAVE  
And the winner is...yeah! My girl! Brenda Hamilton!

The Legend Records crew explodes with joy.

Brenda rises, everyone hugs and kisses her as she makes her way to the aisle. As she passes Barry, she give him a hug that goes on just a bit longer than all the others.

Nadine notices, but says nothing, and keeps a smile on her face.

Brenda takes the stage and is given her Grammy. She addresses the crowd.

BRENDA  
Um, thank you, thank you for this. Kinda funny to be called “new”, I been singin’ since I’m fourteen. I wanna thank...shit, I wanna thank a lot of people, but I’m a little wasted, so I’ll have to thank y’all later.

Laughter.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
I do want to thank...well, my daddy, who couldn’t make the trip...uh, Legend Records for marketing the shit outta the record over Johnny Lee’s dead body... Adamson smiles ruefully.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
And most of all, Barry Silver for...everything.  
(to her bandmates)  
Drinks on mamma, boys! C’mon!

Brenda exits the stage.

IN THE AUDIENCE

BETH ANN

(to Barry)

Congratulation, Barry. You deserve it.

(to Nadine)

You must be very proud.

NADINE

(absolutely genuine)

I am. I really am.

Nadine give Barry a kiss. He looks like he's on top of the world.

INT. FANCY HOTEL SUITE – NIGHT

The after-party in full swing in Adamson's swanky suite. Adamson is shepherding Barry around the room, glad-handing various creative and business types. Barry turns to Nadine, who sits on the couch across the room with Beth Ann, and gestures, "Help."

Nadine wave "Go on."

BETH ANN

Having a good time?

NADINE

Yeah. Thanks.

BETH ANN

Why am I not convinced? What's wrong?

NADINE

(laughs a little; then)

I never thought about a fancy life, you know? My family, a decent living, that was enough.

BETH ANN

Nothing wrong with that. Nothing wrong with wanting more, either.

NADINE

I still see our friends from the job, but it's not the same.



BETH ANN

I don't see why not. Friends are friends, right?

NADINE

You don't understand. If you're not in...you're out. And since Barry's out, I'm out. Even with the girls.

BETH ANN

I see.

NADINE

We talk, but it's just polite now, you know? And all this money and whatnot won't ever bring them back. And they were my family, too.

Nadine sips her wine.

BETH ANN

When Joe gave up being a lawyer, I felt just like you. What kind of business is this for a nice Jewish boy, you know?

NADINE

I know, right?

BETH ANN

But listen: you, your kids, you're gonna have a really nice life. Different, but really nice.

NADINE

How can you be so sure?

BETH ANN

Because Joe's got plans for Barry. You wait and see. And believe me, the money isn't so bad.

NADINE

(bucking up a bit; raising her glass)

Okay, then. To a really nice life.

They clink, drink.

INT. FANCY HOTEL SUITE – LATER

Nadine sleeps against Barry's shoulder. Rock music suddenly blasts from the stereo, startling Nadine awake.

NADINE

Baby, I'm beat.

BARRY

I know, me too. Just one more hour, this producer's coming by Joe wants me to meet.

NADINE

I'll just take a cab back to the hotel, you come when you're done.

BARRY

But...

NADINE

It's fine. Really.  
(kisses him)

She puts her shoes on, rises.

NADINE (CONT'D)

If I'm asleep...and you've got the energy...go ahead and wake me.

BARRY

I always got the energy.

NADINE

I know. It's like I'm married to a sixteen year-old.

She goes, wending her way through the crowd. Tom, the long haired executive ogles her ass as she passes, then catches Barry watching him. He smiles and shrugs in apology.

Smiling back, Barry makes the shooting gun gesture with his thumb and forefinger.

Tom smiles a little uneasily, disappears into the crowd.

Barry chuckles to himself.

EXT. FANCY HOTEL SUITE BALCONY – NIGHT

The lights of L.A. twinkle below. Brenda leans on the balcony, sipping a glass of whiskey.

Barry comes out to get some air, sees her, goes over and leans next to her on the balcony.

BRENDA  
Hey Mr. Record Man.

BARRY  
Hey superstar. Whatcha drinkin'?

BRENDA  
I forget. Want some?

BARRY  
Yeah.

He reaches for the glass, but Brenda puts it to his lips. Barry takes a gulp. Brenda removes the glass, runs her forefinger under his lower lip. She looks back out at the lights.

BRENDA  
I miss Johnny Lee.

BARRY  
Yeah, me too.

BRENDA  
He loved the shit out of you. Told me you were the only white man he ever trusted.

Barry is visibly moved by this.

BRENDA (CONT'D)  
So I trust you, too. Remember that.  
(kills her drink)  
Now momma's goin' to bed before she gets in trouble.

She extends her arms for a hug. Barry embraces her. They stand very still, just holding each other for what seems like a very long time.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Sorry to interrupt.

Barry and Brenda break the hug, turn and see:  
Nadine.

Barry heads to Nadine. She takes a step backwards.

BARRY  
Honey...

NADINE  
No no, don't mind me, I forgot my key, but I'll...

BARRY  
Honey. It was just a hug.

NADINE  
Right. Just a hug.

BRENDA  
(to Nadine)  
Nadine, he's a good man. I owe him a lot. But I'm no homewrecker. Okay?

Nadine does not reply. Brenda goes. Nadine speaks in measured tones.

NADINE  
I stood there. I watched you. Now you look me in the face and tell me you have no feelings for her.

BARRY  
It was a hug, that's all.

NADINE  
Answer the question.

BARRY  
You're making a federal case out of nothing.

NADINE  
Something you're an expert in.

BARRY  
Ha ha.

NADINE

Whole time, I was afraid I wasn't strong enough for all this. But the weak one is you.

BARRY

Oh, I get it, I'm weak, that's my problem. Thanks for the heads-up.

NADINE

If it's not her, it'll be someone else. A one-nighter or true love, I don't care. I'm not spending the rest of my life waiting for the other shoe to drop.

BARRY

You honestly think you mean that little to me?

NADINE

When we get home, pack your things.

Nadine goes, barely holding it together.

Barry is alone for a brief moment when Adamson appears with a hip, rich-looking PRODUCER and two mini-skirted BABES.

ADAMSON

There he is! Boychick, meet Richard Perry, another true son of Brooklyn.

Barry pastes a smile on his face and goes over to glad-hand.

INT. BARRY'S NEW OFFICE – DAY

A bigger, swankier office. Two gold records on the wall. Feet up on the desk, Barry listens to a harmonica-driven rock-blues.

A COMMOTION is heard outside the door.

INT. RECEPTION AREA – CONTINUOUS

Barry exits his office to find:

Ray Orsino arguing with Rita, sitting at the secretary desk outside Barry's office.

RITA

I told you, you can't come her without an appoint...

RAY

Hey, fuck that. I been leaving messages, so you tell that son of a...

BARRY  
Tell me what?

RITA  
I'm sorry, Barry, I told him...

BARRY  
No no Rita, it's fine.  
(to Ray)  
Come on in, Ray.

Ray gathers himself, walks past Barry to the open office door.

RITA  
(a little shaken up; sotto)  
You want me to call security?

BARRY  
Relax. I got this. Go grab lunch.

RITA  
It's only ten-thirty.

BARRY  
Take a long one.

RITA  
I don't want to leave you alone with them.

BARRY  
Don't worry. I got I covered.

RITA  
OK. Be careful. Please.

Rita nods, grabs her purse, goes.

INT. BARRY'S NEW OFFICE – CONTINUOUS

Barry closes the door behind him.

BARRY  
Where's Tony?

RAY

I told him to stay home. He don't think straight when he's mad.

BARRY

So what's on your mind, Ray?

RAY

That bitch played us. You know she did.

BARRY

What do you mean?

RAY

We had a contract.

BARRY

Which expired.

RAY

It had a renewable option.

BARRY

Which she declined.

RAY

And we didn't.

BARRY

What do you want, Ray?

RAY

I want a taste. Which we're entitled to.

BARRY

Why? You didn't do "stugatz". Did you get her a deal? Gigs that paid the rent? Anything?

RAY

That shit takes time.

BARRY

Your time ran out.

RAY

So pay us for puttin' in the work.

BARRY

Ray -- even if I wanted to -- which I don't -- there's nothing I can do. How can I justify a pay-out to Brenda's ex-management?

RAY

I don't give fuck how you do it. Give us fifty large, we'll call it a day.

BARRY

Not gonna happen.

RAY

That right.

BARRY

That's the fact, Jack.

Ray gets up and looks at the gold records on the wall - one from Brenda, one from another artist.

RAY

Look at that. You got your name on these.

BARRY

I produced the records.

RAY

Must be nice to be a big shot.

BARRY

(shrugs)

I wouldn't know.

RAY

Listen, we go back a long way. I don't wanna bust balls.

BARRY

No? So what do you call this, Ray?

RAY

Listen: our guy from the Arthur Avenue thing? He's jammed up real bad.



BARRY

I'm sorry to hear that.

RAY

Talk to Georgie, it's his case, get our guy out from under, and we'll call it square on Brenda. Deal?

Barry smiles thinly; he realizes that Brenda was never the point.

BARRY

I'm off the job over a year now, Ray. You now what that means.

RAY

Georgie's still your dick buddy, right? Make it happen.

BARRY

Or?

RAY

"Or"? I gotta tell you, "or"? C'mon, Barry. We're both adults here. We live in a world where bad things happen.

BARRY

Get out.

RAY

Whatever you say.

BARRY

Now.

RAY

Okay. Nice talkin' to you.

BARRY

Wait.

Barry rises, gets right up in Ray's face. Ray is much bigger, but Barry's all cop now.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Anything happens, I'm holding you personally responsible, Ray. Remember that.

They stay face to face another moment. Ray then smiles, makes an “I surrender” gesture, goes.

INT. BRENDA’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

A cozy but nice brownstone apartment in Greenwich Village. Brenda sits at the piano, working out a tune.

A BRICK shatters a window.

Then another.

And another.

And another.

Brenda grabs her purse, goes to the door. Stops. Looks through the peephole. Panics. Runs into the hallway, then into the bedroom.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING/ALLEY – CONTINUOUS

The bedroom window opens a crack. Then a bit more. Brenda peeks out, then seeing that the coast is clear, beats it.

INT. BARRY’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Brenda nurses a drink. Barry sits stands by the window, controlling his rage.

A KNOCK, then George enters.

BARRY  
(to Brenda)  
This is George.

BRENDA  
Hey George.

GEORGE  
Hey kid. You okay?

BRENDA  
I been better.

BARRY

So?

GEORGE

No prints, no nothin'.

(small pause)

The Arthur Avenue guy, there's nothing I can do.

BARRY

I didn't ask...

GEORGE

I know, but just so you know. It's off the table.

BARRY

Can you believe these motherfuckers? The fucking brass balls on these guys?

BRENDA

See? This is why I wanted out.

GEORGE

(to Barry)

You're off the job. You don't count no more.

BRENDA

What the hell does that mean? I thought you were his friend.

BARRY

No, he's right.

BRENDA

I don't understand.

BARRY

No way no how would a wise guy ever go after a fed. It's be a war that they know they'd lose. But I'm out, so I'm fair game.

GEORGE

And now they figure he's got everything to lose.

BRENDA

So what happens?

Barry and George exchange a look.

Barry sits next to her.

BARRY

We can put this right, but if you're gonna go back to the farm, there's no point. This is your life, Bren. You gonna stand up for it, or not?

BRENDA

Jesus.

BARRY

What would your dad say?

BRENDA

(thinks for a moment; then)

Fuck 'em.

BARRY

(smiles; then, to George)

When's the meeting?

GEORGE

Two.

BARRY

(to Brenda)

I'll be back soon. Don't worry.

BRENDA

'k.

George senses the vibe between them.

GEORGE

I'll go get the elevator.

George goes.

BRENDA

So I'm your girl, huh?

(quickly)

Be careful.

BARRY

Just another day at the office.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Barry joins George at the elevator.

GEORGE

I didn't want to embarrass you, but you can't come with.

BARRY

Shut up George.

GEORGE

No, listen. You can't.

BARRY

Why?

GEORGE

The badge needs to do the talkin'.

BARRY

Thought you were off the clock.

GEORGE

Even so.

(cutting Barry off)

C'mon. You know I'm right. Let me do it.

The elevator arrives.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You fuckin' her?

BARRY

No.

GEORGE

Not yet, you mean. That what all this is about? The broad?

BARRY

C'mon. You were me, you wouldn't protect her?

GEORGE

You love her?

BARRY  
(small pause)  
That's not the issue.

GEORGE  
If you say so.  
(small pause)  
How's Nadine? The kids?

BARRY  
Fine, thanks for asking.

GEORGE  
Good. I'll call you when it's done.

The elevator arrives, George enters, it closes.

INT. BARRY'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Barry re-enters to find Brenda asleep on the couch. He puts a blanket over her, then goes into the bedroom.

INT. BARRY'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Barry is asleep. Brenda enters, wrapped in the blanket. He opens his eyes. She drops the blanket, revealing her naked body.

She lies down next to him. Barry encircles her in his arms. They kiss. Things heat up. They begin making love.

EXT. DOWNTOWN EAST RIVER PARK – NIGHT

2AM. The Orsinos sit on a bench overlooking the river. A wrought iron barrier extends into the foggy distance in both directions.

A car pulls, up George emerges.

The Orsino brothers rise and head towards the car.

GEORGE  
Go back and sit.

The Orsinos sit back down on the bench. George leans against the railing a few feet away.

TONY  
Where's Barry?

GEORGE  
Home with the flu. So fellas: no more bricks through the window. It's just not a classy move.

TONY  
Wish I knew what you were talking about.

George sighs, gets off the railing and makes to leave.

RAY  
Georgie, alright alright, c'mon, let's talk.

George perches back on the railing.

RAY (CONT'D)  
Look, the broad fucked us. So did Barry. We know this. You know this. So you tell me, is it wrong to look for a little payback in cash or in kind?

GEORGE  
Not at all. But listen: you're guy on the Arthur Avenue thing. I'm tellin' you: he's fucked. End of story.

TONY  
So why're we meeting at two fuckin' AM, there's nothing you can do?

GEORGE  
DA's lookin' to hand down more indictments. You behave yourselves, I'll keep you and the rest of your crew out clean. Fazoot?

TONY  
So the deal is, we walk with nothing more than what we had in the first place?

GEORGE  
Peace of mind, boys. Can you really put a price on that?

Small pause. Ray gets up and leans against the railing, facing the water, opposite to George who faces the other way.

RAY

Things used to be simple, Georgie. We all behaved like gentlemen. Like that time I needed to go get booked, I told you I had an appointment to bang my girlfriend, but I'd be in front of her building at three. And what time was I there?

GEORGE

Three on the nose, Ray.

RAY

And my dick was still half-hard! But things are changing. You, us, we're goin' the way of the dinosaur. The moolan-yans, the fuckin' spics settin' up shop uptown -- they'll fuckin' shoot anyone, just as soon as look at you. There's no reasoning with these animals.

GEORGE

They're a tough bunch.

RAY

No, I mean it, Georgie. I worry for you, I really do.

George senses this is going somewhere, but he's not sure where yet, so he plays along.

GEORGE

That's mighty white of you, Ray. Nice to know you're lookin' out for me.

RAY

So I wonder, what will it take for us old-timers to get the respect that we've earned, that we've returned time and time again? Because I'll tell you: this whole business? It's a matter of respect. Everyone knows we got chumped by your man Barry. Our credibility has been severely diminished. And our reputation, like yours, means everything to us. So we can't -- principle does not allow us -- to sit back and do nothing. So you tell me: to what method must men like us resort, to see justice done? Must we act like animals, or will reason and the ways of the fuckin' gentlemen prevail?

GEORGE

(to Tony)

You have anything to add?

TONY

(shaking his head "no")

I think my brother has covered all the major points.



GEORGE

(to both)

I'll keep you from getting jammed up. My word on that. But that's it. But if anything happens, I'm coming for you. Gentlemen.

RAY

I don't think my message got through. And that frustrates me.

GEORGE

G'nite.

George straightens up, heads back towards his car. Tony jumps us, menacingly blocks his path.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You fuckin' kidding me?

George turns around to address Ray and sees...

Ray approaching fast holding a stretched garrotte wire in his hands.

George reacts quickly, and drops to one knee, drawing his gun at the same time.

Ray trips over George's shoulder and lands hard on the cement pavement.

Lights out.

Tony reaches into his waistband for his weapon.

George shoots him in the shoulder, the shot reverberating and echoing into the silent night air.

Tony drops, quivering.

George goes over, helps Tony to his feet.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Alright, c'mon you're gonna be alright, things just got outta hand...c'mere, you're okay.

TONY

I'm gonna be sick...

GEORGE

Alright, c'mon, over here...

George guides Tony to the railing, checking quickly over his shoulder:

Ray still lies motionless.

Tony starts throwing up.

George grabs him by the waistband and heaves him up and over. He lands with a splash and then sinks into the darkened river.

George then wipes down his gun and tosses it into the river. He then looks over:

Tony is gone.

George sees him in the distance, crossing the street, slowly, painfully limping towards a lone parked car.

INT. GEORGE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

George jumps into his car, fires up the engine.

POLICE SIRENS are heard in the distance.

George guns the engine and peels out.

EXT. STREET – CONTINUOUS

Before Ray can reach his car, George's car clips him and continues off into the night. The SIRENS grow louder as Ray lies writhing, then motionless on the ground.

INT. HOSPITAL I.C.U. - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ray is hooked up to a battery of tubes, and machines. His face is a mess.  
Enter an NYPD DETECTIVE and a twenty-something INTERN.

NYPD DETECTIVE

He gonna make it?

INTERN

Probably. He's got a mass of contusions and too many broken bones to count, but his vital organs are all intact.

NYPD DETECTIVE

Can he talk now?

INTERN

I'd give it 'til the morning. He's pretty doped up.

Ray motions "Come here."

The Detective goes to Ray's bedside. The Intern hovers behind him.

NYPD DETECTIVE

Mr. Orsino. Do you know who did this to you?

Ray nods "yes."

NYPD DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Tell me.

Ray motions, "come closer" then whispers in the Detective's ear.

The Detective reacts with surprise.

INT. BARRY'S BEDROOM – MORNING

Early morning light reflects off the high rise buildings seen from the window.

Barry and Brenda are asleep.

There is a sudden CRACK from the other room that startles them both awake.

Before they can get out of bed...

Two NYPD UNIFORMED COPS burst into the room, followed by the Detective we met in the hospital.

BARRY

What the fuck?

NYPD DETECTIVE

Barry Silver, you're under arrest for the murder of Anthony Orsino and the attempted murder of Raymond Orsino. Now get dressed.

BRENDA

That's nuts! He's been here all night! With me!

BARRY  
(quickly, to Brenda)  
Not another word.

Barry sits up and the cops go to cuff him.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
(to Detective)  
Mind if I get my pants on first?

The Detective nods at the cops, who head for the door. The Detective stares at Brenda.

BRENDA  
The hell are you starin' at?

NYPD DETECTIVE  
Don't I know you from somewhere? The TV or somethin'?

Barry and Brenda can't help but smirk.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM – DAY

Barry waits alone. Enter A.D.A Miller (the guy Barry punched out), and Barry's old boss Hank Daehler.

DAEHLER  
Barry. Good to see you, even under these circumstances.

Miller and Daehler sit opposite Barry.

DAEHLER (CONT'D)  
Orsino murder's all over the news. It's the talk of the town.

BARRY  
I was with Brenda Hamilton all night in my apartment.

DAEHLER  
Congratulations.

MILLER  
But that doesn't mean we can't press charges. And leak it to the media. And fuck up your career.

DAEHLER

We've kept your name out of it. For now.

BARRY

Fine. Go ahead. You'll both look like assholes when you come up with nothing and I sue your asses for building a false case.

DAEHLER

What about George?

BARRY

What about George?

DAEHLER

What do you think a forensic examination might yield? Wonder if there are any new dents in his car.

BARRY

George had nothing to do with it.

MILLER

With what?

BARRY

My beef with the Orsinos.

MILLER

Oh, so you did have a beef with them.

BARRY

Over Brenda Hamilton. They wanted a piece of her, I said no. End of story.

DAEHLER

Barry, listen: we didn't come here to hurt you. We came to ask for your help. Truly.

Barry looks at them quizzically; this is the last thing he expected to hear.

DAEHLER (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here, get some breakfast, then go back to my office. It'll be nice and quiet on a Saturday.

INT. DAEHLER'S OFFICE – MORNING

Barry, Daehler, and Miller.

BARRY

What do you want? I have nothing on the Orsinos. If I did, I'd give 'em to you in a heartbeat.

DAEHLER

We don't care about the Orsinos.

BARRY

Then what is all this?

DAEHLER

A much bigger fish. A whale, in fact.

MILLER

We've been building a case for almost a year on drug traffic in the music industry.

Barry says nothing.

DAEHLER

Funny thing, Legend Records is one of our main targets. Coincidence, huh?

BARRY

You're wasting your time. It's just hippies smoking weed, a little acid once in a while. That's it.

MILLER

We think there's more.

BARRY

(to Daehler)

Musicians get high. This is news to you? What did you always tell us? "The users are nothing unless they can get you to the source."

DAEHLER

That's right.

BARRY

So, what, you're gonna come through the office, guns blazing, to bust a couple of secretaries who like to get stoned after work?

MILLER

It's bigger than that. Joe Adamson is involved in major level drug traffic. He's the mark.

BARRY

(laughs)

That is bullshit. The only thing Joe Adamson ever got high on was an egg cream.

MILLER

We have enough evidence to make a case.

BARRY

What kind of case?

MILLER

Payola, procurement, drug traffic, you name it. But we need him on tape.

DAEHLER

That's where you come in.

BARRY

To do what?

DAEHLER

Wear a wire. Get Adamson to admit he's been dealing.

There's a pause as Barry takes this in.

BARRY

No way.

DAEHLER

Barry...

MILLER

Hey hey hey, Mister Moral High Ground: we've been down this road before. So let's save time: I'm not asking you. I'm telling you. And here's how.

Daehler clicks on a reel-to-reel player. Barry's conversation with George in the reception area plays back:

*GEORGE*

*I talked to Benjamin. Nobody's gonna jam you up. Guy overdosed, end of story. You're clean.*

*BARRY*

*Thing is Georgie...I scored for him. He was so shaky, he couldn't get the needle in right, so I ended up putting the junk in his veins. I fuckin' murdered the guy.*

*GEORGE*

*Hey. Stop with that. You didn't do shit. That never happened.*

*BARRY*

*I know it didn't. But it did. And I have to live with it.*

*GEORGE*

*Then live with it. How many times did we score for some smackhead, get him to flip? It's the cost of doing business.*

Daehler stops the tape.

MILLER

Now before you tell me to go fuck myself, you might want to factor in that we also have your boyfriend George on suspected murder and confessing to conspiracy to drug traffic.

BARRY

I'm telling you, Adamson is clean.

DAEHLER

Then wear the wire. We'll protect your identity.

BARRY

How?

DAEHLER

(shrugs)

We had the room tapped. You didn't know.

MILLER

So you got a choice: you and George, or the other guy. Part of my is actually hoping you play the hero again 'cause nothing would make me happier than nailing you for second degree manslaughter.

DAEHLER

(to Barry)

Go home. Think it over. We'll respect your decision either way.

MILLER



I need an answer by nine am, Monday morning.

As Barry heads for the door:

DAEHLER

I must say, I never thought I'd see the day Barry Silver'd be sticking needles into people's arms. But I guess that's all part of the new job, eh?

INT. BARRY'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Barry packs a bag. Brenda sits on the bed.

BRENDA

I'm glad you told me.

BARRY

And I'm sorry you had to be involved in all this.

BRENDA

So what will you do?

BARRY

Disappear. Leave the jackals to sort it out among themselves.

BRENDA

Where will you go?

BARRY

Back on the job, you always had an escape route. Leave it at that.

BRENDA

And what about me?

BARRY

I don't know.

BRENDA

And what about your kids?

Barry stops packing, slumps on the bed. Brenda puts her arm around him.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

I know you're loyal to Joe...but he's not the person you think he is.

BARRY

What do you mean?

BRENDA

You don't know what it took for me to get the contract.

BARRY

I think I do.

BRENDA

No. You don't. I had, let's call it a "private audition" with Joe. And I'm not the only one.

BARRY

I've never hear anyone talk about Joe like that.

BRENDA

You think people are gonna rat on the most powerful man in the music business? Who would believe me? And I'll tell you what: if people think I'm lying, I lose, and if it's true, I'm a whore, so I still lose.

BARRY

Then why'd you do it?

BRENDA

Because I saw I could have everything I ever wanted if I sucked one dick. So I did.

BARRY

How many times?

BRENDA

Once.

BARRY

Don't lie.

BRENDA

I'm not. It was just the one time. Look, it wasn't about sex any more for him than it was for me. It was him showin' me who the big dog is.

Barry thinks for a moment.

BARRY

If what they're saying is true, he's making a fortune dealing drugs.

BRENDA

And you would protect a man like that? At the expense of yourself? Your best friend?

BARRY

No.

BRENDA

Well then. So what are you going to do?

EXT. HENRY PALLEK'S OFFICE – DAY

The top floor of the Pallek Building. A huge, austere lobby. A large wood-paneled reception desk behind which sits DOROTHY, 50s.

Barry waits.

Dorothy's console buzzes, she answers.

DOROTHY

(on headset)

Yes Mr. Pallek. Right away, sir.

(to Barry)

Mr. Pallek will see you now. Go right in.

BARRY

Thank you.

INT. HENRY PALLEK'S OFFICE – DAY

If God had an office, it would look like this.

Barry enters. HENRY PALLEK, mid-60's, a grey eminence and great media mogul rises and warmly greets Barry.

PALLEK

Barry, I must begin with an apology.

BARRY

About what, sir?

PALLEK

And with all you've achieved, I've not made the time to meet you. And for that, I most humbly apologize.

BARRY

I'm sure you're very busy.

PALLEK

Yes but it's really because of my wife, she's had some health issue and it's been...  
(he grows visibly upset at the thought)

BARRY

Of course, sir. No need to explain. It's a pleasure to finally meet.

PALLEK

Please sit.

They do so.

PALLEK (CONT'D)

Now I understand that you need to discuss something rather urgent, correct?

BARRY

Yes.

(small pause)

Mr. Pallek, this is not easy for me. And I ask that we keep this conversation in total confidence.

PALLEK

You have my word.

BARRY

You know what I used to do for a living.

PALLEK

Yes.

BARRY

I still maintain close ties with the Department. And I've been informed that a huge investigation is underway targeting Joe Adamson.

PALLEK

I see.

BARRY

I don't know the exact nature of the operation, but it involves drug traffic on a major scale.

Pallek takes this in.

PALLEK

How far along is the investigation?

BARRY

Pretty far. Again, I'm not privy to all the details. But I understand it's a substantial case.

PALLEK

(pause)

I truly like Joe Adamson. He's shrewd, and he's built my music division far beyond my expectations.

BARRY

I honestly believe he'll be vindicated, but...

PALLEK

But a scandal, a trial, even if he's innocent, we are all tarred by a most unfortunate brush.

BARRY

I'm not going to lie to you, sir. In a case like this, your broadcast license would be at risk.

PALLEK

Really.

BARRY

But these things, scandals and such, they fade over time.

PALLEK

(small pause)

My wife is dying, Barry. Time is not something I do not wish to waste.

Pallek rises, extends his hand. Barry shakes it.

PALLEK (CONT'D)

This must have been difficult. Joe is very fond of you, and I imagine you feel the same.

BARRY

I love Joe. I owe everything to him. I came to you because I hope you'll protect him.

PALLEK  
I'll certainly do what I can. Thank you Barry.

Barry exits.

Pallek hits the intercom.

DOROTHY (O.S.)  
Yes sir?

PALLEK  
Dorothy, get my lawyer on the phone.

DOROTHY (O.S.)  
Which one?

PALLEK  
That's a good question. I'll call you back. In the meantime, get my accountant.

DOROTHY (O.S.)  
Which one?

PALLEK  
Never mind.

Pallek flips through his rolodex.

INT. ADAMSON'S OFFICE – DAY

Adamson is on the phone.

ADAMSON  
I like her, great voice, but to be honest, she's a little chubby...can you put her on a diet or some...

The door flies open and two uniformed SECURITY GUARDS enter.

Adamson stares.

INT. ADAMSON RECEPTION AREA – DAY

The hallway is full of people. The doors to Adamson's office open and he comes through, flanked by the Guards and holding a cardboard box. They escort him to the elevator. Alana fights back tears.

INT. BARRY'S LIVING ROOM – EVENING

Barry crosses from the TV set to the small kidney-shaped bar in the living room. He takes a breath then dials his phone.

BARRY

(on phone)

You okay?..eight's fine. Hang in there.

Barry hangs up.

INT. ADAMSON'S HOME STUDY – NIGHT

A high-ceilinged, beautifully appointed room in a Gramercy Park brownstone, shelves full of books and records, awards, and mementos, plush, expensive furniture, the works.

Looking a mess, Adamson drinks from a large tumbler of whiskey.

Barry pokes his head in.

BARRY

I thought you didn't drink.

ADAMSON

First one in nine years. Seemed like the right moment to jump off the wagon.

He drinks.

BARRY

Tell me what they have, what they don't have, and what they think they have.

ADAMSON

Why?

BARRY

Maybe I can help make it go away.

ADAMSON

The only thing that's going away is me.

(drinks; then laughs ruefully)

Henry Pallek, that paragon of virtue, you think he doesn't know how the record business works? Up there playing God on the fifty-seventh floor while the rest of us kneel in supplication and throw gold at his feet? The fucker came to me to start the record label. You know why?

BARRY

Because...

ADAMSON

Because he wanted a smart Jew to do the dirty work. So I did. I got rich, he got richer. So why now, all of a sudden, is he shoving me in front of a moving train?

BARRY

The feds must have something on him. And you. From what I can tell, this is a drug case.

ADAMSON

Drugs in the music business. They finally caught on. Three cheers.  
(laughs; drinks)

BARRY

Are you dealing?

ADAMSON

Define dealing.

BARRY

Joe.

ADAMSON

You know what my job is? Finally? I'm the cruise director, I'm Mr. Fun and Games. The talent goes where the party is. What makes for a good party? Money. Girls. Getting high. So I made sure we were the best party in town.

BARRY

Who were your sources?

ADAMSON

People I am sure you are acquainted with. I kept the guinea bastards happy - I bought their shit, found them fresh pussy, and the world went round and round.

BARRY

So you bought directly from the five families?



ADAMSON  
Yup.

BARRY  
Which ones?

ADAMSON  
I don't know. They all sound the same to me. Bonnano, Banana, Gambino,  
Bambino...  
(laughs; drinks)

Barry takes the drink out of Joe's hand, sits him up straight.

BARRY  
Joe. I know these people, both sides of the fence. You are in a world of hurt,  
you don't tell me who you've been in business with.

ADAMSON  
Let go of me.

BARRY  
Talk.

ADAMSON  
Barry! You're hurting me!

Barry lets go.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)  
I had a regular pipeline deal with the Gambinos and the Lucheses.

BARRY  
Who were the bag men for the Gambinos?

ADAMSON  
Orsino brothers. Got kind of complicated after Brenda broke, lemme tell you. I  
heard Ray's still in the hospital.

BARRY  
(ignoring the last statement, pressing on)  
How much were you skimming?

ADAMSON

I wouldn't call it skimming. More like a transaction fee.

Barry rises.

BARRY

I'll see what I can do.

ADAMSON

Thank you.

(small pause)

If this gets out...I'm done.

BARRY

I'll see what I can do. Meantime, I'd lawyer up hard.

(small pause)

I need to ask you something.

ADAMSON

Then ask.

BARRY

Did you fuck Brenda Hamilton?

ADAMSON

(laughs)

I don't shit where I eat. But I heard she's been passed around more than a Torah on Yom Kippur.

Barry doesn't like the sound of this one bit.

EXT. GRAMERCY PARK – NIGHT

Barry exits the brownstone, heads to the outer edge of the park. He passes an ELDERLY MAN walking his dog. He nods to Barry in friendly greeting as they pass each other.

ELDERLY MAN

Evening.

BARRY

Evening.

Barry waits until there is a good distance between them, then speaks to no one in particular.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
You get what you need?

INT. SURVEILLANCE TRUCK – CONTINUOUS

Two SURVEILLANCE TECHS man the equipment.

SURVEILLANCE TECH #1  
(on headset)  
Clear as day, Barry. Nice job. This guy is worm food.

EXT. GRAMERCY PARK – CONTINUOUS

BARRY  
Aren't we all.

EXT. PALLEK BUILDING – DAY

Surrounded by microphones and cameras attorney JACK LEVY, 40s, reads from a prepared statement.

LEVY  
“It is with great regret that we terminate Joe Adamson’s employment. He turned Legend Records into a world-class company, and we are grateful for his many years as part of the Pallek Media family, but a series of recently discovered financial improprieties led Mr. Pallek to this painful decision. But no one man is more important than the integrity of the company Henry Pallek has spent a lifetime building. For legal reasons I cannot comment any further.” Thank you.

The phalanx of reporter fire questions at the retreating Levy.

INT. ADAMSON’S OFFICE – DAY

Barry sits behind Joe’s desk, having taken over the office. Muddy Waters “  
Brenda enters, looks around, smiles approvingly.

BRENDA  
How’d you manage the office?

BARRY  
Pallek insisted. Sends a message.

BRENDA

That it does.

Brenda locks the door.

BARRY  
What are you doing?

Brenda goes over to the hi-fi, picks up a Muddy Waters LP.

BRENDA  
I'm in the mood for a little Muddy. How 'bout you?

BARRY  
I'm always in the mood for a little Muddy.

She puts the record on the phonograph. "Hoochie Coochie Man" plays.

BRENDA  
You might want to hold your calls.

Brenda does a bump and grind to the music, and strips off her shirt as approaches Barry.

BARRY  
Baby...

BRENDA  
Baby, yourself.

Brenda gets cozy on Barry's lap, kisses him, reaches for his crotch. Barry breaks the kiss.

BARRY  
Joe said it never happened.

BRENDA  
What never happened?

BARRY  
What you said.

BRENDA  
Who you gonna believe? A soon-to-be convicted felon...or the woman who loves your ass?

She kisses him again, breaks it.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

You know what this is called?

BARRY

What?

BRENDA

Having it all.

They kiss again. Barry suddenly lifts her off his lap and bends her over the desk.

BRENDA (CONT'D)

Fuck yeah.

He pulls down her jeans and enters her from behind, a little roughly, totally dominating her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. IRISH PUB – AFTERNOON

A.D.A Miller sits eating lunch at the same table from earlier when George and Ed muscled him.

Barry joins him.

MILLER

Thanks for coming. You wanna order something? Burgers here are great.

BARRY

Can we make this fast? I have to get back, my afternoon is swamped.

MILLER

Sure, sure, it won't take but a minute. There's been a slight change in the game plan: you need to testify in open court.

BARRY

WHAT?!

MILLER

I promise it won't take more than afternoon. We're going to trial...

BARRY

Wait a minute. We had a deal.

MILLER

Now doesn't this sound familiar?

(cutting Barry off)

If I may? You had a deal with the Treasury Department. A deal that I am not obligated to honor.

BARRY

What's the point? You have Adamson on tape. You have what you need.

MILLER

I need a star witness.

BARRY

Why?

MILLER

Because Adamson refuses to cooperate. He won't make a deal. Says he's gonna fight for his reputation. Guess he's not as smart as he looks, eh?

BARRY

And if I say no?

MILLER

You go up on the manslaughter and trafficking beef. Take your pick.

BARRY

No. You take your pick. I'm not doin' it. And I'll fuck up your case but good.

MILLER

Speaking of cases, we got George by the balls on the Orsino hit. Seems old Ray got his memory back.

BARRY

You're bluffing.

MILLER

You think? Call George and ask him.

Barry says nothing.

MILLER (CONT'D)

(confidentially)

This is a career-maker for me, Barry. "The guy who blew the lid off the music biz." So how 'bout helpin' a guy out? For old times sake.

Miller takes the last bite of his burger, puts some money on the table, slides out of the booth.

MILLER (CONT'D)

You really should get a burger. They're yummy. See you soon.

Miller goes.

Barry sits, stunned.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nadine and Barry sit at the small kitchen table, sipping tea. Nadine is digesting the story Barry has just told her.

NADINE

I don't know what to tell you.

BARRY

If it gets out I wore the wire, I'm out of the music business. And and, even if I wanted back in the fed? I'm burned.

NADINE

Maybe not. We, you, you could move. See if Daehler can get you that job in D.C.

BARRY

The guy who killed Johnny Lee Redmond teaching at the Academy? Not going to happen.

NADINE

Then you need to bargain. What do have?

BARRY

Nothing.

NADINE

Then take the stand. Nothing else you can do.

BARRY

Great. Thanks for the sage advice.

NADINE

What do you want from me?

BARRY

Nothing. Never mind. Thanks. I'm gonna leave now, unless you want the satisfaction of saying "I told you so."

NADINE

Is that what you think, you stupid shit? You think I want vindication?

BARRY

What do you want?

NADINE

My life that you fucking stole from me! Can you do that? Huh? Put our family back together, bring my friends back who won't even talk to me now? Huh? Because that's what I want, Mister Big Fucking Deal.

BARRY

I'm sorry.

NADINE

Sorry never solved a goddamn thing. But "thank you." That what you wanna hear?

BARRY

Nadine, please.

Nadine waves her hand, as if to say "I'm done."

BARRY (CONT'D)

I could roll the dice on Johnny Lee. A good lawyer'll beat the manslaughter rap, a slap on the wrist for possession, done.

NADINE

Yeah? And what about George? You gonna leave him with his head in the noose?

BARRY

If I could make a deal I would.

(small pause; an idea hits him)

Or...



Barry suddenly rises.

BARRY (CONT'D)  
I think I can fix this.

NADINE  
How?

BARRY  
I'll tell you later.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH – NIGHT

Barry is on the phone.

BARRY  
Miller, listen: if I can get Adamson to flip, am I out?  
(listens; then)  
You put that in writing?  
(listens; then)  
Fine. I'll see what I can do.

Barry hangs up. Take a breath, drops a dime in the slot, makes another call.

EXT. GRAMERCY PARK – NIGHT

Adamson and Barry sit on a bench in the empty park. A light misty rain falls. Adamson looks even worse for wear.

ADAMSON  
“Financial impropriety”. You know what Pallek nailed me on, me, the big fuckin’ embezzler?

BARRY  
What?

ADAMSON  
I charged my son’s Bar Mitzvah to the company. Five hundred guests, four hundred of them business people -- what was I supposed to do? Pay out of my own pocket? That’s not right.

BARRY  
The feds don’t give a shit about your son’s Bar Mitzvah.

ADAMSON

I'm just saying.

BARRY

Joe, why aren't you making a deal?

ADAMSON

Listen: my lawyer -- make that lawyers -- think they can poke holes in the DA's case the size of moon craters. Bring it on, I say.

BARRY

But if you turn state's evidence...

ADAMSON

Fuck that.

BARRY

Joe. The indictment's not been made public yet. There's still time to come to Jesus, here.

ADAMSON

I'm not going to do that.

BARRY

Joe, think. You give them what they want, you walk. Then you go start another record company.

ADAMSON

(small pause)

I...I thought about that.

BARRY

Half the artists and most of the staff would follow you anywhere.

ADAMSON

And what about you? You got the top slot now. You going to give that up?

BARRY

It's temporary.

ADAMSON

Until it's permanent.

BARRY

You want me to quit? Would that make you happy? Fine, I'll turn in my letter tomorrow.

ADAMSON  
Alright alright, don't be so dramatic.  
(small pause)  
So what do I do?

BARRY  
Get a deal in writing.

ADAMSON  
I'll think about it.

BARRY  
Well, you better think fast, because you're almost out of rope.

INT. MILLER'S OFFICE – NIGHT

An exhausted Adamson sits in front of a microphone on a small desk stand. Miller sits behind the desk. A reel-to-reel tape comes to the end; the tape flaps against the machine. Miller switches off the machine.

ADAMSON  
So now what happens?

MILLER  
Nothing. You're good to go. Thank you for your cooperation.

ADAMSON  
People are going to know I made a deal.

MILLER  
I suppose that's true.

ADAMSON  
And and and, certain people, they're not going to like that I did that.

MILLER  
Probably not.

ADAMSON  
They're going to wonder what I said.  
MILLER

What's your point, Mr. Adamson?  
ADAMSON

Let me ask you: if you were in my seat, what would you do?

MILLER

I'll have my indictments ready in the next ten days. I'd get out of town if I were you.

ADAMSON  
For how long?

MILLER  
Forever.

EXT. ADAMSON'S GRAMERCY PARK BROWNSTONE - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

A Checker Cab pulls up to the brownstone. Adamson gets out, pays the cabbie.

The Cab drives off.

INT. ADAMSON'S HOME STUDY – NIGHT

Adamson finishes writing a letter, puts it in envelope, seals it, tosses it on a pile.

INT. ADAMSON'S HOME STUDY – NIGHT

Whisky pours into a tumbler. A hand picks it up.

Adamson takes a swig, then dials a number on the phone.

ADAMSON  
(on phone)

Hey honey, listen, you and the kids are gonna have to stay a little longer...I know...don't worry everything's going to be fine...I love you too...yes, yalk tomorrow.

Adamson hangs up. Takes another gulp of whiskey. Goes to a drawer and removes a handgun. He goes to the window and flings it open.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

C'MON MOTHERFUCKERS! YOU WANT ME? COME GET ME! I'M RIGHT HERE YOU GUINEA BASTARDS! FUCK YOU!! YOU HEAR ME? FUCK YOU!

He fires several rounds through the window in the air. He then takes a huge glug of whiskey, then coughs and sputters.

ADAMSON (CONT'D)

YOU'RE NOT GONNA WIN? YOU HEAR ME? YOU'RE NOT GONNA WIN!

(like Jimmy Cagney)

YOU'RE NEVER TAKE ME ALIVE

(laughs like a madman)

EXT. ADAMSON'S GRAMERCY PARK BROWNSTONE – NIGHT

A single GUNSHOT is heard.

INT. ADAMSON'S (BARRY'S) OFFICE – NIGHT

Barry alone in the darkened office. He holds an envelope. He finally opens it, removes and unfolds the letter:

*Good luck, boychick.*

*ISSUR ADAMANSY'S PERFECT EGG CREAM.*

*{Directions follow: milk, selzter, U-Bet Syrup, etc.}*

Barry's eyes well up with tears, but he fights them back. He then dials the phone.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MILLER'S OFFICE – NIGHT

At his desk, Miller answers the phone.

MILLER

A-D-A Miller.

BARRY

Yeah, it's Barry Silver.

MILLER

Barry Barry Barry. How's it goin' buddy?

Miller puts his feet up on the desk, lights a cigar and settles in to enjoy the conversation.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Sorry to hear about Adamson. But you're off the hook. Never let it be said I'm not a man of my word.

BARRY

You're a regular prince, Miller. Thank you.

MILLER

You know what's funny? We really didn't give a shit about Adamson.

BARRY

What do you mean?

MILLER

A good lawyer would've smashed our case to bits - hearsay, entrapment blah blah blah. But like your old boss used to say, the users don't count for shit.

BARRY

He wasn't a user.

MILLER

Middleman, whatever. Adamson dead is perfect: no cross, so what he gave us makes our case against the Gambinos.

BARRY

Uh huh.

MILLER

And here's the beauty part: we leak to the press what a drug-dealing scumbucket Adamson was, the case gets national attention, we get more money to bust up the mob in show biz.

Pause. Barry makes a decision, then his face hardens.

BARRY

Listen...would it help you if I testified in open court?

MILLER

(surprised)

Yeah, of course it would. But why would you do that?

BARRY

Because I'm sick of this fucking business. I want out. Daehler said he might be able to get me a teaching post in D.C. You get that for me, I'll talk. Tell everything I know, everything I've seen, and I'll corroborate Adamson's depo.

MILLER

You serious?

BARRY

Can't believe I'm telling you of all people, but yeah. This ain't for me. Never was.

MILLER

I'll get you the job, Silver, if that's what you want.

BARRY

It is. But I want one more thing.

MILLER

What's that?

BARRY

Let Adamson rest in peace. He's got a family, you don't have to destroy what's left of his reputation.

MILLER

Can't promise that. But the other, I can. We'll sling some bullshit at it, you were working undercover the whole time, they'll take you back no questions asked.

BARRY

I want Joe's name cleared.

MILLER

I can't promise that. So. In or out?

BARRY

In.

MILLER

Alright. I'll get back to you. But don't quit until after the trial, it'll look like a set-up. Let 'em fire you.

BARRY

Fine.

MILLER  
Once a cop, always a cop, eh Silver?

BARRY  
Yeah.

MILLER  
Know what? Even after all the bullshit? I like you, Silver. We should...

Barry hangs up.

Miller hangs up.

INT. COURTROOM – DAY

A packed courtroom. George, Nadine, and several other agents are present, as well as a bunch of Mafia types. Brenda sits apart from Nadine and the agent with folks from Legend Records.

The JUDGE addresses Miller.

JUDGE  
Mister Miller, you may call your first witness.

Miller rises.

MILLER  
Your honor, the state called Barry Silver.

Barry rises and takes the stand. He's dressed in his old cop suit and tie, looking every inch the fed he once was.

MILLER (CONT'D)  
State your name for the record.

BARRY  
Barry Michael Silver.

MILLER  
And what is your occupation, Mr. Silver?

BARRY  
I am the acting President of Legend Records.



MILLER

And prior to your employment at Legend Records, what was your occupation?

BARRY

I was an undercover agent for The Treasury Department, where I and my fellow agents worked specifically in matters pertaining to the trafficking of narcotics and dangerous drugs.

MILLER

And isn't it true that, despite your rapid rise to success, you were actually working undercover to expose drug traffic in the music business?

BARRY

No. That's absolutely false.

Miller is totally taken aback by this. He regroups and tries again.

MILLER

Mr. Silver, based on our numerous discussions, that is not my understanding of the situation.

BARRY

The situation is, your entire case is built on heresay, coercion and entrapment, especially where Joe Adamson is concerned.

The crowd reacts to this.

MILLER

(pointedly)

Mr. Silver, I might remind you that you are under oath.

BARRY

That's right. And that's why I'm going to tell the truth. Are there drugs in the music industry? Of course. Is there a relationship between organized crime and record executives? Absolutely. But this case -- this case -- is built on a lies. And I won't be a party to it.

MILLER

(to Judge)

Your honor, permission to treat this witness as hostile.

JUDGE

Permission granted.

BARRY  
(lookin right at Miller)  
You bet I'm hostile. Bring it on, Mr. Miller.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY (BLACK & WHITE)

A MALE NEWSCASTER addresses the camera.

NEWSCASTER  
Today's surprising testimony from Legend Records executive and former government agent Barry Silver led to the dismissal of the case against several reputed mobsters, including Ray Orsino, whose brother Tony was killed under still-unsolved circumstances. Assistant District Attorney Miller stated that although this case was dismissed, that state of New York would soon mount... The image goes suddenly black, followed by a thin white horizontal line in the middle, a la an old school TV set.

WIDEN TO REVEAL:

INT. ADAMSON'S (BARRY'S) OFFICE – NIGHT

Barry is packing up a cardboard box.

Enter George.

They look at each other for a long moment.

BARRY  
Spit it out.

GEORGE  
You fucked up our case.

BARRY  
I know.

GEORGE  
I fuckin, how could you do this?

BARRY  
You wouldn't understand.

GEORGE

THEN MAKE ME UNDERSTAND YOU FUCKIN' ASSHOLE!

BARRY

They destroyed a good man. And I was a part of it. I wasn't gonna let Miller and the rest of them make their bones on the corpse of my friend.

GEORGE

What about the wiseguys who walked?

BARRY

You'll get 'em next time.

GEORGE

(small pause)

You're no friend. You're no brother. You're no partner. You're nothing. I don't care if your fuckin' kids are on fire, you're on your own.

George exits, more heartbroken than angry.

Barry picks up the phone, dials. The phone rings, Brenda picks up.

BRENDA (O.S.)

Hello?

BARRY

Hey, it's me.

BRENDA (O.S.)

Yeah...how you doin'?

BARRY

I'm doin' okay. Lookin' for a job, I guess.

BRENDA (O.S.)

Yeah, you'll be okay.

BARRY

Can I see you?

BRENDA (O.S.)

Listen Barry, I love you, you know that, but, you know, I think we gotta cool it 'til this thing blows over, you know?

BARRY

Right.

BRENDA (O.S.)

The Dylan tour starts in a few weeks, I'm rehearsing like crazy...

BARRY

Let me come over. We can talk.

BRENDA (O.S.)

No, babe. No.

(small pause)

We had the world by the balls for a bit, didn't we?

BARRY

That we did.

BRENDA (O.S.)

But nothing stays forever, you know?

BARRY

Bren...

BRENDA (O.S.)

I love you. I do. Pretty much everything about you, from your sense of honor to your pretty blue eyes right to the way you fuck me. So I want to tell you something, alright? And I tell you this because I love you. You listening?

BARRY

Yes.

BRENDA (O.S.)

Go home to your wife and children. That's where you belong.

(breaking down)

I've got to go...

BARRY

Bren...

BRENDA (O.S.)

Take care, baby.

BARRY

Wait wait wait. I have to ask you something. One thing.

BRENDA (O.S.)

Okay.

BARRY

What you told about you and Joe. That was a lie. Wasn't it?

BRENDA

(small pause)

And what if it was?

BARRY

Why would you do that? Why would you lie?

BRENDA (O.S.)

Because maybe you needed a little push to fulfil your potential

(quickly)

I gotta go.

She hangs up.

EXT. NADINE'S APARTMENT BUILDING – NIGHT

Barry waits in front of the building. Nadine comes out the front.

NADINE

Please make it fast, I don't like to leave the kids alone.

BARRY

I know, I know. I, baby, please try to understand why I...

NADINE

You don't have to explain. I know it was a decision based on integrity.

Barry embraces her.

BARRY

Can I spend the night? Please?

Nadine gently pushes him away.

NADINE

No, baby. You can't.

BARRY

Honey, please.

NADINE

I understand. You're scared and alone. And it gives me no pleasure to turn you away. But I let you up, I'm giving you the wrong idea. And the children, too.

BARRY

So...you're saying never?

NADINE

No. I'm not saying never.

(small pause)

But it's a long-shot.

BARRY

Why?

NADINE

(small pause)

Because I met someone.

Barry goes numb.

NADINE (CONT'D)

Go home, honey. We can't do this right now.

BARRY

I want to see the kids.

NADINE

You'll wake them.

BARRY

I want to see the kids!

NADINE

Shh. Will you stop?

BARRY

I...

NADINE

Your kids aren't going anywhere. So go home. Okay? Go home.

BARRY

This is my home.

NADINE

No. It isn't. I wish it was. But it isn't.

She gives him a quick peck on the cheek then walks as fast as she can back inside the building.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE – NIGHT

Barry sits on the balcony, shirtless, strumming his guitar. His gun and holster sit on the small table next to him.

BARRY

(singing softly)

*“Well it's hard to tell, it's hard to tell, when all your love's in vain...all your love's in vain...”*

He continues to play and hum, a lonely figure against the great backdrop of the NY City skyline.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END