

***CROSSING THE LINE***

An Original Screenplay by  
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There are areas of the South Bronx and other cities where no mail, police or emergency vehicles will tread because of the violence.

What if there was a reason?

The gap between the rich and poor is getting wider.

What if there was a reason?

And in one city... a breaking point.

But this is just a story... or is it?

*"Only a crisis -- actual or perceived -- produces real change."*

Milton Friedman, Economist

*"Extreme violence has a way of preventing us from seeing the interests it serves."*

Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*

CROSSING THE LINE

FADE IN:

INT. SALLY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Overturned furniture, ripped clothes, broken glass... a war zone. Not pretty. We HEAR a radio TUNED past music to TALK.

CALLER #1

(over radio)

Somebody's gotta do something.  
They're takin' over -- they painted  
a black line down the middle of the  
streets -- right across buildings!

Objects LOOM into frame --

A MAN'S CRUMPLED SHIRT

buttons torn loose, hanging by twisted threads. A few drops  
of BLOOD...

DJ HOST

(over radio)

This is "Open Line," and if you  
just joined us, you could say our  
topic is open sores -- and our  
city's got a beaut. The Pit.

The trail of blood droplets lead to --

A WOMAN'S BRA

ripped in half -- then MOVING PAST --

A PIECE OF BROKEN MIRROR

reflecting the SNOUT of an AUTOMATIC -- a 9mm BERETTA.

A MAN'S LEATHER BELT

hangs down from the bed... dangling from a WOMAN'S FOOT --  
pulled taut at the ankles.

DJ HOST (CONT'D)

Caller, you're on the air.

CALLER #2

Yeah, about The Pit. Let 'em rot.  
It's only four square miles. They  
don't pay no taxes -- IRS ain't  
goin' in there. Post office don't  
deliver no more.

By the bed post -- torn condom packets. Suddenly, an intact,  
worm-like cigarette ash DROPS onto the carpet from above...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DJ HOST

The Pit used to be only three square miles. Doesn't that tell you something?

A few more ashes flutter down -- past torn sheets -- streaked with whipped cream...

CALLER #2

Yeah, but I'm across the river, so it doesn't bother me that much.

The radio CLICKS OFF.

OVER THE MATTRESS EDGE

beads of sweat roll off naked thigh. Breasts, smeared with whipped cream, lead to a hardened face contorted in a long drag on a cigarette. Meet SALLY.

SALLY

That really sucked.

The smoke is exhaled...

A NAKED MAN

Looks out the window. The Statue of Liberty in the distance.

Three finger-streaks of whipped cream on his butt. Meet NICK ANGEL -- a true iconoclast, but you won't see him on the Sundance Channel. His "shit detector" rattles the cages of the proverbial "they." He's on "their" radar because he's got the balls to make a difference.

SALLY (CONT'D)

The word on you was hot stuff. Ya can't believe jack shit anymore.

She takes a long drag IN as...

NICK

EXHALES against the cold pane, fogging it up. He traces a "heart symbol" through the condensation...

SALLY (CONT'D)

What else you do on first dates?

(No answer)

No way you're done yet.

Cigarette dangling -- her eyes challenging. Nick grabs her ankle -- loosens the belt and slides it off her foot.

SALLY (CONT'D)

(wicked grin)

Gotta do it 'til ya get it right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She stretches like a cat, exposing her ass... beckoning.

Nick brushes condom packets off his NYPD DETECTIVE'S GOLD SHIELD -- flicks his finger across her nipple, lifting off a patch of whipped cream, then sucks it off...

NICK

I think this romance is over.

**EXT. SALLY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

Nick walks out the dingy entrance past the display window of a TV/Stereo store. The place is closed -- but a large screen TV is ON -- showing: CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360."

Even through the plate glass, we HEAR Anderson Cooper's narration. On the large TV screen is a handsome and imposing man -- RON W. KARY -- walking in a vast garden landscape with five beagles romping at his feet.

ANDERSON COOPER (V.O.)

Ron W. Kary is a man for our times!  
From humble beginnings, he rose to  
be king of the hill -- high atop  
the American dream!

Nick moves past -- THE CAMERA HOLDS ON the large screen TV and the dark inner store beyond it.

ANDERSON COOPER (V.O.)

Tonight we continue our special  
report on philanthropists who make  
a difference.

ON THE TV SCREEN, the "CNN" camera moves past the HIGH SECURITY compound walls through the huge wrought iron gates, complete with the symbol "K," and up a winding road toward a sprawling palatial mansion in the distance.

While this occurs, We also SEE three FLASHLIGHT BEAMS slice and probe the darkness from WITHIN the store itself.

ANDERSON COOPER (V.O.)

Ron Kary has amassed a vast fortune  
with far-reaching influence. He is  
a global player. When he built his  
palatial estate, he asked for his  
own zip-code -- and he got it!

The three flashlights are right on top of us -- and are in fact THREE MEN dressed in stealth black -- who quickly pick up the large screen TV from the display window and sneak off.

**EXT. CITY PARKWAY - AERIAL SHOT - NIGHT**

CREDITS OVER. Light traffic. It's very late. From up here, the city looks like a sparkling jewel. Inviting. You'd never think anything less than poetic went on below.

**EXT. ELEVATED ROADWAY - NIGHT**

With the city shimmering behind it, a lone, rugged LAND ROVER begins the descent down the other side -- this area is dark and foreboding. The road acts like a beltway around it.

**EXT. OFF RAMP - NIGHT**

A solitary exit into the dark side. The Land Rover slows as Nick stares out over the urban abyss...

**NICK'S POV OF "THE PIT"**

Ulcerated. Ravaged. The ultimate image that life is fucked.

UP AHEAD

a LONE MAN, with a red beret, stands on the off ramp with a professional Ikegami video camera. Meet VICTOR DRODELLE.

THE LAND ROVER

pulls alongside him and Nick opens the door for Victor, who just stands there... WHISTLING, waiting for a response from Nick, who listens to the WHISTLED TUNE, then --

NICK  
"Midnight Cowboy."

VICTOR  
Damn, thought I had you.

Victor piles in...

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
You actually doin' this thing?

NICK  
That's the plan. Set up in the back.

This ISN'T the ritzy Range Rover -- this is the Land Rover -- big, rugged safari version -- rear seat replaced with padded flooring -- strewn with chewed dog "toys."

NICK

fumbles in the mess for his cell phone, while Victor checks his video camera. Nick dials out.

**INT. CAPTAIN MILLS' LUXURY CONDO - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Dark. The phone RINGS. A lamp CLICKS on illuminating --

A FRAMED PHOTO

of CAPTAIN HARVEY MILLS in crisp police dress blues along with his elegant silver-haired WIFE.

CAPTAIN MILLS' HAND

lifts the receiver to his face as WE INTERCUT:

CAPTAIN MILLS  
(groggy)  
Yeah...

NICK  
I need your okay to run The Pit.  
Captain Mills...

CAPTAIN MILLS  
(still in a fog)  
Yes...

NICK  
Thanks. And, Captain...  
(enjoying this)  
Kiss Mrs. Mills for me.

Mills focuses on the bedside alarm clock -- 2:45 am.

CAPTAIN MILLS  
(more awake)  
What? Who is this? Angel??

The phone CLICKS OFF.

CAPTAIN MILLS (CONT'D)  
Goddamn it... that arrogant prick!

Mills' WIFE stirs -- wearing a hairnet and blindfold mask.

MRS. MILLS  
Harvey, go back to sleep.

CAPTAIN MILLS  
That fucking ass-wipe!

MRS. MILLS  
Harvey!

The light CLICKS OFF. Total black. The phone RINGS.

**INT. BRIGGS SUBURBAN HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Total black. A DIFFERENT phone RINGS next to a digital clock -  
- 2:47 am. A huge hand engulfs the phone.

GABRIEL BRIGGS

could wrestle a bear... and win. Fortunately, for the bear,  
he's got a sense of humor. We INTERCUT:

GABRIEL  
(into phone)  
Yeah...

NICK  
(filtered over phone)  
Good, you're awake.

GABRIEL  
(groggy)  
Nick, you okay?

NICK  
Yeah, I'm fine.

GABRIEL  
Then you're an asshole.

From ANOTHER room, a BABY starts CRYING. Gabriel's wife,  
DANI, rolls out of bed...

NICK  
(knows)  
I woke the kid, sorry.  
(a beat)  
You up for a little test run?

GABRIEL  
(suddenly more alert)  
You goin' in?

NICK  
Thinkin' about it.

GABRIEL  
We're supposed to do that together.

NICK  
You're gettin' old, spendin' too  
much time in bed.

GABRIEL  
At least I know her name.

NICK  
Gotta go, Gabe. Victor's gonna tape  
it. Stock up on popcorn.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

GABRIEL

Nick --

Nick CLICKS OFF. Dani carries the baby into the bedroom.

DANI

Is everything okay?

Briggs takes the tiny child into his huge arms.

GABRIEL

(worried)

No, it's not.

**EXT. OFF RAMP - NIGHT**

The Land Rover sweeps off the beltway towards THE PIT.

**INT. NICK'S LAND ROVER - LOOKING OUT - NIGHT**

Nick's scans the dark horizon...

VICTOR

What're we lookin' for?

NICK

Anything.

Victor begins WHISTLING again, but Nick quickly cuts him off.

NICK (CONT'D)

"Patton."

VICTOR

Shit, you been honin' up.

This road runs parallel to two worlds.

A THICK BLACK LINE

painted down the street and across buildings is a dividing line. One side has a zip-code. The other... is hell.

**EXT. INTERSECTION - NIGHT**

Two lone cop cars at a T-intersection -- facing into The Pit.

FOUR UNIFORMED COPS sit inside. A mixed bag. JACOBS is white, his partner CHIN is Chinese; EVANS is black, and his partner ROJAS is Puerto Rican. The headlights are OFF, but the two searchlights are ILLUMINATING A FIGHT --

INSIDE "THE PIT"

TWO BLACK GUYS and a WHITE GUY are beating the crap out of another BIG BLACK GUY. This is good theatre.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIN  
How much time?

JACOBS  
(timing with watch)  
Thirty five seconds.

EVANS  
(from other car)  
Hang in there, baby, I got round  
two!

ROJAS  
(pissed)  
C'mon, finish him off!

Rojas obviously has round one, and these are running bets.

EVANS  
(looks off)  
Heads up, company.

NICK'S LAND ROVER

pulls up near them...

ROJAS  
It's Angel, he's cool.

The cops are relaxed. Nothing out of place here.

INSIDE THE LAND ROVER

Nick checks his 9mm Beretta...

VICTOR  
You want me out there or in here?

NICK  
Wherever... just start taping and  
don't stop. I want the whole area.

NICK

leaves the Land Rover and strolls over to the cops...

NICK (CONT'D)  
Pretty good seats.

JACOBS  
We're timing it, Lieutenant.

CHIN  
One minute a round. Just started.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROJAS  
Got a little bet goin'. Round  
five's open if ya want it.

EVANS  
Ten buck ante.

NICK  
Pass. It ain't goin' five.

JACOBS  
(timing)  
Round two... Now.

ROJAS  
Shit! They hit like a bunch of  
fags!

Actually, they can HEAR the THUDDING punches REVERBERATE  
between the buildings in the deserted street. It has a  
sickening rhythm. The victim is getting wobbly.

EVANS  
The legs are goin', baby. C'mon  
drop! Come to Papa.

Suddenly, the fight's over. The big black man drops like a  
sack of meat -- the THUD of his body washes over the street.  
Retreating FOOTSTEPS fade into the night. All is quiet again.

EVANS (CONT'D)  
Yeah!

CHIN  
Sonuvabitch!

EVANS  
Pay up, you assholes.

JACOBS  
(digging out money)  
It was rigged. Had to be.

ROJAS  
Yeah, took a fall.

CHIN  
(paying up)  
A fuckin' pussy.

The cops crack up laughing as Evans counts his winnings.

NICK  
We're goin' in.

It gets awfully quiet...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACOBS  
(re: The Pit)  
In there?

CHIN  
That's over the line.

They're all staring at Nick like he's nuts.

NICK  
(simply)  
There's a man down. We're goin' in.

ROJAS  
They don't want us in there.

CHIN  
It pisses 'em off if you go over  
the line.

EVANS  
(re: fight victim)  
He's just some asshole. Who gives a  
shit?!

NICK  
It's only a hundred yards. You  
badasses shouldn't have any trouble  
handling that.

JACOBS  
This is nuts, Lieutenant. No one's  
been in there in six months.

NICK  
(pointed)  
Crank it up.

End of discussion. Things get busy real fast. The cops check  
their guns -- shells rammed into shotguns.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Chin, you're back up. Rojas, you  
take us in.  
(pointing into Pit)  
Once there -- Evans, Jacobs, you  
flank the car. I'll get the man.

They get at it. Before Nick climbs in the squad car, he  
checks his shirt pocket, feeling for --

A SMALL BULGE

about the size of a bent quarter. Whatever it is, it's there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

THE SQUAD CAR

INCHES forward across "the line" and into The Pit.

UP AHEAD

the big black man lies dead still. A jagged pool of light from a broken street lamp rakes across his body.

IN THE SQUAD CAR

Eyes nervously dart over the area. Guns are gripped tight. Nick casually watches Rojas drive. Rojas feels his stare...

NICK (CONT'D)  
(off Rojas's look)  
Gas pedal's on the right.

Rojas eases down onto the gas. It's like walking on egg shells in here for these guys. Except Nick... he's cool.

THE SQUAD CAR

rolls up to the body... one hundred yards into The Pit.

Chin waits back across the line. Jacobs and Evans flank the car. Rojas stays behind the wheel. Nick moves toward the body. Evans, eyes alert, looks back toward "the line."

FROM HIS POV

it seems to hell and gone...

JACOBS

watches Evans looking back...

EVANS  
Looks like a fuckin' mile.

THROUGH VICTOR'S VIDEO CAMERA

we SEE the whole area, and HEAR Victor SOFTLY WHISTLING the theme to "The High And The Mighty," as Nick steps into --

THE JAGGED POOL OF LIGHT

next to the black man's body. The guy's a pulpy mess.

NICK  
(feeling his pulse)  
This guy's still with us.

Jacobs and Evans could care less.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JACOBS  
You see anything?

EVANS  
No, we're cool.

NICK  
If you two humanitarians are  
finished with your survey...

They move to help Nick -- but never get there.

THE NIGHT SKY

is LIT up by a GREEN FLARE soaring overhead -- bathing  
everything in a freakish GLOW.

ON THE STREET

A CACKLE of LAUGHTER rumbles out of the injured black man's  
body. Two eyes grin at Nick through a bloody face.

BLACK MAN  
Bye, Sucker.

The man SPRINGS to his feet and DARTS OFF. And that's when  
it happens... The quiet of the night ERUPTS with a ROAR as --

MUZZLE FLASHES

POP out from the green glow surrounding them.

THE GROUND AROUND THEM

SPITS asphalt as bullets RIP into it!

ALL THREE MEN

LEAP toward the squad car as Rojas turns it around.

TRACER BULLETS

trailing bolts of white hot light, STREAM out of the  
buildings -- SLAM into the squad car -- and light it up!

ROJAS

LEAPS out of the car as it -- JUMPS THE CURB -- IMPALING  
itself through a wrought iron fence!

THE TRACER BULLETS

TEAR chunks of metal off the frame -- RAKE across the gas  
tank IGNITING a fireball!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

THE EXPLOSION

KNOCKS Evans, Jacobs, and Nick right out of their socks!

CHIN

ROARS in -- backwards -- the trunk POPS open en route.

THE BULLETS

find their marks -- a new color is added to the WHITE light streaks and the GREEN glow... BLOOD RED.

Evans SPINS and TWISTS -- caught in the leg and shoulder -- SPARKLED droplets of blood leap outward in SPLASH patterns.

Jacobs is PROPELLED forward -- three TRACER LINES run into his ass and up his back -- DRILLING him like LIGHTNING BOLTS.

Rojas catches one in his hand -- another BURST of COLOR through his thigh -- and a RAINBOW SPLASH out his cheek.

NICK

is engulfed in STREAKS of crisscrossing light -- chunks of street ERUPTING all around him. Nothing touches him.

He is all motion -- DARTING toward the fallen cops -- GRABS Jacobs and HEAVES him into --

THE OPEN TRUNK

as Chin SQUEALS up in front of them, tires SMOKING!

NICK

HAULS Rojas up by the belt -- LURCHES him into the back seat.

CHIN

turns to help and CATCHES one in the shoulder -- SPRAYING Nick and the back seat in SPECKLED RED.

EVANS

spitting blood through gritted teeth, struggles to his feet. Nick reaches him and SHOVES him in the other rear door.

NICK  
(to Chin)  
Move! Move!

NICK

DIVES into the open trunk with Jacobs! Chin RACES off!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

TRACER BULLETS

SAIL after the fleeing squad car!

AT THE INTERSECTION

the squad car RACES toward "THE BLACK LINE" -- white light lines of SCREAMING projectiles chase it all the way -- both FLARING across to the other side!

THE SQUAD CAR

SKIDS to a halt -- the hail of bullets ceases. The green glow of the flair has faded... lines of tracer smoke dissipate upward in the night sky. It gets very QUIET.

NICK

climbs out of the trunk, feels for the medallion in his shirt pocket... it's still there. He looks at Victor, who is still taping... then he looks back into The Pit --

NICK'S POV

is the GLOW of a single BEAM of LIGHT -- FLOWING OVER the crest of the rise at the end of the deadly street. EMERGING THROUGH the glow, like a phoenix in the night --

A LONE WHITE MAN

Tall. Foreboding. You just met MURCHISON. He stands his ground -- stares down the street -- right at Nick.

The message is clear. Across this line -- all is his.

**EXT. THE KARY BUILDING - DAWN**

A massive skyscraper, symbol of the power elite -- "KARY" carved into the granite keystone over the entrance.

A MESSENGER

DARTS through bottle-necked cars on his Vespa right up to the curb -- DASHES INSIDE carrying a padded envelope.

**INT. THE KARY BUILDING - GRAND FOYER - DAY**

Towering and cavernous. Flashing a GREEN PASS CARD, the messenger darts past the SECURITY GUARDS, through the morning business crowd to the EXPRESS ELEVATOR.

**INT. KARY INTERNATIONAL HQ - DAY**

This is the power corridor. The executive offices of the diverse Kary conglomerate. But -- there is no crass display of hype -- only magnificent works of art adorn the walls.

(CONTINUED)