

EVERYMAN

by

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FADE IN:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

In a windowless, harshly-lit room, JOHN SMITH -- early 40's, plump, sad-looking -- slumps in a plastic chair at a long table.

On the wall opposite John, a heavy door's lock CLICKS.

John watches in fear as the knob turns and the door opens.

A muscular man in a plain suit and FLAT-TOP haircut slides through the door and closes it behind him, tapping a folder casually against his chest.

Flat-top stalks across the room, tosses the folder on the table, then drops into the chair opposite John with a BANG!

FLAT-TOP

How do you take your coffee?

JOHN

I don't. That would be illegal. I usually pay for it.

Flat-Top shoots him an icy look.

JOHN

Milk. Two sugars.

FLAT-TOP

So basically... regular.

JOHN

Will I get it faster if I say it that way?

FLAT-TOP

Who said you're getting any?

John looks curiously at Flat-Top.

JOHN

Have we met?

Flat-Top flashes an enigmatic grin.

JOHN

I would really like to call my wife.

FLAT-TOP

Not yet. First...

Flat-Top opens the folder and dumps out a bunch of menus from Chinese, Italian and other takeout joints.

FLAT-TOP

We have to order dinner.

John sits back in his seat with a resigned sigh.

JOHN

Listen, I have to use the rest room. Do I need like a hall pass or something?

FLAT-TOP

You're lucky I'm in a good mood.

EXT. CORPORATE BUILDING - MORNING

SUPER: "ONE MONTH EARLIER"

Men and women in conservative business attire swarm through the revolving doors of a tall office building. On one of the upper floors...

INT. CORPORATE RECEPTION AREA

PARKER BENNETT -- early 20's, handsome but nervous-looking -- sprawls in a clunky modern chair, adjusting the collar of his ill-fitting suit.

Parker grimaces at the day-trading software running on his laptop. He opens Instant Message software and begins an enthusiastic chat with someone named "TigerGrrrl\_42".

A RECEPTIONIST - short hair, trendy glasses - behind an upscale desk cruises Facebook, occasionally shaking her head or chuckling softly to herself.

The phone on the Receptionist's desk RINGS. She tears herself away from Facebook and answers it.

RECEPTIONIST

Monolith Megacorp, Marketing  
Division.

She glances at Parker. He looks back, expectantly, too late to catch her glance.

RECEPTIONIST

I'll send him in.

She hangs up the phone and goes back to her computer.

RECEPTIONIST  
Go on in, they're all waiting.

PARKER  
Ah. Thanks. Thank you.

He packs up the computer, slings the bag over his shoulder and walks boldly in the wrong direction.

RECEPTIONIST  
It's actually that way.

PARKER  
(pivoting)  
Right. Thanks. Again. Never been to the Executive Boardroom before.

RECEPTIONIST  
I know.

INT. EXECUTIVE BOARDROOM - MINUTES LATER

A dozen well-dressed, serious-looking people sit imposingly around an enormous oval table.

The CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER (mid-60's) sits at the head of the table in his impeccably tailored suit. Even his smile is intimidating.

Next to the COO is NANCY DETMER (late 40's), attractive but hard-edged with eyes that could cut glass.

At the front of the room, Parker plugs his laptop into a console, projecting a feed onto a large screen to his left.

Parker closes his eyes, steeling himself, then opens them.

PARKER  
What is marketing? At its very core, what marketing is, is... is two words: consumer research. Surveys. Polls. Questionnaires. All trying to answer one fundamental question.

A message pops up on the screen, from "TigerGrrrl\_42".

INSTANT MESSAGE (ON SCREEN)  
- were did u go babee? dont leve me hangin

PARKER  
What is it that, um, the average consumer want to buy?

Parker sees the message and panics, but the board members haven't noticed -- yet. Parker clicks the message closed, but new, similar ones keep popping up.

INSTANT MESSAGES (ON SCREEN)

- *cum on u no u like the dirty talk*  
 - *i want you to pull on my leesh*  
 - *dont be shy a leperd cant change its spots*

Parker struggles to keep his composure while tugging desperately on the console cord.

PARKER

Of course there are other questions that, you know, flow directly from that. Uh, what are the consumers' needs? How can our brands best meet those? Needs.

The plug finally comes out, causing the screen to go dark.

Parker types rapidly, seems satisfied, and plugs the laptop back in. The screen now shows his empty desktop.

NANCY

Mr. Bennett, I don't think the board needs a crash course in basic marketing strategies.

Parker takes a deep breath.

PARKER

You're right, Ms. Detmer. I don't have to tell you what it is we do. I also don't have to tell you how much it costs to do it.

COO

Sounds like you've seen our budgetary reports.

PARKER

(laughing nervously)  
 I haven't, of course. Although being in I.T. I could probably... no. I'm fairly certain we spend a fortune on consumer research. But what if...

(MORE)

PARKER (cont'd)

I want you to imagine a person so mainstream, so ordinary, so incredibly average in every way, that he could be counted on to always identify the best-selling item out of any product line - before it goes to market. How useful would a person like that be to this corporation?

COO

For the sake of argument, if such a subject did exist, I suppose they'd be an invaluable marketing tool.

PARKER

What if I told you... that I found him.

Beat. The Board looks to COO and Nancy, but even they seem unsure how to react.

Before anyone has a chance to respond, Parker busily hands out information packets.

PARKER

Look at the results of these online surveys. I compared the answers to later sales figures, and... well see for yourselves. It's uncanny. I believe that I have stumbled upon a consumer who in every conceivable way is right smack bang at the tippy-top of the bell curve. His household makes almost the exact mean American salary. That's mathematical mean, not mean like angry.

Parker briefly closes his eyes at his own stupidity, then shakes it off.

PARKER

He's a little overweight like the average American, he commutes about a half hour to work, he's married, and oh, you're going to love this. He actually has one point four kids.

All look at him oddly. Parker shrugs.

PARKER

He and his wife have one child, and she's nearly four months pregnant with their second. In every conceivable way, this man is typical, standard, regular, garden variety and just plain... quotidian.

COO mouths the word "quotidian?" to Nancy, who shrugs. After a moment's thought, COO nods as if impressed.

PARKER

This is from this morning.

Parker clicks on an icon, and a video plays.

INSERT - MORNING FOOTAGE OF JOHN (ON SCREEN)

The shaky, hand-held footage shows John Smith emerging from his house, holding a briefcase.

John's wife MARY -- early 40's, athletic, belly just starting to swell -- follows him out.

Behind Mary is their daughter EMILY, six years old and cute as a button.

John kisses them both goodbye and heads down the steps. Mary and Emily go back inside.

John stoops to pick up a newspaper, and nods amiably at a TALL MAN IN A COWBOY HAT passing by.

PARKER (V.O.)

The newspaper he subscribes to has the largest circulation in the city, he carries a Samsonite briefcase and wears a Seiko watch. Drives a Toyota Camry.

The footage zooms in and out wildly, barely showing John climbing into his car and pulling away.

The hand-held camera follows John's car as it pulls away, and suddenly the frame fills with a huge image of DOUG -- mid-40's, balding, heavysset -- fiddling with the camera.

PARKER (V.O.)

Sorry, I didn't have time to edit. That's my buddy Doug, from down in the records room. He's, uh...

The footage cuts abruptly to Doug frantically driving and yelling silently at the camera, then swings over to catch John pulling into a parking lot.

John gets out and enters a Starbucks.

PARKER (V.O.)  
Gets his coffee at Starbucks, wears  
Florsheim shoes...

Doug looks into the camera, breathing on the lens and wiping it off with his sleeve.

BACK TO SCENE

Parker shuts off the video.

PARKER  
I could go on, but it's more of the same. Every single product he uses was the most popular of its kind at the time he bought it. It's unprecedented. Although actually it makes sense if you think about it. The odds are there must be someone out there whose tastes happen to always reflect the majority. I guess this is him.

Parker looks at them expectantly.

NANCY  
How much is he asking?

PARKER  
I'm sorry?

NANCY  
This average Joe of yours. Does he want a salary, commission, what?

PARKER  
His name is John, not Joe, and he's not asking for anything. He doesn't even know I'm pitching the idea.

NANCY  
(quietly)  
Good.

COO  
Yes, I see you named him "John Smith" here on the dossier. I like that, it's a nice touch.



PARKER

Oh, uh, no, that's his name. John Smith. That's his actual name. Swear to God.

COO

No way. That's just... too much.

PARKER

That is how average he is.

NANCY

I just don't see what's so special about this guy.

PARKER

Nothing. He's nobody. I mean he could be anybody. But he somehow represents everybody. He's everyman.

NANCY

You make him sound like a superhero.

COO

If he can save us millions in research, he is a superhero.

NANCY

Why don't you take lunch. Meet me in my office at one thirty.

PARKER

Yes, ma'am. Sir. Thank you.

Parker packs up his computer as the COO consults with Nancy.

INT. CORPORATE HALLWAY

Parker emerges from a door labelled "BOARDROOM", shuts it, then collapses against a wall with a huge exhale. He shuts his eyes and holds his hand on his forehead.

PARKER

Control alt delete, control alt delete...

The Receptionist approaches, looking at him oddly. Parker opens his eyes and is instantly embarrassed.

PARKER

Oh, uh, no, it's okay, that's kind of my mantra, it helps me to, uh...

She enters the Boardroom and shuts the door behind her.

PARKER  
Right. Thanks. Again.

EXT. PARKING LOT, JOHN'S OFFICE BUILDING - AN HOUR LATER

John blinks in the sun as he exits a small, ugly, cinder-block building.

VICTOR -- John's small, bespectacled, nervous boss -- runs up behind him holding a clipboard.

VICTOR  
Wait, hold on a second, John. Did you fill out this requisition?

JOHN  
Isn't my signature right there?

VICTOR  
Oh. Did you approve all of your staff's time sheets?

JOHN  
Should be in the system, did you check?

VICTOR  
No. And don't forget that meeting next week.

JOHN  
I put it together, Victor, I'll be there. But right now I'm going to take lunch.

VICTOR  
Good. Keep it up.

John shakes his head in amazement as Victor goes back in the ugly building.

EXT. BUSY CITY STREET

John passes a car blaring a POP SONG, and hums along.

JOHN  
That's catchy.

INT. SANDWICH SHOP

John enters, still humming, and gets on a short line.

A TV tuned to business news plays an interview with PHILIP RANKIN -- 50's, well groomed, sleazy.

RANKIN (ON TV)

Then again, Jim, unemployment is a lagging indicator. American businesses have been bearing the brunt of this recession for a long time. A crucial aspect of working our way out of this mess is the smooth flow of information among companies at all levels of the economy...

John smiles at the man in front of him.

JOHN

Nice shirt.

SHIRT MAN gives him an odd look.

SHIRT MAN

Thanks.

Shirt Man leaves. John reaches the counter.

JOHN

Hi, listen, can I have that same sandwich I had yesterday, the...

SANDWICH MAN

Grilled chicken? Everybody's ordering that one today! Gonna run out soon. Here you go my friend.

JOHN

I timed that well. Coke please.

John pays, takes his food and heads for the door.

On the TV comes a still shot of Shirt Man's shirt.

ANCHOR (ON TV)

And in the fashion world, the new Van Heusen line of shirts has burst to the front of the pack...

EXT. BUSY CITY STREET

John once again passes the car blaring the tail end of the POP SONG.

DJ (ON RADIO)  
And there you go, the number one  
song burning up the charts...

INT. NANCY'S OFFICE

Nancy sits imposingly behind her desk. Parker sits  
apprehensively in front of it.

NANCY  
If the Chief Operating Officer and  
I decide to green light the  
Everyman Project...

Parker stifles a giggle. Nancy shoots him a look.

PARKER  
Sorry, it's just a cool word, I'm  
glad it caught on. You were saying?

NANCY  
Do you feel capable of heading up  
the team?

PARKER  
I think I have certain leadership  
qualities. And I have a plan. We'll  
start simple, go to his house and  
have him fill out surveys...

NANCY  
That's not going to work. We  
instituted a "Secret Shopper"  
program, where we hire people to  
use our products and services  
without the vendor's knowledge. So  
that they are treated like a normal  
customer. The concept is based in  
part on the results of the  
Hawthorne Experiments.

Parker's face is blank.

NANCY  
Workers who know they're being  
watched don't act the way they  
normally would.

PARKER  
So, what, if John Smith knew that  
we wanted his opinions...

NANCY  
(shaking her head)  
If he knew that he was making multi-million dollar decisions...

PARKER  
He would ask for more money? Sorry to interrupt. Again.

NANCY  
He would cease to be ordinary.

PARKER  
(a realization dawning)  
He'd be as out of touch as all the super-rich, corporate executives who drive Lexuses and vacation in Maui. Not that there's anything wrong with Lexus-uses or the Hawaiian Islands generally. It just seems like John is only useful as long as he doesn't know about the project.

NANCY  
Still think you're capable of being project leader?

PARKER  
(pondering, blinking)  
Yes.

Nancy presses a button on her desk.

NANCY  
I think you'll find it's not so bad being out of touch with Toyota drivers. Let's say hi to your team.

Doug enters, and feigns surprise at seeing Parker.

PARKER  
Doug.

DOUG  
P-funk!

NANCY  
(unenthusiastically)  
He volunteered.

DOUG  
Shooting that video this morning  
was a pain in the ass, but it beats  
the records room.

Parker and Doug perform a complicated handshake.

VALERIE -- late 20's, pretty in an old-fashioned way --  
enters hesitantly.

NANCY  
Valerie is your executive  
assistant, but I told her not to  
expect to sit behind a desk.

VALERIE  
Hi. I was kind of drafted. But it  
sounds fun, I'm interested.

PARKER  
Me too. I mean, I also think it'll  
be fun.

They shake hands. Parker catches himself looking at Valerie  
too long. He withdraws his hand and finds somewhere else to  
look.

NANCY  
And I can get you free-lancers to  
fill in here in and there.

PARKER  
Great!

All look at Parker expectantly. He hesitates.

PARKER  
Okay! So! I think I know where to  
start.

Parker opens his laptop to show a screen grab from the video  
of John earlier that day.

He zooms in on John's car key ring, which holds a plastic tag  
with the logo: Shopmart.

NANCY (V.O.)  
Well done, Mr. Bennett.

EXT. SUPERMARKET SIGN - DAYTIME - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Doug's tiny hybrid car is parked outside of the Shopmart.

INT. DOUG'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

DOUG

No, see, the instruments always alter the state of what they measure. A thermometer absorbs a minute amount of heat, a volt meter uses up current. The very act of observing affects what's being observed.

PARKER

(baffled)

Are we still talking about the Hawthorne experiments?

DOUG

It's more basic than that, my droog. It's the Observer Effect. From quantum physics to psychology, you can never measure anything accurately, ever, without changing it in some way. Kind of depressing, really.

Doug's phone rings. He flips it open.

DOUG

Make it so.

Doug listens, then slams it shut.

DOUG

That was the spotter. He's on his way. We're a go!

Parker hurries out of the car and talks into his cell phone while dashing into the store.

PARKER

Val. Man the table. Right, sorry, staff the stable.

Doug grabs a duffel bag from his car and looks around casually as he strolls into the store.

John Smith's car pulls up near Doug's. John gets out, consults a list, and enters the store.

INT. SUPERMARKET - CONTINUOUS

The typical suburban Mega-Mart has a grocery store, pharmacy, plus a little of everything else.

John makes his way toward the rear.

1ST AISLE - CONTINUOUS

At the end of the first aisle Valerie stands behind a card table bearing two plates, each filled with pieces of sausage on toothpicks.

John approaches the table, and finds he can't get around it.

VALERIE

Excuse me, sir, would you like to try some sausages? It's a, um... free sample.

John looks behind him, but his way is blocked by another shopper's cart.

JOHN

Sure.

John tastes one of the sausages, then turns to go.

VALERIE

Why don't you try this one too?

JOHN

Oh, thanks, but I don't like fennel seeds. That one was very good though, thanks.

John turns to go, and the other shopper gives him enough room to get by.

Once John's back is turned, the "other shopper" is revealed to be Doug, wearing a black trench coat and black fedora.

Doug gives Valerie an enthusiastic "thumbs up". She sighs and shakes her head, and they both quickly start disassembling the table.

John continues slowly down the aisle, then abruptly turns around.

The table is no longer there!

John is puzzled, but shrugs it off and continues down the aisle.

2ND AISLE - CONTINUOUS

John strolls up the second aisle.



As he approaches the end of the aisle, he sees Valerie behind another table, this time with two plates of crackers on it.

John gives her an odd look. She responds with a bright smile.

VALERIE

Hi! Sir. Would you care to try some crackers?

JOHN

They go well with sausage?

Valerie responds with a nervous laugh and a shrug.

John tastes each of the crackers.

JOHN

Very good, thanks.

VALERIE

Um... so which one did you prefer?

JOHN

Buttery ones, definitely. Never understood the poppy lemon thing.

VALERIE

Me neither. Have a nice day, sir!

John walks away, then abruptly turns around, catching Valerie in the act of disassembling the table.

Valerie thinks fast, points at her watch and shrugs.

VALERIE

Union rules.

John nods and smiles, points to his own list and shrugs.

JOHN

Wife rules.

Valerie finishes packing up the table as John walks away.

NEAR THE CHECKOUT LINES - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

John turns another corner, his cart now full of best-selling items. He approaches the checkout line.

CHECKOUT LINE - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

As the last of John's items is swiped across the reader, he hands his car keys to the CLERK.

The Clerk separates out the store card on the key chain, and swoops it down toward the scanner.

The red laser runs slowly across the black and white lines of the UPC symbol on John's card with a loud BEEP!

STORE MANAGER'S OFFICE

The portly STORE MANAGER points to the store computer screen.

STORE MANAGER

There we go.

Parker types on his laptop and yanks a plug out of a port.

PARKER

Got it.

Parker pumps his fist in triumph, then looks embarrassed.

Valerie holds her breath and Doug bites his nails while they all watch John on security monitors.

CHECKOUT LINE

The machine spits out a few store coupons, which John pockets. They are followed by more and more coupons -- a never-ending stream!

The Clerk shrugs. John takes a few more coupons, then pushes his cart away as the machine continues to spit coupons out.

John heads toward the exit door, which automatically opens. He abruptly stops and backs up, almost hitting a fellow shopper.

JOHN

Sorry.

John turns and heads towards the Manager's Office.

STORE MANAGER'S OFFICE

Four faces are frozen in terror. On one of the monitors, John approaches the Manager's Office door.

PARKER

(panicked whisper)

B-S-O-D.

DOUG

Hide.

VALERIE

Huh?

DOUG

Hide.

PARKER

Blue screen of death. When a computer crashes, it...

DOUG

Hide!

A loud KNOCK on the door causes them to scramble into haphazard action.

OUTSIDE STORE MANAGER'S OFFICE

John cocks his head to hear the faint COMMOTION inside.

The door opens. The Store Manager pokes his head out.

STORE MANAGER

Yes?

JOHN

I just wanted you to know that the coupon machine on aisle four is broken. It keeps spitting them out.

STORE MANAGER

We're waiting on a call back from the manufacturer. Thank you for letting me know, Mr. Smith.

John gives him an odd look.

STORE MANAGER

I... like to get to know my repeat customers.

JOHN

Oh. That's very nice.

The Store Manager nods and smiles, and John turns to go.

INT. STORE MANAGER'S OFFICE

The Store Manager closes the door, revealing Parker and Valerie crammed tightly together behind it.

As they awkwardly disentangle from each other, Parker realizes he has his hand on her ass.

PARKER

Sorry.

VALERIE

Quite alright.

Doug crawls clumsily out from under the desk.

On one of the screens, John exits the store and heads toward his car. Parker lets out a huge breath.

VALERIE

That was exciting.

On the screen, John puts the groceries in his car, gets in and pulls away.

DOUG

Part Star Trek Away Team, part  
Mission Impossible.

STORE MANAGER

Part Three Stooges.

Doug squints at him.

PARKER

I'll forward the info to the brand  
managers and we'll see what  
happens. You guys, go home. Enjoy  
the rest of your weekend. Good  
work.

DOUG

(saluting)  
Sir, yes sir!

Doug marches out the door.

VALERIE

You too, Mr. Bennett. I mean, enjoy  
your weekend.

PARKER

Thanks, Valerie. And please, call  
me Parker.

VALERIE

Parker.  
(gesturing to herself)  
Val.

PARKER

Enjoy your weekend. Val.

Valerie lingers, looking at Parker, then exits.

Parker breathes a sigh of relief, packs up his laptop and exits the office.

The Store Manager snorts and shakes his head.

STORE MANAGER  
 "Goodbye! You're welcome!" Parent  
 companies suck.

INT. VALERIE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Valerie pulls a bag of popcorn out of the microwave, and juggles it, trying to open it without burning herself.

She heads toward the couch, where her MOTHER waits. They settle in to watch TV.

INT. DOUG'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Doug turns on the Sci-Fi Channel, and looks lovingly to his right with a heavy, pleasure-filled sigh.

To his right is... a plate full of Hot Pockets.

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Outside the window of Parker's small, shabby apartment a dog BARKS incessantly.

Parker cruises Facebook on his laptop.

He opens a Friend Request from "Susie Q.T." -- the photo is of the M.M. Receptionist, but her hair and makeup are so different she is almost unrecognizable.

PARKER  
 Hel-lo. Do I know you? Doesn't  
 matter.

He presses "*Accept Friend Request*", then opens his day trading software. Most of the figures in the "*NET GAIN/LOSS*" columns are negative numbers. Parker sighs.

The dog continues to BARK. Parker yells out the window.

PARKER  
 Alright, enough, take a breath  
 already!

The dog stops abruptly. Parker looks proud of himself.

INT. HOSPITAL COMMUNITY ROOM - EVENING

Mary lies on her back on a mat, breathing out in short puffs. John crouches next to her. They are surrounded by several other pregnant couples doing the same.

An older, matronly NURSE walks among them, offering encouragement.

NURSE

That's right, two shorts and a long. Hee-hee then a hoooo. Very good, ladies.

JOHN

(quietly)

I don't know how you ever managed to breathe at all before we met this woman.

MARY

Shh, I'm concentrating.

JOHN

It's an involuntary reflex, it's not like you're suddenly going to forget how.

MARY

Stop it, please. Talking while I do this is making me hyperventilate.

JOHN

Did you use any of this crap when you had Emily? Cause mostly I just remember hearing screaming.

Mary sits up as the Nurse walks up behind her.

MARY

I don't like it any more than you do. I'd rather save the baby-sitter for a night out together. But we have to be here if we want to have the baby in this hospital. So can the Mr. Sarcastic-Under-Pressure bit, and let's just get through this bullshit, okay?

John looks up at the Nurse.

JOHN

I'm sorry. My wife is... I mean we're... sorry.

NURSE

Well done, ladies, and coaches.  
Practice that at home. Right now,  
why don't we do some role-playing!  
Let's start with... you two.

She points to John and Mary. John goes to help Mary get up.

NURSE

No, honey, you stay down there. But  
your coach can stand up.

Mary helps John stand up.

NURSE

Now. Sweetheart, you're playing a  
woman in the early stages of labor,  
who has just checked into the  
hospital. And you, sir, are the  
doting husband who goes down to the  
gift shop to pick out some nice  
items for his wife, and a few for  
himself. Just whatever comes to  
mind.

She holds out a pencil and clipboard and gives him a huge  
smile.

NURSE

You can write your answers down  
here.

John crouches and whispers to Mary.

JOHN

You sure there's not some other  
hospital that we could...

Mary gives him a withering look.

John sighs and takes the clipboard, flashing the Nurse an  
unconvincing smile.

Far across the room, a sticker on a brand new expensive-  
looking machine reads "*Donated by Monolith Megacorp*".

PARKER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Parker clicks back and forth on his laptop between John's  
shopping receipt and an "Actual Sales Figures" document,  
creating a pie chart entitled "EVERYMAN'S ACCURACY RATING".

Parker finishes and sits back. The pie chart shows a huge blue section labeled "95% EXACTLY RIGHT" and a tiny yellow section labeled "5% VERY CLOSE".

Parker smiles and shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. SHOPPING MALL, WOMEN'S STORE - DAY

John wanders uncomfortably around the women's section of a J.C. Penney-style chain store. He consults a list.

A SALESGIRL sidles up behind him.

SALESGIRL

Excuse me, sir, would you like some assistance?

John turns around, blushing.

JOHN

Yeah, actually I would, thanks. I have to bring home exactly the right size of maternity pants if I don't want to get in trouble.

When the Salesgirl sees his face, she unsuccessfully tries to hide her look of wide-eyed surprise.

SALESGIRL

(excitedly)

Sir, I'll... I'll be right back.

She dashes away.

JOHN

Thanks for the help.

INT. SHOPPING MALL, WOMEN'S STORE REGISTER - CONTINUOUS

The Salesgirl runs over to the register, and picks up a flyer containing a photo of John and a phone number at the bottom.

INSERT - FLYER

FLYER

*\$\$\$\$ FOR YOUR BUSINESS \$\$\$\$  
IF YOU SEE THIS MAN, CALL US AT THE  
BELOW NUMBER FOR INSTRUCTIONS!!!  
SALES CLERKS GET BONU\$ !!*

She excitedly dials the number.



INT. SHOPPING MALL, WOMEN'S STORE - MINUTES LATER

John looks through racks of women's clothing, increasingly frustrated.

The Salesgirl returns, holding a catalogue.

SALESGIRL

I am so sorry, sir, we had a minor emergency. So what was it again, maternity pants? I can definitely help you with that. But we're running some sales in other departments. Maybe you'd like to take a look at menswear or sporting goods?

JOHN

Thanks, but really, just the pants.

The Salesgirl puts on a pout.

SALESGIRL

You don't have to buy anything, just tell me what you're interested in. Please? I, uh... have to get a certain number of people or I'll get fired.

JOHN

(sighing)

Fine, whaddya got?

The Salesgirl's face lights up.

INT. DOUG AND VALERIE'S OFFICE

Doug has the phone tucked under his chin while he writes on a pad. Valerie types on a computer.

DOUG

Right, and then enter that password, and the money will be sent to your paypal account. No, thank you!

Doug hangs up the phone.

DOUG

(mockingly)

The flyers are a bad idea.

VALERIE

I didn't say they wouldn't work. I  
just wasn't sure they were the  
right thing to do.

The phone rings; multiple lines on the phone bank light up.

Doug waggles his eyebrows.

INT. SHOPPING MALL, MAIN WALKWAY

John, bag in hand, strides past store after store as  
SALESPEOPLE inside stare at him, compare his photo to the  
flyer, and dial phones.

Salespeople emerge holding merchandise.

SALESPERSON #1

Excuse me, sir, which of these  
would you buy for your wife?

JOHN

(passing by)  
Uh, that one.

SALESPERSON #2

Hey man, I'm having trouble picking  
out speakers, what do you think?

JOHN

I don't know. Those?

John looks around the walkway; every single store has someone  
standing outside, waving items and beckoning him.

JOHN

(to a passerby)  
Boy, they really go for the hard  
sell in this place, don't they?

John, puzzled and frightened, ducks into an elevator, and the  
doors shut.

Disappointed Salespeople skulk back into their stores.

INT. NANCY'S OFFICE

There is a sharp KNOCK on the door.

NANCY

Come!

Parker strides in, holding his paycheck.

PARKER

I assume payroll didn't make a mistake.

NANCY

You did read your new contract before signing? I just hope it's not enough for you to go into day trading full time, I'd hate to lose you already.

PARKER

No chance. Listen, I appreciate this, but I can think of someone who deserves this more than I do.

NANCY

Doug and Valerie seemed pretty happy with what they got.

PARKER

Not them.

NANCY

Oh.

PARKER

He's making us millions. He deserves something.

NANCY

I might agree to give him a decent but not life-changing amount, but there's just no way to do that without him knowing where it came from.

PARKER

What if there was a way?

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM - EVENING

John sits at his livingroom table going through his mail, grimacing as he opens bill after bill.

He picks up a cheesy-looking sweepstakes envelope which says, in large garish letters, "*YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY WON \$20,000!!!*".

He looks at it, vaguely amused, then casually dumps it in a paper recycle bin.

The doorbell RINGS. John opens the door, revealing Parker, who has a hard time making eye contact.

JOHN  
Hey! How you doin'?

PARKER  
I'm, uh, I'm good, how are you?

JOHN  
Alright. You know. It's crazy out there. But we'll survive.

John ushers Parker in, and shuts the door.

PARKER  
Right, right. And Mary, and the little princess?

JOHN  
Emily's in bed, so you know, shh. Mary's upstairs in our room, reading I think. You can go on up if you want.

PARKER  
You know, I think I will pop in and say hi.

JOHN  
Alrighty.

INT. JOHN AND MARY'S BEDROOM

Mary lies on her back on the bed, reading a book. One pair of headphones is on her ears, another on her large bare belly.

Parker enters without looking at her.

PARKER  
Hey Mare, I was just in the neighborhood, thought I'd...

He finally gets a look at the headphones, and gives them an odd look. He waves his hand at her.

PARKER  
Mary? Hello!

Mary takes the headphones off her ears. Classical music BLARES out of them.

MARY  
Oh, hey Parker, I didn't know you were here. What's wrong? They say classical music helps the baby's brain develop faster.

PARKER

Yeah, I get it, I just never walked in on it like that before, it's a little disconcerting.

MARY

Don't knock it, Emily's already reading on a third grade level.

PARKER

Genetics plays a part too. So. Enjoying your house arrest?

MARY

Turns out, sabbaticals suck when your obstetrician forces you to take them.

PARKER

He's probably just concerned because of your age. But you're okay, right? John takes care of most of the shopping. Doesn't he? I mean, I assume he does. He's good like that. Right?

Mary looks at him oddly.

MARY

You know, if you weren't my brother I'm not sure I'd ever hang out with you. You're pretty weird, and can be kind of a jerk sometimes.

PARKER

Thanks. Alright, let me leave both of you to your music. Don't get up.

MARY

I wasn't going to. Oh, and Park?

PARKER

Yeah?

MARY

I was kidding about not hanging out with you. I'm not saying we'd be best friends or anything. But you know, acquaintances for sure.

Parker smirks and shuts the door. Mary puts her headphones back on and picks up her book.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM

Parker enters the livingroom and looks at John's computer. John's voice suddenly comes from the kitchen, startling Parker.

JOHN (O.S.)  
Parker, can I get you something? A beer?

PARKER  
What, uh, brands do you have? Never mind. Whatever you have is fine.

Parker sees the discarded sweepstakes in the trash, laughs quietly, then looks around.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S KITCHEN

John takes two Bud Lights from the fridge.

JOHN  
So Mary tells me you got a promotion at work. That's great!

PARKER (O.S.)  
It's nothing really, just a title.

John exits toward the livingroom.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN  
Still, it's recognition of good work, right?

John stops in his tracks. The cover of John's computer is off and Parker is fiddling with the insides.

JOHN  
Um... What are you doing, Parker?

PARKER  
You mentioned a while back that you wished your computer was faster.

Parker holds up a memory chip, then sticks it in a slot.

PARKER  
Got it from work.

JOHN  
Oh. Cool. Thanks. You're not going to get in trouble, are you?

John hands Parker a beer.

PARKER

Nah. They go through tons of these,  
no one'll miss it.

PARKER

Oh, yeah, there's something else I  
wanted to tell you about. There's  
this credit card, you can transfer  
balances -- twelve percent interest,  
guaranteed. I did it, and my  
credit's lousy. I can get you the  
paperwork if you want. Just want to  
help out a buddy, that's all. I  
think I do get a "refer-a-friend"  
gift certificate or something. But,  
you know, you don't have to.

JOHN

I'll think about it.

Parker types on John's computer. He grabs a CD, considers  
putting it in the computer, then changes his mind and puts it  
down.

John continues to go through his mail. He opens a magazine,  
unfolds a cologne "scent strip" and smells it.

JOHN

Not bad.

He smells another one.

JOHN

Oof, awful.

Parker strains to see which one John liked. John looks up to  
catch Parker looking at him.

PARKER

You now have two gig of RAM. Why  
don't you take it for a spin?

John sits at the computer and opens a website called  
"VideoWorld.com".

JOHN

Wow, that opened fast.

PARKER

Toldya.

John clicks over to the "Discussion Forum", which contains a window saying "*Welcome Back TheRealJohnSmith*".

Parker gives John an odd look.

JOHN  
What? Sometimes people debate interesting topics.

A Private Message pops up.

PARKER  
You don't have to explain yourself to me, man, I'm the computer geek.

John opens the message, reads it, and begins to type a response.

INSERT - JOHN'S MESSAGE (AS IT'S TYPED)

JOHN'S MESSAGE (ON SCREEN)  
*Yeah, I'm back. Faster computer, no stopping me now. So watch your back...*

BACK TO SCENE

John highlights the last four words, then chooses "COLOR: WHITE". The words seem to vanish.

PARKER  
Ah, invisi-text!

JOHN  
Sometimes people miss it, but that's part of the fun.

John highlights the words again, and they re-appear in a different color. John sends the message.

Another Private Message pops up.

INSERT - ANOTHER MESSAGE

ANOTHER MESSAGE  
*dude, what's your IP address? I want to make sure you're on my friends list. Try [whatismyipaddress.com](http://whatismyipaddress.com)*



BACK TO SCENE

PARKER

Don't. It's a scam. I mean that site works, but don't give it out. People who know what they're doing can get your home address and more.

JOHN

Invasion of privacy.

PARKER

Uh, yeah.

JOHN

Bastards.

Parker knocks over his beer.

PARKER

Shit. Sorry.

JOHN

Don't worry about it, I'll clean it up.

John picks up the bottle and wipes up the beer.

PARKER

I have to go anyway.  
(shouting up the stairs)  
Mary! Pump that belly full of Mozart, I want another genius in the family!

Parker cringes and covers his mouth.

PARKER

Sorry, I forgot, Emily... Maybe she didn't wake up.

Emily appears at the top of the stairs, wiping her eyes.

PARKER

Hi, sweetheart! Sorry, I didn't mean to wake you! She'll go back to sleep, right?

John rolls his eyes and half-grins as he heads up the stairs.

JOHN

Say good night to uncle Parker, Emily.

EMILY  
'Night, Unca Park.

John picks up Emily and carries her toward her room.

PARKER  
Good night, Emily. Sorry, John.

Once John and Emily are out of sight, Parker's face suddenly looks grim.

PARKER  
Sorry.

Parker pulls a colorful envelope out of his pocket and leaves it in a prominent place, then heads toward the computer. He picks up the CD and taps his hand with it, looking around.

INT. PARKER'S OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

A pie chart on the wall shows blue "90% EXACTLY RIGHT", yellow "4% VERY CLOSE" and red "6% WRONG".

Parker and Nancy are having a standoff. Nancy's eyes are smoldering, and Parker is trying to avoid them.

Doug rushes in, holding a fake mustache and a small makeup kit.

DOUG  
Brosef, check it out! Whaddya think?... what'd I miss?

NANCY  
He didn't install the software.

PARKER  
I couldn't. Isn't it enough that we know every time he buys beef jerky and nasal spray at Shopmart? And that he has people practically watching his every move? He's my brother-in-law for crying out loud!

Nancy puts her hand on Parker's shoulder.

NANCY  
I think you're missing the bigger picture here, Parker. Do you have any idea what manufacturers would pay to have Everyman at their New Product Expos?

Parker shifts uncomfortably. Nancy removes her hand.

NANCY

Social and political organizations would benefit from his talents. He crosses over all racial and ethnic lines. The potential is almost unlimited. Remember when I said I didn't see what was so special about him? Now I do. Very clearly. You can't sit on an opportunity like that, you have to act. But you know what? I don't blame you for not installing the tracking software. It's kind of noble. And as it turns out, it may be unnecessary. If he does apply for the card, we'll be able to track his purchases that way. At the moment, though, we have a more serious issue. Do you still feel capable of heading up the team, Mr. Bennett? Perhaps I should step in and be more hands-on.

PARKER

No. I'll do it. If someone's going to invade his privacy, it might as well be someone who cares about him.

NANCY

How sweet. Good day, gentlemen.

Nancy slinks out the door. Parker punches his desk, then gives Doug an odd look.

PARKER

"Brosef"?

DOUG

It's a new one, I'm trying it out.  
No good?

PARKER

(cracking a smile)  
I let you know.

DOUG

(switching mustaches)  
So. Tom Selleck? Or Kaiser Wilhelm?

PARKER

You sure that's the right way around?

DOUG  
You're right. Selleck.

PARKER  
This is a good thing we're doing,  
right?

DOUG  
(reading)  
Oh wait, no, it's Freddie Mercury.

PARKER  
(laughing)  
Just go.

EXT. JOHN SMITH'S HOUSE - EVENING

A MESSENGER knocks on John's door. He holds an envelope, a larger package and a digital signature pad. John answers.

MESSENGER  
Mr. Smith? Fly-by-Day Messenger  
Service. Sign here, please.

John signs and takes the packages.

MESSENGER  
Thank you sir, and you have  
yourself a nice evening.

John nods and closes the door.

The Messenger turns around, and is revealed to be Doug, in a disguise!

Doug gets into his car, pulling the mustache off his face. He talks into a walkie-talkie.

DOUG  
The eagle has landed. I'm going  
home.

VALERIE (ON WALKIE-TALKIE)  
Thanks Doug. And for the record I  
think the mustache is a good look  
for you.

Doug pulls his car out, looking at himself in the mirror.

DOUG  
Really?

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM

Mary sits at the table eating two different kinds of chocolate-covered ice cream nuggets.

John puts down the large package and tastes one of each.

JOHN

Ooo, this one's good. That one, not so much.

MARY

So who really cares what you think?

John opens the envelope while Mary works on the package.

JOHN

Ah, the new credit card. Huh. Isn't that something.

MARY

What?

JOHN

The balances I transferred from our other cards were paid off, but I don't seem to owe anything on this one. Maybe they just didn't update their system yet.

John logs onto the credit card's website, picks up the phone and dials. Mary hobbles over and snatches the phone from him.

MARY

What's wrong with you?

JOHN

What? They probably just made a mistake.

MARY

So why call attention to it? It's about time a mistake went our way.

Mary returns to her package and finishes opening it, revealing a laptop computer.

JOHN

I just don't want it to suddenly catch up to us, that's all.

(sees laptop)

Whoa.

MARY

A promotion from the credit card company.

JOHN

Nice. What the...

An "Account Alert" box on the computer shows that he has been awarded six thousand air miles.

JOHN

Honey? You know that annual convention that I never get to go to?

MARY

Only because Victor won't spring for the air fare.

JOHN

What if I suddenly acquired some air miles?

MARY

That must be a mistake, you didn't buy anything yet!

Mary rises delicately and comes over to John's computer.

JOHN

I've learned not to call attention to mistakes that go our way.

MARY

Very funny. You do know why prostitution is legal everywhere in Nevada except Vegas, Reno and Carson City?

JOHN

Why do you get like this?

MARY

It's because the casinos know that men spend more on gambling when they bring their wives with them. Fewer distractions.

JOHN

But the airfare is only for one. Is it even safe for you to fly?

John rubs her belly gently.

MARY

I'm not saying you can't go. I'm just saying you can't have any fun.

JOHN

None at all, huh? Then you're not allowed to enjoy the laptop.

MARY

Deal.

They kiss and laugh quietly.

INT. PARKER'S OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Parker reviews his day trading account. Once again the net figures are all negative. He shakes his head and opens another file.

A pie chart on his computer shows blue "84% EXACTLY RIGHT", yellow "6% VERY CLOSE" and red "10% WRONG". Parker frowns.

Valerie appears in the doorway, visibly upset.

VALERIE

New suit fits well.

PARKER

Thanks, yeah, you know, I had it... What's the matter?

VALERIE

I don't know how much longer I can do this.

PARKER

Do what specifically?

VALERIE

What we're doing to John. It's wrong.

PARKER

I know exactly what you mean, but you have to keep in mind that he's going to benefit from this too.

VALERIE

You really believe that?

PARKER

Of course. Listen, do you have plans tonight?

(MORE)

PARKER (cont'd)  
Do you want to maybe have dinner?  
With me, I mean. So we can talk  
about all this.

VALERIE  
I understood. Sure, I'd like that.

PARKER  
Purely professional, of course.

VALERIE  
Couldn't write it off as a business  
expense otherwise.

PARKER  
Good thinking.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S HOUSE - EVENING

A new large flat-screen TV blares a newscast.

While Emily helps Mary make dinner in the kitchen, John goes  
through the mail, once again sweating over the bills.

ANCHOR (ON TV)  
Violence continues to flare in the  
troubled region, and no resolution  
to this conflict seems to be in  
sight. Meanwhile the economy took  
another downturn...

INT. EXECUTIVE BOARDROOM

The COO, Nancy, and the other board members are around the  
table. The Receptionist is off to the side, taking notes.

Nancy clicks on a laptop. An image appears on the screen.

It shows several dated pie charts showing Everyman's  
Declining Accuracy.

NANCY  
So. Thoughts?

BOARD MEMBER #1  
I knew paying off the cards was a  
bad idea.

NANCY  
The downward trend started before  
that, look at the dates.

BOARD MEMBER #2  
Advancing pregnancy maybe?



NANCY

Still within the margin of error,  
it's only been a few weeks.

COO

Show them that new data.

Nancy presses a button. The Board Members look confused as they read the unseen slide.

NANCY

We had some thoughts on how to make  
this happen.

INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO - EVENING

Flashing lights, dancing girls, fireworks and rolling dice give way to gaudy carpet and cheesy slot machine beeps.

John puts a token into a slot machine, pulls the lever, and looks disappointed.

An OLD LADY at a nearby slot machine eyes him.

OLD LADY

You been here an hour. Did you  
expect to win?

JOHN

No. But I guess I thought losing  
would be a little more...  
enjoyable.

OLD LADY

Keep playing, you'll win something  
eventually. Then you'll forget how  
much you lost.

JOHN

Not sure that's a wise investment  
strategy. I think I'd rather play  
the change machine in the  
laundromat. At least they pay even  
money.

OLD LADY

(under her breath)  
Not in Vegas they don't.

A WAITER approaches John.

WAITER

Sir, could I interest you in a  
drink, on the house?  
(MORE)

WAITER (cont'd)

Or a cigar, or reading material,  
cologne or other toiletry items,  
jewelry or perhaps a complimentary  
pay-per-view event of your choice?

John is speechless.

OLD LADY

I'll take a cigar.

WAITER

I'm sorry ma'am, it's only for Mr.  
Smith.

JOHN

Nothing right now. Thanks.

The Waiter bows and glides away.

OLD LADY

I never get offered anything but  
watered-down drinks.

JOHN

Must be a perk for my convention.

OLD LADY

Must be. You done with that  
machine?

JOHN

Oh, uh, yeah, sure.

John gets up and the woman sits down at his machine.

OLD LADY

You can be my good luck charm.

She gives John a broad smile as she pulls the lever.

John smiles at her distastefully, looking around for  
somewhere else to be. Then his gaze moves to the slot machine  
as a SEVEN drops into the first position.

He watches in growing horror as another SEVEN lands in the  
middle. Then... CHERRIES.

John breathes a sigh of relief. The Old Lady notices and  
gives him a disapproving look.

John clears his throat and wanders off. The Old Lady pulls  
the lever.

OLD LADY  
Don't need a good luck charm...  
damn.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S HOUSE - EVENING

Mary opens the door to reveal a breathless Parker.

PARKER  
Where is it?

MARY  
If you had let me finish before you  
hung up, you could have saved  
yourself a trip, there's no rush, I  
don't know why you're so...

Parker rushes over to the laptop and picks up a small webcam.

PARKER  
This it?

MARY  
Yes, it came with the laptop.  
What's the problem?

PARKER  
Do you realize that this thing lets  
pretty much anyone see what you're  
doing?

MARY  
Can't you control who can access  
it? I thought you had to give  
people permission or something.

PARKER  
Believe me, there are ways to hack  
into it. I'm going to take this. If  
there's anything else you need  
before John gets back, don't  
hesitate to call me.

Parker looks at their TV. A new cable box sits above it.

MARY  
(puzzled)  
Okay. Thanks Park. Good night.

She holds her belly and kisses him on the cheek as he rushes  
out the door.

INT. NANCY'S APARTMENT, NEAR THE DOORWAY - EVENING

There is furious KNOCKING on the door.

NANCY (O.S.)  
I'm coming, I'm coming.

The knocking continues.

After a few moments, Nancy comes into view, tying a bathrobe, her hair pinned up.

NANCY  
Jeez, the complex better be on  
fire, or...

She opens the door. Parker is there, a wild look in his eyes.

PARKER  
You've gone too far this time. Up  
to now we've been dancing on the  
edge of legality. Like their new  
cable box. I assume that's ours?  
Somewhere in the small print it  
said the box may transmit  
information? What is he, replacing  
the whole Nielson system?

NANCY  
Probably be more accurate.

PARKER  
But what really crossed the line  
was this.

Parker holds up the webcam.

NANCY  
A webcam. So. What about it?

PARKER  
It came with their laptop.

NANCY  
It's a fairly common accessory,  
Parker.

PARKER  
Not everyone uses it to invade  
someone else's privacy.

NANCY  
Do you really think we'd do that?  
We don't even know how.

Nancy takes her hair down and shakes it sexily. Parker loses his train of thought and some of his steam.

PARKER

But I do. I figured you'd ask me how to do it eventually.

NANCY

(her eyes softening)  
Parker, I swear, that wasn't the plan at all. We're businesspeople, not monsters.

PARKER

Well, I, uh... I wouldn't put something like that past you and the others. Look, you can't blame me for thinking it.

NANCY

No, I can't. You've been under a lot of stress. You were thrown in to this feet-first, and you know what, you've been handling it very well so far.

Nancy puts her hand on his shoulder.

NANCY

I might know a way to relieve some of your stress.

PARKER

(breathlessly)  
How?

NANCY

Do you want to know why we approved the Everyman project in the first place? Much as I'd like to say it was your dazzling pitch or the seemingly supernatural abilities of John Smith, it was actually because the company was losing money. Your idea was a Hail Mary pass. If it didn't work the next choice would have been chapter eleven.

PARKER

So naturally you'd do anything to keep it going. And this was supposed to relieve my stress how?

Nancy slides her hand slowly up to his neck.

NANCY

Take some of the pressure off. We didn't expect the project to work. But it did. You saved a multinational corporation practically single-handedly. What you need to do now is to just... relax.

She pulls him in and kisses him. Parker pulls away.

PARKER

Yes. Yes, that probably is what I need, but right now I don't feel relaxed, I'm a little wound up.

Nancy pulls the sash and her robe falls open. Parker tries, and fails, to avert his eyes.

PARKER

And... whoa! You're not helping. Wow. Yeah, definitely not relaxed.

Nancy moves in close to Parker's face.

PARKER

Listen, I really think we need to keep things professional here, you know, because we have to work together, and... Oh, what the hell.

They kiss passionately. Parker pulls back for a breath.

PARKER

You know what, you were right. I do need this. Just not with you. I gotta go.

Parker rushes out the door while Nancy closes her robe and angrily dials a phone.

NANCY

(into phone)

Bennett is off the reservation... I tried! I think he might be gay.

INT. VALERIE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Valerie opens the door to reveal an out-of-breath Parker.

PARKER

Listen. Have you ever wanted to tell someone something, but you couldn't, because on the one hand, yeah, you'd feel a lot better getting it off your chest, but on the other hand, if you step over a certain line, there might not be any going back...

Valerie impulsively kisses him.

PARKER

Oh, uh, no, that wasn't what I was meant.

VALERIE

(mortified)

I am so sorry.

PARKER

No, no no no, don't get me wrong, I do want that, it just wasn't what I happened to have been talking about right now, that's all. Here, look.

Parker kisses her back quickly. She enjoys it, but laughs a little anyway.

PARKER

See? I'm glad you did it, it's just the timing is a little odd.

VALERIE

Are you all right?

PARKER

I'm having a very strange night.

VALERIE

You were talking about John.

Parker nods.

VALERIE

You know how I feel about that.

PARKER

I went into this with the best intentions.

VALERIE

I believe you.

PARKER

Now things have gone too far.

VALERIE

And if you think it's better to keep quiet about it, fine. It's probably safer for you that way. Good night.

Parker stops her from closing the door.

PARKER

You're right. I'll do it. I'm sorry.

VALERIE

Don't tell it to me.

PARKER

Right. Again. Thanks. But, you know, not tonight, because John's not back yet. First thing in the morning.

Parker goes to leave, then returns to Valerie and gives her a half-hearted kiss.

PARKER

We can pick this up right here when it's all over, right?

VALERIE

(laughing)

Go.

PARKER

I'm going.

Valerie smiles as Parker exits.

EXT. SIDEWALK NEAR JOHN'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Parker paces back and forth down the block from John's house.

PARKER

Hour glass. Hour glass. Hour glass.  
(deep breath)  
Arrow.

He steels himself, and walks toward John's house.

John's car nearly hits him as it comes RACING out the driveway backwards.



The car stops in the street to make a screeching turn. Parker catches a glimpse of Mary in the driver's seat, and a frightened Emily in a booster seat in the back.

PARKER

Mary? What's... is everything  
alright?

The car races away down the street as Parker hurries through the open door to John's house.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM

Parker enters to find John sitting on his sofa, distraught.

PARKER

John? What the hell happened?

John wordlessly points to the laptop, which is open to a website called "*BadBoyInVegas.com*" with embedded photos. Parker scrolls through them.

INSERT - PHOTOS

The first three pictures show John standing in the doorway of a motel with an attractive woman.

In one picture, she has her hand on his shoulder; in another they appear to be kissing; in the third she's bending down in front of him.

One shot shows John entering the motel room, and another shows the girl closing the door.

The last two show the girl in skimpy underwear embracing a shirtless John, then the two of them under the covers.

BACK TO SCENE

PARKER

Jesus, John. What is this?

JOHN

I met with that woman for business  
in Vegas, before the convention.  
But nothing happened at all, you  
have to believe me!

PARKER

I do. Can I take this?

John nods. Parker squints at the girl in the photos, looks thoughtful, then closes the laptop and picks it up.

PARKER

Listen, I'm going to do what I can to figure this out. Meantime, I wouldn't call her just yet. Let her calm down. You just sit tight and try to relax.

Parker turns to leave, then awkwardly turns back to John.

PARKER

Oh, and don't watch TV, or buy anything online, or go to Shopmart.

Parker pauses oddly, then leaves. John puts his head in his hands.

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT EVENING

On the laptop, Parker zooms in on the photo with the shirtless John. He notices a fuzzy line at John's neck.

He digitally circles the line in red, then does the same to the one of John and the woman in bed.

He right-clicks on a blank part of the web page and chooses "view source". A "notepad" document comes up, containing complicated computer code.

While scrolling through the lines of code, Parker slows down, then stops at a particular line.

He opens Facebook, and scrolls through his list of friends.

His eyebrows narrowing, he shuts the laptop.

INT. BAR - EVENING

John sits on a bar stool, miserably nursing a beer.

A TV in the background blares international news.

REPORTER (ON TV)

Turmoil in the region continues, as do calls for the UN to send in peacekeeping troops to bring aid where it's needed and to restore order to this volatile part of the world...

A man with a mullet strolls up to John, sipping a beer and watching the TV. This is FLAT-TOP in disguise.

MULLET/FLAT-TOP

F'd up, man.

JOHN

Sorry, what?

MULLET/FLAT-TOP

The whole thing, the situation over there, it's all f'd up. A bad scene.

JOHN

Sure is.

MULLET/FLAT-TOP

What do you think, dude, should we send troops in there or what?

JOHN

Whew. I don't know. Sometimes I think the more we meddle the worse it gets. You poke your nose into someone else's business, you're asking for trouble and you usually end up causing it. Then again, there are innocent civilians, women and children, hurting in there. We should probably do something to stop it.

MULLET/FLAT-TOP

You know, I think you're right. You're cool, man. You're the real deal. You enjoy the rest of your night.

Mullet/Flat-Top walks away.

JOHN

Fat chance.

John turns his attention back to his drink.

INT. NANCY DETMER'S OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

Parker bursts in and slams a stack of photos on Nancy's desk.

PARKER

So we didn't just monitor the conference in Vegas. You also dolled up the receptionist who used to work on this floor and had her try and seduce John. Oddly enough, she also befriended me on Facebook. Was she supposed to try to sleep with me, too, if things went bad? I see.

(MORE)

PARKER (cont'd)

So when I flew off the handle at your place you were improvising. Well played. Even though it didn't work out. And of course, John didn't cooperate either, so you had to make crude forgeries instead, and send them to his wife from your computer. All I want to know is... Why?

Nancy looks at the photos, then slowly up at Parker.

NANCY

I would have told you about it if I thought you could handle it.

PARKER

I asked you a question.

Nancy turns her monitor around and points to the graph from the board meeting showing the red line heading downward.

NANCY

You know as well as I do. Everyman is losing his touch. We couldn't understand why. Until I saw this.

Nancy clicks her mouse, and the graph changes to a news article.

INSERT - ARTICLE HEADLINE

*"National Divorce Rate Rises Above Fifty Percent"*

BACK TO SCENE

NANCY

This is John Smith's first marriage. Which means he isn't truly average.

PARKER

So you decided to... make him more average.

NANCY

I guess we'll find out if it worked soon enough.

PARKER

No we won't. This project is over. I'm going to his house right now.

NANCY

No. You're not. Your new contract included a confidentiality agreement. You can't tell him a thing.

PARKER

Do you know what the really pathetic part is? You got it all wrong. Just because more than fifty percent of marriages fail doesn't mean that the average person has been divorced more than once. Did you even consider factoring in people who have never been married? I didn't think so. You know, if you had left him alone, the goose might have gone right along laying golden eggs. But instead, you tried to ruin a good man's life for a few percentage points on the bottom line. Well done, Ms. Detmer.

Parker heads for the door.

NANCY

Maybe you don't understand. If you leak word of this project to anyone, you face fines and possible jail time, not to mention termination. You don't want that now, do you?

PARKER

I don't want... to work for this company for one minute longer.

Parker turns on his heel, walks out the door, and tries to slam it behind him. Instead it drifts closed slowly and anticlimactically. Parker walks away, miffed.

Nancy picks up the phone and dials.

NANCY

Is he available? Well, tell him I'm ready to share that information.

The COO appears in Nancy's doorway, making her nervous.

NANCY

So... I'll pick up the car in the morning. Thank you.

(to the COO)

Mechanic.

He nods knowingly as she hangs up the phone.

NANCY  
We need to talk.

INT. MARY'S CAR - EVENING

Mary, red-eyed and sniffing, drives and talks on a cell phone earpiece.

MARY  
So, wait, some of them are real?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

PARKER  
Only the ones where they're outside. It's the angle that makes it look... incriminating. She was bending down to pick up files, you can see them on the ground. Their faces aren't even touching in the other one. Come on Mare, it's me talking. This computer stuff is what I do.

MARY  
I trust you. And I guess I should've trusted John.

PARKER  
You overreacted, which is understandable. You're pregnant, your hormones are going crazy...

MARY  
Should've quit while you were ahead. I'm there. Thanks again.

PARKER  
Anytime.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S HOUSE

John opens the door to reveal Mary holding Emily.

Mary looks at John with tears in her eyes. She throws herself into his arms and the three of them hug deeply.

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Parker sits at his laptop. An instant message comes up from "TigerGrrrl\_42". Parker grins and types a response.

INSERT - INSTANT MESSAGE

*"sorry, honey, no more zookeeper  
game. there's someone else"*

"TigerGrrrl\_42" responds by sending a "crying smilie", then a winking one.

Parker clicks out of Instant Messenger and into his day-trading software.

Valerie comes up behind him and drapes her hands on his shoulders. He touches her hands absentmindedly.

VALERIE

Watcha doin'?

PARKER

Day trading. Stocks. It's tricky,  
you really have to-

Valerie leans over, types and clicks, finalizing a trade.

PARKER

If that transaction makes money,  
you're taking over. How did you...?

VALERIE

I watched a video on the internet  
once. I always wanted to try it.

PARKER

Glad you did. Wait a minute, video  
on the internet...

Parker's eyes light up. He logs onto "VideoWorld.com", goes to the Members Forum, finds "TheRealJohnSmith", and sees that he is "online".

PARKER

I think you just helped me figure  
out a way to avoid going to jail  
but still do the right thing.

Parker types furiously.

PARKER

First I have to cover our tracks...  
Now, how should we word this?

Valerie looks pleased, and scoots closer to Parker, focusing on the laptop.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S HOUSE

On a TV in the background, a news break is ending.

ANCHOR (ON TV)

...due to flagging sales the famous ice cream company has decided to cease producing the peanut butter flavor of their famous chocolate covered nuggets...

John sits at his computer, clicking around on Videoworld.com. A Private Message pops up, from "A\_Friendly\_Stranger".

John, amused, opens it and begins reading. His look changes to puzzlement, then to horror.

He pulls out his credit card and stares at it in disbelief.

INT. PARKER'S APARTMENT DOORWAY - MORNING

Parker's doorbell RINGS.

After a few moments, Parker stumbles to answer the door, wearing only boxers and a t-shirt.

Parker opens the door to reveal the COO, his smile more intimidating than ever.

PARKER

You know, I'm sleeping later now that I'm unemployed.

COO

Can I come in? I'd like to talk.

PARKER

No.

COO

I don't blame you for quitting. Believe me when I say that Ms. Detmer made a lot of those decisions on her own.

PARKER

If you say so.

COO

There's more. We've been talking to him. John Smith.

(MORE)



COO (cont'd)

It seems he got a private message in some internet forum about the Everyman project. Details that only someone who'd been prying into his private life would know.

PARKER

Hmm. Anyone know who sent it?

COO

The I.T. guys -- the ones who still work for me -- managed to trace it back to Nancy Detmer's work computer. She was terminated.

PARKER

You had her killed? Just kidding. I'm sure that went well.

MEMORY HIT

Two GUARDS roughly escort Nancy from the building.

NANCY

(screaming)

I didn't compromise the project, why would I?? You men are just afraid of a woman with power, that's what it is!! Let go of me!

BACK TO SCENE

PARKER

Sorry I missed it.

COO gives Parker an odd look.

COO

Apparently it would be very difficult to fake a data trail like that. I just thought you'd want to know.

PARKER

I don't think I'd be able to sleep otherwise. Is that all?

COO

Your contract covered future confidentiality, regardless of employment status. You do understand that.

PARKER

Sure. Have a nice day, I'd like to get back to bed.

COO

And you have-

Parker closes the door in the COO's still-smiling face.

Valerie slinks through the bedroom door, wearing Parker's shirt.

VALERIE

You are good.

PARKER

Yeah, I wasn't sure I had it in me to stand up to him like that.

VALERIE

That too.

She gives him a steamy look.

PARKER

Oh! Well, that I knew I had in me. Wait, that came out wrong.

VALERIE

Shut up, you idiot.

They kiss passionately.

INT. EXECUTIVE BOARDROOM - DAY

John exhales deeply as he signs the last of an inches-high stack of papers bearing phrases like "indemnity", "strict confidentiality" and "fair compensation".

The COO, flashing his most-practiced smile, hands John a check. John smiles back weakly, then looks at the check and his eyes go wide.

The COO gives John a wink and a "thumbs up"; John mockingly returns the gesture.

EXT. WOMEN'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - AFTERNOON

A FAT MAN -- who appears to have been ladled into his suit -- smokes a cigarette outside a Women's Correctional Facility in a lousy neighborhood.

Nancy bursts out the Facility's doors, holding a manila envelope with her name on it. Disheveled and furious, her icy eyes settle on the Fat Man.

FAT MAN

Don't say your uncle never did  
nothin' for you.

NANCY

This wasn't quite the favor I had  
in mind. Can he get me a job?

FAT MAN

I am not authorized to... authorize  
that.

NANCY

Great.

FAT MAN

I am authorized to drive you home  
though.

Fat Man puts out his cigarette and gestures toward a nondescript sedan with tinted rear windows.

NANCY

I'd rather take a cab.

Fat Man shrugs and crams his considerable frame behind the wheel.

Nancy looks around at the graffiti on the wall and the creepy empty street.

Fat Man starts the car and pulls away.

NANCY

Wait!

The car screeches, lurching to a stop. Nancy climbs in.

NANCY

Why should I have to pay?

FAT MAN

Why indeed?

NANCY

Shut up.

FAT MAN

I'm authorized to do that too.

As the car pulls away, Nancy gives the Facility the finger.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S KITCHEN - MORNING

A TV blares the news. John half-watches while he eats cereal. Mary and Parker sip coffee.

ANCHOR (ON TV)

...fighting continues in the war-torn region despite the presence of American troops. As civilian and military casualties mount, a drumbeat for withdrawal seems to be starting from many sides. Better news on the home front though, the economy seems to have taken a surprising upturn, especially at Monolith Megacorp. In an exclusive interview, we asked its new CEO how he managed to steer the company out of bankruptcy during these trying times.

The former Receptionist hovers in the background, now looking remarkably like Nancy.

COO (ON TV)

We streamlined our business model. Eliminated outdated products, put the focus on what appealed to the average American, made the whole company much more quotidian.

Parker shuts off the TV.

PARKER

Unbelievable.

MARY

Amazing how you and your girlfriend worked for them and had no idea what they were up to.

PARKER

(eyes wide)

Right? I was just as surprised as anyone. I've been trying to figure how they... John, do you have any idea how they found you?

Mary gives Parker an odd look and backs up.

JOHN

I'm still not sure exactly when it started. A couple of months ago I got a couple of surveys by e-mail, they promised me a tankful of gas or something, so I filled them out. Where they got my info from, I have no idea.

PARKER

The only thing I can think of is that when I started working there, they asked for emergency contacts. I put you guys down. Maybe they go through that list looking for subjects.

MARY

That's not right.

Mary walks out. Parker shrugs at John.

EXT. PARKING LOT, JOHN'S OFFICE BUILDING

John's car pulls into a spot. John gets out, then enters his office building.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY

John heads down the dingy hallway, nodding to various people along the way, most of whom avoid his gaze.

Victor dashes up to him, sweating.

VICTOR

John! Would you step in to my office for a moment, please?

JOHN

Sure, Vic. Can I stop in to mine first and get settled?

VICTOR

Um, no. Please. Thanks.

John, puzzled, follows Victor down the hall.

VICTOR'S OFFICE

A serious-looking man (30's) sporting a plain suit and a meticulously groomed goatee flashes a badge.

GOATEE

Hello Mr. Smith. I'm with the  
Federal Trade Commission. We need  
to talk.

(to Victor)

Would you excuse us please.

VICTOR

Sure.

Victor leaves, then comes back to retrieve his coffee cup. He gives Goatee a respectful nod, bordering on a bow, then exits again.

JOHN

Listen, what...

GOATEE

You had an unusual experience with  
a certain Monolith Megacorp.

JOHN

I signed a whole stack of  
confidentiality agreements. I'm not  
even sure I'm allowed to say that  
much.

GOATEE

You can talk to me. In fact you  
have to. Trust me, we can do a lot  
worse to you if you don't than they  
can if you do.

JOHN

That's comforting.

GOATEE

The SEC takes flagrant abuse of  
private information very seriously.

JOHN

You said FTC.

GOATEE

It's a joint task force. Come with  
me, please.

Goatee walks briskly toward the door, and looks at John expectantly.

JOHN

Do I have to?

GOATEE

Yeah.

JOHN

Can I at least stop at my desk?

GOATEE

Nah.

JOHN

I have to tell my boss I'll be out.

GOATEE

He knows. Come on.

John sighs and follows Goatee out the door.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Goatee ushers John into the back of a nondescript sedan with tinted rear windows.

INT. NONDESCRIPT SEDAN

Fat Man, in the front passenger seat, turns around and hands John a blindfold.

FAT MAN

Put it on.

JOHN

Are you kidding me?

FAT MAN

That would be highly unlikely.

Goatee leans in to the driver's seat, revealing a gun holster under his suit jacket.

JOHN

How do I even know you really are who you say you are?

GOATEE

If we're not, you probably don't want to mess with us. Wear it.

FAT MAN

The location we're going to is undisclosed and needs to stay that way. Cell phone.

John gives a blank look, then hands over his cell phone and reluctantly puts on the blindfold.

Goatee starts the car and pulls away.

GOATEE

You didn't have to say that.

FAT MAN

You told me to take his phone.

GOATEE

The "undisclosed location" thing, it was unnecessary. Never over-explain. You want to intimidate? Less is more.

FAT MAN

I got it. Can we just get there, please?

(mockingly)

Wherever it is we're going?

Fat Man reaches back and jabs John in the neck with a syringe needle.

JOHN

What the hell was...

John slumps, eyes closed, head lolling to one side.

FAT MAN

You sure the Attorney General is on board with this?

GOATEE

Stop it.

FAT MAN

I mean come on, fourth amendment, search and seizure.

GOATEE

Our permission is as high as it gets.

FAT MAN

I still don't like this gig.

GOATEE

We're lucky to have any gig. Can I drive in peace now, please?

FAT MAN

Touchy.



A bead of sweat falls from John's forehead onto the blindfold.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John, unconscious, droops in a plastic chair. Goatee removes the blindfold and jabs another needle into John's neck.

John immediately begins to blink in the harsh light.

JOHN  
Whuh... Wait, what? Who the hell  
are you people?!?

John's eyes finally focus. Goatee is gone.

John rises and tries the door, but it is locked tight.

JOHN  
Hey! Hello!! Hello!?! I have to go  
to the bathroom!!

John bangs on the door, hurting his hands.

JOHN  
What the fuck is going on...?

John slumps against the door, gasping, nearly crying.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S KITCHEN

Mary has a phone to her ear and one hand on her stomach.

MARY  
Yes, it's Mrs. Smith, I'm trying to  
reach my husband... oh, okay. Thank  
you, I'll try again later.

She hangs up, disappointed.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John shoots Flat-Top a look of sheer hatred, and speaks with as much menace as he can muster.

JOHN  
General Tso's Chicken.

Flat-Top checks the menu he's holding against another piece of paper.

FLAT-TOP  
And you are... right again! Their  
number one most popular dish!  
(MORE)

FLAT-TOP (cont'd)

You are a remarkable man, Mr. Smith. You just earned yourself a ticket upstairs!

JOHN

Is there a fucking phone "upstairs"?

Flat-Top nods and holds out the blindfold.

FLAT-TOP

If you cooperate and put it on yourself, maybe we can skip the needles from now on.

John gives him a withering look and puts on the blindfold.

INT. ORNATE ROOM

Flat-Top and Goatee lead John into an expensively furnished room.

Flat-Top removes the blindfold. John looks around and gasps, while Flat-Top and Goatee stand guard at the door.

JOHN

I'm guessing this was paid for either by drug money or taxpayer dollars. Your suits rule out drug money.

Philip Rankin saunters into the room, his arms wide.

RANKIN

Actually, everything you see was donated by interested parties.

JOHN

Betcha you guys throw a great one. Party, I mean. Hey, I know you. I've seen you on TV.

RANKIN

Philip Rankin. I'm the President's Information Czar.

Rankin holds out his hand for John to shake. John ignores it.

JOHN

Mmm, no, I was going to say reality show host. So close. Czar, huh? I thought the Bolsheviks had all you guys killed.

RANKIN

My official title is "Federal Chief Information Officer". I serve at the pleasure of the President.

JOHN

How very nice for both of you.

Rankin laughs.

RANKIN

Nobody told me how funny you were.

JOHN

Who'd you ask? Oh, I know what it is. I usually only get like this when I'm terrified for my life and have been illegally detained, which happens to me more often than you'd think.

Rankin puts his hand on John's shoulder and leads him down a hallway.

RANKIN

Relax. I'll explain everything.

JOHN

Do you have any idea what those guys did to me?  
(mock whisper)  
I have a feeling they're not from the FTC or the SEC at all.

RANKIN

They are hired guns, and believe me their actions were not sanctioned.

Goatee, still within earshot, looks aghast.

GOATEE

But you said...

Rankin gives him a look that could flash-freeze a side of beef.

GOATEE

You said to get him here, and we did.

JOHN

They're very professional, I'll give them that.

(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)

So where exactly is "here"? So I can tell my lawyer where to send the papers.

RANKIN

(smiling insincerely)

There is no street address. See, technically this room, the whole building, doesn't exist. And while you're in it, neither do you. I can tell you what this place is, though. It's a think tank. Some of the greatest minds in the world come here to give me, and through me the President, their opinions on any topic you can imagine.

JOHN

Looks more like a country club.

RANKIN

Our members are accustomed to a certain level of comfort. Speaking of which, can I get you anything? Are you hungry?

JOHN

(thinking)

Lobster Thermidor.

Rankin snaps his fingers, and Flat-Top pulls out a pad and pencil, preparing to write.

RANKIN

You like Lobster Thermidor?

JOHN

Never had it.

Rankin waves off Flat-Top, who resumes standing at attention.

JOHN

Always wanted to try it though. I bet you guys eat a lot of that kind of stuff here. I figure if I'm ever going to have it, might as well be on your dime. Maybe some caviar too. Although I might throw up on the million dollar carpet.

RANKIN

I think that's enough jokes.

JOHN

Fine. Why am I here?

RANKIN

The current administration was appraised of your particular set of skills and would like to make use of them.

JOHN

No.

RANKIN

Hold on...

JOHN

I've been a guinea pig, it wasn't much fun. So that's definitely a negatory. Can I go now?

RANKIN

I'm afraid not. See the thing is, you don't have a choice. Your country needs you. You have a lot of valuable information in that head of yours. And one way or another, we're going to get it. See, with the right information, you can do almost anything. You can channel certain trade secrets from one corporation to a competitor, and if you time it just right, put them out of business. Almost.

JOHN

Double M. You engineered that?

RANKIN

When the government bails out a corporation, it gets a fair amount of control in return.

JOHN

It was a power grab. And to think I voted for him.

RANKIN

The President is not necessarily kept appraised of every aspect of the operations I oversee. He's not a micro-manager. He just wants results.

JOHN

But you didn't get results.

RANKIN

No. The plan was unexpectedly foiled by someone with very special talents. Who will now use them for us.

JOHN

No I won't.

RANKIN

Yes. You will. Think of it as the draft, only instead of a gun, you'll be given a multiple choice test. You'll be brought here from work every morning, blindfolded. Sometimes you'll even be out in the field, that ought to be fun. I was considering letting you work up here. I was hoping we could be friends.

JOHN

I think it's a little late for that.

Rankin walks him back toward Flat-Top and Goatee.

RANKIN

Downstairs it is. Your calls will be re-routed so as not to arouse suspicion. You'll go home at night, like always, but you cannot tell anyone. Understand that we have eyes and ears everywhere. Everywhere. You thought you were under surveillance before? Pikers. You so much as fart and not only will we know about it, we'll be able to tell what you had for dinner the night before. Blabbing would bring the weight of this entire administration down on you. And unless you can manage to make it to a friendly country with no extradition...

FLAT-TOP

Your life will be pretty f'd up.

JOHN

Wait a minute, I know you too. From that bar...

MEMORY HIT

MULLET/FLAT-TOP

The whole thing, the situation over there, it's all f'd up.

BACK TO SCENE

JOHN

When we sent troops in, was that... because of what I said to you?

RANKIN

Call it a dry run.

JOHN

Oh my god. Oh my god, this is a nightmare...

John leans against a wall, gasping.

JOHN

Well... what do you know... turns out you can forget how to breathe.

FLAT-TOP

Listen, you're making more of this than you should. The work will be easy. We'll get you a computer, you can do what you want in your spare time. Monitored, of course. Hey, you'll even get a raise.

Goatee's phone rings. He looks at it.

JOHN

(near tears)

I just... want to call my wife.

GOATEE

No need, she's on the line for you.

RANKIN

You are at work. You were in a meeting all morning.

John glares at them, then closes his eyes and holds out his hand for the phone.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Parker and Mary nurse mugs of coffee in a greasy spoon diner.

MARY  
So, emergency contacts.

PARKER  
Huh?

MARY  
That's how you think they found  
John?

PARKER  
That's the best I can come up with.

MARY  
Well you'll have to come up with  
something else, because it's not  
very convincing.

PARKER  
What?

MARY  
Parker. Did you forget that I've  
been watching you lie since you  
could talk? Your eyes always go  
wide. So please stop insulting my  
intelligence and admit that you  
knew about it.

PARKER  
Mare, I... listen... okay, I did  
know.

MARY  
You did?!?

PARKER  
You said you knew that!

MARY  
I guess you also forgot that you've  
been watching me bluff since before  
you could talk. How could you be  
such an idiot?

PARKER  
What, so I forgot you were good at  
bluffing.



MARY

For your involvement. I suppose next you'll tell me it was all your idea.

PARKER

No...

Parker's eyes go wide, but he fights to make them smaller.

MARY

Oh my God, it was?

PARKER

I'm sorry, I really am!! You have to believe that I pictured it totally differently! I thought they'd bring him in, like a specialist, a consultant. Once they said it was all going to be behind his back, I still thought that it would somehow be alright. But I should have known better. I just... I thought I could get ahead. I also thought it would help you guys. And you have to admit, ultimately it did. I mean, your house is paid off!

MARY

It wasn't worth it. Have you spoken to him lately? He's like a broken man. Can you imagine him finding out that... you're telling him. You made this mess, you fix it.

She storms away from the table and out the door.

PARKER

Mary, please, relax, in your condition...

Parker slams his fist on the table. Several diner patrons turn to stare at him.

PARKER

Oh, I'm the one being watched now?!? Go ahead, stare away, I deserve it! At least I know about it, though, right? Haha. Okay, show's over, I have to go now. Gotta go do the most difficult thing I've done in a long time. Thank you, I'm here every Tuesday.

Parker throws a wad of dollars on the table and stomps away.  
Beat. He comes back and leaves a few more dollars.

PARKER  
Tip. She was good.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM - EVENING

Parker sits in a chair facing John.

John looks like he just took a baseball bat to the stomach;  
Parker looks like he just betrayed one of his best friends.

John stares at one of the mall flyers in disbelief before  
crumpling it up.

Mary stands behind John, her hands on his shoulders, glaring  
at Parker. After an agonizing pause, John speaks.

JOHN  
It's... it's okay, Parker. You  
thought you were doing the right  
thing...

PARKER  
But I should have shut it down  
sooner. Again, I'm so sorry, John,  
if there's ever anything I can do  
to make it up to you...

JOHN  
Don't worry about it. It's late. I  
have to get up tomorrow for... for  
work.

MARY  
Are you alright, honey?

JOHN  
(yelling)  
I'm okay! Everything's okay!

Mary freezes, then slowly backs out of the room, her hand on  
her stomach. John holds his head in his hands.

PARKER  
John, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't  
have lied to you, no matter what I  
was threatened with. You're family.

JOHN  
(choking up)  
Excuse me.  
(MORE)

JOHN (cont'd)

I have to go apologize to your sister for yelling at her like that.

PARKER

It was meant for me, wasn't it?

JOHN

No. I don't know. Parker, listen...  
(looking around)  
Never mind. Go home.

John runs after Mary.

JOHN

Honey. Honey!!

Parker hangs his head.

EXT. ENORMOUS FIELD - DAY

John stands next to Flat-Top in front of several army tanks.

John shrugs and points unenthusiastically at one of them.

Flat-Top smiles and makes a note on a clipboard while John hangs his head.

A SOLDIER runs up with a cell phone.

SOLDIER

It's for him. His wife.

FLAT-TOP

You are in the parking lot outside of your building.

JOHN

Hey, honey... No, I'm outside, waiting for a shipment.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Mary stands in the parking lot of John's building.

MARY

No you're not, because I'm out front waiting for you.

JOHN

Oh, uh, no, I'm around back, there's a loading dock.

MARY

There is?

JOHN

You have to know where it is.

MARY

Come around front when you're done, let's have lunch together. I've got two hours before I have to pick Emily up at school.

JOHN

Sorry, I can't. There's a big client meeting, I can't get out of it. Maybe tomorrow?

MARY

Honey, I came all the way here!

JOHN

(harshly)

You shouldn't have. Your doctor doesn't want you going out any more that you have to!

(softening)

Sorry, I didn't mean for it come out that way honey, I just wish you had let me know. Listen, go home. I'll see you when I get there. I love you.

John closes the phone.

FLAT-TOP

Not bad!

JOHN

I'm going to have to go to work sometimes. Like tomorrow.

FLAT-TOP

Tell you what. You can do that if you pull an all-nighter in the room tonight. We've got a lot to cover if we don't have you tomorrow. Suit up.

Flat-Top throws John a blindfold.

JOHN

Next time you make me lie to my wife like that, I'm telling her the truth. I don't care what you do to me.

FLAT-TOP

Or her, don't forget. Or your daughter.

JOHN

You're a complete bastard.

FLAT-TOP

Yeah, but the hours are good.

John puts on the blindfold.

EXT. PARKING LOT - SAME

Mary closes her phone and looks puzzled. She heads toward her car, then changes her mind and turns toward the building.

Victor emerges from the building and is shocked to see Mary.

MARY

Hi Victor! Listen, it would be okay if my husband skips part of the meeting and has lunch with me, wouldn't it? Oh, and where is the other loading dock?

Victor's expression shifts clumsily from stunned to confused, then back to stunned.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John types on his computer, glistening with sweat.

Fat Man trudges through the door, holding a survey.

FAT MAN

What's this?

JOHN

Those are the questions I answered an hour ago, aren't they?

FAT MAN

Number 37. You picked the Libertarian candidate.

JOHN  
So? They stand for less government  
and more...

FAT MAN  
You're a registered Independent who  
voted for the winner in every major  
election since you were 19.  
Libertarians ain't winners. Are you  
messin' with us?

JOHN  
No. No, of course not. I must have  
circled the wrong one.

John takes the questionnaire and changes the answer.

FAT MAN  
Yeah, you must have. Don't let it  
happen again.

Flat-Top walks in.

FLAT-TOP  
You have an e-mail for me to check?

He sees John and Fat Man eyeing each other.

FLAT-TOP  
What's going on?

FAT MAN  
Nothin'.

Fat Man grabs the survey and crams himself out the door.

Flat-Top looks over John's shoulder at the computer, moving  
his lips as he reads.

FLAT-TOP  
Very nice. You can send it.

Flat-Top exits, slamming the door. John clicks on the  
computer and lets out a huge breath.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM - AFTERNOON

Mary is crying, near hysteria. Parker looks at her, unsure of  
what to do.

PARKER  
You have to calm down Mary, this is  
not good for you. Just tell me  
what's going on.

MARY

I wish I knew. All I do know is that my husband has not been himself. He's been yelling, and now he's lying to me.

PARKER

How do you know that?

MARY

Gee I don't know. Maybe it was when I showed up at his office, he told me he was in the back, then his boss told me there was no "back", that John was working at the downtown office! Then there was the e-mail, where he changed his story again and said he was staying at a hotel finishing up some business.

PARKER

Come on, you don't think... Look, you know you can trust John. He's a good man.

MARY

He sure is. He even congratulated you in his e-mail, for your new I.T. job. Thanks for telling me.

PARKER

I didn't get a new job. Can I see that e-mail?

Mary turns on her computer and opens her e-mail software. Parker opens an e-mail.

INSERT - E-MAIL FROM JOHN

E-MAIL

*...heading to a hotel after this to finish up. Sorry I didn't call, cell phone is dead, left my charger at home - you can e-mail me in an emergency. Love you, see you tomorrow. Oh, and tell Parker congrats on his new I.T. job. Must be the highlight of his week.*

BACK TO SCENE

PARKER

Why would he..? Wait a second, highlight...

Parker uses the mouse to highlight the whole e-mail - a series of numbers suddenly appear below the text.

PARKER

Clever boy. Looks like an IP address. He secretly sent me his computer's I.D. number.

MARY

You taught him how to do that? You do have your uses.

Parker types furiously.

PARKER

I may be able to get a physical street address, I just don't understand why he would... That's weird. This is in Washington DC.

MARY

John's in Washington?

PARKER

Not necessarily, that's just who the computer is registered to. Wait a minute, that sounds familiar, nine thirty five Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest. Holy shit.

The monitor shows a Wikipedia entry for the J. Edgar Hoover Building.

INSERT - COMPUTER SCREEN

WIKIPEDIA ENTRY

*The J. Edgar Hoover Building in Washington, DC is the headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The building is located at 935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW...*

BACK TO SCENE

MARY

Parker, what does that mean?

PARKER

I don't have the slightest idea. Alright, listen, I'm going to work on a response. Mind if I invite a friend?



MARY  
You think he can help?

Parker nods seriously, then doubt creeps into his face.

PARKER  
Maybe. But I'm sure he won't want  
to miss it.

INT. RECORDS ROOM - AFTERNOON

Doug's ASSISTANT puts a folder into a filing cabinet.

DOUG  
No. No no no. The MC's come after  
all the M's, that's just how it is.  
Here, gimme that.

Doug, who sports the beginnings of a mustache, files the folder himself, then takes a sip from a cup of coffee.

DOUG  
This is perfect though, thanks.

The phone rings. Doug picks it up.

DOUG  
Records, Doug speaking.

Doug listens, then straightens up.

DOUG  
I'm in.  
(to Assistant)  
You have the conn.

Doug starts to dash out the door, then slows down so he doesn't spill his coffee.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John miserably fills out a multiple-choice test.

A sleeping bag and pillow lay in the corner.

Flat-Top sits across from John, reading a magazine, his suit jacket slung across the back of his chair.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM - AFTERNOON

Doug consults a scribble-ridden scrap of paper while Parker types one letter at a time.

DOUG  
L... W... and V.

PARKER  
You sure?

Doug gives Parker a withering look. Parker hits the "send" button, then sits back, blowing out a nervous breath.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

As Flat-Top stifles a yawn, the computer emits a faint "beep".

John looks at the computer.

JOHN  
It's from my wife. She'll be suspicious if I don't respond soon, especially since I don't have a phone. She's pregnant, you know. She's not supposed to be stressed.

Flat-top walks over and looks at the computer.

FLAT-TOP  
You got a twenty minute break. I want to see the response before it goes out.

Flat-Top stretches, then exits. As his footsteps fade, John eyes Flat-Top's jacket, then reads the e-mail.

INSERT - E-MAIL FROM MARY

E-MAIL  
*Hey honey, I'll miss you tonight.  
You owe me a nice lunch tomorrow.  
Parker says thanks, he likes it so far, he knows the job backwards and forwards. Except that the other guys switched the letters around on his keyboard the first day, haha.  
Love you.*

BACK TO SCENE

John takes a deep breath, then highlights the whole e-mail.

A string of seemingly random letters appear at the bottom:  
"RK QVZWH GL UYR - ZIV BLF LP - DSZGH TLRMT LM - IVHLMW DRGS  
HZNV XLWV"

John re-reads the e-mail excitedly, certain phrases catching his eye: *"backwards and forwards"* and *"switched the letters around"*.

John looks nervously at the door, then opens a Word document and types the alphabet on one line. On the line below, he types the alphabet backwards, so that A is below Z.

He looks across at "R", and types an "I" on a line far below. Then he looks across at "K", and types a "P" next to the "I".

JOHN  
Parker, you are officially  
forgiven.

John quickly decodes the rest of the letters.

John sits back and reads the translated message: *"IP LEADS TO FBI - ARE YOU OK - WHATS GOING ON - RESPOND WITH SAME CODE"*

John cracks his knuckles and begins composing a message.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVING ROOM

Parker, Valerie, Doug and Mary huddle around the computer.

DOUG  
Okay, and "S-V-O-K" becomes H...  
E... L... P. Wow.

PARKER  
Jesus.

They read the whole message: *"AM BEING HELD - FORCED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR GOVT - DON'T KNOW WHERE - HELP"*

MARY  
He's serious about this, isn't he?  
I just... I can't believe this is  
really happening. I don't  
understand why he wouldn't tell me.

VALERIE  
He couldn't. He said he's being  
"forced", they probably threatened  
him. He sounds scared. Poor man.

DOUG  
It's more than that. He's changed.  
He had to. It's the observer  
effect.

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)

When he was being monitored by us - sorry about that, by the way - his credit cards got paid off, so he bought a much bigger TV than he normally would have. Doesn't matter whether or not he knew we were watching - in science, the observer effect occurs whether or not the object knows it's being observed. Of course now they're not even hiding it, so who knows how that could make him behave...

VALERIE

That's it.

DOUG

That's what?

VALERIE

That's the answer. That's how we can help him.

PARKER

What? What are you... what?

VALERIE

Look, he's valuable to them because his answers tend to match what a majority of people think. But we know that if he's aware that he's being monitored, he'll start to get the answers wrong. What if he always gets the answers wrong?

DOUG

Throw the tests...

PARKER

You're brilliant. I love you.

VALERIE

Really?

PARKER

Well, you know. For the idea, but also...

Parker impulsively grabs her and kisses her passionately. She melts in his arms and kisses him back passionately.

PARKER

(whispering in her ear)  
Download successful.

He kisses her more, then suddenly backs away. Valerie pauses, opens her eyes, and sees Parker and Doug huddled around the computer.

VALERIE

Can't stand when he does that.

MARY

Walk away in the middle of making out?

VALERIE

No, it's the first time he did that, although I don't like it very much either. I was talking about the little computer comments.

MARY

They were cute at first though, right?

VALERIE

A little. Once.

Mary laughs, then holds her stomach and winces.

MARY

Listen, I really want to thank you guys. I don't know what I would have done.

Mary begins to weep. Valerie puts her arm around her.

VALERIE

It'll be alright, Mary. They'll get it done.

MARY

With your idea.

VALERIE

It was a good one, wasn't it?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Once again, John fills out tests while Flat-Top flips through a magazine.

John clears his throat.

JOHN

I think we should pull the troops out.

FLAT-TOP

Excuse me?

JOHN

Your people put soldiers in harm's way based on what I said. Now soldiers are dying, civilians are being killed... my opinion now is that we get out.

FLAT-TOP

I'm afraid it's not that easy.

JOHN

Seemed easy enough to send them in. It's not a very popular war, you know. Have you looked at the latest opinion polls?

Flat-Top stares at John.

FLAT-TOP

We don't need to. Look, if it's not on those questionnaires, you have no business talking about it.

JOHN

You made it my business when you asked me what I thought.

The computer beeps. Flat-Top rises.

FLAT-TOP

Another one? She must be lonely tonight, huh?

John looks at Flat-Top towering over him, then stands.

JOHN

This room doesn't exist, right? And while we're here we don't either?

FLAT-TOP

That's right.

John balls up his fist.

JOHN

Then no one's going to know that I did this.

John hits Flat-top square in the jaw with everything he has. Flat-Top drops to the ground, to John's surprise.

JOHN

Do not talk about my wife like that  
ever again.

FLAT-TOP

You know what, I deserved that.  
(feeling his chin)  
Not bad. Not bad at all. I didn't  
see it coming. Didn't expect it  
from you.

JOHN

Me neither.  
(cradling his hand)  
That hurts.

FLAT-TOP

(rising)  
Gotta keep your thumb on the  
outside. And the jaw is very hard.  
Next time go for the neck or the  
balls.

Flat-Top holds his hands over his crotch.

FLAT-TOP

I mean next time next time, you  
know, not...

JOHN

I got it. So what happens now?

FLAT-TOP

Now, you can read your e-mail. I'm  
going upstairs to find an ice pack  
and my dignity. And maybe - maybe  
I'll consider putting in a request  
to have them draft a survey re-  
evaluating the war effort.

JOHN

Thanks. And uh, sorry.

FLAT-TOP

Accepted.

Flat-Top exits. John rushes over the computer and highlights  
the text.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVING ROOM

Valerie shows Parker day-trading software with positive  
gains. He whistles in amazement, then they switch back to the  
e-mail software.

Mary cradles a half-asleep Emily on the sofa.

Doug finishes the last of a beer.

DOUG  
Anything?

PARKER AND VALERIE  
No!

DOUG  
Okay, okay, just asking.

MARY  
Shh!

Doug makes a "SH" motion and nods, then drains the last drops from the beer bottle.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John looks up from the computer as he hears voices outside the door arguing, getting louder.

GOATEE (O.S.)  
But you were with him, how could you not know?

FLAT-TOP (O.S.)  
I'm not a computer specialist, how was I supposed to know what to look for?

Flat-Top, Goatee and Fat Man burst into the room. Goatee pulls out a gun and points it at John.

GOATEE  
Been passing notes in class, Mr. Smith?

FLAT-TOP  
Whoa, easy there, killer.

Fat Man reaches for his gun, but Flat-Top waves him off.

John struggles to remain calm.

GOATEE  
Did you think that him glancing at the e-mails was the extent of the monitoring?



JOHN

Now you listen to me. You can't just shoot me. Just like you can't lock me in a room and demand that I give you my opinions. I'm a American citizen. I have rights.

GOATEE

Not in...

JOHN

Not in this room I don't, I've heard that before.

Goatee fingers the gun.

GOATEE

What did the latest message say?

John looks at Flat-Top.

JOHN

Harlon Jenkins. 1284 West End Avenue. Two thousand five Jeep Cherokee. Black. 2 VISA's, a Mastercard, no American Express, you should think about getting one. You shoot at the Sterling Gun Club, but your membership lapsed, might want to renew it.

Flat-Top looks genuinely surprised.

FAT MAN

Harlon?

FLAT-TOP

Shut up.

FAT MAN

I thought Hank was short for Henry.

GOATEE

Shut up!

JOHN

A lot of people know about this now. They know who you are. I want to talk to Rankin. Now.

GOATEE

That does not happen.

JOHN

Fine. Then go tell him you let me pass secret messages, that I know your names and more, I'm sure he'll be pleased. While you're at it, tell him that any question you ask me from now on will not be answered honestly. Sometimes I'll give the opposite answer, other times I'll pick one at random. Every once in a while, I might give my real opinion, but you'll never know when. Your odds of getting a good result will be worse than pure chance. Whatever else happens, you will never get what's in my head! It's over. I want to go home.

FLAT-TOP

I'll handle this.

Goatee lowers the gun and runs up the stairs. Fat Man follows him, slower, closing the door behind him, his voice fading.

FAT MAN (O.S.)

Jimmy is short for James, though, right? Right...?

John lets out a huge breath.

FLAT-TOP

So your friends really got all that info on me from the internet, based on what, your description?

JOHN

Uh, no. Actually, I got a look at your wallet. You left it in your jacket.

Flat-Top cracks a smile.

FLAT-TOP

I knew I liked you. Alright, listen, I can't put you in front of him, but maybe I can pass your message along. I... want you to know that I would never have hurt you or your family.

JOHN

Thanks.

FLAT-TOP

They would have gotten someone else to do that. I just do the intimidating.

JOHN

You're a true humanitarian.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVING ROOM

Parker and Valerie huddle by the computer. Mary sits in a nearby chair, her head in her hands.

In a corner of the room, Doug lies face down on the floor, near a couple of empty beer bottles.

A chime rings, and an e-mail appears in the inbox.

PARKER

Here it is, come on John, tell us it worked!

Parker begins to read the e-mail, and his face collapses.

INSERT - THE E-MAIL

E-MAIL (ON SCREEN)

*You are hereby ordered to cease and desist all communication with this e-mail address. Failure to comply is a direct violation of Federal Law...*

BACK TO SCENE

VALERIE

Oh shit! I hope we didn't make things worse.

PARKER

I'm not sure they could be.

Parker runs his hand through his hair, thinking furiously. He comes to a decision and opens Google, goes to Images, and types "FBI ID Cards" into the search box.

He finds an image he likes, and saves it to a small memory stick. Then he goes to Facebook, finds a photo of himself and saves it.

PARKER

That all night copy center is on what, 8th?

VALERIE  
I think so. What do you have in  
mind?

PARKER  
I have to do something.

He kisses her.

PARKER  
I'll be back before I leave.

VALERIE  
Leave for where?

Parker bolts out the door.

VALERIE  
I'm dating a lunatic!

A small smile creeps across her face as she lies on the sofa.

VALERIE  
I'm dating.

INT. ALL NIGHT COPY CENTER - LATE NIGHT

A CLERK pulls a freshly-laminated card out of a machine,  
waves it in the air and hands it to Parker.

Parker examines his photo on the FBI ID card and seems  
satisfied.

PARKER  
Think this could get me a free meal  
at the diner?

Clerk shrugs.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S HOUSE

Parker lays a post-it note above Valerie, who is asleep on  
the couch. Then Parker creeps out the door.

INSERT - THE POST-IT NOTE

THE NOTE  
*I'm not coming back... without  
John. Love, Parker.*

EXT. J. EDGAR HOOVER BUILDING, WASHINGTON DC - EARLY MORNING

Even at this early hour, there is bustle in the streets.

INT. J. EDGAR HOOVER BUILDING, LOBBY

Parker watches a couple of AGENTS swipe their ID cards through a turnstile.

He takes out his ID card, thinks, then strides across the sleek black marble floor toward the Agents' entrance.

Parker swipes his card against the turnstile several times. Another AGENT approaches, and Parker shrugs and rolls his eyes while continuing to swipe.

AGENT

You're going to have to deal with the police now.

PARKER

(panicking)  
Pardon?

The Agent nods toward a row of bank-teller-like booths.

AGENT

Security. They'll have to let you in that way. Did you have it in an eelskin wallet? That can demagnetize the chip sometimes.

PARKER

Guess I'll have to get a new one. Thanks.

The Agent nods cheerfully and moves along. Parker approaches the security booth.

PARKER

Hi, my card isn't working, can you buzz me through please?

GUARD 1

Name?

PARKER

(deep breath)  
Special Agent Parker Bennett.

The Guard starts to type.

PARKER

I... might not be in the system yet. I'm fresh out of Langley.  
(correcting himself)  
Quantico. Quantico, just finished up there.

GUARD 1  
If you're not in the system, I  
can't let you in.

PARKER  
Come on, I'm... I belong here, you  
saw me chatting with that other  
Agent.

GUARD 1  
Tell him to let you in as a guest.

Parker walks away, frustrated, then comes back a moment  
later.

PARKER  
Hi. I'd like a guest pass, please?

GUARD 1  
(typing)  
Who are you visiting?

PARKER  
Special Agent Parker Bennett.

The Guard stops typing and stares at Parker.

PARKER  
Alright, listen. I have some very  
important information about an  
ongoing operation. I really need to  
speak to someone about it. Just  
give me two minutes in a room with  
someone.

The Guard stares at Parker for a moment, then buzzes him  
through.

GUARD 1  
They'll meet you on the other side  
of the metal detectors.

Guard picks up the phone.

PARKER  
Thank you so much.

Parker collects his things after going through the metal  
detectors. Two more GUARDS approach him.

GUARD 2  
Mr. Bennett? Will you come with us  
please, sir?

They guide him down a hallway.

PARKER

Sure. Listen, thanks for agreeing to see me, Agent, uh...

GUARD 2

We're FBI police.

PARKER

Cool. So. How do we do this? You want to hear what I know, or are you going to ask me questions?

GUARD 3

Just one. Do you realize that it's a felony to impersonate a federal officer?

Parker's face takes on a look of horror as Guard 2 slaps a pair of handcuffs on him.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John snores on the floor, the sleeping bag half on him. Flat-Top gently jostles him awake.

JOHN

Wha..? Oh. Right, I'm still here. So what happened?

Flat-Top's face looks grim.

FLAT-TOP

It's not good. He said you will continue to answer questions, and you will answer them correctly. Or...

JOHN

Or what?

Flat-Top avoids John's gaze.

FLAT-TOP

I don't want to say it.

JOHN

Come on, Hank, with all I've been through, I think I can handle it.

FLAT-TOP

He, uh, threatened your family.

John slumps to the floor.

JOHN

This isn't right. You know it.

FLAT-TOP

I'm just doing my job.

JOHN

Are you? Do you really think you're serving your country doing this? Look at me, I haven't done anything wrong and I'm practically a prisoner.

FLAT-TOP

There's more. They're holding your friend Parker on Federal charges. He was trying to bust you out. Didn't come close, of course...

JOHN

Oh my God. Listen, this has gone too far. You have to help me.

FLAT-TOP

What can I do? I'm just a cog in the wheel, like you. Only not as average.

JOHN

We need to go higher, over his head.

FLAT-TOP

I got a buddy on the Secret Service.

JOHN

(inspired)

Do you think he could get a message to the President?

FLAT-TOP

I don't know. Calling in a favor like that...

JOHN

Please. For me, for my family. My wife is pregnant, I need to be with her and my daughter.



FLAT-TOP  
 You write it, I'll see what I can  
 do.

John scrambles to the computer.

JOHN  
 Should I introduce myself, or what?

FLAT-TOP  
 If he reads it, he'll already know  
 who you are.

John begins typing.

JOHN (V.O.)  
 Mister President. You seem to  
 believe that my opinions are  
 important to this country. You may  
 be right. If you trust what I think  
 about anything, please trust me on  
 this: Philip Rankin is a very  
 dangerous man.

INT. FANCY HOTEL

The PRESIDENT is seen from behind, reading the e-mail. He  
 looks up to see Philip Rankin joking with a woman in a  
 pantsuit.

JOHN (V.O.)  
 I don't know if it qualifies as  
 insider trading or stock  
 manipulation or industrial  
 sabotage, and I can't prove it from  
 where I sit, but I beg you to look  
 carefully into his actions. And I  
 want you to how deplorably Rankin  
 and his men have been treating me.

FLAT-TOP (V.O.)  
 "His men"?

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

JOHN  
 What?

FLAT-TOP  
 I don't work for him.

JOHN  
 Could have fooled me.

FLAT-TOP  
I'm helping you bring him down,  
here! Potentially.

JOHN  
Well, what do you want me to say?  
"They're all mean, except for the  
guy with the Flat-Top, he's pretty  
cool"?

FLAT-TOP  
Whatever.

INT. FANCY HOTEL

The President is once again reading the e-mail.

JOHN (V.O.)  
I'm supposed to represent the  
majority of the country, yet I am  
being treated like a slave. I trust  
the metaphor is not lost on you.  
Please, Mr. President, allow me to  
return to my family, my job and my  
life. Well, maybe not my job.  
L.O.L.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

FLAT-TOP  
Really?

John thinks, then deletes everything after "my life".

INT. FANCY HOTEL

The President, still reading, beckons to an assistant, and  
points to Rankin.

JOHN (V.O.)  
I know you will do what is right.  
Thank you for your time. Yours,  
John Smith.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John sits back, satisfied.

JOHN  
Oh.

His hands abruptly fly back to the keyboard.

INT. FANCY HOTEL

The President chuckles as he reads the last two sentences.

JOHN (V.O.)

P. S. Could you also please have my brother-in-law Parker Bennett released from FBI custody? He may need a pardon or something.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

John saves the message and falls back in his seat, exhausted.

JOHN

Thank you. Thanks a lot.

Flat-Top pulls a memory stick out of the computer, nods, and hurries up the steps. John puts his head in his hands.

INT. FANCY HOTEL ROOM

Goatee and Fat Man roughly shove a blindfolded John through the door. Flat-Top follows, shaking his head.

JOHN

Now this room smells a whole lot better than the other one. Anyone care to tell to tell me where the hell I am now?

PARKER (OS)

John?

JOHN

Parker? You're here too? Are you okay?

Parker, also blindfolded, is guarded by two more AGENTS in plain suits.

PARKER

They won't let me go to the bathroom. But I won't give them the satisfaction of pissing myself. They might think it's because I'm scared. Which of course, I am. Beyond reason.

JOHN

They know that, so you might as well let it go before you rupture your bladder.

PARKER  
I like these pants.

PRESIDENT (O.S.)  
Can you remove those please?

John and Parker's blindfolds are yanked off. They both blink and then register astonishment as they focus on the President.

PARKER  
Hello! There. Mr. Pre... sir.

Parker salutes clumsily. John notices Rankin standing smugly nearby.

JOHN  
You got my letter.

PRESIDENT  
I did. You leveled some serious charges against a member of my cabinet. If they turned out to be true, I'd like to know what it is you think I should do about it.

JOHN  
(haltingly)  
Fire him?

PRESIDENT  
I looked into what you suggested Mr. Rankin was up to. You were right.  
(turning to Rankin)  
I'd like your resignation on my desk in the morning.

Rankin's face blanches.

RANKIN  
But you said... we had a...

PRESIDENT  
Then I'll decide how to deal with the other charges. Show him out, please?

A Secret Service Agent grabs Rankin as he lunges at John. In the melee, Rankin ends up almost attacking Parker, who recoils in fear.

RANKIN  
You haven't won. Ow.

JOHN

Really? Sure feels like I have.  
Bye!

The Agent shoves Rankin bodily out the door. The President motions Goatee, Fat Man and Flat-Top toward the door.

PRESIDENT

I'll have a word with you gentlemen  
when I'm done here.

JOHN

Don't be too hard on them.  
(indicating Flat-Top)  
Well, him, anyway.

FLAT-TOP

I asked you to put that in the  
message, but nooo...

The President shoots a stern look at Flat-Top, who lowers his head. John shrugs helplessly as Flat-Top heads meekly out the door with the others.

PRESIDENT

I want you to believe, Mr. Smith,  
that I knew nothing of this  
operation beyond the basics of  
your... apparent abilities.

JOHN

I do. Sir.

PRESIDENT

We'll be leaving you alone now.  
Good luck.  
(turning to Parker)  
And you, sir, will not be allowed  
to visit any federal buildings for  
quite some time.

He notices that Parker has an enormous wet spot on his crotch.

PRESIDENT

For... various reasons.

JOHN

On second thought, the other room  
smelled better.

PARKER

Would I by any chance be able to  
borrow a pair of pants?

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Valerie and Mary both sit anxiously on the sofa, upon which Emily lies sleeping.

Doug is at the computer rubbing his temples.

Suddenly, a key is heard in the door. Mary runs to the door and jumps on John as soon as he enters, hugging him hard.

JOHN

Easy honey, easy. The baby.

MARY

Then join me on the sofa.

Mary pulls him down to the sofa where they proceed to kiss.

Parker enters sheepishly, wearing pants two sizes too large. Valerie puts her arms around his neck.

VALERIE

My man is so brave. And so...  
stupid.

PARKER

I thought if I ran the idea past  
you first you'd try to stop me.

VALERIE

Maybe not. Brave and stupid kind of  
turn me on.

PARKER

Really? I ever tell you about the  
time I broke up a bar fight by  
insulting both guys so they came  
after me instead?

VALERIE

Ooo, don't say any more, we might  
have to get a room.

Valerie and Parker laugh and kiss.

Doug stands up and looks around.

DOUG

Anybody want to kiss me? Or realize  
I'm in the room, or anything? I  
helped too you know.

Valerie pulls away from Parker and beckons Doug.

VALERIE

Come here, Doug, yes, you're a hero too.

DOUG

Oh, no no no, I don't want any sympathy glory, no way, not me. Oh, alright, if you insist...

Valerie and Mary pull Doug in for a hug as they all laugh.

Doug pulls Parker aside during the merriment.

DOUG

Should've told me you were planning a raid on the J. Edgar Hoover building. I could've helped you navigate your way through that labyrinth. I've seen every episode of The X-Files.

Parker stifles a laugh and manages to nod.

PARKER

Next time, brosef.

DOUG

So you like it?

PARKER

Can't stand it. That was my one and only use.

DOUG

Your loss, dude-brah.

PARKER

That one I kind of like.

EXT. JOHN SMITH'S HOUSE - MORNING

Emily bursts out of the door, followed shortly by Valerie. Mary follows, going slower.

Emily waves a blurry black and white picture - a sonogram.

EMILY

Come on, we hafta take my baby brother to the park!

VALERIE

Well then, let's get you two into the car!!

While Valerie and Mary secure Emily in the car, John and Parker come out the door.

PARKER  
So... Parker, right?

JOHN  
I tried to sell it, really. No go.  
Probably Jacob. Or Michael.

Parker pretends to look hurt. John laughs, approaches Mary and touches her stomach gently.

JOHN  
Meet you there later.

MARY  
Just make sure they delivered the  
right cradle before you open it.

JOHN  
How am I supposed to...? I'll  
handle it.

VALERIE  
And please put it together the  
right way.

PARKER  
We will. Go!

John kisses Mary through the car window as the car pulls away.

The TALL MAN IN A COWBOY HAT ambles by, grinning at John.

JOHN  
What? What do you want? I can't  
kiss my wife?

The Tall Man, confused, breaks eye contact with John and keeps going.

PARKER  
John, what's the matter?

JOHN  
I... I don't know, I thought...

John calls after the retreating Tall Man.

JOHN  
Sorry! I'm sorry, I...



John hurries into the house. Parker follows him.

INT. JOHN SMITH'S LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stacked boxes of baby equipment dominate the room. Many of them bear the brand name "Graco".

John grabs a remote control and turns on the TV.

PARKER

Listen, John...

JOHN

Wait, I have to watch it just one more time.

PARKER

Knock yourself out.

John fast-forwards through news footage, then presses play.

ANCHOR (ON TV)

...is expected to hit a few key points, such as the troop draw down and the short list of who is in line to fill the position vacated by the outgoing Mr. Rankin.

(taking a jovial tone)

And while the President prepares for his speech at The Capitol Building, there was still some activity back at the White House. On the Lawn, actually, where Buck the White House dog was seen taking care of his own business.

Shaky, unfocussed footage through the White House fence shows a dog running loose.

Fat Man chases it and lands on his ass while Flat-Top scrapes the sole of his shoe on the grass.

Goatee, a pooper scooper in one hand, spots the camera, points, and yells into a radio.

The Anchor chuckles as John stops the footage.

JOHN

Never stops being funny.

Parker laughs, then pulls an envelope out of his pocket and hands it to John.

PARKER

Oh, by the way, I forgot all about it, here. Rescued it from your garbage. I think you'll find you're a winner. I mean, it doesn't really make up for... well, nothing could. John, I...

JOHN

Parker, please. Stop apologizing. I don't think I can take anymore.

PARKER

You got it.

Parker opens his day trading software and quickly types up an order to buy two hundred shares of Graco stock.

John struggles to keep a teetering stack of boxes from falling.

Parker watches John and hesitates, holding his finger over the "Enter" button. Then he presses "Cancel Transaction" and shuts the laptop.

PARKER

That's gonna cost me.

Parker runs to help John with the toppling boxes.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Philip Rankin sweats profusely while playing a grueling game of tennis.

An OFFICIAL in a grey polo shirt comes up to him.

OFFICIAL

Sorry, sir, your time is up.

RANKIN

(breathlessly)  
Just let me finish the set.

OFFICIAL

I'm sorry, I can't allow that Mr. Rankin.

RANKIN

Come on, I... Alright, alright, fine.

Rankin puts his hands behind his back.

The Official handcuffs Rankin and leads him toward a gate in a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire.

INT. OFFICE CUBICLE

Nancy adjusts her telephone headset and presses a button.

NANCY

Double D. And how are you today?

She rolls her eyes in disgust, clenching her fist.

NANCY

A... skimpy teddy that barely fits.  
What about you? Oh, sweatpants are  
so... sexy. Yes, you're really  
turning me on right now...

Nancy's eyes practically burn a hole in the cubicle wall.

INT. RECORDS ROOM

Doug sips coffee while he sits with his feet up. His Assistant files records in the background.

DOUG

Yeah, that's right.

The Assistant looks up from the files.

DOUG

I'm taking a half hour coffee  
break. I'm entitled. I'm a national  
hero. I was a key figure. Didn't  
make the papers, of course, but  
that doesn't mean it didn't happen.

The Assistant quietly slips out of the room.

DOUG

I know things about this company,  
too. Proprietary things. Can they  
buy my silence? Absolutely.  
Coffee's good again.

Doug looks around, noticing the Assistant's absence.

DOUG

Oh yeah. Key. I was key.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END