

REEL LOVE  
BY  
DANA SHELDON JACKSON

FADE IN:

INT. KENT MARKETING GROUP - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

MATTHEW WASHINGTON, African-American, listens to MR. TED BALLER.

MR. BALLER

Matthew, we have the name. We have the product.

Holds up a bottle of BALLER LIFE ENERGY DRINK.

MR. BALLER

I need you to deliver a campaign that will excite the kids.

Matthew picks up a remote and presses a button. A chart displaying data on consumer trends is projected on the wall.

MATTHEW

Today, people choose drinks based on ingredients and benefits. Not just how cool it is.

MR. BALLER

My nephew thinks it's whack.

Matthew glances at a spreadsheet on the table.

MATTHEW

That would be your sister's son, Toby?

MR. BALLER

No. Toby's my stepson from my third marriage. I'm talking about -- Oh, wait. You're right. They're both named Toby.

MATTHEW

Mr. Baller, Ted, you pay us a lot of money --

MR. BALLER

You're damn right I do.

MATTHEW

Yet every meeting you come in with a new idea from family or friends that ends up costing you money.

MR. BALLER  
Now I'm a pain in your ass?

MATTHEW  
No. However, I'm asking you to  
trust us to do our job.

Mr. Baller pops out of his seat.

MR. BALLER  
It better knock my socks off.

MATTHEW  
Already did.

Matthew points at Baller's feet. He's sock-less.

MR. BALLER  
Good one.

The two men exit the room.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - LATER

*\*\*DIALOGUE IN ITALICS ARE SPOKEN IN SPANISH\*\**

Matthew is at his desk. Movie posters and landscape art hang on the walls.

His mentee, NIA LOPEZ, comes in and deposits two pills in front of him.

MATTHEW  
Thanks.

NIA  
Looks like your meeting went well.  
You should've let me sit in.

MATTHEW  
It's hard enough to get him to  
focus without having you two  
discussing current music trends.

NIA  
I always steer him back on course.  
(beat)  
Something else is bothering you.

MATTHEW  
My birthday is coming up and Sara  
is pushing for a big bash.

NIA  
*Ah, the big six-oh.*

MATTHEW  
 It reminds me I'm getting further  
 away from the prime demographic and  
 it's getting harder to keep up.

NIA  
 You mean by going sock-less and  
 using words like "whack"?

MATTHEW  
 You were listening in. Good girl.  
 Thanks for these.

He picks up the pills.

NIA  
 So you have two problems to solve.  
 What's your plan?

Matthew pops the pills in his mouth.

MATTHEW  
 I'm going to catch a movie before  
 my big date tonight.

NIA  
 I'll want details.

MATTHEW  
 I don't kiss and tell.

NIA  
*So you're planning on kissing?*

MATTHEW  
*Get back to work.*

INT. MOVIE THEATER - AFTERNOON

Near the rear of the theater, Matthew tosses popcorn into his  
 mouth as the AUDIENCE files in. TANIKA, MALIK, TERRANCE and  
 MICHAEL, African-Americans in their early twenties, sit in  
 the row in front of him.

MATTHEW  
 Excuse me. Can I ask you a question  
 about this film?

No response. Matthew hands Tanika a business card.

TANIKA

You're a marketing guy.

MATTHEW

I'm doing research on what gets your age group excited enough to try something new.

TERRANCE

That's easy. Come at us like we have a brain.

MICHAEL

(to Terrence)

How is that going to help you?

TERRENCE

Shut up.

Tanika turns to Matthew.

TANIKA

Never-mind these fools. But for real. Don't show some celeb using the stuff. We know they just doin' it for the paycheck.

MATTHEW

Very insightful.

MALIK

Tell us why your shit is Gucci and their's isn't.

MATTHEW

I take it Gucci means good.

MALIK

Yeah, it means good.

MATTHEW

Thank you. I just learned something. We got off track. What got you to come see this?

MICHAEL

You jokin', right? The symbolism the director uses to highlight how our society is in decay is chilling.

Matthew's mouth opens but no words come out.

TERRENCE

He's just messin' with you. We're here for the car chases and fights.

MALIK

And, Lex Scott Davis!

TERRENCE

Hell yeah! This could be her breakout role!

MATTHEW

Ahh, back to reality.

TANIKA

They wonder why they can't get dates.

Tanika grabs the business card from her friend and holds it out to Matthew.

MATTHEW

Keep it. Call me if you want a summer job.

TANIKA

Thank you, sir.

She turns and sits in her seat. Then turns back to Matthew.

TANIKA

Why you so serious? Gives the impression you ain't happy.

INT. MATTHEW'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MATTHEW

watches a documentary on the mating habits of birds of paradise on the TV. His phone rings.

MATTHEW

Nia, what's up?

NIA (V.O.)

I didn't expect you to answer.

MATTHEW

Too wound up to sleep.

NIA (V.O.)

Laura's been blowin' up my phone. Please give me something.

Matthew pauses the show.

INT. STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) - MATTHEW  
stands as his date, LAURA, approaches.

LAURA  
I was skeptical about this blind  
date, Matt. Nia was right. You are  
a perfect gentleman.

MATTHEW  
One of the things my parents taught  
me that stuck. Please don't call me  
Matt. I've never liked that.

LAURA  
Okay, Matthew. You were telling me  
about your wife, Norma. She passed?

MATTHEW  
Eleven years ago.

LAURA  
She was the love of your life.

A WAITER places a dessert in front of each of them.

MATTHEW  
(to waiter)  
Thank you.  
(to Laura)  
She was the best woman I've ever  
known. She put up with my -- Stuff.

LAURA  
You're not over her.

MATTHEW  
No reason to be.

LAURA  
I still have dreams about Jason.

MATTHEW  
He was your first?

LAURA  
That's a little personal, Matthew.

MATTHEW  
I meant your first husband.

LAURA

I know. He was the first of four.  
Met him while he worked at the zoo.  
He was a wild one.

MATTHEW

Liked to live in the moment.

Laura opens her eyes wide, smiles, and leans in.

LAURA

Once after the zoo closed we had a  
quicke near the elephant pen. The  
elephants watched.

Laura waits.

MATTHEW

Sorry, I don't shock that easily.

LAURA

Numbers 2 through 4 never got me.  
I'm not that difficult to please.  
Take me out. Rub my feet. Not in  
that order.

MATTHEW

Finding a perfect fit once is hard  
enough. Twice might be impossible.

LAURA

We keep looking.

MATTHEW

Between work and sharing a house  
with my daughter and her husband, I  
don't have the energy.

LAURA

When was the last time you went to  
the zoo, Matthew?

Matthew freezes and stares at her. She smiles as she lifts  
her eyebrows up and down.

END FLASHBACK

INT. MATTHEW'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MATTHEW

gets up and pours a drink.



MATTHEW

It was fine. I just wasn't gettin'  
a solid vibe.

NIA

We all keep telling her the zoo  
story is not first date material.

MATTHEW

Let's just say it didn't pair well  
with our fine dining experience.  
See you in the morning.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY - MATTHEW AND NIA

hunch over the table reviewing the Baller account.

MATTHEW

If he doesn't change his strategy  
he's going to tank this product.

NIA

Speaking of tanking. I didn't say  
it last night, but I'm sorry about  
Laura.

MATTHEW

Nothing to be sorry about. I know  
my limitations.

NIA

She seems so straight-laced at our  
book club meetings.

MATTHEW

She'll find someone that can keep  
up with her.

ALICE LONG (52,) president of XX Real Estate Group enters.  
Struggles to manage a large wrapped package.

ALICE

Hello!

MATTHEW

Hi. Did I forget about a meeting?

ALICE

No. We're good. So good we're  
looking for another project.

MATTHEW

Can I help you with that?

Matthew and Nia rush to help her.

ALICE  
I'm not interrupting, am I?

MATTHEW  
What's this?

ALICE  
A little thank you for showing me  
that being an all female company is  
a selling point.

NIA  
Play to your superpower.

ALICE  
Open it. I see how much you love  
movies.  
(indicates the posters)  
I hope you don't already have one.

Matthew rips the paper off revealing a poster from the movie  
Black Panther.

MATTHEW  
Thank you.

ALICE  
You don't like it.

NIA  
He hasn't seen the movie.

MATTHEW  
It's on my list.

ALICE  
These are for you, Nia.

Alice hands Nia two tickets.

NIA  
Tickets to the game! Thank you, Ms.  
Long! Go Wildcats!

ALICE  
I'll let you two get back at it.  
Enjoy!

Alice strides out of the office. Matthew goes back to the  
documents. Nia stares at him.

NIA  
Is everything alright?

Matthew ignores her.

NIA  
We have another friend in book club  
you might like.

MATTHEW  
No, no, no, I'm fine. See?

Matthew puts a big fake smile on his face. He notices PEOPLE  
scurrying in the bullpen.

MATTHEW  
Oh crap, it's time for Mr. Kent's  
weekly address.

INT. KENT MARKETING GROUP - BULLPEN - DAY

EMPLOYEES gather for this week's announcements. Matthew and  
Nia stand off to the side; separated from the others.

NIA  
*I think this is it.*

MATTHEW  
*We'll see.*

INT. KENT MARKETING GROUP - BULLPEN - DAY - MR. KENT

uses a cane to amble in followed by DAVID JACKE, senior vice-  
president and REGGIE KENT.

MR. KENT  
Just a quick announcement and you  
can get back to work.

MATTHEW AND NIA

Nia looks at Matthew and crosses her fingers.

MR. KENT

continues his speech.

MR. KENT

This is my nephew. He graduated from Stanford and will come aboard as an account executive.

Mr. Kent leaves. The crowd is bewildered. David steps up.

DAVID

Team, Reginald Kent.

A smattering of applause.

DAVID

I know you all will make him feel welcome and show him the ropes.

REGGIE

Hey, y'all. Happy to be here. Let's kick some ass and make some money!

More scattered applause.

DAVID

Back to work, people.

David and Reggie make a speedy retreat.

NIA

*This is bullshit.*

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY - MATTHEW

peers out the window. Nia watches.

NIA

If you're thinking about jumping, the windows don't open.

MATTHEW

I'm thinking that when you can't take people at their word, it's time to move on from them.

David steps in behind Nia. Matthew turns to face him.

NIA

I have some stuff that...

Nia leaves. David closes the door.

DAVID

I know you're disappointed.

MATTHEW

Do you? We talked about this promotion last quarter, David. I thought you had my back.

DAVID

I do. I couldn't convince Mr. Kent.

Matthew moves behind his desk.

MATTHEW

What changed?

DAVID

Kent wants younger people involved in the decision making process.

Matthew shuffles papers on his desk.

MATTHEW

So I don't get a promotion and his nephew gets a job Nia should have? How is any of this right?

DAVID

I know it's not fair.

MATTHEW

I didn't say fair. I said right.

Matthew grabs his keys off the desk and steps past David.

DAVID

Where're you going?

MATTHEW

I'm taking the day.

EXT. MATTHEW'S FRONT YARD - DAY

The exterior of the 2-story house is well maintained. Matthew replaces a sprinkler head. A POSTAL WORKER approaches.

POSTAL WORKER

Have a registered letter for you Mr. Washington.

Matthew signs for the letter, and sits on the steps. Thumbs through the mail. He finds one from --

MATTHEW

Law Offices of Vincent Chamberlin.

Opens the envelope.

MATTHEW

Hope this ain't somebody suing me.

As he reads the letter his shoulders sag.

MATTHEW

Poor Warren.

INT. DAVID JACKE'S OFFICE - DAY - MATTHEW

presents the revamped marketing plan to Mr. Baller while Nia, David, and Reggie watch.

MATTHEW

The plan is to do taste tests at local youth sporting events. We need to know what they think about the taste.

MR. BALLER

What if the people prefer the competition's product?

MATTHEW

Only your product is tasted. And yes you may have to change your formula. We all remember how bad The Juice tasted at first.

Matthew waits for a response.

MR. BALLER

You're close, But marketing to a bunch of 8-year-olds?

MATTHEW

Mr. Baller, your sales numbers were crashing before you came to us. It's going to take time to turn this around.

Matthew sits next to Baller.

MATTHEW

We're playing the long game. When these kids get older they'll choose healthier products. Your products.

Reggie steps forward.

REGGIE

How about we do the same thing but with high-schoolers? Show how the cool kids dig the drink.

Baller stands.

MR. BALLER

That's it! Get the people with a social media following involved. Give me that and I'll sign off on the campaign.

Mr. Baller waves goodbye as he exits.

REGGIE

Before anyone says anything, I only jumped in because I thought we were losing him.

Nia and David turn to Matthew.

MATTHEW

He wants immediate gratification. Part of our job is to show him a path to long-term profits.

NIA

We almost had him convinced. Now you've backed us into a corner.

Nia quickly leaves.

DAVID

Can you get him back?

MATTHEW

I don't know. Let's see what Reggie comes up with.

REGGIE

Me?

MATTHEW

Your idea. Put it together.

INT. MATTHEW'S KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MATTHEW

pours himself a drink. A bowl of popcorn sits on the dining table. His daughter SARA and her husband AMANI ANDERSON sit together in the living room.

MATTHEW

Sara, you want a drink?

SARA

I'd better not. I think I'm coming down with something.

AMANI

Did you hit that lawyer up yet?

MATTHEW

No.

SARA

Uncle Warren was the one that travelled a lot, right?

MATTHEW

Yeah. Big-time rolling stone. He bought into some medical device and made a killing.

SARA

Not a great choice of words, Dad.

MATTHEW

If it turns out to be anything substantial, it's going to your house fund.

AMANI

You've done enough by letting us stay here.

MATTHEW

Don't worry about that. I know PhDs don't come cheap. However, they do make a man stand a bit straighter.

Matthew takes his drink and the popcorn into the living room.

SARA

Especially when you get to one-up folks at family gatherings.

MATTHEW

I never rain on someone's parade.  
(beat)  
Unless it's your Aunt Mae. That woman will crow about anything.

Matthew grabs the TV remote and falls into his recliner.



MATTHEW  
Time for a movie.

Matthew turns on the TV.

SARA  
I can't believe Uncle David dissed  
you like that.

Matthew hits pause.

MATTHEW  
I was so close.

AMANI  
You should roll up outta there.

SARA  
Amani, stop it.

AMANI  
What? They're making bank off his  
genius and not rewarding him.

MATTHEW  
Stop arguing about something none  
of us has any control over. Now,  
movie time.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY - NIA

comes in and places some files on Matthew's desk.

NIA  
How can you be so calm?

MATTHEW  
It's about the client. Not me.

NIA  
It's a terrible idea.

MATTHEW  
Myopic.

NIA  
You got Ms. Long on board. Why not  
work your magic on Baller?

MATTHEW  
*That ship has sailed.*

Nia pauses.

NIA  
*I may quit. There's no future here  
 for me.*

No response from Matthew.

NIA  
 Aren't you going to try to talk me  
 out of it?

MATTHEW  
 You're grown. If you want to go, I  
 can't stop you.

Nia lowers herself into a chair.

NIA  
 You should call that lawyer about  
 your inheritance.

Both their cellphones buzz.

MATTHEW  
 David wants to see us.

INT. DAVID JACKE'S OFFICE - DAY - MATTHEW AND NIA  
 stand at David's desk. Reggie is on the sofa.

MATTHEW  
 What's up, David?

DAVID  
 Have a seat.

NIA  
 Uh oh, more bad news.

MATTHEW  
 Nia.

NIA  
 Sorry.

DAVID  
 I updated Mr. Kent on the Baller  
 account.

MATTHEW  
 And?

DAVID

He wants to make sure we give the client what he wants so Reggie will take the lead on this.

NIA

What the hell, Mr. Jacke? I'm the one who brought him in.

DAVID

We all know that, Nia. You both will remain on the account, but under Reggie's direction.

MATTHEW

You know it takes some clients longer to come around.

Reggie moves next to David's chair.

REGGIE

You said you liked my idea.

MATTHEW

I said it gives him what he wants.

REGGIE

Which means it's a good idea.

MATTHEW

No. It means we took the easy way out. We sell him the long view --

NIA

He stays a client for a long time.

DAVID

This is all moot. Mr. Kent wants to move ahead with Reggie's version. Now get to it.

Matthew gets up. Nia stays seated.

DAVID

Is there anything else, Ms. Lopez?

Matthew puts a hand on her shoulder.

NIA

No, Mr. Jacke.

DAVID

Good.

Nia rises and ambles out with Matthew.

INT. MATTHEW'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MATTHEW AND SARA

watch "Black Panther". A tub of ice cream is on the coffee table.

MATTHEW

So they have cloaking tech like the Romulans in Star Trek?

SARA

Yes, Dad, like the Romulans. How do you like it so far?

MATTHEW

I like it.

Sara pauses the movie.

MATTHEW

Sara, not now.

SARA

I'm sorry. Twice in one week? Maybe you should think about leaving.

MATTHEW

There was a time Kent would have told me to my face.

SARA

Sounds like he's ashamed.

MATTHEW

He doesn't know what that means.

Amani comes in and grabs the tub of ice cream.

AMANI

What can you do, Pops?

SARA

(to Amani)

I'll tell you what he can do.

(turns to Matthew)

Do you.

AMANI

When I said that you shushed me.

SARA

Don't make this about you.

MATTHEW  
It may be time.

SARA  
So, you are considering moving on.

MATTHEW  
But to where?

Sara leans forward.

SARA  
Call the lawyer.

INT. REGGIE'S OFFICE - DAY

Matthew, Nia, and Reggie sit at the round table which is littered with papers.

MATTHEW  
How are going to approach this?

REGGIE  
Not any different from the last meeting. We'll just add in visuals.

MATTHEW  
What about the focus groups?

Reggie rummages through the jumble of papers.

REGGIE  
I heard you're a big fan of testing the concept beforehand, but I don't think it's really useful.

NIA  
If you change your mind, remember, they take time to set up.

REGGIE  
Understood.

He pulls a notebook from the mess.

REGGIE  
I've looked over your timeline, Matthew. I do have a question.

MATTHEW  
About what?

REGGIE

This 2-week period for research.

MATTHEW

That's the space for focus groups.

REGGIE

If we take it out doesn't that put us ahead of schedule?

MATTHEW

You're thinking about the bonus for early delivery. Going ahead without proof of concept is dangerous.

REGGIE

Matthew, you've got to risk failing if you want to do great things.

NIA

Will your uncle see it that way?

REGGIE

I can handle him. Take the break out and move everything up 2-weeks.

MATTHEW

Sounds like you just made up your mind on the focus groups.

REGGIE

I guess I have.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAR - NIGHT - MATTHEW

is at the end of a bar that's filled with folks unwinding from work. ROCKY, the bartender, comes to him. She has multiple piercings and tattoos.

MATTHEW

Hey, Rocky. How's it going?

ROCKY

I'd be better if these suits would learn how to tip. How about you?

MATTHEW

Not bad. I'll have the stuffed mushrooms and a Nolet's. Neat.

ROCKY

You only order your gin neat when something's bugging you.

Matthew freezes.

MATTHEW  
You're too perceptive.

ROCKY  
That's what makes me a great  
bartender. Want to talk about it?

MATTHEW  
Naw. I've got it under control.

ROCKY  
We're out of mushrooms. Calamari?

MATTHEW  
Uhhh...

ROCKY  
You haven't ordered anything  
different for months.

MATTHEW  
I...

Rocky picks up a bottle and pours.

MATTHEW  
What's wrong with me? It's just a  
damn appetizer.

ROCKY  
You like what you like. That's why  
I keep the bottle right here.

MATTHEW  
Am I that predictable?

ROCKY  
I'd say consistent. Two drinks and  
an appetizer. You make a plan and  
stick to it.

She pours a little extra in the glass.

INT. REGGIE'S OFFICE - DAY - MATTHEW

steps into Reggie's office without knocking.

MATTHEW  
Here's the revised timeline you  
asked for.

He drops the report on Reggie's desk with just enough force to show his disapproval. He turns to leave.

REGGIE

I'm glad to have reliable people  
that put the company first.

Matthew stops at the door.

MATTHEW

Are you in charge now?

REGGIE

In time.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Matthew fingers a business card.

MATTHEW

Consistent. Reliable. Not bad  
things. However...

He picks up the phone and dials.

MATTHEW

Good morning, this is Matthew  
Washington.

INT. BROWN EGG CAFÉ - DAY

The café has seen better days, but it's clean. VINCENT  
CHAMBERLIN dines at a table. His phone chimes.

INTERCUT

VINCENT

I said no calls.

(beat)

Sorry I snapped at you. Low blood  
sugar. Put him through.

Wipes his mouth and hands.

VINCENT

Mr. Washington, good morning. I'm  
glad you called. People are  
hounding me about the property.

MATTHEW

So it's real estate.



VINCENT

Yes. It's a time sensitive issue. A lot of interest in the community.

MATTHEW

I have to clear up some things before I come out your way.

VINCENT

How soon can you be here?

MATTHEW

I'll be there this Sunday.

VINCENT

My office will get you a hotel room near the property.

MATTHEW

That'd be great. Thank you.

INT. NIA'S CUBICLE - LATER - MATTHEW

rolls a chair into the space and takes a seat.

MATTHEW

I'm taking some time off.

NIA

If you start your own company I'm going with you.

MATTHEW

Nothing like that. I'm going to handle this inheritance business.

NIA

Fabuloso! What about Baller?

MATTHEW

That's why I wanted to talk to you first. Me being gone will put more pressure on you.

He leans back and checks the area.

MATTHEW

Whatever Reggie asks you to do, within reason, do it. No push back.

NIA

No promises.

MATTHEW

You should have his job, or a least the same position. Don't burn this bridge while I'm gone. It'll come in handy later.

NIA

Now what?

MATTHEW

I talk to David.

NIA

Can I watch? His head might actually explode.

MATTHEW

I'll see you before I leave.

INT. DAVID JACKE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER - DAVID  
rants as Matthew and Reggie watch.

DAVID

We're in the middle of a huge campaign and you want to go pick up some junk a relative left you?

MATTHEW

A campaign I'm no longer in charge of. Nia's here, so Reggie has experienced help behind him.

DAVID

I know you're pissed about the promotion and being taken off lead.

MATTHEW

Has nothing to do with any of that. This is for your god-daughter.

DAVID

Sara? Is she okay?

MATTHEW

She's fine and I'm going to make sure she and Amani stay that way.

DAVID

Reggie, this affects you.

REGGIE

I --

MATTHEW

I don't work for Reggie.

Silence.

DAVID

Mr. Kent isn't going to like this.

MATTHEW

I'm not asking for permission.

SUPER: PAGE, INDIANA

INT. MATTHEW'S CAR - DAY - MATTHEW

listens to the Commodore's EASY as he drives. In the distance the city of Page, Indiana is dotted with construction cranes.

MATTHEW

Lots of construction going on.  
That's a good sign.

INT. CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - DAY

The chamber is standing-room-only. COUNCIL MEMBERS and CITIZENS shout at each other. COUNCILMAN MARK BROOKS bangs his gavel to quiet the crowd.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

People, people, we're not going to  
get anything done with all this  
yelling. Please, settle down.

LYNN GRAINGER, African-American stands at the gallery mic.

LYNN

Settle down for what? You scheduled  
this meeting on a Sunday morning  
hoping to slip it by us.

The crowd raises the noise level once again. Councilman Brooks bangs his gavel.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

This isn't a vote on the Main St.  
Redevelopment Project.

MAN (O.C.)

You expect us to believe that?

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

We're here to discuss delaying the official awarding until the remaining owner can be located.

CHRISTINE ROBERTS, Caucasian, leaps to her feet.

CHRISTINE

This isn't what we agreed to. Any delay will cost my investors money.

LYNN

All you care about is profit.

CHRISTINE

Let's not make this personal, Lynn.

LYNN

When it comes to saving our city from corporate greed, I take it personally, Christine.

WOMAN (O.C.)

You grew up here. You used to be one of us.

CHRISTINE

Yes, I grew up here and I want to keep the city moving forward.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

The delay can't be helped.

The councilman stands.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

In the meantime, we're exploring the use of eminent domain.

LYNN

What? You thieves!

The crowd erupts and advances towards the council table.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

We're adjourned.

The council members, and Christine make a hasty retreat. Christine pauses long enough to make eye contact with Lynn. They exchange frigid glares.

INT. MATTHEW'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY - MATTHEW

peers out the window as he talks on his phone.

MATTHEW

Hey, Sara, I'm here safe and sound.  
Going to meet the attorney and look  
at the property. Love you.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY - MIGUEL

opens the lobby door for Matthew.

MATTHEW

Hi, is the Brown Egg Café within  
walking distance?

MIGUEL

Four blocks that way. Turn left for  
three blocks.

MATTHEW

Four, left, three. Got it. Thanks.

MIGUEL

Not much to look at but the food is  
on point.

Matthew takes out his phone and dials.

MATTHEW

Mr. Chamberlin, this is Matthew  
Washington. You can find me at the  
Brown Egg Café when you're ready.

INT. THE BROWN EGG CAFÉ - LATER - LYNN

and a few angry CITIZENS FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING enter the  
bustling cafe. TRUDY, holding a coffee pot, runs up to Lynn.

TRUDY

How'd it go? Did you stop the vote?

Lynn puts on an apron.

LYNN

They delayed it on their own.

TRUDY

That's good, right? It means they  
might reconsider.

LYNN  
They mentioned eminent domain.

TRUDY  
Shit.

A BELL DINGS.

LYNN  
Your order's up.

CUSTOMER  
Miss, my coffee please.

Trudy eyes her food order and the coffee pot.

LYNN  
I'll handle your order. What table?

TRUDY  
Five. Thanks.

Lynn goes behind the counter and grabs the plates. Expertly balancing them on one arm while picking up a coffee pot with her free hand and delivers them to --

MATTHEW'S TABLE

Lynn approaches from behind.

LYNN  
Here you go, sir. One lumberjack breakfast and a decaf-- Matthew?

MATTHEW  
Lynn!

Lynn deposits the food on the table.

Matthew stands and they embrace.

LYNN  
You haven't changed.

Eyes his gray hair.

LYNN  
Much.

MATTHEW  
You look great!

LYNN

Thanks. Welcome to the Brown Egg  
Café. Not much to look at--

MATTHEW

But the food is on point.

Lynn is surprised.

MATTHEW

The doorman at the Brixton was  
singing its praises.

LYNN

Seems I owe Miguel another pie.

MATTHEW

You might want to consider taking  
out the first part of that slogan.

She adjusts his chair. And pushes him down.

LYNN

Alright, mister marketing exec,  
sit. Your food is getting cold.

MATTHEW

Folks seem to be riled up.

LYNN

Local politics.

MATTHEW

Always a sticky subject.

LYNN

What brings you home?

MATTHEW

Family stuff.

LYNN

Another sticky subject.

TRUDY

Lynn! The register is stuck again.

LYNN

(to Trudy)

Coming.

(to Matthew)

Enjoy your breakfast.

CASH REGISTER COUNTER

Lynn struggles with the cash register.

TRUDY

He's watching. Were you flirting?

LYNN

We grew up together and I haven't seen him in years. Decades.

TRUDY

Did you break his heart? Is that why he left?

LYNN

He's just someone I knew.

The register opens.

LYNN

There. Now get back to work.

TRUDY

Just saying, you could do worse.

LYNN

Trudy.

MATTHEW'S TABLE - LATER

Matthew has barely touched his food.

LYNN

How is everything?

MATTHEW

Fine.

Lynn looks at his plate.

MATTHEW

I wasn't as hungry as I thought.

LYNN

I'll get your check.

MATTHEW

Do I get a Fighting Eagles discount?



LYNN

No, but this month 5-percent of your bill goes to the women's shelter.

MATTHEW

Nice. What's up with the Main Street Theater? It's shuttered.

LYNN

Part of our political problems.

MATTHEW

A retail hub with no theater? What idiots let that happen?

LYNN

Don't get me started.

INT. BROWN EGG CAFÉ - LATER - MATTHEW AND LYNN

sit at the counter while the staff prepares for lunch.

LYNN

How do you settle someone's estate?

MATTHEW

Lawyers take care of that. I'm just here to take possession of whatever Uncle Warren left us.

Vincent Chamberlin enters the café.

LYNN

Hello, Vincent. What brings you in on a Sunday?

VINCENT

I think I'm here to meet this gentleman. Mr. Washington?

Matthew stands and the men shake hands.

MATTHEW

That's me. Nice to meet you.

LYNN

How do you know --

MATTHEW

Vincent is trustee of my uncle's estate. My inheritance.

VINCENT  
You ready to walk over?

MATTHEW  
It's that close?

VINCENT  
The theater and connected buildings  
at the end of the block.

MATTHEW  
Uncle Warren owns the MST.

VINCENT  
Haven't heard it called that in a  
while. The city wants the land  
beneath it.

MATTHEW  
For what?

LYNN  
To build a 17-story monstrosity for  
the rich to live in.

VINCENT  
Not just residential living. Retail  
space too.

LYNN  
But all the current businesses  
can't afford the proposed rent.

MATTHEW  
Let me guess. You're against it.

VINCENT  
Lynn and I are on committee to put  
it to a vote.

MATTHEW  
Great. I'm in the middle of a turf  
war. Let's go do the walk-through.

LYNN  
Just so you know. There's no plan  
to replace the theater.

MATTHEW  
Not my concern.

LYNN  
So, no interest in preserving your  
uncle's legacy?

MATTHEW

This is found money that my family  
needs right now.

(to Vincent)

Let's go see it.

INT. MOVIE HOUSE -LOBBY - DAY

Enough light gets through the papered-over doors to allow  
Matthew and Vincent to see this was a grand theater lobby.

Vincent reaches behind the counter and produces a couple of  
flashlights and hardhats. He hands a set to Matthew.

VINCENT

When it's empty and dark, this  
place gives me the willies.

MAIN THEATER

Ornate, dirty but not dilapidated.

VINCENT

Seats about 400 people.

They make their way to the front.

MATTHEW

The curtains don't look too bad.  
Hope they're up to code.

PROJECTION ROOM

Two 35mm projectors and a 35mm film splicer. Basic.

VINCENT

Without power, no way of knowing if  
anything works.

MATTHEW

It needs to be upgraded to laser.  
Sound system is probably outdated.

Matthew slowly looks around the entire room.

MATTHEW

Fixed up properly, this place could  
make a little money.

VINCENT

You think?

MATTHEW

The pandemic took some of the shine  
off theaters, but I think so.

They exit the room and aim their lights down the short  
hallway. There's a door at the end.

MATTHEW

Where does that lead? It looks like  
a slasher movie waiting to happen.

VINCENT

To the apartment upstairs.

MATTHEW

What?

VINCENT

Two bed, 1 1/2 bath.

MATTHEW

So, a historic theater, 2 attached  
buildings, an apartment and the  
city wants to tear it all down?

VINCENT

They're blinded by the tax revenue.

LOBBY

OFFICER WAGNER and OFFICER HOWARD exit the main room as  
Matthew and Vincent come down the stairs. They're all  
startled.

OFFICER HOWARD

You have business here?

Officer Wagner's hand hovers near his weapon.

VINCENT

He's the new owner. I'm his lawyer.

OFFICER WAGNER

The city wants to tear this down.

MATTHEW

I'm aware.

Matthew stands frozen. Officer Howard studies him.

OFFICER HOWARD

Before it shut down, We'd bring the kids on the weekends, watch a double feature and load up on junk.

Officer Wagner relaxes his gun hand.

MATTHEW

I thought doubles were a thing of the past.

OFFICER HOWARD

Not here. Families could watch magicians. Do sing-a-longs. Just have safe fun.

MATTHEW

If most of the citizens feel like you, why don't they fight it?

OFFICER WAGNER

Can't fight city hall.

OFFICER HOWARD

Or Christine Roberts.

Officer Wagner nods in agreement.

MATTHEW

I went to school with a Christine Stanford.

VINCENT

Probably the same woman. She married our local sports reporter, Gary Roberts.

MATTHEW

Gary and Christine. Who would've thought.

OFFICER WAGNER

Want us to wait around until you finish up?

VINCENT

We're done.

EXT. BROWN EGG CAFÉ - LATER - MATTHEW AND LYNN  
stand to the side of the entrance.

LYNN

What did you think? Is it worth fighting for?

MATTHEW

Yes but not by me. Anyway, the city can force a sale if they can prove the project is in the best interest of the public.

LYNN

I'm not giving up.

MATTHEW

You shouldn't.

His phone rings.

MATTHEW

This is my daughter. Gimme a sec.

Matthew steps away as Christine comes around the corner.

CHRISTINE

(smiling)

Hi, Lynn! You out here dragging customers off the street?

LYNN

Did you need something, Christine?

Christine's smile fades.

CHRISTINE

You may fancy yourself as some version of Jane Jacobs, but you're blocking progress.

LYNN

You mean blocking you from making a profit.

CHRISTINE

One in the same, sweetie.

Matthew steps up.

LYNN

You remember Matthew Washington, don't you?

MATTHEW

Christine. I hear you married Gary.

CHRISTINE  
You wouldn't have me.

LYNN  
You two dated?

MATTHEW  
She's kidding. We were like oil and water.

CHRISTINE  
I guess. Are you moving back or just visiting?

MATTHEW  
Visiting. I'm here to put my uncle's theater on the market. Know any interested buyers?

Matthew points the theater. Christine's jaw drops.

CHRISTINE  
Matthew, there's a party tonight.

She pulls an invitation from her purse and hands it to him.

CHRISTINE  
Come. We can talk a little business. Have a little fun.

Christine rushes off.

LYNN  
And by fun she means twisting your arm until she gets what she wants.

MATTHEW  
Then it should be an interesting evening. Normally I'm the one doing the twisting.

LYNN  
Speaking of invitations, we've organized a rally in front of City Hall this Tuesday.  
(imitating Christine)  
Come. Learn about the issues.

MATTHEW  
Christine isn't the only one who has a pitch.

Matthew looks over the invitation.

MATTHEW

I know we're on opposite sides of  
this but would you be my plus one?

INT. COUNCILMAN BROOKS'S OFFICE - DAY - COUNCILMAN BROOKS

is at his desk. Reclined, eyes closed. The shelf behind him holds PHOTOS of him with LOCAL AND NATIONAL FIGURES, and awards from various civic groups. Christine bursts in. GARY ROBERTS steps in behind her.

CHRISTINE

An old classmate owns the theater.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

How'd you find that out? Hi, Gary.

Gary nods.

CHRISTINE

He just told me.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

He's here? Seems Vincent has been  
holding out on us.

Christine turns to Gary.

GARY

I'll go chat up Cheryl.

Gary closes the door as he leaves.

CHRISTINE

I need that start date approved.

The councilman rises with the grace of a man used to dealing with agitated citizenry.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Without ownership of the theater  
that's not possible.

CHRISTINE

I've given a lot of money to your  
campaign fund. I expect some ROI.

Brooks moves around to Christine.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

This project will be my legacy. I'm  
not going to let a bunch of  
malcontents get in my way.



CHRISTINE

We need to do something to counter  
this rally on Tuesday.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

I'll come to your party tonight and  
work on... What's his name?

CHRISTINE

Matthew Washington.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Maybe I can close the deal before  
he gets swept up by the opposition.

EXT. THE ROBERTS'S BACKYARD - NIGHT - CHRISTINE AND GARY

shake hands and give hugs as they walk through the dozens of  
guests. They come upon Matthew and Lynn.

CHRISTINE

Matthew, you came!

She eyes Lynn.

CHRISTINE

Lynn.

LYNN

Christine. Hi, Gary.

GARY

Hi, Lynn. Nice to see you.

He looks closely at Matthew.

GARY

Is this Matthew Washington?

Before Matthew can respond Gary gives him a big hug.

GARY

Man you look good. What's it been?  
Forty years?

MATTHEW

Somewhere in that neighborhood.  
How've you been?

GARY

My life is blessed. Great job,  
beautiful wife.

MATTHEW

You two look good together.

GARY

Come by the station. I'll give you the VIP tour. The crew would love to meet the one guy who could go toe-to-toe with me.

MATTHEW

Well I --

Two massive arms envelope Matthew and lift him off the ground. Lynn and Gary laugh. Christine looks annoyed.

TANK

Matthew Washington!

THOMAS "TANK" JOHNSON, sets Matthew down. Unlike everyone else at the party, he wears shorts and a casual floral print shirt.

MATTHEW

Damn, Tank, you scared the shit out of me.

TANK

That was the point. How you been, bruh?

MATTHEW

Fine until you crushed my ribs.

TANK

I ever tell y'all this man was responsible for getting my niece into graduate school?

MATTHEW

I just wrote a letter of recommendation. No big deal.

TANK

Yes, big deal. You got a half-dozen heavyweights to sign it.

MATTHEW

Thankful clients who trust me.

GARY

Don't be modest. Let's walk around.

Gary grabs Matthew's arm and pulls him away.

GARY  
You ladies don't mind, do you?

LYNN  
Go right ahead.

The ladies watch the men disappear through the crowd.

CHRISTINE  
I'm surprised to see you, Lynn.

LYNN  
You put "Plus One" on the invitation.

Lynn and Christine face each other.

CHRISTINE  
Well...

LYNN  
Yep.

They quickly move in opposite directions.

THE BUFFET TABLE - LATER - MATTHEW AND GARY

are amused they watch Tank pile food onto his plate. Cans of Baller Life Energy Drink are on the beverage table.

MATTHEW  
Gary, you drink this stuff?

GARY  
Tank does.

TANK  
I got most of the folks at the gym hooked on it.

GARY  
The owner should put him on the payroll. He comes to the station and hands out samples.

TANK  
Too bad it's so damn hard to find in stores.

MATTHEW  
We handle the account. I'll see if they can up distribution here.

TANK

Bless you, Matthew Washington.

MATTHEW

So are you involved in this redevelopment deal?

GARY

No, that's all Chrissy. I learned early that business isn't my thing.

MATTHEW

She tell you I inherited the Main Street Theater?

GARY

Not directly.

TANK

No shit? Are you gonna reopen it?

MATTHEW

I don't know anything about running a movie theater.

TANK

What's to know? You hire a bunch of kids to sell tickets, pop popcorn and shine a light on folks making out in the balcony.

Tank shovels food into his mouth.

GARY

I'm not the only one with no head for business.

TANK

Check yourself. Certified C.P.A.

GARY

Brother, that just means you can add one and one. When did Chrissy find out you owned the theater?

MATTHEW

This afternoon.

GARY

That's why she rushed over to Brooks's office and why he's here.

MATTHEW

What?

GARY

The guy over there holding court.  
Chrissy just invited him.

Gary nods towards a GROUP OF PEOPLE listening to Brooks.

GARY

He's the one pushing the  
redevelopment plan. His legacy.

TANK

Legacy? Really?

GARY

His words.

MATTHEW

Politicians. Hey, let's grab that  
empty table so Tank can eat like a  
regular person.

TANK

Y'all full of jokes tonight.

The three men turn and step towards the table.

CHRISTINE (O.C.)

Matthew, wait!

Matthew's head sags. Gary and Tank keep walking.

MATTHEW

Where are you two going?

TANK

Oh, I'm going to sit and eat like a  
regular person, bruh.

Matthew looks at Gary.

GARY

I've seen this show before.

Gary and Tank continue on. Christine and Brooks come up  
behind Matthew.

CHRISTINE

Matthew.

Matthew puts a smile on and turns.

CHRISTINE

I'd like to introduce you to Councilman Brooks. He's helping transform our city.

The two men shake hands. Brooks tries to pull Matthew closer (like a Trump power move) but Matthew holds his ground.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

(releasing his grip)

Nice to meet the man who now owns the last piece of the plan. I hope you have a moment to hear my...

Christine gives Brooks a questioning look.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Our idea of what could be the city's... What's the word I'm looking for?

MATTHEW

Legacy?

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Yes, that's as good a word as any.

MATTHEW

Well, Councilman, it's been a long day for me but I'll be happy to meet sometime and hear you out.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Maybe you don't understand how time sensitive this is, Matt.

Christine's eyes bulge. Matthew's eyes narrow.

MATTHEW

My attorney made that clear but I don't make decisions when I'm tired. So like I said, I'd be happy to meet tomorrow. Oh, one more thing. It's Matthew, not Matt.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Well, I don't--

CHRISTINE

We'll be in contact, Matthew.

MATTHEW

You two enjoy the rest of the evening. Christine, thank you for the invitation. This was nice.

BUFFET TABLE - MOMENTS LATER - MATTHEW

spots Lynn chatting at the bar with a WOMAN. He continues in her direction and stops a few feet away.

LYNN

Well, it was nice catching up, Teri. Good luck with that fungi.

Lynn takes Matthew's arm.

MATTHEW

Fungi? Should I be concerned?

LYNN

(laughs)  
She's a scientist looking for new ways to combat fungal infections.  
(beat)  
You look like you've had enough.

TANK (O.C.)

Cannonbaaall!

Matthew and Lynn turn just as Tank goes airborne and lands in the pool creating a massive splash that narrowly misses Christine and Councilman Brooks.

CHRISTINE

Tank, you idiot!  
(indicating her outfit)  
This is Hanifa!

MATTHEW

Now, I've had enough. Do you mind?

LYNN

Let's roll.

EXT. PARK - LATER THAT NIGHT - MATTHEW AND LYNN

mosey through the park. They're close enough to each other that now and again their arms bump.

LYNN

That's my place across the street.  
Did Christine and the councilman  
corner you?

MATTHEW

They tried.  
(beat)  
I may have pushed back too hard.

LYNN

You're going to piss some people  
off. One way or another.

MATTHEW

The city will get that property.  
The best I can do is to contribute  
to your cause.

LYNN

For an idea guy, you aren't very  
creative.

Matthew takes a seat on a bench.

MATTHEW

We're not talking about shampoo.

Lynn joins him.

LYNN

What happened to you?

MATTHEW

I don't understand your question.

LYNN

In school you were so willing to  
fight for what was right.

MATTHEW

I don't live here anymore. This is  
for the people that do to settle.

LYNN

That's a copout.

MATTHEW

No. A fact. I came here hoping to  
find a way to make things better  
back home. I did. Sorry if it  
doesn't align with your needs.



LYNN

When my father passed... I got stuck. The Lord put the Brown Egg in my path.

MATTHEW

The point being?

LYNN

Be aware of what's being laid in front of you and seize it.

MATTHEW

Like Uncle Warren leaving me a theater knowing I like movies.

She pats his knee, stands and takes a few steps.

Matthew jumps in front of her.

MATTHEW

Hold on. Did you just slip in a pitch for saving the theater?

LYNN

If I did it was unintentional.

MATTHEW

Mm-hmm.

Lynn crosses the street to her townhouse. Matthew watches until she makes it inside. She looks back at him before closing her door.

INT. CHRISTINE AND GARY'S DEN - DAY - COUNCILMAN BROOKS

knocks back a drink while watching the GARDENER working outside.

CHRISTINE

Why are you so upset? He plans to sell the property to us.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

This joker doesn't know who he's fucking with.

CHRISTINE

He was always his own man.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Well, he's going to know what's what before I take his land.

CHRISTINE

Don't let you ego screw this deal.  
The only thing now is to slow  
Lynn's group down.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Yeah, we don't want a court fight.

Councilman Brooks sets his drink down.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

I gotta go.

Christine goes to the patio door and taps on the glass,  
getting the gardener's attention. She goes and pours a drink.  
When she turns around TOM QUINCEY is waiting.

CHRISTINE

I need a pesky weed removed.

TOM

This have anything to do with Lynn  
Grainger and that land deal?

CHRISTINE

Can you slow their spread without  
implicating me?

TOM

May take a couple of days, but  
it'll look like an accident.

CHRISTINE

I don't want her hurt, you idiot.

TOM

Subtlety costs extra.

CHRISTINE

Can you do it?

Tom walks to the door.

TOM

There is this fun little thing I've  
been dying to try.

(beat)

I wanna be paid in crypto.

CHRISTINE

You'll be paid in cash for your  
gardening services. What you do  
with it is your business.

Christine walks into the hallway.

TOM

Fine.

CHRISTINE (O.S.)

Gary. Sweetheart, are you here?

INT. MATTHEW'S HOTEL ROOM - BALCONY - DAY - MATTHEW

sips coffee on the small balcony. His cellphone rings.

Sara wants to FaceTime. The phone screens are not seen.

MATTHEW

Mornin'. You two are up and dressed?

INT. MATTHEW'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - SARA AND AMANI

struggle to fit into the frame.

INTERCUT

SARA

We're so excited we couldn't sleep.

MATTHEW

You're moving out.

SARA

Jokes this early? You're in a good mood.

AMANI

We're about to improve that mood tenfold.

SARA/AMANI

We're pregnant!

MATTHEW

Congratulations! You both must be flyin' high.

AMANI

You know it, Pops.

SARA

(singing)

You're going to be a grandpa.

Matthew tears up.

SARA  
Are you crying?

MATTHEW  
I wish your mom was here for this.

AMANI  
We do too, but you can spoil both  
of them enough for two.

MATTHEW  
Oh, I will.

SARA  
(to Amani)  
I don't think it registered.  
(to Matthew)  
Dad, we might be having twins.

Matthew drops his cup.

AMANI  
Now he's got it.

MATTHEW  
When you two do something, you do  
it big.

SARA  
I have to get an ultrasound to  
confirm but the doctor says my hCG  
levels are elevated.

MATTHEW  
That's all greek to me. You two go  
celebrate. No alcohol.

SARA  
Damn! Always a price to pay.

AMANI  
I'll be right there with you, babe.  
Lemon water and tea for the next  
nine months. How 'bout you, Pops?

MATTHEW  
Not a chance. I will watch  
"Bowfinger" this evening.

SARA  
A movie featuring Eddie Murphy as  
twins. Funny.

MATTHEW

Bye.

INT. KENT MARKETING GROUP - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY - REGGIE

itches the revamped campaign. Nia and David observe.

REGGIE

This way they do the advertising  
for you. At almost no cost.  
Brilliant if I may say so myself.

Mr. Baller gets up and walks around the room. David jumps to his feet.

DAVID

Mr. Baller?

Mr. Baller ignores him.

MR. BALLER

Your plan is to pass out free  
samples and ask people to post  
their thoughts on social media?

REGGIE

For every positive post, they get  
an electronic coupon for a 4-pack  
of Baller Life Drink.

Mr. Baller eyes each of them. Lands on Reggie.

MR. BALLER

How did it test?

REGGIE

Pardon?

MR. BALLER

The focus group. How'd they respond  
to it?

Reggie looks to Nia for support. She avoids eye contact.

REGGIE

We made the decision to bypass the  
focus groups.

MR. BALLER

You didn't run this by anyone?

REGGIE  
We're so confident this is a  
winner, we ran with it.

MR. BALLER  
Where's Matthew?

DAVID  
He had to go handle a family matter.

MR. BALLER  
Ms. Lopez, you work closely with  
him. Did he sign off on this?

All eyes are on Nia.

NIA  
Unfortunately, he had to leave  
before that decision was made.

MR. BALLER  
He and I butt heads but he always  
backs up his arguments with facts.

Mr. Baller collects his phone.

REGGIE  
Mr. Baller, I assure you I showed  
this to my friends in the target  
demo and they loved it.

David shakes his head in disbelief.

MR. BALLER  
Assurances don't do squat for me. I  
deal in facts. Since no one here  
can give me those, we have nothing  
further to discuss.

Mr. Baller is gone.

DAVID  
You bypassed the focus groups  
without telling me?

REGGIE  
I was put in charge. We'd have had  
that bonus if Nia had backed me up.

DAVID  
Young man, I'm still your boss!

Nia backs towards the door.

DAVID

Nia, stay here. Our job is to give the client an actionable plan. Not chase bonuses.

REGGIE

I just thought...

David lets him squirm.

DAVID

I'll try to fix things with Baller. Nia, you get Matthew back here.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - LATER - NIA

brings Matthew up to speed.

NIA

I actually felt sorry for Reggie. Baller may pull his account.

EXT. PARK - DAY - MATTHEW

watches a GROUP OF YOUNG MEN play touch football as he talks.

INTERCUT

MATTHEW

David won't let that happen.

David walks past the office and looks through the glass. Nia doesn't see him.

NIA

None of this would've happened if you were in charge of the account.

MATTHEW

Don't be so sure of that. Baller is a tough cookie.

NIA

Are you coming back?

MATTHEW

No. Complications.

NIA

*David won't be happy.*

MATTHEW

No he won't. Send me what you have.  
I'll see if I can come up with  
something to help you.

NIA

Thanks. But I got this.

MATTHEW

That's what I wanted to hear.  
(beat)  
By the way, Sara is pregnant.

NIA

You're going to be un abuelo!  
Congratulations!

David pushes through the door. Nia quickly hangs up.

DAVID

Was that Matthew?

NIA

Yes. He can't come back yet.

DAVID

Dammit.

EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Matthew's phone chimes. A text message from David.

INSERT - TEXT MESSAGE

"Be here by the end of the week, or don't come back. Mr. Kent  
is on board with my decision."

BACK TO SCENE

Matthew taps a few icons on his phone.

MATTHEW

Vincent, this is Matthew. I want a  
drink. Can we sign the papers in  
the hotel bar?

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

A WAITER places drinks on the table for Matthew and Vincent.

WAITER

Cheers, gentleman.



Vincent slides some documents into his briefcase.

VINCENT

I'll file these in the morning.  
Why'd he leave you a theater?

MATTHEW

We both loved movies but I had no  
idea he'd bought one.

VINCENT

Sentimentality. Here I thought he  
purchased it for the investment  
income.

MATTHEW

Maybe a little of both.  
(beat)  
I have to get back home. I'd love a  
quick sale.

VINCENT

Get out before it hits the fan.

MATTHEW

Something like that.

VINCENT

You could hang on to it. It's all  
paid for.

MATTHEW

I don't have that luxury. I may  
lose my job and my daughter is  
pregnant.

VINCENT

Wow. A regular deluge. After I file  
these, I'll set up a meeting with  
all those concerned.

MATTHEW

Not a penny less than \$500,000  
after your fee.

They clink glasses.

INT. THE BROWN EGG CAFÉ - DAY - MATTHEW

makes his way into the crowded café. Trudy, rushing as usual,  
spots him and comes over.

MATTHEW  
Hello, again.

TRUDY  
(curt)  
There's a spot at the counter.

Trudy rushes away and Matthew positions himself on the stool next to JIM PARSONS (80,) Caucasian.

MATTHEW  
Good afternoon.

MR. PARSONS  
How're you? Jim Parsons the name.

They shake hands. Matthew shifts to get a better look at him.

MATTHEW  
Mr. Parsons! I was in your literature class. Matthew Washington.

MR. PARSONS  
Did you pass?

MATTHEW  
It wasn't easy but I eked out a B.

MR. PARSONS  
It wasn't my job to make it easy.

Goes back to eating his fries.

MATTHEW  
You did your job. What I learned serves me well at work.

MR. PARSONS  
What's your trade?

MATTHEW  
Marketing.

MR. PARSONS  
Manipulation.

Trudy drops a menu in front of Matthew.

TRUDY  
Pardon me, are you ready to order?

Lynn joins them.

LYNN

Trudy, the Jacksons are ready for their check.

Trudy is off in a flash. Lynn is all business.

LYNN

What can I get you?

MATTHEW

Oh, I'll have the Cobb salad and an iced tea.

LYNN

Very good.

She picks up the menu, and walks away.

MR. PARSONS

She's pissed about something.

MATTHEW

I missed her rally yesterday and didn't call.

MR. PARSONS

You here on business?

Lynn returns and drops off an iced tea.

MATTHEW

I'm here to settle my uncle's estate.

LYNN

Tell it all.

Matthew gives Lynn an annoyed look. She's unfazed.

MATTHEW

I inherited The Main Street Theater.

LYNN

He's selling to the city so they can knock it down.

Lynn leaves. Mr. Parsons finishes his meal.

MR. PARSONS

Well, do what you think is right. No one will respect you if you constantly follow the crowd.

MATTHEW

I can live without their respect.

Mr. Parsons turns sideways on his stool.

MR. PARSONS

Do your clients respect you?

MATTHEW

I see where you're going with this.

Matthew rotates on his stool.

MATTHEW

I need clients to trust my judgement. That trust is earned. That earned trust gains me their respect.

MR. PARSONS

Does it? You make them money. Do they have to respect you for that?

MATTHEW

No. I guess not.

MR. PARSONS

If that's the case, which is more essential? Trust, or respect?

Matthew ponders the question.

MR. PARSONS

Look at it this way. You hated that I called you Matt. It was disrespectful to you.

MATTHEW

(surprised)

You do remember me.

MR. PARSONS

You stepped up for a lot of causes but you never confronted me.

MATTHEW

I was a student and you were my teacher.

MR. PARSONS

And you trusted me to teach you. You should have demanded that I respect you.

MATTHEW

You could've just called me  
Matthew.

MR. PARSONS

Actions without context mean  
nothing.

Lynn delivers the salad.

MR. PARSONS

Whatever you decide, Matthew, make  
sure they respect that decision.

Mr. Parsons stands.

MR. PARSONS

Thanks, Ms. Grainger.

MATTHEW

I just realized that for him  
teaching is a calling.

(beat)

Can you spare a couple of minutes  
for me?

No response.

MATTHEW

Please. It's about yesterday.

LYNN

I'll box up your salad and meet you  
out front.

Lynn takes his plate.

EXT. BROWN EGG CAFÉ - DAY - MATTHEW

paces as Lynn approaches.

LYNN

Here.

She hands him the container.

MATTHEW

I'm didn't purposely ghost you--

LYNN

You would've seen how many people  
don't agree with the city's plan.

He and Lynn notice the customers and staff inside the café staring at them. They move farther down the street.

MATTHEW

I wanted to come to the rally.  
Damn, I don't know why I feel  
compelled to get your approval.

Lynn shakes her head.

LYNN

Neither do I. Like you said, it's  
not your problem.

She turns to leave. He reaches for her. She puts up a finger to stop him and walks back into the café.

INT. MATTHEW'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY - MATTHEW

sits on the edge of the bed and puts his shoes on. His phone is on the nightstand beside him. A movie is on the television.

MATTHEW

Sorry I didn't call you last night.  
I got in late.

INT. MATTHEW'S HOME - KITCHEN - SAME TIME - SARA

leans on the counter and drinks tea.

INTERCUT

SARA

What's that saying you always use  
about life?.

MATTHEW

It keeps coming at you.

SARA

Amani's two biggest clients  
cancelled their contracts to  
replace him with A.I.

MATTHEW

Where is he?

SARA

I sent him on a bunch of errands to  
get him out of the house. He didn't  
take it well.

MATTHEW

Nobody takes losing their job well.

SARA

I could leave school and get a job. Some of my friends worked up to the very end of their pregnancies.

MATTHEW

Before you start making decisions like that, let me see where this theater deal leads.

Sara looks at her watch.

SARA

I gotta get to class. Love you.

MATTHEW

Love you too.

EXT. OUTDOOR RESTAURANT - NIGHT - MATTHEW

surrounded by festive DINERS eats alone. A SERVER comes over and refills his water glass.

MATTHEW

Thanks. Would you bring me a Nolet's gin, neat?

SERVER

Right away, sir.

She goes to fulfill the order. Gary walks up behind Matthew.

GARY

Matthew.

He sits in the empty chair.

GARY

You decided to sell the property.

MATTHEW

In a sense that decision was made for me. How'd you find out?

GARY

Not brain surgery. You're sitting alone at one of our better and most romantic restaurants.

(beat)

Did Chrissy force your hand?

MATTHEW

She won't know until tomorrow.

GARY

Then she's up to something.

MATTHEW

What?

GARY

Don't know. She has a tell. When she's extremely pleased with herself, she gets... You know.

MATTHEW

Horny.

GARY

That there. It started after Councilman Brooks stopped by. I'm talkin' right after.

MATTHEW

Then it's about the redevelopment.

GARY

She plays dirty sometimes.

MATTHEW

No need to. Vincent will inform them of my commitment after I become the legal owner.

The server drops off Matthew's drink.

SERVER

Something for you, sir?

GARY

No thank you.

The server goes to another table.

MATTHEW

She could be making sure they don't reject her offer.

GARY

That's in the bag. Once you sell, the council only needs to give final approval.

MATTHEW

Christine's group was the low bid?



GARY

No one knows. The council just up  
and announced them the winner.

MATTHEW

With no hearing or public input?  
That doesn't seem right.

GARY

That's why we tried to fight back.

MATTHEW

We?

GARY

I'm with Lynn's group on this.

He gets up.

GARY

I'll look into it some more.

INT. THE BROWN EGG CAFÉ - DAY

It's eerily quiet in the café. CUSTOMERS speak in hushed  
voices. From behind the cash register Lynn and Trudy watch  
Christine and a CITY OFFICIAL eat a late breakfast.

LYNN

Make sure everything is perfect for  
them. I don't want to deal with any  
complaints from her.

TRUDY

Got it.

Matthew eases through the door, nods hello, and takes a seat  
at the far end of the counter.

A scream from the kitchen fills the room. Lynn dashes into  
the kitchen. Pots and pans clang. A COOK scrambles out.

LYNN (O.C.)

What the hell! Don't let it get out  
of here!

Matthew sprints to the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Lynn and the KITCHEN STAFF chase a rat around the space.

Matthew closes the swinging door to the dining area.

A COOK attempts to cover the rat with a trashcan.

Lynn takes a swing at it with a broom, but the handle gets caught in some hanging pots.

MATTHEW

Wait! Everyone hold still.

Matthew takes the broom from Lynn.

MATTHEW

(to the cook)

Put the trash can at the end of the counter. I'll force it towards you.

Matthew gets on the floor and shoves the broom underneath the prep table and pokes around.

MATTHEW

You ain't got to go home, but you gotta get the hell outta here.

The rat scurries into the can, the cook turns it upright, and puts a lid on it. The staff applaud.

Trudy enters the kitchen.

LYNN

How'd that damn thing get in here?

Matthew goes to the sink to wash and sanitize his hands.

TRUDY

We didn't see any droppings this morning when we opened.

LYNN

Shut it down but don't clean.

Lynn walks past Trudy and the other staff.

DINING AREA

Lynn stands where everyone can see her.

LYNN

I'm sorry for the commotion. We'll be shutting down for the day. Everything is on the house.

Like children lining up for a fire drill, customers slowly make their way to the exit. Lynn holds the door open and thanks each one. Christine is the last to leave.

CHRISTINE

Tough break, Lynn. You'll be closed for at least a week.

LYNN

Get out.

Matthew emerges from the kitchen.

MATTHEW

Is there anything I can do to help?

LYNN

You've done enough. Thank you.

MATTHEW

For what it's worth --

LYNN

I have to notify the city health department about this.

Lynn goes back into the kitchen. Matthew notices Christine and the city official talking and smiling outside. He dials a number on his phone.

MATTHEW

Can you come to the theater? I'm struggling with something.

(beat)

Thanks. See you there.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - LATER - MATTHEW AND VINCENT

each hold a hardhat and flashlight.

MATTHEW

Thanks again for meeting me. I want to run something by you.

VINCENT

You're cancelling the sale?

MATTHEW

I want to go through here and find out what I can sell off.

VINCENT

Oh.

MATTHEW

Sorry, I forgot you want to save  
all this too.

VINCENT

It makes sense. To us.

Matthew takes a long look around the lobby.

MATTHEW

Gary Roberts told me the project  
was awarded with no public input.  
What can you tell me about that?

VINCENT

Not much. Why?

MATTHEW

There's something weird about how  
it went down.

VINCENT

You're right, but why does it  
matter to you? I've already  
arranged a meeting with the city  
and Christine's group.

MATTHEW

My gut tells me Christine is behind  
the shenanigans at the Brown Egg.

VINCENT

I wouldn't put it past her.

MATTHEW

Messing with someone's livelihood  
is going too far.

EXT. THE BROWN EGG CAFÉ - LATER - MATTHEW

reads the health department notice taped to the door.

INSERT - NOTICE

"Business is closed due to vermin infestation."

BACK TO SCENE

Lynn comes up behind him.

MATTHEW

This is a fast response.

LYNN  
They take vermin seriously.

MATTHEW  
What'd they do with the rat?

LYNN  
No idea. You looking for a pet?

She unlocks the door and enters the café. Matthew follows.

LYNN  
You read the sign. We're closed.

MATTHEW  
Who hates you enough to shut down  
your restaurant?

LYNN  
You know who.

MATTHEW  
She's high on everyone's list.  
Including her husband's.

Lynn moves to use the counter as a barrier between them.

LYNN  
I have paperwork.

MATTHEW  
I'm sorry. You deserve better.

He turns and moves towards the door.

LYNN  
Did you solve your problem?

MATTHEW  
Workin' on it.

He eases through the door.

INT. LYNN'S OFFICE - LATER - LYNN

dials a number on her phone and hangs up a couple of times  
before completing the call.

LYNN  
You win.

INT. CHRISTINE'S CAR - SAME TIME - CHRISTINE  
waits at an intersection for the light to change.

INTERCUT

CHRISTINE  
Thanks. What did I win.

LYNN  
Don't be --  
(beat)  
I'll back off opposing the project.

CHRISTINE  
I'm glad you've come around.

LYNN  
Why'd you have to come after the  
café? It's all I have.

CHRISTINE  
I don't know what you're talking  
about, but I can make a few calls  
on your behalf.

LYNN  
(seething)  
Thank you.

CHRISTINE  
You're welcome.

Christine disconnects and makes a call.

TOM (V.O.)  
Hello.

CHRISTINE  
There's an envelope in the yard  
underneath the red herb planter. Go  
buy yourself that crypto.

INT. MATTHEW'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Matthew's room phone rings. He comes out of the bathroom to  
answer.

DAVID (V.O.)  
I'm down in the bar. Let me buy you  
a drink.

MATTHEW  
David? You're here?

DAVID  
See you in few minutes.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER - DAVID

sits in a lounge chair. He stands when Matthew arrives. The bartender, EDWIN, comes to their table.

DAVID  
You want anything?

Matthew shakes his head.

MATTHEW  
Why are you here, David?

Edwin moves away.

DAVID  
You screwed us, Matthew.

MATTHEW  
Young Reggie screwed you. That's one ambitious kid.

DAVID  
I need you to hold Baller's hand.

MATTHEW  
I'm not finished here.

DAVID  
You've put me in a tough position.

MATTHEW  
You or Nia are capable of fixing this. What's really going on?

DAVID  
We've been friends a long time.

MATTHEW  
Long enough to be honest.

David braces himself.

DAVID  
I told you what Kent wants.

No response.

DAVID  
If you don't get back here by  
Friday he will have me fire you.

MATTHEW  
Promote Nia before you lose her.

There's a interminable pause between these old friends.

DAVID  
Show your face. That's all you  
needed to do.

MATTHEW  
I'm tired of being y'all's  
fallback. I need this job, but I  
need my dignity more.

David rises.

DAVID  
Take care.

MATTHEW  
Your god-daughter is pregnant.

DAVID  
That's outstanding!

David surprises Matthew with a hug.

DAVID  
Edwin, two Nolet's with a big rock  
and no fruit.

MATTHEW  
No thanks.

DAVID  
Please, let's end on a good note.

Matthew nods.

INT. HOTEL BAR - AFTERNOON - MATTHEW AND MR. PARSONS

chat at the bar. Matthew drinks gin, Mr. Parsons drinks an  
Arnold Palmer. EDWIN mixes drinks and tends to other  
customers.

MR. PARSONS  
He flew out here to fire you?



MATTHEW

To see if he could avoid it.

MR. PARSONS

Knowing that you're going to be a grandfather trumps all else.

MATTHEW

Maybe twins.

MR. PARSONS

No wonder you want to sell.

(beat)

I've heard what others need from you. What does Mr. Washington need?

MATTHEW

You ask tough questions.

MR. PARSONS

Only to people I think can handle them. What's the answer?

MATTHEW

Sell the theater. Gift the cash to my daughter. Find another job?

MR. PARSONS

More manipulation?

MATTHEW

I don't know.

MR. PARSONS

Don't wait too long. You might miss an opportunity.

Matthew downs his drink and gets up.

MATTHEW

See you later.

MR. PARSONS

Ms. Grainger told me she's dropping her opposition to the project.

Matthew shakes his head.

MR. PARSONS

Surprisingly, the health department says she can reopen tomorrow.

MATTHEW

This is bullshit. Because of a rat  
that someone planted.

Matthew storms out of the bar.

MR. PARSONS

Edwin, were you a student of mine?

EDWIN

Lord, no.

EXT. MAIN STREET THEATER - SUNSET - MATTHEW

stares at the marquee. THADEOUS WATKINS and his wife EMMA,  
walk arm in arm. Both are African-American, and nearing the  
top end of 80.

EMMA

It was a beautiful theater.

MATTHEW

Yes it was.

EMMA

Could be again if the city came to  
it's senses.

THADEOUS

I'm Thadeous Watkins and this is my  
wife Emma.

MATTHEW

I'm Matthew Washington.

EMMA

You have troubles, Matthew?

THADEOUS

Emma!

MATTHEW

(chuckles)

It's alright. Life is coming at me  
fast and hard.

THADEOUS

It'll do that.

EMMA

Whatever you plan to do, remember--

THADEOUS

It's okay to be a little selfish in your decision.

EMMA

You can't please everyone--

THADEOUS

So don't try. Do what you think is--

EMMA

Right.

MATTHEW

You used to come here?

Thadeous and Emma lean into each other and smile.

THADEOUS

Proposed to her here in 1961.

EMMA

I made him sit through *Carmen Jones*.

MATTHEW

I love that film.

EMMA

He slipped the wedding ring case into my popcorn.

MATTHEW

Very romantic.

EMMA

Now the city wants to tear down one of the few places--

THADEOUS

That reminds us of our youth. A lot of memories get--

EMMA

Destroyed in the name of progress.

MATTHEW

You two have a wonderful relationship.

EMMA

Everyone says that. To be honest, most times--

THADEOUS

I have no idea what she's thinking.

The happy couple continues their stroll.

MATTHEW

(to himself)

Be a little selfish.

INT. MATTHEW'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

MONTAGE

- Matthew, hunched over his laptop, views the city's website and makes notes.
- Phone in one hand, notes in the other, Matthew paces around the room as he talks.
- Wipes his face with a towel. Grabs a sandwich from the tray of food on the bed. Makes another call.
- Back on the computer buying an airline ticket.
- Packs his suitcase.
- The sun is up. Matthew, fully dressed, grabs his suitcase and leaves the room.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE BROWN EGG CAFÉ - DAY - LYNN AND THE STAFF

prepare for breakfast service. Lynn loads the cash register. Trudy wipes down menus.

LYNN

I'm excited. It feels like our first day.

TRUDY

Don't change the subject. So he sold the theater to the city. You said he had a good reason.

Trudy stops working.

TRUDY

You guys are dogs fighting over the same bone.

LYNN

The theater is the bone?

TRUDY

Maybe if you put your heads  
together you could share it.

LYNN

Let's just get the restaurant open.

Trudy moves close to Lynn.

TRUDY

You're attracted to him. Even  
though you're mad at him I can see  
it in your eyes.

LYNN

Are you sure you're only 23?

TRUDY

Grammie calls me an old soul.  
(beat)  
None of this is his fault.

LYNN

He's the key that opens Pandora's  
box. If that block goes, what's to  
stop them from seizing this one?

TRUDY

We'll survive.

LYNN

At what cost? It's like the city's  
soul is dying.

TRUDY

Help him find a way to save it,  
instead of dumping it all on him.

Lynn mulls that statement over.

LYNN

You are an old soul. I'll be back.  
Keep things moving.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER - LYNN

strides into the lobby. She pauses and takes a deep breath  
before continuing to the front desk.

FRONT DESK

Lynn steps up to the CLERK.

CLERK  
How may I help you?

LYNN  
Could you call Matthew Washington's  
room and tell him Lynn Grainger is  
here to see him?

The clerk types on the keyboard.

CLERK  
Mr. Washington checked out.

LYNN  
He couldn't have. When?

CLERK  
Early this morning.

LYNN  
Did he leave any message?

He punches some more keys.

CLERK  
No.

Deflated, Lynn trudges away from the counter.

INT. XX REAL ESTATE GROUP - DAY - MATTHEW

waits as Alice Long reviews a file on her computer.

ALICE  
You came home to pitch me this?

MATTHEW  
What do you think? You said you  
were looking for a new project.

ALICE  
It's an attractive proposal for  
certain. Are you sure you want to  
take on something this big?

MATTHEW  
It's exciting. I want to partner  
with someone used to making bold  
moves.

ALICE

How much time do I have to put the numbers together?

MATTHEW

Including the weekend, 5-days.

ALICE

You want me to pull this together in 5 days? That's a tall order.

Matthew deposits another file on her desk.

MATTHEW

I have faith in you.

ALICE

You did all this overnight?

MATTHEW

I was motivated.

ALICE

No promises. What's your plan B?

Matthew stands and gathers his things.

MATTHEW

Workin' on it.

ALICE

Where are you headed?

MATTHEW

To clear out my office.

EXT. YOUTH SOCCER FIELD - DAY

FAMILY AND FRIENDS watch kids play soccer. Among the crowd stands Councilman Brooks.

A PLAYER breaks free of defenders and scores a goal. Some of the crowd cheers.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

(playing to the crowd)

That's my grandchild! A natural, just like me.

Vincent Chamberlin approaches.

VINCENT

I don't recall you being much of an athlete, Councilman.

The councilman wheels around to confront his heckler.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Counselor. Still with the wisecracks. What brings you here?

VINCENT

(hushed voice)

I wanted to share some information.

Vincent indicates they should move to a more secluded area.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

What's going on, Vincent?

VINCENT

Monday morning I'll be in court to move that the city council accept other proposals for the redevelopment project.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

You're what?

Heads turn in their direction. The two men move further away.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

You have no right...

VINCENT

You violated the city's rules by only examining one proposal.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

The others were sorely lacking.

VINCENT

We both know that's a lie, Mark. You turned them down in favor of Christine's group.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

Vincent, you screw up this deal and I'll make your life a living hell.

VINCENT

I'm the lawyer here and I have a compelling case which includes documents and affidavits. You will lose. Unless...



COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
Blackmail is it?

VINCENT  
No. Do your damn job and hear the other proposals in an open hearing this Thursday.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
You're bluffing.

VINCENT  
Court on Monday. Tuesday the papers will publish the proposals you refused to entertain.

Vincent strides away.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - DAY

**\*\*DIALOGUE IN ITALICS IS SPOKEN IN SPANISH\*\***

Matthew packs his belonging into a rolling bin. Photos, awards, and his movie posters. The computer beeps. He sits and types.

Nia enters.

NIA  
*Downloading company secrets?*

MATTHEW  
Don't tell me David has you working on weekends.

NIA  
(waving an envelope)  
I came in to leave him something.

MATTHEW  
You sure about that?

NIA  
David couldn't salvage the account.

MATTHEW  
I know.

NIA  
He wouldn't even give me a shot. I can read the signs.

MATTHEW

David's covering his ass with Kent.

NIA

He'll do it without me. I have an interview Monday.

MATTHEW

Don't badmouth the company. Be honest about why you're leaving.

Matthew continues to pack. Emptying drawers, stacking files.

NIA

What about you?

MATTHEW

I made a presentation to Alice Long. I hope we can do business.

NIA

You are opening your own marketing firm! You lied to me!

MATTHEW

Not a marketing firm.

NIA

What then?

MATTHEW

I'll talk when it's a sure thing. Let's have brunch tomorrow. I'll help you prep for your interview.

NIA

You paying?

MATTHEW

Dutch. Neither of us has a job.

INT. MATTHEW'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MATTHEW  
cooks and talks to Sara and Amani.

MATTHEW

Any questions?

Amani rubs Sara's feet as they talk.

AMANI

No. It makes sense to me. You'll be in an environment that you love.

MATTHEW

Sara?

SARA

Great idea. Anything to get you away from that company. And David.

MATTHEW

David has family too. He didn't have an opportunity fall in his lap like I did.

SARA

I'm still pissed at him and I told him so.

MATTHEW

You called him?

SARA

Of course. He's my godfather.

(beat)

Oh, yeah, that's the spot!

MATTHEW

Do you have to do that now?

AMANI

I'm practicing for when she really needs them.

MATTHEW

Please. Stop.

SARA

When are you going back?

MATTHEW

I fly out Tuesday night.

AMANI

That's cutting it close, Pops. There's a snow storm coming.

MATTHEW

I'll be gone by the time it starts.

INT. MATTHEW'S KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: MONDAY

Matthew paces and eats scrambled eggs from the skillet. His laptop rests on the table. "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington" plays on the living room TV.

MATTHEW

Council members, thank you for  
hearing our vision --

He takes a chair at the table, sets the skillet down, and pulls the laptop closer. Types.

MATTHEW

Thank you the opportunity to  
present our vision for the Main St.  
Redevelopment Project.

(beat)

Better.

MATTHEW

We estimate our plan, while larger  
in scope, will offer a greater ROI  
than the proposal you were  
previously considering.

He eats some more.

MATTHEW

That should get their attention.

His phone rings.

MATTHEW

Vincent.

VINCENT (V.O.)

They caved when I mentioned media  
exposure. How are you doing?

MATTHEW

I'm working on the presentation.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Thursday at 11am. Get here early so  
we can discuss any changes.

MATTHEW

Will do. Bye.

Matthew disconnects and refocuses on his speech.

MATTHEW

I've addressed the city's needs,  
now I need to bring in the  
community. Offer a greater ROI...

He types his words.

MATTHEW

While preserving most of the  
businesses and historic charm of  
the area.

Leans back in the chair.

MATTHEW

I hope this works.

INT. MATTHEW'S BEDROOM - DAY

SUPER: TUESDAY

Matthew packs his suitcase. A movie plays on the wall-mounted  
TV. He makes a call.

MATTHEW

Alice, I was getting anxious.

EXT. MAIN ST. THEATER - DAY - ALICE

stands in front of the theater with a GROUP OF INVESTORS.  
Some peer through the lobby doors while others take photos of  
the buildings on the block.

ALICE

We're all here in front of the  
theater about to walk the block.

INTERCUT

MATTHEW

Must be some pitch you're giving to  
get them out there.

ALICE

The pitch is over. We're in  
development mode. They were sold  
within 5-minutes.

MATTHEW

I can't believe it.

ALICE

My company is putting up 300-  
million, 2 other investors are  
throwing in 500-million each.

MATTHEW  
Outstanding.

ALICE  
It gets better. You get a 10-  
percent finder's fee.

MATTHEW  
Did everyone agree to my one  
condition?

ALICE  
That you retain ownership of your  
inherited property? Yes.

MATTHEW  
Excellent. See you tomorrow  
evening.

Matthew dances around the room.

INT. COUNCILMAN BROOKS'S OFFICE - DAY - COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
admires a photo on the wall.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
You see, Christine, we have to show  
that all this is above board.

He turns to face Christine who is seated on the sofa.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
You got Lynn to back off. Now we  
can put an end to all dissent at  
Thursday's meeting.

CHRISTINE  
What if other members of the  
council break ranks?

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
I've made it clear that if they  
want my backing in the future, they  
have to support this deal.

CHRISTINE  
And you take them at their word?

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
Same as they take me at mine.

## EXT. MATTHEW'S DRIVEWAY - EVENING

The ground is covered with snow. Nia and Sara watch Matthew toss his luggage in the back of Nia's Jeep Wrangler.

MATTHEW

Sara, if I leave now I should be okay. The airport is still open.

SARA

This is a bad idea. How could you upset me in my delicate condition?

MATTHEW

The pregnant card? Really?

Goes over to Sara and puts his hands on her shoulders.

MATTHEW

I have to be there for that meeting. I'm not going to say don't worry, I know better. But It'll be fine.

SARA

Nia, make sure he gets to the airport safely.

NIA

He will. I've been waiting for another chance to engage this baby's 4-wheel drive.

SARA

Okay. Love you, Dad. Thanks, Nia.

## INT. THE BROWN EGG CAFÉ - NIGHT

The café is lively. Lynn brings Vincent a piece of apple pie.

LYNN

Here ya go, Vincent.

VINCENT

I didn't order this.

LYNN

It's on the house. My way of plying you for information.

VINCENT

About what?

LYNN

Somethin's up. The city council  
reopened bids on the project.  
That's all anyone is talking about.

VINCENT

Don't look a gift horse in the  
mouth, Lynn.

LYNN

Didn't Matthew -- Mr. Washington  
agree to sell the building?

VINCENT

I can't discuss a client.  
(beat)  
Christine's not a client, so I can  
say I know she isn't happy.

Vincent gives her a wink.

LYNN

Thank you.

INT. NIA'S JEEP - NIGHT

A light snow flurry has begun. Matthew nervously taps the  
dashboard.

NIA

Relax, we'll make it. What you're  
doing is huge!

MATTHEW

The city is divided and the city  
council is doing some shady stuff.

NIA

And you did that Matthew thing.

MATTHEW

What's a Matthew thing?

NIA

Your M.O. Problem pops up. You  
dance around with it. You solve it.

Matthew laughs.

NIA

Wow. Been a while since I heard  
that sound.



MATTHEW

The snowfall is increasing.

NIA

Maybe time for some off-roading.

MATTHEW

You're kidding, right?

Nia smiles. Matthew braces himself.

SUPER: PAGE, INDIANA - WEDNESDAY - 9:00AM

INT. VINCENT'S OFFICE - DAY - VINCENT, ALICE AND LYNN  
huddle in the small office.

VINCENT

(making introductions)  
Alice Long, Lynn Grainger.

Vincent hands them both binders.

VINCENT

Thanks for coming. This is the only  
place I felt we could talk freely.

LYNN

Why am I here, Vincent?

VINCENT

This is about a new project  
proposal that involves you.

ALICE

Matthew was supposed to be here but  
he's running a little behind.

LYNN

He's coming back?

VINCENT

Yes. He went to convince Ms. Long  
to come on board and tie up some  
loose ends.

LYNN

Who are you again?

ALICE

I'm a business partner who wants to  
make this deal.

VINCENT

He emailed me a copy of his presentation before he went home. He might not be here in time for the presentation.

ALICE

When he puts his mind to it, he could convince a lion to go vegan.

LYNN

You've worked with him before?

ALICE

He put together a marketing campaign that should double our business in three years.

LYNN

He's that good?

ALICE

He's that great.

They thumb through their notebooks.

VINCENT

Lynn, you handle the intro and layout the overall idea, that this is not a traditional mall.

ALICE

I'll talk money, timeframe, and close by reading the list of potential tenants.

LYNN

With national chains coming in how will small business compete?

ALICE

We're not going after the big department stores. Our plan is to build on the sense of community.

VINCENT

A place where people can socialize. The businesses will support that idea. Activity spaces for kids and young adults.

ALICE  
Restaurants and bars that cater to  
single and married adults with or  
without children.

VINCENT  
How does that sound so far?

Alice's phone chimes.

LYNN  
I'm not onboard yet.

VINCENT  
It may not work unless you're  
behind it. You lead this fight and  
people will respect your opinion.

LYNN  
I don't know.

VINCENT  
Think how much this'll piss  
Christine off.

LYNN  
It's not about her, or me. However,  
pissing her off is a plus.

ALICE  
Dammit!

VINCENT  
What?

ALICE  
An investor pulled out. We're 75-  
million short.

VINCENT  
I'll try to reach Matthew.

ALICE  
I'll reach out to potential  
investors to replace them.

INT. CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - DAY

SUPER: THURSDAY - 11:00AM

The space is packed. CITIZENS, POLICE, even HIGH-SCHOOL  
STUDENTS are there to witness the event.

Lynn, flanked by Vincent and Alice, addresses the council. Christine stands nearby with Gary. Trudy records video with her phone.

LYNN

(reading Matthew's words)

Thank you for the opportunity to  
present our vision for the Main St.  
Redevelopment Project.

Some murmurs from the crowd. Matthew bursts in. All heads turn towards them.

LYNN

And now I'd like to bring up the  
visionary who put this together,  
Matthew Washington.

The crowd applauds. Christine fumes.

MATTHEW

(takes Lynn's hand)

Thank you, Ms. Grainger.

(to the council)

Sorry for the dramatic entrance.  
I'm just so excited.

Matthew turns to acknowledge chuckles from the crowd.

LYNN

Ahem.

Matthew realizes he's still holding Lynn's hand. He mouths "Sorry," and lets go. Lynn takes her seat. Matthew stares at his notes. The crowd whispers.

MATTHEW

I planned to talk about the death  
of malls around the country. Bore  
you with details of our vision. You  
all have copies.

He sets his notes aside, grabs the mic, and walks.

MATTHEW

Look, I grew up here but I'm not  
one of you. I'm just a man who  
stumbled into a huge difference of  
opinions.

He looks at Christine.

MATTHEW

Both sides are passionate and feel  
their plan is best for the city.

He turns to the crowd.

MATTHEW

One thing is undeniable. That block  
holds a lot of history and memories  
for the people who grew up and  
raised families here.

Looks at Lynn.

MATTHEW

They're business owners.

He turns to Officers Wagner and Howard. He focuses on Mr. and  
Mrs. Watkins again.

MATTHEW

Law enforcement.

He focuses on Mr. and Mrs. Watkins. He smiles at them.

MATTHEW

And romantics who began their  
stories in the theater and shops on  
that block.

He moves closer to the council. Walks past each of them.

MATTHEW

No matter what you decide,  
remember, this doesn't have to be a  
zero-sum situation. Please, keep in  
mind the families you represent and  
what's best for your community.  
Thank you.

The crowd gives Matthew a roaring applause.

EXT. CITY HALL - LATER

Matthew, Lynn, Vincent and Alice stand off to the side of the  
building. PEOPLE nod and flash thumbs up as they walk by.

ALICE

Matthew, that speech was touching.

Trudy walks up.

MATTHEW

I hope it swayed them.

TRUDY

I asked around. The council will  
give it's decision on Monday.

They all turn to her. Unnoticed by any of them, Tom Quincey  
slowly walks by.

VINCENT

That'll give us time to come up  
with that 75-million.

Christine approaches.

CHRISTINE

That was a pretty underhanded move,  
Mr. Washington.

MATTHEW

Sorta like using a rat to get a  
restaurant closed down.

The two stare each other down.

CHRISTINE

You haven't won yet.

LYNN

The playing field is level now.  
Everyone has a chance.

Christine turns on her heels and disappears into the crowd.

VINCENT

Can we talk about this over lunch?  
I'm starving.

MATTHEW

I need to check back into the  
hotel. Let's all eat there. On me.

LYNN

You don't have a job, remember?

ALICE

It'll be my treat.

LYNN

I'll call ahead for a table.

MATTHEW

Trudy, would you forward me that video you recorded.

TRUDY

With pleasure.

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - LATER

The group sits at a large round table.

LYNN

Can you really do this without any taxpayer money?

ALICE

Yes, we have to. We don't want to give the city any reason to say no.

LYNN

(to Matthew)

What happens to the theater if they choose another offer?

MATTHEW

I'll go back to my original plan and sell it.

VINCENT

Think positive. You're getting a 2-bedroom apartment, and a theater.

TRUDY

It has an apartment?

MATTHEW

Yes it does.

LYNN

You'd move here?

MATTHEW

If this all works out.

VINCENT

Here's to everything working out.

All glasses are raised. Matthew and Lynn toast a second time.

Matthew's phone chimes.

MATTHEW

Excuse me. I have to make a call.

INT. CHRISTINE AND GARY'S HOME - DEN - DAY

SUPER: SATURDAY - 11:00AM

Gary and Tank watch Tom work in the yard.

TANK

You sure about him?

GARY

Pretty sure. Chrissy just paid him a load of money. She doesn't think I pay attention to our accounts.

TANK

Where is she?

GARY

At a showing. We have the house all to ourselves.

TANK

Alright, let's do this.

Gary opens the patio door.

EXT. THE ROBERT'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Tank and Gary approach Tom. He pays them no mind.

GARY

Hey, Tom.

Tom turns and faces them.

GARY

We need to talk to you about that payment Mrs. Roberts made to you.

Tom's eyes bulge and his jaw drops.

INT. CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - DAY

SUPER: MONDAY - 2:00PM

The same crowd is gathered from the last meeting. Matthew's group, minus Vincent, sits in the first row. The council files in and takes their seats.



COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
 I'll make this quick. Mr.  
 Washington, would you come to the  
 mic please?

Matthew steps forward. His group shows him crossed fingers.

MATTHEW  
 Councilman.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
 Before we announce our decision, an  
 issue has come to our attention  
 that needs clarification.

MATTHEW  
 What's that?

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
 In your proposal, your group claims  
 it won't use any taxpayer money.

MATTHEW  
 That's correct.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
 Is all your funding in place?

Matthew turns to his team. They all are wide-eyed. He spots  
 Christine and Gary in the audience. A big smirk on her face.

MATTHEW  
 To be honest, no. We lost one of  
 our investors.

Gasps and murmurs come from the crowd.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
 We were prepared to offer you the  
 project. But unless you can  
 guarantee here and now that you'll  
 be fully funded by 5 p.m. today, we  
 have no choice but to award the  
 project to someone else.

The crowd erupts in anger.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS  
 Quiet, please. This is the only way  
 to ensure tax dollars are not used.  
 (beat)  
 Mr. Washington?

MATTHEW

I'm sorry. We can't at this time assure that. If you would give us until the end of the week.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

This has dragged on long enough. So we have to award --

Vincent, and Mr. Baller come through the chamber doors. Vincent holds up some papers.

VINCENT

I hold in my hand a fully executed contract guaranteeing the money needed to move ahead right now.

Christine leaps to her feet.

CHRISTINE

This is unacceptable. He's totally out of order. I will fight this.

Gary stands and puts his arm around Christine.

GARY

Sweetheart, if you look over there, you might have a change of heart.

Gary indicates Tank hovering over Tom Quincey. Tank smiles and waves at Christine.

GARY

He told us, on tape, about your little joke. Shall we give it to the police?

CHRISTINE

I withdraw my opposition.

COUNCILMAN BROOKS

In that case, your group is officially awarded the development project. Meeting adjourned.

Everyone celebrates.

INT. THE BROWN EGG CAFÉ - NIGHT

Matthew, Lynn, Vincent, Alice, Gary, Tank and Trudy are the only one's in the café. Sandwiches, bottles of beer and iced tea cover the tables. Lynn sits very close to Matthew.

LYNN

I have so many questions. How --

MR. BALLER

It was Matthew. He sent me the video of last week's meeting along with the proposal.

ALICE

What was it?

MATTHEW

In exchange for his investment, I'd follow through with the ad campaign I started for him. Free of charge.

MR. BALLER

And, Baller Life Energy Drink gets a prime spot in the theater.

TANK

Yes!!

LYNN

Alice, you were right, he is great at what he does.

They raise their glasses to Matthew.

LYNN

Next question. Gary, Tank, how'd you pull that off?

TANK

It's amazing what folks'll do when you mention the police.

VINCENT

How'd you know Tom was involved?

GARY

He's a terrible gardener and we're his only client.

MATTHEW

How'd Christine take it?

GARY

She's filing for divorce.

MATTHEW

Sorry, man. That's a hefty price to pay.

GARY

The shine of being married to the prom queen wore off a while ago.

LYNN

I'm mad that she and the councilman get away unscathed.

VINCENT

Maybe they won't. The State Attorney's office is looking into their actions.

MATTHEW

Great, more drama.

INT. MAIN ST. THEATER - NIGHT

SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER

The main room has been restored to its original splendor. The formally dressed AUDIENCE fills every seat.

Lynn, Sara, Amani, Vincent, Alice, Nia, Trudy, David, Mr. Baller, Gary and Tank sit half way up the center section. The council members and their SPOUSES sit behind them. Christine and Councilman Brooks are not present.

Matthew steps from behind the curtain to thunderous applause. He's all smiles.

MATTHEW

Thank you all for coming. It's been a trying 2-years but we finally made it across the finish-line.

More applause.

MATTHEW

I'm not going to stand here and make a long speech.

MAN (O.C.)

Thank you.

The audience laughs.

MATTHEW

Alright. Enjoy the movie and afterwards, please support the nearby businesses.

Matthew steps down and strides up the aisle. He pauses when he comes to Thadeous and Emma Watkins.

MATTHEW

I'm so glad you two could make it.

THADEOUS

We're glad you found--

EMMA

A solution to your problem. And thank you for--

THADEOUS

Saving a bit of the past for us.

Mr. Parsons walks up.

MR. PARSONS

Great job, Matthew!

MATTHEW

Thanks. Where's your wife?

MR. PARSONS

In the little-girl's room. Let's all have a drink after the movie.

Both men move to their seats. The theater goes dark. Matthew takes ahold of Lynn's hand.

LYNN

You made all this happen.

MATTHEW

I took the advice of a wise person and paid attention to what the universe was offering me.

He kisses her hand.

MATTHEW

Thank you.

INT. LYNN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Matthew and Lynn sit on the plush couch. Music emanates from the speaker system. Matthew, a smile on his face, watches the screen. Lynn, wrapped in a blanket, watches Matthew.

LYNN

That was a good movie.

MATTHEW

(doesn't look at her)  
Seeing the sacrifices some will  
make to keep evil at bay.

Matthew gets up and gathers their glasses and goes into the kitchen. Lynn rises and folds her blanket.

LYNN

Don't forget we're going furniture shopping tomorrow afternoon.

MATTHEW (O.C.)

No need for you to take off from work. I can handle it.

LYNN

You used to own a pink jean suit.

Matthew emerges from the kitchen.

MATTHEW

It was peach.

Lynn cups his face with her hand.

LYNN

Whatever helps you sleep at night.

He snatches the blanket from her and holds it like a matador's cape. He turns his back to her, bends slightly and slowly gyrates. This is his imitation of the courtship dance of the Flame Bowerbird of New Guinea.

Lynn is confused. Then intrigued. Then she bursts out in laughter and rushes Matthew. They kiss.

LYNN

I love you, Mr. Washington.

MATTHEW

I love you, Ms Grainger.

They sway in each other's arms.

FADE OUT.