Miss A You saw her. No. You saw her wrap me in that shawl. No one could know that. You saw her.

John Did I see her . . .

Miss A No. You must tell me. (Pause.) You must tell me. You saw her. (Pause.)

John Yes.

Miss A You saw her wrap me in that shawl.

John Yes. (Pause.)

Miss A And you say I lost it.

John You, yes, that is what I said. But you did not lose it. You burnt it. In rage. Standing somewhere by the water, five years ago.

Miss A Yes. And then I . . . ?

John I do not know. That is all I saw.

Speed-the-Plow

This play is dedicated to Howard Rosenstone
Characters:
Bobby Gould, Charlie Fox, two men around forty
Karen, a woman in her twenties

Scenes:
Act One: Gould’s office, morning
Act Two: His home, that evening
Act Three: His office, the next morning

Speed-the-Plow was first presented in a New York Broadway
production by Lincoln Center Theater at the Royale
Theater, opening on 3 May 1988, with the following cast:

Bobby Gould        Joe Mantegna
Charlie Fox         Ron Silver
Karen               Madonna

Directed by Gregory Mosher
Designed by Michael Merritt
Costumes by Nan Cibula
Lighting by Kevin Rigdon

This production subsequently transferred to the National
Theatre, London, on 25 January 1989, with the following
changes:

Bobby Gould        Colin Stinton
Charlie Fox         Alfred Molina
Karen               Rebecca Pidgeon

Act One

Gould’s office. Morning. Boxes and painting materials all around.
Gould is sitting, reading, Fox enters.
Gould        When the gods would make us mad, they answer our
              prayers.
Fox           Bob...
Gould        I’m in the midst of the wilderness.
Fox           Bob...
Gould        If it’s not quite ‘Art’ and it’s not quite
              ‘Entertainment’, it’s here on my desk. I have inherited a
              monster.
Fox           Bob...
Gould        Listen to this... (Reads.) ‘How are things made round? W was there one thing which, originally, was
              round...?’
Fox           Bob...
Gould        (leafing through the book he is reading, reads) ‘A certain
              frankness came to it...’ (He leafs.) ‘The man, downcast, then
              met the priest, under the bridge, beneath that bridge which
              stood for so much, where so much had transpired since the
              radiation.’
Fox           Yeah, Bob, that’s great...
Gould        Listen to this: ‘and with it brought grace. But still the
              question persisted... that of the Radiation. That of the
              growth of animalism, the decay of the soil. And it said
              “Beyond terror. Beyond grace”... and caused a throbbing
              machines in the void...’ (He offers the book to Fox.) Here:
              take a page.
Fox           I have to talk to you.
Gould  Chuck, Chuck, Chuck, Charles: you get too old, too busy to have 'fun' this business; to have 'fun', then what are you...?
Fox  ... Bob...
Gould  What are you?
Fox  What am I...
Gould  Yes.
Fox  What am I when?
Gould  What are you, I was saying, if you're just a slave to commerce?
Fox  If I'm just a slave to commerce?
Gould  Yes.
Fox  I'm nothing.
Gould  No.
Fox  You're absolutely right.
Gould  You got to have fun. You know why?
Fox  Okay: why?
Gould  Because, or else you'll die, and people will say 'he never had any fun'.
Fox  How close are you to Ross?
Gould  How close am I to Ross...? I don't know. How close should I be?
Fox  I have to ask you something.
Gould  (pause) Go ahead, Charli.
Fox  You wanna greenlight a picture? What's your deal, what's your new deal?
Gould  What's my new deal, that's all you can talk about?
Fox  What's your new deal?
Gould  Alright. Over ten mil I need Ross's approval. Under ten mil, I can greenlight it. So what. (Pause.)
Fox  This morning, Bob.

Gould  ... Yes...?
Fox  This morning a man came to me.
Gould  ... a man came to you. Whaddayou, already, you're here to 'Promote' me...?
Fox  Bob...
Gould  You here to promote me? Charli? Because, Charli, one thing I don't need...
Fox  Bob.
Gould  When everybody in this jolly town is tryin' to promote me, do you wanna see my messages...?
Fox  Bob.
Gould  'Get Him While He's Hot'...
Fox  Yes, yes, but...
Gould  My good, my 'good' friend, Charles Fox...
Fox  Bob...
Gould  That's why we have 'channels'.
Fox  Uh huh.
Gould  All these 'little' people out there, that we see. Y'understand? Fellow asks 'what are they there for?' Well, Charli, We Don't Know. But we think, you give the thing to your boy, gives it to my boy, these people get to eat, they don't have to go beg, and get in everybody's face the airport the whole time. This morning the phone won't stop ringing. Do you know who's calling? Everybody says they met me in Topeka, 1962, and do I want to make their movie. Guys want me to do remakes of films haven't been made yet.
Fox  ... Huh, huh...
Gould  I'm drowning in 'coverage'. (He picks up a script and reads.) 'The Story of a Horse and the Horse Who Loved Him.' (He drops script.) ... Give me a breather from all those fine folk suddenly see what a great 'man' I am. N'when I do return my calls, Charli, do you know what I'll tell those people?
Fox  No.
Gould I'm going to tell them 'Go through Channels.' This protects me from them. And from folk, fine as they are, like you, Charlie, when you come to me for favors. Or did you come up here to congratulate me on my new promotion?

Fox Congratulations.

Gould Do I deserve it?

Fox Yes. You do, Bob.

Gould Why?

Fox Because you're a prince among men and you're Yertle the Turtle.

Gould Alright then, that's enough. What did you bring me?

Fox This morning, Bob.

Gould Yes?

Fox This morning Doug Brown came to me.

Gould ... Doug Brown.

Fox (pause) He came to my house Bob. How would you like ... How would you like for Doug Brown to 'cross the street' to do a picture for us? (Pause.) Bob? How would you like, a script that I got him. He's nuts for it; he's free, we could start to shoot next month, I have his word and he'll come to the studio, and do the film for us. Doug Brown will cross the street and do a film for us next month.

Gould (picks up phone) Get me Ross. (Pause.)

Fox ... do you see what I'm telling you?

Gould ... he came to your house ...

Fox ... can you believe what I'm saying to you ...

Gould Douggie Brown. (Into phone.) Ross (Pause.) Richard Ross ... no, no, no, don't look in the book ... there's a button on the console ... Richard R ... just push the button on the ... (Pause.) There's a button on the console ... Richard Ross ... just ... Thank you. (Hangs up the phone. Pause.) Are you alright?

Fox I'm fine. I'm fine, I just need coffee.

Gould We'll get it for you. Tell mmm ...
Fox Who drives up?
Gould ... coffee at your house...
Fox Who drives up?
Gould Douggie Brown.
Fox Douglas Brown drives up to my house. (Pause.) He says 'I Want To Do Your Script. I've got this other thing to deal with, and we'll settle it tomorrow. Call me ten o'clock tomorrow morning. I'll come in and sign up.' (Phone rings.)
Gould (into phone) Hello ... who? No calls. No calls. Just Richard Ross. And we need coffee ... okay? Got it ... ? (Hangs up.)
Fox ... cross the street to shoot it ... ? And he says 'why not'.
(Pause.)
Gould ... huh ...?
Fox Huh ... ?
Gould ... He'd come over here to shoot it ...
Fox Sonofabitch like out of some damn fairytale.
Gould ... he drove to your house ...
Fox ... I'm looking out the window ...
Gould ... son of a bitch ...
Fox ... Douglas Brown drives up ...
*The phone rings. Gould picks it up.*
Gould (into phone) Hello. Yes. Richard ... (Pause.) Yes. Put him ... Hello, Richard. Fine, just fine. They're painting it. Well, thank you. Thank you. Listen Richard. Do you need some good news ... ? (Pause.) Well, it's a surprise that I've got for you. No, I want to tell you in person. Do you have five mi ... (Checks watch.) We'll be there. (Pause.) Charlie Fox ... Charlie came in with a ... (Pause.) Right. Right. We'll be there. Right. (Hangs up.) Well. We see him in ten minutes.
Fox Yessir. I need some coffee.
Gould Oh, Jesus, what's the ...
Fox What ... ?

Gould The, what's the story? Tell me the ...
Fox I can tell it. No, you're right. You tell it.
Gould Gimme the broad outl ...
Fox Yes, yes.
Gould Just sketch me the broad ...
Fox Yes, yes, the thing, of course, is ...
Gould Douggie, Brown, of course, the thing ...
Fox 'A Douggie Brown picture' ...
Gould A Douggie Brown picture ...
Fox Eh? A buddy ...
Gould A Buddy Picture.
Fox Douggie and ...
Gould 'Watch this space', I got it ...
Fox Right.
Gould The Flavor of the Month ... okay, now, what's the story?
Fox Doug's in prison.
Gould ... prison ...
Fox Right. These guys, they want to get him.
Gould Black guys ...
Fox Black guys in the prison.
Gould (into phone) Coffee, quickly, can you get some coffee in here? (Hangs up.)
Fox And the black guys going to rape his ass.
Gould Mmm.
Fox Okay. Now. 'Now, you could,' he goes, 'you could have "your way" with me, all of you ...'
Gould Uh huh, what? ten or twenty guys ...
Fox '... and you could do that. But I'd have to, you see?
Here's the thing of it. Unless you killed me, I would ...'
Gould Uh huh...
Fox "... have to come back and *retaliate*, sometime, somehow, because..."
Gould ...okay....
Fox "I couldn't..."
Gould ...uh huh...
Fox "... *live* with that."
Gould ...The degradation....
Fox "So why'n you skip all the *middle* shit, kill me right now."
Gould ...he throws it in their face.
Fox You got it.
Gould ...uh huh....
Fox "*Or.* (Pause.) Or...."
Gould ...yes....
Fox "If you could use a *friend*, why not allow me this? To be your friend...."
Gould He teams up with the guys....
Fox "To *side* with you...."
Gould Yes.
Fox "and together...."
Gould ...and....
Fox ...they become friends, they teach him the....
Gould ...he learns the Prison Ways....
Fox They blah blah, so on....
Gould Uh huh....
Fox *Now*. Eh? Now. With his, his knowledge of *computers*, so on, with his *money*....
Gould ...yeah....
Fox His Links to the Outside....
Gould A girl....?

Fox Ah. Now that's the great part, I'm telling you, when I saw this script....
Gould ...I don't know how it got past us....
Fox When they get out of *prison*, the Head Convict's Sister....
Gould ...a buddy film, a prison film, Douggie Brown, blah, blah, some girl....
Fox Action, a social....
Gould Action, blood, a social theme....
Fox (*simultaneously with 'theme*') That's what I'm saying, an offbeat....
Fox That's what I'm saying. Bob.
Gould Don't even say it.
Fox Bob:
Gould I understand.
Fox ...I wanted to say....
Gould I know what you wanted to say, and you're right. I know what you're going to ask, and I'm going to see you get it. Absolutely right: You go on this package as the co-producer. (Pause.) The name above the title. This is your....
Fox ...thank you....
Gould *Thank* me?
Fox Thank you, Bob.
Gould *Hey*: You came in here.
Fox ...thank you....
Gould *Hey*, Charl, it's right....
Fox No, but the thing is that you thought of it. You thought of me. You thought to say it.
Gould I should be thanking you and I do thank you.
Fox Thank you, Bob.
Gould  This is your thing and you should get a bump.
Fox  Thank you.
Gould  Because, Charlie: Don't thank me. You start me off here with a bang. I know that you could have Gone Across the Street . . .
Fox  I wouldn't have done that.
Gould  But you could.
Fox  I wouldn't . . .
Gould  But you could. And that's the point, Charlie. That you absolutely could. And it was 'loyalty' kept you with us . . .
Fox  Hey, hey, it's only common sense.
Gould  You stuck with the Home Store.
Fox  Hey, you've been good for me, to put it bluntly, all the years . . .
Gould  . . . you stuck with the Old Firm, Charlie, you stuck with your friends.
Fox  It's where I work, Bob, it's what I do, and my relationship with you . . . we were all happy for you, Bob, you got bumped up, and I feel that I'm lucky . . .
Gould  I'm the lucky one, Charlie . . .
Fox  Hey, Bullshit, to have somebody I could come to . . .
Gould  (simultaneously with 'come') Because you could have gone Across the Street. Who would have blamed you?
Fox  Yeah, but I wouldn't of done it.
Gould  Who would of blamed you, Charlie? You get a Free Option on a Doug Brown film, guys would walk in here, hold a guy up . . .
Fox  I work here, Bob. And my loyalty has always been to you. (Pause.)
Gould  Well, I'm one lucky son of a bitch . . .
Fox  That you are.
Gould  And what I do is 'owe you'.

Fox  No, no, Bob. Bullshit . . . The times you've . . .
Gould  I'm just doing my job.
Fox  No, I know, I know . . . and I know at times, that it was difficult for you . . .
Gould  No.
Fox  And I hesitate to ask it, to ask for the credit . . .
Gould  . . . Don't have to ask it.
Fox  'Cause I know, anybody was to come in here, exploit you . . . this thing . . .
Gould  . . . Forget . . .
Fox  . . . your new 'position', all, I even hesitate . . .
Gould  Don't hesitate about a goddamn thing, forget it, Charlie: You Brought Me Gold. You're gonna be co-producer. What the fuck are you talkin' about . . . ?
Fox  I just, I wanted to say . . .
Gould  (simultaneously with 'say') I'm grateful to you, pal. For this n' for all that you've been, over the years . . .
Fox  Now . . . you know . . .
Gould  Hey, hey, hey. (Gould checks his watch.) Let's go make some money. (He rises.)
Fox  I, I need a cuppa coffee . . .
Gould  You get it in Ross's office. Here's how we play it: we get in . . .
Fox  . . . yes . . .
Gould  We get in, get out and we give it to him in one sentence. Let me talk, no disrespect . . .
Fox  No.
Gould  But it's courtesy . . .
Fox  I understand.

Gould  One sentence. 'Doug Brown, Buddy Film.' (Phone rings. Into phone.) Whoever it is, we'll be with Mr Rrr . . . (Pause.) Yes? Put him on . . . Hello: Richard . . . Yes . . . ? Yes,
well, how long will you bbb ... (Pause.) I see ... Absolutely. (Pause.) No problem whatsoever ... you'll be back by then ...? (Pause.) Absolutely so. Thank you. (He hangs up. Pause. To Fox.) Ross just got called to New York. He's going on the Gulfstream, turn around and come right back. So we got pushed to tomorrow morning, ten o'clock.

Fox (pause) Aha. (Pause.)
Gould No help for it.
Fox I've got, Dougie only gave me until ... 
Gould ... I'm sorry ...
Fox Doug Brown only gave me until ten tomorrow morn ...
Gould No, I know, we've only got 'til ten to tie ...
Fox We got to come up with a Pay or Play to tie him to this thing by ten o'clock to ...
Gould No problem. Ross'll be back for tomorrow morning, if he doesn't ...
Fox ... if he doesn't ...
Gould ... yes ...
Fox ... then ...
Gould ... Then we'll raise him on the phone ...
Fox ... I'm saying ...
Gould Wherever he is, we'll pull him out of it ...
Fox Wherever he is. 
Gould Yup.
Fox Because I only got the option until ten o'clock tomorrow. Doug Brown told me ...
Gould Yeah. I'm saying. Ten o'clock tomorrow. Ross: he'll be here, one chance in a quillion he isn't, then we go Condition Red, we get him on the ...
Fox ... because ...
Gould Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm with you.
Fox Be ...
Gould  Rich, are you kidding me? We're going to have to hire someone just to figure out the things we want to buy...
Fox  I mean, I mean, you think about a concept, all your life...
Gould  ...I'm with you...
Fox  'Wealth.'
Gould  Yes. Wealth.
Fox  Then it comes down to you...
Gould  Uh huh...
Fox  All you can think of... 'This is what that means...'
Gould  And that is what it means. (Pause.)
Fox  How, how, figuring up the rentals, tie in, foreign, air, the...
Gould  Uh, huh...
Fox  Over the course...
Gould  ...don't forget the sequels.
Fox  Do we... we're tied in to that...?
Gould  Are we tied in to that, Charlie? Welcome to the world.
Fox  Hhhhh. How... (Pause.)
Gould  The question, your crass question: how much money could we stand to make...?
Fox  Yes.
Gould  I think the operative concept here is 'lots and lots...'
Fox  Oh, maan...
Gould  Great big jolly shitloads of it.
Fox  Oh, maan...
Gould  But money...
Fox  Yeah.
Gould  Money, Charlie...
Fox  Yeah...

Gould  Money is not the important thing.
Fox  No.
Gould  Money is not Gold.
Fox  No.
Gould  What can you do with Money?
Fox  Nothing.
Gould  Nary a goddamn thing.
Fox  ...I'm gonna be rich.
Gould  'Buy' things with it.
Fox  Where would I keep them?
Gould  What would you do with them?
Fox  Yeah.
Gould  Take them out and dust them, time to time.
Fox  Oh yeah.
Gould  I piss on money.
Fox  I know that you do. I'll help you.
Gould  Fuck money.
Fox  Fuck it. Fuck 'things' too...
Gould  Uh huh. But don't fuck 'people'.
Fox  No.
Gould  'Cause, people, Charlie...
Fox  People... yes.
Gould  Are what it's All About.
Fox  I know.
Gould  And it's a People Business.
Fox  That it is.
Gould  It's full of fucken' people...
Fox  And we're gonna kick some ass, Bob.
Gould  That we are.
Fox  We're gonna kick the ass of a lot of them fucken' people.
Gould  That's right.
Fox We get rolling, Bob. It's 'up the ass with gun and camera'.
Gould  Yup.
Fox 'Cause when you spend twenty years in the barrel...
Gould  I know...
Fox  No, you don't know, you've forgotten. Due respect.
Gould  ...may be...
Fox  But, but... oh maan... I'm gonna settle some fucken' scores.
Gould  Better things to do...
Fox  If there are, show them to me, man... A bunch of cocksuckers out there. Gimme' a cigarette. Oh, Man, I can't come down.
Gould  No need to. Huh...?
Fox  Ross, Ross, Ross isn't going to fuck me out of this...?
Gould  No. Absolutely not. You have my word.
Fox  I don't need your word, Bob. I know you... Drives right to my house. I need a cup of coffee.
Gould  (into phone) Could we get a cup... well, where did you try? Why not try the coffee mach... well, it's right down at the... down the, no, it's unmarked, just go... that's right. (Hangs up.)
Fox  What, you got a new broad, go with the new job...
Gould  No. Cathy's just out sick.
Fox  Cute broad, the new broad.
Gould  What? She's cute? The broad out there is cute? Baby, she's nothing. You wait 'til we make this film.
Fox  She's nothing?
Gould  Playing in this league? I'm saying, it's Boy's Choice: Skate in One Direction Only. (Pause.)
Fox  Oh, man, what am I going to do today?

Gould  Go to a movie, get your hair done.
Fox  I'm jumping like a leaf.
Gould  It's a done deal. We walk in tomorrow...
Fox (picks up the book)  What's this, what's the thing you're reading I come in?
Gould  This thing?
Fox  Uh huh...
Gould  From the East. An Eastern Sissy Writer. (Passes the book to Fox.)
Fox (reads)  'The Bridge: or, Radiation and the Half-Life of Society. A Study of Decay.'
Gould  A Novel.
Fox Great.
Gould  A cover note from Richard Ross: 'Give this a Courtey Read.'
Fox (reads)  'The wind against the Plains, but not a wind of change... a wind like that one which he'd been foretold, the rubbish of the world—swirling, swirling... two thousand years...'. Hey I wouldn't just give it a courtesy read, I'd make this sucker.
Gould  Good idea.
Fox  Drop a dime on western civilization.
Gould  'Bout time.
Fox  Why don't you do that? Make it.
Gould  I think that I will.
Fox  Yeah. Instead of our Doug, Doug Brown's Buddy film.
Gould  Yeah. I could do that. You know why? Because my job, my new job is one thing: the capacity to make decisions.
Fox  I know that it is.
Gould  Decide, decide, decide...
Fox  It's lonely at the top.
Gould  But it ain't crowded.
Karen, the secretary, comes in with a tray of coffee.

Karen I'm sorry, please, but how do you take your coffee...?

Fox He takes his coffee like he makes his movies: nothing in it.

Gould Very funny.

Fox 'Cause he's an Old Whore.

Gould ... that's right...

Fox Bobby Gould...

Gould ... Huh...

Fox You're just an Old Whore.

Gould Proud of it. Yes, yes.

Fox They kick you upstairs and you're still just some old whore.

Gould You're an old whore, too.

Fox I never said I wasn't. Soon to be a rich old whore.

Gould That's right.

Fox And I deserve it.

Gould That you do, Babe, that you do.

Fox Because, Miss, lemme tell you something, I've been loyal to this guy, you know, you know... what's your name?

Karen Karen...

Fox Karen, lemme tell you: since the mail room... you know? Step-by-step. Yes, in his shadow, yes, why not. Never forgot him, and he never forgot me.

Gould That's absolutely right.

Fox You know why I never forgot him?

Karen ... I...

Fox ... Because the shit of his I had to eat, how could I forget him?

Gould ... huh...

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Fox Yes, but the Wheel Came Around. And here we are. Two Whores. (To Gould.) You're gonna decorate your office. Make it a bordello. You'll feel more at home.

Gould You, you sonofabitch...?

Fox ... and come to work in a soiled nightgown.

Gould Hey, after the Doug Brown thing, I come to work in that same nightgown, I say 'kiss the hem', then every swinging dick in this man's studio will kiss that hem.

Fox They will.

Gould They'll French that jolly jolly hem.

Fox Uh huh, uh huh... you, you, you fucken' whore, on his deathbed, St Peter'll come for him, his dying words, 'Just let me turn One More Trick...'

Gould I'm a whore and I'm proud of it. But I'm a secure whore. Yes, and you get ready, now: you get ready 'cause they're going to plot, they're going to plot against you... (To Karen.) Karen. My friend's stepping up in class... (To Fox.) They're going to plot against you, Charlie, like they plotted against me. They're going to go back in their Tribal Caves and say 'Chuck Fox, that hack...'

Fox 'That powerful hack...'

Gould Let's go and steal his job...

Karen Sir...?

Fox Black, two sugars, thank you.

Gould To your face they'll go, 'Three bags full.' And behind your back they'll say, 'let's tear him down—let's tear Charlie Fox down...'

Fox Behind my back. Yes, but in Public...? They'll say: 'I waxed Mr Fox's car. He seemed pleased.'

Karen (serving coffee) Black, two sugars.

Fox 'I blew his poodle. He gave me a smile.' (Of coffee.) Thank you.

Gould This is Charlie Fox. This is... Karen...
Fox Yes. Good morning.
Karen Good morning, sir.

Gould Please put me down. Tomorrow. Richard Ross. His office. Ten a.m. Whatever you find in the book, call back and cancel it. And leave a note for Cathy, should she be back...
Karen I’m told that she’ll be back tomorrow.
Gould ... draw her attention to our meeting with Ross.
Karen Yessir.
Fox Karen, as Mr. Gould moves up the ladder, will you go with him?
Karen Sir?
Fox When...
Karen I’m just a temporary...
Gould That’s right, she’s just here for a...
Fox Well, would you like stay on, if...
Gould Hey, what are you? The Master of the Revels?
Karen I’m just, I’m on a temporary...
Gould It’s just a temporary job — so leave the girl alone.
Fox Karen: yeah: Karen, this seem like a good place to work?
Karen Sir?
Fox Call me Charlie. This seem like a good place to work?
Karen Here?
Fox Mr Gould’s office.
Karen I’m sure that it is.
Fox She’s ‘sure that it is’. How wonderful to be so sure. How wonderful to have such certainty in this wonderful world. Hey, Bobby...? Your boss tells you ‘take initiative’; you best guess right – and you do, then you get no credit. Day-in..., smiling, smiling, just a cog.
Gould Mr Fox is taking about his own self.
Fox You bet I am. But my historical self, Bob, for I am a cog no more.
Gould Karen, you come here at an auspicious time.
Fox Give this man a witness.
Gould Because in this sinkhole of slime and depravity, something is about to work out.
Fox ... singing a song, rolling along.
Gould ... and all that garbage that we put up with is going to pay off. (Pause.)
Karen ... why is it garbage...? (Pause.)
Gould It’s not all garbage, but most of it is.
Karen Why?
Gould Why. That’s a good... (To Fox.) Why? (Pause.)
Fox Because.
Gould (to Karen) Because.
Fox Life in the movie business is like the, is like the beginning of a new love affair: it’s full of surprises, and you’re constantly getting fucked.
Karen But why should it all be garbage?
Fox Why? Why should nickels be bigger than dimes? That’s the way it is.
Gould It’s a business, with its own unchanging rules. Isn’t that right, Charlie?
Fox Yes, it is. The one thing is: nobody pays off on work.
Gould That is the truth.
Fox Everybody says ‘Hey, I’m a maverick.’
Gould That’s it...
Fox But what do they do? Sit around like, hey, Pancho-the-dead-whale...
Gould . . . huh . . .
Fox Waiting for the . . .
Gould . . . mmm . . .
Fox Yeah . . .? The Endorsement of their Superiors . . .
Gould Uh huh. Listen to the guy. He's telling you.
Fox You wanna do something out here, it better be one of
The Five Major Food Groups.
Gould Uh huh.
Fox Or your superiors go napsy - bye. The upside of which,
though, a guy . . .
Gould . . . that's right . . .
Fox The upside . . .
Gould Hmm.
Fox The upside, though . . .
Gould . . . Hmm.
Fox The one time you do get support . . .
Gould . . . hey . . .
Fox If you do have a relationship . . .
Gould Hey, Char! kidding aside, that is what I'm here
for . . .
Fox Then, you can do something. (To Karen, of Gould.)
This guy, Karen, this guy . . . the last eleven years.
Gould Forget it . . .
Fox Forget? Bullshit. This man, my friend . . .
Gould Now we're even.
Fox Oh, you Beauty . . . What's it like being Head of
Production? I mean, is it more fun than miniature golf?
Gould You put as much energy in your job as you put into
kissing my ass . . .
Fox My job is kissing your ass.
Gould And don't you forget it.

Fox Not a chance. (Pause.)
Karen Sir:
Gould Yes.
Karen (pause) I feel silly saying it.
Gould What?
Karen I . . .
Gould Well, whatever it is, say it.
Karen (pause) I don't know what to do. (Pause.) I don't
know what I'm supposed to do. (Pause.)
Gould Well, that was very frank of you. I tell you what:
don't do anything.
Karen Sir . . .?
Gould We'll call it a Bank Holiday. (To Fox.) Huh? Let's
get out of here.
Fox Good, let's get out of here.
Gould Huh?
Fox Well done.
Gould And let's get out of here. (To Karen.) Look in my
book, and cancel whatever I've got today. Anybody calls, call
me tomorrow. I'll be in tomorrow for my ten a.m. meeting
with Ross.
Fox Young America at WORK and PLAY.
Gould You get done cancelling my stuff, you can go home.
Fox Where we going for lunch?
Gould Well, I figured we'd drop by the commissary, get the
tuna sandwich, then go swishing by Laura Ashley and pick
out some cunning prints for my new office.
Fox Whyn't you just paint it with broken capillaries,
decorate it like the inside of your nose.
Gould I may. I just may. So, lunch, the Coventry, in half an
hour. (To Karen.) Call the Coventry. Table for two, at One.
Thank you. (She exits. Pause. He sighs.) First in war. First in peace. First in the hearts of Pee Wee Reese.

**Fox** Lunch at the Coventry.

**Gould** That's right.

**Fox** Thy will be done.

**Gould** You see, all that you got to do is eat my doo doo for eleven years, and eventually the wheel comes round.

**Fox** Pay back time.

**Gould** You brought me the Doug Brown script.

**Fox** Glad I could do it.

**Gould** You son of a bitch . . .

**Fox** Hey.

**Gould** Charl, I just hope.

**Fox** What?

**Gould** The shoe was on the other foot, I'd act in such a . . .

**Fox** . . .hey . . .

**Gould** Really, princely way toward you.

**Fox** I know you would, Bob, because lemme tell you: experiences like this, films like this . . . these are the films . . .

**Gould** . . .Yes . . .

**Fox** These are the films, that whaddayacallit . . . (Long pause.) that make it all worthwhile.

**Gould** . . .I think you're going to find a lot of things now, make it all worthwhile. I think conservatively, you and me, we build ourselves in to split, minimally, ten percent. (Pause.)

**Fox** Of the net.

**Gould** Charl, Charlie: permit me to tell you; two things I've learned, twenty-five years in the entertainment industry.

**Fox** What?

**Gould** The two things which are always true.

**Fox** One:

**Gould** The first one is: there is no net.

**Fox** Yeah . . .? (Pause.)

**Gould** And I forgot the second one. Okay, I'm gonna meet you at the Coventry in half an hour. We'll talk about boys and clothes.

**Fox** Whaddaya gonna do the interim?

**Gould** I'm gonna Work . . . (Indicating his figures on the pad.)

**Fox** Work . . .? You never did a day's work in your life.

**Gould** Oooh, Oooh, . . . the Bitching Lamp is Lit.

**Fox** You never did a fucken' day's work in your life.

**Gould** That true?

**Fox** Eleven years I've known you, you're either scheming or you're ziggin' and zaggin', hey, I know you, Bob.

**Gould** Oh yes, the scorn of the impotent . . .

**Fox** I know you, Bob. I know you from the back. I know what you're staying for.

**Gould** You do?

**Fox** Yes.

**Gould** What?

**Fox** You're staying to hide the Afikomen.

**Gould** Yeah?

**Fox** You're staying to put those moves on your new secretary.

**Gould** I am?

**Fox** Yeah, and it will not work.

**Gould** It will not work, what are you saying . . .?

**Fox** No, I was just saying that she . . .

**Gould** . . .she wouldn't go for me.

**Fox** That she won't go for you.

**Gould** (pause) Why?

**Fox** Why? (Pause.) I don't know.
Gould  What do you see...?
Fox  I think... I think... you serious?
Gould  Yes.
Fox  I don't want to pee on your parade.
Gould  No...
Fox  I mean, I'm sorry that I took the edge off it.
Gould  I wasn't going to hit on her.
Fox  Hmmm.
Gould  I was gonna...
Fox  You were gonna work.
Gould  Yes.
Fox  Oh.
Gould  (pause) But tell me what you see.
Fox  What I see, what I saw, just an observation...
Gould  ...yes...
Fox  It's not important.
Gould  Tell me what you see. Really.
Fox  I just thought, I just thought she falls between two stools.
Gould  And what would those stools be?
Fox  That she is not, just some, you know, a 'floozy'...
Gould  A 'floozy'...
Fox  ...on the other hand, I think I'd have to say, I don't think she is so ambitious she would schtup you just to get ahead. (Pause.) That's all. (Pause.)
Gould  What if she just 'liked' me? (Pause.)
Fox  If she just 'liked' you?
Gould  Yes.
Fox  Ummm. (Pause.)
Gould  Yes.

Fox  You're saying, if she just... liked you... (Pause.)
Gould  You mean nobody loves me for myself.
Fox  No.
Gould  No?
Fox  Not in this office...
Gould  And she's neither, what, vacant nor ambitious enough to go...
Fox  ...I'm not saying you don't deserve it, you do deserve it. Hey, ...I think you're worth it.
Gould  Thank you. You're saying that she's neither, what, dumb, nor ambitious enough, she would go to bed with me.
Fox  ...she's too, she's too...
Gould  She's too... High-line...?
Fox  No, she's, she's too...
Gould  She's too...
Fox  ...yes.
Gould  Then what's she doing in this office?
Fox  She's a Temporary Worker.
Gould  You're full of it, Chuck.
Fox  Maybe. And I didn't mean to take the shine off our...
Gould  Hey, hey, he sends the cross, he sends the strength to bear it. Go to, go to lunch, I'll meet you at...
Fox  I didn't mean to imply...
Gould  Imply. Naaa. Nobody Loves Me. Nobody loves me for myself. Hey, Big Deal, don't go mopin' on me here. We'll go and celebrate. A Douglas Brown Film. Fox and Gould...
Fox  ...you're very kind...
Gould  ...you brought the guy in. Fox and Gould Present:
Fox  I'll see you at lunch... (Starts to exit.)
Gould  But I bet she would go, I bet she would go out with me.
Fox  I bet she would, too.
Gould No, No. I'm saying, I think that she 'likes' me.
Fox Yeah. I'm sure she does.
Gould No, joking apart, Babe. My perceptions... Say I'm nuts, I don't think so—she likes me, and she'd go out with me.
Fox How much?
Gould How much? Seriously...? (Pause.)
Fox Yeah.
Gould ...that she would...?
Fox Yeah. That she would anything. (Pause.) That she would anything. (Pause.) That she would deal with you in any other than a professional way. (Pause.)
Gould Well, my, my, my, my.
Fox What can I tell you, 'Bob'.
Gould That I can get her on a date, that I can get her to my house, that I can screw her.
Fox I don't think so.
Gould How much? (Pause.)
Fox A hundred bucks.
Gould That's enough?
Fox Five hundred bucks that you can't.
Gould Five hundred? That's enough?
Fox A gentleman's bet.
Gould Done. Now get out of here, and let me work... the Coventry at One. I need...
Fox The script, the budget, chain of ownership...
Gould Good.
Fox I'll swing by my, I'll bring it to lunch.
Gould Good. Char... (Pause.)
Fox What?
Gould Thank you.
Fox Hey. Fuck you. (Exits.)

Karen Mr Gould...
Gould Bobby.
Karen Sir. (Pause.) I was not able to get you a table at the Coventry. But I tentatively booked you at...
Gould Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. (Pause.) It's alright. I'm going to tell you what you did, and it's alright you did it. Sit down. You called up the Coventry and asked them for a table for two at one o'clock. And they told you they had absolutely nothing. That right?
Karen Yes. (Pause.) I... I... I'm so sorry. Of course. I should have mentioned your name.
Gould It's alright.
Karen It was very... it was naïve of me.
Gould It's alright.
Karen I had... no: you're right. I had a thought, when I was hanging up, then I thought: 'You forgot to...'
Gould ...it's alright.
Karen 'You forgot to “tell” them,’ then I thought: 'what difference does it make? If they don't have a table...'
Gould It's alright.
Karen If they didn't have a table, what difference who called up? But, of course, they have a table for you... I'm sorry. It was naïve of me.
Gould Listen, there's nothing wrong with being naïve, with learning...
Karen (simultaneously with 'learning') And I'm sure... I'm sorry.
Gould No, go on.
Karen ...I was going to say...
Gould ...yes...?
Karen I was going to say that I'm sure that much of a job like this, a job like this, is learning to think in a...
Gould Yes.
Karen To think in a ... business fashion.
Gould That's what makes the life exciting, addictive, you know what I'm talking about, you want a thrill in your life?
Karen ... a thrill ...?
Gould To make something, to do something, to be a part of something. Money, art, a chance to Play at the Big Table ... Hey, you're here, and you want to participate in it. *(Pause.)*
Karen Yes.
Gould Well, of course you do. And it is an exciting world.
Karen I'm sure it is.
Gould Sudden changes all the time. You want to know some of it. Now, you want to know a secret?
Karen Yes.
Gould I'll tell you one. Siddown. *(Karen sits.* Charlie Fox comes in and he's formed a relationship with Doug Brown. Doug will leave his studio and do a film with us. Charlie Fox brought it to us, brought it to me. And in the Highest Traditions of the Motion Picture Industry, we're actually going to make a movie.
Karen Is it a good film?
Gould I'm sorry.
Karen Is it a good film?
Gould Well, it's a commodity. And I admire you for not being ashamed to ask the question. Yes, it's a good question, and I don't know if it is a good film. 'What about Art?' I'm not an artist. Never said I was, and nobody who sits in this chair can be. I'm a businessman. 'Can't we try to make good films?' Yes. We try. I'm going to try to make a good film of this prison film. The question: Is there such a thing as a good film which loses money? In general, of course. But, really, not. For me, 'cause if the films I make lose money, then I'm back on the streets with a sweet and silly smile on my face, they lost money 'cause nobody saw them, it's my fault. A tree fell in the forest, what did I accomplish? Yes. You see? There is a way things are. Some people are elected, try to change the world, this job is not that job. Somebody, somebody ... in this job, in the job I have, somebody is always trying to 'promote' you: to use something, some 'hook' to get you to do something in their own best interest. You follow me?
Karen Of course.
Gould 'Cause this desk is a position to advance, y'understand? It's a platform to aid, to push someone along. But I Can't Do It. Why? That's not my business. My business is to make decisions for the studio. Means I have to be blunt, to say 'no', much, most of the time, that's my job. And I think it's a good job: 'cause it's a job of responsibility. Pressure, many rewards. One of them, one time in a billion years, someone was loyal to me, and I'm talking about Charlie Fox, stuck with me, comes in here, let's face it, does a favor for me ... he could of took the script across the street, no, but he came to me, now — I can throw in with him and we rise together. That's what the job is. It's a job, all the bullshit aside, deals with people. *(He hunts on his desk, picks up a copy of the book he was reading from earlier.* ) Look here. Agent gives his client's book to Ross: 'The Bridge or, Radiation and the Half-Life of Society'. Now, who is Mister Ross, now ...?
Karen He is the Head of the Studio.
Gould And he has a button on my console. That's right. Author's agent gave this book to Ross. A novel. Written by a Very Famous Eastern Writer. What's this book about? 'The End of the World.' Great. Now: Ross, no dummy, says, of course, he'll read the book. Gives me the book to read, so when he tells the author 'how he loved the book but it won't make a movie,' he can say something intelligent about it. You get it? This, in the business, is called 'a courtesy read'.
Karen A courtesy read.
Gould Yes. No one has any intention of making the book, but we read it, as a courtesy. Does this mean that we're depraved? No. It's just business ... how business is done, you see?
Karen I think.
Gould A business. Start to close.
Karen But what if there is something in the book?
Gould In the book?
Karen Yes. (Pause.)
Gould It's a novel about the historical effects of radiation . . .
Karen Yes, but . . .
Gould I mean, I mean, the author's crazy as a fucken' June bug.
Karen But, but.
Gould . . . what if . . . ?
Karen Yes.
Gould What if, after everything . . .
Karen Yes.
Gould Hope against hope, there is something in the book.
Karen Yes.
Karen Yes. (Pause.)
Gould Well, I'd be delighted. No. You're right. You're right. I'll tell you. (Pause.) You're making my point. Absolutely. This job corrupts you. You start to think, all the time 'what do these people want from me?' (Pause.) And everything becomes a task. (Pause.)
Karen Does it have to be that?
Gould Can we keep ourselves pure? Hey, I prayed to be pure.
Karen You prayed? To be pure?
Gould I did, I said God give me the job as Head of Production. Give me a platform to be 'good', and I'll be good. They gave me the job, I'm here one day and look at me: a Big Fat Whore. A book, it may be a fine, fine book by a well-respected writer. And because this writer's got the reputation being 'artsy' . . . artsy, you understand . . . I'm ready, everybody backs me up in this, to assume that his book is unsuitable for the screen, so I look on it as a 'courtesy read'.
Karen Do you enjoy your work?
Gould Excuse me?
Karen Do, if I'm being too frank . . .
Gould . . . do I enjoy my work? Yes. Very much. (Pause.) Don't you think you would enjoy it?
Karen Yes, I think I would enjoy it.
Gould You do? Good for you. What of it would you enjoy?
Karen The making decisions.
Gould Then good for you.
Karen Because . . .
Gould . . . yes . . . ?
Karen Perhaps I'm naïve, but I would think that if you could keep your values straight, if you had principles to refer to, then . . .
Gould Hmm.
Karen I know it's naïve . . .
Gould Yes it is naïve, and it's also correct.
Karen You think it is?
Gould Yes, I do. Now, we could talk about purity or we could turn the page. What do you want to do?
Karen Talk about purity.
Gould Okay. (Pause.) If you don't have principles, whatever they are . . . then each day is hell, you haven't got a compass. All you've got is 'good taste'; and you can shove good taste up your ass and fart 'The Carnival of Venice'. Good taste will not hack it. 'Cause each day the pressure just gets worse. It gets more difficult. (Pause.) I want you to do me a favor. Read that book for me.
Karen I should read it . . . ?
Gould Yes.
Karen The Radiation Book?
Gould Let's be frank: it's probably, it's almost definitely
unsuitable, it probably is artsy. But as you said, maybe it isn't.
You read it, you'll tell me, and I'll tell Mr Ross.
Karen ... I ...
Gould ... and then, you're right, and then at least we
looked.
Karen I'd be flattered to read it.
Gould Good.
Karen Thank you.
Gould Not at all. I thank you. I'll need a report on it ...  
Karen ... of course.
Gould By tonight. How long will it take you to ...  
Karen Well, I won't be able to start reading it 'til after
work ...  
Gould (simultaneously with 'work') Fine. Tonight, I'm going
to be home. When you're finished, you bring the report to me
and we'll discuss it.
Karen Absolutely. Thank you.
Gould Not at all. Now, I've ... Please call the Coventry.
Tell them, a table for Mr Fox and me, twenty minutes ...  
Karen Yes, I will.
Gould I'm going to clean up here before I go. Call Mr Fox's
girl up on the phone, get her to page him or try him in the
car.
Karen Uh huh.
Gould ... and tell him that I'll be ten minutes late.
Karen Of course ...  
Gould ... and tell him he owes me five hundred bucks.

Act Two

from the book.

Karen He puts his hand on the child's chest, and he says
'heal', as if he felt he had the power to heal him, he calls on
God ... it's in here ... something to the effect that if ever in his
life he had the power, any power, that now is the time ... list
...(She reads.) ... in that lonely place, the low place, the
tramp, under the bridge, he finds him. Faced with his
troubles, and pours out his heart. We hear the rain, and we
see, in his misery, it is forgotten, wet, cold ... and the
problems which assaulted him: they do not disappear, but they
are forgotten. He says: years later: it did not occur to him 'til
then that this was happiness. That the thing which he lacked,
he says, was courage. What does the Tramp say? 'All fears are
one fear. Just the fear of death. And we accept it, then we are
at peace.' And so, you see, and so all of the events ... the stone,
the instrument, the child which he met, led him there.

Gould They led him.

Karen ... in his ... yes, you see — I know that you see — and
that's, that's to me, that's the perfection of the story, when I
read it ... I almost, I wanted to sit, I saw, I almost couldn't
come to you, the weight of it ... (Pause.) You know what I
mean. He says that the radiation ... all of it, the planes, the
televisions, clocks, all of it is to the one end. To change us — to, to
bring about a change — all radiation has been sent by God. To
change us. Constantly.

Gould To change us.

Karen Yes.

Gould How?
Karen To this new thing. And that we needn’t feel frightened. That it comes from God. And I felt empowered.
(Pause.) Empowered. (Pause.)

Gould Empowered...

Karen You’ve felt that, I hope you’ve felt that, when something made sense, you’d heard it for the longest time and finally you, you know what it means. So... so... it’s not courage, it’s greater than courage. Perhaps it is courage. You’ve felt like that.

Gould I have.

Karen Yes.

Gould Felt like...

Karen Like they say in stories: where, where one thing changes you.

Gould ... have I felt like that? I don’t know.

Karen ... and that it puts you at peace. And I’ll tell you: like books you find at an Inn, or in a bookshop, when you know, when you go in, that you’ll find something there, something. Old, or, or scraps of paper... have you had this...? In a pocket, or, or even on the ground, a phrase... something that changes you. And you were drawn to it. Just like the man. Beneath the bridge. ‘What was it that you feared?’ he says. ‘Embrace it...’ Well! (Pause.) And like my coming here. Why?

A temporary job. But I thought, who can say I knew, but I thought I knew, I thought: I would find something. (Pause.) Too much. It all came at once. So much. May I have another drink? (Gould pours drink.) Do you know, and he says, the radiation, in all things: not just in bombs, in microwaves, in power, in air travel... and the purpose of this radiation... well, I’ve said it...

Gould Thank you.

Karen No, I thank you. Do you know what he’s talking about? Fear. A life lived in fear, and he says, It Says In The Book, it doesn’t have to be so; that those things we have seen... you know, and you think ‘If, am I the only one on the whole planet who knows how bad it is... that it’s coming... that it’s sure to come.’ What... don’t you see? What can I do...? And you can’t join a convent, or ‘cut off your hair’, or, or, or, you see, this is our pain, I think, we can’t embrace Jesus. He, you see, and he says, ‘I know. And you don’t have to be afraid.’

And I realized: I haven’t breathed. How long? In years. From, I don’t know. From terror, perhaps ever. And you say, how can you say it? Is our life so bad? No. No. But that it’s ending. That our life is ending. Yes. It’s true. And he says that, that these are the Dark Ages. (Pause.) They aren’t to come, the Dark Ages — they are now. We’re living them. (Reads.) ‘In the waning days... in the last days...’ ‘Yes’, he says, it’s true, and you needn’t deny it... and I felt such fear, because, of course, he’s right. Then he says: ‘do not be afraid.’ The story... when you, when you read it, the story itself. Down below the bridge, I’ll tell you: written with such love... (Pause.) Such love...

(Pause.) God. A thing to be thankful for. Such love.

Gould You’ve done a fantastic job.

Karen I have?

Gould Yes.

Karen I have? Doing what?

Gould On the book. (Pause.)

Karen I...?

Gould In your report on the book. It means something, it means a lot, I want to tell you, if you want to ‘do’ something out here. A freshness, you said a naïveté, but call it a ‘freshness’, and a capacity to get involved... I think that it’s fantastic. And, you know, you dream about making a connection; but I feel I’ve done it.

Karen You’ve made a connection...

Gould Yes. And you reached out to me.

Karen I did...

Gould You shared this thing with me.

Karen ... the book...

Gould You did it. Someone does something... totally...
Karen ... yes...

Gould And you say 'yes'... 'That's... that's what I've been missing."

Karen ... you're saying...

Gould That's what I've been missing. I'm saying, you come *alive*, and you see everyone's been holding their *breath* in this town, twenty years, forever, I don't know... and then...

Karen Yes...

Gould So rare, someone shows, shows some *enthusiasm*... it becomes, it becomes *simple*. You know what I mean...

Karen Yes. I do.

Gould N'I want to thank you. *(Pause.)*

Karen Um... it's nothing.

Gould *(simultaneously with 'nothing')* It's something. No. Let, let, let, let me *help* you. That's what I want to do.

Karen *(pause)* I'm confused.

Gould I'm saying I *thank* you; I want to do something for you.

Karen No, no...

Gould And, whatever, I'm saying, if I can, that you would like to do, in, in the *Studio*, if you would like to do it, if I can help you with it, then I would like to help you.

Karen Yes. *Thank* you. *(Pause.)* I absolutely do. You know what I want to do.

Gould I...?

Karen I want to work on the film.

Gould Alright. If we can. The *Prison* film... ...

Karen No. On this. *This* film. The Radiation film and I don't care. I don't care in what capacity, well, why *should* I, 'cause I don't have any skills... *that's* presumptuous, *of course*, in any way I could. But I'd just like, it would be so important to me, to *be* there. To help. *(Pause.)* If you could just help me with that. And, seriously, I'll get coffee, I don't care, but if you could do that for me, I would be... *(Pause.)*

Gould Hmm.

Karen I've put you on the spot.

Gould No. Yes, a little.

Karen I'm serious. I'd do anything...

Gould *(pause)* Look... *(Pause.)* This was a 'courtesy read'.

Karen I know that, but...

Gould As I told you, the chances were, were astronomically slim that it would...

Karen Of course, but you said, you, you wanted to *investigate*...

Gould ... yes...

Karen ... 'because once in a while'...

Gould ... yes.

Karen And once in a while one finds a pearl... ...

Gould Yes...

Karen And *this* book... I'm *telling* you, when you *read* it... ...

Gould Karen, it's about the *End* of the *World*.

Karen That's what I'm *saying*. That's why it...

Gould It's about the End of the World.

Karen Uh huh, uh huh. *(Pause.)* This book... *(Pause.)* This book... *(Pause.)* But you said someone's job was to read the manuscripts. *(Pause.)*

Gould Someone reads the manuscripts. Yes.

Karen ... that come in...

Gould ... yes. *(Pause.)* We have readers.

Karen Now: why do the readers read them?

Gould *(simultaneously with 'read')* I get it. I get it. Yes. As I said. Yes. Once in a while, in a great while, yes, that... ...

Karen Why not this? I'm telling you...
Gould  Look: I'm going to pay you the compliment of being frank. (Pause.) I'm going to talk to you. (Pause.) Power, people who are given a slight power, tend to think, they think that they're the only one that has these ideas, pure ideas, whatever, no matter. And, listen to me. Listen, I'm going to tell you. This book. Your book. On The End of the World which has meant so much to you, as I see that it has: Won't Make A Good Movie. Okay? I could tell you many things to influence you. But why? I have to respect your enthusiasm. And I do respect it. But this book, you want us to make, won't Get The Asses In The Seats. Sounds crass? Whatever the thing just may be. My job: my job, my new job... is not even to 'make', it is to 'suggest', to 'push', to champion... good work, I hope... choosing from Those Things Which the Public Will Come In To See. If they don't come to see it, what's the point? You understand? (Pause.) This is what I do. You said a certain kind of courage to embrace a fact? (Pause.) This is the fact here.

Karen  Why do you... (Pause.) Your job is to make movies people will come see.

Gould  That's right.

Karen  Why do you think they won't come see this one? (Pause.) Are you ever wrong? Do you see what I'm asking? Just because you think it is 'too good'... I... I... I think they would come see it. (Pause.) I would. It's about... it's about what we feel. (Pause.)

Gould  It is?

Karen  Yes.

Gould  Which is...

Karen  Everyone is frightened.

Gould  Everyone is frightened.

Karen  Everything is breaking down.

Gould  It is?

Karen  Yes.

Gould  It is?

Karen  Yes. It's over...

Gould  It...

Karen  I believe it is.

Gould  ... the...

Karen  ... things as we know them.

Gould  Are over?

Karen  Of course they are. Do you see? We don't have to deny it... The power that this thought will release... in, in, in everyone. Something which speaks to them... this book spoke to me. It changed me... I...

Gould  Yes, but quite frankly the fact that it changed you, that you like it, that you'd like to see it 'go' is not sufficient reason for the studio to pay fifteen million dollars to put it up there.

Karen  A sufficient reason.

Gould  Yes.

Karen  To make the film.

Gould  Yes. (Pause.)

Karen  Someone, someone makes a decision to, someone can make a decision to...

Gould  Richard Ross.

Karen  You're going to see him tomorrow, you could... look. Look, I read the script. Mister Fox's script, the prison film. That's, that's just degradation, that's the same old... it's despicable, it's... It's degrading to the human spirit... it...

Gould  It what...?

Karen  Of course; this rage... it's killing people, meaningless... the sex, the titillation, violence... people don't want, they don't want, they... they don't want this.

Gould  Of course they do, that's what we're in business to do, don't you understand... that's what we're in business to do. Make the thing everyone made last year. Make that image people want to see. That is what they, it's more than what they want. It is what
they require. And it’s my job. That’s my job... when I tell
Ross about the Douglas Brown film, he’s going to fall upon my
neck and kiss me. You know that. You know that I can’t make
this book.

Karen I don’t know that.

Gould I told you...

Karen You held out a hope to me, this morning...

Gould I held out a hope...

Karen ... that what I said...

Gould Aha! You see? That what you said... We all, as I said,
everyone has feelings, everyone would like to ‘make a
difference’. Everyone says ‘I’m a maverick’ but we’re, you
know that, just one part of the whole, nobody’s a maverick.

Karen But...

Gould Now: what I told you was: it was a ‘courtesy read’.

Karen ... I, I don’t like to be naïve...

Gould ... I told you what the chances were...

Karen ... I don’t think it’s attractive, and I don’t think it’s
right. To be naïve. But...

Gould I told you what the deal was. Don’t you understand?

Karen But I...

Gould But you. Yes. Everyone Is Trying To ‘Promote’ Me
... Don’t you know that? Don’t you care? Don’t you care? Every
move I make, do you understand? Everyone wants something
from me.

Karen (pause) Yes. I understand that.

Gould You understand that?

Karen Yes, I do.

Gould Well, if you understand that, then how can you act this
way?

Karen To come here...

Gould Yes.

Karen you asked me here. (Pause.) I knew what the deal
was. I know you wanted to sleep with me. You’re right, I
came anyway; you’re right.

Gould to sleep with you...

Karen Didn’t you?

Gould No...

Karen Why lie? You don’t have to lie.

Gould But you’re wrong.

Karen But I’m not wrong. This is what I’m saying. Are we so
poor... that we can’t have those simple things: we want love,
why should we deny it. Why should you? You could of asked
me, you did ask me. I know what you meant. That’s why I
came.

Gould You came to...

Karen I said why not? I’m weak, too. We all need
companionship, the things we want... I wanted them.
You’re right. I shouldn’t act as though I was naïve. I
shouldn’t act as though I believed you. You’re... but but but:

Gould I asked you here to sleep with me?

Karen Then I read the book. I, I, I’ve been depraved, too,
I’ve been frightened, I know that you’re frightened. I know
what you are. You see. That’s what I’m telling you.

Gould I’m frightened...

Karen I know that you are. I would have come here
anyway. Is that depraved? I know what it is to be bad. I’ve
been bad, I know what it is to be lost, I know you’re lost. I know
that... How we are afraid... to ‘ask’, to even ‘ask’, and say in
jest, ‘Yes. I prayed to be pure’... but it was not an accident.
That I came here. Sometimes it reaches for us. And we say
‘show me a sign’. And when it reaches us, then we see we are
the sign. And we find the answers. In the book...

Gould Why did you say you would come here anyway...

Karen listen to me: The Tramp said ‘Radiation’. Well,
whatever it had been, it makes no difference... Listen: (She
reads.) 'What was coming was a return to the self, which is to say, a return to God. It was round. He saw all things were round. And the man saw that it all had been devoted to one end. That the diseases in the body were the same diseases in the world. That things were ending. Yes. That things must end. And that vouchsafed to him a vision of infinity... You see?

Gould No.
Karen No?
Gould No, I don't understand.
Karen You don't understand.
Gould No.
Karen Would you like to understand? (Pause.) The things you've hoped for. The reason you asked me here.
Gould I don't understand you.
Karen You wanted something—you were frightened.
Gould I was frightened?
Karen That forced you to lie. I forgive you.
Gould ... you forgive me...?
Karen You know how I can? Because we're just the same. You said you prayed to be pure.
Gould I said that...
Karen This morning.
Gould I was joking.
Karen I looked in your heart. I saw you. And people can need each other. That's what the book says. You understand? We needn't be afraid.
Gould I don't understand.
Karen You can if you wish to. In the world. Dying. We prayed for a sign. A temporary girl. You asked read the book. I read the book. Do you know what it says? It says that you were put here to make stories people need to see. To make them less afraid. It says in spite of our transgressions—that we could do something. Which would bring us alive. So that we needn't feel ashamed. (Pause.) We needn't feel frightened. The wild animal dies with pride. He didn't make the world. God made the world. You say that you prayed to be pure. What if your prayers were answered? You asked me to come. Here I am.
would you sit through it? Eastern Office sent the coverage to me – listen to this... (He hunts through his papers. Reads.) ‘The Bridge; or, Radiation, Half-Life and Decay of Society’, the Blah Blah... set in novel form, The Growth of Radiation, as... ‘What is this? the device of God, in all things, to prepare the world for its final decay.’ Yeah. It’s a Summer picture. (Pause. Reads again.) ‘The author seems to think that radio and television, aircraft travel and microwaves were invented solely to irradiate the world and so bring about genetic change in humankind.’ Great. And Scene Two, he comes out of the bar to find that his horse is gone and he has to go steal the sheriff’s nag to ride for help. I’m sorry. I need a drink. Ten o’clock in the morning and I need a drink. You know, you look forward to something and you think it’s never going to happen – and you really think, bullshit aside, it’s never going to happen, and I’ve got to say, it’s over, now, yeah, yeah, I felt a certain amount of jealousy, toward you, here we started out together, and I always said, someday I’ll, you know, I’ll get something for myself, and it’ll be a Brand New Ballgame. I’ll sit up there with Bobby Gould... over him... you know how we think. Deep inside, I never thought I would. (Pause.) And the other thing, talk about envy, is, a certain extent, I was riding, several years, on your coattails... don’t say ‘no’, I know I was, and I want to thank you, that you were man enough, that you were friend enough, you never brought it up, you never rubbed it in. And I’m glad I can pay it back. Speaking of paying it back. Do I owe you, for sure, the five c? Fess up. (Pause.)

Gould Five c?

Fox The broad come to your house?

Gould The broad?

Fox You fuck the temporary girl? You fuck her. (Pause.)

Gould I’m going to go see Ross myself.

Fox You’re going to see him yourself. (Pause.) Without me, you’re saying. (Pause.) Do you think that... (Pause.) Do you think that that’s the... I mean... it was... if you think that that’s the thing, then that’s it. If you think that that’s the
thing, but, we should, we should, I think we should talk about it. Bob. Don't you... (Pause.) It was, um, um, uh (Pause.) I brought you the picture, Bob.

Gould I know you did.

Fox You see what... (Pause.) I, I, I think that we should go in there together. (Pause.) Babe. If this is truly a collaborative thing. (Pause.) But if you think that...

Gould I'm not going to take him the Prison Film.

Fox ...if you think that that's the...

Gould ...are you listening to me? I'm not going to greenlight the pris...

Fox ...sure, sure, sure... I understand that, but listen to what I'm asking you. Since I 'brought'... which, I was saying, since, since I brought you the film and since, you say, we're going to split the credit. Because, because what I was saying, Bob, to to, finally get a position where I can be equal; where I brought you the film, it means a lot to me, and, frankly, um, um, I think...

Gould I'm not going to recommend the prison picture.

Fox Okay. (Pause.) Is there... you're not...

Gould No. (Pause.)

Fox I don't understand.

Gould I'm not going to recommend the Doug Brown film.

(Pause.)

Fox Because... hold on a second... hold on a second, before we get to that. You told me yesterday that we were going to go to Ross to greenlight it.

Gould Yes.

Fox You promised me.

Gould I know.

Fox I know that you know. Do you know why...? Because you did it.

Gould I know that I did.

Fox You're joking, right?

Gould No. (Pause.)

Fox Huh. (Pause.) Because, um, you know, I had the package, Doug gave me one day, Doug Brown gave me the one day to have the package, I could have, I could have took the thing across the street, you know that? Walked right across the street, As People Do In This Town, and I'd done it yesterday, I'd been Executive Producer of a Doug Brown film. Yesterday. Yesterday. Which is what comes up when you tell me that you aren't going to... This is a joke. Right? I'm sorry... I'm sorry. Bob: When you take the film to Ross...

Gould I'm not going to take the film to Ross.

Fox (pause) Can you tell me why you're not?

Gould I'm going to greenlight the book.

Fox What book?


Fox No, you aren't.

Gould Yes. If I can I am.

Fox I have to siddown. (Pause.) Hold on a second, Bob, you're seeing Ross when...?

Gould Twenty minutes.

Fox I'm not upset with you. (Pause.) Alright. (Pause.) Bob (Pause.): Now, listen to me: when you walk in his door, Bob, what you're paid to do... now, listen to me now: is make films that make money — you are paid to make films people like. And so gain for yourself a fortune every day. This is what Ross pays us for. This is the thing he and the stockholders want from us. This is what the, listen to me now, 'cause I'm going to 'say' it, Movie Going Public wants from us, excuse me, I'm talking to you like some Eastern Fruit, but this, what I've just told you, is your job. You cannot make the radiation book.

Gould I'm going to try.
Fox Shut up, I'm not done speaking, when it's your turn you can speak — because Ross will not do it and he will not let you do it.

Gould I have it in my contract. I can greenlight one picture a year under ten mil, at my discretion, without his prior approval or consent.

Fox You will find your contract's shit.

Gould I don't think so.

Fox Think so or not, you will find it's a sucker clause. You will find that if you insist on it you're going to become a laughingstock, and no one will hire you, Bob... You'll be 'off the Sports List'. Why? Because they will not understand why you did what you did. You follow me...? That is the worst pariah. Your best friend won't hire you. I won't hire you. Because I won't understand why you did the thing that you did, and tried to make a movie that no one will watch. Are you insane? What the fuck's wrong with you...? Have you read this book?

Gould Have you?

Fox I read the coverage. What do you want from me? Blood? List... list... listen to this... (Fox hunts on the desk for the book, opens it, reads.) "... the world is dying," he said, "there is nothing we can do for that," as he stood on the bridge. "It all proliferates. Faster and faster. It begets itself, until it's time to die. The economy will collapse. The reactors will explode, because that's what they're meant to do. We will die, because that's what we're meant to do. The radiation, which has grown over the years, faster and faster." (He puts the book down.)

Gould We have different ideas, Charlie.

Fox We do? Since when...?

Gould (simultaneously with 'when') I was up all night thinking.

Fox Were you?

Gould Yes.

Fox Thinking about what?
Fox To do something which is right? To do someth...?
Gould I want to read you something. *(Hunts in book. Reads.)* "Is it true," she asked, "that we are always in the same state of growth, the same state of decay as the world in which we live? If it is true is it not true that the world is then a dream, and delusion?" All this being true, then what remained to him was this: Nothing. *(Pause.) Nothing but God.* *(Pause.) I've wasted my life, Charlie. My life is a sham, it's true. But I think I found something.
Fox Bob, what's happened to you...
Gould ... And I think your prison movie has a place... and I respect your...
Fox I don't want your respect. Your respect stinks: You know why? You've proved yourself insane. You're gonna buy a piece of shit... you're gonna spend ten million dollars for a piece of *pussy,* you were 'up all night...' You were up all night boffing the *broad.* Are you getting old? What is this? *Menopause*? Your 'life is a sham'? Two days in the new job, you can't stand the strain...? They're going to invalid you out, your name will be a *punchline* in this town...
Gould ... if the film doesn't work out here...
Fox If the film...
Gould The radiation film.
Fox Did you miss your *wake* up call...? If the film doesn't work out here, you know what you got? Little Lambry Divey. No One Will Touch You, do you understand...? You're throwing your life away. *(Pause.)* Listen to me: Bob *(Pause.): Bob (Pause.): I have to tell you something... It's the secretary. She, what did she do to you...
Gould She did nothing to me.
Fox What is she, a witch?
Gould She did nothing, we, we talked...
Fox You talked and you decided to throw your career away...? And my, and my, and my chances with it...
Gould ... I don't want...
Nobody's different. *You aren't, I'm not, why should she? The broad wants power. How do I know? Look: She's out with Albert Schweitzer working in the jungle! No: she's here in movieland, Bob, and she trades the one thing that she's got, her *looks*, get into a position of authority — through you. Nobody likes to be promoted; it's ugly to see, but that's what happened, babe. I'm sorry. She lured you in. 'Come up to my house, read this script... She doesn't know what that *means?* Bob: that's why she's here.

**Gould** A woman...

**Fox** Hey, pay me the courtesy... how lonely you must be. How hard the world is. You complain to her. 'No one understands me...' 'I understand you...' she says.

**Gould** She *does* understand me.

**Fox** Hey, that's *first-rate*.

**Gould** She *does* understand me... she knows what I suffer.

**Fox** 'What You Suffer...?' ‘What you suffer...?’ You're a *whore...* Bob. You're a *chippy...* you're a *fucken*' bought-and-paid-for *whore*, and you think you're a *ballerina* 'cause you work with your legs? You're a *whore*. You want some sympathy? You don't get none. You — you think you can let down. You *cannot* let down. That's what they pay the big bucks for. This is what you put up with you wanna have two homes. Okay? Bob, let's speak frankly, eh? This broad just took you down.

**Gould**... she came to me.

**Fox** Why did she come to you? 'Cause you're the Baal Shem Tov? You stupid shit, I'm talking to you... Why does she come to you? 'Cause you're so good looking? She wants something from you. You're nothing to her but what you can *do* for her.

**Gould** You're full of shit.

**Fox** Uh huh. I know I am.

**Gould** What does she want from me?

**Fox** If I'm so smart? She wants you to greenlight this radiation book.

**Gould** Why?


**Gould** It's not a bizarre idea.

**Fox** It's not a bizarre idea...? *Tell* it to me... Come on. You can't tell it to me in one sentence, they can't put it in TV Guide. What is this movie that you're going to make? Come on, 'A Boy Joins the Cattle Drive and Learns to Be a Man...?' 'A Couple Finds a Million Dollars Buried in Their Yard...?' Come on, come on... what is this movie...? (Pause.)

**Gould** We are...

**Fox** Tell me the story.

**Gould** We... I'm *telling* it to you, and I don't think that we have to mock the possibility that someone could find something that meant something to them. You understand me?

**Fox** Tell me the film, Bob.

**Gould** We... I'll *tell* you the film. Alright? We are frightened... (Pause.) Because the World is Ending. Uh... (Pause.) A man gives up everything... wait. (Pause.) A man, to find happiness... (Pause.)

**Fox** (picks up the book, reads) ‘A gross infection rampant in the world, they spied, and thought they were the messengers of cure, when they were the disease...’ (Turns page and reads again.) ‘That silver is more powerful than gold; and the circle than the square or the triangle. He thought of architecture...’ (He throws the book down.) Are you kidding me...? (Pause.) Are you kidding me...? I wouldn't believe this shit if it was...
true... the fuck happened to you? Let your dick run your office?
What kind of a man...

Gould  Okay, Okay. That's enough.
Fox   I beg your pardon.
Gould  I said that's enough. Get out.
Fox   Fuck you.
Gould  Fuck me. Fuck me in hell. Fuck me in hell, pal. You
read the plaque on my door. I am your superior. Now, I've
made my decision. I'm sorry it hurt you.
Fox   It hurt me? You ruined my life.
Gould  Be that as it may.
Fox   I see.
Gould  Now, I have a meeting.
Fox   Would you tell me why?
Gould  I told you why. Because I've found something that's
right.
Fox   I can't buy that.
Gould  Then 'why' is because I say so.
Fox   And eleven years down the drain.
Gould  I'm sorry. (Pause.)
Fox   How sorry are you?
Gould  What?
Fox   One question...
Gould  It won't change my mind.
Fox   Well then, just say it's a boon, and grant it to me to
assuage your guilt. I want to ask your girl one question. Then
I swear I'll go.
Gould  Alright—ask it.
Fox (pushes the intercom button; into intercom)  Dear, could you
come in here for one moment, please...?
Karen enters.

Karen (to Gould)  What happened to you?
Fox   Where's Cathy...?
Karen  What happened to you, Bob...are you all...
Fox   Where's Cathy, honey? She still sick...?
Gould  It's alright, Karen.
Fox   I have one question for you, and then I'll leave you
alone. I understand...
Karen  I have to... (Starts to exit.)
Fox   No, no, no, no, no... No, no. It's alright. You alright,
Bob?
Gould  Yes.
Fox   Are you, really, though, tell us, now...
Gould  I'm fine. We'll be done here in one minute.
Karen  What's going on?
Gould  Just answer him.
Fox   I understand. Karen. I understand... that things have
been occurring... large decisions... do you follow me...?
(Pause.) Do you follow what I'm going to say?
Karen  What do you want?
Fox   Well, Dear, I want to ask you something. (Pause.)
Karen  Alright.
Fox   You went to Mister Gould's last night? (Pause.)
Karen  Yes.
Fox   You discussed certain things?
Karen  Yes. We did.
Fox   You talked about... his new job, you...
Karen  You know what we talked about. We talked about...
we talked about not being frightened. We talked about the
ability to make a difference.
Fox   To make a difference. Yes.
Karen  To make a film...
Fox To make a film that makes a difference. Yes, I know. Now: listen. I’m not going to talk to you of what gives you the ‘insight’ to, or the experience to know what will make a good film. (Pause.) I’m not going to ask you, I’m not going to ask you what, what brought you to this job...
Karen ...it was a temporary job...
Fox Uh huh. I’m almost there, bear with me. Now: I understand, last night, that you and Bob became intimate.
Karen I think you should leave.
Fox I know you do, but this is something more than your life, honey, you’re at the Big Table, and, I’m done, then Bob, the Head of Production, is going to say what’s what. I have one question. Now, then, you and Bob, you became ‘Lovers’.
Gould Leave her alone.
Fox I don’t think so. Do you owe me this? Do you owe me this? For all the years I spent with you? You became lovers. (Pause.)
Karen Bob? No? Alright. Then, yes. We did.
Fox You talked of love.
Karen Is that...
Fox Did...?
Karen Is that so impossible...?
Fox It’s not impossible. No. Not at all. You were drawn to him. You were drawn to a man. It’s not impossible, I think that we would say it happens all the time; you ‘said’ things to each other. (Pause.) Things occurred. And this is serious. Forgive me if my words seem to belie that, but I’m doing all I can,’cause I love this guy, too. My question: you answer me frankly, as I know you will: you came to his house with the preconception, you wanted him to greenlight the book.
(Pause.)
Karen Yes.
Fox If he had said ‘No’, would you have gone to bed with him?
Karen (pause) I don’t think that I’ll answer you.

Box No?
Karen I don’t think you have the right to ask it. Bob...
Gould I would like to know the answer.
Karen You would.
Gould Yes. I would. (Pause.)
Karen Bob. Bob: the man I could respect...
Gould Without the bullshit. Just tell me. You’re living in a World of Truth. Would you of gone to bed with me, I didn’t do your book. (Pause.)
Karen No. (Pause.) No.
Gould Oh, God, now I’m lost.
Fox Bob...
Gould Please be quiet for one moment.
Karen Bob. Bob, we have the opportunity...
Fox ‘We’? ‘We’...? I know who he is, who are you? Some broad from the Temporary Pool. A Tight Pussy wrapped around Ambition. That’s who you are, Pal. Now you listen to me, Bob...
Gould Charlie. Please...
Karen We talked last night, Bob...
Gould You told me to Be a Man...
Fox ‘Be a Man’? ‘Be a Man’? What right do you have? You know what this man has done...? (Phone rings, Fox picks it up, Into phone.) Yes. One moment. Please... (Hang up.)
Gould Oh, God. I don’t know what to do.
Fox You know the right thing to do.
Karen Bob, Bob. You reached out to me...
Fox He reached out to you? He fucked you on a bet.
Karen I don’t care.
Fox You don’t ‘care’?
Karen Bob, perfect love...
Karen Bob, we decided last night.
Gould Yes. I’m lost, do you hear me, I’m lost. I have to think, I...
Karen We decided last night.
Gould We what?
Karen We decided last night.
Fox Bob: I need you.
Gould I have to think.
Fox I need you to remember me.
Gould I have to stop. I have to think now.
Karen Bob...
Gould ... No.
Karen Bob, we have a meeting. (Pause.)
Fox I rest my case. (Pause.)
Karen Did I say something wrong...
Fox No. We have a meeting, that’s true. Thank you, honey.
Karen Did I say something wrong...
Fox Not at all. (Picks up phone. Dials.) Yes. Charlie Fox. Calling for Bob Gould. Mr Gould and I have a... Yes. Mr Ross is back from...? Fine. Would you tell him we’ll be just two, three minutes late? Thank you. (Hangs up.)
Gould I have to change my shirt.
Karen I don’t understand.
Gould We’re rather busy now. You’ll excuse me. Mr Fox will show you out.
Karen No. No. Listen to me. One moment. One moment, Bob. Wait, Bob. The things we said last night. You called for help. Bob, you remember? Listen to me. (She picks up the book and starts to read.) ‘One bell was “showers about us”: two bells was “showers across the Lake”; three bells was “showers across the Ocean”; and four bells was “showers across the World”. And he wondered how they had obtained that concession to rehearse the bells for the benefit of this instruction.’ No, that’s the wrong bit. That’s not the part...
(Gould exits to the washroom. She looks up.) Bob...
Fox That was a close one. Don’t you think?
Karen I think I’m being punished for my wickedness.
Fox Yeah, I do, too. You got a lot of nerve, Babe. And I’ll tell you something else, that’s why you’re stupid, is you made your move on something wasn’t ever going to make a movie. ’Cause the people wouldn’t come. (He picks up the book, reads.) ‘The Earth burned. But the last man had a vision...’
Karen I don’t belong here.
Fox Well, I can help you out on that. You ever come on the lot again, I’m going to have you killed. Goodbye. See you at the A and P.
Karen Goodbye.
Fox I heard you. (Pause.)
Karen What did I say...
Fox ... Uh huh...
Karen I don’t understand.
Fox I’ll send you the coverage. (Pause.) Goodbye. You’ve said your piece. Now go away. (Pause.)
Karen I hope...
Fox We all hope. It’s what keeps us alive. (Pause. Karen exits. He picks up the book, throws it out after her.) And take this with you. (To himself:) ‘How are things made round...’ (Gould reenters, tucking his clean shirt. Pause. Gould looks at Fox.) Well, Bob, you’re human. You think I don’t know? I know. We wish people would like us, huh? To Share Our Burdens. But it’s not to be.
Gould I suppose not.
Fox: You're goddamn right, not. And what if this fucken' 'grace' exists? It's not for you. You know that, Bob. You know that. You have a different thing.

Gould: She told me I was a good man.

Fox: How would she know? You are a good man. Fuck her.

Gould: I only wanted...

Fox: I know what you wanted, Bob.

Gould: I only wanted...

Fox: I know what you wanted, Bob. You wanted to do good.

Gould: Yes. (Pause.) Thank you.

Fox: Hey, what'd you want me to say, Bob, you 'Owe' me...? (Phone rings, Fox answers it. Into phone.) We're coming... (Hangs up.) Because we joke about it, Bob, we joke about it, but it is a 'People Business', what else is there...?

Gould: I wanted to do Good... But I became foolish.

Fox: Well, so we learn a lesson. But we aren't here to 'pine', Bob, we aren't put here to mope. What are we here to do (Pause.) Bob? After everything is said and done. What are we put on earth to do?

Gould: We're here to make a movie.

Fox: Whose name goes above the title?


Fox: Then how bad can life be?