

CITIZEN ARCANE

an original screenplay by
Richard Hack and Mark S. Meritt
Based on a true story

There's no way of looking at a man's face
and looking and seeing what he has in his mind.

- Sam Byck

FADE IN:

EXT. INTERSTATE 95 - CHESTER, PA - NIGHT

1

Friday, February 22, 1974, just past midnight. Scattered cars dot the highway. The lights of the City of Brotherly Love recede into the distance behind a southbound beige and white 1968 Buick Century.

INT. BUICK

2

On the passenger seat, a Westinghouse tape recorder and microphone sit side by side. A thick hand reaches down, presses record, snatches up the mike. The recorder's wheels spin as they capture the thumping of the windshield wipers clearing away a steady drizzle of rain.

The driver is SAM BYCK, a heavysset 44-year-old in a yellow shirt and brown sportsjacket. He takes a deep breath then speaks into the microphone.

SAM

My name is Sam Byck. I'm hoping that someday... I'm hoping by now that you will have read about me in the newspaper. And if I'm not successful, you probably don't know who I am and it won't make much difference.

Sam slides the heater up to maximum and turns the fan up one notch.

SAM (Cont.)

I call myself a grain of sand on the beach called the U.S. of A., where there are over 211 million grains of sand. And on the beach that we call Earth, there are over three billion grains of sand. With all this sand, is it possible that one small grain could strike fear into the ruling classes, so that they will become more compassionate and cognizant of the needs of the populace, the many, many people? I think so. What I am about to do should prove to the ruling classes, to the powerful, to the affluent, that the least grain of sand, the least individual, has in him the power to destroy them. What I am about to do is assassinate Richard Nixon.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - PHILADELPHIA - DAY

3

Friday, June 15, 1972. JAN HUFFNEL, a Bogard Realty agent, stands in a vacant showroom. Slits of light seep through nearly closed blinds.

JAN

You have 2,000 square feet on the floor, another 850 in the back. Plenty of space, prime location. The corner lot gives you great exposure from the street.

The sounds of street traffic reach into the building.

JAN (Cont.)

Of course, it's a heavy traffic area, so you have some noise-

Sam enters from around a corner, gazing around the room. He approaches the windows, opens the blinds.

SAM

The more traffic the better.

JAN

Exactly.

SAM

Especially for me.

JAN

You're starting a tire store?

SAM

That's right. More cars, more tires, more money. Any idea how much it'll cost to renovate?

JAN

Couldn't really say. But I know some people in that line. Could give you an estimate. If you went with us for this site, I'm sure they'd be happy to help you out. Here's their number.

Jan pulls out a business card, starts writing on the back. Sam approaches.

SAM

And what's the rent?

She hands him the card.

JAN
\$2,500 a month plus utilities and
security.

Shocked as he is, Sam tries not to react.

JAN (Cont.)
I've got some other locations we
could look at if this is out of
your league.

SAM
No. Not at all. I, of course,
would have to talk this over with
my investors.

JAN
Naturally.

INT. DINER - DAY

4

Sam sits at a round table, a plate of french fries smothered in
gravy half eaten before him.

SAM
So you see, with all the
equipment and inventory I need
for start up, I'm not sure 20
grand can support \$2,500 a month
overhead on top of that.

LISA
Over who's head?

We realize that he is consulting with his four children,
CARRIE, 14, PATRICIA, 12, JEFFREY, 9, and LISA, 5. They have
milkshakes and share two plates of fries among them.

SAM
Just a figure of speech.
Inflation being what it is,
prices are just skyrocketing
these days.

PATRICIA
Maybe you just need to find a
less expensive place.

CARRIE
Or more money.

Sam looks at his watch and picks the bill up from the table.

SAM
Speaking of money, I've got an
appointment. Let's get moving.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR - DAY

5

The Byck children sit in a bank of chairs, reading, coloring, etc. Sam stands on a nearby line, holding a notebook to his chest so he can write. He works out budget figures for his store.

The line moves forward, Sam now at the front. He stands before a counter, behind which is MR. WATSON, a clerk. Sam pulls out a form from inside the notebook and hands it to him. He reads from it.

WATSON
Hello, Mr. Byck.

BYCK
Hello, Mr. Watson.

WATSON
So, Mr. Byck. Did you look for
work this week?

BYCK
Indeed I did.

WATSON
And?

BYCK
Well, I'm here, aren't I?

WATSON
Any progress?

Sam holds up his notebook on the counter.

BYCK
Tire store's coming along.

WATSON
This is the one where you're
waiting for a loan.

BYCK
From your compatriots at the
Small Business Administration.

WATSON

I don't work with them, Mr. Byck.
And, unfortunately, I can't give
you points for income that you
may generate if you start a
business.

BYCK

When I start a business.

WATSON

Did you have any job interviews
this week?

Sam lets the notebook fall to his side. He sighs.

BYCK

Three. One rejection, two
outstanding.

Watson rifles through some papers, pulling one out.

WATSON

Okay.

He hands him his check and shoves a clipboard toward him. He
signs.

WATSON (Cont.)

You're halfway through your
benefits. Don't stop looking for
a job, okay?

BYCK

Thank you, Mr. Watson.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

6

The second-floor walk-up in the Bustleton neighborhood of
northeast Philadelphia is tidy but cramped. One very large
room serves as kitchen, dining room and living room. ARLINE
BYCK, 39, is preparing dinner at the kitchenette.

The kids are in the living area watching a black and white
Zenith console. Sam sits at the dining table with paperwork
strewn about.

ARLINE

If you put half the effort you
spend trying to start your own
business into finding a job-

SAM

Arline, please.

ARLINE

Haven't you heard of putting all
of your eggs into one basket?

SAM

The loan is a done deal. So as
far as your eggs are concerned,
I've got the goose, baby! The
goose that lays the golden egg!

ARLINE

Oh, you've got a goose egg, all
right.

In the living room Lisa is playing with a Barbie doll, which
Jeffrey snatches away from her. He pops the head off and
tosses the body back to Lisa.

LISA

Maaaa!

ARLINE

Jeffrey, stop it.

JEFFREY

I'm not doing anything!

ARLINE

Then whatever you've got, give it
back to her.

Jeffrey plays with the head. He places it on top of the
television, tosses it in the air and drops it in a fish bowl.

LISA

No!

Carrie gets up from the livingroom floor, heading straight for
the fishbowl. She removes Barbie's head and gives it back to
Lisa.

ARLINE

Carrie, come set the table.

CARRIE

It's Jeffrey's turn.

ARLINE

Fine. Jeffrey?

Jeffrey makes a face at Carrie and mopes into the kitchen,
where he does his chore.

ARLINE (Cont.)

Hey, Eggman, want to give your
son a hand by clearing your stuff
off the table?

SAM

Coo coo ca choo.

Arline's look says, "We'll talk later."

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

7

Arline is wiping down the table. Sam finds a record from their
collection, slips it out of the jacket and places it on the
phonograph built into the television console.

ARLINE

Don't play it too loud.

SAM

I know, I know.

"More" plays from the phono. Sam sashays toward her, singing
along, light on his feet for a big man.

ARLINE

Sam...

SAM

(sings)

"More than the greatest love the
world has known..."

Sam swoops her up to dance. She swats him with her dish rag.

ARLINE

Sam, go see if the kids are
asleep.

SAM

Right now?

ARLINE

Yes.

Sam goes O.S. into the hallway, while Arline finishes cleaning
the table and sits on the couch. Sam comes back and nuzzles up
to her, shutting off a nearby lamp. Arline snaps it back on.

ARLINE (Cont.)

That's not why I wanted you to
check on the kids Sam.

SAM

No?

ARLINE

No.

SAM

Please?

ARLINE

We need to talk.

SAM

Then maybe can we?

ARLINE

We'll see how well the conversation goes.

Sam sighs.

ARLINE (Cont.)

Did you even go on one interview today?

SAM

Jeez, you sound like the Department of Labor.

ARLINE

Well?

SAM

What's the difference? I'll get that loan from the SBA any day now.

Arline turns the music up a little, standing before Sam.

ARLINE

They turned you down twice.

SAM

Three's a charm!

ARLINE

It's not that I don't support your dream Sam, but it's getting hard for me to support this family.

SAM

Look, if there's one thing being out of work got me is some time to do my homework. This proposal is solid, much more than the others. It'll fly, I'm telling you.

ARLINE

Just promise me you'll get a
paper tomorrow and look for
something else in the meantime.
Okay?

SAM

It'll really make you feel
better?

ARLINE

Worlds.

SAM

All right, ye of little faith.

ARLINE

Thank you.

SAM

You do realize that this is a
complete and utter waste of my
time.

ARLINE

Why, of course.

Sam moves in and embraces Arline.

SAM

So, I'd say that this
conversation went rather well.

Arline lets her guard down.

ARLINE

Oh, all right, but go check on
the kids first.

SAM

I already did.

A smile creeps across Sam's face as he turns the lamp off.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

8

Sam and the kids sit around the table. There are several boxes
of sugar-ridden cereal, and the table is splattered with a few
corn flakes and small puddles of juice.

Patricia, Carrie and Sam watch Saturday morning cartoons.
Jeffrey shoves his entire arm into a box of cereal.

LISA

Hey, no fair.

JEFFREY

No fair what?

He finally fishes out a plastic-wrapped toy.

LISA

That one's mine. You got the last one.

JEFFREY

Finders keepers.

LISA

I want my prize!

Arline enters, dressed in a nurse's uniform.

ARLINE

Jeffrey, give it to her.

She kisses Jeffrey's forehead, then kisses Lisa, Carrie and Patricia, saying goodbye to each. Arline stands before Sam.

ARLINE (Cont.)

Call Mrs. Gulliver to make sure she picks up Patricia for the softball game. I left a grocery list on the fridge. And I'm gonna work a few hours extra today, so it'd be very nice if you could have some dinner ready. I'll be home around seven.

SAM

No problem.

ARLINE

And I left some change in the bowl by the door. Pick up a newspaper today, okay?

SAM

Okay.

Arline plants a kiss on Sam's forehead. She leaves as the kids all say goodbye.

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

9

Sam is still in his boxers and undershirt. The kids still wear their pajamas. They watch "Forbidden Planet" on television, the breakfast mess lingering around the kitchen. Lisa walks up to Sam, holding Dr. Seuss' "Green Eggs and Ham."

LISA
Daddy, could you read this to me?

SAM
I will not read it in this house,
I will not read it to a mouse.

LISA
Daddy!

Sam starts to tickle Lisa.

SAM
I will not read it to a fox, I
will not read it in a box.

A faint song is heard chiming in the distance. Jeffrey's ears perk up.

JEFFREY
Ice cream. Dad! It's the ice
cream man!

SAM
Oh, baby. Let's go. Get
dressed.

The group scrambles for their clothes. Once they are set, Sam hurries them out, scooping up the change from the bowl by the door.

EXT. STREET

10

The five Bycks walk down the sun-drenched street. The kids eat ice cream. Sam licks a Bomb Pop.

SAM
Who led the National League in
home runs last year?

JEFFREY
Willie Stargell. 48.

SAM
What team?

JEFFREY
Pirates.

SAM
1946 to 1952. Who led the
league?

JEFFREY
Ralph Kiner.

SAM
What team?

JEFFREY
Pirates. But the Phillies are
our home team, Dad. How can you
not root for them?

SAM
The Phillies haven't won the
pennant since 1950. Pittsburgh
took it last year, they're at the
top of the division now, and
they've got the best damn player
in the game.

Lisa holds her cone like a microphone and does her best Howard
Cosell.

LISA
Ro-bert-o Cle-men-te!

CARRIE
MVP 1971.

SAM
Very good.
(to Jeffrey)
Batting champ what years?

JEFFREY
61, 64, 65, 67.

SAM
I rest my case.

They come upon a stationery store.

SAM (Cont.)
Hey, who wants to help Dad start
his business?

The kids all raise their hands.

KIDS
Me!

SAM
Okay, finish up your ice cream.
Come on, let's go!

Sam and the kids sloppily wolf down the last bites.

INT. STATIONERY STORE

11

Wiping his hand on the back of his pants, Sam collects all the kids' garbage.

SAM
Patty and Jeff, you guys find me
a nice desk calendar.
(to Carrie and Lisa)
You guys, I need some business
cards. Come on.

Patty and Jeff wander down an aisle while the others follow Sam to the counter, where a CLERK stands.

SAM (Cont.)
Lisa, you wanna ask him?

LISA
Mm-hmm.

SAM
Go ahead.

LISA
(to Clerk)
Excuse me, I'd like to know how
much for business cards.

SAM
She's starting her own business.

The clerk hands Lisa a paper.

CLERK
Here's the price sheet.

Sam kneels down to peruse with the girls. Patricia and Jeffrey appear behind them.

PATRICIA
Dad! We found one.

JEFFREY
It's on sale since the year's
half over.

Sam turns around to see Jeffrey holding up a Batman and Robin calendar.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

12

Still dressed in her uniform, Arline relaxes at the set dinner table with the kids. Patricia is in her team uniform.

PATRICIA

Amanda Stein scored a run, and
Kathy Perez got two RBIs. That's
it.

ARLINE

Well, how'd you do in the field?

PATRICIA

Couple of good catches.

ARLINE

That's good, isn't it?

PATRICIA

I should've scored. My batting
sucked today.

Jeffrey chuckles.

ARLINE

Don't say "sucked."

Sam, clad in oven mitts, tosses a TV dinner on every plate.

SAM

Hot stuff, coming through.

Everyone peels back the foil and begins eating. Arline looks
up at Sam.

ARLINE

Thanks for making dinner.

SAM

Aw, hell, it was nothing.

ARLINE

So, any interesting news today?

SAM

Mmm, no. We had a pretty
uneventful day.

ARLINE

I mean news news.

SAM

Didn't get a chance to watch.

ARLINE

What about the newspaper?

A look of recognition washes across Sam's face.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

13

Sam stands by the sink, brushing his teeth, while Arline casually lotions her hands.

ARLINE

Ice cream? You spent the change
on ice cream?

SAM

It made the kids real happy.

ARLINE

Well, they're not going to stay
happy for long if you don't start
making some money.

SAM

Hon, Sunday classifieds. Biggest
paper of the week. I'm sure I'll
find something there tomorrow.

INT. SAM AND ARLINE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

14

A large mass bulges from beneath the covers of the queen size bed. The door creeps open silently, and Lisa leads her siblings into the room. Arline, dressed in a robe, stands behind them in the doorway as Lisa pounces on Sam, waking him up.

LISA

Happy Father's Day!

Scared at first, Sam awakens harshly then starts to laugh as the other kids join in the well-wishing.

SAM

Hey! Hey. Thank you.

LISA

Here's a card, Daddy.

She hands him a card homemade with construction paper and crayons.

SAM

My, this is most beautiful store-
bought card I've ever seen!

LISA

I made it!

SAM

You did not.

LISA
I did! I did too!

SAM
Oh, thank you, Sweet Pea. It's
gorgeous.

PATRICIA
I made you one too.

CARRIE
Me too.

They both hand him homemade cards and kiss him on the cheek.

SAM
Thank you so much, ladies.

JEFFREY
I got you a card, too, Dad.

Jeffrey hands him a 1971 Topps baseball card.

SAM
Clemente?

JEFFREY
I flipped Timmy Nussbaum for it.

SAM
Come here.

Jeffrey approaches his father, who gives him a big hug.

SAM (Cont.)
Thanks, Champ.

JEFFREY
No problem, Dad.

LISA
Put the cards out on the ledge,
Daddy.

Yawning, Sam rolls over.

SAM
Oh, in a minute.

LISA
You gotta do it now!

ARLINE

He'll bring the cards out in a minute. You kids go on. Let your Dad rest a bit.

The kids head out as Arline enters the room further.

SAM

Thank you guys!

Arline sits on the side of the bed, smiles at Sam.

ARLINE

I've got something for you, too.

Arline reaches under the bed and slides out a wrapped gift. Sam begins to tear off the paper. Inside the box is a new briefcase.

SAM

A Samsonite!

ARLINE

I hope you can use it for work. They say they're the best.

SAM

No, you're the best. Thank you so much.

ARLINE

Open it up.

He does, finding it empty except for a dollar bill.

SAM

I don't get it.

ARLINE

You'd better get it.

SAM

Newspaper.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

15

Dressed in slacks and a short-sleeve button down, Sam walks down the sidewalk toward a newsstand. A small CROWD is gathered nearby.

Sam approaches the stand and picks up the Sunday Inquirer. He glances over the headlines, then notices the crowd. They are all reading the Washington Post. He sets down the Philadelphia paper and picks up a copy of the Post.

He sees the front page. Under Alfred E. Lewis' byline, a story breaks the news about the burglary at the Watergate complex. Sam turns to the VENDOR, reaches into his pocket and hands over the dollar Arline gave him.

SAM

Post.

EXT. STREET - DAY

16

Days later, Sam and Jan exit a vacant store front. This one is not nearly as nice as the first and is in a fairly run down part of town.

SAM

It's pretty small.

JAN

Hey, you get what you pay for.

SAM

You got anything else for me to look at?

JAN

Not in your price range.

SAM

Hey, this is not my price range. The first place was fine, but my investors want me to exhaust all possibilities.

Jan tries to hide her true feelings.

JAN

Mm-hmm.

SAM

Dealing with other people's money, I owe it to them to act responsibly. Just because there are some people in Washington who don't understand that- Maybe they could learn a little something from me, you know?

JAN

I'm sure they could.

SAM

We just need to think it over is all.

JAN

Well, give me a call next week.
I'll try to line up a few more
places to see.

SAM

Great. We appreciate it.

The two shake hands and Sam hops into his Buick and heads off.

INT. BUICK - DAY

17

Dejected as he drives through the streets, Sam flips through
the channels on his AM radio.

He approaches a church which has an old school bus in the front
lawn. A large cardboard sign in its windshield reads "For
Sale." A huge grin suddenly washes across Sam's face, and just
as suddenly he pulls off the road.

EXT. CHURCH LAWN

18

Sam approaches the bus, inspecting it. He looks in the
windows, kicks the tires, etc. He heads into the church.

INT. CHURCH

19

Sam tiptoes down the aisle. A WOMAN is polishing the pews.

SAM

(whispering)

Excuse me, sweetheart, could you
tell me where the father is?

WOMAN

(whispering)

Playing golf, I'd imagine.

SAM

Could you tell me who's in charge
here?

WOMAN

Could you tell me why you're
whispering?

SAM

Respect.

WOMAN

I think you have us confused with
the library.

Sam laughs awkwardly.

SAM

Very funny, lady. Do you know
who I can talk to about the bus?

WOMAN

You can talk to me. I'm Sister
Maryanne.

SAM

Sister? Christ, I thought you
were the cleaning lady! Ooo, I'm
sorry. Oh, God. Let me try this
all over again, Ma'am. I'm Sam
Byck. It's a pleasure to meet
you.

She takes his extended hand.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - EVENING

20

Arline prepares dinner while the kids sit around watching
television. With a jingle of keys, the program is interrupted
when the front door whooshes open. Sam enters, shopping bags
in hand.

SAM

Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas!

PATRICIA

Dad, we're Jewish.

SAM

That's why we're celebrating in
Juuuune!

Arline turns from the stove to eye Sam.

ARLINE

Sam, what did you do?

SAM

I got presents for everybody,
even you, darling.

Arline is suspiciously happy. Sam hands out the bags, and the
kids immediately tear in. Carrie takes out a small book and
looks curiously to her dad.

SAM (Cont.)

It's a locking diary. So you can
record your innermost thoughts.

Carrie gives him a kiss on the cheek. Jeffrey gets a baseball
mitt and Patricia gets a jewelry box. They thank him as Lisa
finds a new Barbie in her bag.

LISA

Daddy!

SAM

You like it, Sweet Pea?

LISA

I needed a new one. Jeff kept throwing Barbie's head around.

SAM

Stick to baseball, Jeff.

Arline opens her present, revealing an LP, Frank Sinatra's "Point of No Return."

ARLINE

Thank you, Sam.

She kisses him.

ARLINE (Cont.)

If I'd've known we were celebrating, I'd have cooked something a bit fancier than fish sticks.

SAM

Fish sticks are perfect.

ARLINE

What are we celebrating, Sam?

SAM

Today I took the next step in my professional career.

ARLINE

You find a job?

SAM

Even better. I found a location for Byck Tires.

Arline smiles politely.

JEFFREY

Dad, I coulda told you, they go on your bike wheels.

SAM

No, my tire store.

JEFFREY

I know. I was joking.

Sam is dumbfounded for a second, then laughs.

SAM

Oh. Hey, that was a good one!

ARLINE

So, where is it?

SAM

Where do you want it?

Arline cocks her head.

SAM (Cont.)

It can be anywhere you want.

ARLINE

What are you talking about?

SAM

I drive by this church, and boom! An epiphany! They have this old bus and they're going to sell it to me for \$3,000. Three grand, can you believe it? That's one month's rent in a decent store space.

ARLINE

What the heck do you need a bus for?

SAM

To sell tires out of. This way I'm completely mobile. If business isn't so great in one area, I just tank up and move to another area, simple as that. Virtually no overhead, just the cost of gas, which isn't cheap these days, but-

JEFFREY

You could paint it like the Partridge Family bus!

LISA

Daddy's gonna drive the Partridge Family bus!

Jeffrey starts singing "Come On, Get Happy" from "The Partridge Family." Lisa joins in.

PATRICIA

You'd be like Reuben Kincaid!

The older sisters laugh.

SAM
Go ahead laugh. Genius is often
ridiculed. But I swear, It'll
fly.

ARLINE
Kids, go wash for dinner.

Singing, the kids file out.

ARLINE (Cont.)
Sam-

SAM
I know, you must think I'm crazy-

ARLINE
No, I think it's great you found
a way to do it without the
\$20,000.

SAM
Oh, no, I'll still need that.
There's still gonna be a lot of
startup expenses.

Arline picks a piece of mail up off the counter, hands it to
him. The return address is the Small Business Administration.
Sam glances up at her.

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING, PHILADELPHIA - DAY

21

Two weeks later. CLARENCE HILL, an SBA staffer, sits behind
his desk. Sam sits before him, managing a handful of papers,
trying to appear as professional and humble as possible.

SAM
Okay, see, now I know. Twenty
thousand was too much to ask for.
I don't need that much anymore.
I found a way to reduce overhead.

HILL
Did you?

SAM
I'm gonna sell the tires out of
an old school bus.

HILL
Excuse me?

SAM

No more Byck Tires. Now, it's "Wheels on Wheels!" Remove the seats, store the inventory. No rent. And if business starts to get slow, I pick up and leave.

HILL

Mr. Byck, if you'd like to submit another application-

SAM

I've already done three.

HILL

And I don't recommend that you try again, because I don't believe you'd be approved. I'm just being honest with you.

Sam glares at him, stewing.

SAM

I seriously doubt that, Mr. Hill.

HILL

If you feel you could get approved, be my guest-

SAM

I seriously doubt that you're being honest with me.

HILL

Are you suggesting something?

Sam shoves his papers into the briefcase Arline gave him.

SAM

Alright, I'm through sucking up. I mean, SBA can't find a measly 20 grand for me when I'm trying to start a good, honest business, not like all those other places that just want to make a quick buck at the public's expense, and you've given hundreds of thousands to businesses that don't even exist?

HILL

What are you talking about?

SAM

In '69 you guys had an article printed about approved loans. Said I got approved after my first loan request. That's a lie. You look good, I suffer. Second time, I get obsolete forms, and I'm told the money ran out. And now...

HILL

We're very careful about who we approve. And your rejection is a result of that same, objective process. I am sorry, Mr. Byck.

SAM

I checked into that article of yours. Ten businesses, six of them didn't even exist. But I ask for less money than them for a legitimate business so I can support my family, I can't get a plug nickel. Who's getting all this money? Goddamn political contributors. Give their money to the party, slowly but surely get it back from the SBA, at my expense. And I'm sure your bosses are getting their kickbacks.

HILL

Mr. Byck, I assure you-

SAM

A guy like in Nixon in the White House, all that corruption just spreads. Everywhere.

Sam rises to leave.

HILL

Mr. Byck-

SAM

I'm not saying it's you personally, Mr. Hill, but seems to me someone at SBA isn't doing their job.

He slams the door behind him.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

22

The television blares a news story about phone calls placed from Bernard L. Barker in Miami to G. Gordon Liddy's CRP office.

Above a desk in one corner of the living area, the June 18th Post headline and article are taped to the wall. Several other articles follow in sequence through mid-July.

Sam's hand appears at the wall, taping up a brand new Watergate article. Unshaven and wearing a robe and slippers, he slumps onto the couch to watch the evening news. He grabs his dinner plate from the coffee table and continues to eat.

Arline and the kids remain at the dinner table, finishing up their meals in silence. Sam's place at the table is bare. Carrie and Patricia start to clear the dirty plates.

ARLINE

Thank you.

JEFFREY

Can we go watch TV?

ARLINE

I don't know. Ask your Dad.

Arline gets up to clean the dishes as Jeffrey and Lisa go to the couch, sitting on either side of Sam.

JEFFREY

Can we watch TV, Dad?

Sam keeps his focus on the TV as he talks.

SAM

Sure.

The kids sit for a couple of seconds, quickly growing restless.

LISA

Do we have to watch the news?

SAM

Yes.

ARLINE

For God's sake, Sam, you hog that thing all day. Let the kids watch some TV.

Carrie and Patricia leave the room.

SAM
After the news.

Arline storms directly to the television, switching the channel to "The Electric Company."

SAM (Cont.)
For Chrissake, Arline, the future
of the country is at stake here!

ARLINE
What the hell do you have to do
with the future of this country,
Sam?

SAM
Every single one of us should be
concerned about this.

ARLINE
Maybe you should be a little more
concerned about the future of our
family.

SAM
I am concerned about the future
of my family.

ARLINE
You've been out of work for a
month, Sam. It's the kids who
are on summer vacation, not you.

SAM
This is no vacation for me.

ARLINE
It sure looks like it.

SAM
If I'd've gotten that SBA loan-

ARLINE
You didn't.

SAM
It's not my fault.

ARLINE
Then whose is it?

Sam indicates his wall of articles.

SAM

Look who's running the show.
Goddamn crooks and thieves!

ARLINE

You can't even hold down a job
for someone else, Sam. How do
you expect to work for yourself?

Sam realizes she is right.

INT. BRIDGE STREET TIRE - DAY

23

A small tire shop. A burly CUSTOMER enters the store area and looks around.

KRUGER, the manager, enters from the garage. Sam, wearing navy dickies and a pale blue shirt with a name patch, stands behind the counter writing in a ledger book. Kruger approaches Sam.

KRUGER

Byck.

SAM

Yeah?

KRUGER

Byck, what do you do when a
customer finds it in his heart to
come into our establishment?

Sam looks up from the ledger book, notices the customer. He closes the book as Kruger squints and heads back to the garage. Sam smiles at the customer.

SAM

Can I help you with anything?

CUSTOMER

Yeah. I was looking for the
Michelin X.

SAM

What size?

CUSTOMER

70R13.

SAM

Sure. Right over here.

Sam leads the customer to a rack of tires.

CUSTOMER

Great. I'll take-

SAM

But I'll tell ya, pal, I wouldn't
buy this tire.

The customer looks confused.

SAM (Cont.)

If I were you, I'd get this
Goodyear. Twice the tire, half
the price.

CUSTOMER

I've had pretty good luck with
Michelin.

SAM

The Custom Wide Tread rates
higher in stopping and tread
life. Consumer Reports. You go
with the Michelin, you're just
paying for the name.

CUSTOMER

Thanks for the advice, but-

SAM

Listen, it's a no brainer. Any
idiot would see I'm just trying
to help.

CUSTOMER

Are you calling me an idiot?

SAM

No. It's a simple matter of
economics. If you wanna get
ripped off that's fine, but I'm
not gonna do it to you.

CUSTOMER

What?

INT. GARAGE

24

Kruger's ears perk up as he hears Sam and the customer argue.
He heads in, ready to kill.

INT. STORE

25

Kruger marches over to the arguing pair.

SAM

If you wanna get ripped off,
you're gonna have to go somewhere
else. I'm not selling you the
Michelin.

CUSTOMER

Who the hell do you think you
are?

KRUGER

I'll tell you who he is, he's
fired. On behalf of my former
employee, I'd like to extend my
deepest apology. And to show you
how sincere I am, Sir, you can
have 10 percent off anything
you'd like today.

CUSTOMER

Then you can shove five percent
up each of your asses.

EXT. STORE

26

The customer storms out, followed closely by Kruger and Sam.

KRUGER

Sir, Jesus, please come on back
inside.

SAM

Go on ahead. You wouldn't know
a bargain if it bit you in the
ass!

The customer hops in his Datsun and slams the door.

KRUGER

Shut up, Byck.
(to Customer)
15 percent!

The customer screeches out of his space, blasts the horn and
holds his middle finger up outside the window.

SAM

Figures you drive a foreign car.
Asshole!

Kruger stares after the customer then spins toward Sam.

KRUGER

What the hell did you do?

SAM

I tried to sell him a Goodyear.

KRUGER

So you not only try to talk him out of the bigger sale, but you end up selling nothing. Byck, you're a goddamn sorry sack-of-shit excuse for a salesman.

SAM

You fired me, right?

KRUGER

Hell yes.

SAM

Then I don't have to take this shit.

KRUGER

Fine.

Kruger dashes back inside. Sam sees a stack of tires in front of the store and one by one bounces them into the street. Passing cars screech their brakes and blare their horns. Kruger runs back out as Sam walks off.

KRUGER

Byck, get those goddamn tires back here!

SAM

I don't work here anymore. Order someone else around.

KRUGER

Byck!

SAM

Have a great fucking weekend!

In the street, Sam reaches into the open window of a car stopped for the bouncing tires. He honks the horn and gives Kruger the finger.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - EVENING

27

Sam sits on the edge of his bed, head in his hands. Arline stands above him. The bedroom door is closed and they try to keep their voices down.

ARLINE

Did you quit or were you fired?

SAM
What's the difference?

ARLINE
If you were fired, you could at least get unemployment.

SAM
Then you'll be happy to know I got fired.

ARLINE
Damn you, Sam!

SAM
If he hadn't fired me, I'd've walked anyway. The guy was a jerk.

ARLINE
That jerk was signing a paycheck.

SAM
The guy had no scruples at all.

ARLINE
Scruples aren't gonna make you money.

Sam lies back on the bed, sighs.

SAM
Well, that's the goddamn problem with this country, isn't it?

Arline sits on the bed beside him.

ARLINE
Maybe it is. But there's nothing we can do about it except do our best, do our best for our kids. And I'm out there, six days a week now, when you haven't had a steady job in months. I mean, when you sat around planning your great and wonderful tire business, fine, at least there was the hope something would come out of it. But now, you sit around here, reading your newspapers and watching the TV, obsessing over political garbage and the nation's problems.
(more)

ARLINE (Cont.)

The country may be going down
the toilet, but don't flush us
down with it.

SAM

What am I flushing?

ARLINE

Your family... Our marriage.

Sam sits up and looks her square in the face.

SAM

Arline, do you love me?

ARLINE

Sam, don't.

SAM

Do you still love me?

Arline begins to sob but is silent.

SAM (Cont.)

Dammit, Arline! Do you love me!?
Answer me, goddammit!

There is a long and awkward silence, disturbed only by her
increasing sobs.

Sam dashes out of the room.

ARLINE

Sam-

INT. LIVING AREA

28

The kids are watching television. Sam bursts in and shuts the
set off.

SAM

Kids-

Arline comes rushing in after him.

ARLINE

Sam, get back in here.

SAM

Kids, your mother thinks I'm a
nothing.

ARLINE

Leave them out of this.

SAM

No, Arline. They are very much in this, and it's about time they grew up and heard about the real nothings. The fuckups running this country!

ARLINE

Sam!

SAM

Maybe I am a nothing. And maybe I always will be. But there's this thing in the world called the system. And the only way to get anywhere in this world is to play by the system. But that means you gotta lie and steal, and screw your fellow workers, and stab your best friends through the heart, and kiss ass til your lips fall off. And if that's the price you have to pay to be successful, I'd rather be nothing. And I'd rather see you kids be nothing than be ratfink, asskissing little shits.

The kids stare up at Sam, stunned. A tear runs down Arline's cheek, but she keeps her composure.

ARLINE

Get the hell out.

SAM

What?

ARLINE

Get your things, and get out.

INT. SAM AND ARLINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

29

An open suitcase rests on the bed. Sam is now fully dressed and cleaned up. He packs his case.

There is a knock at the door. Sam opens it, revealing Carrie. She holds a few photos. Sam struggles to find words, but nothing comes out.

CARRIE

We thought you should have these.

She hands him the photos, school portraits of each of the four children.

SAM

Thank you.

CARRIE

I don't want you to go.

SAM

Me neither. Ahh, I probably
won't be gone for long.

He pats the bed and Carrie sits beside him.

SAM (Cont.)

Listen. I was trying to say
something back there to Jeff and
Lisa, and it didn't quite come
out right. Have you read
Shakespeare yet in school?

CARRIE

No.

SAM

Well, he's got a play called
"Hamlet."

CARRIE

I've heard of it.

SAM

Good stuff. So there's a part
where this guy Polonius is
talking to his son, Laertes,
okay? Laertes is about to go off
to battle, and Polonius, who's
not sure if he'll ever see his
kid again, goes through this
whole spiel, giving advice about
all kinds of things. Basic
stuff. Stay out of trouble,
dress well, don't borrow money
you can't pay back. But he saves
the best for last. "This above
all, to thine own self be true."

CARRIE

Dad, I'm gonna see you again.

SAM

I know, I know, but you gotta
listen. The most important thing
in this world is for you to
decide what you believe, and then
stick to it. No matter what.
Okay?

CARRIE

Okay.

SAM

You hear me?

CARRIE

Yeah, Dad.

SAM

Come here.

He holds his arms out, and she moves in for a hug. After a few seconds, she pulls back.

SAM (Cont.)

Now get outta here. I gotta finish packing.

Carrie heads toward the door, but turns back.

CARRIE

Dad, where are you gonna go?

Sam stares at her blankly, considering this issue for the very first time.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

30

Struggling with his bags, Sam ascends a stairway, entering a hall. Out of breath, beads of sweat trickling down his forehead, he lumbers to a door and knocks.

After a pause, the door opens only as far as a chain lock allows. "The Odd Couple" can be heard on a television within. An elderly woman peers out, and a curious expression crosses her face.

MA BYCK

Sammy?

SAM

Hi, Ma.

EXT. INTERSTATE 95 - DELAWARE - NIGHT

31

Friday, February 22, 1974, later in the night. The Buick cruises down the highway.

INT. BUICK

32

Sam continues to talk into the hand-held microphone.

SAM

It's so goddamn frustrating when you are suddenly aware that this government cannot correct its mistakes, that this government is one of cover-up rather than exposure. There's more crooks than good guys in Washington. They are all con artists, making deals, wheeling, dealing, money in the pocket, money under the table, anything for a buck. We have a national motto, E Pluribus Unum, which must be changed to conform to the times to "Let's make a deal," and Monte Hall would be the master of ceremonies, the head dealer of the nation. Okay, Dick, what'll it be? Behind curtain number one is national amnesia. Everybody forgets about inflation, Vietnam and Watergate. Behind curtain number two, your face on the \$10 bill. Screw Alexander Hamilton, he was never President anyway. But there's always the promise of more behind curtain number three. You pick it, but you know what's there? Sam Byck, and he's got a fucking gun, you greedy bastard.

INT. MA BYCK'S LIVINGROOM - NIGHT

33

July 1972. The Lawler Terrace apartment is furnished with garishly upholstered pieces covered in protective plastic. Ma Byck wears a housecoat and smokes a More cigarette. She sits in a recliner, Sam standing by a couch opposite her.

MA BYCK

Your health, it's okay?

SAM

Yeah.

MA BYCK

You sure? You're still looking a bit heavy. Your knees doing alright?

SAM

I never had any trouble with them, Ma.