

THE CROSSROADS

FADE IN:

EXT. KISSENA BLVD., FLUSHING, QUEENS - DAY - TRAVELING

We're moving east on Kissena Boulevard, between melting snow banks and brick tenements. SOUNDS of a busy Italian neighborhood fill the air. We arrive behind a rumbling BOX TRUCK, its roll-up rear door reading "Flushing Thrift".

SUPERIMPOSE: "Queens, New York"

SUPERIMPOSE: "January, 1985"

The truck's brake lights flash red. It turns left at Cherry Avenue, revealing parked across the street a CARGO VAN with blacked out windows. The rear doors read "BNB Contracting".

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

Crammed in the van with all manner of surveillance gear are two NYC DETECTIVES and a SERGEANT, all in plainclothes.

Detective #1 wears headphones and tinkers with a radio tuner. Detective #2 scratches notes into a pad.

The sergeant looks through the window and sees the box truck parking on Cherry. The sergeant's walkie-talkie CHIRPS.

TRUCK'S DRIVER (V.O.)

(radio filter)

Tiger-One, this is Bronco, we are in position.

SERGEANT

(into walkie-talkie)

Copy that, Bronco. Hold position.

His focus shifts to the nondescript building across the avenue from the truck. Its sign simply reads "Luncheonette".

Detective #1 turns to the sergeant.

DETECTIVE #1

I've got the signal.

The sergeant picks up his headphones and lifts them to one ear. It's a CACOPHONY of men talking, phones ringing, and other assorted noises, but one voice is particularly loud...

MAN (V.O.)

(radio filter)

I'm tellin' ya, the ponies really came through today...

INT. LUNCHEONETTE/AKA "THE BANK" - DAY

The man on the phone is VICTOR--33, tall, athletic, and temperamental. He's got dark hair and a trim beard. A single gold cross hangs around his neck. A Walther PPK in a shoulder holster fits tight to his body.

VICTOR (MAN)

...and we still got a race to go.
(listens)

The boys are counting the take now
so you'll have the number soon.

He sits on his desk holding a clipboard. From here he can survey the entire room. He runs this operation.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

You got it. I'll talk to ya.

We are inside "The Bank", the place where the Mob cashes in on its control of the horse races and the wire business.

Through the fog of tobacco smoke we can vaguely make out the decor--peeling yellow wallpaper and stained low pile carpet. TVs show the races while a dozen old-time WISEGUYS chew on cigars and count up STACKS OF CASH on loud adding machines.

VICTOR

Richie!! What do you got?

RICHIE, a 65-year-old pug, rolls money as he counts.

RICHIE

Forty-five so far!

VICTOR

You ain't done yet? Come on!

RICHIE

Go fuck yaself, Vic!

Victor laughs. He sits down and looks at his watch. He looks up. He looks around. As if he's expecting someone...

EXT. CORNER OF KISSENA & CHERRY - DAY

A delivery truck parks in front of the neighboring building. A DELIVERY MAN hops out with a package and heads next door.

Nearby, a WOMAN pushes a stroller along the sidewalk. A telephone company LINESMAN scales a nearby pole.

SERGEANT (V.O.)

Looks like the gang's all here.

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

The cops watch through the window, restless.

DETECTIVE #2
How long do we have till this
guy's supposed to show?

SERGEANT
He usually picks up about thirty
minutes from --

Then--a black sedan STREAKS across their view, halting at the curb in front of the luncheonette. Who's inside is not discernible. The sergeant opens up his walkie-talkie.

SERGEANT
All units, this is Tiger-One. All
eyes on the subject building, this
may be our guy in the black sedan.

EXT. CORNER OF KISSENA & CHERRY - DAY

The passenger side door kicks open. A MYSTERY MAN bolts out, crosses fifteen feet of sidewalk and opens the door to the luncheonette. In three seconds flat.

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

The Sergeant whips his head around to the detectives.

SERGEANT
Did you get his face?

A pair of blank looks is all he gets back.

INT. LUNCHEONETTE STOREFRONT - DAY

The mystery man strides through the dining area towards a DOOR. He gestures to a GUY standing at the register. The guy reaches down, the door BUZZES, and the mystery man opens it.

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

The sergeant watches the sedan idling at the curb.

SERGEANT
(into walkie-
talkie)
This is Tiger-One, did anyone get
a positive ID on the subject
entering the building?

Radio silence. The sergeant grinds his teeth, takes a breath, then opens up his walkie-talkie.

SERGEANT

It's alright... We need a positive ID from the inside, anyway. We hold position and wait on verbal confirmation from Tiger-Eleven.

INT. "THE BANK" - DAY

The mystery man enters. His eyes SEARCH through the cigar smoke for someone. He finds him. Victor. Their eyes meet.

VICTOR

There he is!

The man marches across the room towards Victor, oblivious to the salutations of his paisans. Victor gets up to meet him.

VICTOR

What brings you here early, Ton --

MYSTERY MAN

Shut up and listen--how much you got in so far?

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

The sergeant, wearing his headphones, turns to Detective #1.

SERGEANT

Did you get that? Did he say Tony?

Adding machines and phones SQUEAL in their headsets. The detective just shakes his head. The sergeant's incredulous.

INT. "THE BANK" - DAY

The mystery man is Tony Bonamo, AKA Tony Bananas, 32, a captain in the Queens mob. Tall, stocky, and volatile, a .38 Special peeks out of a holster underneath his overcoat.

VICTOR

Well the count ain't done yet --

TONY (MYSTERY MAN)

I know the count ain't done yet!
Now what do we got in so far!

VICTOR

Alright, alright--we're looking at thirty-five in the bag right now.

TONY

Good, give me ten K.

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

The sergeant punches the ceiling of the van.

SERGEANT
This is him, this is the guy.
(turns to
Detective #1)
You're getting all this?

Detective #1, hands on his earcups, nods.

SERGEANT
We just need to hear him IDed...

INT. "THE BANK" - DAY

Victor walks over to Richie and points to his cash. Richie nods. Victor grabs two handfuls of ROLLED GREEN.

VICTOR
Just let me count this out.

TONY
Yeah, yeah, come on.

VICTOR
What the fuck is going on?

He lays the money on a desk, mumbling numbers as he sorts.

TONY
They're onto me, they know...

VICTOR
What the fuck are you talking
about? Who knows? Who knows what?

TONY
The cops, you asshole, the fuckin'
cops! The thing I told you about
last week. Guy I visited uptown.

VICTOR
Get the fuck outta here! Nobody
knows nothin'. What, you
seein' black helicopters again?
Johnny G-man under your bed?

Tony moves within inches of Victor's face. Dripping sweat.

TONY
Count. The Fucking. Money.

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

The sergeant's blood pressure redlines.

SERGEANT

He's copping to the hit right
now! We just need the fucking ID!
(into walkie-
talkie)
Everybody standby for go!

INT. "THE BANK" - DAY

Victor packs an envelope with the cash and hands it to Tony,
who grabs it and turns to walk away. Victor scrambles.

VICTOR

The boss knows about this, right?

Tony stops and turns. Maybe he shouldn't have said that.

TONY

What did you just say? Does he
know? Does he know who makes the
register ring in this fuckin'
place? Does he know who whacked
that cocksuckin' snitch last
week?! He better fuckin' know!
The real question is--do you know
who the fuck you're talkin' to?

VICTOR

Relax, okay... I know who I'm
talking to... You're Tony Bananas.

INT. CARGO VAN - DAY

CLICK--the sergeant's walkie-talkie is opened.

SERGEANT

That's it. All units--go, go!

EXT. CORNER OF KISSENA & CHERRY - DAY

THE COPS SPILL FROM THE CARGO VAN'S REAR DOORS

Six DETECTIVES dismount from the delivery truck and fall in
behind the sergeant running towards the luncheonette.

The woman pulls out a shotgun from the stroller. The
delivery man draws one from his box. They join the parade.

Ten EMERGENCY SERVICES COPS emerge from the box truck, armed
with shotguns. They head to the rear of the building.

INT. "THE BANK" - DAY

Tony locks eyes with Victor and gestures as if asserting himself as the Alpha in this group.

Suddenly, a SLAM from inside the storefront followed by SHOUTING men and SCREAMING patrons. An ALARM sounds.

RICHIE
The fuckin' cops!!!

A beat, then wiseguys start ditching rolled cash down pipes built in their desks. Panicked, Tony REACHES in his coat for his .38. A quick decision, Victor pounces, grabbing his arm.

VICTOR
Tony, let's go!

The heavy door leading into the Bank bursts open, and cops SURGE into the room, weapons raised, led by the sergeant.

SERGEANT
Police! Hands up and nobody move!

Victor and Tony escape through a doorway in the back...

INT. HALLWAY

Into a dim, narrow corridor, the only light a single hanging bulb. A red "EXIT" sign is visible at the end of the hall.

TONY
Where the fuck are we going?!

VICTOR
Come on!

The pair bolt towards freedom. They're almost there-- when the exit door is ripped open. SUNLIGHT. SHOTGUNS.

ESU COP
Freeze!

Victor turns and catches Tony running into him. He pushes Tony back the way they came--until they're stopped again.

SERGEANT
Fucking freeze! Do not fucking move! Hands on your heads! Now!

Victor raises his hands. Tony punches a wall.

TONY
Fuck me!

INT/EXT. POLICE PADDYWAGON - DAY (DUSK)

The crew sits inside cuffed to one another. The old-timers, nothing to lose, heckle the cops. Victor and Tony sit across from each other in silence, defeated. The doors are SHUT.

INT. APARTMENT HOME - DAY

We crawl the hall of a nice, middle class home. Tastefully decorated, not ostentatious. The touch of a sensible woman.

A MAN in a dark overcoat stands at the hall's end, still, a phone to his ear. Glancing around, we see FAMILY PHOTOS on the wall. The first, a young black man, 20, with his mother.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK (1960S)

We focus on a young AFRICAN-AMERICAN BOY sitting quietly as his MOTHER, hardly visible, argues with the principal, o.s.

MOTHER (O.S.)

This is absurd--my son would not do those things! Even if he did, those animals were going to be dissected in class, regardless!

The boy's detached, unmoved by the shouting and accusations.

INT. APARTMENT HOME - DAY

We gain on the man. Another PICTURE--that same man, slightly older, in a Marine uniform, his face devoid of emotion.

INT. MILITARY COURT - DAY - FLASHBACK

That man is Marine Damien Colden, 20s, mocha skin, handsome. He stands trial by court martial. A MILITARY JUDGE presides over a jury of officers. Colden's mother looks on, stoic.

MILITARY JUDGE

Based upon the jury's verdict, Sergeant Damien Colden, you are hereby sentenced to time served, and will receive an other-than-honorable discharge from the United States Marine Corps.

His words hang. The judge's eyes drill into Colden's.

MILITARY JUDGE

If I may add, were it not for your late father's decorated service to the Corps, our findings here today may have been entirely different.

The gavel falls. The room gasps. Colden holds back a sneer.

INT. APARTMENT HOME - DAY

We arrive over the man's shoulder, and look down to see a FRAMED PHOTO--Damien Colden and his bride. She is elated, while his face wears a forced half-smile.

INT. APARTMENT HOME - DAY - FLASHBACK

Suitcases are stacked by the front door. That happy bride, GABRIELLA--30s, tall, elegant--is furious, pushing their young DAUGHTER to the door. Colden sits idly on the couch.

COLDEN

You're not really doing this.

GABRIELLA

Oh, I am, and I warned you! I told you I cannot be the only one in this house earning a living!

She slings a backpack over a shoulder and lifts a suitcase.

COLDEN

(calm/cold)

And how many times have I told you, Gabriella, I am distressed.

GABRIELLA

Oh, stop it, Damien, just stop it! Stop making excuses! I've asked for your help again and again!

She opens the door and lifts another suitcase.

COLDEN

(escalating)

That is not fair, Gabriella.

GABRIELLA

Not fair? We cannot go to the Bank of Mother every time someone pisses you off at a job, Damien!

And that's it. He ERUPTS. He LUNGES off the couch and grabs her arm as she pushes their confused daughter out the door.

COLDEN

Don't you dare talk like that to me!! Ever! I deserve respect!

She yanks her arm out of his grasp. She is not afraid.

GABRIELLA

Don't you ever grab me like that.

She pushes her way out and SLAMS the door behind her.

INT. APARTMENT HOME - DAY

We rotate to face the man holding the phone. Damien Colden.

COLDEN

Perhaps you can reach out to her,
she hasn't taken my calls.

(listens)

Oh yes, things are going well at
the new job. Really well. Thank
you. I... Can always rely on
you... Mother.

Colden lowers the phone into its cradle. He's now in his early 30s, wearing a neat goatee. A military build, but not military tough. We find something odd about his disposition.

He lifts his head. In his eyes--a quiet storm brews.

INT. E TRAIN - DAY

Colden stands amongst the throng of subway riders heading into the city. A WOMAN stands nearby, clutching a strap. Colden takes her in, from head to toe and back up--until he's caught by her MAN. The man's eyes threaten.

Colden shrinks, turning around towards two REAL NEW YORKERS conversing loudly. One of them holds up the newspaper.

REAL NEW YORKER #1

See the front page of the Post?
Still with that Bernie Goetz
"Subway Vigilante" bullshit.

Colden takes note of the headline, and their conversation.

REAL NEW YORKER #2

What?! The guy's a fuckin' hero.
(beat)

Listen, if somebody out there
tests you, then they think you're
afraid. And if they think you're
afraid, then they don't respect
you. So you gotta make 'em respect
you. Make them fear you.

REAL NEW YORKER #1

Fear and respect ain't the same --

REAL NEW YORKER #2

Oh no? Tell that to those punks.
Bet they respect Bernie now. They
definitely respect the gun.

Colden digests the words...

EXT. QUEENS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

A massive government complex impossible to overlook. The courthouse is ten stories, with an awning held up by twenty concrete pillars. Shadowing it is the detention center.

BAILIFF (V.O.)

Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

INT. QUEENS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM - DAY

On one side of the aisle, law enforcement, including the sergeant. On the other side, the defendant's "family". And the defendant is Tony Bonamo. He sits beside his LAWYER.

MAN (O.S.)

I do.

A JUDGE presides over this hearing. There is no jury.

JUDGE

You may be seated.

Victor sits on the witness stand, in a dark jacket, shirt, tie. His NYC Detective's SHIELD hangs from a jacket pocket.

The DISTRICT ATTORNEY approaches the witness stand.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

For the record, please state your name, rank, and command.

Victor looks into our eyes. With confidence.

VICTOR (MAN)

Detective Victor Santelli, assigned to the investigative staff of the Organized Crime Control Bureau.

EXT. QUEENS COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

The large glass doors open and Victor emerges, followed by the sergeant. Victor pauses at the steps to look at the sky.

SERGEANT

So that's it for you, man.

VICTOR

That's it, man. Testimony's over. Case is over. Undercover's in my rear-view.

SERGEANT

Unreal, man... So whose tapes am I gonna listen to now?

VICTOR

I don't really give a shit!

They share a laugh, then begin down the steps.

SERGEANT

You got that meeting lined up?

VICTOR

Yep. Actually...
(looks at time)
Shit, I gotta fly.

He extends a hand. A meaningful shake between colleagues.

VICTOR

Another chapter in the books, my man. Thanks for watching my back.

Victor starts down the steps, then something occurs to him.

VICTOR

What are ya doin' tonight? Come by Baron's. Bring the girl. We're having a little reunion!

SERGEANT

Alright, alright. I'll be there. Now get to your fuckin' meeting!

INT. FORD ESCORT - DAY - TRAVELING

Victor navigates Queens. A briefcase is on the seat next to him, joined by sandwich paper and a Bass Player magazine. He sings along with Hall & Oates or Prince on the radio.

He pulls into the lot of the 109th Precinct. Through the window we see the two-story building. He parks the car.

INT. 109TH PRECINCT - 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Victor nears a door. A sign reads "Queens Robbery Squad".

INT. QUEENS ROBBERY SQUAD

Victor enters. If there are nerves, they're not showing. A glance reveals DETECTIVES at desks, an armory, and offices. Spartan decor, typewriters, 80s tech. Phones RING, men work.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)
What can I do for you.

Victor looks down and sees a VETERAN DETECTIVE seated at a desk near the door. A nameplate reads "MARKLEY".

VICTOR
How ya doin'--Victor Santelli,
here to meet Captain Hardigan.

MARKLEY (DETECTIVE)
He's expecting you?

VICTOR
Yes.

Markley gestures with his head, pointing Victor towards the office in the back. Victor weaves his way there, the EYES of every cop on him. The door open, he taps on the jamb.

INT. OFFICE

CAPTAIN HARDIGAN stands up behind his desk.

HARDIGAN
Detective Santelli, come in.

Victor moves towards the captain. A modest office, poorly lit. Various police and military accolades adorn the walls.

VICTOR
(shaking hands)
Captain Hardigan, pleased to meet
you. Thanks so much for having me.

HARDIGAN
Yeah, yeah, don't mention it.
Heard a lot about you, Detective.

He's 64, tall and in great shape. The worn face of a man who landed at Okinawa, but eyes that say he's as sharp as ever.

Out of the corner of his eye, Victor spots a MAN in a dark corner of the room, kicked back in his chair behind a desk.

HARDIGAN
Detective, Lt. Dolan. You'd be
answering to him.

Victor turns to walk over and introduce himself...

HARDIGAN
Detective, have a seat.

Victor promptly halts and sits down in front of the captain.

HARDIGAN

So I hear you were undercover for over a year, with very impressive results. Tell me about the case.

VICTOR

It was a deep cover assignment. Wore a wire for a year, collecting direct evidence on tape. Started as muscle, gaining their trust. I was running numbers for a couple months when they put me in the Bank to run the day-to-day. All said and done, my intel put away about a hundred wiseguys.

HARDIGAN

So tell me why you asked the Inspector to be assigned here coming out of Organized Crime.

VICTOR

Truth be told, I just wanted to stay close to home. Spend more time with my two boys. But you know all this, Captain--the file's on your desk.

HARDIGAN

(laughs)

I like this kid.

He notices the lieutenant is not as amused.

HARDIGAN

Is there something you wanted to ask, Lieutenant?

Dolan--50s, white, mild-mannered, with short, neat black hair--flicks off his glasses and leans into his desk.

DOLAN

(contentious)

You have plenty of undercover experience, but no investigative. What makes you think you have the qualifications to work here?

HARDIGAN

Alright, Tom, relax, relax.

(to Victor)

The Lieutenant usually handpicks his own men, but I'm making an executive decision in your case.

Victor nods in understanding. Hardigan lifts Victor's file.

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