Speed-The-Plow

A Play

by David Mamet

SAMUEL FRENCH
THE CHARACTERS

Bobby Gould —
Charlie Fox — Two men around forty
Karen — A woman in her twenties

THE SCENE

ONE — Gould's office, morning
TWO — His home, that evening.
THREE — His office, the next morning

*Speed-the-Flow* was first presented by Lincoln Center Theater at the Royale Theater, Broadway, opening on May 3, 1988, with the following cast:

Bobby Gould  Joe Mantegna
Charlie Fox  Ron Silver
Karen  Madonna

Directed by Gregory Mosher; sets by Michael Merritt; costumes by Nan Cibula; lighting by Kevin Rigdon.
ACT ONE

SCENE: GOULD’s office. Morning. Boxes and Painting materials all around.
AT RISE: 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? Was there one thing which, originally, was round . . . ?”

FOX. . . . Bob . . .

GOULD. (leaving 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 questions 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?
How close should I be?
Fox. I have to ask you something.
Gould. (pause) Go ahead, Charl.
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. All right. 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? Charl? Because, Charl, 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, Charl, 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, in 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, Charl, 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, Charl, 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. All right then, that's enough. What did you bring me?

Fox. This morning, Bob.

Gould. Yes?

Fox. This morning Doug Brown came to me.


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. Dougie 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. (Hang 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. Alright, I, this is some time ago.

Gould. uh huh...

Fox. That I get the script to Brown...

Gould. What script?

Fox. You don't know it, a prison script...

Gould. (simultaneously with "script") One of ours...?

Fox. I found it in the file. I loved it... all the time I'm thinking...

Gould. Uh huh...

Fox. How to do this script, I, one day...

Gould. Uh huh...

Fox. so...

Gould. So, you give the script to Brown...%

Fox. Not "him," his...

Gould. Uh huh...

Fox. his...

Gould. I know...

Fox. His "guy."

Gould. Yes.

Fox. Gives Dougie the script... (Phone rings.

Gould picks up the phone.)

Gould. (into phone) Yes. Thank you. (hangs up)

Ross'll get back to us...

Fox. His guy gives Dougie the script...

Gould. He gives Dougie the script.

Fox. Yes.

Gould. Mmm...
FOX. Months ago, alright? I don't know. Today, alright...? Today. (pause) I'm having coffee...

GOULD. Umm hmm... FOX. Who drives up?

GOULD. coffee at your house...

FOX. Who drives up?

GOULD. Doug 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...?

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...
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, some-
time, somehow, because . . ."
Gould . . . okay . . .
Fox. "I couldn't . . ."
Gould . . . uh huh . . .
Fox. "... live with that."
Gould . . . The degradation . . .
Fox. "So why aren't 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 com-
puters, so on, with his money . . .
Gould . . . yeah . . .
Fox. His links to the outside . . .
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, Charl. 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, Charl, 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, Charl . . .
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, Charl? You get a free option on a Dougie 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 time’s 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. I, 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, Charl: 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 . . . ? 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, Doug just 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 . . .


Ross: he'll be here, one chance in a quillion he isn't, than we go Condition Red, we get him on the . . .

FOX. . . because . . .

Gould. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm with you.

FOX. Be . . .

Gould. . . . You understand . . . I wanted to do . . .

FOX. . . . I understand . . .

Gould. I wanted to do it in person . . .

FOX. Yes.

Gould. . . . 'Cause you're gonna be the Bringer of Good News . . .

FOX. No, no, you're absolutely right.

Gould. Do it in person . . .

FOX. . . . yes . . .

Gould. And forge that bond.

FOX. It's just . . .

Gould. Don't worry.

FOX. Not me. It's just, you move up to the big league . . . (pause)

Gould. Charley. Your ship has come in . . .

FOX. (pause) . . . all I'm saying . . . Ross . . .


FOX. Lord, I believe, aid thou my unbelief . . . the sucker walked in, said "I love the script."

Gould. Oh yes, Charlie, for we're now the fair-haired boys.

FOX. I couldn't believe it, you talk, talk about, talk, what is the . . . "watersheds."

Gould. That's right.

FOX. And, this is one of them.

Gould. And why shouldn't it be—you understand . . . ?
Fox. I don't know.
Gould. 'Cause you...
Fox. I, I don't know...
Gould. You worked for it... you know, you know...
Fox. "I'm going to be rich and I can't believe it."
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."
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. Hhhh. 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. 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 20 years in the barrel . . .
Gould... I know...
Fox. No, you don't know, you've forgotten. Due respect.
Gould. . . . maybe . . .
Fox. But, but . . . oh, maan . . . I'm gonna settle some fucken' scores.
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 . . .
Fox. Cute broad, the new broad.
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.
Fox. ’Cause he’s an old whore.
Gould. . . . that’s right . . .
Fox. You’re just an old whore.
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?
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.
SPEED-THE-PLow

—let’s tear Charlie Fox down . . ."

Fox. Behind my back. Yes, but in pub-

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

FOX. Yes. Good morning.

Gould. 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,

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

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 . . .

Fox. Hey, everything’s temporary ‘til it’s “not” . . .

KAREN. No, this is just a temporary job.

Gould. It’s just a temporary job — so leave the girl

KAREN. Sir?

FOX. Call me Charlie. This seem like a good place to

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 won-
derful 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 talking about his own self.

Fox. You bet I am. But my historical self, Bob, for I

am a cog no more.


Fox. Give this man a witness.

Gould. Because in this sinkhole of slime and deprav-

ity, 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. 'Cause 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. Hmmm.

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, Charlie, 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. Why'n'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.


Fox. Hey.


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 whaddayacal-lit . . . (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. Char, 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 forget 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 here 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. Hmm.
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.
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" . . .
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 moping' 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, 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)
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 naive of me.

GOULD. Listen, there's nothing wrong with being naive, 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 really. 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, you 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?
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 naive, but I would think that if you could keep your values straight, if you had principles to refer to, then.

GOULD. Hmmm.

KAREN. I know it's naive . . .

GOULD. Yes it is naive, 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. O.K. (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. 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 to 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 that he owes me five hundred bucks.

END OF ONE

AT RISE: GOULD and KAREN. KAREN is reading 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 trouble, 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)
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. My 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 . . .
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 . . .
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 say 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 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.
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.
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 . . .
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. Yes. (pause)

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


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 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 told you . . .

Karen. You held out a hope . . .

Gould. Aha! You see? That's 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.
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 naive. 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 it 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 me to read the book. (pause) 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.

END OF TWO
THREE

SCENE: GOULD’s office. The next morning.
AT RISE: GOULD is sitting behind his desk. FOX Enters.

FOX. Okay. The one, the one, the one thing, I was up
all night; I’m sorry, I should be better at these things, I
don’t know how to say it, you know how you do? You
stand and think, you think, and, the only thing, one hand
you say: “Am I worthy to be rich?” The other hand, you,
you know, you feel greedy; so it’s hard to know what’s
rightfully yours . . . Bob: when we said, when we said:
yesterday: we were talking, when you said “producer,”
what we meant, what we were talking about was, I un-
derstand it, that we were to “share” above-the-title, we
would co-produce, because . . . that’s right, isn’t it?
And the other thing; I’m sure you thought of this; to say
to Ross, to, that we, as a team, you and I, this is only the
beginning, for, if we brought this (I’m sure you thought
of this) it’s fairly limitless, we can bring more . . . those
two things, only, are what I wanted to say to you . . .
GOULD. I’m not going to do the film.
FOX. Which film?
GOULD. The Douglas Brown film.
FOX. . . You’re not . . .
GOULD. I’m not going to greenlight the Doug Brown
prison film.
FOX. I don’t blame you. It’s a piece of shit. I were you,
I’d do the film on radiation. That’s the project I would
do. “A Story of Love, a Story of Hope.” That’s what I
would do; and then spend the rest of my life in a packing
crate. I can’t get over those guys. Why do they waste our
time? A talky piece of puke. Prestige and all, okay, but

why, we should just say, “Sir, sir, you go to the
movies . . . if you saw a movie of this shit, 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 Soci-
ety” 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 human-
kind.” 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 my-
self, 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, and 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: 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. That 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, the 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 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?

GOULD. The...

FOX. Yes? (pause)

GOULD. The... why I was called to my new job.

FOX. Why you, uh huh...

GOULD. The notion, yes, the notion that our life is short... The... that, in some way...

FOX. Go on.

GOULD. I... I believe in the ideas that are contained in the book.

FOX. Hey, I believe in the Yellow Pages, Bob, but I don't want to film it. Bobby. Bobby. Why are you doing this? Why are you doing this to me?

GOULD. You, you can take the prison film to Ross.

FOX. I take Ross the film, he'll make the film, and he'll give me a "thank you." You know that. I need you. I need your protection...

GOULD. I...

FOX. You're going to dy over my whole life.

GOULD. I...
FOX. Have, Bob, have you always hated me?
Gould. No.
FOX. Some secret . . .
Gould. No.
FOX. Doubted my loyalty, my . . .
Gould. No.
FOX. Then, then why are you doing this?
Gould. I think . . .
FOX. I'm listening to you.
Gould. . . . that we have few chances . . .
FOX. I'm listening to you.
Gould. To do something which is right.
FOX. To do something which is right? To do some-
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) Noth-
ing 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 . . .
FOX. Did you miss your wake up call . . . ? If the 
film doesn't work out here, you know what you got? 
Little Lambsy 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 . . . (pause) 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 . . .
FOX. Bullshit what you want. Bullshit. I could of gone 
across the street.
Gould. . . . I don't . . .
FOX. Fuck you . . . Fuck you . . . (He hits 
Gould.) Fuck you. Get up (He hits him again.) I'll 
fucken' kill you right here in this office. All this bullshit; 
you wimp, you coward . . . Now you got the job, and 
now you're going to run all over everything, like some-
thing broke in the shopping bag, you fool — your fucken' 
sissy film — you squat to pee. You old woman . . . all 
of my life I've been eating your shit and taking your 
leavings . . . Fuck you, the Head of Production. Job I 
could of done ten times better'n you, the press, the 
money, all this time, and now you're going to be some 
fucken' wimp, cost me my, my, my . . . fortune? Not in 
this life, pal. You writ has run. You hear me . . . ? 
(pause) Bob . . . ? (pause) Do you hear me . . . ? You
want somebody to take charge? I'll take charge. Do you hear me, mister...? You need an excuse to cop out, I'll give you your fucken' excuse. (pause) We have a meeting. Can you fix yourself up?

GOULD. No. (pause)

FOX. What's the matter?

GOULD. Nothing.

FOX. You have another shirt...? Can you get through the meeting with Ross?

GOULD. I'm going to greenlight the radiation book.

FOX. It's alright, Bob. It's okay. I see it now. It's okay. Everything is okay. Listen to me, it's alright. I'll explain it to you: a beautiful, a beautiful and an ambitious woman comes to...

GOULD. I want you to be careful what you say about her.

FOX. It's only words, unless they're true. It's alright, now. I'm sorry I got frightened. Forgive me. I'll explain it to you. (pause) A beautiful and an ambitious woman comes to town. Why? Why does anyone come here...? You follow my argument? (pause) Everyone wants power. How do we get it? Work. How do they get it? Sex. The end. She's different? 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...
want from you? Hearth and Home? No. What? Love? Huh? Children? ... To greenlight a film. To greenlight some bizarre idea ...

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 T.V. 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 man . . .


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.


Fox. (He 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. I'm 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?

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.

FOX. 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.
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 ... (hangs 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 ...
SPEED-THE-PLOW

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. (He starts walking her to the door.) Goodbye. See you at the A and P.
KAREN. Goodbye.
FOX. I heard you.
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 re-Enters, in a clean shirt. Tucking in his 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.

SPEED-THE-PLOW

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?
GOULD. Fox and Gould.
FOX. Then how bad can life be?

END